

**HISTORY OF PALM WINE TAPPING: A CASE STUDY OF THE
IKA PEOPLE FROM 1999 – 2020**

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A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BARCHELOR
OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN HISTORY

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CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project was carried out by UTI ELLA CHINENYE and it is adequate in scope, content and quality in partial fulfillment of the requirement of an award of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in History.

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DATE

DATE

DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this work to God, the giver of life, my source of strength and inspiration, and also to my late grandpa, Uti Ohue Igbodo of blessed memories.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGRO UND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This study seeks to provide the manifestation of palm wine tapping in Nigeria, particularly to the Ika people and the various activities applied in the era till date. Since the pre-colonial era, palm wine is enjoyed in Nigeria as a drink of entertainment in festivals and other ceremonies by guests and other individuals, in Ika community. Palm wine is one major drink that is recognized traditionally for events such as marriage rites, funerals and other socio-cultural activities. The context of palm wine tapping has given a facelift to our knowledge of the overview concept of the Ika people and their economic activities prior to this time.

Chinua Achebe in his work “Things Fall Apart” describes palm wine as a prestigious drink which was always drunk by the major character Okonkwo, including the wealthiest and most respected elders in the village¹. The economic importance of the Ika people is solely dependent on agriculture, with that notwithstanding, the essence of palm wine which is gotten from palm raffia trees, has been a major source of income for the Ika people. Prior to this time, palm wine production has been a means of livelihood for the Ikas. It has been a survival means for most families and a business capable of sustaining both small and large families. Palm wine has financially improved lives from our period of study and till now; the relevance of palm wine cannot be overemphasized. Palm wine tapping is also a

traditional practice in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa where the sap of various species of palm trees is collected and consumed as a refreshing alcoholic beverage, as stated by Amos Tutuola: “I had no other work more than to drink palm wine in my life”².

It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that in Nigeria cultures, palm wine is a tool of social cohesion (the drink is served during casual visits and occasional gatherings; it has more formal usages in coronations and festivals). The significance of palm wine in Africa is a representation of cultural values, tapped directly from a tree and freshly served in calabash. In Nigeria, palm wine celebrate human existence and it serves as a source of unity in communities.

The use of palm wine in traditional ceremonies is common in many cultures; it is poured during libations as an offering to a deity or god, traditionalists spill it on the ground as a mark of respect to their dead ancestors. It also plays a significant role in many traditional events in Africa. For example, during traditional weddings in Igbo land, and in Ika community palm wine is given to the bride by the head of the family, she then searches for her husband in the crowd and serve him the palm wine to drink afterwards.

Palm wine has many health benefits, especially when consumed fresh. It's loaded with nutrients and has a bevy of health supplement, which reduces hypertension. It is often added to various herbal medicines or products and said to be

a nourishing drink which promotes lactation and improves eyesight due to its yeast content.³

In Nigeria, palm wine has endured urbanization while preserving its socio-cultural characteristics, also in Nigeria cultures; you are not expected to drink palm wine alone. To people, it provides friendship and brotherhood. Also, it is believed that no one drinks palm wine and remains sad because palm wine doesn't exist in a sad gathering. The Nigeria indigenous famous palm wine tapping is of stronghold to the Ika people, it is generally believed to be the home of the sweetest African palm wine. The best palm wine is tapped from this impeccable tribe.

According to Uti, A day old palm wine is mere water and not palm wine because it has lost its original taste"⁴. One of the many native wine brands consumed in Nigeria is palm wine. The specific brand of wine known as palm wine is obtained directly as sap from either raffia palm or oil palm trees. Thus, the most popular brand of drink in the eastern region of Nigeria, particularly, in the Igbo speaking region is palm wine.

The Ika speaking people centers in Agbor which is both a town and a kingdom and this makes her so exceptional. It is located In Delta state, Nigeria and bounded in the east by Umunede, in the north and North West by Igbanke and Oza-Nogogo respectively. Agbor also shares border from the West with Abudu, with above in the south and somehow is closely affiliated with Owa in the north. Agbor

consists of 23 villages (Ogbe) and a metropolis known as Orogodo (Boji-Boji). The villages in Agbor are; Agbamuse/Oruru, Agbor-nta, Alihagwu, Alifekede, Alihami, Aliokpu. Alisor, Alilchan, Alisimien, Alizomor, Boji-Boji Agbor, Ekuku-Agbor, Emuhun, Ewuru, Idumu-Oza, Ihaikpen, Ihogbe, Obielihe, Ogbeisore, Ogbeisogban, Ogbemudien, Oki, Omumu, Oza-Nogogo (Ozara)⁵. The indigenous people of Agbor are of Ika descent of the Igbo speaking group with an admixture of the Bini culture. The history of Agbor is wrought with so many dissipations ⁶. It was claimed to be founded by an indigene of the Benin empire by some Benin historians”⁷. Furthermore, a counter claim was established by some authors of Ika history that the history of Agbor was a case of migration, and that the Ika speaking inhabitants of Agbor migrated from Igboland (Nri origin) ⁸.

However, Iduwe, validating the endemic nature of the origin of Agbor stated thus; “among the ancestors was a man named Nze who we are told founded the spot of Imeobi, he named “Agbor” which means family citadel⁹. Currently Agbor is neither a vassal to Igbo, Benin nor any other la speaking community both in Delta state and Edo state. She is sovereign and this Allows her co-exist and interact with other sovereign neighbouring towns Aghor has related with her neighbours politically, socially, economically and culturally even before the advent of colonialism. The relationship had been friendly and peaceful and in some cases hostile. Agbor related through wars and conquest with Bini and this finds credence in

the words of Joseph N. Egwu, a prominent scholar and historian who stated that, “The wars between Benin and Agbor is not as simple as Egharevba puts them¹⁰. Over and beyond that, it is pertinent to note that Agbor as an Anioma town related with other Anioma peoples of west basin of river Niger in the south-south region of Nigeria. The people of Aghor kept a homogeneous culture and practice the primogeniture form of leadership.

This study is set to expose the socio-economic integrity that occurred and still exist in palm wine tapping in the Ika community and how it helped in boosting the economic activities and the advancement of socio-cultural rites and traditional norms of the Ika people. This study will capture the blue print and the challenges that confront palm wine tapping.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the history of palm wine tapping and its economic development of the Ika people in time perspectives. While the specific Objectives of this work are as follows;

1. To examine the brief history and geography of the Ika people in pre-colonial time.
2. To assess the socio-political impact associated with palm wine tapping In the pre-colonial time

3. To find out the economic relevance and contribution of palm wine tapping development of the Ika people.
4. To identify the various challenges faced with palm wine tapping.
5. To establish the factors that enhances relationship between trades.

Significance of Study

This research work seeks to assess the history of palm wine tapping in the Ika community Area in Delta State, in time perspectives. Enduring researches have been carried out on the political, economic and social history of the Ika people, but until currently there is no work that has comprehensively focused on palm wine tapping in the Ika community. This work is essential in enhancing our understanding of the Ika people which is relatively a new field in historical discourse and contributing to already existing written works on interaction among groups.

Consequently, this information is useful on the path of nation building in Nigeria; this will be generated from the economic activities, stimulating further research in the area by student and historians.

Limitations of the Study

In a bid to acquire useful information and materials in the course of carrying out this research, traveling from Benin City to Agbor town and neighboring villages was a daunting task. There was also the problem of communication because the elders would prefer one to speak the Ika language or Pidgin English for better

understanding of the questions the researcher poses. Another challenge encountered during the course of this research was the problem of classification as to which was to be regarded as the neighbours of Agbor. This owes tremendously to the fact that Agbor is a very vast town with over 22 villages, and also to the wide range of interactions it has had and still has with people within and beyond its locality. However, these challenges were overcome with reference, resilience and focus.

