

NATURAL NATIONALISM: The Path to Igbo Cultural Renaissance

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Who are the Igbo? What are the institutions that sustain Ndiigbo? Can the continued cultural diversification among the Igbo at home and abroad be brought under a single cultural identity? What is Igbo culture? In this paper, the author examines aspects of Igbo cultural legacy (*oḍinala*). Admittedly, no culture is static; but, in the history of humans, no culture has survived indiscriminate dismantling of its religious roots (*Oḍinanī*), obliteration of its traditional tenets (*omenala*), and insensitive degrading of its linguistic legacy (*asusu*). While identifying certain challenges confronting the preservation and propagation of Igbo culture, the presentation proposes a paradigm shift in Igbo national identity and calls for the establishment of functional institutions to advance the affirmative attributes of Igbo culture.

KEYWORDS: Aladimma, Culture, cyberspace, dialects, dictionary, government, history, Igbo, kolanut, language, natural nationalism, Ndiigbo, Ohanaeze, pogrom, religion, technology, tradition

GREETINGS

Deewo nu.

Deeje nu.

Deeme nu.

Daalu nu.

Kwenu!

Rie nu

Ñuọ nu!

Zuọ nu!

Kaa nu.

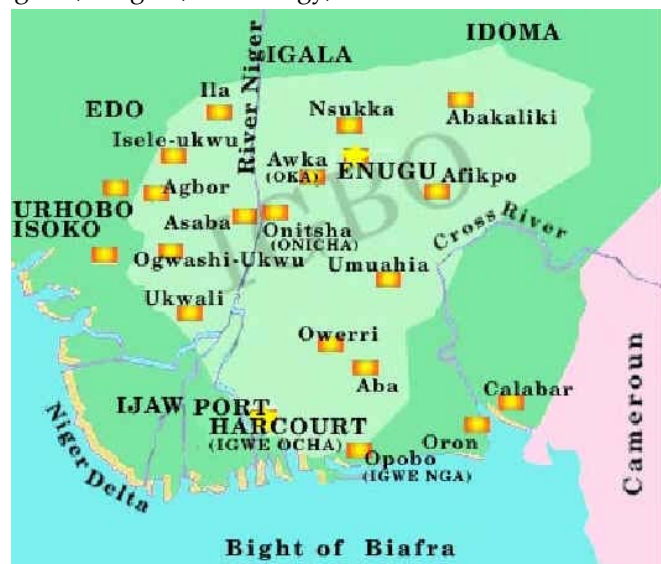
DEFINITION

What is “natural nationalism”?

This is nationalism that springs from fair, sentimental and spiritual reactions of citizens, based on the historical roots, values and right of their nationality. It is distinguished by the fact its expression and manifestation is honourable, orderly and positive inside its own nation and – in its relationship to other nations or types of nationalism – its ways of thinking and courses of action are not exacerbated, unjust, overbearing or aggressive.

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Bishop Emeritus of Vic in Catalonia



1. INTRODUCTION

Natural nationalism focuses on the culture of a people regardless of prevailing political shade or space. It is less like ethnic and more like cultural nationalism: “a variety of nationalism that is neither purely civic nor purely ethnic ::: a sort of nationalism with emphasis on culture and language.”^[2] The Igbo will understand the concept as *ọdịdịmma ọdịbendị**—pride in a people’s way of life, their customs. Natural nationalism is the customary comfort of a particular people of a particular place and their desire to follow set popular principles of power, politics, and propagation of culture. It is a natural “devotion to the interests or culture of a nation ^[3] and to the advancement of cultural creeds in all their rightful ramifications.

What is culture, and why is it so important? Culture is the entire behavior patterns of a particular people, their beliefs, institutions, language, religion, social structure, and all other creations of human mind. ^[4, 5]In Igbo, *ọdịnalala* (culture) is understood as the totality of all grounded and refined structures and traits that bind a people together and facilitate a functional nation. The indiscriminate introduction of foreign cultures and the dishonorable disregard of deep-rooted ways of life that have worked for a peculiar environment are the keys to understanding current crises in traditional societies.

