

The Political Philosophy of Yakurr Kingship, Family and Marriage: An Ideology of Political Regeneration in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper is basically analyzing the political philosophy of Yakurr kinship, family and marriage; as an ideology of political Regeneration in Cross River State. Yakurr Kinship, family and marriage is paramount to achieving the millennium development objective based on the conceptual connotation of Yakurr people with a national interest to the co-operate existence of the country Nigeria. Furthermore, Yakurr kingship, family and marriage is based on the customs and beliefs of the people as kins-group which is developed both matrilineal and patrilineal at regeneration. The paper more so, recommend the drawing of government attention toward kingship role and basic registration of all kings, rulers with the ministry of chieftaincy affairs. It is on this note, that the paper wishes to determine the various roles played towards kingship, family and marriage in today political dispensation.

Keywords: *Yakurr, kingship, family and marriage.*

INTRODUCTION

The political philosophy of Yakurr kinship, family and marriages was first introduced in 16th century immediately after the migration of Yakurr people from Akpa. Yakurr has a centralized and diffused system of political, cultural and administrative system of government which gave room to a strong parallelism in the name of their traditional leaders (Yabol...sing.Obol) who perform both judicial, executive, political, ritual and religious functions. As a community within Africa, Yakurr is shaped by her culture and transmission of cultural kinship, marriage and family. The homo-cultural is activities practiced in Yakurr gave room to refining and development within and outside territorial boundaries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Yakurr cultural kinship bears with etymology of the word culture as “colere” means “to culture and to practice”. The political philosophy of *kinship*, marriages and family circle around traditional ideas and values, beliefs, truthfulness, honesty, and hospitality. Yakurr kinship is esteemed as figure of wisdom, sacredness, purity of life and life communal which formed part of cultural value formation (Mbiti, 1969).

The political philosophy of Yakurr marriage kinship and family rests on the Obol Kepon and Yaponntam. This assemblage excludes women, but male youths are sometime allowed to take part in deliberations involving them (Mathias, 2002). However, family in pre-modern and modern societies is seen as the most basic sub-unit of social organization and one which carries out vital task such as socializing children (Haralambo and Itoiborn, 2000). In Yakurr tradition, individuals are identified based on groups and tight. The communal form of group life is based on a strong sense of collective inter-dependence and mutual obligation within patrilineal and matrilineal linkage which is seen as a “NUCLEUS OF THE YAKURR” household. The oldest social interacting institution in the world is regarded as marriage which is based on acceptability of both the man and woman within the expectation of permanence with the aim of producing children.

However, the term Yakurr is used to refer to five indigenous villages or town to include Idomi, Ugep, Ekori, Mkpani and Nko all in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State. Asa Political Regeneration, there is variant of the term in form of “Yako” (Forde, 1964, Angulu, 1975).

This paper examines the political philosophy of Yakurr kinship, family and marriage; As an ideology of political regeneration in Cross River State for analytical purposes. This paper is scaled down as follows: Part A consist of introduction and conceptual analyses. Part B focuses on the historical antecede of kinship, family and marriage and part C focuses on functions, conclusion, and recommendation.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Marriage can be viewed as one and the same time a cultural system of beliefs and ideals, an institutional arrangement of roles and norms, and a complex of interactional experience for individual men and women (George, 1966). Marriage can also according to Thope (1985) term it to be, as an anticipatory provision for needs. Through marriage, new rights, roles and social relationship are formed, not only between the spouses, but also between the kinsmen of spouses (Oтите and Ogionow, 1985).

KINSHIP

Onwuejeogwu (1992) defined kinship as a socially recognized relationship traced through parent child relation. This implies that the network of kinship relationships is based on birth and descent relationship between parent and male children, between siblings (ie brothers and sisters, children of the same parent), and grandparent, which connotes basic human attachment made by people of the same family linkage. Kinship relationship varies from one cultural society to another based on the descent structure.

FAMILY

As a cornerstone of a society, family is seen as a domestic group up of people who are related to one another in terms of marriage, blood, legalities, sexual mating, and a resilient social unit that has survived and adapted through time (Gordon Marshall, 1994). In pre-modern and modern societies, it can be defined as a unit of social organization and one, which carries out cultural and political task such as socializing children (Haralambos and Holbom, 2000).

