

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE COLONIAL ECONOMY OF  
IDOMA DIVISION, 1908 – 1960**

**BY**

**ADAH Rebecca Ellameyi**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,  
FACULTY OF ARTS,  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY,  
ZARIA, NIGERIA**

**NOVEMBER, 2017**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this study titled: **The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy of Idoma Division, 1908-1960** was written by me. It has not been presented in any previous submission for a Higher Degree. To the best of my knowledge, all quotations and sources of information cited in the course of this work were duly acknowledged in the reference.

---

Adah Rebecca Ellameyi

---

Date

## CERTIFICATION

This dissertation titled: **The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy of Idoma Division, 1908-1960**, has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the School of Post Graduate, Studies, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, for the award of Master of Arts (MA) Degree in History.

---

Internal Examiner I  
Dr. Hanatu Alahira

---

Date

---

Internal Examiner II  
Dr. John Ola Agi

---

Date

---

Head of Department  
Prof. Sule Mohammed

---

Date

---

Dean Post Graduate School  
Prof. Sadiq .Z. Abubakar

---

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to God Almighty who has given me the grace and protection during the period of the study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to many people who offered support, advice and assistance to me since the beginning of the study. I must first mention Dr. Hanatu Alahira and Dr. J.O Agi for their incisive criticism read and returned my drafted chapters within a short period of time and gave several suggestions in improving my understanding of history. I am indeed grateful for their inspiring supervision of the study. I say a very BIG thank You. This study would not have been possible without your supervision.

I want to thank Prof. Sule Mohammed, The Head of History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Prof. Enoch Oyedele and all my Lecturers, who in so many ways, have impacted in me the knowledge of History.

My Post- graduate colleagues in the Department of History, Joel Gajere Joseph, Dese Chongo, Baba Yahaya, Nura Isah Zubairu, Regina Ochogwu and Sylvester Adakole you were all supportive during the period of the study.

You are indeed an angel Very. Rev. Fr Raphael Abiola Adabayo, I thank you for the overwhelming support to me during the study.

To my parents Mr Francis Adah and Mrs Rose Adah, I say a big thank you for the support and inspiring words that made this study a success. To all my siblings, Millicent Salako, Patrick Adah, Florence Ogbe, Philomena Adah, Benedict Adah, Daniel Adah, Helen Aba, Grace Ogah, Blessing Adah and Mary Isaac you were all wonderful. I would not have made this study without your supports. My dearest sister Florence, I remember you prayed and fasted that God should give me the vigor to complete the study, thank you.

My in-laws were indeed supportive of my study, Mr Abiodun Salako thank you very much words can not express my gratitude to you, God bless you. Mr Benard Ogah, Mr Benard Ogbe, Mr Matthew Aba, and Mr Isaac Ochaba I say thank you all. My niece Ayomide Ife-Oluwa Salako you are such a super kid. You amaze me a lot, you are also part of my success story.

## ABSTRACT

*The subject matter of the study is the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division during the period 1908-1960. The objective of the study was to examine and assess the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division during the period 1908-1960. Colonialism placed serious burden on women, through the imposition of policies of colonial taxation, forced labour, oppression and exploitation. The impact of the colonial economy appeared to advance men's roles and relegated women to the background, this in turn, affected the roles and status of women of Idoma Division. This was a distinct phase in the historical development of Idoma land from the point of view of the transformation and their subsequent replacement with an alien socio-economic and political order in line with the imperialist convictions of British colonialism. The establishment of administration institutionalized policies that were aimed at perpetuating the political subjugation and economic exploitation of women and the people of Idoma Division. Colonial rule in the area under study incorporated the area into the capitalist order, characterized by forced labour, taxation, monetization of the economy, export crop production, import and export of goods and services. The subsequent creation of Native Authority system in the area from 1908 was a step towards the centralization of political authority and the control of the political aspect of the societies meant a control of the material and human resources of the people. The creation of a centralized system meant the establishment of a conducive atmosphere for the colonialists to exploit the material and human resources of the area this was so because the centralization of power paved way for the easy collection of taxes, which were used to finance colonial projects and for the payment of salaries of the colonial workers and official. The menace of colonialism was deeply felt by the society. The study showed that women were part and parcel of the economic development of our area of study during the period 1908-1960, through their role in and contribution in farming, local industries and trade. The methodology used involved the employment of primary and secondary sources. Therefore, the role of women in the development of our societies should not be neglected for the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division was pivotal to the entire development of Idoma society.*

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.U	Ahmadu Bello University
A.H.C.H.R.D.K	Arewa House Center for Historical Research and Documentation, Kaduna
B.A (Hons)	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
B.C.G.A	British Cotton Growing Association
C.M.S	Church Missionary Society
D.O	District Officer
H.C	High Commissioner
H.E	His Excellency
J.A.H	Journal of African History
J.H.S.N	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
J.M.A	Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa
J.M.A,S	Journal of Modern African Society
J.R.A.S	Journal of African Royal Society
K.I.L	Kashim Ibrahim Library
M.A	Master of Arts
M.B.P.P	Middle Belt People's Party
N.A	Native Authority
N.A.K	National Archives, Kaduna
R.C.M	Roman Catholic Mission
S.N.P	Secretary, Northern Provinces



U.A.C	United African Company
UNIJOS	University of Jos
VOL	Volume
N.C	Native Court (s)
N.P	Native Authority Police
N.P	Northern Province (s)
N.T	Native Authority Treasury

## GLOSSARY OF VERNACULAR TERMS

<b>IDOMA</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>
A'i.....	A designated lineage through a male line to a common Ancestor
Abakpa .....	A Muslim whether Hausa or Non-Hausa
Abije .....	The Head of blacksmith
Adole or Adakole ...	Father, the eldest or head of the family
A'i-Eke .....	Secret societies
Aje.....	Land, earth or another name for clan
Alekwu.....	The ancestral cult, mostly dead people, Spirit
Igeri .....	Town
Efu'Onya.....	Horse war
Igabo.....	Title holder in the community
Igogo, O'cha .....	Benniseed
Obochi .....	Medicine man
O'che o'oja,(or O'chelihi)..	Market chief
O'ch'Ubeke.....	Idoma Chief appointed by the British
Ocheliya.....	Tax collector during colonial rule
Oche.....	Chief or King
Ojira, Ojila .....	General meeting of adult male
Okute.....	Royal staff
Ole .....	Family/Compound
Ofeyi.....	Headsman
Owoicho .....	Supreme God

Ipari ..... Palm fruit  
Dogari..... Native Police

## LIST OF MAPS

Map : I Nigeria Showing Idoma Division	-	-	-	-	-	31
Map :II Route of Idoma Migration, c. 1500	-	-	-	-	-	38
Map : III Idoma Division, 1920	-	-	-	-	-	40

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table: 1 Taxation Idoma Division, 1926 ..... 127

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Title page.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Certification.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vii
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
Glossary of Vernacular terms .....	x
List of maps.....	xi
List of table.....	xii

### CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Scope of the Study.....	5
1.4 Justification for the Study.....	7
1.5 Objective of the Study.....	8
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	9
1.7 Methodology.....	10
1.7.1 Primary Sources.....	11
1.7.2 Oral Interviews .....	12
1.7.3 Archival Research.....	13
1.7.4 Secondary Sources.....	13
1.7.5 Library Research.....	13
1.8 Literature Review.....	14
1.9 Theoretical Framework.....	25
1.10 Limitation of the Research.....	27
1.11 Conclusion.....	28

### CHAPTER TWO: LAND AND PEOPLE OF IDOMA DIVISION

2.1	Introduction.....	29
2.2	Location.....	29
2.3	Soils.....	30
2.4	Ecology.....	32
2.5	Topography.....	33
2.6	Drainage.....	34
2.7	Rainfall.....	35
2.8	The People of Idoma Division.....	36
2.9	Political Organization .....	39
2.10	Social Organization.....	55
2.10.1	Lineage.....	55
2.10.2	The Age Grade.....	55
2.10.3	Marriage.....	57
2.10.4	Slavery.....	58
2.11	Conclusion.....	59

**CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMY OF IDOMALAND**

3.1	Introduction.....	60
3.2	Women and Development.....	61
3.3	Pre-colonial Agriculture.....	62
3.3.1	Home Farms .....	64
3.3.2	Distant Farms.....	65
3.4	The Role of Women in Agriculture .....	68
3.4.1	Cereal.....	69
3.4.2	Tubers .....	69
3.4.3	Vegetable.....	69
3.4.4	Horticulture.....	69
3.5	Local Industries.....	72
3.5.1	Weaving Industries.....	72
3.5.2	Blacksmithing .....	73
3.5.3	Palm Oil Processing .....	76

3.5.4	Pottery .....	77
3.5.5	Weaving (Otache).....	78
3.5.6	Local Beer Production.....	79
3.6	Trade.....	82
3.7	Household Trade and Local Exchange.....	84
3.8	Long Distance Trade.....	86
3.9	Idoma Trade with the Igbo, Igala, Tiv and the Hausa and the role of women.....	89
3.10	Conclusion.....	91

**CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONQUEST AND ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH COLONIAL RULE IN IDOMA DIVISION, 1908-1928**

4.1	Introduction.....	92
4.2	British Invasion and Conquest of Idomaland, 1908-1928 .....	93
4.3	The Consolidation of British Colonial Rule .....	102
4.4	The Creation of Districts in Idoma Division .....	103
4.5	The Native Authority System .....	105
4.6	The Native Police.....	112
4.7	The Native Courts.....	113
4.8	Colonial Infrastructure.....	115
4.9	Conclusion.....	117

**CHAPTER FIVE: BRITISH COLONIAL ECONOMIC POLICIES AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE COLONIAL ECONOMY IN IDOMA DIVISION, 1929-1959**

5.1	Introduction.....	118
5.2	British Colonial Economic Policies in Idoma Division.....	119
5.2.1	Colonial Land Policy .....	119
5.2.2	Colonial Policy on Agriculture.....	121
5.2.3	Colonial Monetary Policy and Taxation.....	123
5.2.4	Colonial Labour Policy.....	138
5.2.4.1	Colonial Forced Labour.....	138
5.2.4.2	Colonial Wage Labour.....	143



5.3	The Impact of British Colonial Policies on Gender Division of Labour.....	144
5.4	The Role of Women in Colonial Economy.....	145
5.4.1	The Role of Women in Agriculture.....	146
5.4.2	Food Crop Production 1.....	146
5.4.3	Food Processing and Preservation.....	149
5.4.3.1	The Processing of Yam into Flour.....	149
5.4.3.2	The Processing of Cassava into Garri.....	149
5.4.3.3	The Processing of Oil Palm into Oil .....	150
5.4.3.4	The Processing of Groundnut, Soyabeans and Benniseed into Oil .....	151
5.5	Cash Crops Production.....	151
5.6	The Role of Women in Local Industries under Colonial Rule.....	165
5.6.1	Pottery.....	165
5.6.2	Weaving.....	167
5.6.3	Palm oil industry.....	168
5.7	The Role of Women in Commerce.....	169
5.7.1	The Establishment of Colonial Trading Centres.....	169
5.8	Migration and its impact on Women .....	171
5.9	Profile of Some Idoma Women Highlighting the Challenges they faced under Colonial Rule.....	173
5.10	Conclusion.....	178
<b>CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY.....</b>		<b>180</b>
	Bibliography .....	192
	Oral Interviews.....	204

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division during the period 1908-1960. The Europeans imposed their rule on Africa for reasons of security and mainly for economic reason of exploitation. Colonialism detached its subjected people from their own history, integrated them into the world capitalist economy, left them with a distorted form of identity with their past and prevented them from understanding their present.<sup>1</sup> Although, several studies have been carried out on colonialism in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, very little was written on the role of women during colonial rule.

It has been propounded by scholars that colonialism, as a system of domination, was exploitative and this was what Marxist historian, such as Walter Rodney,<sup>2</sup> asserted as one of the factors that led to the underdevelopment of Africa. Other scholars have studied colonialism and revealed that the system was predatory and that it was imposed through violence and sustained through violence.<sup>3</sup>

Basically, the area under study focused on the Idoma Division, the colonial state in 1924 coined the name Idoma Division for administrative convenient and for their selfish interest. The Division consisted of 24 Districts, including Igede area and this was a colonial creation that had direct impact on the socio-economic and political development

---

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Heinecke , *Freedom in the Grave; Nigeria and the Political Economy of Africa*, Asekome and Co Publishers, Delta State, Nigeria. 2004. p.2

<sup>2</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle L'Overture, London, p9

<sup>3</sup>Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, critically evaluated the activities of the colonial state and concluded that the system was all about violence and these led to exploitation and oppression in the attempt of the colonial state to expatiate the human and material resources of the colonized.

of the people, in which women were not excluded from the economic development of our society as we shall see in the course of this study.

Idoma Division was located in the southern valley of the Benue River sandwiched between Igala in the west, Tiv in the east and Igbo in the south, characterized by several sub - groups who lived in small independent quasi-chiefdoms. However, before the imposition of British colonial rule in Nigeria at the beginning of the twentieth century, the people lived a communal life. The creation of Idoma Division was of the merger of parts of Okpoga in the Southern Benue province with the Idoma section of Ankpa Division in the Northern Igala.

The study critically examined colonialism and its effects on the women in our period of study. The role of women in the pre-colonial and in the colonial period cannot be overstated because women played a crucial role of being mothers and also as agricultural producers, traders and as industrialists, as household chores and other burden fell on women both in the pre-colonial and in the colonial period. Nevertheless, the topic was informed by the significance of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, 1908-1960.

The study filled a gap in our knowledge and understanding of gender roles in our societies in general and particularly in Idoma society. Previous studies largely neglected to examine the influential roles that women played in the colonial economy of the Division. Only a few numbers of studies have been documented on women and yet women played a significant role in the socio-economic aspect of the people, right from the pre-colonial to colonial period as we shall see in the course of the study.

In an attempt to present a clearer picture of the study, the researcher have examined the statement of the problem, scope and limitation of the study, justification for the study, objective of the study, significance of the study, theoretical frame work of the study, literature review, and the methodology employed in putting the study together.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The role of women in the colonial ecoomy of African societies in general and Idoma Division in particular, drew my attention and as a matter of fact, informed the topic of the study as a problem that needed further research into Idoma history. Between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, the imperial British through the use of force and cunning subjugated the different polities of Nigeria and subsequently amalgamated them into one political fold, christened “Modern Nigeria” precisely from 1914.<sup>4</sup>

The study solved the problem of negligence of the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division 1908-1960, a theme which has been neglected by scholars over the years. The problem of colonialism was that it was exploitative and oppressive.<sup>5</sup> It introduced measures for the production of cash crops and minerals to the neglect of food crops. However, in this inequitable system, women played a very critical and crucial role in both export and food crops production. This study was prompted by the fact that the role played by the women of this Division needed to be brought to lime light. Thus, the study examined the role of women not only within the context of gender division of

---

<sup>4</sup> Yusuf Bala Usman, “*The formation of Nigerian economy and polity*” *Journal for political and economic studies* Vol. II no.1, 1994 p. 1-15.

<sup>5</sup>Alahira Hannatu in her momentous Doctorate degree thesis *The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy: A Case Study of the Berom of Jos Plateau* opined that colonialism is the oppression and exploitation of a dependent people by the ruling class of other nations capitalizing on the differences in economy and technology.

labour in the pre-colonial lineage based economy but the colonial economy which was critical in transforming Idoma society.

To do this effectively, it was necessary to discuss this theme from the background of its pre-colonial antecedents. Scholars like Samir Amin, Paul Baren, Walter Rodney and host of others have written extensively and elaborately on the issue of colonialism and its consequences leading to development and underdevelopment of Africa,<sup>6</sup> and the present situation of Nigeria which is characterized by corruption in the society, economic meltdown, political instability and bad governance. In other words, the study was necessitated by the desire to bring out the aftermath of colonialism in Idoma Division, which has direct or indirect relationship with the present socio-economic problems of Nigeria. The study demonstrated the significance of the role of women to the economic development of Idoma society, by highlighting the role of women in agriculture, trade and local industries.

Furthermore, there were various colonial policies that ascertained colonial domination of the area which had adverse effect on women, these included the re-organization and the creation of Idoma Division, with subsequent imposition of taxation on women through the monetization of the economy, the creation of Native Authority system which imposed sanctions and used women as forced labourers, prostitutes and host of others. These were the various policies that the British colonialists in the area introduced to have a firm control of the socio-economic and political life of the people. This was a complete political transformation and economic integration of Idoma Division proper into the world capitalist system or “sphere of influence” as the case may be. The existing productive forces in Nigeria, including Idoma Division was not destroyed but extended

---

<sup>6</sup>Walter Rodney, *-How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*”, Bogle L’Overture, 1972.

and encapsulated to meet the requirements of the metropolitan capital, in such a way, that retarded the development of the economy of our society.

Why are there still gaps to be filled in gender roles in Idoma society, these problems calls for the need to give attention why were women not sensitized and emancipated; we need to fill the gap in gender roles in the society, we need to sensitize and emancipate the marginalized Nigerian women, Idoma women inclusive, and development planner needs to be conscious of their roles in using the most important and relevant of development strategies in the societies. The study examined the predicaments of women as women were faced with the problems of taxation, they were degraded through forced labour, forced into prostitution and were also heavily laden by home and farm works. The problems encountered in the course of the research writing and analysis of the role of women in the pre-colonial and colonial economic development of Idoma Division were inadequate economic statistical data to analyse the economic role of women in the pre-colonial and colonial period and the impact of colonialism on the economy of Idoma society. Another limitation of the study was the dearth of sufficient data which limited my analysis of the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division.

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

The study examined the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, during the period 1908-1960, which covered the colonial period in Idoma Division as the scope of study. The choice of 1908 as the starting period of the study was due to the fact that, 1908 was the year the British expeditionary troops invaded Idomaland from Onitsha. From 1908 onwards more than 50% of Idoma Division was under colonial rule, while

1960 which was the terminal period of the study was the end of colonial period and Nigeria gained her political independence.

Idoma Division was created in 1924,<sup>7</sup> and the Division was one of the four Divisions in the Benue Province in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. These Divisions were Wukari, Lafia, and the Tiv Divisions. It is presently made up of nine Local Government Areas viz; *Otukpo, Okpokwu, Ohimini Ogbadibo, Agatu, Ado, Oju, Apa and Obi*. The Division formed part of what the colonial government referred to as the “Pagan Area” of Northern Nigeria, and it was regarded as the Middle Belt or Central Nigeria in present time. Idoma Division is about one hundred and forty four kilometres from north to south and about one hundred and thirty two kilometres from east to west. It occupied an area of about four thousand six hundred and eight kilometer square<sup>8</sup>.

The landscape was broken by some occasional residual hills with peaks of about thirty nine thousand centimeter square above sea level. A number of rivers and streams run through the Division some of which converged to form a few rivers in the Division. The most prominent of which are the Umabe, Okpokwu, and Ohimini. In the South, the river flowed into the Cross —River to the East, while those in the North, emptied into the Benue River<sup>9</sup>. A slightly prominent sandy ridge in the south-west formed the watershed between the Benue and the Cross-River drainage system. The Division, like any part of the country has two main seasons namely; rainy and dry seasons. The rainy season begins in April through October, and the dry season sets in from October through March yearly.

---

<sup>7</sup>George Eje Ode, “The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division”, 1908-1950, M.A Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1981, p.3, see also, p.54

For a more detailed geographical description of Idoma Division, see Udo R.K, Geographical Regions of Nigeria (ed) Obaro Ikime, *States and Peoples of Niger-Benue Confluence Area* in “Ground work of the Nigeria History”, Historical Society of Nigeria, Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Plc, 1980, pp144-150

<sup>8</sup> George Ode

<sup>9</sup> George, Ode,

#### **1.4 Justification for the Study**

A number of researches have been done which included works of Erim. O. Erim, George Ode, Robert .G. Armstrong, Okpeh .O. Okpeh, V.G.O'kwu, Abdulkadir. M.S, Williamson Kay, Mike Odey, Yakubu Aboki Ochefu and Alvin Majid, among others. However, none of these above scholars examined the role of women in colonial economy of Idoma Division, therefore, leaving a wide vacuum to be filled by current researcher which was one of the many reasons that informed the present choice of the topic and area of research. The choice of the area of study was due to the fact that researches have been written on colonial history of Idoma generally and none have focused on the role of women in the colonial economy in particular.

Studies on women and their roles have been neglected by scholars in the past and also the roles which women played in the development and transformation of the society have been relegated to the background, in other words, women have not been adequately acknowledged for their contribution to the socio-economic development of Idoma Division, and this was one of the problems that informed the study.

It was imperative to note that, is not possible to understand issues on economic meltdown in the society without first, getting ourselves acquainted with the past. This will help us to understand why the widening economic disparities between gender and development which was deepened by colonialism continued to persist unabatedly. The study bridged the existing gap in innovation and technological know-how which was channelled towards improving only a particular people at the neglect of others. This was because even after colonial rule the women remained relegated to the background, even though



women in other parts of Benue Province began to rise to prominence, for example; Wukari, Lafia and Tiv Provinces.

This study was therefore, informed by the need to provide solutions to basic societal problems created by colonialism, in respect of gender roles and development which in fact, is the work of an historian. With this in mind, we will understand the true nature and character of the African crisis, we need to know where we are, where we are going, how to get there and what we will probably look like when we get there.

The choice of 1908 as the starting period of the study, marked the entry of the expeditionary troops in the Division from the north-east,<sup>10</sup> while 1960 which was the terminal period of the study, was pivotal to the socio-political and economic history of Idoma Division. Little or no pioneering work have been carried out on the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, hence the justification for the study.

### **1.5 Objective of the Study**

The study examined and assessed the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division 1908-1960. It is the objective of the study to analyse the historical background and geography of Idoma Division as well as the the nature of the economy and the role of women in the colonial economy during the period to enable us advance our knowledge promote progress and development in contemporary Nigeria.

---

<sup>10</sup>Erim O. Erim. *“The Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900, Problem of Studying The Origin and Development of Ethnicity”*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1981, Erim O Erim, Ibid, A Pre Colonial History of the Idoma of Central Nigeria, PhD Thesis in History, Dollhouse University, April, 1977, George Eje Ode, The Impact of British Colonialism on the people of Idoma Division, 1908-1950, M.A Thesis, June 1981, Yakubu Aboki Ochefu “Men work Longer, but women work Harder Okpeh O. Okpeh” in *Gender, Power and Politics in Nigeria*, Aboki Publishers, Markurdi 2007, R.G. Armstrong. The Idoma Speaking Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence, Ibadan University Press, V.G. Okwu, Early History of Idomaland and Idomaland Under Colonial Rule.

The objective of the study is also to integrate the Idoma people, and help in the reconstruction of the processes of historical study and analysis of Idoma history. It is also the objective of the study to inculcate on women the knowledge of their roles in the society by integrating women in development. In the area of marginalisation and relegation of women to the background, the study will enlighten and bring to lime light the roles women played in the socio-economic development of the area and the impact it had on the status of women and the people of Idoma Division as a whole.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The history of Idoma is just beginning to take shape and in comparison with the history of other societies in Central Nigerian area, it is very backward indeed and therefore needed to be further studied. As a modest contribution to history, the researcher have decided to write on the role of women in the colonial economic history of Idoma Division, to show the dynamics or changes that have shaped the people of the area during the period and most especially to critically establish the role women played in colonial economy and answer the questions why women's role have not been given attention by previous scholars during the period 1908 to 1960.

However, historians who decided to write on other areas of research in Idoma Division must have done so in their area of interest. Therefore, the study found this dissertation significant because the study of the role of women during the colonial era in the Idoma Division have been largely neglected, shifting focus on areas like socio-economic and political history without mentioning the role of women. Also, it must be emphasized that other colonial studies on agriculture in Nigeria have focused on cocoa with Ibadan people

as the leading producers, groundnut in Kano and rubber in Benin, palm oil in Onitsha and Aba respectively ignoring the production of export crop in Idoma Division and the roles women played in the production process. From this study however, the roles women played in the production and processing activities were brought out.

In fact, there was virtually no systematic study on women in the area under study. Primarily, the study attempted an empirical analysis that will enable historians to re-examine the postulated assumptions that Idomaland did not give women the place in the production process most especially during the colonial era and that colonialism brought development to the men and women. Even though the negative impact of colonialism have been demonstrated on men and the society severally, there was little attempt to study the involvement of women in development processes.

Be that as it may, the study cannot claim to be an exhausted one, partly because this is a pioneering work. Thus, it is hoped that the contribution of this work will be used as a launching pad for subsequent research as the study will be useful to scholars, students and government agencies.

### **1.7 Methodology**

The research involved the study of the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, 1908-1960. With the highlights on colonial domination and changes in the economy through the exploitation of the society which women were not exempted. Therefore, for the authenticity and internal consistency of the study, there was need for the use of primary sources and secondary sources based on oral interviews, archival and library research.

Primary and secondary sources that were used for this study: these were materials information gotten from oral interviews, archival and library works. However, the methodologies employed for this study was to collect information and oral data in the field through oral interviews conducted in Idoma Division and its environs which were cross- checked with archival sources collected from our National archives in Kaduna as well as from private universities libraries such as Kashim Ibrahim Library Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Northern History Reseach Scheme Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Benue State University Makurdi, and University of Jos.

### **1.7.1 Primary Sources**

The primary sources the study employed were the use of oral sources inform of oral traditions and archival materials. Primary sources in oral and written forms were used, and these were oral interviews and from reliable persons who were eye witnesses to past colonial event in Idoma Division. These involved both individuals and groups mostly elders (men and women) of Idoma Division and neighbouring villages of Ochekwu, Agatu, Ochobo, Oyangedde, Oglewu, and Otukpo. Archival sources were also consulted these were British administrative records, which were found in the Nigerian National Archives Kaduna and Enugu respectively. Another area where these were available is in the Nigerian Meseums. Those of the military were found in the same location and other important records about this study were found in the Local Government Office, Otukpo Benue State.

Since these were raw data mostly colonial reports, assessment, correspondence, biographies, ancient history and missionary records, they were justified in their

usefulness in this study. Those of the Catholic were found in the Bishop's House Makurdi while, that of the Methodist were found in Methodist churches in Otukpo and Makurdi. This record dealt with the pre-colonial and colonial records, the importance of primary sources to this study cannot be over stated because it provided first of most vital information which were basic and essential to the study of the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division in our period of study, these were obtained directly from the sources as they were found in their original form but there was still need for its corroboration for verification and internal consistency of the evidence before they were used for the study and for the historical reconstruction of Idoma people and their economic history.

### **1.7.2 Oral Interviews**

Interviews of this nature were conducted with people who were eye witnesses to past colonial event and who were advanced in age to show that they were born and were around during our period of study. These oral interviews entailed an exclusive fieldwork. However, the significance of primary source materials have proved handy for the reconstruction of Idoma History, as referenced to the past colonial activities. Other primary sources that were used included intelligence reports, mostly written by colonial officers. Examples of these reports are annual reports, quarterly reports, general notes, letters and ethnographical notes which were found at the National Archives Kaduna. This study was carried out with the use of oral information going by the age, gender, occupation location of interview and contributions of persons interviewed, an interpreter was used to translate some Idoma dialects to the researcher to get the precise information

needed for the study. This cut across age, gender, and occupation to have the opinion of various age set, involving both men and women thus, making the interview bias-free.

### **1.7.3 Archival Research**

This was carried out in the National Archives Kaduna and Arewa House Center for Historical Documentation Kaduna, where British colonial records on Idoma Division were found in large numbers.

### **1.7.4 Secondary Sources**

These were books, theses, journals, manuscripts and newspapers which were used for the study. An extensive and intensive reading was done on secondary source materials, which consisted of both published and unpublished secondary source materials, especially, secondary materials that were related and central to Idoma Division as the subject matter. Most of the secondary materials have been reviewed in this work.

### **1.7.5 Library Research**

The use of some important libraries like Kashim Ibrahim Library (KIL), Northern History Research Scheme (NHRS) Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Department of history, Benue State University provided useful information for the study and the use of digital material were invaluable to this study. Thus, secondary sources materials are very significant to this study, as all the sources (primary and secondary) were properly cross-checked and corroborated for the reconstruction of colonial economic history and the role of women in Idoma Division, 1908-1960.

## 1.8 Literature Review

In an attempt to reconstruct the role of women under colonial rule, and its impact, varieties of sources were consulted. Some of these literatures were of great importance to the work going by the vital information they provided on the subject matter. One important literature to this study was the monumental doctoral work of Professor Erim O. Erim which was published in 1981 titled: “Idoma Nationality 1600-1900: Problem in studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity”<sup>11</sup> This work, distinguished by its scope and contents has, by and large, sketched out the frontiers of the region’s historical landscape as it existed today. In this ‘path-breaking’ work, Erim examined the legends of origin of Idoma society and choose one of the most prestigious and long unsettled controversial areas — the defunct Kwararafa kingdom and its effects on the Idoma and other polities.

This book also made a significant point that the legends of origin and migrations, which have gotten such a prominence in African historical consciousness and studies, are themselves historical and their actual origin and development have to be critically analysed, if they were to be useful in scientific historical reconstruction. His position on the historical source material of whatever provenance marked a major departure from the established views which regarded these legends and migrations either as pure fabrications or as the foundations of people and states.

However, Erim’s argument showed that these legends and migrations have to be placed within the context of world view of the cultural and intellectual community that produced them, and the explanation for their nature and form had to be sought there, as well as in

---

<sup>11</sup> Erim O. Erim, *Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900: Problems of Studying the Origin and Development of Ethnicity*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1981.

the broader cosmological and geo-political context, so as to locate these phenomena in the concrete historical reality of human activity in particular societies, belonging to particular epoch and specific locations.

The book therefore, is a great asset to any researcher working on Idoma society because of the light it threw on the epochs and patterns of movement and the basis of Idoma ethnicity in the pre-colonial period. However, the book is more or less a political or socio-historical text and thus, does not have much relevance to the economic history of Idoma such as this present study.

The book did not elucidate the roles of women in the colonial era, limiting the study to the migration of the Idoma people to their present homeland. This was one of the reasons the present researcher found this study significant because previous scholars carried out their research in the areas of interests. Therefore, this study filled the gap in Idoma economic history by focusing on the role of women in the economy of Idoma Division during the colonial period.

Amali's, works, titled, "The Leader",<sup>12</sup> contributed useful insight to the study. It is a theatrical narrative and did not give detailed information on women's role hence, the choice of the research topic for this study. Professor Amali' is not an historian but a theatre artist therefore; he focused on a different subject matter. Constituting the first generation of indigenous Idoma historians, was V.G, O'kwu, the first professional historian of Idoma land, whose three basic works,<sup>13</sup> covered the early history of Idoma, which is titled "the nature and character of the Establishment of colonial

---

<sup>12</sup> Amali S.O, "*The Leader*" Ibadan University Press, 1972,p9

<sup>13</sup> V.G O'Kwu, "Idoma Land under Colonial Rule 1900-1950. A paper presented at the Niger-Benue Seminar 1974. Early History of Idoma, A.B.U., Zaria and the Establishment of Colonial Administration in Idomaland 1921-1930 in Savannah Vol. No.1,1970



administration” which was an excerpt from his unpublished paper “Idoma land under colonial rule 1900-1950” and “early history of Idomaland.”<sup>14</sup> In V.G O’kwu’s three papers he postulated and argued that the ‘impact of the colonial administration on the Idoma economy was indirect and incidental since the Idoma produced no commodities of interest to the British.<sup>15</sup> This postulation came under attack in recent times because it does not corroborate with the contemporary empirical data. In spite of this, O’kwu should be commended for his work having written extensively on the history of Idoma, which provided the researcher with general information on the Idoma.

J I Eliagwu’s article, titled, “self regulation in a traditional society: Integration and order in pre-colonial Otukpo of Nigeria”<sup>16</sup> tried to elucidate the genealogical and chronology of the various lineages in Otukpo from their origin to the present settlement. According to him, absence of integrative mechanism and definable political authority, usually associated with polities in central Nigeria, are not necessarily the only criteria of group cohesiveness and unity. He examined the socio-political structure of the Idoma which is relevant to this study and this work added to the existing knowledge in the economic sphere of the work in focusing on the role of women in the colonial economy through the contribution of women in economic development of Idoma Division.

Adakole Ochai’s work titled “Historical evolution of Otukpo”<sup>17</sup> analyzed the historical evolution of Otukpo to assess the impact of the colonial administration on Idomaland.

The work examined the history of traditional Otukpo society giving an elaborate

---

<sup>14</sup> V.G O’kwu, “The Establishment of Colonial Administration in Idomaland 1921-1930. p.42

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> J I Eliagwu, “Self Regulation in a Traditional Society: Integration and order in Pre-colonial Otukpo of Nigeria, Monthly Newsletter vol 5, No 1, 1975

<sup>17</sup> Adakole Ochai, Historical evolution of Otukpo, examined and assessed the impact of the colonial administration on Idomaland

genealogy of the lineages in otukpo society, but the present study focused on the areas of economic involvement of women in the development of the economy of Idoma Division during colonial period. This study went beyond the historical evolution of Otukpo to the understanding of the socio-political and economic organization of the Idoma people as a whole focusing on the role of women in particular even though Ode's work analysed the relationship between colonial rule and socio-economic and political developments that followed it, his work was gender biased and gender blind because the analysis on women was omitted.

The published work by his Royal Highness late Ochi'Idoma Dr Abraham Ajene Okpabi was also a very important pioneering study on the evolution of the chieftancy Oche institution in Idoma land<sup>18</sup>. It contained much interesting information about the method of selection and appointment of traditional rulers and title-holders in Idomaland. The author, being a paramount chief of Idoma land for thirty-five years before his demise in 1995 discussed the rules of succession and taboos surrounding the entire institution. The work was on a political subject matter, it is significant to this study because it examined how Idoma chiefs and title holders were selected but, he did not focus on women in his discussion therefore, there is a need to examine the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma society especially in agricultural production both in food and cash crop production.

Another work is by George Ode titled, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division 1908-1950."<sup>19</sup> The work is useful to the study, because it examined the impact of colonial economy extensively, discussing the impact of colonial rule on the

---

<sup>18</sup> Okpabi A A "*The Method of Selection and Appointment of Traditional Rulers and Title Holders in Idomaland*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1980

<sup>19</sup> George Ode,

economy and the people inhabiting the Idoma Division<sup>20</sup>. It also discussed colonial policies of forced labour and taxation which informed colonial policies of the economy. Ode also discussed the issues of the delimitation of boundaries which created problems among the people. Ode only superficially touched on women related issues in Idoma Division. He identified two women groups; older and young women but he did not focus on their role in the economy of Idoma society. In spite of this, many of the issues discussed in Ode's work were quite useful to the study. He did not also focus on economic roles in the colonial period but confined his work to general roles than their economic roles. Therefore, the analysis was more on the socio-political history of Idoma Division. This study filled the gap by focusing on the economic roles of women in agricultural production, the involvement of women in local industries and in trading activities.

Another relevant work that contributed to the history of Idoma Division and the present study is by R.G. Armstrong<sup>21</sup> titled "Idoma Speaking peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence". Armstrong's work is a colonial anthropological study, some of which were filled with unresolved questions. For example, Armstrong classified the Idoma into the "Idoma Proper" and "non-Idoma"<sup>22</sup> this tends to remind one of the "Hausa Bakwai" and the Banza Bakwai" phenomenon. The basis of Armstrong's classification was not stated, and as such, it was difficult to identify who the so-called "pure Idoma" and the "impure Idoma were. Being a colonial anthropological work, its weaknesses were quite obvious. However, these anthropological studies were carried out by specialists and are useful in

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Armstrong R.G, *"The Idoma Speaking People in "Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence"*, Daryll Forde University Press, Ibadan pp 99-152, 1976

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

terms of the origins and traditions of the people as well as the socio-political and economic organization of the people. Such information was useful to the study.

Mike .O. Odey's work on, "The Development of Cash Crop Economy in Nigeria's Lower-Benue Province"<sup>23</sup>, 1910-1960 studied an aspect of Nigerian economic history giving particular attention to the origin and development of commodity production under British colonial Government<sup>24</sup>. The central argument of the book is on the role of the British colonial government in the development of commodity production and the responses of the people as well as the far-reaching implications on the socio-economic life of the people and the environment under colonial rule during the period 1910-1960.

The book examined issues in economic history which are now assuming a leading position in historical studies. This is an important text in economic history and is germane to the overall interrogation of the variables that constituted the foundations of the political economy of Central Nigeria which researchers and students in that field can take advantage of. The nature of the argument of the book is on how under the capitalist system during the British colonial rule in the Benue Province, commodity production was geared towards export trade and other necessities of life. This was remarkable progress in the exchange system from barter and neighbourhood trade into another level that was not restricted to household production and consumption alone, which depicted the social relations of production by which the process of generating surplus value was underpinned. This was also a good example of the incorporation of the Benue region into the world capitalist system.

---

<sup>23</sup> Mike Odey, *The Development of Cash Crop Economy*

<sup>24</sup> Mike Odey, *The Development Of Cash Crop Economy In Nigeria's Lower- Benue Province*, 1910-1960, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, p xiii

In a nutshell the book was useful to this study because it discussed export crop production in our area of study. Export crops were exploited in colonial Idoma society by the colonialists. The present research analysed the exploitative nature of colonial rule and how men and women alike were forced against their wish in to labour production through forced labour output.

The details of the work was examined and discussed in the preceding chapters under food and export crops production<sup>25</sup>. The work was central to the present study because of his examination of colonial labour policies which was inherent in food and cash crops production.

