

**SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NYANYA-ICHOGODO,
BEKWARRA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE
FROM 1999 TO 2006.**

BY

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ENUGU.**

JULY, 2026.

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**A PROJECT RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS
(B.A) DEGREE IN HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.**

SUPERVISOR: DR. UGOCHUKWU OKOJI

JULY, 2026.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research, titled ‘SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NYANYA-ICHOGODO, BEKWARRA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE FROM 1999 to 2006.’ was carried out by ACHINE VICTOR ADIDA, with the registration number GOU/U22/HIS/74, under the supervision of DR. UGOCHUKWU OKOJI. I have given the necessary acknowledgement to all the sources from which the research derived its 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.

ACHINE VICTOR ADIDA

GOU/U22/HIS/74

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. UGOCHUKWU OKOJI
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 the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo community. As the first scholarly work devoted specifically to documenting the history and socio-cultural heritage of the community, it is my hope that this study will contribute to the preservation of their history and serve as a valuable resource for future generations and researchers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and Foremost, I give all glory, honour, and thanksgiving to Almighty God, whose unfailing grace, mercy, wisdom, and protection have sustained me throughout my academic journey. His faithfulness has been the foundation of every achievement recorded in my life, and it is by His divine guidance that this research work has been successfully completed. I also want to appreciate Godfrey Okoye University for contributing immensely to an important season of my life and for giving me the platform for growth, knowledge and development. The journey has been worth while.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ugochukwu Okoji, whose guidance, patience, constructive criticisms, and scholarly contributions greatly enhanced the quality of this work. His encouragement and willingness to provide direction at every stage of the research process were invaluable. I also express my deepest appreciation to my Head of Department, Dr. Ifeoma Ezedinachi (Associate Professor), for her exemplary leadership, warmth and commitment to the growth of the Department of History and International Studies.

My sincere appreciation goes to all the lecturers in the Department of History and International Studies for their dedication to imparting knowledge and shaping my intellectual development throughout my years of study. I am particularly grateful to Msgr. Prof. Nicholas Omenka, Prof. Ngozi Ojiakor, Dr Nnoli, Dr. Emmanuel Eyeh, Dr. Uchenna Ani, Dr. Hope, Dr. Kelechi Okoro, Mr. Christopher Uwakwe, Mrs. Winifred Ojiego, and secretary, Mrs. Edith Chiwendu, for their various contributions, encouragement, guidance and support during my academic pursuit.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved parents, Mr. Christopher Achine and Mrs. Justina Achine, whose sacrifices, prayers, unwavering love, and moral support have been the driving force behind my academic aspirations. And I also appreciate my dear siblings, Elijah Achine, Favour Achine, And Treasure Achine, for their love, support, understanding and encouragement throughout this journey.

I am profoundly grateful to Mr. Odey Oyabeni and Hon. Isaac Ogar for their immense assistance during the course of this research. Their willingness to provide relevant information, participate in interviews, and assist in data collection contributed significantly to the successful completion of this study.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to my friends, course mates, and all those who contributed in one way or another to the success of this work. Whether through words of encouragement, academic support, prayers or act of kindness, your contributions are sincerely appreciated and will always be remembered.

May God richly bless everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this research work. Amen.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socio-cultural organizations of Nyanya-Ichogodo community in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria between the years 1999 to 2006. This research was done in order to trace the history and socio-cultural institutions of the community especially in the wake of modernization, Christianity, and other factors which have resulted in the decline of various indigenous institutions. Historical research approach was used in the analysis, combining both thematic and chronological approaches. Sources of data include primary sources such as oral interviews and observations, as well as secondary sources like books, journals, unpublished works and internet. The results indicate that the family, kinship institution, age grades, leadership, marriage, religion and cultural festivals among others helped in keeping the society in order, fostering unity and cultural identity, as well as development of the community. In addition, the study established that despite the fact that modernization and Christianity led to changes in some aspects of the culture, these institutions have managed to survive due to their ability to adapt to new circumstances while maintaining their value base intact. Consequently, the study recommends that these indigenous institutions of Nyanya-Ichogodo be documented, preserved, and propagated to preserve the cultural heritage of the community.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Every society develops Socio-Cultural organizations to organize social lives, maintain order and preserve its values. These institutions include family, marriage, age grade associations, traditional leadership structures, economic systems and cultural practices. In most African societies especially before colonial rule, such institutions formed the foundation of social organization, governance and cultural continuity.¹

In many Nigerian communities, these institutions played vital roles in regulating behaviour, settling disputes, organizing communal labour and promoting unity among community members.² By the aid of these structures, respect for elders and authorities, collective responsibility and cooperation has been established, maintained and passed down from one generation to the other.

One of the most important socio-cultural institution in the southern parts of Nigeria is the Age grade system. It is the grouping of people of similar ages ranges into organized associations with specific duties and responsibilities. Traditionally age grades have contributed to community development, maintenance of law and order, organizations of festival and execution of communal projects. Through these roles the age grades have contributed to leadership training and promotion of communal values such as discipline, cooperation and respect for local authorities.³

Another important institution is the Marriage institution, which is a central pillar of socio-cultural organization. In African societies, marriage is not merely the union of two individuals; it is also a bond between families and kin groups. Marriage serves social, economic and cultural purposes such as procreation, transmitting cultural values and strengthening family ties. It is guided by customs and traditions, with families and elders playing important roles in its regulation.⁴

Nyanya-Ichogodo is a settlement cluster amongst the Bekwarra people in the northern part of Cross River state. According to oral history, the Bekwarra trace their history back to a great progenitor called *Agba*. Nyanya is one of the seven sons of *Agba* originally known as Oti. Although, Nyanya is sometimes described as a relatively

“recent” settlement when compared to some older communities, he still occupies an important place in Bekwarra history and Identity.⁵

During the early period in the history of the Bekwarra people, the ancestors did not necessarily stay in the settlements that they currently occupy. Like many African societies, they moved around within the area, establishing temporary settlements before the current communities were formed. This process of movement, which was often influenced by the availability of fertile land and water, influenced the organization of the Bekwarra society.⁶

The history of Nyanya-Ichogodo is best understood within the wider story of the Bekwarra people of northern Cross River State. Like many African societies, the early history of the Bekwarra was not written down in books but carefully preserved through oral tradition, passed from elders to children from one generation to another.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Nyanya-Ichogodo community like most rural communities in Nigeria, faces many challenges that threatens their cultural heritage and way of life that has been passed down from one generation to another. Socio-cultural institutions like the age grade system, marriage institutions, traditional leadership structures, and kinship organizations have historically played a central role in organizing social life in many Nigerian communities. In communities like Nyanya-Ichogodo, much of the social life have traditionally been guided by these indigenous systems which have mainly been preserved through oral tradition and consistent practice.

However, in recent times, rapid social changes such as Western education, Christianity, urbanization, migration and modern political and legal system have weakened or altered many traditional systems and the younger generations are becoming less interested in sustaining them. There is no proper documented research work on the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo community, as most knowledge remains oral and scattered and this lack of proper documentation makes it difficult to understand how institutions like the age grade system and marriage has evolved and what roles they still play, thereby creating a risk of cultural loss and a gap in scholarly knowledge. This research seeks to address this gap by examining

and documenting the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine and document the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo. This research focuses on key institutions such as age grade system, marriage institution, traditional political structures, economic activities and cultural practices. The study aims to give a detailed understanding on the community's traditional institutions and their social life, cultural values and community development. Specifically this research seeks to;

- Examine the historical background and origin of Nyanya-Ichogodo.
- Describe the the major socio-cultural institutions in the community especially the age grade system and marriage institutions.
- Analyse the functions of the institutions in maintaining social order, promoting unity and supporting community development.
- Identify the challenges facing these institutions in contemporary times and the changes that these institutions might have undergone due to social changes.

Through these objectives, the study intends to contribute to the documentation and preservation of the cultural heritage of Nyanya-Ichogodo and to provide useful information for future research, cultural policy, and community development efforts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Several studies have been carried out on several communities and their history in different parts of Nigeria. Prior to this study, Nyanya-Ichogodo has not benefited from any meaningful research on the history of its community. So, this research work is important in several ways;

Firstly, it will help in the documentation and preservation of the socio-cultural heritage of Nyanya-Ichogodo, especially institutions such as the age grade systems, marriage institutions and traditional leadership structures, which are mainly transmitted through oral tradition. By recording these practices in writing, This

research project will aid in the preservation of the indigenous knowledge for generations.

Secondly, the research will be helpful to students, scholars, and researchers who want to know more about African history and cultural studies especially regarding Cross River State and the Bekwarra people. It will serve as reference material for academic research on socio-cultural institutions in comparable communities. This research project will also raise awareness about the culture and tradition of Nyanya-Ichogodo to various people around the globe.

Thirdly, the outcome of this research may help community leaders, cultural institutions, and policymakers realize the significance of traditional institutions in community development and social cohesion. This may help in the formulation of policies and programs that accommodate indigenous institutions in modern governance and development processes.

Finally, the research project will also assist young people in the community to know more about their cultural heritage and traditional institutions.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study is concerned with the Socio-Cultural Organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo during the years between 1999-2006. Although a brief mention of the history of the people's origin and migration will be made for historical context, the focus of the study will be on the social organization and culture of the community during the period under study. The year 1999 is particularly significant in that it marks the transition of Nigeria from Military rule to democratic rule under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo.

The other end of the period of consideration, 2006, is characterized by the introduction of mobile communication to rural communities like Nyanya-Ichogodo, with increasing access to networks provided by companies like MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria, thereby introducing new forms of communication and social interaction.

The research focuses on the traditional way of life and culture of the entire people, taking into account the institutions, customs, beliefs, and way of life of the people. It

specifically studies the age-grade institution and the marriage institution, focusing on their roles in ensuring that social order is maintained, behavior regulated, and promoting development in the period under review. Additionally, the research focuses on how these institutions were changed by factors such as modernization, Christianity, formal education, and increased contact with urban centers.

