

Semiotically delineating Ritual Images of African-Igbo Traditional Practices in Nollywood: Peter Igbo's *Things Fall Apart* as a Paradigm

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Abstract

This paper is a semiotic interpretation of the ritual images in African-Igbo traditional practices. Igbo rituals such as rites of passage, burial ceremonies, chieftaincy, naming, wedding, worship and other ceremonies are significant cultural communications that reflect the social norms, beliefs, and values of the people. These traditional ritual practices are conglomeration of signs and symbols that convey deep meanings. This research adopted the Semiotic theory as a tool to: interpret the semiotic meanings of the Igbo traditional ritual practices depicted in Peter Igbo's film, *Things Fall Apart*; analyse the ritual images and traditional elements embedded in it; and, convey their cultural meanings and communicate the Igbo people's cultures. The study thus, exemplified that the use of traditional ritual images in films and theatre is a vital tool in preserving and transmitting African cultures.

Keywords: Ritual, images, Igbo cultural practices, African traditional practices, semiotics

Introduction

Africa as a race-related is a continent where the blacks predominantly inhabit, and it is signalized with African religio-cultural and traditional practices. Such religio-cultural and traditional practices could be in form of rituals as prominent traditional elements in a particular constituency. Ritual as an African traditional practice is a form of cultural communication that has well known characteristics and is present in all human societies. As a matter of fact, ritual is a vital aspect of human existence, society, community, and also forms an integral part of human life, especially, in Africa. It is a means through which human beings express their ideas, fear, aspirations and thoughts. This is well communicated by Ohaja and Anyim (2021, p. 1) when they aver that “cultural beliefs and practices find expression through rituals. Rites of initiation or passage are some of the most common rituals among the indigenous African societies.”

Therefore, it could be said that African traditional ritual practices reflect the philosophies, beliefs, culture, societal norms and value systems of a society or community of the people, shared and transferred from one generation to another. In this regard, Bell (1997, p. 2) captures the essence of ritual that “...it transmits the cognitive categories and dispositions that provides people with important aspects of their sense of reality.” The typical African traditional ritual practices as Turner (1969) observes, is a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, that is, (an isolated or hidden place), and designed to influence preternatural (beyond what is normal) entities or forces on behalf of the actors’ (partakers in ritual actions) goals and interests. It is a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of series of actions performed according to the prescribed order. African traditional rituals possess the characteristics of rite, practice or observation, especially in a religion or socio-cultural ceremony, in accordance with the beliefs of the people. However, what this explication on ritual as African traditional practice, as an aspect of social life implies, is that, the nature of African traditional practice is portrayed through images or, better still, traditional images.

An image, in its basic meaning, refers to as a representation of the external form of a person, animal or thing created, pictured, photographed, painted and sculptured in art for visible communication. Images can as well take forms of pictures, status, optical illusions, maps,

diagrams, hallucinations, spectacles, projections, poems, patterns, memories, and even ideas (Mitchell, 1984, p. 504) that are employed in conveying messages. Images are located within traditional practices through involvement of every individual engaging in various activities. Another aspect to show how images are located within traditional practice is through human beliefs, social actions and institutions that are related to the people's traditions.

Traditional practice, as it is, is deep-rooted within geographical entities that constitutes race, ethnic or tribal groups. In other words, traditional practice and ethnicity or tribe or race is interconnected and are sine qua non to each other. Race, ethnicity or tribe correlates to a particular group of people, which Betancourt and Lopez (1993) explain is “characterized in terms of a common nationality, culture, tradition or language”. Hence, the concept of identity is rooted in Greek concept of *ethnos*, which refers to the people of a nation or tribe thus, Betancourt and Lopez stress further that the traditional practices as ‘background can be a determinant of ethnicity identity or affiliation, being part of an ethnic group can also determine... members of an ethnic group interact with each other, ethnicity becomes a means by which culture is transmitted.’

