
Traditional Administrative System and the Politics of Land Management in Akpor Kingdom, in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research focused on traditional administrative system and the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State. The major objectives centered on evaluating the relationship between the traditional administrative system and the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom. The theory employed was historical materialism approach that hinged on the basic ideas of Marxism. The research method adopted was survey approach of research design and made use of both primary and secondary method of data collection. Primary data were generated from copies of questionnaire distributed and personal interviews conducted, while secondary data were generated from textbook, journals, periodicals, etc. The findings were that there is a significant relationship between traditional administrative system and land management in Akpor Kingdom, that conflicts do arise in course of land sharing which can be resolved through process of summoning or law court and that the Nyewe-Ali in Council, the Council of Chiefs, the family heads and the committee set aside for such matters are those in charge of land management in Akpor Kingdom. The conclusion were that there is a significant relationship between traditional administrative system and the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom and that traditional administrative system enhances effective and efficient process of land management in Akpor Kingdom, through the Nyewe-Ali in Council, the council of chiefs, the family heads and the committee set aside for such matters. The recommendations among others were; constitutional relevance should be given to the traditional rulers to enable them perform effectively and decisively on the contradictions that arise concerning land matters, that government at all levels should desist to meddle with traditional institution as it is a sacred institution and that chiefs should adjudicate matters at customary courts at local government areas, while majesties are to be in charge of customary court of appeal without government interference.

Key Words: Tradition, Administration, System, Politics, Land and Management

INTRODUCTION

The traditional administrative system is one that has little or no change over time. It is a dominant feature in African Countries and Nigerian States. This institution provided a system of administration from which law and order came and provided a stable system of governance. It is important to point out that the belief among the most western scholars was that pre-colonial African societies had no system of administration. There were no laws, no order, no government, and no civilization. This belief has long been seen as very erroneous (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2009). It has been known that traditional African societies indeed, had well established and organized system of administration where public order was provided and maintained. Laws were equally made and implemented, while inter-communal and inter-tribal conflicts were also settled. These showed that traditional institutions has been a

significant feature of any group of people and commanded a large degree of loyalty and respect among them as applicable in Akpor Kingdom, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State.

However, considering the 1976 Local Government reform, traditional council in each local government area were accorded with specific advisory roles. One of its roles is the determination of customary law and practice on all matters including land management (FGN, 1976). This therefore, includes; implementations of land policy, land use planning and land re-adjustment.

Moreover, UNESCO, (2005) described land management as the process by which a country's land resources are put into good effect which varies from one society to another. According to the World Bank (2006), land management systems are supposed to maximize the social, economic and environmental interests (benefits) in a way that is not damaging to the land but implies deriving maximum benefits from land. Traditional administrative system is a dominant feature of all communities in African continent and its fulcrum is hinged on land ownership and distribution. Land distribution patterns have being the reasons for most conflicts in the past and even in recent times. Perhaps, crisis resulting from land conflicts or the threat of communal clashes and violence have characterized traditional systems. Individuals and groups throughout history have in one form or another, resorted to violence or its potential use as a tactics of settling land dispute. Crisis has been used by groups seeking land, by groups holding lands and by groups in the process of losing land.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that land ownership is usually tied to the position one occupies in the traditional administrative system. Traditional administrators (rulers) play a very vital role in such systems, since traditional rulers are meant to be custodians of traditions and customs of their people. Be that as it may, given the conditions of traditional administrative system in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular, traditional rulers have failed to play this role in most cases, especially in Rivers State of Nigeria. Traditional rulers and their councils fashion out traditional laws that places them in positions to acquire the lands of their people. Since lands are of high value. This situations most times leads to serious conflicts that culminate to communal crisis.

Also, in retrospect and even in this contemporary era, there are cases of inter-tribal conflicts arising from boundary disputes. Narrowing it down to family unit (family administrative system), land ownership and distribution amongst siblings have countless times led to bloodshed and even results to death. For instance, the case of an elder brother (first-born mostly) using his position and influence to sell the lands belonging to other members of the family.

Finally, in the light of all these, proper and equitable distribution of land is a necessary condition for the restoration of effective and efficient traditional administration, good governance and accountability in rural areas and various communities. In the end, our major interest in this research is to look at the various challenges facing land management and impacts of traditional administrative system on land management (land sharing and disputes), its roles in Akpor Kingdom, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, in Rivers State, Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Tradition originated from a Latin word "Traditio" which means set of beliefs and customs of a people carried out in the past and transmitted through communication and documentations from generation to generation (Authony, 2003). In this contemporary era, some aspects of traditions of a people are being modernized based on the enlightenment that western education has brought into our societies. Sometimes too, some persons decide to do things their own ways, mostly, when they belong to a high class in the society. And if they

manage to sustain such act or deed over time, there will be followership which will definitely have some amendment effect on the existing tradition. Such attitudes and values held by such personalities influences the general attitudinal behaviors and values of others coupled with their norms which are subsumed in their culture.

Moreover, the traditional ruler is in charge and custodian of any society's traditions. He is seen as traditional first citizen, be it appointed, selected, elected or traditionally, chosen according to tradition and culture (Osuji, 2009). "A traditional ruler is a person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area and whose throne has been in existence before the advent of the British in Nigeria" (Bello-Imam, 1996: 135). Or "The traditional head of an ethnic unit or clan and whose title is recognized as a traditional ruler's title by the government of the state" (Bellor Imam, 1996: 136).

