



Socrates Ebo

Federal University Otuoke (Nigeria)

A Critical Analysis of Gender Roles in Marriage in Igbo African Ontology

ABSTRACT. Marriage is one of the fundamental institutions that shape and regulate social life in the Igbo society. The Igbo concept of marriage is unique in Igbo ontology. Among Ndigbo, marriage is not just a conjugal union but an essential social requirement to be fulfilled before admission into the society's rank of respectable adulthood. It is a cross gender ritual. The Igbo marriage is basically between a man and a woman or many women, although there are interesting but rare exceptions. The respective genders have their culturally designated roles in Igbo ontology. There is a complementarity of roles with the male gender clearly dominating. But the female gender cannot really be said to be oppressed in traditional Igbo marriage as it also provides them with many privileges and stronger safeguards. Among Ndigbo, marriage is more of a social responsibility than an individual's conjugal fancy. This work x-rays the traditional Igbo marriage, analyzing and portraying it in philosophical perspectives as it relates to the genders.

KEYWORDS: gender roles, marriage, Igbo society, woman, man

Introduction

Marriage is a universal phenomenon (Crossman, 2019). It is essentially a social regulation of an ontologically biological activity. The will to reproduce is universal to all living nature. Among most animals, reproduction necessarily involves the mating of two members of the opposite sex. For most animals, mating is a function of the availability of an adult male when a female is in heat. For social animals, it involves much more. There are rituals and exclusivity. Man being the apex social animal has a very complicated ritual of mating which unlike most animals, is not necessarily induced by the female heat. Yet unlike other animals, the ownership and care of the young is not the exclusive preserve of female human. Among humans. The male is heavily involved in the ownership and care of the young. Among humans also, mating is not exclusively done for reproduction. It is often done for social and emotional reasons. Therefore, marriage

evolved among humans as a ritual to regulate mating and family making. It is founded on a strong custom of exclusivity.

Since humans copulate for interests other than reproduction (Benagiano, Carrara & Filippi, 2009). There are often clashes of interests in choice of mating partners. These clashes of interests often result in conflicts which sometimes lead to fatalities (Kaplan, 2007). The human society chose to regulate mating by establishing the institution of marriage which publicly sets aside copulating partners as officially exclusive. Marriage often forbids the public from having sexual relations with both or either of the marriage partners. The public nature of marriage abundantly advertises the exclusivity that marriage seeks to confer on a couple. This way, the society takes care of the chaos and conflicts that would have resulted in the struggle for mating partners. Beyond bequeathing exclusivity to couples, marriage also grants rights to couples against each other. The society equally takes care of the young through the institution of marriage as both partners in the marriage are often obligated to care for the offspring of the marriage.

This is a universal practice among humans. There is no culture or human society without the institution of marriage. Ndigbo as part of the human race also evolved their own marriage institution and their own marriage culture. The universality of the marriage institution notwithstanding, Ndigbo had their own conception of marriage and the place of marriage in their own worldview. It is part of their unique history as an unduplicated people maintaining their own existence on their own autochthonous portion of the earth planet. Their institution of marriage like several aspects of their culture is unique to them. But as part and parcel of humanity, the marriage institution among Ndigbo also shares some characteristics evident in marriage institutions as established by several cultures across the globe. But who are Ndigbo?

1. The People: “Ndigbo”

Ndigbo are a subgroup among the Black people that dwell the earth (Ebo, 2021). They are originally found in Africa though as a mercantile people Ndigbo can be found on most corners of the earth engaged in one enterprise or another. Ndigbo do not trace their origin beyond Africa. Since it is generally agreed that man originated in Africa (Tattersall, 2009), Ndigbo must have been among the early groups of humans to people the earth.

Oral traditions and carbon dating of artefacts found among Ndigbo bear credence to this. In Igbo myth of origin, Eri the fabled progenitor of Ndigbo is said to be descended from the heavens at Omambala River (Ebo, 2018a). This is a mythical way of saying that the history of his origin could not be traced beyond Omambala River. Ndigbo as a people have no history of migrating from elsewhere. Of course, there are abundant histories of some subgroups joining Ndigbo, especially at the borderline regions and becoming subsumed within the dominant Igbo culture (Ebo, 2018b). There are instances of such occurrences among the western Igbos where there are notable traces of the Edoid influence in the Igbo culture as evolved in the area. Among the southernmost Igbo who are bounded with the Efiks such cultural subsuming did also occur. The Abriba Igbo clearly have some cultural affinities with the Efiks (Kponkwem, 2015).

