



Kingship Christology: A reflection on Midnight Crew's “Igwe” from an Igbo socio-cultural perspective

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Abstract

This literature-based research explored the subject of Kingship Christology as portrayed in Midnight Crew's song “Igwe.” Through an interdisciplinary approach, the paper delved into how the song articulates the Kingship of Christ from an Igbo Christian perspective. The paper critically examined the lyrics of the song, linking it with the Christian and Igbo socio-cultural worldviews. The research established that Jesus surpasses every human king (past, present and future) in every human society and serves as a perfect King whose leadership style provides a perfect model of what human leadership ought to be. This finding formed the basis for exploring key implications of Jesus' kingship for the Igbo/African sociopolitical setting. The paper charged African leaders to adopt a Christological model of leadership characterized by humility, servanthood, transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and a deep commitment to the welfare of their communities. In addition to demonstrating the nexus between music, theology and culture, the paper contributes to African Christian scholarship on Christology, musical theology and leadership.

Keywords: *Christ, Igbo, Igwe, Warrior-king*

Introduction

During his earthly ministry, Christ held simultaneously the offices of the prophet, the priest, and the king.¹ Each of these three roles/offices significantly contributes to the realization of his salvific mission. As prophet, he spoke on behalf of and revealed God.² The prophetic office of the Messiah and its fulfillment in Christ are also clearly attested in Scripture.³ As a priest, Christ offered himself as a sacrifice⁴ to cleanse humanity from sin.⁵ The priesthood of Christ not only brought an end to the Old Testament priestly tradition but also elevated every believer to the status of a priest.⁶ Through Christ, all Christians share an equal priestly status and stand on equal footing before God. In addition to his prophetic and priestly roles, Christ holds the office of a king.⁷ This kingly aspect of Christ's ministry represents his supreme authority, his fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, his establishment of the Kingdom of God, his authority over all things, and his ultimate triumph over sin and death.

The expression "Kingship Christology" is used in this paper to denote the theological concept that focuses on the understanding of Jesus Christ as the king/ruler. Kingship Christology is essential for the believer's understanding of Jesus' authority, lordship, and the nature of his kingship. In the African context where the chieftaincy institution plays a significant role in the sociopolitical space, people can better appreciate Kingship Christology and link it with their sociopolitical setting with the effect of transforming sociopolitical activities. Yet there is inadequate scholarly attention given to this subject, especially from the African perspective.

This research was, therefore, conducted to explore how Christ's kingly role might enhance the qualitative growth of believers (especially those in leadership) and lead to a holistic and sustainable sociopolitical transformation of the (African) society. It is a literature-based research that gathered data from sources such as books, dissertations/theses, and journal articles. This uniqueness

¹ For more on this consult Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 91-211.

² Luke 22:42; Matt. 11:27; John 8:28; 12:49; see also Luke 13:33; Matt. 13:57.

³ Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22-23.

⁴ Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:26-27; 10:12.

⁵ Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 110-111; John 1:29; 1 John 1:7.

⁶ 1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9.

⁷ Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 197ff.

of this paper is the interaction it facilitates between theology, music, and culture. The paper serves as a foundation for Kingship Christological discourses based on (Christian) songs. It contributes to African Christian scholarship on Christology, musical theology and leadership.

Conceptual framework

Background of the Igbo people

The Igbo people form one of the three largest and most influential ethnic groups in Nigeria, the other two being the Hausa and the Yoruba ethnic groups. Based on linguistic analysis, Onwuejeogwu suggests that the word “Igbo” means “the community of people.”⁸ As a result of the derogatory meaning ascribed to the term “Igbo” by European slave traders when referring to slaves from the interior, certain segments of the Igbo population adopted the practice of describing themselves and others as “Igbo people.”⁹ The description “Igbo people”, therefore, underlines the enduring spirit of the Igbo community in the face of external challenges. Nonetheless, the term “Igbo” presently holds three distinct meanings: It refers to the geographical region of the Igbo people, individuals who are native speakers of the Igbo language, and a linguistic group.¹⁰

The Igbo people live mainly in southeastern Nigeria in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states.¹¹ Some of them also live in parts of Bayelsa, Delta and River states. Igboland is enclosed by neighboring tribes, including Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako, and Ibibio; it is separated into two equal parts, the Eastern and Midwestern regions, by the River Niger.¹² It is believed that Igboland has been inhabited for a span of at least five millennia, perhaps going back to the dawn of creation.¹³ The initial human settlers of Igbo probably

⁸ Onwuejeogwu cited in Chibueze C. Udeani, *Inculturation as Dialogue: Igbo Culture and the Message of Christ* (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 7.

⁹ Udeani, *Inculturation as Dialogue*, 7.

¹⁰ See Daryll Forde and Gwilliam Iwan Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio Speaking Peoples of Southeastern Nigeria* (London: International African Institute, 1950).

¹¹ Nwuba Sr. MaryKristel Grace Chinyere, “The interface between Igbo traditional religion and Christianity,” *African Journal of History and Culture* Vol. 13(1), (2021): 37-42, 38; Joachim Ifezuo Oforchukwu and G. M. C. Njoku, *Education Among Nigerian Youths: Can Our Educational System Be Redeemed?* (Owerri: Umelo Press and Publishing, 2002), 18-19.

¹² Chinyere, “The interface between Igbo traditional religion and Christianity,” 38; Chinyere Ukpokolo, “Self Identity and Chieftaincy Titles among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria,” *LUMINA*, Vol. 20(2) (2009):1-23, 4.

¹³ Alo as cited in Chinyere, “The interface between Igbo traditional religion and Christianity,” 38.

originated from the confluence of the Niger River. The earliest traces of human settlement in the Igbo region can be traced to the Cross River and the Anambra Valley-Nsukka plateau, where significant archaeological sites (dating back to the Stone Age) have been found.¹⁴ The Igboland is predominantly low lying and has diverse vegetation types such as rain forest, mangrove forest, swamp forest and savanna.¹⁵

The Igbo people speak the Igbo language which comprises many somewhat mutually intelligible dialects. The Igbo language, like the Bono-Twi dialect of the Akan language of Ghana, belongs to the Kwa language family, which is prevalent in West and Central Africa. Distinctively, Igbo is a tonal language, with word meaning dependent on tone—be it high, intermediate, or low.¹⁶ Due to British colonization of Nigeria, English is the predominant language spoken by the majority of Igbo people today. The above ethnolinguistic outline serves as a foundation for exploring the religious worldview of the Igbo people in the next section.

