

OMINOUS IN IGBO ONTOLOGY: A SOCIO-METAPHYSICAL CONSIDERATION

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Abstract

Igbo existence is replete with ominous. This is a perplexing feeling that portends an impending or already manifested calamitous event. Ominous experience therefore precedes or succeeds disastrous or ill-fated events. The ominous preceding calamitous events or circumstances is either experienced by the victim(s) of the impending doom or other people, while post ill-fated events' ominous is an odd feeling often experienced by person(s) that are not victim(s) of the occurred disastrous event. This paper investigates the import, essence, sources, mechanisms and dynamism of ominous experiences as well as the socio-existential connections paving the phenomenon in Igbo world. The study finds that Igbo-Africans view ominous experience as prior warning and desperate call to circumvent imminent disasters. The paper also discovers that pre-calamitous ominous experiences serve to prepare one towards imminent ill-fated circumstance, while post disastrous events' ominous experiences are meant to cushion adverse psychic effects an already existent doom may have. Despite these, averting impending catastrophic circumstances that propel ominous experiences among Igbo-Africans depends on the sagaciousness, capacity and responsiveness of the victim, the people undergoing the ominous experiences, available space and time prior to the disaster, and believed resolve of immaterial forces in the metaphysical realm. This paper thus concludes that ominous experience among Igbo-Africans may portend catastrophic events, yet it is a natural apocalyptic experience that either calls for re-adjustment to the safe side of life or is a predisposition towards a disastrous circumstance.

Key Words; Consideration; Igbo; Ominous; Ontology; Socio-metaphysical

Introduction

In Igbo world, there is a great chain of existence. And “life presents itself as one great chain of being ontologically connected with one another” (Ekei 72). As such, cosmic entities; animate and inanimate forces are relatedly and ontologically understood as connected with each other. This connection is not only on the superficial interaction, but on a much deeper level in the interiority of the being of cosmic realities. The nexus and interwoven socio-psychic arrangements as well as interactions existing among cosmic existents in Igbo world form the communal and mystical bond explicable in the maxim; “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am” (Mbiti 108). This means that humans in Igbo world live a participative and complementary existence, which stems from their perception of the universe and life as

harmonious, orderly, communal, connected and united. Based on this socio-metaphysical chain of existence and bond among cosmic realities, Igbo-Africans perceive man as capable of ominous experience which is a pre and post psychic consciousness of ill-fated events or circumstances. This Igbo sagacity implies that in prior and post disastrous events; Igbo-Africans see humans as having the capacity and privilege of experiencing odd feelings that signify such calamities. Dukor describes this odd and informative experience grounded in Igbo universe as a form of consciousness and ontology where the reversibility of time may be made possible (37). And Okere situates the possibility of this socio-metaphysical experience on the rationale that in Igbo ontology, “there is an interaction of beings, that is, of forces... The world of forces is like a spider's web” (2). The general knowledge of these forces; their influences and interactions however propels social balance and internal equilibrium among indigenous Igbo-Africans and within their communities.

Ominous experiences among Igbo-Africans therefore belongs to the realm of ontology, parapsychology, telepathy, idealism or metaphysics which seemingly contradict the immutable laws of physics, fundamental logical ideas, and principles that are the fulcrum of modern science. As such, its skepticism only abounds among the scientific minded intellectuals. But despite this doubt, the larger manifestations of ominous in unfolding events have consistently retained its veracity and credibility. For ominous is an *a priori* epistemic angle of Igbo existence with a *a posteriori* dimension, which can be likened to the reality and efficacy of witchcraft evident in 'when a Witch consistently cries and the child consistently dies'. As such, Igbo-Africans attach great importance to ominous experience and accord it the attention it deserves. This attention is evident in the consultations, short and long prayers, offerings, sacrifices and good wishes which victims of ominous tender to the human, physical and unseen realities in order to avert manifestation of the ominous. Indeed, the importance attached to ominous experience by Igbo-Africans predicates on the understanding that bad omens which inspire ominous experience in people are often sent by the invincible realities who now warn humans through such signs. Based on this knowledge, Igbo-Africans view ominous experience as good in themselves and free gift of the immaterial beings meant to propel humans towards engaging the right gear and adjusting to the right speed in the journey of life (Neadike 159).

