

Historicizing Identity Questions Among the North-eastern Igbo People: A Case of “Wawa”

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Abstract: Identity deals with the identification of oneself, whereas identity questions relate to the difficulties in really understanding or determining who you are in relation to other people. The People of northeastern Igbo, particularly, the Abakaliki in Ebonyi State and Enugu, have had this problem of identity simply because they are being described as “wawa people”. While the two groups of Igbo people have continued to call each other wawa people, none has actually refuted the name. Wawa is wrongly conceived as a derogatory concept that connotes both rejection and timidity. It has been often used to refer to people who have not attained high standard of civilization. Therefore, whenever wawa is used as an identity for someone from northeastern Igbo such person will be ever ready to go to war because he or she feels he or she is being represented in an image that connotes denigration. Against this background, this study was provoked by the inferiority that stigmatizes people from these areas to argue that while the people are disposed to fight for being called “onye wawa”, the word means more than an insult. The word simply means “No” which stands for a disagreement of a particular ideology. The study is underpinned with modernization theory while data for this study will be collected from both primary and secondary sources and data collected will be historically analyzed in a thematic narration.

Key words: Historicizing, Identity, Questions, Northeastern, Wawa

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I. INTRODUCTION

Wawa is a dialectic language spoken by the group of Igbo people found in the Northeastern side of Igboland. Its history is traceable to “wa” which relates to rejection of gift or unwillingness to undertake a task. As a dialectic expression of the Northeastern people of Igboland, “wawa” has been derogatorily used to refer to people with low economic status of life or whose social life is very pitiable. In this regard, it has been argued that it could only be derogatory to call someone “Onye Wawa”. Therefore, apart from being the dialectical meaning of ‘No’ for Abakaliki and Enugu speaking regions, ‘wawa’ is generally understood by those who use the word in error to mean a group of people who live in certain areas of the South Eastern part of Nigeria, and who are generally believed to be backward, illiterate and inferior by every improvised meaning of the word (Wawa editorial, 2019). As a linguistic (dialect) identity of Igbo sub-group, it refers to the people of old Abakaliki-Enugu province during and after colonial enterprise in Southeastern Nigeria.

Apart from being a spoken dialect, the origin of ‘Wawa’ is traceable to the gathering of Igbo kings in 1928 where it was first used in public by chief Onyeama when all major kings and chiefs in the old Onitsha province (including Enugu) and beyond assembled in Enugu to welcome Captain W. Buchanan-Smith on his appointment as lieutenant-governor of southern Nigeria provinces. The gathering was envisaged to be a test of popularity between Obi of Onitsha and Onyeama, the appointed “Warrant Chiefdom” of Eke. By his appointment, Onyeama saw himself as an absolute ruler whose authority could not be easily flouted and began to accord himself all the supreme powers like the Obi of Onitsha. The Obi of Onitsha on the other hand, is the supreme monarch of Onitsha who Onyeama accused of being a sub-colonial setup of recent immigrants from the Benin Kingdom and since himself is also appointed a “Warrant Chief”, him too is also in the league of the Oba of Benin or Ooni of Ife, the Yoruba monarch. This scenario turned conflictive to the kings of northeast Igbo called “Wawa” and southwest Igbo called the “Ijekeebe” and since the Obi of Onitsha occupies the highest seat of honour in Igbo political gathering, it is expected that he (Obi of Onitsha) was to assume the supreme authority of that gathering.

Similarly, Onyeama who was outraged by the Obi’s assumption as the supreme authority in his domain quickly ordered for the immediate removal of the powerful king of Onitsha and when he was tried to be placated by the District Officer, he furiously uttered “Wa” (the local lingo for No) and as a sign of immutability he stated “Wawa” (Never). Meanwhile, Onyeama’s instance on getting the Obi of Onitsha out of the seat is a mark of

patriotism hence he was quoted as saying to the colonial officer: "if that man is still occupying that seat when I come back, the leopard will eat him" (Onyema, 1933).

