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3 **Indigenous Socio-political and Cultural Similarities in Africa: The Case of the Igbo of** 4 **Nigeria and the Jola of The Gambia**

5

6 **Abstract**

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8 *A major thrust of this paper's analysis is the indigenous socio-political and cultural*
9 *similarities in Africa, in particular the case of the Igbo of Nigeria and the Jola tribe of The*
10 *Gambia. The study aims at identifying the areas of similarities between these cultures in a*
11 *context in which indigenous cultural and socio-political framework of society has witnessed*
12 *significant transformations over the years. Using multi case studies strategy of inquiry, this*
13 *paper addressed two key broad research questions, first, whether veritable similarities could*
14 *be found between the two cultures, or whether identified similarities mere coincidence or did*
15 *arise from the fact both groups having the same ancestry but subsequently dispersed into*
16 *different directions and locations in search for arable lands? Second, does ethno-cultural*
17 *interrelatedness of societies arise from shared historical ancestry? In this context, it*
18 *established strong link between the cultures the Igbo of Nigeria and the Jola ethnic of The*
19 *Gambia suggesting that the similarities are real and pervasive. The paper further suggests*
20 *that the complex network of relationships and kinship ties found in both Igbo and Jola*
21 *cultures appear to provide the impetus for persisting social consciousness and observance of*
22 *the customs, traditions, and cultural ethos, attitudes and perceptions that animate and sustain*
23 *cultural colourations, which have survived over the years retaining some key cultural*
24 *elements of traditional society that sets them apart from other ethno-cultural groups in*
25 *contemporary West Africa.*

26

27

28 **Introduction**

29 Indigenous African cultures and traditions are closely related, and there is evidence of mutual
30 understanding, co-existence and collaboration among the several but diverse cultures of the
31 continent. Though diverse, there appears to be much that they share in common. Some of
32 these shared traditional cultural characteristics include highly structured social systems rooted
33 in socio-philosophical concepts of spirituality, mysticism, compromise, contentment and
34 happiness. The social concept of mysticism is about self-discipline and submission of
35 personal ego to the general interest of the community. Contentment is an attribute of what the
36 traditional African considered a good life, which summarizes the simplicity of the African

37 mode of living. Compromise, which is essentially spiritual, if you like, psychological, placed
38 that social obligation on the traditional African to seek the preservation of the group, rather
39 than self-pursuit in conflict situations. Thus, the highly spiritualized traditional African
40 operated in a cultural context that ensured social cohesion and system's maintenance in the
41 simplicity of pursuit of good life and happiness, which is measured in terms of ability to
42 overcome one's worries over material things. African socio-political system, processes and
43 structures are deeply rooted in these shared cultural features, customs and traditions of
44 peoples of Africa, which were important in ensuring balance, maintaining order, settling or
45 eliminating conflict and disputes, and regulating the indigenous society.

46

47 The Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria and the Jola of The Gambia are selected for this study
48 primarily because of their comparable cultural values. The paper argues that both cultures
49 demonstrated respect for indigenous knowledge and institutions and in spite of cultural
50 infiltrations modernism and western colonization over the years have tended to maintain
51 undiluted cultures. Further, in both cultures, established traditional and religious systems
52 continue to shape the behaviour of individuals and families in the contemporary era. These
53 cultural groups share similar culture, traditions, norms, values, socio-political and economic
54 organisation within the West African sub region. The Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria are found
55 mainly in south-eastern Nigeria, with a total land area of about 15,800 square miles or about
56 41,000 square kilometres (Forsythe, 2006). As a people, the Igbo are located on both sides of
57 the River Niger and occupy most of south-eastern Nigeria. Its geographical location includes
58 the old provinces of Onitsha, Owerri, East Rivers, Southeast Benin, West Ogoja, and
59 Northeast Warri. In contemporary Nigerian history, the Igbo have claimed all these areas as
60 the protectorate of the "Niger Districts." Thus, in the context of contemporarily regional
61 politics in Nigeria, began the process of wider unification of the tribal group and their

62 incorporation into wider political and administrative units. Presently, they constitute the
63 entire Enugu State, Anambra State, Abia State, Imo State, Ebonyi State and the Ahoada area
64 of Rivers State. Other Igbo-speaking people west of the Niger are inhabitants of the Asaba,
65 Ika, and Agbo areas of Delta State. On the other hand, the Jola ethnic group is one of the
66 ethnic groups in The Gambia and is found mainly on the Atlantic coast around the southern
67 banks of The Gambia River, the Casamance region of Senegal and the northern part of
68 Guinea-Bissau. The Jola settlement is believed to have preceded the Mandinka and Fula
69 peoples in the river-line coast of Senegambia and may have migrated into Casamance, which
70 was their original homeland before the 13th century. The Jola ethnic group consists of
71 numerous communities or village groups. These communities are based on extended clan
72 settlements, which are considered large enough to be given independent names such as the
73 Jola Karon, Jola Mlomp, Jola Elinnkin, Jola Caginol, Jola Huluf, Jola Jamat, Jola Joheyt, Jola
74 Bayot, Jola Brin, Jola kassa, Jola Seleky, Jola Kabrouse, Jola Jiwat, and Jola Foni (Sonko-
75 Godwin, 1985).

