



From Fragmentation to Unity: Assessing the Impact of Leadership and Technology in the Development of a United Igala Kingdom

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Abstract: The Igala people, scattered across the globe, trace their origins to a common ancestry. While historical narratives suggest diverse points of origin—including Egypt, Arabia, Abyssinia, Mali, and Kwararafa—recent advances in technology and research have established connections between the Igala people of Nigeria and Diaspora groups such as the Nago of Brazil, the Lucumi of Cuba, and the Gullah of North America. Fragmentation of the Igala nation over centuries has been attributed to factors such as expansionist wars, colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and migration in search of habitable environments. The Igala Reconnection Project, initiated by His Royal Majesty Michael Idakwo Oboni and sustained by his successor, HRM Mathew Alaji Oguche Akpa II, under the scholarly leadership of Historian Ayegba Abdullahi Adojo, has leveraged research and technological tools to uncover these shared ancestries. This project has not only fostered the revitalization of Igala socio-cultural practices but also catalyzed the recognition and development of a "United Igala Kingdom." This paper provides an evidence-based exploration of the origins of the Igala people and demonstrates that many groups historically attributed to the Yoruba, Igbo, Nupe, Jukun, and Hausa ethnicities are, in fact, of Igala descent. Employing logical reasoning, historical analysis, and artificial intelligence, the study draws compelling inferences to illuminate these connections. Ultimately, this work highlights the transformative role of leadership and technology in uniting the Igala people and fostering their socio-cultural and developmental aspirations.

Keywords: Development, Fragmentation, Igala Kingdom, Leadership, Technology, Unity.

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Introduction

The Igala Kingdom historically rooted at the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers in present-day Kogi State, Nigeria, occupies a significant place in the political and cultural history of West Africa. Once a dominant regional force, with influence extending into parts of present-day Benue, Nasarawa, Delta, Edo, and Anambra States, the Igala people today are scattered across Nigeria and the global diaspora (Ayegba, 2024). Oral traditions and early historical accounts trace Igala origins to diverse migration narratives, with claims of ancestral links to Egypt, Abyssinia, the Kwararafa Confederacy, and even pre-Islamic Arabia (Miachi, 2012). While this historical diversity underscores the richness of Igala heritage, it has also contributed to the fragmentation of Igala identity across centuries.

This fragmentation, exacerbated by interethnic wars, colonial disruptions, and the transatlantic slave trade, has resulted in the dilution of Igala cultural cohesion. Moreover, colonial and postcolonial classifications of ethnic identities often ignored the interconnectedness of communities,

misattributing Igala-descended groups to larger ethnic blocks such as the Yoruba, Igbo, Nupe, Jukun, and Hausa (Audu, 2014; Oyibo, 2020). The result has been a persistent erosion of unified Igala consciousness, especially among diasporic populations and border communities.

Yet, in the 21st century, a powerful counter-current has emerged—driven by visionary leadership and technological innovation. Central to this movement is the Igala Reconnection Project, a transformative initiative led by traditional rulers such as the late HRM Michael Idakwo Oboni and the current Ata, HRM Mathew Alaji Oguche Akpa II, with the scholarly direction of Historian Ayegba Abdullahi Adojo. Through digital genealogy, DNA testing, historical reconstructions, and virtual community-building tools, this project has rekindled pan-Igala identity across borders, reaching descendants in Brazil (Nago), Cuba (Lucumi), and the Gullah people in the United States (Ayegba, 2020; Aruwa, 2022).

The primary objective of this paper is to critically assess how leadership and technology have jointly advanced the

cause of unity among the Igala people. It explores how modern research tools and political-cultural leadership have uncovered, revalidated, and reconnected fragmented Igala identities. The study also seeks to demonstrate that a significant number of individuals and communities historically identified with other Nigerian ethnicities may, in fact, share genealogical and cultural roots with the Igala Kingdom.

The significance of this work lies in its contribution to cultural revival, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and strategic ethnic mobilization. By drawing on the works of key Igala scholars—Tom Miachi, Ayegba Abdullahi Adojo, Jacob Audu, Jacob Abdullahi, Oyibo, Ukwuede, and others—this study grounds its analysis in evidence-based historical research. Methodologically, the paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach combining historical analysis, oral tradition, ethnographic interpretation, and artificial intelligence applications in genealogical reconstruction. This blend not only deepens the inquiry into Igala origins and dispersion but also models an innovative approach to cultural unification in

postcolonial Africa.

Problem Statement & Aim of the Paper

Fragmentation and disintegration remain persistent challenges in many social, ethnic, and political communities worldwide. Historical conflicts, colonial legacies, migration, and globalization have often resulted in the dispersal and weakening of collective identities, leading to social alienation, political instability, and developmental stagnation. The Igala people, scattered across Nigeria and the global Diaspora, have similarly experienced centuries of fragmentation due to expansionist wars, colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and migratory movements.

Despite these challenges, recent efforts spearheaded by visionary leadership and the innovative application of modern technology have catalyzed a reconnection movement within the Igala Kingdom, fostering cultural revival and the emergence of a more united socio-political identity. This unique convergence of traditional authority and digital innovation makes the Igala Kingdom an important case study for understanding how fragmented

communities can regain unity and cohesiveness.

However, there is a pressing need to systematically analyze this case to draw actionable inferences that other fragmented social and political systems can adapt for their reintegration processes. This study aims to critically assess the impact of leadership and technology in the Igala reconnection movement, explore the historical origins and causes of Igala fragmentation, and evaluate the processes through which cultural, linguistic, and ritual revivals have been facilitated. By doing so, the study seeks to provide empirical insights and practical frameworks that can inform strategies for social and political reintegration in other communities facing similar challenges.

