

**OZO TITLE AND NAMES AS THE MIRROR OF IGBO TRADITIONAL
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN ABBA COMMUNITY OF ANAMBRA
STATE**

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Abstract

The ozo title and names are very important in Igbo society. The ozo title is highest rank one can attain in life in Abba community. It is the occasion of acquiring a new name one will be called for the rest of one's life. Ozo title-taking accord some great honour and prestige in the society. The occasion affords one opportunity to show the strength of his achievement and wealth. Also, it is an occasion that showcases the rich cultural heritage of Igbo people vis-a-vis Abba people. The recent events in Abba community signify that changes have occurred in the acquisition of ozo title and names. The concept of ozo title-taking in contemporary Abba community has eroded the institution its traditional values. The mores of this great institution are no longer observed. These concerns are the basis of this study. The article emphasizes on the religious dimension of ozo institution which is the bed rock of ozo title and has been played down in the contemporary society. The study aimed at unraveling the causes and the effects of these changes on ozo title-taking in the community. This is achieved through phenomenological method. The study revealed that these are as a result of cultural conflict, globalization and technological advancement. The implication is that ozo society is now open to all manner of people who can afford to enter into it without recourse to the consequences. The study therefore, recommends that there is need for Abba community to overhaul ozo institution in order to preserve its traditional values.

Keywords: Ozo title and Names, Traditional beliefs and Practices, Abba

Introduction

Ozo title taking is not only ceremony for entertainment or ritual ceremony but also a name taking ceremony. The study of ozo title is the indirect way of studying of ozo names. Apart from ozo title-taking, there could be no ozo names. Among the Igbo people, the Ozo title is an indigenous institution that is regarded as a central aspect of African indigenous religious practice

through which they engage questions about the meaning for life (Madukasi, 2020). It is a component part of Igbo life and the holder of this title occupy a distinct enviable position from the rest of people in the society. Ozo title is rooted in the Igbo earth (Nze 1997). It is a meeting point of Igbo tradition of arts, music, ritual dramas, and embodiment of authority as symbolised in ofo. As echoes by (Onwuejeogwu, 1977), ozo title in its traditional sense stands as a symbol of justice and a vindication of holiness. In other words, it is not only a manifestation of someone's wealth and affluence as a success- afo ojuju, but its importance lies in the exhibition of justice and holiness, this has proved a point that those who were accorded the right to ozo title in the olden day were people of impeccable character, virtue and would not compromise in any situation. Also, people who have the fear of Ani- the earth goddess and the ancestors were given the privilege of attaining ozo title.

In Abba or Igbo land where ozo title taking is practised, it is a trophy very much coveted by almost every male member who could afford it. It is exclusive to men in the sense that women are not allowed to be initiated. Women cannot be trusted due to the fact that they can divulge the secret information and may betray the town on important matters because of the secrecy involved (Matory, 1993:61). Women as argued by Shepherd (1987:153) 'are necessary as the source of life, as well as potentially dangerous in their power to withdraw it'. Also, it may be argued that one of the reasons why women are not allowed to be initiated into ozo society is that women menstruate and some of the rites abhorred such. It should be noted that an ozo titled man traditionally did not eat food cooked by a menstruating woman nor such woman entering obi palace. Though a woman could be allowed to wear a cord on her ankle together with her husband, but that did not give her the prerogative right as an ozo title holder. Rather, it is a prestige that the husband is able to achieve such a feat in the society. Ozo title is a chauvinistic society where a man is allowed to go through a lot of initiations before he becomes an entrant.

In Abba community, ozo title is the last of a man's religious, socio-economic achievement, and the highest honour a man can confer on himself in life. It shows the cumulative efforts of a man in his society through life of efforts, competition with both his fellow man and the environment. It is a society of free men capable of paying the initiation fees as an external sign of their wealth, and exercising in collaboration with one another the authority it confers (Forde and Jones 1962).

