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A HISTORY OF AFIKPO CIRCA 1600

RAPH OKO AJA



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OF

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CIRCA 1600.

BY

RAPH OKO AJA

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A HISTORY

OF

AFIKPO

CIRCA 1600

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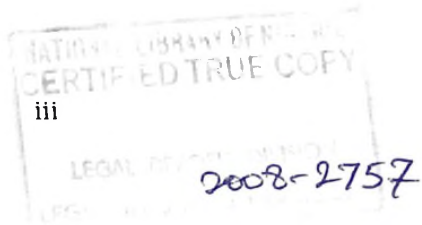
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**A History
Of Afikpo
Circa 1600**

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Raph Oko Aja
2005

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DEDICATION

I have decided to dedicate this book to the memories of three lates:

Barrister Chris Okpani
Mr. Ewa Udu and
Professor Nwanna Nzewunwa.

The late Barrister Chris Oko Okpani and the late Mr. Ewa Udu had been in the vanguard of Afikpo development and unity and had rendered selfless services for the achievement of this objective. Unfortunately, both of them were cut down in their prime of youth and Afikpo was robbed of their patriotic services. Silver and gold have I none, but the greatest tribute I can pay to them is to dedicate this monument to their memories. May their souls rest in peace.

The late Nwanna Nzewunwa, my revered academic mentor, was a Professor of Archaeology in the Department of History, University of Port Harcourt.

He had encouraged me to come to the University of Port Harcourt and was a source of inspiration to me in my academic pursuits.

He died in a fatal motor accident on 9th July, 1991, shortly after writing a 'Foreword' to this book.

May his soul rest in peace.

PREFACE

This book is the maiden history of Afikpo. It is the product of intensive and sustained research on Ehugbo society which started in 1975. The delay in its publication is due to several reasons. The first is that the research was not continuous. There was a terrible time lag. The second is that the research had focussed on different aspects of Afikpo history. The result was files of materials, each of which required painstaking attention. The third constraint includes lack of time, and other technical and financial reasons. The net result of these and numerous other problems is that the materials remained pigeon-holed for years.

But in response to people's call especially during the 1992 Convention of the Afikpo Town Welfare Association (ATWA), I decided to release the first volume of the history. The purpose of this survey is to place the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial history of Ehugbo in its proper perspective, to have the facts where they belong. It is for this reason that emphasis has been placed on chronological analysis. The work, therefore, provides a peg on which to 'hang' other facts.

Writing a history of this nature is fraught with problems. The first is that of collecting reliable data as almost all available data are pre-historic. This problem is accentuated by the present morbid local political consciousness of the people.

The single advantage of this work is that most of the materials were collected in the 1970's when the people, including the elders, were less politically conscious. It was easier then to extract more reliable information. The materials were also collected from a cross-section of the Ehugbo community and cross-checked with other sources such as archaeology, anthropology, ethnography, archival records and extant written works.

The second problem is the non-availability of money for such an expensive project. It should be the collective responsibility of the Ehugbo community to sponsor and encourage researchers both morally and financially to 'dig into' the history of Ehugbo. It is both an expensive and a herculean venture because the researcher must touch all the villages in Ehugbo if he is to do a nice job.

The third problem is the complexity of the Ehugbo society. The people of Ehugbo came in hordes, each group led by an individual or a couple of brothers at various times and from different directions. The leaders became the founders of their respective villages. Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu, who is reputed as the legendary founder of Ehugbo, appears to have arrived earliest with his group. This was so because it is said that each Igbo group that arrived was allowed to settle in the name of Igbo-Ukwu Omaka. It is also said that such a group was allowed to settle with whatever shrines and cultures it had. Igbo did not therefore interfere with or suppress the cultures of other Igbo migrants. He rather played the role of welcoming them provided they accepted to settle in his name or with his authority. This accounts for the cultural diversity and complexity of the Ehugbo society.

It further gives credence to the assertion that Igbo Omaka Ejali who incorporated the various Igbo groups with their diverse cultures, ensured that these cultural performances took place in the villages of origin during the annual sequence of events in Ehugbo. Igbo Omaka was called Igbo-Ukwu because of his great deeds. "Igbo-Ukwu" thus means "the Great Igbo" or "Igbo the Great". Finally, Igbo Omaka Ejali was the carrier of the Ulo Ogo culture. Everything about Ogo and its associated sacred rituals belonged to him.

One remarkable fact about the Ehugbo society is that the founding fathers did not establish hereditary rule or dynasty. Ottenberg (1981:49) has also noted that the "Afikpo histories do not say that the founding patrilineage has the

right to rule others, and that there is nothing like hereditary rule in Afikpo." As a matter of fact, Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu, regarded the various Igbo groups and their founders as integrated equal members of the Ehugbo community, where villages maintained their identities and had the right to perform their customs. However, he fitted these customs in a framework of the Ehugbo annual sequence of events as was later directed by the Afikpo council of elders. It is for this reason that Afikpo has been described as a town of unity in diversity. Ehugbo tradition has it that after the death of Igbo-Ukwu, Afikpo became a typical republican society and a classic example of segmentary village democracies in Igboland.

This study also reveals that Ehugbo town was conquered and occupied by the British on December 28, 1902 (Nwabara, 1977:110-111 and Afigbo, 1973:19) and its name was anglicized to Afikpo. But prior to this date, the period of direct European contact had been brief. Like their other Igbo counterparts, the Afikpo people were involved in slave trading and trading in European goods such as guns, cloths, metals, gin, copper and brass rods in the nineteenth century. However it took many years before they saw the first European. They obtained European goods through Aro traders who had installed their local agents at Ehugbo about the middle of the nineteenth century. Their direct contact with Europeans certainly began later than in some other parts of Igboland. King J.B. (1944) and Ottenberg, (1968:22) said that members of Captain Beecroft's party were, probably, the first Europeans to pass by Afikpo on their trip up the Cross River in 1841. The party, however, made no direct contact with the Afikpo hinterland. The party moored at Amaozara Beach and made enquiries about the Afikpo Igbo. In 1909, a piece of land was granted to Miller Brothers (John Holt & Co. Ltd) at Amaozara Beach where they established John Holt Trading Company for the purchase of palm produce which was transported to feed

British industries overseas.

Finally, I do not claim to have written about everything that has happened in Afikpo, and nobody can. I have only tried, as a professional historian, to write as much as I can, and to distill historical truth from oral traditions by applying the usual historical canons of conduct and tests of reliability. The small book is my little contribution to the history of Afikpo. I have simply blazed a trail for others to continue from where I stopped. The book is what I have bequeathed to my dear town-Afikpo.

I shall welcome constructive comments that will help us to throw more light on areas that require further explanation. I shall, however, reply with equal weight to any uncomplimentary comments of which its intention is to discredit or sully the value of this book.

NB

New states were created in Nigeria on 1st October, 1996 while this book had gone to press. Before the creation of the new states, Afikpo was in Abia State. I have retained my references to this state as this does not change the history of Afikpo as reconstructed. However, all references to Abia State should now read Ebonyi State.

Raph O. Aja (Snr)

Centre for Igbo Studies,
Abia State University,
Uturu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to a number of persons who made the writing of this book possible. I want to start with the elders of Ehugbo for their frank responses during my field work. The first is Ewa Utom, whose wealth of knowledge of the custom, tradition and history of Ehugbo was a great asset to me. By the time of the interview on 15th August 1975, Ewa Utom had clocked about 150 years and was virtually the oldest man in Ehugbo. He died about six months after my interview with him.

Other Ehugbo elders of blessed memory who should share in my thanks include Ndukwe Azu (90 years), Obiahu Chukwu (100 years), Chief Otuu Oyim (80 years), Eze Akama (100 years), Okpara Oko (82 years), Obiahu Oko Ali (78 years), Oko Agbo Oti (80 years), Omezue N. Agada (76 years), Omezue Oko Omaka (80 years), Eze Igariwee Nnachi Enwo, Eze V. O. Inya and many others.

My thanks also go to Eze M. O. Chukwu (the current Omaka Ejali Ehugbo), Eze V. O. Inya (Echara Icha Ibii/Ozizza), Hon. Nnachi Enwo, Chief Nkama Okpani, Chief Oti Abali, Omezue Aja Obiahu, Umar Agha Isu, Nze M. S. C. Abani, Nze Law Oko, G. A. Agwo, E. A. Uchay, Gabriel A. Mbey, Nwachi Oku, Egwu Ogbuu, Ekuma Egwu, Obila Agha, Aja Orié, Egwu Omagha, Barrister Igwe-Okó, Elu Anuma, Abagha Ogbuu, Ukpai Eze, Francis Ama Ugwu, Henry Ndukwe Uro, Cyril A. Ugwu, Pius C. Ewa, Irem Oti, Elder Ulu Ewa, Paul Idam Elu, Chief Azu Ewa, Imo Oko Ewali, Ulu Irem, Brendan Oko Otu, Otuu Chukwu, Edward Idam, Sylvanus Nwachi, Sebastine Oka, Lawrence Irem Egwu, Ota Urom, Gabriel Chukwu, Onya Ugwu, Aja Oko Okpara, Egwu Nkama, Emmanuel E. Egwu, Edward Eleri, Ugwu Okoro, Ude Oti, Ambrose Egwu, Ehugbo Chi, Okpara Irem, Chukwu Okorie, James Oko, Agha Oko, G. O. Abagha, and a host of others too numerous to mention.

I also thank the members of staff of the National

Archives, Enugu, for their co-operation at all times in making relevant materials available to me. My special thanks go to Dr. U. D. Anyanwu, Director, Centre for Igbo Studies, Abia State University, Uturu who personally read through the manuscript and made a number of useful suggestions that were incorporated into this book.

I am also indebted to Professor E. J. Alagoa whose numerous works on the collection and use of oral traditions were of great assistance to me. I can't forget to thank Dr. Oko Okoro, of the Dept. of English, University of Lagos, who corrected the grammar and Chief Emmanuel Agha Mbey, Managing Director, Mbeyi & Associates (Nig.) Ltd. for accepting to publish this book without demanding for money first.

I alone should be held responsible for any factual errors, and constructive criticisms are welcome.

Raph Oko Aja

School of Humanities

Abia State University

Uturu.

1999

FOREWORD

This book epitomizes a number of significant developments in Afikpo from the pre-colonial period to the twentieth century. It highlights the major developments of the people throughout this period. In particular, it takes a hard look at the traditions of origin and migration of the people, and what is more their socio-political organisation even to the twentieth century. The author's analysis of the foundation of the people's agricultural sector of the economy will no doubt leave the reader spell-bound. His vivid, crisp, and lucid explanation of details has left the book lively.

Most readers will probably agree that its utility and interest far outweigh whatever shortcomings it may contain.

It seems to me that the appeal of this book extends beyond Afikpo; it commends itself to readers in Igboland and Nigeria as a whole.

Nwanna Nzewunwa, B. A., Ph.D. (Cantab)

Department of History

University of Port Harcourt

June, 1991.

Notes On The Use of Archives

Archives in Nigeria carry documents written mainly in the early 20th century. The earliest records on Afikpo started in 1902, after the British conquest and occupation of Afikpo.

The records are in the form of correspondence and intelligence reports written by colonial administrators, like the Waddington Report on the Afikpo Village Group of 1931. The information used for such reports was collected from indigenous informants. The authenticity of such information would depend very much on the disposition and status of the informant. Such an informant might be a politically ambitious person who would like to feather his own nest, or satisfy his subterranean political aspirations. Many materials on Afikpo Clan in the National Archives, Enugu, are replete with instances of falsification and distortion of Afikpo history. For example, Ndibe is written in place of Nkpogoro.

Again some of the reports were titled in favour of a particular section of the Ehugbo community because the interpreter was bought over and so colluded with the group. As a result, he (the interpreter) could no longer deliver the goods. Waddington's Intelligence Report on Afikpo Clan of 1931 is a case in point. I had, with reasons, dismissed that report as "a pack of hurriedly written material; dumped raw and full of irregularities and inconsistencies" (See Raph O. Aja: *A Brief Socio-Political History of Ehugbo*, 1988 pp. 9-11)

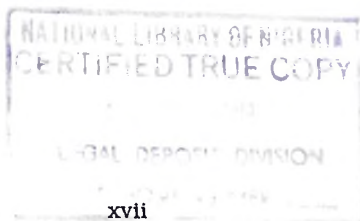
The point I am making is that the materials in the National Archives were written by British administrators with information supplied to them by politically ambitious individuals and groups. Therefore, the authenticity of such records is questionable. The National Archives, Enugu, mentioned specifically the villages from which the information was collected. Remember the information was

collected after the conquest of Afikpo by the British troops in 1902.

Besides, most of the documents have been retyped or recopied, and the contents cannot be claimed to be exactly the original manuscripts. Archival records should not therefore be accepted with that limitless altruism but *mutatis mutandis*. They should be used only as a guide, but not as a finality unless cross-checked and corroborated with other sources.

It is also unfortunate that a lot of materials relating to Afikpo history were advertently removed or torn off or destroyed in the National Archives Enugu by some mischievous Afikpo elements during the Amadi/non-Amadi crisis in 1975 and later years. Such documents were still in the Archives in 1974 and 1975 when I did my first and second researches there. But during my visits in 1977 and later, such records were no longer there. Evidences of such removal and destruction were seen here and there in Afikpo records. For example in N. A. 75: *Intelligence Report on Afikpo Village Group*, evidences of removal of pages, tearing off, mutilation and repaging were observed. For instance: pp 16-19 (4 pages); p. 28 (one page); pp 54-62 (9 pages); p. 66 (one page); and pp 74 - 104 (31 pages) were removed.

I had cause, in some cases, to make photocopies of the places where such vital documents were removed and the remaining sheets repaged. It is most unfortunate!



Simon Ottenberg's Works

Professor S. Ottenberg has written many books on the Afikpo village-group. He has done more work on Afikpo society than any single writer. We are grateful to him. His works on Afikpo include:

1. *"Improvement Associations among the Afikpo Igbo"*, *Africa*, vol. 25, No. 1 (1965)
2. "Inheritance and Succession in Afikpo", in J. D. Derret (ed) *Studies in Laws of Seccession in Nigeria* (London, 1965)
3. "Personal Shrines in Afikpo," *Ethnology* : vol. 9, No. 25 (1969)
4. *Double Descent in an African Society: The Afikpo Village -Group* (Seattle and London, 1968)
5. *Masked Rituals in Afikpo* (Seattle and London, 1970)
6. *Leadership and Authority in an African Society: The Afikpo Village - Group*, (Seattle and London, 1981).

However, it should be noted that Professor Ottenberg is an Anthropologist. All his books are anthropological works, concerned with the description of Afikpo people and their culture. He has not written a history of Afikpo because he is not a historian. He has simply described the social and cultural structure of the Afikpo society and not its evolution. He made an ethnographic study of Afikpo and it should be treated as such.

If you study his works closely, you will discover that he hardly raises 'why' questions. It is for the same reason

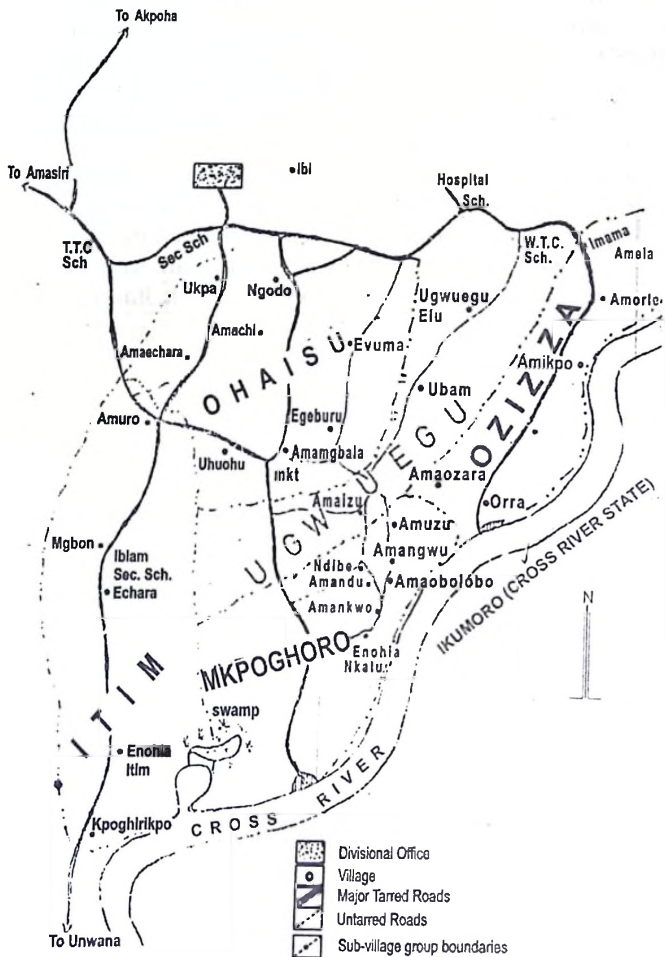
that he is silent on the question of the name of Ehugbo because it would attract a 'why' question; or why the Afikpo Society is structured and ruled in the way it is. To answer 'why' questions involves going back to history which only historians can do. Professor Ottenberg has, on several occasions, said that he has not written a history of Afikpo; that it is left for historians to do that.

Once again, we are very much indebted to Professor Simon Ottenberg for the numerous works, and materials he has assembled which are, indeed, cognate sources of history. But these ethnographic works, which are without historical analysis, should not be 'swallowed' hook, line and sinker.

