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INVESTIGATING MMANWU OZA-EBILI FOR SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE TRADITIONAL SOCIETY OF ULI TOWN

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Abstract

The belief in Mmanwu is one of the peculiar culture heritage of the Igbo people in the ancient and contemporary time. As far as Uli community is concerned, Mmanwu Oza-ebili is believed to be an ancestral spirit who periodically visits their living in Mmanwu form. Their visits are regarded as a spiritual intervention to the world of the living and as a result are highly venerated and respected. The work discusses the Mmanwu Oza-ebili as a mechanism for social control and adjustment in the traditional society of Uli in Ihiala LGA. Recently, there are a lot of misinterpretations and misconceptions of Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli town by some Christian fanatics. They tagged Mmanwu Oza-ebili with derogatory notions; fetism, devilish and outdated. And holding the conception that Mmanwu is no more relevant in this digital age. The work X-ray the original concept of Mmanwu; it's original roles, significances, and symbolisms in Igboland especially Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli town. Findings indicate that Mmanwu Oza-ebili has been seen as an irrelevant culture in this contemporary times and as such should be abolished. The study also found that, despite the dubious conception of Mmanwu Oza-ebili by some Christian fanatics, the Uli people still have strong belief in the reality of Mmanwu Oza-ebili as most effective mechanism for social control and adjustment in the traditional society of Uli town. The work employed both primary and secondary means of data collection. The data collected were analysed using the culture area approach. The study will be of a great benefit to Igbo people especially the Uli people, because it will make them know more about the Mmanwu Oza-ebili and have concrete argument to convince the Christians fanatics and others who are pushing for the abolition of Mmanwu to be aware of the symbolisms of Mmanwu in Uli town and Igbo land generally. The work recommends how to ensure dialogue between traditionalist and Christians in the basic belief systems other than the idea of misunderstanding and destroying each other's religious basic tenets. The people should debunk the idea being circulated by Christian fanatics that Mmanwu Oza-ebili is superstitious, primitive, devilish and outdated belief by some people and see Mmanwu Oza-ebili as a unique culture of the Uli people that served as an agent of social control and adjustment in this digital age.

Introduction

Mmanwu is one of the peculiar cultural heritage of the Igbo people that is greatly Reverend in the traditional society of Igbo land. The Mmanwu Institution is cherished by Igbo people due to what Mmanwu represent in Igbo land. It's societal, spiritual and judicial role can never be over emphasized in the ancient and contemporary times respectively, in Igbo land. Ozochi (2011) asserts:

During the pre-colonial and ancient time, in so many places in Igbo land when there were no law enforcement agents no judiciary system, no western government, the Mmanwu institution offered effective means of enforcing law, order and



administering of justice among the Igbo communities. The Mmanwu settled marital issues, land cases and collection of fines. (p. 6).

Collaborating Ozochi, Ndubisi(1996) posits that:

Mmanwu is an institution that is greatly revered in Igboland. Mmanwu is a sacred institution that goes beyond mere entertainment. It inspires the youth to action, enforces the law and order under the traditional social and society together. Any person who refuse to conform the social norms may be visited by Mmanwu to force compliance, in this case it is assumed that one is no longer dealing with humans but with the spirit world and no human would intervene. (p. 96)

Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli town is a good example of the ancestral spirit that still maintains the original roles of Mmanwu in Igboland. In Uli town the societal, spiritual and judicial roles of Mmanwu Oza ebili cannot be over emphasized in the ancient and contemporary times respectively. It is the Mmanwu that goes beyond a mere entertainment, it is a good example of Mmanwu that inspires the young people to action and also ensure that people conform to the societal order and laws of the land. Mmanwu Oza-ebili forces individuals to comply to social order in the traditional society of the Uli people.

One dealing with the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili assumed that he is dealing with the ancestral spirit and as such, such person should be truthful, humble, law abiding and peaceful, if not such person becomes the enemy of the ancestors and this can attract the wrath of the ancestors on him and his household.

