

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF BURIALS AND BURIAL RITES IN BENIN

BY

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PG./ART/175099

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**THESIS WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis was carried out in the department of History and International Studies and Diplomacy, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

Dr. J. Nwaka
Supervisor
Date: _____

Head of Department

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family, Odihi J. Imadonmwiyi Owegie and others who have lost a dear one.

The family and lineage of the gallant, bold and courageous Benin War Lords and generals.

Moreso, the monarchs Omo N'Oban'Edo Uku Akpolokpole Oba of Benin Empire and Kingdom who fought in various capacities to protect the empire and her divine heritages.

Also to the present monarch Oba Ewuare Ogidigan II, Oba Ghatu Okpene Isee.

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JOHNSON NEKPENEKPEN JULIET

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Burial rites and rituals is one of the major religious rites in Benin, Nigeria and the world. It is said to have been practiced in Benin City in three phases. It appeared since the historical occupation of Iduland, during the eras of the Edionwere, Etebite and Eteghori and has continue all through the reigns of the Ogisos' – Igodo in Igodomigodo land from 40BC 16AD to Ogisi Owodo 1059 – 1100AD. Title count thirty-one (31) Ogisos and Irebor Ogiemen. There have been thirty-six independent Obas and four dependent Obas inclusive of the reigning Oba Ewuare N'Ogidigan II as recorded by Obazenu.¹

The Benin people are occupying the coastal region of the South-West. The obaship period begin with Oranmiyan 1170AD to his Royal Majesty, Oba Eware N' Ogidigan II Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo present reigning Oba.

There have been different rites and rituals, traditional ceremonies and rituals and customs in Benin since the ancient settlement and civilization. The Binis have had, and still have and maintains the same process of first and final burial rites, and the method of inheritances early enough, there have been the designated burial place called in Benin Iteh and Ikpekepe. For burial for Edions and those Edionwere are buried at home or compound. The Binis remain strongly attached to their indigenous religions and traditional rites and practices.

The coming of the colonialists into Benin and the establishment of their rule and the taking over of the administrative affairs in the 19th century out of their home, state/government interests, jealousy and greed. The mandatory cemeteries burial for all deceased Binis. The invitation of the missionaries by the colonialists. The first cemetery was exactly opposite the present day Yanga market, there is now first cemetery along 2nd East Circular, second cemetery

is at Uzebu and third cemetery at New Benin, the new private cemetery by the present Governor is beside the first cemetery in Benin City.²

The colonial masters were ruthless, wanted to possess the land for themselves hence Russett et.al said that they carried out their transnational terrorism and mega murderings. The British should pay reparation to the Benin land for wanton destruction and forced occupation; not part but the entire land and government of Benin as Germany was made to pay reparation to Japan for occupying part of Japanese territory of Manchuria.⁴

Christianity in Benin was said to have impacted in various ways in the life and modern day transformation history; the work of Christian missions has become an integral part of Benin social history. Through the various humanitarian services rendered, mission churches, medical, educational services aided in the building of spiritual, moral, and social development of the people and society of Benin bringing literacy, fighting against diseases and epidemics, so the people can carry on the mission work.

The colonialists aims was geared towards so many goals, among which were stopping the humans and animals sacrifices in all ceremonies and burials rite as burial rituals. Their combined efforts were to wipe out the Benin traditional culture. Politically and religiously after the British war, Trans-Atlantic slave trade; Oduomwuomu period in Benin City.

The Benin has their own method of worshipping God called the “Aruosa Church” and creed. Western culture has threatened to destroyed the traditions and customs of the Benin culture, religion and social life of the people.

The burials rites of the Benin has not changed. Where there is change is in the rituals some are monetized and this is attracting the Christians to participate in the final burial. The night time entertainment of guest has been shifted to afternoon by the Oba. For safety reasons. The economic impacts of burials are alarmingly increasing and competitive due to the role of the

Okaegbē in individual families in Benin as it also impacted on the social-political and religious life of the people of Benin city.

The social-cultural impacts of burial across the globe and other form of burial rites and rituals and the roles of local government authorities.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

1. To examine the nature of Burial rites in Benin before colonial rule
2. To examine the changes introduced by the colonial rule within the area of burial rites
3. To find out the new trend in Burial rites in Benin
4. To explain the new pattern or dynamics in burial rites in Benin

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study is based on practical and theoretical evaluation of the ancient Bini people and their traditional customary cultural heritage passed on to them from their fore fathers.

There had been various expedition of the Europeans either through trade by the Portuguese or through colonial rule by the British and the activities of the collaborating Catholic Missionaries; the administrative authority of colonialist and the imposition of their cultures which they have used to a great extent to devastates the ancient Benin empire and kingdom and the former depopulation, during the British punitive war of 1897. And the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Iduomomu) era.

Moreso, they only have one reason, to stop the rituals killing of humans and animals for burials and other ceremony, this practices were not peculiar to the Benin nation alone other kingdom in Nigeria and Africa practices it. They acted inhumanly as a discredit to them and their home country, amidst few benefits from them; compare to what they louted from the kingdom.

Furthermore, the study covers the Benin people, their political organization and administration, economic activities religious belief and tradition rites and customs, native court, as it affects the subject matter of the study; such as the “changing pattern of burial rites and

rituals in Benin”. It also covers all the local government area of Benin in respect of sameness in final burial rites and rituals (homogeneity).

The study covers and supplements the burial rites and rituals in Benin with those other rites and tradition theoretically across Africa, the world culture of burials and rites and their heritage value and benefits, researchable, architectural and monumental, environmental institution from early times till date.

1.4 Literature Review

There is not much academic works on the different aspects of the History of Benin and actual Burial rites and rituals. The rites and changing pattern in these books.

There are however some relevant literature in this category is the book authored by Prince E.B. Eweka who put in place “The Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles,⁵ he gave a substantive account of the origin of Benin and its early rulers, the chieftaincy hierarchy. The palace chiefs, society, district, village administration and the different local government districts titles, names of the different villages and creation with their different groups heads; some ceremonial time chiefs and ceremonies which they performs. The withdrawal of titles previously confirmed the different villages of the Uzamas jurisdiction and then some traditions associated with chieftaincy, that is the different kinds of greetings Benin chieftaincy in diasporal.

These different analysis and report helps one at a glance to know that the Benin direct administration of day to day government by the Ogisos – the Obas, chiefs and Edionweres brings Benin to the enviable state the European mets it before colonial administration which shattered its during the reign of Oba Ovoranmwun n’ogbaisi the last independent Oba.

The work of Ekhaguosa Aisien, entitled “Aisien Son of Erhunmwunsee, and the British – the 1897 War.⁶ He tells of the incomplete story of the British conquest of the Benin Kingdom in 1897. Incompletely told by the Binis as they from their individual or village perspective point of the Benin.

The events that led to the great massacre (some group in Edo says that Benin people always wants to fight but they were insignificant to the Europeans).

The European wedge war with sophisticated weapon of mass destruction against lesser armed nation. Every colonized nations has unending tales to tell.

Furthermore, Philip Aigbona Igbofe in his book entitled “The Nemesis of Power. Agbho Obaseki and Benin Politics, 1897 – 1956⁷ provides the narrations on this role of Agho Obaseki’s antecedents and rise to fame in Benin Administration during the colonial era and the part he played to restore Benin, his occupation as merchant and farmer, his pioneering work, of power says absolute power brings tyranny and dictatorship. The book, he writes about the placing of the Oba and the Iyase's role and the place of Agho Obaseki in the history of Benin; during the colonial war.

In addition, there is the contribution of Jacob .U. Egharevba entitle; Benin Law and Custom.⁸ He elaborates on the occupations of the Binis and the evening entertainments by oral tradition of storytelling of factual events. The method of teaching the people the different burial rites and rituals and other ceremonies (rites), widowhood, bereavement, mannerism, sanitation, sharing, everything that is involved in the acquisition of land, house development, everything involved with farming, hunting activities, self defence, military training, salutation in Bini, religion, trading, economic and other day to day activities in the kingdom and the Oba as the administrative and religion head.

Moreso, the book authored by R.E. Bradbury, also entitled the Benin kingdom and the Edo-speaking people of the south-western Nigeria.⁹ It describes the tradition of origin and local administrative circles of the Bini communities chieftaincy, occupations, social organization, life circle, it also describes the military organization, inheritances, the social organization and political systems of all the tribes in Edos with their different religion practices inclusive of witchcraft and some other tribe now in Delta State – Urhobo, Isoko and Itsekiri.

The book written by Joseph Oghobaghase Obazenu titled, *Benin City: The Birth Place of Oduduwa, (A Narrative about the True History)*.¹⁰ This work explains some facts concerning the establishment of (Ogiso dynasty); Obaship in Benin kingdom after the Odionwere's era, Ogiso dynasty, the place of Oduduwa and Ekaladeran. The belief of the Yoruba (Ife) kingship of establishing Benin "Obasip"; this book also deals on the extent of Benin occupation in Niger Delta, diahomy, Lagos, Ado-Ekit, Akure and Owo.

The plight of the Yorubas to acculturize the entire mid-Western and Eastern Nigeria by force (and evil) speaking of the Yoruba language, no Yoruba speaking – go no where, which is the "Policy of Assimilation". The Yorubas were first to use culture of writing to write literature books therefore use it to write myths and non-factual history about the kingship (Obaship) and origin of Obaship and of the people of Edo concerning "Oduduwa" origin.

The debunking with natural illustrative facts, the existential realities of the Benin origin, and the origin of Obaship. But lacked the ingredients of burial rites and rituals in Benin which my thesis will reflect, it's compelling writers to write the truth about their origin and establishment of the origin of their rulership in their lands.

The book authored by Kahlil Gibrian entitled "The Prophet"¹¹ reflects more on the prophetic teaching about life of the prophet on earth, his traveling among the people. The seafarers and the end of his dwelling amongst men; he has made us to understand when been asked several requests to explain life activities to the people of orphalise where he dwelled twelve years and the wave of the sea (death) threaten to separate them. This book is basically biblical; and it deals with everyday rules and regulation on religion, economic, trade, health, love, sorrow, joy, from birth to marriage, neighbourliness and other activities of everyday living and life and mannerism, law and punishment, death and reincarnation (reborn); he talk about teaching and hygiene and cloths, house and building.

Finally, he bid farewell which again is death, wishes and mourning. The aspects that concerns my project is; joy and sorrow and on death, he have to give his opinion about life “that it was only yesterday that we meet in a dream”. Life really is but a dream, and the Christians says: there is no reincarnation!

The book of Ronald Blythe entitled, *Akenfield: A Portrait of An English Village* (the *Hour of Death* by William Russ).¹² This book is written about the organization of professions and professionals, workers and farmers, Christians and churches and others in the village. Where there are villages and communities and people there is always birth and sometimes death. Death can be by natural or unnatural causes. The major relevance of this book to this thesis is the activities of the Grave-digger and the role of the church and the parson. The contribution of William Russ’s, *Hour of Death*, to the book is very interesting anyways it is looked at, he reveals a huge damn secret about burying in the Cemeteries, Vault, Churchyards and the reason for burying the dead and other customs and rites. Most importantly the writing of "wills" which encompasses all properties and the sites for burial and method of burial, cremation, natural burial or burials of cremated remains. Death is a world-wide phenomenon, also the activities of grave diggers “it is like the rituals of farming which is the first rituals on earth to be performed, as farmers putting seeds into the earth. Last respect must be paid to the dead, they deserves it.

John .W. Blassingame book entitled “*The Slave Community*”, *Plantation Life in The Antebellum South*.¹³ It also described how “midnight slave funeral rites was conducted. Songs, dances, with instruments and the decoration of graves even in the slave communities African traditional rites were been practical to an extent excepting the rituals killings of sacrificial animals for final burials. This is in chapter one of this book, shows the principal order of burial, first their masters gives to the mourners permission from work to bury their dead. Prayers for the dead to lead him to his ancestral homeland in Africa. This goes to show the advantages in the supremacy of African traditional customs and burial rites comparable to the disadvantages in the

Western burial and ritual culture. These rites were overseen by priests who keeps the African traditions and rites going.

The book by Lynne Ann Despelder, Albertlee Strickland entitled, *The Last Dance Encountering Deaths and Dying*¹⁴ is an all encompassing book from the simple sickness to diseases and war situations, terrorisms which has ravaged... the world; value for the views of others as an advantage over provocation, due or undue. The author wrote about bereavement – The aged, orphans and many issues on the end of life also "Sea burial" for naval officers. The advantage of inheritances, death benefits, burials and its different kind which is very relevant to this project work. The heritage of cemeteries and heritage values. This will be linked to this project concerning burials in the cemeteries in Benin during "Colonial Era and the New Trends of burial rites and rituals in Benin.

Rex Warner book, *Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated with Introduction. Book Two: Chapter Four, Pericles's Funeral Speech.¹⁵

This book on Athenians most courageous and fearless nation (warriors). They have their allocated cemeteries for those who have fallen in war, and those who have fallen in plague. They have good funeral speeches for them to encourage others or citizens to be patriotic to, and defend their hearth (homeland). There is plan for the government to take care of the deceased mother, wife and children. Pericles speech is like the work of a good master of ceremony. There is a well organized system of administration, each family has it own representation. They have beautiful and wonderful burial rites and rituals, traditional belief and culture and national memorial day for their dead. It also reflects on Benin burials rites, praises are said for the Oba, chiefs, warlords, important personalities of prowess and influence even the lesser in the society are praised and recognized when they passes on.

The book by Osemwegie Ebohon, entitled "Cultural Heritage of Benin"¹⁵ reflects on the origin of the Benin people, their culture, traditions, rites and their general way of life and daily

activities, it explains the various Odionwere's era, Ogiso's dynasty, Obaship, origin of traditional dances, pregnancy and oath, mourning of husband or wife (dead). How Christianity (new faith) affects all these rites was not stated; but it has aided my thesis.

ISPU Newsletter International Society for the Promotion of Ubiniology, edited and president Osaren Omoregie” Tagged The Twelve Ages of Benin History¹⁷ is very important to note the different stages of transformation in the¹² twelve Ages of the developments in Benin history, different laws enacted by each of the Monarchs and their period of administration from the Ages of Odionweres to Ogisos, to Obas. It is of utmost relevance to the project work, there is always death to end their rules or sibling's tussles.

In 1914, after the whitefolk (Oyibos) has established in-direct rule it became clear to them that Benin have originated from twelve different ages, which they appreciated, studied, and preserved it for their home government and the modern world.

The departure of the whitefolk after Nigeria independence in 1960 and 1963 first Republic. The most important impact is that sons and daughters of Benin has a new challenge of projecting the cultures, traditions, festivals and burial rites (Gospel of the Monarchy) which has dwindle and for many reasons and influences, lack of sustainable background to the study of Ubiniology. This article has exposed the period of rules and different reigns of the head and their contributions overtime in the realms of affairs of the, Igodomigodo, Ubini and Edo. The disadvantages and advantages of European era. The premogeniture laws and life processes.

The book of Omorodion Uwaifo, titled, Edo Cultural Voyage,¹⁸ This book is also on the origin of the Benin, the religion shrine Aruosa (God’s Shrine) in the reign of Oba Akenzua II as section one, for two are, the customary marriage, antenatal and post-natal care in Edo (Health). The different evening entertainment, traditional festivals, succession and inheritances.

The relevance of study to this work is chapter seven on Okaegbee and the chapter on Ir' Orhinmwin. It advantages and disadvantages. Though this book did not exhaust it processes and ritual involved in all.

The book by Edun Akenzua "Ekaladerhan"¹⁹ written about the origin of the Benin and the ages of Obaship. The migration story, exile of Ooduwa, Izodowa corrupted by the Yorubas as Ijoduwa in Ife as Oduduwa (their ancestral founder). The death sentence on the only son of Ogiso Owodo. The messages of the search party yielded reward and Ekaladerhan was sent and he begat Oba Eweka whose obaship came from Ekaladeran did not stay long because of the complex nature of administration in Benin he left.

This book talks about the advantages and disadvantages of the Benin nature administration and rulership. The impacts on the change of way of life of the government of the people's social and religious life and their intra relation and inter-relation of two set of groups of people.

The book of Princess .C. Aghaku Akenzua, titled, "Historical Tales from Ancient Benin Vol. II"²⁰ The brief history of Benin which is relevant to my work, expose the different ages of the Owere and Ogiso dynasty, Igodo to Owodo; and obaship periods. The advantages and disadvantages of hereditary/ primogeniture nature of obaship. The kindness, foolishness, selfishness, wisdom and warring nature of princes.

The advise of Iginua to his father Olua did not find acceptance with the Benin people led to his exile along with the first sons of all the chief to safeguard Iginua's life led to the creation of Owere (Warri) and the advantage of creation of other clans.

There is also the important roles played by notable women of history during the reign of various Obas like Ise's mother during the reign of Oba Ozolua (the warrior, Okpame) Iye Ukuesien (mother that defends). The role of Emitan (Emotan) as confidant of prince ogunin

restoring him to his throne and was later rewarded with Emelu title and her name was changed to Emotan.

The role of Eleghe's wisdom in saving Oba Ohen's throne by using the Ekoko n'ute masquerades as disguise to redeemed himself and the Uhumwunoria shrine.

Oba Ozolua fought to regain the looted royal beads of his father from the looters some returned theirs, those who refused were destroyed and their wife's became possession of Oba Ozolua.

The Pdf book titled, Funeral Rites Across Different Culture by section Nine Critical Incidents shows the way people relates to death, rituals and belief, it varies, rituals contains fundamental cultural and traditional values with different symbols featuring the symbol of death, the significance of colour, funeral customs and death related rituals. It went as far as enlightening us about the Buddhist belief and practices, Christian belief and practices, Hindu and Sikh cremation custom and rites, Humanists belief and practices and funeral ceremonies. Jewish funeral customs and belief about death; Muslim burial customs and rites before and in the contemporary world. The disadvantages and disadvantages of these burials traditional customs and rites. The Benin burial rites and rituals are not fully represented, if one may take the humanist account. The book is of great value to this work.

Another pdf book, Nansee et al/ Social Media in the funeral industry 85,²² On the memorial which is "peaceful" and "dignified" in doing these dedicated memorials sites themselves as been more sensitive to the specific contexts of death and memorialization than platform like facebook is very relevant to this project work as one memorializes their dead.

Pdf book by Ken Worple, The Briefing Cemeteries, Churchyards and BurialGrounds.²³ Writes that about the 19th century, that it was envisaged as openspace to attracts visits. The environmental (sanitation) benefits unrealized the Jews and the Muslims have separates cemeteries in (UK) United Kingdom.

