

NETWORK AND ETHNICITY IN AN IGBO MIGRANT
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ABSTRACT

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By

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The Nigerian Igbo are one of a number of migrant ethnic groups in southern West Cameroon. As the largest group of non-Cameroonians in the area, their visibility is emphasized by their involvement in highly competitive economic activities, especially in urban centers. There are, however, a significant number of Igbos living in rural centers, whose economic roles and patterns of inter-ethnic interaction shows marked contrast with the town.

This dissertation is based on research conducted in West Cameroon from July 1971 through February 1973. Its major purpose is to examine the phenomenon of ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations among migrant Igbo in an urban center [Kumba] and a nearby village [Kake]. In addition, it seeks to provide a much needed ethnographic account of the Igbo outside the Nigerian homeland. Both objectives are accomplished through

the application of network analysis [the major approach employed] and the utilization of historical data which traces the emergence of the Igbo as an ethnic group and the development of their strategies of adaptation in the multiethnic environment of Cameroon.

Through the application of network analysis, ethnicity is placed in its broader social context. A number of diverse network ties are examined [kinship, affinity, friendship etc.], which, in various ways impinge upon the expression of ethnicity, structuring the activation and manipulation of both intra- and inter-ethnic relations. The contrasting expression of ethnicity in the rural vs. urban environment is examined for each type of network tie.

The study shows that although ethnicity is a situational phenomenon, not necessarily relevant in all instances of social interaction, it forms part of a broader network and influences, to some degree, all levels of interaction. With respect to the Igbo, the salience of ethnicity is conditioned by a number of factors, including their numbers, geographical distribution and economic roles. To the extent which such factors differ in the rural and urban center, the expression of ethnicity, likewise, varies.

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Gerald William Kleis

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To Etagha and all who live
within her country's borders

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM, APPROACH AND FOCUS

That ethnic identity "matters" is an inescapable social fact. Cleavage and conflict, struggle for recognition and autonomy, problems of national integration are, more often than not, ethnic issues, reflecting the universal human tendency to form exclusive social groups associated with cultural differences.

The universality of ethnic identity is, very likely, the principal reason why anthropologists have generally taken it for granted, while treating the ethnic group as a given, the natural unit for study. The question of how and why such groups emerge and persist was usually not asked. The ahistorical bias of structural-functionalism, long dominant in African ethnography, viewed the peoples of the continent as "frozen in time" with fixed customs, fixed identities and fixed boundaries.

The present study, carried out in Africa, addresses itself to the broad question of the origin and maintenance of ethnic boundaries, utilizing the conceptual framework of network analysis as an alternative to earlier approaches. Unlike structural-functionalism, network analysis assumes a fluid

social system based on the formation, maintenance and rearrangement of interpersonal links. If [as the study maintains] ethnic identity corresponds to an identifiable set of interpersonal linkages, its dynamic can be explained largely in terms of the dynamics of networks.

The subject of this research is the Nigerian Igbo migrant community in West Cameroon. The Igbo as a group, proved suitable for this study for a number of reasons. First, it is clear from the ethno-historical record that Igbo identity is a relatively recent, post [European]-contact phenomenon, whose origins are traceable. Secondly, the extensive literature on the Igbo provides a broad base for reconstructing the emergence and development of this identity over time. Thirdly, their ethnic identity has passed through the full gamut of phases culminating in the establishment of an independent state [Biafra]. Fourth, the Igbo as a group with a high incidence of migrancy can be studied and compared in a variety of multi-ethnic situations. Finally, my own familiarity with the Igbo, based on two years of residence in southeastern Nigeria [1963-65] made the group a natural first choice.

I selected West Cameroon as the site for this study because the Nigerian Civil War prevented my returning to the Igbo homeland. Even though the war concluded as I was about to go into the field, research in the war ravaged

area was clearly not possible. Cameroon, with its large Igbo migrant community [which I had visited in 1964], immediately presented itself as a suitable alternative. The large concentration of Igbos in the multi-ethnic centers of southern West Cameroon seemed fertile field for the investigation of ethnicity.

After arriving in the field, I became aware of the significant presence of Igbos in adjacent rural areas. This suggested that an additional dimension could be added to the study by comparing the effects of urban vs. rural residence. To date, anthropologists in Africa have generally overlooked multiethnic rural situations. In fact, ethnicity has been characterized by some social theorists as an essentially urban phenomenon [Wallerstein 1965]. The need to challenge this view and explore the significance of ethnicity in smaller centers, soon became an additional objective of my research.

1.2 ETHNICITY AS A CONCERN OF AFRICANISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS

1.2.1 EVALUATION OF PREVIOUS STUDIES OF ETHNICITY IN AFRICA

In the classical British ethnographic tradition conceptualizations of ethnic groups and ethnicity in Africa are couched in terms of "tribes" and "tribalism." This terminology [which still has limited currency] is misleading

by its implicit suggestion that ethnic phenomena in Africa are not comparable to ethnicity elsewhere, especially the industrialized West. African "tribes" were viewed as discrete entities both for administrative purposes and for purposes of ethnographic research. The tendency to assume they were relatively isolated, culturally distinct and internally homogeneous, gave rise to a reification of ethnic units in Africa which, to some extent has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Characteristic of this approach was the view that "tribalism" is basically a conservative, largely irrational clinging to tradition and an associated parochial (and equally irrational) loyalty to one's ethnic group. This view persists in the otherwise valuable contributions of Epstein (1958) and Mayer (1961). According to Epstein:

The concept of "tribalism" has two distinct points of reference. On the one hand its application is intra-tribal and refers to the persistence of, or continued attachment to, tribal custom. On the other it refers to the persistence of loyalties and values, which stem from a particular form of social organization, and which operate today within a social system much wider than that of the tribe [1958: 231].

Again in Mayer:

The emphasis on resistance, or conservatism, has been dictated by local circumstances too. If anything in this centenarian town has the fascination of the unexpected, it is not the ample evidence of "urban" behavior--whether observed in work or in leisure situations--but the doggedly "tribal" behavior of some people in some leisure situations [1961: ix].

Related to this approach was the assumption that Africans moving to the urban center began the long arduous process of "detrribalization," a simultaneous peeling away of layers of traditional accretions, an acculturation to urban ways, and a shifting of loyalties away from the ethnic group. As with the case of "tribalism", the term detrribalization often makes no attempt to distinguish conceptually among these complex processes which are not necessarily closely linked nor passing through the same stages of transformation.

These approaches to ethnicity, which largely reflect attitudes and policies of the colonial era, carried over into the early independence period (1958-65). Ethnic groups were viewed by European observers (and many Africans as well) as obstacles to the unity demanded by the fragile new state. The task of "nation building" was seen largely as a process of breaking down tribal loyalties and replacing them with nationalist sentiments.

1.2.2 CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNICITY IN AFRICA

Recent trends in dealing with ethnicity since the mid 1960's are pointing in promising new directions. This reflects a resurgence of popular and academic interest in ethnic phenomena, particularly the U.S. situation. Works such as Glazer and Moynihan's (1965) Beyond the Melting Pot

and Novak's [1971] Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics indicate a new concern for ethnicity in western industrial societies and have given impetus to broadening the perspectives of anthropologists focusing [often myopically] on their "own" ethnographic provinces in the Third World.

Evidence of this new, comparative perspective is seen in the recent wave of symposia volumes dealing with ethnic issues notably Helm [1968], Barth [1969], Kuper and Smith [1970], Cohen and Middleton [1970], Cohen [1973] De Vos and Romanucci-Ross [1975] and others. Two of these works [Kuper and Smith, and Cohen and Middleton] limit their scope to African examples, while the rest examine diverse cases scattered throughout the world.

The need for a "classification of concepts and a common framework of comparative study," is spelled out by Vincent [1974], who points up the narrow perspectives which persist in anthropological discourse:

Discussions of intergroup conflict in the new nations today seem frequently to call for the application of particularistic designations--such as those of caste or tribe [Vincent 1974: 375].

Consistent with Vincent's advice, theorists such as Wallerstein [1965], and Cohen [1969] have advocated the abandonment of the term "tribalism" in favor of ethnicity. According to Cohen:

But this term [tribalism] has always been ambiguous and its use as an analytical concept

in sociological enquiry has been severely criticized in recent years. The term "ethnicity" which has been widely used in sociology, particularly in the U.S.A., has been advocated by some writers as a substitute. This, again, is a term lacking in precision but has the advantage over "tribalism" in that it is more free from value-judgement and can be applied to a much greater variety of groupings [1969: 3-4].

Wallerstein, arguing that the ethnic group in Africa is an emergent phenomenon, generated by rural-urban migration sees ethnicity as, "the feeling of loyalty to this new ethnic group of the towns [Wallerstein 1965: 477]."

This definition is valuable in that it forces us to recognize that contemporary expressions of ethnicity are largely the product of modern circumstances, and involve new adaptive strategies, rather than the simple persistence of traditional loyalties. There is, however, no convincing reason why the concept should be applied only to urban situations, rather than extended to cover all fields in which interethnic contact occurs. Multiethnic rural situations [generally overlooked in the literature] need also to be examined within the same conceptual framework, to broaden the comparative base.

Wallerstein's basic contention, that ethnic identity in situations of inter-ethnic contact [such as urban centers], takes on new meaning and new functions in contrast to the rural homeland, is, however, well taken and is echoed by a number of other observers including Mercier, [1963] Parkin

[1969] and Cohen [1969]. The redefinition or accentuation of ethnic identity in the migrant center has been termed "retribalization" [Rouch 1956, Cohen 1969], an awkward term as ambiguous as its conceptual opposite "detrribalization."

In his penetrating study of Hausa migrants in Yoruba [southwestern Nigerian] towns, Cohen [1969] challenges the established view that tribalism is a simple persistence of traditional loyalties, and an irrational preference for one's own culture. He asserts that ethnic identity is, on the contrary, an integral part of the adaptive process, and can be effectively manipulated to achieve political and economic goals. In this context cultural items become symbols which promote group solidarity, while intra-ethnic ties and loyalties become a means of consolidating tangible advantages in the modern arena [in the Hausa case, their monopoly over the cattle and kola trade].

The tendency to see ethnicity as parochialism, antagonistic to the goal of national unification is challenged by Wallerstein [1965] and Mercier [1965]. They point out that throughout much of Africa where social identity was based on the lineage and local community, ethnicity represents a broadening, rather than a narrowing of loyalties. From this standpoint, ethnicity may actually promote national integration, as Wallerstein outlines:

There are four principal ways in which ethnicity serves to aid national integration. First, ethnic

groups tend to assume some of the functions of the extended family and hence they diminish the importance of kinship roles; two, ethnic groups serve a mechanism of resocialization; three, ethnic groups help keep the class structure fluid, and so prevent the emergence of castes; fourth, ethnic groups serve as an outlet for political tensions [Wallerstein 1965: 477].

1.2.3 CURRENT DEBATES: THE NATURE, ORIGIN AND PERSISTENCE OF ETHNIC GROUPS

Above and beyond these issues is the more elusive and fundamental question of the ontological status of ethnic groups, generally. Theorists like Naroll [1964] have been basically interested in "ethnic units" as cultural entities, objectively defined, which could be meaningfully studied and compared with reference to content. Barth [1969], on the other hand, sees ethnic groups as units of social organization whose boundaries are defined by the actors themselves. From this standpoint, social identity, not cultural content, constitutes the "reality" of ethnic groups. With impressive case material from four continents he convincingly demonstrates how ethnic boundaries are maintained despite the changes in cultural content which inevitably occur over time and the exchange of personnel between groups.

The discrepancy between these two points of view is largely resolved when one realizes that Barth and Naroll are talking about two fundamentally different concepts, arising from their respective interests [social dynamics and cross-cultural comparison respectively]. Cohen [1969: 4]

recognizes this distinction between ethnic "categories" (basically equivalent to Naroll's ethnic "units") and ethnic "groups" (in the Barthian sense). His assertion that ethnic categories can become transformed into ethnic groups as shared culture is used to symbolize shared identity and interests, helps to bridge this conceptual gap.

A more substantive argument, less easily reconciled, is the contrast between Barth and Cohen, on the one hand, and Geertz, on the other. Geertz sees ethnic identity as a "primordial attachment" which he conceives as,

...one that stems from the "givens"--or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens"--of social existence; immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves [1963: 109-110]

He goes on to say that such attachments have the character of "absolutes" and "seem to flow more from a sense of natural--some would say spiritual--affinity than from social interaction [ibid: 110]." This view clearly conflicts with that of Barth:

...the persistence of ethnic groups in contact implies not only criteria and signals for identification, but also a structuring of interaction which allows the persistence of cultural differences [1969: 16].

For Geertz the persistence of ethnic boundaries is unproblematic since they "stem from givens," not the interaction of groups, which for Barth is the critical factor. Geertz [like Naroll] views content as critical, pointing to commonalities of religion, language and "social practices," while for Barth [1969: 14] such "diacritical features" are incidental to ethnic identity per se [ibid.: 14].

Cohen, as discussed above, views the ethnic group and its cultural content as important only insofar as they are mobilized to achieve political and economic goals. He does not view ethnicity in terms of "primordial attachments" invested with value "in and of themselves" but as referring to "strife between ethnic groups in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness. [Cohen 1969: 4]." In contrast to Geertz, he maintains "contemporary ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings [ibid.: 198]."

Each of these characterizations--Geertz' "primordial attachments", Barth's "organizational vessels", and Cohen's interest groups--have something to recommend them and can, to a degree, be reconciled from the standpoint that each emphasizes a different aspect of ethnic identity. However, reducing ethnicity to any one aspect grossly distorts empirical reality, pointing up the need for a more eclectic formulation.

Geertz' view is helpful in that it forces us to recognize that ethnic identity is based on other fundamental factors, which are "given" in the sense that they are ascriptive [kinship, language, religion]. Although these factors are the blocks from which ethnic identity is built, it is, however, inaccurate to suggest that ethnic identity itself is a "given," as implied by the title of Geertz' [1963] book, Old Societies and New States. As pointed out earlier [sec. 1.2.2], contemporary patterns of ethnic identity in many African nations are only slightly older than the nations themselves [see Hodgkin 1957: 42; Melson and Wolpe 1971: 42]. Further, Geertz' equation of ethnic identity with "congruities of blood, speech, customs and so on," is surely an over-simplification of the real world in which "units delimited by one criterion do not coincide with units delimited by another" [Uchendu 1975: 268].

In contrast to Geertz, Barth's conception is valuable in that it forces us to recognize that ethnic groups constitute organizational patterns arising out of social interaction, whose origin and persistence must be explained. In his concern for boundary maintenance, however, Barth seems more preoccupied with the question of persistence than the question of origin. The overriding impression left by his treatment is one of "dynamic equilibrium," which accounts for the change of identity by

individuals who cross ethnic boundaries, but not for the emergence of new groups through the fundamental restructuring of the boundaries themselves.

Related to this objection is his tendency to treat the ethnic group as ultimate, classifying "a person in terms of his basic, most general identity" (Barth 1969: 12), or "imparative, in that it cannot be disregarded and temporarily set aside by other definitions of the situation" (Ibid.: 17). This view [reminiscent of Geertz' "primordial attachments"] overlooks the fact that ethnicity may not be immediately relevant in all situations, and that other levels of identity above or below that of the ethnic group (e.g., kinship or nationality, respectively) may often be the most salient criteria. In short, by assuming that ethnic groups are, necessarily, operative units in any given situation, he begs the basic question of "when is an ethnic group" posed by Schein (1975) and Uchendu (1975). Both point to the fact that activation of ethnic identity is situationally selective [long recognized by Mitchell 1956, and Epstein 1958]. As Uchendu expresses it,

Ethnic groups are social categories which provide a basis for status ascription. Because the factors which lead to status ascription are not static, the social frame of reference which categorizes ethnicity is subject to expansion and contraction [1975: 275].

Cohen, like Barth, realizes that the persistence of ethnic groups must be accounted for. Unlike Barth, however, he is concerned with the origin of new groups [ethnic groups arising in urban centers] in the face of changing circumstances. He emphasizes, to a greater degree than Barth, the instrumentality of ethnicity, and, in so doing, comes further in recognizing its adaptive flexibility. Since ethnic identity for Cohen has no "absolute" or "ultimate" value, the differential activation of ethnicity according to situation, poses no problem for him.

The major problem which arises with Cohen, however, is his seeming tendency to reduce ethnic groups to instruments of political expediency. An ethnic group, to be sure, is an interest group, but part of its communality of interests [as his own Hausa example vividly illustrates] is the maintenance of collective identity. The question of whether this identity and the diacriteria symbolizing it has value in and of itself [in addition to their instrumental value] cannot be easily put aside. From my perspective, man has always valued both symbols and more tangible goods, and any formulation of ethnicity must take this into account.

In summarizing this evaluation of the literature, it can be said that an ethnic group is a human population organized as an adaptive system whose members

share [or come to share] a distinctive identity associated with cultural diacriteria [language, dress, ritual, values etc.]. The processes of recruitment and mobilization of members and the strategic, situational deployment of this identity is known as ethnicity.

1.3 SPECIFIC APPROACHES EMPLOYED IN THIS STUDY

1.3.1 MAJOR APPROACH: NETWORK ANALYSIS

In terms of the above discussion, network analysis emerges as a particularly useful approach in dealing with the issue of ethnicity. In applying it to the present study, I have taken account of the fact that it is an adaptive, situational phenomenon, as Cohen and Uchendu point out, which, at the same time, involves the mobilization of fundamental ties [Geertz' "primordial loyalties"].

Using the network approach, it is possible to see how ethnic identity operates as a complex, interconnected system of relations in which fundamental ties form the connecting links. Ethnic identity is but one aspect of total social identity which simultaneously involves membership in a kin-group, local community, occupational category, age set etc. Each of these statuses implies a network of ties radiating outward from ego, linking him to others in the same group. Since such ties tend to cluster within the ethnic group and contribute to its solidarity, the ethnic group can be conceived of and

dealt with as an extended social network.

This approach, in contrast to structural-functional analysis, recognizes the adaptive, situational nature of ethnicity. Network analysis views the social system in a state of perpetual flux, with new links being forged while old ones are actively maintained, kept latent or dissolved, as circumstances require. This gives much flexibility in dealing with ethnicity by providing the means for factoring out alignments which support and those which work against the maintenance of ethnic boundaries [which, as Barth recognizes, is a genuine problem].

Network analysis as a research strategy is particularly well suited to viewing migrant groups in highly fluid urban environments [see Boissevain 1973: vii; Mitchell 1973: 15] or smaller multi-ethnic centers with high in-migration. The social organization of such centers [urban and rural] can be viewed as an extended network and analysed from perspectives other than ethnicity [e.g., class linkages which cross-cut ethnic boundaries].

1.3.2 AIMS AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

Network analysis, the major approach of this study, provides the basic framework for its organization, in that most of the chapters deal with specific types of network linkages in relation to the maintenance and activa-

tion of ethnicity. Since many of the various types of linkages considered correspond to specific institutions [kinship, affinity, friendship] it has been necessary to also make some use of structural analysis. This, however, is mainly background to understanding the organization of different types of interaction around the theme of ethnicity.

A major aim of the study is to compare the significance of ethnicity in the urban center with that of rural areas. In chapter two I introduce the two research sites: the town of Kumba and the adjacent rural center of Kake. Major contrasts between the two centers are highlighted which provide the basis for the comparison of rural vs. urban social networks and rural vs. urban expressions of ethnicity. The Igbo are then introduced as the major actors and attention is drawn to their contrasting roles in Kumba and Kake. Their roles in Cameroon are viewed against their Nigerian background and in historical perspective. The Cameroon "frontier" is seen as a phase in the emergence of Igbo identity.

Chapters three through eight form the main body of the study and deal with the various types of network ties which reinforce ethnicity. Chapter three is concerned with macro-level factors: language and nationality. The dimension of locality is introduced as a segmentary

framework for ordering identity at various levels. This theme is taken up in the following chapter [four] which discusses alignment at the level of the ethnic group, subgroup and home village.

Chapter five discusses networks based on kinship and how the potential for the extension of these ties reinforces ethnicity from below. The same principle is clear in the case of affinal links, discussed in chapter six, which shows how endogamy at lower segmental levels is reconciled with a wider system, cross-lacing the group as a whole.

Chapter seven shifts the focus to ties which, by and large, have been established in the host society: friendship and neighborhood relations. In contrast to most of the links discussed earlier, such ties frequently cross-cut ethnic boundaries. Hence, the complementarity and opposition of inter- and intra-ethnic links becomes a major theme.

Chapter eight reexamines the ties discussed earlier in the context of a particular activity: the recruitment of labor for agricultural tasks [cocoa harvesting in Kake village]. Through the interplay of its myriad of links, the network emerges as a dynamic whole, alternately reinforcing and drawing across ethnic cleavages.

Chapter nine deals with attitudinal dimensions of ethnicity [particularly ethnocentrism] as a boundary defining mechanism. The reciprocal stereotypes of Igbos and Cameroonians are discussed with reference to their patterns of interaction and in the context of the role and history of the Igbo in Cameroon.

Chapter ten, the summary and conclusions, tests the formulation of ethnicity presented in the introduction against the empirical data forming the body of the study. Rural vs. urban contrasts, discussed earlier, are seen influencing the structuring of ethnicity in the village and the town. Finally, the Igbo are placed in a broader comparative framework and their ultimate future in Cameroon is discussed.

1.3.3 METHODS AND PROBLEMS

The greater part of the data in this study was collected through participation and observation during my nineteen month sojourn in West Cameroon. As is true in most anthropological research, the best insights often occurred in the course of casual conversation with African friends, when awareness of "being in the field" was temporarily set aside, and the unguarded moment brought a free flow of information welling to the surface.

Igbos, like anyone else, are a cautious people, and often the overzealous, probing investigator provokes a defensive reaction. They had all the more reason to be so at the time of this research [1971-73], which began just eighteen months after the fall of Biafra, when their general sense of insecurity was aggravated by their tenuous status in Cameroon. Rapport with my Igbo informants was eased by my knowledge of the language [which, if not fully fluent, was at least functional] and my familiarity with people and places in the Igbo homeland where I had lived six years earlier. Nevertheless, the presence of a white American without "visible means of support" was something of an anomaly to most of them and was the subject of some speculation. One of the myths in circulation cast me as a white mercenary, temporarily demobilized in the wake of the Nigeria-Biafra War. Others evidently thought me to be in the employ of a government agency [American? Nigerian? Cameroonian?] and met my inquisitiveness with icy reticence.

Generally speaking, I found research in the town [Kumba] more difficult than in the village [Kake]. This stems from a number of factors dealt with in my discussion of rural-urban contrasts [sec. 10.3.2]. Apart from this, I found that in Kake, where I was able to participate directly in the rural economy [by working in labor parties and ad hoc cocoa breaking groups], acceptance [after initial

amusement] came faster and information was more readily shared.

In Kumba I was able to learn a good deal through the attendance of weddings, funerals and birth ceremonies. Traders, mechanics and shoemakers I patronized were, almost invariably, friendly and talkative. The Igbos' prevailing fear that the Cameroonian authorities were over-taxing them, however, made almost everyone reluctant to discuss personal financial matters in any detail.

Most of the census material presented here is the result of official surveys conducted under the auspices of federal and subdivisional authorities. Those persons conducting these surveys, who I had the good fortune to meet, appeared reliable, competent and well informed. My own, more detailed census of the Kake Igbo community was conducted in the course of participating in agricultural activities, rather than a formal house-to-house survey. In view of the sensitivity which I encountered in Kumba, I feared the latter might damage my rapport.

Additional material was gained from Kumba through my field assistant, who kept a daily diary for five months, recording his activities and social interaction in the town. Each daily entry was tape recorded

and followed by an interview on the content.

It will be evident to many reading this study that my research shows a decided male bias. In Igbo society [as among most West African peoples], the interviewing of women by a male investigator is hampered by sharp sex-role segregation and a values system which precludes most forms of casual interaction. Information about women is, therefore, mainly the result of direct observation, or second-hand testimony of male informants. Evaluations of female behavior should, on these grounds, be viewed as largely opinion, rather than objective fact.

FOOTNOTES

1. "West Cameroon" as used in this thesis, denotes the former British [U.N.] mandated territory of Southern Cameroon, now constituting the Northwest and Southwest provinces of the United Republic of Cameroon [Fig. 2.1; See sec. 2.1 for a fuller description of the territory's political history].

CHAPTER 2

SETTING AND SUBJECT: CAMEROON AND THE IGBO

2.1 West Cameroonian Society

West Cameroon, the setting of the study, is characterized by a high degree of ethnic diversity (Fig. 2.2). Situated in the Northwest Bantu border zone, it is one of the areas of greatest linguistic differentiation on the African continent. The most noticeable cultural differentiae are those separating the egalitarian, small scale societies of the southern forest zone from the centralized, hierarchical groups of the Bamenda Grassfields. The ethnographic picture in the latter zone (see Chilver and Kaberry 1967) is complicated by patterns of immigration in precolonial times which brought together people of westerly origin (the Bali from Chamba in present day Nigeria), from the northeast (the Tikari) and the southwest (the Tadjuk peoples). In the northern section of the forest zone language and cultural features link the Mamfe peoples (Ejagham and Banyang) with the Nigerian Ekoi, while further east the Bangwa represent the westernmost outliers of the Bamileke, a group situated in East Cameroon (Brain 1971 and 1972). The southern forest area is occupied by a number of Bantu peoples, which can be clustered together in two supragroups speaking

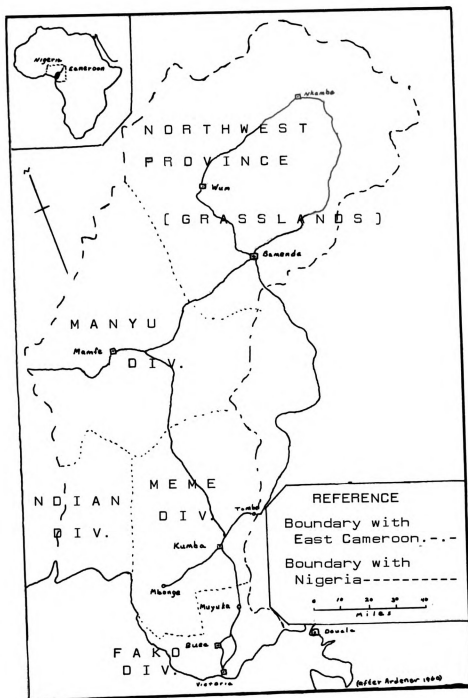


FIGURE 2.1
WEST CAMEROON

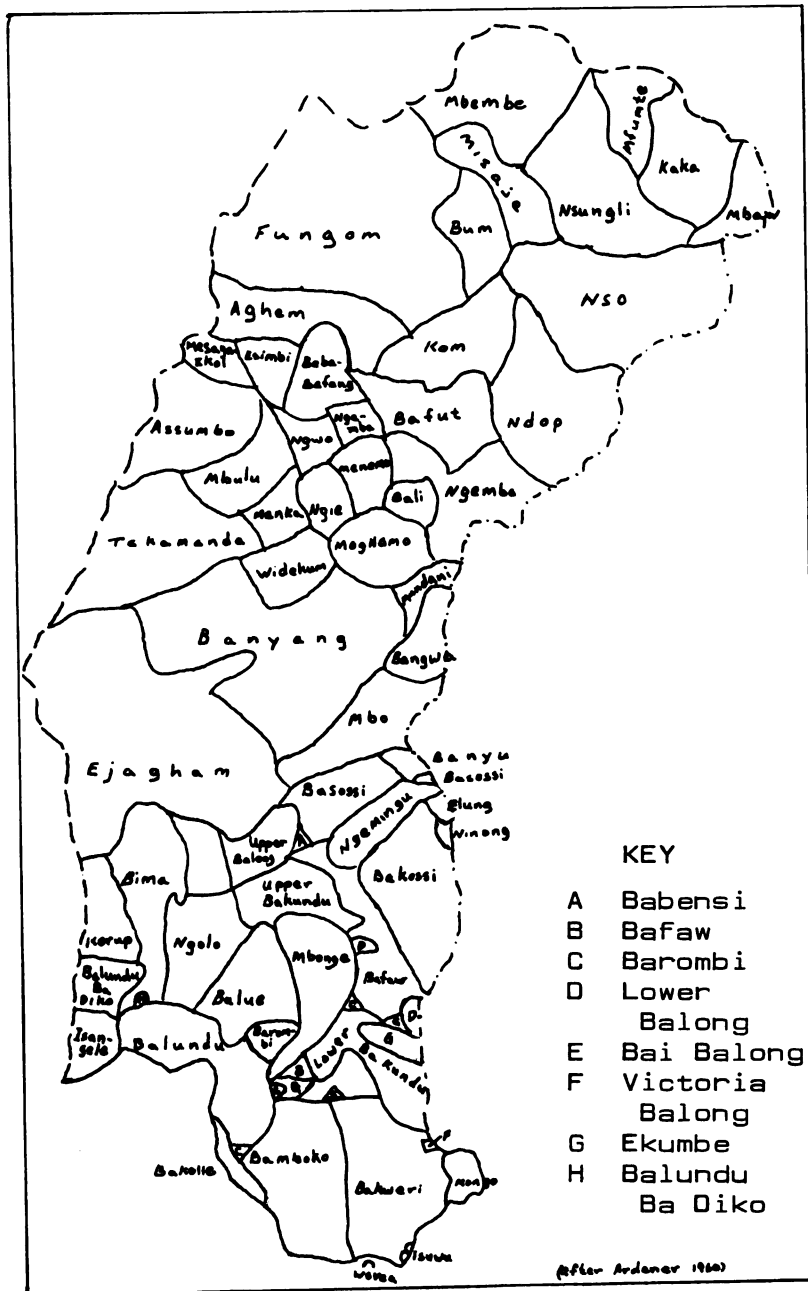


FIGURE 2.2
WEST CAMEROON: ETHNIC GROUPS

mutually intelligible languages. Kumba [see Fig. 2.1] is located near the interface of the western [Ngolo-Batanga, Bakundu, Ekombe] and eastern [Bakossi, Balong, Bafaw] clusters. In addition, the area contains a recently intrusive group, the Barombi, from the southeast [slightly north of Douala], occupying several scattered enclaves in the vicinity of Kumba and Mbonge.

This southern forest zone [Fako, Meme, and Ndian Divisions in modern administrative parlance], more than anywhere else, reflects the ethnic diversity of West Cameroon as a whole. Since German colonial days [pre-World War I] the area has attracted migrant labor both from the northern Grassfields and from the territory east of the Mungo.¹ The principle attraction has been wage employment in plantation agriculture, originally developed by the Germans, and maintained through the British administration into the Reunification era [see Rudin 1938; Ardener and Warmington 1960]. During the late 1940's these plantations were consolidated under the semipublic Cameroon Development Corporation, which remains the largest employer of wage labor in West Cameroon. Since the period of British administration large numbers of Nigerians have migrated to West Cameroon to work for the C.D.C., further increasing the ethnic diversity of the region.

Superimposed on this indigenous mosaic is the added complexity resulting from the United Republic's divided colonial history. West Cameroon, a former British mandated territory, is now, officially, fully integrated into the national polity along with the formerly French administered East.² The dual, anglophone vs. francophone, traditions have, in theory, been accommodated in the nation's official policy of bilingualism. However, the overwhelming numerical demographic predominance of the East [with approximately 80% of the population], the location of the national capital and major commercial center (Yaoundé and Douala, respectively, both in the East), and the stronger economic position of the East, increases the advantages of knowing French and enhances the image of French language and "French culture" in the eyes of West Cameroonians. Easterners are popularly known as "Frenchmen" in the West, while westerners are called "les Anglais" in the East. While people from each area usually express preference for conventions and institutions and institutions associated with their own respective colonial heritage, the francophone influence is clearly gaining ground. Young West Cameroonians [especially secondary school students] are rapidly learning French, and, to an increasing extent, are orienting toward Douala for cultural inspiration.

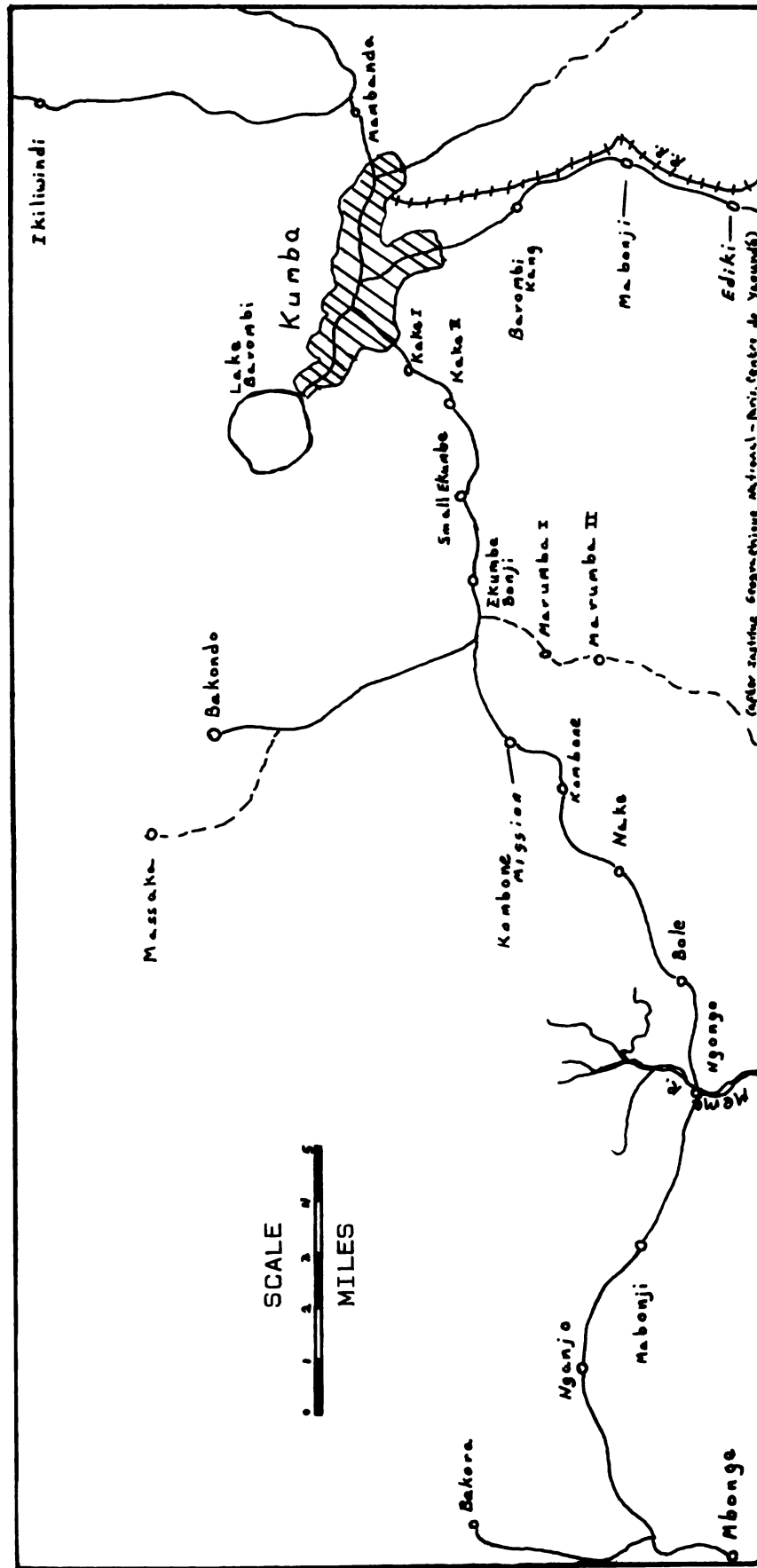


FIGURE 2.3
KUMBA, KAKE AND ENVIRONS

2.2 KUMBA AND KAKE: RESEARCH SITES

Kumba is, in a number of ways, the major cross-roads junction of West Cameroon. With a population of 44,598 [1972 census] it is the largest town in the West and fourth in the United Republic. Kumba is a major commercial center with a flourishing daily market, thriving transport industry and a well developed system of road and rail communications. It lies at the junction of the Victoria-Bamenda road [the major north-south thoroughfare in the West] and Mbonge-Loum road axis [until very recently the only road link between the western forest zone and the East]. A spur of the Douala-Nkongsamba rail line from Mbanga [completed in 1967] now links Kumba with the country's major port city and other areas in the East, including the capital [through connection in Douala]. The highly mobile commercial element of the town reinforces its "consomopolitan" character, bringing in, not only the goods, but, to an increasing extent, the ideas of the outside world.

Approximately 2½ miles to the west of Kumba, along Mbonge Road, is the village of Kake also studied in this research [Kake I & II in Fig. 2.3]. Although Kake is relatively near and influenced by Kumba, it is an almost exclusively agriculturally oriented community with its own concerns and internal dynamics which set it apart from the town. Located on a major all-season [asphalt] road with a well

TABLE 2.1
KUMBA POPULATION: BY NATIONALITY [1972]

Cameroonians	22,169
Non-Cameroonians	22,429
Total	44,598

TABLE 2.2
KUMBA POPULATION: BY ETHNIC GROUP [1964]
[AS PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL URBAN POPULATION]

Coastal groups [Bakwerri and related peoples].....	0.8	
Balundu-Mbo [including indigenous Bafaw].....	10.5	
Northern Forest [Manyu Division].....	10.9	
Central Grassfields [Tikar, Kom, Wum, Nsaw].....	6.7	
Meta, Bafut	8.0	
Bali	2.7	
Total West Cameroon origin		39.6

Bamileke [East Cameroon]	19.2	
Igbo [Nigeria]	30.2	
Other Nigerians	6.0	
Hausa	1.4	
Total non-West Cameroonian		60.4
Total		100.0

TABLE 2.3
KAKE POPULATION: BY ETHNIC GROUP AND NATIONALITY

Bakundu [indigenous group]	246	10.7%
Ngolo-Batanga [related to Bakundu]..	487	21.2%
Grasslanders	1,323	57.6%
Nigerian [mainly Igbo]	244	10.6%
	2,300	100.1

developed system of local public transportation, Kake is far from isolated. The wives of many Kake-based farmers regularly attend the Kumba market to sell produce and buy fish, salt, meat and various household items. Residents of the village go to town to visit relatives, buy clothes, and (as resources allow) to savor the life of the town. There is, however, a local market (recently established) in Mile Two ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile away in the direction of Kumba), and a fair amount of petty trade within the village in supplementary food items. The market stocks a limited range of imported goods, which to a significant extent, satisfies local demands and makes frequent trips to Kumba unnecessary for many.

2.3 Distribution of Ethnic Groups

Kumba is overwhelmingly a town inhabited by strangers. According to the 1972 sub-divisional census, slightly more than 50% of the town's residents were non-Cameroonians (see Table 2.1). Although these figures are not broken down further, it is clear that the vast majority of these aliens are Nigerians (mainly Igbo). For the ethnic breakdown it is necessary to refer to the 1964 demographic survey statistics (Table 2.2), which, unfortunately, do not reflect the large influx of Igbos during the Nigerian Civil War. Since many of these have not yet returned to the

homeland, the Igbo population figures given here are an underestimate of the current percentage.

Although Kake is much smaller than Kumba, it reflects a high degree of ethnic heterogeneity. Here the enumerators separated the population into ethnic (or macro-ethnic) categories in the case of Cameroonians, but not in the case of Nigerians (mainly Igbo with some Tiv, Ogoja and Mbembe; see Table 2.3).

In Kumba the stranger element is clearly dominant, the indigenous inhabitants being a relatively marginal segment of the population, with limited political and economic power. In Kake this is less true. Here, the indigenous Bakundu, [see Fig. 2.2] while in the minority, are relatively active, vocal and have a reasonable amount of economic power. Another striking contrast between the two centers, is the proportion of Nigerians, being close to half in Kumba, while only 10% in Kake. This difference significantly affects the role of this group and the organization of ethnic relations, as will be pointed out later.

2.4 THE IGBO

The Igbo migrant population of West Cameroon is drawn from the populous East Central State of Nigeria [Fig. 2.4]. Except for the period during the Nigerian Civil War [1967-70], virtually all Igbos in Cameroon have maintained

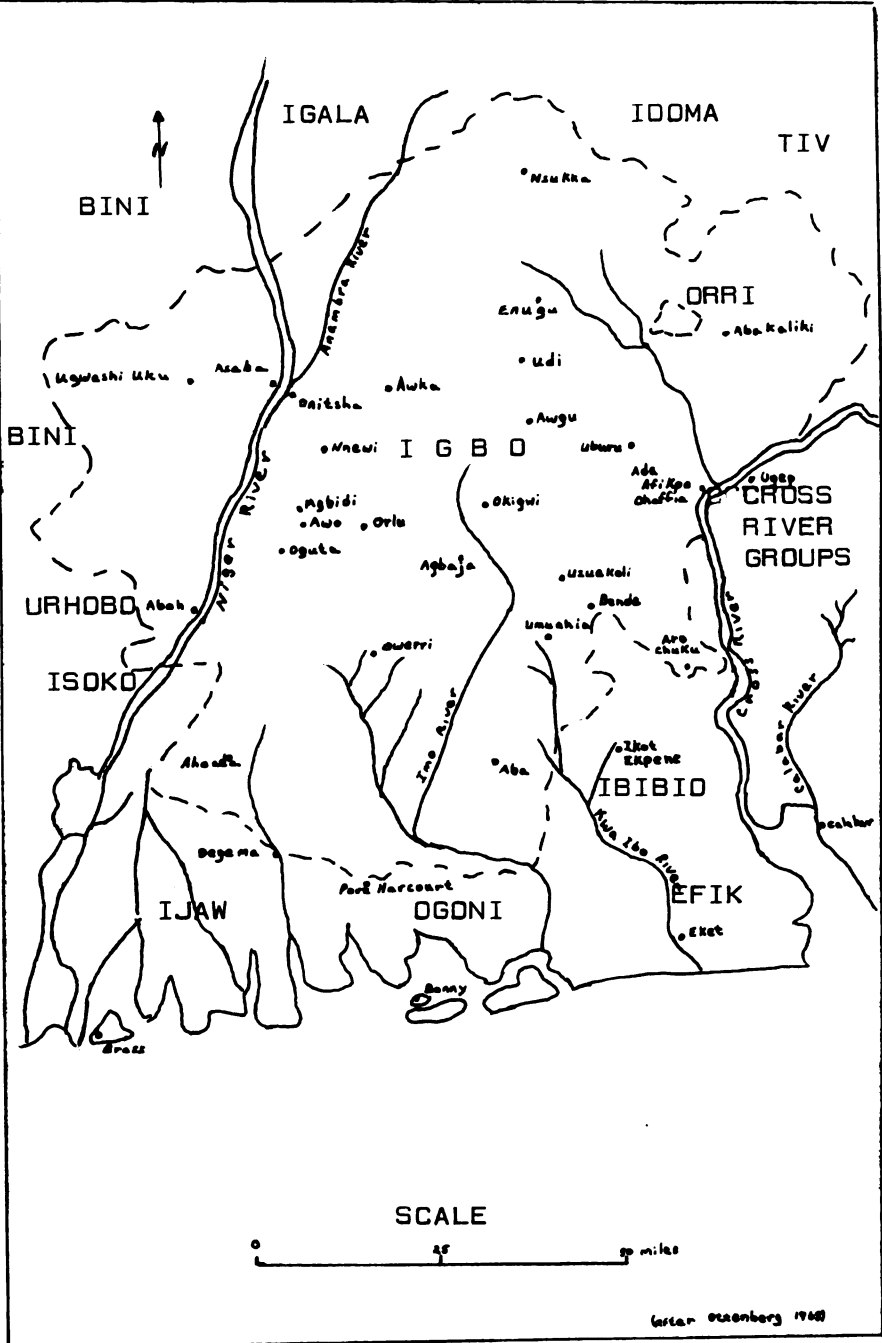


FIGURE 2.4

IGBO COUNTRY

Nigerian citizenship and identify themselves, both publicly and privately, as Nigerians. In the immediate postwar period during which the fieldwork was conducted, they rapidly abandoned the claim to a separate [Biafran] national identity, at least with regard to official purposes and as far as their interaction with Cameroonians was concerned. Grievances remained, however, and, occasionally, one heard talk of a Biafran resurrection, but in the main, the basic concerns of Igbo migrants revolved about more immediate issues, including their defined status as Nigerian aliens, and how that status conditioned and circumscribed their activities and opportunities in Cameroon.

