

IGBO WORLD VIEW ON DEATH: THE ROLE OF FUNERAL ARTIST AT THE BURIAL CEREMONY OF AN ADULT IN TRADITIONAL IGBO SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper investigates Igbo world view on death and why funeral artist is often present during funeral ceremony in traditional Igbo society. To this end, the writer uses selected funeral chants from a renowned Igbo funeral dirge chanter, Loolo Chinyerude in Uzochukwu's Mbem Akwamozu to x-ray Igbo world view on death. The writer also conducted oral interview on some Igbo elders to find out why funeral artist features at the burial ceremony. The findings are as follows: Death is not the end of life but a means of transition to the spirit world. In the spirit world, the dead faces the last judgement before Chukwu (the Mighty God). This judgement determines his position in the spirit world. The righteous is given a comfortable place of rest with the ancestors. He rests there for some time before he reincarnates back to the human world as a new born baby to begin his life afresh. The evil and the wicked join the malignant wandering spirits. They have no fixed abode both in the spirit world and in the human world. They are subjected to perpetual suffering. From the oral interview conducted, it was discovered that the role of funeral artist in the funeral ceremony is both consolatory and educational. The artist consoles the bereaved on the great loss and deprivation caused by death. The artist also uses the forum to educate the audience that death is universal and can happen to anybody at any time. The best thing to do is to get prepared for death, live simple, honest and kind life. The artist uses this period to educate the audience because this is the only situation in which the audience is fact to face with realism of death.

Keywords: Death, Funeral, Artist, Bereaved, Transition, Ancestor, Reincarnation

1. INTRODUCTION

Igbo people strongly believe in being their brother's keeper. This is shown by the manner of their greetings. An Igbo man, not only greets his neighbour or any other person, but also spends some time enquiring about the neighbour's family. Igbo people also believe in the reciprocity of norms "aka nri kwọọ aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwọọ aka nri" This means that Igbo people believe in helping one another and any other person in need not minding whether the person is a relation or not. When a member of the family is sick, he is adequately looked after by members of his family. His needs are always provided for. If during this sickness he dies, there is a great outburst of ululation, wailing, sobbing and weeping by members of his family, friends and well wishers. This is because according to Uzochukwu (2001:12) "death is a painful but temporary parting-leaving the world of men for the world of spirits". Death is a rite of passage. In support of this view, Uchendu (1965:11) aligns that: There is the world of man peopled by all created beings, both animate and in animate. The spirit world is the

abode of Chukwu, the creator, the deities, the disembodied and malignant spirits, and the ancestral spirits. It is the future abode of the living after their death.

Uzochukwu (2007:38) affirms that when one dies, he proceeds to the spirit world where he stays for his judgement. This judgement is based on how well the deceased was able to abide by his societal code of conduct and his people's ability to accord him a befitting burial. Again the outburst of ululation, weeping and shedding of tears that accompany the death of the deceased also count in determining his position in the spirit world; as these show how much the deceased is loved by his people.

Caring for the sick in traditional Igbo society does not end at his death. When the sick dies, his corpse is adequately cared for. The corpse is washed and pomade of high quality or 'ufie' camwood is rubbed on the body. He is shaved and dressed in his finest garment. The corpse is taken good care of because according to Osundare (2003:221) "death is regarded as another point in the interminable cycle of existence." In support of this, Adibe (2009:136) affirms that the Igbo people believe in life after death.... For the Igbo life operates in a circle from the dead to the living. The spirit world according to Ifesiaeh (1970:59) maintains that the Igbo people worship the spirits or the ancestors. Adibe (2009:136) has it that these ancestors receive a yearly feast of 'Alom mmuo'. They are daily honoured at meals, pouring of libations at marriage ceremonies and in all family prayer occasions. Arinze further adds that ancestral spirits personated as mmowu appear in public at seasonal periods, festivals and at celebrations of final funeral rites. Though death is believed not to be the end of life, it is never a happy event whenever it occurs. The death of a deceased often brings great deprivation and a great vacuum to his relatives.