With regard to the above, this study shares the view that traditional practices as embedded in the people within races, ethnicity or tribes that are in the world. In Africa, the Igbo race is a prominent entity notable from the primordial past to the present with its traditional practices. The Igbo traditional practices entail the summation of the skills, knowledge, and practices hinged on the belief systems, experiences, cultural and traditional values of the “*Ndigbo*”, that is the “Paleo Igbo” the *Etheopus* (Black Race) (Onuora, 2018, p. 60).

The Igbo speaking group of people occupy the South-Eastern part of the country in the present day Nigeria. According to Odii et al, (2023, p. 69), the Igbos “are socially and culturally diverse and speak the Igbo language with numerous dialects.” They include people who are

located in the South East geopolitical zone comprising five core Igbo speaking states – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. It also extends to some parts of Delta state (Agbor, Ika, Issel-Uku, Anioma) and parts of Rivers State (Obigbo, Ikwerre, Egbema, Elle, Omoku), (Ojukwu (2009, p. 183).”

In spite of their different states, the Igbo people share the same cultures and tradition. Sunday, Olatunji and Alwode (2018, p. 153) expound that Igbo people share similarities in culture as they

live in the colonized communities, not unified under a single cultural identity and tradition, even though unifying framework were present through expansion ritual subordination and ritual of intermarriage as their traditional practices. They As a matter of fact, they are known for their rich and “great historical and cultural pedigree, (Ojukwu, 2009, p. 183),” some of which include traditional ritual practices such as “worship rites and sacraments of organized religions and cults.... rites of passage, atonement and purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication ceremonies, coronations and presidential inaugurations, marriages and funerals” (Elegbede, 2017, p. 213).

Based on the fact that Africans believe in the Supreme God Almighty as the highest force involving the spirit and soul, their individuals and community affairs are communicated to Him via deities, divinities, gods and goddess. The Igbo people also channel their plea through traditional ritual practices as worship of their gods and goddess like *Amadioha* gods of thunder and lightning, *Anyawu* the Eye of the Light, *Ahiajoku* the gods of Agriculture, *Ala* goddess of the earth, *Ibini Ukpabi* Long Juju of *Arochukwu*, and *Ekwensu* the gods of Warriors among others. The ritual of worship among the *Ndigboo* is extremely rooted in virtually all their socio-religious activities. As a matter of fact, it is a unique identity ‘as a people and offers clues to understanding their cosmological framework and thought patterns’ (Elegbe, 2017, p. 214).

Besides, in Igbo land, traditional practice of worship is associated with deity or god as related to family, group or person whom is regarded responsible to wade off any demonic or malevolent deeds that cross their ways and also for restoration of the fortunes of the family and group members. This belief regularly receives portrayal in Nigerian movies, mostly in ritual images as African-Igbo traditional practices with symbolic actions of the Supreme God’s or deity’s beliefs. This is because, “African traditional religion encompasses beliefs in a supreme God, other gods, ancestors, communal rituals, personal rituals and recognizes the existence of witchcraft, magic and sorcery, sacred specialists and other spiritual forces” (Alawode & Fatonji, 2013, p. 64).

Movie is basically medium of communication, asides from being the tool of entertainment and relaxation to the viewers. Therefore, the Nigerian movie industry well known as Nollywood is an imitation of what materializes or turns out within Nigerian situations regarding their socio-political, socio-religious, socio-cultural, and most importantly, their traditional practices. Movie carries messages to its enthusiasts effectively as a result of its major feature, that is,

audiovisual advantages by merging sound and images projected before the viewers; as it serves as a “veritable index of culture” (Olayiwola, 2010), which is used to highlight and communicate the evolvement of culture, tradition and its society. Ekwuazi (1991) pinpoints to movie as a cultural reflector; a socializing agent, thus serves as an instrument of traditional dynamics. In this respect, movie serves as a tool for strengthening African traditional practices. Therefore, the Nigerian movies as Uwah (2011) notes, “Nollywood settings are familiar with Nollywood plots which depict situations that people understand and confront daily: romance, comedy and occult”. So also, images of traditional practices like witchcraft and magic of various dimensions are displayed in the plots. Beyond these, celebrations of traditional practices like festival and rituals images are prominent in the Nigeria movie productions.

