

**A history of intergroup relations between the Bette of Obudu and Tiv of Vandeikya from 1999-2019**

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**Abstract**

*It is important to highlight and identify those social events of the past that repeatedly triggered inter-ethnic disputes as well as to document the ways these breaches were resolved successfully. This paper seeks answers to what exactly has continued to sustain the relationship between the Bette people of Obudu and the Kunav people of Vandeikya. This study spans from 1999 because at this point there were major war tensions between the Kunav of Vandeikya and Bette of Obudu. Due to this factor, other aspects of intergroup relations such as intermarriages, Trade; Social activities were not flowing freely. On the other hand, 2019 is relevant because the researcher has the desire to discover the different forms of intergroup relations between these two areas over the years. A qualitative research method was employed for this study.*

**Keywords:** History, Intergroup Relations, Bette, Obudu

**Introduction**

Man is a social animal that finds personal fulfillment only when living as a member of his group. Inter-group relation is a popular theme in African historiography. This entails several levels of interaction between and among ethnicities or nationalities which involves war, economic activities, and intergroup marriages, and so on. In other words, the diverse behaviors and attitudes brought out in the course of human interaction can be viewed as 'Intergroup Relations'<sup>1</sup>.

Intergroup relations are a natural course because human beings or groups must interact with others to obtain what they cannot produce. In Nigeria's contemporary society there is currently the issue of disintegration which has ultimately led to the destabilization of ethnic relations among societies. According to Muhammad Gatawa, in Nigeria, discourses concerning intergroup relations have been narrowed down to two inseparable terms which are conflict

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Chaihemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990" (United States of America: Carolina Academic Press, 2011), 1-2.



and violence. This is as a result of the rising cases of inter-religious and inters ethnic conflicts witnessed in a country like Nigeria which is multi-cultural and multi-religious<sup>2</sup>.

Before the colonial conquest, there existed a relationship between the political entities of Nigeria which was majorly based on trade and wars of expansion. This intergroup harmony was strained because of self-relevance [an attempt at showing that one group is more superior to the other and this has shown the manner and nature of the relationship between these federating units<sup>3</sup>. The truth of the matter remains that no group or society in the world can live in self-sufficiency or autarchy, hence the need for integration and cooperation which is ultimately intergroup relations.

### Geography of the study area

The geographical location of both Obudu and Vandeikya has made the people of these areas be predominantly farmers and farming as their occupation has brought these two areas into close relations with one another. Obudu Local Government Area is located in the Northern part of Cross River State in the South-South zone of Nigeria. In the North-Eastern part, the vegetation of Obudu can be said to comprise the equatorial rain forest zone, stretching from the Mbe-Okwango Mountains through Olum, Oban down to Bika in Ipong and Okorshie area.<sup>4</sup> The rest of the territory is of the guinea savannah type with highly rich soils around the hilly and forested area as well as light clay sandy-loam soils towards the Central area with sporadic lateritic soils here and there. The people of Obudu are proud, friendly, and hospitable. And Obudu comprises several sub-communities who speak different dialects. Bette is the dominant language spoken by the majority of the inhabitants or people of the area and is widely understood by other sub-communities.<sup>5</sup>

Obudu land is blessed or endowed with fertile land and the people of Obudu are known for their cultivation of yams and other crops such as rice, Bambara nuts, Groundnuts, to mention a few. Because of the agrarian nature of Obudu, a trade relationship was developed with her Tiv neighbors. The abundant production of yam also contributed to the annual celebration of the Obudu new Yam Festival which happens around the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of September. Furthermore, Vandeikya Local Government Area on the other hand is located in the South-Eastern part of Benue State. Vandeikya Local Government Area has a landmass of 183,939 square meters [0.7 sq miles] with a population of about 234,863. The Kunav people of Vandeikya are also known to have rich and fertile land and are very skilled producers of Cassava, Citrus, Bambara, Groundnut, etc. The area is underlain by ancient basement complex rocks of the Pre-Cambrian times. There are highly undifferentiated ferruginous soils in the area. In addition to climatic

<sup>2</sup> M.M Gatawa." The Role of Islam in Yoruba Hausa Intergroup Relations in Agege, Lagos, Nigeria", *Kaduna Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol 6, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>Federick Iwendi Ofili, "Intergroup relations in Nigeria The dynamics and complexities", *International Journal of development and management review*, Vol11 [1], 2016.

<sup>4</sup>Simon M.U Ogar, "The Fading Legacies of the Descendants of Agba", Obudu, 2012, 4-5.

<sup>5</sup>Simon M.U Ogar, "The Fading Legacies of the Descendants of Agba", Obudu, 2012, 3-4.

conditions, the soils contribute to the moist dry wood savannah vegetation in the Local Government Area.