The scope of the research is limited to the Nyanya-Ichogodo community alone and is not extended to include all Bekwarra communities. It covers both the older generation, who possess valuable knowledge of the community's traditions and historical practices, and the younger generation, whose experiences reflect ongoing social and cultural changes within the period under study. By focusing on these aspects, the study provides a detailed understanding of the structure and transformation of the socio-cultural life in Nyanya-Ichogodo between 1999 and 2006.

1.6 Methodology and Sources

The methodology adopted in this study is both thematic and chronological. The study adopts a qualitative research method, using both primary and secondary sources of data.

The primary data were collected through oral interviews with elders, community leaders and members of age grade associations. These interviews helped to gather first-hand data on the origin, functions and changes in the community's socio-cultural institutions. Some observational notes were also taken and included in this study.

Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, official documents and relevant online materials related to socio-cultural institutions, Bekwarra history, and Nigerian traditional societies.

This work is exposed to rigorous investigation and collection of facts, and based on that the researcher has been able to collect data from both primary and secondary sources. It is the researcher during the field work that studies the evidence which testifies the past, decoding the data given by the society, and interpreting the traces left behind.

1.7 Literature Review

There is no doubt that several literatures exist on Africa Traditional systems, socio-cultural history and indigenous institutions particularly among communities in

Southern Nigeria. However, there is relatively little documented work specifically on Nyanya-Ichogodo in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Most available works focus on the Bekwarra people as a whole or on the broader Cross River societies, with limited attention to individual communities like Nyanya-Ichogodo. The aim of this literature review is there to examine the views of various scholars on relevant themes such as age grade systems, marriage institutions, and traditional socio-political organization, while identifying gaps that this study seeks to fill.

A major work consulted in the course of the study is “*Ebekwarra Ye K’Irinirine (Bekwarra from the Beginning)*” by Joseph Okuta Ajor.⁷ This work provides a historical account of the Bekwarra people, tracing their origin, migration, settlement patterns, and cultural development. It also discusses aspects of traditional leadership and social organization. While the work is useful in understanding the general history of Bekwarra, it does not focus specifically on Nyanya-Ichogodo, thereby leaving a gap that this study intends to address.

Another important study is “*Bekwarra: A Historical Perspective of the People, Justice System, and the Economy*” by Daniel Makai and Veronica U. Oko.⁸ This work examines the traditional political structure, legal system, and social organization of Bekwarra people. It highlights the roles of traditional rulers, elders, and communal institutions in maintaining order. Although the study provides valuable insight into the Bekwarra people. It highlights the roles of traditional rulers, elders, and communal institutions in maintaining order. Although the study provided valuable insight into Bekwarra socio-political life, it does not adequately discuss specific communities such as Nyanya-Ichogodo.

In addition, a study by Joseph Okuta Ajor, Godwin Oko Ushie, and Julius Simon Odey titled “*Social Practices and Ethnic Identity of Bekwarra Migrant workers*”⁹ examines how Bekwarra cultural practices, including marriage and social identity, are maintained outside their homeland. This study does give relevant information regarding cultural continuity and adaptation, but since its primary scope centers on migratory groups, it is not directly applicable to the internal socio-cultural structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo.

Elizabeth Isichei in her work “*A History of Nigeria*”¹⁰ provides a broad overview of Nigerian societies, including traditional political and judicial institutions. She discussed how indigenous systems functioned effectively before colonial intervention. Her work is useful in understanding the general framework within which Bekwarra traditional systems operated. However, like many general historical texts, it lacks specific reference to Bekwarra and Nyanya communities.

Joseph Okuta Ajor in his work titled “*African Traditional Judicial Systems: Bekwarra as a case study*”¹¹ examined the indigenous judicial practices among the Bekwarra people. His work studied how traditional method resolves conflicts, the role of elders, and the use of customary laws in maintaining social order. The study provided detailed insight into how justice was administered in pre-colonial and early colonial periods. However, the work is limited in scope as it concentrated mainly on judicial systems without adequately addressing other socio-cultural aspects of Bekwarra society.

David O. Omagu, in his work “*A History Of the Bekwarra people of the Upper Cross River Region of Nigeria*”¹² examined the origin, migration, settlement and socio-cultural development of the Bekwarra people. The work gives detailed attention to traditional institutions such as family organization, age grades, kinship relations and systems of communal leadership that helped to regulate social life in Bekwarra society. Omagu further explained how communal values, respect for elders and collective responsibility shaped social interaction and conflict resolution among the people. The work is highly relevant to this study because it provides historical background on Bekwarra traditional institutions. However, the study concentrated on the Bekwarra society generally and did not specifically examine the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo community.

Furthermore, in “*The Wing of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization*,”¹³ David Omagu discussed the impact on modernization, Christianity, western education and globalization on Bekwarra traditional society. The study examined how indigenous practices such as traditional marriage rites, age grade responsibilities and communal authority have gradually changed in response to external influences. The work is important to this research because it explains the transformation of Bekwarra socio-cultural institutions over time and the challenges facing traditional systems in

contemporary society. Nevertheless, the work focused mainly on the general effects of globalization on Bekwarra society and did not provide detailed analysis of the peculiar experiences of Nyanya-Ichogodo community.

Similarly, D. O. Omagu and C. M. Amaechi in their article “*Teetering on the Brink: Traditional Bekwarra Mechanisms of Social Control and Legal System in an Age of Globalization*”¹⁴ examined indigenous methods of maintaining law, order and morality in Bekwarra society. The authors discussed the role of elders, family heads, traditional sanctions, taboos and customary laws in regulating behaviour and ensuring social stability. The study also highlighted how modernization and external influences have weakened some traditional mechanisms of social control. This work is valuable to the present study because it provides insights into the operation of indigenous institutions in Bekwarra society. However, like other existing studies, it did not pay adequate attention to the historical and socio-cultural peculiarities of Nyanya-Ichogodo community, which this study seeks to address.

Beyond Bekwarra-specific studies, general sociological works such as “*Introduction to Sociology*”¹⁵ by OpenStax provide a comprehensive explanation of social institutions, culture, and social organization in human societies. This book talks about the main concepts like marriage, family, culture, and social structures to explain how these institutions operate to control and stabilize the behavior of people within the society. Furthermore, it explains the role of social institutions in the process of socialization and continuity. Although the book does not mention anything specific about the community of Bekwarra or Nyanya-Ichogodo, it gives a clear and comprehensible theoretical background about the socio-cultural organization and how social institutions like age grades and marriage help in maintaining this order.

In summary, almost all the literature that exists addresses the issues of Bekwarra society in general or socio-cultural systems in Africa in general, but none of them have discussed anything specific about the Nyanya-Ichogodo. In other words, there seems to be a lack of detailed information about the socio-cultural organization of the community of Nyanya-Ichogodo. The current research intends to fill this void by examining the institutions of the community including age grade institution and marriage institution and other socio-cultural practices.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. **Chapter One** starts with the introductory chapter, which deals with the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, methodology and sources, literature review, and the organization of the study.

Chapter Two examines the geographical location and history of Nyanya-Ichogodo. This chapter will look at the geographical location of the community, the origin, migration and settlement, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo, the traditional political structure, and the economic activities of its indigenes.

Chapter Three focuses on the social institutions of Nyanya-Ichogodo. The discussion under this chapter will cover the family and kinship ties, community organization and leadership, and the age grade system of Nyanya-Ichogodo and their role in maintaining social order and unity in the community.

Chapter Four looks at the cultural institutions and practices of Nyanya-Ichogodo. The chapter covers the marriage institutions and practices, traditional beliefs and religious practices, cultural festivals and ceremonies, the functions of socio-cultural institutions, and the impact of modernization on these institutions between 1999 and 2006.

Chapter Five contains the summary and conclusion of the study.

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CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NYANYA-ICHOGODO.

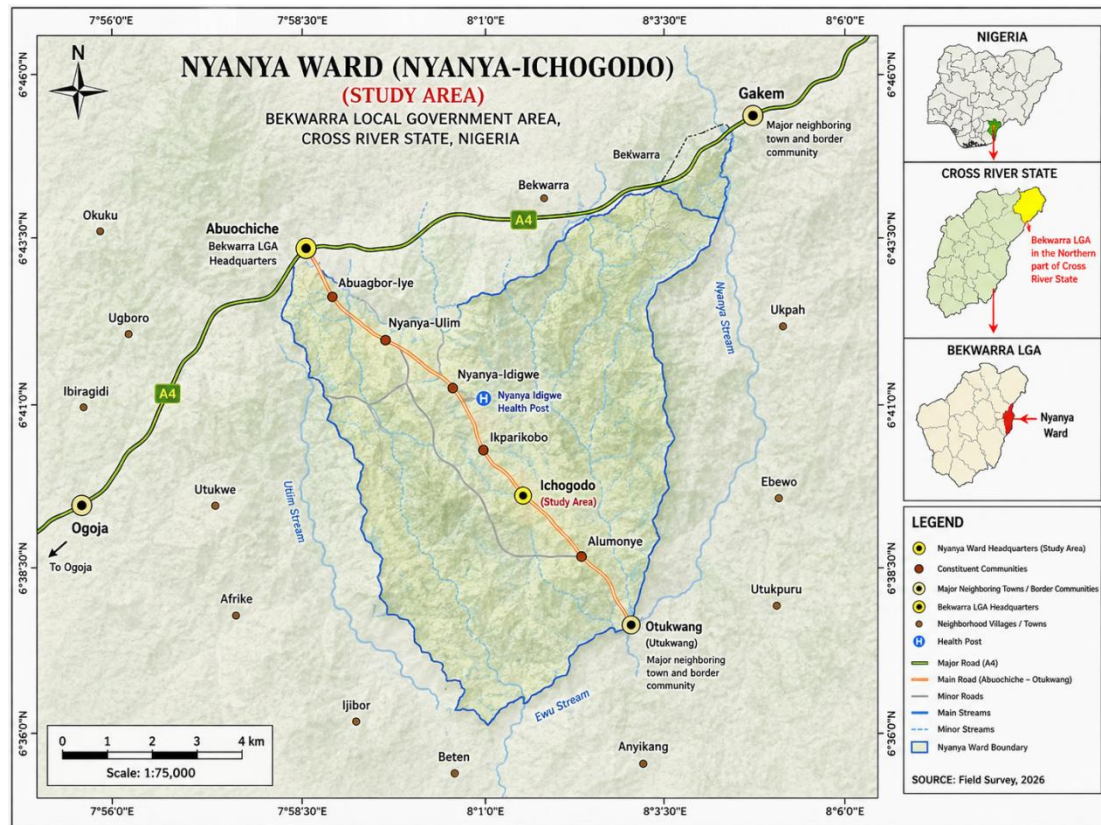
2.1 Geographical Location

Nyanya-Ichogodo is a settlement within Bekwarra Local Government Area of northern Cross River State, Nigeria. It forms part of the Oti group of Bekwarra communities and is situated within the broader Bekwarra socio-cultural region.¹ Its location has played an important role in shaping its settlement pattern, economy, and interaction with neighbouring communities.

