

**MARKET WOMEN ASSOCIATION AND TRADING ACTIVITIES IN
BENIN CITY 1975-2015**

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

This is to certify that this work was carried out by **ARASOMWAN DEBORAH OGHOSA** with matriculation number **ART2100422** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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Prof Rev. Sis JC. Nwaka
(Head of Department)

Date _____

Date _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, whose grace, wisdom, and strength have brought me this far. To Him be all the glory for the success of this work. I also dedicate this project to the memory of my beloved mother, Mrs. Rosemary Arasomwan, whose love, prayers, and sacrifices laid the foundation for all my achievements. You remain my greatest inspiration, and I hope this makes you proud.

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My gratitude goes to the H.O.D. and entire lecturers of the Department of History and International Studies. They include; Prof. (Rev Sis) JC. Nwaka, Prof. Eddy Erhagbe, the orator himself, a father and a legend, Prof. E.A. Ifidon, Mr. F. Osarhiemen, Prof. O.B. Osadolor, Dr Mrs O. Kalu, Mr G. Ekhaton, and others. I

can confidently acclaim that I have studied under the best lecturers and professors in their various fields, and for this, I express my gratitude.

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Abstract

This research study examined the market women association and trading activities in Benin city Benin was known to the Europeans as early as the second half of the fifteenth century. It remained independent until the punitive expedition of 1897. Through early trading contacts with various European nations, the stiff resistance to later European encroachment, and through the discovery of the exquisite pieces of artwork, Benin art became widely known throughout the world. The development of markets in Benin has involved a transition from traditional, informal system to more formal and organized structures. While traditional markets remain important, there has been a transformation for greater efficiency and integration with the broader economy, including the use of technology. Benin has a rich history of vibrant traditional markets such as Oba Market and New Benin Market, Ediaken Market, which are crucial for local trade and supply. Women are known to be large economic participators in Markets majorly as traders. In Nigeria this setting has being since the precolonial times. This role has been evident in different markets around the world and Nigeria is included. Such market includes different market in Benin city Oliha market, Oba market, Santana market, New Benin market, Agbado market, Ekiosa market, to mention a few.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

It appears that males have also received a lot of attention, despite the fact that women are an integral component of our society and cannot be disregarded because of their lack of authority and influence. A civilisation's fundamental unit is its women; that is, a woman creates a family, a family creates a house, and homes create a society.¹ The Benin society is one of class and sex domination consisting of the superior versus the inferior on one hand and dominant versus the dominated on the other hand.² According to Isekhure, the concept of “woman” or “women” in Edo is such that they are seen and regarded as “*Okhuo ore owa*” (meaning, a woman is the home) and again “*Iyeowa*” (Mother of the home). Women’s purpose in the society was to be mothers of children.² The role of women in Benin pre-colonial era was limited to child-bearing, child-rearing and house managing. “...and these of course require a lot of energy and time. At the end of the day, she is tired and used up”.³ Despite these freedoms, however, according to Ebohon, from time immemorial, women in Benin were regarded as inferior class of citizen. Evhierhoma, asserts that the “Bini society, is acclaimed to be highly rich in culture and tradition.⁵ However, this culture in its richness hemlines women, limiting their autonomy, through taboos and observances which many see as obsolete behind the time and retrogressive”. Indeed, besides their motherly and wifely roles, they have

been critical actors in a number of developmental activities.⁴ Women are known to be large economic participators in Markets majorly as traders. In Nigeria this setting has being since the precolonial times. This role has been evident in different markets around the world and Nigeria is included. Such market includes different market in Benin city Oliha market, Oba market, Santana market, New Benin market, Agbado market, Ekiosa market, to mention a few. Market women are categorized based on their various commodity trade and economic activities eg textile market women. Market Women Association, all this difference market women are brought together under the umbrella of market women association which is mostly done locational for example, the women into textile trading in Oba Market are brought under the umbrella of Edo Market Women Association because Oba market is in Benin, Edo State. From precolonial time, market and trade to mention a few have been dominated by market women entrepreneurs, who buy and sell products. The major activities are inseparably with socio economic activities. Despite the dynamic nature of markets, what goes on in the market is buying and selling. The activities of a market woman bore down to getting up in the morning in other to go and showcase her goods.⁵

All the market women rise early in the morning. They spend inordinate numbers of hours gathering and transporting goods to market. Many are family helpers and bread winners. Most suffer the problems associated with rural and urban living-i.e. they have to deal with slow and unreliable transport, police

harassment, and government hostility. Indeed, the details of market women's daily struggles to survive and sell their goods is one of the strengths of African Market Women.⁶ Market center in spatial planning represents a geographical space for the distribution of commodities and services. The different roles of the market in the development of a nation and among nations are not something to be ignored. Meillassou, depict that market acts as a meeting place for the perpetuation of lineage rights and obligations. Market center as described by Sada and Oguntoyinbo, are special man-made features in Nigerian settlements and that every town has at least one large daily market depending on the status of the town⁶. In Benin society, market play a vital role in the economic, socio-cultural and political life of the people. Economically, they serve as centers for collection and local exchange of products originating in the immediate hinterland of a market. Also, the markets are not only economic institutions but serve socio-cultural and political functions. Therefore, it is not surprising that markets can be and are used for nearly every conceivable purpose that requires a large number of people gathering, together under controlled conditions. Moreover, market places are associated with religious activities. Markets serve as avenues for the performance of public rituals. Sacrifices are made to the market spirits for the peace and tranquility of a town or community. Handling the market spirits with disdain or levity could spell doom. In the words of Bohannan, markets were consecrated with shrines associated with them. The consecration emanated primarily from the need for peace at the market

place. It was believed such consecration would guarantee that supernatural sanctions would back up the political authorities in the maintenance of peace in the market place.⁷ The Benin indigenous markets are always under the watchful eye of officials. These are usually appointed authorities, especially the market chief and assistants appointed by the traditional rulers with the duties of keeping the peace and order, enforcing regulations, preventing dishonest dealing and maintaining the cleanliness and repair of the market. Some are in charge of levying a fee on goods entering the market and charging rents on stalls.⁸ Agriculture was the first form of economic activities witnessed in Benin City. This led to trade as the surplus produced from the farms had to be sold in order for the people to be able to purchase other things they required. Right from this period, the market square had been an important aspect of the city development; the market did not only provide avenue for the distribution of these agricultural goods; Prominent market during colonialism was the Oba market association, head by Iye-Eki, in post-colonial time, there are several markets and market women associations across the state example is the Uselu market and market women association in Benin, these market and associations are still present. This study focuses on market women association and trading activities in Benin city 1970-2015. Using two markets in Benin city as a case study. Ediaken market and Eki Oba, market.⁹

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to examine market women association and trading activities in Benin city 1975-2015. The objectives are as follows

- i. The origin of the market and who built it;
- ii. To examine the Oba market and Edaiken market;
- iii. To identify the contributions of market women association and trading activities in Oba's market and Edaiken market to the socio-economic development of Benin City, and;
- iv. To highlights the role of iye-Eki in transformations of market in Benin city.

Scope of Study

This work focuses on the activities of market women associations and trading in Benin, it covers the period of 1975 to 2015 and limited in scope to Benin City the capital of Edo State.

Literature Review

A number of related literatures are available on history of Benin kingdom, little on market women association and trading activities in Benin city, among them are; A. G. Hopkins entitled *Economic History of West Africa*, examines the various aspects of West African economy, the origin and organization of market system. Hopkins argues that markets emerged due to the need for local exchange, stating

that markets are stimulated by external trade against the substantive theorist who claim markets in Africa emerge as a result of long-distance trade.¹⁰

R. H. T. Smith and B. W. Hodder's titled "West African Market Places. Temporal, Periodicity and Locational Spacing" states that markets in Africa could be categorized into daily or continuous and periodic markets. They maintain that most of the daily markets are structured in urban areas and cities while the periodic markets are situated in rural areas.¹¹ They are of the view that in most areas of indigenous trade, the evidence suggests not merely continuity from the pre-colonial period but also expansion, consolidation and a willingness to adapt to new conditions such that European and indigenous trade in many regions had become to all intents and purposes inseparable. Meillassou Claude's titled "The development of indigenous trade and market in West Africa", views the development of trade and markets in west Africa since the pre-colonial era of which Edaiken market emerged after the pre-colonial era in Nigeria under the British control. The gradual process that markets undertook in becoming an indigenous trading center from the colonial era to the post-colonial period.¹² This work is relevant to the study as it provides us with the background knowledge of the market system, market structure and organization in West Africa. Most literature on markets lay emphases on the distributive role of urban and rural markets in the circulation of food and other services between the rural and urban areas. Several scholars have carried out studies on markets. R. G. Lipsey, entitled *An Introduction to Positive Economics*.

market is the medium through which goods and services are exchanged to the terminal consumer.¹³

Hodder and Lee, entitled *Economic Geography*, are of the view that market is a public gathering of buyers and sellers at appointed locations, at regular time, defined market as a place factor where farmers buy and sell their wares. Market to them is concerned with infrastructural needs of producers for the assemblage and marketing of surplus produce to urban areas and sometimes for export and wholesale and retail distribution of food products to consumers within an urban area and with further distribution to other areas for export.¹⁴ On the other hand, O. Ikelegbe titled. *The Spatial Structure of the Supply and Distribution of Stapple Foodstuffs in the Benin Region*. view markets as an abstract economic exchange mechanism that may not necessarily be in a fixed geographical location. To them market may exist without the parties involved having to meet somewhere at a given time.¹⁵ P. O. Sada, titled. *Market Channels and Chains of Distributions in Nigeria*, stated that markets perform economic and non-economic functions. The economic functions are three-fold, local exchange, internal trade and central place function. Markets have been recognized as important nodes for the exchange of goods and services. They function as distributive system within the local economy, encourage specialization and consequently improve production. This distributive system tends to result in greater economic and social integration.¹⁶ The above definitions show that market is a place where people gather at a particular time for commercial

exchange of goods and services as well as a place for social integration. Ikelegbe, study on Benin region shows that African markets are quite diversified in terms of size, mode and quality of construction, facilities for market users and physical maintenance. At one end of the scale are innumerable markets that are simply open spaces alongside of a road where buyers and sellers meet on a regular schedule. If any facilities do exist at such sites, they are usually crude shelters constructed by the sellers themselves, consisting of a roof of thatched materials supported by wooden poles. At the other extreme are the huge and often heavily congested urban markets operated by authority of city councils or similar bodies. The urban markets have open stalls, locked up stalls and toilet facilities. In some cases, some of the markets have drains and refuse dump sites with electricity and water supply. All the markets have allotted open spaces or garages where inter-regional traders bring in their goods for retailers and wholesalers to buy. Commercial activities do not take place only on the market ground itself but also on the adjoining streets and roads close to the market.¹⁷

R. E. Bradbury's work, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo speaking Peoples of Southern-Western Nigeria*, gives a thorough assessment on Benin location, physical environment, topography, traditions of origin and history while emphasizing on the social, political and economic life of Bini's which revolve around their King (Oba).¹⁸ It is of significance to this study as it focuses on the political, social and especially economic life of the Bini's (Market). He claimed

that markets are held every four days so that in the capital there is a market every alternate day, women handle all kinds of foodstuffs and other native products while both sexes engage in the modern trade of imported goods and that the Oba is the head of trade.

Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History, edited by I. A. Akinjogbin and Segun Osoba explores the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria economy and society citing its similarities and differences in economic development.¹⁹ R. E. Bradbury's work titled *Benin Studies*, shows the historical studies of the kingdom of Benin, the Benin village life continuities and discontinuities in pre-colonial and colonial Benin politics.²⁰ This work is useful to this study as it distinguishes what is referred as the Benin kingdom from the outlying territories which at various times accepted the Oba's suzerainty. That is, it shows that Uselu which is the location of the Edaiken market is core in Benin territory as the Oba who controlled, can open or close market at will, is recognized as the sole human arbiter of life and death. This power of the Oba which still exist will be seen in the problems of Edaiken markets, when he dissolved the market Association without questioning. Philip Igbafe's work, *Benin under British Administration* shows the fall of Benin and the consolidation of British rule. The establishment of the Native court system, its impact on indigenous institutions, and introduction of taxation and British economic policies in Benin.²¹ This work is relevant as it shows a change in market systems with the emergence of Native court.

The control of market was no longer in the power of the king and this resulted in direct taxation which led to increase in trade, market and consolidated British economic policies in Benin which turned the market to a supplier of majorly primary goods as is still present in Edaiken market. Ekundare' titled '*An Economic History of Nigeria 1860-1960's*,' sees markets as a distribute chain through which excess goods produced gets to the consumers. Ekundare also looks at factors responsible for the expansion of a market in terms of the diverse population of the market and the various goods sold in the market which is relevant to this study.²²

'The Pre-Colonial Economic History of Nigeria' by O. N. Njoku focuses on a neglected period and a neglected aspect of Nigeria history. The pre-colonial period and its economy, showing the masses as the real creator of wealth with attention given to smaller territories. Aspects such as currency, fishing, hunting, local industry and production. Above all, the role of women in pre-colonial Nigeria.²³

Hannah Igbinovia, Benin, the capital city of Edo State, has its fair share of markets scattered across the city. The Eki Oba otherwise known as Eki Osa Market is prominent among them. This haven of commerce lies along the busy Saponba Road by Second East Circular. It's a long-standing history, especially concerning its origin and the circumstances surrounding its name leaves room for public curiosity. The above literature reveals some gaps. The studies have dealt mainly on the distributive nature of the markets. Not much attention has been paid to the other aspects of the urban markets. Little or no attention has been paid on the traders and

other users of these markets, the income of the market operators and the impact of these markets on their lives have also been neglected.²⁴

J.I Osagie in his article entitled “*Women in the Economy of Pre-Colonial Benin*”²⁵ argued that women had a great place in the Benin Kingdom. For Osagie, women in pre-colonial, Benin contributed immensely to the economic life of their people just like their male counterpart.

According to Osagie, they were involved in agriculture, cultivating a variety of crops in addition to assisting their husbands in all aspects of farming activities. They were also involved in trade as well as cottage industries, producing items which were needed by their immediate families as well as those exchanged with their immediate and distant neighbour. Although a concerted effort was made in exploring the place of women in the Benin kingdom, study was restricted to the economic life of the Benin kingdom.²⁶ Jacob U. Egharevba’s book entitled *A Short History of Benin* he wrote that many, years ago, the Binis came all the way from Egypt to find a more secured shelter in this part of the world and after a short stay in Sudan and Ile-Ife which the Benin people called “Uhe”. He also examined the inter-group relationship between the Binis and her neighbours during the pre-colonial era. The book is centered on how the ancient rulers of Benin kingdom called (Oba) led the Binis to become one of the prosperous kingdoms in the pre-colonial era.²⁷ While this study was able to tell us about the Benin history and her socio-economic and political organization, it is silent on pre-colonial Benin women

and their socio-economic impacts. It will however be useful in the role of women in the socio-economic development in pre-colonial Benin Kingdom. This work will fill the gap in the existing knowledge of pre-colonial Benin women and their socio-economic impacts. Also in this category is P.A Igbafe's work entitled "Benin in Pre-Colonial Era"²⁸ he took an historical analysis of the entity or state called Bini in her pre-colonial era and how the empire became a kingdom before the pre-colonial era. Benin was one of the major kingdoms that thrived in the forest region of West Africa from about c.900 to 1897 when she was conquered by the British expeditionary forces and integrated into the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The resilience and sustenance of the kingdom and her monarchy for this long period has been attributed to several factors such as the successive line of capable and effective Oba (kings) and her trade with the Europeans – Portuguese, Dutch and British – which enabled her to acquire arms and ammunitions for the defense and expansion of her territories. However, the vital role played by the craft guilds in the sustenance of the monarchy had not been given proper attention. The guilds which were associations of professional or craftsmen were involved in the production of variety of products and other items of utilities. It was in order to maximize the benefit derivable from their products the various Oba ensured that the craftsmen were organized into associations to supply every need of the monarch and the palace.²⁹ The work however did not study in detail the various areas on the effect of women role in the economics of Benin kingdom. This work will fill the gap in the

existing knowledge of the role of women in the socio-economic development in pre-colonial Benin Kingdom.

Another work to be examined is an article by J.I Osagie entitled “*Nigeria History and People of Southern Nigeria*”³⁰ where he discussed the pre-colonial history and people of southern Nigeria. The period according to the author was when major empires like Oyo, Benin and Igbo states emerged in the area, he also discussed that Benin more than any other ethnic group has played major roles in the history of Nigeria, he also examined the socio-economic activities of the Benin Empire in the pre-colonial era.³¹ The author was silent on the role of women in the socio-economic development in pre-colonial Benin Kingdom; this makes this research very important. Another literature that was consulted in the course of this research work is the book also by P.A Igbafe entitled *Benin under British Administration*³² where he narrated how the white men came to Benin and publicly declared that Ovonranwen is no longer the King of Benin. The book discusses an attempt to strip the Oba of his erstwhile political influence which was to be rounded off by Moor’s calculated plan of a one-year tour with Oba Ovoranmen and two other Benin Chiefs to old Calabar, Lagos and some parts of Yoruba land. The tour was probably designed also to give Ovoranmen an insight into the government of other territories under British rule, chapter ten discuss dearly that the immaculate concern of the British officers after the capture of Benin City was the economic exploitation of the natural resources and the forest wealth of the kingdom.³⁴ The

work did not treat the effect of the role of women in the socio-economic development in pre-colonial Benin Kingdom in detail, thereby creating a vacuum which the study seek to fill.

In view of this, this study will address these aspects of the market women association and trading activities in Benin city.

Method of Research

In the course of this study, relevant data and information will be obtained from two main sources. These were Primary and Secondary sources.

Primary Sources

Primary sources which are utilized in the course of the research. Oral interviews will conduct with experienced individuals, persons such as local government officials, hawkers, traders, students who patronizes the market, palace officials and chiefs, market officials including chairman of the market, women leader, secretary and resident leaders like Edionwere, Egua-Iyoba, Egua-Edaiken of Uselu community. Special attention was given to women since they dominate the market.

Secondary Sources:

Secondary sources which will be consulted are some university libraries and public libraries across the country and these include: books, journals and periodicals. Information obtained from these sources will help to guide and

supplement the materials obtained from primary sources. These sources will provide data for a historical analysis of economic development in Benin.

Chapter's Outline

Chapter one: Background to the Study. This is the introductory aspect of the project. It discusses the aims and objectives, scope of the study

Chapter Two: Geography and traditional settings of Benin. This chapter discuss the origin of the Benin people and the traditional settings as well the geography of Benin

Chapter Three: Nature and Development of Market in Benin. This chapter focuses on the market systems in Africa, showing us that the Edaiken market and Ekioba Market is a daily market, the various importance and organization of markets with emphasis on the development of markets,

Chapter Four: Market Associations and its impact on trade. This chapter focuses on the activities of woman associations in Benin market and it's in impact on trade.

Chapter Five, Conclusion: This is the concluding aspect of the research. It also consists the summary aspect.

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CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHY AND TRADITIONAL SETTINGS OF BENIN

Introduction

The Benin kingdom was located in the forest region of what is now modern Nigeria in West Africa sub region. It is primarily a rain forest zone of a low lying plain covered with porous, reddish and often plastic sand termed “Benin sand” the area is drained by a series of deeply entrenched river and small streams flowing in a general north south direction. The major rivers are Siluko, Orhinwon, Osse, Ikpoba and Ovia. There are a few hills to the east. Benin has a tropical climate characterized by two distinct seasons i.e. the wet and the dry seasons.¹ The kingdom was under a centralized administrative unit and its boundaries is co-terminus with the present Oredo, Ovia North East, Ovia-South West, Uhunwondo, Orhionmwan, Egor and Ikpoba Okha local government areas of Edo state. At the height of its power, the influence of Benin is recorded to have extended westward

along the coast of Eko which is present day Lagos and beyond westward to Ekiti which marked the boundary between Benin and Old Oyo Empire eastward to river Niger and some Igbo area, and southward to the Atlantic Ocean.² The area was a much large entity encompassing different peoples and different ethnic groups which were brought together by various means including wars in order to acknowledge the authority of the Oba.³ The Benin people form the core of the Benin kingdom which at the height of its power embraced other Edo speaking groups from Esan, Etsako, Owan and Akoko Edo to the North east and then Urhobo and Isoko to the south east. They are called the Edo speaking people because their language sprang from the same source. They are believed to have spoken the same language and that the variations came through migration, wars and linguistic interference. This Edo speaking group of people covers an area extending from the broken hilly country that borders the Igbirra and Igala in the North, to the edge of the coastal swamp forest in the south where their neighbours are the Ijos and the Itsekiri, their other boundaries are with the Yorubas to the West and the Igbos to the East for upwards of three millennium people speaking variety of Edo (Benin) language have occupied an area some thirty one thousand square kilometers (31000 sq km) that is about twelve thousand square miles (12,00 sq m).⁴

It is however important to note that it was not the Europeans (Portuguese) that gave the name Benin or Ubini to the people of the land, Ubini was the name of the territory which had several villages, settlement of people speaking the same

Benin or Edo language from the 15th century when Benin first had contact with the Europeans for the first time, because of the fame and influence of the kingdom, the name “Beny” was given to the territory and its capital began to appear in the report of the Portuguese traders and explores. However, it is important to point out that the territorial boundary or influence of Benin was not static, but rather dynamic, this is why Bradbury states that the history of Benin is one of alternating periods of territory expansion and concentration in accordance with the degree of power and authority in the centre. The natural vegetation of Benin area is high tropical rain forest consisting of high canopy trees such as Iroko and Obeche which today are felled for timber, with an annual rainfall of over 1400mm distributed almost throughout the month of the year. The environment is conducive for Agriculture.⁵

Political Institution

The Benin kingdom exemplified a centralized political system which had several political institutions like Oba (king or monarch), the Uzame Nihron headed by Oliha, the Eghaevbo title holders which is sub-divided into the Egharevbo N’ogbe headed by Uwangue (palace Chief), Eghaevbo N’ore headed by Iyase (Town Chief). These institutions, however, functioned together in the day-to-day administration of the state. It is worthy to note that the Benin Monarch was perfected around the 18th century after a series of experimentation with Ogiso. Indeed, the Monarchy dates back to the 10th century, it is believed there were about

thirty-one Ogiso before the arrival of Prince Oranmiya from Ife who started the second dynasty.⁶

