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**Myth, Ritual and Illusions in John Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*: A Re-Orientation Perspective**

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**Abstract**

*Drama adopts the entertainment medium to inform, educate, conscientize as strong instrument of for social mobilization for the purpose of reorientation. In assuming this pedagogical stance, the importance of myth, ritual and religion in the sociology and worldview of a people cannot be over-estimated. Committed African writers and social critics find these local tools irresistible. John Iwuh explores these ingredients in *The Village Lamb* where Amadi becomes a sacrificial lamb for some seemingly angry gods. Using qualitative analysis, this paper explores the myth surrounding the Osu Caste system in a typical Igbo community, the attitudes of those saddled with guarding culture and tradition, and how the traditional cults manipulate the oracle against members of their communities. Findings reveal that cults and guardians of traditional institutions use their office to witch-hunt perceived enemies, causing suspicion, gross politico-cultural and social- distrust among the people. Further findings reveal that contemporary realities no longer support obnoxiousbeliefs, and recommends that the African society should think toward newer positive alternatives for social cohesion, peace and development.*

**Keywords:** Myth, Ritual, Religion, Belief system, Osu-caste, Re-orientation.

**Introduction**

Across the globe, every society is guided by a set of principles that governs its existence. In the African milieu, instances abound in this regard: there exists a set of principles in the forms of myths, rituals and religion that regulates the African life. These form the language structures, forms, patterns and every other considered communicative and existential concern for the people. Such sets of principles actually form attitudes and regulate behaviours and relationships among them. They also define and suppress realities, address and redress innate experiences, participate in the creation of impressions and even expose and explain the mysteries of the African life. In African post-colonial realism and fiction writings of the 20th century, creative writers use myths,

rituals and religion to frame and interrogate historical events. They thus, have become primary resources for the creative writer in the creative enterprise. However, these fictional or realistic interrogations, which were framed along racial narratives and cultural monolithics, have not helped in universalizing the subject matters treated in such works. To universalize a work through ritual and mythological frames, the mythic figures represented in such a work, if they must attract cross-cultural sympathy, must be seen to be archetypes. Many such products seem to be lacking in archetypal structuration, and thus have failed to attract global conviction, sympathy and attention. Most writers following the opinion of the West, have even gone to the extent of presenting such stories or myths in the manner that saw Africans as deeply barbaric and grossly primitive. But one will not, however, leave not to settle blame on the new generation of African creative writers for abandoning these primary resources as core thematic and plot ingredients in creating 21st century African drama. The contemporary African writer should know that mythology if well utilized, is capable of changing perceptions and creating new orientations. Africa still suffers image and persecution, and our writers can change these negative perceptions when myths are used as re-orientational tools. This is imperative for as many African societies that still wallow in native customs that are anti-progress and development. Myth, ritual and religion are inalienable parts of Africans, and therefore cannot be jettisoned in the life of the people. John Iwuh demonstrates this in his play, *The Village Lamb*, where parochial individual interests and misinterpretations join forces to distort the cosmic order leading to unprecedented destructions. The playwright therefore stresses the importance of change and its adherence in the social and traditional life of Africans. The grudge is holding tenaciously to rigid tradition without parallel view of prevailing situations, which ends up destroying not just the bad aspect of the culture, but its entirety. Suffice it to say scholars of repute have stressed the importance of Myths, ritual and religion to the life of a people.

In affirming the importance of these ingredients in social relations and power dynamics, Bruce Lincoln asserts,

Myths are instrumental in defining and sustaining the cultural codes of society. Such codes are largely prescriptive and provide symbolic significance in narrative form to the power dynamics that determine social stratification (11-12).

Merriam Webster Dictionary describes myth in four broad ways:

\*It is usually traditional story of ostensibly historical nature, unfolding the worldview of a people, practice, belief or natural phenomenon.

\* A popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone, especially one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society.