In view of Adagbada (2014), “ritual as a religious is a ceremony which involves communication with some external forces. It embodies a belief/beliefs and it is done with seriousness and solemnity”. Alawode & Fatonji (2013, p. 64) reiterate on the notion of Uwah (2011) describing ritual as a place where people integrate short-term pragmatic goals and the longer-range mythic values of a culture, where they can replace personal alienation with an affirmation of personal identity. From the positions of authors above, it can be established that ritual is a traditional magic-bullet or remedy to resolving crises that happen to human beings in life. In corroborating this assertion, Adisa (2005) maintains that rituals belong to the realm of the sacred, thereby involving basic sacrifices. Accordingly, sanctified or religious ritual requires sacrifices for life predicament, death traditions, customs and traditional ritual initiation practices. These are represented in Igbo Nollywood movies as this study sets out to investigate the delineation of ritual images as African traditional practices in Nigeria movie, with focus on *Things Fall Apart* (1986) as adapted for TV production that reflects a Nollywood veteran – Pete Edoche and the Igbo ritual traditional practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study espouses Semiotics theory as its theoretical framework. Semiotics cuts across several researches as adopted by so many scholars and disciplines. Semiotic is the study of signs and

relation to the way messages are passed and the code usage to signify sign meaning. Semiotics is related to the use of signs, symbols, process, and signification used in communication, in accordance with the elements of communication. It includes how meaning is constructed within the sign by encoding which is then transmitted and understood by decoding of the sign. The theory was propounded by the modern semioticians, Charles Sanders Peirce (1931) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1974).

Ferdinand de Saussure as the founding father of linguistics used the expression “*semiology*”, and proposed a two-way model or dyadic approaches: *signifier* (the form of the sign) and *signified* (the mental concept of the idea or picture the sign represents). Charles Sanders Peirce, an American logician, mathematician and philosopher devised his system and generalised theory of sign relations as “*semiotics*”. Equally, Peirce (1931, p.58, 2.228) believes that 'semiotic' was the 'formal doctrine of signs' which was closely related to Logic – “a sign... is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity”, therefore, “every thought is a sign.” In his assertion, he made reference to the form, which the sign appears in as *representamen* which he argues may not certainly be the material (or physical form of the sign); rather, *interpretant* (not interpreter) as the perception or feelings about the sign, and *object* is refers to as what the sign stands for as cultural norms within the culture of the people. The two definitions can be associated with modern day semiotics (Chandler, 2007, p.5).

Sign is something used to represent or stand for another thing. It could be the object, quality, event or entity whose presence or occurrence indicates the probability or occurrence of something else. It is also the gesture or action used to convey information or an instruction (Taiwo, 2020, p. 61). Meanwhile, the sign is composed of signifier or an index which is the form the sign takes and signified as symbols which is the concept the sign stands for. The relationships between the signified and signifier is the significations.

Signification is the mental representation of the ‘*thing*’ which is the concept (Adesanya, 2014, p.53). Therefore, the three basic components of signs in line with signification are icons, symbols, and index. Symbolic signification as Chandler puts it is the mode in which the signifier does not have any resemblance with the signified which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional, rather, that the relationship must be studied.

In relation to this treatise, the depiction of African traditional ritual practices of the Igbo cultures and tradition in Nigerian movie becomes representations that is core and prominent among in Igbo audience with degree of importance. Hence, signs and symbols are used for appropriateness of every ritual situation in Igbo society, with interpretations based on traditional codes. For the purpose of this study, semeiotics theory is adopted to identify the symbols, paraphernalia and other notable traditional elements adopted by the moviemaker to propagate Igbo tradition through television movie productions.