Nationalism has not caused wars in Africa as it did in Europe; on the contrary, balkanization of nations by callous colonization and unnatural amalgamation of otherwise incompatible indigenous nations have created the rough edges that spark so-called “civil wars.” Within Nigeria, a conglomerate country of over 250 nations in its 49th year of flag independence, not one has tried to impose its culture on the other outside its traditional space. The last time a nation in River Niger area imposed on another by conquest was in 1804, the Fulani Jihad—an ideology induced by the revealed religion of a Middle East nation.

Do Ndiigbo constitute a nation? The answer is amazingly simple: No. It is even enshrined in the popular saying: *Igbo enwe(ghi) ézè*. What the Igbo have are common cultural creeds and an engaging ethnicity bound by threads of sub-ethnic interests and collective opposition to external threats. The Igbo have had opportunities to build a nation, but those favored to make history chose broader worldviews. In essence, they disregarded the ancestral advice to secure space before squabbling over the possession of a mere mat. [*A zọta ana, a sọwa ute.*]

This paper is not about politics per se; it is about reawakening binding traditions, *omenala*, of Igbo societies and molding them into the commonwealth culture of a nation. Knowing from whence the rain started (*ebe mmiri bidoro mawa Igbo*) is essential. From the devastating dark ages of slavery through colonialism to date, Ndiigbo have been building without foundation, sowing seeds on scorched earth and hoping they will germinate and grow into irokos. One way out of current crises is to look back before making further forays into Nigeria’s political wilderness, just like Akan’s *Sankofa* bird. Without broom commonality devoid of ideational individualism and sickening sectionalism, Ndiigbo will end up like the legendary crab, *nshịkọ*, which swam across seven seas and seven oceans only to perish in a pot of soup.

2. PROBLEMS

There are so many problems confronting Ndiigbo. Some are obvious; others are not. The major problem is disunity. Everyone desires “Igbo unity,” but no one is doing much to address the basis of unity and the kind of unity desired. Many pan-Igbo associations take off with great ideas of oneness, one umbrella. Alas, once the big and elaborately named masquerade (*mmukwu mmanwu*) arrives at the village square, it collapses to the chagrin of citizens watching. Examples abound. There cannot be a nation of people who disregard the basic notions of nationhood. There cannot be a nation where a thousand tongues are spoken. There cannot be a nation that has no good sense of its common history. There is no nation without a common culture.

Igbo language suffers from the apathy of Ndiigbo. What led to the apathy is ignorance. There is therefore a need to reeducate Ndiigbo on the importance of mother tongue. The fact that many Igbo people still write “Ibo” and “Igbos” is a clear indication of invasive ignorance. Extensive interactions with American-born students of Igbo parentage reveal that many do not know the meaning of their Igbo names. It is not because the students do not want to learn Igbo; it is more because their parents do not have a good grasp of grammar (*utoasusu*) and cannot answer simple questions, let alone teach Igbo language skills in any dialect.

There are as many Igbo dialects as there are communities. Even within towns, it is easy to detect distinct shades of dialectical differences. Therefore, though dialects are not a major problem, the importance of a commonwealth Igbo—*Igbo izugbe*—cannot be overstated. Like culture itself, language is a dynamic phenomenon, as is evident in romance languages and variants of English. The few Igbo writers still disregard dialectical terms and expressions that follow set grammar rules. They are shy about taking terms from the streets to the classrooms. It is surprising that textbooks for Igbo children still come with “*juniọ sekọndiri?*”^[6] and “*siniọ sekọndiri?*”^[7] on their covers. Ndiigbo might as well develop “Engligbo”!

Politicians have called, as is clearly stated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria^[8] for the use of Igbo in houses of assembly of predominantly Igbo-speaking states^[9]. It won't happen any time soon because of deficient vocabulary capacity. Igbo cities, layouts, and streets have predominantly English names. It says a lot about Igbo nationhood that there is no common term for the so-called “traditional rulers.”

