



IMPACT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIETAL CHALLENGES LIKE OSU CASTE SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND NIGERIA AND ITS ABOLITION THROUGH EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIONS.

Dr. (Mrs) Rita Kenneth Okere

GST Unit
Madonna University Nigeria
ritaokere81@gmail.com

Dr. Opara, P. I.

Department of Management and Business Studies,
Federal University OyeEkiti
Ekiti State, Nigeria
patoparaife@yahoo.com

Abstract

As enlightened citizens of the society, it is high time we mount very serious intellectual campaign against the eradication of the ungodly and obnoxious discrimination perpetrated against our brothers and sisters through the sustenance of Osu and Ume caste system in Igbo land of Nigeria. This reviewed paper titled “impact of education and communication in the management of societal challenges like Osu caste system in Igbo land Nigeria and its abolition through emerging technologies and innovation” focuses on emerging Christian religion as the communication strategies in the eradication of this obnoxious Quagmire we find ourselves in igboland of Nigeria. The paper will critically examine the negative attitude of some Igbo elites towards Osu abolition in Igbo land. The language of communication and enforcement of Osu caste abolition comes from the church’s approval of non-discrimination as enshrined in the holy bible. For instance Paul’s teaching on non, discrimination, Peter’s justification on non-discrimination, baptism liberates man from original sin, Osu and Ume, were discussed. Critical evaluation and conclusion were made with recommendations for the way forward.

Keywords: Education, communication, societal challenges, abolition, osu caste system ,emerging technologies, innovation, management.

Introduction

Igboland which lies between latitudes 4° 15’ and 7° 05’ North and longitudes 6° 00’ and 8° 30’ East, is known to cover a total surface area of approximately 41,000 square kilometres. The Igbo nation with a population and population density of 8,818,208 and 215 persons per square kilometre, respectively¹, comprises the Nigerian South-Eastern states of Anambra, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, and Enugu. There are also pockets of Igbo people in Delta and Rivers states. The Igbo people, unarguably, have an interesting and illuminating history of social relations which anchors on ‘egalitarianism’ and which has been considered crucial and explicable in the prosperity, growth, and development of the people, especially in precolonial times. The above case notwithstanding, the legality and practice of caste systems in most Igbo communities in the precolonial era, a praxis which has persisted in the contemporary, appear to negate the so-called ‘egalitarianism thesis’.

The legality and practice of caste systems in most Igbo communities in the precolonial era appear to negate the avowals that primordial Igbo society was egalitarian. Being, an unjust social system, antithetical to democracy, the Osu and Ohu caste system – the two predominant caste systems in Igboland could not outlive the colonial era, as it was officially outlawed in 1956. This prohibition notwithstanding, most Igbo communities carried on the system up to present times. The deleterious impact of the Osu and Ohu system wherever practiced remains unarguably, undiminished. As national integration continues to remain a mirage in Nigeria, and as the Igbo people are more and more reliant on Communal Self-Help Development Projects (CSH-DP), the continual practise of the Osu/Ohu caste system is identified in this paper as a communal



problem that corrodes the integration efforts of most Igbo communities and hence national development.

Nevertheless, it requires to be noted that the first move for the actualization of the abolition of various

forms of slavery in Igboland was first carried out by Archdeacon G. T. Basden in 1933. In a letter to the then legislative council of the southern province, Basden submitted that

...the government should take steps to investigate the Osu system... This form of slavery is at the movement causing great bitterness of feelings in certain parts of Owerri Province. It is a disintegrating force that is causing division between villages and individuals, e.g. when members of one family are divided owing to some being regarded as freeborn while one or more other are seen as Osu 2.

Basden's appeal appeared not to have elicited any favourable response until years after. And given that caste systems are repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience and indeed, antithetical to 'democracy' (especially, when viewed from Eurocentric prisms); the Eastern Nigeria colonial government did not waste time to outlaw the practice in 1956, especially in the wake of the Balonwu Commission's report that all forms of slavery had become anachronistic to the Igbo nation³. Speaking boldly on the floor of the House, the Premier of the Eastern Region, Owelle (Dr) Nnamdi Azikiwe averred that It takes moral courage for any person to attempt to disturb what is revered as tradition but it takes social vision for the duly accepted representatives of the people to abolish such a tradition in the interest of social justice. Thus, a plethora of punitive measures were canvassed in the *Osu* Prohibition Act of 1956 to finally put to rest all issues and pathologies associated with the caste system in Igbo land. Regardless of these measures, *Ohu/Osu* caste system continued to be practised in various shades and guises since

1956. In most communities, they have taken new forms; as it is now unlawful to refer to any one as *Osu*. Thus, one can surmise that the *Osu/Diala* dichotomy has become a seemingly intractable communal problem in Igboland as it continues to stoke the embers of social segregation, parochialism and often, a general apathy in communal affairs. The effects of these discriminatory practices are myriad and deleterious to the Igbo society in particular and the Nigerian society at large. It is on this premise that this paper sets to explore the problems as impediments to national integration. (Ubaka and Ugwuja, 2014).