Membership of ozo title society shows a change in one's life style. It is expected that the initiate will henceforth comport himself in a manner worthy

of emulation. He is expected to live above board, live a life worthy of his calling, and must serve in truth and honest. This new life invokes a change of name by which the titled man is called for the rest of his life (Ifemesia 1979 and Ikeobi 1970). The name to an extent reflects the circumstance surrounding the initiate's life and his wealth in the society. The name is to distinguish him from the untitled man in the society. According to (Ebo 1981 and Ezeanya 1967), *ozo* names are part of personality dynamics of the individuals. The names are not a mere label as Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) enthuse. But they are pregnant with meaningful and symbolic importance. Hence, the bearers must of necessity try to maintain them as an Igbo adage says that good name is better than money- *Ezi aha ka ego*.

There are no hierarchy in *ozo* names according to Abba customs and tradition. One chooses name based on what he has in mind or circumstance the bearer found himself before attaining the title. Some acquire the title through the wealth accumulated for them by their fathers, mothers, brothers, sons, relations or through self-hard work. This attributed to various names with different meaning.

In this article, mention must be made of how the much cherished tradition has lost its original aura because of cultural conflict and globalization. However, changes have been made in the system of *ozotitle* taking as well as the names acquired during the ceremony. The pressures of Christianity, together with the influence of civilization have dealt a serious blow to *ozo* title and *ozo* names in Abba. Thus, *ozo* title and names have become seriously modified to enable enthusiastic aspirants to enter into the society.

Brief History of Abba

The account of Abba community is based on oral tradition as there is no written document. Abba is one of the communities in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State. The Enugu-Onitsha dual carriage way passes through Abba and divides it into two with more land on the right side. The town is about four and half kilometers from Abagana and two kilometers from Ifite-Dunu and Awkuzu tarred roads respectively.

There are sources of natural water spread out so strategically as to serve the town from three locations; *Oyi, Orunkpikpa, Ogalanya*.

Abba was founded by a man called 'ABBA' meaning in Hebrew 'FATHER'. Two schools of thoughts have conflicting versions of the number of wives Abba married and number of children his wife or wives had. The first stated that Abba married and gave birth to nine children with a single female

namely: *Nogbe, Mgbafe, Abba-ichi, Iruoruka, Ire, Amabo, Okpuloji, Umu-olie, and Ezi-Abba*. The second account has it that Abba married two wives. The first wife gave birth to five sons: *Nogbe, Mgbafe, Abba-ichi, Amabor, and Okpuloji*, whereas, the second wife had four males and a female child by name *Iruoruka, Ire, Umu-olie, Eze-Abba* and the only female called *Oyilim* meaning a replica of myself.

It was at *Nogbe* that Abba was said to have first settled and later consolidated, established in the process all that were necessary for security of life, property and peaceful existence. Abba was said to have coined *oyi* from his daughter's name *oyilim* which he so much loved. Hence, *oyi*-shrine is regarded as a woman and is highly loved by women of Abba origin.

Originally, the economy of Abba was agriculture, palm wine taping and moulding of clay pot, plates and clay reservoir because of the abundant clay found in the northern part of Abba where the ceramic deposit is based. With the advent of civilization and Christianity, a good number of sons and daughters of Abba had the opportunity to embrace religion and western education early. The town today has produced various grades of men and women in different educational disciplines, some of whom are occupying high positions in government ministries and private establishments.

Traditionally, people of Abba were traditionalists. Their religion was African Traditional Religion and their whole life was dominated by religious beliefs and practices. The objects of their worship in the words of Arinze (1970) are three: God, non-human spirits and the ancestors. Abba as an integral part of Igbo race believes in the one transcendent Being- the Supreme Being. There is a strong belief in the existence of one God, the creator of all things whom they call *Chi-Ukwu*, the Supreme Being, but ancestor worship is also practiced where the people offer sacrifices to their dead fathers (Idigo, 1990:60). This is depicted in their morning prayer which they addressed principally to God and also ancestors they believe are their eyes and intercessors in the land of the dead. The morning prayers offered to God demonstrate convincingly that the concept of God was indigenous to the Igbo religious traditions (Metuh, 1981:7), which promises concrete blessings and protection (Isichei, 1980:4). The life of the people of Abba is intermingled with the belief in God. Like in many other places in Igbo land, there is no altar dedicated to the Supreme Being.

