



## Salt Processing In Igede-Yala Pre-Colonial Economic Relations

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### Abstract

One of the critical challenges Nigeria faces since independence till contemporary period is lack of unity and nation-building among her diverse ethno-cultural and religious groups. It is against this backdrop that this work captures a case study of the nature of the pre-colonial relations and interdependency among the component groups that made up the country. The work outlined how the long peaceful relations and coexistence among the two groups (among several others) occasioned in the sharing of technological ideas between them. It traced the origin of salt refining ideas in the regions of Middle Benue and Cross River Basin of Nigeria. The study discusses the processes involved in the refining of indigenous brine salt and its immeasurable value to the pre-colonial economy and society of the regions. It juxtaposes that such degree of interdependence and cohesion predates colonial amalgamation of entities that made up Nigeria, thereby wading off inaccurate perception that the coming together of the component groups as accident of history. Using historical methodologies particularly substantial oral evidence for the study tangible result was maximally achieved and presented to boost scholarship and contribute to Nigerian question.

**Keywords:** Pre-Colonial, Economic Relations, Central Nigeria Area, Igede-Yala

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### Introduction

At this critical period of Nigerian history one of the many challenges it faced (and is still facing) is the lack of unity and the quest for nation building. Nigerians tends to look always to centrifugal factors than those that help to unite us as one indivisible entity particularly when contentious issues like allocation of resources, power sharing and federalist issues are placed on the front burner for consideration. While the glamour for equitable sharing of resources and access to national wealth is acceptable and supported it should not be stressed to shake the foundation of Nigerian unity with unfounded arguments and rhetoric. Generally, no human society or community is an island of itself. Prior to early contacts with the Europeans, African indigenous groups existed interdependently and related mutually from one generation to another. According to O.O. Okpoh:

They were dynamic, mobile and necessarily interdependent on each other in the Ubiquitous task of coping with the challenges of their environment and reproducing their material existence. It was this process that made it possible for... (them) to maintain a reasonable level of cross cutting loyalty, mutual



trust and solidarity as well as... to affect each other's development in a fundamentality deep sense.<sup>1</sup>

It is against this background that the Igede people, in the course of their origins, migrations and settlement in the present abode had established several socio-economic contacts, viable economic transactions and diplomatic relations with many groups before 1900. These had produced developments on both sides, that is, mutual interests and benefits were recorded. Igede relations with their contemporaneous neighbours address those bordering ethnic groups of Igede. They include Idoma (*Ikpoto*) Igbo groups *Ibahi*, (Essa, Izzi and Nri collectively) the Yala, Ukelle, Tiv and Akpa (Akweya/Yache) peoples. In this work, Igede-Yala economic relations would be treated as our case study of other such relations. This is significant for creating a background understanding of their social relations and exchanges of economic ideas and commodities within the region. In the pre-colonial period, the Igede relations with Yala were characterised by a higher level of peaceful co-existence, mutual exchange; and the spread of salt refining technology was the hallmark.

It is worthy of mention here that there were several aspects of economic relations between Igede and Yala in pre-colonial period outside salt processing. For example, the Yala and other peoples of Cross River Basin acquired their iron and pottery products from Igede through exchange with other commodities particularly those from the coastal areas and Igboland in pre-colonial market centres like Izekwe, Okuku, Ubansara, Bekwara among others. Such analyses would not be discussed here for want of space. More so, the consolidation and expansion of Igede clans led to the displacements of other neighbouring groups. These groups, according to G. E. Ode include Ekoyi, Ikoru, Okpodom, Item, Ikom, Itigidi and Yala all in the present Cross River State and Iwori, Ezza, and Wawa peoples of Ebonyi State.<sup>2</sup> They were all pushed and pressed to their present location by the incursion of Igede people to their present home land.

