

CHALLENGES POSED BY A CHANGING SOCIAL ORDER ON THE OTU AGE GRADE SYSTEM IN AVHIANWU, ETSAKO CENTRAL L.G.A. EDO STATE

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ABSTRACT

In a time when the English calendar was not available and colonisation had not taken place in Africa, knowing a child's age was basically through the age cohorts known as the age grade. This was the common feature among almost all ethnic groups/nationalities in African societies. This system, not only helped in knowing the age of individuals, but it also helped in basic governance of these communities, especially as it affects rudimentary allocation of roles to individuals in the community. The range of those in an age grade or between age groups is three years. It is a unique cultural way of making sure a child is not cheated of his inheritance in the event of the parent's death and it enhances the status of the family. The people of Avhianwu in Etsako Central Local Government Area of Edo state were not left out in this practise. They had and still have an age grade system called OTU. In this paper, we are going to look at the changes that have occurred overtime in relation to the OTU age grade system. The challenges posed by the changes in the social order on this community are also examined.

Key words: Age grade, adulthood, initiation, Otu, Inuotu, Uni.

INTRODUCTION

In almost all African societies, there exist structures that enable these societies to function well especially in the day to day governance of the society. This was how many of these societies managed their affairs prior to the advent of colonialism. In most communities in Nigeria and Edo state in particular, one of the methods used by these communities is the age grade system, which serves as a tool for the determination of leadership. It is a social group which could be defined as a collection of people who relate with one another in a distinctive integrated whole. Members of the group perform or participate in this relationship by performing functions which are complementary (Oтите and Ogionwon, 1979). It could also be seen as a device for aggregating and organizing given population into status groups. In African societies, age grades are entrusted with political responsibilities. A specific age grade could be charged with decision making, while

another, the implementation of the decision. Military duties are also performed by these age grades within the traditional socio-economic context. Belonging to an age grade is strictly based on attainment of a specific age, such as thirteen – fifteen years or more as obtainable in Avhianwu clan. In some societies like Sabogida-Ora, age sets are formed even when the children are still toddlers (David, 2004). The ways age grade are organized and the roles they perform may differ from society to society, but one feature that stands out in this system, is that, it marks the beginning of an individual march into adulthood. Thus it requires some form of initiation. In some parts of Edo state, this is a privilege enjoyed by the males only (Ehigba, 2001), while in others, there is a provision for the females to be initiated but this is usually tied to the female entrance into marriage.

Statement of Problem

Over the years, the method and the practice of the Otu ceremony have changed as a result of changes in the society. These changes stemmed from the influx of other cultures, religion, education, as well as some other social and personal factors. The changes have posed a lot of challenges to the custodians (elders) of the age grade system in some communities in Edo state (David, 2004, Ehiagba, 2001) including the Avhianwu community. We intend to look at the practice of Otu in Avhianwu clan including the challenges associated with the changes in social order in the community.

Objectives

The objective of this work is to:

1. Examine the functions of the Otu age grade system in Avhianwu.
2. Examine the changes that have taken place in the Otu age grade system in Avhianwu clan
3. Examine the challenges these changes pose on the Avhianwu community.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

This research centres on the age-grade system and the changing social order in Avhianwu clan is 165 kilometers (103miles) square kilometers. Avhianwu clan comprises of four Villages namely; Ivhinone, Ivhiarua, the older villages Ivhiraokho and Ivhimhakena (Ogbona) the two older villagers, Ivhinone and Ivhiarua, together are known and called Fugar which is today the Headquarters of Etsako Central Local Government area of Edo State. Avhianwu clan is situated in the north eastern part of Edo state and east of Auchi. It is bordered on the west by Uzairue clan, on the east by Weppa-wano clan, on the north by North Ibie, and on the south by the Ekperi's (Okhaisie N' Avhianwu, 1999).

