



TRADITIONAL BURIAL AND FUNERAL RITUALS IN UMUMBA-NDIAGU: A CONTROVERSY BETWEEN TRADITION AND CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract

The traditional rituals at burial and funerals portray something about a man's inner religious awareness, his vision and his belief about the cosmos. The belief of Umumba-Ndiagu people in ancestral existence is the clearest expression of their faith in life after death. The same belief is also the dynamic hope of the traditional Igbo—that after a successful life on earth, one could be happily gathered with his forefathers in the land of the 'living dead', to continue the interminable cycle of life. This transition from the physical existence to the invisible existence takes place in the land of the ancestors. It is for this reason that the dead is accorded a special ritual before and after burial. Despite this, traditionalists and Christians in Umumba-Ndiagu run into conflicts on the presentation of material and items for funeral rituals. The presentation of certain items, type, quality and quantity differ between traditionalists and Christians. Also, the issue of killing life animal ranging from fowl, goat, cow and used the blood to sprinkled on the eye or body of the corpse before burying the corpse and the shaving of the hair of the close relatives were other major problems affecting burial and funeral rites in Umumba-Ndiagu. The purpose of this is to examine traditional burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu: a controversy between tradition and Christianity. This study adopted qualitative method of data collection. This study used secondary data collected from the review of literatures in textbooks, journal articles, library and the internet. This study adopted method content analysis to analyze the contents. The findings of the study showed that burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu are deeply rooted in Igbo traditional belief and values which many parts are serious opposed by the Christian doctrine. Also, the findings of the study indicated that the people of Umumba-Ndiagu seriously believed that failure to perform all the traditional funeral rituals to send the dead home posed socio-religious consequences such as unidentifiable sickness, spirit haunting, trouble in business, death of livestock, death in very severe situations, seen the spirit of dead person on the road, market and in the farm. The finding also, showed that this beliefs made people of Umumba-Ndiagu to attach much importance to funeral rituals according the demands of the tradition. The study recommends that since tradition of Umumba-Ndiagu and that of Christianity are different belief systems from each other on the issue of burial and funeral rituals, both of them should be practiced differently in the community and avoid clashing with each other.

Keywords: Traditional, burial, funeral, ritual, controversy, Christianity.

Introduction

Life is not permanent on earth and no statistics have proven that someone has been alive on earth since the first man (Adam) till today. This is evidence to proof that man's existence on earth is not permanent. Every human has a short time to spend on earth and pass on to the next life in the spiritual realm. This makes death compulsory, burial and funeral rituals the last respect to the dead person. Kanu (2019: 25-50) observed that burial and funeral rituals are "one of the common things fund to be done to accompany home the dead in the diverse African societies. Igbo people are always seen treating the dead with unreserved respect and an uncommon type of complex rituals. To affirm this assertion, Anyacho (2005) opined that life to an Igbo person is a continuous thing; its cessation on earth paves way for the soul to experience life in the great beyond. In Umumba-Ndiagu tradition, death is a passage to the hereafter and the last thing given to a man at death is funeral



ritual. So, funeral rituals occupy a central position in Umumba-Ndiagu traditional religion. The belief of the Umumba-Ndiagu people in ancestral existence is the clearest expression of their faith

Human being is the only creature known to bury his dead. The practice is not originally motivated by hygienic considerations but by ideas entertained by primitive people concerning human nature and destiny. This is clearly evident from the fact that the disposal of the dead from the earliest times was of a ritual kind. The primitive people not only buried their dead but they provided for them food and other equipment thereby implying a traditional belief that the dead still needed such things in the grave which are not accepted by Christianity.

