

**THE HISTORY OF UHEN COMMUNITY IN PRECOLONIAL ERA**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by Etinosa Imafidon with Mat. No ART1700836 in the Department Of History and International Studies University Of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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**DATE**

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to Almighty God for His guidance throughout my time in school most especially during the period of this research work; and for his blessings and love upon my family.

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My profound gratitude goes to God Almighty for the gift of life, for His wonderful show of love towards me throughout undergraduate studies.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO STUDY

#### **Introduction**

This study is designed to give an explicit elaboration of the ethnographic background, women role played in conflict resolution, social economic foundation and traditional system contributing to the community of when Okada region local government of Edo state. The study shall begin with a proper introduction of the people of Uhen communities and traces of its origin in the ancient Benin Kingdom in history. The study underscores the law and customs of Uhen people backed up with that of the general traditions of Bini people, in the areas of family and marriages, social groups and along the rest of body research in the rest chapter, a self-report questionnaire based on oral evidence are designed to be used in the study which is adopted in such sensitive area concerning the role played by women in conflict resolution socially within family unit and with conclusion to finalize the documented research.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient kingdom of Benin produced today numerous remote communities placed in their sub regional location existing today present day, local government areas such as Ovia north, Oredo East, Ovia South West, Akoko-Edo, Egor, Esan South-East, Esan Central, Etsako East. Each district areas is made up of towns and various villages dwelling in their respective areas, one social participation which makes town and villages

in one district share a relationship through trade point such as market, Okada a district in Ovia North East share wide relationship to its neighbours such as Uhen community our area of study and Okada relationship with Uhen community is said to be ancient right from the formation of Uhen in the Mid15<sup>th</sup> century Ancient Bini Kingdom. Uhen community or rather people also share common interest of trade with other villages and towns neighbouring people such as Utesse, Egbeta, Ogbessa and the other communities that comprises Okada region as earlier mentioned. Uhen is said to be among the oldest community or village that sprung into a developing community in Edo state.<sup>2</sup>

### **Aims and Objectives**

This work is aimed at given significance features of the Uhen community in the pre-colonial Benin, Edo state, looking at the origin, traditional system, mutual relationship with other communities and social features. The aims and objectives therefore are:

1. To examine the tradition of origin of the Uhen community
2. To examine the socio-economic activities of Uhen communities in the pre-colonial era.
3. To examine the role women play in the social affairs such as marriage, conflict resolution and of course economic exercise trade,
4. To examine trade activities in Uhen community using Eken market square

## **Scope of Study**

The project covers the pre-colonial social, political and economic activities of Uhen people from early period to 1900. The historical origin of Uhen people is examined so as to give a better understanding to this project. The nature and area women play their roles in Uhen community such as conflict resolution and marriage affairs in the socio-political development of Uhen where discussed.

## **Research Methodology**

The study adopts a narrative-historical approach and is divided into five chapters. The research method used for this work is purely based on primary and secondary sources.

**Primary Source:** Primary information provided in this study is from oral evidence derived through unstructured interviews and archival materials such as intelligence reports and divisional papers. It is in the light of this that oral information was collected from local historians and high chiefs, among others, detailing their experience. And oral testimonies are useful in supplementing the existing literature. It is in the light of this that oral information was collected from local historians and high chiefs among others who detailed their experiences and practices pertaining to aspects of the Pre-colonial Uhen community. These oral testimonies were useful in supplementing the existing literature.

**Secondary Source:** Secondary sources include published works from the university, private and public libraries, text books, journals and unpublished essays and dissertations, considered relevant to the study. These sources helped in the analysis of the Pre-colonial Uhen community.

### **Literature Review**

Many scholars should be credited for their efforts on scholarly works on the Pre-colonial Uhen community, although relevant materials were reviewed in this course of this project, which helped to provide adequate analysis under the period of research. Much has been written about the Pre-colonial Uhen community; there are many researches, personal accounts both published and unpublished ones, documentaries detailing the development of the Pre-colonial Uhen community among these literatures to be reviewed are:

N. O. Omozusi in his book entitled, *Utesse its Origin and Growth*,<sup>3</sup> The book gives an extensive analysis of Uhen history it also focuses on other aspect such as other villages like Utesse, Ogbese, Egbetta history. The book deals with various royal clan, emergence and responsibility as well as method of installation of Chiefs in Utesse, the book discusses the hereditary of royal lineage. The book talks about the political activities of people of Okada region which is relevant to this project.

J.U. Egharevba in his book entitled, *The Origin of Benin*,<sup>4</sup> This book gives relevant detail of the origin of the ancient Benin Kingdom, according to him the word Benin is an adulteration from the Portuguese word “Benyn” meaning “kindness” because the first Portuguese to visit Edo saw the inhabitants as kind and friendly race of people. The “City” strategically, is located for industrialization, as well as all highway form the East, North, South and Western part of Nigeria met in Benin City, the seat of power of the great Oba of Benin Kingdom. This book helps in giving the ground origin of the Benin Kingdom and the formation of communities that arose in 15<sup>th</sup> century such as Uhen community. This book is important because it gives details of the foundation of Uhen in the ancient Benin Kingdom.

Osaretin George Izevbuwa in his article entitled, “Okada Region: An Ethnographic Reader-Law and Custom”,<sup>5</sup> This article gave some vital detail of the origin of Uhen, this village is reputed to have owned its existence to Oba Ewuare the great (1440AD) one of the earlier settlement of Uhen was a man called Atu a royal family of Benin who was said to have erected or pegged the Ikhinmwin tree. His account clearly reveals that Uhen existed long before Ugbesse village. This article is important because it also gave a clear account of the history of Uhen people.

As we progress, At the end of the study, the reader will find this paper to be a comprehensive resource covering all there is to know about the Pre-Colonial Uhen community. However, as wonderful as these works are, there is still more to be covered

on the Pre-Colonial Uhen community. This research work therefore, seeks to update such areas that were neglected by previous works.

## **Chapterization**

For the purpose of this research study, this project shall be divided into five chapters.

### **Chapter One: Background to the Study**

This chapter provides a general overview to this project. It includes introduction, aim and objectives, scope of research, methodology, literature review and structures of the chapters.

### **Chapter Two: The History of Uhen in the Benin Kingdom**

This chapter gives a historical discussion of the Uhen people by looking at ethnography of the land and the origin of Uhen people, political, social and economic institutions.