On the other hand, administration is the direction and management of human and material resources geared towards achieving a common goal. It can also be seen as a group or organizational management to see to the affairs of family and the entire governmental system (Fadia and Fadia, 2008). The concept of traditional administrative system can be defined as those social, economic or political organizations/bodies which derive their power, legitimacy, influence and authority from the traditions of a particular people (Ellias, 1967). This is why Max Weber (1947) has rightly categorized all types of authority into three; legal/rational, traditional and charismatic. In the pre-colonial Africa, the set of people who control, direct and superintend over traditional institutions are called traditional rulers and their subordinates like provincial chiefs, princes, ward heads, etc. Indeed, the power, authority and legitimacy of traditional rulers were derived from traditions (Ojo, 1979). In that regard, African Monarchs were and are still referred to as traditional rulers. From the Nigerian view point, traditional rulers refer to the set of rulers of the various Nigerian people and communities before these people were brought together by the British colonial rulers in the amalgamation of Nigeria.

Furthermore, according to Amadi (2007), the categories of traditional rulers include the Mai/Shehu of Borno, the Habe and Emirs in Hausa/Fulani land, the Oba in Yorubaland, the Attah in Igalaland, the Etsu in Nupeland, the Obi and Eze in Igboland, which of course include the Nyewe-Ali in Iwhurunuoyna land, etc. These traditional rulers occupied and still occupy important positions among the people of pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria. Their positions are sanctioned by the traditions, history and culture of their respective people who hold them in high esteem and reverence. More importantly, is that the politics of land management is centered on the traditional ethics of any society. This is because the politics of any society is centered on those concerns that are necessary conditions for its livelihood and development (Appadorai, 2001). Politics as unavailable feature and part of social life deals with the authoritative allocation and caring of resources that can be for subsequent allocation of other important objects (Nwosu, 2006). Whereas to kingdom, (1991:5), "Politics is concerned with the art of compromise, the exercise of authority, the acquisition of power, and as a form of devious deception".

Also, the concept of land has consistently occupied a central place in the annals of all human societies sequel to the enormous role played and is playing in the existence of man as a living and social creature (Okorobia, 1996). The different conceptual perspectives of land have been assessed from various fields of study. Thus, land according to Udo (1990), is a notion of people or town and community within a socio-political framework. This reveals that land is not only the space but the group of people with socio-political affiliation. Whereas, economists see land as a source of human wealth and raw materials for man's daily needs.

According to the well-established principle of law *quiequid planate Solo Solo credit*, land consists of the surface of the earth, the sub oil, and the air space above it, as well as all things that are

permanently attached to the soil. It also includes streams and ponds. Land and everything attached to the earth and all chattels real (is the) statutory definitions of land in Nigeria (Chalifour, Kameri-Mbote, Lye and Nolon, 2007:243). According to Obaseki, Land is a species of property. Property has been defined to mean ownership or title and sometimes the res over which ownership may be exercised. The land comprised in the territory of each state of the federation is the res over which the governor exercised ownership in trust in accordance with section 1 of the Land Use Act of 1978. It is an immovable property (Chalifour, Kameri-Mbote, Lye and Nolon, 2007:243).

Again, the urban and regional planning profession views land from the spatial angle. In this aspect, the concept of land is manifested in the definition of development. The Nigeria urban and regional planning law (1992), defines development as the carrying out of any building engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under any land. Land therefore is physical and quantitative. Barlowe (1958), asserts that land may be thought of as space-room and surface within and upon which life takes place.

In addition, Obateru, (2005) opens that in physical planning, land is synonymous with the physical environment of man and natural resources which encompasses the earth's crust or lithosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and the troposphere. This therefore means that land as space includes not only the surface of the earth but also cubic space. Land thus involves the space beneath the surface within which minerals are found and from which they might be removed, the space that man occupies in his daily living and the space above and about him.

Sequel to the socio-economic and physical values of land to human, land has to be used for various purposes for the satisfaction of man and his environment. Thus, the Land Use Act of 1978 recognizes the different uses of land within Nigeria territory. The commencement of the Act revealed that all land comprised in the territory of each state (except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies) solely are under the Governor's control of any state, who would hold such land on trust for the people. And would henceforth be responsible for allocation of land in all urban areas to individual' resident in the state and to organizations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes (Land Use Act, 1978).

THEORETICAL MODEL

This research adopts the historical materialism approach. This theory is hinged on the basic ideas of Marxism. By historical (dialectical) materialism, it implies Marx's investigation of the truth, his opinions and his logical argument vis-à-vis the materialism. It is on account of dialectics of human history that covers items and issues such as primitive communism, ancient slave mode society, medieval feudalism, Bourgeois capitalism, socialism-communism, alienation, reification and fetishism of commodities, the state and revolution. The key element in this theory is the idea that man makes history, history that becomes the liberation of alienated man. According to Marx, "retrospectively, human society's activities have being based on class struggle" (Vygodsky & Afanasyev, 1980). The materialistic conception of history means that man is not the product of material conditions but that he creates himself in history on the basis of his material conditions. The changing economic basis of society and the struggle between the classes to which it gave rise, are keys to the unfolding of history. In Marx's view, the proletariat (non owners of the means of production) still has to realize its historical revolutionary role in bringing about the transformation to a classless society where the means of production would be owned and controlled by the masses (Vygodsky & Afanasyev, 1980). The economic basis of society