Raph O. Aja

1999

AFIKPO VILLAGE GROUPS



Introduction

This book gives a comprehensive survey of Afikpo history from pre-colonial through colonial to post-colonial times. It is regrettable that Afikpo historians have been shying away from writing a history of Afikpo mainly because of the enormity of the work involved in writing a history of such a complex society. The value of this book lies in the fact that, as a maiden history of Afikpo, it provides a 'peg' on which future researchers on Afikpo history can 'hang' their facts.

Before embarking on my field work which started in 1975, I had read virtually all the available literature on Afikpo. I had also visited the National Archives, Enugu where I stayed for three weeks. I made other intermittent trips to the National Archives, Enugu, in later years to consolidate my research findings. Unfortunately, materials in the National Archives are much later than most of the materials which I needed for my work. As we know, National Archives carry documents written mainly in the twentieth century. Thus, the documents and materials were only useful for analysis of colonial events. Nonetheless, they still helped to shed light on the past.

Apart from this, I had gone over the numerous works of Professor E. J. Alagoa on the collection and use of oral traditions. In particular, I had read through his articles on "The Present State of Oral Traditions"; "Oral Data as Archives in Africa"; "Introductory Notes on the use of Oral Traditions in *Tarikh* vol.8, 1987; "Historical Methods" in *Tarikh* vol. 6, No. 1, 1978; "Ethnographic Dimension of Oral Traditions," etc. I had also the opportunity to go through Adefuye's illuminating article on "The Use and Abuse of Oral Tradition," and Onwujeogwu's article on "The Dating of Oral Traditions," both in *Tarikh* vol. 8, 1987.

Beside cross-checking the oral traditions against one another, they were also cross-checked with other primary and secondary sources like archival materials, archaeological evidence and written records. It is interesting to note that no major controversy arose in the corroboration of the various materials collected, especially in terms of chronology. I employed all the available cognate disciplines and 'external aids', so to say. This work is therefore the product of a synthesis of oral tradition, archaeology, ethnography and written records.

Chronology and Historiography:

It is pertinent to note that radio-carbon dates of the first and later human settlements with associated cultures had already been established at Afikpo. For dating this book, I relied on the last excavation's radio-carbon dated to A. D. 1600. This was also cross-checked with other sources.

The radio-carbon date 1600 A. D. obtained from the Ugwuegu Habitation Site, has therefore been deliberately chosen for proper chronology. It is the date taken for the Igbo occupation of Afikpo. The first excavation made at the Eziukwu Ukpa Rockshelter gave a radio-carbon date of between 3,000 - 5,000 B. C. (Shaw 1968:459); Andah & Anozie, (1980 : 102).

It was there that the original inhabitants called the Egu first settled. An excavation carried out at Ugwuegu Rockshelter in 1975 gave a radio-carbon date of 1,000 B. C., while another excavation carried out at a Habitation Site in Ugwuegu (1975) gave a radio-carbon date of between A. D. 690 and A. D. 1600 (Hattle 1980 and Nzewunwa 1983:96). The last date, 1600, agrees closely with the first Igbo migration into the place now called Ehugbo as contained

in their oral traditions and confirmed by written sources (Ifemesia 1978: 31-32); Cookey (1980:335); Afigbo (1981:12-13) and Ottenberg (1968:20).

The problem of historiography and chronology usually associated with writing a history whose materials were almost exclusively derived from oral traditions did not very much arise. Such inherent problems were reduced to a minimum by proper collection and collation of oral traditions and use of auxiliary and cognate disciplines.

Even the great archaeological excavation at Ugwuele, Uturu, Okigwe which places Igbo origins to about 750,000 - 55,000 B. C. (Anozie 1979:32) was useful to me in cross-checking this work. It should be noted that Afikpo oral traditions include Uturu Okigwe among the areas where some Igbo group migrated into Afikpo.

The extant records used include the British conquest and occupation of Afikpo on 28 December 1902, the influenza epidemics of 1916, the Afikpo - Amasiri War of 1917 (NAE OG. 317 vol. 2), the establishment of a Native Court at Afikpo in 1904 (Historical Events: E. C. S. C. S., Enugu 1973) and the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. Other important data utilized are generational intervals, wars, years of movement from one age-grade to another etc. The above records and data were useful to me, especially in dating some of the materials and events, and in determining the ages of my informants. Consequently, a high degree of objectivity in historiography was attained, through the use of scientific and inter-disciplinary approach.

Sources and Literature Review:

I relied heavily on primary sources: oral traditions, and archival materials. These were cross-checked with relevant written and extant records, and archaeological evidence

which had already been radio-carbon dated.

During the field work, I interviewed people from all walks of life. I adopted the method of note-taking since I could not afford a tape recorder or cassette as a result of the prevailing economic situation in the country. The field work was most fruitful and rewarding.

I made full use of both the National Archives and the Mission Archives. Materials from the Mission Archives were much earlier and helped me very much in solving the problem of chronology. The Presbyterian Missionaries had visited Unwana as early as 1881 and 1883, and by 1888 had established their Mission at Unwana. Intelligence Reports on the Afikpo Village - Group and other official correspondence from the National Archives, Enugu were also of immeasurable value to me. Although the National Archives carry virtually only materials dealing with the people's contact with Europeans, the materials still helped to give a flash-back on their pre-colonial period.

The works and records of other early Christian Missionaries were also helpful. For example, Mac Farlan's book titled, *Calabar: The Church of Scotland Mission 1846 - 1946*, which was a personal diary, was particularly useful to me. Others include Mrs Arnot's record titled, "From Afikpo to Uburu and back 1918", and Cruickshank's record titled, "Behind Unwana: The Ada (Edda) in 1903", written in 1918. There were also the works of J. P. Jordan: *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria, 1948* and C. T. Basden's, *Among the Igbos of Nigeria*, first published in 1921 which is an anthropological description of the Igbo people including their economy. Although the last two works expended all their efforts on the Northern, the Niger and the Southern Igbo, they were very useful for a comparative analysis with the researches on the Afikpo Igbo.

Records of British explorers and administrators were also consulted. They include those of J. B. King titled, '*Details of Explorations of the Old Calabar River in 1841 and 1842*' in a journal of the Royal Geographical Society, 1844. J. B. King was the ship's surgeon, and the expedition was led by Becroft, a British trader, explorer, and later Consul. Another record is the account given by Charles Patridge on the Cross River Natives in 1905. Patridge joined the service of the Niger Coast Protectorate in July, 1901. These accounts give a vivid and live description of the Cross River and the Cross River Igbo of Afikpo, Unwana, Ikwo and Izii in the early twenties, and also shed light on their pre-colonial economic activities.

The works of sociologists and government anthropologists who worked in Igboland between 1895 and 1934 were also consulted. They include those of Major Leonard (1906), Northcote Thomas (1913), P. A. Talbot (1926), C. K. Meek and M. D. W. Jeffreys (1934). Apart from the usual Eurocentric bias, these works contained useful materials that helped me in my investigations. Finally, the works of S. Ottenberg which describe the social, cultural and political structure of the Afikpo Igbo were published in 1968, 1970, and 1981 respectively. Although as an anthropologist, his researches were concerned with the description of the structure of the Afikpo society and not its evolution, his published works were useful to me.

The reader will observe that some villages were given a more detailed treatment than others. This is due in part to the fact that the elders of such villages were able to supply more detailed information about their villages. The elders of some villages, with apologies to them, had limited knowledge of their history and exploits. Even when pressed, they could not go further. So I had to make do with the

materials made available to me. In addition, some villages played and still play peculiar roles in the Ehugbo social set-up. In order to bring out why they play such important roles, a detailed treatment of their historical exploits becomes necessary.

Chapter 1 gives a background history of Afikpo. This includes a lucid description of the geographical location and size of the area; its physical features as well as the climate and its effects on the adjacent hinterlands.

Chapter 2 examines the outline of the people's traditions of origin including the legend of Igbo Omaka Ejali, and the meaning of 'Ehugbo', which was corrupted to 'Afikpo' by the colonial masters.

Chapter 3 gives an outline structure of the Afikpo village groupings and lineages. It also deals with tales of migrations of origin of the Nkpogoro, the Ugwuegu and the Ohaisu villages and lineages.

Chapter 4 treats tales of migrations of origin of the Itim and Ozizza villages and lineages. It also discusses the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu War.

Chapter 5 examines the people's religion and cosmology as the premise of their philosophy. It also gives an outline of the Afikpo festivals and culture.

Chapter 6 looks at the Afikpo political organisation in pre-colonial times and the role of the Council of Elders. It also examines the socio-political crisis which erupted as a result of the accidental emergence of the Otosi juju and how it was resolved. It also attempts to make a horoscope of the future of the Ehugbo Council of Elders.

Chapter 7 analyses agricultural economy as the basis of the economy of Afikpo in pre-colonial times. This includes the indigenous domestication of plants and animals and the introduction of new crops.

Chapter 8 investigates Afikpo local industries and crafts in pre-colonial times.

Chapter 9 takes a critical look at the trading activities of the people in pre-colonial times and how it enhanced their relationship with their neighbours.

Chapter 10 makes an incisive examination of the activities of Christian Missions in Afikpo and Unwana.

Chapter 11 discusses the British conquest of Afikpo in the early part of the twentieth century as part of their colonial policy to occupy all Igboland. It also looks at the appointment of warrant chiefs by the British colonial overlords.

Chapter 12 is the summary and conclusion.

The first six chapters are designed for the general reader while the last six chapters are purely academic. The first chapters are so designed to enable the average educated Afikpo reader to understand and appreciate the history of his community.

Both internal referencing and end of note referencing are used in this book. For references to Oral Tradition Texts (O.T.T) the method of giving the full names of the informant, the month and year of interview is used; while for references to secondary sources (written work), the usual method of giving the surname, year of publication and page number is used.

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CHAPTER ONE

Afikpo: The Town

Afikpo town is in the Afikpo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Afikpo Local Government Area is made up of four clans namely, Afikpo, Unwana, Amasiri and Akpoha. It has as its neighbours Ohaozara and Onicha Local Government Areas to the North and West; Afikpo South Local Government Area to the South, and Abbi Local Government Area of Cross River State to the East and South-East.

Geographical Location

Afikpo Town or Afikpo village group (Ehugbo) lies in the extreme north-east of Ebonyi State. Afikpo is often geographically grouped among the Cross River Igbos. However, the people differ remarkably from many other Igbo groups in their double descent system of kinship, composite nucleated village patterns, and age grade system of government. But they share most of these characteristics with their other Cross River Igbos like Edda, Akpoha, Ohafia, Abiriba, Aro, Abam, Bende, Nkporo, Item, Alayi, Igbere etc.

Afikpo Town is typically a composite nucleated village-group or conglomeration of thirty villages collectively called the Afikpo village-group. The village group is made up of five main sub-village groups namely Nkpoghoru, Ugwuegu, Ohaisu, Itim, and Ozizza, which are in turn broken into thirty autonomous villages. It covers an area of about 164 sq. km (64sq mls), ¹ and lies approximately on 6° north latitude and 8° east longitude. ²

The Cross River forms a natural boundary between Afikpo

and her Cross River State neighbours of Ikumoro, Ediba, that is the Yako, and even the Efik-speaking peoples of the Cross River State. Afikpo culture has therefore come in direct contact with their cultures and cultural traits - a phenomenon that has greatly affected the Afikpo culture.

Population:

The population of the Afikpo village-group was estimated at 18,700 persons in 1931.³ But the National Census of 1953 put the population at 26,305 out of a total of 264,796 for the whole of Afikpo Division.⁴ The figure was, however, given as 36,096 by the 1963 Census,⁵ giving a density of about 220 persons per square kilometre. The 1991 estimated population of Afikpo is over 130,000.

Physical Features:

Geomorphologically, Afikpo is a hilly region which lies in the trough of a syncline of undulating sandstone ridges in an elevation of between 250 to 300 feet (76.2 - 91.5 metres) above sea level (Oyeka, 1971:2 and Okoro, 1971:1). It is drained by the Cross River and other numerous streams. In most cases, the streams and valleys serve as natural boundaries between the villages.

In fact, the relief of Afikpo can conveniently be divided into two parts. To the east and south down to the Cross River, one finds a gradual slope with occasional precipitous slopes overlooking the river especially on the western bank. But to the north, west and south-west, one observes a flat prairie plain which makes a beautiful scenery. Out-crops of rocks occur in all parts of Afikpo leading to the fantastic monolith rock structures observable in the north towards Akpoha. All these form part of the grain of a sandstone formation of considerable extent which is to be seen also at Aba-Omege (Waddington, 5 paragraph 17) and stretches to

parts of Edda, Okigwe and Awgu axis (Aja, 1989:13).

Because of this formation, the area is well-drained with subterranean streams which appear on the surface and follow the natural valleys between the ridges. The major streams run throughout the rainy and dry seasons. Some parts of Afikpo are composed of sandy soil while others show undulating features with fertile clay-loamy soil. The area is generally fertile and suitable for the cultivation of root crops and rice for which the area is well-known. One, however, finds the best farmlands along the broad valleys and water courses which are usually swampy during the rainy season and wet enough to sustain crops during the dry season.

There is also a long but narrow strip of low land along the bank of the Cross River usually flooded in the rainy season. This merges into another wide stretch of lowland in the hinterland which the four major lakes of Ehoma, Iyi Eke, Umi and Mgbogolo occupy.

The Cross River usually overflows its banks during the rainy season. When the flood subsides, all the impurities and other organic materials are deposited on the lowland, thus replenishing the soil and making it fertile for cultivation every year. The area is particularly good for cassava, groundnuts and vegetable growing. The planting of groundnuts alternately with cassava helps further to improve the soil since groundnut as a leguminous plant contains nitrogen-fixing bacteria in its nodules. The area is wet enough for growing of crops twice in a year with fertility still maintained. Women farmers take advantage of the early rains in February, and March to plant groundnuts which mature in June. Vegetables (anara) are also grown on the same piece of land. Rice requires constant downpours during the growing period. Around June when the rains have become serious, men, women and children are seen

pricking off rice seedlings. Afikpo is a transitional zone between the open grassland of the savannah region to the north and the tropical rain forest belt to the south. The area of Afikpo in the main forest zone are the villages that lie to the south and south-west and those that lie close to the river bank like parts of Ozizza, Enohia Nkalu, Enohia Itim, Kpoghirikpo, Nkpoghoru, parts of Ugwuegu and Mgbom. These areas lie within the zone of the south-west winds and are therefore characterized by thick forests and palm groves. On the contrary, the areas after Ozizza towards Mater Hospital Afikpo, extending to Ngodo-Ukpa villages and Amasiri junction which lie in the north exhibit the features of open grasslands. These are areas that lie in the rain-shadow and also receive the influence of the dry north-east trade winds which carry virtually no water vapour.

Afikpo, however, enjoys a warm tropical climate with clearly demarcated periods of rainy and dry seasons. It rains between April and October, with a brief August break and heavy downpours in the months of July, September and October. The mean annual rainfall is about seventy-seven inches (Wallace, 1941:89, Ottenberg, 1968:15). The dry season generally begins in October and ends in March. The period is characterized by abundant sunshine and high temperatures - the hottest months being February and March. The general climatic pattern is usually interrupted by a brief period of harmattan, **Uguru** in the local dialect. It is usually a period of dry, dusty, and chilly weather. The 77 inches mean annual rainfall is just good for the growing of tropical crops.

CHAPTER TWO

AFIKPO: ITS PEOPLE

The origin of the people of Ehugbo, like that of their preliterate counterparts in Africa, is shrouded in obscurity. However, their oral traditions, archival records, archaeological data, and secondary sources have tried to illuminate rather than obscure the matter any longer. These sources have invariably helped us to unravel the mysteries surrounding the origin and migration of the Afikpo Igbo. What is certain is that the people who live in the place now known as Afikpo came in stages, from different directions and at different times. But the peak period of migration of the Igbo group into the area was between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. That is, during the early period of the slave trade. It is also recorded that another serious migration into Ehugbo occurred in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

There is now a general agreement among the available sources that a man called Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu, was the putative and legendary founder of Ehugbo. It is said that he and his kinsmen migrated from the Ibibio-Arochukwu axis about the mid-seventeenth century. In his Intelligence Report of 1931, a former British Administrative Officer of Afikpo, Captain Waddington said that the founder of Afikpo was Igbo-Ukwu. Afikpo oral traditions also make constant references to Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo Ukwu as the putative and legendary founder of Ehugbo. He was called Igbo-Ukwu because of his acts of great feat and deeds. Thus, Igbo-Ukwu means 'the Great Igbo' or 'Igbo the Great'.

Before the arrival of Igbo Omaka Ejali, there had existed an earlier non-Igbo speaking group called the 'Ohaodu'

which literally means 'people with tails'. Could we say that the 'Ohaodu' represented a now extinct group that was still in the earlier stages of evolution hence the tails? No, that can not be possible, because archaeological excavations carried out at Eziukwu Ukpa, Afikpo showed a date of between 3,000 - 5,000 years B.C. This represents the date of the first human settlement in Afikpo which is the later stone age or later Holocene epoch. A second excavation at Uji Eke Rockshelter, Ugwuegu Afikpo gave a radio-carbon date of 1,000 BC, while a third excavation at an Egu Habitation in Ugwuegu carried a radio-carbon date of even a later date of 690 A.D - 1600 A.D.

By 5000 years B. C. which is the later stone age period in Africa or the later Holocene in geological table, the question of tails in man's evolutionary cycle is completely ruled out. In fact by Upper Miocene times which is about 14 million years B. C., the ancestors of man called the Hominidae had already separated from the Pongidae and these had no tails. Even the Australopithecus Africanus and Robustus which appeared some four million years B. C. had no tails and this was the Pliocene era. This was also true of the Acheulean Man or Homo Erectus or Homo Sapiens Rhodesiensis who lived between 750,000 - 55,000 years B. C. By about 10,000 years B.C. which is the Earlier Holocene in geological table, the Homo Sapiens or the reasoning modern man had appeared in Africa and had no tails.

