

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN EKWUSIGO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE, 1996-2020

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Abstract

Many Igbo communities have engaged in closely knit relationships since the precolonial times. Communities in Ekwusigo engaged in such inter-community relations. This study discusses the political and economic relations in Ekwusigo, the uniqueness in the nature and patterns and how it has gone a long way to shape the history of Anambra State where Ekwusigo is located. It is important to note that there is noticeably general lack of interest on the part of scholars to document this important part of the history of Igbo Land with reference to political and economic relations. This lack of interest in the nature and patterns of political and economic relations in this area of study was one of the reasons embarking on this study is invaluable. The study observes that the political and economic relations in Ekwusigo from 1996-2020 were multifaceted. It includes, the political activities, embedded in unique political ideology, diplomatic relations and economic relations based on communalism. The market centers a place for selling and buying of goods and services encouraged inter-community relations in Ekwusigo. Using the Interdependent theory, the study emphasizes that the political and economic activities promoted and strengthened the bond of inter-community relations in Ekwusigo, it further enhanced mutual understanding through interaction, exchange of resources, and political ideas, all these were for sustainable co-existence of the communities. The study concludes among other things that each of the communities in Ekwusigo is not self-sufficient, but each provided one thing or the other which others had not, the resources available in one environment may not be available in the other. For this reason, they depended on one another in terms of provision of their basic needs for survival as captured in the principles of interdependence. Primary and secondary sources of history were consulted. The historical method of narrative and description were used. The qualitative methodology was used in its analysis and presented chronologically.

Key words: Political, Economic, Relations, Ekwusigo, Anambra State

Introduction

This study examines inter community relations in Ekwusigo Local Government Area. Ekwusigo is made up of four (4) communities and they include Ozubulu, Oraifite, Ihembosi and Ichi. These communities were under Nnewi North and Ihiala Local Government Areas before 1996. In an interview with Christopher Obi, he stated that these communities were located at about one kilometer away from the headquarters, except Ozubulu (the headquarters). They were located at Onitsha - Owerri express road. Ozubulu, Oraifite and Ichi were from Nnewi North while Ihembosi was drawn from Ihiala division. The four communities were drawn from different local government and merged to create Ekwusigo in 1996. However, the factors which included cultural affinity, urbanization, conflicts and increase in population, led to the emergence of these communities as they were called presently, Ekwusigo. With time they began to welcome urbanization as a result of immigration, education, markets, churches and other developments. This accounts for the reasons why in recent times, there were local,

regional and international traders into the area. They were also agriculturalists because of availability of large land for farming and they were bordered by Ogbaru and were close to River Niger. Most of the people including traders were educated in different fields which include medicine, engineering, Accounting, Law, and Sciences.¹

However, as inter-community relations with focus on political and economic activities are being discussed. It is imperative to observe that Muzafer Sherif stated that 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 inter-group behavior. Research on inter-group relations involves the study of many psychological phenomena related to inter-group processes including social identity, prejudice, group dynamics, and conformity among many others.² The most distinguishing characteristic of the Igbo is its social fragmentation and decentralization of authority. Green observes this fact thus; this great people are broken up into hundreds of small, more or less independent social units, the largest being, in many cases what we may call the village group. This is a collection of villages bound together by certain ties, but each one at any rate in the district with which we are concerned largely managing its own affairs. The view of Green above, explains the popular saying- *Igbo Enweghi Eze*. The Igbo have no king. This is a very important fact about the Igbo which does not have to be disregarded in the study of social and political organization of the Igbo. Decentralization of authority and social fragmentation notwithstanding, the Igbo achieves a high degree of peace and order, unity and solidarity in their traditional society. The reason must be sought in their philosophy and thought pattern, namely; communalism and complementarity (*Ibuanyidanda*).³

Communalism is a mode of social relationship which is marked by the intimate feeling of belongingness which all members share with each other and which they reciprocate. Communalism allows the community to co-operate and come together to harness their resources together for the good of everyone. In a communal society, oneness and the love for one another exist among the community. Communalism is simply, the return to traditional political and economic practices and the rejection of the unsuitable aspects of alien culture. In this system, everybody was part of government and no need for political parties which create divisions in the lives of the people. In traditional Igbo societies says Asouzu.⁴