consists of forces of production and relations of production. The relations of production are social relations between people, Labour or production which is usually social i.e it is done in association with others. Historical materialism will help to analyze and understand the dynamics of traditional administrative systems which is usually premised on the politics of land ownership, management and distribution. This approach is applied because of its adequacy based on the comprehensive survey of society which include; the political, economical, and social aspects of a society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey approach is used as the research design. Both primary and secondary sources of data were adopted in this research. The primary method of data collection was carried out through copies of questionnaire and conducted interviews. While the secondary sources of data includes; News Paper Dailies, Journals, Text books, and other relevant materials with which the propositions or the tentative statements were evaluated via test method. The simple random sampling technique was used in the distributions of the copies of the questionnaire while the stratified random sampling technique was chosen for the interviewed respondents. A total of five hundred (500) copies of questionnaire were distributed in Akpor Kingdom which has ten (10) communities. The communities include; Ozuoba, Ogbogoro, Choba, Rumuekini, Alakahia, Rumuokparali, Rumualogu, Rumuosi, Rumuokwachi, and Rumuorlumini. Each community is administered fifty (50) copies of questionnaire to avoid being bias in the sources of information for the research.

DISCUSSIONS

Given the institutionalized traditionalized administrative system such as Akpor Council of Chiefs, Akpor Women Council, community (men/women) council, and family men/women meetings which their functions are specified. These functions include; fostering peace, unity and development in the kingdom, community and family, respectively among men and women and various laws guiding traditional land management. Such laws specify boundary demarcation, land encroachment and land sharing formulae, land related matters, etc. In spite of all these, land management is still a huge challenge in communities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area with particular reference to Akpor Kingdom. This is the crux of the matter which stands as a major problem and the focus of this research.

However, before the advent of the Europeans, Societies in Africa had evolved various systems of traditional administrations, based on the peculiarities of these ethnic nationalities. This administrative system had full executive, legislative and judicial powers in their different domains and exerted sovereign control over their people. According to Oloko (1976), there has been a systematic and organized administrative authority comprising the legislative, executive and the judicial arm that adjudicates laws of the land. These laws were unwritten which helped in guaranteeing peace and security in the society. Whereas Afigbo (1972) made mention of paramount chiefs, the council of elders, age grade and religious organizations as inclusive in the traditional administrative system. In this regard, leadership is headed by man in any family lineage that made most of the men very powerful and influential. Crisis in the village and among villages, it beholds on the elders to delve into the matter and see to its resolution.

Whereas, in the colonial era, the British system of colonial administration employed the system of indirect rule. Indirect rule was a British system of ruling her colonies through the local chiefs who were under the supervision of British officials. The advent of colonial rule brought about changes on the authorities of the traditional rulers through the indirect rule (Abdulahi, 2007). Prior to this period, traditional rulers were the traditional, cultural, economic and social administrators and lords of their various domains. The bastardization of

the sovereign authorities of the traditional rulers by the British was to perfect their exploitative approaches which they made use of the same traditional rulers (Aidelokhai, 2008). These strategies of the colonial masters with which they exploit the territories in Africa were equally captured in the work of Crowder (1978). Crowder asserts that despite the existing rules and laws of the traditional authorities, at the point of colonialism, that their traditional rights to rule were depending on the colonial authorities (Crowder, 1978).

Furthermore, the British instituted Native courts and installed warrant chiefs that were in charge of the court proceedings in line with the traditional settings whereby the chiefs were in total control. This serve as their main source of power to superintend the constructions of colonial roads and water way (Ofonagoro, 1982). In a situation where warrant chief at Enugu then was described as an “African god” by his grandson to imagine the type of influence and powers that they were possessing (Onyeama, 1982). But then, in spite of the subordination to the British government representatives, it is important to note that the powers of traditional rulers were not eroded and never gone extinct. Rather, the circumstances strengthened the traditional institution in the administrative processes. Although, the traditional rulers roles were conditioned by the British authorities based on their needs and intentions.

Interestingly, in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, the Akpor Kingdom during the pre-colonial era and as applicable (globally) elsewhere in the world has a traditional monarch known as Nyewe-Ali. He is at the topmost/apex hierarchy of the holders of traditional power and authority. Nyewe-Ali in Akpor traditional system has always been ordained by the community’s spiritual/traditional authorities through a divination, acceptable to and by the community as a role model and unquestionable means of selecting a leader. Nyewe-Ali is not only a mere head of a kingdom but he is a role model, father to all and second to the gods. He is generally seen, recognized and acknowledged as the custodian of the people’s history and culture. He represents the reincarnation of the past ancestors of the community. The words of Nyewe-Ali are orders and his actions are divine and sacred. Until the modern period, they were hardly seen in public except during important traditional festivals and religious celebrations. The Nyewe-Ali has always been assisted by a chain of traditional chiefs and loyalists who also form important parts of the traditional administrative system in Akpor Kingdom.