The Igbo religious worldview

Africans generally express belief in the existence of the Supreme Being and the Igbo people are not an exception. The Igbo cosmology comprises belief in the Supreme Being referred to as *Chukwu* or *Chineke*.¹⁷ *Chukwu* is the benevolent Creator of the universe (*uwa*), the ultimate source of all life, and the highest authority. Sometimes, *Chukwu* is perceived as a distant god, not directly involved in daily human affairs.¹⁸ *Chukwu* is venerated as an all-encompassing and omnipotent deity, possessing every conceivable ontological divine attribute.

Besides *Chukwu*, the Igbo people acknowledge the presence of other deities—constituting the Igbo pantheon—who wield influence in their

¹⁴ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 3ff.

¹⁵ Udeani, *Inculturation as Dialogue*, 9.

¹⁶ Udeani, *Inculturation as Dialogue*, 8.

¹⁷ Joachim Ifezuo Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking and its Implications for Current Leadership Issues in Igbo Catholic Church (Nigeria)* (PhD Dissertation, South African theological Seminary, 2011), 31; For more on Igbo concept of God consult Anthony Chimankpam and Victor Iwuoha, "The Concept of God in Igbo Traditional Religious Thought," *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 11(4 (2022): 103-120.

¹⁸ Modestus C. Anyaegbu, "Is 'Chukwu Okike Abiama' The Supreme Being if Igbo Religious Thought? Questioning the Assumptions!" *Ochendo: An African Journal of Innovative Studies* Vol. 4 No. 2, 2023: 67-86, 72.

lives.¹⁹ These deities influence the powers of the tangible world, whether for benevolent or malevolent effect. The Igbo pantheon comprises *Anyanwu* (the sun god), *Igwe* (the sky god), *Amadi-oha* (the god of thunder and lightning), and *Ala* (the earth goddess).²⁰ As the sun god, *Anyanwu* symbolizes light, warmth, and life. *Igwe* represents the celestial realm and the overarching presence of the sky/heavens.²¹ *Amadi-oha* is the force behind both fearsome and awe-inspiring natural phenomena. *Ala* (or *Ani*) is primarily responsible both for overseeing the land where people reside, construct, and cultivate and for fertility in women, animals, and crops. To promote morality, there are prohibitions and taboos associated with *Ala/Ani*. Offences like incest, murder, suicide, and sexual intercourse in the bush are considered offences against *Ala*. Such offences, therefore, require not only expiation by punishment, sacrifices and rituals but also the ritual cleansing of the “land” to prevent *Ala* from visiting the entire community with her wrath.²²

In addition, the Igbo people believe in the existence of ancestors (*ndi mmọnwu*).²³ Ancestors in Igbo cosmology are the spirits of people who lived exemplary lives, married and gave birth, died naturally and now live in the realm of the dead.²⁴ Ancestors are believed to have continued presence and influence in the lives of the living.²⁵ They carry out responsibilities of safeguarding and guiding the family, kindred, and the community. The Igbo people perform rituals and ceremonies to honor their ancestors and seek guidance and blessings from them.²⁶

The Igbo people also acknowledge the existence of spirits associated with natural elements such as rivers, forests, hills, caves and other geographical features.²⁷ These spiritual beings, divinities and the ancestors are considered

¹⁹ T. U. Nwala, *Igbo Net: Ahiajoku Lecture Series*. <http://ahiajoku.igbonet.com> (1988), 8.

²⁰ Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Study of the Interaction of Christianity* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1974), 34.

²¹ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 31; The tonal nature of the Igbo language makes it similar to the Bono-Twi dialect in which the meaning of words is dependent on tone pitch.

²² Ratzinger E. E. Nwobodo, “A Dialogic of Taboo in Traditional Igbo Society and the 21st Century Mentality,” *Trinitarian International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 1(2), 2021: 100-115, 104.

²³ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 48.

²⁴ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 48.

²⁵ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 48.

²⁶ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 48.

²⁷ Chinwe M. A. Nwoye, “Igbo cultural and religious worldview: An insider’s perspective,” *International*

intermediaries between *Chukwu* and humans. These beings are often venerated and appeased through rituals. In all, Igbo cosmology emphasizes the balance and harmony within the universe. Violations of established ethical principles negatively affects the cosmic order and brings calamities and misfortunes into the society.

Traditional Igbo sociopolitical worldview

The Igbo people have a communal sense of life where the community takes precedence over the individual.²⁸ Community is central to their social structure and identity, and decisions normally involve the collective input of the community. In Igbo worldview, what truly defines a person is informed by metaphysical and communal frameworks.²⁹ Traditional Igbo people, therefore, enjoy strong family ties whereby the welfare of each family member is the responsibility of the whole family. Family, in Igbo thought, extends beyond the living members to include the invisible ancestors (the living dead) and the unborn.³⁰ Even the living members of the Igbo family go beyond the nuclear family system of the Western people to include in-laws, cousins, nephews, uncles, grandparents or even maids and servants. This expansive view of the family is beautifully encapsulated in the Igbo description of the family as “*Ezi na ulo*” (“the outside relations and those in the house”). In this dynamic familial framework, relationships are not limited by blood ties alone. In-laws are considered an integral part of the family, and the bonds formed through marriage are cherished and respected. Cousins, nephews, and uncles are all included under the protective umbrella of this extended family. Instead of Rene Descartes’ famous statement “*Cogito ergo sum*” (“I think, therefore I am”), the Igbo perspective is “*Cognatus ergo sum*” (I exist because of my connections with others, therefore, I am). This view of life promotes interconnectedness, interdependence and mutual cooperation.

Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Vol. 3(9), (2011): 304-317, 308.

²⁸ George Ogbonna Mbarah and John Ezenwankwor, “*Akonauche*, Personhood and Social Order in Contemporary Igbo Culture,” *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences (AJSBS)* 13(1) (2023): 220-230, 221.

²⁹ Mbarah and Ezenwankwor, “*Akonauche*, Personhood and Social Order in Contemporary Igbo Culture,” 221.

³⁰ F. A. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 1970), 17-18.

The pre-colonial political framework of the Igbo people was based on a democratic Republican system of government.³¹ Igbo's system of government differed from the systems that operated in the neighboring Hausa and Yoruba regions. The Igbo region was characterized by political fragmentation, with several chiefdoms,³² including Nri, Aro Confederacy, Agbor, and Onitsha. Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther's nineteenth-century visit to the Igboland (specifically to the people along the Niger waterway such as Aboh, Agbor, and Onitsha) prompted the following comment: "One common disadvantage which characterizes the Ibo country is, want of a king, who is supreme head of the nation or even of a tribe, as in Yoruba, Benin, Nupe and Hausa. Instead of which, there are often more than one king to a village."³³ This means that the precolonial Igbo political structure that Bishop Crowther witnessed had no single person with ultimate authority. Instead, authority and power were distributed and operated semi-autonomously among the various societies, each with its unique governance structure, customs, and traditions.

