

**PLAYWRITING AS A TOOL FOR EXPLORING THE STORY AND  
HISTORY BEHIND IGBO GODS**

**BY**

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**BENIN CITY**

**MARCH, 2025**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was undertaken by Ifunanya Catherine Eze with matriculation number ART2000923 in the department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin, Benin City; Edo State

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External Examiner

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God for his unfailing help, grace and protection throughout the course of my study and stay in campus.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate specially, the efforts of my sisters and friends for the opportunity given me to venture into this field of study, for their moral and academic support throughout the course of this study.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Playwriting constitutes the discipline of developing scripts intended for theatrical performances. This process involves the formulation of dialogues, the creation of characters, and the instruction of stage directions to establish a cohesive narrative suitable for performance. A comprehensive grasp of various play genres and proficiency in playwriting methodologies are essential components of this craft. As noted by Leverage Edu, playwriting is fundamentally defined as "the art of writing a script for a play or drama." It encompasses more than mere dialogue; it requires a meticulously constructed plot, well-developed characterization, and the ability to formulate a compelling theme.

Storytelling serves as an effective and accessible means to explore historical narratives and origins. In this regard, playwriting has proven to be an invaluable instrument for educating and entertaining audiences, particularly in works centered on divinities. To be a successful playwright entails not only understanding but also utilizing, adapting, and challenging established norms and conventions of dramatic literature.

"Myths refer to narratives that have never transpired yet persistently exist." - Sallustius, 4th Century A.D. (as cited in Carl Sagan's "Dragons of Eden"). Across various cultures worldwide, myths play a significant role in shaping understanding of life's natural

processes and conveying tales of deities, supernatural entities, and the cosmos. By definition, a myth often encompasses an event or a hero, whether or not there exists a clear natural explanation, particularly in cases involving demigods that elucidate phenomena within nature. Scholarly interpretations indicate a profound correlation among religion, philosophy, and mythology. As Marshall notes, the term "myth" typically refers to fictional narratives, which have consequently acquired a somewhat negative connotation. Traditionally, it pertains to fabricated tales about deities that illustrate them exhibiting human-like behavior while wielding superhuman abilities. This usage is closely tied to narratives that may accompany and are thought to underpin various religious rituals.

Gunkel, refers to myth as “Stories of the gods in contradistinction with legends in which the actors are men”. These stories are symbolic to the history and destiny of the world in general. In any power that they believe in, they describe it to oversee their destiny and such power should explain what is required of them. Unlike the contemporary English use of myth to indicate an untrue story or a misunderstanding based on ignorance, in every religious tradition, myths convey the eventual truths of life.

A superhuman individual taken at a young age by a society that is not developed can also form a myth story where such event can provide an explanation for a natural occurrence and how it came into existence. It can be an ancient fictional story like heroes, gods, etc. The myths that are common these present days are as a result of preservation

by constantly showcasing their myths through plays, movies and books and this can be easily remembered by readers and viewers alike. Coming down to the African culture, displaying or depicting myths through various methods are poorly practiced and even when done, lacks the right utility and promotion to bring it into limelight.

There are over 250 tribes in Nigeria, from large ethnicity that has political effect to small ethnicity that has more or less members remaining as there are no tribe that holds the most population. The three major groups in Nigeria are the Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba.

Nigeria mythology is diverse because of the different ethnic groups in the country. Some major and famous gods in Nigeria- Sango of the Yoruba tribe, Amadioha of the Igbo tribe, Daurama of the Hausa tribe, Ogun of the Edo tribe, Aziza of the Urhobo tribe, Ananda of the Efik tribe and so on. The Igbo community origin dates back to 3000 BCE and is among the major ethnic group in Nigeria. The representation of the Igbo is poorly portrayed and of all tribes colonized in Nigeria, Igbo has the biggest impact from colonialism and this has caused majority of the Igbo to forsake their unparalleled background. It is argued that Christianity has taken major influence from Igbo mythology for example, the God of Christians is called 'Chineke' and the Devil is referred to as 'Ekwensu'.

There are originally four Igbo mythological creation story namely:

1. The Nri Myth of Origin
2. Imilikenu Myth of Invention I
3. Imilikenu Myth of Invention II
4. Ovoko Myth of Invention

This work will focus on the Nri Myth of Origin of the Igbo mythology. Some of the Igbo gods and goddesses include; Anyanwu, Amadioha, Ala, None Mmiri, Agwu, Ekwensu, Ikenga, Ogunabali, etc. Because of the absence of documentation in traditional Igbo belief, most people now have the wrong ideas and misrepresentation of Igbo origin and these gaps are intended to be filled by thinkers as they recreate or restore the Igbo religious cultures and experience after being in contact with other cultures for several years. It has always been taken for granted about the strong belief on the Supreme Being whom they regard on high esteem and the divinities as well.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

This work addresses the problem of the lack of knowledge faced by Nigerians. This means that most Nigerians focus more on the foreign culture than that of the Nigerian culture. Our modern society know little to nothing about their roots. I asked a few people to list 10 Nigerian gods and 10 foreign gods and their answers were more of the foreign gods than the Nigerian gods. Why is it so? Compared to other countries, they have made

their gods known through films and books and still create new storylines about the gods as the world keeps changing and developing.

Some of these movies which tell the story of their deities include:

1. The immortals (2011) - Greek Mythology
2. Hercules (1997) - Greek mythology
3. Wonder woman (2017) - Greek mythology
4. Moana (2016) - Polynesian mythology. Etc.

Nigerian movies which contain our mythology are not very famous because of either poor promotion or bad portrayal of the myths. This has made Nigerians almost forget about their culture and origins. The best way to revive it and make it stay in our memories is through playwriting and not just writing a script, but researching and writing the scripts that will captivate the mind of the audience and also targeting not just National audience but International as well.

There are some things that adults were taught when they were young and if you ask them about it now, they can still answer it exactly or almost as they were taught because the majority of how they were taught was through storytelling, music and dance. Therefore, the problem of this work is the lack of knowledge which we the Nigerians face.

Some Nigerian movies which tell the story of their deities include:

- i. Eye of the gods
- ii. Akweke
- iii. Orisa

### **1.3 The Significance of the Study**

The importance of this work is to educate the young and old who have forgotten where they come from and are able to talk about their culture confidently and proudly and also promote their knowledge widely. This work sets the opportunity for the people to be curious about their tribes as well. This helps us Nigerians to be fond of our cultures so that in the near future, our culture won't fade away.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aims and objectives of this work include the following:

- i. Create an awareness on the histories of our culture
- ii. Making the audience more curious about other cultures that do not necessarily involve gods
- iii. To create stories about the Nigerian gods
- iv. For our myth culture to be known worldwide.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This work will cover all areas regarding Igbo mythology and the relationship between playwriting and mythology and with particular attention to the Igbo gods and goddesses.

Also, this research work will be the gathered and gotten from every resources available such as notebooks, internet, personal thoughts and dictionary. This study will end after showing the facts on histories and the importance of Igbo mythology and also showing playwriting as a great tool to educate and enlighten the readers.

### **1.6 Methodology**

This research will adopt the use of qualitative analysis which involves a deeper understanding of the cultural significance and it'll be easier and more understandable if a play is used to showcase the story of Igbo gods.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

This research will be limited due to the fact of lack of funds to travel to the East to gather more information and that ancient Igbos made use of oral storytelling because there was no documentation at that time. So most facts and information will be gathered from the internet.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Focus of Review

Literature review as a subject matter provides a close examination of literature to the topic of study. The areas to be reviewed includes:

#### **2.1. History and Origin of Igbo Culture**

The Igbo (or Ibo) constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, with an estimated population of approximately 15 million residing in Nigeria and an additional one million living abroad. Their geographical distribution encompasses a broad area between the Niger River to the west and the Cross River to the east, extending from the Delta swamplands near the southern coastline, through tropical rainforests, and into the open grasslands to the north. Prior to the twentieth century, it would have been inaccurate to refer to the Igbo as a singular entity, as they were comprised of over two hundred distinct groups. While their customs and languages exhibit significant similarities, each group operated as an independent society, potentially encompassing twenty to thirty villages. Consequently, an Igbo individual traveling thirty miles within Igbo territory might have encountered substantial challenges in communication.

However, a lot of Igbo people came together from far places and assemble in urban centers, at the work place, and in institutions of higher learning during the colonial period (1900-1960). Because of this meeting, many discovered that the languages they thought were separate was actually different dialects of the same language and that they all share basic culture and sociopolitical organization. In that sense, the idea of a common Igbo identity is a result of the twentieth century.

During the colonial period (1900-1960), numerous individuals from the Igbo ethnic group congregated in urban areas, workplaces, and institutions of higher education, traveling from distant regions. This convergence led to the realization that the various languages they perceived as distinct were, in fact, different dialects of a single language, with shared cultural and sociopolitical foundations. Consequently, the notion of a unified Igbo identity emerged as a construct of the twentieth century.

Moreover, an Igbo creation myth narrates that initially, the Earth's surface was entirely engulfed by water, with no humans inhabiting it. Subsequently, Chukwu (God) created the first human family, comprising Eze Nri, his spouse, and their sons and daughters. This family found themselves atop an anthill, stranded with no land to traverse due to the flooding and facing hunger. Observing their plight, Chukwu looked upon them with compassion, providing Eze Nri with a yam and declaring, "Take this, it is edible." Eze Nri and his family ate the yam and found it was good.

The subsequent morning, Eze Nri experienced hunger once more and earnestly prayed to God for an additional supply of yam. Chukwu, attentively acknowledging his plea, granted him yam seeds with the instruction, “Plant these, and you will reap an abundant harvest of yams.” Grateful, Eze Nri accepted the seeds; however, he expressed concern, stating to Chukwu, “The land is inundated with water.” In response, Chukwu directed him to summon the blacksmiths from Awka, who arrived equipped with their bellows and worked diligently to dry the land by blowing air until it was free from water. Subsequently, Chukwu instructed Eze Nri to offer his first son and daughter in sacrifice and to plant the yam seeds in their graves. Eze Nri complied with this directive. In due course, yam and cocoyam tendrils emerged from the graves of his children. Ultimately, Eze Nri was able to harvest yams and cocoyams, which he generously distributed among the Igbo people.

The narrative delineates the Igbo community’s conviction in a paramount deity, known as Chukwu, who is credited with the creation of the universe and mandates adherence to divine will. This underscores the significant role of spirituality within the socio-cultural fabric of Igbo society. The mythological framework alludes to ancestral heritage, the advent of agricultural practices, and the crucial role of iron production in the development of the Igbo community. Notably, this myth does not reference any migration of the Igbo to remote regions, in contrast to the majority of traditional African origin

stories. This absence suggests that the Igbo have inhabited their current geographic area for an extended period, a proposition that is supported by archaeological evidence.

## **2.2. Igbo Mythology**

In the cosmological framework of the Igbo people, there exists a singular Supreme Being known as Chukwu Okike or Chineke. This deity serves as the highest divine entity and is accessible through intermediaries referred to as deities, which possess certain divine attributes. The origin of these deities is a subject of debate among African scholars; some assert that they were created by God, while others contend that they have emerged from the Supreme Being itself. Mbiti (1975) notes that: pi

"It is sometimes also believed that between God and human beings, there are other things that populate the universe. These are spirits. There are many types of spirits. God is their creator first as he is the creator of all human beings. The spirits have a status between God and man, and are not identical with either and some of them may be used to do certain things." (P.65).

In the Igbo worldview, the distinction between secular culture and religious life is remarkably subtle. They hold a belief in the Supreme Being (Chukwu) and affirm the existence of an afterlife, envisioning that Chukwu resides high above in the heavens. He was the origin of all living and non living thingsIn Igbo African cosmology, there exists a singular deity known as Chukwu Okike or Chineke, recognized as the Supreme God.

Communication with this Supreme Being occurs through intermediaries referred to as deities, who embody certain elements of divine authority. While some African scholars contend that these deities were created by God, others argue that they arose from the Supreme Being itself. Mbiti (1975) remarks:

"It is often believed that in the space between God and humanity, various entities populate the universe, namely spirits. These spirits manifest in numerous forms. God is the original creator of these spirits, just as He is of all human beings. The spirits occupy a unique position between God and humans, distinguishing them from both, and certain spirits may be invoked for specific purposes" (p. 65).

