

**Unraveling the motivations behind History of Uzuakoli: Origin,  
Migration, and Settlement**

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**Independence Chinonye Enyindah**

Department of History and International Diplomacy,  
Faculty of Humanities,  
Rivers State University,  
Nkpolu-Oroworukwo,  
PortHarcourt.

**Blessing Agbugba**

Department of History and International Diplomacy,  
Faculty of Humanities,  
Rivers State University,  
Nkpolu-Oroworukwo,  
PortHarcourt.

**Abstract**

*This paper explores the history of Uzuakoli people, focusing on its origin, migration patterns, and subsequent settlement. The study aims to shed light on the historical development of Uzuakoli, a community located in South East, Nigeria, by examining various sources such as oral traditions and historical records findings. The study will employ a combination of historical and anthropological methods to trace the roots of the town and its people. It explores the origin of Uzuakoli, tracing its roots to ancient civilizations and explores the factors that led to its migration. It also investigates her migration patterns of Uzuakoli inhabitants, analysing the routes, motivations, and impacts of their movement. Furthermore, the study delves into the settlement process, examining the factors that influenced the choice of location and the subsequent establishment of Uzuakoli as a thriving community.. The study will also examine the cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions of the people of Uzuakoli, and how these have evolved over time. The study will not only contribute to the understanding of the history, culture and significance but will also provide insights into the broader history of the Igbo people of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Uzuakoli, Origin, Migration patterns, Ancient Civilisation, Cultural heritage

**Introduction**

Uzuakoli, a town located in the southern part of Nigeria, holds a rich historical and cultural background that predates colonial influence. This paper aims at offering an in-depth exploration of the origin, migration patterns, and settlement of the Uzuakoli community. By tracing the town's roots, examining migration routes, and analyzing settlement patterns, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of Uzuakoli's history and the factors that have shaped its unique identity. It also, aims to unravel the history of Uzuakoli, a town in Abia State, Nigeria. In this direction, the study of history as Zinn notes, serves as a crucial tool for understanding the past, shaping the present, and



envisioning the future<sup>1</sup>. Thus, it allows us to explore the origins, migrations, and settlements of various communities, shedding light on their cultural, social, and economic development<sup>2</sup>. This paper therefore, within the sphere of history, delves into the captivating history of Uzuakoli to unravel its origin, trace its migration patterns, and examine the factors that influenced its settlement. Uzuakoli, located in the southeastern part of Nigeria, is a town rich in cultural heritage and historical significance. Its history is deeply intertwined with the Igbo people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbo people have a long and complex history, with their origins dating back thousands of years. By studying the history of Uzuakoli, we can gain valuable insights into the broader Igbo history and the factors that shaped their identity. By tracing the migration routes and patterns, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Uzuakoli came to be inhabited by her people.

### Geographical Location of Uzuakoli

According to J. C. Anene<sup>3</sup>, "there is no dispute about the fact that the history of an area is written clearly in its geographical features". Uzuakoli is one of the communities in the Bende Local Government Area of Abia state of Nigeria. It is made up of five villages - Eluama, Amamba, Amankwo, Ngwu and Agbozu. The town is situated on a hilly section of the Bende - Afikpo axis. Uzuakoli is bounded in the North by Lohum, in the Northeast by Ozuitem, in the South by Ngu, in the Southwest by Amaoji Lodu, in the Southeast by Umuabia and in the Northwest by Nkpa. Other surrounding villages are Ubani, Akoli, and Isuikwuato<sup>4</sup>. Uzuakoli is one of the largest towns in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State, with longitude E7.5572 and latitude N5.6284. Her population is estimated to be 133,410<sup>5</sup>.

The climate of Uzuakoli does not differ from the rest of the rain forest belt of Eastern Nigeria. In this way, Uzuakoli enjoys a warm tropical climate with well-defined wet and dry seasons. It rains between April and October with a short break in the month of August. The mean annual rainfall is between 1.5 and 2metres. The rest of the months are dry. The temperature is high throughout the year, with an annual degree of between 75°F and 85°F. Like other parts of Eastern Nigeria, two winds are significant in the seasonal circle: These are the Southwest winds that bring rain and the Northeast trade winds that are dry, dusty and cold; the chilling effect of this wind is felt mostly between November and January<sup>6</sup>. Uzuakoli is low lying plain with a flat topography. The area is over 90metres above sea level. There is no prominent river other than streams which provide the people with water for drinking and household purposes. Some streams provide for domestic and commercial use, while others are

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<sup>1</sup> Zinn, Howard, 1922-2010, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 to Present*. New York, Harper Perennial, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Tara, Zahrar. *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World*. W. W. Norton, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Anene, J C. *Southern Nigeria in transition*. (Oxford: University press, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Interner Source: [www.findlatitudeandlongitude.com/1/uzuakoli/1500039/](http://www.findlatitudeandlongitude.com/1/uzuakoli/1500039/) (accessed December 12, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Nigeria Population Commission "2006 Census result."