Conceptual Explanation

In our contemporary society, many people have fought vigorously to eradicate the social evil of *Osu* caste system in Igbo land. Some people on the other hand have remained un-concerned about it. Whatever may be their reasons, it is about time they developed a healthy attitude towards the *Osu* stigma. They should re-orientate their values and place them in the right perspectives. This is a *sine qua non* responsibility we owe to our *Osu* brothers and sisters in Igbo land. Many of them have suffered terrible social discrimination, humiliation and stigmatization in society. This introduction is centered on the abolition of *Osu* caste system and attitude of Igbo elite towards *Osu* in Igbo land. This paper is a clarion call on all and sundry to identify with the grim battle for the total eradication of the horrendous, ungodly and Obnoxious discrimination perpetrated against our brothers and sisters through the sustenance of *Osu* and *Ume* caste system in Igboland of Nigeria. Granted that our forefathers, out of ignorance and religious fear of the deities embraced the cast system during their time, do we as educated and enlightened Christians have any justification for continuing this devilish practice? The objective of this paper is to mount an intellectual campaign against this obnoxious practice of *Osu* caste system and to assist in its eradication in Igbo land. Since, essentially *Osu* people were formerly *Diala* citizens, this paper seeks to restore the original dignity and basic freedoms of the so-called *Osu* people to their erstwhile *Diala* status as free citizens.

Igbos are civilized, educated and enlightened people. Let us prove to the world that we are capable of destroying *Osu* form of stratification that shackles us from being free citizens of the world guided by tenets of the doctrine of God, which stress basic human freedoms of love, association and mutual tolerance. Together, we can do it we must not relent. The time to embark on this task is now or never! (Nwachukwu, 2014).

The terms *Ohu*, *Osu*, and national integration, have received varying scholarly explications. Essentially, an *Ohu* refers to a slave bought from outside a community for a purpose, save for consecration to a deity. This practice contrasts the *Osu* on the ground that unlike the *Osu*, the *Ohu* renders services and inhabits within the human community, and could equally regain his or her freedom⁶. The *Ohu* was never consecrated to a deity but only acquired as a property.



Those who usually constitute the Ohu in the olden days include “inter-tribal war captives, lazy children, some of whom were sold by their parents, victims of political machinations, unprotected/unguarded strangers, and stray children”⁷, and some of their services, thus, included running errands for their owners, and taking punishments meted out for their owners who were found guilty of misdeeds. They were equally used to bury their masters or an important member of the society⁸. On the other hand, the Osu is one or a group belonging to the gods and feared by the generality of the citizenry as belonging to fearful deities⁹. J.O.L. Ezeala, in his own words, pointed out that “the Osu are Igbos, members of a noble race. They are kith and kin of other Igbo people in all applications, implications, and qualifications”¹⁰. Unfortunately, the explanation of Ezeala does not represent the true identity of the Osu, or how the group is pictured in Igbo Land. However, Chinua Achebe seems to provide an apt picture of the Osu in Igbo Land. In his words:

An Osu was a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart - a taboo forever and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by a freeborn. He was in fact an outcast living in a special area of his village, close to the great shrine. Wherever he went, he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste - long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was a taboo to him. An Osu could not attend the assembly of the freeborn, and in turn could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any of the ... titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his own kind in the evil forest.

Similar to Achebe, F. Arinze provided that an Osu is one specially consecrated to a spirit that has a shrine. He is symbolically immolated and afterwards left to live on as a child or a slave of his deity¹². The Osu is connected with the deity or the divine in a special way, as opposed to the ordinary freeborn under natural and normal circumstances of his Chi (one's god). He is equally identified as one sacrificed to a deity by a community or group of people or a family¹³, as well as a slave dedicated to the deity with the purpose of performing some menial functions which may include sacrificial functions¹⁴. J.C. Agunwamba further explains of the group constituting the Osu caste as “... miserable outcasts whose forefathers were bought and dedicated to the services of the gods; despised people who lived in special isolated quarters around the market; unclean persons who were treated like people with infectious diseases”¹⁵. Nonetheless, it requires to be stated that the Ohu system practised in the Nsukka area has all the trappings of Osu, as indeed the people are segregated and discriminated against such as we have in most other Igbo communities.

National integration is the creation of a feeling of oneness where diversities exist by absorbing a sense of nationhood. It involves the feeling of a common identity and unification by citizens of a country or the world belonging to different castes, religions, ethnic group, regions, etc, with different languages. It could also be referred to as “a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties”¹⁶. With these definitions, it is obvious that the possible occurrence of national integration in a nation must be connected with the development of an identity with the nation by a significant number of the citizens, which supersedes ethnic, cultural, and religious identities. Thus, there must be a unified acquisition of political awareness, sharing of common norms and values, and the development of favourable attitudes capable of augmenting integrative behaviours among these peoples. A. Mazrui identifies the interrelated aspects of national integration to include the fusion of norms and cultures; the promotion of economic interdependence; the resolution of emergent conflicts; narrowing of the gap between elites and the masses, urban and rural areas, rich and poor; and the sharing of mutual experiences to enable people discover that they have undergone some important experiences together¹⁷. The challenges to national integration, however, include language variation, communalism, extremism, regionalism, and caste systems¹⁸.

