

**INTER-GROUP RELATIONS BETWEEN IKOT-EKPENE AND AROCHUKWU IN PRE-COLONIAL
TIMES**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried out by **EKANEMEMEDIONGEMMANUEL** with matriculation number **ART2100550** in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Art, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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DATED DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to GOD.

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CHAPTERONE

BACKGROUNDTOHESTUDY

Introduction

The relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku are a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been shaped by their shared history, cultural practices, and economic ties. To understand the dynamics of their relationship, it is essential to explore the history of both communities. Ikot Ekpene, located in Akwalbom State, Nigeria, has a rich cultural heritage and a long history of trade and commerce with neighboring communities.¹

Arochuku, on the other hand, is situated in Abia State, Nigeria, and is known for its significant role in the pre-colonial era as a major commercial center. The history of both communities dates back to the pre-colonial era, with evidence of human habitation in the region tracing back thousands of years. The pre-colonial era saw the rise of various kingdoms and empires in the region, with Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku playing important roles in the economic and cultural landscape. The two communities engaged in trade, exchanging goods such as palm oil, ivory, and cloth. Their economic ties were further strengthened by the presence of European traders, who sought to exploit the region's natural resources.²

The colonial era brought significant changes to the inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku. The British colonial administration imposed new boundaries and administrative structures, which often disregarded traditional territorial boundaries. This led to tensions and conflicts between the two communities, particularly over issues of resource control and territorial jurisdiction. Despite these challenges, Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku have maintained a complex and dynamic relationship over the years. Their inter-group relations have been shaped by a range of factors, including cultural exchange, economic cooperation, and conflict. Understanding the historical context of their relationship is crucial for appreciating the complexities of their inter-group dynamics.³

The impact of inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku can be seen in various aspects of their lives, including economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and conflict resolution. Their economic ties have led to the development of trade and commerce, with both communities benefiting from the exchange of goods and services. Cultural exchange has also played a significant role, with both communities influencing each other's traditions and practices. However, their inter-group relations have not been without challenges. Conflicts have arisen over issues such as resource control, territorial jurisdiction, and cultural differences. These conflicts have often been resolved through dialogue and negotiation, highlighting the importance of effective communication and conflict resolution mechanisms in maintaining peaceful inter-group relations. In exploring the inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku, it is essential to consider the broader context of inter-group dynamics in Nigeria. The country has a complex history of inter-group relations, with various communities interacting and influencing each other in complex ways. Understanding the dynamics of inter-

group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu can provide valuable insights into the complexities of inter-group relations in Nigeria and beyond.⁴

The study of inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu can also provide insights into the ways in which communities can work together to promote economic development, cultural exchange, and peaceful coexistence. By examining the historical context of their relationship and the factors that shape their inter-group dynamics, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of inter-group relations and the ways in which communities can build strong and positive relationships.⁵

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research work is to examine the inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu in pre-colonial times. Specific objectives are:

1. To examine the historical context in which Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu had relations in pre-colonial times.
2. To analyze the nature and dynamics of inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu.
3. To discuss the factors that influenced inter-group relations between the two communities.
4. To examine the impact of inter-group relations on the economic, cultural, and social development of Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu.
5. To evaluate the significance of inter-group relations in shaping the history and identity of both communities.

Scope of the study

This study examines the inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu in pre-colonial times, specifically within the timeframe of the 16th to the 19th century. The scope of the study is limited to this period because it was a time of significant economic, cultural, and political development in both communities. The reasons for choosing this timeframe are that it allows for an examination of the pre-colonial era, a period of autonomy and self-governance for both Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu. During this time, trade and commerce expanded, cultural exchange and diffusion occurred, and complex political dynamics and alliances were formed. The Aro Confederacy, a powerful trading and cultural network, emerged during this period and played a significant role in shaping the inter-group relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu.

Important events that occurred during this timeframe include the rise of the Aro Confederacy, the expansion of the trans-Saharan trade, and the increase in European trade and cultural exchange along the Nigerian coast. These

eeventshadaprofoundimpactontheeconomic,cultural,andsocialdevelopmentofbothcommunities.ThisstudywillcontributeagreaterunderstandingofthehistoryandculturalheritageofsoutheasternNigeria.

Methodology

Thisresearchwouldemploythehistoricalresearchmethod.Relevantdatawouldbesourcedfromtheprimaryandsecondarysources.

Primarysources

ThiswouldincludeoralinterviewswithindigenesofIkotEkpeneandAroChukwu.Relevantquestionswouldbeaskedontheirintergrouprelationsinprecolonialtimes.

Secondarysources

Thesecondarymaterialswouldincludetextbooks,journalarticles,newspapersandonline materials.ThesewouldbesourcedfromTheUniversityofAkwalbomstatalibraryandotherpubliclibrariesaswellastheinternet.

LiteratureReview

ChukwudikeandEminue's⁶"DynamicsofPre-colonialDiplomaticPracticesAmongtheIgboSpeakingPeopleofSoutheasternNigeria,1800-1900:AHistoricalEvaluation" isajournalarticlepublishedinthe*HistoricalResearchLetter*.ThestudyexploresthediplomaticpracticesoftheIgbopeopleinpre-colonialtimes,challengingEurocentricviewsthatAfricalacksrichhistory.TheauthorsarguethattheIgbopeopleconducted sophisticateddiplomacy,includingimmunityfordiplomats,whichwasintegraltotheirinteractions.Throughoralhistoryandhistoricalanalysis,thestudyreveals thattheIgbopeopleengagedindiplomaticpracticesthatwerereciviledandsystematic.TheauthorsdrawinstancesfromvariousIgbo communities,showcasingtheir diplomaticconducts.Thisstudyissignificantin understanding thepre-colonialdiplomaticpracticesoftheIgbopeopleandchallengestheEurocentricviewsonAfricanhistory.Thejournalarticleiswell-researched,employinghistoricalanalysisasitsmethod.TheauthorsprovideacomprehensiveoverviewoftheIgbopeople'sdiplomaticpractices,highlightingtheiruniquenessandsophistication.The study'sfindingsaresignificantindebunkingthemyththatAfricahasnohistory,anditcontributes toadeeper understandingoftheIgbopeople'sculturalandhistoricalheritage.

Akpan's⁷"EconomicDiplomacyinIbibioland:ThePre-colonialPerspective" isajournalarticlepublishedintheInternationalJournalofSocialSciences.The studyoffersanadvancedunderstandingoftheeconomichistoryofpre-

colonial Africa, specifically the Ibibio people. The author argues that contrary to Eurocentric theories, the Ibibio pre-colonial economy was premised on agriculture, trade, and local industries, and was more coordinated, complex, and diversified than previously thought. The study highlights the importance of economic diplomacy in the success of the Ibibio economy, which was practiced through various methods and strategies. The author recommends that present-day Ibibio economy should not be divorced from these fundamental variables to achieve economic relevance. The study is significant in understanding the economic history of pre-colonial Africa and the importance of economic diplomacy in achieving economic success. The author's use of historical analytical method provides a comprehensive understanding of the Ibibio people's economic practices and their significance in the pre-colonial period.

Chidume and Nmaju's article,⁸ "The Aro Hegemony: Dissecting The Myth And Reality" is a journal article that examines the historical role and influence of the Arochukwu people in Igboland. The authors argue that most written accounts of the Arochukwu people do not represent factual truths but embody embellishments, myths, and conjectures. The study highlights the Arochukwu people's significant role in the slave trade and their strategic location in the Cross River basin, which positioned them as middlemen to European slave merchants. The authors contend that the Arochukwu people's exploits have been rendered in current narratives and writings as historical truths, which are contestable. The study is significant in understanding the history of the Arochukwu people and the need to critically evaluate historical accounts. The authors' use of historical analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the Arochukwu people's role in the slave trade and their influence in Igboland. The gap that this research work is going to fill is the examination of the inter-group relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochukwu in pre-colonial times. While the studies reviewed provide valuable insights into the diplomatic practices, economic history, and historical accounts of the Igbo-speaking people, they do not specifically examine the inter-group relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochukwu. This research work aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shaped the history of both communities and provide insights into the ways in which inter-group relations influenced their development.