76

77 Stories affirming relationships between peoples or ethnic groups now widely separated in
78 spatial, historical, and cultural terms persist today, not only in West Africa but also
79 throughout Africa, in other parts of Asia, Americas, and Europe. The basis of such stories is
80 the assumption of a Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) biblical framework as applicable to all of
81 human history. In reference to West Africa, this has taken the form of assuming the putative
82 descent of Africans from Noah's offspring, a model which firmly centred the beginning of
83 West African history in the Near East rather than in West Africa itself. It is therefore in this
84 historical context that that the cultural nexus between the Igbo and Jola groups and
85 considered.

86

87 Since both ethnic groups appear to have many things in common, perhaps seemingly similar
88 cultural values, customs and traditions, socio-political organization of society, and economic
89 system, systematic investigations are justified. Thus, this research questions are, first,
90 whether the apparent similarity could be mere coincidence or do both groups have the same
91 ancestry but subsequently dispersed into different directions and locations in search for arable
92 lands? Second, does ethno-cultural interrelatedness of societies arise from shared historical
93 ancestry? This study seeks to examine cultural similarities between the Igbo of Nigeria and
94 the Jola of ethnic of The Gambia and the nature of their cultural link. It further attempts to
95 establish a historical explanation for socio-cultural commonalities among the groups.

96 The study adopts multiple case studies as a strategy of inquiry and qualitative data collection
97 methods, which allows for the use of selected cases to explore a social, political, religious,
98 cultural or economic phenomena of interest based on the researcher's curiosity (Yin, 1994).
99 Data collection method was essentially phenomenology, which consisted of interview
100 protocols involving randomly drawn groups of very elderly persons in The Gambia and
101 Nigeria. However, secondary data sources included archival and already published works in
102 related research area in literature, which though appear scanty. A case study is intended to
103 describe, understand and explain a research phenomenon. However, unlike quantitative
104 research, the findings of a case study are not usually generalized to the rest of the population,
105 though using critical reflexivity theory testing framework (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 2011), this paper
106 treating the **case** as having critical relevance to dominant theoretical position in literature,
107 established generalizable conclusions. The study objective is also theory testing, which aims
108 at confirming or otherwise rejecting the general theoretical stance in literature that establishes
109 cultural nexus between cultures. Thus, the number of participants in a study does not matter
110 for a case study to be considered acceptable, provided the study has met its objective of
111 describing the phenomenon being studied (Tellis, 1997). The research tools used, namely

112 interview and observation (of transitional rites and festivals), made it possible to explore both
113 the religious and socio-cultural history of the people, which existed, mostly in oral tradition.
114 In this sense, one of the contributions of this research lies in its role of “awakening and
115 rescuing the memory” of the indigenous peoples of Igbo and the Jola. This effort becomes
116 more relevant as the potential for losing this important aspect of the peoples’ identity
117 increases, with the older generation passing on from this life and the reality of the emergence
118 of new breed of people becomes imminent. The author argues that though the passage of time
119 has done much to reduce the cultural similarities between the Igbo and the Jola; and that
120 African culture as depicted in the Igbo and the Jola are neither primordial entities nor colonial
121 fabrications. Using the indigenous Igbo and Jola of Gambia as one case, the author traces
122 these identities back to antiquity, but that in no case can one describe (or dismiss) them as
123 colonial inventions.

124

125 The paper is organized in four sections. The first examined the pattern of the Igbo and the
126 Jola indigenous socio- political system. Section two examined authority and space in the
127 indigenous Igbo and Jola ethnic groups. Section three provided insights into the kingship
128 systems of the two ethnic groups and lastly, and explored the religious and expressive
129 cultural link between the Igbo and the Jola tribes. The paper ends with a conclusion and
130 comments on research limitations and areas for future research.