Mmanwu Oza-ebili is one of the most unique Mmanwu in Igboland. Its uniqueness goes beyond entertainment agents which is the shallow conception of most modern pastors, individuals, and western writer about Mmanwu in Igboland. Some of the Uniqueness of the Mmanwu Oza-ebili includes; Mmanwu Oza-ebili does not use any form of mobility in its movement to wherever it's going to, it recognized all human beings in the town by their names without been told, specific center called Obom where it performs on its festivals, its mystical powers and the fact that it serves as an agent of social control and adjustment in the town.

Recently, some of the modern pastors, Christian fanatics and the acclaimed civilized individuals has been pushing for the abolition of Mmanwu Oza-ebili institution in Uli town in the contemporary times. They have accused the Mmanwu to be one of the reason the community is not progressing. They have conceive Mmanwu Oza ebili as been fetish, devilish and outdated culture and as such, should be abolished. The above assertions is laughable, because, people who are pushing for the abolition of Mmanwu Oza-ebili institution are totally ignorant of the symbolism of Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli town. It is against this backdrop that this paper tried to address the concept of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili in Uli town and also investigate the Symbolism and relevancy in the traditional society of Uli people and the Igboland general.

Conceptual Clarification

According to Wikipedia (2023):

The word “Mmanwu” in Igbo means “spirit of the death”. It is the combination of two Igbo words “Mmuo” or “Maa” which means spirit and “onwu” means death. This refers to the purpose behind Mmanwu which is to create physical representation of spirit and ancestors through the adornment of the masks. (p. 10).

From the above it is clear that Africa and the African's perception of mmanwu is completely different from the view of their European counterparts who limit the masquerade (mmanwu) to objects of pleasure and entertainment. This is because the western world sees anything under a mask as a masquerade, but to African, especially the Igbo people which Uli town is under, the Mmanwu (as the preferred to call it) is the dead Igbo people(ancestors) among the living, which is hinged on the belief that human life does not end in physical death. It is the conception that life is made up of the body and soul, and the soul is conceived as the spirit; and the soul is also conceived. In this way, at the death of any man, the spirit continues its existence in some indescribable environment, where they also commune with the living. The spirit world is seen as the duplication of life here on earth and spirits transform into persons

Brief History of Uli Town

According to Okonkwo (2006)"Uli town lies between 50 and 60 north of the Equator, and 60 and 70 of the Greenwich. This town of historic importance is situated in the extreme southeast corner of Ihiala local government area in Anambra State of Nigeria. Her closest neighboring towns are Amaofuo, (formerly a village in Uli town) and Ubulu in the Northeast, Ibiasoegbe and Amorka in the east. On the south and southeastern borders are Egbuoma, Ozara and Ohakpu towns. These borders towns except Amorka, are in Imo state. In the North, Uli has common boundaries with Ubuluisiuzo, Mbosi and Ihiala towns in Anambra state of Nigeria. Uli town extends westwards to the confluence of the rivers Atamiri, and Enyinja, and across Usham Lake down to the lower Niger region, where Oguta and Ogwu communities share common boundary with Uli. The town Uli covers an area of about 256 square kilometers. According to him, Uli town has a human population of about 65,000, with about eighty five percent (85%) of them Christians and all enjoy equal citizenship with less emphasis on social and religious differentiations. The main occupation of the people is farming and mostly subsistent farming. Maize, cassava, fruits and vegetables are the main food crops produced in marketable quantities. Okonkwo (p.:51).

Uli Town and Her Worldview

By world-view, we mean a rational explanation of the order which undergirds human lives and the environment. For us to have a basic understanding of Mmanwu, an understanding of the world view of the people concerned is necessary. According to Kalu (1978) world-view refers to how people perceive and explain the world, or the ways things are or change in their environment. It is a unified picture of the cosmos explained by a system of concepts which orders the natural and social rhythms, and the place of individuals and communities in them. People's worldview stands for their source of explanation for the ways things are in the world including their theories of illness, death and misfortune, and how human affliction and problems can be resolved. (p.7)

Indeed as Aminalu (1990) sees worldview as a product of experiences so pregnant with drama that such experiences give rise to symbols or totems of some sort. The symbols give rise to thoughts or creative intelligence and creative intelligence give rise, in turn, to the customs and codes of the society which are so internalized, from childhood onwards, that they go unquestioned as a way of life"(p.16) As Madubuko (1904) records it, the Igbo's worldview is a two-tier world of visible and invisible.

