

The Origin of Slavery and the Incidence of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Oguta, Nigeria

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Abstract

Studies in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade have received a lot of patronage. Such contributions have been made mainly from the exterior without adequate coverage (detailed) of the interior concerns of same. Here, the research has been focused on one of the numerous local narratives dealing with the very sourcing and underpinning of what can be judged the pivot of the trade within. Oguta was first opened up as an inland port at the advent of the present occupiers of the beautiful land around Oguta Lake which links to the Niger through the creeks on the plains and the Atlantic, same as the Urashi River. The local trade arising from the agrarian economy of the place and the attendant commercial and social activities had gradually developed into something beyond the ordinary and had triggered a chain reaction that cascaded into various dimensions. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade had just begun and coincided with this latest development in Oguta. But it added to the existing commerce, the nefarious and inhuman trade on humans; for humans were the main stock of the international dealing. The organizers and paddlers at the global level made it so alluring that many took the bait, swallowing its hook, line and sinker. The experience in Oguta is one of such particularly with regard to the local origin with the narrative begging for proper historicisation as is attempted below with the sole objective of projecting love as the missing link that is necessary for progressive and meaningful living.

Keywords: Slave, Slavery, Trade, Commerce, Abolition, Love.

Résumé

Les études sur le commerce transatlantique des esclaves ont reçu beaucoup d'attention. Ces contributions ont été faites principalement extérieurement sans couverture adéquate (détaillée) des préoccupations intérieures de la même. Ici, la recherche s'est concentrée sur l'un des nombreux récits locaux traitant de l'origine même et du fondement de ce qui peut être considéré comme le pivot du commerce intérieur. Oguta a été ouvert en tant que port intérieur à l'arrivée des habitants actuels de la belle terre autour du lac Oguta qui relie au fleuve Niger à travers les canaux dans les plaines et l'Atlantique, même que la rivière Urashi. Le commerce local découlant de l'économie agricole du lieu et des activités commerciales et sociales qui s'y rattachent s'est progressivement développé en quelque chose d'extraordinaire et a déclenché une réaction en chaîne qui s'est répercutée dans diverses dimensions. Le commerce transatlantique des esclaves venait de commencer et coïncidait avec ce dernier développement à Oguta. Mais cela ajoutait au commerce existant, au commerce infâme et inhumain sur des humains ; car les humains étaient le stock principal de la transaction internationale. Les organisateurs et les commerçants au niveau mondial l'ont rendu si attrayant que beaucoup ont pris l'appât, l'avalé sans penser. L'expérience d'Oguta en est une particulièrement en ce qui concerne l'origine locale avec le

récit demandant une historicisation correcte, comme on le tente ci-dessous pour seul objectif de projeter l'amour comme point manquant nécessaire à une vie progressive et significative.

Mots clés: Esclave, Esclavage, Commerce, Abolition, Amour

Introduction

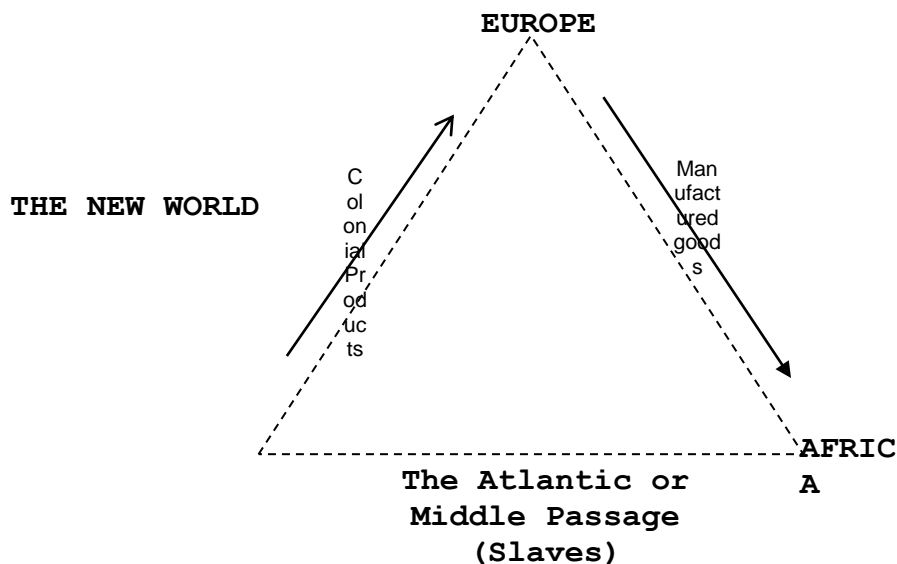
Slaves are persons (most often to include their descendants) who were bought, stolen, captured in wars and similar social crises and who were expected to render services to their owners sometimes called masters who exercise or possess full power over the slaves including their life and death. Slaves amongst humans are the direct opposite of free born, they have few rights and are discriminated upon. They socially are far worthless and hardly allowed any serious kinds of leadership position. In Oguta for example upon the high regard accorded to elders using gerontocracy, the male individual who becomes the oldest in a lineage, village or the entire community is not allowed to assume office if he is of slave descent. This is almost the same in many social organizations such as the very important Age Grade system in Oguta. They cannot lead in the worship or veneration of the land especially where there is a free born.