Method of Study

The study employed qualitative content analysis as the main method of research. This approach centers on the use of content descriptions of the identified traditional elements pointed out for investigation since it is aimed at eliciting information/data from movie media. Content analysis was significantly adopted because it is the most fitting method that could meaningfully identify semiotics as a form of traditional communication elements of Igbo traditional ritual identity embedded in the film of Peter Igbo by way of viewing of the content of the movie carefully and noting the striking identified traditional elements to authenticate the level of accuracy of the depictions. A television movie produced by Peter Igbo with Igbo traditional paraphernalia has been purposively selected – *Things Fall Apart* (1986). The movie with in-depth background of the *Ndigbo* society was exclusively selected watched and personally analysed by the researchers for the reason of identifying the embedded traditional rituals practices of the Igbo people as semiotics of traditional communication of the *Ndigbo* nationhood under review. Data were qualitatively analysed. Data extracted from the selected movie was discussed in consonance with Igbo cosmological existence and traditional practices.

Results and Discussion

Things Fall Apart, a selected film under review is a reflection of the esoteric nature of the culture and traditional ritual practices of the Igbo people and their society, nay Africa. These are in accordance with the Igbo semiology of religio-cultural, socio-cultural, myth, beliefs, values and

traditional systems by telling the stories of the people with individuality from Igbo cosmology, using movie to exhibit traditional aesthetics, history, and wisdom. This is further represented via the storylines.

Synopsis of the Selected Movie '*Things Fall Apart*' (1986)

Peter Igbo's *Things Fall Apart* is a 1986 Nollywood film, and an adaptive film based on the Literature text of the prolific writer, late Chinua Achebe, portraying the Igbo, nay African culture, heritages and traditional practices. The setting of the movie is predominantly the Igbo society, depicting their socio-religious, socio-cultural, socio-political and ritual beliefs. The story revolves around the tragedy of Okonkwo also known as Ebubedike, a wrestler, farmer and warrior who brings fame into Umuofia, his village by defeating Amalinze the cat before his retirement as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages around Umuofia. His father, Unoka, a flutist is instrumental to his wrestling feat by challenging him to fight against Amalinze. Being a conservative individual, Okonkwo possesses some exemplary qualities that make him surpasses his peers, as geared towards great social transformation, changes, and also holds on tenaciously to the tradition, beliefs, and values of African-Igbo culture. With reference to his achievements and endeavours, he shows himself being indomitable. On this note, the elders in the land of Umuofia decide to make him a member of council of elders and offer him a respectable seat among the elders in the land. But the decision generates serious argument among the elders, as opposes by Ogbuefi Ezenwa, who counters the position of Ogbuefi Obeika, a supporter of Okonkwo's membership. After much ado, the elders eventually absorb him as one of them.

On the day of Okonkwo's ritual of chieftaincy title installation ceremony, Osondu and Ukachi from Mbaino village attack and kill Nmonye, a wife to Ogbuefi Udo, one of the prominent elders of Umuofia clan. This becomes an invitation to war between the two villages; and it further aggravates anger in the minds of the youths in Umuofia to match on Mbaino. But the elders of Umuofia persuade them, and consult the oracle on what next to be done. As a follow up to this development, the oracle counsels them not to go to war, rather, to be more diplomatic in handling the situation. In this regard, Okonkwo is saddles with the responsibility of presiding over such defiant occurrence, as he leads a team of emissaries comprising of elders in a state visit to the land of Mbaino for diplomatic discussions.

In a preparation for the arrival of the Umuofia emissaries, the Mbaino elders at a pre-meeting before their arrival unanimously agreed that the son and daughter of both Osondu and Ukachi should be sacrificed for replacement of the daughter of Umuofia killed. At the arrival of the Umuofia emissaries, the Mbaino welcome them warmly, as they resume into discussion fully. As a recompense, Umuofia demands for one boy and a virgin girl for their killed daughter. On the contrary, the Mbaino decides to replace the demands of Umuofia with seven cows and seven goats. This further infuriates the anger in Umuofia emissaries as Okonkwo makes it clear that failure to comply, it shall be bloodshed. But the fact that there's wisdom in negotiation, Mbaino agrees that the son of Osondu and daughter of Ukachi should be given to Umuofia as their demands. Eventually, Ikemefuna, the son to Osondu and Odieah, a daughter to Ukachi were handed over to Okonkwo led emissaries as victims of what they know nothing about. Upon taking Ikemefuna to Umuofia, and in accordance with the elders' decision, the little boy is handed over to Okonkwo to train and live with him in the spirit and ritual ways of Umuofia. Therefore, he becomes the son to him as he also becomes his father and a member of their clan. On the other hand, the virgin girl is handed over to Ogbuefi Udo with expectation of good treatment in replacement of his wife killed to see and train her like a daughter and a wife as the custom demands. This is in consonance with their agreement as a ritual prescribes to them by the oracle.

