

**INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST
COLONIAL UKWUANI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA STATE**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was to the best of our knowledge carried out by **VIVIAN NKECHI OSSAI** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, Nigeria, under my supervision.

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(Head of Department)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God for his grace, comfort, and strength towards me. This work is also dedicated to my family and friends for their support and prayers to me in completion of this project research and during the whole period of my programme.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

There were many factors which promoted interaction among the various communities of Nigeria. This could take the form of trade, diplomatic ties management of trade route boundaries and water resources and wars, among others. It could be friendly or hostile.¹ Group relations means co-operation between states, and communities. All Nigerian groups before colonialism have measured to ensure good relations with one another. Among the most important measures were the recognition of the territorial integrity of other states, promotion of trade, inter-state tours by the rulers or their representatives, inter-state marriages and establishment of diplomatic relations.² In some areas strangers were accepted into lineages where they were not only accommodated but integrated and given land to farm. Secondly states often agreed to promote peace and avoid wars. In essence, no Nigeria group can be treated in isolation of the others.³

Most states had laws, rules, and regulations (though unwritten) which they followed in dealing with others. Among the laws was that first strangers from other states were protected, except during period of wars and slave raiding, strangers were not manhandled. Secondly, states often agreed to promote peace and avoid wars.⁴

In fact, knowledge of history had provided the intricate around the types of disunity caused by few among the populace in Nigeria. It is obvious that people have united as a result of intergroup relation that has existed between them. However, some of the means through which relations were promoted was trade: this is a reasonable factor that facilitated intergroup relations in different part of Nigeria, and it is greatly believed that no community was self-sufficient in agricultural production and manufactured goods that are required for its necessities or luxuries.⁵ Therefore, differences in physical environment and geographical factors facilitated trade. Thus, trade activities have enhanced the creation of trade routes which further promoted inter-state cooperation; like building of roads linking settlements to settlements either by human portages or use of animals etc.⁶ it also promoted peaceful intergroup relations through construction and maintenance of the routes and maintaining security along the routes hence all states or communities along the routes, are saddled with responsibility of nobody gets harmed, this means a lot in establishing a strong ties among the people.⁷

Also, agricultural activities fostered intergroup relations among different ethics and communities. This is clearly practiced amongst Ukwuani people especially Ebedei, Akoku and Utagba (some of the clans that made up Ukwuani Local Government).⁸ According to Mr Ossai Humphrey, Ebedei had a friendly relationship with both Akoku and Utagba people based on having a cultivable land during planting season which sometimes begins from March to June. Though, Ebedei have a cultivable land, but it was

insufficient for her inhabitants, and they related with both Akoku and Utagba who were endowed with vast portion. In turn during their festival, Ebedei people especially those that were assisted with land will return their benevolence and show some level of honor in respect of agricultural produce such as yam (about 10 tubers), kola nut, palm wine and one bottle of gin. It was commonly practiced in both the pre - colonial, colonial and post-colonial raring from independence to about year 2000. In our recent time, Christianity had changed the narrative from presenting of agricultural produce during festival to paying of money once a portion of land is given to an individual.⁹

Ukwuani Local Government Area was carved out from the then Ndokwa on the 4th of December 1996 with Obiaruku as its headquarters. This local government is made up of 9 clans and each of the clans were divided into 2: commonly called Uno and Obi or Ogo. The former is the original clan while the latter is the subunit. Some clans preferred calling it Obi while some others preferred Ogo. These clans include Obiaruku, Akoku, Ebedei, Eziokpor, Amia, Ezionum, Umuebu, Umukwata, Owa-Abi. They have common history, and this could be seen in both their political, economic social life. They spoke the same language known as "Ukwuani language", and this language is an Igbo origin. This justifies the popular saying that Ukwuani is an Igbo descent. Though, according to Chief Vincent Oliseneku, Ukwuani still have some affiliation with the Benin people as most of the names bore amongst Ukwuani people has Benin origin, and such names includes Ossai, Osakwe, Osawe etc.¹⁰

As earlier stated, Ukwuani was carved out from Ndokwa to be a local government of its own on 4th of December 1996, following the local government reform of that year. But this research will not be limited to this time frame because these people had been in existence prior to the reform in 1996 under what was known as Ndokwa. It was the name used to refer to all Ukwuani people prior to the reform but for administrative purpose Ndokwa was divided into three namely Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West and Ukwuani.¹¹ Though, the research focuses on the Post-Colonial Ukwuani local government area and an attempt will be made to unveil the various relationship that existed within Ukwuani.

Aim And Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine intergroup relations in Ukwuani Local Government Area while the objectives include.

- i. To examine the history of intergroup relations
- ii. To examine a brief history of Ukwuani people.
- iii. To identify the various intergroup relations in Ukwuani Local Government Area.
- iv. To identify the impact of intergroup relations in the post-Colonial Ukwuani Local Government Area Delta state.

Scope Of Study

This study intends to focus on the various intergroup relations in the Post-Colonial Ukwuani Local Government Area, Delta state. This study will also find out the impacts of intergroup relations in Ukwuani and how it fostered development in the region. In the course of this work, attempt will be made to look at a brief history of Ukwuani Local Government Area, their political, economic, and social history. Research into this sensitive aspect of Ukwuani people will shed more light on certain aspects of culture and tradition. Lastly, this study will identify some of the challenges that were faced by the Ukwuani relations.

