

EKEKHEN:

PAST AND PRESENT

Cletus O. Akenbor

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DEDICATION

God Almighty, the maker of Heaven and Earth, to him alone is this book dedicated. Thank you, Lord, for your mercies, love and preservation over my life and family. I am sincerely grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of writing this book, my indebtedness to people became unavoidable and very sacrosanct. Therefore, at this juncture, it is indeed my honour and privilege to respectfully acknowledge the individuals, groups, families, and organisations who in spite of their tight schedules, provided the needed information for the compilation of this handbook entitled **“Ekekhen: Past and Present”**.

Firstly, my utmost gratitude goes to Ekekhen Think Tank Association (ETTA) upon whose shoulders I stood to prepare this book. Time and space will fail me to acknowledge members of the Association sequentially and specifically, considering the fact that they numbered over one hundred and fifty (150) persons. Please accept my gratitude. I also owe my indebtedness to Late Mr. John E. Ojelumese who in his book exhumed facts about our past and charted the path, which I treaded on in the course of writing this book. May his soul continue to rest in the bosom of the Lord. To my father of blessed memory, Mr. Andrew E. Akenbor, I remain immensely grateful to you for according me the opportunity to acquire higher education. Part of the History of Ekekhen you shared with me in my childhood days still reflects in my memory, and after several confirmations, formed a significant component of this book. Rest in peace, Daddy.

Permit me to equally acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Dr. Peter A. Akhator who in a short notice shelved other engagements and provided the foreword to this handbook. Sir, I lack words to express my deep appreciation to you for this uncommon honour. May God reward you sufficiently. The contributions of Professors Osadolor O. Odia and Festus Ikpotokin never went unnoticed. These distinguished professors of high repute were readily available to me for necessary information whether day or night. From the depth of my heart, I say thank you.

I am profoundly grateful to some individuals that offer very useful information and constructive comments that further enhanced the credibility of this handbook. Foremost among this category are Barr. Godwin Ikpotokin, Hon. Henshaw Elimihe, Mr. Bright Ighedosa (JP), Elder Idahosa Obaze, Mr. Omoregie Obaze, Arch. (Dr.) Iria Ekhaton, Mr. Fred Obaretin, Mr. Ernest O. Ogbeiwe, Mr. Aimure Agazuma, Mr. Luke Igbinedion, Supo Bernard Obabuike and Mr. Augustine Okoro. It will be a disservice to myself if I fail to specially recognize the unalloyed support of my able Chairman, Comrade Fred O. Iduseri. The Chair! Thank you.

At one point in time or the other when I was at crossroads on conflicting information, there are some individuals based in the community that went extra miles to verify the information with immediate feedback. I owe my unreserved gratitude to them. The list includes Messrs Pius

Iduseri, Timothy Uwagbo, George Ebojie, Jacob Ibhadawmuyi, and Paul Oriakhi. Also on the list are Mesdames Mary Akenbor (my mother) and Victoria Emmanuel Uwuidia.

Kindly forgive me if I could not remember to specifically acknowledge your immense contributions to the success of this book. All sons and daughters of Ekekhen, home and abroad who are yearning for the development of Ekekhen are well acknowledged. God bless you all.

FOREWORD

I feel greatly humbled, respectfully speaking, to be asked to write foreword to this all-important book “EKEKHEN: PAST AND PRESENT”. Without lacking historically, the book is first of its kind.

The author in a lucid and crisp style excavated or unearthed in consultative and collaborative fashion, the fundamental facts of the birth of Ekekhen which today underscores its socio-political trajectory. The book encapsulates, without sounding immodest, the reason why Eko-ekhen (later transformed to Ekekhen an evolving entity is very unique. As the last settlers that migrated from Benin, Ekekhen culture even under the façade of modernity remains that of Benin, which today again defines its ancestral tapestry. For example, the greetings and cultural festivals in Ekekhen are heritage from Benin, which transcend far and above present generation.

In the book, the author showcases individuals in their various capacities of endeavours or excellence. His essence of this presentation was not intended to fan the embers of Utopian fantasy but as a challenge to upcoming Sons and Daughters. They are expected by dint of hard work, faith, courage and dogged determination to out-perform, outsmart and break new grounds in their chosen areas of endeavours. For example, Ekekhen needs more than ever before, new managing directors of banks, shipping companies, etc. Ekekhen desires to see her sons and

daughters having handshake with the President of Nigeria and no longer with Governor for their academic prowess/excellence. Ekekhen, also want to celebrate her children for scoring 100% in English Language and Mathematics, in University Matriculation Examination; Ekekhen needs more first class graduates; Ekekhen needs pilots, and the list is endless.

Again, the author in his book portrayed Ekekhen as very industrious people who are goal-directed and purpose driven and he wished that these sterling qualities be sustained. In the book, the author explained various festivals such as Edion, Ehor, Ekpo, and Igue, which are always celebrated with pomp and pageantry as every place is always agog with activities. He however laments the evolving trend where youth are relegating education to the background.

The book showcased the names of adorable and ever conscious sons and daughters who are championing the cause of development. It is expected the names will increase as more identify with the lofty aims and objectives of Ekekhen Think Tank Association.

The book is a reference/source document.

Peter Akhere Akhator (*Ph.D, LLB, ACA*)

PREFACE

A people's history is a narrative which attempts to account for historical events of the people. It defies easy and simple explanation. The historical reality of Ekekhen is not an exception, considering the fact that the first book on the historical accounts of Ekekhen written by Late Mr. John E. Ojelumese has gradually gone into extinction. The yearnings and aspirations of Ekekhen Sons and Daughters to have an up-to-date reference material on the historical journeys of Ekekhen, propelled me into this adventure.

This handbook entitled "EKEKHEN: PAST AND PRESENT" is methodologically arranged into ten (10) chapters to unveil library of ideas on the historical development of Ekekhen. Chapter one explains the origin of Ekekhen; chapter two focuses on the administrative system of the community; chapter three exposes the people's cultural heritage; chapter four examines economic development; chapter five unravels educational development of the people; and chapter six explores the people political participation. In chapter seven, firstlings of landmark achievements of Ekekhen sons and daughters were exhumed; chapter eight centres on a fact-finding mission on Ekekhen train station; chapter nine lays the foundation and fundamental mission of Ekekhen Think Tank Association and chapter ten is on breaking of curses on the community.

Undoubtedly, this handbook, to a large extent provides succour to the curiosity of the people. It is therefore recommended to the reading public particularly Ekekhen sons and daughters trusting that all and sundry will find it an elixir of knowledge and wisdom. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIGIN OF EKEKHEN

The origin of Ekekhen may make little or no sense without laying foundation of the name “Ekekhen”. Ekekhen is a combination of two words, ‘Eke’ and ‘Ekhen’. While Eke means camp, ekhen means traders. Ekekhen therefore is a camp of traders. The origin of Ekekhen is traced to 1515-1516 at the time of the Benin-Idah war during the reign of Oba Esigie (1504-1550). At that time, there was a large garrison of Benin warriors settled at Igueben from where they prosecuted the war and a group of traders (ekhen) moved out of the metropolitan city of Benin to find settlements on the war front to sell their wares to the Benin soldiers. They scattered in different parts of Esanland like Emu, Oria, Ugboha, Ubiaja, etc. and return to the camp close to the garrison of soldiers in Igueben before going back to Benin City to get more wares. They later considered the camp as their permanent settlement and named it, Ekekhen. Oba Ahenzae between 1641 and 1661 later granted the community an autonomous status, which enabled her to setting up an ancestral (Ukhure) housed in the Ogua-Edion. Prominent among the early settlers of these traders in Ekekhen are Emonkhua, Odukpaye, Ogbeide I (Oviawe lineage), Ogbeide II (Odia lineage), Akenor, Ikhine, Edokpolor, and Osa. Osa happens to be the eldest among them, hence he became the first Odionwere of the community. Other Odionweres include Oviawe,

Okhiria, Enahoro, Igbinedion, Ibhadamwuyi, Okotor, Idumwuyi, Ekhaton, Ehigiamusor, Ozo, and Obhiowu.

History has it that after the death of Oba Osemwende of the ancient Benin Kingdom in 1848, Kingship tussle erupted between Prince Adolor and Prince Ogbewekon, the sons of Oba Osemwende on who amongst them would ascend the throne of Oba of the great Benin Kingdom. Prince Ogbewenkon was born in the morning while Prince Adolor was given birth to in the evening of the same day. However, the birth of Ogbewenkon was not announced in the palace until after the announcement of the birth of Prince Adolor. Ogbewenkon's mother, Eghori, concealed the birth of her son from the Oba for some days. When Eghori was asked why she concealed the birth of Ogbewenkon, she replied that the people of Ogbe had advised her not to announce the birth of the child, as perhaps he might not live, as it was thought he had been born and had died in infancy several times before. His father therefore named him Ogbewenkon, meaning 'Ogbe has made fool of you'. This controversy led to Kingship crisis in the Benin Kingdom.

In the midst of the chaos, people lost their lives in pursuit and defense of their rights, and another group of ekhen (traders) moved out of Benin eastwards, carrying with them light and precious personal effects and cowries to continue their normal trade abroad until peace is restored at home (Benin), and they made their first trading camp at Ugbejun. They were foreigners and thus strange to the customs and

traditions of their host town (Ugbegun). The people were cheerfully welcomed as traders by their host. But after a while, the initial love and respect they earned from their host were turned to various forms of hatred and unfriendliness which found expression in angry demonstrations against the traders. At this point, when the Ekhen (traders) realized that going back to Benin was no longer an option, they learnt that their fellow Ekhen had a settlement south of Ugbegun in the present day Ekekhen and they united with them. Most of these Ekhen that moved from Ugbegun, formed the Idunwu-negbon (meaning the new quarters) quarters in Ekekhen.

The Kingship crisis in the Benin Kingdom did not favour Prince Ogbewenkon, and as such he escaped from Benin to take refuge at the mother's village - Igueben in Esan. He later proclaimed himself as the Oba's representative in Esan and demanded that all the people, villages and towns should thenceforth pay homage to him rather than to undertake the arduous task of having to trek to Benin to pay homage to the Oba. All the towns and villages yielded but Ekekhen, who knew that he was an impostor and an escapee, refused to bow. He then invited the elders to a meeting to resolve the issue. He was working on a strategy to subdue the community. Meanwhile, he had arranged with his son to climb a tree just near the place of meeting and to hide therein. Thereafter, the son was to watch the progress of the meeting and at an opportune time, rain bullets on the leaders of the group from Ekekhen. By this he felt he could get rid of the leaders and subdue the others.