THE HISTORY AND PEOPLE OF AKPOR KINGDOM IN OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Obio/Akpor is one of the twenty-three Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. The L.G.A particularly is part and parcel of Port Harcourt metropolis which is one of the major centers of economic activities in the country and among the major cities reckon in the Niger Delta. The local government area covers 260km² and as at the 2006 census held a population of 878,890 (National Population Commission (NPC, 2006). Obio/Akpor has its headquarters at Rumuodomaya and the original indigenous occupants of the area are the Ikwerre (Ihwuroha) people. Obio/Akpor L.G.A. was created out of Port Harcourt Local Government Area in May 3rd, 1989. With the creation of the L.G.A makes Ikwerre (Ihwuroha) to have four L.G.As namely; Port Harcourt City, Obio/Akpor, Emuoha and Ikwerre L.G.As respectively. Obio/Akpor L.G.A is located between Obio and Akpor geographical area. The L.G.A. has three kingdoms. Obio comprises Evo Kingdom and having Rumuwoji as the traditional headquarters and Apará Kingdom that has Rumuigbo as its traditional headquarters while Akpor has one kingdom known as Akpor Kingdom and with Ozuoba as its traditional headquarters.

More importantly, the people’s origin is predicted on the oral tradition that Ochichi is a descendant of Ihwuroha which later came to be known as Ikwerre. Ihwuroha had a brother called Akalaka, both Ihwuroha and Akalaka migrated from Bini Empire. They escaped being

killed by Oba Ewuare on ascension to the throne after he murdered his predecessor (Uwaifiokuun) at night in a palace revolution which then caused great conflagration in the city of Bini (Benin), which lasted two days just to avenge his banishment. It was not unlikely also that any group terrified by the turmoil in the land of Bini during that time and was afraid that it might boil over to the other parts of the Niger, they move away in search of a safe haven where Oba Ewuare's army were not so familiar with because of coastal terrain. About 12th century B.C. Akalaka and his brother Ihwuroha migrated South East and mixed with the Igbos and Ijaws. Akalaka married wives from Igbo and Ijaw who begot two sons Ekpeye and Ogba. Ihwuroha married a wife from Igbo and he was filled with the spirit of valour and the desire to establish a vast Empire which motivated him to migrate across the Orashi and Sambrero rivers.

To this end, Ihwuroha gave birth to Ochichi and Ochichi has seven children, Akpor as his first son. Others are Elele, Wagidi, Wezina, Obio, Igwuruta and Odogu. Their first settlement on migration was at Elele Okanali. He later establish a secret garrison station as Isiokpo known as Okpo (Bush part) under the watch of his brave son known as Wagidi who had two sons known as Rishiokpo and Ogbodoh. Hence, Ali Isiokpo Nu Ogbodoh is the correct traditional name of the community known and called Isiokpo. Having acquired vast territory and fertile land, he called the area Ochichi-Asaa, representing his seven children which means a hostable space and kingdoms that occupied by an organized group of people. He allocated settlements to his seven principal clans. At his old age, Ochichi and his first son Akpor moved to the present place of Akpor and built a fortress made of Rukani (shrine or holy place), Obiri (Hall), Mgbidi (Fence/wall) and Obaa iji (Yam barn). It was big enough to carter for the food needs of the entire empire. The existence of yam barn which was built at Ozuoba which is the traditional headquarters of Akpor Kingdom was the traditional reason of Akpor celebration of annual new yam festival.

WHO ARE THE IHWUROHA OR OCHICHI ASAA

It is very important to clarify the confusions as to the true or correct name that we bear, also our independent identity as a tribe, which is contested by the Igbos. As the research have stated earlier, Ihwuroha is the father of Ochichi. Traditionally, we know ourselves as Ihwuroha. The name Ikwerre is of colonial origin which arose as a result of linguistic corruption by interpreters who accompanied European explorers, traders, missionaries and teachers who were Igbos. Those set of Igbos deliberately and systematically corrupted the Ihwuroha language as they hoped to annex the territory and this was made possible by marriage of many more of Igbo women by our people (Ihwuroha).

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Obio/Akpor Local Government Area is bounded by Port Harcourt L.G.A. to the South, Oyiabo L.G.A to the East, Ikwerre L.G.A. to the North, and Emohua L.G.A. to the West. It is located between latitudes 4°45'N and 4°60'N and longitudes 6°50'E and 8°00'E (Achinewhu, 1994). Akpor Kingdom covers an area of about 120 square kilometers which lies between 50sqk North and 70sqk East in the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State (Mene, 1998). The area is accessible through the federal (East/West road) highway, Rumuokwuta/NTA/Choba road and Rumuepirikom/Rumuorlumeni Roads. The most important geographical features in this wide area are the new Calabar River which traverses the Northern boundary with Emuoha and Ogbakiri in the South and West respectively. Akpor is bounded by Obio and Port Harcourt groups of its Ikwerre kindred while in the East, it shares boundary with Aluu community.

Again, it lies in the tropical wet climate zone, characterized by abundant rainfall with little dry season. The raining season occurs between April and October, bringing heavy

rainfall, ranging from 2000mm to 2500mm with temperatures up to 25°C and a relatively constant humidity (Achinewhu, 1994). Obio/Akpor is generally a lowland area with average elevation below 30 meters above sea level. Its geology comprises basically of alluvial sedimentary basin and basement complex. The thick mangrove forest, raffia palms and light rainforest are the major types of vegetation. Due to high rainfall, the soil in the area is usually sandy or sandy loam, always leached (Achinewhu, 1994).

Moreover, the people of Obio/Akpor are mainly farmers due to large expanse of arable land lying on a low plain and the type of climate that favours so many seasonal crops. More especially too, the connectivity of the creeks, swamp forest and some other channels of rivers compel some people in the community to be engaged in fishing coupled with hunting, palm fruit harvesting, craft, fruit gathering, palm wine tapping and distillation and petty scale trading (Kinako et al, 1989).

