

**IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE ON OSHIRI COMMUNITY IN
ONICHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN EBONYI STATE,
1900 – 1960**

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY.**

MAY, 2021

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work: Impact of Colonial Rule on Shiri Community in Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State, 1900 – 1960 was written by **ESTHER CHINECHEREM OFOMATA** of the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, Benin City, under the supervision of

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God, and also to my supportive family who has been through thick and thin for me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my acknowledgement and thanks to the following:

My sincere appreciation goes to God Almighty for his loving kindness, grace and mercy towards my life and family.

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My profound appreciation goes to my late parents; Mr and Mrs Okoro Moses who brought me up and also laid the foundation for my education, but never lived to reap the fruits of their labour.

My special thanks goes to my entire family for their unwavering support towards my education and life in general.

I also immensely appreciate my cousin brother; Rev. Ukpa Uche-Egbulam who assisted me in gathering materials for this research work.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Introduction

Oshiri Community is one of the five communities that make up Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State. The community is broadly divided into two parts – *EBIA* and *UVU*. It also comprises sixteen villages which include *Umuorie, Umuimam, Agbabi, Isinkwo, Umumbala, Amankalu, Mboji, Owom, Iyiazu, Ufuezokwu, Isieke* and *Amaokpara*. The *Oshiri* is 25 square miles approximately. The community is found in the east of the present day Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State in Nigeria. The name *Oshiri* is derived from the word “*Oshimiri*” (River).

The traditions of origin of the community has it that the founder of *Oshiri* called *Ezekpechu* the son of *Ugo-Eze* migrated from *Ekpelu* in *Ikwo* Local Government Area in Ebonyi State. He is said to have left *Ikwo* because of land dispute, but *Ikwo* traditions deny this reason. *Ikwo*'s position is that *Ezekpechu* left *Ikwo* not because of land dispute, but because of the war between *Ezza* and *Ikwo*, this conflicting traditions of origin held by the *Ikwo* and the *Oshiri* compelled me to travel to *Ikwo* in order to find out the true position of *Oshiri*'s origin. In this regard, it was confirmed by the people of *Ekpelu* the oldest village in *Ikwo*, that the

Oshiri actually originated from *Ikwo*, but did not leave *Ikwo* because of land dispute, but because of the *Ezza-Ikwo* war. The detail of this *Oshiri* traditions of *Oshiri* shall be analyzed in the subsequent chapter of this work.

Be that as it may, *Oshiri* Community was called *Oshiri* clan in the Eastern Region of Nigeria under *Ogoja* province *Afikpo* Division during colonial rule. The British incursion of the community was in 1905-1960. As it may be expected, the incursion of the British to the community altered the political, socio-cultural and economic organization of the people and left a lasting impact on the people. However, the extent to which colonial rule impacted on the *Oshiri* society has not been given a proper place in the existing literature. Thus with the use primary and secondary sources, this work tends to solve that problem.

It is against this backdrop that this work solely attempts to critically examine, analyze and evaluate the impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* Community in Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State from 1900-1960.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of Colonial Rule on *Oshiri* Community in Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State, 1900 – 1960. While the objectives include:

- i. To examine the traditions of origin, geography and settlement pattern of Oshiri Community.
- ii. To examine pre-colonial Oshiri Community.
- iii. To study the colonial administration of Oshiri Community – the political, economic and socio-cultural organization of Oshiri Community.
- iv. To examine the impact of colonial rule on Oshiri Community.

Scope of Study

This work focuses mainly on the Impact of Colonial Rule in Oshiri Community in Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State 1900 – 1960. Colonial rule began in *Oshiri* in 1905 and terminated in 1960 when *Oshiri* in particular and Nigeria in general was granted independence by the British.

Methodology

This study is a study in historical method.

Primary Sources:

The primary sources that will be consulted are oral interviews with *Oshiri* indigenes, elders and leaders who have vast knowledge on this topic, by providing historical analysis of the impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* Community. Another primary source is the National Archive Enugu where materials relevant to this work

will be accessed, especially Intelligence Reports on *Oshiri* by the Colonial authorities.

Secondary Sources:

Secondary sources to be consulted includes: Universities and Public libraries, both around Oshiri and across the country where books and journal articles will be consulted.

Literature Review

This study examines the Impact of Colonial Rule on Oshiri Community in Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State, 1900 – 1960. Renowned scholars as well as historians have shown interest in evaluating and bringing to the limelight the degree and manners that the colonial rule impacted on many societies in Nigeria in general and Oshiri Community in particular.

A.E. Afigbo “The Eastern Province under Colonial Rule” in Obaro Ikime (ed) *The Groundwork of Nigeria History (Ibadan: HEBN, 2012)*. was a watershed in given the exact dates of colonial activities in the Eastern province, particularly in the Ogoja province Afikpo Division which Oshiri Community could be located during the colonial rule¹. The book stated that the Eastern province became part of the British colonial empire on June 5, 1885. But the actual rule started in 1891 when Sir Claude Macdonald was sent to establish a regular administration in the oil

River. The book also gave satisfactory explanation and survey on the British achieved military and political control of the various hinterland Igbo groups after the conquest of Aro in 1902. In 1905, the Ezza, the Ovororo, Nonya, Onicha, Ahiara, and Oshiri was defeated². Also the page 423 of this book gave a detail account of impact of colonial rule on the group under Ogoja province in general and Afikpo Division in particular which Oshiri belonged. However, the Ikimi's book did not cover the historical origin of Oshiri people and their socio-cultural, economic and political organization of the people. These lapses will be made up with the use of other materials that focus on those areas.

A paper, *Impacts of Colonialism on Religions: An Experience of South western Nigeria*, by Ahamad Faosiy Ogunbado, Ph.D, (Albukhary International University, Kedah Malaysia), was of an immense help in grouping this work into negative and positive impacts of colonial rule on Oshiri Community³. The grouping of the impact into negative and positive also revealed that the negative impact of colonial rule on Oshiri Community outweighs the positive impact.

Ukpa Uche-Egbulam's work, *The conflict between traditional cultural praxis and Christian faith: A discourse of Oshiri Community in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State*, gave a satisfactory explanation and digged deep into the cultural practices, political and economic organization of the *Oshiri* people within this period of study⁴. His work showed how the arrival of Christianity in

Oshiri led to a conflict between Christianity and the existing religion (traditional religion) prior to the arrival of Christian religion⁵. The work also delved deep and analyzed the various festivals in Oshiri, such as Aju festival, New yam festival, Isu-Afa festival etc⁶. However, Uche-Egbulam's work failed to give a descriptive location (Geography) of Oshiri Community. This defect shall be covered by other materials relevant to the compilation of this work.

Furthermore, another important source of information in the compilation of this work was the *Online Dictionary, n.d.* and *Longman Dictionary, 200* these dual dictionaries provided me with the definition of one of the keywords in this topic – “Colonial Rule” or “Colonialism”. They defined colonialism as exploitation by a stronger country of a weaker one or the use of a weaker countries resources to enrich and strengthen the stronger country⁷.

H.J. De Buj and P.O. Muker's book, *Geography: Realms, religion, and concept, 1997*, gave a historical context of the subject matter (Colonial Rule). The book enumerated four reasons the phenomenon came into existence in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. It states that the phenomenon came into existence as a result of-the Abolition of slave trade which was intensified during the 17th and 18th centuries necessitated the search for legitimate trade, emergency of industrial Revolution brought in higher demand for raw materials for industries which the local agriculture was incapable to meet, the necessity of finding market for the

European countries factory productions, and urbanization, the increase in population and increase in rural and agricultural production ushered in high demand for food production to satisfy the swelling growth of the European urban cities. In the Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885, European powers gathered together and determined African fate⁸.

Other relevant materials to this work include, Michael Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule, 1968*. This book analyzed in detail the high-handedness of the warrant chiefs system establishing by the British in the Eastern province during the colonial rule. The book also stated the one the man reasons for colonial conquest of West Africa was for economic motive⁹.

Moreso, J.E. Flint's book, "Chartered Companies and the Scramble for Africa" in J.C. Anene and G. N. Brown (eds), *Africa in the nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries 1966* revealed that the colonial conquest of West Africa was for humanitarian reasons¹⁰.

A. Beahen's et al book, Topic in West African History 1986 was of a great relevant to this work especially the chapter three of this work. The book analyzed the various factors or arguments for colonialism in West Africa. Such factors include political, economical and social factors¹¹.

Be that as it may, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism 1971*, by Coleman J.S., was a watershed in stating in detail, the degree of exploitation that Nigeria in general and Oshiri in particular experienced during the colonial rule between 1861 and 1960 under the Great Britain. The book stated that its advent had impact on many things such as politics, economy, religion, education, and social set up of the country in general and Oshiri Community in particular. Accordingly, by the time independence returned in 1960, the realm had acquired a legacy of political fragmentation that could neither be eliminated nor made to operate satisfactorily¹². The book also states the method and manner in which Nigeria societies in general and Oshiri Community in particular resisted the colonial incursion to their lands.

That as it is, *Igbo Village Affairs*¹³, by Green, M.M., 1940, was of great relevant in the compilation of this work for its critical explanation of Igbo's culture.

Iwe, N.S.S., in his book, *Christianity, culture and Colonialism in Africa*, 2002, also throw more light on the impact of colonialism and Christianity on the culture or traditional belief of the people¹⁴.

Joshua P. & Ohuabunwa, S. in their book, *Reformation of Arochukwu tradition and culture, 2010*¹⁵, made reference to how the most venerate deity of Igbo land – Aro (Long juju) was demolished during the colonial rule. Also the attempt to its reformation denotes its significant to the historical life of the Igbo race in general.

Afoke, J.N. and Nworie, P.J's book, *Ezza history, culture and civilization, Enugu: Cidjap*, gave a detail account of Ezza – Oshiri war, the causes and the role played by the colonial powers in the war¹⁶.

Chief N. Elebe in his work, *Memorandum on the Customary Laws of Oshiri Community for inclusion in the compendium of customary laws of Ebonyi State*. Posited that the paper is based on the modern trend of doing or carrying out events in Oshiri Community because the young generations of Oshiri citizenry have thrown over-board the old ways of following and doing things¹⁷.

Another material or source of information relevant to this work is O.G. 661, *Intelligence Report on Oshiri clan, Afikpo Division 8th May, 1930*, which provided information on the geography and settlement pattern of *Oshiri* people as well as the pattern of British colonial administration on the area. These reports also made reference to the traditions of origin of the people. The reports provide an inkling to understanding of the early history of *Oshiri* people as they delved into the origin of the people, geography, settlement pattern and its relations with other neighbouring communities such as Ugwulamgwu, Isu, Onicha, Agbaegbo etc. However, most of the spellings of things especially names of early founder of Oshiri and the names of the villages were incorrectly spelled, but these will be put in order in the process of compiling this work¹⁸.

CHAPTERIZATION

This work is organized thematically and chronologically into four chapters with each chapters beginning with an introduction.

Chapter One: Background of Study

The first chapter is an introductory background to the work. This comprises the introduction, aims and objectives of the study, scope of study, methodology (primary and secondary sources), and literature Review.

Chapter Two: Historical Background of Oshiri and the Pre-colonial political, socio-cultural and economic organization of the people

This chapter deals with the historical background of *Oshiri* people and social cultural, political and economic organization of pre-colonial *Oshiri*. It examines the origin of the *Oshiri* which is that of migration from *Ikwo*, it will also examine the geography and settlement pattern of the people. The chapter will delve deep into the socio-cultural, political and economic of organization of pre-colonial *Oshiri*, bringing out the social structures and cultural relatives as it attains a significance position on the impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* Community, 1900 – 1960.

Chapter Three: Colonial Administration in Oshiri Community

This chapter will discuss *Oshiri* people under colonial rule. It will examine the system or nature of colonial administration in *Oshiri*.

Chapter Four: Impact of Colonial Rule on Oshiri Community

The focus of this chapter will be a critical analysis of how far colonial rule impacted on Oshiri people, especially as it affects the political, socio-cultural and economic organization of the people. These impacts will be grouped into negative and positive impacts.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This is the last chapter of this study, it is a summary and conclusion of the work.

ENDNOTES

1. A.E. Afigbo “The Eastern Province under Colonial Rule” in Obaro Ikime (ed) *The Groundwork of Nigeria History* (Ibadan: HEBN, 2012), p. 412.
2. A.F. Ogunbado, “Impacts of Colonialism on Religions: An Experience of South Western Nigeria”, *Journal of Humanity and Social Science*. Vol. 5, 2012, p. 4.
3. A.E. Afigbo “The Eastern Province under Colonial Rule” in Obaro Ikime (ed) *The Groundwork of Nigeria History*, p. 413.
4. Uche-Egbulam, Ukpa “*The Conflict between traditional Cultural Praxis and Christian faith: A Discourse of Oshiri Community in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State*. M.Sc Thesis, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, 2018, p. 2.
5. Ibid, p. 5
6. Ibid, p. 5-6.
7. H.J. De Blij and P.O. Muller, *Geography: Realm, region and concept* (N.P: John Willey & Sons, Inc, 1997), p. 2.
8. *Longman dictionary of contemporary English*.
9. Coleman J.S., *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, (1971), p. 5.
10. Green M.M., *Igbo Village Affairs* (London: N.A. 1940), p. 23.
11. Michael Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (London: Hurttchinson & Co., 1968), p. 228.
12. J.E. Flint, “*Chartered Companies and the Scramble for Africa*” in J.C. Anene and G.N. Brown (eds), *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Ibadan: University Press, 1966). P. 112.
13. A. Beahen et al, *Topic in West African History* (England: Pearson Education Ltd. 1986).

14. Iwe S.S., *Christianity, culture and colonialism in Africa* (Calabar: Saesprint, 2002), p. 18.
15. Joshua P. & Ohuabunwa S., *Reformation of Arochukwu tradition and culture* (Lagos: Real value Trust, 2010), p. 6.
16. Afoke J.N. and Nworie P.J., *Ezza History Culture and Civilization* (Enugu: Cidjap, 2010), p. 8.
17. N. Elebe, *Memorandum on the Customary Laws of Oshiri community for inclusion in the compendium of customary Laws of Ebonyi State (2013)*, p. 1.
18. *Intelligence Report on Oshiri Clan, Afikpo Division*, O.G. 661, (8th May, 1930), p. 1 & 44.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF OSHIRI AND THE PRE-COLONIAL SOCIO-CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

This chapter seeks to examine the historical background and pre-colonial socio-cultural, political and economic organization of *Oshiri*. It examines its geographical location, settlement pattern and also a critical analysis of the traditions of origins of *Oshiri* (Early History). Also important to this chapter is to delve into how *Oshiri* people were socially structured, its administrative pattern and economic organizations in the pre-colonial era.

Geography of Oshiri

Oshiri Community is located in the present day *Onicha* Local Government Area in *Ebonyi* State, it is one of the five communities that make up *Onicha* Local Government Area, among other communities are – *Isu*, *Onicha*, *Ukawu*, and *Abaomege*. The *Oshiri* area is 25 square miles approximately. In 1937 the taxable population was assessed at 1705 and the total population is estimated to be 6289. This estimate was based on the formular “Taxable males plus 7% equal to the Total adult male population including absentees, aged and infirm.

Approximately boundaries are shown on the map in the appendix. On the East and North *Oshiri* is bounded by the *Ezza*, a powerful neighbor, on the North-

West *Agba* and *Isu*, on the West, *Isu* and *Onicha*, on the South-West *Onicha* and on the South *Ugwulangwu* and *Ezza*.

The main physical feature is the *Ebonyi* River and its tributaries the *Nkpuma Ozi*, *Ogbu-ehe*, and *Ide* streams. The Eastern part of *Oshiri* is forested while the West is open grassy land. The grassy area is called *Egu* (field), dotted around it are houses, “*Ndi Egu*” (people of the field); these are inhabited by farmers who maintain occupancy of the land which otherwise might be more easily seized by their neighbours².