### **Chapter Three: The Role of Women in the Development of Uhen Community**

This chapter provide details of activities and roles women plays in the day to day affairs whether political, social and economic activities, the pre-colonial Uhen women also plays vital roles in religion and social affairs like conflict resolution, and also in the

aspect of marriage, women also play roles in the economic activities such as trade, farming.

#### **Chapter Four: Conclusion**

This presents the conclusion to this study. It consists of a summary of the study, and some observations on the study.

## Endnotes

1. P. A. Igbafe, "The Impact of Colonial Rule on an African Kingdom", *Benin under British Administration*: Ibadan: Longman 1979, p.20.
2. R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South Western Nigeria*, London: International Africa Institutes, 1959, p.47.
3. N. O. Omozusi, *Utesse its Origin and Growth*, Benin: Ambik Press, 1998, p.23.
4. J. U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968, p.6
5. Osaretin George Izevbuwa, "Okada Region: An Ethnographic Reader-Law and Custom", *International Journal of Applied Research*, Vol. 4(1), 2018, p.8.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORY OF UHEN COMMUNITY IN BENIN KINGDOM

#### Introduction

This chapter is a study of a background history of Benin Kingdom before the introduction to the Origin of Uhen community its Economic and social development in the precolonial Benin kingdom. The community political system is charged by the monarch Oba of Benin kingdom though subordinate power operated in the community the Odionwere, However the Oba supercedes all affairs of communities the co pivotal of the Benin kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The Kingdom of Benin, also known as the Edo Kingdom, or the Benin Empire (Bini: Arriṣba ẹdo) was a kingdom within what is now southwestern Nigeria. It has no historical relation to the modern republic of Benin, which was known as Dahomey from the 17th century until 1975. The Kingdom of Benin's capital was Edo, now known as Benin City in Edo State, Nigeria. The Benin Kingdom was "one of the oldest and most developed states in the coastal hinterland of West Africa". It grew out of the previous Edo Kingdom of Igodomigodo around the 11th century AD, and lasted until it was annexed by the British Empire in 1897.<sup>2</sup>

This work is on women and economy of precolonial Benin. This chapter is an introductory study of the geography and people of Benin. Benin was one of the states

known for its remarkable civilization and development in the Guinea Forest. Benin was one of the most famous kingdom in the forest region of West Africa and that includes her political system. Scholars and writers alike have shown interest in the history of Benin particularly its participation to the world civilization. It is quite fascinating to know that the Benin history of all the pre-colonial African States, in the most mentioned in contemporary European literature and arts. This chapter centers on the geography and the peoples of Benin.<sup>3</sup>

Geographically, pre-colonial Benin kingdom was located in the forest region of what is now modern Nigeria in West Africa sub-region. This kingdom was not a single administration unit, and its boundaries cannot be precisely drawn. The term territory of Benin Kingdom is with the present Orodio, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, Uhumwonde, Orhionmwon and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas of Edo State. At the height of its power, the influence of Benin was recorded to have extended westward along the coast of Eko which is present day Lagos and beyond, westwards to Ekiti and beyond which marked the boundary between Benin and Oyo Empire, eastwards to the River Niger as well as the Igbo speaking areas and beyond, and southward to the Atlantic Ocean. The area of pre-colonial Benin had a continuous expansion and that was because Benin was involved with lot of warfare. Warfare and conquering of kingdoms are part of the key answers to empire building. The area does not correspond with what was left of the empire since the European conquest of the kingdom in 1897.<sup>4</sup>

The original people and founders of the Benin Kingdom, the Edo people, were initially ruled by the Ogiso (Kings of the Sky) who called their land Igodomigodo. The first Ogiso (Ogiso Igodo), wielded much influence and gained popularity as a good ruler. He died after a long reign and was succeeded by Ere, his eldest son. In the 12th century, a great palace intrigue erupted and crown prince Ekaladerhan, the only son of the last Ogiso, was sentenced to death as a result of the first queen (who was barren) changing an oracle's message to the Ogiso.<sup>5</sup> In carrying out the royal order that he be killed, the palace messengers had mercy and set the prince free at Ughoton near Benin. When his father the Ogiso died, the Ogiso dynasty ended. The people and royal kingmakers preferred their late king's son as the next to rule.<sup>6</sup>

The exiled Prince Ekaladerhan had by this time changed his name to Izoduwa (meaning 'I have chosen the path of prosperity') and found his way to Ile-Ife. It was during this period of confusion in Benin that the elders, led by Chief Oliha, mounted a search for the banished Prince Ekaladerhan – whom the Ile-Ife people now called Oduduwa. Oduduwa, who could not return due to his advanced age, granted them Oranmiyan, his grandson, to rule over them. Oranmiyan was resisted by Ogiamien Irebor, one of the palace chiefs, and took up his abode in the palace built for him at Usama by the elders (now a coronation shrine). Soon after his arrival, he married a beautiful lady, Erinmwinde, daughter of Ogie-Egor, the ninth Enogie of Egor, by whom he had a son.[citation needed] After residing there for some years he called a meeting of the

people and renounced his office, remarking in vexation Ile-Ibinu ("ile" means land, "binu" mean anger, and thus the kingdom was called Ibinu, which was mispronounced Bini in the 15th and 16th centuries by the Portuguese).<sup>7</sup>

This was out of frustration as he often expressed that "only a child born, trained and educated in the arts and mysteries of the land could reign over the people". He arranged for his son born to him by Erinmwinde, Eweka, to be made king in his place, and returned to Yorubaland thereafter. His son the new king was soon found to be deaf and mute, and so the elders appealed to Oranmiyan.<sup>4</sup> He gave them charmed seeds known as "omo ayo" to play with, saying that to do so will make him talk. The little Eweka played with the seeds with his peers at Useh near egor, his mother's hometown. While playing with the seeds, he announced "Owomika" as his royal name. Thus, he gave rise to the tradition of the subsequent Obas of Benin spending seven days and nights at Usama before proceeding to announce their royal names at Useh. Eweka thus started a dynasty that now bears his name. Oranmiyan went on to serve as the founder of the Oyo Empire, where he ruled as the first Alaafin of Oyo. His descendants now rule in Ile Ife, Oyo and Benin.<sup>8</sup>

By the 15th century, Benin had expanded into a thriving city-state. The twelfth Oba in the line, Oba Ewuare the Great (1440–1473) would expand the city-state's territories to surrounding regions. It was not until the 15th century, during the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great, that the kingdom's administrative centre, the city of Ubinu (or