Some artefacts found among Ndigbo especially at Igbo-ukwu are among the oldest in the world judging from their carbon dating. Anthropologists generally consider Ndigbo to be an autochthonous people. They have always been known to exist on their portion of the earth. They have no history of migration as a people beyond their present land. Ndigbo occupy majorly the southeastern part of Nigeria. They are mostly in the five states of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo. They are also found as indigenous minorities in Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Rivers, Benue and Kogi states. Ndigbo belong in the Kwa language subgroup of the Niger-Congo languages group (Acholonu & Leguer, 2011). They are a radically egalitarian people. They have a fairly homogenous and significantly indigenously evolved culture; of course, until the advent of Christianity. Lately, some people have tried to allude to a possible Jewish origin of Ndigbo. But the claim is blatantly preposterous and lacks sound scholarly or historical basis (Lidman, 2017). If Christianity never came to Igboland, Ndigbo would never have known that such a people as the Jews ever existed. There are no records of interactions between Ndigbo and the Jews either mythologically or historically. The proponents of this Jewish affinity point to some cultural practices found among the Jews and Ndigbo. But this author is of the view that if there are some cultural diffusions between Ndigbo and the Jews, the diffusions would definitely have been from Ndigbo to the Jews. The reason is that as humans, Ndigbo definitely existed before the Jews. It is a scientifically agreed consensus that humans originated in Black Africa. Jewish civilization is an outcrop of the Egyptian civilization. Egyptian civilization is an outcrop of Ethiopian civilization (James, 1954). Jewish civilization couldn't have preceded

ed Igbo civilization. Any similar cultural practices found between Ndigbo and the Jews could not have possibly existed among the Jews before Ndigbo. Ndigbo, definitely are not related to the Jews. DNA testing bears this out. There is no gainsaying however, that there are strikingly similar cultural practices shared by the Jews and Ndigbo. Perhaps, further scholarship might debate this exhaustively in the future.

2. Igbo Conception of Marriage

The Igbo conception of marriage is tied to the Igbo concept of the being of the human person. For Ndigbo, marriage is much more than the emotional fancies of two adults. It is not regarded as an optional institution but a necessary rite of passage. It is an experience that the Igbo society as a matter of duty demands of every adult. Ndigbo consider marriage to be a rite that must be performed in order to attain the status of complete adulthood. Marriage in Igbo ontology is the fulfilment of the stage of maturity in the individual both as a human person and as a responsible citizen. A man is not considered to have matured in Igbo ontology until he has married. An unmarried ripe adult is more or less considered a failure.

Emotions played little roles in traditional Igbo marriages. The principal theme in traditional Igbo marriages was procreation. A man was supposed to leave a legacy and sustain his lineage by giving birth to male children who would carry on with the family lineage after his death. Failure to marry meant losing a rightful place in the comity of ancestors at death for even the ancestors would consider such a man a failure (Ebo, 2018a). Social considerations also ranked very high in Igbo marriages. The married adult attains instant respectability by the virtue of the marriage per se. There are also practical reasons such as companionship and social security. Among Ndigbo, a man's insurance against old age are his children. Children are expected to care for their parents at old age. Not getting married entails facing the risk of not getting the desired care at old age.

Unlike Western Europe where marriage is purely based on the expression of affection between a man and a woman, Ndigbo conceive marriage primarily as a social duty. The Igbo marriage is strongly communal. The extended family and the clan are prominently involved. Western marriage is more or less a matter for the couple and their individual families. The community has little or no say in the making of the marriage.

3. The Igbo Marriage Process

The conduct of the marriage ceremony among Ndigbo is not a day's event. Igbo marriage ceremony consists of a series of stages. Each stage has its own requirements and its own specific rituals. Some of the stages can be combined and performed in a day while some must be separately done. Traditional Igbo marriage starts with contact with the bride to seek her consent. The prospective groom might not necessarily be the person to make the contact. It could be done by him or a third party. It is always an informal arrangement. The important factor is that the prospective bride gives her consent, whether directly to the prospective groom or through a third party who acts at his behest. Most of the time this is done by the women. A man may ask his mother or an older sister to look for a suitable wife for him. The belief is that being a woman, she is in a better position to understand women. Therefore, she would necessarily choose who is best for her son or brother as the case may be. This informal interaction sets the stage for the commencement of the formal marriage processes.

