

MARRIAGE TRADITION IN NENWE, ANINRI L.G.A, ENUGU STATE, 1976-1991.

BY

FAVOUR KELECHI AUGUSTINE

GOU/U22/HIS/69

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, UGWOMU-NIKE, ENUGU

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TITLE PAGE

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**A B.A. RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
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PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
BACHELOR OF ART DEGREE IN HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.**

SUPERVISOR: DR KELECHI OKORO

JULY 2026

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research, titled 'MARRIAGE TRADITION IN NENWE, ANINRI L.G.A, ENUGU STATE; CHANGES AND CONTINUES, 1976 TO 1991" was carried out by FAVOUR KELECHI AUGUSTINE, with the registration number GOU/U22/HIS/69, under the supervision of DR KELECHI OKORO. I have given the necessary acknowledgement to all the sources from which the research derived it's information. This project is absolutely free from plagiarism and has not been submitted anywhere for publication. Therefore, this work will be submitted to the department of History and International Studies, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

FAVOUR KELECHI AUGUSTINE

GOU/U22/HIS/69

Date

APPROVAL

This project is approved for the award of Bachelors of Art (B.A) Honourable Degree in History and International Studies, Godfrey Okoye University.

DR KELECHI OKORO

PROJECT SUPERVISOR

DATE

DR. MRS. IFEOMA EZEDINACHI.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

DATE

PROFESSOR DR. EKENE OSUJI

DEAN OF FACULTY

DATE

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents who has continued to sponsor and support my academic journey as a student. They gave every necessary resources needed; in sacrifices, in words of encouragement, in prayers, and in financial support. May God bless them both and increase them on every side.

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I am very grateful to God Almighty, the author and finisher of my faith. His divine grace, infinite wisdom, and unconditional love have been my sustaining anchor throughout this academic journey, providing the strength and perseverance needed to bring this research project to a successful completion. In all my journey in the university, I can say that God is faithful and good; my life is a testament of this fact. I express my deepest and most sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Kelechi Okoro, for his invaluable guidance, scholarly patience, and constructive critiques throughout the duration of this study. His insightful corrections and academic mentorship played a pivotal role in shaping the direction and structure of this research. I am also grateful to this great institution, Godfrey Okoye University. This university has been the grounds whereupon I have been blessed academically, morally and discipline-wise. Here I learnt extra academic things, therefore I really thank God I schooled in this university.

My thanks also goes to all the lecturers in the Department of History and International Studies; Msgr. Prof. N. Omenka, Assoc Prof. Ifeoma Ezedinachi, the Head of the Department, who has been motherly and kind hearted, who sees the best in me. My heartfelt thanks to Prof. Ngozi Ojiakor, who has been there since year one, for her motherly care and nurturing until now. I'm grateful to Dr Leonard Nnoli, Dr Ugochukwu Okoji, Dr. Hope Iwuchukwu, Mrs Winifred Ojiego, Dr. Uchenna Ani, Dr. Emmanuel Eyeh, who has taught me through the university and have encouraged me to get up and get running, and also to Mr Christopher Uwakwe. I thank our Departmental Secretary, Mrs Edith Chiwendu for her kindness, care and compassion towards her students.

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed how the marriage traditions of the Nenwe people changed over time, how these alterations affected the socio-cultural fabric of the community, and the continuities it maintained in Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, between 1976 and 1991. Using a qualitative historical approach, the study incorporated oral interviews with community elders, indigenous witnesses, and title holders in addition to written sources such as books, academic journals, and contemporary online articles. According to the study's findings, the traditional marriage system has historically played a significant role in maintaining social order, building kinship alliances, reinforcing cultural identity, and fostering communal cohesion across the autonomous sub-communities. Even though the marriage institution is currently struggling with modernization, religious realignment, and economic pressures, it remains a vital component of Nenwe's efforts to preserve its localized cultural heritage.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Marriage is a globally accepted way of life, a culture and tradition amongst various societies across the globe: it is primarily the union between a man and a woman and it is designed for the sake of procreation, as well as companionship, and bringing about family which is the smallest unit of society. It is important to note that there are various types of marriages that are accepted based on the culture in which it is done. Some cultures practice polygamy, some practice monogamy, and others practice polygyny.¹

Over the ages, many cultures, besides the above stated reasons for marriage which is generally accepted worldwide, have attached some other reasons for the union; politically speaking, some go into marriage for the sake of being attached to an authority by union and some marry for intercommunal relationship (this very reason has been observed in various parts of the world; in Nigeria, as well as in Europe and Asia). In the economic sense, some get married for the sake of economic alliance; wealth and financial support based. Further more, socially speaking, some even get married for the sake of social legitimisation of themselves or their children into another society; this is still practiced in contemporary society.²

Significantly, the historical trajectory of the Nenwe community reveals that the traditional marriage institution has undergone profound transformations, directly impacting the broader socio-cultural factors. Far from being static, these marital customs have evolved in response to powerful external and internal dynamics, most notably the doctrinal shifts introduced by Pentecostal Christianity, socio-economic pressures within Nigeria, and the sweeping forces of modernization and urban migration. Despite these structural shifts, the institution has not been erased; rather, the people of Nenwe have demonstrated remarkable agency and resilience in preserving the core ritual frameworks, symbolic values, and ancestral significance of their marriage culture.³ This survival highlights a strong capacity for cultural continuity, proving that the community can adapt to the contemporary world without completely surrendering its unique historical identity. Consequently, this research dives into the core of these structural social

changes, providing a critical historical analysis of how the Nenwe people continue to negotiate the delicate balance between tradition and modernity.⁴

According to Onyema Ocheoha in "Enugu State: The Glorious Past and a Promising Future"; he emphasizes that traditional Enugu marriage ceremonies are systemic social processes designed to cement inter-communal cohesion through highly specific stages, including iku aka, ajuju, and mmanya umunna, culminating in the igba nkwu festival and occasionally followed by Western church ceremonies. Historically, these customs served as regulatory functions, utilizing strict virginity demands to curb youthful promiscuity and maintaining rigid social demarcation between the Amadi (freeborn) and traditional caste systems like Osu. While modern educational, legal, and religious advancements have structurally dismantled institutionalized caste discriminations in alignment with constitutional human rights, the degree to which individual rural autonomous communities have sustained or modified their specific marital rituals varies significantly. By examining how these macro transformations manifest within the distinct sub-communities of Nenwe, this study provides critical depth to the broader discourse on marriage, people, and culture across Enugu State.⁵

Vincent Ezinwa and Chimee Ihediwa, in their work "Studies in Igbo history", observe, the increasing encroachment of Western culture and the rapid acceleration of globalization have launched a serious attack on the core of the traditional Igbo marriage customs. The modern era has witnessed a noticeable breakdown in the traditional sanctity of the institution, as it manifests in the rising incidence of marital separation and divorce across Igboland: realities that were historically considered highly unacceptable within indigenous villages. This macro-level cultural friction has forced rural communities to continuously renegotiate their ancestral customs, specifically regarding the practice of polygamy, which was traditionally valued for wealth acquisition and agricultural sustainability but has almost completely given way to monogamy due to Christian influences and economic realities. By taking these broader regional anxieties regarding the erosion of traditional values and examining them through the specific lens of the Nenwe community between, this study offers a critical, localized assessment of how historical actors confront the destabilizing forces of modern globalization while trying to preserve their cultural heritage.⁶

Nenwe community is the focus of this work. This community is located at the present day Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu state, Nigeria, lying along the Enugu-Port Harcourt trunk A road. It is about 169km North of Port Harcourt, and 47km South of the coal city of Enugu; located East of Enugu-Okigwe hills on a topography of low lying plains with a vast and productive agricultural land.⁷ Nenwe is made up of four autonomous communities and they are: Uhueze, Emudo, Amorgi, and Agbada (this is listed in the birth order of the birth of the founders of these communities).⁸ Marriage in Nenwe communities are symbolic and culturally systematic. And in Nenwe's traditional lenses, marriage is not just a contract between two individuals, but it's a covenant between two extended families (Umunna), and no member of a clan can get married to his own clan members.⁹ This leads to communal interrelations and cohesion.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The history of the culture of the Nenwe people of Aninri L.G.A, Enugu state, Nigeria, as well as it's marriage traditions is one very organised cultural heritage, just like many other Igbo autonomous communities. It is only ideal that these rites be documented and preserved for the sake of cultural continuity. Marriage is a central institution, and it is traditionally governed by well defined customs and ritual that shows the value and identity of the people. In Nenwe, these marriage traditions has played significant roles, historically, in maintaining social order and cultural continuity. However, in contemporary times, these traditions appear to be going through noticeable changes, and that is due to factors such as modernization, religious influences, and socio-economic pressures (especially in a country like Nigeria where the economic pressure is high in almost every corner of the country).

