SELF IDENTITY AND CHIEFTAINCY TITLES AMONG THE IGBO OF SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

'Self' and 'identity' are two concepts that have been of great interest to scholars in various fields. In the discipline of Philosophy, the simultaneous status of 'self' as subject and object of awareness is one of the enduring problems[1]. Citing Gallagher (2000), Kihlstrom *et al* noted that the 'self' is a problematic metaphysical problem for philosophers, raising such question as mind-body problem. Philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke and Hume have all interrogated the concept of 'self'; leading to the issue of the constituents of the 'self'. For Aristotle, the 'self' is activity. Socrates and Plato, on the other hand, view the soul as the essence of the 'self'. In cognitive psychology, the 'self' is a mental representation of the individual, including all that one knows about oneself[2]. Invariably, self concept is identified by a set of features that distinguish oneself from and identifies one as unique and different from every other person[3].

In the field of anthropology, the discourse on the 'self' features, in the discourse of socialization, and culture and personality. Culture and personality, also known as psychological anthropology, represents the transgression of anthropology into the field of psychology. As a borderless discipline, anthropology, by its nature, delves into other disciplines in its quest to understand humans and their world. In anthropology, enculturation is seen as fundamental in the development of self and group awareness. Indeed, self awareness has been defined as the ability to identify oneself as an object, to react to oneself, and to appraise or evaluate oneself[4]. Anthropologists have argued that the development of self-awareness varies from culture to culture. For Haviland for

instance, self-awareness begins to develop, partly, through the stimulation that the child received in infancy, the frequency of such stimulations and early childhood training or experiences[5]. All these are culture-centric. As an individual continues to interact with his environment, identity formation begins to emerge.

'Identity' is a social construct. Castels has argued that identity is "a people's source of meaning and experience"[6]. From an individualized perspective, identity has been portrayed as an individual's survival kit, an ideological envelop[7]. Academic concern with identity has increasingly become relevant over the last decades [8]. As Rowlands rightly noted, the new attention given to the concept cannot be detached from the development of such concepts as cultural heritage, and ideas about national character in intellectual discourses. Following Margaret Mead's anthropological research works among the Samoa, and subsequent impact of culture and personality schools, from 1940s onwards when the issues Mead raised took prominent position in social thought and discourse in America, identity has increasingly become a major discursive element in the social sciences and the humanities. Indeed, the development of a concern with identity has been consistent with the recognition of the problem of the individuation in culturally heterogeneous society. Invariably, modernization has had its contributions to the problematization of identity. As people become enmeshed in culture contact either within their nation or across national boundaries, and the subsequent impact of social change, there is the tendency towards the longing for those values that seem not to be accommodated in the new set up. This nostalgic desire gives rise to the search for individual and or group identity. It is against this background that Tomlinson argued that identity, rather than being a victim of globalization, is actually a product of it, leading, in fact, to the proliferation of identity [9].

Again, in a homogeneous culture, issues like self-definition, individual aspiration and self realization can also give rise to the need for establishing personal identity. In the words of Rowlands:

> Whether it is the effect of an experience of emigration and immigration in the twentieth century or fears of the threat of cultural homogenization or the doubts cast on the unity of the self due to fears of anomie, alienation and loneliness, identity has become the keyword to describe a sense of loss.[10]

The individual's attempt at coming to terms with the self and the search for self realization, respect, power and privilege avails oneself of the opportunity offered by social mobility. In the process, such an individual engages in a process of identity codification. In this paper, using social constructionist approach which posits that identity is formed predominantly through the choices which an individual makes, taking the political implications of such choices in socio-cultural context into consideration, attempt is made to explore the nature of self identity honorary chieftaincy title holders construct through the title names they acquire following honorary chieftaincy conferment, among the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. The paper also investigates the dynamics of these names (and appellations) within a socio-cultural context. It notes the inherent interplay of symbolisms embedded in these names, the social meanings constructed through the names, and the dynamisms which this socio-cultural practice evoke, and re-enforce, and relate them to the socio-cultural consciousness of the Igbo people in the contemporary times. Invariably, situating these names and appellations within a cultural context, we view them, not only as forms of identity creation, which includes the enhancement of self-esteem and self worth for the conferred, but also as forms which relate the conferred with the realities of their socio-cultural and economic environments.

Thus, self-definition translates into influence in the public space. The paper, subsequently, establishes that chieftaincy titles, names and appellations are instruments through which the conferred distinguishes the self in a stratified society, and through this process reflects the social values and goals inherent in the people's socio-economic world. Through wealth distribution and 'exchange mechanisms' associated with the new position, the conferred further navigates his way in the social space. The 'exchange mechanisms' associated with title holding again, not only reflects a people's attempt at coming to terms with the problems of scarcity of resources in the face of contending demands and challenges, but also constitutes a proactive way of resolving the dilemma that characterizes inherent social inequality in a socio-cultural and economic space. This also, paradoxically, re-enforces social stratification which it attempts to bridge. We have adopted a case study design by selecting twelve honorary chieftaincy title names. The methodology of this paper is qualitative, while research

findings were analyzed using conceptual analysis, descriptive and interpretive techniques.