It is worthy of note that the uniqueness of the political system in Benin is reflected in its divine kingship. From the Ogiso period, the kings were seemed as demi-god or next to the gods, they welded so much power that they were virtually worshipped by the people. According to Igbafe, “the socio-political organization of Benin during the pre-colonial years of its history was dominated by the special position occupied by the Oba, who was the pivot around which everything revolves”. In theory, he had absolute power, but in practice, the title holders, who formed a complex hierarchy, wielded extensive influence, to the extend which depended on the Oba’s personality. The Oba was the administrative and spiritual head whose basis of power lay in the traditional mystical attributes attached to the sacred institution of the palace.⁷ The

moment an Oba ascend the throne, he ceased to be a mere man. He performed state rituals and controlled all cults of the deities throughout the land. The Oba had his own divinity and was credited with all kinds of mystical power; he performed both executive and judicial functions. Be that as it may, for smooth administration of the state, the Oba had to carry his council along. He was the head of the state council, which comprised the three major title orders viz; the Uzama who are the king makers, the Eghaevbo n’ore and Egharevbo n’ogbe. “The Uzama Nihiron were the highest-ranking state officials in the kingdom and formed a distinct branch

of government. The Uzama is headed by Oliha and other six members which are the Edohen, Ezomo, Ero, Eholo-N'Ire, Oloton and the Ediaken. The Uzama were heads of different quarters and villages within and outside the city.⁸ The Eghaevbo n'ogbe (palace chief) helps the Oba to deliberate on executive, judicial and legislative issues affecting the state. The Eghaevbo n'ore belonged to the palace societies but did not actively participate in the affairs of the societies. The Iyase is the leader and he is also the Prime Minister".⁹

These Chiefs also served as a check on the Oba's powers. Some of them were in charge of different quarters of the kingdom and took part in the administration of the state. Among the Chiefs, the Iyase of Benin is the only one that could openly challenge the Oba on important issues; he is seen as representing the interest of the general populace. This is why his jaw is requested by the Oba at his demise, that is, the jaw he used in arguing with the Oba. However, the Enigie assist the Oba at the District and village level. In pre-colonial Benin had two types of Enigie- the Ogie Isi or royal dukes and Ogie Okanaban who were non-royal dukes. While the Ogie – Isi were appointed by the Oba from amongst sons of past Obas and persons who were blood relations of the Oba, the second category, namely, the Ogie Okanaban were appointed from amongst persons who may have exhibited heroic exploits in war or rendered useful service to the Oba who appointed them. The areas under the control of the Enigie-Isi were the village or group of villages, at their demise, succession was based on hereditary patrilineal

primogeniture. There are other district titles such as Ekhaemwen, Ohen or priests and Okaevbo or village heads.¹⁰ This class of administrators were either appointed or confirmed their appointment in accordance with the tradition of the land.

Social Institution

In Benin the extended family is the unit of socialization within which the individual learns the necessary social and occupational skills. Benin had social institutions that held the society together before the coming of colonialism. Aghame Omoruyi states that “for centuries Benin was a powerful kingdom with amazing culture but by 1897 the artistic wealth came to ruin...”¹¹ These social institutions included! Marriage, witchcraft, murder, theft and inheritance. However, it is difficult to separate in analysis, social institutions from political and economic institutions because at some points they dovetailed into each other.

Marriage: Marriage custom was almost the same as other Edo-speaking people. In the old days most girls were betrothed to their future husbands in infancy or childhood. This was against the background of behaviours and the need to extend family ties, hard work and fame. Most important, was the issue of virginity and circumcision. A young girl to be married went through pre-marital training under the guardianship of their own mother and the would-be mother-in-law. This period offered opportunity for the girl to be properly schooled in domestic duties until she was married because there was no clear-cut age of marriage for the male, there was

also no specific age too. It depended on when he considered himself strong enough to be able to fend for his family.

However, a typical pre-colonial Benin marriage was one in which after the bride price as stipulated by the parents of the bride, has been settled alongside the necessary rituals such as Ulamwen, the bride and the groom started life.¹²

Witchcraft: Witchcraft and Wizardry also existed in pre-colonial Benin. This was associated with confession. The Edo concept of witchcraft is well defined. A witch (aZE) is any person who has the ability to detach his or her “life-essence” from the body for the purpose of capturing and killing the orhic of another, the witch’s orhic is generally said to turn into an owl and the victims is transformed into a goat or antelope or some other animal that is easy to kill. Any person of any age or of either sex can be a witch but female witches are believed to be the stronger and accusations are, in fact, more commonly made against women. Witches are believed to kill because they are under an obligation to the other witches to provide food, in their turn. Their status in the secret meeting of witches (oro) is believed to depend on the number of victims they have killed. Witches are propitiated by sacrifices and offerings, usually placed at road junctions. It is the duty of a village headman to defend the community by establishing good relations with the body of witches associated with the village.¹³

Theft: Theft was also one of the social institutions that attracted serious sanctions in pre-colonial Benin. Theft was commonly associated with youths with

punishments that ranged from banishment to death sentence depending on the gravity. When a person caught stealing, such person was brought before the Odion were at the village or the Enogie at the dukedom level, but if within the seat of the kingdom, such person was brought before the Oba.¹⁴

Death and Mortuary Rites: Mortuary rites differ according to clan, locality and the status and rank of the deceased. For the Edo the ideal is that parents should predecease their children and senior siblings their juniors. Children of the deceased should perform the mortuary rites, with the senior son playing the leading role. Children and childless adults are buried unceremoniously by the Ighele or Iroghae in the villages and by their equivalents in Benin City. When full mortuary rites are accorded they take seven days in the case of ordinary people and 14 days for the Oba and some important Chiefs. They may be performed immediately after the decease or, if the senior son is too young or cannot afford the necessary expense. The following is a description of the main states of the mortuary rites for an ordinary adult man with sons. Immediately after the death lamentation is forbidden for a few hours for the soul of the deceased may be lurking round the house and it is hoped that it will return to the body. After sometime the body is taken outside and washed then laid on a bed inside the house. The hair and nails are cut. And a goat is sacrificed and the body anointed with the blood. In the seven-day funeral begins with the rite of “laying out the corpse” (Iwaorivi) at which only members of the deceased’s lineage are allowed to be present. This is the first day. During the

following days goats, fowls and other offerings provided by the family are sacrificed in the courtyard of the house. The burial songs are repeated night and morning.

On the third day there is a procession known as Izaxwe. The senior son slaughters a cow or goat on the threshold of the house for the Edic spirits of the family. On the fifth day there is another procession (isotc) organized in the same way. This time the leader of each group is accompanied by a box (Oku) decorated with a red cloth and brass adornments which represents the prosperity of the deceased and the respect accorded to him.¹⁵

On the sixth day a dance (ikpowia) begins on the evening and will continue until day break. A person, chosen by divination, is dressed up in fine clothes to represent the deceased. He or she is known as Onodierhayi. On the seventh day it is known as isurehafua (“throwing away the sticks”), symbolizes the final disposal of the remains of the deceased and the casting off of ritual impurities associated with death.¹⁶

Inheritance: It is part of the social structure in pre-colonial Benin. By primogeniture, succession rights to property, hereditary titles and ritual duties passed to the eldest son. At the death of a Bini man, the eldest son performed the funeral ceremonies of the deceased father and it was upon this that he inherited the house traditionally known as Igiogbe and lands cultivated by his father. Other children of the deceased (the junior sons) moved to other lands to build their own

houses on attainment of full age. However, son neglected or failed to perform his duties. This arrangement was not a restriction and oppression on persons who were not eldest children, rather, it was a tradition, as such persons could still acquire title that were not hereditary.¹⁷

Economic Institution

Pre-colonial Benin, had traditional economic institutions that had a level of sophistication possessing all the attributes of a structured economy. This ranges from agriculture, land tenure trade, local industries.

Agriculture; Farming was mainly on shifting cultivation basis and was done with local implement like aho, (modern day hoe) and cutlasses. Production was mainly subsistence and the factor of large expanse of land that was fertile was a major encouraging factor. The main crops produced were! Yam, cocoyam, plantain and much later cassava. Tree crops were also produced such as kola, coconut palms and fruit trees such as orange, lemon, banana, avocado and grape fruit cash crops like cocoa, timber, rubber, and coffee. The production of these crops was based on

manual labour from family members, friends and slaves.¹⁸ The involvement of slaves in Benin pre-colonial economy states Igbafe, “ante-dated the advent of European rule and had its own place in the structure of the state with the assistance from these sources, food production was done.

Land tenure; In the area of land tenure, the long-held opinion was that land belonged to the Oba as illustrated in the word “Obayantor” (the Oba owns all land), but this has been dismissed as a mistaken theory of Benin land tenure. Rather, the Oba in pre-colonial Benin only administered the land through the chiefs and heads of villages. Land was owned at the village level by communities and individuals could be granted rights of ownership and was inherited by eldest sons. Where a family went into extinction, ownership of such land reverted to the village head of Onogie, who could reallocate such land to strangers with or without the pre-condition of tribute.¹⁹

Trade: Trade was also done in pre-colonial Benin. P.A. Igbafe states that this was organized in two faces: first, local trade among the people and second the type handed by trading associations called Ekhen-Egbo. Items of trade which was by barter included locally produced foodstuffs, but later in the fifteenth century, items like brass carvings, salt, guns, matches, tobacco, chains formed the means of exchange. The prospect and the continuity of this trade later attracted Europeans to the kingdom.²⁰

Crafts and Industries: Apart from the aforesaid, the people of Benin were also involved in local industries such as wood-carving and bronze work. The indigenous crafts of the Benin kingdom were in the hand of special ward-guilds in Benin City. There were guilds of blacksmiths and brass smiths, wood and ivory carvers (one group), and leather workers, weavers of special embroiled cloths, drum, maker and locksmiths. The dexterity exhibited by them made the area famous to foreign countries, which, from the reports of travelers and traders became aware of the existence of the kingdom.²¹

Conclusion

Benin was known to the Europeans as early as the second half of the fifteenth century. It remained independent until the punitive expedition of 1897. Through early trading contacts with various European nations, the stiff resistance to later European encroachment, and through the discovery of the exquisite pieces of artwork, Benin art became widely known throughout the world. Whether the word "Benin" or "Bini" is derived from the Yoruba phrase Ile-ibinu ("land of vexation"), a word probably uttered by Prince Oranmiyan in declaring that "only an Edo prince can rule over Edo land," is also contested. Osamuyimen Stewart argues that the

Yoruba-based etymology of "Benin- or "Bini" is doubtful since ample evidence suggests the existence of these words in Portuguese narratives about Edo dating back to the Fifteenth Century". Nevertheless, traditional accounts of the kingdom maintain that Benin was initially ruled by the Ogiso ("Kings of the Sky") and 36 of these were accounted

During the early stages of the kingdom, power was located in a council of chiefs known as the Uzama, headed by Chief Oliha. In the late 13th century during the reign of Ewedo, however, a new balance of power was set in motion. Political power began to gradually shift to the favour of the Oba. By the 15th century, when Oba Ewuare Neogidigan (Ewuare the Great) was a ruler of Benin, power had become firmly centralized in the court and the Oba had emerged paramount in the realm. Oba Ewuare accordingly initiated certain measures to consolidate his power. He instituted a hereditary system of succession to the throne; undermined the power of the Uzama by creating more chieftaincies; and transformed the capital of the kingdom, Benin City, into a military fortress by erecting moats and defensive walls. From this base of power, Oba Ewuare undertook the expansion of his kingdom outward from its Edo-speaking heartland.