The distinction between secular culture and spiritual life is subtle within the Igbo worldview, which encompasses a belief in the Supreme Being (Chukwu) and an existence beyond death. Chukwu is conceptualized as residing high above in the heavens and directed the activities of it all. Due to the fact that the physical appearance of Chukwu remains unknown, the Igbo people refrained from creating symbols to represent him and seldom established dedicated shrines or altars for his worship. This is attributed to their belief that Chukwu exists simultaneously in all places, fostering a deep reverence for his enigmatic nature. Instead, they engaged in communion with Chukwu through significant ancestors and spirits, as they were uncertain about the proper manner to approach him.

Moreover, the Igbo held a belief in the presence of Ekwensu, a figure paralleling Satan, whose primary role was to misguide individuals. Ekwensu was accompanied by numerous servants who assisted in executing his malevolent intentions, one of whom was death—a sinister entity that would confront a person during their moments of greatest joy.

The Igbo culture recognized a diverse array of spirit symbols, often derived from natural phenomena. These encompassed spirits associated with caves, fertility, iron, hills, the earth, streams, rain, agriculture, lakes, strength, and witchcraft. Each spirit symbol might be represented by its own priest or priestess. A guardian deity may be associated with various activities such as rain-making, hunting, trading, agriculture, or metalworking. For instance, by performing appropriate sacrifices, reciting prayers, and making invocations, an individual seeking rain could influence the rain deity to provide precipitation. Similar to other ethnic groups, the Igbo people are deeply intertwined with mythological narratives and religious practices. Numerous rituals and customs within Igbo society are grounded in the belief in spiritual entities. The veneration of deities such as Anyanwu, Mmili, and Oku remains prevalent. Among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, notable deities include:

#### 1. Anyanwu - The Eye of the Light

The term 'Anyanwu' is derived from two Igbo words: 'anya,' meaning 'eye,' and 'anwu,' meaning 'the light'; together, they denote 'the eye of the light.' Beyond its literal

interpretation, Anyanwu symbolizes the sun and, within Igbo traditional spirituality, is identified as the sun goddess, referred to as the eye of the light. The theological understanding of Anyanwu carries significant connotations for enlightenment, vision, and foresight. Anyanwu is recognized as a deity endowed with the ability to evoke insight and foresight in individuals. In examining the reverence for Anyanwu among the Nri community, Anoubi (2006) notes that:

"In traditional Nri sacrificial practices, an artist begins by carving a primary line that extends from the center of the forehead to the midpoint of the chin. Subsequently, a secondary line is etched across the face, connecting the right cheek to the left, with the intersection occurring at the center of the nose, thus forming a perfect cross. A second cross is created with one line descending from the left side of the forehead to the right side of the chin, while another line runs in the opposite direction. This process continues in a repeated sequence and pattern until the design resembles sun rays. In total, the full facial sacrificial design comprises sixteen straight lines and eight crosses, representing the sun's rays that were venerated by the community. However, the significance of this design extends beyond mere aesthetics; it embodies an aspect of identity and serves as a means of altering one's facial individuality." (pp. 203-204).

Anyanwu is the daughter of Chukwu, and sacrifices are made through her to Chukwu because of the special and close proximity of the sun and Supreme Being. The

significance of this deity among the Igbo is seen in the artistic expression of the Anyanwu deity even on the walls of buildings in Igbo traditional families.

Artist Ben Enwonwu said, "My aim was to symbolise our rising nation, I have tried to combine materials, crafts and tradition, to express a conception that is based on womanhood - woman, the mother and nourisher of man. In our rising nation, I see the forces embodied in womanhood; the beginning, and then, the development and flowering into the fullest stature of a nation - a people! This sculpture is spiritual in conception, rhythmic in movement, and three dimensional in its architectural setting- these qualities are characteristics of the sculptures of my ancestors".

The significance of the sun to the Igbo people is so profound that their region is often referred to as the Land of the Rising Sun. For the Igbo, the sun embodies both physical and spiritual renewal, with daily rhythms closely aligned to its cycles. They typically awaken at sunrise and retire at sunset. Given that their primary livelihood relies on agriculture, the sun's trajectory holds great importance, as the germination of seeds is enhanced by exposure to moisture and sunlight. Additionally, Anyanwu symbolizes the pursuit of perfection, a value esteemed by the Igbo.

A cursory examination of historical contexts indicates that the representation of a deity as an eye is not unique to the Igbo; for example, the Egyptian sun god Ra is depicted as a falcon-headed figure crowned with a solar disc. The Anyanwu deity serves as the Igbo's

homage to the sun, which is venerated globally for the illumination and warmth it provides, contributing to a safe and hospitable environment on Earth. This highlights the pivotal role the sun plays in the daily existence of the Igbo people. For instance, the Igbo approach to timekeeping is rooted in historical practices that have prevailed throughout much of human history. Predominantly, contemporary calendars are structured around solar movements, with many significant holidays originating from celebrations tied to the solar equinoxes and solstices. Additionally, Western astrology places emphasis on individuals' sun signs. Anyanwu is recognized for bearing two staffs that represent fire and light. She is also referred to as 'Anya Oku,' which translates to "Eyes of the Fire." This designation highlights her symbolic association with these elemental forces.

## 2. Amadioha - god of Thunder and Lightening

Amadioha, often interpreted as the 'Free Will of the People,' embodies the collective will of his community. He is characterized as a benevolent deity who resorts to violence only when provoked. Widely recognized by various names such as Ofufe, Kalu Akanu, and Kamala, he holds the distinction of being the most venerated deity in Igboland. His traditional symbol is a white ram, and he is associated with the color red. Worship of Amadioha occurs specifically on Afo market days; thus, when offerings are presented to him, a white ram is preferred due to its significance. This deity is also linked to personal prosperity, as he is regarded as the god of enterprise. Amadioha exemplifies the principles of justice, executing vengeance on behalf of the oppressed, while

simultaneously promoting unity, peace, love, and providing hope to those in dire circumstances.

Amadioha is also perceived as the 'Owner of the Sky.' Incidents of lightning striking entities or causing fatalities are often interpreted as signs or messages from him, reinforcing his identity as a god of justice. He is recognized as the deity of thunder and lightning, communicating through thunderous sounds and delivering strikes through lightning. When Amadioha judges someone guilty, such person is either struck by lightning which strikes their forehead, leaving a black mark or the person is attacked by bees. The property of that person is normally taken by the priests of Amadioha and the victim is not to be mourned and is left unburied as it is regarded as a righteous punishment from God. Oaths are oftentimes sworn to him, which can carry deadly punishment when broken.

Amadioha can only be appeased by transferring an individual's curse to a live goat, which is subsequently released beyond the community's boundaries, serving as a scapegoat. The priestly lineage associated with Amadioha is referred to as "Umuamadi," translating to "children of Amadioha." As an emissary of Chukwu, Amadioha addresses undetected offenses and bestows divine blessings upon individuals. Through his mediation, Chukwu fosters the growth of earth's greenery, affirms virtuous actions while denouncing malevolence, oversees the well-being of the living, enlightens the world, and gathers evidence. Amadioha reveals the malevolence concealed within trees, a fact

recognized by the community when a tree is felled; this reflects the principle that "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." The adage "Whatever one sows, one will reap" underscores this tenet (Kanu 2013). Moreover, Apollos (2002) notes that within Amadioha's shrine, a long bamboo pole is typically suspended horizontally, supported by two sizable forked sticks, one on each end. Various charms and medicinal herbs are affixed to a suspended pole, stained with the blood of a sacrificial animal and adorned with feathers. It is believed that any wrongdoer who attempts to pass beneath this pole will not emerge unscathed; instead, they face the prospect of death or the affliction of an incurable disease. The shrine of Amadioha is typically encircled by large trees and dense foliage, housing ancient artifacts such as boxes, shattered pots, bottles, cups, iron pots, and mirrors within its grove. Additional items found in the shrine include agricultural tools, animal horns (specifically from antelopes), metal gongs, and knives. Animals that are consecrated to Amadioha comprise rams, sheep, and cows, which are considered his daughters and possessions. Any harm or killing of these animals is strictly prohibited, as it may provoke the anger of Amadioha. In addition to being recognized as a deity of justice, Amadioha is linked with themes of love, peace, and unity. He is frequently called upon for support in enhancing agricultural productivity, nurturing family development, and encouraging acts of kindness.

According to tradition, humans were created by Amadioha when he dispatched a lightning bolt to strike a silk cotton tree, resulting in its splitting to unveil the first man and woman. Amadioha is commonly depicted as the spouse of Ani, the Earth mother.

### 3. Ala (Ani, Ana) - Earth Goddess

Ala is the supreme deity in Igbo culture, revered in both public and private worship. As the goddess of the earth, fertility, creativity, and morality, Ala embodies the life-giving forces of nature. According to Igbo mythology, Ala was the first deity created by Chukwu, the supreme being. Her name, meaning "Ground" in Igbo, reflects her deep connection to the earth and her role as the foundation of all life. Onwu (2002) describes Ala thus:

"Of all the divinities, Ala- the Earth Goddess is generally worshipped in Igboland as the arch-divinity and seen as the goddess of fertility and guardian of Igbo morality, a power which brings fortune and economic prosperity" (p.2).

In Igbo culture, the earth goddess, Ala, plays a crucial role in maintaining moral order. She exposes those who commit evil deeds in secret, bringing their actions to light. The Igbo people believe that Ala is responsible for producing and sustaining all life, and that upon death, all living things return to her. If someone commits a crime and dies without making amends, Ala will reject their corpse, and the family will be forced to cremate it. This results in the destruction of the person's soul, preventing reincarnation. The Igbo

people believe that Ala enforces moral law, while Chukwu, the supreme being, is the creator and giver of moral law. In diagrams, Ala is portrayed in diagrams as a pregnant woman. The water which flows in and out of her can be regarded as the fountain of fertility and life that she gives. Ala is also a punisher of wrong doers as she judges the Igbo law and customs and she is also referred to as the goddess of morality. Crimes and Taboo in the Igbo communities that does not follow the principle of Ala are called "nso Ala". Ala's messenger, the python (èkè), is especially respected in a lot of Igbo communities. Diagrammatically, Ala is often showcased as a regal figure seated on a throne, surrounded by her family.

The Igbo, regard her as the 'mother of all crops'. They hold ritual ceremonies before planting and before harvest as they believe that their sacrifices will appease Ala so that the harvest will be fruitful and healthy and to also thank her for a plentiful harvest.

#### 4. Ikenga -Strength and War god

Ikenga is a revered deity in Igbo culture, symbolizing strength, determination, and mastery. Typically depicted as a seated male figure with two curled horns, Ikenga embodies the Igbo values of perseverance and resilience. The deity's iconography features a knife or machete in the right hand, representing action, and a human head in the left hand, signifying the consequences of one's actions. This imagery is reminiscent of

the ancient Igbo practice of headhunting, highlighting the importance of mastery over adversity.

The horns on Ikenga's head symbolize the ram's strength and persistence, while the facial expression, characterized by sharp teeth, conveys a combative stance. Ikenga's significance extends beyond its iconography, as it plays a central role in Igbo cosmology and ritual practices. The deity is often associated with the concept of Chi, representing the temporal world.

There are two distinct types of Ikenga: Ikenga mmuo, which lacks anthropomorphic features and represents the spiritual realm, and Ikenga madu, which resembles a human figure and symbolizes the physical existence of the owner. The variations in Ikenga's iconography, including the presence of curled or straight horns, are often determined by the individual owner's identity and status within Igbo society.

The annual Ikenga festival, observed in some Igbo communities, honors the deity and seeks to ensure the owner's success and fortune. Through its rich symbolism and cultural significance, Ikenga remains an essential part of Igbo heritage and identity.

## 5. Agwu N- Health and Divination

Agwu Nsi, a complex deity in Igbo mythology, embodies the paradoxical nature of human experience. As a trickster god, Agwu is associated with the intricacies of good and evil, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, and fortune and misfortune (Okeke, 2017).

This multifaceted deity is believed to manifest himself in various forms, inducing confusion, forgetfulness, and emotional trauma in individuals.

However, Agwu's role extends beyond mere malevolence, as he is also credited with inspiring creativity and bestowing exceptional talents upon individuals. As a messenger of the Almighty God, Agwu occupies a revered and feared position in Igbo cosmology, possessing the power to transform minds and inspire wisdom (Nwankwo, 1987). Agwu's significance is further underscored by his role as the patron god of medicine men, known as Dibia. These diviners worship Agwu during the Iru Agwu ceremony, acknowledging his guidance in promoting responsible behavior and common sense (Ogbalu, 1981). The Dibia's relationship with Agwu is characterized by a deep-seated respect, as they seek to maintain transparency of mind to succeed in their daily missions.

