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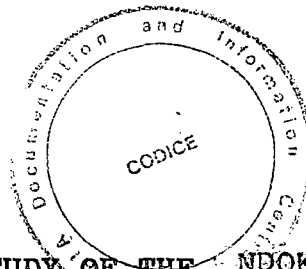
**Departement of : SOCIOLOGY &
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**Women and Power: a Case study of the
Ndokwa-Igbo Speaking People West of Niger
Rives, Nigeria**

AUGUST, 1992



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**WOMEN AND POWER: A CASE STUDY OF THE NDOKWA-IGBO
SPEAKING PEOPLE WEST OF NIGER-RIVER,
NIGERIA.**

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

**IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR M.Sc.
DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY**

BY

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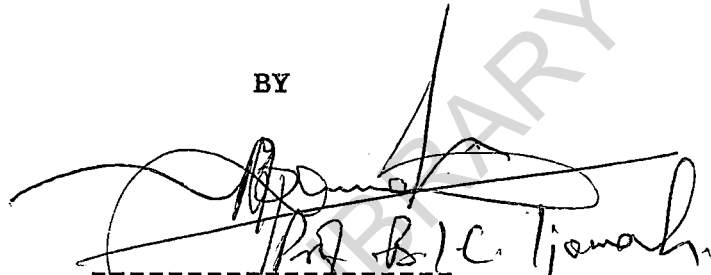
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AUGUST, 1992

APPROVAL

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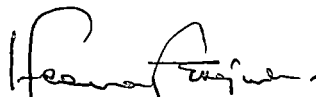
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DEDICATION

In evergreen memory of my late great grandmother, Eze-
Ekwu Osogbue, nwa (daughter) Eneluwe, wuye (wife) Okolocha and
her sister Anie, nwa (daughter) Eneluwe, wuye (wife) Osanife.

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Abstract

Cross-culturally, women are perceived as having low status and thus as being less powerful than the men. This assertion, which is predominantly held by Western liberal scholars, had stimulated fluorescence of global-scale discussion on gender inequality. In support of the assumed low status of women, many liberal scholars have advanced theoretical explanations such as - womanism/biblical theory, biological, status/role, socialisation, urbanisation, colonialism, private/public, dual-sex role, culturalism, etc.. Unfortunately, studies on African women have been influenced by these theories. Thus, this study of Ndokwa women aims at presenting empirical data that will challenge the erroneous and general assertion that traditional Igbo women have no power. It advances and explores the position that the traditional Igbo women, especially in Ndokwa, enjoyed very high status and power both as a group and as individuals.

In order to provide the basis for rigorous theory, the study adopts the materialistic method of analysis. Mainly, the Marxist theories of relations of production, social relations of production and social classes are used in the analysis. Our data was collected from our ethnographical field research through interview, participant and non-participant observation methods of data collection. With the support of this data, we argue as follows: (a) that there is no relationship between patriarchy/matriarchy and gender inequality expressed in women's status; (b) that equal access of both men and women to the means of production enhances gender equality; (c) that there is no relationship between the type of political institution and status/power of women; and (d) that the institutionalisation of capital altered the status and power basis of Igbo women. Further, in the traditional Igbo society, as exemplified by the Ndokwa, both men and women had usufruct rights as land was jointly owned by all members of the kindred. This translated into some good measure of equality at the political and ideological structures of the society as shown in the manifestations and bases of women's power economically, politically, legally, religiously and socially.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

For, while he has been so full of himself, buoyed to arrogance by his belief in some God-ordained strength and superiority, Man has completely lost sight of the power of his woman or the strength inherent in her supposed weakness ... Rather we have a situation best summed up by the proverb that man may be the head, but the woman is the neck, and it is the neck that turns the head (Adesina, 1990).

A woman is an important thing. A man is a worthless thing indeed, because a woman gives birth to the people of the country. What work can a man do? A woman bears a child, then takes a hoe, goes to the field and is working there. A man buys palm oil. Men only build houses. Important things are women. Men are little. The things of women are important. What are the things of men? Men are indeed worthless. Women are indeed God. Men are nothing. Have you not seen? (Kaberry, 1952:60).

... the communistic household and the gens know their responsibilities towards the old, the sick and those disabled in war. All are equal and free - the women included ... (Engels, 1978:114).

Cross-culturally women are perceived as having low status: this makes them less powerful than the men (Beauvoir, 1970; Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974; Steady, 1981). The assertion could be said to have stimulated the florescence of global scale discussions on gender inequality which half of this century has witnessed. From these discussions, women are often represented as the disadvantaged sex in terms of political, economic, legal, religious and social power. Women are depicted as

wielding no significant power in any society. This view is predominantly held by Western European scholars. Rosaldo (1974:40) noted that "such perceptions are not, of course, unique to foreign cultures, but seem to be quite general." Thinkers, from Durkheim to Parsons, have said that women are more 'affective' or 'expressive' and less 'intellectual' or 'instrumental' than men. The differences are seen as functional necessity for the family as a social group (Zelditch, 1955; 1964). Besides, it was during Queen Victoria's reign, characterized as it is by the separation of the home from the world of work, occasioned by the industrial revolution, that "the woman's place-is-in-the-home ideology" hardened into its most recent highly rigid form (Smith, 1970:58-76; Stenton, 1957;302-344). The ideal of Victorian womanhood which was attainable of course, mainly by the bourgeois class, but widely believed in throughout Western society, was a sensitive, morally superior being who was the hearthside guardian of Christian virtues and sentiments that are absent in the outside world. Her mind was not strong enough for the assumed masculine subjects: mathematics, science, business and politics (Van Allen, 1972:180). Invariably, the status of women in the Western societies is depicted as low, and women have no significant power. This position shaped the perceptions and

goals of feminists who have universally advanced women's liberation movement and organizations towards an acceptable gender equality. Many local and Pan organizations for the articulation of feminist views and goals, such as the United Nations' Special women's commission, were founded in the 1970s and 1980s (Wipper, 1988:417-419).

In support of the assumed low status of women, many scholars have advanced some theoretical explanations. Evans-Pritchard (1965) and Fox (1957) advanced biological explanations; Ellmann (1968) natural and cultural explanations. Little (1973) advanced socialization explanation, while Rosaldo (1974) popularized explanations based on the dichotomy between the public and private spheres. Unfortunately, studies of African women have been influenced by these perceptions which disseminate the view that African women have no power in society because of their low status. African Scholar's perceptions of the status and powers of women correspondingly reflected that of the Western Scholars. These views of African women contradict earlier views in which scholars depicted the women as powerful. Gradually, the latter views have coalesced into writings on women characterized as having inferior status (Hay, 1988). In many ways, the problems of Western Women have been superimposed on Africa. According to Mernissi (1975):

One of the main obstacles Western Women have been dealing with is their society's view of women as inferior beings. The fact that generations of University-educated women in both Europe and America failed to win access to decision-making is partly due to the deeply ingrained image of women as inferior.

The advancement of this view in analyzing African women has created numerous problems that have tied the Women in the African society into falsified, adulterated and adumbrated perception of their real status and the power inherent in their status.

Consequently, this has created a lot of problems for the Western Feminist and the African Feminist alike, since the true situation and position of African women in their societies could not be discerned. As noted by Steady (1981:28) "the problem with Western Feminist interpretations of women's positions in Africa is that they have often made projections of male/female antagonisms that derive from Western Middle-class experiences." Whereas in the traditional African society, the African woman had definite social, political and economic roles, which enabled her to achieve a measure of independence and autonomy (Steady, 1981:28). Sanday (1971) finds that the status of women is highest in those societies where their contribution to subsistence is relatively equivalent to that of men. Further, Sacks (1971) suggests that it is the control of

production rather than the sheer amount of foodstuffs produced by women that determines female status. Reinterpreting Engel's theory of the origin of the family and private property, she emphasized the historical dynamic by which women are transformed from equal members of society (or social adults) into dependent wives and wards. Her examination of data from four African societies, shows that as men become more involved in production for exchange rather than for immediate use, women's work becomes more domesticated and women's status correspondingly declined. From this, we can advance the view that the mode of production of any given society, most especially its relationship to production goes further to explain the status of women in a given society than other explanations. That is, one agrees with Engels that the ownership of the means of production as well as its relationship to production in any given society, determines the status of women (Engels, 1978). Therefore, the generalized perception of women as having low status advanced in Western scholarship is erroneous and misleading cross-culturally.

A critical analysis of African cultures against the background of the existing studies, assertions and generalizations by European scholars, such as those on the Igbo (Meek, 1930; 1937; Leith-Ross, ^{1939;} Green, 1964) shows that there

are significant variations in the status of women. The power of women varied from society to society and from culture to culture. The position of "traditional" Igbo women, especially the Ndokwa women of the Delta State of Nigeria is misrepresented by the misguided generalizations in many studies (Leith-Ross, 1939; Green, 1964). Consequently, this study of Ndokwa women aims at generating empirical data which will challenge the erroneous and generalized assertion that traditional Igbo women have no power. The study advances and explores the position that, traditional Igbo women especially in Ndokwa, enjoyed very high status and power.

Some scholars who agreed that Igbo women have power often linked that power to informal associations and meetings (Mikiri) based on agnatic group such as the Umuada/Umuokpu (daughters), or conjugal group Iyemedi (wives) (Leith-Ross, 1939; Green, 1964; Van Allen, 1972; March and Taqqu, 1986). An implication of this group-based source of power is that individual women cannot wield power. Viewing the status and role of women in their conjugal households, we see that, although men are the head of the households, women as wives greatly influence decisions in their individual households (Adesina, 1990). Our pilot survey shows that women are often accused of 'steering the rudder' of decision-making in their

homes. The majority of the respondents agreed that women dominate the decision-making in their homes. This could explain accusations often levelled against wives, whenever there is intrafamilial misunderstanding.

It is baseless to argue that women have no decision-making power in their households, families, villages, clans or nations. The reality contradicts this argument. For instance, in recent times, Nancy, the wife of Reagan, former President of the United States of America, was accused of being the architect of her husband's policies (Kelley, 1991). The wife of Chairman Mao of China assumed power when the husband became feeble. Also, in Romania, the last President was executed with the wife because of the belief that she was the main brain behind her husband's decisions and policies. In Nigeria, President Babangida's wife, Miriam, was often seen as influencing the husband's decisions and policies. When we measure power not only from the individual's ability to manipulate coercive agents of the state or society but also in terms of who influences decision or policies, we will not fail to recognize individuals behind the scene as the actual makers of the decisions or policies. Thus Steady (1981: 30-31) argues that:

Since men dominate formal political power, it is often assumed that domination in all spheres is

inevitable in traditional society. In my view, it might be necessary to distinguish between effective power and formal power when discussing colonial and post-colonial realities in Africa ... With this distinction between formal power and real power, one can say that in societies where most of the activities are geared towards survival and where women's roles are pivotal to this survival, it is women who have the real and relevant power...

Without pre-empting our research result, we argue here that Igbo Women are powerful both as a group and as individuals. The identification of the bases and manifestations of the power of women is one of the major tasks of this study. This is important in order to develop more appropriate theoretical explanations of the position of women in Igbo society and the resulting gender relations.

Statement of Problem:

Annette Weiner, in field work done in 1977 for her dissertation, journeyed right to the sacred heart of anthropology - Malinowski's 'Paradigm elsewhere', the Trobriand Islands. On her second day there, she stumbled upon a feature of the traditional culture that Malinowski had not described.

Two young girls took Weiner to a village plaza thronged with people apparently taking part in some sort of fair. The men sat along the edges of the plaza, watching or cooking, while in the center hundreds of women handled huge baskets containing Whisk-broom-shaped bundles called nununiga. The bundles ... the women tossed them.... Weiner knew only that this was a ceremony for a person who had died some months before. 'I saw a man' she said, 'a Trobriander who could speak English, so I ran over to him to ask what was going on. 'Ah' he said, 'that's women's business. You better talk to the women'.

Weiner, ... now believes that Malinowski did not follow this advice and consequently failed to appreciate the importance of women in the maintenance of collective life. When Weiner unravelled the meaning of the Trobriand Mortuary Ceremony, it turned out that 'Women's Wealth', the banana-leaf bundles, was a linchpin of Trobriand Social and Cultural life, Weiner believes that Malinowski, like other scholars, placed too much emphasis on utilitarian and individualistic concerns - for example, the seeking of political alliance and power - and consequently neglected systems of exchange that involve women and are related to a society's sense of inter-generational continuity.

'There is a great deal of truth in what Malinowski says', observed Weiner, "but he was trapped by his own sense of what women were about". Older ethnographies, including virtually all of the classics in the field, are now seen by many scholars as needing to be revised because they provide an oversimplified perspective - Culture seen from only the male point of view' (Sass, 1971:71).

Pioneer ethnographic studies on Igbo women, (Leith-Ross, 1939 and Green, 1947), part of the colonial Administration's reaction to the Women's War (Aba Riot) of 1929-30 (Lackner, 1973) were essentially a historical and functionalist in their theoretical orientation. Thus, they took after Malinowski's method of analysis, that is, the functionalist method^{of} which Malinowski was one of the Chief exponents. For instance, Tomlinson (1930) observed that:

The great thing is that their enquiries should not be conducted in the spirit of antiquarian research but should be directed to those problems, i.e. to the problems presented by native society as a living and changing organism, which are of

immediate practical importance to the Administrative Officer. What is meant is that they should be followers of the school of which such men as Professor Malinowski are the chief exponents (Lackner, 1973:136).

Coloured by Western assumptions about the status and roles of women and informed by the functionalist perspective, these early studies were unable to accurately mirror traditional Igbo women's roles and the subsequent status and power that are manifested religiously, politically, economically, legally and socially.

Such liberal and more recent scholars as Ottenberg (1970), stated that Afikpo women have no economic power. Van Allen (1972; 1978), on the other hand, disagreed with her, but viewed women in traditional Igbo society as having no political role equal to that of men. Earlier writers like Meek (1937) did not agree that women have legal power. On religious level Basden (1938) and Northcote Thomas (1913) failed to recognize that women have religious (ritual) powers.

Recent studies of Igbo people have continued to perceive women as powerless. Ejizu (1986) concluded that women have no 'ofo'. The implication of this, is that since religious, political, jural, etc. powers and authority in traditional Igbo society were often legitimized by 'ofo', women have no religious (ritual), political, jural, etc. powers. Ekejiuba

(1984; 1991), argues that women enjoy power but sees women's religious and political power as deriving from sources peripheral to the patrilineal-based society.

This study of women and power aims at exploring from ethnographic data, the nature and locus of women's power, both as individuals and in associations that are based on such power and which empower women in the social, economic, ritual and political domains. In achieving these tasks, the following questions will be addressed: Do women have power in Ndokwa and in Igbo land? Does women's power confer superior or inferior, equal, complementary, antagonistic or contradictory status to that of men? What are the implications of the nature and locus of power for women's identity in the social, political, etc. activities and roles in the entire society? How is power established and maintained? Where are the sources of women's power, and what are the associations and activities that are based on them which merely have been neglected by scholars? To what extent has Nigeria's peripheral capitalist mode of production affected women's power? To what extent is the situation in Ndokwa replicated in other Igbo areas? What are the implications of the under-estimation and non-recognition of the power of women by themselves and by society for their participation in economic and political processes, especially

of the democratization process in Nigeria? We will address these and other pertinent questions stimulated by this study. This will enable us to look at the bases and manifestations of power that structure gender relations.

Objective of Study:

The objectives of this study are:

- (a) To examine the degree to which women in Ndokwa wielded and exercised power in traditional system.
- (b) To analyze the nature, base and foci of this power as well as various contexts in which power is exercised.
- (c) To analyze the degree of institutionalization and acceptance of women's power by
 - (i) Women folk, and
 - (ii) Men folk in Ndokwa.
- (d) To assess the degree to which power has been eroded or is reinforced by the processes of modernization including colonization, urbanization and commodity production.
- (e) To determine the extent to which local foci of power prepare Ndokwa women for participation and leadership in modern political processes and institutions at both the local and state levels.
- (f) To assess the nature of continuity and change in women's

access to expression of and use of power.

- (g) To highlight the theoretical significance if any, of the study for the changing pattern of religious, political, economical, etc. behavior of women and power in Nigeria.

Significance And Rationale Of The Study:

The very language and style of the women's movement of the West is an admission of the women's belief that they are inferior to men (Steady, 1981:34).

Women's studies including that of Igbo women, is one of the areas that have attracted the attention of many scholars over the years. Although, there have been many studies on women and gender relations, there is still much conceptual and theoretical confusion which has led to misconception and misperception of women's status and power. One of the reasons for this could be that the area is dominated by what we could call 'academic amateurs'. For instance, every woman believes that since she is a female, she can discuss women adequately. That is, the possession of 'vulva' becomes a leverage to discuss women. Also, with the great attention women's study has been attracting, it is swarmed by 'intellectual opportunists' who feel they can take the advantage of this massive attention to attract funds for themselves. According to Wipper (1988:416):

And, as always, there are the intellectual opportunists who jump on the bandwagon to exploit a convenient situation, now that African women have become a popular research topic, well funded, and considered safe by African governments, some male scholar are suddenly acquiring an interest. Since they hold the senior academic positions, they are well placed to get the funding, and decide on the project.

She substantiated her observation by citing an academic who manipulated women study research grant to his financial advantage. According to her:

One prominent academic received a large grant from a western government and proceeded to survey the women in his home area, an area already well researched and where women were living in poverty. (They even said that they had been studied to death; what they needed were resources). He let it be known that he did not want any scholars in 'his' area, and instead of offering to collaborate with the woman researcher already there, he proceeded to put obstacles in her way. This money would have been far better spent on the women trying to eke out a living than used to enhance the power, repute, and probably financial well-being of an academic not known for his integrity (Wipper, 1988:416-417).

We should note that this does not suggest that there are no female intellectual opportunists, therefore, Wipper's emphasis or example of male intellectual opportunist is a matter of her experience.

Besides, many specialists in women's study are influenced by bourgeois world view to such an extent that their analyses often mirror bourgeois theoretical persuasions. Often, they

depict women's status as low and thus women^{as} powerless, but they pay little attention to exploring how the interplay of socio-economic forces on women in the socialist societies has facilitated the transformation of the status of women which is high, compared with the capitalist societies. Even when liberal Western scholars acknowledge the role of socio-economic forces, a metaphysical and idealistic outlook leads to a confusion of the causes and effects. Further, it results in an inability to understand the relations of determinant and dominant roles of the socio-economic forces on the political, economic, religious, legal and social institutions. Also, the specific manner of their intervention to produce the given situation in relation to the prevailing gender relations in the given society is neglected. Of course, the individual's place in the ownership of means of production (relations of production) is banished from their analysis; and in its place biological, socialization, and other explanations are stressed.

The need for rigorous theorizing to achieve the realistic perception of women's status and power cannot be overemphasized. The materialistic perspective adopted by this work aims at providing the basis for rigorous theory. By subjecting various theories, concepts and notions that inform the study of gender relations to a rigorous criticism against

the backdrop of Marxist science, we hope to contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the problem of power in gender studies.

In recent times, the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in collaboration with the Better Life Program for Rural Women, Imo State Wing, organized a seminar on Igbo Women.¹ Papers were presented by Igbo indigenous scholars. Unfortunately, nearly all the papers presented lacked field research.² Also, all the papers except one³ lack coherent theory and were centered on eurocentric and bourgeois perception of women, that is, women have low status; they are powerless and therefore need to be emancipated. Even where colonialism is mentioned as one of the variables for the change in the status of Igbo women, insufficient rigorous analysis is done on the impact of colonialism and its relations of production on women's status and power. The synchronic disposition of these scholars is absurd to the Igbo society's and likewise other societies gender relations over time. The continuous misperception and misconception of Igbo women's

¹ Igbo women in socio-economic change, April 3-5, 1990, at Multipurpose Hall, Owerri, Imo State.

² Except papers by Ekejiuba, F.I. and Kalu, U.O.

³ Ekejiuba, F.I.

status and power, need urgent academic attention in order to correct and salvage it for our future generations. This is very pertinent because the socialization of any society's future generations into false perceived culture could consequently give rise to false personality development, etc., moreso when the socializing agents of the culture perceive the culture erroneously.

Further, the work is timely, because of the recent national mobilization of women in such programmes⁴ as - Better Life for Rural Women Program. If the real situation of women's status and power is not brought to the limelight, the traditional (rural) women could abandon the realities of their status and power and join the bandwagon of the urban women with the orchestrated subordination of women. This could eventually destroy the rural women's base and manifestations of power. When properly harnessed, women's status and power would be an indispensable vehicle for real development with Man as the center-piece of development (Rodney, 1972; Nnoli, 1981; Bibangambah, 1985:21-59). As noted by March and Taqqu (1986:66):

⁴ March and Taqqu (1986:50-51) demonstrated the disastrous consequences of like programmes among the Tamang in Nepal.

Development efforts have largely failed women by ignoring their particular vulnerability and the unique organizational strengths that their position has generated, but development has also failed to reach many other classes of disenfranchised people as well.

Also, Wipper (1988:414) observes that:

Researchers need to understand the world from the women's perspective, and perhaps then, with an understanding of the women's world, they can influence policy-implementers and help bring about women-oriented development - development that has positive rather than negative consequences for women.

The continuous threading on this ignorant path and women's status and power and the resultant mobilization for development would lead to developmental failure. Thus, according to Fagley (1976:14):

The continued marginalization of women is a serious obstacle to development. In traditional rural and early modernizing African economies, women do seventy per cent of the work in food production, fifty per cent of the work in animal husbandry, and one hundred per cent of the work is food processing, in addition to their household and child-rearing responsibilities. To carry out all these tasks, they apparently put in sixteen-hour or longer work-days.

The structure of female organization and mobilization (Better Life Programme, etc.) ghettoises and peasantises women; it separates their interests from the major development path, where their interests surely lie. As the majority of subsistence women farmers doing far more work than most men do

(as studies on Igbo women and Urhobo women depict) women are key actors whose goals should be treated as an integral, even dominant part of development planning, and major concern to mainstream development personnel. In order to achieve this, the actual status and power of women have to be understood.

Definition of Concepts:

1. POWER⁵: Fundamentally, power is seen as the ability to coerce, that is, the ability of one or of a group to impose one's or their own desires, needs, fears and even fantasies upon another or other person(s). It is not necessary that power must be exercised through coercion. As March and Taqqu (1986:1-2) put it:

... In some instances, for example, it might be significant that power need not exercise sanctions of actual force in order to obtain its ends. Or, one might wish to elaborate upon the variations found in the sanctions used: physical, force, control of necessary economic productive resources, imposition of unendurable emotional or psychological strain, control of the necessities of human life, and so forth. In other instances, it might be important to device measures of relative powerfulness in terms of the numbers of individuals under the sway of a particular power, or in terms

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We are here more concerned with social power than political power. For details on political power see Poulantzas (1987; Nnoli, 1985).

of the amount of the force exerted in any direction.

This *requires* us to look at the social, political, economic, religious, ideological and psychological dimensions and phenomena of power in considering who is powerful. In the strict sense, we designate power as the ability of individual(s) to accomplish one's or their will regardless of the means employed, up to and including coercion. On the other hand, "Authority" is legitimized power, that is, legitimate authority is exercised with public sanction.

We should note the informal aspect of the powerful. That is, the individual(s) who is/are behind the scene (not physically occupying position of power) but influence(s) the physical occupant of power who is exercising the wish of the individual(s). The physical occupant therefore, does not express his/her wish, except the wish of those behind the scene.

2. TRADITION: By tradition, we mean the persistent culture of a given society which is a product of the previous mode of production over the prevailing (present) mode of production. For instance, the tradition of the Igbos is the persistent culture of the precapitalist mode of production over the peripheral capitalist mode of production (from the colonial till present).

"Culture is the sum total of the way of life of people that determine their politics, economic interests, knowledge, belief, attitudes and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Thus, culture is the sum total of the end goal of the production relations which men enter into in order to produce religion, technology, politics, economic and world view" (Ekejiuba, 1986). In other words, culture is "the totality of material and spiritual values created by human society and characterizing a definite level of its development" (Borisov and Libman, 1985:427-428). The material culture (machines, engineering structure, dwelling, etc.) is distinguished from spiritual (immaterial) culture (human thought, cognition, works of art, etc.) (Borisov and Libman, 1985:427-428). The above definition of tradition notwithstanding, we should note that the word tradition is derived from Latin Language: "trado - tradere - traditum." "Trado" means I hand over to. Thus, tradition refers to those persistent cultural traits which are handed down from generation to generation. Other concepts will be defined in our Theoretical Orientation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study seeks to increase our understanding of the changing nature and foci of power of women in Igbo society. We should note that anthropological research on the Ndokwa - our area of study, has been at a rudimentary stage. With the probable exception of Nzimro (1972), virtually no anthropological work on the Ndokwa people has been done (Onwuejeogwu, 1987). This is even moreso with regard to women studies. This led to a reliance on literature dealing generally with the Igbo.

Furthermore, in data collection, we had to rely almost exclusively on primary sources. One consequence of this is the possible distortion that could arise from attitudes of the respondents. However, as we mentioned in our discussion on validity and reliability, we tried as much as possible to check these distortions.

From our pilot survey and literature reviewed, we established that the nonperception of women's power is largely at the academic than the social level, since women recognize, establish, maintain and use their power. On the other hand, men often informally perceive, recognize and maintain the power of

women. A better theoretical conceptualization and understanding of women's power is thus crucial. This study seeks to make this contribution. The goal here is to transcend the existing literature on gender relations and provide a comprehensive and scientific basis for explaining and analyzing women's power.

The study examines the contributions of the two prevailing methods of analysis, the non-Marxist and the Marxist in order to develop its theoretical perspective. Of the two perspectives, the non-Marxist has been more in the interpretation of gender relations among the Igbo, African and non-African societies. It has evolved over the years and therefore, consists of several variants which compete and oscillate with varying strengths for analytical dominance. For instance, the structural/functionalist Paradigm has many variant theories - creation (womānism), biological, socialization, role/status, colonialism, urbanization, private/public domains (spheres), etc., Culturalism and structuralism. The explanation and analysis of Igbo and most non-Igbo women have been made in these traditions. These methods of analysis were first popularized by the colonial anthropologists as part of the efforts of the colonialists to subjugate the colonized Igbos, mostly after the colonial

contradictions led to the Aba riot or women's war in 1929 (Lackner, 1973; Onwuejeogwu, 1991).

The earliest of these theories is the "creation theory" or "Womanism Theory". This theory developed from the theological teaching of the Holy Bible or Koran. The main argument is that, women/wives should be humble and obedient to men/husbands, for the man is the head and woman is created for man, therefore she is subordinate to man. Womanism therefore, to a great extent is opposed to feminism, most especially, the Western brand of feminism (Steady, 1981:28-36). The patriarchy that governs the Christian and Islamic world views was born, bred and sustained by the biblical creation teachings (Gen. 2:20-25), stressed by St. Paul's teachings (1 Cor.11:2-25), and the Koranic teachings echoed by the Suna. Predominantly, women do not hold supreme ritual position over men in the Christian and Islamic religions, for instance, the officiating position of the Priest during worship in the church or mosque. The Biblical creation (Gen. 2:20-25), teaches thus:

... but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh, and the rib which the lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then man ~~the~~ said "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man" (Knowles, 1977:2-3).

In stressing the above, St. Paul's (1 Cor. 11:2-16) stated:

...but I want you to understand that the head of a woman is her husband, and that of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head - it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair: but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man). That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels... if any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the church of God. (Knowles, 1977:962)

Although, Genesis (1:26-29) says that:

...God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"... (Knowles, 1977:2).

the Christian religion continues to stress Genesis (2:20-25) and St. Paul's (1 Cor. 11:2-16) teachings to legitimize women's subordination.

From Morgan (1877), Bachofen (1967) and Engels (1978), we can conclude that the Biblical teachings are part of the

creation myths and an attempt by men to secure and perpetuate their authority and dominance over women. Since no christian questions any order that is regarded given by God, it is impossible for women to challenge the creation theory, for religion is the opium of the masses (Marx, 1968).

Thus, Engels observes that:

Before the beginning of the 1860s, one cannot speak of a history of the family. In this field, the science of history was still completely under the influence of the five Books of Moses. The Patriarchal form of the family, which was there described in greater detail than anywhere else, was not only assumed without question to be the oldest form, but it was also identified - minus its polygamy - with the bourgeois family of today, as if the family had really experienced no historical development at all...(1970:7).

Further, according to him Bachofen observes that:

The development from "hetaerism" to Monogamy and from mother right to father right is accomplished, as was particularly the case among the Greeks, as the consequence of an advance in religious conceptions, of the insertion of new divinities, representative of the new outlook, among the traditional group of gods, representation of the old outlook, so that the latter are more and more pressed into the background by the former. Thus, according to Bachofen, it is not the development of people's actual conditions of life, but the religious reflection of these conditions inside the heads of these same people, which has brought about the historical changes in the relative social position of man and woman. (Engels, 1978:9).

Similarly, the place of the "Patrilineal ofo - a dominant ritual symbol (Ejizu,1986) in ancestor cult in the Igbo

society, and the subsequent introduction of christianity, depicts this development. In the Igbo society, the patrilineal ofọ is held by men and during ancestor worship men officiate. This is the same as the Western Christian denominations that religiously colonized the Igbo where only men officiate. On the other hand, the matrilineal ofọ is held by women and during ancestress worship, they officiate. The patrilineal ofọ became dominant and pervasive over the matrilineal ofọ in Igbo culture because land - their main means (object) of production is most often inherited through the patrilineage. Although the patrilineal ofọ has dominance over the matrilineal ofọ, a critical analysis of their symbolism and use demonstrates to a large extent, the historical development of the authority of both men and women. Bachofen (1967), Morgan (1877) and Engels (1978) stressed the need for a historical approach to the study of the development of these social artifacts. Ejiuzi's (1986) failure to recognize the ofọ held by women and which women use to officiate during the symbolized ancestress worship could be linked to the interplay of two world views - that of Igbo and that of christianity since he is a Roman Catholic Priest. For the same reason, Ekwunife (1990) excluded the women's rituals and officiating role of women in his work.

Also, Okonjo (1977), Afigbo (1991) and Umeagudosu (1990) writing from the theologian perspective failed to realize women's leadership role in development, as they neglected the ritual role of women in the traditional Igbo society for the place of women in the christian religion. Thus, the cause and effect in consonance with the realistic empiricism (Walterstein, 1988) which the materialist method of Marxism - historical materialism and dialectical materialism provide was subordinated to theology. The power of women has been left at the idealistic and metaphysical level with the empirical tools for realizing women's power disregarded and pushed aside as non-religious. Faith and belief governed the religious, since everything attributed to the Almighty God with whom everything is possible. Even though archaeological and anthropological findings (Rosaldo, 1974:3-4; Engels, 1976), challenged the scriptural creation story, what is sacred is still undisputed by the Christian faith and believers, most especially women. Therefore, much has to be done to emancipate christian women from male domination and subordination.

In the same vein, the Moslems use the Koran and Suna teachings to justify subordination of women, most especially the veiling and purdah system (Boyd and Last, 1985). The purdah system of secluding "Married Moslem Women" was introduced in

the Sudan by Mansa Musa of the Songhai empire on his return from his visit to the Arab World during his rule in the fifteenth century (Onwuejeogwu, 1970:23-24). The custom spread all over the Sudan with the Hausa inclusive, mostly with its re-enforcement in Hausaland by Sheikh Uthman Fodio (Boyd and Last, 1985). Presently, the purdah has an important influence on the status of women among the Hausa and other moslem societies in Nigeria. As pointed by Onwuejeogwu (1978:24), the purdah system "is not a religious observation imposed by Islam, even though conservative Islam does regard it as a religious duty. The purdah system in West Africa is a result of innovation and is not institutionalized. The exclusion of women from social activities means exclusion from economic and political ambition." But according to Barkow (1972:327-328) "... In effect, the adoption of wife - seclusion has increased the extent of the local cash economy ... women play an obvious economic role, one recognized by the men."

Unlike Christian women in Africa who have more often been the subject of study, partly no doubt because their Christian practices are more public (Jules-Rosethe, 1979), Moslem women have received less attention. In the recent literature where muslim women are considered as muslims as distinct from the literature on women as wives/mothers, farm workers, slaves,

etc. according to Boyd and Last (1985:284), "the emphasis has been almost exclusively on their role as preservers of pre-Islamic religion or at best as marginal or "Second-rate" muslims - a view apparently held also by many muslim men." In Nigeria for instance, Bovin(1983:89) stresses the way Manga women today sustain traditional values against Islam practiced by their menfolks. Similarly, Pittin(1979), in analyzing the culture of independent women in Katsina, focuses on traditional religion as women's last source of political power. Therefore, women's profession of Islam, by contrast is merely overt compliance to conceal a covert intellectual independence, or simply as viewed by Strobel (1983:127; 1984:93-94) and Schildkrout (1983:107) a part of an ideology by which social stratification and the subordination of women are maintained. These views seem to disagree with Smith's (1959) observation that rather than emphasizing that islamization has lowered the status of the village women, it would perhaps, be more accurate to say that it has increased the separation of the sexes, so that their status systems are made more independent than previously.

