ANATOMY OF PERIODIC MARKET CENTRES IN IDOMALAND, NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria, with the aim of assessing the contributions of periodic market centres to the economic development of Idoma society and challenges of periodic markets in the area. The objectives of the study are achieved through the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data. The result obtained showed that trade and markets have always been an important component of Idoma economy, as it provides employment to many people in the area and bridges the disparities in productive capacity between communities. Though incomes from trade activities are often not very high, traders made a living out of it. The major challenges faced by traders and markets are poor road network, high cost of transportation and inadequate capital. It also explores the impact of markets on the economy of Idoma society and how the peculiarity of each community affects the nature and character of the periodic market centres in the area. The paper concluded by submitting that periodic market centres are beneficial to the growth and development of Idoma society because of the cross-fertilization of ideas, similarities in terms of cosmology, culture, economic and politics as a result of long-standing interactions and relations among the people.

Introduction

The area which forms the subject matter of this paper lies south of the river Benue, in the Benue Trough of Nigeria's Middle Belt Zone, covering a total of 5,955 square kilometres, and lies within longitude 80° east and latitude 60° and 30° north.[159] It shares common boundaries with Nasarawa State to the north, Tivland (Gwer East and Gwer West L.G.As) to the east, Igedeland (Oju and Obi L.G.As) to the south-east, Ebonyi State to the south, Enugu State to the south-west and Kogi State to the west. The area experiences a tropical climate, while the local vegetation is the guinea savannah type. It is marked by dry and rainy seasons. The rain season begins in April and lasts till October. The dry season lasts from November to March. The average rainfall is between 1016 and 1524 mm. The area also experiences the dry, yet cold, windy harmattan weather between December and February and a short break in rainfall in August.[160] It has a population of about 2.5 million and is inhabited predominantly by the Idoma people, who speak the Idoma language and are predominantly rural and agrarian, who produce, eat and sell whatever is in excess.[161] The area is good for the cultivation of root and grain crops like yams, cassava, corn, rice, soya beans, and millets, serving as both food and cash crops – a practice that has considerably changed the luxuriant vegetation of the Idoma remote past. The people also involved in other vocations; as in white-collar jobs, art, and crafts. The administrative status of the seven local government headquarters has generated jobs and attracted more people from other areas for civil purposes, trading and farming.

Even though agriculture occupied the commanding position in the economy of the area of study, trade and markets nonetheless provided vital props. Markets promote and stimulate the exchange of goods and services in Idomaland. Markets in Idomaland are not static, but dynamic, responding to the needs of people through their interactions with one another and their environment. [162]This sector of the economy

[159]Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation of Idoma Society, 1860 – 1960, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2000, pp.5 – 6. Read also O. O. Okpeh, and Y. A. Ochefu, "The Idoma Ethnic Group: A Historical and Cultural Setting", retrieved from www.idoma.info on 23/04/2015; J. E. Agaba, "Colonial Agricultural Policies in Idomaland 1920 – 1960, in The Middle Belt in the Shadow of Nigeria, Makurdi: Oracle Business Ltd, 2007, p.198; _____, "Land Use and the Mode of Production among the Precolonial Society of Central Nigeria", in Benue Valley Journal of Humanities, Vol. 8, No. 1 & 2, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2009, p. 93.

[160]Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation …, pp.40 – 43; O. O. Okpeh, and Y. A. Ochefu, "The Idoma Ethnic Group: …; A. Okpaga, "The Socio-Political History of the Igede, in Y. A. Ochefu, et al (eds.), A History of the Peoples of Benue State, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 200, pp. 76 – 78.

[161] J. E. Agaba, "Colonial Agricultural Policies in …, p. 198; O. O. Okpeh, and Y. A. Ochefu, "The Idoma Ethnic Group: …; Origins of the Idoma People - Traditional History retrieved from www.idoma.info/history.php on 08/03/2016.

[162]See Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation …; Y. A. Ochefu, and O. O. Okpeh, "Idoma Precolonial Economy", in Y. A. Ochefu, et al (eds.), A History of the Peoples of Benue State, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007; O. O. Okpeh, and Y. A. Ochefu, "The Idoma Ethnic Group…; J. E. Agaba,

employs a significant proportion of the population on part-time and full-time basis. It is against this background that the paper seeks to examine the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria. Our data is sourced from primary evidence. This is counterpoised by rapidly growing literature from secondary sources on the people and their history. The data synthesized from all these support claims and conclusion that apart from agriculture, Idomaland is also renowned for its market centres and the Idoma had extensive interaction among themselves on one hand and between them and their neighbours on the other.