Import of ominous experience in Igbo existence

Ominous experiences in Igbo world are bad omens or premonitions associated with ill-fated events or circumstances. It is an odd, pessimistic or ill feelings that are portentous of impending sad, ill-fated and agonizing events or circumstances. As such, Bullon defines it as feelings that something bad is going to happen (1146). From this understanding, ominous could be seen as a psychic sensation, emotional sensation, sensitivity, impression, intuition or consciousness of impending disastrous circumstances. In other words, it is a sign of an imminent misfortune. This is why Nwadike describes it a warning for an approaching danger (159).

Indeed, Igbo-Africans understand ominous experiences as natural information indicating an approaching evil or sad circumstance towards one, those he is connected to or to others elsewhere. Along this line, ominous is understood as a natural lense through which impending

and existent calamitous events and circumstances are known. Hence, Mosley reveals that ominous is a precognition; an “ability to perceive information about events that have not yet occurred” (10).

Essence of ominous in Igbo-African World

Ominous is an internal psychic experience. It is odd, awful, agonizing and sad in nature. Ominous experience is characterized by emotional perplexity and fear. In fact, it is life-choking and excruciating in character. This is as it is replete with imaginary calamity and life threatening event or circumstance with all the pains associated with it. Ominous possesses its victims, and is beyond human control. This is in the sense that it weakens its victims' volition to choose thoughts and cannot be wished away. As such, ominous controls the mental coordination of its victim and renders him feeble at that moment. Essence of ominous is also visible in its evil content which requires human sagacity to understand. In this sense, ominous is an evil thought not comprehensible to many people. However, it is an evil thought believed to be on the verge of imminent manifestation. Such thought is filled with calamitous occurrences or circumstances such as terrible accidents, bloody violence, fatal illness, fatal injury, great loss, disappointments, rejections, painful and agonizing circumstances, death, etc.

From the empirical viewpoint however, ominous is characterized by restlessness, listlessness, worry, uneasiness and amnesia. At the moment of the experience, ominous often seems real, yet its manifestation is probable. However, ominous can befall the victim of the approaching calamity. At other times, it is the experiences of someone/people connected or unconnected to the victims of the ill-fated circumstances. Along this line, ominous precedes or succeed calamitous events and it serves as a warning or cushioning process, respectively. Consequently, many scholars view it as a natural channel of information and mode of knowing besides reasoning (Ruch and Anyanwu 89).

Sources of Ominous experiences in Igbo-African Universe

Based on their worldview, Igbo-Africans perceive certain rare objects, events, humans, animals, plants, trees, atmospheric conditions, etc as portentous. In line with this, Nwadike records that unusual behaviours of animals, plants, insects and other natural realities constitute ominous experience (159). Ominous experience is also spurred by minor accidents, minor spontaneous injuries, collapse of huge trees, and early or first instance contact with uncommon objects, animals, insects and unusual humans like pygmies who are associated with dangers in Igbo world. Adding to these sources are; hitting a toe against a stone or tree root, sudden knife cut, sudden fall and shattering of jars, pots and plates, unusual presence of forbidden or sacred animals; green snakes, pythons, birds; vultures, crows, invasion or sudden sting of rare or extra-ordinary insects; millipedes, centipedes, soldier ants, termites, etc (Elechi 117). Moreover, invasion of bees, locusts, devastating thunderstorm and lightening in one's compound or farm instigates ominous experience. These are coupled with eerie screams of evil night birds (ajo Nnunu), shrieking and hooting of night owls (ikwikwii) and crickets (abuzu) as well as the unusual sounds of night flaps (Ukaegbu 69).