National integration which is the fulcrum of development has continued to be a mirage. Indeed, the lack of a cohesive and integrated polity has actuated the abysmal performance of most of the development programmes of the Nigerian state. The fallout of this situation has been the resort to Communal Self - Help Development Projects. In tandem with this observation, O.B.C Nwankwo has posited that the bulk of the economic growth and development in Igboland since after the Nigerian civil war has largely come as a result of self-initiated efforts with the communities being at the forefront¹⁹. We make quick to add that using Awo-Omamma and Nsukka communities as a template, the Osu and Ohu practices have severally limited and constrained the prospects of national integration in Nigeria. The ongoing thesis forms the thrust of this study. (Ugbaka and Ugwuja, 2014)

Igbo Beliefs About Osu And Christian Teaching

Today in Igbo land, many people have great faith in Christianity and some echoes of pagan practices. Many Christians have not made a clear-cut distinction between the traditional beliefs and Christian faith. Some Christians believe in what the Church teaches, but they still cling to their pagan inherited beliefs from their fore-fathers. One can describe this sad



event among some Christians as religious syncretism. The Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary describes the word syncretism as the mixing of different religions, philosophic or ideas into one. By religious syncretism we are saying that Christians are mixing traditional Igbo religion with Christianity. One can call a Christian that mixes Christianity with African Traditional Religion as 'Christian-nwagwu'. The philosophy behind this pagan practice is rooted in Igbo unexamined traditional beliefs before the advent of Christianity in 1885.

Some of these traditional beliefs include: belief in the existence of different deities, spirits, belief in the power of those deities, belief that sacrifices must be offered to deities (human sacrifice), and belief that twins are a taboo etc. Good enough some of the traditional beliefs, as human sacrifice and killing of twins have stopped through the advent of Christianity. But the Osu-Diala Stigma seems to resist the onslaught of Christianity. However, we will sustain the fight. We will never give up.

The Igbo traditional beliefs about Osu include the following:

1. Osu status is permanent, inalienable and transmitted from parents to children.
2. If either of the parents is Osu, the children are *ipso facto* Osu.
3. Marriage between an Osu and Diala is a taboo, since intermarriage automatically converts the children into Osu.
4. No social interaction between an Osu and Diala.
5. The burial of the deceased Osu is done by the Osu people and not Diala people.

Since these traditional beliefs and customs grew up in pagan world, they should not be allowed to survive in Christianity; otherwise it will be a calm residual of paganism. If we can dismantle the traditional beliefs in the existence of the deities/gods, then the whole idea of human sacrifice crumbles, and the problem of Osu will be a thing of the past. In a Lenien Pastoral, late Bishop Mark Unegbu vigorously attacked Osu structure and Stigma by saying: "'take away the belief in idols, the whole superstitious structure comes crumbling down" (Unegbu, 1977).

The Sacred Scripture gives us the solution to this apparent problem. It has been proved beyond reasonable doubts that idols have no true existence. Saint Paul, for instance, warns the Corinthians about sacrificing to idols which have no real existence. "Does this mean that the food sacrificed to idols has a real value, or that the idol itself is real? Not at all" (1Cor. 10:19-20). Again Paul writes: "... we know that idols do not really exist in the world and that there is no god but the One" (1 Cor 8:4-5).

Since it has been proved with apt quotations drawn from the Bible, that idols have no true existence. we should forsake them. Not only should we discard our beliefs in them, but we should also stop worshipping them. If we can do this, then the question of consecrating a person to a non-existent deity will stop. if the fundamental belief in our Christian religion is the belief in God, then the existence of deities are not. We shall be making a mockery of our belief, if we profess belief in one God and at the same time believe in the existence of deities. It is better that we choose to worship one supreme God, It is bad to be a half Christian and a half pagan. No one can be a slave to two masters: either he loves one or despises the other. Therefore, anyone who holds firmly to Osu-Diala Stigma is an anti-Christ and hypocritical to Christian religion and practice. (Nwachukwu, 2014).

Chi and Christ in Igbo Salvation Experience: An Explication

In the Book God, Bible and African Traditional Religion (Ukwuije, 2010) Most Rev. Dr. Anthony, J.V. Obinna Archbishop of Owerri noted that now in Igboland with our acceptance of Jesus Christ, with our faith in him, as Chineke and Mmadu, in illumination and rectification of our notions of chi-chukwu and of mmadu become imperative. I see in Jesus Christ the historic epiphany of the chi and chukwu that we Igbo have shared from our creation, birth and culture. Now we are invited to embrace our chi and chukwu is to become christochiic and Christochukwu living our chineess and chukwuness in, with, through and around Christ.

The Church's Approval of Non-Discrimination

Peter's justification of non-discrimination between Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised. Diala and non-Diala. Osu and Ume stands till today as the church's official position on non -discrimination. There should be no discrimination and distinction between Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Pagans. Whites and Blacks, Diala and Osu. Aro and Ume. Therefore. Christians in Igbo land should follow the teaching of Peter and the church, by not discriminating against Osu and Ume people. The race for heaven and the success one makes of it depends on practical application of biblical injunctions and teachings. Peter's bold action was vehemently supported by the early church authorities: and this should be emulated by each and every one of us. But how many of our Christians today are reads to risk their position in society in order to stop the discrimination between Osu and Diala? Is it not



high time we lived up to the expectation as authentic Christians? We can do all these if only we take a bold step towards the eradication of Osu Stigma in Igbo land. Let us see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul's Teaching on Non-Discrimination

To support Peter and the Church on non-discrimination, Saint Paul writes:

"All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 2: 11-14). Paul the most articulate Apostle in attacking this social discrimination has also left us with an example to be followed. "As a result, there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised. barbarians, savages, slaves and free born, but Christ is all, Christ is in all" Col 3:10-11). Further. Paul writes, "In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink" (1Cor. 12: 13). The ball is now on our court, we must keep it rolling until a final solution is given to the evil Stigma of Osu-Diala discrimination among the Igbos of Nigeria. (Nwachukwu, 2014).

