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IGBO STUDIES REVIEW: A DECADE OF PUBLISHING IGBO SCHOLARSHIP

CHIMA J. KORIEH

When the Igbo Studies Association (ISA) was formed in 1999 at the African Studies Association (ASA) Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the rationale behind its formation was to “promote and encourage research and scholarship on Igbo history, culture, social movements, linguistic, literary and artistic expressions, science and technology; to forge intellectual links, and network with scholars, policy makers, and activists inside and outside Nigeria.”¹ In addition, the Association, as a scholarly organization, seeks to participate actively and collaboratively in continental and global debates with “interested organizations in Nigeria, the U.S.A., and other countries on issues specifically relevant and correlated to Igbo studies; and to work proactively for the promotion of Igbo language with interested organizations and/ or institutions in diverse regions of the world.”²

The mission statement of the Association was set as follows

To promote and encourage scholarship on Igbo history, culture, and society in African studies, as inaugurated and initiated at the African Studies Association (ASA) Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 8, 1999. To forge intellectual links and network with scholars, policy makers, and activists inside and outside Nigeria. To participate actively and collaboratively in continental and global debates with interested organizations in Nigeria, the U.S., and other

¹ See, <https://www.igbostudies.org/pages/about/>

² *Ibid.*

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countries on issues specifically relevant to Igbo studies. To work actively for the promotion of the Igbo language with interested organizations and/or institutions in diverse regions of the world.³

The idea behind the formation of the organization owes much to the late Professor Don Ohadike and a few other Igbo scholars, including Professors Adiele Afigbo, M.J.C Echeruo, among others, and some junior scholars, including myself and Professor Apollos Nwauwa. Professor Ohadike hosted the first meeting of Igbo scholars at Cornell University the previous year before the Philadelphia meeting. When Adiele Afigbo gave the keynote lecture at this meeting, he, like others, raised the critical issue of the state of Igbo Studies and the need to promote and encourage research in the field. The meeting in Philadelphia marked the formal establishment of the Association. From those humble beginnings, the Igbo Studies Association has emerged as a strong voice in promoting all aspects of Igbo Studies in Africa and its diaspora.

This paper, however, is not focused on the association's history but rather on the intellectual contributions of the Association to Igbo scholarship and, more generally, to African studies.

Undoubtedly, the greatest achievement of the Igbo Studies Association is the establishment of the *Igbo Studies Review* in 2013. It was the foresight and tenacity of Professor Apollos Nwauwa, the associations present, and me, drawing on my experience in scholarly publishing, that led to the establishment of the journal. However, it was the generous donation of \$10,000 by Professor Ihechukwu Madubuike that enabled the publication to take off and enabled the association to provide a free copy of the journal to each member.

As editor of the journal, I took the task of providing intellectual leadership to the Board and the production team seriously. We seek to publish scholarships of the highest quality. The *Igbo Studies Review* remains the “flagship intellectual voice for scholars specializing in the history, culture, and social dynamics of the Igbo people.”

Over the past decade of its existence, the journal has published interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary works that push disciplinary boundaries and provide a critical space for original research across multiple fields. It has published critical works that would otherwise not find an outlet in Igbo language and linguistics, as well as in history, literature, politics, economics, and religion. The journal has provided an opportunity to interrogate the Igbo Diaspora and the intersections of tradition and modernity in a globalized world. The journal has been a voice in Intellectual Resistance, publishing works that “challenge colonial narratives and external misrep-

³ Ibid.

resentations, reclaiming contributions from previously neglected African thinkers.”

The *Igbo Studies Review* has made a significant impact on the intellectual and epistemological tradition, serving as a living archive of the "Igbo Intellectual Tradition," exploring how scholars educated in Western systems negotiate the dominance of European thought while centering African knowledge. Recent volumes have highlighted critical issues such as **Digital Identity**: The role of new media in shaping contemporary Igbo selfhood; **Feminist Voices**: Re-evaluating gender fluidity and female agency beyond established literary canons; and **Language Revitalization**: Documenting youth-led efforts to preserve the Igbo language in urban and digital spaces.

Over the following decade, we hope the journal will explore old questions in Igbo studies from new perspectives. Critical to this new quest for understanding the Igbo include questions of Igbo origin and identity. The early history and origins of the Igbo people have been the subject of much speculation. And as Adiele Afigbo noted in 1975, the Igbo, like any group of people are “anxious to discover their origin and reconstruct how they came to be how they are . . . their experiences under colonialism and since Nigeria’s independence have emphasized for them the reality of their group identity which they want to anchor into authenticated history.” The artifacts unearthed at the ancient settlement of Igbo-Ukwu in Igboland provide evidence of the antiquity of a highly developed civilization and of the Igbo's participation in West Africa's long-distance trade, including the Trans-Saharan trade. Their political and social organization before the arrival of the Europeans indicates a highly developed republican and democratic system and ideology that predated “modern” democratic political ideas and philosophy.

The arrival of Europeans on the West African coast fundamentally reshaped Igbo history. Contact began with the Portuguese in the mid-15th century, evolving into a three-century period (1434–1807) during which the Niger coast served as a hub for Portuguese, Dutch, and English traders, with the export of Igbo slaves as the primary focus. Following the 1807 abolition of the slave trade, the economy shifted toward commodities like palm products, timber, and ivory. British involvement intensified in 1849 with the appointment of a consul to the Bight of Biafra to safeguard trade and enforce anti-slavery laws. While Britain secured "protection" treaties with various Delta chiefs, their authority remained limited to the "Oil Rivers" trading ports until the mid-1880s.

Spurred by the Berlin Act of 1885, Britain moved to formalize its control. The United Africa Company aggressively secured inland treaties, while the appointment of a Consul-General at Calabar and the deploy-

ment of district officials signaled the start of a formal British administration in Southern Nigeria.⁴

From 1891 onward, London asserted its authority as both British officials and traders began pushing beyond the coast. The pacification of the region, the British argued, was necessary to eliminate internal slavery and expand palm oil production. The Niger Coast Protectorate became the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria on January 1, 1900. The new protectorate incorporated the territories formerly administered by the Royal Niger Company and the Niger Coast Protectorate. These developments would have important implications for the Igbo as the British began combining aggressive trade with aggressive imperialism. Between 1900 and 1914 (when Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated), there were 21 British military expeditions into Igboland.

The expansion into Igboland met significant local resistance. Generally, the British conquest was difficult and unwelcome, and pockets of isolated resistance persisted throughout British colonial rule in the region. In 1928, for the first time in their history, Igbo men were made to pay tax as subject people.

The trajectories of change were also shaped by developments that emerged from the period of British disengagement from Nigeria. The mid-1950s were particularly significant in this regard as Nigeria entered the era of internal self-rule in 1954. The Lyttelton Constitution of 1954 provided for regional governments (Eastern, Western, and Northern) with wide powers in political and economic affairs. When the Eastern Region gained independence from Britain on October 1, 1960, the government had the opportunity to fully implement its economic policy and ideology. The new elite, under the pragmatic leadership of the Eastern Region's premier, Dr. M. I. Okpara, rejected the colonial political order but inevitably accepted the economic order bequeathed by the British. Agriculture was perceived as the source of economic development.

The Nigerian Republic once embodied the profound aspirations of the Igbo people, who arguably invested more in the nation's foundation than any other ethnic group. However, by 1966, the federation had spiraled into a political crisis, culminating in a 1967 civil war between the predominantly Igbo Eastern Region and the rest of the country. While the chronic failures of the Nigerian state have been famously chronicled by authors like Chinua Achebe, Karl Maier, and Wole Soyinka, no event proved more destabilizing than the Nigeria-Biafra War. Lasting until 1970, the conflict subjected Igbo society to unprecedented trauma, including systematic

⁴ See, for example, Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo and Europeans: The genesis of a relationship--to 1906* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973).

violence that eclipsed previous pogroms. Ultimately, the Igbo experience serves as a stark testament to the horrors of ethnic politics and colonial legacies, yet it also highlights a remarkable capacity for perseverance in the face of near-total extermination. Despite its significance, a single, comprehensive text encompassing the entire Igbo historical experience during this era remains unwritten.

I have provided the above historical overview to Aquent to help the reader understand the important background linking the Igbo to the broader history of Nigeria under British rule, and how the end of colonialism and the political crisis of the post-independence period not only shaped contemporary Igbo identity and its relationship to the federation of Nigeria. So, a critical area of focus is the place of the Igbo in contemporary Nigeria, the historical roots of the perceived marginalization of the Igbo, and Igbo inter- and intra-ethnic relations.

Most history texts currently available to Nigerian students gloss over this history. The journal, as well as Igbo scholars, should address these inadequacies. While most people have heard of the Igbo and the colonial experience, they have yet to read about the recent experiences. The general population and students have little inkling of the many ways that the Igbo have contributed to the development of major global and local events.

New scholarship should focus not only on the development of Igbo civilization and institutions, but more importantly, on the impact of the Igbo on the development of human civilization. Attention would also be given to external interactions, for example, the Atlantic slave trade, missionary and colonial experiences in the 20th century, and the development that followed. The rest of the world has much to learn about the nature of the Igbo indigenous democratic political institution and the gender dynamics of Igbo society. A critical analysis of the role of women in Igbo history and the family should go beyond the *Umuada* as powerful entities and the gender complementarity within the Igbo social system.

Discourses on the Nigeria-Biafra War and its centrality in the history of modern Nigeria have been lacking. The Rwandan and Darfur genocides in Africa, as was the case with the Armenian and Kosovan genocides, all reflect the historical conflagration of human bestiality and resonate with the Nazi trivialization of Jewish personhood. However, unlike the Jews and the Armenians, the Rwandan and Darfur genocides, the Igbo genocide has been neglected by scholars, activists, and community leaders. The reluctance or indifference to a systematic study and documentation of the Igbo experience in Nigeria stems from the attempt to subvert a focus on the Igbo Genocide, in which more than one million Igbos were slaughtered in a genocide fomented, orchestrated, executed, and supervised by the Nigerian state. Igbo scholarship needs to "put a face" on the

Igbo experience, centralize the discourse and public memory of the Biafra war experience, and update and reconstruct the Nigerian past.

The Igbo Studies Review acknowledged and recognized the Association's past leadership and members for their enduring contributions.

READING CHINUA ACHEBE'S ARROW OF GOD AS IGBO SPECULATIVE FICTION

ADA UZOAMAKA AZODO

Abstract

The second quarter of the twenty-first century, moving forward towards a viable African future repositioned on its traditional foundations, calls for a speculative approach in African literature discourse. It is time to forage into African cosmology in the quest for progress towards a desirable African future, as advanced technological knowledge impacts social media, literature, science, culture, the economy, politics, value systems, and more. Generally speaking, speculation fiction genre goes beyond realism to include aspects of science fiction (Sc-fi), the supernatural, imaginary, fantasy, futurism, and more. Rereading Arrow of God with a speculative lens Chinua Achebe's this third canonical novel of The African Trilogy, Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, and Arrow of God, on the Igbo world can unearth usable materials for continually rebuilding a robust and plausible Igbo future. Because authorial license allowed Achebe less than a rigid adherence to how he depicted people, places, and events, his literary imagination profited from this to challenge the boundaries of the human and divine, real and surreal, and possible and unknown universes. These are the domain of the speculation fiction genre. Arrow of God won the ever-given Jock Campbell Statesman Prize for African Writing! In 2022, Arrow of God was selected as one of 70 books on the "Big Jubilee Read List" to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth 11! A few questions come to mind in this forage into Arrow of God as speculation fiction. First, what was the power dynamics in the Umuaro community? Second, how did the people exert power in deciding their god Ulu's actual wish for their community over above their Chief Priest Ezeulu's dictates? Third, what were the traditional rituals and rites inherent in the Igbo natural and supernatural worlds in Arrow of God? There are only some of the many questions that this exercise in literary criticism shall seek to answer in reading Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God as Igbo speculative fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

African cosmology offers deep insights into human presence in the realms of existence; the essences of family, community, and the interconnectedness of all creatures, both living and non-living, the ancestors, and rites and rituals that call for respect and tolerance for everything in nature and the supernatural. Igbo culture is, of course, implicated in this general definition of African values and worldview. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu defines African Cosmology answering his question by saying that “it is simply the way Africans perceive, conceive and contemplate their universe; the lens through which they see reality, which affects their value systems and attitudinal orientations; it is the African’s search for the meaning of life, and an unconscious but natural tendency to arrive at a unifying base that constitutes a frame of meaning often viewed as *terminus a quo* (origin), and as *terminus ad quem* (end). This cosmology is the underlying thought link that holds together the African value system, philosophy of life, social conduct, morality, folklore, myths, rites, rituals, norms, rules, ideas, cognitive mappings, and theologies.”¹

Igbo cosmology includes the belief that our world, or the universe, has evolved over the ages to the one we live in now and will continue to evolve, as cosmic evolution is ongoing. A pantheon of higher and lesser deities, with Chukwu or Chineke at the highest point of the spiritual realm, controls this cosmos and the spiritual realm of spirits (*ndi nmo*), ancestors (*ndi ichie*), and gods (*ndi alusi* or *umu agbala*). This knowledge has given strength to the saying that the Igbo person is deeply religious, given that he or she is constantly in negotiation with the universe, the cosmos, from cooking meals in the kitchen all the way to conception and child-birth, working on the farms, and more. It is a question of balance and duality, natural and supernatural worlds, seen and unseen or parallel universes, and of masculine and feminine forces. In one word, everything is interconnected in the Igbo (read African) universe, or cosmos, including spirit beings, animate human beings and animal beings, and inanimate beings such as rocks and sand. Furthermore, the rich and complex Igbo cosmology centers on the concepts of ‘Chi’ and ‘Eke’.² Chi, often taken to mean one’s personal god (*Omye kwe chi ya ekwe*), animates an Igbo person’s universe, is her or his destiny as it unfurls throughout the days of one’s life. *Eke* complements *Chi* by assigning to each individual, at birth and at death, an inherent individuality inherent in his or her destiny, thus clearly demonstrating the notion of duality in Igbo cosmogony.

But how does one explain the story arc of *Arrow of God*, including why the Chief High Priest of Ulu, Ezeulu, refused to be warrant chief, leading to the disruption of the calendar of the community? Was it because of a personal or human failure (hubris) of pride and arrogance that he refused to begin the New Yam Festival after he observed the moon, leading to failed harvest, famine in the land, the people's revolution against him, and his ultimate demise in office? No man alone can fight a community of humans and spirits and win, the novel tells us. It was unfortunate that Ezeulu was resisting the incursion of a foreign power into his domain, but that was immaterial to the justification of his downfall, according to the Igbo World View. Achebe had mentioned in the "Preface" to the Second edition of this novel, his third, *The African Trilogy*, that it was the only one that he revised to restructure certain elements, mentioning his fascination with Ezeulu's destiny, the best of the land that became a victim in his community that subsequently rejected him, adding that it was the one he would always be caught rereading.

Whenever people have asked me which among my novels is my favorite, I have always evaded a direct answer, being strongly of the mind that in sheer invidiousness that question is fully comparable to asking a man to list his children in the order in which he loves them. A paterfamilias worth his salt will, if he must, speak about the peculiar attractiveness of each child.

For *Arrow of God*, that peculiar quality may lie in the fact that it is the novel which I am most likely to be caught sitting down to read again. On account of that, I have also become aware of certain structural weaknesses in it which I now take the opportunity of a new edition to improve. (*Arrow of God*, 165).

Furthermore, reacting to international criticisms of African literature, Achebe states in his essay, "Where Angels Fear to Tread": "no man can understand another whose language he does not speak (and 'language' here does not mean simply words, but a man's entire worldview.)³ Then, Achebe distinguished between the entirely negative "hostile" critic, the entirely positive, "amazed" critic, and the "conscious critic," those who seek a balance. John Updike, an American writer, was surprised by Achebe's ending to his novel and stated that few Western writers would have contrived such a downfall of the hero. Achebe responded, reportedly, saying human subjects are also beholden to non-human forces in the unaverse, meaning that communalism was the bedrock of the Igbo political

system, and so it was an anomaly not often seen in African literature for the hero to be individualistic.⁴

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Speculative fiction as a supergenre, its history in literature, how it is viewed today, and its import in literary discourse for moving our world forward are all important subtopics to explore. Collins English dictionary describes speculative fiction simply as: “a broad literary genre encompassing any fiction with supernatural, fantastical, or futuristic elements.”⁵ Cambridge Dictionary describes speculative fiction as “stories set in a world that is different from the one we live in, or that deals with magical or imagined future events.”⁶

Beyond these simple definitions, the term speculative fiction is a super-genre because it encompasses a large number of sub-genres of science fiction: Science fiction; Sci-fi fantasy fiction; Supernatural fiction; Space opera fiction; Urban fantasy fiction; Utopian fiction; Dystopian fiction; Apocalyptic fiction; Post-apocalyptic fiction; Alternate history fiction; and Superhero fiction.⁷ The common denominator of this multiplicity of sub-genres is that they all have elements of the uncanny, mysterious, or supernatural, which turn reality on its head as the writer employs his or her imagination to bring up conjectures that totally reshape the outcome of events. It is common knowledge that although it had been in existence in literature writing for centuries. In the olden days, as Euripides attempted to present an alternative to the real truth, he explored how a Shaman woman resorted to infanticide and killed her own children in *Medea* rather than wait for the Corinthians to kill them. See *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, a similar story, in which out of love that passes human understanding, a slave woman killed her four children, to stop them being taken away from her into slavery, too, just like she was and suffered greatly. In William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, an AI summary puts it thus: “(...) is a comedy play written in about 1595 or 1596. Set in ancient Athens, the story weaves together multiple plots surrounding the wedding of Duke Theseus and Amazon Queen Hippolyta. Four young Athenian lovers become entangled in romantic confusion, while amateur actors rehearse a play for the wedding celebration. When both groups wander into an enchanted forest, mischievous fairies manipulate their affairs with magical potions, creating chaos under the moonlight as the fairy king and queen pursue their own domestic quarrel.” Hence, in this classic Shakespearean play, characters move as they like in woodlands and fairyland

without hindrance from anything or anybody. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the writer does not believe at all in the existence of other worldly beings in the world we know. In 1947, American multiple Science fiction writer, Robert Heinlein, differentiated between science fiction, in which he was immersed, from speculation fiction that had nothing to do with hard core science and its impact on societies of the world first.

Although speculative stories have been present since time immemorial, as mentioned above, the term speculative fiction was coined as a literary term by a science-fiction (Sci-Fi) author, Robert Heinlein, in 1947, and since then, speculative fiction has become more often termed "what if" books. Heinlein has been credited with many quotes arising from his numerous publications testifying to his speculative bent in Sc-fi: One, "I wasn't impressed. As it says in Bible, God fights on side of heaviest artillery" (*The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*); Two, "The noblest fate that a man can endure is to place his own mortal body between his loved home and the war's desolation" (*Starship Troopers*); Three, "Man is so built that he cannot imagine his own death. This leads to endless invention of religions." (*Stranger in a Strange Land*), and Four, "Never attempt to teach a pig to sing; it wastes your time and annoys the pig." (*Time enough for Love*). Some scholars and authors talk about so-called 'soft' and 'hard' speculative stories, stories of what could actually happen, without being teleported, while others are stories focusing on the impossible, as Margaret Atwood, for example, intimated in her 2011 work, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. For Atwood, speculative fiction is realism: a story that "could happen but hasn't yet [happened]" (p. 7), meaning it can depict alternative futures. On the other hand, science fiction dwells on stories of romance or "fantasy [that] could not happen." Generally, Wikipedia terms speculative fiction a broad, "umbrella" term that explores imaginatively hypothetical and supernatural elements that tend to ask the question "what if" and to field alternatives to the commonly perceived reality. Such genres include alternative fantasy, history, science fiction, horror, superhero, or dystopian narratives focusing on the (im)possibilities of things or things that could happen but really have not happened. Therefore, the significance of speculative stories is that they make us speculate about life beyond the world we know as reality as we investigate society, the universe, and humanity.

However, since the twenty-first century, the genre of speculative fiction has expanded as newer fiction writers seek to explain what they do. Margaret Atwood, for example, largely seen as a feminist dystopian writer, speculated on a world in which women who refused to be mothers

and wives could be brought back home to marry and bear children. What would it take to make them return to tradition?" So, in the world of *The Handmaid's Tale* in Gilead, the feminist author speculated that they could be turned into reproductive slaves and allocated to upper-class families essentially to bear and rear children. Nnedi Okorafor, for her part, has even widened the genre with African input in her AfricanFuturism and AfricanJujuisim approaches in which complex, spirit, and spatial female beings fight western-type masculinist beings in search of a more equitable, fair, and just world. Nnedi Okorafor's contribution is a *Complete Binti Trilogy*: "a novella that explores themes of identity, culture, and xenophobia through the protagonist's journey. The story is set in a technologically advanced universe and explores the complexities of AfricanFuturism, integrating African cultural elements with futuristic narratives. Binti, a Himba woman (of indigenous Namibia), embarks on a transformative journey to Oomza University, an intergalactic institution, where she faces challenges related to her identity and the prejudices of different cultures. The novella is celebrated for its character-driven narrative and its exploration of post-colonialism and intersectionality, making it a significant work in the genre of speculative fiction" (see References).

Today, writers and authors tend to see speculative fiction as more fantasy than realism. Sebastien Doubinsky engages with the implications of speculative fiction in his writings on the genre, as well as on genre and gender in literature.⁸ In Diana Wagonner's 1978 book, *The Hills of Faraway: A Guide to Fantasy*,⁹ she describes "supernatural and/or nonexistent phenomena (such as the future) as a special class of objectively real things or events." (p. 9). Judith Josephine Grossman, with pen name Judith Merrill, editor, science fiction writer, short story writer and magazine editor, added a lot that promoted the speculative fiction genre, observing and stating that speculative fiction "makes use of fantastic and inventive elements to comment on, or speculate about society, humanity, life, the cosmos, reality [a]nd any other topics under the general heading of philosophy." (see "Introduction," "Shifting the Frame: Re-imagining Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* & *Arrow of God* as Speculative Narratives," Published online by Cambridge University Press: 07 October 2022: p. 3, In *Speculative Fiction and Science Fiction, African Literature Today*, # 39).

Hence, Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* have been observed by some critics to include elements of the supernatural, the mystical, and the magical worlds found in speculative stories. Included in the speculations in the novel *Arrow of God* are broken societies, such as the six villages of Umuaro; the collapse of the community; the presence of

spirits and other supernatural elements; and initiation rites and rituals. The title of the novel, *Arrow of God*, symbolizes the chief protagonist, Ezeulu of Ulu kingdom (Ulu being an Igbo word for antidote). Ezeulu's hubris turned out to be his grab of power, when he was only the servant of the master, Ulu. As Achebe explained it in the novel, *Arrow of God*: "The man who carries a deity is not a king. He is there to perform his god's ritual and carry sacrifice to him." From that angle of vision, *Arrow of God* is a speculative fiction different and apart from regular, traditional reading of the work as colonial/postcolonial of tragic colonial power in Igboland literature gone awry. Its illustrious author changed the real history of *The History of Umuchu* into speculative fiction, and then measured the outcome of events thereafter. Immersed in the natural and supernatural worlds, *Arrow of God* after the debacle with the British colonizers and their exertion of power on the indigenous Chief priest of Ulu transforms into a power tussle between the powerful Chief Priest himself and his people who believe they are armed with the power of their god against the high priest when he chooses to abandon them, an abandonment that led to great famine in the land. Then, Obika, somewhat a clone of his father, dies mysteriously. What killed Obika? Was it the power of the spirits, their intervention in the human world, a sort of condemnation of the Chief Priest and his stance about the order of the world in their environment? Supernatural elements and intervention of unnatural elements in natural reality mirror the domain of speculative fiction in *Arrow of God*. Cogent questions that the author of *Arrow of God* asks in his novel are the following: What if the British had not come? What if Ezeulu of Ulu had not been in conflict with the British power and, simultaneously, with his rivals, the other indigenous chiefs of Umuro? What if Ezeulu (Chief Igwegbe, OmenụkọAkụ, of historical document) had not been appointed the paramount chief? What if Ezeulu went along with the British District Officer (D.O) and the British rules of mandate? The History of Ulu would have been different.

After a long delay of upwards of thirty years, finally, Chinua Achebe conceded that he borrowed from Umuchu oral history to write his novel, *Arrow of God*:

The only thing I want to say is that the reliance on oral history is something which we have to do. I believe that we have to rely a lot on oral history.... The whole thing is not a secret. I had already told people about this event which happened in this village. I had heard about it on radio and had given a fairly full account of this. There was a pro-

gramme which had been done by one of our best producers in those days called Chijioke Abagwe, in which someone was being interviewed who turned out to be Nnolim's uncle about his village and the story of this chief who was imprisoned by the D.O. came out in the interview. This was in the fifties. I was so fascinated by this story that I got Abagwe to locate this man again and again we went to his place and he told me a lot more about the incident. Not only that, we even went to his village in order to have a feel of this place. That's the indebtedness to Nnolim's uncle. I have used such things before, and I will use them again." (*Commonwealth*: 13.1, Autumn, 1990, 121-122).

Charles Nnolim, in his essay, "A Source for Arrow of God," published in *Research in African Literatures* (Volume 8, No. 1, Spring 1977),¹⁰ accused Achebe of borrowing from him without acknowledgment of his source. Later, Ignatius Ajuru, in his article, "A Source for Arrow of God: Matters Arising, Charles Nnolim"¹¹, analyzed the piece in-depth. One question Olatunbosun Taofeek had for Charles Nnolim after reading the accounts of the source of the novel was: "When does a pamphlet become a book?" And was the history of Umuchu only for the Nnolim's (sic)? Taofeek continues:

For the above questions, I might need to state that "literary ability is divorced from devotion to fact. Fact is the premise of history, while creative imagination is the premise of Literature." Furthermore, "literary imagination is an important key to the process by which the texts about reality are created, including the retrieval of past events since its creative play is mainly the source of our knowledge..." So, the retrieval of the history of Umuchu by Achebe may not be considered as stealing but creative representation. If this is stealing, then all writers are thieves because nobody owns the monopoly of a particular history or ideas in this world. For the idea on the mind of one person also rings in the thoughts of thousand persons. The treatment of the idea and how it is structured is what brings fresh and interesting interpretations to the old material."¹²

TRADITIONAL READING VS. SPECULATIVE READING OF ARROW OF GOD

Arrow of God as Igbo Traditional Fiction: This novel was mostly read as a sordid encounter between the colonizing imperial power and the Igbo kingdom that was irrevocably damaged by the vicissitudes of history,

never to return to its original self. We believe that a consistent reading of this novel as speculative fiction can lead to the recovery of the everlasting and eternal Igboland before the arrival of the British colonizing power. After that, we might be inclined to ask whether the effort is even worth it.