The development of biological science, especially in the area of human anatomy and physiology provided new and more "scientific" means of legitimizing this hitherto religious

argument about the inherent "inferiority" of women. The biological theory about the social power of women has it that women's biological and indeed physiological dispositions and functions made their status second to men and therefore women are powerless vis-a-vis men.

Against this background, Evans-Pritchard (1965) suggested that deep biological and psychological factors, as well as sociological factors, explain why women seldom occupy leadership roles. Also, Fox (1967), mooted that the sheer physiological facts of existence make female role secondary to that of the male in decision-making processes at any level higher than the domestic. Assuming that the views of these anthropologists are correct, it suggests that only after menopause, when women are freed from menstruation and thus child bearing, that they might acquire leadership roles. On the contrary, several researches on African societies have shown the ineptness of this category of anthropologists views. For example, Meek's (1930) Eze of Ogrute; Ahebi Ugbabe in Igboland; Smith's (1964) Queen Amina of Zaria; Ekejiuba's (1967) Omu Okwei in Igboland; Hoggart's (1972) Mende and Sherbro women; Miller's (1975) Nzingo of Matamba; Awe's (1977) Iyalode in Yorubaland; Aidoo's (1981) Asante Queen Mothers and Afonja's (1983) Traditional Yoruba women, to mention a few, have

demonstrated in these societies that women held high political, legal, religious, economic, etc. positions, their biological and physiological constitutions notwithstanding. That is, attainment of menopause is not a pre-requisite for these positions.

Further, among contemporary Igbo, a menstruating or pregnant or lactating woman does not suffer isolation or ostracism nor biological disadvantage. Even in some situations where a husband or man forbids close contact or sexual contact with a menstruating woman, she is not isolated or ostracized. She is given usual treatment which suggests that she has no disability as a result of her menstruation, that is, her biological and physiological disposition, for a woman who does not menstruate is anomalous and abnormal. As Steady (1981:31-32) has pointed out: "the connection between biology and female inferiority facilitates an exploitation of the female body and is a sexist mode of thinking which Western men have unfortunately got their women to accept." Despite the fact that ^{defilement} pollution rules surround women's menstruation in some African societies, this does not imply female inferiority (Aidoo, 1981). After all, men also can be seen as polluting ^{or defiling} (Sibisi, 1977).

Symbolically, in Igbo and many African societies, the body has always been viewed as an asset, as a sacred vessel carrying life and a source of strength and pride. The woman has an intrinsic value in the ideology of Igbo and many African societies and represents the ultimate value in life, namely: the continuity of the group (Steady, 1981). Therefore, the place of women and the importance of the women's mother is crucial and fundamental to the continuity and existence of any society. This could be regarded as a critical fact in understanding woman's status (Chodorow, 1972; Ekejiuba, 1991) and power. Further, Hoffer (1972:163), notes that:

In West Africa, a pregnant or lactating woman does not suffer biological disadvantage. A woman with a plumb baby on her back is seen as an attractive sight. Since a husband is prohibited by Bundu Law from having sexual intercourse with his lactating wife and turns his attention to his other wives, a nursing mother is perhaps freer to move about the country visiting, trading or engaging politics than at any other time.

Correspondingly, the Igbo woman, most specifically the Indokwa woman, after child delivery, is required to stay at home for minimum of three months or four lunar months. This period is called Omugwo. During the Omugwo, she abstains from domestic chores and outside chores like farming, trading, etc. Her outings are mainly for visits. The husband during this period with the help of his mater or matrix or mother-in-law or other

putative or consanguinal relatives, do all family (household) chores. The woman is given special attention and care to show positive significant changes in her, different from when she has not delivered the baby. A man who fails to do this loses respect before his age mates, for he can not shoulder his marital responsibilities. Evans-Pritchard, Fox and other biological theorists, could be said to be eurocentric. They seem to be generalizing from the viewpoint of Anglo-American mothers who are prohibited from breast feeding their infant in public. Encumbered with bottles and pram, they are indeed "tied down" when they have infants to care for (Hoffer,1972). Nevertheless, in Igbo large extended households or compounds (Ezi or Obulu) there is always a kinswoman, client or older ward with whom weaned children can be left, unlike the Western woman, who, alone in a family, continues to be "tied down" by her toddler after she is weaned since there are no other women she can easily turn to for help with child care (Hoffer,1972).

In furtherance of the biological theorist claim, Tiger (1970) postulates that men as opposed to women, have a biological propensity for forming social groups. But Rosaldo (1974:23) points out that whatever universals that can be found in the social organizations and position of men and women can be traced to social rather than biological considerations. The

universal association of women with young children and its various social, cultural and psychological implications are seen as likely but not necessary (or desirable) outcomes, and they are more readily derived from organizational factors than from biology.

With the inadequacy of the biological theory to explain, analyze, concretise and address the issue of women's low status, as expressed by the perpetual gender inequality, there emerged another non-Marxist theoretical perspective of role and status for understanding gender relations in order to deal with the problem of low status and powerlessness. Often, the socialization theory is associated or merged with the role and status since socialization serves as the role and status brooder. The role and status are frequently used simultaneously in two conceptual meanings. First, status of women is used in Liton's (1936:113-311) sense, to mean the collection of rights and duties that attach to particular positions. According to the usage, status, which refers to a particular position itself, contrasts with roles which refers to the behavior appropriate to a given status.

Second, the concept refers to the placement of females relative to males in a dual-level hierarchy. In this sense, according to Sudarkasa (1987:26) the term status connotes

stratification and invites comparison with other systems of stratification which seemed inappropriate for describing the relationships between females and males in most of the African societies she studied. Similarly, Whyte (1978:170) concludes that there is a general absence of covariation among the different indicators of status in this hierarchical usage. He notes that one cannot ensure that "the favorable position for women in any particular area of social life will be related to favorable positions in other areas." Correspondingly, there is no best indicator of key variable that will yield an overall assessment of the status of women relative to men (Whyte, 1978:170). Further, Whyte observed that "this lack of association between different measures of the role and status of women relative to men still constitutes something of a puzzle... In the study of stratification, we ordinarily expect indicators of status at the individual level to be positively, although not perfectly, associated with one another" (1978:70). Inferring from Beauvoir's (1970) distinction between the position of women and that of oppressed national or racial groups, Whyte asserts that "powerful factors" in all pre-industrial societies lead to the perception by females and males that women's statuses differ from those of men but in a manner that does not imply the hierarchical relationship

characteristic of those linking occupational and ethnic groups. Thus, he states further that "the lack of association between different aspects of the role and status of women relative to men is due largely to the fact that women as a group (in pre-industrial societies) are fundamentally different from status groups and classes" (Whyte, 1978:176-180). Viewing women as a social category (Poulantzas, 1987) rather than as status groups or classes, gives better understanding of their (women's) roles, status and power (Nzei and Ibeanu, 1991).

Further, in contrast to Whyte's views, Sudarkasa (1987:27) said that Whyte's observation seems to make sense of the data from most African societies but even though his (Whyte) cross-cultural study dispels a number of treasured notions about "the status of women", it points to a critical research problem that should be pursued, namely: the problem of determining the conditions under which women's relationships take on the characteristic of a hierarchical relationship. Conceptually, she points that:

This is a different problem from that which seeks to ascertain when an egalitarian relationship between the sexes gives way to a subordinate - super ordinate relationship. Thus, as the very concept of an egalitarian relationship between women and men implies that the female and male are unitary categories that are measured or sizes-up one against the other in the societies described (Sudarkasa, 1987:27).

She attempts to show that there are societies for which such conceptualization does not accurately reflect the social and ideological reality of the peoples concerned, which the data she gathered from some African societies suggest. Besides, she attempted to demonstrate that female and male are not so much statuses in Linton's (1936) meaning, as they are clusters of statuses for which gender is only one of the defining characteristics. Further, according to her:

Women and men might be hierarchically related to each other in one or more of their reciprocal statuses, but not in others. Because contradiction, as much as congruence, characterized the status-clusters termed female and male, many African societies did not or could not consistently stratify the categories one against the other, but rather, codified the ambiguities (Sudarkasa, 1987:27).

This view is problematic in discerning the real locus and bases of gender relations inherent in these societies, much so in conflict that result from such relations, that is, both male and female sexes relationships. Sudarkasa in trying to address this issue asserts that in African societies she studied, there is the dual-sex role which made women powerful compared with men. According to her:

Africa is also noted for having paralleled chieftaincies, one line made up of males, the other of females. One way of interpreting these facts has been to dismiss the female chieftaincies as simply women controlling women (and after all, if women are subordinate anyway, of what significance is it

that they have chieftaincies or sodalities among themselves).

Similarly, Okonjo (1978) demonstrates that Igbo women with reference to Ogwashi-Uku and Obomkpa have high status and invariably powerful, which the dual-sex roles of the Omu and Obi institutions depict. However, Ejiofor (1982) and Emenanjo (1987) analyses have presented Okonjo to be inconsistent and unrepresentative of the real gender relationships. Therefore, it appears deceptive for understanding the Igbo women's roles and status, and the power and authority inherent in them, most especially the Omu institution. The societies seemed to be dichotomised by her analysis and conflict resolution, for example, involving both sexes which Ejiofor and Emenanjo attributed to the Obi-in-council, was left hanging and in abstract. In as much as we may agree with Sudarkasa, Okonjo and other dual-sex role theorists, that there exist egalitarian gender relations in the African societies studied unlike the Western societies, in depth empirical study would expose that the egalitarianism in the gender relations should be due more to the mode of production existing in the African societies rather than mere social indices.

The socialization theoretical perspective suggests that women have low status because the society socialized them into such roles which are subordinate to men's roles. Rosaldo (1974)

focusing on the family as the primary agent of socialization, observes that the young girl growing up in a family, probably has more experience of others as individuals than as occupants of formal institutionalized roles, so she learns how to pursue her own interest, by appeals to other people, by being nurturant, responsive and kind. She develops a feminine psychology. The boys on the other hand, are apt to know manhood as an abstract set of rights and duties to learn that status brings formal authority, and to act in terms of formal roles."For males, it is more of being the leader, the head of the family, providing for the females and the young ones. While for females, it is that of staying at home and looking after the home and children" (Onyema, 1988:22). "Since the future roles of a girl was that of wife and mother, the best training for her was at home under the tutelage of her mother and women relatives" (Mbilinyi, 1972:374).

Also, Greenstreet (1972:351) comments that in the traditional Ghana society which was based on subsistence agriculture and later, increasingly in certain areas on cash crops, "the role of a wife was one in which she was expected to care for the home and children and to attend to the wishes of her husband. Additionally, she gave regular assistance with farm work. Young girls were brought up to follow in the

footsteps of their mothers. Customs and mores fortified this role." Although this is found in the traditional Igbo society, it is noteworthy that wife attends to the wishes of her husband often through understanding rather than through superordinate (husband) and subordinate (wife) relations (Ekejiuba, 1990;1991; Amadiume, 1987), just like most African societies (Sudarkasa, 1987). But today, beginning from when the Igbos were colonized, understanding gave way to the superordinate/subordinate - husband /wife gender relations reminiscent of the Western households, which the colonial and neo-colonial economy extruded. Critically, in most societies world wide, husbands could not in reality assume that their wishes govern their individual households more than that of their wives. Even in the traditional societies where men undertook to defend the home and clan from external attack and to ward off enslavement when necessary, women have taken up arms and fought alongside their menfolks for survival, for instance, the Dahomey women soldier, Queen Amina of Hausa Zauzau, Omu Okwei of Igbo Ossamari and Yoa Asentewa, the Ashanti Queen-mother(she led the Ashanti people against the British in the 1900-1901 Anglo-Ashanti). Further, in Ghana, just like in other African societies, women were not only queen-mothers, but served also as chiefs in the Akan

matrilineal society. They wielded and continue at the present time to wield considerable influences (Greenstreet,1972:392).

Nonetheless, Mere (1975:39) argues that the igbo culture not only assigns a low status to women in relation to men, but also so carefully conditions them that they play their roles with minimum manifest conflict. In general, Igbo women are not taken very seriously by men and they have been conditioned to feel similarly about themselves. Continuing, she commented that women "are thought to be childish, fickle, lacking in restraint, incapable of keeping secrets, and therefore excluded from many serious extended family deliberations" (Mere, 1975:39). The ambiguity of her argument become vivid when she later observed that:

In the domestic sphere the woman reigns supreme. Early socialization is primarily in her hands and through this process she establishes a strong link with her sons who later wield power in the kin network. She also exercises remarkable social influence. In village area, she earns some or all of the family income and her economic role in the family is indispensable. The husband and wife complement each other in their roles. They are equally dependent on each other (Mere,1975:42).

Ekejiuba (1991) pointed out that in an autonomous, self-reliant Igbo society, women played a critically central role in ensuring the survival of Igbo society in the absence of societal reliance on slaves or such high powered technology for production/accumulation as the plough, which is seen in

agricultural production, processing and exchange, crafts, music, politics, the arts and traditional religion. These central roles they played made them attain positions of power and authority. Social valuation appears to have been based more on one's contributions to the survival and continuity of the group than such abstract concept as sex or gender, per se, which mark the Western societies. Indeed, socialization and social construction of gender, was flexible enough to ensure the survival of the group (Amadiume, 1987). In conclusion therefore, the Igbo women are socialized to explore, handle and actualize these roles which give them power and authority rather than subordination which characterized the capitalistic economy (Engels, 1985).

With the further inadequacy of the inherent analytical tools of the role/status and socialization theoretical perspectives and the advent of colonialism and neo-colonialism, emanates the most significant and pervasive claims to the liberal understanding of women's status and power, which is associated with the "Modernization" school. The approach could be divided into three subvariants viz: colonialism, urbanization and private and public domains (sphere).

The colonial authors (Northcote-Thomas, 1913; Basden, 1921; 1928; Talbort, 1915; 1924; 1926; 1932; Meek, 1937; 1946;

1948; Lugard, 1939; Leith-Ross, 1939; Harris, 1940; Green, 1941; 1964; Jones 1949; Ottenberg, 1959; Bretton, 1966; Smock, 1971; Sanday, 1971 and others) viewed the advent of European colonialism in Africa as a positive event for African women. They interpret the advent of colonialism as giving rise to the upliftment of the status of African women. Specifically, these colonial authors asserted that Christianity, Western education and economy liberated and lifted the African women (of which Igbo women are not exception) from the toil of agricultural labour, the burden of polygyny, forced marriages and patriarchy, the pain of clitoridectomy, etc., to a richer and more fulfilling life, thereby positively changing and uplifting the status of African women. The colonial authors attempt to legitimize colonialism sequel to the bankruptcy of the indirect rule, coupled with their "Victorian view of women" (Van Allen, 1978; Lackner, 1973) and steered by their structural/functionalist approach and unprofessional anthropology, as recommended by colonial secretary (Lackner, 1973:142-143), shut their eyes and analysis on the actual place, prerogatives, role, status and power of women in Igbo society. Thus, they presented an exaggerated, generalized and contradictory picture of women in Igbo society, therefore

stressing the view that colonialism positively changed and uplifted the status of women in African societies.

Although Basden (1921:1938), Lugard (1939), Leith-Ross (1939) and Green (1964) found Igbo women ambitious, courageous, self-reliant, hardworking, independent and militant; generally, their views were pigeon-holed into the colonial authors view as their studies were stimulated and aided by colonialism (Lackner, 1973). These works are depleted with the universal subordination of women assumption (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974), thus depicting Igbo women along with other women as subservient, marginal, with low status, little or no power, exploited, oppressed and discriminated against by men which colonialism ameliorated.

Many authors have asserted and demonstrated that colonialism resulted in the deterioration of the political, economic, religious, legal and social status and power of women in African societies relative to that of men (Christian, 1959; Bobkin, 1968; Boserup, 1970; Suret-Canale, 1971; Rodney, 1972; Leacock, 1972; Wipper, 1972; Van Allen, 1972;1978; Hafkin and Bay, 1978; Robertson, 1978; Mullings, 1978; Okonjo, 1978; Steady, 1981; Aidoo, 1981; March and Taggu, 1986; Sudarkasa, 1987; Ekejiuba, 1991). The disrupting effects of these colonial influences led to series of riots by women in many African

societies. For instance, the Aba riot or women's war of 1929-1930 in Igboland. Unfortunately many Igbo scholars have not adequately addressed these unrealistic issue and views about Igbo women raised by the colonial authors. One way or the other, they (Igbo scholars) arrived at the same assumption with the colonial authors since they are enmeshed by the same analytical tools of their imperial teachers (Nzimiro, 1986; Ake, 1982). Although, some of these Igbo scholars undertook field researches, the field researches were unintensive and unrepresentative. Thus, they were unable to expose the realities of the gender relations among the Igbos.

The second subvariant and most dominant theme of analysis-urbanization is based on the impact of increased urbanization, commercialization and professionalization on women. It is claimed that modernization, defined in terms of increase in urbanization, schooling, commerce, communication and transportation facilities have uplifted the status and power of women (Marris, 1961; Yang-Chiing-K'um, 1965; Lloyd, 1976; Meyer, 1971; Little, 1973; 1975; Foner, 1975; Oppong, 1975; Baker and Bird, 1975; Gugler and Flanagan, 1979; Obbo, 1982). Thus, Meyer (1971:234) comments on the Xhose women that:

Even the most fortunate rural woman has to go through a long period of subjection to men and to older women; the least fortunate, such as widows and unmarried mothers, may suffer deprived status

permanently. Many Xhose women seem to use East London as a semi-permanent escape. Most agree that it is a place "to be free", "to be independent", "to get away from the rule of people at home". In different terminology, women have reasons to like this new environment where status depends less on ascription and more achievement.

In contrast, Engels (1978), Paulme (1963), Pons (1969), Le Vine (1970), Wipper (1972), Boserup (1970), Steady (1981), Gugler (1981), Jules-Rosette (1981), have demonstrated the deterioration of women's status by urbanization, as a result of the disintegration of the traditional family, subjugation and subservience of women in urban areas due to unemployment and full-time housewifery with their resultant hawking, petty trading, adultery and prostitution. These are responses to scarcity in the urban economy. As Pons (1969:218) pointed for the Kisangani:

...Urban conditions had in various ways largely released women from some of the immediate constraints of traditional life, but their economic, occupational, and educational advancement still lagged far behind their personal emancipation. Most women continued to be directly dependent on their menfolk despite their new found urban freedom and urban feminine roles inevitably came to be defined and evaluated as more specifically sexual and domestic than the tribal roles to which most women had been in youth.

Furthermore, unequal access to economic opportunities in the urban setting imposes heavy costs on societies that seem so contented with the status quo. Families are separated, and a

large segment of the population is dependent on urban services but constrained from realizing its potential contribution to the urban economy (Gugler, 1981:178). Therefore, it is hardly surprising to note that there should be a wide-spread desire among African women to exchange a village life of hard toil for an urban life of leisure and excessive taste for material luxuries (Boserup, 1970:191; Wipper, 1972:339). The idleness and leisure of women in town appear misplaced when, in fact, many urban women are without gainful occupation, not out of choice, but because opportunities are woefully limited (Gugler, 1981:173). Besides, Igbo men protest against urban female sexual freedom, materialism and adultery, vices which avidly consuming Onitsha market literature see as the effect of urbanization (Le Vine, 1970:178-9). Even the contemporary cry for women's liberation, shows also that urbanization has not uplifted the status of women. Most urban Igbo women because of their perpetual subjugation and subservience created by the urban economy, false consciously misconceived their status and thus lost the trends of the dignity of Igbo women. One of the resultant effects of this, is that they seek for their emancipation and liberation, which thereby, alienated them from the two societies - traditional and urban.

Some students/scholars of urbanization school use the studies of Lapidue (1978), etc. for example, to support their argument that urbanization uplifted women's status but in the process, they failed to prove why in the socialist states the achievement of high status of women is far ahead that of Capitalist states. This is because they failed to understand that the processes and effects of urbanization in these societies are quite different, since their modes and relations of production are vividly different. Therefore, the individual's place in the ownership of the means of production gives more explanation to why women's lots are improved thereby having higher status in socialist states than in capitalist states.

With the apparent acknowledgement of the bankruptcy of the urbanization theoretical perspective, emerged the third subvariant, theoretical perspective - the public and private domains (spheres). This theoretical perspective is based on the assumption of the distinction between the public and domestic realms. That is, it assumes a clear dichotomy between the public domain and domestic gender roles, with the male restricted to the public and female restricted to the domestic domain. To this arrangement is attributed women's low status and power vis-a-vis the men. So motherhood and domestic roles

are blamed for the universal subordination of women, and sexual equality, it is argued, would be achieved when women go into the public domain and men private or domestic domain. (Rosaldo and Lomphere, 1974).⁶ Rosaldo (1974:41) concluded thus:

I have tried to relate universal asymmetries in the actual activities and cultural evaluations of men and women to a universal, structural opposition between domestic and public spheres. I have also suggested that women seem to be oppressed or lacking in value status to the extent that they are confined to domestic activities, cut off from other women and from the social world of men. Women gain power and sense of value when they are able to transcend domestic limits, either by entering the men's world or by creating a society unto themselves. Finally, I suggested that the most egalitarian societies are not those in which male and female are opposed or are even competitors, but those in which men value and participate in the domestic life of the home. Correspondingly, they are societies in which women can readily participate in important public events.

Opposed to this, Steady (1981); Sudarkasa (1981); Hafkin and Bay (1978:5); Netting (1969); Tiffany (1979); Brown (1975); Strathern (1972); Weiner (1976); March and Taqqu (1986); Ekejiuba (1991); have shown the inadequacies of the theory for the societies they studied. They suggest that there is no ethnographic evidence supporting an inference of a sharp separation between the private and public domains. For example,

⁶ Finley (1968) shared the same views on the Roman women in his "The Silent of Women of Rome".

Sudarkasa (1981) argued that in the precapitalist societies in West Africa this dichotomy did not correspond to masculine and feminine spheres, for there was considerable overlap between the spheres indicating some degree of cooperation. Women's control over domestic production in Africa and other societies, often gives them considerable influence, even power, sometimes authority, over the events. Similarly, men's control over formal public politics can alter the shaping of public political structure and constrain the productivity of the domestic domain considerably (March and Taqqu, 1986:17). The dichotomy between the private and public spheres and the corresponding association with feminine and masculine domains is, therefore, a luxury more characteristics of European bourgeois family structures (Steady, 1981:23). For African women, the issue is most increasing participation of the labour force, for they are already over-burdened with participation. Unlike the typical Western bourgeois class housewives, African women have to work outside the home (farming, trading or otherwise) for the survival of themselves and their families. While the Western bourgeois women complain about the oppression of affluence, the majority of African and developing countries women struggle against the oppression of poverty (Steady, 1981:35).

In the Western capitalist countries, there is little doubt that the domestication of women's activities has trivialized those activities and transformed the domestic domain. As women and their contributions become increasingly domesticated, women become isolated from the larger society and ultimately from one another. Under such circumstances, domestic tasks come to replicate one another within the separate confines of each woman's household. It would be impossible to consider women in the Western capitalist societies without looking at the triple foil of domestic privatization: physical marginalization, economic devaluation, and social depreciation (March and Taqqu, 1986:18; Rapp, 1979). This probably explains the failure of sexual equality in Western capitalist societies for about two decades, the theory of domestic and public domains was proposed, with women abandoning their motherhood and domestic roles for the public domain. As the inadequacy and inefficiency of this theoretical perspective continue to manifest convincingly to the advocates, they seek for initial revision of the theory but this has failed to counter and remedy the absolute defects. Paradoxically, they argued that the two spheres are not necessarily hierarchically related, and that they have underestimated the importance of women's domestic

powers (Rosaldo, 1980; March and Taqqu, 1986:13). This agrees with Netting's (1969) and Friedl's (1967) contributions.

Other non-Marxist theoretical frameworks such as culturalism (Onwuejeogwu, 1978) and structuralism (Levi-Strauss, 1979; Lane, 1970) are employed to explain gender inequality. The analytical impact of these theoretical modes are not more significant than the others discussed. Culturalists insist that the inferiority of women is due to some cultural constraints imposed on women by the society. This school treats culture of a given society as if it is not a product of the prevailing modes of production in that society. The neglect of the socio-economic foundation of culture makes their analysis ahistorical and unrealistic. Thus, Steady (1981:31) points out that "Another point of departure from Western interpretations involves the viewpoint that nature is necessarily inferior to culture and consequently, in keeping with views of female inferiority, correlates female with nature and male with culture." At times, the culturalists are eclectic in recognition of analytical problems and inadequacies of these theories. On the other hand, the structuralist employs the binary concept as exemplified by the stress on dual-sex role (Okonjo, 1978; Sudarkasa, 1987). Generally, in their analysis the real fabrics which will help us understand the persistent

gender inequality is banished. Instead, unempirical variables are employed in their explanations. Therefore, a more concise explanation has to be sought for the persistent gender inequality.

The various views of the non-Marxist tradition have been unenthusiastic to investigate rigorously the impact of the socio-economic structure with the resultant production relations of society on the emergence and persistence of gender inequality. This neglect has resulted in the mystification of the true gender relations in traditional Igbo society. The failure of the liberal school to explain gender inequality, and particularly, the real basis of gender relations in Igbo society is exemplified by the present groping for gender equality as propounded by feminists, and which has crystalised, for example, into the "Better Life for Rural Women Program".

Although, economic factors are usually mentioned, most of these liberal analysts tend to deal with them briefly and then go on to emphasize the bio-cultural factors, such as the gender biological division of labour (Steady, 1981; Sudarkasa, 1981; Amadiume, 1987). By focussing on the bio-cultural factors these non-Marxist analysts treat the significant units of social action as though they are innate, as if the socio-economic organization of society is static and the economic structure of

the society is an indifferent condition of the socio-political, religious and legal action (Nnoli, 1989:11-12). Since the materialistic nature of the gender relations are excluded from analysis, the historical changes in it are ignored. The synchronic (Poulantzas, 1987:67) analysis of some of the non-Marxist tradition is evidenced further as similarities are identified and analogies drawn across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial African societies irrespective of their degree of social differentiation, level of growth of their productive forces, their prevailing relations of production and the degree of class consciousness of their population, with the concomitant gender relation produced. Consequently, they tend to ignore the causative character of the socio-economic organization of society on gender. The link between relations of production and gender relations are neglected, hence the erroneous assumption and conclusion about the gender relations in Igbo society. Further, the part played by the acquisition of economic power on the high status and power attained by women in colonial economy is treated as mere historical coincidence, for example, Omu-Okēi (Ekejiuba, 1967) and Ahabi Ugbabe (Meek, 1930; Nwoga, forthcoming). Although Ekejiuba (1984, 1990, 1991) and Amadiume (1987) recognize women as powerful in the traditional Igbo society, they fail to

illuminate the actual bases of the power, that is, the rudder that steers the power. This is where the analysis of the nature of socio-economic organization becomes pertinent in order to x-ray the actual causative variable that gives rise to gender relations over time.

The Marxist method of analysis prepares the ground for such a study. However, the main problem with many Marxist-oriented writers is the tendency to treat women as a social class. As a result, they mix up gender and class questions (Ryna, 1975; Mackintosh, 1977; Edholm, 1977; Mullings, 1978; Crehen, 1984; Imam, 1985; 1988; Connel, 1985; Safilios-Rothschild, 1986; Ogbuagu, forthcoming). We cannot set out a sphere of objective interests which set apart women at the economic, political and ideological levels of the social structure (Poulantzas, 1987). It appears more truthful to treat them as "social categories" rather than "social class" (Poulantzas, 1975; 1987).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The aim of science is theory; facts and data are meaningless in themselves, they must be illuminated by a conceptual scheme (Rummel, 1970:27).

... facts can only be rigorously - that is demonstrably - comprehended if they are explicitly analyzed with the aid of a theoretical apparatus... (Poulantzas, 1976:65).

Theoretical work, whatever the degree of its abstraction ... produces knowledge, it is wholly situated in the process of thought... Theoretical work proceeds from a raw material, which consists not of "real concrete", but of information, notion etc. about this reality, and deals with it by means of certain conceptual tools: the result is the knowledge of an object (Poulantzas, 1987:12)

Method Of Analysis (Analytical Paradigm):

Our analysis in this work will be based on the Materialist Method of Marxism - Historical Materialism and Dialectical Materialism. This forms the epistemological foundation of the study. We should note that Marxism is made up of two united but distinct areas of emphasis - the historical materialism and dialectical materialism, which are distinguished by the difference between their objects (Poulantzas, 1987:11; Althusser, 1989;1970).

Historical Materialism is the science of history and has as its object , the concept of history through the empirical study of the various modes of production and social formations with their structure, constitution and functioning, and in

addition the forms of transition from one mode of production to another. Dialectical Materialism which is the Marxist philosophy has as its main object, the production of knowledge, that is, the structure and functioning of the process of thought. Categorically, it is the theory of the history of scientific production. Actually, historical materialism founded the dialectical materialism as a distinct discipline in one single theoretical movement, for the constitution of a science of history (historical materialism) led to the definition of a theory of science which includes history as a constituent part of its particular object (Poulantzas, 1987:11).

Further, the aim of historical materialism is the study of different structures and practices, including the economy, politics, ideology, etc. which are related but distinct and whose combination constitutes a mode of production and social formation. Also, Historical Materialism includes particular theories, thus, the theories of the slave, feudal, capitalist and other modes of production. The existence of these particular theories is justified by the diversity of combinations of structures and practices, which define distinct modes of production and social formations (Poulantzas, 1987:12). Available to us are the basic propositions of the historical and dialectical materialism. The first is the

distinction between the real processes and the process of thought, between being and knowledge. Second, is the primary of being over thought, the primary of the real over knowledge of the real. "The unity of the two processes (the real process and the process as thought) is founded on the fact that they are distinct" (Poulantzas, 1987:12). The above explanation is crucial in order to elucidate and expose the problems and confusions of bourgeois scholars and pseudo-marxists in marxism, which led to their distortion and misinterpretation of Marxism.

Theoretical Framework:

One of the major theoretical aims of this study is to displace the epistemological terrain of liberal conceptions, propositions and conclusions which presently dominate the study of gender relations. In order to achieve this effectively, we must make explicit the epistemological principle of our own dealing with the problem. Therefore, this requires a clear statement of the theoretical or conceptual framework on which our exposition of the empirical reality will be based. This is central to any scientific work since all empirical data must be handled theoretically in order to avoid what Durkheim in his days described as demagogy of the 'palpitating fact', 'common

sense' and the 'illusions of the evident' (Poulantzas, 1976:65).

This study would be hinged on the Marxist theory of relations of production. By relations of production, we designate a combination and the relations of the invariant elements of the economic structure. The relations of these invariant elements determine their very nature which is modified according to the combination. Generally, the economic structure invariant elements are: First, the labourer (the direct producer) that is labour power. Second, the means of production, that is, the object and the means of labour. The objects of labour are the things to which labour power is applied, for example, objects of nature which are extracted and harnessed to serve human needs - uncultivated land, wood, coal, petroleum, iron-ore, etc. The means of labour are instruments with which the worker (direct producer) labours. It includes all tools and other aids for production, for example, the access road to the farm, pond, river, factory, etc., bicycle, canoe, vehicle which takes worker to farm, pond, river, factory; cutlass, machet, hoe, machine used for cultivation; fishing net, hook used for fishing; building in which factory is located; etc. Third, the non-labourer who appropriates to himself the surplus labour, that is, the product.

We should note that in the traditional (precapitalist) Igbo society the third element did not exist. This does not suggest that some areas in the precapitalist Igbo society were not in transitional stage from the primitive communalistic mode of production, for instance, Arochukwu transforming to slavery (Dike and Ekejiuba, 1990); Nri (Onwuejeogwu, 1981; 1987); Onitsha, Aboh (Nzimiro, 1972); Agbor (Onwuejeogwu, 1987) and Ezechima clans (Ejiofor, 1982) transforming to feudalism. But predominantly, majority of Igbo land, was primitive communalistic.

"These elements exist in a specific combination which constitutes the economic in a given mode of production, a combination which is itself of a double relation of these elements" (poulantzas, 1987:26). The double relation of these elements which result from their combination are:

(1) A relation of real appropriation; Marx at times designates it by the term 'Possession'. This relation applies to the labourer (the direct producer) to the means of production, that is to the labour process or to the system of the productive forces.

(2) A relation of property; this is distinct from the first relation because it makes the non-labourer intervene as owner either of the means of production or of the labour-power or of

both and consequently of the product. Precisely, this relation defines the relations of production.

From the above, we can see that these two relations are distinct and by means of their combination they can take different forms. It should be noted that the relation of property belongs strictly to the region of the economic and that it should be clearly distinguished from the juridical forms with which it is invested, that is, from juridical property (Poulantzas, 1987:26). In societies divided into classes, for instance, the feudal and capitalist societies, the relation of property always 'separate' the labourer from the means of labour, which is the property of the non-labourer who, as owner, appropriates to himself the surplus labour.