Natural vegetation is mostly moist woodland savannah. Some places in the Mbaduku district have forests, which are extensions from the Obudu plateau that receive over 1,800mm of annual rainfall. Although the area is blessed with a lot of solid minerals including barites, clay, and gypsum, none of these is exploited in commercial quantity.<sup>6</sup>

### **Geography of Obudu**

Obudu is one out of the 18 Local Governments in Cross River State, Nigeria. Obudu is also one of the five Local Government Areas in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State. The area of Obudu covers about 8,045 east latitude and longitude 6,016 north, with a temperature of 27<sup>0</sup> C. It is bounded to the North by Tsar in Vandeikya Local Government Area of Benue State, to the south by Ogoja Local Government Area, to the east by Obanlikwu Local Government Area, to the West by Bekwarra Local Government Area, all of Cross River State. The Local Government headquarters is located in the Bette clan, with the Bette-Bendi occupying the central position, and the Ukpe-Alege occupying the southern reach of the geo-cultural spread.<sup>7</sup> Obudu can well be referred to as the 'Scotland of Cross River State of Nigeria for it abounds of hills, highlands, and valleys. Contemporary scholars view these hills as barren peaks because no significant exploration has been carried out to reveal the existence within their bosoms of any Coal, gold, silver, copper, tin, zinc, diamond, or any other solid or liquid mineral resource as is the case with the hills of Jos, Enugu, South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique and other areas with such hilly terrain.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of occupation, the natives of Obudu are predominantly farmers; the farming is both for food and cash crops like rice and cocoa. Other people in the area are civil servants. Christianity is the major religion of the natives, though some of the natives practice Islam and Pagan religions. The natives of the area are hospitable people which are also encouraged by their unique cultural heritage. Their cultural heritage is majorly boosted by the presence of forest sites like the Obudu Mountain Resorts.

### **Geography of Vandeikya**

Vandeikya Local Government Area is located in the South-Eastern part of Benue State in the North Central Zone of Nigeria. It specifically lies between latitude 7, 5° and longitude 7, 15° north of the Equator and longitude 9 and 9, 6° east of Greenwich. It has a landmass of 183, 939 square meters [0.7 sq miles] with a population of well over 234,863.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup><https://tivpedis.org.ng/author/admin> Conspiracy against Tiv Nation: The Youth Perspective, retrieved 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Simon M.U Ogar, "The Fading Legacies of the Descendants of Agba", p2.

<sup>8</sup> Simon M.U Ogar, "The Fading Legacies of the Descendants of Agba", p2-3.

<sup>9</sup>Isaac Imborvungu Igbido Amokaha, "Akur-Anieni: A Search Light on Historical and Contemporary Development of the Kunav people", Vandeikya, 2014, 26-27.

Vandeikya is located in the South-Eastern part of Benue State and shares boundaries with Obudu and Bekwarra in Cross River State to the East, Ushongo to the North, and Konshisha Local Government Area to the West. There are twelve administrative wards. Vandeikya Local Government Area was carved out of Gboko Local Government in 1976. The indigenous community is the Tiv people who speak the Tiv language. The Tiv people of Vandeikya are a hospitable group and are predominantly Christians with a few traditionalists. The economic mainstay of the people is Agriculture; with arable land for sheep, goats, and cattle rearing. About 80% of the population are involved directly in the cultivation of virtually all food crops, with a concentration on rice, sweet potatoes, cassava, sorghum, citrus, spices, pepper, groundnut, yam, and Bambara nuts. Being majorly involved in farming, commercial engagement revolves around agricultural products. They are also endowed with mineral deposits such as barites, kaoline, and iron ores.<sup>10</sup> Intergroup Relations between the Bette of Obudu and Tiv of Vandeikya are as old as the existence of the communities. This paper, therefore, sets out to examine their intergroup relations from the colonial period, extending to their contemporary interaction.

### Intergroup relations in the Colonial period

For the Bette people of Obudu and the Tiv of Vandeikya, the era of British colonial administration started with the coming and the establishment of a military garrison at Obudu by the Niger-Cross River Expedition in 1907. The era terminated in 1960 when the British granted Nigeria Independence. In those fifty-three years, the activities of the colonialists affected the lives of the people living in the area.<sup>11</sup> The Bette people of Obudu and the Tiv of Vandeikya were conquered in the process of bringing the "Niger Districts" (which subsequently became the Eastern Provinces of Nigeria) under the British Empire by the Niger-Cross River Expedition moving northwards from Calabar. One of the first fierce battles took place at Bisu, where the British invaders fought against the Bisu/Ugee people. The British forces won and continued their advance, reaching Obudu from the South in 1907. The Obudu people under the Bette leader Chief Ugbong Itiacher received his "visitors" with twelve yams and a cock. However, when it became clear to Obudu inhabitants that their "visitors" were not merely passing by but were there to stay, Bette's national resistance began with them placing a "snake curse" on Captain Frank Hives, the British political officer posted to Obudu garrison town and his men. Subsequently the British pacified the Bette people of Obudu before 1912.<sup>12</sup>

While the Tiv people of Vandeikya and their Bette neighbors were exempted from clashes between the Tiv and the employees of the Royal Niger Company and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in the Benue Valley, the officers of the Niger-Cross River Expedition did notice Tiv courageous defense in planning their assault on the Southern Tiv. Using Bette informants who were familiar

<sup>10</sup> Isaac Imborvungu Igbido Amokaha, "Akur- Anieni: A Search Light on Historical and Contemporary Development of the Kunav People". 26-27.