The community constitutes the point of orientation for almost all human activities and determine human life even if these societies were committed to the insight of mutual complementary relationship between units within any given framework, we see them tending towards extreme measures in view of undermining this commitment.⁵ Mbiti sees the existence of the individual as subsumed in the collectiveness of the community, thus, he said; “I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am” this expresses clearly the Igbo belief that a tree cannot make a forest - *Otu Osisi anaghị emebe ọhịa!*⁶

Commenting on communalism, Steve Biko writes; We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the varied problems of life... Hence, all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than the individualism.⁷ Communalism is opposed to individualism, for example, for individualism, the individual is paramount and the community is a consequent. In the words of Nze, “the relationship existing between the society and the individual in a communalistic society is analogous to that existing between a mother and her embryo, each is connected with the other through the Umbilical cord” what this.⁸ Igbo world view implies two basic beliefs (1) the unity of all things and (2)

an ordered relationship among all beings in the universe. Consequently, there is a belief in the existence of order and interaction among all beings. Man's nature is such that he acts first and foremost in accordance with those things which agree with or are in harmony with his feelings and desires, his comfort and well-being... and are only meaningful in a situation of social relationship.⁹

Without complementarity, human life would be unbearable isolated struggles that easily lead to self-abandonment. We can now understand why the traditional Igbo never cease to sound the clarion call to complementarity and solidarity in times of crisis¹⁰

There are factors which tie or bound the people in complementarity, such as blood relation. In fact, a community in Igboland means "people of one blood" kinsmen, or brethren *Umunna*. Other factors that favour complementarity include territorial location (habitation) and physical proximity of members of the community which bring them into personal face-to-face relation. These factors that favour complementarity illustrate vividly the Igbo belief that (*Agbata-obi onye bu nwanneya*) one's neighbor is his relation.¹¹

The view of Nwala expresses mutual reciprocal relationship which is the hallmark of *Ibuanyidanda* as a concept in particular and of Igbo communalism in general. *Ibuanyidanda* as an Igbo work song expressing unity and strength is echoed in this phrase; Our husbands or men were singing and as they sang, they reaped, they were singing in chorus and reaping in unison. Their voices and their gestures were all harmonious; and in harmony, they were one, united by the same task, united by the same song. They were bound to one another. United by the same soul; each and every one was tasting the delight. Savoring the common pleasure of accomplishing a common task.¹²

The people of Ekwusigo like other communities in Igboland had been into inter-community relationship since 1996 when Ekwusigo was created. The nature and pattern of their relationship was interdependence. The communities depended on one another for sustainable coexistence. The evidence of the interdependence was unveiled as none of them was self-sufficient. Every community has resources available at her disposal and none of the communities could provide all the resources needed for living. Therefore, the need to actualize their human needs caused the people to depend on one another for survival. The study examines the inter-community relations in Ekwusigo with focus on political, cultural and socioeconomic relations, which were the bedrock of their relationships. The political and economic activities are major concerns and significant in discussing relations among the communities. There were some similarities in their traditions, customs, cultures, religious, political ideology and economic endeavors. The study tries eliciting knowledge on the areas of similarities and uniqueness. It discusses economic activities such as buying and selling of goods and services which strengthened relationships among communities. It discusses markets as trade centers for resources available in these communities. Apart from exchange of resources, it performs many other functions that promoted inter-community relation among the people over time.

It is pertinent to note here that political and economic relations in Ekwusigo had not been documented by historians. The political activities and ideas, which enhanced relations among these communities are yet to be written and preserved for the existing and future generations. There wasn't where to derive information about economic activities and communal nature of their cooperation, marketing and occupation which strengthened the bond of their relations. This showed that there was vacuum created by lack of documentation. Therefore, the dearth of literature made it difficult for scholars, researchers and students who want to carry out research

on this area to easily access any secondary sources. In view of the foregoing, the study discusses the nature and dynamics of relations in Ekwusigo.

