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## **Symposium: The Archaeology of Gender**

Alinah Segobyte

### ***Gender and women in the archaeology of south-eastern Nigeria***

F.N. Anozie

This paper examines the place of women in the archaeology of south-eastern Nigeria. It focuses essentially on those artefacts that depict women or the materials with which they are associated. Among them are the artefacts showing figures of women, their style of dressing, their hair-do, beads and pendants as well as their body decorations. The paper will also discuss the creative capabilities of women by examining what they produced as well as the status that they were accorded in society.

The main source of artefacts from which we shall make inferences is Igbo Ukwu and the Niger Delta archaeological excavations. Igbo Ukwu came to light in the archaeology of Nigeria following the accidental discovery of hundreds of beads and bronze objects by two brothers who were digging a cistern. This happened between 1922 and 1938. It was only in 1959, however, that Professor Thurstan Shaw of the University of Cambridge was invited to do a systematic study of Igbo Ukwu sites - the first in South Eastern Nigeria is not over 40 years old.

### ***The Igbo Python: Goddess of Idemili, south-eastern Nigeria***

F.N. Anozie

For many centuries the Igbo have lived with a type of African python in a very cordial and friendly manner. They do not harm it and it does not harm them. They believed that the python was Chi-ukwu's or God's messenger and a female who descended from the sky after the rains, and that the rainbow was its abode.

This python featured in every aspect of the Igbo world: wall paintings, cast bronze objects, clay pots, etc. The python also featured in proverbs, songs, moonlight stories and fertility rituals.

After over one century of Christianity in Igboland the python is still with the people.

In the past this python was said to appear as soon as a child was born and slept near the wooden board on which the child was kept; food was kept for it in a special place in a clay vessel where it came to eat. How long would this cordial relationship last? In this paper in addition to recording some of the beliefs of the people concerning this python we intend to discuss some archaeological sites in Igboland where the python motif is depicted. Examples shall be drawn from such sites in Igbo Ukwu to drive home our point.

### ***Culture keepers, culture brokers***

Heba Aziz

The paper addresses how the tourist culture of Dahab in South Sinai constructed three distinct but linked landscapes that are occupied by three identified social groupings. The Interior, the Road and the Coast are socio-geographic landscapes inhabited, respectively, by the Bedouins, the authorities and the tourists. The landscape of women and children exist in between these socio-geographic landscapes.

This paper examines significant changes witnessed by the landscape of women and children after the introduction of tourism. Tourism as a pivot of economic development has pushed and confined women's landscape to the Interior. The children's landscape is one of movement. They have an emerging role as cultural brokers; they physically move between the Coast and the Interior, producing handicrafts in the former, and selling them to tourists in the latter. They have become responsible for generating a cash economy that supports the family.

The paper challenges the concepts of women's private and public spaces and their relation to economic prosperity. It examines how the landscape of women and children are linked and are mostly affected by the introduction of a new system. I also intend to tackle some development and human rights issues: child labour, child abuse and tourism.

***Reclaiming honour, resurrecting struggle: Black women, patronage, and the global heritage of Afrophobia***

Angela Gilliam

Through a specific case study, this paper examines some of the ways in which the centuries-old, global Afrophobia affects the day-to-day lives of women identified as being of African descent. Negative perceptions of black women have historically been sedimented in the unequal labour relations within the African, American and European continents.

The case study that sediments this intellectual inquiry centres around a class action suit that was filed in May of 1998 on behalf of at least 200 black American women. The collective “complaint for violation of civil rights” maintains that upon their return to the United States from travel overseas, these women were subjected to “on-routine, stripsearches and/or body cavity searches” at the Chicago O’Hare Airport by Customs Officials looking for drugs. The most salient characteristic that the women share is that they were all travelling alone without males accompanying them. Without patronage or other forms of cultural capital, many of the world’s women increasingly have difficulty moving in public space. Finally, this paper also maintains that such cases continue the problematic juxtapositions of Victorian science, race, class and the criminalisation of black women’s bodies that have had consequences in the lives of Africa-identified women for centuries. As such, they represent the enduring conflation of the social constructions of race and culture within an increasingly global world.