Research Methodology

To achieve objectivity in this study, primary and secondary materials would be collated, interpreted, and explained in a qualitative format.

Primary Sources:

The primary source used in this research is the oral interview. The oral interviews are consulted from the chiefs and from the older men in Ukwuani especially from Ebedei one of the clans in Ukwuani Local Government Area.

Secondary Sources:

The secondary sources are consulted from books, journal articles, magazines, textbooks, and internet sources. There are textbooks which are used to obtain standard and accurate information for an analysis of intergroup relations in Ukwuani Local Government Area, Delta State.

Literature Review

There are several literatures on the subject of intergroup Relations in Nigeria, and on Ukwuani Local Government precisely. These literatures dealt with relevant aspects of Intergroup relations in Ukwuani Local Government Area.

One of these literatures is Obaro Ikime, “The Rise and Fall of the Aboh Kingdom”. The author identified some of the factors that led to the rise of Aboh kingdom and buttress on their origin. The book identified some intergroup relations that were carried out in the region and its effect on the rise of Aboh kingdom.¹²

A.E. Afigbo, ‘‘The Igbo and their neighbors: Intergroup Relations in the Southeastern Nigeria to 1953’’. The writer identified the relationships between the Igbo's and her neighbors. He was also keen about how the Igbo culture spread in the southeastern Nigeria and he further emphasize that immigration and the intergroup relations that existed between them was the primary reason for the spread of the Igbo culture in the southeastern Nigeria and Ukwuani happened to be at this area.¹³

Paul O. Opone, “Are the Ukwuanis Benin or Igbo? A study of Origin and Migration”. The writer identified the origin of the Ukwuani people, that they are mainly Igbo descent and had some traces of Benin culture. He asserts that the Ukwuani migrated from Igbo and both the political, economic, and social lives of these people are proving his claims. He went on to say that these people did not live-in isolation but had some relationship within herself and with her neighbours, perhaps this was how Aboh kingship came into play. He also laid the background that the other clans in Ukwuani ethnic does not have kingship but were ruled by the oldest man and woman in their respective communities.

Chukwuemeka O. Ojeh, “Interrogating the Democratic Character of Ukwuani Political System. This journal identified the political origin and further buttressed on its evolution. He was also keen about the various political segment and how they collaborated with one another.

Chukwuemeka O. Ojeh," The Ukwuani and their Neighbors in the Pre-colonial Times" . The writer emphasized on the various relationship that existed between Ukwuani and her neighbours. Both economic and social interaction and how trade became a tool that fostered their intergroup relations.

Humphrey Ossai, Oral interview, in the course of this interview, the origin of different Ukwuani clan were unveiled. He further identified the various political leaders and their role in the community. He also emphasis

Endnotes

1. African Scholar Publication and Research International, “A Study of Intergroup Relations in Nigeria from 1914: Antidote to National Integration”, *African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, I8(6), pp.1-4
2. *Ibid.*p.2.
3. *Ibid.*p.3.
4. Oral interview with Chief Vincent Oliseneku, (a farmer) at Ebedei, Ukwuani local government area, Delta state, on 10 February 2024.
5. A.E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their Neighbours: Intergroup Relations in South-Eastern Nigeria to 1953*, (Ibadan. University of Ibadan Press, 1987), p.25.
6. *Ibid.*p.26.
7. *Ibid.*p.82
8. Oral interview with Mr. Humphrey Ossai, (a trader) at Ukwuani Local Government Area, Delta state, on 10 February 2024.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Ikime, Obaro, *The Rise and Fall of Aboh Kingdom in History, the Historian and the Nation*, (Ibadan: HEBN, 2006), pp.233-240.

13. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their Neighbours: Intergroup Relations in South-Eastern Nigeria to 1953*, p.31.
14. Paul O. Opone, “Are the Ukwuanis Benin or Igbo? A Study of Origin and Migration”, *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 18 (3), pp.132-146.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST COLONIAL UKWUANI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA

History of Ukwuani people

Ukwuani is an ancient ethnic in Delta State, Nigeria, which are traced to as far back as sixteenth century. The people of Ukwuani speak a distinctive dialect commonly known as Ukwuani language, which is of Igbo origin. Hence, Ukwuani is both the ethnic name and language of these people.¹ A common traditional profession of the indigenes of the Ukwuani people was farming. The history of Ukwuani is quite controversial as the different clans that constituted the Ukwuani ethnic group, inhabited their present location at different time.² Though, it is commonly reported that Ukwuani had three wave of migration.³ But the last wave has proven to be more reliable than others as majority of the historical research that was conducted on the account of this work, both Oral interview, journals and other books that were consulted, narrowed the origin of Ukwuani to the third wave.