On the other hand, the relation of real appropriation in societies divided into classes can set up either a union of the labourer with the means of production as in the case with the precapitalist mode of production or a separation of the labourer from the means of production, for example, in the capitalist mode of production in which a separation occurs at the stage of heavy industry. Marx designated this by the expression "separation of the direct producer from his natural conditions of labour."

These two relations invariably, belong to a unique and variable combination which constitutes the economic in a mode of production, the combination of the system of productive forces with the system of relations of production. In the combination that is characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, the two relations are homologous, for the separation in the two relations of property coincide with one another. While that of the precapitalist modes of production consists of non-homology of the two relations for there is separation in the relation of property and union in the relation of real appropriation (Poulantzas, 1987:27). In the Igbo precapitalist mode of production, land - the object of production, is owned by the family or community. There is no individual ownership of land, as an individual has only usufruct right. The implication of this is that in the strict sense, we cannot talk of relation of property and with regard to the relation of real appropriation the labourer is in union with the means of production. We should note that the determination of a mode of production by the economic in the last instance, and of the articulation and index of dominance of its instances, depends precisely on the forms which the combination in question takes on. For example, Marx generally observes thus:

The specific form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the condition of production to the direct producers - a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the method of labour and thereby its social productivity - which reveals that most innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short the corresponding specific form of the state (1867:191).

Further, this combination of the economic also determines the instance which adopts the dominant role in a mode of production, as Marx replied to the objections made to him depicts:

My view that each special mode of production and the social relations corresponding to it, in short, that the economic structure of society is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised and to which definite social forms of thought correspond; that the mode of production determines the character of the social, political and intellectual life generally, all this is very true for our own times in which material interests preponderate, but not for the middle Ages, in which catholicism, nor for Athens and Rome, where politics, reigned supreme ... This much however, is clear, that the Middle Ages could not live on catholicism, nor the ancient world on politics. On the contrary, it is the mode in which they gained a livelihood that explains why here politics, and there catholicism, played the chief part (1867:82).

A particular character of type of relations of production describes a particular mode of production of a society at a particular period, with its corresponding social relations of which the gender is not an exception.

Succinctly, we could reduce relation of production to the positions of agents in the labour process in their relation to the means of production. That is, the relation of people to the means of production which is the principal material condition for making useful things and providing means of subsistence in the course of production, distribution and exchange. We should note that the relations of production as expressed in the relations between the agents of production and the means of labour consequently, do not denote simply inter-relations between the agents of production, but rather these relations in specific combinations between agents and material-technical conditions of labour (Poulantzas, 1987:65). Concomitantly, the structures of relations of production "determines the place and functions occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places, in so far as they are supports (Triger) of these functions" (Althusser, 1970:180).

Social classes are "large groups of persons differing from each other mainly in their position in production (as regards

the ownership/appropriation (sic) of the means of production, organization of production process and distribution of products)"(Borisou and Libman, 1985:424). A class is a social force, only when its connection with the relations of production, its economic existence, is reflected at other levels of political and ideological structure with 'Pertinent effects' (social forces). Poulantzas (1987:79) explains 'Pertinent effects' thus:

... by 'pertinent effects' the fact that the reflection of the place in the process of production on the other levels constitutes a new element which cannot be inserted in the typical framework which these levels would present without this element. This element thus transforms the limits of the levels of structures or of class struggle at which it is reflected by 'pertinent effect'; and it cannot be inserted in a simple variation of these limits.

This is what Marx categorically refers to when he says that a class does not really form a class unless it constitutes its own political organization. For example, in the "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", Marx observed of the French Peasantry:

In so far as millions of (peasant) families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, ... they form a class. In so far as ... the identity of their interests begets ... no political organization among them, they do not form class (Marx and Engels, 1969:170-171).

But this does not necessarily mean that a class organizes its own political party before it becomes a class. For instance, the working class and peasantry in Nigeria constitute a class but they have not organized themselves into a political party, just as the emergency of Louis Bonaparte after 1851 was enough to constitute the peasantry in France into an autonomous class.

Other than social classes, the Marxist theory also distinguishes and delineates social categories, fractions and social strata:

Social categories are for example, 'Summits' of the bureaucracy and administration as mentioned by Lenin (Poulantzas, 1987:84). Also by social categories we mean social ensembles with 'Pertinent effects'. As Lenin demonstrated, social categories may become social forces whose distinguishing feature is based on their "Specific and over-determining relations to structures other than economic ones" (Poulantzas, 1987; 1975:23). Examples include: the bureaucracy which belongs to the political structure in its relation to the state and the intellectuals which belong to the ideological structure in their relations to the ideological. Similarly, the military (Political), ethno-communal groupings (ideological) religious groups (ideological), women (ideological), and men (ideological).

By fractions, we designate social ensembles which are capable of becoming autonomous class fractions according to the criterion of 'Pertinent effects'. Further, autonomous fractions of classes are those fractions which constitute the substratum of eventual (emerged) social forces. Class fractions are essentially distinguished on the basis of economic differentiations and in some cases on the role of political and ideological relations. For instance, capital usually has financial, commercial and industrial fractions. Some of its fractions however are distinguished by the political and ideological effects as in the case of the bourgeois - republic fraction of the constituent National Assembly in France which Marx (1970:105ff) identified, or the national and comparador fractions in peripheral capitalist formations (Ibeanu, 1992:369).

Finally, we designate as social strata the social ensembles which are the products of secondary effects of the amalgamation of modes of production in a given social formation; thus, first on classes, for instance, the 'Working Class aristocracy' (Lenin). Second, on categories, for instance, the summits of bureaucracy and administration (Lenin), and third, on fractions, for instance, the commercial capital fraction.

Although, generally, the Marxist theory used the terms category, fraction and stratum in a way that has often been obscure, most especially to the bourgeois scholars as these terms confuse them, there is absolute agreement by Marxist scholars on the terminologies. For instance, with regard to the distinction between categories and fractions, particularly autonomous fractions, we should note that both are capable of constituting social forces. The problem of distinction is not difficult for the fractions which are easily located at the level of relations of production, for example, the financial, commercial and industrial fractions of the bourgeoisie. This distinguishes them in this case from categories located at the level of structures other than the economic, for instance, bureaucracy, working class, women, religious groups, etc. Nonetheless, it becomes more complex in some fractions described by Marx (1970) which are located solely at the political level. What distinguishes them precisely is the over-determining relation of the categories to the political and ideological structures of which they are the specific effect. "For example, with regard to the political level, it is the relation of the bureaucracy to the state apparatus in the strict sense of the term" (Poulantzas, 1987:85).

Further, the distinction between strata and fractions becomes markedly relevant and noticeable if it concerns their reflection at the political level. Autonomous fractions, such as industrialists, are capable, unlike strata, of constituting themselves as social forces. We should note that this strength of autonomous fractions does not in the least mean that the distinction between strata and fractions explicitly covers the distinction between the respective effects of the economic and the politico-ideological. We cannot effectively assert that only fractions are dependent on the political level alone, but also, simple strata which can already be located in the economic as in the case with the working class aristocracy. As Poulantzas (1987:85) noted: "It would be wrong to believe that such a localization of strata as distinguished in this way from fractions is a concession to 'stratificatory' hyper-empiricism." Poulantzas illustrates further that:

... Such a localization is important, in so far as it designates, as products of the secondary effects of the combination of modes of production, certain fringe-limits of classes, categories and fractions which can, without being social forces, exert an influence on the political practice of these forces. This is the case, for example, with the working-class aristocracy which Lenin designates in Imperialism as a social stratum: because of its character as an intermediary fringe, it cannot itself constitute a social force, but it influences the political practice of the working class, functioning politically as the working-class 'agent' of the bourgeoisie (1987:85).

Nevertheless, in discussing these social ensembles - categories, fractions and strata, we note that they are components of social classes, unlike bourgeois classifications, which try to isolate them from social classes. In strict sense, these ensembles are class based as they are designating parts of class. Concretely, fractions are class fractions, for example, the commercial or financial bourgeoisie which is a fraction of the bourgeoisie. Similarly, the labour aristocracy is a fraction of the working class. Even social categories, for instance, women, religious group and bureaucracy, have a class membership with their agents generally belonging to different classes and class fractions (Poulantzas, 1975:23-24).

From our discussions, we can deduce further that a class fraction or social category exists (structurally determined) does not mean that it always forms an autonomous part of the conjuncture; that is, that it exists as a social force. A class exists inside a social formation as a distinct and autonomous class. We can apply the same social class principle of having pertinent effects (social forces) to fractions and social categories. Social categories and fractions exist as social forces only when their place at the level of class struggle and thus the social formation on the basis of which

structures they are basically distinguished is reflected at the other levels by 'pertinent effects' which may be reflected in:

- (a) Important modifications of the political structures;
- (b) Important modifications of ideological structures;
- (c) Important modifications of economic structure;
- (d) Modifications of the field of the political class struggle;
- (e) Modifications of the field of the ideological class struggle;
- (f) Important modifications of the legal structures;
- (g) Important modifications of the religious structures; and
- (h) Modifications of the field of the economic class struggle (Ibeanu, 1992:371).

'Pertinent effects' however does not simply mean that class fraction or social category is involved at the other levels, for instance working class or peasantry simply participating in elections in a capitalist state. Rather, it means that this involvement constitutes a distinct and new element which changes the framework which these levels would otherwise present, as the emergency of Bonaparte as the champion of the peasantry in France depicts. It is noteworthy, that the primary contradictory classes of the dominant mode of production of a social formation, for example, the bourgeoisie

and proletariat in a capitalist formation, feudal Lords and Serfs in feudal formation, already constitute social forces. That is, their place in production is reflected by 'pertinent effects' at the levels of the class struggle even though their fractions do not. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the whole analysis does not mean that classes which do not register this 'pertinent effects' are not part of the class struggle, for the very fact that their structural determinations make them part and parcel of class struggle. But at the specific conjuncture (class positions), they are usually linked up with classes, fractions and categories represented by pertinent effects to produce the specific character of polarization of the classes at that conjuncture of the social formation. The classes, fractions and strata making up the dominant polar, constitute the 'power bloc', while those constituting the dominated and underprivileged polar make the 'people-masses' (Ibeanu, 1992:371).

Explicitly, it is these conjectures and the social forces present in class fractions, categories and strata that Marxist tradition analysis focuses upon. It is their contradictions in their relations to the means of production that constitute the class struggle of the specific epoch of a given mode of production, which invariably elucidates the real gender

relation of that specific moment. The proper application of these terminologies (concepts)-class fractions, categories and strata x-rays the facets of the society. Therefore, it becomes important to be cautious in applying them, in order not to confuse one with another as the bourgeois scholars do in their bid to destroy Marxism.

Women as a social category is made up of fractions of social classes and social strata. Usually, the ideology of the dominant social class dominates the category activities. For instance, in Nigeria, the 'Better Life for Rural Women Program' is dominated by the ideology of the Nigeria's ruling class which made the program to be often called 'Better Life for Better or Ruler Women'. The level of consciousness in the society affects them, which therefore makes them part and parcel of the class struggle.

Nevertheless, we should note that, our objective here is not to articulate a systematic marxist theory of relations of production, but to present some general guides to understand our analysis of the empirical data. Even though our work is based on the Marxist theory of relations of production, we shall incorporate other Marxist theories like the social relations of production (Poulantzas, 1987) and social classes (Poulantzas, 1973; 1987; Ibeanu, 1992) in the course of our

analysis. It is important for us to note that relations of production and social relations of production are distinct in the strict sense. Social relations of production are relations among agents of production distributed in social classes. That is, social relations of production is expressed in class relations. In other words, it is class relations that manifest themselves, at the economic level as an effect of the specific combination of the agents of production/material-technical conditions of labour constituted by the relations of production (Poulantzas, 1987:65).

Since we shall incorporate these marxist theories - social relations of production and social classes, we shall therefore employ the triangulated method (theoretical triangulation), which is committed to 'sophisticated rigor' in order to broaden, thicken and deepen the interpretative and analytical base of our study (Denizin, 1970:234-247). This would not change our facts, but instead will give them high measurement of reliability and validity. As pointed out by Lincoln and Gubas (1985:307):

Facts are, in the first instance, theory determined; they do not have an existence independent of the theory within whose framework achieve coherence. If a given fact is "confirmable" within two theories, that finding may be more a function of the similarity of theories than of the empirical meaningfulness of the fact.

If facts are therefore determined by theory, then theoretical triangulation is best seen as a method of widening, thickening and deepening one's theoretical frame work as empirical materials are interpreted and analyzed (Denizin, 1970:241). Theoretical triangulation simply asks the researcher to be aware of the multiple ways in which the phenomenon may be interpreted in order to handle any shortcoming of the use of one theory in interpretation and analysis of data.

We have to look at the relations of production for us to understand the nature of gender relations in any society. Although the pre-capitalist Igbo society was patriarchal, the object of labour - land was owned by the kindred. Both men and women had usufruct rights since land was jointly owned by all members of the kindred. In the case of the means of labour, the man or woman owned simple tools which he or she made or easily procured; whatever was produced and used was the common property of the family (Engels, 1978). Consequently, the relationship between the sexes and their ownership of the object and means of labour could not have been a source of exploitation and inequality. This translates into some good measure of equality at the political and ideological structures of the society. This is shown in the manifestations and bases of women's power economically, politically, legally,

religiously and socially. Although the Igbo society is predominantly patrilineal, 'Ofo', the dominant Igbo symbol of authority, is both matri and patri-centered, with equal potency*. Though most people think that the patri-centered 'Ofo' has more potency than the matri-centered 'Ofo', the reality disproves their view which probably may be informed by the ownership of land - the object of labour in Igboland by the patrilineage through which land usufruct rights are got and the patrilineage is often symbolised by the patri-centered 'Ofo'. In Ndokwa, men are the custodians of the patrilineage Ofo while women are those of the matrilineal Ofo. Both sexes pay homage to the custodians of each type of their lineage ofo during the ancestors/ancestresses worship/festivals in which the custodian officiates. This is contrary to the claims by some people that in patriarchal societies, women are subordinated.

With the changes in relations of production brought about by capitalism, gender relations were necessarily altered. The changes which began with commercial contact with Europeans from about the 15th century, were consolidated during colonial rule between 1900 and 1960. Capitalism is based on commodity production and individual ownership of the object and means of production. Private capital accumulation is the pivot of this

* See Chapter Five for explanation.

society. This has consequences for ownership of the object and means of labour which have now become individualized and monetized. With the incorporation of the Igbo into the capitalist mode of production, land no more played the determinant and dominant role in the society. Capital replaced it. Men were at a more advantageous position than women to seek and secure the most lucrative employments in the capitalist economy and opportunities for capital accumulation. Subsequently, gender relations changed as a result of the widening gap in differential access to and control of capital by the sexes. Women's status vis-a-vis men correspondingly became inferior.

Tentative Proposals:

Based on our theoretical orientation discussed above, we could argue as follows:

- i. There is no relationship between patriarchy/matriarchy and gender inequality expressed in women's status.
- ii. Equal access to the means of production enhances gender equality.
- iii. There is no relationship between the type of political institution and the status/power of women.
- iv. The institutionalization of capital altered the status and power basis of Igbo women.

Data collected in the field will be used to support or refute these arguments.

Area of Study:

The 'Ndokwa'⁷ - Igbo speaking people, West of the Niger River is the main focus of this study. We chose the area because it did not experience the traumatic changes and influences due to christianity and colonial pacification as did many areas in Igbo land, east of the Niger River. In the absence of these traumatic influences, changes and reformations, Ndokwa people were not as drastically acculturated as those of Igbo areas east of the Niger. Consequently, several Ndokwa institutions still depict women as powerful and not inferior. Therefore, the study of Ndokwa enables us to gain a better understanding of women's power.

Also in Ndokwa, there are two influences - colonial and indigenous cultural changes which would give us a real and adequate comparative study of the situation. The upland (Ukwuani) has less centralized government and was shielded from colonial influence more than the riverine (Ndosimili) such as Aboh. Thus, since the area under study is in the same sub-culture

⁷ They make up the Ndokwa Local Government Areas of Delta State (see Chapter 4 for more description and explanation of the area and the people).

called Ndokwa within the Western Igbo sub-culture (Onwuejeogwu and Okoh, 1981; Onwuejeogwu, 1987) and at the same time was under the same influence of the same civilization with the core at Aboh, a study of the area with the four groups of villages - Ebedei, Obikwele, Abala and Aboh specifically, may be methodologically right to make generalisation. Besides, the researcher being an Ndokwa indigene,⁸ the psychological, spiritual, ritual and language aspects of Ndokwa culture which would pose problems to a non-indigene, will be surmounted.

Method of Research:

(a) Method of Data Collection:

Our data for this study were gathered from both the secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources consist of textbooks, journals, seminar/workshop papers, magazines, 'archival' materials, etc. which are relevant to our work. The secondary sources of data collection are very useful in research mostly for exploratory purposes. We critically evaluated the validity and reliability of these data to ensure the dependability of the data collected.

With regard to the primary sources, we also applied the methods of triangulation. Therefore, our data were collected

⁸ The research gains of an indigenous researcher has been emphasized by many scholars, for instance, Wipper (1988).

from extensive and intensive interviews, participant observation and non-participant observation in the field. These methods appear to us quite appropriate and more suitable for an anthropological research as this, than other data-generation techniques like the questionnaire.

Besides, these methods were chosen because of the enormous advantages they offer us over other techniques like the questionnaire. Firstly, these methods assure response more than questionnaire in which there is no real assurance that respondents will complete the questionnaire they receive. Secondly, these methods if well handled, could produce more valid and dependable data since the researcher's presence enables him to guard against and control respondents demeanor and determine whether the information being given is authentic or not, especially the interview offers this opportunity. Also the participant observation and non-participant observation enabled us to recognize and articulate the symbolic expressions, for instance, in rituals, settlements of disputes, etc.

The data collected from interviews were cross-checked and validated also through these processes. However, we were very cautious here, since the very presence of the researcher could affect the interviewee's and observee's responses to the

questions, behaviors and presentations. Thirdly, the researcher through these methods could ask follow up questions without anticipating the questions in advance. In the case of the questionnaire, this advantage is likely impossible, because the researcher must anticipate and incorporate before hand, all likely follow up questions and this is cumbersome. Fourthly, especially the participant observation and non-participant observation enable the researcher to critically analyze the symbols and symbolic processes (Turner, 1967; 1968; 1970; Firth, 1973) related to gender relations (Bynum, et al., 1986), most especially during rituals (Kertzer, 1988; Canadine and Price, 1987). This will produce an exhaustive and realistic interpretation of the symbols and symbolic processes for understanding the actual gender relations symbolized. The questionnaire is curtailed from this because of the distanced interaction between the researcher and respondent.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly in our circumstance, these methods reduce to the barest, the problem of literacy. The population we are dealing with is 'illiterate in English' which is the questionnaire's means of communication. That is, the questionnaire is predicated on some level of literacy (in Western education) on the part of the respondent. Otherwise, the researcher has to translate the questions for the

respondent into the language he/she understands and probably retranslate his/her answers into English. This not only introduces biases, for example, the researcher "leading" the answer, but in the end it boils down to a structured interview (Ibeanu, 1992:50).

Cassette tape recorder was used to record our interviews. The cassette tapes were transcribed and translated since all interviews were done in the local dialect - that is, Aboh/Ukwuani dialects. The researcher did not have any problem of communication since he speaks the ^{Aboh/}Ukwuani dialects. The tape recording of interviews has been found to offer a lot of advantages. For instance, the whole interviews and discussions are recorded verbatim. This gives the researcher relaxed environment to meticulously analyze the data collected after field work. Also, information storage is enhanced by tape recording since the cassette tapes could be stored for posterity (Baum, 1974).

Photographs of the symbols that are related to gender relations were taken when necessary. This provided us with the tools for comparative studies and analysis with other Igbo sub-cultures and other cultures for generalization. Further, since the researcher cannot possess some of these symbols,

photographs ensured after field research analysis of the symbols to decipher the real symbolism.

(b) Validity And Reliability:

The validity and reliability of data collected in any research are very important. This is because the success of any research depends largely on the dependability of the data employed in analysis (Durbin and Stuart, 1951; Black and Champion, 1976; Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981). Validity addresses the question - "Is one measuring what one thinks one is measuring," while reliability is a "Measure of the variable errors our measurement may contain" (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981:138). In validating our interview schedules we were concerned basically with establishing the interview schedules content validity. Content validity takes two forms viz: face validity and sampling validity (Nachmias, 1981:138-140). In order to achieve this we widely consulted specialists - like some anthropologists in the area studied to judge the validity of the interview schedule. In the case of the reliability of the interview schedule, a pilot study in the area of our study was undertaken in which some potential respondents were interviewed. The responses of the two sets of respondents from the pilot study and main field research, were compared.

Besides, the result of the participant observation and non-participant observation in the rituals, meetings (legal, political, etc.), with the symbolic processes observed were used to validate the respondents' information. This was very result oriented in the validation of oral tradition (Dike and Ekejiuba, 1976;1990:2-20; Nzei, 1987). Also since we are concerned with gender relations, the sex and social status of respondents were cross-checked with respondent's interest and information.

In case of the secondary data, reliability was established by rigorous logic and content analysis. That is a rigorous use of the technique of content analysis which enables us to understand the producers of such materials, their specific motive(s), the audience they want to reach (and why), could help us select what is dependable from what is not (Barelson, 1957). Therefore, the ideological bias of producers should not be left out in the rigorous logic and content analysis. This raises the question of neutrality and objectivity. Our method of analysis - Historical materialism and Dialectical materialism offers us a means authenticating the neutrality and objectivity of our study, because of its rigorous scientific logic and content analysis. This Abalkin, et al (1983:31) point:

The criterion of truth, the principle according to which the correctness and authenticity of the propositions and conclusions of science are verified are among the most difficult and important aspects of the analysis. The method of materialist dialectics provides a clear-cut and unambiguous answer to the question: the criterion here is the correspondence between the propositions and conclusions of science and the actual processes in social life. In a nutshell, it is practice.

(c) Sampling:

The qualitative nature of anthropological research made us base our data collection on non-probability designs - convenience and purposive sampling (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981). This does not suggest that every step in our data collection was governed by haphazard and unsystematic judgement and purpose. In contrast, we presented a procedure which we hope would further our study. Therefore, we must ensure an adequate representativeness of the samples.

In selecting the groups of villages for the second level data collection, we identified all groups of villages that have common migration or descent traditions of origin, groups of villages that have dominant deities with female chief priest and the extent of European (colonial) influence on the groups of villages. Based on these steps, we arrived at selecting Aboh, Ebedei, Abala and Obikwele groups of villages *respectively*

Our primary data were gathered from two levels. First is the whole groups of villages in the area of study. Our area of

study - Ndokwa local government areas consist of thirty-seven groups of villages. The second level of data collection was from four groups of villages - Aboh, Abala, Obikwele and Ebedei, from our area of study. These levels enabled us to control any cultural variation which in ethnographic research is often reflected in the data and analysis. It is on this that one should be conscious of data and analytical generalization, unless the overview ensures it. Aboh and Ebedei are selected because the oral tradition of both claims similar descent and migration pattern. Abala like Aboh has Monarchical form of government but the former has less European influence (contact) than Aboh. Obikwele, has dominant deity - the "Abibi" which has a female as the chief priest. Data collected from these areas are pertinent to the overall arguments in this research as presented by the relevant representative variables.

Our respondents for each groups of villages were the following: Traditional rulers and their council of elders (male and female), Chief priests and priestesses of deities, Heads of families, Age grade leaders, and other people well educated (knowledgeable) in the traditional culture. Each of these were used for our 'Focus groups' discussion. There were group interview and individual interview. That is, we first

conducted a general group interview in which we located individuals among the groups who are more articulate and knowledgeable (educated) in the traditional culture.

The first level of our data collection is to have overview of the area of study. This checked adequately the representativeness and generalisability of our data.

With regard to the secondary data, the representativeness of materials took double dimension - *Longitudinal* and Vertical. *Longitudinal* representativeness is the use of documents in such a way that they adequately cover the period of interest. In the case of the vertical representativeness, documents were representative of the prevalent moods and views of the various facets and interests in the given situation. This we thrived to achieve by subjecting all literature in our reach with special reference to gender relations in our area of study and the like areas to reinterpretation and analysis.

Method Of Data Analysis:

In an anthropological study like this, data are essentially qualitative, as such, our use of statistical techniques in data analysis is minimal. In this study, data analysis would mainly involve examination and re-examination of data and their logical presentation as a basis for reaching our conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF NDOKWA PEOPLE

Introduction:

The Ndokwa-Igbo speaking people West of the Niger River occupy Ndokwa Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria.⁹ According to Onwuejeogwu (1987:50-51),

These people have diverse origin namely: East Igbno, Enuani, Ika, Benin, Isoko, Asaba, Izo (Ijo) and Igala. The area of origin had influenced the development of local variations like all other Igbno communities. The civilization was centered around key elements or concepts that were rooted in Igbo culture such as Eze, Obi, Okpala-Ukwu, Eze mmuo, Alusi, Okwa, Ndicie, and Umunna. They belong to one variety of Igbo-speaking community called Ukwuani linguists.¹⁰

The main characteristic of the civilization is its ability to combine an upland culture with a salt-water culture.

But the above linguists studies notwithstanding, Manfredi (1989:337-358) study of Igboid linguistic group and dialects also shows that the people under study speak Aboh 'Ebo' (Ukwuani) dialect of Igboid linguistic group. This is evidenced by the Drogun, Aragba and Abraka were transferred to Urhobo Division in 1951 while Noni joined the River State in 1976.

⁹The linguists are Professors Emenanjo N.E., Onwuejeogwu, N.A., Manfredi, V., Williamson, K., and Amsfrong, R.G.

fact that Aboh group of villages people and most Ndosimili (riverine Ndokwa) groups of villages people speak the Aboh (Ebo) dialect of Igbo language, while the Ukwani (upland) groups of villages people speak the Ukwani dialect of Igbo language.

Kwale was the administrative headquarters of ~~Ndokwa Local Government Area~~. It was established on the land between Obetim in Efo group of villages and Utagba-Ogbe in Utagba group of villages by the colonial Administration (N.A.I., C.S.O. 2C/2, 1950). Besides, the word 'Kwale' is a corrupt pronunciation of Ukwani by Early European colonialists (Ryder, 1969:282). The recent creation of local government areas by the Federal Government of Nigeria split Ndokwa Local Government Area into two local government areas, namely: Ndokwa East and Ndokwa West. The Administrative Headquarters for Ndokwa East is Aboh while that of Ndokwa West is Kwale. The two new local government areas were based on the two district councils that were created by the colonial Administration - Aboh (later named Ndosimili in 1952¹¹) and "Kwale"

¹¹See Kemmis, (1952:47); Brown (1952:57).

(Ukwuani). Ashaka and Amai were administrative headquarters for the Aboh (Ndosimili) and "Kwale" (Ukwuani) District Councils respectively, while "Kwale" was the divisional headquarters for "Kwale" (Aboh) Division. In 1976, the name Aboh Division was changed to Ndokwa Local Government Area as a result of the Nigeria Local Government reforms of 1976.

ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND:

The word "Ndokwa" is an acronym of Ndosimili (riverine) and Ukwuani (Uplanders). "Ndokwa" is thus an ecological distinction of riverine and upland dwellers coined from Ndosimili and Ukwuani. Ndokwa is made up of the following thirty-seven related groups of villages: Abala, Abbi, Aboh, Adiai, Akarai, Amai, Ase, Ashaka, Ebedei, Efo, Emu, Eziokpo, Ezionium, Ibedeni, Iberede, Igbuku, Inyi, Ndoni, Obiaruku, Obikwele, Ogume, Okpai, Onicha-Ukwuani, Onogboko, Onuabo, Onya, Osisa, Umuebu, Umukwata, Umualu, Ushie, Utagba, Utuoku, Aragba, Orogun, and Ndoni.

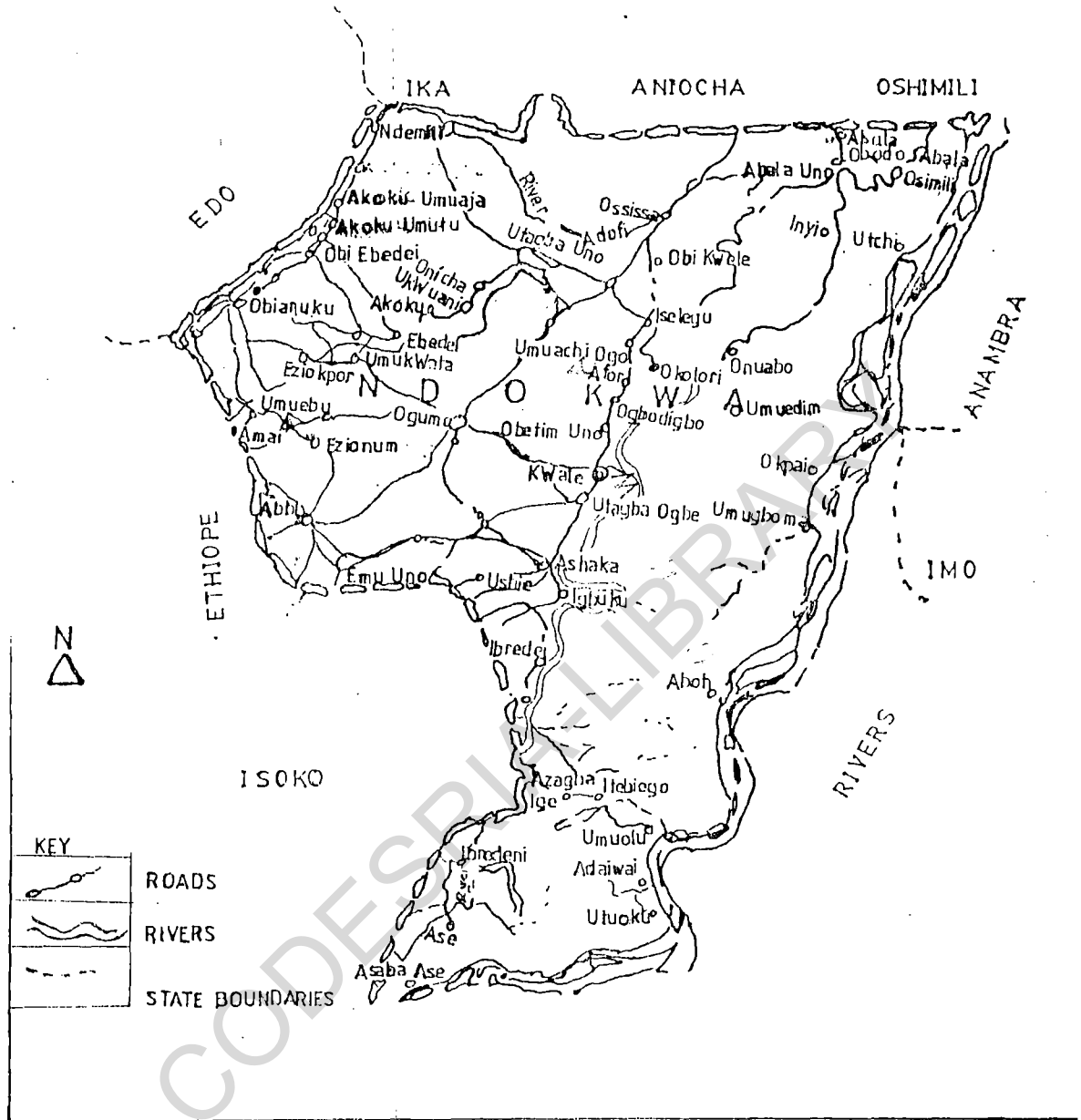
Geographically, the Ndokwa territory lies approximately between longitude 6°6' and 6°42' East and 5°25' and 6°31' North. The land area is approximately 3,000 square kilometers with an estimated population of

1963 Federal Republic of Nigeria Population Census projected figure including Orogun, Aragba, Abraka and Ndoni groups of villages.

0.5 million¹² and a population density of about 300 persons per square kilometer (Idachaba, 1985; Onwuejeogwu, 1987). But the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1991 population census provisional results show that the population of Ndokwa Local Government Area is 255,931. Ndokwa West Local Government Area population is 183,250 while that of Ndokwa East Local Government Area is 72,681. Thus, the population density varies from 100-200 persons per square mile in the Western Delta, to under 100 in the Mid-Delta and 300-400 persons per square mile in the Eastern part (Onwuejeogwu, 1987:37).

