

**THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN POST COLONIAL UROMI
1963-1999.**

By

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**AN ORIGINAL RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **Elijah Oseyiomo ELIMIAN**,
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for his grace and protection all through my stay in the University of Benin, Benin City, and also to my lovely parents Mr. and Mrs. Elimian for their unwavering support.

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I wish to express my profound gratitude first to God Almighty, for it was by his grace I was not consumed throughout my study in University of Benin.

My utmost appreciation also goes to my project supervisor, Dr. (Mrs) I.O. Osemwengie for patiently guiding me; also for her correction which has brought this work to a successful end. I sincerely appreciate all your efforts including pushing me to do better during the course of this project work. God bless you ma.

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I am sincerely grateful to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elimian for the effort they made towards giving me a sound education and for all the wonderful advises they gave me I do not take them for granted. May the good Lord shower you with abundant blessings, guidance and protection. May you reap the fruit of your labour. Amen.

To my lovely siblings, thank you for your prayers, support and encouragement. God bless you.

To my friends within and outside the University of Benin I am indeed grateful to you for making my stay in UNIBEN a memorable one. I love you all and may God bless you all richly in Jesus name. Amen

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Man is an economic creature and from early times, he has been actively engaged in the business of making a living from his environment¹. Over the years, mankind in Uromi and everywhere has built a symbiotic relationship with his earthly home. And this has resulted for him undertaking a diversity of economic activities in his quest for survival; which cumulatively constitute the economy of his nation. Economic development in post-colonial Uromi was largely dependent on the extent to which individual successfully mastered and engaged in these activities, that is, the level of his adept management and exploitation of his environment and its inherent resources. Fittingly, G.A. Petch observes that the word economics is derived from two Greek words: *oikos* (meaning ‘house’) and *nemo* (meaning ‘to manage’), which collectively means to manage a house.² Implicit in this understanding is the fact that, in all societies, the cardinal responsibility of man, as an economic creature, is to effectively manage and harness all the resources found in his environment in order to fully maximize the total utility derivable from them.

Propelled by its inherent economic wiring, Uromi in the ordinary business of life had engaged diverse in economic activities. Uromi has continued to expand the base of these economic activities in order to satisfy human wants. These economic

activities, particularly the effort to understand them, is what Alfred Marshal (1842-1926) conceived as the main purpose of economics³. Thus, as an economic clan, Uromi is perceived as a business hub (entrepreneur), where there is constant search of opportunities to minimise cost. This, according to Chester G. Starr, is the rationale behind the domestication of plants and animals right from the Neolithic Age, when man gained mastery over his environment and stopped submitting blindly to the pressures of nature. In Uromi's economics of survival, Anthony Okoduwa maintained is geared towards feeding his stomach. The fact that economic development takes place in traditional societies within a limited production function does not mean that they experience little or no economic change. Rostow made this point crystal clear by asserting that traditional societies have the economic capacities to respond and adapt to the forces of economic change. He captured the point this way,

“Both in more distant past and in recent times the story of traditional societies is a story of endless change reflected in the scale and patterns of trade, level of agricultural output and productivity, the scale of manufactures, fluctuation in population and rural real income... They did not lack inventiveness and innovations...”⁴

It follows logically from this contention that the pre-colonial economy of Uromi land was not stagnant. During the period, entrepreneurship (inventiveness and innovation) in the region was the bastion of economic development. It enhanced the effective mobilisation of land, labour and capital for development and caused the Esan economy to be responsive to change and continuity. Therefore, agriculture, indigenous industrialisation and trade developed as the main economic activities

entrepreneurship engendered in Esan traditional economy⁵. In Europe, just as the discovery of the new world and advancement in science and technology created the preconditions for take off, so also the resourcefulness of Esan traditional economy attracted Britain to Esanland and it facilitated colonial relations that launched Esanland into its precondition for take-off stage⁶.

Jhingan explains this stage as a transitional phase where the preconditions for sustainable economic growth are created. Consequently, in 1906, the incorporation of Esanland into the British Nigerian colonial enterprise, introduction of indirect rule, and British colonial economic policies paved the way for the Esaneconomy to enter its take-off stage of economic growth⁷.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the economic development in post colonial Uromi 1963-1999. While the objectives of the study includes;

1. To evaluate the Brief history of Uromi people
2. To examine the economic activities of post colonial Uromi land,
3. To examine the socio political and cultural activities of post- colonial Uromi

Scope of the Study

This Study covered the economic development in post colonial Uromi 1963-1999. It focused on the Political and Socio-Economic organization of Uromi in post-colonial time. The study began in the early time to 1999.

Methodology

In the course of this research work, relevant data and information will be obtained from two major sources; Primary and Secondary sources. The primary source that will be used in this research will be obtained mainly from oral interviews from Uromi people. Relevant questions will be formulated to guide the process of conducting the interview. Recording devices as well as written notes will be used to document the information collected so as to avoid loss of such information. The persons that will be interviewed will include traditional rulers, Civil-Servants, Traders and Farmers. It will also include the Traditional Chiefs, Business people, as well as Market Leaders in the community.

Secondary sources that will be consulted will include; Textbooks, Newspapers, Articles, Journals, Internet Materials and Periodical Materials from the Institute for Benin Studies in the University of Benin and other Public Libraries in Edo State respectively. It is hope that Information obtained from these sources will help to supplement, guide and cross examine the information obtained from the primary

sources before putting it down in writing so as to have a comprehensive and well researched work.

Literature Review

There are no much literatures on economic development of Uromi in post colonial time. However, because the people of Uromi are sub-groups of the Edo speaking people, available literature on Edo speaking people such as their; History, Culture and others are used here. The available literatures that are reviewed here, deals on the geographical location, historical origin as well as migration of the people to their present day location and relation between the two close neighbours

According to E. Akyeampong, & Hippolyte, F. in their work titled: *The Contribution of African Women to Economic Growth and Development in Pre-Colonial Africa*,⁸ they stated that for most of the kingdoms in the pre-colonial Nigerian region including Uromi, the women folk occupied an important place in the socio political economy of the state. They participated in various forms of economic activities including those that involved production, manufacturing, farming, live stock processing as well as food processing i.e trade and commerce. He observed that in Etsako land in the 1850s, the women folk were actively involved in virtually all forms of economic activities that were conducted in the emirate. It is therefore relevant to state that Uromi women equally accounted for the high rate of economic

growth witnessed by Uromi community during the 19th century and indeed up to the era of British rule.

