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TOPIC:
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN ISIALA MBANO, AN IGBO SOCIETY, 1906-2007

A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A) IN HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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TITLE PAGE
CERTIFICATION
APPROVAL PAGE
DEDICATION
LIST OF MAPS
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
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TABLE OF CONTENT.

TITLE PAGE
CERTIFICATION
APPROVAL PAGE
DEDICATION
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
LIST OF MAPS
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
  1. ABSTRACT
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
Background of the Study
Statement of Problem
Conceptual Framework
The People and Their Environment
Purpose of Study
Significance of Study
Review of literature
Scope of Study
Method, Sources and Organization
Notes and References

CHAPTER TWO: ISI ALA MBANO ON THE EVE OF THE 20TH CENTURY
Socio-Political Organization
Economic Activities
Traditional Religion and Beliefs
Cultural Practices:
  Ekweji Festival
CHAPTER THREE: COLONIALISM AS A CATALYST OF CHANGE, 1906-1960

Colonial Conquest and Occupation

Colonial Instruments of Change

  Administration
  Health and Pipe-borne water
  Transportation and Communication
  Christianity and Western Education

Cultural and Social Developments

The Society on the eve of Independence

CHAPTER FOUR: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY, 1960-2007

Independence and Developments

Education and Socio-Political Change

Changing Status of Women

Surviving Traditions

The Emerging Scene

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Summary and Conclusion

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
ABSTRACT

Over the years, scholars have argued on the nature of change brought out colonialism on the continent of Africa. Some scholars referred to as colonial apologists, were of the opinion that, colonial change was immediate and sudden. Africanist scholars have on the other hand, countered the position of colonial apologists and have submitted favourably and strongly too, that Africa was dynamic even before colonial intrusion. The truism that colonialism brought some changes on Africa would not be over emphasized. But the African and the Igbo in particular, showed their resilience and receptivity to change.

Isiala Mbano, an Igbo society, was one such Igbo society that witnessed some changes due to colonialism. The study demonstrates that Isiala Mbano before colonialism was not static. Rather, it was and still is a dynamic society. Change in the society, has been gradual over time. Isiala Mbano had evolved and developed from a traditional rural Igbo society, to a modern and semi-urban city. It is against this background therefore, that the writer asserts that the view of colonial apologists on colonial change in Africa- a complete and sudden change- does not apply to Isiala Mbano. Hence, one talks of change and continuity in Isiala Mbano.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Colonialism was one of the great events in the course of African history because of the many and varied changes it brought in its wake. Igboland, of which Isiala Mbano is an integral part became part of the British Empire on 5th June, 1885 when the London Gazzette announced to the whole world that her Britanic Majesty had placed the Niger District under her protection. However, Igboland did not come under effective British occupation even with the British-Aro expedition of 1901-1902, which, it was thought, would be one expedition that would end all expeditions in Igboland. This was not to be, as several other expeditions were undertaken to several Igbo areas before they came under effective British control. Thus different Igbo societies came under effective British control at different times.

Isiala Mbano of eastern Igboland could be said to have come under effective British control in 1906, when Umuduru (in Isiala Mbano) became the headquarters of Okigwe Division. The effective occupation of the area by the British, marked the genesis of certain far reaching changes. To a large extent, the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the people came under the influence of a foreign power. The coming of Christianity and Western Education to Igboland, pioneered the alterations witnessed in the Igbo traditional life style, beliefs, attitudes and culture of the people. In this regard, Edmund Ilogu writes that:

the Igbo came into contact with the Christian religion and Western culture. This contact created significant alterations in the life conditions and behaviour pattern of the people. The situations under
which collective behaviour expresses itself in changing, habitual and traditional actions are becoming more difficult because their basis in custom, social ethos and expectation is being destroyed. New responses are seeking new bases on which to build themselves.  

Following the contact between Western and African cultures which was one of conflict, P.C Lloyd suggests that, a balance could lie between the outright rejection of the goals of the weaker contestant, in favour of those of the stronger, and the compromise between the two resulting in a redefinition of the relationships between them. The dominant one may at times accede to the claims of the weaker one without altering its own composition. As a matter of fact, there has been debate on the extent to which African societies underwent changes by colonialism. Africa, nay Igbo societies, witnessed far reaching changes, in which Isiala Mbano is a part. This work essays to look at change in micro Isiala Mbano an Igbo society.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Isiala Mbano did not exist in isolation prior to the conquest and imposition of colonial rule. Unfortunate as it is, no literature exists on the area, especially as it concerns change since the time of colonialism. The factors, agents, institutions and processes of change have not been investigated. Colonialism with its far reaching changes in the area is yet to be studied. The impact of Western culture on the people’s tradition, custom and cultural life has not received any attention by scholars of Igbo extraction.

Besides, Isiala Mbano society is being transformed constantly into a modern society without documentary evidence of the people’s past. The
rich cultural heritage and custom of the people are fast being eroded, yet the area still suffers such abysmal neglect from historians and scholars. There are no books written on the area compared to available books written on other Igbo communities like Nri, Awka, Aro, Nsukka to mention a few. Scholars have concentrated on these areas either because of their cultural prominence or having a pronounced deity like the long juju or ibini ukpabi of Arochukwu for instance.

The works of pioneer Igbo historians like, K.O.Dike’s, *Trade And Politics in The Niger Delta*, A.E.Afigbo’s *Warrant Chiefs in Eastern Nigeria*, did not study Isiala Mban. Again, S.N. Nwabara’s, *Iboland: A Century of Contact With Britain 1860-1960*, ignored the area. These books on Igboland paid no attention to Isiala Mban, except for Afigbo who mentioned the area in passing in his work: *The Igbo and their Neighbours*. In recent times, some writers on change in Igboland have not included Isiala Mban in their works. Scholars like Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity And Igbo Culture*, U.C Anyanwu, *Igbo Society In Transition: The Ezza Example1905-1979* and so on, did not study Isiala Mban. Isilala Mban is yet to receive attention from scholars. Available works on Isiala Mban are mainly first degree projects and pre-degree essays which may not be regarded as advanced academic work in any serious sense. There is only one available book concerning the area, *Early History of Ugiri Clan 1900-1950*, by C.O. Bones Ojiah. The book covered only Ugiri clan, which is one out of the three clans that make up Isiala Mban.

In this regard, curiosity comes to the mind and raises some apparent paradoxes on why the area is neglected by scholars. One would be tempted to reflect on such issues as: why Isiala Mban has been so neglected by scholars; was Isiala Mban society static and stagnant until
colonialism brought changes; did colonial change mean a total break of the people’s past; is it apt to say that traditions, customs and cultures of the people crumbled once they came in contact with colonialism; can scholars without visiting Isiala Mbano talk of change and continuity in the society; this study seeks answers to these disturbing questions. It seeks to make the society’s past live in the present and the future. This would be in line with the historical saying that “the worst writing is more retentive than the most retentive memory”.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

Change and continuity takes place in a given society and this brings about transition from one archetype to another. J.S. Scott and G. Marshall, writes that in contemporary or modern world, we are aware that society is never static and that social, political and cultural change occurs constantly. Change could be initiated by government pronouncements and laws. It could be through citizens’ organized social movements and trade unionism. Change could be by diffusion from one culture to another, for instance through military conquest, migration and in fact by colonialism. 6

Karl Marx contends that, the most significant changes were revolutionary in nature, and were brought about by the struggle for supremacy between economic classes. 7 It was most probably the struggle for economic and territorial expansion amongst the European nations in the late 19th century, that culminated in the colonial occupation of Africa early in the 20th century. The activities of the colonialists may have been responsible for the divergent views expressed amongst scholars on Africa, colonialism and change. In this regard, Anyanwu writes that colonialism was one of the great events in the course of African history because of the many and varied changes it brought in its wake. 8 Africans,
as a people, had been in contact with the Europeans centuries before the imposition of colonial rule, though the contact was more or less at the sea coasts or periphery. The contact had always resulted in changes either through borrowing or by diffusion within the cultures. However, European contact with the hinterland people may be traceable to effective imposition of colonial rule.

Nonetheless, scholars have variously argued on the impact of colonialism on Africa. Those who argue in favour of colonialism have been described as colonial apologists. Among these scholars are; Curtain, Gann, Michael Crowder, Gallaghar, and so on. These writers perceived pre-colonial Africa as basically static and stagnant, needing the civilizing influences of colonialism to break out of their ossified shell of countless years of tradition. Colonialism was said to have achieved this feat through the development of new economic systems, the creation of new urban settlements, introduction and spread of Western education and of the Christian religion and so on. Colonialism is also believed to have opened the way to “Western civilization” and “modernization”. These perceived changes brought by colonialism were said to have been ‘swift’ or ‘revolutionary’-change involving a great, complete and sudden transition in a society within a very short time. As Mcphee writes, suddenly the barriers hindering the progress of commerce and civilization were removed and the peoples of West Africa took a leap from centuries of “patriarchal and tribal times” to twentieth century conditions- so great and sudden was the change. The views of colonial apologists, portray Africa as static until the contact between Western culture and African culture, which was one of conflict. Western values, attitudes and structures the apologists maintained, quickly displaced their traditional African counterparts once they came in contact. These
writers hold that, pre-colonial Africa was stagnant and weak, and that colonialism brought immediate change that supplanted whatever that was originally African, in favour of Western culture. These views could be described in my humble opinion, as blowing the impact of colonialism on Africa out of proportion.

However, Africanist historians and scholars a like have always challenged these views expressed by colonial apologists. They have continuously emphasized that colonialism was a total aberration to Africa’s development, thereby altering forcibly the African cultural values and system. One of such Africanist scholar is Chinweizu. In his book, *White Predators, Black Slavers and the African Elite, The West and The Rest of Us*, he argues that; five centuries of European expansion into Africa have made Africa a ravaged satellite of Europe. As a consequence, African culture has lost its autonomous centers, lost its independent bearings, and became eccentric.\(^\text{13}\)

In the sixth chapter of his own book; *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney draws up what he referred to as “balance sheet of colonialism” in which those he described as “bourgeois writers” have always placed changes brought to Africa by colonialism on the vantage position of the scale - where the positive impact of colonialism outweighs the negative impact. This view of colonial apologists runs contrary to the views of Africanist scholars like Rodney, Chinweizu and others. Hence, Rodney contends that colonialism had only one hand – it was a one-armed bandit.\(^\text{14}\) He argued further, that Africa was progressive, but colonialism made Africa retrogressive. On this claim on the negative impact of colonialism he stated thus: colonial change was purely retrogressive, the fact that statistics which show that Africa today is underdeveloped are the
statistics representing the state of affairs at the end of colonialism. From this perspective, he sees the supposed positive changes brought by colonialism as being anything else, by ‘accident’.

In his historical novel; *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe exploited the concept of change in showing the impact of colonialism on the Igbo society, and Igbo cultural heritage. He reasoned that colonial change and impact is inextricably linked with Christianity and Western education. He portrayed the pre-colonial Igbo, as a people whose culture and customs laid emphasis on unity and respect for elders and their societal norms. He regreted that contact with Western culture changed the Igbo cultural status quo and hence expresses fear for the future of the Igbo and their culture: “we come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. You may ask why I am saying this; I say it because I fear for the younger generation, for you *people* … but I fear for you younger people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers and his ancestors, like a hunter’s dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you: I fear for the clan”. These extracts suggest that there had been marked alterations in the value systems of the Igbo. Hence, Achebe mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia (Igbo) who had so unaccountably become soft, like women .

Achebe, believes the Igbo society was altered by colonialism.

Anyanwu, in his article; “Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Reappraisal”, was inclined to believe that Christianity altered Igbo culture, but disagrees with the view that, the Igbo culture was weak to
have collapsed once it came in contact with Western culture. Rather, he was of the view that, Igbo culture exerted more resilience than is commonly acknowledged in popular literature.\textsuperscript{18}

Most African historians hold the same view along side Achebe, on the negative import of colonialism on Igboland and Africa at large. Scholars like, E.A. Ayandele, F.K Ekechi, J.C. Anene, I. Nzimiro, Simon Ottenberg and so on, hold that Igbo society was altered by colonial rule. J.C. Anene writes of the dismantling of indigenous (Igbo) society under colonial rule.\textsuperscript{19} F.K. Ekechi comments on the British penetration by military force and the consequent breakdown of law and order resulting from the weakening of the mechanisms of preserving internal order which in turn created a climate of fear and insecurity.\textsuperscript{20} S. Ottenberg in his paper “Ibo Receptivity to Change”, opines that of all the groups in Nigeria, the Igbo appear to be most receptive to Western culture and ideas.\textsuperscript{21} He concludes that the Ibo have changed the least while changing the most.\textsuperscript{22} Africanist scholars hold that in spite of the far reaching changes brought by colonialism on Igbo culture, the Igbo have been able to preserve their \textit{ethnic essence}. This is because the Igbo were astute enough to use in their own way, the new institutions and values introduced by colonialism.\textsuperscript{23} In the same vein, this study seeks to align itself with the views of Africanist scholars, and apply same in studying change and continuity in Isiala Mbano. It strives to show that traditional Igbo societies did not respond in the same way to Western influence. In other for the writer to attempt a more elaborate study, inter-disciplinary approach was adopted. Theories from other disciplines such as sociology, economics and political science were explored for convenience. Analysis and re-interpretation of the information distilled from the above sources have been put to use in the study.
THE PEOPLE AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

The geographical area known and called Mbano today embraces two Local Government Councils: Isiala and Ehime Mbano. They are among the 27 Local Governments of Imo State. Our focus here is on Isiala Mbano.

The name “MBANO” may not have existed before 1900. The area was not referred to by any such name before colonialism.

However, S.A. Ike narrates that, “the area was originally known as ‘MBASAA’. Then it comprised, Ehime, Osu, Ugiri and Mbama clans which constituted the old Mbano and three other clans, namely; Isu, Agbaja and Obowo, all of which were at the time under Umuduru Native Court. The name ‘MBANO’ was coined mid-way during the British administration of Umuduru Native Court (U.N.C.), when it was decided that a separate Native Court be established for the other clans such as Obowo, Onicha Uboma, Isu, Agbaja and their neighbours, which were hitherto served by the Umuduru Native Court. After the exclusion of these towns from Umuduru Native Court jurisdiction in the 1920s, the Court had only four clans to serve viz; Osu, Ehime, Ugiri and Mbama. Thus, during the next sitting of the Court at Umuduru, the name “MBANO”, meaning ‘Four Clans’ naturally emerged and soon began to be commonly employed by the Warrant Chiefs in reference to the Court’s jurisdiction. Umuduru Native Court was said to have been carved out in 1908. It was long after the British had established their rule that the name began to be more pronounced. The name was said to have gained wider and firmer recognition in the 1920’s when each of the four clans previously under Umuduru Native Court had their own Courts. Hence, the name “MBANO” was extensively used, though the first person to use the name is not known. The fact remains that the name
‘MBANO’ had appeared extensively in British records before it was recognized as Mbano Federated Native Authority in 1945. Old Mbano, from available records, was carved out for easy administration by the British and most probably, because the people are closely related by history. Traditions of origin about Mbano abound. This work would not concern itself with such details.
Isiala Mbano occupies an expanse of land of about 205.30 square kilometers. It is located approximately between latitude 5° and 7°N., of the equator, and longitude 7° and 8°E, of the Greenwich meridian. The population has been growing over the years as follows: by 1989 projection, it was about 125,087, and by 2001 it had reached 141,470 by 2004. The population has reached 154,585 with a population density of 760 per square kilometer. By 2007 estimate, it was projected at 185,799. By 1991, the area of study became known as ISIALA MBANO with the creation of Ehime Local Government. Isiala Mbano is bound on the west by Ehime, on the south by Ikeduru, and on the north by Onimo. On the east, she shares common boundary with Isu and some parts of Nwangele Local Government.

The name ISIALA MBANO did not emerge from the blues. According to Herbert Oguine, the name Isiala Mbano has an origin. In Osu, there is a community called “OBOH” and in OBOH, there is a place called ‘ISIALA OBOH’ in Osu clan. It was because Osu clan is the oldest in the area, now known as Isiala Mbano, that the name ‘ISIALA MBANO’ came to be. This was done based on the mutual agreement that existed among the various leaders of the communities that make up Isiala Mbano.

The area comprises three clans, and therefore raises the issue of why the area did not possibly change the name to ‘MBATO’- meaning three clans. This did not happen and no explanation has been given in that respect. However, the clans in their order of seniority are; Osu, Ugiri, and Mbama, with their various autonomous communities. Each community has her own traditional ruler. The names of the autonomous communities are as shown in the table below:
Table 1.1 – Clans in Isiala Mbano with their autonomous communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OSU CLAN</th>
<th>UGIRI CLAN</th>
<th>MBAMA CLAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. Osu-owerre</td>
<td>i. Obollo</td>
<td>i. Amaraku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Umuduru</td>
<td>ii. Umuozu</td>
<td>ii. Umunkwo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Osu-Achara</td>
<td>iii. Ogbor</td>
<td>iii. Amazari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Osu-Ama</td>
<td>v. Oka</td>
<td>v. Umuenyi and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Umudike/ Ofeiyi</td>
<td>vii. Umuneke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii. Isiama Osuowerre</td>
<td>viii. Amaukwu</td>
<td>Obollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix. Umelemai</td>
<td>ix. Ibeme Amaise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi. Umunachi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xii. Luwe Nneri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiii. Ikwuano</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Isiala Mbano is predominantly inhabited by Christians, though scantily, one could find some worshippers or adherents to African Traditional Religion (ATR) in the area. Many people still worship ‘UMUNNE’ in their families as a protector of their fortunes. Like in other Igbo societies, the people observe the four market days of *Afo, Nkwo, Eke* and *Orie* in their local trading arrangement.

The people practise farming as their main source of income and their chief crops include *inter alia*, palm produce, (kernels, oil & palm wine), pears, cassava, yam, cocoyam and vegetables. Over 87% of the inhabitants are engaged in agriculture on a subsistence scale. But the number of farmers in the area dwindled over the years. This was partly
due to the fact that over 50% of the people now reside in urban cities outside Isiala Mbano. Probably, in pursuit of other professions. The reason for rural-urban migration may partly be found in what A.E. Afigbo described as: the unveiling of new and improved life style as may have been at the root of the celebrated Igbo susceptibility to change and new ideas.32

This no doubt may be responsible for continued changes and developments in Isiala Mbano society, and the consequent transformation of the area into an emerging urban society. Isiala Mbano people are found in the diaspora. Perhaps more appropriately, one may think of an ‘Mbano nation’- in a cultural sense as- the people at home and in diaspora are highly conscious of their kin, hence the people value their brothers out side their town, hence; “Nwanne di na Mba.”33 as they imply. Isiala Mbano as an Igbo society is still a developing area.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt at exploring change in Isiala Mbano society from a historical perspective. It strives to close the gap in already existing literature in Igboland. The study seeks to interpret factors, institutions and agents of change and continuity in the area brought by colonialism and other extraneous factors.

