Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal – Vol.7, No.12
Publication Date: December 25, 2020
DOI:10.14738/assrj.712.9423.
Udeagha, N. (2020). Values of Greetings in Igbo Traditional Culture and the Contemporary Society. A*dvances in Social Sciences Research Journal, 7(12)* 43-62.

Values of Greetings in Igbo Traditional Culture and the Contemporary Society

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ABSTRACT

Greetings are one of the cherished core values that facilitate interpersonal relationships and cooperative reality in Igbo traditional culture. It appears that in the contemporary society, especially as a result of influence of foreign languages and culture, the value attached to greetings and respect for others are grossly waning, and more among the younger generation. Some also greet in a nonconforming manner that the socio-cultural value inherent in the Igbo traditional pattern of greetings is apparently absent. As a result, some people have been flagrantly contemptuous and snubbed away noble opportunities or relationships that would have helped in improving their individual lives and the society in general. The paper adopted ethnographic approach and data derived largely from personal observation and interviews. Despite the central place greetings occupied in the Igbo traditional culture, there appears to be scarcity of exploratory information on it. The paper, therefore, attempts to underscore the value of greetings by highlighting its essential elements in Igbo traditional culture. The Igbo should continue to make conscientious efforts in the preservation of their social norms and cultural values, which have shaped and sustained the society since time immemorial. It surmises that greeting in Igbo traditional culture is key relational oil that lubricates and maintains collective survival of the Igbo race.

Keywords: Greetings, Value, Igbo, Traditional, Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Greetings are fundamental features of universal culture and one of the most important aspects of Igbo traditional values. Greetings are every moment affair and the very first things people say and demonstrate when they meet. Even before one introduces himself, asks questions or makes a request, universal courtesy and code of honour demands that he greets first. Greetings warm the heart of the greeted and predisposed him or her to pay attention to other talks and requests from the greeter. Indeed, one of the first things people learn in every society and culture they found themselves is how to greet in their host language. Similarly, one of the first things those who live outside their native cultural area learn about their own culture and language is how to greet. That is why in the Igbo cultural framework, even children or people who can hardly speak Igbo language proficiently, when they are greeted or asked “kedu?” (literally, how is it?) They can easily respond “ọ dị mma” (it is fine). They basically learn Igbo language from greetings.

The origin of greetings in Igbo traditional culture is as old as the society itself. It has remained an integral component of the fundamental and indispensable social experiences of the Igbo progenitors that is transmitted from one generation to another with methodical features of continuity. Greetings are the foremost techniques of Igbo language and custom that are socially communicated. It is the main way Igbo culture is firstly announced wherever the Igbo meet themselves. It underscores the value of personality and humanity. In Igbo culture**,** people greet each other as many times as possible in a day. Those that reside where people often pass through in traditional Igbo communities are bound to exchange constant and more number of greetings with passersby than other community members. It is in this wise that the Igbo would say "Onye bi n'ụzọ ji ụgwọ ekele" (he that resides along the way owes a lot to greetings). The manner and mode of greeting in this regard is very important. As the Igbo would say "e kwe ekele ihu a saa" (when greeting is returned the face beams with smiles).Greeting gestures sometimes reflect how cordial or the degree of love people share. The Igbo demonstrate this when they say "ekele bụ ịhụnanya" (greeting is love).

Whereas, greeting is an act of communication in which human beings register their presence and exchange pleasantries, to the Igbo, it is much more. Greeting is a mark of respect and honour. Respect itself is a core Igbo value that indicates deep feeling of regard and admiration shown towards an elderly person or someone considered important. Typically, it is the younger ones that greet the older ones [1-2]. The traditional Igbo society is community based. People are greeted whenever or wherever they are seen. It is a mark of disrespect for a younger one to pass by an elderly person without greeting him or her. Even elderly strangers are also greeted. In fact, greetings in Igbo traditional culture is elevated to the status of an obligation that the Igbo would normally say "kele onye ntị chiri, elu anụghị, ala ga-anụ" (greet even the deaf, if heavens do not hear the earth will hear). It is seen as a mark of admiration and value. Ignoring people will be offensively rude and a sign of improper training which normally incurs public opprobrium.

Generally, Igbo people greet *Ndewo*, but each Igbo community has words for greetings according to their dialects, which they use for exchanging compliments when people meet. For instance, the Ohafia community in Abia State greets *Kaa*; Nsukka community in Enugu State greets *Deje*; Onitsha community in Anambra State greets *Daalụ;* Afikpo community in Ebonyi State greets *Jọọkwa;* and Mbano community in Imo State greets *A nwụla oo*. These aspects of community greetings are little different from the general Igbo method of greetings. There are also appropriate periodical, occasional and seasonal greetings. Traditional cultural and religious groups have more highly structured forms of greeting rituals and gestures. For instance, amongst titled men like the Nze, Ọzọ, and members of masquerade cults and secret societies like Ekpe, Ọkọnkọ, Obon, etc., they have different patterns of greetings in their groups. Before one addresses the body, there is an already established pattern of greetings to follow, both in words and demonstrations.

Hence greeting is used to cement bond and communicate love and warmth people have for each other, it helps in the formation of the community members. It helps people and groups to relate well with one another. It creates good impressions and leaves memorable experiences. When a parent or an elderly person goes out with a child and meets with another elderly person, if the child fails or forgets to do the needful, the elderly always urges the child to greet the other elderly person "Udo kele Maazi Okeke" (Udo greet Mr. Okeke), he would demand from the boy. The child, Udo, will greet

Mr. Okeke. This helps the child to imbibe the value of greetings and helps in his character formation. The child is meant to always remember to greet.

The traditional community frowns at children that do not greet. The communal disapproval is extended to his family. They are seen as not well brought up. The process of interacting and relating with elderly persons starts with greetings. That is why the Igbo would say "nwata kwọchaa aka, o soro ndị okenye rie nri" (if a child washes his hands well, he will dine with the elders). A child that does what pleases the elders can easily relate with them.

In consideration of the foregoing, this paper derived a scope on two premises. On the one hand, most previous studies on greetings especially in Nigeria focused on other cultural areas [3-5]. One the other hand, the ones that capture the Igbo cultural group are more interested on the linguistic or verbal aspects and illocutionary nature of greetings [6-8]. As such, despite the availability of a number of studies on the subject of greetings, there appears to be apparent lack or insufficient inquiry on the value of greetings in Igbo traditional culture. The paper, therefore, is a modest attempt that focuses on the socio-cultural value of greetings in traditional Igbo culture.