“[R]eligion continues to influence culture in contemporary life,” even in secular societies.^[10] Cultures continue to evolve on their religious roots, even when unspoken. A good example is the United States of America, where the separation of church and religion is set; however, the culture is still heavily Christian-biased. Ndiigbo need a cultural evolution based on time-tested tenets of *Ndiichie*, the ancestors, whose belief in a Supreme Spirit did not cloud the realities of earthly existence. Igbo religion, **Ọdịnani**, is “a logical concept that makes few pretensions about the great unknown. ::: A very tolerant but traditionalist philosophy, its capacity for ecumenism is enormous.”^[11]

Igbo religion should not be feared or degraded; it is neither dogmatic nor unreasonable. It only calls for belief in a higher power, the nature of whom no one knows. Everything else on earth is negotiable; hence the expression “*igò mmụọ*” (propitiation of spirits); not “*ife alụsị*” (“worship of deity” — a concoction of early Igbo Christians). Regardless of early errors and evil exploitations by charlatans, the destruction of sacred groves must stop. “Prayer warriors,” undercover *Igbo Taliban*, raid shrines [12] and sell artifacts to Western art collectors. These iconoclastic imbeciles are loafers (*efulefu*) who subscribe to the inferior taste of others.

Those who forget their history lose its lessons. Nigeria is probably the only country to have fought a war and erased its relics. Regardless of personal persuasions, politics, and prejudice, there are lasting lessons to learn from the bitter Biafran experiences. Unfortunately, barely 40 years after the fact and with gigantic gains in science and scholarship, a good grasp of what Biafra represents still eludes Ndiigbo. They wrestle with the present political problems without recognizing past successes and slip-ups. The Pogrom is a sad chapter in Nigeria’s turbulent history, yet Ndiigbo forget that there is no statute of limitation for murder, even if it is just to deter those with genocidal intentions.

The wholesale adoption of Eurocentric culture has devastated Igbo landscape. When religious relics that drive Igbo culture are demonized and discarded, witnesses to Igbo history are lost. The Igbo are probably the oldest people to occupy the Nigerian space, the sons of the soil and the daughters of the domain. Ndiigbo have so much to give the world if they persevere in the preservation of their history. The following four are just a few tip-of-the-iceberg examples:

- (a) Most accurate calendar system of four-day week, seven week-month, and thirteen-moon year;
- (b) Uniqueness of palm prints long before it became a crime-fighting tool; hence “*akalaaka*” is the Igbo for “destiny”;
- (c) Established anti-baby blues, “*omụgwọ*” rituals of practical prenatal and postnatal protocols and forestalled diseases that modern medicine is slowly “discovering”;
- (d) Identified genetics as the roots of behavioral complexes.

Good governance is an orphan in Nigeria. The essence of a town government is to deliver a wide range of effective and efficient services to its residents and to meet the challenges of modern living as they evolve. Igbo communities are organized as independent sociopolitical and economic entities along democratic doctrines and in keeping with the principle of *Igboenweeze* (rugged republicanism). Even the acclaimed respect for elders is earned; it is not necessarily automatic. Sadly, Igbo communities are saddled with *Eze/Igwe* pseudo-monarchy. “The Eze or chieftaincy Institution was not created by the tradition and cultural mores of the people”; it was created by the Chieftaincy Edict of 1978. ^[13] The concept of an all-knowing, lifelong leader is alien to Igbo political philosophy. Left alone, the Igbo would wake up one day with funny kings and queens of the ancient European mold, characters who caused so much mayhem until the Europeans adopted the principle of *Igboenweeze*.

3. PROPOSALS

It is often easy to pick on prevailing problems and analyze them endlessly. Equally, it is easy to make proposals. Every year, Igbo people gather all over the world in conferences and at party-till-you-drop conventions. Papers are presented. Ideas are thrown around. In the end, a miniscule of ideas leaves the air-conditioned halls of eloquent speeches; a lot less materialize. Ndiigbo must declare a parting of ways with this tradition before it becomes a part of culture, *makana aluluana gbaa afo, o buru omenala; omenala gbakwaanu afo, o buru odinala*. This Conference should vent concrete proposals and implement them.

3.1 Maka Asusu (On Language)

That this paper is written and presented in English is a serious indictment. I expected four new Igbo books written in any Igbo dialect to be displayed. The existence of many Igbo dialects is a source of strength, a natural bank of immense vocabulary, idioms, and unique expressions. In essence, while other languages borrow terms from foreign languages, standard Igbo should incorporate words from its many dialects to enrich the established core. With formal education, urbanization, technology, and Igbo social sophistication, bridging the gaps in dialectical differences and sustaining a standard Igbo language will be a breeze. Standard Igbo does not mean to, nor should it, abhor dialects.

