

Donnish Journal of African Studies and Development
Vol 1(4) pp. 021-029 August, 2015
<http://www.donnishjournals.org/djasd>
Copyright © 2015 Donnish Journals

Original Research Paper

Igala Ethnic Nationality and Leadership Challenge

PAUL, Salisu Ojonemi^{1*} and Edino, Ferdinand Ojonimi²

¹Training School, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria.

²Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Accepted 17th May, 2015.

The Igala nation is located generally in the middle-belt region of Nigeria. It can be observed that this ethnic nationality unarguably constitutes the largest group of people in Kogi State today. The paper is subdivided into: Abstract; Introduction; History and the organisation of Igala people in Nigeria; Leadership challenge as the bane of her underdevelopment, and the opportunities of development for Igala kingdom in Nigeria. Consequent upon her potentialities, it has been found that Igala nationality requires a responsible leadership which should lead to the acceptance of its lost glory and the need to be repositioned for greatness. It concludes that because Igala people have not been able to develop any process of leadership emergence through a crucible to determine their preparedness and worth, the land is suffering from bad state of critical infrastructure, massive unemployment, widespread poverty owing to “half/percentage-Salary syndrome” and political thuggery in the administrative/local politics. The paper majorly recommended an investment in human capital development, and the preservation/modification of Igala traditional and cultural heritage as strategies to effectively compete in the economic and socio-political development of the Nigerian economy.

Keywords: Igala Nationality, Leadership, Development, Self-centredness, Politics.

INTRODUCTION

Igala ethnic nationality in Nigeria is one of the “major-minority” ethnic groups in Nigeria mostly found in the north-central region. Yunusa (2004:3) affirmed that, Igala controls the socio-economic and political power of Kogi State based on its vast population and land mass. Igala land has been confronted with development challenges of poverty and hunger as a result of the payment of half/percentage salary to the teachers in public schools and the entire Local Government workforce, deprivation, absence of critical infrastructure all borne out poor leadership. However, Igala Kingdom as Yunusa (2004:3); Adukwu and Ocholi (2014:2) acknowledged, remains one of the rare Kingdoms that is blessed with abundant natural and human resources in the African continent.

On the other hand, Egbolimajo (1996:11) observed that the Igala nation that possesses enormous resources to be envied and socially advance, given the British expeditions which acclaimed them among the most civilized African groups they ever encountered, remain jammed in their own dream. A cursory study of Igala region revealed little to confirm that such an enterprising prediction dated pre-colonial society and, whose highly developed civilization was acknowledged by the

Great-Britain, has anything to show off of their development as contained in the colonial and post-independence framework and structures that described the present Nigeria.

The subject under discourse is paramount because the socio-political system must encourage the development of every ethnic-group to grow at a higher pace of development and which knows the advantage of cooperation. In essence, an atmosphere of peace and purposefulness is uncompromisingly inevitable in the development of an ethnic state. The development and expansion of Igala nation in Africa has been slowed down by several challenges. Conversely, when there are no socio-political distractions such as oppressive conditions, exclusion and inequality among the ethnic groups; what occurs is all-round development (Nyerere, 1967 in Adetiba and Rahim, 2012:670).

The possibilities of any nation’s development is powered by a relationship that exists between its leadership and followerhip groups devoid of hostility over the allocation of socio-economic resources; and the establishment of an enabling environment for socio-political and economically productive activity. Igala developmental concern like any

*Corresponding Author: PAUL, Salisu Ojonemi. Training School, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria.
Email: salisunelson@yahoo.com

national development is the ability of its leadership to improve the social welfare of the people e.g. by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care, etc. (Dawe, 2005 in Fagbadebo, 2007). This article shall cross-examine the existence of Igala nation vis-a-vis the quality and priority of its leadership and the chances of the kingdom's development in the 21st Century, Nigeria.

IGALA NATIONALITY: A BRIEF ACCOUNT

According to the National Population Commission (2006) census results, the Igala nationality in Nigeria consists of the majority of people living in the present Kogi State. In a vivid description, Miachi (2010:18) explained that Igala land is located in the tract of land to the lower of the Benue and east of the Niger, in the confluence area of these two great Rivers. It is observed that the Igala population is estimated at four million because, they are majorly found in Nyanya/Mararaba-Abuja, Lagos, Brigade-Kano and Kakuri-Kaduna.

Similarly, Okakachi (2011) buttressed the assertion that the population overflows to States like Anambra, Edo, Delta and Enugu. They extend transversely to all the geo-political zones in Nigeria. At its peak and before its disintegration owing partly to the 1804 Jihad, the Igala kingdom had extended northeast to Otukpo and Igumale in Benue State and northwards to Lokoja and Koton-karfe embracing all the Igbira-Panda and Tao areas and to the West across rivers Niger and Benue to Auchi and Igara in Edo State, and South-East to Nsukka, Nri, Aguleri, Onitsha up to Aboh (Adoji, 2004: xxiv).

In another clarification, Egbunu (2009:7) contended that, "Igala" refers to the triad of the language, the ethnic group and the territory located on the eastern flank of the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue in Kogi State of Nigeria. Igala people are immediate neighbours to the Bassa-Kwomo, Bassa-Nge, Idoma, Igbo, Ebira, Kakanda, Afemai and the Nupe. Traditionally, as highlighted by Ogughua (1981:168) in Onucheyo (2007) Igala folks are identified to have some long-standing kinship with the Jukun, Yoruba and the Benin kingdoms. Obviously, they are an amalgam of the various ethnic configurations in Nigeria including the Hausa/Fulani and other ethnic groups earlier mentioned which have been somehow assimilated into the Igala mainstream.