Interestingly, the people volunteered their land to host important landmarks and institutions of economic relevance in Rivers State. Notable among these are the, University of Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigerian Air Force Base, Nigerian Naval Pathfinder, Nigerian Army 2nd Brigade, Oil Multinational Companies such as shell, Agip, Mobil, Elf, etc. The location of many companies and government establishments in Akpor, such as Ascot, Indomie, Charkins, Saipam, Avion Off Shore, Today Radio, University of Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, etc. have provided white collar job opportunities for the people of Akpor Kingdom. These establishments engage the services of Akpor people as unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled employee (Ozuru, 2004).

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SETTING OF THE PEOPLE

Obio/Akpor people are known to be very hospitable set of people in Rivers State. This hospitality is defined in the way they take care of their guests at a given time. They thrill their guests with their traditional meals, wrestling, festivals like new yam festivals of Akpor kingdom, etc. During festive periods like new yam festival, Christmas times, Easter periods and any other time worthy to celebrate. The entire area do showcase the rich cultural heritage. One of the fantastic traditional displays of the Obio/Akpor people is the traditional wrestling. This is mainly engaged by the able-bodied youths to test their physical strength. Wrestling (Egelege) is a cultural and an integral part of the tradition of the people of Obio/Akpor (Amadi, 2004). In the wrestling, instruments are used such as; Ikwirikwe, Ekwenkalu, Ngele, Mbamba of different types, shapes and sizes.

Normally, two competing camps would gather opposite one another, led respectively by a motivator. The motivator holds some grasses, which he uses to whip the wrestlers hands and buttocks exciting them for action. Whoever throws the other down becomes the winner. If the wrestlers were unable to win each other, they are said to have equalized. The side of the wrestlers that wins his opponent will be lifted up with utter jubilation. They will dance round the playground where the wrestling takes place. Women will dance around in a manner that arouses the wrestlers. Apart from the wrestling competition which is mainly for the young men, there is also the Eregbu cultural dance and masquerades. These are important cults, which the young must belong. One of the most popular dance steps in Ikwerre is the Eregbu. In this dance, two drummers, mostly males, sit opposite each other and play selected styles that give different tones to the dancing pleasure of the people who do so in circular fashion to the admiration of spectators. This is a beautiful dance that is highly cherished by the people of Ikwerre ethnic nationality.

Also, they have the Eri-Ite (Clay pot) dance that is mainly played by women. The drummer used different instruments like Ite, Ngele, Osha, Kwirikwe, among others. Sometimes, the men assist the women in drumming, while the other women dance in circle, or as they may find convenient for the movement. Spectators watch with utmost joy,

happiness and admiration. Akpor people also have another dance called the Eri-Oboh, whereby the chief drummer directs the play by using rhythms from locally made instruments. The main instrument, known as Oboh is made of thick calabash, with strong strings. This is used alongside other instruments to orchestrate the dance. Eri-Ogbudu is another sacred dance used for burial ceremony of a traditional ruler, mainly, Nyewe-Ali of any community in Akpor. Ogbudu is a spiritual cult in Akpor Kingdom that is part of the rituals (Ogbudu dance) performed during the burial of the king (Nyewe-Ali). During such ceremony, there are some items used in the process which are as follows; “One piece of native wrapper, four abbeys (old native iron money used during slave trade), one box of gun powder, one cock, one jar of raffia wine (and) one bottle of kai kai” (Orij, 2013:29).

THE POLITICS OF LAND MANAGEMENT

There is always a process of deciding who owns a particular land as his/her own private property. In Locke’s theory of property, he was of the view that God gave all things in common after creation to the children of men. And that man is entitled to survive and continue his life as God has already given him means to achieve that which according to Locke, stands as the two basic assumptions concerning property. Also, by virtue of the fact that man’s labour is part and parcel of him, whatever that he mixes his labour with that belongs to the earth as resources transforms to be his private property because that transformation is of his creation (Nwosu, 2006).

Moreover, ownership of land is usually determined by the political structure on ground in any community. In this regard, the sub-lineage in so many communities are where the politics of individuals right starts and the sub-lineage actually defines who owns the land or modalities of land allotments (Ndu, 2002). There are principles that guide the politics in land management which a glaring one is that all land belongs to someone or group of persons, there is no existence of “No man’s land”.

The Igbo system of land tenure is based on four principles (1) all land is owned. There is no concept of the “abandonment of land” or of “no man’s land” among the Igbo. Whether land is cultivated or not it belongs to somebody. (2) Land ultimately belongs to the lineage and cannot be alienated from it... (3) Within the lineage the individual has security of tenure of the land he needs for building his house and making his farms. (4) No member of the lineage is without land (Ndu, 2002).

Glaringly, the groups regulate the land matters while the individuals have the entitled claims as a result of the land sharing and allotments’ that was carried out by the community, village and family members. It should be understood that these process of sharing is highly political and active participation goes a long way to determine what gets to whosoever. Again, “If a piece of forest is of no obvious use to the village, any one is at liberty to clear it for farming purposes, and the land so cleared becomes his private farm. He cannot be deprived of it, and he can transmit it to his children” (Ndu, 2002); Among the Ikwerres, this is called Osa igba and proof of it is the strongest and surest claim to land in primordial law (Ndu, 2002).