Geographically, Nyanya-Ichogodo is a part of Bekwarra Local Government Area which lies in the north-eastern part of Cross River State, bounded by Benue State to the north and other Cross River Local Government Areas such as Ogoja and Yala to the South and West. The area falls approximately around latitude 6°37N and longitude 8°E, placing it within the tropical region of Nigeria.² The landscape of Nyanya-Ichogodo consists of a mixture of Savannah grassland and patches of deciduous forest, which provides both open farmland and forest resources. The soil is predominantly loamy and fertile, making it suitable for agriculture and supporting the cultivation of crops such as rice, yam, cassava and groundnuts. This explains why farming is the main occupation of the people.

Climatically, the area experiences a tropical climate, with high temperature ranging between 29°C and 32°C and the significant rainfall throughout the year. These conditions favour agricultural productivity and sustain the vegetation of the area.³ The environment also features seasonal streams, gently rolling landforms, and mixed vegetation, which support both settlement and economic activities. These geographical features have influenced the development of Nyanya-Ichogodo by encouraging permanent settlement, farming activities, and strong socio-cultural ties within Bekwarra region.⁴

However, it should be noted that the geographical data used in this study are mostly derived from general studies on Cross River state and the wider West African region, owing to the limited availability of specific documented sources on Nyanya-Ichogodo.



Map of Nyanya showing showing the location of the study area.

Source: Adapted by the author from Wikimedia Commons, Google Map and field survey (2026).

2.2 Origin, Migration, and Settlement of Nyanya-Ichogodo

The people of Nyanya-Ichogodo trace their origin to the broader Bekwarra ethnic group of northern Cross River State, Nigeria. According to Bekwarra tradition, the people are descendants of *Agba*, the ancestral founder associated with the ancient Jukun Kwararafa civilization.⁵ *Agba* is regarded as the patriarch from whom the Bekwarra people derive their ancestry, culture, and social organization.

From the ancestral origin, the Bekwarra migrated from the Jukun region and initially settled in the area known today as Bette-Bendi (Obudu). However due to conflicts specifically between two early groups in Obudu called Ebang-Ekpenhe and Ebang-Egwuji_ and the search for more fertile land, descendants of *Agba* began a gradual migration eastwards and northwards. This migration involved passing through settlements near Takum, Mbebet in Osokum, and the Ogoja region before they finally established themselves in what is now Bekwarra land.⁶

A major phase of settlement is linked to *Odama Ofide* and *Adie Ofide*, who were descendants of *Agba* and founders of several Bekwarra clans. *Odama Ofide*'s descendants include Ujia North(Ijibor, Bewo, Ika-Ichia), Ujia South(Ukpah, Utukwe, Ebegang), Oti(Ichogodo and other Nyanya villages), and Udomu. *Adie Ofide*'s descendants founded Ugboro, Akwurinyi-Omiami, Ukpada, and Eya-Abar communities.⁷ The lineage-based migration was thus responsible for shaping the modern-day structure of clan and community among the Bekwarra people.

Nyanya-Ichogodo in particular belonged to the *Oti* Clan that can be traced back to *Odama Ofide*. With increase in population, some smaller lineages of the *Oti* clan went on to migrate into regions suitable for agriculture and habitation, forming the Nyanya village clusters in the process.⁸ Ichogodo came to be one of these villages whose population consists of people with a common ancestry and cultural identity.

Environmental factors played an important role in the migration and settlement processes of Nyanya-Ichogodo. The community developed itself in regions with loamy soil, sufficient water sources and mixed vegetation comprising of grassland and forest areas that were suitable for agriculture, hunting and other socio-economic activities. The loamy soil formed the backbone of the economy of this community whereas forests served the purpose of providing timber, firewood and hunting grounds.

The settlement pattern of the community of Nyanya-Ichogodo follows the typical social organization pattern of the Bekwarra, which is the kinship and lineage based. Families settled near each other to form compounds and villages that gradually developed into organized communities with shared cultural practices, social institutions, and leadership structures. The sense of unity within the families was reinforced through their belief in the lineage of *Agba*.

In this context, the tradition of the origin, migration, and settling of Nyanya-Ichogodo is an indication of the historical presence of the Bekwarra people. Starting from the ancestry of the people to *Agba*, followed by the migration of his offspring, particularly *Odama Ofide* and *Adie Ofide*, the people migrated and spread into suitable territories to establish clans and communities. The Nyanya-Ichogodo is one such community established based on lineage, environment, and preserved cultural legacy.

2.3 The People of Nyanya-Ichogodo

Nyanya-Ichogodo belong to the Oti clan of Bekwarra , who are a sub-group of the greater Bekwarra Ethnic group. This is because of their common origin, language and culture. The people of Nyanya-Ichogodo identify themselves through family relationships, traditional myths and the belief that they descend from a common ancestor, *Agba*.

Language-wise, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo use the language spoken in their locality which is the Bekwarra-Iribu language, a version of the Bekwarra language spoken extensively in central Bekwarra land.⁹ Language is used as an avenue through which culture, values and tradition are transferred to the younger generation. It also binds the people of the same society.

Socially, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo are arranged on family lineages. *Irifen* Family is considered the basic unit of society while larger lineage groups are made up of extended families. The people of such lineages have close ties due to blood relationship. They help each other and bear collective responsibility. Respect for elder is very much stressed, indicating the Elder-led character of the Bekwarra society.¹⁰

In terms of economics, the inhabitants of Nyanya-Ichogodo are mainly agriculturalists. Farming activities are common and provide the people's livelihood as evidenced by the type of crops planted by them; Rice, yam, cassava and groundnuts are some of the crops grown there. Their agrarian activities are linked directly to the fertility of the soil and favorable climatic conditions prevailing in the area.¹¹ Other economic activities that the community engages in include petty trade, hunting among others.

In cultural aspects, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo have rich cultures reflecting their Bekwarra heritage. These include communal living, adherence to customs and norms, and participation in social organizations like age grades, marriage system and traditional leadership system. Cultural festivals, rites of passage, and communal meetings are some of the practices that enhance unity and preserve the cultural identity of the people.¹² The traditional beliefs practiced by the people include the belief in ancestors and spirits.

Politically, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo use the traditional council of elders as their political mechanism. The council comprises aged and respected people from all

the different lineage. And these persons oversee decision-making processes within the community that concern law enforcement, dispute resolution and other affairs affecting the entire community.¹³ Decisions are made collectively and not by any individual leader in the community.

On settlement, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo settle in very close knit compounds that are mainly structured along family lines. These compounds form villages that collectively form the Nyanya community cluster. This kind of settlement promotes cooperation, communal work, and healthy interpersonal relations among the community members.

The People of Nyanya-Ichogodo form a typical example of the Bekwarra community that is made up of a community of people who are strongly knit through family connections, who practice agriculture for sustenance, and have a distinct social structure and cultural background. This is a community that continues to maintain its cultural identity in relation to changes in environment and social setting.

2.4 Traditional Political Structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo

The traditional political structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo community comprises of native institutions that help in keeping the law and order, ensure good leadership and development of the community. Just like other Bekwarra communities, the structure involves the Chief, the council of elders and the age grade institution working in unity to lead the community.¹⁴

At the top of the political structure is the *Ushie K'Akpa* (Chief/Village head), who is the main authority in the community. The position of the Chief is not open to everyone, as it is restricted to only members of the royal lineage. The selection of a Chief follows a hereditary and rotational pattern among the recognized lineages in the community. When it is time to choose a new chief, eligible candidates are presented from the appropriate lineage. In cases where more than one person is qualified, elders and selected representatives from different lineage come together to choose the most suitable candidate. Once a chief is selected is selected and installed, he remains in office until his death.¹⁵

The written note below states how they install Chiefs in Nyanya-Ichogodo community;

Ichogodo community has its own traditional method of selecting a Chief. First and foremost, the Chief is chosen from the royal family of the Ichogodo community. The selection process involves confining the chosen individual in a small room within the community. The elders then place two specially selected shrub leaves, cut from the forest, across the doorpost of the room where the person is kept. During this period, the individual is not allowed to come out his own for seven days. A special woman, who must not be married or is divorced, would be selected to prepare meals for him throughout these seven days. At the end of this period, the elders instruct the woman to bring him out for public presentation before the entire community, by which time all necessary rituals would have been performed on him.

On the day of coronation, all members of the Ichogodo community are expected to abstain from farming activities. Every farmer is required to bring five tubers of yam, while the women bring ingredients needed for preparing soup, which will be used for cooking during the celebration of the new chief. People from neighbouring communities are also invited to attend the event. Animals such as cows, goats and chickens are slaughtered, and various kinds of food are prepared by the women of the community. After the coronation ceremony, the people eat, drink palm wine to their satisfaction, and engage in traditional dances that continue until sunset.