Among the males in Abba community, it was commonly believed that every one of them must of necessity have an *Agwu* shrine. If a male did not have *Agwu* shrine, it was believed that *Agwu* would punish him or bring

misfortune to him. Thus, there is an annual feast of *Agwu* during which sacrifice of fowls are made to *Agwu* among the adherents.

Mention has to be made hereof public deities also worshipped in Abba. Their common name is *Arusi*. These deities do not belong to anyone individual particularly. They are normally for a whole village or town. These deities have special priests- *Eze-Arusi* who offer sacrifices at the shrine on the special annual festive days. The most central public deities in Abba include *Oyi-Abba*, the most popular, fearful, and perhaps more powerful as attested by her fame which goes beyond the periphery of the town. Others are *Ogalanya*, *Akose*, *Ezumezu*, and *Okwu-ani*. These deities in Abba play a major role during the *ozo* title-taking ceremonies. Besides, the people of Abba also practice the cult of ancestors as mentioned above. It is a common believe that the ancestors are interceding for them. They believe in other minor deities. These, Uchendu (1965:101) affirms that "the number of Igbo deities, spirits, and oracles is enormous and their anthropomorphous character is well recognized. He argues that "Igbo attitude towards the gods is not of fear but of friendship, a friendship that lasts as long as the reciprocal obligations are kept" (Uchendu, 1965:101).

Ritual Processes on the Conferment of Ozo Title and Names in Abba Community

In Abba town just as the case in other parts of Igbo land where *ozo* title taking is practiced, before a man could take an *ozo* title and name, he must have undergone many ritual processes or initiation rites. Initiation rites are seen as fundamental to human growth and development and socialization. These are very important to *ozo* society as a whole as in the olden day.

In the words of (Okeke, 1984), various titles are open to men who could afford them. Some are mandatory while others are voluntary. Some of these titles must be taken before the actual *ozo* title in Abba community. These are *Chi naufejioku*, *Idondiichie*, *Amanwulu*, *Ekwu*, *Obele* and *Nnekwu ozo*, *NniNwammadu* and *Atulukpaokala* which are compulsory and the last ceremonies to be observed before the actual *ozo* title taking in Abba. Since these titles go with the ritual ceremonies, many sacrifices are made by the aspirants to the earth divinity- *Ala* or other divinities according to the tradition of Abba town. These are the requirements in *ozo* title taking which must be met by the aspirants in the traditional Abba community. Some of these which are very relevant to this work shall be treated. These are *Amanwulu*, *Ekwu*, *Obele* and *Nnekwu ozo* and *Nni-nwammadu*.

Amanwulu

According to the tradition of Abba town, *Amanwulu* is an important title enroute to *ozo* title taking. It has artefacts associated with it. Many rituals are performed during this occasion. There will be an entertainment to those who have previously performed an *amanwulu* title. Unless this title is taken, non-initiates would not take other titles, nor traditionally be allowed to carry the coffins of *Amanwulu* title holders when they die.

Ekwu

Ekwu is another title to be taken as far as the tradition of Abba town and *ozo* society is concerned. It is the beginning of the *ozo* events proper. This entails the paying of a certain amount of money by the aspirants to *Ndi Nze* and *Ozo* holders in Abba town. In the process, fowls and goats are killed in the aspirant's compound to entertain people who are invited. The *umunna*, *umuada* and the entire *ozo* titled men of the village will be present during this ceremony. Moreover, it must be accompanied by rituals.

Obele and Nnekwu

Obele and *Nnekwu ozo* are done by the aspirant before *Nni-nwamadu*. The *ozo* title holders and *Ndi nze* would be present. The aspirant would bring four fowls, tubers of yam, dried fish and other items. The person would also give the *ozo* men and *Ndi nze* some money as their tradition requires. In this ceremony, some certain rituals would be performed.