METHODOLOGY

The study engages qualitative method and utilizes ethnographic approach to explore values of greetings in Igbo traditional culture. While sharing interest in other universal elements of greetings, the approach relates to what Duranti describes as "focusing on culture-specific aspects of greetings behaviour" [9]. Thus, greetings behaviour of the Igbo and the values attached to them form the kernel of the paper. The data are largely derived from participant observation. The researcher is immersed in the Igbo culture as an active participating member, which afforded him ample opportunity and privilege of assimilating diverse perspectives of the values and elements of greetings. There were equally informal interviews with individuals from sub-cultural groups of Olokoro in Abia, Onitsha in Anambra, Afikpo in Ebonyi, Nsukka in Enugu, and Owerri in Imo in order to gain more insight and deeper understanding about norms of greetings in different domains of southeastern states. This paper is a descriptive presentation of the data generated.

CONCEPT OF GREETING IN IGBO CULTURAL TRADITION

While greetings are universal social phenomena and codes of conduct, what constitutes a greeting varies from culture to culture and group to group. Duranti [10] notes that in spite of the scholarly attentions that have been given to the subject of greetings from different perspectives, there is apparently no exact method to determine what is generally acceptable as a definition of greeting, therefore in a particular speech community, there is no established way of deciding what is "greetings", but there is postulations on what constitute greetings and their functions in different languages. In Igbo language, the word for 'greeting' is 'ekele'.

The Igbo word 'ekele', is beyond one English word 'greeting'. 'Ekele' can as well denote expression of thanks. In that regard, it could mean more than mere communicative expressions. It can form a body of ritual and act of fellowship. However, the Igbo word 'ekele' in the context of this study is more related to a translation of the English word, 'greeting'. While *'*ekele*'* is the same Igbo word for greeting and thanking, the research focuses more on greeting. A little explanation of the concept of 'thanking' to clearly mark the difference between thanking and greeting in Igbo traditional culture may suffice.

Offering thanks in Igbo culture is more or less an act of worship and devotion. The Igbo acknowledge God, the Supreme Being, and other minor divinities that function as His ministers. The Igbo can hardly do anything or embark on any exercise without thanking his God and his ancestors for making such adventure possible. This is in line with the Igbo philosophy, which says "e kele dike na nke omere, o mekwa ọzọ" (when the mighty is offered thanks for what he did, he is pleased to do more). The Igbo render thanksgiving to their gods and ancestors either verbally or with sacrificial items such as goat, ram, fowl, yam, kolanut, drinks and other things they can afford [11]. Thanks are also what children offer their parents for a meal or other acts of benevolence. It is generally what the Igbo offer in appreciation or anticipation of a gift or act of kindness shown them. That is why the Igbo would say "e kele onye akịdị na nke ọ gwọrọ, ọ gwọọ ọzọ" (If one is thanked for the goodwill he showed, he would be inspired/pleased to do more). While greeting is greatly cherished in Igbo culture, offering thanks is also highly treasured. They are closely related but not exactly the same.

Consequently, Akindele writes that "greetings can be described as the exchange of expressions, pleasantries or good wishes between two people or a group interacting for the purpose of fulfilling social obligations or for the purpose of establishing interpersonal relationship" [12]. However, greetings as applied to this study are acts of addressing with expressions of salutation, compliments, friendliness, respect, goodwill and kind wishes. As such, greetings involve a lot of salutatory and communicative expressions like verbal and nonverbal acknowledgements, handshakes, kisses, hugs, facial expressions, gestures, eye contacts, bows, prostrations and general body language. It can also take some form of display like a motorist flashing the headlamp or honing. Greetings can also appear in written formats. This is typically what is seen in greeting cards, artworks, celebration cakes, airports, embassies, entrance points, etc. Greetings are everyday experiences and every moment affairs. It could also be occasional and seasonal.

There are different kinds of seasonal greetings among organizations and religious groups. For instance, in Nigeria, citizens greet each other "Happy Independence" on every 1st of October, Muslims are greeted "*Barka da Sallah*" during the occasion of *Eid Mubarak*, *Eid El Kabir*, etc., Christians are greeted "Happy Easter", "Happy Christmas" during Easter and Christmas celebrations respectively. There are different methods of greetings at different seasons and occasions in Igbo traditional culture, which equally varies from community to community, that is why the Igbo would say "ọkwa mba na-ebe n'olu, n'olu".

IMPORTANCE OF GREETING IN IGBO CULTURE

Greeting is very important for relationships to continue and thrive. As a code of honor and conduct in the Igbo culture, people are expected to greet in a dignified and respectful manner because it reflects their conformity to the traditional values.

- Greetings help the children to be easily integrated into the Igbo cultural values through the process of socialization. As a basic norm, children in the Igbo culture are taught how to greet right from their families. While the learning starts from the family, it is not just a household affair or engagement, but a community concern for acceptable social and cultural development. To this end, the Igbo would say "Otu onye anaghị azụ nwa" (child's training is a collective engagement). Through greetings the younger members of the Igbo communities can associate with elders more easily, learning and internalizing the essential habits that are acceptable in the society. Older people or elders also greet themselves in the presence of children so that they will emulate. That Igbo capture this in the proverbial saying: "nne ewu

na-ata nri,nwa ya elewe ya anya n'ọnụ"(the kid watches as the she-goat eats grass). They will by far imbibe the norms and values of the society, which will shape their behavioural traits by means of greetings. The young members of the community through acts of greetings develop acceptable personality and build social skills that are necessary for public interactions beyond their immediate community. When one greets a person who probably is in a bad mood with a flash of infectious smile, the individual is most likely to respond accordingly.

- It helps to promote the Igbo brotherhood character and cooperative spirit. The Igbo have high sense of mutual support, arising from common good and shared interests. The belief that one is his brother's keeper is a humanitarian principle in the Igbo traditional culture, which ensures solidarity and support for individual's wellbeing. This notion of brotherhood brought about the saying; "onye nwanne ya nọ n'ala eze anaghị aga ọku mmụọ" (one whose brother is in heaven does not go to hell). It implies that in a situation where one's relative or kinsman is in a good position to assist; the individual is not expected to suffer. Such privileged individuals are not expected to disappoint the idea of brotherhood. That is why the Igbo will equally say "ọ nụrụ ube nwanne agbala ọsọ" (he that hears the cry of a brother should not run away). The Igbo community members are interdependent and supportive. In order to ensure that this chain of supportive system continues, and guarantee the progress of Igbo community, people try to reciprocate kind gestures shown them. This underlines the dictum of *aka nri kwọọ aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwọọ aka nri* (if the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand will equally wash the left hand). There are mutual benefits when the Igbo support one another to attain their possible heights in life. As a fundamental social norm in Igbo culture, greetings kindle this practice and inspire people to support one another.
- It promotes social and cultural awareness in individuals, enabling them to value, appreciate and contribute to the positive changing of their communities. Igbo culture demands that people should first and foremost exchange greetings whenever and wherever they meet. That is why there are various greeting patterns for different activities and occasions. Right from formative years, members of the traditional Igbo society are influenced by the social and cultural patterns of their communities. In Igbo culture, people do not just greet for greeting sake. They greet in accordance with the socio-cultural norms that are tied to greetings. Greetings are integral components of *Omenala*, meaning, that which obtains from the land. There are acceptable patterns of greetings and every good community member is meant to know them, conform to them and apply them in his daily interactions with other members of the group. This helps an individual to adapt properly to social conditions and changing state of affairs, thereby scaling up his or her emotional intelligence. In the Igbo traditional milieu, an individual who does not greet has a social and cultural problem. The Igbo are conscious of greeting habits as core social and cultural ingredients crucial for mutual interactions and harmonious coexistence in the community.
- It helps in the preservation of the community and their values. Through imbibing the virtue of greeting, young people can demonstrate sense of loyalty, honesty, discipline, courage and responsibility. It instills into them the spirit of desirable habits and right attitude to life. It assists in training the young people to becoming good members of the community as well as equips them as the future of the community, who would assume leadership positions and make acceptable contributions to the sustenance and development of the community. It

helps to underline community values and facilitates the promotion of social intercourse for the general wellbeing of the community.