Wawa is geographically said to stretch from the land area north of Awka, the capital of Anambra State, through parts of Oji River Local Government, Udi and Ezeagu Local Governments, some parts of Enugu Municipality and Igbo Etiti Local Government. This emphatically captured Enugu region as being only "Wawa" till population expansion extended to the northern east areas. Undoubtedly, it could be possible that the north eastern Igbo group was not originally part of the designation despite linguistically, they themselves speak the dialect. They are therefore being called "Ndi wa-wa" by the "Ijekebe" who know little or nothing about the people due chiefly to the location of the area which was considered more interior than the Nsukka and Enugu enclaves. In other words, the wa-wa expanded westwards towards the Anambra valley and eastwards across the fertile Nkanu land until they came in conflict with the Izzi, Ezza and Ikwo sub-tribe who were also in desperate need for expansion. Since that time, the Abakaliki speaking people became part of the wa-wa group. However, Elizabeth Isiechei reports that as the Ezza and other groups to the north-east, attempted to expand still further to the west, so were the densely populated Udi-Nsukka plateau, suffering acutely from land shortage-especially serious in the Wawa area- leading them to expand towards the sparsely populated Anambra valley on the one hand and in an east-west direction on the other hand (Isiechei, 1973).

This categorization could be the reason why there often tend to be identity conflict between the people of Abakaliki and Enugu, particularly their younger generations who considered wa-wa as absurd, derogatory and dehumanizing. Wawa in every contextual usage means something rather than abuse. It means an identity and a spoken dialect of those who trace their language to "Wa" meaning (No). It includes all the areas of Enugu and Ebonyi states.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING IDENTITY AND IDENTITY QUESTION

There is a sharp contradiction in the conception of identity between psychologists and sociologists. While the psychologists most commonly use the term 'identity' to describe personal identity or the idiosyncratic things that make a person unique, the sociologists however, use the term to describe social identity or the collection of group memberships that define the individual. From the psychological point of view, we understand that identity relates to the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group (particular social group). In other words, a psychological identity relates to self-image, self esteem and individuality. Therefore, identity as captured by Erikson refers to the sense of sameness or continuity in one's past and present selves. It is also pertaining to the integration of one's private and public selves, hence, he further stressed that an optimal identity is experienced as a sense of psychological well-being... a feeling of being at home in one's body, knowing where one is going and the assurance of anticipated recognition from those who count. To this extent, a person's identity is defined as the totality of one's self construal. This implies that identity relates to how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future. This by every means is indicative that there are processes of change within the development of one's personal identity. Otherwise, identity should be natural and original until it is being influenced by some environmental traits.

In this context, it will be right to stress that there are peculiar characteristic that associate with one's identity. Such characteristics include language (dialect). The dialect of people is a symbol of their identity and no matter the changes that might have occurred, one's dialect is typical of his or her identity. In most cases, dialectic distortions have been associated with identity questions and identity question arises as a result of environmental factors that influence one's social life. For instance, a traveling young Abakaliki man who went to Lagos or Anambra states to fumble with his language before his folks is always criticized and foisted to suffer discrimination. He is always accused of non-patriotism and is not invited to join community meeting. He is left to feel excommunicated from his kinsmen until he begins to speak the language. By this, we understand that the importance of dialectic languages have led to group associations with an example of Wawa Movement of early 80s that served as a conglomeration of Wawa speaking groups.

2.1 Theoretical Framework of Modernization Analysis

This study is anchored on modernization theory of Max Weber. The theory holds that there are certain changes that occurred in societal progression that affect our identity. Modernization is a process of a progressive transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' to a 'modern' society (en.wikipedia, 2019). Modernization theory attempts to identify social variables that contribute to societal progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution. In this context, it sees to look into the possible changes that can earn development to a society on the one hand and the likely changes that development can bring to our cultural practices and values. This could be found on the relationship between modernization and identity. Moreover, whilst Weber was not after the materialistic posture of capitalism as hold by capitalist modernization theorists, he rather shares in Karl Marx analysis on structural inequality that has been created by this capitalism which to a

large extent, has caused class antagonism and conflicts in the society. For him, ideas-especially beliefs and values have the transforming power of the society. Therefore, since capitalism has created a sub-structure that places certain advantages for development to a particular structure, this development could affect one's culture including the language. To that extent, modernization theory looks at how the development that occurs within the class differences has affected people's dialectic languages thus, resulting to standard and sub-standard languages, general or non-general language. The latter in other words is held satiric and to disparage people that speak the language or dialect. Therefore, it is in this context that wa-wa has come to refer to timidity.

2.2.1. Wawa as Identity

As we recognize above that wa-wa is a dialectic language of people, it is apparently wrong to conceptualize it in terms of timidity, backwardness and derogation. Identity is a concept found within one's cultural practices and values and since language is part of culture, language therefore, whether acceptable or unacceptable becomes part of an identity. The way people talk, the language or dialect they speak and the manner with which they speak or express their thoughts are all attributes of identity. Therefore, wa-wa has become the identity of those who speak the dialect.

