

Traditional Methods of Food Procurement and Processing of Fish in Ozizza, Afikpo

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Abstract

One of the most urgent needs of man is food. Food stands to be a major factor that led him into struggling for survival: yet, even though agricultural practices are neglected, man must eat. Therefore, the effectiveness of agricultural practice by man and his ability to engage in different agricultural practices for food, depends on fishing and farming in some zones, but strictly fishing in the coastal/flooding areas. Food procurement and processing has contributed immensely in the development of many nations. However, there is need for continuity and support in food procurement and processing. Any nation, state, locality or community without strong support for food procurement and processing stands the chance of a crisis, considering the fact that food offers security, nourishment, mental stability and an increase in the population. The main focus of this research, archaeologically is to identify fishing and fish netting technology as food procurement in Ozizza. The work emphasized archaeological reconnaissance (oral tradition), ethnographic report, written documents and interpretation of finds. The paper was also anchored on the principles of reciprocity as a theoretical foundation for food procurement in Ozizza. It focused on the indigenous technology/technique of fish procurement, processing and preservation and concluded by giving some suggestions for their technological improvement.

Keywords: Food Procurement and Processing, Traditional, Fishing, Fish-net, Reciprocity

Introduction

Every society is defined by archaeologists based on the manner in which they obtain their food. Societies that herd animals are called pastoralists (Grant *et al.* 2002:197). The earliest society, though not hunters and/or gatherers but scavengers and gatherers, occupied a wide range of world human history. Hunting and gathering occurred from one million years ago to about 100,000 years ago (Grant *et al.* 2002:197). Fish came into the earth during the Paleozoic era (Ikegwu, 2010:120), the era that ushered in the unicellular organism such as bacteria as well as some other organisms due to photosynthetic algae (Decorse, 2000:61). The act of fishing surfaced during the Mesolithic era (Grant *et al.* 2002:197), which was championed during the Neolithic era – the era of food production and procurement for marine food and alternative source of both wild animals and domesticated meat. Greene and Moore (2010:81) buttressed that:

“Early farming communities in the Neolithic period were found to have been located near the water’s edge or on Temporary Island formed by the floods, with the implication that fishing might

have provide an important supplement to the farmers' diet in spring, before crops were ready for harvesting”

Nevertheless, Greene and Moore's idea is supported by the fact that some villages in Ozizza are always flooded during the rainy season. This situation made farmers adapt to fishing as a supplementary and alternative source of income. Based on the excavation conducted in Afikpo in 1966, 1976 and 2011 at the three rock shelters, namely, Ukpa, Ugwuegu and Ozizza by Hartle, Chikwendu and Ikegwu respectively, evidence of the Neolithic/Late Stone Age were provided. Cultural material, such as pottery, bone (fish and animal), snail shreds, seed husks, etc all pointed to this fact dated 5000 -3000BC (Hartle, 1967; Anozie, 1985:19 and 1979:131). These excavations suggested that indeed food production and procurement were indigenous to the people and an evidence for agricultural practice in Igboland (Chikwendu, 1989:58 and Ikegwu, 2012:296).

The chance of survival of fish bone in the archaeological context is very minimal. This is due to its small nature and cartilaginous consistence (Greene and Moore, 2010:210). However, Greene and Moore further observed that the only modern survival of fish bones appeared from the digestive systems of pigs, dogs and humans during experiments. Jones (1986:53-61) ascertained that sieving artifacts from excavation was another means of recovering fish bone. This implied that the researcher only used archaeological reconnaissance (oral tradition) and ethnographic report in the case area. Based on the fact that fish bones were insignificant from the excavated Ozizza site, and was found at other Afikpo sites such as Ugwuegu Village Site (ii) at the depth of 60-75cm by Chikwendu. It is still very insignificant because only Pisces (*Lophius Piscatorius*) was found (Chikwendu, 1989:30-36). World over, fishes are seasonal. Smith (1997:155-7) recorded a cod-like fish caught only during the autumn. Aston (1988) recorded that medieval monasteries exploited “farmed fish”. Ozizza in Afikpo caught *Okpokoro* and *Okpo* during the rainy season. Finally, Fish net came with globalization – that is trade alliance between the people and the outside world. Fishing in Ozizza is an agricultural practice that provides economic basis for indigenous communities in Ozizza, Afikpo. The work, therefore, focused on indigenous technology/technique of fish procurement, processing and preservation. It also made a case for the improvement in her technology.