Besides, this reconstruction further considers later developments occasioned by internal and external stimuli, in line with the historical theory of evolutionary change-gradual process of change that occurs in a society over time. It considers the people’s response to change and the resilient nature of their culture, tradition and custom amidst Western cultural imposition. Upon the completion of this work, the writer would have fired the first shot in the attempt to reconstruct the people’s past.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
The study would help to unearth aspects of the people’s past that have remained hitherto unknown in the wider Nigerian historiography. This would be achieved through investigative historical process, in the people’s past and the effect of the culture contact between the indigenous culture and Western culture. Given the contact between the people and the cross cultural fertilization that occurred in the colonial era, it would appear to have brought some changes in the area.

Change in Isiala Mbano has not been studied. Hence, until the history of such micro Igbo communities including Isiala Mbano are saved from being “interred with the bones of the dead,” would a more comprehensive history of the Igbo be written in its complete sense. However, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, even political scientists, would probably find the work valuable for further research, as it would x-ray the indices of change over time, by reaching a polemical conclusion. It would be of great value to the teeming population of people of the area.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of books were consulted in the course of this research, dealing on change and continuity in Igboland specifically and Africa in general. The dearth of written materials on the area would have made literature review nearly unnecessary. However, the availability of books and scholarly articles on change in Africa and Igboland provides the vent for this literature review, though most of them present panoramic views on change in Africa and Igboland. Nevertheless, they contain some information that is relevant to this study.

The only book that concerns the area is the one written by C.O.Bones Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan, 1900-1950*.34 The book
is a collection of colonial records gathered from the National Archives in Enugu dealing on the people’s origins, migrations and settlements. It does not discuss change in the area, which is the focus of this present effort.

I.D.E. Anyabuike in an article; “The Advent of Christianity in Igbo heartland: Christianity Comes to Mbano via a Freed Slave Woman,” tells the story of how Christianity came to the area of study. He writes that it was an obscure ex-slave woman Nwangborie Iwundu (Ngborie for short), of Umuezala Nsu in Ehime Mbano who brought Christianity when she came back home. But the paper fails to consider the changes it brought on the people and its implications on the indigenous religion and culture. This study, strives to cover the gap.

Simon Ottenberg in his “Ibo Receptivity to Change” in Continuity and Change in African Culture, studies the changes that occurred in Igboland during the colonial era. Thus he states that the Igbo were most willing to accept Western ways of life than any other group in Nigeria. The Igbo, he argues have probably changed the least while changing the most. The study did not cover change and continuity in Isiala Mbano. Afigbo’s article on, “Education, Urbanizations and Social Change in Colonial Africa,” writes of continuity amidst change. He states that change could not be seen to mean the impact of the contact with the Western and African cultures. But, that the contact between the African and Western cultures paved way for synthetic introductions. These synthetic introductions, as they affect our area of study, are yet to be investigated.

P.C. Lloyd in his book entitled, Africa in Social Change: Changing Traditional Societies in the Modern World, discussed in detail the colonial changes in the traditional African societies. So deep were the
changes that they affected relationships between father and son.\(^{39}\) However, his work treated these changes in sociological perspective. Isiala Mabno is not covered by his work. The work, however, retains its relevance to this study.

G.T. Basden’s *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* and Elizabeth Isichei’s, *History of West Africa Since 1800*, present a similar view on traditional Igbo society, as one which gave its members a great deal of say in the matters which affected their lives, more than modern democratic states give their citizens.\(^{40}\) They have looked at traditional Igbo in the modern world of change in a panoramic way. Isiala Mbano is not covered by these works. But they provide relevant information for this study.

Again, Anyanwu in his book, *Igbo Society in Transition; The Ezza Example, 1905-1979*,\(^{41}\) examined change in an Igbo society occasioned by colonialism. However, Anyanwu believes that, though colonialism brought some changes on the people’s culture, they showed resilience by placing side by side the new *Western culture* along side the *African*, to provide a synthesis. The work lends credence to the study of the changes in Isiala Mbano - a micro Igbo society.

Nwabara, in *Iboland: A Century of Contact with Britain, 1860 - 1960*, treats colonial activities, innovations and administration in Igboland. He points to some Igbo macro and micro communities like Enugu, Onitsha, Owerri, and Umunneoha and so on. He talks of the impact of the changes in the Igbo judicial system, like in his home town-Ama-Achara-in Umuahia, Old Bende Division.\(^{42}\) The work does not cover Isiala Mbano which also had her judicial system altered. The work is of relevance to the study, however.

They considered the urbanization of the Igbo society as being partly due to contact with Western civilizations. Hence, they reasoned that; development is viewed as a normative concept synonymous with improvement, the changes in spatial organizations of the neat Igbo rural living diffused city wards with positive elements of modern cities, such as local street, and route way planning that changed aspects of the Igbo rural settlements. This view could be applied in assessing changes in the area of study. This, voluminous book does not cover Isiala Mbano as part of the Igbo nation it surveyed.

In his historical novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe talks of colonial change in Igboland, when he compares the pre-colonial with the colonial and post-colonial Igbo society. He decried the dying old generation, whom he portrayed as possessing loveliness of mind and deep sense of oneness, as opposed to the new generation whom he said do not know what it is to speak with one voice. This description is relevant to this study as it exposes the impact of colonial change on Igbo culture.

In his own book, *Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Study in Igbo Culture*, Edmund Ilogu treats in some detail, changes in Igbo culture brought by colonialism. He adopted a sociological approach in studying colonial change. He also did not include Isiala Mbano in his study.

Onwuka Njoku in *Economic History of Nigeria in the 19th and 20th Centuries* treats aspects of economic changes in the colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. He states that the British had total control over the country, in which they dictated the way and manner the economy and administration were run. Though the work does not include Isiala Mbano in particular, the information in the book retains its relevance to the study.
R.I.Ozigbo in *A History of Igboland in the 20th Century*, highlights the basic reorganizations of the Igbo society and the appointment of Warrant Chiefs. The work is panoramic in its treatment of Igboland and does not cover the area of study, hence the need for this work.

O.N.Njoku and Okoro Ijoma in “High Point of Igbo Civilization: The Arochukwu Period” in *Groundwork of Igbo History* edited by A.E.Afigbo, essayed on the advent of European traders into the south-eastern Nigeria area. They discussed extensively how the traders stimulated trade between the coastal people and those in the hinterlands. The title of the work suggests a treatment of the Igbo societies during the Arochukwu period, but it failed to include Isiala Mbano in the areas it covered.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Isiala Mbano has yet to receive the attention from scholars. This work strives to cover this gap in the reconstruction of Igbo history.

**SCOPE OF STUDY**

The study covers the period 1900-2007. By 1900, most of the continent of Africa had come under colonial rule. This marked the genesis of far reaching changes in Africa, including Igbo societies brought by colonialism. It also culminated in the social, political, economic and cultural reorganization, of Igbo societies, of which Isiala Mbano is a part. By 1906, the area of study had been effectively occupied by the British. The year 2007 was chosen as the terminal date because, it was when for the first time in history, Isiala Mbano produced the governor of Imo State (His Excellency, Chief Ikedi Ohakim). It is a remarkable year in the history of the people. The territorial limit of the
study encompasses the three clans that make up Isiala Mbano with their autonomous communities. Theses clans and their communities are as shown in table 1.1 above.

**METHOD, SOURCES AND ORGANISATION**

The work encompasses thematic, analytical, and chronological methods in its approach. The greater part of the information used for this work comes from oral sources. The informants covered the three clans in Isiala Mbano, and spread across people from all works of life. Much attention was paid to informants who could give information of reasonable authenticity.

Relevant works by various scholars on change and continuity in Africa and Igbo societies were used. Isiala Mbano has not enjoyed attention from scholars let alone Archaeologists. Given the absence of documentary evidence on the area under study, the main source of data has remained oral. This came from oral traditions and eyewitness accounts. They provide some insight into the society whose institutions have produced them. Also, materials from the National Archives at Enugu on the area were used. However, one has to apply caution in using materials from the archives because of the controversies surrounding them, in terms of reliability.

The work is multidisciplinary in its analysis. This stems from the fact that one obviously encounters some difficulties in an attempt to marry materials obtained in one discipline with those of other disciplines as contained in the work.

The study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter serves as the introduction. Chapter two provides some insight into what Isiala Mbano looked like on the eve of colonial rule. The third chapter
discusses colonialism as a catalyst of change, 1900-1960. It also considers the colonial conquest and imposition, colonial instruments of change viz; administrative structure, hospitals, schools, transportation and communication and so on. It also treats the institutions of Christianity and Western education, cultural clash and socio-cultural developments, within the period and the society on the eve of independence.

The penultimate chapter deals with change and continuity within the period covering 1960-2007 which is the terminal point of the study. It discusses agents of change on Isiala Mbano society, mainly through culture contact, education and religion. It also discusses the changing role of women, surviving traditions, customs and the emerging scene in perspective. The last chapter is on the summary and conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER ONE
NOTES AND REFERENCE

5. Ilogu, Christianity and Igbo Culture, p. 170.
10. Anyanwu, *Igbo Society in Transition;* p.2


22. Idid.


25. See C.T.C. Annals, District Officer Okigwe Division, Annual Report, 1945 ORLDIST 3/1/89. See also *Historic Events Lists of Local and National Significance*, (Enugu: Government Printer, 1973), p. 51


28. S.E. Mbalisi, Community Leader, c.66years, retired civil servant interviewed at Umuche Amaukwu Obollo, on 22 January, 200

29. Herbert Oguine Interview Cited.
30. Dr. E.E. Obilor (Ven.) c.74 years, retired Priest/Lecturer interviewed at Alaiyi-Ama Obollo, on the 7th of January, 2008.


33. Sir; Ibe, c.76 year, Retried Public Servant interviewed at Mbeke, Osu Owerre, Isiala Mbano, on 13th February, 2008.

34. C.B.O. Bones Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan*...p.34


37. Ibid. p.130


41. U.C. Anyanwu, *Igbo Society in Transition*...


45. Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, (Onitsha: University Publishing Company, 1985),


CHAPTER TWO

ISIALA MBANO ON THE EVE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The reconstruction of the pre-colonial situation of Isiala Mbano is not only difficult, but an enormous task. This stems mainly from the fact of want of documentary evidence dealing on the people’s past. It is by this therefore, that the writer is compelled to rely, almost entirely on oral tradition and the fragmentary evidence distilled from Intelligence Reports, first degree projects and comments on the Igbo in general. Isiala Mbano shares in Igbo heritage which visitors to the Igbo interior in the 19th and 20th centuries reported. Nevertheless, the society over a century or so has undergone a great degree of change.

Besides, there has been continuity in the Igbo life of which Isiala Mbano is an integral part. The experiences and activities of Isiala Mbano elders, who were consulted in the course of the research, predate the commencement date of this work.

SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Isiala Mbano society was socially and politically organized as in other Igbo societies. It is not totally different from our knowledge of the pre-colonial life of the central and south-eastern Igbo. What would perhaps, appear a bit apart is that some Isiala Mbano clans, for instance, Ugiri and Mbama, had a permanent meeting place and hereditary headship whose authority was however, limited.
On the eve of the colonial conquest and occupation, the Isiala Mbano, like most other Igbo societies, east of the Nigeria, falls into the group of political arrangement the European anthropologists would not desire to admit as state but rather as ‘stateless’. Probably, because of the absence of a central administrative authority system that governed the area at that time. Odetola writes that Western scholars have characterized as states, “those societies which have singular head with a central administrative authority system ruling over a recognized territory”. It was basically on the strength of the above assertion that these writers emphasized that the main attribute of a political system is its ability to exercise a monopoly of physical coercion over a given territory legitimately.

The socio-political organization of a given society depends largely on the people, custom, tradition and culture. The behavioural inclination of a people matures, declines, and falls in accordance with changes in material environment, which procreates and sustains such attitudes. Arthur Nwankwo was of the view that the socio-political behavior of a people is a direct output of the environment in which the people find themselves.

In the social structure, Isiala Mbano was organized beginning from the family and compound, which also dictated the political organizations. Like in most Igbo societies, the man is the head of the house with his wife or wives and children forming part and parcel of his household and close confidants. Each family settles in its own compound with houses built with mud and covered with thatch or palm fronds. There were neither block houses nor zinc roofs during the pre-colonial times in the area. Regarding the type of houses that existed in the society, Herbert Oguine narrated: in those days, the type of houses that
existed was what we called “Otakirikiri”. The name was derived from the nature of the house. It was built with materials such as mud, bamboo sticks or “Okporo Ngwo”, thatch and sticks. Majority of the houses in the area before the ‘white men’ came were built with thatch for the rich men who could afford them. But the poor who could not afford the thatch used palm frond round the standing sticks and mud. There were no zinc houses in Isiala Mbano before the whiteman came. Pre-colonial Isiala was a typical African traditional society in terms of houses the people lived in. These houses provided the shelter for the people. They also gave comfort to the people during rainy seasons. These houses were beautifully adorned with colourful traditional drawings and paintings from Uri and Uhie trees, which depicts traditional houses in Igboiland. The houses provided security and shielded the people from wild animals and cold at night. Most of these houses survived long after colonialism. However, one can scarcely find them these days except in the interior parts of Isiala Mbano villages.

Marriage was another respected important social aspect of pre-colonial Isiala Mbano. It was and still remains a sacred institution in the social relations, traditions and customs of the people. Marriage provided a unifying bond amongst the people and their neighbours. In this regard, Simon Ottenberg writes that “marriages units people to each other, binding families, lineages and other groups in reciprocal duties and obligations.” Marriages in Isiala Mbano created an interlocking web of legal and kinship relationships which bound families and lineages together. It promoted trade, most especially long distance trade in which most people were said to have married from distant neighbours like Obowo, Umuahia, Ngwa and Oru, deliberately to ensure their safe
passage through those villages, since by such marriages the traders became accepted members of the in-laws clans.

A.E. Afigbo rightly observed that most long distance travellers were polygamists and usually took care to choose their wives from important and strategically located towns along their normal route of business... the mere mention of the in-laws family could constitute a safe conduct pass.6

One important primary objective of marriage in Isiala Mbano was to maintain the continuity of the family. It was the duty of parents in the pre-colonial period to choose a wife for their son. However, before this was done, the father of the young man would ensure that he taught his son to be brave and hardworking. He also equipped him with what he would use to earn a living and maintain a wife. He taught him how to farm and bought a hoe and a climbing rope, etc for him. With these implements, the young man explored his environment and became mature enough to live with a wife chosen for him. Again before the traditional marriage rites were performed, one important aspect of tradition the people considered, was whether the two families could intermarry. The family backgrounds of both families were usually considered as regards the taboos that pervaded the people’s marriage tradition. These taboos inludes to ensure that sickness such as epilepsy did not run in the family. The most important aspect was the ‘Osu caste and Umeh’. These two caste systems were strictly observed in traditional Isiala Mbano society before any marriage was contracted.

In an interview, Herbert Oguine commented on the seriousness of the ‘Osu’ caste system in marriage in Isiala Mbano saying: “we had those that were served to the gods called ‘Osu’. They were totally avoided by the ‘Nwadiala’ or freeborn. It was strongly observed in this
our area even long after the whiteman came. Those people that were *osu* at the time, their generations are still regarded as *osu*, even now despite the influence of Christianity. It still lives in them. Infact, no ‘freeborn’ or *Nwadiala* marries an *osu*. In the pre-colonial times, if a freeborn travelled and was bitten by rain, and he enterd an *osu* house to seek refuge from the rain, he was branded an *osu* by the ‘*nwadiala*’. So it was very hard, many *osu* today were formally ‘*nwadiala*’.\(^7\)

Having duly considered these factors, the marriage was continued or discontinued. When a marriage was successful, and the man married the woman, he automatically became qualified as a full fledged man to take part in the social activities in his family, village and community at large. He became qualified to contest and hold political positions in his village and community. He could equally be considered for title taking. He went ahead to bear children and train them.

The traditional *Isiala Mbano* society enjoyed a form of political system, which, while allowing for some measure of patriarchy, at the same time, provided democratic elements in its political process.

Writing on the political process in *Isiala Mbano*, a British political officer, K.A.B. Cochrane, in 1932 wrote on Ugiri,

\begin{quote}
*...before the establishment of government each town managed its own affairs and they... met together mostly when major matters concerned the clan as a whole.*\(^8\)
\end{quote}

Political Organization and authority was arranged in the following levels:

a. Extended family (*umunne*)

b. Lineage (*umunna*)

c. Village (*Ama*)
d. Village group or town (Obodo).

e. The Clan Assembly.⁹

The Extended family was the first and smallest unit in pre-colonial Isiala Mbano society. It comprised all individual heads of the family and adult males of the family who, by their age, financial power, social and traditional qualification, could contribute meaningfully to the development of the family and by extension, the village and town. The natural president of the extended family meeting was the eldest son, ‘di okpara’ or ‘opara’ as pronounced by different communities within Isiala Mbano. He was at times referred to as “Nna Anyi Ukwu” or ‘Oji Ofo’ (the holder of the sacred staff of office of the ancestral fathers of the families). He also took the first share in the family.¹⁰ The Oji Ofo was said to have discharged among other things three vital duties. Aside from being naturally conferred with executive role as the president of the extended family assembly, he also was obliged to perform ritual and judicial functions as occasion demanded.

In Isiala Mbano traditional political organization, the extended family served a number of political and judicial purposes which include inter alia: the discussion and settlement of all matters referred to it by the individual member families, it also treated all cases in dispute vis-à-vis matrimonial, land, theft, murder cases and so on, that arose from families.¹¹ All very serious matters outside the jurisdiction, were referred to the village council.

The office of the okpara was hereditary. It passed from father to the eldest son if he (the son) was of age: otherwise it went from father to eldest brother, then back to the son of the original holder, when he
became of age. The *okpara* held this position until death, as far as he remained mentally sound to discharge his duties.