### **Background: Igede and Yala**

The word, Igede refers to a people or an ethnic group, the land they occupy and the language they speak.<sup>3</sup> The Igede live in the lower part of the Middle Benue Valley extending into the Cross River plains nearly in a contiguous form. The land is located between latitude 6<sup>o</sup>40' and 7<sup>o</sup>5' East, measuring about 2,000 square kilometers.<sup>4</sup> The Igede live predominantly in Oju and Obi Local Government Areas of Benue State. They can also be found in considerable number in Otukpo, Konshisha and Gwer Local Government Areas of the State and in Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State. They traced their origin to an ancestor called Agba who begot Ogede. They originally inhabited a place around Odorere in the neighborhood of Ora

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<sup>1</sup> O.O Okpoh, "Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: A Case study of the Idoma and Her Neighbors in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century" Ph. D thesis, University of Jos, 2001. ix

<sup>2</sup> G. E. Ode "Igede and their Neighbours up to 1900" Post Graduate Seminar, ABU Zaria 1981. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Vansina *Kingdoms of the Savannah*. Michigan: 1970, p. 14 See M O Odey, *The Development of Cash Crop Economy in Nigeria's Lower Benue Province, 1910-1960* London: Aboki Publishers, 2009, 37.

<sup>4</sup> A. Okpaga, "The Socio-political History of the Igede" Y.A. Ochefu, J. Iyo and T. A. Varvar (eds.), *A History of the Peoples of Benue State* (Makurdi, Aboki Publishers, 2007), 79.



people in present Sabongida Ora, Edo State from where they migrated across the Niger River *ihu otuka* due to conflict with their Ora neighbours.<sup>5</sup>

They migrated through parts of present Igala land, Idoma land, Igbo land and finally occupied their present abode called *Opiny'Igede* in about the Middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>6</sup> They formed the third largest ethnic group in the present Benue State. Igede ethnic identity is clearly established and incontestable.<sup>7</sup> Igede is the people's language, classified as the Kwa sub-group of the branch of Niger-Congo African Language family; related to Idoma, Igala, Igbo, Ijo and Yoruba.<sup>8</sup> The Igede have close historical affinity with the people of Obudu, Bekwarra and Yala of Northern Cross River State.<sup>9</sup>

Igede has some interesting geographical and ecological features. The region experiences tropical continental climate with annual temperature of 27<sup>o</sup>C (87<sup>o</sup>F) and average rainfall is between 1600M and 1778, climaxed between July and September.<sup>10</sup> The main geographical feature of Igede is the conspicuous range of hills running southwest from Uwokwu, Andibilla, Ameka to Ohuhu-owo. The large plains provide agricultural lands for the production of food items like yam, millet, cassava, beans, potatoes; and hunting as well as domestication of animals to sustain the population. The drainage system provides water across all seasons. There are few large rivers and streams, most of which flow southwards into the Cross River System. The vegetation is a mixture of wood, thick forest and grass land with orchard bush. Generally, the environment is rich with enough possibilities and opportunities in economic terms to sustain the population in the pre-colonial era.

The Yala people occupy a land mass of 287 square miles at the northern end of Ogoja in Cross River State.<sup>11</sup> Yalaland is currently bounded on the north by Igede and Yache, south by Aiya River, west by Ukelle and other groups, and east by Ogoja minority groups (Yakur, Bekwara Ichibori) and Tiv people. Yala is also a language spoken by some inhabitants of Yalaland. The Yala are a subgroup of the larger Idoma nation or Idoma-speaking people. Some towns of yala include Okuku, Woda, Ijegwu, Yahe, Ugaga, Imaje, Okpoma, Echumoga. The origin of Yala people is traced to waves of migration of the entire Idoma from the Kwararafa state because of upheaval that led to the collapse of Apa.<sup>12</sup> According to E.O Erim, the Yala were descendants of Ode, son of Ala who moved off the main line of the larger Idoma migrations around the present Katsina-Ala area on an indefinite hunting expedition into the banks of the Cross River to settle. His descendants became Ai-Ala or Yala. In the same vein Erim have clearly shown

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<sup>5</sup> O. I. Iganga, *Groundwork on Igede History from Pre-colonial era to 1926*. (Oju: His Grace Printing Press, 2008), chapter two.

<sup>6</sup> E.O. Erim "The Use of Migration Tradition in Reconstructing Idoma Culture History" B. W. Andah, C.A .Folorunso and I.O. Okpoko (eds.) *Imprints of Africa's Past*. Ibadan: Wisdom Publisher 1993. 82.