My conclusion on the "Ohaodu" legend is that it is bunkum for any person to talk of human beings having tails in the later Holocene of the later Stone Age Culture (3,000 - 5,000 B.C) in Afikpo. At best it could be a mere conjecture or loss of memory on the part of those who gave the information.

Whatever be the case, the earliest well-known inhabitants of the area now known as Ehugbo were the Egu and the Nkalu groups. Both of them were non-Igbo speaking groups. The two groups were certainly the original settlers in the area now known as Ehugbo anglicized Afikpo. Both of them were agriculturists while the Egu were also pot makers and smiths. Their domestication of crops dates back to between 5,000 - 3000 BC. Historians have often held that the only early centres of crops domestication in Sub-Saharan Africa were the Nuclear Mande (Middle Niger) and the Highlands of Ethiopia dated between 5,000 - 4,000 BC. It has now been known that Afikpo holds a pride of place as one of the earliest centres of crops domestication in Sub-Saharan Africa contemporary with the Nuclear Mande and the Highlands of Ethiopia. Their pottery is also the oldest radio-carbon dated pottery in West Africa (3, 000 BC).

The antiquity of the Nkalu group in Afikpo is always expressed *inter alia*: **Ji diri Igbo diri Nkalu ma nke Nkalu karia**. Translated into English, it means that both the Igbo and the Nkalu should have bumper yam harvests but that of the Nkalu should be greater; suggesting that the Nkalu group was older than the Igbo in terms of arrival at the area now known as Afikpo.

The Egu were scattered all over parts of the area now known as Afikpo. They were found in Mgbom, Amuzu Nkpogoro and Ukpa. There is also a lineage in Mgbom called Ezi Uzu which was a camp of the Egu smiths. But their main concentration settlements were at Ugwuegu. It is likely that the first settlement site of the Egu was at Eziukwu Ukpa. This appears true because archaeological excavations carried out at the Eziukwu Ukpa Rock Shelter yielded a radio - carbon date of 5,000 - 3,000 years BC, while a similar archaeological excavation at Uji Eke Ugwuegu

Rock Shelter gave a radio - carbon date of 690 - 1600 AD which is much later. It is possible that the Egu group first settled at Eziukwu Ukpa and later moved to Ugwuegu where they found a more congenial environment with better security facilities than the Eziukwu Ukpa Savannah area.

There is a strong evidence to suggest that the Egu and the Nkalu were the non-Igbo groups who belonged linguistically to the Benue-Congo family of languages and who now live in Itigiri, Ediba, Igbo (Agbo clan) Ntezi, Bahumuno, Erei, Akunakuna (Agwugwuna), Ikwo, Effuim etc. Tales of migrations from Erei, Itigiri, Igbo, Bahumuno, Akunakuna etc. echo in Afikpo traditions especially in connection with Ozizza lineages. Professor Ottenberg has also suggested that the Egu may have been Erei or Akunakuna (Agwugwuna) non-Igbo group who today live south of Afikpo.⁸ Evidence abounds here and there that the Egu were agriculturists, carvers, pot makers and smiths. Nonetheless, the earliest human settlements in the place now known as Afikpo dates back to 5000 years B. C.⁹

The Founder of Ehugbo: The Legend of Igbo Omaka Ejali

Afikpo traditions are unanimous that the putative and legendary founder of Ehugbo was Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu. As discussed earlier, Igbo Omaka, his father, Omaka Ejali and their kinsmen migrated from the Arochukwu - Ibibio axis and finally settled in the place now known as Ehugbo. It is said that Omaka Ejali and his group made a stop over at Ohafia and another at Asaga Edda. After what has been described as a hazardous journey, Omaka Ejali and his group arrived at 'Uzokpa' and from here they finally settled in a place called Amaozara Oroghoro in Amaobolobo village.

Omaka Ejali and his group were the carrier of the Ogo

Ehugbo culture. The place where he settled (Amaozara) and his Ogo located in Amaozara, Amaobolobo is still regarded as a sacred ritual spot for Ulo Ogo Ehugbo cults. Their migration into Ehugbo was probably around the mid-seventeenth century. It might be as a result of warfare; for historians often talk of the 'Akpa - Ibibio - Aro War' which occurred in the mid-seventeenth century.¹¹ Afikpo oral traditions also make constant references to the 'Akpa - Ibibio - Aro War, but could not account for the exact date. The traditions agree that there were migrations during the war. That it was during the war that Igbo Omaka Ejali and his group migrated to Afikpo.

However, Ewa Utom, Otuu Oyim and Ndukwe Azu said that the war took place before the Aro slave trade started. This would translate to around the seventeenth century. It should be noted that archaeological excavations carried out in 1975 by V. E. Chikwendu at a Rock Shelter site at Ujue Eke in Ugwuegu Afikpo - the former habitation site of the Egus, carried a radio carbon date of between 690 A.D. - 1600 A.D. The last date agrees closely with the date claimed for Igbo Omaka's migration into Afikpo. But a better and more exact date could have been obtained if the excavations were carried out at Amaozara Oroghoro in Amaobolobo where Igbo Omaka Ejali first settled. Whatever be the case it is most probable that Igbo Omaka's migration was around the mid-seventeenth century during the 'Akpa - Ibibio - Aro War'.

The cause of the war does not very much concern us here. But it is said that a conflict had developed between some Igbo elements and their Ibibio counterparts around the area now occupied by Arochukwu. According to Ekejiuba, *Ikenga*. (1972 vol. I No I:11 - 26) it appears that Igbo farming communities such as Iwerri; Losi. Nkalaku

and Ohadu fell out with their Ibibio - speaking neighbours over a piece of land and intermittent fighting ensued. Another group known as the Akpa (also called Ibom), took advantage of the conflict and invaded the divided people. The Akpa who were armed with superior weapons called blunderbusses, and better organised, dispersed some of the original settlers and incorporated the rest.¹⁴ It was out of this conflict, migration, and fusion that the people of Arochukwu ultimately emerged (Ifemesia, 1978: 31-32) and Cookey in Swartz, 1980: 335)¹⁵. During and after the war, there were a lot of migration. Akpa family groups still live in Arochukwu and elsewhere (Ekejiuba, 1972:19). They are also found in Afikpo, Amasiri and Edda village groups.

The exact identity of the Akpa is not known. What is known is that they were neighbours of the Ibibio and lived in the Cross River valley and belong to Akankpa of Ekoi group. But after the war, they got mixed up with the Ibibio and the Aro. They had acquired fire-arms through their early contact with Europeans on the coast.¹⁶ About the Akpa, Cookey says:

It seems the Akpa originally lived to the South, either along the Cross River or towards its mouth. This would place them close to the Efik or Ibibio, probably accounting for their peculiar cultural complexity. (in Swartz, 1980:335)

According to oral sources and written records (Afigbo, 1981:13-14 & Ottenberg, 1968:20) more serious and large - scale migrations into Afikpo occurred in the eighteenth century during the period of the slave trade. During this period, Igbo - speaking groups came into Afikpo from different directions including Arochukwu, Okigwe, Uturu, Okposi, Ohafia, Isuochi and Amaigbo - Orlu areas.¹⁸ In fact Ottenberg (1968:20) has noted that, "beginning sometime

during the major periods of the slave trade in South Eastern Nigeria, between about 1700 and 1830, and continuing up to the end of the nineteenth century, there was in conjunction with this trade, a gradual movement of Igbo groups from Aro Chukwu, Ohafia, Okposi and Okigwe areas into Afikpo. The traditions of Afikpo indicate a general north-ward movement of population mainly from Orlu, Arochukwu, Okigwe and Ohafia areas into Afikpo. Professor Afigbo (1981:14) has also noted that the Edda and the Afikpo point to the Okigwe - Aro Arochukwu ridge as the home from where they migrated to their present locations.

Most of my informants say that they were told that wars, disturbances, slave raids, and uncertainty of life; (and Ottenberg adds 'population pressure') were probably responsible for the mass movements. The groups came in stages, and in small groupings of families; sometimes led by two or more brothers bringing shrines and their culture with them (Ottenberg 1968:20). The leaders became the founders of their group or village.

This can be authenticated by the fact that most of the villages in Ehugbo have their counterparts in the claimed areas of stopover and emigration. For instance, we have Amachi, Ngodo and Amuro in Okigwe; Amachara, Amankwo, Mgbom and Amuzu in Umuahia; Amachi and Amuzu in Isiala Ngwa; Ndibe in Ohafia; Amankwo and Amangwu in Arochukwu, Uzuakoli and Ohafia. The case of Ehugbo was therefore, that of immigration rather than emigration. If there was any emigration, it was usually within Ehugbo itself.

Tradition has it that Igbo's father called Omaka Ejali was already advanced in age at the time they arrived at the place now known as Afikpo. As a result, his son, Igbo Omaka Ejali or Ehugbo Omaka Ejali became the major actor in the

theatre of the foundation of the place now called 'Ehugbo, which was coined from his name. His father Omaka Ejali was already incapacitated by age on their arrival. He did not do much before his death except that he led his group with the Ogo culture to the place now known as Afikpo.

It seems from evidence available that Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo Ukwu and his group arrived earlier, probably around the mid-seventeenth century which was the beginning of the Aro-Ibibio war. This is evidenced by the fact that he played host to each Igbo group that arrived later. It is said that each Igbo group that arrived was welcomed by Igbo Omaka Ejali and allowed to settle with his authority. It is possible that his early arrival or probably his personality must have given him such an advantage. Igbo is said to have been surrounded by some aura of personality - a man of integrated and unmitigated personality, so to say. It is also possible that some other Igbo groups migrated into the place now known as Ehugbo as early as Igbo Omaka Ejali and his group did. But because they lived in pockets separated by thick forests, their presence might not have been noticed or felt. It should be noted that in those twilights of history, people ran into their neighbours in an adventurous mood. Such an accidental meeting was sharply followed with rapid fire questions of "Who are you?" or "Why are you here?" Probably, "Under whose aegis are you here?" If a satisfactory answer was not given, it could attract a scuffle which might lead to a war and eventually end in subjugation of one group. Igbo Ukwu must have been happy to see his fellow Igbo men in that jungle of uncertainty and danger, virtually occupied by non-Igbo speaking peoples who could strike without warning.

A person becomes the founder of a village or town depending on his role during the early and formative stages

of the people's history. He may either be the leader of the group or the leader's successor during the process of their migration. He may have arrived earlier than other groups and started playing host to them as a father. The person must also have played the role of uniting various independent villages together in a common environment or geographical location. He must also have given them protection, security and identity in the area in times of danger. When a village or town or community derives its name from a person, it is an indication in history that such a person must have played a major role in the foundation of the town or community. Such a person has simply left his foot-prints on the sands of history. It is certain from all evidence available that Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo-Ukwu played all the above roles.

Whatever be the case, Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo-Ukwu is said to have played the role of welcoming his fellow Igbo groups to the place we now know as Ehugbo. The groups were allowed to settle with whatever cultures they had, provided they accepted to do so in his name - na - eha - Igbo.

The Meaning of Ehugbo

Each Igbo group that arrived in the place now known as Ehugbo had to take an oath of allegiance to Igbo Ukwu before it was allowed to settle with whatever shrines and cultures it had. Every Igbo group had one or more cultures to its credit. This is said to account for the diverse and cultural complexity of the Afikpo society. According to sources, whenever any Igbo group had an encounter with any other group and was asked why they were where they were, they usually replied that they were there in the name of Igbo, otherwise 'Na-Eha-Igbo.'

It would appear that Igbo's name was so popular and official and his personality so pronounced that it could give

protection and security to other Igbo groups who lived side by side with the Egu and the Nkalu non-Igbo elements. The mentioning of Igbo's name must have served as a passport for free movement and safe passage in their new environment. Igbo was their kinsman and of the same ethnic group with them. The Igbo groups must have felt very happy to associate themselves with a great man of their stock in those twilights of history that were pregnant with danger.

However, the Igbo groups settled with the authority of Igbo, or in the name of Igbo; that is 'Na-Eha-Igbo', abridged to "Ehaigbo". As time went on, the name "Ehugbo" evolved as a corruption of "Ehaigbo", which was a symbol of allegiance to Igbo Omaka Ejali, the founder of Ehugbo. It is also a symbol of unity. During the colonial period "Ehugbo" was anglicized to "Afikpo".

However, some people say that the name Ehugbo came from Na-Eho-Igbo suggesting that all the people of Ehugbo had uterine relationship with Igbo Ukwu. That is, that all of them came from the same womb with Igbo which again is a symbol of unity. This later suggestion has been thoroughly investigated and found to have very little support. The suggestion which is based on a jaundiced premise was being put forward by some villages who claim to have migrated from Arochukwu, or who were not properly informed about the origin of the name. During my investigation, I discovered that the suggestion was a mere guess-work. Most of the people who held the view later climbed down in favour of Ehaigbo.

What is important at this stage is that the people who occupy the area now known as Afikpo came from different places and at different times, and that they are all agreed that Igbo Ukwu was their ancestor. Even if the suggestion that the name Ehugbo was rooted in 'Na-Eho-Igbo,' it does

not matter. It only goes to show again the closer and consanguine relationship between Igbo Ukwu and his Afikpo progeny (descendants). Again, it goes to affirm their general belief that Igbo-Ukwu was their putative progenitor and founder of Ehugbo. All the same, the assertion that the name of Ehugbo originated from 'Na-Eha-Igbo' is so strong that it cannot be easily brushed aside. As a matter of fact over 80 percent of those interviewed hold this view.

Whether the original name of Ehugbo was Ehaigbo or Ehoigbo, it should be noted that it was the people of Amasiri and Edda who mimickingly and mockingly called the Afikpo people "Ehugbo" or "Eholugbo" during a misunderstanding between them and the people of Ehaigbo. Their mocking gesture was based firstly on the sound of the name "Ehaigbo," and secondly on the fact, as they claimed, that the people of Ehaigbo had scarcity of food and as a result they often lay flat with the stomach on the bed indicating hunger. Although the first reason (based on the sound of Ehaigbo) given for the mockery of the name may be true, enough evidence has been adduced to show that the second based on scarcity of food is not true. It was this name "Ehaigbo" nicknamed Ehugbo by the Amasiri and Edda groups that was anglicized to Afikpo by the British in 1902. Even today the people of Edda still address Afikpo people as Afigbo.

From evidence available in Igbo history, the later Igbo groups that migrated into Afikpo might have formed part of the general movement eastwards of the Igbos from the Amaigbo - Orlu axis in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This movement according to Professor Afigbo (1981:13-14), was deflected northwards leading to the foundation of Edda, Afikpo, Nkporo, Akaeze, Amasiri etc. groups of the Cross River Igbo and of the large north - eastern

groups also known as Ogu-Ukwu. Professor Onwuejeogwu (1981:8) dates this movement to the eighteenth century. Ottenberg (1968 :20) has also noted that between about 1700 and 1830, and continuing up to the end of the nineteenth century, there was in conjunction with the slave trade a gradual movement of Igbo people from the Arochukwu and Ohafia areas to the south into Afikpo. In addition, there were movements of Igbo people from the Okposi and Okigwe areas into Afikpo - movements that were paralleled by other migrations into the north-eastern Igbo area.

Both G. I. Jones (1961), R. Harris (1962) and J. G. C. Allen (1935) have all recounted tales of migrations of Igbo people into the north-eastern area of Igboland during this period (1700 - 1830). It should be noted that prior to this period, Igbo Omaka Ejali had already settled at the place now known as Ehugbo, and already established his authority.

Igbo Omaka and his Igbo group later entered into a fierce encounter with the original inhabitants - the Egu and the Nkalu groups. The encounter celebrated in Afikpo history as the 'Igbo-Egu war' was the war which Igbo Omaka and his group fought against the Egu and the Nkalu groups. Igbo-Ukwu had rallied together all the Igbo groups to help in the war effort. Igbo and his group eventually out flanked their opponents who were worsted. Some of them were killed while some were assimilated into the Ehugbo society and others fled to different places like Abakaliki, Bahumuno, (over the Cross River), Nkalegu, Ikwo, Ezza - Egu, Effium, Ntezi, Amasiri, Itigiri, parts of Erei and Akunakuna. It has been suggested that Nkalegu is a portmanteau word for Nkalu and Egu. However, the authenticity of this assertion still has to be established. Ottenberg (1968:20) has also noted that the Igbo did not kill all the indigenous population

although some apparently fled east of the Cross River.

Both Ottenberg (1981:47) and Afigbo (1981:14) have noted that:

The traditions of the Ohuhu, Ngwa, the Eastern and Northern Igbo including Afikpo are rich in accounts of fierce encounters with various sections of the Benue - Congo speaking peoples who appear in their traditions as the Egu, Nkalu and Igbo.

The above, in fact, is a direct reference to the clashes and war which Igbo-Ukwu and his Igbo group had with the Egu and the Nkalu around the dawn of the nineteenth century. Afikpo traditions recount that the Igbo group first conquered the Egu group before they turned their attention to the large Nkalu group. The Egu and the Nkalu, both of non-Igbo extraction, had been described as belonging linguistically to the Benue - Congo family of languages. The Benue - Congo language group includes the Efik, the Ibibio, the Ogoni, the Andoni, the Bahomuno (Ikumoro), the Ugep, the Ntezi, Effuim, the Itigiri, the Erei, the Ekuri, the Akunakuna, the Igbo (Agbo clan) etc. This direct reference to the clashes of the Benue Congo group with the Afikpo Igbo at this period is no less than the war which the Egu and the Nkalu had with the Afikpo which echoes in Afikpo traditions.