The Pattern of the Igbo and the Jola Indigenous Socio-Political System

A critical look at the socio-political and cultural systems of the Igbo of Nigeria and the Jola of The Gambia portrays striking similarities. According to Basden, (1938) some writers

variously described the indigenous socio-political organization of both the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria and the Jola ethnic group of The Gambia as a cephalous, stateless, egalitarian, gerontocratic, classless, decentralised, fragmentary, segmentary. There are numerous communities or village groups in Igbo and Jola ethnic groups. These communities are based on extended clan settlements, which are large enough to be given independent status and names. A typical clan settlement is run by a strong willed ruling personality often elected for a particular assignment. The idea of chiefs in Igbo socio-political system, and Seyfo, a parallel traditional political institution in the Jola, cuts across these ethnic groups today, and both are results of their European contact. With a few exceptions such as the Obi in the old Onitsha kingdom, there was nothing like traditional chiefs in their pre-colonial society. Both ethnic groupings were more or less egalitarian and republican. The village group is the highest political unit of the traditional society. Each community is segmented into smaller groups known as villages (clans). The villages are in turn, segmented into Umunna or Jola equivalent of hubukau –hanorou (patrilineage or literally meaning children of the same father). The village is the central and the most influential and the basic socio-political unit of their indigenous society. It comprises the descendants in the male line of the founder ancestor by whose name the patrilineage is sometimes called. Njaka, (1974:p?) aptly described the hubukau –hanorou, an equivalent of the Igbo Umunna, as “the catalyst of political behaviour and attitude; the main controlling factor that regulates and conditions its citizens. It is the authority and reason for political and social participation in the town-state government”.

131 The Umunna/ hubukau –hanorou is a communal group which holds allegiance to an ancestral
132 father, one shrine and a common meeting ground or eluweyi, which is a large open square
133 where the patrilineage members meet to attend to issues of common interest to the group. It is

134 an exogamous group but there could be intermarriage among members of these groups.
135 Nevertheless, in a situation where the lineage has become larger indeed, the lineage within
136 the patrilineage may separate themselves from the main body to found a new patrilineage.
137 The Umunna/hubukau –hanorou is again divided into Umunne in Igbo and hilhakon in Jola
138 (literally meaning children of the same mother), which constitute the extended families. The
139 members of Umunne or hilhakon have close blood-relationships while the founding father is
140 traceable to generations past. The position that the hilhakon occupies in the Igbo and Jola
141 political structures underscores the significance of the position of the woman in the culture of
142 both peoples. In both societies, motherhood is perceived as a binding force in intra-group
143 relations. For this reason a person is never rejected in the mother's patrilineage (maternal
144 home). In Igbo and Jola cultures, a man who has problems in his paternal home or with his
145 Umunna or hubukau –hanorou can escape to his mother's patrilineage where he finds solace
146 in times of trouble or oppression. Under no circumstance is he ever rejected. The family as
147 the domestic organization is made up of the man, his wives, children and his sons' wives. On
148 maturity, these sons, except the first son known as Opara in Igbo and anyil anifanon in Jola,
149 move out of the compound to establish their own individual compound. While the family
150 head resides at the obi in Igbo and eluweyi in Jola located most often at the centre of the
151 family compound, the wives' houses are situated as adjoining buildings or huts within the
152 compound in an enclosed formation where each wife and her children reside. The political
153 implications of this household organization would be examined under the section on Space
154 and Authority in the indigenous Igbo and Jola societies to further highlight the similarities in
155 the cultural and social organization of life in both groups.

156

157 In both traditional societies, hamlets were made up of several compounds whose residents
158 constitute members of clusters of patrilineages from the same village. These clusters simply
159 constitute a geographical unit providing some considerable solidarity based on
160 neighbourhood rather than an immediate blood relationship (Olisa, 1971). Among the
161 Igbo/Jola people for instance, a settlement is based on patrilineage relationships as members
162 of the same extended family tend to reside closer to one another than with members of other
163 unrelated patrilineages. The reason for this kind of settlement structure is that each nuclear
164 family shares its land usually a large expanse among the male children. As residence is
165 patriarchal and localized, this had meant that ultimately members of the same
166 Umunna/hubukau –hanorou resided closer to one another than close to people of other
167 patrilineages. The system of relationships built through blood ties and everyday interactions
168 tended to promote closer fraternity amongst kinship groups. It further encouraged support
169 from kinsmen. For the Jola ethnic group, a gift in either cash and or in kind is an obligation to
170 the distressed or needy and an essential part of social relationships within the kinship
171 network.

172

173 Each Igbo and Jola ethnic community protectively recognizes and upholds the social value of
174 independence and therefore tended to be self-supporting in carrying out its internal communal
175 activities and is conscious and protective of its identity in its overall relationships with
176 neighbouring communities. Before the European contact, each of the ethnic group warriors,
177 priests, elders, and heads of component families, exercised influence and authority at the
178 village- group level. They were the elites of the traditional society. The duties of the elderly
179 and titled folks were to direct discussions and recapitulate decisions in the assembly of the
180 whole village-group and carry out adjudication duties, which included the settlement of

181 disputes and conflicts that may arise amongst kinsmen. The elders and titled folks, warriors,
182 and priests were the watch-dogs of the customs, norms and traditions of the society.
183 Currently, however some of these traditional roles have been eroded and increasingly
184 replaced by new cultural values, beliefs, attitudes and roles following contact with other
185 cultures. There are now formal hierarchical positions and roles such as those of political
186 leaders, cabinet members and the district union executives. However, this shift in power
187 structure has not occurred without challenge from the traditionalists in these societies.

