Anatomy of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examines the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria, with the aim of assessing the contributions of periodic market centres to the economic development of Idoma society and challenges of periodic markets in the area. The objectives of the study are achieved through the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data. The result obtained showed that trade and markets have always been an important component of Idoma economy as it provides employment to many people in the area and bridges the disparities in productive capacity between communities. Though incomes from trade activities are often not very high, traders made a living out of it. The major challenges faced by traders and markets are poor road network, high cost of transportation and inadequate capital. It also explores the impact of markets on the economy of Idoma society and how the peculiarity of each community affects the nature and character of the periodic market centres in the area. The paper concluded by submitting that periodic market centres are beneficial to the growth and development of Idoma society because of the cross-fertilization of ideas, similarities in terms of cosmology, culture, economic and politics as a result of long-standing interactions and relations among the people.

Keywords: anatomy, periodic, market, centres, Idomaland, Nigeria

Introduction
The area which forms the subject matter of this paper lies south of the river Benue, in the Benue Trough of Nigeria’s Middle Belt Zone, covering a total of 5,955 square kilometers, and lies within longitude 80° east and latitude 60° and 30° north. It shares common boundaries with Nasarawa State to the north, Tivland (Gwer East and Gwer West L.G.As) to the east, Igedeland

(Oju and Obi L.G.As) to the south-east, Ebonyi State to the south, Enugu State to the south-west and Kogi State to the west. The area experiences a tropical climate, while the local vegetation is the guinea savannah type. It is marked by dry and rainy seasons. The rain season begins in April and lasts till October. While the dry season lasts from November to March. The average rainfall is between 1016 and 1524 mm. The area also experiences the dry, yet cold windy harmattan weather between December and February and a short break in rainfall in August. It has a population of about 2.5 million and is inhabited predominantly by the Idoma people, who speak the Idoma language and are predominantly rural and agrarian, who produce, eat and sell whatever that is in excess. The area is good for the cultivation of roots and grains crops like yam, cassava, corn, rice, soya beans, and millets serving as both food and cash crops – a practice that has considerably changed the luxuriant vegetation of the Idoma remote past. The people also involved in other vocations; as in white-collar jobs, art, and crafts. The administrative status of the seven local government headquarters has generated jobs and attracted more from other areas for civil purposes, trading and farming.

Even though agriculture occupied the commanding position in the economy of the area of study, trade and markets nonetheless provided vital prop. Markets promote and stimulate the exchange of goods and services in Idomaland. Markets in Idomaland are not static, but dynamic and responded to the needs of the people in their interaction with one another and their environment. This sector of the economy employs a significant proportion of the population on part-time and full-time basis. It is against this background that the paper seeks to examine the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria. Our data is sourced from primary evidence. This is counterpoised by rapidly growing literature from secondary sources on the people and their history. The data synthesized from all these support claims and conclusion that apart from agriculture, Idomaland is also renowned for its market centres and the Idoma had extensive interaction among themselves on one and between them and their neighbours on the other.

Conceptual Clarifications

In order to understand properly the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria, it is necessary to clarify some concepts. The concept of “periodicmarket” forms

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the keyword in this paper. The term periodic markets refer to markets that are not open for trade every day. Market activities took place once a market week. A market week is the number of days between a market day and the next in a particular community. On such market days, there are generally a large number of sellers and buyers. Periodicity of markets has been attributed to low level of income in developing economies.\(^5\) Low purchasing power of consumers, lack of storage facilities; sparse population concentration, and insufficiently diversified economy are responsible for market periodicity. These factors do not support continuous trading and therefore markets are forced to hold periodically in the areas. This attribute permits the concentration of sales in relatively short time and extent. Periodic markets resulted from and persisted because of the need of producers, the organization of time, inertia, and comparative advantage.\(^6\) This institution had to be coordinated with a calendar defined with the routine of production, religion, administration, rest, and recreation. Periodicity varied according to settlement pattern and culture area, but the most common in the area are five-day and ten-day periodicities.