Technology/technique here means *modus operandi* and equipment put to use by fishermen to meet their need. For instance, the types of fishes caught, method of retrieval/catch, edible types, preparation (cooked, smoking and drying), tools involved and marketing are all what indigenous technology/technique in the industry stands for. Strategies for their improvement refers to the contributions of the theory of reciprocity, and the need for ensuring a hygienic standard during processing and preservation. Reciprocity is thus the blueprint and hallmark for the modification and standardization of the community fishing industry.

Background Information

Ozizza is a village found in Afikpo. It has Urrah, Amaori, Amainyeme and Amaeta as sub-groups of villages. Amaeta is the only riverine community while others are mainland. Fishing and pottery making are the major occupations of the Amaeta community in Ozizza. Gabriel (1999:67) ascertained fishing as a major occupation of riverine population right from antiquity and the mainland adopt farming with small scale fishing for subsistence.

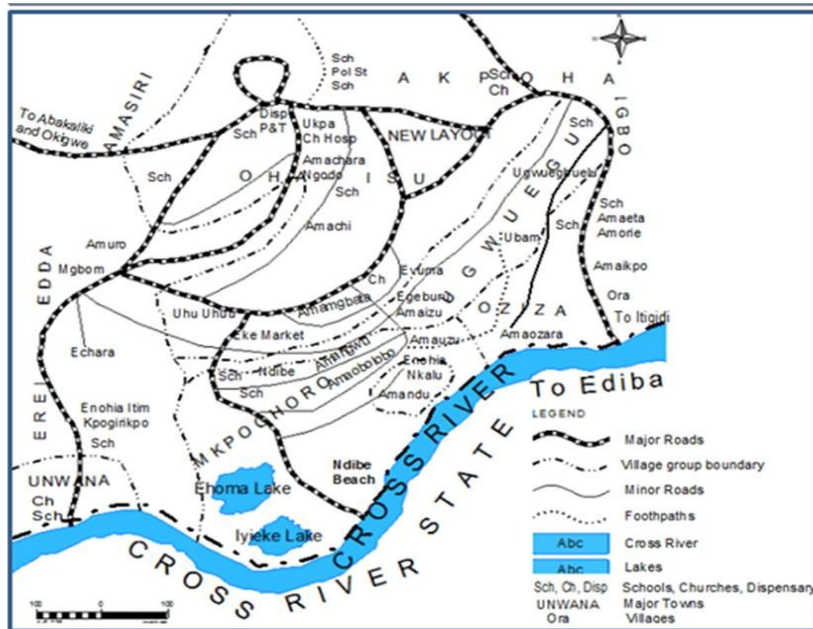


Fig. 1: Map of Afikpo, showing the studied area (Ozizza).

Amaeta in Ozizza dwells in close proximity to the cross river and the area is flooded during the rainy season which gives them an edge over fishing among other sub-group-of-villages. Also, the flooded Amaeta people are surrounded by residual hills (sand stone ridges) that necessitated their living far away from other mainland communities in Ozizza while the neighbouring village in Cross River is the closest neighbour through the river.

Method of Research

The data for this research was gathered by archaeological reconnaissance and oral information. Oral information was obtained from the elders and other resource individuals knowledgeable in the field of the fishing industry in the area. Indeed, in-depth interviews were used to collect data relevant to the subject of the study and on the whole about twenty persons both old and young as well as men and women were interviewed.

