IBIBIO WORLDVIEW ON PARENTING AND CHILDCARE IN EFFIONG JOHNSON'S *SON OF THE LAND*

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ABSTRACT

Several traditional African cultures share the worldview that children are special gifts from the gods to the land and so attach enormous attention to their up-keep and upbringing. They are not entirely the sole responsibility of the parents only but are effectively conceived of as belonging to the community. This worldview specifically places the child under the guardianship or tutelage of a parent, a step-parent or any adult with familial connections or ties to the child, who must raise him/ her in line with community values and mores, to be a responsible son or daughter of the land. As such, the welfare, well-being as well as training of children from infancy or childhood to adulthood is shaped both by the parent or guardian, (nuclei or extended) family, and the community at large. These institutions -family and community- work hand-in-hand in determining the child's nurturance and socialization experiences. While the community sets the standards in terms of moral and acceptable codes of behaviour and/ or taboos; the family ensures that the child lives up to these societal set patterns, norms and values. The parent or guardian, thus, functions as an interface or compass that directs, links, and molds the child′s behaviour within the family unit to the expected standards of the community. Failure in this regard or deviance does not only earn the parent, guardian or family overt social criticism but the community, as well, shares the opprobrium and also bears the consequences of such deviation. This complex process of interaction and learning is what sociologists have come to define as the "Socialization process". Thus, as drama is basically a social art which imitates or mirrors the society in which it is written or produced either overtly or covertly, this paper shall examine this sociological issue as portrayed in Effiong Johnson's play *Son of the Land*, using the textual analysis methodology. The paper shall recommend a more inclusive-exclusive, dynamic and multifarious approach to parenting and child care in the context of deeply-held cultural notions and praxis.

KEYWORDS: Parenthood, Childcare, Worldview, traditional religion, community.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'worldview' has been variously defined. Peoples and Bailey, for instance, describe the worldview of a people as "the way they interpret reality and events, including images

of themselves and how they relate to the world around them" (32). Other definitions such as that advanced by Ishii, Cooke, and Klopf are more specific. Worldview, according to them, is "a culture's orientation towards God, humanity, nature, questions of existence, the universe and cosmos, life, moral and ethical reasoning, suffering, death and other philosophical issues that influence how its members perceive their world" (302). However, the most succinct and relevant definition for the purpose of this study is the one which suggests that a worldview "provides a model of the world which guides its adherents in the world"(Walsh and Middleton, 17). The interesting thing about Walsh and Middleton's definition is the usage of the word 'guide'. This essentially entails that worldview functions as a guide to help people determine "what the world looks like and how they should function within that world" (Samovar, Porter and McDaniels, 149). As such, worldview is at the core of human behaviour since it helps define perceptions of reality and instructs the individual on how to function effectively within their perceived reality. It, therefore, becomes obvious, from the above, that worldview and culture are intricately related as most scholars agree that culture supplies most of a person's worldview. Haviland, Prins, Walrath and McBride point out that worldviews represent "the collective body of ideas that members of a culture generally share concerning the ultimate shape and substance of their reality" (298). This view essentially aligns with Samovar *et al* assertion that culture is often described as a "shared mindset" (105).