It is a symbol of unity and oneness for those who can identify themselves as belonging to Wawa family. It provokes sentiments, feelings and passions especially to people of Wawa group to the extent that a Wawa man prefers to attend to his wa-wa brother before any other person. Hence, the people maintain that historically and culturally, we are one people, speaking similar dialects and cherishing the same traditions and customs (Mbah, Ezea and Eze, 1999). However, it is instructive to know that in the days of colonialism, this cultural affinity among people became the only way group of peoples were substituted for provincial governance. By this, the colonial officer once carved out Udi, Nsukka, Enugu, Agwa, Afikpo and Abakaliki into different provinces. Some of these people were grouped into the old Onitsha Province while others into old Ogoja Province. This balkanization was abrogated after the end of colonialism when local self-government fell into the hands of indigenous people as Dr Nnamdi Azikwe rightly discarded the old provincial set-up and constituted the Enugu and Abakaliki Provinces, thus bringing together the people of the Northern Igbo into two homogenous administrative units.

2.2.2. The Development of Wawa Political Consciousness

As stated above, the Wawa area encompasses all the land of Enugu state and Abakaliki. It is geographically classified as the Northeastern Igbo speaking people whose dialect is distinct from the rest of other Igbo. This dialectical differentiation characterized their political consciousness and galvanized them into searching for political unity, cohesion and stability from the Government of Nigeria.

With the independence of Nigeria in 1960 and the abrogation of all the British political system, the Wawa area was created into the state of Anambra with its headquarters at Awka. At that time, the Government machineries were in favour of those who were considered to be more exposed to development as often held by the "Ijekebee". This discrimination was as a result of the peculiarity in their dialect as the Wawa dialect has come under severe criticism leading to marginalization and discrimination of the (people) Wawa by the so called "Ijekebee" people in terms of employment opportunities, political appointments and distribution of government resources. Thus, the marginalization and discrimination prompted the formation of Wawa Movement that came into existence in the 80s as political movement for balancing the gap that existed between the "Wawa" and the "Ijekebee". Through this process, the campaign for the creation of Wawa state began with the so called "Ijekebee" working against the success of the struggle. Against this background, S. C. Ukpabi (2019) holds that while the people submitted document requesting for the creation of Wawa state to the Supreme Military Council, the "Ijekebee" were out to frustrate the intention. He further maintained that the "Ijekebee" were interested in maintaining the status quo with a slight change on where to locate the state capital. According to him, the "Ijekebee" wanted the whole of Enugu to remain as part of Anambra State but the struggle had to continue up to the last minutes when a bunch of Wawa people converged in his house waiting for the last announcement. Accordingly, it was at the last minute that the Head of State-General Ibrahim Babagida used his biro to include Enugu State in the list of 12 States that were created in 1991. The implication was that Enugu, a backward area as it was called by the "Ijekebee" was no longer part of Anambra state and the "Ijekebee" people would cease from determining what would happen in the state again.

2.2.3. The Association of Wawa Movement

The Wawa movement was a political reaction against the oppression of Wawa people in south east Nigeria. The movement showcased a colourful parade of women in their beautiful costumes and uniforms, match past by school children, political rally and dancing exhibitions. It was first held as "Udi Day" in 1959 in an attempt to recapture the Wawa ideals and to emphasize that the Wawa were never inferior to any group of people. Since then, the Udi Day became an annual event which people walk the streets with their heads raised

up and became proud to be called Wawa. According to Enechi Onyia, the Wawa as an epithet of the people turned as an ideological campaign for mobilizing the Wawa to assert their identity (Onyia, 2019). This implies that they were proud and accepted to be called "Wawa" hence Onyia further stressed that they were so proud that if you call them "Wawa" they will answer back and call you "Ijekebee" in reference to inquisitiveness of other Igbo in their predilection for asking 'where are you going' (Onyia, 2019).

The Wawa Association grew out of political marginalization and oppression from people seeking to address the discrimination and exclusion meted out them. To that extent, its mission statement is "fulfilling lives every day" hence one can add that the Wawa's goal evolved around satisfying the everyday needs of their customs. Specifically, the objectives of National Association of Wawa include:

- To respect and appreciate cultural diversity.
- To promote the understanding of unique cultural and ethnic heritage.
- To promote the development of culturally responsible and responsive curricula.
- To facilitate acquisition of the attitudes, skills and knowledge to function in various cultures.
- To eliminate racism and discrimination in the society.
- To achieve social, political economic and educational equity and
- To maintain the unity of Nigeria.