Ndokwa area shares boundaries with the Edo speaking people of Edo State in the North; the Ijo speaking people of Delta and River States in the South; the Ika and Aniocho (Enuani) people of Delta State in the North-East, Ahoada people of River State in the South-East, the Urhobo and Isoko People of Delta State in the West and is bounded by the Niger river in East (see maps 1 and 2). The location of Ndokwa territory on the lower Niger plains, makes it an economically difficult terrain. The area is situated on the vegetation belts- the deltaic swampy forests to the South and the tropical rain forests to the North. Further, the southern part is

MAP OF NDOKWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS



MAP OF IGBOLAND AND SOME MAJOR TOWNS

KEY

STATES AND ENUGU	CODE	L G A
	100	Abaitatifa
	101	Aduata
	102	Anambra
	103	Awka
	104	Awka
	105	Enugu
	106	Ezra
	107	Ezra
	108	Iferikiti
	109	Igbo Etiti
	110	Igbo Eze
	111	Ihiala
	112	Ikwo
	113	Ishielu
	114	Isi Uzo
	115	Nuikoka
	116	Nkanu
	117	Nnewi
	118	Nsukka
	119	Oji River
	120	Onitsha
	121	Udi
	122	Uz i Uwani

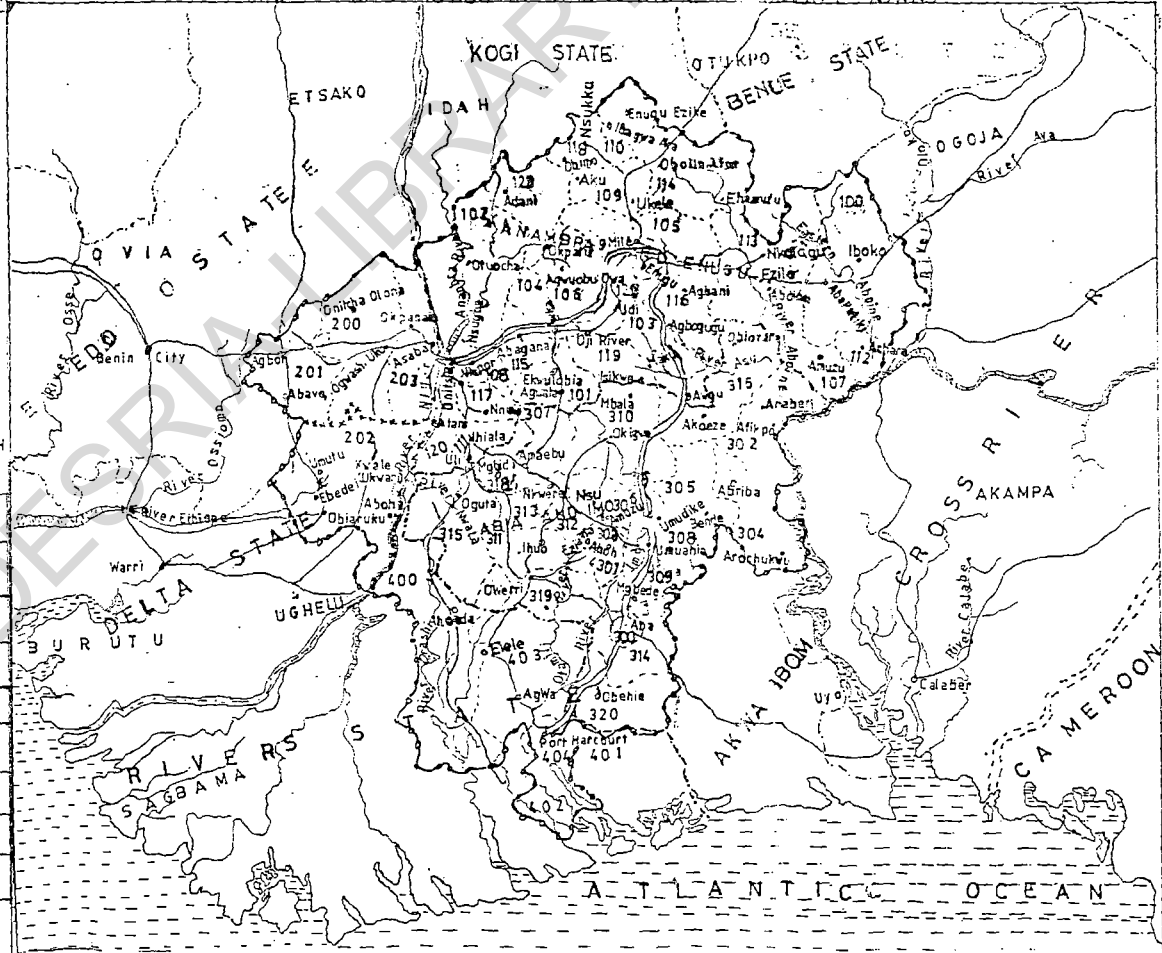
STATES	CODE	L G A
	316	Chozara
	317	Ori
	318	Ori
	319	Owerri
	320	Ukwa

RIVERS	CODE	L G A
	400	Ahoada
	401	Bari
	402	Otalg
	403	Ikwere Etche
	404	Port Harcourt

DELTA	CODE	L G A
	200	Aniocha
	201	Ika
	202	Ndakwa
	203	Oshimili

ABIA/IMO	CODE	L G A
	300	Aba
	301	Aboh Mbaise
	302	Afikpo
	303	Ahazu Mbaise
	304	Arochuku Chafia
	305	Bende
	306	Etiti
	307	Ideator
	308	Ikwuano Umuhia
	309	Isiala Ngwa
	310	Isiukwato Okigwe
	311	Mbaitoli Ikeduru
	312	Mbano
	313	Nkwere Isu
	314	Obioma Ngwa
	315	Ohaji Egama Oguta

	INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
	STATE BOUNDARIES
	IGBOLAND BOUNDARY
	THE AREA UNDER STUDY
	LGA BOUNDARIES
	EXPRESSWAY
	MINOR ROADS
	RIVERS
	RIVER CROSSING



SCALE 1:150,000.

characterized by salt water swamps, while the northern part is characterized by fresh water swamps (Onwuejeogwu, 1987:37). Most of the soil is loamy in nature, and thus make it fertile for agriculture.

Economic Organization:

The main occupation of the Ndokwa people is farming. The area is dominated by peasant farms with few plantation farms owned by the nouveau riches. The farming period is seasonal, especially in the riverine area where the farming period must be in consonance with the seasonal flooding of the Niger river. This ecological peculiarity made the Ndokwa people associated with the olu (oru) culture (Forde and Jones, 1967:9-60; Nzimiro, 1972:3-5; Huntington, 1976:38; Ejiofor, 1982:27-29). Paradoxically, the Ndokwa people prefer and accept being called olu people (ndi olu) to being called Igbo people (ndi Igbo). Calling an Ndokwa free-born onye Igbo (Igbo person) is derogatory to him/her, because the slaves and slave descendants in Ndokwa are called Igbo (onye or ndi Igbo), as most of the slaves in Ndokwa were procured from the Igbo area east of the Niger river, an area referred to by the Ndokwas as occupied by ndi Igbo (Igbo people) (Forde and Jones, 1967:9).

Yam, cassava, plantain, cocoyam, maize, melon, beans and vegetables are some of the food crops produced. Fishing is a

major occupation in the riverine areas as well as in upland places where it is not a taboo to fish and eat fish from some rivers/streams, for example, in onoku (Ethiope) river (Akoku, Ebedei, etc.), Adofi river (Osisa and Utagba), etc. Fish ponds were built to raise fishes in many areas. These fish ponds are owned by the lineages just as farm lands are owned. In addition, there is subsistence livestock farming. The popular livestock kept are: chicken, goat and pig. Some men hunt games for subsistence. Rubber is the major cash crop. The recent rubber-boom has enriched many people. Palm produce used to flourish and this attracted many Urhobo and Isoko migrants. Every farmer strives to produce sufficient food for his family, because it is a common philosophy that a well fed stomach gives happiness and good life.

Belief System And Social Values:

The traditional Ndokwa religious thought is polytheistic with some shades of animism. Her religious cosmology is divided into two worlds - the "other" (invisible) world and "this" (visible) world (Nwoga, 1984). The "other" world is compartmentalized into domains, each controlled by specific god, goddess, deity or spirit with its agents. For instance, the heaven and sky (enu igwe) is controlled by Olise (Chukwu) with its agents - chi (personal god/destiny), Okike (creator),

Enyawu (sun), Agbalala (thunder), etc. The earth is controlled by Ani (earth goddess) with Ifejioku (god of yam), as agent (see Illustration 4.1). The river/stream is controlled by a goddess/god with Mmuo mili (water spirits) elishi, as agents. Often the goddess/god is identified with the name of the river/stream. For example, in Utagba and Osisa, the river god is Adofi. Also in Umuaja-Akoku, Umutu-Akoku, Obi-Ebedei and other villages on the bank of the Onoku river, Onoku is the name of the river goddess. Further, at Akoku-uno, Ebedei-uno, Umukwata-uno, Amai, etc. Okwumeshi is the name of the river god. Finally, at Aboh, Obikwele and Abala, Osimili, Abibi and Nne Alusi Oshimili are the names of the rivers goddesses respectively. This does not suggest that elishi (Alusi) is exclusively an agent of water spirit as often observed in our study area. One could say that it depends more on the ecology of an area. For instance, in areas where hills, caves or rocks are found, elishi (Alusi) is often an agent of the hills, caves or rocks as it is found in some areas of Enugu State, Nigeria. The spirit domain is controlled by the ancestors/ancestresses and deities with other spirits and deities like Nze, Agadi, Ikenga, etc. as agents.

The ancestors/ancestresses and deities serve as the people's (and individual's) mediator, deflator, deflector, and

protector (positive forces) against sufferings, accidents, inequities and evils. These are believed to be caused by such negative forces as evil spirits, witches, wizards and sorcerers. Thus, life is viewed as a contradiction between the positive forces and negative forces. One lives and prospers if the positive forces are stronger than the negative forces. On the other hand, an individual lives an unprosperous life or dies when the negative forces supersede positive forces. The ancestors/ancestresses and deities perform these functions by sublimating the benevolence of the gods/goddesses and their related agents. The ancestors/ancestresses and deities fail to perform their functions if the individual fails to atone for his transgression against the ancestors/ancestresses or deities taboos, or fails to worship, pray, implore or sacrifice to them accordingly. When there is unfavorable relationship between individual and any of the ancestors/ancestresses or deities, adequate sacrifice (which is usually known through divination) is required to restore the good relationship. Thus, the Ndokwa have strong belief in the efficacy of sacrifice (Arinze, 1970; Nwoga, 1984; Ekwunife, 1990) in maintaining a good, harmonious and prosperous relationship with the gods/goddesses, spirits, deities, ancestors/ancestresses. Consequently, the religious pantheon of Ndokwa people is

centered on the ancestors/ancestresses cult (Goody, 1962; Onwuejeogwu, 1978) and other cults, for example, Chi, Okike, Ani, Ikenge, Ifejioku, etc. Festivals center on ancestors/ancestresses, gods/goddesses, and deities. For instance, Iruanri/Otite, Ise, and Ilo Mmuo for the ancestors/ancestresses, Ikenge for ikenge, Enyi in Ebedei for nze (see illustrations 4.2-4.5), Ukpalabor/Eze Mmuo for elishi, Ifejioku for Ifijioku, Iwaiji ada abibi for Abibi in Obikwele, Onoku/Ikaba for Onoku, etc. Besides, shrines are consecrated to the gods/goddesses and deities (see illustrations 4.6-4.9).

About ten percent of the population are christians. This makes christianity not to have as much influence on the Ndokwa culture as most Igbo areas east of the Niger river. Islam is mostly professed by the moslem migrants.

Based on the Ndokwa world-view, the society endeavors to demand probity from its citizens in their affairs (ibi ezigbu ndu). Most especially, morality is imperative for the chief priests/priestesses, village/lineage heads (Okpala-Ukwu, Ada, Okei Imusu/Ndibe) and other people holding significant ritual, jural or political positions.



Illustration 4.1: A Man Performing Fertility Rituals in His Ifejioku Shrine at Obikwele.



Illustration 4.2: Enyi (Elephant Masquerade) at Ebedei, during the Nze festival. The Enyi is on the North-East.



Illustration 4.3: Nde Osue (Isue) Enyi (the Elephant Masquerade hunting band) sitting in front of their hunting weapons, at Ebedei, during the Nze festival.



Illustration 4.4: Nde Osue (Isue) Enyi (Elephant Masquerade hunting band) at Ebedei, during the Nze festival.



Illustration 4.5: Nde Osue (Isue) Enyi (Elephant masquerade hunting band) jubilating after the killing of the Enyi, at Ebedei, during the Nze festival.



Illustration 4.6: Adofi shrine in Adofi river, at Osisa.



Illustration 4.7: Adofi Shrine on the bank of Adofi river, at Osisa.



Illustration 4.8: The Adofi Chief Priest (Okpala-Uku Osisa), assisted by the Onotu-Uku of Osisa, officiating rituals at Adofi shrine, Osisa.



Illustration 4.9: Onoku Shrine at Obi-Ebedei.

Because these people have authority as the custodians of the ancestors/ancestresses, gods/goddesses or deities symbols and are hitherto, the linkages between the ancestors/ancestresses, gods/goddesses or deities and the people. Besides, they are regarded as the earthly representatives of the ancestors/ancestresses, gods/goddesses or deities, and thus, the overseers of justice. The Ndokwa people believe in the laws of retribution; they emphasize reciprocity in their social relations.

Ndokwa people warmly welcome well-intentioned strangers. Hospitality for the guest starts with the offering of kolanut, which is often presented with money (the amount depends on the occasion). After this, drinks and food may be offered. The kolanut and drinks are presented one after the other respectively to the oldest person present (whether male or female) to bless, after which it is given to the youngest to serve. It is compulsory to offer kolanut to a deserving visitor. If there is no kolanut, money or drink is offered to represent kolanut. If these are out of reach, the host must apologize to the guest for his/her inability to present kolanut. Kolanut presentation symbolizes prima facie welcome to and acceptance of the guest by the host. All these values form part of the ideology of Ndokwa people which governs their

relationship in their society, thereby sustaining the society's existence.

Political Organization:

The Ndokwa political organization is based on gerontocracy, except the six groups of villages (kingdoms) in the riverine area (Abala, Aboh, Ase, Ibedeni, Okpai and Onya) where monarchy is combined with gerontocracy (Onwuejeogwu, 1987:51). The combination of monarchy with gerontocracy limits the power of the monarchy (Ejiofor, 1982). The Monarchies have conciliatory rather than authoritative powers found in feudal states (Poulantzas, 1987) like the Fulani empire (Smith, 1960; 1964), Benin Kingdom (Ryder, 1969), etc. The six monarchies are headed by the Igwe of Abala, Obuonwe (Obi) of Aboh, Igwe of Ase, Ogene of Ibedeni, Igwe of Okpai and Inawai of Onya (Onwuejeogwu, 1987:51) and a council of chiefs known as Olinzele. In the purely gerontocratic system, the traditional ruler is the Okpala-Uku (the oldest man of the village) with a council of male elders known as the Nde Okwa, and council of chiefs called Inotu¹³ which is headed by Onotu-uku (the oldest member of Inotu). The Inotu which used to be overseer of the age grades for the council of elders - Nde okwa, have turned

¹³ "Inotu" means overseer of the age grades; Ine - overseer; otu - age grade.

themselves into a political privileged group. Also, there is the Ada institution which is headed by Ada (the oldest woman of the village) and a council of female elders called Ofashi. They have prominent political functions. The Okpala Uku and Ada institutions are also found in the monarchical groups of villages. Besides, in Abala, the Inotu institution exists.

In Ndokwa, age grades are very important for the execution of decisions (according to each age grade's functions) reached by the council of elders, (Okpala-uku or Ada in council), the Inotu or the king in-council and village-assembly (Osa). Some of the age grades and their functions are: Otu-Onuogbe - cleans the village, Otu-olile - cleans the farm and other related roads and burial of corpses and otu-nta - community hunters, warriors and corpse dressers.

The most important and popular titles taken by the people are: Ogbu-ebunu, Ogbu-iji, Igbu, Ote-Ofe and Amawulu/ufe. Ogbu-ebunu (killer of ram) is the title taken by dibias (traditional doctors). It symbolizes the strength of dibias in relation to medicines and sacrifices. Ogbu-iji (producer of yam) symbolizes the strong and successful farmer. Igbu (killer) symbolizes the brave and successful warrior. Further, Ote-ofe (soup cook) symbolizes the successful woman. And the Amawulu/ufe symbolizes the legitimate and de facto "son of the

soil". This title is very central to the Abala people. These titles have been monetized by the nouveau riches who have made them symbols of wealth instead of pristine symbols.

Stratification, Social Organization, Rituals, Marriage and Rites of Passages:

A brief discussion on the distinction between free-borns and slave descendants¹⁴ is necessary because rights, social relationships and status to a great extent depend on this distinction. Therefore, a researcher has to note these differences in order to interpret and analyze the actual culture of the Ndokwa people, most especially their symbols, symbolisms and ritual processes.

In addition to Onye or ndi Igbo which free borns call the slave descendants their other names are: osu, onye nizuneni or ezune (incomplete person), Onye ayi (bent person), etc. During the Nigerian civil war, they were called 'Biafra'. On the other hand, the free-borns are called Nwaezimalu, (child of right person), Onyezunini (complete person), Onyetuluni (straight person), Nwadei in Aboh, etc.

In most of the riverine groups of villages, settlements were established for slaves and slave descendants. For

¹⁴ Anywhere slave descendant is used it denotes slave and slave descendant.

instance, at Abala and Osisa, Abala-Ozizo (Abala-Ugada) and Oloa-Osisa villages/settlements were established for Abala and Osisa slaves and slave descendants respectively. Because the name Abala-Ozizo (Abala-Ugada) was regarded as derogatory, in recent times, the people took advantage of the socio-economic changes and changed the name of their village to Abala-Obodo.

Slave descendants are forbidden to officiate during the worship of most gods/goddesses, deities and ancestors/ancestresses. They may also not perform certain rites during title-taking. Also, they are forbidden from becoming Okpala-Uku, Odua, Inotu-Uku, king (Obuowe, Igwe etc.) and other important positions which have ritual, jural and political implications. Sometimes they are forbidden to go close to the shrines and participate in key ritual activities. For instance, slave descendants are forbidden to reach the shrine of the Nze deity in Ebedei, or to become a member of its elephant masquerade (enyi) hunting band Osue (Isue) enyi (see illustrations 4.2 - 4.5). Besides, if a slave descendant is the oldest man (Okei) of a maximal/major patrilineage (Imusu/ndibe), it is taboo for him to sit alone or spread his legs astride the Ofo (ndikei) of the maximal/major patrilineage during ancestors/ancestresses worship rituals. Instead, he sits sideways or with his legs together with a male free-born

of the maximal/major patrilineage sitting beside him (see Illustrations 4.10 and 4.11). Attempts by the slave descendants to change their status has been resisted by the free-borns. This led to social disorders and litigations, for example in Efo, Ogume, Utagba, etc. groups of villages, in the last decade.

Marriage is a very important social institution among the Ndokwa people. Any person who was never married before his/her death will be buried without much rituals as a baby is buried. Besides, if he/she has no child, he/she will not be given second burial which potential ancestors/ ancestresses are entitled to. Bride wealth is very cheap when compared to many communities in Igboland east of the Niger river. Bride wealth ranges from N200.00 (two hundred naira) to N2,000.00 (two thousand naira). For instance, in Ebedei, N80.60k is the bride wealth (ife nwuye) and about N120.00 is spent on buying courtship wine (ifensu) and for marriage ceremony (imefe nwuye). The amount and implications of bridewealth and dowry vary dramatically from group of villages to group of villages, to the extent to which they provide independent, economic and legal surety to women and their natal homes (March and Taqqu, 1986:51). Married women still belong to their natal homes. Adultery is taboo and married women are forbidden from having

extra marital sexual affairs. There is severe repercussion for any woman that indulges in extra marital sexual affair. It is believed that the penalty ranges from sickness, painful and prolonged labour to death, except if she confesses (iko di) to the Umuada and subsequently appeases the ancestresses (Umuada). On the other hand, any man who indulges in sexual relationship with any married woman also incurs severe punishment unless he confesses and appeases the ancestors (ndichie). A goat is killed for this purpose (itugbu ewu dioke). The adulterer eats the uncooked ear (ili nti ewu dioke).

Ndakwa people are exogamous. In addition to polygyny, child marriage and concubinage (Fox, 1967; Onwuejeogwu, 1978:284-285) are practiced. Any child born out of wedlock belongs to the genetrix and he/she is his legitimate and de facto offspring. This is unlike the practice in most other Igbo areas where the child belongs to the Matrix's genetrix or pater. Descent is patrilineal and inheritance is through the patrilineage.

There are some important rites of passages (Gannep, 1971) for both sexes. These are circumcision rites (ikwa ugu) for both sexes and menstruation rites (ezi) for females.



Illustration 4.10: A slave descendant officiating rituals during a maximal patrilineage ancestors/ancestresses worship at Ebedei, during the Iruanri festival. Note the position of the legs.



Illustration 4.11: A free-born officiating rituals during a maximal patrilineage ancestors/ancestresses worship at Ebedei, during the Iruanri festival.

Circumcision rites are performed for males between the ages of 10 and 15 years. This marks their transition from childhood (nwata) to puberty (okolobie). The circumcised boy stays at home until the circumcision wound heals. Special sumptuous meals are cooked for him during this period. For instance, in the morning, roasted yam and dried fish soaked with palm oil is served. In the afternoon, it is yam with yam soup (osusu), and in the evening, pounded yam with either pepper soup (ikele) or palm fruit soup (ofe eku) are served. His peers visit him regularly throughout the period. At night, they stay together to keep vigil. They tell folktales, stories and jokes to keep awake. Some of them sleep in turns with him.

On the other hand, women perform menstruation rites. Menstruation rites are performed when a girl first menstruates. It marks her passage from childhood (nwata) to puberty age (ngboto). When a girl sees her first menstruation, a hut (uno ezi) is built for her outside the main compound to stay throughout her menstrual period. The hut is usually built by her suitors and their friends, who in addition to her peers, attend her and keep vigil during the period. After the ceremony, the girl is expected to choose a husband from the suitors. Therefore, the suitors compete among themselves in caring for her. Each would like her to get the most favorable

impression of him which subsequently makes her select him as her husband. The ceremony of (iwune ezi) is celebrated on the day after the end of her menstruation.

Finally, in about the third month of a woman's first pregnancy, the clitoridectomy (female circumcision) rites are performed. It signifies her transition to motherhood (nne). The woman leaves her conjugal home to her natal home for the rites. On the day of the circumcision, the Umuada/ndiom-onusa (daughters/wives) of both the conjugal and natal patrilineages attend and aid in the ceremonial rituals. After the circumcision, patrilineage of marriage pays the circumcision fee (ego ikwa ugu) and presents some gifts to her natal patrilineage. Also, the husband's kindred and friends attend the ceremony with gifts for her. In about a traditional week (izu - four days), the husband brings about two young girls from his cognate group to serve as his wife's helpers (attendants) - nwa ekuku. Besides, the husband stays with his wife in her natal home for about one month out of the three months of the rites-ine-ugu. The woman and her attendants are richly fed like the circumcised boy. It is the husband's obligation to cook the meals, but often, his female in-laws help to cook the lunch and super. At the end of the third month, the woman goes with the attendants to visit her

husband's natal kindred. Gifts are presented to her during these visits. Later, the end of the rites ceremony is performed (ito ni ugu) which is attended by the same crowd as on the circumcision day. These female rites of passage promote female solidarity not only through the shared experience of the ritual procedures, or through the ascendancy of a female leadership, but also through their affirmation of an alternative female world view. "While the women's reality affirms their special vulnerability with regard to their men, it also provides an organized avenue for consolidating an autonomous female response to male power" (March and Taggu, 1986:79). We should note that during these rites, the person (both sexes) performing them, rubs Ufie and Ulie with palm kernel or coconut oil. It is one of the symbols used to identify the person performing these rites.

It is necessary to conclude this section by noting that the socio-economic changes have given rise to nouveau riches, some of whom are among the emerging ruling class. They manipulate all available political indices to their advantage. For instance, the name 'Ndokwa' was their creation because this ecological division enhances their economic and political aggrandizement more than the cultural and linguistic

uniformities. For instance, Government (Public) appointments, contracts, etc. are given on the line of this ecological division. Thus, most people would not have got such government appointments or contracts without this division (Nnoli, 1978; 1989). Besides, most of the peasant communal farm lands jointly owned by peasants have been alienated by the rich in the pretext of developing the villages. Also, the royalties/damages paid to the villages by the Oil Companies for exploring oil were collected by them for their own use. Some movements have been formed in some of these villages to resist and check the exploitation by the nouveau riches, for example, in Utagba-Ogbe, Beneku, etc.

History:

From the oral traditions¹⁵ collected from the groups of villages, we can categorize Ndokwa people's settlements as follows:-

1. Settlements that claim autochthony. They are the most ancient of the settlements, for example, Ikilibi village in Utagba.

¹⁵ Ongoing Ekejiuba, F.I. and Nzei, A.A., research on "Cultural History of the Ukwuani People". This research was started by late Prof. D.I. Nwoga.

2. Settlements that claim migration from the eastern part of Igbo land: Eziokpor, Umuebu, Abbi, Obiaruku, Abala, Akarai.
3. Settlements that claim Igala origin: Ebedei, Akoku, Ogume, Osisa.
4. Settlements that claim origin from Western Igbo: Akoku, Abbi, Utagba.
5. Settlements that claim Edo (Benin) origin: Ebedei, Utagba, Onicha-Ukwuani, Ogume, Ashaka, Osisa, Efo, Aboh.
6. Settlements that claim origin from other Ndokwa villages: Obikwele, villages in Ebedei, Akoku, Adiai.
7. Settlements that claim origin from Isoko/Urhobo: Igbuku, Lagos-Iyede, Iyedeami, Orogun, Aragba, etc.

The above categorization shows that most of the groups of villages have mixed origin. This suggests our using group of villages instead of clan¹⁶ as some writers (Nzimiro, 1972; Onwuejeogwu, 1987). This does not suggest that there are no settlements that could be referred to as clans, for instance, Obikwele, but we are more concerned here with uniformities than exceptions. The migrations were in phases. The earliest of

¹⁶ C.F. Fox, 1967 and Onwuejeogwu, 1978:284 for the definition of clan.

them, that is those that claim autochthony might have been before the 10th century A.D., while the most recent, that is the Isoko/Urhobo migrations were in the 19th century A.D. (Egharevba, 1962; Ogedengbe, 1971; Ikime, 1972; Onwuejeogwu, 1987).

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CHAPTER FIVE

PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN'S STATUS

Lineage Structure of the Groups of Villages:

The Ndokwa lineages are patrilineal and segmentary. The institution of sacred kingship is found on this structure, in most of the groups of villages in the riverine area. In Ndokwa groups of villages (Obodo), the patrilineages are organized in a four-level type of hierarchy (Onwuejeogwu, 1981:103-105) at the village (Ogbe) level. These are the minimal (Ofuotu/Umunnali), the minor (nkpukpu/umunnali), major (imusu) and maximal (ndibe). The component patrilineages have different degrees of authority. Thus, a maximal lineage has more authorities - political, economic, ritual, jural and social than a major; a major than a minor, and minor than a minimal. Similarly, the head of a maximal patrilineage male or female (Okei/Okpala or Ada ndibe) wields more political, legal and ritual powers than the major head of a patrilineage (Okei/Okpala or Ada Imusu).

The villages (ogbe) form what we could call town (Obodo). The Obodo is at the apex of the hierarchy, followed by the villages, and then the patrilineages. Thus, political, legal and ritual powers are crystalised at the Obodo, the widest community of related people. A group of villages is therefore

organized in the following order of authority: Obodo (town), Ogbe (villages), Ndibe (maximal patrilineages), Imusu (major patrilineages), nkpukpu/ummunali (minor patrilineages) and Ofuotu/umunnali (minimal patrilineages) (see Figures 5.I - 5.IV).

The villages as well as maximal, major, minor and minimal patrilineages are usually named after the 'founding ancestor'. The members of the village or patrilineage call themselves the children of the 'founding ancestor'. For example, Umueziogoli village, Umuogbeoyibo maximal patrilineage, Umuokpala-Nzei major patrilineage, etc. in Ebedei group of villages (see Figure 5.1). The location of the descendants or children of the founding ancestors/ancestresses is called Ogbe, for example, Ogbe Umueziogoli and Ogbe Umuogbeoyibo in Ebedei group of villages, and Ogbe Umuogwezi (Umuadede) in Obiaruku group of villages. On the other hand, the 'town' is named after the event or circumstance that brought the villages together. For instance, Obikwele means 'Obi Kweli mmadu Obie' (if a settlement is found favorable, person/people settle in it). This is because the Abibi river goddess made it possible for their ancestresses and ancestors (who were fisherwomen/fishermen from Onyia) to survive and settle on the bank of the Abibi river. It provided food for them to eat when

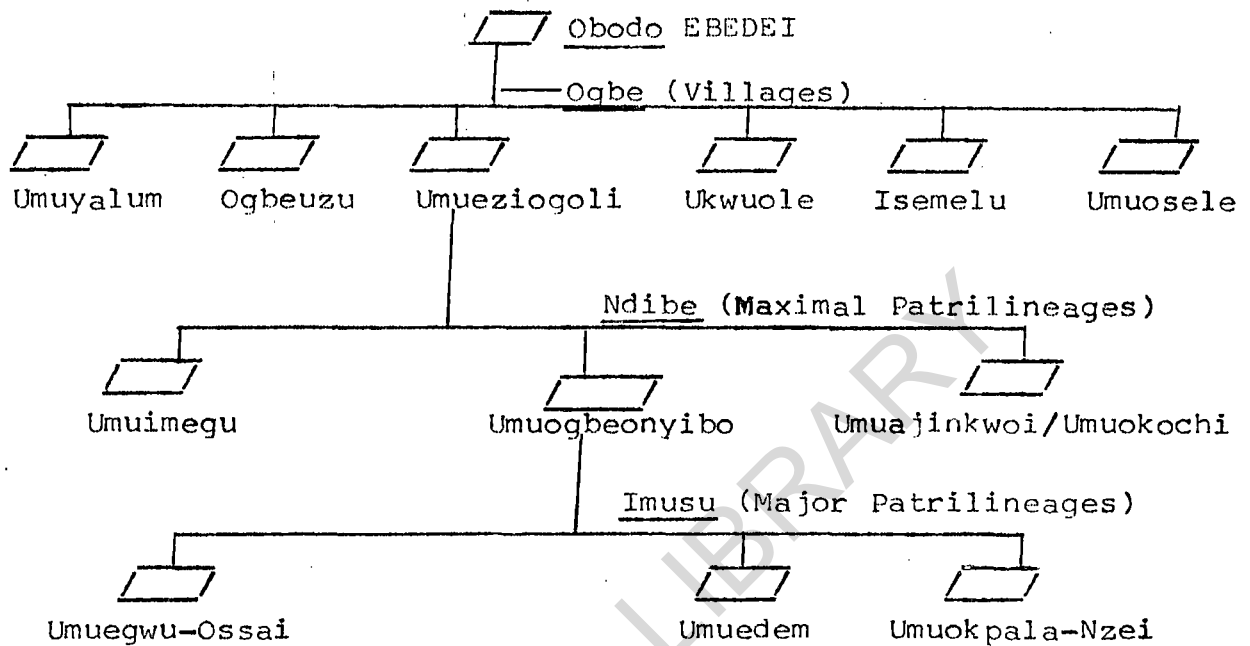


FIGURE 5:I - EBEDEI GROUP OF VILLAGES.

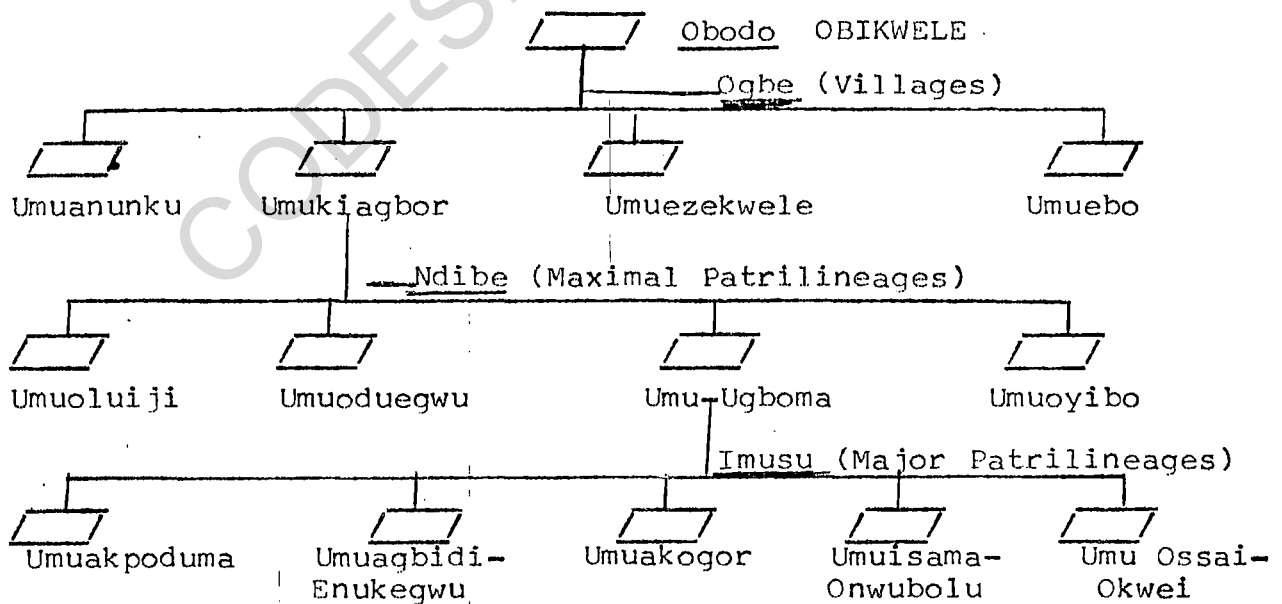


FIGURE 5:II - OBIKWELE GROUP OF VILLAGES.