Traditions of Origin of the Oshiri

It still remains the onus of history to determine the foundations of every society through examination of the trends of development of the society question. This examination of trends however, involves a critical evaluation of data of the evolution of the society from small group to a larger community. To this effect, according to oral interview with *Aja Chima*, both *Oshiri*, *Onicha Igboeze*, *Ukawu* and *Abaomege* are the four communities out of the five autonomous communities in *Onicha* Local Government, that could trace their ancestral origin to *Ezza* in *Ebonyi* State³. According to Nwangama E.U. in his work, *The beliefs, practices and relevance of ancestral veneration in North-Eastern Igbo land, Nigeria. A thesis presented to the department of religion, University of Nigeria, Nsuka in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy (Ph.D) in*

African traditional religion, November, 2011, He reiterates that “oral traditions corroborated with anthropological evidence confirm that *Ezekuna* was the founder and legendary ancestor of Ezza people”⁴. *Ezekuna’s* father was said to be *Ekumaenyi*. According to Afoke, J.N. and Nworie, P.M., *Ezza history, culture and civilization, 2010*, believed that “*Ekumanyi* is the grandfather of Ezza, *Izzi* and *Ikwo* people. *Ekumaenyi* gave birth to *Ezekuna*, *Olodo*, and *Noyo* respectively”. This is indeed the origin of the name of three communities: *Ezza-Ezekuna*, *Izzi-Olodo* and *Ikwo-Noyo*⁵.

The *Oshiri* Community was founded by *Ugo-Eze* who was one of the brothers of *Noyo* of *Ikwo* based on the account of oral tradition. This *Ugo-Eze* according to oral tradition was the half-brother of *Igbo-Eze* who later was known as *Onyikwa* who happens to be one of the eight sons of *Ezekuna*. *Nyekwa Igbo-Eze* was a hunter by occupation and due to the lucrative nature of his hunting business, which took him across a big river (Ebonyi River) demarcating his hometown from the other side. After crossing Ebonyi River, due to huge production in that area, he erected three different huts giving each a wide distance from another. The first huts erected was left for the half-brother *Ugo-Eze* where today is known as *Oshiri-Ugoeze*, the second hut erected was for himself which today is known as *Onicha Igbo-Eze* and the third hut erected was later left for *Ikerefi* his junior brother who later founded a place which today is called *Nkerefi* in *Nkanu West Local Government Area* of Enugu State. Due to bountiful harvest in the area, *Onyikwa*

Igbo-Eze left for the half brother *Ugo-Eze* the first hut he erected. *Onyikwa Igbo-Eze* used this to settle the half brother to ensure that he had a work to make a living. *Ugo-Eze* after his settlement in *Oshiri* went back to his clan and married and gave birth to *Akpateze*. From the oral tradition, the name “*Oshiri*” was derived from the word “*Osimiri*” (River) which also is as a result of *Ugo-Eze’s* re-collective experience of crossing a big river called *Ebonyi* with the half-brother *Onyikwa Igbo-Eze*. Today, the ancestral link between *Oshiri*, *Onicha*, *Nkerefi* and *Ikwo* is symbolized by a life covenant forbidding any spilling of blood among the communities.

Since *Akpateze* was left from the family of *Ugo-Eze*, oral tradition has it that he had four children who were believed to have respectively founded the first-four oldest villages of the sixteen (16) which make up *Oshiri* Community. The remaining twelve villages are said to have been founded by the grandchildren of *Akpateze*. Each of the villages in *Oshiri*, has a traditional village chief who presides over vital issue that concerns the villagers unbehalf of the community king (*Eze*). The first four sons of *Akpateze* were *Orie* who was named after the first and oldest village called *Umuorie Oshiri*, the second was *Imam*, named after the second oldest village called *Umu-Imam Oshiri*, the third son was *Abi*, named after the third oldest village called *Agbabi Oshiri* and the fourth was *Nkwo* who was as well named after the fourth village called *Isinkwo Oshiri*. All these people were the four sons of *Akpateze* who subsequently founded the remaining twelve (12) villages of *Oshiri*.

The ancestral ties between the people of each of these sixteen villages are very visible in certain aspect of their traditional praxis such as Age-grade pattern, burial system, new yam festival, etc. Linguistic proximity is another noticeable evidence between them. *Oshiri* people have a unique language and culture that differs from the languages of the blood brothers as previously mentioned, and that made them special in both character, learning and accommodation of strangers⁶.

Settlement Pattern

Oshiri traditions holds that the original inhabitants of the area occupied by the *Oshiri* were called *Agala*. They now live in the present day Benue State of Nigeria where they migrated from *Oshiri* after their displacement. *Oshiri* traditions holds that their founder, *Akpateze* first settled at *Umuimam*. However, *Umuimam* was a temporal settlement for him. From there he moved to *Umuorie* his parent home till his death. He had four children who were all male, namely: *Orie*, *Imam*, *Abia* and *Nkwo*, which *Oshiri* tradition believed founded the remaining twelve villages. The name of each *Oshiri* village reflected the name of the original founder⁷.

The names of the *Oshiri* villages in order of seniority are:

- (1) Umuorie
- (2) Umuimam

- (3) Agbabi
- (4) Isinkwo
- (5) Umumgbala
- (6) Amankalu
- (7) Umumboke
- (8) Amaegu
- (9) Umuefia
- (10) Amocha
- (11) Mboji
- (12) Owom
- (13) Iyiazu
- (14) Ufuezeokwu
- (15) Isieke
- (16) Amaokpara.

Political Organization of Pre-colonial Oshiri

The indigenous political structure of *Oshiri* people was based on the family unit which had developed into a kindred and from a kindred into a group. In *Oshiri* case two group of kindred's exist - *EBIA AND OVU*. It would be a mistake, however, to stress the fact of the two groups. *Oshiri* is more of a clan in the clannish sense than many other of her neighbours in the pre-colonial era such as

Esza, Okposi, Onicha, Agbaebo and so on, and for practical purposes the grouping of *Ebia* and *Uvu* may be ignored as *Oshiri* is a united body of people, geographically, historically and socially. Its structure was arranged on agricultural needs⁹.

The Family: The lowest functioning unit was and still the family which consisted of a man, his wife/wives and children living in three houses in a compound. In many cases a compound contains twelve houses or six, sometimes fifteen but rarely more. In these larger compounds one could find two to five different men each with their wives and children living together. Generally but not always those men were closely related being either brothers, half brothers or cousins but sometimes the relationship was and still more distant. When such families live in groups in one compound the oldest man was and still recognized as a compound head. There is not much functioning organization in a compound but the compound head received the respect due to age and settles petty disputes arising in his compound provided the parties to the dispute were agreeable. At times neighbouring compounds will meet together and assist at such settlements¹⁰.

The Kindred: This was the next functioning unit. These were people who lived as a group of related compounds in a village. The eldest men of each compound who had ceased to go to farm and wield a hoe were known as *Ogirinya* (Elders), and

they form a village council to settle petty village disputes. Associated with them in the council was the age-grades known as *Ogbe Ojeje*.

Clan Council: This was the highest functioning unit. When the village council found itself out of its depth, or when the question of issues concerned the clan as a whole, e.g. *Ezza-* Oshiri war, or when the parties to dispute were of different kindreds, the clan council met usually at *Umuorie* (the senior village) to discuss the matter. Its members were middle age men of the *Oggbo Ojeje* selected for the purpose by the village council. The representatives were bound to consult their village Elders before and after clan council meetings¹⁴.

Ogbo Ojeje: Consisting of men of 45 years and upwards who still wield a hoe and can walk longish distances. They were the most active member of the clan council and do most of the talking during meetings, while *Ogirinya* just sit and listened, but interrupted at any time they considered that the customary law was being infringed. The *Onye Ogirinya* (oldest inhabitant) was entitled to receive a special portion of any game killed¹¹.

Nnadi Ufu (the high priest of the village): This office is hereditary and the holder must be a direct lineal descendant of the founder of the village. He was and still the priest of *Ala* (land), and also performed the sacrifice to the founder every year. As a priest he was an important person but apart from his duties as such, he did not rule the council in any way. *Nnadi Ufu* might therefore be REGENT appointed by the

village. *Nnadi Ufu* succession to the priesthood was subject to the approval of the elders.

It was not recommended that official recognition should be given to *Nnadi Ufu*. The office a priestly office and the holder not having the greater power in other respects than any other member of his age grade, it would be a mistake to confere upon him administrative functions which he does not by any customs possess. In all cases he would be a member of the village council but no more than that¹².

Assisting the Elders and middle age to maintain law and order were age grades selected for this purpose known as *Ogbo Neche Ogo*, *Ogbo Egirima*, *Ogbo Api*.

Ogbo Neche Ogo (company who guard the village): They arrested malefactors and exercised the powers of a native police force. They were responsible to *Ogbo Ojeje*.

Ogbo Egirima and Ogbo Api

The remainder of the inhabitants of thee village were *Ogbe Egirima* – company of able-bodied farmers from the age of circumcision to 45 years and the *Ogbo Api*. (Uncircumcised boys from 16 years of age downwards).

Functions of the Age grade in Pre-colonial Oshiri

The age grades in pre-colonial *Oshiri* performed the following functions:

They arrested criminals; exercised the power of a native police force; they were responsible for the development and execution of community initiatives and project; clearing of road paths; enforcement off ancestral wishes and they also acted as a porters to white men during colonial rule.

Ozo Egu (Guardian of the Field)

A plenipotentiary personage, whose duties were similar to those of *Osu Agu* in *Okposi*, and *Ozo Agu* in *Onicha*. His powers and duties was the protection of far areas of lands belonging to the community which would easily be seized by Oshiri neighbours if left unprotected and unoccupied¹³.

Women in Pre-colonial Oshiri

Women: Women were organized on an age-grade basis in the same way as men *Nwanyi Nneochie* meaning “old mothers”, corresponding with *Ogirinya*, *Unurukpo*, meaning “still conceiving” corresponded with *Ogbor Ojeje* and *Ogbo Egirima*. *Nwa Agboko*, meaning “uncircumcised girls” corresponding with *Ogbo Api*. The women could meet and pass a law protecting crops against cattle and herds when planting had commenced. If any animal destroys farm crops, thereafter the owner was brought before the women and fined. Boys were detailed to act as cattle

herdsmen with long sticks. There were no priestesses in the clan. Quarrels between one woman and another were settled by the old women¹⁵.

The whole of the above organization survived and received the general recognition of the people; moreover, it was agreed in all the villages that the village councils exact the willing of the people, and likewise the clan council. It should not however be supposed that the clan and village council frequently met or were convened bodies with numerous activities. The people were united people and their interest were centred on agriculture and hunting.

The Judiciary

In the pre-colonial Oshiri, petty disputes were settled in the compound by arbitration. Quarrels in which the participants came from different compounds in one village were settled by the village council described earlier in this chapter. If the wrong was serious such as killing or a case of witchcraft the clan council was convened proceedings at either were quite informal. Each side argued the case. Witnesses were called. The Elders consulted and somebody announced the decision.

Crime of a serious nature was rare and was punished as follows:

- **Murder:** by hanging self inflicted usually, otherwise by force.
- **Theft of farm produce or livestock:** was by sale into slavery. Wounding by compensation only.

- **Adultery:** by the payment of a fine equivalent to £30 or one goat.
- **Witchcraft:** was by burning.
- **Debts:** were collected by the process of seizing the debtors cow or goat.

Socio-cultural heritage of Oshiri People

Culture is generally understood to mean the life and activities of a people. Like other Igbos, *Oshiri* have their own culture or ways of life which distinguishes them not only from their neighbours but the entire Igbo nation. *Oshiri* Community has traditions that are very rich in values. It is not possible in this small work to examine the culture of *Oshiri* in detail. Some of the cultural heritage of *Oshiri* people are listed and discussed below:

Religion and Cosmology of the Oshiri

Like many black people all over the world, the *Oshiri* worship many gods. Indeed many *Oshiri* people today are not Christians. They worshiped and still worship a myriad of gods or deities, as evidenced by the numerous shrines in the area. These gods were dotted here and there; around water ports (Nja), in front of the house, in the yam barn, in the backyard and in the ancestral temple called (*Ngidi*). According to Prof Ottenberg ‘everywhere one looks there are shrines¹⁶. There were also matriclan shrines, yam gods (*njokuji*) whom a farmer had to

consult before planting and after harvesting of yams, and god of war, lightening and thunder called (Ogbuanyanwu).

Above all, the people believed and still believe in the existence of a supreme being whom they variously called *Chineke* (God that creates) or Obashi bu l'elu (God on high). They believed that he controls all things above and below; that he disburses rewards and punishment according to merits. That is the principle of retributive justice. They believed that men were accountable for their actions and would receive reward and punishment accordingly. Religion was ultimately enshrined in their philosophy of life.

Just like the stoics philosophers, the *Oshiri* believed in the idea of a universal law of nature, cosmic principles linking together all living beings and directing them to the proper fulfillment of their respective natures. But the form of *Chineke* himself was not known to them; As a result, they had never represented him with any carved or molded form or cult symbols. As a matter of fact, they did not know how exactly to worship *Chineke* formally or directly. Hence, they approached him through intermediaries who according to them were kept by God himself as agents to carry out a variety of functions.

And in their normal prayers to the ancestors, *Chineke* was mentioned first. So associated with belief in Supreme Being was the worship of a multitude of gods or

deities. These gods which were legion, were dotted here and there in *Oshiri* land as we had earlier mentioned.

In *Oshiri* no one is surprised when he meets elders to talk about marriage or any thing traditional, the reply he will get from the elders is *je – mee omelali* (go and do the customs). But when he fails to do it the way it was supposed to be done, the elders would reply thus (*omebenu-omelali*), he has not done the customs.

Ali in *Oshiri* is regarded as the goddess of the earth and of fertility. Ali; was closely linked with philosophy and cosmology. Ali was the most important single deity equated with *Chineke* and regarded as queen of the under world and the “owner of men, dead, and the living”¹⁷.

According to John Abbah, before we eat kolanuts, or drink palm wine, we must first give to her; the land¹⁸. This land was highly valued and ritualized in *Oshiri*, as was the case in other parts of Igboland. This arose from their cosmological belief that land is an indispensable economic factor. Like their Igbo counterparts, these people revered and worshiped their ancestors; *Ogbuanyanwu*, (an ancestral gods) who were closely associated with Ali and acted as her agents and respected as the judge and guardian of human morality.

Oshiri people also believe that each individual had a spirit, known as his *uwa* or *chi* (destiny) which was associated with him from the moment of his

conception until he went to the grave. They further worshiped a multiplicity of village group deities. The most important ones included *Ogbu anyanwu*, *Akpataeze*, and *Ngele Ukwelu*. The deities were said to have all purpose functions. *Njokuji* for instance was primarily the god of yam and *Izzioba* feast, which should be consulted by the people of *Oshiri* before planting season set in. As a rule, the people of *Umuokenta* of *Amankalu* would first and foremost eat the new yam before the entire *Oshiri* tastes it.

Ogbuanyanwu, was specifically the god of war, lightening and thunder, which the *Oshiri* people must consult first before going to war. While *Akpataeze* was the god of appraisal after victory from war. In the older days, *egbo* was a deity placed at the entrance of the village, to prevent bad spirit and other dangerous thing from entering the village.

According to N. Nwanama; the *Oshiri* always say *Egbo, legbobe-ndu* (*Egbo* that protects life from dangers). It was the owner of the village and was installed by the founders of the village at the village centre¹⁹. It had its counterpart at *Akpataeze*. *Nja-Ikwu*, served as a binding force for the *Ikwu* members or *Umunne*. Besides, offering sacrifices to it, *Ikwu* members discuss matters of common interest there.

Finally, they also worshiped *Anyanwu* and *Onwa* (sun and moon). The *Oshiri* people still believe that it was *Anyanwu* that gave warmth to the soil that produced what they ate. In fact religion was so interwoven with the social customs,

that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. For example, initiation into secret society could not be done without religious rites; the woman who gave birth to twins could only be accepted again after religious purification.

