

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF
UDU 1999 - 2019**

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JANUARY, 2023

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

This is to certify that the project was carried out by **OJEVWE UGHELLI** of the Department of History and International studies, faculty of Arts, University of Benin under my supervision

MRS BRIDGET O. OMORUYI
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Date

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The relevance of women as positive contributors to the development of society has long been acknowledged. Over the last centuries, the contribution of women to economic and political development of society has been recognized in both academic and policy cycles. This growing recognition reflects the active participation of women in various aspects of growth and development of society both through formal and informal production in recent times¹. In pre-colonial times, women were a decisive factor in the

development of society in general. They were an integral part of society or ethnic groups they belonged to.

This period before the colonial rule characterized by a series of economic activities which included trade and commerce, agriculture, bead making and craft work. The Women were totally involved in the support and service of their citizens at that time and by so doing contributed immensely to the general development of the entire community or ethnic group at large². However, it can be argued that the involvement of women in the pre-colonial times actually accelerated the pace at which societies developed considering the fact that most African societies had little or no place at all in the decision making body for women as compared to their male counter parts.³ It is against this back drop that this inquiry intends to look into Udu women role in modern time, 1999-2019.

Women were very instrumental in the formation and evolution of African states and societies. Although no detailed attention has been given to the specific role they played in the reconstruction of African states and societies⁴, this study however is meant to reaffirm the place of women in the history of the reconstruction of African society, politically, economically, culturally and other wise, using Udu as a case study. Udu is a community in Delta State, it is headquarters of Udu local Government Area.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the role of women in the socio-economic development of Udu 1999 to 2019. Objectives of this study include:

1. To examine the historical origin of Udu people.
2. To examines the traditional practices in pre-colonial Udu.
3. To examine the migration history of Udu people.
4. To examine the social role of women in Udu, 1999-2019.
5. To examines the economic role of women Udu, 1999-2019.

Scope of the Study

This study covers the role of women in the socio-economic development of Udu. The study examines the role of women in the social and economic development of Udu. The study begins in 1999 and will terminate in 2019.

Methodology

In order to achieve a comprehensive study, a descriptive, historical method would be employed. This will give room for effectiveness and originality as much as possible. Historical research methodology is most appropriate in studying the history of a particular society. Historical research methodology has a documentary value of the local achievements and challenges faced by the people. In this study, both primary and secondary sources of history will be used.

Primary Source: This study will however depend largely on primary sources mainly because of its originality and lack of written documentation on the area and women. Oral interviews will be conducted with relevant individual to furnish us with useful information. It will also make use of the archival materials and intelligent reports.

Secondary Source: Secondary sources such as textbooks, articles in journals, higher dissertation and thesis, monograph will also be use to help complement the primary sources.

Literature Review

Two categories of literatures will be review here; the first deals on the geographical location, historical origin and migration of the people to their present location and the second deals on the women role in colonial period.

Edoje Okpokunu's article titled, "*Major Culture Areas of Nigeria*"⁶, identified and described some of the major characteristics of the major culture area of Nigeria. He divided the culture area of Nigeria into four regions, which are; the rain forest region, the Guinea Savanna Region and the Sudan Savanna as well as the Niger Delta region. The article identified Urhobo (which include Ovwian) to be located in Niger Delta region. The relevance of this article to our study lies in the identification of the area wherein Udu is located as well as the basic characteristic common to Udu and her neighbours in the period under consideration. The limitation of this article lies in its focus, which is on geography and cultural characteristic.

The book, "Identity Politics and Resource Control Conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta", edited by B. N. Christ Ogbogbo⁷ attempts a description of the geography of Niger Delta region. It noted that the term 'Niger Delta' indicates that it is a descriptive of a particular geographical area. The first word '*Niger*' was used to described the river covering about 4148km, which rises from Sierra Leone and cuts through today's republic

of Mali and Niger into Nigeria through the northwestern flank. At the center of Nigeria, where the Niger meets with the Benue River to form a confluence, the Niger River divided into series of water channel that cut-across a triangular area of about 70,000sq.km, out of this area, about 20,000km is wetland. This vast swampy wetland constitutes the 'Delta of the river Niger'. It stretches from Aboh (Delta State) in its Northern extremity to the mouth of the Benin River in West, Cross-River estuary to the East and to the South, the point below Akassa and Nun River estuary. For the purpose of administration and resources, the Nigeria's Niger Delta includes nine states: Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Abia and Ondo States, thus coterminous with all of Nigeria's oil producing states. Delta State where in Ughievwe is located was created out of the default Bendel state of Nigeria on August 27, 1991.

P. P. Ekeh's books, titled, *History of the Urhobo People of Niger Delta*⁸ examines the people of Urhobo (which also includes Ovwian). The book attempted a comprehensive study of various aspects of the history of the Urhobo people of Nigeria's Niger Delta. It begins with an examination of the prehistory of the region, with particular focus on the Urhobo and their close ethnic neighbour, the Isoko. The book then embarks on a close assessment of the advent of British imperialism in the Western Niger Delta. *The book* also probes the arrival and impact of Western Christian missions in Urhoboland. Urhobo history is notable for the sharp challenges that the Urhobo people have faced at various points of their difficult existence in the rainforest and deltaic geographical formation of Western Niger Delta. Their history of migrations and their segmentation

into twenty-two cultural units (which Ughievwe is one of them) were, in large part, efforts aimed at overcoming these challenges. The book also includes an evaluation of modern responses to challenges that confront the Urhobo people, following the onrush of a new era of European colonization and introduction of a new religion, Christianity, into their culture. The book also examines the Urhobo historical and cultural experience in modern times. These include the difficulties that have arisen from petroleum oil exploration in the Niger Delta in post-colonial Nigeria. The book is vital for this study as it enable us to known the origin of Udu, the culture of the people and the challenges in the period under review.

P. P. Ekeh in another work titled, “*On the Matter of Clans and Kingdoms in Urhobo History and Culture*”⁹, makes identification with the Urhobo abundantly clear. He noted that prehistoric Urhobo towns, namely Agbarha-Ame, Agbarha Otor, Agbarho, Agbon, Arhavwarien, Avwraka, Ephron, Evwreni, Eghwu, Idjerhe, Oghara, Ogor, Okere, Okparebe, Okpe, Olomu, Orogun, Ughelli, Ughievwe, Uvwie, and Uwherun – were well settled before the rise of significant historical epochs that defined the boundaries of medieval and modern Urhobo history. He presumed that Udu like the other twenty one subunits of Urhobo culture were in existence before the rise of Benin Empire in the 1440s and before the arrival of the Portuguese in the Western Niger Delta in the 1480s.

Similarly, P. P. Ekeh’s *Studies in Urhobo Culture*¹⁰, examines diverse perspectives on the culture of the Urhobo people of Nigeria’s Niger Delta. They include descriptive and analytical essays on naming traditions and practices of the Urhobo and their

traditional religious beliefs and values. An in-depth account is given of a nineteenth century monotheistic religious movement, called Igbe. Its doctrine was claims to have been divinely reveal to its founder, Ubiesha Etakpo of Uhwokori. This religious movement is examined in the context of hostile reactions from British colonial authorities to its explosive influences in Warri and Benin Provinces of colonial Nigeria. Other chapters of the book provide important insights into Urhobo traditions of marriage and artistic productions. A treatment of Urhobo traditional poetry and a selection of poems in English with Urhobo themes yield clues on intellectual aspects of Urhobo culture. Thoughtful comments on the nature of Urhobo language, including a revealing analysis of an esoteric sub-language of divination, strongly place Urhobo culture in the midst of Edoid complex of languages and cultures. The book further examines the geography of Urhoboland and agricultural practices of the Urhobo people yield a good understanding of the physical environment of the Urhobo and their tough tropical surroundings.

P. P. Ekeh, Onoawarie Edevbie and Peter Ishaka (eds) in a monograph titled, *Olomu, And Development of Urhoboland & Western Niger Delta: Ancient and Modern Versions*¹¹, examines the various ways in which Olomu has shaped Urhobo's culture and economy, in ancient and modern times. Because Olomu had carried the burden of a previous theory of the origin and migrations of the Urhobo people by the Reverend J. W. Hubbard in *The Sobo of the Urhobo Niger*. This study of Olomu's contributions to the development of Urhoboland and the Western Niger Delta also affords us an opportunity to examine important perspectives in the study of Urhobo origins in general and

Ughievwe in particular. The book examines Okpe in Urhobo culture, linking together Okpe Town in Olomu, Okpe Town and Clan in Isoko, and Okpe Clan in northern Urhobo.