The third wave was a mixture of Benin and Igbo migrants which led to the founding of Aboh kingdom. The inhabitants of Aboh further advanced westward and founded UmuNze clans of Umukwata, Amai, Orogun, Abbi, Amai, and the Akashiada

group of communities.⁴ According to Mr Humphrey Ossai, the rest Ukwuani clans were migrants from Aboh and her descendants.⁵

Aboh group comprised some migrant families who left Abo town in Awgu area in eastern Igbo land with the Nze ritual symbol (common among the Aro and Nri) to the Benin kingdom in the sixteenth century. This movement is attributed to the lure of lucrative trade and ritual services which they were specialists in. They arrived in the Benin kingdom and settled at a place called Udo.⁶ When Udo (one of the vassal states to Benin) was destroyed by Oba Esigie many groups including the Aboh fled back eastwards towards the Niger and after so many days of wandering, they got to their present location originally inhabited by the Akarai people.⁷ The destruction of Udo by Oba Esigie has been dated as the sixteenth century, which suggests the possible date of arrival of the Aboh group in their new site. An intelligence report points to Ishago clan in Awgu division of Afikpo Province in eastern Nigeria as the original home of the Aboh. The Aboh party was originally from the town of Abo, and in the course of migration, they got to Udo in the vicinity of the Benin kingdom before being forced out by Oba Esigie's hostilities during the sixteenth century and following their departure, some Edo descent followed them.⁸ That was why they found no difficulties in settling among the Akarai Igbo, the aborigine. These immigrants got to Aboh when the Akarai who are Igbo descent has already inhabited the region and imposed their newly political

system on them. After which, series of quarries and limited cultivable land further divided them and some band advanced eastward to Ukwuani hinterland.⁹

Different Ukwuani clans and their intertwining origin from Aboh

According to tradition, Abbi clan was founded by Amacha from Echalla-Ukwu in Igbo country east of the Niger. Amacha and his brother (Ukwata) are said to have gotten to Aboh in one of their hunting expeditions, and sojourned there, where they met Effi and Amai, with whom they migrated to Ukwuani hinterland as a result of a quarrel with the Aboh people, in the course of which they founded the Elovie quarters of Abbi which were jointly called Kanyibilinebeni (let us settle here) later shortened to Abbi Echalla (Ezulu).¹⁰ This was after Amacha had established his presence and authority in the new domain by staking a neubouldialaevis plant locally called “Egbo Ogillisi”. All the quarters in Abbi were founded by Amacha and his brother (Ukwata) advanced eastward and founded Umukwata clan. While Amai on the other hand, founded Amai clan.¹¹

Akashiada group is another Ukwuani clan which consists of Eziokpor, Ezionum, Obiaruku and Umuebu clans. According to oral tradition, the Akashiada group immigrated from the western Igbo communities such a Utchi and Afor (both villages share common boundary with Aboh) and settled in their present location. According to the tradition, they first settled at Umuoshi quarters of Eziokpor clan before they later separated to inhabit other clans as mentioned above.¹²

Also, both Ogume and Ebedei clans share common migration experience. In Ogbagu Ogume, there were Obodo-Etiti group said to have been founded by “some group of hunters, namely Ossai Ojugbeli, Ogwezi Omai and Mokobia and other group who together with Obodeti people were referred to as Umu-Ishiom, in addition to Umu-Iyana led by Okpala Olodu and his younger brother, Ogwezi Olodu”. There were Ase, Akarai and Umu-Iwele people who also settled in what became Ogbagu-Ogume. Ogbe-Ogume is said to have been settled first by two brothers, Ezede and Ifelaji who were later joined by Umu-Emo, Umu-Nkwai and other migrants from Onya, a western Igbo town in Ndokwa East Local Government Area, Delta state, Nigeria.¹³

The dominant narrative that the Ukwuani people are Benin immigrants is not supported by evidence. The people speak Igbo language (the most eloquent cultural badge), bear Igbo names and share similar religio – cultural traits with the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, which are obvious indications that they are Igbo settlers.

Political History

The pre-colonial Ukwuani was genealogically organised. The Ukwuani political organization was based on village and village groups who had common descent.¹⁴ The basic unit of political organization was the family of male siblings and their children which, with the wives often constitutes a small compound household group.¹⁵ The citizens were first organized into sub-families called ebo or imusu with the eldest man as the head. He keeps the ofo which is the symbol of their relatedness to their sub-family

ancestor or NNdikei. The umu (a lineage of those claiming common descent from one remote ancestor). It was headed by the oldest man in the lineage called Okehi whose symbol of authority was “the NNdiche (the embodiment of the lineage ancestors). Different Umu's further constituted the quarter called Ogbe and the oldest man from the various quarter become the paramount head known as Okpala- Uku. At the village level the oldest Okpala - Uku of the different Ogbe (quarter) becomes the paramount ruler or head of government. When the various quarters or Ogbe gather at the village level, they formed the administration of the village itself which was headed by the oldest man in the entire village. That is, the oldest of the Ikpala (the oldest of all the Okpala-Ukus of the component quarters and hence the Okpala-Uku of the village or Okpala-Uku osa-obodo).¹⁶ No citizen was neglected especially the male, though hierarchy was maintained. Women also have their council with the oldest woman as the Paramount head (known as Ada).

They have different administrative segment, the oldest man (Okpala - Uku) who is the paramount head of all council has its own segment of elders and they are known as Ndi- okwa. Most times these chiefs does not exceed two to three chiefs and they are the oldest after the Okpala - Uku, and Otu - Uku are the next to Ndi - okwa in council.

The second segment are the Inotu - ani (the chiefs of the soil), and they have a paramount head known as Onotu - Uku. The chiefs here are not age based but are mainly title holders. Although the Onotu - Uku who is the paramount chief is known as the

Prime minister in Ukwuani land and his position is age based. Matters are usually deliberated over in this segment before it will be forwarded to the Okpala - Uku and the council for final decision. They are the most prominent chiefs as their decisions stand as well as the Okpala - Uku's own stands.