From this perspective, therefore, it could be asserted that it is this collective body of shared ideas that members of each culture use in "constructing, populating and anticipating social worlds" (Rapport and Overing, 404). Kraft also emphasizes that "every social group has a worldview - a set of more or less systematized beliefs and values in terms of which the group evaluates and attaches meaning to the reality that surrounds it" (407). From Kraft's position, it is often argued that African worldview and culture are basically the same with little or no alteration, irrespective of ethnic, social or national differences. Traditional African practices or views on marriage, parenting, childbearing, agriculture, festivities or celebrations, social contacts and so on, are related and transcend geographical borders (Udeani, 3; Tangwa, 38). This is so because of shared lifestyles, beliefs and tenets in African traditional religion which serves as the principal background upon which every action is executed. According to Udeani, the African traditional worldview characterizes itself, among others (in all its variations in the different parts of the continent), through its emphasis on the "optimum success of the relationship to and within the community" (3). It stresses more on the importance of the "community than individual" and, particularly, lays much emphasis on the "constitutive factors of the community, especially, those which bind the individuals together in the unity of the community" (3). Thus, the task of upholding and or maintaining this community ethos lies in the effectiveness of parenting, childcare and upbringing through interactions both at the family unit as well as at the wider community level. It is in line with these conceptions that this paper shall critically assess the pivotal role(s) of parenting and childcare with particular reference to the worldview of the Ibibios as portrayed in Effiong Johnson's *Son of the Land*. However, before narrowing in on this, a brief and concise discourse on salient issues such as a theoretical background, African cosmology and the concept of parenting and child care shall be attempted first.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Several theoretical perspectives have emerged over the years as analytical standpoints within the boundary of literary criticism. These perspectives, as it were, serve as the framework through which the meanings embedded in a literary piece are exhumed and refined through a deeper, insightful exploration of the text's underlying philosophies and the core values expressed in them. In view of this, this paper shall draw enormously from postulations in structuralism as its major theoretical perspective.

Structuralism is the name given to a wide range of discourses in the fields of linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology and literary criticism for the methodology that studies elements of human culture in terms of their relationship to a larger, overarching system or structure (Blackburn, n.p.). Its major thrust is the attempt to uncover the "structures that underlies all the things humans do, think, perceive and feel" (Blackburn, n. p.). According to Blackburn, structuralism dwells on the belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations (n. p.). These relations constitute a structure, behind which are local variations in the surface phenomena as well as constant laws of abstract culture (Blackburn, n. p.).

Emerging into prominence between the late 1920s and early 1930s through the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (Briggs and Meyer, n. p.), structuralism has been a fecund sphere of discourse with extraordinarily diverse contributors including Claude Levi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, and Jacques Lacan (Phillips, n. p.). Blackburn enthused that the core of structuralism revolves around three related concepts propounded by de Saussure;

- The distinction between langue (an idealized abstraction of language) and parole (language as actually used in daily life). He argued that the 'sign' was composed of a signified, an abstract concept or idea, and a 'signifier', the perceived sound or visual image.
- There is no intrinsic reason why a specific sign is used to express a given signifier because different languages have different words to describe the same concepts or objects. It is, thus, arbitrary.
- Signs gain their meaning from their relationships and contrasts with other signs (n. p.).

Deleuze notes that the proponents of structuralism have drawn from these concepts to argue that a specific domain of culture maybe understood by means of a structure – modeled on language – that is distinct both from the organizations of reality and those of ideas or the imagination – the "third other" (171-172). This perspective of structuralism as drawn from Levi-Strauss assumes that "meaning is produced and reproduced within a culture through various practices, phenomena and activities that serve as systems of signification" (Briggs and Meyer, n. p.) such as rituals, games, religious rites, literary and non-literary text and other forms of entertainment. According to McHee and Warms, Levi-Strauss' proposal that the focus of anthropological investigations be focused on the underlying patterns of human thought produced the cultural categories that organize worldviews hitherto studied (345). He believed these processes were not deterministic of culture, but instead, operated within culture. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes glaring that the emphasis of structuralism is the understanding of cultural elements in terms of their relationship to the entire system (Rubel and Rosman, 1263; Scholes, 4). Thus, structural analysis aims to "find

out″ the system of thought that govern the ways cultures construct their world and interpret their experiences (Phillips, n. p.). This, therefore, makes the theory a suitable template for this paper′s analysis of Ibibio worldview on parenting and childcare as portrayed in the play so chosen.