Study Area: The Igbo People

The Igbo people are located in southeastern Nigeria and found, mainly, in Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, and parts of Bayelsa, Delta and River states of Nigeria. The Igboland shares boundary on the north with the Igala, Idoma and Ogoja peoples, on the east with the Ibibio, on the south with the Ijaw of the delta region, and on the west with the Edo-speaking peoples of Edo State of Nigeria. Igbo group is one of the three major ethnic groups in the country. The River Niger divided the Igboland into two unequal parts: The Eastern Igbo, which is the larger part, on the eastern bank of the River Niger and western Igbo, the smaller portion, on the western bank of the Niger. The two sections, nevertheless, share many cultural affinities. Today, the word 'Igbo' is used in three senses, as Uchendu has rightly noted, namely, the Igbo territory, the native speakers of the language, and finally a language group.[11] The Igbo language belongs to the '*kwa*' language group of the Niger-Congo language family.[12]

Igboland is not a homogeneous entity but characterized by different sub-cultures with significant differences among them. While Forde and Jones distinguished five cultural sub-groups of the Igbo culture area, Onwuejegwu identified six.[13] For instance, Forde and Jones (1950) division is as follows:

(1)   Northern or Onitsha Igbo which includes towns like Awka, Udi, Enugu, Enugu Ukwu, Nsukka, Aro Ndizeogu, Onitsha, Agukwu Nri, Igboukwu, Nanka, and Ihiala.

(2)   Southern or Owerri Igbo, which includes towns like Aba, Umuahia, Owerri, Ahoada, Okigwe, and Orlu;

(3)   Western Igbo, which is the part of Igboland in Delta State and includes towns like Asaba, Agbor, Kwalle, Ilah, and Aboh;

(4)   Eastern or Cross River Igbo, which includes towns like Abam, Ohafia, Afikpo, Arochukwu, and Abriba.

(5)   North-Eastern Igbo, which includes towns like Ezza, Uburu, Okposi, and

Abakkaliki.

The differences noticeable among the Igbo are as a result of various influences ranging from historical contacts with their neighbors to migration. The Cross River Igbo (Eastern Igbo), for instance, are assumed to have adopted their specialized age set system and double descent system from their Ibibio neighbors.
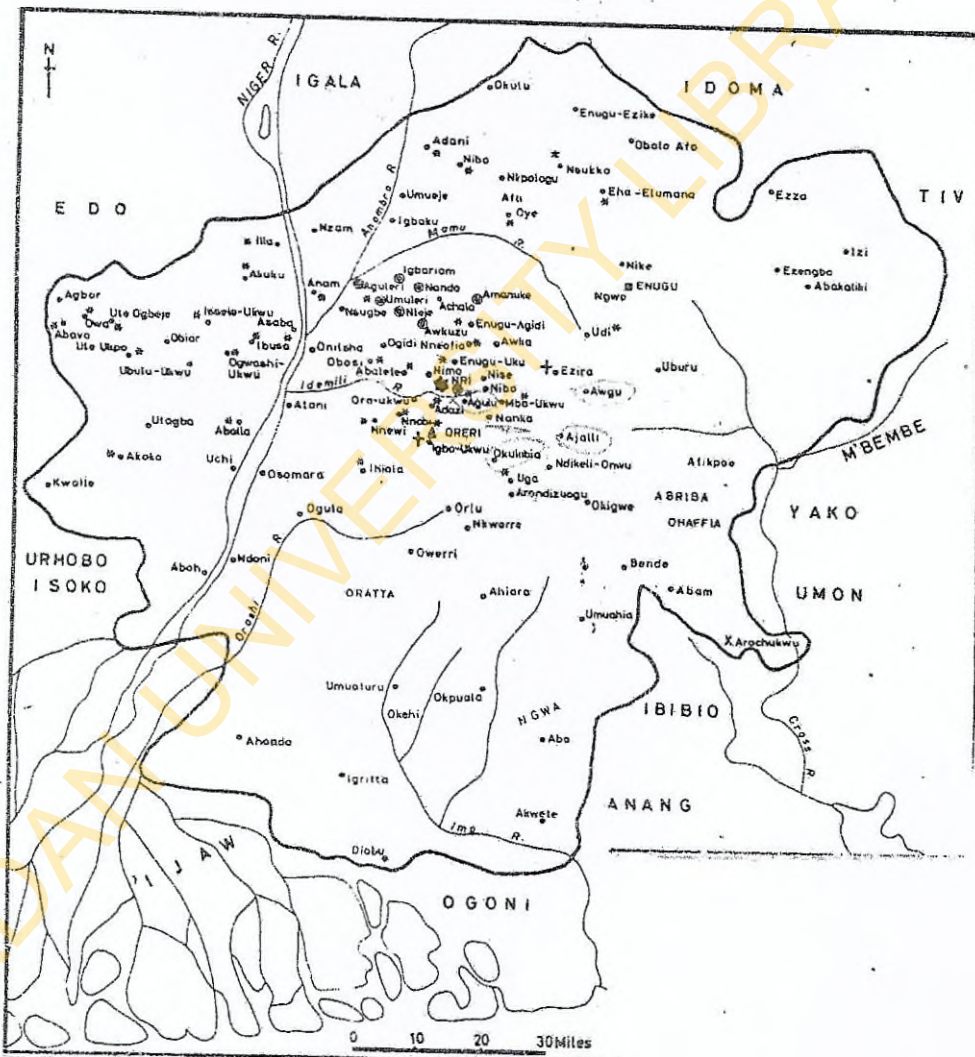