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade has been variously described by so many scholars to give appropriate meaning to it. Philip Curtin a notable historian for instance says of it in 1975 as being “the largest intercontinental migration in western History, spanning a period of 300 years in which the Africans in mass numbers crossed the Atlantic”. It has also been described as the triangular trade on slaves (Williams, (1944); Thornton (1991); Rodney, (1982); Ricco, (1975)) since it basically covered Africa the source of the slaves, the New World (America) the main destination with plantations on which the labour was needed and Europe the continent of the main organizers and paddlers of the trade where some of the slaves also arrived serving both in the domestic and industrial concerns. Simply put the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade stands for the nefarious transactions on humans (slaves and unfortunate free born) from Africa across the Atlantic to the Americas and Europe to serve as slaves at both the plantation (later to include factories) and homes of these places. The slave trade formerly spanned over a period of about three hundred years of between 1600-1900A.D. In actual sense of it, the trade had begun earlier from about the middle of the 15th C. (about the 1450s) when the Portuguese used their ship to move sugar produced in the South Atlantic particularly on the Island of Sao Tome.

They exploited the slaves available on the African coast (the Arguin Islands south of Rivers Senegal and Gambia ends and the mouth of the Congo River). Following the accidental discoveries of the new land mass of the Americas spear-headed by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and the earlier establishment of a new maritime trade route on the African coast around the Cape of Good Hope to India by the Portuguese, the old world came to be divided into two halves: one around Africa to the east, to Portugal and the other around Americas to the west, to Spain by the Pope as ratified in the treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 Ejituwu (1997). This treaty gave Portugal the monopoly of Africa and Spain the Americas. This situation coupled with the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by the Turks which ended the Black Sea Coast supply of slaves caused Africa to become the only external source of forced labour.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade began in trifles with the development of the plantations (sugar) in the New World by the Spanish and to the South Atlantic by the Portuguese (for example at Sao Tome) and later to Europe (Sicily in Italy). At this time mid-way through the 15th century, the slaves bought at southern coast of Africa which were shipped to Europe were about a 100 for each year.

This was after Europeans had attempted using the Amerindians in the New World plantations without much success Curtins (1975). The Indians were not suitable because they could not endure the brutality of the European masters, were not suited to hard labour and were susceptible to European disease that they had to suffer from.



Using the Asiento system (“the right to trade in slaves”), the Spanish granted occasional licenses to its citizens to import slaves into the New World. Through this system as reported by Curtin (1975), some individuals could bring in fifty slaves to Hispaniola (the present Haiti and Santo Domingo) for mining work. He maintained that not long after the number increased coupled with the associated smuggling of 1520s. Upon this the permit as contracts became transferable when Spanish colonists and the European merchants joined in the transaction thus increasing the number of the slaves being dealt with at this time beyond the official estimation. Lorenzo de Gorrevod, the Governor of Bresain 1518, who was granted the Asiento was reported (Rico 1975), to have imported four thousand black slaves to sell to the Spanish colonists of which he paid customs duties. Asiento served up until 1580s as the monopoly of the Spanish. The Spanish crown later gave the right to Asiento to the Portuguese who had the initial license to bring a set number of slaves to the Americas. The Indian labour disaster encouraged the increase in the African slaves in the New World as an efficient labour resource. Asiento system of getting slaves for the Spanish colonies led to bitter contest among member dealers and became in Rico’s words part of the international

diplomacy of this time a powerful bargaining tool. For with the treaties of Utrecht and Ryswick, both the British and the French acquired the Asiento enabling them to receive the Spanish bullion used in the payment for the slaves.