It went further to explain that the dominant form of funerary rites in the U.K is cremation, accounting for 72 percent of all disposals not just by choice but by absence of local accessible land, well manage cemeteries with available space also the choice for natural burial is growing in popularity. Provided with existing public cemeteries, many public cemeteries now full of great heritage values and interests.

Moreso, the legal status of burial ground, statistics regarding cemeteries, burial cremation and burial of cremated remains the disadvantages and also the advantages of the different kinds of burials are of very great importance to different cultures. There are the heritage value and contemporary benefits of burial grounds; current concern of health and safety; burial ground within the Wild Green Space; and the recommendation for the need for separate nature cemeteries strategies, need for local authority cemeteries strategies and funding for improvement.

Although, this book is written for foreign burial rites and cemeteries, it of relevant to this project, in the light that the colonial Era has made it mandatory for all (dead) corpse's to be buried in already existing cemeteries.

The book written by Festus Ogbonwan entitled *Earthly Catholic Missionary Activities in Benin City*²⁴ he analysis the history of christainity on the land of Benin, why the first missionaries that came failed in the first attempts to preach and establish their faith and culture. Some researches scholar views and findings on this issue is highlighted. He also extensively dwells on the achievements of the present day churches in Benin City. The book did not show much on the educational impact of Christianity on the modern day, and the activities of the past missionaries activities and the development of Benin from it. It is of important to my project in that Colonial Rule brought Christianity to Benin City.

Ekhaguasa Aisien's book entitled *Erediauwa Prince of Benin*²⁵ writes on the influence Christianity had on culture and traditions of Benin people is of great value he examines the effects of the Portuguese missionaries in the quest to evangelize the Benin people and the city,

how Christianity part affects the gradual evolution of some cultural, cultic practices among the people of Benin City traditionally today. This book shows the relationship between Christianity and practices of Benin culture the possible effects Christianity will have in the future on Benin culture and traditional practices. Presently the successes it has attained. This book is relevant to the project as it affects the cultural practices and the New Trends of burial rites and rituals in Edo.

The Book by Jacob Egharevba entitled "A short History of Benin,²⁶" is relevant to this work as it concerns the history of Benin though brief is of immense value.

The book written by A.F.C Ryder on Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897,²⁷ highlight the various points of contact of the Benin with the Europeans. The various trades that took place between the Bini's and the Portuguese, British, French and the Dutch. Moreso, the various activities of the Spanish and Italian missionaries in Benin City. The difficulties, factures, successes, the major aims of the European tracks and Empire expansion through the medium of, especially trade and Christianity. The work will shows failure of signing of the one-sided Trade Treaty that led to the British punitive war of 1897.

The book by R.E. Bradbury, Benin Studies,²⁸ talks about the geneology of the Obas, the Principal order of the chieftaincy in Oba Ovoranmwun's reign. All the traditional religion and the new year festival in the land of Benin and the culture. It help to know the culture of the Benin people in Edo State and their importance.

The book by S.P. Owie, History and Culture of Ugo N' Iyekikpoba Dukedom,²⁹ talk about the origin and links, relationship between the six communities in Iyekikpoba in Benin. The origin of Benin as the Oba the central head and religion head and Administration in Benin kingdom. The various religion culture traditional practices, greeting Dances Eho and Igue and other festivals the roles of Edionegbee N'okhua and Okaegbee of the families in Benin. The work is very useful, it will go at length to help the project in it relevant aspects and current trends of burial as it affects the ancient method of rituals.

The book by Neil .J. Salkind, *Statistics for People, who think they Hate Statistics*,³⁰ talks about statistics and data, the method of gathering and discrimination of statistics, when, how, the place of gathering, it important in budget making, in historical events in the past, present and future occurrences, statistically data are collected organished, summarized and interpreted.

1.5 Methodology

In writing this research work, relevant data and informations were obtained from two sources. These were primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources utilized for this work is oral interviews, materials were consulted at institute of Benin Studies. They include intelligence reports and other reports relating to the changing pattern of burials and burial rites in Benin, oral interviews were conducted with experience elderly people of Benin.

Secondary sources which were obtained in some Universities and Public Libraries across Edo state includes, textbooks, journals and periodical material were consulted at John Harris Library, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State traditional library Oba palace, Benin City.

Information obtained from these sources help to guide and supplement the material obtained from the primary sources. These sources help to provide a historical account of the burials and burial rites activities in Benin and among the Binis at large.

Chapterization

The project work is calibrated into five (5) chapters as follows:

CHAPTER ONE/BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction: This chapter gives on overview of the entire research work. It gives an insight into the Bini's Burials rites and rituals activities in Benin City, showing the various history of the different origin and festivals by various Benin authors and their relevance to Benin traditional customs and rites and other greeting customs. Foreign authored are also contributed relatively to

the work and attempts made by them to educate even the non-Benin about their cultural heritage voyage and religion.

It also show the difficulties and obstacles and successes they have achieved during their quest for the way forward in the New Trend of burial and burial rites in Benin.

CHAPTER TWO: BURIAL RITES AND RITUALS IN BENIN BEFORE 1900

This chapter examines a brief historical background of the Benin people before the coming of the colonial rule and missionaries. It shows that the people had their religion called the Benin traditional religion as well as their culture and way of life. It show the different stages of transformation from the Edionwere's rulership of the different villages in the community to the Ogisos dynasty first and foremost was Ogiso Igodo and the last was Ogiso Owodo thirty-one Ogisos, and then the period of Obas and their different rules and laws of traditions.

Furthermore the good and first class method of rulership as organized by these traditional rulers in the day to day administration of the villages, towns and dukedoms were formidable and historical. Everyone falls under the monarchy which was hereditary (primogeniture) and the chieftaincy holder position too. Some are hereditary, the people (subjects) were ruled under the Benin traditional religion. They have their, economic as well as political and military life. From birth to death the Oba is very much respects and honour.

Though the killings of humans and animal sacrifices during deities worships in ceremonies royal burial were frowned at this was not peculiar to the Bini people before 1900.

CHAPTER THREE: COLONIAL RULE AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF BURIAL RITES IN BENIN

This chapter examines the emergence of the colonial rule and the early missionaries activities in Benin, the establishment, structural infrastructure and activities put in place in Benin as soon as they came. Their absolute rulership after their puncture was of 1897 in the Benin nation. The success of the European in establishing their foreign rule and authority due to the well organized

political, native direct institution of Benin. The true fact that the European has already during the trans-Atlantic slavery era depopulated Benin before bringing their rule, then the missionaries were brought after the war where every good things were charted away artisan, anti-facts carving craftsmen and women, looters brought Christianity to stop the obnoxious killing and sacrifices of humans and animals, like cultures. The looted artifacts bronze and carvings that reminded the people of the various period and reigns of the Edionwere, Ogisos and Obas Christianity did evils and some good.

The colonial masters appreciated it the culture, religions, political and economic organization of Benin that they appreciated it, preserved it and valued it and studied it for their home government. For the Benin traditional method of burial, the colonial (masters) rule came to meet functioning cemeteries. Called “Iteh” or Ikpekpe for the burial of all people excepting chiefs and those above eighty years of age and the obas that are buried at home or compound; colonialist made every dead to be buried in the cemetery.

The bottom line is the colonialists and the missionaries used force rule to destroy the Benin Empire.

CHAPTER FOUR: NEW TRENDS IN BURIAL RITES IN BENIN

This chapter focuses on the new trends of burial rites in Benin after 1900 that after independence of Nigeria and the new republic things begins to take a new shape with the acculturation of Bini by the missionary many felt that they have broken away from all the cultures that bond them to their ancestral traditional customs and rites and rituals they called obnoxious and dehumanizing practices. Some Christians and semi-pagan opted for Christian burial. Prior to today, indigenes were fetish and adherents of African traditional religion. Today, many have become Christians many are now priest, Bishop, Reverends, and so on. They have abandon their local language (Bini). They say it is no longer fashionable.

The activities of the nuisance elements in the society concerning burial in the cemeteries interviews are conducted with persons concerning burial.

The present trends of burial (final) had religion, economic social cultural impacts on the society. The roles of the various and individual Okaegbee and family Edionegbee. Some rites are now monetized. The role of local government council, environmental health and burial unit and the grave digger. And explaining the new dynamics in burial in Benin in social cultural impacts of burial across the globe in that people of Benin lives in other culture (countries) and most are not brought home fore burial among their ancestors. The kinds of burial in these places (culture) are used for their burial moreso, there is the need to mention some other method of burial in the world, there is the Christian burial rites, the humanists traditional burial rites. The Muslim burial rites and other forms of burial rites in Africa and beyond.

The role of even planners, masters of ceremony, undertakers and other and the gravediggers activities in the cemeteries, churchyard, vaults, homes and compound burial. Tele-conferencing in burial events for family outside to feel the impacts and presence.

CHAPTER FIVE; CONCLUSION

This is an overview of the entire work it summarizes the discourse in all the chapters. First, of all, the history of the Benin people and their culture, religion festivals, ceremonies, political and traditional administrative method. The Benin traditional burials and burial rites and rituals processes with its sustainability in the face of changing traditional custom and rites by the Christians to the Christian burial (borrowed culture) they called their culture out-dated, outmoded, and local while the impacts is such that even the humanist (pagan) claims to be a Christian during burial rites to minimize cost of burial.

Home and compound burial are preferable to the church or cemetery burial because of the nuisances activities.

There are disadvantages of home burials too. Both method of burials has advantages and disadvantages, benefits achievements such as, artifacts, economic impacts, political, geographical environmental, architectural, monumental, geographical and buildings values, and heritage values for studies and research.

Every burial remains a great success and blessing for all the family immediate and extended members who accomplished it.

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CHAPTER TWO

BURIAL RITES AND RITUAL IN BENIN BEFORE 1900

This chapter will discuss the origin of the Benin people traditions, socio-political system religious affinity, major occupations and emergence of burial rites and rituals.

Moreso, the roles of the various eras – Edionwere, Ogisos dynasty and Obaship periods in political, socio-cultural and economic impacts on the kingdom of Benin.

Further more, the role of the Okaegbee N'Okwu, Okaęgbę N'ekhere as custodian of the family tradition, in festivals and ceremonies as overseer, and judges issues, ensures peace in the immediate and extended family, promotes peace and unity in the kingdom. Difficult issues are directed to the Edionwere, if unresolved, are directed to the Benin Traditional Council which the Oba presides over.

2.1 A Brief History of Benin

The first period was of Etebite and Eteghori, other account is of Eastern migration, the Benin might of sand filed snail shell pour on the sea to form land space share with his brothers for their treasures become the founder of earth (Agbon) and Idu land).¹

The term Edo refers to those who speak Benin proper or as Ovbiedo while those who speak related dialects are four groups on location, religion culture differences. The Edo - those who lives in the Northern, North-Western, North-East - the Akoko-Edo, Etsako, Afemai, Igake, Ora, Owan and the Esan (Ishan). The Urhobo and Isoko who live to the Niger-Delta to the South.² At different points in history perfoms certain functions for the kingdom, although there are difference in the language there are similarities in socio-cultural and political views.³

Benin people is descriptive name of Bini clan it has seven local government. They speak Edo language others are in Diaspora having a common ancestry (Erhinmwin Idu), and language. The entire Benin land and political state, tribe and dimension, founding of vassals states and suzerain nation, notable difficulty in concluding direct and indirect linked to the Edoid speaking

people, the reference to Benin today were the traditional bureaucratic administrators, military commanders, generals and war strategists, they are top of the echelon of leadership and rulership hierarchy of the empire.⁴

Several Ediomwere – thirty-one Ogisos from Igodo 40BC – 16AD the last was Owodo 1059 – 1100 AD 600 years, interan were Ogie Evian and Irabor Ogiameien, the Oba period started from the son of self exile Owodo's son Ikaladerhan. He became known as Oduduwa or Izoduwa (I chose the path of wealth) in Ile-Ife and became king or Ooni. His last son Oronmiyan was crowned king reign briefly, his son (Owomika) Eweka became first Oba in Early 17th century AD, and the ruling Oba is Eware N' Ogidigan II 20th of Oct 2016 till date. Oba ghato kpere, Ise (may his reign be long and peaceful).⁵

J.U. Egharevba (Edo n' ekue) has written that the Edo people migrated from Egypt halt at Sudan move to Ife later came to the land, meet the aborigine people⁶ while in his observation concerning linguistics, Ademola Iyi-Eweka places the Edo language among the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo family he argues that the purported link to ancient Egypt as expressed above might be a mere coincident.⁷ Bradbury on his part holds that there are many villages in Benin Kingdom whose inhabitants have no tradition that their ancestors, came from elsewhere.⁸

The people of the community(ies) pay homage to etebite and eteghon in their domain, especially during festivals. There is contention that Benin is a conglomeration of villages.⁹ These ruler settled within the now Government Reserved Area behind the present palace, family movement brought the owere period before 600AD – 1170AD. They settled at Ivbiotot later moved to Ugbekun Quarters.¹⁰ This is well known during the Renaissance in Europe.¹¹ Benin is common nomenclature found in many of the earliest ethnographic and Historical literature on Africa.¹² Some relates that Benin migrated from the Nile Valley¹³ due to the Ogisos who ruled Benin kingdom from 900AD to 1200AD were conceived to be semi-divine as the Egyptian gods in term of authority, grandeur and revenue from subjects, the king adopted grand Osirian title of

the “Open-Eye”, signifying Omni-Science and Omni-Potent.¹⁴ Besides the hair-style of Benin chiefs is similar to that of Pharaoh II helmet, Benin Cosmological account is similar to that of Egypt¹⁵ Benin owns their land, do not force people to speak her language. The true Blue Blood was (Ekaladerhan) was sent for to ascent his father’s throne in the pre-colonial period, Tarihk Vol.511, 1974. The complexity of the administration and language oppressed Oranmiyan unlike the Yoruba language and position of administration of the Ooni. Some War prisoners have been brought in but they knows their position in Benin, not in it's origin.¹⁶

Benin influence stretches to Dahomey; in early 60s she rediscovered her ancestral link with Benin empire, president Kerekou had the name changed to “Republic of Benin”.¹⁷ Benin people migrate for safety, inter-marriage, prisoners of war/crime,¹⁸ sustained their tradition, religion, cultural, economic, trade, military, political, social institutions though unseen, customary customs, festivals, ceremonies and administrative institutions and activities, inspite of varying degree of intra-umest, civil and external wars. A well defined structure of administration likened to government establishments with hierarchy (not in wisdom or influence). The Oba administer the political, religion, economic and ceremonial affairs of the kingdom through the palace chiefs-Eghaevbo N’ore Eghaevbo N’ogbe, Enigie, Edionwere as village and community heads, and the family Okaegbee for the overall success of the daily affairs of the kingdom.

The kingship is by primogeniture, after performing the Ukomwen ceremony and other required rites.¹⁹ The Oba is both the spiritual and political head. His way of life and characters must be acceptable. The Oba is supreme, a semi-god and a driving personality (force) who himself summed up the whole of the race. To him divert the divine spirit passed onto him forebears.²⁰ The Oba’s power is supreme, extensive and elaborately felt on his subjects, the king’s court is extensive truth is the foundation upon which the palace is built. The Palace and the king are magnificent, a cheque architecture well located, it has move twice – Ugbekun in

about 1200AD to Usama during the reign of Oba Eweka and Oba Ewedo relocated it to the present location in 1255AD.²¹ The European who visited describes the palace in these words:

The king square is... it is as big as the town of Harlem enclosed by a remarkable wall, similar to the city wall. It is divided into many fine palaces, houses and rooms for courtiers and has beautiful long galleries as large as the exchange at Amsterdam, and yet bigger than others, all covered from top to bottom with cast copper, which depicts deeds of wars and battle scenes".²²

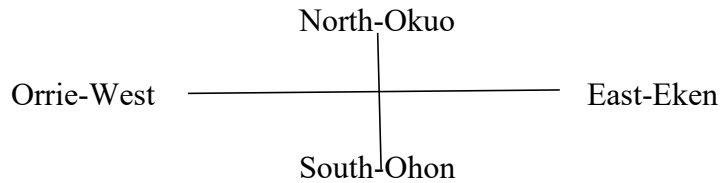
The Oba is held in high esteem, he is made king, while eulogizing him; it became a myth as such behave in a mysterious ways, idioms, proverbs and parables are used mostly for teaching and admonishing; they are of true events in the past against the future events. The Oba go on pilgrimage though it was banned by Oba Ewuare Ogidigan I. The Oba can give public lecture as did Oba Erediauwa of blessed memory. The Oba in council comprises of Uzama N'ihiron, Egharevbo N'ore, Eghaevbo N'ogbe chiefs.²³ During the reign of Oba Ewuare N'ogidigan I in about 1440AD, the palace was established to protect itself. There was an original owner Iken, a war general who was sent to crush a rebellion in Owo (ogho) Ekpoboyuwa was sent as guard by the Oba his father, his sister Adeleyo as a wife was in charge of Iken's harem but he did not return (died) from the war, another son Ezuware was sent to Iyowa as prince, the two sons also died. A decree was passed, people fled from the hardship, to prevent this a moat was dug round Benin which was the third moat by Oba Ewuare Ogidigan I, in mourning of his sons.²⁴ Adeleyo was called to become king after the death of the Oba but was sick on the way, till date women cannot be king in Benin.²⁵ The palace has court-jesters with their roles to comfort the Oba and entertained him, difficult issues are exposed by him to the Oba.²⁶

The Role Of Uko (Intermediary)

Possess no specific title, he nevertheless is an important person in the palace, any person who rises to this position becomes a royal messenger to the Oba. In this capacity, performs useful services acts as an intermediary between the Oba and the subjects, present the petitions,

made representations on their behalf as the duties of an Onotueyevbo, a term which literally means “He who salutes the Oba for the people.”²⁷

The Cardinal Signs



The council was constituted for the confirmation of chieftaincy titles, guilds trades, judgment of crucial matters, holding secret and private consultations with senior trusted chiefs in the form of Eguamaton – meeting held in the palace in which crucial policies were deliberated upon and decision (autimatum) taken, promulgation of new laws, conduct of war, fixing of dates for important festivals, new levies, taking of ritual measures to prevent epidemics²⁸ and preventive strategy of war from within and without the boundaries.

