

**THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITES OF THE EGBUDU-AKAH PEOPLE OF
DELTA STATE**

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**A PROJECTSUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ART (B.A) HONOURS
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **PRECIOUS IJEOMA ONWUEMENE** in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Art, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God almighty for his continuous protection over my life throughout my stay in the university of Benin and throughout the process of writing this .

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I want to use this opportunity to thank God almighty the source and giver of knowledge and strength for sparing my life throughout the course of this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Introduction

The definition of marriage varies according to cultures. Marriage is a legal union between a man and woman as husband and wife. In some jurisdictions, it is a union between two persons in the same sex usually entailing legal obligations of each person to the other.¹

Marriage is also called matrimony or wedlock. It is a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that established rights and obligations between them and their in-laws, as well as the society in general.² When defined broadly; marriage can be recognized by a state, and organization or a religious body, a tribal group, local community or peers. Oxford advanced dictionary defines marriage as the legal relationship between a husband and a wife. According to the definition above, which states that marriage could also be a union between two persons of the same sex which has a legal backing.³ However,, this research stands with the definition that are based on marriage being a union between a man and a woman which is the most acceptable in Egbudu-Akah land and not the other way round.

Egbudu-Akah is a town located in Aniocha-South Local Government area of Delta state. Akishe River formed the boundary between her and Ashama, Ubulu in the East, in the west bordered by Ekuku-Agbor, in the south by Ejeme and Nsukwa and in the

North by Ute-Okpu. Egbudu-Akah, is located in the forest belt of the state, Delta, it covers a total of about twelve (12)miles east to west, and the same North to South.

The town has river (Akishe) as a major source of water which flows from the North to the South. However, fishing in the river was forbidden. The river was worshipped by the women in the community led by the female priest known as (Omu-Ani). There are long stretches of hill towards the river which made fetching of the water very difficult.

The river boundary between the Egbudu and the Ashama made it impossible for dispute between both communities as experienced between her and other neighbouring communities with land borders. In the main town Egbudu's land structure is flat which makes it impossible for erosion to occur, while erosion occurs towards the river area due to long stretch slopes which almost made the roads impassable because of the gully during the rainy season.

The forest nature of the area made it possible for lumbering activities to be carried out by timber companies, and individuals. The area had faced serious deforestation resulting from farming activities by the local inhabitants thereby exposing the ozone layer to the Ray's of the sun. She is blessed with fertile soil leading to the increase in her population. People from various communities came to the town to farm because of its soil texture and fertility. The fertility of the soil had attracted so many people including prominence, the former Bendel state government to establish vast rubber plantation

occupying almost half of the total land mass of the community, the Egbudu people were prominent for their rubber plantation production . The establishment and production of these plantations led to astounding astronomical increase in the population of the people as people came from far and wide for better and easy access to the plantation as a means of livelihood, it created employment opportunities for the original indigenes of the town and even beyond. The forest of Egbudu-Akah has many wild animals, and other beautiful creatures ; this made hunting , craft and farming the mainstay or major occupation of the people.(The guardian ng).

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to critically analyze the socio-economic and political significance of traditional marriage rites of the Egbudu-Akah people of Delta state Nigeria. It does this by

- 1) To Examine the various traditions of origin of the people of Egbudu-Akah kingdom.
- 2) To examine the socio-cultural organization of the Egbudu-Akah people, which includes marriages, festivals circumcision and deaths.
- 3) To examine marriage and its socio-cultural representation of Egbudu-Akah land.
- 4) To examine the impact of the marriage institution on the people of Egbudu-Akah.

Scope of the Study

This study covers marriage rites in pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah people. The study also covers the socio-economic significance of marriage rites in Egbudu-Akah.

Methodology

In order to achieve a comprehensive and interesting study of the marriage rites of Egbudu-Akah community, a descriptive and historical method will be adopted. This study would extract both secondary sources and primary (oral sources) but more of primary sources as one on one interviews will be conducted for derivative of information ,the older members of the community would be interviewed and their accounts will be documented and referenced appropriately while the secondary sources would include online texts, books of history , journals, materials, which unfortunately is more limited than the oral sources .

Literature Review

There is no much work that has been written about the history and marriage rites of the Egbudu people from pre-colonial period to post-colonial, and those consulted offered limited examination on it. However, some academic works that would be relevant to this research which has been helpful to give us a clear insight of how marriage was conducted in the past and present and its contribution to society will be documented. Books like ;

Obah Lucky Lordmarks, *The Origin of Egbudu-Akah and the Illoh Empire*, This book presents the history of Egbudu-Akah kindgom and the Illoh dynasty and discussed their social and political organization. This book is relevant to this study because it offers insight on one part of tradition of origin, geographical location and settlement pattern of Egbudu people

Lawrence Onwuemene, *Documented History Of Egbudu-Akah Kingdom*, This material gives a broader insight on the people of Egbudu ,both their origin , geography ,their cultural practices, economic activities , different types of marriage in pre-colonial time to present time , festivals and ,the kingship system and how it has passed from generation to generation

Agbo M. Charity's work titled "Posthumous Marriage in Niger Delta Land, South-South Nigeria and its effects on Child Development and Education,"¹³ The author investigated on the posthumous marriage in Niger Delta land and its effects on the developments and education of the posthumous children. The population of the study was all the single parents in Niger Delta Land. Simple random sampling was used to select 400 respondents from three states in southeast of Nigeria (Niger Land). Questionnaire and oral interviews were used for data collection. The data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations, while z-test statistic was used to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The author revealed quest for male child, continuity of a lineage, love for the dead and others as the reasons for posthumous marriage. The author also indicated that posthumous children's moral, social, and other developments and education are adversely affected due to poor conditions and social problems associated with posthumous marriage.¹⁴

In Kolo E. Enwereji's work titled "Indigenous Marriage Institutions and Divorce in Nigeria: The Case of Delta State of Nigeria,"¹⁵ This author examines the principles and

structure of marriage institutions in Nigeria. It notes conditions and factors that induce divorce by using empirical examples drawn from the family as a formal institutional structure and from the administrative operation of this institution. The author also revealed that marriage in its present institutional functions are compared to show how divorce affects its stability and to document the results, which follow from this interaction.¹⁶

According to Thomas K. Nwachukwu's thesis titled, "Long-Term Marriages Among Nigerian Immigrants: A Qualitative Inquiry,"²¹ The author reports the lived experience of nine Nigerian Igbo immigrant couples who live in the Houston area metropolis and who have been married for 20 years or more. Data from two clergymen who also live in the Houston metropolitan area and who have ministerial duties for the Nigerian Igbo community were utilized. Interviews were audiotape and transcribed. The author finding did not differ greatly from other studies on long-term marriages. The results support the conclusion that there may be cross cultural similarity in structural factors fostering marriage longevity. The results did, however, indicate some uniqueness germane to the acculturation of this immigrant population in the areas of extended family, upbringing of children, gender roles, and male patriarchal hegemony. This underscores the need for counselors to consider cultural context when looking at marriage longevity. The Nigerian couples in this study also acknowledged that the above listed structures may have either a positive or negative impact on marriage stability.²²

Ushe M. Ushe's in his work, "The Effect of Christian Religious Education on Traditional Marriage Customs among the Tiv, Central Nigeria,"²³ Ushe examine the effect of Christian religious education on traditional marriage customs among the Tiv, North central Nigeria. The article utilized qualitative approach which makes use of secondary sources and participant observation in collection and presentation of data. The author observed that Tiv traditional marriage has experienced an infusion into Christianity due to the advent of western civilization in Nigeria. The author also recommends among others, that an infusion of Tiv traditional marriage into Christianity should be made to contextualize those practices that are not in line with the Christian oriented practices.²⁴

In as much as we agree, that these contributions and views have their own merits towards understanding the traditional marriage system in Delta, but we must also agree that they have not been able to give a total study of the socio-economic and political significance of traditional marriage rites of the Egbudu-Akah people of Delta state. All the books and articles reviewed have been able to cover only some parts of this research.