In view of C. Klaa, in her work titled “Role of African Women in Development and Economic Life: Reality and Challenges⁹”, she opined that the women played an equally important role in the process of economic transformation of Uromi land as their participation in various forms of commercial activities did compliment the efforts of the men by which the community economy was able to rank high both among the pre-colonial Uromi especially during the 19th century. Some of the important economic development fields where Uromi women featured prominently and contributed meaningfully toward the attainment of a stable economy for precolonial Uromi land include vegetable production, clothing and palm oil production.

According to G.O. Ogunremi, & E.K. Faluyi, in their work titled “*An Economic History of West Africa since 1750*”,¹⁰ stated that women paly active role in the socio cultural organization and Economic activities of Uromi people in pre-colonial economy of Uromi. The relevance of the book to this study lies in examination of some of the Social cultural practices common to the Uromi people of Edo State Nigeria and thus provides us with insight into some of those practices like; Widow-Hood among other practices. Also, the book description of the entire

Environment, Culture, Topography, Trade as well as the nature of the Economy of the Uromi people

According to M. O. Shoremi, in his work titled *Indigenous Associations in Nigeria; Nigerian Life and Culture*,¹¹ he highlights the origin of the people of Uromi. The author describes the socio-cultural style of Uromi, with view to point out the similarities in the cultural system as well as the modern day democratic system of governance. The author again looked at the effects of foreign religion on the people of Uromi. It also explore aspects of Uromi such as; part of their geographical area of consideration and consequently introduced us to the history of those people that would be relevant in chapter two. The literature therefore did not focus on relations between neighbours, in other that the gap be filled by this study.

In view of R.J. Gavin, in his book titled '*The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Uromi Economy, 1897-1930*'¹², stated that the Economic organisation of Uromi. The people of early Uzairue where involved in agricultural activities. Such activities entails; agriculture, trade, and crafts. The techniques of farming used yielded good harvest.

J. A. Onimhawo, in his book titled, *The Uromi Traditional concept of Man,*" explained how trade before 1800 was done on small scale and was mainly based on barter. The author also described the, Social, Political and Religion practices of Uromi economy. Also, the article examined activities of ; Trade in the Nineteen Century,

their Market system (minor, major, and compound market), how they engaged in long and short distance Trade, Trading Techniques and different methods explaining that the system of pricing was based on haggling. Examples of Commodities of trades were usually; food stuffs, crafts and other items. Other examples were the trade in slaves that took the form of selling criminals, like those who committed abominations or breaches of laws and orders like; taboos, debtors, captives in inter-village wars, victims of slave raids among others. The article also looked at the trade route which the people employed in the pre-colonial times. Their different means of exchange and currencies of trade was also not left out (which varied from the use of cowries to brass rod etc.). The article discussed the nature of Uromi's trade and other economic activities hence providing us with information on their nature of relations with neighbors in the pre-colonial time. The article however did not focus on relation between Uromir

In view of B. J. E Itsueli's article, "Road Transport in Pre-colonial Uromi, 1986¹³", looked at the development of footpaths and how they helped in development of roads. It also noted how the roads were maintained to prevent them from being covered up by bush. The article also examined some major road links in and outside Uromi communities. Other areas were; how these roads contributed to the economic development as well as intra and inter relations in Uromi

Chapter Outline

This study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One: Background to the Study

This is an introduction to the study. Thereafter, the chapter also examined the aim and objectives for the study, the scope of the study, methodology, literature review and chapterization.

Chapter Two: History and Origin of the Uromi People

This chapter examined the history of Uromi. It examine the political, religion and cultural background of Uromi people. This chapter examined various forms of political relations such as dynastic relation.

Chapter Three: Agricultural Activities in Post- Colonial Uromi land

This chapter examine the agricultural activities in post colonial Uromi land the chapter highlight the mode of agricultural transportation in pre-colonial Uromi land while evaluating the economic impact of agriculture to the development of Uromi in post colonial time.

Chapter Four: Trade and Industry in Post- Colonial Uromi

In this chapter we give attention to the trade and Industry of Post- Colonial Uromi. It also examined the type of trade they are involved in and the impact on the economic growth of post colonial Uromi.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the work.

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CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF THE UROMI PEOPLE

The origin of the Uromi people of Esan land is generally traced to Benin Kingdom. But this is a misconception that inadvertently stereotypes Esan people as Bini. However, as it is true of other peoples of Nigeria, so it is true that the historical origin of Uromi people is shrouded in myth and traditions. To this end, Obaro Ikime argued that, *“If there is any one aspect of Nigerian history about which it is impossible to make definitive statements, it is the issue of origin. We just do not know from which specific centres the various Nigerian peoples came”*¹.

Uromi people, a major subgroup of the Esan ethnic group in Nigeria, have a rich history marked by migration, settlement, and resistance. While literature often attributes their origin to a Benin Kingdom exodus in the 15th century, scholarly accounts suggest a more complex narrative, including pre-existing settlements and multiple sources of origin. The Uromi Kingdom, formed by around 1100-1200 AD, is headed by a King, the Onojie, now known as HRM, the Ojiuromi (Ojie Uromi) Anslem Okojie Aidenojie II². The area known as Uromi was a district in the defunct Ishan Division of the Mid-Western region now Edo State Nigeria. Uromi district as a whole measures 60sq miles and is also the headquarters of Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Its territory is bounded on the North by Afemai-Etsako, on the North West by Irrua, on the North East by Uzea, on the East by

Anegbete and River Niger, and on the South East by Ugboha and Ubiaja, and on the South by Ugbegun and Igueben³. Uromi is situated mainly on a high ridge on the Esan Plateau and the whole district is forested. It lies between latitude 6½ and 7o East of the Equator, and also within longitude 6o and 6½N of the Meridian. The absence of Mountains and Prominent Valleys accounted for lack of rivers in the area. This made the local people before year 2000 A.D, to dig large pits to catch water during the rainy season⁴.