For administrative purposes, other political segments includes: Otu - Etit, Otu - Inta, Otu - Olile, Otu - Onu - ogbe, Otu - Aya and they have their various leaders known as Odua. These political segments are different age grades that were assigned with the responsibility of enforcing the law and punishment of any obstinate individual as ordered by the Okpala - Uku and his council. Also, they were saddled with the responsibility of peacekeeping, security and maintenance of their various villages. They protect the village from foreign invaders and any form of internal and external insecurity. For instance, whenever foreigners penetrate into the borders of any Ukwuani clan or village, from Otu - Etit - O Olile were usually sent to confront them and in turn send them back to their land. They contributed to the governance and political stability of various Ukwuani village.

The Okpala - Uku is the custodian of the N̄dichei or Ofo which is the symbol of his authority and spiritual convergence of the people's essence. Though, there was no authority above his, the Okpala-Uku has no political powers other than those given by the council. So, the Okpala-Uku only functioned in-council of other officials which included

the Ugo (the speaker of the council) and Onotu-Uku in particular. Thus, decisions were reached consensually in-depth of deliberation.¹⁷

Aboh in Ukwuani has its separate political organization. Aboh has a traditional monarchical system of governance, with an Obi [king] serving as the paramount ruler and head of government. The Obi is traditionally seen as the custodian of the town's culture and traditions and serves as the symbol of unity and authority for the people of Aboh. The town was founded about 16th century and has been ruled by a series of monarchs known as Obi. The pre-colonial political organization of Aboh is characterized by a system of monarchy, with the Obi serving as the town's ruler.¹⁸ The Obi-ship was not hereditary.

Nevertheless, the Obi of Aboh co-administered with a council made up of titled men chosen from the two sections that constituted Aboh, Umude and Ndiche. With the former representing the descendants of Edo and the latter of Igbo. The two most important titles were those of the Odua and Iyasere or Iyasele. The Odua was the oldest man from Umude section while the Iyasere was a mixed parentage of both Umude and Ndiche. The Odua acted for the Obi when the latter was unable to carry his duties through illness or other cause and announces a new Obi at Obi's demise. He was also the chief priest of Nze, the royal cult. At the demise of Obi aspirants from Umude section will present themselves to the Odua. Series of consensus will be reached, and the next Obi will be

chosen and crown. The Iyasere was the commander-in-chief and the priest of the cult of Ndiche section of Aboh.¹⁹

The titled men sat on both side of the Obi, the Umude to the left and the Ndiche to the right. The title holders in both Umude and Ndiche section were given by Obi not just in recognition of age but also wealth, influence, popularity, and service rendered to the society.²⁰

Hence, political organization in Ukwuani was not generally unified as those of the Edo, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo etc. And it could be attributed to the historical origin.

Economic History

The economic history of Ukwuani people, like some other communities in Nigeria, is primarily based on agriculture, trade and other economic activities.²¹ Prior to the colonial era, the economy of the region that now constitutes Ukwuani people was primarily agrarian, with agriculture being the mainstay of the economy. Here are some key aspects of the economic history.

Agriculture: Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in Ukwuani, with most of the population engaged in economic activities. The people of Ukwuani are also skillful and professional palm wine tappers.²² The population engaged mainly in farming activities. More than 80 percent of Ukwuani people are farmers and they grow crops like maize, plantain, yam, cassava, pepper while others due to their geographical location are

mainly fishermen. The people engaged in subsistence farming, cultivating crops such as yam, cassava, maize, beans, vegetables etc, and further exchange most of their produce for what they do not have such as fish, crayfish, salt, mat, thatch etc. Ukwuani is endowed with fertile land and produces a wide range of crops such as yam, cassava, maize, plantain, beans, and vegetables. This could be attributed to the geographical location of the region. Ukwuani means low land dwellers...swampy area, though Ukwuani land is not entirely swampy, but it is restricted to Ukwuani towns such as Aboh, while the remaining part of Ukwuani land are referred to as up land. The former usually start their cultivation earlier than the other Ukwuani town in order to harvest their produce before the rivers will overflow its bank, hence they focus mainly on fishery against cultivation of plants. In the pre-colonial Ukwuani, Women were prominent in the economic activities and controlled such occupations as food processing, pottery making, smoking of fish and cooking. Women were also central to trade.²³

Trading: Ukwuani is a major trading hub in the region, with a vibrant market that attracts traders and buyers from neighboring towns and villages. The market is known for its variety of goods, including agricultural produce, textiles, and household items. The Ethiope River, with its source at Umuaja in the Ukwuani country and running through other Ukwuani land, Urhobo and Itsekiri communities was a major waterway that facilitated trading activities among Ukwuani and her neighbours.²⁴ In the western fringes of the Ukwuani country are such Ukwuani towns and villages as Umuaja, Umutu, Obi-