\*It borders on an unfounded or false notion \* a person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence. \* Lastly, it is the whole body of myth, for the study of culture and religion (Webster Dictionary). Some pundits have also given their definitions. For the classical scholar, Robert Graves, "whatever religious or heroic legends are so foreign to a student's experience that he

cannot believe them to be true" (v) are termed myth. Myth, of course, includes "many legendary accounts that are secular for all practical purposes" (Kirk 11). Note in the definitions that myths are limited to stories that are narrative elements of religion. This implies that other non-narrative elements in religion such as rituals are not myths. On the role religion plays in the life of an African, Mbiti posits:

The individual is immersed in a religious participation which starts from birth and continues after his death, for him, therefore, and for the large community of which he is a part, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama ... the world and practically all his activities in it, are seen and experienced through a religious understanding and meaning.

The role of tradition in social stratification and fortification in discourses on the African life cannot go exhaustive. Tradition remains one of the greatest inalienable sustainers of both the physical and metaphysical aspects of the people's life. Graburn Yelsin informs, "tradition was the name given to those features which, in situations of change were to be handed on, thought about, preserved and not lost." (6). In other words, tradition is the connecting link that ensures societal continuity and perpetuation. It connects the past to the present and links to the future and therefore, binds social relations. Thus, tradition will always remain a subject of contemplation among a beholding people.

The ideas of myth, religion, ritual and tradition have presented dramatic forces in both formal and informal specters of life across global societies. Many societies of the world have explored the resources they provide in projecting their identity to the outside world, and even in retelling their history. Greek is a typical example. By the time we met classical Greek, we saw a society whose mythology told us little or nothing about their primitive past. We saw a society which left behind its moments of primitivism and forged a new dawn for itself. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to explore, through a critical investigation of Iwuh's play, the importance of myth and ritual dramas and veritable instruments of re-orientation in contemporary African societies.

### **Myth Theory**

Myth study dates back to ancient history as a result of rivalry between such great Greek mythologists such as Euhemerus, Sallustius and Plato. The discourses of these critics became developed by the neo-platonists and later received by those of Renaissance. Modern mythologists abound some whom have taken it even to the realm of psychology. Here we have such psycho-mythologists as Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, and the many others in that line up. A derivative of the Greek word mythologia, myth connotes an explanation of stories surrounding a subject matter about a supernatural being. Myth therefore retells a story about a legend, a god, a divinity or (a) super-human being(s). In Greek and Roman senses therefore, myth concerns the retelling and/or explication of stories about their gods, divinities, legends and super-

humans. In Platonian sense, however, it was used as a general term for story-telling and fictions of all kinds. It is instructive to note that not until the 17th century the concern of mythology differs not from the ones conferred to moral, allegory, fable and parable.

However, in contemporary ideology, mythology is used to refer to the accumulated myths of a group of people. It may also refer to the study of such myths. Hence, we can refer to Greek or African mythology as a phrase describing the study of myth told and retold about such respective cultures and civilizations. The mythologist Alan Dundes sees myth to stand as sacred narrative that explains how the world and humanity evolved into their present forms. Alan informs that a narrative is "a story that serves to define the fundamental worldviews of a culture by explaining aspects of the natural world and delineating the psychological and social practices and ideals of a society" (22). Hence, as a social narrative, myth explicates the psycho-social and cultural markings of a given people. In the thinking of Bruce Lincoln, myth is an "ideology in narrative form." (23).

Pejoratively, other terms of meaning have been associated to myth. In a broader perspective for example, myth can be said to refer to any traditional story, imaginary entity or a popular misconception that has gained notoriety among a given people, and accepted as a part of their heritage. Modern scholars however take exception to this perjorative sense of myth, and instead opted to mythos as a better derivative term. Society people today see myth as a reflection of the true account of their remote past. In the Christian world for example, many myths abound which recount events past (real or imagined) that today shape opinions, direct behaviours, form attitudes and mould beliefs.

There exist biblical accounts of many stories that may be identified as myth for which its hearers still believe such to be actual events. There also exists other myths that explain the function of society - myths that hinge on certain institutions, customs, traditions and taboos. The truth about myth is that time makes it a subject of contemplation. Yet other mythists claim that myths are real but distorted accounts of actual historical events. This version insists that stories which later transform into myths did so because those who pass them on from a generation to another get them distorted until the figures that are paraded in the stories gain the statuses of gods. Such mythical tales abound in Greek mythology and are classified under the Euhemerist theory (Euhemerism). Euhemerus who espoused the theory was of the view that Greek gods developed from legends about human beings. Yet another version suggests myth to develop in the form of allegories - either allegories for philosophical or spiritual concerns.