P. P. Ekeh books are relevant to this study. Their relevance lies in tracing and identifying the period of the foundation of Udu and thus provides us with the insight into the origin of Udu, the nature of the socio-political organization and economic activities of Udu in pre-colonial time.

Felix Ejukonemu Oghi's "*Aspects of Ughievwe Culture of Western Delta of Nigeria and the Influence of Westernism*¹²", examines the culture and tradition of the people of Ughievwe and their source of identity, pride and dignity. This article also examines aspects of Ughievwe culture and points out areas of conflict with western culture and calls for the restoration of Ughievwe cultural pride. It also provides data for further academic research and suggests a way forward. This article discusses cultural aspects of Ughievwe people of Western Delta of Nigeria especially areas of marriage and healing practices in the pre-colonial times to show the extent to which the introduction of colonialism appears to have adulterated and exterminated them. It is therefore imperative that African and indeed, Nigerian culture needs to be preserved because it is the only link between the past, present and the future.

Also, Felix Ejukonemu Oghi's "*Cultural Resuscitation and Nation-Building: An Examination of Ughievwe Clan of Western Delta, Nigeria*" up to 1960¹³" examines the culture of the Ughievwe and posits that the pre-colonial period the people's past was intact and cohesive because of the importance attached to cultural values. However, the

introduction of the colonial rule in the nineteenth century and the sentimental attachment to western values seem to be eroding Nigerian cultural values even in the post-colonial period. He also examines the need for cultural resuscitation of the Nigeria Nation-state. It discusses aspects of the culture of Ughievwe clan of Western Delta, Nigeria during the first decades of the twentieth century especially marriages, healing practices, dances and burial rites of the people albeit stressing the influences that came to bear on them. It concludes that resuscitating the aforementioned aspects of the peoples' culture could help to promote nation-building.

On the social institutions of Ughievwe and neighbours, the article "The Ikenike, Ovenren and Gbogoniyán Dance of Ughievwe of Western Delta, Nigeria: A Historical Interrogation" by Felix Ejukonemu Oghi¹⁴ examined Ughievwe's Ikenike, Ovenren and Gbogoniyán dance as a way of refuting the fallacious Eurocentric perception. He noted that these dance groups were some important aspect of the people's culture that gave order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious modes of their organisation and as such distinguished them from their neighbours. African culture like other cultures of the world is dynamic, but this will not imply outright extinction or obliteration of the cultures. To worsen matters colonial historiography has tended to portray African culture as not worth studying. This perception has made many cultures in Africa including Nigeria, to pale into extinction. The article also provides information about Udu geographical setting, examined the concept of culture within the Nigerian context, the historical development of the Ikenike, Ovenren and Gbogoniyán Dance

groups of the Udu people, their organisation vis-à-vis the importance of dances as a vital element of culture.

Philomena E. Sodje's "*The Concept of Traditional Marriage among the Urhobo People of Delta State*¹⁵", examines history of the Urhobo people and how marriage is contracted in the land. She noted that the greatest threat to Urhobo social lives is negligence on the part of the stakeholders. For instance, if a woman whose bride price has not been paid is seen with pregnancy by the parents, such parents are supposed to do everything possible to ensure proper marriage of their daughter. The girl leaves the home to stay with the young man, without considering the implications. Both the tradition and Christian religion frown greatly at such attitude. Overtime, several changes have taken place in the way and manner in which the traditional marriage is contracted. These changes also have other challenges.

G. Hopkin's *Economic History of West Africa*¹⁶, gives an expansive coverage of the study of West Africa economic history. It is highly academic and gives not only a balance picture of West Africa economy but also, it attempted a realistic analysis of the structure, features and institutions of the economy. The literature gives descriptive analytical account of economic issues in a manner devoid of prejudice, bias and ignorance of the Europeans.

Also, R. O. Ekundare's book, *An Economic History of Nigeria*¹⁷, examines the participation of Nigerians in colonial economy. He also stresses on the fact that the various infrastructures such as roads, railways and harbours, which were built by the

British all over the country, were build for their interest. Nevertheless, the author also noted that by providing certain infrastructures such as roads and bridges, the colonial authorities meant well for Nigeria and Nigerians. Ekundare, believed that “the greatest contribution of colonial government was building of motorable roads which made possible the evacuation of their goods.

The “*Indigenous Gin Production in the Nineteenth Century Economy of Ughievwe Clan of Western Delta, Nigeria*” by Felix Ejukonemu Oghi¹⁸, attempted to fill the gap in our knowledge of economic relations and items of trade between Ughievwe and neighbours. The article examines the pre-colonial gin production in Ughievwe clan with a view to ascertain the appropriateness of the strand of the debate that contended, “the emergence of states in West Africa was the consequence of external influences. He also show how the introduction of foreign drinks (spirits) dampened the indigenous technological instincts of the Ughievwe people and consequently led to the decline of indigenous gin production which came to be regarded as “illicit”. He stated that like other parts of Africa, British colonial administration stifled the indigenous technological instincts of Nigerian peoples. Before the introduction of colonization to Africa, the people had their own ways of providing for their needs. The advent of colonialism disrupted this ingenuity. The colonial economies of most African states were structure to improve the economies of the colonizers.

Similarly, Ese Odokuma, “*Urhobo Wood Sculpture of the Niger Delta: Its Structure and Its Therapeutic Tendencies*¹⁹”, examines the structure of Urhobo Wood

Sculptures and its healing properties. With certain illnesses on the rise and still no known cures to some of them, this form of therapy offers a new dimension to global medicine. The solutions lie not only in numerous herbal and psychological attributes but also in the structure of these art works. Certain traditional codes as well as iconographic formations, which are engrave on these works, speak volumes on some healing processes. An acceptance of this form of treatment may raise the hopes of numerous persons at globalized levels. However, the article did not discuss the mode of exchange between the wood or sculpture makers and iron related equipment producer or fabrication.

The other categories of literature deal on the role of women in pre-colonial, colonial and economic history of Nigeria. J. I. Osagie, *Women in the Economy of Pre-Colonial Benin*²⁰. shows women's place in the socio-political and economic life of the early period. Osagie in his work attempt to examine the role of women in the economic life of pre-colonial Benin, hence, we see how the women of Etsako land participated actively in the economic life of their society. Many of them partook in farm work, especially during the planting, weeding and harvesting seasons. The book examines how women in the pre-colonial era played undisputed roles in the economy of their society. However, the work but did not specifically treat Udu women, hence the need for this study.

P.I Omoregie *Heroines in Precolonial Benin, Their Lives and Transformation*²¹, explains the various effort and impacts of Benin heroines such as Emotan, Queen Idia,

Ewere and Imaguero. The work examined the significant role these women played in the evolution and development of the kingdom.

Chapter Structure

This study, role of women in the socio-economic development of Udu 1999 to 2019 will be structured into five chapters.

Chapter One: Background to the Study

This chapter comprises of introduction to the study, the aim and objectives, the scope of the study, methodology, literature review and chapter structure.

Chapter Two: The Origin of Udu People

This specifically talks about the origin of Udu people, their economic and socio-cultural organization before the imposition of colonialism. The chapter also examines the socio-political and economic role of women in pre-colonial Udu.

Chapter Three: The Role of Udu Women in the Social Development of Udu

This chapter examines the role of Udu women in the social development of Udu.

Chapter Four: The Role of Udu Women in the Economic Development of Udu

This chapter examine the Udu women and their role in the economic development of Udu.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The conclusion of the entire work

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CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGIN OF UDU PEOPLE

Introduction

Human is different from animal. Humans have the ability to create and imagine what his environment should look like. This ability distinguish human from animal. Thus, in every human community, primitive or civilized, we can observe a social organization, economic patterns, a coherent body of social norms, ideas, integrated unity or system in which each elements has a defined function in relation to the whole. This chapter will

examine the geography and environment of Udu, traditions of origin of Udu. The chapter also examines the activities and socio-political organisation of Udu in pre-colonial times.