- In a meeting or gathering of kinsmen, it helps to bring in order and peaceful deliberations. Greeting wets the listening appetite of the audience in Igbo gatherings and predispose them to be observant and pay rapt attention. In one way, it serves as an overture to conversations and debates. In another way, it serves as a means of acknowledging protocols in a gathering. The "kwenu" or "mma mma" chants normally suffice in such occasions. It generally helps to moderate meetings in Igbo traditional settings.
- Greeting is capable of provoking blessings and benefits. It attracts blessings from God, the ancestors and elders. There are always divine and supernatural blessings that are attached to honoring parents and elders. Those who honour their parents and elders are bound to live long and experience old age too. This underlines the Igbo philosophy of "onye fee eze, eze eruo ya" (if you worship a king, you will become a king). Honour and respect attract reward. At times when an elderly person is greeted by the young ones, the response in addition follows with proclamation of blessings like "Ndewo, Chukwu gozie gị" (Thanks, may God bless you), "Nwa m ọ ga-adịrịgi mma,ịnụla" (My child, it shall be well with you, okay) etc. Any child that demonstrates apparent deficit of greeting habit is regarded as lacking morals and acceptable nurture. People can render help and offer additional advantages and opportunities to a child or persons that often greet them.
- Greetings connect people and bring them together in order to establish a relationship that could last a life time, and might even extend to another generation. It is one of the foundational habit stones that are used in building of healthy relationships in the community. People can easily connect with strangers from different socio-cultural backgrounds by means of greetings. "It is from our web of relationships and connections with other people that we draw our strength. Such communities can lift us when we are down and give us the capacity to deal with whatever challenges come our way" [13]. The relationship can even expand and transcend the initiators into other relatives and friends who may draw from the already existing relationship and cordially relate with one another. It can lead to social attraction that will result in marriage proposals and wedding.
- Greetings can help to actualize life goals and destiny. The habit of greetings can make one happy and set the individual in the right frame of mind for purposeful benefits and achieving objectives. Greeting helps to adapt to different environments and events in order to succeed in that aspect. A simple *jisie ike* (well done) can inspire a farmer at work and provoke more energy. The derivable value enhances encouragement and boosts the self-assurance that is needed to achieve purpose in life. A moment of greeting can be an opportunity that will trigger conversations that will eventually link one to a destiny helper, lucrative businesses, good job opportunities, political appointments, quality services and other destiny related benefits and life goals.
- Greeting is the bridge that breaks cultural barriers and the oil that lubricates social interactions. It is used as a means of creating harmony within human societies. Making conscious efforts to greet in a host cultural pattern is a basic means of understanding cultural differences and appreciating them. For instance, if an Hausa man greets an Igbo with *Kedu* in Enugu, the Igbo is more likely to respond positively and offer additional help than when he greets him with *Sanu*, which is the pattern of greeting in Hausa cultural areas. As the Igbo would say "nkụ dị n'mba na-eghere mba nri" (what is obtainable in a society sustains the

society). Conforming to the code of greetings that is obtainable in a given culture facilities cordiality and warmth. World over, people turn to each other for one reason or another and helps are rendered more when a person's manner of approach is endearing and pleasing. Therefore, societies like the Igbo cultural group normally thrives in the maintenance of peace and harmonious existence, which is primarily, facilitated though acts and gestures of greetings.

CENTRAL GREETINGS IN THE IGBO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

In line with Nwoye's [14] typology that identified three broad categories of Igbo greetings, namely; salutatory, exhortative and commiserative, I have added 'celebrative', in order to accommodate other forms of Igbo greetings that are not somewhat captured in Nwoye's typology and categorization**.** There are, therefore, four broad categories of Igbo greetings, which are: Salutatory, Exhortative, Commiserative, and Celebrative.

Salutatory Greetings

Salutatory greetings in Igbo traditional culture are mostly oral expressions of goodwill at encounters. They are greetings the Igbo exchanged spontaneously when they meet each other to express enthusiasm and goodwill. Forms of greetings that fall in this category include daily interval greetings, welcome and farewell acknowledgments.

Daily Interval Greetings

Morning	Ị bọọlachi, Ị saala chi?, Ị tetala ụra?, Ị hikwara nke ọma? Ị putakwara nke ọma?
Afternoon	Ndewo, kedu ka eke si anya-anwu? Kedu ka ehihie si aga?
Evening	Unu a nọdụla/ Ị nọdụla ọnọdụ anyasị?
Night	Ka chi bọọ/foo, hie nke ọma, rahụjụụ

Salutatory Greetings for Arrivals and Departures

Ịbịala? Ịbịa, Ịlọtala? Ịlọla? Nnọọ	Welcome
Jee/gaa nke ọma, Ị lawala? Ị gawala?	Farewell
Kaọ dị, ka emesia, mgbe ọzọ	Goodbye
Ijeọma/udo/awele	Safe journey
E jee, alọọ	You will go safely and return safely
Kedu maka ije?	How was your journey?