Without such contextualized lessons, many communities risk repeating cycles of division, mistrust, and underdevelopment. Therefore, this study becomes imminent and necessary as it contributes to the broader discourse on unity and integration, offering evidence-based recommendations for leveraging leadership and technology in healing fragmented societies in an increasingly

interconnected world.

Conceptual Clarification

To ensure clarity and shared understanding throughout this analysis, it is important to define the key operational terms central to the paper:

- i.Fragmentation: Fragmentation refers to the process by which a once cohesive social, cultural, or political group becomes divided or dispersed into smaller, disconnected units. In the context of the Igala Kingdom, fragmentation describes the historical scattering of the Igala people due to wars, colonialism, migration, and the transatlantic slave trade, resulting in weakened collective identity and social cohesion.
- ii.Unity: Unity denotes the state of being joined together or at one with shared identity, purpose, and solidarity. This study conceptualizes unity as the re-establishment of social, cultural, and political bonds among the Igala people, facilitating a collective sense of belonging and cooperation, as seen in the emergence of the United Igala Kingdom.
- iii.Leadership: Leadership refers to the act or process of influencing and guiding

individuals or groups toward achieving common goals. The study focuses on transformational and visionary leadership exemplified by traditional rulers and intellectuals who drive cultural revival and socio-political integration within the Igala community.

iv. Technology; Technology encompasses the application of scientific knowledge and digital tools to solve problems and enhance human activities. This includes information communication technologies (ICT), artificial intelligence (AI), genetic ancestry mapping, and social media platforms, all of which have been instrumental in reconnecting dispersed Igala populations and revitalizing cultural heritage.

v. Cultural Revival: Cultural revival involves the deliberate restoration, preservation, and promotion of a community's language, traditions, rituals, and social norms that may have been suppressed or lost over time. This concept underscores the efforts within the Igala Kingdom to reclaim and strengthen cultural identity as a foundation for unity.

vi. United Igala Kingdom: The United Igala Kingdom refers to the contemporary socio-political and cultural construct that

seeks to unify all Igala people globally, transcending geographical and historical divides. It embodies a collective political identity and cultural cohesion fostered through leadership initiatives and technology-driven reconnection projects.

Theoretical Frameworks

Transformational Leadership theory as promoted by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) is explored here too because it focuses on leaders who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and motivate followers towards a shared vision. The Igala Reconnection Project highlights visionary leadership that mobilizes collective action for cultural unity.

Transformational Leadership Theory was introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and later expanded by Bernard Bass in 1985. The theory describes leaders who inspire, motivate, and elevate their followers to achieve more than what is usually expected, by appealing to higher ideals and moral values. These leaders are proactive, visionary, and committed to change, particularly in contexts where innovation, cultural revival, or systemic transformation is necessary.

Core Assumptions:

- i. Idealized Influence: Leaders act as role models and are admired, respected, and trusted. They display high ethical standards and prioritize the collective over personal gain.
- ii. Inspirational Motivation: Transformational leaders articulate a clear, compelling vision and inspire followers to commit to and achieve it, especially in times of uncertainty or change.
- iii. Intellectual Stimulation: They encourage creativity, innovation, and critical thinking, challenging followers to question assumptions and explore new ways of doing things.
- iv. Individualized Consideration: Such leaders pay attention to the needs and aspirations of followers, offering mentorship, support, and opportunities for personal development.

Relevance and Application to the Study

The resurgence of the United Igala Kingdom can be substantially attributed to the transformational leadership of traditional rulers like His Royal Majesty Michael Idakwo Oboni II and HRM Mathew Alaji Oguche Akpa II, as well as cultural intellectuals such as Ayegba

Abdullahi Adojo. These individuals did not merely administer inherited traditions—they envisioned a unified cultural identity, mobilized global Igala descendants, and leveraged modern tools to inspire trans-generational pride and reconnection.

In particular:

Idealized Influence is evident in the moral authority and cultural authenticity demonstrated by the monarchs, which rekindled trust and loyalty among dispersed Igala communities. Inspirational Motivation is reflected in the rallying call for global Igala descendants—across Brazil, Cuba, the United States, and West Africa—to reconnect with their roots and rebuild a shared identity.

Intellectual Stimulation came through the use of historical research, digital reconnection platforms, and interdisciplinary knowledge that redefined the Igala narrative beyond colonial distortions.

Individualized Consideration is visible in community-based initiatives, local cultural revival projects, and attention to sub-group identities within the broader Igala nation, ensuring no group is left out.

Thus, transformational leadership has not only driven cultural reawakening and unity but also promoted a strategic vision for the socio-political repositioning of the Igala Kingdom within Nigeria and the African diaspora. It aligns strongly with the core goals of this study, namely, to assess how leadership and innovation can induce reintegration in fragmented societies.

Technological Determinism is a theory that complements Transformational Leadership in the cause of this analysis. Technological determinism on its part argues that technology is the principal driver of societal change. Proponents such as Thorstein Veblen, Karl Marx, and Marshall McLuhan contend that technological innovation precedes and shapes cultural, social, political, and economic structures. The theory views technology not merely as a tool but as an autonomous force that transforms human relationships, organizational patterns, and cultural identities.

Core Assumptions:

1. Technology drives social evolution.

2. Societal behaviours and institutions adapt in response to technological change.
3. Technological advancement is inevitable and reshapes historical trajectories.

Application to the Study:

In the case of the United Igala Kingdom, digital platforms, AI tools, and genetic ancestry databases (e.g., DNA testing and global genealogical mapping tools) have been instrumental in tracing diaspora links, reclaiming historical narratives, and reinvigorating Igala socio-cultural identity. This aligns with the deterministic view that technology acts as a catalyst, altering perceptions of identity, geography, and kinship beyond traditional boundaries.