According to wawa.com, it is their mission to get you where you are going with less worry and more satisfaction. By this, it could be said that the Wawa are favourably disposed to assisting a distressed person hence, they further stated that whatever you are craving, day or night, our wide variety of fresh, delicious foods and beverages make it easy to find what you are craving (www.com).

III. IDENTITY QUESTION AND THE CHALLENGES ON ETHNIC NATIONALITY

Identity questions arises where there is heterogeneous population or plural society with each of the ethnicity trying to exert superiority over others. Sometimes, this could lead to inter ethnic crisis while at other times result to indigene/settlers' dichotomy. In Wawa areas, there have been completely contentions among the people on who is originally, the Wawa person. While the "Ijekebee" call the Enugu State Wawa, contemporary generations from Enugu State in turn call the Abakaliki themselves the Wawa, thus leading to Identity question and the challenge of Igbo nationality in Nigeria.

Amid this controversy, the Igbo people divided themselves between the "Ijekebee" and Wawa group. Nevertheless, the Wawa further sub-divided themselves between the Wawa Enugu and Wawa Abakaliki against the political conscience or zeal that came to bear in the Wawa movement. While the Enugu saw her own Wawa as a linguistic interpretation of 'No', they look at Abakaliki Wawa as a concept of backwardness. Similarly, this categorization further seems to compound the challenges about the originality of Wawa as an identity. Wawa is historically challengeable by simple misinterpretation of the word, however, it further challenged the Igbo search for ethnic nationality. While it is possible that Wawa extends to other areas of Igboland particularly the Anambra State, some anti radical cynics of Igbo nation have called for a geographic delineation of the people to determine where Wawa started and where it ended. By this, Amoury-Talbot, a British ethnologist who relied on oral tradition for this distinction opines that they exist the "Wawa North and "Wawa South". The Wawa South which is found in such places like Ekwerazu, Obowo, Ugiri, Osu, Abatete and Nnewi have no relationship with the Wawa North (Talbot, 1926). Basically, the area that is referred as Wawa today might have stretched westwards towards the Anambra valley and eastwards across the fertile Nkanu land until they came in conflict with the Izzi-Ezza-Ikwo sub-tribes who were awfully in need of expansion.

To that extent, it will be rightly inferred from the opinion of Elizabeth Isiechei who reported that as the Ezza and other groups to the north-east, attempted to expand still further to the west, so were the densely populated Udi-Nsukka plateau, suffering acutely from land shortage-especially serious in the Wawa area-leading them to expand towards the sparsely populated Anambra valley on the one hand and in an east-west direction on the other hand (Isiechei, 1973). While we will not dismiss the claim, it has been observed that all through history, there had been instances of migrations from one place to another and vice versa which had resulted to inter-cultural contacts and acculturation. Among factors responsible for inter-group contacts or migrations in pre-colonial Igboland, for instance, were religious rituals, hunting, war, search of fertile land for farming, commerce or trade, slave trade and marriages. In Igboland, there existed in those days three powerful deities or oracles such as "Ibini Ukpabi" popularly called the "long juju of Arochukwu", "Agbala Awka"-the Awka juju as well as the Igwe-ka Ala of Umuahia which exerted social, religious, legal and political influences among the people. These deities acted as the unifying factor for Igbo nationality of that time which charted the cause for Igbo liberation and promotion of pan Igboism.

Generally, the search of Igbo identity has become a source of political disunity. For instance, among the Wawa group of Northeastern Igboland, there have been identity challenges between the Wawa Enugu and Wawa Abakaliki. This has however challenged the new generation who were not acquainted with the historical

origin of Wawa, hence they began to lay claim and counter claims against one another. This discrimination comes whenever you call a young Enugu person "Onye Wawa", such person will be ready to fight and tell you to your face that he or she is not "Onye Wawa". In this context, the person will in turn be referring to Abakaliki as the Wawa. This confusion has threatened the unity and the understanding that promoted their political conscience into Wawa movement. Presently, it seems impracticable for an Anambran to work with an Ebonyi man on the ground of cultural identity as it is also difficult for Imolite to take an Anambran as his brother. This identity problem has impacted negatively on the pan Igbo politics and has caused them a place in national politics to the extent that they are even not considered to have a common ground for Nigeria's leadership.