**The lineage (Umuna) level**

This second level of traditional political organization in Isiala Mbano was made up of heads of extended families ‘ndi di *okpara*’ and adult males of extended families which traced their descent to a common ancestor. In most cases, such families dwelt closely together in the same neighbourhood but some times, they might be interspersed with non-blood-related families which broke away from their original lineages or were ostracized. This council was presided over by the oldest man, who came from the most senior family; he was the first to take share in the lineage. He was also the custodian of the founders’ ofo. By virtue of this position, he won the respect and subordination of his peers from other families. Nonetheless, decisions at the lineage council were reached by consensus.

The lineage assembly had jurisdiction in all matters referred to it by individual member families. The matters included disputes between or among member families. They also treated matters affecting development, funeral, inter-lineage conflict and all other questions of common interest. All other matters that could not be settled by the lineage council were referred to the village council for further consideration and settlement.

**The village council**

The village council is the next largest political unit after the lineage assembly. It comprised all the kindred lineages of the village. Attendance at the council was restricted to *ndi di okpara* and all adult male kinsfolk.
The village assembly was presided over by the *di okpara* of the most senior lineage in whose care the *ofo* of the founder of the community was kept. He was not necessarily the oldest man in the village. The functions of this unit included discussion and settlement of matters and disputes as may be referred to it by lineages and families. They made pronouncement on such matters, and other matters of common interest most especially issues that concerned development, defence, external or internal aggression, and disputes with other villages. They also ensured the maintenance of law and order. Moreover, they enjoyed authority over all other matters that may be referred downwards to it by the town council. Decisions in all matters were based on consensus. The council referred all cases it could not proffer solution to, to the village-group-assembly.

**Village Group or Town Assembly**

The assembly of the whole town...is the highest platform for political decision and action.\(^{15}\) K.A.B. Cochrane, (a British political officer) writing on Ugiri clan of Isiala Mbano, emphasized the autonomy of each constituent town in Ugiri Clan. The village group assembly was evidently the hierarchical apex of Isiala Mbano traditional political system. It was also the most paramount machinery of government, where all matters that could not be disposed of, by lower arms of the political system were dealt with. At this level, any matter involving members of the community could not be appealed.

Besides, all adult male citizens of the town enjoyed the right to attend, and participated in the meeting and decisions of the village group. The head of the most senior village, presided over the meeting. However, in the Ugiri and Mbama parts of Isiala Mbano, a titled man could be called upon to preside. Decisions were basically by consensus.
The Clan Assembly

The meeting of the clan assembly deliberated on matters of common concern to the clan. It discussed and adjudicated disputes between and among member towns, but lacked the powers to enforce its decisions.

This assembly was attended mainly by the ‘amala’ members of each constituent town. Each clan met at different points. For Ugiri clan, their meeting place was at Nkwo Mbaa. Mbama clan met at Amauzari, while Osu clan met at Anara. The assembly was however presided over by the “Nna Anyi Ukwu”, who was the first to take share in the clan. This clan assembly discussed religious matters and centres for establishing a common market for the purpose of improving the economy of the clan. In most cases, it acted as the supreme court.15

It was this democratic system of government that had operated in Isiala Mbano until the colonial period. The British conquest and imposition changed the *status quo*. Power was left in the hands of a single individual, the District Officer (DO). This was totally against the wishes of a society that had enjoyed to a large extent, democratic political system during the pre-colonial times.

Aside from the above political structure, there were other machineries of traditional government that existed in Isiala Mbano on the eve of the colonial conquest and imposition. These subsidiary instruments in the political affairs wielded great influence in the society. This influence was mainly in divination and worship of the earth goddess (Ala). Though the average Isiala Mbano man was said to be obsequious to God Almighty (Chi Ukwu or Chineke), he was quite
obsessed by the fear of the fiendish earth goddess and other local deities.\textsuperscript{16}

Anyone who committed an abomination against the earth goddess quickly sought for the service of diviners or at best the priest of the earth goddess to atone for his/her sins. It was believed that in the case of refusal to atone, the spirit forces that governed the land, would avenge for the wrong-doing. Through this process, feuds and dispute over land and other items were resolved.

The age grades were yet another auxiliary element in Isiala Mbano traditional political affairs. They were prominent in Osu and Mbama clans. The age grades were actively involved in public affairs, mainly in the defence of the town against external aggression from neighbouring towns. They also helped in the construction and maintenance of new and old roads, leaning of the premises of shrines, precincts of the town streams and the building and safeguarding of the town’s markets.\textsuperscript{17}

These age grades varied in sizes and structure. The most influential were said to be those of youths and adult men. The titled men were yet another traditional political instrument. Among the Isiala Mbano people, traditional title had significant implications. Besides being an evidence of outstanding individual achievement, title-holding symbolized high responsibility in words and deeds.\textsuperscript{18} In most occasions, ‘Ozo’ title holders had been called upon to preside over meetings. They were also allowed to speak in meetings before any other non-titled person, irrespective of age. They equally influenced political decisions in their communities.

Another significant political machinery in Isiala Mbano was the \textit{Umuada}. The \textit{Umuada} comprised all married daughters of the town. They provided strong team of mourners at the funeral of a deceased
member of the village. They prepared and brought with them to the venue, a variety of food for their feeding and entertainment of others. The *Umuada* also prepared the dead for lying-in-state and performed night vigils alongside the bereaved family before their final dispersal. The *Umuada* in the pre-colonial times could occasionally step in to settle prolonged disputes, which may have defied the efforts of the male folk.

Perhaps, what one may call the final political agent of the period was the *Ndi Omi* council: This comprised all women married into the village. It was presided over by the wife of the most senior man of the unit. It settled disputes among and between its members, discussed matters of common interest to them and allotted civic responsibilities among them. *Ndi Omi* often intervened to settle long enduring disputes within the male assemblies. The *ndi omi* was an umbrella pressure group through which process women pushed for their collective interest.

In the same vein, the judicial process of traditional Isiala Mbano society was not separated from other duties. This was because, the same set of men that were saddled with executive duties were equally in charge of the legislative and judicial responsibilities. Criminal and civil cases were tried and pronouncement made at the various levels of the political structures as discussed above. The court entertained matters involving members of the family, decisions were based on consensus. The guilty persons paid fines and atoned for their wrong doings.19 In some cases, oaths were administered in order for cases to be finally determined, in very serious contentious cases, appeals were made to the oracle.

The adult Isiala Mbano man could be said to have had some recognition of his political system and ideas about the extent and limit of his roles within the system.20 However, despite these democratic and
individualistic characteristics of Isiala Mbano traditional political system, the system endured over a long period of time and served adequately the needs of the people before colonialism.

**Traditional Religion and Beliefs**

In the pre colonial times, traditional religionists had strong belief in the existence of the Supreme Being called *Chineke*. He was believed to be the creator of man, animals and plants.

*Chineke* was also believed to have dominion over all invisible spirits. People reached the supreme God through other smaller deities, who acted as intermediaries. Although the people believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, they also recognized the existence of lesser deities. These deities were numerous but the most important among them was the Ala. D.I. Forde and G.I Jones rightly observed that, “*ale, ala or ane*, the earth spirit is the most prominent deity and is regarded as the queen of the underworld and the owner of men whether dead or alive”.

People had great faith in ‘Ala’ as the defender of the just. Hence, they often swore in its name. It was also believed that any one who swore falsely in the name ‘Ala’ was killed by ‘Ala’.

Despite the belief in Ala, most communities had their minor deities which they equally believed to be the protector of their fortune. For instance, Obollo community had the *Ogwugwu* and *Ezeala Anayanwu* deities.

According to E.E. Obilor, the people of Mbano worshipped small ‘chi’ (gods) or deities. Those small wooden images, libation was poured to the deities before they embarked on any journey. They believed that they would protect them. Infact almost every family had what was called the *Umune* believed to be the god that protects every family from external
attacks. The people also believed it protected their fortunes and progress and cleared way against enemies of progress.\textsuperscript{22}

Osu ama Isiala Mbano, according to Herbert Oguine, had a deity called \textit{Ezeala Katamu},\textsuperscript{23} a deity said to have existed long before colonial rule. These deities were worshipped by the traditional Isiala Mbano people until the imposition of colonial rule that later saw the introduction of Christianity.

Isiala Mbano religious life on the eve of colonial rule was dominated by the belief and worship of the Supreme God, through the minor deities. These minor deities were believed to carry the people’s prayers to the \textit{chi ukwu} or \textit{Chineke}. However, each village and community had deities peculiar to it. Festivals were held in honour of these deities. Some of them were also believed to be very powerful. For instance, the \textit{ezeala anayanwu} deity in Obollo was said to have protected the people from thieves and external aggression. Each deity had its own chief priest and symbol of authority. In most cases the \textit{ofo} stick was used by the priests of the deities. These are small deities found in almost every family called \textit{Umunne}. The \textit{Umunne} was serviced by the “\textit{Di Okwara}” or “\textit{Opara}”, the eldest son of the family. Again, some parts of Mbano were believed to have possessed magical powers. These powers were used both for good and for bad. They provided some security and respect for them. Those who possessed such powers were feared in the community. J.I.J Njoku narrates that “in those days in Umunkwo, there were a lot of magical powers and acts. In the pre-Christian era, some one could just clap his hands, snakes would come out from no where and attack the enemy, there were other witch craft activities the people engaged which attracted different names for Umunkwo people”.\textsuperscript{24}
Besides, the secret society, *nmanwu* (masked spirits) also executed some political functions. They were used in collecting taxes and fines from defiant and ailing members of the community. It helped compel recalcitrant indigenes to participate in community activities such as road repairs, clearing of village square or *Ama* among other deities.

The *nmanwu* (masked spirit) served recreational purposes, and came out periodically, especially from August to December, during the ‘Ekweji’ festival and other festivals to mark the end of the year. Membership was voluntary. The process of initiation was called *Ima nmanwu*. The non-initiates were called *Ogbendu*, while the initiated ones were known as *Odukwu*. Some of these institutions are still in existence.

**Traditional Education**

Indigenous education in pre-colonial Isiala was intended to acquaint the children with the laws, traditions and norms of the land. Children were brought up to fear and respect the gods by being told stories connected with the deities. Indigenous education included initiating children into secret societies which launched them into the mysteries of life. They were expected to keep the secret of the societies they belonged to. Those that did not have this type of education were referred to as ‘Ofekes’ (Loafers, worthless people).

This form of training was said to have discouraged laziness. The lazy ones were (said to be) sometimes sold into slavery. Children were trained to recognize and fight relentlessly for their rights; to take subordinate positions in the home and mitigate extreme privations. They were equally trained to aim high in life. They were taught to take part in story-telling and learnt the folklore and proverbs of the people. They were made conscious of the egalitarian principles of Igbo society by relaying to them the Igbo saying that: *Nwata kwocha aka, o soro ndi*
okenye rie nri; “a child who washes his hands clean eats with the elders”.

Children learnt the trade of their parents such as arts, crafts, divination, rain-making, trading and farming, palm wine tapping and so on. There was no writing or formal education in Isiala Mбано on the eve of colonial rule.

However, before the colonial era, the people had their dress code as it was in many other Igbo communities. Gburu wara — a form of wrapper used was celebrated for the male folk. Adult women wore woven raffia, aji and later akwuwette’.

The people had their form of recreation. Moonlight dance, Egwu Onwa, offered the most recreational activity. It was for both young and old. It was a time parents inculcated discipline and wisdom in their children by telling them wise stories that helped shape their thinking. It demonstrated the saying that, “Onwa time ije aguwa nwa ngworo” meaning, “when the moon is out, the cripple desires to walk”, and “egwu onwa bu mgbe enyi na enyi ji ahurita maka na enweghi ebe onwa anaghi eti”; meaning, “moonlight games are for friends to meet because the moon shines at everybody’s house”. “Egwu onwa’ was usually characterised with singing and dancing, acrobatic displays, wrestling (mgba) and such games as ‘hide and seek’ (nzuzu na nchota) folklores, ‘otiri ogbalaga’ (hit and run) and so on.26 Egwu Onwa was held at village squares where people played in compounds and even neighbouring villages. It provided a good medium of social interaction. It also helped in checking immorality as ill-behaved peoples’ names were used in coining moonlight songs. Good morals were rewarded with good praise songs. All these songs, folklores, dances and so on as witnessed during the moonlight egwu onwa were indigenous.
Economic Activities

Our discussions emphasize the variety of pre-colonial economic activities of the Isiala Mbano. The discussions would be considered under different sub-headings, for easy and proper understanding. The economic activities would be considered under the following sub-titles, agriculture, arts and crafts, trade, transportation and communication.

Agriculture:

a. Land Tenure System

Like in other Igbo communities, agriculture constituted the basic pillar on which pre-colonial Isiala Mbano economy rested. The dependence on agriculture made land a central factor in the life of the people. In the tradition of Isiala Mbano, land was owned by the community but held in trust for them by their various families and lineages. S.E. Mbaliyi stated that land was owned by families and that individuals from these various families had their own share of the land. Land belonging to the various families were inherited by their younger ones. The first and eldest sons of the family, ‘Ndi Diokpara’ were in charge of the family land, and individual must seek his permission before making use of any land belonging to the family for farming or building a house. The diokpara allocated land to their family members for farming. diokpara at his discretion, often times allocated the fertile part of the land to himself and the less fertile areas to other members of their families according to seniority of birth. The last born at times receives the smallest part of the land.

As V.C. Uchendu rightly noted, “in Igboland, land belongs to the lineage and cannot be alienated”. Land was not sold
during the period preceding colonial rule. Acquisition of land was by hereditry and in most cases, land was used as collateral for borrowing. For instance, most people who were in need of money either for title taking or burial of their father pledged some portions of their land to somebody for some money. This was usually done before a witness, “Onye aka ebe”. The original owner of the land regained his portion of land unconditionally as soon as he returned the money within the stipulated time; failure to return the money could mean loss of ownership of the said land. Land was very vital to agriculture.

Writing on agricultural pursuit, Elizabeth Isichei rightly observed that “the invention of agriculture was the most fundamental of human discoveries”.29 Farming usually began immediately after the first rain of the year. Before mounds or ridges were made, the bush was first cleared, burnt and raked. Some cultivated the soil after the first rain, others waited for more rains to soften the ground.

Different methods of farming were adopted and used by pre-colonial farmers. The major method was shifting cultivation. This meant the cultivation of some plots of land in a planting season while in another planting season, a different plot of land was cultivated. This however, depended largely on the available land owned by the farmer and his family.

Mixed cropping was yet another method of farming and was very common in the area. The unit of agricultural labour was the family but at times supported by communal labour. Another prominent source of labour was what was known as Igbo onwo oru – (cooperative labour). This meant simple exchange of working
days in the different farms among a group of boys or girls. Ndi *Ogukwu* from Okigwe area were said to have provided another source of labour. They were known for carrying big hoes with wide blades. Their mounds were bigger than those made by farmers in Isiala Mbano.

Among the crops planted by farmers in Isiala Mbano were yams *ji*, (three leaved yam) *una*, cocoyam, *ede*, fluitied pumpkin, *ugu*. Other produce that were harvested and exploited by the people were, ‘*Ube*’ local pear, *Ugba* (Oil bean) and *Ukwa* (African breadfruit). These crops were equally sources of income to the people. This was because not everybody had the ability and strength to produce all the family needed. Hence as one informant observed, “ndi ozo na aruru, ndi ozo na azruru azuru, ndi ozo na eri eri”. (While some cultivated, others sold and others were eating).

Palm oil (*Elaeis guinensis*) was exploited for its oil, through a local process which involved steaming, pounding and pressing with the hand to extract the oil. This was used due to the absence of any form of mechanical method in the pre colonial times. There were different types of oil palm. There were house hold palms called ‘*Nkwo alilo*’, and the compound palm, (*Nkwu Okpoto ulo*), wild palm (*Nkwu ohia*) and raffia palm (*Ngwo*). The palm tree is also believed to have the male ‘*Okpuruka*’ and the female palm- *osukwu*. There were also the *Ojukwu* or “*Nkwu Ojukwu*”, which is believed to render medicine impotent.

The uses of the oil palm were many and varied. The palm kernel was used as an ointment and hair oil. The oil was called ‘ude aki’ and was also used to prevent convulsion in children. The tree itself
was tapped for wine – mmanya Ngwo or Nkwu and ihe omu nkwu – young pale yellow palm leaves was and still is very significant in Isiala Mbano and traditional Igboland in general. The presence of the yellow palm leaves in an environment usually signified danger. The leaves of the raffia palm (ngwo) provided excellent mats for thatching and the fronds stripped off their leaves were used as rafters and laths in constructing houses.

Yam was the head crop planted by farmers. A man with a large yam barn was regarded a rich man and was called “Eze ji” (Yam king). Writing on the importance of yam in Igboland, G.T. Basden stated, “every labour and capital was invested in its production and… the planting of yam was regarded as a serious business.” In fact, ownership of large yam barn was a measure of wealth in Isiala Mbano on the eve of colonial rule. Yam was highly competitive among farmers, both old and young. Many farmers were said to have married more than one wife because they had large yam barns.

Besides crops, the people kept such livestock as sheep-Aturu, fowl-Okuko, Ehi (dwarf cow) and others. Some weeds had been experimented upon and eaten by the people. These weeds included “Erie mi onu” (Coelosia argentea), “ahi-hiara” (Corchorus olitorus), “afufa” or “anara” (Salanum aethiopicum). There was also the ‘uziza’, West African black pepper and “Uda” (xylpia aethipicum). The leaves, fruits, seeds and stems of these plants and weeds were used in various preparations for eating boiled or roasted yam. They were also used in preparing soup for eating fuu-fuu or Utara (cassava). There was also the “Unyere oji” (black local banana) used at times to pound fuu-fuu and yam.
In Isiala Mbano, meat was basically from hunting. It was common to see most able-bodied males of a particular village or quarter engaged in a mass-hunt, armed with cap-guns, dane-guns, sticks, knives and at times accompanied by dogs. This activity was called ‘nta’, which would be discussed later in this chapter.

**Arts and Craft**

Isiala Mbano people supplemented farming with arts and crafts. Almost every village group participated in arts and craft making. But in blacksmithing, some villages in Osu and Ugiri clans were prominent in the act. The two major crafts were blacksmithing and pottery coupled with basket and mat weaving by young boys and girls. Men practised blacksmithing while women engaged in pottery making. Many people were of the opinion that blacksmithing was introduced into Isiala Mbano from other parts of Igboland. Some have considere the craft to have been introduced from neighbouring Nkwere area, where Isiala Mbano were said to have migrated from. Other people suggested it may have come from Isu. S.C. Ukpabi suggested that “Awka may well have been the home of Iron working in Igboland… and had introduced the trade in several parts of Igboland.”