E. Udo, and Okpala Eke in their book⁹ *Boundary Disputes and Its Implications on Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria: The Annang-Igbo Experience, 1987-2015* examine the implications of boundary disputes on inter-group relations in Nigeria, using the Annang people and their Igbo neighbors as a case study. The authors argue that the boundary conflict between both groups took root in state creation and Boundary Adjustment exercises conducted by the then Federal Military Government. The study reveals that the boundary dispute has dire consequences on long-standing inter-group relations, which goes back to pre-colonial times. The authors recommend that policymakers and traditional leaders must endeavor to avert further imbroglio through proper investigation,

consultations, and reconciliation exercises. Udo E., and Okpalaeke's journal is significant in understanding the impact of boundary disputes on inter-group relations, and it contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shape the relationships between different groups in Nigeria. Their research provides valuable insights into the Anang-Igbo experience, highlighting the need for effective conflict resolution mechanisms to promote peaceful coexistence.

Edet in his journal article¹⁰ "Leading Theories in Akwalbom Colonial Historiography" examines the concept of colonial historiography and its impact on the history of Akwalbom people. The author argues that European writers used racial ideology and pseudo-scientific theories to validate European dominance of African nations, including Akwalbom. Edet highlights the need to re-examine the history of Akwalbom people and challenge the dominant narratives that have been shaped by colonial historiography. The study provides valuable insights into the ways in which colonial historiography has influenced our understanding of African history. The gap that this research work is going to fill is the examination of the inter-group relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochukwu in pre-colonial times. While the studies reviewed provide valuable insights into the diplomatic practices, economic history, and historical accounts of the Igbo-speaking people, they do not specifically examine the inter-group relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochukwu. This research work aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shaped the history of both communities and provide insights into the ways in which inter-group relations influenced their development.

C. I. Atuonwu in his book,¹¹ *Origin, Migration and Inter-Group Relations in Pre-Colonial Ubibia Community* provides a comprehensive study of the Ubibia people's history, focusing on their origin, migration, and inter-group relations. The book is a pioneering effort to reconstruct the history of the Ubibia people using historical research methods, including oral interviews, archival materials, and published texts. Atuonwu's work sheds light on the complexities of Igbo history and the divergent oral accounts of origin and early history that exist among the Ubibia people. The book's findings highlight the importance of considering multiple perspectives when reconstructing the history of a people. This work contributes to a better understanding of the historical context of the Ubibia community and its place within the broader Igbo cultural landscape. The book is significant because it provides a detailed account of the Ubibia people's history, which has been shrouded in controversy and debate. Atuonwu's work is notable for its nuanced portrayal of the Ubibia people, emphasizing their agency and autonomy in shaping their own history. The book's findings have significant implications for our understanding of the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. The gap that this study is going to fill is the need for more specific and detailed research on the Ubibia people's history, particularly in the area of inter-group relations. While Atuonwu's work provides a comprehensive overview of the Ubibia people's history

ory, there is still a need for more in-depth research on specific aspects of their history, such as their interactions with neighboring communities.

G.T. Basden in his book,¹² *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* offers a detailed account of the Ibo people's culture, customs, and beliefs. The book is based on the author's extensive experience living among the Ibo people and provides valuable insights into their way of life. Basden's work is notable for its nuanced portrayal of the Ibo people, highlighting both their unique cultural practices and their shared human experiences. The book's findings have significant implications for our understanding of the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. The book is significant because it provides a rich and detailed account of the Ibo people's culture, which has been influential in shaping the broader cultural landscape of Nigeria. Basden's work is notable for its emphasis on the importance of understanding the local context and the need for cultural sensitivity in interactions with the Ibo people. The book's findings have significant implications for our understanding of the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. The gap that this study is going to fill is the need for more clear and detailed research on the cultural practices and beliefs of specific Ibo communities, such as the Ubibi people. While Basden's work provides a comprehensive overview of the Ibo people's culture, there is still a need for more in-depth research on specific aspects of their culture, such as their interactions with neighboring communities and the impact of colonialism on their cultural practices.

D. Forde and G. I. Jones in their book,¹³ *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria* present a comprehensive ethnographic survey of the Ibo and Ibibio-speaking peoples of southeastern Nigeria. The book provides a detailed account of the social, economic, and cultural practices of these peoples, highlighting their unique characteristics and shared experiences. Forde and Jones' work is notable for its systematic approach to ethnographic research, providing a framework for understanding the complexities of human culture in the region. The book is significant because it provides a comprehensive overview of the cultural practices and beliefs of the Ibo and Ibibio-speaking peoples, which has been influential in shaping the broader cultural landscape of Nigeria. Forde and Jones' work is notable for its emphasis on the importance of understanding the local context and the need for cultural sensitivity in interactions with these peoples. The book's findings have significant implications for our understanding of the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. The gap that this study is going to fill is the need for more specific and detailed research on the cultural practices and beliefs of specific communities, such as the Ubibi people. While Forde and Jones' work provides a comprehensive overview of the Ibo and Ibibio-speaking peoples, there is still a need for more in-depth research on specific aspects of their culture, such as their interactions with neighboring communities and the impact of colonialism on their cultural practices.

A.E. Afigbo in his book,¹⁴ *The Igbo and their Neighbour: Inter-Group Relations in Southeastern Nigeria to 1953* provides a comprehensive study of the Igbo people and their interactions with neighboring groups in southeastern Nigeria. The book explores the complex dynamic of inter-group relations in the region, highlighting the historical, cultural, and economic factors that have shaped these interactions. Afigbo's work is notable for its nuanced portrayal of the Igbo people, emphasizing their agency and autonomy in shaping their own history. The book's findings have significant implications for our understanding of the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. Afigbo's work demonstrates the importance of historical research in understanding the complexities of inter-group relations. The book is significant because it provides a detailed account of the Igbo people's interactions with neighboring groups, which has been influential in shaping the broader cultural landscape of southeastern Nigeria. Afigbo's work is notable for its emphasis on the importance of understanding the local context and the need for cultural sensitivity in interactions with the Igbo people. The book's findings have significant implications for our understanding of the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. The gap that this study is going to fill is the need for more specific and detailed research on the inter-group relations of specific Igbo communities, such as the Ubi people. While Afigbo's work provides a comprehensive overview of the Igbo people's interactions with neighboring groups, there is still a need for more in-depth research on specific aspects of their inter-group relations, such as the impact of colonialism on their interactions with neighboring communities.

K. Baffour in his article,¹⁵ "Abia State Communities Raided by Akwalbom Residents" reports on a recent incident of inter-group conflict between communities in Abia State and Akwalbom State. The article highlights the ongoing tensions and conflicts that exist between different groups in the region, emphasizing the need for further research and understanding. Baffour's work provides a valuable snapshot of the current state of inter-group relations in the region, highlighting the ongoing challenges and opportunities for building peace and understanding between different communities. The article is significant because it highlights the ongoing relevance of inter-group relations in the region, and the need for continued research. Baffour's work demonstrates the importance of local-level research in understanding the complexities of inter-group relations and highlights the need for further study in this area. The gap that this study is going to fill is the need for more in-depth research on the dynamics of inter-group relations in the region. While Baffour's article provides a valuable snapshot of the current state of inter-group relations, there is still a need for more comprehensive research on the historical, cultural, and economic factors that shape these interactions.