Methodology

The method of carrying out this research is for a broader and more satisfactory analysis of this study, most of the information put together was obtained from various oral interviews of prominent indigenes and Palm wine tappers. Such people include: Traditional Rulers, Elders, Lecturers, Distinguished members of Agbor Platform and the Youth Council.

Also, Interviews were conducted with individuals from Owa, Agbor, Umunede, Igbanke, etc. These interviews were from the Ika people who have a wellspring of knowledge about Agbor and her historical, socio-political and economical activities. The Secondary source were materials ranging from books that explains palm wine among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria, between Agbor and her Neighbours, also with different communities of the Ika Nations, and with books that enabled the researcher enquire into the historical background of the Ika people, Journals, media and online sources, articles and close reading of published and

unpublished were not left out as they played most of the part in contributing to the concept palm wine.

However, both sources are used, providing us with the knowledge of the historical, political, economic, and social account of the Ika speaking communities both in Delta State, Anambra state and Edo State.

Literature Review

The lack of writing the Africa glorious past has made many communities in Africa not to have their history duly documented for posterity sake. Often times, these communities transfer history to the younger generation through oral tradition and folklore. But this means of documenting information have their defects inherent in them, consequently, acquiring a professional work on the history of the Ika people especially that of Agbor prove to be a very difficult task. Notwithstanding, in the betimes of the of the twenty-first century some authors of Ika history emerged, directing their energy towards writing literatures in terms of journals, articles and textbooks that focuses on and promote Ika culture and history.

Using ethnographic research method, Jacinta in his work "The value of palm wine tapping in the food production practices of Igbo-land: a case study of Idemili south local government area, Anambra State", examined the socio-cultural, religious, health and economic value of these palms in the southeastern part of the country and asserted that pasteurization of palm wine or its sap without the addition of sodium

metabisulphite or any other preservative could preserve the product without the loss of any vital constituents of the palm wine/sap. He further buttressed that palms are traditionally tapped for their sap. Jancinta is of the opinion that with the cordial relationship existing between traditional food processors and food scientists/technologists in the case of well-preserved palm wine, income would thrive much more, comparable to what it is now. Based on the findings, the study recommends partnership of food scientists and traditional food processors for effective preservation of the product with resultant huge income generation¹¹.

The book by F.A. Onyekpeze titled, *Ika World: A Socio-Cultural Ideology of Ika Nations*¹² speaks exhaustively on the history of Ika nation. It focuses on the geographical region and culture; these in turn provide a specific sense of identity of the Ika people. The book also investigates the religious, social and cultural environment that makes the Ika; it also draws attention to some key aspects of the Ika civilization. Again this piece elucidates expressively Ika past; emphasizes the accomplishments and challenges and the huge roles they play in the history of the Ika people.

There is also, FA Onyekpeze, *Growing up in Ika Culture*¹³. This work centres on mainly the Ika culture. Furthermore, this examines the manner in which human beings born into the Ika community progressively understand and imbibe the cultures and traditions, the prohibitions and the value system of the elders.

Ben Nwanne in his book entitled *Ika: Its Land and Its People*¹⁴, gives an expose on the economic progress of the Ika People from the pre-colonial era until recently and displays the level of growth and advancement that has occurred in Ika Nation. It reveals the industries and raw materials that are available in Ika presently such as, integrated Oil Mill, soft drinks factory, saw mills, bakery, and poultry among others.

Another category of books that would be reviewed is the one that treats the history of Nigeria, and one of such books is K.U. Reuben, "Environments and People in Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria", in Obaro Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc. 1980¹⁵, It considers the distribution of the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria, emphasizing greatly on their lands, climate change, the peoples and their ways of life. This work further divides the Nigerian peoples into two main geographical zones, the peoples of the forest belt which are to be found in the Forest of the south; including the mangrove swamp forest of the Niger Delta and coastal creeks, and the grassland or Savannah peoples of Nigeria which makes up two well defined groups, namely; the Middle Belt people and the people of the north.

The book, "The History of Agbor: its Culture and Tradition", by E.U. Tibi¹⁶ looks into the geography of Agbor, the various traditions of origin of Agbor, the dynasty as well as the social and economic activities in Agbor. Beyond all other

considerations, as regards the topic of this research work, the book also examines the relations between Agbor and her neighbours.

In Josiah Eluwairo Olukwu's book entitled, *History of Agbor Nation*¹⁷, gives a unique evaluation of Agbor as well as the origin of Agbor with regards to their political affiliation to Benin kingdom before turning into an independent community in Delta state; the origin of the exceptional clans in Ika kingdom including Oza Nogogo, Ekuku Agbor, Omumu, Oki, Alisimic, etc.; in strict adherence to the social-cultural aspects of their lives, the political and administrative structures of Agbor and the names of their leaders and indigenous rulers, the economic roles played by each of the clans in Agbor in the development of the Agbor community.

Considering Prince Adams O. Gbenoba in his book entitled “The History and Culture of Agbor”¹⁸. It acquaints us with gradual process of development of Agbor in the economic, social and political affiliations of the Southern part of Ika Local Government Area in Delta State, taking into consideration the cultural activities of Agbor people, their religious beliefs, marriage institutions, festivals etc.

A.E. Afigbo, *Igboland Before 1800*, in Obaro Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc. 1980¹⁹, is another relevant piece used in carrying out this research work. It examines the history and origin of the Igbo people including their social, economic and political arrangements. Most importantly, as it relates to the topic of the research work, this

ook considers the sub-group in Igboland. Under this classification the Ika people were labelled Ika-Igbo; this is to display the level of interactions that existed between the Ika and the Igbo people.

Also, F. A. Onyekpeze, *An Outline of the People, Culture and Socio-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation* ²⁰, summarily outlines the position, size, population, climate, physical features together with vegetation of the Ika world. It also debunks the idea that the Ika ethnic groups are sub-group of the Igbo speaking group. Put differently, the Ika people view themselves in the light of being independent and distinct from other groups in Nigeria. The work further examines the foundations and some form of social organization that it bears.

Chapterization

For the purpose of proper understanding and organization of the study, this research work will be sub-divided into five chapters.

Chapter One: Background to Study

This chapter reflects the introductory aspects of this research and it is broken down into units which are; Background to the study, aim and objectives of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, the methodology of the study, including a review of related literature.

Chapter Two: The Geography and History of the Ika People

The second Chapter examines the geography of the Ika people, the Ika people in pre-colonial times, the Ika people in colonial times and the Ika structure which comprises of Clans, villages, quarters and family units.

Chapter Three: Socio-Economic Activities of the Ika People

This chapter focuses on the economic activities of the Ika people, a brief history of palm wine tapping, political impact, social impacts and roles associated with palm wine tapping.

Chapter Four: Impact and Challenges of Palm Wine Tapping in Ika Community

This chapter seeks to examine the impact and challenges revolving around the economic activities of the Ika people particularly palm wine tapping.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This is the conclusive part of the work giving an all-round knowledge of what all chapters entail.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF THE IKA PEOPLE

The people of southern Nigeria in West Africa known as the Ika people, lives in Delta state, in the Land approximately between 06°00' and 06°24' North of the equator and longitude 06° 05' and 06°24' East of the Greenwich.¹ The topography reveals a fairly undulating area with hills scattered here and there. The south-western ends of the area are watered by a river which runs from Mbiri across Agbor, Owa and Abavo, before it empty itself into a lake at Urhomehe between Urhonigbe and Umutu. It is called Awka River at its source in Mbiri, Orogobo River across Agbor, Owanta or Ifie stream across Owa and Across Abovo. It is known as Ekuma or Ogbe- Obi or Igbogili stream, according to the villages through which it flows. A confluence is formed near the Orogobo River. The Ute-Elugu River flows from North-East of Ute-Elugu in Ute-Okpu into Aniocha areas. These Rivers are perennial sources of water supply to the areas through which they flow.²