Geography and Climate of Udu

Udu is one of the Urhobo aborigines' communities that constitute the present Delta State of Nigeria. The clan is one of the twenty-two clans in the Urhobo area of the Niger-Delta, Nigeria.¹The vegetation of Udu area is a rainforest with swamp forest occurring in flat-flooded valley and bordering low lying area that are seasonally or permanently saturated.³ Like other part of Urhobo land (such as Agbassa (Agbara-Ame),Agbara-Otor, Agbarho, Agbon, Arhavwarien, Avwraka, Ephron-Otor, Eghwu, Evwreni, Idjerhe, Oghara, Ogor, Okere,Okparabe, Okpe etc), the soil is predominantly dirty⁴, hence, following heavy rainfall in the area, the soils are intensely leach. There are however, patches of clay soil derive from shale.⁵ Udu environment have timbers with raffia palm and rivulets.

The Udu people cultivate extensive cocoa, oil palm and rubber plantations with numerous farms plantation where cassava, yam, plantain/banana, pepper, etc, were grown without fertilizers. So luxuriant was the tropical rain forest vegetation around the area that one may find it almost impossible to see someone from distance on cloudy day. Trees such as Abura, Mahogany, Mansonia, Opepe, are common species in the area. Udu's forest has a high biodiversity of insects, reptiles, birds and mammals, many of which are today endangered and are of conservation interest. Udu has stream of the Forcados River.⁶

Some of the inhabitants are fishermen whose means of livelihood is fishery. Over 100 species of fish but particularly *Okaka* or the Bonga fish (*Ethmalosa Timbriata*), crayfishes or *Iku*, in Urhobo language, (*Cardina* species), bivalves/ clams known by our people as *Kpeku* (*Egeriaparadoxa*) and periwinkles or *Imekpe* (*Pachymelania fuscatus*), existed in these river. In Booming markets sprang up on the banks of the river where catches of various types of fishes, dry and fresh, are either traded or simply bartered for other farm produce – garri, starch and tapioca. In pre-colonial time, fresh fish was plentiful hence, every family could afford its protein needs. Cost of living was extremely low, people were healthy and life expectancy was long.⁷

Traditions of Origin of Udu

There are several traditions of origins of Udu, they are the hamitic hypothesis, Niger/Benue confluence hypothesis and Benin-Ogobiri connection.

Hamitic Hypothesis

The theory has it that everything of significance that took place in Africa South of the sahara was brought about the Hermites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian (white) race. This theory was formulated by C. G. Seligman (1930).⁸ Subsequently, the Hamitic hypothesis now involved a collective of writers who subsumed the civilization of the black race as especially seen in Africa to outsiders or a certain dominant people outside the Africa continent. These writers knowingly and unknowingly denied African ability to develop sophisticated culture and conquered their environment. They credited anything

of civilization in Africa to European race. Some of these writers have therefore considered Africans as low and irrelevant even in terms of academic studies. According to Hughes Trevor-Roper, who in the 1960s was asked by his student at Oxford University about the possibility of teaching Africa history, his reply was, “what happen in Africa are the activities of Europeans. The rest is darkness and darkness is not subject matter of history”.⁹ The image portrayed by some of the Hamitic hypothesis theorists were properly summed up by C. G. Seligman book, titled, the *Races of Africa*. According to him:

Apart from the relatively late Semitics influence, the civilization of Africa are the civilization of the Hamits, its history the records of these people and of their interaction with the two other Africa stocks, the negroes and the Bushman, whether this influence was exerted by highly civilized Egyptians or by such wider pastoralist as are represented at the present day by the Beja and Somali. The incoming Hamites were pastoral European – arriving wave after waves – better armed as well as quicker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes.¹⁰

Udu is part of Africa and the black race. Therefore, the Hamitic hypothesis also influences Udu history. One tradition of origin of Udu claimed that the people migrated from the East. The tradition states that; a long time ago, Udu and his followers came from the East (Egypt to be precise) along with the Binis, Ijos, Itsekiris, Hausas, Ga and the Yorubas.¹¹ The tradition claims that the Udu people were part of the Urhobo that lived in Egypt before they (the Urhobo) were evicted by the Arabs, Greeks and Romans. They were said to have dominated as leaders in the delta of Egypt where the people (then

called the - Akka people comprising the ethnic group listed above) once lived. During this period, enemies and friends were made. Indeed, this version claimed that an Itsekiri-Greek king once rebelled thereby changing the name of the Amon City to Akhetaten. He was said to have banished the gods: Re/God of Urhobo, Osiris (Oziri in Tjo, Ausar in Hausa, Aesar in Uvwie-Urhobo).¹²

The Niger/Benue Confluence Hypothesis

Niger-Benue confluence version was introduced by writers after the unearthing of Nok Terracotta connected with the area. This is another version that tries to explain the tradition of origin of the people of Udu. Some Udu people have since made up their story to identify with the tradition. The attribution of the Udu origins to the Niger/Benue confluence seems to have been base on linguistic affiliation. There is the view that groups of people might speak the same language at one period; but with the passage of time and their drifting apart, they might lose contact with each other, develop different dialects of the same language and finally acquire different languages. The Udu dialect belong to the Edo speaking group of language and which also invariably belongs to Kwa family group of languages.¹³

It is claim that all speakers of Kwa group of languages family such as the Udu must have lived initially in the Niger/Benue confluence area, from where they dispersed to their present locations all over this part of West Africa. The antiquity of yam cultivation, which the Udu people call “Ole”, has been used to support the argument for the migration of the Udu people from the Niger/Benue Confluence area.¹⁴

The Niger-Benue confluence tradition is unscientific and lack merit. Yam cannot be use as a element in tracing actual destination Udu migration to their current abode. It is doubtful given the fact that the Udu area is not known for yam cultivation. Yam does not thrive well in the rain forest because they need sufficient sunlight.¹⁵ One may assume that, yam may have reached Udu people through inter-group relations with other Nigerian groups. Besides, there are no detailed studies and archaeological evidence on Udu or Urhobo that link them with Niger/Benue Confluence. Consequently, even if the confluence area may have been for long a region for cross-cultural activities for many Nigerian peoples, it is not enough reason to identifying the area as the original homeland for the Udu people.¹⁶

The Benin-Udu Tradition: Primary Migration

The most tangible and realistic version on the traditions of origins of Udu is the Benin-Ogobiri tradition. This version contains two interconnected traditions of origins of Udu. The first tradition subsumes Udu clan migration to the thirty-two (32) Urhobo clan's direct or primary migration from Igodomigodo (now Benin, Edo state). This tradition stated that Udu was one of the thirty two (32) Urhobo clans that migrated from Benin. The secondary tradition of origin traces them to Ogobiri, Bayelsa state. Uniquely, the two traditions of origins showed that, the foundation of Udu is of great antiquity and has it origin to Igodomido.

The Benin-Udu tradition of origin stated that, Udu is one of the thirty two Urhobo clans - Agbarha-Ame, Agbarha-Otor, Agbarho, Agbon, Arhavwarien, Avwraka, Ephron, Evwreni, Eghwu, Idjerhe, Oghara, Ogor, Okere, Okparebe, Okpe, Olomu, Orogun, Udu, Ughelli, Udu, Uvwie and Uwherun that migrated from Igodomigodo. These were well settled before the rise of significant historical events that defined the boundaries of medieval and modern time.¹⁷ The first traditions of origins subsume Udu to Urhobo primary migration from the land of Igodomigodo.¹⁸ Although, the period and circumstances that led to their migration cannot be verify. This is due partly to the differences in Gregorian and the Julian calendar as well as the absent of written documentation of history at that time in this part of West Africa.

According to P. P. Ekeh, an Urhobo scholar and a historian:

There were no contemporaneous account of Urhobo migration from the land once ruled by the kings of the Ogiso dynasty, which now constitute Benin City and much of modern territory. But Urhobo traditions are firm in pointing to the region (land of the Ogisos) as the sources of their culture. There are indeed important markers of the prior existence of the Urhobo in these lands. The most important of these is the intimate kinship between the people who live in Benin and call themselves Edo and the Urhobo people: closeness between their languages, their religions, and their customs in our own times.¹⁹

In Ekeh opinion, the Urhobo left the land of the Igodomigodo long before the words Edo (was indigenously invented) and *Ubine* or *Beny* was Portugarise to Benin, the two words or names that now identified the people of Igodomigodo. According to Ekeh,

the two words do not exist in native Urhobo language, either in the past or even in modern times. Besides, Urhobo language has been relatively consistent in applying a standard name to those who inhabited the lands of the Ogisos. Thus, those who now inhabit the same lands under the Obas of the Eweka dynasty still refer to as *Aka*.²⁰ Perhaps, two major characteristics of the Urhobo primary migrations are could be deduce. First, the migrants took with them whole fragments of proto-Edoid culture and language. Second, those fragments were dominant in the new environments into which they settled. The primary migrants settled into virgin and unoccupied lands. If they did meet prior settlers, they might have been absorbed by the new immigrants. It is doubtful if they met bearers of an older Edoid culture, like the Erohwa, with whom the new migrant co-existed.²¹ The point is that, like the earliest Urhobo communities, Udu people migrated from Edo when the area was called Igodomigodo.