Some others link the existence of myth to ritual. According to the myth-ritual theorists, myths arose to explain rituals. William Smith was the first to make this claim when he asserted "People begin performing rituals for a reason that is not related to myth. Forgetting the original reason for ritual, they try to account for it by inventing myth and claiming the ritual commemorates the events described in the myth." (Segal 63). For such persons therefore, myths

receive their potency and validation through rituals and ritualistic performances. By implication therefore, myth and ritual as such serve as vehicles of communication between the physical and the metaphysical world. Thus, when there is a positive outcome from such communications for the individual or community after the ritual it shows not just a validation of the myth, but that the gods are happy and at peace with humankind, just as a negative response indicates the gods' disapproval of human actions. Therefore, the existences of such gods are shrouded in mythological tales while continual belief and perpetuation must also be tied to rituals that can be validated. This further justifies the inseparable link between myth, ritual and religion. Segal further writes that for some other people, "myths began as allegories for natural phenomena. Apollo represents the sun, Poseidon represents water and so on." (46), which implies that for every myth there must be a symbol of representation. Other myths exist that explain the function of society - myths that hinge on certain institutions, customs, traditions and taboos. The truth about myth is that time makes it a subject of contemplation. Another version of myth theory claims that myths are real but distorted accounts of actual historical events. This version insists that stories which later transform into myths did so because those who pass them on from a generation to another get them distorted until the figures that are paraded in the stories gain the statuses of gods. Such mythical tales abound in Greek mythology and are classified under the Euhemerist theory (Euhemerism). Euhemerus who espoused the theory was of the view that Greek gods developed from the legends about human beings, while "other myths explain how society's customs, institutions and taboos were established and sanctified." (34).

The anthropologist James Frazer believes:

Primitive humans start out with a belief in magical laws, later when they begin to lose faith in magic, they invent myths about gods, claiming that their formerly considered magical rituals are actually religious rituals intended to appease the gods. (56)

What is implied in all these is that meaning to myths are subject to individual and community interpretations. It is also subject to epochal interpretations as different eras in human history attach meanings to myth according to myth's essence to them.

### **Understanding Myths**

One needs to study myths in order to understand and appreciate its function of shaping human behaviours and psychology through changing perspectives. A classical example of the importance of myth in historical formation is that of Greek. It was the importance Greeks of the classical age attached to myth, and to which they consciously fused into their drama and literature that made Greek the hub of nations and of ancient civilization.

To study myth with greater appreciation and understanding, one must lean on the works of such great writers as Levi -Strauss, Frye, Cico, Schelling, Schuller,

Carl Jung, Freud, and the pre-socratic Euhemerus. Euhemerus is one of the most important mythologists to study in myth understanding and appreciation. Euhemerus saw myths as actual historical events that have been distorted and reshaped over many retellings. To him therefore, to understand a people and their way of life, one needs to look into their myth. In the second half of the 19th century, theorists "framed myths as a failed or obsolete mode of thought, often by interpreting myths as the primitive counterparts of modern science." (72). In line with this, E.B Taylor posits that "human thought evolves through various stages, starting with mythological ideas and generally pressing to scientific ideas," but for Lucien Levi-Bruhi, "the primitive mentality is a condition of the human mind and not a stage in its historical development" (75), thus, refuting Taylor's argument of myth evolving into scientific label. For the mythologist Max Muller, myth is a "disease of language." Muller claimed that the emergence of myth was "due to the lack of abstract nouns and neuter gender in ancient languages, " and therefore, "anthropomorphic figures of speech, necessary in such languages, were eventually taken literally, leading to the idea that natural phenomena were in actuality conscious beings or gods." (76). For James Frazer, myth arose "as a misinterpretation of magical rituals, which were themselves based on mistaken ideas of natural laws" (77), and to these,

Humans begin with an unfounded belief in impersonal magical laws. When they realize applications of these laws do not work, they give up their beliefs in natural law in favour of a belief in personal gods controlling nature, thus giving rise to religious myth. Meanwhile, humans continue practicing formerly mythical rituals through force of habit, re-interpreting them as reenactments of mythical events. Finally, humans come to realize nature follows natural laws and they discover their true nature through science. (56).