Until the 1970s, the Igbo society had a much less pronounced monarchy compared to its current state.³⁴ Nonetheless, traditional Igbo chieftaincy structure was hierarchical with two distinct groups of traditional leaders. The first category included chiefs who held primary executive powers and directly interacted with political officers, while the second category comprised chiefs who could not get audience from political officers without passing through intermediaries (mainly superior chiefs).³⁵ Prominent figures like the *alaafin* of Oyo, the *Oba* of Benin, the *sultan* of Sokoto, and the *emir* of Kano were classified by scholars like Crowder and Ikime as belonging to the first category of chiefs with direct political influence.³⁶ Their subordinates, including councilors, palace chiefs, district heads, and titled individuals, fell into the second category, where their access to political authorities was mediated through superior chiefs.³⁷ This system reflects the intricate social and political dynamics of traditional Igbo society. It should be noted that these dynamics have evolved over the years,

³¹ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 15.

³² Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 15.

³³ Cited in Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 348.

³⁴ Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 348.

³⁵ Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 349.

³⁶ As cited in Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 349.

³⁷ As cited in Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 349.

and contemporary Igbo society may exhibit different patterns of leadership and governance. With this background the paper proceeds to consider Igbo chieftaincy titles in the next section.

Igbo chieftaincy titles

Chieftaincy titles carry important socio-cultural messages. They describe the character of the bearer. In this section, the paper explains two chieftaincy titles used among the Igbos. These titles, *Igwe/Eze* and *Ozo*, have been chosen because of their prominence among the Igbo people and because of the fact that they have been attributed to Christ in the song under study.

Igwe or Eze

The term “*Igwe*” (or *Eze*) holds significant cultural and sociopolitical significance in the Igbo community of Nigeria. It is a title used in some Igbo communities, particularly in the northern Igbo-speaking regions, to denote a traditional ruler (monarch/king).³⁸ To some extent, “*Igwe*” is equivalent to the title “His Royal Majesty.” The “*Igwe*” position is hereditary, passed down in a royal lineage. As seen earlier, the title “*Igwe*” is sometimes used as an anthropomorphic personification of the sky and so in that sense, it is equivalent to “the Sky Father.” This title, therefore, links to the sky deity, symbolizing the king’s elevated standing, akin to a divine presence on earth. Consequently, “*Igwe*” is applicable only to a person who attracts great respect, honor and reverence, and is “elevated” above the “ordinary” person.

The political influence of the *Igwe* in contemporary Igboland is evident in an event that occurred in December 1987. During this time, Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria’s military president, visited the *Eze* in his palace as part of his (the President’s) tour of the Imo State. On this occasion, Eze Alexius A. Njemanze, the *Igwe* Ozuruigbo IV of Owerri (in Imo State), boldly confronted Navy Commander Amadi Ikwechegh, the governor of Imo State.³⁹ The king conveyed to President

³⁸ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, “Nigeria: The *Igwe* of Nnewi-Chi; links to the Ofo shrine in Nkwo-Nnewi; the name of the ruler, rituals practiced, and the tradition for selecting a chief,” (2002), np. [Retrieved online from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f7d4de01c.html> on 14 September 2023]

³⁹ Ebere Nwaubani, “Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1994): 347-371, 347.

Babangida the plight of the loyal citizens of Owerri who were enduring oppressive state governance.⁴⁰ He articulately presented his people's grievances against the Ikwechegh administration. In response, President Babangida promised to address the concerns raised by the *Igwe* and his people. The event highlighted the unique ability of the *Igwe* to effectively voice the anger and discontent of the people on such a prominent platform. It is unlikely that anyone else could have garnered Babangida's attention to this issue, let alone confront the governor directly without fearing potential repercussions. In essence, the *Igwe* stood as the sole figure capable of engaging in such a direct challenge to the governor's authority.⁴¹ As a sign of reverence and honour, people remove their sandals, and their hat, and then bow down before greeting the *Igwe*.

As a traditional leader, the *Igwe* safeguards and passes down the community's cultural heritage and history, promotes unity in the community, performs spiritual duties, participates in religious rituals, mediates disputes, ensures peaceful coexistence and enforces traditional laws and values within the community. In the Igbo community, the *Igwe* has the power to confer chieftaincy titles on members of the community as a sign of recognition of their achievements and moral character. One has to be a noble person, that is, one who is highly regarded and well-spoken of in the community, before they qualify for a chieftaincy title in Igboland. Such titles normally begin with the "nze" title; should the person with the "nze" title, grow up to become an elderly person and still remain in the village, the *Igwe* invites him to be part of his cabinet. At this point the *Igwe* may give such a person who is now a senior elder another "*ichie*."

Depending on local customs and tradition and the rank of the title, one with such chieftaincy titles may be allowed to wear a red or a black cap to hold a walking stick, an elephant tusk, a horse tail or a fan of ram or a cow skin. These chieftaincy titles also give one the privilege to do the chief handshake. This handshake starts with touching each other's hand with the upper side three times before shaking. If one of those doing the handshake feels the other is not a title holder even though he pretends to be one, then the touching stops after two times (not after three times) and after that, the handshaking follows. The three-time touching of each other's hand before the actual handshaking symbolizes honour which is due only bearers of chieftaincy titles. It is clear that,

⁴⁰ Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 347-348.

⁴¹ Nwaubani, "Chieftaincy among the Igbo: A Guest on the Center-Stage," 348.

like many other African societies, the Igbo society also considers chieftaincy as a very important aspect of their sociopolitical and religious life. Apart from “*Igwe*”, the Igbo people have other chieftaincy titles, one of which is *Ozo* which the paper considers in the next section.