Endnotes

1. J.U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968, p.1
2. *Ibid.*
3. E.B. Eweka, *The Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles*, Benin; University of Benin Press, 1994. p.6.
4. P.A. Igbafe, *Benin under British Administration*. The Impact of Colonial Rule on an Africa Kingdom, London: Longman 1979, p.1.
5. E.B. Eweka, *The Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles*, p.31.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.83-84.
7. A. Omoruyi, *Benin Anthology*, Benin City: Anioko Publishers, 1981, p.13.
8. Interview with elder Imuentinyan Igiebor, 91 Yrs, Retired Civil Servant, Benin City 19/4/2025.,

9. R.E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*. pp. 48-49.
10. Interview with Chief Osemwegie Ero, 89 years, The Edobayokhae of Benin Kingdom, Benin City. 8/5/2025.
11. R.E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*, pp.50-52.
12. Interview with Chief Osemwegie Ero... 8/9/2025.
13. P.A Igbafe, *Benin under British Administration*.....p. 23.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 28
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 30
16. *Ibid.*, pp 31-32.
17. R.E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*, p.26.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. E.B. Eweka, *The Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles*, Benin City: Uniben Press, 1992, p. 1
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CHAPTER THREE

NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARKET IN BENIN

Introduction

The development of markets in Benin has involved a transition from traditional, informal system to more formal and organized structures. While traditional markets remain important, there has been a transformation for greater efficiency and integration with the broader economy, including the use of technology. Benin has a rich history of vibrant traditional markets such as Oba

Market and New Benin Market, Ediaken Market, which are crucial for local trade and supply.

Market is a medium that allows buyers and sellers of a specific goods or services to interact in order to facilitate exchange, it may also refer to specific security markets and may take place in persons or online. It is the sum total of all the buyers and sellers in the area or region under consideration. In marketing the term “market” refers to the group of consumer or organizations that is interested in the product, has the resources to purchase the product and is permitted by law and the regulations to acquire the product. The history of market deals with man, his survival and inability to completely satisfy his needs hence trade by barter.¹ The development of markets in Benin has involved a transition from traditional, informal system to more formal and organized structures. While traditional markets remain important, there has been a transformation for greater efficiency and integration with the broader economy, including the use of technology. Benin has a rich history of vibrant traditional markets, such as Oba Market and New Benin Market, Ediaken market, which are crucial for local trade and supply. Markets were central to the economy, evolving from simple barter systems to more complex structures with specialized traders and established trade routes. Post-colonial Benin saw these markets adapt to new economic realities, including globalization and integration into wider regional and international trade networks. Initially, trade was likely based on simple barter, with agricultural produce exchanged for other

goods. Markets emerged as central places for exchange, with evidence suggesting the use of cowries as a medium of exchange from the 16th century.²

Market officials were referred to as (*Okhaiekin*) were responsible for managing markets, collecting fees, and settling disputes. Markets the exchange of a variety of goods, including agricultural products, crafts, and facilitated potentially imported items. Land trade routes primarily consisted of footpaths, while water routes were also utilized. Trade played a vital role in the Benin economy, contributing to the kingdom's prosperity and influence. The arrival of Portuguese merchants in the 15th and 16th centuries introduced new goods and further stimulated trade. Post-colonial Benin saw increased integration into global markets, with new trade partners and commodities. The range of goods traded expanded to include cotton, gold, and petroleum products.³

Traditional and social influence on market

Several writers have tried to explain the origin of markets. According to the Encyclopedia, markets as centres of commerce seem to have had three separate points of origin. The first was in rural fairs where a farmer fed his family and paid the landlord and money lender from his chief crop. He had needs that he could not satisfy at home and so it was convenient for him to go to the market where he could sell some of his crops and buy his needs,⁴ Onokerhoraye and others explained that this exchange leads to the emergence of the division of labour which is associated

with surplus farm production. According to them, as an economy changes from a self-sufficient and subsistence one to a commercial and exchange one, markets which will facilitate the collection, exchange and distribution of commodities produced in different localities are bound to emerge. The second point of origin of markets was in services to the landlords. Rent essentially was paid in grain even when it was translated into money, sales of grain, were necessary to supply the cultivator with funds to meet his dues. Payment of rent was a one-way transaction imposed by the Landlord. In turn, the Landlord used the rents to maintain his warriors, client, and artisan and this led to the growth of towns as centres of trade and production. The third and most influential origin of markets was in international trade. From early times, merchant adventurers risked their lives and their capital in carrying the products of one region to another.⁵

Smith, argues that surpluses develop with societies that permit division of labour in their production process. This further leads to the establishment of specialist group of artificers that are usually located in a village central to the farmers they serve and with whom they exchange. The village becomes the most convenient site for trade and soon assumes the status of a periodic market. This periodic market may later grow into daily markets and the village grows in to town and urban area. Most of the urban markets in Benin City are daily markets although different markets have different days of the week in which they receive food stuff from outside the city.⁶

Onokerhoraye and others also identified specific geographical factors that influence the location of rural markets in Tropical Africa. These are accessibility, nearness to source of water supply, sites of traditional religious shrines, population density, and market periodicity since they evolve over time. As long as commercial centers continue to satisfy one or more of the above criteria, they flourish, when the needs no longer exist, the commercial centres decline. Benin City's nodal position as a gateway to the eastern, western, and northern parts of the country offers her vantage positions for trade, as foodstuff, goods and other services are easily transported from different parts of the country to the city. This in addition to her large population has encouraged the establishment of many markets in the city. The large population of the city also provides the required threshold population for the sale of these products.⁷ He explained the difference between open markets and closed markets. An open market is one in which any merchant or vendor may sell or trade goods and services. The opposite is a closed market in which one must first receive permission from the other merchants to conduct business in a given town or commercial area. In most Nigerian cities and in Benin City in particular open market is practised, although individual traders belong to trade unions which regulate the operation of members in the markets on study Benin region shows that African markets are quite diversified in terms of size, mode and quality of construction, facilities for market users and physical maintenance. At one end of the scale are innumerable markets that are simply open spaces alongside of a road

where buyers and sellers meet on a regular schedule. If any facilities do exist at such sites, they are usually crude shelters constructed by the sellers themselves, consisting of a roof of thatched materials supported by wooden poles. At the other extreme are the huge and often heavily congested urban markets operated by authority of city councils or similar bodies. The urban markets have open stalls, locked up stalls and toilet facilities. In some cases, some of the markets have drains and refuse dump sites with electricity and water supply. All the markets have allotted open spaces or garages where inter-regional traders bring in their goods for retailers and wholesalers to buy. Commercial activities do not take place only on the market ground itself but also on the adjoining streets and roads close to the market.⁸

The prices of most items in the market place are not fixed. Onokerhoraye, explained that the principle of bargaining for a price agreeable to both parties (buyer and the seller) play an important part in the retail system. A person who is skilled in the art of bargaining can purchase at a lower price the same good which another customer less skilled could pay for at a higher price. Similarly, a retailer who is skilled in convincing customers to buy his or her goods can bargain for a higher price than a retailer who is less skilled⁹. Ikelegbe, stated that market guilds exist for various foodstuff sold in the markets in Benin. These act as pressure groups, control entry into trade, fix and control prices and also foster social relations between traders in the market places. However, the disadvantage of this is

that it limits the quantity of commodities that are sold in the market at any particular time and this in turn affects the prices of foodstuff. Many producers do not sell products or services directly to consumers, instead they use market intermediaries to execute an assortment of necessary functions to get the product to the final user. These intermediaries such as middlemen (wholesalers, retailers, agent and brokers, distributors or financial intermediaries) typically enter into longer-term commitments with the producer and make up what is known as the marketing chain or the channel of distribution.¹⁰ Rondinelli, show that the marketing chains through which foodstuffs and other agricultural goods reach urban regions are complex systems, that link three or four levels of producers, intermediaries, wholesalers, retailers, brokers, and distributors and this extend through secondary cities, regional urban centers, market towns and rural villages. In many developing countries food staples sold in markets usually come from immediate hinterland but many agricultural products and other goods also are imported over long distance. Thus, assemblers and wholesalers play important role in any urban marketing system. They operate bulk-breaking sites that allow small retailers and vendors to obtain sufficient amounts of goods for their customers. Because many cities with large numbers of poor households cannot efficiently support large-scale assembling and warehousing firms, cost of suppliers can be minimized at specialized bulk-breaking sites.¹¹ Market can also refer to as a multi-functional site where social political functions, beside commercial activities are

performed. He states that market is a place for entertainment and amusement, “drummers, singers and poets often practiced their arts there “it is also a place for passing information’s, and rumors about the current events in the society but stresses that the commercial functions are the most important activities in a market and that markets are properly organized and trade carried out peacefully.¹²

Market System in Africa

A market system is the network of buyers, sellers and other actors that come together to trade in a given product or service. All marketing systems have evolved within the constraints and conditions placed upon them by the production sector and by the nature of the goods being marketed. The type of product, the number, size and density of produce, the infrastructure, the policy and institutional environment all determine the type of marketing systems and the effectiveness with which it operates (in the market).¹³

The Establishment and organizational Structure of Edaiken Market

Uselu market at inception was located at Oho Street junction opposite Edaiken palace now called Good Samaritan Road, Uselu. At about 1984, Jehovah witness had their camp ground in the land owned by Mr. Agidigbi, who owned vast area of land in Uselu. During meetings (camps/crusades) held by Jehovah Witness, market

women would take advantage of the population to display their wares and this was a frequent occurrence.¹⁴

The Edaiken of Uselu, came to reside in Uselu in accordance with the traditional rites in the coronation of a new Oba (King). These market women welcomed the Edaiken and performed their traditional rites of dancing, praying and paid homage to the Oba with yams and goats. After paying homage to the Edaiken, they (elders and women) knelt down and informed the Edaiken (Solomon Aisokhuoba) who was later crown as Oba Erediauwa, that they had no market in Uselu, as the Uselu Park was too small for them to display their wares. The Oba asked them if they had any land and they choose the location used by Jehovah Witness, which the Oba signed, and was officially declared a market and become known as *Edaiken Market* in the year 1979, named after the title of the crown prince.¹⁵ These women jubilated and began to carve spaces for themselves using Native mats and bamboos to build makeshift shops.¹⁶ History has it that the Oba who patronized some of the women, the middle part of the land he stood to declare the market developed into a tree all by itself (planted by no one). But this assertion has been subject to criticisms.¹⁷ As a result of the land use Act of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Oredo local government took over the operation of the market in Benin market was owned and governed by the Oba). After the death of Mr. Agidigbi, his children began to lay claim to the land for payment and took Oredo LGA to court. There was a market injunction, Oredo paid part and Egor Local

government which took over in 1991 compensated the children with 14 million naira.¹⁸ Edaiken market was incorporated in 2006 and lies in the area of the Egua-Edaiken. It was the only major market along the Lagos-Benin express way. In the early 1980's, it became a prominent yam market during the regime of Governor Tunde Oghehia. It has four unequal sizes with land mass area of 2.871 hectares, scale 1:2000.¹⁸ The market was built with the help of elders and youths and renovated to a makeshift structure by Egua-Edaiken community and became a market all neighbouring communities come to buy and sell. Mrs. Akenuwa was the first Iyeki or head of market women. The first local government chairman of Egor LGA was Barrister Oni followed by Barrister Idiagbon, Mr. Eribo and late Mr. Okoro who was the first transition chairman.¹⁹