On his part, the mythologist Robert Segal posits, "by putting mythical thoughts against modern scientific thought, such theories imply modern humans must abandon myth" (78). However, there is a conscious departure between 1st century myth and that of the 21st century. Modern humans are not in anyway to abandon myth for science, and this stems from the fact that modern theorists, unlike their predecessors, see myth to function positively in human civilization. The theorist and critic Carl Jung, for instance tried to discern the psychology behind world myths. Jung posits that all humans share certain innate unconscious psychological forces, which he termed archetypes. Jung believed that despite differentials in cultural relations between societies, there exists mythic similarities or the existence of these archetypes between such cultures. The structuralist, Claude Levi-Strauss interprets myths as set binaries in the minds of humans. Strauss "believed myths reflect patterns in the mind and interpreted those patterns as fixed mental structures, specifically pairs of opposites (good/evil, compassionate/callous), rather than unconscious feelings or urges" (83). Joseph Campbell identified two orders of mythology. The first he said "are metaphorical of spiritual potentiality in the human being", and the other, myths "that have to do with specific societies." (80) Campbell stresses:

For, as in the visible world of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, so also in the visionary world of the gods; there has been a history, and series of mutations, governed by laws, and to show forth such laws is the proper aim of science. (8)

On creative mythology, Campbell surmises that:

In the content of traditional mythology, the symbols are presented in socially maintained rites, through which the individual is required to experience, or will pretend to have experienced, certain insights, sentiments and commitments. In what I'm calling creative mythology, on the other hand, this order is reversed: the individual has had an experience of his own - of order, horror, beauty or even exhilaration - which he seeks to communicate through signs, and if his realization has been of a certain depth and import, his communication will have the force and value of living myth for those, that is to say, who received and respond to it of themselves, with recognition uncoerced. (82)

In other words, myth is communicative and exhumes a form of understanding, which is not, only symbolic but transcends culture specifics. It stands in congeniality with history, politics, ideology and spirituality. Structurally, myth presents itself as a narrative that be studied, understood, interpreted and re-interpreted. In the psychology of Carl Jung, and some structuralists, myth stands as an expression of a culture or a society's desires, dreams, fears, goals, ambitions, aspirations and interests.

Myth has been known to serve various functions in human affairs, its discourse influence has been known to cut across all aspects of human endeavour including the political, psychological, social, cultural, religious, educational and economic spheres. Man finds mythological essences in not just in his relationship with fellow men, but both with the spiritual and nature. Hence, as human behaviour and the religion, the historian Mircea Eliade in 'Myth and Ritual' argued that one of the foremost functions of myth is to establish models for behaviour and that myths may also provide a religious experience: by retelling or reenacting myths, members of traditional societies detach themselves from the present, returning to the mythical age, thereby bringing themselves closer to divinity. Lauri Honko also stresses that: " A society will reenact a myth in an attempt to reproduce the conditions of the mythical age. For example, it will reenact the healing performed by a god in the beginning of time in order to heal someone in the present." (46).

On the connection between myth, religion and modernity, Roland Barthes declares:

That modern culture explores religious experience since it is not the job of science to define human morality, a religious experience is an attempt to connect with a perceived moral past, which is in contrast with the technological present. Such religious experience connected to a perceived moral past will have the potency of shaping present thought, attitude, behaviour and instinct. On the relationship between myth, civilization and development, the mythologist Joseph Campbell writes:

The rise and fall of civilizations in the long broad course of history can be seen largely to be a function of the integrity and cogency of their supporting canons of myth, for not authority but aspirations is the motivator, builder and transformer of civilization. A mythological canon is an organisation of symbols, ineffable in import, by which the energies of aspiration are evoked and gathered toward a focus. (66).

Campbell therefore recognizes the pathological binaries in the history of civilization of nations. Inman earlier work he identified four functions of myth:

In the long view of history of mankind, four essential functions of mythology can be discerned? The first and most destructive - vitalizing all - is the act of eliciting and supporting a sense of awe before a mystery of being. The second function of mythology is to render a cosmology, an image of the universe that will support and be supported by this sense of awe before the mystery of the presence and the presence of the mystery. A third function of mythology is to support the current social order, to integrate the individual organically with his group. The fourth function of mythology is to initiate the individual into the order of realities of his own psyche, and guiding him toward his own spiritual enrichment and realization (65). In other words, myth can serve to elevate, promote, mould, model and even, liberates the human mind. Devdutt Pattanaik, the Indian mythologist posits myth as "a subjective truth of a people that is communicated through stories, symbols and rituals, " adding that "unlike fantasy that is nobody's truth, and history that seeks to be everybody's truth, mythology is somebody's truth." (68).