<sup>6</sup> Iloje, N P. *A new Geography of Nigeria*. (Nigeria: Longman, 1965).

revered as sacred and therefore not fished in. Some of the streams include, Aruo, Iyi nzu, Nvuvo, Nweiyi, Iyi eke and Iyi okpu-ala, etc.

The people are skilled farmers and seasonal traders. They produce such staple crops as yams, cassava, coco yams, maize and other tropical products. They also produce palm oil and kernel. Apart from these, the Uzuakoli people also domesticate animals - sheep, goats, dogs, and fowls. But it must however be mentioned that all agricultural activities in Uzuakoli have always been influenced by climatic conditions<sup>7</sup>. In general, the climate is hot and humid, in most parts of South Eastern Nigeria, of which Uzuakoli is a part, high humidity and intense solar heat decrease human energy and vitality. Intense heat also affects the organic nutrients of the soil. This situation was made worse when the dry season was prolonged and accentuated by the harmattan winds. On the other hand, excessive rainfall can also damage crops by washing away the top soil and plant nutrients in the form of sheet or gully erosions. As a result of these uncertainties of climatic factors and other environmental influences, Uzuakoli people resorted to other supplementary means of livelihood such as trade and exchange activities. The town has a unique cultural heritage and is known for its traditional festivals, crafts, and music.

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopts historical materialism to discuss the history of Uzuakoli, including its origin, migration, and settlement. Historical materialism is a theoretical framework developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.<sup>8</sup> It seeks to understand history through the lens of social and economic factors. According to this framework, the development and transformation of societies are primarily driven by the material conditions of production and the class struggle that arises from these conditions. Applying historical materialism to the history of Uzuakoli, one could analyze the origin of the community by examining the material conditions that led to its formation. This could include factors such as the geographical location, availability of resources, and the social relations among the early settlers. By understanding these material conditions, one can gain insights into the reasons for the initial migration and settlement in Uzuakoli. Furthermore, historical materialism can also shed light on the subsequent migration and settlement patterns in Uzuakoli. By examining the economic and social factors that influenced these movements, such as changes in agricultural practices, technological advancements, or conflicts with neighboring communities, one can understand the dynamics of migration and settlement in Uzuakoli over time. Additionally, historical materialism can help analyse the class relations and social structures that emerged in Uzuakoli throughout its history. By examining the development of different social classes, such as landowners, farmers, or traders, and their interactions and conflicts, one can gain insights into the social dynamics that shaped the community.

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<sup>7</sup>Chukwuemeka, Arisa 79 years, interview by Blessing Agbugba on December 12, 2022, *Major occupation of indigenious Uzuakoli People in Amamba Uzuakoli*

<sup>8</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F., Lenin, V. I., & Borodulina, T, *On Historical Materialism: A Collection*. Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1972. Also see: Engels, Friedrich. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Translated by W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, Stanford University Press, 2009

Overall, historical materialism provides a theoretical framework that can help unravel the history of Uzuakoli by analyzing the material conditions, class struggle, and social relations that influenced its origin, migration, and settlement.

In conclusion, the history of Uzuakoli is a fascinating story of migration, settlement, and cultural exchange. Through the efforts of historians and local residents, we have been able to unravel some of the mysteries of Uzuakoli's past and gain a deeper understanding of its rich cultural heritage. As we continue to explore and document the history of this remarkable community, we can look forward to discovering even more about its fascinating past and the role it has played in shaping the cultural landscape of Nigeria.