HISTORICAL ANTICIDENT OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF YAKURR KISHIP, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The origin of Yakurr political philosophy of kinship, marriage and family can be traced during the colonial period with a strong sense of solidarity with the basic pattern of political philosophical organizational arrangement which is basically associated with, Yoruba, Igbo and Menda. It was a system based on cultural beliefs and customs which interacts and has intra woven association, through which we achieve internal and external cohesion and peaceful government.

The philosophical antecedent of Yakurr political system as an imperative which lay emphasizes on Yakurr as a double descent “kin group” organization, that is, it develops both patrilineal and matrilineal kins group with equal recognition accorded both at regeneration. The cultural linkage descent traced from the father was called “Kepon” while the linkage traced from the mother called “Lejimo” ie matridan (Ijbi, 2004).

The basic residential unit called Kepon consist of Obol Kepon as an entity of autonomous internal matter in his capacity for ritual lineage head. The Obol Kepun has a tremendous authoritative moral right as a guardian of the ancestral shrine, he is looked upon as an ultimate source of authority and Kepon solidarity in the other hand, it is seen as a land holding unit and it holds on trust for all. The traditional right of Obol Kepon is basic of

customary inheritance of immovable properties. Inter of cohesion within the patriarch family (Kepon) there will be reinforcement based on its territorially delimiting.

In Yakurr philosophy, the matrician (legimo) is not residential a group but a territorially delimited. The members of a matrician were dispersed among the patrician villages within Yakurr, since marriage was based on “EXOGAMOUS” moveable property were traced and inherited matrilineally with passion of each legimo lineage. The Age vaguely is personalized in dwelling powers, believed to intervene in human affairs and subject to influence by appropriate offering not a distance god. The basic collection of objects such as bowls, flask, clay mound, bronze manila and copper rods.

See the plates below showing, the various collection of objects within Yakurr territorial Kepon family.



Plate 1 : The Dane Guns

Source: Slave History Museum, Calabar

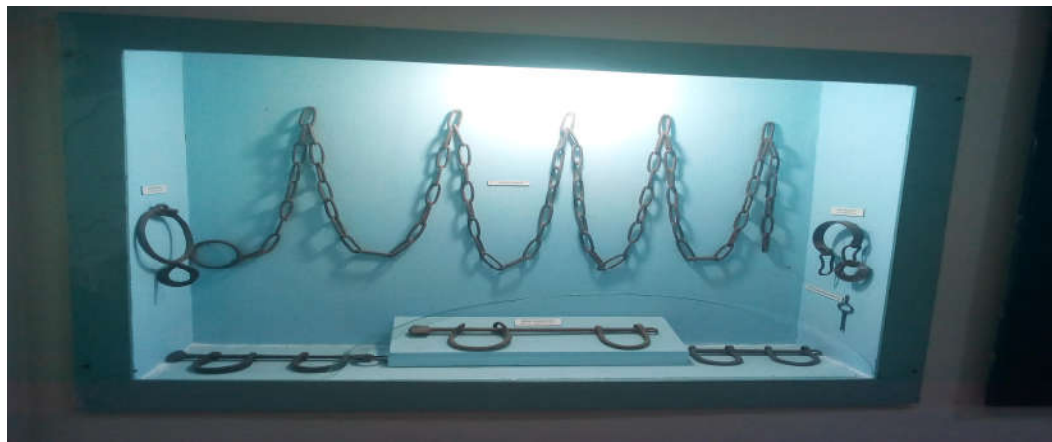


Plate 2: Chains and Shackles

Source: Slave History Museum, Calabar



Plate 3: Manilla Currency
Source: Slave History Museum, Calabar

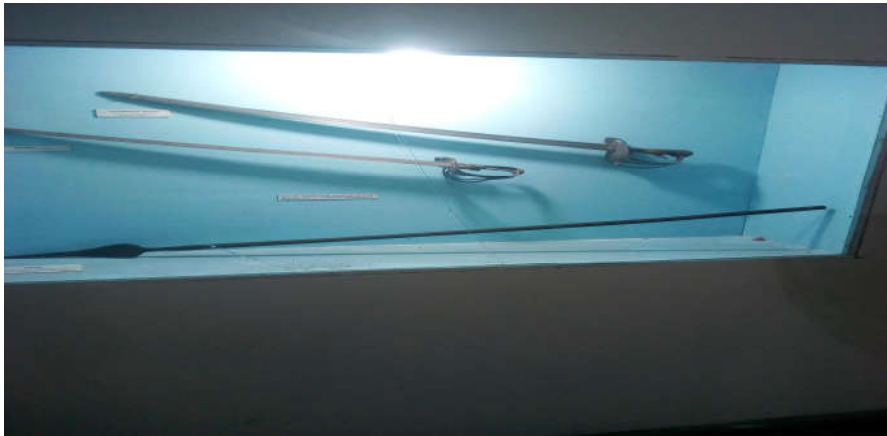


Plate 4 : Ceremonial Sword and Spear
Source: Slave History Museum, Calabar.