But the plan failed, as a young man of Ekekhen went on an early morning mission and saw the son of Ogbewekon with a gun in his hand trying to take the planned-position. He ran home and reported to the elders. After a while the meeting was convened as planned. Before Ughewenkon could realize it, his son had been fired at his post and fell to the ground with his gun. Ugbewenkon's hope had been destroyed. The crowd broke out with a cry of unexpected disaster and despair, "see how a noble Bini son had been killed by Ekhen". In his despair, Ogbewenkon took an instrument of mystical power and placed a curse on the people of Ekekhen that "no matter how well they serve the Oba of Benin, their effort will not be appreciated". The people of Ekekhen, also took an instrument of mystical power and placed a curse on Ogbewenkon that "they will never stop nursing a male child in the family" meaning their male child will always die young.

When Ugbewenkon had been subdued, and returned to Benin, all the Onojies in Esanland had their link with the Oba in Benin. It was the practice for each of the Onojie to pay homage once annually to the Oba. Gifts used on such mission included cows, goats, yams, and in certain cases (where the Onojie is powerful) human beings. Such human beings were later either considered as armour bearers or sacrificed on shrines in the palace. The Oba had recognised the descent and position of Ekekhen in this part of the empire that it was prohibited and thus impracticable for any Onojie to carry his gifts unescorted directly to the Oba. Of course, there were some elders in the hierarchy of the

palace rulers who would confiscate the gifts by any Onojie who had no representative from Ekekhen as his intermediary. It was customary therefore for the Onojie to be escorted by a representative from Ekekhen to the Oba's palace to pay homage. When then an Onojie wished to go on such mission to Benin, he would present a goat through his palace warden to the elders of Ekekhen for sacrifice on 'Edion' shrine. On the day this sacrifice is performed, a delegate is named as escort to the Onojie. By this appearance the palace chiefs would recognise the group and the gifts channeled to the appropriate quarter - the Oba's Palace. At the same time, it was strictly prohibited for any Ekekhen citizen to be made the Oba's armour bearer.

Ekekhen was acclaimed the standing representative of the Oba hence, when any Onojie died, the obituary would be mentioned to the Ekekhen elders. On this, the elders would meet, perform some rituals on the 'Edion' shrine and dispatch an emissary with a piece of white cloth to the family of the deceased Onojie. This piece of cloth is purported and taken to have come from the Oba of Benin's Palace as an authority for the heir of the Onojie to resume the funeral rites. Until the piece of cloth arrived, he would not engage on the burial, however 'powerful' he might be - no one dared defy the Oba's orders. It is remarkably creditable that until this custom died, Ekekhen successfully played her role between the ruler (Oba) and his subjects.

CHAPTER TWO

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

Ekekhen community has an organized system of administration. The head of the community is the Odionwere, which is the oldest man in the community. The Odionwere is the supreme head, socially and religiously in all matters affecting the community. He rules the community with a group of selected elders as his advisers. The people in the community are subject to him but he is subject only to the Oba of Benin. The office of the Odionwere is not hereditary; it is held from time by whoever is the eldest amongst the males. The female folks have no right to this office. This is the practice till date.

It is also important to state that where a stranger comes to settle in the community and in his life-time comes to be the oldest man, he cannot be the Odionwere, the ancestral staff (Ukhure Edion) cannot be handed over to him. More so, if anyone that qualifies as Odionwere is being bypassed for whatever reason, spirits of the ancestors will rise and fight the battle by placing limitations of any kind on the community. This was the case of Pa. Okhiria who was treated as an outcast and was denied of the office of Odionwere because of his wretchedness. As a result of this act, pregnancy ceased for a period of time among women in

the community until it was revealed by divination, and the elders quickly decorated him for the throne.

Under the Odionwere is a tripartite system of government in the community. These are the Edion, Ugiagbedion, and Ekponughe.

Edion: The Edion or elders form the village council dealing with crimes involving native laws and custom e.g. adultery, bad medicines, disobedience etc likely to disrupt the peace and progress of the community. The Edion are sacred people whoever attempts dishonouring their position would be taken to have 'fallen' the old man and it needs the sacrifice of a huge goat bought by the guilty to the Edion shrine to 'raise' him up.

The Edion have spokesmen and messengers. The spokesmen are usually selected from the brightest in their grade; while the messengers may be selected from Ugiagbedion, and from then on, attend all Edion meetings. The messengers are also responsible for sharing gifts or booties accruing from fines, seizures etc. All who have entered this senior grade in the official way, that is, by proper entrance known as IHODION are buried very respectfully at their death.

The position of Edion is that of honour and responsibility, and one leaves Ugiagbedion grade to join the Edion by contributing substantially (financially and otherwise) to the

growth and development of the community. In the past, Chief Richard E. Iduseri, Mr. Edojawerie Okharedia and Mr. Ainerumiton Oziengbe became members of the elders' council by serving as escorts to any Onojie who pays homage to the Oba of Benin. In recent times, Mr. Idahosa Obaze was admitted to the elders' council as a result of his immense contributions to the community. But the most common method is for a man to join the senior grade of Edion at the age of 60 years.

Admission into the elders' council whether by age or other means requires special ceremony known as IHODION. On the day the ceremony is performed, the applicant takes fourteen pieces of coconuts, fourteen cowries, two jars of palm wine, a plate of kolanuts, an eagle's feather, alligator pepper and other items as may be demanded by the elders. At the Ogua-Edion (elders' court), if his gifts are accepted, he kneels and he is blessed by the Edion who covers his body with native chalk. The Odionwere or his representative then gives the person the laws of dignity and responsibility, which include:

- i. From now on it is the duty of the person to uphold all the dignity of man, no defecation anywhere else besides the toilet, and the person is expected to "count ten" before any curse.
- ii. It is the person's unqualified duty to settle any dispute between man and wife in the community.

- iii. Idleness is a sin for it is the idle man who lies and commits adultery while all the men are away in the farms and other occupations.
- iv. The person must not side-track any branch found falling across the farm path etc.

In jubilation and the person having been painted with native chalk is escorted home to make merry amidst shooting of guns: he has cause to be, for he is now one of the rulers and most respected members of the community.

Ugiagbedion: The Ugiagbedion are men of war. They consist of men beyond the age of being frightened, but not too old to be physically handicapped by senility. The Ugiagbedion grade is normally not called for public duties unless such duties are beyond the Ekponughe. Its members head such major works as house building or roofing and are really the dare-devils of the community - being called upon when there is a serious matter or incident like outbreak of fire, night burglary etc. They bury the dead and head the junior grade in digging ponds. They are also responsible for the collection of materials - yams and money for celebration of Ekpo, Edion, Ehor and Igue Festivals. When levies are imposed for village development, they hold the prerogative to collect and keep such money in trust for the Community. They handle more mature problems and matters affecting the whole community. For example, during Ehor, Igue or Ekpo festivals, a representative group is formed among them to pay homage

on behalf of the community to the Oba in Benin. They also qualify to serve as escort for any Onojie in Esanland paying homage to the Oba. Appropriately, since they fully support and protect the Edion, hence the name Ugiagbedion. From the age of forty years, one is qualified to be in the Ugiagbedion grade.

Ekponughe: The Ekponughe are the street sweepers, carriers of water and the breakers of wood for the community. Their most well-known job is that of cleaning and sweeping the village square, which is usually done on every five days. They clean the roads half way to the next village, that is, to the common boundary. They are responsible for a major part of communal labour in the village and only get help from the Ugiagbedion when the job is really too much for them. This is usually on appeal to the Edion who instruct the Ugiagbedion to assist them. The cleaning and sweeping is usually done on EKEN day which happens to be the community's traditional resting day just as Sunday is to the Christians. On such EKEN day, it is forbidden to lay to rest the dead. Anyone who fails to participate in the communal labour will pay a fine of a fowl or goat depending on gravity of the offence.

Boys join this grade as soon as they are strong enough, usually from twelve years of age. Increased educational opportunities and search for greener pasture leading to rural - urban migration is having a multiplier effect on this age grade and hence the entrance to the Ekponughe grade

in particular has been slowly dropping. The Ugiagbedion grade has been severely affected as most able-bodied youths have deserted the community. The community is now inhabited by elementary school children and elderly men, breaking down the communal assistance arrangement and making life unattractive. This is evidenced by the growing grasses at the village square and other areas of the community.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Culturally, Ekekhen has nearly everything the metropolitan Benin City has. She has a vast cultural heritage, which include greetings, festivals, and marriage system.

Greetings

Character being respect, honour and dignity makes up greeting called *otue*. It is a natural law that the young one must greet the elder first. It is a taboo if the elder has to greet first. Greetings (*otue*) are peculiar ways of respect to co-equals, juniors, and elders who are held by the culture and tradition of the people.

The family greetings which identify all Benin people with their family roots are common phenomenon in Ekekhen. Thus, many people in Ekekhen maintain their family (egbe) greetings such as Lamogun which is solely for those that are of the royal lineage (egbe oba), Lagiesan (which belongs to Ezomo family), Lavbieze (associated with Iyase family), and Labo (commonly associated with Idunmwebo -royal physicians and diviners).

Festivals

The festivals in Ekekhen had meaning and bearing with origin of the community. The founders of Ekekhen came

with their experiences of the festivals held from time to time at home (Benin). Of course, they lived and took part in the various festivals before the fateful emigration to Esan land. The Esan towns which surround the community had their own festivals. Igueben community for example, celebrates UKPE (annual feast) and Ugbegun community celebrates IHUEN (new yam festival). Due to the sharp differences between the community and these neighbouring communities, Ekekhen could not adopt any of their festivals. Edion, Ehor, Igue and Ekpo festivals, which are being held in their fatherland (Benin) were imported and celebrated simultaneously with the Binis. The dates for these festivals, once fixed by the Palace in Benin are binding on all Benin towns and villages including Ekekhen.