Furthermore, becoming a chief in Ichogodo community is not something one can impose on oneself. The individual must be selected by the elders or kingmakers, who are responsible for making such important decisions.¹⁶

The Chief does not rule alone. He is assisted by the *Ikum Udyara* (Council of Elders), which is made up of the heads of different families and lineages. The elders help in making decisions, settling disputes, and maintaining peace in the community. When important issues arise, they meet to discuss them and reach a common agreement. Their decisions are then communicated to that people through family heads and other representatives.¹⁷

Another important part of the political system is the age-grade system. Age grades are groups of people within similar age ranges, and they play a major role in community development. They help in carrying out communal work such as clearing roads building projects, and maintaining public spaces. They also contribute money for community development and provide labor when needed. In addition, age grades help to maintain discipline among their members by setting rules and punishing those who break them and that in turn helps to shape the morality in the community.¹⁸

Decision-making in Nyanya-Ichogodo entails the involvement of both the leaders and the community at large. The process can be described as being both representative and participative in nature. Although the process normally entails the meeting of the

elders and age-grade leaders to make decisions on important matters, there are instances where general meetings are conducted in which community members come together to solve problems facing them.¹⁹

Previously, other institutions like the priests, oracle custodians and shrines keepers also played significant roles in governance of the society. These institutions were responsible for religious affairs, justice and morality of individuals. The role of these institutions was to ensure that the customs and traditions of the people were observed.²⁰ Although modern forms of governance and Christianity have brought about some level of change, the traditional political system of Nyanya-Ichogodo has remained intact. The Chief, elders and age-grades still play significant roles in maintenance of law and order in the area.

2.5 Economic Activities of the Community

Agriculture is the main activity that the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo are involved in. Agriculture is the main economic activity among the people of the community mainly because there is fertile loamy soil and favorable climatic conditions for the growth of crops. Some of the important crops grown include yam, cassava, and groundnuts which can be grown for both consumption and business purposes.²¹ These crops provide food for the communities and also generate money when they are sold in local markets.

In agriculture, the farmers use simple tools like hoes and cutlasses mainly in traditional ways of doing things. Family labor is normally the norm in the process of farming in that family members engage in preparation of the land, planting, weeding, and harvesting. Group labor has been common in times of intensive farming where help was offered in carrying out the process of farming.²² This system has been promoting cooperation and strong social relationships within the community.

Other than agriculture, the community is also involved in livestock keeping. Livestock like goats, sheep, and poultry are kept primarily for food, social duties, and sometimes for selling. The livestock acts as an economic backup and are usually used during occasions like marriages and festivals. Hunting and gathering are also economic activities that are common among the community, especially in places where forest resources are still abundant. Hunting provides bush meat, which

supplements the diet of the people and can also be sold for additional income. Similarly, the gathering of forest products such as firewood and medicinal plants supports both household needs and traditional health-care practices.²³

Trading is another important economic activity in Nyanya-Ichogodo. Many members of the community, especially women engage in petty trading involving agricultural produce and locally made goods. They sell in the nearby markets found both within and outside the Bekwarra communities. In the case of the Bekwarra people, their markets run on a five-day cycle (Ugidi, Achanya, Udama, Ugbada, and Uchaga). As far as Nyanya-Ichogodo is concerned, they use the traditional market system. The Ugidi market day is quite important, as it is celebrated in nearby areas such as Abouchiche, Ibiaragidi, Gakem, and Afrike, where the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo participate in trading and socializing.²⁴

The act of trading helps them in the exchange of goods and earning income through their economic connections with the neighboring communities. Recently, some people have taken up different occupations including those of artisans, transporters, and businessmen. These are not as predominant as farming but it is part of gradual economic changes in response to modern influences.²⁵

In summary, the economic activities of the Nyanya-Ichogodo people are predominantly agricultural activities and complemented with other economic activities like animal husbandry, hunting, and trading. The economic activities practiced by the community are directly influenced by the environment and the social structures prevailing in the community.

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CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN NYANYA-ICHOGODO

3.1 Family and Kinship Ties

Family and kinship ties constitute the foundation of social organization in Nyanya-Ichogodo. In all human societies, the family serves as the primary unit through which individuals are socialized, cultural values are transmitted, and social order is maintained. The family is a socially recognized group that forms emotional and economic bonds among its members and performs essential functions such as reproduction, socialization, and support.¹ The broad knowledge on sociological family life described above is clearly illustrated in the family life of Nyanya-Ichogodo.

In Nyanya-Ichogodo, the family structure is predominantly an extended family which goes beyond the nuclear family and includes a larger number of relatives. In the Bekwarra culture, this kind of family is referred to as *Irifen*. An *Irifen* (family) comprises of the husband, wife/wives, children and other relatives.² This type of family is characterized by sharing of roles within the family and ensures that people have a wide number of relatives who are there to assist one another. It is also a patrilineal society whereby descent, succession, inheritance of wealth and family authority is passed from one generation to another through the male lineage. In this type of family, the first born son plays a significant role because he takes over from the family head after he dies. In the family, the younger members are expected to show respect to the elders, who reinforce discipline and hierarchy within the kinship system.

The authority in the family lies in the eldest male who heads the *Irifen*. He makes decisions, solves conflicts, and participates in representation of the family in larger community issues.³ His role, however, is often done after consultations with other elders due to the communal and egalitarian nature of the society.

A number of *Irifen* come together to form another kinship grouping referred to as *Ityang*. *Ityang* consists of people coming from the same lineage or family. In Nyanya-Ichogodo, the ancestry can be traced back to *Agba* who gave birth to different lineages.⁴ The common ancestry makes people feel unified and develops a great sense of identity among them.

Kinship ties in the Nyanya-Ichogodo society have social and economic functions. Land for example is not privately owned but is owned by family or lineage groups. Membership to an *Ityang* or *Irifen* determines one's access to the land. Inheritance in the society also takes into account kinship ties, with emphasis on male succession. Property is mostly transferred in the patrilineal way, because it is believed that men have a duty to preserve the bloodline of the family.⁵ Though women make a big contribution to family affairs and economy, they have little rights regarding inheritance in traditional society.

The family is the first socializing agent through which children absorb traditions, norms and values of the community like respect towards elders, communal living and moral discipline. Children are not only brought up by their parents but also by their elders and other family members. Family is the main unit for cultural transmission and it is obviously seen in Nyanya-Ichogodo where respect towards elders, communal living and moral discipline are taught at an early age.⁶

Marriage is one of the most important factors of kinship solidarity. Marriage is not the union of individuals but it is a relation between two families. This procedure includes payment of bride-price and performing of customs between two families. With marriage, new ties are made which increase the network of kinship relationships in the community. In instances of marital dispute such as adultery and infertility, the family elder steps in to settle the disagreement. This proves that the family serves not only as a social unit but also as an institution of conflict resolution.⁷

Kinship ties provide a system of social support and security. There is an expectation on members of the *Irifen* to help one another in times of sickness, death, or financial hardships. This provides a system of support which ensures that nobody faces hard times alone and strengthens the sense of unity in the community.⁸

Though modernization and Christianity have gained grounds in the society, the structure of kinship in Nyanya-Ichogodo remains fundamentally the same. Some changes have been experienced with time, but the basic principles of helping one another, reverence of elders, and cooperation remain the hallmark of family in the society. Hence, family and kinship ties constitute the very foundation of social organization in Nyanya-Ichogodo.

3.2 Community Organization and Leadership

Community organization and leadership in Nyanya-Ichogodo are organized along the lines of traditional structures, which advocate for participation and responsibility, respect for elders and conformity to cultural norms. Just like any other Bekwarra community, the political structure is segmentary and decentralized. This means that the exercise of power does not lie in one person but is shared by many social units.⁹ It ensures that leadership is participative and that decisions made take into account the collective will of the people.

In any society, leadership is always reflective of the society's structures and values.¹⁰ In this case, the leadership of Nyanya-Ichogodo is participative in nature, with leadership being derived from kinship, age, experience, and consensus within the community and not force or centralized powers. There is a structure in which the lowest level of administration is the *Irifen* (family) while the largest level of administration is the *Udyara* (community).

Community organization starts with the formation of the *Irifen* (family). The smallest form of administration is the *Irifen*, while several *Irifen* form an *Ityang*. Many *Ityang* form the larger community referred to as *Udyara*, which is both the name for the village and the gathering place for the community. This structure allows governance to be collective and representative at all levels.

The central element of the leadership process is *Ikum Udyara*, also known as the Council of Elders. The council consists of well-respected elders representing their own kinship group. The functions of the council include decision-making, dispute-resolution, and maintenance of social order. Age, experience, and wisdom characterize the members of the council, and they are seen as guardians of traditions.¹¹ The process of leadership does not involve absolute power but includes consultation and consensus processes.

Apart from the council of elders, it should be noted that the community also gives importance to the position of the chiefs in the community but only as long as they obey the authority of the council of elders. It demonstrates the existence of checks and balances since there is no one person with absolute power.¹² Leaders are supposed to

act in an honest and respectable manner since their status is associated with the community's trust and acceptance.

The process of decision-making in Nyanya-Ichogodo is highly consultative and participatory. Major things concerning the community are discussed during meetings held at the *Udyara*, where elders, family heads, and leaders of the age grades discuss different issues. After decisions have been made, they are then passed to various *Irifen* and age grades by their respective leaders.¹³ This process ensures that there is openness in governance, and participation from all the members of the community.

An essential part of the organizational structure of the community is the issue of social control and dispensing of justice. It involves the combination of different organizations such as elders, chiefs, age grades, religious organizations and even the belief in the ancestors in bringing about the maintenance of order in the society. Conflicts that arise are first settled within the family setup; and if not settled there, they are brought before the council of elders.¹⁴ The focus is on reconciliation and restoration of peace and harmony.