To get to the desired destination (commonwealth Igbo), four factors are crucial:

- (a) Spelling standardization,
- (b) Uses of standard suffixes, prefixes, and “na,”
- (c) Vowel harmony, and
- (d) Vowel intensiveness.

3.2: Okowaokwu (Igbo Dictionary)

Currently, there is no Igbo dictionary in true sense of the term. It is hoped that by the 8th session of this annual conference, a sleek “Michael West” edition will appear. We do not need more English-Igbo or Igbo-English dictionaries: Echeruo [14] and Egemba [15] have each produced great works, and updates are expected. What Ndiigbo need is an authentic Igbo dictionary complete with definitions in Igbo.

3.3. Igbo n’Amasaiḅa (Web-based bank of Igbo words)

In addition to getting a good grip on Igbo grammar, so as to keep the language from shriveling and vanishing, Igbo Studies Association should chase the trail of new technology frontiers and establish a searchable and updateable, web-based bank of Igbo words with approximate meanings in major international languages. Many nations with much more difficult fonts and scripts have moved on from this proposal and are already using language-specific keyboards and automatic speech recognition. Yet, with many world-class computer experts of Igbo extraction, Igbo language lags behind in establishing a strong identity *n’Amasaiḅa* (in Cyberspace). To this day, no two Igbo persons can carry a casual conversation on computers and information technology in Igbo!

3.4: **Nkanauzu n'Igbo** (Domesticating Technology)

To improve skills and maximize human resources, Ndiigbo should place emphasizes on graduates becoming employers, not job-hunters. To achieve this, technology must be demystified and domesticated—in Igbo. From palm wine tapping, blacksmithing, basket-weaving, word carvings, and computer technology to the rudiments of Biafra-era technological feats and even ethno-pharmacology.

Those who scoff at Igbo indigenous technology and ethno-pharmacology should note that an American in possession of a remote device that turns on an electronic device in 1909 would have been labeled a witch. Yet, in 2009, an Igbo who claims to trigger remotely some form of reaction is tagged “witchdoctor.” If these things worked and still work, what are the principles that drive them? What are the underlying principles of sacred groves? Is Igbo medicine really inferior to the chemical-driven western versions?

3.5: **Mahadum** (A University for Life)

The Igbo are trailblazers in education, both formal and informal. It is no wonder that Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo, is the father of American autobiography, ^[16] that Chinua Achebe is the father of modern African literature, ^[17] that the establishment of premier University of Nigeria, Nsukka by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe opened the path for affordable and quality education in Nigeria, that Governor Jim Nwobodo established the first state university in Nigeria, that Father Emmanuel Ede established the first private university (Madonna Okija), etc. In light of the present state of schools and the irreversible brain drain, the establishment of a “finishing” university has become inevitable.

Mahadum, an Igbo university, will address Igbo-centric business traditions, Igbo indigenous technology and architecture, Igbo history without the constraints of college circles, and all aspects of Igbo traditional life. It will be strong on commonsensical cultural ethics that people tend to ignore in real life with catastrophic consequences. Without such a setup in Igboland, Ndiigbo in Nigeria and all over the world may, hundred years hence, troop to a Virginian village in USA—on pilgrimage—to see and experience an Igbo village! Meanwhile, Igbo Christians and Muslims fly to the sands of Middle East to visit “holy land” while desecrating the sacred society on which their glorious ancestors lived and thrived.

3.6: **Ogbuḅbandu Oji** (Kolanut Communion)

I have penned numerous essays since 1995, and a book in 2005, on kolanut communion.^[18] Ndiigbo must keep and renew the traditional communion and restore it to a pride of place in everyday social interactions. Since Ndiigbo do not have many books on different aspects of the ritual, they spend time at social occasions explaining unnecessarily the sanctity of kolanut. Those who drag in all sorts of sideshows, such as anti-culture chieftaincy status, forget that an honorary doctor of law does not make a lawyer of the recipient.