Chapter Outline

This chapter is divided into five chapters

Chapter One

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter provides an introduction to the background of the study, stating the relevance of this study, with its aim and objectives, justification of this research, the

methodology used in carrying out this research, the scope of the research and various literature reviewed in relation to this study.

Chapter Two

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE OF EGBUDU-AKAH

This chapter examines the life of the pre-colonial history of Egbudu-Akah, it explores the significant of their socio-political and economic institution in the ancient time, which entails their labour in economics and their creativity in the social circle by farming, trading, customs, arts and crafts and of course their form of political life.

Chapter Three:

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES OF MARRIAGE RITES EGBUDU-AKAH

The chapter also examines the pre-colonial customs and norms that characterizes traditional marriage system in Egbudu-Akah; early marriage activities and traditional norms in marriage. All these would be highlighted.

Chapter Four

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITES IN EGBUDU-AKAH

This chapter identifies the various changes and continuity that occurred in the aftermath of the western influence on Egbudu-Akah community

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

This is the concluding chapter which gives a general summary of the entire research and gives possible contributions to how western culture and traditional norms can be adjusted to help promotes good marriage institution in the Africa society.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE OF EGBUDU-AKAH

Geographical Locations of Egbudu-Akah

Egbudu-Akah is a community in Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State. Located in the boundaries of Aniocha Local Government and Ika local Government Areas of Delta State.¹ Egbudu-Akah shares boundaries with Ekuku-Agbor, Ute-Okpu, Ejeme, and Ashama. The language of Egbudu-Akah community is Egbudu dialect (Ibo language). First account :Egbudu-Akah is said to have originated from 'Idu' (Benin-city), by one of the two brothers of the sons of the Oba of Benin in about 15th century.²

Historical Antecedence of Egbudu-Akah

According to history, the Oba of Benin in the pre-colonial era performed ritual sacrifices that scare most of his sons, making them to stay away from their province in order to save their lives. As a result of such sacrifices being carried out by the Oba of 'Idu' (Benin), his two sons of the same mother known as Akah and Agbor were given earthen pot each by their mother, who instructed them that; as they leave the palace in search of a settlement place to save their lives, they should firmly carry their pots as they wonder in the forest with their followers and never settle anywhere until the pots which they must hold firmly in their hands falls down unintentionally, and that; wherever the pot of any of them (Akah and Agbor) falls, that place; such a person must settle.³ Their

mother gave them her blessings and allowed them to leave, each with his own followers. As they embarked on the journey in the forest, they got to a certain spot and the pot of Agbor fell down.⁴ Agbor and Akah his brother realizing that, the falling of the pot from him was a sign of him, Agbor, ending his journey, to settle at that place, embraced themselves and cried for some moment, for separating from being together from that moment in their lives. Agbor happened to be the elder brother of Akah. Agbor encouraged Akah to continue the journey alone with his followers as he was settling with his own followers, as his earthen pot had fallen down at that particular place.⁵ The place that Agbor's earthen pot fell down, that he settled is 'Agbor Ukwu' (Agbor Boji-Boji) as it is known and called till today.

Akah summoned courage, carrying his own pot stil, very firm, and continued the journey alone with his own followers. Several miles afterwards, Akah's earthen pot fell down, and it was dawned on Akah that, he had reached his own place of settlement like Agbor his brother, and ended his journey, and settled at the place with his followers.⁶ The place that Akah's pot fell down, that he settled is Egbudu-Akah as it is known and called till today. Their brotherly relationship continued, Agbor being the elder brother to Akah, passed instructions to Akah as regards the way and manner of governing his people.⁷

Akah, on the other hand, took all instructions from Agbor and worked through with them. Akah's occupation was hunting and farming. He paid homage to his elder brother, Agbor, at 'Agbor-Ukwu' (Agbor Boji-Boji).⁸ Akah's house was located at

around the back of today's known Mr. Okonta's compound. Akah successfully gave birth to a son, and was very glad having a male child, and he named the son, 'Egbudu'. (Egbudu-Uga) and said; . "I am Ugah, my son is Egbudu. Therefore, he is Egbudu Uga. After the death of Akah, Egbudu his son became in charge of his father 'Aka's' possessions and territory. He took his father's steps, hunting, farming, paying homage to Agbor Ukwu (Agbor Boji-Boji).⁸ Egbudu gave birth to Ogbida, who took over the father's government after the death of his father, Egbudu. Ogbida gave birth to Agbalume who left the seat of throne to Atukpua, whom after his death, the son Nwaokoloegbe took over. After Nwaokoloegbe, Odagweze his son, popularly called 'Odagwe'. Odagwe gave birth to Idene, the only son of his mother from Ogwashi-Uku, this is one account of the origin of Egbudu Akah community.⁹

Another account that is generally accepted recounts that Egbudu-Akah was founded in the early period of the eighteenth century about (1715 AD) by Akah who was a great Hunter at the time. He migrated from Ebedei and settled there before subsequent entry of other tribes that then formed the four(4) quarters of the town. The quarter's or villages that make up the town are Idumu-Eze, Ogbe-Eku, Olene and Idumu-Agbor quarters.¹⁰ These were the few at the initial time, entry of the population of about six(6) thousand including the satellite villages. Other satellite villages that make up the community includes Obi-Ozuem, Aniokpor, Obi-Enukegu, Obi- Ogwu, Ani-Menudo, Obi- Okonkwor, Ani-Efume , Ani-Egbune, and Obi- Governor.¹¹

The Idumu-Eze quarters are the descendants of Akah who migrated from Ebedei as the first settler who inhabited where there were wilocane (Ugah), this formed the saying "Egbudu-Ugah". It must be noted that they did not settle there at the same time, but at varying periods.¹² The Olene quarters was believed to have migrated from Uchronigbe, a satellite town from the Benin kingdom at the same early period. Ogbe-Eku quarters migrated from two areas, Ubulu and Igbouzor to meet Akah who originally founded the town. The other settler who settled with these initial settlers were the Agbor people who settled at Idumu-Agbor quarters.¹³ These Agbor people who were more in numbers, wanted to dominate the original settlers. This oppression, and intimidation resulted to protest, and riot against the Agbor people in the town. Also, it is worthy to note that Egbudu invited Agbor people to be able to get rid of wild animals which posed a barrier to economic activities during the period understudy.¹⁴ The truth of this story could be traced to relationship between Agbor-Obi and Ekuku-Agbor having the same king as the custodian of their ancestry. Ekuku-Agbor is a satellite town under Agbor-Obi, administered by a high chief known as the (Uboh).¹⁵

It was the relationship between Egbudu and Agbor that informed the existence of Ekuku-Agbor during this period (Chief Lawrence). It is pertinent to understand that the intimate relationship between Egbudu-Akah, and Akumazi- Umuocha could be dated back to the 20th century war between Egbudu, and Ekuku-Agbor. This was due to the refusal of Akumazi to assist Agbor against Egbudu, which further cemented the

relationship between both communities, and a tie binding that Egbudu and Akumazi cannot shed blood.¹⁶

Ekuku-Agbor in a bid to fight Egbudu sought the assistance of Akumazi. This appeal for assistance was rejected, hence the strengthening of their relationship leading to (inter marriages), and sharing of certain social values; as most Akumazi indigenes live in Egbudu till present day.