Nni Nwamadu

NniNwamadu is one of the processes an *ozo* aspirant has to go through before he would be conferred with *ozo* title. In this case, the aspirant has to inform the *Isi nze* of his *ozo* alliance group of his intention. Here, it is the duty of *Isi nze* to call the *ozo* alliance group for notification. The aspirant would be required to pay a stipulated amount of money which would be shared among the *ozo* alliance group. Rituals and entertainments are involved in this stage. It is during this occasion that the new *nze* would announce his new name to others. He would be given status symbols of his office. These are the bag made of the skin of an aborted-calf- *Akpa nwaefi*; the skin of a ram- *Akpukpo ebunu* and the short spear- like staff with a round head called *Alo Okpulukpu*.

He is advised to behave responsibly so that in the near future, he can take the *ozo* title. The older *ozo* men would reel out the “dos and don’ts” of *ozo* society. Henceforth, he would see himself as an ambassador of peace and justice and also assume the mouthpiece of the community where ever he is found. At this stage, all *ozo* entrants would go home each with a tuber of yam and a fowl at the expense of the new entrant. This is one of the reasons it is said that *ozo* ceremony is a ceremony for the wealthy individuals in the society. The *ozo* ceremony involves a lot of money which the aspirant must expend before he could get the title.

All these initiations are mile-stones marking the progress in life which an individual has made (Nze 1977). It is proper to remark immediately that these sub-titles of *ozo* are independent of one another. Individually, they confer on the holder some degree of dignity, honour and status in Abba community. The rituals performed during these titles are intended to clothe the titles with some religious authority and thereby ensure its continuity, respect and sanctity (Ogbalu 1981). Also to be noted is the fact that it is only the son of the soil that could be conferred *ozo* title. A stranger cannot take *ozo* title no matter how important the person is to the town. It is highly exclusive to the indigenes of Abba even in this modern time everything has changed; it remains as it were in the traditional Abba community.

Finally, comes the actual *ozo* title taking in which friends and all the relations far and near must be present to witness the ceremony. It is an occasion and also a period of extraordinary extravagance. There would be food in abundance together with drinks, cows, goats and fowls which would be killed for entertainment. There is no excuse of shortage of food or anything because it is time to show people actually, that one is capable of taken *ozo* title and feeding the multitude of people who could grace the occasion. This lasts almost seven market weeks according to the tradition of Abba town. During this time, some friends and relations who came would give the new entrant and wife different types of gifts. On the last day of the celebration, there would be outing to the market square. It will not be forgotten that throughout the ceremony, the person and the first wife would be confined in a house till the day of outing. And there would be a traditional music called *ufie* playing to entertain people throughout this period. It is important to note that *ufie* music is for the *ozo* title holders which non-initiates would not dare to dance. After the outing, the new *ozo* title holder will begin to live a new life of his calling. It is from this moment that he will assume full responsibility of *ozo* title. Traditionally, an *ozo* man must not eat food prepared by a menstruating woman or eat in the public. He must be cautious of his thoughts and actions.

There was a rite called *isaile*- cleansing of tongue which signifies that he must not tell lie, bear false witness, cheat, steal, and indulge him in diabolic acts as these could earn him expulsion from *ozo* society. In fact, he will live a life of holiness and exercises justice when the need arises.

These are the hallmark of *ozo* institution which must be live out by the holders to preserve that endearing legacy of the customs and tradition of the society. They are the custodians as well as builders of the community for progress. In the matters of litigation, their opinions are sought. They are called *Ndi nze* and people looked upon them as the role models of the society. Perhaps, it is the reason *ozo* institution is called gerontocracy. This is because it is only the elders or people who have come of age could keep all these rules and regulations of *ozo* institution. It is on this positions that Nabofa (1994:19) connected/interpreted this ethical values to the notion that wisdom belongs to the elders and describes the Ozo titled men as “the voice of the elders which invariably is the voice of wisdom”, that “reminds an initiate of his responsibilities and obligations to his fellow members” (Nabofa, 1994:14).

