

**THE IMPACT OF INTER-GROUP RELATIONS BETWEEN BENIN AND HER
NEIGHBORS**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work was carried out by **DIANA EKI OSIFO** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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Date

Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the Almighty God, for his mercies and benevolence and for preserving me against all odds.

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I give all glory to almighty God, the source and giver of knowledge who spared my life throughout the course of this work.

I also acknowledge my project supervisor Mrs. M U. Isibor, who has contributed immensely to the success of this work by giving prompt attention, incessant encouragement, very constructive criticism, advice and suggestions. I pray God to bless you in your various endeavours. Amen.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Inter-group relations is “whenever individuals belonging to one group, interact collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group and identification.”¹ Inter-group relations imply therefore, the existence of mutually exclusive groups that are in constant interaction with one another. The study of Inter-group relations is significant because it reveals the fact that the communities in Nigeria and Africa in general were not disunited nor isolated from each other; they related with each other before colonial conquest.² Works on Inter-group relations debunks the euro-centric view that Africans were uncivilized and barbaric, and that no meaningful interaction took place within the region prior to the arrival of Europeans.³ However, there exist several literature on this subject. These available materials examine the various patterns and nature of interactions which existed in Africa among Nigerian communities in particular. In Nigeria, the various communities cooperated and had meaningful intercourse before the advent of Europeans colonialism. The interactions among the communities were dynamic in nature. It was a robust and diversified relations. There were socio-cultural, political and economic relations.⁴

The concept of Inter-group relations contend that there is usually the existence of more than one or two group and usually what happens or follows is that there is exchange of relationship which may be political, social or economic. The concept implies a mutual

world of inter-dependency in which no groups or single individual is all sufficient and all knowing. The concept of Inter-group relations implies that no groups or individual is an Island and because of individual specific, limitation and short coming there is always an exchange of relationship in order to complement the shortfalls in our relationship. In economic towns, where there is economic specialization in the production of goods and services, there is also need for exchange of goods and services thereby creating a world of inter dependency and mutual relationship. Either as an individual group or society, it is impossible to produce everything a society or individual needs and thus the need for Inter-relationship.⁵

The concept of Inter-group relationship does not imply the absence of conflict or hostility. As a matter of fact, conflict and hostility are the integral part of a relationship. But the presence of hostility and conflict does not mark out the absence of diplomacy and negotiation in handling such differences and hostilities.⁶

Right from the pre-colonial period, Inter-group relationship between the Benin and her neighbours were basically in the South-South was characterized by hostility and as well as mutual dependency. Social conflict between the Benin and her neighbours pivoted around the control of the scarce resources called land. The control of land, which both groups needed for the production of agricultural resources, formed the basis for the understanding of the Benin and her neighbours conflict.⁷ But despite the conflict over land, both groups entered into mutual relationship in the areas of economic and political ties.

Inter-group relations are indeed very common among the various groups in Nigeria. One way or the other, people of different ethnic background were at one time or the other engaged in some sort of relations. At one time such relation was peaceful, at other times, the people engaged in violent confrontation. But whatsoever shape the relation assume, it is important to uphold the fact that inter-group relations existed and still exist between and among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, Inter-ethnic or interracial marriage occurs when two people of differing racial groups marry. This is often a form of exogamy (marriage outside of one's social group), and can be seen in the broader context of miscegenation (mixing of different racial groups in marriage, cohabitation or sexual relations. Inter-ethnic marriage involves cohabitation, sexual relations, marriage or inter-breeding involving persons of different races, especially in historical contexts as a transgression of the law. However, this research stands to examine the impact of inter-marriage between Benin and her neighbors

Aim and Objectives

This work examines the Inter-group relations between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours in the post-colonial period. Specifically, this research work seeks to achieve the following:

1. To discuss the geography of Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours and also examined their tradition of origins.
2. To examine the social, political and economic organization of Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours in pre-colonial to post-colonial time.

3. To inspect the inter-ethnic or interracial marriage between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbors.
4. To analyze the political relations between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours in terms of the similarities in their political structures and administration and see if issues such as wars, conflicts/disputes, migration and alliances strengthen or affected their political relationship.
5. To explore the social relations between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours in the area of marriage institutions, traditional festivals, cultural belief, birth, death, burial, and the similarities in their linguistic.

Scope of Study

This research is set to examine Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours with its case study directed to inter-group relations from 1990 to our contemporary time. The scope covers the post-colonial aspect of both parties. The platform of their relationship will be considered in cultural affinity-economic etc. Also, the impact of the relationship between both groups in their social, cultural, religious, economic and political life will be considered. The work is limited to inter-group relations between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours during the era earlier stated.

Methodology

Considering the study in focus, two sources were utilized for obtaining relevant data and information which were necessary for the success of this research which are the primary and secondary Sources.

Primary Source

For a better and comprehensive analysis of this study, most of the information will be gathered will be derive from numerous oral interviews from prominent indigenes and members of Benin, Urhobo and Asaba community. Such people include: Traditional Rulers, Elders, Lecturers, Distinguished members of Benin Platform and the Youth Council. Also, Interviews will be conducted with individuals from Urhobo and Asaba. These interviews will be from people of Benin, Urhobo and Asaba community who have a wellspring of knowledge about Benin and her historical, socio-political and economical interaction with Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours.

Secondary Sources

The Secondary source were from materials that ranges from books that describes the concept of Intergroup Relations majorly among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria, between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours, and between the different groups in the Edo-Delta Nations, and also books that give an overview of the historical background of Benin. Journals, internet sources, articles and publications will not be left out as they contributed mostly on the concept of inter-group relations. However, both sources are to be use appropriately for an effective and accurate comprehension of knowledge on the research course giving a historical, political, economic, and social account of Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours both in Edo.

Literature Review

The availability of academic works on inter-group relations in post-colonial Benin society was proven to be insufficient in the course of this research work. There has been little or no detailed account on inter-group relations between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours in the post-colonial period. However, certain literature exists that gives an account of Benin land and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours is classified under. Some of the literature in this category includes;

In furtherance of this is P.A Igbafe's work titled, *Benin in Pre-Colonial Era*,¹⁰ he takes 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. The book also examines how the Binis expanded their kingdom by conquering her neighbouring state before the coming of the European to the Benin kingdom.¹¹ The author also takes a critical analysis on her (Benin) social political life which centered on the Oba to the people who were very popular for their art work. This study will be very useful in this research especially in capturing the pre-colonial era. In other words this work will very useful in examine the socio-political and economic institutions of Benin Kingdom in ancient time which is part of the issues that will be tackle in the chapter of the study.

Another book which closely discuss the idea of intergroup relation among different group is K.U. Reuben, "Environments and People in Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria", in Obaro Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*.¹² This book focuses on the geographical distribution of the different ethnic

groups in Nigeria. It talks about their land and climate and the peoples and their culture. This work further divides the peoples of Nigeria into two major geographical areas; peoples of the Forest Belt which are to be found in the forests of the South; including the mangrove swamp forests of the Niger Delta and coastal creeks, and the grassland or savanna people of Nigeria which forms two distinct geographical groups, namely, the Middle Belt people and the people of the North. The book however provides a background on the economic nature of the different ethnic groups particularly states under the Niger Delta region of which concern Benin and her immediate Neighbours.¹³ The book will be relevant in this study by examine the socio-cultural institutions of the people of Asaba and Urhobo people.

Emmanuel Nwafor Mord, in his article, “The Benin Factor in the West Niger Igbo History: The Example of Ubulu-Ukwu,”¹⁴ The author of the West Niger Igbo kingdom of Ubulu-Ukwu adopts the historical method of description and analysis to critically examine the much generalized influence of the great Benin Kingdom on its proximate and distant neighbours. It posits the Nri-Awka area as the source of the initial stimulus for peopling, kingship and title systems of Ubulu-Ukwu. Relations with Benin and the latter’s attendant influence were stimulated by Benin’s needs for the vital services for which Ubulu-Ukwu was famous. These included the security of Benin coronations and the mystical protection of the Oba’s throne, state regalia and the magical paraphernalia necessary for his vitality and rejuvenation. Ubulu-Ukwu, being dynamic, through adaptation and emulation, effected adjustments to its monarchical system.¹⁵ Although the

article capture the historical background of the Benin Factor in the West Niger Igbo however the study was able to analyze the marriage institutions of Asaba people and this is relevant to this study.

A.F.C Ryder, in his book titled *Benin and The Europeans -1485-1897*,¹⁶ examines the relations between Benin Kingdom and the Europeans. According to him, some of the bonds between Benin and its vassals were in truth as light as air, demanding little more than a formal attitude thereafter. Within such a system, disruption at the Centre led to a loosening a lapse in the performance of customary obligations rather than to a sudden rebellion or a wholesale repudiation of link with Benin.¹⁷ In most places, however, this relatively simple pattern of organization has been overlaid by the development of kingdom title systems and more complex political units and it is the greatest of these more advanced politics. This boom however hives an expose on the political nature of the creation of the great Benin kingdom. This book will cover some aspect of chapter three of this study especially as it relate to the inter-group between Benin and her neighbours.

