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## Historicizing Political Dichotomy Among the Double Unilineal but Prevalently Matrilineal Cross River Igbo

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**ABSTRACT:** *The patrilineally-biased socio-political system was prevalent among the Igbo; and was the preserve of adult males above the ages of eighteen. It legislated on the decisions of the paramount Eze and the Council of Elders. The womenfolk were hardly politically visible enough in decision-making as it affected them. Yet, among the double unilineal Cross River Igbo, such as the Abam, Abiriba, Amaseri, Ihechiowa, Ohafia and Ututu, the womenfolk were politically as active as the men. Their decisions which were usually backed by women-specific deities, such as Odamini Ufuforo, Imohuma, Ohuhu and Ibara; and institutionalized social control mechanisms, such as Abiamkpu, Ibuo Okpu and Use, were often incontrovertible. A gendered political dichotomy entailed specific domains of contestations, well-defined political functions for the men and womenfolk; and cultural exhibits that portrayed the audacity of firmness, authority and visibility. Except in the choice of the paramount chief from among the apical patrilineages, the socio-economic and political systems of the Cross River Igbo were suffused by matriliney through which descent and inheritance were acquired and traced. Authority laid more on those who owned more lands and were more numerous. The matrilineal (horizontal) distributive justice system and the ability principles were preferred over the patrilineal (vertical) distributive justice system. Moreover, members of the patrilineages equally belonged to their mothers' matrilineages where they stood to access more lands, acceptability and relevance in a double unilateral distributive justice system. The paper concluded that it was impossible for the females under the aegis of the matrilineages to be politically invisible since they had certain socio-economic advantages, therefore, political. Oral interviews predominated in the research while written sources served complementary and subsidiary purposes.*

**KEYWORDS:** Acephalous, double uniliny, patriliney, avunculature, matriliney, amitaculature, dichotomy, distributive justice, patrilineal, descent.

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## INTRODUCTION

Diverse descriptions have been given to Igbo traditional political systems, prominent among which are the patrilineal and/or the patriarchal masculine-biased systems. In discernment, the patrilineal and seemingly patriarchal systems are subsumed under the acephalous typology which does not, however, imply the absence of hierarchical political structures but of their not being professionalized. Igbo traditional political systems are democratic with the largest political assembly being an adult male suffrage of those above the ages of eighteen, and referred to as the **Amala**. Contrary to received opinions, there are distinct political units that range from the family and lineal heads, to the **Eze** and elders, through to crosscutting institutions, such as the age grades, age sets, secret and exclusive societies, craft guilds and oracles. Yet, the political roles of the womenfolk have been subsumed under the undue masculinization of the Igbo traditional political systems from pre-colonial to post-colonial times.

In the books, *Igbo Traditional Rulers within the Dynamics of Change et al* (Osuagwu, Okoko and Ota, 2021); <sup>1</sup> *Igbo History: Gaps, Muddles and Unclarities* (Okoko, 2018); <sup>2</sup> and *Gender Dichotomy Among the Cross River Igbo: A Double Unilineal But Prevalently Matrilineal Complex* (Okoko, 2016), <sup>3</sup> the Igbo traditional political institutions have been surveyed. Yet, in none of the books is gendered political dichotomy of both the men and womenfolk separately surveyed. Generally, the womenfolk in Igboland are assigned subsidiary political roles, such as caretakers of feminist problems, about what happens in their husbands' houses, their farms and in the market squares, among others.

There have always been gendered dichotomies in domestic and clan functions; and in the names given to members of both sexes which portray superior and subordinate roles. Although several commentators on the etiology of Igbo names have tended to associate such with days of birth or liken them to events pertaining to birthdays, only women are given names, such as **Nkwo**, **Orie**, **Afor** and **Mgbeke** (all being names given to Igbo market days). Yet, the men born on market days have not been given these names. There are similarly categorizing names, such as **Odozi aku** and **ori aku** (those that look after and 'consume' their husbands' wealth) to depict the womenfolk's domestically-biased roles. The names given to men, such as **Ejiofor** (holder of the staff of office), **Ogbuagu** (a great hunter who would have killed a lion) and **Ojiaku** (a wealthy man), easily depict their masculinities and mandate in the natural schemas.

Patrilineal and, in rare cases, patriarchal systems are prevalent in Igbo traditional political systems. History books resonate with mentions of centralized and acephalous communities, and the authors have been mute on the specialized political systems of the Cross River Igbo; and specifically too, on the roles of women in a double uniliny. The Cross River Igbo are matrilineal and descent is traced to an apical grandmother. Yet, the people in real practice are double unilineal: practicing the patrilineal and matrilineal systems alongside each other. Politically, the patrilineages among the Abam, for instance, produce the

**Onyerubi** (the name given to the village chief) who although a member of the **Obi-asato** group of patrilineages equally belongs to his mother's matrilineage.

Political dichotomy exists within the village groups and between the sub-clans in the Cross River Igbo area. The gendered political systems of the Cross River Igbo will be premised in prongs on:

- i. A survey of the general Igbo traditional political systems with a view to discerning the political roles of the womenfolk; and possibly infer a heightened gendered political role among the peoples;
- ii. Survey the political activities from the patrilineal and matrilineal camps in a double uniliny; and
- iii. Emphasize the matrilineal system as a political force that has over the years been underpinned by its major economic resource - land - which the patrilineages that have the natural mandate of producing chiefs lack.

Before surveying these, it is pertinent to define and contextualize dichotomy to this paper. Certain definitions have been given and synonyms proffered in order to fully explain the word. Dichotomy is taken to mean separation, disunion, distinction and scission. But the application of other synonyms, such as section, cleavage, subdivision and segmentation, would suit the purpose of this paper (Betty Kirkpatrick, 1987, 27).<sup>4</sup> This is because the kind of dichotomy that exists among the double unilineal communities of the Cross River Igbo is an inclusive one which only portrays gendered domains of contestations. Although a dichotomy exists, it is impossible to draw a line between what the males and females do differently vis-à-vis the overall functioning of the communities.

The major dichotomies that exist in the subculture area have always been between the roles of the males and females, activities and stratifications, ascribed role terminologies and actual behavioural patterns, and between patrilineal and matrilineal. Certain questions have been raised to include: What are the social, political and economic activities that the males and females embark on? Is it possible to establish points of interaction and departure? Where do gendered activities meet and mix? Do dichotomies produce parallels or symmetries in the activities of individuals and groups among the Cross River Igbo? Answers to these questions will be attempted in the course of the paper.

### **Igbo Traditional Political Systems**

Leadership is conceptualized at various levels and subjected to differing interpretations in order to build a relatively consistent conventional order. Most of the conceptions have been mere Europeanization arrived at by using alien paradigms; and which are a departure from what it ought to be in Igboland. Whether Emic (occidental) or Etic (domestic), all forms and levels of leadership are used to solve needs, provide direction and give purpose to societies' existence. Small-scale societies show evidences of authority and harmony in social relations that are underpinned by political typologies and structures which were not

easily interpreted by the early missionaries, trade merchants, explorers and adventurers and, most profoundly, armchair European theorists who operated from the coasts without having set foot on the hinterland communities in precoloniality.