Kolanut communion offers Ndiigbo the opportunity to pray with all their hosts or guests and to harness the encouraging energies of everyone: man, woman, and child. The “introduction” and “prayer” sessions are embodied in kolanut communion. This might appear trivial but, if Ndiigbo lose the rituals that followed Igbo slaves across oceans and gave the West different cola drinks, they will not only lose the bragging rights but also a setup where Ndiigbo pray together and harness the righteousness of both friends and foes.

3.7 **Ọdịnani** (Igbo traditional religion)

Regardless of religious denominational divides, Igbo cultural renaissance cannot come without reference to religion because any culture uprooted from its religion dies. To understand the Igbo person, one must understand the basis for Igbo philosophy; to understand Igbo philosophy, one must understand Igbo concept of the Cosmos, a logical concept that makes few pretensions about the great unknown. Igbo philosophy is elastic enough to accommodate other religious beliefs, science, and modern theories of the universe.

The Igbo are very practical and particular about constructive coexistence on earth. In the saying, “*egbe bere, ugo bere*” (Let the eagle perch, let the hawk perch), the Igbo religion express its golden rule: Live and let live. **Ọdịnani** is anchored on the sanctity of **Ani**, the Earth Deity, created by the Supreme Spirit. *Ọ di n’Ani* literally means “It is anchored on the Earth Deity.” Hence, Igbo philosophy is sacred, spiritual, and socio-environmental. Those who follow the teachings of Christian churches and Muslim mosques soon find out that the fundamentals of **Ọdịnani** are still steadfast in every Igbo community because it is about preserving the sanctity of earth (*nsọani*) and following the dictates of one’s personal providence: *Onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe*.

3.8: **Ọnwa Ọdibendi Igbo** (Igbo Heritage Month)

Since I proposed an annual Igbo Heritage Month in May 1997, some Igbo communities around the world have been celebrating May as Igbo Heritage Month. Highlights of events, which could be tailored to local situations, include [19]: kolanut communion, lectures highlighting the achievements and failures of Ndiigbo abroad, **Ụka Nne** (Mothers Day), and cultural extravaganza during the Memorial Day weekend (US) or Democracy Day weekend in Nigeria.

3.9: **The Pogrom and Nigeria-Biafra War Memorial**

Those who preach that Igbo tragic past are better forgotten deny history. All peace-loving people who abhor pogrom, ethnic cleansing, holocaust, hunger, war, and oppression everywhere remember supreme sacrifices, so it may never again be demanded of any people. April 21 is Holocaust Remembrance Day; Armenians have their day too. Ndiigbo should slate September 29 as “Pogrom Remembrance Day.” Those who forget their history are forced to relive it. That is why the killings continue in an installment basis in northern Nigeria. They continue because those who perpetrated earlier pogroms retire to fight another day. Sixty years after the Holocaust, the Jews still go after German Nazi officials even on their deathbeds. Ndiigbo prefer to pal around with known knuckleheads, killers of their kind.

3.10: Obíigbo (Igbo Cultural Centers)

Since Ndiigbo have abandoned their cultural creed and embraced European cultural creed, there are no cultural institutions to call their own. The churches are controlled by lords temporal in Europe, who will not tolerate any shade of “paganism in God’s house.” The local Pentecostals are more interested in amassing as much money as possible and in flying to God with fancy aircrafts. Ndiigbo must build institutions for the propagation of their culture.

First, Ndiigbo have a lot of amends to make for the culture to stabilize. The abandonment of handicapped ex-Biafran soldiers at Oji River is something that future generation will revisit and say: “*Tufiakwa*” (abomination). It is not just the substance of helping these men to eke out a living, for they will some day die off – as we all shall – and nothing will happen. It is more about the symbolism that these men fought on the promise that no one should beg. (See Ahiara Declarations ^[20]) Ironically, that is exactly what they have been doing for almost 40 years. To the last fight put up by these men, Ndiigbo should channel funds from memorial events to the establishment of veteran’s village at Oji River. Eventually, it will serve as a center for peace with monuments to martyrs and a cultural center that could be replicated in many communities as Obíigbo.