However, the presence of Christianity and its doctrines have raised issues between the traditions of Umumba-Ndiagu and Christian beliefs over burial and funeral rituals. Agha (2004) opined that over past decades till now, the processes of this traditional funeral ritual have been affected. He said the most serious problem is the issue of presentation of material items for funeral rituals. The presentation of certain items whose type, quality and quantity may differ from case to case is one of the sore points between traditional rite and Christian rites. Also, the most conflict oriented aspects of the traditional burial and funeral ritual is the killing of life animal ranging from fowl, goat to the cow and using the blood to sprinkled on the eye or body of the corpse before buried and the shaving of the hair of the close relatives. These above mentioned issue have between bone of contention between the traditional beliefs and Christianity in Umumba-Ndiagu.

What is Burial?

Burial is defined as a method of final disposition whereby a dead body is placed into the ground, sometimes with objects. This is usually accomplished by excavating a pit or trench, placing the deceased and objects in it, and covering it over. Burial has been used to prevent the odor of decay, to give family members closure and prevent them from witnessing the decomposition of their loved ones, and in many cultures it has been seen as a necessary step for the deceased to enter the afterlife or to give back to the cycle of life. According to Alabi (2007) the responsibility of burying the dead lies not only with the bereaved family but also with the entire members of the community. It is a practice that is still adhered to. A burial is a unique and personal experience that addresses the cultural, religious, and traditional requirements of an individual decedent and/or the individual(s) responsible for planning the traditional burial and funeral.

What is Funeral Rites?

A funeral rite is a ritual observed after burial. It is a ceremony or practices done to accompanied home the person after traditional burial. Kanu (2019; 25-50), opined that funeral ritual is the first part of last rites of passage of man or woman in relation to physical burial or the act of committing a dead person's body or corpse into the mother earth. The funeral rituals constitute the rites of passage and it takes place after traditional burial. The funeral rituals demonstrate the close bond between the visible and the invisible world in an essential religious worldview. Agha (2004) funeral rituals as ways of performing religious acts is in tandem with the beliefs the people. According to Okaba (1999; 264-284) "sending off the deceased in contemporary times seems to be the most elaborate, expensive and highly ritualized of all our social celebrations". In this circumstance, ostentatious funerals have assumed the status of a social narcotic. In the face of this expensive festivities, it has become more costly for an average Nigerian to die than to live.

Preparation for Burial

Wake-Keep: Burial follows an elaborate wake-keep with the dead lying-in-state. While lying-in-state, elderly women and the first daughter keep vigil or watch as they sit on both sides of the bed on which the corpse is laid. The corpse is usually laid in the house of the first wife. In the case of a



man who married more than one wife, the daughter fans the body to protect it from flies. During wake-keep, those who knew him or her very well would re-enact some of his or her activities when he was alive in a dramatic fashion. Those things he or she was known for, for instance, if he or she was a trader, a farmer, a palm wine tapper, a hunter etc. all these would be dramatized just as he did them when he was alive. His character ranging from his manner of speech, jokes, relationship with people and how he lived his life generally will be demonstrated. It takes various forms in different parts of the world because death is a potentially frightening subject and there are many taboos surrounding it. Wake-keep are low-key occasions. Wake-keep is a party or social gathering held in connection with burial and funerals.

It involves keeping watch beside the corpse and behaving in a demonstrative way either by lamenting or merry-making. Wake-keep is a vigil celebrated with merry-making and dancing. It means preventing someone from sleeping, to wake the person up, to disturb the person's slumber and make it impossible for him or her to slip back into it. The merry-making and dancing take place in order to wake the deceased up again. However, waking the dead is carried out mainly for the benefit of the dead themselves in order to restore them to wakefulness. Wake-keep is not merely to give a dead person a good funeral but to keep the dead properly moving in the right direction instead of simply losing consciousness (O'sulleabhain, 1967). In religious terms, it means making sure that the person goes on living in the dimension of being, he or she must now enter into.