The Igbo forms of political leadership are unique and cannot be fitted into any of the universal paradigms and, therefore, could not be realistically interpreted by the colonial officers, anthropologists and ethnographers who sought for structures that could aid colonial administration and maximization of profits. It is, therefore, not surprising when the British subjected the Igbo to the policy of Indirect Rule. Most exasperating to the colonial administrators when it failed woefully was the introduction of warrant chiefships. Most of the warrant chiefs were employed from non-traditional chiefs-producing lineages. The warrant chiefs, in addition, to not being accepted by the people, engaged in piratical capitalist tendencies which were resented by the Igbo and subsequently ignored these 'chiefs' in their subconscious minds. This in all probability would account for the *Igbo Enwe Eze* (the Igbo do not have kings) concept.

Meyer Fortes and Evans-Pritchard had after a comprehensive study of African political systems: from the acephalous to the centralized, discerned three political systems, namely:

- i. Assorted political systems held together by kinship relations (patrilineal, matrilineal and double unilineal) operating alongside each other and are not easily distinguishable especially by non-indigenous observers;
- ii. Political systems held together by linking different kinship lineages; and
- iii. Political systems with profound administrative organizations that are crosscut by kinship, lineal, village assemblies and by other complementary associations, such as age grades, guilds, secret and exclusive societies (Meyer Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 1-25).<sup>9</sup>

In spite of these delineations, it has been difficult isolating political system in Africa, centralized or acephalous, without kinship relations at all levels. On the possibility of the existence of societies in Igboland without well-structured and hierarchical authority as much as the centralized ones, Middleton and Tait (J. Middleton and David Tait, 1957)<sup>10</sup> further delineated the acephalous system into three political systems, namely:

- i. The political systems without corporate lineage intermix;
- ii. The political systems which are controlled by status title holders and are crosscut by age sets (possibly exclusive clubs) and age grades; and
- iii. The political systems in which the village **Eze** and chiefly councils of elders and associations wield political authority.

Analytically, Middleton and Tait ought to have discerned a fourth category that combines all the three political typologies delineated by them since it has been difficult isolating any political system in Igboland which is operated without kinship relations.

Robin Horton described the categories (of Meyer Fortes, Evans-Pritchard, Middleton and Tait) in the analyses of West African societies and institutions as complementary parts of a whole (Robin Horton, 1979: 78-94). It is simply anachronistic attempting to draw a line at where each of the delineated categories start/stop and others stop/continue. The categories are a highly interrelated whole and wielded together by the principle of territoriality. Although there are organs for decision-making and control that are not, however, professionalized, there are no organs of coercion, such as the police and army. Rather, agencies and tribunals, such as oracles/shrines and their priests, are consulted in times of emergency for divinations without first declaring wars in order not to shed the blood of possible kinsmen. There has, therefore, always been a continuous interplay between the segmentary, complementary and territorial principles in the governance of Igbo societies (Horton).

Leadership in pre-colonial Igbo societies was by adult suffrage and conducted in village assemblies. But contrary to the opinions of J. U. Asiegbu (1987: 1-12) and G. I. Jones (1970: 312-324), inequalities were deemphasized in village assemblies in spite of wealth of members and segregation between leaders and subjects. Pertinently, this system has not changed presently (2023). Okechi (2015: 10) noted that:

While the council of elders, a position occupied as a result of age, screening for experience and exposure, the title-ships were controlled by limiting them to good character and ... wealth. This was not, as the foreigner may deem it, as a competition for those who can make wealth by hook or crook; wealth here were more of prowess in the area of farming and other legitimate means of acquiring properties (sic).

Regarding the day-to-day running of community affairs, irrespective of the interplay of crosscutting institutions and admixes of networks of leadership, decisions and orders are, legislated, executed and obeyed; and conflicting interests/disputes are settled at whatever levels and stages (family, lineal/kindred and clan) they occur. Unarguably, Igbo political systems have undergone mutations of sorts, especially with the innovations arising out of Christianity, European-type education and modern democracy. Although there have always been the rich and the poor in traditional Igbo societies, it has assumed a modern dimension. Rehearsing Isaac Okorafor (2021) in modern terms, the structuralization of society into classes - rich and poor; and the commercialization of benefits becoming uppermost; and having become corrupted between pre-colonial and post-colonial times, the concept of leadership in Igboland became perceived as mere positions that are of consequence only to the holders and not to the other members of the communities. Similarly, Okechi observed that the leaders, on their part, began to perceive their subjects as mere livestock which can fetch them wealth when they are manipulated or indirectly subjected to some forms of taxation in consonance with non-traditional government. On

the whole, the leadership positions at different levels were perceived from outside as potential opportunities for making wealth and prestige by whoever gets their either by hook or crook (Okechi, 2015: 14).

This contention, which contradistincts traditional political systems is in line with G. I. Jones' analyses in which leadership became isolated from the poor and the well-to-do in character and behavior, leaving it in the hands and reach of the rich and strong men of Jones' thesis who were ready to capture the opportunity of leadership - **Eze**-ship at all costs (Okoko, 2018: 106).

### **Political Organizations of Select Igbo Communities**

This section considers the traditional political institutions of the Umuahia in central Igboland and the Abam in Cross River Igbo area. It undertakes equally to establish a comparative basis between mainland Igbo and western River Niger Igbo communities' traditional political institutions. Generally, it attempts to:

- i. Make an overview of the traditional political institutions of one of the mainland Igbo communities, such as the Abam and Umuahia, in the pre-colonial period;
- ii. Portray the slight variations in the traditional political institutions of the Igbo, some of which tend towards centrality or professionalized governance, east of the River Niger, such Onitsha;
- iii. Survey the traditional political institutions of any of the Igbo communities located on the banks of the River Niger, such as the Aboh; and
- iv. Survey any of the peripheral Igbo communities west of the River Niger in the Delta and Rivers States, such as the Asaba, Agbor, Ahoada, Ikwerre and Ogwashi-Uku.

The political systems of Igbo societies have been categorized into the centralized (west of the River Niger) and non-centralized or acephalous (east of the River Niger). Yet, to properly situate and portray the diversities that exist, it becomes pertinent to survey the political systems of the double unilineal Abam (Abia State), Umuahia-Ibeku (Abia State), Onitsha (Enugu State) and Agbor, as case studies. Reasons for the survey would be in order not to fall victim to labeling all political systems in Igboland as same without diversities, and that all the communities portrayed hierarchical political structures in spite of being acephalous. The Abam and Umuahia traditional political systems will be representative enough of all mainland Igbo communities, while the Onitsha Igbo would serve corroborative purposes.

### **Umuahia Example**

The Umuahia clan, popularly referred to as Umuahia-Ibeku, is made up of five sub-clans, namely, the Ohuhu, Umuopara, Ubakala, Olokoro and Ibeku, while the Ikwano community, as the name implies, is made up of four kindreds, namely, Ariam, Ibere, Oboro and Oloko. They are all in the present-day (2023) Abia State in Nigeria.

Regarding the Umuahia socio-political systems, Asiegbu (1987: 1-12) explained that becoming an adult “was not just a ... matter of age” but of having fulfilled certain maturity rites; and that headship may devolve on powerful individuals in the village in terms of wealth, power of oratory and wisdom. Not ill-gotten but wealth in the areas of farming and legitimate means of acquiring property.

Although Asiegbu’s position could apply to some Igbo communities, it cannot aptly describe traditional political organizations in Igboland since it discounts the fact that eponymity and lineal relations are the yardsticks for succession to chiefships. Asiegbu, although not particularizing on the paramount headship of the village(s) but on the **Amala** as agents for internal cohesion and discipline, infractions of which could attract severe punishments, his ability and ‘strong man’ principle for succession still underscores the unnecessary of imposing any generalized concept in the study of Igbo socio-political systems.