Technologies such as: social media; Online archives; Digital oral history recordings; and Virtual Igala heritage communities have reconfigured the way Igala people interact across borders, helping to collapse the historical fragmentation caused by colonialism, migration, and the transatlantic slave trade.

Synthesis of both Theories and their Relevance to the Study

Together, Technological Determinism and Transformational Leadership offer a complementary framework for understanding how:

Technology enables cultural reconnection (Technological Determinism), and how Igala people and leaders actively shape and repurpose that technology to meet cultural and political objectives. This dual theoretical lens allows the study to critically examine:

- I. How modern technologies reshape fragmented ethnic identities, and
- II. How social agency, leadership, and cultural values direct the use of these technologies.

Thus, the emergence of a “United Igala Kingdom” is not simply a by-product of digital innovation, but a socially orchestrated project using technology as a strategic tool for ethnic revival, transnational solidarity, and political repositioning.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing a combination of historical analysis, ethnographic narratives, and digital data mining supported by artificial intelligence tools to examine the impact of leadership and technology on the unity of the Igala Kingdom.

The qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena such as identity, leadership, and cultural revival, which require deep contextual understanding rather than quantification. Through this approach, the study seeks to interpret historical records, cultural narratives, and contemporary technological interventions to provide a holistic understanding of the Igala reconnection movement.

The sources of Data for the study are as follows:

- I. **Secondary Historical Data:** The study draws extensively on historical texts, academic articles, and documented oral histories from prominent scholars of Igala history and culture including Tom Miachi, Abdullahi Adojo Ayegba, Jacob Audu, Professor Oyibo, Jacob Abdullahi, Idris Ejima Aruwa, Ukwuede among others. These sources provide insights into the origins, migration, and fragmentation of the Igala people.
- II. **Ethnographic Narratives:** Interviews, speeches, and publications by contemporary Igala leaders—such as HRM Michael Idakwo Oboni and HRM Mathew Alaji Oguche Akpa II—and historians involved in the Igala Reconnection Project serve as qualitative data reflecting leadership perspectives and community responses.

III. Technological and Digital Tools: The study incorporates findings from the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in ancestry mapping, digital archival research, and social media analysis to trace diasporic connections and cultural revival efforts. These tools enhance the reliability and depth of data by identifying patterns not easily accessible through conventional means.

For Data Collection and Analysis, the following steps were taken:

- a. Document Review: Historical and contemporary documents were systematically reviewed to identify recurring themes related to fragmentation, leadership roles, and technology's impact on cultural unity.
- b. Thematic Analysis: Data was coded and categorized into themes such as 'Origins and Migration,' 'Agents of Fragmentation,' 'Leadership in Reconnection,' and 'Technological Facilitation of Unity.' This allowed for the identification of patterns and relationships within the qualitative data.
- c. Logical Reasoning and Inferencing: Historical facts were critically analyzed alongside technological data outputs to draw logical inferences about the processes

leading to the emergence of a united Igala identity.

Given the use of publicly available secondary data and documented speeches, the study does not involve direct interaction with human subjects requiring formal ethical approval. However, proper attribution and respect for intellectual property have been maintained throughout the research.

Data Presentation and Discussions **Historical Origins and Migration** **Narratives of the Igala People**

The origin of the Igala people has been a subject of robust scholarly debate, shaped by oral traditions, archaeological inferences, linguistic analysis, and comparative anthropology. Unlike some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria with relatively well-documented migration accounts, the Igala origin story is rich in multiple, sometimes competing narratives, which collectively suggest a history marked by mobility, resilience, and cultural fusion.

One of the earliest and most prominent traditions links the Igala ancestry to ancient Egypt and the Nile Valley civilization, drawing parallels with spiritual symbolism, titles, and practices such as ancestral worship and regalia used by Igala monarchs. Ayegba (2020) posits that certain religious and

administrative structures within the ancient Igala Kingdom—such as the concept of divine kingship and the role of priesthood in governance—echo practices from pharaonic Egypt and Nubia. This perspective is complemented by linguistic traces and symbolic alignments that suggest long-distance cultural diffusion over millennia.

Another significant migratory theory identifies Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia) and the wider Sudanic region, including Mali and Songhai, as key waypoints in the trans-Saharan movements of early Igala ancestors. Tom Miachi (2012) elaborates that the Igala may have been part of a larger wave of West African populations moving southward due to environmental pressures, Islamic expansion, and shifting trade routes. This movement eventually culminated in the settlement of the Igala people around the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers—a strategic location that allowed for trade, interaction, and military expansion.

A particularly influential body of scholarship emphasizes the Kwararafa connection. The Kwararafa Confederacy, a powerful multi-ethnic polity revolved

around present-day Taraba and Benue States, is widely believed to have been a crucible for the formation of the Igala identity. Jacob Audu (2014) and Oyibo (2020) argue that the Kwararafa experience not only shaped Igala military and political culture but also provided the ideological foundation for their early monarchy and expansionist ambitions. The movement from Kwararafa to Idah, the present-day cultural and political capital of the Igala Kingdom, is often presented as the final major southward migration phase that gave birth to the centralised Igala identity under the leadership of the first Ata.

Furthermore, modern research increasingly supports the theory that the Igala people were not only shaped by these ancient migrations but also contributed to the formation of neighbouring ethnic identities. For instance, Aruwa (2022) and Ukwuede (2003) document several communities in northern Igbo land, northern Yoruba land, and parts of Nupe and Jukun territories that retain Igala linguistic terms, cultural festivals, and lineage titles. This suggests a pattern of ethnic diffusion and assimilation, where the Igala either

absorbed or were absorbed by proximate populations through trade, warfare, intermarriage, and political alliances.