M.S.Ekpuk in his unpublished B. A. long essay,¹⁶ "Annang-Igbo Inter-Group Relations, 1957-1970" explores the complex dynamics of inter-group relations between the Annang and Igbo people in the mid-20th century. The essay provides a detailed analysis of the historical, cultural, and economic factors that shaped these interactions, highlighting the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. Ekpuk's work demonstrates the importance of local-level research in understanding the complexities of inter-group relations and highlights the need for further study in this area. The essay is significant because it provides a valuable insight into the inter-group relations between the Annang and Igbo people, highlighting the ongoing challenges and opportunities for building peace and understanding between different communities. Ekpuk's work demonstrates the importance of understanding the local context and the need for cultural sensitivity in interaction with different communities. The gap that this study is going to fill is the need for more comprehensive research on the inter-group relations of specific communities, much as the Ubibi people. While Ekpuk's essay provides a valuable insight into the inter-group relations between the Annang and Igbo people, there is still a need for more in-depth research on specific aspects of their inter-group relations, such as the impact of colonialism on their interactions with neighboring communities.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Background to The Study

This chapter contains the aim and objectives, scope of the study, methodology and literature review.

Chapter Two: A Brief History of Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku

This chapter provides an overview of the historical context of Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku in pre-colonial times. It explores their geographical location, cultural context, traditional political and social structures, economic activities, and trade networks.

Chapter Three: Economic Relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku in Pre-Colonial Times

This chapter examines the economic relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku in pre-colonial times. It discusses the economic factors that influenced these relations, such as trade, culture, and politics, and explores the forms of interaction between the two communities.

Chapter Four: Socio-Political Relations between Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku

This chapter assesses the socio-political relations of Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku. It examines the social and political impacts of these relations, highlighting how they shaped the development of both communities.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This is the summary of the entire research work.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

ABRIEFHISTORYOFIKOT-EKPENEANDAROCHUKWU

IkotEkpeneandAroChukwuaretwosignificanttownsinthesoutheasternregionofNigeria,witharichhistoryandculturethatspanscenturies.Geographically,IkotEkpeneislocatedinAkwalbomState,occupyingalargeportionoftheSouth-SoutherngeopoliticalzoneofNigeria.AroChukwu,ontheotherhand,islocatedinAbiaState,whichwascreatedin1991frompartofImoState.¹

Inpre-colonialtimes,thepoliticalorganizationofIkotEkpeneandAroChukwuwascalculatedbyasystemoftraditionalleadership,withacouncilofeldersandaparamountrulerwhoservedastheceremonialheadofthetown.TheAroConfederacy,whichwasapowerfulandinfluentialentityintheregion,wasformedthroughtheamalgamationofthreepowerfuldynasties:theIbibioclan,ledbyObongOkonIta,andtheIgbodynasties,ledbyMaziAgwuInobiaandMaziNnachilpia.ThismarkedtheinceptionoftheAronation-state.²

The Aro Confederacy was a highly organized and progressive power, supported by a hierarchy of priests and chiefs who were agents of the all-powerful god, Ibini Ukpabi. The Aros were highly respected and appreciated within the Igbo and non-Igbo lands of eastern Nigeria. The Aro man was regarded as a sacred being not to be attacked, killed, or looted, and such an act against the Aro man brought instant punishment on the perpetrators. Trade and commerce played a vital role in the economies of Ikot Ekpene and Aro Chukwu. The Aro Confederacy monopolized trade in Eastern Nigeria, Delta areas, southern Igbala areas, and perhaps even beyond the border of Nigeria through horacular and economic forces. Some slaves were captured by fierce Aro slave raiders and warriors were feared and backed up by allies such as Ohafia, Abam, Bende, Abiriba, Afikpo, and other warrior lands that supplied recruiters and mercenaries.³

In terms of religion, the Aros had a rich traditionalist and religious belief system. They believed in the power of their god, Ibini Ukpabi, who was a mediating god among the Aros. The Ibini Ukpabi shrine was used for selling slaves during the slave trade, and the priests of Ibini Ukpabi spread the religion and the Aro Confederacy was in power. The Ekpe society, a sacred cult originally from east of the Cross River, played a significant role in Aro cultism. The highly religious and judicial cult took a major part in Aro cultism, and the use of the writing system, Nsibidi, was based on secret societies like Ekpe.⁴

The Aros also had a strong military tradition, with a well-organized system of defense that allowed them to resist British colonization. The Aro Confederacy was a powerful military force in the precolonial era, with a strong emphasis on warrior culture. The Ikperikpe warrior dance was very famous among warriors in the old days and continues to be practiced. The military history of Ikot Ekpene and Aro Chukwu is also notable, particularly during the Aro-

Ibibio wars, which were a series of conflicts between the Aro people and several Ibibio groups in present-day Southeastern Nigeria from 1630 to 1720. These wars led to the foundation of the Arochuku kingdom. The Aro Confederacy's military power was eventually broken by the British forces with their superior firepower in the Anglo-Aro war of 1901-1902.⁵

The pre-

colonial history of Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku is a rich and complex topic that spans centuries. The town's geography, political organization, trade and commerce, religion, and military and defense systems all played significant roles in shaping their development and growth.⁶

Geography of Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku

Ikot Ekpene, a town with a rich history, is situated in the southern state of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. The town is often referred to as the "raffia town" due to its association with raffia products, and it is widely regarded as a hub of artistic expression. The name Ikot Ekpene is derived from a village of the same name, which was initially inhabited by ten families.⁷

As a significant cultural and political center, Ikot Ekpene serves as the capital of the Annang ethnic group in Nigeria. According to Kannan Nair, a renowned historian, the town is not only a cultural but also a political hub for both the Annangs and the Ibibios. Geographically, Ikot Ekpene is located along the A342 highway, which runs parallel to the coast, connecting major towns such as Calabar, Aba, and Uyo. Umuahia is the next major town to the north.⁸

The town's strategic location has contributed to its cultural and economic significance, with the Ibibios residing to the east and most of the Annangs living to the south. The history of Ikot Ekpene is deeply intertwined

wined with the traditions and customs of its inhabitants, making it a fascinating subject for study. In contrast, Arochukwu has a unique tradition of origin that dates back to around 300 AD. According to historical accounts, the land was initially inhabited by the Ibibio people, who migrated from the Benue valley and established early settlements such as Obong Okon Ita and Ibom. The Ibibio people played a significant role in shaping the early history of Arochukwu.⁹

Overtime, the Igbo group, led by Agwu Inobia, arrived in the area and founded several settlements. This group preferred to themselves as the Ezeagwu group. The arrival of the Igbo settlers led to a conflict with the Ibibio land lords over land ownership, resulting in a stalemate. The war between the two groups had a profound impact on the history and development of Arochukwu.¹⁰

The history of Arochukwu is a reflection of the diverse cultural and ethnic influences that have shaped the region. The town's strategic location and rich cultural heritage have contributed to its significance in the region. Understanding the history and geography of Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene provides valuable insights into the complexities of human culture and identity in the region. The geography of Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu is characterized by a diverse landscape and climate, which have played a significant role in shaping the history and culture of the region. The region's unique cultural and ethnic diversity has contributed to its rich history and heritage, making it an important subject for study and exploration.¹¹

Political Organization of Ikot-Ekpene

The political organization of Ikot-

Ekpene is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the region. In the early 20th century, the British colonial administration established a presence in Ikot-

Ekpene, which became an important administrative center. The town's strategic location made it an att

ractive hub for trade and commerce, and several European companies, including John Holt and Paterson Zochonis, set up posts and stores in the town.¹²

The establishment of these companies led to an influx of people from surrounding areas, and Ikot-Ekpene became a vibrant metropolis. The colonial administration built a main market in 1937, which helped to organize trade and commerce in the town. The market was designed to separate European goods from indigenous articles, and a slaughterhouse was added to allow for the inspection of meat.¹³

In the post-colonial era, Ikot-Ekpene continued to play important roles in the region. Ikot-Ekpene became a municipal center in the state of Akwalbom remains a significant cultural and historical site. Understanding the political organization of these towns provides valuable insights into the complexities of human culture and identity in the region.¹⁴

Political Organization of Arochukwu

Arochukwu, on the other hand, has a rich history that dates back to the 17th century. According to local tradition, the town was founded by an alliance of 19 settlements, including old and new ones. The alliance was formed after a group of Igbo people, led by Agwu Inobia, migrated to the area and founded several settlements. The Igbo group became entangled in a war with the Ibibio land lords over land ownership, but a stalemate ensued. In reaction, the Eze-