(i) Edion: The edion festival, which is usually celebrated during the months of May/June is an occasion where the eldest age group rededicate themselves to their ancestors for their foresightedness in founding home for the present and future generations. On this day, the firstborn male child in each household cooks pounded yam to adore their ancestors; thereafter all the youths in each family group (egbe) organise themselves to eat in sequence the food so cooked in each of all the houses along their family group. Thus, a youth had the unrestricted opportunity to eat and drink along from the first to the last house in his family group (egbe). Much of the food is wasted since no one could eat through ten to fifteen houses the same type of

food one after the other. However, it is believed that even what appears wasted physically was taken by the spirit of their ancestors, so that everything is eaten by those living and the dead - which is a dramatic reunion between the living and the dead.

On the day of Edion festival, the Ugiagbedions that are qualified for the next age grade (Edion) are ushered in after performing certain rituals as earlier discussed in chapter two of this text. The Edion festival comes up triennially.

(ii) Ehor: Ehor festival is a yearly festival usually celebrated in the month of September in honour of ancestral parents. In return for their services to him, the head of a family and the household group built round it, has the moral obligation to care for their materials and spiritual welfare. It is incumbent upon him to see that they are fairly treated; and to approach his paternal ancestors on their behalf. The history of the family is retold and families rejoined in more cordial relationship. The festival strengthens the bonds of kinship. Extended families will gather at their ancestral family homes for the festival. Sons and daughters who had set up homes in other places arrive, followed by their own families. Married daughters also come with their spouses and children. It offers sons-in-law a chance to show their love and devotion to the families of their wives. They would bring bundles of yams, live stocks and palm wine. Offering of kola-nuts, white chalk, and wine are used and

are accompanied by prayers for the welfare of the families. The celebration would continue till dusk of that day.

During the Ehor festival, family heads learn to be more tolerant of their brothers and sisters. It usually last for a period of six days though economic hardship in the present times would have affected the number of days.

(iii) Igue: The end of Ehor festival ushers in Igue festival. The Igue festival also known as the Kings festival was initiated in the 14th century during the reign of Oba Ewuare the great, who reigned in Benin between 1440 and 1473. It is one of peace and light-heartedness and an occasion to remember the marriage of two sisters - Ubi and Ewere to Oba Ewuare the Great. The elder (Ubi) was a fool and when she degenerated to being a Palace jester she was led away in shame and the younger sister (Ewere) being respectable and peaceful was brought in as a wife to the Oba in her stead.

Igue festival is the festival of the Ewere leaves, a symbol of good luck and joy, a new hope for the future. On that day, early in the morning, women will process to the outskirts of the community with a stick of fire in their hands chanting "Ubirie". Later in the day, the youths mainly males, adorn themselves with dirty old rags, rub with charcoal and armed with dane guns, machetes and old sticks, as if going to war, drive away evil spirits from the city with fire bands in a procession also to the outskirts of the village. They

dance to the nearest shrub land to collect the Ewere (Holy leaves). Those that collect the Ewere leaves cut a piece of it and put it on their foreheads and giving a piece of the leaf to anyone as a mark of blessing and good luck. On their return, and with the leaves in their hand they proclaim the arrival of Ewere (peace) to the Palace singing “Ewere Ewere no Oyoyo. The women and girls waiting in anxiety, now meet them to share from the leaflets and joy of ushering in Ewere the peaceful wife in place of her elder sister Ubi who had been shamefully driven away. The costumes used for such celebration are usually deposited in the outskirts of the village, and on returning home, one is expected to bath outside at the back of the house before going in. The slogan for this festival is “Igue nan gue non omon.

(iv) Ekpo: Ekpo is a festival mainly for the youths and lasts for one day. The group has a good number of masquerades (Ekpo) which are dressed in palm fronds and a wooden head. On the day of the festival, the organisers collect yams and money from men and women of the community. These are assigned to selected women who would cook and pound yam into boils. All the youths are queued up at the Ekpo square, each with a plate to take pounded yam and soup. They are served in turns with one or more masquerades on ground to maintain orderliness. When this is done, the youths disperse to their homes. The drum is beaten to reassemble them for the end-of-season dance. The drums are beaten, the masquerades dance to tune while the audience cheer them. It is a credit to the people that amidst

civilisation trends and by mixing with other neighbouring communities they have maintained their culture uncorrupted till this day.

Marriage System

Marriage is the legal relationship between a husband and wife, which is regarded sacrosanct and holds a central place in any civilized society. The founders of Ekekhen came from different quarters and families in Benin, and thus were allowed to marry one another's daughters; but marriage was never allowed between children of families from the same quarter. Hence while the son of Edokpolor quarter could marry a daughter from Emokhua quarter and vice versa it was prohibited for a son of one family in Edokpolor quarter to marry a daughter of another family in the same Edokpolor quarter. Later the sons of Ekekhen gained acceptance and familiarity amongst other towns in Esan. Ekekhen people succeeded in marrying in and from places like Uromi, Okhue, Udo, Opoji, Ugbegun and Igueben. Some gentlemen from other towns also came to settle at Ekekhen to farm in the surrounding forests, to tap rubber, and to hold petty trades. The community grew and the intermarriage between the settlers and the aborigines continued undisturbed.

At the early stage, the marriage system in Ekekhen was very crude. When a female child is born in a family, a male of another family who wished to marry her, would quickly cut and send a log of firewood to her mother, as they say

“give warmth” to the girl who would be groomed to be his wife. This proclaims the intention of the man in the innocent child’s life. By this practice, a man was not merely older than his wife by a few years but was old enough to father her. Could this practice allow men to impose themselves on the women? This is truly the picture, for most of these early wives grew to dislike the first men in their lives and chose rather to run away from home than accept their father’s age group as husbands. Although not a regular practice, at times, a man having approached a lady for marriage, would send some young men particularly at night to trace and capture the lady to his house without going through the traditional marriage rite. The lady may be resisting the captors, but as soon as she gets to the man’s house, relatives and friends of the man continuously appeal to her, after which she may concede. But in cases where the parties agreed to wed, the husband would proceed to pay the bride price which consists of a gallon of oil, 7 tubers of yam and 7 cowries. In effect, what was actually difficult to obtain was the agreement of both parties to marry rather than the bride price, which was rather very cheap. As more men pursued fewer women for wives and more money came into circulation, the dowry (bride price) gradually rose.

The marriage system is polygamy and those who maintained monogamous homes are doing so for economic and or religious reasons. Even then, wealth was reckoned by the number of wives a man maintained and the man

who clung to one became an object of ridicule in a gathering where men talked of the strength of their families. In this arrangement, a man of 30 years could count eight wives and 50 children as members of his own family. No wonder then that a man like Uwague who had gone to court to answer to divorce case forced the proceedings to a halt when at the end of his 'case, he left the court with his followers and the District Officer (D. O's) court became virtually 'empty'.

In the contemporary Ekekhen society, marriage practices have been greatly modernised. Bride price is now paid in liquid cash instead of the traditional yams, cowries, palm oil and palm wine. Even marriage that was initially not allowed between the foreigners and the natives is now liberalized. Hence many Ibos and other tribes have married daughters of Ekekhen and built families of their own. After discreet inquiry of the intending couple, there is a day called introduction where the members of his family go to the house of the would-be wife to formally announce his intention to marry their daughter. At that meeting, kola nuts and drinks are presented; an exchange of agreement is thus established. After a mutual agreement by both parents, a date for the real traditional marriage is expected to be fixed. This may take few months from the date of introduction.

On the date of traditional marriage ceremony, the parents of the man go to the house of the would-be wife in

company of his immediate family friends and well-wishers. On the eventful day, the father of the bride presents kola nuts, drinks and others edible to welcome the parents of the bridegroom. Again, the parent of the bridegroom will formally announce the intention of their visit; in between there is merriment. The father of the bridegroom will also present kola nuts, drinks and other edibles to the parents of the bride. Thereafter the would-be wife would be invited by her parents and posed with the questions as to her consent and to identify her suitor before the audience at the ceremony. After this exercise, the father of the bridegroom presents the dowry to the bride's parents or anybody assigned with this duty. The dowry is a little token but varies from family to family. The bride's family usually request millions of Naira as a matter of procedure. In response the bridegroom will present more drinks and kola nuts to appease the bride's family. At the end of this exercise the token will be accepted by the bride's family and funny enough some amount of the money will be refunded to the bridegroom with a directive to use it to take care of his wife (their daughter).

After the payment of dowry, the marriage is by custom sealed. This is followed by betrothal to the father of the bridegroom by the father of the bride and prayers are said for the newly wedded couple. Thereafter, the bride is escorted to the house of the groom. The bride is never taken or escorted to her matrimonial home on a day not permitted by custom, such as 'eken day'. The bride is

accompanied to her groom's house by a 'page' - a small girl (who could be her sister) together with her belongings, including boxes containing her clothes, beads, etc. Some relatives and friends are also delegated to accompany her and they usually sing some traditional songs or choruses in native language as they go with her.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Although Ekekhen is historically known as camp of traders, the community gradually deviated from trading activities after some decades in their present settlement and focused on farming by planting some economic trees particularly rubber, cocoa, oil palm etc. It is generally known that Mr. Akpasubi planted large acres of rubber plantation along Ekekhen - Ebudin slope. Few years later, the rubber reached maturity and became a source of supply of planting materials to other farmers who wanted to plant the same rubber to attract the 'white' man's money. More so, Messrs Ebojie and Osagiede specialised in the propagation of oil palm seedlings. Cocoa did not show any bright future, hence only very few determinant farmers like Messrs Imafidon, Igbinoba, and Igiebor fought against the white ants to establish few acres of cocoa farm. In a few years, almost all the farmers had got one or two economic farm crops ready for harvest. Rubber needed no special technique to extract the latex and it was the most lucrative.

The market was very attractive and virtually everybody was a 'tapper' some were even tappers and buyers at the same time just to double and if possible triple their income. It was said that many teachers and other white-collar workers from neighbouring communities resigned their appointments and found their way to Ekekhen to join the

band of tappers and buyers that flooded Ekekhen from day to day to tap and buy rubber sheets and lumps. Some were trained by the ministry of agriculture and natural resources how to manage rubber, cocoa, and oil palm to greater advantage. Hence many have holdings of these crops that yield money for their needs as well as for community development. Even then, a few indigenes such as Mr. Obabuike Aibagbe and Mr. Oamen Okhoro engaged in shipping of rubber to Sapele. Naira and coins continuously flow into Ekekhen homes in their hundreds. The economic life of this camp of traders drastically improved.