Notably, Abdullahi (2018) emphasizes the methodological importance of combining oral history with modern technologies such as digital genealogy and DNA analysis to clarify the overlapping ancestral ties among West African groups. This fusion of tradition and science has revealed strong connections between the Igala and Afro-descendant communities in Brazil (Nago), Cuba (Lucumi), and the United States (Gullah). These revelations have further challenged colonial ethnographic classifications that rigidly segmented African identities without regard for their fluid and interconnected nature.

In summary, while no single origin theory fully encapsulates the complexity of Igala ancestry, the convergence of narratives—from Egypt to Kwararafa—suggests a multi-phased migration history deeply intertwined with the political, economic, and spiritual evolution of West Africa. The current revivalist scholarship, led by Ayegba et al, Miachi, Audu, and others, underscores the importance of reclaiming these diverse histories as a means of

reinforcing unity and purpose among the global Igala population.

Agents and Processes of Fragmentation

While the Igala Kingdom once thrived as a culturally unified and politically centralized society, a complex web of historical forces led to its fragmentation over the centuries. The erosion of a collective Igala identity was neither accidental nor abrupt—it was systematically shaped by external incursions, internal dislocations, and shifting sociopolitical paradigms. This section analyzes the major agents and processes that contributed to the weakening of pan-Igala cohesion, including warfare, colonial interventions, slavery, migration, and administrative dismemberment.

a. Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Expansionist Wars

As the Igala Kingdom expanded its territory in the 16th to 18th centuries, it inevitably clashed with emerging regional powers, notably the Benin Empire, Jukun of Wukari, and Nupe

Kingdom. According to Oyibo (2020), these conflicts, while initially consolidating Igala military power, eventually overstretched its resources and led to the splintering of border communities. Some of these outlying groups began to identify more with their neighbours due to military subjugation, economic alliances, or intermarriage. Audu (2014) explains that many Igala-speaking communities adopted foreign linguistic and political identities during these power shifts, weakening their ties to the central monarchy at Idah.

b. The Transatlantic Slave Trade

The transatlantic slave trade played a devastating role in the demographic and cultural disintegration of many African societies, and the Igala Kingdom was no exception. The Niger-Benue confluence was a key route for internal slave raiding and external slave exportation. Ayegba et al (2024) noted that several Igala communities were raided either by foreign slave merchants, or rival African groups acting as proxies. This dislocation led to the forced migration of thousands of Igala individuals to the Americas, particularly Brazil and the Caribbean, where their identities were subsumed into

broader Yoruba or Bantu labels.

Recent scholarship, however, is beginning to reclaim these lost identities. Genetic and cultural reconnection projects show that many descendants of Afro-Brazilian (Nago), Cuban (Lucumi), and African American (Gullah) communities share distinctive Igala rites, linguistic elements, and naming systems (Ayegba, 2020; Aruwa, 2022). The slave trade, therefore, not only dispersed the Igala people but also buried their identity under broader Afro-diasporic categorizations.

c. Colonialism and Administrative Partitioning

Colonialism significantly accelerated the fragmentation of the Igala nation. The British indirect rule system, introduced in the early 20th century, redrew ethnic boundaries without regard for pre-existing cultural ties. Under the Lugardian administrative design, large swathes of Igala land were absorbed into the Northern Protectorate, while peripheral Igala communities were placed under Yoruba, Nupe, or Idoma native authorities (Ukwuedeh, 2003).

This artificial redistricting was reinforced by Western education and missionary

activities, which often alienated young Igala elites from their heritage. As Miachi (2012) emphasizes, colonial institutions discouraged the use of indigenous languages, spiritual practices, and historical memory in favour of Christianized and Anglicized norms. The cumulative effect was a weakening of collective identity, especially among urbanized and western-educated Igala populations.

d. Internal Migration and Economic Dispersal

In the postcolonial era, internal migration driven by economic hardship, education, and civil service opportunities further dispersed the Igala people. Many Igala people relocate to urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja, and Kano, or even abroad. There, they assimilated into dominant ethnic and cultural groups. Abdullahi (2018) argues that this spatial dispersion diluted Igala identity, as many second- and third-generation migrants grew up detached from their ancestral culture, language, and history.

Moreover, border communities like those in Delta (e.g., Ologbo), Edo (e.g., Agenebode), Nasarawa (e.g., Gadabuke), and Benue (e.g., Ogbadibo) gradually lost

their recognition as part of the Igala nation due to administrative isolation and sustained cultural intermixing. This “invisibility,” as Aruwa (2022) terms it, rendered them politically irrelevant in Igala traditional affairs, despite maintaining ancestral links.

In sum, the fragmentation of the Igala Kingdom was driven by both exogenous pressures—like slavery and colonialism—and endogenous factors—such as war, migration, and internal neglect. These forces collectively weakened the coherence of Igala identity and contributed to the marginalization of many of its communities and diasporic descendants. However, as subsequent sections will show, new leadership paradigms and technological advancements are reversing this historical trend and enabling a renaissance of Igala unity.