Conceptual Clarifications

In order to understand the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria, it is necessary to clarify some concepts. The concept of "*periodic market*" forms the keyword in this paper. The term periodic markets refers to markets that are not open for trade every day. Market activities took place once a market week. A market week is the number of days between a market day and the next in a particular community. On such market days, there are generally a large number of sellers and buyers. Periodicity of markets has been attributed to a low level of income in developing economies.[163] Low purchasing power of consumers, lack of storage facilities; sparse population concentration, and insufficiently diversified economy are responsible for market periodicity. These factors do not support continuous trading and therefore markets are forced to hold periodically in the areas. This attribute permits the concentration of sales in relatively short time and extent. Periodic markets resulted from and persisted because of the need of producers, the organisation of time, inertia, and comparative advantage.[164]This institution had to be coordinated with a calendar defined by the routine of production, religion, administration, rest, and recreation. Periodicity varied according to settlement pattern and culture area, but the most common periodicities in the area are five-day and ten-day periodicities.

Characteristics of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland

The market is significant to the economic growth and development of the study area, and hardly could you find a community without a market centre. In fact, market centres–daily or periodic – developed as a result of differences in the physical

"Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland 1900 – 1960", M. A. Thesis 1996; _____, "Colonization and the Idoma Economy and Society", in A. M. Adejo, (ed.), Ujo: A Journal of Idoma Studies Vol. 2, Makudi: EkaAgabaidu Press, 1999.

[163] O. N. Njoku, Economic History of Nigeria 19th and 20th Centuries, Enugu: Magnet Business Enterprises, 2001, pp. 81 – 85; C. A. Ochiche, et al, "Spatio-Temporal Distribution of Rural Markets in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State of Nigeria" in IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 16, Issue 3 (Sep. - Oct. 2013), retrieved from www.iosrjournals.org on 23/04/2015.

[164] C. A. Ochiche, et al, "Spatio-Temporal Distribution …

environment and geographical factors which promoted the establishment of trade and markets, as no community was self-sufficient in the production of agricultural and manufactured goods which it requires either for its necessities or luxuries.[165] In order to bridge this difference, exchange systems needed to be established by means of creating and enhancing markets. Among the Idoma, as with many Nigerian communities, market centres are highly valued landmarks, legitimate and veritable tools of the trade and building blocks of the Idoma economy. Ochefu appropriately put it thus:

> The establishment of a market was desired by all communities but affordable to only a few. A high incidence of producers, buyers and sellers, as well as politically safe routes, was a necessary prerequisite in the establishment of markets. Once an appropriate site was chosen, it was cleared and necessary sacrifices were made by the community head to ensure a trouble-free and profitable venture. The market was usually named after the day it was held. The Idoma, like their Tiv, Igala and Yalaneighbours operated a five-day market week.[166]

From the above statement, it is clear that apart from agriculture, Idomaland was and is still noted for its market centresand these markets are not static, but a fluid, dynamic entity, constantly incorporating and reinterpreting new knowledge aspects.[167] This signifies how markets are historically relevant to the Idoma and how it has transformed over time. However, it is not within the purview of this paper to assess these changes and factors which necessitate them. Instead, we shall attempt to examine the anatomy of periodic market centresin Idomaland, North Central Nigeria.Periodic market centres in the study area can be categorized broadly into two – full-fledgedperiodic markets and semi-daily periodic markets.

By full-fledged periodic markets, we refer to markets that are not open for trade every day, such as Adiga, Eve, Ebi, Oja-Ala, Akpa-Otobi, Oshigbudu, and Ojije markets. Market activities took place once in a week. This implies that the markets operate in strict compliance with the rules guiding the operations of periodic markets and are usually smaller in terms of capacity, size, population, popularity and commodities.

[165]See O. N, Njoku, Economic History of Nigeria 19th and 20th Centuries, Enugu: Margnet Business Enterprises, 2001, p.83 – 190; T. Falola, et al (eds.) History of Nigeria I (Nigeria before 1800 AD), Nigeria: Longman Publishers, 1989, pp. 122 – 135; S. Chinyere, and E. Lequome, "The Development of Trade and Marketing in the Upper Cross River Region of Nigeria before 1800", in The Journal of International Social Research, Volume: 7, Issue: 29, retrieved from www.sosyalarastirmalar.com on 23/04/2015.