From the forgoing, it will be mistake to indulge in Hubbard's error in giving the impression that Urhobo language and culture were randomly formed from mixed immigrants from Benin, Ijo, and Igboland.²² Besides, Professor Onigu Otite stated that:

*Although the Urhobo migrated from their Edo abode, they nevertheless continue to assert that they are Edo, and recognized the protect kinship and other social ties with other Edo people. Many ancient songs, epics, and folklore commemorate and re-enact at moments of strategic festive occasions and politically. Militarily rituals, the union between the Urhobo and other Edo- speaking peoples.*²³

These affinities and relations is found in the people’s song and other socio-cultural activities such as nomenclature – to persons and items. One of the songs that symbolize the social relations and identification with other Edo group states that; “Edo! Avware Edo, Uriri Edo! Edo ghini Edo, Uriri Edo”. The song simply means that; “Edo! we the Urhobo are Edo, glorious. Edo! Edo is Edo, Edo we are glorious Edo”.²⁴ This song is as old as the Udu people. Below are some names common to other Edo speaking people (Edo state) and the Udu people (in Delta State).

NAMES IN UDU	EQUIVALENT IN OTHER EDO SPEAKING GROUPS	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT
Omoeфе	Omoseфе	Child is better than wealth
Oghene	Osa (in Benin), Oghene (in Etsako or Afemai)	
Eseoghene	Eseosa	Godgift
Otor	Otor	Land
Obor	Obor	Hand
Arho	Arhor	Eye
Owho	Owhe	Leg
Ozah	Okpia	Cutlass
Ore	Eran	Wood
Omo	Omo	Child

Omose	Omovhor	Girl
Etor	Ekto	Hair
Agogo	Egogo	Wristwatch or bell
Ebe	Ebe	Paper
Amen	Amen	Water
Olotu	Olotu	Champion
Uzo	Uzo	Antelope

Sources: Field Work, from interview²⁵

From this version, the Udu and other Edo speaking people such as the Benins, Esan, Etsakor (Afemai), Ika, Isoko, Itsekiri are historically connected. This is expressed in the proximity of political system. The Benin's Ogiso political system or organization is closer to the Urhobo pattern of clan organization, which today can be seen as the foundation of local government administration in Udu and in many parts of Edo land.

Although, the date for Udu migration from Igodomigodo cannot be traced with great exactitudes, Professor Onigu Otite, while relying on Williamson's language analysis, makes a reasonable inference on the age of Urhobo and other Edoid languages separation from the land of Igodomigodo. According to him, "we speculate that the various Urhobo groups settled in their present separate territories at different times ranging widely between 200 years and 2,000 years ago".²⁶ Thus, the foundation or establishment of Udu is trace to about 2,000 years ago.

The reasons for Udu and Urhobos primary migration or separation from the land of the Ogiso may not be far from the low availability of farming space and population increases in Igodomigodo. In ancient time, it was not unusual for families to separate consensually because of low agricultural spaced. This can also be inferred from Abraham and Lot separation recorded in the Bible book of Genesis. Therefore, Udu clan was founded by migrants from Igodomigodo and then subdues their environment. What flow from this primary migration is the birth of new villages abode, Ogobiri in Bayelsa state.

Benin-Ogobiri Connection: Secondary Migration

This tradition portrayed Ogobiri as place of secondary migration. It traced the ancestors of Udu clan to secondary migration and the primary migration to *Igodomigodo*,²⁷ that is now Benin. For us to be able to situate the Udu movement from Ogobiri and their connection, it is imperative to sip into the Ogobiri traditions of origin. The Mein group of Ijo who lived side by side with the Udu provided the answer. They stated that, Mein, the ancestor of the whole subgroup lived at Benin with his wife, Obolu. He left Benin because of internal wars and settled at Aboh temporarily. He had large number of children here including, Kor. He fled Aboh with his family after killing a woman he caught stealing or violating his god, Dimieghbeya, represented by an elephant's tusk. He lost the original tusk in his flight but received a fresh one from God. Mein then settled and established Ogobiri on the Sagbama- Igbedi Creek. Ogobiri soon became too crowded for Mein's descendants. At this time, the whole family was headed by Kor – the eldest man. With time, however, some Mein children decided to leave Ogobiri.³⁰ The

point here is that, since the founding of Ogobiri by Mein is connected to migration from Benin, it is quite obvious therefore that the people of Udu like their Mein brothers in Ogobiri migrated from Benin.

A similar explanation is held by Ugievwe's tradition, which stated that, the *"ancestor left Benin to settled in this part of the Delta voluntarily after previous examination of the area by the employed hunters and sanctioned by the Oba of Benin"*,³¹ the oral account noted their ancestor abode in Ogobiri. This tradition held that, Udu, Eghwu and Udu (a woman), Aghbahor, Izon were children of the same biological father. But Ughievwen, Eghwu and Udu (a woman) were of the same mother and that Aghbahor, Izon were their step brothers. However, the name of their mother was not revealed. They all lives together with their father (Mein) who left Benin to Ogobiri and on the death of their father, disputes arose as to who would take custody of the ancestral shrine or god. While in Ogobiri, Udu was married out to Onighe, a Benin warrior and who the move to settled a little in Otor-Ughiweven. But the descendant of Ughievwen arrived in that area, Udu and her husband, Onighe decided to move far interior into the presence location.

The Udu people decided to migrate far inward. Two reasons have been adduced for Udu moved away from Otor-Ughievwe. The first talked about consultation and discussion based on the previous knowledge that, the land was demarcated or shared and that Udu was outside her domain. Thus, Udu people decided to vacate the areas for Ughievwen. The second reason is that, Udu felt threatened by rapid population increase in the Ughievwen community. The Udu's husband, Onighe discovered that, his wife

(Udu) had paternal relationship with Ughievwen and decided to leave. This attitude is reported to have resulted from frequent raids and other forms of harassment which the Udu settlement suffered at the hands of the Ijo (of Kiagbodo/Bikorogha) before the Ughievwen arrived the area. This was responsible for the decision of the Udu to evacuate the site in preference for the present day Oto-Udu, about four kilometres to the North-east.³³

Conclusion

In this chapter we have analyze three distinct versions on the traditions of origins of Udu - hamitic hypothesis, Niger/Benue confluence hypothesis and Benin-Ogobiri connection. The chapter showed that, the hamitic hypothesis which says that everything of significance that took place in Africa South of the sahara was brought about by the Hermites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian (white) race cannot be used to explained the tradition of origin of Udu. The theory cannot explain the differences in race, language and culture between that of Udu and Egypt.

Similarly, the Niger-Benue confluence version is too intellectualized. The chapter showed that the version is unscientific and lacking in merit. Yam cannot be use as an element in tracing actual primary place of Udu migration to their current abode. This is because, Yam does not thrive well in the area and Udu is not known for yam cultivation. So, it is plausible that Udu got access to yam through inter-group trading or relations with other Nigerian groups. Also, there are no detail studies and archaeological evidence on Udu that link them with Niger/Benue Confluence. None of the Udu renowned historians

point to any cultural affinities.

The chapter showed that the Benin-Udu tradition of origin is the most tangible and scientific among all the versions on the traditions of origins Udu. This tradition of origin contains elements back by the Udu culture and tradition. The Udu culture and language are proto-Edoid culture and language respectively. The position of this thesis is that, like other earliest Urhobo clans, Udu people migrated from their brothers in Benin or Edo when it was called Igodomigodo. This is supported by the Urhobo culture, traditions, historians and the Mein (Ijo) in Ogobiri – who also claimed to have migrated from Benin. These are found in the people's song and other socio-cultural activities such as nomenclature – to persons, animals and items. The Udu and other Edo speaking people such as the Benins shared the same ancestors and historical foundation. This is expressed in the proximity of political system. The Ogiso political system or organization is same as that of the Udu pattern of village organization.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF UDU WOMEN IN THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF UDU

Introduction

The role of women in national and international development discourse is gradually receiving accelerated attention, particularly in the developing nations, such as Nigeria. In the past, attention has been paid primarily to women in the modernized nations. Since the late 1950s, though the efforts of the United Nations in conjunction with organized women's groups all over the world, this has focused on women's changing roles in developing countries. This is true of Nigeria, as well as of Udu, Delta states,

where the activities of women is now being taken cognisance of and documented. The women's socio-political role denotes contributing to the environment that enables individuals to experience a state of active role, fulfilment, satisfaction and self-worth in the society freely. Thus, this chapter looks into Udu women's contribution to the social development of Udu, from 1999 to 2019.