In addition, the acquisition and management of land holding adopted a general form in Akpor. The dominant characteristics of which is that land belongs to the group or community (clan, village, kindred, lineage, head of the group or community) holds land in trust and administers it on behalf of its members currently living, and its members yet to be born (Rayer, 1989; Elias, 1956; Kio, 1971; Hopkins, 1973; Onwuamaegbu, 1975). The criteria for selection of the head could be age in which case those enjoying rights of

primogeniture in their respective families are chosen or holders of respected traditional titles such as ward head (Ebunilo, 1982). The control over and access to land were inextricably linked to socio-political relationships and land was regarded not just as a physical entity but as also having symbolic and spiritual significance as an embodiment of a link between the generations (Acquaye and Asiana, 1986). The fundamental principle is that no male member of the lineage is without land as all adult male members of a group had rights to use the land (dike, 1983). It was from this “Right of Avail” that all other rights either individual or common were deduced (Kalabamu, 2000). Krueckeberg observed that, non-indigenes encountered fewer obstacles in getting farm land than they did in acquiring land for settlement (Krueckeberg, 1999).

WOMEN LAND RIGHT IN AKPOR

The land rights of women are recognized in Akpor only in specific social contexts. When a woman is likely to receive land, it is culturally determined based on Akpor custom and tradition irrespective of whether it is farmland or forest land. The considerations based on the Akpor customs and traditions are as follows;

- When there is no son in the family, the daughters are likely to inherit land from their parents. The proportion of land share among the daughters is a function of various conditions such as the economic condition of a particular daughter, the daughter who looks after the ailing parents, etc. There is no universal social norm on the quantum of the land shared.
- When there are sons and daughters in a family, the default condition is from what the sons will get their share of the parental land and the daughters would not.
- Even when there are sons and daughters in the family, if one of the daughters takes up the responsibility of looking after her parents in their old age, the daughter is likely to get a share of the land. It could even be an equal share of land with her brothers.
- In case land is purchased by the husband or the father-in-law, it is likely that they bought the land in the name of their married daughter or the daughter-in-law, to avoid crossing the land ceiling or to access more government benefits.
- A widow, who losses her husband in her old age, is likely to get a share of the land along with her sons. The quantum of land is likely to be less than that of the sons.
- A young childless widow, who loses her husband at her young age, usually would not get any share in the land. In case she does not remarry and continues to stay at her in-law’s house, she is likely to get a small share of land.
- A young widow with a child, who loses her husband at a young age, is likely to get a small share of land from her father-in-law.

THE TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACTS IN AKPOR KINGDOM

The traditional administrative system in Akpor Kingdom is still sacrosanct to the extent that the views and instructions from the institutionalized traditional administrative systems are being obeyed and respected with total loyalty without questions. It is believed up till today that they are sacred and extra ordinary institutions. They include; the Akpor Council of Chiefs, Akpor Women Council, Community (men/women) Council, and family men/women meetings. Their major functions are as follows; fostering peace, unity and development in the kingdom, communities and families respectively among men. The Akpor traditional council of chiefs is the highest traditional administrative body in the kingdom.

The creation of additional District and Village Heads has given high credence and premium to the duties of traditional rulers in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers

State, as land cases are being disposed of faster and easier. Access by the community to the authority has become easier. Fewer cases are reported at a higher authority. In view of the fact that appointment of Village Heads were chosen by the gods, candidates usually emerge with respect and loyalty to his authority and views are respected. The methods of conflict resolution employed by the traditional rulers are less cost effective than conventional ones used in the law courts.

THE TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND THE POLITICS OF LAND MANAGEMENT IN AKPOR KINGDOM

The politics of land management is traditionally left under the control of the administrator who as the head of a community, clan or family decides and determine on land matters. Customary tenure is the cornerstone of landholding in Akpor. Accordingly, under this system, land is held by the community which is held in trust by the family, the village or the clan. Individual right to use the land is based strictly on being a member of that community, clan or family. More importantly, the title of any member of the community to land is purely of traditional legitimacy. Land which is no longer in use by an individual usually reverts to the community, clan or family as the case may be.

THE CAUSES OF LAND CONFLICTS

The limitation of land may be due to many factors of which are government incursions and appropriation of lands, population pressure, multiple users, rural-urban migration and minor/gender issues. Undefined or improper delineation or description of land also leads to ambiguities resulting to conflicts. Family land transfers especially when it's done through private conveyance method also contribute to land dispute. The process of land acquisition when faulty would result in complicating land ownership. The common form of acquisition of land is either by purchase, leasing, adverse possession, inheritance or donation. Land conflicts arise as a result of land limitation and driven by legitimacy as perceived by two or more claimants. In addition, the interdependency of the claimants having almost equal power also contributes to sustain the conflicts.

Moreover, the causes of land disputes can be related to either positional, territorial, resource or cultural origin, the way and manner land is demarcated can give rise to dispute. For instance, if a boundary is marked by temporary features, it is more susceptible to dispute than the one marked by permanent features such as rivers, mountains or roads. Territorial boundaries are such boundaries which are being claimed by long occupation or historical reasons but are being challenged by other groups. This type of dispute can trigger some level of animosity among the people. The resource type of land dispute is usually on scarcity of water, or presence of oil, or absence of food or struggling for one type of resources or the other. The cultural type is the one in which legitimacy or superiority complex to dominate on religious, ethnic, political or linguistic basis. Hence, land dispute relating to any of them is difficult to resolve due to personal and value issues involved.