[166] Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation …, p. 67.

[167]See Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation …; Y. A. Ochefu, and O. O. Okpeh, "Idoma Precolonial Economy", in Y. A. Ochefu, et al (eds.), A History of the Peoples of Benue State, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007; O. O. Okpeh, and Y. A. Ochefu, "The Idoma Ethnic Group…; J. E. Agaba, "Colonialism and the Introduction …; _____, "Colonization and the Idoma Economy and ...

The markets are held within an interval of days, with the most common in the area of study as five-day periodicities. By semi-daily periodic markets, we mean periodic markets that are held on a daily basis. Even though these markets are periodic in all ramifications, they act as daily markets, as traders also transact business in them on adaily basis. The only difference is that there are more people from different villages and towns and a variety of goods and services on a market day.

This implies that their activities are a daily affair as against a one-time, temporary or contract that only occurred in an interval. This is so because even in places full-fledged periodic market still exists, there are a handful of activities that go on, on non-market days. This is evidence during harvest seasons, especially good seasons when crops produce at their peak and as such lead to surplus and low prices. Goods and services are usually available at lower prices and in large quantities and variety for exchange on market days compared to non-market days. Apart from low prices and the large volume of goods and services, semi-daily periodic markets are a beehive of activities on market days, with sellers and buyers from within and outside the community. [168]Oyangede market at Oyangede, Nkwo-Orokam market at Orokam, Inikiri market at Ulayi, Adoka Central market at Adoka, Affor market at Ugbokolo and Oweto market at Oweto typify this.

[168]Christopher Onoja, 45, Farmer; Akor Felix, 55, Civil Servant both interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016.

Certain salient features characterised full-fledged periodic markets and semi-daily periodic markets. First, full-fledged periodic markets are plagued by an infrastructure deficit, if any facilities did exist at such sites, they are usually crude shelters constructed by the sellers themselves, consisting of thatched roofs, tents or stalls supported with stakes or other wooden materials. Second, agricultural and easily perishable goods dominate other goods in these markets. This is so because most of these markets catered mostly for the subsistence needs of households due to the poor or near absence of an access road and little specialisation between economic units. But traders and manufactured goods of distant origins are not usually absent in the markets. Third, they posed few transportation, logistical and security problems as most participants in them come from their immediate communities. Fourth, very little capital requirement was necessary for a trader to trade in these markets, as goods found in them are basic food and household items, and exchanges are usually carried out under tree shades and crude shelters constructed by the sellers themselves. Finally, these markets are dominated by women basically because they are seen as an adjunct to the domestic chores of women. There is a saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words”. Plate 1 below explains further by showing the nature and character of full-fledged periodic markets as described above.

Plate 1: Pictures Showing the Nature and Character of Full-Fledged Periodic Markets



Source: Author's Field Work, 2019

Some features of semi-daily periodic markets contrasted markedly from those of full-fledged periodic markets. Semi-daily periodic markets are often large in terms of size, fame and catchment area and also attract traders from far and wide with diverse cultures and political systems because of their rich or greater varieties of consumer goods. The traders therefore, had to deal with the problems of logistics transportation, security, living accommodation and storage facilities. In these respects, the traders worked in close liaison with their host landlords and brokers. Second, unlike full-fledged periodic markets, which are dominated by women, semi-daily periodic markets are dominated by men. The tradition which tends to confirm women to domestic chores made it difficult for them to undertake long-range journeys which would keep them away from home. Third, semi-daily periodic markets have better and improved facilities like open stalls, locked up stalls and toilet facilities andtraderswho trade in semi-daily periodic markets are often professionals that are people who took to trading as their main means of livelihood. Fourth, it required relatively substantial capital to justify undertaking the long journeys. They tried to solve the problem of capital through *igeya* system. A group of traders contributed an agreed amount of money each at an agreed interval, usually every market day. The amount collected was given to a member; the process continued until every member

got his or her share. The Scheme is a self-imposed (or group-influenced) savings plan regularly and not profit-oriented,is similar to *Isusu* in Igboland, *Isoko* among Edo people, *Esusu* in Yorubaland and *Adashi*/*Asusu* in the Hausaland. [169]Apart from *igeya,* there are other forms of

generating income such as daily contributions/savings, loans and credit purchase. Sometimes traders raised credit from family members, from money lenders and brokers. Finally, while most articles of trade in full-fledged periodic markets are perishable, those traded in semi-daily periodic markets are mostly not easily perishable. This is because it took a long time, sometimes months, for such goods to travel from their production centres to their final destinations. The goods are also usually of low bulk but high value, a condition dictated by high transportation cost. Plate 2 below explains further by showing the nature and character of semi-daily periodic markets as described above.