Ibinu), began to be known as Benin City by the Portuguese, a pronunciation later adopted by the locals as well. The Portuguese would write this down as Benin City. Edo's neighbours, such as the Itsekiris and the Urhobos, continued to refer to the city as Ubinu up until the late 19th century.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from Benin City, the system of rule of the Oba in the empire, even though the golden age of the kingdom, was still loosely based upon the Ogiso dynasty's tradition, which was military protection in exchange for pledged allegiance and taxes paid to the royal administrative centre. The language and culture was not enforced, as the empire remained heterogeneous and localized according to each group within the kingdom, though a local enogie (or duke) was often appointed by the Oba for specific ethnic areas.<sup>10</sup>

Excavations at Benin City have revealed that it was already flourishing around 1200–1300 CE. In 1440, Oba Ewuare, also known as Ewuare the Great, came to power and expanded the borders of the former city-state. It was only at this time that the administrative centre of the kingdom began to be referred to as Ubinu after the Portuguese word and corrupted to Bini by the Itsekhiri, Urhobo and Edo who all lived together in the royal administrative centre of the kingdom. The Portuguese who arrived in an expedition led by João Afonso de Aveiro in 1485 would refer to it as Benin and the centre would become known as Benin City.<sup>11</sup>

The Kingdom of Benin gained political strength and ascendancy over much of what is now mid-western Nigeria. Benin's wealth grew through its extensive trade, especially with the Portuguese. European traders were keen to acquire Benin's art, ivory and pepper. In the late seventeenth century, the kingdom temporarily declined following a major civil war and disputes over the kingship.<sup>12</sup>

### **Burials**

The monarchy of Benin was hereditary; the eldest son was to become the new Oba. In order to validate the succession of the kingship, the eldest son had to bury his father and perform elaborate rituals. If the eldest son failed to complete these tasks, the eldest son might be disqualified from becoming king.<sup>13</sup>

### **Separation of Son and Mother**

After the son was installed as king, his mother – after having been invested with the title of Iyoba – was transferred to a palace just outside Benin City, in a place called Uselu. The mother held a considerable amount of power; she was, however, never allowed to meet her son – who was now a divine ruler – again.<sup>14</sup>

### **Divinity of the Oba**

In Benin, the Oba was seen as divine. The Oba's divinity and sacredness was the focal point of the kingship. The Oba was shrouded in mystery; he only left his palace on

ceremonial occasions. It was previously punishable by death to assert that the Oba performed human acts, such as eating, sleeping, dying or washing. The Oba was also credited with having magical powers.<sup>15</sup>

### **Ovia North East Local Government Area**

This background of study focuses on the Area the Uhen community was founded in order to best understand her people. This local government area is found in Edo state, South-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The headquarters of the LGA are in the town of Okada and the LGA is made up of several towns and villages which include Uhen, Okada, Ofunmwengbe, Uhiere, Isiuwa, Addor, Oluku, Iguoshodin and Utoka. The LGA has an estimated population of 369,042 inhabitants with the area primarily populated by members of different tribal affiliations such as the Ijaw and Bini ethnic groups. Popular festivals held in Ovia Northeast LGA include the New Yam festival while the notable landmarks in the LGA include the Igbinedion University, Okada and the Okomu oil palm company.<sup>16</sup>

### **Geography of Ovia North East**

Ovia Northeast LGA occupies a total area of 2,301 square kilometres and has an average temperature of 28 degrees centigrade. The LGA witnesses two distinct seasons which are the dry and the rainy seasons with the average humidity level in the LGA put at 52 percent.<sup>17</sup>

## **Economy of Ovia North East**

The economic importance as it is used in this essay is to significance of the project executed by the community in relative monetary value and the wealth of those who embark on it.

Agriculture is an important economic activity in Ovia Northeast LGA with crops such as oil palm, banana, plantain, sugarcane, cassava, and maize. The LGA also hosts industries, hotels, banks, privately owned institutions as well as government owned establishments. Other important economic activities in Ovia Northeast LGA include trade, lumbering, and crafts making.<sup>18</sup>

Ovia North-East Local Government Area counts as one of the serving eighteen local government areas with its administrative headquarters in Okada town, thus falling within the southern senatorial district of Edo state also called Edo south district alongside Ovia South-west, Egor, Oredo, Orihionmwon, Ikpoba Okha and Uhumwode. Ovia North-East Local Government constitutes the federal constituency together with Ovia-south-west government areas. Ovia north east local government area is one of the twenty-two local government areas in Edo State of Nigeria. The local government area was created from the district council under the local government law in 1976, the local government which lies across the larger part of the local government. Ovia North East local government area is one of the largest local area in Edo State in term of land mass.<sup>19</sup>

Eguake (1990) noted that it is situated between longitude 5°45 and 6°15 east and latitude 5°15 and 6°45 north of the Central province of Edo State. The local government consist of twelve wards for the purpose of easy administration, the wards are Egheta, Utese, Uhen, Oghese , Olumoye, Okada, Emma, other are Isiuua, Egbarha, Ovbiogie, Utekan, Iguegho. Therefore the local government area is made up of about 50 villages. Okada is the administrative headquarter of Ovia north East local government area.<sup>20</sup>

By 1960 the population of the district councils that now make up Ovia north east local government area has one-hundred and seventy six thousand, four hundred and fifty three (76,453) but it was projected in 1976 to be two hundred an forty-two thousand, two hundred and seventy-six (242,276) according to local government report Journal of 1950. The inhabitants of the local government area are Edo speaking people, so they are said to be the same origin with Bini's and the Yoruba's who claimed to have migrated from Egypt in search of a more ferile land. The major occupation of the inhabitants of the area are farming and trading, of recent the people have attached much importance to education which they hope will place them in better position in white collar-jobs in order to be able to develop the local government.<sup>21</sup>

The village head in Ovia North East local government is the “Odionwere” the Enogie is the hereditary position while the Odionwere is the position for the eldest man in the community concernment. The local government area is situated in the centre of Edo

State. It is bounded in some village by Emma by Ovia north east local government area (map to be attached).<sup>22</sup>

Development in the local government are is slow due to lack of infrastructural facilities the insufficiency of these basic infrastructure have caused devastating affects to the economic development of the area. Such that the social aspect of life in the local government has been hindered. Little wonder that the various communities in the local government embraced self-help developmental project which the researcher is to examine.<sup>23</sup>