Now these changes have taken place, yet there are limited scholarly works documenting and examining the nature of these traditions and the extent to which these transformations have taken place within Nenwe specifically. This creates a gap in the understanding of how traditional practices are being sustained, modified, or even abandoned. Without such kind of analysis, important aspects of the Nenwe cultural heritage stands the risk of being misunderstood, lost or replaced entirely, especially as modernization and migration is increasingly pulling the younger generation away from the village.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the changes and continuities in marriage traditions in Nenwe, with a clear goal of providing a clearer understanding of how the community can negotiate tradition and modernity.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the marriage traditions of Nenwe with particular emphasis on identifying elements of continuity and change. The research objectives include to:

Trace the historical background of Nenwe

Examine the historical perspective of marriage in Nenwe community

Analyze the factors that influence their transformation

Access the various changes and continuities in the marriage tradition of Nenwe

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is significant in quite a number of ways. First, it contributes to the existing knowledge in cultural and social studies by providing detailed documentation of the marriage traditions in Nenwe communities, an area that has received limited scholarly attention.

Second, this research will serve as a very valuable resource for the members of Nenwe community, both of the present and future. This is to the end that they have a written record of their customs (marriage customs to be precise) by preserving important aspects of their cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the study will help the policymakers and cultural organizations to understand the impact of modernization on traditional institutions. Finally, the work will provide a foundation for researchers who would do further research on cultural change and continuity in marriage traditions in other communities.

1.5 Scope of the study

This study focuses on marriage tradition in Nenwe community; changes and continuities, from 1976 to 1991. The choice of 1976 is because it marked the creation of old Anambra state (February 3, 1976, to be precise); coupled with the fact that some of the interviews carried out for this work were done on aged people who had a marriage perceptive of the 1970s. These traditions as it was known will be enumerated in the course of this work. Now the termination period, 1991, is based on two significant facts: it was in that year that Enugu state, as we know it today was created. Also, it during this period that certain changes began to normalise in Nenwe community after serious resistance of the locals and kindreds, marking out the changes and continuities.

1.6 Methodology and Sources of data

This research work adopted a qualitative historical research methodology. The choice of this method is informed by the nature of the kind of research to be carried out (historical enquiry). To compliment the historical data, this study incorporated field observation from a contemporary marriage that took place within Nenwe community.

This work made use of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources of information. The primary source include: archival materials and oral interviews from. This was to ensure a very authentic and direct information from witnesses of marriage tradition from old times. The secondary informations used in this work are published and unpublished sources, including: text books, and journals. This work also made use of tertiary sources which include internet materials.

1.7 Literature review

Luke N. Anameze in *Marriage Among Igbos: An Analytical Study Of Past And Present Practices*¹⁰, reveals certain details of traditional Igbo marriage, as well as outline key stages in marriage such as introduction, bride price negotiation, and the wine-carrying ceremony (Ipagamaya). This literary work also explains marriage as a union that does not only involve two persons but the extended families, as it (marriage) serves to preserve lineages and social order. Furthermore, this book also examines how the marriage practices have evolved over the years due to modernization. This work is highly important as it helps bring a foundational understanding of the general structure and significance of the Igbo-marriage, which has Nenwe

marriage tradition situated within its framework. However, this work generalizes the Igbo culture and uniformly treats Igbo society, not exploring the variations of specific communities like Nnawo.

According to Reuben Eneze in *Igbo Culture*¹¹, there are several aspects of the way of life of the Igbo people which includes their traditions, values, and social institutions such as marriage. This work takes a look into the communal nature of marriage and emphasized the place of customs, kinship and social expectations that shapes marital practices. This book explains why marriage in Igbo land is rooted in family and community structure. Although, it uses a broad scope in discussing Igbo culture in general terms, it did not focus specifically on marriage as a detailed subject.

Starling E. Nnemechukwu, in his work titled *The Igbo Family and Cultural Change*¹², explores the structure that the Igbo family have, and the impact of social changes on traditional institutions, including marriage. This work shows marriage as playing the role of maintaining family relationships; it also outlines the influence of modernization on Igbo family life. This book connects marriage with family organisation, helping to explain the broader social significance of marriage practices. Despite the fact that this work provides a good insight in the discuss of marriage, it focuses more on family structure rather than marriage practices themselves. It didn't go further into marriage ritual process.

John Eberegbulam Njoku, in his work *Igbos of Nigeria: Ancient Rites, Changes and Survival*¹³, provides a historical view on Igbo traditions, and highlights facts about marriage practices as well. The work traces the origin of these customs and reveals how they have survived and adapted overtime. It contains historical analysis, making it relevant, situating marriage traditions within a broader timeline. This work lays out the ways practices in Igbo culture may have evolved from precolonial to modern times. Nonetheless this book has a very long historical focus and it doesn't provide detailed accounts on contemporary practices or community-specific variations.

Ernest Nnagbo, in, *Ethnography of Traditional Marriages (Igbo-Nkwu) in Southeast Nigeria*¹⁴, analysed the Igbo-Nkwu ceremony (basically, marriage ceremony) on the bases of ethnography.

The book described its stages, symbolisms, and cultural significance. It brings to light how marriage ritual reinforces identity and social cohesion. This work is insightful as it gives details of one of the most important aspects or stages of Igbo marriage. Although this work could be used to identify similar marriage practices in Nenwe, it has a regional scope, focusing on the southeastern Nigeria, and not concentrated on Nenwe specifically: thus overlooking cultural differences, which means generalization.

According to Aaron A. R. Nwabude, in "Traditional African (Igbo) Marriage And Western Influence"¹⁵, colonialism, Christianity, and modernization have made strong impact on Igbo marriage practices. He emphasises on how certain customs have been modified, left, or even lost completely overtime. The work explains the transformation of marriage tradition in Igbo land. However the study has a generalized approach, as it focuses more on broad trends rather than specific cultural settings and it does not provide detailed data on particular communities.

Kanayochukwu Michael Okoye and Ndidiamaka Vivian Ugwu in their article, "Ethical Delimmas in Contemporary Igbo Christian Marriages"¹⁶, published in *Religions* 2024, they explore the conflict between native marriage practices and Christian beliefs. The article highlights issues like cultural compromise and changing values. It provides insight into the challenges that most modern Igbo marriages face. While this work provides rich insights on one of the several influence on marriage customs, it only focuses on contemporary Christian marriages and does not really address traditional practices of their history.

Isichei, in her book *A History of The Igbo People*¹⁷, argues that marriage among the Igbo was not merely a personal relationship between a man and a woman but an institution that brought families and lineages together. This book explains the importance of bride wealth, family consent, and communal participation in marriage ceremonies. It also highlights colonialism, Christianity and modernization, and their influence on traditional institutions. She explain the broader cultural environment, providing historical context for understanding family involvement and community participation in marriage. However, it focuses on the general Igbo people. As a result, it does not explain the local variations of marriage found in Nenwe.

According to A. E. Afigbo in *The Igbo and Their Neighbours*¹⁸, there is a high and significant importance of kinship and lineage systems in regulating social life among among the Igbos. This work explains that marriage functioned like a mechanism for strengthening relationships between families and communities. It also highlights the role of elders and customary norms in marriage arrangements. This study also provides insight into the traditional foundations of marriage and family life, which influenced general Igbo communities. Nevertheless, the study did not go into cultural-specific details, and therefore does not provide detailed information about marriage practices Nenwe community.

According to Ifi Amadiume, in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*¹⁹, gender roles, inheritance, and family organisation are crucial aspects of Igbo society. She argues that traditional Igbo society had flexible social arrangements that shaped marital relations and family responsibilities. This work also explores the economic and social expectations of men and women within marriage. It analyses gender roles within Igbo marriage traditions, providing insight as to how family responsibilities were distributed between husbands and wives. However, this work focuses on Nnobi community, one of the Igbo communities, and not directly Nenwe.

1:8 Organisation of the study

This research work is organised into five chapters: Chapter one is the introduction which deals with the background to the study, statement of problem, purpose of study, significance of study, scope of the study, methodology and Sources of source, literature review as well as the organisation of work.

Chapter two focuses on the historical background of the Nenwe people, highlighting the geographic location of their habitation which contains the boundaries of its territory, their political organisation, socio-cultural organisation, as well as economic organisation.

Chapter three goes into the very subject of discussion; marriage traditions. It lays emphasis on Historical perspective of marriage tradition in Nenwe (in the 1970s particularly), consents required for traditional marriage to be acceptable in Nenwe, pre-union rituals and Brides wealth, the union ceremony, and then post-union customs.

Chapter four highlights the changes in marriage traditions in Nenwe, and the continuities in Marriage tradition in Nenwe.

Chapter Five contains the summary and conclusion of the work

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CHAPTER TWO

THE NENWE PEOPLE AND THEIR ORIGIN

2.1 Geographical location of Nenwe

Nenwe is a rural community of Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu state, Nigeria. It is one out of the five communities in the above local government area.¹ This community is located in the southeastern part of Nigeria. It lies at approximately 6.1207° North latitude and 7.5265° East longitude, this shows it's exact position in the face of the earth.² Also, this community is situated at the south of Enugu which is the state capital.