Daily General Greetings

Ndewo/Imela	Well done
Kedu?	How are you? Hello
Udo diri unu	May peace be unto you
Ekele m unu	I greet you people
Ka ọdị echi	See you tomorrow
Kelere m ndị ebe gị	Extend my greetings to your people
Unu dịkwa mma?	I hope you are fine

Long Interval Greetings

Anya kwa?	Long time
Nkea ọbụ anya?	It's been a while

Onye ka m na ahụ ịhea?	Who is it that I see?
Ị si ka ahụ gị anya?	You decided to be seen?
Onye nkea o si ebe pụta?	Where is she/he coming from?
Onye bụ onyea?	Who is this?
Anya m ji hụ gị akpọkwala m	Let the eyes with which I see you not go blind

Exhortative Greetings

The Igbo are assiduous and industrious. They are very hard working and always engage in some form of work activities. As such, they are always urged to put more effort in whatever they are doing or to persevere so that the individual will not end half way, but to tenaciously endure the difficulties associated with such engagements and achieve the goal. At times it comes in form of a prayer. Some examples of exhortative greetings are:

A dala mba,	Do not get weary
Jisie ike n'ọrụ,	Well done at work
Ike agwulagi n'ọrụ	Do not get exhausted
Kee ajị n'ume	Gird up your loins/be strengthened
Chukwu gbaa gị ume	May God strengthen you ,
Ọ ga adịrị gị mma,	It will be well with you/I wish you well/Best wishes/Goodluck
Ọ ga agara gị nke ọma	It will go well with you
Chukwu nonyere gị	God be with you
Mmeri bụ nke gị	You shall overcome/you will succeed

Commiserative Greetings

The Igbo traditional community is brotherhood oriented, where everyone is his brother's keeper. As such, people that life events threw into unfortunate circumstances are normally greeted with expressions of sympathy, pity and feelings of compassion. This can be an event of death, sickness, accident, loss of any kind, or other ill-fated misfortunes that befall an individual, family or even kindred. In such situations, the Igbo normally commiserate with the bereaved or victim. They also show great compassion and solidarity. Appeal for an offence committed can also be categorized here. Some examples of commiserative greetings include:

Sickness

Ndo	Sorry
A rịazila ọzọ	Do not fall sick again
A rịakwala	Do not be sick
Ọrịa hapụ gị aka	May you be free from sickness
Eji m aka na ina agbake	I hope you are recuperating
Gbake ngwa ngwa	Get well soon

Events of Bereavement and other Misfortunes

Ndo,	Sorry
E bezila	Cry no more
Kara obi/tachie obi	Be strong
Kasie onwe gị obi	Be strong and console yourself
Jide obi gị aka	Put yourself together

Diwe	Endure
Chukwu wetara, chukwu e werela	God gives and God has taken
Ọzọ e mela	Let not this misfortune repeat itself

Greetings for an offense

Ndo	Sorry
Biko	Please
Gbahara/gharawa	Forgive
Iwe gị dị ọkụ dajụọ	Let your smoldering anger subside/Don't be overtaken by anger
E wezila iwe	Don't be offended
Biko, Obi gi juru	Please calm down

Celebrative Greetings

As there are times and seasons in the Igbo traditional calendar, so are greetings for every time, season, activities, and festivities. Among diverse Igbo peoples and dialects, there are greetings for early morning, morning, afternoon, evening, night, and other events in Igbo socio-cultural life. The Igbo traditional community is normally a beehive of activities. From time to time there is one celebration or another the people normally engage themselves in. There are seasonal celebrations like new yam festivals, *ọfala* festivals, masquerade festivals, etc., with seasonal greetings; there are also cultural celebrations like marriage and dances with their greetings too. 'Season greetings' in the contemporary society fall into this type.

Individuals who attain different degrees of success or achievements like childbirth or coronation are also greeted with celebrative greetings. There are also groups like the masquerades and secret societies with their different kinds of greetings. Dance groups have varying ways they are greeted. The celebrative method of greetings mostly varies from one Igbo community to another. For instance, in an event of childbirth in some communities in Igboland, the family would be greeted by well wishers with the chants of "Owowo", "Wereyo" (joyful chants).

Achievements

Ị nwaka	You tried a lot
Ị gbara ezigbo mbọ	You made tremendous effort
Ị turula ugo	You have attained success
Dike ka Ị bụ	You are a great man
Ị bụ odogwu	You are a great personality
Ị bụ dimkpa asaa	You are a great man (You worth seven men)
Ị karaka/kajarakaja	You are a strong man
Ị nwela mmeri	You have won

Titled hailing

Oke Osisi
Ogbu Agụ
Ogbu Efi, dzg

Gathering Moderation Mantra

Cha cha cha/Che che che!

Igbo kwenụ!
Kwenụ!
Kwezuo nụ!, or
Cha cha cha /Che che che!
Igbo mma mma nụ!

While the "Igbo kwenu" (which will be elaborated more in subsequent section) is a central Igbo model of greeting, gathering moderation greetings vary a lot from community to community. Gathering moderation mantras also depend on the group. Secret societies, masquerade and dance groups have their various greeting mantras.

From the above greeting types and categories, it is instructive to observe that the original Igbo pattern of salutatory greetings mostly appear in a question form. For instance, kedu?, simply means, how are you? However, in modern times, some people have tried to consider some Igbo pattern of greetings from the direct English translations. This is mostly seen on the daily greetings that are rendered at different intervals like morning, afternoon and night. *Ụtụtụ ọma, ehihie ọma, anyasị/mgbede ọma* are direct translations of the English version of good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, respectively. Note that 'good' in English is translated as 'ọma' in Igbo, while morning, afternoon, and evening are *ụtụtụ, ehihie* and *mgbede*/*anyasị*, respectively.

To that effect, some now consider good morning as *ụtụtụ ọma*, good afternoon as *ehihe ọma*, and good evening as *mgbede*/*anyasị ọma*. They are not originally Igbo traditional pattern of greetings. People greeted in this contemporary fashion normally respond as they should have responded when they are greeted in the original Igbo pattern. Thus, it is gradually becoming an acceptable pattern of greetings, standing side by side with the original Igbo greetings pattern. However, it should be understood to be a model cut from direct translations of English greetings at such daily intervals. Likewise, 'Hello' in English is being translated by some Igbo broadcasters to mean 'Alo', it should be noted that 'Alo' is a mimic of the English 'Hello' hence it does not have direct Igbo translation. What looks more probable as 'Hello' in Igbo is 'Kedu'. Olaoye locates the cause of this changing trend on Anglicization of the world. He particularly infers that "…the pervasive influence of English on Nigerian languages and Nigeria's polity has a deleterious consequence" [15]. Such deleterious consequences are capable of relegating indigenous languages and value systems especially among the Igbo, who are regarded to be highly receptive to change [16], hence the need to document aspects of Igbo indigenous value system.

Nevertheless, the Igbo morning greetings are more than the English 'good morning'. In the Igbo version, one seeks further to know whether another slept well last night and the greetings can take more time because of probing more to ascertain each other's family wellbeing. The traditional Igbo method of greetings on daily intervals especially, in the morning, does not only come in form of question but requires an answer. For instance, "Ị/unu a saala chi?" (have you woken up?), would be greeted by the first greeter and the second person that is so greeted would respond "ee, anyị a saala chi" (yes we have woken up). Most times the greetings come in plural form that associates third parties, even when the meeting involves only two persons and addressed to an individual. This underscores the Igbo conceptualization of sense of self and family orientation that encourages "We" more than "I". This equally accentuates the common bond in a typical African community like the Igbo. The Igbo is a typical collectivist culture [17]. An individual Igbo responding "we are fine" aptly

exemplifies Mbiti's African philosophical concept of "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am" [18]. Thus, among the Igbo, the idea of belonging to a family or community is prioritized by individual members and it defines how they react to life events, including greetings and their responses.