The flow of naira and coins into the community brought its ills for while everyone had money, the traditional love for one another's families and the humility with which the young ones dealt with the elderly ones, gave way to dishonour, hatred and malice. All these ills aided by evil forces, dragged them to court both at Igueben Customary and Ubiaja Magistrate's Courts. Brother fought against brother and one-time peaceful Ekekhen became a fertile ground for the policemen to carry out investigation of cases. Unfortunately, they were ignorant in using the proceeds from rubber and other farming activities to sending their children to school rather they lent money to people from neighbouring communities particularly Igueben to sending their own children to school. Today there are no more rubber trees in Ekekhen: a community that was once very rich in rubber crops. The present generation should focus on re-planting economic trees for improved economic situation of the community.

As rubber and other economic crops in Ekekhen were gradually fading away, some members of the community retraced their steps and went back to trading and other businesses. In the 70s to 90s, garri business was at boom in Ekekhen to a point that a single trader will have a lorry and in some cases two lorries load of garri within two weeks to markets in Northern Nigeria, particularly Kaduna, Zaria, Kano and Sokoto. Prominent among these garri traders were Mr. Jacob Okpuye Elimihe (popularly known as 4:40), Mrs. Margret Elimihe (popularly known as madam 8:8), Late Mr. Godday Uwuidia (popularly known as G:O), Mrs Atohan Obhiowu (popularly known as 202:20), and Mr. Itua Peter Ifionayi (popularly known as C:2). Those with remarkable achievement in their line of business but have passed on to glory include Mr. Anthony Osazuwa, Mr. Isaac Ifada, Mr. Akhere Agah, Mr. John Igbinoba, Mr. Sunday Agho, Mr. Isaiah Irabor to mention but few.

In recent times, Ekekhen sons and daughters are engaged in other lines of business such as sawmilling, hoteling, civil and wood works, etc. Those prominent in these lines of business are Mr. Paul Ogah, Mr. Bright Ighedosa, Mr. Idahosa Obazee, Hon. Osarenkhoe Obhiewu, Mr. Omoregie Obaze and Mr. Joseph Aibangbe. It is worthy of note that some Ekekhen sons and daughters have also ventured into international business thereby earning foreign exchange. One of such persons is Mr. Prince Ben Ekhatior.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Education is an inseparable part of human life. It is the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits. It is a social institution through which members of a society are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. Education socializes children into society by teaching cultural values and norms. It equips them with the skills needed to become productive members of society. This way, it stimulates economic growth and raises awareness of local and global problems.

Education could be divided into three types- formal, non-formal, and informal education. Formal education happens in a complex institutional framework. Such frameworks have a chronological and hierarchical order. For instance, the modern schooling system has classes based on the student's age and progress, all the way from primary school to university. Formal education is usually controlled and guided by the government. It is normally compulsory up to a certain age. Non-formal and informal education take place outside the formal schooling system. Non-formal education is a middle ground. Like formal education, it is organized, systematic, and carried out with a clear purpose in mind. Examples are tutoring, fitness classes, and the scouting movement. Informal education, on the other hand,

happens in an unsystematic way through daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Unlike formal and non-formal education, there is usually no designated authority figure responsible for teaching. Informal education is present in many settings. It happens throughout one's life, mostly in a spontaneous way. This is how children learn their mother tongue from their parents or how people learn to prepare a dish by cooking together.

The focus of this text is on formal education, which to the founders of Ekekhen community was very crude. The people resisted the first white men who wished to stay and live with them due to the ambience and blessing of having many streams around the village. They dreaded the Europeans who they thought were always there for slavery. Until the Europeans won their confidence, parents would hide in bushes around the school to watch their children at school with their indigenously made firearm to fight if the 'white men' engaged in enslavement of their dear ones. They hesitated in sending their children to school until 'black' men were teachers in the school.

In 1944, Rev. Parsons then based at Ekpoma visited the elders of the community and told them of his wish to establish a church and school for them and their children. Although the elders initially resisted the move, they later supported the idea, which led to the establishment of St. Peters Anglican School (Primary School). There was no secondary school in Ekekhen. Early elites of the community

attained their secondary education from schools established in neighboring communities such as Igueben, Ebelle, Ogwa, Uromi, Ekpoma, Opoji, Irrua, Ubiaja, Ewohimi to mention but few. But in 1980 when Alhaji Shehu Shagari was the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Professor Ambrose Alli as Governor of Bendel State, Ekekhen Secondary School Ekekhen was established and built by community effort at a cost of over Five Hundred Thousand Naira (N500,000.00). But few years later, the school was closed down for lack of proper funding, and the community returned to the status quo on secondary education.

As the community opens up to formal education, many elites have emerged in the community. Among the first-generation elites by classifications are Chief Richard E. Iduseri, Mr. Luke O. Odiase, Mr. Matthew A. Uwagboe, Mr. Thomas O. Igbinedion, Mr. Osarenren F. Iyare, Mr. Andrew E. Akenbor, Mrs. Esther Enibhakpokpo Nee Iyare, Mr. Sadoh E. Okonofua, Mr. Mike Aigbangbe, Mr. John E. Ojeruwmesese, Mr. Peter Ohenhen, Mr. Pius U. Agazuma etc. The second-generation has Mr. Uleleze Ekhaton, Mr. Timothy Uwagboe, Chief Jerry Osifoh, Mrs Mabel Uwagboe, Mr. Aigbe Ifionayi, Mr. Pulley Uwagboe, Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri, Mr. Monday Omo Odigie, Dr. Victor Ihuezor Ekhaton, Mr. Sam Obaze, Prof. Festus Ikpotokin, Engr (Prof.) Osadolor O. Odia, Mrs Eunice Okogun (Nee Iduseri), Mrs Juliana O. Idode (Nee Okonofua), Mr. Ikhine Godday Uwuidia, Mr. John A. Ibadin, Mr. Minister Aisha,

Cletus O. Akenbor

Mr. Elvis Iduseri, Ms Maria Aisha, Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor, Mr. Aigbedion A. Ifionayi, Engr. Lucky Iyare, etc.

In the current generation, Ekekhen community has produced many elites. Time and space would fail me to list them all, but permit me to mention Dr. Augustine S. Akenbor, Dr. Peter A. Akhator, Dr. Osayomore Ikpotokin, Dr. Solomon Agazuma, Mr. Sunday Obazee, Mr. Desmond O. Osemwegie, Mr. Clarence E. Omokaro, Barr. Sunny Elimihe, Eng. Sunday Agho, Mr. Augustine Iduseri, Barr. Godwin Ikpotokin, Barr. Elvis Iyamo, Mr. Maifuwa Aibagbe, Mr. Abel Osadaye, Mr. Lewis Uwudia, Mr. Isaac Irabor Ogbomode, Mr. Pius Imafidon Ogbomode, Late Samuel Alika, Late Pius Osemwegie, Late Dr. Blackie Odia, and Late David Oboh Adaho.

Through formal education, dedication and commitment to duties, many Ekekhen sons and daughters have made giant strides in their areas of endeavours. For instance, in the banking sector is Mr. Sam Obaze (former managing director of equity bank), health sector is Dr. Sam Idumwonyi (medical practitioner in the United States), finance sector is Mr. Maifuwa Aibangbe (finance and investment consultant), educational sector - Prof. Festus Ikpotokin, Prof. Osadolor O. Odia, and Prof. Cletus O. Akenbor, legal sector is Barr. Sunny Elimihe, engineering is Engr. Sunday Agho, and in politics and government are Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri and Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor.

Nevertheless, in recent times, the desire for greener pasture in foreign countries has become the order of the day. Many young men and women have migrated to countries like Italy, Spain, Ireland, Germany, England, Canada, United States of America etc to have a new phase of life. While this development no doubt has increased the wealth and economic status of the community, it is regrettable that many Ekekhen sons and daughters would abandon their educational pursuit (even at 300 or 400 level) in the University and migrate to Europe. The situation today is so worst to the point that only very few sons and daughters born in Ekekhen are pursuing university education. Regrettably, when job opportunities are available for graduates in the federal or state civil service, police service commission, companies, banks etc, hardly anyone is found to be qualified in Ekekhen. If this continues without check, Ekekhen would have nothing to contribute to the educational and political development of our dear nation (Nigeria), and this will not be a good legacy for the unborn generations.

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Members of Ekekhen community play active role in Nigeria politics. While the male folks are actively involved in political development, the female folks seem to be alien to politics both at the Local, State and National levels. They demonstrate high respect to the age-longed tradition that the role of women is restricted to the kitchen.

In this text, the participation of members of Ekekhen community in the politics of Nigeria is addressed under different political dispensations:

Pre-Independence Era: Nigeria gained a degree of self-rule in 1954. Prior to the Nigeria Independence in 1960, and in the build-up to the 1959 national election, there were local elections in 1955 to elect members to the Council Areas, and Ekekhen community was named as a constituency which qualifies her to elect a candidate into the Western Ishan District Council Area with headquarters at Ebelle. There were three political parties at that time namely; the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led by Nnamdi Azikiwe; the Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello; and the Action Group (AG) led by Obafemi Awolowo. But only two of these political parties (NCNC and AG) were very prominent in Southern

Nigeria, and Ekekhen had qualified candidates (Chief Richard E. Iduseri and Mr. Luke O. Odiase) in AG and NCNC respectively to contest the election, and the AG candidate Chief Richard E. Iduseri defeated the NCNC candidate Mr. L. O. Odiase to become the first man to represent Ekekhen in the council.

First Republic Era: With the approach of Nigeria independence, power over the Regions was transferred to Nigerian-born citizens with Sir Ahmadu Bello as the Premier of Northern Region with its capital in Kaduna, Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the Premier of Western Region with its capital in Ibadan, and Sir Michael Okpara as Premier of Eastern Region with its capital in Enugu. In 1959, a new council (Central Ishan District Council) with headquarters at Igueben was created and local elections to the Central Ishan District Council were to be held, and as usual, Ekekhen was to produce a candidate for election into the new council. Chief Richard E. Iduseri again emerged to contest on the platform of Action Group (AG) with a strong opponent of the same political party from Igueben, Mr. R. E. Oaikhina. This division was capable of ceding electoral victory to the NCNC's candidate but Chief Anthony Enahoro who was of the Action Group and the Minister of Home Affairs in the Regional Assembly stepped in for settlement and Chief Iduseri stepped down for his opponent.