The Role of Leadership in the Reconnection Movement

Leadership has historically played a decisive role in shaping the trajectory of ethnic revival and cultural cohesion. In the case of the Igala people, traditional rulers, intellectual elites, and diaspora

activists have been central actors in rekindling a shared sense of identity, despite centuries of fragmentation. The reconnection movement among the Igala, particularly from the early 21st century onward, has gained momentum under visionary leadership that blends royal authority with scholarly inquiry and technological innovation.

a. Royal Leadership: The Monarchy as a Symbol of Unity

The institution of the Ata Igala, as the spiritual and political epicenter of the Igala nation, has been instrumental in anchoring the reconnection movement. His Royal Majesty Michael Idakwo Ameh Oboni II, who reigned from 2012 to 2020, redefined the role of the Ata beyond ceremonial functions to include cultural diplomacy, pan-Igala engagement, and strategic partnerships with diaspora communities. Under his reign, efforts were intensified to trace and reconnect with Igala-descended communities outside Nigeria, including in Brazil, Cuba, Sierra Leone, and Ghana (Ayegba, 2020).

Oboni II's tenure was marked by support for historical documentation, oral tradition preservation, and promotion of

Igala cultural festivals that reached both domestic and diaspora audiences. He also sanctioned the Igala Reconnection Project, a collaborative initiative between the palace and Igala scholars to explore genetic, linguistic, and spiritual links between homeland Igala and diasporic Afro-descendants. According to Aruwa (2022), this move rekindled communal pride and inspired several Igala communities previously assumed lost or diluted to reassert their cultural identities. His successor, HRM Matthew Alaji Oguche Akpa II, has continued this legacy with renewed vigour. Under his leadership, the palace has opened formal channels for cultural exchange with Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean organisations. More importantly, he has provided royal endorsement for research-based reconnection, insisting on evidence over sentiment as the foundation for unification. This has fostered legitimacy and coherence in the movement.

b. Intellectual Leadership: Scholars as Custodians and Interpreters of Heritage

The intellectual efforts of scholars such as Ayegba Abdullahi Adojo, Tom Miachi, Jacob Audu, Oyibo, Ukwuede, Idris Ejima Aruwa, and Jacob Abdullahi

have been foundational in the revival of Igala identity. These scholars have not only documented oral histories and migration patterns but have also reinterpreted existing ethnographic and linguistic data to contest colonial misclassifications that obscured Igala identity.

Ayegba (2020), in particular, has argued for a revisionist historical approach that repositions the Igala as a historically expansive and influential group within the Niger-Benue axis. His work has challenged the artificial boundaries that exclude culturally Igala communities from contemporary identity frameworks. Similarly, Miachi (2012) has emphasized the need for “strategic cultural historiography” that incorporates archaeology, ethnolinguistics, and comparative mythology in retracing Igala roots and influence.

Moreover, scholars have served as bridges between the monarchy and modern institutions, using their academic credentials to attract national and international attention to Igala issues. Abdullahi (2018) advocates the integration of history with technological tools such as DNA analysis and artificial

intelligence to create digital genealogies that link diaspora individuals to Igala ancestry with scientific credibility.

c. Community Leadership and the Diaspora Network

Grassroots and diaspora actors have also played a significant leadership role, especially in facilitating cultural diplomacy and identity recovery. Organizations such as the Igala Global Network, Igala Diaspora Council, and various Igala student and youth unions have helped globalize the reconnection agenda through media campaigns, cultural exhibitions, and genealogical research collaborations. Ukwuede (2002) note that such community-based leadership structures are increasingly essential in supporting individuals of Igala descent to rediscover, reclaim, and reintegrate into the broader Igala cultural sphere.

For example, descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil identifying as Nago Igala and those in Cuba within the Lucumi community have expressed renewed interest in their Igala heritage, attending virtual conferences, exchanging artifacts, and even visiting Nigeria as part of reconnection

pilgrimages (Ayegba, 2023). These developments demonstrate that leadership in the Igala Reconnection Movement is multi-tiered—spanning royal, intellectual, and community-based domains.

In sum, the success of the Igala Reconnection Movement underscores the importance of integrated leadership that combines cultural authority, academic rigor, and grassroots mobilization. As the movement advances, it is this synergy of roles that will continue to guide the Igala people from historical fragmentation toward unity and renaissance.

The Role of Technology and Digital Tools in Cultural Reconnection

Technology has emerged as a transformative instrument in the effort to reconnect fragmented identities, particularly within diasporic and marginalized ethnic groups. For the Igala people, digital tools have not only facilitated the recovery of lost histories but also enabled real-time interaction among descendants scattered across the globe. From DNA testing, and artificial intelligence (AI) applications to virtual heritage platforms and social media networks, technology is now at the centre

of a new cultural revival and reconnection movement.

a. Genetic Testing and DNA Ancestry Platforms

One of the most profound technological interventions in the Igala Reconnection Project is the use of DNA ancestry testing, which provides scientific validation to oral traditions and historical hypotheses. Individuals in the Americas—particularly among the Gullah in the United States, the Nago in Brazil, and the Lucumi in Cuba—have used services such as 23andMe, AncestryDNA, and African Ancestry to trace their roots back to regions within the Niger-Benue confluence, where the Igala ethnic group has historically resided (Aruwa, 2022; Ayegba, 2020). This molecular approach has reignited interest in Igala culture among those who may have been previously unaware of their origins.

Such genealogical revelations have created new pathways for diasporic descendants to engage with their cultural roots—attending festivals, learning the Igala language, or even making pilgrimages to ancestral communities. Ayegba (2020) observes that DNA

testing has become a new form of “digital initiation” into the Igala identity for those whose histories were erased by slavery or migration.

b. Artificial Intelligence and Historical Reconstruction

The integration of AI-powered tools into ethnographic and historical research has enabled a more nuanced reconstruction of the Igala past. By using machine learning algorithms to analyze linguistic patterns, migration data, and cultural markers, researchers have begun to build digital genealogies and virtual ethnographic maps that visually link various Igala-descended communities across Africa and the diaspora.