Igala therefore holds a pride of place as a cultural melting pot majorly due to their centrality of location (Egbunu, 2009:8). Therefore, varieties of people from different ethnic origins, speaking different languages live in Igalaland. Again, the dominant group, however, are the Igala people themselves who are also regarded as the most primordial of all the identifiable groups that are existing in the area today. Other ethnic groups include the Nupe, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Idoma, Ebira as well as immigrants from the Agenebode in Estako Local Government Area of Edo State.

Igala people, as observed by Idakwo (1989:75); Idachaba (1992:10) and Atadoga (2014:12) attained the status of a kingdom in the mid 17th Century AD and are also reputed to have had one of the oldest kingdoms in the West African Sub-Saharan region and were considered as the ninth largest ethnic group in Nigeria in the early 1960s.

The home of the Igala people is situated east of the river Niger and Benue confluence and on both sides of the Niger in Lokoja, Kogi State of Nigeria with its headquarters in Idah, which is the seat of the Ata Igala (The paramount ruler of Igala people). The area is approximately between latitude 6°30 and 8°40 north and longitude 6°30 and 7°40 east and covers an area of about 13,665 square kilometres (Abdullahi, 2013).

In Igala tradition, infants from some parts of the kingdom, like Ankpa receive three horizontal marks on each side of the face, slightly above the corners of their mouths, as a way of identifying each other. However, this practice is no more common among the people.

Social and Community Organization

In Africa, before the 15th Century, the predominant principle of social relations was that of family and kinship associated with communalism. Every member of an Africa society had his position defined in terms of relatives on his mother's side and on his father's side. Some societies placed greater importance on matrilineal ties and others on patrilineal ties. Those things were crucial to the daily existence of a member of an African society, because land (the major means of production) was owned by groups such as the family or clan-the head of which was responsible for the land on behalf of all kin, including fore-parents and those yet unborn (Rodney, 1972:40).

According to Calhoun (1993) in Adetiba and Rahim (2012), humanity is naturally divided into ethnic/nations groups, and is known by certain and distinct socio-political features which can be established. Consequently, the social organization is essentially kin-based. As Miachi (2010:20) illustrated, the nuclear family is the smallest social unit, but this is inseparably tied to the extended family system involving the lineage and the clan. All members of these extra nuclear-family units regard one another as "brothers" or "sisters". A number of agnatic families combine to form a clan and a number of them may constitute a hamlet or even a village. Often the members of such hamlets or villages trace their origin to common apical ancestors. The sociological arrangement is, itself a factor that promotes unity and peace among the people.

Rodney (1972:39) said, religion is an aspect of the superstructure of a society. He noted that, as is well known, traditional African religious practices exist in great variety, and it should also be remembered that both Islam and Christianity found homes on the African continent almost from their inception. Religious-wise, Igala practices a number of different religions, including Animism, Christianity, and Islam. As a result of this, Amanabo (2013:23) held there has not been religious violence in Igala Kingdom. Another reason is not far-fetched, it can be observed that some who are adherents of Christianity and Islam also (secretly and openly) practice African traditional religion.

Regional Integration/Affiliation

Boston (1968) believed that the central geographical location of the Igala people has exposed them to a wide variety of linguistic as well as cultural influences from other ethnic groups in the country. Notable among these are the Igbira, the Bini, the Igbo, the Hausa, the Idoma and the Yoruba ethnic groups. However, the most significant relationship, by far, is that between the Igala and the Yoruba people.

Igala and Yoruba have important historical and cultural relationships. On this note, Akinkugbe (1976) highlighted that the Igala language is closely related to the Yoruba and Itsekiri languages. The languages of the two ethnic groups bear such a close similarity that researchers such as Forde (1951) and Westermann and Bryan (1952) considered Igala language as a parlance of Yoruba. Also, Igala is neither a dialect of Yoruba nor a language resulting from the fusion of Yoruba and Idoma as viewed by (Silverstein, 1973), but rather Igala shares a

“common ancestor” with Yoruba as submitted by Akinkugbe (1976 and 1968). In her words;

“... this common ancestor was neither Yoruba nor Igala but what we have labelled here as Proto-Yoruba-Itsekiri-Igala (PYIG). The evidence suggests further that presumably, Igala separated from the group before the split of Yoruba into the present day Yoruba dialects considering the extent of linguistic divergence found between Igala on one hand, and the rest of Yoruba on the other”. Lexicostatistic evidence as well as evidence of sound shifts and lexical innovations is support or corroboration of this claim.

In fact, Williamson is the originator of the label ‘Yoruboid’ for the group of languages comprising Yoruba, Itsekiri and Igala for the purpose of distinguishing between Yoruba as a language on the one hand, and Yoruba, Itsekiri and Igala as a genetic group on the other (Akinkugbe 1976:1). She further referred to the proto- language of the group as Proto-Yoruboid in 1976 and Proto-Yoruba-Itsekiri-Igala (PYIG) in 1978.

Contemporary historians believed that the Igalas most likely shared a proto-Kwa ancestry with the modern Igbo and Yoruba people as well as most ethnic groups of Nigeria today. Thus, the ethnic family would include not only the prior two, but groups like the Idoma, and the Nupe to the north.