Some of these African slaves were later to be used for mining in for instance Hispaniola and Puerto Rico so that their numbers in the entire New World particularly increased tremendously. The slave population rose to the level that in 1527, they could mobilize and rebel in Puerto Rico. They even moved into Cuba and Jamaica where they were not so needed. Also as the colonists moved from Spanish Islands to the Spanish mainland, they went with some of their African slaves who then had to settle at New Spain, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Chile (Curtain 1975). During this period of the 1520s, a given Spanish estate was reported to have used between eighty and hundred African slaves so that towards the end of the 16th C. Curtain estimated that there were over fifty thousand officially imported slaves to the New World besides the number which was smuggled in.

Once every 8-10 days (prisoners of war and criminals) from the forts, the African who brought slaves would go with powder, ball flints, shots, rum and tobacco.

The African chief forced the Europeans to pay presents (dechy) or tax (comey) on each slave. Slave dealings brought revenue to participating African states (government & chiefs) Ejituwu (1975).

Ship captains or factors (white agent) dealt with African chiefs at the coast and were in charge of the trading ports where the slaves were kept by the African traders, for shipment. At some time, the agent became consults under the African authorities.

Price of male slave at Bonny: 96 yards of different types of cloth, 52 handkerchiefs; 1 large brass pan, 2 muskets, 25 kegs of powder, 100 flints, 2 bags of short, 20 knives, 4 iron pots, 4 hats, 4 caps, 4 cutlasses, 6 bunches of beads 14 gallons of brandy (Auger, *etal.* : 70).

Journey through the Atlantic (the middle passage) took 5 to 8 weeks, slaves sometimes would attempt suicide by going on hunger strikes, hanging, cutting their throats Rico (1975). The slave holiday ships averaged 5.8 “and this was packed with four lines of slaves. The space allotted to each slave was 6ft by 1ft by 4inches so that a ship carried between 451 x 600 slaves Rico (1975). Diseases suffered by the slaves which accounted to high mortality rate would include, small pox, dysentery, and opthamia.

The slave origin was important to the planters: Ibo slaves from Niger Delta were said to appear docile but despondent with slavery and so could commit suicide. The Mandigo from Sierra Leone were gentle, could write Arabic recite parts of the Koran but unfit for field work. Koromantees (Gold coast) were courageous and rebellious papaw (Whydah) were popular, hardworking and disciplined Curtin (1975).

The root of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Oguta is in the internal slavery system which developed along the line of growth of the community. The issue of the development of slavery in Oguta as the research has revealed is likened to the saying that necessity is the mother of invention. The subsequent development of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the involvement of Oguta in it came about also as a necessity too. These necessities it has been argued, could have been critically viewed so that perhaps a more mindful attention should have been paid to them for the sake of humanity. Before one goes on to further analyze the incidence of the slavery/slave trade in the area, an excursion into the course of the action from the very beginning as narrated by the people around the spatial area of the discuss is

made. The main instruments used in gathering the data and processing of them, are oral traditions, participatory observation and some library research.

Narrating the incidence of slavery and the commercialization of the practice in Oguta which with time was engulfed by the foreign trade on it known as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Pa OkororieNwaso traced the beginning to the initial period of the political development of Oguta. According to him, during the further formation of the political organization of Oguta, the people needed a leader whose responsibility would be solely the administration of the society. This leadership styled after the monarchical system of government, had a man in the person of a king. The king was bestowed with great powers above everybody. He was therefore, highly respected and lived with strict dos and don'ts in relating with his people including his royal family members. One of such was that the king should not be engaged in most practical working activities such as working in the farm. Such rights and privileges were to some extent, extended to his royal family members. Other people performed some of such functions and were remunerated or rewarded in one way or another. He was supposed to live in an unrivaled comfort so to concentrate on the all-important governance of his domain. He exercised control and power in an almost absolute manner that for instance, he could have any maiden that he pleases as wife no matter the number he had earlier taken. People wished to be identified with the king, his honour and privileges. There came a time when many people did not wish to work for the king for some reasons. Perhaps the very king at whose tenure this began, was not popular or cherished as was earlier the situation.