It is pertinent to know that in the olden days, the means of livelihood was basically agriculture in which yam was the main attraction. In fact, many have come to link the Igbo success in modern trade, industry, commerce, ethos of work and adaptability to any environment to their early ritualized food culture, which was based on yam cultivation (Onwuejeogwu, 1987). The strength of a man was measured by the number of barns one had in his compound. There was no bank to save money realised from the yearly sale of the yam. Thus, a successful man would, as it were, register and legitimize his success by acquiring a title (Agada-Uya, 1984). *Ozo* became an available means of saving the money. This is because so far as the title holder is alive, he would continue reaping the dividend of the money invested in *ozo* title taking through the entrance of the new aspirants into the *ozo* society. Apart from the money one would realise each time there is a new entrant, *ozo* title taking accords one great respect and honour both in the immediate community and beyond. It is the occasion that makes one to be popular as his achievement is seen by all and sundry. More importantly is the sacredness of the title that is the driven force behind the *ozo* institution.

Classification of Ozo Names

Ozo names taken by the *ozo* title holders are very important in their lives. As was mentioned before, the new names adopted by the *ozo* title holders imply a remarkable change in life and they are called by these names for the rest of

their lives anywhere and anytime. Names in general always stand as land marks in the life of a normal Igbo man, and with greater reason for an *ozo* titled man. All these names are purposeful in one way or the other. Some of these names will be outlined here for further explanation.

Ozo Title Names Associated with God or the Supreme Being

Chinyelugo	God gives glory
Ezechikwelu	A King by God's consent
Ezechikwulu	A King through eternal decree
Ezemgbechikwelu	A King in God's time
Ezechiwubelu	A King by God's authority
Ezechukwu	God's King
Nwachinemelu	A son whom God always provides
Omenkechikwulu	Executor of God's will
Ugochukwu	God's glory or Glory of God
Ugwuchinyelu	Honour accorded by God

Ozo Title Names Associated with Divinities

Ezeanyanwu	King of sun divinity
Ezejiofor	A king who holds the sceptre or Ofo

Ozo Title Names Associated with the Ancestors

NwaGozieNnaYa	May the son honour his father
Afunwaechetanna	When son is seen, the father is remembered

Ozo Title Names Associated with Personal Achievements

Akuabata	Wealth has come
Akubude	Wealth is fame- one may become famous by one's deeds, wealth or hard work
Akubueziowu	Wealth is truth

Akuezuilo	Wealth that is beyond the reach of an enemy
Akuilili	Multi-faceted wealth or Surplus wealth
Akukalia	Surplus wealth
Akukwesili wealth	Well-deserved wealth or you deserve to be wealth
Akulueuno...	If wealth reaches home
Akuneche	Wealth is waiting or a wealth that is waiting
Akunaefobi	Wealth that gladdens the heart
Akunwata	A child's wealth
Ekwueme	Proclaimer or Executor
Ezeadaubu	Unscrambling kingship
Eze dinka	A skilful king
Ezeafulunamba	A king seen in another town
Ezeafulunanya	A well beloved king
Eze afojulu	A well- satisfied king
Eze amaulu	A well-known king
Ezeaku	King of wealth
Ezeanekwu	A king who is the centre of discussion
Eze anulumbu	A king whose like has existed before
Ezenwata	A king from childhood
Eze anatuanyaya	The expected king
Eze jiugo	A king who holds the glory
Eze ji	King of yam
Eze okwelum	A king who is able to do
Ezeeonyezulu	A self-satisfied king
Eze Orimili	King of sea
Eze Udo	King of peace
Milinaezoluora	Rain that falls on the masses
Ngaaku di	Where the wealth lies
Nwakaibeya	A son who is greater than others

Nze di uba	Nze is lucrative or multitude
Omesiliotuubosi	He who finished a day
Omego	He who is generous in giving gifts to others
Omekanti nu	One whose achievement deserves publicity
Omesilinanwata	He who finished his <i>ozo</i> title in childhood
Omekaokwulu	He who keeps his word
Ono n' enyi	One who has mounted the back of an elephant
Ogbunaechendo	A fig tree that gives shade
Okutaluakukwe	Let he who has wealth admit it
Ochiora	Public defender or leader
Onyenweaku	Owner of wealth
Onwanaetilia	Moon that shines for the people
Omenka	A craft-man
Okpalajideaku	May the first born be wealthy
Opulu ozo	He who has enough for <i>ozo</i> title
Oranuduya	People have heard his fame
Ozo adiuche	<i>Ozo</i> is not causing anxiety
Ozo kwesili	<i>Ozo</i> title is well-deserving
Ozo nwayo	Unassuming or modest <i>ozo</i> title
Ozulumbaonu	Universal
Ozuluumuogbenye	Breadwinner of the poor
Uduezue	Fame is accomplished