Igbo kola nut with two lobes also induces ominous experience among the person(s) that broke

it (Oraka 4). Otagburuagu adds that in Ngwa part of Igbo land, a kola nut without lobes (Oji akpuru) is not even eaten but thrown away as it induces ominous (94). The combination of sunshine and heavy rain, presence of bright star in broad day light as well as nightmares also spur ominous experiences among Igbo-Africans. This is more so as many Igbo-Africans view nightmares as revelations from the metaphysical world signifying subsequent or existent catastrophic events or circumstances. However, an existent calamitous circumstance can trigger ominous in which the concerned person(s) feel that a repetition or re-occurrence is imminent. This is why in the midst of particular illness which previously led to deaths, people often become ominous of another death. Also among the causes of ominous are critical situations like protracted illness, pandemic/endemic diseases, poor leadership, insecurity, poverty, conflict, etc.

Inspiring ominous experience in Igbo world is also the knowledge of the popular metaphysics that the universe is teeming with malevolent spirits, forces and strange personalities (Ruch and Anyanwu 162; Onuigbo 15). With intense religiosity, Igbo-Africans believe that the metaphysical world is a living reality and unseen forces are conceived as impinging on all facets of human daily life (Onwuka 84). Thus, Igbo-Africans see the earth as ontologically constituted, structurally ordered but replete with imperfections and evil forces. These mysterious forces are perceived to be surrounding the universe and inflicting injuries, setbacks and obstacles on human endeavours. In fact, these forces seek to harm people at every opportunity (Basden 38). This is as they have unlimited power and access in the determination of human fate (Ogugua 72). Generally, therefore, Igbo-Africans view human life as being threatened by many powerful forces and natural potentates: *Ala, Igwe, Amadioha*, etc., angry gods and ancestors and evil spirits (Oguejiofor 7).

Consequently, the consciousness of the presence of these evil forces that negate the cosmic order instills fear and ominous in the people. It is along this line that Mbiti recalls that awareness of wicked people and devilish human agents instills emotional tensions, psychic disturbances and ominous experience in the people (209). This is more so as these agents are believed to cause harm to people in diverse ways; especially through their material possessions; hair, clothes, pictures, foot wears, etc. The believed efficacy of this harm however predicates on Igbo belief that humans are inseparable from their possessions and cosmic existents to which they are bonded through life-force. Thus, the thoughts of malevolent beings and their human agents as well as their evil machinations are also part of the catalysts behind ominous experience among Igbo-Africans.

Also propelling ominous experience is presence of things that can constitute danger such as dilapidating structures (houses, walls, bridges, roads), huge trees, storms, heavy rains, floods, land slide, etc. In fact, ominous experience also emanates from life threatening physical factors and forces such as poverty, natural disaster, geographic unpredictability, poor governance and absence of economic endowments. Besides, Igbo-Africans are constantly encircled by worry and fear of unknown; the unknown minds of beings in the spiritual realm (Onuigbo 3). This fear also induces constant ominous in the people. Deepening ominous experience as well is the reality of human imperfections and finitude, which often incline man to moral lapses and actions that foul human relationships punishable by the ancestors and

deities (Ilogu 41, Ilogu 17). Referring to this, Basden documents that infringement on laws and conventional code of morals may lead to severe penalty and distributive justice inflicted by the ancestors and deities (34). The ancestors also sanction breach of Divine and natural laws (Nso ani) like incest, homicide, patricide, etc (Okafor 35, 43-44).

Despite these, benevolent beings like ancestors also induce ominous experience in their offspring as a warning about an impending doom. Most of the realities that constitute ominous experience are however not universal among Igbo-Africans. There exist slight variations in diverse Igbo environments as to what spurs ominous experience. This is more so as “each community or clan has its ecological symbols that provides a channel of interpretation to its problems and remedies (Ukaegbu 69).

Mechanism of Ominous experiences in Igbo ontology

In Igbo-African world, all entities are ontologically related and connected to each other. On this inter-relationship and complementarity, all realities are naturally caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny, that whatever affects one directly or indirectly affects all. And whatever will or has befallen one is ontologically felt by the other(s). Based on this reality, cosmic existents and socio-cosmic arrangements are like spider's web existing in communal and mystical bond. In the light of this reality, Nwigwe argues that this is why,

Reason ...in its western sense is discursive and analytic. The African mind, on the contrary looks at reality holistically. It does not impoverish or sap or rob or press issues into cold schemata. Unlike the European intellect, which is mainly after the utility of things, the African reason is participatory and intuitive. In African thought, mysticism prevails – there is a great interest to forge unity and harmony among the various aspects of reality: the environment, man, animal, the ecology, etc. for the European, man lives in a world which is tangible and realistic: man himself is part of nature, which consists and functions according to certain principles and laws. In African thought, the world is an organism, it is more properly understood, when taken as a whole. This means that the physical and spiritual realms of reality are inseparably bound together (45).