This research highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of Agwu Nsi, underscoring his significance in Igbo mythology and cosmology. Further exploration of Agwu's role in Igbo culture and society can provide valuable insights into the complexities of human experience and the nuances of traditional African spirituality.

## 6. Chi

In Igbo cosmology, Chi refers to a divine spirit or spark of the supreme deity, Chukwu, that resides within every individual. This concept is often translated as "The Great Spirit" due to its origin from Chukwu. The presence of Chi within humans is believed to confer a

degree of divinity upon them, enabling them to exercise agency and shape the course of their lives.

According to Igbo mythology, Chukwu created the world and subsequently imbued humans with Chi, a creative spirit that guides their decisions and actions. As Chinua Achebe notes, each person's Chi is unique, even among siblings, and plays a crucial role in shaping their life experiences (Achebe, n.d.). This idea is encapsulated in the Igbo proverb "Onye kwe chi ya ekwe," which emphasizes the alignment between an individual's spirit and their actions.

The Chi is thus understood to be responsible for the various experiences and outcomes that an individual encounters in life. This concept has significant implications for Igbo understandings of agency, free will, and personal responsibility, and warrants further exploration in the context of African spirituality and cosmology.

Chinua Achebe stated "Chi is an individual's personal god which accounts for the fortune or misfortunes that one experiences in life". For a person to have a good life, such person has to work with his Chi. He continues, "Hence, the meaning of a person's life is only realized as a collaborative venture...between his person and his chi. People often make statements like I am in agreement with my personal god or chi as a reference to the collaborative dimension in the individual/chi relationship. However, there are situations in a person's life where it is believed that one's chi may work against him. A man of

impeccable character may yet have a bad chi so that nothing he puts his hand will work out right. Chi is therefore more concerned with success or failure than with righteousness and wickedness".

A person's chi has a role to play if a person is successful or not as the Chi is held accountable and it does not depend on bad or good deeds.

## 7. Chukwu/Chineke

In Igbo traditional religion, Chineke is revered as the universal God, the Almighty, and the creator of all existence. This Supreme Being is considered all-powerful and all-knowing, symbolized by the sun, and is held responsible for the existence of all deities and living beings. Chineke's omnipotence extends beyond the spiritual realm, influencing the physical world as well.

The Igbo concept of Chukwu, denoting a high and great God, is widely recognized across various Igbo communities, with alternative names such as Osebuluwa (Agbedo, 2010). The etymology of Chineke reveals a complex understanding of the Supreme Being, combining the Igbo words Chi (spirit), na (who), and eke (create), to convey the idea of a spirit that creates and sustains all existence. The various names and manifestations of Chineke reflect the multifaceted roles of the Supreme Being in human existence, as perceived by the Igbo people. Notably, Chineke is considered a mystery, transcending

human understanding, with no discernible beginning or end. This concept warrants further exploration in the context of African traditional religions and theologies.

#### 8. Nyoki Ji - The god of Agriculture

The Eri-Nri narrative is a pivotal aspect of Igbo history, highlighting the significance of the Nri domination (Madubuko, 1994). According to Igbo mythology, Eri, the father of the Nri people, was instructed by Chukwu to sacrifice his children, Ahiajoku and Ada, to alleviate a severe famine (Uzukwu, 1988). The sacrifice led to the miraculous growth of yams and palm trees from the burial sites of the children, symbolizing the origin of these crops.

Ahiajoku, in particular, is revered as the god or goddess of yam, embodying the spirit of fertility and productivity. The annual New Yam Festival celebrates Ahiajoku, with rituals and offerings to ensure a bountiful harvest. The myth of Ahiajoku is re-enacted through the symbolic sacrifice of yams, cooked with palm oil and chicken to represent the body and blood of the deity.

The etymology of Ahiajoku's name reveals a profound connection between industry, trade, and wealth, reflecting the Igbo values of hard work and self-sufficiency. In pre-colonial times, the size of a man's yam barn was a measure of his ability to provide for his family and contribute to society. The sacredness of yam is underscored by the severity of punishment for theft, emphasizing the importance of respecting the deity and the land.

This narrative highlights the intricate relationships between mythology, culture, and agriculture in Igbo society, demonstrating the significance of Ahiajoku as a symbol of fertility, productivity, and prosperity.

#### 9. Nmuo Mmiri or Nne Mmiri - The Water Goddess

In Igbo cosmology, Nne Mmiri is a revered deity embodying the sacredness of life, water, and female fecundity (Jell-Bahlsen, 2014). This complex goddess is characterized by her divine beauty, benevolence, and elusiveness, as well as her capacity to unleash chaos and death. Nne Mmiri is associated with multiple spouses and is believed to grant children and blessings to her devotees.

As a symbol of female magnitude in the Igbo universe, Nne Mmiri serves as a role model for female achievement. Her symbolism is linked to the crocodile, tortoise, and python, emphasizing her connection to the natural world. In Igbo mythology, Nne Mmiri is also known as Nmuo Mmiri or Mammy Water, a female deity revered for her power to provide help, hope, and solutions to problems.

The origins of Nmuo Mmiri are traced to Nnobi, Anambra State, where she is worshipped as a river goddess. The deity's association with snakes is notable, as snakes are believed to visit children born in Nmuo Mmiri without harming them. This phenomenon is admired by parents and underscores the sacredness of snakes in Igbo culture. Nmuo Mmiri is also known as Idemili, with one of the oldest shrines in Igboland dedicated to

her worship. The reverence for Nmuo Mmiri is reflected in Igbo prayers, where devotees invoke her blessings, saying "ka uzo anyi buru uzo mmiri" ("may our journey follow the path of the stream"). This phrase highlights the significance of Nmuo Mmiri as a guiding force in Igbo spiritual life.

#### 10. Ekwensu - The god of Warriors

In Igbo mythology, Ekwensu is a complex deity embodying the spirit of violence, force, and transformation. As the son of Chukwu, Ekwensu is often associated with malevolent forces, ruling over wicked spirits and testing the resolve of individuals. His influence is believed to inspire anger, aggression, and destructive behavior, often leading to evil acts that contravene human values.

The similarities between Ekwensu and the Christian concept of the devil have led to comparisons between the two. However, in Igbo cosmology, Ekwensu's role is more nuanced, representing a force that can be harnessed for both destructive and constructive purposes. His association with war, conflict, and negotiation underscores his reputation as a cunning and powerful deity.

Historical records indicate that Ekwensu was revered in various Igbo communities, with the Asaba Igbo celebrating an annual Ekwensu festival to showcase their military prowess (Isichie, 1969). The deity's feared reputation as a god of war and vengeance led to his invocation during times of conflict, while his influence was actively suppressed

during peacetime to prevent bloodshed. The complex and multifaceted nature of Ekwensu highlights the richness and diversity of Igbo mythology, offering insights into the cultural and spiritual values of the Igbo people.

There are other Igbo deity which includes

- i. Igwekala
- ii. Ogunabali- Death deity
- iii. Ibini Ukpabi- long juju of Arochukwu

In Igbo traditional religion, the concept of a supreme being is deeply ingrained, serving as the cornerstone of the Igbo cosmological framework. While a pantheon of lesser gods exists, the supreme being, Chukwu, holds a singular and paramount position, integrating the various aspects of Igbo traditional life into a cohesive structure. This structure provides the foundation for Igbo existential understanding, shaping individual experiences and perceptions. The Igbo believe that harnessing the forces of nature and maintaining harmony with the divine, deities, and ancestors is essential for achieving protection, progress, success, and peace. The supreme being's omnipotence and benevolence are seen as the ultimate sources of guidance, sustenance, and protection, influencing every aspect of Igbo life, from daily routines to ritual practices and communal celebrations. This profound reverence for the supreme being underscores the

Igbo people's deep-seated spirituality and their quest for balance and harmony within the cosmos.

### **2.3. Playwriting as a Tool for Cultural Storytelling**

Playwriting, as a form of storytelling dates back to ancient civilization where it emerged as a significant cultural activity. One of the earliest documented instances of playwriting can be traced back to ancient Greece. During this era, plays were often integrated with religious ceremonies and rituals, marking their importance in the society.

Literary arts encompass the strategic use of words, whether in written or spoken form, to convey meaning and tell stories. While literature often connotes a written text, oral literature focuses on the spoken word, drawing upon oral traditions that have been passed down through generations. Oral tradition, as defined by Ikiddeh, refers to the collective body of spoken cultural expressions, including folktales, myths, legends, incantations, and riddles. This social product is rooted in a specific cultural context, reflecting the values, beliefs, and experiences of a particular community. As a dynamic and evolving form of cultural expression, oral tradition relies on the testimonies of witnesses and the inheritors of a community's heritage, who transmit their knowledge and stories through spoken words. This process of transmission not only preserves cultural memory but also allows for the continuous adaptation and reinterpretation of traditional narratives. The Igbo people have a very rich style of entertainment and it was not only entertaining, but

also educative for younger ones as it teach them to know about their environment, customs, and traditions of the society and they have a very close link with music which is an important characteristics of the elements of oral literature. Example of an oral literature that has music accompaniment is Folktales, for example, have songs accompaniment. The traditional storytelling of the Igbo people deals with prevalent behaviour of human condition universally and for every event, they may be various versions as they are villages around the area and the storyteller has the freedom to improvise. Some of these stories involve celebrating past heroes and the worship of gods The story is then passed on through same method which is storytelling from one generation to another. Not every story is told reflecting human condition, there are fictional stories that are told mainly for the aim of teaching lessons, pleasure and entertainment. In storytelling, the narrator imitates the character in the tales, and this act gave rise on the idea of acting accompanied with songs which set the right mood through music.

Each culture also has a distinct approach to how its stories view and confronts different challenges. Chinua Achebe's novel; *Things Fall Apart*, weave tales that merge real and the mythical, giving birth to a unique genre known as mythical realism. This distinctive style often tackles complex social and political issues and explore the complexities of the Igbo society. But what we value as a culture can change overtime and

we often see this play out in the stories we encounter. No culture stays stuck in one moment in time, and our arts reflects that.

Oral performance is an important part of the Igbo society. However, the art of storytelling is almost extinct in Nigerian homes and schools. Due to the influence of modernization, which the Igbo people have shown great interest, the decline of Igbo folktale is evident. Civilization has to a considerable level taken entertainment and education away from families and folk communities and these duties are now done by social media and formal social establishment.

Chinua Achebe is known for his style that blends traditional storytelling with modern narrative techniques. It is characterized by several key elements, one of the foremost being that his storytelling technique is deeply rooted in African oral tradition and he incorporates folktales, proverbs and dramatic expressions into his narratives and this infusion of oral tradition adds richness and authenticity to his writing.

#### **2.4. Playwriting and Mythological Retellings**

The resurgence of mythology-inspired novels in recent years, particularly on platforms like BookTok, has led to a renewed interest in classical mythology. Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* is a notable example, achieving widespread acclaim despite being published over a decade ago. This phenomenon raises questions about the enduring appeal of classical mythology. One possible explanation lies in the universality of

mythological themes, which transcend temporal and cultural boundaries. The flawed nature of Greco-Roman gods, in particular, allows readers to relate to them while maintaining a critical distance. The dual role of gods as heroes and villains adds complexity to their appeal, making them more nuanced and interesting than modern superheroes. For instance, Athena's rage creates the monster Medusa, while Zeus's adulterous tendencies complicate his characterization as a powerful king. The retelling of mythological stories provides a unique opportunity for creators to recontextualize and reinterpret classical themes, potentially shifting the direction of the discipline in a positive way. This is particularly significant in light of the growing contentiousness surrounding the legacy of classics.

Ancient tales that deals with epic adventure, mystery and evil fascinate us and have been passed down for thousands of years Ancient myths and legends have been passed down to thousands of years. Books that tell stories of unheard myths have become best selling books. Some retellings of Greek mythology include:

- i. A Thousand Ships - Natalie Haynes
- ii. Circe - Madeline Miller
- iii. The Song of Achilles - Madeline Miller
- iv. Ariadne - Jennifer Saint
- v. The Silence of The Girls - Pat Barker and others.