### **Origin and History of Uhen**

According to Traditional account Uhen was founded in the 15th century by two brothers Ezegbughe and Arazua. It later became a military post to which warlords were sent for defense of the Benin kingdom. The last of such warlords was Ebokinmwin who fought in defense of the Benin empire in 1897 at Ekewan Road during the Benin invasion. Initially the foundation was created as a defense core along the quest for expansion Uhen grew vast into a community comprised of people in the pre-colonial Benin kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

This village is reputed to have owned it's existence to Oba Ewuare the great (1440AD)one of the early setter, However, According to Pa Gregory Otasowie Osagie was a man called 'Atu' a royal family member of Benin who was said to have erected or pegged the ikhimwin tree which symbolises Royalty which herald the existence of a

village bearing same existing origin of Ogbesse village. Well still on Pa Gregory account Uhen is neither headed by an Enogie nor an Odionwere But Rather a warrior known in Benin terminology as Okakuo. However, Evidence from one of my source the narrator account suggest that it is the family lineage of Atu that now remain the Okao which means head in Ogbesse a sub relation of Uhen.<sup>25</sup>

Historically, It's also claimed that from the family lineage of Atu one of the settlers of Uhen that founded Oke-nusen a village across river Ogbesse. Notably Uhen popular River called Oshoghogbugie N'iyomo, this river According to Mr Felix Idehen had a matrimonial relationship with Ogbesse river originally known as Ogbehenazada, Significantly, Uhen people till date celebrate a yearly festival called Oligan which ceremony is a resemblance to Ovia festival celebration.<sup>26</sup>

Myths and Traditional account will not be exempted in this research, However, According to myths the origin of traces to Divinity this account bears similar tool that of Mr Felix Idehen which views Natural earthly materials given deity roles and personification. The deity Osogho contributed to the rise of Uhen community, shrine were built not just for worship but also to honor roll played in the rise of Uhen people. The name of the famous popular river Oshoghogbugie N'iyomo is said to be a connotation of the deity. This account is a clarity that people share a common acknowledge of this River Oshogho, Most people from neighboring villages come in

admiration and honor of festival under the deity name Even till date the festival celebration is carried on.<sup>27</sup>

However, with both accounts from documentary, tradition and myths one will ascertain that Evolution, and origin of the Uhen people is ancient and old which symbolises the long existence of the Uhen community in the Ancient Benin kingdom. It is important we have a review of Africa Economic structure in order to fully understand the Nature and pattern the people of Uhen community engages themselves in. The southern region adapts relative similar system of Economic development though over the years few adjustments were made that didn't change the Nature of Economic activities the southerners operate such as the subsistence and Commercial farming, However the people of Uhen community make use of same practices.<sup>28</sup>

People in pre-colonial Africa were engaged in hunting and gathering, agriculture, mining and simple manufacturing. Agriculture involved most people, so the pre-colonial Uhen community looks mainly at farming activities. There are factors which explains that farmers in those days faced two big challenges: a hostile environment and scarcity of labour. In many regions the environmental conditions were unfavourable for production. And almost all regions suffered from a shortage of labour. We will see that there were many different systems of agricultural production in pre-colonial Africa, to suit the variety of conditions the people faced.<sup>29</sup>

Africans were not passive victims of these conditions. They were innovative and good at adapting. Their production systems had to be flexible to deal with the existing conditions. Pre-colonial Africans could make an impression on nature. As a Malawian proverb says: 'It is people who make the world: the bush has wounds and scars.' They were not, however, able to transform nature on a large scale, since economic development was not far advanced in the pre-colonial period. Without modern machinery such as tractors, and modern inputs such as chemical fertilisers and pesticides, they were to a large extent at the mercy of the land and the weather. Minor temporary changes in conditions could have severe effects on people's livelihood. In some regions, for example, two weeks' delay in the rains could reduce the crop yield by one third.<sup>30</sup>

### **Economic and Social Activities of Uhen Community**

The Economic activity in Uhen community is relatively in coexistence with the Activities in Benin kingdom, However, The Economic activities in the Benin pre-colonial era emphasizes more on the Rural area which in this case enables this study to be documented been that secondary research still makes use of Benin economy in General as a case study. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. Yams, cassava (manioc), oil palm produce, rice, and corn (maize) are the major subsistence crops, while rubber, timber, and palm oil and kernels are cash crops. Mineral resources include limestone and lignite.<sup>31</sup>

The basis of the economy is farming, with the main food crops being yams, cassava, plantains, and cocoyams, as well as beans, rice, okra, peppers, and gourds. Oil palms are cultivated for wine production and kola trees for nuts for hospitality rites. Farming is not an exclusively rural occupation, as many city dwellers own farms on the outskirts of the capital and commute regularly to work on them. Domestic animals include cattle, goats, sheep, dogs, and chickens. Most villages have markets, and there are also several large regional markets supplying Benin City and the other towns. In the precolonial period trade was in foodstuffs and locally manufactured products, but in the colonial period cash crops were introduced; by World War I Benin had begun to prosper from the commercial growing of timber and rubber trees. Whereas shifting cultivation used to prevail, with the introduction of cash crops it has begun to disappear in favor of crop rotation. Today all farmers grow food crops for their own consumption as well as cash crops. Rubber processing and the preparation of tropical hardwoods are major industries in the state. The people of Uhen are very industrious like any other communities in Edo state This Urban area tend to have working apprentice sent to other communities closest to the city to learn trade which in turn can be Benevolent to inspiring traders.<sup>32</sup>

At least half of the urban work force is in clerical and, especially, sales-and-service professions. Men are typically involved in tailoring, carpentry, or electrical and mechanical repairs, and women tend to be hairdressers, dressmakers, and petty traders.