Plate 5 : Funnel Artifact
Source: Slave History Museum



Plate 6: Traditional Beads
Source : Slave History Museum, Calabar

The above Plates showed that Kepon (patrilineal family) is the smallest political unit in Yakurr while the largest family is “Ajimo” which regenerated to “Legimo” as a political, religious and cultural village.

THE AJIMO FAMILY GOVERNMENT

Angulu, 1975 believes that the apex of the machinery of government in Yakurr traditional system, rested on the “council of Yabol”, which terms to be ritual and Religious authority of the entire community and the political and administrative jury for ritual offences and major disputes. The external affairs connected with other villages are controlled. He equally disciplined individuals or group of individuals who flouted the councils decision and was ritually ex-communicated. The traditional actor judgement implies the basic use of other association, which aim at intervening, sought based on the membership derived. Furthermore, the council of Yabol was regarded as both legal and legislative body of Yakurr community. It brings unity amongst the various different section or groups together as a village and ensured the total well being of the entire society. This consist of Obol Lopon (head) Okepabri (prime minister) Onun Eko (commander-in-chief), Ejukwa (Town Crier) Ogbolia (chairman of the ligomi), Bina (head of the matrilineages in all the villages).

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Ijbi (2004) stated that, the basic economic activities of Yakurr people rested basically on agriculture, trading, manufacturing, livestock rearing, gathering, hunting and fishing. The main stay of agricultural economy activities and virtually involvement of people in a given society within Yakurr settlement giving opportunity to create and accumulate wealth such as food stuff and cash crops. The system of Agriculture mostly practiced was subsistence farming which deals with communal affairs based on it organization of human, material, land and capital resource. The family (Etoh) was regarded as the basic labour unit which gave an opportunity for people within the family to relate or interact with one another either by blood or by marriage (Forde 1950). Obol kepon as the head of the family gave room for land to be provided based on Agricultural purposes building of residential houses, and equally ensured that members were easily taken care off.

In terms of labour, family is encouraged by group work, which involves the pooling together of the labour of many families to work for a particular person, based on the rotational system of labour. By this, most age grades, extended family members, friends etc rotates this scientist work for somebody called “Kojinna”. In case of extra hands, for harvesting, clearing, hoeing and weeding called “Kebla” and it cut across family linkage. In case of appropriate request, land was equally pervasive within Yakurr communities where which land is located for those willing to build resident houses or engage in any agricultural practices. However, the cooperation undertaking is systematical not partisan, this implies it involves both men and women.

Secondly, gathering fishing and hunting also include craftsmen and women who possesses the skill to process raw materials into finished products. These include bambo work, rope making, decoration of calabash, mat weaving, wood curving and palm leaf resulting to division of labour and specialization in varies areas within the Yakurr community. Thirdly, trading is another economic activity of Yakurr communities or villages. Trading is seen as a basic economic activity.

SECURITY:

Yakurr generally, is noted by defence which is usually carried out in each communities’ territorial boundaries, mostly during internal crises. In terms of land, each patrician is expected to protect it residence and land to avoid any intrusion into the land of a particular patrician by non-village member to ensure development within the community and protection under the command of “Onun Eko”.

MARRIAGE STRUCTURE:

The concept of marriage within Yakurr traditional society is based on the agreement between a wide range of people or group of people giving rise to the establishment of new family, kinship relationship. However, the union is established based on traditional law and its customs and beliefs. The choice of marriage partner is not based on Romantic love alone but also on beauty, character and health, the affection and love relationship offer, which makes marriage successful. In Yakurr tradition, the endogamous of marriage within wards, villages and community as a whole is enveloped in patrilineage, and patrician and also within the matrician exogamous and the matrilineage. While close matrilineal kins are forbidden in marriage, the marriage contract last until death. In case of death, a widow continues to derive privilege and other amenities due to her as a married woman, from her husband’s patilineal kins, except she decides to remarry. Furthermore, in Yakurr levirate, widows’ inheritance and ghost marriage does not exit.