In other words, the deceased must be awake among the dead, a state of affairs that is held to be beneficial to the deceased survivors as well. The underlying intention of wake-keep everywhere is to honour the dead person. According to O'sulleabhain (1967) it was an attempt to heal the wound of death and to do final justice to the deceased while he was still physically present. After the burial, the opportunity to do so would be absent. So, the practice is held to be an expression of a straight forward fear of dead and what they are capable of doing to the living?

The thanksgiving and praise and the fear which people normally experience during burials explain the religious ceremonies surrounding death and dying. A determination to play games and invent ways of amusing the mourners seems rather more than out of place in such circumstances. Those who claim to understand such behaviours tend to do so in terms of a reaction against sadness or a celebration of corporate optimism in the face of death i.e. conviviality called upon to reinforce solidarity. According to Toolis (1995) wake-keep is a way of creating a space for irrational grief to be acted out. In the words of Clare (1995) it is an energy and activity used to anaesthetize the bereaved.

Dressing the Corpse: The dead body or corpse will be washed and dressed the second day before burial. This rite is usually performed for both genders by the women or the daughters of the deceased in preparation for the burial. After bathing, the corpse was dressed in the best clothes of the deceased. Some local cosmetics are applied like "nzu", ufie or odo and even powder. He will also be dressed in many beautiful wrappers and a cap. For an ordinary person, he will need two or three ufu eku and a cap. Men who had children will need 12 fathoms: One for the diggers of the grave, one for the dressers of the corpse and one for the children: six will be used for the burial.

Titled men will need more. Having more enhances their socio- economic status so that even in the spirit world, they will continue to dress in a way befitting of titled men.

Digging of the Grave or Tomb: The first son of the dead man must indicate the place where his father is to be buried even if he is still a child. If the child is too small, an adult supports him by holding his hand to the hoe. The first son takes out one or two scoops of sand from the gravesite then the family and friends or volunteers among the kindred help in digging the grave. The grave is usually dug on the day of the burial proper. The grave diggers are given a gallon of palmwine, a live



chicken and some tubers of yam with which they prepare porridge. If the man died a conceivable bad death, such rites cannot be performed for him because tradition forbids that. Instead sacrifices may be made to appease the gods.

Burial or Interment: According to Alabi (2007) the responsibility of burying the dead lies not only with the bereaved family but also with the entire members of the community. It is a practice that is still adhered to. Basically, the traditional burial rites start from when a person dies till a few days after interment. Multiple traditional burial rites are accorded to the dead irrespective of gender and social class. However, these rites are not carried out for the young and unmarried particularly those whose parents are still alive because they are believed to have died abominable death. Though, immediately after committing the dead to mother earth, people will gather, drum and dance in order to give that person honour. After the burial, there will be traditional drumming and dancing, eating and drinking which continue till the next day. This is followed

by the main ceremony. Members of the community including the children, the in-laws, members of the dead person's lineage and other relatives gather for this ceremony. There will be cultural display by various cultural troupes, traditional drumming and dancing. If the dead person's married daughter's bride wealth or dowry had not been paid, the kindred will reject her gifts and subsequently refuse her participation in the ceremony unless that is settled. The affected daughter will bring people to plead on her behalf. After an agreement to pay the dowry on a later day, she will be allowed to continue with the funeral ceremony. This aspect of the ceremony is very intriguing and fascinating.

Reasons for Burial and Funeral Rites

Wolfelt (2018) highlighted the reasons for burial and funeral rituals as follow;

Respect for the physical remains: If left lying on top of the ground, scavengers may eat the corpse, considered disrespectful to the deceased in many (but not all) cultures. In Tibet, sky burials deliberately encourage scavenging of human remains in the interest of returning them to nature, just as within Zoroastrianism, where burial and cremation were often seen as impure (as human remains are polluted, while the earth and fire are sacred) (Wolfelt, 2018).

Reality: When someone we love dies, our minds and hearts rebel against it at first. We don't want to accept that the person we loved is gone. The first purpose of a funeral is to help us accept the reality of the death. In order to heal and grieve, we must first accept what has happened and meaningful funeral, mourners have the chance to confront reality and begin processing their grief. The funeral is not the end of the grief journey – it is the beginning. We must learn to come to grips with our new reality – one without our loved one.