VALUES OF GREETINGS AND RESPONSES

To greet is one aspect of the Igbo social values and to respond to the greeting is another. One thing that is important in the traditional greetings norm is the 'how'. How the greeting is rendered and how the response comes are measured in the traditional scale of values. It is good to greet with decorous and decent mien. Putting up a smiling face is always welcome while greeting. Sometimes the way one greets determines how he would be responded. While it is considered as a mark of disrespect and dishonor for a child or the younger person not to greet the elderly, it is also considered as a sign of animosity and bitterness when one is greeted to his or her hearing and the individual fails to respond accordingly. This is not however, in a situation where the greeter merely mumbled or muttered his greeting in a careless manner that suggests apparent disregard or disrespect, which is generally not accepted.

In such instances, the individual is not really motivated to convey the value of greeting, but as a basic requirement of social custom and community relationship, he was merely doing it just to fulfill social needs. In a standard Igbo greeting, if an individual is greeted and he did not hear it or heard it and pretended he did not hear by not responding, the greeter is bound to repeat the greeting. If the greeter is convinced that the greeted has heard and refused to respond accordingly, he may not greet him again at the moment. However, he will take an account of it and imply that the greeted individual might be habouring some ill thoughts against him or his family member(s). He might also be wondering whether he or any of his family members offended the greeted in any way that he did not know. Most greeters that experienced such unresponsive attitude would normally narrate their encounter with their family members for them to take note. Not giving appropriate response to greetings can breed acrimony and hostility, whereas proper response builds trust and facilitate affection. Hence the Igbo would say, "e kwe ekele, ihu a saa", (the face beams with smile when greeting is properly responded). Traditional ethics of greetings in Igbo traditional communities emphasize acceptable manner of greetings and responses.

THE "IGBO KWENU" GREETING MODEL

One of the most popular Igbo greeting patterns in a gathering is "Igbo kwenu". "Igbo kwenu" is a phrasal combination of two Igbo words, 'Igbo' and 'Kwenu'. While 'Igbo' refers to the entire people of the Igbo ethnic nationality, especially the very people that are present in a particular gathering as the audience, 'Kwenu' denotes agreement and consent. It can be loosely translated thus: "Igbo agree!" and the response: "agreed!" In other words, the people were summoned to agree and they agreed. This greatly underscores the Igbo philosophy of commonality, unity of purpose and shared solidarity. It is in this light that Iroegbu remarks that;

The Igbo see the fact that to stay united in a direction or course of an action will bring a shared honour to them. As a result, they value strongly to come together. Coming together is deterministic and central to all else. In gathering of all sorts, namely marriage, rituals, celebrations, age grade meetings, war, wrestling, hunting, and village political affairs, the Igbo assert their emotions and psychology together through calls to order of solidarity such as invoking the "Igbo kwenu". When

someone is to speak to an issue, he will call to order the gathered Igbo to listen to him through the application or summon of "Igbo kwenu" [19].

It is a pattern of greetings used in arousing and stimulating the interests and attention of gathered members. As a result, it can mean "Igbo ekele m unu" or "Igbo mma mma nụ" (Igbo, I greet you). In a former gathering especially among the men folk, an individual that wants to make an important presentation is expected to bellow "Igbo/umunna kwenu" and the people will respond 'ịyaa', "kwenu*" again, "*ịyaa" and at the third time he might raise his voice a little more and say "kwezuonụ!," and they will respond and drag the 'ịyaaa' a little longer. It is used in recognizing the presence of all the group members that make up a particular gathering or meeting. It also serves the purpose of protocol acknowledgements. On one hand, it can only be for the sake of greeting the constituent members of the gathering. In that regard, an individual may walk in and would be allowed to greet the gathering; he will acknowledge various groups or kindred that make up the gathering and after the acknowledgements will sit down or take his leave. On another hand, it can be greetings that precede a speech or an address. Mostly, the "Igbo kwenu" greeting pattern is followed with a speech or address.

This is related to what Akindele [20] describes as using greetings for a prelude to the main conversation. It is used to greet, recognize the audience and crave their indulgence before one begins to make his presentations. It helps to summon the consciousness of the people, and generate a listening atmosphere in the midst. Once you have used the "kwenu" greetings to whet the listening appetite of your audience, you have the floor and no one is expected to interrupt you until you are done with your speech. A typical example of the 'kwenu' greeting pattern is highlighted by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, where one of the elders of Umuofia, Ogbuefi Ezeugo, bellowed the "kwenu" greeting among his people.

At last Ogbuefi Ezeugo stood up in the midst of them and bellowed four times, '*Umuofia kwenu*,' and on each occasion he faced a different direction and seemed to push the air with a clenched fist. And ten thousand men answered '*yaa*!' each time. Then there was perfect silent [21].

At anytime the people in a gathering are greeted with the "kwenu" greetings, they are expected to yell a chorused 'iyaa' in response. The 'iyaa' response underscores general consent and common acceptance of the greeter. It is therefore, mainly a form of proper salutation that normally precedes a spoken presentation in a formal traditional Igbo gathering. One can still decide to agree or disagree with the position and submission of the speaker even though he heartily responded and accepted the greetings. The speaker can equally use the "Igbo kwenu" greetings pattern to pronounce blessings before making his presentation. In that instance, it might be rendered in the following manner:

The speaker: Chee! Chee!! Chee!!! Igbo kwenu!
The (People) audience: Ịyaa!
The Speaker: Mụọ nụ!
The (People) audience:Ịyaa!
The Speaker: Zụọ nụ!
The (People) audience: Ịyaa!
The Speaker: Rienụ!
The (People) audience: Ịyaa!

Ṅụọnụ: Ịyaa!
The (People) audience: Ịyaa!

In the above lines, the speaker greets and prays for the blessings of procreation and the provision for sustenance so that the people will not only procreate, but be able to nurture and train their children. As such, he equally prays that what they will eat and drink will never be in short supply, but always in abundance.

It could be prefixed with Igbo, Ụmụnna, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Nigeria etc., just like Ogbuefi Ezeugo prefixed it with "Umuofia" in *Things Fall Apart*. The 'Igbo' in the "Igbo kwenu" mantra could also be replaced with the names of communities like Mbaise, Ngwa, Idemili or families like Ụmụonyike, Ndeogbuewu, Ndịokereke, or names of age grade associations like Igwebụike, Ọganiru, Odoziobodo, or educational institutions like University of Nigeria, or the name of organized unions like Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), especially when they are within the Igbo cultural area or mainly Igbo members. Put differently, it can be focused on a particular group. Any gathering that is largely made up of people of Igbo decent usually adopts the traditional "Igbo kwenu" pattern of greeting in their meetings and deliberations.