Benin Myth of the Origin of Uromi people

The existing Pro Benin Versions about the traditions of origin of Uromi people points that sometimes in the 15th century when Benin was at its peak, a group of people left the city to form new settlements and these migrant groups eventually moved towards Esan region among whom was Uromi. These migrants were either criminals or disadvantaged with the laws of the Oba. They were also said to have settled in the jungle of Uromi land, struggled against all environmental hazards, survived and then evolved a soothing state system which remained stable under British imperial force conquered Benin Kingdom in 1897 and by extension Uromi in 1901⁵.

Another account from Benin migration myth of origin assents that the first settlers of Uromi migrated into the chiefdom about 1025AD during the reign of Ogiso Orire, grandson of Ogiso Ere. There was said to be an outbreak of smallpox epidemic.

By some process of magical ordeals, the oracle was capable of determining the perpetrators of the pestilence, who were beheaded. The fear of being subjected to the ordeal, whose method of dispensation of justice was unascertainable and unreliable, compelled the migration of people. Some issues in this story tie up with another story in the reign of Oba Ewedo⁶. This story recalls Oakha as one of those who migrated in protest against the magic pot ordeal, with his three sons namely, Uzea, Uromi and Ekurele. They were to find trace of human habitation in the course of their migration, Uromi, the second son of Oakha discontinued his movement due to health challenges and settled in a spot known today as Egbele, which is regarded as the first village in Uromi.

Jacob Egharevba authoritatively claimed that, “*The early people of Uromi were Bini emigrants from the first and second periods of the Benin Empire. Uromi is the name of the first man who migrated from the City of Benin and became the founder and progenitor of Uromi. Their first Enijie were mostly princes of Benin who founded the various towns*”⁷.

Christopher Okojie’s writing in 1994 upheld this view. He argued along Egharevba’s line that all Uromi people originated directly or indirectly from Benin. Hence, N.O. Omozusi in his study identified submersion as one of the problems plaguing the historiography of Edoland. He observed that the history of the peoples is usually written as a macro or block history of the Binis⁸. Although Joseph Osagie and Simon

Ehiabhi partly disagreed with the Benin-centric explanation of Esan origin, they were not assertive on the subject.

Geography of Uromi

The geography of uromi people, over time, remains a significant factor that continues to shape and condition the life of the people and their level of development⁹. It suffices to state here that, this claim is very much true of the Uromi people. Hence, the reconstruction of the tribe and tribal origin of Uromiland hang on understanding the interplay between the Uromi people and their environment, and how this interface conditioned and forged their independent political and socio-economic life. Esanland (*Oto Esan*) for which Uromi is a part occupies a total land mass of 2,814.347 square kilometres out of Edo state's 19,794 square kilometres and Nigeria's 923,763 square kilometres territory¹⁰.

Uromiland is a tropical rainforest economic zone characterised by high temperatures, high humidity, and heavy rainfall in most parts of the year. The constant rainfall in the region accounts for presence of tall tress such as the Iroko trees, Mahogany tree, Ebony tree, *Okpekpe* tree, *Obeche* tree and *Agba* tree, with palm trees and mango trees being the most dominant in the forest. They create a magnificent forest canopy, usually over 100 feet in height. Below the forest canopy are small tress, woody plants, creepers, and the usually difficult to penetrate tangle of lianas. Uromi communities have links to the River Niger. This contributes to sustaining the region's

water cycle. The water cycle made water available for domestic, agricultural and industrial use through rainfall. Kelvin Shillington observed that the seasonal rainfall that is experienced in tropical areas of Africa like Uromiland naturally occurs when the sun is out at mid-day, causing heat, and water to evaporate from the oceans at their highest levels. This, in turn, triggers onshore winds from the Indian and Atlantic Oceans that carry moist air over Uromiland and other tropical areas in Africa, where it later falls as heavy rain.

The abundance of rainfall in Esan accounts for the fertility of its lands, which makes the region suitable for farming. Its green and lush vegetation and bushes make Esanland a safe haven for a bio-diversity of herbivorous and carnivorous wildlife such as monkeys, snakes, rodents, antelopes, deer, grass-cutters, insects, snails and birds, among other predatory and non-predatory animals, to thrive on the forest floor under the forest canopy¹¹. Thus, the forest, wildlife, and the humanoid in Uromi were yoked in a mutually beneficial trinity of relationship. The Uromi forest provides homeland and sustenance for its human and animal inhabitants, while the forest on the other hand depends on the Uromi peoples, who occupy the pinnacle of the food chain, to maintain the delicate balance of life in the forested ecosystem.

However, the slow population growth of Esan as at 2006 does not in any way suggest that the region experienced a decline in birth and an increase in death rate during the period. Rather it is a clear demonstration of the impact of rural-urban drift

and illegal trans-border migrations in search of greener pastures bedevilling Uromi. They are rapidly depopulating the rural area. In modern Nigeria, Esanland is made up of thirty-five (35) tribal clans. They are *Amalu, Egoro, Ewohimi, Emu, Ekpoma, Ewossa, Ebelle, Ewu, Ewatto, Igueben, Irrua, Ido, Ifeku, Illushi, Iruekpen, Iyenlen, Ogwa, Okalo, Opoji, Orowa, Ori, Ohordua, Okhuesan, Onogholo, Udo, Ubiaja, Ugboha, Ujiogba, Ugbegun, Ugun, Uromi, Urohi, Ukhun, Uroh, and Uzea*¹². These consanguineous tribals are federated into Nigeria as five Local Government Areas and one Senatorial District for administrative convenience. They are Esan North, Esan South-East, Esan Central, Esan West, and Igueben LGAs, and the Edo Central Senatorial District. The people of Uromiland are culturally homogenous, and they are tied together by the Esan language. According to R.E. Bradbury, the Esan language belongs to the Edoid language of the Kwa language group of Western Sudanic language just like Benin, Yoruba, Igbira, Igala, Igbo, and Ijaw¹³. But as a cultural area, the Uromi peoples exhibit significant degrees of cultural similarities not only with one another, but also with the Benin people and even with their Niger Delta neighbours. They also exhibit a significant degree of cultural dissimilarities with other Nigerian cultures.