Fig. 1. Map of Igbo culture area (adapted from Onwuejegwu, 1981).

The western Igbo is assumed to have adopted the chiefdom system of governance from their Benin neighbor. To draw attention to the great fact of differences is not, however, to deny that there are overwhelming similarities uniting all the sub-groups. Such similarities are in the institutions and language. Onwuejegwu, for instance, notes that the basic cultural uniformity shared by the Igbo includes one Igbo language, kolanut and white chalk customs, the vigor in Igbo music and dance movements, highly developed arts of wall decoration and delicate body paintings, pottery designs, and 'mmuo' (masquerade) institution. Socio-political institutions like the age grade system, and 'umunna' (patrilineage) groupings, are also common to all Igbo culture areas. Again, the honorary chieftaincy conferment which this work examines is also a common practice among the Igbo people (see Fig. 1 for the map of Igbo culture area).

The Igbo and Honorary Chieftaincy Conferment

Chieftaincy conferment is a common practice among the people of sub-Saharan Africa, the Igbo inclusive. However, different society confers chieftaincy positions on selected members of their community for specific reasons, and the nature and forms of these titles could differ among cultures. Such chiefdoms are associated with specific geo-political space. The nature of the chieftaincy being explored here is such that those so conferred have neither political enclave nor authority to enforce laws on any group of people. Whatever degrees of respect, prestige and power or status accruing to them is such that they, in the first instance, worked for it, and secondly, must work to sustain their individual relevance and continued acceptance or else go into the oblivion.

Honorary chieftaincy conferment in Igboland predates colonial contact. From time immemorial, deserving members of the community have always been acknowledged and rewarded. This enhances the social mobility of such individuals within this stratified society. Social stratification, according to Peil, has both moral (cultural) and structural base.[14] The structural aspect entails the manner of identifying people with roles and the societal structure, which results. The moral or cultural aspect of stratification has to do with the fact that every society has an idea of the model, that people aspire to be like, and against this model they measure themselves. Davis and

Moore give functional reasons for the existence of stratification in any society. According to these scholars, stratification is universal and necessary because of the requirement faced by any society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure.[15] As a functioning mechanism, they further noted, a society must somehow distribute its members in social positions. It must, thus:

> Concern itself with motivation at two different levels: to instill in individuals the desire to fill certain positions, and, once in these positions, the desire to perform the duties attached to them. [16]

In many traditional African societies, systems of stratification ranged down from aristocracy through several strata of commoners, freemen, serfs, to slaves, with each group in the hierarchy enjoying different life chances from other groups. Today, however, most systems of stratification are based on one of the following four principal forms: caste ranking, social class, ethnic identity, or sex.[17] For Douglas, stratification has three major forms which are class, status, and power. According to him, class refers to economic inequality; status to inequality in prestige; and power to inequality in political rights and influence.[18]

Invariably, social stratification provides the basis for group formation with the resultant inequality. For the individual, membership in a particular social stratum determines the opportunity he or she has in sharing in the wealth, privilege, and power available in the society. For the individual in a lower cadre of the social strata, there is always the aspiration for social mobility. With the collection of people into groups, Ortner and Whitehead noted that organizational seeds develop, and this makes possible a number of social functions, which can bestow rights over the social life of individuals.[19] Chieftaincy conferment is a medium through which individuals could enhance their social status and occupy an enviable position in their society. In pre-colonial times in Igboland, those so conferred could be as a result of their prowess in inter-communal wars, inter-village wrestling or successes in farming, hunting or as a result of their personalities and values, such as peace-loving or honesty, and these are reflected in the title names they bear. For instance, one who is a successful farmer could take up such names as *Ezeji* (King of yam) or *Diji* (Husband of yams) as title name. Those reflecting

