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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Igbo nation like every other nations in the world, Africa as well as Nigeria in particular has certain traditions, customs, cultures, beliefs and worldviews, which constitute their dos and don'ts. Most of these traditions are handed over to them from one generation to the other from their great grand fathers. The violation to these beliefs and traditions are seen by most of them as a great abomination (Aru). Thus, they give a strict adherence to the laws even when they are no longer obtainable in a given epoch like in this contemporary era when and where scientific inventions, globalisations, civilization and so on have become the order of the day.

Among these obnoxious, outrageous and devastating traditions and belief in Igbo land is the 'OSU CASTE SYSTEM' which has in different places both in the past and present become an atom of disunity, humiliation, infringements, isolations e.t.c in the places where they are practiced.

Sequel to these, a lot of critical thinkers have deliberated intensively on the possible ways of abolishing the system. As a result of this, several people have appraised the system in several ways with the view of unveiling some of the ill repacutions inherent in it especially as it regards to the human existence, dignity of human person as well as the equality enjoyed by all human beings created by God

It is from this point of view that this research work has come to appraise the Osu caste system from the ambience of complementary reflection. In this context, we are saddled with the responsibility of using the notions of complementary reflection to explore the place of Osu caste system in Igbo land to bring to light its demerit and merit if there is any.

The various chapter of this work will serve as a missing link towards the actualisation of this great task and dream.

1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The concept of Osu and its inherent problems have been in existence since antiquity of Igbo community (Nation). The problem is as old as the killing of twin babies, the killing of innocent children for developing first the upper incisor (teeth) the offering of human sacrifices, the problematic ideas of

reincarnation and others which are practiced in the ancient Igbo nation and other nations in Nigeria and Africa at large.

Thus, the Osu caste system has gone through several stages and generations. But due to the fact that most Igbos see it as an integral part of their culture which can not be easily changed or amended, all efforts towards abolishing it remained abortive and illusive. Today the problem posed by this system has grown beyond ordinary social and cultural into political, economical and more devastatingly philosophical.

Going by the complementary view point, the Igbos may be seen as a people that believe in the mutual complementarity of every body's effort and ability. This may be seen in their dictum "Agbakota Aka nyuo mmamiri Ogbo ufufu" which means "if all efforts are brought together, the desired goal will be achieved". Also, Igbos believed in the view of "Ibu anyi danda" which simply means "if every body will bring their efforts together, there will be no load that too heavy for them to carry. Moreover, they believe in the mutual unity among all parts that forms the absolute or the whole. Thus their dictum "Egbe bere Ugo bere"; and ka som adina: simply shows their believe in the conglomeration and the mutual unification of every human being and their efforts. Osu caste contradicts this views, because of it's teachings on seeing some people as being inferior, less humans etc, it becomes a serious problem that is begging for a rational solution.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

Osu caste system in Igbo Land is such a problematic system that opinions and views always vary in terms of it's merits and demerits or in terms of it's rejection and adoption. Thus, while some people argued that the system is obnoxious and outdated and hence worth's abolishing and extinction, others are of the view that since it is a system that is handed over to us by our fore-fathers, and like every other Legacies given to us, we should not allow it to die away. For this last set of people, any attempt to eschew this system and other cultures may attract the wrath of the gods of the land who may punish the people in the forms of pestilence, lack of rain, draught and so forth.

Besides, the objective of study in this work will be to unveil the ill consequences of Osu caste system. Another important aim of this work is to show the reason why some of the outrageous traditions in Igbo Land should be discarded. Also, another essential aim or the objective of study in this work, is to make the point that human being are created equal, and all human being are important to the society, thus for the society to make any headway, all the human beings in it should work in harmony, that is, our aim to incorporate the notion of "complementary reflection" Vis-à-vis the interaction of human beings in the society as propounded by Prof. Asouzu.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is on the exposition of traditional and the non-philosophical views and beliefs and traditions as well as the religions of the Igbos both in the past and the present such as Osu Caste system and other institutionalised mode of discrimination like the out casts, Oru, Ume and others which to an extent constitute the lion share of the Igbo traditional belief, religion and philosophy.

Besides, we shall try in this work to clarify the ambiguous notions and conceptions about the Osu and the cause of the present day's ill human treatment bestowed on the people who are known as Osus. Thus, our philosophical justification and appraisal to this system (Osu Caste) will expose the negative and the nemeses of the system on the Igbos, Nigerians and Africans.

The research will establish the importance of every body in the society whether old or young, Osu or Diala, to show that every body has a role to play for the betterment of the society. In this view, this research will try to present an overall preview of the inhumanity of man against his fellow man.

1.4 THE METHOD OF STUDY

In this research work "appraising Osu Caste system within the context of Complementary reflection" the method that will be used in it is basically the methods of complementary reflection. Although other philosophical methods and approaches may be employed in the cost of the work like the methods of analysis, argumentation, criticism, evaluation as well as justification. Also approaches like the historical, religious, ethnical, and philosophical approaches will be of a tremendous important for the work. For instance, the historical approach will help us to go in-depth in the exposition of the origin and nature of the system in practice throughout the entire Igbo nation, which will in turn enable us to carry out a complementary assessment on the system. The philosophical, ethnical, cultural approaches will go a very long way in helping us expose the ethnical, philosophical, social as well as cultural and economic short comings of the system in view

1.5 THE SCOPE OF STUDY

Despite the varsity and broad nature of this research work, it is limited in scope, and the scope in this regard is the scope of philosophy and complementary reflection.

1.6 ORGANISATION OF STUDY

This research work is delineated into five distinct chapters. This delineation is for the proper comprehension and grasping of the work.

Chapter one is tagged the general introduction. This is the introductory part of the work. It is the chapter that will expose the aim, the problem, and the importance of the entire work.

Chapter two deals intensively with the concept of Osu Caste system. In it, we shall see the origin of the system, meaning of Osu and other related salient issues inherent in the system.

Chapter three is all about the basic implications and outlooks of Osu caste system, implications like the social, ethnical, religious, cultural, legal implication and several others.

Chapter four is the main thrust of the work, it is where we shall see the meaning of complementary reflection, after which we will see other salient notions of complementary reflection which are used in the appraisal of the devastating Osu Caste system.

Chapter five is the epilogue of the work; it carries in it the summary, conclusion and recommendation.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

An Osu according to the Igbo tradition and religion, is viewed as a person or group of persons who are dedicated to a god or gods as it's property, he (Osu) does not have freedom like every other members of the society(the freeborn). Rev. G.T. Basden in this regard made a similar assertion in his book Among the Igbos of southern Nigeria according to him, "An Osu is a slave, but one distinct from an ordinary slave (ohu/oru) who in fact is the property of the god and when devoted to a god, he has no prospect of regaining freedom and he restricts his movements to the precincts of the shrine to which he was attached" (1921, 109). What the above assertion simply connotes is that an Osu is nothing but a property of a particular god or gods. It is said that in the early days in Igbo Land a particular community will go to a very far land and get a small boy or girl either by buying(slave trade) or by kidnapping, after which, they will dedicate the child to a particular deity for the atonement of their sin. There, the slave (Osu) will take the responsibility of taking care of the shrine, performing other functions like running errands for the deity and the chief priest and so forth.

It is in this context that Rev. Edmund Ilogu in his book Christianity and Igbo Culture defined osu as "slave of the deity dedicated to perform some menial functions which may include sacrificial functions (1974, 123).

Furthermore, C. K. Meek in the similar view maintained in his book Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe that "Osu is a person who has been bought and dedicated to the service of the owner's cult." For him, Osu is a religious cast slave understand the practice of Igbo traditional religion and system of worship" (1937:25). Mazi Chidozie Ogbalu in a similar vein maintained in his book Omenala Ndi Igbo that Osu is a cult slave dedicated to the gods (1976:83)

In the view of Tagbo Nzeako and Tony Ubesie in their Omenala Igbo and Odinala ndi Igbo respectively, Osu is "a person dedicated to the gods or owned by the community (1976:195 and 1991:195). Victor C. Uchendu in his book Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria posited that "an Osu is a cult slave, a slave

who has been dedicated to the services of the dedicators deity whose descendants are Osu, be the dedicator an individual, extended family or Lineage” (1956, 59)

Beside, Rev. Joshua N. Dimoyi in an interview made the point that Osu Cast System is Land is mere wickedness, a pure social set-up which has no basis in human creation (an interview with Igwebuike 1986). According to J. O. Nwachukwu talking in Sunday Times Newspaper “Osu is a sacred and holy being deserved to live a secluded life, a monk in order to salvage and save the people under him as a king and saviour” (1985,5). This word of Nwachukwu simply shows that an Osu can some times be the chief priest of a particular communities because of some reason which will be revealed in the next chapter, in this context, the Osu is viewed as an intermediary, a mediator between the people and their god or gods.

Furthermore, Igwebuike quoting Rev. Arazu in his book the Osu concept in Igbo land sees the Osu as “a living sacrifice, something or some one totally dedicated to divinity, only natural dead can terminate its existence on this side of reality” (1986,11). What Arazu meant in this view is that when ever one becomes an Osu he/she will forever live as an Osu. Put differently, then is no means of changing an Osu to a freeborn.

According to the Osu bill written by T. O. Elias, S.N. Nwabara, and C.O. Akpangbo which came under the title laws of Eastern Nigeria, “an Osu is more or less like the untouchables of India and probably in worse position Osu was regarded as a degraded human being not fit for the companionship and association of decent and reputable men and women in the society, an out cast fit only to be sacrificed to the idol for the propitiation of the gods. An Osu initially was as it were a non-person scarified to a local deity or idol” (1963,1-2)

Mesembe Edet in this same view made the point in his book titled Outline of Oriental Philosophy, when he said thus: “Among the Igbo of Nigeria some communities distinguish between the ‘sons of the soil or freeborn’ and the ‘Osu’ the Osu does not enjoy the same rights and privileges which the other members of the community who are recognized as freeborn or true sons and daughters of the land do enjoy. The Osu is an out caste just like the outcastes of the Hindu society, they are discriminated against. Marriage to an Osu is a taboos and like the Hindu system, one cannot change his Osu status”. (2007, 28). The above words of Edet tried to show some of the social implication inherent in the Osu caste system which is tantamount to that of the Hindu or Indian caste system.