A.E Afigbo examined in his book titled; *Igbo and their Neighbours: Inter-Group Relations in South Eastern Nigeria*,¹⁸ various forms of patterns of inter-group relations that existed among the Benin and Igbo. He examined wars, diplomacy, economic, political and cultural factors as instrument of relationship. However, in the Ukwani and Urhobo relations, economic, political and cultural factors have been a bone of interaction among the two groups.¹⁹ This book is however relevant to the study for the inter-group relations between Asaba people and her Urhobo neighbour, but has failed to elaborate and

highlight the inter-group relations between Benin and her Asaba and Urhobo neighbour, this makes this study very important.

O. Otite in his book titled; *The Urhobo People*,²⁰ is one of the most important Urhobo literature, that analyzed with every aspect of Urhobo clans, which includes other sub-group within the Urhobo. The book enumerated on Urhobo political organisation, their emergence, social cohesion and also their present territory. This book has the record that there are two main traditions of origins regarding the first stage. One of them that Urhobo ancestors and predecessors were descendants of a man called Urhobo, while the other tradition claims that the Urhobo are descendants of an ancient ruler in Ife hence they like the Bini and other Edo speaking peoples, came from Ife.²¹ The work however did not study in detail the various areas on the inter-group relations among Benin, Urhobo and her Asaba neighbours but observed the historical antecedence of people and their inter-group relations which will be relevance in this study. This work will fill in the gap in the existing knowledge of the nature and manifestations of inter-group relations among Benin, Urhobo and her Asaba neighbours.

Prince Joseph Asagba in his book titled; *A Royal History of the Okpe-Urhobo of Nigeria*,²² emphasized on the Urhobo culture and their relation to other cultures in the Niger-Delta. The Urhobo and Isoko are related in language and culture, leading to missionaries erroneously labeling the Urhobo and the Isoko cultural groups as Sobo. This name was strongly rejected by both tribes. The Urhobo nation is made up of twenty-two sub groups, including Ewreni the largest of all Urhobo sub group. He went further to

talk about the unique style with which the Urhobo people speak English and Pidgin English.²³ The author attempts to give reasons for this trend. Concentrating on a period that covers from Nigeria's independence to 2010. This article will be relevant in the second chapter of this work where the origin and nature of Urhobo people will be examined. The works did not capture in detailed the inter-group relations among Benin, Urhobo and her Asaba neighbours; this makes this study relevant.

Dawood Omolumen Egbefo and Joseph Inegbenbho Osagie, article titled "Impact of Colonial Rule on intra-group Relations between the Benin and the Esan Peoples of Nigeria,"²⁴ examines the impact of British Colonial rule on intergroup relations between Benin and Esan communities. British contact with most Nigerian states, kingdoms and empires in the twentieth century had far reaching effect on inter-group relations. The authors discuss the conquest and imposition of colonial rule on Benin and Esan and how these impacted on the social, political and economic relations among the people. Benin and Esan had hitherto enjoyed varied degrees of relations - from cordial to hostile – especially in the pre-colonial period.²⁵ This article will only be useful in the second chapter of this study, especially examining the historical origin of the Benin people. But did not capture the inter-group relations between the Benin people and her neighbours. This study will fill the existing vacuum.

Noah Echa Attah, "Nigerian Inter-Group Relations: Emerging Trends and Challenges,"²⁶ The author seeks to argue that there was a relative harmonious relationship among the people before colonialism in Nigeria, and that this was altered by colonial

policies. He further reiterated that relationship among the people became more tenuous due to the activities of the political class that emerged since independence and the unfavourable economic space.²⁷ The extent of the correlation between the character of the political elite and economic failure and the emerging trends in Nigerian inter-group relations is explored in the article. This work will be very useful to this study especially in the third and fourth chapters of this study, especially the issues of impact and challenges of inter-group relations with the Benin, Urhobo and Asaba people.

Frederick Iwendi Ofili, article titled “Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: The Dynamics and Complexities,”²⁸ examines the structure of the situation or the condition(s) in which these groups relate or interact and which obviously determines the nature of their intergroup relations. This therefore, involves understanding the nature of the intergroup relations in the country with a commensurate understanding of the nature or the mode of material production/generation and its associated social relations of production in the country.²⁹ This work help tackle the concetpualiiization of inter-group relations in chapter three of this chapter. Although, the author did not capture the inter-group relations between Benin and her Urhobo-Asaba neighbours.

In Ezinna E Enwereji’s work titled “*Indigenous Marriage Institutions and Divorce in Nigeria: The Case of Edo State of Nigeria*,”⁸ This author examines the principles and structure of marriage institutions in Nigeria. It notes conditions and factors that induce divorce by using empirical examples drawn from the family as a formal institutional structure and from the administrative operation of this institution.⁹ The

author also revealed that marriage in its present institutional functions are compared to show how divorce affects its stability and to document the results, which follow from this interaction. This work is very useful to this study and it survey the nature and manifestations of intergroup relations between Benin and her Urhobo-Asaba neighbours in this study.

According to Thomas K. Nwachukwu's thesis titled, "*Long-Term Marriages Among Nigerian Immigrants: A Qualitative Inquiry*,"¹² The author reports the lived experience of nine Nigerian Igbo immigrant couples who live in the Houston area metropolis and who have been married for 20 years or more. Data from two clergymen who also live in the Houston metropolitan area and who have ministerial duties for the Nigerian Igbo community were utilized. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The author finding did not differ greatly from other studies on long-term marriages. The results support the conclusion that there may be cross cultural similarity in structural factors fostering marriage longevity. The results did, however, indicate some uniqueness germane to the acculturation of this immigrant population in the areas of extended family, upbringing of children, gender roles, and male patriarchal hegemony. This underscores the need for counselors to consider cultural context when looking at marriage longevity.¹³ The Nigerian couples in this study also acknowledged that the above listed structures may have either a positive or negative impact on marriage stability. Although the work did not grasp the intergroup relations between Benin and her Urhobo-Asaba neighbours,

but it summarizes certain concept and theories of inter-group relations which is relevant to chapter two and chapter three of the study.

However, the inter-group relation had received scholarly attention and interests in Nigeria, but it is obvious that none had taken Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours relation as central focus of study. Therefore, it is this vacuum this project essay aim to fulfill.

CHAPTERS OUTLINE

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This is the introductory chapter which gives a highlight of what would be discussed in the entire research work. It gives a narrative of the subject of inter-group relations, and how it has been evident in other intergroup relations in Nigeria before colonialism. It majorly explains the introduction, the aim and objectives of the research, the scope of study, the methodology, literature review, chapterization and endnotes of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

BRIEF HISTORY OF BENIN, URHOB AND ASABA PEOPLE

This chapter examines the geography and tradition of Origin of Urhobo and Asaba people, the study also examine the socio-economic and political institutions of the Urhobo and Asaba people.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF INTER-MARRIAGE BETWEEN BENIN HER NEIGHBOURS

This chapter identifies the inter-marriage activities, the various socio-cultural interactions between the people of Benin and her Asaba neighbour. It further explores the changes and continuity that occurred in the aftermath of the inter-ethnic marriage rites. The social activities include; the systems of marriage, festivals, societal beliefs, food, culture, language, proverbs, belief in reincarnation

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES OF INTER-GROUP RELATIONS BETWEEN BENIN HER NEIGHBOURS

This Chapter gives a vivid description of the relationship that the people of Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours shares economically, politically and socially and finally the chapter draws out the economic and socio-political relationship among the communities and how they have been amicable from that period even till recent time.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This is a sum up of all that is required in this study. Starting from the theme of Intergroup relations, historical background of Benin, its origin, its political features and structure, economic features, its social activities and examine how intergroup relations has been evident between Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours.

Endnotes

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6. Ibid.
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25. Ibid., p.77.
26. Noah Echa Attah, “Nigerian Inter-Group Relations: Emerging Trends and Challenges,” *The Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Vol.19 No.1, p.2016, p.85.
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28. Frederick Iwendi Ofili, “Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: The Dynamics and Complexities,” *Journal of Research and Development*, Vol.4, No.1, 2013, p.135.
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CHAPTER TWO

BRIEF HISTORY OF BENIN, URHOB0 AND ASABA PEOPLE

Introduction

Man's interrelationship with his environment is often tied to his survival. He must exploit the land to survive. In so doing, the exploration and exploitation and control of nature and natural resources for human development are not possible without the exertion and break-out of some form of conflict or the other.¹ Yet, man lives to exploit his environment if he must survive. This chapter seeks to examine the conceptualization and nature of intergroup relations as its concern the Benin, Urhobo and her Asaba people.