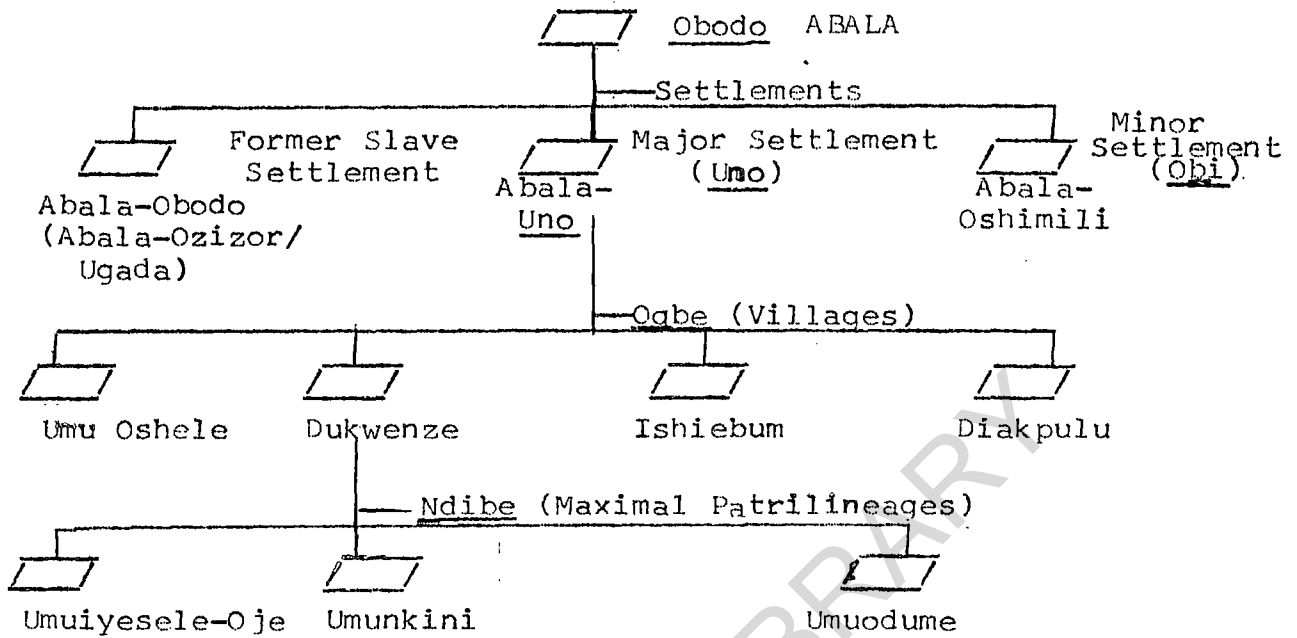


FIGURE 5:III - ABALA GROUP OF VILLAGES.

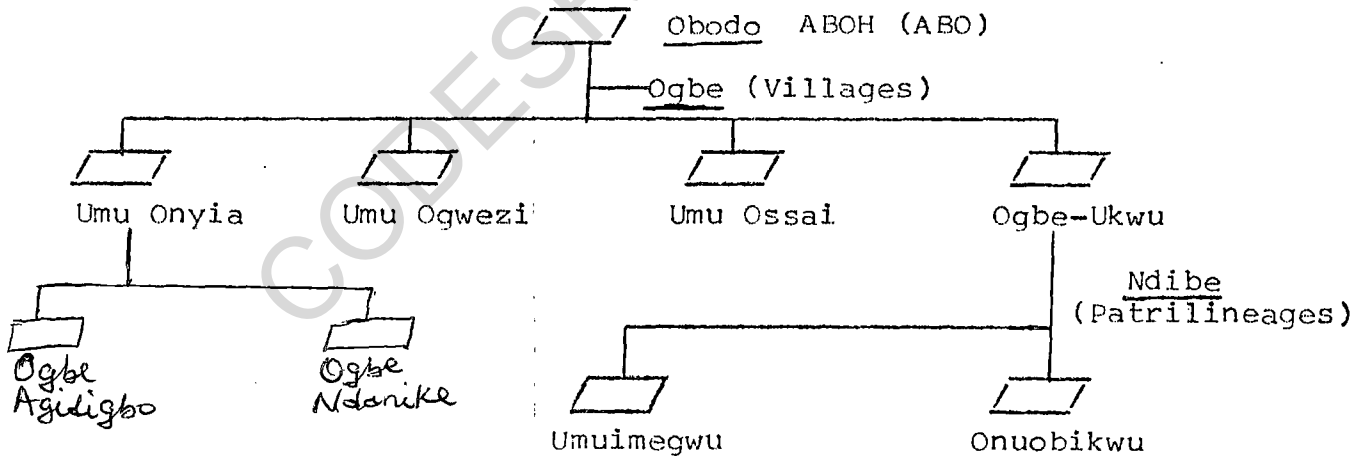


FIGURE 5:IV - ABOH (ABO) GROUP OF VILLAGES.*

* More information will be given in subsequent study.

they were very hungry and exhausted, unlike their kinsmen/kinswomen who left for Onyia but died on the way when they became hungry and had no food to eat.

An individual's membership of a minimal patrilineage qualifies him/her to belong to a minor, major, maximal, village or town respectively. One can be the head of both a minimal, a minor, a major and a maximal patrilineage, village and town simultaneously if he is the oldest person in the town, (Okpala-uku/Ada Obodo). The patrilineages are corporate groups (Onwuejeogwu, 1978:287).

The major patrilineage is a land holding unit. An individual's rights and duties such as those based on inheritance, succession and title-taking, and his/her social, moral, political, economic, jural and ritual responsibilities, are first defined in terms of the individual's membership of his/her minimal lineage. Further, an individual's rights and duties at the various levels in the hierarchy are defined in terms of the specific rights and duties attached to the level.

However, in terms of the lineages' supremacy of authority over others they are asymmetrical and symmetrical in their vertical and horizontal placement and order respectively. This is contrary to Onwuejeogwu's (1981:105-135) observation on the Nri, because the Ndokwa society is not marked by wealth

differentials and associated groupings. And slightly similar to Evans-Pritchard's (1940) observation on the Nuer, Fortes' (1945; 1949) Tallensi or Bohannan's (1954) Tiv, for one cannot observe a dominant 'segmentary opposition' among the Ndokwa (Evans-Pritchard; 1940; Sahlins, 1961; Horton, 1972; Onwuejeogwu, 1981:105-134). The order of ancestor/ancestress worship during the festivals of Otite/Iwaji/Iluannri/Ise, etc. provide a vivid identification of the asymmetrical and symmetrical relationships that exist among the patrilineages. According to Onwuejeogwu (1978:247):

The ancestor cult has four main characteristics which may be isolated... It is the cult of the immediate jural superior; through it elders have jural superior; authority and political and social power over the activities of their dependents. This is because the ancestor cult has a hierarchical structure as defined by the lineage segments. It is the cult of the structurally significant ancestor. The cult is arranged to correspond to the genealogical and segmentary structure of the society. Thus the worship of more and more distant ancestors brings together wider and wider groups in cooperation. It is the cult of the property-owning group. This group is the most effective ritually, jurally and socially in ancestor worship...

During the ancestors/ancestresses festivals, the Okpala-Uku/Ada of the villages worship the ancestors/ancestresses first, then the maximal and major patrilineages, and so on.

In addition to the above patrilineages, a man identifies with his mother's patrilineages. That is he identifies with both his father's and mother's patrilineages. This is called Ebo. On the other hand, a woman's ebo means her natal, mother's and conjugal patrilineages. The individual's ebo is further extended and demarcated into ebo-nne (mother's) and ebo-nnali (father's). Ebo could be regarded as an individual's 'cognate' group (Onwuejeogwu, 1978:283). Ebo, as it is used in Ukwuani, is in contrast with Nzimiro's (1972:21) designation of ebo as quarters. One doubts if ebo according to Nzimiro's meaning is actually applicable to Aboh.

The individuals patrilineages, cognates and kindred form a web of lineages which links him/her with other people. Women are seen in the patrilineages as the main architects of these webs of lineages through their marriages and procreation. Consequently, without women, lineages would be in extinction. When a woman is married, the marriage does not end at exchange of the bride and bridewealth between the patrilineages of the bride and bridegroom but the linkage of the patrilineages into what is called Ogo (affinal relationship). This notwithstanding, the ability of the bridegroom's patrilineage to give wife to the bride's patrilineage further strengthens the affinal bonds. The patrilineages give wife and take wife

among themselves, in as much as the intended couples are not cognates. Thus, the rights, duties and obligations of wife-taker and wife-giver are balanced among the patrilineages. These marriage linkages unite the patrilineages, and produce social and political alliances between the patrilineages.

Marriage is therefore not only an individual contract but also a group contract. Marriage agreement is generally sealed by the initial exchange of wife for material (sic) wealth. This involves the receiving of wealth (sic) and the giving of a wife (sic). The double act of giving and receiving are (sic) symbolically sealed by elaborate rites. This agreement is perpetuated by three important kinship relationships which the exchange creates and generates: firstly, the in-law relationships called Ogo; secondly, the sister's son-mother's brother relationship, which is equivalent to the daughter's son-mother's father relationship called Nwadiala-Nnamochie in Nri kinship terminology; thirdly, the daughter relationship called Nwa okpu or nwa ada (plural: Umu okpu or Umu ada) (Onwuejeogwu, 1981:129-130).

The social and political alliances formed by marriage provide avenues for inter-patrilineage conflict management. This is extended to villages/towns as there are inter-village/town marriages among the people. Thus, in addition to the economic benefits which marriages provide to both patrilineages, social and political alliances make affinal relationships very important in the society. Most especially, it contributes to the peaceful co-existence with neighbours. Thus, Green (1964:215-216) noted that:

... Whereas in their capacity as (sic) wives, the women look inward to the village where they (sic) are married, in their capacity as (sic) daughters, they look outward in all directions to the innumerable villages in which they were respectively born. In the first case the unity of the village is emphasized. In the second case - that of the "Meeting between all the women born in the same village but scattered broadcast by marriage among the neighbouring villages" - it is the links between the villages that are strengthened and institutionalized.

The daughters (married and unmarried) of the patrilineage (Umuada/Ndiom Imusu) and the wives of the patrilineage (ndiomonusa) positions in their patrilineages - as daughters on the one hand and wives on the other, make them very important. The continuity, prosperity and survival of the patrilineages depends on them to a great extent. Generally, the Umuada are very powerful (Leith-Ross, 1939; Green, 1964; Van Allen, 1972; 1976; Okonjo, 1976; Amadiume, 1987; Ekejiuba, 1991). The Umuada usually screen and recommend wives from their conjugal lineages for the men from their natal lineage. They serve as the last resort in intra-familial/inter-familial disputes. Thus, they are safety-valves in their natal lineages, by shielding the men against disputes that can disrupt or disintegrate the unity of the patrilineage. For instance, the permanence of membership and indispensability of women in their natal patrilineage is demonstrated by the 'Bring home our dead daughter to bury' practice of the patrilineages. That is, any dead married woman

must be brought from her conjugal home to her natal home for burial. Similarly, Green (1964:165), observed that "... in life there is much inter-communication between the families of husband and wife ..., on the death of the woman, a rallying of her whole native village, both men and their wives, to fetch her back for burial either in or on the road to her birthplace..." Also, Anigbo (1984:144-151) asserts that among the Ibagwa-Aka Igbo, when a woman dies, her corpse must be brought back ceremonially for burial in her natal lineage land. "Burial in her lineage land thereby becomes a confirmation of her permanent membership of the group. Therefore members of her lineage must receive back her remains with dignity and honour due to a member of the lineage" (145). Another demonstration of the indispensable position of women in their natal patrilineages/villages is the return of the oldest woman of the patrilineage/village to be the Ada of her natal patrilineage/village. Correspondingly, Hoffer (1972:154) observed that among the Mende and Sherbro, "in old age, a woman may return permanently to her natal village with the status of an elder, and women as well as men may finally become revered ancestors."

Ancestor/Ancestress Cult:

i. Ancestor/Ancestress Cult Symbolism:

The ancestor/ancestress cult is the centripetal force that unites the patrilineage. It galvanizes and sustains the unity of the patrilineage. Besides, the ancestors/ancestresses worship reflects (Ndokwa social and moral systems, such as status differentiation within the domestic and lineage group, the centrifugal tendency of the lineages and the centripetal tendency of the clan, the system of inheritance, some of their morals and values, and their ideas of reciprocal relationships. The ancestor/ancestress cult can be considered an extension of society beyond human bounds so that people are dependent on the ancestors/ancestresses (Onwuejeogwu, 1978:247).

The Ndiche¹⁷ symbolize the founding ancestors at the town/village (Obodo/Ogbe) levels, whereas the Ndikei symbolize the maximal/major patrilineages (ndibe/imusu) and the ofu Umunnali the minor/minimal patrilineages (nkpukpu/umunnali; Ofu Otu/Umunnali). At the maximal/major patrilineages (ndibe/imusu) level, the ancestresses Ofo (Ofo Umuada) is kept together with the ancestors' ofo (Ofo ndiokpala). Both are kept as Ndikei and worshipped together. The ofu of the

¹⁷ Ndiche in Aboh has more symbolism than the above. Nzei, Nwoga and Ekejiuba study addresses this.

ancestress (Ofo umuada) is tied in a 'bundle' to differentiate it from the ancestors ofo (Ofo ndiokpala). (See illustration 5.1 - 3). This is similar to the practice among the LoDagaa, of Ghana where a woman who has children may have a shrine made in her name. At first, the shrine is left in her husband's house, but after the final funeral ceremony, it is taken to her father's home and placed near the shrines of her patrilineal ancestors, which is where she socially belongs. Although the ancestresses shrines are *kept* with those of ancestors, they are not usually worshipped with the ancestors (Goody, 1962; Onwuejeogwu, 1978:242-245). Besides, the Ada of the town, village, maximal, major, minor or minimal patrilineages keeps another type of Ofo Umuada (see illustrations 5.4 - 5.6). The matrilineage is symbolized by Ofo Umunna/Omanne/Elanoma (see illustrations 5.7 - 5.9). This is in contrast to Ejizu's (1986) observation that women keep only ofo umuada in Igboland. According to him:

The use of normal-sized Ofo object forms is usually the preserve of men throughout Igbo land. Women could be said to have Ofo in so far as they could make use of their cooking knife, their right hand or grass shoots to realize the ideas in practical usage... women specialists like diviners and a group known as the Umuada ... could make a limited use of Ofo twigs (37).

Thus, the types of Ofo which women keep in Ndokwa and their functions and symbolisms, clearly contradict Ejizu's (1986)

assertion. The eldest male of the town, village or patrilineage is the custodian of the Ofo-ndiche, ndikei or Ofo Umunnali, they officiate during the worship of these forces. The oldest female of the matrilineage on the other hand is the custodian of the Ofo Umunne/Omanne/Elanoma. The custodianship of these symbols coincides with the distribution of authority within the town/village or lineage just as other Igbo societies and some societies like those of the Tallensi and Benin (Onwuejeogwu, 1978:242; Ekwunife, 1990). Thus, the elders derive their authority from mediating between the dead ancestors/ancestresses and descendant generation.

The ndiche is symbolized with a horn-like carving from elephant tusk usually known as Oduku¹⁷ (see illustrations 5.10-5.11), while the ndikei, ofo Umunnali, Ofo Umunne, Omanne and elenoma are carved figurines or ofo sticks (see illustrations 5.1 - 5.3/5.12 - 5.15). Since each figurine or ofo stick represents an ancestor/ancestress, if the figurines or ofo sticks become too many, the patrilineage could decide to cast them into bronze. Then a portion of each figurine or ofo stick is mixed with molten bronze and cast into ofo (ofo ona/nze).

¹⁷ The number of the Oduku represents the number of the people that founded the village for example, at Umuogwezi village, Obiaruku has two and Umueziogoli, Ebedei has four (see illustrations 5.10 and 5.11).



Illustration 5.1: Major patrilineage's (Imusu) Ofo (Ndikei) at Ebedei.



Illustration 5.2: A Maximal patrilineage's (Ndibe) Ofo (Ndikeyi) at Abala.



Illustration 5.3: A major patrilineage's (Imusu) Ofo (Ndikei) at Abala.



Illustration 5.4: Ofo Umuada of Obikwele.



Illustration 5.5: Ofo Umuada of Umuiyesele Oje/Nkini in Abala.



Illustration 5.6: The Ada Umuiyeseleoje/Nkini in Abala sitting beside the Ofo Umuada.



Illustration 5.7: Ofo Umunne (Matrilineage Ofo) at Ebedei.

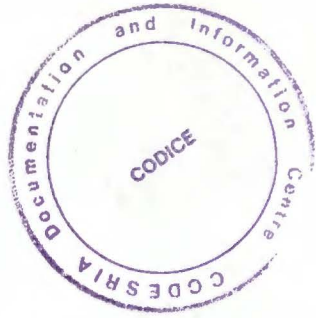


Illustration 5.8: Ofo Umunne (Matrilineage Ofo)/Nwannali Onyeke (brother's Ofo) at Ebedei.



Illustration 5.9: Ofo Umunne (Matrilineage Ofo) at Aboh.

Similarly, the Ikenge symbol is cast into 'bronze Ikenge' (Ikenge ona) as the ancestors/ancestresses 'ikenge' are kept together with their ofu (see the illustrations). This practice contradicts Onwuejeogwu's (1978:251) observation that among the Nri:

When a man dies his Ikenge is split into two during his mortuary rites and thrown outside. It then becomes ordinary wood. The owner has ceased to exist in human form. He played his role when he was alive. Now dead, he ceases to have a human personality.

The Ndokwa people believe that the ancestors/ancestresses roles never cease, and the inheritance of their Ikenge means that the lineage is endowed with their prosperity when they are alive. Thus, the ancestors/ancestresses' ofu is usually worshipped with the ancestors/ancestresses' Ikenge, during the Ikenge festival or when a diviner directs a person to sacrifice to his/her ancestors or ancestresses Ikenge.

We should note that in all the groups of villages, except Obikwele, men are the custodians of the Oduku. At Obikwele a woman (Ada-Abibi) is the custodian of the Oduku which is often called Otuleka Abibi (see illustration 5. 16). The Okpala-Uku of Obikwele is the custodian of the ofu of the group of villages (see illustration 5. 17). This is in contrast with other groups of villages where the Okpala-Uku keeps both the Oduku and the ofu of the groups of villages. This explains the

centrality of the Abibi in Obikwele. During the Iwaiji (New Yam) festival of the Ada Abibi (iwaiji Ada Abibi) the Okpala-uku pays homage to her, an act which is not usually reciprocated. Further, because the ritual authority of the Ada Abibi supersedes that of the Okpala-Uku the Ada Abibi officiates during the rituals in a situation where the Okpala-Uku would want to atone (sacrifice to) the Abibi. The Abibi goddess is believed to be the supreme deity in Obikwele. As such, it is seen as the creator and sustainer of other deities, spirits and ancestors/ancestresses. Hence the importance of the female goddess Abibi as it protected and fed the founding ancestors/ancestresses of Obikwele, and made it possible for them to survive and settle there. This agrees with the conclusion by Steady (1981:30) that:

Women's roles as child-bearers and food-producers are often associated with fertility of the land, this is implicit in much of the ritual. This life-giving quality endows women not only with much prestige but equates them with the life-giving force itself.

The authority and role of Ada Abibi call for the re-examination of the view that in Igboland, women do not have any ritual authority that supersedes that of men (Ekwunife, 1990).

ii. Patrilineage Ancestors/Ancestresses Worship:

The rituals of the town/village/patrilineage ancestors/ancestresses are officiated by men (Okpala-Uku, Okei-

ndibe/imusu/umunnali/nkpukpu/ofuotu). On the other hand, the Ada of the town/village/patrilineage officiates during the ancestress worship of the town/village/patrilineage. The house of the Okpala-uku, and that of the previous Okpala-uku (Okei's house) which is the site of the ancestors/ancestresses worship must be cleansed by the Ada and Ofashi before the commencement of the worship. Similarly, the ritual of cleansing is performed in the various houses of the heads, Okei of the major and maximal patrilineages on the day of their ancestor/ancestress worship. If the Ada/Ofashi fails to perform the rituals of cleansing, the rituals of the ancestor/ancestress worship will not be held in that house. This is because an uncleansed house is a defiled house (uno agwa) and the ancestors/ancestresses do not eat in such a house. To avoid the occurrence of a situation where the rites of ancestral worship, cannot be performed, the Okpala-uku must always maintain harmonious relationship with the Ada/Ofashi. The Ada and Okpala-Uku perform the rites of ancestral worship the same day.

After the cleansing rituals, the ancestral worship rituals start with the cooking of food by the patrilineage Umuada. The patrilineage Umuada are specifically responsible for the 'cooking rites' of the patrilineal ancestral worship during the

Oluannri festival. This role of Umuada is similar to that of the women of Mende and Sherbro who from time to time return to their natal village to "cook for the dead", that is, to participate in ceremonies to honour the dead, (Hoffer, 1972:154). If the Umuada refuse to cook because they are aggrieved by either the Okei or men of the patrilineage (ndikom-Imusu), settlement must be reached before they start cooking. This serves as a check on the powers of the patrilineage Okei or men, for they can never cook the food themselves. Thus, religious authority, reflected and reinforced by women's ritual powers, also legitimize considerable political action by women even though the limits to that authority are tied to the place of both gender and power in the overall religious world view (March and Taqqu, 1986:72).

During the rituals, members of the patrilineage pay homage to the lineage head (Okei). The men bring yams, wine and money, while women bring kolanut and wine, money (not compulsory) (see illustration: 5.18 - 5.21). Also, the patrilineage sons-in-law (ogo) and tenants pay homage. The homage of the ndi-ogo is very important to the patrilineage



Illustration 5. 10: Oduku (Ndiche) of Umuogwezi Village in Obiaruku.



Illustration 5.11: Oduku (ndiche) of Umueziogoli village in Ebedei.



Illustration 5. 12: A Major Patrilineage's (Imusu) Ofo (Ndikey) at Obikwele.



Illustration 5. 13: A Minor Patrilineage's (Umunnali) Ofo at Abala.



Illustration 5. 14: A maximal Patrilineage's (Ndibe) Ofo (Ndikei) at Abala.



Illustration 5. 15: A Maximal Patrilineage's (Ndibe) Ofo (ndikei) at Abala.

because it strengthens the web of the lineage through the affinal relationships. Besides, it demonstrates that their daughters are living in peace with their husbands. It also makes husbands respect their wives for if they maltreat them, they would complain to their patrilineage, who would in turn discipline them (the in-laws) during the festival. The penalties range from fine (omasi wunye) to the rejection of their tributes. This does not suggest that husbands are not disciplined for their misdemeanor against their wives at other times, but often this occasion is chosen because of the presence of the patrilineage members. Usually, the annual tribute (Ifo Ibu) paid by a husband to the wife's patrilineage during the Iluannri festival is 10 tubers of yam, 1 keg of palm wine and money (no specific amount). Green (1964:164) observes that:

There are certain social occasions when there is a general movement of visits between in-laws. At the end of the wet season, when the whole of Agbaja village-group clears the paths to the central market place on the same day, there is much visiting and entertaining between relations by marriage: and shortly after, just when yams are beginning to be dug and when the religious festival of the local deity is held, married daughters, taking presents of food, return to their parents' place accompanied by their children and their husbands.

Heaps of yams are usually seen in the houses of lineage heads or Okpala-Uku or Ada after the ancestral worship festivals (see

illustration 5.22). The head of the patrilineage who owns the heap of yam must give some tubers of yam to the widowed and divorced women of the patrilineage. This demonstrates the 'caring' responsibility of the patrilineage to those categories of their daughters. If these women have no accommodation or farm land, the patrilineage provides these to alleviate their sufferings.

iii. Matrilineage Ancestress Worship:

The oldest woman of the matrilineage (Ada/Okei-Onyenye/Umunne) keeps the matrilineage Ofo (Ofo umunne/Omanne/elanoma). She officiates during the rituals of ancestress worship (see illustrations 5.23 - 5.25). The women's roles with regard to the matrilineage Ofo contradict Ejizu (1986) and Green's (1964) generalized assertion that women do not keep Ofo in Igboland. Also, the Ndokwa situation is in contrast with the observation by Gooddy (1962) and Onwuejeogwu (1978) about the place of women in LoDagaa ancestor cult. It is worth noting, however, that while women do not keep their patrilineage ancestors ofo or officiate during the patrilineage rituals, they could keep their dead brother's Ofo¹⁸ (Ofo nwannali onyeke). For

¹⁸ It is often directed by the diviner



Illustration 5. 16: Ada Abibi Obikwele sitting beside of
Abibi.



Illustration 5.17: Okpala-uku Obikwele with Ofo Obikwele.

instance, illustration 5.18, shows a woman officiating during the rituals of her mother's (ancestress) and two brothers' (ancestors) worship. She is the custodian of three - one ancestress and two ancestors' Ofo.

During the ancestress worship, all members of the matrilineage including the in-laws (Ogo) pay homage to the Ada/Okei Onyenye Umunne. The men provide the yam and wine, while the women cook as usual. But, during the Otite (ancestors/ancestresses) festival, men do the yam roasting and cook the soup as it is done during the ancestor/ancestress (men officiated) worship of this festival. The matrilineage ancestresses worship in Ndokwa suggest that although descent, succession and inheritance are patrilineal and marriage usually is patrilocal-virilocal, the matrilineal philosophy still asserts itself ritually, socially, politically, legally and emotionally. Thus, according to Green (1964:161), "clearly matrilineality plays a considerable part in part of Igbo society. Descent and succession are patrilineal, marriage is patrilocal and a man inherits from his father. But the matrilineal principle asserts (sic) itself both legally and emotionally."



Illustration 5.18: A minor patrilineage's (Umunali) head (Okei) officiating ancestors worship at Ebedei.



Illustration 5.19: Some Umuada paying homage to their major patrilineage (Imusu) head (Okei) during ancestors/ancestresses worship at Abala.



Illustration 5.20: The same as 5.17



Illustration 5.21: The same as 5.17.



Illustration 5.22: Heap of yam tubers in the house of a major patrilineage (Imusu) head (Okei) after Iluanri ancestor/ancestress worship festival at Ebedei.



Illustration 5.23: A matrilineage head officiating rituals of Ofo Umunne (ancestress Ofo) and nwannali Onyeke Ofo (Brother's Ofo) worship at Ebedei.



Illustration 5.24: A matrilineage head officiating rituals of Ofo Umunne (ancestress ofo) worship at Ebedei.



Illustration 5.25: A matrilineage head officiating rituals of Ofo Umunne (ancestress Ofo) worship at Aboh.

This disproves Wolf's (1972:37) view that: "The uterine family has no ideology, no formal structure, and no public existence. It is built out of sentiments and loyalties that die with its members, but it is no less real for all that." March and Taggu (1986:35) also disagreeing with the latter's view say that: "Even in the absence of culturally recognized descent from the mother or life long residence with her, motherhood commonly creates vital ties with children." Thus, matrilineal societies and matrilineage also provide good examples of the development a structure which makes female self-reliance and authority a positive ideology (Steady, 1981:17). The matrilineage philosophy to a great extent protects and enhances women's powers in patrilineal societies.

CHAPTER SIX
OWNERSHIP OF MEANS OF PRODUCTION
AND GENDER RELATIONS

Introduction:

Ndokwa is an agrarian society. In most agrarian societies, land is the dominant and determinant means of production, the ownership of which determines the social relations of production (Marx, 1867; Marx and Engels, 1968; Poulantzas, 1987). The type of relations of production and the resulting social relations of production in most agrarian societies, produce either the primitive communal socio-economic formation (mode of production) or the feudal socio-economic formation. Consequently, the socio-economic formation determines a society's gender relations which could be complementary (equal) or super-ordinate/subordinate (unequal), accordingly, it empowers either gender (Engles, 1978). Thus, Hoffer (1972:162) noted that:

... it would seem that control over the means of production has some important implications for political power. For instance, traditional economic activities in the Mende/Sherbro area are farming, especially of rice and cassava, and shallow - water fishing. Aside from cutting the bush and planting, women do the farming and preserving of vegetable foods. They also fish with hand nets, dry the fish and market surplus foods. Women's economic contribution is both significant and cooperatively achieved. In some cases, as when an able old woman is the ranking elder of a descent

group and administers the corporate estate of that group - principally its land - she has considerable control over the basic factors of production: land, labour, and capital from marketed surpluses and the gifts of clients using the land ... Mende and Sherbro men respect women, and culturally women are defined as active and able for leadership roles. This contrasts with the Western culture.

Furthermore, in pastoral societies where the principal wealth is herds of half-domesticated cattle which are handled by men, women make a less substantial economic contribution and have negligible control over the factors of production (Hoffer, 1972:162). Thus, Dupire (1963:85) described Fulani women as working solitarily, milking their share of their husband's herd, and having little more legal, political or religious status than a child.

The primitive communalistic socio-economic formation is marked by communal non-individual or privileged group ownership of the means of production - land¹⁹. Nevertheless, the means of labour are not commoditised or exploitatively commercialised. Therefore, the relations of production and social relations of production are equal. The socio-economic formation is classless. This gave rise to the resultant equal gender relations. However, in the feudalistic socio-economic formation, the privileged group (feudal lords) own the means of

¹⁹ Including rivers, streams and fish ponds in societies they exist.

production (land), as such, relations of production and social relations of production produced are unequal, thus producing social classes - the feudal lords (landed) and serfs (landless) (Marx, 1967; Marx and Engels, 1968; Poulantzas, 1987). The natural division of labour - relations of production between the genders which was complementary and equal in the primitive communalistic socio-economic formation, became socially translated. This gave rise to gender inequality with women subordinated by men.

The 'Ndokwa' society depicts the primitive communalistic socio-economic (mode of production) characteristics, the kingdom status of some of groups of villages notwithstanding. This is because land is not owned by a privileged group (class) - the feudal Lords; there is no landless group - serfs in the kingdoms. For instance, the Obonwe (Obi) and the Olinzele in Aboh, the Igwe and the Odua Olinzele in Abala, etc. do not own land. Land (Object of Labour) including rivers, streams and fish ponds are owned communally. This is contrary to the Fulani (Smith, 1960), the Benin (Bradbury and Lloyd, 1957; Onwuejeogwu, 1978) or the Lozi (Gluckman, 1943; Onwuejeogwu, 1978). Although, the Benin lineages have given up their landowning rights to the state, all the land of the kingdom is said to belong to the Oba. "This statement refers primarily to

his position as the political ruler of the territory rather than to his actual control over the ownership of land. The land is vested in him as trustee for the whole people" (Onwuejeogwu, 1978:197). Further, the Benin case illustrates the situation in which the king, although called the owner of the land, has no control over it as the Lozi King. Even though the Lozi is politically not territorially organized, the King derives his political control from the fact that he is the hub and center of land distribution. "Without these rights over land allocation, it is doubtful if the Lozi King would be of any political significance. Lozi political authority and power are based on land, which is controlled by the King" (Onwuejeogwu, 1978:198).

Ownership of Land/Fish Ponds:

Land ownership has a hierarchical placement - Obodo (town), Ogbe (village), Ndibe (maximal patrilineage) and Imusu (major patrilineage). That is, a group of villages - Obodo has its territory which is divided for the villages. Each village territory is divided into parcels which the maximal patrilineages share among the major patrilineages. Finally, each major patrilineage parcels cut the land to its members -

both males and females, (widow, divorced and unmarried)²⁰. In other words, each Ogbe has its territory within the Obodo territory, and the Ogbe land is divided into parcel for the ndibe which is divided for the imusu. The imusu therefore, parcels out its shares to its members male and female according to each member's basic needs and ability. This is the practice in many African societies (Steady, 1981). For instance, among the Tiv, Onwuejeogwu (1978;194) observed that, a person only has the right to sufficient land to meet his/her basic needs of subsistence. In Ndokwa, although the Obodo, Ogbe and Ndibe regulate land use/ownership, the imusu is more central to it. These roles of the imusu - allocation of land and regulation of land use/ownership, suggest one of the reasons ancestors/ancestresses worship is markedly important at that level. Since the people's survival depend on land, and land is inherited through the imusu, the imusu serves as the rallying point for them. Further, this method of land holding could explain why the matrilineage Ofo is not as elaborate (much in number) as the patrilineage Ofo.