According to Igwebuike R. Okeke in his book titled Osu concept in Igbo land “the Osus were the alter boys/the mass servers of the juju, cult and /or the deity priest, the significant roles they played in the traditional mode of worship just as the mass services do today in Christian Churches during offerings..., put succinctly, the services of the Osu were then inevitable and therefore a sine-qua-non in the scheme of worship of the Igbo mans religion”(1986:10). Interesting as the above view of Okeke may seem, it is note

worthy that the roles played by the Osus in Igbo land cannot be compared to that of the mass servers or the alter boys. They play a more vial role in Igbo land than the mass servers in Catholic Churches.

In the words of Jude C. Mgbobukwa in his book titled Alusi, Osu And Ohu in Igbo Religious And Social life. “In Igbo traditional religion, Osu is seen as an accused human being sacrificed to a deity. In the prayer of consecration, he is made to be the absorber of the iniquities, weakness, and problems of the people. He is also made to take on himself the death of the freeborn. Hence the Osu could well be said to be the redeemer of the freeborns” (1996:39)

In a nutshell, what the above assertions from the different authors and literatures simply connotes is how different people views Osu caste and some of the outcome of the system as well as some of the roles played by the Osu, but since the subsequent topics that we are going to treat will deal deeply with some of these view, deliberating on them now will be out of place.

Besides, interesting to know in this connection is the fact that though Osu caste system is still in practice now in some Igbo communities but it is no longer as pronounced now as it was then and some of the things or practices inherent in it are no longer obtainable now perhaps due to the presence of Christianity which carries in it civilization, education and so forth.

CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter as we have said in the organization of the study, we shall look deeply into concept of Osu. And to judiciously fulfill the aim, we shall look into such concepts like the meaning of Osu, the origin of Osu caste system, the classifications/the dedication of an osu, the role and the privileges of an Osu and other things or issues one needs to know about the caste system.

2.1 THE MEANING OF OSU

The word Osu in Igbo land simply means a belief system, a traditional and religious belief that certain people should be discriminated from others. It is a name that is given to slave, untouchables and outcasts. It is the name given to those humans that are sacrificed to the gods, those that are banished from their community who do not have anything to do with the people of the society or community and finally those people that ran to a far distanced town due to inversion from their enemies, and so forth. Besides, Osu in the other hand in most cases is seen as signifying course, in other words, Osu is viewed as course, thus, umuosu are referred to as coursed people. This is the reason why calling one an Osu is more dangerous than calling him a thief, harlot or any bad name.

Besides, Father Anyichie in his Ikwu amaghi Ibe ezi ako made the point that the name or word Osu mean thus: “One connected with the deity or the divine in a special way as opposed to the ordinary man born under natural and normal circumstances of his “CHI.” According to him, this is the reason why most people are named often deities like Osuji, Osuagwu, Osuamadi, Osuigwe, Osuala, osuchukwu and others.

For those people that are sacrificed to the gods or deities for the atonement or appeasement of the sin or wrong doings of the community (Osu arusi), rather they are foreboms (Diala) that are born under the tutelary or influence of the deities they are named after. (1991, 12) Osuagwu for instance means a child that is derived from an Agwu (a small deity that is responsible for child bearing), Osuigwe may also mean that the parents of the bearer of the name have gone to Igwekala in Umunoha to perform some rites vis-à-vis child bearing, and so on.

Having seen these, the major concern of this work is not mainly on the meaning of Osu but how to complement the work of an Osu and that of freeborn to produce a viable and stable society that will be discrimination free, and to clear some ill thoughts and conceptions about the system, and moreover, to seek for a way of bringing a mutual complementarity between the Osu and the non Osu, to enhance the socio-economical wellbeing of the people or the society. Note, we are not envisaging that there is nothing like Osu but our view is that it is an out-dated issue or practise meant mainly for our fore-fathers who neither know anything about Christianity nor civilization. Thus, having been educated and civilized, our view is to eschew the system and focus on the possible ways of developing our nation.

2.2 THE ORIGIN OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM

Rules, regulations, laws doctrines, traditions and so forth, came into existence like the positive laws when human beings sees it to be pertinent for the individual freedom to be controlled by a certain code of conduct. Like the Hobbesian state of nature, these individuals became tired of their original state of nature which is characterised by brutishness, nasty and short. Thus, they came together to not only form a society or to produce a leader, rather they also make Laws that will be binding to all a sundry.

Nevertheless, Osu Caste system may be said to have started from the time immemorial, but the problem with the system is that there is no general accepted date of it's establishment, thus a lot of people have a lot of conceptions about it's origin let us consider some of these conceptions. According to Uchegbulem in his thesis titled 'the ethical implications of the Osu caste system in Igbo land' "... Osu caste system has its roots in practice of human sacrifice in Igbo Land" (1994, 27) what he meant in this view is that Osu caste system originated from the time when angry gods started demanding human beings for sacrifices in place of the usual animals for the atonement of the evil the people have committed. To buttress the point Uchegbulem continued "occasionally circumstances arose in which human sacrifices were believed to restore harmony, and so they resorted to, to pacify an enraged deity to save the community, the group or the family".

According to Amadife talking in an article titled 'The culture that must die in Sunday times newspaper followed the line of Uchegbulem as he said that " Some of the gods in Igbo land demanded human sacrifices during their festivals to remove the abominations committed in the communities within the past years" (1988,3). The failure to comply to the demand of the gods may bring about several problems

and in order to avoid the misfortune, the people will contribute money which is called Utu aja' to the general purse for the purchasing of a slave from the slave market or the kidnapping of a slave which may be either man or woman depending on the one demanded by the gods. This person bought or kidnapped is referred to as an Osu whom after his/her sacrifices to the deity will start carrying the iniquity of the people. He will be seen as the personification of the rage of the god(s), his presence will be reminding the people of the rage of the god and the calamity that caused his being sacrificed. Thus to a large extent is the major reason why an Osu is stigmatised and seen as a living death. This type of Osu is generally referred to as "Osu arusi".

Another salient view about the origin of Osu caste system in Igbo land is the view that the system originated from Nri kingdom. It is said that in the early days Nri people possess some hereditary powers and rites to proclaim cleansing to any kingdom where abominations are done in the past consequently, any community or kingdom that refute or regret the cleansing by the Nri spiritualists, or any village (community) that is unable to meet up with the requirement needed for the cleansing will be viewed as impure; and any community that is termed impure is referred to as an Osu or untouchable.

To clarify this view, C.M. Ezekwugo in his book titled Ora Eri Nnokwa and Nri Dynasty that "Nri descendants possess certain hereditary rites to perform traditional and cultural ritualistic functions. One of the functions is the rite of cleansing the land where abominations (Aru) are committed, such abominations like murder, suicide and other such heinous acts on account of which spirits are angry, required purification of the Land" (1987,10). In a nutshell, according to this view, any un-purified community is outcaste or Osu, which means that other purified communities should segregate themselves from the un-purified one because they are viewed as impure set of people.

Furthermore, Osu caste system may be said to originate from the inter-communal migrations and invasions. According to my mother, who also heard from her parents in an oral interview, in the olden days some stronger communities will wage wars with the smaller and weaker communities and kill a lot of them, when this small community sees that most of their members have died in the war which always comes in the night, they will carry their remaining wives, children and other relevant properties and migrate to a very far land to settle. On getting to this far land, the owner or the settlers of the land will welcome them and give them land to cultivate and build their house. While settling in that land the owners of the land will always refer them to as Osu. There, they will develop and form a village of their own.

Furthermore, according to Mr. Cletus Asomusha in an interview, in the early days when a woman gave birth to a bastard, the bastard will be isolated from his age mates and due to the isolation, people will start referring to him or her as an Osu or an untouchable, they will neither get married in his town nor have access to any property in his/her land".

The last but not the least in the origin of Osu caste in Igbo land as far as this work is concerned is the view that ostracism is the root of Osu caste system, according to Mr. Asonmugha also, "when a certain

person or group of people refuted a particular decision of a king or the entire community, the king will banish them from the land, thus, they will have nothing to do with people of the community, when this banishment or ostracism has passed through generations, it will get to a generation when the community will refer to the ostracised people as Osu or outcasts". (Mr. Cletus interviewed in Owerri 2007).

It is important to note in this connection that aside the first or the institutionalized form of the origin of Osu caste system, all other theories of the origin of the system as we have shown in the paper is a loose sense of the origin of the Osu caste system.

2.3 CLASSIFICATIONS/CATEGORIES OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND

Osu caste system in Igbo land has to an extent become a bone of contention because while some school maintained that the system is natural, others see it as being intentional. Among the peoples that see the system as being intentional is Igwebuoke Okeke, according to him "Osu Caste system is an intentional, conventional, religious proposition established by our fore-fathers through religious ceremonies with religious apparatus to serve a religious purpose"(28) Also what the bible said in the book of Genesis chapter one verse twenty-seven (Gen.1:27) buttressed the points according to the bible "So God created man in his own image in the image of God created he him male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27 KJV). The following assertions from Iqwebike and the Bible, Plausibly shows that Osu caste system is a human invention particularly the very point made by Bible from the above quotation is that God created every human being to be equal. Thus class division like osu caste system is nothing but a human convention, which is out in the original plan of God during his creation.

Besides, there are several other classifications of dedications of Osu caste system but this research will be restricted aptly on three distinct classifications namely voluntary or self servitude, involuntary dedication and mass classification dedication. By voluntary dedication, we mean a way of becoming an Osu that deals with personal volition, in this case, one is not forced to join nor did he or she become one by inheritance, rather, he or she became an Osu because he or she delights being an Osu. There are certain conditions that can make one to become an Osu voluntarily, for instance victimization and frustration. Here a person due to frustration and helplessness may decide to embrace a deity for either protection or guidance; as a result the person becomes an Osu. Another condition in this regard is poverty and indebtedness. Here a person may become the property of a deity due to his/her inability to pay up his/her debts, the person may run to the deity to scare his debtors away, and having run to the deity the person automatically become its property. Finally, one of the essential conditions that make people to become properties of the god voluntarily is laziness. Hence, some people became an Osu just because they are too lazy to work and earn their own living. They easily go to the deity and become its property in order to be eating the sacrifices sacrificed to the gods. There was a story of a man in Dikenafai, in Imo State whom due to laziness and greed agreed to become an Osu in order to receive a certain amount of money which was contributed by

the people for the purchasing of a slave who will become the sacrificial slave to the Oriehie deity. Thus, the man and his descendants are Osus today due to his laziness and greed.