These worlds, he says, are not mutually exclusive, but overlap, i.e. there is a correlation between beings in the two realms as they interact. The visible realm is the human environment with man living and controlling the inhabitants, the corporal world. He conquers his adverse environment and domesticates the other beings, animal, trees and the rest. Man is a wealth and powerless being compared to the being in the invisible realm. Because of his powerlessness the Igbo man worships and propitiates the beings in the invisible realm in different times and in moment of joyfulness. The invisible realm on the other hand, is peopled by the spirit beings. The invisible realm is a densely populated world of the spirit being structured into five hierarchies with the subordinate led by the deities – Arusi, others and the spirit forces – Ndi muo, the Ancestral spirit Ndi Ichie, the charms and medicine – Ogwu and Ekwensu – the evil or malevolent spirit.(p.5) It is on the basics of Ancestral beings that the Mmanwu Oza-ebilibelong to and from the ancestral world came to earth to intercede for humans in terms of difficulty and also in terms of memorial traditional feast.

In the Igbo cosmology, beings are not alone; they mutually interact with one another. Man finds himself in the midst of these beings. Man maintains stability when there is balance or harmony between the visible and invisible forces. And man can read the invisible forces through Mmanwu cult and divination. It is anthropocentric in that it centers on man and preservation and enhancement of life. The world view of Uli people is encapsulated in cyclical model, and this cyclical model of their worldview gave impetus to their belief in Mmanwu. The cyclical model of worldview emphasizes man's journey of birth, puberty, adult stage, old, death and Ilo-uwa. This Ilo-uwa (reincarnation) can either be re-incarnating in human or appearing as Mmanwu to be with the living.

Okoye (personal communication June 14, 2021) asserts that Mmanwu is a form of Ilo-uwa (reincarnation). He said not all our ancestors reincarnates in human form, some came back to us as Mmanwu and returned to the ancestral world after his assignment. He asserts that their assignment is usually to direct the humans on the code and rules of the community and that of the ancestors. He also said that Mmanwu helps to make human conform to socio-cultural laws of the society. Okoye who was aged 80 years, said, that since his childhood, he has never seen any case that is difficult for Mmanwuoza ozabili to settle. Judgment of Mmanwuoza ebili in Uli is final, because it is assumed that they are spirit of the ancestors and cannot fail to restore justice in the land to enable the humans to live in peace and life of conformity.

More so, in an interview with a notable son of Uli, Nze Oliver (personal interview June 12, 2021) posits that, among the Uli people, Mmanwu is believed to be our forefathers (ancestors). He said, Uli people, both the old, young, men, women, initiate and uninitiated respect and fear the Mmanwu ozo-ebili because we believe they are our forefathers; core traditionalist who believe so much in mmanwu or those initiated usually called the Mmanwu“Nnayi” (our father).

Oliver said, “I respect every Mmanwu oza ebiliI see in the street of Uli, because I believe they are my forefathers and in that case, I never know if it was my late father that appeared in the Mmanwu. Trying to authenticate his assertion, he said that it is obvious that Mmanwu oza-ebili is a spirit indeed and not only a spirit, but a close spirit, because, it knows every human in uli by his/her name whether initiate or uninitiated.

The above statement by Oliver is true, because as a participant of this Mmanwuoza ebili cult, I have noticed that the Mmanwu oza-ebili knows every member of Uli town

whether initiate or uninitiated by his or her name. There is a very clear evidence to say that this Mmanwu oza-ebili is a spirit and not human as many western authors have described it, using the word masquerade, which contradicts with Igbos or Uli concept of Mmanwu.