One could continue indefinitely to make a litany of how the *Oshiri* social organization was intricately interwoven with their religious beliefs and practices. In effect, their religion was really a way of life. Like the Egyptians and their other Igbo counterparts, the people of *Oshiri* also believed in re-incarnation and life after death. Unlike the Egyptians, they didn't build pyramids where they kept the dead. But they built ancestral shrines, temples called *Ngidi* in *Oshiri* dialect (a small house found at the centre of every compound). One can readily see *Oshiri* religion as fundamentally monotheistic or essentially polytheistic, a kind of pantheism. This appears to be the characteristics of African religion generally. It is also in tune with a research carried out by B.C Ray; which suggested that African religions are better understood as involving elements of monotheism, and pantheism, at different theological levels, and in different contextual experience²⁰. Finally, there was inter-village solidarity maintained through a collection of norms, customs, and sanctions.

Death and Burial in Oshiri

The *Oshiri* like other Igbo communities, believe in life after death. They hold that ancestors who live in the spirit world could be re-incarnate and protect their children and off-springs on earth. Beliefs in life after death hold that dead

people were alive in the spirit world. This belief convinced the *Oshiri* that the rich should be buried with people to serve them in the spirit world. *Oshiri* community marks such burials with elaborate ceremony.

When young people die in *Oshiri*, they were differently buried out side the compound in a place called “*Ochueja*” the burial of people killed by small pox or leprosy was also different. Their burial was similar to those who committed suicide or died with swollen belly.

At death adult men and women properly married were given befitting burial. This varied according to their social status and influence. The *Oshiri* believed that a dead person who was not accorded a befitting burial would not rest in the spirit world. For this reason, it mattered a lot how and where a dead person was buried in *Oshiri*.

Proper Burial Arrangement

There are three stages of burial for the rich in *Oshiri*. In traditional *Oshiri*, before electricity brought a means of preserving dead bodies from decaying, people were buried before their bodies started decaying. The relations of the dead normally made known to others the burial date of the death. On the appointed day; relations, friends, sympathizers and the general community attended the burial. Most people attending the burial bring gallons of wine which is elaborately consumed after the

burial. Those who have brought wine are noted. A big earthen pot is brought and placed at a strategic place and the wine brought by people are poured into it until it is filled.

Oshiri tradition does not allow pregnant women to see a corpse or take part in its ritual dressing. As soon as someone dies in *Oshiri*, members of the family send messages to people announcing the demise of the person. As it is the practice today, a committee is set up. This committee plans the burial of the deceased; if the person is of high status, the body is taken to the mortuary for preservation and this gives time to the bereaved to plan the burial. On the burial date different types of food are cooked. Meanwhile, the body is brought back from the mortuary and other burial procedures follow.

Marriage System of Oshiri People

The nucleus of any family is marriage which is the coming together of a man and a woman in a single union. Until recently, *Oshiri* people were Endogamous (of a marriage within a social group). In those good old days when a boy had served his parents very well and they had seen that he was of age to marry for him. His parents would not ask for the boy's consent either to know if he was ready to marry or to know the girl of his choice. The parents would meticulously begin pre-marriage enquiries about the girl of their choice in the area of social purity, health, reproductive patterns, decency and behaviour, any incidence of

madness and so on. The enquiries were more prudential than legal requirements. They were meant to ensure that the marriage would be successful, happy, and faithful. This is called in Oshiri *Iju-Ese* or *Igba nju*. Also, in those good old days, as soon as a woman delivered and people knew the baby was a girl, a suitor took wine to the parent of the new born baby and pledges to marry the infant girl when she grew up. Immediately the father of the infant girl accepted the gift from the suitor, a new relationship would develop between the two families. Meanwhile, the suitor of the infant bride continues to work for the family and patiently waited until the girl grew up. It was a delicate and tricky business sustained only by trust and faith²¹.

The details of the processes of marriage system in *Oshiri* are as follows:

Marriage Qualification:

In *Oshiri* Community before a young man goes to seek for a wife or goes to marry, he should have initiated into manhood called “*IGBA EGBE N’AHIA*” (shooting a den gun or cannon) in the traditional market designated for such age grade ceremony.

Ntugba Nri na Iwota Nkpu Requirements

This *Ntugba Nri na Iwota Nkpu* is the traditional solemnization of marriage after all necessary requirements have been fulfilled by both parties. No married girl is expected to return to the husband home unless this custom is performed. After performing the first phase the girl will return to the husband. On the following *Orie* or *Nkwo* day she should be returned to the parents for circumcision (*"Ibi Ugwu"*) ceremony. On the following Eke market day, she would again go back to the husband's home. This is known as *"IKUTA"* ceremony. Thereby she would have to complete the adult-hood ceremony, and becomes a full fledged woman.

On the day of this ceremony, the parents of the girl will provide the following materials: Two basins, one gown, one head tie, one pair of footwear, earrings, necklace, two eating plates, meat and many more materials which could not be all listed here.

The husband on the other hand will provide the following for the ceremony in the in-laws compound:

Two pots of palm wine, ten heads of coconuts, ten kola nuts, and two heads of tobacco etc. It is on the day of this ceremony that kindred or *Ikwo* of the girl will give to the couple their blessing for their happy and fruitful marriage life.

Ikpobe Ekwu:

This is the final ceremony for the couple in their home. This is performed for a woman to know where to put her cooking stand in the husband's home. This is three big stones put as pot stand in her name by young children (boys and girls) as a symbol of full welcome. She can now cook with authority of tradition as a complete woman in her husband's home. This also accords the couple full right and obligation as married people²².

Oshiri people cherish and love a healthy relationship than anything else in as much as their daughter can be loved by a man. *Oshiri* people frown at men beating their daughters in marriage or humiliating them. *Oshiri* people frown at a woman who does not respect or submits to her husband. The type of marriage prevalent in pre-colonial *Oshiri* was polygamy.

Iriji Ohuru (New Yam Festival) in Oshiri Community

Iriji festival usually takes place annually between August ending and the first week of September. *Iriji* festival usually marks a transition from a period of famine to a period of harvest. The *Iriji* is a major milestone in the traditional calendar of *Oshiri* people²³. According to Simple N, in *Oshiri*, the harvest of New yam is usually preceded by some sacrifices, while the arrival of new yam is usually celebrated. The people pay special respect to yam which is also common practice among Igbo people. They do it this way because of the status accorded yam as the prince of crops in *Oshiri* land.

Iriji festival is associated with wrestling competition on *Eke* day known as “*mgba-Eke*”, and it is been observed at Eke market square. Due to the importance attached to *Eke Oshiri*, the community arranged it in a way that normal marketing activities takes place on *Nkwo* day. On this *Nkwo* day, the major marketing items are groundnut (*Ashioko*), *Elili* (melon seed), *Ugba* (African oil bean), and other items. The above mentioned items are made available on this *Nkwo* day in place of Eke day to mark *Oshiri* people’s end of famine period called *Ntagbu-Unwu* in the land²⁴.

Isu-Afa Festival/Nefi-Oha in Oshiri Community

This is another festival common in *Oshiri* Community. This is usually done to usher in the new traditional year in October. During this period of the festival, rituals are made to the gods so as to take care of the people as they enter into the new traditional year. Activities accompanying this festival is usually done by the oldest family in *Oshiri*. Among the festivals that are observed by *Oshiri* people, they all involve rituals which involve the killing of fowls, goat, use of kola before shrines and pouring of libation²⁵.

Aju Festival in Oshiri

In this festival every family, clan, whether there is money or not even if it entails borrowing to buy local fowl, goat, dog, or its equivalent for yearly sacrifice on ancestral graves. These animals were roasted, cooked and consumed. *Aju* festival is another important festival in which people living in different places come home for its celebration. It marks a form of communion with the people's ancestral spirits during which sacrifices are made to their ancestors. Every village in *Oshiri* at this period move to the central area of the clan that one belongs in order to have a share of the meat killed on *Eke* day. This sacred communion is very significant that families come out each with their laps of the meat and is shared accordingly among the members of the clan, whether one is around or not, one will have a share of the meat. This very exercise is carried out in small central hut at the middle of every compound called "*Ngidi*". Inside the *Ngidi* is a wooden object called *Okwa* that is used to share the meat. This festival comes up between the end of September and the first week of October each year. It is obvious that this communion symbolizes unity and love among the people²⁶.

Igba Egbe n' ahia (Initiation into Manhood):

This initiation in *Oshiri* Community qualifies a male child a full grown adult irrespective of one's age, and as well qualifies the person into married life. In preparation for this act, those who are due are prepared to go to *Eke* market with umbrella accompanied with other age mates with a hilarious song, drink and den

gun. This events is being accompanied by serious jubilation by the age mates and some members of the clan. Reason for male initiation into manhood in *Oshiriis* is to qualify a male child a full-fledged man.

Ibi Nwanyi Ugwu (Female Circumcision)

Circumcision here according to the tradition of *Oshiri* people means cutting of the clitoris of a female child and after which the girl will be regarded as a full-grown girl. According to Okoro Mary, one of the purpose of female circumcision in *Oshiri* is to curtail the excessiveness of female going after men. Cutting the clitoris will reduce their sexual urge²⁷.

In *Oshiri* Community, if one failed to initiate into age grade, he will be taking as a child irrespective of the person's age, even if he had married with a grandchildren. When he dies he will be buried like a child because he did not fulfill the traditional rite of age grade initiation. Another effect of circumcision is that anyone who is not initiated traditionally will not be qualified to receive any share things within a particular clan²⁸.

Taboos (Aru) in Oshiri Land

Taboo comprises those things that form the don'ts of a particular culture. According to MacDonald, A.M., *chambers twentieth century dictionary*, 1978, taboos has to do with the system of prohibitions connected with things considered

holy or unholy²⁹. In Oshiri, most villages have one thing or the other they regard as taboo when done by any member of the village, for instance *Umumgbala* Oshiri worships and forbid the killing of fishes in their great water called *Urani*. According to oral interview with *Iseac Njoku*, *Agbabi* Oshiri worship and forbid the killing of monkey in the great forest called *OphiaAgbabi*, *Isinkwo* worships and forbids the killing of lion (*Agu*), *Amankalu* worships and forbids the killing of Antelope (*Ele*), *Amaokpara* worships and forbids the killing of lion etc.

It is a taboo in *Oshiri* for a married man to sleep with another man's wife and a married woman who has attained the full traditional rites does not dare sleep with another man who is not her husband else the spirit of the land will descend on her until she confessed it. The spirit of *Oshiri* can only hold at ransom any woman who has been traditionally initiated into what *Oshiri* called "*Iji-Woku*" that is the traditional marital bond³⁰.

Other taboos in *Oshiri* include: A teething infant who first develop his tooth from the upper gun, traditional marriage on *Eke* or *Afo market* days is held as a taboo in *Oshiri* land, if a person slumps dead at any place outside the home, such a persons we be denied burial at home, marriage with a slave is forbidden in *Oshiri*, any person who impregnates his sister or brothers wife will loose right to burial and live in his original home, and a person caught in a diabolical act of witchcrafting are usually regarded as outcast and when dead is buried shamefully etc³¹.

The Pre-colonial Economic Organization of Oshiri

As earlier discussed, *Oshiri* perhaps has the finest weather in *Ohaozara*. Because of this fine weather; *Oshiri* is an agro-based community and their agricultural produce were many and still varied. The most notable ones were yam, cassava, rice, and livestock. The main industry of *Oshiri* in the pre-colonial era even till date is mat-making. It won't be wrong to state that Oshiri people weave the finest mat in Igbo land, so fine are the threads used in the manufacture of their mat (*Uteweji*) that you can fetch water with it when folded.

The people also engaged in hunting activities and the various animals hunted were Rabbit, (*Iwita*), grass cutters (*nchi*), Antelope (*Ele*) and so on, which were both for sales and consumptions.

Oshiri women also produced vegetables in great quantities. And this helped in supplementing the carbohydrate food they produced.

The land tenure system was simple and this made it easy for people to acquire land for agricultural purposes. Available lands were divided among families and large portions of land undivided were left as communal lands. This communal land belonged to the entire Oshiri³².

The people also engaged in trade as the surplus products from farming, hunting and the industry were exchanged with other products from the neighbouring communities in both the internal and external trade.

Concept of Warfare in Oshiri

In *Oshiri* Community, parents gather their children to teach them warfare strategies especially when there was/is a problem in the community. This is supported by the comment made by Green M.M. in his book *Igbo village Affairs*, 1940, he affirms that:

In Igbo traditional political system there was no Igbo state, no central authority which welded the people into political whole, whereas the Igbo societies can take decision, carry out such decision and in the event of war organize themselves against common enemy suggest the fact that there were a central authority and the state where people are organized for action³³.

Generally, *Oshiri* people had a war-god called *Ogbu-Enyanwu* situated in *Ebonyi* River. This war-god was sacrificed to every year to be able to fight for the people in time of war. *Ogbu-Enyanwu* (war-god) in *Oshiri* Community which was like a project Rocket once it left the shrine and inside it contains all kinds of animal sound such as: Cockerel *Okokoro – Oku*, Bull (*Oke-Eti*), and the sound of pounding with mortar and pestle. The movement in the air with a horrible sound showed that *Ogbu – Enyanwu* was out for war and can never allow *Oshiri* to be defeated in war

no matter the number of soldiers with their sophisticated weapons. Another thing about the people is that every child born in *Oshiri* land and those born outside the community also receive from the parents the consciousness of enemies around and how to get rid of them. Oshiri people are known for their physical might, and confident like their great-grandfather *Ugo-Eze*³⁴.

ENDNOTES

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17. Oral interview with *Ede Elebe*, 83 years, a farmer, Umuefia Oshiri, April 23rd, 2019.
18. Oral interview with John Abba, 69 years, a farmer, Amaokpara Oshiri, April 24, 2019.
19. Oral interview with Nwanchukwu Nwanama, 78 years, a trader, Umuefia Oshiri, April 25, 2019.
20. Green M.M., *Igbo Village Affairs* (London: N.A. 1940), p. 115.
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25. Ibid. Pp. 48-49.
26. Oral interview *Uneke Chukwu*, 78 years, a farmer, Umuorie Oshiri, April 23, 2019.
27. Oral interview *Okoro Nwalo*, 75 years, retired civil servant, Agbabi Oshiri, April 23, 2019.
28. Oral interview with *John Abbah*, a farmer, 69 years, Amaokpara Oshiri, April 24, 2019.
29. Oral interview with *Omaka Chukwu*, 72 years, a farmer, Mboji Oshiri, April 24, 2019.
30. Oral interview with *Grace Odii*, 75 years, a trader, Amaokpara Oshiri, April 24, 2019.
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CHAPTER THREE

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION IN OSHIRI COMMUNITY

Introduction

Colonialism or colonial Rule is a phenomenon that continents such as Africa and Asia in particular experienced in the hands of European major powers. It is defined as exploitation by a stronger country of weaker one or the use of weaker countries resources to strengthen and enrich the stronger country. *World web Online Dictionary, n.d*¹. According to *Longman Dictionary*, it is also said to be a situation whereby a powerful country rules a weaker one and establishes its own trade and society there².

Broadly construed, the term colonialism can be described as the deliberate imposition of the rules and policies of a nation on another nation. Its strategy is the forced placement of a nation over another that gives room for the opportunity to exploit the colonized nation in order to facilitate the economic development of the colonialist home state.

A definition by Ronald J. Horvath sees colonialism as a “form of domination – the control by individuals or groups³ over the territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups”. Clearly, colonialism is a tool for expansion and a form of exploitation on all fronts. This is why Robert Young’s

view on colonialism is that it “involved an extraordinary range of different forms and practices carried out with respect to radically different cultures, over many centuries”⁴.