Regarding headships falling on powerful individuals as a result of their wealth and abilities, ascension to political leadership in Igboland is predicated on both lineality and heredity as it is among the Cross River Igbo. Certain apical patrilineages produce the paramount chiefs from among themselves as direct descendants of the ancestors of the community; and not just powerful men from anywhere or any lineage, irrespective of having special abilities and wealth. Although Okoko might have thought differently on the powerful men theory posted by Asiegbu as a probable source of leadership in Igboland, what ought to have been done by earlier scholars (especially those trained in Western historiography) remain undone.

Finally, on Asiegbu’s thesis, the Umuahia did not have age grade institutions, although semblances of it, presently, exist. Other parameters for measuring and attaining maturity and strength are rather subscribed to. All attempts made by the Umuahia to establish the age grade system failed woefully. According to J. I. Uwazierem (2017), several attempts were made by the Uhuiyi community in Ohuhu to institute the age grade system during the colonial period. It was until the 1970s that the people were able to do so, having seen the achievements of the age grades in the socio-political systems of other Igbo communities that have them. The Ezeleke community in the Umuopara clan also successfully instituted the age grade system in the post-colonial period. No other community among the five subclans of the Umuahia operated the age grade system/institution from the pre-colonial to the colonial periods. Chiedozi Atuonwu (2017) recounts that among the Ikwuano too, the age grade institution does not exist and there are no recorded attempts at instituting the system by the people. The Ikwuano have their own systems of recognizing maturity and membership of the community and in the discharge and apportionment of responsibilities. The ability system would seem to be appropriately applicable in the Ikwuano area.

### **The Abam Example**

Relations between groups in Abam are conceived in terms of lineages which are both minimal and maximal. The lineages compose a total structure which are complemented by the roles played by crosscutting institutions, such as the age grades, age sets, village councils, secret and exclusive societies, among others, in the socio-political organization of the clan (Okoko, 2015: 40-45).

In looking at the acephalous societies of West Africa, Robin Horton (1979)<sup>26</sup> and R. N. Henderson (1972: 22) discerned three habitational principles, the Abam additionally have the lineage and age grade principles overlapping into each other because the institutions always provide vent for social, economic and political contestations. Thus, there has been the territorial aspect of belonging to Abam whereby individuals not only owe allegiance to their lineages but also to their age grades and age sets (**Otuenyi**). The age grades, in fact, facilitate social mobility among the Abam more than the lineages which are the natural habitats to members even when one is a laggard.

Above the family unit which is made up of the man, his wife (or wives), his unmarried daughters and sons, as well as his married sons and their wives and children is the compound, **Ezi**. This comprises between thirty and fifty families with their separate household heads. Though the Abam are matrilineal, the members in the families in an **Ezi** are patrilineally related, but are related more with each other, in most cases, with their matrikins. They constitute what the Abam call **Umudi**. Irrespective of the household heads, the compound, **Ezi**, has a head that lives in the compound's meeting house, **Obi Ezi**. Compound headship is hereditary. He must be a descendant of the founder of the **Ezi**. Every **Ezi** has its lands with the compound head, **Eze Ezi**, as the custodian. He performs ritual functions regarding the **Ezi** shrine and lands.

Decisions concerning village affairs are taken by the **Ukerabuo cheogo**. These decisions are, however, not taken arbitrarily, rather the people, **Amala**, are often summoned to the village square, **Ebele**, when the need arises and all are allowed to air their views on whatever issues are at stake. After the general deliberations by the **Amala**, the **Ukerabuo cheogo** in concert with the **Eze** and Council of Elders usually withdraws to conduct and take the final decision(s). Because of the democratic nature of the Abam society, the decisions of the chiefs are at times disregarded. If it involves matters like land disputes, other agencies, such as spiritual tribunals and deities, are consulted to administer oaths, **Iri Arunsi**. The oath is expected to produce effects within stipulated periods, usually a year. If nothing untoward happens to the individual who oath was administered within the period, it will be assumed that the person is innocent and has been wrongly accused.

### **The Onitsha Example**

Onitsha is one of the largest communities in the present-day (2023) Anambra State. It is bounded to the north by the Nkwelle, to the south by the Odekpe, to the east by the Ogidi, Nkpor and Obosi, and to the west by the River Niger which is a natural boundary separating



it from the Asaba-Oshimili. The cosmopolitan nature of Onitsha and its location at the boundary between Igboland and the communities to the west, such as the Agbor, Iselle-Uku and Ogwashi-Uku, accounts for its dense and multi-cultured population of Igbo and non-Igbo stocks (Helen Anunobi Nwando, 2015: 1-5).

The importance of Onitsha came to the fore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the advent of the Christian missionaries and the institution of British and European colonialism. The underpinning events then were the establishment of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) by Bishop Ajayi Crowther and the formation of the Royal Niger Company. These events definitely transformed the material and human capital contents of Onitsha.

The **Obi**-ship of the Onitsha has been highly influenced by the Edo monarchical system and probably by the northern kingdoms of Aboh and Igala. This shares an antiquity that spans from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This is evidenced by the chronicle of Onitsha **Obi**-ships, starting with Eze Chima as the founder of Onitsha to **Obi** Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe (Agbogidi) who is the 21<sup>st</sup> and present **Obi** of Onitsha (2023). The chronicle of **Obi**-ships in the political history of Onitsha shows that “*Onitsha Nwelu Eze*” (the Onitsha have kings) and absolutely hereditary and cannot be attained by the strong men of G. I. Jones’ thesis on Igbo political history. Nwando affirms that “*Eze bu ora nyelu*”: Among the Onitsha is a line of kings. Only the descendants of Eze Chima can be considered for any of the positions in Onitsha monarchy, therefore, hereditary.

Yet, the seemingly monarchical political structure in Onitsha does not preclude the existence of title holders and crosscutting institutions that rule and contribute to decision making. For instance, the nine clans that make up Onitsha, namely, the Umuezechima, Awada, Ubulu na Ikem, Ulutu, Obamkpa, Ubene, Ogoli Eke, Obior and Agbornute are subdivided into six administrative units and, broadly, into the royal and non-royal clans.

The **Ndichie** are the highest ranking titled men who are appointed by the **Obi** of Onitsha to rule in the various kindreds (similar to the **Eze Ogo** among the Abam) on his behalf, advice him on peace, conflicts and resolutions, and generally act as representatives of the clans and kindreds in Onitsha. Constructed to maintain law and order, the **Ndichie** are categorized into three groups with structured levels of authority within the polity. The **Ndichie Ume** (First Class), **Ndichie Okwa** (Second Class) and **Ndichie Okwaraeze** (Third Class) help in providing administrative guidance to the **Obi**-in-Council.

Notable crosscutting institutions in the Onitsha political structure are the **Agbalanze** Onitsha, **Otu Odu** women society and age grade agencies. The **Agbalanze**, membered by men of significant accomplishments ensure peace, equity and justice in their communities. This institution gives people the privilege to aspire for higher monarchical positions [within the] Onitsha Monarchy (Nwando, 2015). The **Otu Odu** women society, usually attired with ivory bangles on their wrists and ankles, and age grade organizations comprising men

and women, participate in the elaborate political system of the Onitsha; and provide checks and balances while ensuring the rule of law and democratic principles are observed.