In my personal observation, I have noticed that when this Mmanwu appears, no human go close to it, to tell the Mmanwu what to say or who to call his name. the Mmanwu does all this things without the help of any human. This has remained mystery about Mmanwu oza-ebili up till this day.

Brief Origin of Mmanwu Oza-ebili

According to Ndubuisi(1996), Mmanwu “Oza-ebili” has its origin from the riverine area south of Onitsha. According to him, the actual town from where it originated is in dispute, some say it has its origin from Atani; others say it is from Osomala or Umuna-nkwo (1996:96). He asserted that Mmanwu “Oza-ebili” can best be described as a moving giant anthill, broad and round at the base, tall and narrower at the top, which is covered with black ram tur. Beside its elegance and beauty, it is this black tuner which differentiates it from the other mmanwu in Igboland (p:96).

A lot of myths surround the Mmanwu oza-ebili, to uninitiated (Ogbodu), it takes off from an ant hill and disappears after each performance. To add credence to the myth which is widely believed, the Mmanwu never get caught up by rain when it is in transit from one performing arena to the other. It literally disappears. As a result of its artistic construction, it is believed that its art work is artistry of spiders (Ije-Oha – Ududo) and is accompanied by a group of Other Mmanwu oza ebili. The Mmanwu oza-ebili is commonly found in Uli town and Ihiala local government area at large/ it is also found in parts of Ekwusigbo local government, particularly in Ozubulu, it features also in parts of Nnewi local government of Anambra state, particularly in Ukpok. The Mmanwu oza-ebili features also in parts of Oru, Orsu and Orlu local government area of Imo state. (Ndubuisi 1996).

3.3.1 Classification of Mmanwu Oza-ebili

Mmanwu oza-ebili is a trio Mmanwu made up of:

Nnemmuo is the tall Mmanwu oza-ebili. It serves as the eldest Mmanwu in Uli town; it is the father/mother of other two categories of Mmanwu oza-ebili in Uli town. It features in a very serious event or festivals in Uli town. It never comes out usually and it always comes out with the sound of local gun (Mkponala). One can describe it as the head of Mmanwu oza-ebili. Nnemmuo is the Mmanwu oza-ebili that performs the rituals in Mmanwu festival at the Obom (Mmanwu center). It climbs the step of authority, while other categories of Mmanwu oza-ebili bow to it as their mark or act of loyalty to its seniority and relevancy in the world of Mmanwu institution.

According to Kanu (personal communication August 2021), Mmanwu oza-ebili is seen as a justice minister in Uli town, the Nnemmuo is the minister/judge. Its judgment is final and respected. Nnemmuo is the only Mmanwu oza-ebili that holds a staff (oji) as a symbol of leadership and seniority and Nza as a mark of honor and respect and sometimes, the oji (staff) is held by Okpadugbedugbe (the front man) and had its movement to wherever is going. Nnemmuo is always the tallest and designed with magnificent artistic articles, that make it look more beautiful and adorable to other categories of Mmanwu oza-ebili. Nnemmuo is usually followed by advanced men, elders unlike the two categories. Its movement is like that of a king, with a lot of traditional ancient Mmanwu rhymes and a

local gung and horn held by elders. The words that come out from its mouth is usually proverbs and it talks wisdom. Young men usually fail to understand its way because it speaks in proverb, and it is only the elderly ones and those who understand proverb can relate with nnemmuo. Nnemmuo have been seen in many occasion in Uli town settling different kinds of dispute, marriage, land, boundary and crisis and all its judgment are said to be fair and just in Uli town. The nnemmuo is surrounded with a lot of ancestral mysterious powers, notwithstanding its calmness, kind and quiet nature, we are advised, never to stand on its part when it is angry or when it calls for isolation because of one thing or the other, at this stage, clear until it feels relieved of the anger, if not, it can do something very dangerous and harmful, but this is on a rare case.