Published in 1964 as a historical novel of the Nigeria of the 1920s, the principal protagonist, Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu and the six villages of Umuaro struggles against the invading colonial British rule, amidst internal strife with his own community. Hence, the novel is at once a conflict between tradition and modernity, and also ego and power. The conflict is centered between Ezeulu's duty to obey tradition and the British alternative 'music' through the three arms of the executive administration. The British administrator wants to convert him to a Warrant Chief to serve their own ends. He refuses, and they imprison him. When he returns from prison, when the New Yam Festival could not begin until he sees the moon and declares the festival open. He refuses to carry out his duty that day, making the community starve due to famine. His arrogance isolates him from his people and the British administration, making him out as "something of a public enemy" (*Arrow of God* 393). All this just when he believed that he was the 'arrow of Ulu,' his god and that he was executing the will of Ulu and therefore of his community and people. Ezeulu fails and loses his mind in the ensuing confusion; he was neither with the British nor, worse, with his own people. As an Igbo proverb puts it, you can never be bigger than your community, no matter how big you become. It is a tragic end and a complex situation that goes beyond the mere post-colonial interpretation of the themes of the impact of Christianity in the African rural environment, the nuances of power, cultural transition, and the danger of personal pride, leading to the destruction of one Igbo community through internal division. Achebe recreates the tragedy of a most just man becoming inadvertently a victim in a tirade of wise sayings: "It seemed so much easier to deal with an old quarrel than a new, unprecedented incident."

His (Ezeulu of Ulu's) quarrel with the white man was insignificant beside the matter he must settle with his own people. [...] no one came near enough to him to see his anguish, and if they had seen it, they would not have understood.

Arrow of God as Igbo Speculative Fiction: Observe that the flouncy title of the novel is nothing more than a symbolic description of the principal protagonist, Ezeulu, as the "arrow" of the god he serves, the deity Ulu.

Ezeulu thereafter sees himself as half man and half spirit. Ezeulu conveys his pride and obstinacy through an interpreter to Mr. Clarke: "Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief, except Ulu" (*Arrow of God*, 352). According to an Igbo proverb, a person or an event represents the will of God. So, Captain Winterbottom throws Ezeulu into prison for thirty-two days, that was eight eke weeks total, for refusing to condone British indirect rule system of administration that wanted to make him a warrant, paramount chief beholden to the foreign power on his soil, thereby setting off a chain of events that resulted into the vicissitudes of history that culminated into the fictional representation we now know as the novel *Arrow of God*. The headstrong Chief Ezeulu, rather than feel relief at his regained freedom, turns into a 'mockingbird' of the British colonial presence, saying: "I prefer to deal with a man who throws up a stone and puts his head to receive it, not one who shouts for a fight but when it comes he trembles and passes premature shit" (*Arrow of God*, 358).

Furthermore, Ezeulu realizes that his more formidable enemies are really the factious elders of the six-nation Umuaro, which they all belong to, led by his archrival and enemy, Nwaka. And Ezeulu made up his mind to fight them. He had had a vision of these elders in the presence of his own grandfather merged into himself was shouted down and spat upon by the irritated elders because he had not called the festival after observing the moon (*Arrow of God*, 337). Ezeulu then stated: "Let the white man detain him not for one day but one year so that his deity, not seeing him in his place, would ask Umuaro questions." Mr. John Jaja Goodcountry profits from the internal strife between Ezeulu and the other chiefs in his six-village Umuaro to proselytize and draw adherents to his church. In order to arrest the famine that had gripped the land, he moved to salvage the unharvested yams rotting away in the soil. Furthermore, Obika, Ezeulu's first son, dies mysteriously during an innocuous traditional ceremony of Ogbazuluobodo when the ayaka masquerade runs the length and breadth of the village, liberally with the speed of lightning, if he is indeed good at the art of it (*Arrow of God*, 410). Was that a sign that the god Ulu was angry as well with the Chief Priest, as the community thought? Obika had departed as a mighty warrior, despite running a fever, sure of his mettle and "leaving potent words (of valor) in the air behind:

The fly that struts around a mound of excrement wastes his time; the mound will always be greater than the fly. The thing that beats the drum of ngwesi is inside the ground. Darkness is so great it gives horns to a dog. He who builds a homestead before another can boast more broken pots. It is ofo that

gives rain-water power to cut dry earth. The man who walks ahead of his fellows spots spirits on the way. Bat said he knew his ugliness and chose to fly by night. When the air is fouled by a man on top of a palm tree the fly is confused. An ill-fated man drinks water and it catches in his teeth. Even while the people are still talking about the man Rat bit to death Lizard takes money to have his teeth filed. He who sees an old hag squatting should leave her alone; who knows how she breathes? White ant chews igbegulu because it is lying on the ground; let him climb the palm tree and chew. He who will swallow udala seeds must consider the size of his anus. The fly that has no one to advise him follows the coffin into the ground. When a handshake passes the elbow it becomes another thing. The sleep that lasts from one market day to another has become death. The man who likes the meat of the funeral ram, why does he recover when sickness visits him? The mighty tree falls and the little birds scatter in the bush. The bird which hops off the ground and lands on an anthill may not know it, but is still on the ground. A common snake which a man sees all lone may become a python in his eyes. The very Thing which kills Mother Rat is always there to make sure that its young ones never open their eyes. The boy who persists in asking what happened to father before he has enough strength to avenge him is asking for his father's fate. The man who belittles the sickness which Monkey has suffered should ask to see the eyes which his nurse got from blowing the sick fire. When death wants to take a little dog it prevents it from smelling even excrement. (Arrow of God, 408-409).

Even the Christian Bible, which author Chinua Achebe was also as very conversant with as he was with Igbo folklore and traditions, given his background as the son of a convert and evangelist under colonial rule, tells us in Exodus 33: 20 that God has mysterious ways of appearing to humans to flaunt and demonstrate His power: "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." In another instance in the Bible, Hebrews 1:1, God's presence was mediated, for he spoke to humans through the prophets. In Igbo theophany, Chukwu or Chineke has never been visible to humans either. But his presence is acknowledged through signs in nature: wind, water, and fire. He does not act but through lesser gods represented in various symbolic ways, such as stone, wood, and more. These gods themselves in the Igbo pantheon are visible through the priests and priestesses who carry out their wishes.

The big question, then, is how one must interpret the relevance of Ezeulu from the perspective of Igbo speculative fiction. It is noteworthy that he describes himself, an 'Arrow' in the Bow 'of' his 'God,' Ulu. And he was unflinching about refusal to bow to any other god, least of all a

foreign god. Is he a divine will designed to hit a particular target, the British colonial presence in his time, or perhaps the cynical people of his community of Umuaro, who once accepted him as Chief Priest of Ulu but have now abandoned him? Second, is he meant to be divine noble warrior to hit and scatter the enemies of the Igbo nation and save it from the evil machinations of a conquering foreign presence? After all, he was bewildered and, in spite of himself, sent his son, Oduche, to learn the ways of those people. In time, it would be clear whether they were bad or good ways. He was almost sure that survival in the future, going forward after the encounter, would require knowledge of the foreign culture that wins a war without being right. His Igbo people would not fight an unjust war, a battle for which they would be faulted. Third, was he divine retribution, and the manifest 'arrow of famine' against the complicit and cynical Mbanovillagers in the decimation of their own people? These are various ways to see Ezeulu as the 'arrow of God' of the novel's title: as wrath or divine judgment; as deliverance or protection, as divine purpose or guidance, as metaphysical or prophetic, and more. Why does 'speculation fiction' in African literature matter today? Why must we reread Igbo literature as speculation stories? What do these pieces of literature matter in the world-building of today? Reading Igbo literature as speculation fiction, in this case *Arrow of God*, matters and can lead to a more desirable future for African literature and the African worlds.

CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to demonstrate that *Arrow of God* is a specimen of Igbo speculative fiction because of certain thematic and structural pillars inherent in the novel. Achebe himself attested that it was his only published work that he restructured after publication because the structure of the novel was that important to him. Some of these elements include 'the novum,' meaning the new thing (literary critic, Darko Sulvin), whether it is in science fiction, or in a work as *Arrow of God*, the magical, mythical, or mysterious divergences from known concrete reality. Then again, *Arrow of God* maintains internal consistency and world-building, for in spite of these intrusions of the supernatural into the novel, they are not aspects of nature that are unknown to the Igbo world. The Igbo cultural worldview holds that there are parallel universes and that beings from these universes constantly intersect and communicate. This strategy, sometimes termed cognitive estrangement, allows the reader to step back and (re)consider his or her society from a distance, to gain a better under-

standing of its reality and to work towards an alternative, thanks to new conjured settings that mix emotions and social conflicts. Indeed, in *Arrow of God* Achebe took the negative impacts of colonialism, and by extension globalization, on Igbo culture and extrapolated it beyond its logical end, at once as a warning and a philosophical exploration of things that can happen to the Igbo world, and by extension the African world, if they fail to heed the lessons of past history, refuse to negotiate wisely in the new world-building carrying their goatskin bag straight, not slanting, askew, or bent.

NOTES

1. (Filosofia *Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religion*. Vol. 2 No. 2, July - December 2013, p. 533; <https://www.ikechukwuanthonykanu.com/repo/AFRICAN%20COSMOLOGY.pdf>).

2. (<https://www.bing.com/search?q=igbo+cosmology&q=MT&rpq=igbo+cosmology&sc=8-14&cvid=546F21963D8E4BA1834BA051446A4697&FORM=QBRE&sp=1&clq=0>).

3. December 1962 issue of Nigeria Magazine.

4. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinua_Achebe

5. (Collins English Dictionary – Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012 <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/speculative-fiction>)

6. (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/speculative-fiction>).

7. Subgenres of speculative fiction Super genres include:

Sub-genres of Speculative Fiction

Most speculative fiction novels fall under at least one of the following genres. Some may fall into multiple genres depending on the story structure:

- Science fiction: stories with imagined technologies that don't exist in the real world, like time travel, aliens, and robots.

- Sci-fi fantasy fiction: sci-fi stories inspired by mythology, folklore, and fairy tales that combine imagined technologies with elements of magical realism.

- Supernatural fiction: sci-fi stories about secret knowledge or hidden abilities, including witchcraft, spiritualism, and psychic abilities.

- Space opera fiction: a play on the term "soap opera," sci-fi stories that take place in outer space and center around conflict, romance, and adventure.

- Urban fantasy fiction: fantasy stories that take place in an urban setting in the real world but operate under magical rules.

- Utopian fiction: stories about civilizations the authors deem to be perfect, ideal societies.

- Dystopian fiction: stories about societies deemed problematic within the world of the novel, often satirizing government rules, poverty, and oppression.

- Apocalyptic fiction: stories that take place before and during a huge disaster that wipes out a significant portion of the world's population. The stories center around characters doing everything they can to stay alive—for example, running from zombies or trying to avoid a deadly plague.

- Post-apocalyptic fiction: stories that take place after an apocalyptic event and focus on the survivors figuring out how to navigate their new circumstances—for example, emerging after a global nuclear holocaust or surviving a total breakdown of society.

- Alternate history fiction: stories that focus on true historical events but are written as if they are unfolded with different outcomes.

- Superhero fiction: stories about superheroes and how they use their abilities to fight supervillains.

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-speculative-fiction-defining-and-understanding-the-different-genres-of-speculative-fiction> Accessed 05/03/2026.

8. "Women of Horror and Speculative Fiction in Their Own Words: Conversations with Authors and Editors." Sébastien Doubinsky (Anthology Editor), Christina Kkona (Anthology Editor). Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/in/women-of-horror-and-speculative-fiction-in-their-own-words-9781501384479/> Accessed 04/30/2026).

9. (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1978).

10. An account of *Arrow of God* as speculative history states that Simon A. Nnolim in pamphlet, *The History of Umuchu*, states that Mr. J.G. Lawton (misspelled as Lotain by S.A. Nnolim), Acting D. O. in charge of Awka District, replaced J.B. Gardiner, who in 1913 imprisoned Mr. Ezeagu Uchu. In "Chief Igwegbe Odum: The Omenụkọ of History" (Nigeria Magazine, No. 90, 1966, pp. 222-223), A.E. Afigbo states that after the release of Ezeagu Uchu from prison, Omenụkọ was appointed to the paramount chieftaincy of Ajalli-Umuchu and Arondizuogu, where Chief Igwegbe Odum hailed and was (Ajalli-Umuchu) administered as a unit. Mr. Lawton wrote to Mr. Roberts, the resident officer at Onitsha, a letter of complaint that the paramount chieftaincy was not working well with Chief Igwegbe, where chief Ezeagu Uchu was Chief Priest in Ajalli. Division, from 1914 to 1918. Factioneers added salt to injury by accusing Ezeagu Uchu of leading them when he was not suitable to do so. Roberts terminated Igwegbe's appointment in 1917. In 1918, coincidentally the year of German measles, Lawton was succeeded by District Officer W.H. Lloyd. Igwegbe contested his removal, accusing the court clerk, Mr. Kerri, of bribing him with 100 pounds to help placate the rebellious chiefs, who had opposed his appointment. Mr. Kerri successfully denied Chief Igwegbe (Omenụkọ)'s charge. The Inspector of Police (IP), Mr. Dodson, wrote an unfavorable report about Igwegbe Odu, alias OmenụkọAkụ (He who displays largesse in times of great scarcity). Mr. Lawton then terminated Igwegbe's warranty as the local Chief of Oneh before handing over to Floyd. In 1918, Chief Igwegbe was publicly reprimanded in front of other chiefs, and he retired discredited. He was imprisoned in Awka. Simon A. Nnolim had told this story in the 1950s to a radio announcer at Radio Ajalli, Mr. Chijoke Abagwe (Commonwealth 13.1. Autumn 1940, 121-122).

Literary critic Olatunbosun Taofeek challenged Charles Nnolim's version of the story on the origins of *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* in 2022, while conceding some limitations to Achebe's silence on how he stumbled on the original history story

from which he constructed his novel, stating: "It is surely more than coincidence that Achebe's Umuaro is Nnolim's Umuchu; that Achebe's Ezeulu is Nnolim's Ezeagu; that Achebe's god, Ulu, is Nnolim's Uchu; that Achebe's six villages which sought amalgamation are Nnolim's Seed Yam Festival; that Achebe's missionary, "Hargreaves," is no more than Nnolim's anthropologist, "Hargreaves"; that Achebe's story of Umuama and the sacred python is Nnolim's Umunama and the sacred short snake; that Nnolim's Gun Breaker, J.G. Lotain (Lowton), is Achebe's Gun Breaker, Winterbottom; that Achebe's "The Festival of Pumpkin Leaves" is Nnolim's "The Feast of Throwing First Tender Pumpkin Leaves"; that Achebe's ceremony of Coverture is Nnolim's ceremony of Nkpu; that the main market in Achebe's Umuaro and Nnolim's Umuchu is Nkwọ, where the Ikolo and amalgamation fetish in both sources are located." ("*Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart: Origin of The Manuscripts*" written by February 6, 2022, *Arrow of God and Things Fall Apart: Origin of The Manuscripts* | Independent Newspaper, Nigeria). Taofeek asks Charles Nnolim some cogent questions and goes on to answer his own questions, stressing that it is the writer's prerogative to take a historical factual matter and turn it into literature by his power of imagination.

¹¹ Charles E. Nnolim (*OKIKE, an AFRICAN JOURNAL OF NEW WRITING*, NUMBER 52,

01 NOVEMBER 2014 ISSN 0331-0566, Achebe reportedly borrowed extensively from colonial history in Igboland.

¹² ("*Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart: Origin of the Manuscripts*" written by Olatunbosun Taofeek. February 6, 2022, "*Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart: Origin of The Manuscripts*" | *Independent Newspaper*, Nigeria).

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MARRIAGE, PATRIARCHY, AND FEMALE AGENCY IN IG- BO LITERARY CRITICISM: READING SELECTED AFRICAN AUTHORS THROUGH AZODO

CHIDI IGWE

Abstract

*In Literary Criticism Reevaluated: Challenging a Rigid Creative-Critical Dichotomy, African literary critic Ada Uzoamaka Azodo argues that literary criticism should be recognized as a creative literary genre. Her work demonstrates that criticism can illuminate the gendered codes embedded in marriage, family, kinship, tradition, spirituality, communal expectations, and cultural memory. This article argues that literary criticism is not merely an explanatory activity but a creative and cultural practice through which Igbo social structures are interpreted, questioned, and renewed. It focuses on how Azodo's larger argument about the creative status of criticism becomes visible through her engagement with Igbo women's writing, marriage, patriarchy, and female agency, especially in relation to Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Comfort Nwabara's *Ola: The Passage of an Igbo Girl*. The article also situates Azodo's work within the broader pattern of her scholarship, where African literature functions as a social institution, a site of women's moral and spiritual agency, and a medium of cultural survival. It concludes that Azodo's book is especially relevant to Igbo literary studies because it reminds us that Igbo literature lives not only in primary texts but also in interpretation, rereading, debate, and critical renewal.*

Keywords: Igbo literature; feminist criticism; marriage; patriarchy; literary criticism; female agency; African literature.

INTRODUCTION

Ada Uzoamaka Azodo's *Literary Criticism Reevaluated: Challenging a Rigid Creative-Critical Dichotomy* is a bold intervention in African literary studies. At the centre of the book is a clear and provocative claim: literary criticism

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should not be treated as secondary to creative writing. It is not merely a response to novels, poems, plays, or stories. It is itself a creative form of writing, a literary genre, and a culturally significant practice. Azodo announces this position in the preface when she describes the book as a “clarion call” to recognize literary criticism as “a form of creative work and a genre of its own” (Azodo, 2026, p. 3). Her argument challenges the long-standing hierarchy that places creative writing above critical writing and treats the critic as a commentator rather than a creator.

This argument is consistent with the wider pattern of Azodo’s scholarship. Across her writings on Mariama Bâ, African literature, oral tradition, spirituality, ecocriticism, and African cultural identity, Azodo approaches literature not as an isolated aesthetic object but as a living institution that connects gender, culture, memory, morality, spirituality, and social transformation. In her reading of *Une si longue lettre*, for example, she identifies female spirituality as a source of moral strength and resistance. In her essay, “Surviving the Present, Winning the Future,” she presents African literature as an institution of survival and future-making. In her ecocritical reading of Birago Diop’s poem, “Souffles,” she links literature to ancestral memory, ecological responsibility, and spiritual continuity. These works show that Azodo’s criticism is holistic and interdisciplinary. It does not simply interpret literary texts; it reconstructs the cultural and ethical worlds that make those texts meaningful.

This article explores one major dimension of that critical project: the relationship between literary criticism, Igbo women’s writing, marriage, patriarchy, and female agency. Although *Literary Criticism Reevaluated* covers a wide range of African and diasporic writers, its engagement with Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Flora Nwapa, and Comfort Nwabara makes it particularly important for Igbo literary studies. The book’s discussion of love and marriage in Igboland through Nwabara’s *OLA: The Passage of an Igbo Girl*, as well as its comparative reading of patriarchy in Nwapa’s *Efuru* and Bonnie Garmus’s *Lessons in Chemistry*, provides fertile ground for examining how criticism performs cultural work.

The central argument of this article is that Azodo’s book demonstrates the creative and cultural power of literary criticism through its treatment of Igbo women’s texts. By reading Nwapa and Nwabara, Azodo shows that criticism does more than explain literary works. It opens the social world of text. It examines the cultural codes that shape gender, marriage, womanhood, family obligation, kinship, patriarchy, spirituality, and self-definition. In this sense, criticism becomes a form of cultural interpretation and renewal.

LITERARY CRITICISM AS CREATIVE PRACTICE

Azodo's book begins from dissatisfaction with the way literary culture separates "creative" and "critical" writing. In conventional literary classification, novels, short stories, plays, poems, and children's literature are treated as creative genres, while literary criticism is often placed in a secondary category. Azodo rejects this hierarchy. Her preface asks: "What is literary criticism, if not a form of literature?" (Azodo, 2026, p. 4). The question is not a rhetorical ornament. It is the conceptual foundation of the book. Literary criticism, for Azodo, involves imagination, style, judgment, interpretation, comparison, argument, and cultural insight. These are not mechanical acts. They are creative acts.

This argument is especially important in African literary studies. African literature has rarely existed as art detached from society. From oral tradition to modern fiction, African literary expression has often been tied to community, history, spirituality, moral instruction, social critique, political resistance, and cultural memory. Azodo's formulation is therefore significant because she explicitly links criticism to national and cultural storytelling, asking why criticism is not recognized as capable of telling "the Nigerian story, its history, culture, people, and language" (Azodo, 2026, p. 4). If African literature performs cultural work, then African literary criticism must also be understood as part of that work. The critic does not simply stand outside the text. The critic helps shape the way the text is read, remembered, valued, and transmitted.

Azodo's view of criticism as a creative practice is also connected to her understanding of African literature as a social institution. In "Surviving the Present, Winning the Future," she presents African literature as a resource through which African peoples preserve memory, confront present crises, and imagine future possibilities. Literature, in this framework, is not merely aesthetic production; it is a mode of survival and cultural projection. This insight deepens the argument of *Literary Criticism Reevaluated*. If literature is part of the social life of a people, then criticism is one of the practices through which that social life is interpreted, challenged, and renewed.

Azodo's book is therefore not only a defense of literary criticism in general. It is also a defense of the African literary critic as a creative cultural worker. The critic interprets the text but also repositions it within history and society. Azodo insists that literary criticism, when not merely scholarly research, "can be as creative, entertaining and stimulating" as other literary forms (Azodo, 2026, p. 4). Through this process, criticism becomes one of the ways literature continues to live. This is particularly true in Igbo literature. Works such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Nwapa's *Efuru*,

Adichie's fiction, and Nwabara's *OLA* do not exhaust their meaning in the act of publication. They continue to generate new meanings through teaching, scholarship, debate, translation, adaptation, and rereading. Literary criticism, therefore, becomes part of the afterlife of Igbo literature.

IGBO LITERATURE AND THE CULTURAL WORK OF CRITICISM

Igbo literature is deeply connected to questions of history, identity, gender, kinship, spirituality, colonial encounter, and social transformation. From Achebe's representation of precolonial Igbo life and colonial disruption to Nwapa's exploration of womanhood, fertility, trade, marriage, and autonomy, Igbo literary texts frequently dramatize the relationship between individual desire and communal expectation. Azodo's work matters because she recognizes that such texts require careful cultural reading. Igbo literature cannot be reduced to a plot summary or thematic listing. It must be read in relation to social structures: family, lineage, marriage, title, gender, motherhood, religious belief, market life, and communal authority. Literary criticism, in this context, becomes a method of entering the cultural logic of the text.

This does not mean that criticism simply confirms tradition. One important function of criticism is to show where tradition is contested, negotiated, or transformed. In Igbo women's writing, especially, literature often reveals the pressures placed on women by patriarchal structures while also showing women's strategies of survival, negotiation, resistance, and self-definition. This point is important because Igbo gender systems have often been misunderstood through overly rigid patriarchal models. Ifi Amadiume's work on Igbo societies reminds us that gender, power, and social organization in Igbo culture have historically been more complex than colonial and missionary accounts often suggested (Amadiume, 1987a; 1987b). Her study of matriarchal foundations and gender flexibility complicates any simple reading of Igbo women as merely passive victims of tradition. At the same time, writers such as Nwapa and Nwabara show that women's lives are still shaped by powerful social expectations around marriage, fertility, family honor, and respectability.

Azodo's criticism is valuable because it allows readers to hold these tensions together: Igbo culture as a site of communal meaning, and Igbo patriarchy as a structure requiring interrogation. This balance is crucial. A criticism that romanticizes tradition risks ignoring women's suffering, while a criticism that dismisses culture risks imposing external categories that flatten Igbo social realities. This balance also reflects the broader orientation of Azodo's scholarship. Her critical writings repeatedly show that African literature mediates between memory and modernity. It preserves

inherited worlds while subjecting them to ethical questioning. In this sense, Azodo's criticism does not treat culture as a museum of fixed customs. Rather, culture becomes a living field of debate in which gender, spirituality, authority, identity, and communal survival are continuously negotiated.

MARRIAGE, KINSHIP, AND GENDERED EXPECTATION IN OLA

Azodo's chapter on love and marriage in Igboland in her reading of Nwabara's *OLA: The Passage of an Igbo Girl* is especially relevant to Igbo studies. Marriage in Igbo cultural representation is rarely a private affair between two individuals. It is a social institution involving families, lineages, obligations, negotiations, expectations, and communal recognition. Azodo summarizes the chapter as an examination of "choice and mutuality in marriage alliances," one that unearths "values, beliefs, behaviors, and worldviews indigenous to Igbo people" (Azodo, 2026, p. 31). A literary treatment of marriage, therefore, opens the door to broader questions about gender, power, identity, and belonging.

Through Azodo's critical lens, *OLA: The Passage of an Igbo Girl* can be read as a text that dramatizes the passage of an Igbo girl through culturally marked expectations. The title itself suggests movement, formation, and transition. The "passage" of the Igbo girl is not only biological or emotional, but also social and cultural. It involves learning the rules of family, femininity, courtship, marriage, respectability, and communal identity. Azodo's observation that traditional Igbo marriage "eschews romantic love" while modern marriage accepts choice, passion, and romance captures the central tension between inherited structures and contemporary desires (Azodo, 2026, p. 31).

In this context, literary criticism becomes crucial. A surface reading may treat love and marriage simply as narrative themes. A deeper critical reading asks what kind of social order produces these expectations. Who benefits from them? Who is constrained by them? How do women negotiate them? What forms of agency are available to female characters within the cultural system? Azodo's statement that the Igbo tend to see marriage as "a lifelong business" that can resemble "a business contract" is especially suggestive (Azodo, 2026, p. 31). It points to marriage as an institution structured by social economy as much as by intimacy.

Azodo's broader argument about criticism as creative practice is useful here. The critic does not invent the cultural tensions in the text; rather, they give them interpretive shape. By naming and analyzing the structures surrounding marriage, criticism allows readers to see how literature

encodes social knowledge. It reveals that marriage in Igbo literary representation is not only a domestic matter but a site of cultural meaning.

This approach is consistent with Azodo's attention to African oral and communal forms of expression. Her reading of Mariama Bâ through the Senegalese oral form of *taasu*, for example, shows her interest in women's speech as performance, memory, moral argument, and communal address. Although *OLA: The Passage of an Igbo Girl* belongs to an Igbo rather than a Senegalese cultural world, the methodological lesson is relevant: women's agency in African literature must be read through culturally specific forms of speech, silence, ritual, negotiation, and social performance. In *OLA: The Passage of an Igbo Girl*, marriage is therefore not simply a plot device. It is social grammar through which womanhood, family honor, kinship responsibility, and changing ideas of love are made legible.

FLORA NWAPA, EFURU, AND FEMALE AGENCY

Flora Nwapa occupies a foundational place in African and Igbo literary history. Her novel *Efuru* is one of the most important texts for any discussion of Igbo womanhood, female agency, marriage, motherhood, economic independence, and spiritual identity. Azodo's engagement with Nwapa is therefore significant not only because Nwapa is an Igbo writer, but because *Efuru* continues to challenge simplified assumptions about African women's lives.

In many patriarchal settings, female value is often tied to marriage, fertility, and motherhood. *Efuru* complicates these expectations. Its protagonist is beautiful, industrious, economically capable, socially visible, and spiritually significant, yet her life does not conform neatly to conventional expectations of marriage and motherhood. This makes the novel a powerful site for feminist and cultural criticism.