**Characteristics of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland**

Market is significant to the economic growth and development of the study area and hardly could you find a community without a market centre. In fact, market centres—daily or periodic—developed as a result of differences in the physical environment and geographical factors which promoted the establishment of trade and markets, as no community was self-sufficient in the production of agricultural and manufactured goods which it requires either for its necessities or luxuries.\(^7\) In order to bridge this difference, exchange systems needed to be established by means of creating and enhancing markets. Among the Idoma, as with many Nigerian communities, market centres are highly valued landmarks, legitimate and veritable tools of the trade and building blocks of the Idoma economy. Ochefu appropriately put it thus:

The establishment of a market was desired by all communities but affordable to only a few. A high incidence of producers, buyers and sellers, as well as politically safe routes was necessary prerequisite in the establishment of markets. Once an appropriate site was chosen, it was cleared and necessary sacrifices made by the community head to ensure a trouble-free and profitable venture. The market was usually

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named after the day it was held. The Idoma, like their Tiv, Igala and Yalaneighbours operated a five-day market week.  

From the above statement, it is clear that apart from agriculture, Idomaland was and is still noted for its market centres and these markets are not static, but a fluid, dynamic entity, constantly incorporating and reinterpreting new knowledge aspects. This signifies how markets are historically relevant to the Idoma and how it has transformed over time. However, it is not within the purview of this paper to assess these changes and factors which necessitate them. Instead, we shall attempt to examine the anatomy of periodic market centres in Idomaland, North Central Nigeria. Periodic market centres in the study area can be categorized broadly into two – full-fledged periodic markets and semi-daily periodic markets.

By full-fledged periodic markets we refer to markets that are not open for trade every day such as Adiga, Eve, Ebi, Oja-Ala, Akpa-Otobi, Oshigbudu, and Ojije markets. Market activities took place once in a market week. This implies that the markets operate in strict compliance with the rules guiding the operations of periodic markets and are usuallyless in terms of capacity, size, population, popularity and commodities. The markets are held within an interval of days, with the most common in the area of study as five-day periodicities. By semi-daily periodic markets we mean periodic markets that are held on a daily basis. Even though these markets are periodic in all ramifications, they act as daily markets, as traders also transact business in them on a daily basis. The only difference is that there are more people from different villages and towns and a variety of goods and services on a market day.

This implies that their activities are a daily affair as against a onetime temporary or contract that only occurred in an interval. This is so because even in places where full-fledged periodic market still exists there are a handful of activities that go on, on non-market days. This is evidence during harvest seasons, especially good seasons when crops produce at their peak and as such lead to surplus and low prices. Goods and services are usually available at lower prices and in large quantities and variety for exchange on market days compared to non-market days. Apart from low prices and the large volume of goods and services, semi-daily periodic markets are a beehive of activities on market days, with sellers and buyers from within and outside the community. Oyangede market at Oyangede, Nkwo-Orokam market at Orokam, Inikiri market at Ulayi, Adoka Central market at Adoka, Affor market at Ugbokolo and Oweto market at Oweto typifies this.

Certain salient features characterized full-fledged periodic markets and semi-daily periodic markets. First, full-fledged periodic markets are plagued by infrastructure deficit, if any facilities

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10Christopher Onoja, 45, Farmer; Akor Felix, 55, Civil Servant both interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016.
did exist at such sites, they are usually crude shelters constructed by the sellers themselves, consisting of thatched roofs, tents or stalls supported with stakes or other wooden materials. Second, agricultural and easily perishable goods dominate other goods in these markets. This is so because most of these markets catered mostly for the subsistence need of households due to the poor or near absence of an access road and little specialization between economic units. But traders and manufactured goods of distant origins are not usually absent in the markets. Third, they posed little transportation, logistic and security problems as most participants in them come from their immediate communities. Fourth, very little capital requirement was necessary for a trader to trade in these markets as goods found in them are basic food and household items and exchange are usually carried out under tree shades and crude shelters constructed by the sellers themselves. Finally, these markets are dominated by women basically because they are seen as an adjunct to the domestic chores of women. There is a saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words”. Plate 1 below explains further by showing the nature and character of full-fledged periodic markets as described above.