The gap that was filled in this study was that other gender roles in the colonial economy of Idoma Division were examined alongside the roles examined in Mike's work. It was the responsibility of men to till the land while women played the roles of clearing the land, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing and as traders of all agricultural produce and in local industries. Women were generally found to be producers of locally made goods. For example, pomade, locust bean, pottery, palm oil processing, mat and basket weaving.

Hanatu Alahira's PhD thesis titled, *The Role of Berom Women in the Colonial Economy of Jos Plateau* also contributed to this study. This was because of the discussion on the perspectives and conception of gender<sup>26</sup>. The main thrust of her work centred on examination of the role of women in the colonial economy of Berom of Northern Nigeria.

One aspect of this study was that it stressed on how the impact of colonialism cut across

---

<sup>25</sup> Mike, O. Odey, *The Development of Cash Crop Economy in Nigeria's Lower Benue Province, 1910-1960*, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi.

<sup>26</sup> Hanatu Alahira, *The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy: A case study of the Berom of Jos Plateau*, Ph.D Dissertation, Department of History ABU Zaria, p30

ethnic groups, class and gender.<sup>27</sup> Gender roles differ according to culture, environment, the nature of socio-economic and political development in time and space. This was conducted in a different socio-economic context dealing with tin mining. However, with the integration of the household economies into the capitalist economy from the first decade of the 20th century, the colonial structure widened the gap between classes and stressed gender inequality<sup>28</sup>.

The colonial Agricultural and labour policies had negative impact on both women and men; this was so because it resulted in the neglect of subsistence agriculture and food crop production, which was invariably left in the hands of peasant producers who were mainly women. This of course, increased the burden of labour production and work load of women whereby they had to play dual roles of producers of food and export crops for the labour force of the mines and also provided for their household at the expense of other household productive activities like craft production and pottery. However, it was these colonial structures that laid the foundation for and placed much emphasis on the gender division of labour in our societies. The present study examine the role of women in purely an agrarian setting in which colonial mining activities was absent. However, much work was carried out by women all the same.

Another book is by Yakubu Aboki Ochefu, titled, “Men work Harder, but women work longer” in Gender, Power and Politics in Nigeria<sup>29</sup>. The work was an analysis of gender relations, Labour and Production in Idoma society. (Ed), Okpeh .O. Okpeh and Dung Pam Sha. Ochefu’s work examined how gender relations informed and influenced productive activity of the society. This was considered as having a bearing and also

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid p,35

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

central to this study, due to the prominence accorded to gender roles in the Pre-colonial and Colonial period. The work was anchored on the crisis of development and predicament of the masses in contemporary African society in general and in the Nigerian society in particular<sup>30</sup>. Ochefu combined the economic roles of the Tiv and the Idoma societies in his work; therefore, the present study embarked on a study of the Idoma Division focusing on the women of Idoma Division because of the different cultures, norms and belief of the societies, their socio-political and economic history should be studied separately.

Yakubu Ochefu's Doctoral Thesis, which is now, revised for publication, under the title, "The Economic Foundations of Idoma Society":1860-1960<sup>31</sup>, is the most recent work on the Idoma economy and society. On the objective basis of the strength of his work, we can safely say that, Ochefu Pioneered a new direction in the study of Idoma history. In the first place, out of many competing themes, he settled down for a study of the economic foundations and the political economic configuration that simultaneously developed into it. This he did, so as to examine the concrete destiny of the various social differentiations (classes) of the area ranging from the bourgeois elements to the pauperized peasants.

His political economy methodological approach showed vividly how the region was emasculated within the two divesting contexts of imperialism, that is, the national and international capitalist hegemonies. Through all these, he has, by and large, thrust open the very forces dictating the political economy of the region. To us, this is the ultimate, the climax of scholarship which is committed to influencing the rhythm of ongoing class

---

<sup>30</sup> Okpe O. Okpe, "*Gender, Power, and Politics in Nigeria*", Aboki Publishers, 2007, pp 57-67

<sup>31</sup> Yakubu Aboki Ochefu, "*The Economic Foundation of Idoma Society*" 1860-1960, M A Thesis , University of Jos, 1994

struggles in the society as opposed to armchair scholarship of detachment. His work, therefore, marked a distinct departure from the previous historiography so far reviewed. His political economy approach, tried to show a better and clearer picture of Idoma history than the other eclectic studies in Idoma history.

This study also benefited immensely from M.A. Thesis of Okpeh O. Okpeh, 's work<sup>32</sup> whose masterpiece unravelled one of the endemic group politics, an aspect of the so-called National Question within the context in which, the Idoma were viewed as a minority within a minority. Infact, Okpeh is one who compulsively showed that through multi-disciplinary approach, Idoma history can be objectively studied, the seemingly dense diversity of its dialects, notwithstanding. His anatomy of the domination of the Idoma in the present Benue state by her Tiv neighbours can only be imagined than expressed.

Having reviewed some works that were relevant to this study, it must however, be pointed out that this was not an exhaustive list of scholars engaged in the research into Idoma history. In fact, there were wide range of undergraduate projects and postgraduate dissertations which have been documented in the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Benue State University, Makurdi, University of Calabar, University of Jos, University of Nsukka and other Nigerian Universities whose titles have not yet been properly compiled, and in any case would be too many, we cannot list and review them all. However, these projects suffer from their narrow scope, limited research, and lack of understanding of concepts.

---

<sup>32</sup> Okpe O. Okpe: The Idoma and Minority Group Politics in Northern Nigeria 1944-1960: A Case Study in an Aspect of the National Question: M.A Thesis University of Jos, 1994.



However, the issues, dimension and scope of previous studies covered the pre-colonial history of Idoma, the Idoma speaking peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence, the Idoma Nationality: problem of studying the origin and development of ethnicity, the impact of British colonialism on the people of Idoma Division, colonial rule in Idoma Division, colonial rule in Nigeria: Otukpo District in Idoma Division, Idoma under colonial rule, early history of Idoma, the establishment of colonial administration in Idomaland, the development of cash crop economy in Nigeria's Lower-Benue Province, gender, power and politics in Nigeria. The works listed above must be credited for laying the foundations for further research on the Idoma people. Therefore, this study covered the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, issues, dimension and scope of this present study covered the impact of colonial rule through its aggressive measures on the people of Idoma Division through various forms of colonial exploitation such as taxation, forced labour, colonial land and agricultural policies, the contribution of women to the economic development of Idoma Division as a whole, and the burden placed on women through the roles they played as were examined in the proceeding chapters, the colonial policies of labour as elaborated in the study was immensely felt by these women through colonial forced labour and taxation.

This research is a new area of interest, which examined the contributions and roles played by women in the colonial economic development of Idoma Division as examined and analyzed in this study. All these literatures contributed some historical information relevant to the study, socially, economically and politically. The major gap left in other studies is that the authors did not focus on women which gap this study examined and filled.

## **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

The underlying principle that provided a researcher with a suitable tool which enables him or her to evaluate and analyse the data that has been collected is known as theoretical frame work. Thus, the research was based on the theory of political economy using gender perspectives. Gender and development perspectives focused on socio-economic growth of a society with the inclusion of women as an important factor in its discourse. Women as an integral part of development have been exploited in much inequalities and this have been anchored on women's inability to be beneficiaries of development plans (GAD) showed the roles of both men and women, which in actual terms is complementary in the pre-colonial period. Societies are made up of both men and women and there existed social interactions between men and women alike in all societies. Men and women have played complimentary roles in the economic development of the society; hence, men and women should be given equal recognition and credit. Development should therefore, be planned for both men and women.

Development as a dual process expands new economic and social activities such as in agricultural production with the involvement of both men and women and in the relationships between peoples of diverse cultural background. This however, transformed traditional activities for labour to be released for new socio-economic activities. It is therefore, within this context, that women's role in subsistence cash crop production, food production, food processing, home craft, market, trade and domestic work are been understood.

Gender and Development perspective is one of the perspectives that provided us with a clearer picture in understanding the roles women played in the society, most especially

during the colonial era. This provided us with the tools to evaluate the contribution of women to the development of the society through the production of export and food crop in the agricultural sector, industrial and other socio-economic aspects of the society. (GAD) Gender and Development perspective was developed to focus on the role women played in the development of the socio-economic and political activities of the society under a given period of time.

In this study we adapted the political economy and underdevelopment theory. As a materialist conception of history, political economy theory gave primacy to material conditions in the explanation of socio-economic and political life.<sup>33</sup> This theory gave a direct bearing and understanding of the material well being of a people over time, most especially in production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

The theory, political economy paradigm also focused on conceptualizing human society in terms of origin, evolution, dynamics, transformation, and development which involves complex processes of change in institutions and societies for the betterment of the citizens.<sup>34</sup> Political economy also emphasized structural change perpetrated by imperial powers.

Political economy theory provided us with the tools to effectively evaluate and analyse the data collected, because this was one of the theories that could effectively study and critically furnish us with an understanding of the colonial history of Africa in general and Nigerian in particular. This theory does not ignore the nature of political power and the

---

<sup>33</sup> Ediba Isaac Ogbogo "Colonial Rule in Nigeria" A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960. January 2009. M.A. Thesis Department of History, Faculty of Arts, A.B.U. 2009 p.7

<sup>34</sup> Effiong, D, *Imperialism and Dependency*. Fourth Dimension Publisher, Enugu. Nigeria 1980. P,20

basis of the state, the influence of state policies on the society and the dialectical role of gender relations are not neglected in the analysis.

### **1.10 Limitation of the Research**

Some of the limitations that affected the study included lack of adequate materials relating to our area of study and incomplete records especially archival materials. This was a study researching into a new area of interest therefore; there was paucity of both primary and secondary source materials on the topic of study. There was also the challenge of limited period within which the study was expected to be carried out. The study is on colonial period, and most of the informants that would have been a major source of help in giving relevant information were dead, and this was a major limitation to this study. Nevertheless, we embarked on a vigorous research to counter the aforementioned problems.

The researcher encountered the problem of moving from one village or the other trying to source for information on the subject matter. Nigerian village communities, as in other parts of Africa, are suspicious of outsiders and as such even though the researcher hails from Idoma from that part of the country, the people were still suspicious, making it difficult to give information freely without trying to trace my origin and other related issues. There was also limited data on women, devaluation and variation in Idoma dialects.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

From the foregoing chapter, it was revealed that a study of colonialism was significant in the process of understanding the historical antecedence in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. However, in an attempt to examine the study, the present chapter used the political economy and Gender and Development (GAD) theories as the major tools in the interpretation of empirical data. The political economy theory according to Marx and Engels, studied the material aspect of a society, bringing out the nature of the evolution, production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in a given society.

On the other hand, GAD perspectives attempted a synthesis on the role women played in the society, and basically interested in the aspect of their role in the development process of the society. In this chapter also, the researcher discussed the methodology, statement of the research problems, objectives of the study and significance of the study among others, these were all imperative to the study. It was based on this premise that an attempt was made to examine the land and people of Idoma Division, to give background knowledge of the area under study in order to comprehend the dynamism or changes that took place through the advent of colonialism in the area under study in the subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LAND AND PEOPLE OF IDOMA DIVISION

#### 2.1 Introduction

The history of Idomaland is a long history of human movements, incursion, displacements, inter-mixtures and the impact of these to a great extent affected the socio-economic and political structure of the people of Idoma Division over time. However, without an understanding of the geographical teaching and environment, such an impact cannot be well ascertained, because the physical environment had a direct impact on the socio-economic and political development of the area under study. According to Heylyn, a people that do not interact with its environment is like a dead carcass having neither life nor motion at all, however, that land should not be looked upon only as a fixed location but, its influence appears in a hundred ways, such as for food production .<sup>35</sup> Therefore, to have a better understanding of the land and people of Idoma speaking dialect, it is imperative to examine the location of Idomaland, soils, ecology, topography, vegetation, climate, temperature, rainfall, drainage and the way these have impacted on human activities in the area.

#### 2.2 Location

What is today known as Idomaland lies within the Cross River Basin and the Benue Valley. The territory extended from the Benue River to the Northern fringes of modern Igboland to the south.<sup>36</sup> The area of study lies between latitude 60<sup>0</sup> 30<sup>0</sup> North and

---

<sup>35</sup> Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, Paris, France, 1969

<sup>36</sup> Nats Agbo, *Idoma History and Politics*, Department of History, University of Jos, Nigeria, 1991, p.6

Longitude 80<sup>0</sup> East and covered an area of approximately 5,955 kilometres square.<sup>37</sup> Idoma Division which was a British colonial administrative unit was created in 1924 and comprises of 24 districts.<sup>38</sup> The Division was located in the southern valley of the Benue River. It occupied a continuous stretch of territory extending from the southern banks of the Benue River to the borders of Abakaliki and Nsukka Divisions in the south. On the west, the Division was bounded by Igala Division, on the east by the Tiv Division and on the south-east by Ogoja Division. The location and rivers in Idoma Division is significant to the inhabitants as the natural resources provided the people with varieties of human and natural resources as means of livelihood. Irrigation system was made possible through the rivers especially during the dry season, this serves as a source of fishing to the people in the Division, and it was used for drinking, bathing and building of houses. By 1880, Benue River led to the establishment of trading stations.

### **2.3 Soils**

Soil is life and life is soil in Idoma society. This was because of the importance attached to land as the factor of production. Soil types in Idoma Division can be classified into the ferruginous and parasols.<sup>39</sup> The ferruginous is the most important soil type because it covered the Southern portion and Western parts of the Division, and supports the growth of some important cash and food crops such as cotton, groundnut, rice, beans and maize among others. The soil is formed from the 'basement complex' and old sedimentary rocks. They are reflected by the underlying parent materials as well as the climate which

---

<sup>37</sup> Ochefu. Y, "The Economic Foundation of Idoma Society, 1860-1960" M.A Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos, Nigeria, 1994, p.1

<sup>38</sup> Ode. G.E, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division, 1908-1950", p.1

<sup>39</sup> Okpainya Odobi Okokolo, "The myths and realities of Idoma Dispersal", Unpublished B.A Project, University of Jos, 1999. p.66





is characterized by a marked seasonality of rain fall and wood land to grassland type vegetation, slight spatial differences in depth, texture, moisture and colour of the soil type in the area is largely a function of the relief of the area<sup>40</sup>. The parasols covered a larger part of the northern parts of Idoma Division, following more or less the “belt of the sedimentary rocks” which are deeply weathered red and yellowish brown soils and are mainly loamy and sandy in nature, which made it easier to be cultivated with, yams, cocoyam, cassava, sweet potatoes, maize and guinea corn. Idomaland is well watered by rain and the streams that are abound such as ukpo, water is used for brewing local drinks, milling rice, processing palm oil, except for the western parts of Idoma such as in Otukpa, Owukpa and Orokam where water was scarce<sup>41</sup>, they had to walk miles away from homes and villages to get water from the streams. Irrigation was practiced by only few of the farmers by watering vegetable farms of immediate consumption in the family, the soil as the medium or growth for plants was an important factor of production thus, it was given attention towards conserving and renewing its fertility, in order to get good harvest from the land.

## **2.4 Ecology**

The ecology of Idoma Division was partially homogenous. Most of the area was covered with orchard bush. It was only at the lower end of the crescent that a different pattern, with characteristic typical of the rainforest, was encountered. Towards the northern end of the Division it was covered with Savannah type of vegetation, though, orchard bush

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid . P. 67

<sup>41</sup> 41 See, NAK, MARKPROF, Acc No. ARJASS/06, Intelligence Report on Otukpa District, by Capt GDC Money, 1926

gradually gave way to open grassland due to climatic changes.<sup>42</sup> Generally, soil type in the Division was characterized by the ecological zone which was formed from the basement complex and old sedimentary rocks. Thus, the soils consisted of 18-24 alluvial material overlying sands and sandstone especially in the villages of Akpaeggede and Ojantele, located in the southern end of Otukpo. The colluvial material has a tendency to become clay loamy texture; yellowish mottles were often present. The sand was partly alluvial and generally, they have been derived from the underlying cretaceous sand stones, and supported the most important food crops<sup>43</sup> such as yams, maize and beans.

## **2.5 Topography**

The main topographical feature of Idoma Division was a plain land stretching from Akpaeggede village in the south to Okpamaju in the north. There was handful of savannah vegetation which was derived from the incessant burning of grasses and cutting of forest trees over the years. The small plateau on which were located the main town and the administrative center of the Division was also an important topographical feature of the area of study<sup>44</sup>.

Generally speaking, the area was gently undulating and characteristically linear in shape, consisting of a linear stretch of sedimentary basin of the Benue-River and bounded roughly by its basement complex. The relics of tropical rain forest still survived mainly along the streams courses and towards the southern part of the Division. There were taller and thicker wood along the stream courses, while there are open grassland in areas away from the streams. In the more opened savannah lands, locust bean and shea butter trees

---

<sup>42</sup> Pullan, R.A, "*The concept of the Middle Belt Nigeria*" An attempt at a climate definition, Journal of the Geographical Association of Nigeria, Vol.5 no.1. 1961.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

thrives. These economic trees are useful in various ways such as in local pomade production, hair cream, sitting stool, pistol, mortar, and from locust bean, maggi for preparing foods are made. Idoma Division was rich in game until comparatively recent times when deforestation set in as a result of the building of the Colonial Station, offices, houses and other services that came with colonial rule. Elephants, Buffalos, Leopards, Lions, Antelopes and various types of Monkeys, besides a host of smaller animals roamed the area.

These animals provided abundant game for animal hunts when the bush was burnt down during the dry season. The elephants particularly attracted the “*Abakpa*” elephant hunters to the Division, before the onset of colonial rule. The streams also provided variety of fishes. Fish serves as protein and fats from fishes can be used as cooking oil. Other economic trees in the Division included iroko, mahogany, silk, cotton and rubber trees. The rubber trees attracted the Abakpa rubber collectors to the territory even before the British established their administration in the area. The trees served the British in the construction of the eastern railway through Otukpo, in building bridges and houses.<sup>45</sup> Some economic importance of these trees in the development of the economy were; for cooking, local body cream from shea butter tree, (pomade), hair cream, margarine/butter, farming utensils such as cutlass, hoe, sickle and sitting stool.

## **2.6 Drainage**

The general relief in Idoma Division is that of an upland plain dissected by a number of small streams draining into Ewulo streams northern land to Benue River. Some of the

---

<sup>45</sup> K.O Ologe, *The Environmental Background to Man, History and Culture in the Niger-Benue Confluence Region*, P. 17, See also Ediba Isaac, *Colonialism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Otukpo*, ABU,2009

Ewulo Streams are the Okokolo, Ukpulo Streams, Mabe and Okpokwu, Ohimini is also inclusive in this context since this is also part of a river in the Division. Some small streams converge to form the Ewulo stream that flows into the Benue River. Low ridges form divides between the fairly good numbers of perennial streams that runs through the Division, allowing a slightly prominent sandy ridge in the northern parts to form the watershed of the drainage systems between Idomaland and the Benue River.<sup>46</sup>

## **2.7 Rainfall**

The main annual rainfall in Idoma Division was greater than 60 inches due to it's southernly position in the Benue Region. With the rainfall averaging about one thousand five hundred millimeters in a year, the natural vegetation was once tropical or rain forest, although it degenerated into "derived savannah" or orchard bush. The types of crops adapted to the nature and pattern of rainfall in Idoma Division included; yams, cocoyam, maize, guinea corn, rice and water yam.

The onset and cessation of the rains depended on the movement of the inter-tropical front, but these usually occur in April and October/November respectively.<sup>47</sup> The distribution of the rainfall throughout the wet season varied from year to year, but there was generally a gradual built up until a maximum was reached in September. Where there was a double-peak regime, July, August and September was usually the months of highest rainfall. The dry season lasts from October to March. During this season, there were occasional light rainfalls from November to December and from January to March, there were irregular frontal rains. The main geographical features that attracted the Idoma

---

<sup>46</sup> F. Onah, *The Geography and Relief of Southern Benue*, Fourth Dimension Press Enugu, 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Ode G.E, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Divison, 1908-1950, Unpublished M.A Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria, 1981, p.4

into the regions were as follows, the topography of the area where economic trees were found in abundance and the soil which were productive for tuber crops such as yams, cocoyams, cassava, beans and sweet potatoes.

## 2.8 The People of Idoma Division

The ancestors of the Idoma are said to have lived in the Upper Benue and Lower Gongola Valley.<sup>48</sup> According to Erim, they lived in small autonomous groups in the valley of the Gongola and the Upper Benue valley before 1500 AD.<sup>49</sup> Erim maintained that as a result of social and political conditions such as chieftaincy titles, leadership roles and inter-group relations in the region people migrated in waves at different times from the Gongola and Upper Benue region to the Middle Benue.<sup>50</sup> For a better understanding of the historical development of the Idoma, it is important to put into consideration the process of migration, which played a significant role in the formation of the Idoma people. The Idoma speaking peoples were those who speak a mutually intelligible dialect of Idoma language. All the clans in Idoma Division claimed origin from “Apa”,<sup>51</sup>. “Apa” was the name of the settlement and also the name given to an assemblage of diverse people who lived within the ancestral homeland. Another name for “Apa” was Okolafa.<sup>52</sup> It was from “*Apa*” that they (Idoma) migrated to their present home land. “*Apa*” was a region in Kwararafa, where the heartland of the confederacy laid to the north around the Gongola valley. “*Apa*” was used synonymous with “kwararafa”, that is region of “*Apa*” According to Erim; Apa ceased to be the capital of the confederation and a new capital

---

<sup>48</sup> George Ode, *The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division*,. p. 11

<sup>49</sup> Erim, O. Erim, *Idoma Nationality*, p. 47

<sup>50</sup> George Ode, *The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division*, p. 11

<sup>51</sup> Erim O. Erim, *Idoma Nationality: 1600 — 1900; Problem in studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity*. Fourth Dimension Books Ltd, 1981, p.14

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14

called Kororofa was established.<sup>53</sup> Kwararafa was situated between longitude 10 and 11 and latitude 8 and 9 of Idoma Division, the remains of the city and the fossils could still be found. Though, the wall was almost level to the ground.<sup>54</sup> By the nineteenth century the capital again was moved to Wukari (*Or Okali*) on the south- western edge of the *Apa* region.

Furthermore, it should be noted that before 1900AD, the area under consideration was not known and called by a single name. Each part of the region was called after the people who occupied it. The Idoma were formerly known as *Okpoto*<sup>55</sup> (Pre-1900AD). By 1900 -1924, the name Idoma superseded *Akpoto* which fell into disuse. It was argued by scholars that the early history of Idoma indicated that, Idoma was not a distinct ethnic group; it was a contemporary phenomenon, what this implied was that the heterogeneous groups who were called Idoma did not have a common ethnic identity before the advent of the British colonialists into the area<sup>56</sup> and that *Akpoto* were groups who settled to the north-east of Idah, in Igala Division.<sup>57</sup> The Idoma reacted to this nomenclature by rejecting the term *Akpoto* as derogatory and insulting, it was claimed by Idoma that some Igala of the *Ankpa* region around Ogugu area were the *Akpoto* and referred to themselves and their language and their land as Idoma.

Robert Armstrong argued that the term "*Akpoto*" may well be of geographical application describing kingdom whose geographical expanse covered part of the

---

<sup>53</sup> Ediba Isaac Ogbogo, "Colonial Rule in Nigeria; A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960". M.A. Thesis, Department of History, ABU, Zaria, 2009, p.29

<sup>54</sup>Erim, *Idoma Nationality*,p.15

<sup>55</sup> Ediba, "Colonial Rule in Nigeria; A Case Study of Otukpo", p.27

<sup>56</sup> Erim, *Idoma Nationality*,

<sup>57</sup> Ibid p.53



Occupants of the Lower Benue Valley Region made up of *Idoma*, *Igala* and *Igbira* people.<sup>58</sup> The *Akpoto* connection to the Idoma people was strongly rejected by the people, claiming it was associated with the Igala in present day Idah. However, “*Apa*” was seen as the ancestral home of the Idoma.<sup>59</sup>

Colonel Trenchard, in his expeditions in 1900, visited parts of Idoma Division and labelled the people as “*Akpoto*”<sup>60</sup>. Indeed, there is an area in modern Ankpa Division in Igala land called “*Akpoto*” it may be that this was either the heartland of *Akpoto* country or a settlement that was later extended to other non Akpoto groups which today speak dialects of the same language, this may have been the situation before 1600AD, as more and more non *Akpoto* groups arrived, the *Akpoto* as a “Unique” ethnic group may have been driven out of their land.<sup>61</sup> However, the general claim of the Idoma was that their ancestral homeland was “*Apa*” and not “*Akpoto*” as it was branded by colonel Trenchard and European traders in the area.

## **2.9 Political Organization**

There were political identity and development of Idoma society before the advent of British colonial administration in Idomaland from the political organization of the patrilineage which was known as *Ipooma*, *Adoole* the household heads and *Ai-Onyakwuoche* who were the elders and see to the welfare of the people.

---

<sup>58</sup> Ediba Isaac, “Colonialism in Nigeria; “A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division”, p29

<sup>59</sup> Robert G. Armstrong, *The Idoma Speaking people: In Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, International African Institute, London, 1955, p ,96

<sup>60</sup> Erim, *Idoma Nationality*, p.14

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, P.4





The role of women in the pre-colonial political structure of Idoma society was alienated. In other words, women were not involved neither were they recognized in part of the decision making process and were relegated to the background. However, Idoma had political institutions that were product of the historical experience of the people, which meant that, right from the era of migration to their present land, they have developed a sense of political identity and political development. Although not structured strictly in terms of the Baron de Montesquieu model of the separation of power between the organs of government, Idoma social and political system possessed the lawgiving tradition that provided the broad framework within which various units of societies performed different functions in the context of the development process of the people.

The basic building block of Idoma social and political organization was the patrilineage, *Ipooma* who traced their origin to a common ancestor. The importance of the *Ipoopu* in the traditional Idoma socio-political milieu was emphasized by other writers. According to Ochefu:

Besides being the basis of individual's identity and forum for political and social rights, the patrilineage is primarily responsible for land holding and land allocation and defence of members<sup>62</sup>.

He also added that the charter for the association of the component patrilineal and settlements vary from shared ancestry or kinship to voluntary associations between lineages of diverse origins. However, distinctions existed between aborigines, immigrants and strangers. In the context of political organization, the family or *Ole* may be seen as the smallest unit in traditional Idoma society. Usually under the leadership of the family

---

<sup>62</sup> Ochefu Y.A, *The Economic Foundations of Idoma Society*, Aboki Publishers, Nigeria Ltd, 2005,p.19

head, *Adoole*, this autonomous structure settled disputes amongst its members. Transcending the household however, power and authority diffused within the community creating many foci of authority and influence, all of which were essentially related and integrated.

It was observed that the highest organ of government and ultimate authority in traditional Idoma political system was the *Ojila* or *Ojira*<sup>63</sup>. This was the mass meeting of all adult males, excluding women and the supreme congress of the community. It should be noted that though it was true that all adult males are members of the *Ojila*, it was also a fact that in practice, the elders, *Ai-Onyakwuoche Ole* and other persons of influence monitored the conduct of the *Ojila*. Young men although represented were only observers and could not speak except through their elders.

However, a consensual democratic principle governed the decision making process of the *Ojila*, making it extremely difficult for an individual or faction to control the assembly. For example, while the titled land spokesmen, *Ai-Igabo* and the 'owners' of the ancestral cult and the earth cult, *Ai-Obialekwu*, formed a gerontocratic class in the *Ojila*, they were never able in the slightest sense to convert that organ into a select council of elders. Thus, ostensibly dominated by the elders as regarded deliberations and formation of consensus, the *Ojila* also integrated the views and interests of the youths.

Furthermore, instances existed where young men also had their say in the *Ojila*, for as Elaigwu aptly contended: 'Quite often young men of acclaimed bravery, intelligence and reputation were allowed to speak<sup>64</sup>, this appeared to be the intrusion of achievement into

---

<sup>63</sup> Okpeh. O. Okpeh, Jr., 'Government in Stateless Societies: A case Study of Pre-colonial Idoma of Central Nigeria', in A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu, (eds.), *Studies in Central Nigeria History*, Lagos: CSS Books, 2002, pp. 145-166.

<sup>64</sup>See Elaigwu J.I, 'Self-Regulation in a Traditional Society...'; p.18.

the rigid division of labour on the astrictive basis of age. This may be added to the fact that while the concept of gerontocracy, which was a fundamental feature of the political organization of the people, entailed those elders had a monopoly of deliberative and policy-making prerogative, the actual execution of such policies depended entirely on the youth who were the backbones of the village constabulary<sup>65</sup>. Women's involvement in this aspect of the social structure was to provide entertainment in form of local drinks at the general meeting.

From its inception therefore, the *Ojila* was essentially a democratic institution of government. To solve crucial problems affecting the community, the elders of the various lineages within the community engaged in discussions, debates and negotiations in the *Ojila* at the end of which decisions were arrived at by consensus. Magid's observation in this regard was instructive. In his view:

The procedure tended to register prevailing opinion, to crystallize the sense of meeting, to avoid conflict and to find a compromise<sup>66</sup>

In a society that attached enormous significance to public opinion, the *Ojila* was no doubt a very powerful organ in pre-colonial Idoma society and like the Tiv *Ijir*,<sup>67</sup> all the rest organs of government revolved round it. The origin of the *Ojila* in the political organization of the Idoma was sufficiently explained and available evidence underscored the fact that it has a history that goes as far back as the Kwararafa phase<sup>68</sup> of the people's

---

<sup>65</sup> Mike Odey, p65

<sup>66</sup> A. Magid cited in Ibid, p.20.

<sup>67</sup> Makar T, 'A History of Political Change among the Tiv in the 19th and 20th Centuries', Ph.D. Thesis, ABU, Zaria, 1975

<sup>68</sup> See for example, E. O. Erim, *The Idoma Nationality...*; pp. 954-5. Also see N. O. Agbo, *Idoma Politics and History...*, pp. 19-45

history. In this connection, the *Ojila* was viewed as the earliest form of political organization among the people of Idoma Division.

It is possible that the concept of *Ojila* may have evolved from the basic assumption among several African groups who do not have a centrally accepted 'tribal' authority that government was changeless and custom sovereign and that it was the elders, who largely because of their age and timeless wisdom, were the 'true' and natural custodians of these institutions. This explained why the *Ojila* in the Idoma socio-political setting, retained both legislative and judicial functions while at the same time it controlled the executive organ of government. Evidence abounds to show that the *Ojila* in the past made laws for the community. It also adjudicated in outstanding disputes between one social group or lineage and another. It exercised appellate jurisdiction placing the weight of public opinion behind the injured party. The *Ojila* also selected the *Oche* (King), the *Ai-Igabo* (graded title holders) and the *Ai-Uta* or *Ai-Oga* constabulary and arbitrated in misunderstanding arising from intra and inter-group relations.

The point therefore is that the *Ojila* was the most powerful political institution in Idomaland on the eve of colonial conquest and occupation. As the supreme council of the people, it controlled judicial and administrative authorities. As the nucleus of traditional administration, all the other organs of government derived their authority from it. Besides, during the period of extreme political fragmentation that ensue most parts of Idomaland, the *Ojila* was only one form of political organization among the Idoma people, another one was the *Oche* or King. Like the *Ojila*, the office of the *Oche* demonstrated every sign of being ancient in Idoma and despite years of cultural weathering, still persisted.

The origins of this organ in the political configurations of the Idoma was not clear, for it does seem curious that in a clearly segmented and what appeared to be an egalitarian society such as the Idoma, there should emerge an institutionalized leadership. In a critical appraisal of the antiquity of this institution in Idoma society, Erim theorized that it reflected a natural phenomenon, which was built up over the years upon family, lineage and kindred ties, and emerged from the general structure of the society. He also argued that the office existed prior to Idoma migrations from *Apa* and that it only concretized during their many years of migrations and final settlement<sup>69</sup>. Ochefu agreed with Erim's position but added that the 'natural phenomenon' Erim referred to should be anchored on specific social and economic developments that took place in Idoma society over successive epochs. As he succinctly puts it:

...the various socio-political structures and institutions that were created were in actual terms, a manifestation of efforts aimed at controlling, mobilizing, appropriating and distributing surpluses, and the coordination and resolution of conflicts that may arise there from. The origins of the Ocheship in the political organization of the Idoma represented the concentration of authority in the hands of a group of titled elders in their efforts at managing the growing complexities of their societies.<sup>70</sup>

Among the Idoma, the *Oche* institution further showed that, the office was rooted in religion, for the *Oche* was both the king and the religious head of the community. From all indications, women were not appointed to the office of the Oche, that is to say that, only males were appointed as Oche, because, it involved some taboos such as invoking

---

<sup>69</sup> For details see Erim.O. Erim, *The Idoma Nationality...*, pp. 97-98. Also see R. G. Armstrong 'The Development of Kingdoms in Negro Africa...', pp. 27-28; and by the same author, 'The Dynamics and Symbolism of Idoma Kingship.' In B. K. Swarts and R. A. Dumett (eds.), *West African Cultural Dynamics*, The Hague: Mouton Press, 1979, pp.396-397.

<sup>70</sup> For details see Y. A. Ochefu Y.A, *The Economic Foundations of Idoma Society*, pp, 21-23.

the spirits of the dead and watching the entertainment from masquerades. From the oral evidence available, it was cleared that the *Oche* in traditional Idoma got his power largely from the religious aspects of the society. Indications were that the *Oche* was the chief-priest and presided over virtually all the cults in the community, the most significant of which were the *Aje* (earth) and *Alekwu-Afia* (ancestral) cults.<sup>71</sup> Women's political participation in the pre-colonial Idoma society was alienated because the leadership of the *O'che* involves some ritual activities like the invocation of the *Alekwu* spirit of the dead.

These spiritual responsibilities of the *Oche* made the people regarded him as their chief mediator between the kindred groups and their ancestors, the focus of all traditions that bound them together. The *Oche* in the past was not a clan head nor was he usually a lineage head, although chosen by the lineage, he stood between them and his responsibility was general to the land. It was in this regard that the *Oche* was seen as the highest officer within the land and the senior lineage elders within the *Ojila* were (and still are) collectively higher than him, yet they were not so individually<sup>72</sup>.

It should be added however, that among the Idoma, the *Oche* was more a leader than a ruler. He was at the most only *primus inter pares* among the senior lineage elders in the land. His influence and authority derived from his spiritual responsibilities, his generosity and hospitality, in addition to his reputation for wisdom and courage and particularly the size of his personal following, for as the Idoma put it: '*Ewa Oche-a*' for example, large following makes the king.

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Armstrong R.G, *The Dynamics and Symbolism of Idoma Kingship* p.397

In order to prevent the possible emergence of an autocratic *Oche*, the Idoma worked out an elaborate formula to limit the authority of this organ of government. At least three basic constitutional devices regulated the authority of the *Oche* in pre-colonial Idoma society: (1) the supreme authority of the *Ojila*; (ii) the rituals of the office; and (iii) the principles of rotation and seniority which governs succession to the office. Largely because of their explanatory significance, we would attempt to look at each of these elaborately.

The power of the *Oche* was circumscribed by public opinion articulated in the central *Ojila*. At the land level, as earlier noted, the senior lineage elders took precedence over the *Oche* who had to abide by the decision of the *Ojila* in all important matters of war, religious festivals, inter-territorial relations, general hunts and judicial matters. On formal occasions, such as, the annual sacrifice at the land shrine, the senior lineage elders, with women minimally involved reminded the *Oche* that he is *Oche* because it is they who have made him so. While the *Oche* could appoint the *Ai-Igabo* (titled elders), his choice had to be ratified by the *Ojila*, this was done with a minimal involvement of women. This way, the *Oche* was made accountable to the *Ojila* and through that, the people<sup>73</sup>. Limitations were also placed on the power of the *Oche* by ritually reinforcing the majesty of his office. The new *Oche* was subjected to elaborate installation rites, which included symbolic death and burial ceremonies. Afterwards, he became subjected to a plethora of stringent taboos. The installation rites exposed him to grave sanctions of the departed ancestors should he plot or commit evil against a child of the land.

In Igumale for example, the installation prayers of the *Och'Apa* included: 'Land of my father hear what I say. If I do wrong to my people, may I die, if I rule them fairly, may I

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid



live'. Among the people of *Ugboju*, *Otukpo* and *Ochobo*, the *Oche's* installation rites included symbolic death and burial ceremonies. Afterwards, the *Oche* among the Akpa and *Otukpo* was forbidden from travelling outside his kingdom. In some places like *Onyangede* and *Otukpo*, the *Oche* have the freedom to travel out of his domain, but was prohibited from entering the secular world of the market place. Also the *Oche* was not expected to see a corpse; nor must he see the Western rainbows, *Onaji* or *Owo'hogwa*, which symbolized the death of a great (native) doctor, (*Obochi*). The point here is that, already considered 'dead', it was abominable for the *Oche* to see a corpse<sup>74</sup>.

This to a large extent justified why women were not involved in the political aspects of the Idoma society because women could not stand the strigents of regulations and taboos involved in the selection of the O'che. The principle of lineage rotation checked the concentration of political power and authority in a single unit. In a community of say seven patrilineages, each would according to the principle of rotation, take its turn in nominating a candidate from among its group to the office of the *Oche* in that community. Women being politically alienated, were also excluded from the office of the O'che because, women were not given the rights to be household heads in the pre-colonial period. This would ensure that each lineage participated in supplying the *Oche* in an ascending order of the community. It would seem therefore, that the principle of lineage rotation evolved out of the people's concept of constitutionalism, which entailed participation by all lineage groups. Elaigwu, compared this institutionalized method with the rules guiding succession to the British monarchy.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> See Okpeh. O. Okpeh, Jr., 'Government in Stateless Societies'..., p.102

<sup>75</sup> For details see Elaigwu J.I 'Self-regulation in a Traditional Society...', p.22.