Miscellaneous Ozo Title Names

Akudilinwa	Wealth belong to the son
Akuezuoke	Wealth is never enough
Akujieze	Wealth supports the king
Akunna	Father's wealth
Akunne	Mother's wealth

Ezekwueche	A king by destiny
Ezenwa	A king conferred on a child
Eze nnaya	Father's king
Eze nwanne	A king by the help of a brother
Nnabuenyi	Father is like an elephant
Nnanyelugo	Father gives glory
Nwajideaku	Let the child hold wealth
Onyekaozulu	Who is self-satisfied?
Otuugonnaya	Holder of his father's glory
Ugwunwa	Honour or dignity conferred by a child
Nwannenyelugo	His brother gives glory
Nwamelu	Done by his son
Oranyeaka	Out of people's contribution
Oraebuka	Masses or his people are great
Orabuike	Masses are his

Analysis of These Names

Names in general always stand as land marks in the life of a normal Igbo man, and with far greater reasons for an *ozo* titled man. They are one of the cultural components in the personality system says (Ebo (1981). We do know, however, that there is a strong belief in Igbo culture area that one may be influenced (for evil or good) through the name one bears. Most of *ozo* title names are really very good and interesting from the religious point of view.

Some of these names cover a whole range of religious sentiments. Example of such names are *Nwachinemelu*- a son whom God always provides for; *Ugochukwu*- Glory of God; *Ugwuchinyelu*- Honour accorded by God; *Ezechiwubelu*- A king by God's authority; *Ezegbechikwelu*- A king in God's own time; *Chinyelugo*- God gives glory; and *Ezechukwu*- God's king. These names have great importance to the bearers in particular and society at large. They express among other things confidence, faith, gratitude, joy, reverence and so on. These are sentiments spontaneously coming from the heart of the person bearing the name. Furthermore, it is always an accurate externalization of his innermost sentiments which are generally indicative of his past, present life and a reliable pointer to his aspirations for the future.

Some of these names given in the classification table should be analysed to the understanding of the people in order to give their deeper meanings and also significance. Instance, *Nwachinamelu* has three words- *Nwa*- Son, *Chi*- God, *nemelu*- provides for. Bringing them together, they stand for “son whom God does everything for.” It signifies that it is God who made him what he is in his life. *Ugwuchinyelu* has also three words- *Ugwu*- Humour/prestige, *Chi*- God, *nyelu*- given. Thus, it is honour or prestige given by God. This signifies that it is only God who can exalt a person and not human beings. So it is the humble one whom God wants that he exalts and honours. *Ugochukwu* comprises three words such as *Ugo*- glory, *Chi*- God, *Ukwu*- Great. They stand for “Glory of God.”. This means that God is the source of his wealth, hence, *Ugochukwu*- the glory of God. *Chinyelugo* comprises also three words namely: *Chi*- God, *nyelu*-given, *Ugo*- glory. This means that his title is from God and it is God who confer him his title

Ozo title and names are acquired by the holders through many ways. Some were initiated by their sons, brothers, fathers, through mother’s wealth, or out of cheer contribution made by their relations. Those whose fathers helped to take the title by paying the initiation fees for them generally disclose this in their names which of course are at times chosen for them by their fathers. Hence, *Akunnaya*- Father’s wealth or by their fathers’ wealth or by their fathers’ riches, *Nnanyelugo*- Father gives glory, *Otugonnaya*- Holder of father’s glory and so on. Those whose brothers helped or initiated into ozo society bear names like *Eze nwanneya*- his brother’s king, *Nwanneebuka*- His brother is great and so on. Some who were initiated by their relations through cheer contribution bear names like *Oranyeaka*- Out of people’s contribution, *Oraebuka*- Masses or his people are great. Those who were initiated by their sons answer *Nwajideaku*- If son holds his wealth, *Nwaebuka*- son is great, *Nwanemelu*- done by his son.