In Osu, three villages were said to be proficient in pottery and smithing. They were the Umuozu in Ezumoha, Umueze in Umunachi and Okpuala people also in Umuachii. In Ugiri, the Umudiemeka and Umuozu Ugiri were prominent in smithing, while Umuoruoma in Obollo practised pottery. Much was not known about smithing by the Mbama people.

The list of items produced by the smiths ranged from: kitchen knives, (*nma ekwu*), hoes (*ogu*), *Ikeagwu* to guns (*egbe*). They also produced diggers and “*Mbazu Igwe*”. Smithing was not an easy task.
Hence, A.E. Afigbo writes that, “smiting was a particularly difficult profession, requiring artistic ingenuity and physical strength”.

The rate at which the smiths’ products were exchanged for agricultural and other products gave credence to the encouraged progress recorded by blacksmiths. It also stimulated trade, and provided economic bedrock for the villages that practised smithing.

Pottery was particularly practised by women which was used to produce earthen wares. They were mainly concerned with the production of household utensils like bowls (Oku) or nkputa, wine pots (Udu mmaya), cooking pots (ife-ofe), water pots (Udu mmiri) and musical instrument (udu egwu) used for traditional music. Pottery making involved some techniques in its production of pottery products. In this regard, Afigbo writes that “a porter must aim to be an artist and a craftsman or woman with a skilled control of all pottery techniques…” Basden also remarked that a good pot (Udu) showed a considerable skill on idea of design on the part of the porter.

However, young boys and girls did not stay idle. They were said to have gainfully engaged themselves in basket making. They also produced things like nigiga, etete, akpasa and agiri (local mats). These products provided a source of income to the boys and girls at the time.

**Trade**

Isiala Mbano people on the eve of colonial rule were basically farmers. They engaged in trade primarily to sell their farm produce and local crafts. The trade was conducted within the village and neighbouring towns such as Ogbor, Ibeme, Amaraku, Ehime and so on. The people also traded with Okigwe and Umuahia. The markets were merely open grounds cleared for the purpose of buying and selling. The
trade during the period was unavoidable as it provided the vent for people to buy what they could not produce.

Referring to the importance of trade in Igboland, O.N. Njoku writes that “trade was in consequence, a crucial component of the economy, for it was through trade that disparities in productive capacity between communities were bridged”.37 Many Markets were attended by the people. Prominent among them were, the Orie Amarku, Nkwo Obollo, Nkwo Umuezela, Eke Ezeala, Orie Umuozu, Afo Amauzari, among others. These markets were periodic not daily. Describing the periodic nature in which markets were organized, Njoku again writes: “periodicity varied according to culture areas: but four-day, five-day and eight-day periodicities were wide spread. Sixteen-day markets were less common while twenty four-day ones were very rare”.38

Markets in Isiala Mbano were mainly organized in eight-day periods. This enabled the people prepare their goods for the next market. However, because of the proximity in space between one community and the other, there was a market to attend every four days. Though market in pre colonial Igbo land was said to be dominated by women, men attended markets like women did in the area. The good sold by men included inter alia; basket, yam, palm wine, goat, “akpokoro” (traditional medicine items), kernel, and so on. Women sold foo-foo, vegetable, pepper, cocoyam, ‘ede’, and other food items.

Besides, the commercial import of markets at the time, it served other vital social purposes. As Njoku rightly observed, the market place was a venue for social interaction: gossips were bandied about, lovers met and dated and some people went there to enjoy the thrill of mass gathering.39 It was also a meeting point for couples. Markets were in
fact, information centers. The large gathering provided for quick spread of information within communities and beyond.

As in other Igbo areas in the pre-colonial times, cowries were the major currency and medium of exchange. There was also the ‘ikpechi’ (copper rod) used as currency. Trade by barter was equally engaged in by the people, but at an insignificant level.

Furthermore, the people were engaged in some sort of long distance trade, though at a very low scale. The major long distance trade was conducted with the Uzuakoli, Uturu, Oru and Ikwere people among other towns. The trade was not regular because of the distance covered and other hazards encountered by the people. Trekking was the available means of transport and conveying goods was by human porterage. Marriages were said to have been contracted by the people during the trade. This was said to have provided easy passage for Isiala Mbano mainly among the Ikwere and Obowo and other communities that lay along the trade routes. The major articles of trade included, dried fish, palm oil, bitter kola and kernel, as Oguine had narrated. Long distance trade was exclusively for the brave, strong and wealthy. The fear of the Aro and the ubinu ukpabi was said to have scared the people from massively engaging in the trade. The Aro were known in Igboland for their trade in slaves. Hence, the people feared being captured and sold into slavery. Those who traded were said to have had some agreement with the Aro.

Njoku in his book, was conceded to the fact that the Aro had agreements with traders when he stated that, blood covenant, Igba ndu, was one of the methods Aro land distance traders employed to effect a bond of mutual trust and protection with their hosts.
From the foregoing, one would say that Isiala Mbano on the eve of colonial rule was involved in active trade beyond the confines of the community or town. Farming was the bedrock of the people’s economy, and was beyond subsistence level. It was the bedrock of the people’s economic life. It also provided the major articles of trade between Isiala Mbano, her neighbours and trade allies.

**Transportation and communication**

Transportation and communication were two important aspects in pre-colonial Isiala Mbano. Mobility remains one vital aspect of socio-political and economic life of a people. It was most probably due to the important role attached to transportation in conducting any economic activity that prompted Njoku to see; “transport as a key factor in the movement of goods and services. Its availability determines the spatial extent of the market; the cost defines the depth in social terms while the freight capacity fixes the volume of goods traded when transportation is cheap and efficient; prices of goods tend to be low and affordable to more people than would otherwise be the case.\(^{42}\)

In the same vein, he identified three systems of transportation in pre-colonial Nigeria, namely, water, animal and human beings.\(^{43}\) Transportation in Isiala Mbano within the period was by human being. It was mainly by trekking from one place to the other. Goods were conveyed by human porterage. The people had no large rivers. This accounted for the absence of water transport system. Human transport which was the only system available to the people had been described as the most pervasive of the modes of transport. There were no roads at the time, rather path ways or track roads were available. The hazards associated with trekking hampered the movement of goods and services. The movements of goods was mainly within the neighbouring
communities and towns. Only the strong could engage in long distance trekking for business and other socio-economic activities.

Communication was another important aspect of the people’s life. Isiala Mbano practised the traditional means of communication as used in other parts of Igbo-land. There were no telephone gadgets. Rather people disseminated information orally and by other means.

The major means of communication were gongs and Ikoro – a wooden drum whose sound could go far into the villages. Some certain sounds signified village gathering, while some could mean the death of a person. Again as noted earlier, market places provided veritable avenues for information dissemination in Isiala Mbano. Town criers were sent into the markets to pass on information to the people. Again most town criers moved around at night to disseminate information.

Aside from oral method, there was the use of signs in disseminating information to the people. The “Omunkwu” was one such source of information. The presence of the omunkwu in most cases represents danger. For instance, the death of a person could be announced by simply throwing some pieces of the omunkwu from the road to the path that led to the deceased home. A land in dispute was prohibited from being used by the parties, simply by standing the omunkwu in the farm.

Besides, inter-community trade was another means of disseminating information Herbert Oguine asserted that, information between in-laws from different communities, community leaders, the ozo and nze on new yam festival and other cultural and important festivals were passed through traders. In the same vein, Felix Osuji stated hat information was also spread through village messengers, and in matters relating to death, ndi mbega akwa (a team of mourners) wrer
Communication in traditional Isiala Mbano society was by the word of mouth and use of signs and sounds.

**Cultural Festivals and Practices Ekweji Festival**

The New Yam Festival – ‘Ekweji’-was performed to herald the new yam. In some parts of Igboland it was called different names. In Imo state, it was called ‘Ahiajoku’, performed specifically to mark the arrival of new yam.

However, Ekweji in Isiala Mbano was and still is one of the yearly cultural celebrations of the people. The origin of the ekweji or iri ji dates way back into the pre-colonial times. The Ekweji was celebrated in Isiala Mbano by different communities at different dates within the months of August and September. S.E. Mbalisi narrates that after the planting of the yams, no one harvests the yam until a certain time. Before the commencement of the harvest of the new yam, people were usually informed through a traditional town crier who beat the “tom tom” for this purpose. Before this period, some sacrifices were offered to ‘Ala’ and other deities in the communities like the ogwugwu in Obollo, in appreciation for keeping them alive to harvest their new yam. The sacrifices performed by the ‘onye is agbara’ and nna anyi kwu of each community preceded the general harvesting and eating of the new yam. These sacrifices were usually performed on orie marked day. Cannon guns were shot before the nna ayi ukwu eats his yam. The cannon guns shot in the evening was a proof that nna anyi ukwu had eaten the new yam. The significance of the ekweji was to herald the new yam harvesting season. No one sold the new yam in the market until the Ekweji.

The ekweji was also adorned with the presence of different kinds of masquerades, wrestling and cultural dances by different villages. The
last day was usually celebrated at the village square on eke market day. It was and is still customary that the Ekweji heralds the harvesting of the New Yam in Isiala Mbano society.

**Anara Day Celebration**

Anara day celebration as a festival was in honour of the founder of Anara in Osuama. It was said to mark the rich cultural heritage of the people. Herbert Oguine asserts that, the festival is usually celebrated on the 26th day of December had been in existence before the British (While man) came. It was and still is a day set aside by the people to celebrate our culture and tradition. It was usually marked by sacrifices to the deities, cultural dances and most importantly, masquerades from different parts Isiala of Mbano attend the Anara day. On the eve of colonial rule, people attended the Anara day from different parts of Igboland; Umuahia, Obowo, Okigwe, Ikeduri and so on. It was a time for people to make peace and re unite for development.

The Anara day celebration simply put is one of the ways through which Isiala Mbano people showcase their rich cultural heritage.

**Nta Festival**

The Nta festival was a unifying feast among the different communities in Isiala Mbana. The feast held the three clans in the area together. It was called the feast of the “Agbara”. Accoridng to Bones Ojiah, the clan ‘Agbara’ of Ugiri was Mbaa and the clan feast to the Agbara was known as “Nta”. The feast was observed in the Mbama town of Amaraku, the Mbaa cult was introduced into Umuokpoba compound of Aramku and Iwumunne Nwosu was in charge of the feast as the sole survivor.
The Umokpoba in Umuorsu village of Amaraku town was responsible for announcing the fest of *Nta*, from the period beginning 1888, before a sort of Epidemic struck and cleared almost the whole inhabitants.\(^{49}\) Amazuari and Umukwo towns were said not to have observed the feast. This probably explains the reason behind the introduction of Amaraku Mbaa cult by Ugiri clan. The *Nta* feast was said to have spread far into the Owerri Division.\(^{50}\)

From the foregoing, the *Nta* feast marked the celebration of the *agbara* of the various communities in Ugiri and Mbanaa towns. The feast was usually celebrated by the new yam festival of the corresponding towns. It was annual feast on the eve of colonial rule.

**The Ibo Ama and Ikpo Oku**

*Ibo Ama* and *Ikpo oku* were two important cultural practices of the Isiala Mbano society. They were avenues through which the community roads were cleared. It was usually done before any important annual event like the *Ekweji* and end of the year periods. The *ibo ama* precedes Ikpo oku. This was known as *mbom uzo* in the neighbouring Ehime Mbano society.

In this regard, Herbert Oguine observed that “in Isiala Mbano, at that time, there was what was called *awa* or *aruru*, in Ehime it was known as *mbom uzo*. It was an annual event. It was when all the roads linking one community and another were cleared. Every community cleared the road leading to their boundary with the neighbouring community. At the end of the *ibo ama*, there was usually a ceremony known as *ikpo oku*, that follows the road clearing. *ikpo oku* involved entertainment by the different neighbouring communities. These events promoted relationship among the communities”.\(^{51}\)
Ibo Ama and Ikpo oku were significant because both helped in cementing inter and intra-community relations. The festivals were as a regular means through which the communities were kept clean. Couples were said to have met for the first time during the events. The events were usually brought to an end by the display of different cultural dances, jokes and eating. Villages and communities hosted the event interchangeably. The host community usually led the visiting community to their boundary as the ended ends. The ceremonies were attended by men, women, boys and girls from among the communities.

**Women in the society**

On the eve of colonial rule, women in Isiala Mbano were treated as in other Igbo areas. They were not accorded the same status as the male folk. They were looked at as ordinary housewives and hence, were restricted to the kitchen. Abati in an article described women as decentered and de-natured subspecie of humanity, harassed by culture, intimidated by policies and subsumed helplessly and almost inevitably by patrilineal and patriarchal structures which pamper the male ego. This view of Abati largely explains the position of women in traditional rural Igbo society.

However, it is acknowledged in some Igbo literature that women in pre-colonial Igbo, were treated as some sort of “second class citizens”. In most Igbo societies, young girls were accorded no recognition until marriage and in a situation when a girl remained unmarried, she was regarded as either worthless, a witch or cursed from beyond. An informant, Austin Mbalisi asserts that in the tradition and culture of Isiala Mbano, womanhood starts with marriage, by fulfilling all the cultural rites. After this, she was accorded due respect as a woman. This is the beginning of womanhood and that is our culture. People from
other far Igbo areas who married from here allude to the fact that the girls have good character. They did not engage themselves in extra-marital affairs – *Ono na di acho di*.\(^5^4\)

Isiala Mbano women were hard-working. They were actively involved in pottery making as noted earlier. Trade provided the women, the avenue for economic advancement. Strong and young women went as far as Uburu to buy salt. The women were good in business. They dominated the local markets around Isiala Mbano, selling goods such as earthen pots, vegetables, cassava, and cocoyam and so on. They were also good farmers as far as cocoyam was concerned at the time.\(^5^5\)

Women in Isiala Mbano were not free from the many limitations imposed on them by culture, tradition and custom. They were restricted in their political activities. Regarding marriage, husbands were chosen by parents for their daughters. Many young girls were said to be given in marriage old men and community leaders for one favour or another. It was forbidden for a girl to get pregnant in her father’s house or have a love child. So many taboos surrounded the women in pre colonial times. Herbert Oguine narrated that “in those days in the area, no woman would cook in the kitchen without covering her hair. It was seen as an offence. If the husband discovered any hair in the food served by his wife, that would mean the end of the woman’s marriage. There were no two ways about that then.”\(^5^6\)

Isiala Mbano women in general were usually beautiful and lived a good life. Most of my informant affirmed that girls were beautiful and possessed good character. As Oguine stated, our young girls and women used *Uri* (indigo) to beautify themselves traditionally. They platted their hair and kept themselves sacred. Not many of the girls lived a carefree life,\(^5^7\) he concluded. It was probably this fact, that moved most wealthy
and strong men into marrying as many as six wives or more. Their dressing as noted earlier was like in many other Igbo communities. It was a taboo for a girl to be seen holding hands on the streets with a man. The lazy young girls were often times given to the ‘Nna anyi Ukwu’ for domestic chores. Some of them ended up as fifth or sixth wives of the community leaders.

From the foregoing, it would appear that, women in Isiala Mbano on the eve of colonial rule, faced the same constraints as most women in many Igbo societies. But one fact about the women was that they were actively involved in farming and trade. This was to manifest in the roles played by women of the area during the colonial and post colonial times in Isiala Mbano and Igbo society in general.
CHAPTER TWO
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CHAPTER THREE: COLONIALISM AS A CATALYST OF CHANGE

COLONIAL CONQUEST AND OCCUPATION

It is a truism that by the early 1900s the British had conquered, occupied and set up their administrative system in Igbo land. However, the occupation was traced to 1885, when the oil Rivers protectorate was proclaimed by the British. The ultimate aim of colonizing power was to extend their political sway to the rich agricultural and palm producing regions of the hinterland occupied mainly by the Igbo.¹

Consequently, in 1891, a general instruction issued by the British Foreign Office, was said to have warned Major (later Sir) Claude Macdonald, the first British High Commissioner and Consult-General of Oil Rivers (later Niger Coast) Protectorate, against interference with the people’s government.

During the period, Macdonald was faced with acute shortage of personnel and funds with which to carry out his assignment. Hence, in February, 1892, he established the High Court of the Native Council of Old Calabar, which also was projected to act as the Court of Appeal for a number of minor courts that were in operation in the coastal area of the Cross River. The establishment of courts, which later spread to other parts of Igboland, was to form the basis for British administration in communities in Igbo land.

The British visited Old Mbano (now Isial and Ehime Mbano) in 1905, during a punitive expedition against Ahiara in the present Mbaise Local Government of Imo State. The expedition was adjudged necessary as a result of the assassination at Obizi in 1905 of one Dr. Stewart, who was posted to the then Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In their search for Ahiara, the British Commander, Captain Fox and four sections of the
Bendel-Onicha Hinterland Expedition visited Umunumo on December 8, 1905. In 1906, the British set up a station at Omu Oyibo, near Umuduru (Isiala Mbo) where the first political official, the then commissioner of Umuduru District, A.E. Heathcote, resided.

The presence of the British District Officer (BDO), explained the British occupation of the area which was not without opposition. Ozigbo writes that, the conquest of Igboland was, in the main, accomplished through warfare. The British saw their colonial interests as paramount and were determined to colonize the area. It was the bid to ensure effective occupation of every part of Igboland, that the British subdued Isiala Mbano and established their authority over the area in 1906. The establishment of a native court by implication was the overthrow of the native rural leaders. Power left the people. The day to day political, social and economic life of the people came under a foreign power – the British Empire. From the period beginning 1906, Isiala Mbano became officially included in the British sphere of interest and control. Isiala Mbano was subdued during the Orlu patrol which eventually touched on Okigwe, Owerri and Onitsha districts.

COLONIAL INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE.

Isiala Mbano society from the earliest times had evolved one form of change or the other prior to the British conquest, occupation and of colonial rule in the area. The socio-political and economic life of the people had earlier remained unadulterated with any form of foreign systems.

However, with the coming of the British and colonialism into the area, the people’s traditional way of life had a foreign system superimposed on it. The introduction of various administrative, health, transport and communication systems among other things had
recognizable effect or impact on Isiala Mbano people and society at large. The changes brought by colonialism are our major concern here. The changes came in the forms of administration, transportation and communication, Christianity and Western education.

