

# IS SEX A CURRENCY FOR FEMALE POWER? A PHILOSOPHICAL AND TRADO-ETHICAL INVESTIGATION USING AHEBI UGBABE AS A CASE STUDY

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## **Abstract**

In the Nigerian context, and especially in the traditional Igbo setting, women have never featured prominently in the enterprise of politics and power play. Even when they do rise to power, their achievement is usually attributed to the seductive use of their bodies. This sexist attitude is clearly seen in the true story of Ahebi of Igbo land, who was arguably the only female warrant chief in colonial West Africa (late 19<sup>th</sup> century). Her rise to fame and authority was attributed to her ability to utilize the power of the female body to seduce the colonial masters into giving her the position. Ahebi did not only use her beauty but her sexual attraction was as well used as a strategy to lure herself into the King's palace, where she met the controller of the land (the British). This article will investigate this sexist attitude and, using some feminist hermeneutic keys, will try to analyse the phenomenon of female body power politics. The question is: can we always attribute the rise of women to power only to the way they use their bodies or to their own sheer intellectual and political ability?

**Key Words:** Domination, Female Power, and Sexuality, Female Body and Beauty, Politics, Patriarchy, Sex and Gender.

## **Introduction**

The sacredness of women's body as a sacred canopy among the Igbo communities offers an amazing field for the exploration of gender inequality and power becomes evident because "modesty, submissiveness and fear of authority" (Valji, 2003:72) would be attributed to the cause of this gender inequality and restrictions in many aspects which also includes use of sex as a currency for female power. In what Jonathyne Briggs (2012:524) refers to as "the "sexual revolution", the transformation of sexuality and its appearance in the public sphere in the 1970s, has often been seen as

part of a global change in sexual behaviors, one aspect of the general challenges young people made to social values in the Western world”. No wonder Michelle Hammond (2004:214) comments that “a woman’s influence can make or break a man. It can turn the tide of a nation’s identity”. Van Allen (1993:459) argues that even “in traditional Igbo society, women did not have a political role equal to that of men. But they did have a role – or more accurately, a series of roles – despite the patrilineal organization of Igbo society. Their possibilities of participating in traditional politics must be examined in terms of both structures and values”. Presumably,

### **AhebiUgbabe**

AhebiUgbabe was the first and only female to become King in the history of Igbo land, although her community Enugu-Ezike in the present Enugu State, Nigeria resisted that move then. But under the symbolic shadow of her body, beauty, politics and black-magical powers she was able to rule her people during the colonial era (Achebe, 2011). Similarly, Serinity Young (2007:15) affirms that with the help of her “supernatural power, she transformed herself into a holy, universal monarch, and as such she was the very first to render homage” to her people. Show casing her political powers in those days in Igbo land, Ahebi became “the only one designates heroine as a strong central leader in fighting against the external enemies during wartime and this marks out her sexuality (Lanlan, 2015:131). Carina Garland (2008:24) claims that in a woman like AhebiUgbabe “there is the border between states, with perceived transgressive desire directed toward her embodied limit which to a great extent is dedicated to illuminating the friendships with men—at times asserting a sexual, scandalous element to these friendships”. In this way, scholars have paid critical attention to the ways in which patriarchal ideologies have devalued women’s sexuality and embodiment (Hoel & Shaikh, 2013:70). Pauline Phipps (2009:268) sees women like AhebiUgbabe as one who forged a distinct sexual self-consciousness within the context of her faith. For this reason, Margaret Toscano (2013:1) asserts that Ahebi’s “female desire remains elusive for so many reasons”. This is because her position is still debated by scholars to be either of a question of merit or ability, but of sex (Valiulis, 1995:123). Though, AhebiUgbabe who was

transformed from just an ordinary woman and suddenly “was by no means the most powerful” personality in and around her rural community as an “African god” in the socio-sacral space (Onyeama, 1982:43).