#### ***The Village Lamb: A Summary.***

The above play written by John Iwuh fundamentally explores the myth surrounding the caste system (Osu) as marked through the Ahiajoku (yam) annual festival ritualized with human heads. Usually, the head sacrificed is that chosen and dedicated to the gods and deities. The festival, aside for a thanksgiving to the gods for good and bounteous harvest is specially punctuated to mark the community's triumph against the white man, and for the unity of the legendary figures who founded their community of Umuebe. It is their singular belief that the success of the festival reassures them of a peaceful relationship with their gods. Usually, the ones chosen for sacrifices in



such yearly festivals are children begotten through illicit affairs, and whom villagers refer to as "the lamb".

A lamb is trained, nurtured and given the best education, as he is willing to acquire. This is done given their conviction that their gods deserve the best of any thing they can offer. Thus, Amadi is sent abroad by the villagers to study medicine with the intention of invoking him back to be sacrificed to their gods - through diabolical means. The priest of the oracle of Umuebe possesses the spiritual power to control Amadi or any other lamb like a robot. Against the continuous warning from Ujowundu (a foster father whom Amadi believes to be his biological father) not to ever return to Umuebe. This was not to be as the chief priest has the spiritual wherewithal to remote him through some amulets hung on the young doctor's neck. These amulets navigates Amadi's mind toward home with the erroneous assumption and believe that he is the most important personality in Umuebe. Therefore, he is willing to render his unconditional and uncompromising services to the clan that made him what he is - A doctor. Nothing matters to him most than the people of Umuebe. At this point, the young doctor whom from birth has been hounded by a magically compelling mandate finds himself returning home to a people he assumed cherished him most.

On the chief priest's and elders' invitation, Amadi goes to the shrine and there, a ritual is performed to which he becomes castrated. By the demand of such ritual, the "real him" is taken away and he goes home a walking-corpse. Meanwhile, all efforts to persuade Amadi by Ujowundu not to attend the festival is to no avail as the amenable doctor becomes tricked again into believing he would deliver a "special speech" at the festival. There he is beheaded. The people of Umuebe finally perpetuate their ritual of human sacrifice as a means to obtain the approval of the gods for a continuous blessing and the aversion of death for the entire community.

#### **Appraising Critical Plot Issues In *The Village Lamb*:**

Like a typical African drama and theatre, *The Village Lamb* parades a great number of themes which include retribution, vendetta, conspiracy, hypocrisy, change, love, hatred, ambition, intrigues, punishment, betrayal, sacrifice, justice, destiny, fate/predetermination, murder, repercussion, alignment, bribery, corruption, suicide, identity, class, diabolism, choice, ritual, and the human quest for meaning to life and service to humanity.

As the play opens with the objective set, and which is to get hold of the lamb for sacrifice. Hence, the dramatic action establishes the trio of Uzokwe the chief priest, Maduako and Ikekwe compelling Ujowundu to have Amadi (the supposed lamb) released for the yearly sacrifice to appease Ahiajoku, the god of yam, sequel to the coming festival. These three visitors to Ujowundu who are members of the Inne cult noticing that Ujowundu is unwilling to have Amadi released for the sacrifice, ask him: "What about the Lamb"? (9). Ujowundu who has been the foster father of Amadi considers it preternatural to give up for sacrifice the man whom he has lived to see as his son. For Ujowundu also, such