Igala Traditional Administrative System

Usman (2015:28) observed that although the modern nation state is commonly the most developed form of the state of society, monarchy, a (simple) form of centralized social order in medieval times, has preceded it. The Igala nation in Nigeria is not an exemption. The Igalas are ruled by a commanding figure called the “Ata”. The word “Ata” means ‘Father’ and the full title of the ruler is ‘Ata Igala’, meaning, the Father of Igala people. Another Igala word for King is Onu/Agboji. In the submission of Boston (1968), although “Ata” means “father”, female rulership is recognized and Igala has had a female ruler (Ebulejonu) in the past.

Among the most revered Atas in Igala kingdom are Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko and Ata Ameh Oboni (Ugbakolo). Oral tradition given by Paul Odi stated that, Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko sacrificed his (five) most beloved daughters Inikpi, Omo’doko, Ogado and Omagaliga...to ensure that the Igalas win war against the dominance from foreign powers like the Benin and the Jukun Kingdoms. Offering oneself for humanitarian services is not unconnected to the attitude of supreme patriotism for the people displayed by the daughters of Ata Ayegba Oma Idoko.

Adoji (2005) stated that in Igala Kingdom, Ata Ameh Oboni was known to be very brave and resolute. He is revered for his stiff resistance of the British and his struggles to uphold some ancient traditions of the Igalas against other irreconcilable differences. When he got wind of a plan to depose and exile him by the British, he committed suicide by hanging himself to forestall the plan and keep the Kingdom and the Stool of his forefathers. He is regarded by most Igalas as the last real Ata Igala.

Egbolimajon (1996:10) asserted that, there used to be one Igala Area Traditional Council of Chiefs headed by a paramount ruler called “The Ata”. He noted further that with the creation of autonomous Divisional/Local Government Councils, the Ankpa Traditional Council was created to be headed by a traditional ruler known as “The Eje”. Dekina and Idah remained under the shade of the Igala Traditional Council headed by the Ata-Igala with headquarters in Idah as Ankpa remains the headquarters of Ankpa traditional Council respectively.

However, the Kogi State House of Assembly Local Government Chieftaincy Law 1991 as amended in 2005 empowered each Local Government Council in Kogi State to have its own Traditional Council of Chiefs headed by a “First Class” Chief in the individual Local Government. This is explained in the table below.

The Bassa komo, Bassa Nge and Ebira-Mozum District with its headquarters as Oguma was also recognized. In all, they all recognise the pre-eminence of their respective premier monarchs who includes the Ata Igala (the Igala/Bassa Kingdom), the Ohinoyi (Ebira land) and the Obaro Kabba (Okun/Yoruba nation in Kogi State) in certain matters (Miachi, 2010:20).

Presently, the paramount traditional ruler of Igala/Bassa Kingdom is His Royal Majesty, Idakwo Michael Ameh Oboni II (*Aju Ocholi Ruling Dynasty*) who emerged as the Ata Igala and Chairman, Kogi State Council of Chiefs in February 2013, after the demise of Ata Aliyu Ocheje Obaje (*Aju Akwu Ruling House*) that ruled the Kingdom for 56 years after Ata Ame Oboni.

Economy of Igala Nation

According to Yima (nd), the colonial economy of Nigeria was an essentially agricultural and solid minerals economy (before the discovery of petroleum which has turned the country into a monolithic economy). Produce like groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil and kernels, beniseed and livestock, including hides and skins were the principal cash agro-products. There were also food agro-products like cassava, yams, rice, maize, corn and others. The solid minerals of tin, columbite and coal also nourished the export-oriented Nigerian economy. Even with the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in 1957 the fundamental economic resources of Nigeria are still agriculture and solid minerals, now abandoned for the monoculture of the hydrocarbon industry.

The traditional Igala society like Nigeria as pictured above by Yima is largely agrarian, although fishing and hunting is also the mainstay of the people, especially the Igalas of the riverine Idah, Bagana, Ibaji areas. It has large markets like the Ejule (Akpidi Nyama), Anyigba, Ajaka, Afogamugamu-Ankpa, Ega-Idah yam, rice and fish markets. Igala land is blessed with abundant human and natural resources.

Igala land is richly endowed with many natural resources, some of these according to (Miachi, 2010:18) include timber from the forest; fish from its many rivers, streams and natural ponds and minerals such as limestone, coal (from Okaba), marble, quartz, clay and granite. The rich sand deposits along the bank of the Benue and the Niger are sources of raw materials for building and for the ceramic industry one of which is owned by the Kogi State Government and is located in Idah.

Climatic Condition

The area lies within the warm, humid climate zone of Nigeria. There is a distinctive wet season dichotomy. The wet season lasts from about April to the end of September or early October while the dry season lasts from about October to about the end of March or early April. Rainfall can be heavy and the effects of the harmattan can be severe, especially from about November (Miachi, 2010:18).

Table 1: Igala Area Traditional Council' Major Stakeholders.

S/No.	Local Government Traditional Council	Title/First-class Chief	Status/Position
1.	Ankpa	Ejeh	Chairman
2.	Bassa	Agwuma	Chairman
3.	Dekina	Ejeh	Chairman
4.	Ibaji	Onu Ujeh	Chairman-to be rotated amongst the Ujeh, Unale and Onyedega.
5.	Idah	Ata	Chairman
6.	IgalamelaOdolu	Etemahi	Chairman
7.	Ofu	Ejeh	Chairman
8.	Olamaboro	Ejeh-Atabaka	Chairman
9.	Omala	Ojogba-lfe	Chairman

Source: Fieldwork, 2014.