Similarly, in so far as young people from Enugu have not accepted the concept that they are Wawa, the Abakaliki have also declined to be called the Wawa. They rather refer to someone from Enugu as the original Wawa despite belonging to the group of Wawa speaking people. These differences provided for intra-tribal discontents that manifest in identity question among the Igbo speaking people of south-east Nigeria and contributed to Igbo political problem. As it is between the "Ijekebee" and Wawa, so it is among the Wawa themselves. There are identity crises between the so called "Ijekebee/Wawa" on the one hand and Wawa/Wawa on the other hand. This problem has factionalized the Igbo political organization and set in discrimination within the Ohianaeze Ndigbo as the apex political organization of Ndigbo. Thus, there were crises between the leadership of Ohianaeze with their followers and the President with his cabinet. In some of those crises, the Ohianaeze Youths Council and the Women Wing called for the suspension of the President on the allegation of corruption, maladministration and highhandedness. Accordingly, they accused the President General Nnia Nwodo of turning Ohianaeze Ndigbo into a political appendage for those that could pay and pick his greedy bills (Nwodo, 2019). In other words, he was found collecting money from one Government House to another at the expense of Igbo political Ideology.

3.1 Towards the Agitation for the Creation of Wawa State

Politically, the Wawa area has suffered a whopping marginalization in Southeast zone. From 1952 to 1956, the whole of the so called "Wawa" area had no Federal or Regional Minister. It was only in 1957 that two people of Wawa zone were appointed Ministers after a series of petitions and carpet-crossings protest. In the same period, the southern Igbo people had had not less than twelve Ministers. Moreover, it is pertinent that the premierships of the former Eastern Region had always been held by the people of Southern Igboland. This was not palatable for the people who were deprived of justice in terms of political appointment and recruitment in civil service.

Indeed, the Military Regime of Emeka Ojukwu was the worst to the people of Wawa area. From 1966 to 1970, he did not see it fit to appoint even one person from the Wawa area into his cabinet stressing that the Wawa people did not support him against the Federal Government. In fact, it could be said that the Nigeria-Biafra war further compounded the Wawa problem. The war which started in Biafran areas forced many Wawa people to flee from their home and became refugees in other places as the Nigerian troops overran the Biafran territories. This did not only cause psychological trauma to them but also created other problems like hunger and starvation that resulted to the protruding stomach, death and lean limbs development. Apart from the trauma of refugeeism, the Biafra leadership failed to markedly depart from the age-old practice of utter neglect and marginalization of Wawa people in the appointments into key positions of government. For instance, there was no single Wawa person in the composition of Biafran War Cabinet, appointments of Service Chiefs and the Provincial Administrators. There was therefore a great deal of hopelessness and apprehension among Wawa leaders of what would be the fate of Wawa people at the end of the war in Biafra or in Nigeria.

It was in the midst of that uncertain and hopeless situation that the Wawa leaders decided to approach the Biafran leadership, requesting that passes be issued to Wawa refugees to enable them to cross to their home area, which was being occupied by Nigerian soldiers in order to enable them link-up with their kith and kin. This demand was already there before the Biafran authorities summoned the Wawa leaders and accused them of sabotaging the war efforts. But the Wawa were able to convince the Biafran Head of State that the measure was aimed at ensuring that all the Wawa people did not get perished. It was on this process that Odenigwe (2019) opines that it was the bulk of these returnees that got enlisted into the Biafra guerrilla forces, known as the Biafran Rangers and the Biafran Organisation of Freedom Fighters (BOFF) that served as the Intelligence Wing of the Biafran military, and which also carried out intermittent raids on Nigerian military locations.

After the war, there was no plan to reabsorb and re-engage the Wawa people in the decision-making body of either the Biafran or Nigerian government but the marginalization continued unabated for people who just came out of war. This to a large extent quickly reignited the agitation for Wawa state with a formal application requesting for the creation of Wawa state submitted to the Federal Military Government. In a relative development, a petition was sent to the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon on March 20, 1970 with the petitioners citing equal rights and opportunities to life, property, liberty and pursuit of happiness as the reason for the petition.

3.2 The Creation of Wawa (Enugu) State

As a result of their present experience and in the event of Biafra rejoining Nigeria at the end of the war in 1970, the leaders of Afikpo, Agwu, Eha-Amufu, Enugu, Ezikwo, Igboeze, Nkanu, Nsukka and Udi met on 6th of September, 1969 at Okohia in Mbanjo Division and decided that the people of Old Enugu and Abakaliki Provinces should demand the creation of a separate state to be known as Wawa state. Despite the undaunted zeal demonstrated by these groups of people toward the creation of Enugu state (Wawa), the southern Igbo group opted to kill the idea stressing that Enugu should continue to remain as part of the Eastern state of Nigeria.