Antecedence of Benin Kingdom

The Benin Kingdom was one of the earliest most renowned states in the forest region of Sub-Sahara Africa. The fame of Benin also spread across the world as a result of her early contact with the Europeans. A later contact with the British in the late 19th century which led to the loot of the exquisite arts of Benin further spread abroad her fame and rich culture.² The kingdom extended to cover the vast area occupied by the Edo speaking people of the southern region of present day Nigeria, particularly from the hilly country that borders the Igbirra and Igala in the North, through the coastal swamp in the south with the Ijo and Itsekiri people as neighbours. To the West, they share boundaries with the Yoruba people, and the Igbo people to the East.³

Politically, pre-colonial Benin Kingdom was centralized with the Oba at the centre. The Oba was at the apex of both economic and political affairs and had his

cabinet of chiefs who executed on his behalf. The Oba was seen as the supreme authority in the land whose words were final, although the Oba was not autocratic being that there were limitations to his powers.⁴ Also, the Oba wielded a lot of economic power as the trade of some goods and products such as pepper, kernels, palm oil and ivory was solely carried out by the chiefs on behalf of the Oba. The Oba also had the power to close all markets and routes to traders. It was such power that was exercised by Oba Ovoranmwun and to checkmate the European incursion into the kingdom. This was condemned by the British Officials and traders as well as the middlemen in the later part of the 19th Century.⁵ The British officials were not comfortable with the power exercised by the Oba as it seemed to be a hindrance to their mission. This situation led to the event of the signing of treaty and massacre and then the primitive expedition. The social structure and the supreme power of the Oba were altered in the conquest of the Benin Kingdom in 1897 by the British.⁶

Brief History of Urhobo Kingdom

The Urhobo people belong to the overwhelming number of people whose history is yet unknown. The Urhobo are Edo-speaking peoples a linguistic classification first used by Northgate Thomas in 1910, and which has stuck on with implications not only for social and cultural affinity (as we shall see later) but also for problems of group origins and historical identity.⁷

The neighbours of Urhobos are Osdoko, to the South East, the Itsekiri to the West, the Benin to the North, the Ijo to the South and the Ndokwa to the North-East. The

geographical characteristics of natural resources played an important role in the migratory history of the Urhobo a name or land chose Etymology as both a linguistic and social-cultural grouping is not yet known, but where did the Urhobo migrated from? Or are they autochthonous in their territory? At this point, let us now look at the traditions of origin of the Urhobo people.⁸

There are four main traditions of the origin of the Urhobo people. They are:

Autochthony: Traditions among the Urhobo are replace with assertions of original dwellers of their territory. The autochthonous people believed to be Urhobo, with no known history of migration from anywhere else. They were the aborigines coming from nowhere but living in their territories from time immemorial. This tradition is without documentary or archeological evidence, yet it recurs among Urhobo respondent and it may not brush aside. Bradbury refers to Husband's suggestion that the distinctive characteristics of the various Urhobo and Isoko tribes are a result of the superimposition if Ijaw, Ibo, ad later Edo immigrate upon aboriginal strata already speaking Edo type dialects.⁹ The aboriginal strata referred o must have been very strongly established because the diverse strangers intervening elements have been completely absorbed into a common and distinguishable pool of cultural and organizational forums among all the Urhobo people. The intervention of this foreign element is to be distinguished from suggested total societal migrations from one source in Edo territory.¹⁰

Urhobo emigrants from their Edo territory consist of two categories. The masses ordinary people and the ruling elite. An overwhelming number of Urhobo claim that they came from Benin. But they emphasize that they are not Bini people who turned to be Urhobo on reaching their territories. Instead they asst that they are already Urhobo before they left Benin. This tradition is found n record words. There is a stock answer to questions regarding Urhobo origin. We (the Urhobo), came from Benin (Aka).¹¹ It is implied here that Benin was a skeptical concept, and that the Urhobo were not descendants of another ethnic group Bini. In other words, the Urhobo claim to be connected with Bini get monotonous in its reiteration, yet for all that can tradition is ethnic in laiming intmate connection between themselves and the empire of Benin according to Hubband.¹²

Traditions of Benin origin suggest two major migrations during the two dynasties of Benin history. In the first place, the Urhobo remember clearly the Ogiso dynasty consisting of 31 known rulers (Ogiso) before the alleged joining to Ife that gave rise to the Ewka dynasty. Also such terms as Ighodomigodo, the name by which the territory was known are repeated and are well remembered in connection with cruelty, bitterness, deprivations, in sanctity of life and property and tyranny, and consequently too, in connection with a period when the Urhobo apparently less powerful, left their Edo adobe in search of peace and plentiful economic resources,¹³ however, this dreary characterization of the Ogiso period may well be an exaggeration it is possible too that there were friendly and positive sides to their inter-group relationships, and the Urhobo

might just have emigrated owing to their love, far adventure and desire for socio-political and socio-economic independent. One of Eghauevbas statement was that the first wave of Urhobo emigration left under the leadership of a man called Urhobo regarded eponymous ancestors of present day Urhobo.¹⁴

The second major migrations account after 1170A.D. during the second Benin dynasty. In particular, a reference is made to the reign of Egbeka at about 1370 A. D. when the Urhobo were said to have emigrated from Benin. It was from this time that the Urhobo referred to the Bini as the people. Aka (Ihwo Aka, following a short form of Egbeka), or just AKA as a name of the people, their territory and their language. Both Urhobo and Benin traditions support this event. This later emigrate either founded new settlements or joined their kinsmen and ethnic members in expanding existing towns. One important consequence of this latter migration is the creation and consolation of the regency in the memory connected with the Benin-place origin. It is possible that this unintended psychological. Consequence of memory functioning. Otherwise used as a learning technique, accounts for the stock phrase we came from Benin.¹⁵

Brief History of Asaba People

As the story goes Nnebisi was the son of the founder of 'Ahaba' which must have been called something else at that time because the name "Ahaba" and subsequently "Asaba" was given to it by Nnebisi and the British respectively. Nnebisi for some unclear reason ended up in Nteje with his mother who was from there. As he was growing up he started noticing that he was being treated differently than everybody else around him.

When he inquired why; he was told that it was because Nteje was not his true home town.¹⁶ So he immediately decided to embark on a journey to find out his true home. He was given a small rock and asked to head west. And that where ever this rock falls off his head is his true home. So young Nnebisi bode his mum and friends goodbye and headed across the River Niger. He kept going until he came to where we all know as "cable Point" or "wire" in Asaba and the rock fell off his head. As Nnebisi exclaimed "Ahabam" meaning "I've got my own".¹⁶

The name was shortened to Ahaba and remained so until the British came and renamed it "Asaba" so they can pronounce it. Nnebisi got married to two different women and had five boys: Ezenei, Ugbomanta, Agu, Ajaji, and Onaje in that order. So when you hear your grandfather talking about "Asaba - Ebe Ise" he is referring to the fact that Asaba is made up of five parts - five sons. Each of these five boys were given lands and they all got married and grew to the modern Asaba. So any true asaba person can actually trace (ito oba) their family back to the five villages and therefore back to Nnebisi.¹⁷

The Influence of Nnebisi on the development and tradition of modern Asaba is undeniable. Just like Nnebisi didn't like the fact that he didn't belong where he found himself and decided to do something about it, Asaba people have always been known to be trailblazers in their respective fields. Even the modern Asaba traditional governmental system has element of democracy as once again Asaba people cannot fathom any element of Royalty to any particular family or group as in most parts of Nigeria. Nnebisi

treated all his five sons equally but also maintained that Ezenei being the first son will always go first.¹⁸ The first Asagba of Asaba was from Umuezei and has been rotational ever since. When you consider that Nnebisi probably lived before Some of the well-known democratic bastions of the world, it is safe to say that Nnebisi had the same vision. Judging from the way the traditional government in Asaba is centered around one man one vote.¹⁹

From Ahaba and Asaba

But the name was inadvertently changed to Asaba during the British colonial occupation of Nigeria when the first colonial explorers to arrive and live in Ahaba could not hear the name properly, which appears to them to be heavily accented, much less pronouncing it correctly. At the end it all, they entered the name “Asaba” in their record books, rather than “Ahaba.” And that was how Ahaba came to be called Asaba. And, from then till today, it has always answered to the name “Asaba.”²⁰

In Ahaba, Nnebisi, who was happy that he had finally found his home town started intermingling with the household of earlier settlers like Eze Anyanwu, Ugboma, Odikpe and Obodo Achala. It is to be noted, however, that before then the area that later became known as Ahaba was known as “the town beyond the big river” with no particular name attached to it.²¹

It was the arrival, from Nteje, of Nnebisi, his magical pronouncement of “Ahabam” and his marriage to two wives from the households of the earlier settlers that gave rise to the name “Ahaba” and later Asaba. From his first wife, named Ujom, he had

three children, Onne (male) Ezeumune (male) and Ojife (female). From his second wife, whose name, nobody seems to remember, he had a son called Iyagba. Iyagba's offspring are believed to be part of the lost seed and their lineage remains untraceable even till today.²²

But from the others, Nnebisi had five grandsons namely Ezei, Ugbomanta, Agu, Ajaji and Onaje, in that order. These five united to form the original 9 (nine) quarters of Ahaba or Asaba called "Ahaba ebo ite'nani" But later, by accident of history, the five grandsons of Nnebisi were to absorb most of the earlier settlers leading to the present make up of five quarters in Asaba, namely, Umuezei, Ugbomanta, Umuagu, Umuaji, Umuonaje.²³