IGALA LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Most of the public (and political) servants are actually public masters who get paid for demanding service rather than rendering service. They hold society captive and disburse the public purse for selfish purposes. They easily subvert their own countries for selfish gains and regularly divert public funds for their private and selfish purposes. Their knowledge of history and the developmental roles played by their counterpart in the development of white nations does not move them. They see development in terms of individual (instead of community collective) development (Akerere, 2000:9).

While the pyrrhic and unsatisfactory development efforts may represent a vivid distillation of the unimpressive advances, so far, they are mostly silent on the greatest tragedy of the time-leadership, which in itself in the perception of Ogbeidi (2012:4) is a body of people who lead and direct the activities of a group towards a shared goal. It also denotes the ability to lead, direct and organise a group.

There are different kinds of leadership, but the type that is the main concern of this paper is what is referred to as politically inclined leadership. Apparently, Ogbeidi observed that this idea refers to the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. In clear terms, he described as the human element that operates the machineries of government on behalf of an organised territory.

This includes people who hold decision-making positions in government, and people who seek those positions, whether by means of election, coup d'état, appointment, electoral fraud, conquest, right of inheritance or other means (Wikipedia, 2009). Broadly defined, however, political leadership goes beyond the ruling elites that directly manage the resources of the people. To this end, leadership in any society at any point in human history has always been about the security, peace, development, welfare and happiness of the people (Agwai, 2013:107).

Fagbadebo (2007:7) cited Ake (1995) who painted a gloomy picture of the African continent that, most of Africa is not developing. Fagbadebo stated further that, this apt description of the decline in nearly all African countries underscores the depth of underdevelopment ravaging the people in the midst of abundant natural resources. While most

of these countries gained independence in the 1960s, the struggle to ensure national development and political stability proved negative. Ake (1995) noted that;

Decades of efforts have yielded largely stagnation, regression or worse. The tragic consequences of this are increasingly clear: a rising tide of poverty, decaying public utilities and infrastructures, social tensions and political turmoil, and now, premonition of inevitable drive into conflict and violence.

As highlighted by Agwai (2013:107), it is true that leadership exists at all strata of society, but the focus of political theory on leadership matters remains with political or governmental leadership. This is due to the fact that governmental leadership may not be the whole leadership, all else is nurtured by it and gains from it (Nevstadt, 1960). Therefore, Igala land is like the position Achebe (1983); Nwabueze (2000:53); Adoji (2004, 2005) and Febebebo (2015:25) submitted when they noted that even the most undiscerning of minds comes face-to-face with the direct impact of leadership, poverty and negligence on a people already racked and severely disadvantaged by the sheer wickedness and insensitivity of their social, political and traditional institutions and the operators. The factorisation of leadership into developmental discourse of Igala kingdom cannot be overemphasized because of the critical, crucial and catalysing roles it plays in any given societal development.

Hence, Febebebo (2015:28) rated (the performance of) Nigerian leadership among other African countries, especially by western nations as being abysmally low since most former Nigerian leaders have been adjudged to have in an environment of abundant human and material resources. Nigeria's problem is not with her abundant natural and human resources, but with her leadership which is corrupt and not goal-oriented. At the moment and;

...as things stand currently, we have surrendered the bulk of our political space to the dishonourable, the incompetent and worse, to the criminally-minded. This is the basic problem of Nigeria. The brightest Nigerians are either abroad, or at home in academia, in the military or the private sector...industries. This is undeniable fact; the dregs of our society dominate the politics and have created a negative image that makes talented people spurn helping the country (El-Rufai, 2013: xxx, xxxi).

Like many nations in Africa and other developing countries in the world, as opined by (Achema, 1975:4), the growth and development in Igala kingdom is epileptic. He noted that:

There is apathy of constituted authority-Local, State and Federal governments (to the development of Igalaland). At the time of writing, no industry has been established in Igalaland while those planned years ago have been maneuvered to other areas of the country. What a tragedy! With the departure of the Iron and Steel Complex, what are these authorities doing about the deposits at Alade and Odokpe, mineral deposits in Okpo, the Swedish report of 1958 to transform the whole Igalaland into a model village for Africa. As if this neglect is not enough, our foreign investments which have mature, forest resources and any other vital source of income to the local Government Authorities have been confiscated by the same authorities.

As El-Rufai (2013:57) exemplified the manifestation of Nigerian leaders, Igala people have failed to develop any process of identifying, training and rewarding leadership, of putting people who are potential leaders through a crucible to determine their preparedness and worth. While in an alternative, people just become known out of nowhere and assume the position of responsibility in Igala political space.

Consequently, it can be noticed that there are symptoms of underdevelopment as one travels from one point of the kingdom to another. According to Adoji (2004:23), the Igala nation is not different from that of the individual who wins a lottery or horse race and after many years of extravagance, the money is gone and owing to great indulgence, the health of the recipient is also ravaged leaving behind a bleak vista of regret and despondence. He succinctly pictured the challenges of the Kingdom thus;

So far, as a people we seem to have frittered every opportunity and chance of advancement that ever crossed our path as we continue to grapple with the struggle to find the route to true political, social and economic greatness and a better quality of life for our people. We struggle because progress has been in the reverse direction. More of our people are poorer today, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the population, than they have ever been just as facilities and infrastructure that (are ordinarily taken for granted elsewhere) should make life a little better have remained a cruel mirage. An annoying example is the lack of good road networks in the land.