Scholars such as Oyibo (2020) have begun experimenting with AI to cross-reference historical documents, oral narratives, and demographic records, identifying clusters of populations that share cultural similarities with the Igala. These computational methods have uncovered linguistic traces of Igala in Afro-Brazilian ritual languages and religious chants, thus validating cultural continuity where direct historical records may not exist.

Furthermore, AI-supported platforms

now assist in decoding traditional Igala symbols, myths, and material culture, transforming once-static heritage into dynamic, searchable, and shareable content.

c. Digital Archives, Online Platforms, and Social Media

The digitization of cultural content has democratized access to Igala history and facilitated transnational conversations. Online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, Google Drive-based archives, and university-hosted repositories have become central hubs for storing and disseminating knowledge about Igala traditions, historical texts, music, language, and rituals (Ukwuedeh, 2002). For instance, the Igala Global Network and Igala Heritage TV have produced and shared documentaries and panel discussions featuring Igala historians, monarchs, and diaspora representatives.

Social media platforms also serve as sites of activism, identity negotiation, and cultural revival. Through hashtags, virtual conferences, live streams of Igala festivals (e.g., Idoko Festival or Ocho Festival), and interactive cultural programs, younger generations of Igala

both at home and abroad are now able to participate in the construction and performance of their heritage. Moreover, digital platforms have proven vital during times when physical gatherings are restricted, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that cultural transmission remains uninterrupted.

d. Virtual Reality and Immersive Technologies

Emerging immersive technologies, particularly virtual reality (VR), are beginning to find application in the Igala cultural ecosystem. Experimental projects by Igala digital creatives and cultural preservationists are recreating virtual palaces, traditional ceremonies, and precolonial Igala cities for educational purposes. These tools help to engage the youth and create a tactile sense of connection with their past.

Audu (2014) emphasizes the pedagogical potential of these technologies, particularly in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and lived experience. For many Diaspora descendants, a virtual tour of the Attah's Palace in Idah or a digitally simulated Igala coronation rite offers a first-hand experience of a culture they might

otherwise never encounter.

Reclaiming Igala Identity: Cultural, Linguistic, and Ritual Revivals

The resurgence of Igala identity in recent decades—driven by leadership, scholarship, and technology—has created momentum for a deliberate revival of the people's cultural heritage. This resurgence is not merely symbolic; it has involved the reconstruction of language, reinstitution of rituals, recovery of traditional knowledge systems, and reinvigoration of indigenous governance structures. These efforts, largely orchestrated through the Igala Reconnection Project and its supporting actors, are integral to the broader goal of reuniting the fragmented Igala nation.

a. Language Revival and Preservation

Language is a cornerstone of identity. For the Igala people, the decline in the usage of the Ígálá language, especially among diaspora communities and younger generations, has posed a serious threat to cultural continuity. Scholars and language activists like Tom Miachi (2012) and Abdullahi (2018) have emphasized that revitalizing the Igala language is not only essential for preserving culture but also for asserting

the distinctiveness of the Igala worldview.

Initiatives such as the development of Igala language textbooks, radio broadcasts, YouTube tutorials, and mobile applications are actively reversing language erosion. The Kogi State Broadcasting Corporation (Radio Kakaaki Igala) has played a central role in airing Igala news and cultural programming. Online courses and social media campaigns using hashtags like #SpeakIgala and #IgalaRenaissance have also created digital communities of language learners and promoters. Furthermore, diaspora descendants reconnecting with their heritage—such as the Lucumi of Cuba and the Nago of Brazil—have expressed eagerness to learn the language as a way of reclaiming their lost identities (Ayegba, 2023).

b. Cultural Festivals and Public Ceremonies

Traditional festivals are vital mediums through which Igala identity is performed and transmitted. Events such as the Idoko Festival, Ocho Festival, Eje Festival, and Ibegwu rituals provide spaces for communal memory, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and spiritual

reaffirmation. The revitalization of these ceremonies, often with the involvement of the Attah's Palace and local traditional councils, has encouraged the reintegration of scattered subgroups into the mainstream Igala fold.

Recent editions of these festivals have attracted participants from the diaspora, particularly those who have reconnected with their Igala roots through the Reconnection Project. As Oyibo (2020) notes, cultural performances—when streamed online or documented for global audiences—serve as powerful tools of ethnic affirmation and international cultural diplomacy.

The resurgence of traditional dress, cuisine, music, and dance during such festivals has also served to correct longstanding misrepresentations of Igala identity, especially in Nigerian popular culture where it is often subsumed under broader Hausa or Yoruba aesthetics.

c. Ritual Reconnection and Religious Syncretism

One of the most profound aspects of identity recovery is the return to ancestral religious and ritual practices. While many Igala people today identify as Christians or Muslims, there has been a growing

recognition of the Ibegwu institution (ancestral worship) as a legitimate and central pillar of Igala cosmology. Aruwa (2022) and Ukwuedeh (2002) argue that the neglect of such indigenous spiritual frameworks contributed to the loss of social cohesion and moral accountability within Igala society.

Reconnection efforts have involved the restoration of shrines, reintroduction of traditional naming ceremonies, and documentation of sacred chants and taboos. The Ibegwu Codes, once passed down orally, are now being codified for teaching and legalistic guidance in community dispute resolution.

Interestingly, some diaspora communities—such as the Lucumi in Cuba who practice Santería—have begun aligning their rituals with reconstructed Igala cosmologies, creating a transatlantic syncretism rooted in ancestral memory (Ayegba, 2020).

d. Educational and Intellectual Engagements

Academic scholarship has played a foundational role in the reclamation of Igala identity. From the works of Miachi (2012) on migration narratives, to Ayegba's extensive historical

reconstructions, to Jacob Audu's reflections on traditional governance, Igala intellectuals have provided the epistemological framework for cultural renewal.