Peter's Justification on Non-Discrimination

The two controversial issues that arose in the early church were a) distribution of food and b) circumcision. There was gross discrimination in the sharing of relief between the Greek-speaking (Gentile) Jews and the native Jewish converts. The apostles called the whole groups together and said. "It is not right for us to neglect the preaching of God's word in order to handle finances"(Acts 6: 2-3). The apostles resolved this problem through prayer and appointment of seven Deacons to take charge of distribution of food. Peter, as the head of the apostolic college opted for non-discrimination between Jews and Gentile converts. By implication. Peter would not like to see any form of discrimination between Osu and Ume among the Igbos of Nigeria and any other society in the world. Discrimination is unchristian, devilish and a sign of immaturity in the Christian faith. It should be abhorred. The second controversial issue that arose in the early church was the problem of circumcision of Gentile converts. Some men from Judea argued that the Gentile converts must be circumcised before they were admitted into the church. This problem led to a sharp controversy between the advocates of circumcision, Paul and Barnabas. Thus, the first council of Jerusalem was convoked to look into the matter. During the council. Peter says:

"My brothers, you know perfectly well that in the early days, God made his choice among you; the Pagans were to learn the Good News from me and so become believers. In fact, God who can read everyone's heart showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as He had to us. God made no distinction between them and us, since He purified their heart by faith. It would only provoke God's anger now, surely, if you impose on me disciple the very burden that neither we nor our ancestors were strong enough to support? Remember we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (cf Acts, 15:7-11).

Peter's up-to-date explanation silenced the whole assembly. Hence. his earlier view of non-discrimination was equally accepted in the council. It was after the council, that the gentiles were received into the Church. Further. Peter says: "I now realize that it is that God treats everyone on the same basis. Those who fear him and do what is right are acceptable to him. no matter what race they belong" (Acts. 10:34- 35). Further, there is no discrimination in God in the pouring of the Holy Spirit to Jews, Gentiles, Diala and Osu. The Jewish converts, who were amazed that the Gentile converts received the Holy Spirit just as they did. Peter says: "These people have received the Holy Spirit just as we also did. Can anyone, then, stop them from being baptized with water?" (Acts, 10:47). The Jews in Jerusalem after criticizing Peter's wanton conduct retorted: "so you have been visiting the uncircumcised and eating with them, have you?" (Acts 11:3). Peter justified his position through his point to point explanation of the whole incident. His clear and distinct explanation left no one in doubt. (Nwachukwu, 2014).



Baptism Liberates Man from Original Sin, Osu And Ume

It is very important to note that Christian baptism sets us free from original sin and the sins of our fore-fathers as Osu and Ume. In baptism we are born anew. Our old selves die in the flesh and we come to a new life in Christ. That means that just as baptism washes away original and actual sins, so does it wash away the Osuness and "Umeness". "Aroness" and "Dialaness" in us. It means that through baptism, we become new creation, liberated from the yoke of paganism as Osu and Ume.

In Acts of the Apostles, Peter was reprimanded by God, never to call what He (God) has made clean profane (Acts 10:9-16). This vision led to the baptism of Cornelius, a Gentile and the subsequent baptism of the pagans (Acts 10:44-48). This baptism broke the barrier that existed between Cornelius and Peter, and also broke the barrier between the Jews and Gentiles. If the discriminatory Christian tradition was corrected by Peter in the Bible, why then are some Christians today still trying to perpetuate the discrimination between Diala and Osu? (Nwachukwu, 2014).

Attitude of Some Igbo Elites Towards Osu Abolition

In Igbo land of Nigeria, the word. "Elite" refers to academics as: Philosophers. Theologians, Lawyers, Scientists- Technologists. Physicians. Engineers and Architects, etc who are considered superior to others, because of their intellectual acumen and achievements. Some Igbo elite have distinguished themselves in their concerted efforts towards eradication of Osu caste system in our society. The elite have done this through their publications (books, journal articles). Lectures, symposia, seminars, mass media, television and radio view points. The altitude of such group of elite is quite commendable.

But there are some elite, who have followed the pagan tradition of the fore-fathers. by institutionalizing Osucaste system in Igbo land. Such elite propagate and indoctrinate their children with the social evil of Osu. Granted that our fore-fathers in their superstitious beliefs, fear and ignorance adopted Osu caste system in Igboland, why should the elite follow them without a critical examination? Socrates, the great Greek philosopher tells us that: "An unexamined life is not worth living". We may forgive our fore-fathers because of their ignorance and superstition, but posterity will not forgive the elite if they fail to condemn Osu institution founded on religious fear and ignorance. With education and civilization. the elite have no reason not to fight against Osu social discrimination, humiliation and man's inhumanity to man.

