

©IDOSR PUBLICATIONS

International Digital Organization for Scientific Research

ISSN: 2579-0757

IDOSR JOURNAL OF CURRENT ISSUES IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES 4(1):10-30, 2018.

## Igbo Cosmology: The Concept of Death As A Means To Final Rest

<sup>1</sup>Ukoma, Amarachi Nnachi and <sup>2</sup>Uka-Egwu Roseline Onyinyechi

<sup>1</sup>Department of Philosophy and Religion Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Language and Linguistics, Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo.

---

### ABSTRACT

This paper looked at the Igbo cosmology, the concept of death as a means to final rest. This paper in course of research found from related literature, Journal materials, and oral participatory interviews that death, though, the end of all living things is a time of commencement of rest, time for accountability and a time of creation of space for others to perform on the stage of life. The word death or the natural phenomenon of cessation from activities by living things is not a subject for pleasurable discuss, and it is seldom mentioned or written about by scholars. Until the recent past one had not thought of considering or writing about death as a subject for discussion. In Igbo cosmology, it is not common to discourse the same. One of the songs the Christians sing that end in death is also not always ended with the original word “death”. People prefer to employ the word “end” than “death” for mere fears of this obvious. This is either because no one wants the end to come for himself or members of his family or dear friends. But the more we avoid it the more it becomes real, constant and inevitable. Rather than fearing death one has to develop the understanding that one will get into the final retirement from life struggle to eternal into rest; and as one may save for the end of service in any given career; one has to prepare for death and be willing to give space for others to perform.

Keywords: Igbo Cosmology, Concept of Death, Final rest.

---

### INTRODUCTION

There is this subject which many scholars dread to cast a look at. Many wish it away while others postpone it or even wish others were involved in it no themselves. In this case, they are less perturbed if others go to the world beyond (EburuOzuonyeozọ ọ dikaebuukwunkụ). Others feel it is a way of punishment as they take to facilitating the end for others. But one thing is sure; that this is

the debts each man must pay. This item of unnecessary but ever gripping horror is dead. A thing of unnecessary fear, because it is a necessary and that must come when it will for all men, therefore, not to be feared as a friend that must visit. But a horror of ever gripping fears because no one wants to die.

Death is "... the irreversible cessation of organismic functioning *and* human death as the irreversible loss of personhood".[1]. The word death or the natural phenomenon of cessation from activities by living things is not a subject for pleasurable discuss, and it is seldom mentioned or written about scholars. It is life's ending

*....i.e. the cessation of those organisms by which living things develop or maintain themselves which include chemosynthesis, photosynthesis, cellular respiration, cell generation, and maintenance of homeostasis. Then death is the ending of the vital processes by which an organism sustains itself. However, life's ending is one thing, and the condition of having a life over is another. 'Death' can refer to either....'the ending of life' is itself potentially ambiguous. On one hand, it might be a process wherein... lives are progressively*

*extinguished until finally they are gone. On the other, it might be a momentary event. This event might be understood in three ways. First, it might be the ending of the dying process—the loss of the very last trace of life. Call this 'denouement death'. Second, it might be the point in the dying process when extinction is assured, no matter what is done to stop it. Call this moment 'threshold death'. A third possibility is that life ends when the physiological systems of the body irreversibly cease to function as an integrated whole. (Luper, Summer 2009 Edition)*

Until the recent past one had not thought of considering or writing about death as a subject for discussion. In "Igbo cosmology", it is not common to discourse the same. One of the songs the Christians sing that end in death is also not always ended with the original word "death". People prefer to employ the word "unto the end" than "unto death". This is either because no one wants the end to come for himself or members of his family or dear friends. But the more we avoid it the more it becomes real, constant and inevitable. This paper in course of research found from related literature, Journal materials, and oral participatory interviews that death,

though, the end of all living things is a time of commencement of rest, time for accountability and a time of creation of space for others to perform on the stage of life. This paper also noticed the scarcity of materials in this field which buttresses the fact that people do not find fun in discussing death than they do about life and longevity thereof. Thus proving that “no one wants to die” [2], yet mankind dies and must die. This brings to the fore, the Igbo concept or philosophy that, “all irons must pass through the smith’s fire”. This Igbo “metaphysical axiom” [3] speaks for itself that death in Igbo cosmology is very present as it can never be wished away or swept under the carpet. Birth for the Igbo man is the same as the commencement of death as one leaves and dies gradually at the mercy of the God/gods. This informs the reason why all Igbo mortals are usually presented before deities for protection since there are threats to the longevity of every living thing-man inclusive. Death is regularly referred to in Igbo Cosmology

by the different names the Igbo people give to their children like “Ndu-kwe” if life agrees. This philosophy acknowledges that no one holds his or her life but that life determines its length. “Ndu-di” -if there is life, that is to say, that no one holds life as an object of certainty. ‘In the midst of life we are in death’.[4]