Ozo

The *Ozo* title stands out as one of the most prestigious traditional honors in Igbo culture, signifying significant recognition within the community. Many individuals seek this title as a symbol of their prosperity and social status. Unlike *Igwe* which is a royal title, “*Ozo*” is a non-royal title, though both may be considered the highest chieftaincy rank in different contexts. *Ozo* title taking has been a longstanding tradition passed down through generations, with individuals following in the footsteps of their forebears. Nze Alphonsus Oforchukwu’s answer to the question of the origin of *Ozo* title taking underscores this point: “*Ozo* title taking is part of our way of life. I could not recollect when *Ozo* title taking began in Igboland. But it is what we grew up with, we saw our fathers and grand-fathers taking titles. We also followed in their footsteps. It is our *omenani* (tradition) in Igboland.”⁴² It is also believed that *Ozo* titles emerged as a way of honoring distinguished ancestors.⁴³ Similarly, *Ozo* title taking is often associated with the worship of the spirits, *Njaba*, and gods in the Igbo community.⁴⁴ Given the special place that ancestors and spirits have among the Igbo people, it is not surprising that title taking originated to pay respect and to these beings. According to Joachim Ifezuo Oforchukwu there are oral traditions that link the origin of *Ozo* title taking with Igbo mythology, legends, and folklore.⁴⁵ These narratives connect the inception of *Ozo* title taking with the history of slavery. According to this account, a slave owner once embarked on a journey with one of his slaves who happened to wear a red cap. Upon reaching their destination, the slave received a more esteemed reception than his master, which infuriated the master. In response, the master forbade his slaves from wearing red caps and reserved this privilege for well-respected Igbo members; this eventually became one of the prerequisites for *Ozo* title holders. No matter one’s position

⁴² Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 58.

⁴³ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 59.

⁴⁴ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 59.

⁴⁵ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 59.

on its origin, the fact remains that *Ozo* title taking is deeply ingrained in the cultural heritage and tradition of contemporary Igbo people.

The place of the *Ozo* title on the Igbo political ladder varies from region to region. In Isu-Njaba and its environs, *Ozo* title is the highest title or rank that a chief can attain.⁴⁶ It is often associated with the most prestigious and revered position within a traditional political system. However, in some communities like Nteje in Anambra state, *Ozo* is not the highest traditional rank, but the second greatest of all the titles taken by the people.⁴⁷ In any case, *Ozo* title is considered sacred because it is believed to have been instituted by the gods. In some Igbo societies, slaves (*ohu*) are not allowed to take *ozo* titles; only free persons (*nwadiala*) may take this title.⁴⁸ In Isu-Njaba and its environs slaves are permitted to take the *Ozo* title.⁴⁹

These titles instill in the individual the aspiration to assume certain positions, and once in these roles, they cultivate the motivation to fulfill the associated responsibilities.⁵⁰ The titles are associated with social class, status and power. During the pre-colonial era, Igbo chieftaincy titles were typically bestowed upon individuals in recognition of their accomplishments in inter-community wars and village wrestling tournaments.⁵¹ In addition, successes in agriculture and hunting or outstanding life as a peacemaker and an honest person also qualified one for such titles. These distinct attributes were subsequently mirrored in the titles they received. Thus, some of the titles that emerged included: *Ezeji* (King of yam), *Ezi okwu bu ndu* (Truth is life), *Ndu ka aku* (life is greater than wealth), and *Aghara ndu kpaa aku, onye ilo erie* (If one pursues wealth at the detriment of one's health, the enemy will enjoy such wealth).⁵²

The foregoing discourse gives the context within which the song "*Igwe*" is analyzed in the next section. Even though the song has some lyrics in Yoruba language, the above background of the Igbo people is sufficient to achieve the objectives of the study.

⁴⁶ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 60.

⁴⁷ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 60.

⁴⁸ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 61.

⁴⁹ Oforchukwu, *A Theological and Biblical Appraisal of Ozo title taking*, 61.

⁵⁰ Ukpokolo, "Self Identity and Chieftaincy Titles among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria," 7.

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⁵² Ukpokolo, "Self Identity and Chieftaincy Titles among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria," 7-8.

Selected lyrics of the song “Igwe”

The song “Igwe” is a gospel music that was composed by the Midnight Crew, a well-known gospel music quartet in Nigeria. The group is led by Pat Uwaje-King, other members being Odunayo Ojo-Onasanya, Mike Abdul and Gbenga Oyebola. The Midnight Crew is well-known in the Nigerian Christian music community for their upbeat and uplifting gospel songs. Some of their popular songs are “Igwe,” “Kene Jesu” and “Mo Dibo.” In 2021, the group celebrated their twentieth anniversary.⁵³ The song “Igwe”, which was released in 2008, was composed with a combination of some Igbo, Yoruba and English expressions.

Part of the lyrics of the song “Igwe” reads as follows:⁵⁴

Kosobabire (There is no king like you)

Kosi Baba bire (There is no father like you)

Ko ma s’Olorun bi ire (There is no God like you)

Igwe! (Oh King!)

E ba mi gb’Olorun tobi (Magnify the Lord with me)

Oba nla oba to ga (Great King, Mighty King)

E ba mi gb’Olorun tobi (Magnify the Lord with me)

Edumare oba to ga (Great King, Mighty King)

Eze ndieze (King of Kings)

Idi egwo (You are too much)

Onye nabia ozo (The soon coming King)

Idi egwo (You are too good)

Onyedikagi (Who is like thee)

Onyedikachukwu (Who is like God)

Omalecha (Beautiful God)

Agwunchemba 1 (The number one great warrior that watches the city)

Bulieya (Lift him higher)

Elu (Higher)

Bulie Jesus Elu (Lift Jesus high Higher)

⁵³ Midnight Crew to celebrate 20th anniversary with US tour. (2021)<https://tribuneonlineng.com/midnight-crew-to-celebrate-20th-anniversary-with-us-tour/>

⁵⁴ The lyrics of the song were retrieved from https://sonichits.com/video/Midnight_Crew/IGWE.

Bia Bulie ya (Come lift him higher)
Elu (Higher)
Bulie Jesus Elu (Lift Jesus high Higher)

Kingship Christology based on the Lyrics of the song “Igwe”

There are many theological themes that can be explored based on the lyrics of the song under study. In this section, some of these themes are presented to bring out the Kingship of Christ as embedded in the song.

Christ as Incomparable King

The opening expression—*Kosobabire* (“There is no king like you”)—underlines the uniqueness, supremacy and might of the king to whom this expression is ascribed. As noted earlier, kingship in the Igbo context signifies power, honor and responsibility, among others. In Igbo and other African societies, kings hold a central and respected role in their communities, and their position carries significant cultural, spiritual, and political authority. In Yorubaland, for instance, the *Oba* (king) wields both religious and political authority.⁵⁵ In Ghana, chiefs (kings) are highly respected figures who protect their subjects and contribute immensely to the development of the society. The king described in the song is incomparable, surpassing any known human king. Two expressions in the song identify Jesus Christ as the King described in the song. They are *Onye nabia ozo* (The soon coming King) and *Bulie Jesus Elu* (Lift Jesus high higher). The Bible identifies Christ as one who will come soon to judge the world,⁵⁶ thus serving as the foundation for the first expression. The second expression explicitly mentions Christ’s name and thus identifies Christ as the person about whom the song was written.