The Avhianwu people are descendants of Anwu father and founder of Avhianwu (Ivhianwu) that is, children of Anwu. From oral tradition, Anwu and his children migrated from Bini during the reign of Oba Ozolua, with other Etsako people in about the 15th century Okhaisie N' Avhianwu (1999), just like the Esan people (Okojie 1960). They settled briefly at Uzairue where Anwu eventually died and was buried at Usomh'Anwu, the place they first settled when they arrived Uzairue. Though the exact spot is unknown, but the location of Usomh'Anwu is, however said to be in the neighbourhood of the ancestral place called Okotegba at present day Ikpe (Jattu-Uzairue). They moved eastwards to Afashio still in Uzairue. From Afashio-Uzairue, they later migrated from Afashio-Uzairue to the present area where they are now found. They arrived at a place now called Ukwalmhodie (Ukwe-alimhi-odio) meaning 'Ancestral square' in present day Ughiogwa, where they rested. Their search for water was said to have brought them to a grassless plain with very few trees growing but in the midst stood a huge tree known as 'agbabo' that provided shade. The beauty of this place captivated them and they eventually settled there. The place is today known as Ulumhogie (grassless) or Ukwe-ulumhi-oghie (grassless square) (Okhaisie N' Avhianwu 1999).

These four Villages are each divided into quarters. Ivhinone is made up of nine quarters namely; Ulumuoghie, Ivhiadachi, Ebadi, Iviagbanaku, Ivhiavhia, Ivhioriumia, Ivhiogwe, Ughiogwa and Ivhiochia. Ivhiarua is made up of seven Quarters namely; Ivhiokpo, Ivhiokhile, Ivhiukasa, Iruru, Ivhiavwe, Ivhiadoko and Ivhiapa. Ivhiraokho comprising of six quarters namely; Okotoo, Iviugelo, Iviagbogidi, Usokwi, Iviogbe and Iviakhia and Ivhimhakena (Ogbona), the least of the four villages has four quarters namely; Ivhieido, Okhotoo, Ivhieochie and Ivhieorewo. These quarters are further divided

into kin groups, which are further sub-divided into various families.

Although the age grade system is a common feature in almost all communities in Afemai land and Etsako speaking people in particular, but our concentration here will be the Avhianwu people.

One cannot say categorically when the Avhianwu people started this initiation rite. But the records available on the Otu age grade system is the compilation done by the Avhianwu Council of Elders headed by Chief Ailermhor Ornaighumha in 1930 and edited by Alhaji S.I.Ahmer and compiled by Alhaji Imhoragene. The compilation records started in 1883 to 1997 and another compiled by Mr. James Asemoh which starts from 1999 to 2007. From the records there is an interval of two years indicating that it was done every odd year. Obviously this was a compilation for the male age grade, which sometimes includes females. In all these years the initiation was carried out except in 1907 and 1923 when 'Uni' which is a small animal initiates usually hunt for as part of the ceremony escapes into forest. It is known as 'Unilogwa'. What happens in this instance is that there was no age group for those years. The last age grade by the records was conducted in 2007 (Ahmer, 1997).

This was the age grade initiation that got a lot of the elders angry with the way the Otu is now being conducted

What is "Otu"? It is an age grade system practised by the people of Avhianwu clan in Etsako Central Local Government Area of Edo state. Although all over Etsakoland this practice of age group is common place, some communities in Etsako only initiate males while some initiate females at puberty but would wait until the males are very matured and about to be married or are already married i.e. between the ages of 25-35. That practised by the Avhianwu people is unique

because it must be done immediately the individual attains puberty, (early – late teens) whether he/she is about to be married or not and not before. No one is expected to be already married with child or children among the initiates, but if one already has a child, the child is not permitted to see the father or mother performing the rites. As such, the child would be hidden from view and from the village during the ceremony especially on the day of outing when all initiates would come out to show themselves to the public. A function of the Otu age grade system is that, it is linked to the rules of inheritance in Avhianwu clan. Thus, if a man or woman dies without an initiated child, it means the child would not be able to inherit his/her parent (s) estate, but forms part of the estate to be inherited. Besides Avhianwu as a sovereign community had no organised standing army like other communities, but men could be easily mobilised to arms at short notice to counter any attack, quell any form of uprising, fight a war. Those so mobilised are usually male initiates. Thus it would not be out of place to say that every manhood initiate was a soldier. The initiation into manhood, performed every odd year served as a framework for enlisting into the Territorial Army. What this implies is that, any male so initiated has been empowered in readiness to defend the clan against any form of external aggression if any (Okhiasie N' Avhianwu 1999)