### IGBO COSMOLOGY

Igbo cosmology refers to the Igbo people’s view of things both abstract and metaphysical. This could further refer to

*... how people perceive and explain their world or the way things are or change in their environment. ... a worldview can be understood in terms of a unified picture of the cosmos explained by a system of concepts, which order the natural and social rhythms, and the place of individuals and communities in them. In other words, a world-view reflects people’s basic assumptions about, and perceptions of the universe, which gives orientation and value to their lives. A people’s worldview stands for their source of explanations for the way things are in the world, including their theories of illness, death, and misfortunes, and how human afflictions and problems can be resolved.[5]*

In the context of this paper, the cosmological view of life includes death

which spans from the date of one's birth. In Igbo view, life and relationship with the living members of each family range from birth to death and burial. This philosophy of life also drags into life beyond the grave. It is the problem of the explanation of relationship in Igbo concept of life and life after death that informed the ideology of the ancestral cult and the world beyond the grave. This same attempt remains difficult to accept and explain hence this contemporary x-ray. Death in Igbo cosmology is an "inseparable" [6] socio-religious standpoint or "belief system". [7] This is explained by the evolving of the stages of travel in the world beyond or the world of the spirits after burial. Igbo cosmology acknowledges the far-reaching effect of the power of death by some centric names like ọnwụ-ama-enyi death knows no friend; ọnwụ-ana-ego death does not take money ọnwụchekwa-death should wait as no one wants to die, and Onwụ-kwe if death agrees which is the other side of Ndụkwe.

## CONCEPT

The word "concept" is "something conceived in the mind: thought, notion or an abstract or generic idea generalized from particular instances". [8] In this context it is the ideology of a people concerning a subject matter. It could also be referred to as a people's impression or theory about a particular thing.

## DEATH

*In the past, death has often been defined with a few confident words. For example, the first edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica informed its readership that "DEATH is generally considered as the separation of the soul and body; in which sense it stands opposed to life, ... Readers seeking a clear and accurate definition were met instead with the admission that death "can only be conjectured" and is "the supreme puzzle of poets"...Furthermore, the definition of death has become a crucial element in family, ethical, religious, legal, economic, and policy-making decisions. The word death is used in at least three primary and numerous secondary ways. The context indicates the intended meaning in some instances, but it is not unusual for ambiguity or a shift in meanings to occur in the midst of a discussion. People may talk or write past each other when the specific usage of "death" is not clearly shared. The three primary usages are: death as an event; death as a condition; and*

*death as a state of existence or nonexistence.*[9]

Death is an event because *it* occurs at a particular time and place and in a particular way. In this sense of the term, death is a phenomenon that stays within the bounds of mainstream conception and observation. It is an event that cuts off a life. It is a condition because *it* is the crucial area in biomedical and bioethical controversy. It is also the nonreversible condition in which an organism is incapable of carrying out the vital functions of life. It is a state of existence or nonexistence because it can almost be said that death is what becomes of a person after death.

Furthermore, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is in agreement with Luper in the same words state that Death is life's ending. It is necessary to mention that vital processes are involved which organisms develop or maintain themselves. These processes include chemosynthesis, photosynthesis, cellular respiration, cell generation, and

maintenance of homeostasis. Then death is the ending of the vital processes by which an organism sustains itself. However, life's ending is one thing, and the condition of having a life over is another... 'the ending of life' is itself potentially ambiguous. On one hand, it might be a process wherein ... lives are progressively extinguished until finally they are gone. On the other, it might be a momentary event. This event might be understood in three ways. First, it might be the ending of the dying process—the loss of the very last trace of life. Call this 'denouement death'. Second, it might be the point in the dying process when extinction is assured, no matter what is done to stop it. Call this moment 'threshold death'. A third possibility is that life ends when the physiological systems of the body irreversibly cease to function as an integrated whole (defended, for example... This can be called 'integration death'. Thus death can be a state of being dead, the process of extinction (dying), or one of three events

that occur during the dying process.[9]

Death in all of these senses can be further distinguished from events—such as being shot with an arrow—that cause death.