However, over time and space the Benin superiority complex over the Edoid peoples bred the distorted Benin hypothesis of Uromi origin, and that of all Edoid peoples. Benin traditional knowledge systems that underscored the Benin the

superiority complex over other tribes in the region include Benin proverbial sayings such as “*Edo a suwa wan, Edo Odion; wa suwa Edo, Edo Odion*” meaning when a Bini man comes to the house of other tribal members in Edo state, the Bini man is the senior, and when people of other tribes comes to the house of a Bini man, the Bini man is the senior¹⁴. There is also the view that “*Oba yan oto se ewebo*” meaning that the Benin monarchy owns and rules all lands in Edo and beyond. These epistemologies are arguably the anchorage of the Benin hypothesis of Uromi origin.

Linguistic evidence debunks the Benin hypothesis of Esan origin and proved that the Esan people arguably emerged in Edoland before the Bini people. Patrick Darling observed that related languages such as the Esan and Bini languages are relic forms of a single protolanguage modified over time. But the Esan language arguably came into spoken existence before the Bini language. It is estimated that 800 to over 1000 years separated the Bini and Esan language. Furthermore, archaeological studies carried out by Darling on the Esan earthenware (moat) showed that the earliest was constructed sometime in the mid-first millennium A.D., and the age of these moats debunks claims that the Esan tribe emerged from Benin in the 15th century. Therefore, Darling concludes that founders of the Esan tribe came from all around Edoland, not just Benin. Since their earliest tribal existence, Okoduwa asserts that the Esan language had been the generic name given to the varieties of linguistic patterns (dialects) spoken by the people of Esanland¹⁵.

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CHAPTER THREE

AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN POST- COLONIAL UROMI LAND

In post-colonial Uromi, economic activities centered around agriculture, with a shift towards cash crop production influenced by British colonial rule. While traditional agriculture remained vital, the colonial administration introduced new economic structures and policies that impacted land use, labor, and trade, leading to both opportunities and challenges for the local economy¹.

Agriculture has always formed the backbone of economic and social life in Uromi land, located in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The people of Uromi, predominantly of Esan extraction, are known for their agricultural resilience, which has defined their livelihoods for centuries. While pre-colonial agricultural practices revolved around subsistence farming, colonial influence reshaped land tenure, crop selection, and trade systems. The post-colonial period, beginning from Nigeria's independence in 1960, brought both opportunities and challenges that significantly transformed agricultural activities in Uromi. This analysis explores the historical trajectory of agriculture in post-colonial Uromi land, examining its social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. When Nigeria gained independence, Uromi farmers inherited a colonial agricultural structure that had promoted cash crops such as cocoa, rubber, and oil palm for export while relegating food crops. This legacy shaped early post-colonial farming patterns in

Uromi. The introduction of modern tools, limited mechanization, and cash crop dependence affected local food security and shaped the attitudes of farmers toward agriculture as both a livelihood and a business.

Traditional Economic Activities of Uromi People

The economic might of pre-colonial Uromi was based on agricultural production which most of the population participated. Trade was also an important component of the economy and many Uromi people were involved in both internal and external trade with neighbouring communities. In addition, a vast majority of the population were also involved in other economic activities such as hunting, manufacturing and handicraft production. In recent years the economy of Nigeria including Uromi has witnessed a global interpretation of economies². This powerful thrust has been associated with far reaching consequences which is believed will enhance the economic well-being of the people.

(i) Agriculture

Agricultural Production was the primary economic activity that formed both the means of livelihood and a strong factor for the rise of Uromi nation. Indeed, the first revolution that transformed human economy gave man control over his food supply. Man began to grow crops and improved by selection of numerous plants and trees that are edible. And he succeeded in taming and firmly attaching to his person certain species of animal in return for the fodder he was able to offer, the protection

he could afford, and the forethought he could exercise³. This economic revolution has been branded as the “Neolithic revolution”.

The peoples of West Africa, like other peoples in many parts of the world, developed their agriculture independently thousands of years before the advent of Christ. Though, there was a great deal of agricultural borrowings, by 1900, agriculture in West Africa had undergone many stages of evolution and had reached a stage of near-equilibrium. African economic historians have variously written to prove the antiquity and independent growth of agriculture in West Africa⁴ Uromi like most traditional African societies was overwhelmingly an agrarian economy which was made possible because of favourable climatic conditions and rich humus loamy soil, which characterized the area.

The nature of soil and the terrain of Uromi determined the form of agriculture the people practiced and the crops planted. Shifting cultivation, a process which entails the intense cultivation of a piece of land for a given period, after which the land is abandoned for some years to enable the land, regains its fertility was also practiced. This method which is perhaps the oldest form of agricultural practice in West Africa may have been commonly practiced either because of the land tenure system, customs, the settlement pattern adopted by the people as well as the lack of knowledge of highly mechanized farming⁵. Different Varieties of crops produced range from cassava, yam and cocoyam cultivated in large volume, also, secondary

crops like legumes, cereals, bush and tree fruits, groundnuts, banana, palms etc. The cultivation of water yam led to the expansion of farmland..

Agricultural labour requirements in pre-colonial Uromi were met through, household, cooperative labour, age-grade labour etc. African labour force according to Toyin Falola is more varied than it is generally assumed.. Household labour remains the first identifiable source of labour among Uromi people. Men who had large families could easily mobilize “internal labour” for their farm work. As a matter of fact, it is the need to meet agricultural labour requirement that made many men to marry many wives and raise large families⁶. For cooperative labour, men, young men, ladies and women could work in form of a group into a hair to working in rotation for members.. The farm implements used by farmers reflected the traditional nature of Uromi agricultural production. The different sizes of hoes (egue) manufactured by local blacksmiths are used for weeding, planting and making of mounds. Also, machete (opia) manufactured locally was used for bush clearing, cutting tree branches and the felling of trees⁷. Axes (uze) featured as another important tool used by farmers for uprooting roots stumping operations and chopping huge wood into bits. The pre-colonial Uromi farmers had no access to iron file for sharpening machete.