2. FUNERAL CEREMONY

Osundare (2003:221) aligns that it is because death is regarded as a point in the interminable cycle of existence that it is accompanied by great ceremonies and elaborate observances. He says: In most cultures of Africa, funeral rites are performed largely to pacify the spirit of the deceased, to convert them from elders to ancestors (if they die) a status of godlike immortality that guarantees an on going interaction between the dead and the living. Arinze (1970:18 - 200) affirms that it is illogicality that the ancestral spirit should be believed to be reborn. Arinze opines that a child is supposed to be born under ancestral particular influence and equally receive part of his vitality and qualities. Thus the ancestral name is renewed in the family and the clan has an added advantage. In Igbo land and in parts of Africa, the ancestors are worshipped, exhorted, and pleaded with as if they are living and listening.

According to Uzochukwu (2001), funeral ceremony is the last ceremony performed to the deceased which marks the separation of the dead from the living. Funeral ceremony comprises of:

2.1 Itu Uli

Itu uli is the funeral rite that marks the separation of the dead from the living. In this ceremony, those associates of the dead when he was alive will present either goat, fowl, money, cloth before the corpse in the presence of the deceased family. They then declare that the deceased should not disturb them and that their association with him has ended.

2.2 Igwa aka

In Nanka in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, this funeral rite symbolizes the dead man's deeds of valour. The family provides a goat a ram to those taking part in the funeral race and war dance. They may be the deceased age grade, the paternal relations or the maternal relations. After some spell of display by the participants, the animal is decapitated with a blow of the machet. This symbolizes the dead man's valour when he was alive and the wish that he continues with this attribute when he reincarnates. In support of this view, Ubesie (1978:223) states that there is 'igwa aka' ceremony in parts of Orumba Local Government Area and other surrounding towns to mark the valour of the deceased. Osundare (2003:222), throwing more light on what reincarnation is, says: "After death, the body decays leaving the soul to roam free and take a new life. Thus an old person dies and re-enters the world in the form of a new born, hence the Yoruba for example have such reincarnational names as Babatunde (father has come again), Yetunde (mother has come again)". Basden (1938:282) states: "men and women come, they stay for a while, they go, they fulfil some purpose in their day and generation, and they pass on to the beyond and later reappear again in this world and so complete the cycle". From

Umeh (1999), when a child is born in Igbo land, the parents consult the diviner to find out which of the deceased relatives reincarnated. When the person is known, the child is called by the name of the reincarnated. In some cases such names are used as pet or praise names for the child. In most cases such names as “Eziogo” (good mother-law) “Nnamdi” (my father is alive) is given and that becomes the child’s name. Uzochukwu (2001:13) says that the belief in reincarnation helps the Igbo man to rationalize and bear any vicissitude, for he may attribute any of his failure to his progenitor. It also gives him a fervent hope that any errors of omission or commission in the present life will be made good in the next cycle.

2.3 Iwanye ihe n’anya

This ceremony like *igwa aka*, portrays the deceased as a brave man and expresses the wish of his people that he continues with this attribute in his next world. Osuagwu (1978:141) has it that in parts of Orlu and Asaba and other parts of Igbo land, the eyes of a dog are plucked out and matched to the eyes of the deceased to show that he was brave during his life and should be brave in his next world. Apart from showing that the deceased was brave, the dog also shows that he had the ability to run fast during his life time.

2.4 Izu ahia

When an adult dies in part of Nnewi and in Idemili Local Government Area of Anambra State, the last market is held in his or her honour. This market is held in front of his house before the deceased is buried. This marks his end of appearance in the market and also the end of his association with the living. The belief in reincarnation is a universal belief amongst Africans. Because of this belief, every living man and woman aspires to live a good life while on earth so that he will have opportunity of re-incarnating. For one to reincarnate, one must die and then join the ancestors. Joining the ancestors is for those who lived good lives in the society during their life time on earth and also for those who had a befitting burial rites during their burial ceremony.