<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990".127.

<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990".129.

with Tiv terrain and the locations of the homes of Tiv strong men, the British political officer, on his arrival and establishment of a garrison at Obudu, sent an invitation to Kunav districts to come to Obudu with their dance team to entertain him. Not all Kunav districts honored the invitation but the Mbaduku, Mbayongo, Mbagbera and Mbakaange did. After performing, they were rewarded with different machetes and long European tobacco leaves and were dismissed.<sup>13</sup>

This pretentious act of extended friendship by the British was discovered by the Mbaduku, this is because the Mbaduku people understood that one of their members, Gberibu Kenge of Mbaitough, was arrested and taken to Obudu following a complaint lodged against by a Bette man at the new Native Court there. Instead of taking Gberibu Kenge to his Tiv elders, as expected, he took him to the new authorities at Obudu. The colonial authorities decided to try Gberibu in their new court that the Tiv had not recognized yet. Following the standard Tiv tradition, Mbaduku elders who were responsible for Gberibu's welfare traveled to Obudu to demand his release. The elders failed in their attempt at Gberibu's release and they were lost on the next step to take. The Mbaduku seem not to understand the motives of those "white men". The Mbaduku people felt the British had no right to judge any case between their man and any Bette person. As simple as the issue looks or seems, this was the first intervention of colonial powers in ongoing relations between the Bette and their Kunav neighbors.<sup>14</sup> Utsu Patrick Ishogya also stated that the establishment and the involvement of the British Government in these regions created a rift in the once peaceful relationship of the Bette and their Kunav friends. This, therefore, had a serious impact not just on their lives, but also on their intergroup relations especially from 1907 to 1960.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the Bette and their Kunav neighbors are members of the agrarian community. The land was, and is, still an imperative factor of production among them. The Kunav underestimated the mission of the new British colonial powers at Obudu and had continued to behave like the dominant partner in their relations with their Bette neighbors. The Kunav farmers' usual practices of taking fresher lands or encroaching on the Bette region were severely checked by the new British authority in the area. The British authority saw no need why the Kunav should keep on taking by force land that they recognized belonged to their Bette neighbors. The British desire to establish administrative units based on what they understood to be the ethnic or "tribal" homelands led them to the creation of a permanent boundary between the Kunav and their Bette neighbors. This boundary significantly barred the Kunavs' farming activities beyond it. Because of this action by the British, the Kunav were confronted with

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<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, *"The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbors 1890-1990"*.131.

<sup>14</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, *"The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990"*.131-132.

<sup>15</sup> Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Ustu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 57 years, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

the stark reality that this world is not unlimited farmland waiting for them to take in their own good time.<sup>16</sup>

In Emmanuel Chaihemba Ayangaor's work, one can deduce that the invasion of the British drastically dampened all forms of inter-relations between the Bette people and the Kunav of Vandeikya. There was also increased market rivalry between the Bette and Kunav during the colonial era.<sup>17</sup> On May 23, 1950, thirteen Kunav traders were killed in one fell swoop on the day by Akpanke Adie and some other Obudu youths and this was majorly retaliation on the side of Obudu for the killing of a Bette trader who went to Mbaduku for trade, this was quite far away from the border. D.F McBride, then Divisional Officer of Tiv division, spoke plainly in condemning his counterpart at Obudu. The war lasted for five days during which a total of over forty persons were killed from each side. Over 1,000 houses were burnt down and crops were destroyed. The war was so devastating that both sides felt the pains and after this painful experience of inter-ethnic violence, the two sides discovered that they needed each other. Between 1951 and 1960, there were no major violent conflicts between the Kunav of Vandeikya and the Bette of Obudu. At this point, it was clear that the traditional ways of resolving conflicts between the Bette and their Kunav neighbors were more effective and efficient than those of the colonial powers.<sup>18</sup>

The Kunav seeing the superiority of the colonial authority reframed from seizing lands from their Bette neighbors and devised another legitimate means of solving their problem of land scarcity. The Kunav took to leasing tracts of farmland from their Bette neighbors for an agreed cost and period. Another important component of Kunav-Bette relations during the colonial days was the "paid labor services" rendered by Kunav to their Bette neighbors. For many Vandeikya youth who had to earn the funds to pay for their education, this period of paid labor in the Obudu region became something of rites of passage.