Agwu clan invited a priest named Nnachi from the Edda clan of northeastern Igboland, who brought with him a group of Akpa people. The Akpa forces, led by Osim and Akuma Nnubi, helped the Igbo group capture the rest of the area, leading to the formation of the Arochukwu kingdom around 1650-1700.¹⁵

The Arochuku kingdom was ruled by the Eze Aro, with the first king being Akuma. After his death, Nnachi's son, Oke Nnachi, took over, and his descendants have ruled the throne to this day. The kingdom's history is marked by its relationship with the Abiriba people, who are renowned for their bravery and skills in iron working. The Abiriba people have a long history of warfare and bravery, and their skills in iron working played a significant role in their migratory movement from Akpato Abiriba. They fought several wars, including a notable one against the Ibibio people, who had devised a means of spreading terror and fear using masquerades. The Abiriba people were recalled upon by the Aro people to assist them in fighting against the Ibibio, and they sent seven warriors to defeat the Ibibio masquerades.¹⁶

The Abiriba people did not fight as mercenaries but rather for glory, blood heroism, and to protect their home land and business interests. Their military exploits have become an integral part of their history and cultural identity. The town's market, which was built by the colonial administration, is still an important hub for trade and commerce. The history of the Abiriba people and their military exploits is also an important part of the region's cultural heritage.¹⁷

Trade and Commerce

Ikot-

Ekpene is known as a regional center of commerce, with notable exports of palm products, including palm oil, kernels, raffia products, and ground crops such as yams, cassava, taro, and corn. The town's strategic location has made it an attractive hub for trade and commerce, with a diverse population of Annang people, Igbo traders, and Hausa-Suyavendors. The town's economy is also driven by its rich cultural heritage, with basket weaving, sculpture, and raffia cane furniture being notable exports. The raffia industry is particularly significant, with Ikot-

Ekpene being known as the "raffi town." The town's artisans are skilled in crafting beautiful and intricate raffia products, which are highly prized by locals and tourists alike.¹⁸

Arochukuwu, on the other hand, has a long history of trade and commerce that dates back to the 17th century. The Aro people were known for their highly organized and progressive power, supported by a hierarchy of priests and chiefs who were agents of the all-powerful god, Ibini-

Ukpabi. The Aro people were skilled traders who maintained their customs and traditions despite settling among other cultures. The Aro people played a significant role in the slave trade, with their oracle, Ibini-

Ukpabi, being used to sell slaves to European traders. The Aro also had a network of trader routes that extended to all parts of Igboland and stretched to the southern Igbo areas. Their middlemen commercial activities were not transparent, and they were known for their shrewd business acumen.¹⁹

The Aro people's influence reached its zenith during the slave trade, with their wealth and ascendancy based on the trade. However, with the abolition of slavery and the penetration of European colonizers, the Aro's dominance was drastically decreased, and their influence throughout Igboland was significantly reduced. The Aro people have a rich tradition and culture, with the Ekpe society being a significant part of their cultism. The use of the Nsibidi writing system, which is based on secret societies like Ekpe, is also an important part of Aro culture. The Ibini-

Ukpabi shrine, which was used for selling slaves during the slave trade, is still an important part of Aro history and culture.²⁰

The trade and market of Ikot-

Ekpene and Arochukuwu continue to play an important role in the region's economy and culture. The town

ns' rich cultural heritage and history are still celebrated, and their artisans and traders continue to thrive.

The trade and market of Ikot-

Ekpene and Arochuku are deeply rooted in the history and culture of the region. The towns' rich cultural heritage and history continue to shape their economy and culture, and their artisans and traders remain an essential part of the region's identity.²¹

Religion of Ikot-Ekpene and Arochuku

In the pre-colonial era, the people of Ikot-

Ekpene practiced a traditional religion centered on a Supreme Being and various deities. This religion, known as "Inam," involved a dualistic approach with direct worship of the Supreme Being, known as Abasi Ibom, and indirect worship of other deities through priests and shrines. The Ibom people believed in a Supreme Being who was seen as the creator of all things and the ultimate source of power. They believed that this God was omnipresent and could be worshipped anywhere and anytime through intermediaries. Alongside the Supreme Being, they revered various deities and spirits believed to inhabit different aspects of the natural world and influence human affairs. These deities had their own priests and shrines where rituals and sacrifices were performed to seek their favor or appease them.²²

The people of Ikot-

Ekpene believed in the importance of maintaining harmony with the spiritual world and promoting social order. Traditional religion played a significant role in shaping morality and social order, with people encouraged to be prayerful, pious, and fair in their dealings with others. The Ekpos society, a prominent social and religious organization, also played a role in maintaining social order and enforcing traditional laws.

In Arochukwu, the Ibina Ukpabioracle was a significant part of the people's religious and cultural practices. According to one account, the oracle was created by an Eddanative doctor to give spiritual protection to the Aro people. The oracle was believed to have the power to protect the Aro people and give them a sense of superiority over other Igbo groups. The custodians of the secret of the oracle used its influence and its rumored awesome power to wield considerable political authority in Arochukwu and beyond. The Ibina Ukpabioracle was famous for its impartial judgment in settling disputes, and its fame spread far and wide as people from afar came to consult the oracle aided by a network of agents. The oracle's effectiveness and fame lay in its apparent ability to kill by supernatural means those disobeying its verdict. The Aro middlemen were able to establish new settlements outside Arochukwu through the oracle's influence.

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The introduction of Christianity led to syncretism in some areas of Iko-

Ekpene, with a blending of traditional beliefs with Christian practices. This is evident in the story of Edidem Bassey, who proclaimed himself as Jesus Christ and attracted followers who saw him as a divine figure.

The religion of Iko-

Ekpene and Arochukwu continue to play an important role in the region's culture and identity. The people's traditional beliefs and practices remain an essential part of their heritage, and their history and cultural identity continue to shape their lives. The legacy of the Ibina Ukpabioracle and the traditional religion of Iko-

Ekpene and Arochukwu continue to influence the region's culture and identity. The people's rich cultural heritage and history remain an essential part of their identity, and their traditional beliefs and practices continue to shape their lives.²⁵

Military and Defense

In pre-colonial

the Annang people relied on a combination of traditional weaponry, strategic alliances, and spiritual powers for their military defense. They faced frequent inter-tribal wars with neighboring groups, necessitating a robust defense system. The Annang people primarily used traditional weapons such as spears, knives, and arrows. They also formed specialized warrior groups. The Annang people employed defensive strategies like digging trenches covered with thorns and strategic ambushes to deter and repel attacks. They also formed alliances with other communities to bolster their defense against larger threats. However, these alliances could be fragile and prone to conflict. The Annang people heavily relied on spiritual powers and rituals to aid them in warfare, believing they could influence the outcome of battles. Their spiritual practices played a significant role in shaping their military tactics and defense strategies.²⁶

Arochuku has a rich history of military exploits, particularly in their relationship with the Abiriba people. The Abiriba people are renowned as great warriors and blacksmiths, and their bravery and knowledge of iron work aided their migratory movement from their native Akpaland to their present location. The Aro-

Ibibio wars were a series of conflicts between the Aro people and the Ibibio people in what is now southern Nigeria. These wars led to the foundation of the Arochuku kingdom. The wars were fought between 1630 and 1902, with the Aro people emerging victorious.²⁷

The Aro people, led by Agwu Inobia and Nnachi, formed an alliance with the Akpa people, who were skilled warriors. The Akpa forces, led by Osim and Akuma Nnubi, helped the rebel group conquer the rest of the

area. This formed an alliance of 19 new and old states in the region known as the Arochukwu kingdom between 1650 and 1700. The first king of the Arochukwu kingdom was Akuma, but after his death, Oke Nnachi, son of Nnachi, assumed power, and his descendants still occupy the throne today. By the mid-18th century, there were mass migrations of several Aro business families all over Eastern Nigeria and surrounding areas. This migration, influenced by their god Ibini Ukpabi through priests, and their military powers supported by alliances with several related neighboring Igbo and eastern Cross River militarized states quickly established the Aro Confederacy as a dominant force.²⁸

