

INITIATION AND BURIAL RITES OF OZO TITLED MEN IN IGBOLAND; A STUDY OF AWKA, 1950-1970

Ezeoguere-Oyewole Anne Nnena, Nwadi Sopuruchukwu Daniel & Ahazuem Jones. O
Department of History and International Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba
NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

The quest for recognition is an age long phenomenon as man himself. Among the Igbo generally and the Awka people in particular, title was usually bestowed on indigenes of the society as an act of honour and recognition of various efforts or acts of services rendered to develop and advance the society. Among various titles which were available in Awka, the Ozo title taking stands out. Ozo title taking was an expensive ceremony which probably grew out of the need for priests who would preside at extended family and lineage worship, supervise the cult of the ancestors and keep the family of staff among other reasons. In the pre-colonial period, an Ozo titled man performed the role of the arbiter in matters of justice. Today, members of the society who are dissatisfied with the settlement of the Ozo titled men go to court. With the advent of Christianity, various fetish practices which usually characterized the initiation process of new entrants into the Ozo title institution have been excised. This made a mess of the institution as new entrants had nothing to fear anymore; such fetish initiation practices made the Ozo titled men directly responsible to the gods of the land which met out instant punishment to offenders. Over the years since the advent of Christianity, slow albeit steady, the once revered institution has today become a scorn, the honesty, truth and justice once associated with the institution has become a thing of the past. It is so sad that the effect of Christianity has eaten so deep into the fabrics of this age long institution. While it still wobbles so weakly, there is a daring need to revamp this institution before it dies off completely.