During the national election of 1959, no political party was able to win the majority, hence, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) collapsed her structure with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) to form a national government with Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe as the Governor-General. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons was later changed to the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC). In 1963 when Nigeria became a Republic, Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe became the President and Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was the Prime Minister. A new region known as the Mid-Western Region was created from the Western Region with its headquarters in Benin City, bringing the total number of regions to four.

Contested elections and political turbulence in the Western Region ended Nigeria's First Republic in 1966 with the overthrow of the government by the Nigerian army. A unitary style of government was subsequently decreed into law. Six months after a counter-coup, the country was drawn into a civil war between federal forces and Biafran forces (Eastern Region), which lasted from 1967 to 1970. Following the assassination of Nigerian military Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed in 1976, his successor General Olusegun Obasanjo initiated the transition process to terminate military rule in 1979.

Second Republic Era: With the termination of military rule in 1979, a new constitution was drafted, which saw the Westminster system of government, which was previously

used in the First Republic. This was jettisoned for an American-style (Presidential system). The 1979 Constitution mandated that political parties and cabinet positions reflect the "federal character" of the nation. Political parties were required to be registered in at least two-thirds of the states, and several political parties such as National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Greater Nigerian People's Party (GNPP), Nigeria Advance Party (NAP), Nigerian People's Party (NPP), and People's Redemption Party (PRP) were registered.

In the 1979 general elections, Alhaji Shehu Shagari won as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the platform of National Party of Nigeria (NPN) while Professor Ambrose Alli was elected the Executive Governor of Bendel State on the platform of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN).

It is however not on records that Ekekhen sons or daughters contested or actively participated in the politics of 1979. But in the 1983 general elections, Chief Ogiewmuyi Joseph Agazuma played a very active role in the political space on the platform of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), and contested as House Member representing Okpebholo South Constituency in the then Bendel State House of Assembly. He however lost to Barr. Esangbedo of Igueben who contested on the platform of the Unity Party of Nigeria (NPN). At this time, Professor Ambrose Alli, the incumbent Governor who re-contested on the platform of the same political party, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) lost to

Chief Samuel Ogbemudia of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), while on the same political party (NPN), Alhaji Shehu Shagari was returned elected as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Barely five months of governance by the elected officers of the 1983 general elections, military intervention took place, precisely on December 31, 1983. Major General Muhammadu Buhari, became the military leader of the new government, citing charges of corruption and administrative incompetence as reasons for military intervention. President Shehu Shagari was placed under house arrest, and several of his cabinet members were either jailed or exiled.

Third Republic Era: Having overthrown General Mohammadu Buhari in 1985, few years later, General Ibrahim Babangida started making plans for the transition to the third republic. He legalized the formation of political parties, and in 1991 formed two-party system - the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe as National Chairman and the National Republican Convention (NRC) with Chief Tom Ikimi as National Chairman ahead of the 1992 general elections. After the cancellations of the 1992 presidential primaries in which Shehu Yar'Adua emerged as a presidential candidate for SDP, Kingibe resigned his Chairmanship position of SDP and presented himself as presidential candidate on the platform of SDP although he later became a presidential

running mate to Chief MKO Abiola. In the same year, the national leadership of the two political parties was restructured with Chief Anthony Anenih as National Chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Dr. Ahmed Kusamotu as National Chairman of the National Republican Convention (NRC). There were democratically elected members of the National Assembly and the States Houses of Assembly including elected State Governors during which Chief Odegie Oyegun became the Executive Governor of Edo State. The third republic was however not fully democratic as there was no democratically elected civilian president. The presidential election was postponed until 12 June 1993 due to political unrest and the elections, which everyone believed was won by Chief MKO Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was later annulled by the president, General Ibrahim Babangida. This action threw the country into serious political quagmire and as such, General Ibrahim Babangida stepped aside as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and an interim national government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan was formed.

After three months, General Sani Abacha became Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria after Chief Ernest Shonekan was forced to resign on 7th November 1993. General Sani Abacha disbanded the two political parties (SDP and NRC) and came up with five new political parties, United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), Grassroot Democratic Party (GDP), and

Committee for National Consensus (CNC). He also dismissed the elected civilian governors and placed a military administrator in charge of each State. In his regime, the following military administrators served in Edo State: Colonel Mohammed Abul-Salam Onuka (1993-1994); Colonel Bassey Asuquo (1994-1996), and Group Captain Baba Adamu Iyam (1996-1998).

In September, 1996, General Sani Abacha graciously created Igueben Local Government Area from Esan Central Local Government Area during the administration of Baba Adamu Iyam as military administrator of Edo State, and an illustrious son of Ekekhen- Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri was appointed as sole administrator of the newly created local government council. Without any iota of doubt, this appointment was as a result of the exceptional leadership qualities of our son in public service delivery. As the saying goes “the reward of hard work is more work”. Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri was later rewarded for his outstanding performance as sole administrator of Igueben Local Government Council by the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha in 1997 by appointing him the Katsina State Electoral Commissioner.

In the build-up to the presidential election of 1998, it became very clear that all but one of the five registered political parties adopted General Sani Abacha as consensus candidate for the presidential elections. But on June 8th

1998, General Sani Abacha died in the early hours of the day. The third republic could thus be described as half military and half civilian (hybrid government).

Fourth Republic Era: Following the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998, his successor General Abdulsalami Abubakar initiated the transition which heralded Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. The ban on political activities was lifted, and political prisoners were released from detention facilities. The fourth republic is characterized by multi-party system and at inception of this era political parties, such as the People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) were formed and general elections were set for April 1999. In the widely monitored 1999 election, former military ruler General Olusegun Obasanjo was elected on the platform of PDP and he was sworn-in on 29th May 1999 as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In the present political dispensation, Ekekhen sons and daughters have become more enlightened and this has greatly contributed to their involvement in party politics. At this time women are in the political space competing with men for elective positions. During the 1999 local government council elections, many Ekekhen sons participated and contested to clinch their party ticket and

eventually elected to secure the seat for ward 1 in the Council. Mr. Smart Agho clinched the PDP ticket and Osarenkhoe Obhiowu was the flagbearer for the ANPP. In the House of Assembly elections of the same year, members of Ekekhen community were fully involved. Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor contested for the party (ANPP) ticket to be a member representing Igueben Local Government in the State House of Assembly but lost to Mr. Kenneth Imasuen of Ebelle. In the 2003 elections, Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor also contested for the party for the same position. Although he won the election, he was however advised by elders of the party to step down for Mr. Ogbejele of Igueben. As a strong party loyalist, he accepted it in good faith. Then in 2007, Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor contested again for the same position on the platform of the People Democratic Party (PDP), and at this time he did not only secure the party ticket but was declared winner of the election to represent Igueben Local Government in the State House of Assembly. In 2011 general elections, Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor was returned elected to the House. Since then, he has been actively involved in the politics of Edo State. Presently Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor is the assistant chief of staff to the Edo State Government House.

More so, in 2019, Hon. Henshaw Elimihe, a former personal assistant to Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor was elected councilor, ward one, on the platform of PDP. In September 2023, he was re-elected to the same position as a

staunch PDP member. An election, which he strongly contested with others including another member of Ekekhen community, Mr. Augustin Omoregbe of Labour Party.

Other notable members of Ekekhen Community that have made landmark achievement in politics include Hon. Queen Ekhaton who was appointed as a supervisory councilor of ward one and later senior special assistant (SSA) to the Executive Governor of Edo State, Mr. Godwin Obaseki. It is interesting to note that in the September 2023 local government council elections in Edo State, Hon. Queen Ekhaton strongly contested to clinch the party ticket for Chairmanship of Igubeben Local Government Area. Although she lost the ticket, her bold step is highly commendable. More Ekekhen daughters are expected in the political space. Also very notable in the political scene are Sunday Igbinowu who has been ward one Chairman of PDP; Bright Ighedosa who has been ward one leader in different political parties including the labour party, Omoregie Obaze who is presently ward one leader in the All Progressive Congress (APC), Sunday Omokhegbe who was one time a supervisory councilor of ward one.

The participation of members of Ekekhen community in the political development of Nigeria is not un-noticed. As a testimony to this, on 27th January, 2020 the Ukpogo-Odeze road constructed by Godwin Obaseki led administration was commissioned by the Deputy Governor, Comrade

Cletus O. Akenbor

Philip Shaibu. Also, the State Government has re-constructed the only primary school in the community. More government infrastructural projects are expected in the community with the sustenance and continuous improvement in political participation.

CHAPTER SEVEN**FIRSTLINGS**

Firstling refers to the first Ekekhen son or daughter that made a remarkable achievement in his or her area of endeavour. The intention is however not for self-aggrandisement but an encouragement to the present and future generations of Ekekhen. The table below summarized fifty (50) achievements and the firstlings.

S/N	Firstling	Name
1.	First Odionwere	Pa Osa Ekhator
2.	Oldest Person that ever Lived	Mama Edowaye Odukpaye-151 years
3.	First Car Owner	Pa Enobakhare Igharo
4.	First Mud House with Zinc Roof	Pa Ebojie Edokpolor
5.	First Modern (Block) House	Mr Paul Osazuwa
6.	First Upstairs Building	Pa Ekhator Esanbor
7.	First to Travel Abroad for Studies	Dr. Victor Ihuezor Ekhator (Industrial Chemistry)
8.	First to Travel Abroad for Greener Pasture	Ms. Charity Ifada
9.	First International Footballer	Mr.Victor Igbinoba

S/N	Firstling	Name
10.	First University Degree Holder	Mr. Matthew A.Uwagbo, BA(Hons) History, University of Lagos
11.	First HND Holder	Eng. Ehigiamusor Humprey Iduseri, Electrical/Electronic Engineering, Auchi Polytechnic Auchi
12.	First N.C.E Holder	Mr. Andrew E. Akenbor, Agricultural Science, College of Education, Warri
13.	First Principal	Mr. Matthew A.Uwagbo
14.	First Head Master	Mr. Andrew E. Akenbor
15.	First Professor	Prof. Festus O. Ikpotokin
16.	First Teacher	Mr. Osarenren F. Iyare
17.	First Female Teacher	Mrs. Esther Enihbakpokpo Esemonkhae Nee Iyare
18.	First Lawyer	Hon. Barrister Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor
19.	First Chartered Accountant	Rev. Austin Ikhiwu
20.	First Nursing Officer	Dr. Sam Idumwonyi
21.	First Medical Doctor	Dr. Sam Idumwonyi
22.	First Engineer	Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri,
23.	First Banker	Mr. Pulley Uwagboe
24.	First Architect	Arch. Ayo Igbinoba
25.	First Female Architect	Arch. (Mrs) Omonlowa Bright (Nee Akhator)
26.	First Agricultural Officer (ADP)	Mr. Philip Ogbeide