Theoretical Framework

Considering the nature and patterns of relations that existed among the communities in Ekwusigo during the period of the study, it is imperative to adopt the inter-dependence theory. In the word of Van Lange and Ballet, Interdependence theory is a social exchange theory, which states that inter-personal relations are defined through inter-personal inter dependence, which is the process by which interacting people influence each other's' experiences¹³

Van Lange and Ballet asserts that the most basic principle of the theory is encapsulated in (A. B. S) which says that all inter-personal interactions (1) are a function (f) of the group situation (s) plus the actions and characteristics of the individuals (A & B) in the interaction. The theory's four basic assumptions are (1) the principle of structure (2) the principle of transformation (3) the principle of interaction and (4) the principle of adaptation.¹⁴

Interdependence theory was first introduced by Herold Velly and John Thibaut in 1959 in their book, the *Social Psychology of Groups*. This book drew inspiration from social exchange theory and game theory, and provided key definitions and concepts instrumental to the development of the inter-dependence framework. In their second work, *Interpersonal Relations: Theory of Interdependence*, the theory was completely formalized in 1978. Harold Kelly continued the development of interdependence theory in 2003 with the book *An Atlas of Inter-personal Situations*. In addition, the work of Kelly and Thibaut built on the work of Kurt Lewin, who first defined interdependence and stated that "the essence of a group is not the similarity or dissimilarity of its members, but their interdependence. A change in the state of any subpart changes the states of any other subpart. Every move of one member will, relatively speaking, deeply affect the other member and the state of the group"¹⁵ This theory is applicable to the nature of relations among the communities in Ekwusigo. It would help in a better understanding of the dynamics of the interaction between the people and their proximate neighbours.

Four Basic Assumption of Interdependence Theory

Principle of structure (the situation).

All interactions are set within the context of their given situation (known in inter dependence theory as structure). In order to best analyze this factor, interdependence theory presents a taxonomy of situations that includes the six dimensions listed below. It's key concept with the principle of structure after dance or what the situation affords (makes possible) for the individuals six dimension of structure. Degree/level of dependence, Mutuality of dependence, Co-variation of interest, Basis of dependence, Temporal structure, Information availability.

Principle of transformation (which people make of the situation)

Transformation is a psychological process through which individuals consider possible outcomes that result from both their actions and the actions of others, and weigh these outcomes against possible causes of actions (rewards and cost). Reward and costs, Emotional, Social, Instrumental, Opportunity, Outcome transformation.

Principle of Interaction

ISABI; $1=f(A,B,SI)$

The principle of interaction also offered to as the SABI model) is used to assess the variable that affects any given interaction. This model states that interactions. 1. Are a function of the

situation, person A's (A) motives, traits and action, plus persons B's (B) motives, traits and actions ($I = f(CA, B, SI)$)

There are several factors that individuals bring to the interaction. They are their consideration of outcomes, and comparison level for alternatives. Outcomes, Comparison level (CL), Comparison level for alternatives (CL= ALT).

Principle of Adaptation

Adaptation refers to the process by which exposure to similar situations gives rise to habitual responses which have been proven to result in average positive outcomes. In addition to the type of exposure based condition just described. Adaptations can result based on rule of social norms. For example, persons A might enter into a situation he/she has experienced before, based on these previous experiences person A's actions are guided in a way in which to receive the same positive outcomes as the previous situations produced. Similarly, social norms guide individuals towards specific, society approved actions.¹⁶

Interdependence theory has been used by academics to “analyze group dynamics power and dependence. Social comparison conflict and cooperation, attribution and self –presentation, trust and distrust, emotion, love and commitment, coordination, risk and self-regulation, performance and motivation, social development and neuron-scientific model of social interaction”.¹⁷ Van Lange and Balliet stated, in addition, the theory provides a practical framework for understanding the underlying psychological factors that motivated other individual in which you motivate your own actions when interacting with others.¹⁸ There is evidence that inter-community relations in Ekwusigo is guided by some of the principles of inter-dependence theory. The researcher established that a situation whereby each of these communities was not self-sufficient in terms of material and non- material resources for survival, there is need for inter dependence or inter community relations in order for the communities involved to satisfy those needs which are not within their reach be it economic, political, social-cultural and relatives. It is important to note that formal co-existence of communities cannot occur in isolation of interdependence and every action and activities involved are possibilities of achieving stipulated goals. That is why inter dependence theory formed a strong basis of reconstructing the inter community relations in Ekwusigo local government Area.