The Ika clan area is within the rainforest belt and hence the dominant features of the vegetation are deciduous and evergreen forests. In the pre-colonial area, the land areas were vast dense evergreen forest. The forest was full of many economic timber species noticeable amongst them were mahogany, Sapele wood, iroko, Africa walnut, abura, afara, ekki, opepe, silk cotton tree, obeche and many others. The most important tree of the clans and which has remained the most valuable as a source of

palm oil, palm kernels and palm wine through the ages of palm tree. The vegetation which was mainly evergreen is at present interspersed by bushes which is due to farming activities of the people. Practically, none of these forests is now virgin.³

The Ika people geographically and politically are found in two local government areas of Delta state with some Ika language speaker spillover in Edo state. The two local government areas were created in 1991 out of the single Ika local government areas of Delta state. The Ika people, together with the Aniocha, Ndokwa and Oshimili constitute three Anioma Nation politically known as Delta North secretarial district. Both Ika North East and Ika south local government areas occupy a total land area of 177.45 square kilometers. Ika people have borders linguistically with Edo people, like Igbanke, Inyelen and Ekpon.⁴

Ika people are located in Delta State and some parts of Edo State of southern Nigeria. The people of Ika land speak Ika language and also in the southern Nigeria. They share boundaries on the West East in Bini tribe (Edo State), in the north with the Esan tribe (Edo State), in the East by the Enuani people (Anioma tribe) of Delta State and in the south with Udokwa (Ukwani tribe) of Delta State. With these clarifications, Ika nation is distinct, there is nothing like Delta Ibo or Ika Ibo. The people of Ika are located in the north west of Delta State with some of her people such as Igbogeli/Igbanke, Inyelem, Irru and Ekpon live in the neighbouring Edo

State. Administratively, the Ika land has two vast local governments in Delta State, which are:

1. Ika North East Local Government Area
2. Ika South Local Government Area

Ika North East Local Government Area has nine kingdoms while Ika South has just two big kingdoms.⁵ The Ikas live in eleven separate clans in North East and South Areas. The North-East location government area comprises of nine clans. They are in alphabetical order: Akumazi, Idumuesa, Igbodo, Mbiri, Otolokpo, Owa, Umunede, Uke-Ogbeje and the Ute-Okpu. The South local government areas has Abavo and Agbor clans before the split, Agbor was the head of Ika local government areas, After the split Agbor still remains the headquarters of the Ika South and Owa-Oyibu, the Headquarters of the Ika North-East.⁶

Historical and Ethnographical Background of the Ika People

The people which is Ika today were referred to as Ika before 1945, until the closing years of the 19th century A.D. The word Ika, was though mentioned in history's dim light of antiquity. It was known in the sense in which it is used today. Eka in the etymological essence is rooted in the sagacious remark by , Oba Ewuare thus used the name Eka to refer to a group of deserters from his kingdom. This was one of his first instances and time in history where Eka was authentically used to refer to a group of people. Ika was subsequently mentioned in connection with the

first lady of Ika land, the amiable wife of Ogelle, Ogelle was a patriarch who lived in the Idumu Eka quarters, whose farmland was peopled by Ugbo Eka community during the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great. Eka was Ogelle's first wife, the lady of Ika land, to whom Ika people owe the language they speak as their mother tongue.⁷

Also, Egharavba Jacob, in his book, *A Short History of Benin 1934*, stated that the early people of Eka migrated from Benin, that a man named Eka, the founder by whose name the land was known headed the first wave.⁸

The earlier Colonial documents referred the Ika people as just Ika-speaking. Forde and gone used the term Ika to represent the inland parts of the four groups that make up the western Igbo people (Anioma, Oshimili and Ukwani). The dual mode of Origin, Bini and Igbo of the Ika people has influenced them in so many ways, the situation of which has, however, tended to post a crisis of ethnic Identities of them being neither Binis nor Igbos. This mixed but not exactly confused origin and history is evidenced mostly in Ika culture and her cultural heritage. However, no matter the divergences of opinion and the identified diversities, the Ika ethnic nationality is an identifiable and vibrant entity whose existence is not in doubt. Ika identification with larger ethnic nationalities should not create any identity but should rather be seen as a factor for highlighting Ika specificity, their uniqueness and so their autonomy as a group capable of making clear and choice of whom their friends, brothers or sisters

are. The Ika people are neither Binis nor Igbo but essentially and intrinsically themselves.⁹

It is no doubt that the Ika language cut across the Bini and Igbo language. The existence of resemblance and identities between Ika and Benin and on the other hand, with Ika and Igbo. First of all it is in the area of correspondences in names and traditional titles that there is an Obvious and Unquenchable of Bini presence among the Ika.

The Ika Bini Factor

There is a general evolution of the Bini presence on the Ika people which is applied in their military and political ascendancy. It is possible to explain Bini influence on the nature of royalty and the composition of the traditional council. This there are exclusive Bini titles and corresponding functions being replicated among the Ika, for instance, we have the Iyase, Olihe, Ozomor, Obaseki, Obasogie, Ijeba, Uzama etc. These are also correspondence in the names of quarters, for example, Ihogbe, Ogbesere, Ogan and in the name of individuals Adagbon Osagbo, Isibor, Ibude, Oba, Zuaye etc. From the above and speaking in general terms, Ika does appear in that the Bini influence on the language is largely in the area of dynastic structure (Chieftaincy titles). The Aristocratic role of the Bini in Ika language can be seen in two ways, firstly, it can be explained in terms of the militarist and expansionist tendency of Bini empire which in its conquests may have imposed it's

structure on the oppressed Ika people, secondly, it could also be explained on the basis of emulation, i.e. some elements of the indigenous population who have had contacts with the Bini and conscious of the Bini structure and apparent organizational benefits may have decided to adopt the same in their respective clans as stated before, correspondences also exist not only at the level of lexical terms but also as regards some structural elements in both language.¹⁰

Similarities in Both Languages

Word	Bini	Ika
Cup	ukpu	ukpu
Palm oil	ofigbon	ofigbon
Mortal	Odo	Odo

Close Identical Lexical Items

Street	Idunmwun	Idumu
Market day	Eken	Eke
Woman	Okhuo	Okpoho

It is generally held that people from Benin migrated to various locations in this forest belt as well as other areas in the south. Often times, these migrants assume administrative roles in the places they have migrated to, leaving a mark on the political, economic and socio-cultural structures on them subsequently. Jacob. U. Egharevba, the legendary Benin historian presented Agbor as a vassal of Benin

kingdom during the reign of Oba Ewuare who conquered and annexed about 200 other towns including Ekiti, Ikare, Kukuruku and the Igbo country on a side of the River Niger. He illustrated that the chief (Obi/Dein) of Ika continually rebelled against the kingdom and so the Oba took further steps to curb the situation.¹¹ Therefore, the forbears of Ishan (Esan) and Afenmai Divisions, the Eka (Ika) and Igbo-speaking people of the West bank of the Niger Aboh, the Urhobo, Isoko including the people of Onitsha are all settlers from Benin.¹²

The Ika Igbo Factor

Although the Igbo may or may not exceed the Ika- Bini factor, yet has assumed a greater prevailing influence and has even become embedded in the sub-consciousness of the Ika people. In a matter of fact, the Igbo dialect, the Igbo dialect has become so present in the Ika language that the later has been identified as a "western Igbo dialect" or the Ika Igbo language.¹³ Prof M. A Onwuejeogwu, a renowned anthropologist, in his book, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony*, states that the East Igbo are responsible for Agbor, Owa and Ute-Ukpu of the Ika nation.¹⁴

It is also highly recommended to note that, one of Nigeria most prominent historian, Prof. Adiele Afigbo stated, in his book, *The Igbos and their Neighbours*, we know on the strength of evidence from linguistics and archeology that the people from southern Nigeria took place in present historical times.¹⁵

Ika: kiwu efa I? What is your name?

Igbo: Gini bu afa gi? What is your name?

Ika: Yakwue? Did he say it?

Igbo: Obu nya kwuu ya? Did he say?