Recall: One of the key components of a funeral is remembering the one who has died. We see this happen in the eulogy, in the tribute video (if there is one), in the songs or readings chosen, as well as in the gathering of friends and family following the service. By recalling and sharing about our relationship with a loved one, we help ourselves transition. We begin the process of moving our relationship with the one who has died to one of memory rather than presence. We must go backward into our memories before we can move forward in our grief journeys.

Support: A third purpose of the funeral is to activate support. At a funeral, we gather with other people who knew our loved one. People can share memories, give voice to others feelings, and find support in others. When a funeral includes a visitation or a gathering, mourners have the opportunity to come together and offer a listening ear and a caring hug. When no service is held, friends may keep their distance, thinking that the family wants to grieve privately. But with a public funeral, friends and neighbors can offer their caring support during a trying time.



Expression: As human beings, we are wired to feel. When one feels deeply but actively suppress in emotions, those feelings can become unbearable and begin to fester. Funerals are meant to act as a safe place for us to get our thoughts and emotions out. By putting our thoughts and feelings into action, we begin the journey toward healing. One may need to talk, cry, or just sit quietly with a person who cares. Whatever one may need, expression is an important purpose of a funeral. Through expression, people begin to put grief in motion and create forward movement in the grief journey.

Meaning: When a well know person dies in a family or in a community, many questions begin to surface. Did the person live a good life? Why did this person die? Why do people die? While there are no simple answers to these questions, a funeral gives us time and opportunity to ask them and begin to find our way to answers that give us peace. By searching for meaning and allowing oneself to find peace, people find purpose in continued living and can work toward reconciling oneself to the loss one have experienced.

Transcendence: The final purpose of a funeral is transcendence. This happens in two ways. First, the funeral helps us find a new self-identity. Funerals help us publicly mark a change in status. For example, someone who has lost their spouse goes from someone who is married to someone who is single. A funeral allows everyone to publicly acknowledge this change and begin offering the mourner support in their new status. Second, funerals often wake us up and make us think about our lives and how we want to spend our remaining days.

Traditional Burial and Funeral Rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu Town

Funeral ritual are the rites of passage. The word rites of passage was coined and first used by the German anthropologist, Gennep far back in 1960. He argues that in simple societies, every change that could be thought of as passage from one state to another was ritualized. Gennep (1960) in his work observes that burial ritual are group of ceremonies carried out in connection to the interment and inhumation of the death. The functional role of rites of passage is important to the individuals, groups and society. Ihechu and Uchechukwu (2018) asserted that the Umumba-Ndiagu people believe that a well done burial ritual would determine the well-being of the deceased in the land of the 'living-dead'. It is often believed that if the burial ritual is not properly done, the dead would be in a state of unrest and cannot partake or mingle with their people in the land of their ancestors. This view is the same with Umumba-Ndiagu people believe that a well done burial ritual would determine the well-being of the deceased in the land of his ancestors; some have it that if the burial rituals are not properly done, the spirit of the deceased would roam the earth, causing havoc and destroying lives and properties of their loved ones. Nwala (1985) concurs with this view, when he asserted that death and burial rituals mark the separation of the physical body from the living and that the dead are viewed as the 'living' that deserves necessary rituals in order to progress to the spirit realm.

In Umumba-Ndiagu tradition, birth rites, puberty rites and death rites are rites of passages which are both obligatory and sacrosanct institutions in the socio-structural framework of Umumba-Ndiagu. Parrinder and Geoffrey (2014) concluded in his work that burial ritual are connected with rites of passage. He identifies two burials; the first and the second or final funeral ritual. This contribution has taken decades and this idea is still relevant to the religious beliefs and practices.