The Igbo cultural community educated itself through storytelling before the arrival of the white man. This storytelling was a respected culture used to pass wisdom from the old to the younger generation. One outstanding attribute about African storytelling is the use of animals, spirits and non living characters to tell a story. One of the character that is most used in the Igbo culture is tortoise who is known for his wise and cunning personality and his story is used to teach the younger ones about the consequences of having a personality like the tortoise.

Myths have been one of the most powerful means of storytelling especially because of their metaphorical nature and in how they are open to interpretation. The myths as a form of storytelling remain very prominent because of what it teaches us. At the center of the Ukamaka Olisakwe's "Do Not Answer When They Call Your Name" is the story of an ambitious woman who wanted to conquer her own part of the world. Without the Igbo myth, the story could well pass for an adventure story with its protagonist going into the "forest of iniquity" with her dog, and facing various fearful dangers in the course of the journey. But the Igbo myths interwoven into the story lends it a literary quality and relevance to not just stir the imagination but to cause some reflection on the human condition.

Some common Igbo folklore include:

- i. Obaledo

- ii. The King's Drum
- iii. Why a Hawk Kills Chicken

Igbo folklore is a genuine means of passing cultural values and traditions of the Igbo to the younger generation. A lot of African cultures are slowly going into extinction due to lack of protection and sharing of their cultures. Igbo culture is also among the culture that are slowly going extinct due to the lack of documentation as they made use of oral literature. The effect of Western culture and migration of the people also contribute to this issue and it is a challenge faced regarding the retellings of Igbo myths.

When enough facts and research have been gathered, it gives the playwrights enough storyline, then a good production and promotion is what is needed in order to revive the folklore and values of our tradition.

## **2.5 Challenges and Considerations in Playwriting**

Whether oral or written, literature exist in all cultures. It is with literature that people are able to convey and express their feelings and ideas which was done in the Igbo culture. Their method of oral literature was a very important part in an Igbo man's consciousness and thoughts. This is done because a person is trained with ethical and cultural events where oral traditions continues to play important duty as a major means of communication and continuity. Onyekiaonwu, says, "The oral tradition becomes a sine qua non for cultural preservation and perpetuation. One sees a clear picture of the

relationship between the Igbo writers and the Igbo oral literature". According to Obiechina, "oral village storytelling as well as the other forms of oral tradition is a living reality and helps to inform and direct their attitudes and values".

During those days, after the day's work, the children are fond of gathering under the moonlight for storytelling time. It is the work of the adults to tell several stories whose aim is to teach the children proper character, customs, beliefs and values and this help the children to become good adults in the future. These are the considerations when writing an Igbo play - what are the writers trying to pass across the audience.

Due to modernization, the youths are no longer aware of their cultures and myths and those who are introduced have little to no interest any more. According to Mbiti, stories serve as a reflective medium, mirroring the complexities of human experience. They provide a window into the values, beliefs, and practices of a community, revealing how people interact with one another, navigate their environment, and make sense of their lives. These stories function as a means of articulating humanity's relationship with its surroundings, allowing individuals to express their emotions, joys, and sorrows. By sharing their stories, people are able to convey their unique perspectives, cultural norms, and historical experiences, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the human condition. Nowadays, children and adults regard folktale as unimportant and old-fashioned partially because of its mode of the mode of transmission seen as 'traditional'

regardless of its importance. Most of the films only showcase foreign cultures and we still prefer those to the expense of the local ones.

Another challenge playwriters face when writing Igbo stories is that the ancient Igbo made use of oral literature, so, as the world became more civilised and digitalised, the elders stopped telling the younger ones stories and since there was no documentation at that time, the stories are now slowly going extinct.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Preamble**

This chapter aims to explore the various techniques used to present and gather the necessary information necessary for this study. The research analysis method will be in consonance with the topic of the study.

Some key variables will be analysed as regards this chapter. The first phase of this chapter will look at the Research Design which refers to the approach to this work; second phase will examine the instruments or tools for collecting data and the last phase studies the method of data analysis and presentation.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This is simply the approach to the study. This study operates from the standpoint of Ekwensu. Therefore, this research is a literary research and literary research is that which critically focuses on the in-depth analysis of any imaginative creative writing either in prose or verse form and artistic value. Thus, the fact that it will involve the process of Textual Analysis. The fact that this research is literary in nature suggests that it will deal with the process of Textual Analysis. The design of this research is therefore to basically analyse the primary data of this study which is Ekwensu.

### **3.2 Data Collection Instrument**

The primary source for obtaining information in this study comes from the basic text to be analyzed in this research which is Ekwensu. Other secondary sources such as internet sources within the jurisdiction of mythology and theatre will also be explored.

### **3.3 Method of Data Presentation and Analysis**

The basic method of analysis appropriate for this research is the Functional Analysis Approach. The functional analysis approach examines selected part of the primary sources, paying attention to their importance, practicality and usefulness in relation to the society. It might be their aesthetic or educational relevance, but the bone of contention in Functional Analysis is that it takes selected parts of the texts, magnifies them by doing a thorough analysis of its parts. Ekwensu will be analysed based on its functionality in relation to Mythological Theatre and Playwriting.

From the fore going, this chapter has been able to present a detailed account of the research methodology according to which this research shall be conducted. Being a Literary Research, the major method to be employed as explained above is the Functional Analysis Approach which seeks to analyse textually, selected portion of the text based on their political inclination in relation to the society.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE - AKAWO SHRINE

Light comes on to fierce looking warriors, reacting to the chants from the Akawo. The Akawo

continues chanting in Igbo, marking each of them, then goes back to his shrine chanting. He

brings out sticks dressed in cowries and distributes it to the warriors.

AKAWO

Warriors of the great Aro land. When the elephant falls, the grass suffers but the brave man stands strong. We offered them our home, they thought us stupid. We trade with them, they thought us poor. We offered them peace but they thought us weak and cowards. What they did not know is that our anger cannot be easily quenched that even the earth cries for mercy at each step of our feet. They will never cross our path when we devour them. Where has it been said that Ekwensu looses to a fight? This battle is victorious for us. To our newest warrior, do not be afraid, Ekwensu is not a god that fears war for he is war himself and he'll be with you. Warriors of Aro kingdom, go and show them that our silence does not mean weakness

The warriors yells in anger and readiness for battle. They perform their warrior dance and leaves.

The warriors appear at the battle field, glaring at their opponents fiercely, they start fighting. Kalu, the new warrior stays back watching the fight. He suddenly shrugs his body in bravery and immediately charge toward the opponent till they defeat the enemy. They yell in victory. Light fades

SCENE TWO - AKWAUGO HOUSE

Akwaugo is beside her shrine, performing some rituals

AKWAUGO

Ani, the great mother, our protector, please protect my child in this war, keep him safe as this is his first time in battle. May they all live and return victorious.

Anwuli enters with a food tray, placing it on a stool and going to meet her mother

ANWULI

Mama, the food is ready, come and eat

AKWAUGO

Your brother is in the battle field and you're talking of food? He is my only son and I don't want anything to happen to him

ANWULI

Mama you worry too much, you have seen how committed Kalu has been in preparing himself for war and you know that he is very strong so why worry? And besides, you've been praying to Ani since the start of war and I'm sure she

has heard you clearly, so pity your stomach and give it food to eat eh. You can't be starving yourself na, even if you want to pray from morning till night, do it with a full stomach Nnugo?

AKWAUGO

If I eat, you'll let me be?

ANWULI

Yes. As long as you've eaten, I don't have any problem with you praying all day.

AKWAUGO

Stands up

What did you prepare?

ANWULI

I made abacha, just the way you love it and you'll finish everything o.

Akwaugo sits, preparing to start eating but pause, hearing the sound of the drum

AKWAUGO

Anwuli, what is that I'm hearing

ANWULI

Happily

Mama, it's the victory drum. They're back from the war and they're victorious.

Akwaugo yells and starts dancing

AKWAUGO

Great spirit Ani, our protector, I offer you my thanks and praise as you have given us victory and made us triumph over our enemies, I thank you.  
Let us go and welcome them, the entire village will be there.

ANWULI

Mama first finish your food before you go, it's a thing of joy so let's go there and celebrate with all the strength we have after we've eaten. They're not running na

AKWAUGO

Anwuli, I cannot eat in this situation, I want to go and see my son

ANWULI

You're the one wasting time because if you don't eat, we won't go anywhere

AKWAUGO

Eyes her  
Stubborn like your father.

She starts eating with Anwuli. Light fades

SCENE THREE - PALACE

The stage is buzzing with happiness from the elders to the warriors to the villagers. The warriors uniting with their parents.

ONOWU

Igbo kwenu

VILLAGERS

Eh

ONOWU

Kwenu!

VILLAGERS

Eh!!

ONOWU

Kwezuenu ooo!!!!

VILLAGERS

Ehhhhh

KING

Smiles

May this joy never cease from our home and our  
land

VILLAGERS

Ise!!!

ONOWU

They boasted so much of their power, their army,  
and we showed them our god. Ekwensu is not the  
most feared after Chukwu for no reason, that is  
what they did not know. And Ekwensu displayed

his power that there was no death from our warriors. Arochukwu kwenu!

VILLAGERS

Eh!!

KING

Today is not for long talk. It is a day of celebration and reuniting with our families, but before we go ahead with the celebration, the Akawo has something to say to all warriors.

The Akawo comes forward

AKAWO

The war has come and gone and we are victorious but in our jubilations, strong warriors of the land, let us not forget

what is needed to be done. Before the break of dawn tomorrow, you should have all destroyed your shrines and the sticks you used in going to battle. Ekwensu is a warrior god, needed only in times of war and now that the war is over, he is no longer needed. The celebration should not make you forget this very important task. We thank Ekwensu for giving us victory. Arochukwu kwenu!!!

VILLAGERS

Ehh!!!

The celebrations continues, people dancing and playing, some discussing. Light fades.

AKWAUGO HOUSE

Akwaugo, Anwuli and Kalu goes home, Akwaugo sitting on a stool tiredly

AKWAUGO

Chukwu be praised. Anwuli, go inside and bring food for your brother, I'm too tired to eat

ANWULI

Can he not go and take it by himself? I'm tired

AKWAUGO

Your brother is just coming back from a serious battle and he has not rested since then. Stop complaining and go bring the food

Anwuli grumbles and leaves.

AKWAUGO

Kalu my son, you're now a full grown man. Went to a fierce battle for the first time and came back without a scratch, hai, I'm so proud of you. Chukwu will continue to protect you as you've started this journey.

KALU

Ise mama, you should not worry, You have a brave and fearless son. The enemies were so weak. You should go and rest, you were very agile during the celebration so you should be tired by now.

AKWAUGO

You don't need to tell me, I know that I'm very tired. Kalu, let me remind you again, when you finish your food, destroy the shrine and the stick before dawn as the Akawo has said. You can even destroy it now before you eat. It is now a time of peace and Ekwensu is not needed. Don't forget Kalu, you hear?

KALU

Yes mama, I'll destroy everything after I'm done eating, you don't have to worry. Go and take your rest.

Kalu stares at Akwaugo as she leaves. Anwuli enters with a tray of food, settling it down.

Kalu seems to be lost in thought

ANWULI

What are you thinking about?

KALU

Shut up and mind your business. What did you prepare?

ANWULI

Don't come and check it, if you like don't eat, it's not my business

KALU

Is that what I asked you? Just leave me alone.

Anwuli eyes him and hisses then leaves. Kalu walks to the tray of food, opening it and seeing abacha, he smiles

KALU

Kai, food is life.

NEXT DAY

Akwaugo is in her shrine saying her morning prayers, Anwuli is sweeping the compound. A while later, Kalu comes out from his hut stretching

KALU

Anwuli this place is still dirty o

Anwuli glares at him and continues sweeping. Akwaugo finishes her prayer going to meet Kalu

AKWAUGO

Anwuli come and sweep this place. Can't you see it's still dirty?

ANWULI

Grumbles

Mama is Kalu that put that one there

AKWAUGO

Come and sweep this place osiso. I'm talking and you're talking.

Anwuli grumbles while frowning as she grudgingly sweeps it

KALU

Good morning mama

AKWAUGO

Good morning my brave warrior, did you sleep well? If you're still tired, you can go back and continue, there's not much work to do

KALU

Mama I slept well. I don't feel tired at all. What are we eating this morning?

AKWAUGO

What do you want to eat? Let us celebrate you personally on your successful first battle

KALU

Mama there's no need for that, after I've eaten, I'll be going to Chinedu's house

AKWAUGO

Ahh, Chinedu. He has been asking of you. Just wait small, the food will be ready now now now eh.