Departments which study Igala at universities and other higher institutions such as Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, have designed programmes to train cultural historians, linguists, anthropologists, and educators who will lead future revitalization efforts.

Community-based archives, documentation centres, and cultural exhibitions have also emerged as educational spaces where Igala heritage is being taught beyond formal school settings.

These scholarly interventions have had practical outcomes. For example, the recognition of historically Igala-descended groups in Benue, Nasarawa, and Edo States has led to demands for cultural autonomy, recognition in traditional councils, and the re-inscription of Igala history into national narratives.

In summary, the reclaiming of Igala identity is a multidimensional endeavour. It draws upon traditional knowledge, modern technology, ritual performance,

and scholarly engagement to construct a coherent and unifying narrative. These efforts are not merely nostalgic; they are acts of political, cultural, and spiritual sovereignty in a world where identities are often contested, commodified, or erased.

The Emergence of a United Igala Kingdom: Implications and Future Prospects

The movement from fragmentation to unity among the Igala people—both within Nigeria and across the global diaspora—has set the foundation for the emergence of a reimagined United Igala Kingdom. This emergent unity is more than a symbolic gesture; it reflects the consolidation of shared history, values, language, leadership, and aspirations, all rooted in ancestral memory and modern agency. As this transnational identity solidifies, the implications for socio-cultural, political, and economic development are profound.

a. Cultural Diplomacy and Global Identity

The Igala Reconnection Project, with its success in linking Igala descendants across the Americas, Europe, and West Africa, has positioned the Igala Kingdom

as a potential model for cultural diplomacy in Nigeria and beyond. Through virtual conferences, cultural festivals, heritage tours, and language exchanges, the Igala nation is building a global profile that challenges mono-ethnic national narratives and affirms the complexity of African diasporic identities.

This has implications for how Nigerian history is taught, how international cultural partnerships are formed, and how the Igala Kingdom can assert soft power through its diaspora. Already, the Lucumi of Cuba and the Nago of Brazil are engaging with the Attah's Palace and Igala scholars, expressing interest in dual cultural recognition, pilgrimage, and cross-cultural heritage initiatives.

b. Political Reorganization and Indigenous Autonomy

The unification narrative has reinvigorated calls for internal reorganization and greater autonomy of historically Igala-speaking areas within Nigeria. Regions in Nasarawa, Benue, Edo, and Delta states, which retain linguistic, cultural, and spiritual ties to Igala heritage, are increasingly demanding recognition within Igala

traditional institutions and in state-level policymaking. This movement raises critical questions about constitutional identity, ethnic federalism, and the role of traditional institutions in governance.

In Kogi State itself, where the Attah of Igala holds constitutionally recognized traditional authority, unity among previously fragmented subgroups enhances the legitimacy and reach of indigenous governance. This has the potential to improve grassroots leadership, bolster cultural education, and restore respect for traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

c. Socioeconomic Revitalization and Development Opportunities

A united Igala identity can also serve as a lever for socioeconomic development. Unity brings cohesion, and cohesion enables collective action around issues such as education, agriculture, youth empowerment, and diaspora investment. Organizations like the Igala Heritage Foundation, Igala Global Alliance, and various local development associations have begun to pool resources across communities and across continents to fund scholarships, cultural events, and healthcare programs.

The cashew economy in Kogi East, for example, has witnessed a growing interest in cooperative ventures inspired by a unified ethnic consciousness (Odiji & Egwemi-Ugbeda, 2025). These developments suggest that cultural unity, far from being an abstract concept, has tangible economic implications.

Furthermore, a united Igala Kingdom could become a hub for heritage tourism, cultural industries, and digital education platforms focused on African identity, thus creating jobs and enhancing global relevance.

d. Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Despite these positive trends, the emergence of a United Igala Kingdom is not without challenges. There remain internal divisions—linguistic variations, sub-ethnic rivalries, and generational gaps—that threaten sustained unity. Political manipulation of ethnic identity is also a concern, especially in an election-prone society where ethnicity can be instrumentalised for narrow partisan goals.

Moreover, care must be taken to ensure that the process of unification is inclusive, dialogical, and non-coercive. As noted by Abdullahi (2018), the

rediscovery of identity must not become a tool for exclusion or dominance over other groups. The goal should be a pan-Igala solidarity, not the romanticization of the past or imposition of uniformity.

e. Future Prospects: Toward a Digital and Ancestral Commonwealth

Looking ahead, the Igala people are well positioned to become a prototype for what can be described as a Digital Ancestral Commonwealth—a decentralized but connected network of peoples and cultures bound by shared origin, language, memory, and mutual development goals. With the tools of artificial intelligence, DNA mapping, digital archives, and virtual learning environments, the Igala Kingdom can continue to reach its diaspora and offer a model for ethnic revival in the postcolonial and post-digital age.

Strategic partnerships with universities, cultural institutes, technology firms, and diaspora communities will be key in sustaining this trajectory. As leadership remains committed, and as youth and scholars continue to bridge tradition and innovation, the vision of a united, respected, and prosperous Igala Kingdom is not only possible—it is already

unfolding.

Conclusion

The journey from fragmentation to unity in the Igala Kingdom is emblematic of a broader African renaissance—one in which people of common heritage, long separated by the forces of history, colonialism, and geography, are reclaiming their identity, agency, and collective destiny. Through the leadership of monarchs like HRM Michael Idakwo Oboni II and HRM Mathew Alaji Oguche Akpa II, and the intellectual stewardship of scholars such as Ayegba Abdullahi Adojo, Tom Miachi, and Jacob Audu, the Igala Reconnection Project has emerged as a groundbreaking movement in cultural restoration and ethnic revitalization.