Azodo's reading of patriarchy in relation to *Efuru* demonstrates how criticism can recover the complexity of women's experience in Igbo literature. Patriarchy is not presented only as open domination; it also appears through expectations, social judgments, family pressures, marital assumptions, and communal definitions of female success. Yet Nwapa's protagonist cannot be reduced to victimhood. *Efuru*'s strength lies in her capacity to act, choose, trade, endure, and occupy social space despite the limitations imposed on her.

Azodo's broader feminist criticism helps clarify this point. In her work on Mariama Bâ, she reads female spirituality not as passive resignation but as a source of moral authority and resistance. That insight is useful for approaching Nwapa's *Efuru*, where female agency is not limited to marriage, motherhood, or domestic obedience. *Efuru*'s relationship to wealth,

trade, beauty, social visibility, and spiritual calling complicates the patriarchal tendency to define women only through fertility and marital permanence. Her agency is therefore social, economic, and spiritual.

This is where Azodo's defense of criticism becomes especially important. Without sustained criticism, *Efuru* could be read narrowly as a story of marital difficulty or female suffering. Through feminist literary criticism, however, the novel becomes a meditation on agency, social value, gendered expectation, and alternative forms of fulfillment. Criticism thus expands the life of the text. It makes the cultural and philosophical questions embedded in the narrative visible.

PATRIARCHY UNDER FIRE

Azodo's comparative chapter on Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Bonnie Garmus's *Lessons in Chemistry* extends the discussion of patriarchy beyond a single cultural setting. This comparative approach is important because it shows that patriarchy is not exclusively African, Igbo, Western, traditional, or modern. It is a social system that appears in different forms across cultures. Azodo introduces the chapter with the declaration that "Feminist literary criticism is needed" to attack patriarchal injury and defeat gender discrimination (Azodo, 2026, p. 115).

For Igbo studies, this comparative frame has two advantages. First, it prevents Igbo women's experience from being exoticized, as if gender inequality were unique to African societies. Second, it allows Igbo texts to participate in wider global discussions of women's writing, patriarchy, resistance, and self-making. By placing Nwapa in conversation with a contemporary American novelist, Azodo affirms the global relevance of Igbo women's writing. At the same time, the specificity of Igbo culture remains important. Patriarchy in *Efuru* must be understood through Igbo social institutions, including marriage, kinship, fertility, market participation, spiritual belief, and communal reputation.

The challenge for criticism is to hold both dimensions together: the local specificity of Igbo womanhood and the broader comparability of women's struggles across societies. Azodo's description of patriarchy as a force that "degrades and humiliates women in social relations" gives ethical urgency to the critical task (Azodo, 2026, p. 115). Azodo's work demonstrates that criticism can perform this balancing act. It can respect cultural particularity while also opening texts to comparative analysis. This is another reason her book is valuable: it offers a model of criticism rooted in African and Igbo contexts but not confined to them.

TOWARD AN IGBO FEMINIST CRITICAL PRACTICE

Azodo's engagement with Nwapa and Nwabara points toward what may be called an Igbo feminist critical practice. Such a practice would read Igbo women's writing with attention to culture, but without romanticizing culture. It would take the importance of marriage, motherhood, family, market life, spirituality, and communal belonging seriously, while also questioning the gendered inequalities that can operate within these institutions. An Igbo feminist criticism would not simply import theoretical categories from elsewhere. It would listen carefully to the cultural textures of Igbo texts. It would ask how women speak, choose, negotiate, resist, accommodate, and redefine themselves within specific social worlds. It would recognize both constraint and agency. It would also understand that women's empowerment in Igbo literature may not always appear as open rebellion. Sometimes it appears as endurance, economic independence, spiritual authority, maternal influence, verbal skill, or the ability to survive social judgment.

This point aligns with Azodo's engagement with African feminist criticism, particularly her reference to Obioma Nnaemeka's observation that some first-generation female writers avoided creating overtly strong female characters because they remained bound by tradition and community expectations (Azodo, 2026, p. 147). It also resonates with Ifi Amadiume's work on Igbo gender systems, which appears in Azodo's scholarly apparatus and helps complicate readings that portray Igbo women as merely passive within tradition (Azodo, 2026, pp. 118, 156, 166). Nnaemeka's concept of "nego-feminism" is useful for reading female agency in Igbo and African contexts because it emphasizes negotiation, relationality, and strategic engagement rather than only confrontation (Nnaemeka, 2004). Such a framework helps clarify why characters like Efuru should not be read only through Western liberal models of emancipation, but through the culturally specific forms of agency available within Igbo social worlds. Azodo's book contributes to this critical tradition by treating criticism as active, creative, and responsible.

The critic is not merely classifying themes. The critic is participating in the ethical and cultural task of making meaning. This is where Azodo's broader method becomes particularly useful. Her reading of female spirituality in *Bâ*, her attention to oral tradition through *taasu*, and her understanding of African literature as a social institution all reinforce the need for a culturally grounded feminist criticism. Such criticism does not flatten African women's experiences into a single universal pattern. Instead, it reads agency through the specific institutions, symbols, rituals, and moral languages available within each society. For Igbo literature, this means

that agency may appear through market success, marital negotiation, kinship diplomacy, maternal authority, spiritual vocation, refusal, endurance, or the capacity to reinterpret social expectations from within.

CRITICISM, MEMORY, AND THE AFTERLIFE OF IGBO TEXTS

One of the strongest implications of Azodo's book is that literature survives through criticism. A novel may be published at a particular historical moment, but its meaning changes as readers return to it under new conditions. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for example, has been read through the lens of colonialism, masculinity, tragedy, language, nationalism, religion, gender, and postcolonial identity. Nwapa's *Efuru* has been read through the lens of feminism, motherhood, trade, spirituality, and female autonomy. Adichie's fiction has been read through the lens of migration, memory, war, gender, class, and global African identity. Azodo's own formulation of the critic as a reader who must "break down the text" to uncover its deeper significance captures the labor involved in this process (Azodo, 2026, p. 12). These texts continue to live because critics keep asking new questions about them. This is precisely the point Azodo makes when she challenges the devaluation of literary criticism. Criticism is not an afterthought. It is one of the engines of literary continuity. It carries texts into new classrooms, journals, conferences, and communities of readers.

For Igbo studies, this is vital. Igbo literature is not only preserved by writers. It is also preserved by critics, editors, teachers, translators, reviewers, and scholars. The critic helps determine what is remembered, how it is remembered, and why it matters. In this sense, literary criticism is part of cultural memory. Azodo's wider scholarship reinforces this view of criticism as memory work. Her ecological reading of Birago Diop's "Souffles," for example, treats literature as a space where ancestral memory, the natural world, and human responsibility meet. While that essay is not directly about Igbo literature, it reveals a pattern in Azodo's thought that literature is a medium through which communities remember, interpret, and renew their relationship to the world. Applied to Igbo literary studies, this insight suggests that criticism does not merely catalogue themes. It participates in the preservation and transformation of cultural consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Ada Uzoamaka Azodo's *Literary Criticism Reevaluated* offers an important opportunity to rethink the place of criticism in African and Igbo literary

studies. Its central claim that literary criticism is a creative genre is not only a theoretical proposition; it is also demonstrated through Azodo's engagement with African texts, especially those concerned with gender, patriarchy, marriage, futurity, and cultural transformation. The book is especially valuable because it shows that Igbo literature lives through ongoing interpretation. Achebe, Nwapa, Adichie, Nwabara, and other Igbo or Igbo-related writers remain important not only because they produced significant texts, but because critics continue to return to those texts and make them speak to new questions. Azodo's reading of Igbo women's writing shows how criticism can illuminate the social codes surrounding marriage, the pressures of patriarchy, and the creative agency of women within and against cultural expectations.

The larger lesson of Azodo's book is that criticism is not the shadow of literature. It is one of the forms through which literature continues to do its work. Azodo's preface calls the book "an apologia for the craft of literary criticism as a genre of literature" (Azodo, 2026, p. 15). In the context of Igbo studies, this means that literary criticism is not peripheral to cultural preservation or literary development. It is central to both. Through criticism, Igbo literature is reread, revalued, debated, transmitted, and renewed. Azodo's broader scholarship deepens this conclusion. Whether she is reading women's spirituality, African literary identity, ecological consciousness, oral tradition, or Igbo marriage and patriarchy, her criticism insists that literature is bound to life. It mediates between memory and modernity, tradition and transformation, gender and community, spirituality and social justice. That, finally, is the creative power of criticism that Azodo's book so passionately defends.

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JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY (JICA) AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF RICE INDUSTRY IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA, 1976-1993

MATHIAS IKECHUKWU ASADU

Abstract

This study investigated the origins, implementation, and impact of post-civil war agricultural initiatives in southeastern Nigeria, focusing on the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project. The objective is to examine how post-1967–1970 policies sought to enhance food security and commercial rice production among war returnees. Methodologically, the research draws on archival materials to trace the establishment of river basin authorities, oral interviews to capture farmers’ perspectives – particularly in light of the project’s current moribund state – and secondary sources to situate the findings within existing literature. The findings reveal that Asika Ukpabi’s diplomatic mission to Japan initiated a process that identified the region’s potential for large-scale rice cultivation, leading to the creation of the Anambra-Imo River Basin Authority in 1976 and subsequent collaboration with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency. The project provided new rice varieties, irrigation facilities, mills, and suitable land, which farmers embraced as transformative, despite criticisms of dependency and external influence. The study concludes that while the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project significantly advanced rice production and demonstrated the benefits of international collaboration, its decline underscores the challenges of sustaining large-scale agricultural initiatives.

Keywords: *Japan, International Cooperation, Rice, Nigeria, Food and Agriculture Organization*

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INTRODUCTION

Food is an integral part of man's existence, and the livelihood of most African families depends on agriculture: about 70% of Africans live in rural areas, and 90% of these heavily rely on agriculture.¹ Towards the middle of the 20th century, the world was facing untold narratives of the consequences of hunger orchestrated by the Second World War. To address this scenario, agricultural development was seen as a panacea, and countries consequently made serious efforts to harness the potential of water resources worldwide. Irrigation agriculture, especially in the paddy fields, was canvassed in different countries as the prime solution to shore up regular nutritional intake of food for the growing population in Africa; a development which lends credence to Thomas Malthus logic that economic and social changes in population would affect the food production and availability; while the population was growing geometrically, food production was increasing arithmetically.² To ensure a steady supply of food, rice production has received a boost in recent years, as the crop's intake, nutritional value, and calorie content have made it a staple. Realizing the level of food shortages, international communities have had a number of conferences and summits dealing specifically with the problems and impact of food scarcity, which militate against food security, and suggesting possible ways to battle the challenges of food. For example, the World Food Conference of 1974 brought many countries to a round table with the primary objective of finding a solution to the menacing threat of food insecurity.³

In Nigeria, the federal government has attempted to stem the tide of hunger, especially after the influx of petrodollars into agriculture. Historically, after the taste of oil money, which proved to be a "Dutch Disease,"⁴ Nigeria abandoned food crops for oil revenues. As the food economy de-

¹ JICA/AGRA *Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD)* May 2008, 1.

² T.R. Maltus, "An Essay on the Principles of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of M. Godwin Condorcet", (London: Johnson 1798), P. 1803 quoted in Y. U. Oladinieji, "Food Production Trend in Nigeria and Malthus Theory of Population: Empirical Evidence from Rice Production, Nigeria", *Journal of Agriculture, Food and Environment No. 13 Vol. 1* (2017): 126-132.

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "What is Food Security?" West Africa Magazine, The World Food Summit, No. 4126, (25th November- December 1996): Pp 1844-1847.

⁴ "Dutch disease" occurs when there is a recent boom in a primary commodity for export. It refers to changes in the structure of production occasioned by the discovery of a large mineral resource, such as oil in Nigeria, at the expense of other economic activities. Compare O. Ibeanu, "Affluence and Affliction: The Niger Delta as a Critique of Political Science in Nigeria", *The Twenty-seventh Inaugural lecture of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka* (2008), pp 15-17.

teriorated, especially after the civil war, the federal government adopted numerous agricultural policies aimed at forestalling poverty and food insecurity and, above all, enhancing the socio-economic status of those in rural communities. This is important given that food production in Nigeria received low patronage despite the government's efforts to encourage rural dwellers to be more active in farming. Some of these developmental efforts in agriculture include Agricultural Development Projects (ADP), the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-Operative Bank (NACB), National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP), the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution Program (GRP), and so on.

Apart from these local policies and programs, Nigeria has joined other African countries to battle the challenges of food production in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, she was a member of the Lagos Plan of Action, adopted by the Organization of African Unity Summit in 1981, where they placed priority on agricultural development. She also joined in Addis Ababa at the 21st OAU Summit, where African governments agreed to double their budgetary allocations to enhance the agricultural sector, which led to public investment of 20-25% between 1985 and 1989, being a recommendation of the World Bank and other international agencies ⁵ such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

In addition, the federal government, in a move to sustain its citizenry, especially those in rural areas and its parasitic urbanities, took a bold step toward adopting new technologies in rice production. In readiness for these huge projects, the federal government had to liaise and in some cases borrow significant amounts of money from the donor communities such as the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), JICA, and so on for irrigation projects, especially in the development of the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project located in Omor and other communities where the scheme operated, such as Umumbo, Umuelu, Igbonkwu, Umulokpa, , Anaku, Ifite-Ogwari. Ormasi- Uno, and Umueje.⁶ Some areas of the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project (LAIP) were developed to provide year-round irrigation for paddy on about 13,000 hectares of land.⁷

⁵ Alan Matthews and Andrew Storey, "African Agricultural Development Strategies and Development Aid", *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1987): pp. 13-29

⁶ O.Onah, Fab. "Agricultural Projects, Rural Development and Some Environmental Issues: The Case of Lower Anambra Irrigation Project (LAIP)" *NJPALG Vol.1. No. 1* (Jan. 1995): PP.124-138.

⁷ O.Onah, Fab. *Agricultural Projects*, 124-138.

JICA's activities have been remarkable in Southeastern Nigeria. Through it, many areas of land in the region were cleared for agricultural activities to meet the demands of the Anambra Imo-Rivers Basin and Rural Development Authority for food crops such as sorghum, maize, vegetables, and millets, and, above all, rice. As the project progressed in the Basin, the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project (LAIP) saw remarkable improvements in rice quantity and quality, which, in turn, increased farmers' incomes and living standards. Also, with support from JICA extension agents, illiterate farmers were able to effectively operate their farms, thereby significantly enhancing their skills. Again, the irrigation technology, which was famously preached to farmers, enabled twice-yearly cultivation of the field and gradually became a better employment opportunity.

Other developments of the JICA operation that supported farmers' resilience included land management techniques and practices, new technologies for pest and disease management, and new rice cultivation and processing methods, such as milling rather than pounding the grains. While JICA provided dams and reservoirs for farmers and other water users, the government, through revenue collected from rice farmers in areas of land allocation, was able to redistribute taxes for the good of the entire population. The achievements of JICA seem to be a semblance of what the World Bank-ADP program had done in the northern part of the country prior to the establishment of the River Basin Development Authority, which engaged JICA for water management for modern agricultural development in the Southeast. Thus, Njoku posits,

The program helped to popularize the use of fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides and improved seeds among farmers in parts of the country. It has been claimed that with ADP's support, over 9,000 bore holes with hard pumps, nearly 12,000 earth dams, 922 farm service centers 47 farm training... 12 fish ponds were constructed.⁸

JICA programs in the rural areas supported many farmers, but, as it were, these programs did not take Nigeria to the Promised Land, as we shall see, given the federal government of Nigeria's inability to maintain such facilities built by JICA. Neither did the project enhance the government's financial and input support to the farmers after the project elapsed. Rather, what is observed is the deterioration of modern technical irrigation facilities of such magnitude, originally designed to meet the aspirations and demands of the growing population.

⁸ O. N. Njoku *Economic History of Nigeria* PP. 210, 211.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopts a liberal theory. This theory was first propounded by the political theorist John Locke,⁹ but later took on more meaning for Adam Smith.¹⁰ The major feature of liberal theory is its belief in human reason to promote a more prosperous, free, and peaceful world, which aligns with JICA's objective. Liberalism has been employed in literature in different ways, but is currently anchored in three major interrelated principles, viz., rejection of the use of power in politics and war as the only game nations should pursue as the only means of achieving national security.¹¹ and finally mutual cooperation for the benefit of all.¹²

One of the core assumptions of liberalism is that some states can mutually cooperate for economic or political gain.¹³ Theorists of this assumption believe that each state can seek personal gains, not minding some interests, which can foster domestic or international cooperation.¹⁴

HISTORY OF RIVER BASINS IN NIGERIA

The idea of the massive use of water resources in Nigeria was born during the colonial period. Balogun and Ukeje asserted that the development of water resources in Nigeria received significant attention in the reports of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) in 1955, followed by the First National Development Plan (1962-1968).¹⁵ However, it seems nothing reasonable was done to realize this noble objective.

By 1973, the two River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), viz-a-viz the Chad Basin and the Sokoto River Basin Development Authorities, were established, but comprehensive efforts to increase river basins and

⁹ John Locke, New World Encyclopaedia, accessed online

¹⁰ Andrew Wyatt Walter, Adam Smith and the Liberal Tradition in International Relations, *Review of International Studies*, vol 22 (1886): pp 5-28

¹¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis (New York, 1959), pp 86, 90 in Andrew Wyatt Walter, Adam Smith and the Liberal Tradition in International Relations, *Review of International Studies*, vol 22 (1886): pp 5-28

¹² Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories & Approaches*, 4th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.66. In Yuki Yoshida, A Theoretical Assessment of Humanitarian Intervention and R2P

¹³ Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998), p.32. In Yuki Yoshida, A Theoretical Assessment of Humanitarian Intervention and R2P. E-International Relations Page 2/16 Accessed online

¹⁴. David L. Rousseau and Thomas C Walker, Liberalism [https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/rousseau ...](https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/rousseau...)

¹⁵ E. D. Balogun and E.U. Ukeje, *The Impact of River Basin Development on Nigeria Agriculture*. Pp 64-76.

water resources for irrigation began in 1976, making the efforts prior to 1976 less comprehensive.¹⁶ Thus, it could be said that in Nigeria, the River Basin Development Authority was established in 1975 by the then military government of Murtala Mohammed, who set up the Niger Basin, the Benue Basin, the Cross River Basin, the Ogun Basin, and the Hadjia River Development Authorities.¹⁷ By 1976, the river basin was expanded to ten (10) basins, namely the Sokoto Rima, the Hadjia Jam'are, the Chad Basin, the Upper Benue, the Lower Benue, the Cross River, the Anambra, Imo, the Niger River, the Ogun-Oshun, and the Benin River Basin Development Authorities.¹⁸ It was believed that these river basins would increase the nation's agricultural potential, which was gradually emerging from its 30-month civil war that left the core Southeast in a dilapidated state.

To achieve effective irrigation nationwide, in 1984, these basins were expanded to 18 authorities, covering all states except Lagos.¹⁹ By 1985/1986, under the military rule of Babangida, the number of Basins was further slashed from eighteen to eleven so that the perceived constitutional roles and mandates established would be met, and to be more focused on the comprehensive development of interstate river basins.²⁰

The functions of the Authority, according to the establishment, include:

- i. The promotion of land and water development schemes for the primary purpose of increasing agricultural and fish production.
- ii. To undertake schemes for the control of floods and soil erosion, including afforestation.
- iii. To undertake schemes for the control and exploitation of underground water resources
- iv. To construct and maintain dams, polders, wells, bore-holes, irrigation and drainage canals, and other works essential for the smooth running of the functions of the authority,
- v. To develop and mechanize farming of crops, supply of water for irrigation and forestry purposes to private farmers for free

¹⁶ F. S. Idachaba, "State Federal Relations in Nigerian Agriculture: Managing Agricultural Development in Africa", *the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank* 1989. p.14.

¹⁷ National Archives Enugu (NAE) *River Basin Development Authorities Decree 1975, Development of River Basin*. (Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources 1975 MANR 1/1/374) p. 86.

¹⁸ National Archives Enugu (NAE) *River Basin Development Authorities Decree 1976, Decree No. 25* (Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources MANR 1/1/374) p. 144.

¹⁹ F.S. Idachaba, *State Federal Relations in Nigerian Agriculture*, pp. 14, 15.

²⁰ Idachaba, *State Federal Relationship in Nigerian Agriculture*, p.17. Compare also E.D. Balogun and E. U. Ukeje, *The Impact of River Basin Development Authorities*. pp. 64-76.

- vi. To develop plantations, livestock, and to lease plantations and ranches to private farmers or associations.
- vii. To process food and other crops and livestock products and
- viii. To control pollution of the rivers and lakes in their respective regions.²¹

Besides, beyond their original written constitutional roles to feed the masses in general, they were further saddled with raising the incomes of rural farmers and with any issue concerning public water management. However, of interest is that, prior to the establishment of the Authority, the Eastern region had been losing a significant portion of its cultivated land to floods and, at times, to the dry season. For instance, as early as 1961 – 1962, it was reported that the long dry period adversely affected rice production throughout Eastern Nigeria, leading to considerably lower yields than in previous seasons, and at times, such inclement weather resulted in complete crop loss.²² After the civil war, 1967-1970, there was a severe drought that lasted from 1972-1974, regarded as the worst in Nigeria.²³ After the war, there were serious efforts to restore the region to her past agricultural glory.

First, there was a move to restore higher education institutions to equip students in the region for immediate agricultural development. For instance, by 1971, the Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction in Lagos requested that USAID assist in the rehabilitation of the School of Agriculture, Umudike, which had been badly damaged by the war.²⁴ In addition, after resettlement, the government of the East Central State prioritized restoring the productive capacity of the people, with the ultimate aim of providing a basis for self-sustaining recovery and growth through agriculture.²⁵

The coming of and the extensive development of irrigation for rice cultivation as a revolutionary scheme to booster food availability, in the region began under the then East Central State Administrator, Ukpabi Asika who after observing how famished Ndigbo were took a tour to Japan in 1973 to seal agreement with NIPPON KOEI of Japan to collaborate

²¹ National Archives Enugu (NAE) River Basin Development Authorities Decree 1975 and 1976. Pp. 86, 87, 144.

²² Annual Report, Agricultural Division 1961 – 62 (Rice) Official Document No. 5 of 1963. Printed and published by the Government Printers, Enugu 1963 p. 9, 10.

²³ G. T. Amangabara, “Drainage Morphology of Imo Basin in the Anambra-Imo River Basin Area, of Imo State, Southern Nigeria”, *Journal of Geography Environment and Earth Science International*, Pp 1-17. Google scholar.

²⁴ National Archives Enugu, NAE, USAID Assistance, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources 1/1/345. P. 6

²⁵ A Speech made by Asika Ukpabi on the Launching of the Third National Development Plan 1975-1980, East Central State Programme and Budget 1975-1976. P. 1.

with the Agricultural Development Authority (ADA) of the region to help recover about 15,000 acres of new farm land as a basis for detailed feasibility study for the main project involving the recovery of 650,000 acres of new farmland with controlled irrigation and drainage systems. Interestingly, NIPPON KOEI of Japan reclaimed over 1,000 acres of land, a feat made possible with the assistance of seven Japanese irrigation and canal construction experts at the time.²⁶

Also, the Asika Ukpabi-led administration in the East Central State of Nigeria, in collaboration with the Agricultural Development Authority (ADA), further enhanced the land recovery project for paddy development. Subsequently, a master plan for the environment was prepared by 1974; it comprised seven irrigation projects, with the Lower Anambra irrigation project being the largest (about 5000 ha) and Uzo-Uwani about 1000 ha.²⁷ It was this massive agricultural project in view that necessitated the assistance of JICA because. They also realized that the most sensible approach for food security was to effectively exploit river resources for agricultural development in rural communities.²⁸ Njoku concurs, stating that the idea of harnessing rivers and their basins for the orderly and optimal application of resources has inspired many regional and rural projects across the world, including Nigeria.²⁹

HISTORY AND OBJECTIVE OF JICA

The history of Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA)³⁰ could be traced to the establishment of the Federation of Japan Overseas Association in 1954³¹ and subsequently, mutated to other names such as Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency in 1962, in 1963 to Japan Emigration Services, in 1965 to Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, and in 1974, it metamorphosed to Japan International Cooperation Agency³² as an Act of Special public institution.³³ The history of Japan joining other donor or-

²⁶ His Excellency Ukpabi Asika, the Administrator of East Central State of Nigeria, *The Budget Speech*, May 18, 1974. P. 4.

²⁷ Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development (Profile of Activities P. 1.

²⁸ E. D. Balogun and E. U. Ukeje, *The Impact of River Basin Development Authority on Nigerian Agriculture: A Case Study of Niger River Basin Development Authority*, pp 64-76

²⁹ O.N. Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria, 19th and 20th Centuries* P. 213.

³⁰ The Japan International Co-Operation Agency will be referred to in this work as JICA in its abbreviated form unless it is not desirable to do so by the author.

³¹ Japan International Co-operation Agency, 2019. Exhibit I, Annual Report on Form 18.K

³² JICA.go.jp: The History of JICA www.

³³ Japan International Cooperation Agency 2019, Exhibit I, Annual Report.

ganizations was also laced with the Colombo Plan. The Colombo Plan was an intergovernmental organization designed to strengthen the relationship with Asia and the Pacific in 1951 with the aim of promoting partnership for socio-economic development of the member countries such as Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Pakistan, United Kingdoms, Malaya with the ultimate objective of promoting training and education, provision of food supplies, health, and loan facilities to member countries. It was an ambitious plan to overcome stressful economic challenges faced by some Asians countries colonized by Britain and to help overcome the effects of the Second World War, which became a threat to the Asians.³⁴

Though it has been argued in some quarters that Japan lacked a clear policy direction in its aid-giving, it seems Japan sought a fair share in carving out economic interests in many countries, especially in Africa. For example, it is believed that the primary purpose of JICA was to assist Japan primarily, and as its economic activities progressed, the value of yen continued increasing drastically to the point that by the 1970s, Japan was the second largest economy in the world and was subsequently drawn by the USA to be part of the countries supporting the underdeveloped economy.³⁵ In addition, it was also believed that the criticism of the United States Congress leveled at Japan as a founding member of G-5 in early 1975, with no corresponding contributions to the economic development, peace, and unity of the world, subtly dragged Japan to share the cost of “maintenance” vis-à-vis hegemony in the developing economies. This is because Japan had a “security free ride” from the United States, which probably gave it the muscle to rub shoulders with the USA in terms of wealth creation.³⁶

Ever since its formation in 1974, JICA has remained under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; with an overseas offices in more than 150 countries and had since its inception rolled out trillions of Japanese yen³⁷ which it contributed for the promotion of international development by supporting the economic recovery, and economic stability of the developing economies either through direct donation as bilateral agreement or multilateral aid through other international agencies and

³⁴ Daniel Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan* (Australia: ANU Press 2010), 1.

³⁵ Keiichi Tsunekawa, “Objectives and Institutions for Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA): Evolution and Challenges”, *JICA Research Institute No. 66* (Feb. 2014): Pp 1-30.

³⁶ Keiichi Tsunekawa, *Objective and Institutions for Japan’s Official Development Assistance* pp 1-30.