The age grades act in support of the community organization process. While not making the actual decisions, the age grade leaders attend meetings and assist in the implementation of the decisions. They bridge the gap between the leadership and the community members, and ensure that policies and decisions are carried out effectively.

Religion is another key area through which leaders acquire legitimacy. The existence of Atabuchi (Supreme God) and ancestors spirits ensure obedience because people feel that disobedience to the rules of the community will not only be met with social sanctions but also spiritual sanctions.¹⁵ The existence of religion ensures the legitimacy of leadership.

Moreover, during the period under this study, the traditional leadership in Nyanya-Ichogodo existed alongside the modern political setup that was brought by the democratic processes in Nigeria. While the local government authorities dealt with administrative affairs, the traditional institutions including the *Ikum Udyara* (Council of Elders) were still playing an important role in ensuring law and order and facilitating community development.

To conclude, community organization and leadership in Nyanya-Ichogodo continue to exist due to indigenous institutions such as *Irifen*, *Ityang*, *Udyara*, and *Ikum Udyara*. These institutions ensure community participation, accountability, and social cohesion through the consultation process and respect for the elders. This aids the effective management of the community's affairs and stability.

3.3 Age-Grade System

The age grade system is one of the key social institutions among the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo since it is one of the key components that are used to organize the people, allocate tasks and impose discipline on them. Similar to other social institutions among the Bekwarra, the age grade system is an indigenous and organized way of structuring the society and arranging people according to their ages and the duties that each should be doing to ensure the development of the community. It is also an important tool through which authority is practiced at the grassroots level.

As defined in the context of sociology, age grades consist of individuals of the same age group who go through all the stages of life together while fulfilling social roles and sharing duties. Societies tend to develop structures that can organize individuals in relation to the roles that they are supposed to play in the society, and age groups are some of the most common ways of doing that.¹⁶ In Nyanya-Ichogodo, this is not just a system that serves to classify but also one that acts as a means through which people get involved in the affairs of the community and become part of the larger society.

The age grade institution in Nyanya-Ichogodo is highly associated with the kinship and community framework, which comprises *Irifen* (extended family), *Ityang* (lineage), and the entire *Udyara* (community). An individual becomes part of an age grade within the larger social system. The age grade is normally formed by an interval of two to five years after birth, and individuals progress through various stages of life together with their contemporaries, thereby ensuring unity, solidarity, and identity.¹⁷ This connection also ensures that age grades remain accountable to both family and community authorities.

The community age grade are made up of the youths, middle age members and elders. The table below mentions all the age grades that are still existence till date.

S/N	Age Grade	Age Brackets	Meaning
1.	Enyuma	110+	Not known
2.	Ikibi	105 -110	Not known
3.	Egube	100 - 105	Not known
4.	Iyirufu	95 - 100	Surprise
5.	Ugala-Ashi	90 - 95	Glass
6.	Owaga	85 - 90	Safety pin
7.	Igbagiri	80 - 85	A weighty or big towel used by chiefs
8.	Aburukpa	77 - 80	Not known
9.	Inyamagi	75 - 77	Not known
10.	Iwaya	73 - 75	Telegraph
11.	Obweche	70 - 73	Not known
12.	Ishiko	67 - 70	Tobacco pipe
13.	Ishille	65 - 67	One shilling
14.	Okobo	63 - 65	Penny
15.	Inamba	60 - 63	Number
16.	Iko-Oti	57 - 60	Court
17.	Akachief	54 - 57	Handkerchief
18.	Inyor-Ishishi	50 - 54	Mirror
19.	Iloba	45 - 50	Rubber
20.	Ito	40 - 45	Coin
21.	Ikongo	37 - 40	Congo

22.	Idolar	34 - 37	Dollar
23.	Inaira	30 - 33	Naira
24.	Imikimiki	25 - 30	Sweet
25.	Icar	--	Car

Source: Isaac Ogar, *Record on the Origin of Nyanya-Ichogodo* (unpublished manuscript, 2026).

The age-grade system in Nyanya-Ichogodo is highly organized and reflects the importance of age as a basis for social identity, responsibility, and community participation. Each age grade bears a distinct name, often derived from objects, events, currencies, or popular that were significant during the period in which the members were born. The age grade range from the oldest group, *Enyuma* to younger groups such as *Imikimiki* and *Icar*. Through these age grades, members identify with their peers, perform communal duties, participate in ceremonies, and contribute to the social order of Nyanya-Ichogodo.

Another characteristic feature of the age grade is the contribution made by members of different age grades to community development. Members of each age group have a certain responsibility allocated to them according to their strength, experience, and maturity. The young members of different age grades are responsible for tasks such as clearing bushes, maintaining the roads, collecting water, and participating in communal farming activities. These activities are aimed at developing the community through the maintenance of the public facilities. Therefore, the age grade can be used as an organized labor force for the community.

With aging, the responsibilities of the individual changes from being a labor force to being a leader or supervisor. The old members of the age grade serve as coordinators of communal activities, and they ensure that the younger members perform their responsibilities successfully.¹⁹ This progression is evident of the organization in the age grade system since experience and age are considered. The members of this age grade will be ready for leadership in the future in institutions like the *Ikum Udyara*.

Age grade system plays an important part in law enforcement within Nyanya-Ichogodo too. Age grades act as an unofficial means of enforcement of compliance to community laws and decisions made by *Ikum Udyara* (Council of Elders). For instance, if someone in the community breaks the law or does not engage in communal activities, age grade members can enforce punishment upon the individual who broke the law. Where there is theft and misconduct, age grade may be involved in the process of making sure that the right penalties are enforced. The penalty is meant to help the offender to mend his ways.²⁰

The age system is equally important in terms of socialization and cultural transmission. In each age grade, members learn proper behavior, respect for elders, and participation in cultural practices from their fellow members and from their seniors in age grades. In this manner, age-grade system acts as another agent of socialization along with *Irifen* family as the age grade system helps in passing on cultural values from one generation to another.²¹

Furthermore, the age grade system promotes cohesion among its members through the creation of a feeling of solidarity and collective support. Members of the age grade usually form close relationships with each other and see themselves as a separate social unit. They assist one another in certain events in their lives such as marriages, funerals, and festivals. For example, when a person from an age grade marries, others from the same age grade can contribute resources or help organize the event. Also, when a member of an age grade experiences a loss of someone dear to him or her, other members give their support both emotionally and materially.

Moreover, age grades take part actively in community festivals and ceremonies. They become involved in cultural activities such as dancing, celebrating events, and participating in ritual processes. Not only does this promote cultural heritage, but it also helps strengthen unity within the age grades. Sometimes the activities have religious significance as well.²²

The nature of the age grade system in Nyanya-Ichogodo resembles that of the age grade system in the entire Bekwarra society. According to Joseph Ajour in *Ebekwarra Ye K'irininrine*, age grade associations are critical institutions that are vital for the process of governance, social control, and community development.²³ In

understanding the nature of this general practice in relation to Nyanya-Ichogodo, it is evident that the age grade system is not just a mere form of social grouping but an institution of governance and discipline.

Nevertheless, just like other traditional institutions, there have been some changes witnessed in the age grade system at the time of the research owing to modernity, formal education, and religion. For instance, increased enrollment in schools as well as mobility in search of jobs have made it difficult for the youth to participate in communal works. Moreover, the impact of Christianity has brought about change in some of the traditional ways that were performed during the age grade activities particularly on ritual grounds.

Moreover, it should be stated that while the age-grade system is mostly noticeable among males, females are involved in analogous groups too, though playing different parts. The women's group mainly organizes markets, takes care of children, and engages in various rituals. It demonstrates the inclusiveness of the social organization in Nyanya-Ichogodo when people of both genders play complementary roles in community life.

In addition, the age-grade system acts as a school for leadership. Many people, who are going to become leaders in the community, gain some practical experience by participating actively in the age-grade activities. Organizing and conducting the age-grade activities help them get prepared for future leadership functions in the Udyara and other leadership organizations.²⁵

In summation, age grades are important institutions within Nyanya-Ichogodo, which are essential in the process of social organization, community development, and social continuity. Age grades help people take an active part in the community life by assigning definite roles and duties. They foster discipline, unity, and collaboration, acting as a way of socialization, social control, and leadership training. Despite the presence of social transformation, age grades have become a dynamic element of life in Nyanya-Ichogodo society.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES OF NYANYA-ICHOGODO

4.1 Marriage Institutions and Practices

One of the most important socio-cultural institutions in Nyanya-Ichogodo is marriage. It forms the basis of the institution of the family, and plays a major role in ensuring social stability, cultural continuity and community relations. In the society, marriage is not only an arrangement between a husband and wife. Rather, marriage is viewed as an arrangement between families and clans. Through marriage, social relationships become strong, family relationships get widened and the society continues to develop through marriage.¹

According to Mr. Christopher Achine, marriage is highly valued because a man can neither survive alone nor be able to establish his home and raise his children without a wife's help. Marriage becomes very important in ensuring the continuity of the family and survival of the lineage. Marriage is used as a socially approved means of reproduction, raising children and transferring cultural values from one generation to the other.

The customary practice of marriage in Nyanya-Ichogodo has certain procedures that have to be followed before marriage becomes acceptable in the community. The first step in this practice involves the official expression of interest on behalf of the would-be husband. The man makes an offer to the family of the woman by offering her father three kola nuts and a jar of palm wine. This is an official way of declaring the intention to marry their daughter. At this point, there is a five-day waiting period. When the woman consents to marry him, the man and his family can go ahead and arrange for the marriage ceremony.²

Families of the bride and the groom play significant roles in the process of marriage. Marriage is seen as the joint effort of the whole family instead of being the business of the couple alone. Family members give consultations, prayers, and help in arranging things for the marriage. The cooperation of the two families goes a long way in making sure that the marriage takes place successfully.