The first Ogiso was Obagodo who named the nation Igodomigodo land and people of the South; they were people who lived and represented by animals, plants and material objects matching their wit with trick star animals like tortoise whose fable are in every land in their story telling and folklore.²⁹

Ogiso Ere established the guild system a solid administration. Diaries of well learned noted differences in the casting of Benin and Ife Bronzes. Benin art itself is not of Ife origin, these are pieces in ancient times produced as part of services rendered to the Oba J.U. Egbarevba related that Oba Esigie made a crucifix in brass as a present to Portugues king in 1540AD others were later looted by the British in 1897.³⁰

Igbafe in his lecture, “The Lost Treasure of The Ancient Benin” during the exhibition organized for the Federal Department of Arts.

“The Guilds were association or occupational of craftsmen and professionals under whose aegis Benin artistic products were organised, developed, perfected and marketed under strict rules and royal patronage. The Associations of craftsmen supplied the Oba’s specific needs in return for monopoly rights from the Oba in their various trades, under the system, the various craftsmen in Benin encouraged to form associations on which were conferred the monopoly rights to produce, standardized, perfect and market as well as attended to the products.³¹

These are the reason the craft are still in existence till date. There are sixty-eight (68) guilds which are the industry of Benin. The throne was vacant after the death of Owodo. Ogiomien was nominated as king by his father Evian, two fraction pro-monarch and pro-Ogiomien resulted in civil war.³² The messengers or executioners confess to chief Oliha about Ekaladerhan/Izoduwa a search brought Oranmiyan³³ in the stead of Izoduwa (Oduduwa) and begat Oba Eweka whom the present dynasty started from.

A state of emergency saw Agbo Obaseki during the punitive war. After the death of Ovoranmwun, Aigubasimwin ascended the throne (1914AD-9933AD) as Eweka II. The misadministration reign of the second period also lasted 600 years with the reign of thirty-one rulers excluding five usurpers before Benin confrontation with the British adventurers. Ewuare the Great already change the name of Igodo (from Idu) to Ille-Ibinu. In (1440AD) to Edo in honour of Ogiefa’s servant who saved him from sudden death while he was prince Ogun.³⁴ He transformd th kingdom to an empire saw Ruy de Siqueira in 1472, and Afonso de Aviro in 1485 in Oba Ozolua and first year of Esigie reigns.³⁵ The Europeans were so impressed with the social, economic, political and cultural development in Benin that they compare the city to major European cities of that time.

“The town seems to be very great when you enter it, you go into a great broad street, not paved, which seems to be seven or eight times broader than the Warmoes street in Amsterdam.”³⁶

Chiefs who participats in local government³⁷ J.U. Egharevba wrote that during the reign of Ewuare 1, Eghaevbo N’ore consist of Iyase, Esogban and Osuma³⁸ nonhereditary. Eghaevbo

N'ogbe consist of three palace societies respectable, responsible to their duties of trust, protection, eyes and ears to the Oba and Harem, regalia keeper and sword bearers. Iwebo leader is Uwague in charge of Oba's private apartment a prestigious position. These three Otu duties is to uphold certain "political functions" drafting, training people for specific functions particularly government tasks; a convoluted system of hierarchy that provokes competition, maintaining the centralization of the Oba's power and state stability.³⁹ Edaiken ensures continuity of the monarchy through checks and balances which guards the reigning Oba and himself being prepared for hereditary created by Ewuare I, after institutionalizing primogeniture. There is the lower rank of the seventh member Uzama N'ihiron – part of "highest ranking", order (chieftaincy in Benin)⁴⁰ They "elder of state", appoints important positions due to their role in monarchical restoration of the Ogiso dynasty.⁴¹ Their powers diminished, their responsibility reduced to be official of Oba's coronation rather kingmakers, ensure the Oba power and supreme ruler initiating Benin into the "New-Age" with out altering the political structure. The chieftaincy collective power of checks and balances ensures the private "Ogbe" public "Orenokhua" sphere paving way for the military system initiating imperialistic campaigns for expansion and the Oba's reforms, ability exemplified his effectiveness in imperialism.⁴²

The hereditary reforms stopped power struggle of the Iyase (Edion) and Uzama, once more stabilizing the kingdom, forestalls invasion, emigration, illegal migration into the kingdom. Building of moats after the order of Oguola which counter-balanced the older systems; as the central head, the Oba utilized the military power to intergrate more territories into the kingdom, become an empire as it grows, the need to safeguard, pilot its affairs militarily, economically, politically, traditionally and overview culturally.

Village Administration

Villages started with families into communities with heads of families called Edion, wisest senior becomes Odionwere as a conglomeration of village with clusters of family

compound for fear of external aggressions and commerce⁴³ as political unit developed a structure of governance an Enogie (Duke) as ruler help by the Council of Elders as advicers in the fulfilment of his duties, the position is conferred by the Oba, hereditary villages with Enogie are Eben, Evbuesi, Iyekorhionmwon, Iyekikpoba, Ehor, Erua, Ute, Igieduma⁴⁴ the Edionwere, Eghele (youths) implements the rulings. The case of Dukedom, Enogie oversees the clusters of villages in his domain, the council of Elders has no absolute powers but through deliberations, consultations, arrives at a decision for the progress. Communal labour solidarity, resolution of disputes, deities worship, festivals and ceremonies, allocation of land, sharing at festival, organizing the different age (out) units, paying homage(s) and loyalty to the Oba and dissemination of information, rules and regulations of traditional and customary rules and others.⁴⁵ The Oba is the sovereign ruler, the pivot around which the socio-political system revolves. The Avbiogbe guild mapped out land/domain for the Duke, supervision of the public, town-crier, announced new laws, declaration of war and Treaties of Peace. They exercises the function of the modern ministries of information and lands respectively; accompany the new Enogie to his new appointment and the guild is headed by Okao Iyoboghae. The Oba make choice in conferring, dismisses and replaces.

The Oba prays daily for the subjects, all age prompt performs different functions

“... the Oba presided over state council... responsible for the day to day administration... the Oba could hold private consultation with some trusted senior chiefs... Eguamaton... daily meeting....every evening in which certain crucial executive and judicial matters were deliberated upon and decision taken”.⁴⁷

The name Ogiso was used to address the earliest rulers before the Obaship period.⁴⁸

The Age Grade System In Benin

There are seven different age-grade with different functions in the kingdom, child age is referred to in the family, community, society, ceremony(ies), festival, sharing and communal work, the group one starts with is his group for life. Initially recruitment in the group for six

years from age seven called Akina, Oyaighi ru Oba, the last will be forty-two year just every circle.⁴⁹ Emwin r'oba Evbo are asset without responsibility (duties) Eroghae grade is seven-fourteen years after public ceremony, the village council confers rights and duties citizenship on these teenagers, they are responsible to their village⁵⁰ for roads, shrine (ogua) and other public building maintenance; stays for twenty-one to thirty years, carrying of yams tubers to the royal palace. Eghele are from thirty to fifty years, they moved enmass after a public ceremony, Izeki (shedding of Ukoki) retirement after a yearly trek to the next grade. Their duties is to maintain security in defence or offence. Village and Oba's soldiers meet specialized community needs and in building, farming, hunting and trading, their promotion is not enmass. The Edion grade is by merit. The man is rated high in wisdom, character, life achievement (influence) to lift him. A son can meet his father in Eghele grade with some instructions and functions, outstanding work of Ighele can elevates him to Edionwere.⁵¹

The Odion performs Igue and Igbeken ceremony, led to the Edion supported by his relatives at the raised arm elbow and carnival will escort him home, he entertains them. Edions Age grade's are ruling class in Edo oversees the affairs of his village. In the case of Dukedom he serves under the Enogie with the authority from the Oba. Odion has executive, legislative and judiciary functions to some extent and spiritual powers. At his death his Ukhurhe will be laid down on the altar floor. Installation of new Odionwere sees the Ukhurhe in upright position in the pantheon, the method always been that the village has a new head. This is a routine the new Odionwere will also makes his own Ukhurhe sits in his position to the shrine. Installation is after three year of the death of the former. The later will perform the next ceremony and entertain guests.⁵² The spirit of the dead ancestors of the village will be propitiated with goat, palm-wine and the Ukhurhe.

Social Activities In Benin

There is a social activity to honour human personality(ies) and their deeds well articulated world view is evident in the administration, relation, activities, festivals, ceremonies and others as it unfolds. The Oba prays for the subjects and is reciprocated by honour and in respect to him. Culture and traditional rites were organised by the Edionwere, Ogisos, Obas who created the various guilds groups in their reign. The roles, relationship of the family, extended family Okaegbee in the community. The entire Edo co-existed as an entity. Every action or inaction is accepted for the Oba through delegated channels of authority.

The people of Benin are predominantly religious belief Osanobuwa their creator, originator of the universe, and the elements – fire, earth, air and waters are all worshipped. He demand respect and obedience as he predestined individuals life seeking his will and blessing in all things, place, time and situations. He is referred to as king living in splendor with wives, children and other deities. The first is the Oba of Benin, Ooni of Ife, Oba of Lagos and other and of Europeans in mythology; he chastised the iniquitous, fellowship with those who respects, honour and worship him in truth, fear and trembling, with, in collective worship. Through divinity as intermediaries, he is revered and adored.

Therefore, shrines features as consecrated place of worship, family and communal shrines abound in every homes, villages, communities and other places of the Oba's choice dedicated to different deities at the palace are considered to be the holiest places and essential care of the kingdom.⁵³ Just as the Oba (king) is spiritually and ritually responsible for the entire kingdom both at home and diaspora. According to Omorodion Uwaifo, some of these deities came about through the creation of the world, says the deities are of God in the healing of the sick, coronation of the Edo Monarch.⁵⁴ The sins of Emonse make the sky to recedes with its eternal food. Then humans consumes plants and animals there is payback time. "If earthling could not walk into heaven they had to find a way to get there".

Deities are numerous –

“The basic Christian understanding is that man is the icon, the image of God. We have seen it to be fundamental in origin and in Gregory of Nyssa, and it comes also in Dionysius. But now in Ruysbroeck, there is the further understanding that this image of God in man has its archetype in God. Each of us has an eternal archetype in God where we are one with God in our eternal archetype.”⁵⁵

Deities are what kills animals and humans sacrifices to, other deities are worshipped yearly, monthly, weekly or market days, other are Ukhurhe, Oravan, Ewuwu and Olokun⁵⁶ can be more approached than Osanobua⁵⁷ and Obiemwen. Ogiuwu was the second son of Osanobua, a terrifying god of death. A shrine dedicated to him once stood in the royal palace close to war shrine,⁵⁸ greatest messenger of his father⁵⁹ author of death and eats humans flesh and drinks his bloods. Its worship went into extinction with the coming of European administration.⁶⁰ Obiemwen, she was the only daughter of Osanobua considered to be wife of earth, deity of child birth. She bestows wealth and children.⁶¹

Ogun; is god of iron, very fierce, associated with accidents and injuries, worship with iron assorteries⁶² every male or family has an altar for its worship, its colour is red because of animal blood killed by it, ready for war anytime.⁶³ It is worship for protection and punish offenders with metallic objects in the material world.⁶⁴ Osun, protect through medicinal herbs, worship by professional medicine men herbalists; there is village Osun, its festival are held⁶⁵ some are traditional household where their Osun are kept,⁶⁶ use to bath before embarking on perilous undertakings to strengthen them for their tasks. Plants and their entire forms, rocks, sands, white-chalk, clay pots and other materials and animal sacrifices are used. Witches, wizards, native doctors (ritualists) priests, priestesses, herbalists control the magic⁶⁷ and their medicine and shrine represented by snake.

Esun is a deity said to be present in creation disobedient and extremely negative persons are created by Esu biblically said to be very crafty and knowledgeable⁶⁸ sacrificial messenger

who collaborates with Ogun to destroys, he controls all beings in the universe, lives, controls human minds becomes triumphant with forceful voice in persuading his advice(s). Esu is not the equivalent of western devil contrary to prejudice scholars; no devil in indigenous African religion and spirituality. Ovia is the deity of Ovia River, is the god of the land and fertility, worship by farmers all over Edo State. There is a day assigned to its worship called Edugie Ovia for all the villags.⁶⁹ Oronmila is a divination and wisdom deity. Concern with general well-being of the humans and foreseen the unforeseeable. It aids medicine practitioners, Esu, Osun and herbalists for information.

Sango is the deity of thunder, lightening, Uashes anytime and season, represents the ultimate male hot temper, strong lover; called several praise names by his worshippers, when he speaks the earth trembles. Red is it colour of worship to match it hot temperedness. Eziza is the whirlwind and medicine deity worship for purifying and protective God against epidemics and misfortunes of all kinds also uproots evil from the land. It colour is black. Ason is a deity of night-time, against all manipulations by witches, wizards and other worship against night sicknesses, diseases and other occurrences. It sacrifices are done at night.

Ancestral Veneration

In Benin ancestors is derived from those who passed on, with time those who will passed on. Everyone has ancestors both on maternal and paternal lineage. Benin has Erinwin-Idu, though co-exist with us and cannot be annihilated, communicated through visions, dreams, signs because of their extra powers. Ancestors are name with specific genealogical reference, objects of domestic worship in the immediate and nucleus family, are referred also to Edionikaro. Edion are living heads make prayer on all aspect of family life.⁷⁰ Sacrifices are made, the food and wine consumed before the effigy (Ukhure Edion) in the altars and shine.⁷¹ Ancestors continues in playing vital roles in the life of the living a bond which binds the society as a chain or web.⁷²

Ehi is a personal spirit, directs destiny from conception, a guardian who pilots one's affairs throughout one life span. It takes prayers to and blessings from God to one.

Uhunmwun is the deity of head, everything done for or against a person is done for the head, persons are christened because of the head; fortunes or misfortune is for Uhunoma or Uhunmwun Ibis/Atosi also productivity in all aspect,⁷³ hence passport is always need to match face (head) to name in transaction. Oba Ewuare Ogidigan I, (Prince Ogun) started head worship with python and leopard which would have killed him. Okao kill and skinned them, both skins are for the Oba, meats are shared⁷⁴ Oba for the date for himself, his family and the subjects every December (yearly).⁷⁵ Igwe festival, Ihogbe family constituent the paternal arm of the royal family developed the incantation they use. Ewere leaves hid and saved his life he later got married to a lady called Ewere. Igwe awakens the conscious self to the primacy of the human spirit and to the head that represents Osanobua, the immortal God, to thank the head for all done to it in the past and appease for the future. All subjects participates in Igwe festival.⁷⁵ Obo is the seat of power, respect, strength, in accomplishing tasks; to those in the guild trades the unique roles of Obo (hand) in human's body in relationship to material world.⁷⁶ Edo mystic like Oba knew that the hand completes the body that one could ignore experiences and fail to learn from them; one may focus on experiences and learn and direct life to a more positive goal.⁷⁷

Greeting – Function and Rite in Benin

They are different as occasion warrants greetings during the day are all centered on the Oba as social head of the Benin people. The pattern shows the lineage and their greeting where to enquire into the character of an individual and into dept of time. It is a hereditary one wille, servant, children greets in master salutation. There are numerous known morning salutation in the kingdom. Benin culture and ethnicity plays keep roles, sociable, hospitable, mindful in their assigned position, home of culture. Oral tradition of teaching – poems (Ekhara) different songs and dances⁸⁰ some of which are thousands of years old.⁸¹ Historical tales, stories of different

actual happenings, myths, proverbs, advice, folklores and idiomatic expressions are mostly used, are not impulsive sadly also have been picked up in Western civilization people forget their roots.⁸² The making of craftworks and artifacts are of paramount importance in all the festivals and ceremonies.

Before 1900, Portuguese visited Benin and Oba Esigie, his sons and some chiefs has been educated in their language, the Dutch, Italians and French nationals came from evangelism and trade, a crucifix was sent to the king of Portugal as gift. The British (English) came with their arrogance and jealous life style later. The people of Benin live in the tradition of their ancestors, providing physical survival through basic biological security, emotional and physical needs and filtering unity among themselves. The traditional cultural heritage cut across the era, dynasty and period of both dependent and independent Obas. The ancient practice is polygamy and monogamy and hereditary, primogeniture and family tree.⁸³ The villages is set up in same pattern of law and order through Edionwere, Enogie, Okaogbee, Otu and Oba in various activities of the year shared⁸⁴ maintain by the immediate family – Ora tradition of counting in figure, storytelling, initiations, festival, cooperation, competition, association, philosophy teaching, natural native act of medicine and prophesying professing protection, love and security which is reciprocated by his family, teaching the various methods and seasons of farming. Anyone seeking solace and fair hearing finds it with the Elders and Edionwere in the traditional council.⁸⁵

Economic Activities in Benin Before 1900

The people are hard working, the women are warrior-like and farmers, the populace engage in the guild system. They engage in cooperative and schedule method called Akugbe Oretin.⁸⁶ There are different guild about sixty-eight (68). The earliest were carpenters, builders, potters an medicine men,⁸⁷ they are the industries of Benin. The Oba guaranteed monopoly of trade⁸⁸ the artifacts were made for the Oba's palace.⁸⁹ Ogisio Igodo was granted supernatural fear, might be called mystical beings of the first dynasty with hereditary throne.⁹⁰ succeeded by his

son Ere who established the guild system in C. 900-980 or 16AD-66AD⁹¹ were addressed as “Sky God” asserting authority over the land.⁹² Their works are much of what the world knows of Benin. Members of the guild lives and works as a group creating notary which sustained the trades Benin still live the life of guild before and after the British punitive war and the roles of Izemeke (patriot).⁹³ During leisure, Benin propitiates the tools in Ihiekhu festival, they believes that tools have spirits. Propitiation is an ethos amongs them and it does not end with tools and the Ihiekhu.