### Pre-colonial Migration

There is limited literature on the origin of Uzuakoli and the available information is based on oral tradition. A 1964 book by A.J. Fox titled "Uzuakoli: A Short History," provides a brief overview of the town's origin, the Agbagwu Market, and slavery<sup>9</sup>. Despite this, Uzuakoli was a town that was receptive to change, and was not behind in terms of civilization. The Uzuakoli Welfare Association described the town as having one of the largest markets in West Africa and a population comparable to Ibadan. The Uzuakoli Welfare Association<sup>10</sup> conceptualizes the town thus:

It is well known fact that Uzuakoli is one of the towns in Nigeria which have the largest markets in the whole of West Africa. She is an agricultural town of no means order with a population of over half of that of Ibadan with already Skeleton township yearning for development<sup>11</sup>.

Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton argue that the first major coup in the hinterland occurred in 1886, when the British intervened to end the Ekitiparapo War between Ibadan and other forces. The available information on the origin of Uzuakoli is primarily based on oral traditions, as there is dearth of literature on the Uzuakoli. Afigbo notes that Igboland, where Uzuakoli is located, was not frequently visited by early travelers, and the absence of written records has limited the documentation of this group. The main source of literature on the Uzuakoli people is a book titled "Uzuakoli: A Short History," published in 1964 by A.J. Fox, a foreigner. This book provides a brief overview of the origin of Uzuakoli, information about the Agbagwu Market, and the history of the slave trade and slavery in Uzuakoli. However, this book is not a comprehensive study of the Uzuakoli people. It is worth noting that Uzuakoli has a significant history of civilization. A letter from the Uzuakoli Welfare Association, dated June 30, 1946, emphasizes that Uzuakoli is recognized as one of the towns in Nigeria. The association describes Uzuakoli as a town with one

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<sup>9</sup>A, J Fox. *Uzuakoli: A short History*. (Oxford: University Press, 1964).

<sup>10</sup>*Petition from Uzuakoli Welfare Association, Lagos Branch*. Achival material, National Archive, Enugu, The Resident, Owerri Province, though Distrct Officer, 1946.

<sup>11</sup>*Petition from Uzuakoli Welfare Association, Lagos Branch*. Achival material, National Archive, Enugu, The Resident, Owerri Province, though Distrct Officer, 1946.

of the largest markets in West Africa, an agricultural town with a population comparable to half of Ibadan's, and a township in need of development.

In line with the perspectives of Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton on Ibadan, the perception of Uzuakoli town mentioned above aligns with their views. They seemingly inferred that Ibadan was cosmopolitan and argued that the first significant coup in the hinterland occurred in 1886 when the British intervened to put an end to the prolonged Ekitiparapo War between Ibadan and the alliance of Ekiti, Ijesa, Egba, Ijebu, and Ife forces. The war was caused by the seeming rising powers of Ibadan. This war as they highlighted had been ongoing for fifteen years, and all parties involved were tired of fighting. They welcomed the British as peacemakers<sup>12</sup>. However, while the British intervention brought an end to the main fighting, it also paved the way for full-scale colonization. The treaty that ended the war stated that all signatory combatants would refer future disputes to the British governor in Lagos for resolution. Additionally, all parties agreed to promote free trade, which ultimately benefited British commercial interests in accessing interior markets. Also, Elizabeth Isichie's view also seems to corroborate this view. She argues that in the 19th century, Uzuakoli emerged as a rival fair to Bende, serving as the final stopping place for the Aro people traveling from the Aro further West<sup>13</sup>. According to A.J. Fox, many Ibo villages, including Uzuakoli, were founded by individuals. Uzuakoli specifically got its name from events that occurred after their settlement. According to him:

For one reason or another, very many Ibo villages were founded by individuals. Such villages have been named to commemorate either the events which led to the settlements or the events which took place after the first settlement had been made. It is this latter category that Uzuakoli is placed<sup>14</sup>.

However, the origin of Uzuakoli varies according to tradition<sup>15</sup>. According to him, one version traces it back to a man named Imenyi, who left his home in Isiukwuato due to constant quarrels and settled elsewhere, naming the new place after his son Akoli. Another version states that Imenyi migrated from Oghere in Ezere village to Ahaba, where he spent his entire life and had children, including Akoli. Akoli then migrated to the Akoli settlement and had a son named Ozu, who founded Uzuakoli. Yet another version suggests that Ahaba, Ezere, and Ovim were the first, second, and third sons of Imenyi, respectively, and that Ozu descended from Ahaba. Akoli and Ozu were believed to have the same mother. Overall, it is clear that there is no consensus on the origin of Uzuakoli according to tradition.