This reference gives a picture of what constitutes death as;

*It is clear enough that people die when their lives end, but less clear what constitutes the ending of a person's life. Second, in what sense might death or posthumous events harm us? To answer this question, we will need to know what it is for something to be in our interests. Third, what is the case for and the case against the harm thesis, the claim that death can harm the individual who dies, and the posthumous harm thesis, according to which events that occur after an individual dies can still harm that individual? Fourth, how might we solve the timing puzzle? This puzzle is the problem of locating the time during which we incur harm for which death and posthumous events are responsible. A fifth controversy concerns whether all deaths are misfortunes or only some. Of particular interest here is a dispute between Thomas Nagel, who says that death is always an evil, since continued life always makes good things accessible, and Bernard Williams, who argues that, while premature death is a misfortune, it is a good thing that we are not immortal, since we cannot continue to be who we are now and remain meaningfully attached to life forever. A final controversy concerns whether or not the harmfulness of death can be reduced. It may be that, by*

*adjusting our conception of our well-being, and by altering our attitudes, we can reduce or eliminate the threat death poses us. But there is a case to be made that such efforts backfire if taken to extremes.[8]*

Thus death can be a state (being dead), the process of extinction (dying), or one of three events that occur during the dying process. Death in all of these senses can be further distinguished from events—such as being shot with an arrow—that cause death.[9] Accordingly, death could be considered in

*... two ways, one, can begin to think about the nature of death by supposing that human beings are composed of a body and a soul. This is known as a dualist view. If one possesses a soul, then one can imagine that while the body dies, the soul may continue to exist in some fashion. This informs the possibility of thought of continuity in another sphere after this plain. However, this assumption that one has a soul is no guarantee that this is true, but it does appear to be a necessary concept and condition for surviving the death of the body. The other way one can think about death is to start out with the assumption that there is no such thing as the soul. This view, known as physicalism, asserts that human beings are entirely physical or that they depend so completely on their*

*physical bodies that, once the body dies, there is nothing to sustain our consciousness (or our "selves").*[10].

The second proposition does not receive the approval of Igbo cosmology hence the first lends credence to the ideology of life after death. The later leaves man without any hope or any other place outside this metaphysical mundane.

From whichever angle one views death, it remains a paramount Igbo concept. It is a common knowledge in Igbo land that man practices how to die or death on daily basis, but would not know it, though, he is consciously or unconsciously afraid of the same.

Death is an interruption to life, like sleep or disease, only permanent. [11] Life is to be lived in spite of it. It is the end of our projects, an interference with them, not something to be integrated. This would be the case for both ourselves and those we love. Death or rather dying ought to be considered, rather as the culminating act of life, in which a person expresses who s/he is, what they stand for, what his/her

life is all about. This might happen in two ways: (a) via the circumstances of the death or by the manner of death or both: an external and internal expression of what their life is all about. E.g. Jesus, Socrates, the martyrs. (b) Whatever about the outer circumstances and perceivable manner of death, death provide for all an opportunity for an internal expression of what they are all about, a "final option" ratifying their "fundamental option" or perhaps modifying it, this being part of dying [12].

This could be buttressed by the experience one passes through at each time one sleeps. At such leisure hour, the soul of man wonders about even into such lands he may not even think about. Indeed sleep is a similitude of death or temporary cessation of activities. Death or a natural phenomenon of cessation of living things from activities is not a subject for pleasurable discussion, and it is seldom mentioned or written about by scholars as earlier mentioned. But the day a child in Igbo land is born is the day his

or her death is fixed, hence Igbo injunction “Onyenekpenduakpekwaonwu” (- whoever talks of life let him also talk of death). This philosophy holds all Igbo people in check as it relates to their daily activities as death can come at any time “as an end point to life” [13] According to [14]

*...dying as it is with so many other kinds of arts...is not learned quickly, rather it takes a long time to learn and also a lot of practice. It may sound altogether impossible to learn or practice death anything in connection with the death, and yet it is possible. Of course we die only once, but during our lifetime we become confronted with death so many times: in our personal experience of serious sickness, when there are cases of sickness or fatal accident among friends and relatives, or when we stand at their sickbeds or deathbeds: these give us opportunity to think about death. Furthermore, the when, how and manner of death is not of essence to the Igbo man as it comes when and how it pleases God/gods [14].*

This shows how necessary it is for one to learn to number one's days like the Palmist (Palms 90:12). The eschatos (έσχατος) [15] of life is of the essence to the Igbo man than the genesis thereof. For that reason, he is very conscious of the

fact that the time of accountability is coming when he will appear before the God/god and the ancestors who will pass verdict on his or her qualification as a saint. In this light, even the living are conscious of this one fact of accountability as no one is allowed to die with a clenched fist as all must show God/god their clean hands. At the burial, the dead are never allowed also to be buried facing downward as all must face both the ancestors and God/gods even at that critical moment. Death, as it were, is the summit of existence in this plain and commencement of the journey to the great beyond.