Marriage in Benin

There is courtship before bride price (dowry). The father is the Okaegbee and his family, gives the bride away with blessings; she is accompanied to her husband’s house, guests are entertained, gifts presented. She adjusts to family life.⁹⁴ Child birth is celebrated in naming ceremony (Izomo) the child is endeared to the parents, siblings, extended family and friends of the parents. The name given mark his or her destiny for life with blessing⁹⁵ the father is the Okaegbee pray for long life and prosperity. He breaks and cut colanut, coconut and an antelope leg. The master of ceremony plead the yam be boiled, eaten or planted.⁹⁶

The Egbee means family, oldest form of human groupings, comprising of father (Odafen), mother (Iye, Amwen) and children (Emon). Discipline, administration, tradition, custom, culture acruer. This institution of Egbe n’okhua and N’ekhere is to enable economic, agriculture ora learning, regulates, enforce laws, territorial expansionists. Custodian of the guild system. Ancestors are patriarchal all action on important matters are decided while the matriarchal family plays supporting roles.⁹⁷ The family salutation is ancient.⁹⁸ The oldest male of the patriarchal family is the Okaegbee. However, no male who has not performed the final burial rites of his father (parents) and has not perform the Ukomwen ceremony after the final burial. His duties is to promotes cordial relationship between his family and others, the arrow-head to put his family above individual members no matter the status. Power or influence (Aimu Ada din egbee) above

your family.¹⁰⁰ He enforces laws moral values, assessors of the customs, carries out Igbolu ceremonies (laying of foundations) marrying out of daughters and sons bringing in wives, naming ceremonies, supervises the burial of those older than him, performs the ceremonial feeding of ancestors in Eno festivals, he possesses and maintains the family shrine (Oguedion).¹⁰¹

Elderly Okaegbee does not presides over the burial of younger family member, he delegates younger male the duties and he report back to him. The Benin as a matter of custom attends burials of younger relatives, it is a taboo. Okaegbee irorinwin position cannot be held by one whose father is dead and has not performed the final burial rites and Ukomwen ceremonies also when one father is alive. Unresolved issues are referred to the palace, the Oba gives final verdict. Eguae emwen see. The Oba has his family Okaegbee.¹⁰²

Burial Rites and Rituals in Benin Before 1900

The Benin people takes into cognisance all they do and say, their method of burial has never changed. All Okaegbee adhee to the rules and procedures except the case of burial of the Oba, chiefs and Ediomwere which are three months, fourteen days and seven days respectively. Oba's burial is where the human sacrifice where is needed, for the subjects only animal sacrifice is required. Benin calendar and market days are used; Ekioba, Ekiagbada, Eken and Ekenaka are all strickly observed in the programmes of festivals and ceremonies to avoid controversies. Burial are in two parts. The interment which is the actual burial of the corpse, while the final burial rites includes all the rituals.

Pre-colonial time no local government only trans "Iyeke" – Ikpoba, Ogba, Ovia, Orhionmwon, Uselu which refers to major rivers in Benin, but Uselu has swampy area (Arhioro) at the area where the Edaiken palace is today people fetches water there during the dry season. Wonderful sites and place of beauty is there too - the Edogun of Uselu palace, Iyoba's palace. People of Uselu are pride of these palaces in their district. They also has their own Okaegbee. Most importantly Uwughike Oba Y'edaiken. A Benin man is called Okpioba while the woman is

Okhuoba, children and Iyebioba regarded as Semi-Oba-palace (their home) servants are Ovioba. When one is loyal and pleases the Oba is regarded as Osioba. Abominable and disloyal servant are Oghionba.¹⁰³

If an Odafe is deceased his wife (wives) will be summoned by the Okaegbee n'okhua to know the cause of death,¹⁰⁴ if a chief the Edion were informed of the passing on of the Oba, the Oba's Okaegbee is informed, thereafter, the Ekhamwen, the Edion and general public. Through the town-criers burial commences immediately.¹⁰⁵ At the death of chieftaincy holder, the palace is notified and (Ukpon-Eguae) is given to the senior son as permission to proceed the first and final burial rites ceremony indicative of the dead chief's loyalty to the Oba and Edo, he was regarded as Osioba. Deceased person can be embalmed if the children or relative are far away especially the senior son in local way by pounded herbs and leaves (Umion) rubbed all over the corpse to have a firm touch and prevent stench for few days.¹⁰⁶ Method of preservation in pre-colonial period by S.P. Owie, he said that there are some method of preservation then, not for subjects.¹⁰⁷

The body is interred, the rites enable the deceased to join their ancestors who are believed to be spirits in the court of Osanobua (heaven) they intercede on behalf of the living thus burial is by special customary rites without which the body (spirit) will foam in the world of the spirits without links with ancestors long dead. Such situation is perilous to the family especially to the children. Then the Okaegbee fix the date. Children are responsible for carrying out the rites and rituals supervised by the Okaegbee both on the maternal and paternal sides and the elders of their extended family.¹⁰⁸

Home and Compound Burial

The children or deceased map out the burial grave site, the Eghele-Eobo digs the grave for the elderly deceased persons. The lying-in-state is because the body has become contaminated hence thorough bathing of the body with herbs,¹⁰⁹ after the children has "miame" provided the

bathing items/materials which are Uwawa (clay pot) Ihion (sponge) Ewe (goat)¹¹⁰ family prays on and wrapped up the body in Benin cloth (native cloth) mats are used. Some rituals are done with the goat. Burial is done during the night (Okpovbie).¹¹¹ The legally married wife (wives) are (wana) confined in a room, wore black throughout the mourning period men are not confined, women swear to the destiny of their husbands men do not. Ugho and cultural troupe will entertain guest. A member each from both paternal and maternal side prays for the dead to bring the rite to end.¹¹² The children prays by breaking of broom sticks piece by piece into the grave with every pronouncement and the lifting of earth into the grave. The Eghele-Eobo covers up the grave amidst tears and wailing and praying for the dead.¹¹³ Those who died in war and plague that are retrievable and irretrievable are given mass burial prayers generally by the grave sides mass grieving, praises are said about their gallant deeds, boldness and courage as other parts of the world like Atherians.¹¹⁴

There are different kinds of farewell greeting they are heard by the grave side when the corpse is lowered into the grave. It is called Uhimwen is to wish for smooth home sailing “Okhiarhiavbere and Erinwin n’uye Evbuevbu. The dead can also be admonished thus, ghede vbe oke Anubode, rhunwuda aghade vbe oke n’anubode, aiyemwen sowa.¹¹⁵ There are greeting normally said when sacrifices are being made to the corpse feet (Arue Erhinmwin Owe).¹¹⁶ Children are buried in the forest by father and relatives,¹¹⁷ death is meritable for all mortals but youth constitutes a more drawback to any community. When an infant/ youth dies, they are buried immediately, no ceremony for infant burial. If a youth or middle-aged person that is a patent death, low key ceremony is held, it is only those younger than him/her that attends and participates in such burial activities.¹¹⁸

Burial of Condemn Criminal

Anyone who is condemn as a result of heinous crime or killed by a deity would not be given a befitting burial but thrown into the evil-forest to serve as deterrent to other living being.¹¹⁹ The village he or she died, will search for the family, relatives or friends by sending messages to the surrounding villages for the corpse to be identified and retrieved the body for proper burial. No villagers takes law(s) into their hands in the matter of pauper's disposal.¹²⁰ At death the husband would inform her family of their daughter's death, the cause of the death is demanded, he would have to satisfactorily answer, that over, arrangement for the burial similar to that of Odafen's burial is programmed. The late wife/mother is burial in the compound of the husband or wherever he so directs.¹²¹

Burial of Princes/Princess

They are buried outside the Oba's palace, and a befitting burial rites and ritual and ceremonies are given to them as children of the king (Oba). After the interment Okaegbee and elders ask the eldest son/ children their preparedness if prospaning. The Okaegbee will be notified of the arranged date. Ordinary subjects has seven (7) days, the chiefs has fourteen (14) days and the Obas, it is three (3) months¹²² when children are ready, the rites will be explained to them. The Okaegbee n'okhua appoints overseer called Okaegbee Irhorinmwini who take charge. The family appoints Adan, a male or female in case of husband or wife's burial from among the family to assist the Okaegbee. The rites will begin.¹²³

A daughter who had children out of wedlock and still co-habiting with the man that day he will pay before participating in her parent final burial rites; also applies to foster children or ward(s) do not perform Isoton for the dead, and do not have inheritance in that family.¹²⁴ These who have not performed final burial for their parent are banned in other extended or immediate dead member final burials but be onlooker and the parent(s) properties will not be shared among the living children, but can only be used. Hence every child, coupled with the fact that its mandatory; strives to participates in final burial.¹²⁵ This is for all ancestors and the elders living,

who are older than the deceased do not attend the burial ceremonies. The rituals are as with all the burials in Edo, kolanut, drinks, goat (food) are required.¹²⁶ Is a symbolic lying-in-state ceremony of wake-keeping as the family all participates. There is entertainment, prayers, singing and dancing to Ugho, dance troupe lived throughout the ceremony. It is the duty of the deceased children to feed the family and guests.

Izakhue (Santification and Purification)

It is staged to inform neighbours of the death among them. Prayers are made at the door step (entrance) to the house for ordinary subjects, while a chief of the rank of Eghaevbo, a goat or cow is slaughtered and slices of coconut share among those present; thereafter the senior son leads the procession of able bodied family members, friends and neighbours in a dance (Ukpukpe). There is a mapped out traditional route in a town or village for this rite; chief burial dance will be Ema Edo, Emi Ighan and the Eldest uses Eben at the dance thereafter, the wake-keep. Next day is free from outdoor activities.¹²⁷ In burials, the services of Omunu (masters of ceremony) and that of rain-makers is employed, shades (stalls of woods or bamboos are pegged on the open space and are covered with palm fronds tops of each stall. Those buried in the cemetery are said to have gone with the crowd (Olele Usun rhie) cemeteries does not fill-up (iteh/ikpekepe evhuon).

Isoton

At burial it is done to honour the dead as a determinate to inheritance in Benin. All the children participates. It is kicked off by the senior son who makes a quick rushed part in the carnival to the end of his father street or road, rushed back to take his place among the elders and the Okaegbee who had taken seats to receive and reviews every troupe and ceremonial offerings they brings along. Who participates, the senior sons of other wives, married daughters, other sons and daughters; the eldest-grand-child. If they are all married will carry otton (carnival). The relatives takes part because of inheritance, but custom is not lowered, no matter who take part.¹²⁸

- One goat or a cow, if the deceased is a chief of the rank of Eghaevbo.
- Fourteen (14) coconut
- One keg of palm oil (about four literes).
- One native mat (ewa)
- One ow'uzo (smoked hind leg of an antelope)

Participants can give more, then troupes starts from different bases with their oton a colourfully decorated four-legged box with different ornaments and wrappers dancing in procession with family and well-wishers and out, moves to designated places (points); Benin City is to Emotan statue in the centre area; Uselu to the West, Oka to the East and Uzebu to the East of West. Villages also has their designated spot. Items handed over by other children are for the first son and the Okaegbee Irhorinwin, who makes his choice.¹²⁹ No inheritance for any child who had not performed Isoton. The Igiogbe where the father lives and was buried is never shared. The other properties can be shared. Ishans (Esan) in Edo has no Inheritance(s) for the other children (sons) or daughters) whether from same mother or other wives but they remarry their dead brother's (sibling) wives.¹³⁰

This is a wake-keeping ceremony by the family Oguega is consulted to find the most coved family by the deceased he/she is dressed like priest/priestess and sits in centre position will be on fast; no sleeping throughout the night, the family will minster, shower gifts, honour him/her to keep "arha" awake as the spirit do not sleep in order not to seen the spirit of the dead as "arha" is an embodiment of the deceased's spirit. Prayers, singing and dancing continues. There are evidences, if the deceased r'arha, asaninwoto will be seen around or feeding on the food sacrifices on the shrine/altar of Ukonnowen the son just erected and will be made the priest, the burials is declared successful. It take place same night or dawn of the Ikpowia, with the shooting of gun into the air at the chosen spot, the last shoot ends the burial ceremony. They

return to the compound to sprinkle water in the air and the drops on the participants symbolized ablution.

Ukonmwun

Is the altar set up by the son to propitiate the spirit of the deceased, he provides Ukhnerhe (effigy) of the deceased made and carry it about to visit relatives then set up as a shrine couple with those of his ancestors. If the first son inherits, provides a goat or any other items required to feast the ancestors. It is the final rites and rituals also confers on the son the full rite to inherits Igiogbe. The title and debts if any and the entire estate of the deceased subject to what he decides to give to his siblings. This delicious food is prepared by the daughter appointed by the elders and Okaegbee. It is pounded yam and melon (Egusi) soup and meat (fish) early in the morning of the final day.¹³¹

Inheritance and Succession

Most times follows hereditary pattern, the Benin person is usually buried in his/her home hence the Arhuerha/ Arhuiye can also be buried elsewhere as happens to all in Ogbe quarters in Benin City; only the Oba's body is buried in the soil of Ogbe; that is the custom.¹³² The Edo culture expects the Igiogbe to endure. It embodies the life of the founder and his people will bear his name forever. It is expected to be so, names therefore are given to children to remind them of the Igiogbe, Ogbeide, Ogenede, Omokpaogbe, Ogbelivi, Ogbewe and so on. The Edaikeri also propitiates the Ukonmwun, performing all traditional rites and rituals by the length of three months involves deeper meaning and depth. Thereafter the coronation ceremony – Benin operates strict hereditary/ succession system (primogeniture) by crown Prince Edaiken of Uselu.¹³³ The Oba crowns his son Prince to Edaiken position at Uselu n'evbuiyoba. The coronation to Oba is highly esteemed one, it last about ten days, with visit to important sites and shrines, performs some rites and rituals.

The procession(s) starts from his residence at Edaiken palace and ends at Urhokpota. He is publicly crowned by the king-maker, chief Oliha and the Isekhurhe (chief priest) prayers are offered for the well-being of the Oba. Prior to this time, he had visited Useh to acquire a name which he will be known and address world-wide, then ascends the throne of his fathers. The Oba's position entails spiritual, civil, social, economic, cultural, traditional, political, religious and military head of the Edo nation, kingdom and empire, a semi-devine (god) to the people and chief justice. The visits to shrines/altars were to prepared him for the throne and tasks ahead, to bring peace and prosperity, he is regarded as divine who summed up the whole race with divine spirit passed on to him from his ancestors.¹³⁴ The entire kingdom is inseparable.

CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the origin of Benin kingdom. The inter and intra relations and the roles of the other tribes in the empire who migrated during the different period of siblings and inheritance(s) struggles for the throne, during civil war, British punitive war(s), those banished by the Ogisos and Obas. The installation of Oba Eweka I period till date, different rules, administrative political structure of usurpers, Enigie, Edionwere, Age-grades and Okaegbee as traditional, political, social, economic, traditional, cultural keeper and deities worshipping for protection and security and general well-being of the people and their services and regards the guild system which enable the Oba's control (monopoly) of trade and industry in local and international sphere, the military might for overall security.

Then Christianity which ushered in evangelism and colonial rule before 1900 in the continent, has advantages and disadvantages (more). Furthermore, the immense roles of the immediate and extended family getting as custodians of the cultural heritage, the activities of the age-grade (groups) and their effects on the society. Moreso, the Benin people are predominantly farmers, concerning agricultural production and rearing of animals (husbandry), producers of hundred percent of all they consumed. The thick rain forest zone enable lumbering, hunting,

rearing of live-stocks; the trade organized into guilds enable perfection (homogeneity) and mass produce of goods and guaranteed services rendered. The rites and rituals of passage, from birth to marriage then to death, the issue of succession and inheritance. The Okaegbee n'okhua and Okaegbee n'ekhere as custodians of Benin heritage values; acting, as judges in their own capacity as semi-palace and Oba hence Okpioba, the roles of woman (Ikhuoba) as mother, wife and teacher cannot be overemphasized. Woman is the mother of the Obas, chiefs and everyone in the kingdom-subjects.

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CHAPTER THREE

COLONIAL RULE THE CHANGING NATURE OF BURIAL RITES IN BENIN

3.1 Colonial Rule in Benin

The chapter examines changes in burial rites during colonial rule, thereafter the emergence of Christianity; Catholic Missionary activities and the British imposition of cemetery burial for all and sundry-mean from the Oba to the subjects that died in that period were subjected to cemetery burial which is the first burial rites, closely monitored, colonialists said it was due to health hazards. It will expose military strategy and approaches of the British emmistry towards negotiation of the "one sided trade treaty" and the consequences of the 1897 punitive war on the people of Benin and land. It will look at the present burial rites of the 19th century as relative to final burial rites and rituals and the ceremonies involved the nature and kinds of customary inventory taking; inheritance, Ukomwen, altar propitiation, inheritances of properties and chieftaincy titles and succession. The communities builders – Oba, Enogie, Edionwere, Okaegbẹ, Odafen, families and children. The Oba as political, civil, spiritual, customary, traditional, cultural, physical head and the looming presence of the new faith.

There was existing cemetery (Iteḥ) on the ground at opposite Yanga fish market (Ogbe). The British took over the political civil institution/ administration of the daily affairs thereby ignoring the Oba who was later deported to Calabar out of jealousy of the Portuguese and other nationals before concerning Gele-gele sea-port at Ughoton which was hitherto leveled to the ground. In 1897 in the punitive war with the British Arsenal (weapons of Mass Destruction) (WMD) through the Royal Niger Troupe and the NEPD Troupe, carriers comprising of Hausa and Yoruba, Nana of Opobo was exiled to Gold Coast Ghana after the British destroyed his city Brohimi down. Thereafter the depotation of Oba Ovoranmwun N'Ogbaisi in 1914. The European imposed their culture, religion (Christianity) through the tool of evangelism, according to them

the stopping of obnoxious activities (human sacrifices) in Benin and environs as far to Calabar where “the killing of twin” was very rampant as a human ritual practices and the Yoruba ritual killings of pregnant women among others which is frowned at in Benin called Ogbozi gbeken, and the child hunters to their Ooni for rituals follow by the Hausas and Ibos of Nigeria. The Hausa Jihadists and terrorists on rampage. The British monarch Queen Elizabeth and her subject want to possess everything now in competition to the other Europeans by force.

Benin was already operating direct/indirect administration through the Oba as Head of Traditional Council, and Ekhaemwen, Enogie, Edionwere guild leaders, family heads Odafen/Okaegbẹ. In trades and industry, agriculture husbandry, Unorthodox medical partitioning, local courts, and native clinic system. Traditional Historians, different age-grade, Ekaegbẹ and their divers roles. There is local marriage institution, ante-natal and post-natal care, ceremonies and festive, progenitor, inheritance and coronation as a key and pin-code to ascension to the monarchical throne. There was also the method of dating for festivals and ceremonies. The Ukomwen the establishment of ancestral altar(s) in each lineage from forebears progenitor, precedent to inheritance.

It is worthy of note that Ague festival was the only reason for the punitive war of 1897. The strong point of the British to level the city of Gele-gele seaport of it inhabitants. Oba Ovoranmwan (crowned prince Idugboe) enjoined the emmistry to come for another appointment after the fsst but impatience got the better of them. One sided trade was not acceptable to the chiefs, six prominent chiefs were sent to bring the eministry but on the way back due to British disrespect, the chiefs revolted, which was normal as a strategy but it was on the behalf of the king. As Nigeria’s of the later century in fact 1960, got her independence and refused British interference in the affairs of Nigeria-lands, people, politically, economically and in it entirety. A stranger, dictator with a one-sided trade treaty! They had to take action, Great Benin versus

Great Britain, winner takes it all.¹ Captain Philip was impatient, jealous and greedy and collaborative; while Oba Ovoranwen was hospitable.