non-material elements include *Ezi okwu bu ndu* (Truth is life), *Udoka* (peace is greater), *Ndu ka aku* (life is greater than wealth), *Aghara ndu kpaa aku, onye ilo erie* (If one pursues wealth at the detriment of one's health, the enemy will enjoy such wealth), *Uzodinma, agaa ya abua* (when a route is good, one will pass it twice) and so on. Honorary chieftaincy conferment is a community's show of appreciation to those so honoured for their contributions in community development, and functions as encouragement for further assistance and participation. It is, therefore, a form of motivation for effective community participation and engineering. In this wise, such conferment becomes symbolic social activity, where dramatic performances are geared towards social cohesion and solidarity.

In recent times in Igbo land, there seem to be a paradigm shift in the nature of title names which the title holders assume following the confinement of honorary chieftaincy titles. This shift has tended towards materialism, a move away from predominant metaphysical tendencies that carries moral truth, which was dominant in the earlier periods, and this is a reflection of cash economy of contemporary times, which has equally affected rural economy and life style. More so, as the monetization of politics from the national, state, to the local government levels has become a characteristic feature of modern Nigerian society, this has reverberating and snowballing effects on the local communities. The implication is that the Igbo society seems to be more cash and materialistically inclined in contemporary times than before, and this is reflected in title names. Hence, such title names as *Ezi okwu bu ndu* (Truth is life), *Udoka* (peace is greater), *Ndu ka aku* (life is greater than wealth), *Aghara ndu kpaa aku, onye iro erie* (If one pursues wealth at the detriment of one's health, the enemy will enjoy such wealth), *Uzodinma, agaa ya abua* (when a route is good, one passes it twice), seem no longer fashionable, and hence no longer popular. In the section below, we present an exploration of the social dynamics and issues that are thrust up in title names in contemporary Igbo society.

The Self as a Symbol in a Socio-cultural Context

Scholars like Achebe, Ebeogu, Madu and Fasiku, have observed that names have underlying cultural significance in specific African societies. According to Ebeogu,

within the Igbo cultural context, names are not abstractions but hinge on the socio-cultural consciousness of the people.[20] In the same vein, Madu posited that Igbo names are not mere appellations but have very deep expressions of attitudes, sentiments, aspirations, sorrows, historical facts, and the underlying philosophy of the Igbo people.[21] He further noted that a social scientist can study the social, religious, historical and political issues in the Igbo society through Igbo names, which must be understood within the context of Igbo worldview and the symbolic functioning of such names.[22] In *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Chinua Achebe had earlier on extended this significance to the names a man gives to his children, and advised: "If you want to know how life has treated an Igbo man, a good place to go is the name his children bear".[23] Among the Yoruba people, Fasiku noted the place of name in the consciousness of a Yoruba person. According to the author:

> A child's name acts as a catalyst which propels the bearer to work, while at the same time it is also the brake that cautions her and regulates her behavior. It is within the purview of this name that the bearer of the name defines or is expected to define her worldview and philosophy of life.[24]

This consciousness, he also observed, is socially-created.

T the Igbo people, a chieftaincy title name not only reflects the social status of the conferred, connotes a performance, a role, but also conveys self connectedness to the socio-cultural milieu of the bearer of such name. Indeed, the name which the titleholder bears is symbolic. This symbolism conjures and imbues on the bearer an identity that singles him out for recognition, acceptance, and acknowledgement. As identity maker, it facilitates social mobility, which further enhances one's privileged position. Such positions once attained, need to be retained, maintained and serviced through dedicated community participation, which includes being available in almost all community programmes such as developmental activities in the community and fulfilling all financial obligations in the community, and in fact initiate fund generation when the need arises. The implication is that there is always expectation of performance from one who has been so conferred if one must remain afloat on the sea of social relevance. For this reason, the individual sees the self as an active stakeholder in the affairs of his community, and portrays himself as a model. As one who symbolizes a model for, and

reflection of a model of 'the real man', and a symbol of community consciousness, he must be seeing as defending the social cum systemic ideals; the ideals which anchor and establish connectedness between the self and the community. Invariably, the name the conferred bears projects role expectations, aspirations and the consciousness of the people.