However, the Egu were renowned craftsmen in pottery, carving, and smithery. The traditional reference to them in connection with pottery in Afikpo is important and a pointer to their age old attachment to pottery. A miser, for instance, would always be referred to as, '**Egu na-akpu ite na-eri ihe na mgbeju**', meaning 'Egu, the pot-maker who eats from potsherds'.

The Egu were scattered all over the present location of Mgbom, Ugwuegu and Ukpa. The Nkalu occupied the area of the Enohia Nkalu. Archaeological excavations carried

out at a Rock Shelter in Eziukwu Ukpa where the Egu were said to have originally settled, dated Afikpo pottery to about 3,000 B. C. However, a recent review of the Afikpo site places the date to between 3,000 - 5,000 B.C. This shows the antiquity of pottery in Afikpo and the people in their present area of location. It represents the oldest dated pottery artifacts in West Africa.

Tradition has it that the original settlers of Enohia Nkalu migrated from Ikpom in the Cross River state. The present settlers however, claim to be the remnant descendants of the original Nkalu. The new settlers inherited a ritual called "Elom Ji" from the remnants of the original settlers.

The "Elom Ji" is a ritual connected with the New Yam Festival. The "Elom Ji" juju priest was and is still called "Eleri Aja." Tradition says that Ndibe lineage acquired the knowledge of the secret of the "Elom Ji" ritual from Enohia people through marriage relations.

What emerges from the analysis so far is that Ehugbo is a community of people from various places with their associated cultures sheltered under the umbrella of a putative founder called Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu.



Foot Notes

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CHAPTER THREE

Afikpo Lineages

Afikpo has five levels of lineage structure:

1. **Minimal Lineage:** Extended family or umudi.
2. **Minor Lineage:**

Amaobolobo: Ezi Egwini, Ezi Ike, Ezi Idume.

Amankwo: Amaelu, Eziukwu Ewa, Nde Obiahu Aja and Ezi Ologwu/Ezi Ekpe

Amuzu: Eziukwu, Ezi Ukpam.

Ndibe(Amauku): Ezi Nwachi, Ezi Oti, Ezi Owoo, Ezi Nnali, Amaebo, Eziukwu, Ezi Ogudu.

Amangwu: Ndi Iro, Nde Udu Egwu, Nde Ndabu Ezi.

Amaekwu: Nde Aja, Agbogo

Amaizu: Eziukwu, Amaha, Agboride, Amancho, Eluogo Okpoota.

Ubam: Ezi Egwu, Ezi Agha and Agbogo

Ugwuegu: Amaebo, Amaelu, Ihuogo, Amaogwugwu, Ezi Uzu.

Ukpa: Ezi Akani, Ezi Agbii, Ezi Oti, Ezi Ukwu, Ezi Uroko.

Ngodo: Ezi Ukpani, Ezi Nnali, Ezi Olua, Ezi Obila, Ezi Idam Ugo, Ezi Egwuta.

Amachi: Amaosu, Agbondudu, Amuda, Ezi Ekuma and Ezi Ogwu.

Amangbala: Ezi Onuu, Ezi Eze, Amaokwu, Agbogo, Ihuogo, Ezi Ngwu, Ezi Aziga, Uhu Ohuu and Amaelu/Amaebo,

Amaechara: Amaechara Agbo, Amaechara Elu.

Ibii: Agbogo, Eluogo.

Mgbom: Ezi Akputa, Ezi Ukie, Ezi Agbo, Ezi Item, Ezi Ohia, Amuzu, Echara.

Amuro: Ezi Ogbenyi, Ezi Onya, Ezi Aja, Amaelu.

Kpogirikpo: Ezi Ukwu, Ezi Uche Uro.

Enohia Itim: Ezi Ewa, Ezi Ogbuu, Ezi Egwu, Amuncha and Ezi Okpo formerly Ezi Inya where Irem Njaka lived before transferring to Ezi Ewa.

Enohia Nkalu: Ezi Ama, Ezi Okereke, Ndemiyi

Amandu

Imama: Amika, Ovum, Amaoge and Amaime.

Agba (Ameta): Ezi Egwuadu and Ezi Inya Okoro

Amaorie: Ezi Ukwu, Ezi Agba, Ezi Agbo

Amaikpo: Ezi Ihere, Ezi Ugwute, Ezi Udume, Ezi Okote, Ezi Ologwu and Ezi Ezeke alias Ezi Omaghauzo.

Orra: Agbogo, Ezi Urom Ota, Ezi Eni, Ezi Akpu Eke, Ezi Elechi, and Uhu.

Amaozara: Ezi Okoro, Ezi Egwu, Eziukwu and Ezi Uhu.

3. Major Lineage (autonomous villages)

Amaobolobo

Amangbala

Amaekwu

Amankwo	Egeburu	Amuro
Amuzu	Evuma	Amaha
Ndibe(Amauku)	Ibii	Kpogirikpo
Amangwu	Mgbom	Ugwuegu
Amaizu	Enohia Itim	Enohia Nkalu
Ubam	Amandu	Amaechara
Ukpa	Agba (Ameta)	Amikpo
Amachi	Imama	Amaozara
Ngodo	Amaorie	Orra

4. Maximal Lineage (Sub-village Group)

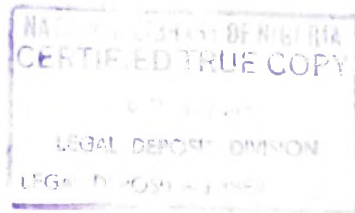
Nkpoghoru

Ugwuegu

Ohaisu

Itim

Ozizza



5. Afikpo Village Group or Afikpo community or Afikpo Town.

Nkpoghoru Sub-Village Group

'Nkpoghoru means 'Nkpu Oroghoro' or 'Nkpu agbaari Oroghoro.' Tradition has it that when Omaka Ejali and his group first arrived, they camped temporarily at Uzokpa. From there they looked around every evening to observe signs of smoke. The presence of smoke was an indication

of human settlement. The reconnaissance lasted some days.

It is said that for four consecutive evenings they were able to sight some clouds of smoke far to the north and north west, and another very close to the north-east and south-east of their position. These directions were likely to be the Egu and the Nkalu settlements respectively.

At last Omaka Ejali and his group having observed an area with no sign of smoke moved into this unoccupied place, which they called 'Amaozara' because it looked like savannah with few trees. The movement took place at night and by the help of a 'native' search-light **ohihie oku** called **Oroghoro** in the local dialect. The area where they had settled came to be called **Oroghoro** since it was by the help of oroghoro (search-light) that they were able to locate an unoccupied area. The local name of the place where Omaka Ejali and his son and kinsmen settled was, and is still called Amaozara in Oroghoro meaning "treeless area". It was at Amaozara, also called Ogo Achi, that Omaka Ejali built his Ulo Ogo. He was the carrier of the Ogo Ehugbo culture. It was, and is still at Amaozara Oroghoro that the various villages in Ehugbo went and still go for their Ulo Ogo Ehugbo rituals whenever the need arises. Some of the members of his migration team were of Ibibio origin. His son was called Igbo Omaka Ejali.

Thus, it was Omaka Ejali who brought a culture - the "Ogo culture" - which became a binding force for all the villages of Ehugbo and the dynamics of their unity. Apart from language and religion, it is the only major and dominant culture in Ehugbo that was evenly and invariably spread to all the villages in Ehugbo. It was gathered that Omaka Ejali carried the Ogo culture with his brothers who founded Edda, Unwana, Akpoha and Amasiri. The story of how the brothers parted to found their own communities is both fascinating and intriguing, but cannot be related here

for lack of space.

However, it is said that each of the brothers adopted a modified form of the Ogo culture and initiation hence the slight differences. It is also said that **Ije N'ohia** or **Isubu Edda** initiation was not originally a part of the Ogo initiation in Ehugbo. Most of the Itim villages especially Mgbom who came last to Ehugbo copied from Edda the 'Ukpo' and the Isubu Edda type of Ogo initiation. The Mgbom group of villages in particular massed and camped at Ugwu Itim Edda for some years before their final journey to Ehugbo in alarming hordes. According to Afikpo traditions, ogo initiation or '**Ibu Ubu**' first started with **Omume**, **Isi Ji** and **Ikpem**, which climaxed the prestigious omume title - taking ceremony.

When Omaka Ejali died, his son, Igbo Omaka Ejali, had risen to become a powerful personality whose influence went beyond the confines of the place called Nkpoghoru. His earlier arrival with his father among the Igbo groups apparently placed him at an advantage. He seemed to have got firmly established and was ready to face any odds. He was also a man with an integrated and overbearing personality. Apart from the fact that he played the role of welcoming all the other Igbo elements and united them into Ehugbo, he also played a leading role in the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu war. He initiated the declaration of the war and ensured that everything went on well.

As mentioned earlier, Igbo Omaka Ejali had convened an emergency meeting of all the Igbo elements by raising an alarm at Oroghoro, his residence. The purpose of the alarm ('iti mkpu') was for a military operation against the Egu and the Nkalu non-Igbo elements. His Igbo brothers responded to the emergency call by assembling at Amaozara Oroghoro, the residence of Igbo Omaka Ejali. All the various Igbo groups sent their war lords to Oroghoro in response to

the crucial call.

The call was an alarm which brought all the Ehugbo elements to Oroghoro. It is said that Nkpoghororo derived its name from the people's response to this call. Nkpoghororo thus means 'Nkpu Oroghoro' or 'Nkpu agbaari Oroghoro'. The defeat of the Egu and the Nkalu was, therefore, the collective responsibility of the Ehugbo people.

Amaobolobo

Amaobolobo tradition states that their grandfather was called Omaka Ejali, and he was the founder of Ezi Egwini lineage in Amaobolobo. He had a younger brother called Ugwu Ereghe Ejali and a son called Igbo Omaka. According to their tradition, Omaka Ejali and his kinsmen migrated from Ibibio-Arochukwu area. After a number of stop-overs at several places including Nguzu Edda, they arrived at Uzokpa, where they camped for some days. They later moved over to Amaozara Oroghoro after ascertaining that the area was unoccupied. Amaobolobo tradition says that it is Ezi Egwini lineage that is traditionally called Amaozara. It was there that Omaka Ejali, the carrier of Ogo culture, built his Ulo Ogo - reputed to be the first Ogo in Afikpo.

When Omaka Ejali died his younger brother called Ugwu Ereghe Ejali moved over to the present location of Ezi Egwini lineage in Amaobolobo. It is this lineage that performs the rituals at Ogo Amaozara, which is the headquarters of Ulo Ogo Ehugbo culture.

As mentioned earlier, Omaka Ejali had a son called Igbo Omaka Ejali who later became very powerful and was called Igbo-Ukwu. He is regarded as the legendary founder of Ehugbo. He and his father first settled at Amaozara Oroghoro near Onumgba Nkpoghororo. Their Ogo, which is now an artifact of archaeological interest, can still be seen at **Achi**

Jokwiri, Amaozara near Onumgba. It appears that his father must have become so old and incapacitated that Igbo took over the mantle of leadership himself.

When his father died Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo-Ukwu moved over to the site where Ezi Ike lineage in Amaobolobo is now located. He was therefore the founder of Ezi Ike lineage. When he died his cousin called Nnachi Akpu Egwu took over from him.

It is understood that Omaka Ejali had a short span of life in Ehugbo. It is said that he was already an old man when he arrived with his son and kinsmen. As a result all the major achievements in Amaobolobo and Ehugbo, except Ulo Ogo Ehugbo, were attributed to his son, Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo Ukwu, who led all the Igbo villages in Ehugbo in a successful war of conquest against the Egu and the Nkalu groups.

A person becomes the founder of a village or lineage depending on his role during the formative stages of the people's history. He can either be the leader of the group during the process of their migration or the leader's successor. The person must also have played the role of uniting the various lineages or villages together in an environment or geographical location. He must have given them protection, security, and identity in times of danger. When a village or lineage or town derives its name from a person, it is a major indication that such a person was the founder of the lineage, village or town. Such a person has simply left his foot-prints on the sands of history.

Tradition says that Ezi Egwini lineage was called Amaozara because the people first settled at Amaozara in Oroghoro where Igbo and his father, Omaka Ejali, sited their Ogo. But Ezi Ike and Ezi Idume lineages were called Oroghoro. However, Ezi Egwini also lived at Oroghoro since

Amaozara was, and is still in Oroghoro.

Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo Ukwu had a son called Idume Ogu Ehugbo who founded Ezi Idume lineage in Amaobolobo. Both Ezi Ike and Ezi Idume lineages belong to the same kindred. The inhabitants of the two lineages bear the name Igbo or Ehugbo which they inherited from their fathers. It should be noted that about one-third of the persons who had lived at Ezi Ike in particular and Ezi Idume bore the name Igbo or Ehugbo. Those within living memory include Ehugbo Chi, Ota Igbo, Egwu Igbo, Ehugbo Olua, Ehugbo Udu, Igbo Uche, Udu Ehugbo, Oko Ehugbo, Igbo Egwu, Ehugbo Ota, Ugo Ehugbo, Agha Ehugbo, Vincent Ehugbo, Ehugbo Uche, Ehugbo Nnachi, Uche Ehugbo, Ehugbo Oko, Ehugbo Egwu, Nwata Ehugbo, Igbo Otu, Chukwu Ehugbo etc. In fact, wherever a person in Afikpo bears the name Igbo or Ehugbo, it would be discovered under investigation that his name is traceable to Amaobolobo, except in rare and isolated cases. Similarly, the Omakas can easily be distinguished at Ezi Egwini lineage in Amaobolobo.

Their tradition states categorically that Igbo Omaka alias Igbo-Ukwu fought a war and was victorious, and because of that he was called Igbo-Ukwu meaning "the Great Igbo" or "Igbo the Great." This war is likely to be the Igbo-Egu-Nkaku war which echoes in Afikpo traditions.

Amaobolobo means land of 'obolobo'. There was an abundance of 'obolobo' trees in the area. Obolobo trees were known for noise making. Beside, Amaobolobo had a teeming population. It is related that the people formerly occupied the whole of Oroghoro land up to where Amankwo/Amaobolobo Primary School is now located and even spilled over, stretching to the fringes of Onumgba near Amaekwu and Amangwu villages of Nkpogoro. The population was later swept away, first by an epidemic of small pox, and

then by the killing of the 'aba' incident - a pathetic phenomenon that cannot be discussed here. It is said that the incident occurred many years after the death of Igbo Omaka Ejali, around the later part of the 19th century. As a result the lineages were reduced to their present size. However, the deafening noise from their large population coupled with that from the 'obolobo' trees produced such a din that Amaobolobo was usually described as 'Obolobo Uzu', meaning 'the noisy Amaobolobo'. Their former Ogo at Achi Jokwiri Amaozara Oroghoro from where they retreated to their present location, is today an artifact of archaeological interest.

Amuzu

The father of Amuzu Nkpogoro was called Ilughilu. He had a son called Ilum Ilughilu who had two sons - Ugwu Oke Ilum and Eluu Idam Ilum. But because of his great deeds, Ugwu Oke Ilum is often regarded as the founder of Amuzu. Whatever be the case, the legendary father of Amuzu was called Ilughilu.

Ilughilu migrated from Amoefe, Arochukwu and finally settled at the place called Amuzu where the people live today. The place was called Amuzu because the original settlers there were smiths. Their tradition says that those smiths came from Ezza clan in Abakaliki. There were probably the Egu smiths who were also found in Ugwuegu and Mgbom villages. We have a village called Ezi Uzu in Ugwuegu and Amuzu in Mgbom. It is said that Nde Obiahu lineage in Ezi Ukwu Amuzu were the first to arrive at the place now called Amuzu. It was at Eziukwu lineage that Ilughilu, the putative father of Amuzu first settled.

Amuzu Village is the carrier of **Egwu Ehibie** culture, **egbele ogo** culture, and **ikpem** initiation culture. They are

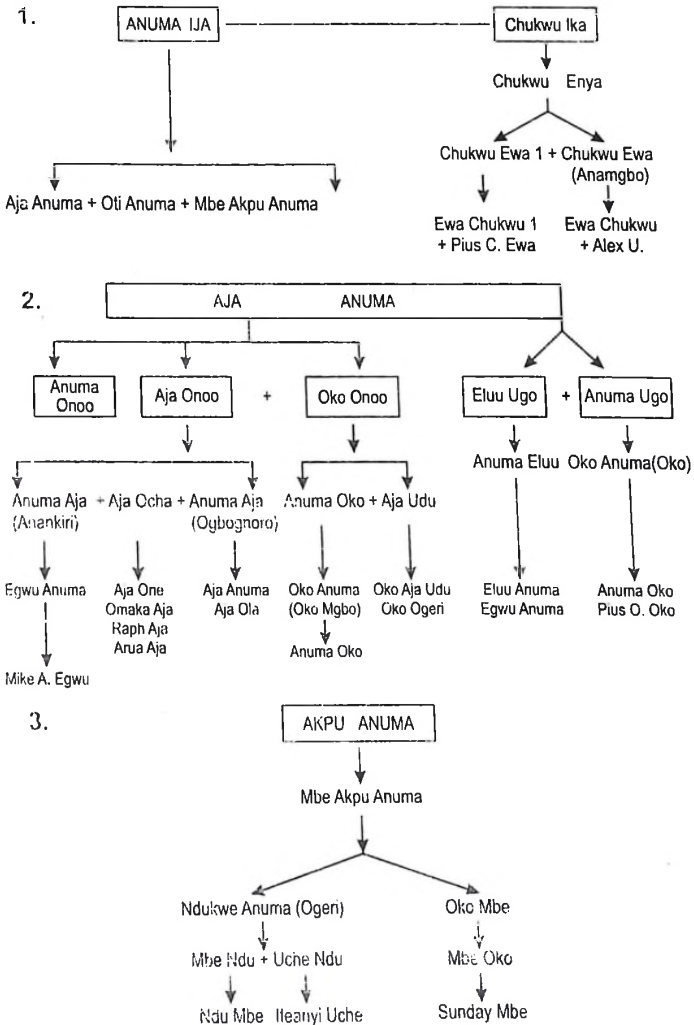
also the first in conjunction with Amaobolobo to weed the traditional play ground (Ogo) and to construct the 'Ajaba' in Nkpogoro. They also in conjunction with Amaobolobo handle the ritual of a dead masquerade in Ehugbo. In pre-colonial times any dead masquerade in Ehugbo must be taken to Ogo Amuzu for rituals before burial. As a rule, the owners of the masquerade must ransom the corpse, that is, 'igbata' or 'gbata', otherwise the Amuzu elders had to chop off the head before the owners were allowed to carry it away for burial. Up till today, all dead masquerades must be carried to Ogo Amuzu for rituals before burial.