#### **Intergroup relations since 1999-2019**

In an interview with Chief Ishogya, the clan head of Bebuawhan village in Obudu, he stated that intergroup interaction between the areas involved was severely dented especially after the 1995 crisis. That notwithstanding, the relationship between the Bette and the Kunav can be best described as that of a "husband and wife" and this is so because even in the phase of adversities they still carry on with their usual trade relations. He further explained that from 1999 to 2008 war tension was still brewing between the Bette people and Kunav that is why on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 there was an attack on two Bette men who were farming around the boundary between Obudu and Mbaduku. He stated that the two men though not killed sustained severe injuries of which one had a broken hand and the other an injury on the head. This attack caused a

<sup>16</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 57 years, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990".145-146-150.

<sup>18</sup>Oral Interview with MaryAnn Alelele Ugbaha, Obudu, Cross River State, Retired Civil Servant, 61 years, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

clash between the Bette and Kunav that lasted for three days which both communities incurred serious damages. According to the chief, the rulers of both communities met at Bebuabong town hall in Obudu to accept a truce. The rulers saw the need for a truce because the clash was beginning to have a weighty effect on their trade relations. At this meeting, the chiefs from both groups welcomed a peace settlement to amend other aspects of their intergroup interaction such as inter-marriage and trade relations.<sup>19</sup>

Against the backdrop of the above, the truce or peace agreement between the Bette people and the Kunav people only stood for a couple of years as the two communities continued to have series of disputes concerning farmlands, especially during the rice farming season. On January 20, 2017, there was a serious gunfire outbreak from both sides along Akasom road, by the Girls Secondary School in Obudu. A young Bette native, Placidus Undie was the first casualty of this gunfire outbreak. This dispute also prevented some Bette traders who already went to Vandeikya local government to shop for foodstuff to follow another route back to Obudu for fear of getting killed. Another situation where the Bette-Kunav intergroup relations have dampened is seen in their most recent conflict which lasted from 2019-2020. Utsu Patrick commented stating that the conflict started during the early hours of the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2019. The hostile outbreak was between the Abonkib village of Obudu and the Mbezerem village of Vandeikya. This conflict is said to have started after a fatal confrontation over farmland at the boundary between the Obudu and the Mbaduku. Some Kunav men started clearing land that had been retrieved from them for Obudu after the last boundary demarcation exercise. They resisted when the Obudu people asked them to desist and this resulted in a conflict between the two groups.<sup>20</sup>

Kenneth Andelehe Undie stated that the Bette people and the Kunav people have had a friendly but unstable relationship. This implies that even with their incessant conflicts over the boundary, they still co-operate with each other in finding a lasting solution to their one problem. This effort of finding peace was seen in July 2018, when the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calabar, Zana Akpagu, who is a Bette man, was endorsed with a chieftaincy title by the Kunav community for his philanthropic gesture towards the Kunav people. This act of kindness towards the Kunav by Zana can only be traced to the age-long friendship that has existed between Bette and Kunav.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, another evident influence of Bette-Kunav intergroup relations on both sides is their similarities in names. Ugbaha Alelele noted in an interview that trade relations between the Kunav and Bette people have resulted in a place called "Bakunde" which is the local name for Makudi (Benue State). Akpena, Adie, and Wanidye are an example of Bette names born by Vandeikya areas, as names like Utsu, Akande, and Upurigh are now indigenous to the Obudu areas. This is a follow to the fact that Bette has become a second language to the Kunav and vice versa.

<sup>19</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

<sup>20</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

<sup>21</sup>Oral Interview with Kenneth Andelehe Undie, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 49 years, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2020.



Also, the Ukpatemena dance in Tsar (Kunav land) and the Ikpatemana dance in Obudu is a clear case of similarity in pronunciation, although it is now difficult to ascertain which area borrowed from which.<sup>22</sup> The Kunav and the Bette people also share some similar trends in their burial and marriage patterns, since wooden drum beats from both areas could be interpreted and understood by both areas. Their relationship has even grown over the years to the extent that Kunav people work and school in the Federal College of Education located in Obudu town, likewise, the Bette people who often enroll their children in some secondary schools in Vandeikya like the Federal Government College in Vandeikya town.

On a general ground, the Bette and Kunav since 1999 have interacted well with one another economically, this is because being agrarian communities they rely heavily on each other for the exchange of edible commodities especially with the Kunav being very good agriculturists and the Bette men being good palm wine tappers. It is a truism that conflict is an integral part of intergroup interaction, therefore, the Bette and the Kunav intergroup relationship is not void of this fault. There have also been inter-marriages between them, and they have continued to share their different traditional and cultural heritage like the famous Ikpatemana dance and the Ogirinya cult.

