The Impact of Oil Production on Land Tenure System in Egi Kingdom

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Abstract

The study examined the effects of oil production on land tenure systems in Egi Kingdom of Rivers State. Land which houses natural resources, is a source of settlement, livelihood and development of Egi Kingdom.Oil production in Egi Kingdom which has contributed immensely to employment opportunities, infrastructural development, development and industrialization in Nigeria, has become an albatross to the Egi people. The work also investigated how oil extraction has reshaped traditional land ownership and usage patterns, leading to conflicts, displacement, and inequality. The study maximized the use of primary and secondary data to examine the impact of oil production to Egi Kingdom. The study revealed that oil production has led to the concentration of land ownership among a few individuals and companies, disrupted traditional farming and livelihood practices, created negative health impact and environmental degradation which has destroyed biodiversity, acquatic organisms and water bodies. It has exacerbated existing social and economic inequalities, which has resulted to conflicts and aggressive dispositions against the oil companies and their cronies. The study contributes to our understanding of the complex relationships between oil production, land tenure, and social inequality in the context of Nigeria's oil-rich regions. It highlights the need for more equitable and sustainable management of natural resources, prioritizing the rights and interests of local communities.

Keywords: land tenure, oil production, Egi Kingdom, Nigeria, environmental impact, social inequality etc.

Introduction

In Egi Kingdom, the land tenure and production systems generally revolved around communalism before the advent of colonialism in the 15th century[1]. This was a socio-communal system in Egi society in which relationships are governed by family and kindred ties traced predominantly to the father's linage. However, it is important to note that while Egi kingdom give due respect to the mother's linage, the tradition and culture of the area favoures inheritance from the father's linage (i.e. patrilineal). In Egi kingdom, land is a major means of the production system and land is communally owned either by the family, village or the clan. Though the eldest male adult in Egi serves as the head of the family, village, or clan, he equally doubled as the chief custodian of the land and reserves the traditional responsibility to preserve and maintain the properties vested in the land on behalf of his kinsmen. It is equally significant to note that the labour for agricultural activities on the land such as farming, hunting, and fishing generally revolves around members of the family, village, or clan because communal property ownership is practiced in Egi society. For example, any member of the family, village, or clan who have a piece of work to be done such as clearing of farmland, building of hut, and or planting of food crops, could merely solicit the assistance of other members of the family, village, or clan to get the works done as a practice derived from their land tenure institution.

As a result, land tenure in the area is generally governed by institution of inherited rules that regulates behaviours of how property rights to land and its derivable are to be allocated within the society especially, how access to the right to their usages are granted, controlled, and transferred, as well as, how its associated responsibilities and restraints are discharged. In other words, land tenure systems in any given society determines who, can use what resources (on or beneath the land), for how long, and under what conditions. Therefore, according to Muojama, land tenure can be defined as the relationship (whether legal or customary),

[1] G.C. Agi, Total Life for the Egi Man: Issues Dividing our Clan. Port Harcourt: *Journal of African Law and Business,* Vol 1, No.1, (2009), 24-44.

among people, between individuals or groups, with respect to land are determined[2]. Thus in the context of this study, land, land tenure, or production systems are used among others to include any other natural resources such as water, trees and crude oil that are found in or on the land. Indeed, land tenure is an important aspect of social, political and economic structures of a society. It is a multi-dimensional concept that brings into play the social, technical, economic, institutional, legal and or political aspects of any society. Though, these features of land tenure are often ignored in contemporary discuss, but they are usually taken into account by traditional societies such as Egi society. The relationship created by land tenure institution in Egi society is well defined and equally enforceable in a formal court of law, or through customary structures in its communities. Relatively, the structures of land tenure institution may be poorly organized with ambiguities thereby opening them up to exploitation, but alternatively, they constitute a web of intersecting interests including

1. Overriding interests, such as the sovereign power exercised by the government of a community to allocate or reallocate land through expropriation etc.
2. Overlapping interests, such as the activities of several parties being allocated different rights to a parcel of land. For example, one party may have the right to lease, while another party may have a right of way over the same parcel of land.
3. Complementary interests, such as different parties sharing the same interest in the same parcel of land, for example, when members of a community share common rights to farm land etc.
4. Competing interests, such as different parties contesting one interest in the same parcel of land. For example, when two parties independently lay claim to the exclusive rights to the use of a parcel of agricultural land. Note, there could be land disputes arises from competing claims to the use of a particular land space.

Ogbogbo contends that, land tenure is often categorized as private, commercial, open access, and state property rights, but stressed that in practice, other forms of

[2] O.G. Muojama. African Political Philosophy, Socialism, Democracy, and Party System. In C.B.N. Ogbogbo (ed.) Perspective in African History. Ibadan: BookWright Publishers, 2011, 100

land holdings may be found within a given society[3]. For example, in Egi society, what obtain in their institution of land tenure system is the private residential and agricultural land holdings, where customary tenure typically includes communal rights to pastures, and exclusive private rights to agriculture and private residential parcels. In Egi ethnic nationality, land is communal, and its production systems are often characterized with collectivism and cooperation, while its distribution of agricultural activities, products and produce, such as farming, hunting, and fishing are done on the basis of kinship ties, marriage and or friendship relationships. Equally, any disaster that affects any one community or an individual, are seen as a visitation on the entire members of the communities, as the rest communities will rally around to assist the affected community or individual.

The Egi communities are inter-related by censinguinity, and also bonded by the ties of kinship, family, and marriage relationships etc. This is why in Egi ethnicity, any community in distress could be readily assisted by its sister communities, families or clan members. As well any community or persons in need, could borrow an implement such as, farming implements among others, from its fellow members mostly when such member does not readily have need for the use of such implement or food stuff.