Hunting, a relevant supplement to agriculture remains as part of the subsistence strategy of rural peoples widely practiced in many Uromi villages. Hunters were highly celebrated because of their bravery because they formed the

nucleus of the community informal defense squad. Hunters were specialists and the occupation was restricted to men who allegedly had charms to overcome physical and metaphysical dangers associated with their occupation. In pre-colonial Uromi, hunting expedition was divided into two main groups i.e. Cooperative and individual hunting. For the co-operative, the day and time to meet at a particular place is agreed upon. On the D-Day, hunters met and decided on the hunting ground they will go to. At the end of which, parts of the animal killed are dismembered and shared among those who were less fortunate for that day. Hunters used well-domesticated dogs during hunting exercise to help draw the attention of animals in the bush⁸.

Impact Of Globalization on The Agricultural Transformation of Uromi People

There are several views on how globalization has impacted on the economic lives of Uromi people of Edo State. While for some people globalization has positively impacted on the lives of the people, others argue that it has negatively impacted on the lives of Uromi people. Running through this debate, this part examines both the positive and negative impact of globalization on the economic life of Uromi people.

Responding to colonialism as a force for economic change, the Esan economy shredded part of its traditionalism to become a pseudo modern economy from 1906. Seamlessly, the Esan economy experienced structural changes that marked the start of its drive towards maturity and the age of high mass consumption¹². And this change can best be put into proper historical perspective through theorisation. Murray Hunter

observed that all economies evolved and developed over time and that theories are the veritable frameworks developed in their wake or aftermath to give them both descriptive and predictive explanations. Therefore, Rostow's theory of economic development lends itself well to this study as a veritable instrument for understanding economic growth and development in Esanland. It has both descriptive and predictive analytical implications for Esan economy that transcends 1906.

Stretching the narrative of Rostow's theory further, Hunter argued that economies yet to complete their transition through the five stages of economic growth would remain an underdeveloped economy. He explained it this way,

An underdeveloped economy is one that has broken out of the traditional mode and is beginning to experience some development spurred by government investment in transport, social capital and other infrastructures. Government supported roads, railways, airports, communication services and schools enhance the ability of society to develop and transform itself from a rural based society¹³.

This implies that an economy still in transition is a pseudo modern economy. Although it had left the traditional stage, it still remained an underdeveloped economy until it reached the stage where local production can conveniently satisfy mass consumption needs.

The impact of globalisation on the agricultural sector of Uromi economy is both positive and negative. Positively, globalisation has revolutionized the way agricultural activities are carried out in Uromi Land. Mechanization and post-

harvesting operations is boosting food production in the area. Indeed access to mechanization especially tractors has reduced drudgery and promote sustainable agronomical practices. The impact of globalisation has flourished to our agriculture and its engagements. Without a need to reiterate it, it is obvious that the world has gone beyond the reliance of farmers on cutlass and hoes to do their agricultural activities for them. In order for them to consolidate their gains, our farmers in Nigeria, particularly those in Uromi must look into what globalisation can do for them to maximize their potentials to the fullest¹⁴.

Negatively speaking, globalisation has led to the mass migration of Uromi people to other parts of Edo State and even Nigeria as a whole to help them develop their economies. The past decade has seen rural livelihoods collapsing in Uromi due to mass migration of our men and women. Today, a lot of Uromi sons and daughters migrate to other parts of Nigeria in search of jobs of all sorts. In the same vein, Uromi has witnessed an influx of migrant Labourers to provide labour needs during farming season for a fee. Even the Hausas from the Northern part of Nigeria provides labour needs to Uromi farmers. In all, the government should provide the needed assistance to Uromi people by making them have access to technological inventions that will help their agricultural activities. Agriculture simply remains the propeller of Uromi economic growth¹⁵

Food Crop Production in Post-Colonial Uromi

In the early post-colonial period, Uromi farmers expanded their production of staple crops to meet rising demands from growing populations. Key food crops included yam, cassava, maize, rice, and cocoyam. The favorable rainforest vegetation and fertile soils provided conducive conditions for year-round cultivation. Women played a central role in food crop farming, often managing cassava and maize farms, while men concentrated on yam cultivation. By the 1970s and 1980s, population growth and rural-urban migration increased pressure on agricultural land. Farmers had to expand cultivation into forest reserves, leading to gradual land shortages in some communities¹⁶.

Post-colonial Uromi retained its colonial orientation toward cash crop farming. Cocoa and oil palm remained dominant in the 1960s and 1970s, contributing to household incomes and financing education for many families. Uromi farmers sold their produce in local markets such as Uromi Main Market and also to middlemen who supplied larger urban centers like Benin City and Lagos. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the mid-1980s forced many farmers back into cash crop production, especially oil palm, due to rising prices in export markets. However, fluctuating global demand and poor government support weakened long-term profitability¹⁷.

Agricultural activities in Uromi continued to reflect gendered divisions of labor in the post-colonial era. Men largely dominated land ownership and yam cultivation, which was culturally prestigious, while women managed cassava farms, vegetable production, and food processing. Women also played a vital role in marketing agricultural produce, sustaining household incomes and urban food supplies. The post-colonial period saw a gradual increase in women's participation in cooperative societies, which enabled access to small loans and collective farming initiatives.

In response to these challenges, Uromi farmers adopted innovative strategies. They diversified crop production, integrated livestock rearing (goats, poultry, and cattle), and increasingly engaged in cooperative societies for credit access. Some wealthier farmers invested in small-scale mechanization and irrigation. Others shifted toward mixed farming and agro-processing, producing garri (cassava flour), palm oil, and yam flour for wider markets¹⁸. The spread of educational opportunities also meant that many households combined agriculture with white-collar employment, creating a semi-subsistence and semi-commercial agricultural economy.