Smiles

Anwuli sweep fast and come join me in the kitchen.

KALU

I will not come back early o, we will go farming and small hunting

AKWAUGO

No problem my child, as long I know who you're with, I cannot worry. Anwuli I don't want to wait for you in that kitchen ooo.

She leaves

ANWULI

Kalu, that Ekwensu shrine that you destroyed, why did you not throw it out properly?

KALU

Nonchalantly

Eh go and throw it properly na

ANWULI

You'll just be giving somebody unnecessary work to do.

KALU

Go and fight war since you think it's so easy, nonsense

Kalu hisses and leaves. Anwuli stares irritably

ANWULI

So because of one war that you fought, you're doing anyhow. It's not as if you fought them alone ooo. Let me not because of you pray for another war, rubbish.

NIGHT

Akwaugo is sitting outside with a lantern, brushing off the night insects. Anwuli enters

ANWULI

Mama what are you still doing outside this late?

AKWAUGO

Which kind of stupid question is that? Is your brother back?

ANWULI

But he said he'll not be back early na and you said you'll not worry since you know who he is with

AKWAUGO

What will they still be doing by this time, it's late na, he's suppose to be back by now.

ANWULI

Mama please go inside first, outside is cold, I'll wait for him

Kalu enters looking tired.

AKWAUGO

Kalu why are you just coming?

KALU

Mama I told you I'll not be back early, I'm really tired and I need sleep

AKWAUGO

Won't you eat first?

KALU

I'm not hungry, goodnight mama.

He leaves

ANWULI

You see that there was nothing to be worried about. Now that he's back, let's go inside. He'll explain why he came late, tomorrow.

AKWAUGO

There's no need for that

ANWULI

Ah ah, mama if I was the one that spent time outside this late, you'll nearly cut off my head.

AKWAUGO

I'm going inside, if you like sleep there.

She enters her hut. Light goes off.

SCENE FOUR - UNKNOWN

Kalu is the middle of nowhere, darkness surrounding him, he starts hearing eerie sounds.

KALU

Who's there?

No answer

Show yourself

He hears footsteps, but he sees nothing when he turns. He starts searching himself, bringing out the Ekwensu stick. He points it aimlessly. The sound suddenly turns to creepy laughs.

Kalu pause as he sees a mask.

KALU

Who is there? show yourself

There was no response, the light goes off and comes back on immediately to see the mask closer to Kalu

KALU

Stop all these nonsense and face me if you're  
brave

Light goes off again and comes on to see the mask more closer to Kalu. He stares at the mask without body and walks to it slowly, tempted to touch it which he did. The laughter becomes very loud startling him to let go of the mask but is unable to. He tries to throw the mask away but is unable to. He suddenly starts bringing the mask closer to his face as if he is controlled. The mask forcefully merged with his face making him go stiff.

The laughter gets louder and louder. Light goes off and comes back on. Kalu is suddenly seen in his mat, jolting up from his bed, breathing heavily but stops and sits up, turning his face, he smiles. A loud thunder strikes, light goes off.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

A villager is walking, holding a hoe with a large raffia hat. He passes a figure but pause and goes back to check what he saw. A dead body.

VILLAGER

Yells

Abomination! Murder does not go unpunished, whoever did this has angered the gods and the gods will not fold their hands and watch. Seeing a dead body this early is a bad omen, the king has to hear of this.

He looks at the body again in pity and leaves.

AKWAUGO HOUSE

Kalu comes out from his hut weakly, sitting. Anwuli who is out doing chores looks at him in worry?

ANWULI

Kalu, are you okay? You look tired. Did you not sleep well?

KALU

I'm in no mood to talk Anwuli, just ignore me.

Anwuli stares at his body and sees marks on his body

ANWULI

Kalu what are all these marks on your body?

KALU

Stares at his body

It should be wake and see

ANWULI

But this is not like wake and see. It looks like an injury

KALU

Sighs

Then I got it from hunting yesterday. I'm not in the mood to talk this morning.

ANWULI

You don't even know what is wrong with you. Anyway, you remember we have a gathering at the king's palace

KALU

I'll try to be there, but if not you'll just tell me what happened. I'm tired, I'm going inside to sleep, I'll eat after I wake up

He enters his hut, Anwuli staring at him in surprise.

ANWULI

Because I'm your slave? He hardly goes anywhere but he's always tired? Or is he sick?

She hisses and leaves

Light fades

SCENE TWO

The entire village is gathered bearing pity and unbelievable faces. The elders stand up to greet the king while the villagers bow

ALL

Igweee!!!

KING

I thank you my people. My deepest condolences to the families of the victims. We will now get to the issue of today as it requires a matter of urgency. Onowu will brief us on the matter at hand

ONOWU

Long live the king.

ALL

Ise!!

ONOWU

My people, I greet you. It is with a sad note that I announce to you that weeks ago, we celebrated a successful war where we lost no one and we finally had our peace, but the peace did not last long. We have heard the recent happenings over the weeks and we can no longer fold our hands. It is only a tree that will know it has been marked to be cut down and will remain on same spot. One cannot sit back and watch his people die and do nothing. There have been several cases of killings in this our land and no one know how it happens. Relatives of the victims say that the victims were home and

did not go anywhere, but will wake up the next morning and find them dead outside their homes.

This series of killings is beyond human power so we consulted the Akawo and he told us that one of the warriors did not destroy the Ekwensu shrine.

The people exclaim in shock

ONOWU

This is why everyone was ordered to be here. Ekwensu is as feared as Chukwu and that is who we're dealing with. All warriors should come forward, we will know who disobeyed the order of destroying their shrine and sticks.

The crowd starts murmuring as the warriors come out. Kalu is restless and tries to hide between the other warriors. The Akawo also comes forward, sits down and starts chanting.

Then stands up, walking between the warriors chanting. He goes back to sit down and chants more, then suddenly stops. Everywhere is silent as he stands up.

AKAWO

People of Aro, the gods have given us an answer

The people murmur in relief and happiness

AKAWO

The gods tell me that the problem troubling us is not from the gods, but from us. We need to search within ourselves for in us the solution to our problem will come.

OKPARA

But wise one, You said that the problem could be from Ekwensu as one of them did not destroy their shrine and sticks.

Akawo laughs and starts moving around the warriors

AKAWO

Did everyone of you destroy your shrine?

ALL

Yes wise one

AKAWO

Did everyone of you destroy your stick?

He goes closer to Kalu and smiles at him

ALL

Yes wise one

AKAWO

Chuckles

So if everyone destroyed their shrine and sticks, how is Ekwensu the problem?

No answer

Are you all questioning the gods? Are you saying that the gods are lying?

ALL

Never wise one

AKAWO

Were you not told the consequences of not  
destroying Ekwensu shrine before next day?

ALL

We were told wise one

AKAWO

And what is the consequence?

ALL

Ekwensu is chaotic and causes bloodshed even in  
the time of peace, that is why he is only  
needed in times of war.

Kalu expresses shock staring at Akawo who stares back at  
him smiling

AKAWO

And you all destroyed everything so it is not  
possible for Ekwensu to suddenly appear. The  
problem is within us.

We have offended the gods and if that person  
doesn't come out and confess, the killings will  
continue. You can all go.

The people mumble among their selves as they leave. Kalu  
stares at Akawo who continues smiling at him till he leaves.  
Moments later, Akawo turns to the king and chiefs

AKAWO

I'll be going now your majesty. As I said, you  
all should look within yourselves and find the  
problem before it is too late

AKUEBUE

What exactly is happening? Why is the Akawo behaving strangely?

The king stands and leaves while the chiefs pay their respects

Lights fade.

SCENE THREE

Anwuli is sweeping the compound when Kalu bursts out from his hut.

ANWULI

Ah ah, Kalu is someone chasing you? Chimoo, see your body is getting worse. We need to meet the Dibia whether you like it or not. At this rate mama will not believe that it's hunting that caused this one and you can't start making that woman worry.

KALU

I'm not going to any Dibia. What if they don't know what is wrong? I'll just go for nothing

ANWULI

We won't know if we don't go at all

KALU

I don't think the Dibia can solve this

ANWULI

So you know what is wrong with you and you've been keeping quiet? Kalu are you okay? If you want to kill yourself, don't carry mama along please. Okay, tell me what is wrong

KALU

I'm not certain yet but I can't tell you, I'm too ashamed

ANWULI

I won't judge you. Everyone makes mistakes but you have three options. You either tell me or mama what is wrong or go to the Dibia or I tell mama myself that this mark is not ordinary

KALU

Anwuli what is this na, can't you support me for just once, it's not easy for me

ANWULI

This is me supporting you because you're being selfish right now. You're thinking about just yourself and not the people around you. Have you thought about how mama will feel when this get out of hand and we have the chance to stop it now? Forget all these our fighting, do you think I'm happy seeing you like this? After the war, you suddenly start feeling too tired even if what you do is not quarter to what I do and you suddenly have injury marks on your body that is not getting better but worse. Stop thinking about yourself for once and start thinking of us Kalu.

KALU

I'm so stupid and greedy and did not think things through

ANWULI

I won't pester you to tell me what happened but you have to choose from the options I gave you. What will it be?

KALU

Sighs

You already know what my answer will be?

ANWULI

Eh eh, let me go and tell mama

She attempts to go but Kalu drags her back

KALU

Why are you doing like this? You know I'll choose to go to the Dibia.

ANWULI

Smiles

Good, you just have to avoid mama, after I'm done with my chores, we'll go to the Dibia ó?

KALU

Nods

Thank you. I want to go sleep, wake me when you're ready to go.

He enters his hut

ANWULI

May Chukwu protect you

She continues sweeping. Light fades

DIBIA SHRINE

Kalu and Anwuli enters the Dibia shrine, looking for the Dibia

DIBIA (V.O)

The girl leaves, the boy stays. I have no business with the girl

ANWULI

You heard him, I have to go

KALU

But I can't face him alone. What if he doesn't have a solution?

ANWULI

Stop behaving like a child and act like a warrior that you are and besides, he sees us and we don't see him, that is a good sign. Just do whatever he tells you to do. Think about your family and don't make any rash decisions, Nnugo? I'll be praying for you

She leaves.

DIBIA

Come closer and sit

Kalu obeys and after a while, Dibia comes in and sits opposite him, staring hard at him that he becomes so uncomfortable

DIBIA

You should know that I see and know everything, so think about your answer wisely. Why did you refuse to destroy the stick?

KALU

Sighs

I loved the feeling it gave me when I was in battle

DIBIA

The person who argues with the lord will plead for a long time. It is good that you're being truthful, it will make everything easier. What feeling did it give you?

KALU

I felt no fear and was stronger. During the war, when the rest were bravely fighting, I cowered in fear and stood far from the battlefield, but I suddenly felt stronger and I wasn't afraid of anything not even death, and I loved the way I fought the enemies with so much strength and without fear. But when I heard that we should destroy it, I just could not let go.

DIBIA

So you were greedy

KALU

I accept that I was greedy, but in my defense, I didn't know that Ekwensu was not only a warrior god but he cause bloodshed even in times of peace. If I had known, I would not have done it. I feel like Akawo knows what I did, but I don't understand why he didn't tell everyone.

Dibia laughs and chants a little

DIBIA

If I was not prepared, he could have done the same with me

KALU

I don't understand

Dibia starts arranging some items in their middle

DIBIA

You're not the one we want to talk to

KALU

We?

DIBIA

All you have to do is stay put and don't do anything.

Dibia starts chanting fastly. Smokes starts coming out and the lights darkens. Kalu remains still and watch till the smoke goes away but the light is still dark. Kalu suddenly smiles at the Dibia

EKWENSU

That was quick, didn't think I'll be caught so soon. It's been so long Agwu Nsi

AGWU NSIS

You need to stop all these nonsense

EKWENSU

That is not how to welcome someone you've not seen in centuries.

AGWU NSI

If I want to see you, I know where to find you. Your work here is done, you're no longer welcome in this village

EKWENSU

Says who?

AGWU NSI

Says I and the other gods, they've heard the cries of the villagers which is why they sent me to deliver the message. You've had your fair share of bloodshed down to the innocent ones...

EKWENSU

But I can't leave. You heard what the boy said, he felt stronger and fearless and he wants the power that I give him

AGWU NSI

He didn't know what he was getting into

EKWENSU

And how is that my fault, blame the people for not informing him of the consequences.