Far too many communities have had cause to resent the Igbo, from South Africa to Sierra Leone, ^[21] from Lagos to Lafia, and from Calabar to California. Ndiigbo are not really hated by their hosts; they are just not understood. They are therefore envied or feared because what one does not know is always suspect. In building cultural centers in communities where Ndiigbo live and thrive, they encourage those who do not know to copy: *Ụzụ amaghị akpụ ogene lee égbé anya n’òdu*. It is expected that Ndiigbo worldwide will work from all fronts to preserve their corner of safety as do the Jews, the Irish, the Armenians, the Indians, etc. To do so, they must first be safe, stable, and comfortable within those Diaspora communities. As the most populous, single ethnic entity in Africa, Ndiigbo have the resources and the reach.

3.11: Afamefune (Igbo names)

William Shakespeare definitely never heard about the Igbo when he opined that “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Names are a very personal phenomenon as well as popular vehicles through which Igbo generations advance and pass on cultural creeds, linguistic legacy, extensive experiences, reflective religiosity, social sophistication, and tributes to their traditional tenets. Igbo names encapsulate the philosophy of a proud people; they tell stories of life experiences from time immemorial, of human experiences, and of beliefs in the realms beyond the world, the hereafter. ^[22] Therefore, Igbo names must not only be meaningful they must reflect on certain circumstances and experiences of human sojourn on earth or border on the child’s conception, birth, and societal expectations. Igbo names tell stories of happiness, joy, sorrow, death, travels, prospects, potentials, and even belief in the seemingly impossible. Ndiigbo should refocus the sacredness of names, spellings, and meanings.

3.12: **Ọchịchị Obodo** (Town Government)

Ndiigbo in Nigeria should be encouraged to support any political movement that promises a paradigm shift in local governance. Town governments can constitute a functional fourth tier without upsetting the present pseudo-monarchical models (*eze/igwe* institutions) and without contravening current constitutional complex. Based loosely on ancestral principle of “*ebe onye bi ka ọ na-awachi*” — where you live, there you thrive—town governments will work in rural as well as in urban settings. ^[23]

3.13: **Aladimma** (An Igbo Cultural Nation)

No matter what becomes of Nigeria, ECOWAS, or the proposed United States of Africa, Ndiigbo will occupy exclusively their corner of the continent as the largest ethnic group in Africa. Hopefully, Ndiigbo will still be speaking Igbo and exhibiting common cultural traits filtered from generations past. In European Community, nations maintain their national identity, language, religion, sociopolitical setups, even their kings and currencies. The Igbo nation cannot be any different. In Great Britain, the Scots secured political and linguistic independence; ditto the Welsh and the Irish.

The Igbo never wanted secession or separation from Nigeria. In fact, Ndiigbo would have invented Nigeria if Britain had not cobbled together a colonial contraption. They are competitive capitalists; the larger and leveler the play ground, the better. Biafra was forced on Ndiigbo; even at that, it involved other ethnic groups whose independence Ndiigbo did not plan to compromise. It is not necessary to seek textbook autonomy from or within the Nigerian experiment. In fact, the experiment has moved on to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and now to Africa as a whole. The United States of Africa may come on stream in our lifetime, but the idea was mooted exactly 60 years ago.

At the Igbo State Assembly held at Aba on Saturday, June 25, 1949, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who went on to become the father of Nigerian independence said:

The Igbo people have reached a crossroad and it is for us to decide which is the right course to follow. We are confronted with routes leading to diverse goals, but as I see it, there is only one road that I can safely recommend for us to tread, and it is the road to self-determination for the Igbo within the framework of a federated commonwealth of Nigeria and the Cameroons, leading to a United States of Africa. Other roads, in my opinion, are calculated to lead us astray from the path of national self-realization. ^[24]

The best way to self-realize is to institute and promote Igbo natural nationalism. The utopian Nigerian nationalism is romance in the face of reality. After a century of forceful amalgamation of nations inside Nigeria, the component nations still stand and drift apart. No social structure or inherent institution exists to make Nigeria a nation in any living generation. The best case scenario is to build brick by brick a new natural nation within Nigeria with an eye to leading the other nations into a united states of Africa. It is no wonder the map of Aladimma is a mirror of the map of Africa! [See map on page 1/12.]