We should note that although the village groups, village section and patrilineages own land as discussed, the territory

²⁰

Widow, divorced and unmarried woman is called Okuno, while that of man is Okonkpolo.

or parcel of land, in practice, is owned by the first person that actually cleared the virgin forest (onye gboni ani)²¹, land thus belongs to the ancestors hence the Okpala-Uku of Obodo or Ogbe and Okei ndibe or imusu holds the land on trust for the Obodo, Ogbe, ndibe or imusu members. The Okpala-Uku/Okei is the linkage between the lineage members and the ancestors as depicted by the ancestors/ancestresses worship. As such, payment of homage to the Okei by lineage members partly symbolizes his role as their trustee for land. Since land belongs to the ancestors, it therefore belongs to everybody and the ancestors' chief priest holds the land on trust for the people of that patrilineage. All members of a patrilineage, both men and women, have equal right to the land of the patrilineages. Because there is no individual ownership of land, there is no appropriation. This equal relation to land (the means of production) produces equality in gender relations.

The whole territory was divided into two categories according to land usage - the 'residential land' (ani uno) and 'farm land' (ani ogo) before the incorporation of Ndokwa into the western capitalist economy. This incorporation into the

²¹ Onwuejeogwu (1978:197) made a similar observation for the Benin.

western capitalist economy brought with it the production of cash crops, mostly rubber. This created an additional category - 'cash crop land' (ani akwukwu). These three categories of land are identified as one moves from one group of villages to another. Usually, the 'residential land' is surrounded by the cash crop land (dominated by rubber plantations) and the latter by the 'farm land'.

Cash cropping eventually gave rise to individual ownership of land. Hailey (1946) noted that over most colonial Africa, the primary factor that created the individualization of land holdings was the introduction of export agricultural crops, particularly tree crops. Because land was owned by the patrilineage, men shared some parcels of farm land near the residential land among themselves for cash cropping. This resulted in their having more money at their disposal than women. But because the cash crop boom was unstable as the price fluctuated, men could not transform their wealth into absolute unequal gender relationship. Moreover, farming still dominates the people's economic activities. The individualization of land-holding introduced by cash cropping which was restricted to 'cash crop land' could not significantly change the existing primitive communal relations of production and social relations of production. The usufruct

right to land that governs the land-holding still applies to the 'cash crop land'. According to Onwuejeogwu (1978:196):

The cultivation of permanent crops has brought about some changes in the traditional pattern of land rights, theoretically, but it has not resulted in individual ownership of the land. Once planted permanent crops can be alienated by the owner by sale, pledge or mortgage, though in theory the land on which they are grown is not involved in the transaction.

Nonetheless, we should note that socio-economic changes have brought about the sale of land. A member of one patrilineage can buy land from another patrilineage. The land bought is inherited by his/her siblings. A patrilineage land cannot be sold to member of the same patrilineage, but one can sell one's owned land to a member of his/her lineage. Only 'residential land' and 'cash crop land' are usually individualized. Women were disadvantaged on the process of these types of land individualization because men took advantage of the fact that they held patrilineages land on trust for the patrilineage as well as their permanent stay in the patrilineage to share land among themselves for cash cropping and make more claim on the lineages residential land.

The ownership of fish ponds (ngbo) is the same as that of land, except that the products (fishes) of the ponds are owned also by the patrilineage. But rivers and streams within the territory of a group of villages belong to that group of

villages. Thus, all indigenes of the group of villages have equal right to the rivers/streams. In the place where fishing or eating the fish from their river/stream is not tabooed, an individual owns his/her catches from fishing. The harvesting of fish ponds (ikwo ngbo) is usually done between January and April of every year. Fishes harvest are shared to all members of the patrilineage according to age. That is, the higher the age the more the quantity of fish one gets. However, a part of an individual's catch is given to him/her before sharing. It is worthy to note that women are the major harvesters of fish ponds. The socio-economic changes have given rise to individual ownership of fish ponds by the nouveau riches. Communal lands are alienated by them for fish farms.

The individualization of land and fish ponds ownership is now addressed by the villages, to check the unbridled land speculation by the nouveau riches. In most villages, selling of land has been limited to the residential land and 'cash crop land'. Also, in some villages, for example in Umuaja-Akoku, residential land is under the direct control of the village. The village allocates the land in plots to indigenes that want to build houses. The allocation is based on one person, one plot. If an allocated plot is not developed within a certain period, it reverts to the village. Besides, no person sells

the plot allocated to him/her to another person. Further, land is not sold or allocated to non-indigenes except in-laws who are resident, but the allocation is done in the name of his wife (an indigene).

Household Farming and Ownership of Farm Crops:

Farming in a household is equitably done by the married couples. Thus, March and Taquu (1986:53) noted that: "Just as it is not always easy to get accurate information regarding the kinds of property men and women separately control or how each controls it, so, too, much of the information about the sexual division of labour is submerged." There is equitable division of labour among the nuclear family or polygynous compound family members. After parcels of farm land have been allocated to the members of the patrilineages, bush (farm land) clearing by the men starts. Allocation of farm land is done during the Iluanri (ancestors/ancestresses worship) festival. Also, allocation to each member of the patrilineages is according to his/her basic need, ability and family size. Similarly, Steady (1981:16) noted that, traditionally, land was communally owned and distributed according to the ability of a person to farm a certain area. Because farm land is allowed after each year's farming, to be fallowed for about eight years 'bush clearing'

is tedious. Men clear the bush with their male siblings and helpers. Any time a husband goes to the farm, the wife/wives must provide the food and kolanut to be eaten at the farm. A wife that fails to perform this responsibility loses her right to the farm.

After clearing, and the cleared bush is dried, the farm is burnt (iye oku). The men and women start to work on the farm (see illustrations 6.1 - 6.4). In a polygynous family, the husband divides the farm equally among the wives. The men (husbands) concentrate on the planting of yams and corn (maize) which are required as masculine food crops (akuku ndikom). Nevertheless, women help in the planting of corn in addition, they plant other food crops - melon, cassava, beans, vegetables, etc. which are regarded as feminine food crops (akuku ndiom). Although, theoretically all the food crops belong to the household, in practice, food crops are owned by the gender associated with them²². Weeding is usually done by the men while the women cook and attend to the feminine food crops. Wife/wives own the farm after yam tubers (mba iji) and stem tubers (ekpu iji) are harvested. This is logical, because all the crops left in the farm are feminine. Although, this

²² Green (1947) discussed the ownership of crops and production of food between men and women in Umueke Igbo, e.t.c.

method of food crops ownership in the household is still practiced, we observed some changes. Men now own cassava as well as their wives due to the high prices of cassava products (garri, starch and fermented, processed cassava (akpu/npiko)).

It is important to note that the types of foods consumed in households have shown that the women's (feminine) crops sustain the households throughout the year, for example, cassava, vegetables, etc. unlike the men's (masculine) crops - yam and corn. Women have crops to harvest throughout the seasons. Yam and corn are limited and after their harvests no other crops are planted. Succinctly, women's crops are more varied than men's crops: They sustain the households much longer and throughout the year. All season production of food crops by women has been observed as one of the indices that make women powerful in their households, and also make marriage important for men. Green (1964:170) observed among the Umueke Igbo and its neighbours that:

... the part women play in the economic and family life of the society means that even (sic) without public position they have much quiet power ... women are the chief breadwinners. Among this agricultural people who live almost entirely on the products of the soil, it is the crops grown by the women that provide the staple diet. For the purpose of food production, the economic unit is basically the individual family which grows or buys its own food and is responsible for its own members. Husbands and wives both have crops, the men having chiefly yam and women having cocoyam and

cassava and often a certain, amount of yam. The women also have the less hunger season corn crop and the vegetables (sic) that are the indispensable ingredient and relishes ... it is the women who provide the lion's share of the normal family food, ... The men admit that it is normally the women who feed them. This, they do so far as possible out of the crops they grow ...

Also, Steady (1981) and Boserup, (1970) noted that traditional African societies, by their very structure, encouraged the development of self-reliance among women, thus enhancing their power. This is due to the paramount role of women in horticulture and agriculture which are the predominant economic activities in Africa. "Since from all available evidence women spend more time on agricultural activities than men, women not only develop an ideology of self-reliance but can be said to have 'food power' in that they make certain decisions with regard to food production, processing and distribution" (Steady, 1981:15-16). Ndokwa men do not process feminine crops. For instance, it is unusual to see a man grating cassava or frying garri. Even if a man is unmarried, he invites any of his female cognates to help him process cassava for food. Also, the distribution of these food crops is done by women.

Inheritance:

Inheritance has gender connotation and is predominantly by premogeniture. A son inherits his father's properties,

(including slaves during slavery) while a daughter inherits that of her mother. In other words, men's properties are inherited by men and women's properties by women. For instance, in Ebedei, Osogbue nwa Eneluwe wunye Okolocha (Osogbue the daughter of Eneluwe, wife of Okolocha)²³, inherited her mother's properties including the slave, while brothers inherited that of their father. Because the slave had no child before he died, all his property were inherited by her. The researcher witnessed many occasions when plantain from the slave's farms were brought to her (Osogbue) by some members of her natal patrilineage. Although this practice still holds, some changes have occurred. Women now inherit their mother's immovable properties, for example, house. Immovable properties are kept on trust for the senior daughter (nwa ada) by her most senior brother (nwa diokpala). This change can be said to have been motivated by inter-village and inter-ethnic marriages (exogamy).

Nonetheless, if a man dies, without a son, his daughter (marital status notwithstanding) inherits his property (both movable and immovable). If however the daughter dies without

²³ This is usually how women are identified - the natal and conjugal family names.

a child, the property of her father revert to her father's eldest brother of the same paternal siblings. For instance, in Ebedei, the researcher bought a parcel of 'cash crop land' for residential purpose from a woman who inherited the land from her father. Her father planted rubber on the land and died without a son. Unfortunately, the woman was childless and aware of the implications, decided to sell the land. When the negotiation for the sale of the land was on, the eldest son of her late eldest patrilineal uncle who will inherit the land if the woman dies, did not want the land to be sold. He employed many tactics to obstruct or delay the sale. When the tactics did not succeed, he asked for the sale of half of the land. But when the head of their patrilineage (Okei imusu) intervened and supported the woman to sell the land according to her wish, the cousin withdrew. She sold the whole parcel of land and the head of their patrilineage was one of those who witnessed the sale. The payment and agreement were made at the house of the head of their patrilineage. A few years later, the woman died. If she did not sell the land, the cousin would have inherited it.

This pattern of inheritance in Ndokwa is unlike that of some Igbo areas east of the Niger river. For instance, in Nnewi, Anambra State, if a man dies without a son, the eldest

brother of the same paternal siblings inherits his property including his wife and children. We suggest that the intense pressures on land in those Igbo areas, is responsible for this type of inheritance. The smaller the quantity of land as a result of population increases, the more the tendency to make rules and regulations restricting access to and inheritance of land only by males. The rationale is that women are expected to marry and inherit from their conjugal homes. Also, in some Igbo areas, the commoditization of land brought about changes in inheritance to favour the permanent patrilineage members (men), instead of their in-laws, since a wife's property is regarded as her husband's. In addition to these changes in inheritance pattern men often use their authority to dominate and subordinate women.

Furthermore, in Ndokwa, in addition to a woman's usual rights in patrilineage land, she has right to build on her father's residential land and such house is inherited by her siblings. This practice is not restricted to only unmarried/widow/divorced women. Married women are inclusive. For instance, in Obiaruku, a woman married to an Itshekiri man, built two houses on her father's compound. She authorized the eldest brother to receive and use rent from one of the houses, while the other was left for her use. When her eldest brother

died, his male siblings decided to inherit the houses. Early this year a quit notice was served the tenant of the house from the deceased eldest brother's sons. She summoned the person that wrote and signed the quit notice before the Inotu but he refused to answer. She then summoned him before the Okpala-Uku and Nde Okwa (Isu Obi). He answered the summons (see illustrations 6.5 - 6.12). After the woman and the deceased brother's son had presented their cases and after the subsequent cross-examinations by the members of Okpala-Uku-in-council, judgement was delivered ordering the deceased brother's sons to stay away from the house. She should continue to collect the rent from one house but of her own volition, asked the deceased eldest brother's children to collect rent from the other particularly as she did not take the house away from their father before his death. During this traditional court session, we learnt that her deceased brother's son wanted to take the house from her because she is married to an Itshekiri man and they feared that the Itshekiri children will inherit the houses if they did not establish their claim to the house now that their father is dead. This symbolized that women are still legitimate and de facto members of the compound and thus the patrilineage, their marriage notwithstanding. These examples of women's right to their father's property, not only

demonstrate the gender equality in inheritance but also contradict the view that women's rights to property are not considered in their natal homes.

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Illustration 6.1: A woman working on a new farm
(see arrow) at Ebedei.



Illustration 6.2: The same as 6.1.



Illustration 6.3: The same as 6.1.



Illustration 6.4: A husband and wife from Ebedei resting at a new farm after work.



Illustration 6.5: The woman (sitting) presenting her case at Isu Obi Umuogwezi village, Obiaruku.



Illustration 6.6: The accused man (standing) presenting his case at the same 6.5 venue above.



Illustration 6.7: The accused man cross-examined at the same 6.5 venue.



Illustration 6.8: The same as 6.7.



Illustration 6.9: Reading of the quit letter at the same 6.5 venue.



Illustration 6.10: Reading of the quit letter and cross-examination at the same 6.5 venue.



Illustration 6.11: The Ugo (spokesman) Okpala-Uku-in-Council delivering judgement at the same 6.5 venue.



Illustration 6.12: The same as 6.11.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL INSTITUTION OF NDOKWA

Introduction:

In segmentary lineage system societies with the primitive communalistic socio-economic formation, religion informs, to a great extent, the ideological, political, social and legal structures²⁴. According to March and Taqqu (1986:75):

Religious authority entails more than leadership. Its legitimacy derives not only from a constituency of citizen-followers, but from a constituency of believers who share a commitment to a system of ideas about the ultimate order of things. That order is never unproblematical nor is it transparently recreated in the real world, but its principles are the ones people consider in judging their world and the human relationships in it.

The political and jural powers are derived from religion, as such, religious, political and jural powers are often inseparable. That is, the religious authority legitimizes the political and jural authorities. In other words, the divine or spiritual (sacred) controls the political and legal institutions (secular) (Green, 1964:207).

In Ndokwa, the sacred controls the secular laws and governance has religious basis. Therefore, in order to discern the political institution, one should first of all understand

²⁴ This is also found in the feudal socio-economic formation (mode of production), for example, the Fulani Empire.

the religious institution and then the legal institution. That is, a proper understanding of the religious institution juxtaposing it with the legal institution, will give us a clear picture of the political institution. Concomitantly, the placement of the genders on the institutions would be realized (Ekejiuba, 1984).

As we have mentioned, in Ebedei, other than the six groups of villages which are monarchical, the rest have political organization based on gerontocracy. With reference to our samples, Ebedei and Obikwele political institutions are based on gerontocracy, while Aboh and Abala are monarchical. The difference in the political institutions has given rise to some variations in the foundation of existing political authorities in the groups of villages. Further, in the groups of villages with the same type of political institution, there are some variations. These variations, which might have resulted from the different deities worshipped, gave rise to some unique political/legal authorities. Nevertheless, political organization / institutions of the groups of villages are basically similar. The Okpala-Uku and the Ada institutions are found in all the groups of villages with similar authorities, most especially the ritual and the legal. The institution of kingship could have been motivated by an attempt

to deal with cultural changes brought about by the development of productive forces and commerce. For instance, trade in the lower Niger river areas (Dike, 1956). Therefore, in order to clarify and understand women's status and powers vis-a-vis that of men in these institutions, we have to analyze the authorities in these institutions - religious, legal and political in each of our samples.

The Ritual, Jural and Political Authorities in Ebedei

In Ebedei, the Okpala-Uku and Ada are at the apex of the religious (ritual) hierarchy. Following them are the Inotu and Ejine who are followed by the chief priests and priestesses of important deities, for example, the priestess of the Agadi deity (god of war and protection against enemies). Finally, are the heads of the patrilineages. (See figure 7.1).

The Otu Ejini are women and few men selected on the basis of their profound dexterity in witchcraft, wizardry and sorcery. It is headed by the Ejine-Uku (Ejiuku) who must be a woman. The male members can never become Ejine-Uku. They oversee the cosmos in order to maintain the ontological balance for the benefit of the village(s), most especially, the detection of and protection against witchcraft, wizardry and sorcery acts that are inimical to the village(s). Thus, they

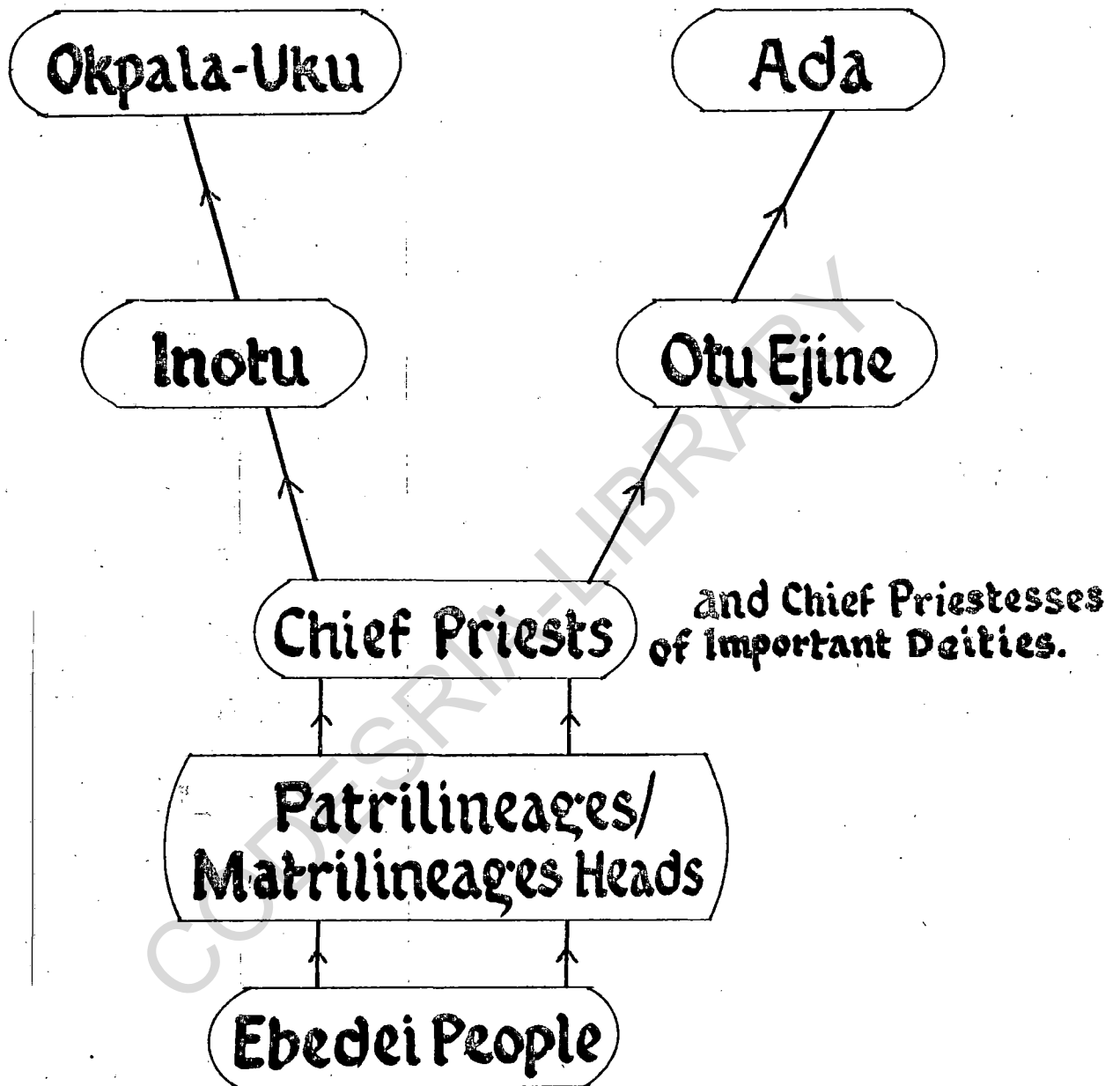


Figure 7: I RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION (RITUAL AUTHORITIES) OF EBEDEI

ensure that the balance between the 'Other (invisible) World' and 'This (visible) World' is maintained and their relationship is in harmony for the benefit of the people. However, these are some of the duties of the Ada and Ofashi, but the Otu Ejine assist them because of their (Otu Ejini's) specialized roles. Thus, the Ada institution has not only the communal sanction as their only basis for legitimacy, but religious/ritual associations, in particular, are also drawn upon it - a higher authority. The Ada and Ejine institutions cast women's actions within a culturally meaningful frame, cloaking women's associations with an aura of spiritually inspired authority and orienting the place of gender in the wider world order. Also, in these institutions women actively exercise their authority as women within a divinely sanctioned interpretation of their gender rights (March and Taqqu, 1986:67-85). In places where the Otu Ejine is not found, the Ada and Ofashi perform these functions.

It is mandatory on the members of the Otu Ejine to use their preponderant sorcery and witchcraft/wizardry capabilities for the well-being of the villages instead of destruction. Some of the ways through which they achieve these goals are by divination and the performance of the necessary rituals and sacrifices as directed by divination. By performing these

activities, they prevent disaster, for example, out-breaks of disease, war and famine, poor harvest, multiple deaths, frequent accidents, etc. But when disaster occurs, they divine to ascertain the cause and what to do to arrest it and prevent a reoccurrence. The rituals and sacrifices needed for these purposes are accordingly performed. For instance, during the Nigerian Civil War, the Otu Ejine Ebedei divined and performed rituals, and offered sacrifices to ensure that the Nigerian (Federal) and Biafran troops did not fight any battle or kill any person on Ebedei soil. Coincidentally no battle was fought and nobody was killed on Ebedei soil. Instead, battles were fought at the neighbouring villages of Umutu and Urhonigbe. When a sacrifice requires the participation of all the women in the village, the Otu Ejine will inform and supervise them. The Otu Ejine can invoke the legitimacy of a separate female power which implicates the solitary femaleness of all women and can effectively redistribute women's ritual power among all women (March and Taqqu, 1986:79). Even if a sacrifice is required to do it, they also instruct, organize and supervise them. A similar practice was observed by Green (1964:213) among the Agbaja, Igbo east of the Niger river.

Comparatively, the Ejine institution could be said to be similar to the Omu institution described by Okonjo (1976) and Emenanjo (1987). An analysis of the Omu and the Obi institutions, juxtaposed with the Okpala-uku (Diokpa) and Ada institutions which are in existence in the areas studied by Okonjo (1976) casts doubts on the existence of the dual-sex role according to her. Rather, it appears more correct to regard the gender relations therein complementary instead of parallel. This makes Emenanjo's (1987) observations more correct than Okonjo's (1976). Therefore, further ethnographic studies on these areas studied by Okonjo (1976) should be done to ascertain the actual gender relations inherent in the societies. Even the Ejine institution is found in most Enuani (Aniocha) and Ika areas, for example, Okpanam, Ishiagu, Ewulu, Ekuku-Agbor, etc.

In the legal institution of Ebedei, the Okpala-uku and Nde Okwa - Okpala-Uku-in-Council (Isu Obi) (see illustration 7.1) is the highest court on criminal cases (usually abomination cases - nso) and civil cases other than adultery, witchcraft, wizardry and sorcery cases. The Isu Obi serves as the supreme appeal court (see illustrations 6.4 - 6.11). If an individual is not satisfied with the judgement of the Inotu, he/she appeals to the Isu-obi. This means that the Inotu court is next

to the Isu-obi. Cases of adultery are handled by the Ada and Ofashi (Ada-in-council) while the Otu Ejine has jurisdiction over cases of witchcraft, wizardry and sorcery. If mistakenly cases of adultery, witchcraft, wizardry and sorcery are taken to the Isu-obi or Inotu, the Okpala-Uku-in-Council or Inotu will refer such cases to either the Ada-in-Council or Otu Ejine respectively. The patrilineage serves as the court in the first instance for cases between its members (see figure 7.11).

Politically in Ebedei, these religious and jural authorities also constitute the political authorities. Their religious functions give them legal powers and subsequently political powers. That is, the Okpala-Uku and nde okwa, Ada and Ofashi, Inotu, Otu Ejine and the patrilineages share political authority (power) according to the hierarchy of their ritual and legal functions (see figure 7.III). These ritual and jural authorities rule Ebedei politically. Thus, political supremacy of the political authorities are ranked according to their legal jurisdiction.

The Ritual, Jural and Political Authorities in Obikwele:

In Obikwele, the Ada Abibi's ritual authority is supreme over the Okpala-Uku, Ada Obodo, Inotu and the patrilineages. Ada Abibi is thus at the apex of the religious (ritual)

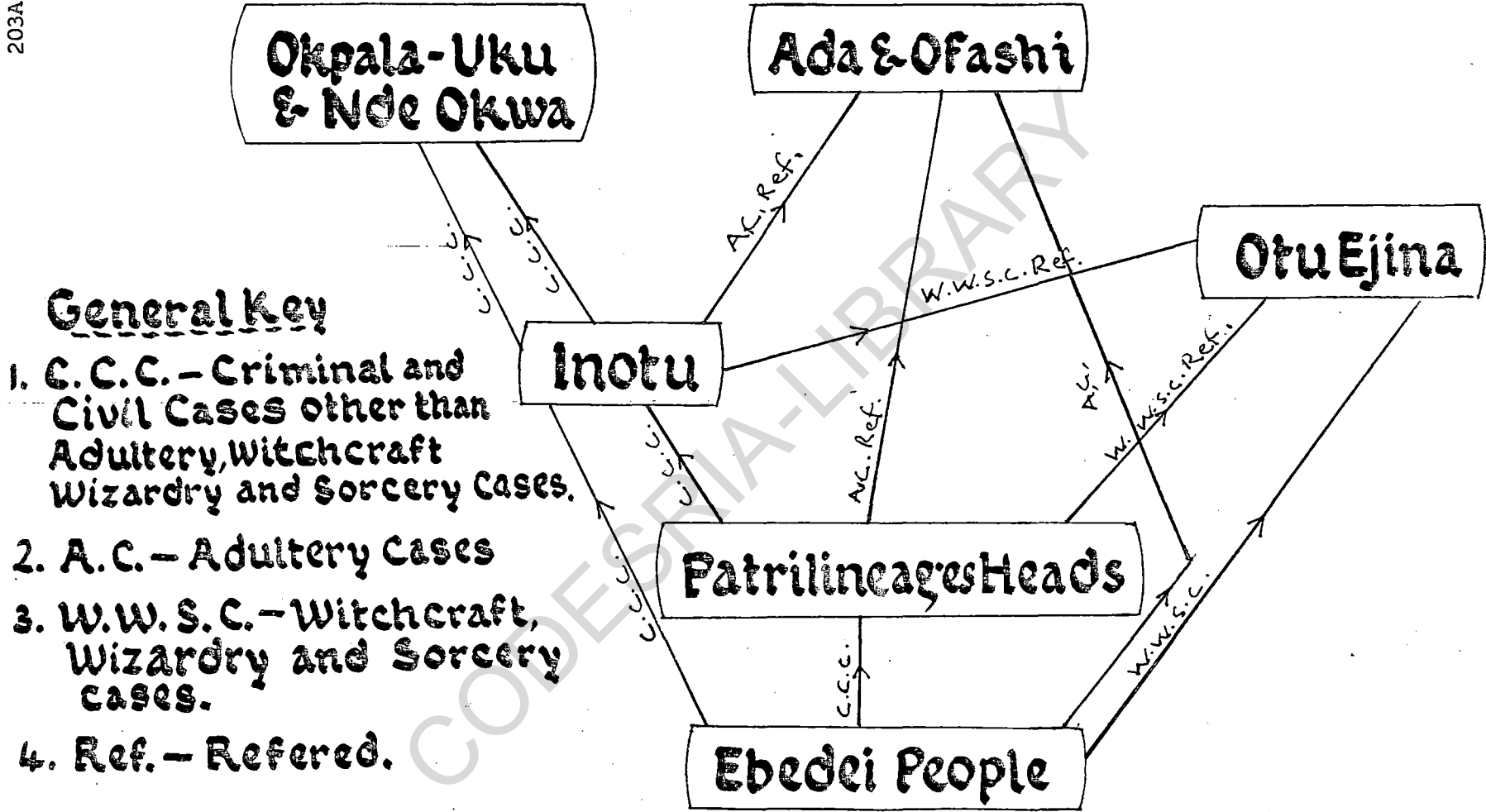


Figure 7: II, JURAL AUTHORITIES IN EBEDEI

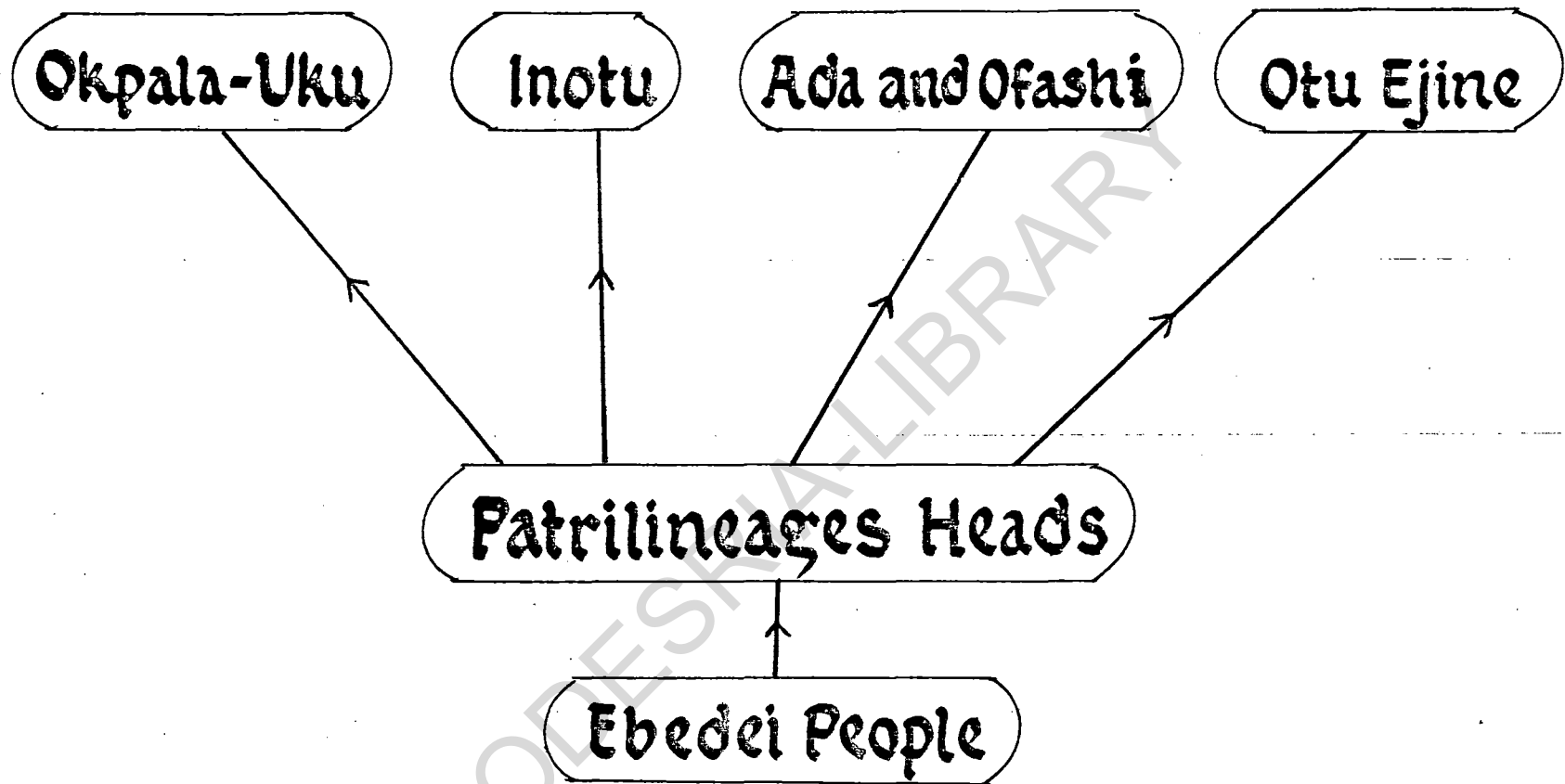


Figure 7: III, POLITICAL AUTHORITIES IN EBEDEI

institutional hierarchy, followed by the Okpala-Uku and the Ada Obodo, then the Inotu and lastly by the patrilineages (see figure 7.IV). The Ada Abibi has ritual supremacy over other ritual authorities because the Abibi goddess is very central to the Obikwele people. It is their dominant deity. They believe that their settlement and continuous existence at Obikwele were made possible by the Abibi. Therefore, the chief priestess's ritual authority is regarded as the ultimate: the existence of any ancestor/ancestress was primarily due to the Abibi. According to Onwuejeogwu (1978:125):

Almost all West African societies have the history of their origin told in the idiom of myth. This is true of the Tiv, the Hausa states, the Tallensi, the Yoruba, the Benin and the Nri. The myths ... validate the social order, give meaning and reality to the social system, strengthen and reinforce the people's beliefs and values, and also perpetuate the ideology that the society and the component lineages have an unbroken continuity which every member must try to maintain.