It is, of course, true that the Igbo in Cameroon are more frequently referred to by ethnic, rather than nationality labels, forming one of a complex of indigenous and nonindigenous ethnic groups making up the pluralistic fabric of Meme Division. Although the Igbo are drawn from a vast constellation of communities in central, northern, and eastern sectors of East Central State, reflecting nearly the full range of cultural and linguistic diversity of the region, they have evolved a well developed sense of communal identity.³ It has been frequently pointed out [Forde and Jones 1950; Uchendu 1965; A. Smock 1971] that Igbo identity in its all-inclusive modern form has no counterpart in the precolonial past. The term "Igbo" itself was used by

riverain Igbo-speaking peoples in reference to their upland Igbo-speaking neighbors who were culturally and socio-politically dissimilar. The widest political community was, throughout most of Igboland, a loose association of neighboring villages bound together through a council of elders and men's societies, and, even where centralized authority existed [e.g., western Igboland and Onitsha, see R. Henderson 1972], it did not extend far beyond the local community. Unlike other Nigerian peoples [e.g., the Yoruba and the Tiv] the Igbo have no oral tradition of common origin and few overarching institutional complexes which might generate a sense of supralocal identity prior to the colonial era.

The network of Aro Chuku satellite communities established throughout central Igbo territory was undoubtedly a factor in extending the scope of commercial, political and ritual relations in the area [Ottenberg 1958].⁴ Whether Stevenson's speculation [1968] that the influence of Aro Chuku constituted incipient state formation remains problematic, however, but certainly up to the time of British intrusion had not proceeded far enough to have created a basis for pan-Igbo identity. The emergence of the Igbo as an ethnic community is a relatively recent phenomenon which grew slowly in the face of forces set in motion during the colonial era. According to Audrey Smock [1971: 8]:

The process of assimilation took place very gradually. In the mid-1930's many groups, especially those of Onitsha, Aro Chuku and Oguta rejected the name Igbo as applying to themselves. When the administrative secretary of the Igbo State Union toured the rural hinterland of the Eastern Region in the late 1940's, he found the concept of "all the Igbos" was still incomprehensible to most villagers.

One factor promoting consolidation of Igbo identity was the tendency of the colonial government to merge peoples into larger units for administrative purposes. The creation of district and provincial government served as a framework for integration of peoples above the local level. Provincial boundaries in Eastern Nigeria were "artificial" at first but, eventually, were redrawn along ethnic lines separating Igbo from non-Igbo areas.

With the cessation of intervillage warfare, and the expansion of transportation and communication, the population became more mobile. The development of urban centers [Onitsha, Enugu, Aba, Port Harcourt] increased opportunities for contact and "by bringing communities into a wider range of contact with other groups, of both a similar and a dissimilar nature, the colonial administration precipitated transformations in the nature of ethnic identity [Ibid.: 6]."

Beginning in the 1930's Igbos living in urban centers began organizing home area associations. When

migrants from the local area in a town were few, district or provincial unions were formed. Gradually a system of unions emerged articulated both horizontally (migrants from a given local area based in various towns being linked via their "home branches") and vertically (local-level unions being linked to those of district and provincial scope). By the mid-1940's the Igbo State Union came into being which served as a focus for Igbo interests at the national level. By this time many migrants and educated Igbo had developed a sense of Igbo identity, although it was probably not until the 1950's that less educated, village-based Igbo acquired this consciousness [Ibid.: 8].

Perhaps more than any single factor, the entry of the Igbo into national politics gave impetus to their sense of community. By constituting themselves as a power bloc, identifying themselves with, and virtually dominating the NCNC (National Council of Nigerian Citizens), they contested elections and threw themselves into the struggle for control of the federal system. The consolidation of other large ethnic groups [the Yoruba and Hausa] undoubtedly served as a stimulus for the Igbo to close ranks. Each of the three groups became dominant in its own region and served as the focus for the development of subnational interests and growing centrifugal tendencies.

Biafran succession in 1967, spearheaded by the Igbo represents a culmination of communal identity in the face of intense competition and conflict. Technically speaking, Biafra was not an Igbo nation. Its territorial boundaries corresponded to the former Eastern Region which included a number of non-Igbo peoples [Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio and Ekoi]. Biafran partisans argue that representatives from these "minority areas" participated in the government to a greater extent than their populations would require. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there had long been separatist movements in these areas, and the extent to which they supported the Biafran cause is a matter of contention. It is clear that the broadest base of support was in the Igbo heartland whose population constituted the great mass of Biafra's population. Furthermore, although Biafra proper excluded the section of Igbos west of the Niger [the Ikas], there was wide sympathy for the Biafran cause in the area which was occupied by Biafran forces for a brief period in the early phases of the war.

It is unlikely that the processes leading to the emergence of Igbo ethnicity will be reversed or rapidly subordinated to a broadened sense of Nigerian identity and commitment to national goals. The new East Central State corresponds to the territorial boundaries of the Igbo east of the Niger, underscoring the political reality and integrity

of Igboland. The state's broadcasting station at Enugu [ECSS] features discussion of events around the state, mention of prominent Igbos and programs designed to promote appreciation of the Igbo cultural heritage. Much of the broadcasting is in a standardized form of central Igbo which helps accelerate the dialect leveling process, long under way in the towns, extending it into the rural hinterland.

2.5 The Igbo Diaspora: The Cameroon Frontier

The Igbo entry into West Cameroon was a result of a combination of demographic and colonial-historical factors. After World War I, with the collapse of Germany's African empire, Britain and France became custodians of the League of Nation's mandated territory of Kamerun. This territory was divided into two sectors. The western sector was administered by Britain through the Governor of Nigeria based in Lagos. The southern portion of this territory ["Southern Cameroon"] was effectively annexed to the Eastern Region of Nigeria and, until 1954, administered from Enugu. In the absence of boundaries there developed a free flow of goods and human beings between Eastern Nigeria and southern West Cameroon.

With high population densities in Eastern Nigeria (exceeding 1,000 per square mile in central Igbo territory) and relatively low densities in southern Cameroon (15-30 per

square mile in the Kumba area in the 1920's), the main direction of flow was to the east. British authorities consciously promoted this movement and saw Cameroon as a catch basin to absorb the population overflow from the Igbo hinterland.⁵

For the Igbo Cameroon was seen as a virgin territory awaiting their developing influence. Although the Igbo often cast their role in the transformation of Cameroon in heroic, larger-than-life images, exaggerating the difference in sophistication between Cameroonians and themselves [see section 9.6], the fact remains that many of the skills that Igbos brought with them were in short supply in Cameroon. The earliest Igbos in the Kumba area appear to have been blacksmiths, mainly from the Cross River area and, to some extent, northern Igboland [see Fig. 4]. As manufacturers of guns and farm implements, their skills were much in demand. In the late 1920's and early 1930's various Nigerians, mainly Igbos, began to enter the territory as plantation workers. Many of them after a time left the plantations and began to establish themselves in farming or petty trade.

The local market system was undeveloped in West Cameroon prior to the entry of the Igbos. Imported goods were in scarce supply and the Igbos rose to meet this demand. Gradually increasing numbers of them began to filter into

the territory specifically for the purpose of engaging in retail trade. At first much of this commerce was concentrated around the plantations, but later spread with the expansion of the nearby urban centers of Kumba, Tiko and Victoria. In the early phases goods were brought to the port of Lobe in dugouts via the Rio del Rey water route from Calabar. They were then headloaded overland to Kumba, a distance of about 30 miles. Later this track was expanded into a seasonal motor road and an overland route to Nigeria via Mamfe was developed. The scope of Igbo commercial activity in Kumba and other centers continued to grow accordingly.

Land in the Kumba area was especially fertile and relatively easy to obtain. Within the provisions of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance, Nigerians were able to acquire a "right of occupancy from the original occupiers [Brayne-Baker 1934]." In the early period such transactions rested on an unwritten contract between the tenant stranger and the occupying lineage or village council. A nominal consideration was provided by the tenant, usually consisting of dried fish, tobacco, locally made gin and other miscellaneous items. In return the tenant was granted the use of the land for an indeterminant amount of time.

It is an unsettled matter as to whether such transactions were meant to be permanent. Clearly, with the

growing stranger population in Meme (Kumba) Division the colonial Government sought to prevent the alienation of land. For the transaction to be legal a certificate of occupancy had to be obtained and it was clearly specified that "tenure cannot exceed occupancy [Ibid.]" Tenants were thereby prevented from passing the land on to a third party and, upon vacation, it reverted to the original owners. However, as the influx of migrants continued to rise many transactions went unrecorded and the provisions of tenancy were often not clearly established.

By the early 1930's conflicts irrupted between tenants and the original owners. The owners complained that the stranger occupants failed to comply with the original terms of occupancy. Gradually, the liberal receptiveness toward strangers gave way, as villages and towns sought to control and carefully circumscribe the activities of strangers. Abel Mukete, the Bafaw chief of Kumba, designated certain areas for settlement by various ethnic groups, creating the basis for the present system of quarters. Rental of land and housing on a specified term basis superseded the previous practice of indeterminant tenure, and in the 1940's the sale of land became an established practice. Although these agreements were not always registered and boundaries were not always clear or respected, the process of land transfer became more regulated and formalized.

As long as West Cameroon remained associated with Nigeria, Igbo migrants enjoyed the same land holding rights as Cameroonian strangers. Igbo Quarter in Kumba [see Fig. 3] grew in size as Igbos bought plots from their Bafaw owners, erecting rows of block houses, hotels and restaurants. The Igbos became a conspicuous, established feature of the West Cameroon landscape.

The British administration in Cameroon drew heavily upon its Nigerian reservoir of trained manpower. Igbos constituted the major part of the Africans in the civil service and were a significant segment of the police and armed forces. A Cameroonian caricature of the pre-independence situation ran as follows:

In those days if you quarreled with an Igbo trader in the market, an Igbo police officer would come and take you to the Igbo judge who would convict you and turn you over to the Igbo jailer.⁶

The Igbo eventually came to dominate many sectors of the economy in the towns throughout the forest zone, including Kumba. According to the 1964 demographic survey, Igbos represented 44% of the total persons employed in service occupations in the towns of West Cameroon. The breakdown by occupational categories is as follows:

Table 2.4

Occupational Distribution of Igbos in Urban West Cameroon

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>No. of Igbos in occupation</u>	<u>Total engaged in occupation</u>	<u>% Igbo in occupation</u>
Butcher	44	100	44.0%
Baker	47	74	63.5%
Prepared foods vendors	28	103	27.0%
Tailors & Seamstresses	166	649	25.6%
Carpenters	163	299	55.0%
Makers of local beds	40	61	66.0%
Misc. crafts (black-smiths, roof makers etc.)	68	129	53.0%
Shoe makers	81	131	62.0%
Repairs (Mechanics, shoemakers etc.)	222	387	57.0%
<u>Other skills</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>35.0%</u>
Total skills	878	1,992	44.0%

Commerce was even more heavily Igbo dominated:

Table 2.5

Igbos As a Percentage of Total Traders in Urban West Cameroon

<u>Igbo traders</u>	<u>Total traders</u>	<u>% Igbo</u>
3,900	6,013	65%

In addition, Igbos control a significant proportion of the transport industry, operating taxis and trucks within Cameroon and between Cameroon and Nigeria. They have entered into the cultivation of cash crops, especially cocoa,

and during the pre-independence era were the major middle-men in the marketing of cocoa.

The Igbo State Union in Kumba was a vigorous institution which articulated concerns of the Igbo community and supported self-help projects, such as financing the higher education of deserving sons. Igbo Hall, the Union's meeting house and focus of communal activities, was a visible symbol of Igbo presence, power and prestige. Igbo Day, celebrated in November, was a holiday for all Igbos, when their market stalls were closed and their taxis stopped running, causing inconvenience and irritation to many Cameroonians. The festivities included dancing and processions in the streets, dominating the atmosphere of the town.

2.6 INDEPENDENCE: THE CAMEROONIAN REACTION

In 1961 the West Cameroon Plebiscite took place, which was to determine the political future of the territory. The choice before the citizens was between continued association with a newly independent Nigeria and joining the Cameroon Republic to the East. By a wide margin the Southern portion of West Cameroon chose the latter course, notwithstanding the complexities in integrating with a francophone country with a distinct tradition of national institutions and which had already past through phases of instability.

A major factor which tilted the balance in the plebiscite was the fear that West Cameroon would continue to be what many saw as a neglected backwater area of Nigeria, whose tiny population [2% that of Nigeria] would give her very little leverage in such a large nation. Particularly strong was the fear that the populous Igbo would flood in and overwhelm the area as they already appeared to be doing during the British trusteeship.⁷

With Reunification [October 1961] Cameroonians began to assert control over their Igbo migrant population. Many Cameroonians resented what they perceived as heavy handedness and lack of respect and courtesy for the indigenous people. They felt the time had come for the Igbos to realize that they were in Cameroon at the leave of its people, and would have to abide by its laws, accepting their role as a subordinate alien community.

A series of political and economic measures were taken to restrict the role of foreigners in the society. Igbos and other aliens were of course, disenfranchised and replaced by Cameroonians in civil service posts and virtually all areas of government employment. In the Cameroonian Development Cooperation they were rapidly phased out, from the professional and managerial posts down to plantation laborers. International corporations operating in Cameroon were encouraged to hire nationals in preference to aliens,

and usually readily did so to improve official relations.

Meanwhile, new measures were enacted to restrict the activities of Igbos who were self-employed, mainly those engaged in commercial ventures. Previously the Igbos had a virtual monopoly over the lucrative wholesale palm oil trade, buying and transporting the oil from producers in the Rio del Rey area for consumption in the population centers further east. Around the mid-1960's the West Cameroon State government passed legislation limiting this trade to Cameroonians. Kumba Town Council, likewise, passed a law restricting Igbos from retailing palm oil within the township. This measure had considerable impact on Igbo market women who traded extensively in this widely used product [the primary domestic cooking oil throughout coastal West Africa].

One key area of Igbo economic activity in the Kumba area was cocoa. Igbo factors based in Kumba bought the cocoa crop from farmers in the surrounding villages, which they would resell at a profit via licensed buying agents to the West Cameroon Marketing Board. As cocoa is Cameroon's foremost export product, this trade was especially vital, and Igbos in it were among the wealthiest in the Kumba community. In the late 1960's the West Cameroon government excluded aliens from this role. The passage of this law coming as it did, before harvest time affected many

Igbo factors severely, who had followed the established practice of loaning farmers money against their upcoming annual harvest. Unable to buy the crop, they were, in many cases, unable to recoup their investments. As these loans were often scattered among a large number of farmers, and as Igbos, allegedly, did not enjoy juridical equality in Cameroon, legal redress was frequently difficult to obtain.

Another occupation of Igbos, principally from the southeastern [Bende] area, was trade in second-hand clothing [okrika]. It was alleged by the authorities that bundles of clothes, obtained from overseas, concealed counterfeit money. Despite the fact that many Cameroonians as well as Nigerians depended upon okrika to cloth their families, the government took steps to eliminate this trade.

The transport industry of Cameroon, long dominated by Igbos was also a target. In Kumba a law was passed excluding Igbos from operating "township taxis" (i.e., taxis which operated entirely within the town), and, while they continued to play a prominent role in intermediate and long distance transport, increasing numbers of Cameroonians (especially Grasslanders) were beginning to enter the field.

Finally, laws were passed making it illegal for foreigners to buy or sell real estate. As large numbers of

Igbos owned plots in Igbo Quarter of Kumba [a large area in the central part of town] this particularly affected many of them who wished to sell their plots to return home to Nigeria. Steps were also taken to limit the internal political effectiveness of the Igbo community. These were partly justifiable on the basis of a 1967 federal law which placed a ban on "tribal meetings." Ostensibly for purposes of national security and promoting national unity, ethnic unions were prohibited.⁸ This forced the disbanding of the Igbo State Union and Igbo Hall was razed to the ground by the authorities. The annual public celebration of Igbo Day was banned, and Igbos participated in ethnic displays only in the context of Cameroonian national holidays, and then only in a much subdued form.

During the Nigerian Civil War, Yaoundé's official support for the pledge of the Lagos regime "to keep Nigeria one," led to efforts to contain the rising tide of Biafran nationalism within the Igbo migrant community. During this period most Igbos actively identified with the Biafran cause and attempted to use their human and material resources to support their new nation. Manpower, money, vehicles, and, reportedly, even arms crossed the border to bolster her defenses. During this period a number of Igbos were imprisoned for political activism and quarrels which resulted from antagonisms generated by opposed loyalties

within the Nigerian community.

In short, since independence the government of Cameroon at various levels, national, state, and local, took a variety of actions not unlike those taken by other governments in Africa and throughout the world, designed to increase and insure the economic and political advantages of citizens vis à vis noncitizens. It was clear that while many of these restrictions were meant to apply to aliens in general, a good number of them [especially those passed at the state and local level] were specifically designed to circumscribe the activities of Nigerians, principally Igbos. Given the size of the Igbo population and the scope of its influence, the Cameroonian reaction was understandable.

From the perspective of many [probably most] Igbos, the Cameroonians had over-reacted. They were suddenly faced with the reality of disenfranchisement and possible loss of livelihood in an area where they had previously enjoyed considerable freedom of maneuver. For many, the change required considerable economic readjustment, perhaps, even a return to the Nigerian homeland. The option of repatriation was a difficult one, especially for those whose entire adult lives had been spent in Cameroon and whose patterns of economic activity were adapted to Cameroonian conditions. Many of these restriction,

coming as they did during the Civil War, were doubly felt. when returning home [for the majority] was not a live option.

The political-economic situation was aggravated by natural disaster. In March of 1967, two months before the outbreak of the war, a large section of the Kumba main market was destroyed. The stalls and goods of a number of traders, largely Igbos, went up in flames and with it their capital base for continued trading. Many Igbos were forced to borrow and rebuild their trade from scratch, while others, already heavily in debt, were forced out of the market completely.

The 1960's and early 70's were then, a period of considerable dislocation and readaptation, when the Igbo community was thrown back upon its own resources. Network ties within the community were activated to meet this challenge while new linkages developed with Cameroonians designed to stabilize the tenuous position of the migrants. A key element in this adaptive strategy for the Igbo was to maintain a critical balance between intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations and orientations, which constitutes the major focus of this study.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Mungo River in its lower course divides East from West Cameroon [see Fig. 3].
2. In 1961, in accordance with the results of a plebiscite, the British United Nations Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons [i.e., the West] joined the newly independent Republique du Cameroun to form the Cameroon Federal Republic. This process was popularly referred to as "Reunification" as it reunited the territory previously forming the German colony of Kamerun. The West Maintained something of its political distinctiveness, with its own Prime Minister and House of Assembly, until 1972, when a popular referendum supported President Ahidjo's bid for the creation of a unitary government.
3. See Forde and Jones [1950] for a description of the cultural diversity within Igboland, comparing the various subgroups. They divide the region into five sectors [West, North, South, East and Northeast.] which differ substantially in residence patterns, political organization, type of descent, etc.
4. Aro Chuku is a village group in the eastern Igbo area near the west bank of the Cross River. During the era of the slave trade, a shrine there known as the "Long Juju" [Obini Okpabie] functioned as a ritual-judicial center for large sections of eastern and central Igboland. Agents of Obini Okpabie established settlements throughout the area where they exercised varying degrees of control and influence over local commerce by virtue of their ritual and military power.
5. According to the Resident of Cameroons Province "one of our long-term post-war aims is to free some of the over-populated areas of Owerri and Calabar provinces by encouraging settlement outside those areas where land hunger is less acute."
6. This caricature was submitted by Mark Delancy of the University of South Carolina who carried out research on the Cameroon Development Cooperation.

7. As one Cameroonian Kumba resident (an indigenous Bafaw) put it, "Actually we feared a population explosion. You know if we are one country with Nigeria then they can go anywhere, and we feared the Igbos would overwhelm us."
8. The Cameroon Times (August 12, 1967) quoting the Prime Minister wrote, "Associations of an exclusively tribal or clan character as well as those founded in aid of a cause or in view of an illicit purpose which is in opposition to the law of public dencency or whose purpose is to undermine the integrity of the National Territory [sic] or form of Government shall be null and void."

CHAPTER 3

DIMENSIONS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY LANGUAGE, LOCALITY AND NATIONALITY

The following chapters trace the influence of ethnicity on the organization of social networks through a full range of micro-level spheres of interaction [kinship, affinity, etc]. At the macro-level ethnic identity points back to one's place of origin in the Igbo speaking East Central State of Nigeria. Language, locality and nationality, thus, are fundamental factors in the ethnic equation which [as will be shown] bear directly and indirectly on lower levels of social interaction.

3.1 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

Although, ultimately, the fundamental criterion of Igbo identity is membership in the vast Igbo speech community, the linguistic requirement is, of necessity, somewhat flexible for two reasons. First, within the Igbo speaking areas of Nigeria there is considerable dialectical variation. Dialects spoken in the southern and eastern margins of Igboland [Ikwerri, Abakaliki, Ohaffia and Ada] are scarcely intelligible to speakers of the more standard central and northern versions of the language. Secondly, Igbos who have been reared abroad are frequently more fluent

in the lingua franca of the migrant locale than in Igbo.

In the Cameroon situation speakers of local dialects of Igbo continue to employ their home language in their intercourse with kinsmen and associates from the home area. Although central Igbo speakers predominate in Kumba town, there are also a considerable number of eastern Igbo speakers, who constitute the majority of Igbos in many rural centers, including Kake. While recognizing the significance of dialectical differences, Igbos in Kumba insist that they all speak essentially one language and can make themselves understood to one another with little difficulty by approximating central Igbo.

Various dialect leveling processes are at work within the Cameroon-based Igbo speech community as in the Nigerian homeland. Many migrants did their primary schooling at home in "Union" Igbo [the written form of the language based on the Onitsha and central dialects] while those with radios regularly receive vernacular broadcasts from the East Central Broadcasting Service at Enugu. Although these processes contribute to broadening the base for communication within the migrant community, the most significant factor in creating a compromise language has been the continual interaction of Igbos from different areas of southeastern Nigeria and their mutual linguistic accommodation in a field of shared problems and experiences.

Linguistic accomodation has occurred between, as well as within, languages in West Cameroon where Pidgin English [Wes Kos] serves as the primary lingua franca and, at least in the migrant areas of the south, is almost universally understood. As Igbos frequently come to Cameroon after having spent time in the urban centers of Nigeria, they are often already fluent in Nigerian Pidgin, while most others have at least a basic grasp of standard English.¹

Igbos raised in Cameroon are frequently more fluent in Pidgin than in Igbo. Most Igbo children of pre-school or primary school age interact in multi-ethnic peer groups drawn from the school or neighborhood where Pidgin is generally the only mutually shared language. This is especially true in Kake in the absence of ethnic neighborhoods where the Igbos form a relatively small segment of the population. It is less true in central Kumba where over 75% of the large Igbo population is residentially concentrated [in Igbo Quarter], but still true of the ethnically heterogeneous school environment and the peripheral areas of the town.² In such areas it is common to find children who use Pidgin in the home, and, while generally understanding Igbo, resist their parents attempts to induce them to use the home language.

Youth of secondary school age and young adults developing an interest in the internal affairs of the migrant community, events in the homeland and their ethnic heritage gradually develop a sense of ethnic identity and more of an intra-ethnic social orientation. Igbos at this stage tend to make more use of Igbo which is reinforced by visits to Nigeria and later through marriage, customarily, to a girl directly from the home area.³

While virtually all Igbos in West Cameroon speak fluent Pidgin, it is relatively uncommon to encounter Igbos based in the Kumba area who are able to speak Cameroonian languages, a fact which reflects the universality of Pidgin and the absence of a dominant vernacular in the highly mixed migrant area. Igbos who do speak Cameroonian languages are generally long established migrants who may have lived in more remote areas where the indigenous population was dominant and migrancy limited, or among the few Igbos who have married Cameroonians.

Summarizing the language situation in the Kumba area, it can be said that, at one level, virtually the entire population is included within a single speech community based on English (in its various forms ranging from Pidgin to standard). At the lower level it is segmented into a number of smaller vernacular speech communities with relatively little, or no, mutual intelligibility.

The social significance of this English-vernacular dichotomy is noteworthy, especially with respect to its bearing on inter-ethnic relations. The values associated with each register and the situations governing their selective use could easily form the basis of an extensive sociolinguistic study, but here it will be sufficient to mention a few salient points relevant to the phenomenon of ethnicity.

English, both standard and Pidgin, is the vehicle for the transmission of shared as well as alien culture. The content of most communication in Pidgin concerns the myriad of issues of the migrant locale, the common fate of men in the new peri-urban centers of West Cameroon. Based on Niger-Congo grammar and absorbing African vocabulary, it easily accommodates speakers of diverse cultural backgrounds, allowing them to discuss a variety of issues without requiring them to recast their thoughts in a totally alien mold. Standard English, spoken by the more educated residents of Kumba and Kake, is a borderline-intelligible language to the majority, associated with alien culture and the elite.

Despite their differences, both Pidgin and standard English completely cross-cut the constellation of ethnic diversity in the area. Vernacular languages, on the other hand, are associated with the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and form the basis for ethnically exclusive communication networks. Given the situational use of vernaculars, their

content is frequently more private, concerning, for example, domestic matters or secrets shared between close co-ethnic friends [see chapter 7]. Vernaculars are used to carry on private conversations in public situations when third parties are unfamiliar with the language, often when non-speakers are members of an ethnic group being discussed [in unfavorable terms]. In fact, a number of informants confessed that they would not teach their language to members of other groups for fear the outsiders would be privy to their ingroup secrets. An Igbo resident of Kake boasted as proof of his proficiency in speaking Bakundu: "Whenever they [Bakundus] are speaking about Igbos and I come in they stop talking."

Not only is the home language an exclusive code and repository of shared information, it also has considerable symbolic value as a badge of group unity and ethnic pride. Igbos and Cameroonians alike give a high evaluation of their own respective languages vis a vis others which are characterized as tik (Eng: "thick"; confusing, unintelligible), repetitive and not as swit (Eng: "sweet"; expressive and esthetically pleasing) as one's own. These same values extend to dialectical variations of a single language, for example, speakers of Upper Kenyang see their own speech as clearer and more representative of the language than Lower Kenyang (Mamfe area) and vice versa. Similar

reciprocal attitudes are found among the speakers of the various Igbo dialects.

The linguistic accomodation among Igbo speakers leads them to make the frequent statement "Igbo is one." Unity of language symbolizes ethnic solitarity in the migrant situation, forming the keystone of the communal charter which stresses common origins and plays down internal differences. Igbos will regularly justify a practice by saying that is "our Igbo custom," when the practice in question may be a local one or confined to one section of the Igbo speaking people.⁴

Emphasis on unity of language and tradition is critical in the migrant situation where ethnic identity is in need of continual renewal in the face of alien influences. The Kumba locale is seen by Igbos and others as being a difficult place to properly socialize children. Igbos view their children's lack of prodiciency in the home language as part of the general erosion of knowledge of home traditions and home values. The "Pidginization" of Igbo speech is seen as one aspect of the process of gradually adopting patterns of behavior which Igbos see as characteristically Cameroonian, hence inferior.⁵

3.2 SEGMENTAL RELATIONS BASED ON LOCALITY

The contemporary world in which the West Cameroon-based Igbo finds himself is one in which human relationships are, to a significant degree, territorially defined. The political-geographical units with which he identifies, from the nation at one extreme, to the home village community on the other, constitute his portable gridwork, a set of axes for ordering his social world no matter where the changing fortunes of migrant life may carry him.

As was the case with language, the territorial basis of ethnic identity is not rigid; the axes of the grid extend and contract according to the requirements of the situation at hand. Under certain circumstances it may be convenient or necessary to emphasize parochial ties, while other conditions may call for the mobilization of broader scale support. Although, as with home language, the territorial basis of ethnic identity is a given which enmeshes the migrant in a system of compulsory relations, many situations allow considerable latitude for manipulation of these ties.

It is convenient to view relations based on locality or origin as a hierarchically ordered set of segmentary loyalties of increasing levels of inclusiveness. The home village community is important in a number of contexts as the most immediate territorial grouping. It, in turn, is

linked to other such communities forming the district, the state and ultimately, the nation. The articulation between these levels of segmentation and the circumstances which condition their differential activation, give shape and consistency to the recurring themes of ethnicity in the migrant locale.

3.3 NATIONALITY

As indicated in chapter 2, Igbo awareness of their national identity as Nigerians is meaningful primarily in the context of official relations vis a vis the Cameroonian authority structure. The restriction of economic activity, the required repatriation deposit,⁶ the periodic inspection of identity papers, all serve as constant reminders of alien status. In fact, it can be said that Nigerian nationality, to a significant degree, has been externally imposed by Cameroonian officialdom, rather than freely elected by Igbos themselves as a basis for ordering their social relations. Given the relatively long history of Igbo presence in West Cameroon, the common history of British administration in Nigeria and the Trust Territory, and the heterogeneous ethnic fabric of the latter, Igbo migrants in the Kumba area were not faced with a radically alien environment. The adaptive problems were not of the scale faced by migrants to areas such as Fernando Po, Gabon,

or Chad, where unfamiliar administrative systems and new metropolitan languages added to their complexities. They were, in fact, less formidable than that faced by migrants to northern Nigeria, where the domination of Islam, the Hausa language and established patterns of residential exclusion of southerners from the central city overshadowed the tenuous bonds of shared nationality.

Despite this background, a sense of Nigerian national identity is clearly emerging among Cameroon-based Igbos. The ambivalence which many Igbos felt toward claiming Nigerian nationality in the immediate post-Civil War period is rapidly giving way as conditions in the homeland become more stable and the primary concerns of migrants come to focus on issues in the host country. It must be re-emphasized, however, that this phenomenon has been largely a reaction to the various forms of external pressure, mentioned above, rather than a spontaneous development.

In present day Cameroon, continual emphasis is placed on national unity. National holidays are declared several times during the year, when all segments of the population are mobilized to rally around the symbols and proclaim the slogans of nationhood and national solidarity. Flags and welcoming banners festoon the highways during the periodic visits of government notables, when every village along the route is astir with clearing the roadside for the

official motorcade.

Such events reinforce the Igbos' sense of exclusion from Cameroonian national life, which, in turn, reactivates their claim to Nigerian citizenship. It induces them to invoke their own national symbols, although, in a much less public manner. It was rather remarkable that two years after the Civil War, many Igbos already began to display miniature Nigerian flags in their parlors and decorated their walls with calendars bearing the pictures of the Nigerian head of state and military governors or war heroes under the caption "ONE NIGERIA." At the same time, many migrants were inclined to boast about the greater size of Nigeria, its higher level of economic development and a number of other factors, which, in their view, make their country superior to Cameroon.

This reactionary upward valuation of national identity is more evident in the larger urban centers such as Kumba, than in rural villages, for a number of reasons. In Kumba, as a divisional headquarters, the symbols and agents of the administrative system are more conspicuously present than in a rural center, such as Kake. The office of the prefect, the security office and gendarmerie represent and enforce the directives of the Cameroon national government. The police and military personnel are much more in evidence than in rural areas, and the felt weight of authority, correspondingly greater. In

Kake contact with authorities [other than health inspectors or tax collectors] is relatively infrequent, whereas in Kumba the inspection of personal documents, the monitoring of public gatherings and close regulation of commercial enterprises are all a regular feature of the migrant's precarious urban life.

Although nationality as a basis of official identity carries more meaning in the urban, as opposed to village context, the opposite tends to be true with respect to its significance in the realm of internal relations within the Nigerian sector of the population. As pointed out in the introduction, Nigerians are, overwhelmingly, the largest expatriate element in West Cameroon, accounting for the entire non-Cameroonian population of Kake and more than 95% of the non-Cameroonians in Kumba. In both centers the Igbos constitute approximately 83% of the Nigerian resident population. In Kumba the non-Igbo segments of the Nigerian population in descending order of size, consists of Efik-Ibibios, Hausas, Ogojas, Tivs, Yorubas and Mid-Westerners [Edo, Urhobo, etc.]. In Kake, where the Igbo: non-Igbo Nigerian ratio is almost identical to Kumba, the population is more homogeneous, including Tivs, Mbembes [Obubras], and Ogojas. My Observations however, indicate that Kake is, in this respect, reasonably typical of the numerous small

centers surrounding Kumba.

Given the large size of the Nigerian contingent in Kumba, and the greater extent to which its various ethnic groups are represented, it is not surprising that lower levels of segmentation are much more often emphasized and form the effective basis of migrant social organization. The cultural and economic diversity of the urban Nigerian population is substantial and not easily bridged by the somewhat remote ties based on common national origin, except under circumstances which specifically call attention to those ties, such as the confrontation of the Cameroonian authority structure, mentioned above. This was illustrated when the district officer called a mass meeting of Nigerians to discuss a recaption for the impending visit of the military governor of Nigeria's Southeast State. Plans were discussed for assessing contributions and it was decided that each Nigerian should pay 100 frs. The Ibibio chief [representing the major ethnic group from Southeast State] suggested that the contributions should be increased, which was strongly resisted by others, mainly Igbos. Later, it was observed that Igbos and Ibibios moving away from the meeting jointly discussed the matter, and agreed that administrative heavyhandedness was used in extracting the contribution and that such events typified their subordinate status in Cameroon.

The situation in the village is significantly different from that of the town. In Kake the numbers of Nigerians is so small [244] that all are mutually known to one another on a face to face basis. Being a comparatively small section of the population [10%], they are a definable, if loosely-knit, ingroup. Unlike the urban situation, there are few significant economic distinctions either within or between ethnic groups. The non-Igbo Nigerians in Kake are mainly from the Cross River basin with a history of relations with the Eastern Igbo [the major Igbo contingent in Kake] and from other areas immediately adjacent to Igbo territory.

Unlike the Kumba situation, Igbos and non-Igbo Nigerians in Kake are involved in a network of reciprocal participation in funerals, and to a lesser extent, marriages, birth celebrations and cooperative labor projects [see chapter 8].

In Kake, and most other villages in the Kumba area, the chief of the Igbo community is also chief of the Nigeria segment as a whole, the primary intermediary between the segment and the Cameroonian administrative system. He has a mandate to collect taxes and, in collaboration with chiefs of the various ethnic sections, helps coordinate the resolution of problems arising within the segment. Minor internal juridical issues which cannot be

effectively handled within the ethnic group are normally delt with at this higher level before they are allowed a hearing in the village council. There is the general feeling among Nigerians that such matters should, whenever possible, be handled internally before they become the jurisdiction of the village at large, or the more formidable judicial system beyond the village.

In Kumba the chief of the Igbo community is effectively the head of his own ethnic section only, rather than overall head of the Nigerian population. Judicial problems are delt with within the ethnic sections and no appeal is made to a higher Nigerian authority before the case passes into the court system. Unlike the village situation, taxes are collected by representatives of the various home communities, or subethnic units, rather than at the level of ethnic group or nationality.

In summary, then, national identity among Igbo migrants in Cameroon adds an additional dimension of complexity to the already multifaceted phenomenon of ethnicity. Depending on the situation, it may variously reinforce, cross-cut or be irrelevant to the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. One highly suggestive situational parameter is the rural-urban contrast. In the town, where national identity is largely reactionary, the tendency is to reinforce certain ethnic boundaries [between Igbos and

Cameroonians]), while being largely irrelevant to others [between Igbos and other Nigerians]. In the village, on the other hand, nationality emerges more as a natural extension of ethnic ties, bridging the divisions between [Nigerian] ethnic groups.

In Kumba town the home language community is the largest effective ingroup within which Igbo migrants regularly interact. In Kake the corresponding maximal ingroup is defined by the overarching bonds of nationality. In most contexts, however, both in the village and town, lower level ties based on district of origin or home village community are of considerably more importance and it is to these networks which we will next turn our attention.

FOOTNOTES

1. Nigerian Pidgin is essentially the same as Cameroonian Pidgin except for some differences in vocabulary. Historically both are related to Ghanaian Pidgin, Sierra Leonian Krio and various creoles spoken throughout the Circum-Caribbean area (e.g., Jamaican Creole and Saramaccan). The use of Pidgin English in West Africa traces back at least two hundred years to the era of the transatlantic slave trade when it served as a medium of communication between Africans and Europeans, on the one hand, and among Africans with different home languages, on the other. It was already well established in the coastal zone of Cameroon when the Germans established their colonial presence during the 1880's.
2. For a more detailed survey of inter-ethnic relations in the school environment, see W. N. Haupt [1969]. The Secondary School and Cross Tribal Integration in West Cameroon.
3. See chapter 6, "Marriage and Affinal Ties."
4. For example, one informant discussing the impending marriage between a "freeborn" girl and a man from an osu [cult slave] lineage said that although they were living in an enlightened age, such marriages should be avoided. "We are, after all" he said, "still Igbo." The statement ignores the fact that recognition of osu is confined to sections of the central and southern Igbo area and is not a universal Igbo trait.
5. See chapter 9, "Ethnic Attitudes in the Migrant Setting."
6. Foreigners residing in Cameroon are required to pay a deposit of 10,000 francs, C.F.A. [\$40.00 U.S.A.] and obtain a government receipt which constitutes legal permission for remaining in the country. The deposit is officially designated for paying costs of repatriating indigent migrants, and, in theory, recoverable by others on their return to their home country. Many Igbos in Cameroon maintain that it is specifically intended as a means of excluding them from Cameroon, or giving a pretense for harassment by the authorities. They further allege that it is applied only to them and is not, in fact, refunded on their departure from Cameroon.

First, we should note that the data from the 1990s are not representative of the entire population of the United States. The data are based on a sample of households that were selected for the study. This means that the results may not be generalizable to the entire population.

7. The Igbo chief of Kake, allegedly fearing robbery, declined the job of tax collector, which was delegated to the chief of the indigenous (Bakundu) population. Given the difficulties involved and the universal unpopularity of tax collectors, he no doubt saw a conflict between this task and his obligations toward his Nigerian constituency.

CHAPTER 4

LEVELS OF COMMUNAL IDENTITY: STATE, DISTRICT, AND HOME VILLAGE

Locality [or, more accurately, local origin] is a primary factor in the organization of social networks within the migrant community . It determines, in large measure, the categories of persons with whom a given individual will interact, as well as the nature and content of such interaction. Although nationality does exert some influence, ethnic and subethnic ties are much more significant. Since these links form a hierarchical system, it is convenient to describe them in order from the broadest to the most parochial: state (ethnic group), district and home village.

4.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE ETHNIC GROUP AS A WHOLE

Although the Igbo as a whole are delineated primarily by the criterion of shared language, they have recently come to view their collective identity in cultural, political and geographical terms. The absence of an explicit oral tradition of common origin matters little in the context of modern Nigeria which is welding peoples together in increasingly wider collectivities on the basis of new-found

common interest. The factual and fictional dimensions of ethnic unity become extremely difficult to disentangle, as communal charter and socio-political reality pass through successive phases of transformation and mutual re-accommodation. The emergence of "Igboland" as a bounded political entity [the East Central State of Nigeria], for example, gives substance to the charter and paves the way for further consolidation of ethnic identity.

The migrant Igbo population of West Cameroon, though geographically dispersed, maintains an intricate network of intra-ethnic ties linking its members with one another and back to the homeland, mirroring its hierarchy of parochial and ultimate loyalties. Each level of segmentation in this hierarchy is, in its own set of contexts, a bounded interest group, with its own concerns, secrets and facilities for handling problems.

At the level of the ethnic group as a whole, part of the mechanism for dealing with internal and external problems resides in its leaders and prominent members, the most notable of whom is the ethnic chief. As pointed out in the previous chapter, both Kake and Kumba have their own Igbo chiefs with parallel roles in the village and town. Given the difference in scale of the two centers, there are, as would be expected, some noteworthy differences.

The Igbo chief of Kake is well known to all of his constituents. He is in a fundamental sense a primus inter pares who engages in the same agricultural activities as the great majority of Igbos in Kake and is not distinguished by wealth or other status markers. As with other Igbos, indeed, the vast majority of Kake residents, he lives in a simple "carraboard" house¹ with his wife, children and a matrilineal kinsman.

In Kake and other villages throughout the Kumba area, the Igbo chief is chosen by popular election, the major criteria guiding the choice being the length of residence in the village, general competence and familiarity with the local situation. The present Igbo chief of Kake is, with a single exception, the adult Igbo male longest resident in the village,² and is generally regarded as "sensible" and one who "knows what's going on."

In Kumba the Igbo chief would find it quite impossible to know personally all the members of his vast constituency. His regular face to face contacts are largely limited to persons from his home district, business associates and persons of relative prominence. In contrast to his counterpart in Kake, he is readily distinguishable from the great majority of Igbos in the town. As a titled man he wears the traditional wrapper rather than trousers [unlike most urban Igbos], and, on ceremonial occasions, he dons the

distinctive okpu agu ("hat-leopard") stocking cap of: stocking cap of titled men.³

Unlike the majority of Igbo market traders, who tend to deal in small articles and foodstuffs, the chief is a relatively prosperous cloth merchant. He owns several plots within the town and gains additional income as a landlord. He occupies a sizable "block" (cement block) house on the east side of town ("Hausa Quarter") together with his three wives and numerous children (see Fig. 2.3). Although a sizable minority of Igbos are polygynous, the chief is among a very small number who have been able to maintain more than one wife in the migrant town.

As chief of the largest Igbo community in West Cameroon (and one of the largest Igbo concentrations outside Nigeria), the Kumba Igbo chief is a man of considerable importance. He deals directly with the indigenous (Bafaw) chief of Kumba, the Senior District Officer, and high level officials outside the local area. He is, likewise, in contact with the overall chief of the West Cameroonian Igbo community, based in Victoria, and the Nigerian consul in Buea, the provincial capital (see Fig. 2.1). He knows the Igbo chief of Kake only vaguely and has little, if any, contact with him.

As is the case in the village, the Igbo chief of Kumba is elected, but, given the size of the town, the

electors are representatives of the various constituent local communities, rather than the entire adult constituency, as was true in Kake. Competence and knowledgeability are, of course, important criteria for selection, but sheer length of residence in the town is given relatively less weight.⁴ Wealth, prominence in the community and ties with influential persons are, likewise, important criteria for selection.⁵

Some of the functional differences between the town and village chief were touched upon in the preceding chapter. Given the differences in scale of the two centers and the different statuses of the two chiefs, relative to their respective constituencies, the village chief is, naturally, much more approachable for most members of the community. Disputes and other issues involving Igbos in Kake will frequently go directly to him without undue delay at a lower level. In Kumba, on the other hand, matters would be first dealt with among kinsmen of the parties involved, then the home village community, passing through a number of intervening levels before going to the chief. The Igbo chief of Kake would often be the first agent to impose a fine on a member for misbehavior or default of a communal obligation, while in Kumba such a fine would be levied by the head of the home village community or home district contingent.