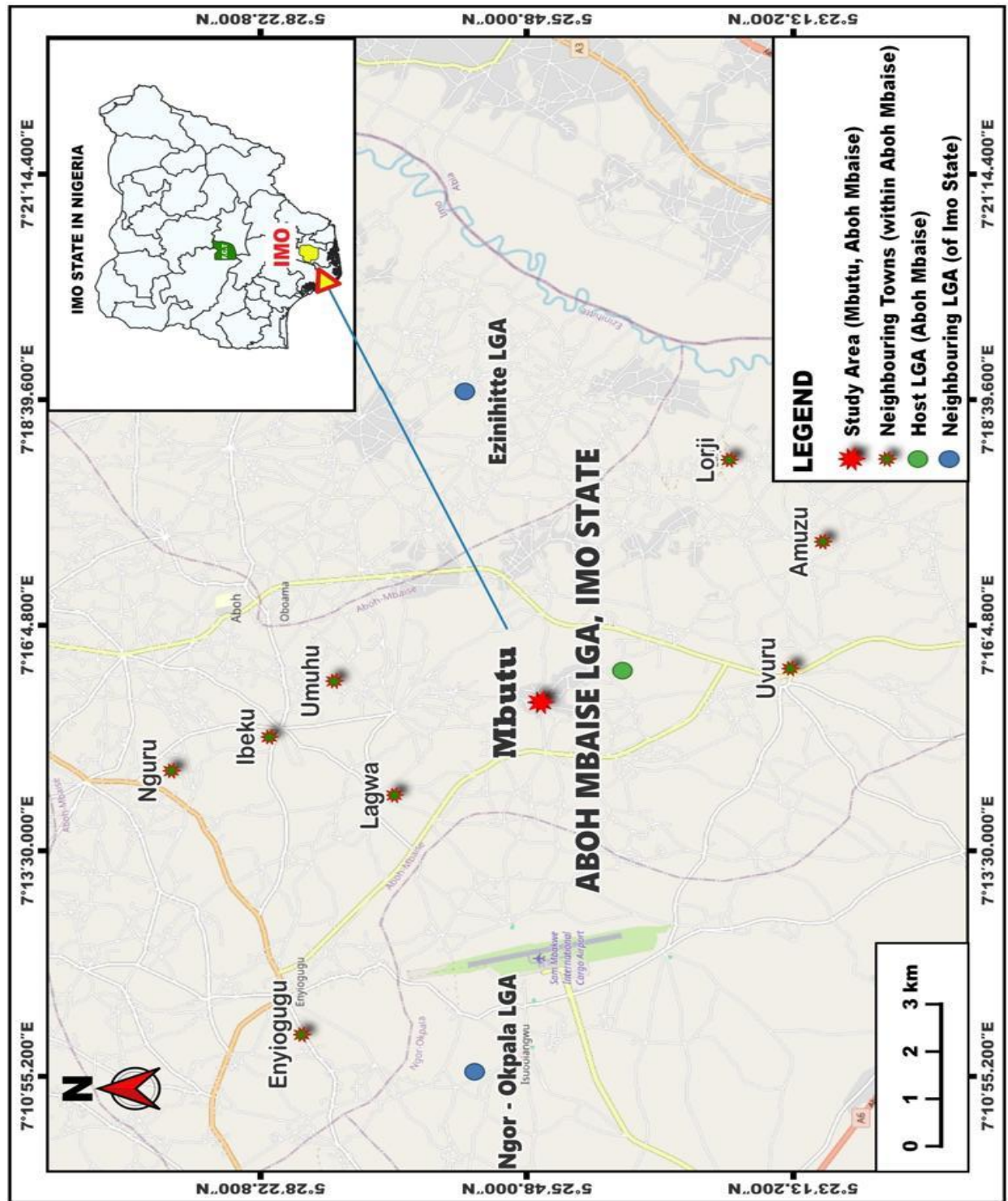
Nenwe abounds within the Udi-Awgu upland region. The region is characterized by a wavy topography i.e a place with rolling hills: it has low hills and ridges which is a typical landscape of Enugu state.³ The elevated areas of the land is estimated at about 88-93 meters above sea level making it a moderately lifted landscape, suitable for settlement and farming (which is the basic occupation of the Nenwe people, just as any other Igbo society)⁴

Nenwe's vegetation falls within the tropical rainforest belt of the southeastern Nigeria. It has dense vegetation and undergrowth, and a significant area of it is covered by forest and farmlands. Although a significant part of the natural forest has been taken over by human activities.⁵ It's present vegetation consist mainly of: secondary forest, bush growth, and farm lands. The nature of this land, vegetation speaking, makes it possible to support agricultural practices, which is common in the region.

Nenwe community experiences a tropical Savannah climate, which is the normal climate for southeastern Nigeria. The climate is marked by a rainy season from April to October in a year, and a dry season from November in the same year to March the next year. Furthermore, Nenwe has consistent warm temperatures through out the year. This kind of climate makes for crop production and dense vegetation.⁶

Nenwe has a connection of local road networks to nearby towns such as Awgu and Mgbowo. These other settlements that surrounds Nenwe, form part of the broader rural network within Ani-nri Local Government Area.⁷ Furthermore, Nenwe is close to the boarder of Enugu state, at

the southern end of the state. It is not directly at the edge but it is close to the boarder that separates Enugu from Anambra state.



Map produced by: Terra Centurion (08139695427), Source: Open Street Map and Google Earth 2026

2.2 Origin of Nenwe

The origin of the Nenwe community began with a personality; a man known as Nenwe (it is thus clear that the community carries the name of a man). Nenwe was said to be a hunter. He was the son of Nenwe Nta.⁸ He was the brother of Awgu, and the two brothers were born of the same father and mother. Awgu, Nenwe's brother was a farmer, while Nenwe, being a hunter that he was, traveled far and wide in search of game, and after many years he found a place to finally settle; haven come of age and thought it wise to to settle down and raise his own family. Therefore,he found a place, specifically called "Ekeukwu", which is still called Ekeukwu till today in contemporary Nenwe community.⁹

Later on Nenwe found a woman and got married to her, and she gave birth to two children; the first was named Uhueze, and the second was named Emudo. After some years he got married to another wife who also gave birth to two sons: the first is Amorji and the last is Agbada. Now it is from these four sons of Nenwe that the four sub-communities under Nenwe originated (Uhueze, Emudo, Amorji, Agbada).¹⁰ Later on, the man Nenwe migrated again and headed to a place called Ovirikwe which is in present day Ezi-echo. That place called Ovirikwe is a place of spiritual alignment where Nenwe did some spiritual business. And till today, that place is believed by the Nenwe people to be very sacred.¹¹

Some indigenous people say that any animal that is found in that place should not and can not be killed by anyone. It remains the highest oracle site in Nenwe. In fact, it is attested by some elders that during the Biafran war, the river in Ovirikwe was home to fishes that represents every single person in Ezi-echo and if a person was injured or died in battle, his own fish would receive the same fate. It is said, that if anyone took Palm fruits and mentioned his or her relative's name and threw the palm fruit in the water, only one fish will come out to eat showing that though that person is not present, he is still alive; but and if no fish responds to a call, it means that the person being called is dead.¹² Like earlier stated, Nenwe gave birth to four sons through two women; in chronological order, according to their birth, they are: Uhueze, Emudo, Amorji and Agbada. Now each of these sons formed the four villages within Nenwe, and they also had children who formed smaller kindreds within those communities.

However, archival records reveals that Nenwe was formerly part of a larger polity known as Awgu (bearing the same name of Nenwe's brother in the account of locals given above). These records suggest that Nenwe community was once united with Awgu before, with Nenwe being a smaller community under it. But in subsequent times they became separate entities. Cajetan Eze buttresses this in his work, "History of Greater Awgu":

"Nenwe did not appear to have any connection with any of the other towns in this area. Nor were the people related to their close neighbors of the Mbanabo area, as they have appeared to be with Awgu. They were, possibly, not included in the Awgu court area during the colonial time as Nenwe was a large group, the inclusion of which, in the then already populous court area of Awgu, would have been inconvenient. A further reason might have been that they had long shown a feeling of disagreement towards the people of Mgbowo, who attended the Awgu court. As Nenwe was the largest town or clan in the Awgu Division, the question in the colonial time was considered whether they might not be given a local court and council of their own." ¹³

Taking these two accounts together, they may be interpreted as reflecting different aspects of the community's past. But this is where the two accounts comes to meet: the old Awgu division was created by the British administration in order to have administrative ease, but Nenwe community has been in existence long before the coming of the British government. Christopher Uwakwe confirms this in his doctoral thesis, saying "During the colonial period, all the communities that make up Aninri today were under Awgu Division – a creation of the British for administrative convenience."¹⁴ It was later on, long after independence, in 1996, that the Aninri Local Government Area was carved out of the old Awgu division: the new local government is where Nenwe happened to fall under, alongside several other communities.¹⁵ Therefore, these two accounts need not be seen as contradictory, but rather complimentary, representing genealogical and historical perspectives on the origin and development of the community.