In an interview with C. Obi he informed that Ichi people were noted for crafts such as mats, hat, hand fan, broom, rope, they also produce hoes, and related crafts, though they farm but at minimum. All these crafts were taken to the markets where they were purchased by other communities that needed them. The crafts serve for many purposes such as; fanning, sweeping, sleeping or resting, climbing palm tree, farming and others. The raw materials for these crafts were mainly available during rainy season at inter-locustrine areas of Oraifite and Ozubulu. The inter-locustrine areas made it possible for the two towns to participate effectively in farming activities. Availability of land in the area encouraged the cultivation of crops like; cassava, yam, cocoyam, maize, melon, vegetables. They also produce plantain and fruits such as; breadfruit, oranges, mangoes, in large quantity. The farm produce from both communities in Ekwusigo were taken to the various markets within and outside Ekwusigo for sale in order to make them available to other communities and people that needed them¹⁹. Kanene Nwangwu informed that in Ozubulu and Oraifite, there were economic trees such as; Iroko, from which timbers of various kinds and shapes were produced, and supplied to the community markets and beyond. The timbers were useful for construction of houses of all kinds, building of furniture and others. Oraifite people were noted for raffia wine tapping. The wine was very important because of its usefulness to the community. It is used to perform cultural activities

such as marriage, burial ceremony, festivals, receiving visitors and others. The people of Ichi and, Ihemposi bought timber from Ozubulu and Oraifite, they also purchased raffia wine from Oraifite. Ichi and Ihemposi people lease farm land from Oraifite. It was done every farming season. There is evidence of interdependence among the communities in Ekwusigo since various products from the communities were taken to the markets by the producers and the buyers from and outside the communities also made their choices according to their needs. To this end, the markets became a center for ascertaining the extent of the interdependence among the communities. It is imperative to note that none of these communities was independent rather they depended so much on one another in order to obtain their needs which were not available in their environment. The quest to satisfy their needs from one another, i.e., Act of dependence enhanced and bonded the inter-community relations in Ekwusigo.²⁰

Politics in the word of W. Connolly, politics refers to the activities of governing and those involved in the process of governing. Politics is also a specific historical, evolving, dispersed, but socially and culturally circumscribed, particular form of human life which arguably had a beginning and will possibly have an end as a conventionally discriminated element of social organization.²¹ Economics in the word of A. Adebayo, economics is the study of how people and society end up choosing with or without the use of money, to employ scarce productive resources that could have alternative uses to produce various commodities over time and distribute them for consumption, now or in the future, among various person or groups in the society.²²

Relations according to Advance English Dictionary Relations is mutual dealings on connections or groups. It is any form of activities be it political, economic, sociocultural going on within or between groups or among persons. It is also social interchange within or between persons or groups.²³

Political Relations

Uzochukwu Okoye informed that politics involves selection of leaders. It deals with establishment of the rules and regulations that will guide the conducts of the members of the society and the members will show compliance to those rules which if not obeyed will lead to punishment as stated in the rule and regulations. It deals with leadership and followership and gives opportunity for selection of the leaders by the members of the society. Every community be it primitive or modern must have rules guiding it as well as organized system of administration established by tradition as government at various levels of the community. No society exists devoid of political activities. Politics is very important in the area of the conduct of the society. Selection of leaders, allocation of resources and policy making are the importance of politics. Put aside politics, communities would be in a state of chaos²⁴

Okoye stated that politically, a form of democracy was practiced in Ekwusigo. The democratic relations appeared in the zoning of political offices. As stated earlier that in the interest of equity and fairness, Sir Jerome Udoji from Eziora Ozubulu donated larger land, Chief (Dr) Mike A. Obi became the founding father of Ekwusigo L.G.A. He founded Ekwusigo Local Government Area with shared resources from Nnewi Local Government and Ihiala Local Government as well as allocation from both Anambra State and Federal Government of Nigeria. Mike A. Obi built Ekwusigo Local Government headquarters at Ozubulu and set up the administrative processes. He constructed and modernized the markets in the various towns making up the local government and successfully conducted the election of chairman and councilors for the new local government before he handed over power to Chief Mrs V.V.I. Okoye.²⁵

