

# **Igbo Traditional Security System: A Panacea to Nigeria Security Quagmire**

**By**

**Onukwube Alex Alfred Anedo, Ph.D.**

Department of African & Asian Studies

Faculty of Arts

Nnamdi Azikiwe University

[ao.anedo@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ao.anedo@unizik.edu.ng) +2348037859249; +2348149225739

&

**Ngozi Edith Anedo**

[Ngonedo36@yahoo.com](mailto:Ngonedo36@yahoo.com) +2347032491704

## **Abstract:**

This is a study on *Igbo* traditional security system believed to be of help in solving Nigerian and Global security challenges if adopted by Governments. Prior to the creation of Nigerian State; the *Igbo* people had devices and ways of securing life and property. These devices and ways used by the *Igbo* in checkmating stealing, witchcraft, terror, accident, fraud, war, embezzlement and other criminal acts are *Ngige*, *Ogwu amosu*, *Nkwu ogwu*, *Iji ogwu*, *Ogwu mkpụ*, *Ogwu ibobo*, *Ogwu nde*, *Ịnụ* or *Ịtụ ụlụsị* and *Ima ịta*. At that time, issue of security was properly managed. Unfortunately, with the colonization of Nigeria by the British and subsequent conversion of greater number of citizens to Christianity, those traditional ways were termed fetish, illegal and unacceptable. Therefore, western ways of dealing with crimes came into use. However, instead of reducing crime, the new system became a failure and Nigeria started experiencing sophisticated crimes hence this study. It aims to bring to limelight, traditional apparatus for securing life and property amongst the *Igbo*; examine how they are used and suggest how such could be integrated into Nigeria and Global security systems. In studying these devices and their workability, the work used interview questions posed to randomly selected adult and younger individuals of *Igbo* origin, those that had fallen victims of several crimes and those that escaped. Views of the interviewees collected, formed part of the analysis of this study. It was found that most criminals caught in their crimes were due to applications of some devices and that those who escaped being hurt by activities of criminals did so by applying some devices. This study therefore discovered that no one watches over a city, life and property better than the spirits hence *Igbo*'s applications of the devices which in their belief, are of spirits. The spirits here are deities and charms. Given the potency of these devices as evidenced in so many ways and times, it is the opinion of this study that all Governments should adopt these devices, liaise with *Igbo* experts for expansion and legislate on their uses for maximum Global security.

**Key words:** Protection, Remedy, Predicament

## **Introduction:**

It is a known fact that from the beginning of the world, the major occupier of human mind has been fear. There was fear of the unknown; fear of being devoured by dangerous animals; fear of being kidnapped by slave hunters and ritual killers and fear of getting drowned by waters for those who have something to do with seas and rivers. There was fear of losing life and property to thieves and armed robbers and fear of being struck by the gods and ghosts.

Fear therefore, is a major agent of destabilization in human life especially in Nigeria where so many things bedevil her as a nation and constitute fear to the citizenry. Those things that constitute fear and threat to life and property in Nigeria since her birth as a nation in 1914 are kidnapping, coup, civil war, oil bunkering, ethnic cleansing, robbery, terror attacks, internet murder, militancy, air, river and road mishaps. Most recent discomfort to the people of Nigeria is Boko Haram religious killings and abductions of innocent individuals in the Northern part. This is due to Government's failure to provide security to the citizenry as "... security is a social contract between the state and its citizens in which the former is expected to protect, defend and provide for the later in the public area" (Arisi, 2011: 257).

It is annoying that in spite modern mechanisms being employed by Government of the day in fighting crime, more new waves of crime seem to be on the increase. Most noticeable is the frequent cases of suicide bombings and cases of ethnic cleansing terrorizing the Northern parts of Nigeria. It must be recalled that on July 9, 2012, residents of Jos in Plateau State and some rural communities were gripped with fear (Fagbemi et al, 2012: 22). It was understood that during this time, hundreds of people including notable politicians were slaughtered like salah goats by men suspected to be Fulani herds men. They perpetrated this evil act on humanity and went away scot free. Yet, we have modern equipments to fight crime.