Against this background, the Wawa struggle continued with the people deploying all arsenals at their disposal and eventually, the state was created on August 27, 1991 along with eight other states. Indeed, it is important to note that the struggle for the creation of the state took complete 63 years beginning from Richards's constitution which started with the formation of Enugu Aborigines Improvement Union on May 29, 1928. After the creation of Enugu State, the Abakaliki group of Wawa speaking area which was part of Enugu state had through the principles adopted on the proposal for state creation by the Eastern Regional Government which read that "the principle of ethnic relationship; each state should be as nearly as possible homogeneous" commenced the agitation for the creation of Ebonyi State citing marginalization from the Enugu Wawa as the reason (Elechi, 2000). Abakaliki was formally in the old Ogoja province and became part of the area submitted to the 1952 Willink Commission on state creation. The report of Commission adopted inter alia that:

1. The principle of self-determination, each state should wish to be separate and to be one single state;
2. The principle of ethnic relationship; each state should be as nearly as possible homogeneous;
3. The principle of geographical contiguity; each state should consist of one continuous and compact piece of territory;
4. The principle of viability; each state should be large enough to administer itself and as nearly as possible should be a self-contained economic unit (Elechi, 2000).

Implicitly, Abakaliki as part of the old Ogoja province was to be part of the proposed Ogoja, Cross River and Rivers State. In this proposal, the government objected to the creation of the COR state which was perceived as a contrivance borne out of Igbo hatred. By these principles, Abakaliki became part of Enugu State hence; Elechi opines that strenuous efforts were made to include Ebonyi people in Wawa projects basically, because of their oneness with the Wawa (Enugu State) people (Elechi, 2000).

IV. CONCLUSION

The study of Igbo history and the search for Igbo identity has become one of the difficult tasks of historical ventures. On the one side, is the general view that Ndi Igbo are autochthonous in terms of historical origin and thus, could trace their origin to "Nri" in the present day Anambra state. Scholars who hold this opinion often disregard the Igbo being traced to outside historical origin as evidence in Semitic or Asiatic hypotheses rather anthropologic evidence has tried to tackle this problem of Igbo migration and dispersal within the area they now occupy. Scholars such as G. I. Jones, A. E. Afigbo and some Anthropologists have propounded a theory of Nri-Awka-Orlu complex to probably explain the earliest centre of Igbo settlement in southern Nigeria. According to them, the Igbo... have no tradition of migration from elsewhere and appear to have settled in the thickly populated parts of Nri-Awka and Isu-Ama areas for a very long time and to have appeared from there... This theory is explicable on the fact that the Igbo might have started occupying their present area for about 4 millennia B. C.

Another side of the problem is the search for Igbo identity. The Igbo identity has become problematic in the study of Igbo history. There is a complete diversity of Igbo societies that spread across Igbo villages and communities and made each village or community unique in its own way. This made them formed into group and developed into clannish settlement that predated Igbo history. Most clans or groups no doubt began to exert superiority over others by claiming to be more Igboistic or belong to what is called "core" Igbo or language group that is in several Igbo settlement today. Some of these language groups include Delta Igbo, Ikwerre, Anambra Igbo, Oweri Igbo and Abakaliki Igbo. This basically contributed to the varieties of dialects found within the Igbo language hence, that Ndi Igbo have varieties languages- "*Igbo na asuu olu na olu*".

This is the basis of Igbo identity problem, but if our beliefs on Igbo historical evolution are acceptable, it is therefore imperative to know that Igbo identity remains largely the same and shouldn't be used as an insult to represent one section of Igbo group. Linguistic evidence has suggested that the Igbo belong to a linguistic unit designate as 'Kwa', a sub-group of the Niger-Congo group of Negro languages. This 'Wa' nevertheless qualifies those whose language belongs to 'Kwa' speaking group to which the Igbo are member.

Therefore, Wawa is more or less an identity for Igbo speaking group and does not in anywhere refer to backwardness rather, it is a local lingo for 'No' or 'Rejection' of a gift and message. In this context, the negative

use of Wawa is made to denigrate people that speak Wawa as their mother tongue. It is this negative use of the concept that apparently led to identity question and contributed to the search of pan Igbo nationalism.

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