During Mr. Eribo's administration, he built wooden structures and also built a decking structure with lock-up-stores of over 1,000 shops. During the reign of Honourable Barrister Nosa Adams, who was a transition Chairman, some market officials claimed the Association was abolished by order from the palace (Oba) as a result of series of collections and crisis.²⁰ A six (6) member committee was set up, headed by Mr. Clifford Enabulele. In their short term, the committee in partnership with the wife of former governor of Edo state, Prof Osunbor gave the sum of #10,000 grant to 100 traders in the market. The money was meant to empower the market women.²¹ During these periods, there were no trade Association. Eribo came back again as chairman, Egor, Ehi Egharevba and the transition government

of Amienoho.²² The elected chairman, Enobakhare brought in Association again and sold the market for 25 years to Prane Business Integrated Limited. Presently, Rose Ebose, the Iyeki and Godwin Gabriel Omoregie, the Chairman.²³

During the time of Eribo, Sunny Erengbo was the head of security and then Lezy who was killed, Erengbo came back again and lastly Akonofua.²⁴ The market has experienced several problems and an inferno in 2005.²⁵ Sanitation exercise which was formerly Monday 8:00am-12 noon became 8-10 am during the administration of Adams Oshiomole.²⁶ The first Union in the market was the cloth union and others like Beef Butchers Union, Osaretin Progressive Union, Rice and Beans dealers, Ehiomodo progressive union (fresh leaves) Ukokomo (cooked food), Ozigodo progressive union (native rice), Kemuin Kemuin union (native things), Arwomainadiaru union (native fowl), okro union, goat butcher union, girls wear union, provision dealers association, Uhuankamarie Progressive Union (hair dresser), Netete Progressive Union (river fish). Tailoring materials union, baby things union, Aghakhiansowa progressive union (soup things) and Osasere palm oil progressive union.²⁷ These sub-unions are registered under the body of traders dealing in the same or similar commodity or items of trade from which each association derived its name.²⁸ They also have chairman/president among others who run the affairs of the union. Their core objective is to promote their interest and obey the constitution.²⁹

Organization and Administration of the Market

Edaiken market is a well-organized market. It is a daily market in which transaction begins as early as 8:00am in the morning and ends at about 6:00pm when shops are locked. It has a constitution, which regulates its operations.³⁰ The introductory statement in the constitution shows that the members of Edaiken market traders association having firmly and solemnly resolved to trade in peace, unity and harmony and to provide for the purpose of promoting wealth and mutually benefitting relationship among our self and uphold the welfare of the traders on the principles of fairness, equality and justice.”³¹ Section 1(a) shows the supremacy of the constitution and the others shows the name of the association, motto, creed and emblem. Section 2 states the aim and objective of the association which is to foster unity and understanding among members to render moral and financial assistance to members as the need arises and to promote the social and economic welfare of members.

Section 3, states admission into the association, membership and items required to register. Section 4 of the constitution show the organizational structure annual general meeting held in the first week of December to review the association’s activities during the year and is the highest decision-making organ of the association, composed of all members of the association, members of the executive committee, members of the board of trustee and all members of the central working committee. Section five shows the central working committee and their functions, section 6 –general meeting which is held twice every month. The

constitution has a total of 23 sections which shows the quorum discipline, dispute settlement, patron, Board of trustees and how vacancies are filled, the common seal, association bankers, finance, and security, benefits of membership, punishment and amendment of the constitution.

It clearly shows the administration of the market which begins with the chairman/chairperson, vice chairman, general secretary, treasurer, public relations officers, provost, welfare officer, coordinator patron and board of trustees. A member wishing to contest election must meet the eligibility requirement.

The functions of the chairman are as follows:

1. He/she shall preside at all meetings and serves as the accounting officer and coordinate the activities of the association.
2. He or she shall be co-signatory to the association's bank account.
3. He or she shall deliver an annual report of the activities of the association annual general meeting.
4. He/she must have attended not less than eight (8) out of the immediate past twelve (12) meetings.
5. He or she must be a trader in the market.
6. He/she shall have a casting vote to break a deadlock except during election.
7. He/she summons all emergency meetings as the need arises.
8. He or she shall be the chief's spokesperson of the association in all policy matters, both internal and external.

Vice Chairman

1. He or she assists the chairman generally and shall function as the chairman when the chairman is unavoidably absent.

Secretary General

1. He/she shall call all meetings after consultation with and as directed by the chairman.
2. He or she shall record minutes of meetings and read same for adoption.

Provost

1. Shall ensure that law and order are maintained during general and executive meetings and other gatherings of the association.
2. Shall keep record of late comers and noise makers and submit it to the president for necessary action.

Coordinator

1. Shall be the leader of their responsive zones
2. Shall be nominated and elected by the union of their respective zones.
3. The members of the coordinators shall be the same as the number of zones created.

Financial Secretary

1. He or she shall receive all money paid to the association, record such payments and thereafter handsome over to the treasurer within 48 hours of the receipt of such money for payment into the association's bank account.

The Treasurer

1. He or she shall ensure that all the association money collected are paid into the association's bank account within 48 hours of receipt by the treasurer.

Public Relations Officer (PRO)

1. He or she shall be the Association's image maker and contact person.

In conclusion, the dissolution/election of officers gives room for re-election. Election is conducted by a three-member electoral committee and there is also room for Bye-election to fill vacant post created as a result of removal from office, resignation, incapacity or death of any members of the executive committee who will also take the oath of office.

Items Sold in the Market

Items sold in Edaiken market ranged from commodities such as salt, pepper, kola, shoes, bags, fishes preserved in different forms, foreign and locally made cloth, meat, tomatoes, native things, cooked food, rice, (native and foreign), beans, garri, sugar, plantain, banana and yams.³² Others include pots, plastic, buckets, plates and cups of all sizes and shapes, creams, detergent, matches, perfumes, phone accessories, computer accessories, flour, provisions of all kinds, baby things, palm oil, soup things, etc.

A few commodities have relatively fixed price in the market. The greater the quantity of a commodity supplied to the market, the lower the price.³³ Also, goods with different qualities had different prices. For example, prices of goods are

always high during important ceremonies because only a few traders could offer their goods for sale as a result of high demand but low supply and foreign goods were also more expensive. The distance between the source of commodity and the market also affected the prices. However, in some cases, there could be price discount to a first buyer, preferred customer and purchases made in bulk.³⁴

Oba Market (Ekioba)

Benin, the capital city of Edo State, has numerous markets, including the Eki Oba or Eki Osa Market. The name "Eki Oba" comes from the native Benin language, which means "market" and "Oba" is a shortened form of the word for a king. The market was originally used as a crusade ground for early Christians, where missionaries spread the gospel. As the new converts arrived, local traders saw an opportunity to make money from worshippers by bringing their wares to the crusade. This led to the name "Eki Oba" being given to the market. The market's history and its significance in the city's commerce scene make it a popular destination for traders. According to Ediagbonya Michael and others Eki Oba, Nigeria, is known for its spiritual objects and items, including animal bones, skulls, dead rats, bird feathers, live tortoise shells, native chalk, coins, cowries, and red pieces of rags. This market, which was once a hub for evangelical crusades, has been a hub for traders for about 70 years, according to Madam Eghaghe Ifueko, the woman leader of traders of spiritual items. The name "God's market" comes from the missionary work of Christians who used the area as a ground for evangelical

crusades. Madam Eghaghe Ifueko, who has been a trader there for about 70 years, explains that her customers include ordinary individuals with problems they need to solve and those who have tested the efficacy of the items. She is one of many traders, mostly women, who have found a means of livelihood by trading in these spiritual items in Eki Osa Market. The foul stench on the entrance to the market, caused by rotting animal parts, is enough to make one sick as if they are walking into a shrine.³⁵ Despite the growth of Christianity in the state, many people still engage in deity worship and sacrifices. The controversy lies in the lack of rationale for confessing Christ as one's only Lord and saviour and continuing to worship idols. Traders also criticize shop owners for taking their wares on the road, preventing buyers from entering the main market. This has negative environmental impacts and reduced patronage for those who choose to remain in their stores. They call on the state government to ensure all traders return to their stores to protect the environment and ensure equal operating conditions for all traders.³⁶

Market Associations in Ekioba Market

The colonial Ekioba market was physically divided into separate locations for commercial commodities, such as yam, cassava, palm oil, vegetables, meat, goat, fowls, and cloths. These commodities were sold under shaded structures like trees, thatched roofs, tents, or stalls supported by stakes, bamboo trees, or other wooden

materials. Each stall or allotted space for a particular product was known as an iso. In the early colonial period, the Ekioba market had no modern stall system, except for thatched and fragile sheds.³⁷

Different Lines within the Market

The Eki Oba market in Benin City is divided into several "Lines" such as Rose Line, Umbrella Line, Hot Landline, Love Line, and Success Line. Since 1948, the government built many stalls in towns with large populations to generate money from stall rent. The stalls became a productive and well-cherished market culture for domestic trade. They allowed for longer storage of goods, particularly perishable ones, and allowed traders to stay longer in the market to sell their goods. This was beneficial for those who couldn't go to the market for various reasons. The stall system also saved many Ekioba traders the burden of carrying their goods home at the end of each market or every day. These goods were left in the stalls guarded by market security guards or night watchmen. The leadership of every market was under a woman chief known as Iyaloja or Iya Oloja (the mother or leader of the Market). The stall system was a significant development in the market culture and allowed for more efficient and productive domestic trade.³⁸

Contributions of Ekioba Market to the Economic Development of Benin City

Agriculture was the first economic activity in Benin City, leading to trade and the development of the market square. The market provided an avenue for the distribution of agricultural goods and another means of livelihood for the people. The Benin Kingdom became a powerful empire due to the development of trade, encouraged by good markets and the leadership of the obas. Craftwork was another means of livelihood in Benin City, but it was only for specific families trained in such artworks. The market square played a crucial role in the city's development, providing an avenue for the distribution of agricultural goods and fostering a strong economy. The market was a significant source of employment in Benin City, with many people involved in trading activities. However, the colonial influence introduced wage-earning, white-collar jobs, which are the formal sector of the urban economy, to the educated active population. This sector employs a small percentage of people in Benin City, unlike other Nigerian towns, due to inadequate employment opportunities. Unemployment has become alarming in Nigeria, with millions of qualified individuals unable to find employment. The majority of the labor force in Benin City is engaged in the informal sector, including market traders and non-traders operating in urban markets. Urban markets provide livelihood opportunities for thousands of traders and market operators in Benin.³⁹

The Ekioba market is open to anyone interested in trading or performing various activities, including hairdressing and public transport. The market serves as a livelihood source for most traders, particularly women. Mrs. Osagie uses the

money from the market to send her children to universities and polytechnics. Most traders earn over 18 thousand naira, which is a minimum wage per month, according to interviewees.⁴⁰

Financial and Administrative challenges

Market operators with low income often face inadequate capital, which affects the number of goods they can purchase and the size of their businesses. Non-traders in markets also face this issue, as it limits the number of sewing machines, hairdryers, tailors, and hairdressers they can own. Transporters often lack the capital to purchase vehicles and work for people who provide fixed returns daily. Obtaining loans from banks is difficult for these individuals, as they often lack collateral. Informal credit facilities and associations also have limited capital to meet the financial demands of these individuals.⁴¹

Management

Market management issues in Nigeria include the allocation of stalls, which are typically determined by local governments and should be allocated to any Nigerian citizen, regardless of their origin. However, this often happens, with indigenes in council or state ministry civil servants renting or hiring stalls at a

higher rate. Additionally, local governments neglect the establishment and maintenance of markets, resulting in unkempt conditions. Market operators pay for stall charges and sanitation, but the sanitation of the markets is below expectations. These issues highlight the need for improved market management and sanitation to ensure the well-being of Nigerian citizens.