On the other hand, the principle of seniority ensured that while succession rotated among the constituent lineages, by proceeding from the most senior to the most junior (that is, the lineage whose founding ancestor was the last to emerge), political power and authority would never become the monopoly of one lineage. Above all, the seniority principle ensured that the *Oche* would be too old and in some cases infirm to participate actively in political affairs or even threaten dictatorship. This invariably, meant the delegation of authority to the young men who in fact were the crux of gerontocracy in traditional Idoma society. This would then enable the *Oche* to focus more attentively on his duty as the priest-chief and president of the cults<sup>76</sup>.

In addition to all of these, the *Oche*'s status was marked by certain traditional regalia, the most important of which were the bracelet of coral beads, *Oka* which was strapped round his wrist; the royal stool, *Akpa*, the staff, *Okwute* and the red cap, *Ofula*. Similarly, he was surrounded by elaborate etiquette and is addressed by a traditional title that varies from community to community and can be translated as simply 'Your Majesty'. As a further mark of status, the *Oche* also received tributes which consisted of trophies of fierce game animals and other symbols of war and brave exploits: elephant tusks, lion and leopard skins, python skins, feathers of the Senegal coucal, Uloko, and captured slaves.<sup>77</sup>

In another context, this development was associated with a phase in the early history of the people, namely the period of their migrations from *Apa*, which took some Idoma groups to Igalaland. Agbo, for example, noted that *Idah* was the ancestral home of some Idoma groups, so that the people still believed that *Idah* was the abode of their ancestors,

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> See Armstrong R.G, 'The Dynamics and Symbolism of Idoma Kingship...' p.337.

hence their installation was sanctified at *Idah*. Citing A. P. Anyebe who saw these royal trips as merely spiritual and not political<sup>78</sup>, Agbo however, concluded that it would be incorrect to completely rule out any form of Igala political influence over pre-colonial Idomaland. Whatever was the real situation, it should be noted that this political relationship was facilitated by certain variables that were then operating in both societies. As we shall eventually see in subsequent chapters, the scope and dynamics of this relationship was such that involved a two-way flow of influences from both the Igala and the Idoma ethnic groups.<sup>79</sup>

A critical look at the evolution of the *Oche* institution among the Idoma also indicated that between the mid seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries, the office declined to a point that made the institution waned in most parts of the land. In fact, on the eve of colonial rule in Idomaland, this office was for all intents and purposes in abeyance. Analysts have propounded a number of theories about this development. The first of these theories situated the ebbing of the *Oche* institution within the context of the political violence that occasioned Idoma migrations and settlement.

According to this view, the disintegration of their *Apa* homeland on the one hand, and their subsequent displacement by the Tiv on the other, left the Idoma in utter political disarray. Consequently, by the time they arrived at their present habitation, their status was no better than political refugees. In this situation, matters pertaining chieftaincy titles were quickly overtaken by the exigencies of their new homeland.

The second theory suggested the corroding influence of the rather protracted process of the Idoma migrations from the legendary *Apa*. According to O'kwu, largely because of

---

<sup>78</sup> See Agbo N.O, *Idoma Politics and History...*, pp.54-55.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

the long period of time spent on their migrations and due to the fact that the Idoma were dispersed over an extensive territory stretching from the upper and middle Cross- River Basin, the Lower Benue and the Niger-Benue Confluence Region, the Idoma must have lost the tradition of central chieftaincy which they claimed they had during the *Apa* period of their history<sup>80</sup>

The third and for now the last theory suggested that while wars and migrations were critical to the emergence of leadership and centralized authority among the Idoma, the reduction of these as from the mid 1850s encouraged centri-fugal tendencies in the Idoma political structure. In consequence, not only did political unity behind an *Oche* disappear, but in fact:

Jealousy between lineages, always present became relatively more significant and while the ideology of chieftaincy remained strong, the lineage could never agree on the succession. In this situation chieftaincy as an operating social reality evaporated<sup>81</sup>.

The decline of the *Oche* institution in Idoma society during this period was however modified by a number of other important political institutions that ensured the much-needed balance between the units in the society. The *Ojila* (already examined), the *Och'olihi* or *Oche'Oja* (market chief or master) the *Ai-Uta* or *Ai-Oga* constabulary and the *Ai-Ekwu* (secret Societies) were the most significant. In the pre-colonial Idoma political set up, the most important recipient of delegated authority were the *Oche'Olihi* (saluted *Ukpooju*) and his assistants, the *Ai-Uta* constabulary. Appointed by the *Ojila*, the *Och' Olihi* was in charge of the administration of the market place; he collected dues and

---

<sup>80</sup> O'kwu V.G, 'Idomaland Under Colonial Rule, pp, 6-8.

<sup>81</sup> See Armstrong R.G, 'The Idoma Speaking Peoples...', p.100.

adjudicated disputes within the precinct of the market in accordance with customary laws. It was in this respect that he was aptly described as the ‘president of the market courts’,<sup>82</sup>

The *Ai-Uta* constabulary whose membership was drawn from able-bodied young men and heads of small social units assisted the *Och’Olihi*. It is instructive to note that as the executive organ of the land, the *Ai-Uta* had no authority of its own but would be given ad hoc power for specific purpose by the mass meeting. For example, members were usually detailed to carry out the wishes of the mass meeting and sent on diplomatic missions to other land.

The *Ai-Uta* constabularies were in turn assisted by a number of secret societies. Some of these included *Onyonkpo*, *Achukwu* and *Okpantla*, and others, found in almost every Idoma community. The origin of this organ of government is still shrouded in mystery. A source claimed that the idea of secret societies got into Idomaland through *Utonkon*<sup>83</sup>. Another source however, linked the history of secret cults in Idoma society to one *Anube*. Whatever their origin, one thing is most probable, and that is, the concept of secret society may have evolved among the Idoma out of the continuous search for ways by which efforts of the *Ojila* and the various social and political institutions could be supplemented and perfected in the overall interest of the society. The secret societies were secret to the extent that they were limited to official members alone and exclusively to adult males of the community. They were believed to be more matured and could keep secrets from the people, also, they were involved in some rituals such as invoking spirits of the dead members of the community. These adult male were matured and well trusted

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p.123.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

to keep the rules and regulations laid down by the organization. Among their many functions was ensuring that members of the community conformed to the norms and values of the society. It was in this regard that they were responsible for carrying out punitive expeditions against social deviants and dissenters. In this sense, it can be argued that the secret societies together with the *Ai-Uta* constabulary constituted the instruments of coercion at the disposal of the elders who were regarded as the custodians of the norms and values of the society. Gerontocratic structure of pre-colonial Idoma society was enhanced by the preponderance of age-groups and age-sets which were also critical organs of government. As a system of grouping all members of the community into classes on the ascriptive basis of age, age-group associations helped in fostering unity and harmonious living while at the same time encouraging socio-political growth.

This was because they emphasized the gerontocratic structure of pre-colonial Idoma society. Age-group associations provided auxiliary services such as the clearing of paths, construction and repairs of bridges, digging of graves for the burial of dead members of the community, etc. In all of these, the point should be made, that contributions by individual groups depended on their maturity and ability of its male members.<sup>84</sup>

The point therefore is that the decline of the *Oche* institution in most parts of Idomaland on the eve of colonial conquest and occupation did not degenerate into chaos and anarchy as often portrayed by colonial writers. This was the case as demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs; many institutions of government modified the ebbing of the chieftaincy institution which, working together with the *Ojila*, preserved social and political equilibrium. It should be added that this does not rule out instances of discord. On the contrary, political discords mostly between generational groups did occur, but because

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

these were subsumed in the Idoma constitutional system, they were never allowed to develop into serious crisis such as to threaten peace in the society. Indeed through the mechanism of dialogue and consensus, such challenges were usually quickly resolved in the interest of the harmonious existence of groups<sup>85</sup>.

Going by the political structure of the Idoma as examined above, two important questions comes to play; the first is what were the role of women in the political system of the Idoma people? Secondly, what were the reasons for the British to categorize the Idoma as having political base and described them as stateless and backward? Women have not been given the opportunity to make decision in Idomaland, they were at the background, and they were not allowed to participate in the *Ojira* meeting or assemblage. This of course, caused discontentment among the women. The British on the other part took a hasty study of the political structure of the Idoma people and erroneously placed the Idoma society as stateless society. It was established that the communities that were organized on clan level lacked cohesion on the scale that was necessary to save them from incorporation into the emergent states, while those that had evolved centralized state system suffered from internal weakness.<sup>86</sup>

This contradiction explained above by Mahmoud Hamman can also be attributed to the Idoma Division, where the British colonialists termed the Idoma as a “stateless and pagan society” with no political structures to re-organize the system into the indirect rule fashion for easy exploitation of the economies.<sup>87</sup> This was one of the major reasons why

---

<sup>85</sup> Okpeh.O.Okpeh

<sup>86</sup> Mahmoud Hamman; “The Rise and Fall of the Emirate of Muri (Hamaruwa), c1812 — 1903,” Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, ABU, Zaria, 1983, P.175

<sup>87</sup> “See, George.E.Ode “Idoma Land Under the British Colonial Administration”. Some Reflections on **the** Nature and Effects of the Colonial Policy 1908-1950 Seminar Paper Presented to the Department of History, ABU, 1979, P.2

some parts of the Idoma Division were placed under the Emirate System for administrative control in the colonial period.<sup>88</sup> Alien or non indigenous District heads were selected in some Districts in Idoma Division because the colonialists assumed that the peopling in this area did not possess a political structure that fitted into their plan of political hegemony, therefore, the colonialists dominated and categorised the people into a baseless frame work.<sup>89</sup>

## **2.10 Social Organization**

The basic units of Idoma social structure was the lineage and clan systems, age grade organization, marriage institutions, slavery, compound, family among others. The social structure formed a central aspect of the people of Idoma Division. The Idoma organized themselves into age grade, with their leader called *Och' Okorobia*. The age grade was well defined and operated mainly as mutual aid club for funeral and ceremonies. This was central in the organization of the people.<sup>90</sup> These were association of young men, the warriors, under varying degree of control by the *Ojira* (Assembly)<sup>91</sup>.

### **2.10.1 Lineage**

Lineage system was an integral aspect of the social system among the Idoma people, they depended on the lineage most especially matters related to land and policy making process, all depended on lineage system. Lineage among the Idoma are of great antiquity and it entailed various kindred, relating through blood possibly occupying a larger

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid P.2

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Pp. 2-3

<sup>90</sup> Robert .G. Armstrong; *The Idoma Speaking People*”, in *People of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, International African Institute, London, 1955, p.98

<sup>91</sup> Ibid p. 98



household. As earlier stated, the lineage was a significant social aspect of the Idoma social structure, and through this process land holding was defined and the senior member of the lineage wielded considerable level of political and social control on the household and the lineage. This also involved both patrilineal and matrilineal, the implication of this for women was that, they played roles of entertaining the people on occasions and gatherings but were not given control over political matter.

### **2.10.2. The Age Grade**

The age grade in Idomaland organised themselves into dance group to entertain people at funeral, marriage and festivals in the area and also served as watch dog for the security of the area, these processes were important in the role the age grade played in Idomaland. Women were the majority of people in these dance groups while the men drummed and played the instruments, the women in turn danced to the drum. The age grade also organized for hired labour on farms and whatever that was given to them was shared among them. But one of the most important functions of the age grade was that they function as mutual aid club for funeral and also protected the people as watch dogs or security.

Membership into the age grade was based on age of the person, capability and attitude. The dancing society also called *Ogrinya*, formed an integral aspect of the age grade, whose membership was based on competence, and those that knew how to dance in the traditional ways were admitted into the *Ogrinya* dance group.<sup>92</sup> These dance groups are significant in entertainment in the area most especially at funeral and marriages. Young women between the ages of 10-15 were encouraged to join in the dance groups to

---

<sup>92</sup> Agada Ochekwu

entertain the people during social gatherings and ceremonies such as marriages, selection of the O'che and burials.

### **2.10.3 Marriage**

Marriage was the oldest institution ordained by God for man. The institution was of great antiquity among the people of Idomaland. Marriage was confirmed by the payment of bride price,<sup>93</sup> by exchange, more rarely by working for the parent of the bride or by a combination of exchange and payment or work. The dowry was more pronounced among the people of Idomaland, and should be noted that the parents of the groom took their son to the bride's house and request for marriage, and also in some cases the bride and the groom do not even know that both parents had arranged for their marriage before they grew up.

This system existed in the pre-colonial period. Marriage organization based on this system was a feature of the social organization of the area. Before a child was born, the parent had arranged for a husband for her and also, this was done based on the rational that the parents of both families were either family friends and had a close contact in the past.<sup>94</sup> The items needed for traditional marriage in Idoma Division included kolanut, palm wine, yams and goat, palm oil, salt and melon. But when the woman marries and eventually dies, the corpse of the woman will be taken back to her father's family, not the man or husband's family. This was the marriage culture of the people of Idoma Division.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Anthony, J.I, *The Making of Otukpa Land*, Forefront Publishers, Makurdi, Nigeria. 1976. p,34

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Owoicho Akor, C. 68 years, in Otukpa, on the 2-08-20 12

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

Divorce is also an important issue among the people of Idoma this was affected by consent and was completed by the repayment of the dowry to the husband by the wife's relation. In a situation where the dowry is not paid back to the husband, the wife had no right to re-marry another man.<sup>96</sup> But in situation where the dowry is fully paid to the husband, she can go ahead to marry another man in the process. All the children (if they had any) bore during the marriage are property of the husband, this was the characteristics of the nature of marriage in Idoma pre-colonial society. Some times, it was difficult to pay back the dowry by the wife and her family either because, they were abjectly poor and could not afford to raise such money or the family remains adamant to pay back the dowry. This could lead to prostitution as the women could not pay the dowry back and were unable to remarry another man. The children born may never come to see their mother if the husband and his relations make a final decision to stop the woman from seeing her children.

#### **2.10.4. Slavery**

Slavery in Idomaland had an internal and an external aspect. The *Abakpa* market in *Oyangedde*, *Utonkon* and *Igumale* and *Ede* markets were all big slave markets and were regularly visited by the Nupe and Arochukwu Igbo and Idoma slave dealers.<sup>97</sup> The Idoma also kept slaves for domestic activities. Thus, aspects of slavery shall be examined in the section. There were families that kept slaves. Under this system the slaves were used for domestic works and agricultural activities. They were tied to some certain families to assist in the labour of the farm. This was basically what existed internally in the provision

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Armstrong, p.99

of labour in the farm. Idomaland in the pre-colonial era was also seen as a gradual development of slave labour being replaced by wage labour in the colonial time. However, it should be noted that slave raiders from Aro area in Igboland came for slaves in Idomaland. The historical development of slavery in Idoma area remained obscure because in Idomaland, a slave was somebody without a family to defend him. From the examination of the available sources, it was claimed that they did not participate in slave trade. That was the reason why it was said that the development on slavery and historical process on slavery in this area remain obscure. However, men and women were equally taken as slaves, women were used as porters to convey goods to faraway places within the Division, while in the external slave trading women conveyed goods to places such as Makurdi, Obollo and Ogoja province.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

The examination of this chapter showed that the land and peoples of the Idoma Division and the geographical setting of the people interplayed with the economy and role of women socio-economic and political structure of the people of Idoma Division over time. However, without an understanding of the geographical teaching and environment, such an impact would not have been well ascertained, because the physical environment had a direct impact on the socio-economic and political development of the area under study. The understanding of the land and peoples of Idoma speaking society showed how imperative the location of Idomaland, Vegetation, climate, temperature, and drainage are to the development of the the economic base of the people.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMY OF**  
**IDOMALAND**

**3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focused on the pre-colonial economy of Idoma society and the role of women. Gender studies revealed that women contributed immensely to the development of the pre-colonial economy, however, their roles have not been well documented and previous scholars neglected to study the role of women in the economy of Idoma Division because of one or two reasons. All of these may be summarized as being gender insensitive, gender bias and ignorance about gender due to traditional approach to ruling which focused on men and written primarily by men. This also buttresses the major reason why this research was carried out. However, this study examined the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division 1908-1960, defining the concept of Idoma pre-colonial activities and the role of women as a fundamental factor to show the role of women basically in agriculture, industries, trade and commerce, and other domestic activities in the development of the society. The study on this premise adopted the socio-economic formation approach in general and mode of production in particular. According to Falola<sup>98</sup> it was primarily a departure from the imperialist and revisionist scholars who hitherto explained the pre-colonial history of Africa in terms of ethnology. The study formed a background to our understanding of the mode of production of the Idoma society in the pre-colonial era and the changing role of women in the colonial period.

---

<sup>98</sup> Falola, T., *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial Africa States: 1830-1900*, University of Ife, Ife University Press Ltd, Nigeria, 1984, p. 6

### 3.2 Women and Development

“Development is a dual process<sup>99</sup> which greatly expands new economic and social activities, and at the same time, traditional activities are transformed and their relative importance reduced,<sup>100</sup> so that labour is released for the new activities. In all societies, women play a major role in traditional activities such as subsistence food production, food processing, home craft, market, trade and domestic chores.<sup>101</sup>

However, efforts to increase the economic contribution of women should be viewed not only as a means to make fuller use of women’s potentials, but also as a way of improving income distribution. Most women in the society who attempted to earn income were either in abject poverty and were the poor heads of a household often with many children, or women who were married to men in the lowest income bracket who were unable to feed their families without the help of their wives.<sup>102</sup> This is true in contemporary societies, but this was quite different and also, not the case with African women in the pre-colonial economy because they played active part and benefited from almost every aspect of the economy. A typical African woman strives to support her household even when it was strenuous to do so, in which they are already known in their praxis.

This was the more reason why Idoma men married more than two to three wives so as to help and generate more income and agricultural produce to support the family and the surpluses, if there were any, were traded at the market by women or exchanged for a more pressing household needs, while some were stored in the barns for planting season.

---

<sup>99</sup> Esther Boserup, “Integration of Women in Development” UNDP Programme, May, 1975, p6

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p.6

<sup>101</sup> Oral Interviews, Diana Ochoga, Igedde, on 06/11/2015

<sup>102</sup> Oral Interview, Diana Ochoga

This was so especially during the pre-colonial period.<sup>103</sup> In examining women's role in development, the very first thing that comes to mind is that women always make larger contribution to the support of societies based on economic production for subsistence as well as trade.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.3 Pre-colonial Agriculture

During the pre- colonial period, Idoma Division was sufficiently fertile to allow the production of both food and cash crops.<sup>105</sup> The household in pre-colonial period had units and were very dynamic such that, each unit could adapt its size and skills to changing circumstances. Each unit was divided into small units if need be to work on different farms simultaneously. Sometimes, several families could come together to form a unit of labour production and rotate from one unit to another. Some men married more wives for the same reason and labour was allocated between sexes. Marion Johnson equally referred to such activities in pre-colonial period as 'extra-subsistence economy'.<sup>106</sup>

It is interesting to note that women played tremendous role in the food production process in Idomaland. Their roles in agriculture cannot to be overemphasized; women tilled the soil, planted yam seedings, harvested crops, and weeded the grasses, and carried the harvested crops on their heads home for the family consumption, while some were traded to meet other household needs. According to Oral tradition it was revealed that agriculture predated their migration from 'Apa' whose kings were referred to as "The lords of agriculture and stock pillar of grains"<sup>107</sup> Agriculture in Idomaland was of great

---

<sup>103</sup> Esther Boserup, p8

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.11

<sup>105</sup> Mike Odey, p.47

<sup>106</sup> Marion Johnson, p48

<sup>107</sup> Adakole Ochai, "The Historical Evolution Re-Unification of Otukpo up to 1930," B A Project, Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria, 1972. p.16

antiquity. The People of the area under study were conscious of providing their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter right from the period of their migration from 'Apa', to their present habitation.

It should be noted that in Idomaland two agricultural practices were recognised. These were shifting cultivation and bush fallowing. Shifting cultivation or migratory agriculture was by far the most important agrarian system. It involved the relocation of farms and the population to entirely new environment after the fertility of the previous lands have depleted. This agricultural practice was only possible in area where the man and land ratio was in favour of land.

On the other hand, bush fallowing was characterised by short period of fallow system within which a given plots (uncultivated plots) were allowed or left to replenish their fertility. Depending on the availability of land, the fallow period in Idomaland range from three to four years. It should also be noted that an important aspect of the agricultural system was the high degree of inter-cropping or crop rotation. The significance of crop rotations included protecting the soil from water erosion, and increasing the fertility of the soil which in turn led to increased yields<sup>108</sup> Scholars<sup>109</sup> have contended that this system gave farmers the opportunity to extract maximum benefits from the land and at the same time made sure that this process did not completely exhausted the land of its marginal productivity.

It is fundamental to note that women's participation in agriculture could be described as holistic, in the sense that women did as much farm work as the men, men work harder, but women work longer in the clearing of lands, cultivation, planting, weeding, and

---

<sup>108</sup> Oral interview with Omadachi Acheme, C. 84 years, in Orokam District, on the 12-3-20 13

<sup>109</sup> See, Yakubu Ochefu, P. 52.



harvesting of crops<sup>110</sup>. Women were also, laden with the responsibility of conveying the food crops to the various markets. This showed that there were trading activities during the pre-colonial and the colonial period between villages and neighboring societies. The effect of these two agricultural practice on the ability of women and the accessibility of land is that, at the period when the land was left to regain its fertility, women were left without farm land and income because there was no produce to be sold, there was also wide spread scarcity of food to cater for their immediate households. With minimal roles in agricultural activities, thereby shifting focus to the trade in basket and mats because these are not affected by the two agricultural practices of shifting cultivation and bush fallowing.

### **3.3.1 Home Farms**

This was the farm close to the settlement which was referred in Idoma to as *Eglor Ole*, (*Home farms*) this played a fundamental role in defining the role of women in the pre-colonial era. The produce from the home farms included; okra, vegetables such as spinach, ugu, bitterleaves, pepper, tomatoes, ayila which is medicinal in the treatment of hey fever and migraine, curry leaves and scent leaves (*ayemba*) in Idoma<sup>111</sup> The agricultural produce from this farms were used for the family consumption which were manly carried out by women by setting aside acres of land to plant vegetables. Women played tremendous role in the development of agriculture prior to colonial rule, women were responsible for food produce for the family consumption, but these foods were controlled by men.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Oral interviews with, Diana Ochoga

<sup>112</sup> Oral interview with Mercy Eje, f, 69, Ichiana, FRSC, 14/10/2015

### 3.3.2 Distant Farms

Distant farms are also known as bush farms because this farm is not located close to the house and could be one hundred thirty to two hundred fifty kilometres and even more away from the houses. It took some farmers two to four hours to go to the farm, work and come back home. These are farm lands situated far from the homes and the following produce were cultivated yams, cassava, rice, cocoyam, maize, beans and water yam. Women took turns to farm in each other's land to promote solidarity amongst them and when it was harvest time these crops were harvested for consumption or for sale at the market to generate income that could be used for sustenance.<sup>113</sup>

The size of land for agricultural production, both home and distant farms varied depending on the capability and ability of individual, the number of children and how many wives there are, in a given household. Home farms were usually small in size to grow vegetables while the distant farms were very large acres of land which could contain two to three different crops. Women produced maize, rice, guineacorn, cocoyam and millet on the bush farm.

Most of these crops were produced by women the only exception is yam which was more tasking hence, regarded as men's work and the food crops were processed in varying forms of drying, grinding, salting, or milling before they were consumed or traded at the markets. The markets that existed in the Division both in the pre-colonial and colonial periods were *Nkor*, *Afor*, *Eke*, *Ugbokolo*, *Ogobia* and *Ede* each market has a specific market day in which women traded food stuff and other items such as mats, baskets, brooms, pots, yams, beans, beneseeds, salts, palm oil, and livestock. However, the crops have an economic value, for consumption, millet served the purpose of a drink and

---

<sup>113</sup> Mercy Eje, oral interview

also for pap (akamu), maize and guinea corn were blended into powder form for *Ona* (swallow) and for flour. The proceeds were controlled by men despite the fact that women did most parts of the farm works. It should be noted that women contributed immensely to labour output in Idoma society, they were part and parcel of the household labour and their roles ought to be regarded in the attempt to make a synthesis of the role of women in the period prior to British colonialism in Idomaland in particular and Nigeria in general.

The primary unit of social production was the household. This formed the basic unit in the mobilization of labour in the production processes. The oldest male of the household wield unquestionable authority within the context of traditional laws. His position was further strengthened by the religious role he played in appeasing the ancestral spirit when necessary. The eldest in the household was responsible for the distribution of land among the various members of the household in Idomaland, he also determined the type of crop to be planted and is in charge of the granary in which the main grain and tuber crops were stored and dispensed. It should be noted that the most famous and most important example of social relation of production with its closely related labour and surplus appropriation among the Idoma society in the period proceeding colonial conquest and occupation was the relation between the household/ family head and other member of the unit.

The household embraced the labour force of wives (women), children, relatives and persons who voluntarily belong to the household for some reasons. However, this partly explained the reason why polygamy was and to some extent still common among the people of Idoma Division. Furthermore, the collective basis of household was often

expanded into larger work groups, essentially organised to overcome labour bottlenecks in the agricultural circle. Ochefu<sup>114</sup> contended that there were three features of the household system, first, that under this system, conscious efforts were made to preserve the dignity of the labour force, and factors of production such as land and capital were subordinated to the interest of labour. Secondly, all the members of the household co-operated with one another to achieve the set objectives of the unit and any gains, accruing to it was more or less equitably distributed among the members of the household. Thirdly, each member of the household endeavoured to contribute his or her own best to the success, not by application of force nor persuasion by elders, but simply by the selfless determination as well as the will to promote group solidarity and welfare. Another source of labour in the area of study was co-operative labour (*Opiatoha*), where groups of people come together and work on each other's farm in turn with the host partly providing sustenance such as local beer and food which was largely produce by women. The organization of this form of labour was based on the concept of mutual reciprocity and was commonly based on age-set, sex, and was within the context of contractual agreement between the individual involved. The owner of the farm who invited members of the group to his or her farm provided local beer called "ewula" by the people.<sup>115</sup> This was done to encourage division productivity, and in turn larger portion of the work can be done within a short period of time. These forms of labour were significant in the pre-colonial agricultural activities in Idomaland, and this was developed according to the geographical features of the area.

---

<sup>114</sup> See, Ochefu, P, 40.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

As earlier stated, agriculture was the major economic activity of the people of Idomaland, and the natural environment has direct bearing on the agricultural structure of the people. One example is the seasons, wet season made it possible for farmers to engage in farming activities, and the dry season also allowed farmers to engage in other economic activities such as basket weaving and broom making, trade, hunting among others. From the foregoing, there existed division of labour based on sex and age. This division of labour does not negate the fact that the head of the household wielded considerable authority in the pre-colonial Idoma society, as the elders were able to manipulate the labour of young men and women. The members of the society may not have seen themselves as been manipulated as they received various social welfare from the co-operate groups such as cares of widow and orphans,<sup>116</sup> because they believed that the elders could control or intercede with the spiritual powers which controls the world. On this note, it would be significant to point out that women formed the household labour output which was considered as part of the pillar of labour production, and were as insignificant because they were not part of the decision making process in the Idomaland.

### **3.4 The Role of Women in Agriculture**

Those who want to grasp the fuller meaning of Idoma history must try to catch the clink of the farmers hoe; the thump of the house wife's pounding stick as the true makers of history and the real creators of wealth and power.<sup>117</sup> The statement however suggested that the economic history of Idoma society especially of the agrarian practice, which is set before us, is the ground work of the society.

---

<sup>116</sup> C.C Jacobs, Pre-Colonial Economies on the Jos Plateau and the Adjoining Lowlands. M A Thesis, University of Jos. 1991, pp, 12-57.

<sup>117</sup> Davison, et al, The growth of African Civilization, London, 1974, p.3

As long as agriculture was mainly a subsistence activity of the people, where most or all the output was consumed by the family who produced it, women were found to take a heavy share in agricultural work, either in the peak season or during the whole year. In some cases, women's input was greater than that of the male members. The role of women in the production of various crops such as cereal, tubers, vegetables and horticulture were as follows;

**3.4.1 Cereal:** is a plant grown and known for its edibility. For example, wheat and rice are grown in our area of study in the pre-colonial and colonial period in districts like *Ugboju, Adoka* and *Agatu*, women were actively involved in the production and processing of cereal such as wheat and rice. The trading was done by the women at the market during market days.

**3.4.2 Tubers:** These are yams, cassavas and potatoes. Yams are edible starchy tuberous roots of a tropical climbing plant. Cassavas are plant grown in Africa and cultivated for its tuberous roots, which yields a nutritious starch from which cassava bread, flour and garri are made. Potatoes are starchy, oval tubers eaten as vegetables which are grown by women.

**3.4.3 Vegetable:** An herbaceous plant grown for food. Vegetables such as; Ugwu, spinach, bitter leaves, curry leaves, water leaves, moringa, okra, tomatoes, pepper, onions and green beans were grown by women to feed their households.

**3.4.4 Horticulture:** Women were involved in the growing of fruits such as cashew, mango, oranges, pineapples, pawpaw, banana, and guava. This was done by planting the seedings deep down the soils, with a considerable amount of rainfall.

The summary of the production of cereals, tubers, vegetables and fruits seedlings by women in Idoma Division could be seen from the gender division of labour, where men play the role of planting the seeds and women play the role of weeding the grasses, harvesting and conveying the crops to their homes or to the markets for trading. Women therefore, played the major roles in the production of cereals, tubers and vegetables. The nutritional and economic value of these to the society is that cereal such as rice and wheat, have considerable level of fibres therefore, cancer patients are advised to make most of their meals from these, they are also brewed as drinks, tubers such as yam is used in ceremonies and sweet potatoes is used as sweetner for millet and guinea corn in making gruel (kunu in Hausa language). Vegetables have nutritional values and should be eaten by every body. To carry this burden of work, women found it necessary to enlist the help of their daughters. There was yet another Factor that tended to increase the work load of women and girls in the societies. The high rate of natural increase of population created the need for food production step- up through a more intensive use of both uncultivated land and cultivated land surrounding the villages, thus, increasing the need for female work which expanded more than male labour. This was so because, some of the additional operations required an intensive farming, such as weeding and transplanting are traditionally women's work.

However, the non-agricultural activities which women engaged in were usually cooking and weaving, as well as other tasks which were women's chores in family production because the society was at the stage of subsistence production in the pre-colonial. In family production, there were complimentary roles between men and women, but division of labour was replaced by agricultural production exclusively done by women

when men migrated out of villages as a result of colonial policies which were stated in the introduction to this chapter as the changing roles of women. Therefore, we found a higher proportion of women in food processing and in weaving industry.

However, women participated in the economy of Idoma Division. Women grew crops, processed the food crops, marketed the food crop, and stored some for use in posterity. Women were also responsible for the preparation of these foods. Women earn income through the sales of handicraft and agricultural produce to support their husbands and family as a whole. Women care for children and other family members; women were active in community as well as in family life. The demands on women's time are great indeed. Women working days and hour of work are long, sometimes, longer than men's by as much as 43 percent.

In addition to domestic chores, women were involved in food production and processing, for much day for example, statistical data from Idoma societies in the north, south, east and west analysed in this study indicated that in all but one case woman spent over 50 percent of their time on agricultural activities in the pre-colonial period. Women weeded harvested, transported produce from the farms, stored, processed, and marketed as much as men did. This affected the status of women in the pre-colonial period because women had to take to early marriage and polygamy was rampant as men needed more hands to do farm work.



### **3.5 Local Industries**

The industries that existed in Idomaland were basically palm oil production, the making of baskets, brooms, local beer production, iron smelting, mat weaving and cassava processing. These were fundamental to the industrial development of the area prior to the advent of British Colonial rule. In Idomaland, women played substantial roles in the production of local goods and production especially, palm oil, salt, mats and baskets. It was generally regarded as women's work.<sup>118</sup> This was one of the areas through which women contributed to the development of the household trade system and it was basically on this note that household containers like baskets were produced to move agricultural produce to the market or from the farm to the house became pertinent.

#### **3.5.1 Weaving Industries**

The palm trees which were scattered all over the Western and Southern parts of the Division made it possible for women to have the necessary raw materials needed to weave mats and baskets in the area. This was a common activity of women during the dry season when the rains have subsided and completely stopped. Women shifted focus to basket and mat making to generate income as they waited for the next farming season. Brooms for sweeping houses and the environment were made out of the palms, basket for conveying food crops from the farms and taking goods to the markets were also made from the palms. And it should be emphasized that this led to expansion of the market system, because some of the mats were taken to the market for sale, and this was carried out by women.

---

<sup>118</sup> Oral Interview with Omale Jenebu in Otukpo, C. 78, on the 12-05-20 13

As discussed subsequently other items were also woven in the pre-colonial period. These were hats for shielding traders from the sun or during farming activities. Bags were also woven from palms for carrying tools such as cutlasses, hoes and axes. Hunters also used bags to carry their tools such as guns, machets and traps. Fishermen use these bags to carry tools like hooks, ropes, baskets, basins and baits. Men and women played active roles in the weaving of hats, baskets, trays, bags and mats. However women played the most pivotal roles in the weaving industries. Baskets and mats which were produced by women were useful for crops carriage and other food crops either for the family consumption or for trade at the market of *Ugbokolo, Eke, Ugboju, Otukpo-Icho* and other neighbouring markets in Idoma Division.

### **3.5.2 Blacksmithing**

Although, this activity was not carried out by women, they were part of the industries that existed in pre-colonial Idoma society in which iron and wooden implements were fashioned out of economic trees such as iroko tree, mahogany tree, bamboo tree, Obeche and Afara. These trees were used for plywoods, papers, thatched roofs, sitting stools, barns, pounding sticks, mortars, and farming implements such as hoes, cutlasses, and spades, sickles and hunting tools like guns and machets.

The Division is predominantly a Guinea Savanna Belt, with giant elephant grass, oil bean trees, shea butter and locust bean trees. Most of these trees can be found in the Division as well as some varieties of Raphia trees, Palm trees, Iroko trees and haha trees.<sup>119</sup> These trees are invaluable in the economic development of Idoma Division meaning Idoma

---

<sup>119</sup> Mike Odey, *The Development of Cash Crop Economy In Nigeria's Benue Province*, p39

Division, portrayed epithet of, ‘‘The Food Basket of the Nation’’ because it is one of the largest producers of yams, and other root crops, grains, export and food crops involving virtually every household.<sup>120</sup>

The trees were used in the pre-colonial period to build colonial rest houses. Blacksmiths produced a wide range of implements, it was discovered by U’kwu that iron slag were found in Orokam District in Idoma Division, which was dated back to the pre-colonial era. Iron as a special aspect of the people’s culture, were moulded into various implements and used for agriculture and warfare. These were the two most important uses of iron in Idomaland during the pre-colonial era. There was evidence of the existence of iron smelting kiln scattered over the area and it was believed by the Orokam and Oyangede peoples that this was as the result of the operation carried out by the Edumoga who came to Otukpa by invitation and smelted iron on payment.<sup>121</sup>

Women played the role of providing wood and charcoal for the fire and food for the black smiths while working in the workshop. Women were not part of blacksmithing. Their roles were to make provisions for fire. Woods and charcoal were used to set the fire ablaze and to provide food and local drinks made from guinea corn and millet for the blacksmiths. The traditional rites associated with blacksmithing and iron smithing forbade women’s participation since iron working is associated with the spirit world and women were not meant to see the spirits because it is a taboo.

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p.39

<sup>121</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Ace No ARIINT/1/5, Intelligence Report on Otukpa District by Capt Money, 1926

It should be noted, however, that the slag's head was found during the well sinking operation in Orokam District, part of the kiln was found at a depth of over fifteen feet.<sup>122</sup> It was not quite clear if iron were locally produce in Western Districts of Idoma Division, information gathered showed that the iron smelters were from the neighbouring District of Okpoga, but the importance iron working had was the great impact on the socio-economic activities of the people in Idoma Division. Through the iron implement lands were cleared for agricultural produce, cutting of firewoods for cooking, these implements were also used for carving sitting stool, for pounding stick and mortar which was used for pounding yams and grains, and hoe for tilling the soil among other implements were produced.

However, the origin of iron technology in Idoma Division was obscure. From the sources available there were blacksmiths and iron working factories in Idoma Division, in the pre-colonial period. Thus, smithing led to the making of iron into different articles for the development of the economic sector. Blacksmiths are called *Onowa*, and were so important in Idomaland that they were mentioned in the ancestral cult chanting of the ancestral spirit *Alekwu*.

The significance of iron or metal working in Idoma Division was important in producing implement used in agriculture, tools such as hoes, cutlasses, rakes and shovels. In warfare; the tools used were guns, bows and arrows, in hunting; guns, machets, bows and arrows were used to hunt, in carpentry; iron implements fashioned by blacksmiths are nails, hammers, saws, chisels, pincers, drills, mallets and crowbars, in fishing; iron, hooks

---

<sup>122</sup> Robert. G, Armstrong; *The Idoma Speaking People, In people of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, International African institute, London 1955, p.115

and basins were used to fish. The smelting industry was very important in the area during the pre-colonial period, thus, it was very vital in the production of cutlass *Ogbangle*, knife, *ewa* and hoe, *eni* in the Division. These items helped the people to easily cultivate and tilled the soil, engaged in other economic activities like hunting, clearing of bush for road path and building of houses. It also helps in reducing household work and drudgery.