The subsequent plot of Agbor people to invade and capture Egbudu Akah people got to their ears and immediately they swung to action. At this point war was looming. The town under the leadership of king Illoh consulted the Oracle on how the war will be carried out and the outcome, if it would be in their favour or not and for fortification purposes, they were a very fetish community and believed strongly in their Oracles (gods and goddesses). On the consultation of the Oracle it chose Mr Isi-Ekwene to lead Egbudu-Akah people to the battle front. In the course of the war, Egbudu defeated Agbor people. Agbor people had to run from their original settlement to a place where Abavo, Ute and Ejeme indigenes collectively farm(Eku), this formed the name Agbor-Eku. Egbudu people in fear of reprisal attack ran to an area near the river(Onu-Iyi)but later returned to the original settlement.¹⁷

Socio-Political Organisation

Egbudu-Akah society was socially and politically organized as in other Anioma societies. It is not totally different from our knowledge of the pre-colonial life of the

central and south-eastern Igbo. What would perhaps, appear a bit apart is that some Egbudu-Akah families, for instance, Ugiri and Mbama, had a permanent meeting place and hereditary headship whose authority was however, limited.¹⁸

On the eve of the colonial conquest and occupation, the Egbudu-Akah, like most other Igbo societies, east of the Nigeria, falls into the group of political arrangement the European anthropologists would not desire to admit as state but rather as 'stateless'. Probably, because of the absence of a central administrative authority system that governed the area at that time. Odetola writes that Western scholars have characterized as states, "those societies which have singular head with a central administrative authority system ruling over a recognized territory".¹⁹ It was basically on the strength of the above assertion that these writers emphasized that the main attribute of a political system is its ability to exercise a monopoly of physical coercion over a given territory legitimately.

The socio-political organization of a given society depends largely on the people, custom, tradition and culture. The behavioural inclination of a people matures, declines, and falls in accordance with changes in material environment, which procreates and sustains such attitudes. Arthur Nwankwo was of the view that the socio-political behavior of a people is a direct output of the environment in which the people find themselves.²⁰

In the social structure, Egbudu-Akah was organized beginning from the family and compound, which also dictated the political organizations. Like in most Anioma societies, the man is the head of the house with his wife or wives and children forming

part and parcel of his household and close confidants. Each family settles in its own compound with houses built with mud and covered with thatch or palm fronds. There were neither block houses nor zinc roofs during the pre-colonial times in the area. Regarding the type of houses that existed in the society, Herbert Oguine narrated: in those days, the type of houses that existed was what we called “Otakirikiri”. The name was derived from the nature of the house.²¹ It was built with materials such as mud, bamboo sticks or “Okporo Ngwo”, thatch and sticks. Majority of the houses in the area before the ‘white men’ came were built with thatch for the rich men who could afford them. But the poor who could not afford the thatch used palm frond round the standing sticks and mud. There were no zinc houses in Egbudu-Akah before the whiteman came

Pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah was a typical African traditional society in terms of houses the people lived in. These houses provided the shelter for the people. They also gave comfort to the people during rainy seasons. These houses were beautifully adorned with colourful traditional drawings and paintings from Uri and Uhie trees, which depicts traditional houses in Anioma land. The houses provided security and shielded the people from wild animals and cold at night. Most of these houses survived long after colonialism. However, one can scarcely find them these days except in the interior parts of Egbudu-Akah villages.²²

Marriage was another respected important social aspect of pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah. It was and still remains a sacred institution in the social relations, traditions and

customs of the people. Marriage provided a unifying bond amongst the people and their neighbours. In this regard, Simon Ottenberg writes that “marriages units people to each other, binding families, lineages and other groups in reciprocal duties and obligations.”²³ Marriages in Egbudu-Akah created an interlocking web of legal and kinship relationships which bound families and lineages together. It promoted trade, most especially long distance trade in which most people were said to have married from distant neighbours like Obowo, Umuahia, Ngwa and Oru, deliberately to ensure their safe passage through those villages, since by such marriages the traders became accepted members of the in-laws clans.

A.E. Afigbo rightly observed that most long distance travellers were polygamists and usually took care to choose their wives from important and strategically located towns along their normal route of business... the mere mention of the in-laws family could constitute a safe conduct pass.²⁴ One important primary objective of marriage in Egbudu-Akah was to maintain the continuity of the family. It was the duty of parents in the pre-colonial period to choose a wife for their son. However, before this was done, the father of the young man would ensure that he taught his son to be brave and hardworking. He also equipped him with what he would use to earn a living and maintain a wife. He taught him how to farm and bought a hoe and a climbing rope, etc for him. With these implements, the young man explored his environment and became mature enough to live with a wife chosen for him. Again before the traditional marriage rites were performed,

one important aspect of tradition the people considered, was whether the two families could intermarry. The family backgrounds of both families were usually considered as regards the taboos that pervaded the people's marriage tradition. These taboos includes to ensure that sickness such as epilepsy did not run in the family. The most important aspect was the 'Osu caste and Umeh'.²⁵ These two caste systems were strictly observed in traditional Egbudu-Akah society before any marriage was contracted.

Political Organisation of Egbudu-Akah

Political Organization and authority was arranged in the following levels:

- a. Extended family (umunne)
- b. Lineage (umunna)
- c. Village (Ama)
- d. Village group or town (*Obodo*).
- e. The Clan Assembly (Obi, Iyase, Oghne Onihre, Nze/Ogha, Odogwu, Isama-Oza, Ozoma and Ede)

The Extended family was the first and smallest unit in pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah society. It comprised all individual heads of the family and adult males of the family who, by their age, financial power, social and traditional qualification, could contribute meaningfully to the development of the family and by extension, the village and town. The natural president of the extended family meeting was he eldest son, 'di okpara' or 'opara' as pronounced by different communities within Egbudu-Akah. He was at times

referred to as “Nna Anyi Ukwu” or ‘Oji Ofo’ (the holder of the sacred staff of office of the ancestral fathers of the families). He also took the first share in the family.²⁶ The Oji Ofo was said to have discharged among other things three vital duties. Aside from being naturally conferred with executive role as the president of the extended family assembly, he also was obliged to perform ritual and judicial functions as occasion demanded.

In Egbudu-Akah traditional political organization, the extended family served a number of political and judicial purposes which include inter alia: the discussion and settlement of all matters referred to it by the individual member families, it also treated all cases in dispute vis-à-vis matrimonial, land, theft, murder cases and so on, that arose from families. All very serious matters outside the jurisdiction, were referred to the village council. The office of the okpara was hereditary. It passed from father to the eldest son if he (the son) was of age: otherwise it went from father to eldest brother, then back to the son of the original holder, when he became of age. The okpara held this position until death, as far as he remained mentally sound to discharge his duties.²⁷

The Lineage (Umuna) Level

This second level of traditional political organization in Egbudu-Akah was made up of heads of extended families ‘ndi di okpara’ and adult males of extended families which traced their descent to a common ancestor. In most cases, such families dwelt closely together in the same neighbourhood but sometimes, they might be interspersed with non-blood-related families which broke away from their original lineages or were

ostracized. This council was presided over by the oldest man, who came from the most senior family; he was the first to take share in the lineage. He was also the custodian of the founders' ofo. By virtue of this position, he won the respect and subordination of his peers from other families. Nonetheless, decisions at the lineage council were reached by consensus.²⁸

The Village Council

The village council is the next largest political unit after the lineage assembly. It comprised all the kindred lineages of the village. Attendance at the council was restricted to the Obi, Iyase, Oghene Onihe, Nze/Ogha, Odogwu, Isama, Oza, Ozoma and Ede. This political hierarchy begins from the Obi in council who is crowned by the seven Chiefs. It is of notable interest that kingship is the duty of the extended family to produce an Obi.