Though the mantra of "Igbo kwenu" has evolved to be a vibrant public philosophy with other meanings and variables that it could be used even in the wider Nigerian context by summoning "Nigeria kwenu" (Nigeria agree, unite or stand up), it is primarily a pattern of greetings in Igbo cultural milieu. In the national perspective, it is a statement of affirmation and a clarion call for Nigeria or even Africa to arise, standup or unite. 'Nigeria' normally replaces 'Igbo' in this instance, "Nigeria kwenu". The "kwenu" mantra has evolved overtime and become an established pattern and feature of greetings among the Igbo whenever and wherever they gather in any part of the world.

HANDSHAKE IN IGBO TRADITIONAL GREETINGS

Contrary to such opinions that handshake is not part of African style of greetings as shown by Elegbe and Nwachukwu [22], handshake is one of the ways Igbo people greet themselves since time immemorial. When two or more people meet on the way, they greet each other by the way of shaking their hands. Shaking of hands in the Igbo pattern of greeting is deeply symbolical and significant. It is called "ịta ọjị aka" (eating of the hand kolanut) [23]. Kolanut in Igbo culture is a great symbol of peace and unity. "The ceremony of kola (ọjị) presentation is a good example of the central value of life (Ndu) for the Igbos" [24]. The kolanut ritual is highly treasured that the Igbo would say "onye wetara ọjị wetara ndụ" (he who brings kola brings life). Eating kolanut together is like *ịgba ndụ* (covenant). In a similar vein, in the Igbo value system, when one greets another by the way of *ita oji aka* (handshake), it goes a long way to demonstrate the degree of trust and goodwill they have for each other.

Consequently, it douses fear of aggression. As Duranti [25] reckons, some scholars who study greetings on the basis of phylogenetic cause argue that it was necessitated by fear of aggression. They maintain that from the basis of evolution of human behaviours, humans like other animal species share common instincts of possible hostility and safety, suggesting that greetings behaviour might have emanated from this sense of fear, and the need to allay such fears of aggression in humans. Drawing from this perception of fear of aggression definition, Duranti shows that greetings are seen as "rituals of appeasing and bonding that counteract potentially aggressive behaviour

during face-to-face encounters" [26]. He equally notes that they further accentuate that between individuals, the gesture of handshake is a mark of trust across societies.

This assumption of fear of aggression appears to align with Ubesie's [27] exposition on the evolution of handshakes gesture as a form of greetings in Igbo traditional society. Ubesie observes that in the days of yore, when might was right, people can easily hack down each other and go with the head as a trophy. As such, clouds of nervousness normally pervade the atmosphere, especially when men meet on the way. For that reason, men constantly have their machetes firmly sheeted around their left waist region so that they can easily draw it with their right hand in case of any offensive contingency. He maintains that every great man always goes out with his machete not being sure whether he will encounter a friend or a foe along the way.

When people eventually meet on the way and greet each other with the right hand that would have been used to pull out the machete, it becomes obvious that they sue for peace and mean no harm, because no one can easily unsheathe the machete with his left hand and strike. It however, appears that the thesis of "fear of aggression" in human encounters as highlighted by Duranti [28], informed shaking with the right hand in Igbo pattern of greetings [29]. Handshake greeting helps to douse every apprehensive feeling of backstabbing when they turn their back against each other. They will greet each other by eating the 'ọjị aka' (having a handshake) peacefully and go their ways. In this wise, handshake greeting in the Igbo culture symbolizes peace and life. People hardly shake those that they are suspicious of being infected with communicable diseases. When people shake each other not minding such ill thoughts, it conveys and confirms deep love. Handshake among the Igbo revives life and removes every shade of suspicion and misgiving.

Handshakes in Igbo traditional community can also serve the purpose of commendations. Ubesie [30] further observes that in the olden days, other than when people meet on the way, those that are mostly greeted with a handshake are people that recorded great achievements or made uncommon marks like killing a lion or leopard, or bringing the head of an energetic man as a war booty. In this wise, it is used in offering congratulations or appreciation for achieving a rare feat. This shows that the community is proud of the individual as a brave soul that brings joy to his people. The handshake is normally memorable in the person's psyche as deserving for his or her milestone, which most people in the community can only wish for. Handshakes in Igbo community can also be used for supporting children.

It is usually for children that are very extraordinary and do what pleases adults. Perhaps, a child that knows how to run errands and delivers messages perfectly can be encouraged with a handshake as a commendation. Typically, this form of handshake bolsters a child's morale tremendously, and serves as inspiration for other children within the area to emulate and do their best. Suffice it to say that handshakes in traditional Igbo communities also serve as encouragements and motivations for people who achieve commendable feats to strive and do more exploits for bigger accomplishments in life.

INSTRUMENTS FOR GREETINGS

Greeting in Igbo culture is so deep that in the community, members do not just use verbal expressions and body language to exchange greetings. The Igbo use various cultural instruments for greetings. While some of them are handy, others can be procured or provided for the purpose of

greetings. There are two methods of Igbo greetings, the verbal and the nonverbal methods [31]. Instruments of greetings are mostly featured in the nonverbal salutatory gestures. Some of the items or instruments used for greetings in Igbo culture include traditional regalia or symbols like, *ọfọ* staff, walking stick, machete, *akupe* (traditional hand fan), elephant tusk, *ọza*, *nzụ* (traditional white chalk) etc., these can be offered or raised to greet people in a large gathering or between individuals. In a large gathering, it is usually done by taking the instrument of greeting up in the air, a little above the head and waves it in the direction of the people you are extending the greeting gesture to. Between individuals, it can be used to exchange traditional handshake of three at the backhand-side and one at the palm-side popularly known as 'ịna atọ'.

In Igbo cultural tradition, greetings have been ritualized that it could be done in many other ways than verbal expressions. These also include body contacts and movements. Eminent personalities can be greeted with guns at the moment of their arrivals and departures on important traditional occasions. When a king or illustrious individual arrives at a great occasion, he is normally greeted with gun salutes. It could be seven or twenty-one gun salute. In a similar token, some people can be greeted with *opi*/*ọja* flute/elephant tusk/animal horn with a finger hole, and other musical instruments like *ufie/ekwe* (slit wooden drum), and *ikoro* (larger wooden drum/gong) [32]. The drum especially *ikoro* or *ekwe* will be given peculiar beat by the drummer in a manner that from the resonating echoes it will be understood that such a dignified person is being greeted. It is in this wise that the Igbo would say "nke onye na-aza ka ekwe na-akpọ ya" (one is greeted with the drum by the name he answers).