3.1. Introduction Ceremony

The introduction ceremony is the very first ceremony in the Igbo marriage process. It involves the groom going to the home of the bride's parents to introduce themselves and declare their intention (Dike, 2021). The parents of the bride will inform a few members of their extended family who will witness the event. Usually the groom shall present some drinks and kola nuts. The bride shall be invited by her parents and relatives and asked if she knew the man. On answering yes, she would be informed of the mission of the man and asked if she consented. If she answers in the affirmative, the ceremony shall proceed. Immediately after the prospective bride has given her consent, the prospective groom shall be questioned by members of the bride's family to ascertain his family background and what he did for a living. The bride's family would eventually conduct a background check to determine his eligibility to receive the hand of their daughter in marriage. The marriage process terminates abruptly if the groom is considered unsuitably.

Among the things that are usually checked is the groom's family's reputation. Do they have a good reputation in their community? Are there thieves in their lineage? Are there leprosy or other socially reprehensible diseases in their lineage? The next thing to be checked is longevity. Are

there untimely deaths in their lineage? Is their lineage part of the forbidden caste, the *osu* caste (the *osu* caste system has been outlawed)? These are the inquiries generally made to ascertain the background of the groom. The groom's family of course will also make inquiries concerning the family of the bride as the background checks are traditionally mutual. They would want to know whether wives married from the bride's clan or community generally stay in the marriage. They would also inquire to know whether women married from the bride's clan have a history of waywardness. There are communities that generally discourage marrying from particular areas due to conflicting marriage culture. A community that places high premium of wife fidelity generally discourage marrying from communities where wife infidelity is treated with levity.

The philosophy behind these background checks is the cultural fact that courtship was unknown to traditional Igbo African society. Unlike the West where love played prominent role in choice of mate, love was seldom a decisive factor in the choice of marriage partner among Ndigbo. Character and family background were supreme. The brides were usually young adults dependent on their parents. They were generally considered not to be experienced enough to handle such a weighty matter as the choice of a life partner all by themselves. They necessarily depended on their parents whom naturally would want the best for them. No parent wants his daughter sent packing from her husband's home. So, the parents usually exercised caution in approving whom their daughter got married to. The influence of the bride's parent in choice of a marriage partner is always stronger than that of the groom's parent. The grooms in Igbo traditional marriage are generally older more mature than the brides. They are expected to know what is best for them.

After the background checks have been done, the groom and his people come back once again to the bride's parents to collect the list of items needed for the marriage proper.

3.2. The Three Traditional Weeks Wine Carrying Ceremony

The next stage in Igbo traditional marriage process after the introduction ceremony and the collection of the marriage list is the three traditional weeks wine carrying ceremony. The Igbo traditional week is made up of four days: Eke, Afor, Oye and Nkwo. Three Igbo traditional weeks would translate to twelve days in the Gregorian Calendar. At this stage, the larger extended family traditionally called the house is invited. The ceremony

takes place at the bride's parent's ancestral home. The ceremony cannot take place in another town even if the bride's parents have a home there. They must return to their ancestral or village home to perform the ceremony. The groom shall equally be accompanied by members of his own larger extended family—the house.

At this ceremony, the groom is required to presents certain quantities of drinks to the members of the bride's traditional house including: the men's group in the house, the women's group, the wives' group, the girls' group and the young men's group. On satisfactorily providing these items or their cash equivalents, he may pay the bride price if he so wishes. If he pays the bride price at this point, he is deemed to have legally married the bride.

The rationale in inviting the traditional houses of the intending couple's families is the Igbo belief that no one person parents a child alone. A child is parented by all the relatives. In traditional Igbo setting, a relative could discipline an erring child of another relative. Therefore, giving out a daughter's hand in marriage could not be the exclusive preserve of the bride's parents since the entire relatives are deemed to have participated in the upbringing of the bride. At the end of the ceremony, the bride's father prays for the success of the marriage. Afterwards, the groom's party proverbially asks the bride's parents to permit the bride to help the groom in bringing back the groom's emptied calabash of palm wine to his house. This is a proverbial way of asking the bride's parents to permit her to follow the groom to his house.

This is the actual courtship in Igbo ontology. The Igbo worldview does not criminalize but forbids premarital sex. A young man and a young woman are not expected to be in any amorous relationship unless they are husband and wife. At the end of the three traditional weeks wine carrying ceremony, the bride goes to stay at the groom's home for three traditional weeks which are twelve days. During this period, the bride is expected to put up her best behavior. So, is expected of the groom. At this period groom's relatives get the chance to observe the behavior of the bride at a close range to ascertain her character. They are also expected to be kind to the bride. The bride takes her time to observe the attitude of the groom's relative towards her to ascertain whether she can actually spend the rest of her life among them. At the end of the three traditional weeks visitation, the groom returns the bride to her parents' home with assorted gift items.