A major feature of Egi land tenure and production systems before, during and after the colonial era is the concept of equality among individuals in the society, especially, in their access and right to the major means of production (i.e. land), and the distribution of products mostly farm products. There are no marked existence of class stratification in the society, and if there are, they are not pronounced or antagonistic against each other. Though, conflicts or disagreements do arise between communities or among members in Egi society, but are however not allowed to degenerate to the level of violence before they are settled amicably. It is important to note that this fact is imperative as we shall see in the succeeding systems of colonial and post-colonial land tenure practices especially, as Muojama observed that the introduction of a formal state or government leads to the

[3] C.B. Ogbogbo, Perspectives in African History. Ibadan: BookWright Publishers, 2011, 101

emergence of class structure in any society.[4] The forms of land tenure and social production and reproduction systems introduced in the communal societies as a result of formal state in Nigeria have led to the division of even the local communities into antagonistic classes of exploiters and the exploited. This marked the beginning of conflicts and disagreements that lead to violence in the society arising from the feelings of individual or collective dissatisfactions in the society.

This was brought about by the increase in contacts with the communal formation which started through the process of growth in population and clan migration. The above fact corroborated Onimode's assertion as he argued that the consequence of clan migration is conflicts over land among communities and families leading to organized raids for the capture of communal lands, treasure, or people.[5] As a result, in Egi society the communal mode of production eventually paved way for the individual household mode of production in which the number of wives and children became a major source of labour and a defining factor of social production. This mode of production saw the division of the society into several classes and they were responsible for growing crops, herding animals, building huts, and providing security for their respective households. Under this mode, the social surplus is appropriated by the community and family heads or elders. Thus this became the first exploitative group in Egi kingdom and consequently, of antagonistic classes, that are now locked in social struggle and violence amongst themselves in this period.

The individual household mode of production was succeeded by the private mode of production whose distinguishing feature is private landholding and personal bondage among others. The predominant forces of land tenure and production systems in this mode still revolves around land and the labour of wives and children, while the community chiefs, family heads, and elders still appropriate the surplus of labour. For example, the process of local palm oil production leaves the head of the family with the appropriation of the proceed from the sale of the palm oil, while the wife or wives are left to struggle with the palm kernel and the little proceed that could come out of it. As a result, the social relationship in this

[4] O.G. Muojama, African Political Philosophy: Socialism, Democracy, and party system. In C.B.N. Ogbogbo (ed.), Perspectives in African History. Ibadan: BookWright Publishers, 2011, 108

[5] B. Onimode, Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria. Nigeria: Macmillan press, 1983, 13

mode of production is based on bonding, though with minimal exploitation, social struggle and or, antagonism.

Emmanuel and Onyekwere argued that social classes on their very nature, operates in a definite socio-economic system in which the dominant class appropriate the surplus of labour of the subordinate class, from which arises oppositions, conflicts, and violent in the society.[6] However, a cursory look at the Egi land tenure and production systems, as well as its social formation will reveal a difficult attempt at class differentiations, but the co-existence of different modes of production in the area since the pre-colonial time, to this post-colonial era have thrown up a number of social classes in the society that are sharply distinct like those in the contemporary societies. This co-existence is further compounded by the prevalence of oil production activities in the area which has introduced corruption into the system, and has provided opportunities for upward mobility for some members of the society to other class strata. Thus it is significant to adequately differentiate members of Egi society who by their access to oil wealth, transformed themselves automatically to the higher stratum of the social divides. Therefore, the reality on ground is that the entire Egi society has been polarized into class stratification and in this situation, the relationship amongst them became one of antagonism, conflict, and violence basically because of the land tenure practice in the area and the production systems since the pre-colonial to this post-colonial period. This gave rise to the strands of corpus known as modern Egi society in the concept of land tenure, production systems, and pre-colonial and post-colonial eras. It is the examination of these ideologies that this study is aimed.

Pre-Colonial Egi Land Tenure and Production System

African communal ideologies talks about collective communalism. Implicit in this notion of collective communalism which otherwise can be referred to as African socialism is the apparent absence of class stratification. Ogbogbo observed that in 1965, a Kenyan government publication held that the sharp class divisions in Europe have no place in African socialism and no parallel in African society.[7] As we shall see in this study, no class problem arose in pre-colonial Egi society, just

[6] S.A. Emmanuel and L.A. Onyekwere, Introlgia to Demography. Port Harcourt: Is – Jac Int'l Co. 2023, 154.
[7] C.B. Ogbogbo, Perspectives in African History. Ibadan: BookWright Publishers, 2011, 107.

as it was in the traditional African society, both in their land tenure institutions and its production systems. African societies have always had strong element of communalism in their daily traditional lives as in no African community especially, in Egi kingdom and its communities were people ever stratified, into classes. They shared their resources according to their needs and base on shared responsibilities, family or kinship ties. As a result, Nyerere argued that the basis of African socialism did not start from the existence of conflicting class in society, but with African Communalism.[8] Note that the foundation of African socialism is the extended family system. That is why in African system, the Ujama or family hood is described as African socialism, while in Egi culture, 'NWANEM', or UMU-NWANEM (children of the same parent) is described as Egi socialism or communalism. This was part of the pre-colonial Egi land tenure and production systems. It is opposed to capitalism which is a colonial introduction seeking to build a happy society on the basis of exploitation of man by man. Secondly, pre-colonial Egi land tenure institution and production systems is also opposed to doctrinaire of socialism which seek to build happy society on the philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man, but modern Egi socialism still draw from its traditional heritage by recogonising its society as an extension of its basic family units.