Social Role of Udu Women

Man by nature is a social being from the day they are born to the day they will take their last breath. That is why the social aspect of life is vital and that is not to say that the political and economic aspects are irrelevant because just as a new born baby for example does not engage in economic and political activities so also is a huge and very old man and woman does not engage in political and economic activities for survival, and even if they do, they are doing so to keep their fitness as in the days of youth but social engagement is all life long.¹

In this context family played a unique role. Even though a lot of emphasis have been place on the role of men, it does not require much ink to be told that woman play a vital role in nation-building like their men counter parts because the nucleus of the society is the family. The great Greek philosopher, J. J. Rousseau once make this point cleared when he stated on society and freedom, the family is the most basic, vital nucleus of the society as such the thought of learning began from there. He also pointed out that the family is the oldest and natural of all human or societal institutions.² This showed that for Udu to have a viable society in the pre-colonial times the women played their unique

role for the community within the frame work that the law and norms of their community allowed them to do in the family.

In larger context, Udu's women in pre-colonial era greatly contributed to the social life of the communities in various ways. Women in pre-colonial Udu were part of the domestic population of the man family courtyard .this was because she was not essentially alone at home, but married into a highly packed, polygamous environment where her main concern was to produce children for the man and struggle to give them material protection against interaction from the other children and other people in the neighborhood.³ To this effect, she was in full competition with the other wives to show loyalty to her husband especially as it was part of the oaths she was usually compelled to take upon being married into the home, it was the sole duty of the women to keep the house clean, train her children in the proper way as desired by the society. The Udu's women were regarded as the, subject of her husband, she had to seek her husband approval before she could do anything. The husband on the other hand had always respected his wife view on certain matters affecting the interest of the family. Both of them always come together to discuss family issues. Significantly Udu women engaged in the sustenance of the society not just economically but socially. This has been displayed in administering health care service such as the playing the role of midwifery in society, herbalist etc.⁴

Music and Dance and Udu's Women Role

Just as religion permeates all aspect of the lives of Udu people so also is music. Music in Udu is not only an object of entertainment aesthetics but it also plays a significant role in rituals and mental development. There is hardly any ritual that is performed in Udu that has no music as its accompaniment. Music serves as a vehicle for involving the generality of the populace in an on-going ceremony. Dance is physical aspect of the of music, in which both the performer and the people are involved. It is a physical participation in a celebration as people dance to the rhythm of the music

At birth, a baby is welcome into the physical world with music. In Udu, the people appreciate the fact that children are a gift from God. The role of women serving as local midwife and local Doctor (medicine women) is regarded and appreciated.⁵ during the naming ceremony masquerade dance and *tonyain* (drama) performed by the women involved danced to appeal the audience. Dance was an integral part of the Udu culture, dance was a pride to be identified with for every young lady. They sang and danced during the feast. Since it was to appeal to an audience, the use of customs and cosmetics was unavoidable. They painted their eyes and lips using chalk makings on different part of their body. They used different wrappers, hand fans and mirrors.⁶

At funerals, music features prominently. The music produced by the synchronization of the sound from both the musical instruments and voices with gestures, grimaces and the movements of the body creates a lull and makes the hearts of the bereaved lighter. It is believed that the dead also employ music, the way the living do, to express their sentiments and joys. The women played unique role in this regard. This

goes to showed that from the day of welcoming new baby to the day one pass out of the world, the song of women is observable or important. However, this perception on the music in the burial ceremony varied according to time and space.⁷

Furthermore, in this area of dance imagine, with a mind eye a group of women dancing in public square, palace ground and shaking their body in tune with the beat of the song and instrument from the men, and the Chiefs nodding their heads and shaking their leg in commendation to the combination of melodious voice. This is traditional dance, is naturally the accompaniment of folk- music. As a matter of fact there can be no music without dance and vice versa and the women are recognized for this. Traditional dance and folk-music can be said to be the microcosms of the life of the people. Traditional dances express the social, economic, religious, cultural, traditional and linguistic values and identity and the cultural institutions of Udu.⁸ There are as many varieties of traditional dances as there are occupations, rituals and cultural institutions.

Costumes and Cosmetics

Today Africans are looking for ways to preserve their identity and culture in the present of European ‘cultural imperialism’. In pre-colonial time, body design, wearing and using of natives naturally made costumes and cosmetics by women was an expression of and preservation of Udu and Udu culture in general. In colonial Africa it was demonize, not until it was redesigned or redefine in Western world an imported to us that people now began to appreciate the culture of African costume and cosmetics but this

time at the cost of dilemma – not knowing which one is Western and African.⁹ For example, body tattoo was normal women activities in Udu land and it was called, Isekele.

The people of Udu employ various costumes and cosmetics for religious, social, commercial and aesthetics purposes. Costumes and cosmetics are vehicles for the manifestation and expression of the people's culture, their way of life. And the continuity of culture is clearly symbolized in the choice of costumes and cosmetics are inescapably personal. The Udu women are uniquely known for it and should be respected for preserving the people's culture through practical application. The cosmetics native to Udu women is local black dye prepared from wild fruits, is used to draw designs of choice and at other times prescribed, on the skin. The black dye features aesthetically and religiously both at pregnancy and at birth and by would-be brides. Ordinarily, females of all ages use it predominantly for aesthetic purposes. Others include native chalk used in markings part of the body.

On the religious aspects, in the pre-colonial era, the Udu women were not Christian, like Egyptian, the Udu people believes many gods. Although the people are now primarily Christian (95% profess to be), they also have elaborate traditional religious practices of their own. Veneration of ancestors plays a central role in Udu traditional religion. In addition, the Udu practice divination, in which recently deceased individuals are interrogated on the causes of their death.¹⁰

The Udu's women are also known to practice ritual acculturation (enculturation) whereby an individual from a different, unrelated group undergoes rites to become Udu's.

Like the family and economic structures, the religion of any Nigerian tribal societies conceived the position of women as complementary to that of men. However, the fact remain that the societies of pre-colonial Nigeria believed men superior to women.¹¹ Religion plays a very significant role in the lives of the people all over the world. before the emergence and acceptance of the major religion practices of Christian, which emphasize a rather direct relationship with God, natural phenomenon and man's activities on earth were purely guided by belief in supernatural beings as manifested of natural mightiness.¹²

Udu Women and Conflict Resolution

Women in pre-colonial Udu played the position of mediator both at family and communities level. In pre-colonial Udu, when crisis or other similar crime such as murder/manslaughter, fighting arose in the market, the women will be the first to mediate the dispute and attempt to settled the matter as much as possible.¹³

When a woman commits adultery in the community, she had her own punishment and cleansing ceremony, which was conducted by the women of the village. The women would pluck leaf (which scratches or itches the skin), wrap it around her body, put a load on her head, make her half naked, and finally dance round the community or village with her, booing her. She was also made to pay a fine, before she was accepted back into her husband's bossomed. In Udu, and the entire land, it is believed that a man cannot commit adultery. Furthermore, in a marriage, there is bound to be conflicts and quarrels between the husband and the wife. In such times, the woman must be pretty careful not to let out

of her mouth, forbidden utterances such as; that the husband is smelling. It is also forbidden for a woman to curse when she serves her husband food. If she does this, her husband may decide not to eat her food from thenceforth, and he would speedily report to the elders, who would invite the woman over, for questioning. Every Udu women see their role in the family and the society as whole as community builder that. However, the gravity and the kind of offensive word used by the woman, determines whether the conflict is resolved by the elders, or the elderly women in the village. Furthermore, when divorce cases arose, they were resolved by the elders of both families, that is the elders of the man's family and the elders of the woman is family.¹⁴