Okoye stated, looking at the above scenario, there is need to understand some forms of democratic/political inter community relationship which existed in Ekwusigo since its creation. Even at the point of its creation, there is evidence of inter-community relations in the area of zoning the chairman and councilors. The construction of the Ekwusigo Local Government Area was a collective bargaining, therefore, there was evidence of mutual understanding and collective effort made by different individuals from these communities to ensure that their plans became a success. There is also evidence of inter-community relations in the volunteering/donation of a very large land by Chief Jerome Udoji from Ozubulu, implementing policies, construction of structures and markets in these communities. These were performed in order to strengthen the bond of inter community relations in Ekwusigo so that these communities would accept themselves as a group of people with common economic, political and sociocultural ideologies and work towards achieving common goals.²⁶

The creation of Ekwusigo Local Government formed a strong bond of inter community relations in the sense that it provided employment opportunities at all levels to the indigenous people of Ekwusigo. Such employment created opportunity for people from these communities to interact, share ideas and finally solve their different problems through mutual understanding and love. In discharging their duties, inter-community relationship occurs as the law was enforced through ranking and promotion of the staff who were drawn from the four communities. Ekwusigo embodied different institutions of government ranging from clinic, education, agriculture etc. Maximum interactions that promotes inter-community relations is ensured within these intersecting units.²⁷ He narrated that during local government election for chairmanship and councilors, there was also evidence of inter-community relations, the chairmanship position was zoned among the communities while councilors must be drawn from each of these communities to ensure that every community participated in the political affairs of the Ekwusigo. It also ensured that government at the grassroots penetrated every community in terms of development.

Inter-community relations were also promoted in the way they shared things in politicking, the four towns were not equal, Ozubulu 6 (Six) wards, Oraifite had 3 (three) wards, Ichi had 1 (one) ward and Ihembosi had 2 (two) wards. Each ward has a councilor representing it. Through the chairman of the local government, revenue is being shared to those communities. The chairman is representing the state government in the local government while the councilors take allocations to their different wards as they represent their different wards. Inter community relations were promoted as workers from higher and lower cadres interacted in their daily activities. The four communities ensured that they promoted the welfare of Ekwusigo. This explained the absence of violence and skirmishes within the federating units in Ekwusigo. Historically, the political activities in Ekwusigo strengthened the bond of inter community relations. There was a well-defined political relationship among the people. During election a candidate for chairmanship would gather all the traditional leaders and chiefs including Ozo title men in the three communities in quest of their mandates in order to win election. This is practical evidence that accounted for the nature of peaceful political relations.²⁸

Economic Ideology and Relations Among the Communities in Ekwusigo Local Government Area

Communalism

Communal system of ownership was practiced in Ekwusigo. Communalism which is a political and economic ideology that supports the shared ownership of resources, property, and wealth, promotes collectivism. It is also referred to as the political unity and power sharing within a

small community. In, communalism leadership is usually divided among smaller organization of people. It can be found in the division between states, groups of people or by larger communities on the basis of ethnicity, religion, beliefs or values divided among smaller organization of people.²⁹ With all the research work conducted through oral interview and as a native of one of the communities in Ekwusigo, the researcher observed that communal system of ownership existed in Ekwusigo. Communalism in Ekwusigo just like elsewhere in Igboland was based on family inheritance system and are related to the concept of group ownership or absolute right on land, with individuals acquiring right of ownership. Customary land established the basis of access to land resources and the opportunity to use land for productive purposes.

An interaction with Christopher Obi shows that land was owned together by family and kindred. At the family level, which included nuclear and extended families, each father or son was entitled to a portion of land, big enough to feed himself and the members of his family. No member of the community or family should dispossess another of his or her stake in family land, no one should alienate family members' interests in family land without the knowledge of consent of these members.³⁰

C. Obi stated that ownership of land in Ekwusigo Local Government Area could be communal and at kinship level. At this level, all the stakeholders have right of ownership to farm on that land, there is no chance for dispossession of the right of ownership by any member of the kindred on the kindred land. Non-members of the kindred are not allowed to interfere in the affairs pertaining to sharing of the land. As of 1996 to 2021, most of these lands were no longer owned by community or there was no land owned by community. This was because those communities, village and clan land as adopted in the time range not included in this study had been shared into different families and kindred's in the communities.