Although the Igbo chief in Kake is more approachable and deals more directly with community members at large, given his rather limited range of contacts outside the village, he has comparatively little influence and relatively little need to deal with the problems of constituents involving higher level authorities. The Kumba chief, on the other hand, living in the midst of a relatively cosmopolitan center, deals with a variety of matters whose scope extends far beyond the local level and may require direct or indirect contact with officialdom. For example, when one constituent was experiencing difficulty in securing a U.S. visa for overseas study, the chief was able to persuade an American researcher resident in Kumba [myself] to go to the U.S. Consulate in Douala and intervene on his behalf. Such a matter is highly unlikely to arise in Kake where ambition and social mobility are much more limited and would scarcely require dealing with representatives of overseas nations.

In both centers, Kumba and Kake, the institution of chieftaincy has a certain symbolic value, representing the unity of the Igbo as a discrete ethnic group in the migrant locale. This is more evident in the urban situation, where the chief is more distinctive and distinguished, than in the village. Also in Kake, the dual role of the Igbo chief as ethnic and Nigerian communal

head, somewhat blurs the boundaries of his Igbo constituency.

Paralleling this rural-urban differential is the difference in roles which the Igbos as whole occupy in Kumba, as opposed to Kake. In the town they tend to dominate market trade and are, to a large degree, stereotyped as intense hustlers and profiteers [see section 9.4]. In Kake, on the other hand, the great majority of them are engaged in the cash cropping of cocoa, as are the Cameroonian residents, and do not stand out as an economically differentiated group. The Igbos in Kake, being fewer in number and residentially dispersed, are less conspicuous than the large Kumba Igbo community, mainly concentrated in Makata ("Igbo Quarter"). In short, the Igbos in Kake maintain a relatively "low profile" and appear more assimilated into the overall socio-economic network of the village than their countrymen in Kumba.

This impression, however, requires considerable qualification and should be re-examined in the light of Igbo values and intra-ethnic networks. One essential fact that must be appreciated, is that, unlike many other strangers in Kake, the Igbos do not consider themselves settled there, or any other part of Cameroon, for that matter. The clear appreciation of alien status is, to an extent, a contributing factor, but, of more significance is the high value given to ultimate re-establishment in

the home community after the term of migrancy [see below]. At any rate, no matter how well or ill-adapted the various Igbo migrants of Kumba and Kake may be to the Cameroonian situation, economically and socially, they are unified by the common bond to the Igbo homeland and the shared goal of eventual return.

Another important consideration running counter to the view of Kake Igbos as assimilated is the relatively tight-knit intra-ethnic network of reciprocal obligations which binds them together. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this reciprocity in participation in agricultural tasks and ceremonies crosses ethnic boundaries, particularly within the Nigerian community. However, within the Igbo community these relations carry much more of an obligatory value. This is particularly true with respect to funeral attendance, as will be discussed later.

In Kumba, by contrast, despite the relative distinctiveness of ethnic boundaries between Igbos and non-Igbos, reciprocity at the level of the ethnic group at large is less regular and less obligatory than in Kake. This is true for a number of reasons. First, the sheer size of the Kumba Igbo enclave and the strength of more parochial ties limits the degree of involvement at the pan-Igbo level. Secondly, economically oriented activities, particularly those in which Kumba Igbos are involved,

PLEASE NOTE: THE POLYMER BRUSH IS DESIGNED TO BE USED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

tend to be highly competitive, unlike Kake, where agricultural tasks lend themselves well to patterns of relatively broad scale co-operation. Igbos involved in commerce, for example, are more directly in competition with other Igbos similarly engaged than with the majority of Cameroonians, who tend to prefer other occupations. Such co-operation as exists, therefore, tends to be limited to kinsmen and people from the same home village.

According to informants, the situation in Kumba was markedly different in the pre-World War II days when the town was small and migrants relatively few. "When we were few," one long established Igbo commented, "we were all brothers." In those days, he related, a funeral, marriage or birth ceremony of one Igbo resident was attended by all the others. Likewise, when the migrant population was small and economic competition less keen, there was less inter- and intra-ethnic conflict and considerably more co-operation.

Another factor inhibiting Igbo-wide co-operative enterprise in Kumba and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in the smaller centers surrounding the town, is the intervention of the authorities, mentioned earlier. The government has made it clear that it is particularly interested in rooting out the large-scale, highly organized

tribal level unions and is less concerned with home village level gatherings which are able to continue under the innocuous label "family meetings."

The situation in the Kumba peri-urban area contrasts markedly with other, more isolated centers where the Igbos have established themselves. For example, the village of Bekora [about half the size of Kake] lies approximately 30 miles to the west, away from the major highway, on the fringe of the Lobe Oil Palm Estate [see Fig. 2.3]. Well over 50% of the population is migrant [mainly eastern] Igbo, who occupy two continuous lines of houses on either side of the road forming the long axis of the village. Given the relative isolation of Bekora, the Igbo community is comparatively free from pressures or surveillance by the authorities, and relations with officials are generally more relaxed than in Kumba or even Kake. Permission for holding large public gatherings is frequently verbal [as opposed to the peri-urban area, where it must be written] and, in view of the geographical situation, such meetings would probably go unnoticed, even if such sanction was lacking.

The dynamics of communal solidarity in Bekora were demonstrated by an incident in which the entire Igbo community was mobilized to meet a crisis situation. The

event centered around a young man who, late one night, had taken an overdose of epsom salts while in Lobe Hospital and went berserk. Running out of the ward, he eluded the hospital staff and disappeared into the surrounding bush. When the message of his disappearance had travelled back to the village, a bell was sounded for all Igbo men to assemble and form a search party. Splitting up into small groups, they fanned out near the point where the youth was last seen. As there is a river in the vicinity, there was much fear that he might stumble in and drown, so an intense effort was made to locate him as soon as possible. Toward morning the youth was found, unharmed.

Later in the day all the Igbo men of the village gathered in the shade of an uncompleted house which served as a meeting place. The chief discussed the events of the preceeding night and mentioned the names of several members who had not participated in the search. A small number of them had valid excuses for being absent, but the remainder were fined 1,000 frs. each for neglecting their communal obligations. As the fines were paid, beer and palm wine were purchased and shared among the members who had either participated or paid their fines. Gradually, the combined pressure of the group wore down the resistance of the

holdouts, who, by now, thirsty from argument, relented and paid up.

Such a dramatic demonstration of communal unity-- the swift collective reaction to the initial crisis and the efficiency with which defectors were later brought into line-- is difficult to equate with events observed in either Kumba or Kake. Although the situation was in some respects, an unusual one, the community's capacity to react clearly indicated an effective organization for handling such crises. The sound of the bell in the middle of the night had a common meaning to all who heard it, and the great majority responded appropriately. Likewise, the speedy achievement of consensus in dealing with non-participants indicates a highly developed sense of mutual obligation which can be activated to meet an unusual and unpredictable event.

In summary, it can be said that the various Igbo communities in Cameroon are organized with reference to a common pattern of hierarchically ordered loyalties, which gives a certain amount of scope for focusing attention on symbols and issues which serve to unify the ethnic group as a whole. The extent to which this unity is actually realized varies according to situation, i.e., the trend of events and the locale under consideration.

From an external point of view, it can be said that the Igbo are more clearly differentiated as an ingroup in larger centers [such as Kumba] where their more distinctive leadership, residential concentration and more specialized economic roles contrast with the rural situation. However, viewed from the standpoint of internal relations, it is evident that the smaller size and agricultural base of rural centers creates a firmer foundation for a viable network of reciprocity and functional communal solidarity than the large, competitive town. The relative isolation of the center was, likewise, a factor, particularly with respect to freedom from official intervention, which inhibits Igbo-wide organization. In this respect, the Kake Igbo community was somewhat more free to organize itself than Kumba, while remote villages, like Bekora, considerably more free than either Kumba or Kake.

4.2 ORGANIZATION OF RELATIONS BASED ON HOME DISTRICT

In the introduction and the preceeding chapter, an attempt was made to suggest the range of cultural, social and dialectical diversity existing within the Igbo homeland. Despite the modern credo "Igbo is one," and the effective bridging of local differences in the

migrant area, there are significantly more "shared understandings" among members of the same local contingent than among members of the Igbo community at large. Although differences in local origin generally have greater significance in the organization of the urban based Igbo community, they are meaningful in the rural centers as well.

In Kumba and other centers where the members from a given district are sufficiently numerous, they almost invariably have their own subcommunal head, generally referred to as a chief. Although their constituencies most frequently correspond to the modern administrative units of origin (Nigerian "provinces" or, more frequently, "divisions"), they are, relatively speaking, culturally homogeneous. Consequently, selection of the subcommunal chief, in both Kumba and Kake, places emphasis on age and knowledge of omenala ("tradition, custom"), rather than the length of residence in the migrant center, or familiarity with the Cameroonian situation, the criteria for selection of the chief of the ethnic group at large.

In Kake the only Igbo subcommunity with an actual chief is Ohaffia, the largest local contingent represented in the village [see Fig. 2.4]. At the time the chief was chosen, he was the oldest Ohaffia living in

the village, and though not old compared to senior men in the homeland, he was regarded as the man most familiar with home traditions. He is, for example, the only Igbo in the village who is qualified as a dibia (one skilled in herbal medicine and ritual). As with the chief of the Igbos as a whole, the Ohaffia chief is respected, but not accorded special status in the context of everyday life. Even in subcommunal meetings he enjoys no special privileges or exemptions. On one occasion, for example, when the Ohaffias were holding a funeral celebration, he was strongly upbraided for being late. When he offered the excuse that he was entertaining guests in his house, many members protested that the excuse was invalid, and that he should be fined as anyone else. He was, however, able to muster enough support to avoid the fine, which he otherwise would have been required to pay.

In Kumba, in contrast to Kake, there are 16 Igbo contingents with their own subcommunal chiefs. As in Kake, age and knowledge of custom are given relatively heavy weight, but achievement also is a consideration in selection. The chief of the Orlu contingent, the largest single divisional subcommunity, for example, is among the oldest (but not the most senior) of Orlu men in the town [see Fig. 2.4]. He is one of the few Igbos

in town bearing extensive ichi marks [facial scarification], uncommon in younger, even most middle-age men. He is clearly more prosperous than most Igbos, who, as a relatively successful trader, has managed to educate his many children to a moderately high standard, but is certainly, not as wealthy as the chief of the Igbos as a whole.

Meetings of the sub-communal contingents in Kumba are held on an occasional basis with government permission. Such gatherings are occasioned by specific issues such as the need to plan a marriage or send-off party, the organization of a funeral, or judging a case which has not been resolved by the home village segments. At such times a man appointed as messenger will contact the heads of the various component local segments, and other parties involved, announcing the purpose, time and location of the coming meeting.

In Kake, where no subcommunity contains more than 25 adult males, meetings are attended by rank and file members, rather than leader-delegates as is the case in Kumba. In practice, only the Ohaffia subcommunity, and to a lesser extent, the Ada contingent, [see Fig. 2.4] are sufficiently large enough to be organized as functional divisional units. Other Igbos in Kake will either bring their problems before the Igbo-wide meeting there or to their

own home village meetings in Kumba, depending on the nature of the issue at hand and the parties involved. If the larger subcommunities in Kake fail to resolve strictly internal problems they may refer them to their divisional chief in Kumba as well.

In both Kumba and Kake the subcommunity acts as an agency in maintaining social control, although in Kumba the home village and kingroup assume a more direct role in this function. Despite the fact that the subgroup has a number of means at its disposal for handling dissidents, considerable effort is made to contain the problem informally at the local level, as this example from Kake illustrates:

F is always proud. No matter how little money he has, he always acts like he has a million francs. We asked him to pay 275 frs. to take the wife of U home. He agreed to do it but later, every time we came around after the money he didn't have it. He did not come to work the day the Ohaffias worked for K, although he agreed to come, and before going we had a meeting which he joined in chopping [eating] and drinking wine. We told his landlord [a Grasslander] about him, that he should know F has no family here in Kake. No one would want such a person in their house. When it becomes known around town, no one will want to have dealings with him. We could really have made things hard for him if we wanted to. We could take the matter before the Ohaffia chief in Kumba or to the authorities there, but we just know what he is and just try and manage him.

The above statement, offered by a member of the Ohaffia subcommunity, is a telling commentary on the significance and dynamics of in-group membership in the village. The network of reciprocal obligations binds all members to an even greater extent than Igbo-wide ties, and covers a wider range of corporate activities [such as contributing to a fund for the repatriation of a member's wife]. The remark that F had "no family" in Kake underscored the fact that the subcommunity in the migrant rural center is functionally comparable to the kin group elsewhere and that ostracism from it entails the loss of one's immediate source of support.

An interesting aspect of the above situation is the fact that F's landlord was approached as an indirect means of putting pressure on him [through threat of eviction] to recognize his subcommunal responsibilities.⁶ Urban based Igbos would find this tack somewhat irregular and would, in contrast, appeal to the next higher level of segmentation within the Igbo community before appealing to a Cameroonian for assistance. In this case, keeping the matter within the village under the control of the locally based subcommunity was important, and approaching the landlord entailed less of a sacrifice of autonomy than referring the case to the Ohaffia chief in Kumba. This further

illustrates the fact that, despite the relatively close-knit character of intra-ethnic ties, inter-ethnic relations are, by and large, more casual and less strained in the village than in Kumba.

Owing to the small size of Kake, its agricultural base and patterns of communally shared labor, members of the subcommunity there are in more regular contact with one another than in the town. In the urban center, however, they do maintain frequent contact through visits, funeral attendance and other subcommunal celebrations. Although regular subgroup wide meetings which formerly brought together members from the peri-urban area are now under government ban, members from the smaller centers often visit neighboring villages where men from their division are established.

Igbos in Kake are generally well acquainted with the villages along Mbonge Road [the road running from Kumba to Mbonge forming the long axis of Kake], especially those where their home area men have settled. A survey of seven major villages in the area [see Fig. 2.3], utilizing information from Igbos based in Kake, showed the following distribution:

Table 4.1

Distribution of Igbo Sub-Groups in Select Villages of
Meme Division

<u>Villages</u>	<u>Igbo Sub-Group</u> *		
	<u>Ohaffia</u>	<u>Ada</u>	<u>Awo</u>
Ekumbe Bonji	X	X	X
Marumba	X	X	X
Kombone	X	O	X
Nake	X	O	X
Bole	X	X	X
Mbonge	X	X	X
Boa Bakundu	O	X	X

Although there are Igbo settlements in almost in all of the villages lying between Kumba and Mbonge,⁷ two villages [Kombone and Nake] lack Adas and one [Boa Bakundu] has no members from Ohaffia, the two subgroups which form the major part of the Kake Igbo community. According to one Ada man, the subgroup serves as an effective community network, providing information on the suitability of various centers for settlement:

If my people [the Adas] find where the ground is sweet we will settle there. I do not know how Kombone is as I have not lived there and no one has told me what it is like. I was the first man from Ada to come here to Kake. I laid the foundation. After I came other Adas followed.

* X indicates "members of subgroup present";
O indicates "members of subgroup absent"

Boa Bakundu, where a large Ada contingent has established itself, and Ekombe Bonji, with a sizable Ohaffia population, are both within easy cycling distance of Kake and frequently visited by members of each sub-community based there. Special events [funerals, marriages, and birth ceremonies] will carry members to some of the more distant villages [Kombone, Nake], but it is unlikely that they would go as far as Mbonge [30 miles from Kake] unless to visit a kinsman or for a gathering of home villagers. The network of communication and reciprocal obligation attenuates more rapidly with geographical distance for higher, than for lower segmental ingroups, a pattern which will be examined in more detail in later chapters.

4.3 THE ORGANIZATION OF HOME VILLAGE RELATIONS

In the Nigerian homeland divisions are subdivided into county council areas which are, in turn, made up of a number of village groups, the maximal indigenous Igbo political community.⁸ In the migrant situation these subdivisions are organizationally significant principally in the larger centers, where they are more likely to be well represented. In smaller centers, such as Kake, however, the minimal unit which functions corporately within the village is normally the division of origin. The lower level links

are, of course, vitally important in terms of personal networks, both in the town and the village, forming a broad system of relations linking members scattered throughout the migrant centers of West Cameroon. In the urban center, therefore, lower level links generally have reference to relations both within and outside the boundaries of the town, whereas, in the rural center they orient the member primarily toward the world outside the village.

In Kumba, for example, the Okigwi Divisional contingent [see Fig. 2.4] is composed of members from six county council areas: Mba Ano, Isu Ikwato, Etiti, Utulu, Otanchara, and Otanzu. Each of these areas is sufficiently well represented in Kumba to have its own corporate organization, and those whose constituent village groups are large enough, likewise, have their own "family" meetings. One of the areas, Mba Ano, for instance, contains four village groups: Ehime, Osu, Ugiri and Nnuato Ogumezie. Ehime, being well represented in Kumba, meets as a unit, while other groups meet collectively as Mba Ano.

In Kake, by contrast, the entire Okigwi contingent consists of four adult males and their respective nuclear families. Although they engage in reciprocal cocoa harvesting, their definition as a subcommunity is less clear than other larger groups [Ohaffia, Ada], and,

in terms of their home village relations, are linked to Kumba and other areas where their home people have settled. Ohaffia and Ada, which do, to a significant extent, function corporately in Kake, do not subdivide themselves into their component village groups. These lower level ties are, of course, important insofar as they link members to home people in Kumba, neighboring villages and other centers further afield.

In order to appreciate the importance and durability of the home village network in the migrant situation, it is useful to examine the basic system of values and attitudes which serves as its normative underpinning. One fundamental Igbo value is the importance of, and the attachment of human beings to the land. Throughout Igbo country the land is represented symbolically by the female deity ala (or ani), the source of all wealth and sustenance, receiver of the dead. Next to the ancestors, ala is the most accessible and most attended of supernatural powers, who has the greatest relevance to human affairs. She is frequently represented in mud sculpture in local shrines, where she stands as the guardian of village morality. The most severe moral infractions a villager could commit were those which offended the land.

This reverence toward the land is particularized and focused on the land with which one's kin group is

identified and on which one's home village is situated. It is here one's personal ancestors are buried who receive libations during communal feasts. It is here a person's umbilical cord is carefully interred under a sapling which will grow into a tree as he grows into adulthood, validating his status as "freeborn" member of the community.

For the Igbo living abroad the ritual importance of the land strengthens the bond between himself and the homeland. Periodic return to the home village is a reaffirmation of his social identity, a renewal of the ritual bond between man and the land. He must return to the homeland to take titles not only because the officiating members are based there but because of the significance of the land itself. Likewise, he looks forward to burial in his home soil, rather than a poor man's interment abroad. Wealthier Igbos who die before they are able to return to the homeland are carried home in trucks. Most Igbos, however, have no intention of dying outside the homeland. The comment "he wants to die here," is sometimes directed at a man who has passed the age when (according to prevailing values) he should have returned to the homeland.

Virtually all Igbos in Cameroon look forward to ultimately returning permanently to their home village. While abroad they maintain a share in lineage land, and, if

they have more than one wife, almost always have at least one based at home to cultivate it. Alienation of lineage land is unthinkable to most Igbos who see this as a point of difference between themselves and Cameroonians, who, in their view, have allowed strangers to take over much of the better land in Kumba and other centers.

The ideal of the Igbo migrant is not merely to return home, but to return triumphantly, and establish a monument to his success abroad. This is generally expressed as building up, or "restoring", the family compound, i.e. improving or rebuilding its houses, adding metal roofing, or erecting a "story building" (a house with an upstairs). These more modern goals have generally taken priority over the classical status validating practice of title taking, although wealthier men would be expected to accomplish both. This is more true of the elite in Kumba, while the majority of the town population, and almost all Igbos in Kake, would have more modest objectives.

Whatever a man's eventual plans may be, an Igbo abroad makes it very clear that he does not identify himself with the migrant locale. Identification with the home village is viewed as an unalterable social fact, which does not change regardless of the time spent abroad. Children of migrants, raised or born abroad, irrespective of their knowledge of the homeland or home traditions, are viewed as

full-fledged members of their parents' village. Consciousness of origin, loyalty to the home community and solidarity with fellow members in the migrant center is continually reinforced and restated. This value is summarized in the proverb, Ma m'ruru ala bekee, enweghim ike ihapu egbela ["even if I go to white man's country, I cannot forget the home society"].

"Igbo is one," but the fundamental building blocks--the strands from which that complex unity is woven--are the individual villages and village groups. The emphasis on solidarity in the migrant context should not obscure the fact that each local community is aware of the diacritical features which distinguish it from others. Local dialectical differences, for example, are, on the whole, slight, but sufficient to distinguish people from neighboring village groups. As pointed out above, this local speech remains the medium of communication in the household and in home village meetings in the migrant center. Each local area observes its own dietary proscriptions, the avoidance of certain animals or [less commonly] plants as food. These proscriptions carry over into the migrant situation and are rigorously observed, even by many Igbos with post-primary education.

The village and village group are then, normally, the minimal nonkin hierarchical units with which the Igbo

migrant identifies himself. In general, co-villagers abroad sense the binding obligation to mutual aid, sustained contact and corporate activity to a greater degree than units of broader inclusiveness. However, the unity of the village, in fact, the consistency and continuity of the entire segmentary system, is cross-cut and complicated by the pervasive polarization of the Igbo community into Aro and non-Aro sections.

The villages of central Igboland from which the great majority of Kumba based Igbos come, typically contain enclaves of descendants of settlers from Aro Chuku. Although the date of Aro settlement extends back into the precolonial past, the Aros, by and large, have not been absorbed and are regarded as a semi-alien population in the areas where they have settled. Thus, Aro Igbos in Cameroon when asked their home village will usually specify Aro-Ubulu, Aro-Mgbidi and Aro-Nnempi, for example, for their respective sections of Ubulu, Mgbidi and Nnempi, while non-Aros will simply give the name of the village group itself. This distinction, even in Cameroon, is often expressed by Aros and non-Aros alike in terms of "Igbo" vs. "Aro" identity [e.g., "he's not Aro, he's an Igbo"]. It is, however, a distinction which Igbos [in the broader, more inclusive sense] would make in the context of their internal relations only, since Cameroonians are generally unaware of the

Aro/non-Aro dichotomy.

Aro Igbos in Cameroon, as in the homeland, are set apart from the rest of the Igbo community in a number of ways. The strictures maintaining Aro endogamy are rigorously observed by Aro and non-Aro alike [see section 6.3]. Although Aros know and speak the central Igbo dialects of their respective villages, their domestic speech is basically that of Aro Chuku, which strengthens their sense of association with Aros from other areas. Their dietary prohibitions are likewise distinct from their non-Aro co-villagers. They are stereotyped by other Igbos as being particularly aggressive, devious and often ruthless.

Organizationally the Aros are divided in their allegiance between their village and district of origin, on the one hand, and the Aro segment of the migrant community at large ["Aro Federal"], on the other. While Aros will attend home village and subcommunal meetings, and participate in corporate functions along with other Igbos, a number of functions are organized along lines emphasizing Aro ingroup ties. Funerals and "send-offs" [i.e. "going-away parties"], for example, hosted by Aros will tend to draw both Aro and non-Aro from the home village area, but the over-whelming proportion of Igbos from other home areas will almost invariably be Aros.

Although the Aro section of the Kumba Igbo population is substantial [roughly a quarter of the total Igbo community], the Kake Igbo community contains no Aro members. The great mass of Aros are inclined toward commerce to an even greater degree than Igbos as a whole, a fact rooted in the precolonial history of the group. Consequently, they tend to concentrate in towns, although they are occasionally seen in rural centers managing small shops, off-licenses ["beerstores"] and restaurants. In such cases they usually maintain close ties with the larger Aro settlements in the nearest town. Being isolated from other Aros they frequently emphasize their Aro identity to a greater degree than those based in urban centers.⁹

4.4 SUMMARY

Although the local origin of Igbo migrants in West Cameroon is a prime factor in the organization of their social networks, the significance of specific level loyalties is variable. As has been noted, important parameters associated with this variability include the size of the local group in the migrant locale, size and location of the migrant center, urban vs. rural economic patterns and relations with the authority structure. The patterns of organization which emerge in the town are, in a broad sense, analogous to those in the village, but show several important

differences.

In the town the boundaries between Igbo and non-Igbo are relatively clear-cut owing to residential concentration and occupational differentiation, but, from a functional point of view, subcommunal identities are much more significant. Corporate organization and social networks are based on lower level segmentary affiliation, which superimposes a complex pattern of hierarchical loyalties on intra-urban social relations.

Among village-based migrants the same pattern of hierarchical loyalties exists, but in terms of intravillage relations is vastly simplified owing to the smaller size of the migrant community. Although the ethnic community at large is less differentiated than in the town, it is more tightly drawn together by an over-arching network of reciprocity. Subcommunal networks are even closer knit, but lower level ties have reference, primarily, to relations outside the village.

The various subcommunal distinctions recognized by Igbos are not meaningful to most Cameroonians, who lump together their own conationals from other areas (e.g., "Forest," "Mamfe," "Graffi"). In terms of the popular macro-ethnic taxonomy, which operates both in the urban and rural center, "Igbo is one." There are, however,

ways in which the internal segmentation of the Igbo community has relevance for inter-ethnic relations, which will be outlined in later chapters.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Carraboard" houses, the most common type of dwellings in the southern forest zone of West Cameroon and adjacent areas of East Cameroon, have walls consisting of overlapping slabs of rough cut lumber. They may be roofed with raffia thatching or corrugated metal, depending on the financial circumstances of the householder. Persons of better means tend to build houses with walls of close-fitting boards or, ultimately, cement block.
2. The Igbo longest resident in Kake had been born in Cameroon and had voted in the 1961 plebiscite. There were, consequently, some misgivings about his qualifications to be chief and he was described [somewhat facetiously] by one informant as "practically a Cameroonian."
3. A number of prominent older Igbo men in Kumba have gone back to the homeland and taken one or more of a series of graded titles through the payment of initiation fees. As access to higher titles requires considerable expenditure, senior titleholders were not found among the less wealthy residents of Kake.
4. The present chief established himself in Kumba in 1949, a few years after leaving the colonial armed forces. There are a number of Igbos still in Kumba who came during, or even previous to World War II.
5. The previous chief of the Igbo community [expelled for political reasons during the early 1960's] recommended that he be replaced by the present chief, a factor which evidently had considerable influence on his selection.
6. F maintained good relations with his landlord, which included co-operating with each other in agricultural tasks. It is conceivable that members of the Ohaffia contingent felt that F's landlord could persuade him to be more responsible.

7. Small Ekombe, a village two miles west of Kake, is the only village along Mbonge Road where Igbos have not established themselves.
8. This scheme is, for the sake of simplicity, somewhat idealized. Although the administrative system attempts to take indigenous sociopolitical units into consideration, occasionally county council, or even divisional and provincial boundaries may divide affiliated villages.
9. One Aro man operating a restaurant in the village of Ebonji [five miles east of Kumba] identified himself as a native of Aro Chuku. Further questioning revealed that he was, in fact, from the Aro section of Mgbidi [see Fig. 2.4] but chose to emphasize his Aro affiliation, rather than his village of origin in central Igboland. This type of response was irregular and was never encountered interviewing Aros based in Kumba.

CHAPTER 5

ETHNICITY AND KINSHIP

In the preceeding chapter we delt with the system of ordered loyalties which links the migrant to a series of reference groups based on territory. Except in the case of the lower level units [villages and village groups], these allegiances are products of the modern, postcontact experience, which have been further amplified in the migrant situation. We turn now to a system of organizing social relations which, for the migrant and nonmigrant Igbo alike, is, on the whole, more basic, more immediate and, generally speaking, exerts greater influence on his day to day affairs: Kinship.

There are in the Igbo homeland two basic systems of kinship organization, both of which are represented among the migrants in West Cameroon. The first, by far the most prevalent, is patrilineal descent, which is practiced by northern, southern [including central], riverain, and some eastern groups [Aro Chuku Division]. Although there are local varients of terminology and practice, the fundamental pattern is similar. The basic land holding and residential grouping is the patrilineage [umunna] and its subdivisions.

Authority within the lineage segment is transmitted patrilineally from father to senior son [okpara]. Descent through females has relevance only with respect to uterine divisions of the patrilineage and its segments or to the patrilineage of one's mother. Both of these latter categories are termed umunne, a term frequently used to denote immediate [as opposed to more inclusive] kin ties.

The other system, which predominates in most of the eastern section of Igbo country [Ada, Ohaffia, Afikpo and neighboring areas], is a form of double unilineal descent.¹ As in other areas of Igboland, residence is patrilocal, the major patrilineage forming a compact walled compound containing lineage men, their children and in-marrying females from other compounds. Authority in the lineage segments is, as in other Igbo areas, transmitted from father to senior son. The major point of difference in this area is the existence of matriclans [ikwu] and their constituent lineages, the major landholding units. As with the patrilineages, the ikwu have their own system of formal organization, a body of administrative elders and mechanisms of ritual control. Given their dominant role in the control of the village's most strategic resource; land, matrilineal links are generally regarded as more important than patrilineal ties [Ottenberg 1968: 94].

5.1 THE NETWORK OF RECIPROCAL OBLIGATIONS

In the migrant situation, where kinsmen are scattered, and land is acquired on an individual, contractual basis, the lineage loses its primary function as a residential and/or land holding group. In a sense, the situation is more radically different for the patrilineally organized Igbo than for the eastern groups whose matrilineages maintain their corporate functions in the homeland, despite the wide dispersion of their members. In this sense, the ikwu are pre-adaptive to the migrant situation and emerge as the primary basis of lineage alignment among eastern Igbos in Cameroon. Among other Igbos, the patrilineage and its segments fills this role, attempting, so far as is possible, to bridge the distances separating members.

It is, of course, easier for kinsmen to maintain their internal links and some semblance of corporate life where they are more concentrated. From this standpoint, larger centers, such as Kumba, which would be more likely to contain numerous representatives of a given kin-group, enmeshes its residents in multifunctional, lineage-based networks to a greater degree than smaller centers such as Kake. In Kake, where kinsmen are relatively few, comparatively more emphasis is given to higher level, nonkin links (especially at the district of origin level), as indicated in the last chapter. On the other hand, residents of Kake,

are generally more tightly bound to kin networks centering around Kumba than migrants in centers further removed. This does not intend to underestimate the sense of ultimate responsibility which extends to kinsmen wherever they may be [a value continually expressed by Cameroon-based Igbos], but merely notes the practical limitations imposed by distance to the conduct of routine corporate activities.

The degree to which widely scattered kinsmen will be mobilized for collective participation is highly variable, according to circumstances. At one extreme of the situational continuum is the event which, more than any other, draws the multitudes of dispersed kinsmen together with a sense of unavoidable urgency: death. In both the home area and the migrant locale lineage members assumed the primary responsibility in arranging for burial of the corpse and organizing and hosting the accompanying celebration. Although moral responsibility weighs on nonkin from the home area as well, pressures and penalties for nonparticipation are particularly severe for members of the kin group. After the ceremony lineage members will assemble to arrange for the distribution of the deceased's heritable wealth. This is a function of the patrilineage for most Igbo groups, but, in the case of eastern Igbos, it is the responsibility of the matrilineage.

Other life crisis celebrations, such as naming ceremonies and marriages, will also draw kinsmen from distant centers, but here the sense of obligation is less, no penalties are imposed and excuses for nonattendance more acceptable than in the case of funerals. Members, would, however, be normally expected to attend such functions out of a general interest in kin affairs, and a desire to maintain the good will of fellow members.

Kinsmen in Cameroon, as in the Nigerian homeland, are normally expected to assist one another in a variety of ventures. Contributions to school fees is one of the most commonly solicited forms of financial aid within the kin-group. Kinsmen living in the same center are most frequently approached, but, if necessary, longer journeys are undertaken to collect funds. In view of the high value Igbo place on education and helping kinsmen to achieve status, this form of aid is difficult to deny, especially when it is clear that the prospective donor is in a position to help.² This form of aid is more frequently sought in urban centers [such as Kumba] where an expensive secondary school education is a common goal, than in smaller centers [such as Kake].

Another form of aid frequently sought among kinsmen living close at hand is money to pay the cost of transport back to the Nigerian homeland. Motives for returning are various, including the need to attend the funeral of a

close kinsman, the collection of school fees, or the desire to re-establish there after a term of migrancy. As these motives are linked to primary values, there is a general willingness to lend support where possible. Occasionally, also, if the returnee was unemployed and is planning to leave permanently, financing his return may be seen as a way of ridding oneself of a burdensome dependent.

It should be appreciated, however, that the obligation to provide meals and shelter to kinsmen is fundamental. A man with widely distributed kinsmen is, thus, able to travel about the country with minimal expense. A newly arrived migrant, or one who, for various reasons, has not been able to establish himself economically, will normally lodge with his nearest kinsman in the migrant center. This would be a patrilineal kinsman or member of the mother's patrilineage for most Igbos, while, in the case of eastern Igbos, most frequently a matrilineal relative. In Kumba, where the cost of maintenance is relatively high, such a lodger may strain the household budget, whereas in Kake he would be expected to contribute his share of farm labor.

The more typical pattern of establishment in Cameroon, however, is not to arrive in the migrant center alone and directionless, as the above description might suggest. The greatest proportion of Igbos in the country have come in the company of, or at the request of kinsmen

already established there. Frequently, a young boy or youth becomes the ward of an older kinsman, often at the insistence of his parents. During this initial period of dependency he lodges with his senior kinsman and serves him in an apprentice capacity [e.g., as a trader or mechanic's helper]. After a number of years the patron-relative will give his charge sufficient capital to establish himself independently. Alternatively, the senior kinsman may pay his school fees and pave his way to other career goals.

Although, as mentioned above, kinship obligations and kin-group activities engage rural-based migrants to a somewhat lesser degree than their urban-based counterparts, kin links are occasionally activated in circumstances calling for more co-operation than can normally be expected in town. In one village a few miles from Kake, for example, a man erected a house with the aid of his fellow umunna [patrilineage] members. Fortunately, he was able to draw on kinsmen from the surrounding villages, where a number had settled, including five men from Kake. Members of other lineages, which are well represented in the area, are able to offer one another the same assistance, but the majority of men would hire carpenters from town. In Kumba, where owners of plots are usually comparatively wealthy, carpenters are almost always engaged for such tasks.

Another form of rural collective activity involves mutual assistance in farm work. Agricultural work parties are usually broad-based, frequently mobilizing most of the home divisional contingent. During the peak of cocoa-ripening season, however, two or more men from the same division may harvest their cocoa on the same day. If a participant is consanguinally linked to one of the sponsors, he will prefer to join the party harvesting his kinsman's cocoa and send a substitute to cover his obligations in the other home area party [see section 8.2].

Obligations among kinsmen carry the expectation of reciprocity. Failure to assist a kinsman in need, or join in a corporate lineage function may not bring immediate censure but is well noted. One umunna member who failed to participate in the house raising project [mentioned above] was described by a kinsman as one who "didn't come because he doesn't have an interest in the umunna affairs." Such a member is unlikely to have much success in calling others to his assistance in the future. Despite the alleged primacy of kin obligations, every member adopts his own strategy for translating this value into action.

The ideal of lineage solidarity is emphasized, both in the home village and the migrant situation, but the dispersion of members, the fragmentary representation of the group in any given locale and the loss of certain vital

functions, undermine this value considerably. The difficulty of socializing young members abroad was also discussed, [see section 3.1], and it was suggested that cultural cleavages tend to develop between generations which, necessarily, erodes the entire fabric of kinship unity.

As in the case of language, contact between Igbos from different areas leads to some restructuring of kin values. There are many younger eastern Igbos in Cameroon who feel, for example, that matrilineal patterns of inheritance is "wrong," and prefer the more general Igbo pattern of patriliney. "In our area," one eastern Igbo complained, "your sons are not really your own, they belong to the family of your wife. You cannot give them your property but are bound to care for your sister's children."³

This individual, at the same time, saw positive value in the supportive role of the matriclan. "If I am in trouble and shout the name of my ikwu-Ibe Omaka, ayee! - everyone [i.e., all fellow clansmen] must come running." He took great interest in identifying Ibe Omaka members from outside his own village group (Unwana)! This points up the fact that the attitude toward kin values is ambivalent, drawn between the centrifugal and centripetal forces operative in the migrant situation. Although this young Unwana migrant had spent by far the greater part of his life outside of Nigeria, he, like many other Igbos his own age in Cameroon,

was trying to rediscover and reassert his ethnic identity.

5.2 MAINTAINING HARMONY AND CONTINUITY

The kin-group in the migrant situation is faced with the problem of maintaining its integrity in the face of a host of disruptive forces. There is, therefore, much concern with containing internal conflict, on the one hand, and insuring the continuity of the kin-group, on the other.

Igbos in Kumba and Kake take an avid interest in collecting and displaying photographs.⁵ A typical house is decorated with portrait-sized photos of family members many of whom are either dead, living in other centers, or back in the homeland. This is, in a sense, a symbolic attempt to bridge distances in space and time, to restore the completeness of the kin-group and insure the continuity between past and present. One Igbo expressed it this way:

It is rare to enter an Igbo house where there are no photos. If a man doesn't have pictures on the wall, he has them in an album. For instance, I have the pictures of my father and mother here. Igbos consider this more important than money, because when somebody dies, we only have his photo. Our people are healthy, that is why we are making all these photos. We like to refer back to when we were children. We like to know the stages of our lives. This evidenced by the pictures we have on the walls.

Not only is maintaining this continuity important, according to the informant, but it is seen by him as a characteristically Igbo value. The objective fact that

various Cameroonian groups may also hold the same values, including this one, and choose similar modes of expressing them is less important than the perceived association between maintaining the values and ethnic identity [see section 9.2].

Maintaining values and meeting obligations toward kinsmen in the home area is important. Mere geographical distance does not allow the migrant to completely sever the ties between himself and the homeland, even if he wished to do so. According to one informant:

If I am doing badly in my examinations, I may learn that something is wrong at home and I did not return. This is worrying my [living] parents and causing them to disturb my progress here. If you do not pay the bride price and your wife does not give birth, it may mean that the hearts of her parents are not satisfied. The doctor [dibia = "diviner"] may say that you have to go home and finish the rites.

A primary obligation of a senior son [okpara] toward his deceased father is to assume the major economic responsibility of sponsoring his funeral celebration [ikwa ozu = "to cry corpse"]. To be executed properly this entails returning to the home area, buying animals for slaughter and other elaborate, costly preparations. Because of the expense involved, many men must delay this task several months, or even years after the fathers actual death.⁶ If during the intervening period the son becomes ill, suffers

economic reverses or other misfortune, this may be attributed to the displeasure of the father's spirit [mmonwu], who will continue to afflict him until he fulfills his filial duties.⁷

The ancestors are the primary supernatural guardians of the lineage, whose major concern is maintaining harmony among its members. Although they are intimately associated with the land in which they are buried, their influence extends to their living descendants abroad (c.f. Mayer 1957: 289). Concern for kin affairs is, to a certain extent, correlated with a knowledge of the ancestral linkages, which bring living kinsmen together. In general, knowledge of these linkages is greater for older than younger migrants, as might be expected. Members of certain specialist professions, which are associated with specific lineage segments (e.g., blacksmithing and herbal medicine) tend to remember remote ancestors to a greater degree than most others. Igbo diviner-doctors in Kumba evoke their remote ancestral spirits in the course of their diagnostic investigations, despite the distance from the homeland.

Maintaining harmony within the kin-group is of vital importance. This is especially clear in the homeland, where the patrilineage is the basis of residence and prolonged or recurrent fraternal conflict would produce disruption within the neighborhood. Here every effort is mobilized to

bring internal quarrels to speedy resolution.⁸ This value is, likewise, transferred to the migrant center even though the physical separation of kinsmen tends to buffer the expression of hostility.

Kinsmen living in the same center are, in any case, expected to interact, and it is essential that each kin-group represented there maintain at least a facade of internal harmony in the eyes of other home area people. This often forces kinsmen who might otherwise choose to avoid one another to continue close association for the sake of preserving appearances. O, a young Okigwi migrant, for example, was sharing a single room apartment with U his nearest patrilineal kinsman in Kumba. U's life style, including his irregular hours, and his continual indulgence in drinking and Indian hemp, proved offensive to his younger relative who was inclined to give the former occasional, unwanted advice. U, for his part, was resentful of the latter's higher educational qualifications and made it clear in a number of ways that he did not appreciate having to room with him. Although, as time passed, O spent increasingly more time outside, rooming with friends, he did not want to transfer his home base:

I don't expect to live in someone's house at this age. All I have to do is take heart. What do I do? Do I eat in the house? Do I sleep in the house here? I just want merely to keep my clothes there. There are friends who could say, "Bo [friend], come, let's stay together." As is our custom, if I have to go to another person's house and stay, they [home area people] would say, my brother is living here, why have I decided to leave and be living with another person outside?

The above example typifies the strained relations which may develop when the harsh economic realities of urban life create situations of dependency among kinsmen. Fortunately, the issues involved were not particularly serious and the matter did not lead to open conflict. More serious cases require the intervention and adjudication of other lineage members. One such case concerned adultery, which, according to an informant, was handled as follows:

The man who committed the act was a member of our umunna (patrilineage). All of the people involved in the incident were from Okigwi. The adulterer was asked to pay 105,000 frs.⁹, but being a poor man, he couldn't pay. We will have to ask his family members (i.e., immediate patrikin) to help him. The matter was delt with in our family since we do not like to go to court. If the man had gone to court the money he would have paid for lawyers would make the amount even higher. The money will be given to the husband of the woman. It is he who normally brings up the case. Although there were many such cases of adultery during the war among other Igbos, this is the first case of this type to happen in our family since I have been here.

Here, although the offended party was not a kinsman, the matter was handled by the patrilineage of the offender. There was a strong interest on the part of all parties concerned to confine the issue, to this ingroup as much as possible to limit undue publicity. If the offended party had failed to obtain satisfaction in this matter, he would have requested the intervention of his own lineage group, which may have led to a wider [e.g., divisional level] hearing. Had both of the parties been kinsmen, the offense would have been handled in a similar fashion, although from the standpoint of intra-kin morality, this would have been an outrage requiring [at least in the homeland] ritual purification.¹⁰

In major centers, such as Kumba, where the lineage is well represented, the manner of dealing with such cases is not radically different from the home area. In smaller centers, such as Kake, two men, even if they happen to be kinsmen, might call upon their home area people to settle matters. If, however, the matter can be dealt with more privately, among a few resident kinsmen, all the better. In one case of domestic discord, involving C, an Ada farmer, W, a neighbor in Kake from an adjacent eastern Igbo village group [Unwana] was asked to intervene. W's father was a member of Ibe Omaka matriclan as was C. According to W's account:

I am the father of C because it is my ikwu member who is his father. There was another man there from Item [C's wife's area]. The husband was accused by the wife of getting into quarrels and losing his land tenure. He has not been adequately able to maintain his family. He had gotten into a quarrel with J, who went behind his back and bribed the owner, in order to get control of C's property [which he worked jointly with C]. C's wife warned him, "you never paid my brideprice, and I can carry these children home whenever I wish." I tried to discourage her from leaving, as she was pregnant and shouldn't travel.

Here W was asked to intervene, even though, technically speaking, he was not a true kinsman of C, but was associated with a like-named matrilineage in a neighboring village group [see note 4]. Such patterns of extension of kin ties and associated values and functions are common among migrants, as will be discussed below.