In another development, Oladeinde (2012: 1-2) narrates the abuse and misuse of the new social medium called facebook. It is a fact that originators of facebook and other internet related medium of communication meant well for humanity but criminals now use them to propagate crime against fellow humans. Oladeinde (2012) reported how one Cynthia Osukugu was lured into the den of wolves in human cover and murdered in cold blood by two young men in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Atolagbe (2011) says that the spate of burglaries, assassinations for political power and other violent crimes has been unsettling in recent times; to the extent that the individuals – politicians and well-meaning citizens seek personal protection from alternative security sources. It is interesting to note that most popular of these is the indigenous or traditional medical sources which may differ across the tribes but are peculiar to each of the over 250 cultural and ethnic groups in Nigeria (Saad et al, 1996, Fatiregun, 1999). Two hundred and fifty cultural and ethnic groups mentioned by Saad, Fatiregun and Microsoft was to avoid exaggeration otherwise, Anedo (2009:193) posits that "... with survey conducted using correspondents in all the geographical zones, it was found that Nigeria is a nation of six hundred and thirteen language groups" One could recall that sometime in 2003, a sitting Governor of Anambra State, Nigeria under civilian dispensation, was abducted and could have been wasted away if not by Providence intervention. Of course, Arisi (2011: 254) mentions amongst criminal activities prevalent in Nigeria "... such as kidnapping, reigning cases of broad day light robberies, hired assassinations, political sponsored killings, looting of government treasuries by those in government, fraudulent banking activities, etc." Recently, it was reported in Nigeria national dailies (Daily Vanguard, The Sun, The Nation and Punch) that about six senior officers of Central Bank of Nigeria, Ibadan branch, were arraigned by Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) before an Ibadan High Court for allegedly defrauding the nation to the tune of eight billion naira. All these and others constitute Nigerian security problems and therefore, call for urgent attention and solution. In pursuit of the solution therefore, this paper intends to study Igbo traditional security system which is believed to be of immense help to the security of life and property of the entire Nigeria citizenry.

### **The Igbo Nation**

Igbo is a language spoken by a group of people known as Igbo. They live in the south eastern part of Nigeria and constitute the single most spoken language group in Nigeria. Prior to the coming of the Europeans to West Africa and subsequent creation of Nigeria State, it has been an independent group with so many autonomous communities. Having adopted and established a genuine life style that had granted her peace and security, it became a problem to them, to have been forced into making a nation, Nigeria

with other peoples of alien cultural settings where much cherished peace and security of life and property was not guaranteed hence, the secession bid which they tried between 1967 and 1970 with the name "Biafra". "On May 30, 1967, mandated by the elders and leaders of the old eastern region of Nigeria, late Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, leading Ndigbo and other Biafrans, declared secession from Nigeria and announced the Republic of Biafra" (Master web reports, 2015)

In declaring the new republic, Ojukwu states thus: "We have come a long way. We were once Nigerians, today, we are Biafrans. We are Biafrans because on May 30, 1967, we finally said "no to the evils and injustices in which Nigeria was steeped" Nigeria was made up of peoples and groups with very little in common. Because the dream of having Biafra was not realized, the Igbo still remain Nigerians. Igbo land extends to Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states which constitute the South Eastern Region of Nigeria. The Igbo also constitute 1/3 of Delta State, 3/4 of Rivers State, 1/5 of Akwa Ibom State, 1/8 of Cross River State and also make up three local government areas of Benue State and few towns in Kogi State, all in Nigeria.

Historically, they are believed to have migrated from Israel through Egypt during the time of Biblical exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Basden (1966), Claims that the word Igbo is corruption of the word, Hebrew ... that the Igbo are one of the lost tribes of Israel. According to Basden, Igbo and Hebrew customs share a lot of similarities though; linguistic evidence does not support the theory. Igbo language according to Greenberg, belongs to the "kwa" sub-group of Niger-Congo language family

"Igbo people worship many gods even though, they believe in the Supreme Being. Today, most people have become Christians. A small percentage still worships other gods" (Anedo, 2010:207). However, both Christians and non Christians amongst them admit and use the traditional devices in addressing the security lapses of modern security system. Such lapses appear in Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013). It will be recalled that during the regime of Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju as Governor of Anambra State of Nigeria between 1999 and 2003, so many wealthy sons and daughters of the state went on self exile as a result of armed robbers till the then Chairman of Onitsha Amalgamated Traders Association, Sylvester Odiye Jr invited a group of security organization, Bakasi that made use of Igbo security apparatus and wiped out the criminals. It was learnt that that which could not be done by modern security outfit, was effectively and efficiently done by the Igbo traditional security outfit.

It was unfortunate that because the system was applied outside Government's legislation, it was quickly outlawed. As a result of the Government's action therefore, the criminals resurfaced and did not only send the wealthy individuals packing but set the rate of development back and there became crises in the society.