The kingship of Jesus is biblically grounded. The Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would come from the lineage of King David and that he would establish an eternal kingdom.⁵⁷ The New Testament presents Jesus as the fulfillment of these prophecies, being born in the Davidic line and proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God. For example Matthew 1:1-17 traces Jesus’

⁵⁵ Oluwasegun Oladosu and Ajayi Adetokunbo Olaiya, “Kingship and Integrity in Yoruba Traditional Society,” *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies*, 4(2) (2021):168-188, 174.

⁵⁶ Rev. 22:20; Matt. 24:30; 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

⁵⁷ 2 Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 9:6-7.

lineage back to King David, emphasizing his Davidic ancestry. This genealogy is presented to show that Jesus is the rightful heir to the Davidic throne.⁵⁸ The uniqueness and superiority of Jesus' kingship is underlined by the title "King of kings and Lord of lords."⁵⁹ The phrase "Lord of lords" appears twice in Scripture and is attributed to God the Father in Deuteronomy 10:17 and Psalms 136:3. The attribution of these titles to Christ is an expression of his superiority to any human ruler.

In the Akan context, this fact is expressed in the expression "*ɔhene biara nte se wo*" ("There is no king like you [Jesus]"). This statement suggests the Akan recognition of Jesus as a divine and unparalleled king. It suggests that no human king, no matter how powerful or revered, can compare to Christ. In the Igbo context, Jesus fits the title *Omenyiri* (The Unbeatable), a title which highlights his unparalleled power, and hence alludes to his divine identity. Jesus' victory over sin, death, and evil makes him an incomparable and unbeatable being. As one who surpasses all kings, Jesus deserves worship and praise. This prompts the songwriters to say *Bulieya* (Lift him higher), *Bulie Jesus Elu* (Lift Jesus high Higher), *Bia Bulie ya* (Come lift him higher) and *Bulie Jesus Elu* (Lift Jesus high higher). Jesus, being God, deserves all honor and glory.

Christ as a Parent-king

The next line of the song alludes to the parenthood of Jesus. The expression *Kosi Baba bire* ("There is no father like you") identifies Jesus as Father par excellence. The Yoruba word "Baba" literally means "father"—that is, a male adult old enough to have children.⁶⁰ "Baba" can also refer to "grandfather," "wise old man" or "sir"; it connotes great respect and reverence for somebody. It can also be used as an affectionate term for one's own father or as a term of endearment for an older person, even if they are not biologically related. In the Yoruba context, the Baba protects the family, provides for their (physical, spiritual, psychological) needs, directs them and ensures the safety of the family. In addition, the great wisdom possessed by the baba also makes him an adviser to the family. Family members would usually not take key decisions without

⁵⁸ Matt. 21:1-11; Luke 1:26-33.

⁵⁹ Rev0 19:16.

⁶⁰ Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale, "Clientelism and Social Structure: An Analysis of Patronage in Yoruba Social Thought," *Africa Spectrum* Vol. 43(2), (2008):203-224, 214.

consulting him. One can, therefore, imagine how difficult it will be for the family to survive without the Baba.

The Fatherhood of Jesus is not lacking in the Bible, even though he is not explicitly referred to as father. Jesus provides for his followers,⁶¹ protects them,⁶² teaches them,⁶³ sets example for them⁶⁴ and comforts them⁶⁵ just as a father does. The term “Baba” as applied to Jesus underscores his care, concern, mercy, providence and love for humanity. Jesus’ love for humanity is epitomized in his substitutionary death on the cross. He was not a sinner but because of his love for humanity, he accepted to bears the sin of humanity and die in the stead of humankind. To some extent the term “Baba” points to Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. The cross stands as the pinnacle of his (fatherly) love for humanity, demonstrating his willingness to bear our sins and provide a path to reconciliation with God.

Christ as divine-king

The songwriters go on to say “*Ko ma s’Olorun bi ire*” (“There is no God like you”). Here, the song establishes Jesus’ divinity by referring to him as “*Olorun*” (God). “*Olorun*” (also referred to as *Olodumare*) is a Yoruba noun referring to the Supreme Being,⁶⁶ equivalent to the Akan “*Nyankopɔn*” (“God” or “the Supreme Being”). *Olorun* owns the universe and everything in it and cannot be reached directly. Therefore, there are no shrines, ordained priests for the worship of “*Olorun*” and no sacrifices are offered to him directly. Intermediaries such as ancestors and lower divinities are employed to have access to *Olorun*.

The reference to Jesus as “*Olorun*” is an identification of Jesus’ divinity which is a very important aspect of his salvific ministry. Jesus has a dual nature, human nature and divine nature which was made possible through the incarnation.⁶⁷ His humanity made him a perfect representative of the human race on the cross while his divinity enabled him to offer a perfect and highest sacrifice for the sins of humanity. The expression “*Ko ma s’Olorun bi ire*” highlights the uniqueness of

⁶¹ Matt. 14:13-21.

⁶² John 10:1-18.

⁶³ Matt. 5:1ff; 11:29-30.

⁶⁴ 1 Pet. 2:21.

⁶⁵ Matt. 11:28.

⁶⁶ Oladosu and Olaiya, “Kingship and Integrity in Yoruba Traditional Society,” 170.

⁶⁷ John 1:1, 14.

Christ's deity. He surpasses every deity in the Yoruba socio-religious context, and by extension any god in any part of the world.

The divine person, Jesus, is also King. In this light, the songwriters attribute *Igweness* to him, hailing him "Igwe!" ("Oh King!"). Like other African groups, names and titles are not mere appellation but "expressions of attitudes, sentiments, aspirations, sorrows, historical facts, and the underlying philosophy of the Igbo people."⁶⁸ Names and titles also express contextual realities in which the bearer acquired them. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Chinua Achebe asserts that: "If you want to know how life has treated an Igbo man, a good place to go is the name his children bear."⁶⁹ This means that names/titles in Igbo culture often carry significant meaning and reflect the individual's life journey, beliefs, or aspirations. Thus, names are not just arbitrary labels but hold a deeper cultural and personal significance, serving as a window into the individual's life story and values. The titleholder's name is symbolic of what they stands for. Therefore, the reference to Jesus as *Igwe* is meant to signify Jesus' royalty and greatness.