On the other hand, he fails to differentiate between the qualifications of the beneficiaries of the burial and the funeral rituals. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979; 258) point to two important kinds of burial ceremonies for every adult who dies a good death in Umumba-Ndiagu . The first ceremony is the physical burial of the body, while the second burial is intended to make the dead man secure his place in the company of the ancestors. They submit that, "Both burials are characterized by great feasts; singing, drumming, clapping, dancing and general rejoicing". The above depends on the high social status of the deceased man or the relative's financial capability. Madu (2003; 25) wrote on



rites of passage in traditional and modern Igbo society; observed that human life from birth to death is ritually celebrated. He maintains that, "rituals of passage celebrate transition from one phase to the other. It means that one's movement involves separating oneself from the former status and thus transiting into another status". There is substance in articulating man's helplessness in the face of the mysteries surrounding him which is said to be responsible for his dependence on ritual actions.

More still, funeral ritual are the first part of the last rites of separating the dead from the physical life to the ancestral world. Ilogu (1979) pointed out that, after sometime of not performing these rites and rituals for the deceased, the family will start experiencing some difficulties. Such bad visit could result to accident, barrenness, late marriages, hard lucks and premature death. This is often regarded as generational curses because it continues recurring in the family. This view is in tandem with occurrences in Umumba-Ndiagu. Ejizu (1986) remarked that the aims of burial rituals are: "first to absolve the deceased of his transgression and to rid off all obstacles which could impede his entrance into the spirit land. And then pray for the deceased to re-incarnate and bring greater blessing to the family". During the ritual ceremony, the divinities are asked to receive the dead and keep him in peace and also the deceased not to obstruct the family on earth rather to send them more blessings. This shows that death rites and rituals are necessary for the dead to enter into the spirit land. Hence, in Umumba-Ndiagu, funeral rituals are meticulously and purposefully prosecuted to create wealth for the dead in the ancestral world. He remarks that happiness of the dead according to Igbo people's beliefs, depend largely on the type of funeral rituals accorded him during and after death. To go home unhappy person means the wrath of his spirit to the departed family, his spirit would constantly visit the family members to torment them. There is no doubt that the coming of bad spirit is not a healthy visit to the living. He also observes that at burial, the mourners and sympathizers from various clans or ethnic groups gather together, they feast, drink, dance and make new friends or renew their old friendship and induce a relation of crowd behaviour. In this way the individual lose their sense of individualism or separateness and isolation as a result of the inevitable excitement.

Consequently burial rituals and funeral rituals are one important means our fore fathers used to promote good moral behaviour in the society in one hand and enhancing the passage of a deceased into the ancestral world on the other hand. Refusal of any family to perform the traditional rituals for their deceased sometimes result to difficult times like failure in business, lack of promotion in areas of work and poor harvests in agricultural practices. Such family may not locate their problems, rather they accuse their neighbour and relatives as the source of their predicaments. The perspective of Nzomiwu (2012) on the concept of funeral ritual is that the body of the deceased is given a ritual bath, anointed with cam wood, dressed in his or her best regalia and laid in state. The work of Nzomiwu on the concept of funeral ritual is at one with Igbo traditional funeral ritual of passage in a way. In Umumba-Ndiagu, wailing and prayer are essential components of rituals of passage.

Funeral rituals are traditional ceremonies performed on behalf of the deceased by the living relatives during the second funeral ritual. The idea of second burial is to ensure that no ritual element has been left unperformed, so that the danger of misfortune brought about by the displeasure of the deceased may be averted. Basden (1966; 124) in his work affirms that funeral rituals among the Igbo have differing customs and its practice has its own peculiar adaptation. He concludes that "second burial is the name adopted by Europeans, from that time, to all intents and purpose, there are two burials the first real, the second by proxy". He affirmed that funeral rituals among the Igbo people have little differences among communities. From the Basden's idea, there exist the connotation of the fact that prior to the advent of the Europeans, death rituals were not considered as real and proxy rituals in nature, rather, all were expressed as burial and funeral rituals in concurrence nature but not in a day.