These five Quarters or Ebos constitute the five Ruling Houses of Asaba. The Asagba of Asaba throne rotates amongst these five Quarters or Ebos. The order of rotation is in accordance with the seniority of these five sons, starting with Umuezei and ending with Umuonaje. The current Asagba of Asaba, the 13th Asagba, Obi (Prof.) Chike Edozien, a retired hospital administrator and Ist African Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University College, Ibadan (later University of Ibadan), is from Umuezei quarters. His father is said to be a direct descendant of Nnebisi (the founder of Asaba). His mother was the daughter of a prominent Asaba chief, and a notable trader.²⁴

Asaba used to be warlike in days gone by so much that they were said to have defeated in battle the armies of Aboh. Warriors in those days were called Odogwu. But somewhere down the line that gave way to agrarian/substience farming in which the

strength of a man was judged not so much by the number of people he killed in a war or the number of heads he brought from it, but by the number of yams he had in his barn and the number of mouths he could feed with them.²⁵

Even so, this agrarian farming was to give way, first to goods trading in the hinterland and on the River Niger and later to education with the coming of the white man to Asaba. Many of Asaba men and women who became educated were employed in government service to serve as clerks, interpreters, teachers, administrators. In fact, sources say the rumour about marriage to Asaba women not lasting long may have originated from the tendency by Asaba women of those colonial days not to take nonsense from any man, in marriage.²⁶

On the effect of education on the general lifestyle and fortunes of the people, Achuzia opines that “Asaba people lost the art of farming, the art of fishing and even commerce because everybody was involved in education for the purpose of civil service. In fact, It should be notes here that Asaba were the forerunners in civil service.²⁷ It’s should note here the socio-economic activities in Benin are obviously same with Urhobo and Asaba which include farming, hunting, and animal rearing. They plant cassava, potatoes, okra, yam, maize, melon, beans, pepper, tomatoes, plantain, sugar canes, fruits and vegetables.²⁸

Definition of Intergroup Relations

Intergroup relations The term intergroup relations refers to both individual interactions involving members from different groups and the collective behaviour of

groups in interaction with other groups, at either the intra or inter organizational level.²⁹ The classic definition of intergroup relations was originally provided by Sherif who suggested: Whenever individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identification, we have an instance of intergroup behaviour. Intergroup relations imply therefore, the existence of mutually exclusive groups that are in constant interaction with one another.³⁰ These mutually exclusive groups due to the mode of their social bond usually exhibit the we attitude toward members of their mutual group while exhibiting the they‘ attitude to the other members of the out-group.³¹

Intergroup relations’ considers a range of theories that encompass the perceived relationships between the individual, their own group, and other groups, and that provide a range of psychological approaches for preventing prejudice, intolerance, and conflict, and for promoting more positive intergroup relations.³² Theories include the minimal group paradigm, the mere categorization effect, the category differentiation model, social identity theory, the common in-group identity model, and the contact hypothesis, which proposed that contact would only decrease conflict under certain conditions such as when contact takes the form of a cooperative interaction. Experiencing pro-social behaviour promotes a more positive pro-social orientation for the individual in general.³³

Factors of that Promote Inter-Group Relations

There were many factors which promoted interaction among the various communities of Nigeria. No Nigerian group can be treated in isolation of the others. The

economic and political survival of a community depended on the relationship, whether friendly or hostile, which it had with its neighbors. Group relations means co-operation between different states. They took the forms of trade, boundaries, wars and diplomatic ties. All Nigeria nation states took measures to ensure good relation with each other. They respected the recognition of the territorial integrity of other states, promotion of trade, inter-state tours by rulers, inter-state marriages and establishment of diplomatic relations.³⁴

Relations Promoted by Migration

Migration of people from one place to another is important. Nigeria's history is full of examples of migrations from one area to another for boom political, economic and security reasons. There **were** migrations within the same region or ethnic group and this was caused by disputes over succession to thrones, quarrels over chieftaincy titles, invasion and flight to avoid being punished for a criminal offence.³⁵

There are also other forms and patterns of migration, they included movement of Islamic teachers, forced migration of slaves and captives in war, and also attempt to establish new dynasties by princes and other leaders in already established kingdoms. These migrations produced pockets of heterogeneous communities in different part of the country. Many urban states are made up of diverse people with different cultures. This heterogeneous nature strengthened the links between the urban dwellers and relatives in distant rural towns and villages.³⁶

Relations Promoted by Religion, Social and Cultural Institution

Various groups in Nigeria were also integrated by religions and social institutions. There were many institutions which brought the people closer to one another. These institution included marriage ties, age grades and secret societies. A number of societies had age set organizations. Young people who were born in the same period were initiated into the same age set. They were usually many such organizations in every community, each with a different name and leadership. This was true among the Ibibio who had well organized age-grade that cut across villages. Also were the secret societies.³⁷ This involves men with similar ideas and common interests in economic, religious and political matters. Those who could afford the initiation fee and keep secret were accepted as members for example, members of the Ogboni secret society among the Yoruba in the South-West, Republic of Benin maintained cordial relations with one another. They had their own symbols and signals which all initiates understood very well. Also members of the Nze na Ozo societies among the Igbo maintained very close contacts too.³⁸

The oracle system also helped in promoting inter-group co-operation. Some communities had an oracle which was used to settle disputes among different villages or towns. It was regarded as an impartial judge since its pronouncement were believed to be sanctioned by the gods the famous oracles in Igbo land which include Umunoha and Ebini Ukpabi in Arochukwu which was the most famous, integrating almost all Igbos.³⁹ The marriage which forbade a man from marrying within his lineage or people related to

him by previous marriage ties created a complex inter-locking web of relationships in many part of Nigeria and thus contributed to inter-group relations. Martial relationships were common among royal families who exchanged their processes with one another. Marriage connection strengthened relationships among different communities and families.⁴⁰

Conclusion

However, from the above analysis, there is need to gives a vivid description of the relationship between people of Benin and her Neighbours. The social activities will be capture which include; the systems of marriage, festivals, societal beliefs, food, culture, language, proverbs, belief in reincarnation. In the subsequent chapters, we also evaluate the economic relationship between Benin people and her Neighbours and see how they have been able to benefit from each other. It will examine the natural resources, agricultural activities, local industries, arts and crafts, economic value what they trade on, their economic challenges, and their main occupation for both the male and female.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF INTER-MARRIAGE BETWEEN BENIN HER NEIGHBOURS

Introduction

This chapter investigates the changing nature and patterns as well as the social construct of intermarriage activities between the Benin, Urhobo and Asaba people in our contemporary times. Marriage in Nigeria takes place under three legal systems, Islamic, civil (statutory law), and customary (tribal/traditional law).¹ In general, marriages in the north of the country are under Islamic law, while those in the south are under statutory law. However, even when couples marry under statutory law, customary laws generally prevail in personal matters. Customary law tends to vary from one ethnic group to another, from state to state, and most often from one town to another.²

Two major types of marriage exist in Nigeria: monogamy, a marriage of one man to one woman, and polygyny, a marriage of one man to two or more wives. In most cultural groups in Nigeria, traditional marriage is usually an arrangement between two families as opposed to an arrangement between two individuals.³ Accordingly, there is pressure on the bride and bridegroom to make the marriage work as any problem will usually affect both families and strain the otherwise cordial relationship between them. In most Nigerian cultures, the man usually pays the dowry or bride-price and is thus considered the head of the family. Adultery is acceptable for men, but forbidden for women.⁴

Basically, two forms of marriages which greatly influence inter-cultural marriage are common in Nigeria. One was the betrothal of a girl to a young man chosen by the families of the young people concerned. This may be predicated by close family ties, which may range from political ties, religious ties, and historical ties to mere friendship between such families.⁵ The second category of marriage partner selection (which makes for the increase in inter-cultural marriage) now prevalent in Nigeria is the one in which individuals concerned personally chose their own partners. This may not be unconnected with the increased pace of modernization whereby emphasis is shifting from extended family ties, which formally existed in most of the rural areas.⁶

Nature and Operational Mode of Benin Marriage System

In ancient times, the process of marriage can actually begin right from the point of birth of a female child through the process of betrothal; that is when a female child is born, an interested family betroths her on behalf of their male child by symbolically dropping a log of wood in their compound. On acceptance of the proposal she will then catered for by the family, until she is ripe for marriage.⁷

Introduction: As the intended groom goes for the first visit, he is usually not required to bring along any family members as a sign of independence, although he might bring a few of them if he so desires, along with a few gifts for the girl's immediate family members. On getting to the girl's fathers house, he introduces himself and tells them his intentions, they then fix a date for him to come with selected members of his immediate and extended family for an introductory visit. The purpose of the introduction is for both

families to meet and also for them to investigate if they are related by blood as it is seen as taboo for two people related by blood to marry. They both also go in-depth to find out if there are any known bad traits in the family.