### **3.5.3 Palm Oil Processing**

Palm oil processing was common among Idoma women in the pre-colonial period. This involved the collection of the palm kernel from the trees by men and given to the women to boil for a considerable period of time, for example say, three hours to four hours after which it was pounded to extract the substance called (oil having undergone some vigorous heating on the fire) from the chaff. When the oil has been extracted from the chaff, it was left to heat on the fire until water was completely drained from the oil. All of these processes were carried out by the women, the marketing were done by women as shown from the interactions they had with the Igbo, Igala and her Tiv neighbors during trade activities.<sup>123</sup>

The men helped the women in cutting down the palm fruits from the trees and put into the baskets for the women to take to their various homes. When taken home, the women washed the palm fruits and lighted the fire containing wood and charcoal. Then put a very large pot filled with water on the fire and put the palm fruits into the pot, after three to four hours the palm fruits will be removed from the fire to cool. When cooled, it will be transferred from the pot into the mortar to be pounded, after which it will be put into a

---

<sup>123</sup> Oral interviews with Mercy Eje, Oyema Jonah and Onyeche in Ichiama, Ugbokolo and Adoka

basin and scrubbed with fifty litres of water depending on the quantity of the palm fruits. When scrubbing the chaff remains at the bottom of the basin while the oil comes to the top of the basin.

As the oil is ascending to the top of the water, the women set aside a clean bowl to collect the oil into the bowl after which it was put into the pot and put on the fire again for thirty minutes to one hour. While on the fire a clean broom and basket is used to collect the remaining chaff and husks from the oil. *Akpa* women sliced some bulbs of onions into the oil to give it a good aroma. This *Akpa* process of oil production is known in Idoma dialect as *Ano-Akpa*, Akpa-oil. Palm oil in Idoma society is used for cooking, frying, local pomade, it was sold at the market on market days, and some women exchanged the oil for some household items needed. This was controlled by the women the only case where the men assisted the women was when the kernels were to be brought down from the trees.

#### **3.5.4 Pottery**

Pottery as a craft formed an integral part of the pre-colonial economy of this area and it was exclusively women's work. The raw materials used for pottery included fine reddish clay, grasses and water<sup>124</sup>. Different types of pots were made for various purposes. Primarily pots were made for cooking purpose, however, there were large pots that were produced for the storage of grains and storage of water. Some large and medium sized pots were used for the storage of water, beer storage as well as for ritual purposes. Pottery was also carried out within the confines of the household. The Potters got their raw material from clay, which was dug and turned into a suitable texture. This was soaked with water and left over night and then it was moulded the next day into different shapes

---

<sup>124</sup> Oral Interview with Abah Owoicho, C 74, interviewed in Otukpo on the 2 1-06-2013

and sizes. The pots were then subjected to intensive heating to make them firm and ready for use. After the intense heating of the pots, they were kept under the sun to dry up<sup>125</sup>having undergone the above processes; they were marketed afterwards by women. Pottery got a serious challenge as a result of the importation of European made substitutes. The effect of this was that, women who happened to dominate the production of this craft lost their prestige and this also affected their economic status, income and social security within the household exchange and local trade. According to one informant<sup>126</sup>, it was revealed that during market day's varieties of pottery were traded by women traders, most especially Igbo women from the neighbouring areas came in contact with Idoma women in the course of trading activity. The design on the pottery materials revealed the culture of the people that produced it, and mostly, the pottery materials were molded into pots and plates, cups and other home items which were used for eating and fetching water. It was a serious technological advancement in the part of women to carry out the work on pottery in the area under study; it involved preparing the clay, mixed with grasses and water, before molding and firing to achieve strenght and durability<sup>127</sup>. However, as aptly stated in this work, women were engaged in this work during the pre-colonial era and mostly during the dry seasons when the rains have subsided.

### **3.5.5 Weaving (Otache)**

Before contact with the British colonialists, Idoma women were involved in weaving clothes in fairly large quantities. The materials needed were gotten from the cotton they produced. This was a ceremonious cloth wore during festivals. The products were as

---

<sup>125</sup> Mercy Eje

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> Oral Interview with Oche'anya Agaba, C 53, a Potter in Otukpo, interviewed on the 13-04-2013

numerous as their usage. Cotton was made into clothing for both adult and children and for other special festivals when the need arose. Baskets and mats were also part of this industry. They included baskets for general use, food baskets, and lidded containers, baskets for carrying chickens, porters' baskets and winnowers. The production of these crafts was carried out within the confines of the household and they were exclusively women's work. Palm trees have a lot of importance in the area under study, first, women participated fully in making brooms and basket from the stems of the tree, they used the palm fruits as raw material for the production of oil, palm wine were extracted from it, though women do not tap the wine from the tree, but they were responsible for its sales at the market.<sup>128</sup>

### **3.5.6. Local Beer Production**

This was a local method of making drinks in the Division, which was done by women using either millet or guinea corn. This was made especially during the cooperative farming system (Opiatoha) as examined under agricultural production. The millet is milled, blended into liquid form and put in a very large pot and allowed to boil after which it was kept to be cool. This local drink tasted like modern day Maltina and Amstel drinks. This was solely women's work<sup>129</sup>.

The significance, value and importance of beer vary in continents, regions and societies. For example, in both Eygypt and Mesopotamia, beer was the national drinks consumed by all classes in the society. Beer was paid as wages and bride prices in both Eygypt and

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Oral interview Onyeche Echeno



Mesopotamia.<sup>130</sup>This was particularly true with the Idoma society where beer was included among items taken to the bride's family to ask for her hand in marriage. Beer was used medically and cosmetically, it was prescribed for constipation, stomach ailments, cough and swollen eyes.<sup>131</sup> Beer provided parts of the ingredients for festivals and was served at varieties of celebrations such as traditional marriage rites, burials, naming ceremonies, kings and queen's coronation and was used as catalyst for breaking down social barriers.<sup>132</sup> In some parts of African culture beer was a critical component of social, economic and political structure of the society for example, the Kofar of Northern Nigeria, conducted all aspects of their daily lives around beer. However, the payments of tributes with beer indicated an economic and political significance as beer was presented to kings as tributes and offered as sacrifice to ancestor.<sup>133</sup>

For the welfare and fertility of the lands, chiefs offered beer to fulfill their redistribution and obligations to their subjects and show appreciation to the warriors who defended the chiefdom. Thus, this formed socio-economic and political reciprocal bonds between commoners and leaders.<sup>134</sup>

In spite of all these significance, many were influenced by modern psychological outlook which viewed local beer with disdain because; modern scholars frequently downplayed and neglected its significance. This is because local beer has been appreciated outside its context. For example, in pre-colonial as well as in post-colonial African societies, local beer played its role within the context, rather than recreation as it was assumed because it

---

<sup>130</sup> Michael, M.H. "Beer and Its Drinks: An Ancient Near Eastern Love Story in Journal of Archaeology, Vol.67.No.2,June, 2004, pp84-85

<sup>131</sup> Ibid,pp.84-85

<sup>132</sup> Douglas Barnabas, "Women and Local Beer Production in Bwazza Area of Numan Division, 1900-1960, M.A Dissertaion, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, January, 2015,p62

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p.62

<sup>134</sup> Ibid,pp.61-62

was commonly required for ritual activities, celebration of festivals, mobilization of labour, payment of dowries and tributes.<sup>135</sup> However, since the colonial period, the introduction of tax and currencies saw the “commercialization” of the economy which resulted in the “devaluation” of local beer following its “commoditization”.<sup>136</sup> Beer then assumed a new significance like European distilled brewed alcohol, whose significance was for mostly recreation and leisure.

It should be emphasized that the meaning and value attached to the production and consumption of local beer in Africa in general and Idoma Division in particular was context-specific a value that have been rooted in the people’s history.

The value of local beer among the Idoma people and in Idoma Division was not in any manner, different from that of else where in Nigeria in general and Idoma Division in particular. Even though, there were significant similarities, there also existed peculiarities that cannot be under estimated as beer was invaluable in its role in agricultural activities.

Beer strengthens social relations and ties among diverse people as well as ethnic groups, women processed beer and give some to their husbands first before marketing the beer as a sign of respect as the house hold head. Beside the socio-economic importance of beer among the Idoma people, it was used as reciprocal for services and exchange, it served as gifts and labour beyond that which a house hold can perform was rewarded with beer. Task such as hoeing, harvesting, weeding, preparation, processing and building of thatched houses were occasions during which beer was used to reward labour. Beer was offered as tributes to reaffirm allegiance and loyalty by kinsmen, it also served as a

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p.63

<sup>136</sup> Ibid,pp. 63-64

symbol of solidarity with bereaved relations in time of mourning. Thus, beer was generally accepted by the people. The role of women in the production of local beer ranged from the pre-fermenting to the fermenting stage, women engaged in the cultivation of grains, they also separate the grains from the stalk, and then winnowed it to remove the husks; they collected fire woods and water needed for the preparation of the drinks. Beer was used to mobilize labour during the cooperative or communal farming system during which a large portion of farm work was efficiently and diligently carried out. Thus, the availability of beer was readily provided by women for its purpose of providing much needed labour productivity by Idoma men and people.

One of the impacts of the production of beer on the socio-economic status of women is that, it made money to flow from the men to the women to manoeuvre their way out of abject poverty which colonialism infested on them. In other words, this financial freedom made the women economically independent and financially buoyant to support their households. Beer has its moral and social aspects on the society as beer causes drunkenness which may also lead to recklessness in driving and eventually, an accident may occur in which cases, may result in death of such persons this may also lead to prostitution for women and abuse.

### **3.6 Trade**

In the pre-colonial Idoma society, trade took place through bartering as goods, food and ingredients for cooking were swapped for items of equivalent value instead of money and the value of goods depended on their availability. In villages and at market places, people met to swap food items such as locust bean, oil, salt, yams, and garri.

Most trade in this period of time was limited to some quantity of luxury products such as salt, palm oil, and locust bean<sup>137</sup>. It also included a small range of products from neighbouring villages; this was very much determined by the specialization and division of labour in the societies. The earliest trade was given impetus by buyers of such items, which awaken Western European interest in the society as it was discussed in chapter four of the study.

The nature and character of the earliest trading activities in Idoma Division laid the basis for the more permanent trade of the later period during the colonial period. Safety was ensured to attract more buyers from far and near villages, as the youths and able-bodied men took turns to watch the market path, this also, encouraged the Special merchants who were mandated to engage in financial transaction to assist the trade by women who traded in items such as palm oil, salt, baskets, locust bean, mats and root crops such as yams, potatoes, coco-yams and cassava.<sup>138</sup>

However, the volumes of trades were in large quantities, to attract buyers from different locations such as, from the Igala, Igbo, Tiv and Hausa territories.<sup>139</sup> This was precisely in the pre-colonial period when, cowrie shells known in Idoma dialect as *ikpanini* were used as currency in trading transaction.<sup>140</sup> The items traded were in large quantities and women farmed crop which were for family consumption as well as for trade at the market in the pre-colonial period<sup>141</sup>.

The market days were every day and with different market names holding at intervals.

---

<sup>137</sup> Oral interviews with Mercy Eje, Diana Ochoga, Alice Ogbanje, Edumoga, Egedde and Otukpa Districts,

<sup>138</sup> Oral interviews with Onyenche Echeno, 75 years, Farmer, Adoka District, 19/10/2015

<sup>139</sup> Oral interviews with Mrs Omada Linus, 87 years, Farmer, Owukpa District, 30/10/2015

<sup>140</sup> Oral interviews with Elizabeth Ajogi,

<sup>141</sup> Oral interviews,

The markets were Eke, Afor, Otukpo-Icho, Ugboju, Ugbokolo, and Onyangede. However, the market days for Eke were, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Afor markets days were, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Otukpo-Icho market days were, Mondays, Fridays and Sundays, Ugboju market days were, Mondays and Fridays, Ugbokolo market days were Wednesdays and Saturdays and Onyangede market days were Tuesdays and Thursdays.<sup>142</sup> The items of trades were yams, livestock, melon, palm oil, beneseed, Okra, pepper, vegetables, locust bean, pots, mats, baskets and brooms<sup>143</sup> . Trade played a pivotal role in the socio-economic aspect of the people; however, women were the hallmark of the trade in the area under study. Trade existed between individuals and among villages, usually, it was a small scale and it was among the villagers before it was improved to market places. This local transaction was to meet the daily needs of the people in the area<sup>144</sup> . Women who were active in independent trading and production on a small scale in our society had few, if any alternative means of earning an income.

### **3.7 Household Trade and Local Exchange**

There existed local trade and exchange of commodities amongst the Idoma women in the pre-colonial period. Interviews with Omeche showed that women were not only into farming but were also trading locally and exchanging food stuff such as okpehe (locust Bean) and salt with other women in the Division.<sup>145</sup>

Thus, Idoma speaking people practiced the local trade within the villages that made up the area. Agricultural produce were mostly traded within this level of trade. However,

---

<sup>142</sup> Oral interviews

<sup>143</sup> Oral interviews

<sup>144</sup> Oral Interview with Onyeche Echeno

<sup>145</sup> Amina Ajefu, Awume,

this was one of the important aspects of trade in Idomaland and as earlier stated, the barter system was practiced at this level before the introduction of the British currency. The currencies used in the local trade was the Iron bars about fourteen inches long with a central bulb, called “*Kantai*,” one hundred kantai was the average price of a male slave.<sup>146</sup> This form of currency was the medium of exchange in Idomaland prior to the introduction of fairly standard currencies. Erim argued in this direction when he stated that,

The currency is an iron in form of a small hole, with a long pike at one end”. This strange money was in Doma and Kwararafa called *Akika*, by the mitsh Ibia, and in (Hausa language) *agelema*.<sup>147</sup>

Cowries shell was also used as currency in the area and was called *Ikpanini*.<sup>148</sup> According to Hopkins the cowries were imported from Maldive Island and Marion Johnson argued that cowries’ shells were imported from East Africa during the palm oil trade.<sup>149</sup> This was the forms of medium of exchange in the pre-colonial Idoma society. Thus, the existence of these currencies in the pre-colonial era greatly contributed to the integration of the economics, and goods could be measured for the value of money which gradually displaced barter system. Women acquired the currency through the sales from agricultural produce, making of pomade and palm oil. Every member of the household had their own produce for sale. Sometimes the women sold the produce from their husband’s farm and give the money to their husbands.

---

<sup>146</sup> Meek .C ,K, “*A Sudanese Kingdom “*. *An Ethnographical Study of the Jukun Speaking People of Nigeria*, Negro Universities Press, New York, 1931, p. 452, and Oral Interview with Ocheba Ogenyi on the 26/07/20 12.

<sup>147</sup> Erim .O. Erim, *Idoma Nationality 1600— 1900. Problems in Studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Nigeria, 1981, p109

<sup>148</sup> Oral Interview with Abenyi Ogar C. 67 years, in Oyangede, on the 15-3-2013

<sup>149</sup> A.G Hopkins; *An Economic History of West Africa*, London Publishers, 1973. p.68.

### 3.8 Long Distance Trade

Due to the active nature of Idoma women in agricultural production, women took care of the sales of agricultural products in the village markets of Ede, Afor, Nkwor, Eke, Ugboju, and Ugbokolo and trade at this level were also handled by women in Idoma Division.

There was long distance trade in the Division prior to the advent of British colonial rule. Igbo traders were the majority of traders who came to Idomaland for commercial activities, bringing pottery, textile and other products to *Otukpo*, *Orokam*, *Otukpa* and other places in the area under study and at the same time purchasing produce such as palm wine, live stocks and palm oil among others from Idoma Division. The Igala people also came for commercial activities in the area<sup>150</sup> and this to a great extent showed how trade brought these diverse groups into one socio-economic fold for a peaceful co-existence. The market was administered by the *Oche' Oja* appointed by the *Ojira*. Women were not appointed into the *Ojira* but some groups of women were at the fore front to see to the running of the market system when the need arose. He was appointed by the head of the clan and was responsible for maintaining law and order and the collection of market tolls. The *Oche' Oja* was highly placed in the market system. He performed judicial function by settling disputes at the market and any major disputes, for example cases on death was taken to the *Oche' Idoma* or head of the clan and *Ojira* (Assembly or Mass meeting of elders).<sup>151</sup> The *Oche' Oja* office was rotational among the lineage in the area and it was not hereditary. This was a functional institution that provided security to the traders in the area. Women of Idoma Division played invaluable roles both at the

---

<sup>150</sup> Oral interview with Atah Ogenyi, C. 73 years, in Otukpo, on the 16-3-20 13

<sup>151</sup> Ibid,

regional level and the long distance trade, thus women played a very significant role in the economic development of the area. It was quite clear that regional trade led to the introduction of certain crops in the area under study, the notable crops that were said to have been introduced in the area from Obolo-afu in the present day Enugu state was cashew, and textile materials were also brought into the areas by traders from the Igbo country.<sup>152</sup>

Some notable women in the long distance trade from the Igbo country were Oluchi Chukuma, aged 89, a trader from Enugu, Osinachi Ezenwata, aged 93, Uloma Chikeze, aged 92 a trader from Ubolu. Those from Igala Division were Ojochenemi Linus from Imane, Olamaboro, aged 85, Ojochogwu Omachi from Ibaji, aged 92, from the Tiv Division some notable women traders were Felicia John, Dooshima Timothy and Member Youngo. The participation of some Hausa women in the long distance trade was also noted by my informant, these were Zainebu, Jummai and Achetu.<sup>153</sup>

However, those from Idoma Division were Omada Linus, aged 87, trader, Akoundu Aboje, aged 98 from Agatu District, Onyowoicho Ameh, Edumoga District and Maria Obagwu, a trader from Onyangede District. These information were provided by people who participated in the long distance trade in the pre-colonial period area. These are oral information from eye witnesses who participated in the long distance trade in our area of study.

The wealth these women acquired during the long distance trade was much and was worth the volume of the traded items of yams, palm oil, Rice, livestock, pots, mats and baskets that women were able to support their households. The money was also used for

---

<sup>152</sup> Oral interview, with Agada Ochekwu, C. 73, on the 16-4-20 13

<sup>153</sup> Oral interviews with Omada Linus, C 87 Trader, Owukpa Districts



buying other household items which they were in need of while a of token the currency in use then (*ikpanini*) was used as contributions at weekly meetings called in Idoma dialect *Ugeha*, which will be kept in a small box as savings until it was time to be shared. This money was sometimes used by these women to buy sets of plates, pots and basins for their house chores.

The organization of the trade by these women in Idoma Division was on a mutual understanding and basis of understanding of the nature of the pre-colonial settings of the economy which stemmed from the organization of agricultural activities with the availability of ample lands for the production and processing of foods and material crops such as; yams, beans, pottery items, pomade, salts, locust beans, palm oil, mats and baskets.

However, some able-bodied men were selected to look after the affairs of the markets as laws were enacted to guide and regulate the markets systems. Examples of such laws were no theft and fighting in the market arena, prices of goods and items were equal and the arena of the markets must always be kept clean.

The challenges and prospects these women encountered were as follows; sometimes profits realized from sales were so low that, it affected women's financial status as they were inhibited from supporting and providing basic family needs, long distance trade were covered by walking long paths of 150 and 200 kilometres to markets and villages, they were sometimes ambushed by thieves and their money or goods collected.

### **3.9 Idoma Trade with the Igbo, Igala, Tiv and the Hausa and the role of women**

The socio- cultural and political impact of the contacts between the Idoma, Igbo, Igala, Tiv and the Hausa ethnic groups of peoples will be discussed in the light of their interaction in trading activities. According to “Jan Vasina”, these groups of people constituted an ethnic groups of their own in a community with its distinct language and culturally different from other communities around it<sup>154</sup>.

Trading activities in the pre-colonial period was not limited to Idoma Division alone. There existed household and local trade and exchange between women initially, women traded and sometimes exchanged salt, locust bean and dried fish before the women started going as far as Igbo land, Igala and Tiv Division to buy food and materials, likewise, other women from neighbouring borders were also coming to trade and buy items which were not produced in their land. However, these trading activities brought about interactions among Idoma Division women and other women from outside their territory.

Igbo women traders mostly traded at *ede*, *nkwor*, *eke*, and *afor* markets. The items they traded and brought were palm oil, baskets, food stuff, such as salt, okpehe and palm kernel which were used for making local pomade. That was the more reason why Otukpa, Orokam and Owukpa peoples of the Idoma Division understand the Igbo dialect and there existed between them intermarriages due to trade contact<sup>155</sup>, some of the impact of the contacts between these groups of people are understanding of each other’s dialects, intermarriages, similar facial marks particularly between the Idomas and the Igalas and breaking of kolanuts during social gatherings such as traditional marriage rites and the

---

<sup>154</sup> Mike Odey, p 37

<sup>155</sup> Oral interviews with Omadachi, C 89 on the 13-03 2013

way of dressing and greetings. Igala women from Ankpa Division also brought goods for sale in Idoma Division, while they brought some important things which they lacked in their Division from Idoma Division. Likewise, the Tiv women traders also brought food items to Idoma Division and food crops were either traded or exchanged in the pre-colonial period.

Importance of the pre-colonial trade to Idoma society, trade promoted cooperation between Idoma people and her neighbours, it made it possible for people from other areas to have access to some of the goods they lacked in their territory which would otherwise not be available to them, it aided economic growth and development of our area of study, trade also served as income generation to the women of Idoma Division where goods were exchanged for goods or a meager part traded and lastly, trade prevented waste of resources, people are able to exchange things they do not have too much of for things they do not have ample of.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The chapter examined the role of women in the pre-colonial economy of Idomaland. It was deduced from the study that women played significant roles in the development of the economy, and they contributed to agriculture, trade and commerce, labour output, and local industry. Yet, they were not part of the decision making process of the *Ojira* and were relegated from it. This chapter brought out the invaluable roles women played in pre-colonial era, they contributed in the cultivation of the land, they made local beer for labour in the farms, they engaged in mat weaving and basket making among others. The roles of women in the pre-colonial era was to a large extent obvious before it was altered by the advent of British colonial rule during the period 1908-1924 as contained in the next chapter. Trading activities brought diverse people together, which led to intermarriages, between the Igbos and Idoma's, Tiv and Idoma's, Gbagi and Idoma, the understanding of dialects, similar facial marks, way of dressing and greeting. This was as the result of the socio-economic interactions between these diverse ethnic groups in the pre-colonial period.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CONQUEST AND ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH COLONIAL RULE IN IDOMA DIVISION, 1908-1928

#### 4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the conquest of Idoma land by British colonial forces and the establishment of colonial administration during the period 1908-1924. The late 19th century was a period in which British Imperialism made desperate efforts to impose itself on Africa in general and Idoma area in particular. It was a well known fact that European Imperialism in general aimed at the political and economic domination of weaker nations of the world, with the interest to have a regular source of raw materials and markets for their surplus goods, profitable field of exploitation and where cheap labour could be acquired.<sup>156</sup> British Imperialism in Idomaland in particular and Nigeria in general employed all the means at their disposal to dominate the people, including Military forces for the selfish interest of metropolitan state. Thus, the late *19th* century was seen as the period of Imperial invasion, conquest and occupation for the total incorporation of the dominated people into the world capitalist system.

However, this chapter examined the advent of British colonialism in Idomaland, the resistance movement by the people of the area, the form and nature of resistance put up by the indigenes to colonial conquest and the extent to which the resistance yielded any positive result in the context of the colonial structure. Emphasis was further laid on the nature of the administrative arrangement that resulted after colonial conquest, which included Native Authority system, Native Police, Native courts, taxation, forced labour

---

<sup>156</sup>V. I. Lenin. *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow, 1983, pp 80-93 Also see Felix Greene, *The Enemy, What Every American Should Know About Imperialism*, New York, 1971. Also see Barret Brown, *The Economic of Imperialism*, New York, 1974, p.22

among others. The chapter critically analysed the attitudes of the colonial administration to the societies and the process through which Idomaland was finally “pacified” and incorporated into the colonial scheme of affairs and capitalist structures in line with the grand plan of European imperialism.

#### **4.2 British Invasion and Conquest of Idomaland, 1908-1928**

The process of British occupation of Idomaland began symbolically with the burning down of *Odugbehu* in *Agatu* District by Mclintock in 1899 and ended with suppression of Igede rebellion in 1928.<sup>157</sup> However, it should be noted that one of the factors that constituted problems for the colonial administration and participation by the indigenous people was the nature by which the British conquered and established domination on Idomaland.

The conquest was brutal and inhuman, whatever excuses the colonialists had for the conquest of the area cannot be justified on the basis of the conquest, because, they needed the resources of our area of study to boast the metropolitan states thus, British reasons for the subjugation of the people were ingenuine reasons. The British Imperialists claimed that the killing of an *Abapka* trader in *Odugbehu* led the British to invade the area in 1899.<sup>158</sup> The question to be asked is this, what was the relationship between the *Abapka* traders and the British colonial power? It was documented that the British Imperialists used the excuse of killing an *Abakpa* trader to invade, conquered and exploited the economies of the people of the area under study. However, in 1907 in *Adoka*, another

---

<sup>157</sup> V.G.O'KWU, *Idomaland Under Colonial Rule, 1900- 1950*, Niger Benue Seminar Paper, Department of History, A B U, Zaria, 1974. p.1 Also see George E. Ode, *Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division, 1908-1950*. M.A. Thesis, Department of History, ABU, Zaria, 1981, p.47

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, p 47

*Abapka* trader and a group of eight others claimed to be agents of Royal Niger Company were reportedly killed. These people were suspected to be the British agents therefore they were attacked and killed. Like the previous incidence, this evoked a harsh reprisal by the British who organized punitive measures against the recalcitrant village.<sup>159</sup> In the course of this, twenty three *Adoka* peoples were killed and thirty villages were burnt down, with livestock and food stuff confiscated to feed the patrol team.<sup>160</sup> The aim of British invasion, conquest and occupation of the various polities in Idomaland in particular and Africa in general was well documented. However, it was imperative to note that British Imperialism can only be grasped in their economic and political exploitation and the need to feed her home industry with the raw material she needed and with the use of propaganda the colonialists subjected the colonized to the habit of consuming what she did not produce and produced what she did not consume. This was a major problem that made the third world countries became a dumping ground for European industrial surplus goods. Imperialism was predatory and destroyed the development that existed in Nigeria prior to European contact in the 15th century. However, Lenin elucidated reasons for imperialism, which he argued that Imperialism was in place to search for raw materials and markets for its finished goods and fields of profitable investment and cheap labour.<sup>161</sup>

The British Imperialists entered Idomaland with the aim of suppressing the inhabitants of this territory so as to allow British commercial agents to collect commodities which included rubber, ivory, and palm oil without molestation. The British entered the area to

---

<sup>159</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No 27, Old District Note Book.

<sup>160</sup> See George.E.Ode and V.G,O'Kwu,

<sup>161</sup> V,I Lenin, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Moscow,1883. Also see, Felix Greene, *The Enemy, What Every American Should Know about Imperialism*. New York. 1971.

delimit a definite boundary line between the North and the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria. However, George Ode argued that the British colonialists were in Idomaland to complete the process of bringing all parts of Nigeria under effective British domination.<sup>162</sup> This study is in accord with the argument opined by George Ode that, the British colonizers were in Idomaland for no reason other than to exploit the human and material resources of the people.

The demands for raw materials by the British Imperialists led to the establishment of trading stations along the Benue River in 1880s. The station was at Loko, situated at the northern bank of the Benue River.<sup>163</sup> From critical evaluation of sources available, it was quite clear that the traders were British agents who supplied the British with information about the socio-economic organizations of Idomaland. It was from Loko the Royal Niger Company with its armed forces controlled and directed some economic activities of the people in the Middle and Lower Benue before 1900AD. For effective conquest of the area, the British colonialists under the supervision of Byng Hall moved the power base from Loko to *Ankpa* in 1906. This was the year the pressure was on European nations for the search for raw materials and markets were high, and it was this year that the pressure for the outbreak of the First World War was also high, and from *Ankpa*, the Northern and Central Idomaland was conquered.<sup>164</sup>

The nature of brutality and coercion used by the British colonialists urged the Resident Officer of Bassa, Byng Hall to negotiate with the secretary to the administration in Zunguru (The then headquarter of Northern Nigeria) for Assistant Resident officer in the Agatu District. It was against this background that Adejo Armstrong argued that the

---

<sup>162</sup> George.E. Ode, p.48

<sup>163</sup> Ibid,p50

<sup>164</sup> O'kwu,p9



situation in Obena village in Adoka where bombardment seemed to be thorough and people were accused of head hunting, kidnapping and murdering Hausa traders that British aims and interests were best understood. He further argued that the guns that were fired at *Obena* people by the Whiteman's troop had their vibrations tremendously affecting the people<sup>165</sup>. The pacification of the entire Idomaland was characterized by brutality which produced on the part of the Idoma bitterness, distrust, and aloofness towards colonial administration.

The colonizing officers that led the occupation of Idomaland were behaving with such recklessness that in 1910, the Assistant Resident at *Anpka* was inclined to warn one of the Junior Officers in restrained but with unmistakable language when he declared that "I wish this tour to be a pacific one. The military escort was not an offensive purpose but it was only sent as a protection for you. I do not wish this to be taken as a punitive patrol."<sup>166</sup>

The Idoma patrols, as stated by the British colonizing powers was to effectively control and bring the entire area under effective British hegemony. The Idoma patrol was carried out between 12, January, and 17, February, 1912.<sup>167</sup> The patrol consisted of Lieutenant A.C Aubin the officer in charge, Mr. Woodhouse, with an advance party of 18 ranks and a file carriers and a maxim gun.<sup>168</sup> The nature by which the British colonialists conquered Idomaland was brutal thus, this study agrees with views of Frantz Fanon on the issue of violence being attached to the conquest and occupation of the people. It was also argued

---

<sup>165</sup> Armstrong Matiu Adejo, "The History of political Development in Idoma Division".1900 1960, B A Thesis, Department of History, University of Maiduguri, 1984, p. 38

<sup>166</sup> Agaba Ebute John,"Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland." 1900- 1960, MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos.1996. p,134 In V.G. O'kwu, Idomaland under Colonial Rule, 1900- 1950.

<sup>167</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, SNP 2269/19 12 , Aubin Report on Idoma Patrol, Idoma Division

<sup>168</sup> Ediba Isaac Ogbodo, "Colonialism in Nigeria", A Case Study of Otukpo District.1908 -1960. M.A Thesis, Department of Histroy, A. B. U, Zaria, 2009, p.117

that colonial rule throughout the world has always been essentially a violent phenomena, it was imposed through violence and maintained by its potential capacity of violence.<sup>169</sup>

The Idoma Patrol as designed by the colonialists spent 36 days visiting most part of Northern Idomaland; they fed on the people's livestock and foodstuff without paying compensation. Rather, this troop killed the people who resisted their penetration into the territory. On 24<sup>th</sup>, January, 1912, the patrol was divided into two groups, one was headed by Lieutenant Longbourne which under took series of brutality in Idomaland.<sup>170</sup>

According to V.G.O'kwu, the attitude of the Idoma people towards the invading British escort was affected not only by the brutality of the raids but also by the presence of 'Abapka' traders.<sup>171</sup> To many Idoma, the memories of the horse war (*Efu- Onya*) was still fresh, so it was therefore a question of an old foe returned in the fashion of another powerful enemy. The horse war was a kind of resistance put up by the Idoma people to colonial rule and exploitation with the series of crisis and protest of the Idoma that evolved from colonial rule, exploitation and domination.

The presence of the "Abapka" trader in Idoma area in the 20th century was to generate immense hatred in the people for several reasons. Firstly, the people of this area associated the 'Abapka' traders with the jihadist who raided the region for slaves up to the end of the 19th century from the North of the Benue.<sup>172</sup> The *Abapka* traders were regarded by the people as the old raiders coming back in the company of a powerful

---

<sup>169</sup> Isichei A, *A History of Nigeria*, Longman Group Ltd, London, 1983, p5

<sup>170</sup> See, George.E.Ode, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division",

<sup>171</sup> V.G O'kwu ,

<sup>172</sup> see, George.E.Ode, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division",p60

enemy, the British.<sup>173</sup> The *Abapka* traders after taping the sap from the rubber trees left without paying royalties to the indigenous people of the area.

And most importantly, the rubber trees died because of the recklessness on the part of the *Abapka* traders. The Idoma people left the *Abapka* traders to tap the rubber trees by themselves because they thought they were good at tapping the rubbers from the trees and because they were making profits, they did not allow the trees to regain its fertility before tapping it again, thereby, causing the rubber trees to die.

Consequently, indigenous people became dissatisfied with this attitude and came into conflict with them.<sup>174</sup> However, one may conclude that the reasons why these *Abapka* traders behaved the way they did was because they thought Idomaland was under the control of the Sokoto Caliphate which was established after the conquest of the far North by the Jihadists led by Shehu Uthman Danfodio in 1804. The Sokoto Jihad did not conquer Idomaland and no community under Idoma Division paid tribute to the Sokoto Caliphate. But the *Abapka* traders thought that Idomaland was answerable to the Sokoto Caliphate. Also the absence of a centralized authority in Idomaland was an aspect the *Abapka* traders and British Imperialists took advantages of and invaded, conquered and occupied the region from the period 1899 to 1928.<sup>175</sup>

The colonization and conquest of Idomaland was done by the British and its colonial officers which led to the the establishment of colonial administration in Idomaland during the period 1908-1924, with the conquest however, Idomaland was conquered and incorporated into the colonial scheme of structures. However, some indigenous peoples

---

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p, 60

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p, 60

<sup>175</sup> See George .E. Ode, "Idomaland Under British Colonial Administration," Some Reflections on the Nature and Effect of Colonial Policy. Paper Presented to the Department of Histoy, A B U, Zaria. 1979.Pp2-5

were used to conquer Idomaland. For example, the *Abakpa* who were also the British agents were also used to conquer and occupied Idomaland.

Most communities in Idomaland such as *Onyangede*, *Ochobo*, *Oglewu*, and *Okpiko* did not encounter the agony of any noticeable military confrontation with the British Maxim gun; they were constantly at logger head with the British trade agents. This informed the perception that the *Abakpa* traders were agents of British colonizing powers.

The colonial troops existed as an army of occupation, moving from place to place conquering people and their land. The Igede District which was part of the Benue Province remained outside any form of colonial control until the *Ukelle* escort of 1922.<sup>176</sup>

The Igede were however, periodically visited by Military escort after colonel Trenchard expedition, one of such patrols ran into trouble in 1919 and they were conquered.<sup>177</sup> A well organized and much larger expedition was launched on the Igede in 1922 in spite of the determined resistance put up by the people of the area the Igede did not make a cause on the invaders. The Igede were eventually defeated by 1934 and were incorporated into the Okpoga District.<sup>178</sup>

However, the Igede's were among the communities in the Benue province that have a well documented resistance to British conquest and occupation. From 1928, the relationship between the Igede and the British remained unfriendly, this was not surprising because they were about to lose their independence to invaders whose interest was to exploit and dominate the people, essentially for economic pillage of the Igede area in particular and Nigeria in general. In 1924 and 1927, some *Abakpa* traders were

---

<sup>176</sup> See, V.G O'kwu, pp 9 -11.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p, 10

<sup>178</sup> See the works of V.G O'kwu, Idomaland under Colonial Rule, and George.E.Ode, The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division. M.A Thesis, Department of History, A B U, Zaria.

reportedly killed in an argument at *Ainu*.<sup>179</sup> The administration responded by impounding the people's weapons, this was interpreted as general disarmament and speculation circulated about what might follow and the people quickly rearmed.<sup>180</sup> The reprisal expedition later against the people exploded into a general uprising throughout Igedeland. It was against this background that the people planned a rebellion and *Ogbuloko*, a powerful juju military man took the leadership and in the mid 1928, nearly all the colonial agents in the District were massacred. This massacre was generally known as the *Ogbuloko* Rebellion in Idoma Division.

The *Ugbuloko* rebellion led to the massacre of the entire colonial agents in Igede area, leading to a seven months rebellion. This was one of the rebellions in the areas that struggled to retain and sustained the territory from falling into British colonialism. However, with the superior weapons (Maxim gun and Gatling gun) of the Imperialists<sup>181</sup>, and with the use of violence with the existence of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) the British were able to crush the rebellion in 1929. The leader was killed, houses were burnt down and the strength of the rebellion was weakened which eventually led to its fall in 1929, and this was the final stage in the pacification of the entire Idomaland. At this point, it should be noted that by 1929 the whole of Idomaland was conquered and occupied by the British colonialists.

The conquest of Idomaland took about three decades, from 1899 to 1928; during this period violence was imperative in order to regain back their freedom. The Idoma did not

---

<sup>179</sup> Agaba Ebute John, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland", p137.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid , p, 137

<sup>181</sup> Pictures of these guns were displayed in UNESCO , Vol. 7 titled: *Africa Under Colonial Domination*, 1994, p. 21, the guns were so powerful, it was used during the First World War and was also retained for the conquest of the independent polities in Nigeria in particular and Nigeria in general under the West African Frontier Force (WAFF).

have any standing army; the decentralized and fragmented structure of the people was imperative to the conquest. From 1907 till the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, one noticed that the process of subjugating the indigenous authorities of the various Idoma communities particularly those in the Southern and Eastern part of the territory became increasingly intensified, and in consequence came under the focus of new administration.

For the British, the significance of the Idomaland which was situated in a strategic area between the Northern and Southern protectorate was very fundamental to their exploitation and conquest. This was so, given the fact that a proposed link between the coast and the newly opened tin mine in Jos plateau and some parts of Bauchi, was to pass through parts of Central and Eastern Idomaland.