When a woman is accused of witchcraft and she denies, she will not be dragged or taken immediately to the king's palace, rather the immediate neighborhood would first and foremost intervene to the savage the situation. It is only if they could not settle the matter that the issues will be taken to the palace by the community in general to seek for permission from the king, so that she could be taken to a shrine for trials. Once she arrived there, she was given concussion to drink by the Chief priest. If she fell down after drinking it, the Chief priest confirms that she is a witch, she was left there by the community, and her immediate family members were expected to come to her rescue. They eventually pay the fine, as imposed by the Chief priest, before they could carry her away. However, before they carried her away, part of her hair was shaved, and this was a sign that such a person is a witch. The sight of such a person in the community sent a perfect signal to the people.¹⁵

Conclusion

From various viewpoints, Udu women in pre-colonial time did a lot for the society in which they lived. Women at that time were very good in taking care of their family. Women were also good in preserving their culture, which also enhanced the social and cultural aspects of pre-colonial society. The chapter showed that even though a lot of emphasis have been place on the role of men, that of women cannot be denied as it does not require much to be told as it begin from the nucleus of the society, the family.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF UDU WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF UDU

Introduction

The economic activities of women cannot be overemphasized. During the pre-colonial era, Udu women contributed to the sustenance of the kin group. Pre-colonial Udu women participated effectively in their economy. Apart from being mothers and wives, women contributed substantially to the production and distribution of goods and services. On the other hand, women who have resource power tend to have greater decision-making power within the household¹, as mother; they are responsible for the welfare of the children and elderly relations. In order to fully understand the economic

activities of Udu women, that this chapter attempts an examination of the activities of women in the economic life of pre-colonial Udu². This chapter looks at the economic activities of Udu people in pre-colonial time. It examines the economic practices which the Udu women were involved in during this period, which includes agriculture, palm oil and palm kernel production, craft works, trading and activities.

Udu Women and Agriculture

The geographical nature of the Udu area has definitely dictated the main economic occupation of the people, which is farming. The presence of great expanse of lands in the area occupied by the Udu, allowed for farming, and was so widely practiced. These lands provided vast acres of farmland in the drier areas where crops such as cassava, plantain yams, coco-yams, potatoes, sugar-cane, groundnuts and maize were cultivated. Yam, cassava and plantain however, in later years, formed the predominant cash crop in these areas. Of interest here is the view held by some historians that most of these crops only came about by way of European contact. This view posited that the early European Portuguese and Dutch traders introduced most of these crops in the area, to feed their crew members and slaves, on the journey across the Atlantic Ocean. Whatever the position, there is no gainsaying the fact that the Udu practiced farming before the contact with Europeans.³

Crafts Work of Udu Women

Crafts worthy of note, were canoe carving, carving of wooden spoons, plates and dishes. Also carved, were statues in the form of human beings, birds, animals and fish.

Some of these represented symbols of some festivals of significance amongst these crafts, was canoe carving. Materials for this craft, were got from the numerous trees that abound in the deep forest regions of the delta, of which the most important, was the mahogany.⁴ The sale of canoes provided an important source of economic wealth for the Udu. Women in ancient Udu land played an important role in art and culture. Handicrafts, though not produced in commercial quantity are to be found in various forms in Udu land. Wooden plates, dishes and soup-spoons are neatly carved and used in many homes. Sculpture carving in the form of dolls, statues, masks and other idol-images were excellently done and they constitute the greatest works of antiquity of the tribe.⁵

People engaging in trade with the Udu often had to do so by the use of head pottrage, which they had to buy from the Udu. These were the Itsekiri, Isoko, Urhobo and even Aboh. Other items mentioned, were mainly for internal use, thus trade in them was carried out, albeit, on a very small scale. Weaving was another craft of importance, which has over the years, lost its position. Though the weaving of beautiful and various types of mats, baskets, screens and fish traps are still being practiced, the weaving of cloth, is not now much on the scene. Cloth weaving was done with materials got from the upper epidermis of the leaves of the wine-palm tree. But as been mentioned, this craft has lost its importance, owing to the importation of European clothes, as from the period of the European trade. pottery was once a thriving industry, but like weaving, it gradually dwindled and is now only practiced by a handful of people.⁶

Though their vegetation abounds with palm trees, the Udu did not tap wine on a large scale, until the later years of the European contact, around 1900.⁷ The distillation of this liquor, yielded which is now generally known as ‘illicit’ gin; a name given to it by the Europeans, who true to their nature, tagged everything African with a derogatory term, as the produced drink, was similar in taste and colour to the European type, called gin. The Udu traded extensively in this drink, with their hinterland neighbours.⁸

The Udu were however, not much of hunters, though the art was practiced on a very small scale. They however, did rear of few domestic animals. Salt, was another major source of economic wealth for the Udu. It was made from the aerial rots of the mangrove trees. As would be seen in the next topic, the Udu found in these crafts, important sources of economic wealth.⁹

Trade and Commerce

As has been discussed in the last section, the Udu economy was based mainly on canoe building and fishing. Though farming was practiced, as has been mentioned, it was not too large a scale. The need for other essential commodities such as vegetables, tools for producing canoes and many others, dictated the need for the Udu to establish trade relations with their neighbours. They traded not only with neighbouring peoples, but also with people farther back in the Nigerian Hinterland.¹⁰

Trade in Udu land like in other parts of the globe has been a long time activity and women in ancient Udu were very much involved in it. Udu women were very good

traders. They were involved in local as well as long distance trade. Trade is said to have developed naturally because of the various needs of the various commodities. The main centre of exchange in Udu as in most other pre-colonial societies was the markets.¹¹ Consequently therefore, the trade did not make much impact on the Udu community. This is the reason for its absence in most historical records about the Udu. The items involved in this trade, are, from the northern traders, yams, onions, rice, beans and calabashes in exchange, the Udu gave fish, salt, plantains and canoes. The fish was often fried and smoked. This pattern of trade was by barter, though cowries had by this time, began to come into use as currencies. Even with this however, the old system of barter still thrived, till up the mid 19th century.¹²

Udu women also traded in other items such as spoons, plates and other household utensils, carved out from wood. Salt was another important item of trade between the Udu and their hinterland neighbours in the delta region.¹³ ‘The export of the material by the Igbo and related groups, was in the form of bars, for blacksmiths to turn into various shapes as desired. But in the case of their trade with the Udu, these iron bars were made into the required shapes before being sold as the Udu were not versed in the art of blacksmithing. Thus, there is not much evidence of iron smithing among the Udu. The Igbo and Ibibio also marketed foodstuff such as yams, a few goats and sheep. The rearing of animal was not much of a popular occupation among the Udu people. Of interest in the Udu trade with her neighbors are articles found in the area, suggestive of trade with the Benin kingdom. These articles include knives, hooks, and hoes. Other articles of

bronze and brass were found. The presence of these articles points to trade and friendly relations between the Udu and the Benin.¹⁴ Some of the articles of trade include; brass indented tray with uneven lifted edge, a hollow short cylindrical vessel of brass, with groove circles around the outside, and an ornamental brass bar across the base, ivory tusk, brown and polished with age with a carved alligator on its length, and a carved lion attached to its top, death mask- a plague of unknown substance, carved with the image of a face and said to have been given by the Oba of Benin, as a picture of Mein (a descendant of Udu and founder of Udu clans), and brass bracelets, each 6 inches in length, two worked basket tracing, and two of ornamental but solid design. Women in pre-colonial Udu made many brass bracelets and armlets for women and children. These facts clearly support the belief of the Udu that trade as well as friendly relations were maintained between them and the Binis.¹⁵

Before the establishment of colonial economy and administration in Nigeria, the people of Udu had flare for oil palm extraction based on the local technological know of that time that help sustained their economy.¹⁶ This was majorly done by collecting of palm nut from which oil and kernel were extracted.¹⁷ Palm-nut collection was seasonal activity in some area. The period of collecting extends from January – June and it was controlled by a council of elders. In Udu it was controlled by the elders of various villages, community and their duty also involved officially declaration for opening of palm push open or closed for collection. The oil industry extraction in the pre-colonial

period was from the palm-nut. The process could last for about 21 days, and it involved the family collective action and even extended family.¹⁸

The first stage involved climbing of the palm tree using ropes woven from raffia palms. This was usually and undertaking assign to men. The man used cutlass to cut down the nuts in bunched together in a big cub of about eighteen inches long. Then the bunches are haul to the trough where the nuts would be collected in a single day, which amount to somewhat one puncheon (13 clot) or 180 gallons of oil and about fifty six bushels of palm kernel.¹⁹