Indeed, such consciousness is concretized in the Durkheimian conscience collective and group allegiance. The self, within the context of communal conceptualization of ideal man, recognizes that the attainable options are available and valuable within the community. For as Ikuenobe has noted, "one cannot have or try to realize a life plan, goal, or aspiration that is not offered, valuable, or conceivable as an option in a community".[25] The emphasis here is on the primacy of social responsibility as a precondition for an individual's relevance in a socio-cultural space, in an environment where relationship is such that can be referred in the Durkheimian model as mechanistic solidarity.[26] In mechanistic solidarity, Moore noted, "the individual tends to have values or views which are shared with all members of society".[27] In such societies so characterized, "the conscience collective has a greater intellectual and emotional hold over the individual".[28] The fact is that socio-cultural meanings are shared by members of the group and as shared values integrate the individuals into a community, such bonds sustain mutual exchange of meanings. Indeed, communitarianism, which aptly captures the nature of traditional Igbo society, is such that:

> Instead of such values as individual interests, autonomy, universality, natural right and neutrality, communitarian philosophy is framed in terms of the common good, social practices and traditions, character, solidarity and social responsibility.[29]

In essence, the individual's interest is in agreement with the group interests, which is concretized in the value system. To this extent, there is a symbiotic relationship between the self and the group; a situation where one nourishes and gives life to the other. Invariably, the right to participate in the social life of the community places on one the need to integrate oneself to the group-mind. This includes imbibing those non-material or metaphysical aspects of the societal ideals inherent in the value system.

These values, Oyesile rightly noted include sharing resources, burden and solidarity, reciprocal obligation, social harmony and mutual trust.[30] As Daly again observed:

> Each person seeks personal fulfillment through participation in the evolving social structures of the community, finds personal liberty in the expanded self-development cultivated through these activities, and honours a traditional complex of agreed-on commitments.[31]

A titleholder in Igbo socio-cultural space is expected to, and must identify himself with a name, which could be a word or phrase, that acts as an appellation or a rider to his original name. With this name, he distinguishes himself, and navigates the social and political climates of his environment. The social life as a patterned exchange between individuals and groups re-enforces the exchange of social goods. In this social intercourse, the title holder is aware that, as Peil submitted, as one person does another a favor, [he/she] is rewarded with a smile, another favor, prestige and so on.[32] The title holder clings on to this and exploits it to the fullest to climb the social ladder. Durkheim's student, Mauss, has, in fact, established in his work, *The Gift,* that the exchange of gifts can be used to enlarge one's prestige in the society.[33] Through this title name, the individual lives out his personal values, philosophy, and what he perceives to be important truth about life, consciously re-enforces these principles, responding to the societal expectations and needs. This name represents the individual's driving force in life, conviction, and influences his actions and reactions. Below, we outline twelve of such title names and subsequently examine them.

i)   *Ochendo I* (One who shelters)

ii)   *Onwa* (The moon)

iii)   *Ochiri Ozuo I* (One that gathers and trains).

iv)   *Agu na eche Obodo* (The lion that guards the community).

v)   *Ide Gburugburu* (Massive Ocean; connoting one with much wealth)

vi)   *Ochi na Nwata* (One that rules at a tender age; connoting one that has acquired much wealth at a tender age).

vii)   *Omego* (He that Spends or Lavishes Money)

viii)   *Oji Ego* (Iroko of Money)

ix)   *Eze Ego* (King of Money)

x)   *Odiuko na Mba* (Rare in any community).

xi)   *Omenyiri* (The Unbeatable)

xii)   *Nwannne di na mba* (One's siblings are in foreign land).

Chief Chikelu Osondu, the *Ochendo I* of Nanka. The personality in this instance reflects one whose name is 'Chekelu Osondu', and hails from a town known as 'Nanka'. On the conferment of chieftaincy title he subsequently attaches '*Chief*' as a prefix to his name. There is another appellation, a suffix, attached after the individual's name which is the appellation '*Ochendo I*'. This is the title name. '*Ochendo*' means 'one/he who shelters'. This, metaphorically, means from danger, from hunger, and in fact, (if possible) from perils of life. This is the self perceived as a 'demi-god' or 'tin god'. "He that shelters", protects everyone under his care from anything that endangers his or her life. Such an individual could protect from hunger by supplying foodstuffs and other material necessities of life to the widows and indigents in his neighborhood and partrilineage. He could offer scholarship to deserving individuals of his community for further studies. The number 'I' represents the unprecedentedness of such a name in his community, and, of course, in his family and patrilineage. It implies 'none else'. The performer is unique, set apart from the rest for respect and honor. He does not expect an incursion as title names are mutually exclusive in any community. In a situation where another person takes another's title name (which is rare in a community), he must proceed from the second position (that is the 2nd). And who wants to play a second fiddle? In other words, such a newcomer can assume the number 'II', 'III' or any other position. In situations where this obtains, it is most likely that such a person must be the first bearer's son, who probably is proud of the father's achievements in life and wants to identify with such, either, to indicate that he is a descendant of the successful, and should be recognized so; an indication that he has an enviable pedigree, and thus wishes to keep the memory of the late father alive. Nonetheless, the performer must always be seeing to be what he has claimed to be, to sustain the father's achievement. He, therefore, constantly, engages in self evaluation and must have the financial wherewithal to sustain the name.