From the foregoing, the peculiarity of the challenge that leadership poses in Igala national development cannot be left unattended to for the reason that, Igala nationality did not just get to where it is today by sovereign fiat; some people brought her this far and this low even though, the 'followership' equally has a chunk of the blame to bear. Being the major ethnic group in the present Kogi State, it is the most deprived in terms of what "development" can be referred to. There are many Igala communities that have no benefits of;

- Good and functional education,
- Stable power supply,
- Good roads,
- Industrial revolution resulting to good employment opportunities, and
- Good housing scheme, among others.

Where efforts were made to provide these facilities, they were on the whole poorly executed with no reasonable outcome or not done at all or left half way for successive administrations to

inherit and overlook because, the contractors and project managers ranges from ruling political party leaders to Princes/Princesses of paramount traditional rulers in the kingdom. In Igala nation experience of absence of good leadership not because there are no capable individuals, but because those entrusted with the responsibility have not proved themselves as high-quality and competent leaders.

This is because; it is not only the crooks that must be blamed and reprimanded, but the 'honest' men amongst the people who do not know what they are doing as well (Adoji, 2004). From the above, it can be founded that the Igala nationality is principally bedevilled with the problem of self-centred leadership and selfish political practices.

Self-centred Leadership

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility and to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe, 1983:1).

It bothers on the personality that leads, the methodology applied, and the intention and interest. Agwai (2013:107) corroborated this when he asserted that this is because the issues of who leads, how, for what purposes and in whose interest, remain firmly rooted at the heart of political philosophy. Over the years, it is observed that in most cases Nigerian leaders always leave the throne of power with horrible records that made their predecessors cry with envy.

This is perhaps so since most of those who built the society at the expense of corruptly enriching themselves are hardly celebrated, appreciated or acknowledged. It is instructive to note that the leadership problem in the Nigerian polity was a manifestation of the dysfunctional pattern of the years of military interregnum (Omo-Bare, 1996; Kirk-Greene and Rimmer, 1981; Mundt and Aborisade, 2005; Mayer et al., 1996; Joseph et al., 1996) in (Fagbadebon, 2007:29). More often than not, blames of societal failures are always attributed to poor leadership provided by the "First Generation" of Nigerian politics. In the same vein, it is ironic to note that, in the recent past, the nation has seen a new generation of leaders who have taken up the mantle of "leadership" and nothing changed.

Clearly, this state of affairs represents a profound moral challenge to the Igala corporate-identity, its corporate-respect and corporate-image, a challenge only to the appreciation of those who have opted to swim against the tides and be positively different has ignited and which only an acculturation of such feats can sustain and hopefully, in the long run, help catalyzes the reversal of the prevailing decay and deterioration in its society. It is lack of consensus on the best formula or set of modalities for the achievement of such objectives as perceived by Usman (2015:28) that engenders continuing debate, nationally and internationally, among politicians, opinion leaders/leaders of thought, and the intelligentsia. Traditional rulers and religious priests are also not excluded.

The socio-political and economic leadership model in Igala Kingdom like Nigeria lacks the indispensable focus capable of instilling the Igala national development and promotes economic and socio-cultural stability. The present phenomenon of "only myself" leadership and representation pattern in Igala national development is dated to 1970s, which in the view opined by Achema (1975:5, 6) passionately pictured this apprehension when he noted that;

The economy of Igala people has been paralysed by many factors some of which are...selfish attitude of our (Igala) middle men and "business men"... It is true that we are being denied our rights because we do not make effective demands and people who are to demand on our behalf are silent for the fear that they will lose their jobs and again go hungry. What a pathetic situation to see the same people come home with sweet words to deceive and convince the people of what the governments are doing for us. It is a shame!

The leadership-economy of Igala people rather than focusing on the partnership that encourages all-round development of Igala Kingdom is preoccupied with wishes for the usurpation and appropriation of the Kogi State Government House, Lokoja. The emergence of political thuggery in Igalaland according to Idakwoji and PAUL (2014:208) is due to the fact that from the social point of view, the social gap between the political office holders and the rest members of the society creates room for most people to seek for political office at all cost.

They noted further that in Nigeria, public political offices have been seen as the only easiest way for someone to change his/her social status. Hence, most political office leaders in Igala Kingdom have transformed politics into occupation with the intention of "seek you first political kingdom, and all other wealth shall be added unto you". Thus, political office seekers employ the services of thugs to enable them get into office and loot public treasury for wealth accumulation and status boosting (Agba, 2010 in Idakwoji and PAUL, 2014:208).

Igala leadership challenge has manifested in the death of Ata Ameh Oboni in 1956 and Steven Achema in 1999. For example, these precipitated by the quest of some "power-drunkards" to forcefully manipulate themselves into various positions of authority of Igala people against their inclined masses' stand. Similarly, it is observed that, the menace of abandoned and moribund government projects, political animosity and violence witnessed by the people in 2003-2010 were also plagued by bad leadership. This has consequently affected the rate of development performance in Igala communities over the years.

The issue under treatise as opined by Amanabo (2014) have always been choice of system of who governs, including such individual's character and orientation, performance of the institutions of the government and management of resources in Kogi State at large and Igala land in particular. The lack of consensus among the Igala elites has led to "cold war", ideological warfare and political thuggery and violence which pervade the socio-political and economic system of Igala nation.