Plate 2: Pictures Showing the Nature and Character of Semi-Daily Periodic Markets



Source: Author's Field Work, 2019

Organization of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland

[169]See Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation …, pp. 70 – 160. Also see T. D. Ayodele, Revolving Loan Scheme (Esusu): A Subtitute to the Nigerian Commercial Banking? in IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM) e-ISSN: 2278-487X, p-ISSN: 2319-7668. Volume 17, Issue 6.Ver. II (June. 2015), PP 62-67, DOI: 10.9790/487X-17626267, retrieved from www.iosrjournals.org on 14/052021; E. Osabuohien and O. Ola-David, Esusu (Nigeria) in A. Ledeneva, (Ed.). The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality: Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity, Volume 2. London: UCL Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787351899, 2018, retrieved from www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press on 14/05/2021; N. J. Nwachukwu and M. S. Uchenna, Digitization of ESUSU Thrift Savings Scheme in Nigeria in African Journal of Basic & Applied Sciences 8 (2): 90-95, 2016, ISSN 2079-2034, DOI: 0.5829/idosi.ajbas.2016.8.2.1166, retrieved from https://idosi.org on 14/05/2021.

We may at this juncture outline the basic organizational features of periodic market centres in Idomaland. Some of the features have been mentioned in passing or obliquely in the course of our discussion above. However, it is appropriate now to accord the issue the specific attention it deserves. Periodic market centres in Idomaland are well organized commercial centres and are organized in a way that enhanced the efficiency of the distributive system. The markets, as regards physical layout, are usually demarcated and allocated according to commercial commodities. These commodities could be sold on bare ground without shade, but traditionally, market goods are sold under shades of trees, thatched roofs, tents or stalls supported with stakes, poles or other wooden materials. Although the modern market system was a later introduction, the modern stalls system is fast becoming a productive and well cherished market culture for domestic trade across the length and breadth of the study area.

For example, goods, particularly perishable ones, that were earlier spread on the ground are more appropriately shaded by or accommodated in stalls, thereby making the goods retain their freshness for a longer period. Also, traders who used to vacate the market early because of the blazing sun during the dry season and the soaking rain during the rainy season could stay longer in the market to sell their goods.[170] This is very promising, because those who could not have been able to go to market, for one reason or the other to purchase their needs, could easily take advantage of the longer time made possible by the stall system. Importantly, the stall system saves many Idoma traders the burden of carrying their goods home at the close of each market, or, in the case of daily market, every day. Such goods are left in the stalls and guarded by market security guards.[171] There are, therefore, different sheds or stalls for yam, cassava, palm oil, vegetables, meat, goat, fowls and cloths, etc.[172]Sellers of similar commodities sat in groups, an arrangement which helped buyers to easily locate the commodities they wanted to buy. Merchants or vendors may sell or trade goods and services, nonetheless individual traders had to belong to trade guilds which regulated the operation of members in the markets.[173]

The marketsare under the watchful eye of appointed authorities or officials, especially the market chief known as *Och'olihi*or *Oste-Oja*(the administrator or leader of the market) and crops of assistants who levied

[170]Interviews: Olofu John, 60, Retired Civil Servant; Ogenyi Emmanuel, 74, Ex-serviceman, both interviewed inMakurdi, April 2016. Also see NAK/MAKPROF/2780E: Development – Minutes of Divisional Committee Meetings – Idoma Division; NAK/MAKPROF/2780/S.15: Development – Market, Trade and Economic, 1945; NAK/MAKPROF/5517: Idoma NT Council Minutes of Meeting; NAK/MAKPROF/5517/S.2: Idoma NT Council Minutes of Finance Committee; NAK/MAKPROF/3669: Improvements, Local industry – Spinning and Weaving.

[171]Interviews: EnyiAgasi, 60, Farmer/Trader, interviewed in Utonkon, September 2016.

[172] Interviews: Ogenyi Emmanuel, 74, Ex-serviceman, Makurdi, April 2016.