PROSPECTS/CHALLENGES OF LAND MANAGEMENT IN COMMUNITIES IN AKPOR KINGDOM

Though the traditional rulers have prominent roles in land disputes, resolution, they have not been given a constitutional relevance or recognition to effectively and decisively act on land matters. Lack of adequate training in the area of survey and map hinders them from effectively discharging their duties. There are no adequate map and survey data in their offices and at their local governments offices that will enable them record and maintain land transactions. Lack of capacity building in all its ramifications that includes human and

material resources to record and maintain such services which a land conflict resolution requires on a continuing basis.

In addition, lack of constitutional recognition which will support and give legal backing in the discharge of their duties, e.g appointing all the government recognized traditional rulers as members of customary court because they are the custodians of the people's tradition and customs. The current facilities, human, material and the infrastructure cannot support the proposed technological revolutions like geographical information system (GIS) data base. Many land transactions are not recorded and where the documentations exist they are usually vague and ambiguous. This certainly leads to litigation and end up being a boundary issue depending on the location and the parties involved. The rigours of arriving at a solution to boundary issues through conventional method are very hectic, long and cumbersome, this has made many boundary issues difficult to resolve.

THE ROLES OF TRADITIONAL RULERS IN THE POLITICS OF LAND MANAGEMENT (SHARES AND DISPUTE) IN AKPOR KINGDOM

From the definitional views of a traditional ruler by the government, their functions have diminished from having legislative, judicial and executive powers in its day to day affairs to a more advisory status and as custodians of culture and tradition at the local government levels and to some extent at state level. The people however still have high regard and respect for the traditional rulers.

Furthermore, having highlighted the general impacts of traditional rulers in Akpor, the Rivers State government has given some kind of responsibilities to traditional rulers which specifically entails treating land and boundary disputes. This is in recognition of their proximity with the people and also as the custodian of the culture and tradition of the people. Other role of traditional rulers in Akpor include but not limited to the following; maintenance of law and order, without prejudice to the legal process, the family, and community Heads/Council of Chiefs may assist or intervene to settle boundary and farmland disputes, through summoning the parties involved. When the matter could not be resolved by the family, and Community heads/Council of Chiefs, the matter is often referred to the Akpor council of chiefs being the highest local arbitrary body for adjudication in Akpor Kingdom, presided by the Nyewe-Ali Akpor. All the matter before Nyewe-Ali Akpor are always heard and decided in the Akpor ancestral hall.

LAND USE POLICY

Land use policies are observed to be documents which determine the aspect of growth and development of an area. Thus, the joint centre for Land Development Studies (1985), maintained that land use policies are statements of the directions in which an area should move in order to achieve the objectives and implement the proposals contained in, a plan. It is also seen as guide to inculcate both private and public opinions in the use of land. The present generations are under obligation to use the land and make its policies in an ideal manner because the present generations and the futurity of the upcoming generations morally counts in everything especially in land use policies (Beatley, 1994). This is so because clean air and water, a standard food, quality shelter and a conducive environment are generally needed by both present and future generations (Beatley, 1994). Therefore, there should be policies to curtail the ways and manner that many youths and some men dispose and use lands without proper considerations for its impacts on the future generations in Ikwerre (Iwhuruoha) communities (Beatley, 1994).

Interestingly, in Nigeria, land policy existed long before the advent of the colonial administration. Land management was traditionally left under the control of the administrator of the geo-political group such as heads of ethnic group, community, clan and family.

Kayode (2010), observed that customary tenure is the cornerstone of land-holding in Nigeria. Accordingly, under this system, land is held by the community which is held in trust by the family, the village or the clan. Individual right to use the land was based strictly on being a member of that community.

Although, there are different types of land-use rights, there are legal or constitutional land-use right, compensational land-use right, negative and positive land-use rights. These last two stands for trespassing or damaging activities and rights to shelter and housing, rights to health care, rights to transportation and mobility, rights to some environmental resources and amenities such as beaches, coastlines, mountains, rivers, etc (Beatley, 1994). “The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights appears to assume, in a significant way, that such rights apply with equal force to all individuals regardless of their cultural social or governmental circumstances” (Beatley, 1994:69). Again, there are impacts of land-use policy on the upcoming generations because it influences the standard nature of the environment. Land-use policies and decisions sharpen the entire world we live in now and therefore both the present and future generations have to be considered while deciding on matters concerning land. For “surely we owe it to future generations to pass on a world that is not a used up garbage heap. Our remote descendants are not present to claim and livable world as their right, but there are plenty of proxies to speak now in their behalf” (Beatley, 1994:135).

More importantly, it should be clear that land-use decisions are profoundly political dictates that deals with both the ethical and the moral aspects. Also, the title of any member of the community to land is purely of traditional legitimacy. Land which is no longer in use by an individual usually reverts to the community. The living and the dead had a degree of ownership of land as well as the generations yet unborn in which the collective ownership was held in trust for the wellbeing of society members. Thus, Udo (1990), maintains that land under this system is seen as belonging to the living members of the community as well as those who are dead and are buried in the land and to those members of the community who are yet unborn. It was out rightly prohibited under the customary land policy for sales of land. Though, increase human population, industrial development and commercial agriculture brought about reduction in supply which subsequently weakened the control and effectiveness of the traditional heads.