This participative existence in Igbo-African world amidst this bond however stands as ontological link both on the superficial interaction and at a much deeper level of existence (Ekei 32). In this sense, there is collective integration, participation, harmony and connectedness between man, nature, inanimate and metaphysical beings. In other words, no being is perceived as existing in isolation but in an inclusive form, and in relation to nature; material and immaterial entities. In fact, the idea of separate substances or beings existing independent of each other is not African. This is why scholars depict Igbo-African existence as

essentially holistic (Ogugua 71). And based on this, Onwuanibe in Ramose argues that Igbo-African existence is more vividly existential and practical than theoretical (65). This is in contrast to western cosmic epistemic understanding in which the content of the cosmos are largely perceived as autonomous, individualistic, disordered and discordant (Ekei 72).

Sequel to these, life in Igbo-African world is one great chain of being ontologically connected with one another, with people interacting and relating with other cosmic realities. In other words, people exist in a chain of relationship, cooperation and transfer of feelings with material and non material beings. This is the rationale behind the position of Aghamelu that beings in the world are neither island with each operating on its own nor independent forces, but linked by a network of relationships in which each of them actively participate (68). This then means there is no sharp distinction between man, nature, self, other creatures and the world in Igbo-African context (Ruch and Anyanwu 97). And this essential relationship are implied in many Igbo maxims like; *Egbutu ojutu* (A felled tree touches other trees necessarily) which conveys that man is socially and ontologically linked that one's misfortune is felt by others, and *Otu mkpisi aka luta mmanu, ozuo ndi ozo* (One finger that touches oil spreads it to others) which conveys that humans are rooted in series of relationships and collective responsibility in the universe. With this knowledge in mind, Nze asserts that Igbo-African psyche recognizes an existential connection between man, animate and inanimate forces in the universe (42). And Ekei concurs to this view stating that “man is like a chain...man is socially and communally linked like a chain. No man is an island!” (87). Heidegger in Macquarrie further reflects this existent capacity when he refers to man generally as a “being-with”, (community) and insists that this quality is an essential characteristic of *Dasein* man (18).

Consequently, one of the results of the interconnectivity, relationship, interaction and interpenetration of beings in Igbo-African world is ominous experience of man. For, the ontological and metaphysical contents of this web foster the necessary connections that enable transfer of feelings and forces. In fact, there is intimate ontological relationship and interaction of beings and their forces in which life-force of one being flows into another. Thus, life-force which is an immaterial energy permeates the whole universe and natural things through their interactions, and renders material and immaterial realities inseparable (Ruch & Anyanwu 89-90). As such, humans, animals, plants, inanimate, environment and the metaphysical realities share the bond of vital-force through which feelings of subsequent events are communicated. In this Igbo-African epistemic conviction, the metaphysical sphere is not totally divorced from concrete experience. For the physical and metaphysical are though aspects of reality, but the transition from one to the other is natural and real. With these therefore, it stands that the mechanism of ominous is dependent on the ontological and metaphysical tie among cosmic realities, which fosters a necessary connection between events; especially the motion of feelings where one event is necessarily the cause of the other or felt by the other (Ogugua 53).

Through this tie, man in Igbo-African context experiences the feelings of other realities, discerns and decodes their minds, moods and conditions, and becomes aware or conscious of present and impending circumstances. In reference to this, Tempels writes that “the world of

forces is held like a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole net-work" (60). Thus, it is not possible to isolate or dissect Igbo existence without touching the vital relationship among all levels of being and experience (Anyanwu 94).