The progress of a panic follows a fairly regular pattern. A sudden crisis occurs; people experience intense fear; normal social expectations are disrupted; each individual tries desperately to escape from the source of danger, mutual cooperation breaks down; and the situation becomes even more threatening as a result. (IAN Robertson, 1977:520)

### **Problem of the Study:**

Prior to the creation and colonization of Nigerian State, the Igbo people and Nigeria in general had ways of securing the life and property of the citizenry. At that time, issue of security was properly managed with traditional devices. This was not only because the criminals, witches and wizards whose anti-social activities brought discomfort to the citizenry, were known but because the society had ways of preventing, arresting and punishing such ill behaviors. Unfortunately, with the colonization of Nigeria by the British and subsequent conversion of greater number of citizens into Christianity, those traditional ways were not only termed fetish and unacceptable, the government introduced the western ways of dealing with that and made the traditional ways illegal. This is because according to Atolagbe (2011:57),

“As civilization increased and technology advanced, the development of daring weapons, tools, and mechanical and electronic devices rendered ineffective, the security devices that were earlier considered insurmountable.” The people therefore decided to trust the new system. Unfortunately, the new system became a failure because, instead of reducing crime, Nigeria started experiencing sophisticated new ways of crime hence this study intended to bring to bare, the assured old traditional apparatus of securing life and property amongst the Igbo Nigerians.

### **Objective of the Study:**

In view of the failure of the modern system of security, this work has intention to bring to limelight the security models of the Igbo people of Nigeria for adoption into Global system. As the whole world is in dare need of solution to her numerous security problems, the paper is aimed at helping the United Nations in her bid to bring peace to entire world.

### **Significance of the Study:**

It is believed that at the end of this work, the outcome if adopted and applied as national and international security apparatus would help in containing security threat facing the Nigerian nation, Africa as a continent and the entire world. When security is mentioned, it is a comprehensive issue concerning human life, finances of nations, financial fraud against individuals and companies, cyber and internet, embezzlement of public funds, kidnapping, armed robbery, assassinations of any kind, terror attacks and witchcraft. All these will mean problems solved once Igbo security systems are adopted into national security matters.

### ***Igbo* Traditional Security System:**

As many things and events or actions pose a threat to happy and peaceful life of the Igbo people of Nigeria, so are there many ways to curb the same threats. One understands that some threats are spiritual; some are physical while some are both spiritual and physical. Among the Igbo, there are ways of tackling the spiritual threat and ways of arresting physical threats to their life and property. Instances of spiritual threats are witchcraft and charming while the physical threats are theft, armed robbery, kidnapping, wars, politically induced assassinations, financial fraud and embezzlement in Government offices and internet fraud. Each of these anti-cultural actions has one way or the other to be stopped by the Igbo people which we are up to discuss below.

### ***Ngige* (Mystical barricade):**

The desire for security of life and property prompted the development of perimeter walls around the shelter of trees and barricades at cave entrances by the early man in prehistoric periods (Buah, 1969). It is always said amongst the Igbo that prevention of disease is better than curing it. The Igbo normally like to guard against ugly experiences. To realize this, they do apply a device called *ngige* around their farm lands, property and or homestead and on top of their economic trees to protect such against theft when no one is around. *Ngige* is an instance of security token associated with a resource such as herbs, roots and barks of trees in addition to some elemental beings like animals and birds. It is a collection of relevant herbs and or with some elemental beings tied together and to a stick, tree or post at any site of a farm land, compound or office or to a thread round same farm land, compound or office with intent to stop an intending thief and arrest same if she dares taking action.

One may ask how this works. According to a respondent, it works in the sense that when a thief who knows about it, sees it, one shelves the idea of stealing from the area. However, if the thief does not know about it or that he or she ignores it and goes ahead to steal, many ugly experiences awaits one. Such ugly experiences come in form of unending scratches, boils all over one's body, protrusion of anus, going

blind, elongation of the tongue or any other physical problems that forces one to confess and face ostracism or death depending on the gravity of the theft.

*Ngige* is such a charm that instills fear into one who has intention to steal. It is in many forms and colors. It is not hidden.

Today, there is not much of physical barriers or anti burglaries devices that can offer adequate burglary resistance to the onslaught of grenades, back-saw, rock and steal borers, metal smelting, etc, in a civilization and technology age where the pentagon, the American ingenious security edifice, can be devastated as was recently witnessed in the global world (Atolagbe, 2011:57)

*Ngige* is strategically placed that an intending thief must take note of it. Even when the thief comes through the back door or from behind the farm land that one may not see the object, the thread to which the charm is tied and which is used to guard around the property bars the thief from entrance but when some stubborn criminals cut it off and go ahead to steal, the criminal stands to blame oneself hence the Igbo saying *Okuko bere na ngige n'egwu, ngige n'egwu*. Literarily, it is to say that while fowl that perches on *ngige* dances, the *ngige* too dances meaning, whoever that steals any thing under the care of *ngige* attracts trouble to oneself.