ADMINISTRATION

As British administrative officers and personnel were extremely few on the ground, it became necessary to utilize the services of local indigenes in the governance of the people. Consequently, a Native Court System was imposed on Igboland. The Supreme Court Proclamation Ordinance of 1900 and the Native Court and Native Councils Proclamation of 1910 made provision for Native Councils and Native Courts. Local agents were selected (often arbitrarily) to serve as members of Native Councils and Native Courts. Such members obtained officials letters (warrants) from the High Commissioner or the Provincial Commissioner (after 1906), appointing them to their respective Native Councils or Native Courts. The recipients came to be known as Warrant Chiefs.⁶

The warrant chiefs were the direct appointee of the colonial government. By implication, the administration of various Igbo communities which had been under the people became controlled by the British colonial officers. The institution of the warrant chiefs who were answerable to the District Officers (DOs), District Commissioners (DCs), saw most community leaders, village heads and clan chiefs replaced with these warrant chiefs. The duties, and functions of the Warrant Chiefs were basically to assist the British in their administration of Igboland. Hence our emphasis here would be as it concerns Isiala Mbano.
As noted earlier, the Birstish set a station in Umuduru Isiala Mbano in 1906. The first Native Court in Isiala Mbano came into being in 1907. It was located at Umuduru, which was considered a central site for Agbaja, Osu, Mbama, Ugiri and other constituent communities which it was intended to serve. The Court was established and operated in consonance with the amended Native Courts Proclamation of 1903, which later became as the Native Court Ordinance of 1906. The Native Court at Umuduru was the headquarters of the then Okigwe District. The court was attended by all the warrant chiefs of the integral towns. These towns included inter-alia: Ehime, Ugiri, Osu, Mbama, Onicha Uboma, Isu, Obowo, Otanchara, Otanzu, Isukwuato.

From the foregoing, A.E. Afigbo opined that the appointment of warrant chiefs in the interior of southern Nigeria was by two methods. First were those who were arbitrarily appointed, - those whose appointments were without the backing of the people represented. Such persons were said to have obtained their warrant to sit in the Native Courts form British political officers either because they assisted the British during the various expeditions, or because they were pushed forward by traditional rulers who wanted to avoid the intruders. The second method was appointment of a warrant holder, after consultation with the people they were intended to represent in the courts. These categories of warrant chiefs enjoyed a traditional right to hold a warrant and to rule over their people.

In Isiala Mbano, the British appointed Warrant Chiefs without due consultation with the people between 1906 and 1930. The British Officer, A.E. Heathcote, who was the then Umuduru, appointed all his guards as headmen for their various communities to assist him in his administration of the area.
Consequent upon Heathcote’s decision, Njokuikenyonwunwu who guided the British officials in Ehime became the headman of Ehime clan. Likewise, Ihemeje of Umuebue became the headman for Agbaja; Agbugba Okere became the headman for Osuama for preventing Anara people from engaging the invaders in battle during their expedition. Ukachuu who was part of the team that led the punitive patrol to Ahaira to venge the murder of Dr. Stweart was appointed headman for Osuowerre. Duruagbazie was picked for Umununu, while onwudiwe Onumaku, introduced by Njoku Nwokeiwu of Umuakagu became the headman for Nsu group of villages, now in Ehime. At the time, the British officials were still settled at onu Oyibo.

Upon the establishment of Umuduru Native Court in 1907, the need arose to constitute its membership with despatch in order to ensure a prompt take off. Without hesitation therefore, all the headmen were designated warrant chiefs. Chief Agbugba Okereke of Anara was issued with warrant certificate by Captain H.S. Burrough in 1911. Between 1916 and 1917, many, including new headmen, were appointed and elevated to the status of warrant chiefs. They included among others, Ekejiuba from Umuduru, Ofoaro for Obiohuhhu, Ibegbulam for Umuelemai, Osunwa for Ezihe and Njokuduruozo for Umualumaku. In 1919, at the end of the World War I, Ohanyerem of Umueze, Nwaeme of Okohia, and Obiechefu of Mbeke received warrants as members of Native court at Umuduru.

Warrant Chiefs from Ugiri clan and Mbama attended Court at Umumuduru until 1932. It was after Mr. Annals report on Ugiri clan, the Ag. Resident of Owerri Province, Mr. K.A.B. Cochrane, met with Ugiri Clan. Consequently, on September 19th, 1932, the Native Court Warrant establishing Ugiri Native Court was signed by the same Ag. Resident for
Old Owerri Province – Mr. Kenneth Alexander Basil Cochrane. It would be recalled that in 1912, Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard became the Governor-General of Nigeira. He was said to have viewed with contempt Macdonald, Moor and Egerton’s political practice, whereby political officers sat as presidents of Native Courts. Hence, he recommended for the establishment of Native Authorities and imposition of direct taxation to boost the Native Authority Treasury. Lugard’s desire, was to apply to the Southern ProvinceS, the indirect rule system of administration already existent in the North. To implement this, the Native Court Ordinance, of 1914, Native Revenue Ordinance, 1914 and Native Authority Ordinance, 1916 were introduced. The system was less successful than Lugard had envisaged.

The Native Authority Ordinance, 1916 was designed to establish Native Authorities by appointing “traditional rulers” in the case of unorganized communal groups as Native Authority. Political participation at the time was to be limited to such rulers who wielded executive, legislative and judicial powers to rule over all communities within their area of jurisdiction.

In Ugiri clan Native Court of ‘C’ grade, was attended by traditional rulers, or town heads with their ndi amala for the six towns in Ugiri. Chief Onuoha, who was the nna anyi ukwu of Ugiri, was the president, while the nna anyi ukwu of the other five communities were the vice presidents.

Mr. V. Fox-Strangeway was the D.O for Okigwe, Mr. C.T.C. Annals was the A.D.O for Okigwe, while Mr. Daniel Okorie was the scribe (Court Clerk). The court Messengers included: Mr. Joseph Onwuka of Ugiri, Joel Azubuike of Obollo, Mr. Eze Chukwu of Umuneke, Mr. Okpegbuorie of Ogbor, Mr. Ukadike of Oka and Mr. Sam
Emakalamorie of Ibeme. Mr. Emmanuel Akaeme, was the contractor who built the court.\(^\text{18}\)

The Chiefs performed a number of functions both as members of Native Courts and in their individual capacities. Despite their arbitrary appointments, there was hardly any opposition during the period. This was most probably to avoid the risk of indignation of the colonial government. Thus, any information that came from the government was readily obeyed. Again their non-resistance to these appointments was also attributed to illiteracy. There were no educated persons to articulate the grievances of the people, and forward same to the government.

The Native Authority Ordinance gave the Chiefs the power to arrest without warrant a person who committed, or was charged on aoth with having committed, a breach of traditional or protectorate law.\(^\text{19}\) Also, by the Roads and Creek Proclamation, the chiefs were empowered to recruit able bodied men and women to clear roads, rivers and creeks.\(^\text{20}\)

However, with time, the excesses of the chiefs began to irritate the people, who felt the chiefs were exploiting them. The chiefs were said to have used their powers to encroach into peoples’ farmlands. This caused some disturbances in some villages in Isiala Mbanu. For instance, the Obololo Town Disturbances of 1926 led to the deposition of chief Ogoke. It was a land dispute between Umuche and Umuau on one hand and Umuoruoma and Umuozu on the other hand. The matter was investigated and the villages fined accordingly. According to Ojiah, the Resident accepted Mr. Riley’s findings after the investigation. Umuoruma and Umuozu paid the two different fines as contained in paragraph 5 vide Okigwe Treasury Receipt No. 35 [A240804]90 1 OF 30\(^\text{th}\) October, 1926.\(^\text{21}\)
Such were the problems caused by some overbearing chiefs and the consequences of their action. There was also the Umuneke and Mbeke town political matter of the same year (1926). There were the inter-village conflicts, between Ugiri and Njoku Edede of Ibeme, among others. These disturbances, according to Ojiah, were occasioned by the actions of the Chiefs. Nonetheless, some chiefs used their position to settle crises in their areas of jurisdiction. For instance, Chief Agbugba Okereke settled a boundary dispute between Okwelle and Umunachi. The settlement was reached when he Agbaugha, in 1914, divided the said land in dispute between Umunachi and Okwelle. That singular action was said to have attracted the attention of the British officials who hailed the wisdom of Chief Agbugba.

However, at the end of the women rising of 1929-1930, the effectiveness of the Warrant Chieftaincy system was undermined. No new warrant chiefs were henceforth created but the surviving ones were to remain and be absorbed into the new Native Administrative system. The people selected their traditional rulers in the new system. In Isiala Mbano, some of the warrant chiefs became traditional rulers after the re-organisation while some lost their position. The traditional rulers, who were selected by the people, were to replace the warrant chiefs. For instance, Chief Agbugba Okereke became the traditional ruler of Anara in Osuama (the place now has new autonomous communities). Mbeyi became the traditional ruler of Obollo community that now has a new autonomous community created out of it-Amaukwu Obollo community.

Ozigbo rightly summarized the events of 1930-1950 on Native Authorities in Igboland thus:

*In effect, the “traditional rulers” replaced the former warrant chiefs only in some localities*
where they were weak or totally unwanted by their people. In many places, the former warrant chiefs manipulated themselves back to power as traditional rulers. Many of the warrant chiefs lost their positions. They resented the reorganisation which resulted in the diminution of their power.²⁴

The British administration in Isiala Mbanao was in all, not totally different from what was in other Igbo areas. The Native Authority lasted till 1955, when the District Council, which succeeded it, took effect in old Owerri Province including Isiala Mbano.

Aside from the overbearing excesses of the warrant chiefs, the Court Clarks constituted yet another thorn in the people’s flesh. The Court Clarks lived in the same area with the District Officer at Umuduru. This gave the feeling among the chiefs and the people that they were very important. They determined whether a case was criminal or civil and whether the accused was to be arrested and detained.²⁵

Afigbo observed that “in the period after 1914 no Annual Report was complete without a reference to the menace of court clarks. In fact, the years from 1914 to about 1930 could be properly called the ‘golden age’ of court clarks in Eastern Nigeria, the era during which the clerk sitting at his table commanded and he was obeyed”²⁶.

In the late 1920’s one Daniel Okorie, a court clerk in Ugiri Native Court, was dismissed for malpractices. He was replaced by Jupruze.²⁷ Again, one Ukanwa, a court clerk at Umuduru Native Court was on several occasions warned and even punished for exercising powers extraneous to his office. Chief Ehirim, a former court clerk confirmed the fact that, there was widespread evidence of corruption against court
clerks after 1914. In his words, he stated that, “the situation became worse because even where one wanted to steer clear of the vogue, litigants lured one into it by their material gifts and persuasion”.

In lieu of the above, one would be tempted to suggest that, the court clerks were not men of integrity. Hence, they were prey to corruption.

However, it is worthy to note, here that though the Umuduru Native Court was fully operational, in parts of Ugiri, Osu and Mbama, the traditional patriarchal system was still practised, especially in places where the appointment of Warrant Chief was made without consultation with the indigenes.

In the 1930s, British Officials had consolidated their administration of Isiala Mbano local affairs as in other parts of Igboland, through the Native Court System.

However, apart from the chieftaincy reform of 1932, there was another reform in 1946 which embraced all the clans in the Okigwe Division of Owerri Province. In some parts of Isiala Mbano, for instance in Ugiri clan, the reform affected most warrant chiefs. It was said that the government put up some sort of advertisement, inviting applications from eligible candidates. Many people applied, including the traditional rulers and town heads. Out of the 84 applicants, only 23 of them were selected. The names of the 23 selected candidates are as contained in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>1946</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Umuneke  | 1. Daniel Egwim  
|          | 2. Obialo Ika  
|          | 3. Stephen Ike  
|          | 4. Duru Nwanyanwu  
|          | 5. Peter Ejionwu  |
| Ogbor    | 1. John Onweni  
|          | 2. Thomas Agunnanne  
|          | 3. Joseph Egbuziem  
|          | 4. Njoku Dururoha  
|          | 5. Enwerem  |
| Ugiri    | 1. Dennis Ekeanyanwu  
|          | 2. Durumba  |
| Obollo   | 1. Timothy Onelike  
|          | 2. Julius Ogoke  
|          | 3. Mbaeyi Ndukwe  
|          | 4. Samuel Adim  
|          | 5. Michael Mbali  
|          | 6. Josiah Ejiogu  
|          | 7. Christopher Nwachukwu  |
| Oka      | 1. Azubuike Akudorobi  |
| Ibeme    | 1. James Ijezie  
|          | 2. Stephen Igwe  
|          | 3. Christopher Ohiaeriaku.  

30
Most of those selected during the period, retained their positions till 1960, the year Nigeria independence. Some others were dropped. However, those that were retained became traditional rulers in most communities during the post-colonial era. Colonial administration was the major catalyst of colonial change in Isiala Mbano within the period 1906 to 1960.

**Health and Pipe-Borne Water**

According to Ozigbo; a veritable revolution occurred in medicare services in 20th century Igboland. Its history, in fact, dates back to the 1890’s. It was the Christian missionaries who pioneered the introduction of western medical practice in Igboland. Isiala Mbano no doubt was a purely traditional rural society before 1906. The people depended on the herbs, native doctors (dibia) and diviners (dibia afa) for their health related matters. Women gave birth in their homes, under the supervision of older and experienced women. The medical needs of the people were settled through the use of herbs gathered from the bush and forest. Different types of roots were used to cure deceases and other sicknesses. It is a truism that the Christian missionaries brought Western medical practice into Igboland. However, it took a long and considerable period of time, before it spread to all parts of Igboland. Before 1906, there were neither hospitals nor health centers in the area. According to Herbert Oguine, “the thing we call health centers and hospitals today were not known here. It was when the white men came, infact, when churches were built in this area that those health clinics and other Medicare centers were sited in some places. It was first sited in Umuelemai where the white-man lived. It was that early health center that later gave birth to the present Mbano Joint Hospital”.
The missionaries built hospitals in major cities around Igbo land for instance, the Roman Catholic Mission built a dispensary at Onitsha in 1886 and began attending to sick people in 1890; the Mary Slessor hospital was built at Itu in 1906, by the Presbyterian Chuch. There was also the Queen Elizabeth Hospital built at Umuahia by the Methodist and Anglican Churches.34

However, the missionaries equally built the Mbano Joint Hospital which began operation in 1960s. The people travelled as far as Umuahia, Amaigbo and Owerri to obtain Western medical care and drugs. But by 1960, some other health centers were constructed by different churches in the clans at first and later in the communities. Health care in Isiala Mbano developed more during the post-colonial era.

Pipe-borne water in Isiala Mbano during 1906 – 1960 was rare. According to Obillor, “it was Nwa DC (the name given to the colonial officer in many Igbo communities), who established pipe-borne water at Umuelemai to serve him and members of his native court,”35 For the people, the main source of water supply remained the streams and springs like the one at Agbaja, Ora miriokwa in Ugiri. There are many streams in and around Isiala Mbano, but the largest number of the streams is found in Ugiri clan.36

It was after the Nigeria –Biafra War of 1967-1970 that pipe-borne water was established in other communities. When the civil war ended, water wells were dug in almost all the communities to cushion the effect of water scarcity. It was the Sam Mbakwe administration in Imo State in the 1980s that established pipe-borne water and boreholes in many parts of Isiala Mbano. Consequently, the wells were replaced by boreholes and pipe-borne water. Chima Dialaekwe observed that, the water wells in Isiala Mbano and environs were replaced by boreholes and pipe borne
water established by the late Sam Mbakwe, administration in the 1980s, when he was the governor of Old Imo state. Because of the presence of Streams in Isiala Mban, pipe-borne water was not taken seriously until after the 1980s. The people depended on the streams and rain water for most of their domestic water needs. Pipe-borne water was a post-colonial affair in Isiala Mban

**TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

Another important aspect of change occasioned by colonialism was in the area of transportation and communication. Prior to the colonial times, one major means of transporation was by land (trekking). People trekked to very distant palces to carry out their socio-political and economic activities. There was no motor transport in Isiala Mban until about the 1920s. Movement of goods and services was by human porterage. This was, as Njoku wrote, “the least efficient and most expensive mode of transportation. It was also hazardous”

However, with the introduction of motor transport system during the colonial era, trekking and human porterage reduced considerably, as the use of lorries to convey goods and services increased. Again, before the introduction of motor transport system, bicycles were used to transport goods, from one destination to another. L.E. Opara confirmed that one means of transportation in this the area (Isiala Mban) at the early times of visitors (colonial officials) was by trekking. Later bicycles were used. The people used bicycle to travel to Umuahia, Obowo, Okigwe, and Uzoakoli to buy and sell their goods. They did not have motorable roads at that time. It was the coming of the white man that caused the people to open up the track roads, through the efforts the colonial officials. They brought Lorries that came through Umuahia, Owerri and Okigwe to carry palm oil and kernel to the railway at
Umuahia. The white man’s visit changed the transport system. They saved us from carrying loads and trekking long distances.\textsuperscript{39}

By implication, transport system in Isiala Mbano changed from trekking and human porterage to the use of lorry. It is instructive that the early British administration in Isiala Mbano encouraged construction of motorable roads. These roads were mainly to enable the British merchants have easy access to produce from the area to the riverine areas, for export to Europe. It was not aimed at developing the area. Generally, the colonial administration improved transportation in the country to enable them to have access to raw materials. The first roads that were constructed in Isiala Mbano included among others: the Umuahia-Umuduru –Amaraku road, the Umuduru -Anara – Okigwe road and the Umuduru – Oka-Ikeduru road. These roads were expanded later in the 1940s and 1950s.\textsuperscript{40} Bicycle transport survived until 1960. With Motorable roads now available, a number of vehicles came into Isiala Mbano in the last years preceding Independence. There was the “Ugbo Nkwere” and the “Mbano Go Town”, a lorry, which was one of the first public transports that came into the area. These lorries came twice in a fourth-night or even in a month.

However, transportation meant the improvement of market. It enhanced mobility among the people and their movement to ther parts of Igboland. Trade and other economic and social activities improved. There was some sort of transformation in the mode of communication. Information dissemination became faster with the presence of motor transport which conveyed people faster to their various destinations. As communication was enhanced, social life and economic conditions changed. The peoples ways of life, began to tilt towards the western innovations introduced by the colonial people. There were new articles
of trade such as cosmetics, clothes and so on. One informant, Erastus Obilor, was right to narrate that:

*The visitors and traders alike brought new articles of trade into this area, things like cosmetics, and soap. People from the Northern part of Nigeria also brought rice into our area through Enugu. They sold them and bought our own goods which they sold to the foreigners for export to Europe. This new form of trade and economic activity opened Isiala Mbano up to the larger Igbo and Nigeria society. Communication became a lot easier. Our people traveled wider. This brought a lot of developments and changes in Isiala Mbano.\(^4\)*

From the foregoing, it is instructive to state here that though, there were no telephones in the area, communication spread easier with the introduction of motor transport into Isiala Mbano during the colonial period.