AFRICAN COSMOLOGY AND THE CONCEPT OF PARENTING

In its most general and widely used sense, the term cosmology refers to a people′s worldview (Viriri and Mungwini, 29). Cosmology, according to Okon, is ″the sum total of people′s opinion concerning life, happiness, fears, purpose of life, death, and after-life. It is the ″fundamental communalities of a given culture such as folkways, mores, languages, human productions and social structure″ (4). Cosmology is also considered to be ″the complex of a people′s beliefs and attitudes concerning the origins, nature, and structure of the universe and the interaction of its beings with particular reference to man (Okon, 4). Ekeke notes that there are two major categories of worldview namely – the material worldview and the religious worldview (2). According to him, the material worldview sees the cosmos as a ″product of chance which has no meaning and no end″ (Ekeke, 2). Ekeke asserts that those who share this worldview subscribe every occurrence, whether sickness or natural disaster as a product of chance (2). However, the religious worldview sees the cosmos as having a great meaning and purpose; thus, every happening is interpreted based on what the people perceive as its meaning or purpose. This perspective is captured in Redfield′s explication thus:

> Of all that is connected to 'culture', worldview attends especially to
> the way a man, in particular society sees himself to all else. It is the
> properties of existence as distinguished from and related to the self.
> It is in short, a man′s idea of the universe; it is that organization of
> ideas that answers to a man with question: where am I? Among what
> do I move? What are my relations to these things? (31).

In his discussion of cosmology, Kanu delineates African cosmology invariably as one which relates;

> 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 national tendency to
> arrive at unifying base that constitutes a frame of meaning often
> viewed as 'terminus a quo' (origin), and as 'terminus ad quem' (end)
> (533 – 534).

African cosmology is the underlying thought link that holds together the African value system, philosophy of life, social conduct, morality, folklores, myths, rites, rituals, norms, rules, ideas, cognitive mappings and theologies (Kanu, 534). Kanu, however, points out that the African

worldview must be understood in a general and restricted sense, as what is generally referred to as African worldview is not one shared by all Africans in its totality but rather some characteristic features of the common elements among African worldviews (534). This corroborates Viriri and Mungwini's earlier assertion that tradition and culture on Africa in philosophical literature do not connote homogeneity of cultures, but a referencing of dominant generative themes in African cultures (29).

As such, it is often inveighed by scholars such as Wambutda, Onuoha, Metuh, Madu, Ezenweke and Kanu respectively, that African worldview is predominantly religious (Kanu, 533; Ekeke, 3). This position could be inferred from Shorter's submission that "...Africans are notoriously religious" (49). Ekeke further emphasizes this by stressing that the entire African culture is permeated with religious practices (3). The linkage between African culture and religion obvious in Mbiti's observation that;

> Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is therefore ultimately a study of the people themselves in all complexities of both traditional and modern life...Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned (1).

It could be asserted from the above that African cosmology or worldview is shaped by the philosophy of African Traditional Religion; or put differently, Africans see the world around them from a religious perspective, where every life happenings are traced to a particular spirit which must be appeased (Ekeke 3). A concise summation of major concepts in the African traditional system as captured by Turaki, shows this system as consisting of the following components:

> (a)Foundational religious beliefs, which composes of beliefs in (i) impersonal (mystical) power(s); (ii) spirit beings; (iii) divinities/gods and (iv) the Supreme Being; (b) Foundational religious practices such as those involving (i) the establishment of links, relationship and close ties with the cosmic mysterious, mystical and spirit powers and forces, (ii) various religious and social rites, rituals (sacrifices and offerings) and ceremonies, (iii) spiritual and mystical communications with the spirit world and spirit beings and (iv) religious and social practices of relating to the various activities of the traditional specialists; (c) Philosophical foundations in traditional worldview which include (i) Holism/organism, (ii) Spiritualism, (iii) Dynamism/power consciousness (iv) Communalism; (d) The Spirit Beings, classified into categories of beliefs in (i) the Supreme Being, (ii) divinities/ gods, (iii) ordinary Spirits, (iv) the ancestors (Turaki, n. p.).

From the summation above, it is glaring that many African societies believe that the universe is made up of visible (material) and the invisible (immaterial). In other areas, Mbiti notes that several African societies see the universe as being made up of three partitions or ″three-tier creation namely: the heavens, the earth and the underworld″ (32).