Furthermore, the other chiefs like the Iyase who is the Prime-Minister and also the second in command, it is his duty and the duty of Oghene Onihe, Nze/Ogha, Odogwu, Isama, Oza, Ozoma, Ede to see to the successful coronation of the Obi. They also assist in the day to day running of Egbudu-Akah, agenda are been brought before the Obi to deliberate on the village of Egbudu-Akah for it growth. Also it was the Odogwu (the Warrior) chief who made sure that the community is well protected. According to chief Osakwe, he said that each of these Chiefs came from the different quarters in Egbudu-Akah; The Iyase is from Ogbeisi, Odogwu-Ishekpe, Isama-Ogbe-Akwu, Oza-Idumu-Ona, Ozoma-Idumu-Uzagbo, and Ede from Ogbe-Onicha. These Chiefs are known as the

Onotus and they play active role in the festival. The Omu also known as the mother of the town and markets, saw the peaceful running of the market, every matter relating to the market is being addressed to her and she in turn relates it to the Obi in council. This political hierarchy is still functional till date.

Economic Activities of Egbudu-Akah

Our discussions emphasize the variety of pre-colonial economic activities of the Egbudu-Akah. The discussions would be considered under different sub-headings, for easy and proper understanding. The economic activities would be considered under the following sub-tittles, agriculture, arts and crafts, trade.

Agriculture:

a. Land Tenure System

Like in other Igbo communities, agriculture constituted the basic pillar on which pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah economy rested. The dependence on agriculture made land a central factor in the life of the people. In the tradition of Egbudu-Akah, land was owned by the community but held in trust for them by their various families and lineages. S.E. Mbalisi stated that land was owned by families and that individuals from these various families had their own share of the land. Land belonging to the various families were inherited by their younger ones. The first and eldest sons of the family, ‘Ndi Diokpara’ were in charge of the family land, and individual must seek his permission before making use of any land belonging to the family for farming or building a house.³¹ The diokpara

allocated land to their family members for farming. diokpara at his dicreation, often times allocated the fertile part of the land to himself and the less fertile areas to other members of their families according to seniority of birth. The last born at times receives the smallest part of the land. Land was not sold during the period preceding colonial rule. Acquisition of land was by hereditary and in most cases, land was used as collateral for borrowing. For instance, most people who were in need of money either for title taking or burial of their father pledged some portions of their land to somebody for some money. This was usually done before a witness, “Onye aka ebe”. The original owner of the land regained his portion of land unconditionally as soon as he returned the money within the stipulated time; failure to return the money could mean loss of ownership of the said land. Land was very vital to agriculture.

Different methods of farming were adopted and used by pre-colonial farmers. The major method was shifting cultivation. This meant the cultivation of some plots of land in a planting season while in another planting season, a different plot of land was cultivated. This however, depended largely on the available land owned by the farmer and his family. Mixed cropping was yet another method of farming and was very common in the area. The unit of agricultural labour was the family but at times supported by communal labour. Another prominent source of labour was what was known as Igbo onwo oru – (cooperative labour).³²

Arts and Craft

Egbudu-Akah people supplemented farming with arts and crafts. Almost every village group participated in arts and craft making. But in blacksmithing, some villages in Osu and Ugiri clans were prominent in the act. The two major crafts were blacksmithing and pottery coupled with basket and mat weaving by young boys and girls. Men practiced blacksmithing while women engaged in pottery making. Many people were of the opinion that blacksmithing was introduced into Egbudu-Akah from other parts of Anioma land. Some have considered the craft to have been introduced from neighbouring Nkwere area, where Egbudu-Akah were said to have migrated from. Other people suggested it may have come from Isu. S.C. Ukpabi suggested that “Awka may well have been the home of Iron working in Anioma land... and had introduced the trade in several parts of Anioma land.”³³

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion is on historical background of Egbudu-Akah. The discussion has proved the origin of Egbudu-Akah from Benin, after a brief sojourn in both Ukwuani and Anioma. Egbudu-Akah people having made their present territory, their home evolved a political and socio-cultural system that were based on participatory gerontocracy and traditional beliefs that well served the needs of the people. Egbudu-Akah was not an island entirely of itself, so their political and socio-cultural beliefs cooked like that of their immediate Ogwa-kwu neighbors.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES OF EGBUDU-AKAH PEOPLE

Traditional Marriage System in Egbudu-Akah

Pre-Marital Activities

In Egbudu-Akah land, there are major ceremonies before the consummation of the traditional marriage. A lady does not just wake one day to say she wants to get married. When a girl has received a proposal for marriage from a man, she informs her mother who in turn informs the father of the girl. In other cases, the groom sends a notice of marriage to a young girl through his kinsmen.¹ At a point, the groom is asked to come with his family to introduce themselves to the bride's family. A day is fixed for this meeting. The father of the girl will inform his family members, and will all be at the man's house to wait for their expected guests the groom's family. This first major visit is known as 'djoma' – to show oneself. It is also referred to as "introduction" because it is a day in which the groom's family is formally introduced to the bride's family.²

As it is customary in Egbudu-Akah, the family of the bride will welcome their guests and entertain them. This is done through the spokesman of the bride's family. He stands and calls for the attention of everyone present with the greetings, "Onyeozi" (greetings to Egbudu-Akah people). He then asks for the nicknames of the men from both families. He presents kola nuts, drinks, alligator pepper and money on behalf of the bride's family. They are then received on behalf of the groom's family by their

spokesman; prayer is then said by the eldest man. Thereafter, they will all eat and drink together. A short while later, the spokesman of the groom's family will stand and call for the attention of everyone in the same way the spokesman of the bride's family did. He then presents kola nuts, drinks, alligator pepper and money on behalf of the groom's family. These are received by the bride's family. The procedure followed in the first presentation is followed. Prayer is said by the girl's father or the eldest man in the family and they eat and drink together.¹⁶

After entertainment from both sides, the middleman of the bride's family will stand and call for attention again, and this time, he will enquire from their visitors, the purpose of their visit. Then, through their middleman, the groom's family will inform them of their intention to marry one of their daughters. Again, the bride's family will say "we have many daughters, which of our daughters do you want to marry"? The groom's family will mention the name of the bride in question.¹⁷ The bride's family will now reason together, and then, through their middlemen, will then agree that they have such a person, but they need to enquire from her if she knows the young man. They will invite her in. In the presence of all, she will be told of the young man's intentions, and thereafter, her family will ask her if she knows the young man. If she agrees that she knows him, then she will be asked to go into her room again, while both families celebrate, eating and drinking together. After some time, through their spokesman; the

groom's family will request for the list of required items needed for the payment of the bride price. They are usually given. Some items are negotiable, while others are fixed.¹⁸

Meanwhile, partying continues. When the groom's family is satisfied that they have achieved their purpose of visit, they will request for permission to leave for their home. They will be permitted, but before departure, both families will fix another day for the payment of the bride-price. Meanwhile, both families and other members of the community now know that the lady is engaged to be married to the young man who has been formally introduced to her family.¹⁹

Payment of Bride Price

After the introduction, both families fix another day for payment of the bride price. However, the traditional marriage slightly varies in some families. The middleman is always the one appointed to meet the bride's family to get the date for the traditional marriage as agreed by the bride's family. The variations experienced in the families in Egbudu-Akah are due to certain circumstances in the families. In most cases, it is the demands that come from the bride's family members. In some families outrageous demands are made to the groom in order to prepare for the marriage rites.²⁰ And so before the marriage is contracted, such grooms spend so much for the bride's family members. But in other cases, it is not so.