Again, interaction between the people of Isiala Mbano and their neighbours improved over time. This was partly due to the new method of communication and transportation. Despite the presence of motor transport, many Isiala Mbano people travelled to distant places like Umuahia, Uturu, and Ife on bicycle. It was said that, Isiala Mbano indigenes that died in places like Umuahia were tied on bicycle and brought back home.

However, with the introduction of Christianity and western education, more changes occurred. Indigenous Isiala Mbano dialect and Igbo language in general was altered. There were new introductions
brought by Christianity and Western education. They had consequences and implications on the Isiala Mbano custom, traditions, culture, social and economic life. The social situations and political interaction among the people assumed new dimensions.

**CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN EDUCATION**

Christianity and Western education were perhaps the two main factors that led to several changes in Isiala Mbano during the colonial era. Freed slaves had played the most successful roles in the spread of Christianity in West Africa, and Igboland in particular. While neighbouring Mbaitolu-Ikeduru people were being converted into Christianity, parts of Okigwe and old Mbano were alerted to the message of Christianity.

However, the story of Christianity in the area now called Isiala Mbano, began with the story of an obscure ex-slave woman – Nwangborie Iwundu of Umuezeala Nsu (now in Ehime, Mbano). She came back from Arochukwu in 1912. She had been sold to Obinkita in Arochukwu; liberated by the Scottish Presbyterian Church and was converted a Christian. Enchanted by the Christian message and promises of eternal life, she was inclined to bring the same “good news” to her own people back home (in Old Mbano). In the main, Nwangborie, was said to have converted her family and her sister Munonye, who was married to Chief Nwadigo of Ezeoke Nsu – in Ehime Mbano. Munonye, was said to have informed her husband that “his throne could be better boosted by his embracing the new religious ideology called Christianity with all its blessings and promises”. Chief Nwadigo on hearing this, showed keen interest. He sent messengers who accompanied Mgborie to the Presbyterian Mission in Arochukwu. It was after chief Nwadigo had made a payment of twelve pounds as was demanded by the missionaries,
that he was granted permission to build the C.M.S church in Ezeoke. The church had one Joseph Chiejine of Onicha Alona as the first Church teacher.44

It was this experience that probably encouraged other Chiefs from Isiala Mbano, to bring Christianity into their communities. The situation was such that the conversion of a chief in some cases, meant the chief would retain his warrant. Hence, chiefs began inviting the missionaries into their communities. It is worthy of note here that Christianity was introduced into Isiala Mbano in 1912, and it spread into the hinterland communities. It is said that “in the same 1912, Agbugba, Chief of Anara in Osuama Clan (in Isiala Mbano) applied for the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) from Rev. A.C. Onyeabo of Egbu C.M.S. It was granted with Emmanuel Chikwendu as the first church teacher. By 1915, with the visit of Rev. Payne to Oka Isiala Mbano, a young juju Priest by name Onwuka became a Christian. Later he became an Archdeacon of the C.M.S (The Onwuka Family is still in the C.M.S Priesthood) By 1915, one returnee from Amawo Atta by name Uzoho Nwobi Nwankwo, having been converted, struggled and brought Christianity into Umukwo Isiala Mbano. In the same 1915, some young itinerant workmen of Umuduru Osu in Isiala Mbano, Isuama, who served in Uzuakoli, advised Ekejiuba their chief, and he brought Christianity into Umuduru. It was the Methodist church that first came to Umuduru where the British first built their native court. In 1914-1918, First World War years, an overzealous court clerk, Stephen Oranye, who worked with Mr. C.A.B Cockraine, the District Officer in Okigwe Division, arbitrarily announced to the Chiefs of Okigwe that any chief who failed to establish a church in his area of jurisdiction ran the risk of losing his warrant. This threat triggered off an unprecedented enthusiasm for the chiefs, who
went all out and brought Christianity into all communities with in Isiala Mbano territories”. 45

The above extract paints a clear picture of how Christianity penetrated Isiala Mbano from 1912. By the end of World War I, it had spread into all parts of Isiala Mbano. The early churches were mainly built with red mud and thatch. Some chief’s houses were used as Churches until the community was able to erect one. For instance, in Ugiri Clan, in 1917, R.C.M was the first to be established in Umuebie Quarter of Ugiri town within the compound of Late Chief Duruokwara. The Church was attended by all and sundry who professed the Roman Catholic doctrine within and around Ugiri, Clan. 46

However, Christianity in Isiala Mbano was not established without resistance, though at a very minimal level. The resistance came mainly in the respect to the provision of land for the siting of church buildings. It also took the form of individual communities resisting the siting of churches in chief’s houses and far distance from the people. RCM of Umuopara Ugiri was one such example, C.O. Bones Ojiah writes that:

*Early in 1926, the young Catholics of Umuopara Ugiri described as The Boys” felt that the distance they were covering to attend church services and other committed activities was not conducive to their health especially during rainy season. Of course this situation coupled with non-availability of enough space to accommodate them in the church hall triggered off crisis between “The Boys” and Chief Duruokwara. Eventually, the church building was demolished and later, another*
new church building was set up at Nkwo Mbaa.  

The years 1920-1960 witnessed the establishment of the R.C.M. and C.M.S in almost all communities in Isiala Mbano. Each community had its own Church. It is instructive that, the missionaries, who brought Christianity to Isiala Mbano, also introduced Western education. One of the most revolutionary influences operative in Nigeria since the beginning of the European intrusion has been western education.  

From the very beginning, Western education was a virtual monopoly of the Christian Missionaries. Writing in this perspective, Victor Murray, observes that;

*To all intents and purposes the school is the church. Right away in the bush or in the forest the two are one, and the village teacher is also the village evangelist. An appreciation of this fact is cardinal in all considerations of African education.*  

Until 1898, education was under the direct control of missionaries. As late as 1942 they controlled 99 percent of the schools and more than 97 percent of the students in Nigeria were enrolled in mission schools. By 1945, there were comparatively few literate Nigerians who had not received all or part of their education in mission schools.  

Europe or the Christian mission did not bring the concept and practice of education to Igboland. The Igbo had their traditional system of education as noted earlier. What the Europeans brought was the Western type of education. Western education first came to Onitsha and spread to most of Igboland through the agencies of the CMS and the
RCM especially. Schools spread to Igbo areas like Awka, Udi, Nsukka, Abakaliki, Orlu, Owerri, Aba.\textsuperscript{51}

The first school that was built in Isiala Mnano was St. Paul Mission School, Osu (now Osu Central School). The school was built by the C.M.S. Many people attended it from other parts of Isiala Mbano, for instance Obollo, Ogbor, Amaraku, Umunkwo, Oka, Amuzari and so on.

E. Obilor remembered that:

\textit{The first school that came to Isala Mbano was sited in Osu the people form Ugiri including, Goddy Mbalisi, the Onyelikes and many others trekked from here to attend St. Pauls School in Osu before schools were built in our area. What we had then were just elementary schools. More schools were built within 1920-1940s. It was during the independence era that we had secondary schools in this area.}\textsuperscript{52}

Due to the far distance covered by people from other parts Isiala Mbano to St Pauls Osu, and the perceived dividends of being educated, other communities were determined to establish schools. They contributed both the human and materials resources needed. In the light of the above, by 1932, the then six towns in Ugiri clan, Ugiri, Obollo, Umuneke, Ogbor, Oka, and Ibeme had an elementary school each under the management of the then Nsu Parish priest, Rev. Father Howell.\textsuperscript{53}

Again in 1933 and 1942, Rev. Fr. Howell who managed the six R.C.M Schools transferred the Central School at Ibeme to a more central place, that is Umebie Ugiri (a village in Ugiri town) where they got a communal virgin land. The land was regarded as “Ajo Ohia’ evil forest. The Catholic Christians in Ugiri cleared the area for the transfer of the
Central School at Ibeme. The school was erected at its present location as St. Michael’s Central School Ugiri at Umuebie Ugiri.\textsuperscript{54}

By 1932, the C.M.S built the Central School Obollo and the RCM built St Theresa’s School (now Community Primary School Obollo) in 1935. The schools were built by the missionaries. There were regular school inspections by the colonial government, through the District Officers. In 1948, the year the eclipse of the sun occurred, tragedy struck at Central School Obollo. According to C.C.Opara, who was a pupil and an eye witness, it was announced that government inspectors were coming to inspect the school facilities. The pupils were asked to dig a pit toilet for the school. In the process, the toilet collapsed and a number of pupils were buried alive. However, some people were rescued including Mr. Joseph Onyekebi, who was alive,\textsuperscript{55} at the time of this research.

However by 1960, there were elementary schools located in all the communities in Isiala Mbano. Some communities had one, while others had two. There were no secondary schools in Isiala Mbano before 1960. But from the 1960s to 1990, almost all the communities in the area had built a secondary school. The first was the St. Thomas Acquinas Secondary School located at Anara Isiala Mbano.

The introduction of Christianity and Western education brought remarkable changes in the socio-political, economic culture of the people. It changed the social status of the people. It had both positive and negative impact on the people’s culture, custom and traditions. As Ozigbo rightly pointed out,

\begin{displaymath}
\textit{Since man is mortal, every society must perpetuate itself physically by procreation and socially by process of education. Through education, the customs, values, beliefs, skills}
\end{displaymath}
and so on, are passed on from generation to generation. Without this, the society would disintegrate. The new generation must be taught the ways of thinking and behaving which preserved the society in the past and are believed to keep it in the future. The function of education is to mould individuals to the social norm.\textsuperscript{56}

The above extract probably, explains the reason Isiala Mbano people embraced education when it was introduced. It was not every one who desired to be educated had the privilege. The few who did had only elementary education because of the fact that the colonial administration had no interest in tertiary education. As Ozigbo rightly observed; the Christian missionaries, that where the main providers of school education in Igboland, were generally not interested in tertiary education. It was not until the 1960s that the first tertiary institution was opened in Igboland, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.\textsuperscript{57} Isiala Mbano like in other Igbo communities, had their culture tradition and custom altered in a great degree. There were social and cultural developments in the area. These changes as occasioned by Christianity and Western education had its impact on the peoples socio-political and economic beliefs and general attitude to life.

**CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The introduction of Christianity and Western education in Isiala Mbano meant the presence of new and foreign cultures. These new cultures were to contribute immensely in cultural changes of Isiala Mbano. In the first place the missionaries preached against polygamy and worship of images, which was part and parcel of African
Traditional Religion (A.T.R.). In fact, the missionaries had disdain for the people’s art, music, dancing, names and the like. Almost all the traditional beliefs and customs were at logger heads with Christainity.\(^{58}\) It was a period of intense conflict between the indigenous culture and the Western culture. According to Michael Crowder, the missionaries required of an African conversion not only to a new religion but to a completely new way of life.\(^{59}\)

Though, the people embraced Christianity, many still remained traditional worshipers. They would attend the church on Sundays but went back home to offer sacrifices to images. The preaching against idol worship, polygamy and most of the people’s customs did not go down well with the elders, hence the indifference they showed to Christianity.

The coming of Christianity changed the dress style of the people. Nudity became a thing of the past. The people’s tradirional cultural dress was known \textit{Iwa ogodo}, but Christianity and western education described this traditional dress as primitive. Hence, the people’s dress style and fashion tilted towards the western styles. According to E.E. Obilor,

\begin{quote}
\textit{The coming of the church and western education changed a lot of things in our society. Our traditional fashion changed. There was mobility due to the presence of motor transport system. Our people could travel far to trade and interact with other Nigerians. They began to build block houses, and roof them with zinc, for those who could afford it. Our roads were expanded to enable the lorries carried goods to Umuahia, port-Harcourt and other places. A number of things really}
\end{quote}
changed, teachers became indigenous. Some indigenous people who had attained some level of education were employed as teachers, courts clerks, police and so on. Our women began to wear trousers and shirt. The white man really did a lot to civilize our people. Not only in Isiala Mbano, Igboland in general.

The view, as expressed by Obilor, described to a greater extent, the socio-cultural and political changes brought by colonialism. But he only failed to consider the implications of the changes on the people’s indigenous culture and identity. He tended to make the reader believe that Isiala Mbano was completely changed by colonialism. It is instructive to recall the view of Simon Ottenberg that, of all the groups in Nigeria, the Igbo appear to be most the receptive to Western culture and ideas. However, emphasis here should be on the rider to his assertion that “the Ibo have changed the least while changing the most”. In lieu of the above, it would be apt to state that, though there were marked changes in the people’s culture and social life, they have been able to preserve their “ethnic essence”. The changes that occurred during the colonial era, were not immediate, rather they took a gradual process over a period of over 60 years (1900-1960). It was largely evolutionary rather than revolutionary. In other words, Isiala Mbano, despite the changes, were astute enough to use in their own way, the new institutions, values, and cultures introduced by colonialism.

Be that as it is, there were changes in the social living in Isiala Mbano, due to colonial innovation. The first people, who embraced the colonial innovations, were the so-called “outcasts”, the ‘osu’ and ‘ume’ who were looking for a way out of their social limitations. The Christian
religious preachings relaxed a lot of the social disabilities suffered by the ‘osu’ and ‘ume’. Hence, they began to enjoy some social interactions with the ‘freeborn’ – ‘the nwadiala’. This was largely due to the coming of Christianity. References have been made to the gradual disappearance of the caste system, though not in totality. A.O. Odoemena writes that, “the osu caste system is dead, it is no longer rampant as it used in Igboland or group of Igbo communities, for that matter assigned to a prohibited area and people prevente from living near to them”.

The ‘osu’ who in some parts of Isiala Mbano, like Osu clan, were hung on trees to decay, were buried by the church for the sake of humanity and for the sake of the judgement of God.

Again, the revered ozo and nze title institutions became almost insignificant in the political and administrative circle. The secret societies and masquerade groups gradually began to give way to Christian activities. The Native Courts and the Warrant Chiefs assumed the center point of the local administration. Afigbo in this perspective writes that other institutions such as title lodges and secret societies which shared social and political authorities with the council of elders were side tracke.”

Also, village warriors during the pre-colonial period in Isiala Mbano went into hiding due to the presence of more sophisticated weapons used by the British in the area.

Furthermore, the rudimentary education introduced by the missionaries produced young men who quickly abandoned the laborious but little paying farm work. The people’s attitude to farming which had been their mainstay waned over time. People went after white collar jobs which was relatively scarce. Collective participation in meaningful labour and the exercise of skill in traditional craftsmanship were almost abandoned. People began to work mainly for money. Those who
travelled far for business came home with the newly introduced electronic gadgets and other products like gramafones, European dresses, slippers, hats and so on.\textsuperscript{65}

Again with the establishment of industries and big market in big towns like Enugu, Umuahia, Aba Port-Harcort and other places, the people sought for greener pastures in these cities. As a result, traditional rule living began to give way to urban life style. The traditional customs and prohibitions did not apply in the cities hence it was more convenient to live in the city than in the village community. This came with its moral problems, in which case people’s attitude to life, and respect for elders waned. This was partly due to the fact that Christianity and Western Education preached egalitarianism. Edumund Ilogu writes that, the moral problems of town life in Igboland, originated mainly from the fact that the change from village to town life, meant a sudden transition. It was a transition from a fairly neat pattern of community oriented life to another style of life where individualism, which requires inner-controlled and conscience-directed actions, as well as freedom of choice, make up the style of life.\textsuperscript{66} Ilogu however concluded that, the governing moral principles as well as acceptable social philosophy of town life, when towns first appeared in Iboland, could have derived from schools and churches, which were the main agents of social change at the initial stage.\textsuperscript{67} The early changes that occurred in the area during the colonial era, were largely attributed to modernization and industrialization. It also contributed to change in family structure. P.C. Lloyd puts it succinctly that, change in family structure were closely correlated with the processes of modernization and industrialization. The nuclear family he said, became a necessary concomitant of industrial society.\textsuperscript{68}
Again, change in communication was mainly a means the Europeans employed to fast-track exploitation. In another sense, the imposition of a new economic regime and introduction of paper money was by itself a method the British used to extend and consolidate their rule in Isiala Mbano and Igboland in general. In cognizance of the importance of communication, Tamuno asserted that “it was hoped that through these new lines of communication, European trade, ideas and way of life would reach even the remotest village and that those who benefited from the trade and contact with Europe would have a stake in the security and continuation of the new regime”.

E.E. Obilor confirms that colonial change in terms of communication and road transport was for the purpose of exploiting the people’s scarce natural resources:

> Our track roads were widened and made motorable by the Europeans through using communal labour. That was just to enable their trucks and lorries carry some of our locally produced palm oil, cocoa and kernel to the tarred road and railway at Umuahia, Okigwe and Port-Harcourt, to the sea for export to Europe. These roads made communication a lot more easier.

It would be germane therefore, to state that these changes that occurred in the Isiala Mbano during the colonial era did not arise out of a conscious plan of development. Rather, it was in a bid for the British to achieve effective exploitation that some structural changes occurred. However, against the negative effect meted to the socio-political and economic life of Isiala Mbano people, the Igbo and Africans at large,
Crowder observed that; “for all the rationalization of the colonial officials and all the impressive statements of the Annual Reports, official Gazettes and other colonial publications, there is very little evidence of any conscious purpose or plan of the colonial regimes to create a new and improved social economic order for the African”. However, before 1960, there were marked changes in almost every aspect of life in Isiala Mbano occasioned by colonialism. The people’s resilience to Western innovations and receptivity to change combined to bring about colonial change.

**THE SOCIETY ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE**

In most Igbo communities, colonialism brought several changes in almost every sphere of the people’s life. There was political consciousness at the end of the first world war1. The ‘amalgamation’ of Nigeria had occurred in 1914 which saw the merging of the Northern and Southern protectorates, that produced what is today is called Nigeria. This was followed in 1922 by the Richards Constitution. Consequently 1946, 1954 and 1960, saw the development of different constitutions, which affected the political structure of Nigeria. For instance, Ozigbo writes that the 1951 constitution introduced ethnic politics in Nigeria. It is not my desire to bore the reader with the details of the various constitutional developments.