A natural Igbo nation is desirable and doable, and it will emerge “from fair, sentimental and spiritual reactions of citizens, based on the historical roots, values and right of their nationality.” [25] According to Anthony D. Smith, Professor Emeritus of Nationalism and Ethnicity at the London School of Economics, the following aspects of culture are preconditions for the formation of a nation: [26]

1. A fixed homeland (current or historical),
2. high autonomy,
3. hostile surroundings,
4. memories of battles,
5. sacred centers,
6. languages and scripts,
7. special customs, and
8. historical records and thinking.

The only thing left is the will to take the first collective step, starting with town governments. Once our community councils are in place and at the shortest possible time,

“We can grow good governance, accountability, and transparency. We can replicate the affirmative attributes of Biafra without wars, in a functional federation, without dragging averse or apprehensive minorities, and without disturbing the fundamentals of other neighboring nations.” [27]

Natural nationalism flourishes well under a cultural categorization, a banner of belonging, just as the Yoruba function under Oduduwa, and nations of the North mesh into Arewa vision. Meanwhile, the Middle Belt is caught up in its own cultural dynamics, and the Niger Delta is coalescing with oil. This is an evolution of natural nationalism sustained by common concerns, if not common culture. The Igbo have a common culture, and there are countless common concerns. With the Aladimma banner, Ndiigbo will begin the march to a more peaceful, more progressive, and more practical place on this planet.

4. CONCLUSION

The Igbo built no recent-memory nation that was based on its cultural core and history, a nation that reflected Igbo values and nationality. It is no surprise there is no traditional name for an encompassing Igbo nation... except loosely “Alaigbo” (Igboland), which is a case of resting one’s hand on the knee for lack of a better place. Biafra was not an Igbo nation; it included only Igbo people east of the River Niger and a dozen other major minority nations that are often uncomfortable with, and even suspicious of, Ndiigbo. For the foreseeable future, resurrecting a rebel republic with a big bulk of Biafran riverine (*mbammiri*) minority groups looks bleak. Also, a secessionist state that excludes Anioma Igbo west of the southbound River Niger will be an awful act of tactlessness.

Since 1960, great Igbo sons pop up periodically, mount an unsaddled horse, and ask everyone to follow. Down the road on open Nigerian “nation space” [28] they jump off the horse, are thrown off the horse, or simply ride into the world of selfish, personal aggrandizement. Ndiigbo need to sit down and discuss modalities for the entrenchment of natural nationalism for the realization of a nation that encompasses all contiguous Igbo communities wholly within Nigeria. There is enough room in the Nigerian constitution to accommodate Igbo customary laws, customary government, development strategies, and Igbo security within the borders of present predominantly Igbo-speaking states.

Ohanaeze has gone some way in creating a core for Igbo unity of purpose, but it is still a long way from practicing Igbo democratic-republican doctrine. Simply stated, there is no *oha* (the masses) in Ohanaeze; it does not include the people. Ohanaeze is a club of Igbo elites, regardless of how they emerged. Ohanaeze can champion the proposed town governments and become an umbrella of elected leaders; otherwise, it will remain an elitist (*éze*) entity dictating to the masses without proper popular representation. As with the so-called “traditional rulers,” this setup is anti-Igbo culture.

With a successful and peaceful **Aladimma** nation to call their own, Ndiigbo living outside the boundaries will set up *Obúigbo* (cultural centers) and improve relationship with their hosts. Love does not prosper in the face of poverty and misunderstanding. Ignorance is not incurable but, often, it triggers tragedies. Poverty breeds contempt; or, as my mother put it: *Akpataghịaku na-akpata ntụkwụbaọnu*. Ndiigbo are not hated; they are just not understood. The paper proposes harnessing traditions that bind Igbo communities under the banner of natural nationalism defined by a common culture that neither imposes on others nor stops them from sharing, irrespective of prevailing political arrangement.

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**“Odidiṃma oḍibendi” bu mmadu inwe ihunanya na nsopuru n’ihe gbasara oganiru obodo, igba mbo maka oḍimma obodo, nakwa ihazi ihe ka o ga-adiri ohanaze mmá n’usoro oḍinala n’uju ya niile.*

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