From this perspective, Kelly Oliver (2008:2) argues that scholars have both galvanized and confounded debates over feminism and women’s equality. He goes further to argue that their stories share, perhaps more subliminally, the problematic notion of women as both offensive and defensive weapons of war, a notion that is symptomatic of age-old fears of the “mysterious” powers of women, maternity, and female sexuality (Oliver, 2008:2). Ulrike Wiethaus, (2004:43) argues that Ahebi’s “contradictory role as aristocratic woman and female” became a questionable issues in the history of the Igbo’s. Seidman (1968) cited in JonathyneBriggs (2012:524) claims thatbecause of this “many women were already questioning the traditional vision of female fulfilment in marriage and motherhood and refused to become “baby-making machines”.Looking at Ahebi as a prostitute scholars like Courtney Shah (2010: 454) affirms that “public opinion labelled women who entered into casual sexual relationships as prostitutes whether or not they traded money for sex”. Briggs concludes that “sexual suggestiveness often accompanied their success” (2012:523). From an aristocratic point of view, the unruliness of sexuality was less a matter of pure lust than a lack of calculated analysis of political alliances and property distribution (Wiethaus, 2004:43). On this position, KayodeOgunfolabi(2013:81) affirms that “objectification of the female body should be placed, first, within the framework of visual pleasure and objectification in order to demonstrate the global objectification of the female form in other aspects.

### **Gender,Cultureand Tradition**

Insofar as culture represents routine behaviour that carries norms and values of a society, they are often not easily changed (Steady, 2005:326). Phil Okeke (2000:50) consistently argues that the tendency to regard gender discrimination inherent in cultural practices as being acceptable because it is the tradition. She goes on to illustrate how patriarchal continuities, even when they contain contradictions between statutory and customary law and the

weaknesses in statutory law can lead to the strengthening of traditional justifications that still privilege men in relation to property rights, inheritance laws. This can result in relations of power which keep in place an inequitable social structure that privileges the dominant gender (Okeke, 2000:57). SabaMahmood (2005:2) argues that it is under the pretence of tradition that women are enchained. Al-Bukhari (1928) cited in Fatima Mernissi (1991:49) asserts that “those who entrust their affairs to women will never know prosperity” especially women that indulge themselves in sex as a currency. Richard Leppert (1987:64) argues that “this attitude reached its climax in the early nineteenth century in the establishment of rigid distinctions between both peoples at all levels of interaction”. It is on this notion that Fleischacker (1994:21) thinks that tradition refers to “the practices and standards of conduct that we accept unquestioningly when presented to us by our society”. He argues that “traditions are first and foremost the sum total of what is not argued in the transmission of knowledge and practice from parents to their children” (Fleischacker, 1994:70).

It is on this position that Okafor&Emeka (1994:62) asserts that “culture and conventions are generally localized within culture groups but certain traits could be universal to the main groups. Because of this, even small communities have firm control of these customs and conventions and can therefore exercise social control of its members. The individual is subject to the community – bows to its laws and conventions and yields to all manners of sanctions”. On the contrary, John Brenkman (1987:3) argues that “it expresses a restless consciousness, one that senses in every work of culture the fact and the effects of social domination”. He stresses that “this restlessness, this critical attitude toward what is sometimes experienced as the realm of freedom and the very place of human meanings and values, also includes the hope of liberating the human capacity for thought and expression—a capacity that is promised or realized in still distorted and threatened ways in those forms of activity we call culture, art, and literature, philosophy and science” (Brenkman, 1987:3).

Again, insofar as gender is analogous to difference but contains within it notions of inequality and is often viewed as a metaphor representing relations of power, nonetheless, analysis of

power is often restricted to male/female power relations only, ignoring power relations based on race, class, ethnicity, age, nationality and so forth (Steady, 2005:319). According to Ruth Bloch, “the view that gender relations are cultural has been a standard cliché of the anti-biological argument. The very term gender as distinguished from sex-has derived its widespread appeal from its supposedly cultural definition. As a cultural rather than purely physical fact, gender is meant to refer not merely to the male and the female but to the contingent and variable symbols that define masculinity and femininity within a particular social group” (1996:73-74). Sadiq (1996:58) view this concept of gender as a form of socio-cultural distinction in the individual’s physical outlook. Marin Whyte (1978:163) affirms that “these features give men more outlets and resources to use in dominating women, and more ideological support for the controls they place on their wives and daughters”.