In ancient times, before the prevalence of western education and religion, both families usually conducted a check in their family shrine to know if there are any ancestral curses or diseases running in either family. If such curses are found, they either stop the marriage plans or appease the gods to break the curse.⁸

Traditional Marriage Rites: If all checks show that there are no issues, then they can proceed with the marriage plans. The bride's family will carry out consultations and send a list of the requirements for her dowry, as well as a suitable date for the traditional marriage rites proper to take place. This date is normally seen as the "big day".

In the traditional marriage rites according to Benin native law and custom, the dowry normally includes salt, sugar, honey, palm oil, palm wine, yams and the sum of twelve pounds and ten shillings (as at the time these requirements were documented by the Benin traditional council, this amount equated to ₦25 and is still paid till date). The quantities of the other items required are regulated by the individual families. Some might ask for large quantities while others might ask for little.⁹ On the selected date, the groom will be expected to arrive at the girl's house in company of his family members and friends. A member of the girl's family will welcome them and offer prayers. They might even offer them few drinks after the prayers.¹⁰

The ceremony then begins with the oldest male from the girl's father's family (Okaegbe) taking charge of the ceremony, and acting as a spokesman. The groom's family will also select a spokesman who most times is also their Okaegbe. After all the pleasantries, the groom's Okaegbe then informs the bride's family on the purpose of their return visit. He would normally say something like "we were walking past your compound and we saw a lovely flower which we have come to pluck with your permission". The bride's Okaegbe then responds by saying "I have plenty lovely flowers in my garden, let me bring them so you can identify the one you are after."¹¹

A Bride with the Okuku Hairdo: He then tells a female in the family to bring out the maidens in the family. In order to make it more interesting, they will bring a maiden covered with a veil who is not the intended bride, and ask *ònò na nò a*, meaning "is it this one" and the groom will reply *éo*, meaning no. This is repeated for four or five times before they bring out the bride who will stand out prominently because of her Okuku (traditional hairdo). The groom will then answer *Ehn*, meaning yes.¹²

After confirming her identity, she then goes to sit with her family while the groom's family presents her dowry. After the acceptance of the dowry, the bride's *Okaegbe* then hands her over to the groom's father by placing her gently on his laps while counting aloud up to seven. At the seventh time, she then sits on his laps. The groom's father then hands her over to his son by placing her on his lap. This action symbolizes that she has been officially handed over to her new family, and they have accepted her.¹³

Both families then offer prayers and blessings for a fruitful, loving and lasting marriage. After the prayers, the new couple then moves out along with their friends and immediate family members to appreciate all those who have come to grace the occasion. They normally wave hands and chant *wa ruese* meaning “thank you”. After the appreciation, food, drinks and other refreshments are served to guests who will later dance with the couple and hand them gifts of cash. In the past, the bride would be escorted to the groom’s family house on the eve of the traditional wedding. The escorting of the bride is another interesting aspect of the marriage rites. The bride is usually escorted along with her personal belongings by elderly females and some youths from her family. Her parents are not involved in this ceremony.¹⁴

The brides escort party will normally get to some distance from the groom’s family house, and then send one of the youths to inform them of their arrival. A delegation from the groom’s family will then proceed to meet them. On getting there, the bridal escort party will act like they are tired from a long journey and the groom’s delegation will have to drop some money on the floor for them to continue the journey. This “drama” is repeated a total of seven times along the way before arriving at the groom’s family house.¹⁵

On getting there, the youngest wife in the groom’s family performs the *ikpoba ovbioha* (washing of hands and feet). This ceremony involves washing the hands and feet of the new bride and wiping it dry with a new scarf that has never been used by anyone. This scarf becomes the first property of the new bride. After the washing

ceremony, prayers are then offered for blessing and success of the union after which the bride is finally handed over to the groom's family amidst singing, dancing and merriment. Her escort party then leave her behind at her new home.¹⁶

Nature and Operational Mode of Marriage Rite in Asaba

The marriage process begins with the groom meeting with the family of the bride to familiarize with intending family members, thereafter, a relationship is established with the two families by engaging in what we call introduction. Before the introduction, the groom's family sends delegates to visit members of the family of the bride. This visit is to know members of the bride's family and to inform them of their intentions of getting married to their daughter. After which a date is now fixed for the official introduction where the groom and his family visits the family of the bride. During the course of the introduction the family of the groom is introduced to the wife-to-be for recognition. Some items are being presented to the groom's family such as; kolanut, groundnut, garden eggs, biscuits, dry gin with a wedge of some amount of money.¹⁷

These items are shared amongst families and pleasantries are exchanged. Each family has their own spokesperson who is usually the father or the oldest Elder present at that time. If the father of the bride is a chief, his title would be acknowledged during this process so also with the father of the groom. The groom's family is asked about the purpose of their visit, the bride's family welcomes them with kola nuts and palm wine which is shared from the oldest to the youngest.¹⁸

Then the groom's family answers the question by presenting the required items and says "our son has seen an apple in your garden and he is interested in having her". At this point the family of the bride may bring out two of her sisters instead of her, enquiring if they are the "apple" which the groom seeks. The groom waits until his rightful intended is brought out before the introduction continues. The bride is then finally brought out for them to be sure of the 'apple'. She is then asked if they should accepted or not and if she agrees; it is accepted and she proceeds to sit beside her mother. Food and drinks are served. This entire process is usually wedged with some amount of money.¹⁹

At this point of the introduction, the traditional wedding list is presented to the family of the groom, this list may contain certain items that are expected to be presented by the family of the groom.²⁰

Requirements of the Prospective Groom's Family

No.	List Items for the Groom
1.	20 tubers of yam
2.	10 litres of Palm Oil
3.	1 big goat
4.	25 litres of Palm Wine
5.	Kola nuts
6.	Alligator Pepper
7.	Crates of Soft Drink
8.	5 cartons of Beer
9.	Bottle of Gin
10.	Bottles of Schnapps
11.	Palm Wine

All these items can be supported with a wedge of some amount of money which can be agreed upon by the family members of the bride. The above items can also be monetized as a substitute.

The second visit involves the groom to be visiting his intended's family to see the family members that were not present on the day of the introduction after which a date will now be fixed for the traditional marriage.²¹

Traditional Marriage: On the day of the Traditional marriage, both families now come together to perform marital rites which involves the payment of the dowry. The families go through a negotiation process for an amount to be agreed upon. This process involves the elders of both the bride and groom's families. After this procedure, they will now go into the marriage ceremony.

Urhobo Traditional Marriage Rites

The Traditional marriage ceremony begins with music from a live band while the family of the bride provides food and drinks such as palm wine, stout, schnapps, fruit wine and soft drinks for the attendants. A special seating arrangement is made for the bride and the groom who is usually adorned in the beautiful marriage material colours. Before the bride and the groom come out, there is usually a procession where the bride, groom and ladies on "asoebi" dance out to the music of the live band to the seating area. During the ceremony, guests from far and wide begin to arrive which may include the Secondary school and University friends of both the bride and groom, these guests usually adorn the asoebi materials that were distributed to them by the bride. The mother

of the bride also invites many of her friends to the ceremony as the day is usually regarded as a bragging right for her, most especially if it is her first daughter (“Ada”) that is getting married.²²

The father of the bride as well as some elders would be seated at a special high table or canopy where the community folks come to pay respect and congratulate him on the marriage of his child. In some cases the parents of both the bride and groom seat together to welcome well-wishers. The siblings of the couple also play a significant role in this marital process as they ensure that drinks and food get to all the guests. Siblings also help to hold and safeguard personal items of the bride and groom, they may sometimes call guests who may have difficulty locating the venue of the ceremony. The couple is made to do a special dance in which well-wishers are given the opportunity to dance and celebrate with them; money is sprayed on the couple and the bride usually assigns a sibling or friend to pick it up.²³

At the end of the ceremony, the mother of the bride presents her with certain items as she moves into her husband’s house. These items include;

No.	List of Items for the Groom
1.	.Motar and Pestle (“odo” and “ekoshi”)
2.	A big basin.(“igbeju”)
3.	Grinding stone
4.	Brooms(“eziza”)
5.	Cooking pots(“ite”).

6.	Gas cooker
7.	Stove.
8.	Box with few wrappers (george)

Any other items which the parents feel they should give their child are also presented.

Bride Price: The bride price is not fixed but instead determined by the bride's family.

The amount is usually from N80000-N100000.