In spite of the influence of the Edo monarchical system, the Onitsha and Abam traditional political systems are not significantly different. They are structured similarly with apical political paramountcies, to clan or kindred leaders, lineal heads and crosscut by the activities of titleholders (that are differently regarded and referred to in the communities but play parts in socio-politics), gender based associations and age grade organizations.

### **The Western Niger Igbo Example**

The bulk of the Igbo are located in present day Southeast Geopolitical zone with a considerable number in the Rivers and Delta States. Apart from the River Niger, the other major rivers are the Imo, Orashi and Anambra Rivers, to the east and Ase River to the west. The Igbo are predominant in the forest belt of Southern Nigeria. Archaeological excavations at Igbo-Ukwu, 25 miles southeast of Onitsha led to the discovering of the Igbo-Ukwu bronze and this demonstrated that the people have been living there since the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD (T. Shaw, 1980: 145).

The Igbo population west of the Niger has necessitated appellations, such as the Western Niger Igbo, Midwest Igbo, Bendel Igbo, later, Delta Igbo and, recently, the Anioma. The Anioma are made up of the Aniocha, Ika, Ndokwa, Oshimili and Ukwuani. Also, Elizabeth Isichei, Don Ohadike (1994) and Okoro Ijoma (2010, 13-15) equally located the Anioma within the Igbo family tree (E. Isichie, 1976: 16). Linguistically, Igbo is one of the languages designated as “kwa”, a sub group of the Niger-Congo of the larger Niger Kordofanian proto-phylum. Nonetheless, there are other Kwa groups dominantly in the south, such as the Yoruba, Edo and Idoma. R. G. Armstrong (1962 and 1964: 26) is of the view that Glottochronological evidence has demonstrated that languages in the “kwa” sub-group would have started diverging into distinct forms in about 6000 years ago.

Apart from the Nri hegemony which dates to antiquity, monarchies elsewhere in Igboland seem to have been influenced by intrusive traits from neighbouring communities. V. C. Uchendu (1965: 29) regards the type of monarchy developed by the Igbo on the Niger as the “presidential monarchy” with examples of the Aboh and Agbor. In the works of Oguagha and Okpokpo, it is reaffirmed that monarchical influence was from the Benin and Igala Kingdoms, respectively.

In the Aboh kingdom are two broad territorial sections, namely, the Umudei and Ndichie. Umudei is the royal clan and its members claim Benin origin and descent from Oguezi. The Ndichie section and its members are non-royals, consisting of strangers and autochthonous elements. Equally, leadership titles are divided between the two groups. In the State council are Ndichie title holders who rule with the **Obi**, while the Umudei title holders constitute the opposition, although it is from their rank that an **Obi** is chosen. According to Nzimiro (1972, 59), the Umudei title holders are headed by the **Ndanike**,

while the Ndichie title holders are headed by the **Iya-sere**. The **Obi**'s eldest son holds the office of **Akpulosu** and supports his father in the council against the other Umudei chiefs.

**Obi**-ship is not hereditary in Aboh. When an **Obi** dies, succession is open to all Umudei males. Yet, it is the Umudei **Olinzele** that plays the opposition in Council. Obaro Ikime (2006: 234) explains that, perhaps, it is thought that since among the Umudei **Olinzele** are persons who nurse leadership ambitions, every fact would serve as a check on the extent of their opposition.

The **Odua** is another important office in the Aboh political structure and is held by the oldest male among the Umudei. The **Odua** was the ritual head of Aboh. He is the chief priest of **Nze**, the royal cult. The **Odua** acts for the **Obi** and serves as a regent when an **Obi** dies. The institution of kingmakers is not known in Aboh, hence when an **Obi** dies, interested Umudei candidates would make themselves known to the **Odua** who would then engage in far-ranging consultations among the Umudei until a consensus is reached. The **Odua** is the only office that operates independently of the **Obi**, yet serves in the **Obi**'s inner cabinet and has the privilege of holding meetings with the **Olinzele** at his residence. He equally holds court and tries cases and appeals against the judgments of his court lay with the **Obi**'s court and could also rally the **Olinzele** against an oppressive or recalcitrant **Obi** in Aboh kingdom.

Concluding on the systems of political administration in mainland and peripheral Igboland, it becomes glaring that political activities are carried out on village, clan and kindred or extended family bases. Each of the sectors is autonomous as far as decisions taken on matters that affect them are concerned. Where it concerns the whole village, a general meeting of the village assembly is summoned by those charged with the responsibility, often the apical **Eze** and the Council of Elders. The **Eze** must be chosen from the lineage or group of lineages that founded and first settled in the village.

In modern times, the pre-colonial traditional administrative systems seem to have been affected by the new systems of administration foisted on Igbo communities during the colonial period. Yet, the traditional systems of administration based mainly on the **Ezeogo**, age grades and the village assembly, **Amala**, of an adult male suffrage still form the bedrock of a stable local administrative system among the Igbo, in general.

### **The Myth of Matriliney**

To fully understand political dichotomy among the double unilineal Cross River Igbo communities, it becomes necessary to briefly examine the concept or myth of matriliney in the area under study. Moreover, the system of matriliney among the Cross River Igbo has been tainted by patriliney in a duo-uniliny, especially when there is a greater tilt towards the matrilineal.

The preeminence of the womenfolk among the Cross River Igbo dates back, as oral traditions hold, to some apical mothers who were so hardened that they ably hewed down thick forests and farmed them as much as the men. In fact, traditions further recount that the lands acquired by the apical mothers were, and still are, sacrosanct that their ownership has never been in doubt. The male offspring of the women fought several wars in pre-colonial times in defense of such lands. According to Kalu Ejieke and Okon Kalu Okeke (2006), the lands have been regarded as synonymous with the mothers' umbilical cords - **Erii avo nnem**, therefore, a sustaining linkage. The loss of any land was tantamount to losing one's mother-link.

The feminization of the communities of the Cross River Igbo, with time, assumed mythical dimensions. Other than the ebullience exhibited by the apical mothers through hewing down thick forests, farmed and coveted them, are the psycho-sexual implications of such. Anything done against the women and their possessions is tantamount to a declaration of war. No one was, and still is, willing to forgo any property and titles acquired through the motherline. Semblances of irreverence and disrespect to motherhood have always evoked a tendency towards defense. One's father could be called names and it will be laughed over. Insulting another's mother is interpreted as an assault on one's origin. For instance, a referral to one's father's phallus among the Cross River Igbo could be waved away, but not a referral to one's mother's reproductive system (vagina). Among the teenagers, the phrase - **Ikpu Nne gi** (your mother's vagina) has always been settled through fights, and it is intended by the vituperate as an attack on your beingness. This is not the case among the Owerri and Onitsha Igbo where referrals to mothers' privacies are laughed away and in line with the patrilineally-determined worth of, and roles for, the womenfolk.

The myth of matriliney pervades all aspects of the peoples' life. The questions that arise are: Did the principles of matriliney grow naturally or are they the machinations of the apical mothers? In the peoples' oral traditions are recounted the sacrifice of a son by a woman in order to save a brother's life. This one-off act seemingly compelled the brother's gratitude to the extent that he willed all his property to the sister before his death. Although a non-Cross River Igbo circumstance, the mystification of the feminine among the Nteje community in present-day Anambra State is common knowledge. Tradition recounts how a certain woman sacrificed herself to the gods in order to stem the ravages of a pandemic that killed their children in numbers. Ever since, the Nteje have worshipped her as the "Cult of the Benevolent Woman": **Alusi Agadinwanyi Nteje**. This is an apotheosis that has been replicated among the Abam but in a dissimilar circumstance and varied in application because the worship of **Alusi Agadinwanyi Nteje** is not gendered.