5.3 AUTHORITY WITHIN THE KIN GROUP

In the Igbo homeland the position of lineage and lineage segment head is vested in its senior male, the okpara. For the majority of kin groups represented in West Cameroon such men tend to be lacking.¹¹ Nevertheless, lineage members who have seniority vis a vis others in the migrant area are given respect commensurate with their age. However, it is important to appreciate the fact that such men would lack the ritual sanction associated with authority and, in any case, would have to validate their claims to leadership

through demonstrated ability.¹²

As in the homeland, group decisions are arrived at [ideally] through consensus among adult males, with prominent, or otherwise respected men channeling public opinion through the weight of their influence. Although participatory democratic values are highly esteemed by the Igbo, men who are of limited means, unemployed, or otherwise dependent on the good will of wealthier kinsmen, tend to be politically subdued, agreeing or acquiescing in the decisions of others. Such situations are certainly not unique to the Cameroon situation, but do tend to be intensified in the urban migrant locale where wealth differentials are more glaring than in the rural homeland. In smaller centers, such as Kake, where the distribution of wealth is more uniform, the distribution of power is, likewise, more egalitarian. This, coupled with the fact that Kake-based men are further removed from their influential kinsmen, gives them more scope for expression in local kin and supra-kin affairs than they otherwise enjoy.

Among eastern Igbos, where there is a clearer functional differentiation of men according to age grade, seniority tends to be given somewhat greater consideration, but other factors count as well, as this quote from a Kake-based Ada indicates:

There is one man living in Bakoko [a quarter of Kumba] who is the senior man in our ikwu [matriclan]. I am second. Although the man in Bakoko is older, I am more active. I can't say I am onye isi ["leader"] but I am active. Many people have property, but they respect me because of my age. I am able to move about and go various places where the onye isi does not.

At lower levels of segmentation the leadership role of senior men is more clear-cut. This is expressed in the Igbo proverb, "everyone is a chief in his hut [Uchendu 1965: 20]." Men who bring their young kinsmen to Cameroon, assume the role of parental surrogate, and are referred to as nna m ["my father"], even after their ward has established his own residence and has become economically independent. Typically, if a man is in Cameroon with several brothers, or close male patrikin, the eldest will assume the role of father.

Occasionally, in the absence of male authority figures, a leadership role may be assumed by a senior kinswoman. W, an eastern Igbo in Kake, for example, had no close kinsmen in Cameroon. As a youth he had come to the country from Nigeria, living with his father's mother's sister [FMFD] who he called "Grandmama," a mission worker in Victoria. Later, he left Victoria to complete his education, but continued to maintain regular contact with "Grandmama" during holidays, deferring to her and seeking her advice, even though he was no longer dependent on her for material support.

This relationship continued after he had taken employment as a teacher some 50 miles from where she was living. According to W:

I am her child. She has the social prestige of owning me as a child. I was under her [i.e., subject to her authority] during all my training at Nyasoso. She had no money to assist me at that time, that is why I sometimes trekked from Victoria to Kumba. There is hardly anyone who does not know "Grandmama." Since German times [pre-World War II, when the Germans still maintained plantations] she has continued being a Presbyterian elder, until this date. She can be sleeping at 1:00 a.m. and waking you at 4:00 a.m. A very wonderful mama. That is why if I finish with all these things I will go to see her. Any advice she gives me I will take it. If I had money now, I would go to see her to learn what to do. If I take a step without her, good God, it means a lot!

5.4 THE EXTENSIBILITY OF KINSHIP TIES

Up to this point we have been discussing kinship as though it operated as a separate sphere of relations, distinct from the organization of the migrant community at broader levels. Certainly lineage membership does have its particularistic aspect, separating small segments of the community into discrete interest groups, as discussed above. However, it must be appreciated that, kinship in Igbo, and other African societies, is a broad principle for structuring relations beyond this narrow range, and, in a fundamental sense, pervades the actor's entire universe of social intercourse.

The dynamic dichotomy between parochial and broad scale interests is one of the basic features of Igbo kinship terminology. Umunna [sing. nwa nna = "child of father"] is the Igbo term which in its most narrow frame of reference denotes the legal offspring of a given male parent. At this level it distinguishes all children (male and female) belonging to a particular household, from other like units. In the case of polygynous households, the children of various wives are considered as belonging to a single group, which have a claim on the property of their common father.¹³

At a higher level of inclusiveness, umunna denotes all the descendants of a given male ancestor. It may, for example, encompass all descendants of a single grandparent, great-grandparent or remote common ancestor, depending on context. At its greatest range of expansion it refers to the maximal patrilineage.

The other basic kin group to which an Igbo is assigned is the umunne [sing. nwanne - "child of mother"], which, in the narrow sense, refers to all the children of a given woman. It, thus, distinguishes subsections within the polygynous household, according to maternal ties, and recognizes the common interest of children of a single mother vis à vis the children of other wives of their father. In the case of monogamous marriages the umunna and umunne would, of course, coincide.¹⁴

Umunne, like ummunna has a broader field of reference, which consists of projecting links backward to previous generations. Ego might, in this context, distinguish his father's full brothers and their descendants as his ummunne, in opposition to other patrilineal descendants of Fafa. The same principle can be similarly applied to differentiating kinsmen at points of greater geneological depth, as descendants of a particular female ancestor.

It can be seen from this description that the basic Igbo terms for "sibling" [nwanna/nwanne] are highly flexible and can easily be extended, as the case requires, to cover increasingly broader categories of kinsmen. The system as a whole emphasizes solidarity among classificatory siblings, but makes provision for distinguishing parochial from broader interest groups [umunne vs. umunna]. As a rule, however, it is generally considered bad form to emphasize such distinctions in everyday affairs. Consequently, the more intimate term nwannem ["my sibling"] is often extended to kinsmen generally, at least as a term of address, in preference to the more qualified nwannem ["my sibling/half sibling"].

In addition, Igbos use a third term, agburu ["kindred"], in a variety of contexts. Generally, the term is taken to mean anyone with whom ego is linked through any traceable geneological ties. Functionally,

it represents the boundaries of his exogamous kin network. In terms of conventional usage, however, it is often taken to mean relatively close kinsmen considered collectively. However, as was the case with umunna/umunne, the term can be extended, according to context, to mean anyone who could conceivably be regarded as a kinsman, irrespective of known genealogical connection. In this connection, the Igbo employ the proverb agburu enweghe usotu ["kinship has no boundaries"], which aptly expresses the structure of the system and its potential for infinite extension.

The flexibility of the Igbo kinship system makes it eminently adaptable to the migrant situation, where there is increased occasion for contact with individuals of variable social distance from the actor. As in the homeland, basic kin terms are extended to kinsmen further removed, but, in a number of instances, are applied to various categories of nonkinsmen as well. The extension or contraction of ascribed links, the degree of generalization or discrimination in the usage of basic kin terms, reflects the focus, demands and expedients of the situation at hand.

Extension of kin terms and associated roles within the kin group itself is a common practice among Igbos in Cameroon. This is the usual pattern in cases

where the children become wards of immediate or more distant kinsmen, who assume the role and title of parent. A further, looser extension of the terms nna ["father"] and nne ["mother"] to any senior person, regardless of actual relationship to ego, is common, both in the homeland and in the migrant locale. This recognition of seniority is easily extended to Cameroonians of appropriate age, who are addressed in Pidgin as "Mama" and "Papa." ¹⁶

The Igbo nwanne, or its English equivalent, brother/sister [Pidgin: broda/sista] can be used in its restricted Euro-American sense, but is rarely confined to this level, even by highly educated Igbos speaking in English to foreigners. Given the often fragmentary representation of kin groups, such terms are more frequently used in their classificatory sense abroad than would be true in the homeland, where immediate kin are close at hand. Further, there is a series of patterns for extending its range of meaning beyond the kin group to other categories of people toward whom ego claims association. These patterns are, likewise, more evident and more diverse in the migrant center, given the scope for extra-kin association.

Perhaps the most frequent extension of nwanne beyond the range of actual kinship is with reference to other home area people, especially from the same village

or village group. One Kumba resident from Uturu, Okigwi, for example, introduced a man from the same village group as "my brother", although, as he admitted, he would not regard him as such in the home area. "I call him brother because we are strangers here," he declared. The distinction between the restricted and expanded use of kin terms in the migrant situation was more fully elaborated by a senior Kumba resident from Awo Omama:

Nwanne means someone of our family. It can mean someone from our own lineage or village within Awo Omama who would be a brother here in Kumba. Even men from other Awo villages would be nwanne, in the sense that we have a common meeting here. At home we would also be close because of the bond we created in Kumba, but I would still be able to marry his sister.

Although, strictly speaking, a clear distinction can be made between kin and home area people, a particularly close relationship between individuals from the same area is seen as an extension of the kin bond. This is evident in the statement of one Kumba resident from Isu Ikwato, Okigwi:

Mr. J. sells clothes in the market. Although he is not my brother, he cares for me like a brother. He is the only one who I trust enough to tell secrets.

At higher levels of segmentation, the term nwanne would not normally be applied as a blanket term, especially in urban centers where the Igbo migrant popu-

lation is large. In smaller centers, such as Kake, Igbos from areas not well represented [Awo and Okigwi] would be more inclined to call one another brother than those from better represented districts [Ada and Ohaffia; see Fig. 2.4].

There is, however, a pattern of extending kin terminology and kin values to specific individuals, in response to special circumstances. For example, in certain areas of central Igboland kola nuts are given by a host to his nearest kinsman to divide and share among guests. In the absence of a kinsman the member of the group whose place of origin is closest to that of the host performs this task, who might, conceivably, be from a remote area of the host's home district, or even another, more distant part of Igbo country.

The above example was cited by an informant from Umuahia as an example of the infinite extensibility of kin ties. As he put it, "That is why brotherhood has no end." ¹⁷ He and other Igbo informants agreed that persons who, in most circumstances, would be strangers, could, in special contexts, regard one another as brothers, e.g., two Igbos in Cameroon, or an Igbo and a Cameroon-ian in the United States.

In the broadest sense, a brother is one with whom ego shares a common situation and minimal similarities in background. This provides the basis for the metaphorical extension of the kinship bond even beyond the boundaries of the ethnic group. Eastern Igbos in certain centers where they are few in number might, for example, claim other neighboring Cross River people (also practicing double descent) as brothers. According to one Okigwi man, when he was in Douala, a francophone city, he could call an anglophone West Cameroonian "brother," because of their shared lingua franca, and colonial heritage. An even broader extension was cited by an Mgbidi [central Igbo] man who said that in the pre-World War II period, when Kumba was small and migration limited, "Hausas, Graffis [Grasslanders], anyone was a brother at that time." Here he was emphasizing the lack of conflict, "tribalism" and relatively harmonious co-existence which characterized the era "when we were few." ¹⁸

Often the expression "brother/sister in Christ" is used by Christian Igbos and Cameroonians of various denominations in reference to their coreligionists. Such alignments would be more likely to be emphasized by one with few actual kinsmen living near. He would, in any case, be more likely to attend his fellow churchmen's weddings, burials and baptisms, and interact in other church centered

functions, even though he might belong to another ethnic group. In smaller centers, like Kake, such ties might even form the basis for friendship, mutual visitation and other forms of interaction. This does not appear to be the case in Kumba, where congregations are much larger. A genuinely close relationship, however, is often formed between two individuals who share the same God parent(s), who will refer to one another as "God-sisters" or "God-brothers." One Igbo informant, W, for example, was living in Kake, about a half mile away from a young Cameroonian woman, N, whom he called his God-sister. The woman, who had been living with a man for sometime, got into a quarrel with him and was driven out of the house together with their young child. N fled immediately to the house of W who provided her with shelter for the night. W said that their God mother had always insisted that her God-children maintain close ties and assist one another whenever possible.

5.5 THE BOUNDARIES OF KINSHIP

Despite the seemingly limitless potential for the extension of ties based on the analogy of kinship and what may appear to be a loose, almost indiscriminate application of kin terms to nonkinsmen, constraints,

nonetheless, exist. If a man is situationally classified as a "brother" there is simultaneously an implicit recognition of the corresponding opposite category, "non-brother."¹⁹ Just as there is provision for distinguishing immediate from more remote kinsmen, which is called into play in various contexts, there are, likewise, means and circumstances which call for discriminating kin [metaphorical or actual] from nonkin.

Although co-ethnics can, in a number of situations, be terminologically merged with kinsmen, attention is sometimes focused on the formal distinction between the two. Agburu ["kinsmen"], is, thus, formally distinguished from onye ala anyi ["person-land-ours"], a flexible term which ranges in meaning from fellow villager to fellow Igbo. When one informant from Umuahia, for example, was asked if he had any agburu members in Kumba, he replied that he did not, and that he would regard other migrants from his home village as ndi ala anyi ["people-land-our"], construing both terms in their most restrictive sense. On the other hand, in response to the question, "would you call all Igbos in Kumba ndi ala anyi?", he replied that he would, in which case, he would apply the term agburu to members of his home area, Umuahia [covering all village groups in the vicinity of a large town]. Furthermore, if

he wished to distinguish the members of his own village group [Olokoru] from Umuahia at large, he would call them his agburu, in contrast to ndi ala anyi.

In other words, "kinsmen," in the broad sense, is loosely defined as a subset within a larger category, "home area people," which is, itself, a term whose range of inclusiveness is variable.²⁰ It delimits a group of people with whom the individual would normally be expected to interact with on a more regular basis and have reciprocal responsibilities toward, in contradistinction to a broader, more inclusive group toward which there is an attenuated, but nonetheless real bond of obligation and identification.

Various criteria serve to mark off the agburu/ndi ala anyi boundary. In the homeland the exogamous lineage group is distinguished from other such units which together constitute the local sociopolitical community. In the migrant situation, the distinction may set members of the same village group, who may have their own ["family"] meeting, apart from other members of the same division, who gather on an irregular basis. This dichotomy is also useful in differentiating various levels of participation and responsibility in the conduct of funeral celebrations, according to subcommunal membership.²¹

The Igbo expression, "kinship has no boundaries," should not, therefore, be taken literally to mean all men are kinsmen, but, rather, that the values of kinship can be extended to almost every conceivable situation, and that the individual will inevitably come to align himself with certain sets of people in preference to others. It further implies that no matter how far from home the migrant may find himself, he carries with him the expectation that those who are in some ways similar to himself are a more reliable source of support than those who are different.

5.6 THE MANIPULATION OF KIN TIES

Kinship categories, being highly flexible [especially in the migrant situation], are subject to considerable manipulation as individuals adapt their personal networks to their respective needs. As a general rule, the closer a given individual is related to ego, the more imperative is the recognition of ties and implied obligations. With regard to individuals further removed, on the other hand, there is greater scope for voluntarily underplaying or emphasizing ties. In no case, however, are kinship roles so rigidly defined that they do not allow some margin for the exercise of strategic choices.

It is uncommon [and almost unthinkable] that an individual would totally refuse to recognize other kinsmen in the migrant area. Less rare, however, is the attempt to avoid many of the obligations implied by kinship ties. A man may, for example, avoid joining a fellow lineage brother's work project when his own affairs are too absorbing. He may beg off contributing to a brother's son's school fees, not wanting to be inconvenienced by sacrificing part of his income to a goal he may not value. He may, on the other hand, grudgingly meet his obligations, but make it clear that in the future his kinsman should look elsewhere for help. In the case of O, mentioned above, U tried in every manner possible to discourage his brother from sharing his room. Although his recognition of his obligations [as O's closest kinsman in Kumba] prevented him from telling O to leave, he used various subterfuges, including removing his spare key from its hiding place. Although O resisted for a long time [for the reasons mentioned previously], U's pressure ultimately proved intolerable and O transferred his residence to one of his friend's rooms.

The decision to avoid or honor kin obligations is often based on, or justified in terms of the principle of reciprocity. For example, W was approached by a distantly

related member of his lineage, who, in the course of their conversation, he regularly addressed as "brother." The man had been accused by the authorities of passing counterfeit currency, and fined 10,000 frs., which he hoped to borrow from W. After the kinsman departed, unable to secure the loan, W made the following remark:

When I can I want to get out of here, as far away as I can from my own country people. They think because you have a position that you can afford to be helping them all the time. What have these people done to help me? I have got all of this way on scholarships. They didn't bring me as much as a bunch of plantains into the house. I don't like his attitude-- thinking that I have to help him because I am his brother! Maybe if he had approached me differently I would have helped him.

In this case W offered various excuses for his refusal to help his kinsman, including the latter's presumptuous attitude and the general failure of his home people to come to his aid in the past. He tried to put greater distance between himself and his lineage brother by lumping him with the broader category, "country people," who are only interested in taking advantage of his position, which they in no way helped him to attain.

Often, whether or not kin obligations are honored is based on a calculation of the kinsman's ability to reciprocate that aid either in the immediate or more distant future. O attributed the casual, disinterested attitude

of U and other umunne members to the fact that he was unemployed and would not [in their view] be in a position to return any aid they might offer him within the foreseeable future. As he struggled to gain admission to an American university, he found little support among his kinsmen, but was confident that once he had surmounted the initial hurdles and his leaving was assured, he would be surrounded by a host of generous "brothers."

The expectation of reciprocity is, likewise, a motive for extending the values of kinship to nonkin. O remarked that J, who was not an actual kinsman, treated him like one, and gave him financial aid when possible. He was willing to help O partly because "as he is helping me now, he would expect me to help him in the future." In like manner, W regularly called one Umuahia man "brother," "even though he is not even from my area, because he treats me like one and gives me things from his store on credit." Such a relationship was, obviously, beneficial to W, as well as potentially rewarding to the storekeeper, in that he established links with his more educated, economically mobile customer, which could prove useful in the future.

The situational extension of the kinship analogy across ethnic boundaries can be seen as establishing a moral basis for interaction where little or none exists. One

example, cited earlier, is the case of an Igbo who referred to A [a Cameroonian], as his brother, since they both spoke English. The two men were among a mixed group of Igbos and West Cameroonians trying to revive a business in Douala. As the business had suffered mismanagement in the past and there were reasons to doubt the trustworthiness of some of the collaborators, creation of bonds of obligation was especially crucial.

5.7 SUMMARY

In summary, the following basic points concerning kinship should be emphasized:

- 1) The inherent flexibility of the Igbo kinship provides the individual with patterns of social alignment facilitating his adaptation to the migrant situation.
- 2) Kinship ties, in the literal sense, are the most parochial of the migrant's alignments, which focus his loyalties, attention and involvement on narrow, ingroup matters.
- 3) These bonds and their associated values can, on the other hand, be generalized outward in a great variety of situations in patterns which overcome the fragmentation of loyalties resulting from territorial

segmentation.

- 4) Kin groups per se are more functional in the town, but kin ties and values are readily generalizable to wider groups in the village situation, where they play a prominent role in reinforcing communal solidarity.
- 5) Obligations associated with kinship [and extended kinship] have considerable binding force, but often allow wide margin for manipulation to suit the migrant's individual needs.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hereafter, the term "eastern Igbo" will be used to refer to these groups practicing double unilineal descent. Where the patrilineal peoples of Aro Chuku Division are included this will be indicated. The system of social organization as described for one of these double-descent groups, the Afikpo [Ottenberg 1968], can, with some qualification be generalized to the rest of this area. Two non-Igbo groups practicing double-descent on the opposite [eastern] side of the lower Cross River, the Yakɔ and the Mbembe, have been described earlier [Forde 1964 and R. Harris 1965, respectively].
2. The Igbo emphasis on helping kinsmen and co-villagers to achieve status goals is discussed in Uchendu [1965: 34-38].
3. C.F. Ottenberg [1968:201].
4. According to Ottenberg, the Cross River Igbo village groups of Afikpo, Unwana, Ada, Amasiri and Okpoha have "independent but, as a rule, like-named clans." It is possible for a man from one village group to resettle in another and "take part in the activities of his like groups without adoption [Ottenberg 1968:97]."
5. Significantly, most of the professional photo studios in Kumba are owned and operated by Igbos.
6. A burial ceremony will have been held at the time of death, but this is not regarded as the funeral proper. This practice has given rise to the misleading term "second burial," sometimes applied by Europeans to the more elaborate subsequent ceremony.
7. Other supernatural forces associated with home values may influence or afflict migrants as well. An elderly migrant from Udi [northern Igbo] living in Kake, evidently suffering from senility, had severe memory lapses and would often wander aimlessly around the Kumba area. At one point he was suspected by his son of trying to sell him to sorcerers to obtain medicines for promoting his own success. A diviner attributed this erratic behavior to the influence of a spirit [agwu nsi] which often

- troubles people in the homeland. In the eyes of his son and most other Igbos in Kake, the old man's time for returning to Udi was past due and his affliction was taken as a sign that he should go home as soon as possible, which he, in fact did.
8. As one Okigwi informant described it, "With us, if there is a quarrel between brothers [patrilineal kinsmen] it cannot be allowed to continue. We will try very hard to settle it. If I fall out with my brother, they will talk it over with each of us. Then they will summon the whole family and try to settle the dispute. They will try to seek the opinions of old men."
 9. Approximately \$420.00 U.S.A.
 10. Adultery with the wife of one's near patrikinsman is comparable in severity to incest [c.f. Ardener 1959: 125; Meek 1937: 218]
 11. Owing to the Igbo patterns of land inheritance which gives preferential portions to the sons of senior wives [the okpara], such men are usually under less economic pressure to emigrate than other lineage members.
 12. In the homeland the heads of lineage and lineage segments hold the ofo staff, symbolic of their authority and role as the primary ritual functionaries of their respective groups. As Uchendu points out, his secular power is limited, "being essentially presidential in nature [Uchendu 1965: 41]."
 13. This discussion is, in part, based on Ardener's description of the kinship system of Mba Ise [Ardener 1954] which can be generalized to most of the patrilineal zone of the Igbo speaking area. The primary local differences are the dialectical variations of the terms employed, which here have been slightly adjusted to conform to wider central Igbo usage.
 14. We have omitted, for the sake of simplicity, the term umu nne [tonally distinct from umunne], which refers to the patrilineage of ego's mother [Ardener 1954: 92].
 15. This extension is, of course, logically justifiable, since umunna [in the restricted sense] becomes umunne at a higher level of segmentation.

16. This potential for extension is suggested by the proverb, uto nwa enweghe usotu ["The sweetness of the filial bond has no limits"].
17. Uto nwanne enweghe usotu ["The sweetness of brotherhood has no limits"].
18. Another extended use of kinship terminology is the application of the term "brother" to a person or group with whom the speaker [or his group] allegedly shares favorable traits. According to one informant: "I have about 50 brothers [kinsmen or co-villagers] in the U.S.A. Americans and Igbos are brothers, since Igbos are the people in Africa who want progress."
19. For example, the term ["soul"] "brother"/"sister" employed by black Americans implies the corresponding opposite category "non-brother"/"non-sister" [i.e., whites].
20. According to Ardener [1959: 117]: "This vagueness of application of local terms means that any attempt to assign them to groups of a definite size, and especially to arrange them in any hierarchy of increasing magnitude is doomed to failure." With reference to the same issue Green [1964: 17] remarks: "In every case it is the context which gives precision to the term and we deceive ourselves if we think that terms like these can be defined apart from their context."
21. The potential for the Igbo kinship categories to expand and contract according to functional context is summarized by Ardener [1959: 113]: "The system is expressed indigenously quite simply by the extension of attitudes and terminology appropriate to the basic "extended family" unit to other wider groups of people. According to different purposes this extension will be restricted or very wide."

CHAPTER 6

MARRIAGE AND AFFINAL TIES

Superimposed on the ramified system of lineage affiliation is the network of ties established through marriage. As with kinship, these links are associated with primary obligations and create enclaves of intimacy within and, to some extent, cross-cutting the broader system of territorial relations.

Despite the wide opportunity for interaction with persons of diverse ethnic backgrounds, the migrant's patterns of associations is far from random and this is pre-eminently true in the case of marriage. Although casual sexual encounters cut freely across communal boundaries, marital alliances are far more serious and more regularized. In the case of the Igbo community in Cameroon, regulating marriage means, among other things, defining the range of acceptable mate choices and insuring that at least the greater part of the community operates within these bounds.

6.1 INTRA-ETHNIC ENDOGAMY

The Igbo community as a whole maintains strict standards of intra-ethnic endogamy. Although official and church records do not, by any means, constitute a comprehensive

survey of existing unions, they do suggest that Igbo/non-Igbo marriages are relatively uncommon and, in Kumba, account for a very small percentage of the total [see Table 6.1].

TABLE 6.1

RATE OF IGBO EXOGAMY IN KUMBA

Marriages declared [Kumba Magistrate's Court, 1971-72]		Marriages cele- brated, [Catholic church, Fiango, 1936-72]	Marriages celebrated, [Catholic church, Mbonge Rd. 1963-72]
Total Igbo*			
Marriages	8	365	252
Igbo Marriages [intra-ethnic]	8	362	249
Igbo Marriages [inter-ethnic]	0	3	3
% Igbo Marriages [inter-ethnic]	0.0	0.82	1.18

If one generalized on the basis of the above records, it would appear that the proportion of Igbo/non-Igbo unions is approximately 1% of the total number of marriages contracted by members of the Kumba Igbo community. This is, in all probability, an exaggeration since it does not account for the vast number of marriages contracted at home, but not

* Igbo marriage is taken to mean at least one member of the couple was Igbo.

celebrated or registered in Kumba.³ In any case, it is clear that Igbos, both in Kumba and in Cameroon at large, are overwhelmingly oriented toward marrying co-ethnics.

The norm of ethnic endogamy is maintained, to great extent, by emphasizing two corresponding sets of values: the negative aspects of marriage to non-Igbos and the desirability of marrying within the ethnic group, preferably someone from the local home area. As these values are readily elicited and highly consistent, it is evident that they have considerable influence in channelling mate choices.

It is the prevailing view of the majority of Igbos in the Kumba area that Cameroon women are not suitable as wives. The most frequently encountered allegation maintains that they are lax in their sexual morals and seldom, if ever, remain faithful to their husbands (sec. 9.2). As one Igbo informant put it, "the women in this country do not know marriage, they just make friends [enyi]."⁴ They just want someone to keep them." Another informant, somewhat more generously, allowed that perhaps 25% of Cameroonian women remained faithful to their husbands, in contrast to Igbo women, whose fidelity ratio he estimated to be "slightly more than half [the basis for his estimate is, needless to say, rather suspect]."

In the view of many Igbos, Cameroonian mothers encourage their daughters to become prostitutes to supplement the household income and will even continue to arrange for them to take lovers after they have married. One Igbo who had recently separated from his Balong (see Fig. 2.2) wife because of her infidelity, blamed her poor socialization, which he contrasted with Igbo women, who, he asserted, "come fully into marriage." He further insisted that Igbo women are much more frugal than their Cameroonian counterparts and could, "make soup with two bones." Igbo women are generally represented as being patient and able to cope with hardship, while Cameroonian women are said to desert their husbands when economic circumstances become difficult.

Another common stereotype represents Cameroonian women as lazy, who, unlike Igbo women, "do not know how to raise yams or do farm work." Igbo women, by contrast, are portrayed as expert farmers and are further able to add to the household income through their trading activities. All in all, Igbo wives are seen as an asset both economically and morally, while Cameroonian wives are viewed as a liability and a risk to be judiciously avoided.

A comparable set of attitudes is applied to Igbo men who elect to take Cameroonian wives. Such men are frequently thought of as "womanizers," or, in the words of one informant, "sexually inclined." The implication is that

such men are impatient to get married and will not assume the responsibility of making the usually elaborate arrangements to marry a home area girl. Bride price is, generally speaking, much higher among Igbos than the majority of West Cameroonians peoples, and it is widely believed [by Igbos] that those who marry Cameroonians are either "ne'er do wells" who cannot afford, or, irresponsibles wishing to avoid the greater expense of "normal marriage." The fact that Cameroonian women can be married with a smaller bride-price than Igbos is taken as further evidence that they do not view marriage as a serious, binding contract.

These attitudes and values are frequently restated and supported by citing examples of Igbo/Cameroonian marriages which ended in separation or divorce. There seems, at the same time, a strong tendency to selectively avoid mention of other such marriages which have survived, at least in a normative context, even when such examples are well known. One Igbo informant, for example, frequently elaborated on the disadvantages of marrying Cameroonians, saying that he would prefer to a non-African over a local girl. His generally negative attitude toward exogamy, however, did not prevent him from close association with his Cameroonian "in-law", i.e., a man who had married a girl from his home village.

In view of the high male/female ratio among migrants the greatest concern of the Igbo community seems to be preventing Igbo men from marrying Cameroonian women. For this reason, the stereotyping of Cameroonian women as unsuitable wives is perhaps more elaborate than for men. Nonetheless, Igbo women are discouraged from marrying Cameroonians on the grounds that Igbo men are more responsible and ambitious than Cameroonians [sec. 9.2]. Igbo men frequently declare that Cameroonian women are anxious to marry them since they are more desirable as husbands than their own men. Cases are frequently cited of Igbo women who married Cameroonian men who either treated them cruelly, squandered their money on other women, or, in other ways behaved irresponsibly. During the time this research was conducted, the daughter of a Kumba-based Aro man married a wealthy Cameroonian. An informant suggested that she only married him because she had suffered rejection by an earlier suitor, and being "lonely" married him out of desperation. He also noted that being an Aro, her range of potential-Igbo-suitors was limited, and she was in less of a position to be selective than a "true Igbo" woman.

The norm of ethnic endogamy can be enforced through the exercise of social pressure including the solidary expression of communal disapproval evident in the following example:

When I got married to this Cameroon girl I sent invitations out to the Igbo people in Kumba. They did not want to come. They only sent representatives who told me that the Igbos in Kumba were disgraced that I, the only Igbo pastor here in Cameroon should marry a Cameroonian. Even if I wanted to marry a Cameroonian, they said that I should have waited and consulted them so that they could decide on a Cameroon girl who was suitable. They asked, "why should this man marry a Cameroonian when there are so many Igbo girls here in Kumba to marry?" Now that I am marrying an Igbo girl there are many Igbos coming to my house to congratulate me.

The values associated with marriage within the ethnic group are enunciated both by urban and village-based Igbos. Kake Igbos point with pride to their women's gardens and house-front vending stands and disparage the lack of comparable industry in Bakundu women.⁵ As in the case of Kumba the incidence of inter-ethnic marriage is very low. Although there had been Igbo/non-Igbo marriages contracted by Kake residents in the past, none were noted in the survey taken in January, 1973.

6.2 LOCAL AND SUBCOMMUNAL ENDOGAMY

The tendency of Igbos to avoid marriage with Cameroonians can, at one level, be viewed as an extension of the norm of local endogamy. The extent to which Igbo migrants from various divisions tend to take wives from the same area, is illustrated by the following statistics from Kake [Table 6.2].

TABLE 6.2
INCIDENCE OF EXOGAMY IN KAKE

Sub-Community	Total No. Wives	Husband from same village [v-g]	Husband from neighboring village [v-g]	Husband from elsewhere
Dhaffia	19	18	1	0
Ada	12	10	2	0
Udi	4	3	1	0
Orlu	3	3	0	0
Okigwi	2	0	2	0
Total	40	34	6	0
% of Total	100.0	85.0	15.0	0.0

As can be seen, there is a strong tendency for migrants to marry from the immediate home area. In the case of Dhaffia and Ada, marriages are largely confined to within the home village, with a slight spillover into neighboring villages. With Igbos from other areas, wives are usually drawn from the home village-group, or other village groups within the vicinity. In short, marriage patterns among Cameroon-based Igbos appear to differ little from those of their counterparts in the home area, and, if anything, display an even stronger tendency toward endogamy.

The preferred and prevailing practice both in Kake and Kumba is to bring a girl directly from the home area itself. This is true for a number of reasons. First, since

marriage is a contract between kin-groups requiring the participation of as full a representation of the bride and groom's kinsmen as possible, going home is prerequisite for its proper execution. This is equally true if the prospective bride happens to be living in the migrant area. For many men, however, the sentiment seems to be, that as long as he must go home he might as well make his choice where the selection is wider. Secondly, Igbo women based in Cameroon, even if from the local area, are viewed as less desirable than those raised in Nigeria. There is the established view that Igbo women raised in Cameroon take on many of the traits which Igbos ascribe to Cameroonians, especially moral laxity and laziness. Igbo women brought from the homeland, on the other hand, have been "properly" socialized, are modest, frugal, industrious and their coming is, in a sense, a renewal of Igbo culture worn thin abroad. In Igbo marriage ceremonies celebrated in Kumba, the announcement, "he went home to get his bride," is greeted with shouts of approval by the guests.⁹

Marrying within the local area is valued because of the heavy emphasis placed on knowing a girl's (or boy's from the standpoint of the girl's kinsmen) personal and family history. Extensive inquiries are carried out among co-villagers and acquaintances, concerning her behavior, and when the girl is from his own village-group, it is likely

that some of the groom's kinsmen may know her fairly well. Almost inevitably, they will know her kin-group and its local reputation. Facts concerning the incidence of disease and mental health of the kin-group are also highly relevant and would be more difficult to obtain if the girl came from an area further afield. One of the most critical facts to be ascertained is the assurance that she does not come from one of the groups which the majority of Igbos do not marry [see below].

Another factor underlying the preference for local endogamy is the importance of the ogo [in-law] relationship which will be dealt with in more detail later. It is obvious that the extent to which a man can enter into active relations with his in-laws and fulfill his ogo obligations are severely limited as distance from the bride's home village increases. As migrant Igbos generally foresee resettling in the home area this fact applies equally to those based in Cameroon.

Finally, Igbos give much importance to marrying a girl familiar with the custom [omenala] of the husband's people. Here, the differences between Igbo and non-Igbo is especially relevant, but internal regional differences within Igboland is, likewise, of some significance. Negative stereotypes do operate between the various Igbo subcommunities [see sec. 9.6] which reinforce their value on endogamy.

Perhaps the most significant local difference within the Igbo community which limits intermarriage is that between eastern and other Igbos. Igbos from patrilineal areas are, on the whole, adverse to marrying women from the eastern zone because of the competing claims of the wife's matrilineage on the children. This has been mentioned as an incentive inducing some eastern Igbos to marry outside [sec. 5.1], but a man who did this would be faced with the problem of balancing off his obligations to his sister's sons with those to his own male offspring.¹⁰

Circumstances may arise which strain the norm of local endogamy and the value of bring one's bride direct from the home area. Perhaps the most notable example was the Nigerian Civil War, which may have forced a local contingent to be somewhat more flexible than otherwise, but would, so far as possible, strive to retain a conservative, endogamous orientation. This is evident in the statement of an informant from Umuaka (central Igboland):

We have ten villages within Umuaka. Our people do not normally marry outside of Umuaka, except during the war. Perhaps at that time there may not have been any Umuaka girls here of the right age, so a man could marry from Okwudo, Nkume, Akatta and other neighboring villages.

An abrupt drop in marriages during the war (mid 1967-70) is evident in the examination of statistics during a ten year span from 1962-71 [Table 6.3].

TABLE 6.3
TRENDS IN INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGE IN KUMBA [1962-71]*

	<u>Total Igbo Marriages</u>	<u>Inter-ethnic Marriages Involving Igbos</u>
1962	36	0
1963	28	1
1964	28	2
1965	22	0
1966	90	0
1967	36	2
1968	12	1
1969	14	0
1970	13	0
1971	34	0

The fact that there is no evident increase in the incidence of inter-ethnic marriages is noteworthy. The six such marriages recorded were equally divided between 1963-4 [pre-war] and 1967-8 [wartime]. This, taken together with the overall decrease in marriages, suggests that the prevailing tendency was not to marry at all in preference to marrying someone outside the conventional choice range.

* Combined figures from Roman Catholic Mission register [Fiango and Mbonge Rd.].

Many younger informants indicate that they do not share the rather inflexible insistence of the older generation on local endogamy. The greater number of marriages between Igbos from widely separated home areas involve younger partners. The same holds true of ethnic exogamy, and it is noted that the six recorded cases of interethnic marriage during the thirty-six year span from 1936-72, have all occurred since 1962. There, likewise, seems to be a regional variation in the tendency toward exogamy. For example, Owerri people are represented [by Owerriis and non-Owerriis, alike] as being more likely to marry outside their home area and more willing to intermarry with Cameroonians.¹¹ This is viewed by Owerriis as evidence of their broadmindedness and by others as a failure to maintain Igbo values.

6.3 PROSCRIBED MARRIAGES

While there is strong emphasis placed on marriage to women from the home area, the range of choices does not include everyone in this category. Generally speaking, there are three groups which are, for most Igbos, excluded as potential mates: 1) traceable kin, 2) osu, 3) Aros. While marriage with outsiders is strongly discouraged, and statistically low, intermarriage with these groups [especially the first two] is, for most Igbos,

specifically forbidden and virtually nonexistent.

Most Igbo subgroups enforce a rule which bars marriage within an individual's agburu. This prohibition includes all individuals who have any traceable kinship link with ego, however remote. Further, in many areas, it is forbidden for a man to marry into a lineage [umunna] from which any of his immediate kinsmen [umunne] have married, or, conversely, into a minor segment of a lineage from which a member of his major lineage has taken a wife.

In eastern Igbo areas it is prohibited to marry within one's matriclan [ikwu], or like-named matriclans in adjacent village groups. Marriage to members of one's patrilineage [umudi] is, however, allowed, provided the relationship is not too close [Ottenberg 1968: 55].¹² Unlike many Igbos, who practice widow inheritance, eastern Igbos forbid a man from marrying the widow of his patri-kinsman [Ibid.: 54]. In the event that a lineage connection is discovered after the union has been consummated, ritual purification is performed and the marriage is dissolved; a practice observed equally in eastern and central areas.

Apart from kinsmen, the category of persons most insistently excluded as potential mates is osu. In central Igboland the osu functioned as guardians of special shrines,

which imbued them with awesome ritual power, much feared by other Igbos. Membership in the osu category was inherited, and, in most areas, all descendents of osu were automatically recruited into the group. Osu were regularly avoided in many areas of interaction, especially with respect to commensality, sexual contact and marriage.¹³ Although this category has been officially abolished by Nigerian law and the rules of avoidance much relaxed, intermarriage with osu is rigorously prohibited by social pressure. In one case encountered in Kumba, a girl from a diala (non-osu) lineage was invited to come to the United States by a co-villager who offered to subsidize her education. The co-villager, an osu, was secretly arranging for her to marry his younger brother, a fact known to the girl and some of her friends, but unknown to her father, who would certainly have prevented the union. Although her friends would not betray the arrangement to her father, they strongly felt that she should be discouraged from this course of action, which would lead to her becoming an outcast in her family and village at large.

The third category with which the majority of Igbos do not intermarry is the Umu Chukwu or Aro lineages.¹⁴ Although patterns of avoidance are not nearly so strict as in the case of osu, and there is some indication that the

ban on marriage into this group is slackening, it is still upheld by the majority of Igbos at home and in Cameroon. Unlike osu, many of whom actively seek to escape the stigma of their classification by passing for, or even attempting to marry diala abroad, the Aro view themselves as superior to other Igbos and actively uphold the prohibition against marrying non-Aro.

Although marrying from afar would certainly be an effective guarantee against marrying kinsmen, the dangers of marrying an osu or Aro would be much increased. One Okigwi informant, for example, told me that he could identify the Aro and osu from his own village group quite easily, but would find it difficult, or impossible within the ranks of the Okigwi migrant contingent at large. This is cited by most central Igbo as a primary reason for marrying within the village group.

6.4 THE NETWORK OF AFFINAL OBLIGATIONS

As we have seen, the strategy of marriage alliances requires the parties involved to give high consideration to the origin of the partners. Even now, when the norm is for partners to choose for themselves, they usually do so with these considerations in mind. The family's reputation is often given greater emphasis than the virtues of the intended partner, and it is felt

that it is easier to bring a difficult woman from a respectable family into line, than to predict the future behavior of an apparently well-mannered girl from a bad family. Careful selection is given especial weight in the Cameroon situation, where good background is seen as insurance against the corruptive influences which abound.

The origin of the groom is, likewise, important for much the same reasons and, in addition, there should be reasonable assurance that he is willing and capable of fulfilling the various obligations associated with the ogo ["in-law"] bond. Unlike kinship, which creates essentially reciprocal bonds of responsibility, the affinal bond is asymmetrical, and the duties expected of the son-in-law far outweigh the benefits which he can expect from his wife's kinsmen. As the latter have given him "a woman to bear children," he sees himself as being in a state of perpetual debt to his ogo, which continues even after the final payment of the bridewealth. This is expressed in the proverb, ugwo isi nwanyi adighi agwo agwo ["bride-price never finishes," i.e., is never fully paid].

Although a man is often assisted in his payments (particularly in the case of a first wife), the first gift of cash and small items to the bride's parents should be provided by the suitor himself. This is taken as

a demonstration of his ability to support their daughter and to continue the fulfillment of the duties associated with the ogo role in the future.

As discussed earlier, Igbo bridewealth tends to be high relative to that paid by Cameroonians. It is paid in cash and ranges from about 50,000 to 150,000 Frs. C.F.A.* The average amount for eastern Igbos would appear to be, approximately, half of that paid by those from patrilineal areas where the father obtains a clear, incontestable right over his children. In the event of divorce, the full sum is recoverable, irrespective of the number of children the woman has born. It is refunded by the parents if the girl has not remarried, by the new husband if she has found one. Although Cameroonian courts will support a man's claim to his brideprice refund, the majority of Igbos prefer to handle such cases within their respective subcommunities.

A man is expected to give gifts and aid to his ogo throughout his married life. Gifts of clothing and cash are made to the mother and father of his wife [ogo nwanyi/ nwoke] upon the birth of the first child and, in some areas, various subsequent children as well. When visiting any of his wife's kinsmen, he may take with him small gifts, such as a loaf of bread for their children.

* \$200.00-\$600.00 U.S.A.

Men are also expected to aid their ogo by loaning them money when in need. A common request for assistance is money for return to the homeland. In the words of one informant:

If you want to leave, your ogo can give you transport money or money to bribe people at the border.

It is possible for a man's wife's kinsmen to give him aid as well, and, in certain situations, he would be inclined to do so, but this clearly not their obligation, as this informant's testimony indicates:

They can help if they are ndi ebere ["magnanimous people"]. The help that they give is so that you can survive to maintain their child, but they are not responsible for your maintenance.

In the homeland and, to a more limited extent, abroad, men are obliged to assist their in-laws through contributions of labor. Aid in agricultural work, especially the clearing of fields, is normally expected. In Kake a man would join in breaking his in-law's cocoa, and this obligation would be given priority over reciprocity toward other home area people. In the homeland in-laws participate in the construction of a man's house, a practice which is extended to the migrant center when feasible and called for, but given the fact that affines, like kinsmen, are scattered, assembling a work force is often difficult. Furthermore, most Igbos either occupy houses

built by their Cameroonian owners, or, as in Kumba, this aid to one's ogo would normally take the form of financial assistance. In villages like Kake, however, there is more opportunity for contributing labor.

A man is also expected to take an active part in his ogo's celebrations, especially his funeral, when the scattered umu ada ["daughters"] return to their father's compound with their husbands. Generous gifts of money and palm wine are provided by the sons-in-law, especially the husband of the deceased's eldest daughter. In Cameroon [if the wife's father is a migrant based there] sons-in-law will join in giving their ogo a fitting send-off party on his final return to the homeland. As in the case of a funeral, sons-in-law are expected to provide the major share of the wine.¹⁴

As mentioned earlier, it is preferable to marry from a village reasonably near in order to fulfill affinal obligations. If one's ogo is not too distant it is customary to pay regular visits to assure him that their relations are in good repair and that his daughter's [or sister's] husband can be counted on to support him when necessary. If he becomes ill and is committed to the hospital, he would expect his ogo to come frequently to inquire about his health, give him encouragement and, perhaps, bring him food.

The value of the affinal bond is seen in proverbs and expressions which represent it as an extension of kinship:

An in-law is like a brother.
 Brothers and in-laws are the same.
 Your brothers are first and after them the ogo.
 A son-in-law is regarded by a man just like his son.
Ogo is part of the family.