To ensure that the deceased reincarnates, the family members take adequate steps to ensure that they fulfilled all necessary requirements to ensure that the deceased rests with the ancestors. For example, in case of the titled man’s burial ceremony, apart from ‘*itu uli*’, ‘*igwa aka*’ and *iwanye ihe n’anya*’ as explained above (p 3 - 4) his corpse is not exposed for every body to see. Only the titled men are required to see the corpse. He is buried at sun set. These respects count a lot in determining his position in the spirit world.

The funeral ceremony of female adult or a woman is also determined by her age and achievement in life. Her achievement depends on the number of her grown up sons and their ability to perform their mother’s funeral rites as demanded by her people. The activities of the sons determine the burial place of the woman. Normally, the corpse of a married woman is taken back to her people and buried so that she rests with her departed kit and kin, and reincarnates when the time comes. In the light of the above assertion Ogbalu (n.d: 54) aligns: This underworld (*ala mmuo*) is inside rather than above the earth. There, the dead live in families, *umunnas* villages and towns as they lived on earth. They live males and females as they were while on earth. They are able to influence the lives of the relatives on earth for they can bring fortune or misfortune on them, protect them against evil spirits and other dangers. A person is lucky if his father ‘sees’ in the spirit world. The dead have supernatural powers. They can appear before men and vanish at will in broad daylight as ghost or in dreams or visions. The deceased woman is buried with her kit and kin after her sons might have performed series of funeral rites as demanded by her people. Their inability to fulfill them incurs trouble from the spirit of the deceased. This also ensures the deceased ability to rest peacefully with her kit and kin in the spirit world. These days, however, the deceased woman can be buried in her husband’s house after the sons might have fulfilled the demands of their mother’s people.

3. THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL ARTIST AT THE FUNERAL CEREMONY OF THE DECEASED

Role of Igbo funeral artist is three fold, these roles are: First, funeral artist participate in funeral rites which are very significant to the Igbo. They sing dirges, chants and elegies during the occasion.

Secondly the artist consoles the bereaved by reminding them of the mortality of man, death comes to man at any time. The funeral artist also praises the deceased by reminding the family that the deceased lived a useful life and therefore a source of pride to the family. Thirdly, the funeral artist tries to inculcate in the living the knowledge of what constitutes good character. This they do by either making direct appeal to them or by using satire.

The purpose of satire in traditional Igbo society is to punish delinquent by bringing him to ridicule thereby making him change his bad behaviour. The funeral artists all over Africa and in Igbo land in particular are aware of this their important role in the society and so in their performance during funeral ceremony, funeral artist not only dwell on the theme of death but also dwell on other issues that concerns healthy living or good behaviour in the society. The artist uses this opportunity to touch these issues because it is only at this period that people are sober enough to listen to any message given to them about death and good living. It is at this time that people remember that death is inevitable and they too can be victim of death any time. In other words, at this level of the artist's delivery of his message, the audience feel that the artist is speaking about what touches the innermost recess of their hearts. Again, the fusion of emotion and thought is most evident at this period. Uzochukwu (1978:25) has a concrete Igbo example:

Ukwu arurū naabọ nwoke rụwara n'ama:
A nọruo, e were rụọ ji,
A nọrughị, e gwejie ha were n̄aa ọdi n'ama, lasịa
Nwata jemere ije ikpata ego n'orū oyime,
Ozi naabọ ọ ga-ezi ndị nọrọ ya n'ulo
ebuteghị akpati ozu ya, e bute ego ọ rụtara n'orū
(Two heaps of yam-stake bundles a man stores in his compound,
these if he lives, are used as stakes
if he dies, are cut to warm funeral drums,
and people disperse.
Two messages a son leaving home in quest of money
Has for those he leaves at home
His coffin is carried home or
the money he acquired)

During the funeral celebration, which is dominated by sorrow, sobbing and seighing, the audience are transported to a world of thought where they are urged to reflect on the temporary nature of man's earthly existence. Egudu, (1981:253) commenting on the above excerpt says: The occasion on which this piece was performed was a funeral one, which, by its nature is marked by a feeling of sorrow. However, the essence of the poem itself is not to promote the feeling, but rather to compel reflection on the irony and futility of man's struggle for existence.