Family land in Ekwusigo refers to a parcel or parcels of land over which a social unit usually smaller than the kindred family possess common rights, or exercises control and over which all its members have right other than the that which go with personal ownership. Each male of that unit, for example, have the right to farm a particular portion every year in accordance with the rotational circle.³¹

C. Obi narrated that there was evidence of economic relations between these communities in Ekwusigo and these economic relations were hinged on the farm land. Land was very important for wealth in these communities. The rich landowner who are industrious, cultivates many plots of land and plant various crops ranging from yam, cassava, cocoyam, coconut, maize, palm trees, oranges, pears and all sorts of vegetables mainly produced for subsistence and commercial purposes. That is why the people amass enormous wealth from farming on the land. Wealth could be amassed from land by selling the products of farm land, using the land as collateral for loan. Members of the communities' lease land for farming, this is done seasonally. Also the land could be sold by the owner of the land be it family or kindred. Selling of land in Igbo community emanated from colonialism. Appropriation of land by the British led to selling of land as properties. Hence, land from various families and kindred could be sold to make wealth for business or to pay for a loan. The form of communalism practiced in Ekwusigo ushered in the opportunity for means of getting incomes from agriculture, acquiring assets, and educating one's children.³²

During farming, people from Oraifite, Ihembosi etc communities embark on a form of communal system known as “*ofu oru*”. This form of farming had been practiced in the olden days and yet obtainable in this modern time. It is a system whereby a group of farmers either women, men, girls or boys depending on the largeness of the farmland worked in group in their farms to accomplish a common goal. Their goal may be to be able to finish their cultivation in a particular season without relenting. It was done turn by turn among the members of the group which may be drawn from these communities. They also provided food for themselves in turns in the process. They helped to promote economic relation in Ekwusigo³³

Market Centers as Places of Inter-Community Relations

It is important to understand that a form of economic relations exist amongst these communities in Ekwusigo. In an interview with C. Obi, he exposed the evidence of economic relations amongst these communities. The people of Ekwusigo were well known traders. Their farm produce were exchanged amongst themselves at their various markets which were weekly distributed to them. Through the origins of these communities, local market which were named after the days on which they were held, emerged in some important places. These market centers range from Nkwo, Eke, Orié, and Afor and also these markets indicate days of their worship.³⁴ In a conversation with Obi, in Oraifite, there was Nkwo Ozulogu which was the major market, it was a weekly market at initial stage, located at the center of the community. In the course of trading, it extended to Nkwoedo market. Nkwoedo market was an extension of Nkwo Ozuluogu market, it grew into a daily mark. It was late Bernard Aghaeze in conjunction with Ekwusigo Local Government that built the market. It was constructed into partition of different sizes and became a daily market. Ekwusigo Local Government gave Oraifite Community Bank power of attorney to construct Nkwo market into standard market structure and shops with good partitions.

In recent time, Nkwo Oraifite and Nkwo Nnewi (*Nkwo to Nkwo*) road was constructed to strengthen the daily activities of the market and people from different remote places including these communities in Ekwusigo and their neighbours embraced Nkwo market for selling and buying. These markets have garage for every articles of trade and were controlled by market traders.³⁵ Their neighbours came to exchange commodities or buy and sell their goods and services. They also buy shops or rent shops in Nkwo for their different businesses. With the above narrative from an informant, it shows that there were economic relations based on trade that existed amongst the communities. Different forms of services were offered at Nkwo market which included tailoring, shoemaking, cooking (restaurant), transportation, barrow/truck pushing, washing and dry cleaning, hair dressing and barbing, e.t.c. Other communities sold products from the farm or environment such as yam, cassava, cocoyam of different kinds, orange, maize, fish, domestic animals such as goat, sheep, dog, e.t.c., kola nuts, red oil, and clothe. Therefore, Nkwo market became a center of exchange for the communities. The activities that went on at this market among people from different communities helped in building inter community relations.³⁶

Obi further informed that there were major and feeder routes from these communities to the market. These routes joined different communities in Ekwusigo. This shows that before arrival to the market one must have passed different communities, rivers, hamlets, clans and families. Sometimes people from Ozubulu, Ihembosi and Ichi formed feeder routes through bush which

may be closer to Nkwo market. People from these communities moved in caravan, sometimes used vehicles, barrows or trucks to carry their goods to Nkwo Ozuluogu market. Therefore, there were bond of economic relations in Ekwusigo.³⁷