The idea behind colonialism basically is the conquest and rule over a country or region by another, allowing for the exploitation of the resources of the conquered for the profit of the conqueror. Colonialism is an instrumental process through which a state acquires and maintains colonies in another territory. The outcome of this, which is the colonial stage of society, alters mildly or altogether the economic, political, social and even intellectual structure of the conquered state.

Between the 1860s and 1900s, Africa as a whole was subjected to various forms of aggression from Europe, ranging from diplomatic pressures to military invasions until almost all African states were finally conquered and colonized. The process of colonization came to its complete stage with invasions of the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres of the African societies.

Many reasons by different scholars have been employed to explain the motives behind colonialism in Africa. Various factors and arguments had been advanced in explaining colonialism in Africa: These factors had been grouped into three namely, Economic Argument; Diplomatic Arguments; and Socio-psychological Argument.

The economic argument has two theories – the classical theory and the African Dimension theory. The first proponent of classical theory was J.A. Hobson, who published his book titled, “*Colonialism: A study*” in 1902, in which he argued that the industrial Revolution in Europe was the major problem of imperialism in West Africa. According to him, the problem of over production of capital and under consumption in Europe forced European powers to acquire territories in Africa. Contributing to this classical theory or debate was V.I. Lenin, who published a book titled, *Imperialism: “The highest stage of Capitalism”* in 1916. He advanced the argument that industrial capitalism in Europe intensified the agitation for the partition of the world. This agitation for expansion was led by the bourgeoisie for the following reasons: To put an end to the rivalries in Europe; to invest their surplus capitals; to search for market for surplus goods; and to have access to raw materials⁵.

The second economic argument is the African Dimension theory which explained the phenomenon from the events in Africa, that is from African perspectives. The leading proponents of this theory are *G.N. Uzoigwe*, J.E. Flint and A.G. Hopkins. According to these writers, the economic transition of the nineteenth century from the slave trade to legitimate commerce created problems in Africa for both Europeans and African merchants. First of all was the failure of the legitimate commerce to transform West African economy to the expanding economy of Europe. Secondly, the difficulties experienced by the traders which

prompted the European traders to advocate for direct occupation in order to maintain law and order. Thirdly, the economic depression in Europe in 1873 created problem of low price and economic rivalry among powers – Britain and France⁶.

The second reason for colonialism is the Diplomatic Argument. In this category are three arguments – Global strategy, Nations prestige, and Balance of power. The theory of global strategy was propounded by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, who advanced the view that the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 provoked the essence of scramble and partition in Africa⁷. The second theory which is the national prestige was propounded by Carlton Hayes, who put forward the argument that colonialism has to do with national pride and national self respect among the European powers. Example France that lost Alsace and Loraine in Franco-Prussia war of 1870 – 1871 sort territories in Africa. On the other hand, Britain was anxious to expand the British territories in Africa to show to Europe and the world its national pride. According to the statement of Leon Gambetta, “To remain a great nation or to become one, you must colonise”. The third diplomatic theory is balance of power, and the greatest exponent is F. Hisley. According to him, the imperialism in Africa was pushed vigorously by European powers to maintain peace and stability in Europe by avoiding major wars⁸.

The third factor or argument for colonialism is the socio-psychological theory. The first proponent of this theory was Charles Darwin who published his book titled; “The Origin of species” Charles Darwin posited the argument of natural selection in which the stronger dominates the weaker. He put forward the argument of the survival of the fittest. In any case, if the European are stronger than the Africans, they could acquire their territories and take over their lands because they were considered very weak. The second psychological theory is simply described as Christian evangelism, that African worship pagan gods, land of rituals and worship several gods. The Europeans believed it was their burden and moral obligation to carry religion (Christianity) and civilization to the backward people of Africa⁹.

The final psychological theory was propounded by Joseph Schumpeter. According to him, the essence of European scramble and partition of Africa was the spread of superior culture of Europeans to the Dark Continent of Africa.

It is noted that:

In Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885, European powers gathered together and determined African fate. Great Britain, France, Germany and Portugal were the major players in this three months conference that ended in setting up guidelines for the occupation of African continent among the European colonial powers and superimposed artificial boundary on it subjects¹⁰.

The Berlin Conference was Africa's undoing in many ways than one. The colonial powers superimposed their domain on the African continent. Nigeria as one of the important countries in Africa in general and Oshiri Community in particular experienced exploitation between 1861 and 1960 under the Great Britain. Its advent had impact on many things such as politics, economy, religion, Education and social set up of the country in general and Oshiri in particular. By the time independence returned in 1950s, the realm had acquired a legacy of political fragmentation that could neither be eliminated nor made to operate satisfactorily. Nigeria the so called "the giant of African and the biggest black nation of the world" is an import-nation that suffered the phenomenon¹¹.

The Eastern Provinces under Colonial Rule

In Law, the Eastern provinces became part of the British colonial empire on June 5, 1885 when the London Gazette announced to the world that her Britannic Majesty had placed "the Niger Districts" under her gracious protection. But in terms of actual rule, which is to be understood as the successful establishment of a regular machinery of government which seeks, and is able, to administer the public life of the people, the historian has to think of a later date than even 1891 when Sir Claude Macdonald was sent to establish a regular administration in Oil Rivers¹².

In any case by 1899 the British had persuaded themselves that only defeating the Aro could they achieve military and political control of the hinter land

groups. Consequently, preparation for the famous Aro Expedition began operation in late November 1901 and by Christmas Day the same year the Aro had been defeated.

But the Aro Expedition which had been projected as the war to end all wars in the Igbo and Ibibio interiors soon proved to be only the beginning. The war against the Aro ended in March 1902. Military actions were taken against *Afiko* and *Umunneoha* in 1904. In 1905 the *Ezza*, *Ovoron*, *Nonya*, *Onicha*, *Ahiara* and *Oshiri* in particular were defeated. The years 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, and 1914 saw scores of military units fighting and subduing various villages and settlements which regarded themselves as independent of the British. Thus the conquest of the provinces was more or less accomplished by 1914¹³.

Administrative Structure

There is some argument as to whether the British tried to apply the policy, popularly described as Indirect Rule, to Eastern provinces in the period before 1930. The view maintained here is that they did, even though in the process they made grievous mistakes which helped to frustrate the attainment of ultimate objectives. Firstly, the colonial authorities assumed that the Igbo and their neighbours had remained at such a low level of civilization that they failed to evolve any system of government properly so-called which could maintain the medium of law and order necessary for sustained development. This open contempt for the people prevented

the British from making an early and genuine attempt to understand the peoples indigenous government. The second assumption was that in so far as the people had evolved socio-political system, it was one centred around institution of chieftaincy¹⁴.

Advent of Indirect Rule

As is well known, British occupation of the various parts of the area took place at different times. Also, Nigeria as we know it now was not in existence then. The effect of these two factors on establishment of British administration is that it was done in bits or instalments. Consequently, by 1900 and up to end of 1913, there was no single administration in Nigeria. Instead, there were three separate administrations. one was the Niger Coast Protectorate created in 1891 as the Oil River Protectorate). It was ruled by consuls who had their headquarters at Calabar and were responsible to the Foreign Office in London.

The second was the colony of Lagos which was ceded to Britain in 1861. This colony was ruled by Governors who were also responsible to the colonial office in London.

The third was the Territory of Royal Niger Company. This was equivalent to northern Nigeria. The agents of the Company who were responsible to a Board of Directors in London ruled the territory from 1886 to 1900 when British

Government declared a protectorate over Northern Nigeria and appointed Sir Frederick Lugard as the High Commissioner¹⁵.

Be that as it may, it is used to be held that indirect rule was not introduced or practiced in the Southern Nigeria before 1914, when the amalgamation of the south and north took place. Also, because of the preeminent position of Lugard in developing the theory and practice of indirect rule, there has been the tendency to argue that he introduced indirect rule in Nigeria only in the north. However, scholars have already shown that these views are untrue. We need to note that every part of Nigeria experienced indirect rule as soon as British rule was imposed. The fact is that the respective British officers who took charge of the eastern and western provinces of southern Nigeria recognized the importance of the indigenous rulers in administration. Consequently, in both the east and west, indirect rule was practiced before 1914¹⁶. What happened in Southern Nigeria from 1914 was that as a result of the amalgamation, Lugard who became the Governor – General extended the northern system (or his own brand of indirect rule) to the area. It is this extension as well as the reforms which it brought about that led some into the erroneous belief that indirect rule entered the south from the north. Also Lugard contributed to this erroneous thinking, because in trying to justify the need for the extension of the northern system to the south, he declared that what existed in the south was not indirect rule. He was definitely wrong in this opinion. A close examination of the situation of indirect rule in the western Nigeria (especially

Yorubaland) and the situation in eastern Nigeria (especially Igboland) would make the issue clearer. Thus for the purpose of this work, I shall discuss the history of Local Government in the Eastern provinces under colonial rule.

Indirect Rule

In principle, indirect was one of the non-violent measures adopted by Britain in ruling her African colonies. Indirect rule in theory was a concept of local government in which it was believed that the British were to rule Nigeria and other colonies through indigenous rulers and institutions. The system was based on the belief that the British officials were to be advisers to indigenous rulers ruling their communities. British political officers were to have no direct dealing with the people. For instance, all instructions or directives had to reach the people through the rulers. Indigenous institutions were to be utilized in the administration though they were to be purged of practices considered repugnant or against humanity. These, in brief, were the main features of the concept or system of indirect rule.

Warrant Chiefs

In Eastern Nigeria, traditional rulers or paramount traditional rulers cannot be easily identified. Obishop institution, for instance, was not clearly defined and so the colonial authority decided to select some people whom they made chiefs, and given “certificates of recognition”, which were called warrants. This was why they

are popularly referred to as Warrant Chiefs. According to Hailey, “The Warrants were sometimes given to people in return for services rendered to the government and there was inevitably a tendency to appoint persons of intelligence with some understanding of European ways, that the more pushing men tended to gain warrants although they may have had no hereditary or customary status”. Nevertheless, even in the East the administration was by and large anxious to appoint those with real claim to Authority¹⁷.

Similarly, they were constituted into an all purpose body which was at once a court as well as executive and legislative body for the area under the warrant chiefs jurisdiction. Infact, in a law, this body was known as Native Court and can also be referred to as Native authority. This action exhibited by the British colonial authority was seen as undemocratic in the setting of Igbo political system. Little wonder, why these warrant chiefs were ruthless and high-handed in the process of exercising their functions. The method of tax collection introduced and the way it was manipulated by the warrant chiefs, brought fear in the system. The fear by the women that they would be taxed like the men led to the Aba Women Riot of 1929/30¹⁸.

Thus, it is against this background that this chapter seeks to examine the nature or pattern of British administration in *Oshiri* and the impacts of colonial rule on political, socio-cultural and economic organization of *Oshiri*.

Pre-1914 Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria (1891-1914)

Indirect rule was practiced in eastern Nigeria before 1914. In fact, right from 1891 the colonial authorities began to use indigenous rulers or people whom they believed were such in the administration of eastern Nigeria which includes the Igbo, the *Efik*, *Ibibio* and *Ijo*. The persons concerned were given warrants by the authorities and were thus called the Warrant Chiefs. By 1900 a proclamation gave legal backing to the indirect rule system which was referred to as the Native Court system. The fact was that the proclamation provided for native Court Areas as the unit of indirect rule. Two categories of Native Courts were provided for. There were those presided over by a native Authority which were called Minor Courts. The second were those presided over by a European officer and were called Native Councils. In keeping with the provisions of the proclamation and subsequent amendments to it between 1901 and 1906, the two types of Native Courts continued to form the bases of indirect rule in eastern Nigeria in the years before 1914.

Other characteristics of the Native Court or the Warrant Chief system should be noted. Native Councils with European presidents were higher in status than Minor Courts which normally had jurisdiction in matters in which the parties concerned were indigenous. Native Councils were all located at district headquarters. Membership of both types of courts depend on the notes of authority

or warrants given to members by the High Commissioner. All Native Courts were made subject to the orders of the Supreme Court which could amend, dismiss or uphold their decisions. Under this system appeals lay from the minor court to the Native Council and from the latter the political officer who was a commissioner of the Supreme Court and finally from the officer to a judge of Supreme Court. Each Native Court had a clerk who recorded its proceedings, conveyed to the chiefs the list of members chosen by the District Commissioner to sit for the month and issued summons to the accused. Each Native Court also had a fund out of which, in consultation with the District Commissioner, it paid the salaries of its members and staff, as well as provided basic local amenities¹⁹. Each also had a treasury and generated revenue from fees and fines. Each Native Court saw to the development work in its area of jurisdiction. For example, by means of the local treasuries Native Court houses were built, roads were constructed, rest houses were built and maintained and salaries or rewards were paid to Warrant Chiefs. These then were the main features of the indirect rule or Native Court or Warrant Chief system in Igboland and the rest of eastern Nigeria before 1914.

The Lugardian System of Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria, 1914-1930

When Sir Frederick Lugard came back in 1912 as Governor – General of Nigeria which he was mandate to amalgamate. He saw the system erected for

Eastern provinces by Macdonald, Moor and Egerton as different from that which he had helped to establish in the Northern provinces.

As with western Nigeria, however, Lugard was not satisfied with the system as it existed. His major criticisms of the Warrant Chief system were that he considered it different from or indeed inferior to the system practiced in northern Nigeria. Second, he condemned the arrangement which made political officers presidents of Native Courts; denounced the fact that appeals were from Native Courts to the British Courts and complained about the absence of direct taxation which could strengthen Native Treasuries. He also criticized the system because it was not based on 'paramount chiefs'. Generally Lugard was of the view that the indirect rule system in Igboland and the rest of eastern Nigeria deserved to be brought in line with what obtained in the north.

A similar conclusion was reached by him on the system in western Nigeria. The result was that the three ordinances of 1914 to 1916, namely, Native Courts Ordinance, Native Authority ordinance and the Native Revenue Ordinance whose provisions introduced the northern system into western Nigeria were also applied to eastern Nigeria. Overall, the Lugardian system from 1914 onwards attempted to create Native Authorities or Paramount Chiefs; sought to establish Native Treasuries with revenue derived mainly from direct taxation; and to separate the

executive from the judiciary by discarding the arrangement which enabled political officers to serve as presidents of Native Courts²⁰.

Some of these measures were difficult to implement given the social and political organization of the *Igbo*, *Efik*, and other groups in eastern Nigeria. For example, sole Native Authorities were virtually absent in the area since there were no real equivalent of the emirs and obas there. The colonial authorities as a result attempted to create such chiefs and in the process offended the people's conception of power. The chiefs so appointed in the attempt to drum up the kind of authority their new positions gave them became authoritarian and repressive. Many of them were also corrupt. The result was that the people became disenchanted with the Lugardian system of indirect rule, they protested against being taxed that is, Direct taxation for all adult males in the form of poll tax of two and half percent (2½%) of their annual income²¹. But even more so they protested against being counted as against census of their livestock, palm trees and yam mounds. In the same manner they were against their farm lands being measured as though the government would seize these. In spite of sustained propaganda the people could not understand how the British who minted the money they use could not simply mint more if the government were in need of funds. As all this was happening two other developments complicated the situation. One was an increase in import duties which led to a rise in the prices paid for imported materials like tobacco, calico and so on which had become daily necessities. The other was a fall in the price of palm

produce which had become the peoples' main means of earning money. Somehow, the first year collection was done with only minor incidents. By the time the second collection was being made the economic situation had worsened, people had a practical experience of what direct taxation meant to their purses and there was also a rumour that women were going to be taxed along with the men. At this point the strain became too much for the people to bear and the immediate upshot was the women's Riot of 1929/30, during which police fired on one crowd and killed thirty-two people. The Women's Riot of 1929/30 took the government by surprise and brought the Warrant Chief system of rule to ruin. This was the end of second phase in the administrative history of Eastern provinces under colonial rule²².

Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria (1930 – 1953)

The Women's Riot shocked the colonial authorities to sobering awareness of the extent of their administrative mistakes in the preceding three or four decades. Consequently there followed an attempt at root and branch reform five main principles guided the reorganization of the Native Court Authority system in the Eastern provinces between 1930 and 1938. The first was the principle of broad-based democracy. The administration came to face the hard fact that no group in the Eastern provinces had evolved a political system based on chiefly autocracy. The attempt reorganization was to ensure that all major segments in each unit of local government were represented by the traditional leaders. This led to the

creation of clan and village assemblies in which every lineage head was expected to attend. The officially recognized authority was in most cases the clan assembly or council. While the village assemblies were allowed to function as subordinate Native Authorities it was hoped they would in time wither away. All this was an attempt to get away from the pre-1930 idea of one *ma*, who was arbitrarily chosen, claiming authority over people to an extent not justified by traditional usage²³.

The second principle was that of maintain ethnic integrity. It was recognized that though Igbo or Ibibio or Ijo or Ogoja culture could each be said to be generally uniform or homogenous, there were small but significant differences in institutions and political practices between the different sub-cultural units of each. In order to maintain political unity and common purpose it was considered necessary not to repeat the pre-1930 mistakes of grouping ethnic fragments which had significant differences of culture and tradition under one local authority or of including members of the same ethnic unit in different local authorities. Thirdly, attempt was made to reach the Igbo and their neighbours to separate the executive from the judiciary. In the pre-1930 courts, like in the indigenous system of government, the executive, legislative and judiciary powers were vested in the same body. Thus with the reorganization the administration set up a Native Authority and a Native Court for each Native Administrative unit.

The fourth principle was that of ensuring that the Native Authority and Native Court staff, that is clerks, the court messengers and so on were local youths. Finally the administration was determined to the Native Authorities to recognize that their main duty was to promote local development. To this end, the members were compelled to take an interest in tax collection and assessment in their native treasuries, in the drawing up of their annual estimates and in the disbursement of their funds²⁴.

For the first ten years or so of reorganization the Eastern provinces were agog with enthusiasm and optimism. The administration believed that they had discovered the Lugardian stone that would turn the so-called direct administration of the Eastern provinces into indirect Rule and that the inhabitants of those provinces would soon be making the much desired political and social progress. Some people on their side were equally excited by the new measures. By 1938 most of the Native Authorities had been reorganized. By 1940 the excitement of the last decade had faded and was succeeded by disillusionment.

Administration and the people soon found the new bodies disappointing. For one thing the Native Authorities were rather unwieldy. The British complained the proceedings were noisy and the members uncontrollable; the elders complained that the whole thing cheapened chiefship. They found that being so many they could not enjoy as much power and influence as the Warrant Chiefs had enjoyed.

They looked up themselves as chiefs and were disappointed to find they were mere delegates. The administration also complained that the members were too illiterate and unintelligent to develop financial sense or acquire the know-how of modern budgetary process. To make matters worse the Second World War broke out in 1939 just as the new bodies were being set up. One result of this was shortage of the experienced staff who were suppose to train the councils in their duties.

By the time the Second World War ended it had become clear that the Native Authority system had failed. After the war therefore, the colonial government retreated from the undiluted Native Authority system, and adopted what has been called the ‘Best man policy’. Under this policy, each community was allowed to send to the Native Authority Council and Native Court, the men it considered ‘best’ qualified to represent their interest. Such people could be traditional leaders, or educated youths or retired government servants, but was for each community to decide²⁵. This reform returned out to be the thin end of the wedge, for by the late forties it had become quite clear that the policy of Native administration had hopelessly broken down in the Eastern provinces.

Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria 1950s – 1960 (Period of Democratization)

When Donald Cameron and Bernard Bourdillion became the governors of Nigeria in 1931 and 1943, they emphasized two principles in the application of indirect administration – the principles of tradition and acceptability. Both

governors were equally reformist in the concept of indirect administration following the path of natural 'growth' although they failed to understand that colonialism did not promote suitable condition for such growth. Both governors were also impressed by the growth and development of cultural unions, professional associations and political parties in the various part of the Southern provinces after 1914. The members of these groups, the governors realized, demanded a voice not only in the central but also local institutions of government. Both governors therefore favoured injecting into the 'native' administrative structure younger and educated men of stature and ability in their respective areas.

The policy and practice of giving such administrative structures in Nigeria in general and in the Eastern region in particular a democratic base gained momentum during the 1950s. From 1950 the Eastern Region reorganized the preceding 'native' administrative structure in their areas in favour of local government councils which allowed the elective principle for membership. Through the modern mass parties and the village and town unions the educated elements pressed for far-reaching reforms. In despair the colonial government decided to introduce a modified version of the British local government system. And in 1951 the system of 'county council' was introduced with the first county council in the Eastern provinces being established in *Ikot Ekpene*. This gave the educated element the opportunity to flood the local government councils in consequences of which local politics came to drowned in national politics. In a

sense it could be said that at the local administration colonial rule in the Eastern provinces virtually ended with the demise of the Native Authority System in 1951²⁶.

This important change of policy had a lot to do with two factors first, the labour Government which came to power in United Kingdom immediately after World War II was willing to confer self-government on some dependent territories without indicating a time-table of constitutional advance. Arthur Creech-Jones, in his statement on age of development continued:

It means a marked change in approach to indirect rule... local government machinery is required for the administration of plans for progress in the economic and social field, while an outlet is required for the growing political consciousness of the ordinary people. For this purpose the unmodified traditional machinery is inadequate; and wherever possible, it must be adopted to the new needs of local government and administration.

In Nigeria, a second factor explains the administrative interest of central government in indirect administration after 1947. The new constitution of 1950s moved steadily towards federalism involving the sharing of powers between the federal government and regional governments. It will be recalled that from 1950s, local government council became more and more democratic in form²⁷.

Far-reaching reforms came after 1954 because of Nigeria's towards formal federalism. The appellate jurisdiction of the West African Court of Appeal in

Nigeria ended in 1954. In Eastern and Western Regions, 'native' courts were after 1954 called customary courts of the Eastern Region were later designated county, district and local courts. This period also witnessed more important political developments. These include the holding of election into the House of Representatives and the attainment of self government by Western and Eastern Nigeria. The eastern government and western regions were to attain full internal self-government in 1957. At last major constitutional conference, the 1957 constitutional conference, northern Nigeria opted for self-government in 1959. At the same conference, a national government under the leadership of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was established²⁸.

Two major problems delayed the granting of independence to Nigeria. They were the minority question and the fear of southern domination by the leaders of the northern Nigeria. Their fear was understandable. Self-government meant that power would pass from British to those Nigerians able to command a majority in the existing political sub-division (the regions). The major parties then represented the regions. They were the Action Group in the west, Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the North and NCNC in the East. These parties were led by the politicians of the numerical dominant groups such as the *Yoruba*, *Hausas* and *Igbos* respectively. As a result the minorities called for additional political sub-divisions, that is for them. By and large, the minority problems were not resolved. This was because the top British officials in Nigeria then, began to have their minds on

possible careers elsewhere and so were anxious to leave. And the politicians were anxious to take over power, they could not be bothered with the problem²⁹.

As for the second problem, the fear of southern domination by the northern Nigeria was taken with the granting of greater powers to the regions. After a series of proposals for the date of independence, the Nigerian politicians and the British eventually agreed on October 1960 as the date of Nigeria independence. As stated earlier, the British had succeeded in handing over Nigeria to the politicians they could trust. They made sure that the members of radical groups such as the Zikist Movement and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) were barred from taking over power. The implications of this was that the politicians who took over power from the British ensured that British economic and other interests in Nigeria were not interfered with. Be that as it may, the Nigeria in general and *Oshiri* in particular became independent from colonial administration on 1st October, 1960³⁰.

British Administration in Oshiri

The British arrived *Oshiri* in 1905. Their arrival brought about complete change in the governmental structure of the people. As happened in many other parts of the southern provinces the natural heads refused to come forward and government had to adopt a system of selecting certain men. A Native Court was duly established and a system of rule through the Native Court adopted. It worked

fairly well as men chosen were men of character. Although strong and powerful the Oshiri clan had been easy to dealt with as the discipline of those selected chiefs had been good and for many years they had brought forward the Elders to attend meetings with the government on matters of importance³¹.

The introduction of taxation and Native Administration brought about a change. Despite every effort to contradict the people especially the women, became convinced that the “Warrant Chiefs” had sold them over the question of taxation, and this made the latter unpopular. Tax was collected by Elders appointed for the purpose by the village council³².

Oshiri Native Court

Up to 1934 *Oshiri* shared Native Court with *Uburu*, *Okposi*, *Ugwulangwu*, and *Onicha* at *Okposi*, in 1934, the *Oshiri* Native Court was opened.

In 1935 the Native Court bench had at the people’s expressed wish consisted of a representatives selected by each village made up of thirty in all. These representatives were all members of the *Ogbo Ojeje* age grade. Nobody in *Oshiri* desired any change in the system. They said it worked well and was in accordance with native custom in the matter of a clan judicial council³³. Some of the warrant chiefs were *Okoroafo Ikele* of *Isinkwo*, Chief *Elebe Nwিয়েকে* of

Umungbala, while *Akpuru Nweze* and *Harrison Nweze* represent *Oshiri* in the District Council.

Oshiri Treasury

At the beginning of the British administration in *Oshiri*, the *Oshiri* shared treasury with the Central Treasurer at *Afikpo*. When *Oshiri* demanded a separate treasury, it was recommended that a boy should be educated to be capable of undertaking the duties of treasury clerk until they did so, their fund were to be continued to be kept in the Central Treasury.

Tax was collected by Elders appointed for the purpose by village councils. The District Headman was responsible for collection of tax quota in the village. When the village quota was correctly collected, it was taken to the treasury at *Afikpo* and tribute receipt issued. The sum was accounted for in a subsidiary Tax ledger and in the Revenue vote service ledger: the tribute receipt was cross referenced to the Assessment Ledger which shows the number of discs issued. *Oshiri* clan revenue was estimated at only £222, and much of whose recurrent expenditure consisted of items shared with the rest of the *Afikpo* Division³⁴.

Native Authority

Following the report of Mr. Connell that the general meeting of the *Oshiri* elders forms a body as united and coherent as can be found anywhere in the province, and the proposal that the Native Authority should be the clan council was recommended.

The clan court of D' Grade, with twelve months for praedial larceny, appeal to the District officer and a membership consisting of "the Oshiri clan elders" was constituted by a warrant confirmed in 1935, and in connection with the following extract from Mr. Hunts inspection notes of the January 30, 1935, is quoted:-

"The Oshiri clan of 15 villages was next to deal with, and they are agreeable to a D' Grade court near the Rest House which is more or less in the centre of the area, and I provisionally approved, I told the clan that they would have to make shift with temporary court buildings for the time being as a deal of their reserves had been eaten up in building the large court and quarters at Okposi, now to be at the sole disposal of the fortunate Okposi"³⁵.

In summary, approval was sought for a Native Authority for *Oshirians* consisting of the *Oshiri* clan council, but no other changes were recommended then.

Thus, the clan council as the Native Authority was approved for *Oshiri* in 1939 and the membership of council included in theory all village elders and in practice representatives selected from those elders by the villages. The District officers doubtless made it clear to the village council that they can at any time

change their delegates both the clan council and more, especially to the clan court. They were element of anger by the members of these (30) thirty men as not to regard themselves as appointed for life with government approval.

British Intervention in Ezza-Oshiri Wars

No one knows exactly when the *Ezza-Oshiri* war began. Many people date the beginning of the war to before 1850. Oral tradition has it that the war arose because of the assistance the *Oshiri* gave to *Ikwo* during the *Ezza-Ikwo* war. One thing we are sure of here is that the *Ezza-Oshiri* war had lasted for years before British arrival in 1905. By this time the *Ezza* had crossed the Ebonyi River and were fighting *Oshiri* close to their homes. Indeed, many *Ezza* villages such as *Idembia*, *Okofia*, *Echara*, *Ezzama*, *Ekka* and *Inyere* already had settlement on the *Oshiri* side of the river.

It should be noted that the settlement of the *Ezzas* on *Oshiri* land across the *Ebonyi* River was based on agreement in which the *Ezzas* were paying a fixed amount of fifty pound. This amount was later reduced to twenty-five pounds, but at a time, the *Oshiri* were no longer satisfied with the agreement and thus demanded that the *Ezza* should vacate their land. Meanwhile the *Ezzas* had taken the land as belonging to them.

It had been stated that prior to the British arrival in *Oshiri* in 1905, the *Ezzama* had crossed the *Ebonyi* River and were fighting *Oshiri* four to five miles into the *Oshiri* territory. But the *Ezzama* never passed the *Umuopu-Ekuma*, each time they reached there, the wailing of the women always re-invigorated the *Oshiri* warriors. *Oshiri* warriors were indomitable and their gallant men and women stopped the *Ezzama* further penetration into *Oshiri* territory until the British intervention in 1905.

By 1912, the *Ezzas* were fighting their neighbours in all front. But the British when they arrived thee area were not interested in fighting any group. Their concern was to stop the slave trade and to maintain peace and order so that the legitimate trade could flourish. But continuous warfare by the native groups made this goal difficult to achieve. Thus the British found out that the *Ezzas* were obstinate, arrogant and bellicose, and therefore decided to deal with them.

In 1912, the *Ekka* and *Ezzama* communities attacked the *Oshiri* and the *Agbaebor-Isu* killing about fifty people and burnt three hundred houses. In the encounter that followed, the British dispatched a police patrol from *Okigwe* to teach the *Ezzas* a lesson. This time, the *Ezza* were driven permanently beyond *Ebonyi* River and a fine of 750 pounds was imposed on them. The *Ezzas* were still recalcitrant. They continued to encroach on the Southern part of *Oshiri*. This time,

another patrol theme of 600 policemen were deployed to *Ezza* in 1916³⁶. They were forced to contribute 1000 paid labourers to work on the railways.

In 1922, a lease was signed by the representatives of *Oshiri* and the *Ezza*, whereby a piece of land on the *Oshiri* side of *Ebonyi* river was leased to the *Ezzama* for an annual rent of £50. The rent was reduced in 1933 to £25. This rent was not continued and finally expired on 31st May, 1936. From that day, the ownership and occupiers of the land were unsettled and *Oshiri* decided to sue *Ezzama*. A British Officer, Mr. T.W. Ban and D.S. Cook brought the dispute temporally to an end by building a church on the disputed land; this did not bring the dispute to an end. The war continued with intermitted peace even after the British had left. It was not until 1990 when *Oshiri* gave the *Ezza* a final defeat and drove them across the *Ebonyi* River, their original home³⁷.