Illo, Adonishaka, Owah Abbi, Obinomba and Obiaruku. Obiaruku which is the border town between the Ukwuani and the Urhobo tribes along the Ethiope River, became the most prominent port for trade activities to flourish along the Ethiope River. It received traders not only from the neighbouring Urhobo towns of Abraka, Eku and Okpara, but further away as Sapele as well as Ijo and Itsekiri towns. These traders came to Obiaruku in their canoes with their produce (including fish, crayfish, crabs, etc.), salt, mat, thatch, etc. which they exchanged for yam and cassava and other farm produce which various Ukwuani traders had brought to Obiaruku's Ñkwo (market day) market to purchase stocks of river-rine items such as fish items (including fish, crayfish, crabs, etc.), salt, mats, thatch and even palm oil usually brought through the Ethiope River by Urhobo, Ijo and Itsekiri traders (to Obiaruku's Ñkwo market). This has been in existence from the Pre-Colonial till date as people from different places converge at Obiaruku for trade. As earlier stated, that Ukwuani as an entity was divided into three local government on the 4th of December 1996, following the local government reform of that year. Ndokwa East as one of the local governments in eastern part of Ukwuani had their trading center or port at Akarrai commonly known as Aboh and Okpai. Their geographical location opened them up for trade to flourish in the region. Though, the whole of Ndokwa East are referred to as riverine area (Ndosumili or Onumili). They are the low land dwellers and lived within the swampy area. Also, the administrative system at Aboh was responsible for the stability in their economic system, as they had a king known as Obi.²⁵

Cottage industries: The Ukwuani has a number of small-scale cottage industries that produce goods such as textiles, pottery and wood carvings. These industries provide employment opportunities for the local population and contribute to the economy of the Pre-Colonial Ukwuani.

Transportation: Ukwuani is strategically located along major transportation routes, which has helped to facilitate trade and commerce in the region. Ukwuani is served by a number of major roads that connect it to other towns and states. For instance, the New Sapele-Agbor Road popularly referred to as the “New Road” passes through Ukwuaniland. The Warri-Umutu-Ekuku-Agbor Road enroute to Onitsha also passes through Ukwuani land as well as the Agbor-Ogwashi Road to Onitsha. This road that converged in Ukwuani has successfully led to rapid development in Ukwuani land.²⁶

Small-Scale Businesses: Small-Scale businesses are also prevalent in Ukwuani, with individuals and families running their own shops and enterprises. These businesses include grocery stores, tailoring shops, barbershops, restaurants and other service-oriented ventures.

The economic history of Ukwuani Local Government precisely is closely tied to agriculture and commerce, with their fertile land and strategic location contributing to its economic prosperity. The market and cottage industries play important roles in the local economy helping to provide employment opportunities and support economic growth and

has turned most of Ukwuani town to autonomous town. Places like Obiaruku has become autonomous following the trade and transportation system that passed through there.

Social History

Festivals: Ukwuani is known for its various cultural festivals which are held annually. Although, the festival varied from village to village. But the one that is commonly observed by number of villages in Ukwuani are Ikenge and Ukpalabo festival. During these feast, different people from far and near converge for the festival. In the period of these festival, some delicate works will be on hold such as cassava processing because it is a sacred season.²⁷

Religion: The people of Ukwuani practice various religions, including indigenous African religions, and Christianity. The people Ukwuani are followers of traditional Ukwuani religion which is characterized by belief in deities or Nmo. Some of these deities are Elishi, Nzi, Onye - Uku and so on. These deities are believed to have the power to influence the daily lives of individuals and the community at large. These deities have priest who were believed to be mediator between the people and the Nmo and played a central role in the religious ceremonies and rituals. Following the coming Europeans, Christianity have also gained significant followership in Ukwuani, with churches being prominent places of worship and social gatherings for Christians. And Islamic religion has also penetrated the region in the recent time.²⁸

Family Structure: The family structure in Ukwuani is largely patriarchal, with the father being the head of the household. Extended family are also common, with multiple generations living under the same roof. The family traditional values and customs are passed down from one generation to another. The people of Ukwuani place a great importance on family values, and community cohesion. Extended families play vital role in supporting and nurturing their members. The community also play a significant role in social interactions, with communal activities such as festivals, ceremonies and social gatherings being important occasions for socializing, networking, and building community bonds.²⁹

Arts and Crafts: Ukwuani is known for its vibrant arts and crafts scene, with skilled artisans producing a wide range of traditional items such as pottery, weaving and wood carving. These items are not only used for practical purposes but also to serve as decorative pieces that reflect the cultural heritage of the people.

Social Roles and Hierarchies: The Ukwuani society has social roles and hierarchies that define the status, rights, and responsibilities of individuals within the community.³⁰ Age, gender and social position often determine the roles and responsibilities that individuals have within the Ukwuani society. Elders are accorded with respect and are seen as custodians of wisdom and traditional values, while younger individuals are expected to show respect to their elders. Gender roles are also dominant in

Ukwuani society, with specific expectations and responsibilities assigned to men and women based on traditional gender norms.

Food: The staple food in Ukwuani is called “Oloni”, Iron beans which is locally produced and consumed. Their food is largely influenced by the Ukwuani culture, with foods such as yam, cassava and plantain forming the base of many dishes. Some of the popular dishes in the Ukwuani include Banga soup and Pounded Yam. It was also use during their feast.