According to Brenkman (1987:ix) “a major premise drawn from post historic hermeneutics is needed to keep the interpretation of ideology and utopia from slipping back into the original dichotomy. A text’s meaning is not fixed once and for all, because it is determined by the situation of the time and changes with each distinct configuration of production and reception contexts”. Brenkman (1987:34) again argues that “historicism maintains that its object domain is unaffected by the interests of modern interpreters themselves; that the techniques of the historical-philological method are capable of dissolving such modern prejudices and recovering the real, original meaning of ancient texts; and that the concept of the classical can be employed as a value-neutral category of periodization and stylistic description”. It is on this position that Dollimore (1995:520) argues that “there are two analytic perspectives which address first, this paradoxical centrality of homosexuality in our culture, second the phenomenon of homophobia, and third the construction of masculinity [the three things being closely related]. The one is a radical psychoanalysis, the other a materialist account of deviance”. However, Tapper (1991:104) asserts that inequality of status does not preclude able women from wielding considerable power within the household. Koskoff (1989:13) also observes that across culture women

sometimes “connive” with this notion of male superiority. This concept of gender has been a serious discourse for sometime which made Aluede (2005:58) to assert that such roles structure our choices and guide our behaviour in an acceptable manner within the community we operate. However, gender issue is a condition of being either male or female and in this wise, Nfah-Abbenyi (2005:260) argues that men and patriarchal ideologies control women’s reproductive and sexual capacities, and that as a result, women are trapped by their reproductive anatomy and by a dogma of compulsory heterosexuality.

In fact, in Nigeria, a typical Igbo man, in an Igbo society attaches much significance to this concept of gender inequality and this apparently is very noticeable in situations where a woman does not have a male child for the husband, she of course knows that her position is being threatened (Nwokocha, 2007:230). Metuh (1987:188) asserts that “a woman who cannot or has not given birth is a social misfit and if she has never conceived she is openly ridiculed and told that she is not a woman”. Augustine Nwoye (2007:390) argues that “an African marriage experiences a sense of disorder and distress where the above process of positive evolution in a marriage fails to place”. Strictly speaking, this social structure of the Igbo tradition, culture and hegemony as regards women is apparently “chauvinistic” (Balogun, 2010:28) while it is also “a symbol of women’s oppression” (Mahmood, 2005:195). This notion portrays “women as timeless victims of a ferocious patriarchal order” (Zeleza, 2005:213).

This is why Ali Rattansi (1997:485) argues that “the feminization of the colonized male also of course occurred in the context of the masculinism of imperialism and the dominance of the male in the metropolitan order of things. It is therefore appropriate to turn to another recent contribution to post-colonialism literature in which many of these issues are particularly well highlighted”. It is on this position however that Van Allen (1972:169) asserts that “women, therefore, came second to men in power and influence”. Brenkman (1987:231) argues that this notion of dominance is a “socially organized forms of exploitation, coercion, and nonreciprocity which structure the uses that one individual or group makes of another for the satisfaction of its own need”.

## **Gender Differentiations**

According to Sarkissian, gender combines a principle of social organization and a set of ideas which, while appearing to be natural, based on common sense and biological difference, is in fact culturally constructed and variable (1992:337). Richard Okafor (1994:173) posits that “age-sex limitations are found in many areas”. A survey of some of the most widely used history textbooks clearly demonstrates these biases (Zezeza, 2005:208), and Igbo traditional society attaches much importance to this gender issue, when men and women operate in separate the same culture (Ibekwe, 2013:137). Deborah Court (2008:421) argues that “historically, culture made women invisible”. Conkey (1993:42) admits that “first, we found that women – if they are present at all in reconstructions of prehistory – are usually depicted in a narrow range of passive, home-oriented tasks; they are often exchanged as wives, the objects of art and image making, and symbols of fertility and sexuality.