188

189 The Opara in the Igbo ethnic group or the anyil anifanon in the Jola (i.e. first son who is
190 usually the eldest in the patrilineage) in each constituent family unit, occupies a unique
191 leadership position in the hierarchy ranging from the Umunna/hubukau-hanorou
192 (patrilineage) level down to the extended family. His headship is derived from his position as
193 the eldest man in this patrilineage. He is accordingly, the living representative of the
194 ancestors and the holder of the staff of authority and justice (Ofo, in Igbo) acting as a spiritual
195 link between the living and worldly departed ancestral spirits. Although, the Opara or anyil
196 anifanon occupies a leadership position, that position is basically a moral one. Consequently,
197 he cannot take unilateral decision but implement decisions taken by his kinsmen. The eldest
198 son plays the symbolic role of coordinator of lineage or family affairs in the general interest
199 of all. Much like the Opara, the anyil anifanon's position is entrusted with a lot of other
200 duties such as presiding over the sharing of family or patrilineage lands. He is also the
201 principal host in traditional marriage ceremonies in the unit that he leads. Every Umunna or
202 hubukau – hanorou (patrilineage) has its own meeting square called eluweyi (for the Jola).

203 Besides, in the indigenous socio-political organization of the patrilineal Igbo/Jola society,
204 female institution of Umuada/kurimanak (i.e. the institution for daughters consisting of

205 married, unmarried, divorced or widowed) provide a significant platform for women to
206 contest for both social and political power. The decisions of this female group in the
207 abdication of disputes are supreme. The groups function as the custodian of public morality.
208 Thus, the women have formidable assemblies of their own liaising with different units and
209 constituting an important force in the Igbo as well as Jola socio-political power structure. For
210 instance, each hillhakon (extended family), Umunne/hubukau hanorou (patrilineage), village
211 and village-groups have similar women's groups and associations. In such meetings, the
212 women address issues affecting the women folk of that particular patrilineage and the
213 community in general for the mutual benefits of all. They nevertheless share to a great extent
214 in the social life of their natal homes when married. The system of exogamy as practised in
215 most Igbo and Jola societies ensures that a woman who marries outside her patrilineage in the
216 patrilineal society is a peace advocate and a role model.

Another striking similarity in institution building among the indigenous Igbo and Jola societies is the age grades system or age regiment. The regulation of political relations and implementation of customary rules in the village rest squarely with these age-based associations. These associations are viable and strong groups, which carry out community based works, carter for the welfare of their age mates and implement local laws made in the village interest. The associations are constituted through the principle of age and selection.

217 However, the socio-political philosophy of communalism, spirituality and duality of man in
218 both Igbo and Jola traditional societies is all embracing. Indeed, it essentially highlights the
219 role of the dead in the lives of the living. In Igbo as well as the Jola, it is believed that the
220 ancestors constantly intervenes in the lives of the living, live around them and offers
221 protection. For this reason the living pour out libation, offer sacrifices and consult the spirit

222 of their ancestors in time of severe peril and traditional calamities such as famine and
223 drought. It is usually believed in Igbo and Jola traditional societies that natural disasters are
224 outcomes of ancestral wrath; which requires that the spiritual elders appease the gods and
225 goddesses by offering sacrifices, which are usually performed as dictated by the gods.

226

227 **Authority and Space in the Indigenous Igbo and Jola Societies**

228

229 In the context of both Igbo and the Jola cultures, space whether spatial or figurative plays out
230 important individual and group roles. Within the domestic framework, for example, the Obi
231 in the case of Igbo group and eluweyi in Jola as the abode of the head of the family represents
232 the symbolic function of decision making and power house from where decisions emanate
233 from a bargaining and consultation process. Moreover, every woman in the polygamous
234 household has her own apartment, which is an enclosure containing a bed room, kitchen,
235 store room for keeping her valuables, poultry house, pen house for her domestic animals
236 consisting of goats and sheep, and cattle. Also found within this enclosure are barns for her
237 agricultural produce as well as few economic trees like orange and mango. She also has water
238 well to meet her immediate food and sanitary needs. All these are walled round with a door
239 linking her compound to the bigger family compound at the centre of which the Obi or
240 eluweyi for that matter is situated. Within the women apartment or quarters, she lives with
241 her children and grandchildren as the case may be. In this traditional arrangement, the
242 household mother is in complete control of both the economic and cultural production as she
243 plays basic roles in economic activities and socialization of offspring to the cultural norms,
244 values and beliefs of the society. Though the man-of-the-house, as the head of the family,

245 takes significant decisions regarding the overall interest of his family, there is a limit to which
246 such decisions can encroach on the woman's power on domestic matters.