The Ada Abibi, the Ada Obodo and Ofashi perform similar functions as the Ada and Ofashi and the Otu Ejine in Ebedei. The Otu Ejine does not exist at Obikwele.

The legal process in Obikwele is similar to that of Ebedei, especially in the criminal and civil cases which the Okpala-Uku-in-council, Inotu and patrilineages have jurisdiction over. Cases of adultery, witchcraft, wizardry and

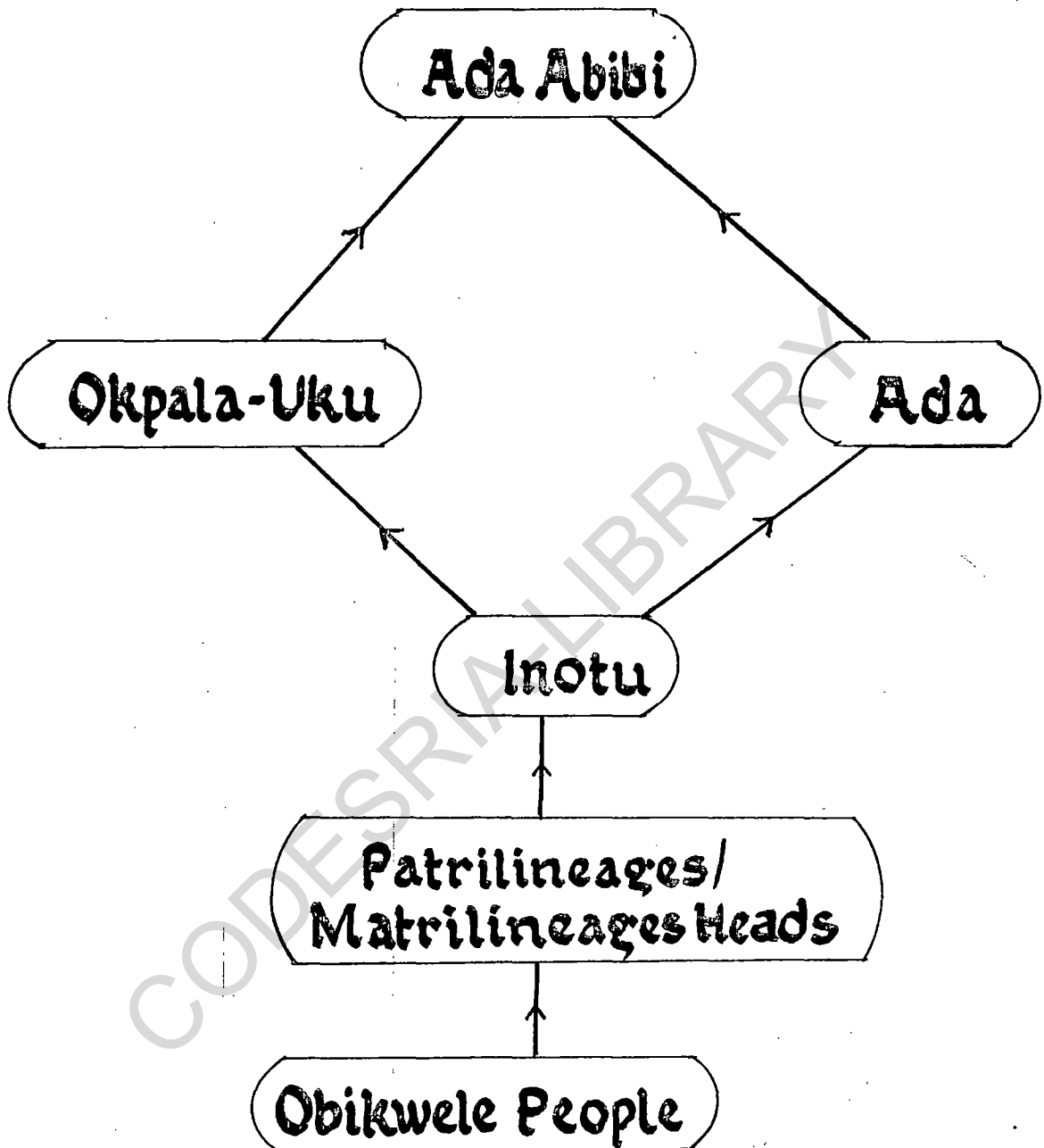


Figure: 7: IV, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION (RITUAL AUTHORITIES) OF OBIKWELE



Illustration 7.1: Isuobi Umueziogoli
village, Ebedei.

sorcery, are under the jurisdiction of the Ada Obodo and Ofashi (see illustration 7.2 and figure 7.V). These jural authorities - Okpala-Uku-in-council, Ada-in-council, Inotu and patrilineages are also the political authorities. The magnitude of political power that each authority commands, depends on its position on the legal institutional hierarchy (see figure 7.VI).

Although the Ada Abibi has no manifest jural and political authority since all the powers exercised by these institutions are legitimized by the Abibi. Thus, the Ada Abibi is not only respected for her religious authority but also wields considerable secular authority²⁵ which is ultimate. The Obikwele people believe that the Abibi also oversees justice, thus controls the legal and political affairs. Since these institutions obtain their authorities from the Abibi, they must exercise their powers according to Abibi's will in order to have peaceful and prosperous rule.

²⁵ Similar observations have been made on other societies by Steady (1976), Hoffer (1972; 1974), Tapper (1978) and March and Taqqu (1986).

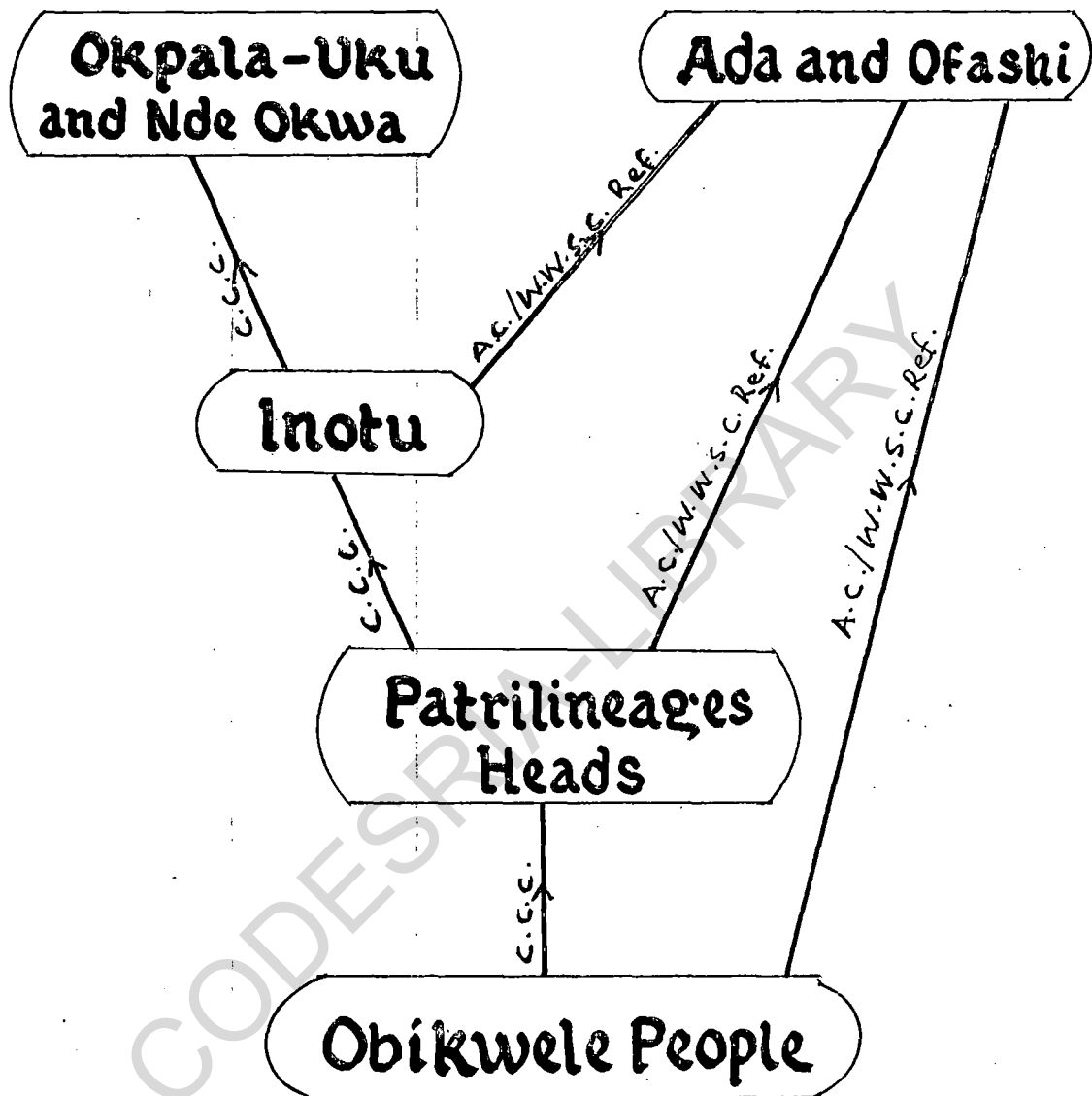
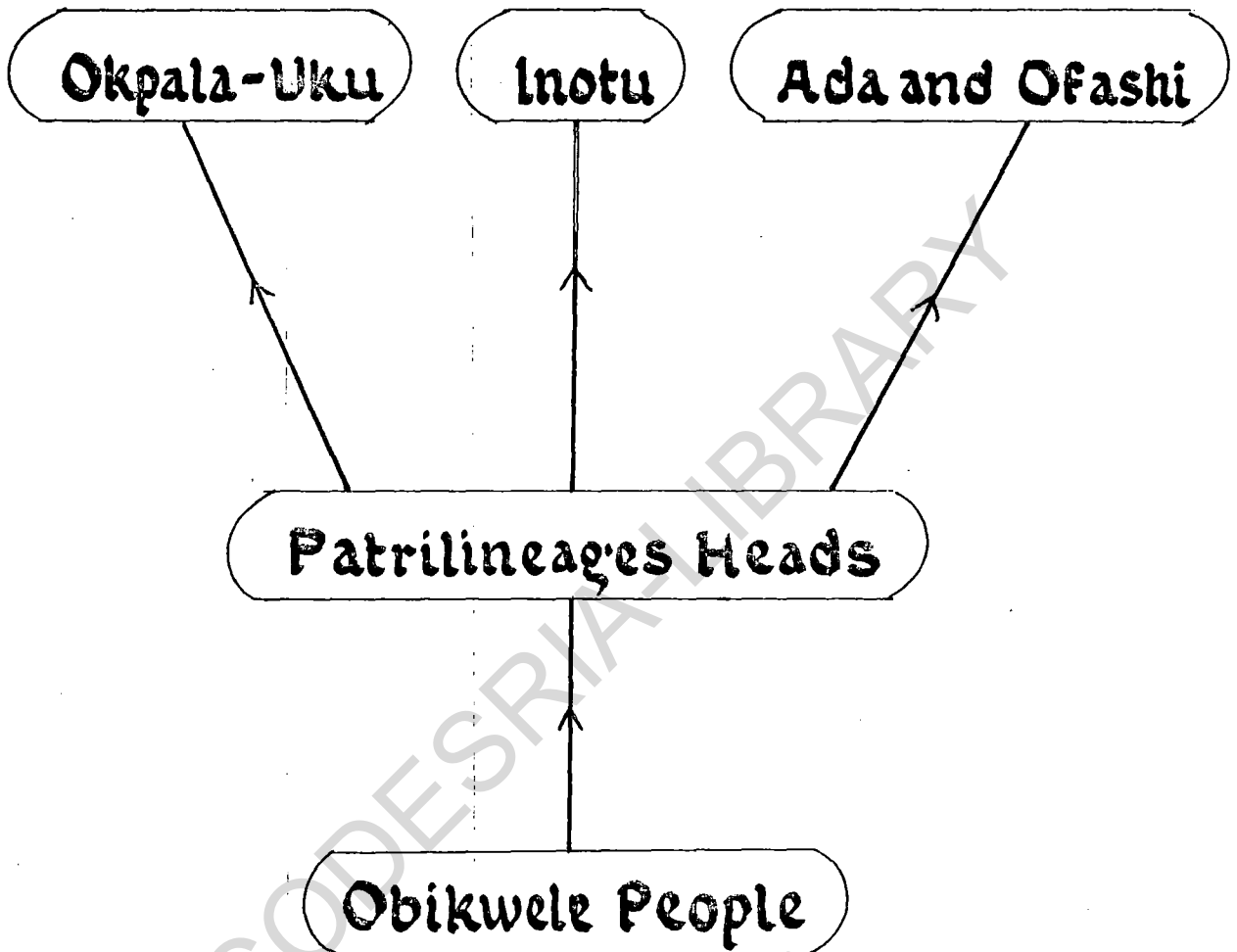


Figure 7: V, JURAL AUTHORITIES
IN OBIKWELE



**Figure 7: VI, POLITICAL AUTHORITIES
IN OBIKWELE**

The Ritual, Jural and Political Authorities in Abala:

In Abala, the Oshele (the Okpala-Uku) of Umu Oshele village) is at the top of the religious hierarchy. The Okpala-ukus of other villages and their Adas follow. Next to them, are the Eze Otofe, Igwe, Inotu, Disu and Mmawu. The patrilineages are at the base of the hierarchy (see figure 7.VII.). The Oshele is the chief priest of Nne Alusi Oshimili - Odobu Nwanyi goddess which is the dominant deity of the Abala people. It is central to their religious practices and social organization. The Amanwulu/Ufe titles which every son of Abala must take to legitimize his birth-right as son of the Abala soil, are consecrated to the goddess. Amanwulu could be taken during childhood and must be before the Ufe which is taken after marriage. The time one takes Amanwulu determines his seniority among the Amanwulu title holders, his biological age notwithstanding. The Disu is the oldest Amanwulu title holder and thus the head of the Amanwulu title holders. Since the Amanwulu is mandatory for every Abala son, nobody will become an Igwe, Inotu, or Mmawu member without taking the title. Whereas men take the title without performing any rituals, a woman who takes the Ote ofe title must perform the 'soup cooking' ritual (Ite ofe Amanwulu) on the first day of the

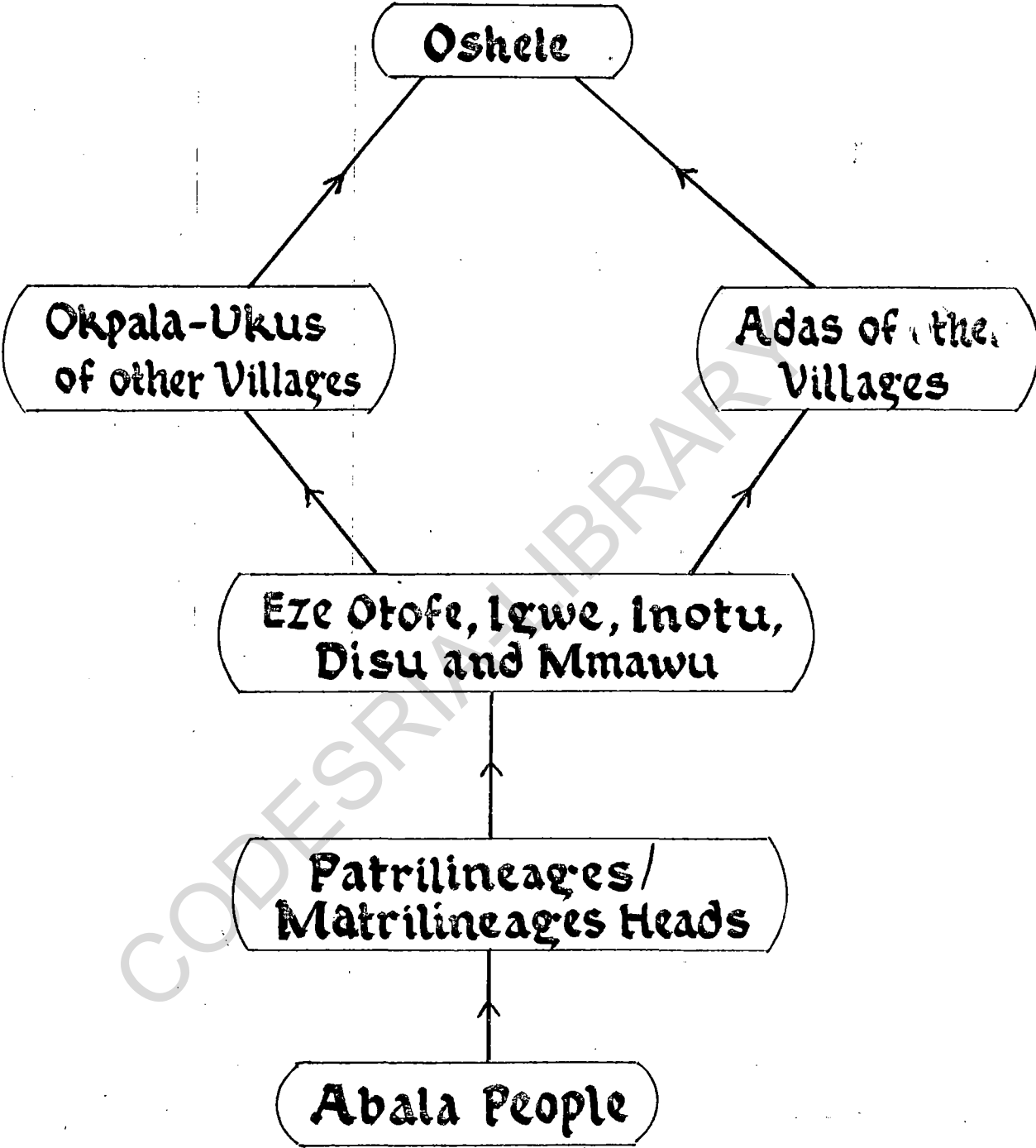


Figure 7: VII, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION (RITUAL AUTHORITIES) OF ABALA

title taking rites (see illustration 7.3). If this is not done, the title taking will not be performed.

The Ote Ofe title is regarded as the female equivalent of amanwulu. However, the woman taking it must either be married to or must take the name of an amanwulu title holder. Thus, we should note that the roles both gender perform in the amanwulu and ote ofe title taking are complementary. Further, although the Nne Alusi Oshimili - Odoibu Nwanyi goddess has a male chief priest, it is feminine in nature. As such, anything that is gentle, kind and prosperous is regarded as feminine, moreso, as the founder of Abala is traced to an ancestress. Therefore, women are highly honored by men. This gives rise to a complementary gender relationship rather than a superordinate/subordinate one in Abala society. Besides, men and women are initiated into the Mmanwu (masquerade) cult. This is contrary to the practice in some Igbo areas where only women of old age are initiated into the cult. In fact, in most places, women are never initiated into the mmanwu cult. The Abala women's membership of the mmanwu cult suggests a re-examination of the generalized view that women in Igbo land are never initiated into the mmanwu cult (Onyeneke, 1987), for a proper categorization of women's participation in Mmanwu. Even in Abakaliki, women dominate the membership and activities of



Illustration 7.2: Ada and Ofashi in Obikwele.

Mmanwu. Further, it is noteworthy that the Ada and Idoko (council of women elders) have similar ritual functions like the Ada and Ofashi/Otu Ejine in Ebedei.

The Abala legal institution has a different order of organization from the Ebedei and Obikwele. Criminal and civil cases other than adultery, are handled by the patrilineages first, then the village's Okpala-Uku-in-Council, and finally by Mmanwu, Inotu and Igwe-in-Council (see figure 7.VIII). Although, the Igwe is the King of Abala kingdom, his jural authority is mostly reconciliatory. That is, the Igwe-in-council do not often penalize or impose sanctions on the guilty. Instead, the Mmanwu or Inotu penalizes or imposes sanctions on guilty persons. The Mmanwu which was founded in early 1950s dominates the Inotus jural authority. On the other hand, the village's Ada and Idoko (the council of women elders) handles adultery cases and witchcraft, wizardry and sorcery cases referred to them, since other jural authorities can hear the latter three types of cases. Also, the Ada and Idoko serve as the last resort in the application of coercion to ensure that an individual that refuses to comply to the penalty or sanction adheres. Nobody refuses the Ada and Idoko's order.

The above jural authorities in Abala are the political authorities (see figure 7.IX). The limitation of the jural

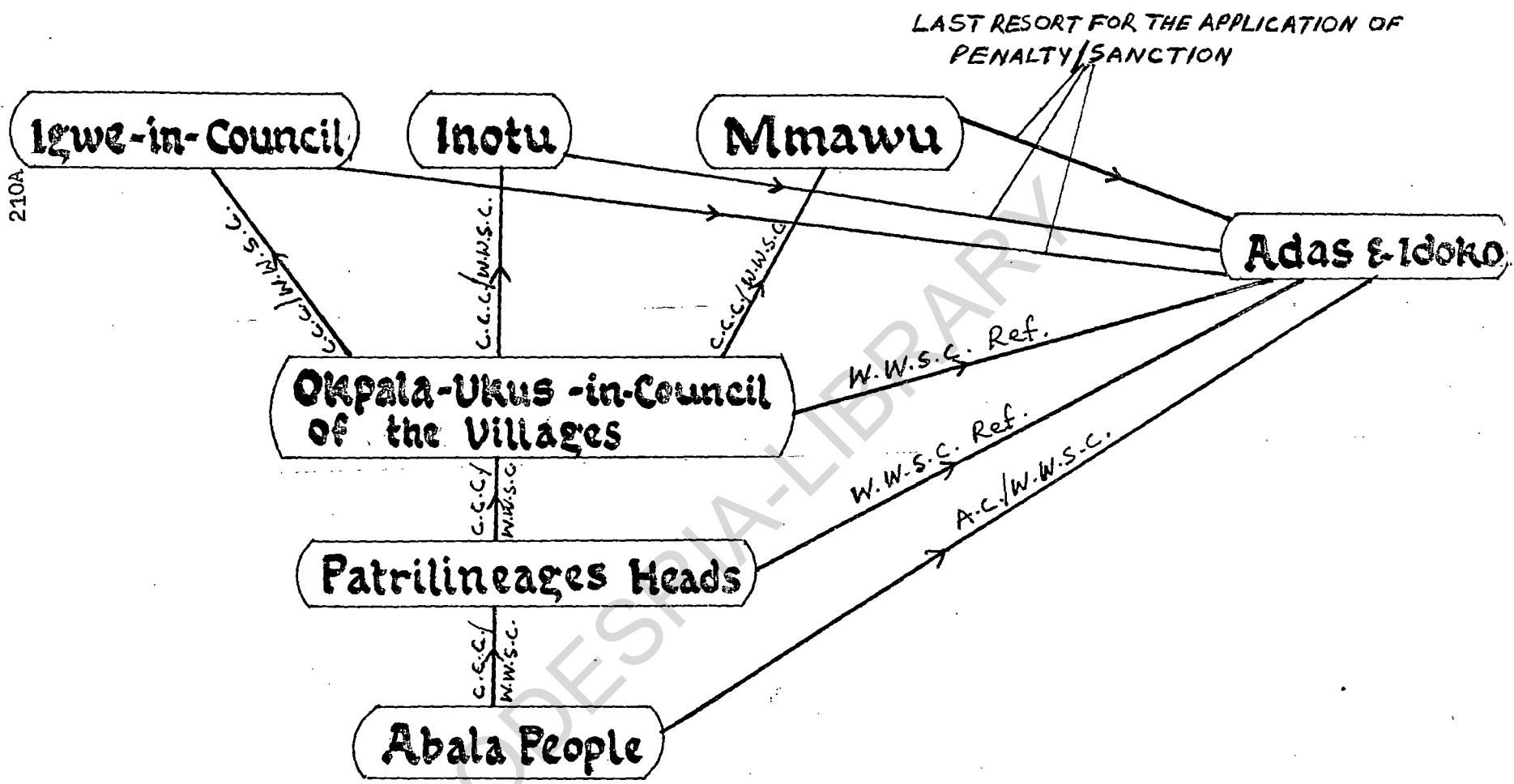


Figure 7: VIII, JURAL AUTHORITIES IN ABALA

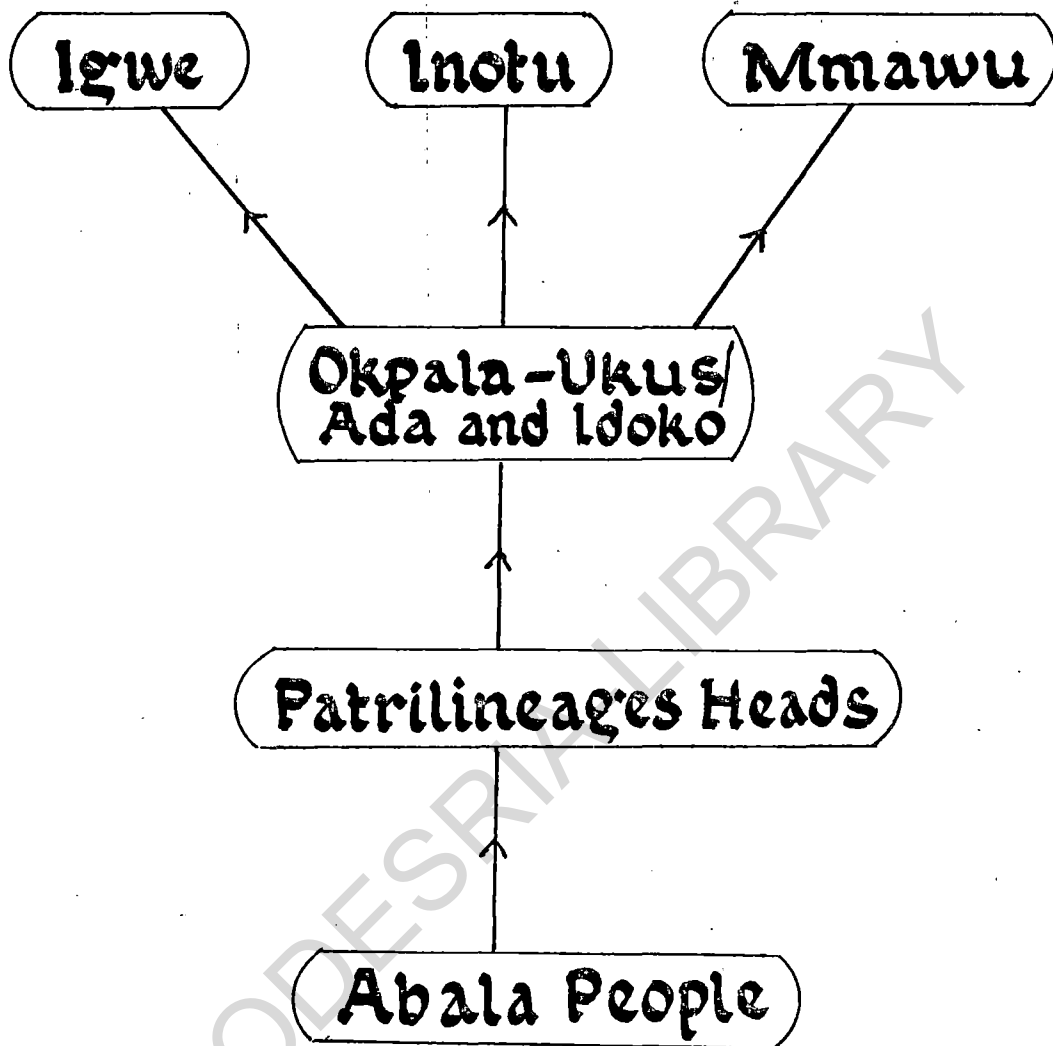


Figure 7: IX, POLITICAL AUTHORITIES
IN ABALA

authority of the Igwe-in-council could prompt one to say that the Igwe reigns but does not rule. Therefore, the Mmanwu, Inotu, Ada and Idoko are the actual political authorities that rule Abala.

The Ritual, Jural And political Authorities in Aboh:

In Aboh, the Odua (Okpala-Uku Aboh) and Ajieh Nwanyi (Ada Aboh) are the supreme ritual authorities. They are followed by the Obonwe (Obi) who in turn is followed by the village's Okpala-Uku and Adaeze (village Ada). The patrilineage heads are the last in order (see figure 7.X). The Odua (Okpala-Uku Aboh) gives to the Obonwe Ofo eze which is the symbol of the kings authority. On the other hand, the Obonwe officiates in the Nze deity rituals for the group of villages. The Nze deity legitimizes the obonwe's authority (Nzimiro, 1972). It is also a god of war and protection for the Aboh people. The Ajieh Nwanyi and Adaezes perform similar ritual functions as the Ada and Ofashi and Otu Ejine in Ebedei (see illustration 7.4).