#### DEATH AS A TRANSITION

The Igbo man believes that life is a stage on which every mortal plays his God's/god's given role once in every circle of life which runs for seven subsequent reincarnations (UwaEsaa). In Igbo cosmology, death is the control post between each state of reincarnation. This does not depend on how well or badly lived. In this cosmology, death is an



irresistible appointment, whether one knows it or not. And believing in the dualness of the world of humanity-(the seen and the unseen),

*Death is to be considered as a transition from this (physical) life eventually to another life of much the same kind, better or worse according to one's deeds (karma): doctrines of reincarnation. But not quite so final: one will get another chance to do it right. This sometimes combines with views of reincarnation as the wheel of rebirth, final salvation = to get off the wheel of rebirth [15].*

Hawe's impute above is an integral part of Igbo cosmology hence the belief in reincarnation.

On this note, every man is expected to mark this from the day one can determine the right from the left. One is reminded that death is like a palm tree-cutter that cuts from the matured and the premature palm trees hence death is no respecter of individuals or age. However, this phenomenon is least discussed because each man would love to enjoy the utmost benefits from the world of the living. The second reason why people least talk of death is because the other side of the

world which is referred to as the world unknown is an undisclosed mystery. It is the unknowability of the world beyond that makes death horrible, not the phenomenon itself. If one realizes that death is a transition to a place of perpetual rest from the labour of the earth, death will be a welcome development which has always been the case of anyone that dies at old age.

On the hand death is a natural way of creating a space for others to perform. Imagine, where every man born on earth has to live on, the stress that will be on the soil and space. A study of any village that lack land space will force one to accept the wisdom of God/god to allow death to act as the clearinghouse of life and clearing agency that makes pace for posterity. It may not be any gainsaying that death rather than being feared should be appreciated.

However, death in Igbo land could be divided into two OnwuOjoo (Bad death) and EziOnwu (Good death). These

divisions are determined by beliefs which sanitize the community.

*A bad death is abhorred in Ngwa as in every other Igbo culture... everybody strives to live a good life; so as to die a good death to be given good burial not bad burial. The way one is buried is determined in the way he lived his life. To validate this, the soil of the Ngwa land and every other Igbo soil rejects people that have questionable character because of the Ala deity which inhibits it. [16]*

These divisions are governed by Ala deity and ancestral considerations. To the Igbo man; his length of life and worth thereof is dependent on the observation of societal norms. It might be necessary to mention here that the title ancestor is a creation and preserve of the community that determines who an ancestor should be. Like the Christians that canonize the Saints, the Igbos have some pegged criteria for one to attain to the status of an ancestor. In Igbo cosmology not all people who die are ancestors. Indeed, in Igbo like in Yoruba land “death is desirable when the diseased has children and grandchildren or possibly, great-

grandchildren, and dies in his/her sleep or after a brief illness” [17]

Ancestors are those who faithfully fulfilled their life assignments to the acceptance of the Igbo society longevity or otherwise notwithstanding. Or

*those who lived their lives well and died in a socially acceptable manner (i.e., were given the proper burial rites). These ancestors live in one of the worlds of the dead that mirrors the world of the living. The living pay tribute to their ancestors by honoring them through sacrifices.[18]*

Consequent upon this conceptual framework the death of a child or a middle-aged person is a bad death as the person may not have left any legacy behind. Very close to this type of death is suicide - Maduigbuonweya: Ikwuudo, one is not expected to take his own life not minding the level of sickness or hardship. The Ngwa man relies on fate and this takes him wherever he goes. Any person that takes away his own life in Ngwa land is not given a befitting burial. Such a person is thrown into an evil forest. This,

however, serves as a deterrent to societal vices [16]

Drowning is another type of bad death [3] as it is believed that the sea will not just take any man without justification. Indeed the Igbo man believes that nothing happens for nothing. This is what forms the idea of seeking the divine counsel of the Dibia in such unexpected deaths.

In some Igbo communities, people who die bad death are never properly buried as there are thrown into the *offiaqjoo* (Bad bush-sacred Bush).

This, however, removes the grantee that every death at ripe old age is automatically classified as a good death. [19] For an elderly to be seen as having died a good death such elderly must have one, responded to the law of procreation, two, left good legacy, not in terms of money but in terms of morality and charity, thirdly, such a person must have been one of the defenders of the course of the community. In this light, he is assumed to be capable of defending the

same even in the world of the ancestors. His or her moral impeachability makes him or her desirable hence the hope of his or her quick reincarnation.