***Dietary behaviours amongst the present inhabitants of Okigwe South-eastern Nigeria***

A.M. Ibeanu

Subsistence patterns and dietary behaviours have been found to be very important sources of data in the study of human settlements and migrations in Okigwe area. Our preliminary study of the dietary behaviours of the two major clans in Okigwe seem to suggest a kind of dichotomy in dietary preferences. For example, Ricinus communis (Ogiri) which is used in most Igbo communities as food seasoning is absent in the diet of one of the clans in Okigwe. These differences in food exploitation seem to support aspects of oral traditions which opined that some groups moved into Okigwe in the distant past.

In our excavation of Uhuchukwu cave, Ahaba Imenyi in Okigwe area, charred seeds of *Canarium schweinfurthii* were recovered from the lowest deposit. This native pear is still eaten in Okigwe and Igbo land in general. Therefore, if and when these seeds are dated, it would enhance our understanding of plant food resource exploitation by man in the area. This paper, therefore, draws the attention of ethnoarchaeologists to the potentials of dietary behaviours in strengthening our oral traditional data bordering on traditions of origin and migrations.

***Relations of production and Igbo-Ukwu***

Alexander A. Nzei

Fundamentally, the analyses of Igbo-Ukwu archaeological remains were essentially influenced by liberal methods of analysis. The problem with these analyses is that they are premised on theoretical models that see society as necessarily a harmonious whole. Nevertheless, these models can only lead to an ahistorical analysis of Igbo/Nigeria culture, since they do not allow for an examination of the social forces that culled and shaped it. If the general conception of Igbo-Ukwu by the researchers did not always entail the creation of new norms and concepts, it did often entail justifying newly elaborated or extant - though changing - cultural ideas by reference to an ideally unegalitarian society in a past often presumed to be static. These researchers, in producing this referent, postulated an ahistorical, functionalist conception of social relations in pre-capitalist Igbo/Nigeria. Many writers reified this referent in the concept of tradition. Thus, rigorous appraisal of, for instance, the relationship between labour and means of production, neglects social relations of production, the development of the productive forces and the type of political, religious, economic, legal, ideological and social structures produced. This consequently, prevented the realisation and determination of Nigeria society's past in place with the development of the modern.

***Unearthing an age-long controversy: Perspectives on the “ABA women riots” of 1929 in south-eastern Nigeria***

Carolyn Panaki

In 1929, what the British regard as the “ABA Women Riots” erupted at Oloko, a small village near Umuahia, present-day Abia State in Nigeria. It subsequently spread to parts of what is today as Imo, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, and Cross-Rivers; engulfing a total of six states in modern Nigeria.

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Though much has been written about this event by a number of eminent historians, scholars, and features writers, it is nevertheless apparent that majority of these contributions are often one-sided, treating the subject in passing without going into an appreciable depth. What therefore do we call the 1929 event; is it a riot uprising, war, movement, or a fit of feminine fancy?

This paper focuses on events leading to the women uprising of 1929, and attempts an analysis of its conception, level of organisation, and nature. In conclusion, the paper posits that the 1929 episode is a part of the growing gender consciousness in women, and this consciousness went beyond the 1929 event because it manifested in increased women reaction to unfavourable administrative policies.

***Igbo-Ukwu: An archaeological record of Igbo women's culture***

Obianuju P. Umeji

The Igbo (or Ibos) of eastern Nigeria are among the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The pottery and bronzes reveal a high degree of craftsmanship and signatures of design that could always be recognised as Igbo in origin. Traditionally, uli art, mural art, pottery and weaving are exclusively women's art, while carving, metal works and sculpture are men's. Since there is no evidence to the contrary, it is assumed that there had been no reversal of sex roles in antiquity.

Using the sequence of dated archaeological remains from excavations in Igboland, we argue in this paper that women's art preceded the male art. Where similar designs are found in body art, pottery wood and metal, it was the earlier art that influenced the later. Hence, the uli body art is found in all the cultural materials called Igbo, and what is recorded as Igbo culture and civilisation is actually the legacy of Igbo women. The argument could be extended to other parts of Africa where western-oriented African scholars, currently and in antiquity, have brought the achievements of women, under subjugation. This calls for a re-assessment of the interpretations of archaeological data.