S/N	Firstling	Name
27.	First Bursar	Mr. Uleleze Ekhaton, Annunciation Catholic College (ACC) Irrua
28.	First Police Officer	Mr. Mike Aibangbe
29.	First State Security Service (S.S.S) Officer	Mr. Peter O. Ohenhen
30.	First Army Officer	Pa. Omondiare Aga
31.	First Custom Officer	Mr. Joseph O. Aighekwonmwin
32.	First Immigration Officer	Mr. Henry Igbinedion
33.	First Prison Officer	Mr. Matthew Igbinedion
34.	First Pastor	Pastor Iyamu Osawe Barnabas
35.	First General Overseer and Deliverance Minister	Apostle Osaro Odia
36.	First Managing Director of Bank	Mr. Sam Obaze, MD Equity Bank
37.	First Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Staff	Mr. Augustine Iduseri
38.	First Shell Staff	Mr. John E. Ojelumese
39.	First Senior Member of the Nigerian Judiciary System	Mr. Sadoh E. Okonofua, Vice President, Ebelle Customary Court
40.	First Councilor-Ekekhen Constituency	Chief Richard E. Iduseri, Ekekhen Representative in Western Ishan District Council

S/N	Firstling	Name
41.	First Chieftaincy Title Holder	Chief Agazuma Ogbeide
42.	First State House of Assembly Member	Hon (Barr.) Kingsley O. Ehigiamusor
43.	First Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Governor	Comrade Queen Ekhaton
44.	First Local Government Chairman (Sole Administrator)	Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri
45.	Highest Political Appointee	Engr. Humphrey E. Iduseri-Electoral Commissioner, Katsina State
46.	First to be congratulated by the State Governor with a handshake for excellent academic performance	Engr. (Prof.) Osadolor O. Odiya
47.	First to make First Class in a University	Dr. Victor I. Ekhaton (First Class in Industrial Chemistry)
48.	First to score 100% in JAMB Examination	Dr. Peter A. Akhaton, 100% in Mathematics
49.	First Holder of two Ph.Ds	Prof. Cletus O. Akenbor, Ph.D-Accounting; Ph.D - Business Administration
50.	First Executive Chairman, Ekeken Think Tank Association (ETTA)	Comrade Fred O. Iduseri

CHAPTER EIGHT

EKEKHEN TRAIN SUB-STATION

To the glory of God, development in the transportation sector of the Nigerian economy has extended to Ekekhen through the train sub-station. The Ujevwu–Itakpe railway is a standard gauge railway in Nigeria that connects the port city of Warri to the inland town of Itakpe with various sub-stations including Ekekhen sub-station. The primary purpose of the railway was to supply the Ajaokuta Steel Mill with iron ore and coal. In 1987, the Federal Government began the construction of Railway under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida who left office on August 27, 1993. The project was not in the priority list of projects under the regimes of late General Sani Abacha and General Abdulsalam Abubakar. But the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo gave some attention to the project, though could not implement it substantially. Also, no major progress was recorded on the implementation of the rail project under the administrations of the late President Umaru Yar'Adua and former President Goodluck Jonathan.

When the Ekekhen train sub-station was to be constructed, farmlands belonging to some members of the community notably, Akenbor, Osifoh, Iseguan, Okonofua, Iduseri, Asikagbon, Obaretin, Ogieriahki, etc were acquired by the

Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), and certain financial compensation was paid to the individuals and the community as a whole. In September, 2020 during the Administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari the rail infrastructure was inaugurated and there was jubilation in Ekekhen when the first train stopped to pick and alert passengers. The economic life of the community has improved as a result of the sub-station and few indigenes of the community have been gainfully employed in the sub-station.

While the excitement of a train station remains indelible in the heart of the people, little did they know that development in a community also comes with its ills. On January 7th 2023, suspected kidnappers armed with AK 47s, invaded the train station shooting sporadically and abducted scores of intending passengers in the waiting hall, including the station manager and one other staff of the corporation. There was a great hue and cry in the community. As a result of the incident, the Executive Governor of Edo State represented by the Deputy Governor Comrade Philip Shaibu visited Ekekhen train sub-station on the 8th of January 2023 to garner first-hand information of the unfortunate incidence. Members of the community in collaboration with the State Government and security agencies swung into action in bringing the perpetrators to book, and later alleged that some youths in Esanland were paid N20,000 each and given cows to allow the kidnappers who paraded themselves as herders, access into their

forests. Also, some traditional rulers in the area were alleged to be aware of the operations of the kidnappers, which led to the arrest of some traditional rulers and youths in neighbouring communities around the railway. It was reliably gathered that some members of vigilante groups and hunters are also informants to the kidnappers. But no one in Ekekhen was a culprit. This was confirmed by some of the rescued victims who spoke to Crime Guard on the condition of anonymity.

One of 12 victims earlier rescued said and I quote:

“The abductors were six-armed men. They announced their presence with sporadic shootings. I was to travel by train to Warri, Delta State to see my ailing father. Immediately they came, they started firing. The Abuja-Kaduna train attack incident came to my memory and I concluded that my end had come. When they kidnapped us, we walked about six hours into the forest, before arriving at one of the camps, which they referred to as a cell. While we were there, we were moved to different places because our captors were informed that the Police and Army were combing the forest for us. I understand the Hausa dialect very well and I overheard them saying one of the vigilantes told them that the Special Force would strike very early in the morning. The second time they said they (Special Force) were in the forest and that they had identified one of the camps. This

second information was brought by a vigilante, while the third informant was a hunter”.

When it became obvious that there was a mole among the rescue operators, Crime Guard reliably gathered that operatives of the Edo State Intelligence Surveillance Team with other security agencies embarked on a rescue mission on January 14, 2023, without hunters and members of the vigilante group who were assumed to be conversant with the forest terrain. It was 9 pm. Coincidentally, the kidnappers were taking four victims whose families had paid for ransom, to a designated point, from where their relatives would pick them. Meanwhile, Crime Guard gathered that relatives of the victims were directed by the kidnappers to wait far away from where they would drop the freed persons: a male and two females.

Then, all of a sudden, the operatives opened fire from their General Multipurpose Machine Guns, jolting the kidnappers. One of the rescued victims said, a voice, supposedly from the leader of the Police team, was heard shouting “move to the road side and lie flat, else, you will be killed”. However, the operatives were careful not to fire at them in order not to shoot at the kidnapped victims. The kidnappers were said to have escape to Amiedokhian and Ugboha axis, only to discover that they were surrounded. In the confusion, Crime Guard gathered that the kidnappers used the Railway Station Manager and another victim as shield and fled into the forest, while

others were forced to leave the rest victims, from where they were picked by the operatives and taken to the Police Hospital Cottage in the Government Reserved Area (GRA), Benin City, for medical attention and rehabilitation.

The twelve rescued captives who hail from Edo, Delta, Imo and Kogi States, comprised seven females and five males among who was a teenager. They were: Julius Iyore, 25; Mowoe Marian, 42; Egwuje Precious, 28; Ann Benson, 42; Emmanuel Esieba, 67; Favour Ulugo, 18; Obehi Enaibre, 39; Christian Iyere, 33; Awolotu- Smart Faith, 23; Eunice' Esiabe, 56; Ehimena Akhere and Aguilera Beatrice. One of the rescued victims, Julius Iyore, was discovered to have earlier been kidnapped by the same gang. He was released after 15 days in the kidnappers' den, after an unspecified amount was paid as ransom. Back in their safe haven in the forest, the kidnappers put a call to families of the remaining two victims with them, accusing them of alerting the Police. A relative of one of them said, "They told us we would pay for the ransom they did not get from those rescued by the Police. We were negotiating for N2 million, initially. But they increased it to N20 million".

Not done, the operatives were said to have further combed the vast forest which was discovered to link communities like Ugboha, Ilushu, and Udo. Unable to withstand the heat of the operatives, the kidnappers were said to have released the railway station manager and another passenger few

days after the 12 others were released. One of them was reportedly found in Ewu area of the state.

During his visit to the Police Cottage hospital in Benin City where the rescued victims were receiving treatment, Governor Godwin Obaseki confirmed that information reaching him shows that some traditional rulers in the area do not obey and respect government decision to discourage open grazing by herders in their forests, and therefore instructed that those traditional rulers should be investigated and anyone found to be harbouring the criminal herders will have questions to answer. While he applauded the security agents in the state for proving themselves to be formidable, he however frowned at the deployment of only one policeman at the train station, considering the Abuja-Kaduna train attack, last year. As a result of the incidence, the Nigeria Railway Corporation, closed down Ekekhen sub-station only to reopen about five months later.

CHAPTER NINE

EKEKHEN THINK TANK ASSOCIATION (ETTA)

Ekekhen Think Tank Association is the brain-child of four illustrious sons of Ekekhen-Comrade Fred O. Iduseri, Prof. Cletus O. Akenbor, Engr. Sunday E. Agho and Barr. Sunny Elimihe. The Association was given birth on the 21st of September, 2020 when these notable men in a conference phone call shared their individual experiences about the state of the community (Ekekhen) with overgrown grasses and high migration of youth to Europe without a University education. The question that arises from the brainstorming was whether the community should be left the way it is? Of course no, the four responded affirmatively. Based on this, various suggestions were made on how to improve the educational, economic, social and political condition of the community, hence the birth of Ekekhen Think Tank Association (ETTA).

With the birth of Ekekhen Think Tank Association, a WhatsApp group was created to connect sons and daughters of Ekekhen both home and abroad within the age limit not exceeding sixty (60) years and initiate them into the dream. Some early members of the Association are Dr. Solomon Agazuma, Mrs Odion Ojiegbede, Mr. Maifuwa Aibangbe, Mr. Fred Obaretin, Arch. Iria Ekhaton, Barr.