<sup>7</sup> M.O. Odey. *The Development of Cash Crop Economy*. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Okpoh "Intergroup Relations"

<sup>9</sup> P. O. Agogo "The Migration Story of the Igede People: the Missing Links" A. Okpaga *Issues in Igede Development A Festschrift in Honor of Chief Reuben Galba Ade's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary*. Makurdi, Bookworks, 1914. 17. See S.I. Okita "Cultural Affinity in the Niger-Benue Confluence Region" O.O.A. Idrees and O. O. Okpoh (eds.) *Readings in Central Nigeria Culture*. Jos, Concept, 2011. 17-22

<sup>10</sup> Iganga, *Groundwork on Igede History*. chapter two.

<sup>11</sup> R. G. Armstrong "Idoma-speaking peoples" 128

<sup>12</sup> V. G.O'kwu, "Early History of Idomaland" in *UJO: A Journal of Idoma Studies*. Vol.2, September 1999. 12- 16



how the Yala and the rest of Idoma related historically and ancestrally in details. The period of this migration was broadly put between c.1625-1775 with subdivision into several phases.<sup>13</sup>

### Salt Production

Generally, the indigenous salt industry has not received due scholarly attention despite its high value and the important position it occupied in the pre-colonial economy in West Africa. It was generally used as a means of exchange just like the iron in some parts of Africa.<sup>14</sup> A. G. Hopkins has described salt as “many ways the most interesting and important of the minerals produced in West Africa. Salt, like water, is a biological requirement of humans and livestock, a regular intake being necessary for survival.”<sup>15</sup> In the pre-colonial period the demand for salt was very high because its deposit were limited to some societies and locations while those societies that did not have the deposit obtained it through exchange and barter trade.<sup>16</sup> In the entire pre-colonial West African states and empires, salt was also mined in Taghaza, Taodeni, and other places that formed the bulk of the Trans-Saharan trade goods and the long control on the trade centres stimulated the life wire of those early kingdoms.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the popular communities and societies with history of salt production in pre-colonial times included the Jukun of Wukari and the entire Middle Benue Basin in sites like Bomanda, Je-muryan and areas around the Taraba valley.<sup>18</sup> Other important areas of salt processing include Alago of Keana, the lowlands of Jos Plateau communities of Goemai and Kwalla within the Central Nigerian Region.<sup>19</sup> In Borno empire, according to Paul Lovejoy, the salt mining and ownership was a very critical determining factor of ascendancy to the royal throne (the *Mai* and *Bulama*). It reflected the entire political economy of the empire in pre-colonial period.<sup>20</sup> There was also an efficient salt production and trade in Igbo land around Okposi, Uburu, Oshiri and Abakiliki in the pre-colonial period.<sup>21</sup>

In Igede, the Salt Lake is owned and controlled by the community but fetched and processed exclusively by their women. This practice is different from what was obtained in those areas that associated kingship with the ownership of salt well (brines). For instance, P. T. Gbasha

<sup>13</sup> E. O. Erim “The use of Migration Tradition in Reconstructing Idoma Culture History” 78-84.

<sup>14</sup> R. G. Armstrong “Idoma-speaking peoples” 140

<sup>15</sup> K. Faluyi “Inter Regional Trade in Pre-colonial Africa” in *Tarikh Vol.10*. 35.

<sup>16</sup> See A. G. Hopkins, *Economic History of West Africa* London 1973. 47.

<sup>17</sup> B. Awe “ Empires of the Western Sudan: Ghana, Mali, Songhai” in J.F.A. Ajayi and J. Espie (eds.) *A Thousand Years of West African History*, Ibadan, University Press, 1965. 56-57

<sup>18</sup> R.J.Gavin and W. Oyemakinde “Economic Development in Nigeria since 1800” O. Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History Ikeja*. H.E.B and HSN. 483. S.U. Fwatshak *Indigenous*

*Entrepreneurship in Jos metropolis Central Nigeria, 1902- 1985* CAP, North Carolina, 2011. chapter 4

<sup>19</sup> *Dept. of History Seminar Series vol. 9* ABU Zaria. 65. See also S. U.. Fwatshak, *Indigenous Entrepreneurship*. 28. See SNP.17/4/34252, Benue Province Annual Report 1914.