If the bride is dissatisfied with the groom or his relative's and wishes not to be married to them, she would state thus. That marks the end of

the marriage process. Neither the bride nor her parents would owe the groom any liability. He would not be entitled to any compensation. Likewise, the groom or his people could be dissatisfied at the character exhibited by the bride during the three traditional weeks visit. They could also choose to terminate marriage ceremony by simply discontinuing communications with the bride's family. In turn, they would neither owe the bride nor her parents any liabilities. He would not be required to pay them any compensations.

But if the bride price was paid during the three traditional weeks wine carrying period, it is a different ball game. The bride's parent would have to refund the bride price to the groom if the bride discontinues with the marriage process. On the other hand, the groom would not be entitled to any recompense if he discontinues with the marriage process after the three traditional weeks visit. If he had paid the bride price, he would have to wait until another man marries the bride before he is repaid the bride price. Until another man marries the bride, she is traditionally considered to be the groom's wife, his discontinuation of the marriage process notwithstanding. The bride's parents could repay the bride price even if another man does not marry their daughter if they don't want anything to do with the groom anymore. It is pertinent to note that the bride price is a tiny fraction of the marriage expense. More so, what is returned is the bride price paid to the bride's dad. The one paid to her mum is never returned. This is a testament of Igbo society's distaste for divorce, and an elegant edifice of marriage security of marriage for women in the Igbo society.

3.3. The Final Wine Carrying Ceremony

The final wine carrying is the ceremony at which the entire community is invited to witness the marriage. It is the most expensive ceremony in the Igbo traditional marriage process. The drinks required for the ceremony are always far higher than the quantity demanded at the previous ceremonies. The thinking is that anyone from the community can freely come to the event for a drink. Apart from the drinks, other items are also required most times in larger quantities than were previously demanded at other stages in the marriage process. These items are usually for the four groups in the kindred. When these items have been satisfactorily provided, the bride price may be paid if it had not been paid at the previous ceremony. The climax of the final wine carrying ceremony is when the bride receives

a cup of palm wine from her father, searches the crowd for the groom and hands it over to him on her knees (Bamidele, 2020). It is important to note that the final wine carrying is not a compulsory ceremony in Igbo marriage ontology although it is demanded. The decisive ceremony that designates marriage in Igbo ontology is the payment of bride price. Even if a marriage process progressed to the final wine carrying but crashed without the payment of the bride price, a marriage is not adjudged to have taken place.

3.4. The Symbolism of the Final Wine Carrying Ceremony

The final wine carrying ceremony is essentially the presentation of the bride and groom as a couple to the public. Ideally, the bride price would have been paid before the ceremony. So, the couple are often already legally husband and wife before the final wine carrying ceremony. Therefore, the ceremony is essentially held to demonstrate strength. It is an avenue for the groom to demonstrate that he can more than take good care of the bride. It is also a measure of the social standing of the groom. He is expected to invite his entire kindred, his friends and his well-wishers. The bride's kindred would be present and would be keen in assessing the social strength of the groom. The final wine carrying ceremony is also a ritual to enact affinity between the relatives the groom and the bride. The marriage relation in Igbo ontology surpasses the nuclear and the extended family and flows into the kindreds of both parties. Ndigbo do not see marriage as a contractual relationship existing solely between a man and a woman; the kindreds of the bride and the groom are involved.

Some have argued that the final wine carrying ceremony is a ritual that crept into Igbo marriage ontology at a much later era. It is argued that the marriage process in Igbo ontology originally culminated in the payment of the bride price. The payment of the bride price, among Ndigbo, is actually what makes a couple man and wife. The final wine carrying ceremony is seen in some quarters as a superfluous ceremony that neither adds to nor detracts from the legality of marriage in Igbo ontology. The superfluity of the ceremony varies from clan to clan. Among some clans, it is so exorbitant that it is often seen as a factor militating against marriage in such areas. More often than not these clans demand that the bride price be paid at the final wine carrying ceremony as a way of compelling the groom to perform a marriage ritual that should ordinarily be a matter of choice. Such clans always bypass the three traditional weeks wine carrying ceremony, insisting that items required for the ceremo-

ny be presented at the final wine carrying ceremony. This practice decimates the essence of the three traditional wine carrying ceremony which is the traditional courtship. It eliminates the opportunity for the bride to understudy the groom and his family to ascertain whether she could fit into the family or not. The groom's family equally doesn't get the opportunity to understudy the bride.