Furthermore, Nyerere argued that class does not exist in any African language. This implies that there were no classes in pre-colonial African society both in their land tenure institution and production systems. Equally, Senghor observed that pre-colonial African societies are collectivist or more exactly, communal societies because it is rather a communion of souls than aggregation of individuals.[9] This goes to say that pre-colonial African societies had already achieved socialism through their land tenure institution and production systems before colonialism. Nkrumah in his thought also observed that pre-colonial African land tenure institution and production systems are based on communalism and egalitarian African traditional society whose principles are in conflict with the principles that informs capitalism.[10] In the same vein, Toure observed that Pre-colonial African land tenure institution and production systems are essentially communocratic (i.e.

[8] J. Nyerere, Ujamaa: Essay on Socialism. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, 110
[9] L. Senghor, African Socialism. London: Praeger Books, 1964, 8.
[10] K. Nkrumah, Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Development. London: H.E.B., 1964, 6

government by the community).[11] Implicit on the above thoughts are the facts that collective life and social solidarity in pre-colonial Africa gives a basic habit and humanism to traditional African society. It is as a result of these human qualities that no single individual in the African society can ascribe to himself the organization of his life outside that of his family, village, or clan groups in their land tenure practice and production systems.

However, since these claims of African socialism in their land tenure institution and production systems are based on the absence of social classes and the presence of land as the major factor of production, there is the need to discuss how land is distributed in Egi society for the purposes of production such as, agriculture and residential uses. Though, there is a strong tradition in ore-colonial African societies with regards to land tenure and production systems. The tradition validates the claim in this study of classlessness in traditional African society, and equally gave claim that amounts to African ideology, but in the context of Egi society the tradition is based on land distribution for agricultural production on the basis of seniority of only married adults and widows of each kindred family unit that makes up a village and or clan group. This is an annual routine depending on how many farm lands a kindred family unit owns. Though, an individual could own a farm land by purchase based on such individual's economic privileges. There is also the rotational farming system as part of the tradition. This is where farm lands in turn will be left unfarmed for a period of time for the purpose of maturity and effective yields.

In the case of residential purpose, land is distributed based on the financial capacity of individual family member who wish to erect a residential home on the family land, and or could equally purchase from another family depending on his choice or preference. This shows some measure of order and government in Egi pre-colonial society especially, in their land tenure institution and production systems. Therefore as Mutiso observed, there is government in a society if whenever a decision is made by some people they may oblige the others to conform their behavior to it.[12] The implication of Mutiso's observation is that a

[11] S. Toure, Africa is Essentially, a Commiunocratic. In O.G. Muojama, African Political Philosophy. Ibadan BookWright Publisher, 2011, 108

[12] J. Mutiso, Readings in African Political Thought. London: Heinemann, 1975, 109

governmental organization may be said to be a state where its cohesive agency is permanent. That is where there is a formal governmental agencies. Unlike the pre-colonial Egi land tenure institution and production systems, where the rulers and the subjects constitutes the fluid groups of the society, thus, it was only when a state organization appeared in the form of colonialism that the two groups became stabilized and Egi society began to split into distinct classes.

Note that the state is the institutional context of civilization, and the pre-colonial Africa civilization was forged on the context of state system in which African ideology acknowledged its existence to demonstrate African ingenuity, but denied the existence of classes which is the precondition for the civilizations and its flourishing. From historical point of view, it can be explained that though the communalistic ethos in land tenure institution and production systems is a universal historical phenomenal characteristic of all pre-industrial societies such as, Egi society. However, due to Egi primitive civilization with regard to land tenure and production systems arising from low technical know-how, the economic individualism they exhibited was low thus leading to communal ownership of property predominating private property ownership which resulted to the ethos of communalistic society rather than ethos of individualistic society in land tenure and production systems.

Though, Karl Marx observed that man started as a tribal being and as a generic being, and only became individualized in the course of history, so also does communalism corresponds to the stages of underdeveloped productive forces. Therefore, communalism and socialism in the context of pre-colonial Egi land tenure and production systems are polar opposites in the historical evolution of Egi ethnic society. Thus as Amin observed, it is an illusion to think that the primitive collectivist tradition of pre-colonial African society can facilitate the setting up of socialist structure.[13] He explained that this illusion was suffered by the Narodniks in the 19th century Russia, and some African leaders of the 20th century suffered the illusion too. According to him, Nyerere of Tanzania suffered this illusion when he attempted to build socialism on the foundation of

[13] S. Amin. Primitive Collectivist Tradition. In C.B.N. Ogbogbo (ed.) Perspectives in African History. Ibadan: BookWright, Publishers, 2011, 110

cooperative agricultural village, under the scheme known as "villagisation".[14] The product of this illusion lies in the theoretical explanation of the failure of communal experiment of pre-colonial African societies which fact is that African rural communities or economies was transformed through capitalism to achieve communalism both in their land tenure institutions, and their production systems. Therefore, in the context of Egi kingdom, the above fact underscores the functionality of violence as it was eventually brought about by changes in their land tenure institution and production systems arising from the advent of colonialism in Egi ethnic society.

Colonial Egi Land Tenure and Production System

Colonial incursion into Africa in the 15th century marked the beginning of a full scale capitalist mode of production in African societies. As a result, colonialism can be defined as an alien rule on an indigenous people. In otherwords, it is the rule on the land and people of African descent by the European. The enthronement of colonialism was characteristic of force and violence in the colonized society as a feature used by the colonial authority to subjugate the people, suppress their resistance, and command their obedience to the law and order of the colonizer. Land tenure governance and productive system's activities in the colonial period among others, revolves around administration of agriculture, mining, trade, finance, and shipping etc. These activities were carried out by the colonial state or authority using subtle force and sometimes coercion if the need arises. The application of these vices by the colonial authority redirected the primordial pre-colonial mode of land tenure practice and production systems in African societies, and geared the system towards cash crop productions to service the industrial production needs of European industries due to the wave of industrial revolution spreading across Europe at the time. This was how Egi ethnic society and other societies across Africa generally were integrated into the whelm and caprices of the now global capitalist system and the present flow of innovations in communication and finance, among others. Equally, that was how Egi ethnic society as well as other African societies was structured into the orbit of colonial operations, as producers of raw materials to service the industrial production