In contrast prehistoric men are shown as very public, far ranging [adventurous], productive, active and responsible for most of the significant changes in human evolution, especially technological innovations”. Wyatt MacGaffey (2000:236) argues that what matters about gender is not maleness or femaleness as such but the ambivalent interdependence of the two, always at least latently competitive. Eunice Ibekwe (2013:138) explains that “there are many factors that determine or contribute to gender role playing. These, encompasses natural factor, cultural factor, religious factor, and social value system/social factor”. Abeles & Porter (1978:65) argues that sex-based stereotyping can “limit the range of experiences available to male and female in several ways, including participation and selection of vocations and positions”. Abele (2009:128) asserts that “a socio-cultural model for gender associations suggests that sex-based stereotypes are a consequence of socialization”. This is why Doubleday (2006:125) admits that “male professionals sometimes asserts their ascendancy by downgrading women”, and “satirically accuse women for not knowing anything” (Doubleday, 2006:120). Nonetheless, Gilmore (1993:163) concludes that “these gender ideals, or guiding images, differ from culture to culture.”

### **Women and Gender Struggle for Leadership**

However, from the Islamic perspective, according to Doubleday (2006:115) “despite its message of equality, the Holy Qur’an was open to misogynistic interpretation. One verse states: Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made one of them to excel the other. The Qur’an also states that women are unclean when menstruating and thus unfit to perform ritual practices”. Equally, from the Christian perspective according to Obeng (2000:386) “the Catholic Church, on the other hand, disqualifies all women from exercising priestly and thus sacramental duties due to its sacredness”. These “decisions are mediated by the ability to ensure that their current relationship are not jeopardized”, while it also serve “as a sign of strength” among the men (Venkatesh, 2006:104 & 105), which is “the security of the group boundary” (White, 1995:46). The idea is that somehow being a male confer something extra or perhaps the role of men additionally makes most men think that they should be in the leadership of all women at all times (Ogundipe, 2007:43). In his study of gender and performance in Swahili, Mwenda Ntarangwi (2003:105) clearly demonstrates the discrepancy between what is stated as ideal and what actually happens in practice: “that lived experiences and practices form the crux of a culture, and not the expressed ideals that are constantly negotiated through practice, is now a truism in the social sciences. Thus, it is by looking at Swahili life as practiced rather than as stated I have been able to understand the social contradictions and contingencies reflected in Swahili expression”.

On this ground, Timothy Rice (2007:25) argues that “constructed identities become an issue in situations of change or where the weak and the powerful are fighting over issues of identity”. Buttressing this further, Obeng (2000:386) affirms that only postmenopausal women are permitted to perform religious ritual acts in their own right in the indigenous society. In this situation, because the Queen mother has been admitted into the group [cult], “the concern may likely be less serious or non violent” (Ibekwe, 2013:142) and in that case, the Queen mother is invariably regarded as [*NneManwu*] mother of spirit manifest (Ibekwe, 2013:141). In this form she design, shape and size motifs symbolic

of their matrilineage (Antiri, 1974:32). Filomina Steady (2005:319) argues that such “changes in the lifecycle can alter women’s status so that post-menopausal women can assume political functions and serve as elders and advisers on the same basis as men” like the case of Ahebi. Ibekwe (2013:141-142) explains that “spirit manifest [*manwu*] in Igbo tradition is an embodiment of ancestral spirit in the physical realm and for that, it is only the men who are qualified to communicate with such supernatural beings”.