The King responded defensively and was said to have appointed the respected elders in a council who became the *Ndiche* (council of *Oririnze* titled elders) who were responsible for overseeing of the services, due the king, assigned to some people. Pa Okororie, further said that this arrangement worked only for sometimes as most of the people later proved very difficult in the state of affairs. The king had to devise new means of taking control of the situation. The king made laws that tended to compel the people to perform the tasks around the palace even without some form of reward. Such dictator king used the state security mechanism around him to enforce conformity of the people. Some of the new laws simply were oppressive and meant that the will of the people put around the king to serve was neglected and later completely denied.

In this way, some of their people were now made to permanently serve and live around the king. These gradually with time became slaves to him. This situation further deteriorated when family members of such people and their descendants continued to serve as slaves within the royal family even after the king had passed. The sort of kingship evolved by Oguta people is the hereditary type so that in the place of the king who passed, would be the regent. The regent must come from the royal family and may later perhaps later succeed the king. If he is not to be the king one of the male relations of the late king would reign in his place. The kings upon the much power accorded them by the people, had at some points arrogated to themselves so much power that they ruled as something of demi-gods or despots or outright dictators.

It was as from this time that such kings made the rather very wicked law that they must be buried with certain items (exotic grave goods) and two servants standing alive on either sides of the body of the king right inside the grave. These kings were theocratic and

said to be of god. People believed that whatever they commanded was from god and were bound to obey such even after the death of the kings. In this way, the people would not have offended their God. From this time onwards, the servants respect among the people dwindled and was finally lost at one point. At the beginning, it was viewed as an honourable thing to be with the king and even accompany him through the journey to the great beyond. The people particularly the servants transcended from the privileged position round the exalted king to a disdain lavish situation. Some people now looked at serving around the king as living in an earthly hell. Families would only send their wayward children to be with the king. Those who could not find such sort of persons among their family members and who must send someone looked for an alternative means of dealing with the situation. Sometimes there could be a family that has such less desired children and would be willing to part with them for something important to them. Such people may wish to exchange a good woman from a good family for their worthless son who may end up at the palace to serve the king.

Women were often used in such dealings because they were considered less valuable human beings. Another reason for this is because of the patrilineage family system which translates to only men being the ones entrusted with the survival of the family. The woman married into a family is to join her husband in the procreation and survival of the family which the existence is on the account or in the name of the man's family. Ascendancy of each family is therefore, traced to the man's family not the woman's. A woman cannot establish her lineage in that regard in the husband's family or place. Her contribution is mainly viewed and appreciated in the help she renders in raising the children with her husband and co-operating with him and their children in their social growth and development. A woman exchanged for a worthless person of course would not have much respect from the new family although she would not be maltreated as was obtained around the palace and lose all respect.

With time, other solutions to the contribution of persons to the king came up. Those who could not make such exchange with a woman, considered by some as being wrong or did not have enough resources to resort to valuables such as life stock, landed property, (including fishing waters), gold and special inheritance but had the so-called worthless man or boy to give out would accept very valuable possessions in exchange for the human. If the person's worth is judged as being the equivalent of a property, his treatment by mean royals may not go beyond that of ordinary property tool or domestic animal. They therefore, can be used in doing all sorts of activities. It was from among such that the individuals to be buried alive with the corpse of a king or similar sacrificial and ritualistic affairs were taken. Since the kings were very powerful, people could not stop them when they thought such acts to be inhuman and gradually it became part of the customs and tradition of the people.

Not long after some wealthy and influential persons desired that they (such as high chiefs and priests) should be served in similar way as the king. Such began to exchange some of their valuables for the rejected persons. When they arrive these wealthy person's houses, they will subject the so-called worthless persons to serving in whatever capacity that suites them or they would be severely punished. From the manners they treated these servants who could not go back to their original families, slavery started in Oguta. These so-called worthless people would normally be taken out of their community where they may

never get to see any of their original family members and so did not have something of a second chance of changing from bad to good persons and be mercifully returned in similar way as they came. Even for some who were not taken far away from their biological family home, they challenge of being free was so much as the master would require a lot more than an average or poor family can afford. More so, the parties involved would normally be put through an oath never to back down on the agreement or deal. Again, there was a gradual evolution of the status of some servants who later became slaves in hands of their masters. The kings from the beginning, allowed the servants to visit their families since they were taken from within the Oguta community, marry and raise families but were bond to go back to the service of the king. When the wealthy men joined in the system, such privileges were curtailed. The individuals were exchanged for the wealthy and important men's property and the people were taken to be a replacement of such property which therefore made them to be assets. Under the king, the servants lived in similar ways as other citizens of Oguta. They could raise children and keep some personal belongings though never to become so rich. Some of the servants were proudly pleased to be with the king even at death. Being used as sacrificial lamb around the palace was an honour to the servant and the faithful family. The kings were charismatic and ruled with caution and fear of God. He could be assassinated and made to seem as if he died naturally in the palace.