act was foolish especially given the enormous resources the community has committed in training him to the status of a medical doctor. For the keeper also, it is morally wrong for humanity to play god by cutting short the life of fellow human for sacrifice to some unknown gods. For Ujowundu, therefore, introspection would suffice here because "This ill-wind is not against a tree trunk ...but on the soft tissues of a human breath. Or would you call a curse a blessing?" (12). On their part, the messengers do not see it from the point of view of Ujowundu. For them, the old man is challenging the resolve of their gods, and thus warns Ujo of the consequences that usually accompany such rebellion. Ikekwe rhetorically asks: "Ujowundu, but you do realize, that this is the gods' case, didn't you? Then we must defend the cause of the gods. Let Amadi answer the call of the sweet breeze. It is due and it is a tradition that we must uphold" (12). In a follow up to the above, Maduako in a rather sarcastic ironic bewilderment asks: "Where is your wisdom? Do you realize that ashes survive fire? A man close to the grave shouldn't destroy the future of the youths. How selfish and unfair to the living!" (12). They go further to warn Ujo of the visitation of the wrath of the gods on his household if he becomes a clog in the realization of the wishes of the gods: "you live by the magnanimity and mercy of the gods achieved by their normal demands, not by your strength or wisdom. Are you out for the forces, shall we pitch you against them? (12). Seemingly perturbed by their psychological bend, Ujo considers their demand for human sacrifice as an act of foolishness and one of moral bankruptcy. It is for him foolish for humans to fight for some gods they consider all-too powerful and omnipresent. If therefore the gods are what they are, they should fight their own battle. He thus questions: "Do you have to inform them? They are omnipresent forces of our community, guiding every moment. They are present even now. Or are they not? (12)

Ujowundu senses that there is a kind of dishonesty and intrigue that surround Amadi's emergence as a chosen lamb for community sacrifice. For him therefore, the gods must have been manipulated by those who claim to be its mouthpiece, and in this doubt, he asks the chief priest: "Did the gods as all-knowing reject his presentation at birth? (12), a question the villains answered in a rather escapist manner saying: "we didn't tell you what we spoke with the oracle about him. His presentation was without question but that doesn't make him a freeborn. A dedication is a dedication, and a sacrifice a sacrifice" (13).

A critical dissecting of the above assertion will reveal Ujowundu's fears: that there is a foul play by the chief priest and his band of evildoers regarding the concession of abnormality of Amadi's birth. Ujo feels the chief priest and his cohorts manipulated the oracle or perhaps refused to report the true faith of Amadi as the oracle had it during the presentation. This position suffices because according to Ujo, "(but) the gods sure do reject those of abnormal births. (13), and because Amadi was not rejected at presentation, it implies he was not of abnormal birth, and therefore should not have been negatively classified. Here, the chief priest's magnanimity: "I, Uzokwe convey the minds of the gods. However, his was a mere dedication rite as a matter of consequence. Do not ask me of what consequence. But now, the lot simply fell on him" (13). Ujo doubts the plausibility of the above claim by the chief. Reminiscing, here

calls, "There was confusion, in fact doubt, if his father actually committed the act...(13). And the chief priest replies, "the act ran concurrently with other offences"(13). "You didn't say so" (13). The above arguments suggest that there was a grand conspiracy and calculated manipulation of the gods by the chief priest and his acolytes. Hence, there is an obvious possibility that they, and not the gods, determine the fate of Amadi. Even so, Ujowundu believes that it was time the community began to rethink its cultural practices and beliefs. The old man is of the view that changing realities no longer support such barbaric and based practices, and so, he unequivocally tells them: "I haven't accused you; after all you're messengers of the gods. (Pause) But do you ever pause to ponder? Time no longer support your cause. Look around yourselves. (They do) Gray hairs. Lets' brace up, we're behind time...(people) with your kind of obsession do not see change...(I) don't know who is foolish but it's time to examine our ways. Dimgba's blood was Offor's first cup of wind but today Ofo flushes down his annual meal with a cow's" (13-14).

From the above we see that Ujowundu buttresses the ineluctable dynamics of change in human society and the need to brace up with it. Maduako, Uzokwe, Ikekwe and some other members of Umuebe refuse to open their eyes to the prevailing changes, and like most of Achebe's characters, they become consumed by such evolving circumstances. Thus, in their illusion, they rhetoricize: "As we all know, only the deaf dances at the cease of music. Ujowundu, you've lost the dance steps of our rhythm. Shall we call another tune or should we sound the Ikoro"(15). Ironically for these primordial characters, even the Ikoro they talk about recognizes the changing circumstances and has even changed tune, hence Odome asks Mbonu during a discussion at the village square during the festival: "Mbonu, have you noticed any hiccup on the part of the drummers? (22).