Women dominate in the street and local markets in the city. Youth unemployment has become a growing problem as the influx of migrants from the villages and other parts of Nigeria steadily increases.<sup>33</sup>

During the Pre-colonial time, the adult men in the community tended the principal crop, yams, clearing and working the land together with male relatives, or friends. Women cared for their households and grew subsidiary crops. Marketing, at least in precolonial times, was entirely in the hands of women. Within the city, the labor was divided in a similar way, that is, male guild members did the craft or ritual work, and women sold some of the products of the guild in the market. Since the colonial period, men and, to a lesser extent, women have been involved in the administrative and economic sectors of what became a regional capital.<sup>34</sup>

Farming system involves Shift farming of various crops that contributed to the Economic structure of Uhen community, However, Before the introduction of mechanism equipment for farming The farmers makes use of Implementing tools such as Cutlass and Hoes which was mostly used for clearing out fields securing the Tilling of the soil so planted crop would be covered by weeds. Men were actually great farmers and the farms were mostly located in forest pasture that's commercial farms, Uhen people especially the men are highly acknowledge by the large scale of his farms the people of Uhen respect farmers due to the occupational influence farming has on the Economy of the community.<sup>35</sup>

The People of Uhen engages in Social activities that helped in the development of the community in pre-colonial time and some of the social activities has been in existence from the 14th century by the monarchs of Benin kingdom, The festival events has contributed to the ground work of the society. The people of Uhen were sole participant of Historical Igue festive events.<sup>36</sup>

### **Igue Festival**

Igue festival also known as King's Festival is a celebration with its origin in the Benin Kingdom of Edo State, Nigeria. One tradition states that the festival date coincided with the marriage of Ewuare to a wife named Ewere. Celebrated between Christmas and New Year, the festival includes the Oba's blessing of the land and his people. During the Igue ritual season, the Oba is prohibited from being in the presence of any non-native person.<sup>37</sup>

The Igue Festival was initiated in the 14th century during the reign of Oba Ewuare I, who reigned in Benin between year 1440 and 1473. Following Oba Ewuare I's experience whilst fighting as a prince for the Benin throne, he was known as the Prince Ogun, the son of Oba Ohen as at then.<sup>38</sup>

The Igue festival however now consists of several other festivals put together by the Oba Akenzua II. This is because he wanted the festival to last for couple of days due

to the current movement of people and the Igue festival has become a terminal for many other festivals celebrated by the Benin people.<sup>39</sup>

### **End of the Year Festival**

The people of Uhen community also performs rituals in celebration of the Annual Osogho Festival which is done at every end of the year mostly at December, The Osogho festive events has a significant role in the the social Traditional and religious institution mostly said to bring the year to an end in good grace traditionally believed. The shrine of the deity is decorated and Traditional chief priests are the pioneer of the ceremony who are also responsible for incantations, The people of Uhen were greatly involved in Festivals whether from The capital of Benin or community Rituals. The Osogho Festive events makes use of newly harvested crops such as yams, cassavas and animal livestocks as well are mainly used for sacrifices ritual. During the Rituals no women is allowed into the shrine and premises, there are also limited age grades who are also restricted into the shrine which is the ground for the Rituals.<sup>40</sup>

### **Odion Social Group**

In every given society there are various class that distinguish people with certain privileges, acknowledgement from other citizens of the community, some of this class in Uhen community is called the Odion social group these certain groups of people can be considered important in the society. The Odion social group is a Male age grade group

which its name implies Elder, the Benin refer Odion to seniority at such it's explains this age grade group, Most society recognize age grade in terms of popular participation in the society.<sup>41</sup>

The people of Uhen community are sole partakers of customs and Traditional the Odion social group has existed from the foundation of Uhen community in the 15th century. This male social group plays a role in Traditional authority though not politically equal authority like the Odionwere they are also called up in meetings Traditional participations such as Festive events, rituals and jurisdiction in settling conflicts which has a large crowd or audience rather grievance of large scale. The odion age grade is only open to male members of different families and maintains a proper age before new members can come in, However, age is properly checked and family background the age grade is essentially important before participation into the social group.

There are certain age a member of a given family needs to be in same age peer group ages like 35-50,it's important a member of a family obtain this participation though not necessarily customarily stated everyone must join but the privileges accompanied with it makes it essential for membership. Furthermore.<sup>42</sup> The initiation holds a ceremony placed in any Odionwere premise of any streets and during initiation newly welcome members are expected to put on white attire with native chalks tattooed on their body this exercise marked a new social status for it's newly added members. The initiation is done at every mid months of the year and not placed during the Eken markets day or funeral

rites, The role they mostly play it's traditional as it is also political though they only act as wing men to the authoritarians the Odionwere, there's no head or hierarchy of power in this age grade group such that they're all considered equal with no seniority complex among themselves.in some local look they're act as chiefs when trying to relate to the complexity of Benin monarchy, The Odionwere act as supreme head in the village politically institution before the introduction of local government Enogies.<sup>43</sup>

### **Eken Market**

The People of Uhen community are not just farmers rather they're traders as well involved in Economic and social activities which in turn gives the village profound developments in the precolonial era. The Eken market a periodic rotation which once in a week after a counting period of four nights the market holds significant ancestral links not just in The Uhen community but in the whole of ancient Benin practiced even till date. The "Bini" people have four market days: Ekioba, Ekenaka, Agbado, and Eken.<sup>44</sup>

The Eken market holds the biggest trade fares which is located between the open boundaries of Uhen and Utesse many traders come to meet respectively with the relationship of trade. However, Women are mostly the main participant of market trade though farmers participate in this exercise giving the large scale of trade.<sup>45</sup>

## **Funeral Rites**

The funeral rites is strictly observed measured by the customs and Traditions instituted by monarchs for people of Benin kingdom which requires community to adhere to customs. The eldest surviving son of a hereditary traditional title holder in Benin plays the main role, together with his brothers and sisters in the burial ceremony of his father. After the final burial ceremony of his father, called Ukomwen had been performed; the customs allows him to succeed to his father's title. However, where the title holder had no male child to succeed to the hereditary title, his brother or any other male paternal relation of his, after due confirmation by the Oba succeeds to the title.<sup>46</sup>

The ceremonies entail the slaughtering of a cow or a goat to the spirit of the family by the eldest surviving son. He with his brothers, sisters and other members of the family in their order of seniority, dance round the town with funeral songs. These ceremonies are followed in the night with another vigil night.<sup>47</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The great Benin kingdom is said to be among oldest ancient empire in Southern region of Nigeria and became a Pivot for bringing fort various societies, units and areas such areas brings us to the course of study the Uhen community and its people in the Precolonial Benin kingdom. The origin of Uhen according to Tradition which was founded by two brothers Ezegbughe and Arazua in the 15th century. The Uhen

community is presently located in the local government unit the Ovia North East local government area.

The economy and social activities of the Precolonial Uhen community throws light on Agricultural participation such as Subsistence farming which involves the cultivation and harvesting of crops planted in an area of land. The people most of them were hunters with the availability of forest sites it facilitated hunting in the village, The forest land site enabled farming and hunting. The great Benin kingdom is located in a rainforest region and rural areas were mostly blessed with all these embodiment. The people of Uhen community are farmers mostly Subsistence farming this was the major occupation of the people and Agriculture aided the development of Uhen community. Shift farming was also a means of farming which was practiced in the Precolonial era, the cultivation of crops such as yam, cocoa, cassava, sugarcane, cocoa yam, palm products as well was also among industrial agriculture people of Uhen were engaged in though production and industrialization was not as large or considered lucrative due to the community development.