³⁷ Japan International Cooperation Agency. About JICA Accessed online

organizations in form of technical cooperation earth wide.³⁸ For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, when many African countries struggled to cope with worsening food insecurity, Ryoichi Sasakawa enlisted Norman Borlaug, an agronomist who led the “Green Revolution” in South Asia in the 1960s, to repeat the feat in Ethiopia. Ever since then, Nigeria and Uganda have benefited from this foundation, heavily sponsored by JICA. Sasakawa has trained people to become fertilizer and seed dealers and has trained some of the Ugandan government’s agricultural extension agents.³⁹ Also, JICA assisted South Sudan in developing its agricultural master plan after it gained independence in July 2007, and has been popularizing irrigation pumps and facilities in Egypt for many years to reduce overdependence on the Nile River.⁴⁰

To realize the primary objective of promotion of high quality and inclusive socio-economic development as well as stabilization of different societies in the developing economy, the following objectives have been her guiding principles:

- i. The development of Japan
- ii. Promotion of international cooperation
- iii. Increasing capacity for public investment
- iv. Disaster and risk reduction and climate change
- v. Public-private partnership
- vi. Infrastructural development and macro-economic activities
- vii. Improving business environment, trade, and investment
- viii. Promoting local economy and industry and contributing proactively to peace
- ix. Reducing hunger through equitable growth
- x. Improving governance
- xi. Tackling complex issues flexibly with the field-based approach by fostering expertise for promoting professional solutions.
- xii. Addressing the global agenda for peace and human security.⁴¹
- xiii.

In order to achieve the following objectives, JICA had on several occasions adopted a face-to-face approach and training and participation in some

³⁸ Japan International Cooperation Agency. About JICA. Accessed online.

³⁹ Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) The Nippon Foundation, Agricultural Assistance in Africa, working Hand-In-Hand with Smallholder Farmers.

⁴⁰ Japan International Cooperation Agency, Thematic Issues, -Agricultural and Rural Development, Case Study, South Sudan: Project for Comprehensive Agricultural Development Master Plan (CAMP) accesses online

⁴¹ Compare the Online Information from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development. Access online and *Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Accessed*

long-term economic growth and poverty reduction involving the local smallholder farmers, as the case may be, to ensure economic stability and “inclusive and dynamic development” for poverty reduction and promotion of Japan’s security and prosperity.⁴² For example, the Sasakawa Foundation, with support from JICA, has engaged some universities in northern Nigeria, such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Bayero University, Kano, and Adamawa State University, to train students through the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE). This program focuses on training students for effective extension work to help farmers improve crop production, post-harvest handling, irrigation, and more.⁴³

In view of the above, Japan had established some economic and bilateral agreements before the development of the river basin in Southeastern Nigeria. For example, Nigeria had been taking loan facilities from Japan before the civil war. For example, the Arewa Textile Expansion Project was supported by a loan of N1.26 billion with interest of 5.75, and the United Nigerian Textiles expansion Project of 1966.⁴⁴ After the war, Nigerian-Japanese economic ties continued, leading to other loans such as the Kainji Dam and NEPA Power Distribution Project of 1972, the Nigeria Railway Expansion Project of 1974.⁴⁵

FUNDING OF THE BASIN

In 1976, the Act that promulgated AIRBDA was decreed.⁴⁶ In 1978, the project that the Agricultural Development Authority (ADA) was already executing was inherited and transferred to the River Basin Authority, and consequently, the Nigerian government, in agreement with JICA, entered into a contract of 16.9 billion yen with an interest rate of 3.5% per annum and 10 years moratorium; thereby making it possible for the project to start in 1981.⁴⁷ Chife put it this way- that with this agreement of (96.9 bil-

⁴² JICA, United Nations. Compare also Keiichi Tsunekawa, *Objectives and Institutions for Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA): Evolutions and Challenges*. Pp. 1-30.

⁴³ M. R. Ja’afar-Furo1 et al, Training Needs Assessment of Mid-Career Agricultural Extension Officers: Evidence from Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE) Intervention in North-east Nigeria, *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development* Vol. 4No.18 (2012): pp. 471-47.

⁴⁴ Aloy Chinedu Chife. “The Political Economy of North-South Relations: Japan’s Relations with Nigeria, 1960-1985”, *An unpublished Thesis Submitted to the London School of Economics* (University of London, 1992) for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations. Pp.264, 265

⁴⁵ Aloy Chinedu Chife. *The Political Economy of North-South Relations: Japan’s Relations with Nigeria, 1960-1985*, Pp.264, 265

⁴⁶ National Archives Enugu NAE on Emeghara Everestus Elechi, *The Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority*, Pp. 109,110.

⁴⁷ Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development. Profile of Activities P. 1

lion naira or \$99.41 million) with a 3.50 interest rate in naira sealed on 24th July, 1981, the Lower Anambra River Irrigation Project kicked off.⁴⁸ After completing the loan processes, other supporting international agencies assisted with irrigation work in the LAIP and Ibu dan in Imo state, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). They have been very active in some agricultural development in Nigeria to the point that from 1976 when the Basin was established to 2012, the organization had sponsored one hundred and eleven (111) projects with a total value of approximately \$70, million though not only in agriculture but in such areas as technical development, emergency responses, rehabilitation in areas of agriculture and natural resources which demands technical expertise, policy advice for the development of crops, fisheries, forestry, livestock, development of local skills⁴⁹ and so on. For example, in 1994, JICA supported the National Water Resources Master Plan Draft and also provided Grant Aid to Oyo State to improve water supply to achieve zero tolerance for Guinea worm.⁵⁰ Again, JICA supported the Kura rice parboiler project in Kano State and the Kura rice miller project for the training of parboilers and millers, respectively.⁵¹

Irrigation projects in Southeastern Nigeria seem not to have been fully successful without international agencies on the ground, as they have the capabilities for such technological development, and that partnership and the transfer of technology are essential for quick, immediate development. For instance, the Adarice irrigation was supported by the World Bank, and the LAIP was conspicuously supported by JICA, and so on. In view of this, Katherin said that effective development incorporates international and bilateral agreements, with an underlying national commitment to development partners to sustainably use shared resources for optimal development and cooperation to actualize the shared vision.⁵² Citing World Bank that had committed to supporting the member states of NBA (Niger Basin Authority) as they embark on reforms which hold promises of un-

⁴⁸ Aloy Chinedu Chife. *The Political Economy of North-South Relations: Japan's Relations with Nigeria, 1960-1985*, Pp.264, 265

⁴⁹ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. (FAO in Nigeria) Accessed online March 2022.

⁵⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/japan-donates-water-equipment-bauchi-katsina-states-and-nwri-kaduna>. accessed online

⁵¹ The Federal Republic of Nigeria, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) Technical Cooperation for Development Planning on the One Local Government One Product Program for Revitalizing the Rural Economy in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Final Report December 2011 Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) IC Net Limited Overseas Merchandise Inspection Co., Ltd. Yachiyo Engineering Co., Ltd. Accessed online

⁵² Katherin George Golitzin, "The Nigerian River Basin: A Vision for Sustainable Management", *The World Bank, Washington D.C.* (2005) p.x

leasing water resources development potential, she further posits that in the march towards this project of river development, development partners (donors) should put aside all the political inclinations and put aside any individual preferences for national investment with the ultimate objective of finding regional solutions for the benefits of those using river resources in Africa especially in Nigeria.⁵³

JICA ACHIEVEMENTS

Prior to JICA, farmers faced a major challenge: they had insufficient seed. Where they existed, they were prone to rice diseases and lacked modern technology to facilitate adequate production. For instance, according to the report from the Agricultural Division of 1961 – 1962, the demand for BG.79 seeds was considerably higher than in 1960/61 and in Adani, where mechanized farming in the swamp was attacked by army worms.⁵⁴ These had to be addressed by JICA, by providing improved seeds to farmers and by digging numerous canals and dams.⁵⁵ This is one of the ways it fulfills one of its major mandates. JICA, through the Authority, facilitated adequate use of water resources in the Southeast for agricultural purposes.

JICA built one of the largest irrigation projects in Southern Nigeria, which contributed to the massive expansion of rice cultivation in Eastern Nigeria. These water resources have been made possible through JICA's massive construction of irrigation projects in the Lower Anambra lowland, popularly known as the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project (LAIP). Irrigation facilities provided by JICA enabled a large number of migrant farmers to relocate to LAIP areas, enabling easier rice cultivation in flooded areas.

Further, before these huge projects by Japan, rice cultivation within the area largely depended on rainfall, and farmers found it difficult to irrigate their fields because the existing irrigation facilities were very unsatisfactory and, as such, did not support massive and commercial rice production, and on some occasions, they abandoned the rice field because of drought in the area. According to Chigozie, prior to the large project, there were irrigation projects, but on most occasions, an adequate water supply was very difficult to obtain. He also observed that the World Bank had done its best to provide water resources for farmers, but the government of Anambra State (as then known before the Creation of Enugu and Eb-

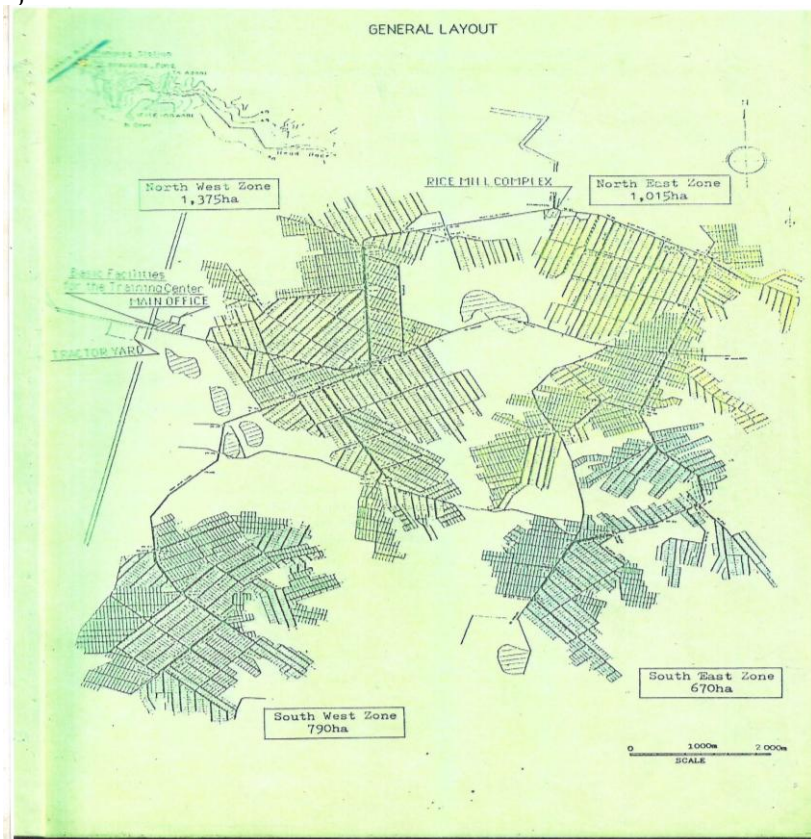
⁵³ Katherin George, *The Niger River Basin*. P. 69

⁵⁴ Annual Report of Agricultural Division 1961 – 62 (Rice), P. 9, 10.

⁵⁵ Ezea. Francis, Migrant Farmer interview cited

onyi States) was not adequately addressing their predicament in rice irrigation. Some people became absorbed in giving and receiving bribes to the ad hoc staff of the Bank, else your field will not be irrigated, but lauded the Japanese government for taking the bull by the horns in supporting and implementing such projects and supervising them to the end. The result was what you see: well-designed rice fields divided into four geographical areas for easy identification, drainage, allocation, and, above all, the easy collection of land rent from the farmers.⁵⁶

The figure below shows the general layout of the JICA-developed land project at LAIP.



Source: Federal Republic of Niger, Anambra -Imo River Development Authority, lower Anambra Irrigation Project. Bi-Monthly Progress Report No. 41, May-June 1990. NIPPON KOEI Co., Ltd. Tokyo P.2

⁵⁶ Lazarus Chigozie, c 68 years, Migrant Rice Farmer, interviewed at Ifite Ogwari, Anambra State, July 4, 2019.

In addition, Ozor posits that the Japanese activities in the LAIP will remain indelible in the minds of the Southeasterners who love farming, especially rice, since no other agencies have equaled them in their support to farmers. Thus:

If other agencies such as World Bank, USAID, FAO, UNDP among others could devote their attention to the needs of African farmers like the Japanese in sophisticated rice field constructions, canals and dams, much repetition of works in the rice fields will not occur. Japanese were more sincere, tolerant, and focused on the small farmers' needs to the point that they required farmers to report their observations, challenges, and progress to the Agronomist Department of the River Basin and to write petitions against any contractor (expatriate) or indigens without fear of molestation, intimidation, and deprivation.⁵⁷

In view of the above, many ad hoc staff on the project felt free to partner with the Japanese company that handled the contract. The above also shows that, despite their seeming ignorance, farmers are meticulous when working with these agencies on their various projects in South-eastern Nigeria.

In another instance, JICA promoted human capacity development among farmers by training local rice farmers in advanced, well-prepared cultivation methods. For instance, according to Udechukwu, he reminisces about when they cultivated rice in relatively sloppy areas, thinking it did not affect the paddy, but was later informed by JICA to jettison such practices because fertilizers quickly leach into the sloppy areas.⁵⁸ Okpara also spoke on the loss of rice after harvesting but the use of sophisticated machines of JICA made it easy for them to reclaim virtually all the rice they processed.⁵⁹ To ensure the appropriate use of the new technology, JICA had, on different occasions, sent local farmers and staff of the Basin to Japan for practical training in best rice agronomy. This enabled the staff of the Basin to be up to date with modern information on rice development. It also enabled farmers to choose the best rice seed capable of producing richly, even under the stresses it can endure in difficult conditions.

⁵⁷ Ozor Jonathan, c 63 years, a Rice Farmer, Interviewed at Ayamelum, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁵⁸ Udechukwu Okonkwo, c 72 years, a Rice Farmer, Interviewed at Umumbo, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁵⁹ Okpara Ignatius, c 69 years, a Rice Farmer, Interviewed at Umumbo, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

Odimma observes that they received different rice seeds from the Japanese and were told to prepare their nurseries differently to carefully observe their yields. And by doing so, rice farmers in the LAIP were able to choose the best seeds instead of relying on rumor and hearsay in their seed selection.⁶⁰

JICA also supported the River Basin extension services, which many farmers outside the rice industry lacked; thereby making it easier for farmers to stay abreast of developments in rice technology and making production techniques more attractive. As such, nothing new in rice development happened without their knowledge. ⁶¹ Through these agents, information was easier for farmers and others to access via JICA-trained agronomists. Egwu reported that, at that time, the agronomists trained by JICA had become experts. They were trained to spread information on seeds and cultivation practices to prevent loss. Agronomists trained by JICA were so scarce that their services were needed in most parts of Igboland, yet there were not enough personnel. Emeka, a trained agronomist by JICA, concurs, stating that rice cultivation in LAIP was successful because the agronomists trained by JICA were determined to root out hunger in Igboland and beyond and see that Igboland will be the center of rice cultivation in Nigeria - a project which they are also working hard to achieve.⁶²

In an effort to ensure that Africans become masters of their own technical skills, such as tractor operation, JICA trained some farmers to become experts in rice cultivation using tractors. For example, the Japanese selected farmers from Umunbo, Umuerum, Omor, and Igbakwu in Aya-melum LGA and trained them in tractor operation in their training ground at the LAIP office in Omor. Uchefuna, trained by JICA as a tractor operator said that they labored so much as rice farmers removing dried weeds and maintaining their farms because of poor harrowing and leveling by few tractor operators who came down from Enugu but did not know how to manipulate tractors well and as a consequence, rice farmers had little to eat and sale because of poor performances of rice but immediately after their training as tractor operators, rice farming techniques different from earlier operators changed and I saw my social and financial status elevated as I can cultivate my own plots on time and be hired by many farmers to cultivate their lands. We did not know when the quack

⁶⁰ Odimma Lazarus, c 64, a Rice Farmer, Interviewed at Umunbo, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁶¹ Friday Egwu, c 55 years, Site Engineer, Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority at Omor. A staff member of the Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority. Oral Interview at Omor, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁶² Peter Emeka, c. 64, an agronomist, interviewed at LAIP, Anambra State, July 4, 2019.

operators from Enugu relocated to other places because our performances outpaced their techniques, and we began to see them as quacks.⁶³ Also, Anedo posits that after their training as operators, he has been moving from Umuerum to Abakaliki, Adani, and many other places in southeastern Nigeria as a renowned operator, and this has made him busy in both dry and rainy season cultivation.⁶⁴ Okeke, who was also trained as a tractor operator, said that after Japan's training, no other agency ever cared to know about special skill acquisition, such as pump technician, irrigation, and drainage in water management. For example, Engr. Erondu, who was trained in water management, posits that, prior to their training, the farmers knew little about irrigation management. They did not know when to add and reduce water effectively in the farm, but JICA training exposed both the farmers and the newly trained technicians to when and how to manage the irrigation system in rice cultivation.⁶⁵ Mbachu added that people add fertilizer at any given water quantity, but after our training, we realized when to add and reduce water for better yield. We also know how to saturate the rice field with water based on the plant's maturity.⁶⁶ Everything seemed perfect after their training, but as they aged, new operators seemed to be more concerned with money than with good skills.⁶⁷ The earlier trainees were instrumental in training most tractor operators in southeastern Nigeria.

JICA also facilitated training for personnel in irrigation and drainage management. For instance, the current traditional ruler of Umubo was trained in irrigation and drainage systems. According to him, his popularity stemmed from his effective management of the irrigation and drainage systems in the field. Most farmers wanted to work with him as he never disappointed them. I quickly live in the morning and evening to supervise many rice fields, even to check rice fields whose owners I did not know and add water accordingly. Everyone liked me, and when the opportunity to serve my people of Umunbo came, they did not resist, knowing that I deserved more and would do more. My success stories started in rice cultivation, to the irrigation and management system. We say kudos to JICA for being unselfish in information dissemination.⁶⁸ He also added that

⁶³ Uche Uchefuna, c 67 years, a Tractor Operator, interviewed at LAIP, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁶⁴ Anedo Paul, c. 70 years, a Tractor Operator, interviewed at LAIP, Anambra State July 4, 2019.

⁶⁵ Chidi Erondu, 66 years. interviewed at LAIP, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁶⁶ Chuma Mbachu, 65 years, interviewed at LAIP, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁶⁷ Okeke Ifeany c 71 years, Tractor Operator, interviewed at LAIP, Anambra State July 4, 2019.

⁶⁸ HRH. Igwe S. I. Chidubem, 66 years old, a former irrigation and drainage system. Interviewed at Umubo Ayamelum, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

good work pays a lot. Stating that the former Hon. Member representing Oyi Ayamelum Federal Constituency, Gabriel Onyeweife, was also trained in irrigation and drainage systems, from where he made huge money that enabled them to be known as a person in their communities, and when the time came for the people to demonstrate their confidence in him, they did just so.⁶⁹

The aim, according to Nnochirim, was to prevent the Japanese from permanently remaining in the area and to encourage African farmers not to rely on foreign operators every time. He also pointed out that, since the rice-cultivation area was extensive, having hundreds of tractor operators cultivate it twice a year would be challenging. In view of this, the Japanese not only saw the need to train the early operators but also called for those willing to do so to be informed.⁷⁰ Ojemba added that “When the expected number of those required to be trained were not met, JICA advertised the opportunity in the local villages so as to have a reasonable number of them steadily and regularly”. The engineers also “allowed them to participate in the repair processes to enable them to have basic ideas on fixing certain parts, repairing them in cases of sudden breakdown and damage.”⁷¹

Apart from tractors, JICA trained some rice farmers to operate combined harvesters and other farm machinery. Egwu had reported that of late, because some of these early trainees did not continue to operate such harvesters since they were not readily available because of old age and sickness, the operators of such machines became scarce, and as such, many new operators do not know how to cultivate rice, which needed more expertise than cassava and other crops that can be cultivated in ridges.⁷² JICA also took responsibility for installing one of the largest rice processing facilities in the region. These integrated rice mills in LAIP, in turn, revolutionized rice post-harvest processing. It made it easier for rice farmers to abandon some manual labor in processing the grain. Some of these facilities could be seen in the photos below.

⁶⁹ HRH. Igwe S. I. Chidubem, 66 years old, a former irrigation and drainage system. Interviewed cited

⁷⁰ Gerald Nnochirim, the Chief Liberian Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority, interviewed at Agbala in Owerri, Imo State, June 2022

⁷¹ Ojemba Patrick, c 65 years, rice farmer, interviewed at Omor, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁷² Friday Egwu. Interview cited



A giant mill built by JICA at Umumbo. Source: Field Work

The combined effects of these are many. They include; (1) the desire to farm rice (2) it checked rural migration (3) it increased the income of the household farmers in the rural communities (4) it made it feasible to ensure double cropping in eastern Nigeria (5) the water resources were well utilized for agricultural development (6) it reduced poverty in the rural communities (7) it became a strong source of employment (8) it helped in the march toward food security and it gave the people good sense of belonging in the national development of irrigation scheme which was very tangential for agricultural development.

Prior to JICA, rice irrigation in the Southeast had not been developed to the extent of irrigating such a large area for rice cultivation and other crops such as yams and cassava. As such, JICA had a pact to raise land values, and its contribution to irrigation increased production and returns from the use of factors of production, such as land, labor, and capital.

Also, there was an increase in farm size, output, farm income, farmers' productivity, and yield.⁷³ In fact, it was JICA's custom to train rice researchers in Africa to be effective in food production. This is especially important for African rice researchers. Speaking on this, Ehara said that the aim of developing core rice researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa is to promote rice production, and this idea is anchored in the belief that these researchers will take the lead in advancing rice production in their respective regions.⁷⁴ The Japanese demonstrated these in their rice projects in LAIP.

In addition, the Ibu dam irrigation project, located at Ndi-Onuoha in Okigwe Local Government Area, constructed a dam 22 meters high to irrigate a net area of 3,500 hectares. In LAIP, the project covers 3850 hectares for rice production and an additional 350 hectares for staple food crops, including cassava, maize, yams, and vegetables. The project is capable of producing over 30,800 tons of paddy rice or 17,864 tons of processed rice. Over 7000 families benefited directly from the project every cropping season. Okpara, one of the beneficiaries, noted that cultivating rice twice a year improved his family's situation. "I can now boast of three-square meals a day, but prior to that time, many rice farmers were obviously poor because of consistently poor harvests, and they depended on hearsay. We were privileged to be present during demonstrations, and that gave us opportunities to excel." ⁷⁵ Udechukwu added, "No JICA, no

⁷³ E. D. Balogun and E. U. Ukeje, *The Impact of River Basin Development Authorities on Nigerian Agriculture: A case study of Niger River Basin Development Authority*. pp. 64 – 76.

⁷⁴ Hiroshi Ehara, *JICA Group Training Course on the Development of Core Agricultural Researchers for Rice Production in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Accessed Online.

⁷⁵ Okpara Ignatius, c 69 years, a Rice Farmer, Interviewed at Umunbo, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

reliable irrigation scheme in Omor and environ". And after JICA, we are gradually sinking back to where we were before their intervention. The Japanese are "skillful and determined- ready to share ideas" and to assist farmers in reaching their targets. "I have yet to see any agency serious in their business like the Japanese. They were so dear and brotherly in teaching, and that is why most of us who were not educated were able to understand and advance in the rice industry."⁷⁶ There was a series of canals, farm roads, drains, irrigation systems, rice mill complexes, plants, and machinery for double-cropping rice.⁷⁷

Above all, the seemingly apathetic interest in the rural community declined as many people as possible from different parts of Igbo land migrated to the communities where the project was carried out. For example, in Omor, many farmers who had lost interest in rice and migrated to the city came back, and many other Igbo people migrated to other communities, especially because of the news that having business dealings with Japan could afford the "humble" and the hardworking ones the opportunity to travel for training. Ani noted that he was a rice farmer, but poor harvests due to disease and low yields led me to abandon rice farming. On hearing the glad tidings of increased productivity at home due to new methods and better seeds introduced by Japan, I decided to return home, as my business in Onitsha was not stable.⁷⁸ Obeta, a migrant rice farmer from Nsukka, said, "Rice farming brought me to Adani, and from there I relocated to Umunbo to ensure 'greater harvest' because of reports of assured double cropping of paddy. Today, I bought land at my hometown and in Omor and trained my children. I live a fulfilled life because of Japanese "enterprises" in Igboland. If Japanese contributions to rice cultivation in Anambra State are removed, the state will be backward, since major infrastructure built by JICA is yet to be maintained, let alone build new ones.⁷⁹ In addition, Uchenna observed that some rice farmers who participated in the project felt they would elope in Japan after training. Many farmers' incomes increased, and a form of irrigation technology was introduced to the Southeast for the first time. Rice productivity, training of farmers, agronomists, tractor operators, maintenance, and rice processing machines were all set up to facilitate production at a "cheaper rate." Road construction in the farm and "earnest cooperation" among extension agents, contractors, and farmers were observed. Also, rice farming has

⁷⁶ Udechukwu Okonkwo, c 72 years, a Rice Farmer, Interviewed at Umumbo, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁷⁷ Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority Brief on projects.

⁷⁸ Ani Geoffrey, c 73 years, Rice Farmer. Interviewed at Omor, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

⁷⁹ Obeta Kelvin, c 70 years, Rice Farmer. Interviewed at Omor, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

become a business, and output has increased as the Japanese encouraged local farmers across LAIP to “Japanize” their farms.⁸⁰ The table below shows the yield per unit of paddy productivity in different years.

Table Showing Performances of Farmers 1987-1997

Year	season	Area cropped (Ha)	No. of farmers involved	Average yield (T/ha)	Total yield of paddy	Paddy worth (Naira)
1987	Rainy	3,200	3200	4.0	12800	20000
1987	Dry	3,200	3200	3.0	9600	18000
1988	Rainy	3,200	3200	4.0	12800	20000
1988	Dry	3,200	3200	3.2	10240	18600
1989	Rainy	3,350	3350	4.1	13735	36000
1989	Dry	3,250	3250	4.1	13370	35800
1990	Rainy	3,360	3360	4.2	14112	58100
1990	Dry	3,320	3320	3.9	12948	21750
1991	Rainy	2,900	2900	1.75	5075	16493
1991	Dry	2,000	2000	2.9	5800	16700
1992	Rainy	2,100	2100	2.9	6090	16900
1992	Dry	2000	2000	2.2	4400	13200
1993	Rainy	1637	1637	1.9	3110	11580
1993	Dry	-	-	-	-	-
1994	Rainy	3000	3000	2.3	6900	17100
1994	Dry	-	-	-	-	-
1995	Rainy	2400	2400	2.1	5040	16600
1995	Dry	1200	1200	2.3	2760	10100
1996	Rainy	2150	2430	1.2	2916	10500
1996	Dry	-	-	-	-	-
1997	Rainy	2150	1500	2.2	3300	11800
1997	Dry	3100	2107	1.5	3160	11680

Source: Profile Report on Lower Anambra Irrigation Project in E. E. Emeghara, “The Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority (ALRBRDA) 1976 - 2001,” p. 117

The Authority's above profile report shows a significant increase in farmers' output from double cropping, enabling them to increase their income. It also shows that JAICA's assistance and the technological improvements and innovations adopted to address rice shortages resulting from a lack of irrigation facilities worth the effort.