Payment of bride price is one of the most significant parts of the traditional marriage rites in Nyanya-Ichogodo community. The payment is seen as the acceptance of the

marriage and is a sign of dedication from the groom and his kin. Information gathered from field research reveals that the father of the bride receives the bride price. Some of the items given include assorted drinks, fourteen kola nut seeds, foods, meat, and others as required by the bride's kin. Presentation of these items is seen as the fulfillment of crucial parts of the marriage and as an opportunity to cement the bond between both parties.³

Traditional marriages are always marked by some cultural practices. In these events, dancers from the community perform before the guests as a way of entertaining them. Gifts are also given to the bride and the groom from friends, relatives, and well-wishers as a way of helping them start up their new life together. The ceremony is not only an occasion to celebrate marriage, but also an occasion of socializing and community unity.

Marriage in Nyanya-Ichogodo imposes responsibilities on both husbands and wives. The couple is expected to live together peacefully and harmoniously while fulfilling their obligations to one another and their families. Childbearing is regarded as one of the important objectives of marriage because it ensures the continuation of the family lineage. Married couples are also expected to support their aged parents and contribute to the welfare of both their immediate and extended families.

The Marriage Institutions also serves as an important mechanism for strengthening social relationships within the community. Through marriage, families become connected and cooperate in various social and developmental activities. Married families contribute to community development projects such as road construction, clearing of paths, provision of assistance to community leaders, and participation in communal activities. In this way, marriage contributes to the promotion of communal and collective responsibility.⁴

Conflict resolution within marriage is largely regarded as a family matter in Nyanya-Ichogodo. Minor disagreements between husband and wife are expected to be settled privately within the household. However, when conflicts become serious or difficult to resolve, elders from the family lineage (Ityang) may intervene. These practices aim to foster mediation between conflicting parties, reconcile them, and bring peace in the

family. The above practices illustrate the significance of the family and lineage system in ensuring social stability.

Even though the marriage institution is supposed to be lasting, divorce is acknowledged in cases of infertility, adultery, and theft. The husband would seek the refund of the bride price in case any of these occurs. The bride's family must comply immediately. This practice still holds regardless of whether there were children born out of the marriage. If the husband does not request the refund of the bride price, it is not obligatory for the family to give it back.⁵

Polygamy was another vital element of the marriage system in Nyanya-Ichogodo before the widespread influence of Christianity. Most of the men in this society had several wives. The reason behind polygamy in the society was the fact that it was predominantly agricultural. The farming practices were the principal occupations of the people, and hence big families ensured sufficient labour in farming. Those men who engaged in polygamous relationships were required to acquire plots of land for their wives. Through farming, they would earn enough money to meet the needs of their wives and offspring, while at the same time ensuring harmony in the family. The influence of Christianity and modernization saw the changing of marriage practices in Nyanya-Ichogodo. Christians believe in monogamy and discourage polygamy. As a result, there has been a trend in which people choose to marry once and combine both traditional marriage practices and church weddings. However, traditional marriage requirements continue to be of great importance.⁶

Notwithstanding the influence of Christianity, some of the traditional practices surrounding marriage have remained the same. Formal proposal of marriage and payment of dowry continue to remain part of the marriage rituals in the community. Traditional marriage practices must be fulfilled by the man, irrespective of whether he intends to get married in a church or not. Where there are some of the traditional items that conflict with religious beliefs, they can be replaced with money.

The institution of Marriage is a key element in the socio-cultural structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo. It supports family formation, social stability, cultural survival, and cooperation. The practice of marriage through processes like bride price, family involvement, dispute settlement, and bringing up children contributes to the

strengthening of social ties among the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo. Despite the changes that occurred due to Christianity and modernity during the period being studied, the institution was still significant and one of the major foundations of social life in Nyanya-Ichogodo.

4.2 Traditional Beliefs and Religious Practices

Religious beliefs and practices were another crucial aspect of the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo. Prior to the dominance of Christian beliefs in the region, the community adhered to indigenous religious beliefs which informed their views about life, morality, agriculture, leadership and social relationships. Indigenous beliefs play an important role in the regulation of behaviour, creation of social order and strengthening of social unity. Religion, therefore, was inseparable from daily life of the community and was a constituent part of its social and cultural structure.

Similar to other Bekwarra tribes, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo had an indigenous belief that *Atabuchi* was the supreme God and the Creator of the universe. He was the highest spiritual power whose power superseded human powers and the power of nature. Although the people believed that *Atabuchi* was the source of life and all the good things in it, they also believed that there was a means of communication between humans and the spiritual world through their ancestors and other spiritual beings.⁷

One of the important things about traditional religion among the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo was the existence of ancestral spirits. Ancestral spirits were seen as spirits of dead members of the *Irifen* (family) and *Ityang* (lineage) who had led very honourable lives and maintained a spiritual connection with their children after death. They looked after the well being of the family, good health, and general prosperity. This means that there was a lot of respect and reverence for the ancestors among the community.⁸

The impact of beliefs in ancestors was greatly felt in farming activities which provided the economic base of Nyanya-Ichogodo. It was more than just economic activities; it was a process where some spiritual powers were involved. Members of the community believed that good harvest could only be achieved through hard work

and blessings from the gods and the ancestors. Therefore, different religious ceremonies were conducted..

A good illustration of this kind of belief was a tradition called *Ebefutang*. Based on data collected through fieldwork conducted by the researcher, *Ebefutang* was a traditional ceremony conducted before the consumption of yam. The people believe that their ancestors deserve acknowledgement for bringing about prosperity in the farming season. As such, a portion of the yam would be first offered to the shrines before the members of the community consume the new yam. This is how the people acknowledge the ancestors' contributions and make prayers to ensure continued prosperity in the next farming season. Hence, *Ebefutang* had a religious as well as a social dimension, reenacting communal values and for the ancient cultures.⁹

Also, traditional religious beliefs acknowledged the presence of spiritual forces which might have a bearing on people's lives. Some actions would bring blessings to an individual, family, or community, while there were other actions that would bring ill-fortune to people. People needed to observe certain practices and respect the elderly members of the community as well as follow the laid down rules and regulations within the community. In this way, religion played the role of being an effective tool of social control because it promoted positive behavior and discouraged negative behavior.

There was an intimate connection between religious institutions and leadership. The elders who worked within the *Ikum Udyara* were not only seen as political leaders but also as keepers of tradition and morality. Besides, there were other people including those who took care of shrines who were also important in helping preserve the religious traditions. Through their influence, the traditional religion contributed to the maintenance of peace and justice in the society.

Besides the above, religious beliefs were associated with different phases in the lives of individuals in the society. For instance, marriage in the society was more than just a union between two people; it also included blessings from both the living family and the ancestors. In the same way, death was associated with transition from the physical world into the spiritual world. Religion thus became firmly integrated into the social institutions of society.¹⁰

The introduction of Christianity into Nyanya-Ichogodo led to the transformation of the religious life of its inhabitants. As a result of missionary activities and increased contact with the outer world, some people embraced the ideas of Christianity. The churches became centers of worship and activities in this area. Christian teaching taught people that there is only one God, who needs to be worshipped; it rejected various traditions connected with shrines and worshipping ancestors.

The effect of the process on religion is clearly seen in the gradual disappearance of *Ebefutang* and the rest of the rites. As Mr. Samuel Odey noted, people have started to offer less sacrifices to their ancestors and more gratitude to God. It means that the spread of Christianity did not lead to the disappearance of the traditional culture but to the transformation of the meanings of certain rituals.

The most striking illustration of the transformation of rituals is the festival called *Ipem Ihihe* or New Yam Festival. Earlier, the ritual was strictly connected with *Ebefutang* and offering the first yams to ancestors. However, due to Christianity, the practice has transformed. Now, people do not take their produce to the shrines but to the churches to give. Although the cultural festival was significant, the religious aspect of this festival transformed from paying reverence to ancestors to worshipping Christ.¹¹

In spite of the growth of Christianity as at 1999 to 2006, a lot of the traditional values were persevered in the society. Respect for the elderly, communal cooperation, and the value of family and clan relations were some of the elements that were preserved. While some religious practices either disappeared or changed, the social values associated with them continued to have an impact on the behavior of the community members.

The coexistence of the traditional religions and Christianity gave a particular religious atmosphere to Nyanya-Ichogodo in the period being studied. A lot of people embraced Christianity, but at the same time respected some elements of their culture. In this way, there was preservation of cultural heritage through the interaction of both the old and the new beliefs.

Moreover, religious organizations played an important role in the development of the community. Churches offered the chance for joint worship, teaching on morals, and

cooperation among the community members. Through religious activities, the members of various *Irifen*, *Ityang*, age grade and other social groupings were able to come together.¹²

Traditional beliefs and religious practices were an integral part of the socio-cultural setup of Nyanya-Ichogodo. People practiced belief in *Atabuchi*, ancestor reverence, and practices like *Ebefutang* over generations and built a religion around them. Even though Christianity brought about many changes in the period being discussed, the people still relied on the traditional values in guiding social conduct. The change from *Ebefutang* to *Ipem Ihihe* clearly shows how the people have managed to change their culture in light of their new religion.

4.3 Cultural Festivals and Ceremonies

Cultural festivals and ceremonies form an essential element in the socio-cultural structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo. These events serve as avenues where people interact culturally, give thanks, entertain themselves, and preserve their culture. People celebrate various cultural events through festivals and ceremonies, maintain social relations and preserve cultural practices from one generation to another. In the duration of this study, cultural festivals maintained their significance in the lives of people in this community despite the rising significance of Christianity and modernization.

Amongst the numerous cultural festivities held in Nyanya-Ichogodo, the most significant of all is *Ipem Ihihe* or the New Yam festival. This is celebrated after the successful harvest of new yam, which is amongst the most prized crops amongst the Bekwarra people. Traditionally, the cultivation of yam has been taken to be both a source of staple food crops as well as a reflection of hard work, prosperity and agricultural success. As a result of that, the harvest of new yam is considered as a significant event that should be celebrated by the entire community.