Be that as it may, the considerable role played by the prominent son of *Oshiri*, the late Chief Abasi Odefa cannot be banished when discussing the factors that led to *Oshiri* victory in *Ezza- Oshiri* wars. Chief Odefa was the Commissioner for works and transport and a member of *Onu's* kitchen cabinet when Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu became the Governor of the newly created Abia State in 1990. It is true that the *Ezza- Oshiri* wars ended in 1990, but the final settlement was reached in 2000s when the two side were brought together for a settlement and a peace treaty was signed forbidden hostility from the two groups. Today, the *Oshiris* and the *Ezzamas* intermarries, while the disputed land belongs to the *Oshiri*³⁸.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE ON OSHIRI COMMUNITY

Introduction

Igbo societies in general and *Oshiri* Community in particular, like other societies in Africa, underwent far-reaching transformations during colonial rule. The very fact of colonial conquest shook the foundation of traditional society. The full impact of this on the Igbo in general and *Oshiri* community in particular and their neighbours can be appreciated only when it is remembered that for the various autonomous communities in this area which prided themselves in their independence and had often boasted of their military invincibility, there was no case of alien conquest and rule previous to British occupation. Until the moment of bitter and, to the people, inexplicable defeat, *Oshiri* and other *Igbo* villages were sure there were equal to the British threat. The *Aro*, for instance, before 1901, boasted to all and sundry that they would push the British back into the sea and, because this was generally believed, they found it easy to instigate resistance to British advance in many *Igbo* and *Ibibio* villages. When subsequently they were beaten it caused consternation and dismay throughout the Eastern provinces and people started asking how *Ibinukpabi*, the famed *Aro* oracle, could not protect its own shrines, and how the widely feared *Abam*, *Ohaffia* and *Edda* warriors could not ward off the British attack. Still, few villages were overawed which explained

why the British had to continue campaigning in the Eastern provinces until the end of the First World War. Three years after the defeat of the *Aro*, for instance, the *Ezza* of *Abakihiki* told Major Crawford Cockburn the District Commissioner in charge of Cross River area, that they had heard how the *Aro* were beaten, but then that they the *Ezza* were stronger than the *Aro*. The *Ezza* had never been conquered by anyone, they boasted. In the whole wide world, they continued, the *Ezza* recognized only the Heaven above and the Earth beneath. Again in a few days campaign the *Ezza* were defeated. In the same year, 1905 the *Oshiri* Community was also defeated. Thus the extent to which colonial rule impacted on the *Oshiri* Community has not been given proper place in existing literature. Therefore, it is the concern of this chapter to discuss in detail the impact of colonial rule on political, socio-cultural and economic life of *Oshiri* people¹.

Political Impact of Colonial Rule on Oshiri Community

Prior to the arrival of the British and subsequent British administration in *Oshiri*, the community's political system was organized on the bases of the family, the kindred, Age grade system, the village council, and the clan council, with the family as the lowest functioning unit and the clan council as the highest functioning unit. With the arrival of the British in *Oshiri* community and the subsequent discovering that the indigenous political system was not defined unlike what was obtained in most other parts of the Nigerians societies such as Benin, Yoruba lands,

Hausa land etc. the warrant chief system was introduced in which certain individuals were selected as chiefs and were issued a certificate of warrant by the colonial powers to govern the affairs of the community. Although it was discovered in *Oshiri* community by the British following their arrival that the general meeting of the elders (clan council) forms a body as united and coherent, as can be found anywhere in the province, thus the clan council became the Native Authority².

Colonial rule distorted the political culture of *Oshirians* by giving them the false impression that they were still operating their traditional political organization when in fact colonial rule was removing that organization. The result has been that *Oshirian* leaders and people have been trying to make their own what in fact is a foreign political system³.

Colonial rule through its mechanism of indirect rule system of divide and rule left *Oshiri* and its neighbours in particular and Nigeria in general both short and long term divisions. Its emphasis on tradition and local differences stiffened group differences to a point in which intergration of this groups become a major obstacle to development particularly in *Oshiri* Community and in Nigeria in general. In a nutshell, it planted or nurtured seeds of disunity among *Oshiri* and her neighbours or groups⁴.

Colonial rule was a force in the strengthening of parochialism in the development of *Oshiri* Community in particular and the country in general. As in

common knowledge, their failure to rise above parochial interest on the part of *Oshirian* leaders and people became a major legacy of colonial rule which adversely affected developments in *Oshiri* not only during the colonial period but also in the independence period. Thus, elections, political parties, revenue allocation, and other issues of the development of *Oshiri* in particular and the country in general were most of the time tackled according to regional interest during and after colonial rule⁵.

Positive political impact of colonial rule in *Oshiri* Community was that through its use of indirect rule system, made it possible for some aspect of indigenous institution of *Oshiri* to be preserved and integrated with the system of government introduced by the British.

Furthermore, it is asserted that indirect rule prepared the Native Authorities for the subsequent role they came to play in the development of the local government system that came with colonial rule. In this way, they were preserved for modern *Oshiri* in particular and Nigeria in general.

It can also be added that colonial rule through indirect rule in *Oshiri* provided opportunity for indigenous rulers of *Oshiri* and their people to contribute to the provision of social and economic amenities in their land during the colonial period. Politically, these are some of the points that can be raised in favour of colonial rule in *Oshiri* Community within the period of study⁶.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE ON OSHIRI COMMUNITY

Traditional Culture

During the British conquest, it was not only the traditional military machinery that failed, but the time honoured gods and medicine men. These too had been evoked to fight against the British but to no avail. Thus the very fact of conquest shook the people's belief in the superiority of their gods. For instance, the highly venerated gods of war, lightning and thunder of *Oshiri* called *Ogbuanyawu* could not protect its people. Consequently on the morrow of conquest many people found themselves disposed to acquire the secret of the whiteman's power. This quest, reinforcing a traditional tendency to imbibe new ways as long as they worked, led to the widespread drive among the Igbo and their neighbours in general and the *Oshiri* in particular for the transformation of their society.

Along with the government and the traders came the mission the Scotland mission which was managed by Rev. W.M. Christie had led the way in *Oshiri*. The missionaries challenged indigenous society much more radically than either the government or the traders did. They not only shook the faith in the traditional gods who had provided the ultimate sanction for indigenous *Oshiri* society and morality, they also insisted that the *Oshiri* and their neighbours could not actually become good Christians or attain salvation unless they modified their societies drastically

along prescribed Western lines. People in quest of salvation were to embrace monogamy, welcome the birth of the twins with joy, allow many indigenous practices and ceremonies to fall into desuetude and so on.

Advent of colonialism necessitated the coming of new religion into *Oshiri* Community. That is to say, the Christianity which was believed to be religion of the whites was introduced. The coming of colonialism and its concomitant helped abrogate ritual with human beings or human sacrifice in *Oshiri* Community. In other words, the phenomenon helped to put an end to some of the traditional religion rituals conducted by sacrificing human beings to appease the gods. For it was said that in *Oshiri* before the coming of Christianity, that masters were being buried with their slaves. In addition, the arrival of colonialism coupled with appearance of Christianity brought an end to the killing of twins. For in pre-colonial *Oshiri* Community, to give birth to a twin babies was seen as an abomination in the community and when this occurred, such babies were killed immediately at birth and for the women who gave birth to twin to be accepted again by her husband, she must undergo purification . Thus the end of the killing of twins in *Oshiri* is one of the most important positive impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* Community during and after colonialism⁷.

However, looking into these so called positive impact of colonial rule on traditional culture in *Oshiri* could be proved negative to an extent if they were to be scrutinized as the following phase will expose it.

Colonialism brought negative impact into the traditional culture through the introduction of a new religion (Christianity), *Oshiri* traditional religion felt threatened by this new religion. Missionaries were converting many traditionalist into the new religion, while this action caused havoc among the followers of the same religion. *Oshiri* rulers were custodians of traditional religion and thus did not fold their arms and allowed their religion to be castrated. They put effort to resist the conversion. However, both the colonial powers and the missionaries worked together to subdue the existing religion. According to Fafunwa;

“The missionaries depended on the colonial powers for help in keeping the religious African chiefs in their place, while the colonial authorities helped to conquer by religious persuasion what they failed to achieve by force of arm”⁸.

Perhaps, it would also be comprehended from this statement that introduction of Christianity by the colonial authorities was not for the religious sake, not for their love for the father or son or Holy Spirit, but to achieve the hegemony.

It would also be argued that the introduction of Christianity in *Oshiri* was aimed to completely up-root the existing norms as it was said that “the primitive religions were all destined to be perished and disappear” – kraemer⁹.

The following quotations also speak voluminosly

“The missionary is a revolutionary and he has to be so, for to preach and plant Christianity means to make a frontal attack on the beliefs, the customs, the apprehension of life and thee world, and by implication (because tribal religions are primarily social realities) on the social structures and based on primitive society. The missionary enterprise need not be ashamed of this because colonial administration, planters, merchants, western penetration, etc. performed much more severe and destructive attack”¹⁰.

It is an indisputable fact that colonialism coupled with appearance of Christianity has had and still have a considerable impact in the religion and cosmology of the *Oshiri* people. Although it has not removed entirely the worship of *Oshiri* myriad of gods or deities, Christianity has drastically reduced their effectiveness. Such gods or deities are: yam god (*Njokuji*), god of war, lightening and thunder called (*Ogbuanyanwu*), *Ali* (god of land), *Akpataeze* (god of appraisal after victory from war)¹¹ etc.

Western Education

Had the churches offered only the alternative of the cross and salvation, they might not have been such a disruptive force. But they offered Western education in addition, a highly attractive bait which indigenious religion could not offer. Since the people of Eastern provinces in general and *Oshiri* in particular were

anxious to acquire the whiteman's irresistible magic and knew this could only be done through going to school, they in time sent flocks of their children to schools. But churches had planned so well that the church and the school had become virtually synonymous. At times the same building served the two purposes. Our people started cautiously at first by sending their slaves and distrusted children to school and church, just as they had acted cautiously in the political sphere by sending similar people forward as their chiefs. But it did not take time before this caution was discovered to be foolishness as political, economic, religious and social life of the *Oshiri* came to be dominated by these former undesirable who had acquired the white man's magic first. After discovery what had hitherto been a trickle into schools and churches gradually became an avalanche¹².

Oshiri early contact with the Christianity is interestingly amusing. Only one school existed in the Community in the late nineteen thirties. The school belonged to Scotland Mission and was managed by Rev W.M. Christie who taught in the school. The total school fee amounted to fourteen pounds four shillings, that is twenty eight naira fourty kobo. The total amount was nineteen pounds ten shilling a year. This was insufficient and could not pay the salaries of the teaching staff.

The differences were made up with the money which the church members paid as collections. The highest class in the school was standard four. More qualified teachers were needed to teach in the school if it was to be up graded to

standard six. By 1937, no indigene of *Oshiri* had passed standard six examinations. To solve this problems, it was agreed that each village in *Oshiri* should sent a child to government primary school in *Afikpo* which was then a standard primary school. Each village was to support their student with a scholarship of two pounds a year, that is four naira.

As at the time it was desired that *Oshiri* should have a separate administration from that of *Afikpo* and *Okposi*, one problem remained unsolved. There was no indigene of *Oshiri* available to hold any position in the administration if *Oshiri* were to be granted a separate administrative because they were not yet educated as at that time¹³.

However, a positive impact of colonial rule in *Oshiri* Community was that the arrival of colonialism coupled with appearance of Christianity brought the western education which is considered as a vehicle of prosperous civilization. Uniform was introduced and schools boys had to dress and speak like Europeans.

Western or colonial education brought *Oshirians* together with the people of different backgrounds and cultures in Nigeria during this period of study. The contact at school created for many of the students opportunities for lasting mutual relations which became helpful to nation building efforts. Under colonial rule it afforded some of the educated *Oshirians* the chance to establish links which they exploited in later years as they engaged in anti-colonial struggle.

That as it is, despite its weaknesses, the colonial education created a literate group in *Oshiri* who later formed in varying degrees the vanguard of the anti-colonial movement in *Oshiri* in particular and Nigeria in general¹⁴.

What is more and quite similarly, it trained a corps of men and women who were literate enough to engage in clerical and other jobs that came with British presence and rule. In this way, colonial rule through western education contributed to the emergence of the working class elite in *Oshiri* who later took part to play an important role in the labour movement in the country.

Finally, the English language as a medium of learning helped to promote communication among *Oshirian* and its neighbours of different cultures, and in this way contributed to the growth of mutual relations despite the crises which came from time to time¹⁵.

Be that as it may, it was mentioned earlier that colonialism and Christianity brought western education and civilization. However, it is now proved that the negative side of it preponderates the positive side in the sense that:

Colonialism coupled with the appearance of Christianity which brought western education was not without some unhealthy impact for *Oshirians*. The nature of colonial education created inequality between *Oshiri* and her neighbouring communities. For example, communities like *Okposi*, *Afikpo* etc had far greater

number of educated people by the 1930s than *Oshiri* because of the differences in the pace of educational development. Evident to this inequality in educational development was that by 1937, there was only one school in *Oshiri*. The school belonged to the Scotland Mission under the management of Rev. W.M. Christie whose headquarter was at *Okposi*. Only two teachers taught in the school. The highest class in the school was standard four. Also, by the 1937, no indigene of *Oshiri* has passed standard six whereas they were many educated people in *Oshiri* neighbouring communities such as *Okposi*. The implication of this was that, those neighbouring communities with early access to western education tended to be at some advantage in occupying positions in the political, economic and social institution in the area during this period of study. Thus Oshirians as late comers have often seen this as evidence of domination.

Further solidifying this point of inequality in the development of colonial education between *Oshirians* and her neighbours was the fact that when it was recommended for *Oshiri* to have a separate administration from *Okposi* and *Afikpo* in early 1930s, there were no educated indigene of *Oshiri* available to undertake the duty of treasury clerk if *Oshiri* were to be granted separate administration as at that time.

What is more, the school was used as an instrument of conversion, that is, to convert the beneficiaries into Christianity. It seems also that colonial education and

its religion in *Oshiri* focused on spiritual and some aspect of social life. Therefore, little or no emphasis was laid on other human endeavours such as interpersonal morality and societal norms¹⁶.

Lastly, colonial educational in *Oshiri* was fundamentally literary which based on reading writing, arithmetics, Bible knowledge, Christian literature and so on, which all to produce Christian who can read the Bible and serve as interpreters, clerks and agents for the colonial powers and facilitated their trade. In other words, the nature of western education under colonial rule in *Oshiri* Community produced only clerical and secretarial officers with an unquenchable thirst for office work. Colonial education did not promote functional and vocational education in *Oshiri* and as such most of the educated *Oshirians* were unable to contribute meaningfully to the technological and overall economic development of the community. In this way, the nature of colonial educational is a factor in *Oshiri's* underdevelopment. Colonial education did not put *Oshirians* in a position in which they could become the champions on their own terms-of-the community's economic and social development.

It is therefore, right to conclude that despite its positive effects, colonial education policy was not planned to contribute to social transformation of *Oshiri* Community in particular and Nigeria in general¹⁷.

Urbanization

Until the coming of British rule most of the peoples of the Igbos in general and *Oshiri* in particular lived in a rural communities, unlike the *Yorubas* and the *Hausas*. But under the impact of colonial rule urban centres developed among the Igbo and their neighbours. Most of the centres started as administrative headquarters, that is they were first centres where the District Officers and their staff of clerks interpreters, policemen, messengers, prison warders and so on lived. Being nearly always all strangers, these men had to depend on the surrounding rural population for their livelihood. They also made use of rural labour to build their quarters and maintain their surroundings. Coming and going developed between the rural villages and the administrative centres as people came to sell to the strangers or to answer the calls of the political officers or to attend court or to do political labour at these centres. As time went on a few of the local people came to settle close to the government stations to be better to exploit the economic opportunities they offered. Those centres which, apart from being government headquarters also important economically outstripped many of their counterparts. This was the case of Aba and Umuahia which *Oshiri* belonged during this period of study¹⁸. In addition, in Oshiri today, the Native Court built by the British during the colonial rule is still in operation in Oshiri today. It is found in its site called *Egu* Court.

Marriage System in Oshiri

In those good old days when a boy had served his parents very well and they had seen that he was of age to marry, the parents would take their time to look for a girl from a good lineage to marry for him. His parent would not ask of the boy's consent either to know if he was ready to marry or to know the girl of his choice. The parents would meticulously begin pre-marriage enquiries about the girl of their choice in the area of social purity, health, reproductive patterns, decency and behavior, any incidence of madness and so on. The enquiries were more prudential than legal requirements. They were meant to ensure that the marriage would be successful, happy and fruitful¹⁹.