## REINCARNATION

The relevance of reincarnation in this paper stems from its close association with the Igbo cosmology of death. "Reincarnation is continuous succession of birth, death and rebirth", [20] or

*transmigration or metempsychosis, in religion and philosophy, rebirth of the aspect of an individual that persists after bodily death—whether it be consciousness, mind, the soul, or some other entity—in one or more successive existences. Depending upon the tradition, these existences may be human, animal, spiritual, or, in some instances, vegetable. While belief in reincarnation is most characteristic of South Asian and East Asian traditions, it also appears in the religious and philosophical thought of local religions, in some ancient Middle Eastern religions (e.g., the Greek Orphic mystery, or salvation, religion), Manichaeism, and gnosticism, as well as in such modern religious movements as theosophy. [21]*

It could be further regarded as 'the rebirth of the soul in another body after death'. Inquiries carried on this agree with

the definitions enunciated in this article. There are two words combined to give Reincarnation. "Re" prefixed to the major word "Incarnation". Incarnation on its own means taking a human form by a divine being while 'Re', could mean again. Both put together give rise to the idea of one's soul coming back into the world after death in the newborn baby. Some go to the extreme of claiming that it has to do with what is called the law of 'karma'. [15] sees reincarnation as a belief system that cuts across many religions as not only in Eastern religions and among Scholars especially namely Hinduism. "Many distinguished philosophers in the history of philosophy indeed, "household names" such as Plato, Hume, and Schopenhauer have held views on reincarnation." [22].

### HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Plato mentions reincarnation and related ideas several times in his works. The main instances occur (a) in his so-called eschatological myths:

- Chariot myth (Phaedr. 246-254)
- Myth of Er (Rep. 614-621)

- Gorgias myth (Gorg. 523E-527)
- Phaedo myth (Phaed. 106E-115A)

and (b) in several other places:

- Meno (81)
- Cratylus (400)
- Phaedo (70C ff., 81C-E)
- Timaeus (41D ff., 90-91)
- Laws (870D/E, 872E, 881A, 904 ff.)

2. However, it might expedient to mention that John delisted Plato in his historical panorama as never specifically presenting 'reincarnation' as his doctrine. Usually the character of Socrates speaks in a dialogue, calling what he is about to describe a "tale", "myth", or "tradition", and attributing it to others. "We might also note that our other direct sources of information about Socrates, namely Xenophon and Aristophanes, never associate Socrates with reincarnation" John concludes. [23] One may note once again that one is not after who believed in what or who taught what but the definition of Reincarnation and its age long history.

The soul or innermost self-does not die but continues its career in another person or sometimes in a lesser form of life. Re-birth. This is not always considered a 'good thing': the whole idea of religion for the major Indian religions is to get off the wheel of re-birth e.g. the Buddhist nirvana. This distinguishes the Indian religions from New Age: in Hinduism and Buddhism, reincarnation is assumed background, part of life as suffering, from which the religions save us. Sometimes the getting off the wheel takes the form of immortality. This is the case in the Platonic tradition: philosophizing as a way of getting off the wheel of rebirth into genuine immortality. What can be said for it: (i) It is probably the most widely believed of all the possibilities; (ii) it emphasizes the togetherness of all life; (iii) there are certain claimed experiences in favour of it, e.g. memories of previous lives; (iv) it makes for an easily conceivable notion of an after-life, with karma, for the most part, replacing apparent memory. [15]

This notion implies that an individual must return to the earth to receive the reward of his past life. The individuals reincarnate into different things as the Supreme Being responsible permits. The type of thing into which the individual reincarnates is governed by the gods, or the type of life the individual lived while on earth, and the conduct of an individual before death. The case of bad life could make one reincarnate into ape, cow, and goat and so on, as the reward of what one's life conduct according to the law of "retributive justice". [24] On the other hand, good ones reincarnate into human beings or are not allowed to come back at all as not to suffer evil in the second or third circle as the case may be. This belief also supposed that those individuals who suffer on earth do so as a matter of reward for their past evil conduct in their first incarnation or subsequent reincarnations. This is African because it is believed that all conducts are accountable for, whether good or bad. But the issue of reincarnating into animals

stands questionable, though accepted by Edda people hence 'Ina-Aja- the great warrior of Edda' is believed to have reincarnated into the hawk to make sure that no fowl or chicken lived on earth as a retaliation on man.