[14] S. Amin. Primitive Collectivist Tradition. In C.B.N. Ogbogbo (ed.) Perspectives in African History. Ibadan: BookWright, Publishers, 2011, 111

needs of overseas industries and thus have remained consumers of finished goods by European industries. However, in this mode of production, the means or factor of production still remain land and labour, but with the introduction of merchant capital which is alien to African society's land tenure practice and production systems. It is significant to note that labour activities during this colonial era were classified into two categories. On one hand, are those carried out by the locals or indigenous people such as, peasant producers, petty-traders, forced labourer, and wage labour etc. While on the other hand are those carried out by the colonizers such as British civil servants, merchant labour, and merchant capitals (i.e. entrepreneurial skills or resources) etc. Under this mode of production, the colonial authority appropriated and monopolizes the production and its surplus, and it is subsequently transferred to their home countries to further their economic growth, improve their infrastructural development, and enhance their technological advancement.

Against the known land tenure and mode of production system in Egi culture before the colonial era which was basically unantagonistic amongst the locals in their social relationship, is the colonial land tenure and production mode. The social relationships were basically antagonistic because the colonial system introduced state system and its agencies into the land tenure pattern of the area, and the indigenous elites which the new capitalist mode or state structure could not completely obliterate began to clash with the remnants of the pre-capitalist mode of land tenure and production system in the area. This resulted into large scale antagonism between the colonial and traditional production systems leading to crisis and violence in Egi ethnic nationality.

According to Obulor, in the colonial Egi land tenure and production system, there were three distinguishable classes including the European masters, the Egi middle class, and the Egi mass working labour.[15] However, following the thesis in this study which posit that the dissatisfied groups like the women, and the mass working labour in the system of production and reproduction in Egi society who struggled to change or improve the system eventually fell out with the colonial

[15] I. Obulor, Political Economy of Ethnic Militias and Political Violence in Nigeria. Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications, 2023, 24

production system which according to Isabu resulted to protest/riot in Egi communities in 1939 by the mass working labour and consequently led to the attack on Ebubedike a colonial tax collector.[16] He narrated that the protest was over the colonial policy of taxing locally produced palm produce such as palm oil and palm kernel. Accordingly, Owerri also revealed that in 1958 there was an organized Egi women riot which centered on their disagreement over the colonial proclamation of taxing women on their income, popularly referred to as 'income tax'.[17] He observed that the social relations of Egi colonial production and reproduction was basically on agricultural produce especially, palm produce (i.e. palm oil and kernel). Furthermore, he narrated that the viability of Egi land in the production of palm produce which was a product needed for the production of consumables like groundnut oil, chocolates, soaps, and pomades among others, in industrial Europe, led to the establishment of an oil mill sited at Erema, as well as warehouses and Bitch Resort sited at Kereganni. For example, he explained that the oil mill at Erema became a rendezvous where palm fruits from within and outside Egi enclave were assembled and sold to the colonial authority at regulated or fixed prices based on scaled measurement for onward shipment to Europe through the Kereganni river coasts of Sombriro/Orashi Rivers.

Equally, as part of the Egi colonial land tenure and production system, another agricultural product that was viable in Egi kingdom was timber and timber resources such as, economic trees and its sawdusts. According to Allen, these products were largely produced in Egi kingdom and were in high demand by the colonial authority for the production of furniture and plywood.[18] He explained that the mass working labour from Egi in this agricultural sector often engage the colonial administrators in bitter protests and agitations that culminates into industrial actions, such as the first industrial strike that occurred in 1952 in the timber factory at Ogbogu over alleged poor treatment of both the timber industry workers and the sawmill factory labour. These facts underscore the functionality

[16] Z.E. Isabu, 98 years, Interviewed at Erema on the Protests/Riots in Egi Kingdom during the Colonial Era, 30th April, 2024

[17] R. Owerri, 97 years, Interviewed in Abururu-Erema on the Protests in Egi Kingdom, during the Colonial Era, 2nd May, 2024.

[18] I. Allen, 83 years, Interviewed at Obagi on the Varieties of Natural Resources Endowed in Egi Kingdom, 2nd May 2024.

of Protests, riots, and violence as tools that could bring about positive and desired changes in the colonized society of the people. As a result, due to these events in the Egi colonial mode of land tenure and production system, the post-colonial land tenure and production system in Egi has been revolutionized to what is obtained presently.

Post-Colonial Egi Land Tenure and Production System

The post-colonial Egi land tenure and production system still remain largely the same as the colonial mode of land tenure and production system in the area, except that formal responsibilities are still retained by the families and communities. This is essentially because the post-colonial mode of land tenure and production system in Egi land combines the features of communality and some measure of capitalism such as, commercializing mass working labour. According to Idoniboye Tom Big-Harry, this is referred to as 'articulation of modes of production.[19] This means that the both systems (colonial and post-colonial land tenure and production systems in Egi), interacts and co-exists together base on the culture and tradition of the people. However, the major means of production still remains land, and mass working labour, among others. It is significant to note that labour activities in this era still revolves around peasant producers, petty-trading, and partly wage labour.

Arising from the above features are numbers of contending forces in the system including the peasantry, families, communities, mass working labour, mass unemployed labours, and partly wage labours. In the system, there is hardly any social surplus to be appropriated by any of the land tenure and production forces, as against the alliance in the colonial mode where the surplus was appropriated by the foreign bourgeoisie and their local counterparts. However, it is important to state that in this era of crude oil and gas economy, there is high level alliance between the multinational oil companies including Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC), TotaEnergies (TEPNL), SPDC and NLNG who are operating in Egi land and the local ruling elites against the host communities. This has resulted to fierce

[19] Idoniboye Tom Big Harry, 48 years, Lecturer Rivers State University. Interviewed on the Modes of Production during and after the Colonial Era, 29th April 2024.

and irreconcilable antagonisms in Egi kingdom's land tenure and production system under this present (post-colonial) mode.