Others were ethnographic reports, literatures and interpretation of finds in order to arrive at the following:

- (a) The theory based on the fishing
- (b) The traditional methods in the fishing industry in the area
- (c) Technology/technique involved in the area
- (d) Methods for improvements in the area
- (e) Impact of traditional fishing in the area

Theoretical foundation (Principles of Reciprocity Theory)

The Latin word *reciprocus* means 'going back and forth' (retro-procus): giving and receiving. In the word of Bruni et al; (2008:2) reciprocity underlies the meaning that:

“The mutual exchange, not logically equivalent to the notion of equal give and take. The opposite concept is that of unconditional behaviour, the search for satisfaction without being under any obligation to give anything in return”

Reciprocity rewards people's kind actions and punishes unkind ones (Falk and Fischbacher, 2000:1). Therefore, it is a powerful determinant of human behaviour. In the field of archaeology, the importance of reciprocity has been explored by Grant and Fleming (2002) as a bilateral interaction between give and take which solidified transactions in the society.

Reciprocity in our discourse is not the ideas of Falk and Fischbacher's reward for kind actions and punishment for unkind ones but the mutual situation of give and take, embedded on the gift exchange and the investment games of traditional methods of fishing. The theory buttressed that in the traditional methods of fishing, the spirit of give and take is what controls the obligation of the mind of the fishermen in the area of study. This is because the gift exchange and the investment games is what explains the mutual bilateral interaction of the fishermen and farmers also in the study area. Whereas, there is fairness in the exchange, that is goods paid for with goods, hence, farmers exchange syndrome with fishermen is based on the fact that crops are exchanged with fish. In the investment games, fairness in the fish market generates huge sales. Unfairness in the distribution arises only during the scarcity times (Trivers, 1971). In the study zone, there is unfairness in the distribution around May to July of each year due to the scarcity of seasonal crops in the hands of the farmers while the fishermen had abundance of their fish.

However, Bronislaw Malinowski (1920s), one of the fathers of the structural functionalism theory to the understanding of people's cultural practices, insisted that the idea of the principles of reciprocity centers on human involvement in life- food, possession, labour, women, children, religious organization, etc. This human involvement is otherwise called 'cultural institution' and the Ozizza fishing industry is an aspect. Invariably, the efficacy and successfulness of the traditional methods of fishing is in its cooperation in food procurement. Reciprocity theory confers on fishing becomes one of the major total social phenomena in Ozizza, more especially the Amaeta sub-group of the village. People living in the coastal area survived through fishing and fish-netting while the upland regions adapted to the methods as a vital supplement, waiting patiently for the harvesting of their crops. The Ozizza communities in Afikpo use fishing and fish-net as another agricultural practice which provides an economic basis, since the area is flooded

during the farming/raining period. It is a social phenomenon that virtually involved everybody irrespective of age. The usefulness of fish in the research area had indeed been demonstrated in its freshness, smoking and drying methods as a nutritional protein supplement to the people. Therefore, both the gift exchange and the investment games identified reciprocity in action and not altruism. Reciprocity altruist is only willing to reciprocate if there are future reward arising from reciprocal action (Kreps et al, 1982). Therefore, the use of the theory of reciprocity in this research buttressed the fact that the parties involved are unconscious of this actions in reciprocating whatever goods they had bought in exchange of their own services. This reciprocity theory applied in this work is an unconscious phenomenon.

Traditional Methods of Fish Net and Fishing in Ozizza

Fishing is another profession to agriculture and pottery in Ozizza, Afikpo. Different methods of fishing such as fish net, traps, lines, basket, hooks and boats abound world over. Netting, trapping and basketry are very common in Ozizza communities. Net making is very sophisticated and demands intensive labour and investment. Although nets were imported from China into Nigeria, they are available all over in the open markets. The netters purchase the ropes; that is, the seine nets and the European nylon ropes. By the technique of *Oku ntofo* at the head, fish nets are formed. These techniques (*Oku ntofo*) enable the net to sink to a particular depth. The second method is trapping. This is done by using stakes anchored around the rock outcrop that project into the river in a semi-circular formation. An opening that enables fish to penetrate is normally created. This also demands skillfulness and identifies sportsmanship. Despite the fact that trapping among Ozizza fishermen is not a very profitable method of fishing, it gives room for combining fishing with another means of livelihood. The final method is basketry. Fish basket is mainly used by women. Basden (1966) calls it prawns. Fish baskets are made according to Basden (1966), by twigs plaited together to form balls. In Ozizza, the basket is made from either raffia palm or palm sheath in a cone-shape with a large spherical calabash bowl. The neck is shaped to fit into the funnel-like mouth narrowing into the bowl (Ikegwu, 2012 and 2013).