**Plate 1: Pictures Showing the Nature and Character of Full-Fledged Periodic Markets**

![Plate 1](image)

**Source:** Author’s Field Work, 2019

Some features of semi-daily periodic markets contrasted markedly from those of full-fledged periodic markets. Semi-daily periodic markets are often large in terms of size, fame and catchment area and also attract traders from far and wide with diverse cultures and political systems because of their rich or greater varieties of consumer goods. The traders therefore, had to deal with the problems of logistics transportation, security, living accommodation and storage facilities. In these respects, the traders worked in close liaison with their host landlords and brokers. Second, unlike full-fledged periodic markets, which are dominated by women, semi-daily periodic markets are dominated by men. The tradition which tends to confirm women to
domestic chores made it difficult for them to undertake long-range journeys which would keep them away from home. Third, semi-daily periodic markets have better and improved facilities like open stalls, locked up stalls and toilet facilities and traders who trade in semi-daily periodic markets are often professionals that are people who took to trading as their main means of livelihood. Fourth, it required relatively substantial capital to justify undertaking the long journeys. They tried to solve the problem of capital through igeya system. A group of traders contributed an agreed amount of money each at an agreed interval, usually every market day. The amount collected was given to a member; the process continued until every member got his or her share. The Scheme is a self-imposed (or group influenced) savings on a regular basis and not profit-oriented, is similar to Isusu in Igboland, Isoko among Edo people, Esusu in Yorubaland and Adashi/Asusu in the Hausaland. Apart from igeya there are other forms of generating income such as daily contributions/savings, loans and credit purchase. Sometimes traders raised credit from family members, from money lenders and brokers. Finally, while most articles of trade in full-fledged periodic markets are perishable, those traded in semi-daily periodic markets are mostly not easily perishable. This is because it took a long time, sometimes months, for such goods to travel from their production centres to their final destinations. The goods are also usually of low bulk but high value, a condition dictated by high transportation cost. Plate 2 below explains further by showing the nature and character of semi-daily periodic markets as described above.

Plate 2: Pictures Showing the Nature and Character of Semi-Daily Periodic Markets

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Organization of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland

We may at this juncture outline the basic organizational features of periodic market centres in Idomaland. Some of the features have been mentioned in passing or obliquely in the course of our discussion above. However, it is appropriate now to accord the issue the specific attention it deserves. Periodic market centres in Idomaland are well organized commercial centres and are organized in a way that enhanced the efficiency of the distributive system. The markets, as regards physical layout, are usually demarcated and allocated according to commercial commodities. These commodities could be sold on bare ground without shade, but traditionally, market goods are sold under shades of trees, thatched roofs, tents or stalls supported with stakes, poles or other wooden materials. Although the modern market system was a later introduction, the modern stalls system is fast becoming a productive and well cherished market culture for domestic trade across the length and breadth of the study area.

For example, goods, particularly perishable ones, that were earlier spread on the ground are more appropriately shaded by or accommodated in stalls, thereby making the goods retain their freshness for a longer period. Also, traders who used to vacate the market early because of the blazing sun during the dry season and the soaking rain during the rainy season could stay longer in the market to sell their goods.\(^\text{12}\) This is very promising, because those who could not have been able to go to market, for one reason or the other to purchase their needs, could easily take advantage of the longer time made possible by the stall system. Importantly, the stall system saves many Idoma traders the burden of carrying their goods home at the close of each market, or, in the case of daily market, every day. Such goods are left in the stalls and guarded by market security guards.\(^\text{13}\) There are, therefore, different sheds or stalls for yam, cassava, palm oil, vegetables, meat, goat, fowls and cloths, etc.\(^\text{14}\) Sellers of similar commodities sat in groups, an arrangement which helped buyers to easily locate the commodities they wanted to buy.

\(^\text{12}\) Interviews: Olofu John, 60, Retired Civil Servant; Ogenyi Emmanuel, 74, Ex-serviceman, both interviewed in Makurdi, April 2016. Also see NAK/MAKPROF/2780E: Development – Minutes of Divisional Committee Meetings – Idoma Division; NAK/MAKPROF/2780/S.15: Development – Market, Trade and Economic, 1945; NAK/MAKPROF/5517: Idoma NT Council Minutes of Meeting; NAK/MAKPROF/5517/S.2: Idoma NT Council Minutes of Finance Committee; NAK/MAKPROF/3669: Improvements, Local industry – Spinning and Weaving.

\(^\text{13}\) Interviews: Enyi Agasi, 60, Farmer/Trader, interviewed in Utonkon, September 2016.

