

**Transcript of the episode of Privacy Studies Podcast: Dynamics of Privacy and Death in Nigeria – Presentation by Dr. Lucky Igohosa Ugbudian (Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria)**

Hello, my name is Felicia Fricke and I am Natacha Klein Käfer, and you are listening to the Privacy Studies Podcast.

This season of the Privacy Studies Podcast follows the discussions of the symposium *PRIVACY AND DEATH: Past and Present*, which took place at the University of Copenhagen and online between October 12th and 13th, 2023. This event aimed to bring to the fore the discussions of what kind of privacy, if any, we have given to our dead in different cultural and historical contexts. We will hear presentations by historians, archaeologists, sociologists, and other experts.

Transcriptions of the episodes can be found on the Centre for Privacy Studies' website.

In today's episode, we will hear from Dr. Lucky Igohosa Ugbudian from Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi, Nigeria. His presentation is entitled 'Dynamics of Privacy and Death in Nigeria'.

Yeah, thank you so much and It's a great thing being the first presenter. It's always interesting to be the first presenter. And also, you showed me five minutes, one minute, and I've not started presenting. So, how do I do it now? I mean, I've done, so I can go and sit down. Because I saw you showing me five minutes, and then a minute remaining. Thank you so much.

So, yeah, my name is Dr. Lucky Igohosa Ugbudian I'm a lecturer at the Alex Ekwueme Federal University in Nigeria. I'm currently a visiting scholar at the University of Bern in Switzerland. And in the next 15-19 minutes, I'll be speaking on my paper on the Dynamics of Privacy and Death in Nigeria. And basically, I hope that we all know where Nigeria is, but basically, I will start by saying that Nigeria see dead not just at the end of life, but a continuation in the spiritual world. There's an interaction between the living and the dead. And the dead are regarded as ancestors. Once I leave this world, I'll become an ancestor to those that are living. To my children, to my family, to my community, I'll become an ancestor. That's the kind of afterlife. So, most Nigerian culture assumes that. So, there is an interaction between the living and the dead. And this is also influences how the dead are buried. So, there is a ritual, several rituals that are performed before a dead person is buried. It is culturally based whether you're a Christian, you're a Muslim, it's immaterial. So, there is that procedure, there's a list that are given to the family of the deceased. Whether you're a priestly Christian, Muslim, it's immaterial. And death in Nigeria is not a family issue. It's a communal issue. When I die, it is not only my children, or my wife, or my uncle, but it's the community that will come to bury me. So, it would be a departure from the Western system of burial. It would be seen as family stuff, but this is worse. It's a larger community because there is an interaction among the people in the community, being your family.

So, several scholars have tried to conceive privacy in philosophical, traditional ways, in legal terms. But for me, we have to see it from a Nigerian constitutional point of view. So, in Nigeria the constitution protects, gives the freedom of no interference, privacy, to both the living and the dead. In that case, that's why when someone dies in Nigeria and is buried, the grave is seen as a sacred place

that shouldn't be disturbed. So, when there's an intruder, there's a criminal law and also the penal code that offenders are prosecuted on.

So, in this lecture, I've given a certain aspect where those things came about. So, there's also a UN Universal Declaration on that. Then, historically death in Nigeria was seen as a very tearing, fearful, and a scary thing, but in recent years, due to the rising wave of digital media burials, death, it's now becoming an everyday thing. You know, stream live, here and there and then in this paper I will attempt to look at the dynamics in this context. How it was before, our current trend, and what are the consequences of it. So, this is what I will try to look at. But before I proceed, two very important implications of the changes, change and continuity in the privacy and death and burial process in Nigeria are the emergence of two basic things. The first one is treasure hunters. The second one is ritual hunters. Treasure hunters are those that go to the grave sites looking for expensive items. Because in Nigeria, some very wealthy families bury their dead ones with gold, with cash. With expensive golden shoes, diamond, this watch, golden caskets. All of these they put, therefore some greedy criminal elements go to the grave or cemetery to steal those items. Those ones are regarded as treasure hunters. Then, there are those that I call ritual hunters. Those that are looking for protection, spiritual protection and wealth, goes there to take the body parts of the dead in the quest for spiritual protection and for wealth. It is assumed that they could use human body for money ritual. So, I term them as treasure hunters and ritual hunters.

Then, I try to look at the concept of privacy and death. Because as I said earlier on, they are diverse. In fact, privacy is a complicated term to conceptualize. And then, scholars have tried to see it from a traditional perspective, a philosophical perspective and also, including legal perspective. However, I have tried to use the word of... Well, it is not to... (unidentifiable words) that the death is all pervading, in human culture like, gravity or the (unidentifiable words).. It's always there, it's part of human, is so busy, it cannot be dissected up from the rest of life, as we know it. So, death is something that must come to everybody. There is no solution. It's just, when and how. Yeah, we all will die, but we don't know when. How we will die. I would die, but I don't know where. So death is a reminder of the transcendent nature of life. There's a beginning, also there must be an end.

In the literature, death can be described as the process that society cannot control, contain, and that despite England and Portugal, either physically or symbolically, it never goes away. Bummer. In the privacy of.. playing to a state of a certain one's freedom or security from the interference of other parties also impairs the movement of exercising the right of super-reflection on anyone looking (Ed.: audio difficult to hear, might be not directly transcribed).