However, all constitutional and political developments occurred under the British rule in Nigeria. Hence, the social, political and economic life of Nigeria remained in the hands of the British government. They dictated the way and manner Nigeria was governed. Igboland including Isiala Mbano of course was also under British rule in Nigeria until 1960. By implication, the administration of the area, the economic activities and social interactions of Isiala Mbano were at the
mercy of the colonial powers. There were some structural developments. There was greater mobility than was the case during the pre-colonial period. According to C.E. Okorike,

There was the establishment of harbour in port-Harcourt, the building of railway through Umuahia and the discovery and mining of coal at Enugu. Consequently, many sons of Isiala Mbano left to these parts of the country to secure employment either as skilled or unskilled labourer. At these various new towns, they inaugurated the Mbano federated associations and other town unions that helped our people in Diaspora. All these associations had their headquarters at home and contributed in the bringing development to Isiala Mbano. Though they played greater role during the independence era.73

Again, Isiala Mbano was not left out during the era of nationalist struggles that gave birth to Nigerian independence in 1960. The people may not have played very active role in the struggle, but they were said to have adopted the passive form of non-corporation by disobeying the instructions of the colonial powers by sometimes avoiding Court sittings. The consciousness of the people against colonial rule was awakened by Western education. Western education revealed to the people some fundamentals of human rights.

These developments, no doubt, contributed in bringing about changes than were witnessed on the eve of the colonial period. J.I.J. Njoku, asserts that, Isiala Mbano before 1960 had known “their left and
right.”\textsuperscript{74} However, changes in social life brought by Western education and the people’s attitude to life with regard to tradition, custom and cultural values, were responsible for a common parlance in Isiala Mbano. It became a common lament among the elderly men and women thus:

‘O wuru mgbe elu wu ala Osa’: this is to say, \textit{if it were when things were traditionally done.}

Herbert Oguine stated that, this lament became necessary because a lot of the cultural values and traditions were lost to the western culture and way of life.\textsuperscript{75} This lament has not died among the surviving elders at the time of this research. Young men and women were said tilt more towards Western cultures and way of life. Again, zinc houses had begun to replace the mud and thatch houses. Though roads were widened there was no tarred road in the area before 1960. In fact, almost every aspect of the people’s life and the society witnessed one form of change or another like in many other Igbo areas before 1960. Hence, it could be said that, Isiala Mbano on the eve of independence was on her way to modernization. In 1960, along-side other Igbo Communities in Nigeria, Isiala regained her independence.
CHAPTER THREE
NOTES AND REFERENCES


5. P.R.O. CO520/31 “Onitsha Hinterland Patrol” (June 1905) CO 520/03, “Orlu Patrol” (May 1911).


17. C.O. Bones Oji, *Early History of Ugiri Clan*...p.9

18. *Ibid* p. 10


26. *Ibid* p. 225

27. Emma Onyenze, c.76 years, Judicial secretary, interviewed at Umukam Obollo, on January 20th, 2008.


29. C.O.B Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan*... p. 117

30. *Ibid*


32. Herbert Oguine, c.71 years, Architect/Contract, interviewed at Anara Osuama Isiala Mbano, on 3rd February, 2008

33. Herbert Oguine interview cited.


36. E.E. Obillor interview cited

37. Chima Dialekwe c.70 years, Retired Public servant interviewed at Ogbor Ugiri on 22nd Feb 2008.


41. E.E. Obilor interview cited.


43. Ibid

44. Ibid

45. Ibid

46. C.O.B Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan*. P. 59

47. Ibid

48. The concept “Western Education” (as distinguished from traditional African education) is employed herein to refer to formal and systematic instruction in subjects characteristic of the curricula used in western countries (reading, writing and arithmetic as core subjects, to which are added courses in the Humanities Arts and Sciences). This system of instruction was designed to standardize the training of young people not only in the values of a modern industrialized and commercialized society, but also in the necessary skills for meaningful participation in that society.


52. E.E. Obillor interview cited.

53. C.O. Bones Ojiah, Early History of Ugiri…p.119

54. Ibid
55. C.C. Opara, c. 78 years, retired civil servant/community leader interviewed at Oka Ugiri on February 9th, 2008.


57. *Ibid* p. 123


60. E.E. Obilor interview cited.

61. Herbert Oguine interview cited.


63. Lazarus Interview cited


65. Erastus Ezeala interview cited.


67. *Ibid*


70. E.E. Obilor interview cited.


73. C.E. Okorike c. 67 years, Traditional ruler interviewed at Ibeme Ugiri on February 17th, 2008.

74. J.I.J. Njoku interview cited
CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY, 1960-2007

INDEPENDENCE AND DEVELOPMENTS

Nigeria gained independence in 1960; in 1963, she became a republic. The machinery of power and administration returned to indigenous people. In Isiala Mbano the local administration went into the hands of the people. The introduction of Western Education and Christian religion contributed immensely to the changes that occurred in Igboland. Writing on these changes Ozigbo asserts that,

\[ \text{lots of changes have been brought to bear in Igbo marriage, family life, kinship. The one-man one-wife syndrome (monogamy), which came with Christianity, has already come to stay. The innovations of church wedding and associated rituals and paraphernalia became domesticated.}^{1} \]

The independence era was for the consolidation of the changes brought by colonialism. The people began to re-adjust to the traditional life style while in- corporating the new western culture into their own. In Nigeria, there was leadership struggle over the control of the nation’s resources, and other paraphernalia of power. The power struggle was among the three major ethnic nationalities, the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo, and constituted a cog in the wheel of progress and development of the country. The country was plunged into a civil war. As Anayanwu rightly observed, no sooner the country had became a republic, cracks began to appear. These were cracks which could not be papered over.\(^{2} \) There was corruption in high places. The politicians threw decency to the winds and
enthroned the politics of hate, and corruption. In the western region, for example, there was a serious outbreak of rioting and violence in the wake of the 1963 regional election.³

In a bid to save the country’s nascent independence, there was an initial move to salvage and safeguard the country from those perceived as corrupt. On 15th January, 1966, the military struck to put an end to corruption and halt the nation’s further drift to chaos. The revolutionary move, according to Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, the leader of the revolutionary movement, “the aim of the revolution was to establish a strong, united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife….”⁴ But the result of the action spelt untold catastrophe for Nigeria from 1967-1970. However, the aim of this work is not to tell the story of how the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970 started. The avalanche of books on the war has offered enough explanation of the civil war. Rather this work considers its impact on the wheel of progress and setbacks suffered by Isiala Mbano people in their development effort. Scholars of Igbo extraction have variously argued that the Igbo were worst affected by the war more than any other group in Nigeria. By the end of the war, most communities in Igboland had been devastated. The Igbo were believed to have attained a high socio-economic developmental level before the war. Again Ozigbo was of the opinion that the time Nigeria declared war on Biafra in July, 1967, the Igbo had attained a high degree of economic prosperity. Modern industrial growth, educational advancement and social sophistication.⁵

The Nigeria-Biafra war ended when Biafra surrendered unconditionally to Nigeria.⁶ Nonetheless, much devastation had already been done before the unconditional surrender of Biafra, to the Nigerian forces. Isiala Mbano indigenes at home and in diaspora were affected by
the war. Many private houses, schools, markets and bridges among other infrastructure were destroyed by air raids. The health centers were not spared. Consequent upon the destruction of the houses and schools, many people were rendered homeless, school children studied under trees. Most markets were shattered and market men and women had to carry on with their trade under the hot and scorching sun and atimes beaten by the rain.\(^7\)

Following the destructions caused by the civil war post-war Isiala Mbano was faced with reconstruction of war devastated infrastructure and the initiation of new development projects. One major problem that the people were faced with was capital. The Nigeria government had rendered the Biafran money illegal. On the financial situation, Harniet-Sieveres posited that, for the individuals in the core Igbo areas, the immediate post-war period was one of “desperate search for money with which to buy goods and make available other preconditions for future planning”.\(^8\) The Igbo man is known for his determination to survive in any condition. Hence, the people set out to reintegrate themselves into the wider Nigerian society. Survival in Isiala Mbano at the initial stage was mainly by individual effort and self-help projects embarked upon by communities.

Firstly, the schools, markets, and health centers were reconstructed. As was the case generally in many parts of Igboland, people were more eager to survive than embarking on reconstruction by the end of the civil war. There were no strong community agencies because the war weakened the ones that were in existence before the war broke out. Nonetheless, most communities in Isiala Mbano embarked on self-help projects. C.E. Okoroike stated that, “in my community, Ibeme, our two schools, community primary school and Ibeme High School,
were devastated. My people contributed money and rebuilt the schools. Our market Afor Ibeme was equally rebuilt using iron and Zinc.”. This was the case in many other communities that had devastated schools.

In Isiala Mbano at the end of the war, leadership became a serious matter. The people became more politically conscious. Communities reorganized their local unions to pursue development projects. Some traditional rulers were Warrant Chiefs under the British administration. In Anara for instance, Agbugba Okereke became their traditional ruler. His family till date is still the royal family of the Anara community in Osuama Isiala Mbano. It was the case in Obollo, Ibeme and so on.

In 1976, Imo state was created out of the East Central State. This provided for the creation of more autonomous communities, hence, the number of the traditional rulers increased. In the same vein, many communities instituted their Town Unions to see to the administrative running of the communities. According to C.E. Okorike, town unionism started by 1976, but between 1970 and 1975, there was nothing like town unions here, people had their town councils, some had associations. But by 1976, there was a law establishing town unions, under the then General Murtalla Muhammed regime. There were a few town unions that existed at the initial time. There was the Obollo General Assembly (O.G.A), Ogbor Improvement Union (O.I.U), Ibeme, improvement Union, Anara Peoples Congress, (A.P.C), Umuneke Development Union (U.D.U), Amaraku Town union (A.T.U), Umunkwo Development Union and Some others. The town unions engaged in one form of development project or another with a view to better the lot of their people.

Again at the post-independence era, many Isiala Mbano people that had travelled to the cities to seek for greener pastures, returned home
with modern domestic utilities, televisions, refrigerators and so on. Many young people abandoned farming for business; those who cut palm trees and tapped palm wine, left for places like Lagos, Enugu, Umuahia, Port-Harcourt, Owerri, Kano, Jos and other parts of Nigeria. Those who had primary and secondary education were recruited into the police force. Many others became teachers. The living condition of people improved.  

The coming of television Vision, contributed immensely in influencing the attitude and the behaviour of the people. Fashion began to change in line with what people saw on television. In this regard, E.E. Obilor stated thus:

> Our peoples’ behaviour was influenced by the western way of life. A lot of things have changed due to Western influence. In those “good old days” there was respect for elders. But now, people hardly greet their elders. Young people now beat up their parents, indecent dressing is now high among our girls who now put on trousers. These things are the making of the whiteman. Our girls now get pregnant in their father’s house. Our culture has really changed. But thank God, some people still remember the good past.

However, people still believe that despite the negative impact of colonialism on the culture, there were some good changes. In all, the church and Western Education remain pivotal to these changes. Herbert Oguine argues that the church and Western education brought some
positive changes in every area of life in Isiala Mбанo. Hence he states that:

The coming of the church and the schools brought civilization and modernity into our communities. Our people used to worship idols. We were illiterates, we could neither read nor right. But today we have educated people. We now worship the God of the Whiteman, which is “good” we now have pipe born water, cars, we live in zinc houses with air conditioners. We now travel to any part of the country and the world if we have the money. Things are a lot easier. At least, Isiala Mbano generally is more developed than what we had before the whiteman came. Our living condition improved greatly. Isiala Mbano is developing and will still develop more.14

In the same vein, S.E. Mbalisi stated that, some of the cultural and traditional taboos that prohibited social interaction like the ‘osu and umeh’ caste system are gradually being over looked in recent times. Though some communities still observe them minimally.15

S.B.C Onwuka agrees that the people have changed because of Christianity and Western Education. The benefits at least show that they now live a better life with less cultural prohibitions. The live in a more modern society and change with the times.16 It is intresting to note here that all the people who were interviewed believed that Isiala Mbano in the Post-colonial times has greatly changed in terms of socio-cultural and economic developments. This has been because of the innovations
brought by Christianity and Western Education in the society. This also explains the people’s increased pursuit of education as the key to their development and achievements.

**EDUCATION AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE**

Western Education was introduced in Igboland by the missionaries during the colonial era. It was not until the post-independence era that Isiala Mbano people began to build secondary schools with vigor. It was in 1916 that St. Pauls Catholic School Osu which was the first primary school in Old Mbano was built. After independence as Oguine stated, Isiala Mbano people realized the importance of western education and began to build schools. The St Thomas Acquinas Secondary School was established in 1962. The school was attended by most Isiala Mbano indigenes. As noted earlier, Imo state was created in 1976 out of the East Central States. From the 1980s, many communities with the help of the Imo state government, built their own secondary schools. Among the secondary schools built are: Obollo Technical Secondary School 1984, Amaraku Secondary School 1989, Amarazari Secondary School 1984, Ogbor Secondary School, 1989, Umuozu Secondary School 1985 and so on. In fact, there were secondary schools in all the autonomous communities in Isiala Mbano before 1990. With the government take-over of schools from the missionaries, the effort of most communities in building schools was encouraged by the government. Imo state government in conjunction with the communities since 1980 built about 108, 166 schools (both primary and secondary) at a cost of over N9,000,000.00.

The government and the communities jointly contribute immensely financially in ensuring the upkeep of these schools. This was done mainly through organising fund raising and through individual
contributions. Scholarships were given to brilliant and deserving school children to encourage them.

Education is a catalyst to change and developments in human society.\textsuperscript{20}

Education has been pivotal in the development of Isiala Mbano. The result of the schools, which were established in the post-independence era, was that, it exposed the people to the gains of being educated. According to E.E. Obilor, education helped in training their sons and daughters, who in turn, occupied some vital position in government (both at the state and federal level) and have been helping in developing Isiala Mbano. There are rich business moguls, academics, politicians and so on. These sons and daughters occupied these positions because they were educated. For instance, we have poeple like, E.C. Echeruo, B.C. Agunanne, Prof. R.I. Onwuka former Provost of Alvan Ikeokwu College of Education, Prof. Azubuike of Oka at University of Nigeria Nsukka, Prof Dave Onyejiekwe at Nsukka, and Prof Osuji of Amaraku at Nsukka. There are also women, like Rubi Emele who was an Executive Assistant to the Imo state Governor. All these people and many more others attained these heights through education.\textsuperscript{21}

These educated persons have contributed in attracting both state and federal government attention to Isiala Mbano. These government attention have been in the area of infracstructural development. As far back as 1960, there were no tarred roads in Isiala Mbano. The first tarred road was the Owerri-Amaraku-Anara-Okigwe road that was built in 1974-1976, which was a federal government road.\textsuperscript{22} Apart from the two tarred roads that passed through Isiala Mbano, all other roads were locally maintained by the communities and the local government through grading. Road development in the rural areas of Igboland had been
greatly neglected. Isiala Mbano is among the communities in Imo state that have suffered neglect of some of her roads since independence.

However, it was in the year 2000-2001, that the then Achike Udenwa administration in Imo state tarred the Amaraku-Obollo-Umelemai road and the Obollo-Umueze II – Afor Oru Mbaise roads. These roads have contributed a lot to the speedy development of Isiala Mbano in terms of transportation and communication. At the vanguard of the road construction was one Chief Allwell Onwuka, who was the commissioner for Agriculture in then Udenwa administration. Other prominent persons included Chief Jasper Nwachukwu, the then Isiala Mbano Local Government Chairman. Hon. Jasper Ndubuaku, member Imo State House of Assembly that represented Isiala Mbano, Senator Ifeanyichukwu Ararume that represented Okigwe Senatorial Zone, Chief Ikedi Ohakim, who was also a Commissioner in the Udenwa administration. These Isiala Mbano indigenes by their positions in various levels of government influenced government’s decision in the construction of these roads.

Apart from the roads, there were other social amenities provided that have helped in the transformation of Isiala Mbano into a semi-urban area. These included markets, portable water through the establishment of borehole. In all these areas, one thing is certain, Isiala Mbano is developing and the people are living a more modern life. Mbalisi stated that: “our people are better educated now than what we had earlier. They are better employed in the civil service, and public service in the country. In my Ugiri clan, we have top ranking civil servants and public servants. We had, John Onyeze the auditor general of Imo state, we have Alhell Onwuka commissioner in the Imo state civil service Commissioner. The people are attracting development in Isiala Mbano. Our local government
Chairmen are also doing their bit like one Sam Nwaigwe, a former local government Chairman in the 1990s, he built a lot of lock up shops in almost all the communities in Isiala Mbano. Recently Chief Jasper Nwachukwu built a borehole at Eke Obollo. Simeon Iwunze, who was also a local government Chairman, built a new market; the Amaukwu Obollo Modern Market, he equally established a pineapple plantation at Umuneke. All these projects are geared towards developing Isiala Mbano. On the whole, our society is developing more because our people are educated. Education is helping to bring about development in every area in Isiala Mbano”.

Again, there have been development and changes in the status of the communities. The years 2002-2005 witnessed the creation of new autonomous communities and creation of development centers in Imo state. Isiala Mbano again was not left out. As S. Ibe put it, the creation of autonomous communities was necessary for even rural development. The creation of more autonomous communities in Isiala Mbano has also helped to bring about more developments in the communities. Some of these new autonomous communities included: Amaukwu Obollo, Ibeme Amaise, Amaato Amaraku, Umuenyi, and Ekwedim among others. There are also two development centres namely, Ugiri Development Center with its headquarters at Nkwo Mbaa and Mbama Development Centre with its headquarters at Amuzari. These development centers were established to bring development into the interior of Isiala Mbano.

Following the creation of new autonomous communities in Isiala Mbano, was the selection of traditional rulers. In some communities, the selection of the traditional ruler was peaceful. In some others, the reverse was the case. For instance, in Amaukwu Obollo autonomous community, the selection of a traditional ruler has lingered since 2003. It has not been
settled at time of this research. Such is the problem associated with creation of autonomous communities. It has adversely affected the development projects in the affected communities. The creation new autonomous communities come with changes. In the past, traditional rulers were selected by the people and subsequently, crowned by the *Onyeisi Ala* or *Oji Ofo* of the most senior communities. But in recent times, this has changed in Isiala Mbano and many communities in Imo state. The church has influenced the Igbo tradition to a large extent that traditional rulers today are given Staff of Office (SO) by the state government. In some communities, traditional rulers are crowned by the church Bishops. This development in my humble opinion is a rape on the tradition and culture of the people. It is an evidence of overbearing influence by western culture on the tradition and culture of the people.

**CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN**

The status of women in pre-colonial Isiala Mbano was mainly to take care of their children. They also engaged in local trading within the communities. They participated in farming, mainly in the areas of planting cocoyam, fluted pumpkin, weeding of farm land. In some parts of Isiala Mbano, especially, Osu and Ugiri clans, women engaged in local craft such as mat making and pottery production.