247

248 Both the Opara of the Igbo and the eluweyi of the Jola patrilineage play important roles in
249 political decision making in the context of the larger society. As the residence of the eldest
250 son in the patrilineage, the eluweyi also becomes symbolic, as it functions as the tempo-
251 spiritual essence of the collective identity (Ukpokolo, 2010). Within this spatiality, rituals and
252 libations are performed using the Oji/ekruayi ((kolanut) and/or staff of authority, justice and
253 peace as key objects of ritual performances invoking the earth's goddess (mofamu emit in
254 Jola and chi in Igbo) as the intermediary between the physical and the spiritual world
255 (Ukpokolo, 2010). Thus, in the context of the concept of spatiality, interesting patterns
256 emerged from analysis of qualitative data. Qualitative evidence shows that both ethnic groups
257 share certain social and religious philosophies. These include the religious view or concept of
258 duality of man, the immortality of man's soul, sacrifice and atonement, which are lucidly
259 presented by Orizu (1944:199-206). Man is both a physical and metaphysical being having a
260 physical body, which cloths the immortal soul. Upon death, the soul sheds its physical
261 clothing and returns to the spiritual world from where it intervenes in particular in the
262 worldly affairs of the immediate family. The souls of the departed represent the spirit of
263 ancestors who may be offended by ignoble acts of the family members, and must necessarily
264 be appeased either by means of confession, sacrifice or repentance. Thus, the link with
265 ancestral spirits ensured acceptable social behaviours among the living, a link that is
266 symbolically represented and sustained by the Opara or eluweyi who holds the family ofo (a
267 symbol of justice and peace) and performs the necessary sacrifices to appease the ancestral
268 spirits or mediate on behalf of the living. The sacrifice is seen as atonement for wrong doing

269 or socially condemned transgressions. This priestly role of the Opara or elewuyi places him
270 in a significant hierarchy in the political power structure. However, for the Igbo and Jola,
271 power belongs to all. Everybody has the right to freedom of expression at the village
272 assembly where political decisions are made. Hence, both ethnic societies are essentially
273 republican, which implies that both cultures reject intimidation or oppression and arbitrary
274 exercise of political power. Power serves as a main resource without which other necessities
275 may elude the individual. With equitable access to power, justice and equity can thrive and
276 seen to be applied. In fact, without power, according to (Lawuyi, (2004), it may be difficult to
277 access resources, retain resource or commercialize resources. Nonetheless, this belief on
278 political equality, justice and the principle of fair opportunities for all to grow and have his
279 chance are not contradicted by an equally important social belief shared by both cultures that
280 all men are not born equal. This aristocratic thinking emanates from perception of inequality
281 evident in nature itself, which is the rivers, mountain, the sun, moon and stars are not equal in
282 depth, height, or brightness; animals are unequal in strength while men are unequally
283 endowed with intelligence as their fingers are unequal. The outcome of this social philosophy
284 is the phenomenon of social stratification in both cultures.

285 Moreover, in both Igbo and the Jola traditional societies, women were active participants in
286 the socio-political life of the people, hence the idea that a woman possesses the power to
287 influence decision making, especially the groups of first female members of households, the
288 Umuada in Igbo and kurimanak in Jola. These groups exercise significant power and
289 influence in crises situations involving disputed within and between family groups. As the
290 custodian of community morality, women can use satirical songs such like ikpe in Igbo or
291 ekim-eteme in Jola to criticize a young man or lady in order to caution him or her against
292 immoral behaviour. Songs are sung to either praise or to condemn. 'ikpe' or 'ekim- eteme'
293 are used to criticize the unacceptable behaviours serving thereby as a corrective or deterrent