Basically, the Otu in Avhianwu is of two kinds 'Otu emosi' age grade for girls which is done every year and 'Otu emho' age grade for boys which is done every odd year, that is, every three years. Thus when it is the time for *Otu emho*, the girls who are due to be initiated for that year join the boys in the initiation rites adding more colour to the ceremony. Thus many see it as a privilege to be initiated with the boys.

i) Otu Age Grade

The Otu festival as with most festivals in African communities is tied to a cult in this case, the cult of Anwu, (ancestral cult of the Avhianwu people) and incidentally the founding father of these communities. Anwu happens to be the ancestor the Otu age grade system is tied to. It is a socio-cultural means of identifying those who are ones age group and creating social awareness which is very significant to the traditional set up of the Avhianwu people.

In Avhianwu, when someone is of age to be initiated into the age grade he/she is said to be preparing to "rua", "Arua" is a word used to describe the process of initiation into the age grade. Like every system in Avhianwu joining an Otu calls for fanfare in the entire clan as a result it is usually done when crops have been harvested and in the early periods of clearing the farmland in preparation for the next planting season. According to Kadiri, (1994) the age of puberty was about 14 traditional years for females and 18 traditional years for males was strictly adhered to. It is at this age the boys were initiated into age groups bi-annually, while girls were initiated annually. The reason adduced for this, according to Kadiri (1994), is that the females grow more rapid and besides that females were married off immediately they attain puberty. The age grade for males is very important to the average Avhianwu. Thus there is the struggle to make sure one initiates his/her child or ward, because they would be the one to inherit their properties when eventually they pass on.

Apart from this, it gives the parent especially the mother of the initiated child a pride of place in her husband's family as well as in the community. For the man he is still seen as an "Ozhawo" which means a young man not having attained the age to

be called an "Erama" which means father, until he has had an initiated child. In Avhianwu, when a man marries his wife she is not expected to have a kitchen of her own. She is to stay in the kitchen of her mother in law. Especially if the mother of the man is alive if the man's mother is dead she is assigned to the most senior wife in the compound. She is not seen as a 'woman' or old enough with the right to manage the household, own a kitchen or to cook whatever she likes for her family until her child is initiated into the Otu. Thus many women encouraged their husbands to initiate their children early so as to be free of their mother in laws.

ii) Initiation Process

The process of male/female initiation to adulthood calls for elaborate arrangement. The male/female Age group (*Otu-Emo*) formation usually starts from about the month of July at the onset of the fifth moon called '*Uki-Okhuiozibo*' in the Avhianwu traditional calendar (year). The process begins when the young men who are of age in the clan call themselves up at night by shouting. This is known as '*Atsukoko*'. Thereafter, they meet at night in the homes of their leaders where songs are composed for the initiation dance '*Umhomhe*'. The songs composed were to praise themselves or notable personalities in their villages or to insult their peers and any violator of the norms of the land in the other village. (This though no longer takes place as initiates do not dance the '*Umhomhe*' dance anymore). On either '*Ewho N' Okhwa*' or '*Ewho N' Ikeke*' market day, whichever of these market days it falls in the month of August, all the young men from the villages gathered at '*Ukwumeh*' square Ivhiunone village. This gathering breaks up later into two groups, the first made up of those ready for the

initiation rites and the second group made up of those not matured enough or ready yet for the initiation. With this selection process known as '*Uzoegbe*' done, the group ready for initiation dance and sing jubilantly into the market place '*Ukweulomhogie*' to show themselves to the people.