⁸⁰ Uchenna Bernard, c 67 years, a Rice Farmer. Interviewed at Omor, Anambra State, July 4, 2019

CHALLENGES

JICA's activities in the AIRBDA in Nigeria's river basin raised many contentious issues. These challenges ranged from ineffective implementation of the designed schedule and programs as enshrined by the establishment, as occurred in some agricultural policies of Nigeria. It seems Nigeria has not been able to stick to a particular program and pursue it to a logical conclusion, making it prone to policy changes, especially in agriculture. For instance, it had had a reasonable number of programs designed by both military and civilian governments after the war that ended in 1970. According to Akindele and Adebo, the major problem which militates against massive agricultural and economic development concerns the failure of various programs such as Operation Feed the Nations, the Green Revolution, River Basin Development Authority, Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure to meet their primary goal occasioned by political environment and actions and inactions of political elites with poor managerial and organizational capacity to carry the Authority along, with their personal idiosyncrasies.⁸¹

Some state governments replicated the Basin's duties by establishing their own independent management programs to control erosion and flooding. For example, in the Southeastern part, as in other regions of Nigeria, we have state policies on environment, covering erosion control and conservation, flood control, and riverine management, in virtually all the states.⁸² These management agencies tend to be quicker in responses to the need of the local communities but have also failed to construct adequate dams that could be used for agricultural purposes or at most to contain the surging flood to ensure that Nigerian farmers are well protected from the surging flood or to provide reservoirs to protect the farmers and their houses from the harmful and ever-increasing flood caused by changing environmental and weather pattern. The above shows that River Basin Authorities have not been able to effectively implement all the mandates they received; thereby warranting the various states to take the matters

⁸¹ S.T. Akindele and A. Adebo, "The Political Economy of River Basin and Rural Development Authority in Nigeria; A Retrospective Case Study of Owena-River Basin and Rural Development Authority (ORBRDA)", *Journal of Human Ecology Vol. 16. No. 1.* (2014): Pp 55-62.

⁸² NEWMAP Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) Final Report Sept 2011 pp 65, 66, 69, 70, 72. All these states mentioned here seem to be having over flooding in some areas during rainy season and the state government no longer wait for RBDA for quick intervention; rather, these management agencies have been saddled with the responsibility to tackle and find the solutions to areas prone to flooding and serious erosions; thereby limiting if not taking over this aspect that was statutorily mandated to RBDA. However, they still do not intervene by constructing dams in such areas for improved agricultural purposes.

independently, a situation that leads the Authorities to relapse or accomplish little of their statutory obligations.

Another issue that challenged JICA's implementation of the project in the Anambra-Imo River Basin is the lack of components for the sprinkler irrigation system and other components for the machines used during and after the construction of irrigation canals, as well as for the maintenance of facilities supporting the irrigation system. In some cases, the component parts of the machinery might not arrive on time, thereby delaying construction or maintenance and, if not corrected, halting their work entirely. Balogun and Ukeje capture it this way:

Technically, all the components of the sprinkler irrigation systems are imported, and foreign expertise are required to install them. As a result of/or delayed arrival of the spare parts and major components, most of the schemes could not be completed as scheduled. For example, only 3 of the 8 dam projects of the NRBDA have been completed but the pipes for the irrigation works have not been installed. Because of this development, the installed capacities of the dams are underutilized, thus hampering the technical efficiency goal for which the sprinkler system is known.⁸³

A critical review of the above will show that Nigeria seems not to be in total control of what the Authority portends. In other words, the resources and technical know-how for developing the Authorities depended on the whims and caprices of our foreign partners. On some occasions, the challenges were corruption and obvious domination, if not outright takeover, of projects by the expatriate for maintenance. For example, during the construction of the Anambra-Imo River Basin, irrigation systems were controlled by engineers at the forefront, predominantly Japanese.

Further, given the fact that the money used in prosecuting this project was borrowed from JICA (the loan was all in Japanese yen), it seemed to give the Japanese additional strength to determine how and when the money would be used, and at the same time, the employment of construction overseers and contractors. From the money loaned to Nigeria for the construction of irrigation canals and dams, they decided who would be employed as manual laborers and as overseers, how much to be paid, and when to pay it. The machinery, such as bulldozer tractors and the rest, was under the discretion to purchase. The spare parts and other related

⁸³ E. D. Balogun and E. U. Ukeje, *The Impact of River Basin Development Authority on Nigeria Agriculture: A Case Study of Niger River Basin Development Authority*. Pp. 64-76.

components were all imported, and the contractors remained the same,⁸⁴ though not without the connivance of Nigerians. Wallace observed

These projects rely on foreign consultants to do the feasibility studies, design the projects, import the machinery, and construct the dams and canals, often to run the initial phases of the scheme. Thus a large amount of the initial investment goes abroad. Further, high costs are incurred setting up the administration building office headquarters for the River Basin Authorities, for the engineering, irrigation and agricultural staff, for extension workers on the scheme. Construction costs and senior staff salaries consume substantial funds.⁸⁵

This seeming attitude easily gave rise to corruption and generated mistrust in the lending process and the execution of contracts. It also shows a level of high-handedness from the mighty to the small ones.

During the early 1980s, when some thought Nigerians were making headway in revamping agriculture through the outcomes of the river basins and increased overseas development assistance, some states lined up to secure loan facilities. We were informed that when the new policy for River Basin Development was introduced, it established a new pattern of dimensions for agricultural development. This offered new opportunities for different states and for cooperation among federal, state, and local governments.⁸⁶

In view of this development, the scheme seems to give some Nigerians the opportunity to plunder resources. For example, high interest rates and suspicion were prevalent in loan processing. For example in 1984, the World Bank approved \$122 million loan to support agricultural activities in Kaduna State, a project that should spread across all the rural areas of the state; the state government which owned the project had to contribute only N25.4 million for the execution of the project but the dichotomy was that the loan would largely be spent on maintenance of World Bank appointed managers and consultants (expatriates) and the balance on importing materials. While the state governor, Abba Musa Rimi, had argued that such consultants should be responsible to him, the federal govern-

⁸⁴ Federal Republic Development Authority, Lower Anambra Irrigation Project. Bi-Monthly Project Report No. 30 July-August, September 1988, NIPPON KOEI Company Ltd, Tokyo, pp. A-1 and A-6.

⁸⁵ Tina Wallace, "The Challenge of Food: Nigeria's approach to Agriculture 1975-80", *Canadian Journal of African Studies, Renal Canadienne des Etudes Africaines. Vol. 15. No. 2.* (1981): PP. 239-258.

⁸⁶ *Daily Times*, Tuesday, April 21, 1981, P. 3

ment supported the World Bank, which later made the agreement impossible.⁸⁷

Obviously, it appears that the governor was marginalized, and there were a collaboration and a conspiracy to hijack the project in which the state government would pay the entire loan, including interest, without filling their pockets; hence the rejection. In view of this, Ukwu captures the relationship between the borrowers and the lenders of many projects executed in Nigeria, this way: "the projects were, on some occasions, dominated by expatriates, while the local partners involved are at the level of receiving and obeying."⁸⁸ The scenario above appears to be a tradition among some government representatives and the lenders in many areas where contracts are not easily executed without kickbacks. In recognition of the above, Ugwu argues that in some occasions, too much money was spent in infrastructural facilities, thereby leaving a paltry sum for the development of the main projects and in some occasions the infrastructures were so sophisticated that the local operators could not manage them effectively or access them with technical maturity and skills and hence were either allowed to rot, stolen or sold and the money shared among the world Bank- ADP support staff and the state governors.⁸⁹

For example, it has been said that the Green Revolution in the southern part of the country is failing due to corruption. The Northern part too is corrupt, but it seems the difference between the Northern corrupt leaders is that they get projects implemented, while the southerners divert money made for projects to their individual pockets; an attitude that made JICA's accomplishment ridiculous and the River Basin Authority to be only known by a signpost without much to offer.⁹⁰

Some other times, it might seem that the failure to push vigorously toward a complete mechanized system stems from divergent opinions. Oculi reported that instead of focusing on the development strategy to improve on rice production, the major interest of some big companies especially from America was on how to bring in farm machinery and its distribution; ranging from tractors and combines to small farm implements and on most occasions efforts to build such machinery in Nigeria is deliberately foiled as some politicians prefer importing them than having

⁸⁷ *West Africa* 2nd July 1984 No. 3489

⁸⁸ U. I. Ukwu, "Planning and Rural Development: The Nigerian experience", *The Nigerian Journal of the Development Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 3 (1983): Pp. 78-84.

⁸⁹ D. Ugwu, World Bank Publications. (1995) pp. 12, 13 quoted in Emmanuel E. O Chukwuemeka and Hope Nzewi, *Empirical Study of World Bank Agricultural Development Program in Nigeria*. pp 176-187

⁹⁰ National Concord 18.10.62 quoted in Okello Oculi, "Multinationals in Nigerian Agriculture in the 1980s", *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 31. *Capital Vs Labor in West Africa (Dec. 1984)*: Pp. 87-91.

them readily available since the former will facilitate the giving and taking of bribery from the multinationals.⁹¹

In another development, by 1986 and 1987, the Japanese-supported farmers experienced the greatest shock to their farming activities. It was the year in which the seeming privileges and support for farmers were abruptly removed, a situation that led over 50% of the farmers to vacate their farms. We were informed.

For this dry season programme, the charges for irrigation water supply and machinery services for soil preparation are compulsorily collected in advance from all the participant farmers prior to land allocation. The payment for supply of farm inputs is scheduled time to time at the optimal bases, and more than 50% of the participant farmers did not join.⁹²

No doubt, the above is a consequence of the fallout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which significantly discouraged government support for farmers in many areas, such as inputs and credit facilities, and promoted a market-oriented economy. The effect was devastating. By 1988 – 1992, due to massive borrowing by many African states, especially Nigeria, which did not allow them to adequately support farmers, agricultural production declined, and, as a result, hunger and related consequences followed, including disease and death. By 1992, against this backdrop of misfortune, international organizations called for renewed support for underdeveloped economies to boost agricultural production.

In addition to the fallout of the new policy (SAP) for the farmers to support themselves with little or no subsidies, dry farming of rice, which was supported by the irrigation scheme, suffered a terrible setback. Onyekachi noted that precisely after the Basin-Authority, in conjunction with JICA made the decision, which was supported by the federal government, the massive exodus of the rice farmers to cassava was such that land disputes among the communities where Laip is located, such as Umubo, Anaku, Ifite-Ogwari, and Omor, escalated among real land owners and the migrant farmers who were mostly affected. He added that the new techniques of cassava cultivation were not well known among many rice farmers, and since they dabbled in the new field without much guidance,

⁹¹ Okello Oculi, *Multinationals in Nigerian Agriculture* Pp. 87-91.

⁹² Federal Republic of Nigeria, Anambra Imo-River Basin Development Authority, Lower Anambra Irrigation Project. Bimonthly Progress Report No. 23 May-June 1987, NIPPON KOEI Co. Ltd, Tokyo, p.13.

the wildfires of 1988 and 1989 destroyed most of their farms, and many did not return quickly to rice cultivation even during the rainy season.⁹³ According to estimates of mass exodus from the rice field under Japanese supervision, an official document reported that by 1988, about 30% of the poor farmers who could not pay the charges had retired from participation in the rice program.⁹⁴ In fact, the irrigation systems built by JICA had failed greatly. Amakom reported the scenario, stating that the irrigation water systems built by JICA for all-season rice cultivation in Anambra State, covering about 3000 hectares of rice fields at present, do not operate at maximum capacity. Contrary to expectations, about 70% of the irrigated facilities went out of service due to inadequate maintenance of pumping facilities.⁹⁵

PROSPECTS

In view of the shortcomings of the JICA-supported River Basin in LAIP and the continued assistance it has been giving to Nigeria, the farmers still have strong hopes that, since the agency still operates in Nigeria, the Authority might not go into complete comatose. Many opportunities still exist for the Authority to take Nigerians to a greater height in food development and processing, especially rice, for food security. Given the Authority's mandate to control water resources and flooding, it is not unreasonable for the Authority to be more concerned with diverting many rivers and increasing floodwater in the region to areas where they can be utilized for agricultural development, especially rice. The control of flood does not necessarily mean to divert it from the cities and rural areas to "uninhabitable areas" but includes the discretionary application of the flood to the benefit of the people for agricultural uses.

SUMMARY

The Federal Government of Nigeria continues to do its part in developing rice production to ensure food security for its citizenry, but its best efforts

⁹³ Clifford Onyekachi Ikpa, c 67 years, a Rice Farmer, interviewed at Umunbo, Anambra State, July 4, 2019.

⁹⁴ Federal Republic of Nigeria, Anambra-Imo River Development Authority, Lower Anambra Irrigation Project, Bi-Monthly Project Report NO. 30, July-August, Sept 1988, NIPPON KOEI Co. Ltd, Tokyo, p 20.

⁹⁵ Amakom Stanley Tochukwu, "Trends in the Activities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Anambra State, Nigeria, 1991 – 2013". *An Unpublished MSc Project Report to the Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*, p. 49.

have not been sufficient, as many Nigerians still go to bed hungry due to food shortages, especially in rural areas. Her efforts are evident in the irrigation project in the AIRBDA, whose part of responsibility was to ensure that lack of water would not be an obstacle to the production of rice crops in Southeastern Nigeria. As seen, farmers benefited immensely from LAIP and JICA involvement.

Despite all the achievements, a few saw the Japanese engagement in the Nigerian farm as selfish. Chife had opined that Japan had succeeded in her mission vis-à-vis business intentions, political influence, and “development,” as manifested in her trade policies, 1929 – 1960, during which she made millions of yen in imports to Nigeria as gains.⁹⁶ He added that a cursory look into the Japanese firms stationed in Nigeria and the development of Nigeria and Japanese construction of four trawlers for the Eko-Nippon fishing company will reveal some deceits, such as the domination of Nigerian fishing industry by both the USSR and the Japan, which shows that the export of shrimps, prawns and lobsters from 1977-1985 was the brain child of Japan as these items sold from Nigeria to Japan were later processed and sold back in packaged form as mackerel and so on.⁹⁷ Egwu seems to believe Chife, but argues that the benefit outweighs any gains the Japanese may feel. According to Chife,

The engagement of Japanese firm Nippon Koei Company, Tokyo in the development of LAIP was part of agreement of the loan that Japan being the borrower provided the contractors. Unexpectedly, their home based famous firm was used which made it easy for them to determine all terms of the contract.⁹⁸

The above is evidence that the Japanese benefited the people. No doubt there are also diplomatic reasons for Japan's engagement in Nigeria's rice industry, but the gains outweigh any presumed exploitation. LAIP will not be returned to Japan, and our people and unborn generations will never forget Japan's efforts to reduce food insecurity in Igboland.⁹⁹

Obviously, the project's viability and gains can be attested by the outcome. Smallholder farmers in Southeastern Nigeria interviewed admitted that, despite the seeming “gains” Japan might have made under the contract, the benefits continue to be resounded and outweigh any perceived opportunistic agenda, if any. Egwu posits that if the state and federal govern-

⁹⁶ Aloy Chinedu Chife. *The Political Economy of North-South Relations: Japan's Relations with Nigeria, 1960-1985*. Pp. 264, 337.

⁹⁷ Chife. *The Political Economy of North-South Relations*, pp. 232, 233.

⁹⁸ Fiday Egwu. Interview cited

⁹⁹ Fiday Egwu. Interview cited

ments holistically support the Authority to harness all the gains from the facilities left behind by JICA, there will be greater hope for farmers, and their future will be very optimistic.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Fiday Egwu. Interview cited

INSTITUTIONAL DIVERGENCE AND POLICY EVOLUTION IN POST-BREXIT UNITED KINGDOM AND NORTHERN IRELAND: EXPLORING THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM PERSPECTIVE

EUZEBIUS CHINEDU UGWU

Abstract

This study explores institutional divergence and policy evolution in the post-Brexit United Kingdom, with a focus on Northern Ireland's distinctive governance. It analyzes how Brexit reshaped regulatory alignment, trade policy, and intergovernmental coordination, emphasizing the consequences of divergence between Northern Ireland and Great Britain for policy coherence. Grounded in New Institutionalism, the research highlights the influence of institutions, regulations, practices, and historical legacies on governance outcomes. Using a comparative qualitative design, documentary evidence was drawn from legal texts, parliamentary proceedings, policy reports, and scholarly literature. Findings show that Brexit placed Northern Ireland in a unique regulatory position through the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and the Windsor Framework, introducing mechanisms such as green- and red-lane trade arrangements, democratic consent procedures, regulatory harmonization, and revisions to EU-derived legislation. These changes have generated regulatory fragmentation, political contention, trade sensitivities, and greater complexity in multi-level governance. The study recommends closer UK-EU-Northern Ireland collaboration, transparent management of Northern Ireland's special status, improved intergovernmental consultation, flexible regulatory coordination, and inclusive policy negotiation to reduce uncertainty and support coherent governance in the post-Brexit era.

Keywords: Brexit, Northern Ireland, New Institutionalism, policy evolution, and institutional divergence.

The post-Brexit era has sparked significant debate over the nature of governance and institutional arrangements in the United Kingdom, particularly in Northern Ireland. At the heart of this discussion lies the concept of institutional divergence, which refers to the process by which political and regulatory institutions evolve in different directions, creating variations in rules, practices, and governance structures across regions (Hantrais, 2017). Closely linked to policy evolution is the gradual transformation of public policies in response to shifting political, economic, and social contexts

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(Murray & Robb, 2023). In the UK, Brexit has acted as a catalyst for both reshaping regulatory alignment, trade arrangements, and intergovernmental relations. Northern Ireland's unique position under the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and the Windsor Framework exemplifies how institutional divergence manifests in practice, producing distinct governance outcomes compared to Great Britain. To analyze these dynamics, this study draws on contemporary political theories – particularly New Institutionalism, which emphasizes the enduring influence of institutions, historical legacies, and regulatory frameworks on political behavior and policy outcomes. By situating Brexit within this theoretical lens, the research highlights how divergence and evolution interact to shape the coherence, complexity, and contestation of governance in the post-Brexit United Kingdom.

Brexit represents one of the most consequential political transformations in 21st-century Europe, reshaping the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union and producing far-reaching institutional consequences (Igwe, 2022). Globally, the withdrawal of states from integrated regional frameworks often triggers debates over institutional divergence and policy adaptation, as governments recalibrate the legal, economic, and political systems embedded in supranational orders (Wolff & Piquet, 2022). Brexit thus offers a distinctive case for examining how disengagement from established institutions catalyzes policy change. Institutional divergence refers to the gradual differentiation of political systems as they develop distinct rules, norms, and decision-making processes (Wolff & Piquet, 2022). In the UK, this process is evident in the disentanglement of domestic law and regulation from the EU's *acquis communautaire*, reflecting broader dynamics of de-Europeanization and renewed assertions of sovereignty. Institutional divergence unfolds on multiple levels: globally, as states exit supranational frameworks; continentally, as Europe adapts to such departures; and regionally, as substate governance units recalibrate policies in response to shifting mandates (Wolff & Piquet, 2022). Brexit exemplifies this layered divergence.

Northern Ireland occupies a unique position in the post-Brexit settlement because the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland maintains partial alignment with the EU single market for goods (Whitten, 2024). This arrangement has produced internal divergence within the UK, as Northern Ireland's institutional and market frameworks differ from those in Great Britain. The Protocol creates a hybrid legal and policy space designed to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland while preserving UK territorial integrity, but it has also generated political tensions and divergent policy paths between devolved institutions and Westminster. The "Global Britain" agenda illustrates how the UK is redefining its external economic role outside EU trade agreements, emphasizing regulatory autonomy and

global market engagement (Sowels, 2023). Yet divergence also introduces significant policy challenges. Without binding alignment to EU standards, questions of market access, regulatory equivalence, and legal coexistence in goods and services regulations become pressing (Howell, 2020). These challenges are especially acute in Northern Ireland, where unique governance arrangements shape local politics. Unionist parties argue that the Protocol entrenches asymmetrical divergence from the rest of the UK, complicates internal politics, and undermines policy coherence (Kelly & Tannam, 2023).

Policy evolution in devolved contexts can be traced through legislative amendments, alignment choices, and institutional negotiations over frameworks such as the Windsor Framework, which revised aspects of the Protocol (Whitten, 2024). At the global level, Brexit has also driven regulatory divergence, with UK environmental standards increasingly departing from EU norms—raising concerns about potential rollbacks in areas such as pollution control and chemical regulation (*The Guardian*, 2024). Within the UK, devolved administrations have pursued distinct strategies: Scotland and Wales often seek continued alignment with EU norms, while Northern Ireland remains largely governed by the Protocol (Birrell & Gray, 2017). Taken together, regulatory fragmentation, political contestation, trade disruptions, environmental risks, and multi-level governance challenges constrain policy development in post-Brexit Northern Ireland. Tracking divergence through indicators such as regulatory alignment, legislative amendments, consent decisions, and framework negotiations provides policymakers with practical tools to monitor gaps and coordinate responses.

This study is therefore motivated by the need to systematically analyze these multi-layered processes, treating institutional divergence as a structural force and policy evolution as its observable outcome. The case of Northern Ireland is especially significant, as divergence intersects with peacebuilding frameworks and cross-border cooperation. By grounding the analysis in empirical evidence—such as regulatory alignment, legislative consent decisions, and negotiated frameworks—this research clarifies the relationship between institutional divergence and policy evolution in a post-Brexit context. Ultimately, this study explores two central questions: How has institutional divergence between Northern Ireland and Great Britain influenced policy coherence and evolution in post-Brexit governance? And what role do measures of institutional divergence play in mitigating trade, environmental, and governance challenges in Northern Ireland? By addressing these questions, the research contributes to scholarship on devolution, regional governance, and supranational withdrawal, while offering insights for policymakers navigating the UK's evolving constitutional framework.

INSTITUTIONAL DIVERGENCE IN POST-BREXIT GOVERNANCE:
THE STATE OF LITERATURE

Institutional divergence refers to the process by which political, legal, and administrative institutions gradually adopt distinct rules, norms, procedures, and policy directions after previously operating within a shared governance framework. In the post-Brexit context, Wolff and Piquet (2022) conceptualize institutional divergence through the lens of Europeanisation. They argue that the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union should not be understood as a sudden rupture, but rather as a gradual and layered transformation involving phases of de-Europeanisation, disengagement, re-engagement, and continued engagement. Divergence, therefore, is not simply a break from the EU; it represents a stepwise reconfiguration of policy rules, institutional relationships, and governance practices that were long shaped by EU membership. Igwe (2022) reinforces this perspective by framing Brexit as a political project aimed at "taking back control." From this vantage point, institutional divergence is closely tied to sovereignty, national autonomy, and the reclamation of decision-making authority from supranational structures. Together, these accounts highlight that Brexit is best understood not as an endpoint, but as an evolving process of institutional differentiation—one that redefines the UK's governance trajectory while reshaping its relationship with Europe. Institutional divergence also manifests in regulatory and constitutional differentiation. Howell (2020) observes that regulatory divergence raises critical questions about whether the UK should continue to "shadow" EU law or carve out space for domestic regulatory variation, particularly in sensitive sectors such as financial services. Birrell and Gray (2017) extend this perspective by emphasizing how Brexit interacts with devolution and multi-level governance. They highlight that Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland experienced Brexit through distinct institutional lenses, shaped by their varying relationships with EU programs, regulations, and decision-making processes. Taken together, these insights underscore that institutional divergence operates on two interconnected planes: externally, in the evolving relationship between the UK and the EU, and internally, in the differentiated trajectories of Northern Ireland and Great Britain. This dual dynamic provides a crucial foundation for analyzing how Brexit reshapes governance both across borders and within the UK's constitutional framework.

In Northern Ireland, institutional divergence becomes even more complex because it unfolds within a sensitive constitutional and peace-building environment. Whitten (2024) highlights Northern Ireland as a distinctive case within the UK internal market: post-Brexit arrangements

granted it a unique institutional position relative to Great Britain. Although the UK formally exited the EU, Northern Ireland continues to align with certain EU rules to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. Kelly and Tannam (2023) argue that Brexit prompted a shift in UK policy towards Northern Ireland, marked by unilateralism and a sovereignty-driven approach. This recalibration has weakened traditions of cooperation associated with the peace process, demonstrating that institutional divergence is not merely a technical or legal phenomenon. It directly affects trust, identity, intergovernmental relations, and the stability of devolved governance. As a result, divergence generates tangible policy challenges—undermining coherence, heightening uncertainty, and complicating coordination between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Policy evolution refers to the transformation of public policies, regulatory standards, and governance practices in response to institutional restructuring. Wolff and Piquet (2022) emphasize that post-Brexit policy change should be understood as a trajectory rather than a single rupture, with British policies moving along paths of de-Europeanisation, partial disengagement, renewed cooperation, or continued engagement depending on sectoral demands and political choices. Egan and Webber (2023) illustrate this dynamic in trade policy, noting the profound shifts that followed decades of collective EU agreements and regulatory alignment. Howell (2020) adds that policy evolution often takes the form of cautious regulatory adaptation, balancing the pursuit of autonomy with the practical need to preserve market access, regulatory equivalence, and legal certainty. Institutional divergence establishes the structural conditions that compel such adaptations. As institutions move away from common EU rules, governments must redesign legal frameworks, renegotiate responsibilities, adjust trade arrangements, and manage new regulatory boundaries. In this sense, institutional divergence functions as a key driver of observable policy change—shaping rules, regulatory alignments, governance negotiations, and sector-specific adjustments across the post-Brexit landscape.

New Institutionalism, introduced by March and Olsen (1984) in *The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life*, provides a valuable theoretical lens for analyzing institutional divergence and policy evolution. The framework emphasizes that political outcomes are not determined solely by individual preferences, party competition, or rational calculation; rather, they are shaped by institutions, rules, routines, norms, historical legacies, and established procedures that constrain and guide political behavior. Institutions possess relative autonomy and exert influence over the meaning, direction, and consequences of political action (March & Olsen, 1984). This perspective is particularly apt for studying the impact of Brexit on regulatory alignment, governance structures, legal arrangements, and policy coordination among Northern Ireland, Great

Britain, and the EU. Scholars such as Hall and Taylor (1996), Pierson (2000), and Thelen (1999) reinforce the view that institutions sustain policy continuity and change through path-dependent processes and gradual adaptation. Yet critics, including Hay and Wincott (1998), Peters et al. (2005), and Schmidt (2010), caution that institutionalist approaches may understate the role of agency, political conflict, and ideas. This critique is especially relevant in post-Brexit Northern Ireland, where formal rules alone cannot explain divergence. Political contestation, unionist resistance, sovereignty claims, identity politics, and competing policy narratives surrounding the Protocol and Windsor Framework all demonstrate that institutional divergence is simultaneously structural and deeply political.