The historical background of the New Yam Festival relates to traditional religions beliefs. Prior to the emergence of Christianity, the people performed *Ebefutang*, which is the presentation of part of the yam harvest to the ancestors as a token of respect and appreciation. The people believed that the ancestors played a crucial role in ensuring that agriculture prospered and that they needed to be appreciated for

blessing them. No one was allowed to consume the yam until the ritual process took place.

However, the spread of Christianity led to major changes in how the festival was celebrated. As stated by Mr. Samuel Odey, *Ebefutang* was replaced by the Christian thanksgiving ceremony. People stopped bringing their yam harvest to shrines and started bringing their harvest to churches to give thanks to God for a fruitful farming season. Therefore, the event transformed into what is nowadays called *Ipem Ihihe* but maintained its cultural relevance as a harvest festival.¹⁴

The celebration of *Ipem Ihihe* festival occurs normally on the first Saturday of September. On this particular day, people will cook different types of dishes from yam and other farm products. Friends and relations are invited to join in the fun of the festival. People will visit one another and share in the food, drinks, and other friendly activities. Relations in an extended family come together to eat and celebrate together. These practices foster unity among family members.

Another main purpose that *Ipem Ihihe* festival serves is that of fostering social harmony among people. During the celebration of the festival, family members residing elsewhere will come back home and meet their family members. Friends who may not have met for a long time will meet during the celebrations. Thus, the festival plays an important role in strengthening interpersonal relationships and communal harmony.

One other cultural festival celebrated in Nyanya-Ichogodo is Cassava Harvest Festival. Cassava is among the main crops grown in the area and acts as an important source of food and income for many families. This festival acts as a good way for the farmers to recognize the fruits of their labor as well as appreciate for the good harvest. It may not get as much recognition as *Ipem Ihihe*, but it is still an important part of the agricultural culture of the community.

In addition to harvest festivals, there is also 'Nyanya Day Celebration' which is an annual festival for all the communities forming the Nyanya community. This festival acts as a forum for promoting unity, culture, and development within the community. During the festival, members of various villages meet to celebrate their culture and discuss issues affecting the development of the community.

The organization of 'Nyanya day' involves active participation from different segments of society. According to Mr. Samuel Odey, various committees are established to coordinate activities associated with the celebration. Membership of these committees cuts across different *Irifen* (families), *Ityang* (lineages), and age grades. This inclusive arrangement ensures that all sections of the community are represented and actively involved in the planning and execution of the event.¹⁵

Age grades play particularly important roles during cultural festivals and ceremonies. Members of different age grades assist in organizing activities, maintaining order, providing labour, and ensuring the successful execution of community programme. Their participation reflects the importance of age-grade institutions within the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo. Through their involvement, younger members of the community also learn important cultural values and traditions.¹⁶

Cultural festivals are often accompanied by traditional music, dancing, storytelling, and other forms of entertainment. These activities provide opportunities for the display of cultural talents and artistic expressions. Traditional songs and dances serve not only as sources of entertainment but also as vehicles for transmitting historical knowledge, moral lessons, and communal values to younger generations.¹⁷

Festivals also contribute to the preservation of cultural identity. In a period characterized by increasing modernization and external influences, cultural celebrations provide opportunities of cultural identity. In a period characterized by increasing modernization and external influences, cultural celebrations provide opportunities for community members to reconnect with their heritage. The cultural festivals serve as a reminder of the common history, customs, and values of the people while making them feel part of a community.

Apart from festivals, different ceremonies are associated with different significant occasions that take place in people's and families' lives. Ceremonies of marriage, naming children, taking titles, and burying dead relatives have been and continue to remain an integral part of the life of the community. In these ceremonies, family members, elders, age grades, and community members participate.

Moreover, cultural festivals and ceremonies have contributed greatly to economic activities of the community. During festivals, traders, food sellers, transport service

providers, and craftsmen benefit economically. People who visit the community during festivals also participate in the economic activity of the community. Thus, cultural festivals bring social and economic gains.¹⁸

Although Christianity and modernization influenced the community of Nyanya-Ichogodo, the cultural festivals continued to remain a significant part of life in Nyanya-Ichogodo. Despite some aspects of the traditional religion being transformed or done away with, the social and cultural aspects of the festivals kept on being retained. This shows how well the people managed to adapt their culture in the changing times.

Culture Festivals and Ceremonies play a critical role in the socio-cultural structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo. Cultural Festivals such as *Ipem Ihihe* Festival, Cassava Harvesting Festival, and Nyanya Day have played an essential role in enhancing unity, protecting the culture, fostering cooperation, and building social relations. Through cultural festivals and ceremonies, the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo remain close to their culture despite experiencing changes in religion and society. Therefore, cultural practices have remained an essential aspect of Nyanya-Ichogodo community during the research period.

4.4 Functions of Socio-Cultural Institutions

The socio-cultural institutions serve very vital roles in contributing to the sustainability, growth, and continuity of life in Nyanya-Ichogodo. Out of these institutions are the Age Grade Institution and Marriage Institution which play a essential role in the social structure of the people. They help to maintain social order, promote development, preserve cultural values, and strengthen relationships among members of society. Between 1999 and 2006, these institutions continued to play significant roles in the daily lives of the people despite the growing influence of modernization and Christianity.

One of the major functions of the Age Grade Institution is the promotion of community development. Age grades serve as important agents of communal progress by mobilizing both financial and human resources for development projects. According to information obtained during fieldwork, members of various age grades contribute money whenever the community undertakes projects such as the

construction of schools, churches, roads, and health facilities. Younger members often provide the labour needed for the the execution of these projects. The age grades also undertake communal tasks such as road clearing and environmental sanitation. In addition, many age grades have constructed their own meeting halls which serve as centers for meetings and social activities. Others of such buildings are leased out for business purposes in order to raise income for both the Age Grade activities and community development projects.

The Age Grade system not only ensures cooperative relationships between the age grades but also unites community members in a spirit of social cooperation and social responsibility. Social cooperation between members is ensured through meetings and collective activities where the need for cooperation for the general good is taught. Projects that are done by members of the community are normally assigned to age grades where members of various age grades perform certain roles. Age grades thus provide avenues through which the communal values of cooperation and assistance are expressed and perpetuated.¹⁹

Age Grades help in ensuring social order within the community. The Age Grade institution runs according to certain codes and regulations. People who fail to follow these codes are normally punished according to the law. Members who fight, quarrel, or engage in any other misconduct during meetings are normally punished in order to discourage such behavior. Age grades can thus act as tools of social control in ensuring responsible behavior and reverence of values held in the community. Age grades are also involved in decision making in the community since age grade leaders participate in decision making in meetings organized between the elders and other community leaders and disseminate those decisions to their group members.

Furthermore, the institution of Age Grades carries out economic roles. Members of the group are seen to come up with collective ways of contributing money that they use in various ways. Through field study, it is found that some age grades have local saving programs where members of the groups save money on regular basis. These contributions are used to lend money to members of the group, invest or distribute them back to contributors at the end of the year.²⁰

The Marriage Institution is another socio-cultural institution in Nyanya-Ichogodo. One of the functions of marriage institution is the creation of families and perpetuation of society. Through marriage, men and women come together to form families and procreate so as to keep the family line alive. Marriage is greatly esteemed since through marriage, a man and a woman can be able to establish a home and take part in the perpetuation of their family line. Marriage helps in creating new generations who become part of the society's social organization.

In addition, the institution of marriage acts as a way of cementing relationships among Irifens (families) and Ityangs (lineages). In Nyanya-Ichogodo, marriage is not seen as just a connection between two people but rather an alliance between two families. Families of both the bride and groom are actively involved in making marriage plans for the couple by giving them advice, prayer and helping them. Through these relationship, friendships, cooperation and assistance are formed in order to foster social cohesion and solidarity in the society.²¹

A key role played by the institution of Marriage is that of culture transfer. The family which is created by marriage acts as the first place where children get to learn about the customs, beliefs, language and moral principles of the society. Parents and older generations have an integral part to play in instructing future generations about proper behavior and values of Nyanya-Ichogodo.²² This way, marriage serves the purpose of maintaining cultural identity and tradition.

Moreover, marriage plays significant economic and developmental roles in the life of Bekwarra society. In particular, husband and wife engage in cooperative endeavors related to farming, bringing up children, managing household affairs, and other productive pursuits. Being engaged primarily in farming, the labor of families greatly contributes to the process of agriculture and well-being of the households. Married families are actively involved in development work in the community like maintenance of roads, opening up paths leading to streams, participating in joint projects, and general development of the community.

In addition, marriage has significance in maintaining social order and setting the rules regarding the relations of men and women, as well as their roles in the family. According to the historical information about Bekwarra, adultery was considered as

an offense in the community. If a man committed adultery with someone else's wife, he had to pay a fine, which would help to buy some sacrifices to pacify *Ndem*, the god of social morals and marriage. In the same manner, among the people of Nyanya-Ichogodo, it is expected that the husband and wife should live harmoniously, care for their children and attend to their aging parents. The Stability of the family and community is thus ensured through such regulations by the Marriage Institution.²³

The Age Grade Institution and the Marriage Institution were some of the most crucial socio-cultural institutions in Nyanya-Ichogodo in the period that this research work focuses on. These two institutions played roles which facilitated social development, social cohesion, economic cooperation, marriage, cultural preservation, and community solidarity. From their different activities, these institutions have made substantial contributions towards the development of the community.

4.5 Impact of Modernization on Socio-Cultural Life

The period between 1999 and 2006 witnessed significant changes in Nyanya-Ichogodo as a result of modernization. Factors such as Christianity, formal education, improved communication, urbanization, migration, and increased interaction with other societies influenced various aspects of the community's socio-cultural life. While many traditional institutions continued to exist, they experienced changes in their structure, functions, and methods of operation. Modernization therefore brought both opportunities and challenge to the socio-cultural organization of the people.