But the advent of Christianity and modern condition of loving have reduced but not removed the impact of the belief and attendant practices. A boy and a girl would meet and agree to marry each other before their parents are informed²⁰. Christianity does not also encourage and support a polygamous type of marriage which was prevailing in *Oshiri* prior to its arrival rather they preach monogamy that is 'one-man-one-wife'. Some families in *Oshiri* today are divided as a result of male child. On this, a man who is not a Christian may decide to marry another wife just to ensure the continuity of the lineage through the birth of a male child or children. This problem was and still intense especially when the first wife gives birth to only female children. To this effect, the woman who is/was a Christian may

not buy the idea of husband going into another marriage with another woman. The woman would only be of the view that the man should be patience and wait on the Lord to give a male child or children to the family whereas such issue could have been averted in a polygamous family, since it would be hard for a man who married two to five wives not have a male issue.

In addition, hitherto to the incursion of Christianity in *Oshiri* Community, marriage rites were virtually carried out on traditional bases, but some Christian believers in *Oshiri* were and still against the use of palm wine and other traditional requirement for marriage rites. The implication of this was that people were restricted to families they could marry from, thus, leading to cultural conflict between the traditional cultural praxis and Christian faith in *Oshiri* Community during and after colonial rule²¹.

Circumcision in Oshiri

Before the incursion of the British in 1905, *Oshiri* culture was still intact. It had not received influences from outside except from her immediate neighbours. In those good old days, both male and female were not circumcised at birth but at adulthood.

When male children were born, they were not circumcised until they reached adulthood. In *Oshiri* culture, adult circumcision is not just the removal or cutting off the fore skin of manhood, it was followed by other cultural events.

In *Oshiri* Community, an adult male who wants to carry out circumcision must announce to his *Umunna* his intention. *Oshiri* custom requires him to do this with palm wine, palm front (*Igu*) which was used to decorate the entrance of the boy's room, unripped coconuts, den gun etc. The ceremony took off on *Nkwo* day usually in the evening. The next day – *Eke* day, he goes round the *Eke* market square with an umbrella or *Nkwu* market depending on which section of the community the individual came from. He was accompanied by his age mate and page boy called *Ishiko* who accepted gifts from the public on his behalf. At the *Eke* market square, his group who accompanied him drink palm wine and rejoice with him, the display at *Eke* market ends with shooting of a den gun. After the *Eke* market ceremony, the celebrant moves to his uncle home (*Okpenee*). The uncle entertains them, he leaves the uncle place with another shut of a den gun, from there he heads for his father's home where he is welcomed with another gun shut. This is the ceremony that goes with male circumcision in *Oshiri* (*Igba Egbe na Ahia*) as it is called by *Oshirians*²². Thus colonialism has adversely reduced the effectiveness of this culture. In those good old days, no man married in the community without performing this ceremony, but with the arrival of Christianity, some people now frown at this unique culture of *Oshiri*. The implication of this is

that, till date, no matter how churcheous one may claim, one cannot still marry from certain homes without the fulfilment of this tradition. This had prevented some people from marrying a woman of their choice²³.

Female Adult Circumcision in Oshiri

In the pre-colonial *Oshiri*, girls passed through certain processes and customary rites before getting married. Some of the rites are:

First, *Erube – Ishi*, which literally means growing the hair without cutting it. It was a period when a girl reaches a puberty age. From this time, she was permitted to plait her hair to her taste or any style off her choice. Hitherto to this stage, girls were allowed to glow their hair. The *Erube-Ishi Nwanyi* marked the end of female childhood and the beginning of female adolescence in *Oshiri*.

Second, in the pre-colonial *Oshiri* Community, *Oshiri* like most Igbo societies circumcised their girls when they had fully grown. But with the arrival of the British in *Oshiri* in 1905 and the subsequent establishment of their culture, they told the people that female circumcision was harmful.

Today in *Oshiri*, female circumcision which means the cutting of the female clitoris is no longer prevailing. In the pre-colonial *Oshiri*, the process of female circumcision lasted for twenty-eight days. In pre-colonial *Oshiri*, it was against the custom of the land to give in marriage or for a girl to be pregnant without being

circumcised. But colonial rule has changed all these. The female circumcision is today unpopular among Oshirians²⁴.

Oshiri Festivals

Oshiri like other societies in Nigeria is rich in festivals. Some of the festivals observe by *Oshirians* are – *Aju* festivals, New yam festival etc.

The *Aju* festival is the most popular and most celebrated festival in *Oshiri* Community. As discussed already in the chapter two of this work, the *Aju* festival marked the time of communion between the living ancestors and their ancestral spirit under which the living offer sacrifices to the dead spirits.

With the arrival of colonialism coupled with Christianity in *Oshiri*, the impact of Christianity on this unique festival and the resultant effects in *Oshiri* Community cannot be overemphasized. As stated earlier in the preceding chapter of this work that on this occasion (*Aju* festival), every man in *Oshiri* was expected to kill either goat or dog to sacrifice to the ancestral spirits. It was also a custom that the cooking of the meat should be done by the first wife of a man. What is important here is that the influence of Christianity on this festival in *Oshiri* had resulted in serious conflict between the Christian believers and *Oshiri* traditionalist and also among husbands, wives and children. These conflicts emanants from the Christians forbid of *Aju* festival and thus were often persecuted by the adherent of *Aju* festivals (*Oshiri* traditionalist).

For instance, the refusal of the wife to cook the *Aju* meat and food, in turn restricted the father from performing some of their fatherly roles in the family. Such as payment of children's school fees, buying them clothes and provision of foods. Some men at this period send their wives and children out of home for refusing to partake in *Aju* festival. In some cases, the men may resort to bating up their wives or even strangulating their wives. This is done because the men would be regarded by their ancestors as unworthy representatives. To avert this incident, most churches had chosen to keep night vigil during this period, in order to protect the members from harm by their husbands and fathers.

In addition, many families had been torn apart during this period and therefore generally known to be a period of family persecution in *Oshiri* both to traditionalist and to the Christian in their faith. In the event of any evil occurrence in the land, the traditionalist would accuse the Christian that calamity befallen the land because of their desecration of the land while the Christians accused the traditionalist of being responsible for their set back because they patronize deities and idols and refuse to repent. This conflict has persist or exist in *Oshiri* Community till date²⁵.

Another *Oshiri* festival in which colonialism had immensely affected is the New yam festival. According to Njokwu Nwaogbonwesi, in the pre-colonial *Oshiri* community, nobody was expected to come out in the midnight to meet face to face

with the spiritual men during the traditional rites of ushering the new yam festival. And if a virgin girl mistakenly came in contact with them, she ceased from child bearing (that is, she became barren for life). However, during this period of study, some Christians defiled such tradition by hosting night vigil and by going out in the night thereby, leading to the warning away of some of the cultures of *Oshiri* Community²⁶. Also today, Christians in *Oshiri* have their own date for new yam festival different from the date of the traditionalist.

Burial Ceremony

In pre-colonial *Oshiri*, when one dies and the death was suspected to had been induced by someone, it was a customary that during the burial, the family or relation of the diseased go to the extent of putting things like a broom, knife, phone, nail etc inside the casket of the dead person. This was to enable the person revenge for his/her death who ever might be responsible. But with the arrival of Christianity, this practices were forbidden as one cannot take revenge rather they preach that revenge belongs to God. In the same vein, shooting of a den gun was another prevailing practice in *Oshiri* during burial ceremony especially burials of traditionalist. For instances, in a death of a well known traditionalist, the children been Christians may not allow such traditional rites to be given to their father because to them it was fetish in nature. Some families in disguise employed men of God who would preach at the burial or officiate the burial. On the other hand,

the traditionalist who already knew the importance of such traditional rites to the man, in most cases insisted on performing some sacrifices to the man such as gun shooting (*dane gun*) and other traditional ceremonies which must be observed in the honour of the dead. The implication of this disagreement between the Christian believers and traditionalist was that it got to the extent where both parties would start exchanging words, fighting, murmuring and even created division among family members²⁷.

Oath Taking (*Ita-mgbu*)

This in *Oshiri* was and still a crucial procedure for ascertaining the truth on a matter between two individuals or families. It was and still done when people have disagreement over land matters. In *Oshiri* cultures, it was and still believe that when an oath is taken, a sequel to the stipulated number of days, weeks, months, years as the case may be, were given for the oath to react, life is/was always taken as a result of its effect. But Christians are/were not in support of oath taking when involved in any matter that requires/required it, because to them it was/is diabolic in nature. Christians disagree vehemently with oath taking, and quote the Bible as being against such, and that God vindicates the just. Thus during and after colonial rule and even today, some take advantage of Christians by imposing some crime on them as the cause of some evil actions since they could not accept oath taking on the issues where they were involved. Thus there is no single accepted procedure or

process for ascertaining the truth on matters between individuals in *Oshiri* Community within this period of study²⁸.

Economic Impact

They not only turned the old political order upside down, they also changed the economic pattern of *Oshiri* society. They fought against the slave trade and slave dealers, causing many ancient families to lose their source of labour. They introduced new currencies in the place of the old ones, as a result of which most of the latter in time became scrap metal to be broken up and used as projectiles in Dane guns. As part of the new economic measures, the government built motor roads linking all the administrative centres, and cleared the creeks so as they could be used by larger vessels like launches. These roads quickly became the arteries of commerce and new ideas people who were forcibly recruited to work on them returned to their villages with strange ideas in their heads and probably also with resentment in their heart against the local chief who had recruited them.

Thus, the impact of this trade contact between *Oshiri* and the British cannot be over emphasize during this period of study.

In the first place, the incursion of the white in *Oshiri* especially before the abolition of the slave trade boosted economic status of the rulers as well as some dignities who collaborated with the white in slave trade. Likewise the economic

activities of those who engaged in the palm oil and palm kernel production were also boosted during this period.

Another important impact of colonial rule on the economic activities of *Oshirians* within this period of study was the introduction of some important crops through trade contact with *Oshirians*. Such crops include: maize, cassava, sugarcane and pineapples. The food crops were introduced to Benin by the Portuguese during the slave trade from the New world, from Benin they have spread to other parts of Nigeria including *Oshiri*. Since then, these crops have revolutionized the farming feeling of *Oshiri*²⁹.

However, by way of negative impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* economic activities, the agricultural policy by the colonialist was not aimed at improving crops which had internal or domestic value in Nigeria in general and in *Oshiri* particular. These crops needed for internal consumptions or for inter-and intra-group trade were designated food crops by colonial authorities and were not developed except during the second world war years when the authorities needed some of products (notably rice) for their own consumption. As it therefore was, the development of agriculture under colonial rule was to service colonial needs. This was why respective parts of Nigeria were known in the production of certain so called cash crops (or export crops), palm oil and kernel were predominant in the eastern Nigeria, cocoa in the western Nigeria, rubber in the mid-western Nigeria,

groundnuts, cotton and shea products in the northern Nigeria. Marketing conditions placed more emphasis and greater value on these crops than the people's food crops. The next point to note is that the techniques and methods of agricultural production were not improved by the colonial administration. By the end of colonial rule, Nigeria in general and *Oshiri* in particular still depended on pre-colonial methods and techniques in agricultural production³⁰. Thus there was no improvement in the existing situation.

Similarly the commercial and industrial policies in *Oshiri* under Britain were also directed towards promoting export trade and while industrial policy was aimed at serving the interest of Britain and not the *Oshirians*. This is why the only type of industrial activity was extracting industry. Manufacturing industries that would produce commodities that could compete with those manufactured in Britain and the rest of Europe were not encouraged. Even the major industrial activity of the *Oshiri* which was mat making, nothing was done to improve it. Thus, all these colonial agricultural, commercial and industrial policies cannot be banished when analyzing the factors that have led to economic underdevelopment in *Oshiri* during and after colonial rule³¹.

ENDNOTES

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2. *Intelligent Report on Oshiri Clan*, Resident Ogoja Province Afikpo Division, (O.G. 661, May 8, 1930), p. 19.
3. *Personal observation from field work*, July 19, 2019.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. *Intelligent Report on Oshiri Clan*, Resident Ogoja province Afikpo Division, Pp. 46-49.
7. Oral interview with *Chukwu Ifeanyi*, 76 years a retired civil servant, Amaokpara Oshiri, July 20, 2019.
8. F. Babs, *History of education in Nigeria* (Ibadan: NPS Education Publishers Ltd, 2002), p. 22.
9. H. Kraemer, *The Christian message in a non-Christian world* (London: Harpers, 1938), p. 21.
10. Ibid.
11. Oral interview with *Obasi Azuanuka*, 82 years, a farmer, Amaokpara Oshiri, July 21, 2019.
12. A.E. Afigbo ”*The Eastern province under Colonial Rule*” in Obaro Ikime (ed) *The Groundwork of Nigeria History*, p. 425.
13. *Intelligent Report on Oshiri Clan*, Resident Ogoja province Afikpo Division, Pp. 46-49.
14. Toyin Falola et al, *History Nigeria 3: Nigeria in the nineteenth century*, (Longman), p. 20.

15. Personal observation from field work, July 22nd, 2019.
16. Ibid.
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18. A.E. Afigbo “*The Eastern province under Colonial Rule*” in Obaro Ikime (ed), *The Groundwork of Nigeria History*, Pp. 427-428.
19. N. Elebe, Memorandum on the Customary Laws of Oshiri Community for inclusion in the compendium of the Customary Laws of Ebonyi State (2013), p. 1.
20. Ibid.
21. Uche-Egbulam, Ukpa “*The Conflict between traditional Cultural Praxis and Christian faith: A Discourse of Oshiri Community in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State*. M.Sc Thesis, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, 2018, Pp. 9-10.
22. Oral interview with A. Alo Ugbala, 79 years, a farmer, Umuimam Oshiri, July 23, 2019.
23. A.F. Ogunbado, “*Impacts of Colonialism on Religion: An Experience of South-Western Nigeria*”, *Journal of Humanity and Social Science* vol. 5, 2012, p. 54.
24. Oral interview with Okoro Cecilia, 72 years, a retired civil servant, Amankalu Oshiri, July 18, 2019.
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26. Ibid.
27. Oral interview with Eze Isaiah, 68 years, a trader, Amaokpara Oshiri, July 17, 2019.

28. Oral interview with N. Nwachkuwu Omaka, 75 years, a retired civil servant, Nmboji Oshiri, July 18, 2019.
29. Oral interview C. Chukwu Nwachukwu, 76 years, a farmer, Owom Oshiri, July 18, 2019.
30. Personal observation from field work, July 19, 2019.
31. Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Oshiri Community is one of the five communities that make up Onicha Local Government Area in the present day Ebonyi State in Nigeria. The Community is broadly divided into two sections of *EBIA* and *UVU*. The Community also comprises sixteen villages which include *Umuorie*, *Umuimam*, *Agbabi*, *Isiinkwo Umugbala*, *Amaokpara* etc. The traditions of origin of *Oshiri* has it that the founder of *Oshiri* was *Ezekpechu* the son of *Ugo-eze* who migrated from *Ekpelu* in Ikwo Local Government Area in the present day Ebonyi State. The name *Oshiri* is derived from the word “*Oshimiri*” which was as result of *Ugo-Eze*’s re-collective experience of crossing a big river called *Ebonyi* with the half-brother *Onyikwa Igbo-Eze* to found *Oshiri*. The *Oshiri* area is 25 square miles approximately. On the East and North *Oshiri* is bounded by the *Ezza*, on the North-West *Agba* and *Isu* on the West, *Isu* and *Onicha* on the South-west, *Onicha* and on the South, *Ugwulangwu* and *Ezza*.