Christ as the warrior-king

The expression "Agwunchemba 1" ("The number one great warrior that watches the city") underscores the warrior-like nature of Christ. Jesus is not just "a great warrior" but "the number one great warrior", meaning he surpasses all other warriors. Here are some key aspects of the concept of a warrior in Igbo culture as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.⁷⁰ Firstly, warriors are brave and valorous. They are often involved in intertribal conflicts, defending their communities from external threats or engaging in wars with neighboring clans. Bravery in battle is a source of pride and honor. Secondly, in the Igbo context, being a warrior brings respect and prestige to the individual and their family. Warriors are celebrated through rituals, songs, and storytelling. Thirdly, becoming a warrior requires training and initiation. Young men undergo a period of preparation, which includes physical training, spiritual rituals, and learning about the customs and traditions of their people. Fourthly, warrior are protectors of their communities. They are responsible for ensuring the safety

⁶⁸ Ukpokolo, "Self Identity and Chieftaincy Titles among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria," 9.

⁶⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Morning yet on Creation Day* (New York: Anchor Books, 1975), 96.

⁷⁰ The following aspects of Igbo concept of warriorship is found throughout Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Penguin Books, 1994).

and security of their people. This role includes not only military defense but also maintaining order and resolving disputes within the community. Fifthly, Igbo warriors often form a distinct social group within the society, with their own leadership and hierarchy. Sixthly, warriors may carry symbolic weapons and attire, such as machetes, spears, and colorful clothing, to represent their status and readiness for battle.

To some extent, the Bible presents Jesus as a warrior-king superior to the Igbo warrior. The root of the biblical portrait of the Jesus as a warrior-king is found in the early chapters of the book of Genesis. In Genesis, God created humankind in his image⁷¹ and gave them dominion over the Earth.⁷² Adam and Eve were placed in a garden with one prohibition, not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.⁷³ The story of Adam's and Eve's fall through deception had profound consequences on human relationships, the environment, and humanity's sinful nature, leading to separation from God and his wrath.⁷⁴

God's promise of a Messiah, depicted as a warrior-King,⁷⁵ whose salvific mission is symbolized as a battle against Satan. The Messiah would crush the head of the serpent (symbolizing the devil)⁷⁶ while the serpent also bruise the Messiah's heel.⁷⁷ The Bible alludes to this struggle in stories like Cain and Abel's feud⁷⁸ and Noah's righteous lineage against the serpent's descendants.⁷⁹ Their offspring, who were in the order of the serpent, became notorious for being mighty men of war.⁸⁰ Noah, representing the righteous seed of the woman,⁸¹ was in direct contrast with the seed of the devil or serpent who caused God to promise judgement against humanity in Genesis 6:7.

⁷¹ Gen. 1:26-27.

⁷² Gen. 1:28.

⁷³ Gen. 2:8, 15, 17.

⁷⁴ Gen. 3:1-24.

⁷⁵ Gen. 3:15.

⁷⁶ Rev. 12:9.

⁷⁷ James M. Hamilton, "The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment: The Centre of Biblical Theology?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 56(1) (2006): 57-84, 64; Joseph Johnston, *Christ in Genesis: A Clergyman's Study of the First Book of Moses as a Scripture of Prophecy* (New York: Exposition, 1959), 2; Gen. 3:15; cf. Rev. 12:4-6.

⁷⁸ Gen. 4:1-8.

⁷⁹ Gen. 6:3.

⁸⁰ Gen. 6:4.

⁸¹ Gen. 6:9.

The New Testament portrays Jesus as a King,⁸² born during Roman rule when the Jews sought a leader for political liberation. Some saw Jesus as an earthly king, but he revealed a different kingdom, one that is spiritual. When asked by Pilate, Jesus confirmed his kingship but clarified its non-earthly nature.⁸³ His kingdom operates through preaching and repentance, disciple-making. After his resurrection, Jesus granted authority worldwide, commissioning disciples to spread his message.⁸⁴ Thus, Jesus' kingdom is spiritual⁸⁵ emphasizing faith and transformation rather than worldly power or lineage, and Pilate's inscription, "King of the Jews," unwittingly affirmed this truth.

The fulfillment of the head-crushing prophecy was seen in the life, ministry and death, resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus defeated Satan and his host. Paul captures this thought clearly in Colossian 2:15 where he says Christ "has disarmed the powers and the authority and he had made the public spectacles of them triumphing over them by the cross" (NIV). The writer of Hebrews 2:14-17 made the same point when he said that the crucifixion of Christ has given the warrior-king (Christ) a mandate to defeat the devil and deliver those he had taken captive. In Colossians 2:15 Paul draws on an ancient Roman imagery where a king who conquered another king in a war would parade all those he conquered publicly through the principal street so that people would see them and they would be shamed by the defeat that they had suffered. The term "disarmed" indicates that the power that held humankind captive have been rendered powerless through the power that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. In other words, the crucifixion was meant to ensure Jesus' victory over Satan.⁸⁶ The Bono-Twi version uses the word "waatutu" (he/she/it has uprooted) for "disarmed." The term "waatutu" is an agricultural metaphor that indicates that a plant is lifeless. When the stem of a tree is cut, it can survive because of the presence of its roots to absorb water and minerals for it. That is the idea behind the Bono-Twi saying "dua a beatwa so koraa wə anidasoə sɛ əbɛfɛfɛ" ("a tree is cut has hope of sprouting again"). The imagery that Paul uses based on the

⁸² Matt. 2:2.

⁸³ John 18:36.

⁸⁴ Matt. 28:16-20.

⁸⁵ Matt. 4:17, 23, Matt. 12:28.

⁸⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, edited by Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 173.

Bono worldview is an uprooted plant. This is the picture that he paints for the devil and his host after the head-crushing encounter that the devil had with Jesus on the cross.

Paul's point is that demonic forces are made much like trees without root so that they are now rendered powerless and lifeless. The encounter between Satan and Jesus reminisces the Ghanaian saying in "*amaga ne amaga hyia a ne yehu amaga hoho*" ("when two strong men meets, you will find out who is the real deal"). Christ's ultimate victory over sin, death,⁸⁷ and Satan underlines his role as the one who overcomes all opposition and establishes God's kingdom on earth. This victory is the culmination of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

Christ as Divine-Protector

In addition to identifying Jesus as a warrior, the phrase *Agwunchemba* 1 ("The number one great warrior that watches the city") also depicts Jesus as a powerful protector who watches over and safeguards a city and its inhabitants. Jesus protects his flock and makes sacrifices for them.⁸⁸ He gives eternal life to his followers and has the power to protect them from the snatcher.⁸⁹

Afua Kuma underlines Jesus' role as a divine protector when she says "You [Jesus] stand at the mouth of the big gun while your body absorbs the bullets aimed at your followers."⁹⁰ Kuma highlights Jesus' role in taking on the suffering and challenges faced by believers. She also emphasizes that through faith in Christ, believers can find protection and safety, even in the face of adversity. In other words, Kuma identifies Jesus as the source of protection and safety, similar to the idea of being "bulletproof" against harm or danger. Jesus acts as a spiritual shield to protect his followers, ensuring that those who remain in a close relationship with him cannot be harmed by Satan. This can be related to the Igbo appellation "*Ochendo*" ("one/he who shelters") which metaphorically means protection from danger, from hunger, and from perils of life.