The reviewed studies predominantly employ qualitative, legal, doctrinal, historical, and policy-analysis approaches. Birrell and Gray (2017) adopt qualitative policy-review methods, examining constitutional arrangements, devolution debates, and EU-related responsibilities in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Howell (2020) applies doctrinal legal and regulatory analysis to assess UK and EU fund regulation, equivalence requirements, and the scope of regulatory autonomy. Egan and Webber (2023) use political economy and role theory frameworks to trace post-referendum trade debates and policy developments. Kelly and Tannam (2023) combine historical and policy analysis to explore the governance implications of the Protocol, while Whitten (2024) focuses on legal and policy review of the UK Internal Market Act, the Protocol, and the Windsor Framework. Birrell and Gray (2017) found Brexit had unequal impacts on devolved nations due to differing reliance on EU funding, legal frameworks, and political relationships, intensifying territorial and institutional tensions within the UK. Egan and Webber (2023) reported major changes in trade policy but noted that the “Global Britain” agenda faced constraints from post-Brexit EU relations and global political shifts. Kelly and Tannam (2023) observed weakened traditions of interdependence and cooperation, while Whitten (2024) highlighted Northern Ireland’s unique position, exposing the limits of a uniform internal market. Overall, institutional divergence has driven policy evolution, though outcomes remain contested, uneven, and dependent on effective coordination.

The impact of institutional divergence on policy evolution is neither automatic nor uniform; it varies according to prior Europeanisation, the sensitivity of policy domains, the strength of devolved institutions, and the willingness of governments to coordinate. Birrell and Gray (2017) highlight the need for stronger cooperation between Westminster and devolved administrations, recognition of devolved competences, and inclusive policy negotiation. Howell (2020) underscores the importance of carefully managed divergence in sectors where market access and regulatory credibility are critical. Whitten (2024) emphasizes transparent coordi-

nation and flexible cooperation among the UK, EU, and Northern Ireland. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that post-Brexit governance extends well beyond legal separation from the EU. Effective management requires practical mechanisms to address regulatory differences, trade flows, environmental responsibilities, and constitutional stability. Institutional coordination, selective alignment, and cooperative governance emerge as essential strategies for mitigating the negative effects of divergence and fostering coherent policy evolution across the UK's multi-level governance system.

The existing literature reveals notable gaps in conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and empirical domains. Conceptually, key ideas such as institutional divergence and policy evolution are often examined in isolation or within narrow sectoral contexts rather than as interconnected variables. For instance, Howell (2020) focuses on financial regulation, Egan and Webber (2023) on trade policy, Birrell and Gray (2017) on devolution, Kelly and Tannam (2023) on political trust and sovereignty, and Whitten (2024) on Northern Ireland's position in the internal market. Yet no comprehensive framework explains how divergence systematically drives policy evolution across regulatory, trade, environmental, constitutional, and governance dimensions. Theoretically, contemporary political approaches remain insufficiently integrated into a unified explanation of these processes. This study addresses this gap by conceptualizing institutional divergence as the independent variable and policy evolution as the dependent variable, applying New Institutionalism to explain how divergence in legal alignment, regulatory standards, intergovernmental relations, institutional authority, political agency, sovereignty claims, and governance contestation produces observable changes in policy coherence, trade arrangements, regulatory adaptation, and coordination. Methodologically, most existing studies rely on qualitative, doctrinal, historical, or legal-policy analysis without employing structured comparative frameworks capable of measuring the effects of divergence across post-Brexit policy areas. Empirically, research remains fragmented: Birrell and Gray (2017) on social policy, Howell (2020) on financial regulation, Egan and Webber (2023) on trade adaptation, Kelly and Tannam (2023) on political behaviour, and Whitten (2024) on Northern Ireland's constitutional position. The current study addresses these limitations by adopting a comparative analytical approach that links divergence to observable policy outcomes across multiple domains—including regulatory alignment, legislative changes, negotiated frameworks, trade adjustments, environmental governance, policy coherence, and multi-level coordination across Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and the wider United Kingdom.

This study adopts a comparative qualitative design to examine how institutional divergence has shaped policy evolution in the post-Brexit

United Kingdom, with particular focus on Northern Ireland. A comparative approach enables systematic analysis of Northern Ireland's institutional position relative to Great Britain and the wider UK, highlighting similarities and differences in policy development across trade regulation, environmental policy, internal market arrangements, intergovernmental relations, and the Protocol/Windsor Framework. Institutional divergence is treated as the independent variable and policy evolution as the dependent variable, linking structural changes to observable outcomes. This framework provides a context-sensitive understanding of post-Brexit governance, moving beyond descriptive or sector-specific accounts and addressing methodological gaps in existing scholarship. It demonstrates how divergence in legal alignment, regulatory standards, and governance practices translates into concrete outcomes in policy coherence, trade, environmental regulation, and multi-level coordination.

This study employs a documentary method consistent with its comparative qualitative design. Instead of primary data such as interviews or questionnaires, it draws on legal, institutional, policy, and scholarly documents that illuminate institutional divergence and policy evolution in the post-Brexit UK and Northern Ireland. A purposive sampling strategy identified 30 key materials. Primary sources include the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, the Windsor Framework, the UK Internal Market Act, the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, parliamentary reports, government papers, and Northern Ireland Assembly documents. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed articles, books, legal analyses, and policy studies on Brexit, devolution, and governance. Documents were screened for relevance, credibility, authority, and connection to study variables. Key information was extracted using a structured review guide and comparative policy matrix, then organized thematically around regulatory divergence, legislative changes, policy coherence, trade, environmental governance, intergovernmental relations, and coordination. Comparative analysis contrasted Northern Ireland with Great Britain and the wider UK to identify how divergence has differently shaped policy evolution across jurisdictions.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study is grounded in New Institutionalism, introduced by March and Olsen (1984), which emphasizes that political outcomes are shaped not only by interests or rational choice but also by institutional structures, norms, routines, and historical legacies. Institutions possess relative autonomy, influencing how actors define problems, interests, and responses. This makes the framework particularly suitable for examining how Brexit reshaped institutional arrangements, regulatory alignment, and policy

coordination between the UK, Northern Ireland, and the EU, especially through the Protocol and Windsor Framework. Supportive scholarship highlights institutions as drivers of continuity and gradual change. Hall and Taylor (1996) stress historical, rational-choice, and sociological dimensions; Pierson (2000) explains path dependency; and Thelen (1999) shows how institutions evolve through adaptation and conflict. These perspectives underscore that Brexit was not a sudden rupture but an ongoing institutional process reshaping trade, regulation, and devolved governance. Brexit-specific studies reinforce this lens. Birrell and Gray (2017) show varied devolved experiences; Wolff and Piquet (2022) frame Brexit as a continuum of de-Europeanisation and re-engagement; and Whitten (2024) highlights Northern Ireland's exceptional position under EU rules. Together, they demonstrate that post-Brexit policy evolution is deeply conditioned by institutional location and governance interactions. Critics caution against overemphasizing institutions while neglecting agencies and ideas. Hay and Wincott (1998) warn of exaggerated structural constraints; Peters et al. (2005) highlight the role of political conflict; and Schmidt (2010) advocated discursive institutionalism to capture the influence of ideas and narratives. These critiques are pertinent in Northern Ireland, where unionist resistance, sovereignty debates, and identity politics shape divergence alongside formal rules.

Despite these limitations, New Institutionalism remains the most appropriate framework. By treating institutional divergence as the independent variable and policy evolution as the dependent variable, the study demonstrates how changes in rules, authority structures, and norms drive outcomes across trade, environmental governance, internal market coordination, and intergovernmental relations in the UK's post-Brexit landscape.

INSTITUTIONAL DIVERGENCE AND POLICY COHERENCE IN POST-BREXIT GOVERNANCE

The study finds strong evidence that Brexit created significant territorial and institutional differences between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. While the United Kingdom as a whole voted to leave the European Union, Northern Ireland voted to remain, producing political and constitutional tensions. A uniform post-Brexit governance model could not easily accommodate Northern Ireland's geographical position, peace process obligations, and economic ties to both the Republic of Ireland and the wider European market.

Referendum data empirically underpins the study's argument. While the UK-wide vote produced a Leave outcome, Northern Ireland voted Remain, highlighting internal political and institutional divergence. This

contrast explains why Northern Ireland became a special case in the post-Brexit settlement: its political preference, geographical border with the Republic of Ireland, and peace-process obligations made a uniform UK-wide withdrawal arrangement difficult to sustain (Electoral Commission, 2019; Northern Ireland Assembly, n.d.).

Table 1: Empirical Indicators for Verifying Institutional Divergence and Policy Evolution

Variable	Empirical indicator	Verifiable evidence/data	Interpretation	Source
Institutional divergence	Divergent Brexit mandate between UK and Northern Ireland	UK national result: Leave = 17,410,742; Remain = 16,141,241; turnout = 72.2%. Northern Ireland result: Remain = 440,707; Leave = 349,442; turnout = 62.7%.	The UK as a whole voted to leave the EU, while Northern Ireland voted to remain. This provides empirical evidence that Brexit produced territorial political divergence within the UK.	Electoral Commission (2019)
Institutional divergence	Northern Ireland's different regulatory position from Great Britain	Under the Protocol/Windsor Framework, Northern Ireland aligns with laws relating to the EU single market for	This confirms internal UK divergence because Northern Ireland remains partly aligned with EU	Northern Ireland Assembly (n.d.)

		goods, unlike the rest of the UK.	goods rules while Great Britain does not follow the same arrangement.	
Policy evolution	Windsor Framework reforms to Protocol arrangements	The Windsor Framework introduced the Internal Market Scheme/green lane for goods staying in Northern Ireland and a red lane for goods at risk of entering the EU single market.	The policy framework evolved from the original Protocol towards a more differentiated system of trade governance.	Northern Ireland Assembly (n.d.)
Policy evolution	Democratic consent mechanism	On 10 December 2024, the Northern Ireland Assembly supported continuation of Articles 5–10 of the Windsor Framework by 48 votes to 36, but without cross-community	This verifies that post-Brexit policy evolution is now subject to institutional consent and political contestation in Northern Ireland.	House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee (2026)

		support.		
Institutional/policy divergence	Scale of assimilated EU-derived law	As of 23 December 2025, the UK dashboard recorded 6,925 assimilated law instruments across about 400 policy areas; 2,572 instruments had been revoked or reformed.	This shows that post-Brexit divergence is not merely symbolic; it involves ongoing legal reform across a large body of EU-derived law.	Department for Business and Trade (2026)
Trade-policy evolution	Continuing UK-EU trade dependence	In the four quarters to December 2025, UK exports to the EU were £385.4bn and imports from the EU were £474.1bn.	Despite Brexit, the EU remains a major UK trade partner, explaining why policy evolution involves balancing autonomy with market access.	Department for Business and Trade (2026)
Northern Ireland trade adjustment	Northern Ireland sales and export structure	In 2024, Northern Ireland's total sales were £109.3bn; sales within NI were	The data show that Northern Ireland remains economically linked to	NIS-RA/Invest NI (2026)

£69.5bn; sales to Great Britain were £20.1bn; exports were £19.6bn. both Great Britain and external markets, supporting the need for a hybrid post-Brexit trade framework.

Source: Electoral Commission (2019); Northern Ireland Assembly (n.d.); House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee (2026); Department for Business and Trade (2026a, 2026b); NISRA/Invest NI (2026).

Table 2: Brexit Referendum Results as Evidence of Territorial Political Divergence

Area	Remain votes	Leave votes	Turnout	Empirical meaning
United Kingdom	16,141,241	17,410,742	72.2%	The UK-wide mandate favoured leaving the EU.
Northern Ireland	440,707	349,442	62.7%	Northern Ireland’s mandate favoured remaining in the EU.

Source: Electoral Commission (2019).

Tables 1 and 2 show that institutional divergence began with the different Brexit mandates and later became embedded in legal and regulatory arrangements. Northern Ireland’s partial alignment with EU single-market laws for goods, unlike Great Britain, demonstrates that Brexit produced uneven institutional outcomes within the UK. This divergence directly affected policy coherence, as the UK sought sovereignty and regulatory autonomy while maintaining special arrangements for Northern Ireland. Consequently, post-Brexit policy evolution became less about implementing a single national withdrawal and more about managing internal divergence.

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

The study shows that the Protocol, the Windsor Framework, the Internal Market Scheme, the green lane/red lane system, and the democratic consent mechanism operate as institutional measures to manage divergence. The strongest evidence relates to trade and governance, while environmental concerns are indirectly tied to regulatory alignment and EU single-market rules, which embed standards affecting goods, compliance, and safeguards. Trade data confirms Northern Ireland’s economic position between Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and wider European markets. In 2024, sales to Great Britain totaled £20.1bn, while exports to the Republic of Ireland alone reached £10.45bn. These figures support the argument that Northern Ireland requires a distinctive governance arrangement, as its trade flows span both the UK internal market and the EU single market. The Windsor Framework and its green lane/red lane system exemplify policy evolution designed to manage the practical consequences of institutional divergence (Northern Ireland Assembly, n.d.; NISRA/Invest NI, 2026).

Table 3: Northern Ireland Trade Data as Evidence of Post-Brexit Policy Sensitivity

Trade component, 2024	Value	Share/description	Relevance to study
Total sales	£109.3bn	Overall Northern Ireland business sales	Shows the scale of the economy affected by post-Brexit rules.
Sales within Northern Ireland	£69.5bn	63.6% of total sales	Indicates the importance of domestic NI market activity.
Sales to Great Britain	£20.1bn	18.4% of total sales	Shows why GB-NI trade frictions became politically sensitive.
Total exports	£19.6bn	18.0% of total sales	Shows the importance of external markets to NI firms.
Exports to Republic of Ireland	£10.452bn	Largest export destination	Supports the importance of avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland.
Exports to	£4.018bn	Major European	Shows continuing

Rest of Europe	trade destination	economic relevance of EU-related market access.
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Source: NISRA/Invest NI (2026).

Table 3 illustrates why institutional divergence measures became necessary in Northern Ireland. Its economy is closely tied not only to Great Britain but also to the Republic of Ireland and wider European markets, making trade governance highly sensitive. A rigid UK-wide post-Brexit model risked increasing friction, undermining cross-border activity, and complicating governance on the island of Ireland. Distinctive arrangements under the Protocol, later refined through the Windsor Framework, therefore function as policy responses to these structural economic realities.

POLICY EVOLUTION THROUGH LEGAL REFORM, TRADE ADJUSTMENT, AND DEMOCRATIC CONSENT

The study shows that post-Brexit governance has evolved through legal modification, differentiated trade mechanisms, and enhanced democratic scrutiny. Northern Ireland's continued alignment with EU single-market rules for goods confirms institutional divergence from Great Britain. At the same time, the Windsor Framework illustrates policy evolution, modifying the earlier Protocol through the Internal Market Scheme, red lane arrangements, labeling requirements, new scrutiny procedures, and the Stormont Brake.

Table 4: Legal and Governance Evidence of Policy Evolution

Policy/legal development	Verified empirical evidence	Effect on policy evolution
Protocol/Windsor Framework	Northern Ireland aligns with EU single-market laws for goods, unlike the rest of the UK.	Created a distinct regulatory regime for Northern Ireland.
Internal Market Scheme/green lane	Goods staying in Northern Ireland use simplified procedures; goods at risk of entering the EU single market use the red lane.	Reduced some trade burdens while preserving EU single-market safeguards.
Democratic consent vote	Articles 5–10 continued after the 2024 vote by 48 to 36, but without	Institutionalised periodic political review of Northern Ireland's post-

	cross-community support.	Brexit arrangements.
Assimilated law reform	6,925 assimilated law instruments identified; 2,572 revoked or reformed by December 2025.	Shows continuous legal and regulatory adjustment after Brexit.
UK-EU trade position	UK exports to EU = £385.4bn; UK imports from EU = £474.1bn in the four quarters to December 2025.	Confirms that full regulatory separation is constrained by continuing economic interdependence.

Sources: Northern Ireland Assembly (n.d.), House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee (2026), Department for Business and Trade (2026).

Table 4 confirms that post-Brexit policy evolution has unfolded through legal modifications, trade policy redesign, and new democratic scrutiny mechanisms. Northern Ireland’s continued alignment with EU single-market rules for goods demonstrates institutional divergence from Great Britain. At the same time, the Windsor Framework illustrates policy evolution, revising the earlier Protocol through the Internal Market Scheme, red lane arrangements, labeling requirements, new scrutiny procedures, and Stormont Brake. The 2024 consent vote further shows that policy evolution is not merely administrative but also political, since the continuation of Articles 5–10 depends on institutional approval within Northern Ireland (House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee, 2026; Northern Ireland Assembly, n.d.).

The green and red lane arrangements distinguish goods remaining in Northern Ireland from those at risk of entering the EU single market, reducing trade burdens while preserving EU safeguards. Similarly, the democratic consent mechanism provides a political review process through which Northern Ireland’s institutions can periodically approve or contest key post-Brexit arrangements. Together, these measures show that divergence has generated not only policy challenges but also new institutional tools for managing them.

Empirical evidence supports the study’s core argument. Brexit produced institutional divergence by separating the UK from the EU legal order while leaving Northern Ireland in partial regulatory alignment with the EU. At the same time, policy evolution is evident in the redesign of legal, trade, and governance mechanisms through the Protocol, the Windsor Framework, assimilated law reform, and democratic consent arrangements. Overall, the data confirm that institutional divergence has

directly shaped policy evolution in post-Brexit Northern Ireland and the wider United Kingdom.

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings align with Birrell and Gray (2017), who observed that Brexit produced uneven consequences across the devolved administrations, with Northern Ireland most affected due to its land border with the Republic of Ireland and its peace process context. This study similarly shows that Brexit deepened territorial, political, and institutional divergence within the UK. Northern Ireland's Remain vote contrasted sharply with the wider UK's Leave outcome, placing it in a unique post-Brexit position where its regulatory and trade arrangements differ markedly from those of Great Britain. These results reinforce Birrell and Gray's claim that Brexit intensified institutional tensions and exposed weaknesses in intergovernmental policy coordination.

This study supports the arguments of Howell (2020), Egan and Webber (2023), and Whitten (2024), particularly that institutional divergence does not automatically yield full policy independence but instead initiates complex processes of adaptation. Howell (2020) warned that complete regulatory divergence could create market-access uncertainty, while Egan and Webber (2023) noted that the UK's "Global Britain" trade agenda remains constrained by ongoing EU ties. This study confirms these insights, showing that UK-EU trade dependence persists and that Northern Ireland's links with Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and wider European markets necessitate hybrid governance. Likewise, Whitten (2024) identified Northern Ireland as an exceptional case within the UK internal market—a finding reinforced here by evidence that the Protocol and Windsor Framework established a distinct regulatory regime, particularly through EU-aligned goods rules and the green/red lane system. This study only partially aligns with Kelly and Tannam (2023), who emphasized unilateralism, muscular unionism, political mistrust, and identity-based contestation as Northern Ireland's main post-Brexit challenges. It concurs insofar as the 2024 democratic consent vote and lack of cross-community support show that policy evolution remains politically contested. However, this research extends beyond their predominantly political interpretation by demonstrating that institutional divergence also produces tangible policy outcomes, shaping trade governance, regulatory alignment, legal reform, consent mechanisms, and multi-level coordination. Thus, while Kelly and Tannam's findings highlight instability and contestation, the present study offers a more comprehensive explanation by linking these tensions directly to policy evolution across legal, trade, environmental, and governance dimensions.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights institutional divergence as a defining feature of post-Brexit governance in the United Kingdom. Brexit not only withdrew the UK from the EU but also created uneven institutional trajectories within the state. Northern Ireland now occupies a unique position, maintaining partial alignment with EU single-market rules for goods, while Great Britain follows a separate regulatory path. This demonstrates that post-Brexit policy evolution is driven by institutional restructuring, regulatory adjustments, political negotiations, and ongoing UK–EU interdependence. The resulting divergence limits the feasibility of a uniform UK-wide framework, as Northern Ireland’s regulatory position under the Protocol and Windsor Framework introduces legal complexity, political friction, and policy challenges. Future policy in Northern Ireland must prioritize flexible regulatory coordination over rigid assertions of sovereignty. Effective management will require sustained negotiation among Westminster, Northern Ireland’s institutions, the Irish government, and the EU to safeguard trade, uphold peace-process commitments, and ensure policy coherence. Given Northern Ireland’s economic ties to Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and wider European markets, trade and market access remain central. The Windsor Framework, with its green and red lane system, illustrates how policy can reduce friction while respecting EU single-market rules, underscoring the need to balance autonomy with interdependence. Policy evolution in Northern Ireland is as much political as administrative. Democratic consent mechanisms, debates over Articles 5–10 of the Windsor Framework, EU-derived law reforms, and regulatory standards show that institutional divergence requires ongoing review, adaptation, and legitimacy. Managed well, divergence can foster innovation; mismanaged, it risks uncertainty, contestation, and fragmentation. Ultimately, successful post-Brexit governance in Northern Ireland and the wider UK will depend on transparent legal frameworks, inclusive inter-governmental collaboration, and a realistic balance of sovereignty, stability, and shared governance.

We also suggest that a joint regulatory monitoring committee should be established to manage post-Brexit divergence between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Its role would be to identify areas where Northern Ireland’s alignment with EU single-market rules diverges from UK regulations; review trade rules, environmental standards, legislative amendments, and consent mechanisms; and publish periodic reports on affected sectors. The committee should also recommend corrective measures to prevent regulatory gaps from escalating into political or economic problems. This is essential given Brexit’s regulatory fragmentation, overlapping legal frameworks, and policy uncertainty, particularly under the Pro-

tol and Windsor Framework. Policy changes affecting trade, governance, environmental regulation, or internal market arrangements should involve consultation with political parties, business organizations, civil society, regulators, border communities, and UK–EU representatives. Each reform must include a clear impact assessment detailing effects on market access, cross-border cooperation, political stability, regulatory certainty, and environmental protection. Such consultation reduces mistrust, strengthens democratic legitimacy, and ensures policy evolution addresses both sovereignty concerns and the practical needs of Northern Ireland’s economy, institutions, and communities. The study supports this recommendation, emphasizing the role of the Windsor Framework, green/red lane arrangements, assimilated law reforms, and democratic consent mechanisms in shaping post-Brexit governance.

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WHEN WOMEN REBEL: CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN THE GENDER RELATIONS OF OZUITEM, SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

VICTOR UKAOGO & OGECHI UKAOGO

Abstract

Central to issues of male domination and female marginalization in Igboland are cultural attitudes associated with political authority. This study examines the unexamined intrinsic nexus between social and political authority within the arena of gender relations in Igboland, using Ozuitem-Bende women in Southeastern Nigeria as a case study. The study argues that, beyond the matrilineal powers wielded by women in some Igbo social formations, women's 'social authority' (evidenced in the activities of Umuada, which includes declaration of sex strike, etc.) in several Igbo communities has grown into 'political authority' that provides them the platform to participate in village democracy and governance. In this, women have extracted a variant of 'authority' from the men, for which no major decisions can be taken without their input. Using Ozuitem-Bende women as case study, this research affirms that the sheer number and unity of purpose of women including their ability and likelihood to impose sanctions on men especially in the area of detaching or distancing themselves from communal cultural feasts and festivals, refusal to take part in burials and above all, the declaration of sex strike remain instruments readily available to encourage men to 'let go' and involve them in decision making. Scholars of cultural and gender history seem reluctant or unable to investigate the curious link between men's 'natural' authority and women's 'earned' authority in the broader discussion of women's inclusion, marginalization, and authority in Igboland. The study concludes that women's accumulated social authority has made them co-travelers with men in village governance and in community organization/mobilization.

Keywords: Social authority, political authority, village democracy, rural governance, marginalization, sex strike

INTRODUCTION

The strongest weapon the Council had and used against the men was the right to order mass strikes and demonstrations by all women. When ordered to strike, women refused to perform their expected duties and roles, including all domestic, sexual, and maternal services. They would leave the town en masse, carrying only suckling babies.¹

¹ Ifi Amadiume (1987), *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, p. 67.

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We have chosen to preface our academic discussion in this paper with an excerpt from Ifi Amadiume because she showed by the submission above that withdrawal of 'sexual services' by wives from their husbands could bend the iron resolve of men and compel them to reverse policies considered obnoxious by the women. If this does not approximate to power, I doubt what is!! In like manner, the attitude of a husband that tilts towards oppressing the wife is good enough for women to institute a regime of punishment that could be widespread; a regime and sanction of sexual boycott that is emotionally and psychologically crippling. Thus:

In cases of extreme mistreatment of one of them by the husband, they may institute a Lysistrata regime, an economic and sexual boycott in which they may enlist their other sisters in the community.²

In its absurdity, sex strikes and boycotts are nothing short of a display of feminine power to compel obedience from the menfolk, even when men prefer to live in self-denial. Therefore, the nature of political power in Igboland and elsewhere must necessarily include this neglected area of the withdrawal of sexual services by women.

Scholarly debates continue over the nature of the political power women exercise in African communities, especially in Igboland. These debates follow a monorail line of thought, emphasizing that the possession and exercise of political power through village governance are the only true essence, manifestation, and reflection of political power. In this work, I argue to the contrary that, beyond gendered and visible duties that depict masculine presence and superiority, there are several feminine duties that project political power, even when such duties, roles, and functions are ignored by male-centered studies prevalent in centers of scholarship across Africa. Studies on political power in African rural communities glorify mainly the contributions of the men-folk while underestimating the role of women.³ Here, we submit that there is a dearth of scholarly literature on the role of women in these communities, underscoring the need for information on women's involvement in village or rural governance. The cause of this knowledge gap is obvious, especially considering the prejudiced male-patronizing works produced using a "Eurocentric framework of history."⁴ For instance, the role of spirituality and religion in Igbo societies

² Laurent Sharp (1933), *The Social Organization of the Yir-Yoront Tribe*, Cape York Peninsula, Part 1. Kinship and the family: *Oceania* 4: 404-31.

³ Victor Ukaogo (2020), *Androcentrism and Misogyny: Debunking Myths Regarding the Role of Women in the Biafran War Economy, 1967-1970*, *Cogito Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol. XII, no 4, December, 128-155.

⁴ Antwanisha V. Alameen (2013), *Women's Access to Political Power in Ancient Egypt and Igboland: A Critical Study*, Dissertation Submitted to the Temple University

cannot be overemphasized. The power and position of community rulers will be meaningless without the spiritual and religious dimensions. In most studies, this aspect has been conveniently ignored, probably because it will amplify and promote women's role in community administration. Official spiritual and religious positions in communities enabled women to lay claim to spiritual authority, which translated into political power and higher social status in their respective enclaves. This was what Watterson explains further to the effect that:

Women participated in a cult for both religious and social reasons: the holding of a priestly title carried a certain amount of prestige; it was taken as an indication that the holder was a woman of respectability and standing in society, and perhaps as an indication of her intellectual capabilities.⁵

Very importantly, the spiritual position of a priestess carries significant authority in both spiritual and political realms. Although attention drawn to women's role in communities would seem to be a 'romanticization'⁶ of women's role, reality is that two opposing paradigms seek to interpret the role of women in the African political space, namely that which romanticizes women's contribution and the other that holds 'lingering inhibitive cultural and patriarchal forces' responsible for the diminished role of women across African communities.⁷ Scholars such as Zulu Sofola⁸ and Ifi Amadiaume⁹ insist that foreign influence through colonialism diminished women role in African communities through the process of '*de-womanization*'.¹⁰ *De-womanization* is the process by which African women were deliberately eliminated and removed from positions of authority and supplanted with 'less qualified men' in the interest of the colonizers. However, recent research initiatives encourage us to argue that the sexual and

Graduate Board in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy.