#### **Impact of intergroup relations between the Bette of Obudu and Tiv of Vandeikya from 1999-2019**

Intergroup relations between the Bette of Obudu and the Kunav of Vandeikya have significantly influenced and impacted divergent aspects of their lives, ranging specifically from their economic interaction, and also their socio-cultural aspect of interaction. These interactions the two groups have had over the years have shaped and made strong their bonds of friendship regardless of their constant land feuds.

#### **Socio-cultural impact**

In an interview with Kenneth Andelehe Undie, he stated that the socio-cultural intergroup interaction for the Bette people and the Kunav people started or began in the pre-colonial days. This relationship started on "friendship" as a strong organizing principle. Furthermore, he explained that it was under the context of friendship that the economic, political, social, and even cultural aspects of Bette -Kunav intergroup relations were manifested.<sup>23</sup> Analyzing Undie's narration, one can see that the rural and underdeveloped community character of the Kunav and their Bette neighbors made it important for visitors without relations in an area to depend on their kind hosts for accommodation, food, advice, and other forms of assistance to achieve the purpose of their visit. The traditional norm among rural communities is for the host to offer his guest food, accommodation and to make sure that he was comfortable, this gesture

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<sup>22</sup>Oral Interview with Ugbaha Alelele, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 52 years, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

<sup>23</sup>Oral Interview with Kenneth Andelehe Undie, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 49 years, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2020.



had no form of the price tag attached because most African communities considered it "a good thing to do" for fellow human beings.

He further stated that the only way a guest could repay or ever reward his host came when the host made a return visit. It was considered in bad taste to pay cash or in-kind for hospitality. In this case, if the favor was reciprocated to the former host, then the once-casual contact was converted or changed into a new bond of friendship. This, therefore, means that intergroup trade and business deals, land leasing agreements, donation of land to Kunav for settlement purposes, and the consummation of inter-ethnic marriages depended on such pre-existing friendship networks. There is no way a Kunav man could walk into Bette land and obtain a wife as if bought from a market. The suitor depended on a pre-existing network of friends and relations with his Bette neighbors. He may also sort help from his Kunav relations or friends who have already established friendships there. Thus, the prior establishment of friendships is required for successful intergroup contacts and interactions in those communities. In addition, the hostile aspect of intergroup relations between the two communities has affected their inter-ethnic marriages and this is a result of the fact that conflict naturally brings about instability and chaos.<sup>24</sup>

According to Emmanuel Chaihemba Ayangaor in his work titled "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1960", marriages between the Kunav and their Bette neighbors have been ongoing since the pre-colonial days. What had been observed all along was an imbalance in terms of the Kunav marrying more wives from their Bette neighbors but not reciprocating their good gesture. The Kunav had the excuse of not wanting their daughters to undergo the genital mutilation practiced by the Bette. In recent times, things have changed and more Bette men are beginning to marry Tiv wives.<sup>25</sup> Chief Ugbaha Alelele of Bebuabie in Obudu Local Government Area is already married to five Kunav wives. On the other hand, the devastating or intense nature of the 1995 Kunav-Obudu war between the people of Tsar Town and the Obudu (Bette) people forced the Mbaduku elders to call for a halt in their young men marrying more Bette wives. The decision was reached after the painful experiences of the 1995 Tsar-Obudu war in which the Obudu did not even spare the children of their daughters married to Kunav men. Since the decision was made in 1995, there have been unintended consequences. However, this marriage prohibition by both Kunav and Bette elders discontinued from 1995 as marriages are still being consummated up until their contemporary interaction.<sup>26</sup>

The famous Ogirinya dance or performance which is now popular in both communities was influenced on the Kunav by their Bette neighbors. The Ogirinya dance looks very innocuous today because boys and girls sometimes perform this dance, but beneath its aesthetic appearance lies death and misery. The Kunav adopted this performance from their Bette neighbors mostly to

<sup>24</sup>Oral Interview with Kenneth Andelehe Undie, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 49 years, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990". (United States of America: Carolina Academic Press, 2011), 183.

<sup>26</sup> Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990". 183.

counteract the silent beheadings of their people by the Bette in pre-colonial days during times of disputes. Consequently, the Bette people also taught the Kunav another famous Bette dance or performance known as "Ikpatemala dance".<sup>27</sup>

From the aforementioned, it shows therefore that intergroup interaction between the Bette people of Obudu and the Kunav of Vandeikya right from the pre-colonial era and most especially in the period of consideration has changed some cultural and social behavior of the Bette and the Kunav. That is why as a result of the strong bonds of friendship, some Kunav youths still perform the Ikpatemana dance in some parts of Bette land, especially during the Obudu new yam festival.