Plates 1(a): Local fish pond along gullied site during drying season. (b) Fishing along the bridge

The funnel-like mouth is the small opening that captures fishes into the middle of the basket and prevents the escape of the fish. The inside is filled with little stones and tied

into a long line and with a good float; the basket is thrown afar into the river and it sinks deep (Ikegwu, 2012 and 2013).

These three methods (*Oku ntofo* netters, trapping and basketry) of fishing are prominent to men and women in Ozizza. In some localities, fishing is regarded as a men's profession. In the case of Afikpo, women do the fishing. Fishing is done in two areas: at the beach of cross-river all year round and that of the flood zone of *Ogba-Eju*(rock shelter) environment during the peak of rainy season. Men with fish net and canoe paddle at the flood area with the help of bridges constructed to support fishing during the period of flood. It is at these bridges that the fishermen stand and haul their net with long rope.



Plate 2: *Oku ntofo* netter

According to informants fishing involved cooperatives that is one fisherman hauls the net and the other gathers the fish into the canoe and fish caught are reasonable. In some places, especially in Niger Delta, the greater number of fish caught is during the dry season. This is as a result of heavy rains that carry flood water away. Fishes retreat into the flood zone. No wonder the greater number of fish in Ozizza is evident during the rainy season. It is a simple logic, *Ogba-Eju*(rock shelter) environment houses the entire fish that were carried away by water. These fishes had no escape route because *Ogba-eju* was surrounded by sand stone ridges. The Fulani cattle rearers also fish with their type of net called *marley* at *Ogba-Eju* rock shelter flood zone. Their nets are always kept at rock shelters, for the next season. They also used the rock shelters as an abode during the rainy season.

Invariably, women prawn only at the cross river beach yearly. This means that women never fish at the flood plain probably due to the high risks involved. Trapping was done by men only at the beach of cross-river. Little children also fish like their mothers. But the sharp difference is that they do their own by splashing the water freely with a stick while placing their baskets deep inside the water. After a few moments, they do raise their baskets to behold a few small fishes.



(a)

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(b)



(d)

Plates 3 (a): Baskets used for fishing the fulani herdsmen called *Marley*. (b): Trapping using a basket at the research area. (c): Trapping using hooks. (d) Fishing using a canoe

The only limitation of fishing in Ozizza Afikpo is the continuous use of simple technology compared with the Chinese and the Malayan fishers that have adapted to the use marine engines boat possessing sharp lights (electricity) (Baring et al, 1974). Despite the limitation, fishing at Ozizza serves the following importance:

- a) It provides good diets among themselves, neighbouring communities and market at the city of Abakiliki and its environs.
- b) It is a profitable profession to those involved.
- c) It gives room for interaction with nature.
- d) It offers employment to fishers.

Finally, fishing in Ozizza, like other West African villages that probably engaged in fishing due to subsistence needs, were later metamorphosed into a profitable business largely due to the increase in population in the big cities to augment the price of beef and other poultry products. It provides income to households for solving family problems. This summed up the Igbo adage that says *aku n'esi obi ike* which literally means "wealth is strength". Increase in the demand for fish led to the supply, hence its continuity and youth's willingness to indulge in the industry. Likewise, during the dry season when the

flood waters had receded and the creeks are found with little ponds of water, men, women and children indulge in a type of fishing called splash fishing. In this method, the water in the pockets of the ponds are transferred to another artificial pond using plates, holes (which creates channels), and calabash. This practice makes it impossible for fish trapped inside the pond to escape and all of them are caught.