However, given the overwhelming military technological superiority of the British, the Maxim guns which could not be matched by the bows and arrows of the people of this area was central in the conquest of Idomaland. Michael Crowther argued that “each small autonomous village valued its independence and would guard it jealously whenever it could from infringement by the Whiteman or stranger”.<sup>182</sup>

The indigenous people did not fold their arms watching the British taking up their Sovereignty. They resisted the invaders but due to the technological advancement of the British over the indigenous people, they were conquered. There were resistance movements in *Otukpo*, *Agatu*, *Igede*, *Orokam*, among others, but there were more organized resistance movement in the Northern and Central parts of the Idomaland than

---

<sup>182</sup> Crowder Michael, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, Hutchenson Publishers, London, 1968, p.71

the Southern and Western areas.<sup>183</sup> After the conquest of Idomaland, the next step was the reorganization of the social, political and economic structure to favour the exploitation of both human and material resources in the region in line with the British interest.

### 4.3 The Consolidation of British Colonial Rule

The moment the British conquered an area, the next agenda was to establish a political system that will fit into their plan of exploitation of the human and material resources for the gains of the metropolitan state. In Idomaland, the British did not administer the whole Division at the same time; they were of the view that the people were backward, primitive and did not have any political baseline to be ruled.

In 1908 the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was created, and the Northern Boundary of the new Protectorate truncated Idomaland, leaving a huge chunk of it in the Southern and Western Provinces, which later became Western Nigeria. Consequently, the Western Districts of Idoma Division were organised first as the *Akpoto* District of *Okwoga* Division in the Onitsha Province.<sup>184</sup> A boundary demarcation commission in 1917 redrew the North-South boundary along ethnic lines, although there were still anomalies.<sup>185</sup> Ethnic categorization was a strategy used by the British in colonizing the independent polities of the Nigeria area, these “development” gave rise to the segregation and categorization of the people in the Nigeria area into *Sabon Gari*, for non-indigenes.

---

<sup>183</sup> See the following books on the resistant movement in Idomaland, (A) George, E. Ode, *The Impact of British Colonialism on te People of Idoma Division*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, A.B.U Zaria, 1981 (B) Agaa Akatu, *Problem of Taxation, An Aspect of Colonialism in Idomaland* B.A. Project Submitted to the Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria, 1973, (C) Agaba Ebte John, *Colonialism and the introduction to Cash Economy in Idomaland, 1900-1960* M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos, 1996.

<sup>184</sup> Adegbe Idoko Benedict, “British Colonial Rule and its Impact on Orokam Traditional Society” 1916-1960. A case study of British Colonial Administration in Idomaland. B.A, Project, University of Jos, 1980. P, 5.

<sup>185</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc. No. 11, Northern Area Old District Note Book, Vol. 1

Tudun wada for indigenes and Government Reserved Area (GRA) for colonial officials, these were the pattern in which the societies of the Northern Nigeria were categorized and separated. In 1918 subsequently, the old *Okpoga* Division was carved out from the Southern Province and merged with the Munshi Province in the Northern part of Nigeria. Prior to 1920, the British were yet to find a workable means by which to administer some of the districts in Idoma Division. The subjugation of any area was one thing and its administration was quite another. The latter presented a more difficult problem in respect of the Idoma than the former. The British imperialists realized the danger of using the traditional institutions of the people to make real their authority.

The British did not take time to study the people's socio-political system and customs before they decided to establish a Native Authority Sytem in 1912.<sup>186</sup> This involved the *Och'Otukpo*, a greatly reduced *Ojira* formed the Native Authority. Membership was limited to a handful of British favourites. It was stripped of all it legislative and judicial powers, which was vested in the *Och'Otukpo* represented by the Native Authority. It was left with only the executive powers to carry out the orders which the British issued through the *Och'Otukpo*. It was a negation to the claim that indirect rule merely implied the governing of subjugated people through their own political institutions.

#### **4.4 The Creation of Districts in Idoma Division**

The Idoma Division comprised of 24 Districts these were Otukpo, Agatu, Edumoga, Adoka, Onyangede, Okpoga, Otukpa, Owukpa, Orokam, Ugboju, Igumale which was created by the colonialists to ascertain the policy of Divide and Rule. In each districts,

---

<sup>186</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, ARJINT/1/5, Intelligence Report on Otukpa District by Capt. G.D.C. Money, 1926.



there was a District Head, a Native Courts and a District Council. The council members were at first appointed, like the District Heads, by British Officers. But these officers who were really District and Assistant District Officers (DO and ADO), did not, before 1930, carry out adequate consultation with the local people before they appointed the council members and their Heads. The District Head and the District Council formed a Native Courts for their District, and the District Head was as well the president of the Native courts. In order to discharge their duties satisfactorily there was a Council Scribe, two or three local policemen who also served as messengers, and an interpreter who helped the colonial officers to communicate with the local people. Each village within a district had a Village Headman who acted between his village and the District Headquarters. Above all, these, local agents were the British District Officers or the Assistant District Officers who passed orders down to their agents in the Districts. Officers occasionally supervised the activities of their agents in the Districts. The District Officers and their Assistants in turn were accountable to the Resident who was the officer in charge of the Province.<sup>187</sup>

The creation of Districts caused a great deal of confusion among the local people. Some of the clans and sub-clans which were forced to accept the leadership of only one person as a District Head were before colonial rule united under different leadership as discussed in chapter two. Even within the so-called single clans, there were still sub-clans which enjoyed a large measure of independence before the advent of the British. Some clans were not at peace with other neighbouring clans. For example *Akpa* and *Utonkon* had a serious crisis prior to the period under study and their trouble did not end before 1909. *Oglewu* and *Otukpo* also had serious crises.<sup>188</sup> Within Igede District the *Iyeche* clan had

---

<sup>187</sup> See lioroprof no.2700 NNAK Amalgamation Reports by F.D. Lugard

<sup>188</sup> NAK MakprofAR/11'4T/1/1 Report on Otukpo District by D.F Heath D.O.

serious troubles with the *Uwokwu* clan. Some of these conflicts did not end, according to the people's custom, before the British imposed their rule on the people. It was therefore, impossible for the people of one clan to accept the leadership of a person from another unfriendly clan forced on them by the British.

It should also be noted that the type of people the British Officers appointed to rule were not in some cases suitable from the local people's point of view and therefore, not acceptable to their people. Local communities had ruling lineages and families had a gerontocratic system of government. But the British needed strong middle-aged men who could command their people to do anything they wanted to do. The British did not care about their social backgrounds. In most cases, such people had no right to rule others as far as traditional societies were concerned. Thus, by 1920 when the British introduced the system whereby District Heads were selected by a majority of the elders in their respective Districts, the people viewed it as acceptance of defeat by the British. The right people in the traditional system were in most cases no longer acceptable to the British<sup>189</sup>.

#### **4.5 The Native Authority System**

The Native Authority System was the body concerned with the day to day administration of Idoma Division. The British administration in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern Nigeria region heavily relied on the Native Authority System, systematically based on emirs and the chiefs and had evolved into a powerful political force.<sup>190</sup> However, the actual position of the Native Authority was contained in the Political Memoranda by Frederick Lugard as thus "The Native Authority.

---

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> Yahaya A. D., *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria*. A.B.U., University Press, Kaduna Nigeria 1980, p.3

Thus recognised were not to be regarded as independent ruler. They were the delegates of the governor whose representative was the resident. The central government reserved to itself the sole right to raise and control armed forces, to impose taxation of any kind, to make laws and to dispose of such land as are under Native law and custom vested in the paramount power. These limitations were specifically set out in the letter of appointment under which each chief of the higher grades held his office.<sup>191</sup>

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the Native Authority system was a complete indirect rule system which was synonymous with the centralization of political system and a well developed system of taxation. The Native Authority system in Northern Nigeria was not simply an institution of local government, but an organizational manifestation of political and social forces in the colonial society.<sup>192</sup> The Native Authority, as a political institution under colonial rule was expected to maintain law and order, to balance interest among the political and social forces, and to supervise all allocation of resources in the society. It was in this sense that the colonial regime expected it to function.<sup>193</sup>

From the early days of British administration in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern Protectorate, Native administrations were developed into units of local government based on emirs and chiefs and, by the end of the Second World War, this evolved into powerful Political force<sup>194</sup>. In the emirate north, since the N.A. was constituted under a chief, the legal authority for local government during the British rule was vested in the office of Emir, and the Emirs thus, became recognized as the authorities responsible for local

---

<sup>191</sup> See, Dr. Sule Bello, *State and Economy in Kano, C. 1894 to 1960, A Study of Colonial Domination*, Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria, 2011, in Lugard Fredrick, *Political Memoranda*, London, 1918, p. 93

<sup>192</sup> Yahaya, A.D, p.5

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>194</sup> Heath, D. F.

government and the implementation of colonial policies through the Residents and the District Officers. It should be noted that the N.A. under colonial rule in Northern Nigeria was not simply an institution of local government, but an organizational manifestation of a political and social forces in the colonial society<sup>195</sup>. Yahaya stated that...

The N. A. as a political institution under colonial rule was expected to maintain law and order, to balance interests among the political and social forces, and to supervise the allocation of resources in the society. It was in this sense that the colonial regime expected it to function<sup>196</sup>.

Thus, it could be said that the N.A. was a necessary participant in the political transformation of Northern Nigeria, especially from the mid 1940s. Broadly speaking, the primary interest of the N.A. was to safeguard the values to which it was founded and considered vital for the survival of the political and social forces it represented. Nowhere did British demonstrate the political force during the colonial period than in the area of the administrative superstructure that was imposed in Idoma Division, and other desperate ethnic groups occupying the Benue region. The political and administrative changes that Idoma Division experienced following the conquest of the area can better be appreciated against the background of the development of the Native Authority. The haphazard attempts that were made by the specialists to establish the rudiments of a local administration as a reflection of the Indirect Rule developed in the emirate north by Lord Lugard.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> See A. D. Yahaya. *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria*, Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, 1980. p.3

<sup>196</sup> Ibid

<sup>197</sup> See Okpeh O. Okpeh. "The Idoma and Minority Group Politics in Northern Nigeria," 1944: A Study in an aspect of the National Question. Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos, Plateau State, 1994, p. 161.

The British, through Lugard, were so fascinated with the centralized political system in the emirate north and they found this system to be non-existent with the various polities of the central Nigerian area. What happened was that there were chiefdoms, but the chiefdoms were small in size when compared to the emirates. It is of course true that, some of the societies in the middle belts lacked centralized institutions. Therefore, the British, quickly concluded that they were “primitive and had no form of social or political organisation”. According to Ballard:

The British saw the “Pagan” of both North and South as “tribes” in the lowest stage of primitive Savagery, without central organization’<sup>198</sup>

*Otukpo* District, for example, because it was erroneously assumed that the people lacked indigenous political institutions and leadership through which administrative policies could be made and in order to safeguard the interest and values of the colonialists, the colonial administration appointed one Ogbole in 1923<sup>199</sup>. This year marked the beginning of the Native Authority in the District and this very act by the British was to instigate political dissension between the three lineages of *Otukpo* District. By this action, the British disregarded the existing pre-colonial system of political appointment of chiefs in *Otukpo* clan. *Ogbole* was considered to be too young by the people and as such, cannot rule the district. Thus, he assumed the role of the District Head of the newly created *Otukpo* District comprised of all the villages in *Otukpo* clan. Worst still, the British administration came to interpret Ogbole’s new office as synonymous with the *Och’Otukpo*. However, justifying the British administrative actions, H. P. Eliot wrote thus:

---

<sup>198</sup> Ibid

<sup>199</sup> See George E. Odeh. “The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division”, 1908 — 1950, Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Department of History, A. B. U. Zaria, 1981, p.100

The extent of the influence of the District Head was very small but it served the purpose of holding together the peoples groups of independent and mutually jealous villages and accustomed them to work together in the Native courts<sup>200</sup>.

It should be noted that prior to colonial rule, it was usually the most suitable elder of the appropriated lineage in *Otukpo* clan that was elected to the position of a chief. However, because the colonial administration wanted effective agents, age was undermined and older candidates were automatically disqualified. This violated the traditional methods of selection by rotation as shown in the chapter two of this work. Thus, emerged a new class of Chiefs who ensured the execution of the unpopular policies of the British, the “*Och’umbeke*” meaning, white man’s chief by the people, the colonial styled office had the power and prestige as well as the British government’s sanction and were to the “Warrant Chiefs” in Eastern Nigerian<sup>201</sup>.

Furthermore, Ogbole encouraged by the British administration, appointed village representatives known as *Oteyi*. They, however, became the mouth-piece of the administration at the village level, quite contrary to the pre-existing village head who was usually the oldest man in a particular village. Thus, apart from being particularly autocratic in the dispensation of their duties, this category of chiefs became oppressive and corrupt. They however, regularly meet at *Otukpo Upu* at summon of chief Ogbole. These together with the salaries attached to the new office turned into a sort of center of attraction to the younger and more ambitious members of the *Otukpo* society, resulting, in the final analysis, into the convulsive phenomenon of unregulated struggles for

---

<sup>200</sup> MAKPROFFARIINT/1/3 Report on Idoma Division by H. P. Elliot, 1924

<sup>201</sup> See A.E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria: Direct or Indirect?* In *JHSN* vol. 3, No. 4 1967.

succession for which the *Otukpo* people were well known during this period<sup>202</sup>. In 1946<sup>203</sup> the colonial state established the Central Idoma Native Authority System; this encompassed the whole Division to have a single Native Authority System to administer the people. This action by the colonialists was not for the best interest of the people. The Central Native Authority System Idoma Division brought conflict among the various headships of districts, as *Otukpo* became the capital of the Central Native Authority System, some district heads refused to take orders from the Central Native Authority in *Otukpo*. It was this Central Native Authority that helped the colonial state to mobilize forced labour to work in the railway, and other roads networks in Idoma land during the period 1946-1960. It must be emphasized that, the creation of the Central Native Authority for the Idoma directed attention at the creation of a superior Native Authority for the whole of the people under the area from 1946.

This policy gathered momentum as from 1928 when the Southern and Northern District was amalgamated into a single administrative Division with its headquarters at *Otukpo* District. It was also at this same time the Idoma central council or *Ojila* of Idoma District Heads was established. It was imperative to note however, that the nomenclature as applied here to mean a selected group with a clearly defined and limited leadership was a misnomer. As Alvin Magid pointed out, its compact form described membership and scheduled meetings were only infrequent attributes of the national assembly<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> See J. O. Derrett (ed) *Studies in the Laws of Succession in Nigeria*, London, 1965

<sup>203</sup> Ediba Isaac Ogbogo, "Colonialism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908- 1960, M. A Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria, 2009

<sup>204</sup> See A. Magid, *Men in the Middle: Leadership and Role Conflict in a Nigerian Society*, Manchester University Press, 1976, pp. 44—45.

The Idoma central council however, served as an appeal court, hearing appeals from the districts. It also “advised” the administration on matters referred to it. V. G. Okwu saw this as the reversed of what was obtainable in the emirates, where he argued. The administrative officers served as advisers to the Emirs<sup>205</sup>. This, he argued, showed to what extent or degree the administrative officers were involved in the Native Authority of Idoma Division.

However, the establishment of the Idoma Central Council with headquarters at Otukpo marked a watershed in the evolution of Idoma political consciousness in the colonial milieu. Although a purely administrative measure, this step towards political unification of the Districts marked the climax of the series of attempts made by the colonial administration to unite the desparate kindred groups in the Division for the purpose of effective application of the principles of local administration. Indeed, as early as 1927, the central council or *Ojila* of District Heads was perceived by the administration as the precursor of a Divisional chieftaincy. This political development dealt a terrible blow to the N.A. in Otukpo District headed by Chief Heads. Given that the British wanted Otukpo to serve as the Divisional headquarters, the District heads choose it as the center of their quarterly meetings. When this arrangement was effectively enforced, the roles of chief Ogbole were usurped by a more superior and empowered central native authority. Thus, the seniority principle which was strongly emphasized by the various District Heads once again resurfaced. Following this, Chief Enyi from Igumale District emerged as the chairman of the Idoma N.A. in 1928’. This development unarguably undermined the executive and judicial roles of Chief Ogbole in Otukpo District in the sense that he

---

<sup>205</sup>Adejo,A.M, “The History of Political Development in Idoma Division, 1900 – 1960”. Unpublished B. A. Project, Department of History, University of Maiduguri, Borno State, 1984, pp. 83-90



was not in charge of a superior local administration that existed and functioned in his territory. In addition this political arrangement continued and provided the platform for the subsequent centralization of political authority by the British in 1947.

Meanwhile, the role and status of women was seriously affected as women were heavily tax, women were part of the Idoma population that paid direct tax in the colonial period while, the Central Native Authority also aided the colonial state to mobilize forced labour to work at the railway in Otukpo in which women were subjected to strigents of labour exploitations in carrying water, stones and sands to construction sites.

#### **4.6 The Native Police**

The establishment of Native Courts to a great extent signified the creation of Native Police, the department that forcefully arrest offenders and enforced colonial laws. The Native Police as linked to the Native Authority system in Idoma Division was created to provide security to British colonialists, colonial property and to arrest people who in most cases refused to pay tax, forced labour refusal, and flogging of people that undermine the law and order of the British colonialists. The Native Police was first established in Idomaland in 1908 with the creation of Okwoga District, and subsequently, other districts were created so was the recruitments of people into the Native Police System. The Police served as escorts to the tax agents in order to protect against violence and others such as those who refused to pay tax were taken by the police.

The police who were also known as the Dogari (Native Police) were attached to a “*Dogari*” in the collection of tax also, as stated above, this was because the “*Dogari*” encountered tax riot in Otukpa. Based on this fact, the police were attached to the *Dogari* for safety and to prevent the indigenous people from rioting against the colonial agents,

in other words, they are also known as tax collectors. The numbers of police was also increased and intensified when the colonialists in our area of study increased tax payment, this was to prepare adequately in case there was a tax riot in the process. The police were stationed to protect colonial interest to the highest order, and where the police were not effective, the colonial military force were deployed. This was one of the reasons why the Idoma patrol lasted in Idomaland till 1929. The Native Police was established for enforcing colonial policies in Idoma Division, and to an extent it was successful in maintaining law and order for the colonial state, most especially, in arresting and punishing people that did not abide by or maintain law and order in the area up to the period of independence.

#### **4.7 The Native Courts**

British colonial administration in Nigeria brought confusion to the people and drastically altered the existing African judicial system which was the establishment of Native courts. The British earlier observed, after the conquest of Nigeria from 1900, that the system of justice hitherto tenable in Nigeria societies was “repugnant to natural law and justice”<sup>206</sup>. Thus, it was on this backdrop that they set in motion the process of overhauling the justice system in Nigeria to conform to aspirations of colonial imperialism and to complete the process of undermining the socio-cultural and political system prevailing, prior to their incursion. It was also necessary in order to ensure the maintenance of “law and order”, in an abode of “barbarism and cruelty”.<sup>207</sup> This motion was focused on the colonial state apparatus and also included the police. In addition, these institutions were

---

<sup>206</sup> NAK MARKPROF, AR/ASS/1/8 W. M. McCreery Assessment Report on Otukpo District, 1926- 1927

<sup>207</sup> Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1922. p.564

necessary for protecting the colonialists from any form of nationalist expression which were perceptively bound to surface in one way or the other.

In view of this, Grades A. B. C and D courts were established in different Nigerian polities that were subdued. The Native courts had authority to try certain categories of cases, such as theft and adultery, while the more serious cases such as murder was tried by the British officers themselves<sup>208</sup>. It should be noted that the Idoma conception of justice, prior to the advent of the British, involved not only punishment but also retribution and expiation. For among them, in the realm of crime, law and justice, the interest of the living individual, community and those of the *Alekwu* were regarded as identical. Thus, British conception of justice was strange to the people<sup>209</sup>. Cases and disputes were tried by different bodies ranging from the *A'dole* (Compound head) to the *Ojila* (general assembly). Serious cases were tried by clan heads and their spokesmen. The truth was often revealed by asking the parties involved to take an oath. The establishment of native courts by the British undercut the influence of the traditional institutions and some individuals. The people vehemently resisted this diversion accentuated by colonial rule; given the forceful and firm establishment of colonial rule they had no option than to struggle to take up the new offices created by the British.<sup>210</sup>

The Native court was a major imperative to colonial administration, the department under the Native Authority system that prosecuted offenders. Colonial policies were meant to be maintained and respected, despite the harsh policies, of heavy taxation, confiscation of livestock and foodstuff, forced labour and all inhuman treatment. The law and order must

---

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.p.

<sup>209</sup> See M. Y. Mangywat. "Colonial Economy and Society of Nigeria, 1900— 1960," being a paper presented at the Seminar on Nigerian Economy and Society since the Berlin Conference: 1884-1985, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, A.B.U. Zaria, 11-15 November, 1985, p.35

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. p. 40

be respected by the colonized. There was the punishment of imprisonment and fine in cash, which was to be used for the administration of the districts under the Idoma Division and it was under the control of the Native Treasury under the Native Authority System.

#### **4.8 Colonial Infrastructure**

Colonialism was not a charity venture to establish infrastructural development in the colonies, however, colonialism created avenues for the easy evacuation of raw materials to the coast. The intention was not for the development of the colonies, it was ascertained for the easy exploitation of the raw material and importation of finished goods from Europe to the interior of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. In the case of Idoma Division, the British colonialists developed the Otukpo railway in 1923. It was the single and most important infrastructure the colonialists did in Idoma Division.

Before the creation of the Idoma Division which in 1924, replaced the erstwhile Okpoga Division, the British administration felt that Otukpo District was more strategic for the British administration of the people of the Division than Okpoga, Ankpa or elsewhere<sup>211</sup>. This likeness of the British for Otukpo District was further confirmed when the Eastern railway from Port-Harcourt passed through *Igumale Utonkon, Akpa* and then *Otukpo*, Otukpo District, it should be noted, was the first point north of the Benue- River from which the railway line passed from the South to the North of the country. It was therefore, regarded as a commercial terminus between the two protectorates of the country.<sup>212</sup>

---

<sup>211</sup> Intelligence Report by Captain G.D.C Money

<sup>212</sup> R. G. Armstrong, *The Idoma Speaking Peoples*

The building of bridges between 1921 and 1935 was also imperative, most of which were constructed with strong and heavy logs with the involvement of women conveying woods to the construction sites. In addition, there was a massive erection of houses and government offices for the colonial officers in Otukpo. This infrastructural proliferation no doubt galvanized the urban development of Otukpo thereby, affecting the demographic pattern of the area. As forced labour in the whole Division was concentrated in Otukpo, it led to the influx of many people into the area. Given this situation, and to intensify the local people's suffering, the assessment and collection of direct taxation was rigorously intensified by the colonial authorities and even the stranger settlement were not left out. The total tax revenue of the Otukpo District in 1935 was £482, which was 5.2 percent of the tax revenue of the Idoma Division. Out of this sum, the non-indigenes paid £123 into the colonial treasury annually<sup>213</sup>. It should be noted that some of the labourers from other Divisions after rendering services at the railway sites later settled in Otukpo and did not go back to their homes. Thus, most of them settled close to the Central Native Treasury office built in 1926. Up to 1945, very little currency was in circulation in Otukpo in spite of its expanding urban process and the unprecedented population growth.

---

<sup>213</sup> George E. Odeh, p.184

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

From the foregoing chapter, it was revealed that the advent of colonialism introduced alien socio-economic and political structures in the Division under study. However, the conquest of Idomaland was brutal and inhuman, making it one of the procedures Frantz Fanon opined, that it was through violence that the various independent polities of the colonized were maintained and brought down and they were also sustained administratively through violence. The moment the British conquered an area the next step was how to administer the various groups, and through the administrative structures imposed on the colonized, forced labour and colonial taxation was all functional under the auspice of the Native Authority System. From the period 1908 to 1928, the whole of Idoma Division fell under the British colonialists, and at this period to 1960 the history of the Idoma people was characterized by exploitation which led to the eventual linkage of Idoma society and economy into the metropolitan capitalist system.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BRITISH COLONIAL ECONOMIC POLICIES AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

#### IN THE COLONIAL ECONOMY IN IDOMA DIVISION, 1929-1959

##### 5.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to examine the British colonial economic policies and the role women played in the colonial economy of Idoma Division during the period 1908-1960. Women have played substantial role in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, they were part of the population that paid direct tax, they formed major part of the traders and consumers of goods and services, women engaged in local industries such as mat weaving, broom making, palm fruits processing, pottery making, local beer production, among others. However, this chapter attempted to bring out the impact of colonial rule on women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division. Previous chapters revealed that colonialism was imposed on the people through violence and sustained through violence. Fanon<sup>214</sup> and other scholars described the colonial phase in Nigeria in general and in Otukpo in particular as a period of exploitation, deceit, banditry and oppression in Africa. Women were estimated to be responsible for more than half of the food produced in the developing countries, and it was also argued that the proportion could be higher in Africa.<sup>215</sup> In Idoma Division, women were responsible for the trashing or pressing of oil from palm fruit, and according to Agaba<sup>216</sup> women were integral part of the colonial economy, through the cultivation of land for the production of food to sustain the

---

<sup>214</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Books Publishers, Paris, 1962, also see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Panaf Publication, Nairobi, 1971

<sup>215</sup> I. Ifeyori, *The Impact of the Better Life Programme on the Economic Statue of Women*, IFRA Occasional Publication, No. 7, African Books Builders, Ibadan, 1991, p.1

<sup>216</sup> Agaba John Ebute, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland", 1908-1960, M.A Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos, 1996

household systems and the weaving of baskets and mats, pottery making and decorations, trade and commerce and host of other roles. The analysis of the colonial economy of Africa cannot be completed without the role of women in its discourse, it was noted that, the colonial state were morally abusing women during the colonial era, some were taken for prostitution which defined the interest of the colonial state.

## **5.2 British Colonial Economic Policies in Idoma Division**

British colonial economic policies in our area of study can only be understood within the context and aims of British colonialism in Nigeria in general and Idoma Division in particular. This in its content is the subjugation and exploitation of a people of their human and natural resources. In the analysis of the economic roles of women, they subsidized in the economy through their roles in agricultural production both in export and food crops, processing and preservation, in processing palm fruits into oil women were the major people in this industry, in trade, women were the people who traded food and items at the market and in local industries, women were found to contribute the largest share. In this discourse, colonial land policy, colonial economic policy of forced labour and taxation which were critical to the attainment of the aims of the British were most crucial means in which the British colonialists exploited the economy of Idoma Division as will be examined subsequently in this study.

### **5.2.1 Colonial Land Policy**

Colonial policy on land in the study area cannot be understood if not situated within the larger Northern Nigeria Area. The colonial policy on land in Northern Nigeria was aimed at advancing British interests through the incorporation of the region and its economies



into the expanding world capitalist system. After the conquest of the area, the land was regarded as 'crown' and 'public' land. 'Crown' land was the area previously bought by the Niger Royal Company, while 'public' land did not fall under the jurisdiction of the N.R.C. But, following the appointment of Sir Percy Girourd in 1906 as High commissioner, land proclamations were revised and what followed was the enactment of the 1910 Land and Native Rights Proclamation, which in its content placed all lands occupied or unoccupied under the control of the Governor of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria who was to administer the land for the "common" use and supposedly for the benefit of the 'natives'. Peasants were no longer entitled to compensation on land but only on improvements and peasants could be disposed of their land without finding alternative land for them.

The power of the Governor, Resident and District Officers was however to be exercised in accordance with native law and custom as enshrined in the principles of indirect rule. With these new changes and developments, there was an acceleration of land acquisition by Europeans especially in building colonial houses, rest houses and also appropriating land for the building of railways and other public facilities.

The effect of the colonial land policy on the women of our area of study was that under the enactment of the 1910 Land and Native Rights Proclamation, this placed all lands occupied or unoccupied under the control of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria to administer the land. The implication of this on the women and the Division was that, they were no longer entitled to compensation on lands and were allocated in the interest of the colonialists for production of crops which yielded and produced quantities of food. Although, this led to the limitation of food crops production and increasing the yields of

exports crops which were spearheaded by the British for the expansion of their home economies as the expatriates paid the colonial government a certain fee before land was leased out. The impacts of all of these were the increase of export crop production and minimal food crops production due to more demands on the cash crops than food crops production. This increased the yields of crops which led to the economic development of the Idoma Division as bush fallowing system became less practiced and there was degradation of the fertility of soils.

The implication of this meant that the traditional land tenure was broken down especially as a result of the monetisation of the economy. Food production had to increase due to the need to pay taxes using the newly introduced British currency. From the 1920's upward, more and more land came under cultivation in order to meet household consumption and the local market, thereby leading to the reduction in the practice of bush fallowing and shifting cultivation. Lands that were previously left to fallow for about three to four years, were now constantly cultivated, thus, bush fallowing was hardly practiced by 1935. The long term effect of this was the degradation in the fertility of the soil. It was rather unfortunate that women in Idoma Division bore the brunt of food crop production coupled with other activities within the domestic domain, for example, animal husbandry, craft production, care for the children and the aged.

### **5.2.2 Colonial Policy on Agriculture**

Colonial Policy on Agriculture in Northern Nigeria considered Idoma Division as a major area for the production of export/cash crops, and also an area for labour reserve for the tin mines in Jos, railway construction in Otukpo, public works, and an area for the

production of food crops for the colonial army, labour force. Colonial Policy on agriculture was very vital to the British colonialists whose immediate need was to get the inhabitants of the Division to farm and produce agricultural crops both in cash and in food crops in large quantities to develop her home countries.

Cash and food crops were exploited by the colonialists to the metropolitan states. This was achieved through the various introductions of plantations which became imperative to feed the colonial troop. Cash and food crops were produced in large quantities in the interest of of the British and labour on this note became intense as will be examined in the study. There was also initial need of labourers for the construction of administrative buildings, rest houses, cells, military camps etc. By 1930 labour was required for the tin mines in the Jos Plateau and in Otukpo road and railway construction, bridges and forestry works.<sup>217</sup> Labour was conscripted through forceful means especially at the district levels, while in the tin mines; the labour categorization included waged and unwaged labourers.

Portterage became a widespread means of transportation in Idoma Division in which Women were used as porters to transport heavy European equipment from Otukpo to Makurdi. Others transported equipment from Otukpo District to Makurdi and sometimes Onitsha Province and they sometimes returned home with imported seedlings and insecticides etc. Although, both men and women were used, women suffered more due to the nature of goods conveyed.

These journeys usually took a day or even weeks depending on the nature of movement. Many women were reported to have had still birth and miscarriages during the course of

---

<sup>217</sup> Oral Interview with Ohemu Efikwu, C 71, a farmer in Otukpo, on the 21-8-2013

such journeys.<sup>218</sup> The colonialists solely depended on portterage and in rare cases on pack animals for transportation of goods from one District to Northern Province until the late 1920's when the North-Eastern railway lines were completed and thus, provided an alternative means of transportation of the exploited goods.

### **5.2.3 Colonial Monetary Policy and Taxation**

The nature of colonial taxation in Idoma Division was brutal and exploitative as both men and women were charged to pay a specific amount of money as tax. Women were in some occasions, taxed more than the men because colonial officers believed they make more money from the sales of agricultural produce and trading generally. Men and women reacted and resisted colonial taxation by leaving their houses and hiding in the bush when the colonial agent comes to collect taxes.

Colonial Policy on Taxation was no doubt one of the most important means in which the British colonialists exploited the peasants of Idoma Division. The imposition of direct tax was therefore to demonstrate that there was transfer of sovereignty from the colonized peoples to the colonisers. Direct taxation was enforced as the basis of the revenue system for the whole of Northern Nigeria. Lugard accepted direct taxation as an essential feature of the new native administration. He further stressed that payment of such taxes by peasants should be in cash and when it became necessary, payment could also be received in kind. Thus, he left the instruction to that effect as follows;

When payment is received in kind the District Officer should, of course, accept only what is mostly easily convertible into cash, such as cotton, livestock, produce which can be issued as ratio to soldiers or police.

---

<sup>218</sup> Oral Interview with Agada James, a farmer, C 78, in Otukpo on the 21-08-2013

Of course the colonialists needed the peasants to pay tax for the day to day running of the local administration and for remittance to the home government. In order to achieve its goal in the area of taxation, the peasants were assessed village to village on a regular basis by the touring officer and district head based on the acres of land each family and household had. The farm produce together with the livestock were also assessed in order to determine what they were to pay as tax. However, in the attempt to have a better understanding of the major factors and contribution to the colonial economy, it will be imperative for the study to discuss the major themes of the colonial economy in a separate files to avoid lumping of ideas together and to present a more comprehensive and well articulated and coherent discourse.

Women were greatly and heavily laden during the colonial era due to colonial taxation and labour policies; women were also pressurized and exploited through other colonial policies. It should be noted that the role women played in the development of the society were germane to the over all economic development of Idoma society. It came to the point where in 1926, women began to pay taxes, which was not so in the pre-colonial era. This was also synonymous with the Aba women tax payment which led to the Aba women riot in 1929. One fundamental aspect of it was that women were expected to pay higher taxes in comparison to the male counterpart. However, colonial taxation essentially reflected the British policy of making their administration self sufficient and responsible for the cost of their administration. Towards this end, the British introduced taxation, in accordance with the Native Revenue Proclamation of 1904.

Since the British colonial authorities did not introduce direct taxation in the Southern Province until after 1920, the former *Okwoga* Division which parts of Idoma was under

after the conquest did not pay direct tax until part of it was transferred to the Munshi Province in December 1918.<sup>219</sup> Direct taxation was introduced in the Northern Provinces immediately after the British conquest and occupation of the region. In 1903 direct taxation was not in existence in Idomaland, it was until after the First World War that it was introduced and intensified.<sup>220</sup>

Thus, before analysing taxation in Idoma Division, it will be imperative to analyse the content, purpose and nature of taxation as put forward by British colonial administrator.

Frederick Lugard stated that.

I referred to the recognition of the village as a unit of administration and to the difficulty of defining it since with security to life and property, the tendency is no longer to live in walled towns, but to build their huts on the land they till, the village must be the unit of taxation.<sup>221</sup>

Lugard further argued that.....

Taxation was a triple edge weapon as a stimulus to production as a source of revenue for the support of colonial administration; it made the recognition of community on the protecting power.<sup>222</sup>

The payment of tax signified total submission to colonial rule, by the colonized. In this respect, Tukur argued that the payment of tax to the colonialists was viewed by the British as a mark of loyalty by the colonized African societies to the British, and for the supposed benefits the colonized were getting from colonialism.<sup>223</sup> This study is in total

---

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, p.148

<sup>220</sup> Frederick Lugard. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, London, 1965, p.164

<sup>221</sup> See, Michael Crowther; *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, London, 1968, p.206

<sup>222</sup> M.M Tukur; "The Imposition of British Colonial Domination on the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno and Neighbouring states" 1877-1914, A.B.U., Zaria 1977, p.531

<sup>223</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda, 1913-1918*, Frank Cass and Co Ltd, London 1970. p.242  
MARKPROF, Acc No. ARJINT1/5

agreement with Tukur's argument. The payment of tax by the colonized meant the total submission to the British colonialism. Lugard's justification for taxation was that it was imposed in order to provide revenue for colonial projects. He further argued that taxation supported the ruling class and protected the peasantry, and it was the burden of civilization to be borne by uncivilized people of the world.<sup>224</sup> Lugard did not stop in his quest to justify the essence of tax payment, he went on to argue that taxation emancipated people from indolence on the one hand and force service on the other hand and also that taxation promoted an intimacy between the British staff and the local people.<sup>225</sup>

From the foregoing, it is clear that taxation was imposed on the colonized to make them pay for the conquest and occupation of the land. The main source of income for the colonial economy was taxation; taxation was also an instrument of exploitation. With this the colonized were forced with compulsory payment of often specific amount reviewed from time to time in colonial currency and levied by the British. It was partly through taxation that funds were provided for running colonial administration and the payment of salaries of its officials.

Western Idomaland which was placed under the Southern Province until 1917 were not fully administrated until after the First World War in 1918. These areas, however, were not spared the unsettling effects of the imposition of direct taxation. The greatest source of friction with which the administration had to contend was this issue of taxation. Being part of the Northern Province, direct taxation was introduced immediately following the effective occupation.

---

<sup>224</sup> Ibid p242

<sup>225</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No. AR/INT/1/5,

The abolition of brass rods as currency in Idoma Division began in 1908 and it was intensified through the payment of taxation in the area under study.<sup>226</sup> Initially, taxes were collected in brass rod but when the brass-rod was banned as currency in Idomaland in 1908, general purpose-money was introduced by the British colonialists and also all adult male were taxed, and the tax persistently increased for the interest of raising more capital for colonial administration.

A population census was carried out by the British colonialists in 1926, to enable them have a firm control of the resources of Idoma people. This was to make sure that all adult male and female were taxed accordingly. However, British colonial touring officer in some districts, in order to get the total number of people in the area for easy collection of tax, strictly adhered to the number of people counted in the whole of Idoma Division, not because the British colonialists were to plan for the development of the area, but for their exploitation. The British Colonialists or administrators also studied and put into cognizance the wealth of the Districts, this was done because British colonialists taxed goods produced and farmland.