### **Economic impact**

For the Bette and Kunav people, agriculture has remained their dominant mode of production and the most crucial factor of production. Because of the desperate need of the Kunav people for more farmlands, which they perceive their Bette neighbors possess in relative abundance, they continue to lease farmlands from their Bette neighbors, often migrating and settling there. Despite their bonds of friendship and intermarriage with their Kunav neighbors, their solidarity has been periodically tested in struggles over scarce resources and engagements in reciprocally hostile headhunting Ogirinya practices.<sup>28</sup>

Against the backdrop of the above, social interaction is a salient point to economic development in any society. The marketplace as an economic institution promoted social interaction amongst the traders on one hand, between the traders and buyers on the other, and also between people who went to the markets to fulfill social obligations. In the marketplace, people interacted freely without restrictions especially as they spent their leisure time with members of other communities. As it is, from these interactions, foundations of socio-cultural relations beyond the marketplace later developed. Some of these relations and exchanges went far deep into the society that it has become difficult in this post-colonial era to identify political and socio-cultural traits that are indigenous to the communities in the area and those that came through interactions in these border market place since "sometimes", the stranger is viewed as a culture bearer and is honored as a valuable asset by his host".<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, despite their constant feud and toggle for resources, the Bette and the Kunav people have established a good trade relationship. The Kunav people have for years established a trade market, where the Bette people go to buy not just food but other items like clothes and even labor. The relationship has been

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<sup>27</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 57 years, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

<sup>28</sup>Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990". 186.

<sup>29</sup>Irom Obar Ayami, "Market Place and Integration: Interrogating Obudu and Tiv Women in Cross Border Trade" *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, Vol 12,2020, 51.

such that the Bette people find it difficult to trust any tools bought not from a Kunav person and even go as far as Vandeikya to buy these tools.<sup>30</sup> The use of friendship ties and neighborhoods to organize production and distribution allowed ethnically diverse Bette people and the Kunav in Vandeikya the flexibilities to seize new economic opportunities within the market place such as traveling further to trade and coming back with not only new items of trade but cultural exchanges to their original communities. For instance, even in recent times, Bette women go to Tsar market and sometimes extend to Awanga, Ubwa Shiriki, and Ikyobo in Benue State, while Kunav women stretched to Obudu, Ogoja, Bekwara among others.<sup>31</sup>

For both groups, the market day was the center of the village week. Chief Utsu Sampson Adie of Begiaba village in Obudu commenting on the integrative aspect of the market place stated that "a market is a place where people buy and sell. People travel from one marketplace to another market place and on the way; they stop and see their friends in other villages. In the market place according to the Chief, one often meets and takes a drink with his friend." Utsu Sampson Adie is lending support to the contention that the marketplace has created a familiar ground for the age-long economic interaction between the Kunav of Vandeikya and the Bette of Obudu.<sup>32</sup> Kutio Kufung (Palm wine) as a major commodity in the Bette-Kunav markets is also a major contributing factor to the growing economic relationship between the Kunav and the Bette people. Kutio Kufung (Palm wine) is produced mainly by the Bette people and most times even during conflicts, the Kunav man would still find a way to consume this wine.<sup>33</sup>

Food types and varieties of crops have been exchanged over the years. Sweet Potatoes (the pink skin species), and locust bean seeds were introduced to the Bette people by these market places traders. Today sweet potatoes are grown in Bette land and that is because the Kunav did not only market the item, they went as far as showing their Bette friends how to grow this commodity which is not only for selling but could also be used for household consumption.<sup>34</sup> The Kunav traders according to Utsu Patrick are also remembered to have brought plates and drinking water pots made from clay that replaced drinking pots and plates made from calabashes.<sup>35</sup> The chief also remembers that his mother and aunt became experts in the production of these clay pots. Till the contemporary time, drinking pots made from clay are still in use by both groups. Although Bette women were known to farm sesame (beniseed), a legume used for a major soup in the area, these border markets have shown a shift as this plant is

<sup>30</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Irom Obar Ayami, "Market Place and Integration: Interrogating Obudu and Tiv Women in Cross Border Trade" *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, Vol 12, 2020, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Sampson Adie, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 59 years, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Irom Obar Ayami, "Market Place and Integration: Interrogating Obudu and Tiv Women in Cross Border Trade" *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, Vol 12, 2020, 52.

<sup>34</sup> Irom Obar Ayami, "Market Place and Integration: Interrogating Obudu and Tiv Women in Cross Border Trade" *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, Vol 12, 2020, 54.

<sup>35</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

now grown and marketed in large quantities by the Kunav women to the Bette women.<sup>36</sup>

### Conflict and resolution mechanism

The major problem associated with conflicts or disputes is the loss of lives and valuable properties. This occurs between individuals or groups; therefore, Conflicts whether political, communal, ethnic, or religious are often influenced or motivated by disparity rather than similarity among the combatants, especially unequal ones. Conflicts usually occur where there is a disagreement, contention, or the state of antagonism between two or more parties or groups. Conflicts occur when two or more people or groups have or think they have incompatible goals. This could be a result of the inability of both parties to reach a compromise on issues of common interest. Put differently, conflicts evolve from variations in interests, values, ideas, ideologies, orientations, perceptions, and tendencies and are part and parcel of social existence and progress. Thus, it is not only the destructive nature of conflicts that counts but whether groups involved in conflicts can maintain a healthy relationship after the conflicts.<sup>37</sup> Conflicts, therefore, serve as a means for creating integration between groups. It is a way of settling problems between opposing parties as to the belligerents in contending situations are sometimes forced to compromise for the well-being of the society.