#### ***Ogwu Amosu (Witchcraft charm):***

In Nigeria, witchcraft abounds in every culture and is of great threat to human peace. Economic and social forces that play upon household and kin dynamics exacerbate tensions and hostilities among associates, who become suspected of both causing and benefiting from the misery of others (Kohn, 1994). Witches and wizards cause a lot of problems to the citizenry. Most times, they are originators of certain grave illnesses and when they send any sickness to humanity, they sometimes ask people what to do for prevention. Witches use many objects to appear in many forms such as cockroach, owl, rat, cart, bird, and bat. How this is conceptualized depends upon previously existing views of human nature and its potential. The West gives credence to satanic cults whose members sacrifice children and to so-called recovered memories of childhood abuse (La Fontaine, 1998). Once a person incurs a witch's anger even though witch does not bewitch only enemies, the person is gone. A witch as ones neighbour or relation signifies danger. That is the reason why Elizabeth Colson (2000:333) says, "In Zambia evil is embodied in the person of the witch."

It is more dangerous than a snake. Having a witch in a house is like having an armed robber as a relation. When one is a friend to a witch, the person's life is in danger because the much one favors a witch, the more problems one attracts to oneself. A witch is capable of blocking ones progress as in business, child bearing, promotion in a work place, et cetera. Adilī Ajaana in a comparison of the locus of witchcraft accusations among Benin and Efik during an interview session demonstrated that accusations reflect patterns of residence and animosities stemming from the exercise of power and the differential distribution of benefits derived from property and labour. Witches do much harm to people. Investigations revealed that there was once a witch believed to be the leader of all witches in Igbo land. She was a woman with about five children.

When she was still a young married woman, she once pretended to have died. Her supposed corpse was traditionally embalmed for four days so as to send messages to relations. When it was time to bury her corpse after all rites have been performed, there came a witch doctor who asked corpse bearers not to perform the burial rites; asked one to get very hot firewood for him. When it was brought, he used it to unceasingly place on the woman's foot. The hotness went down on the woman's leg and another was brought and placed on till she shrank her leg and got up. It happened that she was not dead rather, she swallowed life with the intent of sending all the people to their early graves had they buried her alive. This is in line with Iwegbune Ekwemeze's (an eighty five years old man) answer to a question posed to

him during a chat with him, that resentment, fear and envy underwrite the truth of a diviner's diagnosis of the source of evil. An acceptable diagnosis must be plausible to those aggrieved, and plausibility derives from the emotional charge of the relationship.

The fact is that no witch accepts being a witch until a witchdoctor not only diagnoses right but also prepares right witch charm that actually arrests the die hard witch. However, one thing is certain. Once accused of witch crafting if investigated, is never in vain in that, the accused must have shown oneself as a witch by ones actions towards the accusers. When the focus of accusations shifts, something has happened in the field of relationships that makes the belief plausible that this person, not that, is causing misery, and it must be plausible to both sufferer and supporters. Elizabeth Colson (2000:333) adds that "In recent years such a shift in focus has occurred among Tonga-speakers in Gwembe Valley in the Southern Province of Zambia. Since the 1980s they have increasingly named their own fathers whereas in previous decades the plausible witch was usually sought among other male kin." As that was not enough for her, she gave all her children one deformity or another and initiated some who became too dangerous that people became afraid of them and they had no friends.

To get reed of witchcraft, there are several anti-witch charms that are prepared by witchdoctors for people. Some of the charms are eaten; some are hung on the door posts while some are worn either round ones waist or neck. Some other ones are used as pillows and others are strategically placed in front of the homestead of kindred.



**Figure 1. Qgwu Amosu as prepared by Venerable Chinetu Igbeke of Dagama, Ikem (Witchcraft charm)**

There was a case of witchcraft in Owerri Municipality of Nigeria where a young married couple's pregnancy could not stay due to witchcraft attacks. They have stayed childless for four years as reported by Anedo (2004). In search of solution therefore, they consulted a witchdoctor who gave them a charm (qgwu amosu) which they hung on the door post of their sitting room. So, when time came for the witch to perform her nefarious activity of taking the pregnancy, appearing with breeze around 12.00 am, the presence of the witch charm hung at the door post could not allow her to escape after taking the pregnancy. Rather, it made her to be caught in bird form. While the pregnancy became empty, the witch suddenly became pregnant in real world for forty two months after which she exchanged her life with the

life of her own two children before she could offload the very baby taken from the genuine pregnant woman. She later died.