Another tradition had it that the Ika people migrated from the *Igboland* (Nri). According to M.A. Onwujeogwu, the predominancy of Nri from the 1100 to 1700 snowballed over Ika Igbo areas especially Ute-Okpu, Owa, Abavo and Agbor.¹⁶ In his book, *The Quest for the Origin of Igbo People*, Uche Ikeanyibe observed that there has been attempts in recent time on the part of the Ika community to deny their identity as Ndi Igbo. He featured F.C. Ogbalu in the same book as admonishing the people of Ika, and all that counted themselves out of their Igbo originality that there is no justification whatsoever to do so¹⁷

Similarities in the Linguistic Make-up between Ika and Benin

Meaning	Benin	Ika
God	Osalobua	Osolobue
Oil	Ofigbon	Ofigbon
Onions	Alubara	Arabasa
Mirror	Urghegbe	Uwegbe
Mouth	Unu	Onu

Corn	Okha	Okha
Person	Avbihian	Inhian
Chief	Uzama	Uzama

Source: Data collected by the researcher during the field work.

Similarities in the linguistic make-up between Ika and Igbo

Meaning	Igbo	Ika
Goodluck	Awele	Ewere
Head	Isi	Ish
Cloth	Akwa	Ekwa
Cockroach	Ochicha	Achicha
Dog	Nkita	Nkite
Mother	Nne	Nne
Plate	Afele	Efere

Source: Data collected by the researcher during the field work.

The political and administrative structure of the Ika people has a lot of things in common with Benin and the Igbos. The traditional Igbo society was acephalous in nature, therefore, there was absence of a monarch. But, the Benin Kingdom on the other hand, had a centralized system with the Oba occupying the highest position in the political echelon. Using Agbor as a case study, in traditional Agbor society, the administration of the society rested on the shoulders of the *Obi* (the monarch) and

assisted by his council. The right of an Obi and his council were regulated by custom.¹⁸ The Obi was the central authority in Agbor whose office was hereditary, his first son succeed him.

Also, there were two councils known as *Ogwa Ndichien* and *Ogwa Idibodein Agbor*. The *Ogwa Ndichien* consisted of only noble elders, some of whom were king makers, the ancestral shrine priest and state messengers or *Idibodein*. The *Ogwa Idibodein* Agbor consisted of title holders, some of whom were Obis counselors and other messengers. The two councils were responsible for the life and property of the citizens¹⁸, the chief of the inner chamber was titled *Oweh*, he was head of the *Idibodein* and was responsible for confirming titles on anyone who had served the king and his kingdom.²⁰

The government in Agbor was administered in *Dein/Obi's* name by the *Ndichien* Agbor council among whom was classified chiefs consisting the *Ihaim/Idibodein* members who were the advisory body to the Obi.²¹

The *Uzama* members were *Orkwa Ukpo Ndichien* namely: *Ovia, Edae, Ojerijangbae, Iyase Ozormor, Agbaosorgwu, Ine Ekuku, Ohazama, Iregwai and Nwan-dein* (crown prince).²² *Ighaigho* members are the advisory body to the elders namely: *Obi, Akpara, Ebbe, Akwueh, Ekpaeh, Oguden, Ojisi-Agbor Nta, Ojisi Ozara, Elema Oki, Elema Omumu, Ero, Ekpenike, Alaza Emuhu and Igbokeje of Alihagu*²³,

Ifiorkpor members are the ancestral priests in all Agbor villages and quarters, namely: *Iregwai, Ajaeh, Oriorwor, Ojefa*, etc. They come with *Ofor* staff when attending palace meeting called *Oka-Afor*.²⁴

In attending to dispute or other issues that concern the people, for example, any complaint in a family circle was settled by the elders of the family if not an appeal the village elders at the Orgwa Onyisi Idumu (the eldest man in the quarter) or Onyisi Ogbe (the eldest man in the town). Serious crimes as murder homicide, theft etc., were tried by the village council or by the Obis tribunal if not amicably settled.

	Dynasty till Date	Period on Throne
1.	Dein	1270-1307 (37 years)
2.	Owuwu	1307-1333 (26 years)
3.	Akina	1440-1460 (20 years)
4.	Agho	1460-1518 (58 years)
5.	Ahisana	1518-1594 (76 years)
6.	Ofuede	1598-1630 (32 years)
7.	Ogwade	1630-1650 (20 years)
8.	Oje	1650-1658 (8 years)
9.	Adigwe	1698-1740 (42 years)

10. Modu 1740-1795 (55 years)
11. Obanor 1795-1885 (90 years)
12. Igbinije 1885-1890 (5 years)
13. Gbenoba 1890-1911 (21years)
14. Agborbu 1914-1929 (15years)
15. Obika 1935-1967 (32years)
16. Ikenchukwu 1968-1979 (11years)
17. His Royal Majesty, Dr. Benjamin Keagborekuzi I the current Dein of Agbor who was crowned at age 2 after his father's death.²⁵

Endnotes

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Uti Ella Chinenye (Researcher) with Mrs. Emmanuel, A., Librarian at Onu Ika Library, Agbor, Delta State (2023).

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE IKA PEOPLE

In the pre-colonial period, Ika and her neighbours did not live in isolation; neither did they experience warfare alone. On the contrary, they entered into rich socio-economic relations which promoted good neighbourliness and advanced unity among the generality of the people. Substantiated trade relations had existed between Ika and her neighbours. Their economic activities were grouped into Agriculture and system of trade. There was also existence of local trade, long distance trade and other bilateral relations among these communities

Agriculture has been the earliest and dominant occupation of the Ika people and hence it is the source of their economic mainstay. The Ika Nation were predominantly an Agrarian society. The peaceful nature of the people, their spiritual contentment, the fertile soil and the climatic conditions of the area¹. Without any forms of speculations and strenuous enquiry, it is obvious, taking a look at the Ika geographical location, that agriculture has been the earliest and dominant occupation of the people. It was their major source of livelihood in pre-colonial times. The fertile soil and favourable climatic condition served as incentive to the practice of agriculture in Agbor. Both men and women engaged in agriculture majorly to cater for their families. In other words, subsistence farming was the actual practice.

Consequently, the economy was static and remained at the same level of limited technology, almost every Ika man and woman engaged in farming. The Ika environment was favourable for root crops especially yam, which was what they started cultivating first. A lot of myths, legends and tales abound in Ika oral history on how yam was discovered. Ika people believe that Osolobue which means God, gave their forefathers yam and directed them on how to cultivate it².

The farmers produced staple food crops like yam, cassava and maize. They also produced beans, plantain, okra, melon, tomatoes, vegetables, etc.³ The area was blessed with rubber and oil palm, which the colonial masters later exploited extensively and converted into plantation farming.

Apart from farming, the people also kept poultry and livestock, which equally provided manure for their farms. Also, hunting was another aspect of the economic activities. For many, hunting served as a means of obtaining meat rather than as a means of getting money⁴. Another reason why many in the olden days was to kill the animals that destroyed their crops⁵.

Fishing was also an economic activity in pre-colonial Agbor. The people engaged in fishing although, it was a small scale venture due to the absence of a large water body in Agbor. Hence, fishing was mainly for subsistence purpose.

Away from agriculture and all that have to do with food production, the people also engaged in crafts. The local craftsmanship included cloth-weaving, mat making, pottery, smithing and basketry, especially in the olden days⁶.

Trade and exchanges have existed even during the era of slave trade. With Awuu as Abavo was called originally, they related through various forms of trade. They also transacted in the famous Udomi market of Igbon (slave) trade as middlemen alongside other prominent towns in Iduu, kwale and Igbo⁷.