Oba Ovoranwen was deported to Calabar in 1897, later he refused to return to Benin, he died in 1914, his son Oba Eweka II brought his corpse back with peace. During this emergency period, Agho Obaseki who was formerly palace bouncer, made Iyase by Oba Ovoranwen was appointed the Administrator of Benin empire as Prime Minister who reigned six years when the colonial rule begins properly, after the British Monarch has annexed Benin under her protectorate. The governor refused the then Oba Ewaka II, 1914-1933AD; to take full rulership, they preferred Agho Obaseki, the Oba was just a "figure head". During this time, the altar in the palace where human sacrifices and other altars and shrines that takes animal sacrifices were destroyed to stop all "obnoxious" activities only in Benin.²

Christianity in Benin

Evangelism came to Benin at different stages in and with time. Before the colonial rule, was the Portuguese missionary enterprise in the fifteenth century in their quest to evangelize Africa. The faith was firmly established in Tunisia, Carthage and other North Africa cities but gradually waned away with the arrival of Islam.³ The Benin kingdom as at then was becoming an empire and was been known in the Western World gradually off her fame and monarchical government, sea-port and trade activities. Their second attempt was around 1485AD in the reign of Oba Ozolua 1481AD-1505AD.⁴ The Europeans as sea-farer, explorer of new horizons and sea-route searchers, in looking for sea-route to India has already heard of Benin empire and their interest/curiosity, adventurous nature.⁵ The missionaries and their tools of reaching the hearts of the people was evangelizing the Gospel of Christ subtly. The Portuguese are far more reliable, respectful, responsible and patient... than their British counterpart who are arrogant in their culture. The Portuguese believe and strategy was to convert the Oba as, recognized his high esteem position as civil, political, religious (spiritual), economic head, hence in converting him,

the chiefs, his household, and their servants. Thereafter the Oba will decree the subjects be converted to replace the original traditional culture. Indeed, during the reign of Oba Esigie in 1505AD-1550AD; he was Baptised, also the Princes, Chiefs and their servants. The European established a school and chapel at Ogbeluka where European language, religion and culture were taught.⁶ They also operated monarchical government where their laws are life or death. Their strategies of teaching their language with their religion had effects, but with a mixture of African culture of taking the favourable parts and subduing the irrelevance of the western cultures. The people has allegiance to the authority of the Obas as spiritual heads.

According to A. Ryder, in his book, Portuguese mission in West Africa has said “certain superficial resemblance between African and European political systems and other features, such as an official hierarchy which are inevitably present in all organized states, gave the Portuguese the impression that in political matters at least, they were on familiar ground. Chiefs were readily identified as kings, princes, dukes and other with powers and functions similar to those attaching to such ranks as in Europe. Hence these personages loomed very large in missionary calculations, which assumed with unquenchable optimism that once a ruler was worn over his people must follow. Variations in the nature of Africa ‘kingship’ and the numerous checks and balances to which it was subjected went largely unnoticed”.⁷

These political resemblances in political and religious organization created rivalry which the British monarch and her emmistry could not condole such from the black world (Africa) compled with the socio-economic realities the guild system, cultural practices and the great fear of obnoxious practices and activities of deities worship, the overall procedure of worshipping God Almighty as Supreme. The ancestral worship of Erhinmwini-Idu is a strong glue which bond the families together and the roles of the three Okaegbẹẹ regulates the different events here in the Oba also the secrete head of secrete palace cultic life. The European has cultic secrete societies too. The European missionaries failed to stop this for they were kept in the dark concerning these

cultic aspects by their Pope and Kings and others concerning their obnoxious practices in their churches and palaces. Their first strategy was effective, but not much catechism. The Benin heir apparent was educated in Lisbon for four years, he became Oba Orogbua. The teachings and preaching of the missionaries, probably due to inadequacy of man-power there was no follow up, home-visiting, amidst their activities were able to build four chapel though smaller than churches in Benin.⁸ The Oba ordered his people to help in the service of the building of the churches.

Piries gave his King's account of the activities of the Portugal missionaries, their patience made the Oba to gain their friendship..." when the missionaries arrive, the king of Benin was very delighted, they went to war with him and remained a whole year, the king could do nothing until the war was over, for the great "Mystery Peace" was needed. The month of August at year-end the king (Oba) ordered his son and two greatest noble men to become Christian and build a church in Benin.⁹

The Obas are known for their wisdom and tolerance, he listens and settles cases, with the missionaries he gained friendship instead of religion which he already practices in his local ways. The Eroghae were involved in the church building, some of the guilds assisted in different ways outside and inside as services. Some powerful chiefs persecuted the missionaries and the collaborators because of their influence in Benin.¹⁰ This among other reasons led to the failure of earliest Portuguese missionary priests, the Oba was more interested in the economic gain. Missionaries brought (guns) fire-arms. Therefore the Oba tolerated them due to the wars.

"It is hardly surprising that many rulers threatened by internal or external enemies; wishing to expand his territories, accepted the package deal: Missionaries and guns. Also, their relatives and envoys enjoyed trips to Portugal and Rome where they could gain a footing in the upper stratum of European-style education."¹¹

The problem of direct communication between the Benin and Portuguese language became a barrier and failure of Christianity. Another was, the Portuguese started the evangelism in the palace, also their failure to see that the native religion is a binding force in the kingdom from her

origin (Idu) this was condemn, even the language is said to be very hard to speak and understand? There also was no female missionaries among the priests to interact with the children and their mothers. It was indeed very strange whiteman's religion. Christianity has always been based on political ties hence the early collapse coupled with the incessant wars, Portugal wish for independence from Spain; poor organization and funding of mission by Portuguese government led to the mission fending for bear necessities enabling their involvement in trade activities in Benin to the neglect of the evangelism and crusades of enlightenment. They are also indulged in raiding of camps and villages to get slaves for sales during slavery era "slaves were sold out at the colonies they were captured... the more peaceful Indian succumbed to European diseases; small-pox, typhus, measles, influenza so alien to the plantation regiments that they did not make suitable slaves... Africa fishing people, pastoral and hunting people were too nomadic to enslave... some of the centralized states became too weak that large numbers of their citizens were captured as happened with the Yoruba in 1750. Infact these were the nations which made war on their more peaceful (defenceless), neighbours and sold them and the people who fell under their political, economic, military and cultural hegemony into bondage. Approximately ten million Africans were brought to the New World between the sixteenth, and the nineteenth century (excluding the dead).¹² This trade, missionaries engaged in slave trade with guns and gun powder. Subsequently there was conflicting interests with different groups in evangelism.¹³

According to Iyi-Eweka, on marriage in Benin; that the greatest influence of religious thought and practices of the mission traced to the earlier Portuguese (Aruosa church) Spanish, Roman Catholic missionaries and European traders who were very active in Benin religion, Wars and Political system between the 14th and 19th century.¹⁴ They could not penetrates the hinderland, they needed the services of African who understood the culture and traditions of the hinderlanders. The missionaries adopted strategy of buying slaves and setting them free to make them Christians,¹⁵ in Lokoja but they failed, such clashing of interest was the reason for thirty

years war between the catholic and protestant (Pentecostal) churches from 1608 to 1638 in Europe which saw the death of more people than the two world wars combined in history resulting in Westphalia Treaty (settlement).¹⁶ When a blackman preaches he does it with passion compare George Bantley preaching to that of the missionaries in J.W. Blassingame's slave community.

“On Lynn Creek Giles county, Tennessee, there is a Hardshell Baptist church, supported by a number of wealthy communicants of that “persuasion” who for several years pass have had their regular pastor a negroman, black as the ace of spades, named George – known as Bantley’s old George”, and belonging to the estate of one Matthew Bantley, deceased. George is said to be a most excellent man and a good preacher. Sometimes ago, he had a noted public discussion, lasting four days, with a white preacher, on subject of baptism, from which the white man is said to have come off (if any difference) “second-best”. The church wants to buy George, but he is unwilling to be sold out of his master’s family, and is without a regular southern pro-slavery parson. George is the “preacher in charge” of a large congregation, nearly all of whom are slave-holders, and who pay him a salary of \$600 to \$700 for his pastoral services.”¹⁷

After the Benin conquest, colonial rule was instituted. The former burial of dead in home and compound made compulsory cemetery burial.

3.2 Burials Rites Colonial Rule in benin

This period was a trying one in the lives of our ancestors. Death is the end of life. It comes in different ways, for the dead, it is the end of life and loss of everything, it frightens the living, no one is going to live here alive. Thereafter it causes debt, pain, loneliness and doubts to family and friends. Religious questions are asked and rituals are performed, yet traditional and cultural issues and the different method of disposal of corpse; whether Christian, pagan, humanist, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and others they have their rites and rituals to perform. The burial rites were allowed in the city centre proper, the human rituals were not witnessed by them. The (British) colonial masters made a decree against the usual “home and compound” burial, for “health and hazards reason” everyone who died be buried in the already local existing cemeteries irrespective

of rank and status mandatorily. Those in the interiors were still burying at home/ compounds because of distance to the centre and lack of interior cemetery. The law of not burying in Ogbe was broken. First cemetery was located in opposite Yanga market of today. The cemetery has since been built over.¹⁸ It was only after the restoration of the Monarchy in 1914 when there was once again an Oba in Benin that the occasional compound burial was grudgingly permitted.

“And the Oba of Benin had to acquiesce in it in writing to the authorities, this was a permission not lightly given by the palace because the Oba knew that compound burial offends the sensibility of the British medical officers of health in charge of Benin City at the time”.¹⁹

The other cemeteries are strategically located in Benin areas, the later first cemetery at Uzebu, the second at 2nd East Circular Road, while the there is located at New Benin, Benin City, envisaged as a given land space by the colonial masters like the pattern of British cemeteries in London-Britain but their Monarchs and nobles are not buried in cemeteries but in family vaults. The services of the Iteh/Ikpekpẹ are utilized by natives and non-natives till-date. It has been discussed in previous chapter colonial time it became low keyed because the institution of taxation and of levies, not to offend the administrators, the children of the deceased still informs family Okaẹgbẹ; inventory or counting of items and keeping them (movables), with him until final burial for sharing as inheritance by the children. Burial can be immediate (internment), embalmed locally or employ the services of the mortician and mortuary.²⁰

After the interment, the children of the deceased lead by the senior son would fixed date and inform the Okaẹgbẹ who would explain the rites to them if the children agree it will commence and the Okaẹgbẹ as the chief overseer will take charge. An Adan a male and female is appointed from among them (father and mother side) to assist the Okaẹgbẹ,²¹ the Eghesle digs the frame.²² The first son from each wife slaughters a goat which will be consumed by those

present while the leg and other juicy and sumptuous parts are exclusively reserved for “Okaegbẹẹ for his services, he will report with these items to Okaegbẹẹ n’okhua²³ thereafter, the final rituals will begin. Final burial rites can be immediate or postpone depending on the preparedness of the family or the first surviving son which include all the ritual activities and rites of passage which end with the “Ukomwen” family altar and propitiation of the Edion-egbẹẹ. The first son has the customary use to description in, at all times, during the ceremony if he, and the Okaegbẹẹ is honest to guide him, must always carry his siblings along as custom imposes all responsibility on the eldest son; he always consults with siblings.

According to Benin burial rites and custom produced in a publication issued by the Benin Traditional Council in 1996²⁴ these rites and rituals are the same with pre-colonial era. It has never changed. These are the Iwaorhinmwin (lying-in-state), Izakhue (purification/sanctification of the house), the Iseagbaen (Effigy of the dead carried to visit relations), Isoton (the precedent to inheritance and succession) the children dances with the Oton, decorated four legged box with mirrors, wrappers, scarfs and other onarments to the out skirts of the village to pay homage to the spirits, the Ugberhinmwin Ohanwen (fasting day usually on eken day), the Ikpowia is the last wake-keeping; Isuerhanfua (last gun shot) done between 4:00AM and 5:00AM of the next day. The final rites especially Isoton and Ekomwen determinant of inheritance in Benin land.²⁵

From the beginning there is procedure for burial without enmity or bitterness to avoid controversies. After the death has been announced the Odiongbeẹ n’okhua, Okaegbẹẹ Irorhinmwin, the Elders and the children takes inventory of the properties of the deceased person which is then kept by the Okaegbẹẹ for safety pending the completion of the final burial the immovable properties were counted and identified by all.²⁶ Thereafter, the properties are shared according to the formular of sharing prescribed by custom. The “Igiogbe” is not to be shared,²⁷ it belongs to the senior son. It is the house the father lived and died in. Other properties based on the inventory taken prior to the burial would be equitably shared for the children.²⁸ If the

deceased has more than one wife his property(ies) will be shared in block that is senior son from each wife (Urho/door) would stand and take for himself and his siblings. Later he will share the castle among themselves will making has been the tradition of Benin concerning the sharing of inheritance and property(ies).²⁹ and the place of position (succession) in society. The (old) man would call his, some members of his family and inform them that after his death such property(ies) should be given to such child³⁰ some person before their death called their children and shared their property, tells them where he hoped to be buried inside or outside the Igiogbe it done to prepare the children, and forestall negative future occurrence(s). This eases the work for the deceased family, Edion, Okaegbete n'okhua and n'ekhere – respectively; every child should respect their father's service of sharing.

The Death Of A Youth Or Elderly Persons

Humans develop as a person, later to father or mother and creates families which grows into communities, villages, towns, cities and eventually countries. The dead do not take away anything, they are left for the children or family. The young dead leaves little, siblings takes things over, if they were not memories too bad for the parents. In the case of youth without children. Benin custom will allow siblings to inherit what they had. If any of the parents survives the deceased, they see to the orderly inheritance of his or her property. But there are special circumstances when the custom allows the family to use its best judgments. In a normal circumstances, Benin custom frowns on the old inheriting the property of the young as they do not attends the burial of younger family members.³²

When parent(s) dies children has customary right of inheritance which always favours the eldest surviving son in the patriarchal culture of the Benin. When a mother or wife dies the properties are shared accordingly with age without discrimination as to gender. If she has a proven instruction from this should be respected and at best be silent. In the past women only have their akpeleku for cloths, beads, jewelry. These are shared as mentioned before between

children and daughters-in-law if fortunate to have them. If all are sons. Aunty can also have some shares. There is no change of burial rites and ritual custom once again wife (wives) are not allowed to inherit husband's property. The senior son who was had out of wedlock and the mother (kewu) cooked for the family while father was alive will inherit his father's property and if a chief his position and also becomes head of his new family after performing the final burial, Ukonmwun and others rites; he will always strives for peace because of the illegality of his birth while others are legal; he should be responsible and respectable to his calling.³³

If some of the deceased children are of a "new faith" Ukonmwun is not performed, if the deceased is also a Christian and had throw away his idols he will be burial in the Christian rituals. If he has not thrown away his idols he will be buried in the traditional custom. This has cause a lot of trouble, the Okaegbeṅ angrily left the venue until the issue is resolved.³⁴ The family always want to abandon the ritualistic aspect of the burial. The wives who has things to hide run to the church for sure, where pastors tells them that their sins are forgiven. God Almighty has way(s) of punishing such as they refused to confess to the family, that is the reason in the past a new bride sworn to the oath of her husband's family home "Igiogbe". Some say to prevent adultery or adulterous woman and other evil deeds. Benin men are polygamous like other tribes and clans in nature and culture. Some women still sworn to oaths.

As for the burial of Ogisos and the inheritance issues, Ogiwo Oriagba has succeeded the throne of his fathers under the gerontocratic system and he had come determined to bring stability to the Monarchy. A system that made a king out of a man counting days to his grave, a son takes over from his father will have man years reign in youthfulness and carryout meaningful works is primogeniture with tussle of siblings from the old system, it was backed up that the next-of-kin shall succeed him if no heir, Ogiwo Oriagba wanted also the Edion N'Isen to have hereditary positions which they later sworn to and utilized till today for all inheritances and all who inherits, inherits debts of their parents, but Edionwere and Enogie do not inherits the debts

of their predecessors privately incurred except on behalf of community will devise a way of pay-off.

The Edaiken is crowned prince by his father at his own appointed time. He will succeed his father (Oba) at death.³⁵ As Oṭo r'orhueor Osorhuwee burun, mean the Oba is dead. The coronation takes place in Benin from Uselu Edaiken palace residence of the Edayi n'Iken to different historical places and shrines for rites and events. To show this Eweka dynasty (Obaship) the Oba goes to Useh, Olor shrine (arhuolor) and plays akhue a very interesting local game and inherits a name he will be address, it can be from the names of his prodecessors which he will be called for life in his reign by all. He is crowned by chief Oliha and chief Isekhurhe-chief priest of Benin and present are other hereditary chiefs. The procession walks through designated areas at different days. Chief Isekhure offers prayers for the Oba's protection and well-being; also for the entire Edo for a peaceful reign as coronation ceremonies comes to an end at Urhokpota hall he ascends his father's throne witnessed by all publicly. A crowned king, he becomes the spiritual physical, civil head and political, cultural and economic head a divine person who summed up the race, he inherits the deities and worships them on behalf of the people and the land, he generally sees to the ceremonies and takes responsibility for them all.³⁶ What goes for the Head goes for the body. The Enogie and Edionwere are the spiritual and physical heads of their villages and Dukedoms also performs the rites and rituals and worships the deities, performs ceremonial roles in festivals and ceremonies, the Okaęgbę n'okhua and n'ekhere as family heads. The father Okaęgbę n'ekhere as his immediate family head and (Odafen) husband and father are semi-palace where community starts. The religions are adhered to which made Benin men, people to be called emotoṛ otherwise would be called Oriovbe or Egbon.

Benin tradition is a straight forward one, the people talks as those with king(s) to respect. Therefore burial rites and rituals in Benin do not change. Those in new faith has tried to muddled it up. There are those traditionalist/humanists who still adhered to the culture as custodians and

Ezemeken (patriots). What change is that some are looking at or trying to look for simple culture, easy to handle, because strangers are claiming Christianity in Benin people have reasons to reject traditional ways of burying their dead, before witches, murderers, assassins conspirator, lies and other evil people were not buried; they were thrown into the evil forest. Left for some Christians they would abandoned their dead (let the dead bury the dead), for others Jesus Christ practice Judaism and nomadic living.