In summary, the origin of Nenwe reveals the story of a man, a hunter, who left his father's house and migrated to seek a place for himself, and haven given birth to four sons became a great society or community, as each son became a sub community under him, still having smaller kindreds under them. Nenwe as a community has also been shaped by the influence of foreign administration, as well as habitat viability, as the land and climate support the effectiveness of agriculture which has been a form of sustenance for the people of Nenwe for years.

2.3 The Political Activities of Nenwe

The political organization of the Nenwe people is very much like any other Igbo community that did not practice kingship before colonial era. Some of such Igbo autonomous communities that practiced kingship were: Onitia, Nri, Arochukwu, Ossomari, Asaba, and Agbor.¹⁶ Nenwe had no kings and they lived in segments, honouring lineage systems. It was therefore not centralized but consisted of autonomous villages which were further segmented by clans and kindreds. According to Leo O. Nnoli, "the Igbo were organised in a segmentary lineage system. Communities lived in dispersed settlements. A collection of lineages made up an autonomous village, a village group or community."¹⁷

Like any other Igbo community, these autonomous communities were governed by the heads of kindreds or family, who coming together, formed the council of elders. There were no chiefs but authority was delegated to those heads of kindreds, and members of title-holding societies.¹⁸ The elders were the mouthpiece and representatives of the ancestors; their Ofo staff symbolised the authority of the ancestors and was seen as an embodiment of the supernatural realm: these elders came together, not formally or frequently, but occasionally when it was necessary to make decisions like make a sacrifice, decide for war, or settle internal disputes between families or people, such as have escalated beyond the control of a kindred's Okpara.¹⁹

Several nuclear family made up a kindred, and the oldest and wisest man in that kindred becomes the head of the kindred being called the "Okpara". These heads are the representatives of their kindred in the assembling of the elders. Usually, family issues or controversies are before the oldest person (Okpara) and settled within the kindred, but issues that have passed the state of being negotiated within the kindred (family) is then referred to the council of elders.²⁰

Another political institution in Nenwe, apart from the family and council of elders, were the Ozo Sacred societies. This is also same in many other Igbo communities. The members of this group were guided by truth, integrity and steadfastness. A wealthy man could take up the Ozo title to legitimize his wealth: this title symbolised wealth, influence, and power.²¹ The Ozo title holders could also influence the decision making in the society as they also are part of the village assembly (basically, everyone was part of the village assembly; only that the council of elders

preceded over the assembly). The sacred society of the Ozo reveals the meritocratic system of the Igbo community where anyone can rise from one status to another in the society due to achievements and capacity.

Furthermore, the Ani priest also wielded some form of authority in the decision making in Nenwe land. Intelligent reports states,

*"At the intelligence meeting, one or two priests who had inherited the office from their fathers and grandfathers endeavoured to show that their priesthood entitled them to temporal authority and a place on the quarter council."*²²

The Ani priest was the one who spoke to the oracle and the intermediary that connected the people to the ancestors. However, intelligent reports on Awgu reveals that in some cases the Ani priest could be a young boy, not sufficient or experienced to take part in any council meeting.²³

Basically, in Nenwe, everyone had some level of voice as the village assembly (Ohaneze) comprised of every man in the houses, the title holders, the age grade, the women and then the head of kindreds who preceded over the meetings.

2.4 The Socio-Cultural Activities of Nenwe

The Nenwe people had social institutional activities which were part and parcel of their society. Nenwe also had cultural heritages and several cultural festivals that has lasted for long, and some even began in the 20th century.

Ozo title holders or Ozo sacred society can also be classified as a social institution. As much as they possess some level of authority and influence in the society, they were still a social organization. As explained earlier, the Ozo is a sacred society of men guided by integrity and truth. The title they possess signifies wealth and power, and as wealthy and influential people, they can make things happen in the society and influence the decision making of the society.²⁴ Although, it was only the wealthy that became part of this society: therefore wealth was the passport to membership of this institution.

Another social institution is the age-grade. The age grade was an institution that comprised of men and women of the same age bracket of about three years. They served the society like some

sort of "law enforcement agents" to discipline offenders in the society. They also disciplined members of their own society who infringed public policies. The elders could call the younger age grades of the community to carry out certain functions like clearing bush parts, cleaning the community, building local bridges and building village meeting places.²⁵ Some times when the age grade of the community is summoned for public duties and one person abscond from the meeting, the age grade haven known every family in the community, would go to that person's house and take a fine from that person as is culturally meet. If that person cannot pay, they would take a collateral, either lambs or pots or something of worth till that person comes back to pay.²⁶ Being part of the age-grade was optional, but yet by social pressure, it seemed compulsory.²⁷

Another social institution is the Umuada, it is an institution that composed of all married women in the the community. Part of the things this society does is that they help in the organization of the marriages of their daughters. In those marriage ceremonies, there is an allocation of goodies that goes to these women.²⁸ They also embarked on demonstrations and protest against ills in the society, and were always known to have an undying action of commitment and loyalty to any course that is justifiable and ethically acceptable.²⁹

In addition to it's social institutions, the cultural life of Nenwe was an important part of community organization. Various cultural practices and festivities served as avenues for social interaction, transition of value to further generations, and preservation of tradition. One of the very significant festival of the Nenwe people is the "Okokoro fighting festival" this cultural festival is done in the sacred place called Ovirikwe which was earlier stated in this work as the second place where Nenwe migrated to. Okokoro actually originated in the 20th century when a warrant chief called Chief Okoro Eleke of Agbada was appointed to Nenwe during the colonial period.³⁰ He was the first ever warrant chief of Nenwe, and he ruled with terror, exploitation, extortion and humiliation of the subjects.³¹ The locals say that, in those days, any one who walked with his wife to the market place, and the chief saw her, he would take that wife from the person, and so was same for any thing he loved. The elders therefore came together and consulted from the oracle what to do to this Chief, and they were given a counsel to use a machete that has not been used before, and that when he bends in the market to price, he should be beheaded.³²

A man called Orioriogo volunteered to do the killing and he executed it. As a result of this act, the British authorities then began to jail many Nenwe people. Therefore, the People of Nenwe thought of what to do to remember the courage and strength of Orioriogo and they came up with the fight feast, Okokoro, when two representative from two communities go head on with each other, and if one person pins the other person's back to the ground he becomes the winner. Therefore, he is celebrated by the communities and their various women society (Umuada) will give the winner many food supplies to celebrate with. This is one cultural ceremony of the Nenwe people.³³

Another cultural festival is one called Oriri-Ale/ Oriri-Ala. This festival is held in honour of the Ale deity and is celebrated throughout Nenwe in all villages where an Ale shrine is located. Although the celebrations take place in the different Nenwe villages, they are observed simultaneously, occurring on the same day and within the same festive period. This festival did not have a static date, it rotated within the year, meaning it could happen in a certain period in one year and happen in another period in the next year. Whenever this festival takes place, all the Nenwe people are meant to return for its celebration as it symbolizes a tie that bonds Nenwe people together.³⁴

However, there are restrictions to this ceremony. Any one whose hands is defiled with blood is unclean to participate in this ceremony. Before the ceremony commences, the chief priest of the ceremony (Eze ale) who is always from Ezi-echo, Uhueze, will go to perform a certain ritual called (Nwocha-mmiri-Oriri-ale) after this, an announcement is passed a week before the ceremony; that whole week becomes a holy week. As earlier said, any one coming for that ceremony must be one who has not shed the blood of a Nenwe man or woman. If any has shed blood, he or she will not be permitted to stay in Nenwe until that ceremony is over.³⁵

Oriri-Ale is seen by the locals as a ceremony in which certain issues in society are settled; for instance, any woman who cheat on her husband must have to confess on that day, or depart from the community later on, else calamities will befall her. Also, when two people argue over birthrights for the sake of land ownership or so, they go to the priests on the Oriri-Ale day, and each of them would have an egg in his hand, declaring that whoever is senior, let his egg break: they will both squeeze the eggs but the parson who is truly senior, his egg will break while the

other's egg will be unshaken. This period is also used for settling land disputes as the priest will tie the borders of the land argued about with palm leaves till the issue is resolved. People who are born within the days of the celebration are named after the day and the celebration e.g "Nwa Ori ale" or "Nwa Ava ale". Also, any one who dies within that week will be buried but not celebrated or mourned till after that week.³⁶

2.5 Economic Activities of Nenwe

The economic activities of Nenwe, like many rural Igbo communities, was predominantly agrarian. While local trade and communal labour were important aspect of their economic life, farming stood as the major occupation of the Nenwe people. Studies on southeastern Nigeria has also revealed the importance of women in agriculture and market activities as they had family-based labor systems.