Customs and traditions: Ukwuani have a rich cultural heritage, with the people of Ukwuani being predominantly Delta state. The Ukwuani culture is known for its rich tradition, customs and beliefs which are reflected in the social life of the people of Ukwuani. There are many customs and traditions practiced in Ukwuani. Some of which are Levirate marriage, worshipping Nmo or Chi (gods). First born son inheritance, festivals, ceremonies, rituals and so on.³¹

The social history of Ukwuani is and diverse, with a strong emphasis on tradition, culture and community. The town’s festivals, religion, family structure, food and arts and crafts all serve to reinforce the cultural identity and make it a unique and vibrant place to live. Land was communally owned, and women had access to it through their husbands or parents. Although a man was the head of the household in a patrilineal system, old women had control of the labor of younger family members.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST COLONIAL UKWUANI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA STATE.

Introduction

Ukwuani Local Government Area was carved out from the then Ndokwa on the 4th of December 1996 with Obiaruku as its headquarters. This local government is made up of 9 clans and each of the clans were divided into 2: commonly called Uno and Obi or Ogo. The former is the original clan while the latter is the subunit. Some clans preferred calling it Obi while some others preferred Ogo. These clans include Obiaruku, Akoku, Ebedei, Eziokpor, Amia, Ezionum, Umuebu, Umukwata, Owa-Abi. They have common history, and this could be seen in both their political, economic, and social history of the people.¹

They have a well-established relationship with the other Ukwuani clans, Ika, and Urohbo people. Their relations cut across different facet of their daily endeavors. Trade helped to promote intergroup relations while marriage solidified it. The exchange of goods and services among these groups also brought about cultural exchange that existed between them. Hence, trade created a platform for cultural exchange to thrive.²

Political Development

The political organization of Ukwuani has evolved overtime from pre - colonial, colonial and post-colonial. The pre - colonial Ukwuani practiced gerontocracy (rule of elders) with Okpala - Uku as the paramount head of government while Aboh, was mainly monarchical in nature. But following the advent of the European in the region, lots of innovations was introduced into the political organization of Ukwuani people. For instance, it was only Aboh that was known for her kingship with the Obi title, but with the colonization of the region, some political offices were introduced which competed with the Okpala - Uku and the chiefs in council. Such position and title include, Onochieze (someone that rule in place of king) and Onu - Eze (the mouthpiece of the king). These titles and positions were introduced to limit the authority of the Okpala - Uku and the chiefs. These offices were meant to be answerable to the European officials while the indigenious rulers at the other hand felt insulted by the foreigners that has colonized them.³

Following decolonization, new political organization emerged, though it did not eradicate the traditional political organization completely but to some extent in the western political organization dominated the traditional political organization in Ukwuani Local Government Area, Delta state.⁴ The traditional rulers were still recognized but their influence were largely restricted. The various counselors, and the local government chairman recognizes the role of the traditional rulers. The traditional rulers were allowed

to function in their respective office having in mind the rule of law and the fundamental human right of everyone. So, as they observe their cultural practices, they were also meant to observe the law of the nation at large. Also, following this political evolution, some of the traditional rulers has also modernized their archaic traditional observant to suit the new system, in order to avoid much rebels.⁵

Economic impact

The economic history of Ukwuani people, is largely based on agriculture, trade, and other economic activities. Both the Pre - colonial, colonial and post-colonial era, the economy of the region that now constitutes Ukwuani people is largely agrarian, with agriculture being the mainstay of the economy. But as recent as 2006, crude oil was discovered in some of the communities that constituted Ukwuani local government area, and such communities are both Ebedei and Akoku which share common boundary. Here are some of the economic activities in Ukwuani local government area, Delta state.⁶

Agriculture: Ukwuani local government is largely rural and agrarian in nature. Agricultural activities is usually small-scale as farmers employed traditional methods of farming. In an agrarian economy, agriculture is the hub of economic activity and a major force behind the growth and development of the economy. This local government has been a major benefactor of agriculture as most of her citizens rely mainly on agricultural activities. The people engaged in subsistence farming and exchange the excesses for those they do not produce. As earlier stated, that Ukwuani was a single entity prior to the

local government reform of 1996, but following the reform of that year, Ukwuani was split into three local government namely Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West and Ukwuani local government area. It was quite easy for Ukwuani local government to have an intergroup relation with them.⁷

According to Fanty Nwose, the citizens of Eziokpor one of the communities in Ukwuani local government area go to as far Utagba-Uno, Ukabbi in Ndokwa west to obtain a cultivable land whenever there were limited land.⁸ Ukwuani local government are endowed with cultivable land but because of crop rotation that is being practiced in the region, most communities were left with limited land as the rotation was usually six to seven years. The farmers in this region cultivated crops such as cassava, yam, pepper, beans, corn, melon, vegetation okro, plantain etc.⁹

Trade: Ukwuani local government area had a well-established trade relation with her neighbors. Due to natural and geographical peculiarities, farm products and occupational practices of the Ukwuani vis-a-vis their neighbors present a diversity that corresponds with sufficient differences that required interdependence via mutual exchanges of the products of their various endowments.¹⁰ The Aboh country in Ndokwa east is naturally disadvantaged as a result of perennial flooding. When exceptionally bad floods ravaged the riverine Aboh people, through trade, they got compensated for their poor harvest by the favorable harvest of their upland Ukwuani neighbours of Utagba-Ogbe and Ogume in such crops as cassava, plantain, pepper etc. The Ukwuani in turn,

gained from the abundance of Aboh fish which the same floods had occasioned as well as the Aboh yam specie *iji-oru* which matures early and was usually harvested before the flood sets in, and earlier than the Ukwuani yam species.¹¹ Actually, the Ukwuani ate their first new yams with *iji-oru* specie got through trade with Aboh, before theirs matured for harvest. This trade relations had been existing from the pre-colonial era till date, as majority of *azu nmili* (fish water) that is being consumed by the Ukwuani people (local government area) are largely obtained from as far as Ughili - Amai, and Utagba-Ogbe (Kwale) in Ndokwa west.¹²