### ***Nkwu Ogwu (Palm Tree charm):***

In Nigeria and all over the world, land is the greatest asset one may possess and bequeath to ones descendants. Due to its strategic importance, some governments do make laws on the ownership and use of lands. However, cases on land matters are not easy to settle even at the court of law. It is a fact that most of the problems that exist in our world today, borders on land. Even Palestine – Israeli war was and is a problem of land. In Nigeria, so many states, communities and towns are in enmity because of land. So many people have died as a result of land squabbles. Nweze (2004) identifies sources of security threats in Nigeria to include ... socio-economic inequalities and demographic factors, small arms and ammunition trafficking and indigenous question in Nigeria. Inequalities in land distribution fall into the socio-economic inequalities amongst Nigerians.

According to Robbert-Okah (2014:5), “Great disparity in life chances is a major root cause of insecurity in Nigeria.” Amongst the Igbo of Nigeria, not so many can boast of land and as such, to get land for any project, one needs to pay a lot of money. As a result of this, people tend to grab other people’s lands without due process, the attitude of which, have made “... a large number of the Nigerian people to have become frustrated and lost hope, particularly the youths who have taken to violence” (Onuoha, 2011 retrieved from <http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cf?id>) This attitude of some people in fact, generates hatred amongst societies which drags them into unending wars. This is why Elesin (2013) citing Al-Qurān, Chapter 5 verse 8, says, “... and let not the hatred of others to make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice.” However, all men are not equal. Some people are extremely rich while others are poor. So, in a situation like this, while the rich or the strong feels that money can do everything and so, grab the land belonging to the weak, the poor or the weak relies on the use of *ogwu* (charm). They believe that charm has the potency of defending them against the strong and so, the witch doctor is consulted. When such medicine man comes, he has to configure a charm in defense of the weak’s property. Such charm is buried, hung or sprayed around the property. Sometimes, it is caused to be something else like animal or tree such as palm tree or any other economic tree. If it is in form of palm tree, it is *nkwu ogwu* (palm charm).

*Nkwu ogwu* is a prepared charm transformed into a palm tree and placed at the supposedly boundary. What happens is that people would come to farm next day to see a full grown palm tree which they knew was never there. In first instance, it becomes a source of fear to unsuspecting opponents who may wish to run back home. But for some heady deviances who may pretend not deterred and move on to farm beyond the position of the tree. The tree turns to a natural masquerade called *otumkpala*. Amongst the Igbo, masquerade is a dreadful being that no one dares. She does not waste time to whip any one termed intruder. Because the masquerade is a normal being representing an Igbo ancestor rather than a charm, whoever that allows oneself to be whipped, does not live to tell the story. Story could be told only if the person is so lucky to escape the punishment and of course, such person would not like to experience such twice neither would he want his relation to have. By such action, the masquerade form of charm helps in solving land disputes among the Igbo Nigerians and their neighbors.

### ***Iji Ogwu (Mystical flood):***

During the Nigeria – Biafra Civil war time, the population of Biafra would have been wiped out. The Nigerian soldiers had already circled the people of Biafra and they had no where to hide in order to survive.

Whereas survival is an essential condition, security is viewed as safety, confidence, free from danger, doubt, among others. Therefore, security ... could be understood from the standpoint of

being able to enjoy some freedom from life-determining threats and some life choices (Booth, 2007:15).

That was possible because Biafra map was almost inside Nigeria as Lesotho is inside South Africa. There was no food and the Biafrans ran out of ammunition due to blockade they suffered from Nigerian side with the aid of Cameroonian Government. So, in protection, many *Igbo* communities of Biafra resorted to building fences around their towns with a powder-like charm. This is because “Security as the name implies, involves the ability to pursue cherished political and social ambitions” (Williams, 2008:6). The fences were not physical ones that ordinary eyes could see or jumped over with physical self. It was a mystical fence that to the enemies’ eyes, the whole area was waters without any anchor for any ship nor was there any ship or canoe to cross over with. Around such communities were war zones but enemy’s forces were scared getting close to the mystical waters. The funny thing according to a respondent in the scenario Iwegbuna Ekwemeze, was that the inhabitants could move out and into the communities whenever they wanted without hindrance and they did that without canoe because there was no real presence of waters whereas the enemies could not.

It remained so till the end of the war and nothing happened to the citizenry. Their men were spared from being conscripted into the army as there were forceful enrolments of young men and women into the Biafra army. After the war, while the communities that did not apply this mechanism counted their human and material loses, those that employed the service of *iji ogwu* (flood charm or mystical fence) had cause to bless their creator.