Successful final burial bring “inheritance” and “succession” after the “Ukomwen” ceremony which is said to plunge the Benin people into idolatory proper. Properties are shared for children, the Igiogbe is not shared. Unless stated before death wife do not inherits husband’s properties. Ritual killing of animals are in all culture and in their burial rites and rituals ceremonies. Those who forget their cultural traditions of burial, buries anyhow or abandoned the corpse of the parent(s). The Christians themselves are confused. The Ishan people are very polygamous in nature, they marries their dead siblings wife (wives) refusal bring alienation of the woman to exile her or the children will be killed in succession with incurable diseases, “before the mother eyes”. It is ironic they do not share inheritance, but marries their brothers’ wives adding them to their collections. Therefore very Ishan or other tribes who agrees to this arrangement (custom) is an adultress. They are found in the churches/ mosque preaching to people, they called themselves widows. Ishan said they had same culture with the Ibos. In this culture brother kills brothers to marry his wife and inherits his properties.

In Benin divorce is renegotiated, allowed instead of adultery and bigamy and women can own property(ies) for their children to inherits. A daughter if an only child inherits her parents property(ies) but not succession as a chieftancy holder which is for a son/male debts are paid by inheritors. Ukpon eguae is given to the eldest son of the dead chief by the Oba, this shows that the chief was a loyalist who has served the Oba judiciously and he is Osioba not Oghionba (enemy). This is to encourage the son before the internment. The Benin cloth (Ukpon eguae) is

used to wrapped the deceased before been lower to the earth. The Oba can send (Ukọba) royal messenger to such ceremony, other chiefs and general public (Ovinọba) can attend the ceremonies. Some influential friends to the Oba (subjects) owe also buried with royal regards. There are many rites and rituals of animals. The humans rituals need not be conducted. The Egyptian pharaohs are buried with all his servants, wealth and throne. Benin traditional burial allows to deceased to have smooth passage home to his/her ancestors to intercedes for the living family members; as God helps us all. Amen!

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CHAPTER FOUR

NEW TRENDS AND DYNAMICS IN BURIAL RITES IN BENIN

4.1 New Trends in Burial rites

In the late 19th Century, burial rite in Benin has been strictly by traditional customary rites with procedures despite the presence of early Christian religion, and some native adherents of the Faith. From the mid of late 19th century saw little changes in the manner people responds to burial generally. Burial processes in Benin is in the same has not changed. Changes is in the manner death has death with people/families through its instruments of Wars, Terrorism, Accidents, Plagues, Pestilences, Viruses and Diseases and Sicknesses of the whiteman (European). These are small-pox, typhus, measles, influenza and syphilis¹ and the fake substandard drugs.

Christianity and all the rituals of service and burial rites and rituals, mostly thanksgiving which is equivalent to Benin Igue festival² and the praying and fasting which is Benin Ague.³ People think that everything local is idol, but the women are more romantic than the European women. Our life-styles has eaten deep into us and our lives deadly distractions⁴ natural and unnatural disasters⁵ and multi-tasking which have and is still destroying lives.⁶ The failures of the different government authority to close the gap(s) in the affairs of the society is another tool. Therefore, no matter how people resents death or have resentment concerning life/nature's issues, the world will keep on moving. The era saw the "New Trend" in burial for those who seeking change(s) in the manner mortuary/ interment/ first burial rites are services and the final burial rites procedure are traditionally, culturally, religiously conducted in their individual family and localization.

One should recall the way and manner the colonial administration frowned at "Home/compound" burial by instituting compulsory cemetery burial for all in Benin City in Nigeria, at independence. Home and compound burial returned alongside cemetery burial.

Human aggressions according to Russett et al in their book “World Politics” menu for choice, said all the forms of international interactions, war is the most studied; in a pioneering examination of the cause of war, Kenneth Walt located theoretical explanation at three different levels of analysis.⁷ All these are written down daily in the local and international registry of “Birth” and “Death” for references (ing) and studied. The method of collecting statistics and datas shows frequency in age, time, venue, period, causes, groups and others, to enable government plans budges for the future.⁸ Death announcement are daily occurrences over the studio/television stations, newspapers and magazines, internet/GSM and its applications. Sometime those abroad gets information before the local people due to the discovery of this internet/ ICT services worldwide.

In this 20th century, major changes begin to take place in the kingdom due largely to colonial influence of Christianity, trade/ commerce, education and religion interactions with foreign cultures people begin to imitate this cultures dressing, marriage (monogamy – one wife) intermarriage and the shopping of obnoxious practice – human and animal rites and rituals, also in the learning, writing and speaking of foreign languages – French, English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. Generally education which influenced the thought of the indigetious people and their culture.

4.2 Major New Trend in Burial Rites in Benin

The role of Oredo Local Government Council Authority Environmental Health Department concerning all forms/ kinds of burials in Benin.

- The new trend in cemetery/ interment burial
- The new trend in home/compound internment and burial in Benin.⁹

Innovation in Benin Mortuary/ Interment Rites

- Propitiation to the Edion egbee
- Coffin now in vogue (interment/ first burial)¹⁰
- Izakhue
- Isoton/The Emotan Statue
- Ikpowia
- Isuerhanfua¹¹

Burial Schedule/ Reductions¹²

- The Oba's burial
- Burial of Princes/ Princesses/ Dukes (Okoro/ Uvbi/ Enigie)
- Odionwere's burial
- The burial of chiefs (Ekhaemwen)
- Human sacrifice¹³

The Humanist/ Elaborate/ Prestige Burial¹⁴

- The event centres/ event planners
- The role of undertakers/ mourners
- The new role of Okaegbẹ Ir'orhinmwin¹⁵
- Enlightenment of the general public/ visitors¹⁶
- The issue of Bini cloth¹⁷
- The issue of Ukpon eguae¹⁸
- Benin Mortuary rites¹⁹
- The usefulness of Children²⁰
- Those in cult
- The living/ death ancestors desire²¹

Making of Replica (Akpa)²²

- The Ukhurhe/ Ukomwen²³
- The indication of a proper burial²⁴
- The issue of reincarnation²⁵
- Christian burial rites and rituals²⁶
- The method adopted by the traditionalists²⁷
- The making of Will²⁸

Architectural Design of Graves²⁹

- Memorializing the dead³⁰
- Hair-Do's
- Social clubs
- Colour of death
- Significant of food

In the light of these “New Trends” one will be tempted to conclude that – the Benin tradition, culture, religious rites and rituals and deity(ies) worship is dying or extincted; but it is not true. There is these bearest changes for some individuals who makes request, that is “Will” when alive. There are still families that are very strict when it comes to burial rites and rituals, the process must be adhered to, no monetizing of Isoton, every of the rites are performed especially the “Isoton”, Ukhurhe/ Ukomwen which determined the inheritance and succession in Benin Kingdom. There is no changes in the traditional custom culture of the people at home and in diaspora. The shortening of the day do not affects the rites/ rituals. Some family preferred Christian burial. Here is where the change can take place which they called monetizing. The people believes in the reincarnation. None is leaving this earth alive, others memories of us counts.

Explaining The New Dynamics In Burial Rites In Benin

In the ancient land of Idu, Igodomigodo, Ile Ubinu, Edo and Benin, burial rites and rituals of the ordinary subjects has not changed; also the traditional burial rites of the chiefs, nobles and the Obas. It is a dynamic culture, a superb religion handed over to the citizen in colourful ceremonies in the kingdom. Though dynamic is nature, some aspect can be changed or modified to suit the presented situation on the ground – family of the disease needs, distance finance which may give rise to the shortening of the stipulated days – not rites themselves.

Jobs location and age of children of the deceased also to be considered. There is no human sacrifice in interment/ first burial. Burial need not include human sacrifice like the civilization of Egypt. The customary burial rites and rituals are still present and observed by the people.

What has changed? The way and manner people attributes towards the modern civilization. Some celebrates their dead as if he/ she will arouse to life; everywhere, place and time in human nature we experience change(s), exhibits new way to modify the pass. Many people want their dead to live on forever, but God so design the earth that man should return to him. Death is always bad no matter the person, the circumstance involved; death before honour, this is bad.³¹ Death can occur to anyone everywhere, to any family for this reason, one have responsibility to them. The new dynamic has procedures. Everyone has duty to their dead either the person is good or evil, no matter the status in life. Therefore;

“Duty is not only familial, it is a sense of time and place; but mostly; it is a definition of self and our memory preserved in time, sights, sounds, smell and most of all feelings as vivid when one has life and is conscious”.³²

In the same vein, if one dies, one loose communication and that is when doctor certified that no longer breathing therefore is dead. Body language is a means of communication and reveals inner mind intents of an opponent or partner (illnesses and diseases). It has no voice but is a faster means of transmission of emotions if interpreted correctly by one concerned.³³

Everyone needs to be buried properly, to meet his/ her ancestors, even when the soul has gone. The people of Benin believes that such improper or no final burial, the soul lingers, obviously; when contagious disease kill the person family clamour for his/ her corpse for proper burial. People dies according to K.C. Copper, due to the absence of basic necessities (and also) in the Army (society), and among the aliens, War and civilian clinics are dear needs.³⁴ Due to the neglect of the promises of government, it is unnoticeable when there is plentiful but now when starvation and unemployment squats like swordsmen of the Apocalypse astride...(Nigeria).³⁵

Some New Dynamic in Burial Rites in Benin

The role of Oredo Local Government Council (Authority) Department of Environmental Health concerning all forms and kinds of burial and inspection of premises in Benin. The new dynamic in cemetery burial and interment. The Europeans meets this arrangement of Iteh/ Ikpekpẹ in existence. The people were utilizing it service. The reason the colonialists insisted on compulsory burial for all citizens was due to health/hygiene.³⁶ Every home has graves inside, outside (within, without), around the premises they were burial close to the homestead because of love, togetherness,... also to prevent the corpse been tempered with by animal if so far buried away. The colonialists were biased by instituting compulsory cemetery burial for all, even the chiefs, nobles and the Oba. Even for health reasons the European still have vault burial for their noble, kings and queens.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, burial procedure has changed for cemetery burial drastically with the institution of states and local government autonomy. Local government has to fund for itself and states by generating revenue(s). In the words of Osawaru G. on the compulsory burial, it takes processes, as it will be analysed below: A formal letter should be written to Oredo Local Government Chairman for permit through application stating: Date of Deceased, Age of Deceased (birth), starting with – we the family of the deceased... The Local Government Chairman then reply – request for medical or cause of death. If the deceased died at home,

affidavit is required for both home/ compound and cemetery burial. Death certificate to National Population Commission with payment of ₦20,000 (Twenty Thousand Naira) only into Oredo Local government account at Zenith Bank. The teller will be taken to the Cashier at Oredo Council office which will be converted to receipt; this is what the family will take to the Department of Environmental Burial Unit for onward processing after approval by the Chairman to the Council.³⁷ After the receipt and application have been sent and approval is granted, the Unit will go for inspection of the burial site. Today there is a private cemetery which is beside the public one at 1st East Circular call the first cemetery.

Since the origin of Idu home burial was the first option. They want their ancestors close to them, part of their existence and their future. Hence, the first son propitiate the “Ukomwen” altar and Ukhurhẹ Egbeẹ in Benin which has plunged still plunges the first son into idolatory (as said).³⁸ In the past, only elderly deceased persons of 85 (eight-five) years of age and above were buried at home/ compound.³⁹ It is only the family or the “Will” made by the deceased before his/ her demise on the exact site for the burial. But the mapping out of grave site now involve the permission of local government environmental unit for inspection after the same procedures as that of the cemetery afore mentioned has been made and approval is given by the chairman.⁴⁰ Moreso, later the age limits for home/compound burial reduced to (70) seventy years,⁴¹ but people especially land/ home and property owner preferred to be buried in their premises and landed properties without regards to age.

Inspection of Mapped Out Burial Site

The unit will go for inspection to the place appointed by the family if it is conducive for burial, approval will then be given for it to commence. If approval is not given, the burial permit will be withheld. The amount payable for home/ compound inspection is (₦10,000) Ten Thousand Naira only to the office of the (Health Officer) Environmental Unit.⁴² Moreso, the cemetery site is not inspected by the Environmental Health Officers due to the fact that it is their

domain. But that of cemetery fees in application to the Chairman which will later also be converted to receipt with the above process in Oredo Council is (₦10,000) Ten Thousand Naira only. The Office of Environment deal with general inspection of premises, _inclusive market, roads, school and so on.⁴³

The picking of unknown corpse along the way (pauper). Is it the work or jurisdiction of the Police Department or the communities in which the paupers died? The community where the death occurred report to the police and in the case of police report (if they are the one reporting the death) will bring police extracts. This is the work of Environmental Department, not the jurisdiction of the police. They are not aware of this hence the police is first notified.⁴⁴ In the past the villagers in the village/ community where the pauper died look for the relatives around the other communities. They do not bury pauper without their relatives or friends identifying them, it is a taboo till date.⁴⁵ Thereafter, the police extract brought, the Health workers and council will used their ambulance to convey the pauper to the cemetery and the council (labourer) will bury the pauper. Photographs are taken of the pauper before burial. In some causes, the family members can come after the missing of the person or announcement over the Radio/ Television of such occurrence, and they will be shown where the grave is. The most used cemetery is (3rd) third cemetery at New Benin. This occurs only when the family are searching. If they go to the police station, they will be directed to the Oredo Environmental Department Office at Urhokpota and they will pay the “burial fees” which is ordinary. The usual process of applying to the Local Government Council Chairman will not be applicable in this very kind of case (death).⁴⁶ Some family/ people abandons their ill relatives to roam especially if such died of insanity/ lunacy they becomes a pauper case for Local Government to bury, even when ill-certified, hence;

“Dr. D. Richards has said about great works of shaftesbury’s was the improve treatment of lunatics. As a lunacy commissioner for the greater part of his life, he was largely responsible for showing up the terrible conditions in both public and private asylums, and he constantly strove to abolish such inhumanities as changing up,

over-crowding of insanity quarters, and unjust certification. It was he who wage a ceaseless war against neglect and cruelty in every form, and no one did more to enforce the vital principle of public inspection or control”.⁴⁷

The cases of Paupers in Benin presently is very broad and rampant as like other parts of the country and the globe, which includes other arms of government to find causes and reduce such frequency which invites feelings of loss and sadness. Due to the eye saw, the empathy one have for fellow human and the major reason is the health hazard on the people and the environment.⁴⁸ Russ William in the “Hour of Death” has said that the reason for people buring their dead is because of the “Stench”. People (relatives) hold on to them for days after death as if the dead will not be put to rest.¹⁹ Death are certified so that people will not be buried alive and post-mortem.⁵⁰

In Benin majority of dead are buried at home or compound, as it’s increase today is due to the activities of the nuisances and the way the graves/ tombs are reused. For this people want their dead loved _ ones close to them. The Benin people say that (Iteh/ Ikpekepe) cemetery does not get full.

W. Russ has enlightened us as he said concerning Churchyard burial in England.

“ Village folks have been buried over and over again in the same little bits of churchyards. You have to throw somebody out to get somebody in – three or four sometimes. I always put all the bone back so that they lie tide-like just under the new parson. They are soon all one. The Parson said to me “How is it that you get so many in one grave”? And I always tell him I must have disturbed a plague pit. Arrsons will believe anything.⁵¹

For the Vault burial he said of Monarchs/ Nobles _ “I need to open a vault the other day and put a woman in; she joined six or seven others and I had to shove ‘em and say, “come you together now, make room for a little one”⁵² When the Colonialist made buried in cemetery compulsory for all in Benin, they were biased without respect to the Monarch and Nobles. In

most part of the world cemeteries fills up quickly, it was envisaged as open_ space and as pack to attract visit in the 19th century. It fills up because of the head_stones, monuments and other architectural infrastructures like buildings, landscape and others.⁵³ They will even put crazy pave on top of the graves so they don't have to pay me to chip the grass, and the price of it all.⁵⁴

Mass/ Unclaimed/ Unidentified Corpse

Over the years, they accumulates, the management of hospitals and mortuaries/ morgues, from two to three years will want to decongest for space for the next occupants. For this the University of Benin Teaching Hospital and Central Hospital in Benin City, put in request to the Environmental Department of Oredo Local Government Council and mass burial grave(s) is dug for their interment. After prior and duly notification of the general public in the Radio/ Television broadcast. This case, these deceased cannot be redug up for burial because it is a very tedious case. These exceptional case, the aged cannot have final burial rites perform, they are government property. Local Government Council Environmental Department has since 2018 not increase their revenues for burial unit and council.⁵⁵

Below fifty (50) years are not buried at home, from fifty years are buried at home/ compound. Application and requirement are made accordingly for them.⁵⁶ Measurement for graves does not matter but some said it is 6fts by 6ft. cemeteries measurement is more shallower. Now child are buried in cemeteries with paved graves, that mean permanent space bought with epithet at first cemetery in Benin.⁵⁷ Generally, anybody be it a child, chief, noble, president, citizens, military (commanders) personnel and so on can be buried in cemeteries all over the world, except Naval Officers that have Sea burial. No matter how we resent death or life/ nature issues the world will keeps on moving. Here are the words of Joseph Braddock in his novel.

“... Nature he knew, was implacable, caring nothing for the happiness or grief of the individual so long as her immutable processes continued, the flow and ebb of life, birth and love and death.”

Then he continue

“...but to die so young! But, perhaps after all death was the actual, most intense moment of truth, the crown of life that everybody was seeking.”⁵⁸

Are burials unapproved by the Oredo or any other Local Government councils in the Benin Kingdom or elsewhere by the chairman of council.⁵⁹ In the past, Iwarinmwini – which is the symbolic lying-in-state of the dead by the family. The children will provide all the requirements for the interment. The children and family will together clean or bath the deceased. After the children has miame that is provide the items – Uwawa (a clay pot), Ihion (sponge) and a goat.⁶⁰ If the burial site is a different place from the home, the deceased must be lied- in-state at his permanent residential private chamber before taken to the mapped burial site. Wake-keep, praying, singing and dancing to local Ugho or dance band hired. But now the Benin mortuary rites is changing for some, that is ,family who loss are now embalming their dead at the hospital. The rites of bathing the deceased by children and family member (nucleus) is no longer applicable for the dead. The Mortuary Attendants has taken over, they bath and dress-up the deceased who is taken to his resident for lying-in-state. Some are lucky their children will be made to use sponge to touch the fore-head of the deceased individually, while some deceased are taken straight to the cemetery.