2.4 INVOLUNTARY CLASS OR DEDICATION:

In this class, people do become properties of god or deities ignorantly and unknowingly. In the early days in Igbo land, a lot of situations and conditions can lead some into becoming an Osu and this is the major reason why the people are always very careful and conscious in their daily dealing and interaction with their fellow human beings, because whenever one is known to be contaminated with the Osu stigma, he will live his entire life and his family as an Osu, because once an Osu is always an Osu. However, the following can make one to become an Osu involuntarily. Firstly, killing an osu, that is, killing someone that has been sacrificed to gods whom the Osu is sacrificed to will demand another person, and this will not be another person than the killer. Besides, walking across the out stretched legs of an Osu while he or she is sitting or lying can make a person an Osu. Being an Osu incarnate can easily make one an Osu. Also, marrying an Osu unknowingly can easily make a person an Osu. But in this case, one can change his or her own Osu status by running away from the Osu family where she is married or divorcing the Osu women respectively. Finally, another salient way of becoming an Osu involuntarily is by inheritance. Here, if a person is born in an Osu family he will be immediately become an Osu whether he/she likes it or not, in this case, there will be no way of averting it.

2.5 MASS CONSENSUS DEDICATION OR CLASSIFICATION

In this context, one becomes an osu due to the conventional pronouncement of the stigma on the person. For instance, a slave bought from a far land is never known as an Osu until when the community started calling him or her an Osu. Also an ostracized person is not an osu until when the entire community started conceiving him or her as an osu. More so, a person that committed adultery and capital crimes like killing may also be dedicated to the gods through a unanimous consensus, and when this is done, he become a pronounced Osu.

Besides, there are other classification of Osu in Igbo land for instance, in Igbo we have 'Osu Arisi' which mean Osu to a deity, they are the people that lives closer to a deity or shrine. There is also 'Osu Ahia' which means slave to a market. Though this is not the case in all Igbo land. There are such other ones like Osu Iyi, that is Osu to river or stream, the osu here takes care of the stream and others. These classifications show that in Igbo land in the early days, Osu caste system forms an integral part of the Igbo tradition and religion.

2.6 METHOD OF DEDICATING AN OSU

In the above classes of osu, the only class of osu that goes with a special method of dedication is the one that deals with consensus dedication. However, in Igbo land, to dedicate an osu, a diviner will be called who will reveal the mindset of the gods. If by his words it is obvious that the gods are in need of a human sacrifice, The people having bought or kidnapped the sacrificial person will quickly bring him to the deity (IHU ARUSI) and the chief priest (OnyeIsi Nchuaaja) will give the slave some of the properties of the shrine to handle (properties like clay pot stone etc) which simply means that the slave has exchanged his person and forfeited his right, liberty and freedom with the property of the deity he is holding. The slave will nevertheless be asked to make a certain citations before the deity and the entire people present. After the citation the chief priest will cut his or her ear or any part of the slave's body and sprinkle the blood on the stones and other properties around the shrine. After these series of ritual Sacrifices, the person becomes an osu instantly, and when he wishes to marry, he will marry another osu woman else where and like that they will spread into osu village.

2.7 HOW TO IDENTIFY AN OSU

An osu especially those ones whose dedications are celebrated can be identified in several ways. For instance, most of them have cut in their body, either that their ear is cut or one of their fingers or toes are cut. According to Eze Godson Ezekwensiri quoted by Igwebuiké "...Some parts of his body, like an ear or a finger is also cut to identify him. (38). Apart from the identification by mark, one can also identify an osu by their Inherent devastating body odour. It is said that osus have a very bad body odour that no matter how they try to remove it with perfumes it does not go. Another important way of identifying an osu as we have said earlier is by the place they live though this may not be the case in all parts of Igbo land. Any group of people found to be living near a shrine, market, stream and so forth respectively are said to be osus. Besides, osus may also be known in some cases by their level riches, development and education. It is said that due to the fact that Osu do not have lands to farm and to do other local activities, most of their father gave their children to the early whit missionaries who took them to their land and educate them, and through their education, they became affluent and they developed their people, thus, most of them are passionately rich and educated more than the firstborns.

2.8 THE ROLES / THE PRIVILAGES OF AN OSU IN IGBO LAND.

The question of what should be the role, important and privilege as well as the use of an osu has generated diverse opinions and views, consequently, to some, it is better to imagine role played by the Osus in the socio-economic and political set up of the Igbo society than discussing it, but for this work, that is not the issue.

However, it is interesting to acknowledge that the Osus occupy an indispensable and envious place and position in the traditional religions arrangement in Igbo land particularly in the areas where it is practiced. The Osus in some communities are priests of cults (shrines) and in some other cases; they are subordinates to the chief priests like the mass serves in the Catholic churches. Thought aside the fact that they can be given the sacred place of priest, they are still seen as priests without power and prestige by the freeborn because they do not and cannot command the respect or attract the admiration of the freeborns due to their Osu stigma in the sight of the freeborns due to the fact that they see them selves as inferior beings.

Furthermore, in most Igbo communities in Igbo land in those day when the system is fully in practice, the Osus are saddled with the responsibility of keeping vigil in the village when the house slaves (Ohu or Oru) and their master must have gone to farm especially between the home of 10am and 12 noon. Thus, they in this connection acts as watch dogs in the villages for the protection of couples still with children between the ages of two and ten who could easily become preys and victims to the kidnappers.

Nevertheless, there are those Osus who acquire the powers to make powerful charms during inter-tribal wars which were assembled via the Chief Priests of the shrine on behalf of the sons and daughters of the soil. According to Iqwebiuke “these charms were believed to be very powerful and difficult to defile because of the fact that the Osus don’t neutralize any charm known to have been prepared by fellow Osu” (43)

They are also used during inter-tribal wars as frontiers that were normally given charm pots to carry as the battle zone was being approached; perhaps, their body odour is enough to scare their enemies away before their arrival to the merits of their owners. Though as plausible as it is, it is not immune for criticism. The view is just a mere subjective conception.

Also, the Osus especially when they are the Chief Priests fetch/attracts offerings or sacrifices to the deities because if they were peradventure injured by anybody, such a person would have to incur the expenses of providing the spirit he serves with a new one. According to M. M. Green talking about making an Osu priest in his Book Igbo Village Affairs, he made the point that “The Osu people looked up as horrible and holy by the society do not necessarily make them into people of authority, because of their anomalous position in some society, but it does not mean that they are or may be a part of the mechanism whereby law and order are preserved (1978, 20).

Igwebiuke interviewed Arazu, on the role of an Osu as he maintained that “an Osu is the living symbol of the invisible spirit when he is carrying the emblem (of the spirit or a god). Thee emblem carrier is seen as the most important person on such occasions, this is because, in the very blood of the Osu runs the potency of the spirit, hence, they are feared”. According Igwuike the osu would make the best occultists and mystics thus he said: “if I were an Osu, I would go in completely for occultism and mysticism in order

to develop the power inherent in a 'Kratophany' because the particular spirit which the Osu was dedicated is not the devil and is not one of the demons" (Interviewed in May 15, 1986).

Moreover, according to Cardinal Arinze in his book titled Sacrifice in Igbo Land "non wicked spirits in Igbo traditional region are to be regarded as angels" what he meant here is that it is a sheer absurdity to see the Osus as evil and harmful like the way many people used to do. it is this view that make Igwebuike say that "To me therefore Osu in the religious context, has no bad connotations and cannot be viewed otherwise".

What the above views about the role of an Osu and the privileges of Osu simply shows is that Osu occupies a crucial position and plays an important role in the socio-economic and cultural well being of the Igbos. Thus, they deserve some privileges. Having seen this, it is out of place to see them as turds or discriminate them from the rest of the people in the society. Meanwhile, what we are envisaging in this regards is having seen the roles of the Osus and knowing that each individual in any society has his or her own work and the freeborn can not do the work of the Osus neither can the Osu do the work of the freeborn, hence they should work together with the spirit of complementarity in order to achieve the summum bonum of the society.

CHAPTER THREE

VARIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF THE OSU CASTE SYSTEM

In this chapter, our main focus and emphasis will basically be on viewing Osu Caste System from several view points so as to expose some of its demerit and merits if any. Also, this chapter will deliberate a little on the Legal efforts towards the abolishment of the system. Meanwhile, our major bones of contention will be on the social, ethnical, religious, cultural, natural as well as the legal implications of Osu Caste System in Igbo land.

3.1 THE SOCIAL IMPLICATION OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM

One of the major implications of Osu Caste that will be discussed in this work is the social implication. When we talk of social, we are simply laying emphasis on things that have to do with society. That is, the inter relationship of the people of the society. Thus, in this context, we are meant to look aptly and indepthly on the position of Osu Caste System vis-à-vis the day to day inter relationship of the people of the society where the system is practised.

Although, Osu Caste System has been known as a social issue which simply depicts that it is something that has to do with the social life of the people, and also, due to the fact that all the alleged problems of it like segregation, discrimination, dehumanization and others, are all social activities, but our main focus in this aspect will be on such salient points or issues like the marriage between an Osu and the Diala, the funeral rites of an Osu, the chieftaincy of an Osu and several other essential concepts.

It is note worthy that it is not only on the above concept that Osu Caste System in Igbo land can be known socially, there are several other ways or issues in which the system can be known but space may not permit us to enumerate all the social view point of the system. However, we shall deliberate on the above mentioned concepts one after another.

3.1.1 THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN AN OSU AND DIALA

In the ancient and even the recent days of Igbo land, freeborns have virtually nothing in common with the Osus especially in terms of marriage. It is a universal belief in Igbo land that whenever a freeborn has any kind of sexual intercourse with an Osu branded person, the freeborn among the two will immediately become an Osu. Thus before one goes into marriage in Igbo Land, to avoid falling into the hand of the Osus, and to avoid sharing in the Osu stigma, the parents of the people involved and even the people themselves, usually engage into what is called “*ijuaaju*” which means ‘doing findings’. The essence of the findings which may last for months is simply to avoid getting married to an Osu person or lineage.