Also Africans see man as the centre of the universe. He is considered the priest that links the universe with the Supreme Being who created and sustains it (Ekeke, 4). In Turaki′s explication, this conception of man at the centre of the universe is directly linked to the pervading philosophical view of communalism in the African world (n. p.) where man is viewed not as an individual living in a state of independence but that of relationships and interdependence. Thus, the concept of communalism, therefore, implies the existence of man in a community of relationships: to the human world, the world of nature and the spirit world (Turaki, n. p.). The understanding of community in African perspective is defined in terms of how man in relationships relates to the world around him as a member of society/community; to other human beings in the society/community; to the spirit world and to nature and the world (Turaki, n. p.). It is in view of this that Van der Walt, cited in Turaki, acknowledges that ″man does not claim personal rights and freedom, but fulfills communal obligations and duties″ (n. p.). Styne corroborates this in his delineation of two views that undergirds the existence of man in community − (i) man′s understanding of his place, position and station in community, which helps to integrate and conform him to community and (ii) man′s understanding of his actions, activities and behaviour (61 -62). Hence, the community acts on man to integrate him, while man acts to conform himself to the community (Turaki, n. p.). Both activities, according to Styne, are normative in nature because the integration and the conformity of man are not only to the world of humans, but also to the world of nature and the spirit world (63). In Styne′s assessment, becoming a member of a community is the most basic social principle of understanding man in relationship to others since it is through the process of becoming a member of a community that makes man become a person or an adult (63). Viewed in this light, the human community is, therefore, a community of relationships between the ancestors, the ″living-dead″, the living and the unborn descendants (Styne, 63; Turaki, n. p.).

Another key element in the African concept of community or communalism is kinship. According to Turaki, kinship in this context refers to family relationships rooted in a progenitor or an ancestor (n. p.) and determined by a physical or blood linkage. The element of kinship connotes that the community takes its roots or beginnings from a human origin (physical and blood source) and a network of relationships are built around this ancestral nucleus which, in turn, serves as a unifying factor or bond to a given people. Thus, having a common progenitor(s), ancestor(s) or origin strengthens kinship or blood-ties and as well, defines affinity, loyalty and obligations to a ′blood-community′ by all members (Turaki, n. p.). It also determines social behaviours, attitudes and practices.

Styne further identifies marriage as one of the most important kinship relationships of man. This is because it not only transcends a physical relationship; marriage in the African context has eternal consequences as not to marry is to cease living now and in the hereafter (66). According to Styne, marriage establishes essentials in life and death as begetting children guarantees eternal life as children not only provide for reincarnation of the ancestors, they also sustain the ancestors through prescribed rituals such as sacrifices and offerings (66). Thus, African concept of parenting

and childcare is derived from the foregoing. Although it is often controversial or misleading to make generalizations about Africa, however, an aspect of African culture that is less controversial, in this regard, is that which concerns parenting, childcare and the value of children (Tangwa, 55). This assertion should not be misconstrued to mean that children are less-valued in other parts of the world or cultures because parenting and childbearing remain valuable to human beings in general and within all human cultures. But as noted in Tangwa, the ways and manner in which this value is manifested and expressed differs from place to place, from culture to culture and these differences can be used as a rough gauge of the extent or magnitude to which the value is affirmed or upheld against competing values (55). As such, there is no part of Africa where children are not greatly valued and where as a consequence, large families do not exist or polygamy is not practiced. According to Tangwa, children are so valued in Africa such that parenting is considered the main purpose of marriage and the main cause of, if not justification for, polygamy and other forms of marriage (39). Conversely, a childless marriage is considered to be equivalent to no marriage at all. Also, parenting is seen in African culture as a rite of passage into full adult responsibility and a means of perpetuating and contributing to the continuity of the community. This is, particularly, true in Ibibio culture as they share, to a greater extent, most of the beliefs highlighted above as aspects of African worldview. In Ibibio land, for instance, kinship is patrilineal (i.e. descent is traced through the father), with the married couple living with or near to the husband′s parents (″Trip Down Memory Lane″ n. p.). The value of parenting and childcare in Ibibio worldview is entrenched in the complex norms of kinship involving: ′ayayin′ (grandchild); ′ukod′ (in-law) and ′imaan′ (brotherhood) (″Trip Down Memory Lane″ n. p.). This kinship structure provides a dependable framework and serves as a pivot of social relations within and outside Ibibioland.   Children, especially, grand-children are highly regarded within this framework as it is considered a taboo to harm them, for whatever reasons, at the ′nnung′ (basic family unit), the ′ekpuk′ (compound) as well as the community at large. However, these units contribute enormously in shaping and molding the child educationally, morally, socially and economically.

