

Change in Tenure Pattern and Customary Land Practices among Igbo Community in Southeastern Nigeria

Emeka E. Obioha

*Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology, National University of Lesotho,
Roma, Lesotho*

E-mail: eeobioha@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT Land to the Ibos of southeastern Nigeria is a property that has both religious, economic, political meaning. This conception held strongly until the era of colonialism when new cultural and economic values were introduced into the colonies. As in many African societies, Ibo society accepted some of the tenets of the colonial rules without force, but was forced to adopt some other measures through obnoxious legislations. Ibo society continuously remains helpless in reverting colonial masters' imposed legislations. However, as other aspects of the peoples' culture keep on changing those which relate to customary land laws are assumed to follow suit. Against this background, this study examines the changes that have occurred in various customary land regulations of the people of Awo-Idemili in Imo State, a rural community located at 33rd kilometers east of the River Niger. The study utilised the anthropological methods, namely Key Interview, Observations, and Archival Records in collecting its data. The study explains the changing tenure and land laws phenomenon from the conflict perspectives of Karl Marx and Hegel. The study reveals that most aspects of the land laws of the people including land pledging, communal ownership, land sales, inheritance procedure, and gift land among others have changed due to the emerging social and economic pressure on land in the area, coupled with increasing population pressure. The implications include the fact that people do not observe the previous culturally defined channels of acquiring and disposing of land in the community. However, the implementation of the Land Use Act 1978 in Nigeria has created some avenues to more people on land in Nigeria.