\(^\text{14}\) Interviews: Ogenyi Emmanuel, 74, Ex-serviceman, Makurdi, April 2016.
Merchants or vendors may sell or trade goods and services, nonetheless individual traders had to belong to trade guilds which regulated the operation of members in the markets.\textsuperscript{15} The markets are under the watchful eye of appointed authorities or officials, especially the market chief known as \textit{Och'olihio Oste-Oja} (the administrator or leader of the market) and crops of assistants who levied taxes, and maintained law and order to attract customers. They are appointed by the Council and the traditional rulers with the duties of ensuring peace and order, enforcing regulations, preventing dishonest dealing and maintaining the cleanliness and repair of the markets and market paths. They are market administrators and their position within the markets, is therefore, strategic and pivotal. The orderliness and tranquility that prevailed in the markets is achieved through the agency of market officials, trade guilds and customary laws guiding the establishment and operations of the markets.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, the markets are treated as a neutral and sacred place where violence is strictly forbidden.

**Challenges of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland**

Several factors are militating against periodic market centres in Idomaland, although every community has major issues to deal with. However, the issues common to almost all places are; lack of funds, weak infrastructures, government policies and insecurity.

1. **Lack of funds**: Most traders and farmers in the area are poor, with little or no saving and lacking the capacity or skills to diversify their sources of income. The relatively low income of traders and farmers is associated with the problem of inadequate capital. Inadequate capital is a problem for both the traders and farmers as it affects the quantity of products/commodities they can produce and purchase. The non-traders in these markets also have the same problem because this can limit the size of their business. Inadequate capital limits the infrastructural development, as the aim to put in place new structures to replace the ageing ones scattered across the markets, as well as provide the basic infrastructure to enhance smooth market activities had always been a challenge to the markets. Under this situation, a lot of infrastructure such as good market stalls, potable water and toilet facilities, which would have enhanced smooth marketing activities, are lacking.\textsuperscript{17} For example, some traders do not have the capital to purchase their own goods; they work for people whom they give fixed returns daily. Getting loans from the banks is not an easy exercise, as the majority of these people do not have collateral for the banks. The various informal credit facilities and association which tend to provide loans have limited capital to meet

\textsuperscript{15} Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader; Adah FavourOgebe, 53, Trader, both interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016.


\textsuperscript{17} Interviews: Priscilla Ejeh, 50, Farmer, interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016; Interviews: EjahAdoko, 85, Farmer, in interviewed in Adoka, August 2018.
the people’s financial demands.\textsuperscript{18} For traders to have a smooth market operation, adequate financing is imperative.

2. \textit{Weak infrastructures:} This is another major challenge facing not only markets or traders but also the economy in general throughout Nigeria. Farm produce, in the area lie in waste in remote areas and this is mostly because farmers/producers and traders encounter difficulties in transporting their farm produce/finished products to the available market to sell as there are no storage facilities to help preserve agricultural produce especially perishable produce from rotting. Good roads don’t exist and most remote areas find themselves cut-off from the rest of the urban and market centres.\textsuperscript{19} For trading and agricultural produce marketing to be efficient, transportation for moving the products from the rural areas where they are produced to the urban areas must be in good shape. The majority of the roads in the area are in very deplorable conditions. These inadequacies of rural transportation facilities are an insidious encumbrance to agricultural production, trade and rural development in the study area.\textsuperscript{20} This implies that the bad conditions of the road affect the cost of transportation of agricultural produce which in turn affects the rural farmers’ income. Consequently, leading to concentrated poverty, longer travel time, high prices for the transportation of goods from the production centres to the markets and high transaction costs for sales of agricultural inputs and outputs, and these limit agricultural productivity and growth as well as reduce chances for commercialization and industrialization in the study area. Plate 3 below explains further by showing the poor nature of roads and railway linking market centres in the study area, as described above.