Still on the metaphor of change sweeping across their community, the dialogue below by some elders would suffice:

MBONU: What have the elders decided about Amadi? I hear the Inne members are threatening Ujowundu.

ODOME: A man wishing to change the cause of history must have his help among the stars. I hear the elders have given him one week to describe Amadi's mandate to him. But they want him to first as a father persuade him to meet a maiden of his life.

NWAOGU: This sounds like a delicate issue. Is the mark of the lamb no longer effective? Don't you think that the times have something to do with it?

ODOM: Of cause it does...the fear is unfounded. (19)

This reveals in general terms that most villagers acknowledge the import of time and its changing mechanics on their world-view. Hence, they are skeptical regarding the continuous perpetuation of a festival replete with human sacrifice at the very time of their cultural life. Besides, the fact that those marked for such sacrifices revolt against such community resolves is enough to attest to the

changing situations. Ocheze is referenced as a typical example of such revolt. Even Ugochi, Amadi's native choice, who commits suicide for being the lamb's choice, suffices.

### Conclusion

Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* is a problem play that x-rays an instance of the Osu(Outcast) Caste System in a typical Igbo community. Fundamentally, the play explores African worldview through the ingredients of myth, ritual, religion and sacrifice. It is typical of an African Theatre. Through such characters as Ujowundu, the priest of Umuosu, the police officers, Janet, et cetera, the playwright captures, as well as exposes, some of the intrigues that played out in most African societies regarding traditional dicta that not only reared the emergence of some belief practices like the caste system, but beliefs that currently are at odds with prevailing realities. Through the above characters and their juxtaposed villains, the playwright exposes the inner truths that most often were genesis to the human crisis that triggered such social anathema. Iwuh, just his likes, sees the caste system as a myth created by some human elements in society with the aim of perpetuating dominance over others. A lot many stories abound that support the playwright's opinion. The playwright does not condemn traditional Africa society that is replete with festivals, rituals, sacrifices, religion and the plethora of such mythologies, but that oftentimes, guardians of such traditions, for their selfish ends, manipulate the forces behind such deities at the disdain of social justice and fairness. Instances that support this claim abound in the play. Thus, through some characters as the dialogue below shows, the nature of such characters are exposed:

SERGEANT: Oga, I want you to see this case like that one for Amanze, that village weydey go kill another village for their sacrifice.

CORPORAL: Oga, na true. Me I feel say some true dey for wetin that old man dey talk.

If fowl weyget chicken dey look up deyhala, e mean say wicked bird dey up.

SERGEANT: Oga, that chief priest na trickish man. True, true me no sure say that young man e well. Me I for like make we pick interest for this case. Give us power make we talk to that old man private, he knows many things and e ready to talk. (85-86).

The play in fact demonstrates that even the Western culture made manifest through the presence of the police officers supports the existence of the people's culture alongside it. This receptive sentiment is punctuated during the warrant of arrest over the killing of Uzomba. Here, Ujowundu who is a native and therefore knows the importance of the festival to the worldview of the people suggests that the festival be put on hold, but on this, the Police Inspector replies: " (*To Ujowundu as Amadi staggers away*) I'm sorry I will have to permit the festival but we shall be sending our men" (85). This implies that modern

sensibility supports flexibility, and that is the sense of postmodernism. If seen from the perspective that mythological tales are capable of changing people's ideology by winning their sympathy, change their attitudes, change their behaviour and change their opinion, the truth in that statement can be accepted as plausible. To begin with, African creative artists must go back to the drawing board by developing African myths and mythologies that offer themselves as ingredients of reflection of the African situation. What the African creative writer must do is to toe the line of Iwuh and some other creative artists whose works have helped create alternative myth that project the continent in positive light. In like manner, J.P Clark's *Song of a Goat*, Ogonna Agu's *Cry of a Maiden*, Kalu Uka's *Ikhanna*, et cetera, are worth mentioning here. Their novels counterparts are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* suffice as recognizable examples. The reason for this is that it is only through such mythological tales that insights into a people's behaviour and attitudes are exposed, shaped and projected. Such offerings also help to expose some of the intricacies that characterized human socialization within such society, even as it further exposes devious ills perpetrated among them.