Like an Akan king, Jesus is influential, powerful and have military prowess indicative of his chieftaincy titles. For example, the Akan chieftaincy title

⁸⁷ 1 Cor. 15:54-57.

⁸⁸ John 10:11.

⁸⁹ John 10:28-30.

⁹⁰ Afua Kuma, *Jesus of the Deep Forest: Prayers and Praises*, translated by Jon Kirby (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2011), 9.

“*asagyefo*” (“deliver in times of war”) is given to a king/chief who has the ability to people in times of war. The title “*asahene*” (“war marshal”) connotes high military skills. Kuma serves us well with the following quote: “Should the devil himself become a lion and chase us as his prey, we shall have no fear, lamp of God, Satan says he is a wolf, Jesus stretches forth His hand and look Satan is a mouse.”⁹¹ Here, Kuma makes the point that, the power possessed by Jesus surpasses that of Satan. Satan would come as a lion trying to prey human beings; but when Jesus appears, he (Satan) becomes like a mouse. The mouse-lion comparison shows how powerless Satan becomes in the presence of Jesus. Therefore, it is only those who are not abiding in Christ who fear Satan; whoever abides in Christ and Christ also abides in him/her is not under Satan’s control. Kuma also refers to Jesus as “*ɔkatakylie*” (“the brave one or the hero”).⁹² The noun “*ɔkatakylie*” comes from the words, “*kata*” (“to cover”) and “*akyire*” (“back”) meaning “to cover ones back.” So, Kuma’s point is that, in times of trouble, Jesus is the one who covers people’s back, that is the one who gives protection to people.

Going back to the Igbo context, Jesus epitomizes the Igbo appellation “*Agu na eche Obodo*” (“The lion that guards the community”) in his demonstration of strength over evil, his courage, and protection. This appellation draws on the traditional Igbo agricultural setting where the lion, the king of the jungle, has the power to offer the greatest protection. Christologically, this echoes Jesus’ analogy in the Good Shepherd pericope.⁹³ In the passage, Jesus refers to himself as the Good Shepherd and the “gate” through which the sheep enter and find safety.⁹⁴ Similarly, the title “*Agu na eche Obodo*” implies that the lion serves as a guardian and protector of the community, ensuring the safety and well-being of its members. The imagery of Jesus going ahead of his sheep and leading them is reminiscent of the lion that guards the community, taking the lead in ensuring its safety. Jesus’ strength and authority in defending his people against spiritual enemies also comes to bare in Revelation 5:5 where he is described as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

In the Zulu context, Jesus serves an antitype of the Zulu monarch, who is often referred to as the “*Ingonyama*” (“Lion”), and greeted *Bayede, Ngonyama!*

⁹¹ Kuma, *Jesus of the Deep Forest*, 19.

⁹² Kuma, *Jesus of the Deep Forest*, 1.

⁹³ John 10:1-18.

⁹⁴ John 10:7, 11.

(“Hail, Lion!”)⁹⁵ because of his valor and protection for his people. In the Zulu society, the title “*Ingonyama*” represents the highest earthly authority, similar to the Christian perception of Jesus as King above all kings. Jesus, then, becomes not just the “*Ingonyama*” but the “*Ingonyama kaNgonyama*” (“the Lion of lions”) whose kingship transcends borders and cultures, encompassing not only the Zulu society but all nations of the world.

Paradoxically, the title “*Agu na eche Obodo*” connotes peace as the holder is expected to protect the community from any danger.⁹⁶ This agrees with the Old Testament description of the Messiah as the “Prince of Peace”,⁹⁷ signifying his nature as a bringer of peace and unity. The New Testament portrays Jesus (the Messiah) as a nonviolent figure who advocated for love, peace, and forgiveness.⁹⁸ One of the most well-known instances emphasizing Jesus’ nonviolent nature is the event in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was arrested by Roman soldiers. According to the Gospels, when one of his disciples attempted to defend him with a sword, Jesus instructed him to put the sword away.⁹⁹ Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught principles of turning the other cheek, loving one’s enemies, and resolving conflicts through peaceful means. He is seen as the embodiment of peace, breaking down divisions among people. Jesus can, therefore, be considered as *agu* (the lion) in the Igbo context where the lion connotes protection and peace.

Christ as eschatological King

Jesus’ kingship also relates to eschatological events, such as the final judgment and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.¹⁰⁰ In this role, he is seen as the righteous judge who executes justice and delivers his people. This fact is expressed in the expression “*Onye nabia ozo*” (“The soon coming King”). This expression aligns with the Messianic concept of Jesus as the promised King and Messiah who will establish God’s kingdom in its fullness upon his return. The title reflects the eschatological hope of believers in Christ.

⁹⁵ Noverino Noemio Canonici, *Tricksters and Trickery in Zulu Folktales* (PhD Dissertation, University of Natal, 1995), 95.

⁹⁶ Ukpokolo, “Self Identity and Chieftaincy Titles among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria,” 13.

⁹⁷ Isa. 9:6.

⁹⁸ See for example, Matt. 5:5; 2 Thess. 3:16; John 14:27.

⁹⁹ Matt. 26:52.

¹⁰⁰ Rev. 19:11-16.

Jesus' first advent was characterized by weakness and lowliness. The King of kings was born in a manger and his parents had to seek refuge in Egypt to prevent Herod from killing him.¹⁰¹ On the cross, he appeared like a weak person who could not do anything to save himself. His Second Advent will be quite different. He will come in power, glory and splendor: "At that time people will see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory, he will come and sit in his judgement seat and judge everyone who has lived on the earth."¹⁰²

This fact is underlined in the reference to Jesus as "Ozo", a prestigious and sacred title, often associated with leadership, honor, and reverence within the Igbo socio-cultural context. As noted earlier, individuals with the *Ozo* title are typically highly respected community leaders with exceptional qualities. Jesus will come back as a highly respected King. One has to note that any comparison between Jesus and an "Ozo" in Igbo setting is symbolic and not meant to be taken literally.