Although the events that spawned into apotheosizing women among the Abam and Nteje occurred in different environments; and in different social contexts of matriliney and patriliney, certain cults among the Abam are women-specific and cater to the welfare of the women and their children, the matrilineages and, by extension, the whole clan. Among the cults are prominently the **Odamini Ufuforo, Imohuma, Ohuhu and Ibara**.

Regarding the women-specific deities, Ayi Ayi opined that their institution-alization became necessary when the matrilineages perceived imminent threats to their enormous land resource; and also the need to protect them from the highly masculinized **Obi-asato** eight patrilineages. Yet, the threats which, *ab nitio*, existed have thinned out due to the pervasiveness and wealth accruing from matriliney. It is one of the enigmas of socialization that a people chose from pristine times to be matriliney-biased while the rest of the Igbo have remained patrilineal. The relationship between the matrikins and patrikins, and the residential pattern of the Cross River Igbo which is patri-virilocal, are such that have made double uniliny a natural social system.

Among the Ozu Abam, both the patrilineages (**Obi-asato**) which are eight (8) in number and the matrilineages which are twenty seven (27) in number have unconsciously merged to the extent that it is difficult to point at anyone as a patrikin or matrikin; or as mentioned elsewhere, point at any part of the Cross River Igbo communities as where the patrikins (in patrilocality) and the matrikins (in a matrilocality) live. Typically, among the Abam, the residential pattern is patri-virilocal since the patrikins - **Umunna** - and who naturally own compounds live together with the matrikins - **Umunne**, who are visitors, yet, more numerous from pre-colonial times. According Charles Okeke Okoko (2016: xv-xvi):

European anthropologists ... sought for parallels, akin to what obtained in their home countries. It was un-Victorian, indeed, anathema to the colonial administrative officers, for women in the Cross River Igbo area, and elsewhere matriliney was practiced, to have so much social latitudes and economic advantages.

In spite of patrilocality which gives the patrikins, **Umunna**, prominence, it pales into insignificance since the matrikins, **Umunne**, have attained dominance through their sheer numbers and the ownership of the greater portions of land in the communities of the Cross River Igbo. The patrilineages and the patrikins have for long remained content with the provisions accruing from amongst themselves (as matrikins and patrikins), of the patrikins always producing the chiefs and have consequently remained suffused into their mothers' matrilineages in a double uniliny. In fact, the matrilineages have remained, unarguably, sources of material and emotional succor and refuge for the whole clan.

The attempts so far made have been to portray the extent of the matrilineal contents and patrilineal mix; and prepare grounds for possibly discerning the political 'force' of the womenfolk of the Cross River Igbo. This is against the background of the highly masculinized patrilineal Igbo societies. Yet, this would be better understood if a brief survey of matriliney and the matrilineal puzzle is undertaken vis-à-vis the patrilineal.

### **Matrilineal and Patrilineal Practices**

This section attempts discerning aspects of matrilineality which make it relevant and imbues resilience in contradistinction to patrilineal practices. However, although there are clear-cut opposites/dissimilarities and parallels/symmetries in the operation of the two social systems, they are not diametrical opposites. Thus:

1. The matrilineal communities of the Cross River Igbo area are better organized and have more elaborate processes of procreation and recruitment of labor;
2. Patrilineal systems are better suited for securing inheritance for the offspring since allegiance is not dispersed while such advantages are diffused and reposed in matrilineal uncles at whose discretion the male members of the matrilineages stand to inherit property;
3. Matrilineality thrives because it creates dual loyalties which sustain inter-lineal and intergroup ties even in the face of change or challenges;
4. Matrilineal groups control both males and females, and by extension the patrikins.
5. The loose recruitment methods for men, labor and subsidiary services have worked in favor of the matrilineages against the patrilineages;
6. The risk of paternity uncertainty in the Cross River Igbo area in pre-colonial times enhanced the development of matrilineality. The men faced imminent dangers from warfare and trading ventures compelling the women to adapt to the ecology of the Cross River Igbo area to the extent that they produced enough foods and services to cater for their families; and
7. The matrilineal, patrilineal and double unilateral distributive justice systems underpin the strength of the matrilineality social system. The matrilineal and double unilateral distributive justice systems favor the matrikins because the allocation of economic resources is horizontal and by 'ability' in comparison to the vertical and seniority-based patrilineal distributive justice system of the patrilineages. The double unilateral distributive justice system ensures that individuals acquire allocations from both the matrilineal and patrilineal camps at the same time.

### **Matrilineality and Masculinity**

As a result of the insecurity that characterized the Cross River Igbo area when the people migrated into it, the men were always away from home fighting wars of defense and acquisitions. The males preferred their sisters as estate managers to their wives who came from other matrilineages and, therefore, could not be trusted. It is inferred too that the bonding established between mothers and their children, and the concomitant domination of economic affairs, on the one hand, and between brothers and sisters as real estate proxy managers, on the other hand, are some of the factors that contributed to the development and growth of matrilineality.

Despite being dominant in economic matters, being the acclaimed breadwinners of their families, proxy caretakers of matrilineal estates and occupying esteemed socio-economic and symmetrical political positions, there has evolved, over time, some degrees of contestations among the males and females of the Cross River Igbo. This is alien to the

outsider observers from Victorian societies (Emic Perspective) but natural among the aborigines (Etic Perspective) who understand what is actually in operation among the communities (Chen Lai, 1967).

As a result of the gender-based contestations, it has been misconstrued that the women are more economically viable than the men. In fact, Leonard Mbah (2012) in his study posted a ‘matriarchy of matrilineal ancestresses’ among the Ohafia, where authority seemingly resides in the females. A recap of matrilineal typologies showed that the position taken by Mba on the Ohafia, would appropriately have applied to the Amaseri and Afikpo communities in northern Cross River Igbo area, where the most senior aunt hold authority in intra-matrilineal, **Ikwu**, affairs. A closer observation, however, has proven that the men are only economically unviable in their wives’ matrilineages, but are rich and have access to more lands in their own matrilineages. If such a man was the eldest, would mandatorily run the affairs of the matrilineage. It is a known fact that whoever controlled the economy of any community also wielded enough socio-economic and political power. It is not in doubt that the womenfolk of the Cross River Igbo under the aegis of the matrilineages have enormous socio-economic powers, but the men in the non-matrilineal communities in Igboland control socio-political activities. It is the ‘Lions’ Den Complex’, where the lionesses hunt for food and the lions protect and lord it over the pride (Okoko, 2016: 333-337).