It should be noted that Amaobolobo also performs almost all of the above rituals and culture. There are, however, claims and counter claims as to which of the two villages is senior in the performance of the rituals and culture. Whereas Amaobolobo specialises traditionally in Ulo Ogo cult rituals, Amuzu specialises in **Egbele Ogo**, **Ikpem** initiation and probably rituals over dead masquerades. Amaobolobo and Amuzu are closely related through marriage. It is understood that all the rituals belonged to Omaka Ejali as the carrier of the Ogo culture and were formerly performed by Amaobolobo. But because Amaobolobo gave their daughter (a sister of Igbo Omaka Ejali) in marriage to an Amuzu man, some of the rituals and culture were handed over to Amuzu and they inherited others. It is possible that Amuzu Village through marriage relations inherited some of the rituals and culture connected with Ogo from Amaobolobo who were the traditional custodians of the **Ogo Ehugbo** culture

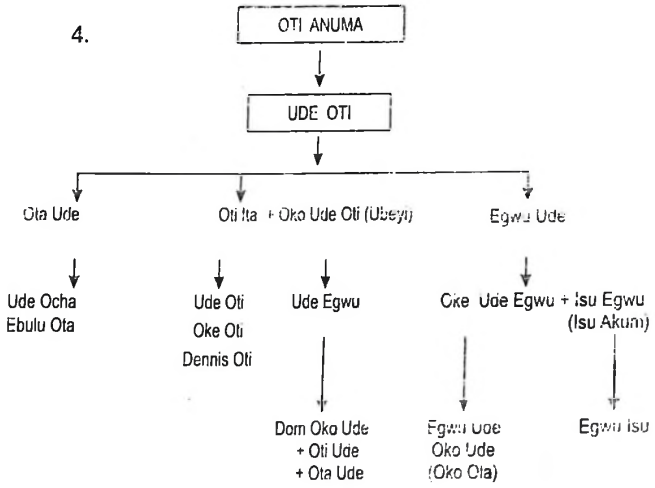
Amankwo

Amankwo tradition is silent on the meaning of the name of their village. The people do not also have a common

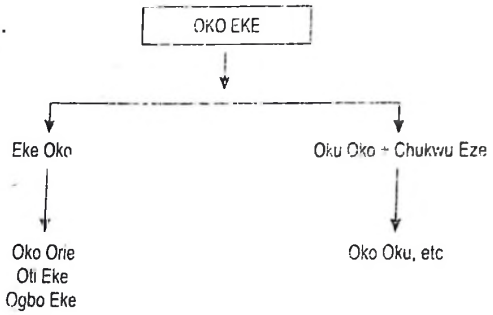
AMAEU AMANKWO PEDIGREE



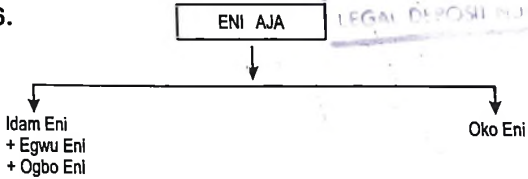
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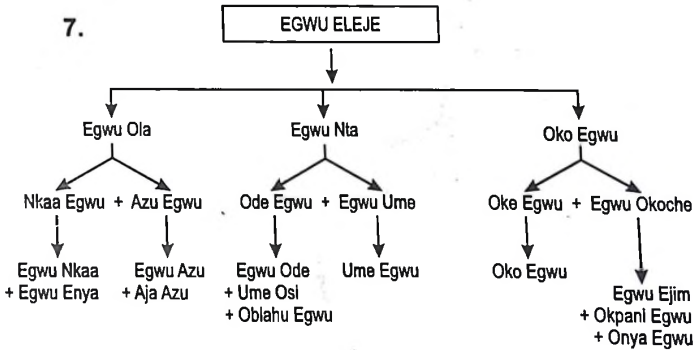
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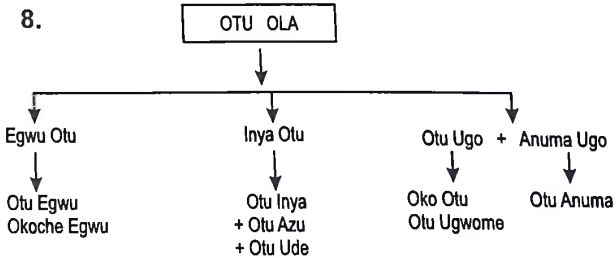
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8.



founder of the two major lineages in Amankwo. It is possible that they derived their name from Amankwo in Ohafia, where they had a stop-over for long before they finally arrived at their present location.

(a) Eziukwu Ewa

The founder and putative father of Eziukwu Ewa was Erusi Idam Obila. He migrated from Arochukwu to Ohafia. From Ohafia, Erusi and his kinsmen came to Lelu Unwara, then to Echara Mgbom and finally to their present location at Amankwo. Eziukwu Ewa still has a lineage in Lelu Unwara. They also have a strong link with Ezi Ewa in Enohia Itim who are said to have migrated from Eziukwu Ewa Amankwo.

Eziukwu Ewa takes "apa omaogo", but a call has been made for it to be shared in the interest of the unity of Amankwo lineages, as it is done in Amuro and Ibii villages.

(b) Amaelu (Nde Anuma)

The putative father and founder of Amaelu Amankwo (Nde Anuma) was Anuma Ija who migrated from Arochukwu to Ohafia. From Ohafia he came to Ezi Edda, then to Uhu Ebiri and finally to Amachi where he lived for some time. He later left Amachi and settled at a place now called Uhu Amaelu in Amankwo very close to Eziukwu Ewa. It was from Uhu Amaelu that he finally came to settle at the present location of Amaelu which was formerly occupied by a people known as Ubam Itigiri who today live at Ubam. It was the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu-War that forced the Ubam Itigiri to flee. Anuma Ija then bought the large piece of land from them. Amaelu lineage has close links with Ezi Oti in Ukpa and Ezi Aja in Amuro, all of whom migrated from Amachi. As a result they do not intermarry. Anuma Ija came with a pow-

erful juju called '**Ovuatamara**' which is claimed to have the power of revealing the truth after swearing before it. The people had left Amachi well before the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu War broke out.

Anuma Ija had three sons - Aja Anuma, Oti Anuma and Akpu Anuma. He had a younger brother or cousin called Chukwu Ika who founded Nde Chukwu minimal lineage.

Aja Anuma was the founder of **Ndǎbu Nde Aja** in Amaelu Amankwo. He had five sons: Anuma Aja, Aja Onoo and Oko Onoo, Eluu Ugo and Anuma Ugo. Anuma Aja or Anuma Onoo (who died young), Aja Onoo and Oko Onoo were uterine brothers, while Elu Ugo and Anuma Ugo were uterine brothers. Aja Anuma performed the highest Ehugbo title called Omume about the later part of the nineteenth century. He was therefore an Omezue.

Aja Onoo begot Anuma Aja (Anankiri), Okoro Ocha and Aja Ocha - all of whom were uterine brothers. Anuma Aja alias Anankiri begot Egwu Anuma or Egwu Omagha who begot Mike Anuma Egwu while his brother Aja Ocha begot Aja Orié, Omaka Aja, Raphael Aja, Arua Aja, Fidelis Aja tc.

Aja Onoo also begot Aja Anuma alias Ogboghoró who begot Aja Anuma - (Ngere) and Aja Ola. Aja Onoo's younger brother called Oko Onoo begot Anuma Oko who begot Oko Mgbo. He also begot Aja Oko alias Aja Udu who begot Oko Aja Udu, Oko Ogeri, etc.

On the other hand, Eluu Ugo begot Anuma Eluu who begot Elu Anuma and Egwu Anuma (Egwu Aka). His younger brother Anuma Ugo begot Oko Anuma alias Oko Onyome who begot Anuma Oko and Pius Ogbonnia Oko.

Oti Anuma lived at **Ndabu Nde Aja** with his agnatic brother Aja Anuma who founded the lineage. However, Oti Anuma begot Ude Oti who had three wives. From the first wife he had a son called Oti Ude (Omezue), who begot Ude Ocha and Ebulu Oti. From the second wife, he had Oti Ita

(Nwata Oti) and Oko Ude (Okó Ubeyi) who begot Ude Oko who begot Dominic Oko Ude, Ota Ude and Oti Ude, etc. Oti Ita (Nwata Oti) himself begot Ude Oti, Dennis Ogbonnia Oti, etc. From the third wife, he had Egwu Ude, Oti who begot Oko Ude Egwu and Isu Egwu, alias Isu Akum. It was Oko Ude Egwu who begot Egwu Ude, Oko Ude (Okó Ola) and Ude Egwu while Isu Egwu begot Egwu Isu.

Akpu Anuma was the founder of Nde Mbe lineage. He is said to be the eldest son of Anuma Ija. Akpu Anuma begot Mbe Akpu Anuma who begot Ndukwe Ogeri and Oko Mbe while Ndukwe Ogeri begot Mbe Ndu and Oko Mbe begot Mbe Oko (Nnade Ucha). All the above persons were the direct children of Anuma Ija also called Anuma Ika.

Anuma Ija had a brother or cousin called Chukwu Ika who founded Nde Chukwu lineage in Amaelu Amankwo. Chukwu Ika begot Chukwu Enya who begot Chukwu Ewa I and II. Later Oko Eke arrived from Agbogo Amauku and was received by Chukwu Ewa I of Nde Chukwu lineage. Amaelu tradition says that Oko Eke was born at Ndabu Nde Chukwu. But at the death of his father (while he was still young) his mother took him along to Agbogo Amauku where she had remarried. However Oko Eke begot Eke Oko, alias Eke Udu, and Oku Oko. Then Eke Oko begot Oko Eke (Okó Orié), Oti Eke and Ogbo Eke while Oku Oko begot Oko Oku, etc. Tradition states that Eni Aja, alias Agbaraka, also arrived at Ndabu Nde Chukwu and was received by Chukwu Ewa. Eni Aja begot Idam Eni, Oko Eni, Innocent Egwu Eni, Ogbo Eni, etc.

The founder of Ndabu Nde Egwu was Egwu Eleje. On arrival he was received by Anuma Ija who gave him a piece of land to settle with his people at the place now called Ndabu Nde Egwu.

Egwu Eleje had three sons, namely, Egwu Ola, Egwu

Nta and Oko Egwu. His first son, Egwu Ola, begot two sons who were uterine brothers called Nkaa Egwu and Azu Egwu, who in turn begot Egwu Nkaa and Egwu Azu respectively.

On the other hand, Egwu Nta begot Ode Egwu and Egwu Ume who begot Egwu Ode and Ume Egwu respectively. In the same vein, Oko Egwu begot Oke Egwu and Egwu Okochi who begot Egwu Ejim, Onya Egwu and Okpani Egwu.

Another group called Nde Otu Ola or Otu Ola lineage arrived and were allowed to settle side by side with Nde Egwu as part of Nde Egwu minimal lineage.

We can see that all the lineages in Amaelu Amankwo had one common putative ancestor called Anuma Ija or Anuma Ika who migrated from Arochukwu. It had been the custom of our forefathers to welcome strangers no matter where they came from. Even today, such a custom is still in the blood of the average Ehugbo man. Such strangers were usually welcomed without qualms. At the same time, all the rights and privileges which belonged to the founding patrilineages were usually extended to them.

It is obvious that the founders of the Afikpo lineages were anxious to increase their numerical strength in case of any possible attack by neighbouring groups. They were warriors who wanted not only to expand the frontiers of their communities or states, but also to defend their territorial integrity. And numerical strength was important to them.

Both Ezi Ekpe and Ezi Ologwu lineages are close brothers of Amaelu; while Amaelu, Nde Obiahu Aja, Ezi Ekpe and Ezi Ologwu lineages are collectively known as Nde Anuma, indicating their close relationship to one another. Certainly Anuma Ija, the founder of Amaelu, extended his sway over these lineages.

(c) **Nde Obiahu Aja**

The founder of Nde Obiahu Aja lineage in Amankwo was Obiahu Okoro Uka. However, Anuma Jja brought the lineage under his sway. As a result, Nde Obiahu Aja is a part of Nde Anuma minor lineage.

As noted earlier, Amankwo tradition is silent on the meaning of the name of the village. However, there is a village in Arochukwu called Amankwo. It is possible that Amankwo Village derived its name from the 'Amankwo Arochukwu', from where they migrated and corrupted the name to Amankwo. It is also possible that their name came from the Amankwo in Ohafia where they had a long stop-over before their final arrival at their present location.

Amauku

The founder of Amauku was Ama Uku. He had a son called Uma Uku who begot Ali Uma Uku who begot Ukpaka Ali Uma Uku. But because of his great deeds and the wonderful achievements during his reign, Ukpaka Ali Uma Uku is often regarded as the founder of Amauku. Both Ezi Oti and Ezi Owoo lineages were regarded as twin brothers. It was there that Ama Uku first settled. His former Ogo, which was located between Ezi Oti and Ezi Owoo, can still be seen as an artifact of archaeological and historical interest.

Ama Uku migrated from Ibibio to Arochukwu, and from there to Ngele Okpani near Akpughuru Edda. From Akpughuru he came to Ugwu Ajum near Iyioka, and finally to the place now called Amauku. The people of Amauku, particularly Ezi Oti and Ezi Owoo lineages, participate with Amaobolobo in some aspects of the Ogo Ehugbo culture rituals because of their close relationship with Amaobolobo.

There is a story of how during an outing, Ama Uku ran into Igbo Omaka Ejali. This chance meeting ended up in

treating Ezi Oti and Ezi Owoo as part of Amaobolobo and extending to them some of the rights and privileges enjoined by Amaobolobo village. There is also a story of how during the pathetic incident of killing the 'aba', a group of Amaobolobo lineage fled to Ezi Oti and Ezi Owoo Villages for shelter. As a result, elders of Ezi Oti and Ezi Owoo, at times, join with Amaobolobo elders in the performance of the Ogo culture rituals at Amaozara Oroghoro in Amaobolobo. Even the 'aja Nkpoghoru' is located at Ezi Oti lineage where the founder, Ukpaka Ali Uma Uku, sited his ogo (traditional play ground).

Amaekwu

The founders of Amaekwu were Eluu Idam and Ama Ekuma Aja. Their tradition has it that Eluu Idam migrated from Ezi Oti in Amauku. Both Eluu Idam and Ama Ekuma Aja were the sons of Ukpaka Ali Uma Uku. The two brothers were the first to settle at Amaekwu. There is a very close link between Ezi Oti and Amaekwu in Nkpoghoru. The two lineages do not intermarry.

Their tradition states that as soon as Ama Uku, the founder of Amauku arrived, he ran into Igbo Omaka Ejali during a brief outing. The story says that Igbo Omaka Ejali was seen armed to the teeth. As usual he quickly asked Uku a number of searching questions, such as: "Who are you?" "Who brought you here?" "What are you up to?" The questions were said to have come in quick succession. It was in this way that he brought Uku under his Oroghoro sphere of authority.

Ndibe

Ndibe means the people of Ibe Nwachi lineage (Nde Ibe) who are the descendants of Egwu Urochi, the founder of

the place now called Ndibe. The place was formerly called Amauku after the original founder of the place who was called Ama Uku. According to Nkpogoro and Ezinwachi lineage traditions, Egwu Urochi migrated from the Arochukwu/Akpa/Ibibio axis to Ohafia, and from there to Okposi where he had a brief stop-over, and then to Amasiri where he had another stop-over before moving to Afikpo.

Some Ezinwachi traditions state that some lineages in Ezinwachi joined the original migration team at Okposi and Amasiri. That such lineages are often referred to as having come from Okposi and Amasiri where the original Ezinwachi lineage had a stop-over during the process of migration from Arochukwu/Akpa/Ibibio axis.

Ndibe elders always associated themselves with the Akpa group, who were neighbours of the Arochukwu and Ibibio groups. As a result they often refer to themselves as **Umu-akpa** (children of Akpa). According to Chief Uche Osi (June, 1991), "we belong to the Umu-akpa stock of Arochukwu." The Akpa who originally lived in the Cross River valley were warriors. After the Aro-Akpa-Ibibio war in the mid-seventeenth century (Ifemesia, 1978: 31-32; Cookey, 1980:335), the Akpa got mixed up with the Aro and Ibibio groups and became an integral part of Arochukwu Community. Today, out of the nineteen villages that make up Arochukwu, six of them belong to the Akpa group. The six villages which are collectively called Ibom-Isi are Ugwuakuna, Agbagwu, Ujari, Amukwa, Amasu and Ibom (Afigbo, 1981:190). The Akpa were warriors invited by the Aro to help them (the Aro) in their war against the Ibibio about the middle of the seventeenth century. For a full history of the Akpa (see chapter two).