Another group of elite are those who condemn Osu discrimination verbally, but in practice they enforce its continuation by not allowing their sons and daughters to enter into marriage freely with an Osu or Ume. A person, who behaves in this way, is not true to his Christian faith and utterance. Since actions speak louder than words, we should write, speak and put more actions to eradicate Osu Stigma in Igbo society.

What we want our elite to do towards eradication of Osu in Igbo land is more practical actions and not rhetoric. The word rhetoric is described by Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as a speech or writing that is intended to influence people, but that is not completely honest or sincere. In this context, we do not want our elite to practice rhetoric of political slogan, which sounds sweet on hearing, but empty in practice. The Igbos believes '*ana ekwu-ekwu ana ememe*'. Briefly put in Igbo, '*Ekwe-eme*'. It means that speech and action are necessary tools towards total abolition of Osu-Diala obnoxious discrimination. Granted that all elite condemn Osu system realistically, why then do some secretly or publically deny their neighbours their social right? For instance, right social title or public election is often denied the Osu. In one town in Owerri, a man was denied chieftaincy title because he is stigmatized as Osu. Some elite even reject their neighbours' application for membership to a social club on the grounds that he is an Osu.

Presently, it is human wickedness and hard-heartedness, that keep us in the slavery of this social injustice to Osu and Ume neighbours. Some of our elite today do lament and sympathize with our brothers and sisters in South Africa for their racial discrimination, while they practice apartheid here by upholding Osu system. Oh! What hypocrisy! Do we not know that condemning the Whites in South Africa for racism; we are indirectly pointing accusing fingers on ourselves? Let our consciences be our judge in this matter. (Nwachukwu, 2014).

Osu/Ohu Caste System in Igbo Land Nigeria as Problem to National Integration

The achievement of national integration for the Nigerian polity has remained one of the top priorities for Nigerian leaders in the post-independence era. Recall that the problem of national disintegration and disunity which began to be felt in the colonial period brought about a thirty (30) month conflict that created adverse economic, political, social, and psychological effects on the Nigerian populace. Following the effects, every serving government of Nigeria deems it imperative and a priority to promote unity amongst Nigerians as this would not only encourage peace, but also give room for sustainable development. The dream of achieving national integration in the Nigerian polity, however, has become a mirage as result of some factors, one of



which is the practice of caste system in most traditional communities of the country.

As shown in the preceding section, Awo-Omamma community is an example of Igbo community where castesystem prevails. Consequently, there is a dichotomy or socialdisparity among the indigenes of the community – adevelopment which jeopardizes communal integration bymaking to be elusive the feeling of oneness among thosediscriminated against. Those considered members of this castesystem, the Osu, are segregated or discriminated against inevents of social relevance in the community. By so doing, theyare regarded as aliens and consequently, are denied fullidentity as bonafide members of the community. (Ubaka and Ugwuja, 2014)

C.O. Durueke shares his knowledge on the derogatorysituation of the Osu folks in Igboland. In his words:

Umuosu were sequestered from society and as such suffered total ostracism. They could not sleep under the same roof with the so-called Diala sons and owners of the land. They neither ate from the same pots nor drink with the same cups with the citizens. Marriage between the two groups was a taboo eternally. Children were forbidden to see the corpse of an Osu. An Osu could not be a chief or leader of any village.

Durueke further notes that:

If the corpse of Osu was to be carried through the village of Diala, palm fronds were placed everywhere to warn the people that evil was in the air, and a bad event was to happen. If an Osu had sexual intercourse with a Diala woman, the offending woman was to be dragged to the Osu to marry for free. Under no circumstances would a Diala run into the compound of an Osu even if it was raining or he was being chased with gun or matchet (sic). If one did so, one automatically becomes an Osu.

Although, not all of the mentioned discriminations against the Osu still subsists till date, however, discrimination in marriage and discriminations in title taking, chieftain issues and kingship are still prevalent in the community. Unarguably, these adversely affect communal integration in the community.

Additionally, as pointed elsewhere in the study, the Osu stock are abhorred from performing libations in communalsettings as well as disallowed from breaking kolanuts. Thispractice is so serious that even if a member of the fold appearsto be the oldest man in a social setting, he would be denied therights to perform libations, and to bless and break the kolanut.

The reason being that, libations and kolanut breakings are sacred functions in the traditional practices of the land. Thus, delegation of such functions to a person considered an “unclean entity” like the Osu is tantamount to desecrating tradition, and this, as believed, could invite bad omens to the land.

The issue of kolanut breaking and performing libations equally extends to the house of an Osu upon a visit by the Diala. The latter neither eats a kolanut broken by the Osu nor drinks palm wine used by him in performing libation. However, he can accept kolanuts provided that the sacred function has not been performed by the host. This, thus, has made the members of the Osu fold to be wary of presenting kola nuts to a Diala visitor as a sign of hospitality.