However, man is the center of Igbo-African ontological and metaphysical relationship. This is as he is the only being with what it takes to coordinate the universe. For above other beings, man is capable of interactive thinking, reflection and reasoning. These critical and rational activities indeed elevate man above other realities as a being with a higher grade of existence (Arua 6). Hence, with these qualities, man is capable of discerning and feeling the mood and circumstances of each other and that of other beings. These qualities however are also the reasons behind the dependent of supernatural realities on man to accomplish their plans. Igbo-Africans are therefore communal beings with metaphysical convictions arising from experience that outside the communal bond and relationship no one will likely survive (Iroegbu 7). These natural ontological and metaphysical orders in Igbo universe explains why Igbo-Africans see themselves in others, concern themselves with the actions and circumstances of others, and experience the ominous linked with imminent disaster. Of course, this mythical but passionate and workable tie goes against western logic but sustains the Igbo existence.

Social interaction stemming from ominous experience in Igbo world

The argument regarding ominous experience in Igbo world exposes an aspect of social interaction among Igbo-Africans. This social relationship is more existential in post ominous experience, and it subsists in Igbo understanding of life as "*Onye aghana nwanne ya*" (let no one abandon his brother/sister or Be your brother's keeper) and *O nuru ube nwanne agbana oso* (He that hears a brother/Sister's wail should hearken to it). These maxims and more reveal ominous experience as a phenomenon that paves outstanding social connection and interaction between the subject that experienced the ominous, the victim of the impending danger and the community. The social interaction stemming from ominous then becomes glaring when the subject of ominous experience obligatorily feels concerned about the wellbeing of the victim(s) of an impending calamitous circumstance(s). Based on this, Igbo-Africans are quick in sharing their ominous experience with the person(s) concerned, and at times initiate a process towards averting the manifestation of the ominous. They are also quick in contacting the concerned person(s) in ominous experience to ascertain the veracity of their feelings and to be sure they are in good condition.

Moreover, when the victim(s) of an imminent calamitous event becomes aware of the preceding ominous experience, he is quick in seeking help from his friends, family, kinfolk and community relying on Igbo understanding of life enshrined in the maxims; *Onye aghana nwanne ya* and *O nuru ube nwanne agabna oso*. These of course assist the intended victim in the process of averting the expected calamity. In this way, ominous in Igbo-African world fosters a social relationship and interaction where one is always his brother's or sister's keeper. It as well enhances collective responsibility (Igwebuiké) and improves social relations in Igbo society. One can therefore state with certainty that ominous experience among Igbo-Africans promotes the *I-thou* and *I-we* social relationship as well as the *we-feeling* that emanate from

the value of collective existence rooted in Igbo culture (Okonkwo 121-122). In this culture, it is also a common understanding that what affects one (will) affects all; hence the need to rally round the intended victim as a family and community.

Along this line, individualism exists only in minute form, for no one enjoys or suffers alone in Igbo context. And this selfless social relationship stands as an exhibition of Igbo identity as being-with-others which is also evident in the existent ontological relations between man and all realities; material and spiritual, visible and invisible (Okolo 7, Ruch and Anyanwu 124). This relationship and interaction are however best described as Igbo humanism; a humane and socialist attitude to life which defines the mode of being of Igbo-Africans that is beyond egoistic, material and utilitarian needs. Rather this humanism reflects Igbo values visible in the protection of others because of their ontological practical values and the need for their presence in order that others will be properly human. It as well reflects Igbo values replete in recognition of others as values themselves; not just because they serve as means to an end but because they are end in themselves, and as such deserve happiness, appreciation, social and moral considerations.

Ominous experience in contemporary Igbo existence

In those days, ominous experience is seriously followed with every responsiveness; consultations and divinations to ascertain the means of circumventing the impending sad circumstance. This approach has detrimentally changed in the contemporary time. This is as ominous experience is largely ignored, especially by the educated and exposed class who perceive the phenomenon as mere psychic conjectures, superstitions or products of mental stress. As such, this group of Igbo-Africans explains the experience from the natural and scientific perspective. This is as expected for these modern Igbo have been immersed in western education and influenced by global association; thought and patterns which has severed their ontological and metaphysical connection with Igbo culture; beliefs, customs and tradition (Makumba 31). Consequently, a large number of this group tends to compromise many aspects of the traditional beliefs, principles and customs that underscore ominous experience. Worst still, a great number of them often neglect ominous experience to their detriment and that of others.