According to Utsu Patrick Ishogya, the foremost factor propelling constant conflicts between the Bette people and the Kunav people island. He stated that in Kunav land, the quest for farmland which is used for subsistence agriculture has always brought the Kunav people at loggerheads with her Bette neighbors. Since the Kunav practice shifting cultivation, the desire for new lands has always brought them to constant conflicts with their Bette counterparts. On the other hand, disputes also arose over the ownership of drinkable water from streams and wells. One of such conflicts which took place around 2003 started or began as a result of a fight involving two Kunav women and a Bette man and woman on a stream that was located at a boundary between the two groups. While the Kunav women fished in the water, the Bette couple objected to this as they used the stream as their source of water. This disagreement degenerated into a fight between both parties as it ended with one of the Kunav women having a machete cut. The resultant effect of this disagreement was the mobilization of about 80 armed Kunav men for war, with the Bette doing the same. Though a full-blown war was avoided, the situation nonetheless led to conflicts, at the end of which the two sides recorded some losses as about 40 people died from both sides, about 1,100 huts burnt and crops destroyed in farms.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Irom Obar Ayami, "Market Place and Integration: Interrogating Obudu and Tiv Women in Cross Border Trade" *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, Vol 12, 2020, 55.

<sup>37</sup> Godwin A. Vaaseh, "The Tiv-Udam Conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> Centuries: A Backlash Over the Location of Market Centers", (Unpublished Ph.D. Project 2013, Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil Kano State), 1.

<sup>38</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Furthermore, aside from land encroachment being the foremost point of dispute between the two groups, Izabi Ugbong also commented that another contributing factor to their conflicts can be traced to the establishment of the Tsar market in Mbaduku and the Udam (Bette) market in Obudu. Historically, from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tsar market in Mbaduku in Vandeikya was the largest market in Tiv land. It was the commercial backbone of the area and was attended by the Bette from Obudu and the Kunav. At this point when the Tsar market was established, another market was also established in Obudu to help limit travel stress for traders in Obudu. There were now two markets within the same environment separated by a distance of about two kilometers. Subsequently, these markets began to cause disagreement between the two groups as both sides were now contending for customers or market sales. The only solution local chiefs from both sides had been able to come up with was fixing both markets to fall on the same day to regulate the inflow of traders to each other's markets.<sup>39</sup>

There are also spiritual and mystical dimensions of these disputes which make them extremely dangerous. It is a known fact that the Kunav and the Bette people used to hunt for each other's fresh heads (Ogirinya cult) to carry out burial ceremonies when important figures in their respective areas die and are to be buried. It is said that when a significant personality, such as a Nomor in Kunav or an Oko in the Bette area dies, he could not be buried alone but with a specified number of fresh heads, hence the hunt for heads which makes the conflicts continuous. During conflicts, the Kunav do not usually go to Obudu to have a fill of their usual good palm wine of which the Bette are known to be leading producers, while the Bette does not go to Tsar market.<sup>40</sup>

An imperative fact to be noted during these wars is the fact that the Kunav people resident in Bette lands like lecturers at the Federal College of Education Obudu, hospital nurses, businessmen, and those married to Bette people are not harmed during these conflicts. The Kunav on the other hand does not touch the Bette resident in Tsar.<sup>41</sup> Notably, unlike the Tiv-Jukun conflicts that warranted the involvement of the Federal and State Governments, the Kunav-Bette conflicts have never escalated to a magnitude that warrants intervention from the Federal Government.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, disputes are part and parcel of every society, and adding to this is the fact that it is usually associated with destruction and chaos. War belligerents, therefore, having experienced the devastating aftermaths of war or conflict always seem to try to find a lasting solution to these conflicts as it has dire and severe consequences which ultimately involve the loss of lives.

<sup>39</sup>Oral Interview with Izabi Ugbong, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 47 years, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Godwin A. Vaaseh, "The Tiv-Udam Conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries: A Backlash Over the Location of Market Centers", (Unpublished Ph.D. project 2013, Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil Kano State), 11.

<sup>41</sup> Oral Interview with Izabi Ugbong, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 47 years, on 13/01/2020.

<sup>42</sup>Emmanuel Chiahemba Ayangaor, "The Tiv and Their Southern Neighbours 1890-1990" (U.S.A: Carolina Academic Press, 2011), 186.