From the day of selection, the initiates to be will perform the '*Umhomhe*' dance on each market day. At the end of this dance, the group begins to pay each individual member's homes to share drinks and pleasantries. These visits continue to the eight traditional month called '*Uki-Aghie*' that is the month of October when the initiation proper is performed.

It is at this time, the oldest man in Avhianwu known as 'Anwu' would invite the eldest man of either Ivhiarua or Ivhiunone villages whose turn it is to produce a candidate who would act as the father or patron to the group. Note here, that it is only the two senior villages that were qualified to produce patrons of age groups. It is not also every quarter in these villages that is qualified to produce candidates as patrons of Age group. After this, eldest man in Ivhiarua or Ivhiunone would then call on the elders of the quarter whose turn it is to produce the candidate. Consultations would then take place until a candidate was presented from the appropriate family. As soon as a patron is selected for the new Age group, the testing of the young men for bravery and maturity commences. This is known as '*Agbuni*' it involves the search for and killing of a little but powerful animal called '*Uni*' in the forest at night. During the search, the members of the senior age group of the previous year, would try to frustrate the efforts of the initiates by erecting barricades and sending people to

deceive the initiates, even to the extent of throwing calabashes of smelling things into their midst. This does not deter the initiates. When they finally find the '*Uni*', they would come out dancing and singing – "*Uni - Uni – Uni – omhogwa*" (meaning *Uni, Uni, Uni* is the owner of the forest).

Having found *Uni*, the next stage is the '*Edioye*' which involves dancing and singing. The '*Edioye*' dance starts on '*Elumhi N' ikeke*' and continues to the evening of the next day which is '*Ewho N' ikeke*'. The dance entails the young men dressed in various attires, shaking neatly tied brooms, dancing majestically round the streets praising themselves and family members. In the evening, the initiated men and the girls from all the villages of Avhianwu converge at the home of the group's patron or father to participate in the great race called '*Iluagho*', which is also a test of strength and maturity involves getting a special medicinal concoction known as '*Ukhumi*' prepared in a mortar and hidden in a well guided room. This substance when obtained is rubbed on the chest and backs of the initiates who embark on the race by marching gallantly in a procession to the traditional market place called '*Aki-nokhua*'. When they get there, they receive moral instruction, rules and regulations guiding initiated adults. They then return to their various homes.

On the fifth day, which is the day preceding '*Eluhmi-nokhua*' the ceremony resumes. On this day, the bodies of the initiating men are tattooed with a black substance called '*Abie*' in preparation for the grand finale dance which comes up the next day. On the day of the final dance, all male initiates from Ogbona, Ivhiuraokho, and those from Ivhiarua and Ivhinone move to the traditional market place '*Akiugba*' in Ivhinone. This part of

the ceremony is the most interesting and spectacular of all the activities. The young men will dress in various attires consisting of specially made baggy trousers called '*Ikamu*' and '*Igbhada*'. They are made to dance ecstatically to strong music and paraded round the market place several times, sometimes carried shoulder high. Towards the end of the day, the dancing stops and all initiates assemble under the traditional '*Agbabo*' tree near the market place for breaking of kola nuts and naming of the age group by the age group's patron (father) who is assisted by all the past age group fathers (*Inuotu*) that are alive. The naming of the age group ends the initiation ceremony for the males but not the end of the initiation. For the next seven days is a rest period for the initiated men and their female counterparts. This rest period also entails some activities. During this time the group meets daily at their various village squares inside circle fenced with sticks and cloths called '*Ifikpo*'. Here they entertain themselves with singing, dancing and eating food prepared by the female members of the group. At the end of the seventh day, the group disbands and join the community as initiated adults. The following month, '*Uki-Ogbe*' separate ceremonies are organised to fete the initiated girls and then are given away to their husband.