294 instrument against actual and potential offenders. In songs of praise, the individual's positive
295 attributes are appreciated, eulogized and recommended to the people. In this way, songs
296 remain one of the traditional instruments for peace building. In stateless traditional societies
297 like the Igbo and Jola with no centralized government, such group approach to problem
298 solving goes a long way in upholding high moral standards in the community and sustaining
299 peaceful relationships among people. Eventually, it has the potential to reduce the scale of
300 deviant behaviour and to protect the society from moral debauchery. These suggestions ego
301 the view in literature that the lives of men run on lines quite distinct from those of women
302 (Basden, 1938) and females have their own power base from where they impact significantly
303 on the lives of people in the society. Thus, amongst the Igbo and Jola, the institution of
304 Umuada and kurimanak present women as instruments of peace and power negotiation. This
305 assures them a place in the affairs in their community. In the context the patrilineal society,
306 the system of exogamy offers them double citizenry of their society (Green, 1947). As
307 members of the Umuada or kurimanak institution, this group of first female born of
308 households control burial rites and punish any married woman in their patrilineage who
309 maltreats her husband or refuses to take care of him. However, the punishment which may
310 not be a physical could be sanctions denying privilege of the offender from participating in
311 women's activities for some specified period. In rare case, the woman could be ostracized for
312 a given period or even permanently.

313

314 Another striking similarity between the two cultures is found in one's relationship with
315 mother's relatives, which is an integral part of the Igbo and Jola kinship social structure.
316 These extended families are a person's nna- ochie or nne- ochie in Igbo and ampa-afan and
317 enya-afan in Jola, which means ancient father or ancient mother of the patrilineal and

318 matrilineal families respectively. Children are regarded as nwa-nwa in Igbo or kusunpulo in
319 Jola (son of son) in their mother's patrilineage. These relationships are so closely knit and
320 integrated into the kinship system that it offers a patrilineally- organized people special rights
321 and privileges in their mother's patrilineages. Such rights and privileges include those that
322 they would not ordinarily receive in their own descent group, which is their father's
323 patrilineage. For this reason, the kusunpulo in Jola is inviolable in his or her mother's
324 patrilineage and as such could not be harmed or maltreated in that group. In both Igbo and
325 Jola traditional societies, the nwa-nwa and kusunpulo further plays significant role as peace-
326 advocate in his/her mother's patrilineage. This practice gives the Igbo and Jola marriage
327 system relative stability and further strengthens intergroup relations. Such established
328 networks contribute in no small way to strengthening the structure of groups and kinship
329 cohesion.

330

331 **The Kinship System of the Igbo and the Jola**

332 Kinship describes the social relationships that exist among people in the same blood lineage,
333 which is traced from descending of some distant fatherhood. An equivalent of the Igbo and
334 Jola are the Umunna and hubukau–hanorou respectively, which are patrilineage groups,
335 literally meaning children of the same distant generation father. This is a general social
336 phenomenon in both ethnic groups. Membership of kindred group becomes important in
337 shaping individual and group behaviour and relationships. The bases of kinship system in
338 most African indigenous society are the social and cultural affinity and the symbiotic
339 relevance it portends. This fact appears to explain why most traditional economic, social and
340 political activities are carried out on communal basis. For instance, rules against incest and
341 regulations governing marriage rites and those that define rights of the natives at the kindred
342 level are traditionally enacted by kinsmen who make up the kinship system. The kinship

343 system thus maintains group cohesion and solidarity as it provides invaluable platform for the
344 orientation and integration of individual members into the wider social system. Moreover,
345 evidence indicates that the Igbo and Jola societies build kinship alliances and relationships
346 through multi-lineal parentage system, which is through both the male (patrilineal) and or
347 female (matrilineal) line. While most of the Igbo and Jola societies commonly practise the
348 patrilineal descent system, there are some noticeable matrilineal elements in the social
349 systems. For instance, in Igbo and Jola traditional system, the nwa-nwa or kusonpulo
350 (maternal son) has a role to play in his/her mother's patrilineage. The nwa-nwa or kusonpulo
351 constitute a powerful force in making and advocating for peace in the mother's patrilineage
352 home.

353

354 Analysis of data further shows that the Igbo and the Jola societies are each endogamous in
355 nature, which allows a man to take a wife among his kinsmen, especially those not closely
356 related. It is believed that this practice fosters peace, co-operation and harmony among
357 families. The matrilineage is also exogamous though the residential group is the patrilineage.
358 Mostly, however, patrilineage system is more common among the Igbo and the Jola than the
359 matrilineal system from where the line of descent or genealogy is traced to the mother. In a
360 patrilineal descent system, ancestry is established by tracing descent solely through the male
361 lines from a founding male ancestor. In fact, the fundamental principle of a patrilineal
362 parentage is the unity of the male group. Although, both men and women are included in the
363 patrilineage, only the male links determine successive identity of a group though generations.