The nature and operations of Egi kingdom's economy under this present mode is entailed in the natural resources endowed in the area. Egi kingdom is well endowed with different natural resources including abundant crude oil and natural gas, as well as, clay soil for the manufacturing of ceramics and glasses, among others. Most of these natural resources are not yet tapped. It is important to note that each of the four sub-cultures in Egi ethnicity viz, Ahiahu, Etiti, Umu-obor, and Usozimini is endowed with at least major resources that could be a good source of revenue for Egi kingdom in particular, Rivers State, and the nation in general if such resources are tapped, and its revenue properly invested.

According to Osoh, these zones in Egi kingdom are endowed with the underlisted natural resources among others, as listed in the table below;

Table 1.1 Natural Resources Endowments in the Zones in Egi Kingdom

S/N	Zone	Resource Endowment
1	Ahiahu Zone	Glass sand, clay soil, laterite, marble, lignite, limestone, granite, oil and gas etc.
2	Etite Zone	Phosphate, gypsum, limestone, clay soil, bentonite, oil and gas, etc
3	Umu-Obor Zone	Sharp sand, clay soil, laterite, marble, cypsum, limestone, oil and gas, etc
4	Usozimini Zone	Sharp sand, phosphate, limestone, oil and gas etc

He further observed that besides these mineral resources, Egi land is also endowed with reasonable agricultural potentials including crops such as yam, cassava, plantain, economic trees, coco-yam, groundnut, palm produce (palm oil and kernel), and three leaved yam etc.[20] it is important to note that of all the mineral resources listed in table 1.1 above, it is only oil and gas resources that are given

[20] K. Osoh (Dr.), 55 years, Interviewed in Obirekom on the types of natural Resources Endowed in Egi kingdom, 10th May, 2024

attention presently to the neglect of the other resources due to its huge revenue generating power. Though, the post-colonial Egi kingdom land tenure and production system still concentrate on agriculture as a means of livelihood, but the dominant status of oil and gas mining in the area have largely shifted their attention from their traditional agricultural farming thereby leading to the gradual dearth of the agricultural sub-sector in area.

According to Abide, the shift of attention from agriculture to petroleum in Egi land is the major source of ethnic discontentment with regards to the huge revenue generated from the petroleum sub-sector, and the dynamics of federal allocation, politics beginning with oil and gas dominating the Nigerian economy as the major revenue earners.[21] He narrated that this brings to focus the consequences of the allocation politics and the consequent mismanagement of the enormous revenues derived from oil and gas in Egi land. As a result, the study aver that it is this revenue mismanagement that has resulted in the impoverishment and mass poverty in Egi kingdom, and the consequential erruption of violent crisis and militia attacks on oil and gas facilities in Egi host communities.

It is significant to note that between the period of the colonial era, to the early part of post colonialism, agricultural production constituted the economic mainstay in Egi culture in particular and Nigeria's economy in general. It is equally important to note that the colonial economy was predominantly dependent on agricultural production due to the fact that Europe simply needed to meet up with the increasing demands in raw material supplies for her industrial (mass) production. Therefore, to effectively meet these demands, the colonial authorities encouraged massive agricultural production and emphasized on the growth of cash crops and its production in the colonies, particularly, in Egi land tenure and production system.

In most cases, these agricultural productions are achieved through physical coercion by the colonial authorities by introducing various policies such as taxes and production quota policies which are only enforced by taxing local products and incomes of local producers, payable in European currencies, against the local

[21] S. Abide, 83 years, Interviewed in Obukegi on the sources of Discontent in Egi kingdom, 12th April, 2024

or native currency like cowry, manila or the barter system which served as the various medium of exchange for the people before the advent of colonialism. This process thereby introduced state involvement into the accumulation system and thus marked the entrant and interference of the state into the production process for the purpose of economic accumulation. These were done through colonial proclamations and post-colonial legislations.

The above facts corroborates Ake's assertion when he argued that given the autonomization of the Nigerian state, the emerging ruling class soon started to manipulate the state as a veritable instrument of economic accumulation.[22] Nevertheless, the post-colonial Egi land tenure and production system witnessed increased agricultural production and rapid sub-cultural production as each of the four sub-cultures in Egi kingdom specialized in the production of particular cash crops for subsistence and revenue generation through buying and selling and also for export. For instance, the Ahiahu sub-culture specialized in the production of such agricultural products as cassava, yam, palm oil and kernel, three leaved yam, among others. While the Eitit sub-culture specialized in the production of fish products, groundnut, fufu, coco-yam and timber products among others. Equally, the Usozimini sub-culture specialized in the production of palm produce, meats, dried fish, palm oil, cocoa, and timber woods such as, rubber, among others. Likewise, Umu-Obor specialized in the production of fish, palm wine, meat, palm produce, clay pot, and timber woods, among others. This led to high competition among these four sub-cultures in Egi kingdom hence, revenues derived from these agricultural products were employed to develop facilities or infrastructures needed in these zones such as, schools, churches, town-halls, health facilities such as dispensaries and maternity homes among others. They also used the resources to sanitize their respective communities such as community services in the forms of security, sanitation, spatial organization, and educational scholarship to deserving indigenes of the communities etc.