The British colonialists took keen interest in the gross wealth of the District, this was so because the colonialists used the statistics from the goods produced to tax the people. The population census conducted in 1926 was to have the number of people and their economic resources recorded in order to tax them and to avoid the incidence of tax aversion. Thus, in 1926 adult male in Idoma Division was taxed 2s and female was taxed 6d per person.<sup>227</sup> From the cross-section of my information, prior to British colonial rule

---

<sup>226</sup> Ibid

<sup>227</sup> Oral Interview with Enemari Orukpa, C 73, Interviewed in Otukpa on the 12-07-20 13



in the area under study, there was no oppressed system of taxation like what was obtainable during the colonial era. It was contended that

There was no form of taxation before white man came to our land, what our people use to do before the white man came to our land was the payment of tIBUTE to the *Ochi'Idoma* of food items.<sup>228</sup>

Taxation was a colonial creation in our area of study that required critical analysis. Let us take a statistical account of taxation in some Districts under Idoma Division and make a comparison to show that taxation in some landlocked areas in the Division was higher than Districts where rail lines were constructed for example, Agatu and Ochekwu Districts in the Idoma Division, see below<sup>229</sup>

**Table: 1 Taxation Idoma Division, 1926**

Districts	Adult male	Adult female
Otukpa	2s	6d
Agatu	2s	3d
Ochekwu	2s	3d
Adoka	2s	3s
Ugboju	2s	3s
Onyangede	3s	6d
Okpoga	2s	6d
Orokam	2s	6d

<sup>228</sup> NAK: LOKOPROF, Ace No. 366

<sup>229</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No 366

Source; NAK: MAKPROF, Acc No 366, Taxation in Idoma Division, 1926.

Adult females were taxed in Idoma Division with effect from 1926. The colonial justification for the tax on women was that women were engaged in trading activities at the markets, in addition to agricultural produce. Thus, the year that adult female were taxed, the burden of tax increased as the amount paid as tax also increased from 2s for adult male and 6d for adult female to 3d for adult female and 3s for adult male.<sup>230</sup>

This meant almost one hundred percent increase within this period. The arbitrary assessment and consequent taxation of the Idoma bore no relation to their wealth or potential. After survey of the wealth of Idoma Division, the British administration decided to increase the taxes and those described by the British colonialists as foreigners, such as Igbo, Hausa, Tiv, Igbirra and Yoruba among others were also taxed.<sup>231</sup> Before a colonial official assessed an area, he had already made up his mind as to how much the area should pay, within the shortest time possible, therefore, placing faith before evidence and reason.

A new class of “*Dogari*” emerged as the “local police”<sup>232</sup> and messengers incurred the favour of the people not just because they were agents of the new regime, but because they constituted a new class in the society. This new class was stationed with the office of the tax collector in the collection of taxes for the District. The “*Dogori*” played an important role in the processes of tax collection and as watch dog in the area of study. In 1930, Idoma Division was divided into several tax units and a tax collector was appointed for each unit. Two or more villages combined to form a tax unit, but a large village

---

<sup>230</sup> See, Adegbe Idoko Benedict, “British Colonial Rule and Its Impact on Orokam Traditional Society, “ p.51.

<sup>231</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No. ARJINT/1/5,

<sup>232</sup> See, Adegbe Idoko Benedict, “British Colonial Rule and Its Impact on Orokam Traditional Society, “ p.51.

constituted a unit, and every tax collector must be resident in at least one of the areas that came under him. To this effect, a tax force “*Alaikadede*” was created, to ensure the payment of tax wherever it was resisted. It also served as the Native Administrative Police.<sup>233</sup> Existed village heads were usually made tax collectors if they were still active, but if they were considered too old to be effective, they were automatically replaced. The position of village heads thus, became synonymous with that of a tax collector. This was the situation until 1955 when each tax unit was permitted to elect its own village head. The consistency in the increase of taxation and the excuses of the tax collectors provoked an anti-taxation riot in Idoma Division in 1935. The people also resisted the payment of tax as a major way to show their frustration in colonial rule. Also, it was documented that the people of “*Ipie-ilor*” in Otukpo resisted the payment of tax, in which armed forces were sent to the village and dealt with them severely.<sup>234</sup> The District officer in charge of Otukpo District reported that...

One incident in the collection of tax augers well for the future... the federal council sent the scribe and a *Dogari* to a certain village (*Epiero*) to collect arrears of tax and the elders there incited the young men to beat the emissaries a storm of protest was raised by the council and with administrative aid the malefactors were captured and hailed before the court. They awarded all the maximum penalty of 3 months in prison and 12 lashes.<sup>235</sup>

In Idoma Division, cases of tax incidence were quite high that not all people could meet the requirements of paying tax, because the problem arose from shortage of cash. And cash can easily be accessible in areas strategically on the railway stations. This incurred the anger of the colonial administration that in some cases burnt down houses,

---

<sup>233</sup> Ibid p. 52

<sup>234</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, AR/INT/1/5

<sup>235</sup> Ibid

confiscated their products and even imprison tax defaulters.<sup>236</sup> For a tax collector to do his job effectively, each tax collector was given 10% of the total money collected as tax, whether the 10% was paid or not, it was not clear because of the dubious activities of the British colonialists and their agents.

The resistance to taxation was very significant to this study, due to the fact that the nature, purpose and procedures in which the tax was collected and used were questionable. The introduction of the general purpose money was very significant to this study also, because the monetization of the economy had direct consequence on taxation, however, with the introduction, the British colonialists, imposed taxation based on the new money that was introduced. The new currency also facilitated trade, because it became easier for people in the area under study to move about with the new money because of the portability, not on the contrary to brass rod and iron bars that were heavy and uncomfortable to carry about, that was one of the reasons for the abolition to give way to the introduction of the British currency or coinage. This standardized the exchangeability value of all items on a common scale.

It was partly through taxation that the funds were provided for running colonial administration and paying the salaries of its officials. It is clear from the foregoing that colonial taxation was highly exploitative, not only in Idoma Division, but to all the British Colony, because taxation formed an integral aspect of the economic exploitation of the people. Taxation sustained colonialism, and it was through taxation that the British colonialists maintained colonial rest houses, rail ways, and the payment of the native authority staff. However, taxation was not the only colonial economic department. It was in respect of this development that colonial forced labour was discussed.

---

<sup>236</sup> Akatu Agaba, "Problem of Taxation,"p.20

The effect of taxation in the area under study played significant roles in the establishment of colonial administration. Thus, the burden of colonial taxation brought about hostility in the society, as people in our area of study were forced to abandon their farmland and move about either in attempt to evade taxation or in search of work as wage labourer in order to earn cash for payment of taxes.

Such colonial induced migration took place from their homes to as far as the cocoa farm in western part of the country and the Jos tin mines. In 1932, the Native Authority in Idoma Division intercepted three truck loads of young men and children to the cocoa producing area to work on cocoa plantation in western Nigeria.<sup>237</sup> Colonial taxation was a factor that led to the migratory movement to seek for employment as wage labourers; this was also the factor that led to the development of a new social class in Idoma Division. Those who migrated to the cocoa farm returned and became influential because they were able to pay their taxes and had money to build good houses and married many wives. While the long term effect of this was the neglect of farm work, some of the men took to the habit of drinking which in most cases, there were incidence of drunkenness, theft and indebtedness, some became irresponsible in their household and to the society. Colonial taxation led to rural indebtedness, as many tax payers that could not pay their taxes were forced to either borrow money from perceived wealthy local clerks, messengers, interpreter, courier and police. They were made to collect the money on the condition that they will pay with interest. This caused a lot of social vices in Idoma Division, most especially stealing or theft in order to pay taxes. One Okpe in 1938 was charged to court for stealing a goat, and he was fined and flogged 20 lashes.<sup>238</sup> People were forced to pay

---

<sup>237</sup> W.R, Crocker, *Nigeria; A Critique of British Colonial Administration*, London, 1936, P. 88.

<sup>238</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, AR/INT/1/6,

taxes and the incidence of colonial taxation was so high that indebtedness and social vices were the end result in order to pay tax which was not used for the development of the colonized rather for the smooth operation of colonialism. However, colonial taxation also led peasant to wallow in poverty. Thus, in our area of study, the household, (Ole) as a unit of production was influenced by colonial taxation. The household as a unit of production did not function as an organised unit in the colonial era, this was because colonial taxation forced people to move out and source for wage labour and this had some effects on the household, first the labour force was reduced, and secondly, output in production was affected negatively. These were some of the fundamental changes brought by colonial taxation in the area under study.

Colonial taxation also affected other economic activities in the area, such as basket making, blacksmithing, broom making and palm wine tapping, etc. The tax on trade and other occupation led to the decline of indigenous manufacturing industry in the area. This was because the high rate of tax incidence discouraged many of the people from continuing with trades. The consequences of such neglect were the technological dependence of the people of Idoma Division and Nigeria as a whole on the western capitalist countries for foreign goods and services.<sup>239</sup> Colonialism was a predatory system that transformed a society from an independent state to a dependant state, leading to the consumption of what we did not produce and produced what we did not consume. Walter Rodney,<sup>240</sup> Andre Gunder Frank<sup>241</sup> and Effiong .D.<sup>242</sup> in a general terms argued that colonialism was a system that led to Africa's underdevelopment through dependant on

---

<sup>239</sup> George.E.Ode, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division," pp, 160-165

<sup>240</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Panaf publications Ltd, Pretoria, 2009 Effiong D, *Imperialism and Dependency*. Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria.1980, p20

<sup>241</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *The Development of Underdevelopment*, Garden City, New York, 1972,p163.

<sup>242</sup>Effiong D, *Imperialism and Dependency*, fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria, 1980, p20.

western capitalist countries for industrial and material goods. This had negative consequences on the local industries, by destroying our local industry, to depend entirely on imported goods from European countries. An example was the destruction of the industrial base of the people. In fact, Nigeria became a dumping ground and a large market for imported goods and services.

Colonial taxation was an unnecessary burden which was designed only to perpetuate and sustain British domination in Idoma Division.<sup>243</sup> The Idoma dislike paying tax not because of the hostilities to the administration, but because they said they have never paid tax before and did not understand why they should.<sup>244</sup> Colonial taxation brought a great deal of suffering and poverty to the people of Idoma Division. This was because of the high rate of incidence of taxes and the brutal methods with which they were collected. These taxes were regular and inflexible in order to tally with the budgeting procedure of the fiscal year. There was no consideration given to harvest in terms of success or failure, local calamity, locust invasion, drought, famine or individual misfortunes. Women's effort in subsidizing the economy of Idoma Division was reduced to nothing and discouraged by colonial taxation. Furthermore, the incidence of taxes given consistently throughout the colonial period which made rural producers to pay a minimum of thirty percent of their net profit,<sup>245</sup> the killing of tax collectors and frequent threat to colonial officials in the Division before 1924 was a major imperative to the suppression of any form of resistance to colonial taxation in Idoma Division.

Tax collectors were fully armed with local police called *Dogari*, to accompany them in the collection of taxes. There was killing of a tax collector in *Awume* village in 1917

---

<sup>243</sup> George.E.Ode, "The Impact of British Colonial Rule on the People of Idoma Division", p. 161

<sup>244</sup> Akatu Agada, "Problem of Taxation: A Aspect of Colonial Rule in Idomaland," pp. 24-29

<sup>245</sup> George.E.Ode, "The Impact of British Colonial Rule on the People of Idoma Division", p. 161

under the jurisdiction of the headman of *Opa*. In 1917, one *Ochefu* was ordered by the British officer to collect tax within the area of *Adoka*; he was accompanied with the local police, and preceded to *Awume* where people had already vowed to kill any local agent of the British who might demand tax from them. Thus, as soon as *Ochefu* asked for money, he was attacked and killed on the spot by a group of angry men among who was *Oto Ijagwu*.<sup>246</sup> Captain Byng- Hall the residence of Basa District with some troops chased *Oto Ijagwu* through *Ugboju* village which eventually led to the burning and killing of a number of people and burning down of houses. The search for *Oto* continued to *Iga* where five suspects were arrested and hung to serve as a deterrent.<sup>247</sup>

There were two main types of resistance to colonial taxation in the Idoma Division, the killing of colonial tax collector and abandoning of their houses in order not to pay taxes. *Ode*, contended that people in the Western Districts abandoned their villages more than the other Districts in the Idoma Division.<sup>248</sup> In *Ipe-iru* in *Otukpa*, the people organised themselves and waged a resistance to colonial tax collectors as they adamantly refused to pay tax and threatened to kill the tax collector.<sup>249</sup> However, in 1935 the District officer of *Otukpa* contended that...'.Tax collection necessitated for the presence of an officer, but quite an appreciable amount of work was done between visits of vast areas and a considerable improvement was achieved. One incidence in the collection of tax auger well for the future, the federal council sent scribes and *Dogari* to *Ipieyro* to collect arrears of tax and the elders there incited the young men to beat the emissaries.<sup>250</sup> A storm of protest was raised by the council and with the Administrative aid the malefactors were

---

<sup>246</sup> Akatu Agada, "Problem of Taxation: A Aspect of Colonial Rule in Idomaland," pp. 24-29

<sup>247</sup> Ibid,p.58

<sup>248</sup> George.E.Ode, "The Impact of British Colonial Rule on the People of Idoma Division," p.157

<sup>249</sup> NAK• MARKPROF, Acc No *ARJINT/115*

<sup>250</sup> Ibid



captured and assembled before the court, and sentenced to three months in prison and 12 lashes of cane.<sup>251</sup>

Furthermore, people occasionally abandoned their huts and houses because they were unable to pay taxes. The incidence of Colonial taxation was high because of the nature at which it was introduced, collected and used. Taxation was not meant for the interest of the colonized; rather it was introduced to sustained colonial domination and exploitation. Again and Again taxable men were running with their goat and fowl hiding them in the banana trees and planting them beneath in their large earthen pots. Often too, there was detrainning of goods where the persons had either run away or were unable to pay.<sup>252</sup> In Idoma Division, elders joined in the common purpose of avoiding the payment of tax until they saw that their personal safety was threatened, at the end, they had to pay tax because of the new military power and force used by the colonialists to enforce and dominate the people of the area under study. Since Lugard stated it clearly that colonial taxation was to be levied and collected on behalf of the colonial state, for the interest of the colonizing powers and that Britain will not pay for the civilization and development of Africa, Africans had to pay for developing them.<sup>253</sup> The British colonized the people for their economic gains, and Felix Green<sup>254</sup> gave four essence of colonialism, which was search for raw materials, markets for surplus production in Europe, areas for profitable investment and cheap labour.

---

<sup>251</sup> Ibid

<sup>252</sup> Akatu Agaba, "Problem of Taxation: An Aspect of Colonial Rule in Idomaland", p, 43.

<sup>253</sup> Lugard Frederick, *Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, 1906- 1913, Annual Reports*. Microfilm Publishers, London, 1974,p.93

<sup>254</sup> Felix Greene, *The Enemy; What Every American Should Know About Imperialism*, New York, 1971.

The degree at which the indigenous people were affected by the taxes was not an interest of the colonial state. The colonial administrator turned a deaf ear to the burden placed on the people through the obnoxious taxes imposed on the people.

The colonialists in an attempt to force people to pay taxes introduced strict measures which were achieved through violence and mobilized a team of Native Police, and messengers who were acquainted with the localities of the tax payers to collect the taxes, and refusal to pay tax resulted to a bitter experience, where by people were flogged, some taken into forced labour, and others have their properties confiscated.<sup>255</sup> Incidence of taxation was a serious offence, and the colonial officials introduced severe punishment to offenders. One of such punishment was confiscation of the properties of the defaulter, and taken as forced labourer.<sup>256</sup> In other words, the colonized had to pay with taxes and through other de-human means for being colonized<sup>257</sup>. The colonial view on the incidence of taxation was in accordance with violence, brutality and to achieve the essence of economic pillage in the attempt to develop the metropolitan state.

Women in Idoma Division also resisted the policy of taxation like the women in eastern region of Nigeria who were not in accord with the payment of taxes in the period proceeding colonial era. History made it clear that the attempt to do this in Aba, by the colonial state led to the Aba women riot of 1929 and this to a great extent explained the burdened placed on women in the process of paying taxes in Idoma Division during the colonial era. It was revealed that in some cases women paid higher taxes than men and this was compounded during the 1940's when adult male migrated to the cocoa farms in

---

<sup>255</sup> Akatu Agada, "Problem of Taxation: An Aspect of Colonial Rule in Idomaland,". Also see, NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No ARIINT/1/5 Intelligence Reports on Otukpa District, Idoma Division.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid

<sup>257</sup> Felix Greene, *The Enemy, What Every American Should know About Imperialism*, New York, 1971

western Yorubaland and Jos tin mines, the pressure to produce was left in the hands of women and this did not only weighed them down but the pressure from taxes caused a serious revolt by women.<sup>258</sup> Through this process a centralized political structure was needed to ascertain the process of tax collection through a central political system, and in the attempt to do this the Native Authority was created in Idoma Division and subsequently the Central Native Authority was established and Otukpo was made the capital in 1946.<sup>259</sup> However, through this process, women became the major figure in the production of goods and services, which involved the production of cash crops and food crops for the interest of the colonial state or metropolitan capital.

#### **5.2.4 Colonial Labour Policy**

This was the policy that regulated the imposition of forced labour in Nigeria area in general and Idoma Division in particular during the British colonial rule. A policy whereby a person is forced against ones wish to carry out specific task in favour of the colonialists without a pay. In otherwords, this was a form of labour which dehumanized the colonized people of Idoma Division.

##### **5.2.4.1 Colonial Forced Labour**

Forced labour was introduced in Idoma Division in 1921, when the Eastern railways were to pass through Otukpo to Makurdi and was later replaced by wage labour in 1930. When some men in the Division migrated to cities like Jos in the tin mines, Ibadan, Ondo,

---

<sup>258</sup> Akatu Agaba, p. 56

<sup>259</sup> See Isaac Ediba Ogbodo, "Colonialism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960",p.226

Cocoa farms in the Western region, Enugu, and Kaduna Textiles Limited as Wage labourers.<sup>260</sup>

The role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division was also felt in the forced labour output as women were forced to work in the railway stations in Otukpo, colonial rest houses, as servants without being paid and the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges.<sup>261</sup> Though men were regarded as the strongest based on their physical ability and structure, however, women were also used to do work which was regarded as men's work in the pre-colonial era. This was a critical issue during the colonial era that entailed total brutality by the colonial state on women.

However, the early phase of colonial rule in Nigeria was accompanied in virtually every case by the extensive use of forced labour. For example, the construction of railways and building of colonial rest houses in otukpo. It should be made clear here that two important labour proclamations were made by the British, in 1903 these were the Southern Nigeria proclamation No. 15 of 1903, which compelled all able-bodied men and women to work as labourers with the directives of the local chiefs and compulsory labour was ensured under road proclamation of 1903, which legalized compulsory labour in the North.<sup>262</sup>

The ban on slave trade by the British meant the intensification of forced labour in the production of raw materials and construction of roads among others. The British administrator openly condemned slave labour, which led to the occupation of the area of

---

<sup>260</sup> Isaac Ediba, *Colonial Rule in Nigeria: A Case study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960*, M.A Dissertation, January 2009, p.186

<sup>261</sup> Oral Interview with Simon Oche, C89 years a farmer, Interviewed in Otukpo, on the 15-06-2013

<sup>262</sup> Don Ohadike,p.5

study and subjugation of the people, but they claimed they colonized for “civilizing<sup>263</sup> mission”.<sup>264</sup> For us to appreciate the content of forced labour in Idoma Division, it will be imperative to give a brief conceptual position of forced labour. Forced labour was simply the recruitment of labour by coercion to undertake work which it would not have been willingly undertaken, whether it was paid or unpaid.<sup>265</sup> The manner in which labour was recruited was harsh, with harsh laws and low wages, for example, payment of tax and force labour. In some processes, no wage was paid. Elizabeth Odiba opined that, forced labour is the engagement of the people in colonial project such as road construction, building of colonial offices, carriers of commodities, and so on.<sup>266</sup> From the foregoing discussion on the concept of forced labour in general colonial terms, it should be noted that force labour is a conscious violation of the fundamental human right, forcefully engaged into the project that was followed with coercion. Colonial forced labour and slave trade were the same, because they served the same purpose in the development of the economies of the colonizers or the metropolitan state directly or indirectly.

The discussion on forced labour may be summarized in terms of the concept with the convention of International Labour Organization (ILO), where force labour was defined as all works or services which was expected from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person have not offered himself voluntarily.<sup>267</sup> The international labour organization definition excluded compulsory military service, hard

---

<sup>263</sup> Adu Boahen, *Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935*, Heinemann Educational books Ltd. California (UNESCO), 1990, pp. 10-15.

<sup>264</sup> See, Agaba Ebute John, “Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland”, 1900-1960. M.A Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos. 1996 p.142

<sup>265</sup> Elizabeth Odiba, “Colonial Labour and Taxation” A case study of Dekina Local Government Area, B.A Project, Department of History, University Jos, 1990, p. 23

<sup>266</sup> Agaba Ebute John, “Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland”, p. 141, Cited in International Labour Convention concerning Forced Labour or compulsory labour, Article 2.

<sup>267</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No 145, Otukpo-Obollo Road, 1934

labour imposed under the conviction by a court of law, emergency work in the event of flood, fire and so on and minor communal services. Not to direct more attention to the concept of forced labour, we examined the nature of how women were used in forced labour and how the system of forced labour was operational generally in Idoma Division. Forced labour in our area of study was directed towards the construction of public works such as in the construction roads for example, the first major road to be constructed was the road that ran from Otukpo to Okwoga, Otukpo to Obolo, Okwoga to Ankpa and later from Otukpo to Adoka, Ugboju, Onyangede, Akpa, Edumoga, Agatu, Ochekwu, Agila, Orokam, Ichama, Owukpa, and Igedde,<sup>268</sup> rest houses, Otukpo rest house, government residence for example Otukpo G.R.A and agriculture these were occasions where women were forcefully used to carry out the colonial interest. Some were carriers of heavy equipments for the colonial government, among others .Thus, shortly after the military conquest of Idomaland from the period 1899 to 1928 forced labour was introduced and human portrage was one of the imperatives in the area under study. Women were forced as carrier using basket in carrying palm fruits to areas that the fruits were needed, most especially areas that the production was not in large quantity. The railway station in Otukpo served as a tremendous station for the transportation of palm fruits to the coastal areas. Thus, women worked as an integral aspect of the colonial economy during the period 1908-1960.

Women were also using basin to carry sand and stones in the construction of roads and the maintenance of old roads in the area under study. It is imperative to note that women also worked as force labourers in the construction of road, and the construction of the rail

---

<sup>268</sup> Isaac Ediba, Colonial role in Nigeria: A case study of Otukpo District in Idoma division 1908-1960. P. 178

road in Otukpo in 1921 and beyond. This was critical that when most men migrated to the cocoa farms in the 1940's, it became imperative that women took the mantle of road construction and maintenance in the area. Though, to a large extent women were part of the process, they were used heavily in the process of sustaining colonialism in Idoma Division in particular and Nigeria in general.

However, the role of women in road construction was evident, all the roads created during the colonial era were significant of being mention in this dissertation to enable us have a clearer picture of the nature and impact of the British colonialism on women in the process. The first colonial roads in most parts of Idomaland was completed with women forced labour, the construction and completion of Otukpo-Obollo —Afor road was constructed with the use of forced labour in 1920, with a cost of £195,700, the money was used in the purchase of materials used in the construction. This road connected Idomaland with Eastern Nigeria.<sup>269</sup> In the same year (1920) Edumoga — Akpa road was completed.

This road was designed to serve as link between Western Idoma communities and the railway line. Other important road constructed during this period using forced labour included the Okpoga — Igumale road completed in 1922, Otukpo — Oju road completed in 1924 and the Otukpo-Ugboju — Adoka road which was completed in 1928.<sup>270</sup> The construction of these roads was done with the use of forced labour, under ill condition that can be described as dehumanizing and oppressive.

---

<sup>269</sup> Agaba Ebute John, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland, 1908-1960"p, 147

<sup>270</sup> See, George.E.Ode, "Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division" 1908- 1950. M.A Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria 1981, p. 148

Forced labour was used in the construction of the Otukpa-Obollo-Afor road. Most of the labourers were employed as casual workers and others were conscripted as forced labourers in the construction of the Otukpo-Obollo-Afor road. British colonialists opened the Idomaland through the construction of road with the use of forced labour.

The British colonialists started the construction of the railway line along Otukpo in 1920 to 1924. In all the above roads networks, women played major parts, most especially in physical labour or through working as those that served foods to the workers in some instances. There is no way the role of women can be denied in the attempt to examine their contributions to develop a historical base line on colonialism and its impact in the area under study.

#### **5.2.4.2 Colonial Wage Labour**

The quest for meeting the demands of these colonial economic policies led to the development of wage labour and labour migration, with vast majority of the people migrating to the Jos tin mines and Western cocoa farms, popularly referred to as *Oklumi* in Idoma. While in some cases this migration was purely an economic movement to opportunities for profits, in others, it was stimulated by social consideration such as the desire to escape from the restrictive nature of colonialism in Idoma society. These two phenomena as noted had traumatic far-reaching consequences on the economy and society of Idoma. The implication of this was that women were placed on more burdened to provide food and other domestic needs of the family or household. Some of these women whose husbands migrated to the cocoa farms were there for 6 months to one year. During this period women were expected to provide the needs of the family, pay tax and engaged in order financial demanding activities. For example, pottery, mats, baskets and



general sales of goods and items at the market. This movement according to the available sources had a catastrophic effect on the role and functions of women in the area under study.

### **5.3 The Impact of British Colonial Policies on Gender Division of Labour**

In an attempt to understand the character of gender division of labour in Idoma Division, it is imperative to note that gender division of labour was as old as the beginning of human existence itself. It evolved as a result of the continuous interactions of man in the social, economic and political sphere. Gender division of labour also depended on the material condition of the time and place which was usually engineered by the social, economic and political factors in play. Gender division of labour was believed to have found its root in the biological features and characteristics of both males and females; in other words, the anatomy and the physical feature of men and women was used as a reason to justify the inequalities between them. Hence, their roles in the society were sacrosanct and unchanging. While on the other hand, gender division of labour was considered as being socially constructed and maintained over time by structures like society, family, cultural and religious beliefs.

By implication GDL was not natural but rather socially constructed. The society through cultural beliefs determined which sex plays what roles. Based on the belief that a man or woman has the ability to carry out a particular task in the society and each of these tasks should not be at conflict with one another. It was this socially constructed phenomenon that led to the control of the means of production and distribution by men and the appropriation of its surplus at the detriment and expense of other members of the society, namely women and the female child. During the pre-colonial times, gender roles in

Idoma Division were to an extent complementary. In Agricultural production, men did the clearing of land, ridging and harvesting early crops such as yam, while women planted, weeded, harvested, transported and processed the food crops.

Though, women to an extent bore the brunt of agricultural production, this however, changed with the incorporation of the area into the expanding capitalist mode of production in the first half of the 20th century which explained the changing roles of Idoma women. Due to labour migration to the Jos tin mines, migration to cocoa farms in the western region, railway construction in Otukpo, Kaduna Textiles Limited in 1930-1940 and other colonial public works demanded massive labour recruitment most men were absent from the rural areas and thus, labour demands for farm work rested more on the shoulders of women, daughters and underage children.

The percentages of men involved in labour migration were 87%, while these men migrated out of their villages to cities for wage labour, the frequency of their absence left some vacuums to be filled by the few men at home, women and children. Women therefore, filled these vacuums by tilling the soils with an occasional aid from children and relations. This also, became a herculean tasks as women began to head their households while their husbands migrated to the Jos tin mines, Kaduna Textiles Limited, Enugu and the Coco farms of the Western region.

#### **5.4 The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy**

The role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division can not be taken for granted if women were to be integrated in the economic development of our society. Women played dual roles in Idoma society, these roles ranged from catering for their

households to agricultural roles of clearing, planting, weeding and harvesting the crops and in trade and industries. This will be examined under the sub-headings.

#### **5.4.1 Role of Women in Agriculture**

Agriculture is the science and practice of cultivating crops and rearing of livestock for man's use. It also includes the processing, preservation and marketing of agricultural products.<sup>271</sup> The mainstay of the economy was agriculture, and with the location of Idoma Division in the transitional zone between the tropical rainforest and the savannah land to the north, agricultural production was given a big boost. It was a significant area in which movement of people to the north and south was pronounced. However, agriculture was a major aspect of the economy in which women participated fully on. Women tilled the land, cleared the weed, planted and harvested the crops, and yet they were not part of the decision making process in Idoma Division. Their role was not taken note of in the sense that they were neglected and relegated to the background in the society.<sup>272</sup> During the colonial era, women were active in the production of palm fruits, rice and cotton which were the major cash crops in Idoma Division, and were also active in the production of food crops such as yam, beans, and cassava which was used to feed colonial official and colonial troops in the area.

#### **5.4.2 Food Crop Production**

Food Crop production was amongst the main economic activity of the peasants of Idomaland during the pre-colonial and colonial era, this was because food crops were the

---

<sup>271</sup> Olatunji O.A, *Essentials of Pre-Vocational Studies*, Extension Publishers Limited, Ibadan, 2015, p2

<sup>272</sup> Oral interviews with Mercy Eje, Oyema Jonah, and Onyeche Echeno

life wire of the people and women were active in the production process. Food crops such as yams, cassava, maize, coco yams were produced in the Division. Cocoyam and yams were produced in a similar way by burying the preserved tuber seeds from previous surplus which were kept in the barns, women were responsible for the weeding of the grasses until the food were harvested then processed and kept for household consumption or traded at the markets of *eke*, *nkor*, *afor* and *ede*. Food crops were produced specifically to meet the immediate needs of the people, only on some occasions when there was need for other items such as livestock, ornaments; dairy products did such food crops changed hands. The monetisation of the economy during the colonial period came with the following demands, payment of taxes using the newly introduced British currency. The only way for the peasants to get tax money, was for them to engage themselves in the production of crops and goods that were in high demands in the world market.

This new development led to the migration of men into the tin mines, colonial army, export/cash crop production etc, thereby reducing the labour force needed for food crop production. Thus, food crop production to a large extent was left in the hands of women, children and the aged. Women continued the cultivation of food crops such as yam, guinea corn, millet, and cocoyam using traditional farming techniques, tools and animal droppings as manure, where as the cultivation of export/cash crops was given all the necessary attention by the colonialists through the provision of extensive services in the area of propaganda, distribution of imported seeds, insecticides, animal dung etc. This was not because food crop production was not important, of course it was; it was only that the colonialists never wanted food crops production to become an impediment to export/cash crops production which was needed for the survival of their home industries.

In order for the women and their children to survive, these women made sure that they brought considerable acres of land under cultivation. The increase in the cultivation of land was necessitated by abundant rain, fertile soil and the need to produce food in order to survive. It later turned out that food crop production became very imperative for the survival of the colonial economy especially for the labour camps on the tin mines, railway construction sites and other colonial public works.

The demand for food became intense on a yearly basis especially by the mining companies in Jos. In order to meet these demands, the mining companies with assistance of the colonialists took to food requisition through the use of officials of the Native Administration. This was another form of extreme exploitation which continued almost throughout the colonial period. In some other cases, the Igbo retailers who bought food stuff especially groundnut and beans from the peasants who were mostly women, offered meagre prices to the peasants but retailed them exorbitantly. For example, between the years 1920-1925 the retailers bought beans from the peasants at 1d per lb. they resold a similar quantity at 2-3d to the licensed buying agents in Otukpo District<sup>273</sup>.

The production of food crops by the people were used to feed colonial troops and official, most times the food were exported to Jos tin mines to feed the colonial forced labourers and the railway line at Otukpo that was established in 1921<sup>274</sup>, these were the major areas in which the food crops were consumed. It was interesting to note that prior to the advent of colonialism, the people of the area under study produced food for subsistence and other economic activities were carried out along with farming. The household was

---

<sup>273</sup> NAK MARKPROF. File No. 23 58/1925, Yearly Report on Idoma Division, 1925

<sup>274</sup> Isaac Ediba Ogbogo, "colonial Rule in Nigeria: A Case Study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U Zaria, 2009.

the basis for labour output, consumption and development. These were later intensified with the production of food crops such as yam, cocoa yam, and guinea corn and women were at the forefront of this development. Women were not only producing these crops, they were also tax heavily in the production process and this was done by the colonial state.

### **5.4.3 Food Processing and Preservation**

Virtually all agricultural produce needs processing and preservation from decay before the can be consumed. Preservation is mostly needed especially when these foods are perishables. In any case, all food types are preserved for future use.

#### **5.4.3.1 The Processing of Yam into Flour**

The yam is harvested by the men and collected by the women and children to peel. This is a similar way with the processing of garri. The only difference in yam processing is that, after peeling the yam, it is soaked for three to four days, dried on a neat place for three days, before this was turned into powder form as yam flour for consumption. The women pounded the dried yams in a mortar for a smoother result this activity was carried out during the dry season, when there was no rain and a little farm work to be done.<sup>275</sup>

The preservation of yam flour is by storing the powdered yam in a tight container to prevent air from entering.

#### **5.4.3.2 The Processing of Cassava into Garri**

Cassava is a starchy and tuberous plant which is grown in Africa. It is also grown in Idoma Division in a very large quantity. Cassava is uprooted by women or they enlisted the help of their children and sometimes their husband who carried the harvested cassava

---

<sup>275</sup> Oral interviews with Amina Ajefu, Femal, 65, Awume Village Onyangedde District, 15-04-2014

in basins to their homes. After which it was peeled, washed, and blended, excessive water was collected by tying the grounded cassava in a neat sack, it was then hanged on a tree to drain all substance from it. After four to five days it was sieved and fried.<sup>276</sup> The preservation for garri is simply to pack in a tight container or in a sack.

### **5.4.3.3 The Processing of Oil Palm into Oil**

Palm oil processing was common among Idoma women in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. This involved the collection of the palm kernel or fruits from the trees by men and given to the women to boil for a considerable period of time, for example say, three hours to four hours after which it was pounded to extract the substance called oil (having undergone some vigorous heating on the fire) from the chaff. When the oil has been extracted from the chaff, it was left to heat on the fire until water was completely drained from the oil. All of these processes were carried out by the women, the marketing was done by women as shown from the interactions they had with the Igbo, Igala and her Tiv neighbors during trade activities.<sup>277</sup>

The men helped the women in cutting down the palm fruits from the trees and put into the baskets for the women to take to their various homes. When taken home, the women washed the palm fruits and lighted the fire containing wood and charcoal. Then put a very large pot filled with water on the fire and put the palm fruits into the pot, after three to four hours the palm fruits will be removed from the fire to cool. When cooled, it will be transferred from the pot into the mortar to be pounded, after which it will be put into a basin and scrubbed with fifty litres of water depending on the quantity of the palm fruits.

---

<sup>276</sup> Ibid

<sup>277</sup> Oral interviews with Mercy Eje, Oyema Jonah and Onyeche in Ichiama, Ugbokolo and Adoka

When scrubbing the chaff remains at the bottom of the basin while the oil comes to the top of the basin.

As the oil is ascending to the top of the water, the women set aside a clean bowl to collect the oil into the bowl after which it was put into the pot and put on the fire again for thirty minutes to one hour. While on the fire a clean broom and basket is used to collect the remaining chaff and husks from the oil. *Akpa* women sliced some bulbs of onions into the oil to give it a good aroma. This *Akpa* process of oil processing is known in Idoma dialect as *Ano-Akpa-Akpa-oil*. Palm oil in Idoma society is used for cooking, frying, local pomade, it was sold at the market on market days, and some women exchanged the oil for some household items needed. This was controlled by the women the only case where the men assisted the women was when the kernels were to be brought down from the trees. Oil is preserved by storing in tightly closed cans for sale or for family consumption.

#### **5.4.3.4 The Processing of Groundnut, Soyabeans and Benniseed into Oil**

The processing of groundnut, soyabeans and benniseed into oil is different from the processing of oil palm into oil. The groundnuts, soyabeans and benniseed are fried and with the husks removed from it blended into water form and some very hot water is added to it and squeezed until oil is seen coming to the surface of the blended groundnut, soyabeans or benniseeds. It is preserved in a container.

### **5.5 Cash Crops Production**

A convenient starting point on the subject of the development of cash crop economy in Idoma Division appeared to be when the slave trade was abolished and was subsequently



replaced by the export of agricultural commodities.<sup>278</sup> Cash crop production in Nigeria in general and in Idoma Division in particular was an intensive and important feature of agricultural development under colonial rule.<sup>279</sup>

However, the climatic conditions which are; rainfall, climate and soils were suitable for these cash crops to be easily cultivated. The area provided such basic requirements because it was well drained with sandy/ loamy open texture soil which facilitates easy harvesting. The soil has good content of Calcium-Sulphate (Cas 04) potash and phosphate.<sup>280</sup> For its rainfall requirements, groundnuts, soyabeans, rice and palm fruits should be planted at the onset of the rains either in April, or latest by May within average requirements of 220c-270c under normal temperature for about one hundred and twenty days.<sup>281</sup> For example, groundnut as an export commodity, developed side by side with soyabeans from the late 1940s to 1950s, stations for groundnuts were Gboko, Kastina-Ala, Loko, Makurdi, Taraku and several other market –posts in which groundnuts were marketed. Some of these also included, Ida, Obudu and Igede.<sup>282</sup>

The next to food crop production was cash crop production. The penetration of colonial market economy meant the introduction of cash crops and this changed the pattern of household labour allocation by diverting labour from subsistence crops and created new cash needs for socio-economic activities. That is to say, where women were expected to provide labour for cash crop, they had less time available for subsistence agriculture. This

---

<sup>278</sup> Mike .O. Odey, *The development of Cash Crop Economy in Nigeria's Lower Benue Province, 1910-1960* Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, p1

<sup>279</sup> Ibid, p.78

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, p.97

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, p.97

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, p.97-98

was a major aspect of the colonizing mission, to search for raw materials and markets for their finished and surplus product in Europe.