Jude Achu, in his book "Igbo Culture in Disarray", says that the Igbo people (Ndi-igbo) took farming as the major occupation of life. According to his book a traditional Igbo man does not play with farming as it is a form of lively hood; yam was a major player and anyone who possessed large barn of yams was seen as a rich man. Men who had vast land usually marry many wives so as to have man-power to cultivate his land.³⁷ This was very much the same in traditional Nenwe community. Agricultural activities among the people included the cultivation of crops such as yam, cocoyam, vegetables etc. Now crops like cassava and maize are not original crops planted in Nenwe land; the locals call these crops foreigners because they were brought to the land by the colonists.³⁸

Palm wine tapping (Iku mmanya) was also one of the economic activities of the Nenwe people as palm wine remains an indelible part of cultural life. In marriage ceremonies and burial ceremonies, palm wine is used as the traditional drink of the villagers.³⁹ Cajetan Eze, in "History of Greater Awgu", describes Awgu (a large community where Nenwe ultimately came out from) as a place filled with immense number of palm trees. There were many species of of palm trees, but the most profuse was the oil palm. The oil palm trees supplied food, drink and materials for building mud houses (they were used especially for food and drink). These oil palm trees were

tapped in order to collect the sap; it is the sap that is commonly known as palm wine. The best time know to tap palm wine was in the morning or in the night.⁴⁰

Another aspect of Nenwe economic activities was trade. Trade constitutes an indispensable pillar of human society; historically, it has facilitated essential economic interactions between nations, regions, and local communities. The Nenwe people also had trade as one of the components of it's economic structure, and like every other Igbo community they also had four major market days: Nkwo, Eke, Orie, and Afo. The main market day of the Nenwe people was the Orie Market day.⁴¹ Historically speaking, the Igboland had a four-day-week which are the days mentioned above. Apart from being a place of transaction, the market was also a place where distant relatives met to discuss and familiarise, and some even had meetings there to discuss important issues of the community (as earlier stated, the Umuada gathered at a particular place in the market). The market was a place for trading mainly farm crops like yams, cocoyam, palm kernel, fruits, ground nuts, chickens, goats, kolanut (orji), vegetables, fishes etc.⁴²

Trade has been a very important aspect of Nenwe economy. And until date the Nenwe people are very involved in trading, both within Enugu and outside the state of Enugu. One very unique trade carried out by Nenwe people is the trade in Donkeys, a trade that has been since the mid 20th century. Many young men sold donkeys to foreigners (especially to the Chinese), and this helped them accumulate wealth. Even till date, the donkey trade is still largely recognized, as donkeys are used in weddings, and some other ceremonies, and as basic meat for the Nenwe peoples food.⁴³

In summary, Nenwe people are a very industrious and hard working people, since time immemorial. And they have had organised economic activities as is reflected in their their four days of market arrangement, and a definite place for trading.

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CHAPTER THREE

MARRIAGE TRADITION IN NENWE

3.1 Historical perspective of marriage tradition in Nenwe

From time immemorial, marriage in Nenwe community has been considered as the foundational part of the society, just as in any other community in the world. Historically, marriage in the Nenwe community is not just seen as the coming together of a man and a woman, but as a strategic alliance between two kindreds which are traditionally called "Umunna". Studies prove that in the Igbo culture, marriage is not just between two people but between two families: parents, elders and friends are all involved.¹ In historical Nenwe society, marriage (ilu Nwanyi) was seen as one of the most vital institutions for societal survival and continuity. This was the only socially approved arrangement for procreation, the legitimate transfer of ancestral identity, and the expansion of communal security.²

Historically, individual desires had to be secondary to collective interest. Communal affairs is what will best describes marriage in those times: and it is rooted in preserving family honour, the building of economic or influential alliances with neighbouring communities and expansion of the workforce for agricultural production. Now because Nenwe's economy was typically agrarian, relying on farming, a large stable family structure was needed, and family was the primary way to achieve this.³

Several things were obtainable in the late 1900s, as regarding marriage tradition in Nenwe land. Brides wealth was cheaper and less expensive; there were no specific kind of attire to put on as couples in contrast to contemporary Nenwe community. The palm wine was brought in a clay pot, not gallons as it is today.⁴ There was what they called "mara imu'm" which meant that the bride had to know the house of the groom.⁵ They also did investigations of each kindred and many more things.⁶ Unfortunately some of this very core cultural heritage are being lost to rapid urbanisation, the migration of many young people into urban places, the imbibing of Western culture, and adoption of new religious beliefs.

3.2 Consents required for marriage in Nenwe

In traditional Nenwe community, there are certain formalities attached to the process of getting married, and one of them involves the various persons whose consents are required before marriage can commence.

Groom: As concerning the groom and the consents he must make, himself must first be aware of the fact that he wants to intentionally settle down with a woman. The groom's parents are the first people to be aware of his intention to marry and if the lady is of the same community he will tell them the family of which he speaks of. Then investigation will commence as his family or he himself will have his friend make an inquiry on the family he wishes to marry from. The investigators job is to find out if the family is a good one, if women in that family who have married normally stay in the house of their husbands, if the women are respectful, if there were any evil or wrong doing associated with their lineage, and to find out if there are any sickness or deformity that often follow the lineage.⁷

The next people who's consents must be taken before marriage is the kindred of the man (Umunna); traditionally, they have to be informed. Therefore the groom calls his kindred together and inform them of his intentions to get married, and he presents them with palm wine to drink; of course he must have already conversed with the lady herself, and he must have gotten her opinion that she is ready to live with him. After these, the next people to be consented is the parents of the lady. The potential groom and a few of his kinsfolks will go to the girls' parents house where he makes his intentions known to her parents; it is only if he is accepted that he will then proceed to the step of knocking on the door (Iku aka).⁸

Bride: As for the bride, the first people to know is her parents who would be visited by the groom and a few of his kinsmen. Then the next people who are culturally meant to be consented are the friends of the girl: the women of her kindred, who would later follow her to the house of the groom before the marriage. This is to adhere to the culturally accurate stage which is called "mara imu'm".⁹

3.3 Pre-union rituals and Brides wealth

Now there are several stages that must be undergone before marriage can properly be held. The Nenwe people, just like other communities within Enugu, believes that if these traditional necessities are neglected in any marriage, such a marriage is void of the approval of the ancestors and lacks strong roots; this makes it like a tree planted on loose soil. Therefore, the pre-union rituals of Nenwe marriages are more like a spiritual seal than a traditional formality.¹⁰ As was earlier noted in the previous chapter, Nenwe people recognize four days which are Afo, Nkwo, Eke, and Orie, but out of these days, Nkwo is a day when no body discusses or do anything concerning marriage in the land, and this is a standard in Nenwe.¹¹ Before discussing the Igba Nku ceremony itself, it is important to examine the stages and processes that traditionally preceded the main event. Below are the stages required in the Nenwe marriage tradition.

Enquiry Stages (Iju ese): As at the period of the 1970s and early 1980s, the first stage of marriage is the stage of enquiry. In this stage the man begins to make enquiries concerning the family of the woman he is interested in. He sends a friend or who ever can carry out the task of finding out the details of the family. The things to enquire are "is this family a group of good people, do they stay committed in their marriages, do the women in this family obey their husbands, is there any evil attached to their lineage that any of their fathers committed, is there a particular sickness or ailment that flows in their bloodline, are there series of madness in this family". This Stage, in most cases, gives the man the necessary information he needs to know if he would proceed in reaching out to the family of the woman he is interested in. The parents of the potential groom must be aware of his decision.¹² However, in some other cases, the man would have already been seeing the woman before he proceeds to the next stage. Oftentimes, even the woman which he is seeing also sends an enquiry agent to find out about his home, seeking the answers to the same questions listed above.

Familiarisation Stage: After the stage of enquiry, the next stage is the stage of familiarisation. In this stage, the two families begins to know eachother. First, the man will call his kinsmen and present them with palm wine. He will make known his intentions of getting married; this is not necessarily to gain their approval but to make them aware of his intended actions, as his kindred will be of support to him in the arrangement of the ceremony. The man will then go with a few

of his kinsfolks to the house of the lady. And meeting her parents, they will present palm wine to them: it is at this point that the man will make his intentions known to the parents of the lady. Usually, they will use statements like "there is a ripe fruit in your house that I want to plug" or "there is a flower in your house that I seek to take". The man in this stage, is significantly asking the parents of the lady should I come again or should I not come again, in the native dialect it says "O mu bia, su ma'm bia"; of course the palm wine is for that appeal.¹³ This aspect of the tradition is still practiced till date. Now if the parents of the lady are interested in the man, they will send a message to him telling him to come again: the call of acceptance then gives him the go ahead to get to the next step in the procedure.