No wonder, Loran Matory (1993:60) argues that “most importantly, men act in all communal rituals as affectively potent embodiments of their subjects, social and political unity”. It is only in such special situation that the initiated or powerful women like Ahebi or the Queen mother is permitted/allowed to undergo certain ritualistic tests, after which she can begin to use “the homilectics language in a transformative manner so that the believer would begin to speak” (Kalu, 2010:125). Michael Nabofa (1994:59) describes such mysterious languages as “classical and weird languages that are anchored on priest craft”, where “the foray into the men’s repertoire is viewed as evidence of an unusual degree of intelligence and talent” (Sugerman, 1989:208). Bronislaw Malinowski (1954:74) posits that the use of such languages or words “invokes, state, or commands the desired aim”. The idea is that the Queen mother has possessed the “moral quality of wisdom, knowledge, emotion, compassion...symbolically, not granted by man, but as a person with the innate quality of a woman who moves in a man’s sphere of action; a person without formal political authority in a court of male power” (Gilbert, 1993:9f). Farid Al-Din Attar (1966:40) writing from the Muslim context, clearly affirms that in that situation, “when a woman becomes a man in the path of God, she is a man and one cannot any more call her a woman”.

From these observations, it has been shown that a woman like Ahebi/Ugbabe as political figure with the consent of the gods and ancestors in Igbo cosmology with her positional transformation affirms a decoration and demonstration of power which is described as “shifting configurations of power” (Gilbert, 1994:118). Joshua Jacobson (2000:12) refers to it as “crossing the sacred bridge”, after “grappling and wrestling individually with God” (McAdams,

1988:35). In this case, this actually accords high regard and respect for the woman because she is looked upon as not being an ordinary woman but man. Stephen Ezeanya (1994:7) argues that on this occasion of attaining a new social or religious status of this nature, it invariably implies a remarkable change in her life, because “she is subjected to a number of conventions and taboos during this period” (Ardener, 1989:79) through this kind of inner or mystical transformation.

This situation is remarkable because in many other regions—parts of Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, sacred positions and rituals are occupied and traditionally performed by men, not women (Doubleday, 2006:109). Ortner (1995:492) argues that “the secondary status of women in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact. Yet within that universal fact, the specific cultural conceptions and symbolizations vary enormously from culture to culture, and over different periods in the history of particular cultural traditions”. Hoffman-Ladd, (1992:83) asserts that this “implies the degradation of the female sex as a whole and suggests that true spirituality is normally found only among men, it also indicates that the sex of the body is not a barrier to the inspiration and grace of God”. Insofar as it is not proper in Igbo tradition for women to overstep their boundaries or do the obvious in matters or roles strictly meant for males, nonetheless, all these put a check and balance on the type functions being performed by any categorized group, male or female (Ibekwe, 2013:143).

According to Lazarus Ekwueme (2005:23) gender functions have been so arranged and segregated that men arrogated superior functions to themselves and inferior functions to women. Rosaldo (1974:19) argues that “what is perhaps most striking and surprising is the fact that male, as opposed to female, activities are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and value to the roles and activities of men”. This is the reason why Doubleday (2008:4) argues that “gender is one of the most important parameters in human power relations, influencing most aspects of life, and power play between humans which is often enacted along gender lines”. Sugarman (1989:193) affirms that “this responsibility was ascribed to men primarily because they were perceived as being physically stronger by nature than women. He

argues that men were also regarded as having greater social savvy because of their activities within the public sphere, and their esteem within the community increased as they gained in experience (Sugarman, 1989:194).

On the contestation of male strength hypothesis, Brettell & Sargent (1993:2) asserts that “men are physically stronger than women and this gives them superiority. They are larger, and they have stronger muscles and less fat, a pelvis better adapted for sprinting, larger hearts and lungs, and so forth”. They explain that “one position holds that women are left-brain dominant, giving them superior verbal skill, while men are right-brain dominant, giving them superior visual spatial skills” (Brettell & Sargent, 1993:2). Bruce Lincoln (1989:73) argues that “dominance is thus the imposition of an unwanted and exploitative fusion on groups that are converted into subordinate segments of the new social aggregate”. Matory (1993:61) admits that women cannot be trusted due to the fact that they can divulge the secret information and may betray the town on important matters because of the secrecy involved. John Shepherd (1987:153) argues that “women are necessary as the source of life, as well as potentially dangerous in their power to withdraw it”. No wonder the proverb of the Gikuyu of Kenya says: “women, like the weather, are unpredictable”, and “women have no secure gourds, but only leaking, upside down ones” – you can’t trust women with secrets” (Mbiti, 1991:66-67).