But in the case of someone who has been in love with an Osu person to the extent of getting married, if any of the two persons eventually found out that one of the two is an Osu, the freeborn out of the two will secretly abstain his/her self from the relationship. But if such person refuses to turn out of the relationship,

it is obvious that the persons 'Umunna' (kinsmen) will not be party to the wedlock and it is obvious that any offspring that emanate from such union will involuntarily become an Osu.

Nevertheless, issue of marriage between an Osu and the Diala out of the other social issues of the system has become so rigid and unchangeable even in the contemporary days unlike such other issue in the system which are best known in theories than practice. The thrust here is that despite the enormous efforts of Christianity, civilization, law, globalization whose aim is to ecumenism the whole world into one global village and family, the issue of abolishing the system especially in the aspect of inter marriage between an Osu and the non-Osu has remain abortive. This difficulty might be because just like HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, the people believed that sexual relationship or inter marriage is one of the chief sources of contracting the stigma of Osu.

However, a lot of instances have been used to buttress this fact, but few will be discussed in this work for the wanting of space and time. Firstly, there is the instance of a pastor who out-rightly preached about the abolishment and condemnation of the system, but when he was interviewed thus: Would you like an Osu man to marry your daughter or like your son to marry an Osu woman, the answer he gave was No. this simply shows that the issue of abolishing Osu Caste System especially in the area of inter marriage is easily said or preached than practiced.

Also, one king was known for making a public pronouncement on the abolishment of the Osu Caste System in his dynasty, but when his people asked him to lead by example by either getting an Osu woman for his son or allowing an Osu man to marry his daughter, he declined. These instances shows that no matter how a person or group of people tries to stop the system, the issue of Dialas getting married to an Osu is very difficult (though not impossible) especially in the land where the system is in practiced.

One of the salient implication of this is that most of the young men who belong to the system often leave the girls in their Caste and get married to other girls elsewhere who in most cases are Dialas, leaving their young girls without husbands knowing fully well that the freeborns will never think of coming closer to them let alone getting married to them. Having seen this, the Osu girls usually find their ways to big cities and become prostitutes in order to get themselves sexually and emotionally satisfied. Because it is believed that in the cities they will not be stigmatised by any body. Since staying in the village will put them into sexually emotional trumer. It is on this ground that it has been said accordingly that the Osus constitutes the integral part of the call-girls that roam the big cities both within and outside the country. Though this view is not immune from criticism.

Besides, it is notable, that it not a taboo or any form of evil for an Osu man to marry his fellow Osu woman and vice-visa. Also, an Osu can get married to a Diala person who agreed to marry him or her. An Osu can also marry any body in distance town where the system is not practiced.

In a nut-shell, the social interaction between an Osu and the freedom especially in the context of marriage has been difficult to be abolished despite the enormous efforts which have been made towards its abolishment. Thus, it is among the two or three issues in the system that are still practiced till day in Igbo land.

3.1.2 BURIAL RITES OF AN OSU

The social segregation between an Osu and the Diala runs through the entire gamut of their existence from birth to death. Thus, nothing can by any means exonerate an Osu to become a Diala. According to Iqwebuike Okeke,.

From birth to death, the Diala do not ever dare to rejoice over or celebrate the arrival of a new born baby delivered by an Osu as they do not sympathize with or lament over mishaps on them” (64).

Besides, it is said accordingly that in the Igbo days of Yore, that at the death of an Osu, the Diala do not participate in the digging of ground as well as taking part in any other burial rites likewise the Osus. The Osus are not allowed to be buried around the places where the freeborn were buried. This was the case according to Mgbobukwa in the certain communities like Aguata, Nnewi and other neighbouring communities in Nnewi Local Government Area” (48).

One of the reasons for this hostility towards the Osus by the freeborns even at death was according to Mgbobukwa because the freeborns do not believe that the Osus do have any soul to be saved, hence, there is nothing like the resurrection of the soul for them. Just as the case was with Whites and the Blacks in American and South Africa where the White sees the blacks as people with no history, no hope of life after death a blissful resurrection probably on the last day.

As an ancillary to the above view, Onwubiko said in his book Facing the Osu issue in the African Synod that “it was the traditional Igbo religious belief that a person on whom the right of segregation was performed as was the case of the Osu was bound to be last in the life after death and thereafter would not attain the blissful state in the spirit world. This belief was very latent in the minds of the adult Igbos” (1993).

Furthermore, Mgbobukwa enunciated some of the rights enjoyed by the freeborns at death. According to him, when a man is pronounced dead, the relatives gather together and he will be lowered to the grave. Three days later, the buried rites begin, the following animals are provided:

Ikenga Ewu (A female goat that has given birth)

Agbogho Ewu (A female goat that has not given birth)

Okemkpi (A he goat)

Okokpa (A cock) (50)

It is believed that when ever a person is buried with the enunciated items and several other ones, based on the culture and tradition, the person will be welcomed in the land of the dead. But since the Osus

do not enjoy these rights during burial rites, thus, their spirits did not go well in the land of the dead. Thus, they will not take part in any thing that has to do with life after death.

3.1.3 THE CHIEFTAINCY OF AN OSU

One of the enormous social segregation between an Osu and the freeborns is prevalent in the case of making an Osu a chief or king over the freeborn. It is a sheer abomination in Igbo land till date to coronate an Osu or to crown any untouchable or slaves a king that will rule over the freeborns even if the person is the most eligible person for the seat in the community or land. The people would rather choose a mediocre or an unqualified person to rule them instead of seeing themselves being ruled by a known slave of the gods.

The ill implication of this is that it can easily lead to the wrong selection of leaders in the community. Because the people in the bid of rejecting the qualified Osu may enthrone the wrong candidate who in most cases lead them to an unanticipated doom.

Kenneth Ezeaguba in an interview made the following assertions “I witness a situation where a well educated man was acceded to the traditional chieftaincy title of grown town, this man is overtly overflowing with benevolence, integrity, dynamism, thus, he was very popular. But some people protested, claiming that he was said to be an osu and as such should not rule over the freeborn. They therefore chose a less qualified and unqualified illiterate as the rightful candidate”(interviewed at Owerri).

The issue of coronating an osu a king in Igbo land is among the social segregative issues in osu caste system that has lingered and devoured any possible solution till date. But these views do not stop an osu from being the chief or king in any osu kingdom as it does not stop them also from becoming leaders of association like churches, clubs, institutions and so forth.

3.1.4 GIVING A COLA NUT TO AN OSU

From the issue of making an osu a chief, also comes the issue of showing or giving cola nut to the osu. Due to the high esteem which the Igbo's held cola nut, it becomes a misdeed for a person to show cola nut to an osu in the presence of visitors or to give a cola nut to an osu who visited a freeborn - According to Jude Mgbabukwa, “the reason for this discrimination is because there is never a time an Osu is welcomed in the house of a Diala. In many social gatherings, by the time cola nuts are broken and eaten, an Osu is made to be aware that he is a stranger being manly tolerated” (48).

Osu as at this time are regarded as inferior beings and as such should not be given a cola nut by the freeborns nor is it pertinent for an Osu to give cola nut to the freeborns. Meanwhile, it will be germane to bear in mind that there are other issues of social segregation between the world of the Osus and the world of the freeborn like the issue of belonging to the same age grade and age group, cultural dancing going to the same market, and so forth. Most of these practices have been dead and buried.

However, Mr C.O Druke writing in the Sunday Times news paper in June 13, 1985 made a seemingly summary of the whole issue of social segregation of Osus from the freeborn when he said thus: Umuosu (descendants of Osu) were sequestered from the society and as such suffered total ostracism. They could not sleep under the same roof with the so-called freeborn citizens called Diala. They neither ate from the same pots nor drank with the same cup with the citizens. Marriage between the two groups was a taboo eternally. Children of the free born were forbidden to see the corpse of an Osu. An Osu could not be chief or a feaster of any village. If the corpse of an Osu was to be carried through the village of a Diala, palm frond was placed every where to warn the people that evil was in the air and a bad event was to happen. If an Osu had a 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 machete, if one did so, he or she automatically becomes Osu.” (15)

Consequently, these segregations in the social interactions between an Osu and the Diala has attracted a whole lot of ill social implications and repacaution. For instance, the segregation can easily lead to marital problems as well as wrong selection of one’s life partner. There is a story of a young man and woman who become friends from their cradles only to find out that they cannot marry each other because one of them is an Osu branded person. This forcefully made them to live each other and marry different persons whom they do not only hate but whose life styles were different from theirs. This in turn led to marital problems because people are not allowed to marry a person of their choice. More so, there is another case of a couple who married for more than ten years with children, only to divorce each other immediately one of them found out that the other person is an Osu.

Furthermore, apart from the fact that it can lead to the wrong selection of a community leader or chief, it can bring about an age long hatred. What is meant here is that Osus having seen themselves as inferior beings because of their Osu stigma, may in turn see the freeborns as devils and external enemies which may even lead to killing the freeborn or do any other harm to them especially when they are reminded of their stigma or when they are called by the name by the Dialas. It is from this antecedent that one does not easily mention or call any body by the name any how.

Besides, the social segregation of the Osus from the freeborns may lead to political apathy. Like in the case of the blacks in South Africa as well as the black Americans in those days, the Osus having been seen as the rejects of the society may in most cases loose interest in the political or the politics of the Land, because they may think that since they are unrecognised and ineligible citizens, they cannot be elected into any political position or seat nor can they elect any body 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.

More so, in most cases, the segregation of the Osus from the freeborns socially can hinder the socio-economic well being of the society, because the Osus having being segregated from the freeborns, or having been seen as turds, may refuse to bring in their own quota both in the social and economic spheres of the societal development and this to a very large extent will hinder development, improvement in the society both economically and otherwise.

It is against this background that the researcher has made recourse to Asouzu's complementary reflection as offering some of the basic theoretical tools towards addressing this matter. According to the theory, society and human beings in it can surmount all her problems as well as get to her predestined happiness and joy which has been eternally made available for them by God. If and only if there will be a mutual harmony of all ideas and thought positive and negative, theoretical and practical. Thus, this paper envisaged for the mutual harmony of both the Osus and the Dialas to achieve and ensure the societal development and happiness of all which is the designed end of the society.