Agbor and Igbanke also interacted with each other, and such interactions further enhanced peaceful relations between them. It may seem as if economic relations did not exist between these two communities, due to the fact that they were engaged in almost the same economic activities. But trade made it possible for the two communities to relate. The markets in Agbor and Igbanke were the points where people from both communities met and exchanged their goods, so trade thrived between these two communities⁸. A particular day was regarded a market day in both communities and that day was the day when people from both communities traded among themselves. Such commodities that they traded with included their farm produce such as yam, plantain, cassava, melon, vegetables, maize, etc. others were animals such as goats, sheep and birds.

Umunede is known to produce varieties of crops in abundance including the German banana, corn, melon, calabash, okro, cassava for consumption and in exchange for crops like orange and cherry⁹.

The name Ika, is synonymous with Agriculture, indeed farming. From the 13th century till date, farming in Ika has centered around crop production. The principle crop of important is yam and palm fruit. A man's affluence and wealth were calculated by the number of lines of yam in his ban and therefore, an authorized title of "Diji", is given to a man that produces large quantities of yam from his farm. This will also qualify him to have more than one wives if he desires¹⁰.

Palm Wine

The palm wine trade is an important economic activity for many tropical rural areas worldwide. In West Africa, palm wine holds high sociocultural and traditional values. There are two major species of palm in Nigeria: the oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) and the raffia palm (*Raphia hookeri*). Both species produce palm wine. Both species are cultivated; oil palm is mainly for palm oil production on commercial scales but raffia is essentially for palm wine. The quality of wine is similar in both species but there are cultural preferences for each of the species for Palm wine is a ready brew of nature; it is ready for use in real time and without any embellishments. It is usually consumed in homes and at social events. The use of palm wine in traditional ceremonies is popular in many cultures; it is poured during

libations as an offering to a deity or god, traditionalists spill it on the ground as a mark of respect to their dead ancestors. It plays a significant role in many traditional events in Africa. For example, it is served as a special drink to guests during celebrations like naming and weddings ceremonies¹¹.

Palm wine has been a lucrative business for the Ika people in the pre-colonial era and till date. The palm wine which is called "Ozu" in the Ika language has been an economic uplift for the Ika nation and they're generally known to be the best producers of palm wine in the world. The palm wine has made the Ika people a popular nation to her neighbours in South South (Edo state) and to the Igbos in the East. Palm wine has been a major source of revenue and it's a business that is been passed from one generation to another. Palm wine (Ozu) which is a popular drink that is drank widely by the people, they show much appreciation to the drink and it is sold in almost every eatery and joint.

The Process of Extraction Palm Wine

Palm wine has been a skill that was and still mostly passed on from one generation to the other within the community and the learning process depends on the individual. It is mandatory to acquire the learning process because of the challenges and incident revolving around it. For a quick learner, one week is enough to learn the skill but for a slow learner, a month is enough to acquire the tactics involved in palm wine tapping¹².

Generally, there are two ways of extracting palm wine, first climbing method and second the fallen tree method. The climbing of very tall palm trees using rudimentary climbing equipments, slashing the palm flower until the sap begins to run and attaching a gourd in other to extract the palm wine. This is mostly done by the Igbo and other parts in Nigeria but to the Ika people, this is not so because they would rather fall the palm trees which yield higher quality wine and the drink runs for a week or two depending on the tree. Although falling the tree is a much safer practice, most times, the tapper is most often not the tree owner, the most popular Igbo method is preferred in this sense because it preserves the tree for many years at the cost of more labor time, effort and risk. While the Ika have lots of palm trees and practice afforestation¹³.

After uprooting and falling the palm tree, they allow it lie fallow for about a week, hence the reason why it is called Ozu (Dead body) and the tapping begins afterwards, first by creating a hole in the crown of the tree and then putting a bamboo stick in form of a pipe underneath it and patiently waiting for it, at least, a minimum of two days or more in order for the sticky sap to drain out, after which, the fresh palm wine starts dropping. Then, the final stage is to dig a small portion of the ground where the keg can be placed in connection with the bamboo stick¹⁴.

Social Impacts of Palm Wine

In the socio impact of the Ika people, palm wine has a paramount role to play in socio-cultural activities and without it, such meetings cannot hold for it symbolizes togetherness. In traditional Agbor society, there were established social groups and institutions within which the people lived and interacted. There was interaction based on age grade.

The age grade was divided into two main age divisions in Ika land, including Agbor; the Ikoro, the young and energetic men, and the *Ndichen*, the elderly men. This meeting is usually held with palm wines¹⁵. These age grades had specific duties and obligations. The young men among them had the obligation of forming the militia, clearing the bush to create a path for people to walk on, and they also had the duty to execute any decisions of the council that needed physical execution.

There are also existing institutions to check the excesses of the people in the society. One of such was the establishment of taboos. To check indecent behaviours and protect the name of Agbor, some serious misbehaviours were declared as taboos¹⁶. An example of such act of misbehaviour was adultery. Marriage was another institution in Agbor that was held in high esteem and it was also regarded as being sacred. There were two types of marriage systems in Agbor. That of betrothal (Ikwa nwuyen) and the other was known as *ngba*. Marriage by betrothal was carried out when the female child was given out in marriage at a tender age either as a result

of friendship between two parents or to thank a friend for bailing out a family out of trouble. The girl so betrothed remains with her parents till she is ripe for marriage. If the man to whom the girl was betrothed was old for marriage, he passed the girl to his first son. This system of marriage was known in Agbor as *Ilu nwuyen*¹⁷.

The *ngba* marriage system on the other hand, took place whereby the young man made his intention known to his parents. In turn, his parents acted as intermediaries between their son and the girl's parent with minimum of two keg of palm wines and when both families were satisfied and assured, then a marriage agreement would be reached, marked by the payment of the bride price. *Egwu ofe*, *Egwu ori nani*, *Egwu orurue* and *Egwu ogbugba* (demonstration) are evidences that Agbor had well established socio-cultural systems in the area of dance and music¹⁸.

The birth of a baby into any family in Agbor are usually celebrated, and the high regard in which children were held is reflected in the names usually given to them¹⁹. Therefore, naming ceremonies are done with some kegs of palm wine available. In Agbor naming ceremony for a male child was different from that of a female child in terms of duration. The male child was named after seven days, while that of a female was five days²⁰.

Death is an inevitable occurrence in life. In Ika generally when more than three persons die consecutively within a short period of time, or someone dies suddenly or prematurely, the gods will be quickly consulted to ascertain the cause of

the death in order to prevent further occurrences. a death penalty will be placed on the person and afterwards the corpse will be thrown into the deep forest for animals to feast on the body. This is a common practice in Owa, Idumesah, Ute-Okpu, Agbor and Abavo. Be it as it may presently, as a result of western education and its vestige people of Agbor became aware that death can be caused by different factors such as sickness, poor hygiene, negligence, accidents, through child delivery, lack of proper medical care. The cases of witches and wizards held responsible for such kind of deaths are marginal²¹.

With regards to burial practices, the age of a person usually determined how the burial ceremony was done in Agbor. If a child who was less than ten years of age dies, the child would be buried that same day and will be wrapped with a certain kind of cloth²². The death of the child will be mourned for a longer period of time compared to an adult. People within the age range of eleven and forty were not given a huge burial ceremony when they die because their death are considered to be tragedy. In Agbor, they entertain what they call second burial known as Izu and this was only done when the person was within the age range of sixty and above. Such burial called for huge celebration with the availability of palm wines because the person would have achieved a lot in life. The chief priest prior to the day of the burial would kill a goat to appease the gods to welcome the dead to their kingdom and sometime there was a strong belief that the chief priest can even hear the voice of the dead people²³.

Proverbs

Ika Proverbs

Meaning in English

Ale nwihin nwata tikpo ugbegbe
ofugbon ku wa ju aya.

One should not react immediately to an
offence.

K'onye han k'ome.

Cut your coat according your cloth.

Onweni k'weme inmi nkite n'ochucha.

A bad person is always a bad person
regardless.

W'an di eka maka je da nhun eze.

One should give to honour to whom it is
due.

W' an vini inhian jonjo.

There's always the good side of a bad
person.