However, there is some common ground in the various sources regarding the relationships between the different individuals mentioned. It is known that

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<sup>12</sup>Toyin, Falola and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

<sup>13</sup> Isichei E, *A history of the Igbo People*, London; Macmillan Press Ltd, 1970.P. 63

<sup>14</sup>A, J Fox. *Uzuakoli: A short History*. Oxford: University Press, 1964.p.32

<sup>15</sup> (Chukwuemeka, Arisa 79 years, Community Chief). Interviewed by (Blessing Agbugba), Uzuakoli and 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

Imenyi was from Isiukwuato and that Ezere, Akoli, and Ahaba were somehow related to him, either as children or brothers. Additionally, Akoli was related to Ozu, either as his father or brother, although there is disagreement among the sources about the exact relationship. The prevailing tradition today suggests that the Uzuakoli people can be traced back to Ezere in Isiukwuato, then to Akoli, and finally to Uzuakoli. According to this tradition, after Akoli's death, Ozu only received a small portion of the inheritance and was motivated to seek his fortune elsewhere. He initially settled at a place called Eke, which was known for hindering the progress of large families like his own. Ozu had five sons - Mba, Oma, Nkwo, Ogwu, and Ozu (the youngest and favorite). As they grew up, they built their own homes near their father's, which became a central meeting place. These five homes eventually developed into the five villages that make up Ozuakoli - Amamba, Eluama, Amankwo, Ngwu, and Agbozu. The name "Ozuakoli" is a combination of their father's name, Ozu, and their grandfather's name, Akoli. In 1915, the railway authorities corrupted the name to "Uzuakoli," which is today the more commonly used version.

Emmanuel Okezie Enyinnaya explains that the change in name occurred when the British colonial government took control of the Uzuakoli town. He posits thus:

At the time when the British colonial government became effective, Uzuakoli was blessed with the presence of the white men who brought new trade of wares and produce to replace slave trade which thrived in the land. They also brought education which taught the people how to read and write. The situation changed the names of Akole (Akole) to Akoli and Uzuakole to Uzuakoli. These were designed by the colonial masters for easy spelling and pronunciation for the people and themselves<sup>16</sup>.

Similarly, Elizabeth Ezichie notes that:

In 1923, work began on the Port Harcourt- Enugu railway and the Methodist Church made a deliberate decision to set a chain of missions along the railway in Uzuakoli, Umuahia, Ihube and Ovim. Each of these stations was the nucleus for scores of outstations... In 1923, they established an important training College and secondary school in Uzuakoli, but in the main they stressed evangelization rather than education, an emphasis inherent in the church's own history and origins.

Also, oral tradition further holds that it was as a result of the advent of British colonial rule that the names Akole and Uzuakoli were changed to Akoli and Uzuakoli respectively, in order to make them easier to spell and pronounce for both the locals and the colonialist. The presence of Europeans in Uzuakoli had a significant impact, as they established missions along the Port Harcourt-Enugu railway and set up a training college and secondary school in the area. However,

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<sup>16</sup>E.O. Enyinnaya, *The Origin Of Ila-Oso Uzuakoli Cultural Festival and Genealogy of ancestral Father of Uzuakoli*: Pioturu Books. 2021.

their main focus was on evangelization rather than education, which aligns with the church's history and origins.

Furthermore, according to oral tradition, Mba, Oma, Nkwo, Ogwu, and Ozu were the original settlers in different areas of the village. Mba settled at Ndi eke nte-ukwu compound and his house became the central ancestral meeting place. Oma settled at Obi-amuihe, which is now the head lineage of the Eluoma village. Nkwo settled at Ndagbor-amankwo, which is now the head of the Amankwo village. Ogwu settled at Ndagbor-ala or Agbor-Ngwu, which is now the Ngwu village head. Ozu, the youngest son, settled at Eserem-Agbozu near Mba's house. Mba had two wives and they gave birth to six sons. The first wife had Eze, ikpekogu, and Erem, while the second wife had Ikenga, Ekwo, and Ngwaogu. These six sons formed the six lineages of the Amamba village.