The idea of interdependent relationship between the living and ancestral world in Igbo cosmology presents the living-dead as real member of the family in senior partner form. Funeral rituals predicated on this platform seems to nullify the view of European missionaries view which holds that funeral rituals are burial by proxy. However, in Umumba-Ndiagu, the death rites are known by two names. The first is called funeral ritual *ili ozu* while the second is called funeral rituals *Ikwa ozu*. The categorizing of burial and funeral rituals into numerical positions of first and second rites could be the impact of Christianity on Igbo traditional beliefs and practices in relation to burial and funeral rituals as Basden pointed out. Yet, Basden's work failed to outline the qualifications for first burial and the second burial and their importance to Igbo society.

In Umumba-Ndiagu cultural, burial rituals is incomplete without the performance of funeral rituals. Also, in Umumba-Ndiagu, funeral rituals cannot be performed on the day of internment of the corpse. When he said, the date for these ceremonies is fixed by the eldest son or the closest relatives of the deceased in consultation with the members of their kindred *Umunna*. The scholars elaborate on the activities of the four days. In Umumba-Ndiagu culture, funeral rituals began the second day after burial and last four days. During the four days funeral rituals, every woman married in the compound of the deceased and the kindred (*Umuada*) cook food and serve the people at the funeral. goat and fowl will be killed and sprinkle part of the blood on the grave and rest of the blood will be poured in the alter of a shrine that unite the kindred. After cooking portage with the animal, the heart, liver and unique parts of animal and some parts of food will be removed, sacrificed in the grave and the kindred shrine with enchantments.

Burials and Funeral Rituals for Different Classes of Individuals in Umumba- Ndiagu

Burials and funeral rituals for different categories of individuals vary in Igbo land. The old and the young are not buried the same way; the rituals differ. The way a title holder is buried and the way an ordinary man is buried differ. In Igbo land and Umumba- Ndiagu not exempted, when a married woman who is aged or with kids dies, the news is not just announced. First, they take the news of her sickness to her maternal relation, and then return in tears to break the news of her death. It is believed that if it is not done this way, the children would be required to pay an amount of money; they need to know the source of her death. After this is done, the maternal relations would break down in tears for their sister and then proceed to ask the children if they intend to bury her immediately. Their response would then determine the next step to take. If their response is 'Yes', members of her maternal home start making preparation to carry her corpse, although this is no longer done as they only carry the corpse symbolically now, but all their rites must be performed, some of which include wrapper, her drinking pot, basin, kitchen knife and the kitchen seat, etc. An unmarried man is not given respect during his burial. In some places in Igbo land and as well as Umumba- Ndiagu, the corpse is thrown into the evil forest.

Furthermore, when a titled man dies, the corpse is given preferential treatment. They are not permitted to be buried in a communal cemetery; they are buried within the precincts of their own house, with elaborate ceremony. The Ozo title holder is also given a befitting burial, even if the family would have to borrow. Some of the rites that are done for an Ozo title holder include washing the corpse thoroughly with local pomade (*elu aki*), supervision of the corpse by Ozo titled men to confirm that the body was given due preparation, covering the body with black cloth and placing his cap on his head with eagle feather and a red feather and his titled staff put in his hand. In Obimo, the dead Ozo title man's grave is dug into two chambers, one for his corpse and the other for his bed (Solomon-Etefia & Nweya, 2017). When a child dies, the corpse is thrown into the evil forest. Other factors not mentioned determine how a person would be buried and where such a person would be buried.