3.2 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM

From the points of view of ethics, we may ask such questions like, is it morally right to see one's fellow human being as a turd, inferior and less human? Is it just to discriminate, subjugate and stigmatize fellow human beings? These questions and several others will help us to know if Osu Caste System is worth adopting or not.

When we say that something or an act is morally right, we simply mean that it is generally accepted in all aspects of life, legally, biblically or religiously, individually as well as collectively. In other words, for something to be moral, it means that it is not partial, that is, it is not going to favour a group and leave other group disfavoured. Thus, for something to be moral, it means that it is right and its rightness goes beyond every reasonable doubt. From this background, one may ask, is Osu Caste System in Igbo Land moral?

Osu Caste System as we have been talking in this work is one of the obnoxious cultures and traditions in Igbo land that sees some as inferior beings, half human etc. and views others as real human, good and pleasant beings. Thus, from the ethical view point, this system is morally erroneous and worth's abolishing.

According to J.O.L. Ezeala, "The Osus were socially avoided, discounted, isolated, denigrated, victimized, abused, dehumanized and denied fundamental human rights, in some schools, the children of Osus are cajoled, mocked, spat upon, ridiculed by pupils and their leaders, while in villages, they suffer all manner of opprobrium and odium"(African Concord 7th January, 1988:6). Having seen all these, the question now is, do the Osus offend the freeborns to have attracted these ill-treatment meted on them? If the Osus receive such insults just because that are conventionally branded Osu, then there is no justice, ethics or morality in the equal treatment in the land. It is believable that sparthing up some one, mocking

as well as other social ill treatment done to the Osus by the freeborn are nothing but a disregard, disgrace and humiliation to the sanctity of human life.

Besides, as a way of implication, the Osus having seen this high level of injustice and inhuman practices against them, they usually commit suicide, and others will often run away from their native land 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 prostitutes, jingolos and even armed robbers.

Nevertheless, human beings have accordingly been defined as rational animals which simply means that humans are that type of animal created with a high level of rationality than other animals (this does not mean that animals are not rational) which shows that they should always use their rationality other than emotions or feelings in their social relationship with one another. It is from this connection that the Stoics had maintained that reason should suppress passion in other for us to maintain our moral standards. Also, Spinoza having seen how human beings are dominated by passion and emotion instead of reason, called for the emancipation of reason from a mere emotion for the determination of morality. He said that "We should liberate ourselves from the servitude of passion and live according to the dictates of reasoning. For him, the life of virtue is a life lived in accordance with reason, morality consist in this self liberation form the servitude of the passion and living in accordance with reason " (quoted by Omorogbe 1991:27) .

From the above view therefore, if we subject the whole issue of Osu caste system to right reasoning, we will unveil how unethical, unjust as well as irreligious, it is for human being(s) to dedicate their fellow human beings to deities and (as if that was not enough) thereafter, stigmatize, discriminate, subjugate and subject them to, and force them psychologically much against their wish to life a social recluse in the very society they belong.

However, the point made in this ethical implication of Osu caste system is that since the system failed to produce the equality of all men and since its entire gamut tends toward injustice, therefore the system is ethically wrong.

3.3 RELIGIOUS IMPLICATION OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM

In this context, the most available question that comes to mind is, did God create all human beings equally? Or are there some inequalities in Gods creation? The Bible which is one of the most viable source of our knowledge of Gods intention to mankind has stated categorically in the book of Genesis chapter one verse twenty-seven (Genesis 1:27) That God who is the creator of the whole universe and its inhabitants, created all human beings equally on His own image and likeness with the primary assignment of multiplying the earth and taking charge over other creatures. This simply means that before God all men are equal. Thus, the inequality, segregation and division which characterized the contemporary ontology

especially that of Osu caste system in Igbo land runs contrary to the original design and arrangement of the creator of man and as such, it ought to be abolished.

Also, another reason why this system ought to be abolished is because it runs contrary to the biblical or religious golden rule of 'treat other the same way you will want them to treat you'. It is believable that from Genesis to Revelation, and from the beginning of the teaching of Jesus to the end, there has never been a time that God or Jesus encouraged class division, caste system. This shows that God himself and Jesus are angry with those people who still practice Osu system in Igbo land.

3.4 NATURAL IMPLICATIONS OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM

From the point of view of nature vis-à-vis Osu system in Igbo land, one may be forced to ask this question, is class division, segregation and dehumanization a natural phenomenon? If Osu caste system is not natural from our previous trace of its origin, then it is obvious that the continuous practice of the system is a sheer disobedience to the connotations of the natural laws.

Common sense ought to have informed us that it is by nature evil to discriminate against ones fellow human being on the basis of race, birth or circumstances of birth and so forth. Just as nature has made it aware to everybody whether educated or not that taking of another persons life, property as well as beating of ones parents are evil, it should have also made it clear to those still practice Osu caste system that all human beings are equal as such need to be treated likewise. The equality of all human as depicted by nature is no other equality than ontologically equality which is contrasted with the artificial equalities and inequalities of education sex and other.

Thus, according to Omorogbe, "When we talk of the equality of all men, we mean ontological equality. In other words, we mean that what makes a being 'human' is the same in all men and that all men are equally human, no man is more of a human being than another man (1991:97) what he means is that since all humans share in the name humanity, they are equal. However, by this view, both the osus and the freeborns are equal ontologically

Besides, it is obvious that nature has bestowed in all humans both the osus and the freeborn with such right, privileges and freedoms like the freedom of speech, movement, possessing or acquiring personal properties, right to life, right to fair hearing, freedom of association and others. But the Osus are often denied of these privileges and right simply because they are conventionally branded Osu. It is from this background that this research work has out rightly said that Osu caste system in Igbo land is naturally evil and thus envisaged for its abolishment.

3.5 CULTURAL IMPLICATION OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM

From the cultural out look, every full-fledged Igbo person will plausibly agree with this paper that Osu caste system in Igbo land is more of religious rite than cultural affair. Put differently, we talk of Osu

caste system in Igbo land when we talk of religions practices in Igbo land other than when we are talking of the Igbo Original cultural well-being Igbos in their cultural belief system believed essentially in the ecumenism, the complementarily or the mutual coming together of every bodies efforts, views, strength and personality in order to achieve any of their desired social goals and to surmount difficulty which an ordinary individual would not be able to surmount this view is often seen in their proverb “AGBAKOTA AKA NYUO MAMIRI OGBUO UFUFU” which simply means if a group comes together to urinate it will produce foam, but if individual urinates, it will produce no foam. Foam in this view may signify or symbolize strength.

Furthermore Igbos in their cultural ontology believed in the concept of ‘IGWE BU IKE’ which simply means ‘Group is strength. In this regards, they believe culturally that strength or power lies on the conglomeration of the various individual strengths and powers. Thus, it is their ontological belief culturally that it is only when the group comes together that they will be able to achieve any achievable phenomena. This is the major reason why they also believed in the concept of ‘IBUANYI DANDA’ as we are going to see in chapter four.

In a nutshell, it is obviously deducible that class division caused by Osu system is not in the original plan of the Igbo cultural ontology, it came as a result of religious practice which was practiced in the days of yore when human sacrifices for the appeasement of an angry god(s) was the order of the day. However, knowing fully well that culture and religion are two distinct concepts, and since this sort of religion is no more practiced and obtainable in this contemporary age, it is therefore in the best interest of this paper to appeal to all Igbos, especially those areas where the system is being practiced till date to debunk the system because keeping to the practice is nothing but a mere anachronism.

3.6 THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE OSU CASTE SYSTEM

Before going into the legal implication of the fore-going system, I suppose that it will be germane to firstly trace the history of legal measures towards the abolishment of the system.

To start with, it could be plausibly said that the British abolition of slave trade in their Act of 1807 which eventually became effective in 1841 is the catalyst that caused the pace of the movement for the abolishment of slavery and other forms of social segregation in Nigeria, West Africa at large. Nigerian having been colonized by the British Government may plausibly be said to have followed the foot step of her colonial mentors in the abolishment of slavery and other social segregations like Osu, Ohu and their likes in 1956.

Nevertheless, the first move for the actualization of this dream, that is, the abolition of various forms of slavery in Igbo Land was first carried out by Archdeacon Basden in 1933. According to Basden’s letter to the then legislative council of the southern province, “the government should take steps to

investigate the Osu system, because according to him, “this form of slavery is at the movement causing great bitterness of feelings in certain parts of the 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.”

Meanwhile, it has been said accordingly, that Basden’s first movement towards the legal abolition of the osu caste system must have been inspired by the various factors like Magna Carta of 1215, the petition of rights of 1628, the emancipation proclamation of 1863 and the abolition of slavery act of 1807 and others, which laid the foundation of civil liberty in England.

After some years however, it was as if the Basden’s movement was forgotten, not until the report of the Balonwu’s Commission on bride price rekindled the desire to get the species of slavery like Osu Caste System in Igbo Land abolished. After the submission of the report, the then Minister of Social Welfare immediately swing into action as he moved the motion in the house of assembly envisaging that a bill for a law for the abolition of the Osu System and to prescribe punishment both for the practice Osu System and for the enforcement of any disabilities arising from it be passed into law. In his explanation of the nature of the bill, he made the point that the bill will make it an offence for any person to molest or injure or annoy or boycott any other person by the reason of his/her being an Osu. The bill makes it an offence for any other person to enforce against another person any disability with regards to marriage or other acquisition or inheritance of property or joining of any title society or the observance of any social custom or ceremony on account of being an Osu. It also makes it actionable for a person to taunt another person that he is an Osu. In supporting or seconding the bill, the premier of the then Eastern region said that the bill will do three distinct things, which includes; abolishing the Osu Caste System and its continued allied practices: to prescribe punishment for its disabilities caused by the enforcement of the Osu Caste System and its allied system.

However, after a long quarrelling and debates on the adoption of the bill for months, the house saw the system as being horrible by which a fellow human being was degraded and dehumanized, with his rights and liberties, brutalized by abject non recognition, as unethical and unchristian. Thus, based on the provision and decision of the Section 20(1) and Section 23(1) of the then constitution of Eastern Nigeria which states that no person shall be hold in slavery or servitude; and every person shall be entitled to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence respectively.