It is worthy to note at this juncture that because of the increasing number of under aged children registered by parents for Otu, the council of elders have decreed that from this year 2009, all those to be initiated must be from eighteen years and above. This is to restore decorum as well as sanctity to the practice in Avhianwu land and also to check abuses.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Change is a thing that will forever remain with us as individuals and groups in societies. This is so since society as we know is dynamic. It is ever growing, ever changing, and ever evolving whether for good or bad. Change according to Ibn Khaldun is immanent, cannot be stopped, averted or manipulated by anyone (Ijomah, 2008). The situation in Avhianwu is not different. This study is focused on the changes this concept has undergone over the years, why did these changes occur, who instituted the changes, what significance do these change have on the Avhianwu people, how have they been able to manage these changes and what are the outcomes. The perspective which this paper will tilt to is that of social change. We are using this perspective because of the phenomenon under study which is a social variable in Avhianwu clan.

When we look at the concept of social change, cognisance has to be taken in understanding that there are various schools of thoughts. There are those who fall into the category of evolutionary change, were societies in their process of change move from the simple to complex or a more advanced form of change. Proponents of this variant like Comte, Spencer, Darwin etc, (Charles 2005), believe that societies progress in a unilinear form that is, developing or evolving progressively through defined stages from simple to complex and excluding any variation on this course. If we may take a journey into history and analyse briefly Darwin's evolutionary theory of change, which reduces society to an organism, it is noticed that there is a tremendous variation existing among species if we are to look at this, using the social concept of society, we would say that various customs, values, norms and traditions exist in society each serving one purpose or the other. With growth in society and the influx of various varieties of cultures there

exists a struggle as some cultures die and are replaced by others, thus the culture that has the most influence remains. This is likened to Darwin's 'survival of the fittest or theory of natural selection. In this case as Darwin saw no question of species adapting themselves to the environment, so also there is no question of cultures adapting to their environment instead as there are variants, the best survive while others die off (Appelbaum, 1970, Oke, 2006).

Conflict theorists are of the view that change occurs as a result of long term oppression which eventually leads to agitation and revolt that would lead to conflict which invariably culminates into conflict. As long as we live in societies, there is bound to be change occurring whether technological, religious, economic or cultural which is what we are dealing with here. Looking at cultural change, such factors as diffusion, acculturation and assimilation are issues which we are going to be dealing with (Haralambos, Holborn, & Heald 2008).

In the case of the Avhianwu clan, a lot of changes have taken place in the traditions, customs, values, norms and culture of the people. These changes have influenced the attitude and behaviour of the people positively and negatively. In this work the cultural change that has occurred in the age grade (Otu) system, is what we are looking at as well as the challenges they pose to the community. Lots of factors have been adduced to the changes that have taken place in the practice of the Otu initiation rites. Colonialism which resulted to the westernisation of everything starting from religion which as we know is the bedrock of the African society to introducing western education which was the main vehicle for indoctrinating the populace, dealt a heavy blow to the customs, norms as well as values of the people. From the time Nigeria was colonised by the English, efforts were made to westernise the various

communities in the area. Religion and education was a major tool which was used (Onwuejeogwu 1995). According to Ijomah (2008), "when the Whiteman introduced education and their religion, they tailored change to their own ways of doing things. This was made possible because Africans had no organised education or national religion, thus the Whiteman's education and religion created a curiosity.... He went further to say that Africans were systematically indoctrinated to understand western values and ways of life and once the process of changing the tribal world view began, there was no stopping, and Africans themselves took over the job of cultural evangelism to the extent of willingly abandoning their tribal names for western names that meant nothing to them" (Ijomah 2008).

With religion, the change began slowly but when education was introduced, it became rapid. Rapid in the sense those children who were in school must attend church and were told that, they must not be part of the cultural practices of their people. As such many grew up and refused to have their own children perform the initiation rites, calling it a pagan as well as fetish practice.

By the time Nigeria got her independence and self rule began, the sweep of the Pan African movement was felt and a new dimension occurred in the practice. The fascination for the Whiteman's way of life though still there, but an awakening began of questioning the pretensions of western indoctrination which the new elite found out was making them lose touch with the people. This led to the rush to go 'back to our roots' by many educated parents who began sending their children back to their various clans and villages to learn their customs and traditions. This change in perception was a great source of joy to the custodians of these customs who hitherto thought they would not see those to bequeath these legacies when they passed on.