In addition to their acquired and seemingly natural economic endowments, the womenfolk have own socio-political institutions which operate alongside those of the men folk. This has given the women “greater political obeisance and authority, from both men and women”. Some institutions, such as the **Ikipirikpe Ndiyom**, among the Ohafia, and the **Uke Ekwe**, among the Abam, have been established to enable the women play complementary socio-political roles with the men. There are in addition, other feminine assemblies, such as the **Umuada** (assembly of autochthonous married daughters), **Otu Ndiyom** (assembly of wives) and the **Ogba Odu** (female king or **Eze Nwamia**) among the Abam. Similar to Alice Schlegel’s (1984) observation on the Amerindian Hopi, gender roles in the Cross River Igbo area are egalitarian. Neither of the sexes is inferior to the other. Abam women participate effectively as much as the men in decision-making. However, there were no situations among the Hopi that required that their men, like those of the Abam and Ohafia, to embark on protracted wars to prove themselves in battles and gain honors in their society. Although women could attain high economic positions, their roles are not super-ordinate but complementary to those of the men folk. Women, in pre-colonial times, cultivated as much lands as the men in the harsh tropical vegetation of the Cross River valley, and, consequently, acquired extensive lands to have graduated to the statuses of female ancestors to succeeding generations.

It is a truism that internal dynamics and the institutions within the Cross River Igbo communities in pre-colonial times engendered competitions and self-realization and actualization among individuals and groups, and provided a gendered dichotomy in socio-

economic and political activities. Whatever constraints or contestations that existed among the communities in pre-colonial times were created to delineate male-female domains. According to Celina Ojembe and Nnuku Koke (2013), matrilineal practices created a caste of independent women who took care of their children, especially, those they got out of wedlock. The trend persisted into the colonial period during which the women acquired some education, became teachers and health workers, and competed favorably with the men in paid employment. This was in spite of the fact that the colonial officers preferred that men occupied more positions than the women. This definitely breached the pre-colonial male-female domains.

Although matriculture gave leverage to the women in socio-economic spheres in pre-colonial times, it nonetheless diminished in the colonial and, even more, in post-colonial times. Instead of describing the circumstance as matriarchal, what obtained in the Cross River Igbo area was a mutual and complementary process. It was a profound feminism which the matrilineal practices of the people permitted to co-exist with the patrilineal and the masculinist. It was, indeed, not perceived by the men folk as a socio-political threat. Mbah's (2012) contention that matriliney "was a prominent domain of contestation between men and women" is a position taken in error. Rather, the contests have never transcended the male and female domains and gendered dichotomies. The women have proven their mettle socio-economically and politically and these benefitted the entire community within their female domain without seeming autocratic, a threat to the men or matriarchal.

The contests are between men and men, and between women and women. Social mobility is truncated into the worlds of the men and women. Yet, there are points of interaction between the males and females. That matriliney empowers the women of the Cross River Igbo cannot imply they could be initiated into the **Ufiem**, participate in the war dance (**Iri agha**) and join secret societies, such as the **Aku Akan**, **Obong** and **Ekpe**, like the men. The so-called gendered contests between men and women among the Ohafia, pale into insignificance when it becomes clear that both sexes only aspire to positions into definite dichotomies which the traditions of the people have condoned over the years.

Rather, observable gendered contests started during the colonial and post-colonial times when women trained as clerks and teachers like the men. Mba argues in his "Emergent Masculinities" that "Ohafia men often colluded with European officials and missionaries to forge patriarchal, exploitative and discriminatory ideologies that facilitated the subjugation of women". This is also not tenable since the European officials and missionaries came from patriarchal backgrounds and could not have contemplated the logic of Ohafia women superintending their men.

However, the womenfolk play very important socio-political and economic roles in the Cross River Igbo area and in Igboland, in general. But the role of the womenfolk in decision-making among the Cross River Igbo is strong enough to override governance decisions at the communal level and within the various lineages: patrilineal or matrilineal.



The **Uke Ekwe**, which is the highest ranking female age grade association in Abam, for instance, performs complementary functions to the **Ukerabuo cheogo** male age grade that rule with the paramount Chief, **Ezeogo**. The primary duty of the **Uke Ekwe** is to ensure that there is a high standard of discipline and morality in the community vis-à-vis the womenfolk and by extension, the males. The activities of the **Uke Ekwe** have always truncated decisions and influenced responses from the male folk.

### **Social Control, Conflict Resolution and Peace Education Mechanisms as Politics**

The mechanisms which have anchored decorum to the communities of the Cross River Igbo have spawned to the extent that generations have come to regard them as norm; and form greater platforms for acculturation. People are readily reminded to be mindful of their activities in order not to have any of the mechanisms unleashed on him/her. In fact, the mechanisms equally form instruments for conflict resolution and peace education.

The visibility of the womenfolk in the political scheme of the communities of the Cross River Igbo is multifaceted and manifests not only in the political but in the socio-economic and religious spheres. This is evidenced by the numerous social and religious control mechanisms which have anchored some sanity in the day-to-day running of the affairs of this subculture area. Included in the social control mechanisms are sex control mechanisms which were, however, instituted in pre-coloniality by the men whose wives under the aegis of matriliney ran riot with men other than them when they were out on warfare or trading. Although 'traditionally ambiguous' and lacking in tenable empirical evidences, yet, the application of the mechanisms by the womenfolk in social control, conflict resolution and peace education has been very effective. Among the mechanisms that have been effectively used to enforce compliance or punish non-compliance to acceptable moral stipulations are the **Abiamkpu** and **Use** (Ihechiowa) and **Ibuo-okpu** (Abam). There are equivalent systems in all the clans of the Cross River Igbo subculture area.

The onus on this paper, therefore, is to continue portraying the socio-political prominence of the womenfolk in governance and not their political absoluteness as it pertains in matriarchal dispensations.

### **Religious Dimensions to Political Dichotomy**

In the Cross River Igbo and, in fact, in almost all Igbo communities, the statuses and roles of women are determined and defined in terms of their culture and prevailing environment. In addition, there is no environment or culture in the world where women are deemed superior to men, no matter the extent of their material acquisitions and culturally-imbued positions. This section attempts isolating possible dichotomies in the traditional practices of the Cross River Igbo area. Although it is not peculiar to them, matriculture enhanced, and still enhances, the domestic and spiritual roles of women in pre-colonial and colonial times.

Religious dichotomy is a rather difficult extract; suffice it to say that the spiritual or religious responsibilities of the women in the Cross River Igbo area are executed within their traditionally ascribed domains. As mentioned earlier, certain illnesses are peculiar to the women who consequently patronize female-oriented deities for remedies. In fact, the women who attained the status of **dibia** (herbal doctor) also medicated essentially on gynaecological and paediatric ailments, such as infertility, infant illnesses, circumcision and the exorcism of spirit-beings that are fond of reincarnating in children that are regarded as having become jinxed with the **Ogbanje-spirit** cult in continuous spates of rebirths. They prescribe remedies to enhance fertility, induce pregnancy and difficult child-births, and generally acted as midwives.

All occidental and traditional religions endorsed and upheld the superiority of men over women. In fact, it was seen as a divine prescription. But some variations and departures are observable in the Cross River Igbo area. God in the African religious pantheon was either male or female. This was the primordial concept of divinity and seemed to predate the equally ancient system of patriarchy which emphasized the dominance of the human males and male gods, although in clearly anthropomorphic situations, gender of the spirits is non-specific. There is an intimate relationship between spirits and their human hosts. This is conceived against the belief of a corporate relationship between spirits in the spiritual realm and the humans in the earthly realm. The ideological construct of alliances found expression in the social organization of the Cross River Igbo area which is constituted into the male and female domains. As if the events in the human realms are replicated in the spiritual, the deities so accepted, in turn, attend to the needs of the supplicants in the culture area: male or female (Douglas Anthony Kalu, 2015).