Nwoko enumerated that Ahiahu sub-culture built and equipped among others, Erema maternity home in 1964, Community primary school I and II Erema in 1950 and 1957 respectively, Community secondary school in 1978; Umu-Obor sub-

[22] C. Ake, Political Economy of Nigeria. Lagos: Longman Publishers, 1985, p.10

culture built and equipped community primary school Obagi in 1965, Clay pot making site at Oboburu in 1952, and community town hall Oboburu in 1978; Etiti sub-culture built and equipped Akabuka native customary court in 1946, health dispensary in 1963, Government secondary school Akabuka in 1978; and Usozimini sub-culture built and equipped community primary school Obioziemini in 1966, market stalls in Akabta in 1970 and fishing port at Egita.[23] Equally, he observed that Egi as a kingdom founded and funded the ONAKATA-KA-UMU-EGI (a socio-cultural organization of Egi sons and daughters with the aim of developing the entire Egi kingdom using revenues generated from local resources). He further explained that there are other social services provided in Egi kingdom using revenues generated from their agricultural activities.

Ojima corroborated the above assertions as he observed that these development programmes in these four Egi sub-cultures were made possible only because the people capitalized on agricultural production, and derived enough revenues from it upto 100 percent. He therefore argued that agricultural production became the leading contributor to socio-economic and human capital development in Egi kingdom. However, the above accounts reveal that the post-colonial period in Egi kingdom is very remarkable in the history of the area especially in the aspect of socio-economic and human capital development with regards to their land tenure and production system. Moreso, the area witnessed a high level of agricultural productivity among individuals and among the sub-cultures in the kingdom. Equally, wealth was earned through hard work by engaging in useful agricultural productive activities. Azunuka revealed that most young men in Egi kingdom based on the land tenure and productive system, engage in agricultural productive activities and out of it, are able to educate themselves in schools, and in vocational skills of their choices.[24] He however, observed that at first the post-colonial land tenure and productive system in Egi kingdom was far less rancorous in terms of social and ethnic crisis ostensibly because the area produced and managed the revenues that accrued from the resources generated from agricultural production,

[23] K.C. Nwoko, 62 years, Interviewed on the Developmental Projects Embarked upon by the Four Sub-cultures in Egi kingdom, 2nd May, 2024

[24] I. Azunuka, 77 years, Interviewed at Egbelu on the Agricultural Activities Engaged by Youths in Egi Kingdom, 10th May, 2024.

but the rancor heightened with the advent of oil and gas production in the area by the conspiracies of the multinationals.

These developments in Egi land tenure and productive system corroborates Okoko's observation when he alleged that it is the revenue allocation formula adopted in the post-colonial Nigeria as the principle basis for derivation from the federation account that introduced rancor into the ethnic systems in Nigeria. He succciently emphasized that the revenue sharing was based on what a region produces. For instance, he illustrated that the western region produced cocoa from which it derived one hundred percent of its revenue; the northern region produced groundnut and cotton from which it derived one hundred percent of its revenue and the eastern region produced palm produce of which it derived one hundred percent of its revenue.[25] He therefore argued that the above arrangement changed in the case of the agricultural produce from the Niger Delta region, especially, from the core minority of the Niger Delta region such as, the Egi kingdom. Furthermore, he revealed that the derivation formula even changed more dramatically as soon as petroleum resources derived from the minority Niger Delta group became the main revenue earner for the country.[26]

It is significant to note that by the early 1970s, Nigeria's petroleum products acquired pronounced importance as they had become the world essential commodities arising from the combined effects of the Yom Kippur war in the Middle East, the Arab Oil Embargo, and the price hikes by the organization of petroleum exporting countries (OPEC). It is equally important to note that these global events entrenched enormous price hikes on petroleum products and essential boom in crude oil sales across the world, especially, the Nigerian oil. These developments instantly raked billions of petrodollars into the Nigerian coffers, and the events led to the phenomenal rise in Nigeria Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the dramatic turn in the country's terms of trade and her international reserves.

[25] K.A.B. Okoko, The Politics of Resources Extraction, Distribution, and Sustainable Development. Nigeria Journal of Oil Politics, vol.2, No. 1, 2002, 124.

[26] K.A.B. Okoko, The Politics of Resources Extraction, Distribution, and Sustainable Development. Nigeria Journal of Oil Politics, vol.2, No. 1, 2002, 121.

According to Onimode, increase in oil sales and revenue during this period of global turmoil, also brought about a corresponding increase in governmental expenditure on projects of various types both at the federal and states levels, including the building of seaports, refineries, road constructions, and cultural festivals, among others.[27] He observed also that the period largely enhanced extravagancy in government spending under which the basic economic structure of the country which was solely dependent on agriculture was consequently altered and new demands such as those for wage increase and the astronomical increase on imported goods began to be thrusted into the system. It is significant to stress that the emergency of oil and the associated revenue accruing from it changed the economic narrative and the structural trajectory of the Nigerian economy thereby dramatically affecting the land tenure and productive system of most societies in post-colonial Nigeria particularly, those of Egi kingdom. This is a clan where the oil and gas deposits are being manned by three major oil multinational companies and one National gas Production Company including TotalEnergies, NAOC, and SPDC, with the operations of their respective subsidiaries in the area as well as, those of the NLNG for gas operation. In Egi kingdom, the emergence of oil and gas, and the revenue accruing from it have redirected the attention of the locals from agricultural production to oil and gas politics.

Obulor corroborated the above assertion when he argued that oil which contributed about 2.8 percent of Nigeria total exports in the 1960s, had peaked up as much as 82.6 percent in the early 1970s, and the trend steadily continued at the rate that agricultural production began to decline, while rural urban migration drift ensured, thereby depleting rural agricultural workforce in the communities who are predominantly agrarian.[28] As a result of this, Sambol observed that in Egi kingdom, land and food scarcities have mounted so high, and have thus ultimately entrenched food crisis in the area.[29]

[27] B. Onimode, Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria. Nigeria: Macmillan Press, 1983, 168.
[28] I. Obulor, The Dynamics of Social Production and Reproduction System in Nigeria. Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications, 2013, 31
[29] I. Sambol, 64 years, Interviewed at Erema on the issue of Land and Food scarcities in Egi Kingdom, 11th May, 2024.