However, from Amasiri, Egwu Urochi and his kinsmen moved to Ajagbo in Ubam Afikpo. But they had some misunderstanding with Egwu Ehite of Ubam and had to leave.

They moved to Amuzu Nkpoghoru where Ugwu Oke Ilum of Amuzu Nkpoghoru and Ukpaka Ali Uma Uku of Amauku welcomed them and allocated to them a piece of land at the present location of Ezinwachi. Ndibe elders interviewed as far back as in 1975 and 1988 stated categorically that Ndibe lineage arrived late at Nkpoghoru, while those interviewed in the 1990's say the Ndibe lineage (Ezinwachi) arrived as early as other villages in Nkpoghoru.

Here we find a classic example of the trick which time and political consciousness can play on the collection of oral traditions. But the traditions of other villages in Afikpo including other Nkpoghoru lineages say that Ndibe lineage arrived latest at Nkpoghoru. And evidence are legion especially in the establishment and location of social symbols and institutions and performance of rituals in Nkpoghoru Sub-Village Group.

However, the question of who arrived first is not very important to us in Afikpo. But it is necessary for keeping historical records straight and for proper chronology of events. In a complex society like Afikpo, the villages did not arrive at the same time; they arrived in hordes at different times, and from different places and directions. And because of the republican nature of the Afikpo society, the founding patrilineage has no right to rule others. So early or late arrival is of little importance to us in Afikpo history, but it is unavoidable. What is more important to us is the role which villages should play in the overall development and unity of Afikpo.

Egwu Urochi was a warrior which is reminiscent of Akpa stock. He waged successful wars on the remaining Egu and Nkalu groups (after Igbo Ukwu's death). Egwu Urochi and his Ezinwachi group played a very important role especially in mobilizing the rest of Nkpoghoru Villages for a

war of conquest against some neighbouring villages. Their dynamic role, and the impact they made on Nkpogoro and Afikpo Village groups, will continue to be remembered in history.

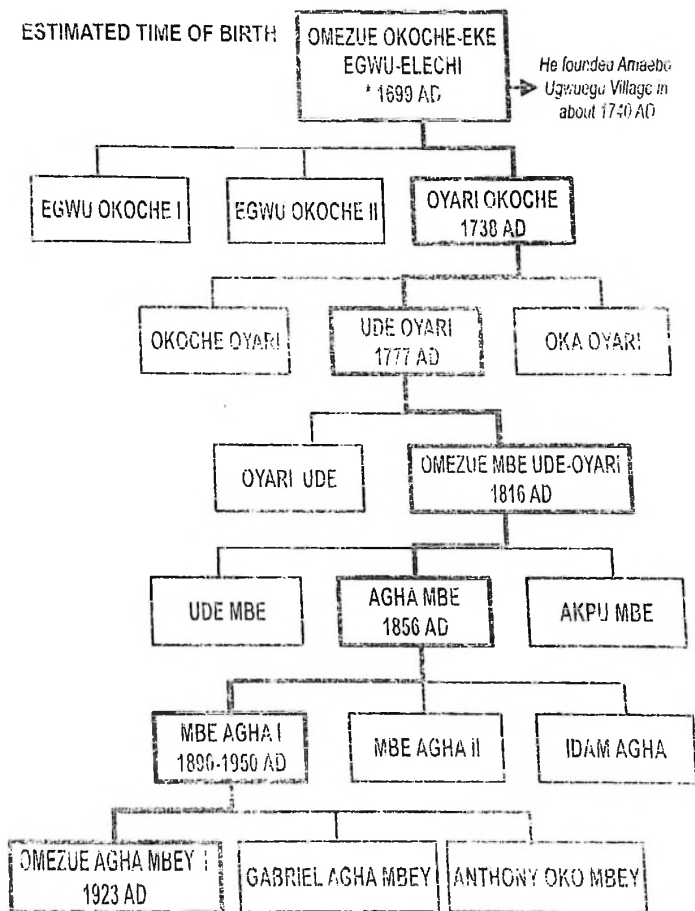
Apart from the Efiks, the Akpa were one of the earliest people in South-Eastern Nigeria to have contact with the Europeans. As far back as the 15th century, the Akpa had come in contact with the Portuguese from whom they purchased fire arms and acquired the techniques of modern warfare. Little wonder then why the Ezi Nwachi lineage was well-organised when they arrived at Afikpo and produced leaders who were bold enough to confront the white man when he came to Afikpo in 1902. It was for the same reason that much of the information about the social organisation of Afikpo was collected from them by the British in the early twentieth century.

When Ukpaka Ali Uma Uku died, one of the later successors of Egwu Urochi called Obia Uka Ibe alias **Obiaogburuka**, colluded with the colonial administration to change the name of the village from Amauku to Ndibe. However, Obia Uka Ibe (**Obiaogburuka**) was a bold and daring personality - a man of intelligence and unmitigated bravado who was capable of acts of great feat. He and Ota Okocha boldly stood and defied the white man in the dawn of the twentieth century.

Amangwu

The founder of Amangwu was Ekpu Ike. But later one Abani Udu alias Abani Mgbo from Eziukwu Amuku, drove away Ekpu Ike's children and occupied Amangwu. There is close link between Eziukwu Amuku and Amangwu village.

AMAEBU UGWUEGU PEDIGREE



Ugwuegu (Sub-Village Group)

Ugwuegu means the concentration camp of the Egu group who were one of the original inhabitants of the place now known as Ehugbo. The whole of Ugwuegu sub-village group was united under the umbrella of two eponymous fathers - Egwu Ehite for Ubam and Ugwuegu-Elu and Eta Aja (Ataja) for Amaizu.

Ugwuegu Elu

Ugwuegu Elu means the upper part of Ugwuegu.

Amaebo: The founder of Amaebo was Okoche Eke Egwu Elechi. Amaebo traditions say that the people migrated from Ozara Akpuemeghi, between Amaozara and Amaelu Amankwo. They were a part of the Egwu Ehite group called Ubam Itigiri. Okoche Eke Egwu Elechi and his group formerly settled at Ezi Egwu in Ubam. According to this account, Okoche Eke Egwu Elechi was a younger brother of Egwu Ehite of Ubam. Okoche later discovered that the main economic pursuit of the Ubam people was mat making. He felt that a mat-maker would be a poor man for life and decided to look for a greener pasture elsewhere. This he found in an area just behind Ubam popularly known as Ebo Ubam. He settled there, hence the name Amaebo, meaning Ebo area. The place was said to be flowing with milk and honey.

As a matter of fact, the tradition of Amaelu Amankwo, always refers to a people called Ubam Itigiri who lived where they are now occupying. The founder of Amaelu Amankwo called Anuma Ija is said to have bought the large piece of land from Ubam Itigiri before they fled to Ugwuegu-Elu. There is a lineage in Ugwuegu Elu called Amaelu which is said had derived its name from Amaelu Amankwo where

they had earlier settled under Ubam Itigiri.

Amaogwugwu - The founder of Amaogwugwu was Eze Omagha

Amaelu: The founder of Amaelu Ugwuegu was Oko Uhere.

I have only been able to produce **Amaelu** Amankwo lineage pedigree or genealogy. Other lineages in Ehugbo should be able to produce their family tree or pedigree or genealogy as Amaebo Ugwuegu had done (see *Afikpo Today*, vol. 1, No. 1 1990). This will enable future historians to incorporate such genealogies into their work. However, the inclusion of Igbo-Ukwu, Egwu Urochi, Urobo Chiali and Ukwuanyi Njaka in the Family Tree of Amaebo Ugwuegu where they do not belong is a distortion of Ehugbo history. This matter has already been taken care of in my Rejoinder (see *Afikpo Today*, vol. 1, No. 3, 1992).

I hereby reproduce the Amaebo Ugwuegu Family Tree with Egwu Ehite as their putative father.

By courtesy of *Afikpo Today*, 1990.

Amaebo Ugwuegu Family Tree here

Ezi Uzu

The founder of Ezi Uzu was Ezeta. It is recounted that the inhabitants of Ezi Uzu were the Egu proper, who were dispersed during the Igbo-Egu war. Their leader, called Ezeta, came out from hiding after the war. He was looking for a place of abode until he approached Egwu Ehite of Ubam who allocated to him a piece of land regarded as '**Ohia Ojoo**' (evil forest) at the present location of Ezi Uzu. The people were specialist smiths, hence the name "Ezi Uzu", meaning the village of smiths. It is said that later, other groups started to settle around them such as Ezi Ekuma and Ezi Ogbuu.

All these lineages were, and are still collectively called Ihuogo. They are reputed to be the Egu proper.

Ubam - Founder: Egwu Ehite

Egwu Ehite and his group migrated from Ozara Apkuemeghi and around the area now occupied by Amaelu Amankwo. Egwu Ehite was the leader of the Egu group known as Ubam Itigiri who formerly occupied parts of Amaelu Amankwo. The tradition of Amaelu Amankwo is rich in tales of a people called Ubam Itigiri from whom they purchased the land where their village is now located. Ubam tradition also talks of Amaelu Amankwo as their former settlement. However, all the Ugwuegu-Elu Villages including Amaebo, Amaelu, Amaogwugwu, Ihuogo and Ubam were united under the umbrella of an eponymous father called Egwu Ehite who was the flag-bearer of the Egu group. But after their defeat the Egu dispersed to various places outside Ehugbo. Some of them were killed while others who stayed behind were assimilated into the Ehugbo society.

Amaizu - Amaizu means a meeting ground or a place of assembly. In short Amaizu was and still is the traditional meeting ground for Ehugbo community. The founder of Amaizu was Eta Aja (anglicised) Ataja. He was the man who united the various Amaizu lineages under his umbrella. Eta Aja migrated from Arochukwu to Ekoli Edda, from there to Asaga Edda and then to Ebe Eta and finally to Odim where Ezi-ukwu Amaizu now occupies. Eta Aja's piece of land called Ebe Eta has become a common farmland for all the Amaizu lineages.

As mentioned earlier, Amaizu was the traditional assembly ground for Ehugbo community. It was at Amaizu

that the covenant or peace agreement which ended the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu War was 'signed'. The choice of Amaizu was not only based on its central location but also on its relationship with Nkpoghoru. The ingredients used for the covenant rituals (**igba ndu**) blood pact, were put in a "pot of peace", and buried at **Ogo Okpoota**, which in consequence became the traditional meeting ground for Ehugbo community. The covenant ritual was anchored on truth and reality. As a result a speaker at **Ogo Okpoota** is not supposed to tell lies. After the rituals, Amaizu elders were charged with the responsibility of taking custody of the "covenant pot".

Iko Izu

It should be noted that Igbo-Ukwu's daughter called Oriete or Nwata Oriete was married to a prince of Eziukwu Amaizu. Her mother's name was Oriete Imomo, the wife of Igbo Ukwu. When Oriete or Nwata Oriete died she was buried at Ulo Ogo Eziukwu Amaizu, as a mark of honour to her, being the first woman Omezue (**Olariwe**) in Afikpo and the first daughter (Ada) of the founder of Ehugbo. A wooden effigy was erected on her grave, deified and called **Orie Amaizu**. A special annual feast called **Iko Izu** was instituted and fixed for a particular period in the year by Igbo Ukwu to serve a dual purpose. Firstly in honour and memory of Oriete Amaizu; secondly to renew and perpetuate the ritual peace accord made at Ogo Okpoota. It was also a feast designed to end all **Iko Udumini** feasts in Afikpo and mark the end of all folk-tales and **erebe**, and the inception of **okochi** (dry season). Ogo Eziukwu Amaizu where **orie Amaizu** - the deified woman effigy is located, was deliberately chosen as a venue for the annual re-union and covenant renewal under the auspices of **Iko Izu** feast. Formerly, the chief priestess of Oriete Amaizu was Oriete Imomo's slave woman

called Osim who lived at a one-man settlement called **Onu Ogo Onyeani** at Amaelu Amuro. Being a slave woman of Orié Imomo the wife of Igbo Ukwu, Osim was accorded some social recognition and given privileges. For example, her one-woman settlement was raised to the status of a sub-village group in Afikpo. Commenting on this slave woman called Osim, Chief G. A. Agwo said, "In appreciation of her services, Igbo and his descendants accorded her a one-person compound, the status of a large group that celebrates 'Iko Okochi' as a unit (see Afikpo Today vol. 1 No. 4, 1993: 64) On the death of Osim, men maneuvered women out of that position.

It should be noted that the founder of Eziukwu Amaizu used Ogo Amaobolobo for the **Isiji** dance and initiation during the performance of his **Omume** title. In other words, he used the **Ohia Isiji** (enclosure) at Amaobolobo for his **Isiji Omume** and ikpem masquerade initiation. Even the dressing of **ikpem** masquerade, was done at Ogo Amaobolobo. This again lends strong weight to the relationship between Nkpogoro and Amaizu and to the ancient status of Amaobolobo in the Ogo cult set up.

On this annual **Izu** Festival Day (Iko Izu) all the people of Afikpo attended to renew the Okpoota covenant pledges, honour Oriete or Nwata Orié, and witness the feast that ushers in the dry season. On that memorable day, the **Izu** Chief Priests and elders would encircle a pot called **oku** in Afikpo dialect. The 'oku' represents the ritual covenant pot buried at Ogo Okpoota. Through an act which appears like magic, the contents of the **oku** (pot) would be invoked to produce stupendous foams which held observers spell-bound. Then there would be a cry that 'Izu' was foaming - **Izu na-agbo**. A large heroic wooden drum called **Ikoro** (the talking drum) would be beaten and the sound echoes in

the air to the joy and admiration of all. **Iko Izu** was therefore an occasion for all in Ehugbo to renew the peace covenant which marked the end of hostilities and the beginning of peace and unity in Ehugbo. It was an annual re-union day attended by all Ehugbo village elders from **Ekpuke Eto to Horii**. But today only Nkpoghoro elders mainly attend it. More will be said about the peace covenant later (chapter four).

Ohaisu (Sub-Village Group)

Ohaisu derived its name from Isu Nkalu, the run-away warrior from Enohia Nkalu. Ohaisu means the people of Isu or the followers of Isu Nkalu. It was this war hero who later united the large Igbo group in the north and north-west of Ehugbo in the area now known as Ohaisu. The various Ohaisu villages came from different places like their counterparts in Ehugbo. But where they settled was an area where Isu Nkalu's influence became dominant as a result of his later activities in the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu war.

Isu was, as it were, a run-away soldier who first fled to Amangbala and then to Amachi where he camped with his followers. However, he later surrendered and joined the allied forces and commanded the north and north-west sector of the war. There he made a name for his gallantry and heroism. As a result, that section of Ehugbo was called Ohaisu - the Isu group. Isu Nkalu's role in ensuring the ultimate success of the allied forces at the north and north-west sectors of the war was proverbial. It was manifest in many ways: firstly, he was the last commander of the sector; secondly he was the brain behind all the mopping up operations and combing out of the Egu and the Nkalu run-away soldiers from their hideouts - an operation that helped to usher the allied forces to victory. It is recounted

that whenever Igbo Omaka Ejali wanted to monitor the movement of Isu Nkalu, and probably to ascertain his numerical strength, the answer was usually that he had a large crowd or following, expressed in the dialect as **oha sue** (standard Igbo: "**oha so ya**"). This 'Oha', or crowd, came to be called Oha Isu (Ohaisu).

Amachi

The founder of Amachi was Isu Nkalu. Afikpo traditions are unanimous that Isu Nkalu was a warlord who fled during the Igbo-Nkalu phase of the war to avoid capitulation. It is said that he first settled at Amangbala where he lived in a temporary shed called **mgbala**. The 'mgbala' which was built by Eze Chima, the founder of Amangbala, served Isu Nkalu as a transit camp. It was there that his followers came for briefing on the Igbo-Nkalu war. His followers were given temporary shelter and protection at the 'mgbala shrine. However, he later moved over to a permanent site where there were many **achi** trees - the place called Amachi.

It appears that before Isu Nkalu arrived at Amachi some Igbo groups had already settled there. This is attested to by the fact that some Igbo lineages migrated from Amachi to other places in Ehugbo well before Isu Nkalu's escape to Amachi. But sooner or later, Isu imposed his influence not only on the remaining lineages at Amachi but also on the adjoining villages now called Ohaisu. His domain, Amachi, soon became a rallying point for all the Igbo villages dotted around the area now collectively called Ohaisu, made up of Ukpa, Ngodo, Amangbala, Amaechara Egeburu, etc.

Isu Nkalu was later worshipped like a hero because of his immense contributions to the success of the allied forces in the Igbo-Nkalu-Egu War. His gallantry and bravery were colossal and celebrated. As a result Amachi became the

headquarters of the north and north-west sectors of the operations against the Egu and the Nkalu. It was, and is still for this reason that Ogo Amachi is the reception ground for war heroes in Ehugbo. The Ohaisu group initiated several rituals to be associated with Ihu Ogo Amachi. The weeding of Ihuogo Amachi marked the beginning of **erebe unwu**.

Ngodo

The founder of Ngodo was called Urobo Chiali. He was the carrier of **Akpoha Ngodo** culture. He and his group migrated from Urhobo in the present Delta state of Nigeria to Arochukwu where they made a stop-over for days, if not years. From Arochukwu, Urobo moved to Ngodo Isuochi in Okigwe, and from there to Akwahi and finally to the present location of Ngodo named after their last village of call (Ngodo Isuochi). There is a large piece of land at Akwahi known as Ngodo family land which the six Ngodo lineages own in common. An oral interview conducted at Ngodo Isuochi confirmed that a group of people who formerly lived at Ngodo Isuochi later migrated to Afikpo. The source said that they still regard them as their kith and kin.