Although the industrial process for the extraction of oil palm and kernel in pre-colonial time varied from place to place. Udu some people could be employed to help in slicing of bunches into four or more smaller pieces each, covers them with palm branches and they are left for a period of two or three days to ferment a little. Thus softens the nuts and further processing. After that the palm nuts collector, shake the nuts from the sliced cobs into a bamboo rack, designed to remove husk or dirt from them. The clean nut are then transferred into the oil canoe or trough of about 12 to 15 fl long, 3 to 4 ft wide and 4ft in depth, with a sloping bottom and a plugged hole at the end.²⁰

When the trough is half full with palm nuts, the nuts are trodden with barefoot for about two days until they are reduced to pulp consisting of nuts, having integument and oil. A motar and pistol will be used. From here on the responsibilities fell on the women, the pulp emerges as a result of the treading is piled on higher end of trough so the oil will flow to the lower end. The trough is then covered with plantain leaves as well as palm

fronds for a couple of days – two to three days later the process of oil extraction is complete. Oil is subsequently poured into this for further boiling to remove impurities. Water then is added to the pulp and shaken very well to float the oil that is left in the nuts and hair integument. The oil is siphoned off from the top of the water into drums and boiled for about one hour, after which it is poured into kerosene tins ready for sale and commercialization. While the clean nuts and fibrous residues are thrown out of the trough to dry for about nine days.²¹ The economic value of oil palm industry was a motivating factor while men and women were engaging in it. This same economic factors was the reason why Britain also become interested in the industry between 1900-1960.²²

Weaving Industry

The weaving industry represents one of the most vibrant and important industries in pre-colonial Nigeria, and where the women folk had a considerable measure of participation. It is also obvious that one of the notable industrial engagements characteristic of pre-colonial Yoruba economy was weaving. It was an industry that engaged the services of the women population in such aspects as cotton picking, processing, spinning and ginning etc in pre-colonial Udu. Weaving was a major occupation among the women folk. The weaving industry provided employment opportunities and means of livelihood for a large proportion of the women population in different wards of Udu. It also stood as one of the most important and flourishing indigenous industries in pre-colonial Udu .²³

The Udu weaving industry is also widely believed to be one of the most ancient indigenous industrial establishments in the area. The practice of weaving seemed to be as ancient as Udu settlement itself. As a region where cotton was produced in substantial quantity, cloth weaving was an important economic venture or industry with readily available raw materials. Weaving was popular, widespread, and was dominated by the women folk in pre-colonial Udu , and this probably explains the prevalence weaving centre. Such traditional woven materials were always used at festivals, wedding/engagement ceremonies, naming, coronation, installation, outings, anniversaries and other related festivities.²⁴

Bead-Making and Jewellery

The production of beads which the women folk dominated in pre-colonial Udu, was meant to meet the ornamental needs of the royalty or the aristocracy and other members of the ruling elites. Both the beads and jewellery were also used as items for ceremonies such as wedding and other social activities in pre-colonial. The bead-making business was popular among Udu women. It is also noteworthy that most of the beads, jewelries and other items of adornment which were produced in Udu, were marketed by women all over the Udu country during the 19th century.²⁵

The art of soap-making was to become an important economic activity for the women folk in Udu due to the high demand for local soap and the fact that most of the raw materials required for production in the soap-making industry in Udu were sourced locally. It was also an industry that was exclusively meant for the women folk, and it has

maintained this characteristic up to the contemporary period. There were different types of markets that existed in pre-colonial Udu. These included the daily markets, the 5-day markets, the 9-day markets, the periodic markets, and the night markets. The Udu women folk naturally played a leading role in the operation of such markets as they conducted series of commercial activities in the markets on daily or periodic basis. Several enterprising Ilorin women who had no stalls to operate or goods to sell due to their inability to mobilize enough resources equally registered their presence in the markets for daily survival as they served as carriers, sales attendants, porters, hawkers of farm produce and other petty items as well as artisans/apprentice in one form of trade or the other.

Food Processing

As an agrarian economy where various forms of agricultural production took place, the aspect of food processing formed an integral part of the economic activities in pre-colonial Udu.²⁶ Items of agricultural production which the Udu women processed during the pre-colonial period included yam and cassava flour, locust beans, cow milk into cheese, vegetables and fruits, palm oil and palm kernels, corn and sorghum flour, smoked fish, pepper, garri, sheer butter and other forms of processed food items. The sale of these processed foods in the daily or weekly markets as well as through hawking was also usually coordinated by the women in pre-colonial Udu . The task of food processing thus represented an important form of economic activity that engaged the Ilorin women folk through which they contributed to the growth of pre-colonial Udu economy.²⁷

Udu Women and the Blacksmithing Industry

The blacksmithing industry was an important indigenous industry that engaged the services of different segments of the society and which contributed to the growth of the pre-colonial Udu economy. This gave the settlement of Udu its uniqueness and the advantage of establishing a tradition of blacksmithing in the region. It was noted that most communities in and around Udu during the pre-colonial period were farmers and accordingly they provide a ready market for these commodities.²⁸

It has been observed that the women folk often participate in most of the production processes involved in iron smelting. From the commencement of production, women are involved in gathering and setting the wood that were usually placed at the base of the grave's heap before such is thrown into mud furnace expected to heat for about 4 days after which the slag is detached from the iron for actual moulding of objects such as hoes, knives, machetes, plates, diggers, traps, spoons etc to take place. With the support of the women folk, the industry produced a wide range of items used for diverse purposes. The products of blacksmithing usually start with the very tools they use. For example, they make such articles as hoes and cutlasses, hammer, anvil and chisels which are further employed in making other articles.²⁹

In fact, many of the blacksmiths also engaged in agricultural production and sometimes took part in the game of hunting. It logically follows that the blacksmiths were kept busy all year round with the production of tools and implements. There are other artificers such as knives and axe used in the home which were all produced by

blacksmiths. They also produced weapons like, bows and arrows, spears and javelins often used as hunting implements as well as in wars as evidenced by the turbulent periods of the 19th century. The blacksmiths also made varieties of decorative articles, although such articles are not as common as those made in the brass industry. The marketing and distribution of blacksmithing products in pre-colonial Udu seemed to have been conducted either in the local or external market centres. The women were always responsible for co-ordinating the sale of the products of Udu blacksmithing industry.³⁰

The blacksmithing industry has contributed immensely to the social and economic advancement of those who engaged in it as a profession. The various items they produced as mentioned above enhanced their economic prospects and raised their social status within the pre-colonial setting. It should be stressed that several other occupations also depended on the products of the blacksmithing industry. In fact, farming could not have been conducted successfully without hoes and cutlasses that were produced by blacksmiths. Thus, the blacksmithing industry in pre-colonial Udu appeared to have related with other occupations for the promotion of smooth socio-political and economic relations within the Nigerian region.³¹

Endnotes

1. An interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Dora, 78 years, trader, Udu 23/07/2022.
2. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-middle-east/Udu-economy.html>
3. An interview with Mrs. Sarah Omokhio, 52 years, trader, Udu, 23/07/2022.
4. Ibid.
5. An interview with O. Okungbowa, 59 years, Business man, Udu , 23/07/2022.
6. Ibid.

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8. Capt. John Adams, "Sketches Taken During Ten Voyages to Africa between the years 1786 and 1800, (London: Heinemann, 1823).
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10. Obara Ikeme, "The Peoples and Kingdoms of the Delta Province", *Groundwork*, p. 102.
11. Ibid.
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13. S. O. Aghalino, "British Colonial Policies and the Oil Palm Industry in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria, 1900-1960", *Africa-Study Monographs*, vol. 21, No. 1, 2002, pp. 19-25.
14. An interview with Mr. Victors O., 58 years, trader and farmer, Udu, 23/07/2022.
15. Ibid.
16. An interview with Mr. Monday Omorodion, 42 years, hunter and farmer, Udu, 23/07/2022.
17. Ibid.
18. S. O. Aghalino, "Economic Impact of the Colonial Rule on the Isoko People of the Western Niger Delta Region, Nigeria, 1900-1960", *Alone*, Vol. 14, No. 11, 2004, p. 174.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 174.
21. Ibid., p. 175.
22. An interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Dora,
23. Ibid.