In the word of E.A. Anene, market was useful in Oraifite as well as in every community in Ekwusigo. Again, dances by women for new yam festival were carried out at Nkwo market to observe the new yam. This market just like other markets in other communities in Ekwusigo became a center for watching masquerade and also parading of any members of these communities that committed crime such as killing, incest, stealing of yam e.t.c.³⁸. Anene stated that this form of buying and selling of goods and services were also obtainable at Ozubulu that holds Orié Ozubulu market, Ihemobosi that holds Afor market and Ichi community that holds Eke Ichi market. Ichi was noted for craft such as hat, mat, hand fan, basket, nets, e.t.c. these crafts became articles of trade in the various markets. These markets operated on weekly basis before they developed into daily markets.³⁹

C. Obi informed that in the markets, there were no fixed prices for goods. The seller only strove to make the highest and best price, and on the other hand, the buyer was keen to bargain, hence the outrageous haggling over prices. The goods were handled, committed upon, rejected or accepted. All the goods were sold in Nigeria with the currency known as naira which is generally acceptable means of exchange in the whole of Nigeria. These market centers were used as centers for information dissemination. It was also centers for gossip; sometimes women went to market not to sale and buy but to gossip. To deprive a woman of the privilege of visiting market would be to cut off the greatest pleasure of her life. These markets formed centers for social interactions, people went there to meet friends, hear news, spread rumour and also buy and sale as a general purpose of markets.⁴⁰ Both men and women were found in the market. Men also had their own shops with agricultural produce, especially, yam and craft of different types, they also sale domestic animals like goat, sheep, dog e.t.c. These forms of economic relations were mutual and inter-dependent in practice. The inter-dependent in the sense that each community markets their products and buys those products that was not available in their environment from the market. None of these communities is self-sufficient for the existence of her members. These communities co-exist under collaborative form of life and the chances of inter-dependency amongst them were very high.⁴¹

Inter-marriage between the communities in Ekwusigo sometimes began in these market that were located in these communities. These markets served as a place for selecting the best woman for marriage. It was a place of investigating about the character of a woman for marriage. Men intentionally went to market to fetch woman for marriage, so through market interaction marriage relationship were built between these communities. To enquire for a woman's character, there was need to include the woman's chastity, her domestic prowess, and the reputation of the families of both parties. Market place served as forum for these enquires.⁴² Inter community relations between communities in Ekusigo has been based on an interdependent nature. It has remained dynamic over time following the constancy of change in human society.

Conclusion

The communities in Ekwusigo Local Government Area developed a very close relationship, which has a strong effect on the political and economic aspects of their lives. This showed the nature of relations among many Igbo communities east of the Niger within the time understudy. Among the major instruments of contact, interaction and relationship were exchange of political ideas and economic activities such as trading and farming as highlighted in this study.

The effective economic relations which included the short distance trade and the nature of land tenure system played a pivotal role toward promoting inter-community relations amongst these communities. These communities also recognized common authorities, which included the village assembly, revered title holders and other political institutions of authority. There were development in the different aspects of their lives which motivated the researcher to write that Ekwusigo Local Government Area is a semi-urban area. All these developments were to enhance mutual relationship and sustainable inter-community relations within Ekwusigo, the area of study. It is important to note that major changes which came with European incursion before the time range under study did not drastically affect the pattern of relationship among the communities. Though there were major disintegration in the area of religious belief brought about by the two major Christian denominations of Anglicans and Catholics, the bond of relations still remains largely cordial among the people in the communities.

There is need to understand that the people of Ekwusigo communities continued to imbibe by the principle of interdependence theory, which encouraged peaceful co-existence, where one community depended on another to obtain those resources it had not. This theory promoted interdependence amongst these communities or peaceful cooperation and co-existence i.e. different entities working together to ensure the survival of one another. The traditional and political leaders of Ekwusigo should consider the adoption of approaches that would eventuate into the establishment of stronger ties among the communities, especially in the developing political area. Researchers, especially the indigenous people of Ekwusigo communities are encouraged to carry out more studies on other aspects of the people so as to provide ready literature on the people and as well shoot the communities into the deserved limelight. The nature of relations in Ekwusigo has been largely peaceful because the rudiments of its interdependent form.

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