Onukokome ogbuofifi.

Unity is power.

Ewu son nkite Ori nshi.

Evil communication corrupts good
manner.

Onyema Kono a'ni ogbehen nwuonwu.

Tomorrow is uncertain.

We rgha fe ebu rinhu.

There's always light at the end of tunnel²⁴

Festivals

In African society, festival was an important aspect of the people's life. Festivals were celebrated for different purposes, either to commemorate a particular event or a deity or an important event that occurred in the history of the people. For

the Agbor people, the festivals which were celebrated and are still celebrated today are, Igwe festival, Iwagi festival (new yam festival) and the Osiezi festival. Igwe and Iwagi are annual festivals, while Osiezi is celebrated every three years. Also, Agbor people celebrate the Igbose which was instituted by Dein Eboraka in 1270AD, to mark Gods appearance to him in Oza-Nogogo²⁵. This festival is peculiar among the people of Oza-Nogogo. While Ihium Imemi is observed by Ewuru people.²⁶

Traditionally, palm wine is deeply rooted in West African culture and traditions and thus is the most frequently consumed alcoholic beverage. It is enjoyed at birth celebrations, at funeral wakes, and plays an integral role during traditional marriage ceremonies. It is commonly though²⁷.

Endnotes

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Mr. Benedict Ayomehue, palm wine Tapper Owa Alero, Delta State (10 June, 2023).



Uti Ella Chinenye having a taste of fresh palm wine in Owa Alero, Delta State (10 June, 2023).



Mr. Benedict Ayomehue, on work duties, Owa-Alero, Delta State (10 June, 2023).



Source: Fieldwork.

CHAPTER FOUR
IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES OF PALM WINE TAPPING
IN IKA COMMUNITY

It is no doubt that palm wine has numerous impacts but yet associated with tedious challenges. Palm wine is a natural drink which nourishes the body. It is consumed during celebrations, enjoyed at naming ceremonies, burials, also it plays an integral role during traditional marriage ceremonies.

When it is tapped, it is fresh and sweet, but by 24 hours, it becomes sour and alcoholic. due to fermentation. Palm wine has many health benefits, especially when consumed fresh. It is good for our health if it is taken in pure form. The point needs to be made that commercial palm wine is regularly adulterated with narcotic agents obtained from regular herbal source Preservatives and sweeteners distort the originality of the wine, therefore making it not good for the health¹.

Health Benefits of Palm Wine

Nutritionally, Palm wine is a power house. Optometrists confirm that yeast is good for the eyes because of the presence of yeast contained in palm wine. The yeast is use for industrial purposes such as baking and production of alcoholic drinks or potable ethanol². Palm wine also fight cancer because it contains vitamin B2, also known as riboflavin, Riboflavin helps in the fight against free radicals.it also helps in maintaining healthy hair, skin and nails The iron and vitamin B complex found in

palm wine are needed for a healthy skin, hair and nail. Palm wine can be combined with other local herbs for consumption during malaria attacks³.

Reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases: Research has shown that drinking moderate amounts of palm wine has been associated with a reduced risk of developing cardiovascular diseases such as heart failure. This study was conducted by Lindberg and Ezra in 2008. Palm wine contains potassium which has been proven by research to improve heart health and reduce hypertension.

It can help fight cancer: Palm wine contains vitamin B2, also known as riboflavin. Riboflavin helps in the fight against free radicals.

Palm wine helps in maintaining healthy hair, skin and nails: The iron and vitamin B complex found in palm wine are needed for a healthy skin, hair and nail. Iron is essential for the development, growth and functioning of some cells in our body. This property of palm wine makes it helpful in promoting wound healing by repairing our tissues and promoting the growth of healthy cells.

It promotes lactation: When nursing mothers include coconut oil in their diet, it induces breast milk production. But it has also been said that palm wine is used by many natural healers in Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and other parts of Africa to help lactating mothers when they have limited breast milk production.

It boosts sperm production: In West African tradition, palm wine is credited for increasing sperm count in men.

It helps in swallowing herbal powders: African traditional healers often infuse palm wine with medicinal herbs to produce a wide variety of remedies.

Bakery and preservative use of palm wine: Indians are known to use fermentation due to the wild yeast content of palm wine to produce special local bread.

Malaria treatment: Palm wine can be combined with other local herbs for consumption during malaria attacks.

Nutritionally it is a power-house: Palm wine is nutritionally important because it is an excellent source of probiotics, nicotinic acid, thiamin, vitamin C, protein and riboflavin. It contains sugar, protein, carbohydrate, amino acid, Vitamin C, yeast, potassium zinc, magnesium, iron, vitamins B3 and B6.

Treatment of stomach problems: In folk medicines, palm wine is mixed with other herbs and used for treating stomach disorders.

Treatment of skin rashes: Palm wine can be applied on the skin for treating skin rashes especially in children. It is used in Nigerian rural communities for treating measles in children⁴.

Political Impact

Palm wine is used in traditional institutions and ceremonies. For coronation, title collecting and other political activities, it serves as not just a drink but also a symbol of purity and ancestral recognition. This is because of the role the wine plays in the day-to-day life of the people. In the pre-colonial time, wine in the palace was

never bought but donated to the palace daily by tappers. The tappers took turns in supplying or donating palm wines. The drink is used in several meetings hosted in the palace and other gatherings, just like colanut, the importance of Palm wine in the Ika land cannot be over emphasized. During festivals, palm wine is often used as an opening. It is strewn on the ground and is meant to remember the deceased ancestors who should not be forgotten. Palm wine is used as a libation poured on ancestral shrines⁵.

Socio-Cultural Impact

Palm wine cannot be separated from socio-cultural activities in Ika land because without palm wine, there is no celebration. Palm wine is a social and communal act that is the core symbol of hospitality, with the informality and solemnity of the occasion. Ancestor spirits appreciate drinks, and palm wine was often used in offerings and fetishes to obtain their favor and help or to reduce their anger and, therefore, the risk of disease or other calamity⁶. Spousal relationships are not considered solid until the suitor brings palm wine to the father of whomever they're pursuing. Elders bless the palm wine, which is then enjoyed by the couple. There are two types of marriage systems in Ika, that of betrothal (Ikwa Nwuyen) and the other which is known as Ngbal. Marriage by betrothal was carried out when the female child was given birth to. It is marriage at a tender age either as a result of friendship between two parents or to thank a friend for bailing a family out of trouble.

The girl's betrothal remained with her parents till the ripe age of marriage. If the man whom the girl was betrothed was old for marriage, she will be passed to the man's first son. This system of marriage was known in Agbor as *Ilu nwuyen*"⁷.

In the Ika Nation, palm wine is an important aspect of every festival carried out in Ika Festivals were celebrated for different purposes, either to commemorate a particular event or a deity or an important event that occurred in the history of the people. For the Agbor people, the festivals which were celebrated and are still celebrated today are *Igwe*, *Iwagi* (new yam festival) and the *Osiezi* festival. *Igwe* and *Iwagi* are annual festivals, while *Osiczi* is celebrated every three years. Also, Agbor people celebrate the *Igbose* which was instituted by *Dein Eboraka* in 1270AD, to mark Gods appearance to him in *Oza-Nogogo*⁸. This festival is peculiar among the people of *Oza-Nogogo* While *Ihium Imemi* is observed by *Ewuru* people⁹.

Igwe Festival

The *Igwe* festival was celebrated annually between the end of the year and the beginning of the New Year. It started far back during King *Ahimasa's* reign which lasted from 1594 to 1630. The festival was marked by different activities involving both the youths and the elders. And there were laid down procedures that the people were expected to strictly adhere to the festival to afford the indigenes the occasion to thank the gods for their surviving the outgoing year and to herald the new one¹⁰. The first step taken to mark the festival was the fixing of date, and this

was done by the Obi in council. They all would meet and fix a suitable date for the festival. It was usually fixed in two or three market periods in advance¹¹. On the eve of the festival, the oldest man in the family would perform a mini celebration known as Igwo Isi. Igwo Isi was performed with one kola nut, native chalk, plate of dried meat mixed with palm oil and drink. Parents and their children assembled in the Ehi shrine where the celebrant broke the kola nut and prayed for the wellbeing of the family¹².