Agriculture and Socio-Cultural Identity

Beyond economic significance, agriculture in Uromi carried deep cultural meaning. Festivals such as the annual New Yam Festival reinforced the centrality of

farming in Uromi identity. Agricultural labor also fostered communal cooperation through age-grade systems and family farming units. Even as modernization and migration eroded traditional systems, agriculture continued to anchor Uromi's cultural life. Agricultural activities in post-colonial Uromi land represent a complex interplay of tradition, adaptation, and state policy. From the subsistence and cash crop legacies of colonialism to the challenges of modernization and globalization, Uromi farmers have continually negotiated their livelihoods within changing socio-economic and political landscapes. Despite persistent obstacles land scarcity, infrastructural deficits, and climate variability agriculture remains the backbone of Uromi's economy and cultural identity¹⁹. The resilience of Uromi farmers underscores the need for sustainable agricultural policies, improved rural infrastructure, and enhanced access to credit and technology in order to secure the future of farming in the community

Agricultural transportation is a critical factor in the survival of agrarian communities. For Uromi, located in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, agriculture has been the backbone of economic life, and the means of transporting farm produce from villages to markets has shaped both the local economy and social interactions. In the post-colonial era (from 1960 onward), the transportation of agricultural goods in Uromi underwent significant changes due to population growth, government policies, technological improvements, and socio-economic transformation²⁰.

At the dawn of Nigeria's independence in 1960, most Uromi farmers relied on head portage (carrying goods on the head) and bicycles as the dominant means of moving agricultural products. Women, who were often responsible for marketing cassava, maize, and vegetables, carried produce in head pans or baskets to Uromi Main Market. Men used bicycles to transport yams, palm oil, and cocoa to nearby trading posts. Animal-drawn carts were rare in Uromi compared to Northern Nigeria, due to cultural and ecological factors. Instead, communal labor systems ensured that neighbors often assisted in transporting heavy loads during harvest seasons²¹.

The Rise of Road Transportation (1960s–1980s)

The post-colonial government invested in road construction, especially feeder roads linking villages to Uromi town. These roads allowed the gradual introduction of motorcycles, lorries, and pickup vans as means of agricultural transportation.

Motorcycles: Became popular from the 1970s as they could maneuver poor rural roads, carrying small farm loads.

Lorries and Vans: Traders and cooperative societies pooled resources to hire lorries that transported yams, palm oil, and cocoa to Benin City and even Lagos.

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CHAPTER FOUR

TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN POST- COLONIAL UROMI

The transition from a primarily agrarian economy during colonial times to its current state, is linked to factors like globalization, traditional economic activities, and the impact of colonial policies. The thesis could also explore the challenges and opportunities faced by the Uromi economy in the post-colonial era, including issues like poverty, unemployment, and the need for economic diversification¹

Uromi is one of the principal Esan settlements in Edo State, Nigeria, with a long history of organized kingship, market exchange, and communal institutions. Its location in Esan North-East, with road links to Irrua, Ekpoma, Auchi, and Benin City, positions it within active regional trade corridors. Like many Nigerian communities, Uromi inherited the colonial economic architecture of export agriculture, head-taxation, and indirect rule that reconfigured precolonial production and exchange. Post-independence, national policy and macroeconomic shocks—from the 1970s oil boom to the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the democratization era since 1999 have repeatedly reshaped incentives, prices, and investment patterns that affect local economies such as Uromi²

Despite evident dynamism in trade, education, real estate, and services, Uromi's economy has struggled to transform from a commerce-dominated structure into a diversified, productivity-driven system with strong manufacturing and formal

employment. Infrastructure deficits (power, roads, water), youth unemployment, skill mismatches, and limited access to long-term finance persist³

Colonialism reoriented Uromi land toward export crops (palm produce, rubber, cocoa in nearby belts) and taxation, altering pre-existing subsistence and market systems. Road construction prioritized extraction and administrative control. Education expanded through mission schools, creating a cadre of clerks and teachers who later became civil servants or traders. The colonial land regime left a legacy of customary tenure mediated by families, lineages, and community institutions—supportive of smallholder farming but often ill-suited for collateralization and large-scale mechanization⁴.

Uromi's communal structures age grades, kinship networks, market associations, and the traditional council facilitated collective action in road maintenance, market sanitation, and basic social welfare. Cooperative societies emerged around agriculture and trading, pooling savings and sharing risk. These institutions, while informal, underpinned resilience in periods of macroeconomic turbulence and remain vital for mobilizing local development today

In the first two decades after independence, livelihoods in Uromi were anchored in smallholder agriculture: yam, cassava, maize, plantain, cocoyam, and vegetables for home consumption and sale; palm produce and rubber in the wider

zone; and livestock (goats, poultry) as savings and protein sources. Production relied on family labor, low external inputs, and hand tools. Seasonal calendars structured work, while market days integrated surrounding villages into town markets. Post-harvest losses and transport costs limited marketable surpluses.⁵

Manufacturing

Contrary to the erroneously held belief by some racist European Scholars about African societies as backward, Uromi people through their manufacturing activities have not only dispelled this false claim but have also punctured this balloon of falsehood perpetrated by these disgruntled Europeans about African past. There are many manufacturing activities engaged in by pre-colonial Uromi people ranging from agricultural tools, war implements, varieties of baskets, household furniture as well as residential buildings made by mould blocks. These manufacturing activities developed in line with the available technology⁶. Soap making was yet another economic activity that flourished in pre-colonial Uromi and was dominated by women. This may be due to the fact that soap making requires patience which it was thought women possessed.

Trade was equally important to the economic growth of the people. Trading activities among Uromi people was organized at two levels i.e. local trade as well as long distance trade for the purposes of comparative cost advantage. Local trade was between different villages within Uromi while the long distance trade involved Uromi

people and her neighbours. Local trade was the earliest form of trade that majority of people engaged in pre-colonial Uromi⁷. Local distance trade took care of the exchange and distribution of products between different village groups such as Ewoiyi, Ukoni, Amendokhian, Egbele, Arue, Efandion etc.