This shows how man is just a 'pencil' at the hands of death. When death grips man, he struggles but in the end death takes its victim. The quest in each of the above exemplum is for life or a symbol of life; the yams which the farmer in the first was intending to nurse to a point of fruition symbolizes life; and the money which the civil servant in the second is in quest of symbolizes life. In each of these expectations, death becomes an obstacle towards its achievement. Since death is universal phenomenon that occurs when it likes, in parts of Igbo land, the theme of funeral artist's message is universal. It dwells on death and its effect on man. The theme of religion can also be found.

4.0 THE THEMES IN THE IGBO TRADITIONAL FUNERAL ARTIST'S PERFORMANCE

During their performance, the funeral artists dwell on the following themes which are treated under two broad headings, namely: death and religion.

4.1 The Theme of Death

The theme of death: This theme can be treated under three sub-themes. They are as follows: (i) Death as universal phenomenon and a leveler. (ii) In deprivations and yearnings caused by death (iii) condemnation of avaricious acquisition of material wealth.

4.1.1 Death as Universal Phenomenon and as a Leveler

It kills both young and old, rich and poor and all the death are buried inside the ground (grave) of the same depth. Death is inevitable when it determines to come. In Uzochukwu (2007:36) he says:

Onwụ a enweghị ebe o jedemere
Ebe onwụ gburu Nwiizu nwa Ezeriọha, ọ nwụo,
Gbuo nwa Onyekwere, Akpaka, na-eche ọha na ndị mmụo
Gbuo Okoori Ijeoma;
Gbuo Izuagbanyeghi, nwadibia nwaanyi - oo
Onwụ gburu nwadibia nwaanyi
Ngwuru eruchie, obodo akwuru ọhịa – oo
Ekwueme n' Amamputa Uri, ihe ọ luru bu ohu nwaanyi na otu
Ma ya amutaghi ihe kwumara akpu were nwuo
E kee be ya n'aka n'aka-aa
Ihe m jiri lechaa uwa gwuo uwa anya-aa
Arifered nwa Onyemerekwe gbuwara uzọ panya
Ma ọ koweghi iheme akọ - ọọ (Death knows no bounds
For death killed Nwiizu, son of Ezerioha and he died
Killed the son of Onyekwere, Akpaka, who used to rescue others from death
Killed Okori Ijeoma
Killed Izuagbanyeghi, the medicine woman
Death killed the medicine woman
And her compound is now weedy and deserted
Ekwueme of Amamputa Uri, who married twenty-one wives
Was never blessed with a male issue
And his property was shared out
With reason I've observed and winked at the world contemptuously
Alfred, son of Onyemerekwe, started a trading enterprise in Fernando Po
But he never lived to enjoy nthe profits)

In the above excerpt, the artist recounts the names of prominent people in the society who had fallen victim to death; they were powerless to defeat death when it held them. From the excerpt, among such victims are some warrant chiefs who were revered in all the towns around. Then a prominent medicine man and a prominent medicine woman who rescue people from the hands of death and also a prominent merchant prince. In chanter's view, these people represent those who have been successful in their various fields of human endeavour. From the message of the artist, if these people, especially the famous medicine man and a renowned female herbalist could fall victim to death, then death should be regarded as universal phenomenon a natural process that should not bother anybody. It should be regarded as a natural process.

4.1.2 Deprivation and Yearning caused by Death

Normally, the death of a person is never a happy event. It brings sorrow and a great deprivation and an irreparable loss to the members of his/her family. The vacuum created by the exit of the deceased can hardly be filled by any other person, especially in the family. For instance, in Uzochukwu (2007:30) on "Death of a husband" the widow's extreme feeling of deprivation and nostalgia at the loss of her husband is clearly stated. A close look at the chant shows that the husband really loves his wife and cares for her very well. That accounts for her sense of loss for her husband. Her yearnings for him are therefore virtually fathomless.

It is in view of such situation that the funeral artist is invited to come and perform at funeral ceremony of the deceased. The artist being skilled in condolence to the bereaved, is invited to perform the function. The artist does this by exploring the various aspects of the theme of death. Through the artist's messages, the bereaved are meant to realize that they are but one in the helpless condition of humanity and therefore should condition the mind to bear the loss.