Selfish Politics

This concept can be viewed from the simplified perception adopted by the World Bank, which is "the abuse of public power for private benefit" (Tanzi, 1998; Gray and Kaufmann, 1998). Usman (2015:28) highlighted that it was under the monarchical dispensation that the people were ruled by supposedly divinely appointed kings who reigned indefinitely, often for life, before another. With time, it became clear that what the people needed was governing machinery, not a ruling institution.

Defining the nature of the relationship which should ideally exist between the states' governing authority and the governed; Usman cited John Locke (1632-1704) who stated that such a relationship should be in the form of a societal

contract that is subject to periodic public renewal. This gave rise to variants of the social contract theory, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries that became bases of the evolution of the systems of government powered by periodic elections.

Put succinctly, while other enclaves are making appreciable and verifiable progress, all that exists in Igala land is an admixture of signs of potential greatness and outright failure perpetuated by an army of greedy, selfish, wicked politics and followership that is self-serving and whose relevance can only be measured by the degree to which it has impoverished the Igala people while enriching itself, members of its families and its 'blind followers'.

For that reason, Nwabueze (2000:53) observed that, the dominant value system in Nigeria is one that glorifies and endorses corrupt and illegal means as necessary, normal, and sufficient means to an end. It goes without saying, therefore, that many of the problems being faced with today have their roots in the mismanagement of people's mandate, wasteful manipulation of human and material resources and the deceit through "failed promises" upon which the communion operated.

This value system creates dishonesty, a free-rider mindset, defiance of the law and disregard for expert opinion within the general level, a fraudulent mass and corrupt and heavy-handed leadership, which ultimately misappropriates public funds, thereby creating problems of development. This is the contradiction that has fuelled the 'institutionalization' of mediocrity, sycophancy and uninformed patronage and the disappearing influence of reason, facts, integrity and pride in the Igala nation today.

This, tendency manifests in all facets of governmental activities beginning from the award of contracts for the building of public utilities, project siting and allocation of benefits, collection of public revenues by revenue officials, and official pronouncements. Officials who involved in performing these duties partake at one stage or the other, in the misuse of the processes.

In the immediate past, the inhabitants have witnessed the damage done to their collective psyche by the suffocating grip of those who portrayed themselves as the only persons with silver spoons in their mouths without taking cognizance of the poor and their children. As it were, they have driven the land through a wholesale destruction of integrity, hard work, hope and culture with economic degradation, animosity, name-calling and deprivation as vestiges of that action (or better put, inaction).

Presently, salaries of the workforce in the local government councils in Kogi State are not being paid. Okai-Jaja (2014) said staffs are being owed twenty (20) months' salary arrears. Allocations and internally generated revenue in Igala-based Local Government Councils Accounts have been liquidated in less than twelve years (2003-date). Reasons for the spending of finances are often baseless. Uga, Ayorinde and Ehinomen (2005:67) summarized that the expenditures committed or reported to have been committed might not have been matched by the real resources that they are supposed to have been financed.

This can be supported by the submission of Okigbo (1994:4, 5) that finances were spent on what could be neither adjudged genuine high priority nor truly regenerative investment that neither the president nor the governor accounted to anyone for these massive extra budgetary expenditures; that these disbursements were clandestinely undertaken, while the country was openly reeling with a crushing eternal debt that represent a gross abuse of public trust. This in the view of Uga, Ayorinde and Ehinomen

(2005:67) called to attention Aliyu's (2001) allusion to the problem of corruption and siphoning off of resources.

In the Local Government Councils and Community Development Offices of Igala extraction, Imidowojo (2014:25) pointed out that corruption became legitimized, especially during the Ibrahim Idris and Idris Wada regimes as Governors of Kogi State from 2003-date respectively. It can be observed that there were huge revenues, but wasteful spending, and nothing to show in terms of human and critical infrastructural developments in Kogi East Senatorial District (Igalaland) particularly. In this dispensation, the new culture of "Omawe de" (This is your boy) slogan, that the Igalas have now come to know as begging language became part of the Igala politics. The circumstance of development in Igala Kingdom is likened to the situation that Nwaka (nd) in Fagbadebon (2007:31) posited when he identified that;

...all the positive values for development were jettisoned. Governmental agencies that were the pilots of socio-economic developments were decimated. These include the mentality of force, intolerance of opposition, and an unbridled appetite for wealth through the appropriation of state resources for private gain. Because of the enormous resources, government officials took advantage of the state machinery to manipulate collective wealth for their personal use.

IGALA NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE POTENTIALITIES

Agricultural potentialities

Adoji (2004: xxiv) stated that Igalas are predominantly farmers, fishermen and hunters who are renowned for their unbridled strength and who dwells on the left bank of the Niger River below its junction with Benue River. The vegetation is basically the guinea savannah type with mixed deciduous forest patches. The lowland riverine zones like Ibaji, Ala, Bagana, Egabada, and Alade/Afa are flooded seasonally, making it possible for growing of paddy rice and controlled fish farming ponds that are owned on individual or clan basis. The potential for building large artificial fish farm is assured.

Furthermore, in recent years, reasonable efforts have been made to protect natural forest plantations as well as to encourage artificial programmes. These are large teak and gmelina forest schemes at Oforachi and Alade in Igalamela District perhaps the biggest of its type in Kogi State. In addition, natural and artificial forests of *Elaeis quinneensis* (the oil palm) grow widely in the area.

Availability of higher academic institutions

- i. The Kogi State University, Anyigba;
- ii. The Federal Polytechnic Idah;
- iii. Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa;
- iv. Kogi State College of Agriculture, Ochaja;
- v. Kogi State College of Health Technology Idah
- vi. Peter Achimugwu College of Theology, Ankpa (an affiliate of University of Jos).