The British attempted to conquer the Aro Confederacy in 1899. By 1901, the tensions were especially intensified when the British prepared for the Aro Expedition. The invasion of Obegu was the last major Aro offensive before the start of the Anglo-Aro War. In November 1901, the British launched the Aro Expedition, and after strong Aro resistance, Arochukwu was captured on December 28, 1901. By early 1902, the war was over, and the Aro resistance collapsed.²⁹

Ikot Ekpene's military history is also notable, particularly during the Biafran civil war. The town had strategic military and political importance to both the Biafrans and Nigerians. The town and the area changed hands at least three times in this bitter conflict. Under British rule, Ikot Ekpene became the seat of both the Annang Division and Ikot Ekpene County Council. Today, it is a municipal center in the state of Akwa Ibom. The first experimental Local Government (County) in British West Africa was Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State. British troops arrived in the area from Calabar and established a garrison there in January 1904, putting Umoren Eyenobong in charge of the immediate Annang people.³⁰

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CHAPTER THREE

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN IKOT-EKPENE AND AROCHUKWU IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

The economic relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku were a vital part of the pre-colonial era, with trade playing a crucial role in the economic and social development of both communities. The trader routes between the two communities were well-established, with goods such as palmoil, slaves, salt, and European goods like cloth, guns, and gunpowder being exchanged.¹

The commodities exchanged between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku were diverse, with palmoil being a major export of Ikot Ekpene. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was highly organized, with trading posts and agents established in various locations. The Aro traders were skilled middlemen who facilitated the exchange of goods between different communities. The economic influence of trade on local communities was substantial, with trade facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas. The Aro Confederacy's trading network played a major role in the regional economy, and its legacy can still be seen in the modern-day economy of the region. Trade promoted economic growth and development, as well as cultural exchange between different communities.²

The trader relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku was built on trust and mutual benefit, with the Aro traders establishing relationships with European traders and playing a major role in the regional economy. The economic benefits of trade in local communities were numerous, with trade promoting economic growth and development, as well as cultural exchange between different communities. The economic relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku were also influenced by the geography of the region, with the region's rivers, coastal areas, and land routes playing a crucial role in the transportation of

goods and the development of trade. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was highly organized, with trading posts and agents established in various locations.³

Trade promoted economic growth and development, as well as cultural exchange between different communities. The economic relations between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu were a vital part of the pre-colonial era, with trade playing a crucial role in the economic and social development of both communities. The economic influence of trade on local communities was substantial, with trade facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas.⁴

Trade Networks and Routes

The Aro traders were skilled middlemen who facilitated the exchange of goods between different communities.⁵ Elder Chief Okoro, a farmer from Arochukwu, in his view, stated that "The relationship brought trade and intermarriage. We used to travel to Ikot Ekpen to trade palm oil and buy cloth materials."⁶ His notes emphasize the importance of trade in the economic relationship between the two communities.

He also stated, "They were major trading partners. Arochukwu people were middlemen between the Igbo and Efik/Ibibio traders. We brought goods from the hinterland to Ikot Ekpen markets."⁷ This highlights the significant role that the Aro Confederacy played in the economic development of the region. He noted, "We used to travel to Ikot Ekpen to trade palm oil and buy cloth materials." This describes the significant role that trade played in the economic relationship between the two communities.⁸

The economic relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu has had a lasting impact on the communities involved. The trader relationship between the two communities facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the economic and social development of the communities.⁹

he Aro Confederacy's legacy can be seen in the many trading practices and traditions that continue to influence the economy and society of the region.¹⁰

Mmalquo, a trader from Ikot Ekpene, shared her insights on the economic relationship, stating,¹¹ "They were major trading partners. Ikot Ekpene had crafts and foodstuff, while the Aros brought goods from far places. The exchange was beneficial to both." This underscores the mutual benefits of the trader relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu. She stated, "The Aros were respected traders and spiritual leaders. They came with their oracle and settled among us. They helped link us with other Igbo groups and increased the wealth of our market. The exchange was beneficial to both."¹²

The Aro traders established relationships with European traders and played a crucial role in the regional economy. They traded in European goods such as cloth, guns, and gunpowder, and they acquired these goods through their trade in slaves and other commodities. The economic relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu was also influenced by the geography of the region. The region's rivers, coastal areas, and land routes played a significant role in the transportation of goods and the development of trade.¹³ The Aro traders were skilled and adaptable, and they were able to navigate the trader relationships in the region. They developed a high degree of expertise in various aspects of trade, including negotiation, transportation, and storage of goods.¹⁴

The trader relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu was significant, with the Aro Confederacy playing a major role in the regional economy. The economic relationship between the two communities was shaped by the cultural and social context of the region.¹⁵ The Aro Confederacy's trading network was highly organized, with trading posts and agents established in various locations. The Aro traders were skilled middlemen who facilitated the exchange of goods between different communities. The economic

relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu had a lasting impact on the communities involved. The trader relationship between the two communities facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the economic and social development of the communities.¹⁶

The trader networks and routes of Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu played an important role in the economic and social development of the pre-colonial communities in the region. The Aro Confederacy, with its powerful oracle Ibini Ukpabi, established a vast network of trading routes that extended to all parts of Igboland and beyond. The Aro traders were skilled middlemen who facilitated the exchange of goods between different communities. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was highly organized, with trading posts and agents established in various locations.¹⁷

The Aro traders were skilled navigators and traders who were able to adapt to different environments and trading conditions. They developed a system of credit and finance, which allowed them to conduct trade over long distances. The Aro trader network was not limited to the local region. It extended to other parts of Igboland, as well as to neighboring regions such as the Cross River region and the Cameroonian coast. The Aro traders established relationships with other trading groups, including the Efik and Ibibio traders, and played a significant role in the regional economy. The transatlantic slave trade influenced the regional economy and society. The Aro Confederacy was heavily involved in the slave trade, and many of the goods traded in the region were used to acquire slaves. Slaves were traded for European goods such as guns, cloth, and other commodities.¹⁸

The Aro traders also traded in other goods, including palm oil, ivory, and other local products. Palm oil was a major commodity in the region, and it was traded extensively by the Aro Confederacy. Ivory was another

er valuable commodity that was traded in the region. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was characterized by a high degree of organization and specialization. The Aro traders were skilled in various aspects of trade, including negotiation, transportation, and storage of goods.¹⁹

The trade networks and routes of Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku were shaped by the cultural and social context of the region. The Aro traders were influenced by the cultural and social norms of the communities they traded with, and they adapted their trading practices to fit the local context. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was also influenced by the political and economic conditions of the region. The rise and fall of various trading empires and the impact of European colonization had a significant impact on the trade networks and routes. The Aro traders established relationships with European traders and played a significant role in the regional economy.²⁰ The Aro Confederacy's trading network was a major factor in the development of the region. The trade network facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the economic and social development of the communities involved.²¹

The Aro traders were skilled and adaptable, and they were able to navigate the trade relationships in the region. They developed a high degree of expertise in various aspects of trade, including negotiation, transportation, and storage of goods. The Aro Confederacy's legacy can be seen in the many trading practices and traditions that continue to influence the economy and society of the region. The Aro traders played a significant role in the development of the region, and their legacy continues to be felt today. The trade networks and routes of Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku were an important part of the regional economy and society.²²

The trade network facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the development of the communities involved. The Aro traders were skilled and adaptable, and they were able to

navigated the trader relationships in the region. They developed a high degree of expertise in various aspects of trade, including negotiation, transportation, and storage of goods. The Aro Confederacy's legacy can be seen in the many trading practices and traditions that continue to influence the economy and society of the region.²³

Commodities and Goods Exchanged

The commodities and goods exchanged between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu were significant in the pre-colonial era. According to Elder Oji, a teacher from Arochukwu, "It opened Arochukwu to the outside world. Ikot Ekpen was like a gateway for us to reach the Efik people and even the coastal traders."²⁴ This highlights the importance of trade in the economic relationship between the two communities. He also stated that "The Aro Confederacy used to send agents to Ikot Ekpen to monitor trade. Some even became part of their community."²⁵ This highlights the significant role that the Aro Confederacy played in the economic development of the region.