The analogy between kinsmen and affines rests on their interdependency. Igbo point out that, "in-laws beget brothers," and links to affines are, of course, traced through kinsmen. Because you "marry and have a family with them, they will become the same blood," which calls for an extension of the same sentiments and obligations accorded to kinsmen. Being of the "same blood" as his ogo, he "cannot do anything against him," and, in the words of one informant, "never can you see an Igbo man who will support the doom of that person [i.e., his in-law]." As one eastern Igbo put it, ogo is like ikwu in the sense that it carries the obligation of mutual defense, and that a shout from a man in trouble would bring both running to his aid.

The proverb, ogo dika nwanne ["an in-law is like a brother"], likens the affinal relation to that of near kinsmen (umunne), rather than remote kin (umunna). Informants, likewise, testify that "ogo is more important than

umunna." Here the reference is to immediate affines (i.e., umunne of one's spouse or close kinsman's spouse), rather than the more extended use of the term as will be dealt with below. Within this category of near affines, "what you do for them is what you would do for your brothers."

6.5 THE EXTENSION OF AFFINAL RELATIONS

As was true of kinship, affinal terms and relations can be extended to cover broad categories of individuals of varying degrees of structural distance from ego. The expression, "brotherhood has no end" has its equivalent with reference to affinity in the proverb, olulu nwanyi enweghi usotu ("marriage has no end"). This can be construed to mean that the ties established through marriage are continuous through space and time, and limits cannot be placed on the extent to which they can be expanded.

In the most narrow sense, the Igbo term ogo refers to the members of one's spouse's household of origin. This can be extended to include members of the minor or major lineage segment [umunne or umunna, respectively]. It can as well be further expanded to cover all the members of the spouse's kindred [agburu]. In the eastern Igbo area the expanded sense of ogo includes both

members of one's spouse's matriclan [ikwu] and patrilineage [umudi]. As the term ogo is reciprocal, it will equally apply to individuals who have married into any of ego's above mentioned kin-groups, together with their respective kinsmen.

As with kinship, affinal ties are more frequently generalized among migrant Igbo than would be usual in the home area and follow a similar pattern, extending to individuals from the spouse's place of origin. Although this broadened use of ogo is carefully distinguished from ogo "proper" (i.e., spouse's kinsmen), toward whom obligations are more compulsory, there is the strong feeling that one owes them many of the same considerations. In larger centers, like Kumba, the term ogo is frequently extended to people from one's spouse's home village, and to larger territorial units as the situation demands. In villages like Kake the term would more regularly be applied (in the case of men), to persons from one's wife's home village group, or home division, if married from further afield.

Men who have married women from their own home area are, likewise, referred to as ogo in the Cameroonian situation. Occasionally, this term may be employed without reference to a particular marital link, as in the case of

one informant from Umuahia who said it would be quite proper to call a man from Isu Ikwato [Okigwi area] ogo because "our people often marry from his area."

Another pattern of extending affinal bonds was provided by W, an informant from Unwana (eastern Igbo), who was in the process of marrying a girl from Umuahia [central Igbo]. W lived in Kake while the girl was teaching primary school in the relatively remote village of Bekora. W asserted that in a small village, such as Bekora or Kake, he would be regarded as ogo by all Umuahia residents. Furthermore, he maintained that as he had married an Igbo girl resident in Bekora, "the whole village regards me as their in-law." When W went to Bekora he was well received by members of the Igbo community and spent much time circulating through the village consuming large quantities of beer and palm wine. He said that if any Igbo from Bekora were to visit him in Kumba, he would, likewise, be expected to accord him the same hospitality. The example is interesting in that it shows that, in certain cases, the migrant locale [in addition to the home area] can become the basis for the generalization of affinal sentiments.¹⁷

Given the strong endogamous tendencies of the Cameroonian Igbo community, there is relatively little

scope for the extension of affinal sentiments beyond the ethnic group. However, Igbos who have married Cameroonians view members of their spouse's ethnic group as extended affines, greeting them "muyo" (Pidgin: "in-law"), and showing general interest in their affairs. In one instance, S, an Igbo married to a Cameroonian, enquired about the health of a policeman from his wife's ethnic group who had been injured in a motorcycle accident:

We are very thankful that he was not badly injured. He is my in-law. My wife is a Bakossi, like himself. These people expect me to salute them "muyo" even though I may be older.¹⁸

The reciprocal situation is seen in the case of O who maintained close relations with D, a Cameroonian married to a woman from his village, who he termed his ogo. O was a frequent guest at D's house, and, as an unemployed school-leaver, he was grateful for the assistance he would often give him. In another case, an Owerri man visiting the home of a Douala who had married an Okigwi woman, referred to the latter as his ogo, even though the wife was not his kinswoman and even from another part of the Igbo homeland. "Any outsider who marries an Igbo woman is my ogo," he maintained.

Affinity, as with kinship, "has no boundaries." Just as an Igbo maintains he would be a "brother" of any African if they were both living outside the continent,

similarly, any non-African who married an African woman would automatically become his ogo. Ironically, although the pressures for endogamy are very strong, and inter-ethnic [as well as inter-racial] marriages are generally discouraged, this does not appear to significantly restrict the extension of affinal sentiments once the bonds are established. The value of behaving appropriately toward one's affine, thus, has priority over the preference for in-group marriage, which is, after all, largely an adaptive response to "threats" associated with migrancy. Here the rule seems to be "an in-group affine is best, but even an outsider is better than none at all."

In addition to the foregoing, there are occasions in which affinal terms of address are used in a loose, casual manner, unrelated to any existing marital links. According to one informant:

We have what you could call "funny ogo." For instance, if you see some girl, you can [teasingly] call her your wife. Her parents you could then call ogo.

This jocular use of "affine" might also occur when a man has a daughter who he might [half seriously] suggest would make a good wife for another's son. This type of joking is also indulged in with Cameroonians, who will, similarly, call one another "muyo!" Such good-humored exchanges help to smooth over the often strained relations

between Igbo and Cameroonians by suggesting, "we're such good friends, I could even marry your sister [or give you my sister to marry]." Often the two parties in this joking relationship are only casual acquaintances, in which case, calling one another "brother-in-law" (as with "brother") bridges the gulf of social distance. This is especially functional in large centers such as Kumba, where dealing with strangers or near-strangers is a feature of everyday life, and where creating a fictional intimacy may have strategic value, as will be discussed below.¹⁹

6.6 THE MANIPULATION OF AFFINAL RELATIONS

It can be seen that affinal ties, like kinship links, are highly flexible and capable of being invoked in a wide variety of situations, even when the actual structural linkages between interacting individuals is quite remote. As with kinship, affinal relations allow for a certain freedom of maneuver, especially in the migrant situation, where one's ogo are usually scattered. The amount of aid which one might expect from an in-law is, of course, largely a function of his relative economic circumstances, and men who are clearly well-off would be under considerably more pressure to help needy affines than those experiencing the same difficulties. The greater concentration of "real" affines in Kumba, coupled with the greater differences in

wealth makes the demand for economic aid a more regular occurrence there than in Kake.

As was true of kinship, there is much more freedom to activate or ignore affinal links where they are relatively remote. In those cases where affinity is extended to cover people from one's spouse's home area (or migrant center), the guiding principle seems to be, "an affine is one who behaves like an affine." As one informant put it:

It depends on how you behave. If you move about and greet them they can regard you as their ogo.

Thus, W, who was viewed as ogo by the Igbo residents of Bekora, was striving to reassert his ethnic identity and saw his marriage to an Igbo woman (after having previously been married to a Cameroonian) as part of this realignment process. He moved about Bekora freely, showed a good deal of interest in communal affairs and Igbo traditions, which he, as a migrant, was less familiar with.

The potential for actualizing relationships which might otherwise remain latent was indicated by one informant:

One of my brothers married in Awka, but we generally recognize Awka people here as friends, not ogo, until they are identified as ogo. If you were in difficulty and they were in a position to help, you could go to them saying your brother is married in their place, and they would give you help immediately.

One such example of the situational invoking of remote affinal ties was provided by O, a migrant from Okigwi, whose village woman was married to a Cameroonian. J, a member of O's umunne, came to Kumba from a nearby village to seek O's [the Cameroonian's] assistance:

The little daughter took the common entrance examination, and they said she qualified for a scholarship. So J came to see Mr. D to see whether the scholarship could be retained since Cameroonians generally don't give scholarships to foreigners. Mr. D's junior or senior brother is the technical advisor to the Cameroonian educational department and the former principal of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The structural distance between J and the brother of D [from whom aid was being solicited], is indicated by the following chain of linkages:

J---home village---[wife of]---J---[brother-advisor
woman of]

The above example shows that even though inter-ethnic marriages are discouraged by migrant Igbos, they are not adverse to using affinal links with Cameroonians, as exist, whenever it serves their advantage. Given the disadvantages which Igbos experience as aliens, the strategy of "survival" involves establishing and emphasizing a variety of ties to citizens which can be activated at critical times. In view of the low incidence of inter-ethnic marriages involving Igbos, these links are quite limited, but may be very useful to those who can claim them and manipulate them skillfully.²⁰

Although the potential for expansion of affinal links is infinite, as with kinship, practical considerations place limitations on the range of persons one can effectively treat as in-laws. As mentioned earlier, there is a recognized distinction between "proper" affines and extended affines. One informant from Okigwi, for example, said that it would be quite fitting to refer to the people from his daughter's husband's village as ogo, but suggested that extension of the term to his entire village would be almost metaphorical:

I would not usually refer to anyone from Okwudo here in Kumba as my ogo--only those from the very village from which my daughter's husband comes. I might greet them "ogo" on the road but I would not have the same responsibilities toward them as toward my real ogo.

Likewise, another Okigwi migrant said that if he married a girl from Enugu he would treat her covillagers in Kumba as affines, offering them mutual assistance when necessary, but would not extend this relationship to Enugu at large:

I would call all of them ogo but wouldn't need to attend to all of their problems.

Effective manipulation of affinal ties requires the balanced tapping of all available sources of support, while containing one's own responsibilities. Consequently, sentiments toward one's ogo as a whole are generally ambivalent. This is especially true with respect to the kin-

group into which one has married, as indicated by one

Okigwi migrant:

There are some ogo that demand so much--even more than they can use. That is why one boy told me yesterday that he prefers his friends to his ogo. Ogos only like to demand. They don't like to help.

6.7 SUMMARY

The patterns of marriage and affinal relations can be summarized by ranging them along a "social distance" spectrum, shown on the chart on the following page (Fig. 6.1).

	Endogamy	Incidence of Exogamy	Extension of Affinal Ties to In-group of Spouse
Kin Group (<u>Agburu</u>)	Proscribed for most Igbos (matri-kin and near patrikin in case of eastern Igbos)	Theoretically universal for most Igbos and patrikin in east; prevails among patrikin in east	"True Affines"-associated with binding obligations: 1) financial aid 2) labor contribution 3) join ceremonies 4) support in crises
Local Group (Village, village group)	Preferred: Greater knowledge of spouse's kin Affines accessible	Relatively common between neighboring village groups but less than within village group	Affines in context of migrant relations. Extension of obligations in migrant center
District (subethnic unit)	Preferred: Cultural similarity, Similar patterns of descent and rules of inheritance	Not common (generally discouraged)	Termed affines (if exog.) in context of migrant relations, but obligations less binding, can be activated (esp. in small centers)
Ethnic Group	Much preferred: Same reasons as above, also Negative stereotyping of other groups.	Relatively rare (strongly discouraged)	Termed affines (if exog.), but obligations less binding, can be activated when advantageous
<u>Diala/Osu/Aro</u>	Prescribed: Ritual avoidance of other groups, Negative stereotyping of other groups	Theoretically non-existent (condemned)	Exogamy would result in ostracism, no acknowledged affinal ties

FIGURE 6.1

MARRIAGE AND AFFINITY AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL DISTANCE

FOOTNOTES

1. Maintaining municipal vital statistics records is a recent innovation in West Cameroon introduced in the late 1960's.
2. The figures cited here were obtained from the registers of the Roman Catholic mission in Fiango (east side of Kumba) and at Mbonge Road (adjacent to Igbo Quarter). The Fiango church is the older and, until 1963, the only Catholic church in Kumba. In that year the majority of Igbos began attending the newly established Mbonge Road parish. Although a substantial number of Igbos attend Protestant churches, only a small percentage elect to have church weddings, which are not insisted upon to the same degree as in the case of Catholics.
3. It is, of course, possible that inter-ethnic marriages, which, on the whole, are less socially approved, would tend not to be celebrated in a semipublic church ceremony. On the other hand, it was suggested by a European pastor, long resident in Cameroon, that a couple marrying against the pressures of their kinsmen might marry in church to gain a religious sanction which could, in part, compensate for the lack of social approval. From the few cases of Igbo/non-Igbo marriages encountered in the field, it would appear that the proportion of church to nonchurch marriages was about equal.
4. The expression "making friends," in West Cameroon and Nigeria, when used with respect to members of the opposite sex, almost invariably refers to establishing extra (or pre-) marital sexual relations.
5. One Kake Igbo migrant asserted that it was better to marry an Igbo woman since she would be more industrious than her Bakundu counterpart. When asked about Grassland women, he replied that, although they worked very hard, probably harder than Igbo women, it was still preferable to marry an Igbo since, "women cannot work all of the time. They still must do other things like bearing children."

6. Refers to village in the case of eastern Igbo [Ohaffias and Adas], village group in other areas.
7. I.e., outside the division of origin. Although there were no such marriages existing as of January, 1973, there were two early during the previous year.
8. M. M. Green's study of Umueke in Agbaja village group, for example, revealed the following pattern:

Of a sample of forty wives in Umueke [Umueke-ama and Umu Nwa Ebodim], sixteen were from other Agbaja villages and twenty-four were from outside Agbaja.

Of a sample of twenty-six women born in Umueke [Umueke-ama and Umu Nwa Ebodim], sixteen were married to other Agbaja villages and ten to places outside Agbaja [Green 1964: 155].

9. Because of this value, many Igbos send their young daughters home to be raised "properly!"
10. Two of the three cases of such marriages recorded ended in separation, while the third was under severe strain [differences in brideprice was suggested by observers as a possible cause in the case of at least one].
11. This may be related to the historical fact that Owerri "town" previous to World War II was an exogamous village group not permitting intermarriage "within its boundaries ...except with a small group of strangers who had come from elsewhere and settled there [Green 1964: 153]."
12. The eastern Igbo practice of allowing marriage between patrikin is disparaged by other Igbos. In the words of one informant:

There are many people who do marry agburu, for instance, Abiriba, Ohaffia etc. These people wouldn't mind marrying any person.

13. Although the osu category does exist among eastern Igbos, the avoidance pattern does not appear to be as strict in this area. According to Ottenberg [1968: 106-101], osu status in Afikpo was matrilineally inherited, and the children of diala ["freeborn"] women and osu men were classified as diala. Marriage with osu was generally

regarded as a "bad match," but, evidently, not subject to the same degree of opprobrium as in central areas, where marriage to osu resulted in social ostracism and de facto recruitment of the spouse into the osu group [see Forde and Jones 1950: 23; Uchendu 1965: 89-90; Green 1964: 23-4; Basden 1938: 243-258].

14. The general attitude toward Aros is one of vague fear and suspicion [see section 4.3]. Many Igbos associate their refusal to marry Aros with their abuse of power in the past [see note 4, chapter 2], and the fact that "they sold many of our people into slavery." Aros and osu were often mentioned together as avoided groups in contrast to "real Igbos" with whom marriage was possible. This association is also seen in the osus' historical charter which maintains that they performed sacrifices as representatives of Aro priests (Basden 1938: 243-258).
15. In the marriage process considerable significance is given to the suitor's gift of palm wine to the household of the bride, which signals the commencement of serious negotiations. Repeated prestations of wine to one's ogo in subsequent celebrations is, evidently, a restatement of the pledge implicit in the initial gift which lead to the creation of the affinal bond.
16. It is usual in Cameroon for most patients to receive their meals from kinsmen, affines or friends, rather than depending on more expensive hospital food.
17. It should be added that the majority of Igbo residents of Bekora were from Afikpo, Amasiri, Ada and other eastern village groups neighboring W's own group, Unwana. This, together with the fact that W enjoyed considerable prestige as a pastor and secondary school teacher visiting a remote village, was, no doubt, a factor enhancing his hospitable treatment by Bekora-based Igbos.
18. An individual of subordinate status is usually expected to take the initiative in greeting.
19. The foregoing is hardly an exhaustive discussion of the implications of the polysemic proverb "marriage has no end." One informant interpreted it to mean "every generation marries." Marriage, thus, provides limitless opportunity for multiplying alliances with other kin groups. According to another informant, it meant "a marriage cannot be broken." Accordingly, the continuity of affinal ties through time is seen in the survival of at least a

vestige of ogo sentiments after the marriage has been dissolved. This is especially true if the marriage has produced children who constitute a living link between the two kin groups.

20. The need for considerable diplomacy in the conduct of affinal relations with Cameroonians is evident in the case of W, an Igbo who married a Balong girl. W struggled to remain on good terms with the girl's father, while the latter, unsuccessfully, tried to pressure W into becoming a Cameroonian. Later, when the marriage broke up, W (by then engaged to an Igbo girl) tried to placate the parents, while resisting their demands to take back their daughter. W commented as follows:

We have to behave ourselves and watch our step as we are in their country. I have been struggling to keep this matter out of the courts. As I am a foreigner here the judge would favor them.

CHAPTER 7

FRIENDSHIP AND NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

In previous chapters we have dealt with networks which, by and large, are based on the origin of the migrant: nationality, language, local provenance and kin-group. Such ties emphasize ascriptive identity and allow for the exercise of choice only to the extent to which they can be extended or otherwise manipulated. Affinal ties are, theoretically, freely formed through the migrant's marriage choice, but, as we have seen, this choice is conditioned and circumscribed by the ethnic community and subcommunity to which he belongs. Further, as marriages are, in the great majority of instances, contracted in the homeland, affinal ties are rooted there and projected onto the migrant field in much the same manner as relations based on kinship and locality.

Friendship and neighborhood networks, on the other hand, are essentially part of the system of relations which has developed abinitio in the migrant locale.

Although the origin of the migrant is certainly one of the more significant among a number of factors which influences the formation of friendship and neighborhood ties, they are not exclusively inter-ethnic. As will be shown, in certain

cases they may carry a higher valence than home-based alliances. This is an area which is marked by considerably wider freedom of choice than was the case with relations mentioned above, both in terms of forming ties and carrying out associated obligations.

7.1 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is highly valued by migrant Igbos in Cameroon as a distinct category of social relations. Unlike other ties, which emphasize similarities in background, friendship is based on shared attitudes and behavior manifest in the context of the migrant environment. Typical characterizations of friendship offered by informants are as follows:

A friend is someone whose way of life [agwa]and behavior [omune] rhymes with your own.

A friend is someone whose behavior is good. He is one you share your views with. He is someone you very well understand-his way of life--and vice versa.

Your friend is someone who likes your ways.

In point of fact, of course, similarity in behavior and attitude frequently reflect commonalities in status, situation, and to a degree, background, including origin. Relative age, marital status, occupation, and educational attainment are all relevant in the formation of

friendship networks, but, generally speaking, these criteria merely indicate the broad categories from which friends tend to be drawn, rather than the individual factors operative in the generation of particular links. These criteria would, however, generally tend to be more important in small centers where the range of potential friends is more restrictive, than in towns, where corresponding categories are well represented.

The informants' emphasis on behavioral and attitudinal dimensions of friendship, rather than the formal characteristics of friends, corresponds to the objective fact that friendship frequently cuts across status boundaries. O, an Igbo school leaver resident in Kumba, for example, chose most of his friends from the same category. He did, however, have some friends with whom he regularly moved who had not gone to secondary school but who, like himself, were Igbos and unemployed. One such friend, BJ, an illiterate, was described by O as being of similar temperment to himself and, in O's words:

The man is a good story teller and I another.
He later found out that I was more than an
equal to him in that.

O had a number of friends, both Igbo and non-Igbo, with whom he shared different combinations of characteristics. As will be discussed later, the co-ethnic friends tended to be quite diverse in terms of occupation and educational

background, while non-Igbos were more like himself in this respect. In almost all cases, those he described as friends were similar in age (early to mid 20's) and marital status (single), characteristics of utmost significance in defining the peer group, both in the migrant situation and in the homeland.

Friendship is distinctive from other categories of relations mentioned in the foregoing chapters in that it is based on dyadic links. As one informant put it

If a friend of a man dies, usually only that man will come, while if there is an ogo [affinal] relationship [for instance] many will come.

And, in the words of another:

We introduce children to their relatives, but this does not apply to friends. They seek their own friends.

In other words, emphasis is placed on the fact that friendship does not relate the individual to a category of people, but merely to other individuals like himself. When he attends his friend's funeral, he does not go as a member of a group, but is obliged to go by virtue of his personal tie to the deceased. Likewise, friends, unlike kinsmen, are not an ascriptive given, to which he responds in more or less prescribed ways, but constitute a network of voluntarily created ties, which he can make or break at will, which allow considerable scope for individual adjustment.

The significance of friendship is highlighted through the comparison and contrast which Igbo migrants make between friends and brothers. "A good friend is like a good brother," or, more commonly, "a good friend is better than a bad brother," are frequently heard proverbs.¹ Although brotherhood carries a heavy load of insistent and ultimate obligations, there is great variation in the consistency with which they are met. Consequently, there is the prevailing belief that friends, freely selected for their sympathetic qualities, are more dependable than many [if not most] kinsmen. As one Okigwi migrant remarked:

A friend is better than a brother. For example, if you have any trouble or family responsibility, your brother may not feel it. Perhaps if there is trouble, the friend may come, but not your brother. If you are in the hospital, a friend could help take care of your business, while if the brother did that it would go downhill. If you have a real friend, once he hears you have trouble, he will come. A good friend will not hide anything, while your brother may hide many things from you.

The nature of the structured relationships between brothers puts strains on these ties which are absent in the case of friendship. In the words of one Ohaffia migrant, "a friend, unlike a brother, does not eat your flesh." This statement points up the fact that since the obligations imposed by kinship are often difficult to avoid, they are more easily abused. It also draws attention to the property relationships between brothers which makes them

contestants for the family estate. The tension between the expectation for sharing and the reality of rivalry, contrasts with the more spontaneous interaction between friends, as suggested in the following remark by one

Umuahia man:

If my friend damages something, I would vex.
If my brother damages something, should I mind?
No, because it is our property.

The continuity of harmonious relations among kinsmen is a highly valued norm enforced by social pressure. The need to sustain what may only be a facade of concord is essential to the maintenance of the corporate kin-group and its public image, but is not characteristic of dyadic friendship links. Consequently, tensions generated by conflict between friends can be relieved by mutual avoidance much more easily than is the case among kinsmen, as indicated by one informant from Okigwi:

You cannot totally fall out with a brother as you can with a friend. When you fall out with a brother, the whole umunna or agburu will come out to repair it. When you fall out with a friend, only some other friends will know. When they see you moving around town without him they might ask where he is.

Igbos are insistent that the distinction between friends and kinsmen is clear and irrevocable. According to the Okigwi migrant quoted above:

A brother is not a friend because no matter what his behavior, whether good or bad, he is still your brother.

Further, as a friend is outside one's endogamous kin-group, he is [in most cases] a potential affine. In fact, one of the values of friends is that they provide the chance to meet their sisters who might be suitable as wives. If one's friend has eligible kinswomen in the homeland he may endeavor to learn more about them and utilize his contacts with the friend's senior kinsmen to pave the way for future marital negotiations.

As with kinsmen, however, the distinction between affine and friend is clearly defined. If a man does, in fact, marry his friend's kinswoman, he is no longer referred to as enyi ["friend"], but ogo. He is now viewed as a "family member," whose relationship to ego has become formalized and made more permanent. Although he may continue to have close personal relations with ego, he now becomes identified with a category of people toward whom ego has contracted a set of asymmetrical obligations. This group, as a whole, contrasts with friends, as one Enugu informant expressed it:

Your in-laws demand so much, quite unlike the case with friends. They do not give you anything, but demand many things, especially if they find that you are wealthy.

As with kinship, the structured affinal relationship precludes much of the casual give and take which characterizes the relationship between friends. The set of

common interests which binds affines together is generally quite different from that linking friends and forms the basis for most of their interaction. According to one Kake resident from Ada:

The stories normally exchanged between in-laws normally center on "in-lawship." That is, asking about your wife, who is my sister and so forth. It is rare that you find their conversation shifting to something else, to something pertaining to their own lives as is the case with friends.

The Igbo proverb, enyi di obere anu karia ogo ["an in-law is of slightly more weight than a friend"], sums up the relative significance of the two categories of relationships. It takes into account the fact that a friend can easily become an affine, and that affinal relations, though highly valued, are viewed with an ambivalence absent in friendship.

7.2 ETIQUETTE AND EXPECTATIONS

Friendship is the most loosely structured of all categories of social relationships. Unlike the relations mentioned in the foregoing chapters, it does not enmesh the individual in a network of compulsory obligations. As one migrant from Bende expressed it, "there is no rule that I should do anything for my special friend." Similarly, as one informant from Ada remarked:

When I go to my friends house I will not normally demand anything, even kola. But, according to Igbo custom, he normally gives me kola. When he doesn't, I wouldn't mind it.

Nevertheless, there is an etiquette and set of expectations which is associated with friendship, concerning which there is basic general agreement among the members of the migrant Igbo community. These expectations involve the following: 1) mutual trust, 2) mutual aid, 3) co-activity, 4) promotion of mutual interest and 5) the maintenance of ties.

Given the relatively unstructured, spontaneous nature of friendship, it is expected that friends will be open with one another and, depending on the strength of the bond, willing to share confidential information. This, of course, assumes that good friends have shown themselves to be trustworthy as, indicated by one Ada migrant:

A good friend is one that keeps secrets. You have stories of interest between friends which may not be revealed to anyone else.

The sharing of secrets among trusted friends was more fully elaborated by one informant from Ezi Ama:

I would tell my friend who is not talkative about my difficulties and certain other things I would like to keep secret. For example, woman affairs. My friend must know my girlfriend and I must know his. Second, monetary affairs. If I have a friend I cannot hide this, since he may come and ask for money. I should tell him every little thing about my business. He should know my whereabouts. My friend will even know what my wife cannot.

Information about relations with women, financial matters and keeping one another apprised of one's whereabouts and movements are the most consistently mentioned content of the communications network among close friends. As will be discussed later, such networks are generally intra-ethnic, for a number of reasons. Withholding such information is viewed as a breach of etiquette, as indicated by O [an Okigwi migrant] in describing his discussion with one of his co-ethnic friends:

C was the next person I met, and I had to spend some time there. He kept blaming me for choosing to be reserved--not telling of myself. Well, the matter resulted from the fact that I had moved into W's house without his information. This and other similar occurrences was what he kept talking about up to the time I left his shed.

Friends also recognize a commitment to mutual aid, especially in crises or difficult situations. In the absence of close kinsmen, a friend might, for example, assume the primary responsibility in a funeral, "to see that my friend is properly buried." He might also give his friend a substantial loan. According to O:

A friend could loan you over 50,000 frs. to establish a business. If the business falters, he would not ask you anything. That is friendship.

Given the commercial orientation of many Igbos, this form of aid is relatively widespread. If a man becomes ill and is unable to manage his business, a good friend will

often volunteer to temporarily manage it for him without expecting compensation. This form of aid is almost invariably intra-ethnic, presupposing a high level of mutual trust.

Friends are also committed to mutual defense and apprise one another of dangerous situations. Igbos, for example, warn co-ethnics of the activities of the Cameroonian authorities, who periodically check identity papers, tax receipts, drivers' licenses etc. Igbo taxi drivers have developed an elaborate system of hand signals to warn their friends and compatriots of check points along the road. One day the brother of O remained home, not going to his tailor shed, as was usual. He had been warned by his friends that security officers were checking identity papers and were looking for alien residence deposit receipts, which he had not paid.

Friendship is viewed as a relationship which promotes mutual interest. Failure to observe the principle of reciprocity lays one open to charges of exploitation, as this example [provided by O] indicates:

This man C [a co-ethnic friend]--I don't know what is the matter. He was studying for the General Certificate Examination and took my dictionary of economics and my past papers. He wanted me to learn typing at his house, so I bought some typing sheets. He then started using the typing sheets himself, but I kept quiet. After some time the typing ribbon was getting

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered.

2.

finished. I said that as we were both unemployed there was no use for his buying one alone, and that we could buy one together. He said, "No, don't worry." Later, he said that the machine was not his and that the owner had taken it away. He had actually hidden it, because when I came back later with H [another co-ethnic friend], I saw someone else using it. This C wants to gain more from me than he is willing to contribute himself!

It is in conflict situations, such as this, that the instrumental functions of friendship, normally merely implicit, are exposed in bold relief. When circumstances change, ties no longer expedient may grow lax and allowed to lapse. In the above situation C, who was preparing to go to the United States for further studies, made use of O's books and exam papers in order to gain the qualifications needed to enter the university. Allowing O to practice on his typewriter was basically compensation and a means of sustaining what continued to be a serviceable link, as O was also trying to gain overseas admission and shared his knowledge with C. As it developed, C, who had much better financial support, gained admission early, while O's chances remained relatively poor. C now saw himself in another status category, no longer O's peer. As friendship with O no longer served his ends, they grew increasingly alienated as time went on.

If friends are, ideally, committed to promoting one another's interests, they are similarly pledged not to act against one another's welfare. They are expected to

protect each other's public image or, as one Ada migrant put it, with reference to a Cameroonian friend, "I would not talk against him, nor he against me." They would, ideally, try to avoid situations potentially leading to conflict. One sensitive area, particularly in the case of inter-ethnic relations, concerns what are popularly called, "women affairs." Although friendship between Igbos may eventually lead one to marry the other's sister, the chances of this developing from inter-ethnic friendship is remote. Consequently, if an Igbo were to show a keen interest in the sister of a Cameroonian friend, the assumption would normally be that he was interested in establishing a casual liaison, generally viewed as inimical to friendship. This was suspected of IG, an Udi migrant, who carefully avoided "mixing himself" with any of his Cameroonian friend's many sisters and was able to overcome the family's suspicions. In his view, it is unwise to "chase" (i.e., try to seduce) one's friend's sister, and, as he put it, "you should treat her as your own sister."

The importance of these strictures was pointed up in an incident involving U, an Igbo who carried on an affair with P, the sister of his Bakossi friend M. The situation was complicated by the fact that the girl was the mistress of a senior governmental official. According to U's friend O:

U has been a close friend of M, P's brother from the same father. Since M was staying with U while looking for a job, he used to take him to P's house. She lives in a house by herself. The rent is paid by this man who lives in Buea, for whom she is a kind of concubine. That is how U and P came to know each other. The time came when they started loving each other, requesting each other with their eyes. M himself came to realize this and became offended. After that he didn't want to see U again. M complained to P, saying U had been his best friend ever since he had come to his house, and he knows that as P is his direct sister, he should not have gone to her house for all such things.

In the above situation M broke off his long-standing, close friendship with U because of the latter's affair with his sister. In M's view, U had exploited his link with the former by using him as a stepping stone to what he saw as an illegitimate relationship. The fact that a senior government official maintained a liaison with P, was acceptable and even desirable, given his status, which made U's intrusion even more resented. U not only threatened this link with a prestigious, wealthy and relatively powerful man, but laid M open to the accusation that he, as U's friend, had promoted the affair.

U was clearly playing with fire. Not only did he flaunt the conventions of friendship, but he courted confrontation with a formidable rival. In view of the prevalent stereotype which represents Igbos as exploiters of Cameroonian woman [see sec. 9.4], the situation was

particularly sensitive and capable of having reverberations. Other close friends of U, most of whom were Igbos, judged the best course was to keep a distance and avoid being implicated. O, a mutual friend of U and M, tried to remain neutral. As O remarked:

I didn't want to be going to P's house because U is my friend and so is M, and both of them have fallen out. The reason which brought about this dispute is the affair with P. I didn't find it worthwhile going there. That would mean that I was supporting U in his be-friending the sister.

Friendship implies co-activity. Much of the time O moved about Kumba he was accompanied by one or two close, generally co-ethnic friends. As these friends were, for the mostpart, unemployed, like himself, they spent considerable time circulating around the town in this fashion. Often their movements were random but, frequently, involved visits to mutual acquaintances, or simply escorting one another part of the way to a specific destination. The commitment to moving around with one's comrades often lead O to a number of places he would otherwise have been disinclined to go to. According to O:

I was, surprisingly, met by my friend A. He asked me to consider if I would accompany him to a friend's house. From where we were standing to the friend's house was a far cry--all the way to Hausa Quarter. The idea of a long journey almost changed my heart to say no, but I later thought: "No, this is my friend, I will go," and so it was.

Such "moving for moving's sake" is a fairly typical pattern of behavior which becomes more formalized during holiday seasons when larger groups of friends [particularly those from the same home area], circulate about the town drinking and feasting. During the interval between Christmas and New Year's mutual visitation is at its peak, when people abandon their regular occupations for the no less vital activities of travelling, hosting and being hosted. At this time there is a general predisposition toward and expectation of generosity, frequently outstripping one's means.²

At other times throughout the year friends visit one another in the evenings and on Sundays, for the mostpart. Although there is no binding rule that kola [welcoming offering of food or drink] should be provided, this is generally offered, especially if it is a first or occasional visit. Consequently, men of limited means, including unemployed school-leavers like O, might hesitate to invite friends to his house. With close friends in similar circumstances there would be no such restraints, and they would visit one another frequently with no such expectations.

Commensality is a regular feature of interaction among friends, the offering and acceptance of food indicating the absence of ill-will and suspicion. Given the stereotypes concerning the eating habits of other ethnic groups

[see section 9.2], and frequent distrust, Igbos will often try to avoid eating in houses of Cameroonians, unless, of course, they are particularly close friends. The importance of commensality as a rough measure of social distance is suggested in the following idiom provided by N, a friend of O:

Friends differ. If I found my friend was somewhat careless, I would use a shovel--a long spoon--to eat with him.

O would regularly prepare meals and eat with one or two of his co-ethnic friends, which created a convivial atmosphere and minimized work, rotating from one friend's house to another. They would also share their lodgings on an irregular basis which became a regular practice after O's relations with his brother deteriorated [see section 5.2].

The importance of friendship links as communications networks has been discussed above. Important and even vital information is regularly exchanged, but more often talk is of a less serious nature, serving more to keep interpersonal ties activated and the lines of communication open. The etiquette of friendship expects that topics discussed be of mutual interest, as indicated by O in his description of a conversation with three co-ethnic friends:

I returned to the house and was in for about 40 minutes before B arrived. Both of us sat back conversing on a variety of subjects, and

it was from him that I came to know that MS had come from Yaounde. At a later stage N came and joined us in our conversation which basically, was centered on education career [i.e., higher education]. Then BJ came in. With this friend's arrival we shifted the topic to something different.

BJ, unlike the others, had not gone to secondary school, and consequently, would not have been interested in hearing the others discuss their prospects for continuing their education. The topic was quickly and smoothly shifted to accomodate him. This was accomplished with relative ease owing to the shared home language and cultural background of the four, even though two of them [B and BJ] were not mutual friends. Igbos will often, on the other hand, go to some lengths to accomodate Cameroonian friends in their conversations as indicated by O's description of a visit to the house of P [U's Bakossi girlfriend]:

U and I spent more than an hour conversing with P. We were talking about the campaign, the vote, and CNU affairs. P's so-called husband is a politician. P too is a member of the CNU meeting. You know, if you want to keep such people happy you have to talk about some of the things they are interested in.

Although friendship bonds can be made and broken at will, good friends endeavor to maintain ties even when circumstances carry them in different directions. MS, a long standing friend of O, had left Kumba to trade in Yaounde. Each time he returned to Kumba he would spend much of his time moving with O and his friends, sharing meals and

quarters with them. After he had made the decision to return to Nigeria to re-establish himself, MS, O, N and another friend went to a local studio for a group photo. As O described it:

Since MS is leaving on Monday for Nigeria we must have a snapshot so that we can keep memories, so that if God helps and I get to the United States I can be keeping up with that. He doesn't know himself when he will be able to call on me again.

Before MS left Cameroon he introduced O and their mutual friends to a man from MS's village, who operated an "off-license" (beer store) and another friend who traded in Kumba market, with the intention that they might share news about him after he had gone. On the morning of MS' departure, these friends assembled in the motor park to bid him farewell as he boarded a passenger truck bound for Nigeria.

Numerous informants both in Kumba and Kake indicated that their best friends were living in other centers, ten or more miles away. In such cases they continued to keep in touch after one or both had moved. This, according to O, constituted the acid test of friendship:

If he moves away and you continue to keep in contact with him, then to my mind, he is a friend.⁴

7.3 TYPES AND DEGREES OF FRIENDSHIP

Friendship, even more than kinship or affinity, designates a broad category of relationships, within which

there is considerable variation with respect to social distance and function. On the basis of informants' statements, these can be roughly grouped into three categories: 1) casual friends and acquaintances, 2) situational friends, 3) close friends.

A casual friend corresponds to what Igbos call enyi eititi uzo ["friend on the road"]. This indicates someone whose identity is known, who one would greet when passing, occasionally exchanging brief conversation out of courtesy. Such people might greet one another "enyi" ["friend"], merely to acknowledge mutual recognition and the absence of hostility. Traders, for example, who pass one another regularly in the market on route to and from their stalls might greet one another in this manner. Second degree friends (individuals sharing a mutual friend but not well known to each other) would also fall into this category. Casual friends have minimal interaction, little, or no reciprocity and virtually no mutual responsibility.

Situational friends are popularly represented as "drinking friends" or enyi oge ebute mmanya ["friend when wine comes"]. This category is approximately equivalent to the English "fair-weather friends," denoting individuals who are relatively well known, often interacting on a fairly regular basis, but with little sense of mutual responsibility. Such friends are generally trusted, but to a limited extent,

and are not privy to confidential information. One does not consult such friends when confronted with problems, and they are not called upon for support in difficult situations or crises.

Close friends is a much more selective and restrictive category, termed, in Igbo, ezigbo enyi ["good friend"]. Often this term covers only a single individual, or, at most, small core of tight knit friends well known to each other. Many informants indicated that they had one "special friend" who served as their confidant, and who could be trusted above anyone else with private information or private property. The following statement by an Mgbidi migrant in Kumba, is typical:

I empty all my secrets to my closest friend.
He could freely go to the utmost part of my
house and get anything, even money.

A close friend might be called upon to act as a go-between in negotiating a marriage, or helping to reconcile spouses or lovers after a quarrel. They can be relied upon in any crisis, or, in the words of one Dhaffia migrant in Kake, "will be there if you have to go to court."

7.4 FRIENDSHIP AND ETHNICITY

Igbo migrants regularly mentioned both co-ethnics and non-Igbos as included within their extended network of friends. Although ethnic boundaries did not appear to

represent a barrier to the establishment of links between individuals, there was a noticable correlation between ethnicity and the type [or degree] of friendship. This is evident in the case of O, whose patterns of social interaction over a three and one-half month period involved friends of various categories, and diverse ethnic backgrounds [see Table 6.1].

Although O's extended network included nearly as many non-Igbos as Igbos [23 vs. 25, respectively], there is a marked difference in the distribution of intra- vs. inter-ethnic friends among the various categories. All of the non-Igbo friends with whom O interacted were either casual or situational, whereas about 20% [5/26] of his Igbo friends could be described as close, in the sense indicated above.

Most Igbos interviewed, like O, gave the names of co-ethnics as examples of close friends. Some Kake residents mentioned non-Igbos, suggesting rural-urban differences in this regard, a point which will be elaborated later. The tendency for inter-ethnic relations to be, on the whole, more casual is related to four basic factors: 1) shared understandings within the ethnic group, 2) distrust of non-Igbos, 3) emphasis on the value of intraethnic links and 4) social pressure.

As discussed earlier, the ethnic group constitutes an extended network of internal communication. Not only is

there an easier flow of information within this network, owing to shared language, but there is, at the same time, a strong sanction keeping a variety of issues from passing beyond ethnic boundaries. Although inter-ethnic friendships may involve the exchange of personal confidential information, they generally do not permit the sharing of in-group secrets. As this is contrary to the etiquette of friendship which expects openness, it acts as a factor discouraging close ties with non-Igbos. Further, although individual links to non-Igbos are formed which may approach close friendship, they generally do not overlap to form tight networks [such as that of D]⁶, which require a generally broader base of common linguistic and sociocultural background.

A second factor inhibiting the development of close friendships between Igbos and non-Igbos is the negative attitudes which the former maintain vis a vis Cameroonians and, to some extent, toward non-Igbo Nigerians [see section 9.2]. Distinctive Igbo food preferences, devaluation of the food and dietary habits of various Cameroonian peoples, coupled with a general sense of distrust, discourages commensality.⁷ A constant concern about the jealousy of others makes many Igbos [and some Cameroonians] wary of placing themselves in vulnerable positions, by affording others the means or motive for gaining an advantage over them. For this

reason one might be reluctant to discuss one's problems, as well as good fortune with people outside of one's ethnically defined community of common interest. As one Igbo student preparing for overseas study expressed it:

Most of my close friends with whom I discuss my business are members of my own tribe. Cameroonians might be jealous of my going to America, but other Igbos, who are in the same situation as me, would not be.

TABLE 7.1

FRIENDSHIP NETWORK: DISTRIBUTION BY DEGREE AND ETHNIC GROUP⁵

	A. Casual	B. Situational	C. Close	Totals [A+B+C]
1) Non-Igbo [mainly Cameroonian]	5[50%]	18[53%]	0[0%]	23[47%]
2) Igbo	<u>5[50%]</u>	<u>16[47%]</u>	<u>5[100%]</u>	<u>26[53%]</u>
3) Totals [1+2]	10[100%]	34[100%]	5[100%]	49[100%]

Establishing friendship links within the ethnic group is viewed as a prudent investment, more likely to yield tangible benefits, than ties to Cameroonians (although the latter may have special advantages, as will be discussed below). Since such links are, rooted in ascriptive identity, they are generally viewed as more enduring and dependable than interethnic ties. According to the student quoted in the preceeding paragraph, discussing the case of a youth bound for

overseas study whose close friends were all Cameroonians:

When he gave a send-off party the Igbos in town did not come or contribute, although I'm sure they should have been able to donate at least 50 or 60,000 frs.*

Since the Cameroonians who came to his party did not contribute significantly to his educational fund [the dominant motive in staging send-offs], the event was a failure, allegedly demonstrating the folly of such behavior. Similarly, one long established Igbo migrant in Kake who had a number of Cameroonian close friends [although not to the exclusion of co-ethnics], was described as "practically a Cameroonian." Through the repetition of contrary cases, a certain amount of social pressure is, no doubt, brought to bear, containing what might otherwise be a more random and spontaneous proliferation of linkages.

7.5 THE BASES OF INTER-ETHNIC LINKS

Inter-ethnic friendship does, of course, exist, based on factors other than shared origins. One such factor is educational background, which significantly affected D's selection of friends, as indicated in the statistics given in Table 7.2.

* \$200.00-\$240.00 U.S.A.