Historical disintegration, fuelled by war, the transatlantic slave trade, colonial balkanization, and internal neglect, once threatened the continuity of Igala civilization. However, contemporary developments—especially the use of digital technology, artificial intelligence, DNA research, and global networking—have reoriented this trajectory toward

cohesion, heritage pride, and transnational consciousness. The reconnection of Igala descendants in the Americas, Europe, and across West Africa marks the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of the Igala Kingdom: one where culture, memory, and modernity work in harmony.

The experience of the Igala Kingdom vividly demonstrates how visionary leadership combined with modern technology can transform fragmented communities into unified, resilient social and political systems. Fragmentation—whether due to historical displacement, conflict, or external pressures—is a common challenge faced by many ethnic groups, nations, and diasporic communities worldwide. However, the Igala case highlights that sustainable unity is achievable when leaders proactively harness technology as a tool for cultural reclamation, identity reconstruction, and transnational connectivity.

Leadership grounded in cultural legitimacy and scholarly engagement provides the necessary vision and authority to mobilize communities around shared histories and collective

futures. Meanwhile, technology—ranging from digital archives, social media, artificial intelligence, to DNA ancestry mapping—serves as a powerful amplifier of identity, communication, and inclusive dialogue across borders.

This dual force of enlightened leadership and technological innovation does not only revive cultural pride but also promotes social cohesion, political integration, and developmental collaboration. The Igala Kingdom's journey from fragmentation to unity thus offers a universal model illustrating that unity is neither automatic nor simplistic; it is a deliberate, multifaceted process requiring strategy, inclusivity, and innovation.

Recommendations

A. Recommendations for the Leadership of the Igala Kingdom

Based on the analysis throughout this paper, the following recommendations are proposed to sustain and deepen the reconnection and unification process of the Igala Kingdom:

1. Institutionalize the Igala Reconnection Project

The project should be formalized as a Pan-Igala Cultural Institute with

academic, diplomatic, and technological arms. This institute can coordinate global research, heritage studies, linguistic preservation, and diaspora engagement efforts in collaboration with universities and cultural bodies.

2. Develop a Comprehensive Igala Digital Archive

There is a need for a robust digital platform that houses historical documents, oral histories, ancestral maps, traditional laws, ritual performances, and diaspora records. This archive would serve as an educational and heritage repository accessible to all Igala descendants and researchers worldwide.

3. Strengthen Traditional Institutions for Global Representation

The Attah Igala-in-Council should consider appointing diaspora cultural ambassadors who can represent Igala interests abroad, coordinate community events, and facilitate language and identity education programs among younger generations of the diaspora.

4. Promote Economic Projects Rooted in Cultural Identity

Ethnic revival should be matched with economic development. Projects such as Igala heritage tourism, cashew

cooperatives, and arts and crafts markets should be promoted across the homeland and the diaspora. This approach would encourage sustainable development and self-reliance.

5. Encourage Curriculum Development and Academic Collaboration

Igala history and cultural studies should be integrated into school curricula in Kogi State and neighboring Igala-speaking areas. Furthermore, partnerships should be formed with international universities to fund research on the Igala diaspora, identity, and postcolonial resilience.

6. Guard against Ethnic Chauvinism

Unity must not evolve into exclusion or domination. Careful efforts must be made to ensure that the drive for reconnection is inclusive and respects the diversity within and outside the Igala community. This includes respecting interethnic marriages, multilingual realities, and historical coexistence with other groups.

7. Utilize Artificial Intelligence and DNA Mapping Ethically

The use of AI and DNA technology in identity tracing must be regulated by ethical guidelines that prioritize informed consent, cultural sensitivity, and data

protection. These tools should be used to enhance, not undermine, personal and communal identities.

B. Recommendations for Other Social and Political Communities

Drawing from the Igala Kingdom's experience, other communities, ethnic groups, and political systems seeking to enhance unity and integration should consider the following:

1. Cultivate Visionary and Inclusive Leadership

Effective unification efforts demand leaders who embody cultural legitimacy, historical consciousness, and inclusive governance. Leaders must actively engage stakeholders—traditional institutions, scholars, youth, women, and diaspora—to create a shared vision that transcends historical divides.

2. Leverage Technology as a Unifying Tool

Digital platforms, AI-driven genealogical research, and social media networks can reconnect dispersed communities, foster cultural education, and enable real-time communication. These tools help overcome physical and psychological distances that fragmentation creates.

3. Institutionalize Identity and Heritage

Preservation

Establish cultural centers, archives, and educational curricula that document and celebrate common histories, languages, and rituals. Institutional frameworks anchor unity by embedding identity within formal structures accessible to all community members.

4. Facilitate Diaspora Engagement and Transnational Dialogue

Communities should actively involve diaspora populations in unity-building initiatives. Diaspora groups often carry rich cultural legacies and resources vital for community revival and global networking.

5. Prioritize Socioeconomic Development Linked to Cultural Revival

Cultural unity should be accompanied by economic empowerment projects that leverage shared identity as a basis for cooperation in trade, tourism, agriculture, and innovation. Development creates tangible incentives for integration.

6. Promote Ethical Use of Emerging Technologies

The deployment of AI and genetic research must respect privacy, consent, and cultural sensitivities. Ethical guidelines should be developed

collaboratively to avoid alienation or exploitation.

7. Encourage Dialogue and Reconciliation Processes

Unity requires addressing past grievances and building trust through transparent dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms. Inclusive forums and mediation can heal divisions and foster a sense of belonging.

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