Godwin Ikpotokin, Mr. Aaron Okonufua, Comrade Queen Ekhaton, Mr. Augustin Iduseri, Ernest Osaro Ogbeiwe, Prince Ben Ekhaton, Mr. Lucky Iduseri, Dr. Osayomore Ikpotokin, and Mr. Andrew Igbinoba. Having secured reasonable membership, the Executives and Board of Trustees of the Association were formed with Comrade Fred Iduseri as the Executive Chairman while Mr. Andrew Igbinoba and Eminence Prince Ben Ekhaton became the Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of the Board of Trustees. But when Mr. Andrew Igbinoba was not forthcoming, the Vice Chairman, Eminence Prince Ben Ekhaton became Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Association is formally registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (C.A.C).

In December 2020, there was a preliminary flag off of the Association at the residence of the Chairman, Comrade Fred O. Iduseri. But on the 27th of December 2021, there was a formal flag off of the Association. Some Ekekhen sons and daughters both home and abroad were in attendance. Before the flag off, representatives of the Association paid a courtesy visit to the elders' council to announce to them the birth of Ekekhen Think Tank Association and her mission. At that meeting, having listened to the plea made by the elders' council for financial support to enable them pay a courtesy visit to the Oba of Benin few days to come, the sum of three hundred and fifty thousand naira (N350,000) was released by the young Association to enable the elders' council accomplish her mission.

On the day of the flag off proper, the Association unveiled her mission, which is the development of Ekekhen to the general public, and promised to undertake some laudable infrastructural projects in the community such as the installation of street lamps, construction of link road to the train station, provision of borehole water, university scholarship to students among others.

Installation of Street Lamps

As part of the development effort of Ekekhen Think Tank Association, a decision was reached to install street lamps in the community. Voluntary contributions were made by sons and daughters of Ekekhen at home and in the diaspora who believed in the course. A total sum of about N23 million was raised. The lamps were acquired and other fittings and accessories were bought including the replacement of the wooden poles in the community to concrete poles. Light committee was set up to monitor and supervise the successful installation of the street lamps. Members of the committee comprises Hon. Henshaw Elimihe (Chairman), Mr. Bright Ighedosa, and Mr. Omoregie Obazee. In the course of installing the concrete poles, prior to the installation of the street lamps, members of the committee were up and doing to accomplishing this task. Mr. Felix I. Odia also played a very prominent role in the entire process.

On Monday 11th July 2022, while Hon. Henshaw Elimihe as usual was supervising the installation of the concrete poles, Mr. Bright Ighedosa and Mr. Omoregie Obaze were busy with other assignments in accomplishing the same task. Unfortunately, it was reported that in the course of discharging the assignment, a heated argument ensued between Hon. Henshaw Elimihe and Mr. Godfrey Enobahkare which resulted to an assault on the person of Hon. Henshaw. This odious and reprehensible act of Mr. Godfrey Enobahkare was totally condemned by members of Ekekhen Think Tank Association including members of the Elders Council. Mr. Godfrey Enobahkare was however arrested by the police to serve as deterrence to other members of the community. It was indeed a very sad day in the entire community. Ekekhen Think Tank Association, hereby express her profound gratitude to Hon. Henshaw Elimihe for the sacrifices made and his doggedness to ensuring that the street lamps project was not abandoned as an aftermath of the crisis.

Members of Ekekhen Think Tank Association that contributed to this project are listed below:

1. Mr. Erazele Ross Agazuma
2. Hon. Elimihe Henshaw
3. Mr Friday Uwuidia Omongiate
4. Mr Saturday Oamen
5. Mr. Charles Ogah
6. Ms Matilda Uwagboe
7. Mrs Lillian Iduseri Olumese
8. Mrs Eunice Ehigiamusor Asuma

9. Mr Lucky Iduseri
10. Mr Innocent Idahosa Obaze
11. Mr Augustine Iduseri
12. Mr. Elimihe Idoni Uloko
13. Mr. Uwuidia Godspower Itoghomwen
14. Mrs Edith Iduseri
15. Mr Aimurie Nduka Agazuma
16. Prof. Cletus Akenbor
17. Arch. Iria Ekhator
18. Mr. Omonregie Obaze
19. Mr. Bright Ighedosa
20. Mr Maifuwa Aibangbe
21. Mr. Eugene Okoruwa Ogbeide
22. Mr Billy Iduseri
23. Mrs Elimihe Akhere Ogbona
24. Mr Godwin Obaze
25. Marvis Iduseri
26. Mrs Christiana Iduseri Odugba
27. Apostle Osaro Odia
28. Chief Fred Induseri
29. Prince Kennedy Obaretin
30. Mr. Edokpolor Richie Sunday
31. Mrs. Mary Goddy Uwuidia
32. Mr Lucky Agazuma
33. Mrs Blessing Obaze Ataga
34. Mr Friday Okosun.
35. Mr Amase Igbinedion
36. Mr. Okoro Ekhator
37. Mr Aigbe Oriakhi
38. Mrs Ehis Edetanlen Omoragbon
39. Mr Emmanuel Obabueki
40. Mr. Lucky Ogbodu Ighedosa

41. Mr Asikagbon Joseph
42. Mr Godfrey Odigie Igbinedion
43. Mr Ernest Ogbewi
44. Mr Bernard Obabueki
45. Mr Scoller Ohenhen
46. Ms Vero Ehigiamusor
47. Dr Chris Adams
48. Barr Sonnie Elimihe
49. Mrs Odion Ehigiamusor Ojigbede
50. Ms Mercy Igbinedion
51. Mr Michael Ekponughe
52. Mrs Esther Uwagboe Uduebor
53. Mr Emmanuel Adudu
54. Mr Etiosa Ehijie
55. Ms Rose Edeghoghon Okotor
56. Mr Lucky Igbinedion
57. Mr Akenbor Osaretin Polesco
58. Mrs Flora Obabueki Okhuakhua
59. Mr. Osakpanmwan Oriakhi
60. Mr Fred Akugbe Obaretin
61. Mr Unurode Friday Elimihe
62. Mr. Ekpudu Benjamin
63. Mr Osamonyi Parody Omoragbon
64. Mr Aigbe Oriakhi
65. Mrs Queen Elimihe Imade
66. Mr. Uyi G. Omoruyi
67. Mr. Eugene Idumwonyi
68. Mr Aibangbe Okoedo Nicholas
69. Mrs. Monica Iduseri Ehimemen
70. Mr. Barrister Ifeanayi
71. Engr. Sunday Efosa Agho
72. Mr. Prince Ben Ekhatator

73. Mrs Ejiofor Elizabeth Ekwase
74. Mr. Ogbewi Gavin Osas
75. Mr Igbinedion Francis
76. Mr Sunday Ogbodu
77. Mr Felix Idegbor Odia
78. Ms Osifo Osaheruwmen
79. Mr Elisha Ighedosa
80. Ms Ehijie Edna
81. Ms Stella Ebhowe
82. Mr Anthony Hammer Apama
83. Mr Victor Igbinoba
84. Mr Osaigbovo Kindness Usiriedo
85. Mr Godwin Akenbor
86. Ms Doris Igbinedion
87. Mr. Osazemide Agho
88. Ms Lydia Ogbodu
89. Ms Ehinon Ogbodu
90. Mr. Efour Obaseki
91. Uyimonmwan Osabhahiemwen
92. Mr Augustine Okoro
93. Mr Aaron Okonofua
94. Mr Sunday Stanley Ekhatator
95. Mr Aituayuwa Smith Osadaye
96. Ms Itohan Sunday
97. Mr Obhiebo Paul
98. Mr Asikagbon Ehiosun Sylvanus
99. Mr Osadaye Michael
100. Barr Ighedosa Ehigiamusor
101. Engr. Obosa Ehigiamusor
102. Mr Richard Ekhoye Oboh
103. Mr. Odigie Francis
104. Barr Elvis Osadolor Iyamu

105. Mr Uyi Elimihe
106. Mr Governor Odigie
107. Mr Monday Odigie
108. Mrs Emily Azuma
109. Dr. Ikpotokin Osayomore
110. Mr Saturday Oamen
111. Mr Osakpanmwan Irabor Idigbe
112. Mr Daniel Jerome Obhioje
113. Mrs Oliha Rosemary Aziba
114. Mr. Esene Joshua
115. Mrs Osajioku Iyoha
116. Mr Samuel Ehimafemen
117. Mr Osazuwa Fidelis
118. Mr. Igbinedion Ogbewi Clement
119. Mr Aimurie Omorawa
120. Mr Esene Matthew
121. Mr Gabriel Igbinoba Epama
122. Mr Sunday Epama
123. Mrs Christy Obaze
124. Mr Kennedy Uwuidia
125. Mr Itua Obabueki
126. Mrs Evelyn Omokhegbe
127. Mr Imade Iduseri
128. 128 Mr Osaretin Okungbowa
129. Mr Bright Ighedosa
130. Mr Charles Ogah Ighedosa
131. Mrs Joy Obabueki Aibangbe
132. Mr Lucky Iduseri Lordkabi
133. Mr Sunday Omokhegbe
134. Mr Uyi G. Omoruyi
135. Mrs Elimihe Akhere Ogbona
136. Mr Ogboghodo Pullen

137. Mrs Victory Peace Olisa
138. Mrs Vote Uwuidia
139. Mrs Christiana Iyare
140. Mr Saturday Onaifo
141. Mr Friday Okosun
142. Mr Osaigbovo Uwuidia
143. Mr Ehinon Master Isi
144. Mr Kennedy Elimihe
145. Mrs Ebhowe Isoken
146. Mr Ozo Lucky
147. Mrs Evelyn Iduseri Oribhabor
148. Mr Uwuidia Osazuwa
149. Mr Uwuidia Sunday
150. Mrs Maria Obviebo
151. Mrs Otasowie Omorogbe
152. Mrs Franca Ade Ighedosa
153. Mrs Grace Pullen
154. Mr Ehis Igor Obaretin
155. Barrister Godwin Ikpotokin
156. Mr Osamudiamen Ikpotokin

Construction of Link Road to the Train Station

On the news that the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) initially proposed a link road from the community to the train station to ease traffic for train passengers but the road was later diverted to Igueben, members of Ekekhen Think Tank Association frowned at it and vowed to return the status quo. Immediately, several engagements on construction of the link road through physical interactions and correspondences were made with the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) with Barr. Godwin Ikpotokin playing a

leading role in the negotiation. The engagements yielded positive result that led to the construction of Ekekhen - train station link road.