The house passed a resolution abolishing Osu, Ohu and Ume practices throughout eastern Nigeria. The law became effective from the 10th of May 1956.

The law became the first legal, and abolition of osu caste system in Igbo Land, and after the resolution, it became, illegal to refer to any body as an Osu, the Law made it possible for every member of the society to have equal obligation to the state. The law also help to prevent any body from molesting,

injuring, annoying, obstructing or attempting to cause any obstruction to any body or boycotting any body in any attempt to exercise his/her right. The law made it clearly illegal for any body to discriminate his fellow human either socially, economically, culturally and so on, on the bases of Osu caste system.(law of Eastern Nigeria 1963 volume 1).

Having seen these, it is obvious that there is nothing like Osu caste system in Nigeria as far as the law is concern thus referring or calling a person Osu or segregating any body on the basis of Osu caste is a serious offence that is punishable. To buttress this point, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979, abolished osu caste via the provision of section 31(1) (a) (b) which reads thus:

- a. "No person shall be subjugated to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment"
- b. "No person shall be held in slavery or servitude" Also, section 37 and 39 of the said constitution condemned osu caste system from its provision of the equal right to peaceful assemble and association of all the Nigerian citizens, and its provision of the right to freedom from discrimination, respectively. (1979 constitution: 17 & 18). The above quoted sections simply suggests that degrading or dehumanizing or discriminating ones fellow human being is legally wrong and as a result we are to prohibit it.

Furthermore, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in support of the provision of the above mentioned constitutions rejected osu caste system in the chapter iv section 34, sub section (1)(a) and (b) which states that:

- (a) No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment.
- (b) No person shall be held in slavery or servitude. Also section 40 of the same constitution made a similar assertion as it maintained that "Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular, he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his (or her) interest." Also, section 42, sub-section (1) and (2) further explained the point, for instance 42(2) made the point that "No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his (or her) birth." (1999 constitution: 34, 40, 41).

To clarify the view further, section 6 of the 1963 constitution assert the following vis-à-vis Osu Caste system, according to the section "who ever on the ground of the osu system enforce against any person any disability what so ever and in particular, with regards to:

- a. Marriage
- b. Acquisition or inheritance of any property or
- c. Joining of societies or
- d. Observing of any society custom: usage or ceremony is guilty of an offence and shall upon conviction be liable to a fine or imprisonment not exceeding six months (5). It is from this section that

anybody possesses a legal right to take any legal step upon anybody that opposes marriage or any other social event on the ground that any of the parties is hitherto branded an Osu.

Also, according to the same constitution “A word or words spoken or published which imply that a person is an Osu shall not require special damage to render them actionable.” What is meant here is calling a person an Osu or publishing anything that referred to anybody as an Osu is legally evil, there will be no hesitation in punishing such an offender. Thus, it became evil to refer to anybody as an Osu, because such act must be punished.

Having seen these, our little advice to the entire Igbos and particularly those people who still practice this obnoxious system is to do away with the system which characterises disunity and lovelessness, and embrace/uphold as well as pursue the spirit of love, togetherness, ecumenism and complementarity which is the crux and the bone of contention in this work.

CHAPTER FOUR
APPRAISING OSU CASTE SYSTEM WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF COMPLEMENTARY
REFLECTION

As the crux of the matter, in this chapter, we shall appraise or justify the fore going Osu Caste by using or from the point of view of complementary reflection and some of its intrinsic tenets and concepts like, missing-link, Ibuanyi Danda an others. What this simply means is that in this chapter, we shall know as well as well unveil the significant role played or that can be played by the concept of complementary reflection to ensure the eradication of class division, segregation and so forth, which are intrinsic dimensions of osu caste system. Complementary reflection has in it certain concepts as mentioned above which helped in buttressing its point or points. Meanwhile, we shall start by knowing what complementary reflection is all about.

4.1 THE MEANING OF COMPLIMENTARY REFLECTION To complement or complementary may succinctly be defined as the bringing together or the summation of distinct or similar things or words to make a new meaning or to form or produce a new out look or phenomenon. According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, complementary is all about "Combining well to form a balance or attractive group or whole," while to complement is simply "to add new or contrasting feature which show the best qualities of something or which improve it (1995:233). What this means is that complementarily is simply the act of summing up fragments to make up a whole which become more attracting and meaningful than it's former fragments.

Reflection on the other hand may be viewed as reasoning or thinking. It is a deep personal or collective meditation and pondering. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defined it as "a careful thought, or an idea or opinion..." (1995: 1193).

In all therefore, complementary reflection can be defined as the conglomeration, the unification, the summation of fragmented thoughts, opinions and other individualized and fragmented thoughts and ideas. It is a philosophical school of thought that believes essentially that a whole is greater, than any it's corresponding parts. It is also a view that maintains that by the coming together of the individual or parts, a viable and sustainable whole will emerge, and by this, the parts will get to the brim purpose of their existence. Finally, it is the view that holds that individualized views and individualized goals and desires will be attained to if and only it there is a mutual collectivity existing amongst them.

In clarifying this point, professor Asouzu who is the founder of complementary reflection in contemporary African philosophy gives a detailed outline of the major tenets of these philosophical movements in his major writings. To these belongs the work, the method of complementary reflection in and beyond African philosophy. Over and above all, complementary reflection is thus "an attitude of the mind that seeks to establish and re-establish the joy that is the foundation of all missing links of reality in

the most complementary harmonious way". This is what Professor Asouzu refers to as the noetic dimension. From these review, complementary reflection may deducibly be said to be a concept that believes that there is a transcendental joy or happiness which is a virtue that can only be reached by the harmonization of fragments of thoughts, ideas and so forth.

Relating the above views to the on-going debate on Osu Caste System, the concept of complementary reflection is simply envisaging as well as suggesting that Igbo society or the societies where Osu Caste System is practiced can only attain to its desired final development, happiness and joy in so far as there will be a mutual coming together of the everybody's individual ideas and view in the society. Put differently, it connotes that all humans are parts of the ultimate reality, thus, segregating any part (like the Osus) will hamper the possibility of reaching to the desired end.

Also, complementary reflection in relation to the concept of Osu Caste System in Igbo land, may be seen as a sort of encouragement or advice to the people who still practice the anachronistic system to see everybody as one without which there will be no realization or the reaching to the joy which nature has planned or bestowed for all mankind. Thus, the concept is advising the people to always eschew the idea of division and segregation and embrace the concept of togetherness and its likes.

A thorough grasp of the concept of complementary reflection and its subject matter may be likened to that of Plato's political/ethical theory in his book titled The Republic. According to Plato, for there to be justice in the state, the three parts that makes up the state, that is, the rulers (the philosophers) the guardians (the soldiers) and the artisans (the labourers) should often work together in one accord with each person doing his or her work efficiently to ensure a peaceful co-existence in the state. According to him, if any part refuses to do what he/she is ought to do, there is bound to be a problem in the society. (1987:205).

From this it is believable that the enormous problem faced by the people of the society where this obnoxious system is practiced is principally and chiefly characterized by class division and segregation. There is no gainsaying in this regard that class division and its intrinsic social segregation has negative impact on any society where it is practiced because the stigmatized Osus will often fail to contribute their own quota for the development of the society. Thus, their living what they are suppose to be doing in the society as one of the essential parts of the society, will go a long way in making the people to be handicapped in those areas or aspects of social development.

Complementary reflection is therefore a quest to harmonize all the individual differences, classes, races ideologies as well as genders as though they are all links and parts that produces the ultimate desired end or virtue.

However, Plato in his further analysis referred the state as an individual-write large. According to him, human beings are made up of three distinct parts which includes reason, emotion and desire. The coming together of these parts constitute a human being, and if any of these parts is missing an individual

will be incomplete (Asouzu 2002:76) from this point, the Osu and the freeborn are parts that makes up any society where the system is in practice. Disregarding any one as not belonging or as being part that make up any society is like cutting off ones hands, eyes or even legs claiming that it does no belong to the body. This without being told will firstly make such society/individual to be incomplete and secondly, in such society there will be a very slow pace of socio-economic and political growth. And the attainment of their ultimate “Summum bonum” which is transcendental happiness will be difficult if not a utopia.

Going by the view of Plato and Aristotle and others especially on the issues of justices, equity and so forth, one will not be guilty to quickly point at Osu Caste System as that which was design to perpetuate inequality. For instance, according to Plato, in theory of justice “Justice simply means happiness of everyone when everyone interest and life is guaranteed and protected in the society” (Quoted by Uduigwuomen, 2005:75)

From this view, there will be no gainsaying that the Osu are treated unjustly, they are unhappy amidst the happy freeborns, their interests are neither guaranteed nor protected in the society. Aristotle in the similar view maintained that “justice is that which is lawful in first sense and that which is fair and equal in the second sense” (1981:682) from this Aristotelean view, it means that justice depicts legality, fairness and equality in the treatment and distribution of goods and services (Commodities) and punishment simultaneously to the people of the society. From this view therefore it is obvious that Osu Caste System is Igbo land depicts injustice, this is because the subjugation of the Osu and their Stratification are not based on any legal ground. They are not treated fairly neither are they rewarded or punished equal with the freeborns.

Aristotles assertion of “treat equals equally and unequal unequally does not mean inequality as some people often interpret it. It simply means that when a person or a group has done something uniformly whether positively or negatively, they should be given an equal treatment, that is, if it is in punishment, they should be punished equally and if it is in the area of reward, they should also be rewarded equally. But the Osus in Igbo Land do not commit any atrocity to have attracted the kind of injustice and punishment that is given to them by the Dialas. The Osu should be rewarded accordingly like the freeborns in term of their good deeds but instead, the reverse is always the case.

If nature has in any ways recognized inequality of human beings, it should have been on the ground of a person having more than two hands and legs, a person having more than one head and so on. But since these are not possible, it shows that all men are naturally meant to be equal.

Thomas Hobbes in his elaborate assertion made the point that “nature has made man equal in the faculties of body and mind as that, though their be found one man sometimes manifestingly stronger in body or quicker in mind than another yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man is not considerable as that one man can there upon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not

pretend as well as he” (1977:910). This simply means that inequality should be best judged naturally than emotionally and conventionally.