Before Mba died, he distributed his powers, authority, and wealth among his children. He appointed Eze as the chief/priest, Ikpekogu as the administrator and judge, Ikenga as the Ichu-ihu, Ekwo as the guardian of the Azi river god, Erem as the guardian of the Iyi eke god, and Ngwaogu as the distributor of resources among his brothers<sup>17</sup>. Oma had a son named Elu, whose descendants are Amuihie, Amuda, and Ndagbor, the three lineages of the Eluoma village. Nkwo had three sons - Echele, Ozu, and Isu. The Echele lineage now occupies Ndagbor-amankwo and is the head of the village. Ozi's descendants are called Amuzi and Isu, and they were named Umuisu to commemorate their migration from Isiukwuato. Ogwu, also known as Ogwu-anyim, settled at Agbor-Ngwu and had six sons - Agbor-Ngwu, Ugwuode, Ekwueme, Adukwuru, Nwammiri, and Ibina. Ozu, the youngest and most beloved son, had a total of eight sons: Kwesirim, Orji, Ihe, Isu, Ota, Ojika, Amaewu, and Amarji. These eight sons formed the lineages of Agbozu village. However, currently only six of these lineages remain, as Amarji and Amaewu have become extinct groups. He also notes that each son was given a sacred item called Ofo by their father when they established their own homes. The Ofo serves as a symbol of authority and justice. In addition to the Ofo, the ancestral land of Ozu, known as Ala-ozu mmam, and their father's grave in Amamba village represent a shared origin, unity, and justice among the villages that make up Uzuakoli. All appeasement sacrifices are performed at the Ala-ozu mmam shrine. The Ofo of each village is held by the descendant of the first son of the village's founder. The Ofo holders are responsible for preserving tradition and wear a beaded necklace called Achulu as a symbol of their authority. They also oversee and conduct important rituals for the community.

### **Uzuakoli: Migration before Colonialism**

This section aims at exploring the foregoing account of the migrations that brought people to Uzuakoli before the advent of colonialism. It will attempt to investigate the primary motivations behind these migrations. It will also analyse the impact of these migrations on Uzuakoli's societal dynamics, traditions, and customs.

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<sup>17</sup>Chief Uwaezuoke Nnaa 91 years, Community Chief). Interviewed by (Blessing Agbugba), Uzuakoli and 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

### **Inheritance**

After Akoli's death, Ozu only received a small portion of the inheritance, which may have motivated him to seek his fortune elsewhere. This suggests that economic reasons played a role in Ozu's decision to migrate. In this direction, it is unarguable that inheritance plays a crucial role in shaping societal dynamics as it determines the transfer of wealth, property, and power from one generation to another. Inheritance practices can reinforce existing social hierarchies and power structures, leading to the preservation of traditional customs and authority. One renowned scholar who has extensively studied the impact of inheritance on social dynamics, traditions, and customs is Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu argued that inheritance plays a crucial role in shaping social dynamics, traditions, and customs<sup>18</sup>.

He believed that individuals inherit not only material possessions, but also cultural capital, which includes knowledge, skills, and cultural practices. According to Bourdieu, this cultural capital is unequally distributed in society, leading to the reproduction of social inequalities across generations. In terms of social dynamics, Bourdieu argued that inheritance perpetuates social stratification. Those who inherit wealth and cultural capital from their parents have a significant advantage in terms of education, employment opportunities, and social status. This perpetuates a cycle of privilege and disadvantage, as those without inherited resources struggle to access the same opportunities. Regarding traditions and customs, Bourdieu highlighted how inheritance influences cultural practices and norms. He argued that individuals from privileged backgrounds are more likely to inherit cultural capital that aligns with dominant cultural norms. This can result in the reproduction of traditional customs and practices, which may exclude or marginalize individuals from different social backgrounds. Bourdieu's view on the impact of inheritance factor on social dynamics, traditions, and customs emphasizes the role of inherited resources in perpetuating social inequalities and maintaining cultural hegemony. He believed that addressing these inequalities requires challenging the unequal distribution of cultural capital and creating more equitable opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their inherited resources.

In terms of migration account in Uzuakoli people therefore, it would likely be inferred in the light of the foregoing that inheritance plays a significant role in the motivations for migration and the experiences of migrants. Thus, would likely view inheritance as a form of cultural capital, which refers to the knowledge, skills, and values that are passed down from one generation to the next.

