

This study was initiated against the background of a challenge posed by Robin Horton (1995), in which he concluded that despite the enormous output in terms of research and writings in the areas of African religious, previous scholars have not been able to respond adequately to three chief questions focusing on the basic tenets of the religion whose answers are important for a proper understanding of the substance of African Indigenous religion. These questions, according to him, are: What are the focal objects or the key spiritual agencies of African religious thoughts? What are the attitudes of the African worshippers to the spiritual agencies indigenous to their religion? What constitute the fundamental aims of African Indigenous religious life?

Inspired by this challenge, the researcher chose as a topic of exploration, the study of four transitional ceremonies in Igbo Indigenous Religion namely the naming ceremony, the ceremony of taking over of a homestead, a component of Igbo marriage ceremony, and the burial/funeral ceremony. In this regard, two communities, Nri and Ihiala among the Igbo culture area of Anambra State, Nigeria, were chosen for the study.

The Culture Area Methodology (CAM) as well as the Participant Observation Method (POM) was the principal design of the study. A purposive sampling design was used to target four relevant transitional ceremonies in the two communities studied. The snowball sampling technique was adopted in locating and pursuing the critical incidents of interest to the study and in reaching the pertinent people for the study. Three sets of instruments were used for the study: Documentary sources, Observation and Interview instruments.

The major findings show that: Igbo Indigenous Religion is grounded on the Igbo worldview and assumption that attendance to the gods and ancestors of the religion bring good results, while neglect leads to chastisement, bad harvest, physical illness, and various other sanctions on the offenders. Igbo Indigenous Religion is a type of religion in which the Supreme Being is recognized and worshipped alongside other gods, spirits and ancestors. There are multiple goals to Igbo Indigenous Religion; almost all of them this worldly centered. The attitude of Igbo worshippers to the spiritual agencies of their religion is egalitarian, and multi-partial, or rotational in its sensitivity to the respect and worship accorded to the various agencies. Each agency is assumed to count in the economy of the welfare of the people.

The principal findings of the study corroborated Horton's theory of African religion as entailing a quest for achieving of control of events in the current world, and therefore a pragmatic religion. The same is true of Turner's Theory of the symbolic emphasis in African religion, which was also found to be applicable to Igbo Indigenous religious practice. A number of recommendations for further studies were made on the implications of the present study. Among these is that similar studies like the one undertaken in the present research be carried out in other African communities. This will help to test the applicability of the findings of the present study to the nature of indigenous religions in other parts of Africa.