Fish Processing and Preservation: Technology

Fish processing involved everybody, the young and the aged. However, preservation involves mostly women, although no taboos prevent men from preserving fish. In riverine River State, women exclusively dominated in both processing and preservation (Gabriel, 1999:71). The first stage of processing after hauling is sorting of different kinds and sizes. Some immediately would be sold fresh at the bank of cross river, where buyers await. Secondly, fish was smoked and dried to prevent damage or to taste better, this is the next stage. This stage is preferable mostly to low income earners both in the cities and villages where electricity is a problem. The tropics where we are helps these stages quickly; that is, the hot, humid climate of the country (Gabriel, 1999:71 and Okonkwo, 1999:115). Okonkwo, (1999:115) further observed the natural sun drying as the most common method of preserving not only fish but meat in the tropics. Traditionally, both smoking and drying are preferred but smoked fish are consumed almost immediately to avoid decaying. Drying lasts for a long period and is thus consumed gradually. Therefore, fishing is an occupation for everybody who wishes to participate in the area. Processing is mostly for women. The essence here is to note the role of women in the traditional technology of fish procurement, processing, preservation, impact (archaeological interpretation) and how to improve on it.

In the smoking, big fish are cut open and disemboweled. They are chopped in smaller sizes to be salted, dabbed or rubbed with palm oil (Gabriel, 1999:71) and placed on the *Igwe-azu* (fish trays) ready for smoking. Small fish are not chopped and washed but can be sprinkled with a little salt. Both are arranged on a long stick. Some are curved and others are straight and placed on a locally fish card made from raffia which had been replaced with *Igwe-azu* that is iron wire mesh. Drying is the same process. The only difference is that the fish are dried under the intense sun light. As fuel heats beneath the local furnace, the sun shines on top simultaneously. This enables the fish to dry well and last longer.

In Ozizza, Obeche wood example *icheku* (*Dialium guineense*) that is Velvet tamarind wood is used in smoking, although lack of the hard wood warrant the use of any wood. In Rivers State, mangrove wood is in use (Gabriel, 1999:17). Both woods (Obeche and Mangrove) either in Ozizza or River State add flavour to the fish. Therefore, women who smoke and dry fish take cognizance of the fact that they have to stack heaps of firewood (Obeche) and they involve their girls in the area in collecting the wood. These woods are collected from *Ogba-eju* (rockshelters) forest. Other raw materials used for smoking and drying fish are also derived from the forest by girls and boys. Sticks for shaping fish are made from the *ijikara* (*Spondias mombin*) species of the palm tree. The younger ones learn the various fish procurements. For instance, girls, through constant observation and participation, master the processes of salt blobbing, oiling, rotating on the fire when necessary and the best wood in used. Some older women still make local

fish tray from bamboo raffia palm used in smoking fish. The Mud Oven is a major structure used in this area for smoking fish.

Mud Oven

In Ozizza, just like River State and other places in south east Nigeria familiar with fishing had two major types of mud oven, designated for smoking fish. The larger one is purposely meant for fish smoking and the smaller one is for garri processing which can also serve for fish smoking. The first one is industrial in nature. It is large enough to accommodate many fishes for commercial purposes. It is about 70cm high made with openings through which smoke would evaporate. The openings are needed to avoid losing the taste of the fish. The garri oven is smaller, about 25cm to 33cm in height. It is called *akpata-oku* (fire channel) erected with roundish/ovals with mud (laterites), a wide arched chamber at the base for insertion of firewood.