TABLE 7.2

DISTRIBUTION OF FRIENDS: BY ETHNIC GROUP AND EDUCATION

<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>A. Similar Ed. Level</u>	<u>B. Lower Ed. Level</u>	<u>C. Totals [A+B]</u>
1) Non-Igbo [mainly Camer- roonian]	20[61%]	3[19%]	23[47%]
2) Igbo	<u>13[39%]</u>	<u>13[81%]</u>	<u>26[53%]</u>
3) Totals [1+2]	33[100%]	16[100%]	49[100%]

As can be seen, the majority of D's friends [33/49>65%], are of approximately the same educational background [secondary school leavers], although a sizeable minority [16/49<35%] have less schooling [primary education or none]. This latter category, however, includes only three non-Igbos, consisting overwhelmingly [81%] of co-ethnics. Igbo friends are equally divided between "similar" and "lower" education categories [13 vs. 13], while the great majority of non- Igbo friends [20/23 = 87%] have roughly the same educational background.

Many of D's friends in category A were former secondary schoolmates who may or may not have attended the same primary school as well, and former primary schoolmates who attended other secondary schools. Some of the friends in category B were, likewise, former primary school mates. The predominance of non-Igbos in the former category is reflective of the ethnic distribution in secondary schools and corresponds to the observed tendency of most students to form a high proportion of inter-ethnic ties.⁸

Although education level may be an important factor in the formation of friendship links, it does not appear, on the whole, to be more important than ethnicity and is considerably less significant than ethnicity in determining the degree of friendship. As indicated earlier, however, the significance of non-ethnic factors, like education, is generally greater in smaller centers, where persons of similar educational background [at least in the case of secondary school leavers] are usually few. For example, N, an Igbo secondary school leaver living in the village of Kombone, was friends with members of the local primary school staff, the local educated elite. All of these individuals were Cameroonians including M, a Grasslander, who sometimes moved with N and his friends

[D and others] while they were in Kumba, although he was not a member of their "inner clique."

Occupation is also frequently a basis for inter- and intra-ethnic ties. In some cases such links may be reinforced by ties of locality, for example, as with butchers and used clothing dealers, who tend to come from particular local areas within the Igbo homeland. In other, more ethnically mixed occupations there is a proliferation of links between Igbos and non-Igbos, although this may be somewhat restricted where competition is intense. In less competitive occupations, such as agriculture or teaching, inter-ethnic links are commonly formed. The cultivation of cocoa, for example, which requires considerable mutual co-operation, frequently draws on and acts as a stimulus to the generation of ties with non-Igbos [to be elaborated in chapter 8].

D, as a former teacher in Mamfe [see Fig. 2.1], had formed friendships with Cameroonian teachers on the staff, some of whom he later met and interacted with in Kumba. As some of them had, like himself,⁹ been summarily dismissed, they had considerable mutual empathy. D, now an unemployed job-seeker, had many friends in that category, both Igbo and Cameroonian. As a foreigner, however, his chances of being employed were considerably less, a factor which was

responsible for some resentment.

Another basis for inter-ethnic friendship is shared interests and participation in leisure time activities. Some of O's Cameroonian friends were, like himself, avid footballers, most of whom had known one another since school days. These friends would occasionally meet for a match, or, more frequently, encountered one another as spectators of scheduled matches on the town green. Sometimes O might meet one of these friends in the street and exchange conversation or share a drink in a palm wine bar or off-license. One middle-aged Cameroonian, an ex-footballer and regular spectator, became friends of O through the latter's Cameroonian schoolmate. He invited the two to his Mutengene home [40 miles distant] during holidays and, from time to time supplied them with pocket money. Although some of the individuals in this category were relatively good, and regular friends, the network was based primarily on a single activity [football], and, in general, corresponds to the situational category of friendship, described above.

Other activities serving as foci for friendship networks include participation in various voluntary associations, such as churches and religious organizations, savings associations, Boy Scouts and the Red Cross.

One Ohaffia farmer, F, who had achieved a relatively high rank in the local chapter of the Red Cross, was well known to the other members of the organization both in Kake [where he lived] and in neighboring villages. Often these villages would join Kake in area-wide meetings and ranking members serve as delegates to the monthly meetings in Kumba. F's avocation, barbering, would regularly carry him to neighboring villages where he would frequently call on his friends in the organization. Other times he might call on fellow members in Kumba when visiting kinsmen or other home area people. Such friends were situational, however, and would rarely be the main object of such visits.

Residential proximity is also a salient factor in the formation of friendship links across ethnic boundaries. O, for example, was a good friend of M, a Bakossi, who had formerly lived in an adjacent house, and who, like O, was an unemployed school leaver. The overall importance of such neighborhood links will be examined later.

Other bases of inter-ethnic friendship include second-degree ties through kinsmen, affines or co-ethnics. Second-degree friends are typically casual, but frequently, in time, become regular friends in their own right. Examples in O's network include a younger brother of O's patrikinsman, a brother of his extended "affine," and friends of his

small core of close friends.¹⁰ The two former individuals were situational friends, while the last group included both casual and situational friends.

In general, it can be said that inter-ethnic friends share a larger number of non-ethnic characteristics than co-ethnic friends. Similar age, educational level, marital status and occupational pursuits frequently coincided in the case of inter-ethnic friends, and, more often than not, they would share most of these characteristics. Intra-ethnic friends, on the other hand, tended to be more diverse with respect to other characteristics. Common sociocultural and linguistic background seems, therefore, to be the most significant single factor in the formation of friendship links and is only equaled by a number of other factors in combination. Ethnicity seems to be an even more significant factor in determining the degree of friendship, as was pointed out earlier and, in the case of close friends, is not easily compensated for by the coincidence of other factors.

7.6 VALUE AND UTILITY OF INTER-ETHNIC FRIENDS

Previous studies have indicated the wide acceptance of inter-ethnic friendship as a value in West Cameroon, particularly in settings promoting frequent interaction

among individuals of diverse cultural-linguistic backgrounds.¹¹ This value is associated, on the other hand, with the official policy of national integration, which attempts to counter ethnic exclusiveness and prepare the ground for the emergence of a Cameroonian national culture.¹² On the other hand, the formation of inter-ethnic links is, necessarily, a part of the strategy of survival among the diverse migrant communities of West Cameroon, who have, over time, developed a *modus vivendi* among themselves and vis à vis the local indigenous population.

The Igbo, as Nigerians, are, likewise, citizens of a culturally pluralistic society with similar national values. The economic and political limitations and insecurity associated with alien citizenship has made the establishment of rapport with Cameroonians a matter of crucial importance. Friendship with Cameroonians, especially those in influential positions is, therefore, given considerable value.

As mentioned earlier, there has been a general movement to Cameroonize personnel, both in public and private sectors of employment. Occasionally, a Cameroonian friend, favorably situated, can help or will at least try to assist an Igbo in securing a job. This is often possible in fields such as teaching, where discrimination

against foreigners [at present] tends to be less, or other fields where there is need for special skills and a lack of qualified Cameroonian personnel. Even if the chances of securing a job are remote, a friend may attempt to help, as in the case of J, a Grasslander who tried [unsuccessfully] to persuade his employer to give D a job in the marketing board.

Cameroonian friends are of particular value in gaining rapport with the law enforcement authorities. As one Udi migrant in Kake, describing his Cameroon friend, expressed it: "If I am held up [detained] by the police, he will always like to save me."

Although Cameroonians generally tend to have more leverage with the authorities than Igbos, it is, obviously, even more advantageous to have friends who are themselves officers. W [a migrant from Unwana] always made a point of making friends with members of the police force in Kumba and other places he had lived and mentioned instances in which they had intervened on his behalf when he became involved in quarrels with local people.¹³ C, a friend of D, was a regular friend of a security officer. As C was, at this time, preparing to leave for overseas studies, this link was potentially useful in completing the various procedures preparatory to his emigration.

The Igbo are keenly aware that the life of the migrant is fraught with insecurity, which can be minimized by maintaining a "respectable" public image and having friends among the local population. In the words of one Igbo informant:

We learned from experiences like the massacres in Northern Nigeria,¹⁴ that local friends can even save your life.

7.7 NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

Neighbors, in the migrant context, are typically non-kinsmen who may or may not be co-ethnics. If they happen to be co-ethnics, they are, for the mostpart, from other districts within the homeland or at least from other villages. Unlike kinsmen or home area people, neighbors are acquired and lost through choice of residence, although this choice is not entirely an open one, reflecting availability of housing, budgetary limitations etc. In this sense, neighbors differ from friends who are, generally speaking, freely chosen. Unlike friends (but like kin, affines and co-ethnics), neighbors are acquired en bloc, rather than on an individual basis, although existing activated ties may show considerable variation from one individual neighbor to another.

The Igbo term for neighbor, onye agbata obi ["person-neighboring-compound"], in its basic sense, designates individuals residing in the immediate area, which, in the homeland is conventionally defined by the radius of shouting range and the corresponding obligation to heed one another's distress call. Neighborhoods are, therefore, not formal divisions of the village but circles centering on individual compounds which overlap like chain mail, reinforcing ties based on kinship, affinity and community. In the homeland, unlike the migrant situation, most of the immediate neighbors are kinsmen and the remainder, bearers of a common local culture with mutual ties extending back several generations.

As with friendship, there is an etiquette and a host of expectations associated with neighborhood relations, much of which carries over into the migrant situation. Maintaining good relations with neighbors is deemed essential since they are frequently the first source of help in an emergency. As one Igbo migrant expressed it, "if you have trouble in the middle of the night, it is your neighbor who should first come to your aid."

Another aspect of neighborhood etiquette is the avoidance of sexual relations with women in the vicinity. This, in the words of one informant, is reflective of

the high regard with which one views these ties:

A neighbor is the highest brother. That is why at home I cannot connect with a girl in my own quarter.

The fact that in the homeland kinsmen do constitute a large segment of the neighborhood makes this extension of incest avoidances a logical corollary of generalized kinship sentiment. In the migrant situation, where this is not the case, there is more flexibility, but most Igbos view "befriending" neighbor girls unwise for a number of reasons. "She would always be bothering you," or "her family would be always asking for favors," are frequently cited as arguments. Also mentioned is the fact that, "if you wanted to break off it would be very difficult," or, if one did sever relations it would generate strain within the neighborhood.¹⁵

Although neighborhood relations entail recognition of certain obligations and prohibitions which mark the outer boundaries of expected behavior, ties with individual neighbors is highly variable. The ambivalence frequently associated with neighborhood relations was summarized by an Okigwi informant:

You can feed in a neighbor's house, go to him to borrow what you need, but he can still come to kill you, as he knows where you bathe.

In other words, as a neighbor is in a privileged position to know his way around a man's house and yard and is likely to have considerable knowledge of his affairs, he can use this proximity and knowledge for good or ill. A good neighbor is clearly a valued asset, while a hostile one is a formidable foe. Although considerable effort is given to maintaining amicable neighborhood relations, tension and suspicion is not uncommon.¹⁶

In general, neighborhood relations are of more significance in smaller centers, like Kake, than in towns such as Kumba. This fact reflects a number of differences between life in the two centers: 1) the greater involvement of urban residents in kin-based networks, 2) competitiveness and interpersonal alienation associated with town life and 3) the potential and need for co-operation in rural economic pursuits. All of these factors have been mentioned earlier with respect to other forms of network ties. Their significance for neighborhood links is particularly noteworthy given the relatively non-obligatory nature of these ties vis à vis those based on kinship or affinity, for example. In other words, neighborhood ties, being flexible, are frequently activated in the village, where they have considerable utility and there is a relative lack of competing links. In the town, where they

have somewhat less utility, they are frequently underplayed, but could be activated in an emergency situation.¹⁷

7.8 NEIGHBORHOOD AND ETHNICITY

The concept of neighbor, as with kinsman, affine or friend, can be extended beyond its narrow primary meaning i.e., one dwelling in an adjacent house, or the immediate area. In a somewhat wider sense, ties based on shared residence in the same migrant center are, likewise, neighborhood ties. Such extended ties are generally of little significance alone, but become important when associated with other shared traits, especially ethnicity. The obligation to attend funerals in Kake, for example, covers all Igbo residents of the village. Co-operation in economic activities may involve any fellow villager, but more typically involves neighbors from the same ethnic group [see chapter 8].

Neighborhood ties may also bind members of closely related ethnic groups. For example, Igbos living in the village of Ebonji [Fig. 2.3] have reciprocal ties to neighboring eastern Nigerian peoples resident there [Ojojas, Efiks, etc.]. Similarly, W mentioned that in Ghana [where he lived as a youth], Cross River Igbos formed a "powerful union" with neighboring Ekoi peoples ["Cross River Groups" fig. 2.4].

At a higher level of generalization all Cameroonians are neighbors. As one Umuahia migrant put it, in elaborating

the concept of neighbor, "they are our neighbors in the sense that they are next to eastern Nigeria." This recognition is, obviously, of minimal significance in the context of daily interaction between Igbos and Cameroonians, except insofar as it points up the possibility and predisposition for extending the interactional network.

It is clear, however, that the sentiments and values associated with neighborhood do much to bridge the latent hostility and mutual distrust between Igbos and Cameroonians, especially in the case of next door neighbors or individuals sharing different sections of the same house. W described his relations with his Cameroonian co-tenants as follows:

With neighbors it is different. The boy who lives next to me I will give the key to my room to enter at any time. When my [clerical] gown came he took it and brought it in. He would come in and borrow my boots, if he needed them. When I sit down to eat, often the neighbors come to take their own share. Another neighbor, a tapper, comes in and gives me fresh wine without charge.

It has been noted elsewhere that in urban centers neighborhood relations have usually greater significance for women than for men [Okonjo 1967: 97ff]. This is confirmed by the present research in Kumba, where neighborhood women, often of different ethnic groups, interact on a regular basis in distinctive ways. Igbo and Cameroonian women may, for example, perform various services for one another, such as

tending one another's market stands, or plaiting each other's hair. At a funeral conducted by the Umuzumba [Arochukwu Division] community in Kumba, the vast majority of males present were from that area with no non-Igbos attending.¹⁸ The women's dancing group, however, included a large number of Cameroonians [neighbors of the deceased's daughter-in-law]. This, according to an informant, was the typical pattern.

Relations with neighbors are especially important in emergency situations. This is even more true of inter-ethnic links during periods of crisis when the host community engages in acts of violence against strangers.

As W pointed out:

This feeling about neighbors overcomes political ideas. When the Bakossis were killing the Bamilekes, many Bakossis hid their Bamileke neighbors in their houses. They would come in the night and tap on their door, saying, "something is happening, come with me." Even one man who was responsible for starting the hid some of his Bamileke neighbors.

FOOTNOTES

1. Good fren' pas bad broda [Pidgin], or Ezigbo enyi ka nwanne ojo [Igbo].
2. Christmas season corresponds with the end of the cocoa harvest [West Cameroon's major cash crop], consequently there is a greater availability of funds at this time.
3. The C.N.U. [Cameroon National Union/Union Nationale Camerounaise] is the governing [and only legitimate] political party in Cameroon. The campaign and election refer to the 1972 referendum, which ratified an executive decision abolishing the federation and creating the "United Republic of Cameroon."
4. One means of maintaining friendship at a distance is to entrust the friend with a child-ward who will serve as an apprentice, or domestic servant. According to S, an Ada mesident in Kake:

One good friend is NJ, a photographer, who has now gone home. I met this man while I was living in Muyuka. He had not married yet so I sent my daughter to serve him. He cared for her and gave her presents.
5. These tabulations were made from a diary kept by my field assistant from February to May 1972. He was instructed to record all persons with whom he interacted, giving an account of the nature and duration of each encounter. At approximately one week intervals the subject read the diary into a tape recorded. During the reading, he was asked questions concerning the persons in his network, including their ethnic background, educational level, relationship to the subject and how he came to know them. The "degree of friendship" was determined on the basis of the subject's own categories ["good friend," "partial friend," etc.] and the indicated frequency of interaction.

6. The term "tight network" follows the usage of Bott [1957], meaning all members linked to an individual arbitrarily designated as the center of the network [Barnes' "alpha"; Barnes 1968] are, likewise, linked to each other.
7. The fear of being "poisoned" [i.e., injured with destructive medicines, either natural or supernatural] is common among the Igbo and is frequently the explanation given as a cause of death. Jealousy is the motive most frequently mentioned, successful persons being the prime targets.
8. According to a study of inter-ethnic integration in Cameroonian secondary schools, students of non-West Cameroon origin [mainly Igbo], accounted for 40% of the Kumba secondary school population Haupt 1969: 407]. Here the percentage of "school-wide in-tribe friendships" was given as 20.2, and "class-wide in-tribe friendships" as 19.01 [Ibid.: 195].
9. The Ministry of Education of West Cameroon dismissed secondary school leavers as primary school teachers and replaced them with personnel from teacher training schools. The action displaced many teachers, both Cameroonian and Nigerian and caused much ill feeling, particularly among the latter, whose chances for other employment was limited.
10. The "affine" in question was a Cameroonian who had married a woman [nonkin] from D's village. Although his brother might be called ogo at a higher level of generalization, D usually called him a friend [enyi].
11. Haupt's study of "cross-tribal" integration in secondary schools, and Ardener's research on plantations both indicate a high degree of consensus concerning the value of inter-ethnic contact [Haupt 1969: 208-218; Ardener 1960: 101-106].
12. C.f. Ahmadou Ahidjo, "The Will to Be a Nation," [1969]. One of the clearest moves to enforce inter-ethnic integration at the grassroots level was the prohibition against exclusive "tribal" organizations discussed earlier.

13. One such affair concerned W's objection to and interference with a post-mortem examination, conducted by a diviner to locate a witchcraft principle. Owing to W's friendship with the local authorities, they supported him against those performing the operation. More recently W was threatened by the family of his young household servant-ward after the latter had run away. The boy's family, leveling the accusation that W had done away with him, vowed vengeance. Although the boy's family was Igbo, he turned to his police friends for support, which enabled him to live in relative security until the boy returned a few weeks later.
14. The concern for security and reliance on inter-ethnic links was, no doubt, intensified by the war, which made Cameroon a haven for Biafran refugees and Igbos already established there. However, the possibility of violence against strangers was underscored by the massacres of Bamileke migrants by indigenous Bakossi in Tombel in the mid 1960's.
15. The problems arising from forming liaisons with women in the neighborhood is seen in the case of W [a migrant from Unwana], who began an affair with J, a Mamfe girl living next door. From the beginning, J's kinsmen, with whom she lived, resented her involvement with W, and were generally hostile toward him. After some time W became engaged to C, an Igbo girl who came to visit him, and, unavoidably, confronted J, his former girlfriend. J, fuming with jealousy, vented her anger at C for "stealing her man" while W stood helplessly by. As W continued to live next to J and they were regularly encountering one another, the situation was emotionally tense and became even more so some months later when J gave birth to a son [apparently W's]. W continued to visit J and the child, while trying to maneuver to avoid more explosive contact between her and C.
16. Accusations of sorcery among neighbors are frequent and not unlikely related to the economic competitiveness and crowded conditions of the town. One prosperous bar owner, for example, went to a diviner after his infant son had become ill, which coincided with the disappearance of the baby's diaper from the clothes line. The diviner confirmed his suspicion that his next door neighbor, jealous of his financial success, had stolen the diaper and employed it in directing destructive medicine against the child. Following the diviner's instructions, the bar owner went into the neighbor's bedroom and found the diaper in a box under his bed. Confronted with this evidence the neighbor, reportedly, confessed his guilt and vowed to refrain from using the "medicine" in the future.

CHAPTER 8

ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR AND ETHNIC RELATIONS: A KAKE EXAMPLE

The preceeding chapters dealt individually with the various categories of network ties and how they are activated by the Igbo migrant through a range of diverse situational contexts. In reality, of course, these ties exist simultaneously in time and space, influencing, reinforcing and competing with one another. By selecting a particular situational context [farm labor recruitment] in which these ties are activated, one can gain a sense of their relative importance and configurations of interaction. Through this approach ethnicity can be placed in a multi-dimensional framework against the broad background of the total social network.

8.1 ETHNICITY AND RECIPROCITY IN KAKE: MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN FARM LABOR

The rural area surrounding Kumba offers an opportunity to observe patterns of economic co-operation which have no counterpart in the town. In the village of Kake the cash cropping of cocoa makes demands on the organization of labor, which has a number of interesting consequences for inter-ethnic relations and contributes to making

ethnicity there qualitatively different from Kumba. Over 90% of the adult male population is directly involved in cocoa production which constitutes the principal source of cash income. Men typically spend most of their working day in the cocoa groves while women attend to subsistence cultivation, trading [especially in the Igbo case] and domestic duties.

The agricultural year for most farmers begins between late January and early March, sometime after the year's end harvest and holiday festivities. As in Nigeria, Igbo men clear ground for food crops, leaving the bulk of garden work for women, although the sexual division of labor tends to be somewhat less strict than in the homeland.¹ During the first three months of the calendar year there is relatively little to do in the cocoa groves, except for the pruning of branches and the removal of epiphytes [nuisance plants attached to the upper limbs]. These tasks continue through mid-year and are usually performed alone, although, occasionally include help from a friend or kinsman. By April men begin clearing grass and weeds from between trees, a task which continues into the harvest season. Clearing is normally performed by "labor" groups, voluntary, mutual assistance associations which visit members farms in rotation. Spraying trees² begins a month or so after clearing and continues into the early part of the harvest season.

As with pruning, spraying is generally a solitary activity, although a pair of friends or "countrymen" [co-ethnics] will frequently join together, or, alternatively, the job will be finished in a single morning by one's labor group [see sec. 8.3].

The harvesting of cocoa on most farms begins mid-June and early July. The plucking of pods may be either an individual activity spread over several days, or, as with spraying, completed in a few hours by a labor group.³ At this time the cocoa requires a good deal of concentrated work and attention. It must be picked when ripe and within a few days the pods must be opened ["broken"] to remove the beans.⁴ Failure to do so within a week or so of plucking allows the beans to germinate and become unsuitable for sale. It is at this point in the agricultural cycle that the demand for a quickly mobilized labor force is most essential.

Frequently this demand can be met by enlisting the help of one's labor group, although this often may not be feasible. In the middle of the harvest season competition for hands is frequently heavy and the group may have prior commitments. In addition, many members are often in default of "summons" payments⁵, or fines to their groups, especially prior to the sale of their crop when "money [is] hard [i.e. scarce]." More commonly, farmers recruit aid

in breaking on an ad hoc basis, notifying willing hands within two or three days in advance. The host farmer is expected to reciprocate in the future by returning the assistance and, more immediately, by providing the workers with an after-breaking feast.

Cocoa breaking gatherings are foci of dynamic interaction. Often their more serious, economic aspect seems lost in the feastive atmosphere of the breaking and ensuing feast. The mood is congenial with the participants usually well known to one another, and generally, the core of the party is formed by a set of individuals who regularly interact. The workers are gathered together in a compact circle around the heap of pods, and, as breaking is a monotonous activity, requiring little concentration, there is usually a continual flow of conversation.

The host farmer receives his guest breakers in his house following the breaking, furnishing them with liberal servings of food and palm wine. If the breaking is a particularly long one lasting into the afternoon, food is also provided in the field to tide the workers over until the main meal. As pointed out earlier [see sec. 7.2], the sharing of food, and willingness to accept food from others betokens the absence of enmity for Nigerians and Cameroonians alike. The food items offered are standardized consisting of garri [cassava meal], soup, stockfish [served afterward]

and generous quantities of palm wine.⁶

8.2 AD HOC COCOA BREAKING PARTIES

The recruitment of labor for ad hoc cocoa breaking groups is a revealing example of the activation of a host farmer's personal network. A study of the patterns of recruitment, i.e., the types of links activated, and the extent of reliance on each type of link, gives insight into the relative significance of each in the total spectrum of village social relations. The links activated can be grouped as follows: Co-ethnics: Members of the hosts own ethnic group, who may or may not be from the same local area. This includes as a subgroup kinsmen and affines [since the vast majority of marriages are intra-ethnic]. In the present instance, this category refers to fellow Igbos only, but, conceivably might be extended to include other Nigerians as well [see section 3.3].

Non-Co-ethnics:

- a) Laborers- May be regular employees of the host, or the landlord [if other than the host]. Alternatively, they may be day laborers employed specifically for a given harvest. This category includes substitutes who may be sent by a man unable to come who still intends to fulfill his obligations to the host.
- b) Friends- Includes all direct friends of the host other

than members of his own ethnic group [included in category 1].

- c) Secondary and tertiary links- Guest breakers whose primary links are to one of the other breakers, rather than the host himself (e.g., a friend of the host's landlord).
- d) Landlord [and kinsmen]-The owner of the farm if worked on a rental or sharecropping ["two-party"] basis. In the present instance, it includes members of his nuclear family [wife and children] as well.
- e) Neighbors-Those either living or farming in close proximity to the host. Included are non-co-ethnics living in the same or neighboring houses and farmers working different sections of the same farm (i.e., under the same landlord) or neighboring farms.
- f) Labor group members-Fellow members of the host's labor group [described above] coming on an individual rather than a group basis (i.e., not in response to a "summons").

The types of ties which are drawn on will, of course, vary from one farmer to another in accordance with the structure of his personal network. Further, the same farmer will recruit aid from different sources at different times according to the availability of various individuals. However, there does tend to be a certain amount of consistency in recruitment patterns owing to

the principle of reciprocity which operates in cocoa breaking. Hence, there is often an informal clustering of farmers who regularly break cocoa for one another, forming relatively close-knit networks.

Determining the source of recruitment and identifying networks of varying degrees of closeness gives one index for assessing the significance of ethnicity in the village. Taking roll at 31 cocoa breaking sessions hosted by Igbo farmers indicated the extent to which Igbos as a whole rely upon intra-ethnic, as opposed to various categories of inter-ethnic ties [see Table 8.1].

It is evident that by far the greatest number of recruitments come from within the host's own ethnic group, accounting for almost 70% of the total. This lends support to the conclusion, based on casual observation, that ethnicity is the most important single factor in co-operation among Kake farmers generally and, by extension, the dominant principle in the organization of social networks in the village. Such a conclusion, however, would have to be qualified in a number of ways. First, intra-ethnic ties are, in many cases, reinforced by bonds of neighborhood, friendship, membership in the same labor group etc., which may coincide with ethnic identity. It was found, however, that in the great majority of cases, Igbos who broke for fellow Igbos, main-

TABLE 8.1

SOURCES OF RECRUITMENT FOR AD HOC BREAKING PARTIES

<u>Source of Recruitment</u>	<u>Number of Recruitments</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Co-ethnic	318	69.5
Non-co-ethnic		
a. laborers	37	8.1
b. friends	35	7.7
c. secondary and tertiary links	22	4.8
d. landlord and kin*	20	4.4
e. neighbors	16	3.5
f. labor group members	9	2.0
Total non-co-ethnic	139	30.5
Total recruitments	457	100.0

* Also included [in a single case] was a cocoa buyer and his two sons.

tained that they had come to the breaking to "help my countryman." Secondly, kinship and affinal ties subsumed under intra-ethnic links are usually more binding in and of themselves than obligations to "countrymen" generally. In the migrant context, however, the distinction between kinsmen and countrymen is often difficult to draw, especially in the Igbo system of terminology which views the former as grading into the latter [see sec. 5.4].

On the other hand, however, these data do not represent the full scope of assistance to co-ethnics in ad hoc parties. For example, within many networks of farmers the need to maintain the system of reciprocity prompts them to send substitutes when circumstances [such as the need to dry one's own cocoa following a harvest] prevent them from going themselves.⁷ In addition, farmers with seasonal workmen frequently bring them along when breaking another man's cocoa. These men may, in turn, bring friends or kinsmen to lend a hand [secondary and tertiary links] and participate in the festivities. Although such relations have been placed in the category "laborers" and "secondary and tertiary links," many are anchored in primary intra-ethnic bonds among Igbo farmers.

Further analysis of the data is necessary to identify those cocoa breaking networks which are, to a

certain extent, circumscribed by the requirements of the crop itself. In the beginning of the season, for example, when the crop is light, work groups are necessarily small, gradually increasing toward the peak of the harvest and trailing off toward the year's end. In the series of breakings cited above, the number of participants ranged from four to 26, with a mean of 14.7. The total number of Igbo farmers in Kake is 50. Since they are too numerous to form a single cocoa breaking network, they tend to segment into various local groups which form the cores of their respective task forces. These four local groups, Ohaffia, Ada, Udi and Okigwi, differ, however, in the extent to which they rely on intra-ethnic ties for assistance.

Breaking down the data in Table 8.2 in terms of the local origin of host farmers as against the sources of assistance recruitment, the differences in network composition become evident. In all four of the Igbo subgroups observed, co-ethnics form the largest single reservoir of assistance. In only two cases, however [Ohaffia and Ada], does the ethnic group furnish the majority of breakers, while in one subgroup [Okigwi], scarcely more than a third. The degree of reliance on fellow Igbos clearly reflects the relative size of the local subgroup [see Table 8.3].

TABLE 8.2

RECRUITMENT FOR AD HOC PARTIES BY SUBETHNIC GROUP

<u>Source of Recruitment</u>	<u>Ohaffia</u> N (%)	<u>Ada</u> N (%)	<u>Udi</u> N (%)	<u>Okiawi</u> N (%)	<u>Total</u> N (%)
Co-ethnics (Igbos)	208 (86.0)	59 (67.8)	30 (43.5)	21 (35.6)	318 (69.6)
Non-co-ethnics:					
a. Neighbors	7 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	8 (13.6)	16 (3.5)
b. Friends	4 (1.7)	6 (6.9)	14 (20.3)	11 (18.6)	35 (7.7)
c. Laborers	7 (2.9)	9 (10.3)	13 (18.9)	8 (13.6)	37 (8.1)
d. Landlords	6 (2.5)	7 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (11.9)	20 (4.4)
e. Labor Group Members	2 (0.8)	4 (4.6)	0 (0.0)	3 (5.1)	9 (2.0)
f. Secondary and Ter- tiary Links	8 (3.3)	2 (2.3)	11 (15.9)	1 (1.7)	22 (4.8)
Total Recruit- ments	242(100.1)	87 (99.9)	69 (99.9)	59 (100.1)	457 (100.1)

TABLE 8.3
NUMBER OF FARMERS BY SUBGROUP

<u>Local subgroup</u> *	<u>Cocoa Farmers</u>	
	N	[%]
Ohaffia	24	[50.0]
Ada	12	[25.0]
Udi	8	[16.7]
Okigwi	<u>4</u>	<u>[8.3]</u>
	48	100.0

TABLE 8.4
RECRUITMENT OF BREAKERS WITHIN SUBCOMMUNITY

<u>Local subgroup</u>	<u>Recruitments</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Ohaffia	183	75.6
Ada	28	32.2
Udi	20	29.0
Okigwi	9	15.2

* Two of the 50 farmers in Kake did not belong to these subgroups.

The largest group, Ohaffia, has enough manpower to constitute a substantial task force by itself and is the only local subgroup to furnish the majority of hands for its own breakings. The other three groups furnish less, being ranked in order corresponding to their number of farmers [Table 8.4].

Ohaffias as a group show considerable solidarity, forming a close-knit cocoa breaking network which includes virtually all members of their local contingent. Reliance on other ties is minimal, and no set of inter-ethnic links contributes to any significant extent. Laborers [as was indicated earlier] includes substitutes for farmers who are absent, the majority of whom are Ohaffias. Landlords and their kinsmen are frequently present, as the majority of Ohaffias hold their land on a "two-party" basis, and insurance should be made for the equitable division of the crop. Ties based on neighborhood and friendship, considered as a unit, are less important than in any other local group [4.6%]. Links with other Igbos outside the subgroup are, likewise, less important [10.3%] than in any of the other three groups, the majority of such links being with the culturally similar Ada.⁸

Farmers from Ada, being only half the number of Ohaffias, are not sufficient to form an adequate breaking group during the peak cocoa season. As with the latter

subgroup, they do show considerable reliance on co-ethnics, but, in contrast to them, draw heavily outside of their own local group (68% of the breakers being Igbo, 32% from Ada), largely from Ohaffia. In contrast to Ohaffias, two members of the Kake Ada subcommunity were evidently outside the cocoa breaking network, participating in none of the group's breakings, while five of the remaining ten attended only one of the six breakings studied. Adas also show a somewhat heavier reliance on inter-ethnic ties, recruiting larger numbers of friends, laborers, landlords and labor group members, than Ohaffias. On the whole, Adas are significantly less integrated (at least with respect to agricultural co-operation) than Ohaffias, but maintain ties with the larger Igbo community which are frequently utilized.

Udi, unlike the preceeding groups, draws less than half of its participants (43.5%) from the Igbo community at large. In contrast to Ada, however, the majority of these (29% of the total) come from the local area of origin. All active farmers from Udi are involved in a reciprocal cocoa breaking network and regularly participate in one another's harvests.⁹ Udis are significantly more dependent on inter-ethnic ties than either of the preceeding groups, with friends accounting for 20.3% and laborers

18.9% of the work force. Overall, Udi appears to be the reverse of Ada, being tightly integrated within itself, relatively loosely bound to the Igbo community at large and substantially more interactive with the non-Igbo sector of the village.

Finally, Okigwi, the smallest subgroup of Igbos in Kake, shows the least reliance on assistance from fellow Igbos [35.6%], as well as the least recruitment from the area of origin [15.2%]. Okigwis do practice some degree of mutual assistance, but do not co-operate with the same degree of regularity as Udis or Ohaffias. Cameroonians form the largest contingent in most Okigwi hosted breaking sessions [exceeding Igbos in three out of five sessions and equalling them in one], recruited through ties of friendship and neighborhood, with a substantial contribution from laborers and landlord's kinsmen. Recruitment of fellow labor group members [the least exploited set of ties for Igbos as a whole] provides a larger fraction of the work force than in any other subgroup. On the whole, the Okigwis constitute a rather loosely integrated subgroup, showing some association with other Igbos and considerable interaction with Cameroonians.

8.3 FORMAL LABOR GROUPS

As has been indicated, the system of co-operative labor in Kake, has developed in response to the requirements of cocoa farming, especially the critical need to mobilize labor during the harvest season. Although much of this work is done by ad hoc groups, just discussed, formal labor groups are also active at this time and account for a significant part of harvest work. Unlike the informal breaking parties, the labor group is active throughout the agricultural year and performs a number of other tasks in addition to breaking cocoa (weeding, spraying and picking pods). Such groups normally have a chairman and various other elected officers, including a treasurer and "messenger," who, together with certain selected members constitute a core "committee" which directs the movements of the group, sets policy and imposes discipline. The group works at various members' farms in rotation, according to the order in which they have registered with the chairman and paid him the specified summons fee. Fines are imposed for lateness, absence and other violations of the group's rules. On the whole, there is less of the free and easy atmosphere which characterizes the amorphous, acephalous ad hoc cocoa breaking parties.

There are in Kake about 35 such groups, multi-ethnic in composition, having about 15-30 members each. Although the divisional authorities do not directly regulate the composition of labor groups, members are drawn from different ethnic groups (in most cases), conforming to the general federal law banning "tribal" organizations [see sec. 2.6]. As the majority of farmers in Kake belong to at least one labor group, inter-ethnic reciprocity, operating on a regular basis, has become the norm for the village as a whole, at least within the agricultural sphere.

The various Igbo subgroups represented in Kake can be compared [Table 8.5] with respect to participation in labor meetings. Of the 48 active farmers from the four areas discussed [Ohaffia, Ada, Udi and Okigwi], 40, or approximately 80%, are members of labor meetings. As indicated in Table 8.5, a majority of members of each local subgroup belong to at least one of seven meetings [A-G]. The extent to which each subgroup participates is generally consistent with its pattern of involvement in ad hoc cocoa breaking parties [Table 8.2]. Ohaffia and Ada, the larger subgroups, show somewhat less participation in these multi-ethnic meetings [approximately 75%] than Okigwi and Udi, the smaller subgroups [100% and 87.5%, respectively].

TABLE 8.5

PARTICIPATION IN LABOR MEETINGS BY SUB-COMMUNITY

<u>Local sub-group</u>	<u>Labor Meeting</u>	<u>% Sub-group participating</u>	<u>Distribution among Various Meetings</u>
Ohaffia	A	15/24 [66.7%]	16/18 [88.9%]
	B	1/24 [4.2%]	1/18 [5.6%]
	C	<u>1/24 [4.2%]</u>	<u>1/18 [5.6%]</u>
		18/24 [75.1%]	18/18 [100.0%]
Ada	D	5/12 [50.0%]	6/9 [66.7%]
	E	1/12 [8.3%]	1/9 [11.1%]
	A	<u>2/12 [16.7%]</u>	<u>2/9 [22.2%]</u>
		9/12 [75.0%]	9/9 [100.0%]
Udi	F	5/8 [87.5%]	5/5 [100.0%]
Okigwi	D	2/4 [50.0%]	2/4 [50.0%]
	E	1/4 [25.0%]	1/4 [25.0%]
	G	<u>1/4 [25.0%]</u>	<u>1/4 [25.0%]</u>
		4/4 [100.0%]	4/4 [100.0%]

In the larger subsections, as observed earlier [sec. 8.2], ties within the ethnic group and subgroup minimize dependency on outsiders. In the smaller subgroups, where there is greater need to diversify network links and create reciprocal obligations, the labor meetings serve as a means for accomplishing this.

The distribution of membership among various meetings also varies from one subcommunity to another. Again, this distribution shows some correlation with previously observed patterns. In the case of Ohaffias, close to 90% of the member farmers belong to a single group [A], while most Adas are concentrated in another [D]. The fact that Udi, though small, is highly cohesive, is shown by the fact that all her members belong to a single group. The scattering of Okigwi's four members among as many meetings as the much larger Ohaffia subgroup supports the previously observed lack of cohesion of this smallest group. Ada's membership, although only half of Ohaffia's, is, likewise, scattered among three groups. In addition, one Ada farmer [the chairman of group D] simultaneously belonged to two other groups [not listed] in which all other members were non-Igbos.¹⁰ This supports the view, noted earlier [8.2], that Ada is generally less cohesive than either Ohaffia or Udi.

Although labor groups in Kake are ethnically mixed, the composition is highly variable from one group to another. Some groups are predominantly "Graffi" (i.e., Grasslander), while others are mainly Ngolo or Bakundu [see sec. 2.1 and 2.3 and Fig. 2.2]. In many groups there is a fairly representative distribution of membership among the ethnic sections, while in a few, only a minimal number of token outsiders are recruited to avoid being viewed as a "tribal" association. In the nine groups in Kake having Igbo members, for example, their representation varies from one [in four cases] to more than half of the membership [in one group].

The decision to join a particular group, rather than another, is a choice involving many variables. The reason most frequently expressed is typified by the remark, "I joined this group because I saw that they were good workers." In examining the various membership rolls, however, it is evident that ties of kinship, friendship and ethnicity are, likewise, important.¹¹

Ethnicity might be viewed from the standpoint of a given individual's tendency to join a group having a large number of co-ethnics. This tendency varies from one subgroup to another, as indicated in Table 8.6. Comparing this data to the previous table [8.5], it can be seen

TABLE 8.6

PARTICIPATION IN LABOR MEETINGS BY SUBCOMMUNITY
IN RELATION TO PERCENTAGE OF IGBO MEMBERSHIP

<u>Local subgroup</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>No. Igbos</u>	<u>Total Members</u>	<u>%Igbos</u>	<u>Total % Igbos</u>
Ohaffia	A	18	28	64.3	
	B	3	22	13.6	
	C	<u>1</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>7.1</u>	
					34.4
Ada	D	7	20	30.0	
	E	10	25	40.0	
	A	<u>18</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>64.3</u>	
					46.6
Udi	F	5	22	31.8	31.8
Okigwi	D	7	20	30.0	
	E	10	25	10.0	
	G	<u>1</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>4.5</u>	
Mean for all groups					25.4

that, although most Ohaffias are concentrated in a single group [A], two members of that local community are involved in labor groups with low Igbo representation. This underscores the statement made with respect to Ohaffia's recruitment for ad hoc breakings, i.e., that they are internally cohesive while relatively loosely bound to the rest of the Igbo community. Adas, for the mostpart, are confined to groups with substantial Igbo membership. This corresponds to their participation in ad hoc groups which shows them to be highly dependent on intra-ethnic ties, while somewhat loosely integrated internally. Udis, concentrated in a single meeting with relatively low Igbo membership (containing no Igbos other than Udis), confirm the fact that outside the local group intra-ethnic ties are relatively weak. Okigwi as a small community which showed a somewhat higher dependency on intra-ethnic ties in ad hoc parties, likewise, showed a stronger tendency than Udi to gravitate toward labor groups containing other Igbos. In two of the three groups to which Okigwis belong the majority of Igbos come from other segments. However, as in ad hoc parties, Okigwi's membership shows much less dependency on intra-ethnic ties than in the case of Ada.¹²

It can be seen from the above data that the labor requirements of cocoa promote the development of patterns

of co-operation which are, in varying degrees, inter-ethnic. The optimal size of cocoa breaking parties and formal labor groups appears to be a critical factor in limiting or facilitating the activation of inter-ethnic links, depending on the size of the ethnic group or local subgroup under consideration. A group too large to form a single co-operative unit (e.g., Igbos in Kake as a whole) tends to divide into smaller subgroups, which may be integrated or fragmented to the degree to which its members depend on outside assistance. A group close to optimal size as a co-operative unit (e.g., Ohaffia) is often well integrated, reflecting a high degree of mutual dependency, while smaller groups, more dependent on outside assistance, are frequently less cohesive (e.g., Okigwi).

Such economic constraints and demographic variables, however, do not account for the total network of agricultural reciprocity in Kake, much less the full spectrum of inter-ethnic relations. For example, a relatively small subgroup (e.g., Udi) may be well integrated, while less integrated segments may draw assistance from either co-ethnics (e.g., Ada) or non-co-ethnics (e.g., Okigwi). Many of these differences can be accounted for through the examination of the social organization of the various local segments.

8.4 ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES OF SUBGROUPS

The general pattern of Ohaffia social organization in Kake provides the basis for the well integrated reciprocity network noted above. All the members of this local segment live in Kake II, proper [see Figure 2.3], and are mainly concentrated in the "upper" [i.e., toward Mbonge] end of the village. This facilitates the considerable mutual visiting which takes place and allows for the easy mobilization of breaking parties. As pointed out earlier [section 4.2], Ohaffia is also more organized administratively than other local groups.

Ohaffia solidarity manifests itself during celebrations. When a member of the Kake Ohaffia subcommunity has died, the death celebration for all Igbos is followed by another gathering of members of the local segment. Participation and contributions are rigidly enforced, mainly through group pressure and the threat of invoking higher authorities [see sec. 4.2]. Roll is kept by a secretary, funds collected by a treasurer, and some semblance of parliamentary procedure is maintained. However, as the celebration wears on and more alcohol is consumed, order gives way to conviviality and intensity, reflecting a high degree of mutual familiarity.

During the Christmas and New Year season there is a great deal of visiting of friends, kinsmen and countrymen

among Ohaffias, as among other Kake residents. With Ohaffias, however, it is more organized, with Christmas day a time for circulating among the houses of members as a body. On New Year's day the group fragments, going to Kumba and joining roving parties from one's village of origin.

The sense of ethnic and segmental identity is strong within the Ohaffia subgroup. More than two thirds of the Ohaffias use Igbo rather than European first names. Ohaffias decry the other groups for adopting Christian names as un-Igbo and un-African, suggesting a general rejection of ethnic identity. Although about half of the group nominally identify themselves with various Protestant denominations, most are not currently involved in local congregations. Religion is, therefore, neither a divisive factor within the group, nor does it contribute to extending ties beyond the local segment.

Ada, on the other hand, emerges as having less internal integration, with numerous ties to non-Adas, and more dependent on non-Igbos than Ohaffia. This can, likewise, be related to other dimensions of social organization. The Ada population of Kake is more dispersed residually than Ohaffia. A quarter of the Ada farmers in Kake live in Mile Two, with the remaining three quarters, resident in Kake II, proper, scattered across the length of the village with no evidence of clustering as in the case of Ohaffia.