Management of Conflict in the Ekioba Market

Benin as a place is a very old city, by 1440 when Ruydequira, the Portuguese explorer came to Benin during the time of Oba Ewuare, the city of Benin was already in existence and the Oba is a Centre of attraction in Benin. Nobody ever argues with the Oba; hence we have *Enobaghare* which means what the Oba says stands. Everything in Benin is tied to the Palace, many market names also e.g *Obayuwana, Obachagbon, Obarisiagbon* etc. Benin is so inclined to the wits and caprices of the Oba. Although, the market women are not left out, because the market was established as a result within the palace and named Oba Market, so day to day activities of the market must include representatives of the Palace. The Palace must be aware of a development in the place, any deviance or any unruly behaviour must be punished because of the respect everyone has for the Palace, so it is the highest ruling body as far as Benin traditional system is concerned. So, they are strongly related to the palace. If they find it difficult to talk or relate with the government, they go to the palace and they use the palace to interact with the

government in power.⁴² In an attempt to curb this conflict, the government should first stop the local government representatives to reduce the extortion of money from traders, in other words, the illegal and unnecessary levy should be abolished in its totality. Likewise, the government should try as much as possible to strengthen the health condition of the market men and women. The health condition of the traders should be of paramount to the government thereby providing necessary facilities that encourage healthy living within the market.

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23. Interview with Sir Oni, 60 years, Chairman Edaiken community, 9/5/2025.
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25. Interview with Mrs. Patience Agharia, 60 years, Trader, 15/6/2025.
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CHAPTER FOUR

MARKET ASSOCIATION AND ITS IMPACT ON TRADE

Introduction

The market grew from a small area where few women traded at the Oho Street junction opposite Edaiken palace-Uselu Park. As years passed it later became

an established market. The market was relocated to the present site which was originally owned by Mr. Agidigbi in 1979.¹ Women started dividing the land into smaller portions for themselves after the Oba had declared it a market in 1979. The women used makeshift structures made of mats and bamboos.² The real change that took place in this market started after the declaration of the land use Act of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, when Oredo Local Government took over the operation of the market, more sub-unions emerged.³ Wooden structures were used as stalls or shops by the road side. These were built by youths and family members.⁴ The first permanent structure in the market was built by Mr. Eribo, who was the Chairman after the first transition in Egor Local Government and it was a lock up store of over 1,000 shops.⁵

The written constitution of the Edaiken Market Traders Association Incorporated was formed in 2005.⁶ A significant development which was the first of its kind in the market was the sale of the market to Prane Business Integrated Limited for a period of 25 years by Honourable Victor Enobakhare who was a former Board of Trustee Chairman of Edaiken market Traders Association Incorporated, also former Chairman Egor Local Government Council.⁷

Prane Business Integrated Limited Company Incorporated in Nigeria, Registration No 843908, with registered office at 2, Ediale Street, GRA, Benin City, Nigeria, was in charge of Design, Construction and Management of the new Edaiken Modern Market, Uselu. Under a Public-Private Partnership (Design, Build,

Operate and Transfer) in 2014. With an agreed total project cost of #863,797,624,88 (Eight hundred and sixty-three million, seven hundred and ninety-seven thousand, six hundred- and twenty-four-naira, eighty-eight kobo only).⁸ This consisted of 1,955 shop units, incorporating infrastructural facilities made up of walkways, car park, electricity, water supply, medical facility, abattoir, restaurants, cold rooms, warehouses and drainages.⁹ The concession of the market to Prane Business Integrated Limited, was major development stride for Edaiken market which will turn the old market to an ultra-modern market with high quality and standard whose construction phase was expected to be completed within 12 calendar months from the commencement date agreed.¹⁰ This will allow the land mass of the market to be fully maximized which hitherto was trade by the road side.¹¹

Contribution of the Market

The Edaiken market is of great relevance to the people of Uselu and other parts of Benin and beyond.¹² Edaiken market has been an important commercial centre in Uselu since its establishment in 1979. It is a centre for the exchange of goods and services ranging from herbal products, foodstuffs, provisions and all kinds of goods.¹³ Varieties of goods from various parts of the country and beyond are sold and it has generated wealth for traders. The very name *Edaiken* of the market represents pride and dignity.¹⁴

The market has brought considerable improvement in the economic well-being of the people of Uselu and beyond. It helped the traders to have financial independence and increased the standard of living of the people.¹⁵ The Edaiken market has also helped in the emergence of skilled and semi-skilled occupations such as tailoring, hair salon.¹⁶ It is also a source of employment opportunities for the people for example, secondary school leavers learned trade and served as apprentices, sales girls, photocopiers and load carriers and so on.¹⁷ The Egor Local Government authority has employed cleaners, security officers, revenue collectors and other menial jobs.¹⁸ This job creation helped to reduce unemployment rate and other social vices such as robbery and kidnapping as youths are gainfully employed.¹⁹ Like every other market, it generates revenue for the Local Government which they use for the development and provision of social facilities in the market and payment of security and local government officials attached to the market.²⁰ With the establishment of the market, the participation of women in the economy has increased as they dominate the market.²¹ It has helped to increase the social status of these women as they have become co-bread winners in their family through the ownership of their businesses. This development gave these women financial independence from their husbands, and earned them more respect from their immediate family and communities.²²

Trader's Union

The Traders Union in the Edaiken market was formed with the aim of having a strong and united body to protect the interest and aspirations of its member, to also ensure maintenance of law and order and in compliance with the stipulated rules and regulations that guide the activities of members in the market.²³ It could also assist to obtain loans from the financial institutions which they used in boosting their businesses.²⁴

Social Impact

Edaiken market is more than a means of achieving economic purposes as it is also a place to meet friends, establish relationships and alliances. It serves as a center for dissemination of information of local news. The market being a centre of attraction has created wider opportunities for more extensive interactions with people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.²⁶ Traders and buyers interacted with one another and exchanged ideas, views, customs and culture. Traders in the market came from different cultural and historical backgrounds, their interactions opened up an avenue for cultural assimilation and respect for other people's cultures and in some cases, these relationships led to inter-tribal marriages.²⁷ This market as an amalgamation of people from different societies has helped to bring about peaceful co-existence and harmony in the society.²⁸

Political Impact

As a result of the population of Edaiken market, it served as a venue where intense campaigns and political activities were held.²⁹ Politicians during elections

campaigns sought the assistance of women in the market and women mobilizations were held in the market during election campaign period by the women leaders. This is because women constituted a large number of voters during election.³⁰ The Association which serve as the political unit of the market aims at protecting the interest of traders which ranged from security of goods and other properties against vandals, controlling of the incidence of unwanted and dangerous goods into the market and other issues the individuals' traders could not handle.³¹ The market is dominated by Christians and traditional worshippers but they are also Muslims as it does not tolerate religious discrimination and this has breed peaceful co-existence.³²

Challenges (Problems) of the Market

Aside from the fire incident which seems to be frequent in the Edaiken market.³³ The market has other problems which includes insecurity, leadership disputes within the Trade Association, Egor Local Government Council and the Prane Business Integrated Limited.³⁴ There were three incidents of fire outbreak in the market, 1995 when fire engulfed [half of the Edaiken market August 20th 2005 was the most devastating as the inferno was over the entire market and 2015 when part of the market also got burnt. The former governor of Edo State, Adams Oshiomole supported the traders with 20 million naira as compensation and each affected traders got the sum of #50,000.³⁵

The intervention of officials of Edo State fire service, Nigerian security, civil defense corps and some soldiers in the area helped to prevent the spread of the fire to the entire market. The chairman Egor Local Government, Mr. Victor Enobakhare described the incident as an act of sabotage by persons who were against the reconstruction of the market. He urged the victims to remain calm; he however made a donation of one million naira to the affected traders.³⁶ The security issue of the market brought sleepless night to shop owners. Despite the presence of security officials, there were still reported cases of thefts, hoodlums carted away goods and cash.³⁷ Egor local government employed the services of two security body, Alex Omoregie Security Company and Market Traders Association led by Benji Aimiokunvbvbie Security Company to both manage the security of the market.³⁸ The use of two private security firm was believed to be a factor that led to the August 20th 2005 inferno that razed down the whole market.³⁹ The inferno was caused by electricity as a result of negligence.⁴⁰ It started from Omoregie's side of the market and the Benji Security Personnel on duty were reluctant to help as they claimed it was not their coverage (the part they were to oversee.⁴¹ Both security companies were arrested at the end of the day and Egor Local Government set up a panel whose report was swept under the carpet. ⁴²

The market called on the traders association who then employed the services of Charles Eghaghe Security Company.⁴³ It should be noted that as a result of frequent interference by Egor local Government, the traders market Association

in 2014 took them to court as they claimed they owned the goods therefore has constitutional right to employ their own security, demanding the local government secure their goods against all theft and fire in order to operate security in the market.⁴⁴ Aside dispute in the leadership of the security which is currently ongoing, as the old security system protects shops outside the market (old shops) and new security the new shops inside.⁴⁵ There is also the problem of leadership tussle. Some claimed that the market Association has been abolished by the Oba who was said to have laid a curse on the Association for it was seen as the cause of various problems in the market as it made a lot of collections from traders.⁴⁶ This view however has no written document to back up its argument, though there is the existence of a new union, Edaiken United Traders (EUT).⁴⁷ The Edaiken market traders Association is recognized by the community (Urelu), Egor Local Government Council and the traders as it is still in control of the daily activities and interest of the traders, recognized by law as the only constitutional representative (administration).⁴⁸ The traditional representatives of the market also have their own problems (*Iyeki* dispute). This women leader crisis started when Edo state market Association inaugurated the leadership of Mrs. Blacky Omoregie.⁴⁹