Money: This has a very important role to play in the lives of the individual as well as family and the couple. The presence of it makes life a lot easier but the lack of it poses so much threat to a marriage and this could challenge the authority of the man as the head of the house: thus, challenging the marriage. Certain ethnic groups in Nigeria believe that a man must be made or financially reasonably stable, with much emphasis before he can be given a wife. If at some point their finances are threatened, the parents of the girl would almost suggest their daughter quits. Families constantly wobble and sometimes threaten to collapse, obviously many happen daily. Modern ideologies are not helping to build homes and they pile up against our cultural values which on the long run affect marriages negatively. This especially becomes worse when the lady looks for money on several occasions and the so called husband still maintains that there is no money. The only option that is left for the lady is to find her way.²⁴

After the introduction, both families fix another day for payment of the bride price. However, the traditional marriage slightly varies in some families. The middleman is always the one appointed to meet the bride's family to get the date for the traditional

marriage as agreed by the bride's family. The variations experienced in the families in Urhobo are due to certain circumstances in the families. In most cases, it is the demands that come from the bride's family members. In some families outrageous demands are made to the groom in order to prepare for the marriage rites. And so before the marriage is contracted, such grooms spend so much for the bride's family members. But in other cases, it is not so.²⁵

Commenting on it, Emuotu Max-Ogaga from Ughelli says the variation is a result of traditional awareness level, economic background, educational background, religious status of the families involved.²⁶ By this, you discover that families that are deeply involved in the tradition of the land try to compel the groom to do certain things such as, the pouring of libation on the ground. Also, some bride's parents make some financial demands from the groom. All these may be as a result of the background of the families. Some families are poor and see the marriage as a way of enriching themselves while some do not see it that way. They see the groom as their son and the groom's family as theirs.²⁷

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

payment of the bride price. The list is brought out, and one after the other they look at the requirement.²⁸

Traditional Marriage Requirements

No.	List of Item for the Groom
1.	Wrapper, hat and walking stick for the Father.
2.	Ighorugbervharen (Money given to the bride's mother for her labour on the child) to be negotiated by the Mother.
3.	Bride price #140
4.	4. 5 tubers of yam and 2 big fish.
5.	3 bags of salt and #3,000.00.
6.	3 bags of salt and #3,000.00.
7.	20 liters of local gin.
8.	Ighorotoguan (Money for elders)
9.	Otoyare- carton of drink
10.	Ighorukpo (Money for permission for departure)
11.	Otoyare- carton of drink
12.	Ighorukpo (Money for permission for departure)
13.	Clearing of Father's rubber plantation
14.	Ifio (lavishing money on in-laws)
15.	Escort of bride to the arena #15,000.00

16.	Drink for youth #1,000.00
17.	Sing three traditional songs and dance
18.	See family members as directed by Father-in-law.

Although there are variations in the ceremonies, but regardless of the families certain requirements are usually constant. Name and Address of the home where the ceremony will be conducted with the date and time of the ceremony is stated. Ọkpako-ro-orua-Head of the Bride's family and the Parents/Guardians of the bride are recognized. Others are; Ọtota I (Spokesperson) for the Bride's family Ọtota II (Spokesperson) for the Groom's family.²⁹

Parents/Guardians of the Groom will also be in attendance. The Usuqvwa who is the Middleman will accompany the groom while the bride is in the company of her Ikopha (Traditional bridesmaids). Another important part of this ceremony is the Bride fee settlement. A team which consists of four member team made up of two representatives from each side of the families, including their spokespersons does this while Musical group hired is to perform to sensitize the environment of the ceremony of the day. Meanwhile, the bride is being dressed up in her room before presentation to the groom. Usually, she is dressed at least twice specially for a photograph.³⁰

According to Akpotu M from Eku tried outlining some below; payment of dowry, buying of bags of salt for the women, gallon of ogogoro (dry gin) for the family and buying of clothes for bride's parents.³¹ But in Akpotu's list above, certain details are

missing. Some amounts of monies are given to the youths and the bride's siblings. The family will ensure that the groom settles everyone connected to the bride in his little way. In the list, there are things to buy for the father of the girl, the mother of the girl, her younger brothers and sisters. Others include things to buy for ighele (youths), eghwe-eya (married women), emete (girls) and the family as a whole, etc. (see appendix). The bride's family looks at everything to confirm.³²

The girl's mother is invited into the house to formally seek her consent and to confirm whether the groom met her behind and gave her what is required, if she affirms that the groom had done all required, he will rise with his people and "lavish" money on her. Then the bride price of one hundred and twenty naira (N120.00) is paid.³³ It is interesting to note that in tradition, the bride-price is never paid in full. A particular amount of money is usually refunded to the groom immediately after the money is paid or at the end of the ceremony this signifies that their daughter is not for sale. After verifying that the groom has met the requirements and paid the bride price, the Opha will be sent for.³⁴ She arrives in the company of her Ikopha and some family women who shower encomiums on her saying:

Opha cha o...o...o jejeje - the bride is coming make way and admire her
i...iyeeee werhi no. woda mre obuko exclamation of joy
 See her, she is beautiful from
ano buko. Woda mre obaro ano baro. Behind
Omo okporua She is beautiful in front, daughter of a famous family
omote verhuvwu beautiful girl i...iyeeee. exclamation of joy.³⁵

When she enters, she stands before the eldest man of her family who will show to her the young man who has come for her hand in marriage. He will further ask her if she consents to his proposal. If her response is positive, the groom again rises with his people to lavish money on her. At that time, the two of them kneel before the eldest man who prays for them with a glass of dry gin and pours libation on the ground to commit the marriage to the ancestors.³⁶ But the issue of pouring libation on the ground during the prayers for the couple has been criticized as idol worship. This also has faced much argument and debate. Some see it as part of the tradition which must be upheld while to some, it is no longer compulsory because of Christianity (and this will be discussed in the subsequent chapter).

Manifestations of Inter-ethnic Marriage between the Benin, Urhobo and Asaba People

Environment factors set the stage for inter-ethnic marriage between the Benin and her neighbours. This is because the people in ancient Benin were more organized, civilized and were socio-politically and economically powerful from pre-colonial to post-colonial times. In fact, when Nigeria got independence, Benin kingdom became the capital for Bendel state creation in which the Urhobo and Asaba people were part. As a result of that there was cross socio-cultural interaction between the people of Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours.³⁷ This cultural affiliation had more impact on traditional marriage rites between Benin and her neighbours. According to Chief Nosakhare Omoruyi, narrated that the marriage rites of the Benin have been compromised during post-

colonial time, this is because, in pre-colonial times the ancient Benin kingdom capture the whole of the Niger Delta region, and this affected their traditional practices. In other words, before the capture of the Urhobo and Asaba people by the Benin Empire, the people have their own unique way of marriage and their traditional rites was quite different from that of Benin people.³⁸ But both the Urhobo and Asaba people traditional marriage rites was compromise and diffuse Benin traditional marriage rites, this was as a result of the cultural interactions and influence the Benin impact when they political occupy the people of Urhobo and Asaba people. For example the bride price list of both the people of Benin, Asaba and Urhobo people have been altered by the influence of inter-marriage and cultural affiliation.³⁹ In an interview Chief Marcus Efetobore gave an account where the elders of their Agbon (a community in Urhobo land) held a meeting to review the cost of bride price and other rites of the marriage ceremony of the people. According to him, the elders gave their reason that when they go marry wife from other ethnic group, they paid heavily and perform very tough marriage rites and that they usually gave their daughter hand in marriage easy marriage rites. And also certain customs and norms which their fore-father practice during marriage were not capture due to civilization and influence of the Benin expedition and colonial rule in ancient.⁴⁰

In another development, the people of Urhobo and Asaba people share certain cultural influence when conducting their marriage ceremony. For instance, Mrs. Margret Okpara gave a illustration that during the traditional marriage of the Asaba, the call for blessings and prayer for the occasion and the couple, and the breaking of kola nut, the

kins men of both the Urhobo and Asaba people will call for the presence of a Benin man to conduct the prayers and if there is no presence of the man then the senior elder member of the family can now prayer for the event.⁴¹

An intermarriage activity between Benin and her neighbours also promotes cultural affiliation and harmony between the people. During marriage the both the groom and bride parents exchanges cultural ideology and foster areas of mutual relationship and give room to share cultural secret which could not have been open. Also these serve as peace and diplomatic settlement between two ethnic group.⁴² In an interview with Chief Obaro Ogievia, narrated how intermarriage gave way for peace and settling of disputes between the community of Iwevbo in Orionwhon Local Government Area of Edo State and the Eku-Urhobo community in Delta state. The two community have been witnessing boundary disputes and these has affected their cordial relationship and inter-socio-cultural and economic activities, but during the traditional ceremony of the Enogie daughter of Iwevbo with the son of Eku royal family gave way for settlement of disputes and disharmony and today both communities share strong affiliation and unity; although there are still some element of disputes between the communities recently, but it has no effect on the socio-cultural and economic inter-group relation between Iwevbo and Eku people.⁴³

Despite a sufficient number of drawbacks, the inter-ethnic marriage between Benin, Urhobo and Asaba also have their advantages. According to Dr. David Omorodion, point out that inter-ethnic marriage between Benin, Urhobo and Asaba have

promotes society of tolerance and the ability to be sensitive to the representatives of different ethnic affinity. Moreover, the three communities have contributed to the improvement of relations between their ethnic groups. Due to such families, legal conflicts between local governments are more often discussed and resolved. Due to intermarriage between Benin, Urhobo and Asaba, the growth of mutual interest in culture and history increases, as well as the social life of other people. It is also significant that intermarriage between Benin, Urhobo and Asaba have promoted social cooperation.⁴⁴ David Omorodion later reiterated that children who grow up in affluent ethnic marriages are characterized by a high degree of sociability, communication skills, the ability to quickly learn other languages and adapt to a variety of cultural and social conditions.⁴⁵