In Kanu analysis he asserts that: there is this myth surrounding nnemmuo, that when nnemmuo takes a woman back to her father's house, maybe because of her evil deeds, that the woman dies in the next four market days. As such, no woman will want mmanwu oza ebili to come up in her case because of the fear of the unknown. The fear extend to the other two categories that women don't even wish any of the three Mmanwu can send them back to their father's house, at such they try to conform to the norms of the society.

Finally, the nnemmuo never moves alone, in any event that nnemmuo must come out, the other two categories must accompany it to wherever it is going.

Agbogho Mmuo

This is the second category of Mmanwu oza-ebili. The agbogho Mmanwu is the action oza-ebili. It is the agbogho mmuo that inspire the young people to action. He said that agbogho mmuo is the Mmanwu for the young people". In my personal observation, as an indigene of Uli and a member of the Mmanwu cult, agbogho mmuo is the major entertainment officer in the three categories of Mmanwu oza-ebili; its movement is crowded with young men and their heavy voice of praise as the agbogho mmuo hits its head on the ground; sometimes, the young people use agbogho mmuo to play a traditional game, like, the strongest agbogho mmuo who can hit its head on the ground at the count of the number, the one that wins carry the goat, cow or money set for the game. The gift is shared among the followers of the Agbogho Mmuo that won the game. The agbogho mmuo generates a lot of money for the Mmanwu institution; it never gets tired of hitting its head on the ground. The joy and happiness the young people of the Mmanwu cult generate from the performance of agbogho mmuo is beyond compare to any other type of entertainment in Uli town. When a new agbogho mmuo is to emerge, the road will be blocked, because of the crowd of the young people it attracts. The agbogho mmuo on its side enjoys the crowd which motivates it to perform mysterious in terms of hitting its head and rotating on top of the sky. Both the initiate and uninitiated enjoy this performance by Agbogho mmuo. Agbogho mmuo salutes one by hitting it's head on the ground, depending on the amount of money one dropped on the ground. It never gets tired of saluting as long as money is involved.

Agbogho mmuo and Ukwummuo the last category are known for maintaining of orderliness. Agbogho mmuo is seen at another mood of seriousness when it comes to extracting fine for the community, on that act, the agbogho mmuo is a friend of none, it can be dangerous at that point in time, but outside that, agbogho mmuo is very enjoyable and according to Ozoemena, seen as major entertainment officer in the institution of Mmanwu oza-ebili.

Ukwu Mmuo

This particular category of the Mmanwu oza-ebili is the most fearful, hostile and as well as the most enjoyable Mmanwu oza-ebili by the uninitiated in Uli town. The main function of ukwu mmuo is to maintain orderliness. It always moves with canes; one thing is funny about the Mmanwu: the dwarf nature, its dwarf nature is always amusing to people, both the initiate and uninitiates alike. Notwithstanding its hostile nature, the joy of people especially the uninitiates will not be complete without the appearance of ukwu mmuo in any festival. Uninitiates love it because it pursues them in every festival. The uninitiates enjoy the fun run and its dramatic movement and appearance, sometimes it appears from nowhere.

Ukwu mmuo is usually the Mmanwu oza-ebili that is used for collection of levy in the town, when people failed to comply to any payment initiated by the community and when it arrived at your house, it can command the followers (initiates) to carry whatever that is equivalent to the levy in question, and the initiates will do as it ordered. No one claims stubborn in this case of ukwu mmuo when it arrived in your house, except that person want to try the spiritual powers of the ukwu mmuo and nobody will want to try that, seeing or observing places the ukwu mmuo have displayed its anger and spiritual powers, so the best for you to do is to conform to the norms and codes of the society.

The Belief in Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli Town

The Uli town, although densely populated by 'Christians' densely hold tenaciously to the belief in Mmanwu. This idea of Mmanwu is a very honorable one, because before one should appear or reincarnate as Mmanwu in Uli town, it means that such person lead a good life and as such welcomed in the land of ancestors from where he came to the world in form of Mmanwu to intercede for the living and put them in right code of the society when they are about to deviate from the socio-cultural codes or norms of the community. Mmanwu Oza-ebili is the best of its kind and different from other types of traditional entertainment age agents known as Odogwu which can be accepted by Uli people to be addressed as masquerade. For Uli people Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is not a masquerade, because they are not human in masks. They are spirit of the ancestors who visit the living from time to time. Mmanwu oza-ebili and everything about it is unique.