One of the major impacts of modernization is the change experienced in the traditional religious practices and beliefs. Unlike the present time where there is an influence of Christianity in the region, traditionally, the community had several indigenous religions and religious practices such as *Ebefutang* which involves offering of sacrifices to the ancestors before eating the yams. However, the rise of Christianity caused several changes in these practices according to Mr. Samuel Odey. Many people moved away from practicing rituals at shrines and embraced Christian form of worship. Therefore, the traditional practice of harvest became *Ipem Ihihe* involving offering of thanksgiving to God in the church rather than the shrine.²⁴ This clearly shows how Christianity has affected the community's religious practices.

Another aspect that underwent changes due to modernization is the functioning of the Age Grade Institution. Previously, age-grade meetings used to take place at public places like the village squares and open areas or underneath the trees within the community. But today, age-grades are building their own meeting halls where meetings can be conducted along with social gatherings. Some halls have even been converted into commercial places for earning money for age-grade activities.

Despite these changes, the Age Grade Institutions continued to play an important role in community development and social organization. Age grades remained active in communal projects, fundraising activities, and decision-making processes. However, some challenges like financial difficulties and lack of cooperation among some members affected the effectiveness of certain age grades.²⁵ Economic hardship made it difficult for some individuals to contribute financially to community projects, while differences in opinion occasionally reduced participation age-grade activities.

The Marriage Institutions equally experienced changes as a result of modernization. Christianity and formal education influenced marriage practices by introducing church weddings and new approaches to family life. Christianity discourage the practice of marrying more than one wife and encouraged monogamous marriage. As a result, many people increasingly embraced the Christian ideal of one man and one wife. While traditional marriage rites and bride-price payments continued to exist, many couples combined customary marriage with Christian wedding ceremonies. Formal education contributed to changes in marriage patterns, as some individuals delayed marriage in order to complete their studies or secure employment before starting a family. Despite these changes, important traditional practices such as seeking a woman's hand in marriage, family involvement in marriage arrangements, and the payment of bride price remained widely observed within the community.²⁶

Formal education also contributed to changes in socio-cultural life. The expansion of educational opportunities exposed many members of the community to new ideas, lifestyles, and social values. Educated people came into contact with people of various cultures, thus accepting many aspects of modern living. Education fostered critical thinking and offered new ways of looking at things such as leadership, religion, marriage, and development of the community. Despite this, educated people played a role in making some traditions not fully understood by the youth.²⁷

Migration and increased contacts with the urban areas also affected the socio-cultural life of Nyanya-Ichogodo. Youth in the area traveled to cities and towns in order to pursue education and jobs. This contact led to the introduction of other cultural practices that were adopted by the people. Despite this helping in social and economic development of the people, it reduced participation in some traditional practices especially by young people.

There was an impact of modernization on festivals and ceremonies that existed in the area. Although practices such as '*Ipem Ihihe*' and 'Nyanya Day' festivals were celebrated in the area, some traditional elements such as religion associated with these festivals were lost or changed. Festivals now placed more importance on culture, social relations, and gratitude rather than spiritual practices.²⁸ However, these festivals continued to be significant platforms through which unity was promoted and the cultural heritage of the people preserved.

However, it should be mentioned that modernization did not entirely erode the socio-cultural institutions in Nyanya-Ichogodo, as some of them managed to change while retaining their primary function. The Age Grade Institution retained its importance in terms of development and social integration, and the Marriage Institution remained a vital element in forming the family and ensuring social stability. Though some traditions were affected by the influence of Christianity, field work showed that the requirements of traditional marriages were maintained. Even in case when Christian marriage was held, the groom was expected to go through all necessary procedures for his marriage to be recognized by his family. Cultural festivals and leadership structure also managed to keep their significance despite changes in some elements. This proves the possibility of adaptation of the socio-cultural institutions of Nyanya-Ichogodo to modernization and preservation of their cultural heritage.

Modernization significantly affected the socio-cultural life of Nyanya-Ichogodo between 1999 and 2006. Christianity, education, migration and economic transformations affected the beliefs, marriage, age-grade activities and cultural festivals of the community. However, the major socio-cultural institutions of the community proved to be rather resilient and adaptable. Rather Than disappearing completely, they adjusted to new realities while continuing to perform important functions within the social organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

The study investigated the socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo community in Bekwarra local government area of Cross River state from 1999 to 2006. The study was done because there is not much documented information to be found about the history of the community and its socio-cultural institutions. Much of the knowledge has been kept alive through oral history, and a proper documentation of the cultural heritage of the people is needed to maintain this heritage and to enrich the existing scholarship on Bekwarra history.

The study started with the geographical location and history of Nyanya-Ichogodo. It declared that the community belongs to the *Oti* clan of the Bekwarra and had its origin from *Agba* the ancestral founder of the Bekwarra. The research elucidated the migration, settlement pattern and development of the community through oral tradition and available historical materials. It also revealed that agriculture, a favourable climate, and strategic location fostered cultivation, permanent settlement and the development of a robust social structure.

The traditional system of political and economic organization of the community was also a subject of research. It discovered that leadership was rooted in indigenous institutions led by an Elder known as the Chief and assisted by Council of Elders (*Ikum Udyara*). Leadership was largely consultative, important decisions were made through collective discussion rather than by a single person. The research also indicated that agricultural activities continued to be the primary livelihood of the people and other economic activities in the region such as trading, hunting, animal rearing were also a source of livelihood. These economic activities helped build cooperation among the community members and helped the community to survive.

The major social institutions which influenced life in Nyanya-Ichogodo were also explored. It revealed that the family and kinship system provided the basis of social organization. The extended family (*Irifen*) and the lineage groups (*Ityang*) fostered unity, mutual assistance, inheritance, conflict negotiation and the handing down of

cultural values from one generation to another. The family system continued to be characterized by respect for elders, communal living and collective responsibility.

One other institution studied was the age-grade system. The findings of the research have been very significant, as age grades served a significant role within the community socially, politically and developmentally. They provided teamwork for the community, kept up roads and public places, helped to implement community decisions, ensured discipline of community members, and took part in cultural activities. The age-grade system also fostered a sense of responsibility, cooperation and engagement in community affairs among the youth, preparing them to become leaders in their communities.

The study also dealt with the institution of marriage and found that marriage was seen as a relationship between two people. It was a familial and familial bond which fostered social stability and enhanced the bonds of community. The customary elements of traditional marriage were the inclusion of the family, the payment of bride price, the rites and the celebration of the community. Marriage also had important roles of procreation, child rearing, inheritance and perpetuation of the family line. While Christianity brought some changes, such as the growing acceptance of monogamous marriage, during the period studied, there were many traditions of marriage which remained.

The traditional religious beliefs and culture of Nyanya-Ichogodo was also examined. It discovered that *Atabuchi* was regarded as the Supreme God by the people and also ancestors were respected in the community. Religious convictions had an impact on agriculture, political organization, ethos and social interactions. Communal solidarity was strengthened and thanks were given for good harvests through cultural activities like *Ebefutang* and 'New Yam Festival'. But the process of Christianization slowly replaced many of the traditional religious practices, and at the same time enshrined many important cultural values, such as the observance of thanksgiving instead of shrine worship and the offering of ancestral meals instead of offerings.

Furthermore, the study observed that the period between 1999 and 2006 witnessed important social changes in the community. The traditional institutions were brought under the influence of Christianity, formal education, modernization, urbanization,

democratic governance, and communication, which had noticeable impact on the traditional institutions. A few indigenous practices were reduced, others modified to the new social situation. Yet the essential characteristics of respecting elders, sharing resources with the community, family cohesion, and cultural identity were mostly sustained within the community.

In general, the study has revealed that the socio-cultural structure of Nyanya-Ichogodo is based on very strong indigenous structures which gave them socio-political organization, leadership, cultural continuity and community development for many generations. Despite the influence of external factors, these institutions still have a lot of significance in maintaining the identity and unity of the people.

5.2 Conclusion

The socio-cultural organization of Nyanya-Ichogodo is found to be an important pillar for the social, political, economic and cultural life of the community. Traditional institutions like the family, kinship system, age grades, marriage institution, traditional leadership and religious institutions have historically been effective mechanisms for facilitating the maintenance of peace, promoting cooperation, conflict resolution and preservation of cultural identity of the people.

The results indicate that these institutions were not only cultural practices but also systems that were instrumental in organizing leadership, regulating behaviour, encouraging communal labour, reinforcing family relations and passing on indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next. The fact that these institutions have survived is proof of the ability of the indigenous institutions to adapt to external influences

In addition, the research concludes that the factors of modernization, Christianity, formal education, urbanization and democracy have affected various aspects of the traditional way of life in Nyanya-Ichogodo. There are certain practices that have become extinct, while there are certain practices that have been adapted to modern times. However, such changes are not ones that have driven out the traditional socio-cultural framework of the community. Instead, many of the indigenous institutions have adapted to the modern day while keeping their core roles and cultural meaning.

This study has contributed to the preservation of the history and cultural heritage of a community that is relatively under-researched, socio-culturally organized into the Nyanya-Ichogodo community. It has also proven to be a source of valuable information for students, researchers, historians and future scholars who would want to study the history of Bekwarra, its indigenous institutions and African socio-cultural studies.

Overall, the study concludes that maintaining traditional institutions in tandem with modern development is significant for the continuity of community identity, social cohesion and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of Nyanya-Ichogodo to the future generations. It is hoped that this work will be an asset to the community in the future for research purposes and for understanding the community's history and socio-cultural organization.

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3	Adida, Efenji	Nyanya-Ichogodo	68	Elder	Farmer	26/12/2025
4	Odey, Samuel	Nyanya-Ichogodo	64	Elder	Teacher and Farmer	07/01/2026
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