AGWU NSI

You possessed the Akawo and lied to the people

EKWENSU

Laughs

Agwu Nsi, you saw all that happened, I did not lie to anyone. I told them that the fault was from them and they should look within themselves. Kalu refused to destroy the stick when he should have so it's still his fault and he's human.

AGWU NSI

Ekwensu, leave the boy alone and leave this village. They paid you already for the war you helped them win, except you don't want to be summoned ever again

EKWENSU

You know that can never happen. When humans go to war what do they feel? Anger and hatred for each other and where there is anger and hatred, I am there. So I don't have to worry about being summoned or not. They're humans after all

AGWU NSI

You're right. They are humans. Humans who have every right to feel emotions and are bound to make mistakes and it's in that their mistakes that they feel sorry and regret and tries as much as possible to stay away from it. Kalu made a mistake and he realizes it and he is ready to make amends.

Just let him go, you're causing him pain as well

EKWENSU

Why do I have to be the one to go when he caused all these. He was warned not only by the elders and Akawo, but also by his mother when they were home. He was being greedy and greedy people should be taught a lesson.

AGWU NSI

If this repeats itself again, then I'll let you do whatever you want, but you have to let him go just this once.

EKWENSU

When I'm ready to go, I'll go, but for now, I'm staying. He has to learn his lesson.

AGWU NSI

Ekwensu don't do this. You're bringing a war and this is not between humans

EKWENSU

Did I hear war? I'm the warrior god so I fear  
no war, at least I get to have a real fight  
after so long and not with weak humans

AGWU NSI

You are the warrior god, and you cause nothing  
but chaos, but I am the god of health and  
divination. I heal and restore balance to that  
which is unbalanced. We both love to mess with  
humans, we're both trickster, but unlike you, I  
don't kill people unjustly

EKWENSU

Which is why I am looking forward to this battle  
between us. I'm getting tired of this place.  
Kalu can just be the one to build me a permanent  
place of worship. Till we meet again Agwu Nsi.

The smoke comes back again, the light brightens as the  
smokes goes away. Kalu starts looking at himself and sees  
that the marks are gone, staring at the Dibia in surprise

KALU

I'm healed. Thank you great one

DIBIA

That is what Agwu Nsi can do for now. The battle  
line has been drawn. This is far from over.

KALU

What are you saying?

DIBIA

You should go home now, I'll talk to your sister.

KALU

Should I call her once I'm home?

DIBIA

No need, I'll see her. You can go.

KALU

Stands up

Thank you great one

He leaves

DIBIA

He who hits his neighbour's knee, curls up his own leg. He is also facing the consequences of his actions

AKWAUGO HOUSE

Kalu goes back home and sees Anwuli waiting anxiously. She rushes to meet him

ANWULI

What did he say?

KALU

As you can see, he healed me

ANWULI

Looks at his body

May the gods be praised. So it's over now?

KALU

Yes, I'm free. I'm so happy you convinced me to go to the Dibia. Thank you Anwuli.

ANWULI

Eyes him

You hardly thank me. This case had been serious, but it's all in the past now. I want to go and cook, will you follow me?

KALU

What am I looking for in the kitchen? Cook and come and give me food. I want to sleep

ANWULI

That's all you know how to do.

She hisses and leaves

KALU

It's not your fault. I'm in a good mood so I'll let it pass.

LIGHT FADES

SCENE FOUR

The sound of night cricket is heard as Kalu comes out from his hut smiling. He leaves the house and goes to a villager's house, chanting. Soon, a man comes out sleep-walking and follows Kalu as they leave the house. They reach a bushy place and Kalu snaps his fingers, making the

man regain consciousness. The man looks around him and back to Kalu who is smirking at him

MAN

Kalu what is this? Why are you smiling? How did we get here?

KALU

We got here through me. I brought you here

MAN

I don't understand. I was in my house sleeping, so how am I here, far from my house

KALU

Sighs

Let me explain better.

Kalu suddenly punches him so hard the man fell on the floor. Kalu looks around him, seeing a stone, goes to pick it up, going back to meet the man

MAN

Groaning in pain

Kalu what is the meaning of this?

KALU

Sarcastic

You will not believe who the killer is. I just found out

The man expresses shock and fear.

MAN

Kalu it's you?

KALU

Smirks

You're right. It's me and guess who is my next victim?

MAN

Kalu please don't kill me, spare me, I have a family please.

KALU

I usually don't take time like this in killing. Seems like he won't be coming after all. Blame your death on Kalu for not destroying his own stick

MAN

Ek...we....Ekwensu??

KALU

See you in the afterlife

He smashes the stone on his head continuously till he is satisfied.

KALU

Sighs

I can't believe you didn't show up Agwu Nsi. And I was looking forward to meeting you. I'll just continue till you can finally face me.

Kalu stares at the body carelessly and leaves. Light fades.

PALACE

The elders are gathered in the palace murmuring amongst their selves. The king enters causing them to stand

ELDERS

Igweee

He answers their greeting and signals them to sit

KING

With the serious look on your faces, I'm guessing this is about the killings

OKPARA

Your majesty, the killings have become worse and more gruesome that the victims can't be recognised. We're afraid, we don't know who is next.

OGBAJIRI

And with the way these killings are, it seems whoever is responsible has been angered.

KING

Sighs

And what is Akawo saying about this?

ONOWU

We sent for him your majesty. Something is not clear. Akawo told us that it was Ekwensu that was responsible, but then says that Ekwensu is not responsible that it is us who have offended the gods and we should look within ourselves. We can't continue sitting and look within ourselves when we don't even know who is next to die

KING

And why is he not here?

ONOWU

Exercise patience your majesty, he'll be here soon.

Akawo enters, paying respect to the king and sits

KING

Wise one, please tell us that there is a way we can solve this crisis.

AKAWO

I'm afraid I don't have the answer. I tried and tried to communicate with the gods, but they did not answer me

AKUEBUE

Could this problem really be from us that the gods refused to talk to us?

AKAWO

I did not remember what happened when I was trying to catch the culprit in the last meeting. It felt like I was asleep and then all of a

sudden, I'm back to myself only to see myself in  
my hut

The elders start murmuring

KING

So we fold our hands and wait till all of us are  
dead? Is that what you're saying?

AKAWO

Forgive me your majesty.

The Dibia enters, chanting and walking around them

KING

Did you also call the Dibia?

ONOWU

No your highness

DIBIA

Whilst farming, if one encounters what is bigger  
than the farm, he sells the barn.

The elders stares at each other in confusion

KING

Dibia, what brings you here?

DIBIA

Laughs

The crisis that has befallen this community is  
enough to involve everyone. I have come with  
answers and solutions. Akawo, the reason you

could not see it is because Ekwensu possessed you during your meeting with the warriors. Ekwensu has pronounced war on this community, so we must prepare.

AKUEBUE

But Dibia, how is Ekwensu still amongst us?

DIBIA

Kalu, the new warrior disobeyed the order of destroying his stick. He allowed Ekwensu possess him. But he did this without knowing the aftermath of his action.

ONOWU

Kalu? I would never suspect it to be him. You tell a child to wash his body, he washes his stomach. Even after he was warned? He will be severely punished

DIBIA

Who would not like the strength of a thousand mountains and the fear of nothing? Kalu was greedy and he wasn't told what will happen when Ekwensu is let loose and he acknowledges his mistake and is ready to make amends. It is Ekwensu who has refused to let the boy go and has pronounced war on us, so we need to put our heads together and stop him. Akawo, has there ever been a case similar to this?

AKAWO

Just once, but we were quick to control the situation and appease Ekwensu. But in this case, it seems that he is too angry to be appeased

DIBIA

That is because Agwu Nsi is involved and has challenged him

OKPARA

Battle between the gods. But why can't they fight it in their realm?

DIBIA

Ekwensu has refused to leave till he is satisfied. Now we need to find a way to stop him.

AKAWO

If Ekwensu is angry, then we need to banish him or expel him out of the land

DIBIA

We could do that, but Ekwensu will suspect and be ready, moreover, you can't perform the ritual. Ekwensu might take possession of you as he did before and I cannot perform the ritual. Two gods cannot fight in the mortal world or the humans will suffer it.

KING

So what are we to do now?

DIBIA

We need to apply wisdom in everything we plan to do

They commune with each other. Light fade.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

Kalu comes out from his hut in a good mood. He sees his family preparing to cook and goes to meet them.

KALU

Hailing

Mama!!

AKWAUGO

Hmm

KALU

Mama mama

Anwuli eyes him from her side

AKWAUGO

Smiles

Kalu what is it?

KALU

Mama you know you're so fine... I'm so lucky,  
chai

ANWULI

Will she not be fine before, where do you think  
I got my beauty from?

Kalu looks her anyhow and brush her off

KALU

My sweet mother. Mama that will not sleep if I'm  
not okay. Mama you too much

AKWAUGO

Kalu what is it this early morning?

KALU

Nothing o, you know once in a while, you have to  
appreciate your mother. It's not easy

AKWAUGO

Thank you my son. Anwuli finish this one here  
let me go and gather that other one inside

She leaves. There is silence for a while as Kalu stares  
Anwuli as though she's a prey

KALU

Anwuli, you know in all these killings happening  
in this village you and mama are lucky

ANWULI

And why will you say that?

KALU

I'm just saying. You and mama are safe because you're my family

ANWULI

So what if we're not your family?

Kalu shrugs

Kalu don't tell me it's what I'm thinking

KALU

What are you thinking?

ANWULI

You're the one responsible for the killings. Kalu it's not true right?

KALU

Instead of you to be shocked and disappointed, be happy that you and mama are not an option

ANWULI

Kalu why? I thought we're done with all these. Does that mean Ekwensu is inside you? Who is talking to me right now

KALU

Now that you know everything, you just have to pretend so as not to anger him

ANWULI

Kalu you're a murderer and you're not even ashamed of yourself. Why do you have to do this to yourself and bring this evil upon us?

KALU

Don't worry, soon, people will look upon us in fear and respect

ANWULI

They already respect us Kalu and we love how we're living.

I'm so disappointed in you

KALU

Watch what you say Anwuli, you don't want to be the next victim

ANWULI

You disgust me Kalu. I can't stand your face right now.

She packs her things and goes inside.

LATER

Anwuli comes out from the hut, looks around and sneaks out but Kalu stops her

KALU

Where are you going Anwuli?

ANWULI

Shocked

I'm going to see a friend.

KALU

Then why are you sneaking?

ANWULI

Nervous

So mama would not catch me. You know she will not allow me go anywhere. Please don't tell mama

KALU

Why should I listen to you

ANWULI

Kalu please na, I promise my friend I'll visit today. I won't take time, please

KALU

Okay, if you say so. Don't stay out too long cos I won't know what to tell mama

ANWULI

Thank you Kalu

She leaves

KALU

Smirks

Humans. You've finally made your move Agwu. I'm always right ahead of you.

He stares after Anwuli smiling. Akwaugo comes out from the hut a while later looking around

AKWAUGO

Anwuli! Anwuli! Where is this child? Anwuli!

Kalu comes out from the side

KALU

Mama I sent Anwuli on an errand

AKWAUGO

How long has she been gone

KALU

Not too long. She'll soon be back

AKWAUGO

When she's back, tell her to meet me in the kitchen

Sees Anwuli

Oh, she's here already. Where's the errand you went for?

Anwuli looks in confusion

KALU

I told her to tell Chinedu about something

AKWAUGO

Why didn't you go tell him yourself?

KALU

I was feeling tired. Anwuli, you've told him?

ANWULI

Yes. He said he understands.

AKWAUGO

Anwuli join me in the kitchen.

Akwaugo leaves

ANWULI

Thank you

She quickly rush inside. Kalu smiles. Light fades.

SCENE TWO

The light is dimly lit with the sound of the night insects. Kalu comes out wearing Ekwensu mask and leaves. He goes to a random hut, chanting a hypnotic spell but nothing happens.

He calls out again but no one comes

EKWENSU

What is happening? Why is no one coming?

He calls out again but no answer. He angrily leaves and goes to another random hut, calling out but no one comes. He laughs loudly

EKWENSU

Agwu come out! You finally decide to show yourself. Come out and face me!

AGWU NSI

I'm already here, there's no need to disturb the entire community.

EKWENSU

Who are you to stop my hunt? How dare you

AGWU NSI

This is no hunt. This is bloodshed and for no reason. You don't want the easy way, you never want the easy way, so the only way for you to listen is by force.