Nze Oliver (personal communication August 9, 2021) affirmed that, in Uli town, mmanwu Oza-ebili is one of the unique cultures we have ever seen. According to him, "from my childhood till now, the uniqueness of mmanwu oza-ebili is a very mysterious one, that one cannot clearly define the origin of its uniqueness". One of the unique aspect of mmanwu oza-ebili in Uli town is the fact that this mmanwu can go about hundred miles without any form of mobility. It walks to any destination its going. One of the interesting part is that; those followers walk or trek with the Mmanwu, I begin to wonder, what always give them such strength to trek to the place and still trek back to their abode. Nze Oliver said, like seriously, I have never seen Mmanwu of such nature before; he said the one he has come in contact with or seen is either they will transport their costume in that festival ground and when time reach, they will invoke whoever, whatsoever and whatever that control the costume, I can never say is human being or spirit, because am not in any way member of their Mmanwu cult. But regarding to Mmanwu oza-ebili, Nze Oliver asserts that, "we believe it is the spirit of our forefathers. This is the belief of 95% of Uli people and me as a person and a member of this town". The researcher never disagree to that belief." Nze Oliver, furthered to say that the fun associated with this mmanwu oza-ebili is unexplainable.

The belief in Mmanwu oza-ebili is a paramount one for the Uli people. It explains the unified existence of the Igbo community, where the living, unborn and death plays their role in the community. It explains that the visible and invisible world mutually communicates. It also explains the belief or idea of Ilo-uwa (re-incarnation) in Igbo cosmology; this is to say that actually the dead never die totally, they still live with us in form of Mmanwu cult and Ilo-uwa and the two belief work in hand with the other and they are of higher important belief of the Igbos especially the Uli people.

The Role Of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili in Uli Town

The role of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili in Uli town are enormous. This section will discuss the roles of Mmanwu from four perspectives. This includes; Social, Religious, Judicial, and Social control Role.

Social Role

The social role of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili in Uli town cannot be understated. The Mmanwu also served as the major entertainment agent for the people of Uli. The festival of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is one of the major social event that brings all indigenes of Uli both the home and abroad together. its performance creates special joy in the heart of Uli people. Both initiates and uninitiates enjoys the societal vibes that the Mmanwu gives.

The new yam festival and the famous Uli day celebration can never be complete without the appearance of Mmanwu Oza -Ebili. It's appearance promotes unity of all men and women from the town and the neighbouring towns. Social interaction is one of the culture the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili promotes in every of it's appearance; because it brings men and women who don't know themselves previously to commune in the Spirit of enjoyment and the vibes the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili gives. In as much as it reduces itself for social entertainment, this doesn't reduce its respect and dignity in the mind of Uli people. Hence the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is respected and honoured in the traditional society of Uli people.

Religious Role

The religious role of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili in Uli town cannot be undermined. The Mmanwu Oza-Ebili, in fact is the fulfillment of the traditional rituals and sacrifice in the town. Its appearance is a pure indication that the ancestors are still with the living. Its appearance is the authentication of the belief of the unified view of reality of the Igbo people; where both the living, unborn and the dead interact. It gives the impression that the deceased is making a temporary appearance on earth, since the Uli people believe that Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is a spirit of their dead relatives. So all sacrifices and rituals that was performed in the presence of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is like giving a sacrifice directly to the gods and ancestors which the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili symbolises. Another religious aspect of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is its mystical power and ability to neutralize dubious charms in Uli town. It is a known fact in the traditional society of Uli, that anywhere there is dubious charm in the land and Mmanwu Oza-Ebili passes across the place, such charms will be neutralize immediately. Generally, Mmanwu oza-ebili is regarded as the most feared and unique Mmanwu in Igbo land because of its mystical powers. Mmanwu oza-ebili in my personal observation, doesn't look for trouble with its power, in fact, you cannot know that Mmanwu oza-ebili have such mystical powers until the need for it to exercise its mystical powers.