### **Hindrance in Eke**

In the tradition of origin of Uzuakoli people, it is said that Ozu initially settled in a place called Eke, which was known for hindering the progress of large families like his own. This suggests that Ozu may have faced challenges and limitations

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<sup>18</sup>Bourdieu, P. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.



in Eke, prompting him to search for a more favorable environment for his family. Hindrance in a place, such as geographical barriers or limited resources, can impact societal dynamics by influencing the development of distinct cultural practices and traditions. These hindrances can lead to the formation of isolated communities with unique customs and social structures. Edward T. Hall argued that the physical environment in which people live has a profound impact on their social behavior and cultural practices<sup>19</sup>. He identified four different types of spaces that people inhabit: intimate, personal, social, and public. Each of these spaces has its own set of rules and norms that govern how people interact with one another. According to Hall, hindrances in a place factor can disrupt these norms and lead to changes in social dynamics, traditions, and customs. For example, if a community's traditional gathering place is destroyed by a natural disaster, it may be difficult for people to maintain their social connections and cultural practices. Similarly, if a new development project disrupts the natural environment in which a community lives, it may lead to changes in their traditional practices and beliefs.

### Family Ties

Ozu had five sons - Mba, Oma, Nkwo, Ogwu, and Ozu (the youngest and favorite). As they grew up, they built their own homes near their father's, which became a central meeting place. This indicates that the desire to maintain close family ties and create a community may have influenced their decision to migrate together. Family ties are a fundamental aspect of societal dynamics and customs. Strong family bonds can reinforce traditional values, customs, and authority within a society. They can also influence decision-making processes, marriage practices, and the transmission of cultural heritage.

Robert D. Putnam in his book "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community," argues that the decline of family ties and social capital has led to a breakdown in traditional customs and values in American society<sup>20</sup>. Putnam contends that strong family ties and social networks are essential for the functioning of a healthy society. He argues that when people have strong family ties, they are more likely to participate in community activities, volunteer, and engage in civic life. However, Putnam also notes that the decline of family ties and social capital has been a significant factor in the breakdown of traditional customs and values. He argues that as people become more isolated and disconnected from their families and communities, they are more likely to adopt individualistic values and behaviors. This, in turn, can lead to a breakdown in social norms and an erosion of traditional customs and values.

### Name Preservation

The name "Ozuakoli" is a combination of their father's name, Ozu, and their grandfather's name, Akoli. This suggests that preserving their family name and heritage may have been a motivating factor for migration. The preservation of family names and lineages is often associated with maintaining social status and authority. Societies that place a high value on name preservation tend to

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<sup>19</sup>Hall, E.T. *The hidden Dimension*. NY:Doubleday: Garden City, 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Robert, D. Putnam. *Bowling Alone*. United States: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

prioritize the continuation of traditional customs and hierarchical structures. Kwame Anthony Appiah in this direction, postulates that the practice of preserving names is an important aspect of cultural identity and can have a significant impact on social dynamics<sup>21</sup>. According to Appiah, names are not just labels but are deeply connected to our sense of self and identity. By preserving names, we are preserving a connection to our cultural heritage and history. This can help to strengthen social bonds and promote a sense of community. Regarding the migration accounts of Uzuakoli, the preservation of names is often a way for migrants to maintain a connection to their homeland and cultural heritage.

### **Economic Opportunities**

The arrival of the Europeans brought new trade opportunities to Uzuakoli, replacing the slave trade that was prevalent at that time in the area. This attracted individuals seeking better economic prospects and livelihoods. Chief Nwokedi Oliver Emeka in this direction reveals thus:

When you think of Uzuakoli, the historic town in Abia State, Eastern Nigeria, and certain forms jump to mind especially for those without background knowledge of the place. You think of the Methodist College, Leprosy Settlement and Agbagwu market, Ila Oso (cultural festival)Uzuakoli. You perceive the strategic importance of the town to both Biafra and Nigeria during the civil war. You wonder about the uniqueness of her people. Unfortunately today, you experience only the shadow of the old Town so well-endowed but seemingly unable to live its massive history. The difference between the past and present is scandalous and lopsided socio- political and economic changes in Nigeria and the world at large. Before the advent of Religious Missionaries, Uzuakoli had been the centre of trade whose Agbagwu market fair lasted several days compelling visitors from neighbouring towns to settle in strangers quarters around the town. The potential economic content and the organisation must have made the British to withhold Military expedition to this town until much later while trying other means of persuading the people to embrace also commodity trade<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, the foregoing underscores the fact that economic opportunities greatly impact societal dynamics and customs. Societies with limited economic opportunities may prioritize traditional practices and customs as a means of maintaining stability and social cohesion. On the other hand, societies with greater economic opportunities may experience more rapid changes in customs

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<sup>21</sup>Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Ethics of Identity*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Chief Nwokedi Oliver Emeka, "Uzuakoli: A Historical perspective," *facebook*, Febuary, 8, 2020, U <https://m.facebook.com/115133739927574/photos/a.115173639923584/168309904609957/?type=3>

and traditions due to increased exposure to external influences. Amartya Sen argues that economic development should not be solely measured by increases in income or GDP, but rather by the expansion of people's capabilities and freedoms<sup>23</sup>. According to Sen, economic opportunities play a crucial role in shaping social dynamics, traditions, and customs. He believes that economic development and the availability of opportunities can empower individuals and communities which enable them to exercise their agency and participate in decision-making processes. This, in turn, can lead to the transformation of social norms, customs, and traditions.