24. Ibid,
25. An interview with Mrs. Sarah Omokhiodion
26. M. A. Damisa and J. R. Samndi, “Women Participation in Agricultural Production: A Probit Analysis”, p. 427.
27. An oral interview with B.I. Akugbe, Age 66, Farmer, Udu, 23/07/2022..
28. Ibid.
29. An interview with Mr. Monday Omorodion,
30. Interview with Mrs. Orogie, 39 years, Uselu Committee Member (fishing business), 20/10/2022.
31. Interview with Mrs. Patrience Agharia, 60 years, Trader, 23/07/2022.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The study analyzes the several traditions of origins of Udu; the Hamitic hypothesis, Niger/Benue confluence hypothesis and Benin-Ogobiri connection. The thesis acknowledges the existence of speculation and attempts at doctoring or rewriting

the traditions of origins of minority groups in Nigeria in the name of ideology and mythology, of which the Udu is not an exception.

The thesis analyzes three distinct versions on the traditions of origins of Udu - Hamitic hypothesis, Niger/Benue confluence hypothesis and Benin-Ogobiri connection. The study found wanting or caught to be racial prejudice, the hamitic hypothesis which suggested that everything of significance that took place in Africa, South of the Sahara was brought about by the Hermites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian (white) race and cannot be used to explain the traditions of origin of Udu. This is because, apart from the fact that the theory was consummated and propounded by Eurocentric scholars, it cannot explain the differences in race, language and culture between that of Udu and Egypt.

On a similar note, the Niger-Benue confluence version was found to be based on intellectual hand work and lacking in merit. The study showed that the version is unscientific as there is still no archeological evidence to support it. Yam which was used as the basis for the assumption of tracing the tradition of origin of Udu to the Niger-Benue confluence area cannot be used as an element in tracing actual primary place of Udu migration to their current abode. In fact yam does not thrive well in Udu environment and as such the people in ancient time is not known for huge yam cultivation. The thesis also concluded that, it is plausible that Udu got access to yam through inter-group trading or relations with other Nigerian groups. Besides, there are no detailed studies and archaeological evidence on Udu that links them with Niger/Benue Confluence, yam cultivation and the introduction of yam into the Udu society. None of

the Udu renowned historians point to any cultural affinities and connection.

Having analyzed the first two traditions of origin, the study wasted no time in stating the most reliable traditions of origin of Udu, the Benin-Ogobiri tradition. In doing so, the thesis also refused to be drawn into speculation, ideology and mythology. Thus, there are precisely two narratives to traditions of origin of Udu. The first narrative subsumed Udu clan and the whole of the Urhobo thirty-two clans to direct or primary migration from Benin. The second traditions of origin traced them to Benin-Ogobiri migration, what might be referred to as the Benin-Ogobiri migration. Uniquely, the narratives on the traditions of origin of Udu showed that, the foundation of Udu is of great antiquity.

The study concluded that the Benin-Ogobiri traditions of origin is the most tangible and reliable scientific fact among all the versions on the traditions of origin of Udu. This is because the Benin-Ogobiri connection or migration retains elements backed by the Udu people's culture and traditions. The culture and traditions here are not the ones that have been contracted within the last hundred years of colonial and post colonial Nigeria as it is found in some Niger Delta communities but rather rooted in the historical circumstances that gave birth to and transformed the Udu society before colonial encroachment.

The Udu culture and language are proto-Edoid culture and language. This thesis concluded that, like other earliest Urhobo clans such as Agbassa (Agbara-Ame), Agbara-Otor, Agbarho, Agbon, Arhavwarien, Avwraka, Ephron-Otor, Eghwu, Evwreni,

Idjerhe, Oghara, Ogor, Okere, Okparabe, Okpe, the Udu people migrated from their brothers and sisters in Benin or Edo when it was called Igodomigodo. This is supported by the Urhobo culture, traditions, historians and the Mein (Ijo) in Ogobiri Bayelsa state. For instance, the Mein (Ijo) in Ogobiri today claimed to have migrated from Benin. This helps the current writer to reconcile the information gotten from the Udu and Urhobos in Delta state of Nigeria. Of course, Intelligence report such as the Johnson's report on the people of Udu claimed otherwise.

Besides, the Benin-Ogobiri connection relied on by this study was neither to substantiate the Benin attempt to federate the area nor to extol the infamous Benin mirage but to present undistorted history of Udu. This undistorted history of Udu could be found in the people's song, political administration and other socio-cultural activities such as nomenclature – to persons, animals and items. The Udu and other Edo speaking people such as the Esan, Etsako, Benins, Urhobos and others shared the same ancestors and historical foundation. Hence, they belong to the same language family. This is vividly perceived in the proximity of political systems and words formation. For instance, the Ogiso political system or organization (in Benin) is similar or the same as that of the Udu or the Urhobo pattern of village or local government organization. Although, when one contemplates the distance, between the point of migration and destination, one may doubt the possibility of people trekking for such a long distance from Benin (in Edo state) to Ogobiri (in Bayelsa state) without the use of vehicle or animal as means of transportation through the forest. Distance and natural

environmental barriers such as trees, grasses, rivers, desert and mountain as well as others have not stopped human migrating from one location to another. In fact, some times, in the process of a group migration, group relations will be formed in a way that will significantly impact on future relation.

The study also discussed the means of dispute settlement. The Udu people are known to be very peaceful and so before there was no war, it can be rest assured that they have tried all means of settlement of disputes. It was a common thing for the people to have unwritten non-aggression pacts which helped to strengthen brotherliness. These pacts were made to be honored at the pain of incurring the dreaded displeasure of the departed spirits or suffering of a sudden or violent death. Pact or an unwritten agreement was expected to be kept sacrosanct. This was seen in the pact between Udu and Udu that led to the land and boundary demarcation between both clans. As a result of this, the parties to the agreement referred to themselves as brothers and do not spill each other's blood.

The social activities of the Udu people were not excluded in this work as it examined the social activities of the people and the social relations with her neighbours. One of these relations was in the aspect of religion. The Udu people had different gods and modes of worship. Udu people were polytheists, believing in the gods of the things in their environment. For example, god of earth, god of iron, god of medicine, god of fruition, god of trees and many others. They also believed in a supreme being, perfectly, just and without whose blessings none of the requests to the lesser gods could be granted.

This Almighty they called Osanobulua or Oghodua or Oghenan. He was accorded no particular form of worship, had no particular shrine in most places- but his name was on everyone's lips. They also held in high belief the ability of the dead to communicate with and see God so most of their activities were done carefully not to do anything that would be detrimental to them in the sight of the departed spirits. It was believed that if the departed spirits were unhappy with a man, that man has incurred the wrath of God on himself.

This study revealed that economically, the Udu women has always been involved in trade, but she still has room for improvement of her positions as a trader. Many factors have been seen to be militating against the full participation of women in Nigeria's economic development. Moreover, the government despite its much-proclaimed belief in equality of all sexes has not helped. Secondly, most women became rich because of the wealth amassed from trade. This portrays the fact that a society, which allowed for full participation of women in its major economic activities and especially its trade, cannot but have women of wealth from whom the society would also benefit

The role of Udu women in society has been greatly overseen in the last few decades. In the pre-colonial era, women were seen as wives who were intended to work, clean and take care of the kids while the men took care of having jobs and paying any bills that had to be paid. Soon enough, it caught on that women should have a bigger role than what other people thought women should have.

Furthermore, the study revealed that women Udu has always been part of the domestic population of the man’s family court and because she was not essentially at home in the home but maimed into a highly packed polygamous environment where her main concern was to produce children for the man and struggle to give them materials protection against interaction from the other children and other people in the neighbourhood. In addition, Udu women contributed greatly to the socio-economic and political developments of theirs societies. The social position and economic status of women in pre-colonial Udu is superior to other cultures in Nigeria. Significantly, women in pre-colonial Udu engaged in the sustenance of the society in terms of trade, crafts, marriage, healthcare, religion etc.

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NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF	DATE OF
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			INTERVIEW	INTERVIEW
Agharia, Patrience	55	Trader	Udu	23/07/2022
Akugbe, B.I.	56	Farmer	Benin City	23/07/2022
Biakolo, E. D.	78	Trader	Udu	23/07/2022
Ebitimi, K.	60	Farmer	Udu	23/07/2022
Iden, Eseghine Sunday	55	Teacher	Ughievwen	24/08/2021
Justice, Peter	53	Teacher	Udu	23/07/2022
Monday Omorodion	42	Hunter	Udu	23/07/2022
Oburuza, Elizabeth	56	Teacher	Udu	23/07/2022
Okitipi, Friday	28	Business man	Benin City	24/08/2021
Okungbowa, O.	28	Business man	Udu	23/07/2022
Omokhio, Sarah	52	Trade	Udu	23/07/2022
Victors O	58	Farmer	Udu	23/07/2022

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