The Osus in Igbo Land are seen as being unequal with the freeborns not because nature has made them to be so, but because of the selfish emotional and conventional interests of the people who subject them to the services of a deity. The only solution to this problem of inequality and injustice posed by Osu Caste System is the application of the concepts of missing link and Ibuanyi Danda as we are going to see below.

4.2 THE CONCEPT OF MISSING-LINK IN THE APPRAISAL OF OSU CASTE SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND

The concept of missing-link is one of the concepts inherent in the concept of complementary reflection. According to the concept, everything that exists whether good or bad, positive or negative is in one way or the other part of an ultimate end. The concept also connotes that a whole will never be possible without its relative parts and on the other hand parts can only be known to exist if viewed in relation to its whole.

Asouzu speaking on this note said that “all existent realities relate to each other in the manner of mutual service” (278). What he simply means in this context is that the services of the individual existent realities (like the Osus and the freeborns) have a way of relating or must relate to each other mutually so as to arrive at a higher reality that will harmonize the services or the activities of the individual or particular realities and present its authenticity to the extent that the individual realities via the universal reality will attain to its desired goal or end.

Besides, for anything to serve as a missing-link, it means that the thing can help in the future or further achievement of the transcendental joy embedded in its authentication. On this, Asouzu opined that “those units that negatively work against the life of the system have indirect positive functions to play since they help us to understand what is lacking within a given situation.” This simply means that even negative views or concepts can be induced as missing-links of reality in as much as their negativity will help in the actualization of the ultimate goal of the entire system.

Driving down to the concept of Osu Caste System, the above view simply suggests that the Osus and the freeborns or are missing-links to the ontological situation or condition and world view of any society in Igbo Land where the system is practiced. They are among the several links that make up any of its practiced society. Thus, the thoughts, manners, ideas of the two sets of people as links are harmonized to form the societal world view and to achieve social development and happiness as the ultimate purpose of their existence. Thus, if any of the parts is separated out of the society, the authenticity or the world view of the people as well as Igbo culture at large may not be grasped or may not be possibly known.

Having seen this, it will be a sheer absurdity to remove or to disregard any part as not belonging to the group that formed the whole which we may call a society that formed the whole. Also, seeing Osus as turds and inferior beings as well as segregating them is meaningless because even their turdity and inferiority are parts that makes up the whole. This is true because it is a sort of belief that a good family is that which has in it both sane and insane children quiet and stubborn children, boys and girls and so on. This in other words simply means that Igbo Land as one family will never be viewed to be completely good one without the presence of those parts that makes it up. The most important thing is the ability for each of the parts to do her specialized work effectively to ensure the smooth running of the family and the community at large.

Going by the above view, Asouzu maintained that “the principle of complementarity legitimises contradictions as directed”. What he meant was that the contradiction that exacts two opposites’ phenomena will often have a way of bringing a mutual harmony between two opposite things and their harmony will often establish a new phenomenon or idea at the optimum interest of their mutual harmony. To bring it down to the level of Osu, means that the mutual harmony of Osu and Diala will to a large extent produce a transcendental joy and happiness as well as love which is the ultimate purpose of their being. But their separation will amount to one of the two especially the Osus to remain in a perpetual agony melancholy and despire. It is from this background that complementary reflection is referred to in this work as the pacesetter or the foundation of communism. The ultimate aim of complementary reflection vis-à-vis communalism is “to seek to offer the ontological precondition for the grounding of such ideas as communalism in view of elevating maxims to universal laws.” (Ibuanyidanda, Asouzu, 2007: 370). What this also means is that complementary reflection in this regards aimed at de-encasing the minds of the people (like the freeborns) from holding on to the super maxim of the nearer the better the safer.” With this maxim, the freeborns often regard the Osus as outsiders who has nothing to offer, thus for them the freeborns are the best in all ramification. This is the reason why the freeborns will have nothing to do with the Osus especially when it has to with marriage and other social involvements or relationship.

Thus, this work is organized to advice the freeborns to often cooperate with the Osus as part of them and as missing link to the actualization of their eternal ontological purpose.

Hegel held this similar view in his philosophy of the absolute spirit, mind, state and so forth. According his theory of the absolute spirit in his phenomenology of the mind Hegel made the point that the absolute spirit is made up of individual spirits or minds which by their coming together and contradicting each other in form of dialectics in several stages will get to its zenith which is the absolute spirit (Baillie 1931:80-81,86). On this not Sahakian threw more light on the Hegel’s phenomenology of the mind when he said: “In absolute mind (spirit), the subjective and objective realities unite; it is only by ways of the synthesis that human beings can be consciously aware of absolute reality.” (1968:195).

However, from the above views, it is understandable that the individual spirits are missing-links to absolute at which they regain their conscious and authenticity. Without the absolute, the individual spirits will not be known and without the parts, the absolute can never be. This view runs the entire gamut of his philosophy of the mind. In his philosophy of right, he conceived the state as that whole that unifies its part and the parts are the individuals are the thesis, the society as one of the parts is the anti-thesis and the state is the synthesis respectively. The parts exist as part of the whole, and the state is the unification of the parts. (1929:197)

In relating the above views of Hegel to the Osu Caste System in Igbo Land, one can see that Igbo Land and its culture, custom, belief and so on, are or may be viewed as the whole, and the purpose of the whole is ensurance of the happiness of its parts. The parts in this context are the individuals who are the Osus and freeborns who may be seen simultaneously as the thesis and the anti-thesis. To arrive at the level of the absolute which is the whole and the synthesis, the two opposing thesis and anti-thesis, that is, the freeborns and the Osus must be harmonized. Put succinctly, Igbo society may be said to have two contradictory personalities, the freeborns and the Osus. For them to achieve their aim of living, they should work in conglomeration and harmony. Their working in harmony will ensure the happiness of each as well as the development of the society.

However, to crown it all, Asouzu maintained that “as a missing-links of reality, no link can attain its legitimacy without reference to other missing-link of reality” (288). To reduce the assertion to the concept in view what he simply meant is that since the Osus and the freeborns are missing-links to the ultimate reality which we have afore seen as the entirety of the society, hence they should relate with each other, because non of the units can attain to the ultimate goal of the society like social development, property, progression, productiveness, socio-economic, cultural proliferation.

What is anticipated in this context is the mutual relationship of everybody’s ideas, view, and strength, because nobody as a unit or part is perfect. Perfection can only come from a complementary effort will take us to the next topic Ibuanidanda.

4.3 THE CONCEPT OF IBUANYIDANDA

The concept of ‘Ibuanidanda’ is one of the significant concepts in complementary reflection which makes reference to an ‘ant’ call Danda. Ibu means load thus, Danda is an ant in Igbo Land that believed essentially that there is no load that cannot be easily carried or surmounted by the collective efforts of its members. Put differently, Danda are those small ants that often work in group togetherly carrying other bigger dead ants or other loads to their holes (destinations). By observing these ants, Igbos believe that no matter how heavy or difficult a load or anything may be or look, by complementing their efforts and views, the gigantic load and problem will be surmounted.

Thus, this is the reason why Dandas are usually seen working together, carrying their loads complementarily. Their working together depicts that they see each as one, that is, there is no segregation, division or dehumanization amongst them. For the ants, one person problem is everybody's problem, as a person's joy becomes the joy of all. It is due to these alleged hardworking, mutual togetherness as well as wisdom which characterized the ontology of the Danda that make the Bible to assert thus in the book of Proverb chapter six verses six to eight (Proverbs 6:6-8) "Go to ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest (KJV, 1988:374).

Nevertheless, the concept of Ibanyidanda may plausibly be said to be the crown of the entire spectrum of complementary reflection because it is in the activities of the Dandas that one will see that a group can work together without any seeing him/herself a being superior than his counterparts, there are often seen working together in love and harmony solving their problems in one accord by harmonizing their ideas visions, views in a complementary manner. Also, the concept of complimentarily cut-across their tolerating their distinct ambivalent situations and conditions. This is one of the problems we see today in the complementary world, Africa and Igbo Land in particular when intolerance is the order of the day.

However, deducing from this mutual oneness which is paramount in the ontological well being of the Danda, Professor Asouzu who is the founder of complementary reflection in contemporary African philosophy and African ontology sees everybody as mutually related. According to him, there is an ample evidence to conclude that the traditional African culture is mutually related. He came to this conclusion by quoting erudite African and non African philosophers like Kamalu, Anyanwu, Taylor, Ruch, Onyeocha, Nasseem, Kaboha, Nwaoga, Iwe, Oguah, Achebe, Ejizu, Nwala, Basden, Mbiti and others, who respectively held the view that African believed importantly in the concept of mutual oneness and mutual togetherness of everybody. (101-105).

For instance, Mbiti's dictum of "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (quoted by Asouzu, in complementary reflection), shows the level of interdependency that is paramount in the African and precisely Igbo ontological existence. From the above words of Mbiti, it is believable that in Igbo Land. For example one person is as essential as the group of people. This simply connotes that without a person or an individual, the group will not be possible. Thus, the interdependency or relationship of everybody in the society can easily be compared to the relationship that exists between and amongst the human fingers to the extent that if one finger touches oil, it has a way of reaching the ones unconsciously. This became a famous saying in Igbo dialect which says: "Otu mkpuru aka ruta mmanu ozuo ibeya onu."

What the following assertions simply connotes is that Africans in their original ontology, believe in mutual complementarity in their relatedness. Thus, they believed that the spirits in their world are mutually related to living beings as this also metamorphosed into their unifying both social, political,

economical as well as a cultural aspect of life as one because they strive towards one virtue which is human happiness. Thus, segregating the Osu from the freeborns is a contradiction and disagreement from the original ontology of traditional Igbo philosophy of the complementary system of thought. The same can be said with regards to the ontology of most traditional African philosophers.