Plates 4 (a): Small mud oven for fish smoking (b): Big mud oven

The mud oven after construction is plastered with another softer mud (laterite) mixed with water. This makes the oven to last longer. The mud is dug out from the earth. Mixture starts as soon as impurities are removed and water added. Skill and tactics are involved to prevent collapsing on or after construction. Everybody is involved in the construction. There is no taboo in the construction. During smoking, *Ogugu-nkwu* (palm frond) are placed round the mud oven to enable the fish tray positioning well. Some people now use an iron rod and wire mesh. It is made roundish in Ozizza. Other shapes found from Chokor and Elmina town in Ghanaian are the oven called Chokor and Elmina rectangular ovens were not known in Ozizza. According to Gabriel (1999: 73) thus:

“Chokor and Elmina was introduced into Nigeria in 1998 by the Federal Department of Fisheries and Agricultural, Co-operative in the Federal ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development. The first Chokor oven was constructed in

1989 at Magbon Alade in Ibeju/Lekki local government area in Lagos State....., follows by Chokor oven in Okujagu-Ama, Okirika local government area, River State”

The only method of fishing and fish preservation in the studied area were traditional methods and therefore, no improvement so far was introduced. Firewood such as *nku* (Obeche) are *achupa, ugu, ubia, okpi.abacha and eko* and are still in use for smoking fish.

Children and youths who always help their parents in the smoking are not hygienically qualified. During the processes of smoking, they burnt their hands and fingers when turning fish, thereby dropping some on the ground as well as contaminating fish with micro-organisms with saliva due to excessive talking. That is, fish that fell off were contaminated with sand and other particles. Fish smokers' eyes are also affected by smoke oozing out from the mud oven, causing eye problems at old age. Cloths were torn while rekindling the fire beneath.

Packaging

After smoking, the desirable ones are stored in the earthen wares (bowls) or oblong local basket *ukpa* when cool. They are also covered with plantain/banana leaves to prevent dust or particles covering them. Fish can be either smoked or dried. Complete drying lasts longer while soft smoke last for a short while. According to oral tradition, rubbing of palm oil wasn't familiar in the past. Palm oil for them is to make them look attractive, which was introduced recently. Insecticide spraying by women in Rivers State to prevent flies etc. (Gabriel, 1999:75) is not familiar with Ozizza people. Left over fishes are kept at the local chimney inside the local kitchen. This is to allow fire flames to touch them, preventing flies and other insects from causing damage to the fishes. Packaging is equally done by women and youths in this area.

Fishing in Ozizza and Its Improvement

The fishing industry in this locality has continued to thrive, augmenting farm products. The efficacy is still on the traditional methods, thus lack of attention by the government and other international bodies. The hauling and processing of equipment is still wearing local looks with lots of repairs, although affordable (Okonkwo, 1999:98). The frequent damage and repair were cumbersome in the life of the fishers. Therefore improvement is indeed needed in the hauling and processing equipment.

In some parts of Rivers State, indigenous canoes had been motorized and big fibre glass boats had been given to the women for fishing (Gabriel, 1999:76). In Chinese and Malayan, fishermen have adopted the use of the marine engines boat (Baring *et al.*, 1994: 895). These adopted modern methods of hauling fish facilitates the rate of acquisition and improvement, making the industry attractive and employable. In the study area, there are no effects of such modern equipment and the industry is still cumbersome and not employable. It is left to those who had no alternative source of income.

However, the fish processing and preservation are not well done and need improvements. The only available oven is the mud oven. Kiln and other standard types are not known. According to Kramlich *et al.* (1980:61) quoted from Okonkwo, (1999:105) emphasized sophisticated controlled smoking ovens desirable for making products popularly adopted in some western European countries. Talabi and Igbimose (1972:3) in Okonkwo, (1999:105) talk on kiln giving more output than other traditional types used now in some African countries. Both kiln and European modern oven generate great advantages (labour, speeds of processing, space and control (Okonkwo, 1999:105). The disadvantages are the cost of purchasing the modern oven and maintenance. It is here that the people need government attention which is not forth coming.

Apart from the oven usage, the cleanliness during smoking is nothing to write home about. The methods for grading of fishes and sticking in preparations for smoking

contributes significantly to sandy taste in some of fishes. Some always fell down thereby being contaminated with impurities. Lack of hardwood in smoking also lead to rotting of fish, especially during the rainy season. Fish also get burnt due to inability control the fire. All this made the fishermen in Ozizza in need of training from specialists. Improvement, however, must start from government introducing equipment for hauling and processing. This training should follow soon after providing the equipment. The modern system would generate a more hygienic processed fish, enough output and employment for the youths.