The wealthy individuals acted with impunity towards the servants as nobody could question them on how to use their property being the servants. Some of these kings or instance castrated the men servants now slaves and had them like eunuchs so there was no use of them getting married and their own formal family members are better protected.

Mr. Emmanuel Mmaduagwu revealed that the unwritten constitution of Oguta was later to be reformed with further enlightenment. The law that made families to contribute persons to work for the king around his palace was repealed as the people came to despise it so much. The king makers who crowned the king regained their power and the kings seized being dictators. Oguta then resorted to taxation in the form of farm produce especially yam and livestock. People who worked for the kings were now being paid with the proceeds of the tax. The payment this time was with money of which they used cowries (*ego-ayara*) and later *manillas* (*ego-igwe* or *ikpechi*). This time the king was among the richest members of the society and could comfortably pay people who worked for him. He had his own servants whom he paid also. The kings became popular again and no longer secretly despised by their people. The act of slavery and even the local trade on it had already started and could not just come to an end because the king sort to revert. The rich persons of Oguta saw it a good enterprise. They convinced some people who they paid handsomely to exchange their persons for money (that is out rightly buying them). Some people yielded to this and actually sold their persons to such rich individuals.

Mr. Mmaduagwu clarified that at this time, Oguta people were still living around the Old Benin kingdom. That is was when the then Oba of Benin through his expansionist policy conquered Oguta and made her to pay tribute that Oguta got the idea of monetary taxation as mentioned above. At the conquest, he disclosed the then king of Oguta was dethroned and killed and a new ruler imposed by the Benin monarch was put in his place. He further narrated the account of the political evolution of Oguta saying that after sometime, that another powerful state attacked and annexed the area including the part of

Benin which had Oguta in its fold. Oguta people were adversely affected by these wars he said necessitating their migration to the present homeland. Mr. Emmanuel Mmaduagwu explained that although we evolved our socio-political system through the peculiar circumstances of our societal system through the peculiar circumstances of our societal growth and development, that some of the ideas involved were borrowed from places around us who had either evolved such themselves or also borrowed from elsewhere.

The idea of slavery just as that of the kingship had been in existence before Oguta people got involved in them through their societal development. Nobody can claim that he knows exactly when and where the act of slavery began. One can only trace its development in a particular place such as Oguta; that is as an idea that was also borrowed or which simply evolved in their everyday life activities. The biologists such as Stone and Cuisine explained that living things including man, anywhere he may be found, fight for advantage. This may simply be the summary of the natural path through which the act of slavery and the trade began even in Oguta. So man anywhere and anytime can exploit his fellow man and continually capitalize on the advantage, such that may evolve into slavery.

For Mr. A.O. Okoroafor one reason why people sold their persons into slavery was headiness. If a family observes that their child is too stubborn and may end-up badly in life, they would want to do away with him; this time profitability so he does not cause serious problem for them in the society. Often such transaction was secretly carried out although at some point there were those who now made it their business. This people would buy the slaves from whoever, keep them until there is need for them, when they would gainfully sell them. Such people became the middlemen who further cashed in on the local trade when the Europeans arrived at the coast requesting for slaves in large numbers for the labour need in the New world. These Europeans paid even more handsomely for these slaves and so encouraged the local dealers to carry on with the business.

When the local traders were dealing with the people around them, the need was not in large numbers. It was only when such need arose and so there was gain keeping so many who have to be kept alive until they are sold. The people could use them for some sacrifice, as war machinery and the likes and so the numbers on sale was limited. Another reason why slavery and slave trade began in Oguta was that certain people desired to have in the fold, some human traits not found or common among them. Such traits as cleverness and industriousness can be desirable and make people plot devilishly to have them from people who possess them.

Owu 'masquerade' found in Oguta was forcefully taken away from the people of Onya because of its beauty and lovely performances. In such occasion, Oguta might have taken some of its dancers or other performers such as instrumentalist to help propagate such. The oral traditions in Oguta recorded that it was through a gallant slave of Oguta that *Owu* was brought to Oguta. Sometimes when places are stormed militarily, captives are taken together with booties of the war. The captives may include a strong warrior whose brave and fighting traits may be kept as a state asset. History has it that some of the wars waged were partly engaged in for the beautiful women and sometimes treasures such as gold of the party being attacked. Only recently Iraq temporarily annexed the oil rich Kuwaiti for the purpose of its richness.