Sociopolitical reflections

Kingship Christology and Mediation

The identification of Jesus as the Igbo *Igwe* or *Ozo* suggests a mediatorial role because the traditional Igbo leaders serve as mediators. In the context of rebuking his sons of the evil they were doing in the house of God and advising them to desist from it, Eli asked rhetorically, "If one person sins against another, someone can intercede for the sinner with the Lord; but if someone sins against the Lord, who can make intercession?"¹⁰³ One should not interpret Eli's question as implying certain sins are not against God. Eli's question simply highlights the seriousness of sins, especially in the context where there was no clear intermediary to intercede on behalf of the sinner.

The answer to Eli's question is found in the person and works of Christ. When people sin, Christ stands as the intercessor who bridges the gap between the sinner and the divine. His sacrificial death on the cross and his high priestly role enable believers to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with God.¹⁰⁴ He intercedes on our behalf, offering forgiveness and redemption for sins committed against

¹⁰¹ Luke 2:7; Matt. 2:13-23.

¹⁰² Mark 13:26 NIV.

¹⁰³ 1 Sam. 2:25a NRSV.

¹⁰⁴ Rom. 5:1-5.

the Lord. In this way, Christ's mediatorial kingship exemplifies the answer to Eli's rhetorical question. He is the one who can make intercession when someone sins against the Lord. He provides a path to reconciliation and grace for all who seek it through faith in him.

Christ's mediatorial role has both cosmic and corporate dimensions. The cosmic aspect pertains to his role as the bridge between the divine and the entire created universe. The benefits provided by the atonement go beyond humanity to encompass the entirety of creation. It reconciles and restores not only human beings but also the entire cosmos to God.¹⁰⁵ In the African setting where sin is seen as disturbing the cosmic equilibrium, this aspect of Kingship Christology can be appreciated better. Traditionally, Africans express the need for humans to live in harmony with the natural environment and cosmic forces. In case of calamity, they offer sacrifices to supernatural entities to restore peace in the society. Christ, therefore, serves as the once-for-all sacrifice¹⁰⁶ made to maintain the needed cosmic harmony. Kingship Christology implies that leaders should embrace a role of mediation within their communities, striving to resolve conflicts and promote reconciliation. Just as Christ serves as the ultimate intercessor, traditional leaders can play a pivotal role in mediating disputes and fostering harmony among their people.

Kingship Christology and African leadership

Kingship Christology has implications for African leadership. Christ both taught and demonstrated what true leadership entails. Some of the key principles one can derive from his ministry and teachings include the following. Firstly, leadership involves serving others.¹⁰⁷ In essence, greatness is achieved through humble service to others. Secondly, leadership involves sacrifice. Jesus presents himself as the ultimate example of this principle when he asserts that he came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.¹⁰⁸ By this assertion, he taught that leaders in his kingdom are called to sacrificially give of themselves for the benefit of others. Thirdly, leadership requires humility. Jesus challenges the disciples to humble themselves and not seek

¹⁰⁵ Col. 1:20.

¹⁰⁶ Heb. 9:28; 10:10.

¹⁰⁷ Mark 10:43.

¹⁰⁸ Mark 10:45; John 10:11.

positions of honor and authority.¹⁰⁹ Instead, they should be willing to endure suffering and hardship for the sake of the Gospel. Fourthly, leadership requires integrity. Jesus modeled integrity in leadership through his own life. Fifthly, leadership requires accountability and leadership by example. In the Parable of the Talents,¹¹⁰ Jesus underlines the significance of faithful stewardship and accountability in leadership positions. In John 10:4 Jesus makes the point that effective leadership requires showing followers what to do by the leader's example, that is, demonstrating the way forward through their actions and behavior.

The issue of integrity is crucial for any discussion on leadership in contemporary Africa where most leaders lack integrity. Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah has noted that leadership failure can also be effectively prevented by upholding moral integrity because moral failure is a key contributor to leadership failures in contemporary Africa.¹¹¹ This is partly because political leaders are not chosen on the basis of their moral integrity but on the basis of their party affiliation and loyal service to their party and to certain selfish people in the society. This fact is reflected in the following assertion by Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng: "When it comes to choosing leaders to run the political parties and the nation it is no more a question of looking for selfless and competent individuals who have what it takes to move the nation forward. It is more of who is loyal to powerful individuals who want their interests to be served after the power is won."¹¹² This situation has resulted in political clientelism where political leaders provide favors and resources to specific individuals or groups in exchange for their support and loyalty. Even though Frimpong-Boateng made this statement in the Ghanaian sociopolitical context, it equally applies to many African societies. In many instances, loyalty to powerful individuals or factions within the political landscape takes precedence over meritocracy and the genuine desire to advance the nation.

¹⁰⁹ Mark 10:42-45; Matt. 20:25-28.

¹¹⁰ Matt. 25:14-30.

¹¹¹ Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah, "Reflections on Seven Lessons on Leadership from Leaders in the Bible," *The Journal of African Christian Thought* 23(1): 47-51.

¹¹² Myjoyonline.com, "Prof. Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng: An open letter to anybody who wants to be Ghana's president in January 2025 [Accessed from <http://myjoyonline.com/prof-kwabena-frimpong-boateng-an-open-letter-to-anybody-who-wants-to-be-ghanas-president-in-january-2025/> on 16-09-2023].

To avert the situation, Clinton reminds us that, “At the heart of any assessment of biblical qualification for leadership lies the concept of integrity, that is, uncompromising adherence to [a] code of moral, artistic, or other values that reveals itself in sincerity, honesty, and candor and avoids deception or artificiality. The God-given capacity to lead has two parts: giftedness and character. Integrity is at the heart of character.”¹¹³ Therefore, a leader possessing *charisma* but lacking integrity is bound for failure. The Kingship Christology, espoused in this paper, calls for transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the selection of political leaders. Civil society organizations, activists, and concerned citizens are encouraged to work toward reforms that prioritize merit-based appointments, open political processes, and the inclusion of a diverse range of voices in decision-making. Such reforms aim to ensure that leadership positions are filled by individuals who are genuinely committed to advancing the nation’s interests and have the competence to do so, rather than merely serving the interests of powerful individuals or groups.

Conclusion

The exploration of Kingship Christology through the lens of Midnight Crew’s “*Igwe*” within the Igbo socio-cultural context reveals a profound interplay between religion and culture. The analysis highlights the importance of music as a cultural medium for conveying theological messages. Among others, the discussions in the study imply that leaders should lead with a sense of moral integrity and reverence for divine principles. Leaders must be aware that their actions not only have social consequences but also spiritual implications. Finally, leaders should strive to lead by example, upholding ethical standards that reflect their respect for both the cultural and spiritual values of their communities.

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