Prior to colonialism, the indigenous political structure of *Oshiri* people was based on the family unit which had developed into a kindred and from a kindred into a group. *Oshiri* is a united body of people, geographically, historically and

socially. Its structure was arranged on agricultural needs. The lowest functioning unit was the family which consisted of a man, his wife/wives and children living in three houses in a compound. In many cases, a compound may contain twelve or sixteen houses. Generally, not all those who lived in a compound were closely related. While families live in a group in one compound the oldest man was and still recognized as a compound head. The next functioning unit was the kindred. These were people who lived as a group of related compound in a village. The eldest men of each compound known as *Ogirinya* (Elders) formed a village council to settle petty village disputes. Associated with them in the council was the Age-grade known as *Ogbo Ojeje* – men of 45 years and above who did most of the talking during meeting, while *Ogirinya* just sit and listened but interrupted at any time they considered that the customary law was being infringed. The highest functioning unit was the clan council. When the village council found itself out of its depth, or when the question of issues that concerned the clan as a whole arose or when the parties at dispute were of different kindreds, the clan council met usually at *Umuorie* (the senior village) to discuss the matter. There were also different Age-grades who carried out different functions in *Oshiri*. They include *Ogbo Ojeje* consisting of men of 45 years and above, *Ogbo Neche Ogbo* (company who guard the village). They arrested malefactors and exercised the powers of a native police force, *Ogbo Ejirim* and *Ogbo Api* (uncircumcised boys from 16 years below). The age grade in pre-colonial *Oshirii* generally performed the following,

functions – they arrested criminals, exercised the power of native police force, clearings of road paths etc.

The socio-cultural heritage of *Oshiri* people are very rich in values. Some of these traditions of the people have been discussed vividly in the chapter two of this work. Like many black people all over the world, the *Oshiri* people worshiped and still worship myriads of gods or deities. Some of these gods are *Njoku* (god of yam), *Ogbuanyanwu* (god of war, lightning and thunder). Above all, the people believed and still believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who they various called *Chineke* (God that creates) or *Obashi bu L'elu* (God on high). Until recently, the marriage system of the people was Endogamous (of a marriage with a social group). Some of the marriage qualification in *Oshiri* include *Ntugba Nri na Iwota Nkpu* requirements, *Ikpobe Ekwu* etc. *Oshiri* people cherish and like a healthy marriage than anything else in as much their daughter can be loved by a man. *Oshiri* people frown at men beating their daughter in marriage or humiliating them. *Oshiri* people frown at a woman who does not respect or submits to her husband. The type of marriage that was prevalent in the pre-colonial *Oshiri* was polygamy. *Oshiri* is also rich in festivals some of the festivals perform by *Oshiri* are *Iriji Ohuru* (New yam festival); *Isu-afa, Aju* festival, *Igba Egbe n'ahia* (Initiation into manhood), *Ibi Nwanyi Ugwu* (female circumcision) etc.

As earlier discussed in the preceding chapters of this work, *Oshiri* has the finest weather in *Ohaozara*. Because of this fine weather, *Oshiri* is an agro-based community and their agricultural produce were many and still varied. The most notable ones are yam, cassava, rice and livestock. The main industry of *Oshiri* in the pre-colonial era and even till date is mat-making, it won't be an exaggeration to state that *Oshiri* people weave the finest mat in *Igbo* land, so fine are the threads used in the manufacture of their matt (*Utewaji*) that you can fetch water with it when folded. The people engaged in hunting activities and the various animals hunted were Rabbit (*Ewita*), grass cutters (*Nchi*), Antelope (*Ele*) and so on. The people also engaged in both short and long distance trade with her neighbours. Some of the articles of the trade were mat, slaves, which they traded with the *Aros* during the slave trade. The land tenure system was simple and this made it easy for people to acquire lands for agricultural purposes. Available laws were divided among families and large portions of land undivided were left as communal lands. This communal lands belonged to the entire *Oshiri*.

That as it is, the above descriptions were the structure of *Oshiri* Community hitherto the incursion of the colonialist in the community in 1905. Colonialism is defined as exploitation by a stronger country of weaker one or the use of weaker country's resources to strengthen and enrich the stronger country. Various factors and arguments had been advanced in explaining colonialism in Africa. These factors had been grouped into three, namely; Economical Argument; Diplomatic

Argument and Psychological Argument. The British arrival in *Oshiri* in 1905 brought about complete change in the political, socio-cultural and economical life of the people. As happened in many other parts of the Igbo land, the natural heads refused to come forward and government had to adopt a system of selecting certain men who were given a certificate of warrant and were called warrant chiefs. The warrant chief governed the people under the advice of the British officials through a system called indirect rule. Under this system a Native Court, Native Authority, and Native Treasury were duly established and system of rule through the native court adopted. System of taxation was introduced. The introduction of taxation and native administration brought about a change in which despite every effort to contradict the people especially the women became convinced that the Warrant Chief had sold them over the question of taxation and this made the latter unpopular.

The Warrant Chiefs were given specific functions to perform for the new authority. The members were to lead the British officials to various areas in *Oshiri* during their official tour of the hinterland. Secondly they were also in charge of the collection of taxes from villages and remit the taxes to the British Resident in *Oshiri*. Members were responsible for appropriation of force labour for the execution of public works such as mapping out and construction of the roads, building of markets, rest houses etc. The warrant chiefs were constituted into an all purpose body which was at once a court as well as executive and legislative body

for the area under the warrant chiefs jurisdiction. Infact, in law, this body was known as native court and can also be referred to as native authority. This action exhibited by the British colonial authority was seen as undemocratic in the setting of Igbo political system in general and *Oshiri* in particular, little wonder why these warrants chief were ruthless and high-handed in the process of exercising their functions. The method of tax collection introduced and the way it was manipulated by the warrant chiefs brought fear in the system. The fear by the women that they would be taxed like the men led to the Women's Riot of 1929/30.

The question then remains to what extent did colonial rule impacted on *Oshiri* Community within the period of 1900 – 1960. Colonial rule distorted the political culture of *Oshirians* by giving them the false impression that they were still operating their traditional political organization when in fact colonial rule was removing that organization. The result has been that *Oshirian* leaders and people have been trying to make their own what in fact is a foreign political system. Colonial rule through its mechanism of indirect rule system and its emphasis on tradition and local differences stiffened group differences to a point in which integration of this groups becomes a major obstacle particularly in *Oshiri* Community and Nigeria in general. Furthermore, colonial rule was a force in strengthening of parochialism in the development of *Oshiri* in particular and the country in general. The failure to rise above parochial interest on the part of *Oshirian* leaders and people became a major legacy of colonial rule which

adversely affected development in *Oshiri* not only during the colonial period but also in the independence period. Thus election, political parties, revenue allocation, and other issues of the development of *Oshiri* in particular and the country in general were most of the time failed according to interest during and after colonial rule.

However, colonial rule through its use of indirect rule system made it possible for some aspects of indigenous traditional institution of *Oshiri* to be preserved and integrated with the system of government introduced by the British. It also prepared the naïve authorities for the subsequent role they came to play in the development of the local government system that came with colonial rule. In this way, they were preserved for modern *Oshiri* in particular and Nigeria in general.

That as it is, the failure of traditional military machinery, the time honoured gods, and medicine men which were invoked to fight the British but to no avail during the British conquest of *Oshiri* shook the people's belief in the superiority of their gods. Consequently on the morrow of conquest many people found themselves deposed to acquire the secret of the whiteman's power (Christianity). Thus this led to the widespread drive among the *Oshirians* for the transformation of their society. The coming of colonialism and its concomitant helped abrogate ritual with human beings. In addition, the arrival of colonialism coupled with

appearance of Christianity brought an end to the killing of twin babies in *Oshiri* in particular and other societies of Nigeria at large. Furthermore, the arrival of colonialism coupled with the appearance of Christianity brought the western education which is considered as a vehicle of prosperous civilization. However, it is now proved that the negative side of it preponderates the positive side in the sense that the nature of colonial education created inequality between *Oshiri* and her neighbouring communities. For instance those neighbouring communities such as *Okposi, Uburu* with early access to western education tendered to be at some advantage in occupying positions in the political, economic and social institutions in the area during this period of study. Thus *Oshirians* as late comers have often seen this as evidence of domination. Moreso, the nature of colonial education in *Oshiri* did not promote functional and vocational education in *Oshiri* and as such most of the educated *Oshirian* were unable to contribute meaningfully to the technological and overall economic development of the community. It is therefore right to conclude that despite its positive effects, colonial education policy was not planned to contribute to social transformation of *Oshiri* Community in particular and Nigerian in general.

In other aspects of the social life of the *Oshiri* people, such as marriage, circumcision, festivals, burial ceremony, oath taking etc. the impact of colonial rule cannot be over emphasize. For instance colonialism has brought an end to female circumcision and adult male circumcision in *Oshiri*. In addition, colonialism has

reduced but not removed entirely the effectiveness of celebration of certain festivals in *Oshiri* such festivals are, *Aju* festival, New yam festival etc.

Lastly, colonialism fought against the slave trade and slave dealers, causing many ancient families in *Oshiri* to lose their source of labour. On the other hand, the economic activities of those who engage in the palm oil and palm kernel production were also boosted during this period of study. Another important impact of colonial rule in *Oshiri* was the introduction of some important crops such as maize, cassava, sugarcane and pineapple since then these crops have revolutionized the farming feeling of *Oshiri*. However, the agricultural policy of the colonialist was not aimed at improving crops which had internal or domestic value in *Oshiri* in particular and Nigeria at large. As it therefore was, the development of agriculture under colonial rule in *Oshiri* was to serve colonial rule. As such the methods and techniques of agricultural production were not improved by the colonial administration. Thus by the end of the colonial rule, *Oshiri* still depended on pre-colonial methods and techniques in agricultural production. That is there were no improvement in the existing situation.

In the final analysis, *Oshiri*, Igbo societies, like other societies in Africa, underwent far-reaching transformation under the impact of colonial rule. The very fact of colonial conquest shook the traditional society.

The British conquest of *Oshiri* in 1905 was quickly followed by the suppression of the old political order by a new one in which many people who were neither titled elders nor lineage heads, and many who were neither upright nor even free born made good through the creation of the warrant chiefs system. Thus one of the impacts of colonial rule in *Oshiri* today is the institution of the kingship system which could be traced to the warrant chiefs system created during the colonial rule. Today the traditional ruler of *Oshiri* is known and referred to as His Royal Highness *Eze J.U. Nwaogo*.

The most profound impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* can be found in the socio-cultural organization of the people. The traditional religion of the people is today almost entirely eluded by the new culture (Christianity) that came with colonial rule. The people are drastically losing confidence in the superiority of their culture. For instance, the yearly sacrifices made to the highly venerated gods of *Oshiri* such as *Ogbuanyanwu*, *Ngelekwelu* etc. are no longer profound as there is now greater rush by the people to imbibe the new ways (western culture). In addition, the numerous festivals celebrated in *Oshiri* such as *Aju* festival, *Iniji* festival, and different cultural dances are no longer effectively practiced because of the people's convert to Christianity that came with colonial rule of which some of these convert are those knowledgeable in the practice of this cultures. Other socio-culture practices in *Oshiri* such as marriage system, male and female circumcision, *Ibga Egbe Nahia* and so on have undergone far-reaching effect under colonial rule.

However, the western education that came with colonial rule brought *Oshirians* together with the people of different background and cultures in Nigeria during and after this period of study. It created a literate group in *Oshiri* who later formed in varying degrees the vanguard of the anti-colonial movement in *Oshiri* in particular and in Nigeria at large. The English language as a medium of learning helped and still help to promote communication among *Oshirians* and its neighbours of different cultures, and in this way contributed to the growth of mutual relations despite the crisis which came from time to time. However, the nature of western education under colonial rule in *Oshiri* did not promote functional and vocational education and as such most of the educated *Oshirians* were and still enable to contribute meaningfully to the technological and overall economic development of the community. In this way, the nature of colonial rule is a factor in *Oshiri's* underdevelopment.

Furthermore, the role of the colonialist in *Ezza- Oshiri* wars cannot be banished when discussing the impact of colonial rule in *Oshiri* from 1900 – 1960. Before the British arrival in *Oshiri* in 1905, *Oshiri* had been at war with different sections or groups of the *Ezzas* such as *Idembia*, *Okofia*, *Echara*, *Ezzama*, *Ekka* and *Inyere*. Some people date the beginning of the war to before 1850. The cause of the war had been said to be land disputes. Before the arrival of the British many of the *Ezza* villages had crossed the *Ebonyi* River and were fighting *Oshiri* from all fronts. In 1912, the *Ekka*, and *Ezzama* Communities attacked *Oshiri* and *Agbaebor-Isu* and

they killed about 50 people and burnt 300 houses. In the encounter that followed, the British dispatched a police patrol from *Okigwe* to teach the *Ezzas* a lesson. This time, the *Ezzas* were driven permanently across the Ebonyi River and a fine of £750 was imposed on them. In 1916, the recalcitrant *Ezzas* continued to encroach on the southern part of *Oshiri*. To this effect another patrol team of six hundred police were deployed to *Etza* and they were forced to contribute 1000 paid labours to work on the railways. In 1936, British officers, Mr. T.W. Ban and D.S. Cook brought the dispute temporarily to an end by building a church on the disputed land. Although the war continued with intermitted peace after the British left, the intervention of the colonialist cannot be banished when discussing factors that contributed to the end of the *Etza- Oshiri* wars. Be that as it may, the war came to an end in 1990 when *Oshiri* gave the *Ezzas* the final defeat following the considerable role played by the prominent son of *Oshiri*, late Chief Obasi Odefa who was the then commissioner for works and transport and also a member of Dr. Ogonnaya Onu's kitchen cabinet when he became the Governor of Abia State in 1990.

Finally, through information obtained in the course of this research work from oral interviews, National Archive Enugu, universities and national libraries across the region and so on, this work, the impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* Community in Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State, 1900 – 1960 has reviewed that colonial rule which began in *Oshiri* in 1905 and terminated in 1960 had had and still have a far-reaching impact on the political, socio-cultural, and economic life of the people. However, the extent to which colonial rule impacted

on the people has not be given a place in the existing literatures, thus this work have succeeded in solving that problem. The work also reviewed that the negative impact of colonial rule on *Oshiri* outweighs the positive impact.

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(b) Oral Interviews

Names	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
Abbah John	69 years	A farmer	Amaokpara Oshiri	24/04/2019
Alo Eze	85 years	Retired civil servant	Umuorie Oshiri	26/04/2019
Azuanuuka	82 years	A farmer	Amaokpara Oshiri	21/07/2019
Cecilia Okoro	72 years	A retired civil servant	Amaokpara Oshiri	18/07/2019
Chima Aja	74 years	A retired civil servant	Amankalu Oshiri	22/04/2019
Chukwu Omaka	72 years	A farmer	Mboji Oshiri	24/04/2019
Chukwu Uneke	78 years	A farmer	Umuorie Oshiri	23/04/2019
Chukwuka Nkwonwa	76 years	A farmer	Isinkwo Oshiri	28/04/2019
Elebe Nweyeke	88 years	A retired civil servant	Umumbala Oshiri	22/04/2019
Ede Elebe	83 years	A retired civil servant	Umuefia Oshiri	23/04/2019
Isreal Njoku	72 years	A retired civil servant	Amaokpara Oshiri	25/04/2019

Ifeanyi Chukwu	76 years	A retired civil servant	Amaokpara Oshiri	20/07/2019
Ikele Chukwu	78 years	A farmer	Owom Oshiri	26/04/2019
Isaiah Eze	68 years	A trader	Amaokpara Oshiri	17/07/2019
Mary Okoro	65 years	A trader	Umuimam Oshiri	22/04/2019
Nwachukwu Chukwuka	76 years	A farmer	Owom Oshiri	18/07/2019
Nwalo Okoro	75 years	A retired civil servant	Agbabi Oshiri	23/04/2019
Nwanama Nwachukwu	78 years	A trader	Umuefia Oshiri	25/04/2019
Okoroafor Alegu	87 years	A retired civil servant	Umuorie Oshiri	26/04/2019
Obasi Nwangbogo	82 years	A retired civil servant	Iyiazu Oshiri	25/04/2019
Odi Grace	75 years	A trader	Amaokpara Oshiri	26/04/2019
Omaka Nwachkuwu	75 years	A retired civil servant	Mboji Oshiri	18/07/2019
Onodugo Gabriel	81 years	A retired civil servant	Umumbala Oshiri	27/07/2019
Ugbala Alo	79 years	A farmer	Umuimam Oshiri	23/07/2019

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