Kagan cited in Berns describes parenting as the ″implementation of a series of decisions about the socialization of children″ (119). These decisions cover a variety of areas including, but not limited to, when they cry, lie, become aggressive, do not do well in school and so on. Berns notes that these decisions are made in order to enable them become responsible, contributing members of society (119). As such, parenting and the family therefore become the primary avenues through which the child learns through diverse interactions to become a part and parcel of the community by maintaining specific patterns of conduct, fulfilling expected social roles and conforming to societal value as any form of deviance is viewed of as a "sin" against the community that must be atoned for, for a restoration of the social order. In this context, the quality of parenting and childcare plays vital roles in determining whether or not the child grows to imbibe and fulfill these cultural expectations or becomes deviant or societal outcast.
It is from the context above that we shall proceed to the analysis of the selected plays.

Son of The Land: A Structural Insight

The play *Son of the Land*, captures the travails of Ekpema under the guardianship of Usua,

his step- father. It is revealed that his mother, Nneka, a beautiful maiden, had attracted the rivalry of two suitors - Ibom and Usua. Nneka, though pregnant for Ibom, deceived the Council of Elders because she loved and desired to marry Usua instead of Ibom as tradition dictates in such a circumstance. Due to the testimony of the woman, the paternity of the child is ceded to Usua and Ekpema is raised to know Usua to be his father as his mother died during childbirth. But years later, Ekpema is rejected by Usua - the very man who in connivance with Nneka, claimed him in order to marry his mother. Ekpema is maltreated, threatened and thrown-out of the Usua's household despite intercessions by Udo and the Village Head. Ibom, however, is gladly re -united with his son, Ekpema, after about 20 years of separation but Ekpema in his new home and freedom stumbles on his father's "mystical" craft and property, steal some money and inadvertently splits the sacred mystical skull, thereby, incurring an eternal curse on himself. Ekpema is given three days to return the stolen money in order to avoid the impending doom but his failure to comply resulted in his madness. Ekpema thus, becomes an outcast as he is rejected by his step-father, disowned by his father and alienated from the same community at large.

Structurally, the play *Son of the Land* is partitioned into 'Situations'. Within these situations, the pattern, form or structure the dramatic narrative could be presented as follows:
Usua loves and marries Nneka even though he is aware she is with another man's (Ibom) child. As a precondition to achieve his heart′s desire (i.e marry the woman he loves and wants), he has to claim and win paternity of the unborn child which is contested by Ibom at the Elders Council. As is customary in Ibibioland, whoever the mother of a child names as the father is naturally accepted as such; Nneka duly identifies Usua as the father to her unborn child, thus, tilting the Elder's approval in Usua's favour. Hence, Usua not only gains a wife but also a child ("Man" + "Woman" + "Child").

Unfortunately, Nneka dies shortly after childbirth and Usua's disillusionment over her death gradually settleson Ekpeme who he subconsciously blames for the loss. As the years go by, Usua becomes increasingly volatile towards Ekpema's presence in his household since he only claimed to be his father in order to marry the mother. Her death, therefore, entailed that Usua no longer possess any genuine reason to continue his paternal responsibilities to Ekpema and , thus, rejects and drives him away ("Man" - "Woman" - "Child").
Ibom, who had been waiting for an opportunity to reconnect with his son, welcomes Ekpema to his household; though strongly tied to his craft and reputation ("Man" + "Craft" + "Child"). However, when Ekpema became too 'comfortable' in his new-found home to the extent of destroying the mystical skull, a symbolism of Ibom's power and craft, he is not only disowned and rejected by his family but expelled from the sane community at large. In Ibom's estimation, Ekpema's destruction of the mystical skull and theft equates a total relinquishing of familial/parental connection ("Man" - "Craft" - "Child").