But the unfortunate plays out as the oracle of the heels and caves pronounces that Ikemefuna should be sacrificed for ritual. For this, Ogbuefi Ezeudu warns Okonkwo not to be involved in the killing of the boy, saying "The boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Contrary to the warning, Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna as he is taking out of Umuofia in line with their customs. The reason for the killing is for Okonkwo to save his face from the shame of not being regarded as a weak individual in actualizing the directive of the gods, rather, to prove his heroic nature. As a result of the abominable act by Okonkwo to have killed Ikemefuna, the spirits of the dead begin to hunt and torment him in all his dealings and doings, as his household observers the ritual of mourning of Ikemefuna. In addition, the land of Umuofia ceases to experience peace, rather, death all over the place. Such agony further plays out during the ritual of funeral of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the leader of the Umuofia clan and a warrior who joins their ancestors. In the process of the ritual of gun shots by the elders, Okonkwo's gun ceases to produce sound, so, he decides to test it outside the circle of the elders during the ritual.

Unfortunately, he opens gunfire on late Ogbuefi Ezeudu's son, and kills him. This increases the level of calamity befalling Okonkwo as a hero in which his houses were burnt down by the angry youths of Umuofia. Things are falling apart for him, characterized with misfortunes. As part of the measures and customs, he embarks on exile forcefully for seven years outside Umuofia.

As a man of valour, Okonkwo returns to Mbanta village on exile, his mother's place, where he meets his kinsmen, Nnanyi Ichendu (immediate younger brother to Okonkwo's late mother), Nnanyi Oko and others. They accept Okonkwo with joy and he sees solace in living with them and begins a new life. While there, the white men with foreign faith invades Abamae village riding on a horse into the clan. This, the people of the land kill the strange man and hangs his head on their sacred tree. The intention of the white men is to introduce Christianity in the villages and among the black races. The costly mistake by the Abame people makes the white men invade the land on *Eke* market day in African-Igbo land and wipe the village down. The news spread round other villages of Umuofia and Mbanta. As a way of preparation, the Umuofia people decide to send for Okonkwo who is in exile, but objected by some elders that it's just two years out of seven years he will be in exile, therefore, the eligibility of his recall is nullified.

The spread of the Christianity faith continues as it further stretches to Mbanta with the rituals of faith being performed from time-to-time. Even Okonkwo's son joins the Christian group as a member, and this further provokes the anger in Okonkwo as he advances to kill the boy, but saved by his uncle Nnanyi Ichendu. Seven years after, Okonkwo returns to Umuofia having completed his punishment by being in exile.

The Delineation of Rituals in *Things Fall Apart* as expressions of Identity in African-Igbo Traditional Practices

It is evident that Peter Igho's *Things Fall Apart* is characterized with traditional ritual practices of the African-Igbo society. The prominent traditional ritual practices include the *Ikwa ezi* ritual, the *Ofo ala* ritual, the *okonko* ritual, and the *itu-aka* ritual (Uwah, 2013, p.165). All these are with some basic features of communal festivities, sacred sacrifices to the gods, along sides with mystical stories, and renditions associated with invocations as observed and identified in the movie under review.

In the context of the movie under review, some ritual of festivals and ceremonies as acts that are peculiar with village practices are observed. Also, the ritual of sacrifice of human beings is identified as inherent in the film. For the sake of this study, the identified ritual practices subjected for discussions include: ritual of prayer and pouring of libation, ritual of presentation/breaking of kola nut, ritual of festival of coronation, ritual of symbolic dance, ritual of marriage ceremony, ritual of funeral/burial ceremony and ritual of religious worships/beliefs and faith.