Idoma Division was an area in which cash crop such as cotton, groundnuts, palm oil and rubber were produced in large commercial quantity, and women participated fully in the production process. It is appropriate at this point to mention that rice production, though a food crop was produced by women in the Agatu District of Idoma Division in a very large quantity.<sup>283</sup>

However, the focus of this section is to examine the production of crops that were exported and were most crucial for the development of the economic base. For these reasons, the study intended to make a rationale on the nature and intense of the production of cash crops in the area under study. In cash crop production, women did the bulk of the work ranging from the clearing of the land mostly done by men, to planting, weeding and harvesting of the crops the marketing was done by women who were engaged in both household and local trade. Women were burdened with both food and cash crops production during the colonial period when men migrated to the Jos tin mines and the cocoa farms in the Western region. Women were doing such heavy works that were meant to be men's work like in the construction of roads women were engaged in road works, railway, and in building colonial rest houses and at the same time supplementing it with farm work.

Cash crop production was an essential aspect of colonialism in Idoma Division and fifty percent of women formed this innovation of being part of the people that farmed rice, palm fruits, beneseed and cotton as food and cash crops. For example, in the production

---

<sup>283</sup> Oral Interview with Agada Simon, a farmer, C 68, interviewed in Agatu District in Idomaland, on the 23-9-2013

of palm oil, women became skilled in palm produce. However, there were inhibitions to their adoption of new technology such as; traditions forbidding women headed household, the colonial state intensified the production of palm fruit, beniseed and cotton the major cash crops in the Division under study, and food crops such as yam, cocoa yam, cassava and rice among others were cultivated by women. The colonialists in the area of study concentrated efforts in the production of palm produce, cotton, groundnut and yam. The conquest of Idomaland and the establishment of firm administrative control made it possible for the colonial state to have firm control of these crops.

Groundnut production for example, was one of the Division's export and cash crop in the colonial period. Women processed groundnuts into cooking oil for exportation to Britain and other European countries. Women extracted the oil from the groundnut as vegetable oil to be exported to Britain because of its high demand in the world market. This served as both food and cash crop however, in the colonial period it was seen principally as cash crop and was mainly exported to Britain to provide vegetable oil<sup>284</sup>. Groundnut was cultivated in our area of study and its production was in large quantity. This was traded extensively in the Division during the colonial period and the volume of groundnut trade was not small neither was it negligible.<sup>285</sup>

There was distribution of seedlings of all sorts of cash crops for free, with the notion that their cultivation would bring farmers a lot of money.<sup>286</sup> To encourage the people of this area in the production of cash crops, the British colonialists decided to distribute improved seeds to farmers, and this signified the desire for continuous exploitation of the people. The earliest cash crop grown in Idoma Division was palm produce, which was the

---

<sup>284</sup> Mike Odey, p4

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, P4

<sup>286</sup> See, Agaba Ebute John, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland,"P. 179

major cash crop. Seedlings were distributed to the farmers in the area to encourage the production. It was stated clearly that force will be employed to promote the production of cash crops at the expense of subsistence crops.<sup>287</sup> This was the policies of the administration to compel the local population to cultivate certain crops. Be that as it may, in 1939, the Residence Benue Province stated that.....

The seedling would be issued free by the Native Authority and allocated to the individual farmers who would be responsible for looking after them. In case of the loss of any of the trees, the farmers to whom they were allocated would have to pay the Native Authority the cost of the seedlings, plus a small fine.<sup>288</sup>

From the analysis of the production of cash crop in Idoma Division, it should be noted that, the British colonialists in an attempt to have a firm control of the production of palm produce, used cunning and propaganda to subject the indigenous people of Idoma Division into extensive production, introducing the Pressing Mills<sup>289</sup> and distributed seedlings with a strict supervision and fines to boost production for the interest of the metropolitan capital. Of course, women benefitted from this new innovation of applying fertilizers to crops that were most crucial to the British for the development of her home countries.

The seedlings that were distributed was not intended to boost production for the interest of the colonized, rather, it was meant for the indigenous farmers to lose their right in price control and the quantity produced. As earlier stated, the British colonialists in the area under study also went extra miles in making sure that the colonized had no control in the production of palm fruit and tapping the tree for wine, in 1939 because the British

---

<sup>287</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No. AR!ASS/1/9 Annual Report for Benue Province, 1948, by T.N Greeves (Agric Officer)

<sup>288</sup> Ibid, P, 255

<sup>289</sup> The Pressing Mill is a machine that was used for the extraction of oil from the palm fruit.

were not after the wine but after the oil produced for the development of their economies. The Native Authority was indirectly involved in the palm fruit production, distribution and consumption of the produce as directed by the colonial administration in the area under study. Women played roles in agricultural activities such as clearing of farm land, burning of bush and grass, planting of seed, therefore women benefitted from new agricultural innovations such as fertilizer and seedlings but this was to boost British economy. The annotation below was an evidence to show that the colonized was not in control of the production of palm fruit in the area under study....

The farmer would have to sign, a simple agreement form before obtaining the tree. The trees would remain the property of the Idoma Native Authority but the farmers would be allowed to collect all the fruits from the trees allocated to them. The Native Authority would be able to take permit to harvest the fruit from the farmers who did not look well after their trees. This arrangement would also facilitate the control of taping the trees for palm wine.<sup>290</sup>

Colonial economic policies as in other parts of Africa was meant to favour the metropolitan capital, through search for raw materials, market for her surplus goods and areas for cheap labour.<sup>291</sup> The signing of treaty played a significant role in the conquest of Nigeria, where the local chiefs and the people lost their sovereignty in the course of signing agreement with the predators called colonialists.

The colonial administrators forcefully engaged the indigenous people of Idoma Division to sign an agreement which variably gave the imperialist the firm control of the production of palm produce. It was impossible to agree with the report that the Native

---

<sup>290</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, 7203, Op-cit

<sup>291</sup> See Felix Greene, *The Enemy: What Every American Should Know About Imperialism*, New York, 1971.

Authority has to take permission before harvesting the palm fruit. From the available evidence on colonialism, the Native Authority functioned as the organ of the imperialists, which was organically established to control the colonized as the Indirect Rule System. The signing of forms or treaties as the case may be by the indigenous people meant the loss of control over the production of palm produce, including the tapping of trees for palm wine. Furthermore, the counsellors from Western Idoma<sup>292</sup> proposed to the Resident Officer Benue Province in 1939 for measures to be taken in improving the fertility of the land in the area, and the following step was taken.

Trials with fertilizers should be carried out in that area and if these prove successful, a fertilizer scheme should be started by the Native Authority.<sup>293</sup>

Application of fertilizer became a major step taken by the British administrator in the area under study; however, by 1955 the use of fertilizer was intensified to boost the production of palm produce and also food crop such as yam, beans, cassava, cocoyam and sweet potatoes in Idoma Division.<sup>294</sup> The colonial administrators in 1926 complained that the nature of the soil did not support the cultivation of big yams, because it was a sandy soil, most especially the Northern part of the Division.<sup>295</sup> Idoma Division which was located on the Niger-Cross River watershed had a red soil and sand of considerable depth and therefore, made the soil fertile for most crops.<sup>296</sup> Available evidence pointed to the fact that palm trees grew widely in the area and the colonialists were eager to exploit

---

<sup>292</sup> NAK. MAKPROF, 7203

<sup>293</sup> Ibid p, 256

<sup>294</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, 1194, District Heads of Otukpo in Idoma Division, and also see, NAK: MARKPROF, 7203,

<sup>295</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No ARIINT/1/5 Intelligent Report on Otukpa District, Idoma Division, by Capt G.D.C. Money, 1926.

<sup>296</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, 7205, Op-cit

such advantage.<sup>297</sup> Therefore, labour output in the production of palm produce is worth our attention in this discourse. The colonial state in an attempt to exploit the people of the area under study did not only use communal labour, but the labour was supervised under strict and violent process by the colonial state<sup>298</sup> and women formed integral part of the communal labour in which large quantity of production was done. However, the colonial state in their search for firm control of the labour output in 1935, averred through the Residence Benue Province who ordered the Districts under the Idoma Division that...

The area for the plantations would be cleared by labour from the nearby villages, the plantation marked out the agriculture by the staff and seedlings planted under their supervision .<sup>299</sup>

Prior to the advent of British colonial rule in Idomaland, the household labour was a significant aspect of the society, communal labour under the British rule was de-humanising and it was sustained through violence. Palm produce was labour intensive and the colonial state used force and cunning to organised communal labour in order to increase the output of palm produce for the development of the metropolitan state.

The so-called 'incentive' the colonial state provided, be it seedlings, loans, fertilizer, and paid labour, were for the interest of the metropolitan state. This was done by giving lands, seedlings and fertilizers to the people men and women alike, but in the end the crop was harvested and either consumed by the colonial officers or exported depending on the type of crop in question. The role of women in plantation economy especially in palm fruits plantation was germane to the economic development of Idoma society, as with the plantation, communal labour was organized with the involvement of women because

---

<sup>297</sup> NAK MARKPROF, Ace No 980, Vol 2, Idoma Division, *ARJREP/1/5*. And NAK: MARKPROF, Assessment Reports in Otukpa District, Idoma Division, by Capt G.D.C. Money, 1926, P. 11.

<sup>298</sup> NAK MARKPROF, Acc No 7203, Ministry of Agriculture, Vol.2, 1939.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, P, 255

more hands were needed to carry out the task, increasing the work load of women. This was a forceful labour output, unlike the communal labour done with local drinks and food to facilitate the work during the pre-colonial period.

The primary aim of the British colonial domination of Idoma Division in particular and Africa in general was the exploitation of the human and economic resources of the area. This was clearly demonstrated in various colonial reports by the Department of Agriculture in Idoma Division for the year 1955 which stated;

During the same dialogue, it was agreed that it is desirable to organize oil palm industry in Southern and South-Western Idoma. It was to begin in the area which has considerable concentration of oil palm in order to increase their production in the required minimum.<sup>300</sup>

The above report touched on a number of themes which required some observation. First, the colonial state employed a system of increasing yield of agricultural raw materials. For example, palm oil, in order to maximize the exploitation of the resources of the area. That was why Rodney<sup>301</sup> opined that Africa went into colonialism with a hoe and came out with a hoe. But this study is of the view that Africa went into colonialism with a hoe and came out from it without the hoe, leading to a situation that after independence the hoe will not be there to till the land, and in reality the land will be left to fallow without the hoe to till it, because of the nature and extent of damage colonialism did to the socio-economic and political history of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, Idoma Division inclusive in this discourse as seen from the abject poverty, economic backwardness and dependency on external powers, lack of genuine industrial base, bad

---

<sup>300</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, 7203, p. 255.

<sup>301</sup> Walter Rodney's view was that, Africa was colonized by the Imperial states of Europe, leading to the Underdevelopment of African. This was a factor that made Rodney to conclude that Africa went into colonialism with a hoe and came out from it with hoe.



governance, corruption mismanagement and embezzlement of funds and a host of other vices.

The colonial government in her quest to increase the production of oil palm in the area of study established demonstration farms,<sup>302</sup> and scattered oil palm nurseries. The oil palm nurseries cost £200 a year for a 10,000 seedling nursery.<sup>303</sup> And in the year 1955, 10,000 seedling nurseries were ordered for the whole of the Western Districts under Idoma Division.<sup>304</sup> This went a long way in intensifying production of palm fruit in the Division and beyond.

However, it is important to note that prior to the advent of colonial rule in the area under study, palm oil was used mainly for cooking, while palm kernel was used for local pomade and ointment, as its external demands were not high during the period prior to colonial incursion, conquest and establishment of control. It was controlled by women but it acquired cash where, men came to monopolise its production.

According to the account of oral testimonies, it was related that palm produce was the major cash crop in the area, and that the Igbo traders who were mostly women and company agents came to the *nkwor*, *eke*, *afor* and *ede* markets to buy them, the palm fruits and palm kernel which was used in making local pomade were the products needed mostly by these Igbo traders.<sup>305</sup> The British agents also purchased palm produce and to some extent the middle men in the area too brought the palm fruits from retailers. This was the linkage through which the sales of palm fruit was developed in Idoma Division.

---

<sup>302</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No 7023, Vol 2, Policy and Minutes of Discussion. Idoma Division, 1955

<sup>303</sup> NAK MARKPROF, 7203,

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*, p, 255

<sup>305</sup> Oral interview with Godwin Ochigbo, C. 72 years, in Agila on the 12-4-20 13

Our area of study produced one of the best species of palm fruit, the “*Utobo*” which produced more oil than “*Okala*” the one that produced less oil. The Production of “*Utobo*” species in *Otukpa* made it easier for marketers to flock the area for purchase. In fact throughout the colonial era in Idomaland, Akpa, *Otukpa* and *Orokam* produced more palm fruits than the rest of the Districts in Idoma Division.<sup>306</sup>

The price for the palm fruit throughout the colonial period was low in Idoma Division. According to one of the available sources, the price for a tin of palm oil was sold at five shilling (5s)<sup>307</sup>, while in Igede; palm oil was sold in the market at Id. a bottle or 6d to 7d, in terms of gallon and the uncracked nut (palm kernels) fetched about a pound.<sup>308</sup> The prices paid for this product was so low and exploitative; the burden of taxation and a source of livelihood pushed the people of the area in forceful production of palm produce.

With the entrenchment of colonialism and subsequent cash economy in Idoma Division, lot of encouragement was given to the production of palm produce and was carried out by women. At first the product was not exported, it was consumed locally and used for cooking and in the production of pomade, fuel and ointment. This was so because there was little demand in Europe at that period and because it had a different chemical composition from the oil extracted from the part of the fruit. It was however, only in the late 19th century that it became possible to employ kernel oil in the manufacture of margarine, and the residue for cattle feeds.<sup>309</sup> Palm fruit became important for export

---

<sup>306</sup> See, Agaba Ebute John, “Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland,” p.184

<sup>307</sup> Ibid p.184

<sup>308</sup> Ibid p.184

<sup>309</sup> See, Hopkins A.G, pp 128-135.

when much experiment was conducted to value its importance in the economic development of the imperial nation and for export in large quantity.

More importantly, what needed to be discussed is the production of cotton, the nature and impact of cotton production in Idoma Division. However, it will be imperative to note that cotton production was carried out in the northern parts of Idoma Division by men and women.<sup>310</sup> Cotton seeds were distributed to farmers, and women played significant role in the production process, because they were responsible for the planting of the seeds, harvesting of the crops and transporting to the railway station in Otukpo to be exported.<sup>311</sup> This was a serious economic activity carried out by women in the area under study for the development of the economy of the British colonizers and it is imperative to note that the roles women played in the production of cash crops in Idoma Division was germane to the development of the Idoma society as a whole.

As indicated above, cotton was regarded as a major cash crop by British colonialists and it was introduced in the area to increase the output. Thus, cotton was introduced from Loko at the base of the colonialists; it was from Loko that the British brought the seed to Agatu District between 1917 and 1922.<sup>312</sup>

The indigenous people of this area had local cotton which they grew on a small scale, and exclusively for domestic consumption. Those farmers that produced more than enough for subsistence traded it at the markets. The British introduced a different species of cotton to the area. The production of cotton was largely done at *Agbaha* in *Otukpa*, a unit for the production of cotton was stationed in the area, and this was a major source of

---

<sup>310</sup> See Agaba Ebute John, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland, P. 263

<sup>311</sup> Oral Interview with Enemari Ofekwu, C 85, A farmer in Agatu area of Idomaland, on the 23-9- 203

<sup>312</sup> Agada Ebute John, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland," p.188

revenue to the British imperialists. Though, the quantity of cotton produced in *Otukpa* District was not much in comparison with *Agatu* District which made the area to be well known for the wide growth of cotton in the whole of the Idoma Division, the quantity that was produced was exploited by the British. The tonnage of cotton seed distributed in 1939 alone stood at 25 tons.<sup>313</sup> The colonial agents were responsible for the distribution of the seeds through the District Head to the clan level. This was how cotton seeds were distributed in Idomaland. The price paid for cotton produced in *Agatu* and *Otukpo* in particular and the whole of the Idoma Division was small, as they were cheated in the process. While the price for a sack of cotton produce was measured through the weight but when the people started growing the cotton, five shillings was offered for the sack of cotton seed.<sup>314</sup> It was argued that this five shilling offered for a sack of cotton was encouraging and the producers were able to pay taxes and other economic burdens were taken care of.

The British colonialists intensified the production of cotton during the period of the great depression. This was between 1935 to 1936 when, about 7,000 and 10,000 bags of cotton was exported from *Agatu* area alone, which marked a sharp increase in the production of cotton in the area.<sup>315</sup> The increase in cotton production was due to pressure from the British colonialists and agents, however the price paid for the cotton was small to what was in existence in the pre-depression years. Women became more liable to more responsibilities as they processed palm fruits for exportation along side cotton and they also had to meet the expectations of the British in cotton production.

---

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, p191

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, pp. 192

<sup>315</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No. 257, Cotton Production Idoma Division.

The middlemen who bought this produce from the indigenous producers were corrupt on the basis that the prices offered for the cotton were too small to match the effort put forward in the production process. What compounded the problem was the development of marketing boards in Idoma Division and produce control board in 1942. There was also the establishment of the Nigeria Cotton Marketing Ordinance in 1949.<sup>316</sup>

The development of the marketing board had a devastating effect on the production of cotton in Idoma Division. The price of cotton was further brought down, the agents and middlemen used the existence of the marketing board to justify the price of cotton, which was so low in comparison to what was in existence. When asked of the price offered for a sack of cotton in the 1950's, a respondent opined that a sack of cotton was sold for 38s.<sup>317</sup>

The price offered for a sack of cotton was small, thus, the British firm stationed at Loko, Makurdi and Lokoja were the major buyers of the cotton, through their agents, the Igbo, Igala and the Hausa respectively.

In general, the traders took the cotton to Loko and sold it to the United African Company (UAC) at about 2/2d per lb, which is 35s per bag and consequently made a profit of 1 per bag some of the traders took the cotton to Igbirra Division of kabba Province where they sold all for 5d per lb to local weavers.<sup>318</sup> The price of cotton was low in the whole of Idoma Division. In Agatu District, where cotton production was more, there was a sharp reduction in the price of cotton from 1930-1940. The role played by the British trading companies, the colonial agents and middlemen in the organization of the cotton production was significant to the study and it was basically carried out by women in the

---

<sup>316</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Ace No. 336, Idoma Cotton Production, Idoma Division.

<sup>317</sup> Oral Interview with Owukpa Abutu, C. 73 years, interviewed in Agatu area in Idoma Division, on the 05-07-20 13

<sup>318</sup> NAK: MARKPROF, Acc No 257/3 66, Idoma Division.

area, this was because it was regarded as women's work and it was developed by the colonial state to intensify the production of cotton for export to areas that it was needed by the colonial state, and to a large extent was exported to the metropolitan capital.

Women were producing export and food crops for the development of the economic base of the British. Rights and control over lands were lost to meet up with the payment of tax, women had to work extra time to produce more food crops, trade in goods and manufacture local products to raise tax money. Taxation, therefore, increased female participation in export and food crops production. Taxation increased female headed house holds especially during the 1940 migrations from the villages to the cities.

## **5.6 The Role of Women in Local Industries under Colonial Rule**

The role of women in local industries under colonial rule was pivotal to the economic development of the industrial base of Idoma society. Women played numerous and varied roles in local industries such as in pottery, weaving and palm oil industry.

### **5.6.1 Pottery**

Pottery, as a craft, formed an integral part of the colonial economy of this area and it was exclusively women's work. The raw materials used for pottery included fine reddish clay, grasses and water<sup>319</sup>. Different types of pots were made for various purposes. Primarily pots were made for cooking purpose; however, large pots were later produced for the storage of grains and storage of water. Some large and medium size pots were used for the storage of water, beer storage as well as for ritual purposes. Pottery was also carried out within the confines of the household. The Potters got their raw material from clay, which was dug and turned into a suitable texture. This was soaked with water and left

---

<sup>319</sup> Oral interview with Abah Owoicho, C74, interviewed in Otukpo on the 21-06-2013

over the night and then it was moulded the next day into different shapes and sizes. The pots were then subjected to intensive heating to make them firm and ready for use. After the intense heating of the pots, they were kept under the sun to dry up. The method of making clay items from the pre-colonial period and the colonial period was the same except for the fact that, imported pottery materials and designs from other Divisions allow women to mould more beautiful designs which were not so in the pre-colonial period .

Pottery got a serious challenge as a result of the importation of European made substitutes. The effect of this was that, women who happened to dominate the production of this craft lost their prestige and this also affected their economic income and social security within the household exchange and local trade. In addition to this, the colonial period provided an opportunity for some Igbo traders to bring in clay pots in large quantities from Enugu and Onitsha into Idoma Division.<sup>320</sup> According to one informant<sup>321</sup>, it was revealed that during market day's varieties of pottery were traded by the marketers, most especially Igbo women from the bordering areas. The designs on the pots revealed the culture of the people that produced it, and mostly, the pottery materials were moulded into pots and plates, which were used for eating and fetching of water. It was a serious technological advancement on the part of women to carry out the work on pottery in the area under study; it involved preparing the clay, mixed with grasses and water, before moulding and firing to afford portability and durability<sup>322</sup>. However, as aptly stated in this work, women were responsible and were engaged in this work during the colonial era, because men have migrated to the Jos tin mines and the cocoa farm in

---

<sup>320</sup> Oral Interview with Anthony Ebute, C 94, A farmer, interviewed on the 21-06-2013 in Otukpo

<sup>321</sup> Ibid

<sup>322</sup> Oral Interview with Oche'anya Agaba, C 53, a Potter in Otukpo, interviewed on the 13-04-2013

western parts of Nigeria allowed the women to carry the burden of providing for the household and this had a lot of implications on the role women played as we shall see in the course of this study. The importation of iron pots affected the industrial production of home made pots because people began to use more of the imported iron pots to cook and store foods and items than was previously used. These affected the status of women as they made little or no profits on the locally made pots. Materials needed for the survival of locally made pots and items such as additives and binder which were added to the imported pots were sometimes not readily available by this period of time therefore, were limited and challenged.

### **5.6.2 Weaving**

There was a decline in weaving production as a result of the colonial structure on ground. Much of the human labour by this period was channeled towards the establishment of a structure that ensured the steady supply of the economic and social needs of imperial Britain. This phenomenon tended to halt the production of mats, baskets and other associated products, even though we gathered that this specific products were handled by both elderly women and men who did not form chunk of the labour force used by the colonialists, they however, had to channel their labour towards sustaining the household company, this however, reduced their output in cotton production. The products were as numerous as their uses. Traditional and cultural wears, they also included baskets for general use, baskets for collecting foods, and lidded containers, baskets for carrying chickens, porters' baskets and winnowers. The production of these crafts was carried out within the confines of the household and was exclusively women's work. Idoma Division was characterized by oil palm trees and this was one of the reasons why the study argued



that the natural environment has a direct bearing on the socio-economic activities of the people. Palm trees have a lot of importance in the area under study, first, women participated fully in making brooms and basket from the stems of the tree, they used the palm fruits as raw material for the production of oil, palm wine were extracted from it, though women do not tap the wine from the tree, but they were responsible for the sales of the wine at the market.<sup>323</sup> It should be noted that the role women played in the colonial economy of Idoma Division was germane to the economic development of Idoma society as the weaving of clothes and cotton production for export were parts of the activities of women in Idoma Division.

### **5.6.3 Palm oil Industry**

The quest for meeting the demands of the colonial economic policies led to the cultivation of different cash crops in Idoma Division, such as palm fruit. Prior to the introduction of this cash crop, it was noted that indigenous cash crops were in existence in Idoma Division. These were later replaced by the new improved varieties of cash crops, most especially palm fruit. The main reason for the introduction and development of palm oil was the urge to secure a source of raw materials for their overseas industries and in the process turned the local population into consumers of British imported manufactured goods which it aggressively did. Women played the role of extracting the oil from the palms and processing the fruits into oil which where exported to expand the economies of the colonialists. Thus, women's role in the processing of palm fruits was obvious from the advancement and contributions made to the development of the metropolitan states. The processing of oil was aided by the introduction of the pressing

---

<sup>323</sup> Ibid

mill by the British colonizers to boast its production in exported large quantity. With the machine, a large quantity of oil was extracted from the palm fruits and exported to Europe by sea.<sup>324</sup>

## **5.7 The Role of Women in Commerce**

Commerce entails the business or exchange of buying and selling of goods and services in a given place in time. In other words, it is the exchange of commodities, especially the exchange of merchandise on a large scale between different places or communities involving both men and mostly women.

### **5.7.1 The Establishment of Colonial Trading Centres**

Trade was an important aspect of the colonial economy in Idoma Division. Women traded in varieties of goods which included salt, locust bean, mat and baskets, mirror, and palm produce in our area of study. The demonetization of the economy and the introduction of general purpose money was a major landmark on the trading activities of the people in Idoma Division which in turn, aided the processes of buying and selling of goods. The introduction of British currency, meant taxes was collected with the new currency and trade was improved upon to expand the economy of the people. Thus, during this period, the British trading company's sub-stations at Otukpo, particularly John Holt Company, United African Company and Royal Niger were mainly responsible for the importation of soap into the area.<sup>325</sup> The soap was brought into the area by the agents of the John Holt Company, Mr. E.H Counsel, and the colonial officer in the Benue Province which was a major challenge to the locally made products.

---

<sup>324</sup>Mike Odey, "Cash Crop Production in Benue Province

<sup>325</sup> See Adakole Sylvester, "Market System in Otukpa", C 1870-1970, p.41

Trading activities in Idoma Division were examined based on the market structure and systems. The trading companies, as earlier stated, brought into the area new goods which were not in the area prior to the advent of colonial rule and Igbo women and few men were the major agents of the sales. These goods were marketed by the Igbo women, who were agents of the trading companies in Otukpo, Makurdi and other parts of Tivland respectively. There were challenges faced by locally made products as the British introduced the marketing board to regulate the sales of goods.

The Igbo women traders that came for trading activities in Idoma Division also bought palm produce, yams, livestock, palm wine and other produce from the Idoma women traders in Otukpo, Adoka, Agatu, Edumoga, this meant that there was buying and selling relationship between the Igbo and Idoma people. Some Igbo traders even settled in the area under study as a result of trading activities, which introduced some alien cultures, dialects and food crops to the Division.<sup>326</sup>

The market system in the area under study attracted scholars in the area, most especially Mike Odey<sup>327</sup> has written on the issue of trade in the Division. However, the focus of the study is to examine the role of women in the colonial economy of the area through trade relations. Most of the people engaged in trade were women and the colonial state taxed them according to the product and the volume of the trade in the market.

Women revolted in 1947 in Otukpo, contending that they were over taxed and they were not making profits in the system, because of the nature and ways through which the

---

<sup>326</sup> Ibid

<sup>327</sup> Mike Odey, *Cash Crop Production in Benue Province. A Case of Study Groundnut Production in Idomaland*, Aboki Publishers Ltd, Makurdi, 2013 and also see Adakole Sylvester, "Markets and Market Systems in Otukpa District", B.A Project, Department of History, A.B.U, 2008

colonial state exploited them.<sup>328</sup> Trade during the colonial era was not a lucrative venture for the women in the Division, as virtually all produce ranging from agriculture to industrial produce were geared towards the growth and development of the British colonizers. Since it was controlled by the colonial state and profits were less compared to the pre-colonial period in the Division. Thus, the impact of these are the de-humanization of the people, lost of rights to their produce, poverty stricken society, it also halted all possible ways to generate income, colonialism destroyed the traditional system of trade and the importation of foreign goods outweighed locally made goods.

### **5.8 Migration to Jos tin mines and the Cocoa farms in Western Region**

Owing to migration, the number of women involved in farming increased disproportionately and task that were typically meant to be for men became acceptable for women to do when men migrated to the railway construction sites in Otukpo, Jos tin mines and the cocoa farms of the western region, Kaduna Textile Limited (KTL) Although, ( KTL) has no connection with forced labour but it involved migration of the people out of the Division for wage labour and also to Enugu. However, the quest for meeting the demands of colonial economic policies led to the development of wage labour and labour migration, with vast majority of the people migrating to Jos tin mines and Western cocoa farms, popularly referred to as *Oklumi* in Idoma.

While in some cases this movement was purely an economic movement for profits, and search for a greener pasture in others, it was stimulated by social consideration such as the desire to escape from the restrictive nature of colonialism in Idoma society. These

---

<sup>328</sup> Oral Interview with Ene Efowe, C 95, a trader, interviewed in Otukpo on the 21-06-2013

two phenomena as noted in the main discussion had traumatic far-reaching consequences on the economy and society of Idoma.

The implication of this was that women were placed on more burdens to provide food and other domestic needs of the family or household. The men that migrated to the cocoa farms continuously were there for two years to three years or even more. During this period, women were expected to provide the needs of the family, pay tax and engaged in other demanding activities. This movement according to the available sources had a catastrophic effect on the role and functions of women in the area under study. However, this caused many to become abjectly poor, women headed household and the destruction of the socio-economic and political structures of Idoma society.

Labour migration from the 1940s up to the 1950s resulted owing to the inability of the colonial administration to create conducive economic and social environment compounded by taxation in Idoma Division precipitated by the labour shortage, accentuated and expanded opportunities in the educational and industrial sectors of the western region, and given the high prices of cocoa in the world market during the period 1929 to 1940s after the Second World War, the migrant workers were relatively paid high wages and this positively reflected in their economic and social conditions, after they had returned to Idoma Division, they were given respect, due to the fact that they were able to pay their taxes easily, build houses, marry many wives and had enough disposable income. The long term effect of this to their families and the society is drunkenness, increase in polygamy and unproductive life styles.

## **5.9 PROFILE OF SOME IDOMA WOMEN HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THEY FACED UNDER COLONIAL RULE**

### **Mrs Olije Adikwu**

Mrs Olije was born in 1914 in Ogene - Amejo village in Edumoga District of Idoma Division. Her husband Mr Adikwu migrated to the cocoa plantation of the western region in search of greener pasture to work in the western region in 1920. Mrs Olije had four (4) children. With the absence of her husband from Ogene-Amejo in Edumoga District of Benue State. The responsibilities of catering for the family while her husband Mr Adikwu was away from home were innumerable. She shouldered the duties of providing food for the family, buying clothing and of taking them to the hospital.<sup>329</sup> Consequently, to sustain herself she went into trading in farm produce. According to Mrs Olije, only one out of the four children she had went to school after her husband left home because they could hardly feed, and the other three children supported their mother in trading and in farm work. The money she realized from trading in palm produce was used to buy other food items she needed to prepare food for her children and herself. She occasionally received assistance from her husband's relation as well as from her own relations, while waiting for her husband to send some money to his family through his cousins who occasionally visited home. The husband on his part sent home some little money from what he earned from the cocoa plantation to support his family.

---

<sup>329</sup> Interview with Mrs. Olije Adikwu, aged 102, at Otukpo August 2015.

### **Mrs Alice Ejembi**

Mrs Alice Ejembi hails from Ogoli village<sup>330</sup> in Ugboju District and was born in 1911. Ugboju is located 150 kilometres away from Otukpo. Her husband, Mr Ejembi, migrated to the Jos Tin Mines to work and support his family which he did by sending money to his family. Mrs Alice Ejembi had eight (8) children. Mrs Alice Ejembi was faced with many challenges to cater for her family after her husband left the house to work in the mines because the children were many and the money her husband sent home occasionally was a meager part of his salary so she worked extra hard to support her family needs. She shouldered extra responsibilities of providing food for the family and some other needs. According to Alice, none of the children went to school after her husband left home because the children were many for her to cater for their educational needs, but some were skilled in tailoring, and others were braiding women's hair on market days while the boys were into fishing to support their mother. Some of Mrs Alice Ejembi's children were sent to their relations to live with them because they were too many for her to provide basic needs for them.

### **Mrs Omada Linus**

Mrs Omada was born in 1929, in Owukpa District. Her husband Mr Linus Acheme migrated to the cocoa farm in Western Nigeria to work in the cocoa farms a place popularly referred to as *Uklumi* by Idoma people. She said many men left their homes to the cocoa farms and never came back to their families.<sup>331</sup> Although the challenges she encountered was much, her husband sent some money to support her. Omada had three (3) children. She shouldered the responsibilities of providing for the family through her hard

---

<sup>330</sup> Interview with Mrs. Alice Ejembi, aged 105, Uboju District, August 2015

<sup>331</sup> Interview with Mrs. Omada Linus, aged 87, at Owukpa, April 1 2014.

work in the farm and the sales of mat and basket which she undertook during the dry seasons when there was not much farm work to be carried out. Through this way they children learnt mat and basket weaving from their mother. She was forced by the colonial agents to pay tax from the meager income she made from farm produce and from the sales of mat and basket while her husband was away. Her husband sent home money through relations that migrated to the Cocoa farms.

### **Mrs Elizabeth Ajogi**

Born in 1918 in Igbanonaje village in Otukpo District, her husband Mr Ajogi migrated to the Jos Tin Mines area for a paid labour in the mines. Mr Matthew Ajogi worked in the mines for about four years and six months and came back home to his family but when he saw that things were still not getting better he left for Kaduna where he worked in Kaduna Textile Limited (KTL). According to Elizabeth, the husband was away for so many years unlike some of his relations that went to the cocoa farms and the Jos Tin mines that, after a year or two, came back home to ask how their families were faring and then went back. She had six (6) children. All the six children were females and they all worked tirelessly on the farms and at other times, on crafts which were mostly sold at the market especially, at Upu market in Otukpo to generate more income for their survival. With all these responsibilities upon her shoulder the money she realized from farm produce was used to pay colonial tax and was also made to work at colonial work places. She resides in her home town because she is very old now where relations are acting as care giver to her and her husband Mr Ajogi is late.<sup>332</sup>

---

<sup>332</sup> Interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Ajogi, aged 98, at Otukpo, January 2015.



### **Mrs Akoundu Abojeh**

Born in 1919 in Agatu District, her husband, Mr Abojeh, migrated to the railway construction site at Otukpo in search of greener pasture. Mrs Akoundu Abojeh had six (6) children. She was laden with the responsibilities of catering for the family after her husband Mr Abojeh left home to work at the railway construction site. She complained that her siblings lived with her therefore, it was tasking meeting needs of the family. She shouldered the duties of providing for the family. Akoundu laboured day and night to cater for her children and her siblings probably because her mother too was faced with the same difficulty catering for her own children after her husband Mr Abojeh migrated from home to the railway construction site in Otukpo. Her husband was constantly sending money home because his children were many and his in-laws resided with his family. She had to engage herself in trading activities like mat making and local pomade to support her family while her husband was away. Through this way, she participated in the development of the economy of the area from her labour in the farm and trading.<sup>333</sup>

### **Mrs Onyowiocho Ameh**

Mrs Onyowicho Ameh was born in 1909 in Ogene - Amejo Edumoga District. Her husband migrated to Enugu Obolo-Afor area to work. Mrs Onyowiocho had five (5) children. With the absence of her husband she was laden with responsibilities ranging from providing for the family through farming and trading to sustain herself and her children. She shouldered the duties of providing basic needs for the family. Mrs Onyowiocho was laden with the responsibilities to provide for her children and herself with the development that came with migration and demands for wage labour, the

---

<sup>333</sup> Interview with mrs. Akoundu Abojeh, aged 97, at Agatu, July 2014.

husband had to migrate out of Ogene village to work in Enugu. The money she realized from her farm produce was used to buy other food items she needed for her family survival and to also pay tax while she awaited the money her husband sent home through relations for their sustenance.<sup>334</sup>

### **Mrs Maria Obagwu**

Mrs Maria Obagwu was born in 1918, in Onyangede District of Idoma Division. Her husband, Mr Obagwu migrated to Otukpo to work at the railway construction site. Maria shouldered the duties of providing the needs of the family while her husband Mr. Obagwu was away from home. According to Mrs Maria the first two children manage to go to school because there was no means of educating the remaining four children. The money she realized from her farm produce was used to support her family. She was supported by relations while her husband was away from home.

In the final analysis it was deduced from the challenges these women faced during colonial rule and during the absence of their husbands from home due to the search for greener pasture that extra efforts were made to counter these challenges through the extra activities in trade and farming by these women and through the support rendered by their children and the men on their part, were supportive of their wives by sending what ever they had to send to their family either in kind or in cash.

The implication of all of these was that women took extra responsibilities to provide food and other domestic needs of the family and part of the money these women realised from the farms was used to pay colonial tax. These women whose husbands migrated from their homes to the Jos Tin Mines, Cocoa farms, Otukpo railway construction site and

---

<sup>334</sup> Interview with Mrs. Oyowhiocho Ameh, aged 107, at Edumoga, September 2014.

other cities such Kaduna, Enugu and Lagos were poorly fed and their children were not always healthy to support agricultural production. The men that migrated to the cocoa farms were there for four to two years even more as the case may be, therefore, during this period, women were expected to provide the needs of the family, pay tax and engaged in order demanding activities such as; trading in palm oil, mat and basket weaving and pottery these were mostly carried out when the rains have subsided and when the dry season sets in proper. This migration as shown from the profile of these women had catastrophic effects on the role and functions of women in the area under study.<sup>335</sup>

## **5.10 Conclusion**

Chapter five revealed that the colonial economy in Idoma Division pressurized and exploited the people, mostly women. The taxes that were imposed on women were so high that it led to a revolt like it happened during the famous Aba women riot of 1929. As noted, women were the major producers of export crops and food crops to feed colonial officials and troops in the area under study. It was so severe that the colonial state indebted the indigenous farmers by giving out seedlings and fertilizers to boost production and through this medium, they became indebted to the colonial state. Quotas were given to them to produce and when this was not met, it was taxation and confiscation of goods and livestock that was used by the colonial agents to force tax defaulters to comply. Food crops such as yam and cocoa yams were also produced and it was used to feed the colonial troops and officials. Women also contributed to the colonial

---

<sup>335</sup> Interview with Mrs. Maria Obagwu, aged 98, at Oyangede, December 2015.

state through forced labour out put, payment of taxes, cash crop and food crop production, trading activities and carriers among other things. These were the major aspects of the colonial economy through which women were actively involved. Through these attributes, the society and economy of Idoma Division was integrated into the world capitalist economy and women based on the available evidence at the disposal of the present research were a major contributor to the colonial economy as their various roles in agricultural production, local industry and trade subsidized their efforts and support to the men in particular and and economy generally through force, cunning, trickery and banditry which could be summed up as primitive accumulation.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY**

The study examined the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division during the period 1908-1960. This study focused on a hitherto neglected aspect of the colonial economic history of Idoma Division in the Benue Province. We analyzed this process, using the political economy theory and Gender and Development (GAD) perspectives. These theories enabled us to have a better understanding of the nature and extent of colonialism on the society and economy of Idoma Division. Women played tremendous roles in the development of the area under study. Consequently there was transformation in the social relations of production as the pre-colonial lineage mode of production gave way to the emerging capitalist mode of production in the area through the exploitation of human and natural resources of Idoma society, men and women. Its achievement was made viable through the creation of a system that Marx described as predatory and inhuman.