The first lineage to settle at Ngodo was Ezi Ukpani followed by Ezi Olua founded by Urobo's first son. As a result Ezi Ukpani takes the **apa oma ogo**. In fact, the **Ekeje** who was both a chief priest and a village-head lived in Ezi Ukpani. His residence was more or less, "the people's palace" built and maintained by the community.

Ukpa

The founder of Ukpa was Aja Iberekwukwu. He was the carrier of the **aho** culture, which involves fireworks that mark the beginning of a new year and the end of the old.

Aja Iberekwukwu migrated from Mmahi Ukpo in Okposi to Amangwu Ezeke in Amasiri, then to Gorogoro and finally settled at the present location of Ukpa. The village derived its name from their source of migration 'Ukpo', in Okposi. Ezi Akani lineage was the first to arrive at the place now called Ukpa. It is said that Ezi Akani and Ezi Ukwu lineages are closely related through marriage, because Ezi Akani gave their daughter called Mgbo Aja in marriage to an Eziukwu man. Ukpa village has a common land boundary with Amasiri at Ozara Ukwu. It was Aja Iberekwukwu who united the Ukpa lineages under his protection.

However, Ezi Agbi, was founded by Agbi Okpara who migrated from Ezi Onuu in Amangbala Afikpo. As a result both Ezi Onuu and Ezi Agbi have a lot in common. For instance, they do not intermarry. On the other hand, Ezi Oti Ukpa migrated from Amachi Afikpo. It was founded by the younger brother of Isu Nkalu.

One of the celebrated legends surrounding Aja Iberekwukwu is that he ascended into the sky (heaven) through a rope (udo). The rope (udo) depicted day and night; this was shown by its symbolic knotting and unknotting alternately.

Available sources show that the Egu originally settled at the place now called Ukpa. In fact, archaeological excavations carried out at Eziukwu Ukpa Rock Shelter gave a radio carbon date of between 3000 and 5000 B.C. The Rock Shelter was the habitation site of the Egu. It appears that the Egu later moved over to Ugwuegu where they made their camp. They were forced to move there either for security reasons or because of environmental changes.

Aja Iberekwukwu is reputed to be one of the earliest Igbo elements to settle at the place now called Ehugbo. He probably occupied the area when the Egu migrated to Ugwuegu.

Amaechara Agbo

The founder of Amaechara Agbo was Ewa Ukwu of Uhu Ebiri. He migrated from Arochukwu to Lelu in Unwara to Uhu Ebiri and from there to Ihuogo Amachi from where he finally settled at the present location of Amaechara Agbo. The people were famous warriors, which earned them the epithet **Ebiri Ogu**. They stood as a 'buffer village' between Ehugbo and Okposi, who often came on kidnapping expeditions. The **Ebiri Ogu** were able to stop those notorious activities of the Okposi people. They also defeated Ngodo Isuochi at the battle of Ugwu Ngodo, which today has become a common farmland of the Amaechara Agbo lineages. Ezi Ewaenu in Amachi are the kith and kin of Amaechara Agbo lineage. Both of them came from Uhu Ebiri, and as a result they do not intermarry. The area where they now occupy is called Amaechara because of the plethora of **echara** grass in the place in those days.

Amaechara Elu

The founder of Amaechara Elu was Mmaku Ite who migrated from Isuama-Orlu to Unwara and finally settled at the present location of Amaechara. The place was called Amaechara because of the abundance of **echara** grass (bamboo) in the area. The people of Amaechara Elu were probably among the Igbo groups who migrated from the Isuama-Orlu Amaigbo axis about the eighteenth century and later diverted towards the North-Eastern or Cross River Igbo area (Afigbo: *Ropes of Sand*, 1981:12-13).

Amangbala

The founder of Amangbala was Eze Chima. The name, "Amangbala", is a hybrid of **Ama** and **Mgbala**.

Amangbala was a refugee camp - **ama mgbala**. The 'mgbala' or refugee camp was erected at Ihuogo Amangbala by Eze Chima who installed a shrine in it to protect refugees. The camp was popularly known as **Mgbala Eze**. It is recorded that when Isu Nkalu fled from Enohia Nkalu during the Igbo-Nkalu war, he first settled at Amangbala with his followers under the protection of the **mgbala Eze** shrine. He made the place his transit camp. Amangbala had been a sanctuary of political refugees in Ehugbo. Isu Nkalu must have liaised properly with Eze Chima in whose domain he took shelter. It was there that Isu and his followers assembled to discuss the situation of things probably bearing on the Igbo-Nkalu war. Amangbala has since been an assembly ground for Ehugbo community.

Sooner or later, Isu Nkalu moved over to Amachi leaving his host Ezi Chima, the founder of Amangbala, to organise his people. Eze Chima had a close link with Amachi and Isu Nkalu. Consequently, Amachi became the central meeting point for the Ohaisu group.

Ezi Onuu lineage in Amangbala was founded by Aja Chiali, who migrated from Arochukwu to Ngodo Afikpo. It was from Ngodo that he came to settle at the present site of Ezi Onuu in Amangbala. However, it was from the name of the son of Aja Chiali, called Onuu Okorougwu, that Ezi Onuu lineage got its name. Aja Chiali was the younger brother of Urobo Chiali.

Uhu Ohuu: The name means 'New Site'.

Uhu Ohuu lineage migrated from Amaobolobo and first settled at Ezi Onuu before moving to their present location. Agha Eja was the founder of Uhu Ohuu. However, there is still some controversy over the founder of the area. They perform **Egwu ehicie** culture which they inherited from

Amaabolobo.

Ibii

The founder of Agbogo Ibii was Egwu Etu who migrated from Arochukwu, while the founder of Eluogo Ibii was Akani Ude, who migrated from Ikwo.

(a) **Agbogo**: Founder - Egwu Etu who migrated from Arochukwu.

(b) **Eluogo**: Founder - Akani Ude who migrated from Ikwo.

On arrival from Arochukwu, the people of Agbogo Ibii first settled at Apojor near Amasiri. They lived here for several years before moving to their present location under Egwu Etu. In later years, Akani Ude from Ikwo with his group arrived at Apojor and lived side by side with Egwu Etu group under the name Eluogo Ibii lineage.

Later, one Ekechi Odaa Enyum, a warrior from Arochukwu arrived at Apojor. He belonged to Egwu Etu group. He was called Ekechi Odaa Enyum because he arrived across the Esu River in Okposi. He had a shrine called Ekuo Ezi which was and still is at the bank of Esu River. During the Afikpo wrestling contests which take place every two years, prospective wrestlers in Ibii still consult the shrine for help, hence Ibii people are usually referred to as **Adaka Mgba** by their Afikpo neighbours.

All the people of Ibii both the Agbogo and the Eluogo later moved over from Apojor to their present location at Ibii. It was gathered that inter-tribal wars forced the people to move from Apojor to the present site of Ibii. The period of the movement according to the story suggests that it was effected during the Afikpo - Amasiri war in the first decade of the twentieth century when the people were looking for a place of safety and security.

Agbogo Ibii used to take "apa omaogo". But in 1952 when Oko Elem took the Omume title, there was a controversy over the sharing of "apa omaogo". As a result, it was decided that in the interest of peace, each lineage should take its own "apa omaogo".

Egeburu - The founder of Egeburu was Okwua Mbugha.

Evuma - The founder of Evuma was Edu Chiali, the younger brother of Aja Chiali. Edu Chiali was also the founder of Amaelu and Amaebo Amangbala. Both Aja Chiali and Edu Chiali were the younger brothers of Urobo Chiali, the founder of Ngodo.

CHAPTER FOUR

Tales Of Migrations of Origin

Itim (Sub-Village Group)

Enohia Itim

The people of Enohia Itim say that they migrated into Ehugbo from Arochukwu. According to the story, they left Arochukwu for Okagwe in Ohafia and from there to Erei and Unwara, and finally settled at Enohia Itim. It is generally believed that their leader and founder was Akpam Ibe. However, some villages, especially Ezi Ewa, claim that Irem Njaka who was the founder of Ezi Ewa lineage was also the founder of Enohia Itim. But the claim has no support from the traditions of other Enohia Itim lineages.

Enohia Nkalu

The people of Enohia Nkalu say that their father was Eze Ukwu, who migrated with his kinsmen from Agbo Egwu in Arochukwu to Ibibio; and from there to Ohafia and Unwara; and finally to Enohia Itim where Eze Ukwu lived and died. It is said that Eze Ukwu had many sons, the oldest of whom were Eke Ehie and Eke Nwohia. After the death of their father, both Eke Ehie and Eke Nwohia migrated to Enohia Nkalu. They also say that Isu Nkalu was the son of Eke Nwohia. They added that as a result of warfare some of their people dispersed in various directions. They mentioned Isu Nkalu as one of such persons, who migrated to Amachi and founded the village. It is said that when he was asked what his name was, he replied: "Isu from Nkalu", hence the name Isu Nkalu.

The story raises a number of questions and possibilities. Firstly, it is possible that Isu Nkalu was one of the original Nkalu settlers of the place now called Enohia Nkalu and that his father's name was Nkalu. His surname could equally have been coined from his place of origin as mentioned above. This is evidenced by the fact that he is said to have fled because of warfare. It is most likely that his flight was during the war between Igbo-Ukwu and his Igbo group on the one hand and the Nkalu on the other. If this is true and it is most likely to be, then the present inhabitants of Enohia Nkalu are not the original Nkalu settlers, almost all of whom were dispersed during the Igbo-Nkalu war. In fact, there is no controversy in Afikpo tradition about the fact that Isu Nkalu fled during the Igbo-Nkalu war and finally settled at Amachi.

Besides, the present settlers of Enohia Nkalu say that they migrated from Arochukwu - an Igbo community - with their leader, Eze Ukwu, and settled last at Enohia Itim. After the death of their father, Eze Ukwu, his sons, Eke Ehie and Eke Nwohia, migrated to Enohia Nkalu. It should be recalled that the original Nkalu settlers at Enohia Nkalu were of non-Igbo extraction. Linguistically, they belong to the Benue-Congo family of languages (see chapter 2).

What is possible is that the present inhabitants of Enohia Nkalu who migrated from Enohia Itim with their leaders, Eke Ehie and Eke Nwohia, were Igbo. They occupied the area evacuated by the former Nkalu settlers. The area was called Nde Nkalu or Ama Nkalu. From evidence available, it was the new settlers who gave the place the name "Enohia", which they inherited from Enohia Itim, which was their original home. It is also possible that the present settlers from Enohia Itim conquered whoever were left of the original Nkalu and assimilated them into the

Enohia society. Thus, the present settlers of Enohia Nkalu are Enohia Igbo people, and not the original Nkalu, who were of non-Igbo origin. Some Afikpo traditions even say that the original settlers of Enohia Nkalu came from Ikpom (Bahumuno) in the Cross River State. Whatever be the case, there is sufficient evidence to show that the present settlers of Enohia Nkalu are not the original Nkalu but an Igbo group from Enohia Itim.

Nonetheless, the people are the carriers of the **elom ji** culture which they probably inherited from the original Nkalu settlers; **elom ji** is a ritual connected with the New Yam Festival. The juju priest was, and is still called Eleri Aja. It should be noted that the juju priest must, of right, come from Ezi Eleri lineage in Eziama village of Enohia Nkalu. It is said that later, Ndibe lineage acquired a knowledge of the secret of the **elom ji** ritual through marriage relations. As a result, during the **elom ji** period which lasts four days, the Ndibe **elom ji** chief priests usually observe all the sanctions and taboos attached to it.

However, Afikpo traditions say that Isu Nkalu was a warlord who fled during the Igbo-Nkalu war to avoid capitulation. He first fled to Amangbala where he took shelter with his followers. It was there that he provided a temporary shelter and protection for his followers. "Amangbala" thus means a refugee camp or a sanctuary for refugees (amangbala). Isu Nkalu later moved over to a permanent site at Amachi where he united the village groups around the area and called them collectively Ohaisu after his name, that is, Isu's followers or Isu's group.

When the British colonizers were about to establish their administration, Afikpo was simply divided into two groups for administrative convenience. One section was called Ime Ogo comprising Nkpoghoru, Ugwuegu and Itim while the other section was called Ohaisu. Isu Nkalu was really

regarded as a hero by his admirers. For this reason, Ogo Amachi has been a reception ground for heroes in Afikpo. Isu Nkalu's younger brother founded Ezi Oti in Ukpa.

Amuro

The founder of Amuro was Alazu Ude Ekuma Ikpo Nnamekpu. He was the first to settle in the place now called Amuro. He was succeeded by his son called Otu Alazu, alias Otu Ogbuenyi who is now celebrated as the founder of Ezi Ogbuenyi and Amuro as a whole.

Alazu Ude Ekuma Ikpo Nnamekpu migrated from Owerri to Okigwe to Ebiri (Erei), and from there to Ururo Ezi Ogbuenyi and finally to the place where Ezi Ogbuenyi is located in Amuro.

On the other hand, the founder of Ezi Onya, called Onya Nta, migrated from Arochukwu to Lelu Unwara to Uhu Ebiri and finally to the place now called Amuro. Both Ezi Ogbuenyi and Ezi Onya claim primacy of arrival and regard the founders of their respective lineages as the founder of Amuro.

But evidence from the elders of Amuro lineages has cleared the air. All available sources confirm that Alazu Ude Ekuma Ikpo Nnamekpu and his Ezi Ogbuenyi lineage were the first to settle at Amuro. All the elders of Amuro are almost unanimous in their evidence that the founder of Amuro was Alazu Ude Ekuma Ikpo Nnamekpu, who was succeeded by his son Otu Alazu, alias Otu Ogbuenyi. According to available evidence, Ezi Ogbuenyi is the oldest lineage in Amuro and has always been accorded that recognition by the Amuro people. It is said that all the traditional rituals in Amuro were and are still handled by an Ezi Ogbuenyi lineage elder. For instance, during the **igba aja Amuro**, an Ezi Ogbuenyi lineage elder (priest)

usually performs the ritual. Originally, Ezi Ogbuenyi used to take **apa oma-ogo** but now it is being distributed as a way of emphasizing the egalitarian nature of the Ehugbo society.

The founder of Ezi Aja lineage in Amuro was Aja Idam Udu. The grand father of Ezi Aja lineage was called Echi Ihie who originally settled at Ebe Ogwu land, the present location of Macgregor Secondary School, Afikpo. Echi Ihie later migrated to Agbondudu lineage in Amachi probably for security reasons as Ebe Ogwu was rather too exposed to enemy attack. In later years, his son, Aja Idam Udu, now the founder of Ezi Aja came back to the place where Ezi Aja is now located in Amuro.

Ezi Ogbuenyi: Founder - Otu Alazu alias Otu Ogbuenyi

Ezi Onya: Founder - Onya Nta

Ezi Aja: Founder - Aja Idam Udu from Amachi

Ezi Acha: Founder - Acha Ugo Eluu

Amaelu Amuro:

(a) **Nde Nnachi:** Founder - Nnachi from Egeburu

(b) **Ezi Irem:** Founder - Irem Aja from Amaechara Agbo.

Kpoghirikpo:

The name of Kpoghirikpo was derived from the name of the founder of Eziukwu lineage in Kpoghirikpo called Okirikpo.

(a) **Eziukwu:** Founder - Okirikpo

(b) **Ezi UcheUro:** Founder - Uche Uro

By all implications the founder of Kpoghirikpo was

Okirikpo.

Amandu:

The word 'Amandu' means a place of life or safety. Amandu was made up of the group of Nkalu refugees who fled for safety during the Igbo-Nkalu war. They had fled to their present location which they named Amandu or 'a place of safety'. Amandu people elected to be on good terms with the Igbo group, and even formed a bridge-head from which attacks were launched against the Nkalu. As a result their place was spared from the ravages of the war.

Mgbom:

The Mgbom lineages have not accepted a common ancestor or founder. As a result each lineage has its own founder.

Ezi Akputa: Founder - Akputa Nweze.

Ezi Item: Founder - Item Ogburugo.

Ezi Agbo: Founder - Ukwuenyi Njaka from Enohia Itim.

Ezi Ukie: Founder - Ukie Mgbom

Ezi Ukwu: Founder - Udu Ukabi

Ezi Ohia: Founder - Ohia Etc.

Amuzu Mgbom: Founder - Njaka Akama Itigiri.

The Mgbom group of lineages were the last to settle at the place now known as Ehugbo. The word "Mgbom" was derived from **mgbudu** in the local dialect, which means "very large numbers". The reason was that the people migrated in overwhelming hordes. The hordes were so large that onlookers described them in the local dialect as **mgbudu** or "coming in large numbers".

Ezi Akputa led by Akputa Nweze and some other Mgbom

lineages led by their founders migrated from Arochukwu to Ugwu Itim Edda. From there the groups finally settled at their present locations. Each moved to various sites of the place now called Mgbom. It is said that Ezi Ukie came from Amachi and Ameke Mgbom. It appears that Itim derived its name from Ugwu Itim Edda, where the Mgbom migrants were massed before their final movement to their promised land (Ehugbo).

Ozizza (Sub-Village Group)

Most Ozizza traditions agree that a man called Edem Oke, the founder of Amaorie and Agba (Ameta), was the eponymous founder of Ozizza. According to available sources, Amaorie and Agba (Ameta) were the first villages to settle at the place now called Ozizza. During libation-pouring rituals in Ozizza, Edem Oke, is usually mentioned first. Such libations usually start with the cry of 'Edem Oke' or 'Ozizza Edem Oke', suggesting that historically, Edem Oke was the father or 'owner' of Ozizza.