Burial and Funeral Rituals in Christianity

The Christian Meaning of Death: Biblical testimony reveals the Christian belief that humanity was the only creature made in the image of God, and was also given dominion over other creatures (cf. Gen 1:26-27). The Roman Catholic Church interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original state of holiness and justice. This grace of original holiness was to share in divine life (CCC. 375). This background serves as clue to the Christian understanding of death. In the book of Genesis, we find a narrative of how the first parents of humanity disobeyed God and attracted unto themselves and the rest of humanity the consequences which culminate in death. Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy (cf. Gen 3:1-5, CCC 391). This is simply known as the fall from "original justice" to "original sin" - the universal condemnation due to sin. In the New Testament, there are several passages that announce hope and remedy for this condemnation. Among them are the Pauline lines that speak of victory over death through the merits of Christ's redemptive acts (cf, Rom 5:1.9-21; I Cor 15:57). In summary, the Christian who dies in Christ Jesus is 'away from the body and at home with the Lord' (CCC, 1681). This Christian indoctrination concretely shapes the nature, purpose and proceedings of Christian burial.

Christian Burial Rites: Even though all Christians profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, variations abound in their rites of worship, ceremonies and liturgy. In other words, to articulate a unifying rite for Christian burial would be almost impossible. Hence, this discussion would focus more on burial rites as it is in the Catholic Church - the proto-Church from whom others separated. Generally, Christians bury a deceased member in a consecrated ground. Until recent times, Christians never welcomed cremation of corpse on certain theological (eschatological) grounds. In the modern times, this objection seems to have disappeared. Nevertheless, Christians forbid cremation when it is chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching.

Structure of Christian Burial: The different funeral rituals are in keeping with the situations and traditions of each region. From the past, Christian funerals followed a predictable pattern. The vigil, the funeral Mass, and that rite of committal formed a familiar threefold structure (Turner, 2001:xi). The vigil is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy (OCF, 54). The funeral mass is the central celebration of the Christian community for the deceased (OCF, 128). The rite of committal is the conclusion of the funeral rituals, the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member (OCF, 204). In Catholic liturgy, the funeral celebrations follow* a common order: The greeting of the community, the liturgy of the Word, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and final commendation, final commendation is the last farewell by which the Christian community greets one of its members before his body is brought to its tomb (CCC, 1690). After the burial an entry is to be made in the register of the dead, in accordance with particular law (Can. 1182).

Place of Burial: The funeral of a Christian takes place in the Church (parish) where he/she belongs. However, those in charge of the deceased person's funeral, with the consent of the parish priest, may choose another church (Can. 1177.2). If a parish has its own cemetery, the deceased faithful are to be buried there, unless another cemetery has lawfully been chosen by the deceased person, or by those in charge of that person's burial (Can. 1180.1). The prevalent practice among African Christians is burying the deceased in the family (ancestral) land, after the Holy Mass or Funeral Service has taken place in the Church.

Those Eligible for Christian Funeral Rituals: Catechumens and children whose parents had intended to have them baptism but who died before baptism, may be allowed Church funerals by the local Ordinary (Can. 1183). Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, these



categories of persons are not accorded Christian burial: notorious apostates; heretics and schismatics; those who for anti-Christian motives chose that their bodies be cremated; other manifest sinners to whom a Church funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful. If any doubt occurs, the local Ordinary is to be consulted and his judgment followed (Can. 1184). Christian funeral is arranged in such a manner that it brings honor to the deceased and bestows hope on the mourners (Turner, 2001, p.11).

Controversies between Tradition and Christianity over Burial and Funeral Rituals

In Igbo land especially Umumba-Ndiagu, burials and burial rituals or rites have become a bone of contention in which Christianity plays a major role in changing it. Before, in Igbo traditional society, when a person dies, most especially if he is an influential person in the society, his corpse is traditionally preserved as there were no mortuaries in those days. The body would be wrapped in clothes and mats and laid on sticks in a small hut and this is usually done in an open room. Fire is made and holes are also made on the sides of the wall so as to allow the smoke to penetrate; it is this smoke that envelops the body and then keeps the body dry for as long as one wants. Other methods were also used in preserving corpses in those days like herbs, alcohol and many more but today Christianity has abolished that practice and replace with mortuary.