The community frowned at this as she was not an indigene and there was Rose who the Oba supported. A committee was set up by the Oba to look into the crisis and Mrs. Akenuwa was made Grand Patron of *Iyeki* which she did not accept as it was more or less a ceremonial position and the first of its kind in the market.⁵⁰

A major problem that is currently ravaging the market is the seemingly failed concession agreement between Egor Local Government of Edo State and Prane Business Integrated Limited for the Design, Development, Operation and Management of the proposed new Edaiken Modern market project.⁵¹ This problem can actually be traced to how these agreements or with whom it was made. As there was no consultation of traders or the market association that represented their interest.⁵² Simply put, it was a dual agreement (Egor Local Government Council and Prane Business Integrated Limited) instead of a tripartite agreement (Egor Local Government Council, Prane Business Integrated Limited and the Edaiken Market Traders Association Incorporated).⁵³ Most importantly, is the failure to implement the terms of the agreements, which states that the owner (Egor Local Government) offered and Developer (Prane Business Integrated Limited) has accepted to construct and manage the new Edaiken Ultra-Modern market in Uselu, consisting of 1,955 shop units incorporation, infrastructural facilities made up of walkways, car parks, electricity, water supply, medical facility, abattoir, restaurants, cold rooms, warehouses and drainages. Stating that the project shall be of high quality and standard, under completion of the construction phase, the developer shall manage and operate the market, (B.O.T) Build, Operate and Transfer for a period of 25 years.⁵⁴ It also shows the termination of agreement if either party commits a breach of any terms and condition and fails to remedy the same within a reasonable period after receipt of written notice giving full particulars of the breach

and a request for the breach to be remedied in its article 12 (a) of the agreements. Schedule “A” shows the size, number of shops and amount as agreed. This is presented in the table below:

Stalls in Edaiken Market

Shop Size	No of Units	Monthly Lease Amount	Annual Lease Amount	25 years Lease Amount
7m ²	1,270	1,500	18,000	450,000
10m ²	685	2,920	35,040	876,000
	1,955			

Source: Egor Local Government Council of Edo State, Nigeria, 2015 “Concession Agreement between Egor Local Government and Prane Business Integrated Limited,”

These however have not been the case as the purported buildings are not solid. Materials are not of high quality and standard, failure to provide 7m² and 10m² of open shops and lock up stores respectively. Worse of is the #100,000 annually and #1.2 million 25 years lease amount which leaves a wide price range as to the agreed price.⁵⁵ This hike in price has created a special problem in the market as Traders can no longer afford stores, opening the market to anyone who can afford these shops hence the series of court dispute which is still ongoing.⁵⁶ Until the completion of the Prane project, the market lacks social amenities. For example, there are no bathrooms in the market and the toilet available is inadequate to serve the population and this made people to litter the market premises with stools and urine which is unhygienic and morally improper.⁵⁷ Absence of electricity supply

which affects Traders such as hair dressers, fish sellers, drink sellers and provision store operators who need constant electricity supply for business growth.⁵⁸ All these problems have created disunity, stolen the peace and mostly reduced patronage in the market and since it is located in the highway, there is also traffic congestion.⁵

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with Mr. John Omoiawo, 64 years, Jehovah Witness who was present at the camp which later became the present location of the market, 5/6/2025.

2. Interview with Mrs. Rose Ebose, 75 years, Iyeki and member of Market Association, 19/6/2025.
3. Interview with Mrs. Patience Agharia, 60 years, Trader, 15/6/2025.
4. Interview with Mama Tina, 54 years, Trader, 15/6/2025
5. Interview with Mr. Clifford Enabulele, 62 years, (former chairman of 6-man committee and former chairman Uselu community), 9/6/2025.
6. Interview with Mrs. Iriaghe, 49 years, Edaiken Market Traders Association Member, 9/6/2025.
7. Interview with Mr. Eze Okoro, 52 years, Chairman Edaiken market Taskforce Committee, 12/6/2025.
8. Interview with Terry Usonubun Ebonwonyi, 57 years, Secretary to the Market, 16/6/2025.
9. Interview with Mr. Osadolor, 41 years, Assistant General Secretary Edaiken Market Traders Association, 19/6/2025
10. Interview with Ikechukwu Agbo, 45 years, Trader, (Secretary Provision Dealers Association), 15/6/2025.
11. Interview with Mr. Donald Okpo, 61 years, Manager, Prane Business Integrated Limited, 9/6/2025.
12. Interview with Sir. Oni, 59 years, Chairman Edaiken community, 9/6/2025.
13. Interview with Chief Pullin Aguedomuan, 75 years, Odionwere (Eguae-Iyoba), 9/6/2025.
14. Interview with Mr. Osare, 44 years, Associate Secretary Edaiken Market Traders Association, 19/6/2025.
15. Interview with Mama Esther Omosgho, 90 years, Trader (one of the founding mothers of the market), 15/6/2025.

16. Interview with Obonete Sandra, 28 years, Trader (Member New Union, Edaiken United Traders), 10/6/2025. Interview with Mr. Frank Nwague, 68 years, Secretary Uselu community town hall (Egua-Uselu), 9/6/2025.
17. Interview with Mama Tina, 53 years, Trader (Founders), 9/6/2025.
18. Interview with Mr. Solomon, 45 years, Uniben Staff, Customer, 4/6/2025.
19. Interview with Sir. Philip Idugboa, 48 years, P.R.O of the Market, 7/6/2025.
20. Interview with Pastor John, 30 years, Customer, 28/6/2025.
21. Ibid,
22. Interview with Sir. Collins, 38 years, Indigene of Uselu, 14/6/2025.
23. Interview with Mr. Donald 51 years, Indigene of Uselu, 1/6/2025.
24. Interview with Precious Osaumwen, 25 years, Customer/Indigene, 16/5/2025.
25. Interview with Mrs. Eghosa, 28 years, Trader, 9/6/2025.
26. Interview with Honourable Eddy Igniogun, 47 years, Former Supervisors for Works, Egor Local Government, Uselu.
27. Interview with Emwinghare Omorogbe, 53 years, Uselu community resident, 14/6/2025.
28. Interview with Mrs. Eunice, 55 years, Committee Member (Taskforce), 9/6/2025.
29. Interview with Mrs. Eki, 56 years, Taskforce Member, 9/5/2025.
30. Interview with Mrs. Otakpolor, 50 years, Executive, Edaiken Market Traders Association, 9/6/2025.
31. Interview with Godwin Gabriel Omoregie, 50 years, Chairman Edaiken Market, 2/6/2025.

32. Interview with Aunty Edith, 30 years, Trader, 28/6/2025.
33. Interview with Mrs. Ogunsede, 48 years, Traders Executive, 19/6/2025.
34. Interview with Deaconess Mrs. Queen Imasogie, 43 years, Trader, Chairlady, New Union Edaiken Unit Traders, 5/6/2025.
35. The citizenng.com, Accessed on 24/6/2025.
36. Interview with Mrs. Ikpomwan Roseline, 61 years, Trader, Deputy Iyeki, 8/6/2025.
37. Interview with Mrs. Oghe, 51 years, Iyeki Executive member, 9/6/2025.
38. Interview with Isaac Obaseki, 60 years, Elder Statesman, 12/6/2025.
39. Interview with Sir. Ali Usman, 38 years, Trader, 7/6/2025.
40. Interview with Mama Peace, 47 years, Trader, 1/6/2025.
41. Interview with Mama Isoken, 43 years, Indigene of Uselu, 3/6/2025.
42. Interview with Mrs. Violet, 43 years, Taskforce Member, 9/6/2025.
43. Interview with Mrs. Osifo, 53 years, Financial Secretary Edaiken Market Traders Association, 3/6/2025.
44. Interview with Mrs. Uzama, 49 years, Executive member Edaiken Market Traders Association, 3/6/2025.
45. Interview with Deaconess Mrs. Queen Imasogie, 43 years, Trader, Chairlady, New Union Edaiken Unit Traders, 5/6/2025.
46. Interview with Mrs. Osazee, 40 years, Trader, 16/6/2025.
47. Interview with Godwin Gabriel Omoregie, 50 years, Chairman Edaiken Market, 2/6/2025.

48. Interview with Mrs. Ekhaton, years, Executive Edaiken Market Traders Association, 7/6/2025.
49. Interview with B. Enahoro, 56-year, trader (Founding Trader), 9/6/2025.
50. Interview with Mrs. Usonobu Blessing, 40 years, Trader, 15/6/2025.
51. Interview with Mrs. Orogie, 39 years, Committee Member (Taskforce), 9/6/2025.
52. Interview with Mr. Osas, 43 years, Local Government Staff, 15/6/2025.
53. Egor Local Government Council of Edo State, Nigeria, 2015 “Concession Agreement between Egor Local Government of Edo State and Prane Business Integrated Limited,” p.1.
54. Interview with Esoho, 22 years, Customer, 10/6/2025.
55. Interview with Mrs. Judith, 45 years, Indigene, 3/6/2025.
56. Interview with Mrs. Igiebor, 44 years, Trader, 19/6/2025.
57. Interview with Engineer Sanni, 38 years, Egor Local Government, Engineer of the Market, 15/6/2025.
58. Interview with Mr. Innocent T. 42 years, Staff, Prane Business Integrated Limited, 9/6/2025.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Uselu market which is originally known as Edaiken market is now called Uselu market by non-indigene. Edaiken market is located in the Egua-Edaiken area of the community (Uselu) which was established in 1979 having been in operation as a small gathering of traders in Uselu Park opposite Edaiken palace. It became a prominent yam market in the 1980s and is a host to traders and customers from neighbouring communities, though its primary purpose was to serve the Uselu community. The presence of more crowd enticed the market women who displayed their goods (wares) at the Jehovah Witness Camp (which was a bushy area) and it so happened that the Edaiken (Crown prince) was in his palace (Edaiken palace) as tradition demands when the Jehovah Witness church had evacuated the place. It was officially declared a market by the Edaiken when the market women requested after paying homage to the Oba. Oba Erediauwa who founded the market is and will be the only Oba who had vast influence over the traditional market before the emergence of the land use act of 1978, this placed the market under the then Oredo Local Government Council and now Egor Local Government Council, when Egor L.G.A was carved out of Oredo L.G.A. It has been made obvious that aside from the similarity in name, *EDAIKEN*, which is the title of the crown prince, the market has no special affinity with the Oba but still play its role as traders and subjects of Benin kingdom to the Oba and Edaiken.

Though as a result of the present state of the market which seems to be full of fear most traders are no longer sure of their position, distrust and disunity is the

order of the day to a rather harmonious market and peace of mind has evaded the traders as they are not sure of their fate. This has led to increase in breakdown of law as the constitutional leadership are distracted by the various problems facing the market. Even in this state of uncertainty the power of the market Association is still visible. For example, in the case of a dispute which results to fighting, both parties are fined #5,000 each and if guilty #10,000. These can however be avoided with summon (Report) fee of #2,000 which is refundable. The services of the Association were sometimes employed outside the market as a result of its credibility.