#### ***Ogwu Mkpụ* (Bullet proof charm):**

In whatever *Igbo* people do in their daily life, they try to be proactive and never think that all is well. This is because according to the Christian Holy Book, the Bible, “Whoever that has enemies around him, watches over his life every minute of the hour.” They believe in preventive measures instead of pursuing shadows as in looking for a cure in any situation or moment of their life. In pursuance of this, they try to employ specialist who could conjure some substances which when they inject into one’s blood stream or in some other types, swallow as food, serves as immune against bullet, machete cuts, stone or stick hit or any weapon that could inflict wound on one’s body or cause death. It was as a result of Onifade, Imhonopi and Urim (2013)’s statement that ... not only has the continued state of insecurity threatened the very fabric of national integration in the country and created the ecology of fear, disquiet and anxiety. To them, this statement of theirs has meted a deadly blow or what Imhonopi and Urim (2012) call “special bite” to industrial development. This has been the application adopted by some Biafra soldiers and civilians that spared their lives during the war. Right now, some wealthy individuals in Nigeria for fear of being killed by armed robbers, political tugs and or hired assassins or terrorists, employ this substance especially as Nigeria security problem has graduated to suicide bombing or terror attacks. People use these security measures with a view that heaven helps those that help themselves.

#### ***Ogwu Ibobo* (Awe Instigated Charm):**

The collapse of moral values within Nigeria is one critical factor to the continued security challenges that the country is faced with. And worst still, the failure of the security agencies such as the police, the military, state security services and paramilitary units to share intelligent information has been identified as one factor negating the quick apprehension of the culprits (Omede, 2011) of these criminal acts. Being actions which the attacked never gets prior notice of, there is a device or a substance which some *Igbo* people use to scare their attackers. It works in a way that an armed robber, hired assassin, suicide bomber or any murderer with intent of harming such a person would suddenly become afraid or incapacitated to carry his planned action once he sees his target. Some of them sometimes start to confess and hand over their weapons of attack to the person intended to attack. Even at the war front, enemies usually retreat or abandon their arms and ammunitions once they see one with this charm on the other side



of the war and run away. This was why Chukwuemeka Odukwu, the Biafra people's General and war lord was termed *Alusi Biafra* (Biafra god) during the Biafra – Nigeria civil war. It was told that Biafra Head of State, General Emeka Ojukwu had this charm and therefore, any day he defied all advice not to go to the war front; their adversaries retreated once they saw him at the war front.

### ***Ogwu Nde* (Vanishing Charm):**

Throughout the Globe, security has been considered a first order value worth preserving. Evidence abounds in Nigeria where every government places security as her priority in the list of her agenda for year's budget. Whatever way one defines security, there is no consensus on the definition of security. However, it should be noted that insecurity or any event that poses fear or loss of life and property, most times, happens without prior notice. According to Alozieuwa (2012), the challenge posed by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria is not only about the viciousness of either its terror campaigns, or the sect's avowed mission to impose Islamic law on the country, but about confusion regarding the exact cause(s) and the timing of the violence. Philips (2012"16) cited Idika thus:

The Igbo residents in Kano are living with naked fear and apprehension. Though there are few of us who like to stay and defend ourselves, the majority of us, particularly, women and children, numbering over three ... to the North (Kano), because unfolding events indicate that the North is no longer safe for Easterners... Ohanaeze Ndigbo Kano hereby calls on the Governors of the Eastern states and the South-South to provide means of transportation with adequate security to evacuate our brethren who would want to leave because human life is precious and should be protected as such.

In view of sudden happenings of terror attacks and the efforts to avoid loss of life to such ugly incidence, the Igbo do have *Ogwu nde* (vanishing charm) injected into their bodies, swallowed as food, or worn as necklace or around their waists. The effect of this charm is its ability to vacate or remove the wearer from the scene of danger and get him unhurt. It is not only that it removes the person from being trapped; it sends the person far away from the environment no matter how sudden the incident could be. Many people have been saved from fatal accident, armed robbery, terror attacks and other such dangerous events with the work of this charm in Nigeria. During the Nigeria civil war, many soldiers from either side were saved using *ogwu nde*.

In another development, there is a charm similar to vanishing charm. This time, the attacker will come and actually meet the target but instead of accomplishing his mission, he becomes weak to act and could not actualize his plan. It happens in all terror situations even in ordinary attack due to light quarrel or armed robbery. What happens is that when the attacker comes and sees the target, he becomes overwhelmed or overpowered by the target's prestige or humor and therefore, would not have the mind or hands to carry on the plans against the target. Sometimes, it works as if the attackers are in confusion and in disagreement and while they engage in quarrelling over unnecessary issue, the target leaves the scene untouched.