4.1.3 Condemnation of Avaricious Acquisition of Wealth

The Igbo people do not condemn acquisition of wealth. They are hard working people who struggle to acquire wealth. What they are opposed to is excessive acquisition of wealth, as shown by the following excerpt from Uzuchukwu, (2007:59)

Nwoke kpatara akụ rụọ ụlọ elu kpochie,
Ọ nwụọ, a ga-etirisi ụlọ elu ahụ na ya rụrụ ya?
“Arurū m ọgụ nwaanyị neeri!”
Ọ bụ onye nwụọ e were otu nwaanyị hanyere ya n’ọnụ ala na ya lụrụ?
Onye sị na ụmụaka ya dị ọgụ naabo na miise
A ga-eji otu nwata kpochi ala, na ya mụtara ha ?
(A wealthy man who owns a locked up storey building,
Will the building be demolished at his death, for he owns its?
I am marrying two hundred wives!”
Will the deceased be buried with one of the wives?
For he married so many?
Who says his children are fifty-five
Will one child be used in his burial rites,
For he fathered so many?)

This excerpt portrays death as a leveller since everybody at death cannot take any of his wealth to his grave. His wealth is left behind for his relations to enjoy. Everybody both rich and poor are buried inside the ground. In this case the chanter is saying that there should be moderate acquisition of wealth such that will enable one solve his or her own problems, help those in need, marry and take adequate care of his family. He should build a moderate house for his family to live in. Marrying so many wives, having so many children and building gigantic building and other inordinate acquisition of wealth is not necessary since at death nobody will take any of these things into his grave.

5 THE ME OF RELIGION: BELIEF IN SUPERNATURAL FORCES

Isichei (1977:24) rightly observes that ‘the Igbo people are deeply religious and all accounts of their life reflect the fact. Igbo people believe in the supreme being, God or Chukwu, who lives in the sky with other lesser spirits. Some of these spirits have no fixed abode since they are super natural forces. The spirit of the dead ancestors and some other spirits live in the spirit world but visit human world in many forms. God also created other deities who help Him in his works. In the hierarchy of deities, Ilogu (1985:37) notes that the supreme being, Chukwu, is followed by four lesser deities who help him in his works. These are ‘anyanwụ’ the sun god, ‘Igwe’ the sky god “amadiọha”, the spirit of thunder and lightening, and ‘ala’ the earth goddess. Ogbalu (n.d: 47) acknowledges that the supreme God is never in conflict with these deities Ogbalu, affirms: The laws of God are the laws of gods and deities, and visitation with punishment or blessing for their transgression fulfillment could be equally applied by them singly or other wise. Because these supernatural forces work together, man’s implicit confidence in them is assured and man’s relationship with the spirit world is maintained through obedience to the society’s code of conduct and respect for one’s custom and tradition.

Basden, (1982:117) rightly observes that “Igbo people hold profound belief in supernatural being and they are conscious of their relationship with the unseen. They attribute every event they cannot understand to the handwork of God or spirit of ancestors.” Igbo people recognize the important role these supernatural forces including ‘chi’, personal god play in their lives. Ilogu (1985:31) also affirms that: To the Igbo, therefore, the spiritual world is very real and intimate, hence the belief in the existence of spirits in all aspects of nature. God is so remote that he allows great minor gods and spirits to intervene in daily affairs of men thereby providing intimate relationship between the seen world of men and the unseen world of the spirits.

This implicit confidence in these supernatural forces make Igbo people offer sacrifices to them. This is done because the Igbo believe that sacrifices have tampering effect on the lives of people and the society. In addition, Igbo people also believe that the spirits, divinities and other created things like trees and animals could intervene in human affairs. This belief had continued to direct and control Igbo man’s action. The Igbo people believe that the power of the super natural forces help to reshape the characters of members of the community. To reflect this Igbo belief, the funeral artists normally in their performance respect this view by invoking the deities, the spirit of ancestors and the supreme God to be with them throughout their performance as follows:

Agwanzu Nwiyiogwugwu, bja rie ekele – oooo
Ogwugwu Oriemmiri, bja rie ekele – oooo
Agwu Nworiebule, bja rie ekele – ooo
Nkwoma na-ahio uzu, bja rie ekele – ooo
Ogwugwu Ihitenansa, bja rie ekele – oooo
Urasị Ihiteowere, bja rie ekele – oooo
Eke Amaruru, bja rie ekele – oiooo
Chukwu Abjama kere m, rikwee ekele – oooo
Olu nwoke m na-emere amara irikwee ekele - oooo
Izugbe abụ izugbe, rikwee ekele – oooo
Ebiere m ala, biere elu, biere nde new m ni (Uzochukwu, 1985:11)
(Agwanzu Nwiyiogwugwu come and receive my greetings
Ogwugwu oriemmiri, come and receive my greetings
Urasị Ihiteowere, come and receive my greetings
Eke Amanruru, come and receive my greetings
God, leader of strangers,
My creator, receive my greetings
The voice of man I'm chanting for, receive my greetings
All and sundry, receive my greetings
I pay homage to land, sky and my masters)

In consonance with the chanter's belief in God and in the local gods and spirits, the chanter invokes them at the beginning of her performance and also asks for both protection and inspiration from them.

6. BELIEF IN ANCESTORS

e belief in ancestors stems from the belief that death is not the end of life. It is a means through which one joins the ancestors in the spirit world for a rest before he reincarnates to continue his life on this human world. Adibe (2009:136) asserts: "It has to be noted that not all the dead are venerated. The ancestors are the ones who lived good lives and died without soiling their names and were equally given appropriate funeral rites".

The family's failure to give the deceased corpse the required attention has a serious repercussion on the family. Taking good care of the corpse is a prelude to a befitting burial rites accorded to the deceased. Being an ancestor in the spirit world is a status of godlike immortality that guarantees an on-going interaction between the dead and the living. The ancestors are worshiped, exhorted and pleaded with.

6.1 Last Judgement

To the Igbo people, when the deceased is buried, he hovers for some time on earth before he proceeds to the spirit world to face the judgement. In the judgement, he is expected to give account of how he lived his life on earth. The judgement will determine his position in the spirit world. The Great God 'Chukwu', the deities and ancestors judge the deceased. In Uzochukwu (2001:21) Loolo chants:

Ozu adighi ka o ha ya
Were gbara osọ bilie n'ihu Chukwu
Jeruo na-ele nga Chukwu na-edede
Uwa ndi Ioje aloje
Onye nne ji nneke ya were jeruo
Were aka naabọ tinye n'akwukwo
Uwa Chukwu na-edede
Chukwu abjama ewere aka ekpe maa ya n'obi
"Ngee ka i jiri lowa uwa gbara otọ?
Bja kpara akwukwo uwa m na-edede?"

Mmadu n'ozikwa n'obodo nna gi ha ahụ
O nwekwara nwaada e kere di be unu?
Bredi rezọ e ji akpu ozu isi
Olee ka i dewere ya?
Uhie na uri eji ala mmuọ
Nyenụ m ha na e ji m ha agwo ogwu
I nyekwanu m nkirika ogodo a wawara gi n'ukwu
O bu na a naghị awawa ozu nkirika
ogodo na ozu lowa
koro m ute e jiri yiwe gi n'onu ala
I were lowa gbara oto
Ngee ka i mere i lowara ije?
(On reaching the spirit world,
the wretched corpse got up, ran to Chukwu
ran to where Chukwu was writing
Names of returning spirits
The only son stood before his maker
Lover Chukwu's book which He was recording
Names of returning spirits
Chukwu slapped his chest with his left hand, say
"Why are you returning naked?
Scattering the list of returnee I am compiling
Is there no living soul in that your fathers town?
Is there no woman married away from?
Razor blade for shaving the corpse hair
Where do you keep it?
Camwood and 'uri' which you
Bring to the spirit world
Give them to me for I'll use them to prepare medicine
You also give me rag that is tied round the waist
Was it not customary to tie it round the waist of corpse on his burial?
What of the mat on which you were laid
And you are returning naked
What offence did you commit?