Basically, the Africans believe that reincarnation runs human to human (man reincarnates to man and woman to woman or dead adults to New babies). (Christopher,nd) No one thinks of animals sharing the same rights with man except in few cases like the Ina-Aja of Edda mythology mentioned earlier. The Africans do not accept human beings reincarnating into animals but in all cases "ChukwuOkike" can never be asked to explain.

On a happy note, one would state that death in Igbo cosmological is not an end to existence but a transition to the world of the spirits (Ancestral World).

*On this, the Igbo maintained a similar position with the scholastics traced to Aristotle: that man is an*

*incarnate spirit-an embodiment, a component of body and soul. This is the foundation of duality in Igbo cosmology where the body! (ahu) decays after death in the physical world while the spirit or soul ! (mmuo) leaves on or the spirit world where his condition of life in the physical world would determine the continuity of his existence in the spirit world. [25]*

There in the world of the ancestor two things happen: (a) the good returns back to his most loved one in the family or the most hated- in this case to punish someone who did not care for him or her in the first incarnation and or reincarnations; (b) mysteriously too, the same person retains his or her spirit in the spirit world for the purpose of the representation for his or her family hence they take appeals from the living members of their families. Ideally, the worldview of death is that of momentary absence, yet an advantage over the living as the dead lives on unrestrictedly and incapable omniscience. Death is a "sleep" or "resting"[12] hence the pure-hearted

even sees their end and announces the same before they depart. Indeed every Igbo man expects one thing from his parents and that is the last blessing which is given and received at the deathbed. Some give directives on how their burial will take place. For the Igbo man death is a mere journey to the world beyond to the Ancestors [12]. This,

*Ancestral cult is paramount in every traditional society. Among the Ngwa people, for instance, death is not regarded as the end of man but as a transmigration of life. Old people, who left a positive landmark in the communities, are deified after their death. In the words of UzodinmaNwala: Ancestors are also referred to as ndiNweala (owners of the land) the ancestors act as intermediaries between their living children and the deities. They help to protect their living descendants, intervene on their behalf to ensure that no harm is done to them. In times of difficulties or sickness, you hear an Igbo man calling on their dead father saying "NnaayiEkwelakaiheamem" (our fathers do not allow this to happen to me). [16]*

It takes elaborate preparation to make this journey. The dead are well dressed (i.e. the view that he or she was going to a place he or she is expected to appear clean. On the other hand, food reserves

are made because the journey to the beyond is far. For the wealthy in the days when men were men, some escorts accompany the dead. The idea that the dead lives on have also informed the practice of wasteful burials in Igbo land that leave the bereaved in heavy indebtedness. Most times the plights of the living are not considered as landed property and other movables are disposed of in order to raise huge sums of money that are plunged into burials. Widows' and children's welfare are treated with ignominy by relations of the dead in pursuit of what is referred to as befitting burial.

However, the sum total, of all this paper, is that death "in Igbo mythology" [26] is a respectful end. This is shown during burial where the dead are treated with utmost dignity. The modern way of dancing with the casket of the dead in Igbo land remains the desecration of the body which ought to be left in a perpetual state of rest. It is not expected that one who had danced for years should be

forced to dance or labour again after death hence all things are expected to be solemnly done.

### FINAL REST

The word rest 'Rest' could mean the following "freedom from activity or labour, a state of motionlessness or inactivity, the repose of death, a place for resting or lodging, and peace of mind or spirit." [27] The Hebrew word "Sabbath" translated as "rested" is the verb of the noun form that is rendered in English as 'Rest'. Interestingly, the primary meaning of this word is not "rest," in terms of relaxing or rejuvenating, but "to desist from exertion" or "to cease." This makes perfect sense considering that God does not get tired (Isaiah 40:28) ! [28]

In Hebrew History this is one virtue each person expected with the abounding circumstances that threatened their existence. This is found from the pre-New Testament era within which things socially, politically and politically went bad. Israel indeed expected the Sabbath

which was connotative of a time of leisure. To them, that was when both socio-religious and political problems will be put to an end. The time of rest is the time of cessation from labour. From findings, it is true that rest only comes at the end of earthly labour hence Jesus urged the Jews not to expect the Sabbath rest, but the "rest to come". Rest seems to be a virtue which is taken for granted as many African Traditional books and even Christian ethics have little or no space for it. However, whether recognized or not, it is an integral part of life to seek for or have rest.