[173] Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader; Adah FavourOgebe, 53, Trader, both interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016.

taxes, and maintained law and order to attract customers. They are appointed by the Council and the traditional rulers with the duties of ensuring peace and order, enforcing regulations, preventing dishonest dealing and maintaining the cleanliness and repair of the markets and market paths. They are market administrators and their position within the markets is, therefore, strategic and pivotal. The orderliness and tranquillity that prevailed in the markets is achieved through the agency of market officials, trade guilds and customary laws guiding the establishment and operations of the markets.[174] Moreover, the markets are treated as a neutral and sacred place where violence is strictly forbidden.

Challenges of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland

Several factors are militating against periodic market centres in Idomaland,although every community has major issues to deal with. However, the issues common to almost all places are; lack of funds,weak infrastructures, government policies and insecurity.

*1. Lack of funds:*Most traders and farmers in the area are poor, with little or no saving and lacking the capacity or skills to diversify their sources of income.The relatively low income of traders and farmers is associated with the problem of inadequate capital. Inadequate capital is a problem for both the traders and farmers as it affects the quantity of products/commodities they can produce and purchase. The non-traders in these markets also have the same problem because this can limit the size of their business. Inadequate capital limits the infrastructural development, as the aim to put in place new structures to replace the ageing ones scattered across the markets, as well as provide the basic infrastructure to enhance smooth market activities, had always been a challenge to the markets. Under this situation, a lot of infrastructure such as good market stalls, potable water and toilet facilities, which would have enhanced smooth marketing activities, are lacking.[175] For example, some traders do not have the capital to purchase their own goods; they work for people whom they give fixed returns daily. Getting loans from the banks is not an easy exercise, as the majority of these people do not have collateral for the banks. The various informal credit facilities and association which tend to provide loans have limited capital to meet the people's financial demands.[176] For traders to have a smooth market operation, adequate financing is imperative.

[174] Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader, interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016; Interviews: OnaziOste, 80, Farmer, interviewed in Igumale, August 2018. Also See Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation…, p.68; O. O. Okpeh, "The Precolonial Political Organizationof the Idoma People" in Studies in the History of Central Nigeria, Vol. 1, Lagos: CSS Limited, 2002, pp.158 - 160.

[175]Interviews: Priscilla Ejeh, 50, Farmer, interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016; Interviews: EjahAdoko, 85, Farmer, in interviewed in Adoka, August 2018.

[176]Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader, interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016; Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016. Also see P. Ogiji, The Food Basket Myth: Implications for Food Security and Agricultural Policy Reform in Nigeria, Markurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2004, p.65.

2. Weak infrastructures: This is another major challenge facing not only markets or traders but also the economy in general throughout Nigeria. Farm produce, in the area, lies in waste in remote areas, and this is mostly because farmers/producers and traders encounter difficulties in transporting their farm produce/finished products to the available market to sell, as there are no storage facilities to help preserve agricultural produce, especially perishable produce from rotting.

Good roads don't exist and most remote areas find themselves cut-off from the rest of the urban and market centres.[177] For trading and agricultural produce marketing to be efficient, transportation for moving the products from the rural areas where they are produced to the urban areas must be in good shape. The majority of the roads in the area are in very deplorable conditions. These inadequacies of rural transportation facilities are an insidious encumbrance to agricultural production, trade and rural development in the study area.[178] This implies that the bad conditions of the road affect the cost of transportation of agricultural produce which in turn affects the rural farmers' income. Consequently, leading to concentrated poverty, longer travel time, high prices for the transportation of goods from the production centres to the markets and high transaction costs for sales of agricultural inputs and outputs, these limit agricultural productivity and growth as well as reduce chances for commercialisation and industrialisation in the study area. Plate 3 below explains further by showing the poor nature of roads and railways linking market centres in the study area, as described above.

[177]Interviews: EnyiAgasi, 60, Farmer/Trader, interviewed in Utonkon, September 2016; Interviews: Priscilla Ejeh, 50, Farmer, interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016.

[178]Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016.