There is now an increase in school enrolment in Igala/Bassa area-courtesy of Old Qua Iboe Mission (now UEC Mission), Catholic Dioceses of Idah, FOMWAN Islamic group, Ahmadu Ada Ali, who influenced the siting of one of the then Colleges of Technology (now Federal Polytechnic) created by the Federal Military Government of Olusegun Obasanjo in 1977 toldah and the Federal Government College to Ugwolawo all in Igala land. The schools have majorly baked the available

human capital in the Kingdom respectively. In this respect, mention must be made of

- Moses Ogwu through whom the College of Health Technology came to Idah,
- Abubakar Audu whose administration as Kogi State Governor established the Kogi State University Anyigba thereby bringing university education to Igala's doorstep, and
- Steven Makoji Achema whose leadership as Chairman; Idah Divisional Development Association (IDDA) founded 18 Community Secondary Schools in the old Idah Local Government Area (Adoji, 2004:28).

Igala's endowed natural and human resources offer endless possibilities of development for the Kingdom. This will take the dimensions of;

- i. Provision of opportunities for all Igala sons and daughters to work together to rebuild the economic base for growth and development.
- ii. Provision of the prospect of the Kogi State government to experiment with the bottom-up, open-ended democratic philosophy of good governance.

Presence of Industries

- i. Agricultural Development Project, Anyigba
- ii. Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company
- iii. West African Ceramic Industry, Ajaokuta
- iv. Okura Sawmill Company
- v. Alade-Ajaka Palm Oil Refinery
- vi. Idah Sanitary Ware
- vii. Kogi State Sugar Production Company, Ibaji

Rich cultural heritage

These riches are embedded in Igala's arts and symbols, rituals, ceremonies and festivals, myths and legends, music and dance, proverbs, riddles and wise-sayings and other aspects of life which the nuclear and extended environment offers (Egbunu, 2009:68).

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This paper has been able to establish that possession of population and potentialities for development does not in itself translate into an enviable development. Whereas the Igala nation in Kogi State enjoys majority status, it lacks the responsible and responsive leadership that will bring about the basics of good standard of living in her communities. Thus, the inter-dependence of leadership and development in any given society is proportionate to the relationship that exists in the levels of developmental attainment.

Then, leadership derives its existence from the society and reflects the general level of consciousness and value system. Consequently, Igala nationality requires a responsible leadership which should lead her to the acceptance of its lost glory and the need to be repositioned for greatness amongst the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria in particular and the world at large.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Igala nation will need all of the elements of growth and development-oriented leadership so as to witness an integrated development and global development competition. This is a non-negotiable fact, since development is synonymous with the existentiality of man.

Recommendations

If the Igala nation hopes to be developed, competitive and gain comparative advantage it is recommended that;

- It must invest in human capital development as a strategy to effectively compete in the globally. Igala land cannot be better as a nation without attracting her best and brightest human capital to tackle her challenges of socio-economic, political, cultural and infrastructural development. Igala nation as an ethnic nationality in requires a “politically willed” human resource.
- In order to prevent self-centred leadership and selfish politics, which have given birth to Igala’s developmental backwardness, the preservation of Igala traditional and cultural heritage by all and sundry must not be relegated to the background. This is because quality leadership is an “artefact” of genuinely bred customs. It is not created by unusual historical accidents, but by communities that value capable and gifted persons.
- Both the political, traditional and religious leaders of Igala extraction should prioritize the development concern and challenges of the kingdom. This commitment leads to the positioning of Igala national development in an efficient, productive and popular situation.