\textbf{Plate 3: Pictures Showing the Poor Nature of Roads and Railway Linking Market Centres in the Study Area}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate_3.png}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{20}Interviews: Obande Onazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016.
There is no gain-saying the fact that head-portaging of farm produce greatly delimits the ability of the farmers to transport their farm produce to the market and this, by implication, diminishes their returns or income from the farm. This again underscores the need to provide motorable roads and road-worthy vehicles that can haul large volumes of farm produce and enhance the income levels of farmers in the area.\textsuperscript{21} The problem is aggravated by lack of appropriate processing tools, implementation, and equipment. Besides this, the equipment available is often too expensive for the average farmer/producer. Most farmers/producers depend on rudimentary, labour, and time-consuming hand tools for processing agricultural products.\textsuperscript{22} The use of modern equipment is not common among rural farmers/producers either because of non-availability, and where they are available, the high cost of renting/hiring one is highly exorbitant. The solution lies in the provision of incentives, machineries, and government policies to confront these challenges faced by farmers/producers and traders. Agriculture and trade must be given adequate attention in order to improve the economy; and small-scale farmers/producers must be adequately supported to ensure the nation’s food security as well as improving their standard of living.

3. Government policies: Poor policies have greatly affected trade and agricultural production in the area. Lapses encountered in trading puts traders and producers in situations where they need financial support to enable them to produce, expand and improve their yields. As earlier stated, there are various micro-financing institutes in operation today in Nigeria but so many traders and farmers/producers still cannot access them and others encounter delayed financing.\textsuperscript{23} Financial support either by government or private financing will go a long way in helping traders and farmers/producers acquire best practices, equipment and raw materials for easier and high-quality products. However, not much has been done in assisting traders and producers financially. Corruption and insufficient political commitment to address poverty are factors leading to poor markets conditions and agricultural production in the area. Some of the ways in

\textsuperscript{21}Interviews: Priscilla Ejeh, 50, Farmer, interviewed in Ugboju, October 2016.
\textsuperscript{22}Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016.
\textsuperscript{23}Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader, interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016; Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016. Also see P. Ogiji, The Food Basket Myth: ..., p.65.
which this takes place is paying lip service to developmental issues within the area in particular and the State in general, misappropriation and mismanagement of fund made for infrastructures, agricultural equipment and improved product varieties. Likewise, corrupt practice such as police extortion of traders on our highways and revenue collectors having personal receipts which they issued to the market users instead of official receipts militate against the smooth running of the markets. Inexperienced people and persons of doubtful characters are sometimes charged with the task of revenue collection for the Local Government and this, at times, resulted in the loss of the much-needed funds for effective running of the markets. 

4. Insecurity: Markets depend not only on the site or potential buyers and sellers but also on other factors and the conditions prevailing in the society. If there is no security of life and properties like the current situation in Nigeria, people will not farm/produce talk more of trading that will lead to capital accumulation and mobilization and thereby, leading to dwindling revenue generation and economic instability in the area, the state by extension and the nation at large. Besides, the area has a long history of conflicts both internal and across boundaries. These conflicts disrupt agricultural production and marketing systems, and cause mass displacements of rural dwellers who are the major players in the sector. Inter and Intra communal crisis, with its resultant splitting of markets in the communities, posed a challenge to the smooth running of market activities. For instance, the continuous feud between the Agila (Idomaland) and the Ngbo (Igboland) which has been a recurrent decimal for decades affects markets operations and administration in Agila and its environs. There are ill-feelings and apathy between the Agila and the Ngbo and this really has an adverse impact on markets in the area and retard the socio-economic development of Idomaland. Market could not hold for fear of insecurity any time a dispute occurs. Also, road marauders and bandits also constantly pillaged traders, especially during periods of communal clashes and political instability in the area. Consequently, the government at all levels should always secure the life and properties of the people to boost economic sustainability and agricultural production and in turn enhance trade. Political stability and a peaceful atmosphere encourage agricultural production, trade and economic sustainability.

Socio-Economic Impact of Periodic Market Centres in Idomaland

The impact of periodic market can never be overemphasized. Periodic markets perform diverse socio-economic functions towards the integration of peasant economic systems. Commercial activities among rural dwellers are mostly carried out through periodic markets, thereby bringing the gap of socio-economic isolation associated with rural area as well as integrating peasant traditional societies into regional and national socio-economic systems. Periodic markets contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of their locality in diverse ways.