From the narrative structure outlined above, it is could be asserted that the dramatic narrative of the play is constructed on a 'Quid Pro Quo' structure of parental connection/responsibility between both Usua and Ibom for Ekpema respectively. Their parental obligations toward Ekpema are shown to be superficial (as a means to an end) either in order to gain something or not to lose out on something as the case maybe. Hence, when a loss eventually occurs (Nneka in the case of Usua) or threat of loss (Craft/power/reputation in the case of Ibom) the choice of parental responsibility logically shifts to the detriment of Ekpema and the community

at large.

PORTRAYAL OF IBIBIO WORLDVIEW ON PARENTING AND CHILDCARE IN *SON OF THE LAND*

Looking at the play from the prism of parenting, childcare and the worldview of the Ibibios offers interesting reflections and understanding of Ibibio culture and society. This is because, as noted by Kalsruhe, cited in Bamidele, "every work reflects and represents the form of society which produced it in its essential aesthetic quality " (34). In Effong Johnson's *Son of the Land*, there is a blend of culture and worldview, the role of parenting and childcare or lack of it, in an individual's development and how the community shapes, approves or disapproves of it.

Ekpema, the tragic-hero in the play, becomes an outcast - a reject of society and community - instead of a responsible 'son of the land' because his behaviour is seen as an aberration from the norms and mores of the society. This is consequent on the quality of parenting and care he received from his step-father, Usua and biological father, Ibom. Usua lays claim to the child in order to marry Nneka, the woman he loves. As revealed by Ima in Situation 2 (16), Ekpema is well-cared for in the early years after his mother's death but this gradually deteriorates as Usua is increasingly bitter about his wife's death(of which he suspects Ibom, Ekpema's biological father to be behind); which results in Ekpema's maltreatment. Usua's reneging on his parental obligations at a critical stage of Ekpema's development and his heavy-handedness draw an attitude of deviance from him as acknowledged thus;

> **Ekpema:** I started to be very stubborn only recently. I was forced
> into that. I had to become strong-headed as a last resort to force his
> mouth open for me to know the truth.... (11).

Ekpema did not only become stubborn and strong-headed, he also manifested other deviant tendencies such as a lack of remorse and stealing. He steals food and money to support himself when the need arises as portrayed in Situations 1(8) and 2(21) respectively. Ekpema is thrown out and re-united with Ibom in spite of Udo's attempts to make Usua see reasons to reconsider his decision on the child's paternity. Udo's intercession is aimed at drawing Usua's attention to the consequences of his action in relation to the community as well as a censoring on his treatment of Ekpema. This is captured in Situation 3 (33) thus:

> **Udo:** ...is this not the same child during his mother's pregnancy you
> wrestled with Ibom? Is this not that child whose mother before her
> death had mentioned you, Usua, as being responsible for her
> pregnancy? And you accepted it, didn't you? Before the Chief of this
> village and many others. If Ekpema is now not your son, how can
> you explain all those actions you took, with me as your supporter,
> before his birth. My brother, do not punish this motherless child
> again. He has already suffered enough in his little life. Don't make
> the dead frown at you...

The extent of Ekpema's maltreatment under his step-father is highlighted by Udo in Situation 3 (33);

> **Udo:** ...Does this boy cost you half of what your other children have cost you? Does he eat more than all of them? Even if he ate more than others in the house, doesn't he do the bulk of the work in the house? ...He is the one that goes to the market, the farm, feeds the goats, washes all the dirty clothes in the house and does the cooking. Even your daughters there, do practically nothing in this house. They're always busy plaiting their hair, changing clothes as they like because they have got a free "washman" in the house.

Usua refuses to heed his brother's advice and thus allowed Ekpema to leave with Ibom. His action is severely criticized by the Village Head, who tries, albeit, unsuccessfully to remind Usua that:

> **Obong:** A son is not a child to his parent alone. If it were so, you wouldn't have called us twenty years ago to fight for his parenthood. He is our son. He belongs to this village. The land as a whole owns him. You may not see his worth now because he is still a child. But soon a son will prove his worth, bringing in more people to add to our number, our pride and heritage (48).