Note, what is on ground in the market project presently is totally different from what is in the Agreement (Concession) and the modality of payment has totally changed from #450,000 for 7m² shop and #876,000 for 10m² shop for the 25-year period which now range from #600,000 to 2 million. This sudden change without consultation of traders is the current problem ravaging the market as there have been series of court meetings from state high court to federal high court. Having witnessed a court hearing, I would say this is a rather difficult case, though the market officials are not ready to let down their conditions. The next court adjournment date is the 11th of October, 2017. The steady nature of the Nigeria court system has made this crisis to linger for long if not longer. Also, there seem to be an underlying conflict which frequent the leadership position in the market. It should be noted that the Edaiken market traders Association incorporated elect

leaders based on merit and contributions, as membership into the association or sub-unions is irrespective of his/her tribe, political affiliation or religion as seen in the section 3(iii) of the constitution. The host community (Uselu) however frowns at a non-indigene becoming chairman of the market Association.

It should also be noted that although the position of chairman (market leader) is open to both male and female, there have never been a female leader in the market association (chairlady Edaiken market trader association incorporated) and women's participation in the administration of the market is low. The position which has been reserved for women is the Traditional Association (Iyeki-women leader), they also take up leadership role in other unions. The position of the Iyeki is not however open to Christians or Muslims but traditional worshippers because of some rituals performed before installation into office and its direct link to the traditional palace of Benin and the Oba.

Revenue of #50 daily is collected from traders by the local government (Egor) and the state government is presently in charge of environmental sanitation though there are already plans to change this. Aside from the organizational structure annual general meeting, the market does not observe any special festival/event for itself except the union's end of year party where they wear matching clothes but this is not a custom. Also, the demolition of old structure at different stage have never left the traders compensated and this have led to series of protest. A particular relevance of the market is tied to its location "Uselu" which

has always been and is still an integral part of Benin history and kingdom. It should be noted that aside from the threat of Prane Business Integrated Limited to drive the traders inside (in order to force them to buy shops), traders in the old part of the market are open to rain and sun on a daily basis which is hazardous to their health and as a result of accessibility, residence of Uselu, Oluku, Isihor and Ugbowo patronize the market instead of using others like Oba market at ring road.

Furthermore, there is also the absence of electricity supply which affects traders and makes cost of trading more expensive, this limits business growth. This lack of social amenities like bathroom and toilet has made people to litter the market premises with stools and urine as they refuse to use the pit toilet which is unhygienic. All in all, the problems witnessed in the market have created disunity in a once peaceful environment and being located close to the highway, there is always traffic congestion. Due to the security issues on ground, there are presently two security body operating in the market. Obviously, from the stage of a makeshift structure to permanent structure, the market has contributed greatly to the socio-economic and political development of Uselu community and beyond.

Appendices

Old Structures of the Market

Source: Pictures taken by the researcher during the field work in 2025.





Source: Pictures taken by the researcher during the field work in 2025.



Modern Stalls in the Market



*Source: Pictures taken
by the researcher
during the field work
in 2025.*



Source: Pictures taken by the researcher during the field work in 2025.

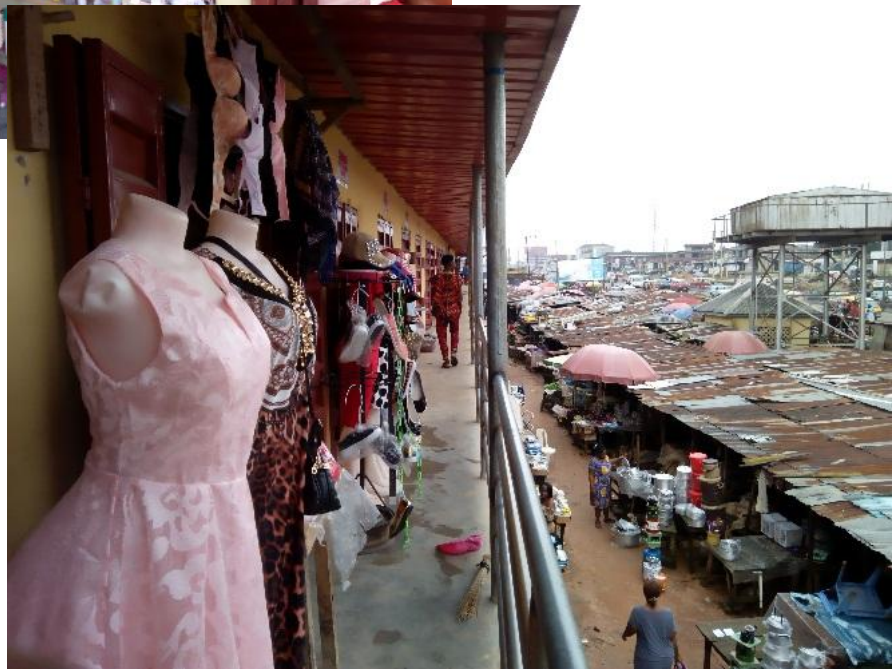


**Different
Sections of the
Market**



*Source: Pictures
taken by the
researcher during
the field work in*

2025.





*Source:
Pictures
taken by the
researcher
during the
field work
in 2025.*





Source:
Pictures taken
by the
researcher
during the
field work in
2025.



*Source:
Pictures
taken by the
researcher
during the
field work in
2025.*

**A Tree believed to have grown on its own...were the
Oba stood to declare the market.**



*Source:
Pictures taken
by the
researcher
during the field
work in 2025.*

Chief Stephen Odigie, the Odionwere of Egua-Edaiken



*Source:
Pictures taken
by the
researcher
during the
field work in
2025.*

Sir Terry Usonubun Ebomwonyi, Secretary of the Market Union



*Source:
Pictures
taken by the
researcher
during the
field work in
2025.*

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NAME	OCCUPATION	AGE	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Abdul, Musa	Fulani Sales Person	32	Urelu	10/8/2025
Ali, Usman	Trader	38	Urelu	7/8/2025
Abraham, Okemute	Student	24	University of Benin	16/8/2025
Agbone, Jude	Student	25	University of Benin	15/4/2025
Agbonlahor, John	Trader	45	Urelu	10/8/2025
Aguedomwen, Pullin	Odionwere (Egualyoba)	75	Urelu	16/8/2025
Ben-Faire Ventures	Trader	32	Urelu	15/8/2025
Ben, Owie-Benson	Taskforce Member	42	Urelu	15/8/2025
Chucks, Godday	Trader	56	Urelu	9/8/2025
Donald, Okpo	ManagerPrane BusinessIntegrated	54	Urelu	15/8/2025
Efosa, Joy	Trader	28	Urelu	15/8/2025
Enabulele, Collins	Indigene	38	Urelu	14/8/2025
Ehi, Donald	Trader	51	Urelu	1/9/2020
Enahoro, B. Osaze	Trader	33	Urelu	9/8/2025
Eghosa, Mary	Trader	28	Urelu	9/8/2025
Edosa, Eddy Igniogun	Supervisors for Works, Egor Local Government	47	Urelu	11/6/2025

Ehi, Edith	Trader	30	Uselu	28/8/2025
Enabulele, Clifford	former chairman Uselu community	55	Uselu	9/8/2025
Ehiogu, Mary	Trader	40	Uselu	29/4/2025
Ekhator, Femi	Trader	42	Uselu	7/8/2025
Eki, Mercy	Taskforce Member	56	Uselu	9/8/2025
Elohor, Felicity Omozua	Student	24	Uselu	27/4/2025
Emwinghare, Omoregbe	Community resident	53	Uselu	1/5/2025
Esoho, Faith	Trader	22	Uselu	10/8/2025
Ezedomwen, Lucky	Trader	36	Uselu	9/8/2025
Eze, Okoro	Chairman Edaiken market Taskforce Committee	52	Uselu	12/8/2025
Ebose, Rose	Iyeki	75	Uselu	19/8/2025
Ehiozee, Smart	Elder statesman	55	At his residence, Benin	9/6/2025
Imasogie, Queen	Trader	43	Uselu	5/8/2025
Idigbon, Kate	Trader	42	Uselu	1/9/2025
Igiebor, Joy	Trader	44	Uselu	19/8/2025
Ikechukwu, Agbo	Trader	38	Uselu	15/8/2025
Idugboa, Philip	P.R.O of the Market	48	Uselu	7/8/2025
Iriage Adesuwa	Trader	49	Uselu	9/8/2025
Ikpomwen, Rosalina	Trader	61	Uselu	29/4/2025

Innocent, Terry	Staff,Prane Business Integrated Limited	47	Uselu	9/8/2025
Iroko, Eze	Trader	42	Uselu	15/8/2025
Nwandike, Victoria	Trader	43	Uselu	3/8/2025
Nwanguie, Frank	Secretary Uselu Community Town Hall (Egua-Uselu)	68	Uselu	9/8/2025
Osaretin, Nosa	Trader	35	Uselu	10/8/2025
Obaseki, Isaac,	Associate Secretary Edaiken Market Traders Association	44	Uselu	19/8/2025
Ogwude ,Phillip	Security Personnel	32	Uselu	15/8/2025
Odigie, Stephen	Odionwere (Egua- Edaiken)	90	Uselu	29/4/2025
Osabo, Uzama	Executive member Edaiken Market Traders Association	49	Uselu	3/8/2025
Omede, Joe	Community secretary	36	Oba market	15/8/2025
Omosigho, Esther	Trader	85	Uselu	15/8/2025
Omoiawo, John	Trader	53	Oba market	5/8/2025
Oseyomon, E. P.	Lecturer	43	University of Benin	11/6/2025
Okafor, Eunice	Committee Member Taskforce	55	Uselu	9/8/2025

Omoregie, Godwin	Chairman Uselu Market	50	Uselu	15/8/2025
Osawe, Favour	Trader	47	Uselu	29/7/2025
Ogbonna, Ferdinard	Trader	27	Uselu	15/8/2025
Omosigho, F.	Trader	26	Uselu	1/9/2025
Osasere, Sonia	Trader	42	Uselu	12/8/2025
Oboneta, Sandra	Trader	28	Uselu	10/8/2025
Ohubame, John	Chairman Egor local Government	50	Uselu	14/8/2025
Oghe, Veronica	Iyeki Executive member	51	Uselu	9/8/2025
Ogunsede, Ayo	Trader	48	Uselu	19/8/2025
Oni, Odion	Chairman Edaiken community	52	Uselu	9/8/2025
Orogie, Osaretin	CommitteMember Taskforce	39	Uselu	9/8/2025
Osamudiamen, E .O	Egor Local Government Staff	43	Uselu	15/8/2025
Osadolor, Godspower	Assistant General Secretary Edaiken Market Traders Association	34	Uselu	19/8/2025
Osaumwen, Precious	Customer	25	Uselu	16/5/2025
Osazee, Rose	Trader	40	Uselu	16/8/2025
Otakpolor, Esosa	Executive,M Edaiken Market Traders	50	Uselu	9/8/2025
Sanni, Abu	Engineer	38	Uselu	15/8/2025
Usonobun, T .E	Secretary of the Market	50	Uselu	29/4/2025
Usonobu, Blessing	Trader	40	Uselu	29/4/2025
Uwafio, Tina	Trader	53	Uselu	9/8/2025
<u>Uyi</u> , Tina	Trader	47	Uselu	15/8/2025
Uba, Violet	Taskforce Member	49	Uselu	9/8/2025

Uwa, Tunde	Trader	29	Uselu	9/8/2025
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