A similar title name in this category is '*Onwa*', (The moon). This title name is common with people who have contributed immensely to the development of their community through infrastructural development, such as electricity, pipe born water, industries etc. '*Onwa*' meaning 'the moon' symbolizes light, modernity, and generosity. The full name is '*Onwa na etiri ora',* that is, 'the moon that shines for all'. The bearer is an embodiment of hospitality, openness and community consciousness.

Another popular title name is '***Agu na Eche Obodo***'. In Igbo language '*agu*' means 'the lion'; and '*na eche Obodo*' means 'that guards the community'. Such title bearer is not only reflecting his idiosyncrasies as an individual but also his physical stature and strength. For the individual to assume the name '*agu*' he must be strong physically and not miniature in stature. He must, therefore, possess an imposing stature and paradoxically, peace-loving, and be seen to be, seemingly, protecting his community from anything that could cause societal disintegration. Such an individual is often a peace broker in the patrilineage and the community at large and often consulted when certain decisions need to be taken. His contributions cannot be neglected when matters of general interest need to be considered in his community. On his part, he must not be seen to constitute hindrance to peace processes nor generate conflict. Both within and outside the community, the bearer must reflect and represent what he claims to be. His community members are silent watchdogs of his activities both within and outside the town.

The symbol of the lion conjured implies also that he is imbued with the material or financial strengths to negotiate the course of the community both within and outside. His significance in the community is constantly echoed by those in the social networks he consciously establishes. Hence, his appearance in the public gathering, stirs up a presence, which is recognized and appreciated. Consequently, he is ready to sacrifice personal gains to secure that which of public good, the good of his community. Interestingly, this title name reflects the construction of maleness, male values, and predominantly reflects male ideology of power: who controls, who dominates. The image of the lion conjured excludes the question of submissiveness and weakness, which are female gender stereotypes.

A different scenario is created by one who bears '*Ochiri Ozuo* I', that is 'he that gathers and trains'. Here, we have one who must have brought up many people either as apprentices in his business area or has given them qualitative trainings that established them in life. His integrity and goodwill is well-known, orchestrated and popularized among these people in particular and the members of the community generally. He, invariably, maintains relationships with them and functions as 'god father' through 'parental' advice and guidance in their life endeavors. He is also well-known for his philanthropic gestures in his community and beyond. His life style calls for emulation through his self-less service and generosity to those that come across him. Through his name, he distinguishes himself from those that are selfish and stingy; especially the unscrupulous ones that refuse to settle their apprentices but rather instigate different kinds of allegations against them. And for flimsy reason, refuse to settle them after several years of apprenticeship. *Ochiri Ozuo* holds out himself to be emulated. He is a symbol of generosity in his community. This title name also emphasizes the common profession among the contemporary Igbo people: trading. In a region where the population density is high compare to the land mass, large scale farming activities are impossible. The population density in Igboland has been put at ranging from 300 to 1,000 persons per square mile.[34] Trading, therefore, becomes the readily available means of livelihood. Igbo men and women, young boys and girls engage in different kinds of trading activities ranging from small scale, medium and well-established industries, and import and export business outfits. Thus, *Ochiri Ozuo* reflects the contemporary experience of the people.

Another category of such title names that invokes presence is **Ide Gburugburu** or **Osimili**. This means 'ocean of wealth'. *Ide* is synonymous with 'ocean', just like '*Osimili*'. It does not dry up. He that bears *Ide* possesses chains of businesses that vary in quantity and quality. His fleet of companies and business empires are well-articulated by both those who have had personal contact with him and those who have not. '*Gburugburu*' means 'round about', 'all embracing' or 'all over'. His wealth is not one-sided. It is diversified. He could be in production, distribution, and exportation and importation. In fact, his wealth is not a common sight. Little wonder that there is no position attached to this title name, for it, simply, does not come-by easily. And how

many can possess such wealth? The bearer is seen as employer of labor who has distinguished himself in business enterprises. In launchings and fund-raising in his community, he is someone to be beaten, and who can surpass him? He projects the self as an accomplished business tycoon known beyond the boundaries of his community; a business magnet and an inspiration and a symbol of achievement of impossibility. *Idegburugburu* creates the image of uniqueness, a feeling of supremacy arrived at due to competency, and reflects rivalry engendered by the material world, especially, in a culture where money exchanges hands easily as a result of trading activities. A similar title name in this category is **Oji Ego** (Iroko of money) which signifies the massiveness of one's wealth. Both *Idegburugburu* and *Oji Ego*, thus, signify exclusiveness, and one's indomitability.