Among the Ozu Abam, certain female-personified deities, such as **Imohuma**, **Idogo**, **Odamini Ufuforo**, **Ohuhu** and **Ibara**, cults exist. Their activities are constructed around the well-being of the womenfolk and their children.

Most pervasive of the deities is the **Ibara** which is serviced by elderly women of not less than eighty. Regarding qualifications for membership and ministration in the **Ibara** cult, the women would have performed all age grade-based maturity rites and attained menopause before they are considered pure and masculine (non-gendered or undergone some spiritual dissection) enough to serve the **Ibara** deity. A yearly ritual, the women (**Iya Bara**) usually assemble in the twilight of an **Afor** market day to prepare the **Uri** (dye) which is smeared on their bodies in preparation for the **Ibara** annual outing and worship. The **Uri** is prepared with the remnants of trade goods left by the women who attended the market on that day. The remnants mixed for the preparation of the **Uri** are symbolic of the activities of women in Ozu Abam. The remnants gathered after the day's sales are considered the last contact with the women of the village and are, therefore, regarded as sacrificial items.

The elderly women traverse the length and breadth of the community, scantily dressed in beads and skimpy loin cloths as if they are maidens. This is *significandum* of purity and re-entrance into the ‘virgin’ state. The fervent prayers at the cult site are usually for the protection of their children and the fertility of their maidens and those recently married. These deities are still patronized by those who believe in them. At the end of the festival procession, the elderly women go to the **Idogo** stream, the abode of the **Idogo** deity, to clean up the **Uri** adornment.

Newly weds and expectant mothers await the elderly women at the **Idogo** stream with little gourds to collect some purified water. Referred to as **Imere mini oma** (the collection of ‘holy’ water), the water is known to be an efficacious remedy for whopping cough for their expected infants. It also enhances fertility and provides ample protection for the womenfolk and their households, in general. After prayers at the family shrine, **Agwu**, the **Mini oma** is administered by a female elder.

In the bid to protect their children from the administration of harsh oaths reserved for adults, the women in Ozu Abam contrived to institute female-children-friendly gods. Thus, the womenfolk agreed to subscribe to **Odamini Ufuforo**, a female deity at whose shrine oaths are administered on their erring siblings. The **Odamini Ufuforo** is expected to be more lenient to the children than the male-personified deities, such as **Kamalu Ochichi** and **Kamalu Agbata Uzo**, in the exaction of justice.

Women are also not expected, no matter the levels of provocation, to engage in quarrels to the extent that they will talk down on each other, refer to their private parts or utter invectives that are intended to defame. This quickly, when it occurs, attracts the **Uke Ekwe** institution that controls the domestic and socio-economic activities of the womenfolk. It is expected that, before children leave home or grow up, parents would have inculcated the rules and behaviors that enhance morality and peace. This is because the agencies responsible for maintaining peace, which are rife, would definitely hold them liable on infractions. No parents would want this to happen since it often becomes a stigma, affecting its relationships with other families in contracting marriages, attending same markets and fetching water from the village streams.

It is necessary at this point to survey in brief some traditional socio-cultural practices of the Abam, Bende and Ihechiowa communities that play the role of enforcers against miscreants and of peace as well as its inculcation and education. Bende has been included for study because it is also found in the Cross River valley ecological system. As mentioned earlier, these rules and stipulates for peace are not in the forms codified by UNESCO or the United Nations, but become manifest when they are contravened. Traditional agencies, such as the **Abiamkpu** and **Use** (Ihechiowa), **Oro** Cultural Group (Bende) and **Ibu Uro** (Abam), portray in their processes of social control the dos and don’ts in society.

### **The Oro Cultural Group**

The **Oro** is a socio-cultural group in Bende that has as some of its responsibilities the educating, informing and acting as checks and balances to the people's activities. Interestingly, as in the other Igbo communities where this kind of agency exists, its functions are couched in festivities, songs and dances. The rhythm, at any moment, determines the message being passed across. It could be a solo, a dirge or a song sang in entertainment. **Oro** instills caution and a sense of propriety on the people. The participants in the **Oro** have the capacity to expose anyone, who commits infractions to acceptable norms in Bende, no matter the extent of the person's wealth or status. Oftentimes, the activities of the **Oro** cultural group are underplayed because its medium of delivery is song-dance and the enforcement of its processes not constitutional but is guided by acceptable dos and don'ts of the societies.

Traditionally ambiguous, its activities preclude all forms of victimization, as the elders are wont to always step in to adjudicate at the slightest signs of such. Its historicity means that it is acceptable to the people. Those who resort to English courts for a perceived injustice are known to have been redirected to make their appeals at the customary courts. However, the songs, renditions and the stigma arising from the activities of **Oro** are dreaded more than the group itself. The **Oro** while chastising those who have engaged in criminalities, overtime, forewarns others who might be tempted into crimes in the future (Chidi Ejikeme Osuagwu, 2015). The **Oro** procedure is correctional vis-à-vis the activities of the old and the young in Bende society. Among the youth are those who do not know the simple morning greetings, **Owara**, or could say 'thank you' when a gift is given. The **Oro** cultural group is known to have successfully carried out certain tasks which parents are incapable of carrying out. It has, indeed, been a corrective social control mechanism that applies, oftentimes, psychological warfare.

The **Oro**, generally, enforces adherence to existing social norms and curbs individual excesses. Although essentially a social control mechanism it engages in other social activities, such as the provision of infrastructures and the giving of labour to its members and the public. It insists on conformity to the community's laws and ordinances through publicly disgracing those who infringed them. Oftentimes, the offenders are compelled to dance naked in the market square or round the village, to disparaging songs, jeers and taunts. If a matter is found out by, or reported to, the **Oro** cultural group that has its tentacles spread to all nooks and crannies, the **Oro** head summons other key members to hear the case. If it is a case of stealing, and if the accused is found guilty, the stolen object and the thief are taken to the village square until all who went to their farms return to the village. The stolen object(s) is/are hung on the thief's neck or placed on his head to dance round the community. The individuals lived with this stigma ever after, especially, since they will no longer be eligible to marry or be married. Other than the stigma of **Agoroo** (as the punishment is referred to), it insists on abstinence from incest. It is taboo marrying one's relative and having sexual relations with one's consanguine relative.

The **Oro** equally regulates marriage engagements vis-à-vis where one could marry into or from, or those that will never be married by indigenes except, perhaps, by outsiders. It also snipes into the activities of married couples. One would be puzzled how these control activities are related to politics, conflict resolutions and peace education; suffice it to say that the assumption is that one would have been taught the dos and don'ts in society from early childhood. The activities of this cultural group are, therefore, educative, palliative, corrective and deterring; and no individual, high and low, is spared the arrows of **Oro**.

### **'IBU URO' IN ABAM**

As mentioned earlier, social control and peace education commence at infancy, when a child is taught to say *Kaa ni, Ndewoo* and other greetings in Igboland. The ability to greet adults, even when they are not related to you engenders goodwill and attracts blessings from them to the child, as the reply will always be thank you, good child. This is often followed by passing questions and comments, such as, whose child is this? Oh! Such a well brought up child. The child is further taught not to steal what belongs to others or even sort the mother's soup pot for pieces of meat. Social control and peace education cannot be isolated from moral education, nor must it be in the form of charters and conventions that govern the relationship between nations and groups.