>  
"Consciously or unconsciously"  
[8] 'African Traditional Religions' [29] provide for rest which is tied to the rites and rituals of the land. A close examination of the festivals of the land shows that their observations are after a long period of hard work or during the rainy season when less farm work is done. At intervals or in between days of hard labour a day is set aside for leisure. In Edda Clan, two days are possible namely



Eke or Orie (Orie days masquerades entertain the society during the less busy days whereas the same Orie day is preserved for farm work in the Male's farm by all his wives and children) days or any chosen market day by any locality.

In Igbo cosmology final rest which is the consummation of rests only comes

through death hence the greeting 'jeankeoma'. The ideology that one born of woman has one day in which he must depart to be at rest with God/gods is paramount with the Igbos as one must be called by his God /gods (chi yaakpolereya- as a summary remark for the dead).

### RECOMMENDATION

This paper from the foregoing recommends that;

- 1) Rather than fear death one has to develop the understanding that one will get into the final retirement from life struggle to eternal rest through death,
- 2) Christian religion and Islam which had tampered with the common ideology of bond between the living and the dead do more work to explain away the deep-rooted bond between the living and the dead in African worldview,

- 3) The further need to explain the difference between reincarnation and resurrection by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that they hold the sacrosanct in their relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac or Ishmael and Jacob (names of people who are already dead), and

- 4) The Igbos reviews the much expenses that are involved in burial ceremonies as many do so to the enslavement of the living.

## CONCLUSION

Death remains one of the locked mysteries of life which only God/gods know and can unravel its wholeness or the real essences. Yet from all so far said, death remains inevitable pheromones of nature. Great religious figures like Jesus Christ who is said to be sure of his beginning and his ending at one time expressed fear about death in Luke 22:39-44. Philosophers like Plato had done some kind of incomprehensive reflections on death showing that its mystery remains unlocked. However, this work had served to buttress the fact that death is not to be feared since it is an unavoidable guest who does not require an invitation to come around. And because every labour earns a sweet rest one has to accommodate death as rest from the bustling and hustling of this mundane to remove its fear. And finally

one has to be mindful of the fact that death is not the final consummation as the Igbo cosmology holds the belief in life after death in high esteem. Death should be seen as the commencement of a journey after death. This last perspective makes life and living itself morally demanding as one must face the ancestors [30] and the gods at death. And from the Christian perspective face God at the judgment. In all, death must be accepted as the commencement of rest not to be feared. Rather than fear death, one has to develop the understanding that one will get into the final retirement from life struggle to eternal rest. And as one may save for the end of service in any given career; one has to prepare for death and be willing to give space for others to perform.

## REFERENCES

1. Luper, S, (Summer 2009 Edition), "Death", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/death/>
2. Steve Jobs (2005) 'Death is very likely the single best invention of life' Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/oct/06/steve-jobs-pancreas-cancer>
3. The Axioms of Objectivism (June 24, 2012) Retrieved from <https://objectivisminddepth.com/2012/06/24/the-axioms-of-objectivism/>
4. Vince Gerhardy(6th April 2014)Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent-"In the midst of life we are in death" Retieved from [http://www.gerhardy.id.au/lent5\\_14.html](http://www.gerhardy.id.au/lent5_14.html)
5. Nwoye, C. M. A. (2011). Igbo cultural and religious worldview: An insider's perspective. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 3(9), pp. 304-317, 21 September 2011 Available online Retrieved from <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSA> ISSN 2006- 988x ©2011 Academic Journals
6. Kasomo Daniel, NailaGeoffryNapoo(2013)The Relationship between Church and State *International Journal of Applied Sociology* 3 (2) p. 9-18 Retrieved from <http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.ijas.20130302.01.html>
7. News Batch (June, 2011) Religion and Public Policy Retrieved from <http://newsbatch.com/religion.htm>
8. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive Winter (2015) Edition English sentences with process of extinction in context Retrieved from <https://ludwig.guru/s/process+of+extinction>
9. Encyclopedia of Death and Dying (nd) Definitions of Death Retrieved from <http://www.deathreference.com/Da-Em/Definitions-of-Death.html>
10. Saylor Academy (2014) Saylor Foundation Retrieved from [www.saylor.org](http://www.saylor.org)
11. Hamza Andreas Tzortzis (10 September 2015) A Short Reflection on Death: Retrieved from [https://web.facebook.com/HamzaAndreasTzortzis/posts/1052891454721288?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr](https://web.facebook.com/HamzaAndreasTzortzis/posts/1052891454721288?_rdc=1&_rdr)
12. Hawe, D. (1968) The Philosophy of Death [members.optusnet.com.au/~gjmoses/index.html](http://members.optusnet.com.au/~gjmoses/index.html) accessed on 10/10/2014
13. Erich A. Berendt (2012) *FACING FINALITY: COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL STUDIES ON DEATH AND DYING* Louisville, KY: The Institute for Intercultural Communication, Retrieved from [http://commcourses.com/iic/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/PDF-COVER-ART\\_Facing-Finality-updated-2012.pdf](http://commcourses.com/iic/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/PDF-COVER-ART_Facing-Finality-updated-2012.pdf)
14. Imberg, J. (1995). *Christian Life- A handbook on Christian Ethics and Morals*. Gothenburg Sweden: Evangelisk Literature Mission. Print
15. Amaechi, N. M. (May 7, 2013) The Moral Dimension of the Earth Divinity In Ngwa Cosmology. <http://manlyacademia.wordpress.com/>