Insofar as ritual, cultic and esoteric affairs usually involved in the sacredness of the royal stool have male dominance and women are highly restricted from intruding or interfering in such situations, therefore, it would be seen that both cultural conceived notions and biological sex differentiation are at play in gender definition, which in turn influence musical performance typology (Ibekwe, 2013:138). In this wise, “the above observations suggest that notion of human sexuality, and the consequent freezing and projection of women as sexual objects, which constitute little more than a cultural construct representing male dominance in the world” (Shepherd, 1987:155). Buttressing this further, Shepherd again argues that:

The conceptualization of people as objects decontextualized from social relations implies the possibility for uncontested, unilateral control. The objectification of women thus becomes a crucial step in the mystification of social relatedness. If women symbolize the source of life, the social interactions that are the source of our being as people, and if sexual relatedness provides a biological code for these same processes, then women tend to become equated with sex. In order to be successful in a male-dominated society, they must package themselves [or be packaged, as in advertising images] as objects amenable to control by men (1987:154).

Ibekwe (2013:142) explains that there are significant areas where men have advantages over women in sacred music which includes ritual music, wrestling music, hunting music, war music, and initiation music and so on. It is on this position that Lester Monts (1989:220) asserts that musicianship in musical practices like other professions is divided along gender line. He explains that “on a general level, women’s musical roles were bound up inextricably with the fundamental practices of birth, initiation, marriage and other labor-related activities” (Monts, 1989:220). Gender-based asymmetry is equally shown in what Ortner & Whitehead (1981:13) describes as “prestige structure”, in which “male as opposed to female activities are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and values to the roles and activities of men” (Rosaldo, 1974:19). This method goes a long way, also combined with the value assigned to men’s activities is a corresponding tendency to devalue women’s activities (Sarkissian, 1992:343), in other that women would be “silenced, defeated, and furious” (Mernissi, 1991:2). Collier & Rosaldo (1981:311) argues that gender conceptions in any society like the Igbo are understood as functioning aspects of a cultural system through which actors manipulates, interprets, legitimize and reproduce the patterns of cooperation and conflict that order their social world. It is in this wise that Makwenda (1990:97) affirms that “performance is

produced within people's personal lives, their social organization, politics and social control, gender and religion".

### **Sacredness of Women as an Ethical and Political Power**

Murphy (2012:78) observes that in religion like that of the Igbo, ethically it is believed that there are some natural components of a woman that make her sacred. Such natural component like the menstrual blood from women like Ahebi Ugbabeas it is believed in traditional religion can disturb the physical and spiritual compounds of certain spiritual energy which can endanger the people in contact with them". Some of these components aid women to be religiously, socially and politically powerful. Buckley (1993:134) writing in the context of the Indian law argues that "a menstruating woman is highly polluting and will contaminate the family house and food supply if she comes into contact with either. Thus, in the old days, a special shelter for menstrual seclusion was built near the main house, and special food for a family's menstruating women was separately collected, stored, and prepared for consumption in this shelter". Buckley (1991:45) again affirms that "traditionally, when a girl menstruates for the first time she undertakes a ten-day period of seclusion and ritual activity, an amplified version of the routine she'll follow during each of her periods until menopause". Ogunidipe (2007:29) asserts that "as the woman is sacred in endogenous thought, her body is also sacred. Similarly her body as the house of life, parts of her body such as her hair and nail clippings, women's discharges such as her milk, menses, tears, sweat, and even saliva are considered sacred."