In Ukwuani local government area, Obiaruku Nkwo (Obiaruku market day) is the prominent market day that converge people from various places for trade activities. Obiaruku Nkwo compelles traders from within and outside the state to Obiaruku in order to obtain fresh farm produce. And this has led to the rapid development in Obiaruku. Obiaruku which is the headquarter, has become an autonomous community in Ukwuani local government area Delta state, following the development that was necessitated by the trade. Obiaruku as well as Obinomba and Umutu has become a prominent trade center with Obiaruku at the fore - front. Most company has their warehouse at Obiaruku, company such as Nigeria brewery, cement industry, bakery, and water factory and many other warehouses in the region. These has enhanced trade activities in the region and further brought about some level of development in Ukwuani local government area. Trade has created job opportunities for both Ukwuani citizens and her neighbours.¹³

Transportation: It has become a major economic activity in communities. It aided their trade activities as the bike riders, tricycle drivers and vehicle drivers were always engaged with transporting people and traders from one location to another. In Obiaruku market day, motorcycle riders from the interior of Ukwuani converge at Obiaruku to transport traders. For such people, transportation was their major occupation and source of income. Transportation has brought major development such as road construction, you could barely see untilled road in this region.

Following this development, almost every family in Ukwuani Local Government Area owned a tricycle. It is very common in the region; it is what they use for their day-to-day work. For the farmers, it makes their farming activities easier compare with when they trek or use bicycle. Hence, transportation has granted farmers some level of ease in their farming activities.

As at 2006, crude oil was discovered in Ebedei Ukwuani local government area, Delta state. Just as agriculture witnessed a sharp decline during the oil boom of 2970, so also did agriculture declined in the region, following the discovery of crude oil. Both the youths and men alike neglected agricultural activities and cling to oil drilling. It is obvious that oil drilling is less tedious and pays more than agriculture, but it is also obvious that agriculture was lagging behind. Both the cultivable land and in cultivable were affected by the gas spillage. Prior to the oil discovery in Ebedei Ogbfacedzu, most of the Ebedei and other inhabitant of the region, usually drink river water. Such river

includes, Ekelem at Ebedei - Uno and Onoku within Umutu, Ebedei - Obi, Owa - Abbi, Obinomba, and Obiaruku axis but following the oil drilling, these rivers were no longer healthy to consume. Hence, pile borne water was introduced in these regions and were for public usage.¹⁴ As a major federal road passed in Ukwuani (Sapele, Agbor road). This has opened this local government to some level of development, construction of the major roads and the once that links different communities

Social Development or Impact

Social interaction is a salient point to economic development in any society. The marketplace as an economic institution promoted social interaction amongst the traders on one hand, between the traders and buyers on the other, and also between people who went to the markets to fulfill social obligation in the marketplace, people interacted freely without restrictions especially as they spent their leisure time with members of other communities, it is, from these interactions, foundations of socio-cultural relations beyond the marketplace later developed.¹⁵ Some of these relations and exchanges went far deep into the society that it has become difficult in this post-colonial era to identify political and socio-cultural traits that are indigenous to the communities in the area and those that came through intergroup relations. Their social relations is characterized by their many cultural activities which includes, festival, religious observance, marriage rites and other cultural practices.¹⁶

Festival: Ukwuani local government area is known for its various cultural festivals which are held annually. Although, the festival varied from village to village. But the one that is commonly observed by number of villages in Ukwuani are Ikenge and Ukpalabo festival.¹⁷ During these feast, different people from far and near converge for the festival. In the period of these festival, some delicate works will be on hold such as cassava processing because it is a sacred season. Ikenge festival usually holds at the beginning of the year, January annually. This was to consult the gods in order to foresee what the year holds. While Ukpalabo festival holds at the fall of the year, usually the month of November. This feast was to appreciate the ancestors on a year well spent. This festival still exists till date. Other feast includes Elephant feast (eyi feast) which is held one's in two years. This feast is Ebedei festival, although people from far and near usually converge for the feast. The uniqueness of this feast is that it compelled people to come to Ebedei on that day.¹⁹ It is a feast that holds every two years, on a working day (Monday), month of January. Two weeks before the Central day of the feast a series of rituals occurs that involves the priests of the eyi to act (this performance was to display how the Elephant will be caught and drag it down to the community). They act from one Ebedei quarter to another till the seven quarters were completed, after acting at Ebedei - Uno, they will then move to the sub Ebedei quarters known as Obi or Ogo. Once they are back from this acting the feast will commence on Eke (the market day of Ebedei). Ebedei people usually show benevolence to all their visitors that day. In the pre - colonial and colonial period, the common food that was used for this feast was pounded yam and

banger soup but in our current day, rice has become the favorite meal for the festival. Ebedei people usually cook large portion of meal in order to have enough to sustain their visitors.²⁰