Introduction Stage (Iku Aka): At this stage, the man is accepted by the lady's family, and then moves into introduction (a significant stage that is usually known as the start of the marriage procedure). At this stage the man will come again to the house of the lady's parents with some of his kinsmen, carrying some items alongside palm wine, items like: yams (4), coco yam (4), oil beans (akpaka) wrapped in foil, or leaves (as in the 1970s), traditional Igbo beads(4): these things are brought in a tray. Usually, there is a middle person who mediates between to two families that are wedding. He is the one who conducts this stage of introduction. He would take the items given by the potential groom to the family of the potential bride. In some cases, this introduction stage is carried out in the house of the middle person.¹⁴

This introduction stage is when the man is introduced to the rest of the girls kindred (Umunna), as her family will bring their kinsmen to come and see who wants to get married to their daughter (in our dialect the potential husband is called Ogo). Further more, the wine brought in this introduction is only to be drank by the family of the lady and their kindred.¹⁵

The visit of the bride: This stage is the next stage of the marriage tradition which takes place after the introduction. This stage is when the soon-to-be bride visits the house of the soon-to-be groom with her friends. This stage, in the Nenwe dialect is called "Mara imu'm", which literally means "know my place". Usually, the girl and some of her friends would visit the house of the soon-to-be groom, carrying food items with them like: a basket of yams (Ji), a basket of coconut (Aku be'kere), and a basket of oil beans (Akpaka).¹⁶ Now this is a stage in marriage tradition that was practiced till the 1980s: but today, it is facing the risk of being eradicated as urbanisation

and modernization is creeping in and many do not have the time for doing this anymore. This stage was significant because it helped the bride know who she was going to marry a bit better. This is because she would stay some while before going back. By this she must have observed one or two things in his family or himself, which is the idea behind this stage. Also the family of the man gets to know some characteristics of the woman whom their son is about to marry. Upon the return of the lady to her house, the soon-to-be husband will give her a sum of money to go with.¹⁷

Engagement list and bride price: The next stage in the traditional marriage rites in Nenwe is the exchange of engagement list and discussion on bride price. The brides family gives the grooms family a list of items to make available.¹⁸ Now it is important to note that this list usually vary between clans; one clan has it's own list of items and another clan have their's.¹⁹ The engagement list often includes: money, clothing, drinks, food items, and gifts. The payment of this symbolises respect and honour. It is in this gathering that selected members of each kindred will sit to discuss the bride price; usually what is fair. As an essential part of the wedding rites, this prepares the way for the ceremony ahead (Igba nkwu).²⁰

Some people do the list before the marriage but the aspect of the bride price is carried out during the day of the ceremony.²¹ Now some locals confirmed that most of the times, after the father of the bride has seen the man's readiness and willingness to pay the bride price of the girl, he would take like one-tenth out of it and distribute to his kinsmen who are present there and give the money back to the husband telling him that "I don't sell my daughter, use the money to take care of her". The bride price signifies the ceiling of the union: after this is carried out the full marriage ceremony can then take place.²² The bride price in Enugu varies according to autonomous communities: for instance, in Uhueze the bride price is 5000 naira: therefore the rest of Nenwe could be similar.

It is important to note that in certain cases where the groom faced financial difficulties, the bride's parents could exercise considerable understanding by allowing him to take their daughter as his wife, with the agreement that the bride price and other customary payments would be settled at a later date when he was financially capable. From the 1970s to 1980s, if a man lack the resources to pay for the bride's price and other requirements, he is allowed to get married to

the girl but will go to the farm of the in-laws to work, showing them that he is interested, but he lacks the money: in some other cases the man can give his farmland to the parents of the lady as a collateral, telling them to hold it for the meanwhile till he gets the money to pay them.²³

3.4 The union ceremony

The union ceremony of traditional marriage is the highlight of marriage tradition in Nenwe community. It is what most Igbos refer to as "Igba nkwa". This is basically the final stage of Nenwe traditional marriage which seals the union of the groom and the bride and marks the beginning of their life together.²⁴ Now in the marriage ceremony, the female members of the bride's extended family are the ones responsible for the cooking. They would prepare native foods like abacha, yam, coco yam, soup made with the meat of a donkey which the groom must provide [the food items listed here are the kind of food that were used originally in Nenwe marriages before foreign foods of Europeans came on board]. However, in recent times, many wedding ceremony has included foreign foods like rice; cassava which is used to make locally processed food like abacha, fufu (called Igboro in the Nenwe dialect); semovita etc.²⁵

The most popular part of this ceremony is when the bride is given a cup of palm wine, and she will dance round the place of the ceremony in search of the man whom she is getting married to, and when she locates him she will kneel before him and offer him the wine to drink. She will also drink of the same cup after him. As some of the old indigenous people said, immediately after the offering of the wine to the groom, a few number of kinsmen will run outside the place of celebration and run back declaring a chant of blessings (cha cha cha uwa, as spoken in the Nenwe dialect). This running round could be done three to four times.²⁶ After this mini jubilation, will come the blessing of the couple: the parents of the couple would place their hands on the couple, pray for them and speak words of hope over them, declaring that their union will be strong and fruitful. Then there will be eating and drinking and dancing of both kinsmen and other attendees of the ceremony, as food and wine will be in manifold supply. The groom and the bride would dance in the midst of all the people and rich men among them would spray money on them.²⁷

This stage seals the union in the presence of both parents and kinsmen. The feast reflects the joy of cultural wedding rites and the unity of both of the families involved.

3.5 Post-union customs

Among the Nenwe people, marriage is considered a continuous relationship that definitely extends the marriage ceremony and bride price payments. After the union and prayers of both parents, certain customs and tradition practices are observed to strengthen family ties.

After the wedding ceremony, the bride would go to the house of the groom to live with him. She would rub a special traditional substance on her feet, and that act is called "Ovio Owe okuko". Her family would give her gifts and special items like soap, cream, kettles, pots, and baskets, all to go home with. And wishing her a happy stay in her new home, she departs.²⁸

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CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGES AND CONTINUITY OF MARRIAGE TRADITION IN NENWE

4.1 Changes in marriage traditions in Nenwe

Marriage traditions in Nenwe community, like that of many other Igbo societies, have changed over time. Nonetheless, the community has tried in continuing to preserve important elements of their traditional marriage rites. Several aspects of the institution have, since late 1980, undergone significant changes due to the influence of Religion (Pentecostal Christianity), modernisation and migration to urban areas, and changed in socio-economic conditions. These factors has in one way or the other affected some stages of marriage processes in Nenwe; processes like bride price, marriage ceremonies, and kinsmen involvement.¹

Religion: Religion has played a big role in changing certain things concerning marriage tradition in Nenwe community; a change that began to take place from the early 1980s, which then normalized in the 1990s. Christianity, and in this case, Pentecostal Christianity, has significantly redefined the idea of many Nenwe indigenes concerning the requirements of marriage rites. As Pentecostal churches like Assemblies of God and Grace of God began to rise within the community, many people began attending, and due to the indoctrination of the church, which was against intoxicating drinks, they began to oppose the use of palm wine in marriage traditions which was a central part of Igbo marriages.²

Many also opposed the use of other alcoholic drinks which were required by kinsmen and youths of the family (there were particular requirements for the youths of the kinsmen of the bride; hot drinks were conventionally involved in most cases). As a result of the doctrine of these Pentecostal churches, many devotees would opt to bring only soft drinks for the occasion or even give money rather than provide these drinks themselves.³ According to Jude Achu "a girl is allowed to use non-alcoholic drink to look for her husband instead of palm wine on the traditional wedding day. All these are caused in the name of born-again mental syndrome which has eaten deep in our society."⁴

As from 1980 to 1986 there were serious contentions of kinsfolks and elders against this kind of ideas which they believed threatened their conventional marriage practices. But from 1987 to

1990 the tension began to reduce as many traditional people started acknowledging the fact that everyone had desired to have their own beliefs. Therefore it was finally agreed that anyone who would not use intoxicating drinks for his wedding will give same equivalent in cash or he would buy an increased amount of soft drinks, which the kinsmen would, in most cases, sell and get the kind of drinks they want. From the 1990s till date, it has been a norm in Nenwe land for people who do not wish to use alcoholic wine and palm wine to do their marriages, to substitute it with cash or increased amount of soft drinks.⁵

Socio-Economic conditions: Economic conditions has also reshaped marriage tradition since the 1980s. It is important to know that Nigeria entered the era of oil boom in the 1970s which marked an increase in the value of the Nigerian currency.⁶ The reason for this analogy is because some of the locals who were interviewed for this work spoke from a historical perspective concerning marriage, ranging from mid 1970s: within this times, the bride price or brides wealth was significantly lower than it is now, making it quite seamless for a man to get married as he could afford it. Some indigenous Nenwe people confirmed that bride price, as of the 1970s was 400 naira.⁷

According to International Monetary Fund report, the rising and ill-directed government spending during the 1970s, and the neglect of the agricultural sector and inward-looking industrial policies left Nigeria vulnerable to profound changes in the external environment in the following decade.⁸ Therefore, in the 1980s the value of the Nigerian currency began to reduce and it indirectly affected marriage requirements as brides price and other requirements for marriage would increase in price.