They are also greeted with songs and dance. This is more fitting in a gathering, as the individual is coming; the lead singer will sing with his name or title and welcomes him to the fold. The names of people of worth are normally incorporated in songs and the vocalist will melodically relate their achievements and exploits in a rhythmic piece of music. In Igbo culture there are so many dance groups, including the masquerades. They have different dance patterns. If it is a dance troupe, there is always a first person who leads. He will dance melodiously to the audience and display some eye-catching dance steps that will understandably communicate greetings. In some groups, the dancer will dance from one end to another as he goes the people will cheer him up while acknowledging his demonstrations of greetings.

In such instances, after the dancer has done this, the other members of the dance group will file out dancing, then the dance session will commence in earnest. In fact, some songs are exclusively composed and rendered in certain occasions for the sole purpose of conveying greetings. They are called 'egwu ekele' or 'egwu nnabata' (Greeting /welcome songs). In some events like marriage, the wife, husband or both can also greet their guests by dancing from one end to another, expressing cheerfulness and conveying greetings.

Likewise, there are some people who have distinguished themselves in various aspects of traditional life and vocation. Among them are people who have made their marks in the traditional society through feats of bravery and heroism Ubesie [33]. These set of people have heroic and honorific accolades that they are always greeted with. It is called 'itu aha'. The individual will be greeted according to the feats he achieved and his heroic deeds. "In the traditional Igbo society, an individual can achieve success and fame by being a great farmer, medicine man, hunter, craftsman, warrior, etc." [34]. As a great hunter that has killed lion or leopard and other tough animals, he

would be greeted as 'ogbu agụ' (leopard killer) or 'o ji egbe aza oku' (one that answers with gun). If it is a man of substance who celebrated the burial of his father with *efi*, (bull), he would be greeted as 'ogbu efi' [35-36]. If it is a community king he would be honoured as the king and greeted 'eze ị ga-adị or 'eze biri kwa oo' (May the king live), or 'Igwe' (His highness) [37].

People are also greeted according to the title they have taken like 'O mere ọha' (he that helps everyone or the larger community), "Aha eji a ga-mba" (the name that takes his people to places), 'Ọnwa' or 'ọnwa na-agbara ọha' (the sun or the sun that shines for all), 'Gburugburu' (general, all-rounder), 'Ikemba' (strength of a nation) etc. It is in this light that in a gathering of men of class and caliber, as part of the protocol, the Igbo would greet "nke onye chiri ya zere" (loosely translated, I greet and recognize you according to your titles). People always want to be greeted by their title, because it takes greatness and fortune to acquire an authentic title in the traditional Igbo society [38-39]. It is usually discourteous and disrespectful not to recognize titled-men like Nze, Ọzọ, etc. by their designations. They can take offense as the case may be. But deliberate efforts are always made to recognize individuals and accord everyone the respect that is due to him or her, irrespective of social variables. It is in this light that the people would say "ugwu bụ nkwai nkwai nwaanyị jiri mụọ nwaanyị ibe ya", (it is by virtue of respect that a woman gives birth to a fellow woman).

ETHICAL STANDARDS AND GESTURES OF GREETING AMONG THE IGBO

In the traditional Igbo community setting, people greet one another, and children greet every elder they meet, whether they know them or not. It is not just a social tradition but a value that holds the social fabric of the Igbo traditional community. In fact, the unwritten rule of greeting in Igbo culture is that a younger person or child should greet first and demonstrate respect with his words and gestures, if they are of the same sex a woman should greet first. Relationships in Igbo communities are guided by hierarchy and seniority. "Parents continue to exercise influence over their children in accordance with the theory of hierarchy of forces" [40]. Igbo cultural values are based on the foundation of the past through the present. Hierarchy is an imperative force of relationship. Parents and elders are honoured [41-42]. In Igboland, it is offensively disrespectful for one to walk and pass an elderly person without greeting him or her.

Eldership and old age are considered a special privilege from God which should be respected. Being alive to attain old age implies that one has passed through series of rites or many life processes, events and acquired enormous experiences. Their being alive is cherished, and their words are taken to be wise counsel and more effective, since they are closer to the ancestors and God, the source of life [43]. The elders are therefore, regarded as repositories of communal wisdom and values. In the traditional Igbo community settings, age is a privilege and acknowledged as such. Therefore, age and seniority command and attract respect. Wisdom most times is believed to come with age. This idea is captured in the Igbo proverbial reflection which says that "ihe okenye nọ-ọdụ hụ, nwata rigoro n'elu osisi ọgaghị ahụ ya" (what an elder sees while sitting down, a child cannot see it even from a treetop). The oldest in the community or family is considered the leader and the head. As a result, they are highly honoured and respected. In Igbo traditional gatherings, they are duly accorded respects; they are greeted first, served first and revered.

For the reason that greeting is a salutation at meeting, a lot of things are involved in the Igbo traditional method of greetings. People exchanging greetings are expected to wear smiles on their

faces as it conveys welcome and acceptability. In addition to acceptable gestures of greetings in Igbo culture, it equally involves a lot of verbal acknowledgements. The Igbo culture requires a respectful body movement and giving special attention to the person that is being greeted. Greeting and walking away is regarded as disrespect among the Igbo, when one is greeting, he is expected to stand or halt a little as a sign of honour and recognition. A little time is allowed for exchange of pleasantries and goodwill. Most times greetings are followed up with other questions like "kedu?", "Ị dịkwa mma?" etc. that is to say that the greeted will ask about the wellbeing of the greeter, vice versa.

Some respectful gestures are associated with greetings in the Igbo culture. If a young man is greeting a well respectable elder it is expected that he offers a little nod in order to demonstrate modesty and as a sign of recognizing seniority and respect [44]. It is also expected that a younger person applies honorific pronouns like Dee, Dede, Ndaa, Dada etc., while greeting an older person as it is more respectful, but awfully disrespectful to call an older person directly by his or her name [45-46].

A boy or younger man is expected to use two hands or support the right hand with the left somewhere between the wrist and the elbow while shaking hands with an older or elderly person. It is a sign of respect. Also the younger person is not expected to be the first to stretch out his hand to an elder to offer a handshake. The younger ones are meant to receive handshakes with both hands and complement it with a little bow. Handshake is meant to be cordial and within the hand region. Any form of handshake beyond clasping the hands affably is ruled out as greeting. Such could lead to untoward brawl and broil [47]. That is why the Igbo would say "ekele ruru na mpi aka aghọla ihe ọzọ"(a handshake that stretches to the elbow has turned into another thing).

It is wrong to shake someone using the left hand. Even if an individual is born a leftist and practically does everything with the left hand, Igbo ethical principles forbid the individual to exchange handshakes with the left hand. Left in the Igbo value system is not just the opposite of right at the face value, but an indication of abnormality and a pointer of wrongness. As a result, a conscious effort is usually made to ensure that a little child who has started showing signs of being a left-handed personality is corrected at infancy. So many strategies are adopted to ensure that the little child's stronger hand is his or her right hand. This is done with the view that the child will get so many things right using the right hand. Thus, the right way of exchanging handshakes in the Igbo traditional culture is using the right hand.