Ritual of prayer is a significant medium of communication between the Supreme God and human being through which the plea, supplications, invocations and the requests of such human being are conveyed to God. In this regard, gods in every society or community serve as the intermediary between the Supreme Being and man. In African-Igbo socio-cultural setting, prayer is a ritual that man engages in from time-to-time as a way of expressing one's thoughts, feelings, views, grievances and to make requests from Almighty God. As observed in the movie *Things Fall Apart*, ritual of prayer is employed as an extra mundane communication with the Supreme Being via the gods. Ritual of prayer was displayed at a new dawn in the morning when Okonkwo was engaged in the ritual of prayers by pouring libation as the custom demands.



Plate1: Okonkwo performing ritual of prayers and pouring of libation at the cock crow in the morning in the movie *Things Fall Apart*. Source: *Things Fall Apart* (1986).

Also, ritual of prayer was identified as employed in the movie when the elders gathered at Mbaino to discuss the abominable act committed by Osondu and Ukachi for killing Nmonye. The leader of Mbaino community expounds:

We ask for guidance in our deliberations. That we deliberate in peace and harmony.
And at the end, we may find goodwill and friendship among our people from Mbaino

and Umuofia. As our people, the visitors, return, may you return in peace and harmony.

(Things Fall Apart, 1986).



Plate2: *The Leader of Mbaino village offering ritual of prayers during the state visit of the Umuofia emissaries' visit for diplomatic discussion regarding Osondu and Ukachi's abominable act in the movie Things Fall Apart. Source: Things Fall Apart (1986).*

Ritual of kola-nut in African-Igbo culture cannot be downplayed. *Ime Oji* Kola-nut as an essential type of fruit, has connotative meaning in African socio-cultural context. Its signification abounds with peace, unity and the level of hospitability in any African society. It is of essence as the number one gift offers to a visitor or friend during visitation.

In the context of the movie, *Things Fall Apart*, the ritual of kola-nut presentation and breaking of the kola-nut was portrayed when Unoka, the father of Okonkwo received his friend, Ogbuefi

Okoye the money lender who paid him a visit in the morning. Unoka offers kola-nut, as Ogbuefi Okoye says: 'He who brings kola, brings life'. In the same vein, during the visit of the emissaries to Mbaino, before the discussion proper, the visitors were offered kola-nut. The leader of the Mbaino explains:

Before we talk, it is proper and customary that we eat kola and offer to the spirit s of our land, our ancestors and our gods to guide us in this discussions... (*Things Fall Apart*, 1986).

After all the ritual of prayers, the leader of Mbaino breaks the kola-nut and offers to their gods, *Ogugu* and *Iyiamo*, saying:

Ogugu, kola has come, *Iyiano*, kola has come, *Ani*, here's your kola
All of your gods, here's your kola that your kola, (*Things Fall Apart*, 1986).



Plate3: Offering ritual of kola-nut to the emissaries from Umuofia during visit to Mbaino for diplomatic discussion in the movie *Things Fall Apart*. Source: *Things Fall Apart* (1986).

As the tradition demands, the elder offers kola-nut to his fellow elders and kinsmen in the presence of everyone at the meeting. Offering of kola-nut symbolizes the appeasement of the gods and invoking the spirits of their deities among them for the meeting to be fruitful.

Ritual of festival of coronation is quite prominent in African-Igbo customs. It involves an individual with prestige being honoured in the society. It is also the practice of positioning someone in the place of authority and placing such placing crown or other symbolic cultural and traditional paraphernalia or regalia on that person as an icon of authority or the head. This is embedded as identified in the movie *Things Fall Apart* when Okonkwo a man of valour, whose

gallantry act has brought victory to Umuofia and also qualified him to be hounoured by joining the honourable council of elders.



Plate4: Ritual of festival of Coronation during Okonkwo's installation as a council member Umuofia in the movie Things Fall Apart. Source: Things Fall Apart (1986).