Although there is a fair amount of reciprocal visiting within the group there is less casual contact, less clustering in bars, and more effort would be required to inform and mobilize co-operative labor. Unlike Ohaffia, Ada has no chief in Kake, although the representative for Nigerians on the village council, who hails from this subgroup, is occasionally referred to as "our chief." Internal disputes, however, are just as likely to be settled outside, either within the Igbo community as a whole or be referred to the Ada chief in Kumba [see chapter 4]. However, since the Ada segment in Kake is much smaller than Ohaffia, the probability of serious disputes arising is correspondingly less.

Celebrations within the Ada segment differ somewhat from those of Ohaffias. Funerals for subgroup members are celebrated together with Kake Igbos as a whole with numerous Adas coming from Kumba and surrounding villages. Although the celebrations are basically "Ada" in character, the large number of non-Ada Igbos, and Cameroonians gives it a more cosmopolitan character. Given the smaller number of Adas in Kake, there is no subsequent ceremony for the subgroup [as in the case of Ohaffia].

During the Christmas/New Year holidays, there is some mutual visiting, but not as organized as is the case with Ohaffias. Many Adas celebrate at home or in the company of kinsmen, neighbors or friends. Nonkin guests may be members

of ones own subgroup, but frequently include other co-ethnics, as well as non-Igbos. Unlike Ohaffias, Adas do not move about in clusters in Kumba or Kake at this time.

Adas do, of course, maintain regular contact with friends, kinsmen and fellow Adas outside Kake [see sec. 4.2]. Heavy Ada concentrations are found in neighboring villages, and, in some of them they form the largest Igbo contingent, a factor which seems to have a centrifugal effect on those living in Kake. It is in patterns of visiting outside Kake and interaction with solidary clusters of Adas in other villages, that subgroup attachments stand out, rather than in terms of their interaction within the village, as was true of Ohaffias.

Just as there are differences in the expression of intra-segmental solidarity between Ada and Ohaffia, there are also differences in the expression of subgroup identity. Adas seem generally less inclined than Ohaffias to lay claim to an authentic ethnic identity which rejects non-African influences. Unlike Ohaffia, for example, the great majority of Adas are known by European first names. More Adas than Ohaffias [about 3/4] identify themselves as Christians, and about half of them attend local churches. Although all of these latter are protestants, there is some rivalry between the two churches they attend [Presbyterian and Church of Christ]. This does not appear to cause significant divisiveness within

the Ada subgroup, but may reinforce differential patterns of network formation, promoting the extension of ties beyond the segment.

Udi is internally very cohesive, but maintains numerous links with non-Igbos. Dependency on Igbos outside the local segment is somewhat less than in most other subgroups. All of the active farmers from Udi live in Kake II [Fig. 2.3], tending to fall, more or less, within the center of the village, being less spread out residentially than either Adas or Ohaffias.¹³ One member of the subcommunity operates an off-license which serves as a gathering point for its members. Members of this segment are, therefore, easily accessible to one another and, being in close touch, respond readily to one another's need for assistance. Although the Udi contingent is too small in Kake to warrant having a chief, two successful and more established farmers command a fair measure of respect.

During the Christmas/New Year season, Udis tend to cluster around the off-lincense owned by a man from that area. A number of other Igbos and Cameroonians often gather there as well, participating fully in drinking, conversation and conviviality, making the gatherings far less exclusive than in the case of Ohaffia celebrations. Funerals for Udis, likewise, point up the extensive links which that community has outside the local segment, with Cameroonians being

especially well represented.

The relatively small size of the Udi community accounts, in part, for the heavy dependency on outside links in cocoa breaking. The fact that Udis tend to draw more heavily on Cameroonians, however, reflects a higher degree of integration into the host society compared to other Igbo subgroups. One noteworthy contributing factor is the fact that **three** of the seven active Udi farmers were born in Cameroon and are fluent speakers of local languages.¹⁴ Among Igbos in Cameroon as a whole, relatively few adults are Cameroon born, and fluency in local languages fairly uncommon. This coincides with the evident greater incidence of friendship with Cameroonians which furnishes a basis for reciprocity in farm labor.

Udis seem less inclined to define their ethnic identity in opposition to European influences than either Ohaffia or Ada. All members of the local contingent have European given names, and most of them are active members of local churches. The majority are associated with a single denomination [Presbyterian], although **one** member is a Catholic.¹⁵

The tiny, fragmented Okigwi contingent is the most dependent on outside assistance of any local segment in Kake. As with Udis, Okigwis are situated in the center of the village, and, although they are not immediate neighbors to one another, there is less co-operation and mutual contact

than one might expect.

Given the small size of the Okigwi segment, a funeral is a relatively infrequent occurrence and none took place during the term of fieldwork. There was also no marriage or any other ceremony during this period which brought together members of this group as a collectivity.

The Christmas/ New Year holiday is celebrated with local friends [without particular regard to area of origin] or with kinsmen and home people in Kumba where a large Okigwi settlement exists. There is, then, little collective expression of solidarity within Kake, and, as is true of Ada, ties to kinsmen living outside the village seem to have a centrifugal effect.

As with Udis, all Okigwis use English first names and all belong to local churches. The fact that they are equally divided between Protestant and Catholic membership, to some extent, reflects the fragmented nature of the segment.¹⁶

As with Udis, Okigwis are highly dependent on non-Igbo friends in agricultural reciprocity and, in addition, draw to a considerable extent on neighborhood links outside the ethnic group. Two members of the group had particularly good relations with their Cameroonians landlords [Ngolo in both cases] and had developed recipro-

cal relations through which they avoided paying rent, a situation not encountered with any other Igbos in Kake.¹⁷ Another man was several months in default of his rent on the forbearance of his Grasslander landlord. This man [the Igbo] had several good friends of his own age from the same Grassland group as his landlord [Meta] and worked a farm on a two party basis with another man from that ethnic group. He relied heavily on neighboring farmers, mostly Cameroonians, for agricultural assistance, while the two mentioned above depended on friendship and labor group ties to Ngolos and Bakundus.¹⁸

Data from informal cocoa breakings and membership in labor groups suggest, however, that ties to Igbos outside the local segment are more important in the case of Okigwi than with Udi. This may, in part, reflect the fact that the former [at least those resident in Kake] have a shorter history of residence in Cameroon and, generally speaking, are less integrated into the local scene. Unlike Udis, no Okigwis were born in Cameroon and none speak Cameroonian languages.

In summary, there seems to be a fairly high degree of correspondence between patterns of co-operation in farm labor and the social organization of various Igbo segments in Kake. Subgroup size, spatial distribution,

formal organization, collective ceremonial life and the perception of segmental identity form an interrelated constellation of factors associated with subcommunal solidarity and potential for mobilization. A fuller understanding of subgroup differences, however, involves an examination of the actual ties which link the members of each subgroup.

8.5 KINSHIP AND COVILLAGER NETWORKS

The degree of solidarity within the subgroup varies according to the network of kinship and home village ties within it. The Ohaffia segment, for example, is drawn from six villages: Ndi Uduma, Amuma, Asaga, Ebem, Elu and Amangwu. Ebem contains the largest representation, accounting for a third of the Ohaffia group and includes the two Ohaffias longest resident in Kake.¹⁹ Ndi Uduma accounts for a quarter of the Ohaffia farmers, while each of the remaining four villages have only two or three representatives each. Although this distribution may seem somewhat random, the solidarity of the Ohaffia segment becomes understandable in the light of cross-cutting kinship ties.

Ohaffia's home territory falls within the section on eastern Igbo territory practicing double-unilineal descent, hence, matrilineal ties are of crucial im-

portance in economic and social organization. The importance of these ikwu ties in the migrant situation was discussed above [sec. 5.1]. The distribution of farmers according to matriclan ties and village of origin is shown in Fig. 8.1.

Although Ohaffias are rather scattered in terms of village of origin, it can be seen that more than two-thirds are drawn from only two matriclans (D and E), which cross-cuts and reinforces ties based on locality, giving the whole subgroup a much more cohesive structure. Lineage D (Umuekuke), the largest matrilineage (in terms of representation in Kake) contains the member longest resident in the village, while lineage E (Umu Eze Nkazi), the second longest resident. As pointed out before, both of these men come from the village of Ebem. Members drawn from Ebem (the largest village in terms of Kake representation) belonging to lineage D (the largest lineage) account for one quarter of the Ohaffia contingent and constitute a core cluster with extensive kinship and home village ties in Kake. Closely linked to this core cluster is the remainder of Ebem and the members of Asaga, all of whom belong to lineage D. Matrilineage E, drawing members from Ebem and Elu, extends this linkage to include Amangu and Amuma. Ndi Uduma is only peripherally linked

to the rest of the community, but, nonetheless, its members, for the mostpart, are active participants in Ohaffia activities.²⁰

In addition, there are four pairs of full brothers, giving some patrilineal reinforcement within matriclans A, B, D and E.²¹ As matriclans are exogamous, affinal ties provide another series of cross-cutting ties, seven of the 24 Ohaffia farmers being linked through such relationships. In addition, members of different matrilineages are regarded as potential affines, which, very likely, is added incentive to intrasegmental co-operation.

Ada, like Ohaffia, is an eastern Igbo group, also falling within the area practicing double-unilineal descent. In Kake, however, Ada matriclans do not form an extensive network linking members of separate home villages, as in the case of Ohaffia and, as is true of the homeland. In fact, all of the Adas resident in Kake belong to separate matriclans, with the exception of two men who are full brothers [4 and 3]. They are patrilineally related to a third man [10] from the same village. Two members of another village [Oso] are, likewise, members of the same patrilineage [9 and 12]. As shown in Fig. 8.2, there are no other kinship links among members of the segment and none cross linking the three villages represented in Kake.

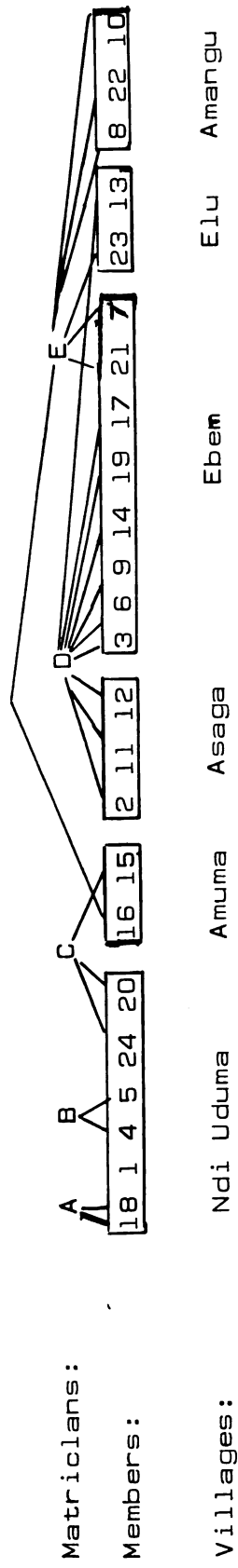


FIGURE 8.1
KINSHIP AND CO-VILLAGER NETWORK: OHAFFIA

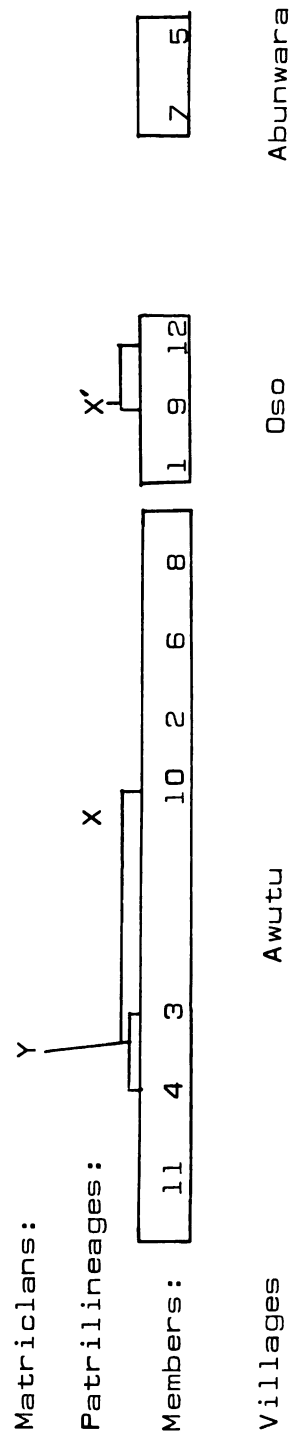


FIGURE 8.2
KINSHIP AND COVILLAGER NETWORK: ADA

The village of Awutu, which claims more than half of the Ada farmers, is, to some extent, bound together with kinship and affinal ties. In addition to kinship ties shown above, there are two affinal links within this village.²² Apart from a single affinal tie linking Awutu to Oso, there are no other bonds of kinship or affinity linking Ada villages in Kake.²³ Although two members of Oso are patrikinsmen (father and son), the two men from Abunwara are unrelated.

The small, tightly knit group of farmers from Udi all come from the Aguru village group. They have a history of long residence and mutual association in Cameroon. Unlike eastern Igbos, Udis follow the more typical Igbo pattern of patrilineal descent, which forms the framework for the organization of this segment in Kake, as indicated in Fig. 8.3.

Six of the eight (75%) of the Udi farmers are closely related patrilineal kinsmen. No. 3, the father of 2, and x [deceased], father of 5,6,7 and 8, are sons of the same father. The sister of 2 [y] is the wife of 1, who is, in turn, patrilineally related to 4. The only other adult male member of the Udi community, a non-farmer (not shown), likewise, belongs to this latter patrilineage. The only members of the Udi contingent not belonging to

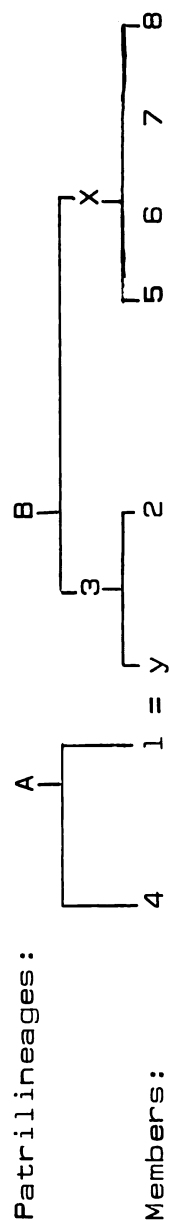


FIGURE 8.3
KINSHIP AND AFFINAL NETWORK: UDI [AGURU]

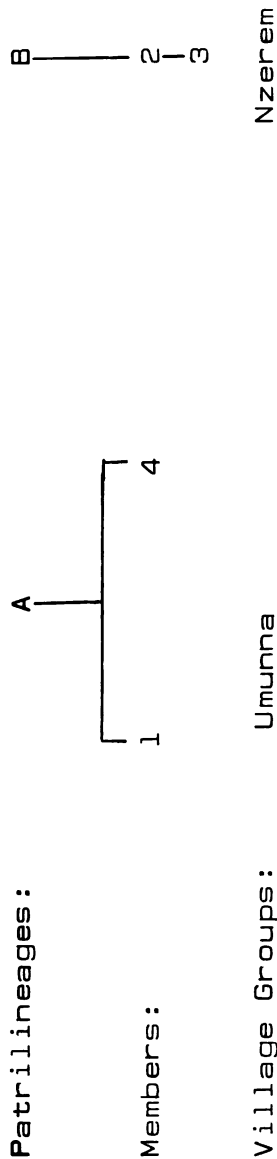


FIGURE 8.4
KINSHIP AND COVILLAGE NETWORK: OKIGWI

these two patrilineages are the wives of the three farmers [3, 4, and 5]; two of the three come from Aguru.

The Udi segment is bound together by a closer network of kin and home area ties than either Ada or Ohaffia, consistent with the high degree of internal co-operation as well as their participation in the same labor group. Close kinship and direct affinal ties, in all probability, exert more compelling obligations for mutual assistance than in other groups, where shared home area, common dialect and culture and relatively remote common descent are binding forces. As these close kinsmen are based in the village, ties to other kin, living elsewhere, have less of a centrifugal effect than is the case with Ada and, to some extent, Ohaffia.

The small cluster of farmers from Okigwi come from two villages within separate village groups. Okigwi lies within the central Igbo "heartland" and, as with Udi, recognizes patrilineal descent. The four Okigwi farmers fall into two patrilineages, as shown in Fig. 8.4.

Farmers 1 and 4 are patrilineal kinsmen, coming from the same village in Umunna, while 3 is the son of 2, from Nzerem, some distance away. There are no cross-linking ties of kinship or affinity between members from the two village groups, and, judging from data on co-operation and overall social organization, the ties between them seem

quite tenuous. The differences in lineage and home village correspond to a difference in religion [Umunna farmers are Catholic and Nzerem Protestant] and a difference in labor group affiliation [Umunna farmers belonging to one group, Nzerem to two others].

Unlike Ohaffia, Ada and Udi, the small size, relative insignificance of co-operation and corporate life and the limited scope of primary ties would not justify calling the Okigwis in Kake a "group." There is considerable involvement with and reliance on other Igbos and Cameroonians, and [as with Ada] ties to kinsmen and home people living in Kumba outweigh loyalties to Okigwi within Kake.

8.6 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF NETWORKS

The differences among the networks of the various subgroups, as outlined above, can be summarized in terms of the concepts of degree and density as applied by Barnes [1968], Kapferer [1973] and others. Degree is a measure of the mean number of links per individual included in the network and is derived through the formula $2 \times N_a/N$, where N_a represents the total number of links and N the total number of persons in a given network. Density refers to the total number of ties within the network as a percentage of the maximum number which would exist if every

member were linked to every other member and is given by the formula $100 \times N_a / \frac{1}{2} N \times (N-1)$. In terms of the present analysis, density [D] and degree [d] of networks, based on covillage linkages, kinship and affinity, are compared for the four subgroups [Table 8.7].

TABLE 8.7
DENSITY AND DEGREE OF
NETWORKS BY SUBCOMMUNITY

		<u>OhaFFia</u>	<u>Ada</u>	<u>Udi</u>	<u>Okigwi</u>
No. persons [N]		24	12	8	4
Maximum no. links		276	66	28	6
Covillage links:					
	Na	51	25	28	2
	D[%]	18.5	37.8	100.0	33.3
	d	4.3	4.2	7.0	1.0
Kinship:					
	Na	70.5	4	16	2
	D[%]	25.5	6.1	57.1	33.2
	d	5.9	0.7	4	1
Affinal links:					
	Na	3	4	12	0
	D[%]	1.1	6.1	42.9	0
	d	0.3	0.7	2	0
Total:					
	Na	99	26	28	2
	D[%]	35.9	39.4	100.0	33.3
	d	8.3	4.3	7.	1

Looking at the above table, it is evident that Udi has the highest overall network density [100%], every member of that community coming from the same village group and linked with every other person, either through ties of kinship or affinity. The degree [d] is, consequently, maximum [7] for an eight person network, which accounts for the high level of mutual co-operation and the tendency to join a single labor meeting. The small size of the group has, however, necessitated considerable reliance on outside assistance.

Ada shows the next highest overall density [39.4], which might lead one to expect a higher level of co-operation than was observed. However, because of the small size of the group [12], the degree is also relatively small [4.3], and there is rather heavy reliance on outside assistance.

This situation contrasts with Ohaffia where, although the total density [35.9] is somewhat less than for Ada, the larger size of the subgroup means that there is a greater mean number of links [8.3] per member, which, in part, accounts for its greater solidarity. Another significant factor seems to be that for Ohaffias there is a much higher density of kinship ties [25.5] compared to Ada [6.1], whose network density is largely a product of covillage ties.

In the tiny Okigwi contingent, subgroup size, density and degree are all the lowest for the Igbo community and correspond to their low solidarity and heavy reliance on outside assistance.

8.8 SUMMARY AND ADDITIONAL REMARKS

In summary, it can be said that, using one activity field as an index [cocoa harvesting], Igbo in Kake emerge as a community knitted together by ties of reciprocity. However, this interlacing at the level of the ethnic group as a whole is relatively loose compared to the tightly knit subgroups which tend to form the functional core clusters of individuals who regularly interact. On the other hand, the relative importance of the ethnic group, subgroup and the degree of interaction with non-co-ethnics, varies in accordance with a number of factors. In general, large subgroups with some degree of formal organization and numerous cross-linking ties based on kinship, affinity and common home village show the greatest degree of solidarity and autonomy. Smaller groups may be tightly integrated, but will be less autonomous, while large groups, loosely integrated, are, similarly, dependent on outside ties.

As Kapferer [1973: 87] has pointed out, network density alone is often not the key factor in understanding the dynamics of a social network, but, due attention should be given to the types of ties linking members. In the present instance, for example, it is evident that kinship ties [even though remote] are of greater significance than covillage links as a basis for labor reciprocity (e.g., Ohaffia and Ada). Affinal ties may also be important in cross-linking separate kin-groups [especially evident in Udi] or separate home village contingents [possibly, though less clearly, in Ada].

FOOTNOTES

1. In the homeland men are concerned only with the cultivation of yams, while in Cameroon they frequently help their women cultivate cocoa yams, plantains and other crops.
2. Two commercial preparations [Gamalin and Perinox] are used against insect pests and black pod disease.
3. Local farmers compare the urgency of breaking cocoa at this point to a corpse [Pidgin: die body] which needs to be buried immediately [especially in the tropics where decomposition is rapid].
4. This refers to the sum paid by a member into the meeting's fund when he "has summons," i.e., the group does work on his farm. This amount is usually paid in advance, but is often deferred, according to the member's economic circumstances. Being seriously in arrears, however, might lead to difficulty in reserving the next summons.
5. The fact that these items regularly appear in all post-breaking feasts, whether hosted by Nigerians or Cameroonians, is interesting and yet another aspect of the emergent compromise culture taking root in both rural and urban southern West Cameroon. The absence of any of these items may result in a fine (if the breaking group is a labor meeting) or an unwillingness of participants to aid the host in the future.
6. Also included [in one case] was a cocoa buyer and his two sons.
7. The practice of sending substitutes is also followed in formal labor groups.
8. One Ada was seen to participate in most of the Ohaffia breakings and was, on the testimony of an Ohaffia man, "more like an Ohaffia, since he does everything in common with us."

9. One farmer [a blacksmith] and an elderly man frequently absent from the village were the only two Udis who did not participate.
10. The chairman of group D was the only Igbo belonging to more than one labor group. He reportedly, did so since he worked more land than most farmers and needed to enlist more labor.
11. Prior to the banning of ethnic unions, labor meetings in Kake were organized along ethnic lines.
12. The extent to which each Igbo subgroup is linked to the Igbo community as a whole through labor meeting membership is indicated by the following formula, where A = any subgroup:

$$\frac{\text{No. of non-A Igbos in all meetings including A's}}{\text{Total membership of all meetings including A's}}$$

Computing this ratio for the four Igbo subgroups in Kake gives the following results: Ohaffia= 6.3%; Ada= 30.1%; Udi= 0.0%; Okigwi= 19.4%.

13. One Udi farmer on the verge of retirement was living in Mile II when I first arrived, but has since returned to Nigeria. One non-farmer [the blacksmith] lives toward the upper [i.e., away from Kumba] end of Kake.
14. Two of these men speak Bakundu, the language of the host population, while the third speaks Bangwa, a language in Manyu Division.
15. This individual [the blacksmith]. was described by one Udi man as someone who "doesn't want to join in the things we [Udis] do."
16. One Catholic farmer from Okigwi pointed out that Ohaffias, in his view, being predominantly Protestant, were generally less interested in religion. An Okigwi Protestant, on the other hand, spent sometime expounding on the alleged superiority of Protestant mission education.

17. In one case the tenant was a mat-maker who repaired the roof of the house which he and his family shared with the landlord. He praised the landlord as a "good-hearted man" who helped him with farm work. The second case was his son, who shared a house with an age mate who, like himself, was an aspiring mechanic.
18. One of these men belonged to a labor meeting in which almost all of the members were from these two ethnic groups.
19. Ebem, with a population of 11,114 [1964], is the second largest village in Ohaffia [Nsugbe 1974: 8].
20. One individual [no. 18 in Fig. 8.1], who was, perhaps, the most dissident in the entire Ohaffia segment, came from Ndi Uduma. Being a barber, in addition to a cocoa farmer, he was the most irregular participant in co-operative labor and for this he received a considerable number of fines by his labor meeting. He was also fined by the Ohaffia community for his failure to contribute to a group project.
21. Two pairs of brothers were from Ndi Uduma, one from Asaga and a fourth from Amangu.
22. Farmer no.11 [Fig.2] is married to the full sister of 4 and 3, while the wife of 10 belongs to the same matriclan as 2.
23. The wife of no. 1 is related to 8, as her father comes from the same matrilineage. Although this was pointed to as an affinal relationship by 1, 8 maintained that he had no affines in Kake. Likewise, no.1 claimed affinal relations with one farmer from Ohaffia, whose wife comes from 1's matrilineage, which was not mentioned by the Ohaffia man in describing his affinal network. This indicates the flexibility of affinal relations and the variation in the extent to which individuals emphasize more remote ties [sec. 6.6].
24. Aguru is one of a number of northern Igbo centers specializing in blacksmithing, whose men have a long tradition of migration and who were [together with smiths from eastern Igbo country] among the first Igbos to come to Cameroon. All of the Udi farmers in Kake were either trained as smiths or were sons of smiths.
25. The third woman [the wife of 5] is from a neighboring village group in Udi.

CHAPTER 9

ETHNIC ATTITUDES IN THE MIGRANT SETTING

The patterns of inter- and intra-ethnic interaction, described above, are paralleled by and occur within the context of an elaborate system of ethnic attitudes. These attitudes, on the one hand, may be viewed as the product of cultural, historical and economic factors which set the stage for the working out of patterns of human relations in the migrant setting. On the other hand, attitudes have salience in and of themselves, contributing to the strategic choices which underlie the formation of social networks, their maintenance and patterns of differential activation.

This chapter examines the attitudinal dimension of ethnicity as it impinges upon the Igbo migrant community in the Kumba peri-urban area.¹ It is largely concerned with the subject of inter-ethnic stereotyping and ethnocentrism, a major dimension in ethnic boundary definition. This broad and complex topic can be conveniently divided into five subareas in viewing the case at hand:

- 1) Igbo attitudes toward the multi-ethnic situation [positive and negative].

- 2) Igbo attitudes toward non-Igbos, mainly Cameroonians [positive and negative].
- 3) Non-Igbo attitudes toward Igbos [positive and negative].
- 4) Igbo views of themselves [primarily positive].
- 5) Igbo views of authority [primarily negative].

9.1 IGBO ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MULTI-ETHNIC SITUATION

Several generalizations can be made concerning the prevailing ways in which Igbos tend to perceive and characterize the ethnically pluralistic society of southern West Cameroon. Broadly speaking, although there is a considerable amount of ambivalence, negative aspects tend to be emphasized more frequently than positive ones. As discussed earlier, Igbos in the Kumba area, being both strangers and aliens, do not identify themselves with their place of residence [see sections 2.4 and 4.3]. The migrant town or village is seen as a temporary location of their current economic activities, and even though a migrant may have lived in a given center for several years, he will usually deny any implication that he has established roots, or any sense of local attachment. Kumba is viewed by Igbos and others as a "town of strangers," and "civic spirit," as such, does not exist, except in the context of the var-

ious ethnic communities. Even so, the Igbo community of Kumba [or Kake] exists as a unit only in terms of organizational convenience, rather than in terms of basic loyalties, which remain focused on the Nigerian homeland.

Not only is the migrant center not a part of one's ethnic or communal identity, but is frequently viewed as a genuine threat to that identity. The term most often used by Igbos to describe the ethnic heterogeneity of Kumba is "mixed up," which suggests that not only are its residents drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds, but that their respective cultural heritages over time become diluted, eroded and intermingled with that of others. Igbos continually draw contrasts between how things are done in the homeland and how they are done in Cameroon as a result of accommodation to an alien environment and the influence of Cameroonians. In one "send-off" [going-away party], for example, two Igbos argued the propriety of using imported liquor [rather than African palm wine] to make libations. One held that it was not, while the other [whose view prevailed] argued that it was appropriate "as we are strangers here."

As pointed out earlier, Igbos frequently remark on the difficulty of properly socializing children in the migrant setting. Language was discussed as an area of concern, citing the generally preferred use of Pidgin English

by Igbo children [see sec. 3.1]. Even more disturbing, however, to the majority of Igbos, is the alleged difficulty of transmitting home values and protecting children from the "corruptive" influences of their Cameroonian peers. Igbos generally see themselves [and are viewed by Cameroonians] as being strict and demanding with their children, expecting them to make contributions to the household economy, not required by Cameroonians. Igbos complain that they encounter more resistance in enforcing these demands in the migrant setting, and, as a consequence, their children grow up with the undisciplined, unindustrious habits attributed to Cameroonians.

Another set of values which Igbos see threatened in the migrant situation concerns sexual morality, particularly in the case of young women. According to one informant, girls at home are better behaved "where they are not mixed-up with others." As pointed out earlier, the alleged corruptive influence of Cameroonian sexual laxity is frequently cited as a reason for marrying girls raised in the homeland in preference to those raised abroad [sec. 6.2]. Although a mature, newly married girl brought from home is considered a lower marriage risk, some Igbos maintain that all women brought to Cameroon eventually take on the undesirable traits of their Cameroonian counterparts

which eventually erodes their home values of fidelity and industry.

Although Igbos tend to be more aware of the negative aspects of the multi-ethnic environment, they occasionally point to its positive side. As indicated by Ardenner [1960: 101 ff] in his study of plantation laborers, Igbos and Cameroonians alike see distinct advantages in inter-ethnic contact in the migrant centers of West Cameroon. Learning from persons of diverse cultural backgrounds is sometimes mentioned as a beneficial by-product of traveling and living outside the homeland. "The traveler learns more than the stay-at-home," is a common expression of migrant Igbos. On this point there is clearly a double standard; men are able to expand their horizons by going abroad, while women and children tend to learn mainly bad behavior. Here, ambivalence toward the multi-ethnic situation stems from the general agreement that the migrant learns a great deal.

The national ideologies of both Cameroon and Nigeria which emphasize ethnic integration, and the suppression of communal rivalries while idealizing inter-ethnic harmony, also influences the perception and reality of the plural society. "Kumba is a place where people of different tribes work together," is a typical remark elicited from Cameroonians, and [to a somewhat lesser extent] from Igbos

as well. The tendency for various ethnic groups to specialize in different economic pursuits is thus seen as complimentary and mutually beneficial, to the degree that one does not use his position to gain undue advantage over others. Mutual assistance, especially in the village, is seen as an indicator of inter-ethnic harmony. As one Ohaffia migrant reported when describing how Cameroonian neighbors assisted an Igbo in repairing his roof after a storm:

That's how they do it in Igboland when something like this happens. People will bring food, nails and come to repair the damage.

This, he said, could be quite uncommon in Kumba, unless one had especially good relations with one's neighbors. Similarly, one Igbo migrant remarked that when Kumba was small, "everyone was like a brother, whether Hausa, or whatever." Here Igbos show a willingness to recognize that many of the social problems which are often associated with Cameroon are more characteristically urban than Cameroonian. Frequently, however, the Kumba based Igbo migrant, linked to his rural homeland tends to forget that anomie, inter-personal alienation and the commercialization of human relations are equally a part of Nigerian town life as well. Migrants also remark that Cameroonians "are too tribalistic," as though inter-ethnic rivalry were a special national characteristic which distinguishes Nigerians from themselves.

9.2 IGBO ATTITUDES TOWARD NON-IGBOS: NEGATIVE

As the Igbo view of the Cameroonian situation is, by and large, negative, Igbo stereotypes of Cameroonians, likewise, tend to emphasize negative characteristics. These stereotypes exhibit a high degree of consistency throughout the Igbo community, being an expression of the "universal syndrome of ethnocentrism," [see Levine and Campbell 1972] which evaluates outsiders according to their perceived divergence from in-group norms. Accordingly, Cameroonians as a whole, or members of various Cameroonian ethnic groups are viewed as significantly different from Igbos in culture and values and are ascribed negative characteristics consonant with the Igbo's definition of themselves. These stereotypes also reflect the shared experience of Igbos in Cameroon, and, particularly, their redefined status after Cameroonian Reunification [sec. 2.6].

The characteristic which Igbos most commonly attribute to Cameroonians is jealousy. In their view, Cameroonians have always resented Igbo success, particularly in economic ventures and are now endeavoring to utilize their privileged position as nationals to thwart and reverse these gains. The allegedly overzealous enforcement of the law where Igbos are concerned is often seen by them as a glaring instance of "jealousy."

Consequently, many Igbos express the view that their best strategy is to assume a low profile and avoid any conspicuous consumption which might encourage envy. One wealthy produce buyer, for example, said that he continued to use his old car, rather than buy a new one because he was a "foreigner" [i.e. Igbo] and that the "natives [Cameroonians] don't want us to have good things."

Related to the allegation of jealousy, which assumes Igbo superiority, is the belief that Cameroonians are ungrateful, refusing to recognize the role played by them in developing the country. This view, an integral part of the Cameroonian Igbo's self-image, sees Cameroonians as hopelessly dependent on the continued presence of Igbos, whose special skills and industry they lack. It is widely held among Igbos that most Cameroonians (except Grasslanders) have no aptitude for commerce and generally lack the drive necessary to keep the country economically viable. Certain ethnic groups (especially the local Bafaw) are stereotyped by Igbos (and others) as being partial to white-collar jobs, unwilling to throw themselves into arduous or low status occupations which could, eventually, lead to economic success. The Bafaw have also been cast as generally lazy and improvident, earning money through the sale of land and consuming, rather than investing it as Igbos tend to do. Although

these ethnic stereotypes are current among Cameroonians as well, Igbos tend to generalize them to Cameroonians at large.

Another widely held set of stereotypes [sec.6.1], concerns the behavior of Cameroonian women, which Igbo men view as immoral in contrast to that of Igbo women. Although certain Cameroonian ethnic groups (especially from Manyu Division) are seen by other co-nationals as contributing more than their share to the ranks of urban prostitutes (see Ruel 1960: 230 ff), Igbos tend to generalize this stereotype to Cameroonian women at large. Again, it appears likely that their standard for comparison is the rural Nigerian homeland (where prostitution is relatively uncommon and inconspicuous), rather than the urban centers. In any event, objective differences, in this respect, between Nigerians and Cameroonians, if they exist at all, are largely irrelevant. The major function of this stereotype, as pointed out earlier [sec. 6.1], is the role it plays in reinforcing the cherished norm of intra-ethnic endogamy.

Another attitude which Igbos frequently express toward various non-Igbos is fear and suspicion. Certain groups in particular are viewed as treacherous, capable of physical violence or given to occult practices. The

Ibibio [a neighboring southeastern Nigerian people] are stereotyped by Cameroonians and Igbos alike as inscrutable, scheming and prone to using magic and treachery to achieve their ends. While Cameroonians tend to equate Igbos and Ibibios in this respect, Igbos see this as contrasting with their highly valued norm of openness and "transparent living" [see Uchendu 1965: 17]. For example, during the term of fieldwork acts of violence were committed by heavily armed Nigerian pirates in the Rio del Ray estuary [Nigeria-Cameroon border] against returning Igbo migrants. While Cameroonians used this as an example of Nigerians' capacity for violence, in contrast to the more peaceful ways of Cameroonians, Igbos insisted that the major perpetrators were Ibibios.²

Similarly, certain Cameroonian peoples, including the local Bafaw and neighboring Bakossi [see Fig.2.2], have a reputation among migrants [Nigerian and Cameroonian] for practicing witchcraft. In Kake the strangers at Mile II were said to have relocated some distance away from the indigenous Bakundu village because of the latter's practice of witchcraft. Interestingly, although the Igbo from east of the Niger [who account for virtually all of those in Cameroon] do not recognize the existence of witches in the homeland, they are willing to acknowledge

them in Cameroon where they form a part of the local belief system. In addition, many Igbos fear alleged occultism in the Grasslands [especially the activities of kweyifon and other masked regulatory societies] and see the area as generally incongenial for settlement.

Although Igbos often distinguish among various Cameroonian ethnic groups, they frequently lump them under the general label "Cameroonian," generalizing stereotypes which various Cameroonian groups hold toward one another to Cameroonians at large. Similarly, Igbos [and other groups as well] usually categorize outgroups in terms of rough, "macro-ethnic" labels, such as "Graffi" [for Grasslanders collectively], "Banyangi" [for Banyang, Ejagham and other Manyu Division peoples], "Down Coasters," [for southern West Cameroonians] and "Frenchmen" [for East Cameroonians]. Each of these categories is, accordingly, associated with its own set of macro-ethnic stereotypes, while the internal linguistic or cultural diversity is minimized [see Mitchell 1959: 28].

From the Igbo perspective, the most socially meaningful cultural differences are those distinguishing them from non-Igbos, especially Cameroonians. Objective differences, in and of themselves, are less significant than perceived or imagined differences which serve to

maintain the mythology of ethnic distinctiveness, superiority and solidarity. Objectively, the differences between Igbo migrants and West Cameroonians are relatively slight in contrast to the cultural distance between Igbos and say British or even Hausa [a fact which is largely irrelevant given the infrequency of contact with the latter two groups in Cameroon]. Prolonged interaction of Igbos and Cameroonians in the Kumba area has, undoubtedly, reduced "objective" differences in behavior and values between them, while making the exaggeration of perceived differences all the more necessary.

The fiction of Igbo distinctiveness implies "social distance" between Igbos and Cameroonians. Accordingly, they maintain a set of negative attitudes toward relations involving varying degrees of intimacy with outgroups. At one extreme, marriage choices are effectively restricted, both by proscription of ethnic exogamy and negative stereotyping of Cameroonians (especially women). In view of the relative permanence of marriage and the network of binding obligations which it establishes, it is hardly surprising that marital links with outgroups are more consistently avoided than any other relationship.

Other forms of avoidance are generally less regular and less explicitly spelled out. In Kumba, as described earlier, Igbos tend to be residentially exclusive [sec. 4.1], but this is largely a result of administrative decree, not their desire to have a separate quarter. This clearly contrasts with the Hausa in Ibadan, who petitioned the colonial government to recognize Sabo as an exclusive Hausa quarter [Cohen 1969: 103-113]. In Kake, not only are Igbo and Cameroonian occupied houses interspersed, but many houses are shared by members of both groups. Occasionally some Igbos express a desire to live separately, but point out that one must live where houses are available.

The wish to live in a separate house from Cameroonians is often couched in terms such as, "their habits are not like ours," frequently pointing to alleged differences in standards of hygiene or diet. Igbos (and others) claim, for example, that Bakundus allow domestic animals to run freely through their houses. Other groups are stereotyped as fond of fine clothes but fail to bathe regularly or maintain an orderly house.

The concern with dietary differences is linked to the significance of commensality, pointed out earlier [sec. 7.2]. A disinclination to share food with outgroups

may be explained by Igbos as, "we don't eat that kind of food," or "we don't prepare it that way." Objectively, of course, dietary differences do exist among Cameroonian groups and between them and Igbos. Just as in Igboland local dietary preferences and proscriptions play a role in defining communal boundaries [see sec. 4.3], in Cameroon migrant centers they contribute to the distinctiveness of ethnic communities. Plantain, a major staple in the Kumba area is a marginal food in Nigeria, while other items, such as achu (a cocoa yam preparation) and kwacha (corn beer) are distinctively Grasslands. Certain foods, such as snails [Limicolaria] are avoided by Grasslanders but eaten by both Igbos and southern West Cameroonians. Such dietary preferences recur frequently in the conversations and joking about ethnic differences which goes on among Igbos and between them and Cameroonians.

Igbos often assert that the food situation is better in the homeland where yams are cheap and abundant, and people do not have to "resort to" a diet of plantain and cocoa yam as in Cameroon. Certain local foods, such as miyondo (cassava rolled into long strands) are rejected by most Igbos. According to O (an Okigwi mentioned earlier), "this is the last thing I will ever eat in Cameroon!" In point of fact, however, most Nigerians

adapt themselves to the basic local diet, and admit [regretfully] that their children "prefer plantain to yam."

In short, ethnically distinctive dietary habits have symbolic value which may bear little relation to the actual diets of in-group members in the migrant center. Rejection of certain local food items [mostly marginal] and staunchly maintaining the superiority of the home diet [while dining essentially like local people], are gestures which assert, "we really are more distinct than you would gather looking at us."

9.3 IGBO ATTITUDES TOWARD NON-IGBOS: POSITIVE

Although negative attitudes are more frequently expressed than positive ones, it would be misleading to conclude that they dominate the interaction between Igbos and Cameroonians. As suggested, they are better indicators of the insistence on ethnic boundary maintenance than of the level of real intergroup hostility. Positive attitudes are also expressed, although they are usually more qualified than negative ones, which tend to take the form of sweeping generalizations. Igbos will, for example, discuss the merits of certain Cameroonian groups in contrast to others. Grasslanders or Bamilekes

are seen by them as ambitious and progressive ("more like us"), as opposed to "Forest" peoples [southern West Cameroonians and Manyu groups], who are branded as shiftless and inept in commercial pursuits. One informant claimed that Bamilekes, Bakossis and Bassas [who are associated with the violence which took place in East Cameroon during the 1960's] were "the only Cameroonians who are strong."

Sometimes Igbos express positive attitudes toward Cameroonians in an attempt to smooth over inter-ethnic relations. Diplomatic or manipulative flattery often takes the form of telling a Cameroonian the merits of his ethnic group [usually in contrast to another group]. This type of behavior is frequently seen in interaction with Cameroonian authorities or others from whom special favors are expected.

Although social distance between Igbos and Cameroonians is usually carefully maintained, this varies considerably according to situation. Even the norm of exogamy is occasionally broken in word and action. One Afikpo man, W [previously mentioned], whose marriage to a Balong woman ended in divorce, was asked by a fellow Igbo why he married a Cameroonian in the first place. His reply, "because I didn't want to discriminate," accords with the universalistic ethos of the new nations.

Another Igbo asserted, "Dwerri people [referring to his own area] believe in [inter-ethnic] exogamy." Although he was married to a woman from his own area, he said that several of his kinsmen were married to Cameroonians and felt that the practice made for better inter-ethnic relations.

As pointed out above, there is no insistence on the part of Igbos to remain residentially exclusive, and numerous instances of positive relations between Igbos and Cameroonians sharing the same house have been noted. In Kake especially, Igbos co-operated with Cameroonian landlords or cotenants in agricultural tasks [sec. 8.2].

Despite the recurrent negative attitudes toward Cameroonian food and dining with Cameroonians, numerous instances of inter-ethnic dining were noted. In Kake, where co-operative cocoa harvesting parties are given food by their host farmers, the sharing of food between Igbos and Cameroonians is a regular occurrence. Igbos mingle freely with other ethnic groups in palm wine and beer bars, both in the village and urban center. In various celebrations [namings, marriages and funerals] which took place [although members of the principal's ethnic group were almost always in the majority], Igbos and Cameroonians dined and drank together with no evident attempt to maintain distance.

9.4 NON-IGBO ATTITUDES TOWARD IGBOS: NEGATIVE

The converse of Igbo attitudes toward non-Igbos is the stereotypes which Cameroonians and others apply to Igbo migrants. As might be expected, they too tend to be largely negative, or, if positive, carefully qualified. One of the most common views of Igbos is their alleged tendency to dominate others by virtue of their numbers and their determination to succeed at all costs. Given the large population of the Igbo homeland [greater than the whole of Cameroon], as well as the high concentration of Igbo migrants in the Kumba area [see sec. 2.3], Cameroonians have long felt threatened by their mere presence. As pointed out earlier [sec. 2.6], this fact was clearly crucial in influencing the outcome of the plebiscite in favor of unity with the Republique du Cameroun [i.e. the francophone East].