Organization of market during this period was largely influenced by the beautiful agricultural and non-agricultural products of the people. As a result, varieties of goods were supplied to market places. The cowry was the standard medium of exchanges in those days in Uromi community. Long distance trade also took place among pre-colonial Uromi people. The fact that colonization provided incentives to greater production beyond the one needed at subsistence level, the surpluses necessitated a long distance trade for exchange⁸. Long distance trade which involved people across borders created the opportunity for different varieties of goods to be exchanged. It was under this circumstance that Uromi people traded with their neighbours such as Ugboha, Irrua, Ubiaja, Ewohimi, Ekpoma, Ozigono, Ugbegun, Igueben etc.. Farm products, such as yams, groundnut, and livestock were sold. Other trade items included goats, dogs, chicken and pigs.

Markets and Exchange

The growth of the Uromi Main Market and satellite markets enabled specialization: wholesalers, retailers, transporters, food vendors, and artisans. Women played leading roles in petty trade and food distribution, stabilizing household

incomes. Price signals from Benin City and Auchu filtered into Uromi through traders and transport unions. Primary and secondary schools expanded, feeding a pipeline of youths into teacher colleges, nursing schools, and later universities in Benin, Ekpoma, and beyond. Health dispensaries improved basic care, reducing disease burdens and enhancing labor productivity. Public sector employment, though limited locally, created salaried households whose remittances supported relatives engaged in farming and trade. With the return to civil rule in 1999, local government allocations and constituency projects modestly improved roads, schools, and health centers. Community-driven development often spearheaded by hometown associations and diaspora unions delivered boreholes, classroom blocks, and scholarships. Though uneven, these investments enhanced the enabling environment for small business.⁹

Private schools, vocational centers, and higher enrollment in regional universities expanded the stock of secondary and tertiary graduates from Uromi. The labor market absorbed many into teaching, health care, banking/finance, retail management, and ICT services in larger cities, while a share returned to start enterprises in Uromi pharmacies, clinics, microfinance institutions, boutiques, eateries, and tech-adjacent services (cyber cafés, phone repairs). Improvements in road connectivity and the rise of motorcycle taxis (Okada) and later tricycles (Keke) reduced last-mile costs, widened labor catchment areas, and enlarged market radii. Cold chains remained thin, but transport costs for perishables fell relative to earlier

decades, increasing the supply of fresh produce and fostering the restaurant/hospitality micro-economy¹⁰

Banking economy

Banking and globalization are becoming inseparable. Several banks in Uromi ranging from First Bank, Zenith Bank, Fidelity Bank, Union Bank, etc are driving the economic growth and transformation of Uromi with technology which is the backbone of globalization. Virtually all bankers in Uromi interviewed in the course of this research emphasized the need for technology in business, digital offering, agent banking, wholesale and transaction banking etc. Uromi sons and daughters can now conduct financial services via mobile wallets, payment apps, online lending and agent banking such as point of sales (POS) scattered all over the place.. In other words, Uromi economy has been “digitalized” in the age of globalization especially in the Banking economic sector. Added to the above, is the proliferation of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) that have made banking easy in Uromi.

However, cash-less banking has faced several criticism in Uromi because of poor quality of service, double debits, excess cashiers to loss of funds to fraudsters, with e-payment users having sad stories to tell. For this reason, many bank customers in Uromi don't take e-payment channels like Automated Tell Machines (ATM), point of sale (POS), internet banking, among others seriously. Despite these e-payment challenges, Uromi people now enjoy revamped banking system¹¹.

The advancement in technology has opened up Uromi business to global economy. For instance, the internet provides platform for all forms of businesses online. Marketing online is faster, cost effective, requires less staff and engaging. The benefits are enormous. Nowadays, Uromi businessman are exploiting the various advantages that come with globalization to move forward their businesses. Put differently, access to internet has been a major contributing factor in the expansion of businesses in Uromi town. Retail giants such as Amazon and Walmart are technological disruptions that have turned online shopping into a thing of joy¹². Be that as it may, that is. despite these benefits that globalization presents, an internet shutdown is a big disruption that can prevent smooth conduct of businesses online.

Entertainment and tourism economy

In terms of entertainment, Uromi musicians for instance are now able to purchase modern musical gadgets to relieve Uromi people the stress of daily existence, creating unlimited employment for DJs, drinking lounge owners, strip club entertainers. In today's Uromi Modern hotels are scattered all over the place such as Citadel hotel along New Agbor road, Standard hotel along Oyomon road, Tonero hotel behind Uromi main market. All these hotels are globalization enabled because the equipments used in the building of the hotels and the gadgets used are all tied to the phenomenon of globalization¹³. Caterers, decorators, facemake-up specialists have boosted their enterprises through the instrument of globalization.

With the advent of globalization, Uromi sons and daughters are now able to travel abroad with the availability of air travel which was non-existent in the pre-colonial period. Today, we can see “Uromians” not only in different parts of Europe, Asia, Africa but also in the Americas. Monies sent home by those sons and daughters have helped in no small measure in boosting the local economy in areas such as Housing, Automobiles and Business Enterprises etc. However, the migration opportunities that comes with globalization is also afflicted with some negative trends. For instance, the career aspirations of most Uromi youths today is to become a “yahoo-yahoo” boy that can suddenly emerge from penury into instant wealth of a magnitude that will dazzle the imagination of even the most adventurous entrepreneur.

Globalisation has raised a generation of Uromi youths that can be described as scammers, email hackers and money launderers. These boys have built mind boggling mansions with the power of money while residing in Malaysia, Senegal, Kenya, etc. They achieve this economic status through social media deceit, digital extortion, hacking of accounts¹⁴. They inflict financial ruin to their “clients.” They prefer stolen money to hard work.