On the trial of the only son, Chukwu discovers that the only son was innocent and the inability of his relations to give him a befitting burial stems from share wickedness of his relations. For this, Chukwu ordered the only son back to human world to go and enter the womb of any desperate woman looking for a child. There he would be born, taken care of and when he matures for marriage, he dies and returns to his creator. This is then the origin of 'Ogbanje' to this earth. The chant above also explains why relatives take care of their relative's corpse and ensure that he is given a befitting burial. If they fail to take care of the corpse, if they fail to give him proper burial rites, God will punish them. In the case of a successful spirit in his trial, he is given a comfortable place in the spirit world where he rests with the ancestors.

7. Findings, conclusion and recommendations

7.1. Findings

1. Funeral artists perform prominently in Igbo states like Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo but these days they feature in many parts of the country. This is because they are ready to honour the invitation of anybody they know very well.
2. When one is highly disturbed by the death of his dear one, he normally invites the funeral artist to come and console him through his performance.

3. Many people attend burial ceremony partly to pay their last respect to the deceased and partly to watch and hear the performance of funeral artist.
4. Funeral artists do not charge money for their performance rather they rely on the spraying of money on them by members of audience during their performance. At the end of their contract with their host, the host appreciate them by giving them any amount of money he feels like or he can give any other thing to them. They do not charge money because Igbo people believe that one cannot earn money from death because death is not a pleasant experience which can happen to anybody at any time.
5. Most of these funeral artists are petit traders and peasant farmers. At the end of their contract with the bereaved host, they go back to their farm work or to their trading business.
6. The funeral artists are middle aged men and women. There are some amateur funeral artists amongst them.

7.2 Conclusion

Death occurs to all living things all over the world. To Africans death is not the end of life. It is just a means of transition to the spirit world from where man reincarnates back to the human world. This transition to the spirit world is for those who lived righteous life on earth during his lifetime. Despite this belief in reincarnation, death is never a happy event whenever it occurs to the Igbo people and to the entire Africans. Death is accompanied with a great sorrow and deprivation to members of the deceased family. As a result of this, funeral artists feature during the funeral ceremony.

During the artist's performance, her role is both consolation and education. He consoles the bereaved to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude since death is universal and comes when it will. He also educates both the bereaved and the audience by reminding them that since death is universal, excessive acquisition of wealth is not necessary for no one will take any of these to the grave. The best thing is for one to live righteous life, abide by societal established code of conduct which will qualify one for rest with the ancestors in the spirit world and consequently reincarnates when the time comes. The funeral artist also satirizes those who deviate from societal code of conduct and praises those who are abiding by the societal code of conduct. He advices members of the audience on how to live good life; how to make their marriage succeed because it is only through marriage that the lineage can be perpetuated. The funeral artist admonishes those who rejoice at the death of people because no one knows when his own death will come, death is for everybody. The funeral artists also comment on day to day happenings in the society. The funeral artist uses this period to dwell on these social issues because it is at this time that the audience are seeing the realism of death and so understand what death means. It is at this situation that the message of the funeral artist sinks into the minds of the audience. The audience then aspires to live righteous life as this is the only way reincarnation is assured after death.

7.3 Recommendations

In view of the important role funeral artists play at the funeral ceremony in traditional society, the writer makes the following recommendations:

1. That every community in Igbo land should make it mandatory that funeral artists feature during funeral celebration in their community so that both the bereaved and the audience benefit from the message of the performance.
2. Those who invite funeral artist to their funeral ceremony should reasonably appreciate them, the audience should equally appreciate them; this will encourage others who wish to learn the art to do so.
3. The educated member of the society should document the chants of the artists just as Uzochukwu documented Loolo Chinyerude's chants. This will help both students, research fellows and all those who are interested in the promotion of Igbo language and its culture in their studies.
4. Since the funeral chants contain Igbo custom, world view and those things which the society cherish and those things which the society despise, the government should promote the work of funeral artists by inviting them to perform during important government functions.
5. The mass media should video the performance of the funeral artists and display them in both radio and television. This will advertise the activities of funeral artists so that more people will patronize them.

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