364 On the other hand, according to Schwimmer, 1995), in a unilineal descent system there are no
365 well -defined objectives, the group's unity and character reflect bonds formed upon common
366 origin and identity and are concerned with the general welfare of the members. This system's

367 relevance lie mainly on its role as an unmitigated group and as an institution of corporate
368 entity, which customarily recruit natives based on conditions of inherited status and identity.
369 In this context, kinship often constitutes a corporate group that assumes a corporate legal
370 status exercising discernible collective right on behalf of its members and over their estates.
371 The unilineal descent system has tended to contribute to the development of social
372 organization of the group. For this reason, as it is widely said in Igbo and Jola local parlance
373 that kinsmen are the basis of strength (Umunna wu ike), communalism is the defining basis
374 of Igbo and Jola traditional economic, political and cultural activities. Offering explanations
375 for this practice, Schwimmer, (1995) postulated two major theories, one economic, the other,
376 political. The author's economic theory focused on the communal land ownership system and
377 argues that since land is corporately owned, individuals need the parentage system for its
378 equitable distribution and as well as the allocating of other economic resources that the
379 kinsmen are endowed with. Besides, collective ownership provides the basis for regulating
380 the individual's right to productive goods and the right to call for assistance in time of need or
381 distress. The political reasons according to Schwimmer focus on the need for social order and
382 cohesion in stateless societies which lack centralized political systems with formal
383 institutions of law-enforcement. Under these conditions, strong and permanent alliances
384 within and between large family-based organizations are necessary to establish the sanctions
385 needed to control disruptive behaviour among their members and to assist them when
386 violence does occur. This approach is associated with the structural-functional school of
387 thought. In addition to group membership, patrilineal descent controls the course of
388 succession and hence helps in preventing conflict over succession claims. Overall, the system
389 of descent as practised in both societies helps in determining parenthood, identifying
390 ancestry, controlling the line of inheritance and assigning people to social categories, groups,
391 and roles. For instance, the child a patrilineage daughter bears in her husband's house is

392 recognized in the kinship structure as nwa-nwa in Igbo and kusunpulo in Jola (maternal
393 offspring) in her patrilineage. In this way, such children have certain rightful social claims
394 and share to some extent in the membership of their mother's patrilineage. In the case of the
395 Igbo of Nigeria, marriage conducted according to the custom of the people determines where
396 a child belongs in the kinship network, particularly among the Igbo, east of the Niger.
397 Marriage according to custom becomes an important factor, which is underscored by the
398 practice that the biological father or genitor of a child may not culturally be recognized as the
399 father of the child if he failed to fulfil certain cultural responsibilities involving in particular
400 payment of bride wealth, or proper marriage so to speak. This result from analysis of
401 qualitative data is supported by argument in literature that in Igbo traditional society, custom
402 determines who the father of the child is, as a child born outside wedlock belongs to the
403 mother's patrilineage (Ukpokolo, 2010). However, in sharp contrast to the Jola system, any
404 child born outside wedlock belongs to the patrilineage, a difference that seems attributable to
405 cultural modifications from invasion of western civilization. However, both cultures appear
406 share cultural element relating to the rule of primogeniture, which means that apart from
407 family property, inheritance of personally acquired assets of a man passes to his first son who
408 will undertake the responsibility of caring for his younger ones. In the exceptional case of a
409 polygamous family, the property is shared amongst the most senior sons of the deceased's
410 wives in which case each of these sons in turn goes back to his mother's homestead to divide
411 this share/portion with his male brothers. In pre-colonial Jola society, the '*anyil anifanon*'
412 (eldest son) was not entitled to inherit the dead father's widow as it is regarded as *nyinyi* or an
413 abomination in the Jola society, though in contrast to the Igbo cultural practice in this
414 context, the first son or 'opara' could inherit the father's wife (s). However, according to Jola
415 cultural practice, the widow may opt to re-marry or even remain unmarried in the late
416 husband's house bringing up her children. In this case, the late husband's brothers will be

417 helping her to perform duties that are gender-specific in the culture like climbing palm trees,
418 clearing the bush, repairing her leaking roof etc. This helps her to have sense of belonging
419 and hope in the family despite the death of her husband. Nevertheless, these findings suggest
420 that the complex network of relationships and kinship ties found in both Igbo and Jola
421 cultures appear to provide the impetus for persisting social consciousness and observance of
422 the customs, traditions, and cultural ethos, attitudes and perceptions that animate and sustain
423 cultural colorations, which have survived over the years retaining some key cultural elements
424 of traditional society setting them apart from other ethno-cultural groups in contemporary
425 West Africa.