The trader relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu was built on mutual interest. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was highly organized, with trading posts and agents established in various locations. The Aro traders were skilled middlemen who facilitated the exchange of goods between different communities.²⁶

Mrs. Nnenna Ogbonna, a midwife from Arochukwu, stated that "Many of our people settled there and even married. It created a sense of unity and spread our influence."²⁷ This underscores the significant role that trade played in the economic relationship between the two communities. She also noted that "Pal

moil, slaves, and kola nuts were common trade items. We needed each other."²⁸ This underscores the mutual benefits of the trader relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu.

The commodities exchanged between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu included palmoil, slaves, salt, and European goods such as cloth, guns, and gunpowder. The Aro Confederacy's trading network was highly organized, with trading posts and agents established in various locations. The Aro traders were skilled middlemen who facilitated the exchange of goods between different communities.²⁹

The economic relationship between the two communities was shaped by the cultural and social context of the region. The economic relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu has had a lasting impact on the communities involved. The trader relationship between the two communities facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the economic and social development of the communities. The Aro Confederacy's legacy can be seen in the many trading practices and traditions that continue to influence the economy and society of the region.³⁰

The Aro traders established relationships with European traders and played a significant role in the regional economy. They traded in European goods such as cloth, guns, and gunpowder, and they acquired these goods through their trade in slaves and other commodities. The trader relationship between the two communities facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the economic and social development of the communities. The Aro Confederacy's legacy can be seen in the many trading practices and traditions that continue to influence the economy and society of the region.³¹

Economic Influence on Local Communities

Trade played a vital role in the economic and social development of these communities, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas. Local trade in these communities involved the exchange of goods and services among people living in close proximity to each other. Markets were usually small and were patronized by people who were generally local to the area. The method of exchange was often by barter, a system of exchange of goods for goods. Women were mainly involved in local trade, where items of trade were mainly food items such as yams, cassava, okra, maize, melon, salt, fish, and palm oil.³²

The nature of trade in local communities was characterized by a high degree of organization and specialization. Traders involved in local trade developed a system of exchange that was based on the coincidence of wants. The barter system was supported by a code of norms and was the first stage in the market economy. Long-distance trade, on the other hand, involved export, re-export, and multi-lateral relations. Traders involved in this kind of trade visited distant markets, and their activities were characterized by a high degree of risk and uncertainty. To mitigate these risks, traders adopted certain measures, such as moving in groups and being accompanied by armed escorts. They also entered into blood pacts with their hosts and business partners, which helped to ensure their safety and security.³³

The economic influence of trade in local communities was also felt in the development of infrastructure, such as roads and markets. The construction of roads and markets facilitated the movement of goods and people, which helped to promote trade and economic growth. The development of infrastructure also helped to facilitate the exchange of goods and services between different communities.³⁴

Elder Inyang Umoren, a village head from Ikot Ekpene, stated that "We became more connected to the wider region. Arochukwu traders made our market known beyond the Cross River region."³⁵ This examines the significance of the economic relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu. In Elder Inyang's

view, the historical relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku expanded the community's worldview and improved their markets system. He noted that "The Aros brought news, stories, and products from far places. Our markets system improved due to their trading model." Elder Inyang noted that "They introduced new markets, new products, and even political connections. We benefited from their networks."³⁶

Elder Udo Bassey, an ex-

soldier from Ikot Ekpene, shared a similar perspective. According to him, "It expanded our worldview. The Aros brought news, stories, and products from far places. Our markets system improved due to their trading model."³⁷ This underscores the significant role that the Aro Confederacy played in the economic development of Ikot Ekpene. He also stated that "Through trade in palm oil, ivory, and even cloth. The Aros acted as brokers, and we both gained."³⁸ This examines the mutual benefits of the trader relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochuku. The trader relationship between the two communities facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, and it played a significant role in the economic and social development of the communities.³⁹

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CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN IKOT-EKPENE AND AROCHUKWU

The socio-political relations between Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene shed light on the rich history and cultural heritage of these two communities. In the pre-

colonial era, Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene had a complex network of alliances and conflicts that shaped their relationships and influenced their development.¹ The historical relationship between Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene is a rich and complex one, with many aspects of their culture and traditions being shared between the two communities. The two communities were able to form alliances and cooperate with each other, which had a lasting impact on their development.²

The influence of Arochukwu on Ikot-

Ekpene was significant, with many cultural practices and traditions being shared between the two com-

munities. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions of Ikot-

Ekpene, with many aspects of Aro culture being incorporated into Ikot-

Ekpene's own cultural practices. This influence is a testament to the strong historical relationship betw-

een the two communities. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions o-

f Ikot-Ekpene, with many aspects of Aro culture being incorporated into Ikot-

Ekpene's own cultural practices.³

Arochukwu's traditional institutions, such as the Ibini Ukpabi oracle, played a significant role in the com-

munity's spiritual and judicial practices. The oracle was believed to have the power to settle disputes an-

d provide guidance to the community. The Ekpe society in Ikot-

Ekpene played a similar role, maintaining social order and enforcing the decisions of the elders. The tradi-

tional institutions of Arochukwu and Ikot-Ekpene played a crucial role in shaping their socio-

political relations. These institutions helped to maintain social order, settle disputes, and provide guida-

nce to the community.⁴

The marriage customs and traditions of Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene were also significant. The traditional marriage ceremony in Arochukwu involved several stages,

including the payment of the bride price and the presentation of the bride to the public. Ikot-

Ekpene's fattening room was a unique aspect of their marriage customs, where young women were secl-

uded and fed a variety of food to prepare them for marriage. The marriage customs and traditions of Aro-

chukwu and Ikot-

Ekpenewerealsoanimportantaspectoftheirsociopoliticalrelations.Thetwocommunitieshadtheirownuniquemarriagecustoms,whichwereshapedbytheirculturalandhistoricalcontexts.ThetraditionalmarriageceremonyinArochukwuinvolvedseveralstages,includingthepaymentofthebridepriceandthepresentationofthebridetothepublic.⁵

Political Relations: Pre-Colonial Alliances and Conflicts

ArochukwuandIkotEkpenemaintainedawebofalliancesandrelationshipsthatplayedakeyroleinshapingtheregion.Theirrelationships wereshapedbyavarietyoffactors,includingpoliticsand economics. Thetwocommunitieswerepartofalargernetworkofcommunitiesandstates,andtheirrelationships wereinfluencedbyacomplexarrayoffactors.AccordingtoMr.NtonEssien, atraditionalist, fromIkot-Ekpen, "theAroscamewiththeirspiritualandbusinessknowledge.Theylivedamongusandhelpedorganizeourtraderoutes."⁶Thisstatementhighlightstheimportanceoftradeandcommerceintherelationshipbetweenthetwocommunities.TheAroConfederacyplayedasignificantroleintheregion.Itsdiplomaticeffortshelpedtoshapetherelationshipsbetweenthevariouscommunities.Theconfederacywasapowerfulandinfluentialentitythatwasabletonegotiateandsecureagreementswithothercommunities.ThediplomaticeffortsofArochukwuandIkotEkpenewereoftenmarkedbycarefulnegotiationandcompromise.Healsonoted, "Welearnedalotfromthemabouttrade, especiallyhowtonegotiateandmaintainnetworks."Thisstatementhighlightstheimportanceofdiplomacyandnegotiationintherelationshipbetweenthetwocommunities.

Arochukwu'sdiplomaticeffortswereoftenfocusedonpromotingitsowninterestsandsecuringitsborders.Thecommunitywaskeenlyawareoftheimportanceofmaintainingitssovereigntyandindependence.AccordingtoElderNwachukwuOkafor, avillageelderfromArochukwu, "itgaveusrespectandacc

ess. The legacy still echoes in our organization.⁷ This notes the importance of sovereignty and independence in the relationship between Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene.