This is done before the interment. It is done for the ancestors and the living elders who are older than the deceased. It is done in the shrine, they will not part-take in the burial ceremony due to seniority. Item require are: Kolanuts, a goat and drinks. According to Mr. Imade – as for the elders not eating the food used in burying juniors, note that not the Okaegbe but Edion egbe, senior(s) to the deceased can eat burial food here. The Edion egbe must meet and propitiate the ancestors before the interment and before the final burial also.⁶¹ Before now the Edo (Benin People used Ewa (native mat) for the burying of their dead, but the new innovation

or dynamic is the use of different coloured and designed coffin/ casket for burying their dead. But the rituals and rites must be done. The small Ewa are still used but under the corpse for the actual wrapping is done with the white cloth before the Ewa is used to wrap up the corpse before been interred.

Two times ten (2 x 10) yards of pure white china cotton material are needed. The corpse will be wrapped up and lowered into the grave with 10 yards while the other 10 yards will be taken by the Okaegbee Ir'orhinmwini. Cemetery burial also required the same procedure as home / compound burial. Some families still strictly requires Ewa for the burial of their dead. The goat used in Iwarhinmin is for giving birth it is called Ewe Ihion.⁶² Izakhue is the second final burial rites in the kingdom. It is usually done to inform the neighbours of the decease of the death among them with the senior son and family members and friends in a dance procession (Ukpukpe) to designated area. They start by prayers at the entrance of the house of the decease. There is a ritual performed with – a goat for ordinary citizens, for chiefs of the rank of Eghavbo, a cow will be slaughter and coconut sliced and served. Izakhue for a chief, Edo dance band called Ema Edo Emi Ighan – eldest son use Eben at the ceremony and they wake-keep the night.⁶³

These days some family only go to the Odionwere's and they call street land-lord/ land-ladies meetings to announce the coming of such burial instead of the children also acquainting with each household of such coming burial event. They now have meeting. Club members, church-members and associations. Isoton – this is the actual rites/ ritual which determines inheritance and succession in Edo land. It is done the second day after Izakhue – break. In the past the carnival begin with the first son, he plays a “rushed” part in the carnival to the end of the deceased street or designated spot. He return and sit with the elders and Okaegbe to receive/ review every troupe and their ceremonial offerings. Those who take part are the senior son of each wife where applicable, married daughters, oldest grand-children will take part in the

carnival of Oton. The daughter will hold “Abokpo” they will be mark with slauting vertical long marks from shoulder down with ankle – long wrapper from breast down, beads around neck, in ears, wrists, and Okukwu – beaded hair-do. Other extended family may want to take part. Family/ traditional process of sharing is not uttered. There is an exception now, the making of a “will” if the deceased's will include any member of his extended family, they will share property to them. This issue of “willing” will be discussed later.

There are items for this ritual:

- 1 goat or a cow if the deceased is a chief of the rank of Eghaevbo
- 14 coconuts
- 1 keg of palm oil (about four litres)
- 1 Ewa (a mat)
- 1 Ow ‘uzo (smoked hind leg of an antelope)

Oton is carnival, with it troupe as a carnival with singing and dancing to designated location in Benin/ Edo land. The items are shared by the eldest son, the Okaegbẹ Ir’orhinmwin and he shares some to the extended family. Also the children can give more or less of the items according to their financial capability.⁶⁴ In an interview with Mr. Ebengho R.O. concerning the New Dynamic in Burial in Benin kingdom, he said that the needful rites/ rituals/ ceremony must be performed in final ceremony and the first burial.

The final burial which are Izakhue, Isoton, Ikpowia – determinant of a successful burial rites, keeping arha awake and evidenced by asanmwoto (ants). While Isuerhafua –gun shot which ends the burial ceremony and the sprinkling of water which is ablution considering it physically and spiritual successful.⁶⁵ The home burial in the past was for very old people from 70 (seventy) years and above (even below) for some families and some youths. Continuing, he said that Oba Ewuare Ogidigan II, made it mandatory on 20th of October, 2016, on his

“coronation day speech” that Isoton-Oton troupe/ carnival should be taken to the house of a chief in the area, whether the deceased is older or junior to the chief. The new dynamic (innovation) is that the people now tends to carry Oton/ troupe carnival for men that are deceased to these designated places especially to the Emotan statue, while women are now only buried without the troupe/ carnival. Women have no much say in Benin land because they do not propitiate the Edion ẹgbẹ. It was made mandatory that the women should not propitiate the edion ẹgbẹ (goat rite) before burial.

That is also why it is mandatorily said by Oba Ewuare Ogidigan II that Edo language should be spoken to their children by all Binis at home and abroad and in schools to be compulsory in Edo land. The known and adapted burial schedule or customary procedure from the origin of Idu to the present day are: Fifteen (15) days of everyday activities, he said that he witnessed the burial of Oba Erediawa II and that it was very expensive and that “I have not seen a burial that is expensive, this is a new trend and dynamic, with the heir apparent on the march (marathon), race. During this time, every other burials in Benin are prospond; no matter who is involved.⁶⁶

Burial of the Princes, Princesses end Duke (Okoro/ Uvbi /Enigie)

They are Oba’s heir apparent, children – sons and daughters (Okoro and Uvbi) and they are also Oba’s siblings (brothers and sisters), (uncles and aunties) from past to present Obas. They are also Enigie (Dukes) that is the princes. Their burial ceremonies takes 14-21 (fourteen to twenty-one). Heir apparent do not die before they are crown Oba. The burial ceremony is from seven (7) days to fourteen (14) days depending on the family and village custom.

The Ekhaemwen are chiefs – they are differentiated by their ranks and functions – Palace chief Eghaevbo n’ogbe, and Egbhaevbo n’ore Uzama n’ihiron and other chieftaincy holders. Their burial are seven (7) days to fourteen (14) days depending on the family and title held.⁶⁷ There is no human sacrifice (ritual) in Benin burial rites. But there is animal rituals in burials and

deities worship. Human sacrifices are now abolished or extincted since the reign of Oba Esigie. It is dog that is now used due to the blood similarity. Every family that uses human blood now reverted to the use of dogs for their deity(ies) worship and rituals.⁶⁸ Any dog that enters the palace die mysteriously. Concerning human sacrifices, Mr. Imade V.E collaborates Mr. Ebengho that, it was not used during burial ceremonies, that it was used during deities worship. It has now been substituted with dog sacrifices.⁶⁹

In the past burial for ordinary subjects was seven (7) days. Iwarhinmwin, Izakhue are now reduced to three (3) days. The major chiefs burial are still fourteen (14) days. Concerning home burial he said was for the elderly or aged person that died in the past with the proper rites and rituals which has on individual family, but the rites and rituals of final burial are still unchangeable. Five goats are used altogether.⁷⁰ A father/ mother can also be buried in the home/compound of children. If a father makes a vow against a senior son, the family will revoke such by the senior son provision of a she goat which the family will slaughter.⁷¹

They believe that there is no after life (resurrection), and ancestral abode of the deceased. Therefore, they prepares elaborate and flamboyant final burial of their deceased parent(s). Some go to borrow money (fund) until their credit worthiness expires to entertain guests and family members, clubs because of personal pride and to show off their wealth; so that people will see and talk about him/ her/ them that they buried their deceased in lavish and grand-style. Thereafter, those who borrowed thinking guest will spray them with the highest currency denomination are disappointed and plunged into debt.⁷² The use of cow is also new dynamic in burials of ordinary citizens instead of the normal use of goats for the entertainment of guests.⁷³

Mr. Imade contribution is that, too much has gone into burial especially final burial rites people borrow money. Some cannot even pay back just to show off their wealth; it has become too competitive and elaborate. Money that would have been channeled into other viable or lucrative businesses or training of younger ones and less privileged in the family or society is

expended in final burial rites and rituals.⁷⁴ This venue is just for refreshment or entertainment of guests after the normal rites and rituals of burial ceremony has been observed.⁷⁵ Another contribution is that “the actual rites and rituals have been done, now is to entertain guests. This does not concern the rites. It is shifted to afternoon instead of the usual night entertainment. It is done so that the activities of the nuisances in the society can be curbed or minimized at social dance. Such as armed robbery, rape, fighting-to disturb/ destroy the gathering. He also said that: “The Oba said night burial should be returned to because it was a human being that died”.⁷⁶

The Local Government also banned the entertainment of guests for those who use the express road as event centres. It causes hold-up, traffic jam where the deceased home is on the express road or those who live in unmotorable areas brings their venues to the express for easy accessibility. Some event centres are too crammy – no car parks, open spaces like schools fields are preferable during dry seasons. Raining season needs for rain maker. Remote Rural areas still use the compound of the deceased as entertainment centres as of old. They are now the ones who announce the death of the deceased to the neighbourhood. From the morgue, their craft has take on another dimension or innovation. They now have uniform or the traditional (dress) cultural attire of the deceased as they bring the corpse from the morgue with their musical dance band. As the government banned procession on feet, motor cars and bikes displaying on the express causing traffic jam. Vehicles now conveys relatives and friends to the deceased home to easy traffic flow. They are paid now. They lift the coffin to the earth, decorate the coffin with wreath, also the grave with flowers.

In the past family member, and friends mourns their dead but of now there paid mourners of which some are theivies who loots the bereaved of valuables. The family members and friends cooks the entertainment food but some preferred the services of event planners due to the fact that relatives chart away most of the provided food items/ meat. The very present of

musician, DJs, clubs as there were also masters of ceremonies (MC) in the past. There were no giving of souvenirs.

The traditional role of the Okaegbee traditionally in burial is to oversee that the burial rites and rituals is done accordingly so that the dead will not worry or punish them and the children of the deceased. It is true, but there is exception now where some Okaegbẹ Ir'orhinmwin are now biased, they favour some children in property(ies) sharing than others. In the past also they are part of the children of the deceased; in the sense that they contribute to the burial ceremony-rites/ rituals in kinds and deed also in finance. In this modern day, some family Okaegbẹ Ir'orhinmwin have become taxers – they just look at the children and tell them to bring huge sums each for/ before they will release date to commence the burial without which the burial will linger.

Enlightenment of the General Public/ Visitors

The general public/ visitors to the Oba's Palace are enlightened about respect/ honour by its constituted authority for/ concerning forbidden areas. For there are areas still in the palace where men women (feet) are not allowed to tread upon. The women do not tread on a particular area. If so, within fifteen days of which menstrual flow starts she dies (whether she is in her menopause or not) all entails death penalty. The public is enlightened on this on the palace visits.⁷⁸ It was not used for burial or burying the dead in Benin.⁷⁹ Mr. Igbinovia expatiates on the Bini cloth (Isoyen) also that it was used as an occasional attire to event. It stands out in these occasions, which when the white men see it, it attracted the white men to trade on it. It was never used to wrap any deceased to the grave. He also reiterates Mr. Ebengho's on the aspects of the areas that should not be tread upon in the palace which is instant penalty of death. He also said that if you are in the palace and you intend to go to your home, you say "Ikhian se od'ogbe" and not "Ikhian se owa" this means you want to die. It is old practice. New trend is to enlighten the visitors (strangers)

to the palace. Bini language must be teach to children mostly in mix-marriage for easy expression in English language.⁸⁰

The people that Ukpon ẹguae is given to those who are more than seventy years of age male or female who died and the announcement of it has reached the palace. It is two way thing – the character and loyalty of his/ her son can be the reason for Ukpon ẹguae to be given to the decease family and if the son is a chief. The chiefs will also get the Ukpon ẹguae if he dies, because it is symbolic. Oghionba will not receive Ukpon ẹguae when he/ she dies as a chief or noble, because of bad/ evil deeds and disloyalty to the palace and Edo land. The children and Okaẹgbẹẹ duties is for the children to bury their dead parent(s). when an Edo man dies he expects to be buried well, mostly if he has a son (sons) or daughter(s). childlessness is a dreadful thing, moreso sonlessness.⁸¹ In the world, children are useful, the average Edo man has several reasons for having children. Concerning burial

“So that they may bury me well. the Edo believe that one who is not properly “burial” cannot enter the society of his dead kin and associated for his survival as a social being, he is dependent on the performance of the mortuary ritual by his children. Again and again at the climaxes of this rites, one hears the song “this is what we bear children for”. In a sense the funerary rituals is the most patent symbol of the parent – children relationship as it is ideally conceived in Edo culture”.⁸² Some children abandons their parent(s) for mass burial now.

They are household head and property holders for succession and inheritance culture and are in every one society or other involves the dead and the supreme deities, associated with human skill “hero” that provides the village group cults. Communicating with the dead, however, accounts for a high proportion of all rituals activities and every kind of social group forms a congregation for the worship of its dead in some form or other. There are in fact many kinds of deads, corresponding to a status category among the living.⁸³ The living make wishes before they died and after during the burial by his grave side the children also make wishes for him. This

process is called “Hi” or “Uhimwen”.⁸⁴ In Edo whereby the children/ family prays for the dead and also in the song:

“This is what I wanted
When I wandered about looking for a child,
This is what I wanted
When I suffered for the sake of a child
This is what I wanted
When I spent my money looking for a child
This is what I wanted
When I sold my clothes looking for a child
This is what I wanted when I said:
“My destiny, let it reach my hand.”⁸⁵

This wishes (“Hi” which the living makes in Africa and the world especially in Edo.

Making of Replica (Akpa)

This is during Iwarinmwin rite where the hairs around the forehead is parred the fingernail which are insetted into a lump chalk; earthen ware pot (Uwawa) and sponge (Ihion). The children sprinkles water on the corpse with the sponge on his/ her body while the family members younger than him do the actual bathing all over. The lump of nature chalk, earthen ware pot (uwawa) and sponge (ihon) is kept by the senior son until the funereal rites, when the assemblage serves as a substitute corpse (Akpa).⁸⁶

Is a staff representing the dead while ukomwen is the planting and installation of the Ukurhe in the altar or shine to represent the dead. The custom requires the eldest son carryout the ceremony of Ukomwen. He provide an ukhurhe and then a goat or other offering according to family practice. The goat is to feast both the deceased and ancestors long dead. The Okaegbee will lead the ceremony. If the deceased inherited his father’s shrine, his eldest son will add the

new Ukhurhe to the ones already them. This is the final rite and it confers on the eldest son the full right to inherit the Igiogbe.⁸⁷ If the deceased had a hereditary title from the Oba, the Ukomwen ceremony will confer on the eldest son, the right to inherit the title, debt (if any) and the entire estate of the deceased, subject to what he decides to give to others of his siblings. This is the very aspects that the Christina runs from, they say it plugs the Benin (sons) into idolatory. This Ukhurhes are amongs the looted carvings of which the British looted in the punitive War of 1897. Some of which are in their museums and some were used as fire wood which they used in roasting the stolen herds of live stocks.

Indication of Proper Burial

The children ask for blessings by reason of properly burying their parents:

“As your son has raised you to a high position so you should raise him to a high position. Gather his house around him... etc.” and the other children kneel and offers prayers for themselves and their family.

The senior son makes the Ukhurhe and his father become an ancestor and spirited elder and Odion.⁸⁸ The Benin people believes in reincarnation, that is why the living “Hi”, and the dead is “Hi” for. According to Gibran, “the prophet”, he said

“... A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me”. It was only yesterday we meet in a dream”.⁸⁹ R. William, ‘The Hour of Death’, the grave digger also wishes:

“... when you are dead you go into the earth like a grain... you might come back as a cat... I want to be cremated and my ashes thrown in the air, straight from the flames to the winds, and let that be that.⁹⁰ The deceased hoped to be reincarnated in one of his descendants.⁹¹

Christians Burial Rites and Rituals

The Christian do not believe in reincarnation, they believes in resurrection as adherent of the Christian Faith. They have service of song, lying-in-state with interment. And cemetery, churchyard, graveyard burial with rites and rituals (services) performed. They entertain guest. No

Ukurhe or Ukomwen either. The traditional rites and rituals be done before the Christian burial rites. This is why before the Christian burial rites and rituals in Edo land has not change. Some said they monetized the rites and rituals. That is the Isoton without the Okun carnival.⁹² New dynamic in the christen churchyard burial is that the churchyard burial are gradullay been converted to schools and messages sent to the family to come and exhume the corpses of their dead loved ones, some did while others have no need for such.⁹³ This is new innovation in Christendom burial.

In the past, before colonization and education culture; the Benin people, had their method of making will(s) concerning their property(ies) inheritances and succession. Some “Will” entail’s disclaimer of a child (son) as heir to their his/ her inheritance(s) and throne due to reasons disclosed or undisclosed to his Okaegbẹẹ/ Odionegbẹẹ; either due to old age or ill-health would call some members of his family and inform them that after his demise, this or that property be given to this child named, one after the other; and so be it.⁹⁴ Responsible, trustworthy Okaegbẹẹ/ should follow due process. Modern method of willing property, disclaiming, by writing a “will”. This is however subject to some factors:

- Is the will consistence with the traditions of the land?
- Was the testator in his right frame of mind which the will was drawn and are they honest?
- Was the will drawn and attested to by a competent authority? And so on.⁹⁵

When the will is not contested and everyone contented, so be it. If the deceased was a debtor, the inheritor pays the debt(s) and takes the credit(s). if a mother is wealthy or not, the female children or the wives of the sons shares the estate, if wealthy, the children shares on their own agreed terms; if their mother died intestate.⁹⁶ All depends on the honesty of the first son and the

cooperation of the other children, they may be from different fathers (step-children). Everything and all things is the device favour of god

Architectural Design of Grave

Most homes in Benin now you will see that different design of graves are now rampant some have statue of their decease on the site with allumacco glass-door, paved with tiles. Sometimes husband and wife. Sometimes as many as four graves in a compound proliferation of graves. This is done to immortalized the dead even in the cemetery(ies). This is why the cemetery fills up quickly all over the world. The state and local government of Edo (Benin) should deem it fit for the Benin nation to have a memorial day for those Ominigie warriors, who fights in may Wars and they danced into heaven, fighting gallantly and courageously in these Wars; including the 1897 British punitive war over the one-sided Trade Treaty. The British should rebuild the Gele-gele seaport as a reparation. Also a memorial day (holiday) in Benin for the Ogisos, the Obas and Chiefs who passed on, it is too ripe for it. The Binis needs it instituted.