Other ego-centric and materialistic names include '*Ome Ego*' (One that Lavishes Money), *Eze Ego* (King of Money), *Odi uko na Mba* (Rare in any community), and *Omenyiri* (The Unbeatable). '*Odi uko na Mba*' emphasizes individual uniqueness and the ability to carry out what others cannot do. The unique characteristic of such an individual could include physical uniqueness in the form of physique, handsomeness and more significantly, the ability to lavish money when the need arises. In the same light *Omenyiri* connotes doggedness, self determination, challenging, and the like. Although there seem to be no obvious competition, such a title bearers try to be unbeatable in donations especially in public fund raising, and display their idiosyncrasies when others are exhausted. In difficult situations, they show their capability. In the final analysis, this category of title names indicates the sphere of inequality, reflecting bourgeois tendencies thrust up by economic exigencies.

Ochi na nwata meaning, 'he that rules at a tender age', and connotes one that has acquired much wealth at a young age, is yet another title name that marks one's hegemonic presence, and through this name makes a statement to the people of certain realities of life. Through the title name, the bearer proclaims that what took others several years to accomplish, fortune has smiled at him and he has succeeded early in life. His achievement has made him a 'king' who rules. Ironically, the Igbo do not have kings, but here we have an Igbo man who declares that he is, in fact, ruling at a relatively young age. He is, in fact, celebrating his achievement and, indirectly, proclaiming to the

youth that there is the possibility of making it, of breaking barriers and transgressing space, and thus enjoying good life at a tender age. Equally, he emphasizes that success opens doors, and privileges opportunities and space. Success breaks barriers of age and confers respect, honour, and power on the individual. It is an encouragement to the youth to be optimistic and, doggedly, strive for success.

Nwanne di na mba I conjures another scenario and different images. The title name is mostly born by non-indigenes of a community who have received honorary chieftaincy title in such community. *Nwanne* literally means 'one's sibling', that is, a child of the same mother, while '*di na mba*' means 'is in a foreign land'. '*Nwanne dina mba*' means 'there is one's sibling in a foreign/strange land'. The title name depicts one who has contributed immensely to the development of another town and is, thus, rewarded by that town for his kind gestures. The social meaning this title name conveys is the need for humans to be one another's brother's keeper irrespective of the other's place of origin. The reason being that one as endearing as a sibling can be found in another town or community. Hence, one can be a brother to someone who is not from one's town of origin. The name, thus, emphasizes the communality of humanity.

As an identity maker, title name generates and make sense of and give purpose to the bearer's social activities, and experiences. The iconization of the self indicated in the title name follow a codification process which would have started long before the title taking, and intensified thereafter. Thus, title name becomes invested with agency that connects one to privileged positions.

To create a self identity, unique and socially acceptable, the individual must be able to negotiate the social space bearing in mind the significance of positive interpretation of his actions. The self so constructed must be such that it must accurately strike the right chord in the social schema. Indeed, when this constructiveness transcends into social acceptability, the individual, proactively, needs to secure one's space, and more often than not, take up a position. Hence, the insistence of being called 'the 1st (that is, 'the first') and not any other, reflects this dynamism, which in itself exacerbate social inequality.

Invariably, the social construction of meanings in title names is a reflection Igbo contemporary society's idea of the 'real man', or 'the ideal man'. It is by implication

particular group of individuals above the others, given them more rights, privileges and power in the community, can be ameliorated. To this extent envy, jealousy and inter-class rivalry that characterize such social environment are minimized. This, however, does not rule out the fact that the dialectics that characterize the social intercourse is such that in the process of constructing a distinctive identity, and in living out the model so constructed, the conferred re-enforces the hierarchical social structures, which the socio-cultural practice has intended to put on check.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted an exploration of the social dynamics that characterize title names and appellations in contemporary Igbo society of southeastern Nigeria. The paper argues that title names, apart from being major signifiers of character, and an identity maker, more importantly, constitute an instrument of hegemonization of individual's presence, which further projects the self in the social space. The dominance of materialistic tendencies in these title names, we have also noted, reflects the changing realities of Igbo socio-cultural, and economic ideologies which has affected the value system of the people. The perception of the rich as 'the real man' in the community does not, in any way, indicate that good character without money are not reckoned with in the society. The question then is what constitutes the good man in indigenous Igbo worldview untainted by the high level of materialism of the contemporary world? This is the theme of a forthcoming effort.

In the present paper, from our analysis, we have identified two distinctive categories of title names: The first group is those that attract position. The second group does not require position. For those with position, there is space to accommodate newcomers. Provided they are ready to find space from the second position onwards. How this can be done has been articulated earlier in this paper. The second category is a clear indication of the intra-class rivalries that exist among the titleholders, a reflection of the power dynamics that characterize intra-class relations. Finally, we submit that the egocentric, and at the same time communalistic title names, at another level portray the fundamental cultural truths of the Igbo people, that is, the interplay of individualism and communalism, but now in an evolving form.