Uromi’s Contemporary Economy

Uromi today reflects a commerce- and services-oriented town with strong agricultural hinterlands: - Agriculture & Agro-processing: Cassava (garri, fufu), palm oil milling, rubber tapping in nearby zones, horticulture, and poultry. Processing is

dominated by small mills; quality and branding vary. - Trade & Retail: General merchandise, food staples, building materials, textiles, electronics. Market days spill into weekly cycles, with wholesalers connected to Benin, Onitsha, Lagos, and northern produce belts. - Construction & Real Estate: Residential building and small commercial properties financed by diaspora remittances and savings from trade; growth in rental markets near schools and busy corridors. - Finance & Microfinance: Proliferation of microfinance banks, thrift collectors (daily/weekly contributions), POS agents, and mobile money; formal collateral remains a hurdle for SMEs. - Transport & Logistics: Tricycles, buses, vans transporting goods to satellite communities; associations structure fares and reduce disorder but can entrench entry barriers. - Health & Education Services: Private clinics, pharmacies, labs, and schools constitute a local services cluster with stable demand. - ICT & Digital Economy: Broadband and smartphones catalyze e-commerce micro-ventures fashion resale, food delivery coordination, online tutoring, digital marketing, and payments.¹⁵

Diaspora Capital and Social Remittances

Uromi's diaspora spread across Nigerian cities and overseas—channels resources into housing, education, and community projects. “Social remittances” (managerial practices, professional standards, and civic norms) complement financial flows, upgrading service quality and fostering philanthropy. However, diaspora investment concentrates in real estate and consumption, with limited channeling into

scalable production. Women remain central to trade and food distribution; youth predominate in transport, phone/ICT services, and creative industries. Skills gaps (accounting, marketing, quality control) limit enterprise growth. Informal apprenticeship remains a crucial pathway but needs standardization, certification, and links to credit¹⁶.

Customary tenure supports incremental house building but complicates land assembly for industrial uses. Peri-urban sprawl increases infrastructure costs and fragments agricultural land. Formal titling and streamlined consent processes would lower transaction costs and enable mortgage/SME lending. Uromi's dense network of traders and micro-enterprises creates agglomeration benefits information sharing, pooled transport, and rapid diffusion of trends. Entrepreneurial culture, honed over decades of coping with macro shocks, sustains high rates of business entry.

Improved schooling and health outcomes elevate human capital. A youthful demographic profile offers labor supply and consumer demand, provided job creation keeps pace. Roads to Benin/Ekpoma/Auchi; mobile networks; and digital payments (POS, bank apps) reduce transaction costs and expand market reach for retailers and service providers. The diffusion of smartphones accelerates market integration and entrepreneurship.¹⁷

Cooperatives, unions, religious groups, and hometown associations coordinate savings, mediate disputes, and execute community projects. Trust enables credit where formal collateral is absent.

Since independence, Uromi has navigated the macroeconomic tides of Nigeria with entrepreneurial resilience rooted in agriculture, trade, and strong community institutions. The town's economy has diversified into services, real estate, and ICT-enabled micro-businesses, with diaspora capital as a significant force. Yet, binding constraints—power, infrastructure, finance, standards, and land administration continue to suppress productivity and formal job creation. A realistic strategy centers on modernizing agro-processing, building market-oriented clusters powered by reliable energy, professionalizing apprenticeships, easing land and business formalities, and mobilizing diaspora savings into productive assets. With disciplined execution and transparent governance, Uromi can shift from a commerce-heavy but low-productivity equilibrium to a diversified, skills-rich, and export-oriented local economy.¹⁸

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research specifically pin-point how different aspects of traditional Uromi economy has been influenced by globalization. The research undertook an examination of the origins and settlement pattern of Uromi people of Edo State, their traditional economic activities and how the community gradually came to terms with the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization has opened up Uromi economy to world capitalist economy although this is not without its constraints such as fluctuations in exchange rate, internet shut down etc¹. The proliferation of information technologies have brought unlimited opportunities in terms of retail and wholesale trade while at the same time opening the flood gate of crimes such as advance fee fraud, hacking etc. The argument in this research is that the adaptation of Uromi people to globalization has brought with it both positive and negative impact, but with the positive impact far outweighing the negative impact.

The kernel of this research is to establish that apart from the Benin migration myth of origins concerning the Uromi people, there are multidisciplinary sources which have shown that Uromi land was already occupied by Agricultural Communities. We should acknowledge the fact that although people migrated from Benin to Uromi, it should not be seen as the “only” source of their tradition of origin. Put differently, we can also interrogate the origins of Uromi people from a multidisciplinary approach as the historian is not the only qualified individual to

interrogate the origins of a people. In the case of Uromi, it is clear that any tradition of origin that arrogates the creation of Uromi to a single factor of Benin migration is not tenable but preposterous²

The conquest of Uromi and the imposition of colonial rule transformed some cultural practices in Uromi, especially the indigenous marriage institution. The indigenous arbitration system provided justice for the people of Uromi because it depended solely on cultural precedent to adjudicate in disputes. But, the colonial established Native Court system introduced new elements that fundamentally affected the Uromi way of administration of justice. With the introduction of the Native Court and implementation of the Ishan Civil Code in 1923, Uromi marriage practices came under attack³. The court robbed the community of utilising indigenous alternative dispute resolution mechanism customarily rested in heads of the families to mediate on matrimonial crisis and conflicts, while the Code weakened the sacredness of marriage in Uromi through the Native Courts that commercialized the resolution of matrimonial cases.

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Mr. Oiwoh Emmanuel	69	Palace official,	Uromi,	26/06/2025
Mr. Ojiefoh A.P	75	Barrister	Uromi,	20/07/2025
Mr. Omolu John	56	retired Civil Servant	Uromi	19/06/2025
Mr. Okhueleigbe Godfrey	50	Businessman	Uromi	18/06/2025
Mr. Oyinanebho Henry	47	Businessman	Uromi	14/07/2025
Mrs. Felicity Favour,	48	Businesswoman	Uromi	14/07/2025
Mr. Ihueyian Anthony	63	Businessman	Uromi	17/06/2025
Mr. Inetianbor Paul	52	Civil Servant	Uromi	23/06/2025
Mr. Idiahi Matthew	46	Banker	Uromi	15/06/2025

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