426

427 **Religion and Expressive Culture**

428

429 Though many Igbo and Jola peoples are now predominantly Christians and Muslims
430 respectively, traditional Igbo and Jola religious practices still abound, which are built around
431 similar religious philosophies. Though both ethno-cultural group share the religious
432 philosophy of monotheism, the idea of one god, each like in most African religious
433 philosophies, accept the religious doctrine of ‘many gods under one god’. In their traditional
434 religious philosophy are found the belief in several gods including the earth goddess, sun god,
435 god of thunder, a host of other male and female deities, spirit of ancestors, who protect their
436 living descendants, and personal guidance angels (one’s *chi*). Equally, in this doctrine is
437 found the belief in one major Deity who oversees these other “lesser gods and spirits serving
438 Him in their specialized functions” (Oriza, 1944:199). Revelation of the will of certain
439 deities is sought through oracles and divination. The Igbo and Jola acknowledge a creator,
440 God or Supreme Being, ‘*Chukwu Okike or Chineke*’ in Igbo or *Emitae* in Jola in addition to
441 their beliefs in the existence of other deities. Some scholars argue that this religious

442 philosophy has a historical underpinning within the context of centralized political formations
443 because it is essentially African having originated from belief in Sun god as the only god of
444 the universe by Amenhotep IV of Egypt during his reign in 1375^{B.C.} A parallel belief is found
445 in Islamic and Christian doctrines. In both cultures, the primordial earth goddess and other
446 deified spirits have shrines and temples of worship and are believed to influence the living in
447 very real and direct ways. The earth goddess encapsulates both politics and religion in both
448 Igbo and Jola society by fusing together space, custom, and ethics.

449

450 The Igbo concept of personhood and the dialectic between individual choice/freedom and
451 destiny or fate is embodied in the notion of *chi*, variously interpreted as spirit double,
452 guardian angel, personal deity, personality soul, or divine nature. Igbo have varied accounts
453 of myths of origin because there are many gods and goddesses. According to one Igbo
454 worldview, Chukwu created the visible universe, '*uwa*'. The universe is divided into two
455 levels: the natural level, *uwa*, or human world, and the spiritual level of spirits, which include
456 Anyanwu, the sun, Igwe, the sky and Ana, the earth. Taboos provided the means by which
457 the Igbo forged a mediatory category of relations with nature and certain animals such as
458 pythons, crocodiles, tigers, tortoises, which are described as totem. Other characteristics of
459 traditional religious philosophies and practices found common to both cultures include two
460 different kinds of religious priests: the hereditary lineage priests and priests who are chosen
461 by particular deities for their service. Diviners and priests are those empowered with, the
462 symbol of authority, truth, and justice. These categories interpret the wishes of the spirits,
463 who may bless and favour devotees as well as punish social offenders and those who
464 unwittingly infringe their privileges. They can also placate the spirits with ceremonial
465 sacrifices. The living, the dead, and yet unborn form part of a continuum. Enshrined ancestors

466 are those considered as great souls who lived good and upright lives and died in a socially
467 acceptable manner (i.e., were given the proper burial rites). These ancestral spirits live in one
468 of the worlds of the dead, the spirit world that mirrors and intervenes in the world of the
469 living. The living pays tribute to their ancestors by honouring them through sacrifices.
470 Overall, these shared social and religious philosophies suggest that both groups could have
471 the same historical origin, though however limitations in obtaining relevant data presented
472 inclusive evidence to test this hypothesis. For this reason, an important area for future
473 research is the nexus between ethno cultural interrelatedness of societies/groups and shared
474 historical ancestry.

475

476 **Conclusion**

477 This paper established veritable similarities in cultural elements found in both Igbo and Jola
478 traditional societies most of which have survived even today in spite infiltrations and
479 transformations coming from theirs colonial experience and globalization influences. Striking
480 similarities were found in their modes of sociopolitical organization of society and authority
481 symbols associated with space indicating spatial synergy that portrays the blending of
482 structure of housing and authority and roles common to both ethno cultures. Research
483 evidence further demonstrated that the Igbo and Jola societies build kinship alliances and
484 relationships through multi-lineal parentage system, which is through both the male
485 (patrilineal) and or female (matrilineal). Moreover, both cultures appear share cultural
486 element relating to the rule of primogeniture, which means that apart from family property,
487 inheritance of personally acquired assets of a man passes to his first son who will undertake
488 the responsibility of caring for his younger ones. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that the
489 complex network of relationships and kinship ties found in both Igbo and Jola cultures appear

490 to provide the impetus for persisting social consciousness and observance of the customs,
491 traditions, and cultural ethos, attitudes and perceptions that animate and sustain cultural
492 colorations, which have survived over the years retaining some key cultural elements of
493 traditional society setting them apart from other ethno-cultural groups in contemporary West
494 Africa. Analysis of data further showed that both Igbo and Jola ethnic groups share similar
495 social and religious philosophies suggesting the both groups could possibly have common
496 historical ancestry. In this context, the paper presents the hypothesis that ethno-cultural
497 interrelatedness of societies could arise from shared historical ancestry, which thus
498 constitutes an area for future systematic investigation.

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