<sup>20</sup> P. E. Lovejoy “The Proprietorship of Salt works in Borno in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century” in *Dept. of History Seminar Series vol. 9* ABU Zaria. 141

<sup>21</sup> C. A. Folorunso “Contacts and Interrelations Among the Peoples of the Benue Valley” See A. E. Afigbo “Foundations of Igbo society” and Osoba (eds.) *Topics on Social and Economic History of Nigerian*. 34-54. See P. U. Mbakwe & M. A. Chigbo “Manufacturing industries and crafts in Ohoazema, Ebonyi State before 1960” O. Njokwu and O. Iwuagwu (eds.) *Topics on Igbo Economic History*. Ikeja, First Academic Publishers, 2008. 152-154 B. Awe “ Empires of the Western Sudan: Ghana, Mali, Songhai” in J.F.A. Ajayi and J. Espie (eds.) *A Thousand Years of West African History*, Ibadan, University Press, 1965. 56-57



reported that in Keana, salt springs were usually allocated to the Keana-born women as right and the industry was controlled by women.<sup>22</sup> The indigenous table salt production was an exclusive activity of one clan, Igabu, which today is part of Yala LGA of Cross River State. However, the entire Igede and her immediate neighbours got most of their salt need and supply from this region through trade and exchange system in the pre-colonial period. According to the oral tradition of the Igabu clan, it was their hereditary activity because they started salt evaporation a long time ago. According to the tradition:

Salt refining was our inheritance from our ancestors from time immemorial. Our fathers were refining salt when they first settled in the central part of Igede land. And when they moved to the present settlement, the salt also followed them. Even today if we move from here elsewhere, we shall refine salt there.<sup>23</sup>

In the process of establishing the claim of the Igabu clan in respect of their monopoly of salt in Igede, this study discovered that even within the Igabu clan, there was a particular family/lineage, Ojegbe-Igabu which seems to be the chief priest of the god of salt that ordered ritual cleansing of the sites when occasion demanded (either violations of the taboos of the salt lake or general cleaning of the salt lake area when necessary).<sup>24</sup> This prompted further inquiry by the researcher thus. In the same vein, G. E. Ode noted:

The earliest neighbours of the Igedes in their present land included the people called Igbadu, Uwogbu, Itire and Ijiba. The chief of Igbadu and Uwogbu received the Igede warmly and soon they had intra and inter-ethnic group marriages. The Igbadu were specialist salt refiners. The Igedes learned the salt trade from the Igbadus and subsequently used treachery to dispossess them of their land and salt lakes/mines.<sup>25</sup>

Beside this fact, one discovered that the Igabu clan and the Yala clan were very close, as the Yala were widely recognized within the entire region in the pre-colonial period to be professionals in salt processing.<sup>26</sup> Indeed R. G. Armstrong mentioned earlier how widespread salt brines were in the land and listed Yala salt sites to include Ijegwu, Aloda, Ugaga, Igekuruku, Akurihia, Okpoma amongst others and how salt was the main product in the barter trade in Okuku and Okpoma markets.<sup>27</sup> G. E. Ode also maintained that the Igede learned the art of salt refining and trade from the Igbadu and Yala neighbours.<sup>28</sup> Indeed the indigenous salt is still called in Igede language as *ima ny'Ala*, (meaning Yala salt) thereby acknowledging its source. These suggest that the particular family in Igabu clan that are the main spiritual custodian of

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<sup>22</sup> P.T.Gbasha "Women and Children in the Labour Force in Nigeria: An Historical Overview".

Mangwvat, M.Y. (Ed.) *A History of Labor in Nigeria*. Jos, CDS and Jos University Press Ltd 1998. 73.

<sup>23</sup> Utukpo-Igabu Elders interviewed in Onah Ogbu's compound, Utukpo-Igabu, Yala LGA, Cross River State on 1/11/ 1997.

<sup>24</sup> A lot of taboos surround the salt mines in Igede like many similar salt processing societies in Africa. Menstruated women were prohibited from fetching the brine, iron plates/bowl were not used in fetching the brines. Oral Interview: Cecilia Ojanyi (55 +) Housewife/farmer, Ojegbe-Igabu 5/1/15.

<sup>25</sup> G. E. Ode "Igede and their Neighbours up to 1900" Postgraduate Seminar, ABU Zaria 1981. 5.

<sup>26</sup> See D. Omagu, *A wind of change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers. 2011

<sup>27</sup> Armstrong "The Idoma-speaking peoples." 128.