As Usua remains non-committal, the Village Head and Udo consequently made arrangements to get their "son of the land" back. Meanwhile, Ekpema at Ibom's house misconstrued the freedom of his 'new' home and thus brings an eternal curse upon himself by stealing from his father and splitting the 'mystical' skull in the process. The skull, which contained the mystical power and craft with which Ibom′s reputation rests, is governed by some invisible, indeterminable power and convention whose consequence is unknown to the uninitiated. The mystical calculations from the broken skull indicate that Ekpema would become insane, an outcast from the sane community, as it were. Ibom knows this but instead of helping his child avoid the terrible fate that awaits him from the impersonal mystical forces behind the skull, he inconsiderately toes the same authoritative line as Usua, by demanding the stolen money back in three days. Ekpema′s failure to return the stolen money as demanded results in Ibom, blatantly, refusing to help the child even when he needed it most. Ibom refused to appeal to the impersonal forces behind his 'craft' and go further to disown him in the process in spite of Obot's pleas for forgiveness and intervention from him (Situation 5, 69).

Ekpema had earlier in the play made a curious assessment of parenting in Situation 1(7) thus;

> **Ekpema:** ...What is a father? When you say that somebody is a father, it should mean that he has children who enjoy him. Children whom the father caters for; cares for them, have their needs in mind, helps and watches them grow up to become adults. But when a man

always attempts to kill and to destroy some other person, who probably, accidentally, happens to live with him; when he is not interested at all in your wellbeing and doesn't even care about your going to school, then he is not a father.

From this assessment, therefore, it could be asserted that Usua and Ibom did not fulfill their parental roles as their lack of love, understanding and insensitivity to the needs of Ekpema contributed to his deviation and, ultimate, insanity.

Several strands or aspects of African/Ibibio culture and worldview have been utilised to vividly depict and situate the dramatic narrative and actions in the play *Son of the Land.*
Since culture is the "knowledge that someone has by virtue of his/ her being a member of a particular society" (Okon, 3); the thrust of discourse and interpretation of cultural milieus and worldview shall be based on the comprehension of the Ibibio culture and society; because there is no society without culture and language serves as a vehicle for cultural transmission and expression. The understanding of a particular culture essentially demands an in-depth knowledge of the "history, religion, values, social organization and language" of that community in order to enable the drawing of valid inference about such a society (Okon and Ansa 4). As such, emphasis shall be placed on the use of language as a medium of transmission and sharing of meanings to summarily discuss the Ibibio society through names, proverbs and other cultural indices as showcased in the play.

First, it is observable that names play an important role in identifying character roles, as well as determining their actions in the play; just as Ibibio names and indeed, names generally in Africa, could reveal a lot about a person, group of people or place. Ansa and Okon affirm that the name system in Ibibio-land gives an insight into Ibibio language, culture and worldview (183). These names have religious, geo-political, socio-cultural and philosophical significance in the community. In the play *Son of the Land*, names such as Ekpema (Who loves or cares?), Usua (Enemy), Obong (Lord or King), Ibom (viper), Obot (Creator), and so on attach deeper significance on the roles and development of these characters in the play. For instance, as seen in the play, Ekpema (Who loves or cares?) is neither loved nor cared for by both Usua and later Ibom. As a result of Nneka's death, Usua (Enemy) gradually develops resentment and enmity towards Ekpema; and Ibom (Viper)   becomes overly dangerous or poisonous for Ekpema's wellbeing, survival and sanity.

Second, the use of proverbs in speech is a common characteristic shared by people the world over, and the Ibibios are not exempted in this regard. Okon states that "proverbs are short statements that portray the intellectual and communicative contexts among the speakers in a speech community"(106). Proverbs, in many cultures, are communicated in colourful and vivid language to show or convey the core values and underlying beliefs or thoughts which shape or sharpen the conceptions of the members of the community or society. Numerous examples of proverbs are found in the play but a few of them include the following:

"A wise man does not mistake a leopard for a cat"(Situation 4, 66).
"The scorpion does not sting the air, but the careless foot that rests on it" (Situation 3, 43).

"The mother hen's foot, no matter how heavy, cannot kill her chicken"(Situation 3, 30).