In facilitating the process of constructing the Ekekhen - train station link road, members of Ekekhen Think Tank Association supported this cause financially and the list include:

1. Mrs. Eunice Asuma
2. Mr. Scoller Ohenhen
3. Mr. Maifuwa Aibangbe
4. Mr Obabueki Emmanuel
5. Barr. Sunny Elimihe
6. Mr. Fred Iduseri
7. Mr. Idoni Elimihe
8. Mr Augustine Iduseri
9. Prof. Cletus Akenbor
10. Mrs Akhere Elimihe Ogbonna
11. Apostle Osaro Odia
12. Ms. Osaherunmen Osifo
13. Mrs. Monica Iduseri Ehimenmen
14. Engr. Sunny Agho
15. Ms. Rose Okotor
16. Maltida Uwagbor
17. Mr Felix Idegbor Odia
18. Mr Lucky Iduseri
19. Master Billy Iduseri
20. Mrs Lilian Olumese Iduseri
21. Mr Godwin Obaze
22. Madam Flora Obabueki Okhuahkua
23. Mr Charles Ogah

24. Mr Obaretin Igor
25. Ms. Mercy Igbinedion
26. Mr Bright Ighedosa

Provision of Borehole Water

In those days, the major source of water in the community was streams and rivers around the nooks and crannies of the community. Inhabitants of the community have to trek some distance to the streams to be able to fetch water. At some point it was fun to be in the stream. There could be arguments, quarrels, and even fighting between peers. At a certain time, when there is misunderstanding among peers in school, church or other social gathering, it ends in the stream either by fighting or through settlement. Now, gone are those days. As economic situation of the people improves, they started digging well as reservoir for water. Unfortunately, most of these wells are dried up during dry season thereby causing water scarcity in the community. In cognizance of this fact, and to ensuring that water is readily available in the community, Ekekhen Think Thank Association embarked on the provision of borehole water as her third project for the community, after the completion of the road project.

Members of Ekekhen Think Tank Association that offered financial support for this project are listed below:

1. Mr Fred Iduseri
2. Prof Cletus O. Akenbor
3. Mr Bright Ighedosa

4. Barr. Sonnie Elimihe
5. Mr Felix Idegbor Odia
6. Mr Iduseri Augustine
7. Mr Abel Osadaye
8. Pastor Williams Ovenseri
9. Mrs Eunice Ehigiamusor Asuma
10. Miss Isoken Ebhowe
11. Ms Vero Ehigiamusor
12. Arch Iria Ekhaton
13. Mr Akenbor Osaretin
14. Ms Rose Okotor
15. Mr Asikagbon Joseph
16. Mr Itua Sylvester
17. Apostle Osaro Odia
18. Supol Bernard Obabueki
19. Mr Friday Uwuidia
20. Mr Idahosa Obaze
21. Mr Charles Ogah
22. Mr Lucky Iduseri
23. Mr Cyril Solomon
24. Ms Matilda Uwagboe
25. Mrs Monica Iduseri Ehimemen
26. Mr Ernest Okhiria
27. Mr Michael Ekponughe
28. Mr Emmanuel Obabueki
29. Ms Iduseri Marvis
30. Mrs Akhere Elimihe Ogbonna
31. Mr Maifuwa Aibangbe
32. Mr Osadaye Aituayuwa
33. Mr Eugene Okoruwa Ogbeide
34. Mr Ikpotokin Osamudiamen
35. Hon. Henshaw Elimihe

36. Mr Igbinedion Ogbewi Clement
37. Engr Sunny Agho
38. Mr Ehijie Etiosa
39. Mr Emmanuel Adudu
40. Mrs Flora Obabueki Okhuakhua
41. Mrs Odion Ehigiamusor Ojigbede
42. Mrs Iduseri Lilian Olumese
43. Ms Edna Ehijie
44. Ms Angela Iduseri
45. Mr Godfrey Onaifo
46. Mr Elimihe Unurode
47. Mr Godspower Itoghomwen Uwuidia
48. Mr Okoro Augustine
49. Mr Godfrey Odigie Igbinedion
50. Mr Aigbe Oriakhi
51. Mr Igbinedion Francis
52. Mr Goddy Ekwase
53. Ms Stella Ebhowe
54. Mr Omorawa Emu
55. Mr Fred Akugbe Obaretin
56. Mr Uyi Elimihe
57. Mr Friday Alex Okosun
58. Mr Uyimonmwan Osabhahiemwen
59. Mrs Blessing Obaze Ataga
60. Ms Mercy Igbinedion
61. Mrs Omorogbe Enobhamien Usiriedo
62. Mr Kennedy Obaretin
63. Mr Lucky Ogah Ighedosa
64. Mr Ernest Ogbewi
65. Mr Aibangbe Okoedo Nicholas
66. Mr Elimihe Idoni
67. Mr Aaron Okonofua

68. Mr Uwuidia Osaigbovo
69. Barr Elvis Osadolor Iyamu
70. Mrs Christiana Iduseri Odugba
71. Mr Osaigbovo Kindness Usiriedo
72. Ms Grace Omorogbe
73. Ms Ujuomo Okotor
74. Ms Ehis Omoragbon
75. Mr Scoller Ohenhen
76. Ms Mary Edigi
77. Ms Mary Goddy Uwuidia
78. Mr Sunday Uwuidia
79. Eminent Prince Ben Ekhaton
80. Mr Sunday Ogbodu Ighedosa
81. Mr Osaretin Okungbowa
82. Mrs Patience Key
83. Mr Ogbewi Gavin Osas
84. Ms Osajioku Iyoha
85. Mr Ighedosa Ehigiamusor
86. Mr Obosa Ehigiamusor
87. Mr Paul Obhiebo
88. Great Ehizogie Asegbelen
89. Mr Christopher Ogbebor
90. Mr Lucky Agazuma
91. Miss Loveth Ewan Iduseri
92. Ms Doris Igbinedion
93. Mr Lucky Ozo
94. Dr. Chris Adams
95. Barrister Ifionayi
96. Mr Solomon Edigi
97. Mr Friday Edigi
98. Mr Okoro Harry Ekhaton
99. Mr. Sidiqui Ifionayi

100. Mrs Evelyn Omokhegbe
101. Hon. Sunday Omokhegbe
102. Mr Osaretin Isaiah
103. Mr Bright Odion Akenbor
104. Mr Omoregie Obaze
105. Mr Amase Igbiniedion
106. Dr Osayomore Ikpotokin
107. Mr Usiobafoh Ifionayi
108. Mr Michael Osadaye
109. Mr. Anthony Edigi
110. Ms Osayamen Aziba
111. Mr. Tuesday Okotor
112. Mrs Evelyn Iduseri Oribhabor
113. Barr. Godwin Ikpotokin
114. Mr. Uyi G. Omoruyi
115. Mrs Queen Imade Elimihe
116. Mr. Igor Ehis Obaretin
117. Mr. Osazuwa Uwuidia
118. Mr. Monday Odigie
119. Mr. Governor Odigie
120. Ms. Joy Aigbangbe
121. Mr. Anthony Hammer Apama
122. Mr. Odion Okotor

Interestingly, Ekekhen Think Tank Association is also prepared to offer scholarship awards for university education to serious-minded students of Ekekhen community in order to encourage them to acquiring a university education.

CHAPTER TEN

BREAKING OF CURSES

A curse is a barrier or hindrance. It is like a pole, a wall that separates and hinders a man, a family or a community from getting to the expected goal. When somebody invokes magical power or God's power to call evil down, it is a curse upon someone. Anyone that is under a curse finds everything difficult. A curse can be likened unto a man on a car driving from Ekekhen to Uromi to get some things done and along the line, a truck fell and covered the entire road. That man can no longer accomplish the proposed task. That is a curse. It is a limitation, which comes from the use of words. Therefore, the question is "do curses work"? Of course, yes. Things that are naturally easy for others to get or do are usually hard and impenetrable for the one under a curse. Do you know that when someone is under a curse, there is a spiritual force (an invisible being) that goes ahead to bring the curse to manifestation? Blessings are real and curses are real. When Jesus blessed the five loaves of bread and two fishes, there was multiplication and 1500 men could be served with it, with twelve baskets left. More so, when Jesus cursed the fig tree, the tree withered. Curses can be rescinded by people that laid the curse or people that have covenant with God can speak and rescind the curses, and angels will carry it out to completion.

I believe we are familiar with the story in the Bible about the wall of Jericho. God sent Joshua to fall the wall of Jericho, as it is written in the book of Joshua chapter 6. Having succeeded in the assignment, Joshua in verses 17 and 26 of the same chapter laid a curse on both the city and any man that shall rebuild the city saying in verse 17 *"now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it"*. In verse 26, he said *"cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it"*. Many years later, in the days of King Ahab, a certain man called Hiel the Beth-elite, out of his benevolence, rebuilt Jericho unknowingly to him that a curse was placed on any man that would rebuild the city. As it is written in 1st Kings 16: 34 *"he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub"*. Also, for many years, Jericho was under the curse laid by Joshua until it was destroyed by Elisha, the prophet as it is written in 2nd Kings 2:19-22. *"And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So, the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha, which he spake."*

Concerning our community Ekekhen, history has it that after the first son of Ogbewenkon (i.e Igueben) was killed by the people of Ekekhen, Ogbewenkon took an instrument of mystical power and laid a curse on Ekekhen that “no matter how well she serves the Oba of Benin, her effort will never be appreciated”. Similarly, Ekekhen took an instrument of mystical power and laid a curse on Ogbewenkon that “her male child will always die young”. Many years later, during the reign of Pa Akekpe as the Odionwere of Ekekhen, a woman of Ekekhen descent from Akpasubi family and by extension the people of Idumu Ezomo married into Ogbewenkon’s family without having any knowledge of the curse. Each time she gives birth to a male child, the child dies untimely. The curse Ekekhen laid on Ogbewenkon was working in her life unknowingly to her, until it was revealed by divination. Thereafter, Ekekhen rescinded the curse on Ogbewenkon by appeasing the gods. But it is not on records that Ogbewenkon or any other person with spiritual authority rescinded the curse against Ekekhen by appeasing the gods, and this seems to be working against Ekekhen in her relationship with the Oba of Benin.

My good people of Ekekhen, if the autonomy of our community is utmost importance to us, then our relationship with the Oba of Benin must be a priority. This therefore suggests the fact that there is no better time than now to rescind this curse.