<sup>28</sup> Ode "Igede and their neighbours up to 1900". 9.



salt could have been the descendant of the original Igbadu people or the Igabu family that agreed and actually carried out the costly sacrifice to learn the processing of salt.<sup>29</sup> Even a young boy from the family could perform the rituals when the need arises including the cleansing rites when someone breaches the taboo. The taboos and “Fetish” belief system surrounding the processing of salt is also common in the Yala and Igbo salt processing communities.<sup>30</sup> These taboos were the same in salt processing in Igede and Yala societies. The real motive of the taboos and rituals surrounding this technology was to preserve its purity and neatness of its production environment, high processing value and as well a form of monopoly and cartel over it which prevented other communities from engaging in the trade.<sup>31</sup> There were no formal apprenticeship training for the refining of salt but young women learned the crafts from their mothers and other members of the family through direct participation. Such practical involvement is handled cautiously according to the age and maturity of the learners in order not to contravene the established taboos<sup>32</sup>

### Salt Processing Techniques

The salt processing here in Igede refers the mineral salt which entirely is different from the Berom salt processed from plant straw by women in houses through burning and filtering<sup>33</sup> The processing of Igede indigenous salt could be all year round but largely due to difficulties in fetching and boiling the salt water during the raining season, it is reserved for the dry season from January up to May. The difficulty mentioned arose from the grossly low salinity of the salt lakes due to flooding. The fetching of the liquid salt from the brine lake *Uje-nyima* in Igede was done by only “clean people” in the society using calabashes, guards and clay pots (but not iron pots and in the modern times, basins or rubber containers). The ‘clean people’ that can fetch the liquid salt include men, young girls before menstruation and old women that have passed menopause.<sup>34</sup>

The liquid brine *Eny-nyima* was carefully filtered into some big cooking pots. The filtered water tastes somehow salty, different from ordinary water. When the volume of ordinary water was high, men helped women by inserting bamboos stick *Ochachwo* into the bottom of the lake thereby, fetching out highly concentrated salty water. This is done to avoid the ordinary surface water. The filtered water would be emptied into the uncovered pot placed on fire for gradual boiling with logs of wood.<sup>35</sup> The pot would be uncovered to enhance quick evaporation of water. As the boiling continued for about two to four days, the women refiners also continuously added more filtered salt water into the pot. As the heating intensified, the water evaporated while the salt crystallized at the bottom of the pot. These processes continued until the pot was full of salt

<sup>29</sup> There is serious resemblance of Igabu and Igbadu. Indeed among the entire fourteen existing clans of Igede, Igabu has a unique dialect that distinguished her from the rest and whose origin is yet to be ascertained. Traditions recorded that the Igabu ancestors sacrificed human to their shrine to own the salt brine. Utukpo-Igabu Elders interviewed in Onah Ogbu’s compound, Utukpo-Igabu, Yala LGA, CRS on 1/11/ 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Oral Interview: Mama Ownanyi Oko (80+) Old Salt refiner, Oyinyi-Ijegwu Yala 5/1/15. See P.A. Mbakwe and M.A. Chigbo “Manufacture and Trade in Igbo culture”. 152.

<sup>31</sup> Oral Interview: Mama Ownanyi Oko.

<sup>32</sup> Oral Interview: Oluwa Michael Edibe (35+) Business man, Ajimole-Igabu 5/1/15.

<sup>33</sup> See J. Y. Dung-Gwom “Berom Traditional Crafts” in C.C. Jacobs *Studies in Berom History and Culture Vol. I* Berom History Project 1995. 100-101.

<sup>34</sup> Oral Interview: Declan Eje (75+) farmer, Ijegwu-Oyinyi 5/01/15

<sup>35</sup> Oral Interview: Mama Odoobi Oko 78+ years, Retired salt refiner, Oyinyi-Ijegwu 5/01/15.





or till the women were satisfied with the quantity needed then, the fire would be put off. The pot *Ota-nyima* would be left over one night for cooling process to take place.<sup>36</sup> The salt could be so heavy that strong men some time would be invited to lift it with the pot from the cooking stand *Iyegwu* and then a fresh process is set up. Indeed, the factory site situated close to the salt lake was full of empty pots and the tripods. The crystallised salt *echima* would be taken home for use and to the market for sale in bowls.