Generally in many Igbo areas, women were restricted to cooking and other domestic chores. In some others, they were fully involved in farming, trading and other economic activities. Anyanwu writes that, the Ezza women were not only involved in agriculture but floated local industries in salt and pottery production. They were also involved in agriculture alongside their men counterparts.

Isiala Mbano women were industrious and therefore helped their husbands in family upkeep. Some of the men, as Lazarus Nwabugo
stated, were busy working for the whiteman. The women helped sustain their family through the farms and Petty trade.\textsuperscript{28} Those who were involved in mat and pottery making taught their daughters and sons how to make mats. This also provided them a source of livelihood at the time.

As stated earlier, Christianity came into Isiala Mbano through an ex-slave woman. This was followed by missionary schools around 1912 and 1916. However, E.E. Obilor asserted that, women in Isiala Mbano were prohibited from attending schools. Some men also prohibited their wives from attending churches because of fear of the unknown. It was after the Aba women rising of 1929, that the women began to be liberated from traditional prohibitions.\textsuperscript{29} Onwuka observed that education was a key factor in the changing status of women. Those who became educated, helped and enlightened the rural women on the achievements recorded by women in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{30} Again, Opara stated, the proliferation of schools in Isiala Mbano after independence, helped many women who could not trek to far places to enroll into the schools in their communities. This was the beginning of change in the status of our women.\textsuperscript{31}

By and large the education of women in Isiala Mbano soon began to make noticeable impact on the role of women in community development. In the first place, women associations began to take new dimensions. Women became involved in development projects through their yearly women abroad meetings. There were women wings for town unions. Through these unions, they were able to carry out some development projects. In some communities, women helped in built civil centers, church halls, market stalls and health centers. For instance, in Amazuari community, the Aladinma Women Association, rebuilt the Amazuuri Maternity Home and equipped Aladinma Hospital Amazuari
in the 1980s. This was under the leadership of Mrs. Reginna Okere, the woman leader at the time.³²

Women have also contributed to the building of town union civic centers. In Obollo community, women through their meetings, assisted the men and built the ultra modern civic center. The women contributed over two million naira (N2, 000,000.00) to the project. The women also piloted the building of the Queen of Apostle’s Secondary School Obollo (now St. Theresas’ College).³³

In the area of education, Isiala Mbano women have also contributed in the management of both primary and secondary schools. They had been instrumental in the training of the brilliant but indigent students. According Obillor, in almost all the communities in Isiala Mbano, women award scholarships to over twenty students in tertiary institutions every year. They have been a source of succor to indigent families by sponsoring their children in the universities. The women are helping in the development of Isiala Mbano. As they train these youths, they prepare them for future development of Isiala Mbano.³⁴

Again, in politics Isiala Mbano women have been on the forefront. They have served in many capacities at both local and state government levels. It is true none has become a governor or local government chairman. However, many have been within the corridor of power mainly since 1999. For instance, Rubi Emela was a senior executive assistant in Achike Udenwa administration (1999-2007) in Imo state. Also she contested for Isiala Mbano Local government Chairmanship position in 2003, though she was not successful. This goes along way to indicate the changing status of Isiala Mbano women in post colonial times.
Women in pre-colonial and colonial Isiala Mbano society were forced into unwanted marriages with men who were not their desire and choice. This situation has changed in recent times. Women now marry husbands of their choice from any part of Igboland and Nigeria. Again, some traditional prohibitions on women have become part of history. However, the traditional etiquette of women preparing food for their husband and household still holds. Most of the women still observe their domestic obligation of cooking for their husbands.\textsuperscript{35}

Given the above, women in Isiala Mbano enjoy more freedom in post-colonial times than they had in the pre-colonial and colonial times. This women liberation to a large extent could be attributed to Christianity and Western education as evidenced in many Igbo areas. They live a more modern life than had been the case. Their status in the society has continued to change with the time.

**SURVIVING TRADITIONS**

Many scholars have written on the changes brought on the Igbo society by Christianity and Western education. Chinua Achebe in his *Things Fall Apart* reasoned that colonial change was inextricably linked with Christianity and Western education. He portrays the pre-colonial Igbo, as a people whose culture and customs lays emphasis on unity and respect for elders and their societal norm. Achebe however regrets that contact with Western culture changed the Igbo cultural and traditional *status quo*.

This view of Achebe applies to Isiala Mbano. In the first place, Christianity preached against some Igbo cultural and traditional institutions, like the Osu caste system, the killing of twins, slave immolation and so on. Western education on the other hand, exposed the people to Western way of life. It created a new class of educated elite
whose life style paid little or no attention to old traditional prohibitions in the society. This was done through the new associations, trade unions and so on that changed the people’s attitude towards some Igbo traditional practices. In this perspective, James S. Coleman writes that:

*Even today, it is not uncommon to find a semi educated Nigerian (Igbo) working as a steward who could name the principal English cities, quote the Bible, and recite Hamlet, but who has little knowledge of the geography, the proverbs and folk tales, or the prominent leaders and outstanding events in the history of his own society.*

This observation by Coleman applies to some degree in Isiala Mbano. Again, Coleman concludes that:

*The result of this concentrated institutionalized indoctrination was the creation of a new class. Conversion to Christianity, knowledge of and preference for English, imitation of European behaviour, and post school employment in an urban milieu all helped to isolate the educated African from his traditional environment.*

However, this created inherent contradiction between the role expected of the young Igboman in accordance with tradition and custom, and the role expected of him as a result of his Western education. Whatever be the case, the Igbo did not lose all his custom and tradition to Western system, at least as A.E. Afigbo contended, they have been able to retain their “ethnic essence”. In Isiala Mbano, some of the peoples’ traditions and customs survived in the midst of changes brought by
colonialism on the society. Some elders interviewed in the course of this research, attested to the fact that there are surviving traditions in Isiala Mbano amidst colonial change and Western cultural imposition.

Opara observed that “in Isiala Mbano today, the high premium our people placed on unity is till there, very important. Some of our traditional dances and institutions are still there, though with some modifications. For instance, the ‘Alija’ traditional dance among the Obollo Ugiri and some other villages is still alive. The nmanwu (Masquerades) are very much alive, though the old way of involving ‘juju’ and magical powers and charms is no longer involved. Our people have changed from ‘nmanwu Ogwu’ to ‘nmanwu church’. In our marriage customs and traditions, most communities observe the traditional taboos, there are still some village groups who do not inter marry. These things were observed in our tradition before the white man came, they are still observed in most communities today”.

Besides, some of the traditional economic practices of Isiala Mbano people are very much in existence. Despite the introduction of banks, Isiala Mbano people still practice their local means of saving money like isusu. Women have not abandoned their traditional role of sweeping the market. This was usually done by all the villages in each community. This has remained the same, even now. It is done on the eve of the market day. Traders still observe their traditional contribution in saving money within the local markets. Mbalisi again observed thus:

again, our people still practice the ‘Isusu’, we call it “Udodiri meeting”. It has been the traditional way of saving money, which is usually shared at the end of every year among the contributors. The coming of Banks did not
stop this traditional banking system. Traders still observe their ‘Akawo’ contributions in our local markets.\(^{40}\)

In Isiala Mbano, the four-day and eight-day market system like in many other areas is still observed. Isiala Mbano, have some fast growing daily markets like the Orie Amaraku, Nkwo Umuezela and Anara markets. However, the traditional eight-day market interval is still observed.

In many communities in Isiala Mbano, some people or families though Christians, still accord respect to the deities. As noted in chapter one, in almost all families, the ‘Umune’ which is believed to be the protector of the people’s fortune is still found in families. People still consult deities when a new baby is born. This is a show of the people’s continued belief in reincarnation. E.E. Obilor also confirms this fact when he said that, our old men and women still consult the “Dibia Afa” to find out which of their grandfathers or grandmothers has come back to their generation.\(^{41}\)

In Obollo of Ugiri clan, the deities such as *ogwugwu, okwara ogbuleke, ezeala anyanwu*, are still respected and consulted by the people. The Iroko tree which was believed to be inhabited by strong deities is still being revered by most communities. The people still believe that the deities are housed in such trees. Hence, one still finds Iroko trees that are over one hundred (100) years old. These are part of the people’s traditional beliefs. They are still observed till date.

Another major tradition that Isiala Mbano people still observe is in the area of marriage. Western culture caused some changes in the mode of marriage. But the traditional *igba nkwu* ceremony, with its traditional rites is still observed. Hence, couples would only be proclaimed husband
and wife, when they must have fulfilled the traditional marriage rites as practised in each community in Isiala Mbano. Besides, the fact that one cannot marry his sister or a girl from his immediate village is still observed. Obilor again confirms that; in the tradition, people do not marry their sisters or a lady from the immediate village, no matter how beautiful she is. It was and still is an abomination in Isiala Mbano society. At least people still respect that tradition.42

Among the surviving traditions in Isiala Mbano is land ownership and land use. In pre-colonial Isiala Mbano, the first son, and eldest male child in the family, controls the family land. He protects the land from intruders. This tradition has not changed, though one would not claim that this tradition is still observed without some modification. However, respect for land ownership still holds. In this regard, Lazarus Nwabugo stated that, “we still respect land ownership in Isiala Mbano. No right thinking man would just get up and sell another’s land. That has been and is still an abomination. In this present time, it is seen as a criminal act”.43

From the foregoing, it could fair to state that, despite the changes brought by colonialism and western cultural imposition people of Isiala Mbano to a large extend, have not lost their traditional identity. Though there are changes and modifications in some of the traditions, at least these surviving traditions are pointers to the fact that the people still retain their traditional identity and “ethnic essence”.

THE EMERGING SCENE

The emerging scence in this context refers to the situation of things in Isiala Mbano at the time of this research. The Isiala Mbano society, like most Igbo communities, is pursuing development projects. Change has remained a constant factor, hence, there are proofs to the fact
that a lot more changes are on the way. Some opinions, as expressed by various people, point to the fact that the society is still a semi-urban society, on the other hand, some believe that Isiala Mbano is an urban society. In recent times, the speed at which new roads are constructed, market stalls developed and more modern houses are built, points to the fact that, Isiala Mbano is an emerging urban city.

In the first place, education is pivotal in the development of any society. Isiala Mbano people at home and in diaspora are pursuing education, this forebears greater developments to come in the nearest future. Herbert Oguire asserts that the people have come to realize that education enables any individual who desires to attain and occupy high positions in the modern world to do so. That is why the youths are pursuing university education with much vigour. Developments in terms of road construction, market development, upgrading of maternity homes to hospitals with modern facilities by government, are ways through which our educated sons are contributing to the development of the area. They are the ones attracting federal and state government presence to Isiala Mbano.

In the same vein, J.I.J. Njoku speaks of a high level of political consciousness among the youths of Isiala Mbano. He therefore observes that, in recent times, the people, especially the younger generation have become active in the politics of the local, state and federal government. It is a positive sign of greater development to come into Isiala Mbano.

There are better improved modern facilities in Isiala Mbano in recent times than there was in the past. The Global Mobile Communication System (G.S.M.) has come into Isiala Mbano. Internet facilities are also being established. In the year 2005, two development centers were created in Isiala Mbano, an indicator that Isiala Mbano may soon be split
into more than one local government. This would no doubt create room for more development. The economic and political activities in Isiala Mbano, point to all round development in the area.

Again the emergence of Ikedi Ohakim from Isiala Mbano, as governor of Imo State at the time of this research, portends more development to come into area. However, it is not the concern of this work to predict the Governor Ikedi Ohakim administration. Neither is it the focus of the work to determine what the Isiala Mbano son should do for his people. The importance of this event to this work lies in the fact that Ikedi Ohakim is an indigene of Isiala Mbano and his emergence as the governor of Imo state is a monumental historic event in the history of Isiala Mbano. Nonetheless, his effort in bringing more development to the area would contribute to the process of urbanization. It would also form an area of interest for further research in the reconstruction of the history of Isiala Mbano.
CHAPTER FOUR

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Isiala Mbano lies across the Owerri –Okigwe road and occupies an expanse of land of about 205.30 square kilometers. On the eve of colonial rule the community was a traditional rural Igbo society. The area was not known by such name Isiala Mbano. It was rather called Mbasaa because of the seven communities that were under the jurisdiction of the then Umuduru administration. The people trace their origin and migration to Orlu area. Hence, they have some form of homogenous ancestral home. No community in Isiala Mbano, from available evidence in their tradition of origin, claims autochthony. It is not therefore difficult to establish their claim on a solid ground. There were however various inter-community migrations within Isiala Mbano communities as noted in the work.

However, inter-group relations between the various communities that constitute Isiala Mbano were to a large extent influenced by considerations of social-political and economic activities. With the exception of minor and generally inter-group skirmishes, mainly in the area of land disputes, cordial relations prevailed. There were endogamous marriages, the worship of different deities by different communities, different markets, but common dialect linked the settlers together. However, their relations varied from peace and friendship to minor quarrels and communal clashes.

The mainstay of the people’s economy was mainly farming. The chief of all the crops was yam production. There were other agricultural produce such as cocoyam, oil palm, palm wine, three leaved yam (una) among others. The women engaged in the production of cocoyam,
cassava, fluted pumpkin, maize and vegetables. Women also engaged in pottery making in some parts of Isiala Mbano. Cocoa was produced at a minimal scale, while kernel was produced on a large scale, due to the presence of palm trees in the area. By and large, as time went on, became diversified. Trade mainly short distance trade, enhanced the economy of the people. Many people did not engage in long distance trade probably because of the hazards and other security risks associated with it. Nonetheless, the few who engaged in external trade were mainly with the Aro, Umuahia, Uturu, Owerri, Oru and Obowo people, among others.

By 1906, British rule was imposed on Isiala Mbano. This imposition of foreign rule disrupted the pre-existing political and social organization of the people. The people minimally resisted British rule, and were conquered, occupied and administered by the British. The establishment of courts and the institution of Warrant Chiefs system almost swept away, at least at the initial stage, the participatory democratic system of local administration of Isiala Mbano. Colonial rule took effective control of the area from 1906. Colonialism brought some marked changes in the traditions, customs and some cultural practices of the people. The killing of twins, slave immolation and the discriminatory life suffered by the Osu caste and Umeh, were checked. Farming was left in the hands of the old men and women as the young men, moved to the towns like Enugu, Owerri, Aba, Umuahia and Port-Harcourt in search of white collar jobs. The British, through the christian missionaries brought christianity and Western education. The British penetration of the hinterland made transportation and communication easier. The economic and political life of the people was under the dictates of the foreign rulers. The name Mbano, as noted earlier, was a colonial creation. The area became Mbano when the Umuduru Native Court administered the
four clans of Ugiri, Ehime, Osu and Mbama under her jurisdiction. The Warrant chiefs and the British colonial officers controlled the administration of Isiala Mbano until independence in 1960. By the end of colonial rule, many marked changes in social, political and economic life of the people had occurred. Many cultural and traditional aspects of the people’s society had been influenced by Western culture. Education had put the society on the path of urbanization. Generally, on the eve of Nigerian independence, Isiala Mbano had attained some sort of modern and urban way of life.

Developments in the post-colonial era beginning 1960, elevated the status of Isiala Mbano to more or less a semi-urban area. The Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967 to 1970 constituted a cog in the wheel of development in Isiala Mbano. Some of the development projects in the area of schools, markets, bridges and houses, suffered destruction. Hence the end of the civil war became a period of reconstruction. It did not take decades before the war affected infrastructure was quickly put back in place. The government and the people, through communal and self-help efforts put Isiala Mbano back on the track of modernization and urbanization.

The last two decades of the 20th Century and the first decade of the 21st century, witnessed a lot more developments in the socio-economic and political aspects of Isiala Mbano. Education in the first place, was given priority attention by all the communities. Schools, both primary and secondary were built, particularly beginning from 1976 up to the 1990s, because of the creation of Imo State. Many Isiala Mbano indigenes enrolled in the schools. Women, who because of the long distance could not enroll in the schools, were able to do so because of the closeness of the schools in their communities. Adult literacy schools
were established. These adult schools provided opportunity for interested persons to be educated. The schools were mostly attended in the evenings when the younger school children must have dismissed. Education contributed in changing the status of women and their role in community development.

Town unions and women associations emerged. Each played important roles in the development of Isiala. Those in business also prospered and contributed their quota in community development. Political consciousness among the people increased. Banks and hospitals were built. New roads were constructed from the 1976 when Imo state was created. Early in the 21st century, more modern facilities like bore holes, lock up stores and market stalls, were built. New school blocks were erected and new roads constructed and tarred. Most especially, the period 2000 to 2007, saw the tarring of more roads in Isiala Mbano by the Achike Udenwa administration. There was the establishment of modern communication and internet facilities.

In the same vein, as noted earlier, colonial rule brought some marked changes in the culture and tradition of the people. However, much of the people’s tradition still survived despite the influence of Western culture. Inspite of the changes in the peoples’ tradition and custom, they have been astute enough to retain their “ethnic essence”. They` have exerted resilience in building the new Western cultural introductions into their culture. Many Isiala Mbano indigenes, both young and old, are expectant of greater changes in Isiala Mbano, to further help in transforming the area into a modern urban city. Almost every aspect of the people’s culture has witnessed some changes over time. E.E. Obilor believes that “fashion has changed but human physical appearance have been the same since creation. Our cultural festivals like
the New Yam festival-(Ekweji) and masquerades are very much in existence with some considerable modifications”.

Again Herbert Oguine observed that, in some homes, pictures bearing Jesus Christ, the Holy Cross and the Blessed Virgin Mary, have replaced those traditional symbols and images which represent the personal spirits and gods found in families. But the “Onuagwuishi” and “Umunne” shrines are still found in some family compounds. Besides, elderly men have continued to tell the young ones that the virtues, values, and treasures of the old should not he neglected and allowed to go into extinction.

In conclusion, therefore, Isiala Mbano has been a dynamic society. This dynamism evidenced in the people’s preparedness to adapt to new conditions, coupled with developments in social, economic and political aspects of the peole’s life. The pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial situations, combined to buttress the fact that there has been continuity and change in Isiala Mbano society. Colonialism, no doubt, was a factor of change. However, the changes it brought could not be seen as a complete break with Isiala Mbano past. From the writer’s investigations, it would be apt to state that the impact of colonialism on Igboland has shown there have been change and continuity in Igbo culture due to Western cultural interference. Change in Isiala Mbano has occurred over time even before colonialism. As long as the society continues to exist, change in Isiala Mbano would remain a continuum.
CHAPTER FIVE

END NOTES
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