The issue above is coupled with the fact that the Igbo society has began to accept Christian religion into it's society system, and so many people are pressured on how to handle both the church wedding and the traditional wedding, in which both of them attracts certain costs. Therefore many people resulted in carrying out church wedding and traditional wedding on the same day. This was not obtainable in Nenwe community as at the 1980s, but it began in 1990, and later became a norm in the following years: the reason for doing this was to cut the expenses of marriage ceremony and to use little resources to achieve two things in one strike.⁹

Modernisation and Migration to urban areas: The migration into urban parts of the country and the so-called modernization has also altered traditional marriage practices in Nenwe, as well as in many other Igbo societies. Many people have, in the name of modern culture, abandoned standards that kept marriage in its most honourable, pure, and prestigious form. In the earlier times, a woman's virginity is essential in marriage, and a man who discovers that his wife is not a virgin will send her back to her parents house: this was a shameful thing and a thing of disgrace. According to Onyema Ocheoha

*"the bride is expected to preserve her virginity for the husband till the night of the wedding... In the past, if the bride is discovered to have lost her virginity to another man earlier, she is sent back home with a basket of ashes, scissors and old clothes, with a peremptory demand for refund of the bride price, to the end of the newly contracted marriage."*¹⁰

Marriage in Nenwe valued virginity till the union is sealed. But now many, due to "modern culture", have begun to have sexual affairs before the main wedding, and many don't even value the issue of entering their matrimonial home, a virgin. Therefore some will engage in sexual promiscuity but are still rest assured that they will settle down in their matrimonial home, even the men are less concerned about this because they also engage in those acts.¹¹

4.2 Continuity in Marriage tradition in Nenwe

There really have been major changes in the marriage traditions of Nenwe community. Nevertheless, there are still very significant aspects of these traditions that remained. Some of these traditions were modified but yet still carries its significant, traditional essence. The truth is this, no people wants their culture to be completely eradicated or replaced by a foreign culture.

Despite the efforts of the Europeans to make Africans wear cooperate shirts and trousers and clone the indigenous people, making them speak their language, it is only important that we preserve the essence of the African culture which reveals our identity and our origin. The same counts for the Nenwe marriage tradition which the so-called modernity has made to seem obsolete; it still stands in some ways and have stood over the years showing Nenwe's efforts in preserving cultural standards. Furthermore, Nenwe marriage ways has found a way to coexist with the changes in the African society blending tradition with modernity. According to Rex clerk article, "Step-by-Step Guid to Traditional marriage rites in Enugu", Even with these

changes, the heart and core of the cultural wedding rites remains the same. No matter the setting, couples today still follow key steps, like the engagement list, bride price and bridal family requirements, and blessings of parents to honour Enugu marriage customs. This same fact applies to Nenwe community as it is a vital part of Enugu state.¹²

The things that remained vital part of marriage rites is the familiarization and introduction (Iku Aka). This two is joined together because familiarization will work out first, before the introduction can be carried out. They are both held by one chain. As it was, so it still is in Nenwe community, that marriage is not just the coming together of a man and a woman but the joining of two families. The parents of the bride must be aware of who is interested in their daughter and most approve of it before any further steps can be taken. The same goes for the man as his family must also know who he is getting married to, as well as his extended family and kindred. In addition, the investigation stage is still a stage in Nenwe marriage traditions that is still practiced by some, but it is not taken seriously by many people in the community these days.¹³

The bride price and the engagement list still remains vital part of marriage customs in Nenwe tradition. The provision of the bride price and all the other items for the members of the woman's family is not just mere payment, it serves as a sign of respect and honour for the members of her family or kindred. Therefore, despite all the Western culture that is ravaging the mind of youths, they are still reminded that they can't take a person's daughter for free.¹⁴

Despite the fact that Nenwe, like every other Igbo society and even the wider Nigerian and African territories, experienced colonialism which altered their way of life, the core of Nenwe traditional wedding ceremony still abided. Christianity had come in long ago into Nenwe, making the Christian wedding quite pronounced and seemingly more valuable, coupled with the rise of the Pentecostal churches in the 1980s challenged certain of the norms of traditional marriage. All these did not stop the core of the Igba Nku ceremony, and the bride would still take wine to locate her husband and show that he is the one she will marry. That cultural symbolism still remains; an act that seals the union in front of both families and opens the way for the blessings.¹⁵ To add to this, the symbol of using the wine cup to search out the groom is the most famous part of Igbo traditional marriage as revealed in many African magic movies, and some articles; wherefore till date it is still an unchanging part of Nenwe marriage customs.

Another part of the Nenwe culture that has stood the test of time and external cultural pressure is the blessings of the both parents concerning the marriage of their children. As was spoken of in the previous chapter, the parents of the couple would place their hands on them and pray for them, and declare words of blessings, that their union will be strong and fruitful. This act is seen by the Nenwe people as essential as it unites the couple before their families and the ancestors, and it is significantly believed to convey fruitfulness of childbirth in the home and creat a strong tie.¹⁶

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

Historically, Nenwe community's marriage customs (*ilu nwayi*) was seen, not as a mere private contract between two individuals, but as a binding socio-cultural covenant that structurally linked two distinct extended families (*Umunna*) together. It was also seen as a union that reinforced local lineage boundaries. Focused on the four foundational villages in Nenwe which involved Uhueze, Emudo, Amorji, and Agbada, this work investigates the delicate balance between cultural preservation and external societal pressure. The work also focuses on the time frame from 1976 to 1991, a fifteen year period. Haven made use of qualitative historical methodology, the study drew upon highly relevant oral testimonies of community elders, archival materials, and descriptive direct observation. Also, drawing information from secondary and tertiary sources, the work makes use of books, journals, and online articles.

The historical and geographical contextualization established in this work, provided the foundation for this study by exploring the genealogical and historical origins, evolution, Socio-cultural, political, and economic structure of the Nenwe people. Situated within the fertile plains of the modern day Aninri Local Government Area (formally part of Awgu division), Nenwe's geopolitical identity is defined by the four villages within it's territory. The study examined the historical traditions of the origin governing these clans, tracking their decentralized, kinship-based socio-political systems led by the council of elders. Furthermore, this study gives details on the primary economic pillars of the community which are agriculture, local palm wine tapping, and regional trade. The work shows how these pillars do not only sustain the population but directly shape local values (for instance, the constant use of palm wine in ceremonies as very obligatory). These indigenous political, economic, and socio-cultural networks combined to establish a strong communal ecosystem where several customs emerged from.

This study also demonstrates that traditional marriage in Nenwe is a very systematic process that is governed by strict sequential phases. Historically, These phases required absolute family and communal consent, beginning with standard investigation (*iju ese*) to access lineage health,

moral integrity, and conduct. This was then followed by formal family recognition rites called "o mu bia, su ma'm bia"; then came the introduction (iku aka), the unique bride's visit to the groom's family home (mara imu'm), bride price settlement, and then the public marriage ceremony (igba nkwa).

The thematic core of this educational investigation is in its examination of the socio-cultural forces that redefined the marriage institution of Nenwe between 1976 and 1991. The data reveals that the emergence of Pentecostal Christianity dramatically altered conventional ritual expectations, specifically challenging long held customs regarding the presentation of palm wine and hot drinks. This ultimately led to the later normalizations of the use of non-alcoholic drinks and cash substitution. Furthermore, the economic shifts within Nigeria, moving from the 1970s oil boom to the severe economic downturn of the 1980s, directly inflated material costs. Concurrently, the change in social dynamics over the scope of this study tend to have reduced the traditional emphasis placed on pre-marital virginity as well.

Despite these distinct transformations, the study highlighted some deep-rooted cultural continuities. The foundational demand for mutual parental and kinsmen validation remains unchanged, which ensured that marriage continues to serve as an alliance between two extended families. The very elements of the engagement list, the symbolic payment of bride price, the igba nkwa ceremony, as well as the pronouncement of parental and ancestral blessings have successfully survived these external pressures. This very much demonstrates the community's resilience and agency in their adaptation to modernity, while still preserving the core identity of the Nenwe heritage.

5.2 Conclusion

Now, based on the historical and qualitative data analyzed in this research, several key conclusions can be drawn. To start with, marriage in Nenwe is a dynamic institution. The traditional marriage custom in the community is not a static, unyielding relic of past times, but it is a highly dynamic cultural institution. While external forces like religious shifts, modernization and economic pressure altered certain practices, the heart and significance of the rituals still survived by adapting to a new context or environment.

Nenwe has proven to have significant Resilience as regarding it's communal identity. Despite the structural colonial and post-colonial interventions, the fundamental communal nature of Nenwe people's traditional marriage remains intact. The continued involvement of the kinsmen (Umunna), and the survival of the parental blessings demonstrates that Nenwe community effectively protects it's local, social structures from behind replaced by western individualism mentality.