Hair_Dos (Okuku)

The Hairdo in the past was the “Okuku”⁹⁷ beaded with real coral beads during burial (Isoton). They look elegant and queenly the daughters, and daughters-in-law and some female relatives. The female/ males wears beads on wrist and necks and are cleanly shaven. Female carry “abokpo” (a wooden short-length polished mantle). The females are marked with some colour mixture across from shoulder to shoulder. Dressed to complete the occasion in velvet wrapper worn floor-length with beaded ear-rings to complete the outfit. Presently, in Edo and particularly in Benin the bereaved wears this princess hairstyle and look like (Oloi, Iloi) Oba’s wives or daughters (Uvbi). Oba Ewuare Ogidigan 11 once stated about the female hairdo – whether all the women of Benin are princesses of the royal palace. What is different is the hairdo is the royal touch of the royal hair-dressers/makers with significance in the bead-work. Now it is

hardly differentiable. Hair-do for men (males) elderly bereaved male shave their hair. The youth also shave; but the new innovation in burial is to make all kind and types of hairdo to suit their status.

Social clubs has come to replace the primitive “Otu and Age-grades” particularly in the sense that each Age-grades are responsible for/ to each other till death.⁹⁸ Now there is also the presence of association at home and in the diaspora. Asuebi – This days uniform clothing is used by all friends and well-wishers who can buy it, in the past only the deceased family used Ukpou ẹgbẹẹ/ Asuebi. Universally black is used for elderly dead person, while the aged burial or mourning blue or black pattern on the wax material that the children and family wears. Black signified gloom and grief, represent mourning the dead. Most uses pure white to mourn, it signified purity for their dead depending on the age, marital status and caste. Death comes to its victims without notice, when it is time, it gives neither options of choice nor opportunity for negotiation. It is a perfect time keeper as it neither waste nor loss time.⁹⁹ Ogiuwu (death) snatches its victim(s) sometimes violently and suddenly in a manner it becomes a mystery.¹⁰⁰ these kind of food for the various rites and rituals and deity worship varies. Therefore in preparing this food extra-care is taken not to add forbidden ingredient/ item. When ema ẹgbẹẹ/ is to be prepared one of the deceased daughters are duly ask to prepared family food. Food also serves as, or signifies the success of the burial ceremony by the presence of and the actually eating of the food by asanmwonto (yellow ant that follow oil). Family member also carries food shared to their home.¹⁰¹ Some of the visitors brings gifts to the bereaved in the past. Now the pattern is for some of the bereaved families to give souvenirs, expensive ones like – pressing irons, microwaves, fridges and so on.

However, this chapter ’s topic is inexhaustible in this project work. Furthermore, the dynamics will keep on changing to suit the individual family needs. Moreso, the Benin traditional procedures will still take its due course, even when the burial days are shortened, the

rites are still not shortened. The traditions, culture, religion of the Benin is dynamic, supreme. The presence of Christianity cannot exterminate it. It is beautiful, colourful and wholesome. It distinguishes the Edo (Benin) from others. There need not be human rituals burial in burial rites and rituals. The Benin do dedications for their new borns, they value life of their children, grows old with their law abiding nature, hospitable to a fault, though not fools or imbeciles. Changes are in the entertainment aspect as new innovations in dress codes, events centres/ planner and other method of entertainment which are according to some the final touches. These are not part of the rites and rituals of the actual ceremony. Looking at also the method of grieving as new trend one notices the way people grieves – some has short-term, long-term while some dies grieving. Many resorts to drinking and doing drugs. This also leads to self destructs. Those grieving should be very patient with themselves. It can led to mental-health assistance and many others grief challenges, emotional, physical,¹⁰² financially, loneliness, insecurity... the reality is that the pain following the loss of a loved one can be intense but knowing this in advance may help recently bereaved ones to cope. Remember, too, not everyone experiences all grief's potential effects. Furthermore, there may be some comfort for bereaved ones in knowing that the intense feelings associated with grief are normal.¹⁰³

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The origin of Benin kingdom and its culture tradition, and norms and ceremonies is eche in time and place. The people were known as Idu as the land they live is Idu where they derived it. There was a great transformation which takes place, Idu was renamed Igodomigodo by Ogiso Igodo and the land was Igodomigodo. Then it change again to Ile-Ubinu during the reign of Oronmiyan know to all as Benin. The transformation was profound; in it there is little or no changes in the culture. Some Ogisos added some ceremonies and festival. Oba Ewuare N'Ogidigan I (as Prince Ogun) change the name of Benin to Edo by the singular act of chief Ogiefafa's servant, Edo who died saving the Prince Ogun with other helpers, especially Emotan (Emitan) ascended the throne of his fore-fathers as Oba Ewuare N'Ogidigan I.¹

Different transitional period in Benin from the period of Edionwere to the Ogisos' dynasty, there were the period of the interim of usurpers and the institution of obaship by Oranmiyan, Ekaladerhan's last born son. Obaship started with Oba Eweka 1.

The Benin people (Binis) have their own peculiar origin of Idu and there is different group make up of different language with different services performed for the Obas from North, East, West and South of Edo. The Benin people believes in only one God called Osanobua. Osanobuwa, Oghene-Osa as their creator and maker of all things; amidst the difference transformation stage and the intra and inter clan and succession wars (siblings tussles) which depopulated the nation.²

Benin is an organized society as well as structured community, have villages for easy dissemination of information and accessibility. The Oba/monarch who is held in high esteem, he is the central to everything that happens in the society; the people accords him respect and loyalty for being their ruler and leader. In the running of administration the Oba employs the services of the local chiefs as well as the Enogie, Edionwere, the family Okaegbee and leaders of

all the guilds systems, the “Otu” and “Age-Grade” in the various villages as semi-palace to uphold the cultural heritage of Benin.

The Benin people are religious, they believe in various deities and shrines which they worship. They engage in some economic activities, such as agriculture and trade, were engaged in farming as they produce all they consumed and also for the purpose of trade – cash crops, lumbering and hunting, rearing of life stock and animal husbandry amongst others due to the rich rain forest-zone; also known for its rich culture which attracted the Portuguese who felt they could explore Benin as traders and missionaries. They were impressed, studied the Benin political, religious, cultural and social system; appreciated it and sent it back to the king in their own country. Oba Esigie made a crucifix for the king of Portugal. They were the first to visit Benin in 1472 and 1484 respectively. Other Europeans like the Dutch, Italian and French, the British (Britain) was the last, they came with jealousy of the Portuguese and punitive mission, impatient to present their one-sided Trade Treaty which led to the British punitive War of 1897 and the depopulation of Benin centre and the (Adagbasa) Gele-Gele Sea Port, leveling it to the small village it is today with their Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD). They looted everything from the land and the palace and its treasury and every method of keeping history. They instituted the colonial rule system which excluded the Oba and brought in chief Obaseki to take charge of native administration. Cemetery burial was made mandatory for all citizens as against home/ compound burial, even for the Oba, Chiefs, warriors and Izemete.³ The established schools, medical centres/institutions through the missionaries where some royal personalities received baptism since Oba Esigie and all his cabinet members and his sons were also educated in missionary schools.

Ogiso Obagodo-Igodo was the first ruler of the kingdom who ruled single-handedly and was given a hereditary throne – process of progenitor where the first surviving male child of the king automatically emerged on the demise of his father the king, it also goes for hereditary high

cheftancy position and dukedom. The Benin people believes in life after death, polygamy was the organized marriage system, the organized family life (immediate) the father is the Okaegbee supervises his children's marriages and naming ceremonies while the (nucleus) extended family head is Odionegbee who supervises traditional activities and during the burial ceremonies of deceased persons in the family⁴ and acts as custodians of the cultural/ traditional/ religion/ social/ political and other ceremonies in the kingdom.

The missionaries brought Christian burial by/ through native adherents who has the right to bury their Christian parents, not non-Christian in the christian way/ rituals.⁵ The mission fail due to the fact that missionaries were interested in Economic gain than evangelizing, sold guns and gun-powder, the buying and selling (reselling) of slaves to Europe. Seeing these the acceptance was tedious to the people. Furthermore, the Benin were strict cults adherent and the preaching was to destroy the images and shrines by condemning their religion. Therefore, the Benin people disassociates with them and it became unbearable; scarcity of food, sicknesses and plagued by diseases end their mission. Moreover, they were not getting supplies as they need. But today, there is still little success.

The worships of different deities has significance and importance in the life of the people. The yearly Igue festival and ceremony they observes; the most prominent festival in the kingdom is the yearly Igue and Akaba in which Christians participates, but not in the fetish aspects. It is the propitiation of the head that has guilds, guards and directs our destinies. It was Oba Ewuare N'Ogidiga I, that institutionalized it because of incidences that happened to him as prince Ogun.⁶ The guild system in Benin kingdom is generally overseen by the leaders of each guild (Okao, Ikao) and the various Edionwere in the different communities and villages around the kingdom where trade in various Agricultural farming and crafts production and processes. Ogiso Ere and others before and after him and the Obas afterwards organized it since Idu. It is a social, economic industry and trade it bring political Alliances of the communities and villages as

economic “industry” and “trade”. The Oba has the sole monopoly in the kingdom, hence the British Emissary during the Benin Igue festival requested Oba Ovoranmwun N’Ogbaisi as Pince Idugbowa to sign the one sided trade treaty.⁷

The burial rites and rituals, succession and inheritances in Benin follows the customary traditional rites & rituals, first is the announcement of the passing on of the deceased. Then the interment (first burial) actual burying of the corpse/ body. Thereafter, the final burial rites and rituals ceremonies which determines succession and inheritance for all citizens through the Odionegbee who delegates an Okaegbee Ir’Orhinmwun to supervises such burial of his deceased family member. The various kinds of rites and rituals are propitiation to the Edion Egbee then the Iwa’orhinmwim cathering for the family gathered for the imment, Izakhue, Isoton, Ikpowia, Isuerhanfua, Ukonmwun which the senior son inherits along with the shrine and adds his own Ukhurhe (alter) to the ones there. The hereditary chieftaincy title holders pass this same process. The Omo N’Oba pass through this process before the ascension of the throne from Edaiken palace at Uselu, and inherits the crown, the deities and shrines his family adding his Ukhurhe (altar) to others in a colourful ceremony. The Ema egbee is prepared on the final day.

There are different days for the burial of the ordinary subjects, chiefs (Ekhaewen), the (enigies) Dukes, the (Edionwere) Elders and the (Oba) Kings. The other various kinds of death requires different forms of burial, for instance forbidden burial of a criminal, witches/ wizards, burial of a youth, a child and pauper cases. There is the function of the local government council and the environmental health council unit is of very immense help cubing sanitation/ health issues, the inspection of home and compound before first burial is conducted to ascertain premises worthiness otherwise it will be denied the applicant. Revenue(s) are collected for cemetery maintenance from burials. It is useful and also useless the cemetery burials dues to unattended nature and nuisance activities in the society.⁸

The New Trend of burial, of Christian and traditionalist (humanists) has various aspects of entertainment of guests after the main rites and rituals is observed. Where the children and family shows off their wealth for personal pride. The special place of the undertakers, mourners, gravediggers, the condolence visits and the note-book for visitors. The role of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The queenly/ princessly beaded hair-do (okuku) designs and accessories used in final burial by daughters and the other relatives. The New Trend in burial is actually on the area of the burial days that is shortened call now the Christian burial. The actually tradition is still followed no human burial in local burial rites/ rituals only animals sacrificed which the Christian also observed. Many do no longer propitiates the Ukomwen altar. The true traditionalist still insists. Only when the deceased is a christain will the family accept to exempt some rituals. Open spaces, event centre in the urban centres are used for entertainments to decongest traffic on the major express roads. The new dynamics in burial in Benin things succums to changes where people faith has gone from it. But in actual sense the burial procedures in Benin kingdom has not change. The new dynamics is that the Isoton carnival has been monetized by some, in some family, but the traditional chieftancy title holders still performs it to the Emotan shalve or any other designated point in each communities around Edo. Most people has also retuned to home/compound burials and some other dynamics are also mentioned.

The heritage value of cemeteries cannot be over emphasized, everything is there despite the presence of the nuisances in our society. The colour of death, significance of food, architectural outlook of the cemeteries. There are the activities (colourful) social clubs and association “Otu” and “age-grades” for life at home and in diaspora. These are still some of the changing pattern or “dynamic” of burial rites and rituals ceremony in (Edo) Benin. This pattern will keep on changing as a trend to suit the modern civilization. Final, mention should be made of Edo National Anthem; the holiday as recommendations. Human ritual is no longer involve in

traditionalists (chieftaincy) holders burial. If it ever existed, but in both Christian and traditional burials animals must be used.

National Anthem of Benin

Ewuare N'Ogidigan II N'Ogie N'igho	My sovereign king
Ovbi'ekenekene man do yo	Scion of the eternal light
Ogha de vb' umodia na renren o	O, you'll recognize him far away
Tu gha to gb'egie re	May he live and reign forever

In praise of the Oba

Ogie mwan de	Our king is coming
Oye vb'okankan digbo	He's as mighty Okankan
Erhan n'odiae	A straight tree
Na ya b'ow' Eguae	To build a Palace. ⁹

The Royal Emblem¹⁰

The emblem represents the longer Edo State. It can also be called logo.

“Ada and Eḅen”

“The sun and the moon”

They are celestial glory of the Oba and his kingdom's productivity.

Eḅen can be used by the chiefs on occasions special to the palace.

Ada is the staff of the office and the throne of the Oba. The Omuada/ Emuada carries it along with the Eḅen on occasions in the Royal Palace side by side of the throne while the Omo N'Oba Uku Akpolokpolo is enthroned in coronation and takes power. Politically, religiously, culturally, economically, socially, traditionally in the customary ways of festivals and ceremonies.

This shows the Royal regalia of power and authority of the Oba in his status as embodiment of government president of Benin traditional council presiding over all cases brought before his court in wisdom his judgment is final. The Iyase of Benin is the Prime Minister and head of

administration after the Oba, currently chief Sam Igbe. The chief Priest of Benin is Isekhunhe Idubo Nosakhare, by tradition is the keeper of the Oba's ancestral staff and recorder of his ancestry. The title was created by Oba Owedo about 1255 AD. The lineage remain unbroken

Royal Insignia¹²

A leopard rampant in between two Ada coral work and other treasure of counter flory of tresses work worn as a crown by the Oba. When the leopard rampant is looking at you he's called regardant, when he's lying down he called couchant; while he's walking is called passant. There are lion rampants (two) carved as arm-rest for the throne. One on either right and left side.

Coats of Arms

Are used by all titled, from Oba to the title chiefs by the families, titled heirs forever. With due registration and permission from appropriate authority in-charge of permit issuance.

Security Measrues¹³

Moat building, Oba Oguola was the one who started the building of moats, to prevent external aggression and illegal invasion, and commerce of Edo land in about 1280AD. Later Oba Ewuare in about 1440AD completed the building of these moats to forestall emigration of the citizens from the kingdom after his decree of unhealthy condition due to the death of his two sons, a tragedy.

Proposed national memorial holiday¹³. The Bini nation should have this holiday for all the bini's did Omingie warriors who fought gallantly deeds durng the (wars) British, punitive War of 1897 and others for fighting to heaven for boldness and courage. Patrioticsm also the Ogisos and the Benin Empire/Kingdom was never conquered Obas the Governor and those in Authority shudl note¹⁴

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Name	Age	Occupation	Place of interview	Date of interview
Owegie Maria	81years	Retire trader	Useh	4/4/2021
Akorogie, William	60years	Civic Servant	Ugbowo	21/9/2021
Iyoha, Helen	57years	Civic Servant	Uwelu	2/2/2021
Owegie, Charles	49years	Panel Beater	Iguadolo	4/4/2021
Ogierhiakhi, Benjamin	75years	Farmer	Avinugo, Edo	4/4/2021
Osawaru Gladys	56years	Civic servant	Benin City	5/9/2021
Imade E. Victor	55years	Civic servant	Ugbowo	11/11/2021
Nwaka, Jane	-	Lecturer	Uniben	2/2/2021
Ebengho O. Raymond	34years	Palace curator	Benin City	8/4/2021
Igbinovia, N Moses	56years	Palace Typist	Benin City	8/4/2021
Johnson, Nekpen J.	54years	Civic servant	Benin City	18/6/2021

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THE CHANGING PATTERN OF BURIALS AND BURIAL RITES IN BENIN

BY

JOHNSON NEKPENEKPEN JULIET

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**THESIS WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY AND SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
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FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
AND DIPLOMACY (M.A. I.S.D)**

DECEMBER, 2022

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis was carried out in the department of History and International Studies and Diplomacy, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

Dr. J. Nwaka
Supervisor
Date: _____

Head of Department

Date: _____

External Examiner

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family, Odihi J. Imadonmwiyi Owegie and others who ahs lost a dear one.

The family and lineage of the gallant, bold and courageous Benin War Lords and Generals.

Moreso, the monarchs Omo N'Oba n'Edo Uku Akpolokpole Oba of Benin Empire and Kingdom who fought in various capacity to protect the empire and her devine heritages.

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ABSTRACT

Burial rites is one of the major tradition religious rites in Benin, Nigeria and the world at large. The major religious rites is that of a farmer putting seeds/seedling in the ground. It's old as mankind. In the first place, burials and burial rites in Benin has three phases; foremost is that the Benin people have lined in the land of Uhe before they moved to this present place they were later called Idu and they have a deity spirit of all the Idu people called Erinmwin – Idu. Later Idu was renamed Ubini and later Igodomigodo by Ogiso Igodo first of all the Ogisos. There were burial rites and (cemetery) Ikpẹkpẹ or Iteh burial and homes and compound burials before 1900 century.

Thereafter, in the second phase the arrival of the colonial era and masters the use of the cemetery for all people irrespective of title, rank, grade was abolished in Benin land. Ikpekepe was favoured and many prominent chiefs are buried in these Ikpẹkpẹ. There are several Ikpẹkpẹ localized in Benin City. The third phase was the Era of the independence through to the first republic 1960 and 1963 respectively. The traditional Benin customs and rites are still being performed, and home and compound burials are most commonly use, the activities of the nuisances reduced the fervent for cemeteries. They both have advantages and disadvantages.

The roles of the local government and it environmental health and burial unit the difference ceremonies and rites for the dead, heritage values and burials across cultures in Africa and other; activities and events will be discussed. There is the Oba's palace, the chiefs' palaces the Odionwere (Edionwere) priests and Ekaegbe (family heads) who preserves these customary rites and the Benin traditional heritage and cultures. The Benin has duty to play by the preservation of their heritage.

Finally there is the inclusion of the burial rites and tradition by other religion culture in Benin there is the Holy Aruosa Church and the Benin traditional council. Thus, utilizing the primary and secondary sources as this examines the different burial rites for the kings, chiefs and other subjects and the choices they makes as contributions of the Benin traditional council to the social, cultural, economic and religion development of Benin and her people.