On the morning of the festival, the women cooked food with special delicacies, and when they were done cooking at around mid-day, the pounded yam and pot of soup were carried to the man's parlour where all members of the household gathered to eat the food with the Ofor stick in their presence, the man prayed as he appeased the spirits of the departed members of the family. The ancestors and asked for good health and for a successful and fruitful farming in the year¹³.

The youths were not left out during the festival; in fact, they played a vital role in making the event more colourful and glamorous. The male youths, after the food and drinks ceremony was over, picked the Ubiri stick to meet other youths at the village square, and with the Ubiri stick they first hit the ground round the house, saying prayers to the gods asking for the evil spirit to be driven away, to remove

death, sickness and disunity in the family (Nmo riali we pu anwu ni irehun). “The gathered youths moved to selected locations where they performed the same act till they got to the terminating point which was the evil forest where they perform the years final hitting of the ground before throwing the Ubiri sticks away”. The final activity was the wrestling everyone moved to Ogbe-Uku (wrestling ground) where the youths wrestled in pairs beginning from the most junior age group graduating to the senior ones. When the youth leaders were satisfied that they were done with wrestling, they all collected the Ibi-Ewere leaves which they believed would portend good luck, and they rejoiced home. On getting home, the youths shared the Ewere with members of their households, wishing them good luck during the new year¹⁴.

Osiezi Festival

The Osiezi festival was usually a period of reunion of the living and the spirits of the dead and offered friends and well-wishers of Agbor people the opportunity to share in the hospitality of the Agbors¹⁵. Osiezi was the most popular festival of the people of Agbor. It was more of a carnival with the entire ceremony lasting nine days¹⁶. All the villages that constituted Agbor during the period in view celebrated the festival and made one contribution or the other, but the chief celebrant was the Obi. Also in burial ceremonies too, palm wine is offered to guests present in the occasion¹⁷.

Economic Impact

The economy impact of palm wine is seen through trade prior to this time and till date. Palm wine tappers in Ika land engage in sales of palm wine in the south-south and southeast region respectfully. In the pre-colonial time, they had trade relations with Benin and Igbo speaking people. Palm wine led the engagement of short and long trade in Ika.

Local trades were carried out in market places, Ogogo, the name of the market in Oza-Nogogo and Ekhi Egbema were parts of trade between Oza-Nogogo and Agbor¹⁸. Farming, trading, crafts and industry as discussed contributed greatly to the economic relations that existed and still exists between Agbor and Oza-Nogogo. Palm wine was another economic activity that linked Agbor and Oza. Under trade, the various markets that existed in pre-colonial Oza-Nogogo and Agbor were carried out through the means of exchange. Cowries and manilas were later introduced into the trade¹⁹.

Palm wine has contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of the Ika people in several ways. It is equally a source of livelihood, job creation, wealth creation, and taxation. In the area of job creation, it is important to note that unemployment has been one of the major challenges faced by the youths, in this regard, the palm wine sector has significantly reduced unemployment, thereby creating jobs for the people. Talking about job creation, three categories of people

were beneficiaries. These include the palm wine tappers, the middlemen and the retailers who owned palm wine joints in village squares and the town. The palm wine tappers were the first people to acquire jobs in this sector. They were the people who first got engaged in the production of palm wine as their main economic activity. In palm wine tapping, they produced wine and supplied them to the second category of people who were the middlemen and the returns they got from the sales were used to cater for the family. It should be noted that there were some exceptional cases in the palm wine business chain as some tappers were joint owners who sold what they tapped without having it pass through the middle man though at a minimal rate²⁰.

The transporters or the middlemen were the second category of people that got employed in the palm wine sector. This class of people was mostly made up of youths and they bought wine from tappers in the groves and sold it in towns at a profit. These middlemen bought motorcycles and Land Rovers which enabled them to transport the palm wine with much ease thereby, satisfying the growing demand of the wine in Ika. These motorcycles and vehicles were then used for commercial purposes for the rest of the day, after the wine was supplied, creating more jobs²¹.

The third class of people who got employed in the palm wine sector was the retailers. The retailers were of both sexes, based in village squares and towns. These people were fully employed as they spent their days in the palm wine joints selling to customers. They opened their joints as early as 7:00am and closed at midnight

making high sales during weekends. In some joints, two or three sales persons were employed to serve the customers and were also placed on salary by the joint owner, thus reducing the rate of unemployment in Ika and also created wealth for the people who got involved in the business. This sector played a key role in developing and improving the livelihoods of all the Ika people the palm wine tappers sold most of their products to the middlemen who in turn supplied them to the retailers who also retailed to the consumers in smaller quantities which yielded them enough profit to solve financial challenges. These challenges were in terms of constructing good homes following the changing trends in modernization; paying children school fees and catering for other family needs. As concerns fees payment, a good number of successful people in Ndu Sub-Division were sponsored with the money realized from the sales of these palm wine and other raffia related products. Still, in that line, most middlemen used the profits from this sector to establish other businesses²².

This sector equally contributed to development through taxes. Those who were dealing with these products at the frontline in the business were charged to pay taxes according to the worth of their items before they were allowed to sell their products, as a means to generate revenue. Those who had palm wine joints in towns and village squares were also charged to pay taxes through the council²³.

Challenges of Palm Wine Tapping

Palm wine is associated with lots of challenges and social vices such as drunkenness, addictions, mischievous behaviours and irresponsibility in the society. Also some of the ways of extracting the palm wine is dangerous and sometimes put the tapper at risk because the process of palm wine tapping involves climbing the palm tree and making a small incision in the tree's bark with a sharp instrument, such as a cutlass or a knife.

First, the lack of regulation which can lead to unsustainable practices and environmental degradation. There is a need for more precise guidelines and rules to ensure that palm wine tapping is done sustainably. This can be done by creating socio-economic rights for citizens, while the instrumental use of law is desirable. More needs to be done to supplement and adopt a radical interpretation of the constitutional provisions to make socio-economic rights enforceable. Secondly, people need to be active citizens through participation in the development process.

Over-tapping is another significant issue because it can damage the tree and reduce its lifespan, which can have long-term economic and environmental consequences. This is mainly a problem in areas with a high demand for palm wine. The climate poses a challenge too. Climate change can significantly impact palm trees and their ability to produce sap. Changes in rainfall patterns and temperature

can affect the yield and quality of the sap, which can have economic and environmental consequences²⁴.

One of the most disastrous challenges faced in Palm wine tapping, especially in the eastern part of Nigeria, is the falling from oil palm tree or raffia tree in the course of extracting the drink.

It is interesting to know that palm wine tappers in Ika are not exposed to the risk of falling from trees because of the method applied in their extraction process which is done by climbing the uppermost part of the tree and cutting the crown with a cutlass, after which, a container is fastened to the flower stump to collect the sap. The uprooting of trees done by the Ika people has made palm wine a safe means of extracting the sap. One of the main challenges in palm wine tapping faced in Ika, is the issue of theft, due to the fact that the palm trees are located in the bush, it makes it exposed and unprotected²⁵.

Negative Effects of Palm Wine on Human Health

Palm wine can also have some negative effects on our health if taken too often. Palm wine has alcohol, which is a substance that can affect one's thinking, coordination, and reaction time. Alcohol can also harm the liver, brain, heart, and other organs if you drink it too much or for too long. Alcohol can also interfere with some medicines and cause side effects²⁶.

Palm wine can also cause dehydration, diarrhea, and food poisoning if it is not stored or made properly. Palm wine does not last long and can go bad easily if it is exposed to air or heat. Bad palm wine can have harmful microbes or toxins that can make you sick. You may experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and dehydration. Dehydration is a condition where you lose more water than you take in, which can affect your blood pressure, kidney function, and electrolyte balance²⁷.