The community has also significantly adaptated to socio-economic stress over the years, to an extent. The shift towards combining traditional and church ceremonies into a single day, along with accepting alternative for ritual items in form of money, shows that the community practically adapts. Nenwe successfully adjusted it's cultural expectations in order to ease the financial burden on young couples facing hard economic conditions

As these changes occur and certain practices remain, there is therefore, a high importance for documentation: As rural-to- urban migration increases and older generations pass away, documenting the practices that are specific to Nenwe community is an urgent call. This study fills a significant gap by providing a localized record to that protects Nenwe unique heritage from being lost within broader, generalized narratives of the indigenous Igbo culture. It as well gives the future generation a written down work to look into when tracing the custom of marriage in Nenwe.

In conclusion, this study concludes that between 1976 and 1991, Nenwe successfullly balanced tradition and modernity. By modifying the external expression of. The community has sustained its cultural identity, social order, and ancestral ties across generations By modifying the external expression of it's marriage rites while it also preserves it's core values.

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Augustine, Rejoice	Mrs	Masaka, Nasarawa state	45	Reverend & Civil defender	Very reliable	22/5/2026
Ejim, Michael	Ugwu a na so anya	Eziecho, Uhueze, Nenwe	56	A police man	Very reliable	1/1/2026
Mba, Chigioke	Mr	Eziecho, Uhueze, Nenwe	Unknown	Farmer	Very reliable	28/12/2025
Mba, Oruchukwu	Mrs	Eziecho, Uhueze, State	82	Farmer	Very reliable	29/12/2025
Orji, Felicia	Mrs	Enugu-nato, Uhueze, Nenwe	Unknown	Farmer	Reliable	3/1/2026
Ogbonna, Godwin	Former PRO of Eziecho	Eziecho, Uhueze, Nenwe	62	Local drugs trader	Reliable	22/12/2025

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Appendix I

UMUNGELE UGWU FAMILY EZIECHIO UHUHEZE NENWE ANIARI L.G.A ENUGU STATE

OUR TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE COMPREHENSIVE LIST

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Amount for the list: this list will cost N200, with a Jar of palm wine (four gallons equivalent). Each stage is accompanied with 2 gallons of palm wine.

STAGE 1:

To inform your father in-law about your marriage proposal: 2 gallons of palm wine.

STAGE 2:

(Iku-Aka) Official information to kinsmen (Umunna)

FOR MEN

- a. Igbo kola nuts, not less than 15 pieces
- b. 1 bottle of seaman dry gin
- c. Two cartons of beer
- d. 10 gallons of palm wine

FOR WOMEN

- a. 2 crates of soft drinks (coca-cola)
- b. 2 packets of Maggi cubes
- c. 1 packet of cabin biscuits
- d. N200 naira cash

STAGE 3:

(Ndi Okwu garu) Special marriage committee_ elders

- a. 2 jars of palm wine
- b. 1 bottle of seaman dry gin
- c. 2 cartons of beer
- d. N500 naira cash

STAGE 4:

(Nchi Aki) Presentation/ breaking of coconut

FOR MEN

- a. 2 jars of palm wine
- b. 2 cartons of beer
- c. 2 bottles of Seaman dry gin, large

FOR GIRLS

- a. 4 heads of coconut
- b. 2 crates of soft drinks (Coca-Cola)
- c. 2 packets of cabin biscuits
- d. 2 packets of chewing gum

FOR WOMEN

- a. 2 gallons of palm wine
- b. 2 crates of soft drinks (Coca-Cola)
- c. Cash of N300 naira

FOR YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW

- a. 1 yard of lace
- b. A pair of shoes
- c. 1 bar of washing soap
- d. A role of Joy or Lux soap
- e. 1 umbrella
- f. 1 wrapper of 6 yards
- g. 1 big basin with cover (Murtala Mohammed)
- h. 1 hair tie, a necklace and earrings

FOR YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW

- a. Set of chieftaincy wear, up and down
- b. A pair of shoes
- c. 1 chief red cap
- d. A walking stick

STAGE 5:

Dowry may be discussed with the elders in as much as Okowu Okwukwu Okwu is collected

ITEMS FOR SPECIAL MARRIAGE COMMITTEE (NDI OKWU NWANYI)

- a. Oru anu and Ire anu (The lap of cow and the whole tongue)
- b. 2 jet bottles of snuff tobacco
- c. 1 carton of beer
- d. 1 bottle of Seaman dry gin
- e. 2 jars of palm wine (10 gallons)

FOR THE YOUTHS

- a. 2 bottles of Seaman dry gin
- b. 2 packets of Cigarettes
- c. 1 carton of beer
- d. N500 naira cash

STAGE 6:

General Ceremony (Igba Nkwu): the kindred (Umunna) are usually notified about this stage with 3 jars of palm wine (12 gallons)

FOR THE BRIDE

- a. A set of clothe: hair ties, ear rings, necklace
- b. A blouse and a pair of shoes
- c. A cloth box purchased for the bride.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEN

- a. Ite orure ise, 5 big pots of palm wine (100 gallons)
- b. 5 cartons of beer
- c. 3 bottles of Seaman dry gin
- d. A quantity of kola nut that will fill a local wooden plate
- e. 5 packets of Cigarettes
- f. 1 hand, 1 lap, and the whole heart of a donkey for the cooking requirements

NOTE: The other cooking items and ingredients is negotiated between the grooms family and the brides family

CONCLUSION

You are welcome, May God take the glory

1 MICHAEL ESIM NEW ONE
UMUNGELE UGWU FAMILY EZIECHO UHUEZE NENWE ANINRI
LGA ENUGU STATE

OUR TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE COMPREHENSIVE LIST
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Note: This list will cost you N2000.00 with a carton of Hero or Life beer. Each stage is attached with 2 gallons of palm wine.

STAGE 1:

To inform your father in-law about your marriage proposal: 2 gallons of palm wine

STAGE 2:

Legitimate Enquiry (Iku Aka) for men (Umunna)

- a. Igbo kola nuts of not less than 20 pieces.
- b. 1 bottle of dry gin (seaman large original)
- c. 14 gallons of palm wine
- d. 3 cartons of beer.

FOR WOMAN

- a. 2 packets of cabin biscuits
- b. 3 cartons of malt
- c. cash of two thousand naira (N2000)
- d. 2 packets of maggi

STAGE 3:

Okwugaru Special Marriage Committee Mpaga Mmanya (Categories of drinks for the Elders)

- a. 6 jars of palm wine
- b. 2 cartons of beer
- c. 1 bottle of dry gin seaman
- d. cash of three thousand naira (M3,000.00)

STAGE 4:

Presentation of Coconuts (Nchi Aku Requirements)

- a. 8 gallons of palm wine

- b. 2 cartons of beer
- c. 2 bottles of seaman large

ITEMS FOR GIRLS

- a. 4 heads of coconuts
- b. 4 crates of mineral
- c. 3 packets of cabin biscuits
- d. 2 packets of chewing gum
- e. 1 crate of malt

FOR WOMAN

- a. 2 gallons of palm wine
- b. 2 cartons of malt
- c. Cash of N2000.00

YOUR FATHER IN-LAW PERSONAL PROVISIONS

- a. walking stick
- b. an umbrella
- c. a pair of shoe
- d. a set of chieftaincy wear
- e. one chief red cap

FOR YOUR MOTHER IN-LAW

- a. one yard of lace for her
- b. a pair of shoe
- c. 2 bar soap
- d. a roll of Lux and Joy toilet soap
- e. an umbrella of potable size
- f. 2 different cloths
- g. big basin with cover (Murtala Mohammed)
- h. hair tie, neck lace and earring (set)

STAGE 5

Dowry may be discuss with the Elders in as much as Okowu Okwukwu Okwu is collected

ITEMS FOR SPECIAL MARRIAGE COMMITTEE (NDI OKWU NWANYI)

- a. Oru anu and Ire anu
- b. 2 Jet bottle of snuff tobacco

- c. 2 cartons of beer
- d. 2 bottles of seaman dry gin
- e. 5 jars of palm wine (25 gallons)

FOR THE YOUTH

- a. 2 cartons of beer
- b. 2 bottles of seaman dry gin
- c. 2 packets of Benson Cigarette
- d. Cash of N5,000.00

STAGE 6

General wine called **IGBA NKWU**: The Kindred (Umunna) are usually notified about this stage with 13 gallons of palm wine.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEN

- a. A quantity of kola nuts
- b. Ite orure Ise 5 big pots of palm wine (100 gallons of Palm wine)
- c. 10 cartons of beer
- d. 5 bottle of seams dry gin
- e. A life donkey or cow for all cooking requirements
- f. 5 packets of Cigarettes

CONCLUSION

You are welcome, May God take the Glory