The Bette and Kunav people having faced and experienced the disheartening after-effects of conflicts usually engage in dialogues, boundary demarcation, and payment of fines, to ensure the avoidance of war. Utsu Patrick Ishogya noted that the most often used resolution method for the Bette and the Kunav is dialogue. According to the chief, after most of the conflicts they have, the ruling class of chiefs from both sides sometimes converge at Bebuabong town hall in Bebuabong village in Obudu to negotiate or discuss terms of the agreement. Furthermore, it should be noted that the place of settlement is mostly determined by which side of the group initiated or started the conflict. The chief stated that this dialogue can sometimes take up to two to three days depending on how destructive and volatile the dispute is.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Isaac Imborvungu Igbido noted that in 2013 there was a boundary clash between the two groups. The incident that snowballed into a boundary dispute was a minor disagreement between a Kunav man and a Bette man at a piece of land in the boundary between the two sides. This disagreement caused a gunfire outbreak that lasted for 24 hours between the Tsar people and the Obudu people. This was a major cause for alarm as there were about 4 casualties. As a result of this, the then chief of the Tsar people Aondohemba Ikyrior, and some of his subordinate chiefs decided to call for a peace meeting which involves dialoguing with the Utsu Befeh II Apelfe of Bette people to deliberate on a lasting solution to the crisis. Isaac stated that the meeting converged on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July in Maria-Faustina secondary school hall situated along the boundary of both areas, this location according to Isaac's narrative was supposed to serve as neutral ground. This dialogue however proved effective as both parties went back to their various communities and cautioned their people against any further attacks.<sup>44</sup>

Against the backdrop of the above, there has also been an attempt by the Governors of both states in trying to find a lasting solution to the constant feuds between their states. Benedict Ayade the Governor of Cross River and Samuel Ortom the Governor of Benue state have for the past five years had series of dialogues to make sure they restore peace and order between both states.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, the medium that has proven very effective in maintaining peace between the two groups according to Kenneth Andelehe Undie is dialoguing. Sometimes, in the process of these dialogues, the group that defaulted is fined and is expected to pay reparation to the offended party. Be that as it may, as in 2016 the local chiefs from both communities converged at the clan heads secretariat inside Obudu town and they were able to come up with the suggestion that both groups can strengthen their relationship by intermarrying more and allowing their economic relationship to be more flexible than it has been over the years.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Oral Interview with His Royal Highness Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Isaac Imborvungu Igbido Amokaha, "Akur-Anieni: A search Light on Historical and Contemporary Development of the Kunav people", Vandeikya 2014, 7.

<sup>45</sup>Oral Interview with Emmanuel Akomaye Ugbong, Obudu, Cross River State, Traditional Ruler, 58 years, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2021.

<sup>46</sup>Oral Interview with Kenneth Andelehe Undie, Obudu, Cross River State, Civil Servant, 49 years, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

### Conclusion

To answer whether the goal of this paper has been realized, one can assert, based on evidence given from the above arguments, that the history of intergroup relations between the Bette of Obudu and the Tiv of Vandeikya from 1999-2019 has been reconstructed. As one of the objectives of this study, the paper has been able to identify the triggering factors responsible for the constant feuds between the communities involved which include the activities of members of the Ogirinya cult and their never-ending land encroachments or land disputes. The introduction of the Ogirinya cult marked the beginning of troubles for the once peaceful and harmonious relationship between the Bette and their Kunav neighbors. Regardless of the slowness and the corruption that inflicts the Nigerian legal system, seeking the assistance of the legal system remains a better option for resolving land and other disputes than actually taking the law into one's own hands. Most significantly, this paper has been able to show that there are no religious, political, or economic differences between the Bette people and their Kunav neighbors that should give rise to major inter-ethnic disputes between them.

The paper has been able to establish also, the fact that aside from the constant hostilities between the two groups, there have been intermarriages between them which have been ongoing right from the pre-colonial days. There have also been cultural integration where the study has shown the interchanging of indigenous dances like the Ipkatemana dance among others. Furthermore, aside from conflict, the two groups as proven by the study have had a good economic interaction even amidst conflicts.

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3	MaryAnn A. Ugbaha	61	F	Rtd Civil Servant	Obudu	09/01/2020
4	Peter A. Ogar	64	M	Rtd Civil Servant	Obudu	10/11/2019
5	Ugbaha Alelele	52	M	Civil Servant	Obudu	10/01/2021
6	HRH. Utsu Patrick B. Ishogya	59	M	Traditional Ruler	Obudu	20/01/2021
7	Ortese A. Abela	72	M	Rtd Teacher	Tsar	21/11/2019



8	Emmanuel Akomaye Ugbong	58	M	Traditional Ruler	Obudu	02/04/2021
9	Samuel Dom	43	M	Trader	Tsar	11/05/2020
10	Donatus Ikpanor	52	M	Teacher	Tsar	12/07/2020
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