The first chapter, provided a general background to the study, discussing the statement of the problem, the scope of the study, why the study was carried out and objectives of the study, the theoretical framework the study employed was based on political economy theory and gender and development perspectives, appreciating and reviewing the relevant works of some scholars such as Hanatu Alahira's doctoral work, Mike Odey's work R.G. Armstrong's work and Yakubu Aboki's work. The methodology used in the study were primary and secondary source materials which involved an extensive use of oral interviews, as well as library and archival materials in Idoma Division.

An attempt was made in the second chapter to appreciate how the natural environments of the area under review influenced the migration and occupation of the people, most especially agricultural activities. The land and peoples of Idoma Division were examined appreciating the geographical location of the people; soil, ecology, vegetation, and topography of the Division. The role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division from the pre-colonial to the colonial period would not have been possibly and effectively carried out if not for the geographical settings and abundance of natural and human resources.

In chapter three, we examined the pre-colonial economy and the role of women in agriculture, local industries and trade which was the mainstay of the people and two agricultural systems were most important, which included shifting cultivation and bush fallowing. These were organized based on the amount of rainfall and the variation in the season, the availability of land and the capability of the individual. The crops produced in Idomaland are cotton, rice, millet, yams, groundnut, palm fruits and benniseed among others. Agriculture played significant roles in the economic development of the people in the pre-colonial era.

The chapter also revealed that the household system was a major aspect of the labour output and organisation of the people in the area in which women were actively involved. There were several systems of labour in the area, the first was the household labour as indicated above, and the second was the cooperative labour and voluntary labour. In this, both men and women were seen to have played complimentary roles. These were the major types of labour system that existed during the period prior to the British colonial rule.

The work further demonstrated that Idoma Division claimed absolute ownership to the land they presently occupied. The migration of the Idoma peoples into the area from *Apa*, in the course of this migration they settled at different locations. It was from this point that the society dispersed patrilineally into their lineage groups but maintained closeness with one another.

A critical analysis of the pre-colonial Idoma economy in which the involvement of women in agriculture, local industries and trade in the society, revealed that the basic unit of production was the household, where labour and surplus appropriation was appropriated by male household heads and subsidized with women efforts. Although it was emphasized that the economic relations between the social groups were not characterized by high degree of antagonism, there existed a distinctive social unit, hence social inequalities, as the eldest people and title holders, the highest social status were given a pride of place in the society.

Thus, this tends to debunk the notion which stated that Idoma is classless and undifferentiated seem to be incorrect. During the pre-colonial Idoma economy and society, handicrafts, trade and exchange were also discussed. Despite these, agriculture, formed the bedrock of the traditional Idoma pre-colonial economy, and thus, occupied a primary position. Far from dissolving under the influence of modern capitalism and colonial rule in the twentieth century, the household showed it was very resilient and played a crucial role in the development of new economic system.

Chapter four of the study focused on the military forces in 1899 that led to the conquest of the Idoma land up to 1928; offensive military activities in Northern Idomaland took place, which led to the military conquest of *Odugeho* in *Agatu* District in 1899. In this

District, the largest quantities of rice was farmed, processed and sold by women. It should be noted that, the conquest of the area under study was brutal and through this medium, the independence of these independent polities were lost to the imperial forces which eventually led to the imposition of a culture that was alien and predatory. These was a blow to the pre-existing structure as an alien rule was introduced, which caused a lot of discontentment among the people in the area.

The study examined the military subjugation and subsequent incorporation of the Idoma society into the larger British peripheral satellite colonies. This incorporation marked a turning point in the history of the people. Thus, colonial conquest and subjugation of the independent polities in the Nigerian area was carried out through violence and was also sustained through violence,<sup>336</sup> this was imperative to the colonial state to effectively exploit the raw materials and have ready markets for their surplus goods produced in Europe. This gave rise to an externally imposed government from the first decade of the twentieth century, which introduced many structural changes in the economy where women were used as forced labourers.

The interests and the means to achieving these colonial policies were also clearly manifested and articulated. Among these early colonial policies were the much hated forced labour used for the construction of colonial infrastructural facilities in which women were also involved and which aimed at facilitating the exploitation of both human and material resources of the people, imposition of taxation to finance the colonial

---

<sup>336</sup> See Frantz Fanon, in the *Wretched of the Earth*, clearly demonstrated the use of force and violence by the colonial state in subjugation and maintaining colonial rule, this was an issue that was carried out through the development of institution such as the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), the Native Police, and other obnoxious policies on the colonized.



administration and above all, the imposition of the colonial currencies as the standard units of economic transactions among the people of Idoma Division.

Chapter Five elaborated on the following issues among others; the quest for meeting the demands of these colonial economic policies which led to the development of wage labour and labour migration, with vast majority of the people, mostly men migrating to the Jos tin mines and Western cocoa farms, popularly referred to as *Oklumi* in Idoma leaving most of the responsibilities of the household demand on the women. While in some cases this movement was purely an economic migration to opportunities for profits, in others, it was stimulated by social consideration such as the desire to escape from the restrictive nature of colonial rule, example, forced labour production and taxation.

These two phenomena as noted in the main discussion had traumatic far-reaching consequences on the economy, Idoma Division and women. The implication of this was that women were burdened with responsibilities to provide food and other domestic needs of the family or household. Some of these women, whose husbands migrated to the cocoa farm, were there for six months to one year. During this period women were expected to provide the needs of the family, pay tax and engaged in other financial demanding activities such as trade, producing and processing locally made goods. This movement according to the available sources had a catastrophic effect on the role and functions of women in the area under study. The study also revealed that labour migration from the 1940s up to the 1950 resulted owing to the inability of the colonial administration to create conducive economic and social environment compounded by the burden of taxation in Idoma Division which was precipitated by the labour shortage in the cocoa farm of Western Nigeria, this also accentuated expanded opportunities in the educational

and industrial sectors of the western region, and given the high prices of cocoa in the world market during the period 1929 to 1940s after the Second World War, the migrant workers were relatively paid high wages and this was positively reflected in their economic and social conditions, after they had returned to Idomaland, they were given respect, due to the fact that they could pay their taxes easily, build houses, marry many wives and had enough disposable income.

There were assumptions that Idomaland lacked export crop production, like cocoa, rubber, groundnut, and cotton which were produced elsewhere, if this was true then, the role of women in the area under study remains obsolete, however, it was not true, because the colonial state took a hasty conclusion on the people in the area under study. But despite the lack of these export crops as opined by the colonial government, the colonial government imposed universal taxation and this was increased yearly without the means to meet the demand for cash to pay the required taxes. The people had no option but forced to migrate to the cocoa farms in the west and Jos tin mines and other places. Thus, throughout the colonial period, there was gradual depopulation of the area due to exploitation of the people. This was much more so as the neighbours to the Idomas were unable to raise sufficient money to pay for administration, therefore, the Idoma had to bear brunt of maintaining the Benue Province through series of colonial policies that affected the economy and women suffered severally by these policies.

The quest for meeting the demands of the colonial economic policies led to the introduction of different cash crops in Idoma Division, such as palm fruit and cotton. Prior to the introduction of these crops, it was noted that indigenous cash crops were said to be in existence in Idoma Division. These were later replaced by the new improved

varieties of cash crops, most especially palm fruit. The main reason for the introduction and development of these crops as noted in the discussion, was the urge to secure a source of raw materials for their overseas industries and in the process turning the local population into consumers of British imported manufactured goods which it aggressively did.

Thus, the study has attempted to debunk the impressions usually held that Idomaland did not produce any export cash crop in sufficient commercial quantities and that the impact of the colonial administration on the economy and society was indirect and incidental, appeared to be erroneous, as our evidence proved to the contrary because women have contributed to the production of export crops from the Division and this to a large extent indicated that Idomaland was and is a significant area for the production of crops needed by the colonial state through oppression and exploitation. These assumptions, according to this study, were informed by the fact that our study area, unlike elsewhere in Nigeria, lacked central storage facilities for these cash crops, and because of the migratory nature of the market, these crops were said to be evacuated through various routes to either eastern or Northern parts of Nigeria, depending on which cash crop in question.

However, through the incorporation of Idoma Division into the orbit of capitalism, the effect of the great depression affected the economy and the society of Idoma and the economy suffered disastrously from this general crisis of capitalism. British colonialism and economic policy was predicated on using the colonies to facilitate her post-war recovery. The policy, as noted, led to the encouragement of food production as well as export crops, mainly to make the British colonial government more self-sufficient and offset her indebtedness to United States of America during the Second World War. Other

reasons precipitating the encouragement of food production in Idomaland in general were locust invasions and drought which badly hit the entire region during the period in question.<sup>337</sup>

Colonial agricultural policies based on a mere propaganda were also discussed. As noted, the initial reactions of the peasant farmers to these colonial agricultural policies and/or innovations were both afraid and enthusiastic. The colonial state introduced policies that constantly linked Idoma Division into the world capitalist system; one of such policies was the distribution of palm fruit seedling to the indigenous farmers to boost production of the produce. The British colonial state went further after discovering that the soil in some part of the area was sandy, they quickly introduced the application of fertilizer in the production of palm produce and other cash crops in the area under study. Forced labour was also used in the production process, demonstrated farms and other policies were introduced, and it came to a point whereby tapping of trees for palm wine was controlled by the colonial state. These agricultural policies were introduced to maximally exploit the indigenous people, to develop the industrial state of the metropolitan.

It was observed in the study that rural Idomaland household before colonialism was an entirely agrarian economic unit producing primarily for the satisfaction of its members and meager part, if any, sold in the local markets, still in pursuance of the satisfaction of the household. But with the development of peripheral capitalism in the area, however, there was a distortion or disruption in the socio-economic relations of production of the people. The most important consequences arising from this development, as noted in the

---

<sup>337</sup> See, George, E. Ode, Op-cit and also Anthony, I.J, *The Making of Otukpa Land*, Government Printer, Makurdi 1978

main discussion, were the spread of commoditization among the people and women suffered more through the payment of taxes and forced labour.

It was also discussed that as a result of this commoditization, some farmers who had neither cash nor food to eat found themselves working for their more fortunate farmers or mortgaging their unharvested crops for food or cash, a phenomenon, which in the past was a 'stigmatized sign of abject poverty' a very last recourse. This crisis of production, which was little or non-existence in the past, ensnared the peasant farmers into the vicious cycle of poverty and impoverishment.

By the time our study period terminated in 1960, the household which was the pre-colonial basic unit of production was ruptured, became more isolated, and economically much more dependent on the world economic conjuncture. In other words, Idoma peasant economy and society, from 1908 to 1960 onwards, became externally responsive, so much that the external interests as expressed by the accepted laws of demand and supply of the so-called world market, and by so doing, tended to specialize in primary commodities whose production had deprived the Idoma economy of the capacity for self-sustaining growth which was a pre-condition to real economic development.

Though, the political aspect of the changes in the area under discourse do not directly impacted on women, because women were not allowed to rule as district head during the colonial era. However, the political changes was important to mention because of the fact that the policies through the Native Authority had a direct bearing on the nature and role of women during the period under discourse.

The distortion of the pre-existing political and social structures and the application of the policy of indirect rule as obtained in the Emirate system was a significant discussion

under this section. This was what the colonial state called “pagan administration”<sup>338</sup> and it has come under serious investigation by scholars. It should be noted that the area under study had a political structure prior to British colonial rule, the people were in harmony and having a simple political and socio-economic formations, relate effectively with her neighbours.<sup>339</sup> The colonialists was in a hurry to justify the conquest and exploitation of the people, and came up with categorization as “pagan administration” to the people with absent of centralized political structure, most especially in the Benue valley region. The colonialists incorporated Idoma Division into the emirate system, and it was the interest of the British colonialists to have a single political system for the whole of Nigeria, that will operate under the indirect rule system just like what was obtainable in the emirate. The introduction of the indirect rule system in the area under study led to the destruction of the system that existed before colonial rule, the British colonial appointment of a paramount chief, Ape was the first concerted step towards the centralization of political authority and departure from the decentralization of political and judicial system of the pre-colonial period which was focused around the Ojira and the Oche’ship institution which wielded some responsibilities during the period under study. The establishment of Native Administration system from 1908 brought about structural changes to the political development of Idoma Division and also the re-organization of the Division up to the creation of the Idoma Central Native Authority in 1946 was to introduce the Idoma Federal Council in 1947. This formed the basis for continuous domination, and exploitation of the material and human resources of the people of Idoma Division. The Native Authority was the basis of the administrative machinery of Idoma people, labour

---

<sup>338</sup> See, Ballard, J.A, *Pagan Administration and Political Development in Northern Nigeria*, in Savanna, Journal of the environmental and Social Sciences, Vol.1, No. 1, A.B.U, Zaria, 1972, p, 1.

<sup>339</sup> Anthony, I.J, Op-cit, Pp, 1-26.

was recruited through the Native Authority, the labour were used for construction and maintenance of roads, government rest houses, in agriculture and the transformation of the society of Idoma were carried out from the Native Authority, most especially the monetization of the economy which women were actively involved. Trade contact and links were also made with the Igbo, Igala, Abakpa at markets places as early in the 19th Century and it was the women that were the hallmark of the commercial systems of the area under study. However, the closest contact between Idoma and other groups before colonial rule was with other Idoma groups especially Orokam, Oyangede, Okwoga among others. Agricultural products were traded in the area, the trade can be classified as inter and intra trade relationship, this was so because trade was carried out within and outside the Idoma Division, most especially the long distance trade. Thus, the monetization of the Idoma economy and the ban of indigenous currencies transformed the economy into the British model, without a conscious development in the industrial sector. In spite of all these transformations which are still working their ways through the Idoma society much of the old ways have survived and traditional rulers and in fact elders, are still being courted by the emergent elite and petty-bourgeoisie. Thus, Idoma history exemplified the process of change and continuity in twentieth century contemporary world and a process to show that women have contributed to the socio-economic and political development of the area under study. The colonial economy of Idoma Division was an aspect of colonialism which women contributed through payment of taxes, forced labour in the construction and maintenance of roads, agriculture and trade, all these were some of the colonial economic activities that women were involved in through oppression and exploitation.

The contribution of the research to this study is seen from the roles of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division during the period 1908-1960. There was actually no area of the society that these women were not involved in, in the agricultural sector women were at the forefront, in industries their roles were also felt and in trade women's roles were exemplified in market system and the interactions with neighbours and the contribution made to the economic development of the society was great.

The research contributed to existing knowledge in the area of integration of women in development. It is, therefore, necessary to give high priority to the usually neglected problem of providing skills to unskilled women. Fifty percent of human resources available for development are women, majority of these have been largely excluded from economic development in the society.

The research on the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, 1908-1960 have been duly examined and arrived at the conclusion that, the involvement of women in development of our society is pivotal and germane to our economic growth and development.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. Archival Sources

- NAK: Acc no, 4434, Idoma Division Cash crop and export crop, 1948
- NAK: Acc No, 33111937, Liquor Permits: Instruction — 1944-54.
- NAK: Acc No, 127/1924, District Chiefs, Idoma Division, Report on Native Treasuries, Estimates Benue Province, 1934-1935.
- NAK: Acc No, 12 1/22, Native Treasury Estimate-Idoma Division — 1934
- NAK: Acc No, 188/111, Appeals from Native Court to District officer and Resident Correspondence, 1949-1953.
- NAK: Acc No, 98/11, Annual Report on Education — Benue Province, 1937-1953
- NAK: Acc No, 213/5 1, Methodist Mission School, Otukpo grants for Subsistence of Idoma N.A. pupils.
- NAK: Acc No, 213/53, Roman Catholic Mission — Application for permission to open a School at Otukpo in Idoma Division 1933-1948.
- NAK: Acc No, 1848/1932, Railway labour Camps, Benue province, 1932-5 1
- NAK: Acc No, 819/1913, Taxation of Railway Servants and others, 19 13-30.
- NAK: Acc No, 331/1940, Labour Migration in Idoma Division, 1940-55.
- NAK: Acc No, 215/1946, Appointment of Paramount Chief in Idoma Division, 1946-1949.
- NAK: Acc No 4958/15.7, Annual Reports on idoma Division
- NAK: Acc No, 1127/1932, Idoma Central Council (Ojira) Minutes of Meeting, 1932.
- NAK: Acc No, 17, Notes on Idoma Division 1847, by Captain D.F. Health, District officer.
- NAK: Acc No, 1608, Vol. II Pagan Administration, 1933.
- NAK: Acc No 1924, District Chiefs, Idoma Division, 1930.
- NAK: Acc No **194**, District Records, 1933-53.

NAK: Acc No 216, Roman Catholic Mission, Application for Permission to Open School at Otukpo, Idoma Division, 1933.

NAK: Acc No 410, Railway Labour, Mine Labour Tax, Idoma Division, 1933.

NAK: Acc No 550B, Otukpo District, Idoma Division

NAK: Acc No 1422, Orokam District of Idoma Division, Farming Condition, 1935

NAK: Acc No 1938/S.6 Western Districts Leper Segregation Area, Idoma Division, 1951

NAK: Acc No 2011, Quarterly and Annual Returns, Idoma Division, 1937

NAK: Acc No 2458, Application for Site to Open a Class of Religious Institution at Ipietu in Idoma Division, by R.C.M, 1938

NAK: Acc No 4434, Idoma Division Cash and Export Crop, 1949

NAK: Acc No 4779/S.3, General Tax Assessment and Collection, 1950-1951, Idoma Division

NAK: Acc No 4951, Idoma Coal Field, Exploitation and Development, 1950-1951

NAK: Acc No 4958/S.1, Annual Reports, Idoma Division, 1950

NAK: Acc No, 27. Touring Instructions, by T.F.W Byng-Hall, 1910.

NAK: Acc No, ARJASS/N6 Assessment Report on Loko District, by Cadman A.D.O. 1914.

NAK: Acc No. 64 ARIASS/I/6 Otukpa Assessment Report 1926, Idoma Division, Capt Money.

NAK: Acc No 366, Taxation Idoma Division 1926

NAK: AR/REP/P/3 Annual Report Returns, Benue Province, 1929.

NAK: AR/REPP/3 Annual General Reports, Benue Province, 1927.

NAK: AR/Rep/P/7 First Annual Report Benue Province for 1936-41.

NAK: AR/REP/P/8 Benue Province Annual Report, 1938.

NAK: AR/REP/I/11 Benue Province Annual Report, 1939.

NAK: AR/REP/P/13 Benue Province Annual Report, 1941.

NAK: AR/Rep/P/14 Benue Province Annual Report, 1943.

NAK: AR/REP/P/15 Benue Annual Report 1994.

NAK: AR/REP/P/16 Benue Annual Report, 1945.

NAK: AR/REP/P/i 8 Benue Annual Report, 1946.

NAK: AR/REP/P/20 Circulation Benue Province, Annual Report, 1950.

NAK: 524/1915 Report of the West African Currency Board on Year Ended 30th June, 1915.

NAK: SNP 10 819/1913 Taxation of Railway Servants and other, Otukpo Station, 1913.

## **B. Published Works**

- Ajayi J.F.A and Espie, I. (ed.) *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence in A thousand Years of West African History*, University oppress, Ibadan, 1965.
- Ajayi J.F.A. *A Thousand Years of West African History*; Ibadan University Press Ltd, Nigeria, 1981
- Ajayi J.F.A. and Espie, I.A. *Thousand Years of West African History*, Longman, London, 1967
- Ajayi, J.F.A, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1846-1891*, Longman Ltd, London, 1965.
- Ake, C. *A Political Economy of Africa*, Longman Group, London, 1981.
- Alanana O. *Sociology of Development: An introduction*. Kaduna, Nigeria 2006.
- Allan M. *The Economic History of West Africa*, Heinemann Press Ltd, London, 1926
- Alvin M, *Men in the Middle: Leadership and Role Conflict in a Nigeria Society*. Manchester University Press London, 1976
- Andre G. F; *The Development of Underdeveloped*, Garden City, New York, 1972
- Anene, J.C. and Brown G.N. (ed.) *Africa in the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Nelson production, 1965
- Anene, J.C. *Southern Nigeria in Transition*, Cambridge University Press, 1966
- Anthony, I. A, *The Making of Otukpa Land*, Forfront Publisher, Makurdi, Nigeria. 1978.
- Appadorai A.; *The Substance of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Armstrong, G. R, *The Idoma Speaking Peoples*. International African Institute, London, 1955.
- Armstrong. G.R. *The Study of West African Language*, Ibadan University Press, 1964.
- Armstrong.G.R. *The use of Linguistic and Ethnographic Data in the Study of Idoma and Yoruba History* (ed.) in the *Historian in Tropical Africa*, London, 1965
- Ayandele, A.E. *The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria, 1870-1918* in J.H. S.N. Vol. III, No., 1966.
- Ballard, J.A. *Administrative Origins of Nigerian Federalism in African Affairs*, No 70, 1979.

- Berry S, *Cocoa, Custom, and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, Clavendo press, Oxford, 1975.
- Bill F, *Forced labour in the Nigerian Tin Mines*, London, 1981.
- Boahen A, *African under Colonial Domination: 1880-1935*. UNESCO Vol. VII, Heinemann Educational Book Ltd. Nigeria, 1990.
- Bohanan P, *Markets in Africa*, North Western University Press, America, 1968.
- Bovill E,W. *Caravans of the Old Saharan*, (1933), Now Titled; *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, (1968).
- Buchanan, K.M. and Pugh, J.C, *Land and Peoples in Nigeria*, London Publisher, London 1955
- Bukarin N, *Imperialism and the World Economy*, Monthly Review press, London, 1973.  
Bull M (ed.) *Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, 1906-19 1 1*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963.
- Carl, K. Eicher and Carl Liedhoim, (eds.), *Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy*, Michigan State University press, 1970
- Chetwyned, I. *Seed Time: The Story of the Methodist Church in Idoma 1924-1974*, Makurdi, 1973.
- Chinweize, S; *The West and the Rest of Us: slave and the African Elite*. Vantage Books Ltd, New York, 1975.
- Cohen R, *Labour and Politics in Nigeria, 1914-1971*, Heinemann Educational Ltd, London, 1947.
- Coleman J.S., *Background to Nationalism*, University of California Press Ltd. 1958.
- Cook, A.N, *British Enterprise in Nigeria*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd 1964.
- Cramplan, EP.T. *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, Gaskiya press, Zaria, 1975.
- Crocker, W..L *Nigeria: A Critique of British Colonial Administration*, London, 1936.
- Crowther M. *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, London, 1970.
- Crummey D, and C.C. Stewart, (eds.), *Mode of Production in Africa: The Pre-Colonial Era*, London, 1981, 93-113.
- Dike, K.O, *One Hundred Years of British Rule in Nigeria 1851-1951*, Lagos, 1957.

- Dike, K.O. *Trade and Politics in the Niger-Delta, 1830-1885*, Ibadan University Press, 1960.
- Effiong, D; *Imperialism and Dependency*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria. 1980.
- Ekechi, F.K, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1859-1914*, Francass, 1972.
- Ekundare R.O. *An Economic History of Nigeria*, Heinemann Educational Ltd, Nigeria, 1980
- Ekundare R.O., *An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860-1960*, London, 1973.
- Engels, F. *The Origin of the Family Private Property, and the State*. Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1978.
- Erim O. E, *Idoma Nationality: 1600-1900 problems in Studying the origins and Development of Ethnicity*. Fourth Dimension Books Ltd. 1981
- Erim, O. E and Uya O.E. (ed.) *Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1984.
- Fanon F, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1963.
- Fieldhouse, D.K. *The Colonial Empire, A Comparative Survey from the 18th Century*, 2nd Edition, Macmillan Publisher, London, 1982.
- Forde D and Richenda Scott, *The Native Economies of Nigeria*, Vol. I, of M. Perham, (ed.), *The Economics of a Tropical Dependency*, Oxford University Press, London, 1946.
- Forde, D. (eds.). *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, International African institute, Oxford, London, 1955.
- Gavin, W, *Nigeria Economy and Society*, Rex Collings Production, London, 1976.
- Geary, W.N.M, *Nigeria Under British Rule*, Oxford University Press, London, 1929.
- Greene, F, *The Enemy; What Every American Should Know About Imperialism*, New York, 1971
- Hailey, L. *Native Administration in the British Territories*, Oxford, London, 1952
- Helleiner, G. K, *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Development in Nigeria*, London, 1968

- Hill, P. *The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1963
- Hopkins, A G, *Economic History of West Africa*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. London, 1993.
- Hya Myint, *Economic Theory and the Underdeveloped Countries*, Oxford University Press Ltd, London, 1971
- Ikime O, *The Fall of Nigeria; The British Conquest*, Butter and Tauner; Britain, 1981
- Isichei, E. *The Ibo People and the European to 1906*, Faber and Faber, London, 1973.
- James D. C, *Dependency and Underdevelopment*, New York, 1972
- Kilby P, *Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria, 1945-1966*, Cambridge, 1969.
- Lenin, V.I. *Imperialism; The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, A popular Outline, Peking, 1965.
- Lugard, F.D, *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Frank Cass and Co Ltd, 1965.
- Lugard, F.D. *Political Memoranda, 1913-1918*, Frank Cass and Co Ltd., 1970.
- Magid A, *British Rule and Indigenous Organization in Nigeria. A Case Study of Administrative and Constitutional Change*, London, 1972.
- Mbiti, A.; *Cultural History and Heritage*; Published in Cape Town, South Africa, 1959.
- Mbiti, J.S. *African Religion and Philosophy*, Heinemann Educational books Ltd, London, 1976.
- Meek, C.K. *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, London, 1931.
- Meek, C.K., *A Sudanese Kingdom: An Ethnographical Study on the Jukun Speaking people of Nigeria*: Negro University Press, New York, 1931.
- Meillassoux C, (ed), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London, 1971.
- Ofonagoro W.U.; *Trade and Imperialism in Southern Nigeria: 1881-1929*, Lagos, 1979.
- Olunsanya, G.A, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria, 1939-1953*, Longman Publisher, Lagos. 1977.

- Olusanya, G.O. *The Impact of the Second World War on Nigeria 's Political Evolution*, Toronto, U.S.A., 1964.
- Omimode B. *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria. The Dialectics of Mass Poverty*, Zed London, 1982
- Perham, M. (ed.) *Lugard the Years of Authority 1898-1945*, Collins, London, 1960
- Perham, M. *The Diaries of Lord Lugard*, (3 vols) Faber and Faber, London, 1892.
- Peterson, W. *The Background to Ethnic Conflict*, London, 1979.
- Plekhanov, G. *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976.
- Rodney W, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Panaf Publication, Pretoria, 2009
- Schumpeter, J. *Imperialism and Social Classes*, Cleveland, 1951.
- Seligman, C.G. *Races of African*, Kegan Paul Production, London, 1930.
- Shaw, W.H. *Marx's Theory of History*, London, 1978.
- Udo, R .K. *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1971
- Yusuf B. U.; *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria: The facts and the Figures*, Ceddert Publication, Zaria, 2005.
- Yahaya, A.D. *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1850-1950: A study of Political Relations with particular Reference to the Zaria Native Authority*, Zaria, 1980.

## **C JOURNALS AND ARTICLES**

- Afigbo, A.E. *Herbert Richmond Palmer "indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria "*, 1915-1928 JHSN Vol. III, No.2, December, 1965.
- Afigbo, A.E. *"Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria"*, 1915-1978" JHSN, Vol. III, No.2, 1965
- Afigbo, A.E. *"West Africa Chiefs during Colonial Rule and After"*, University of Ife, Series V, 1971
- Afigbo, A.E., *"The Background to the Southern Nigerian Education Code of 1903"*. JHSN Vol. IV, No.2, June, 1968.
- Ajayi, J.F.A. *"The British Occupation of Lagos in Nigerian Magazine "*, Vol VIII, 1961
- Alagoa, E.A. *"The Python's Eye; The past in the Living Present, Inaugural Lecture*, University of Port Harcourt, 1981



- Anene, J.C. *"The Foundation of British Rule in Southern Nigeria"*, 1885-189!. JHSN, Vol V, NoIV, 1959.
- Armstrong, G. R, *"The Development of kingdoms in Negro Africa,"* JHSN Vol. II, No.1, 1960
- Ballard, JA, *"Pagan Administration and Political Development in Northern Nigeria Savannah, Vol.1, No.1, June, 1972.*
- Ballard, JA. *"Historical Inferences from the linguistic Geography of Nigerian Middle Belt "*. Vol XLI, No IV, 1971
- Bispham, W.M.L. *"Labour Measurement"*. Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies Vol. 6, No. 1, 1964
- Byng-Hall, F.F.W. *"Notes on Okpoto and Igala Tribes"*. J.A.S. No VII, 1903.
- Donald, C. *"Native Administration in Nigeria and Tangayika "*, Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol.1, No. 36, November, 1937.
- Erim. O. E. *"The Early Foundation of the Kwararafa Confederation "*, 1331-1902, in Nigerian Magazine, Vol 44, No III, 1987.
- Horton, R. *"Stateless Society in the History of West Africa "*, in Ajayi, J.F.A. and Crowther (eds) History of West Africa, Vol.1, Longman Group, London, 1971.
- Ikime, O. *"Re-Considering Indirect Rule"* JHSN, 1968.
- Ikime, O. *"The Anti-Tax Riot in Warri Province 192 7-1 928.* JHSN Vol. III, No. 3, 1966.
- Johnson, M. *"The Cowrie Currencies of West Africa.* "JAH Vol. X., No. 1, 1969.
- Jones, G.I. *"From Direct to Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria.* ODU Vol. II, No. 3, 1966.
- Kilby, P. *"African Labour Productivity Reconsidered"*. Economic Journal Vol., LXXI. No. 282, 1961.
- Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. *"A Review of the Exploration of the River Benue with Special Reference to the Administration of the Royal Niger Company"*. JHSN Vol.. I. No. 3, 1958
- Mynth, H. *The Classical Theory of International Trade and Underdevelopment Countries,* In Economic Journal, Vol. 68, 1958

O'kwu, V.G. *"The Establishment of Colonial Administration in Idomaland"*, 1921-30, Savannah Vol V., No.1, 1976.

Robert, A. *"Idoma Court of Lineages in Law and Political Structure "*, in Selected Papers of the 5th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographical Science, London, 1958

### **Unpublished Works**

Abu S. A. "The Development of Agriculture in Akpa District of Benue State; During the Colonial period, 1920-1960". B.A. project Submitted to Department of History, University of Jos, 1991.

Agada, .A, "Problem of Taxation: An Aspect of Colonial Rule in Idoma, 1900-1940", Unpublished B.A. project, Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1973

Agi, J.O. "Resistance and Rebellion against Colonial Rule: The Montol Uprising in Central Nigeria", 1916, paper presented at the History Department Seminar, A.B.U., Zaria, 1998.

Armstrong M. A, "The History of Political Development in Idoma-Division. 1900-1966,"B.A. Project, Department of History, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

Bonat, Z A, " The Colonial Phase of the Underdevelopment of Zaria Province, 1902-1945," M.A. Thesis Department History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1985.

Don Ohadike; "How British Underdeveloped Nigerian Labour", Paper Presented at the Department of Sociology, University of Jos, 1984.

Ediba I. O, "Colonial Rule in Nigeria:, A case study of Otukpo District in Idoma Division, 1908-1960", M.A. Thesis Department History, A.B.U., Zaria, 2009.

Ebute, J.A, "Colonialism and the Introduction of Cash Economy in Idomaland: 1900-1960", M.A Thesis, Department of History, University of Jos, 1994.

Eje R. A. "The History of Labour Migration from Northern Idomaland to the Cocoa Farms of Western Nigeria", Unpublished B.A. Project, Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria, 1977.

Elaigwu M. A. "Rural-Urban Migration from Orokam District: Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State": B.A. project Submitted to the Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1984.

Erim O. E, "A pre-Colonial History of the Idoma of Central Nigeria", Ph.D Thesis, Dalhousie University, Canada, 1977.

- Gwadabbe M.M., "Land, labour and Taxation in Kano Native Authority," A Case Study of Kwonso District. 1903, Paper Presented at the Department of Sociology, University of Jos, 1984
- Kazah-Toure, T. "The Development of Nationalist Movement in Zaira Province, 1902-1960". M.A. Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U., 1991.
- Mahmuod H, "The Consolidation of Underdevelopment in Colonial Nigeria, 1900-1960", paper presented at the 30th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria University, Nsukka, 1985.
- Mahmuod H, "The Rise and Fall of the Emirate of Muri (Hamaruwa) C 1812-1903", Ph.D Thesis Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1983.
- Mangwat.M.Y, "A History of Class Formation in Plateau Province, 1900-1960", The Genesis of A Ruling Class, Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U, Zaria. 1984
- Odey M, "The Development of Cash-Crop Economy in Lower- Benue Province, south of the Benue River": A Case Study of Groundnut Production 1910-1960. M.A. Thesis Submitted to Department of History, University of Jos, 1994.
- O'kwu, V.G. "Idomaland under Colonial Rule, 1900-1950," Post Graduate Seminar, Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1973
- O'kwu, V.G. "Early History of the Idomaland, Post Graduate Seminar, Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1974.
- Ochai, A. "The Historical Evolution of Otukpo Migration and Re-unification up to 1930, Unpublished B.A Project, Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1972.
- Ode, G. E, "The Impact of British Colonialism on the People of Idoma Division; 1908-1959". M.A Thesis, Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1981
- Ode, G.E. "Idomaland under the British Colonial Administration: Some Reflections on the Nature and Effects of the Colonial Policy: 1808-1950": Post Graduate Seminar Paper Presented at the Department of History A.B.U., Zaria, 1979.
- Ohadike, D.C. "British Imperial Presence and the Introduction and Commercialization of Cassava on the Lower Niger, 1900-1930", Being a Seminar Paper, Presented to the Department of History. University of Jos, 1980
- Okpe, O.O. Jr. "The Idoma and Minority Group politics in Northern Nigeria, 1944-1960: A Study in an aspect of the national question, unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of History, University of Jos, 1994.

Usman, Y.B, "Political Economy and Political Community" The Significance of the 18th Century, Paper Presented at the National Question in Nigeria, 4-9 August, 1986

Yahaya, A.D. "The Structure of Colonial Government in Northern Nigeria", Seminar Paper, Department of History, A.B.U., Zaria, 1974.

Yakubu O, "The Economic Foundation of Idoma Society: 1860-1960 M.A. Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, University of Jos, 1994.

## ORAL INTERVIEWS

### Interviews conducted on the role of women in the colonial economy of Idoma Division, 1908-1960

<b>Names</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>
Simon Agada	Male	68	Farmer	Agatu	23/09/2013
Omadachi Acheme	Male	84	Farmer	Orokam	12/03/2013
Omale Jenebu	Female	78	Trader	Otukpo	12/05/2013
Attah Ogenyi	Male	73	Farmer	Otukpo	16/03/2013
Oweicho Ichakwu	Male	73	Farmer	Adoka	16/04/2013
Owoicho Akor	Male	68	Farmer	Otukpa	02/08/2012
Agnes Akor	Female	65	Farmer	Ochobo	02/10/2012
Ohemu Efikwu	Male	71	Farmer	Otukpo	21/08/2013
Agada James	Male	78	Farmer	Agatu	21/08/2013
Agnes Ochiga	Female	72	Farmer	Ogene	17/03/2014
Mercy Eje	Female	65	FRSC	Ichiana	14/10/2015
Onyeche A Onoja	Female	60	Lecturer	Ugbokolo	015/10/2015
Onyeche Simon	Female	65	NSCDC	Adoka	19/10/2015
Godwin Ochigbo	Male	75	Farmer	Ogene	17/3.2013
Owukpa Abutu	Male	70	Fisherman	Ogene	17/3/2013
Amina Ajefu	Female	65	Trader	Awume	15/04/2014
Omeche Ejembi	Female	60	Trader	Ogobia	30/5/2014
Diana Ochoga	Female	60	Civil Servant	Igede (resident in Otukpo)	06/11/2015
Alice Ogbanje	Female	67	Trader	Otukpo	06/11/2015
Odungbe Ejembi	Female	64	Farmer	Ogene	06/11/2015
Olije Adikwu	Female	102	Farmer	Edumoga	7/5/2014
Alice Ejembi	Female	105	Farmer	Ugboju	21/2/2015
Omoda Linus	Female	87	Trader	Owukpa	8/5/2014
Elizabeth Ejogi	Female	98	Farmer	Otukpo	10/1/2015
Akoundu Abojeh	Female	97	Trader	Agatu	15/7/2014
Onyowiocho Ameh	Female	107	Trader	Edumoga	25/9/2014
Maria Obagwu	Female	98	Trader	Onyangede	5/12/2015