EKWENSU

Laughs

And you think by doing this, I'll listen to you?

AGWU NSI

Leave this village Ekwensu while Chukwu is not yet involved.

EKWENSU

Now that I've seen you're the one stopping my prey, I'll just up my game.

He made to leave but Agwu stops his

AGWU NSI

There will be no killing this night

EKWENSU

You want to fight me?

AGWU NSI

Stop the killing

Ekwensu throws the first punch but Agwu Nsi is quick to dodge it

EKWENSU

I'll be merciful not to kill you.

They get ready and start fighting. The battle is tough as no one is losing or winning but they're both breathing heavily.

ANI (V.O)

Enough!

The shout cause them to pull apart from each other forcefully.

ANI

Two powerful gods behaving like mere mortals, children at that. Agwu can't you see that this is what Ekwensu wants? You both disturb my peace and the peace of my children. It is the time when they rest from the day's work so fight your battle elsewhere.

AGWU NSI

Ani why are you not doing anything when Ekwensu is busy killing your children

ALA

Because it is what Ekwensu wants. He is thirsty for war and he knows that doing this provokes us. He wants us to fight him, but we won't give him

what he wants and neither will you Agwu. Apply wisdom when dealing with him, he is your fight.

EKWENSU

You both are discussing as if I'm not here. Ani, come out and show yourself. It's been so long

ANI

Ekwensu leave while everyone is asking nicely. You're not welcome here. I don't want any more fight between you two

AGWU NSI

Why don't we put an end to this once and for all. You want a fight, then you'll get the fight

EKWENSU

Smirks

Looks like Ani's words meant nothing. I accept your challenge. In two days time, we meet at the village square and put an end to this. If you can defeat me, then I'll leave willingly, but if you can't, then you'll leave instead..

AGWU NSI

Agreed. Until then, no killing of anyone.

EKWENSU

Smirks

Agreed

They stare at each other till light fade

PALACE

The elders are gathered, mumbling among their selves. The king enters

ELDERS

Igwee

KING

What are you all mumbling about?

ONOWU

Your majesty, did you not hear the noises last night? It's as if the gods are at war

KING

While we offer the necessary sacrifices, let the gods take the blame. Why is the Dibia not here?

ONOWU

Your majesty, you should not say that because we're the victims of their anger. As for the Dibia, he'll be here soon.

KING

So there are no cases of death even after the chaos last night?

AKUEBUE

Your majesty, we are shocked and relieved as well. This shows that the gods are fighting for us. Let us hope it goes for our favour.

The Dibia enters chanting

DIBIA

War is upon us. This is not the fight for humans. This is the battle between gods. Igwe, make sure to pass to every single person in this community that in two days time, on the day of the full moon, nobody should be seen outside.

Whoever decides to disobey shall accept whatever he sees. This is the message Agwu Nsi wants me to pass. In two days time, the fate of this land will be decided. In two days time, there will be a clash between two great gods and no humans should ever witness it. He who has ear, let him hear.

AKWAUGO HOUSE

Kalu is sharpening his spear. Anwuli comes to meet him

ANWULI

Kalu what is the meaning of this war I'm hearing?

KALU

The war does not involve us. We were told to stay in our homes and not come outside

ANWULI

Then why are you with your spear? Why are you sharpening it if we're to stay indoors?

KALU

So because there's a battle I should suddenly not do anything?

Anwuli paused, staring at Kalu as he continues with his spear

ANWULI

Ekwensu why are you doing this?

Kalu abruptly stops and finally looks at Anwuli

EKWENSU

Chuckles

I must commend you for your courage. You got tired of playing dumb?

ANWULI

Please leave my brother alone. He didn't know the consequence of leaving the stick. Blame us instead for not keeping an eye on him. Please have mercy and let him go for the sake of our mother

EKWENSU

Greed. Greed is among the deadly sins and it kills fast. You all act as if I caused it, but I did not. Does he have to know the result of not destroying his stick and shrine?

When he was told and warned continuously, why didn't he listen? I'll tell you why, it was because of Greed. You cannot lick a mango outside without expecting flies to gather you. He invited me and I accepted his invitation

ANWULI

But you're killing him. He's getting weak day after day if anything happens to him, mama will suffer for it.

EKWENSU

Then so be it. Let it be his punishment for his actions.

You should leave now before I change my mind about killing you. I have a battle to prepare for. You should support me.

If I lose, it means your brother dies.

Anwuli stares at him hatred and leaves. Light fades

DIBIA SHRINE

The Dibia is chanting and dancing in preparation for war, preparing his weapon. Anwuli enters but stops far from him and waits for him to finish

DIBIA

The charm is complete come forward and take it. When the time comes, do not hesitate to do what needs to be done.

Anwuli moves forward and collects the charm

ANWULI

What if it doesn't work?

DIBIA

Do you doubt the gods? I will also be there so just perform your duty as required by the gods. You may now go for I have a battle to prepare for.

Anwuli leaves. The Dibia continues to chant and dance.

### SCENE THREE

The fast beating of drum rents the air. Kalu enters with his mask, full of energy and anger as he waits for Agwu Nsi. Moments later, Agwu Nsi enters also full of energy. They round each other as the beat of the drum becomes faster. They start fighting fiercely that no one is winning or loosing. The fight continues with so much energy. Anwuli enters sneakily and hides in a corner. The drumming sound reduce as Anwuli starts chanting, talking to the item the Dibia gave her while pointing it at Ekwensu. Ekwensu frees himself from Agwu Nsi and smiles at him. Ekwensu chants a spell, causing Anwuli to start choking, falling to the ground

#### EKWENSU

You thought I would not know about your little trick? You think so little of me Agwu Nsi. This shows how weak you are to face me

Agwu Nsi chants a spell, causing Anwuli to stop choking but falls unconscious

#### AGWU NSI

I will not let you kill anyone. Let's end this once and for all

Agwu Nsi charge at Ekwensu and the battle continues. Ekwensu suddenly start feeling weak giving Agwu Nsi the upper hand. Ekwensu continues fighting but keeps getting weaker and weaker till he could not fight anymore

#### EKWENSU

Breathing heavily

What did you do to me?

AGWU NSI

Simple, I applied wisdom. Anwuli was just a distraction.

Just then, light shines on Akwaugo chanting a spell while pointing it at Ekwensu.

AGWU NSI

I had to use his mother because it was more effective and I predicted that you won't suspect and I was right.

Akwaugo moves closer to Ekwensu who is breathing heavily and groaning in pain. She takes the stick still chanting

EKWENSU

Mama please stop. I'm in pains, mama please

Akwaugo pause as she stares at him in worry

EKWENSU

Mama I know I was supposed to destroy it but I was greedy, I'm sorry. But if you destroy it, I'll die mama, please. He didn't tell you that part but you'll kill me. Ekwensu won't die, he'll just go to another person but me, Kalu will die. Your only son, Mama give me the stick back and I'll destroy it myself. The consequence is not as severe as....

AGWU NSI

Don't listen to him, remember, this is what I told you about. If you want your son back, then destroy it. You started this already, you have to end it. Giving him the stick back will...

EKWENSU

Mama he's lying. You see he did not tell you that you destroying it will kill me. Mama I'm your only son, your pride. I know I was greedy and I'm sorry but I don't want to die mama please. Don't you want to see your grandchildren? Just give me the stick, trust me mama, I'll destroy it myself.

AKWAUGO

Will he die if I destroy the stick?

AGWU NSI

He won't die. End this Akwaugo..

EKWENSU

Mama don't listen to him he's lying. You kill me if you destroy the stick mama please listen to me I'm your son.

Will you believe a common stranger over your son just because he claims to be a god? Believe me mama, I'll...

AGWU NSI

Akwaugo don't listen to him. You claimed to have prepared your mind. He is clearly manipulating you. Destroy the stick.

EKWENSU

I will never manipulate you mama. It's me Kalu, your son. I'm in control and I promise to destroy the stick, just hand it over

Anwuli groans as she gets up to see Akwaugo about to hand over the stick to Ekwensu.

ANWULI

Mama don't listen to him. That is not your son. That is not Kalu, do whatever the Dibia tells you. If you give him the stick, he'll kill us all and he won't hesitate. Mama just destroy it and free Kalu. He is in pain, he has been in pain ever since...

EKWENSU

I should have killed you when I had the chance. Why does this boy even have a sister, a nosy one at that.

Sighs

Just do whatever you want Akwaugo, I give up. You should be happy Agwu Nsi, you won, it was fun while it lasted.

He lies down nonchalantly, awaiting his demise. Akwaugo stares at him for a while, going closer to Ekwensu, but Ekwensu immediately stands up, attempting to take the stick, but Agwu Nsi is faster and holds him down.

AGWU NSI

Yells

Do it Akwaugo, he's gradually getting himself  
back

Akwaugo breaks the stick, chanting. The surrounding turn  
darker as the air howls in protest. Kalu clutches his chest  
in pain shouting in pain.

AGWU NSI

Akwaugo do not stop no matter what till you're  
finished and he's gone

Kalu keeps shouting in pain, rolling on the floor. Akwaugo  
voice starts breaking as she keeps seeing Kalu in pain

KALU

Mama... pl...ease s..top, I'm dying...

AGWU NSI

Akwaugo don't stop. Finish it

The air became tensed as the chant continues. There is a  
shriek sound and the surrounding keeps getting darker.  
Akwaugo's voice seems to be breaking as she is not able to  
watch Kalu in pain. Anwuli steps forward, blocking Akwaugo  
from seeing Kalu

ANWULI

You're doing this for Kalu, mama. Finish it.

This motivates Akwaugo as her voice becomes stronger and  
louder and faster. Kalu's voice becomes louder as the pain  
intensifies. Immediately Akwaugo finishes the chant, Kalu  
goes stiff and everywhere is suddenly quiet. Akwaugo slumps  
weakly on the ground

ANWULI

Is it over?

AGWU NSI

It is done. Be rest assured that your son isn't dead. Once he's fully recovered, he'll face the punishment given to him by the king and elders. I thank you for enduring it till the end, I know it wasn't easy especially as a mother. Anwuli, you're a brave young lady, you stood by your brother and mother and didn't give up on them. I commend your effort. My work here is done now that Ekwensu is gone, I'll leave the rest to your king.

He leaves. Akwaugo and Anwuli rushes to unconscious Kalu and checks if he's breathing.

Akwaugo starts thanking Ani while crying along with Anwuli. Light fades.

PALACE

The entire village is gathered as well as the king and elders. Kalu is in their midst, kneeling

ONOWU

You were warned seriously to destroy any item that had to do with Ekwensu, but you decided to prove stubborn because you thought you could control the god of war. What is your excuse?

KALU

I have no excuse to give. I accept whatever punishment I'm given even if it'll not be enough to atone for my sins

OKPARA

Now you're suddenly wise. Where was that wisdom when it was needed? Now innocent people died because of your greed and foolishness. How will you compensate for their loss

KALU

I'll spend the rest of my life paying for my mistakes and begging for their forgiveness.

KING

All these isn't necessary. The gods told us not to kill him and we'll do that, but your punishment is this...

There is a sudden silence

KING

For your disobedience and causing great chaos in our land, you'll be sent to the evil forest for 14days without food or water and when you return, seventy percent of your harvest will be distributed among the victims family till they decide to forgive you and let go. This is my judgement

KALU

I accept my punishment with my whole heart and I'll forever live the rest of my days in regret.

KING

Guards, escort him to the evil forest. Your punishment starts now.

The guards carries Kalu, dragging him out while the audience looks at him in disgust and hatred.

KING

The piglet asked the mother why they dig the ground, and the mother replied "you'll know when you grow up". Let this be a lesson to those who think that they can be wise.

Listen to the continuous warnings from your elders for what an elder sees sitting, a child cannot see even when he climbs the iroko tree. Let us now depart as peace is now restored.

The villagers happily leaves as well as the elders. Light fades.

THE END

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY TEXT

#### **Preamble**

This chapter aims to breakdown the play 'Ekwensu' in chapter three, with the purpose of a better understanding, looking at the depth of who the character really is and why they do what they do. This chapter also aims to give a brief overview of the previous chapters.