Religion: The people of Ukwuani practice various religions, including indigenous African religions, and Christianity. The people Ukwuani are followers of traditional Ukwuani religion which is characterized by belief in deities or Nmo. Some of these deities are Elishi, Nzi, Onye - Uku and so on. These deities are believed to have the power to influence the daily lives of individuals and the community at large. These deities have priest who were believed to be mediator between the people and the Nmo. But presently, Christianity has become the other of the day as the large percentage of Ukwuani local government believe on God and pay allegiance to God than these deities. Christianity has weakened the loyalty of these people to the deities which were worshipped by their forefathers.²¹

Marriage: This has been a major thing that promoted intergroup relations in Ukwuani local government area, Delta state. In the pre-colonial, colonial and early post-colonial period, young girls were usual bestroded to a husband at early age and they were groomed to be a wife of that particular man.²² Most times, their bride price were paid in their absence as the man and his family will met with the girl's family and perform the marriage rites. Marriage has established bond between families. In the pre-colonial there was not too much record of intergroup marriages but was limited among the different

clans in Ukwuani with few traces of intergroup marriages, hence it was generally inter-communal marriages that was dominant in the region.²³ Post colonial period has ushered in a new approach to marriage in Ukwuani as well as other places. As the word evolve, human relationship also developed. Following this development, both young men and women of age were allowed to make their choices of who to marry and none of them were being cajoled to marry a certain man. This has been a major development in the marriage sector of the Ukwuani people and local government alike.²⁴ Also, through marriage, Ukwuani has gained access into the hinterland of their neighbors both within the state and outside the state.²⁵

Arts and Crafts: Ukwuani is known for its vibrant arts and crafts scene, with skilled artisans producing a wide range of traditional items such as pottery, weaving and wood carving.²⁶ These items are not only used for practical purposes but also to serve as decorative pieces that reflect the cultural heritage of the people. Most of fishing, farming trading tools were carved by the artisans in Ukwuani. And majority of the kitchen equipment were locally made. Such tools includes, Inkata for fishing, Abor for farming, Ite - mili (water pot), Ugbube - ofe (pot) and Atete (trail). The fishing tools there was locally made from water cane commonly known as arha. It was locally made and served as a trap for fishes. Abor was also made from water cane, and it was used to transport yam from the farm to the barn.

Intergroup relations have fostered development in Ukwuani local government area Delta state. The local government has become more developed following her inter relatedness with her neighbors. Their economic activities are a major factor that facilitated intergroup relations. Trade granted them the access to interface with different people that have different approach to life. And has boost their development in a large scale. The Ukwuani people did not exist in isolation but related with their neighbors and this was the reason why most of their cultural practices were not uniquely tied to them, although in practice, their uniqueness comes into play.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This study examines Intergroup relations and development in the post-colonial Ukwuani local government area, Delta state. And it is organized into four chapters, each chapter with full analysis of intergroup relations and development on Ukwuani Local Government Area.

The first chapter serves as the study's background, which begins with brief introduction on the concept of intergroup relations and emphasized on the role of trade in groups relations, and how it became a channel that promoted intergroup relations. The chapter goes on to describe the aim and objectives of the study, the scope of the study in terms of what the study will cover, and a review of the previous work of scholars connected to the topic. The literature review acknowledges their contributions while also outlining areas where they fall short of providing a comprehensive appraisal of the work. Additionally, the chapter also gives the respective chapters of this work in a titled form and a summarized form.

Chapter two, titled " History of Ukwuani people " began with an introduction that briefly explained the origin of Ukwuani people. It continued by examining both yhe

political, economic, and social history of Ukwuani and further buttressed on its evolution till date.

Chapter three began with a brief introduction and then moved to analyse the concept of intergroup relations and development in Ukwuani Local Government. It discusses the various economic activities that fostered development in Ukwuani. The work was keen on the social development of the region, both marriage and festival of the region were carefully explained.

A synopsis of each chapter and a conclusion to the research topic are provided in chapter four, which is the summary and conclusion.

Conclusion

No nation has ever existed in isolation both the developed and the developing nations. There has always been some level of interactions between countries, states, local government, and communities. Ukwuani is one of such group that has not existed in isolation but has a huge cultural affiliation with her neighbors. Trade was one of the most important factors which linked these groups together. No community was self-sufficient in production of agricultural and manufactured goods. Also difference in physical environment and geographical factors tended to promote trade contact and hence intergroup relations amongst Ukwuani and her neighbors. A region could be noted for production of particular commodity which were lacking in other region; and they could exchange their goods. This was what existed between Ukwuani and her neighbors.

Ukwuani rulers has a well-established relation with one another to obtain those goods that they could not produce. Through intergroup relations, cultural diffusion occurs. Hence it could be said that intergroup relations brings about development in any region as it opened up a civilization to the others and following their interactions many absorbance will occur making the different groups to benefit from one another. Intergroup relations have sucked deep into Ukwuani culture that made it difficult to differentiate between this indigenous culture and that which was borrowed. Intergroup relations shaped the culture of a people.

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3.	Humphrey Ossai		64	Ukwani Local Government Area	10 February 2024
4.	Vincent Oliseneku	Chief	68	Ebedei, Ukwani Local Government	10 February 2024

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