Alternatively, they usually resort to showing hospitality to a Diala visitor with either garden eggs, or drinks. The point being made here is that the Osu/Ohu practice makes nonsense of the unifying force needed for communal integration – a precondition for communal development. The continued practice of the Osu/Ohu practice has made such Igbo social pillars as igwebuikism to have little relevance. And since national integration is systemic, that is to say, that it hinges on the communal integration, the de-unifying factors engendered into most Igbo communities as a result of the practice has rendered national integration comatose. In this regard, Francis Onwuabuariri adumbrates: in most cases, the segregation of the Osus fromthe freeborns socially can hinder thesocioeconomic well-being of the society,because the Osus having being segregated fromthe freeborns, or having been seen as turds, mayrefuse to bring in their own quota both in thesocial and economic spheres of the societaldevelopment and this to a very large extent will hinder development, improvement in the society both economically and otherwise.As noted previously, those stigmatized as Osu or Ohu are known to have had an earlier contact with Western civilization. This in turn has caused them to be materially richer than the so-called Diala in most Igbo communities. In the Nsukka area, they are known to be



leading in terms of education, wealth, political leverage etc. In most communities, (as in the case of Awo-Omamma community) these sets of people because of the discrimination meted out to them are unwilling to contribute anything to the welfare of the entire community. (And would anybody blame them?).

The social segregation of the Osu and Ohu from the freeborns leads to political apathy. Like in the case of the blacks in South Africa as well as the black Americans in those days, the Osu most cases loose interest in the political or the politics of the Land, because they may think that since they are unrecognized and ineligible citizens, they cannot be elected into any political position or seat nor can they elect anybody in any political seat in the society. Thus, for them it is pointless to involve themselves in the political affairs of the society. This no doubt will go a very long way in causing a lot of political and social upheavals and mishaps in the society.

Sometimes, when they out of their own magnanimity render services that would benefit the entire community, the Diala would obstinately refuse to help themselves with such services. For example, in the 1990s when good drinking water was scarce in most Nsukka communities, a wealthy Lejja businessman decided to assist his people by sinking a borehole down to the deep aquifer; only for the people to jettison the efforts, tauntingly remarking that taking such water would contaminate them. In clear terms, this situation buttresses the social as well as psychological issues confronting those anathematized as Osu in Igboland. The discriminatory practices against those considered Ohu in the Nsukka area thus involves inequality in freedom of movement and choice of residence, inequality in the right of peaceful association, inequality in the enjoyment of the right to marry and establish a family, inequality in access to public office and unbearably, inequality in being of assistance to fellow humans. It goes without saying that as a result of this high level of discrimination against persons considered Ohu, several of such persons have been known to commit suicide, and others have also been known to have run away from their communities and settle and nationalize in foreign countries where their identity will not be noticed and where they will not be segregated as a cursed and inferior beings. This in turn usually leads most of them into becoming prostitutes, gigolos and even armed robbers. On this point, Christine Nwachukwu reveals that several of the people, especially, ladies we have had worked to rehabilitate from substance abuse and prostitution are people whose hopes for marriage crashed as a result of the insidious practice of different forms of caste practices in Igboland... mostly out of frustration, some of them end up condemning themselves to prostitution and consequently substance abuse.

The implications of the continued practice of all forms of caste system in Igboland are myriad and deleterious for national integration. As the cases of Awo-Omamma and Nsukka communities have amply revealed, Osu and Ohu practice in Igboland greatly impinge on the ability of the people to develop the kindness of social bonding needed for development. It also hampers the prospects of communal self-help development projects (CSH-DP) in Igboland; as there are in most communities (where the dichotomy is practised), two communities (existing as one only in nomenclature). It therefore goes without saying that something urgent is needed to be done towards ending all forms of caste practices in Igboland. (Ubaka and Ugwuja, 2014).

Critical Evaluation

In our critical investigation into Osu caste system, we discovered that Osu myth is an existential problem which has plagued Christianity in Igbo land for a long time. Not only has Osu Stigma been a thorn in the flesh of many Christians, it is also a big problem for the state governments of Igbo-speaking area. The question then is: how can we possibly eradicate the Osu system from the minds of our Christian's and citizens. To do this, we must have recourse to the good examples set by the early missionaries, The early missionaries preached equality of all citizens before God. In this way, they attacked the Osu institution in Igbo land. In our catechetical instructions and sermons today, Pastors of souls should inculcate into the minds of Igbo people the social teaching of the church on justice, peace and equality of all men and women before God. Pastors, preachers and teachers should let Igbo people know that we have the same origin in God and descended from the same parents- Adam and Eve. Therefore, there should be no discrimination between Diala and Osu. People of the same parents should not discriminate against each other. Every human being should see each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Anyone who discriminates against each other is only inviting wrath of God.

Furthermore, our people should be taught to show authentic Christian love, justice and peace to each other by practicing universal brotherhood. This should be made known through the example of the redemptive love of Christ. When Christ died, he died for all, Jews and Gentiles, pagans and non-pagans, whites and blacks, Diala and Osu, aro and ume etc. By that single act of allowing himself to be crucified, he paid the debt of our sins and liberated humanity from the bondage of slavery, Osu and Ume caste systems. By implication of Christ's death on



the wood of the cross, we become free men and women, who are no longer slaves of any deity (agbara). Through Christ's death, he reconciled us to God- For this reconciliation to bear fruit among all creatures, both Christians and non Christians should reconcile themselves with their Osu and Ume neighbours. We can do this by casting off the Osu institution which creates an artificial barrier between everybody. Unless, we do this, we cannot claim to love God and our neighbours sincerely as Christ wants.