Agriculture contributed immensely to the development of Uhen community which can also be said made rural areas Agriculturally commendable compared to the Urban areas, the Urban areas have access to production and industrialization while rural areas have vivid access to Agriculture due to the rich embodiment of forest land space, Streams and River which is necessary for the opium of Agriculture. Harvested crops are taken to

be sold off to trade to the Urban areas this made Uhen community mostly a trading ground of crops in that respected unit in Benin kingdom, The Agricultural activities has contributed to the economic development of Uhen community Most societies in the Rural areas engages in production related to Agriculture such as palm products processed to produce palm oil used for industrialization in the 18th mostly sold to foreigners in the metropolitan marketing. The people of Uhen village were skilled farmers farming was a means of survival which made its occupation necessary for the people to engage in, According to Tradition the new yam harvest shows the productivity of the community in that certain time of the year so during new yam festival if the harvest is poor the productivity in that year was retarded and ineffective this shows the year was not favourable to Agriculture in the community but if the presented harvests are good it shows the year prospered agriculture can also be measured in religion this further shows that Agriculture was a big influence in the social economic structure of Precolonial Uhen community.

The Festive events play a significant role in the development of Uhen community and rituals followed by Traditional rites also play a part in the development, The Precolonial Benin kingdom instituted the Festive events to show her rich Traditional heritage so also the people are obligated to participate in this ancient event celebrated and pass down from generation to Generation, The Igue Festival instituted by customs and Traditions of Benin kingdom the Festival was a social annual events orchestrated by

religious institution which aided the bringing together the people to participate in Traditional exercise the festival is done annually by the end of the year which is followed by the Osogho Festival to demonstrate not just Traditional exercise but also to show the significance of the great Benin kingdom during this festive events all other social activities are put on hold to respect and honor Traditional. The Osogho festival is another social events which involves rituals and sacrifices believed to blessed and end the year in good grace in the Uhen community, Festivals aided the social development of Uhen thereby allocating the spirit of heritage cultural Traditions in the Benin kingdom.

The Odion social group in Uhen community was also among social structure in the society, However, This social group involves male age grade similar to that of the age grade unit in other societies and this unit has existed right from the foundation of Uhen in the 15th century, furthermore, The age grade is fixed in the social political structure in the community tasked with the duty of nobility in the grassroots level with no Superior authority compared to the head of authority in the community the Odionwere each streets in the community is headed by an Odionwere and there are up to 15 streets in the community making it 15 Odionwere's. The Odionwere in a given street may decide to get assisted by the Odion social group in some judicial matters such as conflict resolution and pass verdict on a culprit. The male age grade the Odion has also in their efforts contributed to the social development in the community.

Trade also contributed economically to the development of Uhen community the Eken market enabled access to trade with neighboring villages which promotes inter-relation which will be emphasized in succeeding chapters. The market ground for Eken market day is at the very Centre of Uhen community which stretched down to the entrance of the community, All traders from both far and near come together to meet with the aim to trade this has contributed to the development in the community both other occupations such as hunters and farmers bring items to sell or purchase items for consumption. The social Economic activities aided the contribution to the community development.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UHEN COMMUNITY

#### Introduction

This Chapter shows more light of Precolonial activities of Uhen community with the Availability of Oral Traditions source emphasis made for the understanding of this research. The Precolonial Uhen community formally referred to as village her people were very industrious and productive in terms of promoting development such that the major occupation was Agriculture, trade metropolitan marketing into the capital Benin kingdom,<sup>1</sup> The Eken market facilitate the relationship with other community. In this chapter, we shall strictly observe the role and importance women in the community play in the development of Uhen community, before arriving in this context the role women play in Benin kingdom can be said to be relatively in line with the role women play in Uhen community.<sup>2</sup>

According to Oral report, in most societies and villages in Benin kingdom women play significant role in the day to day activities they get involved in both social and economic activities assigned to them. The Uhen community acknowledge the influence women had contributed in the society one major factor that can be drawn is that of Religion, female deity from the context of the origin myths of Uhen people tradition believes the river goddess Osogho who orchestrated the river bearing the name Osogho

enabled the location of Osogho river,<sup>3</sup> However, just as tradition acknowledge female personality for development so they also acknowledge the Traditional sensitivity of women in the community. There are some customs and Traditions that pointed out the women limitations in some areas that does not conclude the fact that women cannot participate in development, According to Tradition women are not allowed into the shrine of Osogho during the festive rituals in Osogho honor, again this also does not conclude that women play less roles in the community of Uhen. The role women play in the development of Uhen community in the Precolonial time cannot be over emphasize without mentioning their involvement in social Economic development, women are considered the pillars in the society and this also makes them important in society development that equipped the growth of Benin kingdom at Large.<sup>4</sup>

According to oral interview, The importance of having a large population of people out of the numbers of hundred percent seventy five percent compromises of both women and children which makes up the whole percentage of the population living in Uhen community. Among the half population made up of women they are allocated into various occupation, some in the areas of trade buying and selling with the sole aim of profit making, Even in the market ground the numbers of traders are mostly women with large numbers in the sense that the major occupation of women in the society are traders. During the Eken market whereby buyers and sellers from other unit, communities and villages come to meet at the outskirts of Uhen,<sup>5</sup> This trading exercise has contributed to

the Economic development in Uhen community bringing about Exchange of inter-relation between two or more villagers from different communities. One of the primary occupation of women in Uhen community is trade and market square serves as office post whereby items, commodities are sold for profit interest making, According to oral report before the introduction of currency the acceptable means of transaction was cowries and trade by barter, women always looks forward to the Eken market due to that it was the biggest form of trading exercise and items of value which were not sold on regular days were placed in the market ground, commodities such as crops like yams, cassava, sugarcane, cocoa, cocoyam, vegetables, palm product and livestock were sold for a cowries which were used served in as money in the earlier times, trade by barter were also used for payment in trade, valuable products crafted were also sold by women on market days arcraft such as woodcraft made from wood.<sup>6</sup>