According to Nabofa (1996:11) "our experience among our own people, eye-witness accounts from Africans and the study of African thought forms and religious practices have revealed some beliefs and symbolic cultic practices associated with saliva". He affirms that its uses for positive and negative ends have been noticed and it is an element into which multivocal symbologies have been encoded, with varied meanings decoded from it (Nabofa, 1996:11). Ogunidipe (2007:29) argues that "they can and are used as blessings, curses, and potions for power – social, material and supernatural". She argues that women's menstruation is considered sacred and powerful, and that it is believed to have the power to interrupt,

interfere with and cause to happen (Ogundipe, 2007:29), “thereby asserting their womanhood” (Kopytoff, 2005:135).

Nabofa (1996:35) argues that there are checks and balances in its use, especially for some seemingly negative purposes such as cursing, magic and sorcery and coercion, but man’s conscience is always his judge at this situation as could be seen in few cursing rituals. Ogundipe (2007:29) posits that women’s uterus as well as their vagina is also considered sacred. Olupona (1991:6) argues that “it could not be that the biological nature of women is sinful, but rather that blood, which is a symbol of life, has some potency, which can itself destroy. It may be that people like to put this potential threat/power at bay, to control, so to say, that which is highly charged with the sacred.” Leppert (1992:109) writing in the context of playing the family piano in England argues that “in this instance, the virginal, anthropomorphized as woman, is made by the violence imposed upon her. Music is posited as harmony, but harmony is produced by a beating. Aestheticized as music, women’s very being is articulated as a product of a deferential masochism in response to sadistic revenge... Yet even in the privacy of the playing, such instruments’ discursive boundaries must be preestablished”.

No wonder women who are in ovulation period are kept from playing sacred drums in order to protect them, not the drum and it is believed that the spirit that inhabits the drum, desirous of blood, may cause women to bleed to death (Velez, 2000:156). Women are afraid of it, and if one should see the activities forbidden to women she would no longer conceive (MacGaffey, 2000:238). Nabofa (1980:394) asserts that “this is one of the major reasons why women, especially those who are still of child-bearing age are often precluded from taking key positions in many religious activities”. DorathyRoberts (1997:23) argues that women from the beginning, has been seen as objects whose decisions about reproduction should be subject to social regulation rather than to their own will. Levy-Bruhl affirms that “menstrual blood and miscarriage sometimes attract danger” (Douglas, 1966:96). Nabofa (1980:394) posits that “such blood is believed in many places in Africa to be capable of rendering whatever and wherever it touches unwholesome ritually, and that is why traditional believers are suspicious of women when it comes to religious activities”.

According to Metuh (1985:89) such symbolic item “is surrounded by a set of prohibitions. Ordinary people may on the advice of a priest or diviner adopt and practice certain prohibitions and thus achieve a limited level of holiness. It would appear therefore, that prohibitions create or preserve the status of holiness [nso], while the breach of prohibition [nso], result in pollution or unholiness. Nso are therefore sacred prohibitions”. Nabofa (1980:395) argues that “generally, any form of blood from the woman’s reproductive organ is considered to be unclean and a taboo which makes for ritual defilements”. He affirms that being an embodiment of different symbols – in terms of its different applications and uses – we have seen its symbology in African beliefs as multivocal in nature (Nabofa, 1996:35).

### **Conclusion**

Although, women like AhebiUgbabein Igbo land who got to the height of this traditional position is assumed to have exhibited some kinds of sexual exuberance using their body for sex as a kind of currency in order to acquire such political position. The embodiment of certain components that makes women sacred equally paid off in their quest as a currency for sex. Trado-ethically, such women have no moral right to use their ‘God-given’ treasure in order to achieve what they want in life. In Igbo traditional religion and culture, a woman both married and / or unmarried is not permitted to use her body anyhow. That notwithstanding, some women do engage in this act these days. Succinctly, such an act under the watch hood of moral philosophy is tantamount to prostitution and abomination in traditional Igbo culture and society.

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