Plate 3: Pictures Showing the Poor Nature of Roads and Railway Linking Market Centres in the Study Area



Source: Author's Field Work, 2019

There is no gainsaying the fact that head-portaging of farm produce greatly delimits the ability of the farmers to transport their farm produce to the market, and this, by implication, diminishes their returns or income from the farm. This again underscores the need to provide motorable roads and road-worthy vehicles that can haul large volumes of farm produce and enhance the income levels of farmers in the area.[179]The problem is aggravated by lack of appropriate processing tools, implementation, and equipment. Besides this, the equipment available is often too expensive for the average farmer/producer. Most farmers/producers depend on rudimentary, labour, and time-consuming hand tools for processing agricultural products.[180] The use of modern equipment is not common among rural farmers/producers either because of non-availability, and where they are available, the high cost of renting/hiring one is highly exorbitant. The solution lies in the provision of incentives, machineries, and government policies to confront these challenges faced by farmers/producers and traders. Agriculture and trade must be given adequate attention in order to improve the economy; and small-scale farmers/producers must be adequately supported to ensure the nation's food security as well as improving their standard of living.

[179]Interviews: Priscilla Ejeh, 50, Farmer, interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016.

[180]Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016.

3. Government policies: Poor policies have greatly affected trade and agricultural production in the area. Lapses encountered in trading puts traders and producers in situations where they need financial support to enable them to produce, expand and improve their yields. As earlier stated, there are various micro-financing institutes in operation today in Nigeria but so many traders and farmers/producers still cannot access them and others encounter delayed financing.[181] Financial support either by government or private financing will go a long way in helping traders and farmers/producers acquire best practices, equipment and raw materials for easier and high-quality products. However, not much has been done in assisting traders and producers financially. Corruption and insufficient political commitment to address poverty are factors leading to poor market conditions and agricultural production in the area. Some of the ways in which this takes place is paying lip service to developmental issues within the area in particular and the State in general, misappropriation and mismanagement of fund made for infrastructures, agricultural equipment and improved product varieties. Likewise, corrupt practice such as police extortion of traders on our highways and revenue collectors having personal receipts which they issued to the market users instead of official receipts militate against the smooth running of the markets. Inexperienced people and persons of doubtful characters are sometimes charged with the task of revenue collection for the Local Government and this, at times, resulted in the loss of the much-needed funds for effective running of the markets.[182]

4. Insecurity: Markets depend not only on the site or potential buyers and sellers but also on other factors and the conditions prevailing in the society. If there is no security of life and properties like the current situation in Nigeria, people will not farm/produce talk more of trading that will lead to capital accumulation and mobilization and thereby, leading to dwindling revenue generation and economic instability in the area, the state by extension and the nation at large.[183]Besides, the area has a long history of conflicts both internal and across boundaries. These conflicts disrupt agricultural production and marketing systems, and cause mass displacements of rural dwellers who are the major players in the sector. Inter and Intra communal crisis, with its resultant splitting of markets in the communities, posed a challenge to the smooth running of market activities. For instance, the continuous feud between the Agila (Idomaland) and the Ngbo (Igboland) which has been a recurrent decimal for decades affects markets operations and administration in Agila and

[181]Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader, interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016; Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016. Also see P. Ogiji, The Food Basket Myth: …, p.65.

[182]Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader, interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016; Interviews: OnaziOste, 80, Farmer, interviewed in Igumale, August 2018.

[183] Interviews: Priscilla Ejeh, 50, Farmer, interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016.

its environs.[184] There are ill feelings and apathy between the Agilaand the Ngbo, and this really hurts markets in the area and retard the socio-economic development of Idomaland. The market could not hold for fear of insecurity, any time a dispute occurs. Also, road marauders and bandits constantly pillaged traders, especially during periods of communal clashes and political instability in the area. [185]Consequently, the government at all levels should always secure the lives and properties of the people to boost economic sustainability and agricultural production, and in turn enhance trade. Political stability and a peaceful atmosphere encourage agricultural production, trade and economic sustainability.

Socio-Economic Impact of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland

The impact of periodic market can never be overemphasised. Periodic markets perform diverse socio-economic functions towards the integration of peasant economic systems. Commercial activities among rural dwellers are mostly carried out through periodic markets, thereby bringing the gap of socio-economic isolation associated with rural areas as well as integrating peasant traditional societies into regional and national socio-economic systems. Periodic markets contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of their locality in diverse ways through revenue mobilisation and improvement in resident welfare, as it lead to the provision of boreholes, construction of roads, employment opportunities, and a medium for the transfer of produce, among others, in communities where they are located and the diffusion of information.[186]This connotes that the arrangement of periodic markets over time and space takes into cognisance the distribution of population and settlement, the degree of mobility of traders and buyers and local variations in productive capacity and resource endowment.