The conflict between Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene in the pre-colonial era was driven by boundary disputes and competition for resources. The two communities had a history of interaction, and their relationship was marked by periods of conflict and cooperation. Boundary disputes were a major source of conflict between Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene. The boundary between the two communities was not clearly defined, and this led to disputes and conflict over land ownership and usage. The disputes often escalated into violence, and the communities would engage in armed conflict. The conflict between Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene was also driven by competition for resources. Both communities were interested in controlling the resources of the region, including land, trade routes, and markets. The competition for resources often led to tensions and conflicts between the two communities. Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene had a history of alliances and cooperation. The Aro Confederacy had established diplomatic relations with Ikot Ekpene. The alliances between Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene were often formed to counter common threats or to achieve specific goals. The two communities might form an alliance to defend against a common enemy or to secure a trade agreement.⁸

The Aro Confederacy played a significant role in the region. Its diplomatic efforts helped to shape the relationships between the various communities. The confederacy was a powerful and influential entity that was able to negotiate and secure agreements with other communities. The diplomatic efforts of Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpene were often marked by careful negotiation and compromise. The two communities would engage in lengthy negotiations to resolve their differences and reach a mutually beneficial agreement. These negotiations required a high degree of skill and diplomacy. Arochukwu's diplomatic efforts

ts were often focused on promoting its own interests and securing its borders. The community was keenly aware of the importance of maintaining its sovereignty and independence. It was willing to take steps to protect its interests, including forming alliances with other communities and engaging in diplomatic efforts to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. The boundary disputes between Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpe were a major challenge for the two communities. The disputes often led to violence and instability. The communities would engage in armed conflict, and the disputes would often take a long time to resolve.⁹

Arochukwu and Ikot Ekpe maintained a web of alliances and relationships that played a key role in shaping the region. Their relationships were shaped by a variety of factors, including politics and economics. The two communities were part of a larger network of communities and states, and their relationships were influenced by a complex array of factors. The Aro Confederacy was a key player in the region, and its diplomatic efforts helped to shape the relationships between the various communities. The confederacy was able to negotiate and secure agreements with other communities, and its diplomatic efforts helped to promote stability and cooperation in the region.¹⁰

Influence of the Aro Confederacy on Ikot-Ekpe Politics

The influence of the Aro Confederacy on Ikot-

Ekpe politics is a topic that has garnered significant attention in recent years. According to Chief Akpaniko Udofia, a bonesetter from Ikot Ekpe, "we became known as a center of trade partly because of the Aros. Their network brought goods and people from afar." This statement highlights the significant role that the Aro Confederacy played in promoting trade and commerce in the region. The Aro Confederacy's influence on Ikot-

Ekpenepolitics can be seen in the way that the community's political system and markets were shaped by the Aro model. He stated that, "Our political system and markets were shaped partly by their model. The Aros were very organized."¹¹ This level of organization and structure helped to promote stability and cooperation in the region, and it had a lasting impact on the development of Ikot Ekpene. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions of Ikot Ekpene, with many cultural practices and traditions showing signs of Aro contact.

The historical relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu is also significant. He stated that, "the Aros were powerful. They did not just trade—they influenced politics. Many decisions in those days involved Aro input." This statement highlights the significant influence that the Aro Confederacy had on the politics of the region. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the economy of Ikot Ekpene, with many businesses and traders still operating in the region. The economic relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu was also significant, with the Aro Confederacy playing a key role in promoting trade and commerce in the region.¹²

The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions of Ikot Ekpene. Chief Udofia stated that, "our culture grew richer. We shared ideas, names, and spiritual practices. Some of our elders still perform rituals with Aro influence." This statement highlights the significant cultural exchange that took place between the two communities. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the economy of Ikot Ekpene, with many businesses and traders still operating in the region.¹³

The significance of understanding the history between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu cannot be overstated. Chief Udofia stated that, "it helps us learn the value of diplomacy and cooperation. Those are key lessons for modern Nigeria." This statement highlights the importance of understanding the historical relat

ionship between the two communities. By studying the history of Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu, we can gain invaluable insights into the importance of diplomacy and cooperation in promoting peace and stability in the region. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions of Ikot Ekpene. The Aro Confederacy's influence on Ikot Ekpene politics is a significant topic that has garnered attention in recent years. The historical relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu is significant, and it continues to shape the politics, economy, and culture of the region.¹⁴

He noted, "Arochukwu people used to bring goods from the interior, and we would sell them to coastal traders. They were like middlemen." This statement highlights the important role that the Aro Confederacy played in promoting trade and commerce in the region. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the economy of Ikot Ekpene, with many businesses and traders still operating in the region. The economic relationship between Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu was also significant, with the Aro Confederacy playing a key role in promoting trade and commerce in the region.¹⁵

Traditional Institutions

The Ibina Ukpabi, also known as the Long Juju, was a powerful oracle that played a significant role in the traditional institutions of Arochukwu. According to one account, the oracle was created by an Eddanative doctor who invited the Akpawarrior to fight for the Eze-Agwu group. The oracle was initially intended as a channel or object of worship and invocation for safety and blessing but later became the principal organ that played both political and judicial functions. The custodians of the secret of the oracle used its influence and its rumored awesome power to wield considerable

able political authority in Arochuku and beyond. The oracle was famed for its impartial judgment in settlement of disputes, and its fame spread like wild fire as people from afar came to consult the oracle aided by a network of agents. According to G. I. Jones, the effectiveness and therefore the fame of the oracle lay in its apparent ability to kill by supernatural means those who disobey its verdict.¹⁶

In contrast, the traditional institutions of Iko-

Ekpe were reshaped by a different set of factors. The Ibibio society consists of villages and towns ruled by a group of elders (Ekpo Ndem Isong) and the heads of extended families. Their decisions are enforced by members of the Ekpe society who act as messengers of the ancestors (Ikan). Ekpe members are always asked when performing their policing duties, and although their identities are almost always known, fear of retribution from the ancestors prevents most people from accusing those members who overstep their social boundaries. Membership in the Ekpe society is open to all Ibibio males, but one must have access to wealth to move into the politically influential grades. The Ekpe society plays a significant role in maintaining social order and enforcing the decisions of the elders. The society is also responsible for protecting the community from external threats and maintaining the spiritual well-being of the community.¹⁷

The Ibibio people also have a strong spiritual tradition, with a deep respect for the ancestors and the earth deity, Ikpai song. The Obom ceremony is an important part of Ibibio spiritual practice, and it is believed to make children plentiful and to increase the harvest. The ceremony is performed in the middle of the year, every eighth day for eight weeks by each section of the village in turn. In addition to their spiritual practices, the Ibibio people also have a rich cultural heritage. The Annang people, in particular, are known for their art, including mural paintings, raffia, masks, and cement sculptures. They are also known for their prowess in trading and their renown ceremonies.¹⁸

The Annang people place a high value on the ability to speak well and oratory ability using proverbs is highly desirable, especially among leaders. An individual who has the gift of eloquent speech is often complimented as Akwo Annang, meaning the singer of Annang. The Annang people are also known for their charms, which are believed to have healing properties and spiritual significance. The traditional institutions of Arochuku and Ikot-

Ekpen have undergone significant changes over the years, particularly with the introduction of Christianity and Western education. However, many of the traditional practices and customs continue to play an important role in the lives of the people, and they remain an essential part of the cultural heritage of the region.¹⁹

The traditional institutions of Arochuku and Ikot-

Ekpen are an essential part of the cultural heritage of the region. They reflect the communities' history, culture, and values, and they continue to play an important role in the lives of the people. The significance of the traditional institutions of Arochuku and Ikot-

Ekpen lies in their ability to shape the culture and traditions of the communities, and to promote cultural exchange and cooperation.²⁰

Social Relations: Marriage Rites

The marriage rites of Arochuku and Ikot-

Ekpen are steeped in tradition and cultural significance. According to Mrs. Ogechi Nwachukwu, a trader from Arochuku, "Naming customs, market rituals, and even aspects of marriage ceremonies became shared through years of exchange."²¹