The previous chapter explains the research methodology used in this project. The research used in this chapter is literary research focusing on the Ekwensu play and because it is literary research, it suggests that the focus will be on textual analysis. Textual analysis is a research methodology used to analyse and interpret the meaning of texts. Therefore, textual analysis will be used to analyse or interpret the play and it will be focused on the primary source. The basic method that is appropriate for this research is the Functional Analysis Approach which examines selected part of the primary sources, paying attention to the vital parts of the play such as the theme characters, plot and the play will be analysed based on its functionality in relation to Mythological Theatre and Playwriting.

#### **4.1 Brief Overview of the Research Project**

This study focuses on the Igbo mythology using playwriting as a tool. In working in this project, the Igbo gods which were slowly being forgotten and the gods who are not known and gods who are misunderstood were pointed out in this study. This research explains the gods and their story and using one of the god as a case study to write a play about it's history and story. The aim of this work is to enlighten, educate and entertain the audience which is why Igbo mythology suggests a 'digging deeper'. This work is limited due to the current crisis happening in the Eastern part of Nigeria. Another limitation is that Igbo culture and traditions is slowly fading away as the Igbo people have forgotten or are not certain about their root and this is as a result of oral literature used by ancient Igbo rather than documentation.

This research explains how the theatre can be used to explore these Igbo gods using playwriting and that is why a play is written specifically on Ekwensu god who people have misunderstood to be the devil. In doing this research, some information was discovered understood while some were not in access. This work tries as much as possible to dive deeper and not only bring back the forgotten histories of Igbo mythology, but also educate and pass across this information worldwide to both Igbo and non-Igbo alike.

## 4.2 Plot Summary of the Play

Ekwensu written by Ifunanya Catherine Eze is an epic play focusing on Igbo gods majorly on Ekwensu, but also uses other gods like Agwu Nsi, the god of healing and divination and Ala, the goddess of the earth.

The play begins with the warriors of Arochukwu preparing for battle and the Akawo preparing them for battle by charming them and inviting Ekwensu, the warrior god, giving each of them a stick symbolising Ekwensu.

Kalu, the protagonist joins the battle for the first time and after experiencing the power of Ekwensu, disobeys the warnings of the Akawo by not destroying the stick without knowing the consequences of his actions. Kalu becomes a host to Ekwensu and starts killing the villagers. When it seems like there was a little hope through the Akawo, Ekwensu possesses him and keeps the villagers in fear and confusion. Kalu is not left out as he also suffers; always feeling weak and having injuries. Anwuli, Kalu's sister suggests that they visit the Dibia for healing which he agreed to after some persuasion. The Dibia is already expecting their arrival and sends the girl home. Agwu Nsi comes in through the Dibia and talks to Ekwensu through Kalu, warning him to leave the boy, but Ekwensu refuses causing Agwu Nsi to declare war on him. Ekwensu is happy with this and kills the people more brutally to anger the Agwu Nsi more till Agwu Nsi shows up and stops him from killing a villager, thereby causing them to engage in a fierce battle. We see Ala,

goddess of the earth whose voice is only heard, scolding them. She warns Ekwensu to leave in peace and advises Agwu Nsi to apply wisdom in dealing with Ekwensu.

Agwu Nsi and Ekwensu decides to end this once and for all, setting the day for the battle. The people were warned to not step out and who ever disobeys will accept whatever he/she sees. On the day of the battle, Ekwensu and Agwu Nsi fights tirelessly with none winning or loosing. Ekwensu knew that Anwuli and Agwu Nsi planned something, so when he felt her presence, he tries to kill her but she is saved by Agwu Nsi. Unknown to Ekwensu, Anwuli is just a distraction and Akwaugo, Kalu's mother is the one meant to finish him off. Ekwensu tries to manipulate Akwaugo, but is not successful and with the help of Anwuli and Agwu Nsi, Akwaugo is able to cast Ekwensu away and Kalu survives and faces punishment given to him by the king.

### **Characters in the Play**

Characters are the people in a play and these characters are brought to life by actors/actresses. The major characters will be looked at and they include;

**KALU** - He is the protagonist of the play and host to Ekwensu. Driven by greed and selfishness, Kalu refuses to obey the orders from the Akawo and his mother by not destroying the stick representing Ekwensu. He suffers the consequences and admits to his crimes and is saved from Ekwensu after much damage has been done.

EKWENSU - The god of warriors and in this play, he is summoned to help the people fight their war. Ekwensu is known to be chaotic and also a trickster, always needed during the times of war but not in times of peace as he sheds blood even during peace. Ekwensu helps the people of Arochukwu win the war, but because he has not been fully casted out, he lingers around and starts shedding innocent blood. He can be tagged as the antagonist of the play and it took the involvement of another god, Agwu Nsi, before Ekwensu could be finally casted out.

AGWU NSI - The god of Healing and Divination. He represents the other gods who heard the cries of the villagers and comes to the play through the Dibia. He warns Ekwensu at first and when Ekwensu refuses, they had a fierce battle. Agwu Nsi is also known to be a trickster like Ekwensu, but he does not causes chaos and plays with human life, but he cares for the people. He saves the people of Arochukwu and also saves Kalu from death by the villagers.

ANWULI - She is the sister to Kalu and daughter to Akwaugo in the play. She is known to be stubborn and argues with Kalu, but she also cares for her family. She played a huge role in helping to get rid of Ekwensu because if Anwuli had not persuaded Kalu to visit the Dibia, Kalu would not have gone on his own. She risks her life for Kalu safety and her actions paid off.

AKWAUGO - She is the mother of Anwuli and Kalu. A strong worshipper of Ala and she loves her children. Akwaugo portrays the character of a typical Igbo woman who loves her children, but hardly express it especially towards Anwuli. In the play, it seems Akwaugo is unaware of the happenings in her home, but she comes at the end and with the help of Anwuli and Agwu Nsi, she is able to overcome the manipulative Ekwensu and rescue her son.

### **Theme of the Play**

The theme of 'Ekwensu' is centered on greed and selfishness. It was greed that cause Kalu to disobey the warnings and because he wants the power all to himself, invites Ekwensu to the community. Though he regretted his actions after he was told the consequences of his actions, still he disobeyed the instructions. He could not think about what his actions will cause portraying selfishness

Another theme of the play is family and sacrifice. When Anwuli found out that Kalu disobeyed the Akawo and Ekwensu was in her brother, she did not judge him but instead, looked for a way to save her brother while also ensuring that her mother is not aware as she believes that her mother will not be able to bear it if anything happens to Kalu. Akwaugo also plays a big role as she did not give up on her son. Anwuli risks her life to save Kalu and also motivates her mother into not believing Ekwensu.

Other themes include; theme of gods, theme of manipulation and trickery etc.

Other elements of drama involved in this play are:

- i. **Setting:** this play is set in ancient Igbo, during the pre-colonial period
- ii. **Language:** this play makes use of both Igbo language and English
- iii. **Music:** no drama/play is complete without music. Music evokes dance and these elements are done to evoke the right emotion from the audience.

#### 4.4 Objectives of the Play

What is the objective of the play, Ekwensu? What does each character want? What is the writer trying to achieve in this play?

The play is an epic play focusing on Igbo gods, specifically on Ekwensu, Agwu Nsi and Ala. It has been researched that ancient Igbo focuses more on oral literature - this means that they tell their stories and not documenting it. The act of storytelling was upheld till the missionaries came and brought division among the Igbo people. As time passes, the act of storytelling slowly began to fade, thereby, the tradition and culture of the people are slowly being forgotten due to lack of documentation and lack of interest.

The objective of this play is to revive the forgotten stories of the Igbo people and the best way that it can be achieved easily and with better understanding from the young and old is through playwriting, showcasing it in the theatre. For some people, reading stories is more enjoyable than watching them and vice versa. That is why using playwriting to

tell the stories using the theatre is a good avenue in showcasing the rich and diverse culture of Igbo people and educate people as well.

Educating, enlightening, promoting and entertaining the audience can be listed as the major and primary objective of the play.

What does each character want? At the beginning of the play, it is clear that the entire village wants one thing - to win the war, but after the war, wants began to change. Kalu chose power over family and his actions have risen to different wants from different characters. Anwuli and Akwaugo wants Kalu back alive, Agwu Nsi wants to stop Ekwensu, hearing the cries and pleas of the people, Ekwensu wants to cause chaos and confusion and the king wants to stop the crisis as it is affecting his people. These wants began manifesting when Ekwensu starts causing chaos through Kalu.

#### **4.5 Character/Motivation of the Play**

Award winning actress Dame Judi Dench says "you have to find out WHY does that person say lines in answer to something somebody else has said? What is it in that person's make up that makes them react that way"? Why do they want what they want? This is their MOTIVATION and it tells you about the true CHARACTER of the person. How do they go about getting what they want? Are they successful in getting what they want? If they are successful, how do they react? If they aren't then how do they react?

In relating these questions to the play, why does Kalu want the power he feels the stick gave him? Kalu withdrew himself from the battle when the war started, and as a warrior, it can be known as a cowardly act. The sudden feeling he got during the battle were he felt no fear, not even the fear of death, in his MOTIVATION because he feels that if the stick is with him, then he won't have anything to be afraid of and also he kept the stick to cover up his cowardly act. His action speaks of his true CHARACTER in the play. Despite not knowing the consequences of his actions, Kalu still refused to heed to the warnings given to him. He was successful in getting what he wanted, but his reaction wasn't a joyful one because it wasn't what he had in mind that actually happened. His reaction when he discovered the repercussion for his action was that of regret.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### **Preamble**

This chapter provides a conclusion to this research work, summarizing the key findings and recommendations for future research and practical applications.

#### **5.1 Summary of Key Findings**

This study researched on Igbo mythology and found out the different gods of the Igbo and their histories and their true characteristics. This work revealed that the Igbo people dealt with oral literature, therefore, due to modernization and the coming of the missionaries, the act of storytelling which was used to pass down their culture and tradition, gradually starts fading. In this present time, it is at the brink of fading out completely. This work also revealed stories and histories that have been misunderstood and forgotten. It highlighted some key implications which is informing or educating the audience about the Igbo gods which is now fading, if not fades completely. The audience can be impacted with this information such that it cannot be easily forgotten and this can be achieved through playwriting and the use of theatre. This work teaches the people about the Igbo culture and traditions, focusing on gods and this is emphasized through the play 'Ekwensu' written by Ifunanya Catherine Eze.

## 5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this work, several recommendations for future research are proposed:

**Further investigation:** further investigation is needed to gather more solid information concerning the Igbo culture and traditions and this can be done by visiting the roots i.e. the Eastern part of Nigeria and uncover some histories that is either being misunderstood, forgotten or misinformed. And in doing this, certain measures can be taken when writing about such work, so as not to offend the Igbo people. Further research widens/broadens the knowledge about a particular work and also gather other informations while researching on one.

**Comparative study:** comparing a research work with other related work can serve as a recommendation for future research. Comparing the Igbo cultures and traditions with other tribes like Yoruba, Urhobo, Hausa, etc. can provide insights on the traditions between two or more tribes that are closely or related to each other, either through shared themes, motifs or cultural practices.

## 5.3 Practical Applications

This finding of this research work has practical applications for education, cultural preservation, community development. Firstly, in the field of education, incorporating Igbo or other tribe's histories and culture into school curricula can promote cultural

awareness and appreciation, letting the younger ones know about their history and promoting it, thereby reviving fallen or forgotten culture in various tribes of Nigeria. Cultural exchange programs practices can also be applied that promote cross cultural understanding and exchange between Igbo and other cultures.

Secondly, cultural preservation is a practice that can easily be achieved in our modern society. Due to lack of documentation in ancient Igbo, most histories have been forgotten. This study's findings highlight the importance of documenting Igbo myths and legends to preserve fuel heritage and also serve as an easy access to anyone who wishes to know more about the Igbo culture. Community based introduces aimed at preserving the Igbo culture.

Thirdly, involving the community on matters relating to cultural programs can promote and educate and entertain the people and audience, giving the people the privilege of participating in cultural activities, Igbo and non-Igbo alike.

By applying the findings of this study, individuals, communities and organizations can promote cultural awareness, preservation and exchange, contributing to the development of the wellbeing of the different ethnic communities.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this project has contributed to the understanding of Igbo mythology using Playwriting as a tool to tell the history and origin of Igbo gods with the aim of

better understanding and for this work to not be easily forgotten. Through the analysis of primary sources, this research work has shed more light on the histories and importance of Igbo mythology in understanding Igbo culture, identity and world view. This study has shown the significance and relevance of Igbo culture and it is essential that we value, preserve and promote Igbo mythology, ensuring its significance and relevance for future generations.

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