16. Egwu, J. K. (2013) Burial of a bad death in Ngwaland. <http://manlyacademia.wordpress.com/>
17. Kayode, J. O. (1984). Understanding African Traditional Religion. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press. Print
18. Igbo ETHNONYMS: Ala Igbo, Ani Igbo, Ibo, Ndi Igbo Encyclopedia of World Cultures The Gale Group, Inc (1996) retrieved from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/anthropology-and-archaeology/people/igbo>
19. Victor I. Ezigbo (8 Feb 2010 p.167) Re-imagining African Christologies: Conversing with the Interpretations and Appropriations of Jesus in Contemporary African Christianity Wipf and Stock Publishers, Retrieved from [https://books.google.com.ng/books?id=EDpMAwAAQBAJ&dq=every+death+at+ripe+old+age+is+not+automatically+classified+as+a+good+death&source=gb\\_s\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com.ng/books?id=EDpMAwAAQBAJ&dq=every+death+at+ripe+old+age+is+not+automatically+classified+as+a+good+death&source=gb_s_navlinks_s)
20. Sarah Dowdey (2017) Culture: How Reincarnation Works Retrieved from <http://people.howstuffworks.com/reincarnation.htm>
21. Reincarnation Religious Belief (2017) The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/reincarnation>
22. Heinrik Hellwig (p.1) THEORIES OF REINCARNTATION IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES Retrieved from <http://www.sptimmortalityproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ANCIENT-THEORIES-OF-REINCARNTATION-2.pdf>
23. John S. Uebersax, (2007-2009) Did Plato Believe in Reincarnation? Retrieved from <http://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/plato4.htm>
24. Ronen Perry (2006) The Role of Retributive Justice in the Common Law of Torts: A Descriptive Theory Tennessee Law Review, Vol. 73, retrieved from [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=846309](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=846309)
25. Matthew Nwafor (2017 pp. 11,12) Death in Igbo Ontology retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/14879669/Death\\_in\\_Igbo\\_Ontology](https://www.academia.edu/14879669/Death_in_Igbo_Ontology)
26. About World History in Context (2014) The Igbo People Found the Kingdom of Nri: c. 900 retrieved from [http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/whic/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=WHIC&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=&mode=view&displayGroupName=Reference&limiter=&currentPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroups=&sortBy=&search\\_within\\_results=&p=WHIC%3AUHIC&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CDLHFWL911310566&source=Bookmark&u=mlin\\_c\\_montytech&jsid=e1e41db0bcd3ab3dda0e996615fff2ed](http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/whic/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=WHIC&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=&mode=view&displayGroupName=Reference&limiter=&currentPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroups=&sortBy=&search_within_results=&p=WHIC%3AUHIC&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CDLHFWL911310566&source=Bookmark&u=mlin_c_montytech&jsid=e1e41db0bcd3ab3dda0e996615fff2ed)
27. 'Rest' Merriam-Webster, Incorporated (2017) retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rest>
28. David C. Grabbe (1992-2017) Bible verses about God's Rest Church of the Great God Church of the Great God Retrieved from <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/605/Gods-Rest.htm>

29. Rosalind I. J. Hackett (January 7, 2013)\_Traditional, African, religious, freedom? The politics of religious freedom Social Science Research Council Retrieved from <https://tif.ssrc.org/2013/01/07/traditional-african-religious-freedom/>
30. Shawn N. Geniole & Cheryl M. McCormick (2015) Facing our ancestors: judgements of aggression are consistent and related to the facial width-to-height ratio in men irrespective of beards retrieved from [http://www.ehbonline.org/article/S1090-5138\(14\)00164-0/pdf](http://www.ehbonline.org/article/S1090-5138(14)00164-0/pdf)