Adults also greet each other verbally and nonverbally. Verbally, men greet themselves with facial gesture of cordiality and acceptance, while women greet themselves in the same manner. As adults, in such greetings they can go beyond the basic verbal salutations of 'ndewo, kedu?', 'ọdị mma', (well-done, hello/how are you? fine), to asking about family, relatives, work and other important life matters and engagements. This is usually to demonstrate the Igbo ideals of 'agbata obi onye bụ nwnne ya' and 'onye aghala nwanne ya' (the philosophy of supportive neighbourhood and cooperative brotherhood). It is aimed at showing concern for one another and ensuring that each other and his household are doing fairly well.

However, women are required to show more respect when they are greeting men. Women are expected to bend their knees a little so that the man or elderly person will touch and warmly pat

their back. It demonstrates submissive manners as it is not the norm for a woman in the Igbo traditional culture to stretch out her hand and shake the man. This line of submission is also featured in traditional Igbo marriages, where the bride picks out the groom, kneels down to greet him and offers him a cup of palm wine to drink as a sign that she will be submissive and as a mark of agreement and unification.

Nonverbal gestures among the men, especially the titled men, involve gently and stylishly slapping the back of their hands three times and at the fourth time they will clasp their palms or shake themselves warmly and affectionately. Mostly this is done with instruments of greetings like the traditional hand fan *akupe*, staff, or *ọza*. Women and relatives can embrace themselves too [48]. It is called "i bi ọma", similar to hug in English. However, embracing is mostly seen between children and their adult family members, especially their parents. In recent times, whenever a child sights the mother or father coming back from farm or market, he or she normally runs with excitement to go and embrace and greet the parent. Sometimes they go in group of siblings or friends. In such instances, the greeting is usually accompanied with a chant of "Mama a lọta, oyoyo" (mother has returned) if it is the mother or "Papa a lọta, oyoyo" (father has returned), if it is the father. Members of the Igbo communities are expected to conform to the traditional ethical standard of greetings for healthy relationships.

REASON WHY THE IGBO GREET

Greeting in Igboland is beyond communicative expressions and gestures. It manifests the Igbo value of communalism and spirit of solidarity. They show high sense of unity among themselves with an air of enthusiastic mutual support. This is in clear recognition of the "anyi bu otu" (we are one) dictum that ties individual members of the community as one indissoluble body. As the Igbo saying goes "anya bewe, imi e bewe" (when the eyes cry the nose cries too). Igbo traditional community thrives on togetherness, the members rejoice and grief together. It is aimed at the well being and welfare of individual members, irrespective of what the situation is. If it is in a case of bereavement or misfortune, people will come to commiserate and strengthen the bereaved. The Igbo are rich in words and wise sayings. They also employ them in their greetings. They will use so many comforting and suiting words in such occasions.

The Igbo greet in so many occasions and situations but for one major reason. Whether it is in good or bad event, the purpose is to maintain and strengthen the traditional Igbo social ethic and chain of relationship that boldly underlines communal spirit of brotherhood, cohesion, mutual support and collective wellbeing. Through measures of greetings the Igbo register their sense of camaraderie, affinity and joint support to one another, no matter what the situation is. Hence they greet a family that is delivered of a baby in some Igbo communities with such chants and tunes like "owowoo" or "wereyoo". These chants are used for demonstrating shared joy and happiness. People that are getting married are greeted with complimentary counseling, to look after each other, love themselves, and live peacefully.

They are also greeted with the blessings of procreation and prosperity. People that are bereaved are greeted with consoling words. Soothing words are carefully selected to condole and comfort the bereaved. It would be done in a manner that in the end of the greetings, the bereaved would be strengthened, reassured and relieved. Similar pattern of greetings are extended to people that are sick, bedridden or hospitalized. People that arrive or about to depart to other places are greeted

differently. No matter the type or category of greetings, the central aim is to constantly lubricate the hub of Igbo social ethic and communal relationship.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The attempt has been to underline the value of greetings by highlighting its essential elements in Igbo traditional culture. The Igbo pattern of greetings is an age long practice that has endured through generations. The act of greeting is a learnable habit which children are guided to form by exposing them to the basic traditional Igbo social guidelines for greetings. Parental and kinship directives play significant roles in laying the foundations for imbibing the value and culture of greetings in Igbo families. Goodwill that is extended to children that have formed the habit of greetings might be denied those who do not always greet. Greetings create good impression of an individual and help him or her to relate with different people at more personal level. Unlike in the cities, people in the village setting greet one another, including a total stranger. In the cultural value system of the Igbo, it is the right of the elders and older persons to feel honoured and respected by means of greeting.

Greetings in Igbo cultural milieu have been firmly established in a manner that they have influenced even Christianity, which is the most dominant alien religion in the cultural area. It is instructive to note that Christianity has threatened a lot of cultural traditions and social norms in Igboland, but the traditional greetings pattern has rather remained influential. As such, even some Christian denominations have formalized their model of greetings in line with the Igbo traditional method. For instance, the Catholics are greeted 'Otito dịrị Jesu' (Praise be to Jesus) and they will respond 'na ndụ ebebe*,* Amịm' (through/unto life everlasting, Amen); the Methodists will greet 'O kwesiri bụ Nwa Atụrụ ahụ', (Worthy is the Lamb) and the congregants will respond 'Ịyaa'! (Alleluia); and The Apostolic will greet 'Kelenu Jihova nihi na Ọ dị mma' (praise Jehovah for He is good) and the people will respond "Nihi na ruo mgbe ebighebi ka ebere Ya na-adị" (For His mercies endure forever). Igbo masters of ceremony (MCs) and comedians usually adopt these lines comically in their course of duty to acknowledge and greet different denominations that gather for an event. The influence among the churches is an indication of how deep the Igbo greeting patterns have been established and cherished.

However, it appears that in the contemporary society, the value attached to greetings and respect for others are patently declining, owing to ubiquitous influence of foreign cultures, including English language. Consequently, some new generations of the Igbo seem not to understand or regard the values that are attached to greetings in Igbo traditional pattern. For that reason, the older generations of the Igbo, who are well versed in Igbo social values should constantly guide them and consistently strive to ensure that the traditional Igbo pattern of greetings is sustained. As the basic principle of proper socialization in the Igbo cultural tradition, greetings rendered in the Igbo traditional manner help to strengthen the social fabric of Igbo communities all over the world. As a social norm, among those outside their native communities, it stimulates the consciousness of 'nwanne di n'mba' (brotherhood away from native land), and inspires the alliance to advance common cause. Generally, it helps to uphold love for one another and maintain the 'onye aghala nwanne ya' cooperative spirit of the Igbo race. Therefore, the Igbo should continue to make conscientious efforts in the preservation of their social norms and cultural values, which have shaped and sustained the group over the years.

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