From these examples, it is glaring that proverbs provide insights into the lifestyles, beliefs, the environment and thoughts as well as express the perceptions of the Ibibios.

As noted earlier in the paper, worldview is intricately intertwined with religious beliefs and practices and the link between these phenomena exists in every culture. According to Okon and Ansa, "religion provides people of the world with advice, values, and guidance. Religion also sanctions a wide range of human conduct by providing the notion of right and wrong" (73) The Ibibio traditional belief system consists of: a) the belief in Supreme Being (Abasi Ibom); b) the belief in divinities and deities (Ndem or Ekpo Esit Isong); c) the practice of magic, medicine and juju (Idiong or Mfa, Abia Uman, Okpo etc.). The worldview of the Ibibios is shown in their religious beliefs and practices. The belief in the Supreme Being (Abasi Ibom) guides the people on what is right and wrong, as well as the belief in the benevolent and malevolent Spirits. For instance, in the process of appealing to the gods through prayers and religious rituals such as the pouring of libation, drinks for the benevolent spirits are poured with the right hand while that for the malevolent spirits are poured using the left hand. A typical example of belief in divinities and spirits as well as the efficacy of their powers as portrayed in the play is demonstrated in Ibom's 'mystical' skull in *Son of the Land*. As noted by Ibom in Situation 4 (62), it was warned that the skull if split in "two pieces results in madness while three results in death" of the unfortunate victim. It is because of the powers in the split skull that Ekpema becomes mad.

The Ibibios recognize that children are gifts from God and as such place enormous value on parenting and child care. The worldview on parenting is basically buttressed in two very popular philosophical sayings: "Ayin ado okod adubok"(A child grows to be beneficial to the parents) and "Asua ayin owo ineeghe ake mo" (He who hates another person's child does not have his own). The first saying captures the fact that the parents stand a chance of enjoying greater benefits from whatever investments they have made on their children when the child grows up. It is the hope and joy of enjoying this future benefit that parents strive to raise good children that would not only benefit them, but the community at large. The second saying underscores the boomerang effect of nature. It draws to mind the concept of retributions. As such, if a parent performs his/her parental role(s) well, he/she would benefit from it but if not, he/she, including the community bears the burden of the child's deviation because in the Ibibio worldview, the child or individual is a sum total of the family and the community that raised or produced him or her. The success of parents in this regard is founded on their choices and decisions during the parenting and childcare process. As seen in the play *Son of the Land*, Usua had the choice and capacity to cater for Ekpema even though the child was not he's as a testament of his genuine to his late wife, Nneka but his choice and decision was beclouded by excessive grief. In Ibom's case, even after years of waiting to get back what was rightfully his, one would have thought he would have been ready to sacrifice everything to connect with and genuinely accept his parental responsibilities to Ekpeme when he welcomed him to his household. However, when he had a direct choice to make, he chose the power and reputation in his craft over the life, wellbeing and destiny of a child his duty was to nurture into a responsible 'son of the land'.

Conclusion

Parenting and childcare are a tasking familial, religious and social responsibility across cultures irrespective of the society's worldview. The duty is even more enormous in societies that place premium on child birth across cultural, religious, sociopolitical and economic spectrums as is the case in Africa.

Interestingly, most households in African cultures are operated under an authoritarian patenting style where decisions and choices about the wellbeing of the family is taken by a single individual, most often, without discussions or contributions with/from other members of the household. Such unilateral, top-down model of familial relationship may not be most effective towards the care, nurturing and raising of children capable of effectively emerging as genuine 'sons or daughters of the land'. Therefore, the onus is on parents to, conscientiously, work hard at fulfilling their parental obligations both to the child and the society at large by imbibing or implementing parenting and relational styles that allow for genuine love, care, open communication and learning within the family unit.

As Berns notes, parenting deals with the implementation of series of decisions about children. This implementation process needs not depend on a particular parenting style, rather it calls for a multiplicity of dynamic and adaptable methods that would not only take a particular child's uniqueness into consideration but is also flexible enough to permit an enjoyable transition from one stage of development to another.

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