Again, the role of baptism in the lives of Christians must be clearly pointed out by all teachers of souls. It should be made known that just as baptism washes away original sin. it also washes away the Ohuness. "Osuness". "Dialaness". "Umeness" and "Aroness" in even Igbo person. Through baptism we become children of Christ's light that illumines the darkness of evil, devil, superstition and paganism.

One can say that Osu, Ume, Diala and Aro are of pagan institution and should not be allowed to divide Christians in Igbo land. Therefore, Osu caste system ought not be mentioned among Christians, who have been purified through baptism. Like Saint Paul our former selves have been crucified... to free us from the slavery of sin (Rom 6:6). Each baptized has been stripped of his old self and has put on a new self, which will progress towards true knowledge, the more it is renewed in the image of its creator (Col 3:9-10). If we Christians have been baptized in Christ, we form the same body.

"Whatever we are, we are that together, if one Christian is Osu. all of us Christians are Osu including Christ, if one Christian is Ume, all of us Christians are Ume including Christ. If one Christian is Aro, all of us Christians are Aro including Christ" (Jinehu, in Nwachukwu, 2014).

Conclusion

In the preceding sections, we did show that the *Osu/Ohu* caste system is an obnoxious practice among the Igbo which came, but has refused to go away despite the impact of Christianity, modern education and civilization, and numerous human rights campaigns. Apart from being treated as inferior human beings in a state of permanent and irreversible disability, those considered *Osu* and *Ohu* are often subjected to various forms of abuse and discriminations. We have also shown how the continued practice of the caste system imperils national integration and hence development. It therefore goes without saying that for Igboland and by extension, Nigeria to move from its present developmental leukemia, occasioned by disintegrative tendencies (of which the continued practice of caste systems is conspicuous), concerted efforts must be put in place towards total annihilation of all forms of caste system in Igboland.

Recommendations

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes: "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism and God, who is father of us all, through all and within all"(Eph4:5-6). Another possible avenue to destroy the Osu institution from the minds of Christians is by dismantling the traditional belief from the existence of idols. If we do this without fear or favour, then the whole idea of dedicating someone as an Osu to nonexistent idol crumbles.

In the realm of marriage, which is one of the bones of contention between Diala and Osu, we should emphasize the need for intermarriage. We can achieve this by educating the minds of our youths on the evil of not intermarrying mentioned in this book . If we can possible prepare some youths, say an Osu lady and Diala man to enter into marriage, then others will follow. Thank God, some Diala ladies and men have contracted marriages with Osu men and ladies in Igbo land. Bishops and Pastors should encourage their youths to emulate the courage of some Diala men and ladies, who have wedded with Osu and Ume men and ladies. Besides, Bishops and pastors should tell their flock that the church allows marriage between an Osu/ Ume and Diala. They should be informed that Peter in Acts of the Apostle (Acts 10:44-48) destroyed and corrected the discriminatory Christian attitude, between the Jews and Gentiles. Osu, Diala. Aro and Ume.

On the part of our Government, they should enforce the Osu abolition law of 1956. If the government can enforce it by punishing all defaulters of this law, we hope Osu institution will soon be wiped out. The problem worrying us today about Osu-Diala Stigma is that the Government has simply enacted that law and left it to be violated without enforcement. Let the elite who condemn Osu Stigma, put more effort because the war against Osu institution is still raging. They can do this through journal articles, books, lectures, daily News publications. Radio and Television talk shows, seminars, symposia. Student debates on Diala VS Osu could be organized in secondary schools. Tertiary Institutions and Universities in Igbo land. If Osu stigma is transmittable from parents to children according to Igbo fore-fathers, genetic engineers in our contemporary society ask: Is there any special DNA (Deoxy Nuclei Acid) blood sample to show the genetic trace of Osu, which transmits from



parents to children? If the Igbos cannot establish the DNA of Osu, then Osu has no scientific and technological basis for its transmission from parents to children. One can then say that the Igbo concept of Osu heritage by children is based on pagan superstition, assumption and myth. It has no scientific foundation or claim to authentic truth. Since Osu heritage has no established scientific basis for its continued existence, it is erroneous and baseless. In this paper, our stand is that Osu institution is of pagan origin and should not be allowed to survive among Christians and non-Christians. Osu is an aspect of Igbo culture that has caused more harm and no good. Since this aspect of our culture is harmful to our existence, social interaction and marriage, we should *do away* with Osu-Diala Stigma. Those who perpetuate the Osu caste system or connive at its continuation are offending God in particular and humanity in general. Therefore, any person who tolerates this crime of man's inhumanity to man is robbing us of moral authority to protest against the Osu-Diala Stigma and any form of discrimination based on race, creed or skin colour.

Again, if we cannot absorb Osu and Ume brothers and sisters into Diala and Aro society, just because they are out-castes/untouchables, then there is no point blaming our fore-fathers as the originators of the Osu/Ume institution and Stigma. We are then no better than pagan fore-fathers- Those who perpetuate the Osu Stigma and connive at its continuation are not only going contrary to their Christian faith, but are violating Eastern Nigerian abolition law of 1956 on Osu, by committing social injustice. Such people should know that the sanction attached to the law is still in force. Therefore, it is better for us to join hands and stay away from Osu-Diala Stigma because it is of pagan origin and anti-Christian. If we cannot defeat this nagging problem, through genuine and concerted effort, then our claim to practice true Christianity based on God's love would have been in vain.