⁵ Watterson, B. (1998). *Women in Ancient Egypt*. Phoenix Mill: Wrens Park Publishing, 39.

⁶ V. Alameen (2013), *Women's Access to Political Power in Ancient Egypt and Igboland*...68

⁷ Gloria Chuku (2009), *Igbo Women and Political Participation in Nigeria, 1800s-2005*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 42, No. 1 (2009) 81

⁸ Sofola, Z. (1998), *Feminism and African Womanhood*, in O. Nnaemaka (Ed.), *Sisterhood: Feminisms & Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*, 1-64. Trenton: African World Press.

⁹ Amadiaume, I. (1987). *Male daughters, Female husbands: Gender and Sex in an African society*. London: Zed Books. Also see Amadiaume, I. (1987). *African matriarchal foundations: The Case of Igbo Societies*. Lawrenceville: Karnak House

¹⁰ Sofola, Z. (1998). *Feminism and African Womanhood*. 63.

spiritual perspectives of political authority in Africa must not be ignored in discussions of political authority in Igboland, with reference to the Ozuitem community in the Bende Local Government Area of Abia State, Southeast Nigeria. Women in pre-colonial Igboland held important spiritual roles, earning them society's respect and esteem. Accordingly, the civilizations that resulted from their efforts were societies in which women ruled both politically and spiritually. I therefore argue in this study that a discussion of political authority in Igboland that ignores references to men's sexual pleasures and events in the spiritual world denies the reality of power dynamics in Igboland. Achebe affirmed this and volunteered that in the:

Spiritual political constituency of government, the female principle held greater power than the male, as "goddesses were the primary figures of power and in reference to men who became "male priestesses," authority.¹¹

In line with the above, it is safe to say that women have exercised some degree of independence in the past, even when males have reacted in a variety of ways, ranging from acceptance to accusing women of performing witchcraft.¹²

OZUITEM COMMUNITY: AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY

The 2006 national census conservatively put the population of Ozuitem at about 20,000, even as the entire Bende Local Government area, into which Ozuitem is configured, boasts a population of about 192, 621 people within the same period. The community's location is highly strategic, at the center of the local government area and sharing common boundaries with most communities. This probably justifies the selection of the community as the headquarters of the defunct Elu-Elu County Council between 1960 and 1966. The County Council administered and supervised the day-to-day operations of the areas under its jurisdiction, particularly in education, justice administration, and social welfare. This same jurisdiction is today the Bende local government area, comprising the present 13 Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) electoral wards and 20 Abia State In-

¹¹ Nwando Achebe (2005), *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*, Social History of Africa Series, 37, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann).

¹² Onaiwu Ogbomo (2005), *Women, Power and Society in Pre-colonial Africa*, Lagos Historical Review 5(1), DOI: 10.4314/lhr.v5i1.32524, August

dependent Electoral Commission (ABSIEC) electoral wards. Ozuitem is bounded to the North and Northwest by Igbere and Alayi respectively; to the South and Southeast by Bende and Amaeke Abam respectively; to the East by Umuhu; and to the West by Uzuakoli. A road of six kilometers from Ozuitem joins the Umuahia–Arochukwu Road at Uzuakoli.

The origin of the people comes in folklore, 'romanticized by exotic legends' and 'chronicled in European travel diaries'.¹³ And as Uchendu¹⁴ affirmed on the Igbo origin, it remains a subject of much speculation and has become very worrisome to scholars. It is possible to insist that there are many variants of Ozuitem's origin, but similarities abound across all the narratives. One such narrative by Abraham Idika,¹⁵ and put out in the public domain with further corroborated by some other elderly individuals, states that Ozuitem is culturally divided into three broad sub-groups; the first of which is Isiegbu, comprising Obuofia, Ofiavu, Amaeke, and Amakwu. The second is Agbua, comprising Amankwu, Ndiagbo, Ebem, Amagbo, Umuokorieukwu, Ogboko, and Ndiambe. The third is Mbalaka, made up of Mba, Elugwumba, Mgbele, and Ndiobu. Ozuitem took its name from the individual who founded the town, and according to oral traditions, its origin is traceable to Ntu, a verifiable place near Ugwueke in Bende Local Government Area. An earlier movement had taken the migrants from Okpanku in Afikpo to the new place of Ntu. A brotherly migration took two brothers, namely Omaka and Item Okpi, from Ntu to Item, where Omaka's wife delivered twin babies, which were regarded as taboo and a desecration of the land. As a result, Omaka was banished with his wife. He proceeded on exile to Agbugbo near Amiyi in Igbere and later moved to Avu (Ofiavu). Omaka decided to rest in Avu in present-day Ozuitem and, over time, took his new abode as his home, without wishing to return to his original home. Avu thus became the '*OZUZU IKE ITEM*' (the place where Item rested), which was thereafter shortened to Ozuitem. Many independent scholars seem bold to affirm the authenticity of this account, for which the unity and cultural ties between Item and Ozuitem remain a bold confirmation of consanguine ties. In very specific terms, with undulating topography and a multitude of streams and brooks, the soil in Ozuitem is a mixture of clay, silt, sandstone, and shale, all condu-

¹³ Harris, J. "Paper on the Economic Aspects of the Ozuitem Ibo." *Africa* 14 (1943): 12–23. See also Susan Martins (1988). *Palm Oil and Protest: An Economic History of the Ngwa Region, Southeastern Nigeria, 1800–1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.82.

¹⁴ Victor Uchendu (1965). "The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria: Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology", New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto, London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965., .111

¹⁵ Abraham Idika (1984). "The History of Ozuitem," unpublished B.A dissertation submitted to the Department of History, University of Calabar, Nigeria, p. 23

cive to agriculture. The community presents conducive vegetation for habitation, such as great shrubbery, tall trees, and the gift of regular heavy rainfall between April and October. The population is around 30,000, with a vast majority living outside the community's confines. Due to population growth, terrain, and topography, there has been pressure on land, leading the community to be encumbered by land hunger. The community is 48km away from the nearest. The present study was conducted in this community, which has a rich history of tradition and culture. It is, therefore, not without reason that this study derives much of its conclusion from the bowels of its rich tradition.

WOMEN AND THE HISTORICIZATION OF AUTHORITY AND POWER IN IGBOLAND

Immense scholarly attention has been accorded to women's involvement in local governance in several African societies, including Igboland. The involved scholars emphasize women's roles in political organizations to gauge their level of engagement in governance. Truth is that both men and women demonstrate and wield different levels of power in Igboland, and there was a certain, measured, and seeming equality in power in the era gone by. African and Africanist scholars are united in holding a consensus that an understanding of women's involvement in political governance can be examined from only two perspectives.¹⁶ The first eulogizes and fantasizes on what could be likened to the glorious past of full and adequate women's involvement in power and authority before colonialism, while the second laments the subordination and alienation of women in the era of colonial rule.¹⁷ In understanding this, we must refer to the pioneering works of Afigbo, Nzemiro, and Ohadike in identifying two variants of political structure and organization in Igboland, notably the constitutional monarchy in Oguta, Onitsha, and parts of western Igboland, as well as direct democracy practiced in about 80% of the entire Igboland.¹⁸ In the former with 'constitutional village monarchies', Uchendu¹⁹ and Orji²⁰ in-

¹⁶ Michael Muonwe (2019), *Women in Igbo Traditional Religion and Politics: Prospects for Women's Political Leadership Role in Nigeria*, UJAH, Vol. 20, No. 3, 4

¹⁷ Gloria Chuku (2009), *Igbo Women and Political Participation...*p5. Also see Nwando Achebe (2005), *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*, Social History of Africa Series, 37, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann).

¹⁸ Michael Muonwe (2019), *Women in Igbo Traditional Religion and Politics...*6

¹⁹ Uchendu, V. (1965), *The Igbo of southeast Nigeria*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

²⁰ Orji, J. (2007). *The End of Sacred Authority and the Genesis of Amoral and Disorder in Igbo mini states*. *Dialectical Anthropology* 31, 263-288.

sist that such a political arrangement was alien to Igboland but merely diffused via intrusions from neighbors. This alien political arrangement, where it held sway, had kings who dominated governance and were assisted by elders. At some point in their political trajectory, Chuku affirmed that they were ruled by queens.²¹ In this instance, there is a possible temptation to validly assert that women had a pride of place in village democracy and governance. As a result, the pre-colonial era is considered a glorious era that heralded and witnessed inclusivity and equality with men. However, being of foreign origin, this practice was not acceptable in other parts of Igboland. Conversely, direct democracy was not just 'participatory' and 'intensely decentralized' but was widely accepted and practiced in the majority of Igboland.²² Politically more diffuse with elders occupying a place of relevance and pride, village democracy abhors the dictatorship and dominance of a supposed sovereign who singly makes and executes law all by himself. Good governance is dependent and thus evaluated by the level of inclusivity; how everybody is carried along' by the leader. In Ozuitem, for instance, the elders led the oldest gathering in the 'Olobo', otherwise referred to as the village square, to enact laws and deliberate on issues of importance. The *Olobo* is usually dotted with very old trees that provide shade, with the unearthed roots used as seats. This village assembly was dominated by men, and women may have been in attendance²³ only by invitation.²⁴ This was indeed a system of patriarchy at this period. In the era of the slave trade, it was at the *Olobo* that the British slavers negotiated and dialogued with slave catchers and elders who were, in turn, given gins in lieu of money; at the end of the mutual consumption of the gin, the bottles were broken, the relics of which are still visible to this day in Ozuitem. The broken gin bottles unearthed by the vagaries of the environment command a measure of spectacle for visitors who gladly elect and plead to be allowed to have a deeper look at the relics of a best-forgotten past characterized by village greed and wickedness.

A deeper examination of power and authority arrangement in Igboland in the era before colonialism has been aptly referred to as 'dual-sex political structure by Chuku.²⁵ Clearly characterized by assigned roles to each gender, women took charge of affairs that concern them, while men

²¹ Chuku, G. (2009). Igbo Women and Political Participation in Nigeria, 1880s-2005. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42(1), 81-103.

²² Michael Muonwe (2019), *Women in Igbo Traditional Religion and Politics...* 4-5

²³ Uchendu, V. (1965), *The Igbo of southeast Nigeria*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

²⁴ Michael Muonwe (2019), *Women in Igbo Traditional Religion and Politics...* 7

²⁵ Gloria Chuku (2005), *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria, 1900-1960*. (African Studies.) *New York: Routledge*, 32

had a more general function. While this created a measure of balance of power on the surface, it did not foreclose the reality that rules made by men would still invalidate those creatively fashioned by women. The argument has therefore raised to the effect of pouring cold water on claims of equality in the power relations of this era. How real, how sustainable was this seeming equality that has been so romanticized? The truth is that the monarchical duties assigned to women in this period may be a sign of female participation in governance in Igboland, but they could be more rewarding if they are not taken out of context to approximate equality in political influence with men. Too many scholars have dwelt on and used the pre-colonial political arrangement in western Igbo territories as justification of the claim of 'dual-sex' or power-parity political arrangement, but this seems to have blinded some of them from engaging in research that focuses more on issues that depict real power for women, which the musings of men cannot reduce but accept. Accordingly, Muonwe had it all wrapped up when he summarily volunteered that:

In all, it suffices to surmise that, even though women of Onitsha did enjoy some level of political participation in pre-colonial times, which could be considered better than that enjoyed by women in most parts of Igbo society, their involvement was nothing near being symmetrical to that of men, as some have claimed.²⁶

I therefore argue that a sustainable and more enduring power ticket, deeply rooted in the inner recesses and confines of women, should be regarded as political power, not a shared responsibility with a group eager to ensure a wholesale usurpation of such thinly granted powers, which is so very easy to retrieve.

Sexual and spiritual Power: Insight from Ozuitem Women

Furthermore, I argue that two areas of academic interest should be interrogated to clearly dissect and understand the true and authentic nature of political power in Igboland. This should indeed determine the reality or otherwise of claims and counterclaims regarding power and authority. It is true that research efforts on female participation in political power in Igboland have stalled on the western flank, where the intrusion of alien cultures seemed to ensure gender parity in political authority. My submission here is a charge for change and a focus on neglected themes of sexual and spiritual power in relation to men, and on the political equation of social formations in Igboland.

²⁶ Michael Muonwe (2019), *Women in Igbo Traditional Religion and Politics*, 7.

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TO THE SEXUAL:
A CONTESTED TERRAIN?

The Igbo belief system is deep, and along with other ethnic nationalities in Africa, they are very spiritual.²⁷ This spirituality is all too evident in all that they do, but there is every evidence that the coming of colonialism with Christianity influenced the Igbo traditional worldview negatively.²⁸ The Igbo deeply believe in one creator called Chineke, whom they ascribe everything to²⁹ and in the view of Kalu,³⁰ 'Africans operate with a three-dimensional perception of space: the sky, the earth (land and water), and the ancestral or spirit world, which is located under the earth, but each dimension is interconnected and interdependent.³¹ God (Chukwu), in the view of the Igbo, is supreme and 'is the highest of all and resides in the sky.' This explains the view of Ubah thus:

Chukwu is responsible for all creation. He knows everything, can do everything, but hardly concerns himself with anything. Quite unlike other spirits, Chukwu does not require people to expend their resources in the effort to worship him, unlike God in Christian theology he is not jealous of peoples association with other spirits.³²

From the foregoing, it is evident how deep the Igbo worldview is and its belief system. Central to this understanding is the reality that whoever understands what spirits and havens need can command the obedience of the humans who take their instructions from the source of life. As a result, Chukwu is all-knowing; he uses other spirits to handle issues that are of

²⁷ Antwanisha V. Alameen, (2013), *Women's Access to Political Power in Ancient Egypt and Igboland: A Critical Study*, Dissertation Submitted to the Temple University Graduate Board in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, 147

²⁸ Chukwuezi, B. (2008). *The Relationship between Human Destiny and the Cosmic Forces-A study of the Igbo Worldview*, in Holbrook et al (eds) *African Cultural Astronomy- Current Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy Research in Africa*. Springer Science Business Media. Also see Ubah, C.N. (1982). *The Supreme Being, Divinities and ancestors in Igbo traditional religion: Evidence from Otanchara and Otanzu*. Africa: Journal of the International African Institute. 52: 90-105.

²⁹ Afigbo, A. (2006), *Ancstral Igbo Religion and Cosmos and the Idea of World Religion. Myth, History & Society: The Collected Works of Adiele Afigbo*. Trenton: African World Press.

³⁰ Kalu, O. (2000). *Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa*. In *African Spirituality: Forms*.

³¹ Oriji, J.N. (2011). *Political organization in Nigeria since the late Stone Age: A history of the Igbo people*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

³² Ubah, C.N. (1982). *The Supreme Being*. . .91

lesser importance to him. Chukwu uses spiritual mediums to handle human issues. In handling human matters, Chukwu or Chineke uses several channels, chief among them the deities such as the Earth goddess (Ala), the water goddess, the protective goddess, Priestesses, and other ritual positions. All these deities and goddesses are considered feminine and thus accorded with womanly attributes. They are closely associated with obvious female characteristics, such as mothering, protection, and fertility. In a sense, female deities are the spiritual form of the Igbo woman, being regularly ascribed with Igbo womanhood.³³ The deliberate deification of Igbo women, in turn, makes them 'powerful and revered' and a deep sense of 'identity within the metaphysical framework'.

The masculinization of all sacred authorities in Igboland is a falsification of Igbo reality. It is a false representation that attempts to give a few religious roles to women. It is true that in patrilineal societies, men occupied most priesthood positions, but women played significant roles in religious activities, and many were indeed priestesses. This much was amply displayed by Achebe's narrative of priestess Mgbofor of the Nwachukwa oracle.³⁴ She had everything a man does not have and galvanized obedience and authority in her domain, especially by frontally criticizing and challenging European colonial overkill. Having inspired a rebellion against colonialism, she affirmed her power and authority, demonstrating authority where men merely floundered, stammering into silence. Here, it is discernible that Mgbofor's gender was no deterrent or limitation to speak and act for the people, especially given that her spirituality and 'supernatural powers' worked in tandem with 'her spiritual authoritative position' to enable her, through the strength of purpose and character, to solve her community's problems.

SEX, SEXUALITY, AND POLITICAL POWER IN IGBOLAND

The power of sex should not be underestimated and must count as a weapon of power available to the womenfolk in their torturous relations with men. Most people have come to think of sex as something women give, and men feel entitled to take. This giving, taking, and the associated entitlement mentality is the heart of contestations around sex. Men's entitlement mentality over sex explains why it has become a weapon of sorts

³³ Antwanisha V. Alameen, (2013), *Women's Access to Political Power in Ancient Egypt and Igboland: A Critical Study*, Dissertation Submitted to the Temple University Graduate Board in Partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, 164.

³⁴ Nwando Achebe (2005), *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*, Social History of Africa Series, 37, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann).

used to extract obedience and compliance in all disputes and misunderstandings. The women have accordingly used sex to 'bring about political change for centuries.' The first of these women's resistance to extract men's compliance and obedience was chronicled by the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes in his play *Lysistrata*. In the play, women were mobilized by the heroine and asked them to abstain from sex as a means of bringing the war between Sparta and Athens to an end.³⁵ And in the 1600s, the Native American Iroquois tribe in North America let go of sex as well as childbearing. Their men were regularly at war, especially an unregulated war, to the disapproval of their women. This led to a sex strike and, with it, a request of a political nature to allow them more political power. The men agreed and granted women veto power over all wars. The success of the sex strike is considered the first feminist rebellion in the United States.³⁶

Another successful sex rebellion came in recent times in Liberia when, in 2003, the 'instigator' Leymah Gbowee incited women against men with mass sexual abstinence in the greater task of ending the war in the country. Sex strike became a tool in the hands of the peace movement to end the Liberian civil war. She was later rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. Sex strike is effective in all climes, as also evidenced in two Colombian cities; first in Pereira, where the wives of gangs and mobsters took a stand and staged a sex strike, asking their male lovers to end violence and gangsterism. The result was a deep decline of 26.5% in the murder rate recorded in the city.³⁷ In the second city, a three and half months of 'crossed legs sex strike elicited government attention to have a road repaired and paved.³⁸ In 2009, women went on a seven-day sex strike 'to make the opposing leaders of the Kenyan government stop squabbling with each other, and even tried to mobilize the politicians' wives and sex workers to join — to get all the bases covered'.³⁹ In reporting this celebrated event, the BBC teased that 'Great decisions are made during pillow talk, so we are asking the two ladies at that intimate moment to ask their husbands: 'Darling, can you do something for Kenya?''⁴⁰

³⁵ Rajvi Desai (2019), *No Sex for You: The History of the Sex Strike as a Form of Resistance*, *The Swaddle*, May 15

³⁶ Rajvi Desai (2019), *No Sex for You: The History of the Sex Strike as a Form of Resistance*, *The Swaddle*, May 15

³⁷ Rajvi Desai (2019), *No Sex for You: The History of the Sex Strike as a Form of Resistance*, *The Swaddle*, May 15

³⁸ Rajvi Desai (2019), *No Sex for You: The History of the Sex Strike as a Form of Resistance*, *The Swaddle*, May 15

³⁹ Rajvi Desai (2019), *No Sex for You: The History of the Sex Strike as a Form of Resistance*, *The Swaddle*, May 15.

⁴⁰BBC Report cited in Rajvi Desai (2019), *No Sex for You: The History of the Sex Strike as a Form of Resistance*, *The Swaddle*, May 15

I have taken the pain to historicize the sex strike as a background to what Ozuitem women have had to resort to compel the men to accede to inclusivity in local governance. Madam Oti, who led the last sex strike in Umuobasiukwu Ozuitem in 2015, informed with a bemusing smile on her lips that she discovered early in her marriage that her husband was a fierce man in tender matters of the heart and would stop at nothing to please the wife, provided the disagreement did not involve sex. On the processes and procedures leading to the strike, Oti teased:

I mobilized other women, especially the younger ones, on the need to compel our husbands to agree with us on several issues related to marriage, notably dowry and sundry purchases. We also agreed to sensitize the old and very elderly women to do their best in this regard. In less than one week of sensitization and mobilization, we struck, and for 9 days, our husbands were at a loss as to what had happened. They reported to the *Umuada*, but it was too late, as we had already convinced the *Umuada* that dowry matters must be revisited if our daughters are not to be stuck at home without suitors.⁴¹

Speaking to one of the participants of the sex strike, Mrs. Roseline Ndubuaku, she volunteered that

My husband initially thought it was one of my usual jokes and pranks, but on the second day after a night of alcohol consumption, he sauntered home late and jumped into bed after a shower, and began his preliminary signs of sexual engagement, but I calmly reiterated my sermon of the last night on the imperative of discussing with other men and elders on the issue at hand. When pleas fell on deaf ears, I observed that in the morning he bone-facedly entered the communal compound, where I believed initial discussions on the women's request began.⁴²

A preponderant number of male respondents in the community confirmed the ordeal the women put them through and glibly muttered that it appears 'these women would stop at nothing to get what they want,' but he sounded more worried when he wondered whether the women would not make the ancestors come against them.⁴³ The success of the

⁴¹ Personal Communication with Mrs. Abigail Oti (45 years), Ndiuguru-Umuobasiukwu Ozuitem, 21 January 2022.

⁴² Personal Communication with Roseline Madubuaku, Ndiokala-Umuobasiukwu, Ozuitem, 21 January 2022.

⁴³ Personal Communication, Mr. Emelike Mbonu, Oti (60 years), Ndiuche-Umuobasiukwu Ozuitem, 21 January 2022.

Ozuiem sex strike is a signal that the womenfolk can use all manner of their largely unrecognized power to compel obedience at home.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores gender dynamics in Igboland, using a comparative lens to argue that despite the outward appearance of male-dominated politics, women exert significant influence over local governance. Specifically, it highlights how women—often through the strategic use of "the sex weapon"—successfully navigate and direct political outcomes. Using the rural community of Ozubulu as a case study, the research reveals a frequently overlooked dimension of how political power is actually negotiated and held.

RETHINKING MANDATORY IMPACT FACTOR JOURNAL PUBLICATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AS SYMBOL OF POST-COLONIAL SELF-ENSLAVEMENT

ELIKE IKECHUKWU & NATHAN OGUCHIE

Abstract

Over the past decade, some Nigerian universities have increasingly mandated Impact Factor (IF) journal publications for faculty promotion, with a preference for Western-edited or IF-ranked journals. This practice, though varying across institutions, results in significant capital outflow and knowledge transfer to the West, perpetuating a scholarly dependency reminiscent of colonial times. This study aims to stimulate discourse on this phenomenon. Utilizing online surveys, the opinions of university faculty are collected regarding mandatory IF journal publication. The investigation delves into several critical dimensions, including decolonial ideologies, economic ramifications, intellectual ownership, scholarly autonomy, and the pursuit of balanced perspectives of intellectual exchange. By exploring these facets, the study seeks to illuminate the complexities of integrating Western-centric publication standards within Nigerian academia. It endeavors to prompt critical reflection and foster debate among scholars concerning the implications of such practices. This examination is imperative for advancing an understanding of the broader dynamics shaping academic evaluation and knowledge dissemination in Nigeria, while also advocating for greater agency and autonomy within the scholarly community.

Keywords: impact factor, journal articles, decolonial ideologies

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, journal impact factor has been one major issue scholars have considered in a bid to make public their research. The Impact Factor (IF) of a journal is defined by the University of Illinois Chicago (2024) as “a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has

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been cited in a particular year. It is used to measure the importance or rank of a journal by calculating the number of times its articles are cited.

This concept was introduced by Eugene Garfield, an American linguist and businessman who founded the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) in Philadelphia in 1956. The ISI was part of his efforts to articulate a systemic approach to indexing scientific publications, drawing on his previous experience at the Welch Medical Library at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and on his exposure to Shepard's Citations. Garfield, in his work titled *"Citation indexes for science. A new dimension in documentation through association of ideas"* wrote that:

The utility of a citation index in any field must be considered from the point of view of the transmission of ideas. A thorough scientist cannot be satisfied merely with searching the literature through indexes and bibliographies if he is going to establish the history of an idea. He must obviously do a great deal of organized, as well as eclectic, reading. The latter is necessary because it is impossible for any one person (the indexer) to anticipate all the thought processes of a user. Conventional subject indexes are, thereby, limited in their attempt to provide an ideal key to the literature. The same may be said of classification schemes. In tracking down the origins of an idea, the citation index can be of real help. This is well illustrated by an example from my own experience (Garfield E., 2006).

This thought justified his approach to the Impact Factor through the ISI as a system that ranks scientific publications by their degree of citation, thereby emphasizing the relevance of journals or articles among the myriad of circulating publications. ISI faced bankruptcy and was sold in 1992 to Thomson Scientific and Healthcare. The Institute for Scientific Information thereby became Thomson ISI, which became widely known as Thomson Reuters.

About 16 years later, in 2018, Thomson Reuters was acquired by Onex Corporation and Baring Private Equity, the founders of Clarivate, which currently publishes the Journal Citation Report (JCR). So, one can firmly say that the need for an effective model for indexing scientific publications led to the establishment of an enterprise. Therefore, highlighting the business aspect and the presence of financial interests in the concept of journal indexing.

The concept of impact factor has been broadly criticized by scholars. McKiernan, Alperin, & Fleerackers (2019) of the London School of Economics and Political Science stated that "although the Journal Impact Factor was originally developed to help libraries make indexing and purchas-

ing decisions for their journal collections, it has become a proxy for quality—not just of the journals academics publish in, but of the academics themselves. Many now believe that publishing works in high IF journals is an essential step to achieving academic success”. On the aspect of institutional approach to impact factor, especially for assessment and promotion of academic staff, Chukwuemeka, Chekwubechukwu, & Obuteaku (2018) in their study conclude that “its application as measurement index for evaluation of lecturers negates the goal for which it was introduced”. This view is one shared by the outcome of The Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) on December 16, 2012, by the American Society for Cell Biology in San Francisco.

The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment highlighted that the journal impact factor was originally created as a tool to help librarians identify journals to purchase, not as a measure of the scientific quality of research articles. They therefore recommend that journal-based metrics, such as the impact factor, should not be used as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist’s contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.

Besides these points, some authors in Nigeria have specifically criticized the use of the impact factor as a mandatory requirement for employment or for the assessment of academic staff’s promotion in Nigerian universities. In fact, it has been stated that impact factor journal articles carry more weight in promotion discussions than, for instance, books, monographs, occasional publications (the proceedings of in-house seminars or workshops), or book chapters (Olukoju, 2020).