However, Nzimiro's assertion corroborate the above observation as he noted that the emergence of oil boom enhanced the woeful neglect of agriculture, which afflicted the rural masses, disorganized and made the youths to migrate to the cities in search of jobs so as to share in the oil boom.[30] He further argued that the nation lost its bearings in agriculture thereby resulting to a mounting food scarcity because the oil boom transformed the Nigerian economy in only section of the urban communities.[31] Ewegbemi put it rather more forcefully as he asset that the lure of oil revenue and the rat race to become oil company contractors and the corruption it entails in the oil producing areas, including the lure of easy money without hard work which the new elites in the oil producing areas engage in, with the pen robbers in the contracting business have become too attractive for anyone to want to go into farming.[32] However it is significant to note that the important features that arose from this dramatic turn of events in the land tenure and productive structure in the economy of the oil producing areas, especially, in Egi kingdom following the discovery of oil in the area, is the excessive community involvement in the economy and activities of the oil company.

Secondly, having established oil as a major instrument for revenue accumulation in the country, it was not surprising that the local elites in the oil producing areas particularly in Egi kingdom have completely placed the ownership and control of oil production, the revenue accruing from it for the producing communities, and the distribution of its derivation thereof, within its authority. To effectively do this, these elites according to Ibegwura created various bodies both at community and family levels including the formation of Egi Youths Federation (EYF) in 1990, Egi People's Assembly (EPA) in 2001, Egi Unity Organization in 2015 and Egi Professors and Academic Doctors Forum in 2016 among others.[33] He observed that though, the formation of these organizations in Egi kingdom only provided some soft requirements to enable the oil companies (NAOC, SPDC and TotalEngeriges) and its subsidiaries in the area to operate effectively, but the formation of the Egi Ethnic Nationality conference (EENC) in 1991, formerly entrenched the active

[30] I. Nzimiro, Challenges of Nigerian Indigenization. Nigeria: Macmillan Publications, 1985, 26
[31] I. Nzimiro, Challenges of Nigerian Indigenization. Nigeria: Macmillan Publications, 1985, 27
[32] C. Ewegbemi, Structures of the Nigerian Economy. Lagos: Macmillan Publishers, 2006, 2
[33] A.O. Ibegqura, Aged 59 years, Interviewed at Erema on the issue of corruption channels in Egi kingdom, 2nd May, 2024.

participation of the local elites in the area in the oil production process and its activities. The above assertion is however corroborated by Eleanya's observation that the ownership and control of oil production by the elites in the oil producing areas is associated with the increase in the finances of the local elites which enabled them to embark on the establishment of the various bodies that eventually ended up to become avenues for corruption in the area.[34]

Presently, corruption has become endemic in Egi kingdom due to the enormous revenue generated by oil for the area. For instance, this has prompted the incumbent Eze Egi (Eze Ogba Ukwu) HRM, Eze Victor Egbo Elenwa to institute a case of corruption with the Nigerian police against the leadership of Egi People's Assembly (EPA) over the misappropriation of thirty million US Dollars (2012 gas eruption damage in Egi kingdom) on account of fictitious projects for Egi people. As a result, corruption rather than being abated in Egi kingdom has sadly worsened the situation in the area due to the revenue accruing from oil and gas have led to the decline of the land tenure and productive system in the area. Corruption has become a systemic problem and negative vice in Egi society. According to Wolfowitz, systemic corruption is a situation in which corruption has been institutionalized and raised to the level of a structural parameter as such, has become part of the culture of the society.[35] Therefore, in Oti's view, the rate and spate of corruption in Egi kingdom is so alarming that agitations against it by the indigenes of the area has often resulted to various forms of crisis and violence and most of such crises are adjudged as virulent by observers because they have continuously affected the security structure of the place and further heighten the corrupt practices by the leaderships of the area.[36]

Furthermore, Oti's view corroborates Wolfowitz assertion as he did not mince words to assert that Nigeria represents an example of how people in a resource rich country could wallow in poverty in the face of rampant corruption, with about

[34] L.U. Eleanya, Shell, State and the Emergence of Ethnic Militias in Africa: The Nigerian Case. A Seminar paper Presented at the Rivers State College of Arts and Science (RSCAS), 2002

[35] P. Wolfowitz, World Bank President on the Leadership Question in Nigeria. The Guardian Newspaper, Thursday December 21st, 2006.

[36] E.H. Oti, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Orashi National Congress. Interviewed at Obiyebe on the Spate of Corruption in Egi Ethnic Nationality, 20th May, 2024

70% of the people living on less than one U.S. dollar a day.[37] This unfortunate reality as illustrated by Wolfowitz so contrasted with the scenario in Egi kingdom's land tenure and production system due to corruption resulting from the activities of oil production in the area. The fact remains that for the over 60 years of oil production activities in Egi kingdom, several millions of dollars have been stolen from the area through corrupt activities by the elitist groups. As a result, Ikiri, corroborated the above assertion by arguing that since corruption ensured in Egi society, no conscious effort has been made to uplift the material condition of the people such that about 400 billion dollars have been misappropriated and unaccounted for, courtesy of corruption.[38] He went further to emphasize that the consequence of corruption in the area is abject poverty, unemployment, lack of basic utilities or infrastructural facilities, and above all, is the consequential violence and insecurity that have bedeviled the area till date.[39] He further assert that more importantly, in the face of massive corruption such as the type in Egi kingdom entrepreneurship is debased, ingenuity is jettisoned, and wealth is earned without work.[40] He equally explained that this condition in Egi kingdom in no doubt created a situation of extreme wealth for a few people in the area, and extreme poverty for the rest of the populace. The above facts further corroborated the assertion of Ake who affirmed that the condition is worst still as it provides the recipe for social crises and revolution with a view to changing the social order in the society.[41] This is exactly the present situation confronting Egi kingdom's land tenure and production system.