Judicial Role

One of the inevitable aspect of human beings are conflict and misunderstanding. This is to say that there must be a conflict and misunderstanding in relationships and associations. Therefore this issues human beings are bond on needs settlements. In Uli town the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili has contributed and still contributing immensely in the judiciary function of settlement of misunderstanding in the contemporary time.

Mmanwu Oza-Ebili has features and continue to feature with its act of impartial judgement on the issue of marriage, land and religious conflict in the town.

From testimonies and a known fact by the researcher, several cases on land that Mmanwu Oza-Ebil has intervened with its act of judgement ends within a twinkle of an eye. Some of these cases might have lasted for years in the hand of the local Chiefs, Kings, and the modern court, but couldn't find a lasting solution to it. Sometimes the judgement from the local Chiefs, kings and modern courts might be partial. But when such Justice is seek with Mmanwu Oza-Ebili, such case must be settled with earnest Justice. And on conclusion of the judgement by Mmanwu Oza-Ebili, no human can question or appeal to any local court about same case, it's decision is final and unquestionable in the traditional society of Uli people.

Same is applicable to issue of marriage and it's conflict. In fact, in Uli town, no man or woman will wish that Mmanwu Oza-Ebili should interfere in their marriage. There is this old myth about the Mmanwu Oza-Ebili that when it accompany a dubious wife back to his father's house, such woman dies after four market days. This will have not seen where it happened, but no woman will want such event to happen. So as such all the married men and women conform to the marital laws of the Uli people, because of the fear of Mmanwu Oza- Ebili. One will agree with the author that the modern judiciary is known of it's corruption, which make it unable to deliver Justice to individual who seek Justice with it. It is a known fact that Justice in the modern judiciary is being bargained and bought by the few privileged individuals who has what it takes; power and wealth to do so. So justice with the traditional Mmanwu Oza-Ebili becomes a hope for a common man who seeks for justice in the traditional society of Uli people in this contemporary time.

Social Control Role

One of the greatest uniqueness of Mmanwu Oza-Ebili that distinguish it from other type of traditional entertainment agents in Uli town is the fact that Mmanwu Oza-Ebili is seen as a police in Uli town. This is why Ozochi (2011) asserts, "In the ancient time,in so many places in Igbo land,when there were no law enforcement agents,no judiciary system, no western government, the Mmanwu institution offered effective means of enforcing law,order and administration of justice among the Igbo communities" (p. 6). The Mmanwu settled marital issues, land cases and collection of fines. Mmanwu Oza-ebili is a good example of the Igbo personated ancestors in Uli town in Ihiala Local Government Area that still maintains its role as an agent for social control and adjustment in the traditional society of Uli people. Mmanwu Oza-Ebili stands for social control and adjustment especially in the areas of the settlement of marital issues, land disputes and general settlement of conflicts in the traditional society. Mmanwu oza-ebili is seen as a justice minister in Uli town, the Nnemmuo is the minister/judge. Its judgment is final and respected. Mmanwu Oza-Ebili have been seen in many occasion in Uli town settling different kinds of dispute, marriage, land, boundary and crisis and all its judgment are said to be fair and just in Uli town.

According to history there is never a case or crisis that Mmanwu Oza-Ebili settles and later the matter or crisis escalates again, and is so mysterious to people.

Impact of Globalization, Foreign Religion and Modernism on the Roles of Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli Town

The world today is often regarded as a global village. According to Korten (1973), societies throughout the world are finding themselves in the midst of change: new expectation, new possibilities, new pressures are uprooting the lifestyles of nearly all worlds' cultures. The important observation is also true of Igbo society whose modes of social control have suffered the impact of social change and undergone modification over the years. Globalization has generated a situation where Mmanwu are now mainly seen as similar to masked figures in other cultures. This new mode of perception has negatively affected the sacredness, respect and function of Mmanwu which are less emphasized and incompletely covered up and showing physical bodies of human beings.