Mythologies when properly structured are capable of influencing human thinking. Looking at Greek civilization through Greek mythological perspective reveal a radical shift in thinking and ideology showing that the Greeks engaged in the creative shaping and reshaping of their myths and rituals to chart a new course for themselves. The reality of Greek civilization was that Greeks changed their psychology to life and by extension that of the human race when they engaged in the radical overhauling of the content and context of their myths. In contrast with other nations around them, the Greeks in their mythos made their gods in their own image. Unlike the Romans and Egyptians of that era, and other emerging societies of the world whose gods were made in abstracted, terrifying, brutish, and ferocious images, the Greeks imbued their gods with human personalities.

When we create myth, we fix our society, our individuality, our desires, our aspirations, our fears, our thoughts, our culture, our religion, our adventures; our tradition, our custom, our escapades, and our history in the construction of such myths. When we create myths, we usually are working in the construction of archetypes, and because myth is ideological and readily reflects its ideology in the conscious reader or listener, archetypal images used in myth narratives help a society transcend present historical situations. Well-crafted archetypal images in myth persuade readers to tilt toward particular ideological positions. For readers who are strange to such myths, it makes them tend to look at it from the angle of the potency of their own myth, and by so doing they begin to be sympathetic, and hence change perspective. The mythologist Edward Chamberlin states:

The stories in which the secular and the sacred are bound together are sometimes hard to believe, like those that say aboriginal people have been here time immemorial or that one prophet is truer than other. But prophets don't speak this kind of truth. That's the whole points of prophets; they

...speak prophecy, which transcends the category of truth-telling without rejecting it..we don't listen to stories in...(web).

Thus, while discourses on ritual, religion and cultural practices that populate a mythic narrative are locked within specific contexts of historical moments, archetypal images in such tales transcend such moments into the future and thus, help shape perspective. In Chamberlin's assertion above, we can recognize a demonstration of the "dialectics of self and other in the mythical discourse". Archetypal images in myths serve as prophetic speeches that transcend present category of truth telling in present realities without rejecting that told about the future, which it also has the capacity to reject if told in bad faith. What is implied here is that the creative drama-mythologist not only can tell the truth about his society through such categories, but also can explore archetypes in such myths as oracular offerings in telling the future of such society. For Iwuh therefore, characters such as the chief priest and his acolytes represent such negative archetypes as the tricksters in Western literature, and the playwright believes that the antics of such tricksters gave rise to the caste trope that has continued to perpetuate itself in Igbo society.

The playwright does not in any way suggest an annihilation of African traditional practices and customs but rather frowns at some of its contents. In fact the play demonstrates that even the Western culture made manifest through the presence of the police officers support the existence of the people's culture along side it.

From the foregoing, therefore, one would admonish that the imperative for the African creative drama-mythologist is to engage in a critical recalibration of the mythological space that will accommodate newer creations, proper shaping and reshaping of the old and the discarding of the filth, such that both natives and foreigners can listen to the African story and find potency in them. The narrative of myth created contextually with the scrutiny of convincing, sympathetic and satiric rhetoric has the capacity to persuade hearers bend towards desired ideological perspective. African creative mythologists must be capable of creating archetypal myths that can attract subjective sympathy, approval or condemnation by all.

Finally, just like in *The Village Lamb*, African creative writers need to exact conscious efforts through their works if they must reverse our negative understanding of ourselves as imposed on us by such characters as explored in the play. Revising our identity therefore requires a shift in the language we speak of ourselves, in the metaphor we use about ourselves, in the phrase we use on ourselves, in our dialogue in relationship with our various gods, deities and superhuman elements, and most especially, in the image we make of ourselves. We can revise and reverse our history, recreate our social relations and the impression about us by recreating our myths to suit our desire. That the researcher believes is Iwuh's thesis in *The Village Lamb*. The validity of this paper, therefore, lies in the fact that the idea of religion, ritual, myth and sacrifice is to provide a general spectrum of happiness, satisfaction and

fulfillment for the vast members of the citizens of a beholding community and that any attempt to diminish any of these aspirations for any portion of that community betrays these primary essences, and thus calls for abolishment.

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