The making of arcraft was an occupation in the aspect of production in Uhen community these craft were sold by women traders and materials needed for craft such as Bamboo woods were sold on market days as well, carvers may decide to get the assistance of his wife and family to join him in carrying these commodities to trade which also support the efforts women made in aspect of the family According to oral report, women of Uhen community also play role in the art of beads making, beads are Traditional ornament worn by the people Even in festive rituals there were unique beads which can only be worn by chief priests constituted by customs which connotes the idea

of respect. This ornament were produced and marketed for sale by occupants mostly women.<sup>7</sup>

Women contribution in the development of Uhen community can be emphasized in various areas such as family unit, trade, Agriculture, production, marriage arrangements, conflict resolution, labour force and these areas of social Economic structure have contributed immensely to the development of Uhen community even till date women role are still significant they can now also hold political positions and offices. However, the course for this topic is to examine the moral and physical contribution of women of Uhen community using oral reports steps will be measured to see the importance of women.<sup>8</sup>

### **Family Unit**

According to oral interview, Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. The varieties of role played by women of Uhen community in the family unit which makes up the people in the society, they are assigned with responsibilities in the family which are of being a wife, leader, labour force in the family unit but not the least importance the mother, women is a man's helpmate, partner and comrade, she sacrifices her personal pleasure and ambition, set standard of morality, relieves stress and strain, tension of husband, maintain peace and order in the household, women performed duties simultaneously thereby creating room for the male partner to

think more about the economic upliftment of the family. She is the source of inspiration to a man for high endeavors and worth achievements, traditions permit men to marry as many wives he chooses due to that the labour force of a man in Uhen community is his family by so doing many wives creates avenue for having many children contributing to labour unit in the family.<sup>9</sup>

However, a man could seek the comfort and consent of his wife due to that she stands by him in all the crisis as well as she shares with him all successes and achievement, women in the community are persons to whom men in regards to marriage turns for love, sympathy, understanding, comfort and recognition, women are symbols of purity, faithfulness and devotion submission. According to customs and Traditions backed by oral interview, women in the family assumes this function, she is the chief executive of an Enterprise, she assigns duties among members in the family according to their interest and abilities and provides resources in terms of equipment and materials needed to accomplish a social task, she plays a key role in the preparation and serving of meals, selection and care of clothing also help in housing chores laundering furnishing and maintenance. As pillars of the family she organise various social functions in regards of the family, women primary duty in the family is support, subject provided for oral interview for this research have agreed on the duty of support women render in Uhen community. They support their husband and children with moral comfortability, furthermore, men in the community are respected by the numbers of land properties and

wives he acquires such that these are some certain qualities respectable men in the community emulate.<sup>10</sup>

Polygamous family whereby a man is married to many wives he chooses in the community, one major reason men engage into polygamy was the cost for external labour force was high so men acquires as much wives for child bearing in order to generate family labour force in his commercial farming activities, only the wealthiest in the village were able to own servant or cheap labour for farming, Aside child bearing women are also allowed to own land for farming due to that customs prohibited gender segregation so wives too can be able to own land willed to them. Family unit is one of the most important unit in the community and women are the sole pioneer of a steady family unit, the strength of the family unit is not just determined by men alone can also be determined by the wives women as well. This brings other areas women function in the community.<sup>11</sup>

## **Trade**

Trade in the Precolonial time as been the means of inter-relation and development in the Benin kingdom both external trade and internal trade has contributed to the growth of the economy, a social Economic activities which has aided the development of the community. According to oral report, Trade had contributed to the development of Uhen community and the pioneer of trade in the Precolonial time were the women due to the fact men mostly engage in farming and hunting, trading facilitate the means of inter-

relation of Uhen people with other people from different communities in her unit, Women participation in trade can further be seen as the fundamental aspect of interaction in inter-relation during the Precolonial Uhen community, There's balance of trade that existed in the Uhen community, Balance of trade is defined as the difference between the value of merchandise or visible exports and the value of merchandise or visible imports. when the value of import is equal to the value of exports we say that there is a trade balance.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to know that trade aided the development of Uhen community and women were the pioneers who made balance in trade possible according to oral interview before the introduction of currency there was the adequate use of trade by barter this was successful means of exchange when trading activities were been carried out, women trade livestock for ornament and arcraft which had remark value, crops such as cassava, yams, cocoyam, cocoa, palm products, vegetables and these crops were traded to acquire livestock and traders from the Urban areas with materials, tools and implement were sold for crops for consumption, The Eken market was a trading platform that aided trading with Urban markers which in turn contributed to the development of Uhen community.<sup>13</sup>

## **Production**

The guilds were professional groups to which the people of Uhen community belong, There were a number of them such as those of carvers, brass-workers, blacksmith,

weavers, workers in ivory, irons, leather and all these were associated with production in the Benin kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

According to oral interview Uhen people in the concept of production were woodcarvers, palm oil production, and due to that production was done manually with work force the absence of industrial machines it made production very slow most production takes up to weeks before getting ready due to high amount of productions. The labour force in production was contributed by women in palm oil production the harvested palm product required for production was done by men who climbs to obtain these substance. however, women process palm products manually to make oil production due to that rural was not accessible to machines to make production faster, after crops are harvested the thorns are removed and palm kennels are placed on bowls which are later processed manually by marching methods as soon as hot water are poured into the bowls filled with palm kennels in order to draw out materials then fitted to out by weave clothing to bring out the natural resource made from palm kennels and the liquid materials are kept stored in for days before taking to be either traded or for consumption, oil gotten out from palm products are not only use for consumption but they can also be used for body lotion in the Precolonial Uhen community. Women also made the production of weave clothing though weave production was not as applicable in the community unlike palm products, women played roles in production which contributed to development in Uhen community.<sup>15</sup>

## **Agriculture**

Women also play a major role in Agricultural activities in Uhen community such as they were the labour force alongside their children in farming activities. In the aspect of Agriculture women play a role in farming, cultivation and harvesting crops planted in the farm land, farming season also known as raining season women farmers work on their family farm to plant crops and prevent them from deforestation from heavy rainfall which may flood and destroy their planted crops on farm lands there by slowing harvest season, though men play vital roles in clearing removing weeds so easy access for crops to be cultivated and blossom easily women assistance in farming activities cannot be under rated due to the help they render in farming.<sup>16</sup>