The opposite of this action is when people choose to marry certain categories of persons

from certain families because of some good traits found in them; this time through a peaceful natural means of conviction and affection. Some wealthy individuals would buy some strong slaves who are added to their security set up. This time professionalism in this regard had not started as we have today where body guards come on their own to be employed as skilled labour. This also helped in entrenching the act of slavery and the attendant trade.

Similarly, war captives were keyed especially around the king or warriors responsible for their capture and often these would remain as slaves in Oguta. Such people could be used in the farm or in the manufacturing areas. According to Mr. AfamOgini some of such slaves were actually acquired as labour hands in the farm by the wealthy persons in Oguta. In some other cases, barren women they could afford then brought slaves who some of them kept and treated like their own children. This was a sort of adoption by these women. Their children may be well taken care of by the woman but once she and the generation are gone, the children of such persons will be regarded as slaves by Oguta people.

This is better than the act of stealing people's children by such persons as the barren women because at least the pain of the loss of the child by the parents would not be there when they are taken with the consent of the one who legitimately had them either as their children or slaves. Creditor and debtor situation sometimes led to slavery and subsequently slave trade. Someone who is indebted to another and could not redeem such in time may be compelled to live under his creditor for sometime working as a slave so to make-up for the debt. Sometimes this person is not able to pay through his life time and the same treatment would continue with his children who have also become slaves to the creditor. In Oguta there are instances where this happened and caused the subsequent generations of the family of the debtor to now be seen as slaves. Some persons were said to have borrowed money from some rich persons using the child as collateral. When the person does not pay his debt as agreed, the agreement will elapse and the child will become the rich person's slave.

Some slaves situation arose from Oguta because the persons involved were used in making atonement for the crime committed (sometimes mistakes) by them. In one instance, a hunter from a neighbouring community had mistakenly killed a man from Oguta in a hunting expedition but tried to cover it up by retreating to community. Oguta looked for the Oguta man killed, and searched carefully and located the killer who confessed his crime. Oguta in making way for peace, asked the hunter to do some ritualistic things including the provision of a virgin girl for the slain man's family. These were done but it began another line of slave generation.

In these ways slave holding grew in Oguta by the day. An average Oguta person lives an aristocratic life. The wealthy ones among them used the availability of slaves acquired at far less exorbitant amount being paid by the Europeans, who surfaced in their cargo ship with many manufactured items and began to exchange them for certain items of trade found at the Gulf of Guinea especially around the Bight of Biafra, which later came to include the slaves, the story changed. The internal slavery and the trade thereof was now stimulated to respond to a much more global need and trade on slave that had just started with the Spaniards and the Portuguese leading the way at two different but convergent fronts.

The Portuguese who were the first Europeans to arrive the African coast on this part, remained offshore anchoring at such islands as Akasa and Bonny. It was from here that these Europeans and the Niger Delta Middle men began to trade on the items of trade available which later included slaves following the arisen need for them in the New World. With this development, the local dealings on slaves joined the one at the coast enroute the New World and Europe, thereby beginning the triangular trans-Atlantic slave trade which process has earlier been described.

In the middle of 18th C., the Europeans had started moving up beyond the coast and into the hinterland of this area. Before the end of the 19th C. they had moved far into the land encountering directly some of the sources of the slaves that had sometimes pondered on the nature of the environment and society that the African (southern Nigerians) slaves came from Asiegbu (1974), Ofonagoro (1980). At this time however, the slave trade had been abolished and some mechanisms put on to ensure compliance by all. It was at about this time in 1885 that the first set of Europeans entered Oguta for another line of business (the palm produce trade) with trading companies in the lead Agorua (2016) Nzimiro (2005) Ndupu (2000). Unfortunately, the trade of slaves had later firm grip on the system in Oguta and many other societies on the hinterland. The information on the abolition had not sunk in and the trade was still on but perhaps not in full swings as before. Such prominent Oguta business men whose business included slave dealing as Chief ObuaAjukwu, Chief NwasikeUde and Chief IfiEyiche who were at the fore front of receiving the European even against the wish of Oguta people did so with the hope of dealing directly with the Europeans on slaves instead of passing through some second line middlemen around the coast. This did not work as the Europeans had a different plan entirely