Commenting on it, Emuotu Max-Ogaga (Interviewed) from Ughelli says the variation is a result of traditional awareness level, economic background, educational

background, religious status of the families involved.²¹ By this, you discover that families that are deeply involved in the tradition of the land try to compel the groom to do certain things such as, the pouring of libation on the ground. Also, some bride's parents make some financial demands from the groom. All these may be as a result of the background of the families. Some families are poor and see the marriage as a way of enriching themselves while some do not see it that way. They see the groom as their son and the groom's family as theirs.²²

On the agreed day fixed for the traditional marriage, the groom's family comes to the bride's family in the girl's father's house. Meanwhile the list of required things to buy or pay for, has been given to him. Both families have their spokesmen. According to the tradition, the bride's family welcomes and entertains the visitors. Thereafter, the groom's family responds. When these have been done, they go into the business of the day-payment of the bride price. The list is brought out, and one after the other they look at the requirement.²³

Egbudu-Akah Traditional Marriage Requirements

1. Wrapper, hat and walking stick for the Father.
2. Money given to the bride's mother for her labour on the child to be negotiated by the Mother.
3. Bride price 10 shillings
4. 9 tubers of yam (for knocking on the door).

5. Salt worth 3 shilling
6. 20 liters of local gin.
7. 4 yards of cloth
8. Palm wine and dry gin
9. Lap of Antelope or grass cutter
10. Clearing of Father's rubber plantation
11. One pound
12. Escort of bride to husband's place
13. Drink for youth
14. Sing three traditional songs and dance
15. See family members as directed by Father-in-law.²⁴

Although there are variations in the ceremonies, but regardless of the families certain requirements are usually constant. Name and Address of the home where the ceremony will be conducted with the date and time of the ceremony is stated. Diokpa-Head of the Bride's family and the Parents/Guardians of the bride are recognized. Others are;

Nduogor I (Spokesperson) for the Bride's family Onyeozi
(Spokesperson) for the Groom's family.²⁵

Parents/Guardians of the Groom will also be in attendance. The Onyeozi who is the Middleman will accompany the groom while the bride is in the company of her

Umune (Traditional bridesmaids). Another important part of this ceremony is the Bride fee settlement. A team which consists of four member team made up of two representatives from each side of the families, including their spokespersons does this while Musical group is to perform to sensitize the environment of the ceremony of the day. Meanwhile, the bride is being dressed up in her room before presentation to the groom. Usually, she is dressed at least twice in a special native attire called Akwa Ocha.²⁶

According to Ifeanyi M (Interviewed) from Egbudu-Akah tried outlining some below; payment of dowry, buying of bags of salt for the women, gallon of ogogoro (dry gin) for the family and buying of clothes for bride's parents.²⁷ But in Ifeanyi's list above, certain details are missing. Some amounts of monies are given to the youths and the bride's siblings. The family will ensure that the groom settles everyone connected to the bride in his little way. In the list, there are things to buy for the father of the girl, the mother of the girl, her younger brothers and sisters. Others include things to buy for mayaikoro (youths), maya umuada (married women), maya-agbogo (girls) and the family as a whole, etc. The bride's family looks at everything to confirm.²⁸

The girl's mother is invited into the house to formally seek her consent and to confirm whether the groom met her behind and gave her what is required, if she affirms that the groom had done all required, he will rise with his people and "lavish" money on her. Then the bride price of 10 shillings (10) is paid.²⁹ It is interesting to note that in Egbudu-Akah tradition, the bride-price is never paid in full. A particular amount of

money is usually refunded to the groom immediately after the money is paid or at the end of the ceremony this signifies that their daughter is not for sale. After verifying that the groom has met the requirements and paid the bride price, the Opha will be sent for.³⁰ She arrives in the company of her umuada uno and some family women who shower encomiums on her saying:

the bride is coming make way and admire her

i exclamation of joy

See her, she is beautiful from

Behind

She is beautiful in front, daughter of a famous family

beautiful girl i...iyeee. exclamation of joy.³¹

When she enters, she stands before the eldest man of her family who will show to her the young man who has come for her hand in marriage. He will further ask her if she consents to his proposal. If her response is positive, the groom again rises with his people to lavish money on her. At that time, the two of them kneel before the eldest man who prays for them with a glass of dry gin and pours libation on the ground to commit the marriage to the ancestors.³² But the issue of pouring libation on the ground during the prayers for the couple has been criticized as idol worship. This also has faced much argument and debate. Some see it as part of the tradition which must be upheld while to

some, it is no longer compulsory because of Christianity (and this will be discussed in the subsequent chapter).

During the oral interview, several opinions on whether it is compulsory to pour libation on the ground during prayers were raised. Patience Ugbarugba says; it is traditionally compulsory³³ but Helen Edore (Interviewed) is of the opinion that it is not compulsory rather, it depends on the family.³⁴ Meanwhile, P. Esosuakpor (Interviewed) believes that it is necessary because it shows that both family ancestors are witnesses to the marriage.³⁵ Still, Emuotu Max-Ogaga (Interviewed) argues that it is not compulsory because the prayer can be said verbally without libation on the ground.³⁶ Then he gives the drink to the bride who in turn gives it to the groom. He drinks a little and gives it to the bride. She will drink a little from it and give it back to the man. The groom then finishes the drink with the bride sitting on his lap. He follows it up with the money which he and his family members lavish on the bride. When the bride price has been paid, the groom's family through their spokesman will take permission to go home and get prepared for the escort.³⁷ bride is led in, surrounded by her bridesmaids to stand before her father or the *Okpako-r'-orua* who is the Head of the bride's family. He calls on the bride and bridegroom, and both of them move forward and kneel down before him.³⁸

The Head of the bride's family initiates the process of formalizing the marriage by presenting a brief account of the lineage of the bride. He now begins the process by holding up a glass of drink and invoking the name of God and the memory of the

ancestors in prayers, calling on them to bless the new life now commencing for their descendant or child and the man who has asked for her hand in marriage. However, the bride's father gives his blessings to the couple as he accepts the groom into his family and from henceforth sees him as his so-in-law. The head of the family leaves some of the drink in the glass which he offers to the bridegroom to drink.³⁹ The bridegroom after drinking some, in turn passes the same glass to the bride to drink whatever is left, to signify her consent to the marriage. Drinking from the same glass is thus the bride's acknowledgement that the Head of her family has indeed spoken for her, and the signal needed to indicate that members of the groom's family are now recognized as in-laws. The bride now returns the glass through the groom to her family Head, a process that essentially declares the couple's willingness and commitment to live together as husband and wife.⁴⁰

Finally, the bride is handed over to the Head of the groom's family, who henceforth assumes responsibility to ensure that the husband and his family will take good care of their new wife. The bride is directed to sit on the laps of her husband in their first public display of life together as a married couple. The public reacts to the display by showering gifts on the new couple as both remain seated.⁴¹

Escort:

After payment of the bride-price, the bride does not follow the groom home. She remains with her family who will prepare to accompany her to her husband. This is

referred to as escortion. During the escortion, the following will be taken along: box, lantern, mat, umbrella, iron bucket, clothes, wrapper and other belongings. She takes them to begin life with her husband. According Mrs. Agusa (Interviewed), the escortion is usually done late in the night at about 12:00 midnight.⁴² It is a big party which all the young men look forward to-the bachelor's night. By implication, after escorting the bride to the groom formally, both of them are expected to start their lives normally. Also worthy of note is that, the escortion is not done secretly. Both families are well represented. Neighbours are also in attendance. It is also taken as an opportunity of creating awareness in the neighbourhood that a new bride has been married into the home.⁴³ Helen Edoreh (Interviewed) pointed out that escortion is practiced so that people living in the locality would know that a new bride has arrived and the in-laws will know their son-inlaw.⁴⁴

On the other hand, some people also see the escortion as the way of keeping an eye on the security of their daughter. Obenobe (Interviewed) opined that, escortion is to enable the family and the relation to know and familiarize themselves with the groom's family and his home in case of emergency. When a girl gets married, some members of her family try to keep an eye on her. They also check on her from time to time to be sure that her husband is taking good care of her. This is part of the intention why some go for the escortion.⁴⁵

During escortion, certain ceremonies are performed, and the couple is initiated. The escortion describes the final stage of a full marriage according to Aniocha custom. It denotes the completion of all antecedent requirements necessary on the part of the husband. It is the escorting of the bride by her family with her properties to the head of the husband's family, and handing over until death of the bride as wife to the groom's family. A special ceremony is usually performed to invoke the husband's ancestors to also receive her, and bind her over in fidelity to their son – the husband. The entire women receive the bride, eat and dance in the special room prepared for her till dawn of the following day.⁴⁶

At the initiation ceremony, the bride is handed over to the groom's family as their wife until her death. This is done at about 2:00am. Meanwhile as the people are celebrating the marriage of a new wife into the family, a goat is tied somewhere in the compound. By 2:00am, the goat is killed. The young couple stands together and the blood of the goat is poured over their legs. This act of initiation is a way of bringing the couple and presenting them to the gods of the land whom they believe will protect them. The meat is eaten by all and the skull of the goat's head is hung on the wall as sacrifice to ancestors.⁴⁷

The Proof of Virginitiy

This is another interesting aspect of the escortion process. While the celebration is going on, some women will go and prepare the husband's bed. In preparing the bed, a

white cloth is used. The white is used as a test to prove if the bride was a virgin, this signifies purity.⁴⁸ When they have all eaten and drunk, and when it is time to sleep, the people are sent home, leaving the couple to spend their first night together on the bed already prepared with the white cloth. After sexual intercourse on the first night together, the family of the groom will come to see the white cloth.⁴⁹ If the cloth is stained with blood, it is a proof that she was a virgin before she got married. On this confirmation, the husband will go back to the wife's mother and shower her with gifts to prove to her and everyone in the family that they are proud of the wife who kept herself as a virgin before getting married, and it was the effort of the mother.⁵⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has x-rayed the rich cultural heritage of the Egbudu-Akah people as regards marriage and its impact on the society. Historical antecedents indicate that the Egbudu-Akah culture and traditions have been of immense benefit to the society. This fact is seen from the perspective that the Egbudu-Akah are accommodative even to visitors. Their traditional marriage rites involve various practices which will help bring in decency to the society. For instance, it is of great honour to a family, if their daughter passes the virginity test. Knowing this every family wants to ensure that their daughters are kept undefiled. The various activities carried out in those days are not fully in practice today. This is due to various interferences on the tradition directly or indirectly. For instance, the female circumcision is not being practiced as a major part of the traditional marriage today. This is because of the advent of Christianity and awareness of the

medical implications. Thus, this will be treated in the next chapter. Some other types of marriage in pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah community include, Itinkun, Ikunlu-Nwunye (Ikor-Isi), Igbulunzor, and Nwunye-Okpoho.

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CHAPTER FOUR
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITES IN
EGBUDU-AKAH

Introduction

From earliest times, marriage and family life in Egbudu-Akah were central to the evolution and survival of Egbudu-Akah, and other Aniocha societies; hence, several laws were put in place to regulate them.¹ Although with slight variation in terms of traditional requirements for marriage and procedure, marriage and family life were essentially the same across pre-colonial Aniocha societies in terms of nature and practice. In fact, they were the vital institutions that aided nation building in the region during the period.² But according to Obaro Ikime, while it is hard to know adequately how marriages in pre-colonial Aniocha societies were conducted in detail before the coming of Christianity, marriage was however the outcome of love, common aptitude and association. Consequently, marriages in pre-colonial Aniocha were basically conducted according to inherent local customs and traditions across Aniocha societies.³ Hence, Ikime observed that:

Three influences come to play in the traditional marriage. The first is the influence of the parent, the second is the direct arrangement between a man and woman, and the third is the recommendation of friends and relatives. Before this modern time, parents arranged marriages for their children. This was very common among women.⁴

After the successful tying of the nuptial knot and parental blessings obtained in accord with local customs and traditions, family life begins in pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah. However, before anything like engagement can begin in the first place, the grandparents of the intending couple carried out an investigation.⁵ They tried to find out more about the parents of the man and woman respectively. They strived to find out if either family had a track record of any chronic disease (such as insanity), or the reputation and character of both family and their members respectively. More so, there were customary visits to native doctors (seers) to ascertain or obtain divine forecast of the compatibility, success, and productivity or otherwise of the intended marriage.⁶

In pre-colonial Egbudu-Akah, traditional marriage was a community affair. This was because people usually resided and grew up in the community where they were born, where almost everybody knew everybody in the communal estate.⁷

Socio-Economic Significance of Egbudu-Akah Marriage Rites

Marriage is an important aspect of traditional rites to the people Egbudu-Akah. Some importance of marriage has been identified as follows:

It actually makes an incomplete human being complete. It makes him/her a grown up and gives him/her responsibilities, which are to feed and clothe the wife or to assist the husband or otherwise.

Marriage is supposed to take the persons involved out of their hectic life style and place them in a path to follow in life and a shoulder to lean on.

Marriage also prevents/reduces sexual immoral act.

Again, noteworthy is the fact that humans are essentially social animals. They fear loneliness and cannot live or grow their full potentials in isolation. They have a genetically driven need to reach out to other people and marriage fulfils this need.

In addition, human beings know subconsciously that if they remain at the tender mercies of the natural world they will not be able to survive for long. They also think that the best way to eliminate that insecurity and loneliness is to establish and form a bond with an individual of opposite gender.

Marriage is the only institution that allows two people to establish a very strong and enduring relationship that is fully backed by the law and society as a whole. This is the reason why the institution of marriage has been around for so long.

Living Together: In a marriage the individuals involved, come together to set up a home of their own. They live under the same roof and sleep on the same bed. This ensures that the two parents no longer feel lonely and regularly have access to each other as close companions as often possible. They can speak to each other anytime they want and generally benefit from each other's physical presence.

Functional Division of Labour: Marriage creates functional division of labour in all of life's activities for the couple. The wife usually takes care of house hold work such as laundry and cooking food while the husband goes out to work everyday to provide for the

family needs. This makes things easier for both of them and they develop a specialization in the area of work, concentrating fully on the individual's responsibilities.