Conclusion

This work set out to examine the phenomenon of land tenure and production system in Egi kingdom. Earlier scholarly enquiries into the phenomenon of land tenure and production system in Egi kingdom did not pay attention to the system

[37] P. Wolfowitz, World Bank President on the Leadership Question in Nigeria. The Guardian Newspaper, Thursday December 21st, 2006.

[38] A.J. Ikiri, Age 62 years, Interviewed at Ogbogu on the Consequences of Corruption in the Land Tenure and Production System in Egi Kingdom. 20th May, 2024

[39] A.J. Ikiri, Interviewed at Ogbogu on the Consequences of Corruption in the Land Tenure and Production System in Egi Kingdom. 20th May, 2024.

[40] A.J. Ikiri, Age 62 years, Interviewed at Ogbogu on the Consequences of Corruption in the Land Tenure and Production System in Egi Kingdom. 20th May, 2024

[41] C. Ake, Political Economy of Nigeria, Lagos: Longman Publication, 1985, 10

hence adequate explanations on the problems associated with the system especially, in the aspects of social production and reproduction in the area which is usually at the root of every social crisis and violence in human society was neglected.

To grasp the issue and problems therein, the study adopted an analytical framework within the land tenure and production perspective of the political economy of African production and reproduction system. Equally, the study fundamentally adopted the empirical research method through oral interview to determine how these issues raised in the work since the colonial era including deprivation, marginalization, environmental degradation, unemployment, poverty, corruption, underdevelopment, and total neglect of the people in the scheme of things by the multinationals operating in area, the Nigerian Government, and their local collaborators, have singularly or collectively led to the emergence of diverse forms of reactions and attacks by the people ranging from protests, agitations, crisis, and violent confrontations against the operations of the oil companies (NAOC, SPDC and TotalEnergies) and their subsidiaries, as well as resistance to government policies.

The study's hypotheses is that there is a corresponding association or relationship between the Egi kingdom's land tenure and production system with the colonial and post-colonial system of social production and reproduction system that have led to the social violence in Egi society. The study equally held that there is a significant correlation between the character of the colonial and post-colonial state and the Egi land tenure and production system with the emergence of ethnic organizations or groups across Egi kingdom.

This study is inspired by the need to provide the elites in Egi kingdom with an indepth understanding of the problem confronting the traditional land tenure and production system; the danger it poses to the socio-economic development and political stability in the area; the need to urgently uplift the material conditions of existence of the people to forestall crisis and violence in the area; and the need to enthrone social justice and equity in the area through a land tenure and production practices that is devoid of corruption. The study is based on the appreciation of the dynamics of land tenure and production system in Egi kingdom which though,

is richly endowed economically, but has been largely mismanaged over the years. The consequence is mass poverty in the area and general disillusionment at individual levels, as well as dissatisfaction at the group and ethnic levels. The study discussed the nature and character of the Egi land tenure and production system in the pre-colonial era fundamentally in its socio-economic distribution and allocative roles, and equally examined its violent character as reminiscent of its colonial experience.

Like the pre-colonial era, the colonial era is not anything fundamentally different in land tenure and production system arrangement in the area, but individuals and groups in this era tend to place total claims on colonial power and authorities especially in the economic and political aspects of land tenure and production system of the area. This also defines the violent nature or character of politics in the area. All these are further reproduced in corruption and the entrenchment of poverty, continuum crisis, and cyclical underdevelopment in the area.

The study also shows that just like the colonial era, the post-colonial period is endemic with corruption to the dissatisfaction of the individuals and the ethnic group in their land tenure and production system to socially produce and reproduce for them. For instance, the 1993, 1996, 1998 and 2002 violence among others, in Egi kingdom were the consequences of corruption led deprivation and neglect of the people by the operators of their political economy. The study within the Marxist framework examined the dialectical relationship between the nature or character of the post-colonial land tenure and production system in Egi kingdom and found out that the existing system of corruption, social production and reproduction in the area, had promoted dissatisfaction amongst the people and enhanced the rate or spate of violent crisis and attacks on oil company's facilities in the area.

The study analyzed Egi society and the violence therein as consequence of corruption introduced into its land tenure and production system, courtesy of colonialism. This was discussed comparatively in three epochs viz: the pre-colonial, the colonial, and the post-colonial eras. In all, the study found out that the corruption and violence in Egi society was founded by colonial experience and the violence including corrupt practices in the area, have been maintained till date.

Therefore, corruption and violence as witnessed across Egi kingdom are direct responses to colonial experience perpetuated by the colonial authorities on the people over the years and various approaches adopted to curb these menace such as, social amenities and infrastructural developments, worsened the problem rather than solving it. The failure of these approaches was derived essentially from the wrong perception of the challenges ab-initio by the respective authority patterns in the area and its officials.

Finally, the study discussed the challenges posed by corruption and violence to the land tenure and production system of Egi kingdom, its economy, its political stability, and the development potentials available in the area. These are in the areas of cultism, weapons proliferation, economic devastations, high level of criminality, as well as insecurity and its negative impact on the social production and reproduction system in the area's land tenure and production practices. These are caused by reasons of taking undue advantage of the ignorant disposition of the people in Egi kingdom. As such it is considered wrong for the authorities involved to only focus on their economic interest while ignoring the genuine issues surrounding Egi kingdom's land tenure and production system as the main basis of the struggle. As a result, the attitude can be akin to chasing shadow rather than the core issue. Thus, this will definitely not help the matters at stake, nor matters arising, not even in the long run.

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