Although it has been reported that miscreants were sold into slavery in pre-colonial times and early colonial times, it was not predominantly so. This is because it was taboo causing harm to one's consanguine relatives. Yet, it took several corrective attempts before one was sold off into slavery or executed if adjudged to be utterly dangerous to subsist with others in society.

The **Ibu Uro**, among the Abam, became more pervasive in post-colonial times when police action and resort to courts were not prevalent. Even as late as the 1980s, certain individuals were subjected to the **Ibu Uro** having been adjudged serially unrepentant. If the **Uro** is performed more than two times on any individual, he is banished for about three years to a neighboring village, after which he could return.<sup>67</sup> Banishment is usually enforced when the infraction is deemed grievous, while the return to the village, after the expiration of the banishment period, is at the individual's discretion. While in banishment, he is monitored by similar agencies in the community to which he/she has been banished, and if changes are not observed, his banishment will be extended or will not be allowed to return to his home village. This is, however, in agreement with the receiving community (Okoro Kalu, 2015).

**Uro** usually precedes banishment. It is performed when an individual becomes persistent in misdeeds. But before the administration of **Uro**, the elders of the village adjudicate on the misdeeds to ascertain if it required **Uro**. This is because it is the severest punishment anyone found culpable could be subjected to. When crime is established beyond reasonable doubt, the elders and **Amala** authorize the administration of **Uro** by the youth on the offender. Although bodily harm is possible, it must not lead to death since this would

compound the problem and result to desecration of the land, **imeru ali**, it set out to remediate. The stigma of **Uro** affects the individual and his family. While they could engage in social activities, any displays that portray success usually incurred the reprimands and taunts of others, such as, *Onye eburu uro, uwaa uwayaa!!* (Who, that has been subjected to **Uro** should keep quiet and bow his/her head in shame).

It is the activities of agencies or mechanisms, such as **Uro** (Abam) and **Oro (Bende)** that serve as reminders that what we have been taught from infancy must be observed in adulthood to engender a harmonious society. In traditional societies, it is difficult to isolate harmony and peace, since they beget each other. Perhaps, as the social histories of various communities are compiled, the activities of these agencies will equally be recorded. **Uro** and **Oro** systems are corrective and reformative since they insist on the maintenance of morality, peace and harmonious living.

### **The Abiamkpu of the Ihechiowa**

The processes of upbringing entail inculcating values into younger ones so that they will become useful members of the society. Of particular importance in social control mechanism in Ihechiowa are the 'Use' and **Abiamkpu**. The medium, though overt, is delivered in satirical songs that convey the misdeeds of those involved. The song referred to as the "**Nlubiri**" is sung during the famine period - **Unwu** - that is characterized by hunger and, invariably, spates of stealing by the have not's. In the words of E. N. Ota (2013: 13):

The song was sang by a soloist [usually a woman] in the dead of the night whereupon she exposed thieves and other criminals in the community as well as women who engaged in unwholesome activities.

The 'Use' is a double-edged sword, as it could be used to praise those who performed good deeds as well as chastise those who committed infractions. It is performed nocturnally, not for fear of being harmed, but in order to have a wider (listening) audience. At this time of the night, almost a dirge, it conveys eerie feelings. Continuing, Ota said that the soloist usually started by first exposing her own antisocial activities before talking on others. Without doubt, the fear of being exposed in the **USE**' song served to restrain otherwise self-seeking individuals to always reconsider their intended actions. The **Abiamkpu** was contrived by the Ihechiowa women to moderate the activities of untoward men who would not hesitate to heap invectives on women especially commenting on their private parts, such as the buttocks and referring to their breasts as saggy. Satirical and abusive songs are sung for him overnight. Similar to the **Ibuo Okpu** mechanism among the Abam the songs were almost always composed at the gathering, and in rendering such songs the aggrieved women called the offender's manhood into question in sexually obscene lyrics and dance steps. In the process, the women defecated and heaped the offender's premises with fresh leaves or other available rubbish which the Abam refer to as **Ikwa alugulu** during the application of the **Ibuo Okpu** mechanism.

The absence of written charters and conventions in traditional societies cannot imply there have been no media for social control, conflict resolution and peace education. That there are mechanisms to punish offenders means they are taught of the existence of the ordinances *ab initio*. Societies, no doubt, live in harmony when these values are observed. At present, traditional norms and values that sustained societies in pre-colonial times have become replaced by the ones that are predicated on material wealth. Thieves in Igboland, as elsewhere, are publicly admired, cherished and given traditional titles, such as **Anya Mba** (the eyes of the community). Practices, such as stealing, kidnapping and ritual killings are rife because the mechanisms for social control and stability have become relegated to the dictates of modernization. These reprehensible acts, obviously, create inharmonious existence.

Thus, a revisit or the reinvention of our cherished values and norms would be the best approach to effective social control and peace education. The invocation of the **Igba Oro**, **Ibu Uro**, **Abiamkpu/Use** and **Ibuo Okpu** systems for social control would enforce observances of societal norms and values of the Abam, Bende and Ihechiowa communities of the Cross River Igbo.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

A crop up from a doctoral thesis titled, **Matriliney and Gender dichotomy among the Cross River Igbo, 1900-1991**, it is detailed that labeling the people as matrilineal was in error. The peoples of the Cross River Igbo practice both patriliney and matriliney alongside each other but with a greater tilt to the later. Therefore, they are actually and practically double unilineal.

Discerned also is that double uniliny imposed a greater participation on the matrilineal components, directly or indirectly, in the running of the day-to-day affairs of the communities. Moreover, the matrilineal distributive justice system vis-à-vis the patrilineal gives sustenance and resilience to the people because what is important is not seniority but ability to perform. Again, it is more economically rewarding since members of the communities of the Cross River Igbo benefitted from both distributive justice systems in a double uniliny.

With greater population and economic resources, the matrilineages could not be relegated to the background by the fewer and less endowed patrilineages in the running of the affairs of the communities. Moreover, within the double unilineal matrix: of patriculture and matriculture, it is almost impossible to point at any individual as eminently matrilineal and less patrilineal, and *vice versa*. The matrilineal puzzle and pervasiveness includes that the **Eze** although patrilineally selected is a matrikin somewhere. The double unilateral distributive justice system: where individuals benefit concurrently through access to lands and other material components has deepened the socio-economic and political lives of the peoples of the Cross River Igbo.

Regarding political dichotomy which is interwoven into all the other aspects of communal life, especially in an acephalous situation, it is equally difficult to insist that the few patrilineages of the southern Cross River Igbo communities exclusively control political power. Seemingly, the patrilineages control power since mandatorily they produce the paramount chiefs and are more noticeable during inter- and intra-communal affairs. Otherwise, it seems more ceremonial since allegiance is paid more to points that give sustenance. These points are the matrilineages that naturally are veritable corporative systems that, in turn, are avenues for capital formation and distribution from lineal economic pools. The matrilineages are so pervasive vis-à-vis the myth of matrilineity that even the patrilineally chosen **Eze** easily collapses back, after running the affairs of the communities politically, into his natal matrilineage.

Seemingly contrivances, the gendered political and religious dichotomies are underpinned by social control, religious and economic mechanisms. The application of the mechanisms in the processes of controlling the womenfolk protects them from injustices emanating from communal governance. At the invocation of the control mechanisms, it no longer matters if you are patrikins or matrikins. In fact, it is only at the death of a paramount chief and at the point of succession that the natural mandate of selecting the **Eze** from among the group of patrilineages in the Cross River Igbo area comes to the fore.

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