More so, Asuzu in his own point, made a clarifying point when he assert that “the traditional Igbos conceptualize human life as a struggle that must be embarked upon in a unified complementary manner bearing in mind that no man is perfect, thus, human beings can surmount difficulties only in creative recourse to all the opportunities the world has to offer.” According to him, “it is for this reason that he (human being) is ever ready to learn; he gives others a chance, knowing fully well that no individual is ultimately self-sufficient” (107)

From this point of view, you can agree with this paper that it is abnormal, a misconception and an absurdity to underrate, discriminate and inferiorate anybody especially when it has to do with the persons gender, race, geneology, circumstances of birth as well as cast system like that of Osu in Igbo Land, Jippes of Egypt, and untouchables of India. Also, from the above point of view, keeping to this system till date is nothing but a sheer wickedness, heartlessness and any evil thing one can think of.

The major aim of this work from this point of view is to establish the point or the fact that all human being needs each other either positively or negatively for their existence. Their needing each other is simply because of the help(s) that may come from any of the parties. This also prove the point that man is to greater extent interdependent, the interdependency shows that both the Osu and the freeborn are in need of each other. As the hands and the legs of the society, non should be cut off. Also like passengers and the driver; a businessman and his customer, they need each other for their day to day smooth living and the attainment of their societal goal.

Commenting on this mutuality from a unitary point of view which characterize the African ontology, epistemology, reality, ethics etc, Ozumba said that ... “All existent are bound up into one by a pervading cord that maintains the balance and which keeps things in their proper places. For instance, all humans, spirits and their entire cosmos are seen as being intricately interwoven in a mesh that is called reality” (19995:52)

Ozumba used the above view to explain what he referred to as African ontology. For him, reality from the point of view of the Africans can be known only from the concomitant coming together of all human beings, spirits and so forth. According to the view, nature has made everything the way it is in a balanced posture which he refers to as the ontological balance. Thus anybody that offsets this balance will have to pay a certain amount or sacrifice to redress the balance.

To clarify his point, Ozumba said that “the concomitant of this view is that there are no disparate units, all entities are knitted together in a determinate manner. Any upsetting of the position of one entity

immediately affects the positioning of the other entities. The bearing this view has on African ethics is that the Africans innately realize the eternal link that binds him and other existents. He is aware that there is balance which he has to maintain. That is, that he has to obey the principle of ontological balance which holds that all things are in their right places, and that any upsetting of the organic whole will require a compensation to redress the balance.” (53)

In all, the thrust of the above assertions is not to establish or argue against the fact that there is Osu Cast System in Igbo Land or not, nor is it in the interest of this paper to say that Osu Cast System is or was not in practice in Igbo Land. The onus of the paper or this chapter is to establish the fact that both the Osus and the freeborns are all important in the ontological well being of the people where the practice is on going. The area where this paper is frowning at is the area of the relationship between the Osus and the freeborns which is characterized with segregation, subjugation, stigmatization, avoidance, discrimination, ostracism and lots more.

Besides, the works of both the Osus and the freeborns in Igbo Land is like the division of labour in a firm, if anybody will do his/her own work effectively; it will enhance and promote the happiness of all the members of such organization. Thus seeing the entire Igbo Land or specifically the societies where the Osu Cast System is practice as a big firm which has in it both the Osus and the freeborns as co-workers whose work have been divided for specific purposes, the primary aim of the workers should be to work hard so as to obtain the dividends that accompanies hardworking as well as to ensure the proliferation of their society rather than shifting blames or looking at each other with bad eyes or segregating and stigmatizing each other.

However, complementary reflection as we have been seeing in this work if embraced and grasped accurately will among other things help us to see everybody as one people with one vision, goal and destination. As it will also help in reducing the high level of corruption, (bribery and embezzlement of public fund) conflicts as well as wars in Igbo Land, Nigeria, Africa and even the world at large. It will nevertheless help in shaping and directing our thought systems and actions in such a way that our actions will not amount to the infringement of the right, privilege and freedom of other persons. An moreover, it will aid us to act in such a way as propounded by Emmanuel Kant who is his fundamental principles of metaphysics of morals, envisaged that one should act only on that maxim via which he can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. (1797:5).

According to Kant, humans should always carryout such actions which when they become universal categorical imperatives, they will not only favour a set of people and become detrimental to others. What this simply connotes is that Kants categorical imperative simply means treat others as you will them to treat you. Thus, relating this to the concept of complementary reflection it means that the complementary reflection is to a very high extent is meant to direct and order the actions and behaviours of the people

though so ambivalent in a way that both the Osus and the freeborns and even the society at large will actualize the purpose of their existence.

In a nutshell, complementary reflection among all is one of the sure ways of solving the problems of opposites like the problems of rationalism and empiricism, idealism and realism; existentialism and phenomenology; body and soul relationship, appearance and reality and the several other alleged problems of philosophy. On the above problems for example, the rationalism and existentialism, complementary reflection will prove the fact that both rationalism and empiricism are both important for the acquisition of knowledge. The mutual application or complementarity of the two will bring about an authentic knowledge, but rejecting or scraping of the two will amount to poor grasping of the real knowledge. It is the view that made complementary reflection to defeat such views like conceptual decolonization propounded by Professor Oladipo and others.

In all, complementary reflection if understood and followed rigorously and carefully, will usher one into the famous Igbo proverb and dictum “Emenyere Nwa Ogwugwu, Emenyere Nwa Anosike.” This simply says if you favour the child of Ogwugwu, (a person’s name), you should also do likewise to the child of Anosike. Igbos in their ontological jurisprudence believed significantly that it is only when things are shared or distributed in this manner that real justice will be said to have been attained. Since this is the subject matter of complementary reflection, it would not be out of place to say that complementary reflection and its inherent concepts is one sure way of solving the problem of class-division and its sisters social segregation, exploitation, dehumanization and stigmatization which are the bones of contention in the whole gamut of Osu Caste System in Igbo. Thus, going by this system, the problem of Osu Caste will be solved one and for all. This is what my predecessors who have tried in several ways to solve the problem could not know nor do.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY

Seeing how the Osus are segregated, stigmatized and dehumanized in their inter-social relationships with the freeborns in such salient areas or issues like marriage and several other areas of social life, though I am not an Osu but I was distributed and pricked in mind. Thus, I thought it wise to reach the entirety of the world with this crusade of de-encasing the mind of the Igbo people by letting them knowing that both the Osus and the freeborns are all essential for the development of the society, because development can never find its way in any society if there is no mutual oneness or togetherness of all the members of the society. However, to conceptualize or establish this great aim, the need to look for a fortifying concept arose and after several cortical ponderings, complementary reflection appeared to be the most accepted concept or theory that will; help to actualize and optimize this elegant view.

Complementary reflection as it were, is seen in this paper as more of a way of life that has to do with the biblical “follow peace with all men”. It is a concept, a view, theory; as well a doctrine that envisaged that to solve any problem of the opposites, there should always be a harmony existing between the two.

With this, we come to the understanding that the only possible way or means of solving the problem of Osu caste system in Igbo Land is by establishing this concept that will enlighten their both minds to see each other as one though with different assignments which its finality is to promote enhance as well ensure the happiness of all.

Thus, Like Empidocus in the ancient period of philosophy, who said that everything is part of everything, complementary reflection established and showcased the fact that all human both the Osu and the non Osu are one and are missing – links to the ultimate goal of human existence which may be happiness or development. Also like the ant called Danda in Igbo land, complementary reflection believed that if every body will come together and work with one mind, by bringing all their efforts together, they will subdue, surmount and overcome their entire problem and get the peak of their existence which is happiness.

Finally, it is from the above background, that the entire gamut of this work from its Genesis to Revelation was based, that is, on using complementary reflection to appraise Osu caste system. And it is obvious that from all indications, segregating ones follow human being because of mere conventional or religious and emotional purposes is absolutely wrong. The wrong here did not come just from the emotion of the researcher but from the trace of both biblical, ethical, legal, social natural as well as cultural points of view. It is believable that after reading this work, any critical, emotional and humanitarian thinker will see the reason and the need to abolish the system. Thought that is not the concern of this work.

5.2 CONCLUSION

From the fore –going in this topic “appraising Osu caste within the context of complementary reflection” It has been made obvious that Osu caste system as one of the religious practices in the ancient Igbo land, has a lot of inherent problems and ill repercussions as this paper has tried to unveil in the various chapters above. These problems posed by Osu caste system have been lingering from time immemorial. Several attempts have been made by several people both scholars and non scholars to terminate the problem but the saddest point are that the more they try to solve the problem, the more onerous the problem becomes. The problems that are meant here are the problems of restricting the Osus from getting married to the freeborns and vice-versa and that of making an Osu a chief or king over the freeborns. These two mentioned problem culminated into one million plus one other social problems like social segregation, stigmatization, dehumanization, wars, enmity and so forth which in turn do not only bring retrogradeness in the areas of socio-economic, socio – cultural and the socio – political growth of the society, also hampers almost every other aspect of the social development in the areas where it is practiced.

However, since the previous writers could not provide a lasting solution of the problems in question, it became the onus of this paper to proffer a solution to the alleged problem. The way out of the problems of Osu caste according to this research work is the application of the concept of complementary reflection which is postulated by professor Innocent Asouzu, which its major tenet is to establish a mutual harmony to solve problem or conflicts of opposites. Thus, complementary reflection provide us with the idea that to solve the problem of Osu caste system, there should be a mutual coming together of every individual ideologies, efforts, strength as well as personality. This background therefore establish the view that every body is important and every bodies imitative whether positive or negative is needed for the achievement of the societal summum bonum which may mean happiness of all and societal development.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

I want to use this medium to advice the Igbos especially those that practice this obnoxious system to annihilate the idea of division caused by Osu caste system and import the idea of togetherness, oneness and unity. Because with unity it is believable that any community will stand, but by division the people are doomed to fall. For the Igbos, let us invite the spirit of ‘Obinwanne’ and do away with ‘Obiakolo’.

Igbos has a lot of external aggressions from their enemies who have shown their aggression and wickedness to the Igbos in several ways, thus if Igbos is not united, they will not be able to defeat their enemies, and if they are fragmented, their enemies will find it very easy to defect them. Thus, there is the need for them to always be one so as to fight their battles to finish. Like the sticks of a broom, if they are united in one bunch, it will not be easy for one to break them, but if one or few are singled out, you find out that they will be easily broken.

Also, those who practice Osu caste system should embrace the method of complementary with which they will realize that each human being is as important as him the self with this, they will also come to the understanding that segregating or dehumanizing ones fellow human being is evil as it hinders the societal proliferation and development.

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