Liebow (1967), identifies sexual variety and adventure, gambling, drinking, swearing and aggressive behaviours in men and adultery, childlessness, gossip mongering, perceived laziness and need to escape from the exploration of the household in women are responsible for divorce in Yakurr Traditional system. With the advent of Christianity and modernization, high degree of monogamous marriage pattern was established. Among the old people, polygamy is frequent. There is also a high degree of monogamous marriage which resulted to divorced among many families, Children of extra-marital affairs are also legitimized if the decide to take up residence in their patrician.

YAKURR MARRIAGE PREREQUISITES

In Yakurr tradition, the prerequisites regarded for marriage is based on “satisfaction”, “approval” and “involvement” of wide range of people who are ready to be joint together as husbands and wives. Other prerequisites include ritual and the making of family payment in terms of money or service to the woman, her friends, parents and her patrilineal kins. As a result of urbanization, Christianity and modernization, changes have been developed into

marriage system which include pre-modernization, Christianity and modernization pre-requirements.

i. PRE-MODERN PREREQUISITES

This is done through presentation of gifts item to the woman. This gift includes clothing from raffia Palm (Liponi sing. Lopani), coconut which implies the symbol of love and the deep black pear which implies “deep love”. Acceptance of the gift by the woman is communicated to the man by offering him good quantity and quality selected matured groundnut. The quality and quantity groundnut determines whether to proceed to the next stage of bringing palm wine. Thereafter, there is the bringing of palm wine to the woman’s house, with friends and other close relation accompany. Question will be then asked by the patrician parent and kins

Forde (1950, 1964) sees Yakurr bride wealth as a process which gives the man legal right to the woman as wife’s services and variously related to the several interest involvements, the amount of money paid as bride wealth depends on the quality of the girl, for instance behavioural attitude and highest educational qualification.

ii. Christianity, experience of native urbanization and modernization.

Most changes are common within the socio-cultural activities of Yakurr nation. As a pre-requisite, this includes the introduction of money which rests on intrusion of commercial spirit into the marital transaction of the bride price, and is now valued in monetary terms with high degree of education or career, making her worth more in marriage-payment and bride-wealth. Other things introduced include marriage register, church, rings etc.

KINSHIP STRUCTURE

The reflection of kinship structure is based on the relationships between individuals, socio-cultural, biological, economic, political and religious activities which entailed unity affiliation. It also shows the basic recognized principals to a wide range of socio-cultural relationship between marriage, family and kinship affiliation generate.

In Yakurr tradition, due to modernization, urbanization and migration of people from one place to the other changes are been developed. As a pattern of personal and group relationship Yakurr kinship is seen as an important attachment and inter-presentation to guide the basic relationship that guides the conduct of individual from birth to death as right and obligation, governance acceptability. The affiliation of both patrilineal and matrilineal as well as relationship outside the strong bonds of all Yakurr people.

FAMILY STRUCTURE:

Traditionally, a family in Yakurr consist of coalition of nuclear family with close kin modification of extended and patrilineally extended structure. According to Morgan (1975) modified extended family consist of nuclear families in a partial dependence. Such partial dependence implies the exchange of significant service within one another as well as retain considerational autonomy; with Yakurr, there is group identification and tight communal form of group life. However, this can also be seen in terms of Domestic authority which is rests upon the husband and the wife who form the family.

Yakurr family is a hierarchically patrifocal and matri-focal interaction through in which society or institution are sustained and benefit from one another. As a fundamental anthropology of valium dynamic of culture, a family is the maternity home, the nursing home and the primordial institution of the society. As a birth place of cultural orientation where it is basically nurtured and developed. The leaders of the family have some specified rules or duties to performed where culture is taught, transmitted and sustained.

SUMMARY:

This paper has examined the basic political philosophy of Yakurr kinship, family and marriage as an ideology of political regeneration with severe changes, has gradual modification of interpersonal relationship through revolutionary institutional socialization, regulation and changes. The marriage, modernization helps to produce heterogeneous characters in the composition of household as a selfless service, cooperation and accountability, mentally, partial stability, socio-cohesion, good governance and economic basic growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis so far, the research recommends the following.

1. Proper sensitization of the targeted group of Yakurr kingship, marriages and families.
2. Yakurr kingship should be based on merit amongst the royal family members.
3. Government as a machinery should enhance and recognize the leadership role of Yakurr.
4. The operational justification should be carried out to ensure effective registration of marriages and kingship with both the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) the and Ministry of Local Government chieftaincy Affairs.

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