The first stage of the Arochukwu traditional marriage ceremony is called "Ikutuaka," which involves the suitor's family visiting the bride's family to express their interest in marrying their daughter. This stage is significant because it marks the beginning of the marriage negotiations between the two families. The suitor's family will typically bring a bottle of hot drink and some dried animal meat as a symbol of their intention to marry. The second stage is called "Ihe Avuruna Ulo," which involves the suitor's family formally announcing their intention to marry the bride. This stage is significant because it marks the official beginning of the marriage negotiations, and the bride's family will typically invite some of their relatives to witness the occasion.²²

The third stage is called "Nmayi Ajuju," which involves the suitor's family providing some drinks and other items to the bride's family as a symbol of their commitment to the marriage. This stage is significant because it marks a critical point in the marriage negotiations, where the bride's family will ask her if she is willing to marry the suitor.²³

In Ikot-

Ekpene, the traditional marriage ceremony is also a complex process that involves several stages. One of the most significant aspects of the Ikot-

Ekpen traditional marriage ceremony is the fattening room, where the bride is secluded and fed a variety of food to prepare her for marriage. The fattening room is an important institution in Annang culture, where young women are taught moral virtues, societal values, and public etiquette. The fattening room is also a place where the bride is nurtured and prepared for marriage, with a focus on her physical and emotional well-

being. The bride is fed a variety of foods, including rice, beans, yams, and fish, and is expected to stand a

void physical exercise. The duration of the fattening period differs among lineages in Annang, and it can last between six to twelve months.²⁴

The marriage ceremony in Arochukwu is a grand affair, with many people gathering to celebrate the union of the couple. The bride is presented to the public, and the couple is celebrated with music and dance.

The significance of the traditional marriage ceremony in Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene cannot be overstated. It is a celebration of the union of two families and communities, and it marks an important milestone in the lives of the couple. The ceremony is also an opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the couple's love and commitment to each other. The historical relationship between Ikot-

Ekpene and Arochukwu is also significant because it highlights the importance of cultural exchange and cooperation.²⁵

The marriage ceremony in Arochukwu involves several stages, including the "Ihu Onu Aku" ceremony, which involves the payment of the bride price. The bride price is a significant aspect of the marriage ceremony, and it is typically negotiated between the two families. The marriage ceremony in Arochukwu is a significant event that marks an important milestone in the lives of the couple. The ceremony is a celebration of the union of two families and communities, and it marks an important milestone in the lives of the couple. The bride is presented to the public, and the couple is celebrated with music and dance.²⁶

The significance of the traditional marriage ceremony in Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene lies in its ability to bring people together and celebrate the union of two families and communities. The ceremony is a reflection of the rich cultural heritage of the communities, and it is an important part of their tradition and identity. The traditional marriage ceremony in Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene is a complex process that involves several stages and significant rituals. The ceremony is a celebration of the union of two families and communities, and it marks an important milestone in the lives of the couple.²⁷

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that the pre-colonial era was a significant period in the history of Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu, marked by extensive trade and cultural exchange between the two communities and other neighboring groups. Arochukwu, situated in present-day Abia State, Nigeria, was a major commercial center that played a crucial role in the economic and cultural landscape of the region. The Aro Confederacy, centered in Arochukwu, dominated commerce, politics, and religion in the region from the 1600s to the early 1900s.¹

The Ekpe society, a secretive cultural institution, was another significant aspect of pre-colonial Arochukwu. Ekpe lodges acted as economic hubs, controlling key trade routes and regulating commerce. Membership in Ekpe provided access to trade monopolies and protection during journeys, making it an essential institution for traders. The society's use of nsibidi, a system of ideographic symbols, facilitated communication and maintained secrecy within the institution.²

Arochukwu's strategic location near Enyong Creek, a river that connected to the Cross River, facilitated trade with coastal towns like Bonny, Calabar, and Opobo, enabling the Aro people to exchange goods like

slaves, palm oil, yams, and cassava. The Aro Confederacy's influence extended beyond trade to spiritual guidance, justice, and societal control through the Ibini Ukpabi Oracle, also known as the "Long Juju". The oracle was a divine judge that spoke for Chukwu, the Igbo Great Spirit, and its judgments were respected across the region. The Aro people did not rule land like a typical empire but instead controlled trade and spiritual life through the oracle. They set up villages across Igboland, the Niger Delta, Cameroon, and even Equatorial Guinea, following Arochukwu's ways and blending with local communities through marriage and trade. The oracle solved disputes between villages, keeping things stable so trade could thrive.³

In contrast, Ikot Ekpene, located in Akwalbom State, Nigeria, was a regional center of commerce, with notable exports of palm products, especially palm oil, kernels, raffia products, including raffia fibers and wine, and ground crops of yams, cassava, taro, and corn. The town has a long history of transforming raffia fiber into cloth used in shoes, hats, handbags, mats, and distinctive cultural carvings made out of wood. The study has demonstrated that the pre-

colonial era was marked by the rise of various kingdoms and empires in the region, with Ikot Ekpene and Arochukwu playing important roles in the economic and cultural landscape. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to be celebrated today as a symbol of African ingenuity and resilience.⁴

This study has explored the socio-political relations between Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene, highlighting the rich history and cultural heritage of these two communities. The research has revealed that the historical relationship between Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene is a rich and complex one, with many aspects of their culture and traditions being shared between the two communities. The two communities were able to form alliances and cooperate with each other, which had a lasting impact on their development. The influence of Arochukwu on Ikot-

Ekpene was significant, with many cultural practices and traditions being shared between the two communities. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions of Ikot-Ekpene, with many aspects of Aro culture being incorporated into Ikot-Ekpene's own cultural practices. This influence is a testament to the strong historical relationship between the two communities.⁵

The traditional institutions of Arochuku and Ikot-Ekpene played a crucial role in shaping their socio-political relations. The Ibini Ukpabioracle in Arochuku and the Ekpesociety in Ikot-Ekpene were significant institutions that helped to maintain social order, settle disputes, and provide guidance to the community. The marriage customs and traditions of Arochuku and Ikot-Ekpene were also significant, with the traditional marriage ceremony in Arochuku involving several stages, including the payment of the bride price and the presentation of the bride to the public. This research has also highlighted the importance of diplomacy and negotiation in the relationship between Arochuku and Ikot-Ekpene. The diplomatic efforts of Arochuku and Ikot-Ekpene were often marked by careful negotiation and compromise, and the two communities would engage in lengthy negotiations to resolve their differences and reach a mutually beneficial agreement.⁶

The boundary disputes between Arochuku and Ikot-Ekpene were a major challenge for the two communities, often leading to violence and instability. However, the two communities also had a history of alliances and cooperation, with the Aro Confederacy establishing diplomatic relations with Ikot-Ekpene. The Aro Confederacy's legacy continues to shape the culture and traditions of Ikot-Ekpene, with many cultural practices and traditions showing signs of Aro contact. The historical relation

ship between Ikot-

Ekpene and Arochukwu is significant, and it continues to shape the politics, economy, and culture of the region.⁷

The study has demonstrated that the traditional institutions of Arochukwu and Ikot-

Ekpene are an essential part of the cultural heritage of the region, reflecting the communities' history, culture, and values. The significance of the traditional institutions lies in their ability to shape the culture and

traditions of the communities, and to promote cultural exchange and cooperation. This research con-

cludes that the area of study has provided valuable insights into the complexities of inter-

group dynamics and the significance of effective communication and conflict resolution mechanisms in

maintaining peaceful inter-

group relations, highlighting the importance of understanding the historical context of relationships be-

tween different groups in the region.⁸

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Mr. Oji Nwosu	56 years	Teacher	Akwabom state	7th August, 2025
Mrs. Nnenna Ogbonna	62 years	Midwife	Akwabom state	8th August, 2025
Elder Inyang Umoren	70 years	Village Chief	Akwabom state	4th August, 2025
Elder Udo Bassey	73 years	Retired Soldier	Akwabom state	4th August, 2025
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