Despite these, some Igbo-Africans still attach great importance to ominous experience and perceive it with awe. This group often counters manifestation of ominous experience with prayers, almsgiving and good wishes for the intended victim. In extreme cases, spiritual directors are consulted for further prayers and sacrifices against the manifestation of the ominous. However, some people within this group do also resort to the old method of averting the manifestation of ominous, which consists in consultation of Diviners (Dibia afa), Sorcerers/Seers (Ndi amuma), native ministerial Doctors (Dibia aja), native priests (Eze Alusi) and Medicine man/Healer/Exorcist (Dibia Ogwu) (Asiegbu 25-29) These Igbo-Africans who populated mainly the hinterland are still the main bearers of Igbo tradition and custom.

Dynamism and functionalist perspective of ominous experience in Igbo existence

As a natural way of receiving information in Igbo world, ominous experience is dynamic. This

dynamism lies in the fact that it can be experienced before or after the calamitous event. Prior to the ill-fated event, ominous is viewed as an apocalyptic experience and a warning. But in post disastrous circumstance, it is viewed as preparatory revelation and means of cushioning the effect of a manifested sad event. Meanwhile, ominous can be experienced by person(s) that share relationship with the victim(s) of the perceived calamitous circumstances(s). On other occasions, it manifests in would-be-victims prior to the impending ill-fated event. Also, it occurs in people with little or no relationship with victims of the perceived sad circumstances(s). However, it occurs, Igbo-Africans perceive ominous as a prior warning and desperate call to avert or circumvent imminent disaster. They as well as perceive it as an impact-cushioning experience against an already manifested calamitous event which the one experiencing ominous is yet unaware of.

Despite these, disastrous events can also manifest without ominous experience. In this case, this ontological situation premises on the fact that the victim has been deserted by the benevolent forces especially his *Chi*. *Chi*, for Igbo-Africans refers to the spiritual form of the individual that resides in the metaphysical realm (Ezeugwu and Chinweuba 35). This entity is similar to Plato's form of physical realities in the immaterial world (Stumpf 58). "Chi" is therefore the spiritual double, the form of an individual, the life force or spiritual companion of a living person which is resident in the metaphysical world. According to Dukor, "Chi" is an ontological entity created by the Supreme Being ever before its physical copy, but it determines with the Supreme Being where, when, and how of one's birth, existence, fate and death (14). This explains why an ominousless calamity is viewed as a sign that the victim's "Chi" has deserted him.

Against ominous experience and its dynamism however, is functionalist perspective revolving around reliability of ominous in Igbo existence. This view predicates on non-exact conformity of ominous experience with the empirical calamity. Besides, the functionalists find that certain ominous experiences end in futility; devoid of manifestation even without any pacification or propitiation. The traditional Igbo explanation here hinges on the unsolicited protection of the ancestors and one's "chi" whose primary duty it is to ward off impending evil on the people. This unsolicited protection is enshrined in Igbo Proverbs like; *Chi onye adiro na izu ma onwu egbuna ya* (if one's *Chi* is not in agreement; he will not die). More so, the victim is perceived as having strong fate hence he is impregnable and indestructible.

Against these answers, the functionalists maintain that ominous experience is a myth that is still deficient of logical connection with the manifested calamitous event or circumstance. But how does one explain a situation whereby a Witch cries and the child dies? Or more directly, a situation whereby a disastrous occurrence has consistently followed ominous experiences? Not relenting however, the functionalists are of the view that the implied link between the ominous and unfolded event lacks critical connection, conceptual clarity, discursive verification, logical analysis and other scientific processes. Adding to these, the functionalists hold that ominous is an experience that is self-justifying and authoritative. This is as it often leaves the victim with no personal suggestions and option than to face the imminent doom. Despite these, ominous expresses Igbo existence, and stands as a platform through which Igbo people achieve relative balance and internal equilibrium of personhood in their existence

(Ruch & Anyanwu 89).