Finally, adults who laboured, fighting as it were from abject poverty to the prominence of a title holder, take such names like *Ugochukwu*- God’s mark or glory, *Ugoebuka*- destiny is great, *Akubueziokwu*- Wealth is truth, *Uduetzue*- fame is accomplished, *Akunwata*- child’s wealth, *Akuabata*- wealth has come, *Akubude*- One may become famous by one’s deed or handiwork, *Okutaluakukwe*- Let he who has wealth admits it. There are others which are too many to be enumerated here.

Some of these names have no religious implications. This is because of the modern trend and civilization. Modern ozo title men answer whatever they like and forget about their real meanings. Examples are *Ekwueme*- Proclaimer and executor, *Ezego*- King of money, *Eze afulukwe*- A king by unanimous

consensus of his people, *Eze afulunamba*- A king who is recognized in a foreign land, *Eze afulunaanya*- A beloved king, *Milinaezoluora*- Rain that falls on the masses, *Ngaaku di*- Where wealth lies, *Omesili*- He who finished in a day, *Omego*- He who is generous in giving gifts to others, *Omekaokwulu*- He who keep his words, *Onwanaetilia*- Moon that shines for the people or masses, *Ogbunaechendo*- A fig tree that gives shade and so on. In the absence of any written list of names, one often gets mystified at the ease with which the titled men remember the names of one another.

Thus, through these names the religious, social, political and economic outlook of the traditional Abba vis-a-vis Igbo are publicly manifested and perpetuated. This further shows that ozo title and names is an important dimension of this ancient Igbo traditional institution.

Religious Function Ozo Title and Names

Religion gives moral definitions and solutions to the problems of a man on earth. *Ozo* society is a sacred society. This is because it enjoins every member to be holy through living an irreproachable life. An ideal Igbo religion seems to rest with the ozo society and name in that neither fear nor an abject poverty compels its members to practice religion. Religion provides moral code to the ozo titled man who has a particular name. The examples of name which give religious functions are: *Ugwuchinyelu*- Honour accorded by God, *Akubueziokwu*- Wealth is truth, *Ezeudo*- King of peace, *Omekachikwulu*- Executor of God's will, *Ezechiwubelu*- A king by God's consent to mention but a few. It is this moral code which religion provides that make the ozo man not to tell lies, cheat, steal, gossip, fornicate, judge unjustly, break taboos and so on. This shows that ozo man should set example for the untitled man in the society. Moreover, the bearer should recognize their inadequacy before 'the mysterious Being' to show the help God gave him throughout his life. This he expresses in the name he answers. Thus, some of these ozo title names perpetually remind their bearers their religious roles in the society.

Social Function

Social function of ozo title is the fundamental element in the title society. An ozo man in Igbo land is never swallowed up in a crowd. His presence is always felt and the social importance of his name is universally respected. Some of the names that depict social stand include *Akubude*- Wealth is fame, *Ekwueme*- Proclaimer and executor, *Ezeamalu*- A well-known king, *Ezeanaekwu*- A king who is the centre of discussion, *Onwana ,etilia*- Moon

that shines for the people, *Uduetzue*- Fame is accomplished, *Ezeanatuanyaya*-
The expected king and so on.

Political Function

Ozo title holders are advocates of their various communities. As the politics implies the art of acting and judging wisely, ozo title and names convey their holders' position in doing the same. For instance, *Ochiora*- Public leadership involves the man who has the name and engages in leadership role for the public especially his community or town. The political functions of ozo title indicate the holders' abilities to excel his age mates or other members of his society in providing good leadership. Hence, such names as *Ogbunaechendo*- A fig tree that gives shade, *Eze afulunamba*- A king who is recognized in a foreign land, *Eze afulukwe*- A king by unanimous consensus of his people and so on. All these portray that the king has not only a responsibility of leading his people aright, but takes active part and care in the public sector and welfare.