As a result, people are now seeing Mmanwu in Igbo nation as human being in masks, as against the original traditional interpretation that defines them as "spirits from ancestral worlds". Accordingly, obedience to injunctions of Mmanwu is becoming weak. Similarly, may forces of modernization such as western education, and Christianity, the experience of colonization where responsible for such changes. The effect of these forces and the modifications that occurred to the roles of Mmanwu in governance socio-control and adjustment are examined below.

Effects of Urban

The British colonization of Nigeria brought with it the introduction of monetized economy. Consequently, the urban area because of industries and job opportunities concentrated therein attracted people from all cultures in search of money. People from Igbo rural communities accordingly migrated from their traditional homesteads to growing cities in quest for paid jobs. In the cities, they lived and interacted with people of completely differently cultural background and have had to learn imbibe some of the cultures which have in turn affected their reaction of Mmanwu and their roles as an agent of social control and adjustment. Even worse is the trend where some deviant members of the community run to urban countries to take refuge and escape sanction. There they make new friends and join some organizations which gave them social, emotional and economic security which they lacked among their people at home.

From my own perspective, it has been observed that roles of Mmanwu as an agent of social control therefore lost effective hold on the people as a result of urbanization and other factors.

The Effects of Christianity and Western Education

Here, the impact of western education on the Igbo group have been stressed according to Nwala (1985) since the advent of colonization and with it, the forces of western intellectual tradition (in addition to oriental influenced and the Igbo men has undergone tremendous change in his conception about life.

Consequently the traditional mode of life with all its apparent unity and conformism has fallen apart. Education and Christianity affected the formally structure which became increasingly patterned toward nuclear, design with little or no attachment to the extended



family system. These changes have weakened the importance of Mmanwu as an agent of social control and adjustment.

Christianity questions the traditional belief systems upon which most social control and entertainment function of Mmanwu were rooted. The power of deities and the chief priest were disregarded by new Christian converts.

The curses of the ancestors were no longer dreaded by Christians. Today, deviants whose offences require sacrifices and rituals cleansing have declined such rites on the ground that they are Christians. Therefore allegiances to Christian religion and impact of western education have in small major undermined the traditional role of Mmanwu as an agent of social control and adjustment among the Igbos especially the Uli people.

This is largely because the belief systems that supported them are now being questioned by Christian's viewpoints.

Effects of Colonial Expression and Socio-Political Changes

The colonial experience wielded different cultural units into a geo – political entity called “Nigeria”. The Nigeria nation established her socio- political and economic institutions she put in place a modern judiciary and police through which people can seek redress for wrongs done to them. These new structures made the option of Mmanwu less important.

Furthermore, social life in Igbo communities have witnessed wave of individually and nuclear clearage when people face invalid and ignore the extended family, in such situation Mmanwu which thrive on group support last agreeable.

Conclusion

From the discourse it is clear that Mmanwu Oza-ebili in Uli town as in most African societies is far more beyond the mask. For this reason, Mmanwu Oza-ebili appears as a robed figure who is designed specially to give the impression that the deceased is making a temporary reappearance on earth. It is therefore not surprising that they are considered as having power over life and death and people who have committed the most evil crimes against society were summoned before the Mmanwu Oza-ebili and could expect the most severe punishments. Thus, an appeal to this Mmanwu was the highest appeal a group or an individual could make. Thus, the Mmanwu Oza-ebili indeed provided a certain amount of stability and control on Uli people and their society. In the entire Uli town (irrespective of religious affiliation) Mmanwu Oza-ebili remains the major means of authority in settling local disputes, and their divined knowledge is often consulted in times of trouble. There is also a certain amount of societal control that comes with the belief that the spirits of the Mmanwu Oza-ebili can influence the community from above, especially if they are not happy with the behaviour of community members.

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