Circumventing the manifestation of ominous in Igbo world

Averting the manifestation of ominous experience depends on spiritual and physical factors. Physically, it will depend on human responsiveness. This bothers on whether the person(s) experiencing the ominous is sagaciously able and willing to understand and interpret his experience properly. It will too depend on whether this person(s) understand the exigency surrounding the ominous experience and quickens the disclosure of his experience to the victim or the concerned people. It will too depend on whether the victim will be responsive to the urgency surrounding the ominous experience and act accordingly or pursue the expected precautionary measures. Along this line, circumventing ominous experience will also depend on the capacity and willingness of the person(s) forestalling the situation to face the challenges and expenses that are often involved. Adding to these also is the physical and spiritual strength of the person(s) involved in circumventing the manifestation of the ominous.

In traditional Igbo society however, effort towards circumventing manifestation of ominous starts with consultation. In this sense, friends, family members, kinsmen and at times the community are consulted to determine the way forward. This is so because the victim (individual) exists as a member of the community. As such, his fortune and misfortune is that of the community. Thus, every impending doom befalling the individual is considered as a social problem with adverse effect on the whole community. Based on this, everybody is involved in the search for remedy. Meanwhile, the Diviner (Dibia afa) is consulted to decode the source of the impending disaster, the minds of the supernatural beings and the essential remedies that will avert it. These solutions often consist in solemn prayers and appeal for help to one's "Chi", the spirits of the ancestors and deities. Rituals, exorcism (ichu ajo mmuo), cleansing (ikpu alu) by exorcists, animal/assorted edible sacrifices (ichu/igba aja) or ceremonies (salaka) by Chief priest (Eze Alusi) or ministerial native doctors (Dibia aja) are at times performed to avert the impending danger (Asiegbu 25-29). At other times, the solution that is required for the potential victim is extra carefulness in life (Nwadike 159). At the moment of the awareness of the ominous however, the victim's first reaction and that of all that experienced the ominous is immediate request for the gods (or God) to forbid the impending sad circumstance (visible in exclamations: *Tufia kwa!! Or Chukwu ekwena ajo ihe!!* - God/gods forbid bad thing!!). This trend has also been carried into the Igbo contemporary Christianity and Christian life. It is however in accord with the Igbo belief enshrined in the maxim; *Onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe* (One's concurrence is his God/god's concurrence).

In contemporary Igbo world however, circumventing manifestation of ominous ranges from offering counter prayers, almsgiving, sacrifices, making counter vocal wishes to calling on Supreme Being to forbid it. However, circumstances succeeding some ominous experiences may not be circumvented no matter the amount of propitiation and pacification carried out by the victim and his supporters. This is so when the character(s) for which the ominous point at have been destined or marked for destruction by the supernatural realities. In this context, the intended victim(s)' *Chi* often desert him to his fate which has been sealed in the metaphysical realm. According to Nwadike, the character(s) in this case suffers from the hands of fate or destiny (159). In such condition, the victim is seen blaming his *Chi* for his ill-fate or bad

destiny.

Conclusion

Though ominous experience is not scientific, it is a notable belief that shapes Igbo existence. This belief predicates on the knowledge that man as composite of matter and form is imbued with consciousness of impending calamitous events. As such, many Igbo-Africans attach great importance to ominous and do not treat it with laxity. This is despite Christianity, modernity and other Western influences that have tremendously altered the belief of Igbo-Africans. However, most of Igbo traditional beliefs like ominous has also been brought into Christian practice. And solution towards circumventing manifestation of ominous is now largely sought with Christian ministers. And in the diverse churches, prayer and miracle centers scattered across Igbo land, ominous experiences are delivered and interpreted to the faithful.

Despite their new faith, many Igbo-Africans still recline to traditional solutions in circumventing the manifestation of ominous experience. This behaviour is among the many syncretisms prevalent in today's Igbo-African Christianity. Worth commending however, is the social relationship ominous experience enhances among Igbo-Africans. This is glaring in how it links and strengthens the victim(s) and the holder of the experience with their family, kinfolk and community, and thus fosters a “we” social relationship in the verge of averting the impending calamitous situation (Chukwuelobe 78). Since ominous experience is a natural apocalyptic experience that either calls for re-adjustment to the safe side of life or predisposes one towards a disastrous circumstance, it is worth handling with the responsiveness it deserves.

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