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24 Interviews: Clement Owoicho, 55, Trader, interviewed in Onyangede, October 2016; Interviews: OnaziOste, 80, Farmer, interviewed in Igumale, August 2018.
26 Interviews: Enokela Onuh, 57, Trader; Ameh Eliagwu, 65, Trader/Farmer, both interviewed in Otukpo, April 2016.
27 Interviews: Sunday Adoko, 58, Trader; Michael Ikwue, 51, Civil Servant, both interviewed in Iga-Okpaya, October 2016. See Y. A. Ochefu, The Economic Transformation…., p.73.
through revenue mobilization, and improvement in resident welfare as it led to the provision of borehole, construction of roads, employment opportunity, and medium for the transfer of produce among others in communities where they are located and, diffusion of information. This connotes that the arrangement of periodic markets over time and space takes into cognizance the distribution of population and settlement, degree of mobility of traders and buyers and local variations in productive capacity and resource endowment.

The socio-economic development especially roads cut across both local and regional boundaries and thereby stimulating the improvement in agriculture and mass production of goods and services, the influx of people, goods and services into the markets as well as the positive deployment and commercialization of two factors of production – land and labour. This implies that large expenses of land are tilled for production while many people found employment in many diverse activities connected with the markets. These encourage specialization in production and the growth of market among the various communities as well as enhance local and long-distance trade.

The improvement in production capacity and expansion of the domestic economy encourages the acquisition of capital. The capital accumulation is either in form of material property or liquid cash. This contributes substantially to the economic transformation of the area with remarkable changes. Among the changes are specializations in productive activities, population increase, expansion in the markets, and increase in professional traders and middlemen activities. For some of the traders, the trade in agricultural products is their main business. These traders live on the profits they get from the business. The expansion and increase of activities in and around the markets also contributes to local prosperity and increase tax revenues for community development. Traders pay tolls in the form of tax. The revenue is used to develop and upgrade the markets and the communities.

Periodic markets are strong and important vehicle for pulling people and ideas together from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds because as traders moved from their communities to markets within and outside Idomaland, an impetus is given to settlement. For instance, Adoka, Otukpa, Ugbokolo, Oyangede, Utonkon and Igumale, among other communities, owed their prominence and rapid expansion to markets and commercial activities that went on in them. Thus, periodic markets are invaluable socio-economic components of the rural space which facilitate integration among the Idoma on the one hand and between the Idoma and their neighbours on the other hand, thereby fostering the process of integration which enhances peaceful coexistence. Periodic markets encourage intermarriages and serve as focal points for exchange of commodities and innovation; avenues for social function; centres for

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28 Interviews: Enokela Onuh, 57, Trader; Ameh Eliagwu, 65, Trader/Farmer, both interviewed in Otukpo, April 2016.
29 Interviews: John David, 55, Trader; Josephine Agada, 60, Farmer, both interviewed in Ugbokpo, October 2016.
30 Interviews: Ochapa Ogaba, 70, Trader/Farmer, interviewed in Igumale, August 2018.
31 Interviews: Ejah Adoko, 85, Farmer, in interviewed in Adoka, August 2018.
communications and entertainment and points for rural evangelism. These activities bred new breed of ideas and people whose loyalty transcend the narrow ethnic, cultural and religious loyalties of their ancestors as well as promote the diffusions of culture, reciprocal exchange of ideas and bond various people together. Periodic markets are not only major outlets for retail of goods; they are also a means of aggregating rural surpluses. Periodic markets are points for bulking farm produce into larger sacks for sale in urban markets. Also, they are meeting points for the continuation of lineage rites and also enable the socio-political regrouping of people that have previously dispersed.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to show that periodic markets are central to the growth and development of the economy of the study area. Periodic markets satisfy the cultural matrix of some groups and provide vital prop to the overall performance of their economies. Agricultural products from within Idoma and neighbouring communities sustained the vibrant markets patronize by traders from across the length and breadth of the country. The markets demonstrate the success of economic co-operation and cultural understanding, and provide a range of entrepreneurial opportunities for Nigerians from traders to loaders. However, some issues such as lack of funds, weak infrastructures, government policies and insecurity militate against their smooth operation and progress. It is important, therefore, that the government of Benue State set up a task force to ascertain the challenges confronting the market and how to solve them through capital investment and rural development. On the whole, the activities of periodic markets give the required stimulus to improve agriculture and mass production and promote trade and commerce within and outside Idomaland.

33Interviews: ObandeOnazi, 60, Trader/Farmer; Adoste Peter, 56, Trader, both interviewed in Igumale, April 2016. Interviews: Helen Agbo, 70, Trader/Farmer, interviewed in Otukpa, August 2018.