As a result, they welcomed everyone that came without considering the implication. This has affected the practice of this age grade system in Avhianwu. Another change that has affected the Otu age grade is the removal of the 'umhome' dance as an outcome of the civilisation which invariably changed the attitude of many people in the community especially with regards to adhering to the norms of the land.

It should be noted here that cultural change is a change that takes place gradually without one imposing it on the other but a lot of variables help to effect this subtle change. As could be observed above, the change in Otu age grade system was a gradual one which was not noticed until it became a problem. This changing social order has creates a challenge in all aspect of the social life of the people. Though it is most often assumed by theorists of social change that change is good, the social change that has occurred in Avhianwu regarding the Otu, cannot be said to be good since it has affected the fabric (the social control/order and cohesion) of the people. The weakening of the social structure of a society through this type of change, could in effect spell doom for a community if adequate measures are not put in place to cushion the change.

METHODS

The population of the study was drawn from widows in four villages in Etsako central local Government of Edo state. The total population of Etsako Central Local Government area from the census figure of 2006 (National Population Commission 2006), stood at 94,228 with a

female population of 46,520 and a male population of 47,708.

This work is basically descriptive in nature because we are looking at a cultural variable which has been in practice for years and has over time experienced some changes which we want to explain. These changes that have occurred had had some effect in the practice of the age grade system whether positive or negative. We intend to look into the history as well as the functions the age grade system performs among this clan. Thus we relied more on written records and in-depth interviews as there is a limited body of knowledge as it concerns the Avhianwu people. For the in-depth interview, we used the purposive sampling method in selecting our sample for this study. It becomes important that for a work like this, we seek out those in the community that are very knowledgeable in these matters. Thus we could only sample those who had precise knowledge of the information we needed. As a result we were able to conduct (one on one) interview with seventeen (17) elders and a woman, in the respective villages making it eighteen (18) respondents. With the help of the council of elders, three (3) *Inotu* that is, those who had been patrons of the otu age grade system, who were still alive at the time were also interviewed. This gives us a total number of twenty-one (21) respondents. These interviews were conducted between the 20th of March and 25th of June 2009 in the respective homes and villages of the respondents. The simple percentage method was used in the analysis of the data so gathered.

The table below shows the total number of respondents interviewed.

Table 1

	Those Interviewed			
Village/Designation	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Ivhinone	6	1	7	33.33
Ivhirua	4	-	4	19.05
Iraokhor	3	-	3	14.28
Ogbona	4	-	4	19.05
Inotu	3	-	3	14.28
Total	20	1	21	100

In the study of people and their culture not everyone in a community knows the history or the implication of a particular change in the culture or tradition of that community. As such, we focused our research more on the custodians of culture, tradition/history as well as those who have been patrons of these age grade over time that were still alive. With this it is hoped that a comprehensive appraisal of the challenges and changes will be well understood.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The questions asked in the interviews were based on the goals of the study. The first objective was on the functions of the age grade system as practiced by the Avhianwu people. A large number (15) of the respondents 71.42% said it functioned as a means of social control and social order, while 6 representing 28.57% said it served as a transition from childhood to adulthood. What this meant is that all those initiated are no longer addressed as children *óghómo* but an *ozawho*, young men.

Table II: Responses given by the elder's as the functions of Otu in Avhianwu

Functions of Otu (age grade)	Responses	Percentage
Social control/order	15	71.43
Transition from childhood to adulthood	6	28.57
Total	21	100

Source: Field survey 2009

On what changes have taken place in the Otu age grade system, 18 elders representing 85.71% spoke about the major change being the removal especially of the *Umohmhe* dance

from the Otu festival. The remaining 3 elders about 14.29% said the initiation of children of community members in diaspora was part of the change.