In addition, there is a perception that despite many differences that an inter-ethnic marriage can be characterized (social, cultural, religious, political and other), the issue of preservation of the family is directly connected, first of all with the desire of both spouses. Well-being, harmony and stability of the family depends only on the members of this family: the ability to forgive and forget the insults, tolerance and patience, openness to new experience and respect, feelings of warmth and tenderness, trust in each other, a serious attitude towards the family as well as the partner, responsibility, mutual affection, and, of course, love.⁴⁶

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CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES OF INTER-GROUP RELATIONS BETWEEN BENIN HER NEIGHBOURS

Introduction

The fact that inter-ethnic marriage has been practiced in between Benin and her Urhobo-Asaba neighbours since pre-colonial times is well known and recorded in its history.¹ While there has been a modest rise in number of people who choose to marry spouses from Benin and her Urhobo-Asaba ethnic group in the country, the practice itself has been generally portrayed as a problematic and wanting especially in the Niger Delta region.²

Challenges of Inter-Group Relations

Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria

One of the challenges of inter-group relations is the ethnic conflicts that have the potential to destroy and have often destroyed the weak foundations of national unity, nation building and inter-group relations. This is because ethnic and sub-national demands and aspirations often challenge nation-building and allocative policies, and ultimately, the legitimacy of the state. Ethnic conflict in this context is defined as 'forms of identity conflict that take place on a state and regional level.'³ Conflicts according to Stedman result from human interaction in the context of incompatible ends and where one's ability to satisfy needs or ends depends on the choices, decisions and behavior of

others. This invariably involves in this context the competition among ethnic groups in the struggle for state resources.⁴

In Nigeria, the conflict and disparity between the rich and the poor, between the masses and the Elites (Political Class) or between one ethnic group or the other in the struggle for state resources is on the increase. Some of these conflicts have involved in the Ife / Modakeke crisis in Osun state, the crisis between the Aguleri and Umuleri communities in Anambra, the conflict between the Tiv and Hausa/Fulani people in Nasarawa etc.⁵ There have been communal clashes. in Jos (Plateau State) since 2001 especially between Christians and Muslims. In the Niger Delta, the conflict has been among the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri tribes and between the youth and government security forces.⁶

According to Nnoli, ethnic groups are groups characterized by exclusive symbolic formations, value systems, language, normative behaviour and territory. They are groups whose members share similar socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics distinct from those shared by members of other groups. Atere and Olagbemi see an ethnic group as a group whose culture is sufficiently different in beliefs, values, and customs such that its members are inter-group identity, which sets them apart from others. Ethnicity is thus a complex term.⁷ It is indeed a social phenomenon associated with interaction among members of different ethnic groups. It involves the intensity of ethnic identity or the feeling of allegiance to one's ethnic group in the context of multi-ethnic existence. Ethnic differences do not always translate into open conflicts, and some that do are sometimes

not threatening to the social and political order as mutually accepted mechanisms exist to regulate them. Most ethnic conflicts in the world involve situations where ethnic groups pursue their claims within an existing state structure. The aim is not to create an alternative state, but to either capture the existing state or improve access to state resources. When this fails then there is demand for secession or autonomy.⁸

Challenges of Inter-Ethnic Marriages

Marriage in itself is full of challenges which come at various stages and to almost every union. This can be easily explained owing to the fact that the two individuals have their different beliefs, traits characters, orientation and interests. Most people naturally have a distinct picture of what their marriage or home would be. The expectation is always perfect home. Unfortunately, conflicts come from time to time which are usually resolved by the two individuals but in some cases with the intervention of third party which could be another member of the family, friend and sometimes a spiritual sibling or guardian.⁹

Money: This has a very important role to play in the lives of the individual as well as family and the couple. The presence of it makes life a lot easier but the lack of it poses so much threat to a marriage and this could challenge the authority of the man as the head of the house: thus, challenging the marriage. Certain ethnic groups in Nigeria believe that a man must be made or financially reasonably stable, with much emphasis before he can be given a wife. If at some point their finances are threatened, the parents of the girl would almost suggest their daughter quits.¹⁰ Families constantly wobble and sometimes threaten

to collapse, obviously many happen daily. Modern ideologies are not helping to build homes and they pile up against our cultural values which on the long run affect marriages negatively. This especially becomes worse when the lady looks for money on several occasions and the so called husband still maintains that there is no money. The only option that is left for the lady is to find her way.¹¹

Communication: Still on the question of cultural differences, the indigenous language is most times put aside for a rather neutral national language or worse still, foreign language or the official language (English) in many homes in Nigeria. Illiterate parents expect that their would be sister in-law should understand their language for easy communication and where they do not, communication would be limited and gossips come in that may threaten the marriage.¹² Besides, younger women these days have to contend with especially sisters and mother in-law over their style of dressing, she may find quite comfortable but to the in-laws, it may not reflect the symbol of “married woman” it could be interpreted to mean non submission or being uncultured if she does not cover her body all the time especially outside the house. It could be the issue of short dresses, trousers or make-ups. To the wife, she might not see it in this light. Yet this could be brought about by not just the culture but the religious doctrines and traditional beliefs of the ethnic group her husband comes from or even her own, though the men usually do not encounter problems with their dressing or appearance.¹³ In this case though, each person’s attitude towards the other’s cultural differences is what makes the difference; for the purpose of

knowing more or well enough of the family or ethnic group you are to joined with, do not hasten into the marriage.¹⁴

II. Ethnic group he/she comes from: Emphasis is placed on area of weakness of people from that ethnic group. For the non-literate parents, they are concerned with the medium for communication between the two families, especially the son or daughter in questions bothering on family history, for example sicknesses, death, character, occupation, size of family, success and failures cannot be fully or satisfactorily investigated. So, from the onset the parents see these as posing a very big challenge and issues that call for concern. Nevertheless, the intending couple tries painfully and sometimes unsatisfactorily to explain some of these concerns to them. Where there are discrepancies between the two families on the family history, problems set in to the detriment of the marriage.¹⁵

Cultural Differences: This brings a lot of strain in an inter-ethnic union. Naturally, the different ethnicities bring a lot of challenges and are worth it if the partners discuss and if possible study, by way of researching and reading books about the culture of the ethnic groups the partner comes from. It is indeed a lot of work but in the long run you are better informed, you would not be biased and could be in better position to educate the rest members of the family and friends who may have earlier expressed concerns.¹⁶

By interaction, the intending couple learns what is expected of a son in-law. It could be by way of simple gestures, pleasantries, gifts and so on. On the part of the lady, tasks as simple as serving food to the in-laws which may require particular style, she may need to gesticulate.¹⁷ The husband too might be very down to earth or home-boy type

who would always prefer local delicacies and soups from his area (village), these the women must learn from the onset. Modern ladies do not find this interesting as sometimes, they find it not convenient to do but on the long run it affects the relationship not just between her and her husband, but even the relatives who go on gossiping against the lady that she is not worth it. What it implies is non-conformity to their culture and for their brother to change mind over the lady, hence the marriage is threatened.¹⁸

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

Gender Roles: Some ethnic groups have it that women should work very hard, if not harder than the men to be able to cater for the needs of the family. There are others too, who do not believe in women taking up white collar jobs notwithstanding the level of western education she may have acquired. Yet another ethnic group believes that a woman sits at home to take care of the home, while making babies and "watch" them grow. In some areas, it is believed that once a woman marries, she takes one or two of her siblings with her and it becomes the responsibility of her and her husband to train them and even those left behind in the village.¹⁹ Consequently, the man in this situation may not find it interesting but he is forced to comply, because that is what the tradition

demands from the wife's side. It may be alien to the man's cultural practices and this may affect the smooth running of the home due to economic strain and lack of privacy in some cases. At times, some women do not allow their husbands to pay the school fees of their brothers and sisters just to make sure that their brothers' and sisters' schooling is fully sponsored. In this case, when the relatives of their husbands hear this, they will make sure that the marriages are threatened so that the women suffer.

Sex. It is something out of place for the topic "sex" to be mentioned or even discussed among some races. It is considered a taboo. This goes a long way affecting a lot of things with one of the parties realizing it on time. For example, the man may come from an ethnic group where it is believed that a woman has no say when it comes to the number of children they should have. For this reason, the issue of child spacing or family planning becomes a serious burden on the woman who may not win the sympathy of her husband since it is not hers to decide, but of the gods or God. In such a union, the woman must cooperate all the time. This tells on her physically, psychologically and even the finances of the family might be affected which happens to be the case most of the time as the standard is brought below average. The woman is usually highly upset and may begin to question the religious or cultural belief that has brought her under such bondage. Worse still, if a woman commits adultery which the land of the husband forbids, marriage would be threatened.²⁰

Polygamy: Women generally dread polygamous marriage apart from those who are bound to accept it as a religious obligation. Circumstances varying from inability of the

woman to bear male children sometimes bring about pressure from the in-laws or even the husband to take another wife who would bear them male children/grandchildren as they consider it a serious setback where male children are not born to the family. On medical advice too, it might be that a woman cannot and should not attempt to have more than two children, which may not augur well with the man who would say that where he comes from (ethnic background), it is a taboo to bear only two children. As such, he goes for a second wife to produce more children.²¹

Other Challenges of both Intra and Inter Ethnic Marriages include:

IX. Unresolved marriage issues: These are often the major stress points in marriage. Even in quite strong relationships, there are times of tension and marriage difficulties caused by unresolved marriage issues. It is when they begin to really take over a relationship and cause real difficulties that advice needs to be sought. Issues in marriage are many and varied, and should be discussed and settled before they threaten the marriage.