In recent times, the final wine carrying ceremony is more or less turning into a commercialization of the marriage process. The items required are in some cases so outrageous. So many superfluous additions have made their way into the ceremony notably, *aso ebi* which was borrowed from Yoruba culture and the cutting of cake at the final wine carrying ceremony which is Western inculturation.

4. Types of Marriage in Igbo Ontology

Among Ndigbo, marriage could be contracted in basically four ways.

- a. **Monogamy:** There is the monogamous marriage which is generally common. This is the marriage between a man and a woman. In the Igbo monogamous marriage, vows are not exchanged but the woman is required to stay exclusively for the man while the man may add another wife if he can afford to. Ndigbo do not conceive monogamy as a permanent state of marriage. No Igbo man is traditionally required to enter into monogamy as an exclusive and permanent state of marriage. It is always a modifiable state of marriage.
- b. **Polygamy:** The Igbo society traditionally welcomed polygamy among the wealthy. The key requirement was the ability of the man to provide for the wives and their kids. It was a traditionally expensive enterprise. Hence, only the wealthy could afford it. A wealthy man could take as many wives as he could maintain. There was literally no limit to the number of wives he could take so long as he has the capacity to maintain them. Each of the wives is expected to be conjugally faithful to the man. The man in turn must discharge his marital responsibilities to each of them fairly. The most senior wife always had a supervisory role over the rest of her co-wives. The marriage ceremonies for a woman being married into a polygamous home are same as those of a monogamous marriage. It is pertinent to note that the wives in Igbo polygamous marriage do not have any marriage contract with one another but individually with

the man. In other words, a wife in an Igbo polygamous marriage does not owe any marital obligation to a co-wife.

- c. **Wife Inheritance:** Among Ndigbo, young wife of a deceased husband could be inherited by the oldest son of the man. Of course, the son must not be begotten of the woman. This applies in a polygamous marriage where the deceased man had wives either younger or in the same age bracket as his first son. The first son takes over the responsibility of being a husband to them. The woman has a choice however. She could refuse if she is not interested. The purpose of the inheritance is to fill the gap created by the demise of the husband. The children begotten in this marriage belongs not to the deceased man but to his son who has inherited the wife. He son who inherits his father's wives does not have to pay another bride price on them or perform any ceremony to mark the inheritance. They are regarded as part of the responsibilities the first son inherits as a result of the demise of his father.

Where the first son of a deceased polygamous man is too young to take up the responsibilities of marriage, the deceased man's brother could inherit the said young wife. But he must perform a certain ceremony over her to mark the transfer of lineage. If he fails to perform the ceremony, he could have conjugal rights to his late brother's young wife but would not lay claim to the ownership of the children that are begotten in that relationship. Such children would be regarded as the bona fide children of his deceased brother. The essence of the ceremony is to transfer the marriage to his own lineage so that he can lay claim to the children he begets with the inherited wife. A brother could also inherit the young wife of his deceased monogamous brother. Same rules apply.

Apparently, the practice of wife inheritance is not peculiar to Ndigbo alone. The Jews also had the same practice. King Solomon inherited his father's youngest wife at the demise of his father, King David (1 Kings 2: 12-46). Onan, Juda's son inherited conjugal rights to his late brother's wife. But unlike among Ndigbo where the lineage could be transferred if the inheriting brother performed the required ceremony, that was not the case among the Jews. Onan was so peeved at the idea of reproducing children for his late brother rather than for himself that he had to resort to coitus interruptus (Genesis 38: 8-9). Among Ndigbo as the case among the Jews, a father cannot inherit his son's wife (Genesis 38: 1-11).

Ndigbo sought to curb widowhood through the practice of wife inheritance. A young man who lost his wife could easily remarry. He was only required to mourn his wife. After the mourning period, he could marry another woman. That was fairly easy. But it was not so easy for the woman. First, women generally spent longer time mourning their deceased spouses. Secondly, they would have begotten children in the marriage. Leaving the children to start a new home elsewhere was emotionally and practically difficult. Igbo culture does not permit a woman to transfer the children begotten in a previous marriage to another marriage. If a woman chooses to remarry, she is not expected to move with the children. Besides, getting a man to marry her with the added responsibility of the children was generally difficult. Men generally preferred younger and single women. Igbo culture sought to mitigate the existential consequences of widowhood by the practice of wife inheritance.