Impact of Traditional Fishing in Ozizza

Archaeological interpretation of the traditional fishing in Ozizza centers mainly firstly on communication. Effective means of road transport and a good transportation system would aid increased traffic to Ozizza, more especially to Amaeta the waterlogged sub-group of village, where fish is most abundant. As it is now, it remains the rough hilly track and canoe crossing is the only means of transportation. This retards the economic flow, hence a waste of resources and skill. This has continued to generate what is called the 'working poor'. The phrase 'working poor' simply means toiling hard under stressful conditions and yet without success due to poor infrastructures. The exchange via trade should have bound the producers together (fish producers and buyers) but the poor network of roads makes it unforeseeable, thus the 'working poor'.

Secondly, the archaeological interpretation and adaptation of exchange of Ozizza fishing have three major classifications; namely, reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange or investment. Reciprocity, that is, give and take, solidified transactions and increased social stability, social prestige and storage (Grant et al, 2002:217). Reciprocity in trade and exchange had showcased fishing and fish netting technology as was evident in the ethnographic account of the Ozizza in Afikpo. In the redistribution of fishing, technology in Afikpo permeated circulation of resources in the area preventing people from lacking any item. The fishers provide or supply fish to the farmers while the farmers supply crops to the fishers. This became the redistribution-reward altitude, vehicle of trade and exchange (Grant et al, 2002:217). Archaeological interpretation on market exchange or investment characterized market a bargaining place or a regulation of price premises enable floatable or flexible exchange. Grant et al, (2002:218) disagreed when they asserted that not all market exchange happens at a fixed place and not all currencies are archaeologically visible. In the Neolithic period, market exchange or investment was not fixed with any paper currency but with what economists called 'trade by barter' (exchange of goods and services). For example, fish can be exchanged for yam or cocoyam. The case of Ozizza in Afikpo fish market is visible in this modern time unlike in the prehistoric era, of trade by barter. The market is visible only for those who are familiar with the environment. The Amaeta village in Ozizza has been the major fish producers and is surrounded by Cross River and residual hills. It is obvious that its fish market has enormous weight because buyers from Calabar and other places in Igboland who are familiar with the Afikpo fish migrate through Cross River to Amaeta for the exchange. Other artifacts used for fishing are bought from the market (example pots and bowls). Considering the fact that pottery is their indigenous technology, bowls (*oku*) are used mainly by women in fishing and storing fish for selling and smoking. Ozizza also have a trade link with China. Rope used in making fish netting called *ntoko* was made

and imported from China. According to ethnographic studies, the Ozizza market was also identified with possessing social functions such as relaxation places for elders during sunset, a wrestling arena during the festival period.

Conclusion

The act of traditional fishing during the Mesolithic that was championed during the Neolithic era had no difference with this modern time in Ozizza, Afikpo. Evidence of fish bone example Pisces (*Lophius Piscatorius*) found in Ugwuegu Village Site ii at the depth of 60-75cm affirmed this similarity (Chikwendu, 1989:30-36). Although there had been some changes in the technology and methods of acquiring fish in Ozizza, Afikpo, most of the indigenous past technology still predominated. This means that the industry with its technique remains almost the same, serving the same means as edible food products, augmenting farming, and as a means of change of diet from other traditional diets. Fishing at the creek was with the use of canoes and fish net, trapping and basketry due to the lack of funds to acquire engine boats. This remains one of the major weaknesses to fishing in the community, resulting in the inability to gather a bounty that will improve their economic status. The strength lies in the spirit of reciprocity, unity and corporation in the field of fishing and had effect on its sustainability in the Ozizza community. Therefore, Afikpo community, based on ethnographic resources and Chikwendu's fish bone- Pisces (*Lophius Piscatorius*) found in Ugwuegu Village Site ii identifies the people as a self-reliant agricultural community, generating their own food and fulfilling their objective in human need for life.

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ⁱ From "The most important thing in life" an unpublished collection by Ekwueme-Ugwu, C. Chinonye