### ***Inu Alusi* (Oath Taking before Deities):**

Igbo people know that one of the issues that disrupt progress of any community or nation is financial mismanagement. They know that some people may seem good in management of certain things but when it comes to finance, they tend to be weak which in turn, gets the society into crises. In effort to maintain financial stability of their communities and avoid embezzlement, the Igbo normally ensure that they take their leaders, to whom they entrust their finances on oath before the most dangerous deities of the community. However, this does not apply to the eldest son of the land as the ancestors take care of them and make such person lose his life if so misbehaves. The Igbo have hundreds of such deities, as

many as communities in entire Igbo nation. Some of such deities are *Ayaaya*, *Ovuve*, *Otuuvio*, *Aligom*, and *Omalagba*, *Ezedu*, *Inyiaruru* and *Ajaana*.

### ***Itu Álusi* (Invocation of Deities):**

Insecurity in any form keeps a community destabilized. Nigeria as a nation has been enmeshed in a fire fox insecurity leading to hundreds of deaths of innocent individuals including security personnel, political officers and diplomats. The security challenge has assumed formidable dimensions forcing the country's political and economic managers and, indeed the entire nation, to rue the loss of their loved ones, investments and absence of safety in most part of the country. The number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, carjacking, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killing and violence, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others have increasingly become the regular signature that characterized life in Nigeria since 2009 (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012). Among the Igbo, when such happens as it has happened before and evidenced in Nwagboso (2012) thus: The history of kidnapping in the South-East zone of Nigeria could be traced to the hostilities and violence in the Niger Delta region; the invocation of deadly deities to guard and protect persons and property become necessary. In some communities where there are no such deities, they search for one from communities that have and hire from them for same purpose.

It has been observed that in those Igbo communities where deities were invoked, there existed quiet environment regarding the activities of witches, armed robbers, ritual killers, financial fraudsters, terrorists, kidnappers and such other related activities. A concrete example was at Nnewi, an industrial heart beat of Igbo land where investors started closing their businesses and moving away due to the activities of these enemies of people in 2012. When the elders saw that the investments in their community were drifting, they came together and invited the chief priests of all the deadly deities within the community and outside the community who then, invoked the anger of their various deities on any person or group of persons who would engage in any of the unholy activities against any citizen of the community. As a matter of fact, from 2012 till date, there has not been any incidence of robbery, kidnapping, suicide or terror attacks, ritual killings, witchcraft or even backbiting in Nnewi and environs. Nnewi people like other Igbo communities, knowing full well that the security of their life and property is in their hands, did this and became secured. The fact is that the deities in question move faster to frustrate the activities of such evil ones and when such persons dare to carry out their dastardly activities; she does not waste time to strike them and can even cause the persons' arrest. In concord with this, Odokuma (2013) avers,

If one is approaching the town with an evil charm, okwobe will nullify the power of the charm. A living example occurred when some years ago a man came into the town with the intention of killing another man. As he (the charmed man) entered the town, he witnessed a flash of lightening which was followed by a voice which told him to turn back. He did not yield to this threat, as he progressed further; a stronger lightening just in front of him flashed and ordered him to retreat. This he did.

### ***Ima Ita* (External Method of Divination):**

Sometimes when crime is committed and no one could be held responsible, everyone amongst the inhabitants, workers or friends is a suspect. In a situation like this, the Igbo employ investigative measures whereby everyone around and who are suspected to be at the time of the crime, is subjected to *ima ita* (an external method of divination). External divination involves making inference from external facts. Methods under this classification are many. For instance, Polynesia method according to Benton (1964:506) involved spinning coconut like a teetotum to discover a thief. Similarly, at Ikem in Omabala Igbo community of Nigeria, *Ita* is a method through which a culprit is detected through the use of water and cow tail.



**Figure 2. İta Odeal**

Here the suspects are asked to get water from any where and pour it into a plate. Thereafter, they come one after the other, kneel before *qfo* shaped-like object and utter some words to prove their innocence. After this, the cow tail is dipped into the water which would be dropped into the suspect's two eyes by the priest in charge. When this is done according to Anedo (2014:98) and the water turned to *chichangene* (little grass bean seed with black and read colors), inside the suspects eyes, the suspect would be adjudged the real culprit but if no such a thing occurs, he or she is declared innocent



**Figure 3. Chichangene; little grass bean seed**

One good thing about this tactic is that once the culprit is detected by the *ita*, he or she does not hesitate to confess otherwise, he goes blind. However, if he admits having committed the crime and confesses, the priest then, has the duty to release him or her from the *ita* by applying some leaves to neutralize the effect.