- d. **Female Husband:** The Igbo female husband marriage is not same as the Western same sex marriage. This is a situation where a wealthy widow without a child marries a woman in the name of the late husband. It is also the case where a wealthy unmarried woman without a child marries a woman in the name of her late father. In either case, the female husband has no sexual relationship whatsoever with the wife. The union exists essentially for the reproduction of children. The wives get impregnated by biological men though.

To understand the female husband marriage, it is pertinent to note that among Ndigbo, only marriage makes a father. Impregnating a woman does not make a father among Ndigbo. By same logic, a female husband contracts marriage with another woman and gets a man to impregnate her wife. By the logic of the Igbo culture, the children become hers.

The practice was not rampant because it was tedious. The traditional Igbo agrarian economy was dominated by men. Few women acquired significant wealth as women traditionally did not inherit land among Ndigbo. Igbo marriage has always been traditionally expensive. To be a female husband was no mean feat, especially for the unmarried woman. She would have her own house or compound. She would also have to provide for the ensuing family.

The practice of female husband marriage also throws light into how Ndigbo socially viewed gender. Biology per se did not make a man socially speaking. Biology certainly did not make a father

among Ndigbo. The female husband marriage demonstrates that decisively. It is also a testament of the fact that among Ndigbo, women did not play the dominant roles socially on the basis of biology per se but on the basis of sheer ability. As demonstrated by the female husband, a woman with the requisite ability could socially become a man.

5. Divorce in Igbo Marriage Ontology

Although the Igbo marriage culture spiritedly guards against divorce, it nevertheless does occur. Just as it is not possible for a man to contract marriage without his kinsmen, it is not possible for a man to divorce his wife without involving his kinsmen. No court of arbitration is required for a man or woman to divorce their spouse. The decisive factor is the return of the bride price. If a man sends his wife packing, the marriage does not end. It subsists until another man marries the woman and refunds the bride price paid by the previous husband. If the bride price is not refunded, any child begotten by the woman belongs to the previous husband. The fact that the marriage does not terminate until the bride price is returned gives the woman maximum security in the marriage. It is pertinent to note that the bride price is generally a token. It is insignificant compared to the entire cost of the marriage. Leaving it at the liberty of the wife's family to choose when to return makes the wife the ultimate decider of a divorce. If the wife is no longer interested in the marriage, she can always get her family to refund the bride price whether she is remarrying or not.

In the final analysis, it is the woman that ultimately divorces the man. The man only has the power to initiate separation. No matter how passionately a man demands the refund of the bride price he paid on his wife, it is up to the woman's family to decide whether to refund him or not as long as no other man has come to seek the hand of the woman in marriage. The woman's security in Igbo marriage is unrivalled. A man or a woman can initiate separation but only the woman can divorce! Ndigbo socially did not fashion the woman to become a permanent member of her father's family. Traditionally, women did not inherit land from their parents. They were expected to partake in their husbands' inheritance. Therefore, a divorce would put a woman in a very disadvantageous position. This explains the Igbo stringent measures against divorcing a woman. First, marriage is made a process and not an event. The process is made so long that

it affords the intending couple ample time to notice possible red flags. The marriage process is made so expensive that men generally cannot easily afford it let alone frequently repeating it. The Igbo marriage usually takes many years of savings to afford. It involves the kinsmen of both parties. For a separation to be officially recognized, the man must be accompanied by his kinsmen to the woman's parents' home to announce it, of course with a keg of palm wine.

Conclusion

In these days of wars of values, in today's world where Western values have waged unrelenting wars on the African psyche, it has become imperative for African thinkers to showcase African values. Today, most Africans uncritically regard their culture as mistaken and inferior to Western culture. But the reality is that African culture is rich. Some aspects of the African culture are far higher advanced than the Western counterpart. Besides, it is very much okay to be culturally different. It is very much okay to be an African.

This work dug into marriage practices among Ndigbo. It is neither a sociological description of marriage among Ndigbo nor an anthropological narration of Igbo marriage practices but a philosophical analysis of marriage in the Igbo conception of being in the world. It is a critique. The work has not only said what Ndigbo did in their marriage practices, it said how they did it, why they did it and what it meant to them. It is a loud canon, fired into contemporary Igbo African consciousness in the ongoing war of values in our world which has become a global village. If we cannot globalize our marriage values, we can at least affirm their authenticity. That, this work has done.

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