Economic Function

Economy involves wealth, especially what money can do. Ozo title is money consuming venture. Njoku (1992) ,observes that title and secret societies were elite clubs of the 'haves' from which the 'have-nots' were excluded; indeed, a means of institutionalizing elitism (p.139).It is in the light of this that it is believed to be a ceremony for showing off one's wealth. Also it is a money saving enterprises in that the dividend accruing from it will be throughout the bearer's life time. Some of ozo names run along this particular line and thus project the image of their bearers to the masses or people. Some of ozo names that relate to economy include: *Akukalia*- Surplus wealth, *Ozulumuogbenye*- feeder of the poor, *Akulueuno*- If wealth reaches home..., *Akuilili*- Multifarious wealth, *Akuabata*- Wealth has come, to mention but a few. These names remind the people of the bearers' abilities to cope with the hardship of life and especially of their abilities to take the title regardless of the expenses there in. Moreover, the names show the holders' capabilities of paying the initiation fees as an external sign of their wealth. The names also show the holders' ability to host a large number of people for a long period most especially during entertaining period which is one month. The entertainment given to the people is the appreciation of the titled man's excessive wealth.

To sum up, we would say that ozo title names are more than mere labels on the bearers. A name is not just a personal label for the sake of identity; it

means much more (Ezeanya, 1994:7). Alford (1988:2) argues that “in some societies individuals receive their given names at birth and use these same names throughout their lives; while in other societies, individuals traditionally change their names at important points in their lives. And, finally, in some societies personal names are freely used in social interaction, while in other societies, personal names are regarded as intimate and private, and they must be kept secret”. The meaning of these names is deeper than what scholars would call “praise names’ (*Aha otutu*). Rather, these names manifest the vital roles which *ozo* titled men play in traditional Igbo society.

The Effect of Christianity and Western civilization on Ozo Title and Names

Culture is dynamic so also *ozo* title taking which has witnessed many changes in the way it is being taken in modern time. It is an institution among many which the influence of Christianity and civilization is felt. When these forces could not obliterate *ozo* institution completely, they begged for room to be accommodated. Hence, various changes which have allowed many things to be accepted in *ozo* society. All the ritual processes are monetised. One does not need to go through the *ozo* religious rites to become a titled man. No wonder Ekwueme (1974:13) laments that “early missionaries tagged all indigenous forms of arts as the work of the devil, especially as almost invariably those associated with some religious or quasi-religious ceremonies. Today, many with questionable character have infiltrated into the *ozo* society. *Ozo* society that was based in sacredness and justice has given way to ‘anything that goes.’ Once, one is able to shoulder the responsibility, he is eligible to take the once revered title irrespective of the source of his wealth. This has seriously devalued the title to a common ‘commodity’ anybody can buy.

Conclusion

Ozo title is a great land mark in the history of Abba people. This tradition is as old as the town itself. The origin is not known but it is assumed to be handed down to the subsequent generations by their forefathers who lived before them.

However, *ozo* title taking is an assumption of both a new mode of life and self-realising responsibility. It is money intensive in that one has to spend fortune before he can have the title. *Ozo* title is very rigorous because it involves a lot of initiation rites which aspirant must undergo before he could be absorbed into the *ozo* society in traditional Abba community. As a new life, it brings about a new change of name which the titled men are known throughout their

lives. These names acquired as a result of title taking have religious, socio-economic and political significance. In them one can understand the minds and situations of the bearers.

With the advent of Christianity and western civilization, there are modifications of *ozo* title taking and names by the modern people who seriously desired to acquire the title and the names to boost their ego in the community. The Christians among them do not go through *ozo* rites which are the main ingredients of *ozo* society. Instead, these rites are monetised in order for them not to partake in the initiation which they tagged idol worship. Some of these people take the *ozo* title in order to satisfy their hunger for privileges, titles, class distinction and pompous exhibition of their wealth. Through these processes, *ozo* title and names lost some of their values.

Recommendations

Ozo title taking is an ancient tradition among the Igbo people. It is a tradition that has stood the test of time despite the pressure from Christianity and western civilization. What knighthood is to the Catholics that is what ozo title is to the traditionalists. In ozo title taking, one can understand and appreciate our rich traditional cultural heritage. Traditional values will always have a place therefore; they will never lose relevance. Therefore, it is recommended that Abba people vis-à-vis Igbo generally should endeavour to preserve this great institution for generations yet unborn.

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