Table III: Changes that have occurred in Otu

Changes	Responses	Percentage
Removal of some aspects. E.g. Umhome	18	85.71
Initiation of children who are in diaspora	3	14.29
Total	21	100

Source: Field survey 2009

These changes they agreed have created a lot of challenges in the community. Nineteen (16) elders 76.19% agreed that a significant challenge is the disrespect for elders and the inability for instilling discipline as was done with the Umohme dance. They went further to say that the dance was a major means of social control as any boy/girl, even young men/women including family members/those from same quarter of an initiate who had done anything that was against the norms of the land would be made to dance to songs composed about the denigrating conduct before the whole community. This they explained made many people to be very careful of their conduct whether in private or public, as you never could tell who was watching and no one wanted to be the denigrate of the year. This also allowed for what we call collective discipline. This is a situation where any member of the community could discipline any child that

misbehaves. According to one elder, when you now see a young man doing things that are not in line with the culture/traditions of the land, you cannot talk to him for fear of being arrested for assault by the Police. This indicts the operations of the political system inherited by us from the British colonialists. Another challenge which 4 elders 19.05% talked about is the way the initiation of those in diaspora has made it virtually difficult for such children to know their mates especially when there is need such as during marriage, burial of one's parents etc. this has lead to situations where elders had to settle cases before and sometimes during the burial of parents. It has also lead to the initiation of many under aged children. Connected to this is what an elder said is the influx of the Pentecostal churches in the community where members of these churches from the community refuse to initiate their children calling the practice satanic.

Table IV: Challenges these changes pose in the community

Challenges	Responses	Percentages
Indiscipline	16	76.19
Identification of age mates/under aged initiates	4	19.05
New religions	1	4.76
Total	21	100

Source: Field survey 2009

CONCLUSION

Otu is a cultural practice in Avhianwu land which has qualities of both the material and non material culture embedded in the practice. Ogburn's analysis of culture tells us that when material culture changes faster than the non material culture there is what is known as culture lag (Eguavoen, Omorogbe & Omohan 2006). It has been observed that in this instance both the material and non material culture have been affected by the changes that have occurred over time mainly through culture contact with other cultures especially the culture of the colonialists

leading to cultural accommodation and acculturation.

Social change as it has affected Otu is seen by the elders as having a much more negative effect than positive. But we do know that change in itself either adds or subtracts from a thing that is either positive or negative. From our point of view here we have discovered that, apart from the system having affected the age structure severely, it has contributed to an amount of freedom for women and widows of the community. This means that the changes have had a spiralling effect on both individual and group action.

For instance the removal of *Umhomhe* dance from the celebration according to some of those interviewed, had to do with the attitude of those who are vilified for their evil deeds in the community. They began inviting the Police to arrest those who have composed such songs on them, thereby leading to fighting and quarrelling. The elder's council therefore decided it would be better to expunge it from the activities of the Otu celebration, rather than have brothers fighting and arresting each other with police men. This dance was a major source of instilling social order in the clan, as songs are composed to praise and vilify those who have done well and those who have not done well. The removal of this dance has not only detracted from the beauty of the ceremony but has been attributed to why youths and some adults lack respect for the norms of the land.

A lot of changes and innovations were witnessed in Avhianwu especially as it affects the Otu structure. In spite of these changes the Avhianwu people were able to harmonise them in such a way that the effect has not been devastating to the wellbeing of the people as well as the continuity of the ceremony – Otu.

RECOMMENDATION

In the light of what has been discussed, we recommend that;

1. A total revival with modifications where necessary of the Umhome dance and other aspects of the Otu system is advocated. This will bring about the needed discipline while at the same time involving the Police.
2. There should be other activities attached to the celebration in other to attract attention and create awareness. This will encourage those in diaspora to bring their children down for the ceremony.
3. There should be a proper documentation of births of children born by Avhianwu people so as to avoid under aged initiations.
4. Governments both at the local and state level should key into ceremonies like the Otu system which could become a one of the tourists attractions of the state and could be a means of revenue generation just like the carnivals held in other nations of the world like Brazil, or like the Osun Osogbo festival, the Durbar etc.

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