Financial Security: When two people get married, their lives intertwine in more ways than one. They bring together savings and assets they accumulated in the past. This combined wealth increases the purchasing power of both spouses and they can afford to collect many luxuries for the home to make their life comfortable. If both the spouses have jobs then their salaries jointly add up to a tidy sum and they can now afford many assets, both movable and immovable which most likely, they could not afford earlier.

Emotional Support: The biggest benefit marriage offers to the partners is emotional support. The spouses stay together and lead a closely knitted life. They share their personal secrets with each other and discuss all life's big and small events. They also go to social functions together as one unit. When a partner is depressed or life takes a sudden turn for the worse, he/she is provided support by way of soothing words and encouragement by the spouse.

Rearing Children: To have children and begin a family, there really is no better option than getting married. This is because the task of raising children is easier. They are able to establish a safe and secure nest in which the children can be reared to grow up into healthy adults. While the father ensures discipline, general guidance,

and physical security for the children, the mother offers them soft emotions such as tenderness, intimacy and affection.

Social and Legal Recognition: Marriage unlike live-in relationships is an institution that has the full backing of the society and law. A married man and wife have a certain social status and respect that is denied people who have never been married. Marriage is also recognized by the law and has legal validity. The rights and duties of the married couple are well defined and enforceable in a court of law. If partners want to split, there is a particular procedure that has to be followed with respect to not only uniting the relationship but also for matters related to division of assets and liabilities, child custody, and maintenance to be payable to wife.⁸

Impacts of/why Inter-Ethnic Marriage

Marriage is the oldest established form of human behaviour providing kinship ties and an avenue for peacemaking between tribes. Beyond this, it does not only imply kinship; marriage can also be an exchange of goods and culture.⁹ Thus, every marriage, be it homogamy or heterogamy, contains its own acculturation, assimilation and integration process in accordance with its social environment. In addition, social and historical conditions lead to different events and interpretations on a regional basis. Human relationships which exist in their own social reality, must be understood in its historical and political context. In pre-modern times, within the tribal social order, marriage and its results had different dimensions to those of modern times. In the wake of

the nation-state building of modern times, intermarriage has been a device for the application of the ideological framework of political structures. Nonetheless, despite these temporal, regional and political factors, debates on intermarriage share the same conceptual foci: integration, assimilation and cultural hybridization.¹⁰

The family has a key role in cultural transfer to future generations in traditional social structure. The function of culture and tradition transfer and the importance of marriage relationships underline their importance for society, particularly within a patriarchal context. The exchange of women between social groups or families can be of great significance. Strong allegiances and enmities alike have been perpetuated by women or marriages between kinship groups, villages and other small communities.¹¹ The first requirement for a new kinship is marriage, which then creates a blood tie. Marriage ties are like a bridge, with effects growing down through the generations and over the years among Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Mesopotamian and other nomadic people.¹²

The marriage of two people brings about more complex and wide-reaching impacts within the system of kinship relationships. In the traditional social system in particular, in the absence of literary cultural institutions, the language spoken in everyday life is the main instrument for the transfer of cultural heritage. Teaching language to the new generation and preserving it day to day life forms the primary way of keeping

traditions and facts, keeping a language alive and transferring it to the next generation is more than just learning.¹³

Furthermore, reason for inter-ethnic marriages may be because of education similarities that will ensure compatibility of standard in the couples educational qualifications. For example, a male medical doctor may see another female medical doctor from another ethnic groups and decides to ask her hands into marriage.¹⁴ In political terrain, especially Nigerian politics, politicians from different ethnic groups may like themselves and decide to marry each other. The same thing applies to those who transact business and others who have personal charisma in them that attracts opposite sex for marriage.¹⁵

Challenges of Inter-Ethnic Marriages

Marriage in itself is full of challenges which come at various stages and to almost every union. This can be easily explained owing to the fact that the two individuals have their different beliefs, traits characters, orientation and interests. Most people naturally have a distinct picture of what their marriage or home would be.¹⁶ The expectation is always perfect home. Unfortunately, conflicts come from time to time which are usually resolved by the two individuals but in some cases with the intervention of third party which could be another member of the family, friend and sometimes a spiritual sibling or guardian.

Money: This has a very important role to play in the lives of the individual as well as family and the couple. The presence of it makes life a lot easier but the lack of it poses so much threat to a marriage and this could challenge the authority of the man as the head of the house: thus, challenging the marriage. Certain ethnic groups in Nigeria believe that a man must be made or financially reasonably stable, with much emphasis before he can be given a wife. If at some point their finances are threatened, the parents of the girl would almost suggest their daughter quits. Families constantly wobble and sometimes threaten to collapse, obviously many happen daily. Modern ideologies are not helping to build homes and they pile up against our cultural values which on the long run affect marriages negatively. This especially becomes worse when the lady looks for money on several occasions and the so called husband still maintains that there is no money. The only option that is left for the lady is to find her way.¹⁷

Communication: Still on the question of cultural differences, the indigenous language is most times put aside for a rather neutral national language or worse still, foreign language or the official language (English) in many homes in Nigeria. Illiterate parents expect that their would be sister in-law should understand their language for easy communication and where they do not, communication would be limited and gossips come in that may threaten the marriage. Besides, younger women these days have to contend with especially sisters and mother in-law over their style of dressing, she may find quite comfortable but to the in-laws, it may not reflect the symbol of “married woman” it could

be interpreted to mean non submission or being uncultured if she does not cover her body all the time especially outside the house. It could be the issue of short dresses, trousers or make-ups. To the wife, she might not see it in this light. Yet this could be brought about by not just the culture but the religious doctrines and traditional beliefs of the ethnic group her husband comes from or even her own, though the men usually do not encounter problems with their dressing or appearance. In this case though, each person's attitude towards the other's cultural differences is what makes the difference; for the purpose of knowing more or well enough of the family or ethnic group you are to joined with, do not hasten into the marriage.¹⁸

Ethnic group he/she comes from: Emphasis is placed on area of weakness of people from that ethnic group. For the non-literate parents, they are concerned with the medium for communication between the two families, especially the son or daughter in questions bothering on family history, for example sicknesses, death, character, occupation, size of family, success and failures cannot be fully or satisfactorily investigated. So, from the onset the parents see these as posing a very big challenge and issues that call for concern. Nevertheless, the intending coupletries painfully and sometimes unsatisfactorily to explain some of these concerns to them. Where there is discrepancies between the two families on the family history, problems set in to the detriment of the marriage.¹⁹

Cultural Differences: This brings a lot of strain in an inter-ethnic union. Naturally, the different ethnicities bring a lot of challenges and are worth it if the partners discuss and if

possible study, by way of researching and reading books about the culture of the ethnic groups the partner comes from. It is indeed a lot of work but in the long run you are better informed, you would not be biased and could be in better position to educate the rest members of the family and friends who may have earlier expressed concerns.²⁰

By interaction, the intending couple learns what is expected of a son in-law. It could be by way of simple gestures, pleasantries, gifts and so on. On the part of the lady, tasks as simple as serving food to the in-laws which may require particular style, she may need to gesticulate. The husband too might be very down to earth or home-boy type who would always prefer local delicacies and soups from his area (village), these the women must learn from the onset.²¹ Modern ladies do not find this interesting as sometimes, they find it not convenient to do but on the long run it affects the relationship not just between her and her husband, but even the relatives who go on gossiping against the lady that she is not worth it. What it implies is non-conformity to their culture and for their brother to change mind over the lady, hence the marriage is threatened.²²

Mutual Respect: This is very important in inter-ethnic marriage. As much as we know of the secret fears parents of both partners might entertain at some point, there seem to be higher degree of respect for each other's family especially coming from two different ethnic groups. Where the two families do not respect each other, problems set in.²³ The reason might be that one family is richer than the other and wants the poor family to always respect her or that both families are rich, each saying; what are they?

