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Autore Nzegwu Nkiru

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Introduction: Igbo family structure and feminist concepts -- Family politics: making patriarchy in a patrilineal society -- Legalizing patriarchy: sorting through customary laws and practices -- Customs and misrepresentations: widows and daughters in inheritance disputes -- The conclave: a dialogic search for equality -- Structures of equality: in mono- and dual-sex systems -- Conclusion: towards a balanced

society.

Sommario/riassunto Prior to European colonialism, Igboland, a region in Nigeria, was a

nonpatriarchal, nongendered society governed by separate but interdependent political systems for men and women. In the last one hundred fifty years, the Igbo family has undergone vast structural changes in response to a barrage of cultural forces. Critically rereading social practices and oral and written histories of Igbo women and the society, Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu demonstrates how colonial laws, edicts, and judicial institutions facilitated the creation of gender inequality in Igbo society. Nzegwu exposes the unlikely convergence of Western

feminist and African male judges' assumptions about "traditional" African values where women are subordinate and oppressed. Instead she offers a conception of equality based on historical Igbo family structures and practices that challenges the epistemological and ontological bases of Western feminist inquiry.