Legally, the Odua-in-council and Obonwe-in-council are the ultimate jural authorities on criminal and civil cases. Adultery cases are however handled by only the Ajieh Nwanyi and the Adaezes (see figure 7.XI). Any person can choose to send

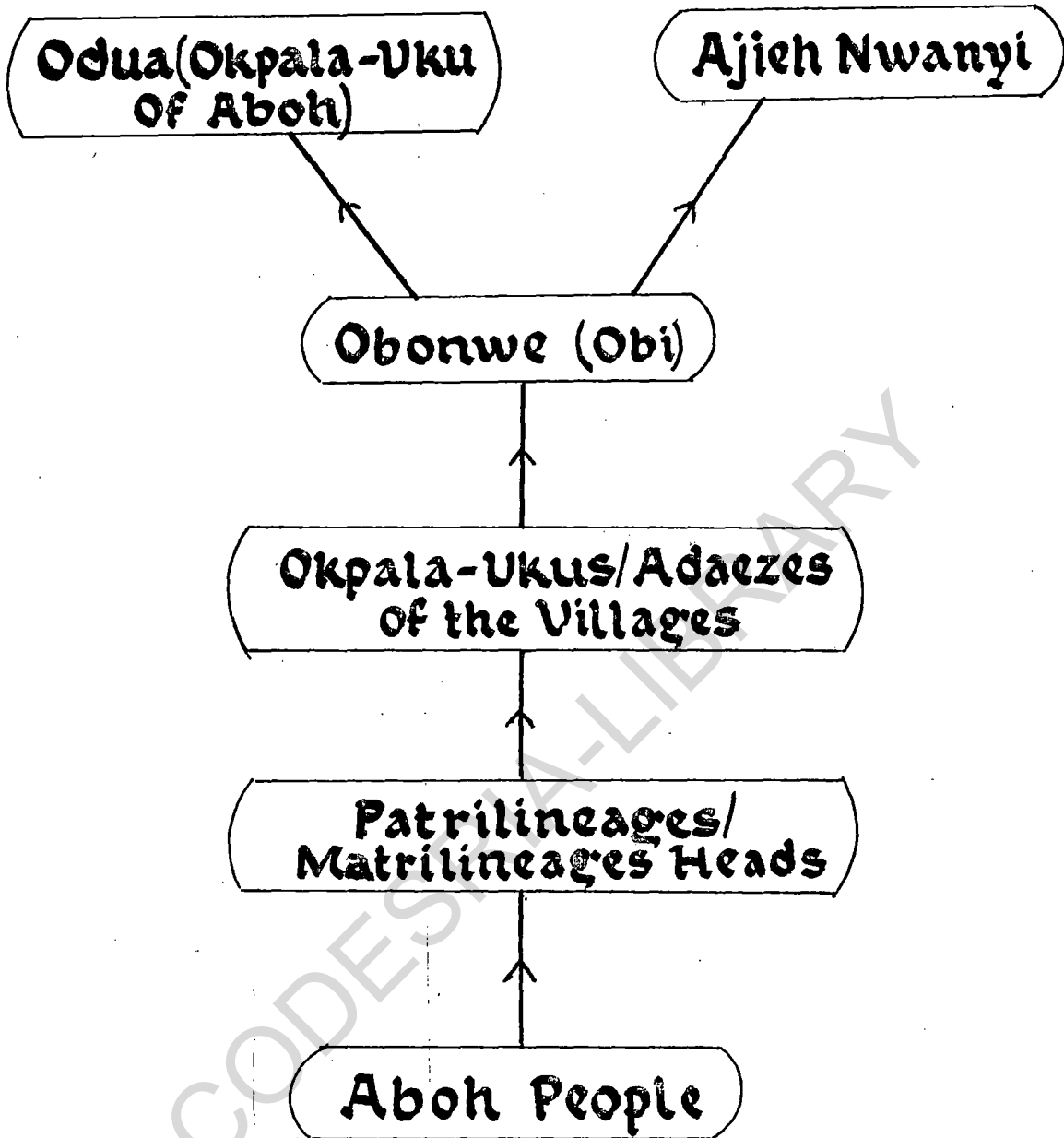


Figure 7: Σ , RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION (RITUAL AUTHORITIES) OF ABOH

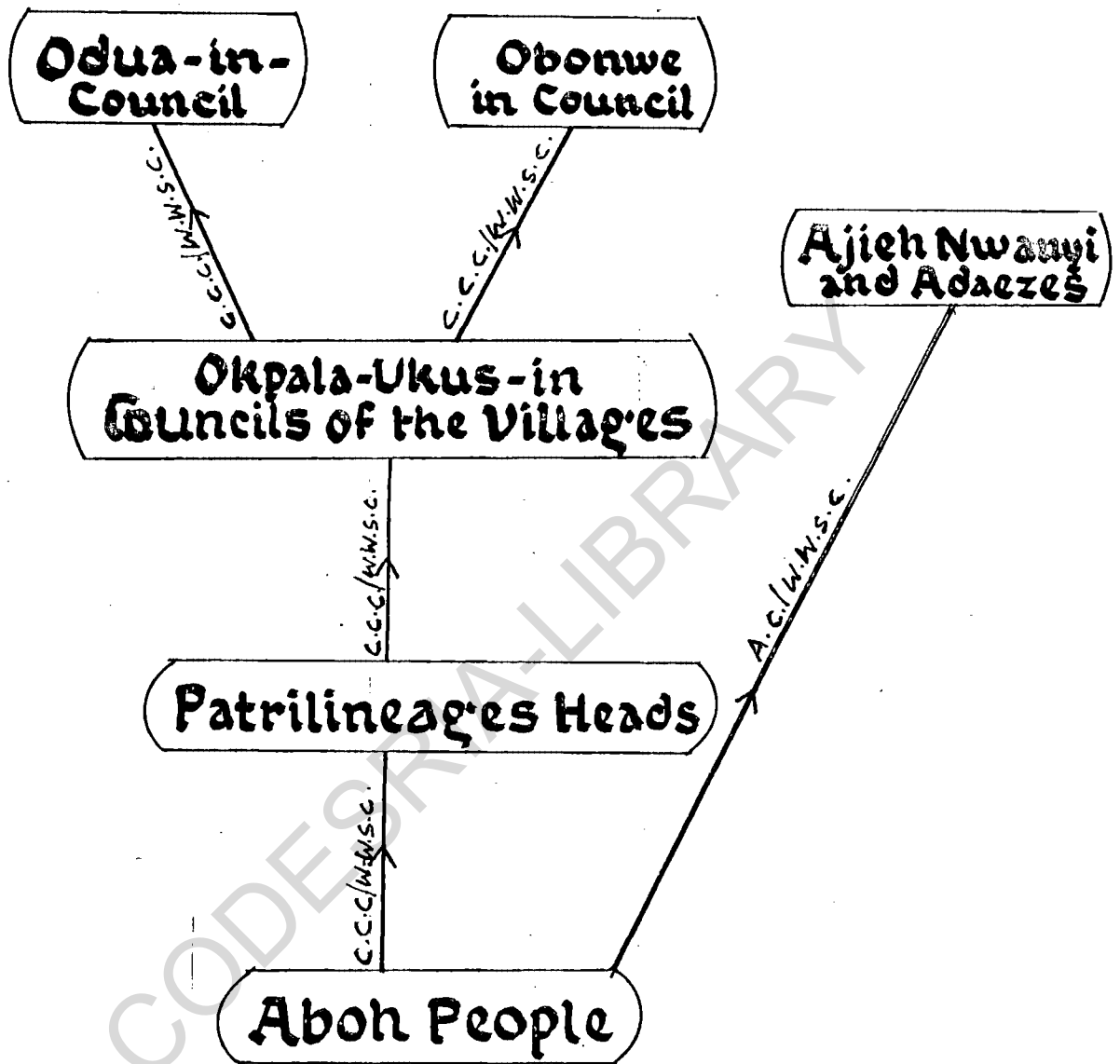


Figure 7: XI, JURAL AUTHORITIES IN ABOH



Illustration 7.3: A woman performing the Ite Ofe Amanwulu (soup cooking) ritual at Abala.

his/her case to either the Odua-in-council or Obonwe-in-council. It is noteworthy that Aboh people seem to have more confidence in the judgements of the Odua-in-council than in the judgements of the Obonwe-in-council. The court of the Obonwe-in-council is regarded as the court for the modern times and is always associated with modern tricks. Justice in this court is held ^{to be} ~~held~~ ^{spiritual} to justice in the court of the Odua-in-council. The confidence in the latter reflects the political legitimacy which the Odua and the obonwe possess. The Odua is regarded as the 'sacred' traditional ruler, while the Obonwe is seen as the 'secular' traditional ruler.

On the other hand, the Ajieh Nwanyi (Ada Aboh) and the Adaezes exercise political power, even though it is not as manifest as the Odua-in-council and Obonwe-in-council. The Odua and the Obonwe rule in consultation with the Ajieh Nwanyi. Apart from the Ajieh Nwanyi and Adaezes position in the governance of Aboh, there are some women members of the Obonwe's council of chiefs - Olinzele. In sum, the Odua, Obonwe and Ajieh Nwanyi are the political authorities in Aboh (see figure 7.XII). It is noteworthy that the kingdom status of Aboh and the subsequent giving of warrant to the Obonwe by the Colonial Administration and the creation of the Council of Chiefs by Nigeria's modern political system which the Obonwe

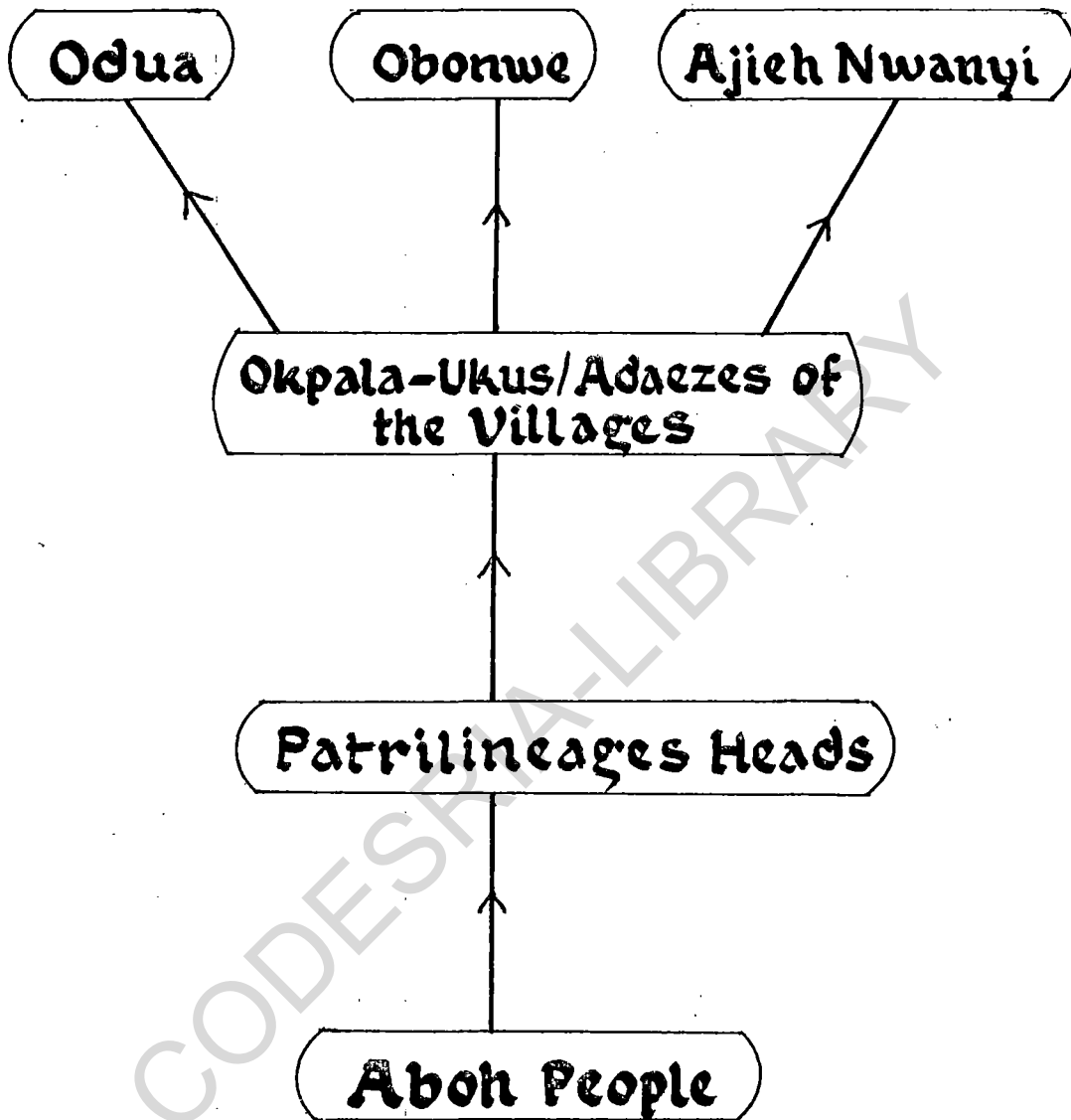


Figure 7: XII, POLITICAL AUTHORITIES
IN ABOH



Illustration 7.4: Sacrifice by women to arrest outbreak of disease in Aboh. The stems of shrubs on the door-step are the objects of sacrifice.

is a member, have made the Obonwe's position very manifest than that of the Odua and Ajieh Nwanyi. This might have informed some people to see the Obonwe as supreme jural and political authority in Aboh. But in reality, the actual traditional jural and political authority exercised by the Obonwe, Odua or Ajieh Nwanyi is complimentary to one another rather than any one of them supreme over the others.*

Further, it should be noted that the Obonwe is not authoritative in his council. He chairs the deliberations, and announces decisions which are reached by consensus between the Obonwe and the Olinzeles. The authoritative powers of Obi (Obonwe) Ossai of Aboh recognized by the early European colonialist (Nzimiru, 1972; Ogedengbe, 1971) might have been due to his personality and his quest to build an empire. To buttress this, even Aboh people refer to him as Obonwe obiwe/efojo/obioku (the wicked/hot-tempered Obonwe).

Women's Role In Other Spheres Of Traditional Politics:

Beside the above discussed roles of women in the political institution of Ndokwa, women still play crucial roles in other spheres of the traditional political institution and politics. The Ada's role is indispensable during the coronation rites of the Okpala-Uku, Igwe, Inotu, etc. in most groups of villages. For instance, in Abbi, only the Ada has the prerogative to

* The detail impact of women in Obonwe-in-council starting from Obi Ossai will be given in further studies.

carry the Ofo Obodo (Ndiche) from the late Okpala-Uku's house (Obi). Without the Ada performing this function, the coronation cannot be held. In Abala, the Igwe after coronation must go to the Ada Umuiyesele Oje/Nkini for blessing, in order to command the women's support and thus, have a peaceful and prosperous reign. Also, in Aboh, the Onowu who rules in the absence of the Obonwe, must be the son of Adaeze. Further, no man can become an Inotu without being married. That is, a man must take the Inotu title with his wife/wives, who will be called Nwuye Ajieh (Ajieh's wife). Besides, during the Inotu title-taking ceremony, the rules and regulations of the Inotu title and title holders are handed to the wife/wives.

Also, we should note that apart from the above discussions of women's ritual authorities, there are other important deities in the groups of villages for which women are chief priestesses. These are mostly deities for fertility and prosperity. They also ensure good political and social relations within and outside the groups of villages. Besides, the deities help people to be successful when there is discord, feud or war with their neighbours, for instance, Agadi (war and protection deity) in Ebedei, Mmor Omumu (fertility deity) in Obikwele, Mmor Okposho (market deity) in Abala (see illustration 7.5). Further, at Obi-umuaja village in Akoku, the

Onoku river (Ethiophe river) source shrine (Isi-Onoku) has both chief priest and priestess. These perform rituals simultaneously at the shrine. People from other ethnic groups - the Edos and Urhobos come to sacrifice at the shrine. The moulded male and female figures are physical representations of the Onoku: the deity also has both chief priest and chief priestess who simultaneously officiate during rituals at the shrine. The representation of both genders underscores complementary gender relations in Ndokwa. (See illustrations 7.6-7.9). The Onoku goddess is a protection and fertility deity. According to Steady (1981:30), women's roles as child bearers and food producers are usually associated with the fertility of the land, and this is implicit in much of the ritual. This life-giving quality endows them not only with much prestige but equates them with the life-giving force itself. If Ebedei has feud/war with any of its neighbours, men perform rituals at the Agadi shrine during which the chief priestess officiates before going to the battle-field. In order to ensure the safety of all the men at the battle, anybody not safe to go to battle will be asked by the chief priestess to withdraw.

We learnt from the groups of villages that during feud/war, women supply food, arms, ammunition, information, etc., to men at the battle field. In some cases, where the battle is too tough for the men to fight, women go to the battle field to make peace. This gave rise to the common saying that 'women stop war' (Ndiom negbo agha). Thus, Green (1964:177) asserts that "...in war it is the function of the women to over ride the fighting of the men and to make peace." Also she observes that: "In actual fighting, particularly between two villages, one of the recognized means of re-establishing peace is for the women, the "sisters" of the fighters, to put okro leaf between them to stop them from fighting" (1964:256). Marriages between warring communities also serve as channels for ensuring peace through the affinal relationships which they create. In their relationship with other women as well as men of both their conjugal and natal communities, women appear to be engaged not just in domestic economies, but in ritual and political activities which, although originating in their segregated private and public spheres, nevertheless have much wider political ramifications, (Tiffany, 1979; March and Taqqu, 1986). There is no gainsaying the fact that women are usually the last resort in resolving catastrophic situations. Further, in Aboh, during the reign of

Obi (Obuonwe) Ossai, women owned war boats. The women that were outstanding were given titles by the Obuonwe as a mark of honour. These women had tremendous political power and influence in Aboh that compare with that of Madam Yoko of the Kaiyamba chiefdom of Sierra Leone (Hoffer, 1972).

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Illustration 7.5: Mmor Okposho shrine in Abala.



Illustration 7.6: Chief priest/chief priestess at Onoku shrine in Obiumaja - Akoku.



Illustration 7.7: Onoku chief priest/chief priestess officiating in rituals at Onoku shrine in Obiumaja-Akoku.



Illustration 7.8: the same as 7.7



Illustration 7.9 The performance of Oloku rites by Edo women at Onoku shrine in Obiumuaja-Akoku.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: WOMEN AND POWER IN 'NDOKWA'

We have demonstrated in chapters five and seven that women's roles during the ancestors/ancestresses worship and other vital activities of their lineages are indispensable in 'Ndokwa'. Both genders' roles in the lineages are complementary. Thus, there is a balance of power and authority between the genders in the lineages, as shown by the lineage ancestor/ancestresses worship. An individual is obliged to perform his/her responsibilities/duties to the lineages and worship the ancestors/ancestresses as it is believed that ones life and well-being are maintained and sustained by the ancestors/ancestresses, and this is achieved through the lineages. Therefore, both the patrilineages and matrilineages ancestor/ancestresses worship are important. Although, in recent times men try to acquire more powers to dominate women due to the changes of the land tenure system, this has had no significant effect on the existing gender relations in 'Ndokwa' that are relatively equal. For instance, the balance of authority between the genders is exemplified during the 'second burial' ceremony where the patrilineages Okpala and Ada perform the burial rituals simultaneously. Besides, the protection of the matrilineages as the matrilineages ancestresses worship

ensure more power for the women. This suggests that the Ukwuani society provides a good example of the development of a social structure which makes female self-reliance a positive ideology, and thus, ensures that greater self-support among women and female kin exist (Steady, 1981:17). Nevertheless, no gender could be said to have absolute power and authority over another. The harmonization and balancing of the gender relations are necessarily done and controlled through each gender roles in the lineages and in ancestors/ancestresses worship. The agnate and uterine ancestor/ancestress worship makes the male and female genders equally important and powerful. Thus, there is non-existence of superordinate/subordinate gender relationship as in the Western capitalist cultures.

As we have shown in chapter six, the means (object) of production-land and fish ponds is communally owned. That is, there is no individual or private ownership of the means of production. The objects of labour - land and fish ponds are jointly owned by all members of the patrilineage. Also rivers or streams are owned by all members of the group of villages. Therefore, both men and women members of the patrilineage have equal usufruct rights in the land and owned the products of fish ponds equally. Further, both men and women members of the

group of villages have equal access to the rivers or streams. Nonetheless, the means of labour are not commoditised or exploitatively commercialised. Men or women owned simple tools which they made or easily procured hoe, cutlass, canoe, fishing implements. Thus, whatever was produced and used was the common property of the family (household). That is, the means and product of labour were jointly owned by all members of the family. Thus, no individual in the family, whether the husband or wife, has more right to the family's property or appropriates the family's product of labour. Consequently, the gender relations produced are equal. The division of labour in the household between men and women is complementary. Also the inheritance system depicts this gender equality.

Although, there is division of labour between husband and wife and husband or wife owns specific food crops in the household farming, unequal gender relations do not exist in the household, rather there is equal gender relations. Considering the amount and variety of food crops owned by women in their households, one could conclude that women are more powerful than men in their households. But this women's 'food power' is not used to dominate men, instead it serves as checks on the men's misdemeanor and exercise, of excess power. This explains why most aggrieved wives use the withdrawal of meals to their

husbands as one of the strategies for resisting or penalizing their husbands for misbehaving. This is logical because it is what one control that one threatens to withdraw as a deterrent. Thus, Green (1964:256) observes that "...when a woman is displeased with her husband she reacts, not aggressively, but by withholding his food from him. And when the women are collectively displeased with the men, their technique of mass withdrawal until the men are brought to their knees strikes one as a pacific retreat par excellence." Similarly, Steady (1981:16) noted that:

In most countries women own the food crops they produce. Consequently, decisions about the disposal of food, especially in terms of family consumption, are essentially theirs. These decisions give women some degree of autonomy and leverage in terms of their relationship with men. Patterns of resistance and protest against males have often taken the form of refusal to feed men.

Also, Ousmane Sembene, a Senegalese film-maker, is quite outstanding in capturing this element of 'food power' which African women possess in his films *Emitai* and *Mandabi* (Steady, 1981:16). Often, husbands in this situation, aware of the implication that a responsible and strong man feeds from his house, and thus matches confidently on well-fed stomach, repent and seek to settle the problem, as it is an undignified job for a married man to cook for himself (Green, 1964:174). Also Barkow (1972:328) observes that among the Maguzawa Hausa,

although women lack respected religious functions, they are economically necessary because they can cook and men cannot. Consequently, "the villager is more dependent upon his wife; instead of respecting her economic contribution, he often fears she will leave him" (Barkow, 1972:328).

The above are in contrast with Rosaldo (1974:31) view that "... women are more involved than men in the "grubby" and dangerous stuff of social existence, giving birth and mourning death, feeding, cooking, Accordingly, in cultural systems we find a recurrent opposition; between man, who in the last analysis stands for "culture" and women, who ... stands for "nature", and often for disorder." Nevertheless, in many traditional societies, the profferment of hospitality and exchange of food are not purely domestic or simply convivial activities but, rather, are the stuff of major political events which empower women (March and Taqqu, 1986:16). Thus, women's 'food power' tremendously empowers them.

This control of food crops (food power) by traditional women suggests one of the reasons they are more powerful in the households than the urban jobless/full-time housewives who are subordinated by their husbands. Thus, instead of the urban jobless/full-time housewives possessing 'food power' as the traditional housewives, their husbands possess it. This is

because the urban jobless/full-time housewife's husband provides all the feeding money. Often, when the wife is aggrieved by her husband and she demands for her right, a reverse of the traditional situation happens. She is threatened by her husband with the withdrawal of the feeding money (chop money) and other benefits like clothing. Therefore, in order not to go hungry or be deprived of other benefits, she succumbs to the husband's authority. Many urban housewives trade or do menial jobs to avoid depending solely on their husbands. Further, viewing the contributions of women in their households, power tends to concentrate on them in households where they control the economy. Husbands in these households are more or less peripheral. Thus, many men complained that most economically independent wives tend to be independent on decision making and implementation in their households. In order to be in full control of decision making and implementation in their households, most men try to marginalise their wives by depriving them the opportunity for acquiring wealth, which will give them the control of the household's economy. One of the strategies is to ask a wife to stay at home to give good care to their children, instead of going into paid employment or any other work outside the household, or registering the woman's or family's business in

his name. The implication of the latter, is that the woman works directly under her husband. The foregoing demonstrates that the more a woman is in control of the economy, the more powerful she becomes. Similarly, Ekejiuba (1967), Brooks (1978; 1983) and Johnson (1978), to mention a few, demonstrate women's social and economic autonomy within the household and the existence of autonomy within the household and the existence of separate and nearly equal political and economic roles in the broader society (Hay, 1988:434).

It is noteworthy that all our respondents agree that women are more powerful in the household than men. As one of them puts it: "If it is not natural for men to impregnate women, women would have killed all men on earth and lived alone." (Obulushi ndikom adine eye ndiom ime, ndiom naka egbufu ndikom, bia noli weso.)

Nevertheless, in 'Ndokwa, women are also powerful in the public spheres. They have ritual, jural and political authorities. As we have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the jural and political authorities are usually derived from religious practices. That is, the people's religion legitimize the jural and political powers. Women have indispensable ritual authorities. Therefore, they have jural and political authorities. Women's powers are complementary to that of men

because both genders' religious functions are complementary. Some of the bases of these powers are the ownership of the means of production and religious practices. The ownership of land - the object of labour, belong to the patrilineages ancestors. The implication of this is that all members of the patrilineage own land and the eldest man of the patrilineage holds the land in trust for the patrilineage. The people's religious practice is centered on ancestor/ancestress cult and animism. Both genders perform indispensable complementary ritual functions in ancestors/ancestresses worship. Thus Onwuejeogwu (1978:125) noted that:

The ancestor/ancestress (sic) cult is a common feature of many West African religions. Through it also the doctrine of lineage continuity is expressed and upheld. It has become a means by which social control is maintained by the older over the younger generation and it is manipulated to perpetuate and sustain the social order in time and space.

In Nkokwa, the ancestor/ancestress cult serves as the pivot through which the making of decisions/policies, and the subsequent maintenance of law and order in the traditional society are done, the existence of other religious, jural and political authorities described in chapter seven notwithstanding. Invariably, the ancestor/ancestress cult is the main means by which social control is maintained,

perpetuated and sustained. Therefore, since women's functions in the ancestors/ancestresses worship are indispensable, they are ritually, legally, socially and politically powerful. But their powers are complementary to that of men since both genders' functions in the ancestors/ancestresses worship are complementary. Thus, there is egalitarian gender relations.

We should note that because there is egalitarian ownership of the means of production and the consequent equal relations of production, 'State' (Marx and Engels, 1968; Engels, 1978; Nnoli, 1985) does not exist in the traditional *ndokwa*. Therefore, it is through these religious, jural and political authorities (with the religious legitimizing the jural and political) that decisions/policies are made, and law and order are maintained. According to Onwuejeogwu (1978:124):

There are some interrelated factors which encouraged the development and persistence of Stateless societies organized on the segmentary unilineal principle in West Africa. These are the historical and cultural trends of development, and ecological adaptation, combined with the ideologies of lineage perpetuity and continuity expressed in mystical idioms. Other important factors are the implications of using the lineage segmentary system as a system of land tenure and property distribution, as tenure and property distribution, as well as the lineage having some ritual attachment to land or property. Finally, it is significant that the inherent character of segmentation and the nature of residence pattern both inhibit powerful leader internally and/or the imposition of an external foreign leadership.

Besides, the other key ritual positions women hold in the society make them very powerful religiously, legally, politically, and socially. Generally, women control the ontological balancing. That is, the women's institutions are responsible for the maintenance of the relationship between the visible 'this' world and invisible 'other' world to ensure their balance for the benefit of the society. This women's key ritual role is imperative for the continuous existence of the groups of villages per se, because any disruption of the harmonious relationship between the two worlds will result in disaster which invariably threatens the people's peaceful, healthy and prosperous existence. Consequently, unpeaceful, unhealthy and unprosperous situation creates social disorder. The Okpala Uku and Nde Okwa, Inotu, the king and the cabinet chiefs or Mmanwu cannot rule amicably or command political, legal and social influence when there is social disorder. Therefore, women make the governance of men possible, (March and Taqqu, 1986:16).

Although, men's legal and political authorities are more manifest (most especially from colonialism) (Van Allen, 1972; 1978) than the women's, this does not suggest that men's status is higher or more powerful than women's legally and politically in the traditional Ndokwa society. Instead gender relations

in existence are complementary and thus egalitarian. Similarly, Paulme (1963:4) asserts that masculine dominance in the political sphere was not entirely mythical, but holds that the position of women in the kinship group based African societies was neither superior nor inferior to that of men, but simply different and complementary. She was reacting particularly to outside observers who compare African practice with the Western capitalist ideal. Indeed, it is tempting to speculate how Europeans in their capitalist societies are delighted in trumpeting the inferior position of women in Africa, so as to silence the voices pointing out the gap between ideal and practice in their own societies (Gugler, 1972:290). The ritual roles of women's institutions have made them indispensable in the making of decisions/policies and subsequently, the maintenance of law and order. Male authorities often consult the female authorities and consider their views in matters that concern the society. Therefore, the saying that 'women are seen but not heard in African traditional society' is generalized, since the **Ndokwa** does not present this referred situation. Also Ekejiuba (1967; 1991), Meek (1930), Smith (1964), Awe (1977), Afonja (1983), Miller (1975), Hoffer (1972), Aidoo (1981) and Amadiume (1987), have demonstrated that this saying does not hold true in the

societies they studied. Thus, this saying should be regarded as eurocentric. Invariably, the religious/ritual roles of women's institutions - Ada, Ejine, Idoko, etc. in Ndokwa have made them to acquire legal and political skills. Accordingly,

The many positions of authority and responsibility for women within their religious and ritual associations give considerable experience in decision-making, administration, dispute-settlement, management of collective resources, staging of public events - all activities requiring leadership and political skills. The authority women gain through their ritual associations extends their legitimacy into the formal secular politics of their society (March and Taqqu, 1986:72).

Thus, the religious and domestic spheres have given women high status and power in Ukwuani society just as other African societies (March and Taqqu, 1986; Steady, 1981). The traditional Ndokwa women are economically, socially, religiously, legally and politically powerful as the men. Extrapolating from Ndokwa experience to other Igbo societies, we can agree that the traditional Igbo women are economically, religiously, legally, socially and politically powerful (Ekejiuba, 1990; 1991; Amadiume, 1987).

With the incorporation of the Igbo into the Western capitalist economy which started from the 15th century and was consolidated during the British colonial administration between 1900-1960, the equal gender relations existing in the

traditional system started to change. Women's status began to be inferior vis-a-vis the men's. Colonialism brought with it capitalist social, religious, legal, economic and political institutions to replace the traditional. Although, colonialism did not base the recruitment of members of its 'ruling class' on gender, but on the ownership of the means of production, the colonial institutions did not give women the required opportunity to maintain the equal status which the traditional society gave them with men. This is because the early colonial Administrators' ideas were coloured by the 'ideal of Victorian Womanhood' (Van Allen, 1972:180). For instance, the colonial political institution's native authority (indirect rule) stressed male dominance on the giving of 'warrants'. Thus, the traditional male political institutions were preferred to the female ones. The 'public spheres' was conceptualized as 'The World of Men' (Sudarkasa, 1981:55). Besides, the introduced Christian religion has no supreme priestly or ritual position for women as the ancestor/ancestress cult. Further, land ownership became individualized, mostly due to the introduction of cash crops. Men took advantage of the fact that they held patrilineage's land on trust for the patrilineage as well as their permanent stay in the patrilineage (unlike the women who are married out to another patrilineage) to share land among

themselves for cash cropping and other purposes. Considerably, women's power in the public spheres started to dwindle compared with men whose power increased. Similarly, Okeyo (1980) and Romalis (1979) have demonstrated how colonial policies which standardized private ownership titles to land, usually in the hands of men, destroyed women's rights to land under traditional communal or lineage ownership. For example, the colonial administration established cash crops and cash income possibilities which were open to men (Tinker, 1976).

Moreover, the male sphere of the division of labour in traditional Igbo economy became commoditized by the colonial economy. Also, the convention in the traditional Igbo society is that in case of any strange situation, men first tried to resolve the problem before women who will only be involved if the men failed. Men seized these various opportunities to exploit the opportunities provided by the capitalist relations of production, for example, western education and colonial employments. Thus, they became economically more powerful than women as they controlled land, jobs and the needed medium of exchange - money in the colonial economy. Consequently, the existing equal gender relation in such traditional societies as Ukwuani started to alter, with women being subordinated by men.

Hafkin and Bay (1978) and Etienne and Leacock (1980), have ample examples of how colonial intervention in the African traditional societies shifted the sexual balance of power to the disadvantage of women in the division of labour. This resulted not only in the undercutting of women's resources for economic parity with men, but even increase in the women's labour obligations and subsequent subjugation by men. Also, Hay (1978) demonstrated vividly how the combined policies of colonial states and missionary churches created a nearly impossible economic situation, the real burden of coping with this "in the rural areas of Western Kenya fell on the women, who remained at home while their husbands and sons sought outside employment" (87). Such disregard for former gender patterns of property right and labour relations have made women's lives more difficult than before (March and Taggu, 1986:53). Since in the capitalist socio-economic formation, the political and legal powers are derived from the ownership and control of the means of production, women lost their political and legal powers and became marginalised by men in the colonial (capitalist) introduced public sphere.

Throughout this work, we have demonstrated, using our method of analysis (analytical paradigm), theoretical orientation and data, that women in Ukwuani have economic,

religious, social, legal and political powers/authorities, which are complementary (equal) to that of men. That is, women were powerful in traditional patriarchal societies such as Ukwuani. The equal gender ownership of and access to the means of production buttressed the fundamental basis of women's powers/authorities. The egalitarian gender relations of production invariably supported equal/complementary gender relations. Alteration in the ownership of the means of production to the advantage of one gender as opposed to the other, makes the advantaged gender more powerful. Thus, the method of ownership of means of production inherent in any society determines the type of gender relations in that society.

Bringing traditional Igbo women out from their traditional set-up and incorporating them into the peripheral capitalist system has led to the destruction of their power bases. The capitalist socio-economic formation, incidentally enslaves them. Unless the liberation movements or programmes empower women economically, by making them own and control the means of production, their former high status and power are threatened. Nigeria's 'peripheral capitalist' economic arrangements and policies cannot guarantee this.

Igbo women can restore their political and legal powers reminiscent of the traditional society in the capitalist socio-economic formation, only if they own and control the means of production. Further, we should note that traditional Igbo women were never in bondage or enslaved by men, so they need no emancipation or liberation as most women liberation movements or programmes depict.

Liberation movements or the 'Better Life Program' should instead of talking of the emancipation or liberation of the traditional Igbo women, learn the traditional Igbo society system and adopt the bases of the women's power to emancipate or liberate the urban women. The 'Better Life Program' and the liberation movements can learn a lot from the rural areas as the traditional society is still agrarian and has not been totally transformed by capitalism.

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APPENDIX I**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. How do you trace descent in your clan/village/family?
2. How is kinship organized in your clan/village/family?
3. Has there been any change over time on kinship organization?
4. What type of 'Ofo' exists in your clan/village/family?
 - (a) What are the functions?
 - (b) Who officiates during ancestors/ancestresses worship and why?
 - (c) How is the ancestors/ancestresses worship organized?
5. Name and describe the principal deities in your clan/village/family.
 - (a) What are their functions?
 - (b) Who officiates during worship and why?
 - (c) How is worship organized?
6. Other than above, do women serve as priestesses of any deity in your clan/village/family? If yes, explain.
7. What are the functions of the 'Ada'?
8. Other than the 'Ada', is there any religious, political, legal, social, etc. position held by any woman in your clan/village/family? If yes, name and explain.

9. What is the place of women in the coronation of 'Okpala-Ukwu/Obi/Igwe', etc.
10. What is the place of women in the functioning of the Okpala-Ukwu/Obi/Igwe Institution?
11. What are the functions of the women organization or groups based on kinship organization - Ndiomimusu, Nwuyedi, etc.?
12. (a) How is Ndiomosa organized?
(b) What are their functions?
13. What changes can you see in these groups over time?
14. Is/are woman/women powerful: (i) in the public and (ii) their Household? If yes, explain, showing how the power is expressed, maintained and protected?
15. How do women implement their order?
16. What is the place of women in their households vis-a-vis their husband?
17. What are the bases of land ownership in your clan/village/family?
18. How are farm products and other properties controlled in the family?
19. Is there any change to Question No. 15? If yes, explain.
20. What is the impact of the coming of Europeans on women/men power?

21. Is there any change observed on the power of women/men from the coming of European till present? If yes, explain.



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