### Historical Significance of Indigenous Salt

Generally, salt is very important and vital for human survival particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa where there is daily loss of this all-essential mineral component from the body through sweat coupled with the long hard work by the people daily.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the product is relatively scarce and was in high demand for the following reasons. It is used to enhance the taste of food thus, as an additive and stabilizer. The indigenous salt is said to be richer than the company processed ones particularly, in quantity of iodine. Women break and grind it with other food or soup ingredients on the stone and it eased the grinding process. The Igede salt is used as indigenous medicine particularly for curing stomachache and other minor ailments.<sup>38</sup> The indigenous salt is used for preservation of food, meat and fish by the people. It is mixed with beans, groundnut, and grains in a pot to preserve these foodstuffs from insects, weevils and other animals one season to another.<sup>39</sup> Weevils and other dangerous insects are repelled from the grains thereby enhance their preservation. Indigenous salt was also used as bride price and as wealth in some communities of Igede and Yala in pre-colonial periods.<sup>40</sup> In early periods, salt was rolled in crystallised form and loaded in basket for markets and bride price purposes.

Indigenous salt was used in exchange for yams, cloths, iron tools and other important products of trade. It was also used as a medium of exchange as currency upon which other items were valued and exchanged in pre-colonial times.<sup>41</sup> It was reported by Donald Omagu that the indigenous salt from Yala area was a form currency in pre-colonial period in Bekwarra, and the entire Ogoja region.<sup>42</sup> The Niger Delta region and most parts of Igboland used salt molded into small cones (produced at Uburu) as currency.<sup>43</sup> Therefore salt as currency played vital role in the pre-colonial economy of Africa.

Due to its high demand, there were many indigenous traders of salt on short and long distances. The entire Central Nigerian and Cross River Valley Regions depended on the salt from Igede, Yala, Alago, Jukun production centres in pre-colonial period. The trading activities and networks were dominated by the Aro of Igbo, Akuna-Kuna, Jukun, Hausa and others.<sup>44</sup> They

<sup>36</sup> Oral Interview: Cecilia Ojanyi. 5/01/15.

<sup>37</sup> See O. Njokwu "Manufacture and trade in Igbo culture" Njokwu & Iwugwu (Eds.). *Topics in Igbo Economic History*. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Fwatshak, *Indigenous Entrepreneurship*. 78.

<sup>39</sup> Oral Interview: Declan Eje.

<sup>40</sup> Armstrong "The Idoma-speaking peoples". 128-129.

<sup>41</sup> Faluyi "Inter regional trade in pre-colonial Africa" *Tarikh*. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Omagu, *A Wind of Change*. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Umorah A.C. "The Lowlands Salt Industry" Isichei E (ed.) *Studies in the History of Plateau State, Nigeria* London, 1982. 151-178.

<sup>44</sup> S. A. Ettah-Attoah "S. A. Effah-Attol "Pre-colonial Trade Relations between the Cross River Basin and the Middle Benue Region of Nigeria" in Ochefu, Y.A. Iyo, J. and T. A. Varvar (eds.), *A History of the Peoples of Benue State*. (Makurdi, Aboki Publishers, 2007).



were extremely involved in itinerant trade within the broad region of the pre-colonial economic activities. Therefore, the trading activities in salt within the broad areas provided employment for the people, through exchange system brought distant goods and valuable items to the societies involved. Salt also fostered peaceful co-existence among the Igede, Yala and their neighbours.

### **Conclusion**

The activities of salt production in the Benue Valley and Cross River areas facilitated peaceful coexistence, understanding and stable intergroup relations amongst the inhabiting groups. There was stability and even some groups had identified themselves more as kinsmen rather than geographical neighbours. For example, there existed a high bond of unity, oneness and feeling of attachment amongst the following despite the fact of long distances and separation by modern administrative and political divisions like states creation had placed them far apart. The following ethno-cultural groups had a lot in common beyond the contiguous neighborhood and trading. They include Igede, Yala, Idoma, Bekwarra, Etulo, Alago, Obudu, Jukun, and Igbo. Indeed, these groups seemed to have similarities in languages and cultural affinities particularly the dance groups, the village-based socio-political system which never ends but exists alongside the modern local government system the beginning of the twenty-first century.