### **Establishing new homes**

The sons of Ozu migrated to establish their own homes and lineages in Agbozu village. This suggests a motivation for migration to create a new life and identity separate from their father's household.

### **Inheritance of sacred items**

Each son was given a sacred item called Ofo by their father when they established their own homes. This suggests a motivation for migration to inherit and preserve their family's traditions and symbols of authority. According to Mills, the inheritance of sacred items allowed certain families and individuals to claim a special connection to the divine and to assert their authority over others. This, in turn, led to the development of complex social and political systems that were based on religious beliefs and practices<sup>24</sup>. Mills also notes that the inheritance of sacred items had a significant impact on traditions and customs. For example, the ownership of certain sacred items was often tied to specific rituals and ceremonies, which were passed down from generation to generation. This helped to reinforce cultural traditions and to maintain a sense of continuity and stability within the community. With Mills' argument on the inheritance of sacred items, it could be safe to assert that such sacred items such as Ofo and ancestral shrines, is an important aspect of Uzuakoli culture and identity.

These items are believed to have spiritual power and are passed down from generation to generation as a way of maintaining a connection to the ancestors and the land. The import of Mills' discourse to the history of migration of Uzuakoli people also infers that the inheritance of sacred items is closely tied to the concept of lineage and kinship in Uzuakoli society. Inheritance is not only a way of preserving cultural traditions but also a means of maintaining social and political relationships within the community. Furthermore, Mills suggests that the motivations for the inheritance of sacred items are not solely based on religious or spiritual beliefs. Rather, they are also influenced by economic and political factors. For example, the possession of certain sacred items may confer social status and prestige, which can be leveraged for economic or political gain. Overall, Mills' analysis of the inheritance of sacred items by implication highlights the complex interplay between cultural, social, economic, and

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<sup>23</sup> Sen, Amartya, 1933-, *Development as Freedom*. New York, Knopf, 1999

<sup>24</sup> Mills, Barbara J. *The Archaeology of Sacred Spaces: The Temple in Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome*. Cambridge University Press, 2012, 45-67.

political factors in shaping the practices and beliefs of a society such as could be inferred in the migration account of Uzuakoli people.

### **Unity and justice**

The ancestral land of Ozu, the father's grave, and the Ofo serve as symbols of shared origin, unity, and justice among the villages that make up Uzuakoli. This suggests a motivation for migration to maintain and strengthen the bonds between villages and ensure the preservation of unity and justice.

The concepts of unity and justice unarguably play crucial roles in shaping societal dynamics and customs. Societies that prioritize unity and justice tend to have more stable social structures and customs. Conversely, societies with deep divisions or injustices may experience conflicts and challenges to traditional customs and authority. Amartya Sen explored the importance of justice in society and its influence on various aspects of human life<sup>25</sup>. According to Sen, unity and justice are crucial factors in shaping social dynamics, traditions, and customs. He argues that a just society is one that ensures equal opportunities and freedoms for all its members. In such a society, people can freely express their opinions, participate in decision-making processes, and have access to basic necessities and resources. Sen believes that unity and justice are closely intertwined. A just society promotes unity by fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose among its members. When people feel that their rights and interests are protected, they are more likely to cooperate and work together towards common goals. This unity, in turn, strengthens social bonds, fosters trust, and promotes social cohesion.

### **Preserving tradition and authority**

The Ofo holders, who are descendants of the first son of each village's founder, are responsible for preserving tradition and wearing the Achulu necklace as a symbol of their authority. This suggests a motivation for migration to uphold and pass down cultural practices and maintain leadership roles within the community.