Gender Roles: Some ethnic groups have it that women should work very hard, if not harder than the men to be able to cater for the needs of the family. There are others too, who do not believe in women taking up white collar jobs notwithstanding the level of western education she may have acquired. Yet another ethnic group believes that a woman sits at home to take care of the home, while making babies and “watch” them grow.²⁴

In some areas, it is believed that once a woman marries, she takes one or two of her siblings with her and it becomes the responsibility of her and her husband to train them and even those left behind in the village. Consequently, the man in this situation may not find it interesting but he is forced to comply, because that is what the tradition demands from the wife’s side. It may be alien to the man’s cultural practices and this may affect the smooth running of the home due to economic strain and lack of privacy in some cases. At times, some women do not allow their husbands to pay the school fees of their brothers and sisters just to make sure that their brothers and sisters schooling is fully sponsored. In this case, when the relatives of their husbands hear this, they will make sure that the marriages are threatened so that the women suffer.²⁵

Is it something out of place for the topic “marital inter-course” to be mentioned or even discussed among some races. It is considered a taboo. This goes a long way affecting a lot of things with one of the parties realizing it on time. For example, the man may come from an ethnic group where it is believed that a woman has no say when it

comes to the number of children they should have. For this reason, the issue of child spacing or family planning becomes a serious burden on the woman who may not win the sympathy of her husband since it is not hers to decide, but of the god's or God. In such a union, the woman must cooperate all the time. This tells on her physically, psychologically and even the finances of the family might be affected which happens to be the case most of the time as the standard is brought below average. The woman is usually highly upset and may begin to question the religious or cultural belief that has brought her under such bondage.²⁶ Worse still, if a woman commits adultery which the land of the husband forbids, marriage would be threatened.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that marriage is a union of a man and a woman who agreed to live together and bear children and can be separated by death, divorce or annulment. Individuals marry for several reasons and from anywhere they like both within and outside their ethnic groups. When it comes to choosing a partner, many Egbudu-Akah are still guided by ethnic affiliations. Some families in Egbudu-Akah still frown at inter-ethnic marriages because of challenges that occur frequently that break the marriages.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research work had discussed the socio-economic significance of traditional marriage rites of the Egbudu-Akah people of Delta state Nigeria. For proper understanding of the problem of study, historical method was adopted.

In treating this problem as assumption was made that there is a linkage between traditional marriage system and the contemporary western marriage system which have to do with the binding together of man and woman to become a one union. To justify this assumption, relevant literature and other related documents were reviewed and analyzed and the result shows that there are interfaces between traditional marriage system and western culture marriage system.

Chapter two carryout an in-depth analysis on the historical background of traditional marriage system by analyzing traditional marriage as one of the ceremonies that depict the rich cultural heritage of Egbudu-Akah people. When traditional marriage is contracted, several factors are put into consideration in order to properly observe the tradition of the land.

It is observable from the discussion in this study that modernization and Christianity have greatly influenced the way traditional marriage is being conducted among the people. The trend seen as worrisome. Also, modern civilization and Christianity are threats to the rich cultural heritage of the people. However, this study

observed that the greatest threat was negligence on the part of the stakeholders. For instance, if a lady 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. This writer sees the need for proper education on the tradition of the people. It is not everything about the tradition that is idolatrous as some assume. Also, modern civilization has greatly influenced the way traditional marriage is celebrated today.

The evidence from the study of the area of Egbudu-Akah marriage system and to examine the rationale of the changing role of traditional marriage system in Egbudu-Akah sub-ethnic group. The study indicates that the woman whose bride price has been paid is treated differently especially, when a situation arises from another woman who just packed in with a man. For example, respect is accorded to a woman who was married properly whereas a woman who just moved into a man's house is treated with little or no respect by the man's family. This is why every parent wants his/her daughter to be properly married is central concern of this research.

From the observation of this research marriage activities in Egbudu-Akah were well managed and elaborate, as it served the people well by helping to keep them united,

stable and creating a sort of prosperity that made a remarkable tradition in Egbudu-Akah which also inspired her neighbors.

The study also examined the life of the pre-colonial history of Egbudu-Akah, it explores the significant of their socio-political and economic institution in the ancient time, which entails their labour in economics and their creativity in the social circle by farming, trading, customs, arts and crafts and of course their form of political life. All these would be seen highlighted. The study thus concludes by identifying various obstacles in the traditional system of Eku Community, it also talked on the issues on the adultery, childless, marrying more than one wives and the punishment that accustom the any break of custom law that widowhood persists as an important aspect of indigenous cultural life given most of the indigenes still see the practice as the only proper and acceptable way to mourn a deceased spouse.

In addition to this, debates on common and challenging elements that are intimately linked to Benin widowhood practices are conceptually and analytically mapped –out, in light of prevailing customary law, national legislation and changes brought by Christianity. In fore-going research, the influence of colonial rule on traditional practices is evident that the coming of Christianity had a tremendous and unquantifiable influence and impact on the traditional widowhood practice in Egbudu-Akah.

This research project builds on researcher extensive, direct and personal experiences of traditional widowhood in Egbudu-Akah as one of the family members was once a victim. Indeed, it was quite challenging because there was little information on specific Benin widowhood rites in the literature due to the sensitive ritual servitude which makes it unsafe for the widows. Reflecting on the sensitivity of this research, the selection Egbudu-Akah community as a case study could be limited by some ethical dilemma, cultural/ linguistic practices, sub group characteristic (widows in different Egbudu-Akah communities) and the researcher's subjectivity. Nevertheless, the research is still somewhat accurate despite these shortcomings.

From the result of this study, it is clearly demonstrated that Egbudu-Akah land, marriage is a village affair or in the least, a kindred affair, whereby it is not only the bridegroom that is the husband of the new bride but all his kinsmen and women. The woman is called: '*our wife*' by the people. Therefore to marry in Egbudu-Akah culture entails pre-marital investigations or research into the family backgrounds of both bride and groom. This is the unique aspect of traditional marriage that benefits the couple. It is the most advantageous aspect of Egbudu-Akah wisdom.

In final analysis the conquest of Egbudu-Akah land and the imposition of colonial rule transformed some cultural practices in Egbudu-Akah, especially the indigenous marriage institution. The indigenous arbitration system provided justice for the people of Egbudu-Akah because it depended solely on cultural precedent to adjudicate in disputes.

But, the colonial established Native Court system introduced new elements that fundamentally affected the Egbudu-Akah way of administration of justice. With the introduction of the Native Court and implementation of the Aniocha Civil Code in 1923, Egbudu-Akah marriage practices came under attack. The court robbed the community of utilising indigenous alternative dispute resolution mechanism customarily rested in heads of the families to mediate on matrimonial crisis and conflicts, while the Code weakened the sacredness of marriage in Egbudu-Akah through the Native Courts that commercialized the resolution of matrimonial cases.

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Chiadika F.	69year	Traditional Palace Chief	Egbudu-Akah	7 th /June/2022
Emuotu M.	56year	Traditional Palace Chief	Ughelli	20 th /July/2022
Egbune T.	56yrs,	Traditional Palace Chief	Egbudu-Akah	, 23 rd /September/2022
James F.	65 years.	Academian	Egbudu-Akah	8 th /June/2022

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