Palm wine can also affect your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes. Diabetes is a condition where your body cannot make or use insulin well, which is a hormone that regulates your blood sugar levels. Pre-diabetes is a condition where your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. Both diabetes and pre-diabetes can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, nerve damage, and eye problems. Palm wine has sugar, which can raise your blood sugar levels if taken too often²⁸.

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Uti Ella Chinenye (Researcher) with Mr. Benedith Ayomehue, Palm Wine Tapper, Owa Alero, Delta State (10 June, 2023).



Uti Ella Chinenye (Researcher) with Mr. Joel Ojumena, Palm Wine Tapper, Owa Alero, Delta State (10 June, 2023).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The focus of this research has been on the study of Palm wine tapping; a case study of the Ika people in time perspectives and it has been evident that there is a great deal of economic prosperity in the business of palm wine basically as a result of their political, social, and economic activities. This research has demonstrated that in the pre-colonial era, the socio-economic activities of the Ika people are mainly on palm wine tapping.

Invariably, most often than not, there was numerous trading relationship between Ika and other communities in which they have their origins traced to the great Benin Kingdom and/or the Igbos (Nri), where they have similar political institutions as well as a common economic and socio-cultural structures. However, they entered into rich socio-economic relations which promoted good neighbourliness and advanced unity among the generality of the people. Substantial trade relations had existed between Ika and her neighbours. Their economic activities were grouped into Agriculture and system of trade and there was existence of local trade, long distance trade and other bilateral relations among these communities.

Palm wine has been a lucrative business for the Ika people in the pre-colonial era and till date. The palm wine which is called "Ozu" in the Ika language has been

an economic uplift for the Ika nation and they're generally known to be the best producers of palm wine in the world. The palm wine has made the Ika people a popular nation to her neighbours in South-South (Edo state) and to the Igbos in the East. Palm wine has been a source of revenue and it's a business that is been passed from one generation to another. The importance of palm wine (Ozu) which is a popular drink that is drank widely by different people cannot be overemphasized in the history of Nigeria culture.

In the socio impact of the Ika people, palm wine has a paramount role to play in socio- cultural activities and without it, some meetings cannot hold for it symbolizes togetherness to the society, there were established social groups and institutions within which the people lived and interacted. It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that in the Ika cultures, Palm wine is a tool of social cohesion (the drink is served during casual visits and occasional gathering, it has more formal usages in coronations and festivals). The significance of palm wine to the Ika people is that it is a representation of cultural values, tapped directly from a tree and freshly served in calabash and cups. Palm wine celebrate human existence and it serves as a source of unity in communities. The use of palm wine in traditional ceremonies is common in many cultures; it is poured during libations as an offering to a deity or god, traditionalists spill it on the ground as a mark of respect to their dead ancestors.

It also plays a significant role in many traditional events. For example, during traditional weddings in Igbo land, and in Ika community, palm wine is given to the bride by the head of the family, she then searches for her husband in the crowd and serve him the palm wine to drink afterwards.

This study has shown that in the social sphere, the interplay of palm wine in social activities such as festivals, meetings, inter-marriages, and traditional beliefs has positively influenced the social interactions between Ika and her neighbours. Their social activities reflect in their rich tradition and culture, mainly in palm wine and hence, have given them a sense of belonging. However, some customs and traditions influenced and robbed off on the other and affected the social bonds and it has made some communities to be socially independent on the other. One of such issues is palm wine tapping, some communities solely depend on the Ika people for their sales of palm wine. There are also existing institutions to check the excesses of the people in the society. One of such is the establishment of taboos, to check indecent behaviours and protect the name of the community. An example of such act of misbehaviour was adultery. Marriage was another institution and it was held in high esteem and it was also regarded as being sacred. Death is an inevitable

occurrence in life. If someone dies suddenly or prematurely, the gods will be quickly consulted to ascertain the cause of the death in order to prevent further occurrences. With regard to burial practices, the age of a person is usually determines how the burial ceremony will be done.

Economically, this study has revealed that in the pre-colonial period, no community was self-sufficient and independent, hence, there was a huge need for economic transition which influenced their trading system. They depended on each other to achieve their economic needs and sustenance. They however operated on the trade by barter system where a community would have to exchange what it had to obtain what it lacked. There were local markets in the individual communities and long distance trade. Agbor and her Neighbours in Umunede, Owa and Igbanke traded well and benefited immensely through their economic interactions. There was common language in the interaction among them. The agricultural economy of the Ika speaking clans with the safeness of trade routes continued to enhance trade and commerce in large scale and at a fast pace. As a result, markets and the need for the regulation of market days became essential. They therefore depended on each other to achieve their economic needs and sustenance. Later, Akopegho was introduced in Agbor as a medium of exchange to facilitate trade relations between them and their neighbours. The implication of these events on the indigenous economy has its base

on the consequent accessibility of a large diversification of new economic crops that emerged. For example, the people of Umunede traded their German banana, scent leaf, pumpkin, okro and cocoyam with the orange and cherry from Agbor. The people of Abudu traded their salts, coco yams with the palm wine and white native chalk from Oza-nogogo. Also, the people from Alisimie bought cocoa from Agbor and the people of Agbor purchased down wine from Alisimie. The people of Alisimie and Oza-Nogogo had to fish together with those in Abudu in River Orhionmwon.

The role played by economic factor as it concerns the impact of palm wine provides the ground for interdependence and therefore comprehensible exposure of the potentiality of the economy and peace time relations; the fact that trade and commerce established the common and most essential basis for formal interactions among groups. For example; the use of Ika language in the interaction among Agbor, Owa, Oza-nogogo, Igbanke, Umunede, Abovo and many others in the long distant trade and such market days served as opportunities for them to exchange pleasantries and obtain the latest information.

Deductively from the foregoing chapters, it has been observed that pre-colonial states in Africa had good Palm wines before establishment of beers and other alcoholic drinks. Palm wine has necessitated togetherness, cooperation, unity,

and cordial relationship. The levels of cooperation have gone a long way to debunk the various assertions of Europeans that Africa had no history. Africa is endowed with a rich cultural heritage; it takes the written and documented records of scholars to reveal this level of endowment. This research has therefore shown the political, social, and economic survival of the Ika people, especially in palm wine tapping, not much has been writing on Palm wine tapping in Ika, the void is what this study stands to fill.

One of the very many lessons learnt from this research is that the tapping of Palm wine that we have in the present day Nigerian States are as a result of economic activities that had been established in the pre-colonial era. This is because the level of contact and interaction that existed in that era took a lot of deliberate effort from the communities in focus. They however understood each other; they respected the differences in their socio-cultural, economic, and political institutions and also appreciated the similarities in these areas.

Another lesson that can be deduced from this study is that through the economic relations, these communities bonded together via their trade system, and industries, agricultural activities, which began in the pre-colonial days have endured till now making it easy for economic interactions to be possible. However, there were limitations in their economic activities as no industries were created at that time.

What should be done now is that the government of Delta State should consider creating industries that would facilitate the production of locally made goods, also small scale manufacturing industries at their common boundaries can as well be established.

The social institutions that were established in the pre-colonial era between indigenes of Agbor, Umunede, Abavo, Oza-Nogogo, Igbanke and Owa have a great influence in their present day social activities. The Obi of Agbor still pay homage to the Ohen-osa Shrine in Oza, by doing this they seal their relationship together spiritually and make them dwell together as one. People of Igbanke still attend and participate in the festivals, coronation, and other socio-cultural activities in Agbor, Umunede, Abavo, Oza-Nogogo and Owa. People are still migrating from Agbor to Oza-Nogogo, from Agbor to Umunede etc.

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4.	Ikenchukwu Helen	Trader	62	Igbanke	15/6/2023
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