Weber's view on the preservation of tradition and authority underscores the concept of "traditional authority"<sup>26</sup>. According to Weber, traditional authority is based on long-established customs, beliefs, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. It is characterized by the legitimacy and power granted to individuals or institutions due to their adherence to traditional norms and values. Weber argued that the preservation of tradition and the authority it confers can have both positive and negative impacts on social dynamics, traditions, and customs. On the positive side, tradition provides stability, continuity, and a sense of identity to societies. It can serve as a source of collective memory, cultural heritage, and social cohesion. Traditional authority can also provide a sense of security and predictability, as people know

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<sup>25</sup> Sen, Amartya. *The Idea of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009

<sup>26</sup> Weber, Max. "On The Theory of Social and Economic Organization." In *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, edited by Talcott Parsons, translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, Chicago: The Free Press. 1947. 155-182.

what to expect and how to behave within established norms. However, Weber also recognized the potential drawbacks of excessive reliance on tradition and authority. He argued that traditional authority can hinder social progress, innovation, and individual freedom.

Max Weber, a prominent sociologist and political economist, did not specifically explicate the history and motivations of preserving tradition and authority in the migration account of Uzuakoli. However, we can draw on Weber's theories and concepts to analyse this phenomenon. Weber's work on social action and the sociology of religion can provide insights into the motivations behind preserving tradition and authority in migration accounts. According to Weber, individuals and societies are driven by various motivations, including tradition, rationality, and charisma. Preserving tradition and authority can be seen as a response to the challenges and uncertainties that arise during migration. When people move to a new place, they often face unfamiliar social, cultural, and economic conditions. In such situations, preserving tradition and authority can provide a sense of stability, continuity, and identity.

In the case of Uzuakoli, preserving tradition and authority can be seen as a response to the challenges faced by migrants. Migration often disrupts social structures and norms, and preserving tradition and authority can help migrants maintain a sense of order and continuity in their lives. However, it is important to note that Weber's theories are general frameworks that can be applied to various contexts.

Overall, the motivations of migration in this account include economic opportunities, seeking a more favorable environment, maintaining family ties, and preserving their family name and heritage. Other includes establishing new homes, inheriting sacred items, maintaining unity and justice, and preserving tradition and authority. Also noticeable are access to education, desire for acceptance from colonial powers, and the establishment of religious and educational institutions.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the comprehensive exploration of the motivations behind the history of Uzuakoli, encompassing its origin, migration, and settlement, has shed light on the intricate factors that shaped its trajectory. By employing the theoretical framework of Historical Materialism, we have unraveled a multifaceted tapestry of influences that propelled this community's migration. One of the prominent factors that emerged from our analysis is the notion of inheritance. The passing down of traditions, customs, and sacred items from one generation to another played a pivotal role in Uzuakoli's migration. The preservation of ancestral legacies and the desire to uphold cultural heritage motivated individuals and families to seek new homes where these traditions could flourish.

Furthermore, hindrances in Eke, the original settlement, acted as a catalyst for migration and Economic opportunities were limited. These hindrances prompted the community to venture out in search of greener pastures, where they could build a better future for themselves and their descendants. Family

ties also played a crucial role in Uzuakoli's migration. The desire to stay connected and support one another drove families to relocate together, creating new communities and strengthening their bonds. The preservation of family names and lineages became intertwined with the establishment of new homes, ensuring the continuation of their legacy.

Moreover, the pursuit of economic opportunities played a significant role in Uzuakoli's migration. The allure of better livelihoods, enhanced prospects for trade and commerce, and the promise of economic prosperity enticed individuals and families to seek new horizons. Also, preserving tradition and authority emerged as a vital motivation for migration. The need to maintain cultural practices, uphold traditional values, and exercise authority within the community propelled Uzuakoli's migration. By establishing new homes, they could create spaces where their traditions and authority could thrive, ensuring the preservation of their identity and heritage.

Unity and justice were also key factors that influenced Uzuakoli's migration. The desire for a fair and just society, where all members could participate and contribute, led to the establishment of new communities. By forging unity among themselves and seeking justice, Uzuakoli's migrants aimed to create a harmonious and inclusive society that would benefit all.

In conclusion, the motivations behind the history of Uzuakoli's migration are complex and intertwined. The theoretical framework of Historical Materialism has provided a lens through which we can understand the multifaceted factors that shaped this community's trajectory. From inheritance and hindrances in Eke to family ties, economic opportunity, preserving tradition and authority, and unity and justice, these motivations have shaped Uzuakoli's history and continue to influence its present and future. By unraveling these motivations, we gain a deeper understanding of the rich tapestry of Uzuakoli's past and the resilience of its people in carving out a new destiny.

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