Then, where is Nigeria? There is Nigeria. Nigeria is in West Africa, it shares a border with the Benin Republic and the Atlantic Ocean on the southwest. And then on this, with Cameroon and Chad on the northeast and Niger on the north-west. Now, Nigeria is the largest country by population in Africa with over 200 million people. It is a multicultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic country. So in such a country, there is a diverse, there is a plurality and diversity. So historically, as I said before, death was seen as something that you don't discuss. You don't engage with it because it entails fears. It brings about a lot of sad issues and people were afraid to discuss it, much more attending burials. Because in burials in those days, in pre-colonial time, colonial times, even up to the early 1990s, most Nigerians were afraid to discuss death because it's seen as that is a very scary thing to talk about. You mean,

you assume that it did to come that I would die? No, no. I can't go there. Don't discuss it. Even as I speak, most scholars in Nigeria, I have not gotten that boldness, as you say, or the guts to actually write more on dead because it's just something that sounds illogical. No. Dead? No. It's something... But now, few scholars are taking time to examine dead issues in Nigeria, in the social media as making more as people to glamorize it. Dead as commercialized. That makes it an everyday thing now.

So, dead was seen as a very sacred thing historically in Nigeria before the 20th century. Sorry, before the 21st century. Dead was something everybody was scared of. And then, and during burials most people were afraid to even look at the corpse. There was only soberness. Fearing nature. Lack of much.. except when that person is more than 18 years old. It's seen as celebration of life. However, when someone that is below 17 years old died, (unidentifiable words) are crying. And this was.. where the grave that such a person is buried. Nobody goes there. You don't go there. It is protected. In fact, you only go there to pray and ask for things that you need from the person. Because I said earlier on, there's a connection between the dead and the living. So like, I sometimes go to my mother's grave to offer my prayers. Those, now, that's what most people used to do until the emergence of the treasure hunters and the ritual hunters. So historically, before the 21st century, both dead and the graves were highly preserved and protected. However, from the 21st century, there was a great change. Because most Nigerians began to have access to the digital media. And Nigeria also began to commercialize burials. Whereby, expensive items, including gold, diamond, diamond caskets, are used in burying dead ones. And coupled with the economic challenges in Nigeria, gave opportunities to those that are interested in evading cemeteries and grave sites.

So this nexus of glamorizing burials through social media on one hand and then economic issues, greed and so on, criminality on the other hand combined. That nexus that made some criminal elements in Nigerian society to start the process of attacking and evading cemeteries and grave sites searching for the articles and items that we use in burying dead and also trying to cut off part of the bodies of the dead to make money ritual. So, the (unidentifiable word) and others talking about the increase of commercialization and discourse of death on social media that has led to commercial and social push for the preservation customers' personhood.

So in Nigeria several powerful and wealthy individuals have used the social media: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook. Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Nigeria and that has been where some have streamed live, videos are uploaded and then it becomes the national discourse of how many cows that were killed during the burial of a particular.. the kind of casket, gold, diamond that was used in burying that person in a country where there is a high level poverty they find some select few wasting or spending huge amount of money, unbelievable amount of money in burying their mothers and their.. and some of the cases that we have seen is that of the burial of the morther of Mike Adenuga. Mike Adenuga is the owner of the Nigeria's largest telecommunication company, Globalcom. So when his mother died he spent a huge amount of money on the casket and so on to bury the mother.

There was also a businessman Samika Opo and then someone engaged in the entertainment industry, Obi Cubana. I think you know 240 cows.. 240 cows yeah if not more than 240 cows were killed during the burial of his mother and then he was kind of expensive item and so on we had used during the burial. And when also the pastor died.. pastor Joshua of the synagogue of all nations died a huge

amount of money spent, streamed live. And then if (unidentifiable word) died during the COVID-19 (unidentifiable words) and then a lot of income was also spent on them.

A business in Nigeria. So huge amount of money were deployed in the burial process irrespective if the person is a Christian, is a Muslim, even for the Muslim that prescribe immediate burial of the person a lot of money is spent besides the normal process of burial with a matter so other aspects involve a huge amount of money. But for the Christians it's a massive, massive, massive money then also it sometimes they are burying both Christian and African traditional ways. So kind of a double burial for them.

Then, the implications of the new form of burial. Now the first one I said is the rise of treasure and ritual hunters. As I've said treasure hunters are those that seek for the items that we are using burying the deceased. And they attack cemeteries in different parts of the country. In Lagos, in Kaduna, Kano, in Benin, (unidentifiable word), in different parts. Irrespective of their faith, because in Nigeria Muslims are dominating the Northern parts and so if I call Kano and Kaduna these are big cities in northern Nigeria and they are largely Muslim, yet there are treasure and ritual hunters there. So it is not a religious thing. It's just a product of greed and influence by the rising wave of glamourization of burial rituals. Therefore, today it's an opportunity to get something, to enrich themselves through stealing these items while committing a dangerous act in the process, a demonizing act in the process. So I've tampered with the privacy of death by attacking the graves, the objects and parts the death. Now, a very interesting part of this work is that it's important to state that attacking graves is not a Nigerian issue, it's a global thing. In Australia there was a vandalization in the graves of cemeteries. In Pakistan, even in Jeddah (?) there have been incidents of attack of cemeteries and grave sites. Some, like in Australia there are those that it's.. my friend just show me something now.. it's a very, very interesting.. now this guy is a ritual hunter, oh sorry for the mistake there, is a ritual hunter. He went to attack a grave in Jigawa and then he slept off, he dug the grave wanted to steal it, then he slept off. Then he was caught in the following morning. You can see him there. The grave was the only one attacked. So you can see it's a point in Kaduna. Just to say in different parts of the country there have been these incidents of attacks of graves and so on. They are still guessing that there is a series of attacks on cemeteries and private incidents (unidentifiable words) excited for treasures and ritual in the country. Most part of the country witness the subject act of people that can be read as the (unidentifiable word) and evil. Thank you so much.

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Thank you so much for listening.