ENDNOTES

[1] see John F. Kihlstrom, Jennifer Beer and Stanley B. Clem (2002) 'Self and Identity as Memory'. In: Leary, M.R. & J. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of Self and Identity* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), p. 68 – 90.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] see William A. Haviland Anthropology (Mexico: Wadsworth, 2003, Tenth edition), p. 414 - 419.

[5] Ibid.

[6] see Castels, 1997 as cited in John Tomlinson (2003) 'Globalization and Cultural Identity'.www.polity.co.uk/global/pdf/GTReader2eTomlinsonpdf , (2003), p. 269 - 277. (Downloaded, February, 2009), p. 270.

[7] see Neville Alexander 'Language Politics in South Africa'. In: *Shifting African Identities*. Bekker, Simon, Martine Dodds and Meshack Khoso (Eds.), (Human Sciences Research Council. Pretoria: South Africa, 2001), p. 148.

[8] see Michael Rowlands 'The Politics of Identity in Archaeology'. In: *Social Construction of the Past: Representation as Power (One World Archaeology 24).* Beds Bond, George C. and Angela Illiam, (London: Routledge, 1994).

[9] see John Tomlinson op. cit.

[10] Micheal Rowlands, op. cit. p. 131.

[11] V.C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria.* (London: Holt Rinehalt and Winston, 1965).

[12] see D. Forde and G.I. Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio Speaking Peoples of Southeastern Nigeria* (London: International African Institute, 1950).

[13] see M. A. Onwuejegwu, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom & Hegemony.* (London: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 8-11.

[14] see Margaret Peil, *Consensus and Conflict in Africa Societies: An Introduction to Sociology* (London: Longman, 1977), p. 79.

[15] Kinsley Davis and Wilbert E. More, 'The Continuing Debate on Equality: Some Principles of Stratification. In: Bendix, Reinhard and Seymour Martin Lipset (Eds). *Class, Status and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routeledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 47 – 48.

[16] Ibid. p. 48.

[17] see P.B. Hammond, *An Introduction to Anthropology* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p. 245.

[18] Jack Douglas, *Introduction to Sociology: Situations and Structures* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 357.

[19] Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, 'Introduction: Accounting for Sexual Meaning'. In: Ortner, Sherry B. and Harriet Whitehead (Eds.). *Sexual Meanings*. (New York: Cambridge, 1981), p. 218.

[20] Afam Ebeogu, 'Onomastics and Igbo Tradition of Politics'. In: *Igbo and Tradition of Politics*. Eds. Anyanwu U.D. and JCU Agunwa. Enugu: Forth Dimension 1993), p.73 -88.

[21] see Okechukwu Raphael Madu (1996) Studies in Africa and Africa-American Culture: African Symbols, Proverbs, Myth: The Hermeneutics of Destiny. Owerri: Assumpta Press.

[22] Ibid. p. 175 -176.

[23] see Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day,* (New York: Anchor Books, 1975).

[24] Gbenga Fasiku, 'Yoruba Proverbs, Names and Consciousness'. *WAJOPS: West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*. Volume 9, December. 2006, p. 34.

[25] Polycarp Ikuenobe, *Philosophical Perspectives on Communalism and Morality in African Traditions,* (New York: Lexington Books, 2006), p. 79.

[26] see emile Durkheim 1972, as cited in Jerry D. Moore, *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists,* (London: Altamira Press, 1997), p. 57.

[27] see Jerry D. Moore op. cit. p. 60.

[28] Jerry D. Moore, op.cit. p. 60.

[29] see Daly 1994, pp xvii as cited in Olatunji A. Oyesile 'The Individual-Community Relationship as an Issue in Social and Political Philosophy'. In: Oladipo, Olusegun (ed.).*Core Issues in African Philosophy*. (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2006), p. 106 - 107.

[30] Olatunji A. Oyeshile 'The Individual-Community Relationship as an Issue in Social and Political Philosophy'. In: Oladipo, Olusegun (ed.).*Core Issues in African Philosophy,* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2006), p.104.
[31] Ibid. p. 107.

[32] see Margaret Peil *Consensus and Conflict in Africa Societies: An Introduction to Sociology* (London: Longman, 1977), p 5.

[33] see Marcel Mauss (1967) In: McGee, R. Jon & Richard L. warms - 'Except from *The Gift*: Mauss Marcel (1872 - 1950). *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History*. (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996), p. 103 – 115.

[34] M.A. Onwuejegwu, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom & Hegemony*. (London: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 8.

[35] see Mauss, 1924, reprinted in: McGee, R. Jon & Richard L. Warms. 'Except from *The Gift*: Mauss Marcel (1872 - 1950). *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History*. (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996), p. 105.

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