In the course of the trade before the 19th C., Oguta people who traded on slaves had bought them from the locals around and moved them on their big dug-out canoes towards the coast to Okrika, Abonema, Nembe and Akasa Okoroafor (2017). Even while the trade was on, the oral history (historical account given orally by an eye-witness) taken from some persons who were involved indicates that it was secretly done to some extent. The slaves were not at all times exposed in the canoe while being taken to buyers in the relay manner in which the trade was carried through. For the children and some young women, they were often covered in the boat and discretely sold to buyers. Oguta according to the oral history did not participate much in the sales at the coastal area except for a very few number of the people. It was through Oguta however, that much the slaves sold from around Oguta were dealt with. Oguta served as a major slave market being an inland port which provided better access from the hinterland to the dealers around the coast. It was through the frequent use of the route from Oguta to the coast, that subsequent business persons came to know the route as an important one linking the people at the coast, far into the hinterland. Yam production which Oguta was famous about, gave her the first cheque to the bank but the new line of trade on slaves further enriched her. Both supported the emergence of a new class of local bourgeoisie who later received the Europeans, coming to trade on palm, another big stimulus in the happy economic growth of the Oguta community.

Conclusion

The incidence of slavery and later slave trade in Oguta, sprouted as a means of solving the political need of the people. It was further enhanced by the uncivilized behavior of the rich persons of the land. The development of slavery in Oguta is really regrettable. The inhuman treatment of man on fellow man is simply callous and insensitive. These were mistakes that could have been avoided but for the wrong reasoning of some persons. The profit made out of dealings on slaves and the comfort sort by the people who patronized the act are nothing compared to the pain, mystery and feeling of alienation that the slaves were faced with. The most unfortunate part of this development is the continuation of the stigma associated with the act. Even when useful laws have been made to end the ugly trend for good, the people in some quarters have not heeded such but gone ahead to entrench the wicked feeling amongst us. Here, love is advocated as the solution to the problem. With love all of such mistakes would be taken care of. Let everybody accept everyone as humans; not to have some as sub-humans simply because of some accident of history. The psychic imbalance created by the incidence of slavery amongst us should be surmounted with love enthroned at all levels of our operation. Some of the descendants of the ex-slaves have achieved a lot amongst us so to earn our respect and elicit love of all. This is another clarion call to all people with this sort of development to please quit anything that supports discrimination and promote issues that bind us together in love.

The 21st century human should be an enlightened one who craves for good always and radiates love everywhere. Let the love shine and shine always

Table of Interviewees

S/N	Name	Title	Sex	Age	Occupation	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
1	OkororieNwaso	Elder	Male	82yrs	Farmer	Oct 1992	IshibeOguta	Very good
2	Emmanuel Anene Okoroafor	Mr.	Male	44yrs	Civil servant	Dec. 1992	UmunkwokomoshiOguta	Good
3	Anthony Osita Okoroafor	Mr.	Male	37yrs	Civil servant	Jan. 1993	UmunkwokomoshiOguta	Good
4	Emmanuel Mmaduagwu	Mr.	Male	45yrs	Business man	Jan. 1993	New Layout Oguta	Good
5	NkemUzoka	Mr.	Male	52yrs	Retired soldier	Jan. 1993	UmutogwumaOguta	Good
6	OnyenmaIyasara	Mrs.	Female	61yrs	Farmer	Feb. 1993	AbatuOguta	Good
7	AkpeEzekoro	Madam	Female	71yrs	Business woman	Feb. 1993	UmunkwokomoshiOguta	Good
8	IkechukwuIronaIzieme	Chief	male	66yrs	Business woman	Feb. 1993	AbatuOguta	Good
9	ChiekeUzoKamalu	Mr.	Male	69yrs	Rtrd civil servant	Feb. 1993	OrsuObodo	Good

10	Onyedika Paul Nzeako	Mr.	Male	87yrs	Traditional ruler	Feb. 1993	Egbu	Good
11	Johnson Ben Ugborua	Mr.	Male	80yrs	Ligoniare	Feb. 1993	Mgbidi	Good
12	NkeoyeniNwapa	Madam	Female	66yrs	Fish Dealer	Feb. 1993	AmarochaOguta	Good

(A) Primary Sources

(i) Oral Sources

(B) Secondary Sources

(i) Bibliographical Texts

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