The prevailing stereotype of Igbos depicts them as ruthless opportunists, who, during the era of British administration, had free rein and dominated large sectors of the West Cameroonian economy.³ Independence and "Re-unification" [i.e. union with East Cameroon] was welcomed by West Cameroonians largely because it gave authorities control over Igbo migrants [sec. 2.6] and opened up to citizens positions from which Igbos had been displaced [especially in the civil service].

As a result of these political developments, Cameroonians, as citizens, now feel superior to Nigerians and flaunt their newly acquired status in the face of the disenfranchised migrants. Overall, Cameroonians see Igbos as less of a threat than in the past and feel that they can usually be brought into line by reminding them of their alien status or, if necessary, calling on the authorities.

These developments, however, have not affected the basic stereotypes of Igbos. They are seen by Cameroonians as cunning and overzealous in commercial pursuits, inducing customers to buy inferior or unwanted goods. Their success is attributed largely to dishonesty and deviousness. "They will cheat you if they see the chance," or "they cannot talk straight" and "good ones are rare," typify Cameroonian characterizations of Igbo traders, which are often generalized to the ethnic group at large.

Another common stereotype of Igbos is their treachery, a trait allegedly shared with Ibibios. Sorcery, poisoning and cannibalism are frequently mentioned as common Igbo practices. These anti-social acts are said to be committed against fellow Igbos and Cameroonians alike, and most Cameroonians can relate second or third-hand accounts of such occurrences.

The objective factuality or statistical frequency of these often imaginatively described and generally improbable events is less noteworthy than the willingness of the host population to give them currency. As with Igbo perceptions of Cameroonians, they are meaningful as social facts related to the maintenance of communal boundaries and indicative of the social distance between the two groups. As Ardener [1960: 104 ff] indicated in his study of plantation workers, [from the Cameroonian standpoint] social distance between Igbos and Cameroonians is generally greater than among Cameroonian ethnic groups. He found that, while the majority of Cameroonian workers favored ethnically mixed camps and work gangs, a significant minority favored the exclusion of Igbos.

According to Ardener, a frequent complaint of Cameroonian workers was the seduction of their women by Igbo migrants [Ibid.: 106]. This accusation is understandably higher in the vicinity of plantations where there is a high male/female ratio than in Kumba where there is a better balance. Nevertheless, Cameroonians do accuse Igbos (especially traders) of leading their women astray with offers of jewelry, clothes and money. In view of the Igbos' own attitude toward their women, many Cameroonians see this as an intolerable double standard. As one Mbo [East Cameroon migrant] sawyer expressed it:

Usually you can hardly see an Igbo girl harlotting. If they see one of their girls doing this they will send her back home. They don't want her around to spoil the fashion [behavior, morals] of other girls. In Nigeria if they catch their daughters doing that, they will kill them rather than let them run around. They will not let any man from outside [a non-Igbo] befriend their girls. If I ever catch an Igbo man touching one of my girls, I will deal with him!

9.5 NON-IGBO ATTITUDES TOWARD IGBOS: POSITIVE

Many of the same traits which make Igbos disliked by some Cameroonians are admired by others. The undeniable success of Igbo migrants, especially in trading, is sometimes pointed to as a positive quality resulting from determination and industry. Even Cameroonians who generally dislike Igbos allow that their strategies for economic success are efficacious and deserve credit.

Although many Cameroonians see Igbos as notoriously ethnocentric and in-group oriented in their social relations, they may admire Igbos for their developed sense of internal co-operation. "They rarely help others, but they always help one another," typifies the ambivalence common in ethnic stereotypes.

9.6 IGB0 VIEWS OF THE IN-GROUP

Many of the characteristics which Cameroonians view as typically Igbo are freely admitted by Igbos them-

selves and form an integral part of their own self image. The difference, of course, is that those traits which Cameroonians view as objectionable, are seen by Igbos as praiseworthy.

While Cameroonians view the large Igbo population in Nigeria and their own country as threatening, for Igbos themselves it reflects their strength and significance as a people. They point boastfully to the many large townships in Eastern Nigeria (Enugu, Onitsha, Aba and Pt. Harcourt), which are vastly larger than any of the urban centers in West Cameroon. W, a migrant from Afikpo, declared that in his area a typical patrilineal compound is larger than most villages in the Kumba vicinity. He went on to say that Igbos in Kumba are the most prolific of any ethnic group. While observing a crowd moving away from a football match, he declared:

About 80-90 percent of these people are Igbos. Igbos are very numerous here. I found out that in the Ndian hospital 90 percent of the births were Igbos. The same is true of Kumba.

Igbos are resentful of their loss of economic and political power which attended the transfer of authority to the independent Cameroon government. They look nostalgically back to the Trusteeship era, when few limits were placed on their commercial activities and they enjoyed full rights with Cameroonians to participate in all

sectors of the economy. In fact, in the years of British administration the Igbo, if anything, constituted a local elite, occupying a privileged position in the occupational structure of the territory. Igbos see themselves as pioneers who brought commerce and the goods of European industry into a relatively undeveloped backwater, which emerged under their guidance as the modern state of West Cameroon. As one older Igbo migrant in Kumba put it, "we were the white men here in those days," pointing up the relative unsophistication of local people and the dearth of consumer goods during the early years of Igbo immigration.

As Igbos see it, the success which they enjoyed in Cameroon was only well deserved compensation for the important part which they played in the territory's development. As Igbos prospered in Kumba they not only enriched themselves but used their wealth in building a modern town. A common claim of Igbo migrants is, "if you look around Kumba at least 90 percent of the block houses were built by us." Now with the movement toward Cameroonization, they see their achievements and contributions as unrecognized and unappreciated. They regret that they see no real stake in the future development of the country. One wealthy ex-cocoa buyer in Kumba declared that he and

men like himself could see no point in using their money for developing their property and building permanent housing in Cameroon when their future in the country was so uncertain. Increasingly, migrants have voiced the view that they should redirect their money toward investments in the homeland.

On the other hand, Igbos see themselves as highly adaptable, able to struggle along and raise themselves up from the direst of circumstances. The classical Igbo success story of the boy who began selling groundnuts in the street moving on to become a wealthy trader is a recurrent theme in the in the migrant's ethos. As one ex-teacher from Owerri expressed it:

Of all the Negro race, that is, of all the people in Africa, the Igbos are the most enterprising. We can go anywhere and integrate ourselves with any kind of people. We can tolerate all kinds of conditions.

Industry and resiliency are two facts of the Igbos' elaborate self image of moral superiority. Another aspect, mentioned earlier, is their belief that Igbo patterns of socialization which stress these qualities are better than those of Cameroonians. Throughout the greater Kumba area, Igbo children are frequently seen vending snack foods, tending shops and serving as apprentices in various service occupations [motorcycle repairing, shoe mending etc.].

Similarly, Igbos firmly believe that they are more successful in educating women for their future role as wives and mothers than Cameroonians. A pervasive male bias [certainly not unique to Igbo society] favors the early marriage of women as insurance against their becoming prostitutes. Although many Igbo girls continue their post-primary education, entering "appropriate" professions such as nursing or teaching, this should, in no case, be given precedence to their all-important domestic role. In the eyes of most Igbo men, the "independent woman" is an immoral woman, who, even though she may have a legitimate profession, has little standing in respectable society. Any unmarried Igbo woman who maintains her own residence, removed from her kinsmen is looked on as "un-Igbo" and "no doubt" corrupted by Cameroonians.

Another trait which Igbos ascribe to themselves and are accused of by Cameroonians is their developed sense of ingroup unity and co-operation ("tribalism"). The proverb, njikota di ike ["unity is strength"], is popular both in the migrant community and the homeland. On one level it reflects a commitment to mutual aid and the willingness of Igbos to combine their efforts in group projects, such as sponsoring development in the homeland or providing scholarships [uncommon among Cameroonian migrant communities]. In another, more abstract sense, it suggests the prevailing

sense that "Igbo is one," the fictional consensus in language, culture and values among Igbos at large [see section 2.1].

The value on unity is the keystone of the mythology of Igbo superiority, in two fundamental ways. First, it reinforces the image that Igbos are strong, not only individually through their energy and determination, but collectively through their numbers and ability to act as a group. Secondly, it amplifies the belief in moral superiority by suggesting that Igbo values, being widely held, are more valid than those of other [especially smaller] ethnic groups.

Igbos in Cameroon struggle to maintain their mythology of superiority despite the fact that it is seriously challenged by both external and internal forces. On the one hand, the behavior and attitudes of Igbos themselves often contradict the view that "Igbo is one." On the other; the ethnocentric attitudes of Cameroonians, coupled with their newly acquired sense of political and economic power has made many aspects of the myth less tenable.

9.7 INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS TO THE IGBO SELF-IMAGE

Although Igbo unity is valued as an ideal, frequently invoked as an essential element in the strategy of success and survival abroad, there are limits on the extent to which it can effectively operate. The sheer size, internal

diversity and dispersion of the migrant community imposes logistical problems on activation of the ethnic group as a whole. Further, individuals often resist being drawn into corporate activities or obligations which they see as contradicting their personal needs and goals.

Many Igbos, for example, complain that co-ethnics often exploit ethnic ties by imposing burdensome obligations and forced solidarity on others. As one Ada farmer put it:

W owes me about 10,000 frs. He got me to do all kinds of things for him by coming around and talking "country talk" [home language].

Interestingly, W, himself, leveled this accusation at another man who tried to extract financial aid from him several months earlier [5.6]. He also complained about the fact that Igbos often use strong arm tactics to coerce or punish unco-operative in-group members. He cited one glaring example of an Igbo photographer whose pro-Nigeria sympathies during the Civil War led Biafran nationalists to take action against him. After beating him and destroying his car, they petitioned the Cameroon government to jail him for illegal political activities. Although W, as a Biafra supporter, was not necessarily opposed to the action taken, he was ambivalent about the ethnic community's oppression and feared its capacity for punitive action.

Pan-Igbo sentiment is often undermined by more parochial loyalties. The significance of subgroup alignment has been discussed [sec. 4.2, 4.3 and chapter 7] as a major level of organization, especially as concerns regular, on-going activities. Associated with each of the various of Igbo subgroups is a complex of ethnocentric attitudes not unlike those held by the ethnic group as a whole. Each subgroup has its own version of the "myth of superiority" which, to some extent, differentiates it from others and confers special esteem within the wider fold of Igbo society.

One such attitude is that the subgroup is more typically Igbo, or represents a more authentic version of Igbo traditions and values than other subgroups. The chief of the Igbo community of Kumba, for example, decided that his own area's dancing group [the Aros] should participate in a Cameroon national celebration, "because they are the most representative group."

Igbos generally associate the alleged higher stability of In-group marriages with higher bride wealth [vis a vis Cameroonians]. By extension, central and northern Igbo groups see themselves as superior in this respect to eastern Igbos who pay lower amounts. One Udi farmer, commenting on W who had abruptly left for Nigeria:

This man had a good job, was earning big money, and just left the job like that. That's the fashion with these Afikpos. They don't have to pay a big bride price so they aren't responsible.

Circumcision of both sexes is viewed by Igbos as hygienically, esthetically and morally necessary. Accordingly, the same Udi farmer was critical of Afikpos for delaying this essential operation:

They don't circumsise for a long time after their child is born. That should be done when the child is young and can't hear [Pidgin: "feel"] the pain.

The Igbo value on collective strength and internal solidarity was noted by one Ohaffia farmer as especially characteristic of his own subgroup:

Our group, the Ohaffias are co-operative. If a decision is made by the chief, it must be followed. Other groups will fight among themselves. Our people are strong. We were the last area to be entered by the Nigerians and they only came in after [Major General Phillip] Effiong surrendered.

As pointed out earlier (sec. 8.4), Ohaffias pride themselves as being less acculturated in many ways than many central Igbo groups, a belief which appears to have some validity owing to their peripheral location. They see themselves as being more authentically Igbo, both in the homeland and in the migrant locale. While many Igbos fear the erosion of home language and values in the migrant center (sec. 3.1), Ohaffias maintain that they are more successful in socializing their children as Igbos. They deny that their children habitually use Pidgin in preference to Igbo, or loose their proficiency in their home language like other

Igbo groups. This is probably an overstatement, especially in Kake where the non-Igbo/Igbo ratio is high and the ethnic community dispersed. As with ethnic attitudes, subgroup attitudes are more concerned with maintaining a positive communal self image than with objective fact.

9.8 EXTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS TO THE IGBO SELF-IMAGE

Although there is considerable overlap between the Igbos' perception of themselves and the characteristics which Cameroonians emphasize in their stereotypes of them, few, if any Cameroonians would accept the Igbo claim to moral superiority. As is true of virtually all human societies, Cameroonian ethnic communities exalt their own in-group culture, values and achievements vis à vis out-groups (both Cameroonian and non-Cameroonian), while negative stereotypes by out-groups are disclaimed, rationalized or counterbalanced by devaluation of others. Accordingly, groups viewed by the Igbos as unindustrious and unaggressive (especially southern West Cameroonians), see themselves as peaceful, restrained and dignified, while their failure to achieve the Igbos' level of solidarity is valued as a rejection of "tribalism."

The greatest challenge to the Igbo self image, however, has been their loss of political and economic power in the wake of Cameroonian independence. Curtailment of freedom to organize has made Igbo unity difficult to achieve and enforce [sec. 2.6]. Exclusion from many areas of employment and restriction of entrepreneurial activities has undermined their sense of economic self confidence. Legislation against land ownership by aliens has thwarted their self appointed mission as "builders of Cameroon."

The altered relationship of Igbo migrants toward authority has had a profound impact on the Igbos' role in West Cameroonian society, and his perception of that role. By examining Igbo attitudes toward authority, one can gain an appreciation for how ethnic identity has had to be redefined to meet the new situation.

9.9 IGBO ATTITUDES TOWARD AUTHORITY

During the British Trusteeship era the Igbo were closely identified with the territorial authority. Independence and reunification has meant the dramatic reversal of this role. Consequently, Igbos have had to readjust their self image as a superior group to accord with their new subordinate status.

Their view of Cameroonian authority is markedly negative. The policy of Cameroonization is interpreted as a bias motivated more by jealousy than commitment to national welfare. Competence, they claim, is overlooked in preference to origin. As one Igbo electrician who had lost his job after independence expressed it:

It doesn't matter what you know now if you are a foreigner. A native who knows nothing can come along and replace you.

A frequent claim of Igbos is that they are treated more harshly by the Cameroonian authorities than citizens. Allegedly there is more attention given to them in the examination of identity papers, tax receipts and licenses, and penalties for infractions is more severe or more consistently applied. They complain that they are often singled out for rude or rough treatment by the police and gendarmes. Traders maintain their inventories are overassessed by tax officials.

The existence of an anti-Igbo bias among the authorities and the citizenry at large cannot be dismissed. The actual extent of discrimination, however, is probably exaggerated and does not take into account the changes which their altered legal status necessarily entails. The fact that most nations, [in Africa and elsewhere] grant economic and political privileges to citizens denied to aliens is, evidently, not recognized by most Igbos who view these

restrictions as directed specifically against them. Cameroon-ian authorities perform a considerable amount of document checking of all people, both in town and along major roads. That Igbos, who, as foreigners, must carry more documents, are more thoroughly checked, is hardly surprising.

Allegations of heavy-handed treatment by the police are not limited to the Igbo and reflect the different styles of training under British and French authority. After Reunification, many West Cameroonians were dismayed by the strong-arm tactics of police and gendarmes from the East [see Johnson 1970: 262 ff]. The fact that Igbos, who, as disenfranchised aliens, already on the defensive, should feel more intimidated by this change, is understandable.

Apart from all of these factors, however, the belief that Cameroonian authorities are unfair has gained currency because it accords well with their self image. Lack of success in any endeavor can easily be attributed to anti-Igbo discrimination. At the same time the persistence of Igbos in the face of discrimination reinforces their sense of resiliency.

9.10 THE REDEFINITION OF IGBO IDENTITY

By 1970 the Igbo community in Cameroon was disillusioned and faced with circumstances which required a

redefinition of ethnic identity. The collapse of Biafra was a severe blow to ethnic self esteem and meant that not only the migrant community, but the homeland itself was subordinate to external authority.

The Igbo had gradually come to see themselves as a misunderstood and much abused people who fate had singled out for a unique role in the history of Africa. The profound contradiction between the myth of superiority and the reality of lost status led them to define their self image vis à vis other groups in increasingly more moral terms. Home values, home language and the legacy of past achievements were all brought into play to revitalize the Igbo self image. The older generation thought in terms of a return to the homeland, as soon as possible to re-establish themselves, but with no grandiose visions of success. The younger generation with some education, resigned to the future, sought to go overseas (especially to the U.S.) to expand their skills and credentials until opportunities in the home country increased. Under a broad shroud of pessimism it was possible to detect a glimmer of hope that their contributions, past, present, and future, would not go unrecognized.

FOOTNOTES

1. The greater part of the information included in this chapter was gathered through open-ended interviews and participant observation. A limited number of more structured interviews were conducted with Kumba-based Igbos using a questionnaire. Key items on the questionnaire were:
 - 1) what type of town is Kumba?
 - 2) what are Igbos like?
 - 3) what are Cameroonians like?
 - 4) what are the characteristics of group A [a specific ethnic group]?
2. This indicates the growing salience of nationalism as an aspect of social identity on the part of Cameroonians. Although the Igbos clearly reject being equated with Ibibios as bearers of negative traits, consciousness of growing national identity is clearly evident.
3. This role of Igbos in the West Cameroonian economy in many ways parallels their role in Northern Nigeria (see Paden 1971: 113 ff).

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Analysis of the data on Cameroon-based Igbo migrants has shown that ethnicity is an organizing principle at all levels of social interaction. I shall now summarize this analysis and discuss the general implications of the network approach to ethnicity, particularly with respect to the theoretical issues raised earlier [Chapter 1]. Finally, I expand the range of the study by placing it in a comparative framework and discuss the future of ethnicity as exemplified by the Igbo.

10.1 A NETWORK ANALYSIS APPROACH TO ETHNICITY

10.1.1 TYPES OF LINKS

Network ties can be separated into two categories, according to whether or not they regularly extend across ethnic boundaries. At least as far as Cameroon-based Igbo are concerned, the "normally intra-ethnic" links include those based on knowledge of home language, common local origin, kinship and marriage. Although there were some exceptions, few instances were noted of these ties extending across ethnic boundaries

Intra- vs. Inter-ethnic:	<u>Language</u>	<u>Locality</u>	<u>Kinship</u>	<u>Affinity</u>	<u>Friendship</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>
	Intra-ethnic	Intra-ethnic	Intra-ethnic (with rare exceptions)	Intra-ethnic (with few exceptions)	Intra- and inter-ethnic	Intra- and Inter-ethnic
Where Formed:	Home area	Home area	Home area	Home area (in most cases)	Host area or (less frequently) Home area	Host area
How Formed:	Ascribed	Ascribed	Ascribed	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved
Duration:	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent (ideally)	Temporary-Permanent (dissolved voluntarily)	Temporary (broken through change of residence)
Relation to Ethnicity:	Reinforces	Reinforces or competes with	Reinforces or competes with	Reinforces or competes with	Reinforces or complements (occasionally competes with)	Reinforces, complements (occasionally competes with)

FIGURE 10.1
COMPARISON OF TYPES OF NETWORK LINKS

[see Fig. 10.1].

All Igbos speak their home language [notwithstanding the interference of Pidgin in the case of children], in contrast to ethnic French in western Canada [Wagley and Harris 1958: 201], ethnic Italians in U.S.A or Basques, Irish and Lithuanians [whose home languages have either become or are becoming marginal in the homeland; see Milosz 1975: 339-352]. At the same time, almost no Cameroonians have any speaking knowledge of Igbo. These facts make membership in the Igbo speech community virtually coincident with Igbo ethnic identity; to be an Igbo is to speak Igbo and be privy to those things which Igbos talk about. To be a non-Igbo is to be excluded from this communication network. In this sense, the Igbo are sharply set apart from the indigenous peoples of southern West Cameroon, but who, speaking mutually intelligible languages [sec. 2.1], are less clearly differentiated from one another.

Ties based on local origin were seen as having more salience in the day-to-day activities of Igbos than those which stress the somewhat more remote sense of "Igboness" [sec. 4.2 and 4.3]. Here the system of obligations and patterns of reciprocity are far more clearly defined than at the level of the ethnic

group. In fact, it is these segmentary units which more clearly display the characteristics of groups, defined in terms of capacity for co-activity and fulfilling specific functions. At the same time, however, being a member of a local community links the individual into a wider ethnic network which becomes mobilized when the situation requires. Conversely, one's being an Igbo ultimately rests on his claiming a specific local origin which articulates through a hierarchy of alignments with pan-Igbo identity.

The prevalence of intra-ethnic endogamy [sec. 5.0] virtually insures that kinship and affinal networks do not extend across ethnic boundaries. Such immediate ties provide an underpinning for ethnic loyalties by linking the individual into the wider system via intermediate levels of organization. At the same time, kin and affinal ties are more parochial, owing to patterns of local endogamy, which, in turn, reinforce lower level loyalties, sometimes at the expense of ethnic solidarity. This centrifugal pull of lower segmentary units is countered by the ideology that "Igbo is one" and the [often metaphorical] extension of kinship and affinal ties through proverbs like "brotherhood [or affinity] has no boundaries." Despite the universalistic

sentiment of the latter proverb, the implied boundary is frequently the ethnic group.

Ties which show less respect for ethnic boundaries are basically limited to those which are either temporary or have a much less explicit code of obligations and rights. The most conspicuous of these are friendship and vicinage [Chapter 7], networks which are voluntarily established by the migrant in the host area. Such networks are certainly not indifferent to ethnic identity, as clear preferences for co-ethnic friends and neighbors are expressed, both verbally and behaviorally. Formation of inter-ethnic links, far from blurring the boundaries between ethnic groups, is frequently qualified, functionally specific and interpreted by migrants as facilitating inter-ethnic accommodation and harmony. Intra-ethnic links, on the other hand, are more apt to be more intimate, multi-stranded and interpreted in terms of shared interests and understanding of co-ethnics.

10.1.2 UTILITY OF THE NETWORK APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF ETHNICITY

The utility of the network approach in the study of ethnicity can be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- 1) How does it provide a better basis for understanding the case at hand?
- 2) To what extent is it applicable to other cases?
- 3) Can it provide a basis for testing various models of ethnicity?
- 4) What alterations in the model does it suggest?

The reasons underlying the selection of network analysis were discussed earlier (sec. 1.1 and 1.3). The soundness of this choice is, I believe, confirmed by the data at hand and should be applicable to other studies of ethnicity. The present case, focusing on a diffuse, mobile community whose collective identity is a product of relatively recent events can only be understood through a framework which presupposes a highly flexible social structure. Igbos of diverse origins coming to live in close proximity must forge new ties. Those of common origin, geographically dispersed, maintain and activate both new and preexisting links. Movement from one center to another (occurring with the majority of individuals studied) necessitates stretching or breaking some ties, while forging or reactivating others. In view of this fluidity, the metaphor of the network seems singularly appropriate.

Since these features, as described, are common to most areas in Africa (and many areas elsewhere) where

there is extensive in-migration, the applicability of network analysis is very wide. In such areas, ethnic heterogeneity is usually the rule, which makes ethnicity an important dimension of the overall social organization. Since networks can be analysed in terms of measurable features, the relative salience of ethnicity under different circumstances can be evaluated and compared.

At a more general theoretical level the network approach provides a basis for assessing the models of ethnicity presented earlier (sec. 1.2.3). Issue was taken both with Geertz' conception of "primordial loyalties" and Barth's "organizational vessels," insofar as they implied that ethnic identity constituted an "ultimate" or "absolute" value. The present analysis views the significance of ethnicity as highly variable, according to situational context [see Mitchell 1956; Epstein 1958; Uchendu 1975; Schein 1975]. This is exemplified by the principle of extension which operates in most of the categories of ties discussed, especially kinship, affinity and locality. According to this principle, whether immediate ties [the "effective network"] or remote ties [the "extended network"] are emphasized depends on the requirements of the situation [see Mitchell 1969:6].

Individual actors activate or downplay specific links in accordance with their needs or goals, manipulating the network to their own advantage. Since these needs and goals vary with time and location and from one individual to another, patterns of manipulation will likewise vary.

Ethnic networks are, thus, important in terms of their instrumental value as emphasized by Cohen. But ethnic identity also imposes a number of obligations on individuals which limits the potential for manipulation and, occasionally, gives it a value akin to Geertz' "overpowering coerciveness" (compulsory funeral attendance and support for the Biafran cause being cases in point).

Ethnicity constitutes only one level in an ordered hierarchy of ties which can be utilized by an individual. Both Cohen and Barth maintain that the feature which distinguishes ethnic from other levels of organization is the use of cultural diacriteria as emblems of in-group identity. Many of the specific cultural items that are employed for this function are, however, replaceable. In the present case a relatively open network system and the widespread use of a lingua franca (Pidgin English) allows free interaction between Igbos and Cameroonians, facilitating cultural change. Igbo identity, on the other hand, remains stable.

The problem then becomes how to identify those network features which are associated with the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. In other words, what mechanisms for closure exist within the total network which enmeshes all persons in the migrant center (both Nigerian and Cameroonian)? So far as the Igbo are concerned, the most conspicuous are home language and endogamy. Wives and information in the vernacular, by and large, do not flow across ethnic boundaries. Of course, wives do not circulate freely within the Igbo community at large either, but the generalization of affinal links and the outer limits of permissible exogamy is the ethnic group. Language, however, is another matter, and, more than any other factor, marks the Igbo off as a distinctive ethnic group, in the sense that it is the only feature shared by all Igbo and with virtually no one else.

Although such closure mechanisms are necessary for ethnic boundaries to persist, one cannot assume that they are, *ipso facto*, permanent, as Barth and Geertz suggest. In the present case, we have seen how the Igbo have emerged as an ethnic group, defining their collective identity at a higher level than in the precolonial past. This pattern of expanding identity as the scale of society increases is part of a general trend throughout colonial and postcolonial Africa (Wallerstein 1965: 476). That

present boundaries will eventually give way to higher levels of alignment is strongly suggested by Schildkrout's study of "supra-ethnicity" in Ghana [Schildkrout 1974] and the increasing use of regional designations in Nigeria, Cameroon and elsewhere [e.g., "Southerner" for Igbos, Yorubas etc. in northern Nigeria and "Grasslander" for Bafut, Bali, Nsaw etc. in southern West Cameroon].

In many cases these categories are imposed on migrants [or other minorities] by members of the host [dominant] society. But, as Glazer and Moynihan observed [1965: 139],⁵ such categories frequently become the basis for new ethnic identity when old boundaries, as defined by in-group members, are not recognized by the host group. This identity then becomes the basis for new patterns of interaction, inclusion and exclusion.

Geertz' concept of "primordial loyalties" does not provide the basis for explaining this expansion of ethnic identity, nor does Barth's "organizational vessels." The ethnic network, however, with its potential for extension, manipulation and invocation of closure mechanisms at various levels of social organization, seems a more promising prospect.

10.2 COMPARATIVE ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

Vincent's [1974] discussion of the need for a comparative approach based on a "common framework" is well taken. It is hoped that fuller use of network analysis can contribute to the development of such a framework. Within the limited scope of the present study, various lines of comparison can be drawn. The present discussion will deal with the following: rural vs. urban expressions of ethnicity, southern West Cameroon vs. other areas and the Igbo vs. other ethnic groups.

10.2.1 RURAL VS. URBAN EXPRESSIONS OF ETHNICITY

This study represents an attempt to deal with the hitherto neglected issue of how does ethnicity differ in rural vs. urban multi-ethnic centers. The major reason for this oversight is, evidently, the fact that ethnicity has been seen as a primarily urban phenomenon [Wallerstein 1965], coupled with the general neglect of rural multi-ethnic centers. Although Vincent's [1971] study of the "big men of a small town" focuses on a "polyethnic" small center, the topic of ethnicity is peripheral to her interests and, she maintains, essentially irrelevant to understanding the dynamics of local level politics there.

In the present case, it is evident that ethnicity is expressed somewhat differently in the village from its manifestations in the town. This stems from a number of factors which relate to the general differences between rural and urban centers and others which pertain specifically to the Igbo and the centers of Kumba and Kake.

One major difference is, of course, the factor of size. Not only is Kake much smaller than Kumba [see sec. 2.3], but the Igbo make up a much smaller percentage of the total than in the town. This means that all of the Igbos and most of the total residents of the village are known to one another. In terms of network analysis, both the total social network, and the Igbo ethnic network are much denser than in town. As a result, the Igbo community as a whole operates as a common interest group to a greater degree in the village than in the town, assuming functions which in Kumba are performed by lower segmental units (subgroup, local group). Subgroups, in turn, assume functions of still lower units (home village, and kin groups). Igbo-wide funeral attendance, and subgroup wide economic reciprocity, for example, are characteristic of Kake but not Kumba.

Another area of difference is economic. The highly diversified economy of Kumba and wide variety of occupations contrasts with Kake where the overwhelming majority of persons are engaged in farming. In the case of the Igbo there are

strong contrasts between village and town. In the village Igbos are little differentiated economically from Cameroonians, while in the town they are more active in market trade [accounting for about 60% of the traders in Kumba main market] than other groups and are more conspicuous in other highly competitive enterprises [e.g., transport]. In contrast they are virtually excluded from all forms of government employment.

These differences are quite significant in terms of ethnic identity. The basic stereotypes which Cameroonians hold toward Igbos [see sec. 9.4 and 9.5] are more reinforced by their role in the town than in the rural area where they are occupationally undifferentiated. This, coupled with the fact that the rural economy is less competitive and necessitates co-operation, is a countervailing force against interethnic tension. In addition, the virtual absence of government employment in the village reduces the Igbos sense of exclusion, in contrast to Kumba where the disability of alien status is more keenly felt. Other limitations imposed on Igbos' economic freedom also apply largely to Igbos based in town.

Another important difference between town and village is the relationship of Igbo migrants to the authorities [sec. 2.6 and 9.9]. In the town authorities are numerous and conspicuous. Confrontation with them is much more frequent than

in the village where police, gendarmes or other officials are seldom seen, and farmers go about their business without interference. This, coupled with the lack of economic restrictions in the village, makes the alien status of Igbos resident there a less salient aspect of their social identity. In a very real sense the Igbo in Kake are simply one of many stranger groups, while in Kumba they are more clearly defined as non-citizen strangers.

In short, the Igbo in Kake are more internally defined as an ethnic group by virtue of their collective interaction, while those in Kumba are defined more externally in terms imposed stereotypes and legal status. Nonetheless, the major criteria of ethnicity pertain to both situations, and the primary boundary maintaining mechanisms--ethnic endogamy and home language--are operative in town and village alike.

10.2.2 KUMBA/KAKE vs. OTHER AREAS

An important aspect of the Kumba area (and southern West Cameroon in general) is the large influx of strangers in proportion to the indigenous population (sec. 2.3). This contrasts with other areas, such as northern and western Nigerian and parts of southern Ghana, where the local ethnic group is numerically dominant relative to migrants. In the latter areas strangers often close ranks vis a vis the dominant

group, redefining their collective identity in opposition to it. This phenomenon has been noted in southern Ghana by Schildkrout [1973: 216] who shows how northern Ghanaians, northern Nigerians and Upper Voltans form an ethnic bloc in opposition to native southern Ghanaians, adopting new supra-ethnic diacriteria (e.g., Hausa language, distinctive dress, Islam). Cohen's "retribalization" of migrant Hausa of diverse origins in the face of numerically dominant Yoruba is, in some ways, a parallel case. The residential segregation of southern Nigerians in the Sabon Gari (stranger quarter) imposes an overarching sense of communal identity vis a vis northerners [Paden 1970; 1971].

In the Kumba area maro-ethnic identity (sec. 9.2) shows a somewhat different pattern. Southern West Cameroonians generally tend to close ranks vis a vis Grasslanders (e.g., in terms of stereotypes and pre-Reunification party politics), while Cameroonians, generally, close ranks in opposition to Nigerians (especially Igbos). Igbos and other Nigerians, as legally defined, disenfranchised aliens will, in turn, emphasize their shared nationality under certain circumstances (sec. 3.3). On other occasions non-Igbo Nigerians will stress their ethnic distinctiveness in opposition to Igbos, although Cameroonians tend to lump them with Igbos as Nigerians. Kumba is quite remarkable in that foreigners make up more than 50% of the resident population

[sec. 2.3]. This, no doubt, leads Cameroonians to emphasize their nationality [and its advantages] to a greater extent than in other areas where aliens are less of a "threat." In Douala, for example, where Nigerians are few relative to the total population, they enjoy relative freedom of maneuver, experience little discrimination and interference by the authorities.

Another critical factor in the Kumba area has been the availability of fertile, sparsely populated land and the economic opportunities afforded [wage employment, commerce]. Movement has not merely been the classical rural-urban pattern but rural-rural migration has also been extensive. This has given rise to a number of small, multi-ethnic centers throughout the area, with the characteristic patterns of ethnicity noted above.

10.2.3 IGBOS vs. OTHER GROUPS

One of the most striking features of the Igbo as an ethnic group, in contrast to almost all Cameroonian peoples, is their immense numbers [8-10 million]. Not only is there no ethnic group in Cameroon which comes close to the population of the Igbo homeland, but migrant Igbos in southern West Cameroon are more numerous than any other single group [50-75,000].

The influence of this on the definition of ethnic identity and interethnic relations has been noted. Within Cameroon, the most conspicuous group, with respect to numbers and rate of interregional migration is the Bamiléké of the eastern Grasslands. With a population of almost 3/4 million, they are, far and away, the largest ethnic group in the nation. As with the case of Igbos their high rate of out-migration is associated with heavy land pressure in the homeland. As with Igbos they are active in commercial pursuits, dominating market trading in Douala, Yaoundé, and other major centers. Like the Igbos they bear the brunt of negative stereotypes which characterize them as an aggressive, mercenary group. Their participation in armed uprising against the central government in the early years of independence is suggestive of the Igbos' abortive attempt at succession [see Johnson 1970, Littlewood 1954].

Just as the "Igbo factor" influenced many West Cameroonians to opt for unification with the [francophone] Republic of Cameroon, the violence spearheaded by the Bamilékés made others opposed to this course. Many Bamiléké, on the other hand, who had settled in West Cameroon were ardent proponents of Reunification [see Johnson 1970: 4]. In this sense, they resembled Igbo migrants who advocated West Cameroonian unification with Nigeria [the other plebiscite option].

The Bamiléké have moved in the opposite direction from the Igbos. Originally an alien population in the West, they now enjoy full rights as citizens of the United Republic. They are moving into a number of economic pursuits [trading, transport, cocoa buying] long dominated by Igbos and are coming into conflict not only with Igbos but with other Cameroonians as well.

As with Igbos, the Bamiléké are perceived by other Cameroonians as a single group, ignoring the fact that the term is a relatively recent one imposed by non-Bamiléké; social identity is based on their particular chiefdoms of origin [Bafoussam, Bandjoun etc.]. The mutual intelligibility of various Bamiléké dialects coupled with externally imposed macro-identity has, as with the Igbo, given rise to the emergence of the Bamiléké as an ethnic group.

Considering these factors, one would predict that the Bamilékés' patterns of maintaining ethnic boundaries, as expressed in the manipulation of social networks, would resemble those of the Igbo in a number of ways. An internal information network associated with a shared vernacular and the enforcement of in-group endogamy may [as with Igbos] function as mechanisms of closure. My own observations, however, indicate that Bamilekes are less in-

sistent on endogamy than Igbo⁶ and, therefore, might emphasize other factors in maintaining unambiguous ethnic identity [e.g., patriliney]. However, the Bamiléké appear to be establishing themselves as permanent settlers in southern West Cameroon, which may move them in the direction of assimilation. Attachment to the homeland is less marked than in the case of the Igbo, a fact, no doubt, influenced by the Bamilékés' status as citizens.

The Bamiléké and the Igbo contrast with the Hausa migrants studied by Cohen [1969] in a number of ways. As with the Igbo, language and endogamy are mechanisms of boundary maintenance, but are even more rigorously exclusive in the Hausa case; few Hausa are fluent in Yoruba and contact with Yoruba women is strictly proscribed [Ibid.: 53]. In addition, differences in dress, residential segregation, and religious sectarianism set the Hausa apart much more sharply than the Igbo or Bamiléké, who resemble West Cameroonians in dress, are less residentially exclusive and belong to the same churches.⁷

The Hausa of Sabo and the Igbo and Bamiléké in West Cameroon each define their ethnic identity in a manner which accords with their adaptive strategies. The Hausa, at one extreme, maintaining their monopoly over the cattle and kola trade, are necessarily, rigorously exclusive. The Igbo, much more diversified economically, are markedly

less so, but emphasize in-group membership [at all levels] partly as a means of compensating for the disability of alien status [through mutual aid and assertion of moral superiority]. The Bamiléké, who in West Cameroon are improving their economic position in many areas, are, on the whole, the least prone to close ranks.⁸ The manner in which they structure their intra-ethnic network, however, is a question requiring further investigation.

The inadequacy of the persistent tendency to emphasize Igbo uniqueness is discussed in Cohen [1969: 188]. The priority given to the precolonial culture in explaining the Igbos' role in modern Africa has been unduly exaggerated. If the Igbos' receptivity to change is explained in terms of a democratic, achievement oriented, open status system [Levine 1966], how does one explain the same phenomenon among the Bamiléké with a more rigidly hierarchical political system? Or, how does one account for the commercial success of the Hausas with their "traditional" emphasis on ascribed status? Such models which contrast ethnic groups in terms of their unique attributes as though, isolated from historical forces, they leap headlong into the modern era in all their pristine purity, are all too prevalent in anthropology. Their persistence in the African literature is linked to the dominant role of British structural-functionalism and the implication of static ethnic

identity. Hopefully, an alternative approach [such as network analysis] can provide a foundation for a better comparative perspective.

10.3 POSTSCRIPT: THE IGBO AND THE FUTURE

From the foregoing account, it is possible to gain some sense of where the Igbo might be moving in the future. Making this projection requires looking at their recent history and current patterns of adaptive strategies, placed in a broader, Africa-wide or even global perspective.

In the Cameroon context several possibilities suggest themselves, ranging from assimilation to expulsion or otherwise induced mass exodus back to the Nigerian homeland. As far as the immediate future is concerned, the latter seems unlikely. The Igbo population in Cameroon has increased, not decreased in recent years, and the large influx of Biafran refugees in the country shows no great impulse to return to the homeland. This could certainly be reversed if the Cameroon government's efforts to control the migrants break down and force the repatriation of aliens, as occurred recently in Ghana. Alternatively, an eruption of anti-Igbo violence, such as occurred in northern Nigeria, might lead to evacuation, but this, again, does not seem probable. As we have seen, the Igbo are better integrated into the social network of the host area than was the

case in northern Nigeria where deep social, cultural and religious cleavages separated them from the local Hausa. The economic restrictions on Igbos and their exclusion from the official political arena may also be an additional safety valve, reducing competition with Cameroonians.

One change which may lead to the return of substantial numbers of Igbos will be the economic recovery of the Nigerian homeland. As of 1972 there was considerable anguish over the scarcity of wage employment, low pay and inflation in the East Central State. When and if Nigeria's new oil prosperity filters down to the rural masses, central Igboland may be able to sustain a larger population than has hitherto been possible. However, the Igbos' loss of the oil rich Niger Delta, and their exclusion from prosperous centers such as Pt. Harcourt is a serious limiting factor.

A more realistic projection would see the Igbos as continuing to be an important element in the ethnic mosaic of southern West Cameroonian society for sometime to come, even to the extent of becoming a permanently established population. The comparative ease of communication between Cameroon and eastern Nigeria, however, promotes the persistence of ties to the homeland, facilitates easy return and stabilizes the established pattern of marriage and retirement in the home village. For these

reasons, it seems unlikely that Igbos will become fully assimilated into Cameroonian society, or will change their legal status as an alien group. As even Cameroon-born Igbos cannot claim Cameroon citizenship (and are discouraged by the authorities and co-ethnics from doing so) the major avenue to full incorporation is blocked.

In this sense, it could be said that the Igbo in Cameroon are what Wagley and Harris (1958) term a "minority," i.e., a politically and/or economically disadvantaged group, whose identity is defined by the dominant society (Vincent 1974: 376). This is, however, an overstatement, since these disadvantages have been recently imposed, and the maintenance of Igbo identity is also an active concern of the Igbos themselves (which for Vincent is the distinguishing factor in ethnic groups in contrast to minorities). Igbos, unlike members of minority groups, do not (for the mostpart) attempt to "pass" as members of the host society. Whether they would try to do so if further disabilities are imposed on them is an open question.

In terms of the more distant future, it is not clear how long ethnic groups will continue to function as major bases for identity, loyalty and adaptation. In Africa, as in other areas of the world, national and supranational (e.g., Pan-African, Third World) identity is growing at the expense of more parochial loyalties. Increasingly,

the nation state is demanding undivided allegiance, carrying out vigorous campaigns to root out "tribalism." Internationally, "less developed" countries are consolidating their common interest in changing the imbalance in the distribution of the world's wealth and power vis a vis the industrialized west. Ultimately, a heightening of political awareness should lead increasing numbers of people to submerge short-sighted ethnic rivalries in favor of collective strategies for securing shared goals. Given the Igbos' high geographical mobility, their emphasis on education and general political sophistication, they will, no doubt, be swept along on the crest of this inexorable wave.

Another set of social forces moving as a cross-current to these trends and eroding the foundations of ethnicity from another direction is class formation. Substantial changes are taking place everywhere within African societies which lead to new concentrations of wealth and power. As new patterns of stratification develop among Igbos at home and abroad, lines of communal solidarity should gradually break down and new strategies based on class interest assert itself.

In the midst of these changes, however, it must be said that, to date, Igbo ethnicity remains very strong.

Perception of group identity is clear and unambiguous. The war experience and disabilities imposed by the Cameroon government have clearly [at least for the moment] sharpened the definition of the Igbo/non-Igbo boundary. As a group, they have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for resiliency, and there seems little doubt that they will be able to alter and redirect their adaptive energies as changing circumstances in Nigeria and Cameroon require.

FOOTNOTES

1. W, an eastern Igbo whose mother was an Efik, claimed Efik identity when the situation demanded.
2. Ikwerris [delta Igbos] in Nigeria have recently been disclaiming Igbo identity in order to avoid a government ban on Igbos living in Pt. Harcourt. The shifting identity of the Ikwerris is discussed by Wolpe [1971: 503].
3. One Igbo chief, for example, urged his fellow Igbos to pay their 10,000 frs. residence fee. He said that Igbos in Cameroon should realize that they were there at the good will of the government and that Cameroon hospitality toward migrant Igbos during the civil war "saved us."
4. Igbos typically stage "send-off" parties for youths going overseas, giving [often large] contributions to defray expenses.
5. "Two wills make a group--the self-will that creates unity, and the will of others that imposes unity where hardly any is felt."
6. Although I made no survey of this, I noted several instances of Bamilékés married to non-Bamilékés.
7. Many of the criteria which distinguish Hausa in Ibadan from the local Yoruba also differentiate those in Kumba from Cameroonians. Their attitudes toward local women and fluency in Pidgin English were not investigated, however. Residential segregation of Hausas is not pronounced. Although there is a "Hausa Quarter" in Kumba, large numbers of non-Hausa [including many Igbo and Bamiléké] live there as well.
8. In southern West Cameroon they may be in the process of being absorbed into the larger, macro-ethnic category, "Grasslander," with whom they are often merged by southerners.

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