While the debate over the validity of the impact factor as a measure of a researcher’s scholarly contribution lingers, this study seeks to interrogate its appropriation as a yardstick for the employment or promotion of academic staff in Nigerian universities. This is especially as it took its root in the West, its adoption in Nigerian universities and the broad implications for local journals as well as scholarly practices in Nigeria, as a comparative discourse with the nature of the corrosive impact of neo-colonialism on traditional cultures. To this end, the following constitute the specific objectives of this study:

1. To ascertain if the cost of publishing abroad constitutes a significant volume of capital flight
2. To find out the relationship between journal article relevance and where it is published
3. To evaluate the attitude of Nigerian academics towards local journals

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact Factor (IF) is a metric used to evaluate the importance and influence of academic journals. Originally introduced by Eugene Garfield in the 1960s, the IF measures the average number of citations received per paper published in a journal during a specified period. This practice of ranking journals and journal articles is widely seen as a way to rate a journal's value and the scholarly contributions of its authors.

While the Impact Factor (IF) or Journal Impact Factor (JIF) metrics are indexed and published by Clarivate, the offshoot company from Onex Corporation and Baring Private Equity that acquired the intellectual property and science business of Thomson Reuters (PR News Wire, 2016), other journal citation metrics now exist that index journal and article metrics such as CiteScore (CS) and Eigenfactor Score. The Impact Factor or Journal Impact Factor is the yearly mean number of articles published in the previous two years of a particular journal. Released the following year, the calculation accounts for the average number of citations to papers published two years prior to the year being reported to determine the impact factor for that year. This system does not consider citations per article but rather aggregates citations for each article within the journal and uses the average to calculate the Journal Impact Factor. The Journal Impact Factor is published annually as the Journal Citation Report (JCR) by Clarivate. The JCR is integrated with the Web of Science, which makes it accessible. However, the individual citation index per journal article is documented in a JCR repository that is not publicly available. Hence, the JCR Impact Factor is a proprietary value defined and calculated by ISI and cannot be independently verified by external users (Hubbard & McVeigh, 2011).

There are others, such as CiteScore and Eigenfactor. CiteScore is a relatively recent journal evaluation metric by Elsevier. It has gained widespread popularity as an alternative to the Impact Factor of Clarivate's Journal Citation Report. CiteScore is produced based on the citation metrics obtained from the Scopus database. According to Elsevier (2016), CiteScore metrics calculate citations from all documents published in year one to all documents published in the prior three years for a given title. For example, to calculate a 2015 value, CiteScore counts the citations received in 2015 to documents published in 2012, 2013 and 2014. This number is divided by the number of documents indexed on Scopus published in 2012, 2013 and 2014. This is quite different from the Impact Factor metrics which uses a two-year period.

Just as with Impact Factor, Citescore has also received fair criticism from scholars, including concerns about conflicts of interest. Bergstrom & West (2016) noted that Elsevier not only owns the division (Scopus) that produces the CiteScore rankings but also publishes a large fraction of the journals ranked therein. We consider it unlikely that Scopus is actively tampering with citation or article counts to benefit Elsevier publications.

But it does seem worth asking whether the particular choice of metrics benefits Elsevier's publishing interests. Davis (2016) noted that, in sum, the CiteScore indicator does not appear to be a viable alternative to the Impact Factor.

For this reason, other establishments and institutions have made attempts at providing tailored journal metric systems such as the h-Index, Google Scholar Metrics and country based system such as the Chinese Science Citation Database (CSCD), Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) and Indian Citation Index (ICI) that serve their unique peculiarities and also with less issue concerning access to the raw data as well conflict of interest and other incentives that can be considered to jeopardise the data integrity. However, one common thread is that they intend to provide metrics on journals and their citation frequency to assign values and promote scholarly publication. As Gorin, Koroleva, Gerasimov, and Voronov (2020) noted, implementing the RSCI project had a positive impact on the full spectrum of Russian academic journals, which are increasingly committed to improving their work to continue to be part of the RSCI databases. This shows how a tailored metric system can help overcome challenges in existing systems and promote the spirit of publication among scholars.

Despite several pitfalls, journal metrics systematically promote journal quality and improve the quality of academic output. This is especially true as they develop standardized practices for publication.

JOURNAL METRICS AND NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

It is noteworthy that, while the concept of journal metrics is a broad subject encompassing all forms of measurement of citations, reach, readership, journal contributions, and the popularity of journals and articles within, this concept has been largely subsumed under the term *Impact Factor* amongst Nigerian scholars. This is largely due to the former *Thomson Reuters Impact Factor system*, now the *Clarivate Impact Factor system*, being one of the first journal metrics introduced to some institutions in Nigeria as a requirement for assessing academic staff for promotion. Notwithstanding, there is significant awareness of other journal metrics, such as CiteScore and SNIP.

Today, the use of citation metrics as a prerequisite for academic staff promotion in some Nigerian universities is gaining wide popularity and acceptance. Adomi & Mordi (2003) noted that all universities emphasize scholarly publication as an important prerequisite for promotion, but some Nigerian universities require academics to have published a specific proportion of their journal articles in foreign journals before they can be promoted to very senior academic ranks.

While it is true that many journals exist locally and abroad, the benefits believed to drive institutional requirements for journal publication are institutional visibility and ratings in various institutional metrics systems. Creamer (1998) in her study had two of her five themes: (3) possible reasons why relatively few faculties publish prolifically, and (5) implications for practice. She noted that faculty publishing productivity is often used as an index of departmental and institutional prestige and is strongly associated with an individual faculty member's reputation, visibility, and advancement within the academic reward structure. Thus, publication can not only advance an individual's career but also enhance an institution's image and bolster the overall reputation of its academics.

In the University of Nigeria as a case in point, Ubachukwu (2017) stated that the use of Impact Factor in the assessment of academic/research staff creative output in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) came into effect in 2006 by the Professor Chiejina-led Committee, adding that the dividend of this decision is already being felt in local, national as well as international academic communities: UNN has remained the number one University in Nigeria based on the 2016 Webometrics Ranking of World Universities.

The University adopted three journal rating metrics, that is, from Thomson Reuters (now Clarivate) Journal Citation Reports (JCR), SCImago Journal Rank (SJR), and Source Normalized Impact Factor per Paper (SNIP). It is important to note that at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, "at least 2, 5, 8 Major Articles in these IF systems are currently being used for promotion to Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor respectively, and at least 1 for the award of Ph.D." (Ubachukwu, 2023, p. 9).

Numerous scholars have raised concerns over the use of IF for academic staff assessment in Nigeria. Professor Damian Opata, as cited in (Agbo, 2021) described the journals as business-oriented media organizations that do not have corresponding social or knowledge impacts, noting that it was unfortunate that the University of Nigeria was among the tertiary institutions using such publications to access their academic staff.

Okoye (2010, p. 2) noted that it is inappropriate for institutions and committees of experts, and sometimes non-experts, to use IF to evaluate individual scientific achievement for the purpose of promotion, given its flaws. To enumerate some of these flaws, the University of Calgary (2024) stated that a large body of research points to the flaws and inappropriate uses of the impact factor and other research metrics. Adding that citation distributions within journals are highly skewed: for example, one "blockbuster" paper or highly cited item such as a review can artificially inflate the metric; Journal Impact Factors can be manipulated (or "gamed") by editorial policy. For example, editors may encourage prospective authors

to cite other items published in the same journal; and also, the data used to calculate the Journal Impact Factors are neither transparent nor openly available to the public.

Another issue relating to the use of Impact Factor for the assessment of academic staff is that a high-quality article published in a journal not indexed by specific bibliometric systems such as Web of Science and Scopus may not count toward the author's credit. As Padron (2022) aptly notes, journals that receive bibliometric attention are select ones included in publication indexes such as Web of Science or Scopus. If your work was published in a journal that is not included in these indexes, it may not have a JIF or other bibliometric.

Similar views have led some other institutions to make strategic decisions on impact factor. For instance, Staffordshire University (2020) noted that the institution recognizes that research metrics have limitations, particularly in certain disciplinary areas and for certain output types. Moreover, we recognize that misused or misapplied metrics can be detrimental to an individual and the institution. They, however, added that research metrics bring great benefits to the University's research by ensuring that scholars publish their work in appropriate outlets, as well as by enabling analysis and understanding of the reach and impact of their research in and beyond academia.

It is important to note that not all fields are adequately represented within each ranking system. However, according to Ezeh (2014), the interesting thing is that lately in the international fora, it is the voices of those in the physical and medical sciences where the Impact Factor calculation originated that are becoming louder and louder against it.

The mechanisms of impact factor rating are entirely Western and neo-colonial, while its application as a measurement index for the evaluation of lecturers negates the goal for which it was introduced (Chukwuemeka, Chekwubechukwu, & Obuteaku, 2018). For Chukwuemeka, Chekwubechukwu, and Fidelia (2018), publishing in highly rated journals has been the primary prerequisite for hiring, appraising, and promoting academics in higher institutions since the beginning of the 21st century. Lecturers became concerned more with this than with classroom activities. To this end, many have raised concerns over the need for impact factor article publications as a necessary requirement for promotion and employment in Nigerian universities.

EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF IMPACT FACTOR IN NIGERIA
AS SELF-ENSLAVEMENT WITH HEGEL'S
MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC

Derived from his work titled "Phenomenology of Spirit", Hegel presents the concept of self-consciousness and the foundation of dominance and submission in human relationships that are established through encounters and interactions. Once two people are brought into close encounters by circumstances, at the individual or group level, there often emerges a struggle to first establish self-worth, then to claim superiority and self that must be recognized by the other. Here, the existence of the other serves to validate the dominant one.

As Feilmeier (1992) explained, in this struggle to determine the objective truth of itself, each consciousness seeks to establish the certainty of its being not only for itself but also for the other. In other words, each consciousness is trying to prove its worth to the other as well as to itself. Therefore, although the clash begins as a struggle to the death, the victor spares the vanquished's life so that the loser may serve as an external, objective witness to the winner's power. Out of this life-and-death conflict emerges a master-slave relationship where the victor is master and the vanquished is slave. Through defeat, the loser has become aware that he is not the objective standard of truth in the world; he has achieved self-consciousness. The master, however, has not discovered his limitedness. He continues to see himself as the measure of all things.

This explains the relationship between Nigeria and the West, particularly her former colonial masters and the institutions that represent Western dominance. The Europe-Africa encounter symbolizes a pivotal moment in defining not just a continental supremacy, but one of race and ideology, as well as the perpetuation of economic dominance. According to Abbattista (2011), at an immediate and practical level, conquest, colonization and trade led to modes of domination or coexistence and multifaceted transcultural relationships. Once Europe was able to suppress Africa through wars and ideologies, it was able to establish a new power dynamic of a master-slave relationship, which the slave trade was just a symptom of the ensuing dynamics. Through early interactions, the West established itself as a superior power and the custodian of an objective standard of truth, while Africa, symbolizing other colonized territories such as India, became self-conscious of its place as a perpetual witness to the West's superiority. This also shaped the direction of technological advancement and growth from then on.

The West defines what is important and what is not. This is vividly exemplified in the demonization of all forms of traditional religious institutions that existed before Africa encountered the West. The idea of the *civil man* came to denote all who adopted European ideals, while the Greek word Barbaros was used to refer to those seen as the others, not belonging to the new class of Western civilization.

So, to belong to this superior class, one must acquire the belief, culture, and technology of the West. This leads to a perpetuation of dependence, which, at best, for the African, is an attempt at belongingness, but for the West, it is a perpetuation of economic dominance and a symbolic reminder of the notion of *place*. It is this desire to belong, even decades after ceremonial independence, that leads to the idea of self-enslavement. That is, the concept of a people who have the capacity to be free but choose to remain as slaves for the sake of belongingness, as they depend on the Master for their definition of truth.

In trying to interrogate this concept of master-slave relationship, Hogan (2018) engages in a contrast between Hegel's conceptualization and that of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He explains that in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon famously distinguishes the colonial master and slave from the master and slave as depicted in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Phenomenology). According to Fanon, while Hegel's master seeks recognition from the slave, the colonial master seeks only work. Moreover, for Fanon, the Hegelian slave differs from the colonial slave because the former eventually gains self-consciousness and freedom through labor, whereas the latter seeks to be like his master—that is, to be white—and thus is unable to find liberation through labor alone (Hogan, 2018).

This idea is seen in our forms of self-articulation and aspiration, and in our institutions, which are constantly being molded in the image of what is perceived as the Western standard. Very often, this is taken even further beyond the limits, such that we try to be more *white* than the white. This is evident in the use of the Impact Factor (a Western concept of library indexing) to assess academic staff for promotion and assign values to scholars in Nigerian universities. The institutional leadership tends to value what is Western as superior in all respects to what is indigenous, without exploring means to establish standards of values peculiar to us as a people. In *The Wretched*, for example, Fanon (2005) argues that colonized people lack freedom not only because they are socially and economically oppressed, but also because they esteem Western values and do not value themselves (Hogan, 2018).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The role of theory in understanding academic studies is primarily to elucidate the relationships among the variables being studied and to establish deeper meanings for how the propositions underlying these relationships are replicated in real-life situations. Theories help stabilize the construct that empirical studies seek to establish. That is why this study adopted *Dependency Theory*.

Theotonio Dos Santos, one of the founders of dependency theory, as cited in (Farny, 2016), describes dependence as “a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected”. Essentially, this theory divides the world into two: the core and the periphery. At the core are the developed nations like the United States and Europe while at the periphery are countries in Africa and Latin America.

Santos emphasizes the historical dimension of the dependency relationships as an historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy, such that it favors some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economies...a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subjected (Santos, 1971, p. 226). The West is seen as benefiting more, only at the expense of developing nations.

This theory, therefore, explains the dependence of Nigerian universities on the IF system as a means of validating their academic staff and promoting institutional growth, while, in return, a significant amount of valuable research work, as well as the costs of publication, is transferred abroad to IF-rated journals for publication.

While at the institutional level, this might seem true. It is imperative to evaluate scholars' views on this trend, particularly after years of IF adoption, to revisit prevailing perspectives. This is particularly drawn from Fanon, who holds that the Hegelian slave eventually gains self-consciousness and freedom through labor. Thus, encapsulating the idea of decolonization.

Decolonization, for Fanon, creates “new men,” men who are free because they have overcome the domination and dehumanization that is colonialism and because they have learned to govern themselves by values of their own creation (Fanon, 2005, p. 36). In doing so, the colonized break from the slavery represented by white values and embrace a form of mastery that comes from generating values of their own (Hogan, 2018). This is the point at which Nigerian universities can develop standards for evaluating journal quality and metrics for staff assessment that take into account indices specific to the scope of work and research practice.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey methods to generate quantitative data. One hundred academic staff were randomly selected from various universities across Nigeria as respondents. The research instrument used in the study

was a questionnaire designed in Google Forms and administered electronically via email and the messaging application WhatsApp.

The responses gathered from the instrument are analyzed and presented below.

RESULT

Of the 100 links shared, 93 valid responses were collected electronically. As an attempt to provide a sense of the respondents' demographics, the data gathered showed that the majority (74.7%) of respondents have a PhD as their highest academic qualification. This shows that most respondents have attained a high level of scholarship. While 20.9% hold an MSc, an MBA, or similar qualifications, others hold a bachelor's degree.

Research objective 1: to ascertain if the cost of publishing abroad constitutes a significant amount of capital flight

The data revealed that while 65.2% of the academics have actually paid to publish their articles in foreign journals, the majority (85.9%) of the total respondents believe it costs a significant amount of money to publish in academic journals outside Nigeria. This shows that the majority of academic staff share the view that the cost of publishing abroad is significantly high. Also, the majority (80.4%) of respondents believe that the cost and publication rates in foreign journals constitute a significant contribution to capital flight from Nigeria.

Research objective 2: To find out the relationship between journal article relevance and where it is published

On the issue of relevance of journal article publication and journal location, while some (23.7%) of the respondents hold that their works are often of global import, a significant proportion (41.9%) are of the view that their works are rather of greater value to their local communities than the foreign journals where they are published. This is also as few (15.1%) agreed that they could care less about where their articles are published.

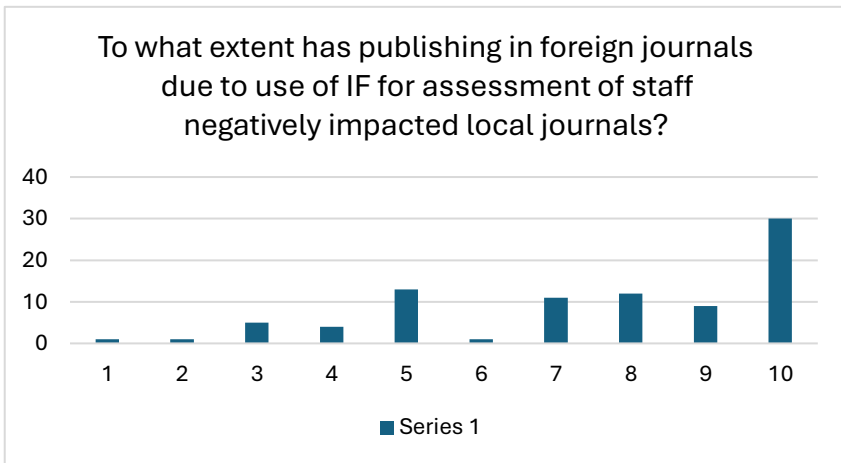
With regards to deciding factors in determining where to publish journal articles, most (45.2%) of the respondents hold that journal impact factor plays a significant role in their decision. Also, the majority (53.8%) say they would prefer to publish in foreign journals based on index citations rather than in a local journal with a wide scholarly readership, regardless of citations.

The data regarding the relationship between the requirement of IF journal articles for assessment and where to publish shows that the major-

ity (61.3%) agree that the requirement of IF journal articles for promotion assessment is the primary reason they publish in foreign journals. That is, this plays a very significant role in their decision of where to publish. These go to show that the impact factor plays a very significant role in determining where journal articles from Nigerian university scholars are published, regardless of subject matter relevance.

Research objective 3: To evaluate the attitude of Nigerian academics towards local journals

To establish the impact of the shift to publish in foreign journals on local journals, the data below, which rates the opinions of scholars from 1 – 10 (1 being very low and 10 very high) shows that there is a dominant view among Nigerian scholars that this practice has had a tremendous negative impact on local journals. It shows that the majority agree that there is a very high negative effect.



Beyond the impact on local journals, the majority (65.6%) of respondents believe this shift to consistently publishing abroad is akin to the pilaging of art and natural resources by colonial masters.

While the majority (44.1%) are of the view that prioritizing publication in a foreign journal is self-enslavement, a few (35.5%) disagreed, and others (20.4%) remain undecided on the issue. Also, most (62.4%) of the respondents disagree that foreign journals are always superior to local journals. This is because some (17.2%) remain neutral, and very few (20.5%) agree.

With regard to developing national standards for academic journals and better metrics for assessing academic staff in Nigerian universities, the majority (87.1%) of academic staff are of the view that they would be willing to reconsider publishing in local journals if Nigerian scholars were

able to establish a minimum standard for local journals. Also, the majority (97.8%) think it is important for Nigerian scholars and institutions to develop a journal ranking system that prioritizes metrics specific to the local academic climate rather than relying on IF.

CONCLUSION

From literature and data gathered in this study, it can be stated that while the use of the impact factor for the assessment of academic staff in Nigerian universities has had the effect of promoting research and institutional visibility, this practice poses a tremendous challenge to the academic system. This is particularly problematic, as it constitutes a significant level of capital flight, leading to the publication of scholarly research in journals where the results make no relevant contribution, and to the death of local journals, which in turn constitute a holistic transfer of local scholarship and research to the West. The implication of which can lead to a monopoly of African thoughts by the West and further our dependence on the developed world for the meaning of life. Thus, advancing the tenets of dependency theory. It also shows that the relationship between Nigerian universities and the Western journal ranking bodies is a symbol of a master-slave relationship, as depicted by Fanon, as opposed to Hegel's Dialectic, as we seem to lack self-consciousness despite our academic work. This is not only because Nigerians are socially and economically oppressed, but also because scholars esteem Western values and do not value local scholarship and publication. Furthermore, it shows that, since our institutions impose this practice on staff, universities are making efforts to emulate those in the Western world through various forms of webometrics without thoughtful consideration of our place and peculiarities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Most research from Nigeria is domiciled in foreign journal webpages, and when a sentence from such work is cited, we refer to it as impact based on citation index. And this has spurred substantial research published in foreign journals to address the need for assessment, leading to significant capital flight. Emphasizing the need to publish locally is important for limiting the extent to which we spend our money abroad to pay for journal article publication.
2. Impact Factor deals primarily with metrics, but not in the way we as Africans are likely to talk about impact. This is especially evi-

dent in problem-solving and addressing significant issues. Nigeria, as a developing country, for instance, is riddled with key developmental challenges; the impact of these challenges can be seen in how specific research has been helpful in solving some of these problems. The idea here is conceptualization. Reorienting ourselves around the meaning of impact will help scholars make better decisions about where to publish, ensuring their findings contribute real value rather than chasing metrics.

3. Just as the current impact factor has helped stimulate a significant amount of research work, a social-impact-based measurement index can instigate more development-oriented studies and valuable research in our societal context. That is, research driven by actions or research stimulated by our unique problems, in which impact can be derived only from the extent to which the studies prove valuable to these issues. This will also likely bridge the gap between industry and researchers, as well as between social and academic institutions. Therefore, it is imperative that scholars in Nigeria work with the relevant institutions to develop local standards. For journal publication and indices for assessment that take into account our specific needs, particularly as a developing nation.

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Literary Criticism Reevaluated: Challenging a Rigid Creative-Critical Dichotomy. By Ada Uzoamaka Azodo. London: GlobeEdit, 2026

How best can learners get the most out of their readings if not through analysis and interpretation of the works and authors they read (9)? How can Africans be sure whether they have gotten dry or not, since the rain started beating them, as noted by Chinua Achebe (29)? Ada Azodo's answer to these questions is literary criticism.

This is a concise, clear, well-researched overview of an immensely complex and important topic. Ada Azodo offers a particularly pertinent perspective on why literary criticism should be regarded as a genre, including the three major ones and lesser-known genres. Acknowledging the inevitable pitfalls and oversimplifications of such an undertaking, Azodo has nevertheless performed a valuable service for scholars, educators, and non-specialist literary researchers. Her book helpfully situated all historical epochs of literature (traditional, precolonial, colonial, contemporary) within a proper understanding of intertextuality. If widely read, it could significantly elevate the utility of current debates over integrating literary criticism as both a critical and creative form of literature.

The book is divided into eight chapters, following the historical periodization of literature from the early to the contemporary period. Each of these chronological sections is further divided into analytical categories that harness disparate currents into a single force. This allowed for an important distinction, since neither the actual presence of a novel, poem, or drama nor the varied interactions among these works (intertextuality) can speak for themselves without critical and creative literary analysis. Even the reader could be lost if he does not understand the text.

Two parallels (most times intertwined) thus form the core of the book. In the first question, current understandings of what literary criticism is and demonstrate what it truly is through the study of the literature of selected illustrious writers (4). Second, casting readers' minds on the distinguishing feature of literary criticism from original scholarly research is itself usually considered a form of literature with no gap (11). That requires both creative and critical thinking to benefit from understanding each other.

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Azodo's first chapter is laudably clear in recognizing that, as literary works proliferate, they are organized into strict genres and that their actions should not always be attributed to less critical motives. Emblematic genres such as the novel, drama, and poem are indeed indicative of African social experiences and history. But they are always executed by the authors who mainly explore their own ideas in their own times, necessitating reassessment. Reassessment in terms of the intergenerational connection between texts, deriving meaning from a text, and expectations of a reader who is either alien or indigenous to the culture represented. Creative literary critics have a lot to contribute here in deciphering the above. An example in chapter two acknowledged the limits of structuration by comparing Yeats, Chinua Achebe, and Chimamanda Adichie. Textual and conceptual boundary fragments exist across the three writings, and criticism is necessary to reveal the connections among biographical, historical, and new historical criticism that have metamorphosed (50). However, Azodo leaves this question unchecked: How do we trust literary criticism? This missed opportunity should be considered for a better conviction.

Appearance, belief, and myth nevertheless do matter. Azodo is careful to acknowledge that, in chapter 3, historical events, such as the colonization of Africa, can assume tremendous significance when they tie into and illustrate narrative or ideological claims about what happens in the present. Africa, as the mother of humanity and cradle of civilization, she argued, has for centuries occupied a place in African history. Therefore, creative criticism can help illuminate the futuristic gaze on Africa's future, as explored in the book through Okot Bitek's two poems (*Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*). Chapter 4 of Felwine Sarr's manifesto and metaphor for a new Africa has been critiqued for positioning readers to recognize the importance of his work in situating Africa within its own values rather than in relation to Europe.

In the fifth chapter, reading the novels of the Senegalese Mariama Bâ and the Nigerian Chinua Achebe, issues of globalization are identified but remain vague, and this is probably understandable without an explanation of how globalization shapes literary readings. These are some key aspects that literary criticism comes to tackle, elucidating how new expressions of identity and issues of literary creation and aesthetic response emerge through rereading (79).

The evolution of love and marriage in Igboland is duly addressed in chapter 6, as popular stereotypes are challenged in the conventional knowledge of Igbo womanhood. But it is ultimately the most recent manifestation of traditional Igbo love of care, respect, and responsibility, rather than a romantic relationship, that Azodo seems

more eager to explore (99). How does this roll through the years with a changing world filled with divorce, lack of extended family support, freedom to live, yearning for satisfaction beyond the person you are supposedly hooked up with? Its shadow lurks throughout the text, though analysis is, for the most part, left to the final chapter (chapter 8) on patriarchy in Flora Nwapa's and Bonne Garmus novels. Here, the notion of feminist literary criticism is invoked to combat gender discrimination and inequality and redistribute power between the sexes and genders (115). Mobility and transnationality in Chapter 7 are compelling observations that migrants' socio-economic and political issues push innovative transnational diasporic literature.

Therefore, literary criticism is worthy of recognition for authors and critics alike, in their shared love of literature and their shared responsibility to address society's concerns at any given time, in any space, and at any era. Azodo's perspective may be colored by her professional work as a long-term professor and researcher, but if she is correct that the perception of an unfounded divide between critical and creative writing requires prioritized examination, then this is indeed cause for concern.

When specialists examine African literature, their framing is usually reduced to thematic content, authorship, and identity of the writer, with an unclear basis of whether a literature should be classified based on the merit it possesses or identity of the author, or even because it treats an African subject, without breaking down the text to interpretations that unearth its complexities and finding deeper significance. Azodo's original contribution is thus telling of a complete story from start to finish with considerations not only for well-known literary genres such as novels, drama, children's literature, film, and poetry, but also how areas that never experience recognition are responsive in their laudable role connecting citizens to norms and truths of societies.

The art and craft of literary criticism provide further scope for comparison and reflection from other disciplines and methods to buttress ideas generated from a text. This is well-developed and accurately summarized for the most part, though some areas need further clarity. An area needing clarification is the distinction between the categories of African literature in the introduction, which does not adequately explain what they entail and instead dwells only on their characteristics. Then the idea of fruitlessness in discovering where a term is borrowed should be taken with a pinch of salt, because even though she posits the non-boundaries in African literature, careful attention to how a term evolved is crucial (28). I appreciate her ex-

planation of how authors who never read each other's work can end up using similar catchphrases, but this should not ultimately preclude the critique of borrowings. These results show no serious deficiencies, and the book remains useful for the field.

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