X. Job versus Family: Difficulties often arise when one partner puts his/her job ahead of their family. Working long hours in a job is something that many married people use as an excuse to avoid dealing with other matters such as having to help the children or helping prepare the evening meal. A working spouse may also be very ambitious and feel it necessary to work long hours to impress the boss. Either way marital relationships suffer.

XI. Bad habits can be a marriage killer: One spouse's bad habits can develop into more than an irritation for their partner; they can often be the determining factor for a couple's marriage breakup. In no particular order, here are some of the top annoying, disgusting and irritating behaviours that can grow into monumental marriage issues that are constantly referred to by marriage couples: bad hygiene habit, leaving dirty clothes on the bedroom floor, breaking wind in your partner's presence, always putting one's self-first in all matters, constantly altering the order of things in the home, lack of personal hygiene, not tidying up their own mess, lying or hiding the truth, drinking to excess, monopolizing conversations, criticizing your spouse in public, childish behaviour, flirting, nagging, neglecting grooming, among others.²²

Strategies for Overcoming Problems of Marriages

To ameliorate the challenges every marriage goes into, the following prospective strategies are proffered: I. Do your best to make the introductory meeting as pleasant and enjoyable as possible. First impressions are difficult to be forgotten.

II. Make sure you tell you fiancé/fiancée from the beginning the details of your culture especially the ones that are dear to your family. Example, some cultures require actually kneeling or prostration when greeting elders, while a simple curtsy or bow would do for others.

III. Do your best to discourage stereotypes and emphasize that each person is an individual and should be regarded as such. Sweeping statements like "Igbo people are

usually very...” or “Yoruba people always...” should be avoided. If you accept the positive generalizations, you will also be expected to accept negative ones.

Develop an interest in the history and culture of your intended’s ethnic group. If you are not familiar with their cuisine, be ready to learn how to prepare and enjoy at least your intended’s favorite dishes.²³

V. Accept the fact that marrying someone whose language you do not understand may make it difficult for you to bond with their family and you may not be able to bear people talking around you, and maybe about you, without understanding what they are saying.

VI. Always do your best to include your intended in conversations with your family. If they refuse to speak English, or are more comfortable carrying on lengthy conversations in your own language, be ready to interpret.

VII. Know that if a wife does not understand her husband’s language, the children may never learn it. Be open to the possible of this and make peace with it.

VIII. Know that you may face intense opposition from members of your family, so you must embrace patience and make sure that what you and your partner share is strong enough to weather the storm.

Frustrations will arise – don’t take them out on your beloved. Always remind yourself why you chose this person.

X. Don’t lose your essence in a bid to prove that you will make a son-in-law or daughter-in-law. If trying to become a part of this family is changing you, and you don’t like who

you are becoming, it may be time to call it quits. Marriage is a lifetime commitment and forever is a long time to be unhappy.

XI. Learn how to make decisions cooperatively.

XII. Increase the positive energies you give to your partner e.g. smile more, touch more, hug more, more kisses, more sex, more shared time, shared projects and more appreciation.

XIII. Show remorse when you err (e.g. pardon me, sorry).

XIV. Learn how to express concern rationally.

XV. Look back at your parents' marriage strengths and weaknesses and decide what difference you can make in your own marriage.²⁴

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that marriage is a union of a man and a woman who agreed to live together and bear children and can be separated by either death, divorce or annulment. Individuals marry for several reasons and from anywhere they like both within and outside their ethnic groups. When it comes to choosing a partner, many Nigerians are still guided by ethnic affiliations. Some families still frown at inter-ethnic marriages because of challenges that occur frequently that break the marriages. To overcome the challenges, a number of strategies were proffered which if employ, will engender positive outcome that will strengthen the marriages.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As a history of inter-group relations among the Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours of south-south region of Nigeria up 1990, what has been attempted here is really a survey of their inter-group contact. The available findings in this study support the detailed history of their socio-economic and political relations in the pre-colonial time. It is however, important to draw attention once again to a few aspects of this survey. Firstly, it is clear that the unit of operations among the Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours were very small.

For most of them the clan was the highest level of political organization. Even for the kingdoms of Benin and her Urhobo and Asaba neighbours, the component parts were not well knitted together, and it is an autonomous group. The family was the known unit of operation and brought members together closely. Secondly, there was a great deal of interaction largely as result of trade, the people of Benin were in touch with the people of Urhobo, and trade ensured among them. They travelled on foots, by canoes, and displayed their wares especially on their market days but as for the Urhobo which was on urban centre trade took place there at any time. They also engaged in selling from each other clan slaves during the period of the slave trade. Indeed a map of modern Nigeria showing the various roots of trade in this period the people who now make up Nigeria and Delta State are not removed from the other as it sometimes thought and publicly asserted. Finally, the development of the two clan were unequal being that they both

dwelt in the forest region, they tended to remain within their smaller units and to engaged in much more limited trading activities, because they mostly use smaller units and to engage in much limited trading activities, because they mostly use foot as a means of transportation but then the Urhobo people being that they were close to main river made use of canoes. This unequal development continued, where by Urhobo developed quickly into a major city through the 20th century, and was to be a major factor in the history of the colonial period of Nigeria's history.

Geographical factors seem to dispose the territory of Nigeria to movement of peoples from one ecological zone to another in migrations or in interdependent relationships of trade exchange. This exchanges and contacts seem to have occurred even in pre-historic times from the little archaeological evidence yet brought to light of stone tools, pottery, and the spread of Iron technology, the bronzes and also in the spread of food civilization and of food crops. In addition, oral tradition which on the surface purporting to be about the origin of Nigerian peoples uniformly tell of wide spread mixing of various groups and of migrants over long distance from Benin and Asaba. The Niger River which was close to Asaba, provided a water way uniting widely separated groups like the Asaba people and the Benin people through exchange of goods, even if the goods reached their destinations late, while the Benin people exchanged with the Asaba people through the use of land routes. Market systems were developed and various sanctions were used for the control for this trade routes and the regulations of inter-commerce. These sanctions were more informal sanctions of religion and morality unlike

sanctions that were often enforced for the political and military authority of a state such as Benin, Oyo, Borno or the Hausa State. The local economic development and contact were reinforced rather than superseded or created by the introduction of European external trade from the Atlantic coast of Nigeria. the trade in slaves brought the Benin and Urhobo people together, therefore in the period of 1900, these people were not isolated from each other and from the outside world.

In modern times, Delta and Edo land has emerged belt on Nigeria. but it was historically the most problematic terrain in this vital regime among the tributaries of the famous Benue river, the lands of Urhobo ethnic group possess river (most notably the river Benue), streams and lakes that provides ample water ways and supplies that are very important in the history of all the ethnic groups in this region of West Africa. The Edo people are known to be agriculturalist, the Benin specialized in the production of pomades, farming and soap while the Urhobo people specialized in the production of palm wine and fishing tools. But both clans plant different crops which they exchange with each other. There were also relations between these people in terms of social and political. There were inter-marriages between these people that led to their dwelling together and their system of marriage was the same but with little differences.

Also, intra-group relations within any given groups times connected and influenced and even some times determine the development of one another. Hence, invariably national peace, unity and development are dictated and directed by the nature

of relations at each level of relationship. It is discernable from the above, how crucial and important the subject inters group relations.

The Benin people, over the years had developed and sustained economic and political institution that earned them self-reliance, peace and stability even to the present time. The Asaba are fascinating people. The Urhobo also had developed economic and political institutions that earned them peace and stability even to the present time. They are both peace loving and courageous. They detest any form of oppression, regardless of who the oppressor may be.

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Names	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
David Omorodion,	45years	Businessman,	Igun Benin City	27/05/2022
Emuotu Max-Ogaga	58years	Civil Servant	Benin City	27/05/2022
Marcus Efetobore	52year	Staff Delta University	at his Office Abraka	12/01/2022
Margret Okpara,	59years	UBTH Staff	Ugbowo	12/09/2022
Micheal Akpotu,	66years	Traditional Palace Chief	Agbon	09/12/2022
Nosakhare Omoruyi,	71years	Retired Civil Servant	Uselu Market	12/09/2022
Obaro Ogievia	60year	Civil Servant	Iyaro, Benin City	27/05/2022

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