Ritual of marriage is another important practice in African-Igbo culture and tradition. According to Adesanya and Taiwo (2019, p.79) marriage is the social joining of male and female matrimony by a qualified person (priest/elder) to perform the ceremony. It is also the approved social pattern whereby two to more persons establish a family. This, as a prominent institution is represented in the movie, *Things Fall Apart* when Obierika was giving Akueke his daughter out in marriage. The first point of the marriage was the *search* for a marriageable bride as observed in the groom and his family members being able to have searched for Akueke, Obierika's daughter. This further propelled the groom's family to have come for *supplication* or *soliciting*

for the bride. In this case, it was observed as embedded in the movie that the *consent* of the bride's father (Obierika) was sought alongside with the consent of his daughter, the bride as part of the ritual of marriage. In addition, *betrothal* as an important aspect of traditional ritual marriage steps was observed as it enables the groom to be proudly husband. *Preparations* being a step for traditional ritual marriage in African-Igbo culture as followed by the *oracle consultations* were equally represented when Obierika and the family members received his in-laws and agreed for the marriage date.

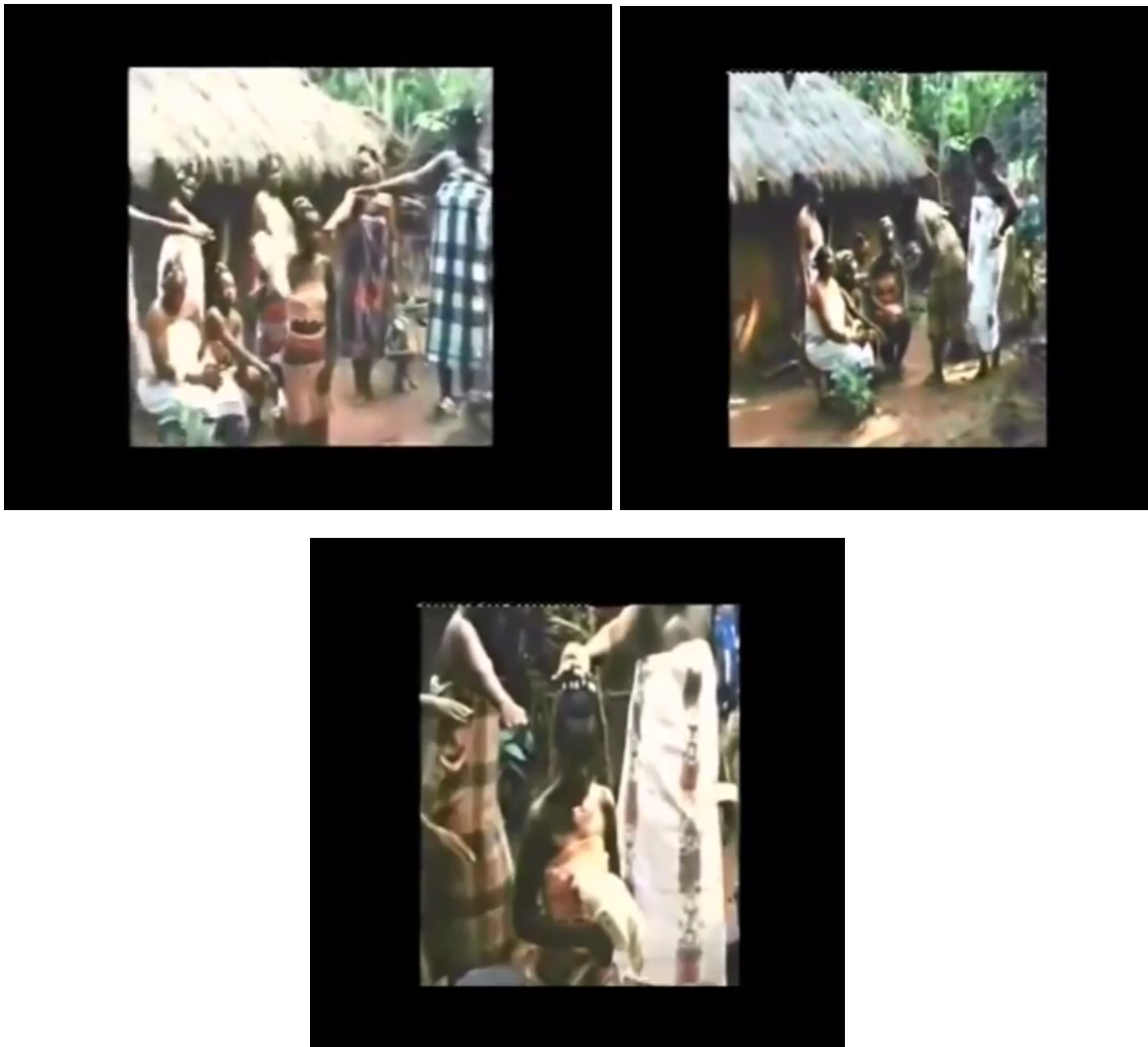


Plate5: Preparations and celebration of ritual of marriage of Akueke daughter of Obierika as delineation of African-Igbo traditional of ritual practices displayed in the movie *Things Fall Apart*. Source: *Things Fall Apart* (1986).

As observed in the movie, use of the white cock is a signification of sincerity on the part of the bride to be honest to her husband in all her endeavours and to the entire member of her husband's family. This was further pronounced as part the ritual that if the bride does otherwise, shameful death awaits such individual.

Ritual of funeral is also part of African-Igbo cultural practice. Inevitably, 'death is considered a passage from the earthly abode to the realm of ancestors' (Uwah, 2013, 183). Hence, the family of the dead person engages in the some certain rituals practices associated or peculiar the nature of such community or society. The whole essence of such ritual is 'to enable the peaceful passage and admittance of the deceased into the circle of his or her ancestors' (p.183). In the movie, *Things Fall Apart*, the ritual of funeral is depicted when Ogbuafi Ezeudu died. As the village Chief Priest, warrior and the elder of Umuofia, the ritual of passage was displayed in his honour. This is in tandem with the relations to the customs of Umuofia, in which the masquerades were displayed as they moved round the village in announcing death. Firing of gunshot forms part of the traditional ritual of the Igbo culture as a signification of paying last respect to the dead before or after committed to mother e earth.