Finally, the surest way to end the issue of Osu Caste System in Igbo land is by state governments in the Igbo states attaching monetary incentives to cross-marriages between a Diala and an osu or Ohu (as marriage serves as an important factor in the discriminatory practices), as well as meting out preferential treatments to the products (offspring) of such union. Since an average Igbo man craves for wealth acquisition, monetary incentives of about five million naira for such union could be potent in expunging completely the practices of caste systems in Igboland with this. With this achieved, appropriate communal integration will be established amongst the members of the aforementioned communities and this can contribute to the realization of national integration and its dividends in the Nigeria polity.

References

- A. Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 18.
- Alex A. Ugwuja and Festus C. Onuegbu, "Towards Resolving a *Historiographical Problematique*: A Reevaluation of the Place of "Asadu" in Nsukka History" A Paper Presented at the 2nd Biennial Conference of the South- East Branch of the Historical Society of Nigeria, at the Abia State University, Uturu, (February 26-27,
- C.O. Durueke, "The Osu Caste System in Igbo Land", *Sunday Times*, June 13, 1985, 5.
- C. Ofoegbu, "Autonomous Communities/Anomalous Problems?" *Daily Sun*, April 26, 2006, 32.
- Chinedu Omeziri, 47 Years, Civil Servant, interviewed in Ubogwu Village, Awo-Omamma, 13/08/2014.
- Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1986), 111.
- Chris Ugwu, 71 Years, Businessman, Interviewed at Nsukka, 22/8/2014. Nwachukwu, C. Years, Social Psychologist/Voluntary Worker, interviewed in Awka, 19/9/2014
- D.C. Ugwu, (1987) *This is Obukpa* Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Francis A. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 1970), 19.
- Francis Onwubuariri, "Appraising the Osu Caste System in Igbo Land", 34, 37
- Onwubuariri F., "Appraising the Osu Caste System in IgboLand within the Context of Complementary Reflection", <http://www.academia.org/osucaste/pdf/054>(Accessed12/08/2014), 30 - 65.
- G.E.K. Ofomata, "Introduction", in *A Survey of the Igbo Nation*, ed. G.E.K. Ofomata. (Onitsha: AfricanaFirst Publishers, 2002), 1.
- G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, (London: University Publishing Company, 1982), 110.
- Gurpreet Kaur, "Understanding National Integration and Challenges in Its Way", *Educationia Confab 2* (2013): 45.
- Igwebuike Romeo Okeke, *The Osu Concept in Igbo Land: A Study of the Types of Slavery in Igbo Speaking Areas of Nigeria* (Enugu: Access Publishers Ltd, 1986),73.
- J.C. Agunwamba, *I Married an Osu* (Enugu: Joen Publisher, 1997), 27.



- J.O.L. Ezeala, *Can Igbo Man be a Christian in View of the Osu Caste System?* (Orlu: Nnaju and Sons, 1991), 14.
- Jude C. Mgbobukwa, *Alusi, Osu, and Ohu in Igbo Religion and Social Life* (Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1996), 84.
- Mark O. Unegbu, *The Osu/Diala Scandal* (Owerri: Assumpta Press, 1977), 7.
- Mathew Ugwuanyi, 63 Years, Community Leader, Interviewed at Onitsha, 17/8/2014.
- Mgbobukwa, *Alusi*, 29.
- Nwachukwu, S.A.O. (2014) *Osu Vs Diala stigma in Igbo land: A philosophical investigation* published by Splendor Concepts Owerri pp43 – 63
- O.A. Onwubiko, *Facing the Osu Issue in African Synod: A Personal Response* (Enugu: O.A. Onwubiko, 1993), 25.
- O.B.C. Nwankwo, “Thinking globally and acting locally: Re-thinking MDGs strategies in the rural communities of Anambra State”, *Global Advanced Research Journal of History, Political Science and International Relations*, 1 (7) (October, 2012), 159.
- Omeziri, interviewed in Awo-Omamma.
- Patrick C. Obinabu, *The Osu Caste System: A Critical Challenge to the Discipleship of the Church in Igbo Land, Examined in the Light of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Orlu: Chimavin Productions, 2004), 16.
- Roland Uwakwe, 59 Years, Businessman, interviewed in Umuokwe Village, Awo-Omamma, 15/8/2014.
- T.C. Ngima in Kelechi Chika Ubaku, “Awo-Omamma – Amiri Relations since 1970” (An Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, 2012).
- Ubaka, K.C. and Ugwuja, A.A. (2014) *Osu/Ohu Caste System in Awo-Omamma and Nsukka Communities: impediments to National Integration* UJHIS Vol. 4, No. 1 October, 2014 Pp 290 -314.
- Website: [uzuunizikjournal.com/https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330411534](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330411534)
- Udechukwu Nnadi, 65 Years, Farmer, interviewed in Ubachima Village, Awo-Omamma, 12/08/2014.
- Ugwuanyi, interviewed at Onitsha.
- Ukwuije, B. U., (2010) *God, Bible and African Traditional Religion* snap Press Ltd Enugu pp5 – 14
- V.O. Okeke, “Traditional Religious Worship in Awo- Omamma”, in *Awo-Omamma: A Land of Beauty*, eds. V.O. Okeke and F.N. Nnadi. (Owerri: Kemano Prints and Publishers, 2010), 131.