Before now, it is believed that before a man or a woman is buried, certain rituals have to be made, such as the “Iwa Nkita Anya”, the goat ritual, the cow presentation, mourning, corpse preservation, determining the place for the deceased to be buried. All these rituals have to be performed to ensure that the deceased is properly welcomed by their ancestors but they are forbidden by Christians creating fighting, quarrelling and conflicts between tradition and Christian believers.

It is also stated that in time past, a woman's body is believed not to rest anywhere asides her paternal home. Also, tradition demands that the corpse is only taken symbolically and certain ceremonies are done to ensure she rests in peace. Once all the demands made by her maternal home are met, which include the cow, the goat, the hen and the drinks, she can then be buried. But now, such practice is no longer observed as Christianity believers oppose it and permit that a woman should be buried in her husband's house and that goat, fowls and other animals must be provided for scarifies before she can be buried. In a similar not, when an aged woman or a woman kids dead, the news is keep secret from her maternal relatives. The information that would be sent to the maternal relatives is come that their sister is sick, those that sent to inform the maternal relatives about their sick sister would return home with tears before the news of her death would announced. It is believed that if this tradition is not observed, the children of the woman would pay 'fine', this is so because they need to know the source of her death. After this is done, the maternal relations would break down in tears for their sister and then proceed to ask the children if they intend to bury her immediately; their response would determine the next step to take. If their response is 'Yes', members of her maternal home start making preparation to carry her corpse, although this is no longer done as they only carry the corpse symbolically now, but all their rites are provided, some of which include wrapper, her drinking pot, basin, kitchen knife and the kitchen seat, etc.

Solomon-Etefia & Nweya (2017) opined that in Christian practice widows no longer go through the rigorous cleansing rituals and all the nightmares that come with it. Christianity has abolished this traditional ritual for their widows to their dead husbands. He maintained that the Osu's before now are seen as outcasts and it is believed that their head is not supposed to touch the soil. Before now, the body is hanged with the head half cut underneath with a pot, so that when it decayed, it drops into the pot; then the body can be buried. Today Christianity has changed this and Osu is now being buried the same way others are buried.



Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Since tradition and Christianity have their own faith different from each other on the issue of burial and funeral rituals, both practices should be allowed to co- exist to avoid clash. This will make it possible for people for tradition to observed burial and funeral rituals according to their traditional beliefs without disturbing Christians and Christian should do via- versa.

1. The traditional rulers, priests, scholars and the elderly ones who know Igbo tradition burial and funeral rituals should come together and revive and promote the culture.
2. Families should do the needful to ensure that their 'dead' is buried properly in order to avoid certain misfortunes.
3. The people of Umumba-Ndiagu should be sensitized on the importance of burial rituals and not just see it as a 'ceremony'.
4. The people of Umumba-Ndiagu should embrace Christianity as it will alleviate the people from the bondage of tradition.

Conclusion

This paper investigates traditional burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu: a controversy between tradition and Christianity. It is evident that burial and funeral rituals are important as it serves the purpose of respect to the dead. The tradition and Christianity recognized burial and funeral rituals to the dead person. The issue here is on the practices and beliefs system uphold by them. It is observed from this study that burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu is deeply rooted in Igbo traditional belief and values which many parts are serious opposed by the Christian doctrine. In Umumba-Ndiagu, it is seriously believed that failure to perform all the traditional funeral rituals to send the dead home posed socio-religious consequences such as unidentifiable sickness, spirit haunting, trouble in business, death of livestock, death in very severe situations, seen the spirit of dead person on the road, market and in the farm. It is this beliefs made that them attach much importance to funeral rituals according the demands of the tradition. So, this study concluded that traditional beliefs and Christian believe pertaining to burial and funeral rites are important and cannot be eliminated, but allowed coexist in the community.

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