Plate6: *Ritual of funeral for the dead during Ogbuefi Ezeudu's burial ceremony. Elders, warriors dancing round his tomb as portrayal of African-Igbo traditional of ritual practices depicted in the movie Things Fall Apart. Source: Things Fall Apart (1986).*

In the process of gun salute to the late community leader, Okonkwo's exploded and killed the late warrior's son. This further complicated issues for Okonkwo.

Conclusion

This study has taken a look at African traditional rituals as activities that vary from one ethnic group and society to another, with focus on Igbo traditional practices. As this treatise examined, the ritual in African-Igbo culture could be seasonal, following a culturally defined moment of change in the climate cycle or the inauguration of activities like planting, harvesting, and movement from one season to another or unexpectedly held in crisis. At times, such unexpected ritual chances may be life-crisis ceremonies like birth, puberty, marriage, death, to demarcate the passage from one phase to the other in the life of every individual. As enshrined in the movie, ritual could equally be of affliction, performed in order to placate preternatural beings or forces believed to have inflicted the sickness, disease or attack on a society or the people of the land. The study adopted semiotics theory upon which the work is premised which mostly has cultural interpretations of the Igbo traditional practices. As delineated in the movie and identified in this study, ritual could also involve divinatory ceremonies by consulting the oracle before embarking on any issue concerning their clan. In addition, the Igbo traditional council of authorities engages in rituals activities to ensure healthy protection of their people and fertility of the human beings, animals and crops in their society. This work further shows the ritual images in forms of birth, puberty, courtship, marriage, death and afterlife as the tradition demands. Also, initiation into religious associations devoted to Supreme God and certain deities, and their daily offerings of praises, food and libation to ancestral spirits are reflected in the movies as part of discourse on African-Igbo traditional practices represented in the movie under review.

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