According to oral reports women work on the farms on daily basis in order to supervise and check on the affairs of work done on the farm lands, any land which had lost its nutrient fertility it is the duty of the wives to make report to their husband about either good or poor performance of the farm land,<sup>17</sup> Women also set traps for rodent hostile to crops and plants in order to make a successful harvest, women in the community are excellent farmers just as they are traders, harvest of crops enables the people to either place such crops for consumption or sold into trade, while the commercial farmers hires expert women farmers to work on farm lands, the number of women in the community is greater than men which makes labourers most are women working on a piece of land used for commercial farming. It is without a doubt even till

date women still engage themselves in farming activities which aided the development of Uhen community.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conflict Resolution**

With the availability of oral interview conflict resolution and settlement of dispute in the community were mainly resolved by a council which comprised of elders in the locality or streets, Odionwere which were the political head in the society, the social age group and lastly elder women. They were responsible for passing out local jurisdiction involving small or local parties but in the case of larger scale only the Odionwere of that street has involvement concerning that matter due to that such case might have gone to the Okhigbe of that unit.<sup>19</sup>

Whenever conflict or disagreement arises of two or more parties which has gotten to the reach of the Odionwere of that society it is the duty of the Odionwere to organize a judicial council responsible to ensure peaceful resolution in the society,<sup>20</sup> women are opinion in this case are considered to maintain open free approach to matters which the customs and Traditions mandates it in the community. However, in the aspect of marriage arrangements women are also called for the family council the Traditional name called Egbe in Benin language meaning Council elders, each family of the two parties has an Egbe made up of elderly members of the family mostly women.<sup>21</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The community of Uhen which is among the various units or villages in the Precolonial Benin achieved solid development in terms of Economic and social development with help of the social activities engineered by women in the community, women role in the community comes with obligation backed up by the customs and Traditions which has existed for a long time and still exist in the present period, The community acknowledges women in the society and roles played are relatively commendable which makes them important unit in the community and a driving force from the family unit to the highest stage of status in the community.

Women played a big role in Economic and social activities such as conflict resolution, Family units, Trade, festivity, manufacturing and marriage rites these stated in this research were provided by oral interviews and reports due to the fact this context is relative to society knowledge. Women have been a major part that enabled support in the sphere of development in the Precolonial Uhen community even before modernization took place and was introduced. The role women play in trade can be said to be among the most important Economic activities that aided development in the community, Market days were filled with the presence of traders who were majorly women both from distant villages and neighboring towns partake in the exercise of trade and this had built a solid relationship among villages in that unit.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

The Kingdom of Benin, also known as the Edo Kingdom, or the Benin Empire (Bini: Arriṣba Edo) was a kingdom within what is now southwestern Nigeria.[citation needed] It has no historical relation to the modern republic of Benin, which was known as Dahomey from the 17th century until 1975. The Kingdom of Benin's capital was Edo, now known as Benin City in Edo State, Nigeria. The Benin Kingdom was "one of the oldest and most developed states in the coastal hinterland of West Africa". It grew out of the previous Edo Kingdom of Igodomigodo around the 11th century AD, and lasted until it was annexed by the British Empire in 1897.<sup>1</sup>

Geographically, pre-colonial Benin kingdom was located in the forest region of what is now modern Nigeria in West Africa sub-region. This kingdom was not a single administration unit, and its boundaries cannot be precisely drawn. The term territory of Benin Kingdom is with the present Orodó, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, Uhunmwonde, Orhionmwon and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas of Edo State. At the height of its power, the influence of Benin was it recorded to have extended westward along the coast of Eko which is present day Lagos and beyond, westwards to Ekiti and beyond which marked the boundary between Benin and Oyo Empire, eastwards to the River Niger as well as the Igbo speaking areas and beyond, and southward to the Atlantic

Ocean. The area of pre-colonial Benin had a continuous expansion and that was because Benin was involved with lot of warfare. Warfare and conquering of kingdoms are part of the key answers to empire building.<sup>2</sup>

The Ovia North East local Government area located in both rural and urban areas of Benin, and this territorial unit covers some Urban part of Benin kingdom before the post-colonial period this territory was referred to as particular unit, under this unit holds villages, Communities and towns such as , Okada, Ofunmwengbe, Uhiere, Isiuwa, Addor, Oluku, Iguoshodin and Utoka. The Okada unit includes Utesse, Egbeta,Uhen and Ogbesse community.<sup>3</sup>

According to oral report, Uhen community which is among the Villages situated in the Ovia North East local government area was Significantly said to be among the oldest existing Communities in the great Benin kingdom and development in the society were achieved by various factors, principalities and social institution. There are some basic Social institution that contributed to development in the community such as Odion Social age group, festivity and even economic activities trade contributed immensely to the growth of Uhen.<sup>4</sup> The Economic activities such as farming and trade were the major occupation of the people, with the availability of forest sites hunting was also carried out as well. Eken market ground was a key centre of trade activities where buying and selling was mostly conducted, and it also contributed to the interaction of the community with

other Communities in the aspect of trade which is among prime factors that aided inter-relation among the community in that unit.<sup>5</sup>

According to oral report, social and Economic development that kept the society strong among many was the role women play which throws more light on the activities and social aid women in the community rendered to the people of Uhen community. Women contributions to the society were emphasized and their importance in family unit made them appreciative in the community, trade activities was majorly conducted by women, and buying or selling of commodities in the Eken market aided inter-relation among Communities in Okada unit.<sup>6</sup> Women also contributed in manufacturing of products such as palm products before the introduction of industries in precolonial period women made homemade palm oil production which were sold in the market. The role women play in conflict resolution and Marriage rites contributed to the development of Uhen community.<sup>7</sup>

According to oral interview, the major significance of Uhen community was that it's heritage, traditions and culture were coined from the ancestral laws formulated by monarchs of Great Benin kingdom. The people of Uhen community political system made use of Enogie from Okada unit which were dukes instituted by the Oba of great Benin kingdom. However, the community though still have a little amount of checks of power which were made up of elders from each streets in the community referred to as Odionwere.<sup>8</sup>

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Ohenhen, Bright	79	Farming	Uhen	6/10/2022
Obasohan, Johnbull	73	Retired Civil Servant	Uhen	6/10/2022
Imafidon, Anna	64	Farming	Uhen	6/11/2022
Uyioghosa, Margret	74	Trader	Uhen	6/11/2022
Osamudiamen, Beatrice	74	Retired Teacher	Uhen	6/11/2022
Imafidon, Edith	52	Retired Teacher	Uhen	13/10/2022
Aigbe, Eki	74	Farming	Uhen	6/11/2022
Osadolor, Thomas	75	Farming	Uhen	6/10/2022

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