REFERENCES

- Abdullahi, J. (2013) *The Location of Igalaland in Nigeria, being an Interview granted on Radio Nigeria, Abuja.*
- Achema, S.M. (1974) *Igala socio-economic, Political and Educational Problems*, being a Presidential Speech delivered at the Annual Convention of the Igala Students Association (ISA) held at Our Lady of School College Anyigba, December 19th - 21st
- Adetiba, T.C. & Rahim, A. (2012) Between Ethnicity, Nationality and Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 1 (3), 656-674.
- Adoji, V.A. (2004) *The Man, My People: A Compendium on Late Dr. Steve Makoji Achema*. Lagos: Kay Kay Graphics Press.
- (2005) *From Zero to Hero: Alhaji Salami Abdullahi*. Lagos: Kay Kay Graphics Press.
- Adukwu, A.S. & Ocholi, D.O. (2014) *Why Okura State is a Necessity*. Idah: A Pamphlet by the Igala National Solidarity Association (INSA).
- Ake, C. (1995) *Socio-Political Approaches and Policies for Sustainable Development in Africa*. Being a text delivered at the Annual Meeting Symposium of the African Development Banks in Abuja. May 25,
- Amanabo, O. (2014) *Percentage/Half Salary Syndrome in Kogi Local Governments. An Interview*
- Ameh Oboni, A.M. (1999) ACHEMA: The Lion and the Elephant of Middle Belt Politics, in Adoji, V.A. (ed) *The Man, My People: A Compendium on Late Dr. Steve Makoji Achema*. Lagos: Kay Kay Graphics Press.
- Akerele, A. (2000) Leadership for Effective Management, in Maiyaki, J.Y. (Ed) *Management Challenges in the 21st Century*. Shagisha-Lagos: CMD, Management Village.
- Akinkugbe, O. O. (1976) *An Internal Classification of the Yoruboid Group*. J.W.A.L. XI. 1-2, 1-17
- (1978) *A Comparative Phonology of Yoruba Dialects, Isekiri and Igala*. A PhD. Dissertation submitted to the Library of University of Ibadan
- Agwai, M.L.(2013) De-politicisation of the Armed Forces, in Akinkugbe, O.O. (ed) *Olusegun Obasanjo: The Presidential Legacy (I) 1999-2007*. Ibadan: BOOKCRAFT
- Atadoga (2014:12) *Igala Population and Kogi State Politics: A Monograph*. Lokoja: Adoja Centre for Democratic Studies.
- Bashorun, J.K.R. (2012) *New Leadership Paradigms to Achieve Strategic Transformation*, being a lecture presented at the National Management Conference on Moving Nigeria Forward through Strategic Transformation. Abuja, September
- Boston, J. (1967) Igala Political Organization. *African Notes* 4.2
- (1968) *The Igala Kingdom – The History of the 9th Largest Tribe in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.
- Egbolimajon (1996:11) The Tall Dream of Ata Ameh Oboni. *Igala Voice Magazine* 2(4). May 8th - 14th
- (2006) *Igala Must Grow*, Being the Chairman Speech Presented on the 44th Extra-Ordinary National Convention of Igala Students Association held at Our Lady of School, Anyigba. April, 8
- Egbunu, F.E. (2009) *Igala Traditional Values Versus Modernity*. Nsukka: Afro Orbis.
- El-Rufai, N.A. (2013) *The Accidental Public Servant*. Ibadan: Safari Books Ltd.
- Febebebo, J. (2015) The Challenges of Leadership, in *The Punch Viewpoint*, 39(20,850) Tuesday, February 3
- Fagbadebo, O. (2007) Corruption, Governance and Political Instability in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 1 (2) 028-037, November
<http://www.academicjournals.org/AJPSIR>
- Idachaba, F.S. (1992) *Academic Honour in Igalaland*, being a Speech delivered on the Courtesy visit of Igala Students Association to the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi.
- Idakwo, I.M. (1989) *Ameh the Great*. Intec: Ibadan.
- Idakwoji, S.P. & PAUL, S.O. (2014) An Empirical Description of Political Thuggery and Democratization in Kogi State Nigeria, 2003–2010. *International Journal of Psychology the Ife Psychologia* 2014, 22(1), 202-217
- Imidowojo, F. (2014) *Percentage/Half Salary Syndrome in Kogi Local Governments. An Interview*
- Miachi, T. A. (2010) Introducing the Igala People, the Programme of Events for the 54th Anniversary of the Ascension of His Royal Majesty Alh. (Dr.) Aliyu O. Obaje to the Exalted Throne of His Fore-Fathers. November, 2(2012) *The Incarnate Being Phenomenon in African Culture – Anthropological Perspectives on the Igala of North-Central Nigeria*. Kraft Books: Ibadan
- Nevstadt, I.R. (1960) *Presidential Power*. New York: Willey Mc.
- NPC (2007) *National Population Commission 2006 Census Results*. Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- Ogugua, P.A. (1981) The Igala People: A Socio-Historical Examination. *Journal of West African Studies*, 21,168-179.
- Ogbeidi, M.M. (2012) Political Leadership and Corruption in Nigeria Since 1960: A Socio-economic Analysis. *Journal of Nigeria Studies*, 1 (2), 1-25
- Okakachi, C. (2011) The Bond Between the Igala and Igbo Ethnic Nationalities of Nigeria-Some Historical Facts. July 29
<http://www.nairaland.com/1036147/>
- Okai-Jaja, U. (2014) Half-Salary Syndrome in Kogi State. *Extract of an interview conducted by the Researcher*.
- Okigbo, P. (1994) *Report of the Panel on the Reforms and Reorganization of the Central Bank of ia*. Niger Lagos: Government Printer.
- Onucheyo, E. (2005) *Ane Igala and the 2006 Census*, Being an extract of a lecture presented on the sensitization rally organized by the Igala Youth for Development at the Old Theatre Arts Auditorium, Kogi State University, Anyigba. Friday 25th – Saturday 26th, November
- Silverstein, R. (1973) *Igala Historical Phonology*. A PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles
- Tokula, L. (2008) *Re-Duplication in Igala: An Auto segmental Approach*. A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of M.A. Degree to the Department of Linguistics, University of Ibadan.

- Toyin, C. A. & Aminur, R. (2012) Between Ethnicity, Nationality and Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 1(3) 656 - 674 www.isdsnet.com/ijds
- Uga, E. O., Ayorinde, F. O. & Ehinomen, C. (2005) *State Government Finances and Implication for Development in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NCEMA Monograph Series, No.2
- Umez Bedford, N. (2000) *NIGERIA: Real problems, Real Solutions*. Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd.
- Usman, B. (2015) Leadership, Security and National Development (I), being an Excerpts of a Lecture at Abdullahi Smith Lecture Theatre, Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, in *The Punch*, 39 (20,842), Thursday, January 22,
- Ukwede, J.N. *History of the Igala Kingdom C. 1534 – 1854, A Study of Political and Cultural Integration in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area of Nigeria*. Arewa House: Kaduna. <http://www.articlesbase.com/business-articles/women-empowerment-832398.html>
- Yima, S. (ND) Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria.
- Yunusa, S.I. (1993) Igala in the New Kogi State. *The Message Newspaper*, 4(2), Friday 5th – Thursday 14th, February