The socio-economic development, especially roads cut across both local and regional boundaries and thereby stimulating the improvement in agriculture and mass production of goods and services, the influx of people, goods and services into the markets as well as the positive deployment and commercialisation of two factors of production – land and labour. This implies that large tracts of land are tilled for production, while many people found employment in many diverse activities connected with the markets.[187]These encourage specialisation in production and the growth of markets among the various communities, as well as enhance local and long-distance trade.

The improvement in production capacity and expansion of the domestic economy encourage the acquisition of capital. The

[184] Interviews: EnokelaOnuh, 57, Trader; AmehEliagwu, 65, Trader/Farmer, both interviewed in Otukpo, April 2016.

[185]Interviews: Sunday Adoko, 58, Trader; Michael Ikwue, 51, Civil Servant, both interviewed in Iga-Okpaya, October 2016. See Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation…, p.73.

[186] Interviews: EnokelaOnuh, 57, Trader; AmehEliagwu, 65, Trader/Farmer, both interviewed in Otukpo, April 2016.

[187] Interviews: John David, 55, Trader; Josephine Agada, 60, Farmer, both interviewed in Ugbokpo, October 2016.

capital accumulation is either in form of material property or liquid cash. This contributes substantially to the economic transformation of the area with remarkable changes. Among the changes are specializations in productive activities, population increase, expansion in the markets, and increase in professional traders and middlemen activities. For some of the traders, the trade in agricultural products is their main business. These traders live on the profits they get from the business.[188] The expansion and increase of activities in and around the markets also contribute to local prosperity and increase tax revenues for community development. Traders pay tolls in the form of tax. The revenue is used to develop and upgrade the markets and the communities.[189]

Periodic markets are strong and important vehicles for pulling people and ideas together from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds because, as traders moved from their communities to markets within and outside Idomaland, an impetus is given to settlement. For instance, Adoka, Otukpa, Ugbokolo, Oyangede, Utonkon and Igumale, among other communities, owed their prominence and rapid expansion to markets and commercial activities that went on in them.[190]Thus, periodic markets are invaluable socio-economic components of the rural space which facilitate integration among the Idoma on the one hand and between the Idoma and their neighbours on the other hand, thereby fostering the process of integration which enhances peaceful coexistence**.** Periodic markets encourage intermarriages and serve as focal points for exchange of commodities and innovation; avenues for social function; centres for communications and entertainment and points for rural evangelism.[191] These activities bred a new breed of ideas and people whose loyalty transcends the narrow ethnic, cultural and religious loyalties of their ancestors, as well as promotes the diffusion of culture, reciprocal exchange of ideas and bonds various people together. Periodic markets are not only major outlets for the retail of goods; they are also a means of aggregating rural surpluses. Periodic markets are points for bulking farm produce into larger sacks for sale in urban markets. Also, they are meeting points for the continuation of lineage rites and also enable the socio-political regrouping of people who have previously dispersed.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to show that periodic markets are central to the growth and development of the economy of the study area. Periodic markets satisfy the cultural matrix of some groups and provide vital props to the overall performance of their

[188] Interviews: OchapaOgaba, 70, Trader/Farmer, interviewed in Igumale, August 2018.

[189]Interviews: EjahAdoko, 85, Farmer, in interviewed in Adoka, August 2018.

[190] Interviews: Ogenyi Emmanuel, 74, Ex-serviceman... Also read Y.A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation ...; J. E. Agaba, "Colonialism and the Introduction….; O. O. Okpeh, and Y. A. Ochefu, "The Idoma Ethnic Group: …

[191]Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016.Interviews: Helen Agbo, 70, Trader/Farmer, interviewed in Otukpa, August 2018.

economies. Agricultural products from within Idoma and neighbouring communities sustained the vibrant markets patronised by traders from across the length and breadth of the country. The markets demonstrate the success of economic co-operation and cultural understanding, and provide a range of entrepreneurial opportunities for Nigerians, from traders to loaders. However, some issues such as lack of funds, weak infrastructures, government policies and insecurity militate against their smooth operation and progress. It is important, therefore, that the government of Benue State set up a task force to ascertain the challenges confronting the market and how to solve them through capital investment and rural development. On the whole, the activities of periodic markets give the required stimulus to improve agriculture and mass production and promote trade and commerce within and outside Idomaland.