**Figure 4. Ita Priest, Venerable Obiora Ekweozo of Akato, Ikem**

### **Discussions:**

This work has strived to expose all strategies by which the Igbo of Nigeria use to preserve or protect lives and property of her citizenry. There is no gain denying that what obtains in other nations of the Globe also do happen among the Igbo. All human elements if checked are the same in want, greed, envy, admiring and even dislike. The only remarkable difference in two races is color. So, crimes of different types and magnitude do happen among the Igbo people of Nigeria as in other places of the world. However, what they use to keep the people's life and property safe are numerous especially at the rural areas till date.

Apart from branding all sources of crime such as theft, raping, burglary, witchcraft, embezzlement of public fund, etc as taboos the Igbo also have devices by which these and other crimes are checked. It was understood that there are many of them who are ready to teach the modern society how to make and handle these devices so as to curtail or even completely eradicate crime. Unfortunately, same modern society especially the elites and so called Christians and Muslims among the populace do question the efficacy of those devices. It is important to talk on these devices and their efficacy so as to understand why the Igbo get disappointed when people wallow in shame while losing their lives and property to different kinds of crime of which they have what it takes to arrest.

It was because of the neglect of the Igbo traditional security system by Government of the day who replace them with ammunitions, cctv and other modern equipments for fighting crime which do not solve any problems, that aggravate many groups to spring up and face the challenges of their time. These groups are Bakasi, MASSOB, and different vigilant groups. Unfortunately, these groups that were formed for the people's protection turned out to be a nuisance. Therefore, there is a need for re-inventing the Igbo traditional security system for peace and sustainable development in Nigeria and the world at large.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions:**

Security problems according to Atolagbe (2011) are relatively more intractable in the less developed nations of the world. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, this is evident in the provoking evidences of crimes of different types in the zone. The paper is not satisfied with the inefficiency of modern security machineries like the police and related agencies such as civil defense corps, road safely commission, indigenous vigilante groups, attributing it to the effect of high youth unemployment, low workers wages,

greed and corruption in all facets of the economy. Can the police be expected to behave differently in such socio-economic situations? In fact, that the police are also in the bandwagon is evident in the wave of police extortion on the nation's highways and the arrest. It is unfortunate that our politicians do not help matters at all regarding the way they embezzle the public fund and affluently display them

This paper has tried to introduce and survey the several Igbo traditional security devices with the belief that Nigerian nation would be a better place to live in if the Government may understand and adopt it in collaboration with the modern system for effective checking of crimes. Among the Igbo, it is believed that no one watches over a city, life, property and all worth not better than the spirits. The spirits here are God, ancestors, deities and charms. Given the potency, of these devices as evidenced in so many ways and times, it is apt to recommend the adoption of these indigenous devices for installation at homes, in markets, plantations, in vehicles and on individual persons and offices for security enhancement. *Ogwu amosu* (witchcraft charm), theft, armed robbery and evil attack can be hidden under the carpet or hung on the door post. Those of accident, armed robbery, war, can be worn round the waist, as necklace or hung on the door post or in a car. They can also be installed under foot mats, behind inner rear mirrors, in the ceilings or attached to seats for the security of automobiles. The devices can also be worn on individual persons – inside pockets, sewn to hats, strapped to wrists or as neckband or kept inside handbags for women. I equally share Atolagbe's view that availability and legislation of these potent devices, built into ornaments in vehicles, and homes; jewelries, necklaces, bracelets and mother fashion materials on individuals may reduce crime and assault rates at homes, highways and streets. In Nigeria and other third world countries, where there are strict legislation against possession of firearms by individuals, the recognition of these devices by the government may provide a protective option for law-abiding citizens; against crime-minded individuals who acquire and go about with arms by illegal means. The paper could not come to an end without an advice to the Igbo people, Nigerian nation and the world at large that they have an opportunity to assemble the old people who know about these devices now for them to train and hand over to the younger ones before the ever fast death consumes them.

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#### **Interviewees:**

1. Adijì Ajaana, a 98year old man and a retired farmer at Ikem, Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria
2. Iwegbune Ekwemeze, 85year old man and a retired Civil servant from the Ministry of Finance, Anambra State of Nigeria.
3. Venerable Chinetu Igbeke of Dagama, Ikem, 70years
4. Ita Priest, Venerable Obiora Ekweozo of Akato, Ikem