In the Southern Region, the customary tenure played prominent role in the management of land. Though, the traditional rulers and other customary trustees of land as at this time were unable to protect and control the use of the land. This resulted to sales and fragmentation of land (Udo, 1990). Land speculators particularly the greedy elites, took over the sales of land and ignored the rules of customary tenure. According to Kayode (2010), land became a marketable good and to worsen things some of the so-called trustees of land also sold land under their control for cash or other rewards. Thus, Lugard in recognition of individualization to lands in the southern state asserted in his process of North-south amalgamation that; individualization of tenure in southern Nigeria should not be arbitrary interfered with either by introducing foreign principles and theories not understood by the people or through stereotyping by legislation existing systems which were in state of transition (Lugard, 1922).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research work are as thus; first, the majority of the respondents agreed with the assertion that there is a significant relationship between traditional administrative system and the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom.

Table One: Responses to assert if there is any traditional administrative system in Akpor Kingdom

Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	500	100
No	X	X
I don't know	X	X
Total	500	100

Table one above shows that all the 500 respondents agreed that there is a traditional administrative system in Akpor Kingdom, implying that 100% of those interviewed agreed yes.

Secondly, findings showed that those in-charges of land management in Akpor Kingdom includes; the Nyewe-ali in Council, the council of Chiefs, the Family Heads and the Traditional Committee set aside for such matters. These set of people are incharge of the politics, the political and the politicking that go on concerning land management in Akpor kingdom.

Table Two: Responses to assert that in-charge of the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom

Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
The Nyewe-Ali in Council	50	10
The Council of Chiefs	100	20
Family Heads	300	60
The Traditional Committee set aside for such matters	50	10
Total	500	100

Table two above shows that responses on those who are directly in-charge of the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom. This cut-across the Nyewe-Ali (10%), the council of chiefs (20%), and the traditional committee set aside for such assignment (10%), whereas the Family Heads have the largest chunk of (60%) as they are the people who hold the traditional right of sharing their family land inheritance or possession.

Another significant finding was about the conflicts that do arise in the course of land sharing. In this regard, majority of the respondents accepted that a conflict or conflicts do arise in the processes that have to do with land allotments.

Table Three: Responses to assert whether conflicts do arise in the course of land sharing

Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	350	80
No	150	20
I don't know	X	X
Total	500	100

Table three above shows the degree and percentages of conflicts that do arise in the course of land sharing as over (80%) of the respondents agreed with this fact. It showed that conflict, land court cases appeared to be major challenges in the politics of land management in Akpor Kingdom, while (20%) of respondents from the various communities disagreed with the view.

Lastly, were the findings on measures for conflict resolution? These measures are as follows; local arbitration through, summoning, mediation and traditional restrictions, law court and those respondents who appear not to know anything about the concern.

Table Four: Responses to assert measures for conflict resolution

Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Local Arbitration through: Summoning, mediation and traditional restrictions	312	62
Law court	188	38
I don't know	X	X
Total	500	100

Table four above shows that overwhelming acceptance that the best measures for conflict resolution include local arbitration through summoning, mediation and instituting traditional restriction to the warring parties as this got (62%) of the responses while law court arbitration got (38%) of the responses which showed that it is an alternative measure to conflict resolution in Akpor Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study clearly highlighted stated that there is a significant relationship between the traditional administrative system and positive impact on the politics of land management in akpor kingdom. Also, that there is a significant relationship between traditional administrative system and measures on land management conflicts in Akpor Kingdom, were both proven positive. The discussion reads that traditional administrative system enhances effective and efficient land management in Akpor kingdom through the Nyewe-Ali in council, council of chiefs, the Family heads and the Traditional committee set aside for such matters. The way and manner traditional institutions forestalls land dispute that arises in the course of land sharing and sustain a lasting peace is through local arbitration by summoning both parties in dispute for mediation and placing traditional restrictions on the land in concern, pending when the matter is resolved. While law court is the alternative measure of resolving dispute in Akpor Kingdom, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State. Based on these assertions, recommendations were made to foster, unity, peace and development in the kingdom and its environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made as to enhance the traditional administrative system and the politics of land management in Akpor kingdom, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State.

- Constitutional recognition should be given to the traditional rulers to enable them perform effectively and decisively on land matters.
- Adequate map and survey data should be made available in their offices and at their local government area offices that will enable them record and maintain land transactions.
- Adequate training and enlightenment programme in the area of survey and map should be provided to the traditional rulers to help them in discharging their duties.
- The office of the traditional rulers should be maintained and equipped at local government level to ensure adequate supervision and inspection in order to discharge their duties without fear or favour.

- Traditional rulers are advised to enroll in Western education as this will enable them have the good knowledge of their communities and the world at large.
- The government recognized traditional rulers (like 2nd class and 3rd class with impeccable character) should be responsible to adjudicate matters at the customary courts while the first class traditional rulers should be responsible to adjudicate matters at customary court of appeal as they are the custodians of the people's custom and tradition for speedy dispersion of justice.
- It is strongly recommended that government at all levels should desist from meddling with traditional institution as it is a sacred institution.
- Finally, that the recommendation of the chiefs being in charge of adjudicating justice on matters at the customary courts at local government areas, should come from local government council of chiefs to the state governor. Whereas, the appointment of chiefs to adjudicate matters at Customary Court of Appeal should come from the state council of chiefs without government interference.

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