Amaorie

The founder of Amaorie was Edem Oke. He is said to be the first to settle at the place now called Ozizza. According to tradition and other sources, Edem Oke migrated from Igbo (Agbo clan) to Ebo Akpata and from there to Ugwu Obu where he discovered a wonderful cave which looked very much like a natural shrine. He stayed there with his group for protection and shelter. However, when Edem and his group were about to continue their movement, they named the wonderful cave 'Eze Ayi', meaning "our chief or king" for the protection it had given them.

From Ugwu Obu, Edem and his people moved up to a place called Onoka from where they settled at the place

now called Amaorie. Since then there has been one peculiar annual festival called 'Iko Onoka' during which all the Ozizza villages go to pay homage to Edem Oke at his former residence, Onoka. During the day, all the ancient cultures of Ozizza including masquerades would be assembled at Ogo Amaorie. The elders of Ozizza would be led in a traditional procession by the chief priest from Amaorie to Onoka shrine. There, young men of Ozizza were, and still are initiated into manhood by the chief priest. After this phase all the elders of Ozizza and the masquerades would lead the new initiates to Obu Eziukwu in Amaorie where the final ritual was performed before the people retired to their various villages.

It should be noted that the chief priest of Ezeayi Ozizza must of right come from Amaorie or Agba (Ameta). It is recorded that if Ozizza community wanted to declare war, the decision for such a declaration was usually taken at Ogo Amaorie. However, all available evidence points to Amaorie and Agba as the first settlers of Ozizza. Another reason is that both Amaorie and Agba were of Egu descent - the original settlers of Ehugbo. Both of them lived at Ebo Akpata before migrating to their different places. Finally both of them regard the legendary Edem Oke as their father.

Agba (Ameta)

The original name of Ameta was Agba. The abundance of **eta** (spear grass) in the area earned them the nickname, "Ameta". The name was given to them by a group of **umu-amadi** from Ndibe who visited Agba about 1908.

The founder of Agba, the place now called Ameta, was Egu Ichie who was of the Egu descent that settled at Ebo Akpata near Ugwuegu. Ebo Akpata had been the original

home of his ancestors. Egu Ichie had a son called Evo Egu who had three sons - Elem Evo, Idam Evo and Ude Eleje. All of them settled at Ebo Akpata with their parents.

Agba tradition has it that later Evo Egu and his sons migrated to Oke Otum Agba, the place now called Ameta. However, Elem Evo, the first son of Evo Egu was reluctant to go. So he stayed back at Ebo Akpata. By then their ancestor, Egu Ichie had died at Ebo Akpata where they first settled. It is said that they decided to migrate because of warfare around Ugwuegu and the neighbourhood. This was probably the Igbo-Egu war which occurred around the dawn of the eighteenth century. It was because Evo Egu founded Agba, the place now called Ameta, that he was often referred to as the founder of Agba rather than his father, Egu Ichie.

Tradition has it that Idam Evo moved over to Uji Ugo Ocha at Oke Otum Agba while his younger brother, Ude Eleje settled at Ozara Eta Nkogho within the Agba axis. All the Agba lineages were thus sprawled within the Agba precincts to counter any possible attack.

Agba tradition also relates that in earlier years, one Edem Oke who hailed from Ezi Egwuadu lineage in Agba left Oke Otum and finally settled at the place now called Amaorie. It is said that on his way, he came upon a wonderful cave in a forest. A voice from the cave ordered him to come nearer. As he approached, the voice told him that 'he' was their chief or king ('Eze wo'), Edem and his people thus called the voice "Eze Ayi", our chief. The voice also directed him and his kinsmen to the place where they should settle - the place now called Amaorie. It is not clear whether he met anybody on arrival there.

It is even more possible that the legendary Edem Oke was the father and founder of the two villages, Amaorie

and Agba (Ameta) at Ebo Akpata where both of them originally lived before migrating to different places. It is said that the remaining Agba lineages later decided to join the rest of the Agba lineages at Amaorie. It is possible that they took this decision in order to join with the Amaorie people with whom they had shared a common environment at Ebo Akpata, and probably, under a common ancestor known as Edem Oke.

Whatever be the case, the Agba continued to live side by side with Amaorie village until about 1908 when they had some misunderstanding with Amaorie over the sharing of **apa oma-ogo**. Thereupon the Agba (Ameta) lineage, except a section of Ezi Egwuadu lineage, decided to go back to Agba (Ameta) after many years of close relationship with Amaorie village. When in 1911 the Amaorie village entered Agba territorial lands to cut palm fruits, fighting ensued between the two villages. But the matter was settled once and for all in favour of the Agba. The people of Agba (Ameta) have also given an intriguing version of the **Iko Onoka** history. The stories of the foundation of Agba from Ebo Akpata, to Agba (Ameta) and the foundation of Amaorie from Ebo Akpata to Amaorie show the antiquity of the two villages at their present places of location.

What emerges from these stories is that both the Agba (Ameta) and the Amaorie villages were of Egu descent. The Agba group might have migrated from Igbo as the Amaorie did or from Itigiri, as some Ozizza traditions say and settled at Ebo Akpata, their original place. However, both the Agba and the Amaorie villages are reputed to be the first to settle at the place now called Ozizza. At one time both of them shared a common milieu at Ebo Akpata and at another time at Amaorie. They had much in common by reason of a common cultural heritage such as 'Ezeayi' shrine and 'Iko

Onoka,' and a common ancestry traceable to their legendary founder, Edem Oke.

Their closely related versions of the Edem Oke - Ezeayi legend show that there must have been some connection between Edem Oke and the two villages somewhere along the migration line. Note that both of them migrated from the Ebo Akpata frontier to their present places of location. They must have also shared a common destiny. Again, there is a lineage called Agba at Amaorie up till today. Both Agba and Amaorie villages agree that they have equal rights over the Ezeayi Ozizza shrine and only an elder from Agba (Ameta) or Amaorie can act as a priest of the ancient shrine. Similarly, both of them have equal rights and privileges thereof, over the **Iko Onoka** (Onoka festival). In the same vein both of them start the **Iko Okochi** rounds in Ozizza. It is also understood that only a man from Ezi Egwuadu lineage, either of Agba (Ameta) or Amaorie can carry the **Arua Onoka** (Onoka spear), which is a symbol of power and authority, on the **Iko Onoka** day. Thus, although they appear to have migrated from different places before settling at Ebo Akpata, the two villages are closely related by the accident of history.

Imama

The common route to Ozizza in those days was along the Cross River. Any village or community located inland away from the Cross River was referred to as "ime-ama", that is, an inland place. It is in this way that Imama got its name. "Imama" thus means "an inland community". It is significant to note that Imama community has not accepted a common founder of their place.

Amika

Amika tradition says that Imama was founded by three brothers called Oko Nekwu, Idam Nekwu and Abagha Nekwu. According to this source, Oko Nekwu and the Amika lineage were the first to settle at the place now called Ozizza. Oko Nekwu and his brothers are said to have migrated from Arochukwu and, after some stop-over, they finally settled at the place now called Imama. Their tradition cited a shrine called Ika at Amika which was the first shrine in Ozizza. It is from the word "Ika" that Amika derived its name. The ritual at Ika was an annual event in Ozizza during which each of the five Ozizza Villages including Imama brought five yams and a pot of palm wine. The yams were usually boiled and pounded for all to partake, while the palm wine was equally consumed. The ritual was usually held in February to precede the clearing of farmlands.

However, Ozizza traditions have not given support to the claim that Oko Nekwu, the founder of Amika, was the first to arrive at Ozizza. In fact, other traditions say that the Ika ritual dates back only to the time of Alike Obeni, the hawker of the "Otosì" juju - an associate of "amadi". According to these sources, the word 'Ika' was coined from Alike's name. If this is true, then the Ika shrine is not very ancient in Ozizza for it would only be dated to the mid-nineteenth century, which is about the time that Alike Obeni came to Afikpo to hawk his Otosì juju. Amika and Ovum lineages are said to be close brothers.

Amaoge

The word "Amaoge" is a compound of **ama** and **oge**. The word 'ama' means "place" while "oge" means "machete." The people who inhabited Amaoge were very fond of carrying machetes about. This notorious habit earned them the name

Amaoge, meaning " a place of machetes".

The founder of Amaoge was Idam Nwaefi from Amuncha lineage. According to sources, Idam Nwaefi migrated from Akunakuna to Afoni in Erei. From Afoni he continued his journey to Nde Eni (lower Igonigoni) in Bahumono clan of the Cross River State. He later crossed over to Okpasue between Amaozara and Orra Villages where he established a transit camp. The choice of Okpasue must have been predicated on the need for security. The area was located on the shoulder of a hill and covered with trees which provided the needed security and defence. It was also a fertile spot overlooking the Cross River. A place called Ukwu Mbembe on the Cross River served as his beach. It was at this Ukwu Mbembe that he first camped from Nde Eni Igonigoni, before moving over to Okpasue for the reasons mentioned earlier. It was from Okpasue that he moved over to a place now called Agbo Ogo in Amaoge, from where he finally settled at the place now called Amuncha in Amaoge. The word "Amuncha" is derived from "ama ucha", meaning "a clean place". It appears the area was devoid of thick forest; it was rather a typical open grassland zone.

There is no controversy about the fact that Idam Nwaefi was the founder of Amaoge and that he came from Amuncha lineage, which is reputed to be the first lineage to settle at Amaoge. In fact, the main Ogo of Amaoge is still at Agbo Ogo where he first settled before moving to Amuncha. All the Ogo rituals including **ibu ubu** (initiation) and **aja Amaoge** are performed at Ogo Agbo Ogo. During the performance of **aja Amaoge** ritual and other important rituals, other elders of Amaoge are usually led by an Amuncha elder. Formally, only an Amuncha elder performed such rituals; but now any elder from Amaoge can do it in the absence of an Amuncha lineage elder. It is Amuncha lineage that takes

the **apa omaogo** after **ibu - ubu** (initiation) rituals.

The Amuncha lineage has a close relationship with the Agbo Ogo Orra lineage, who also migrated from Akunakuna to Erei and after some stop-overs, finally landed at the place now called Agbo Ogo Orra. It is said that Inaa Aja, the founder of Agbo Ogo Orra and Idam Nwaefi the founder of Amaoge were agnatic brothers. As a result both the Amuncha lineage and the Agbo Ogo Orra lineage do not intermarry. An interesting aspect of Amaoge history is that all the lineages regard Idam Nwaefi as their putative father.

Amainyime

The Amainyime lineage migrated from Amangbala Afikpo. They first settled at Uhu Amainyime near Okpasue from where they occupied their present location, Amainyime in Imama. It is the only lineage in Ozizza that participates in the **Obiogwu** dance, which they probably inherited from Amangbala Afikpo.

As stated earlier, Imama lineages have not accepted a common founder for their community. There are claims and counter claims of primacy of arrival at the place now called Imama between Amika and Amaoge lineages. What appears certain is that the Amaoge lineages, especially Amuncha, were among the original Egu settlers who migrated from Akunakuna to Erei and finally settled at the place now known as Ozizza. All the same, Amika lineage was one of the earliest Igbo lineages to settle at the place now known as Ozizza.

What also appears certain is that Amika lineage was about the first in Ozizza to purchase the **otosi** juju, alias **amadi**. Because of this, they began to claim primacy of arrival over the rest of Ozizza lineages. This was common

with all the 'amadi' lineages even in Afikpo. It is the same claim being made by Ezi Ihere lineage in Amikpo who came from Amika and who also purchased the "otosi" juju.

But it should be noted that any claim of primacy of arrival based on the possession of Ootosi, alias amadi, is not plausible in Ehugbo history. The reason is that "otosi" alias amadi came as a mere accident in Afikpo history. It was introduced by one Alike Obeni, after all the Afikpo villages had settled in the place now known as Ehugbo. As a matter of fact, it was introduced into Ehugbo around the mid-nineteenth century. It even got to Ozizza later.

Whatever be the case, most Ozizza traditions credit the foundation of Ozizza to a legendary figure called Edem Oke. Most of my respondents, even outside Amaorie or Agba where Edem Oke lived agree, without equivocation, that Edem Oke was the putative father of Ozizza. Other evidence such as the use of his name to prefix a ritual incantation in Ozizza community is historically plausible. It is said that all libation-pouring incantations in Ozizza usually begin with the prefix 'Ozizza Edem Oke', which signifies primacy of arrival and, probably the founding father of a community. Again Ozizza is often referred to as Ozizza Icha. According to Ozizza traditions, the word 'Icha' means "crab". The crab was associated with the Ezeayi shrine in Ozizza. It was found in context with the Ezeayi shrine, and thus regarded as sacred to the shrine, and as a result, all worshippers of the Ezeayi shrine and indeed all citizens of Ozizza were forbidden to eat crabs. Because the crab was an associate of the Ezeayi shrine, the shrine itself was often referred to as "Icha" (crab). Thus Ozizza Icha means Ozizza Ezeayi. It is common knowledge that the chief priest of the Ezeayi shrine must of right come from Amaorie or Agba (Ameta) village. This further lends weight to the Ozizza

tradition that Amaorie and Agba villages were probably the first to settle at the place now called Ozizza.

Amikpo

The word **Amikpo** is a hybrid of **Ama** and **Ikpo**. **Ama** means a place while **Ikpo** means metal bells or gongs. The village was called Amikpo because its warriors hung or tied **ikpo** (metal bells) around their waists when proceeding to war as a sign of bravery. Amikpo is thus derived from Ama-Ikpo ("place of bells").

Ezi Ugwute

The founder of Ezi Ugwute lineage in Amikpo was Ugwute Ali, who migrated from the Bahumuno (Yako-speaking people) over the Cross River and settled at their present location.

Ezi Ihere

The founder of Ezi Ihere was Ihere Ojofi who migrated from Akpa (Ibom) to Arochukwu, to Okposi, then to Amika, and finally to the present location of Ezi Ihere at the place now called Amikpo. Ezi Ihere lineage has almost the same migration tradition with Ezi Nwachi Ndibe.

Ezi Udume

Ezi Udume migrated from Ibii in Afikpo. It is said they came from Arochukwu but had a stop-over at Ibii from where they settled at their present location.

Ezi Ezeke

Ezi Ezeke alias Ezi Omagha Uzor migrated from Agbogo Orra. They were probably a part of the Inaa Aja group who

migrated from Erei. Their paternal relationship with Agbogo Orra lineage is not in doubt.

Ezi Ugwute claims primacy of arrival at Amikpo and regard their father, Ugwute Ali, as the founder of Amikpo. As a matter of fact, other independent sources confirm that Ugwute Ali and his younger brother, Okote Ali, were the founders of Amikpo. Whereas Ugwute Ali founded Ezi Ugwute lineage, his younger brother, Okote Ali, is reputed to be the founder of Ezi Okote lineage in Amikpo. In the same breath, Amikpo tradition says that the two agnatic brothers, Ugwute Ali and Okote Ali, were the first to settle at Amikpo. The two lineages probably were part of the early Egu group who settled at Ozizza.

Orra

The founder of Orra was Inaa Aja, who migrated from Akunakuna and had a stop-over at Erei. It was from Erei that he moved to the present location of Agbogo Orra. However, other Ozizza traditions say that most of the lineages in Orra came from Ikumoro (Bahumuno) over the Cross River. The lineages include Ezi Urom Ota, Ezi Eni, Ezi Akpu Eke and Ezi Elechi. As a matter of fact, Orra culture is basically that of Yako (Bahumuno) and Akunakuna including the **Ekpe** and **Okonko** societies.

Nonetheless, a greater part of Orra culture was borrowed from Akunakuna. For instance, the language of their **Ebiabu** war song is purely that of Akunakuna (Agwugwuna). Agbogo Orra lineage from where Inaa Aja came was the first to settle at Orra. It is pertinent to note that culture borrowing was a feature of Afikpo society.

Amaozara

Amaozara means a place located on a treeless area. The

founder of Amaozara was Alum Ugo Egwu who migrated from Amaorie. As a result there is a close relationship between Amaorie and Amaozara, which today is regarded as a part of Orra. It is said that at **Iko Onoka** (Onoka festival) the Amaozara lineage has a special role to play. At times, the festival has to be delayed to wait for the arrival of the Amaozara elders.

The Igbo-Egu-Nkalu War

As mentioned earlier, Igbo-Ukwu had raised an alarm called an emergency meeting of all the Igbo groups to his palace at Oroghoro. The purpose of the alarm (*iti mkpu*) was for a military operation against the Egu and the Nkalu non-Igbo elements. The meeting was attended by all the elders and youth of the Igbo group.

The Igbo-Egu-Nkalu war is an important theme in Afikpo history. Firstly, it marked the establishment of Ehugbo and the consolidation of the authority of Igbo Omaka Ejali as the founder of Ehugbo. Igbo Omaka had led his fellow Igbo groups into a successful war of establishment and identity in a new environment. The original settlers had been made to flee and whatever left of them were 'swallowed' into the Ehugbo society. Every Igbo group had participated in the war effort and fought as part of a team. Besides, it brought unity to the various Igbo groups who had migrated from different places and finally settled at the area now known as Ehugbo. After the war, all the people of Ehugbo met at Amaizu where a ritual covenant was drawn and the ingredients dumped in a 'pot' of unity. The covenant emphasised unity as the corner-stone of the people's co-existence in Ehugbo.

The Igbo-Egu-war does not only echo in Afikpo traditions, but also in the history of Igboland. Professor Afigbo

(1981:13-15) has noted that :

The traditions of the eastern and north-eastern Igbo, including Afikpo, are rich in accounts of fierce encounters with various sections of the Benue-Congo-Speaking peoples who appear in their traditions as the Egu, Nkalu and Igbo.

The causes of the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu War were both far-fetched and not clear. According to Nkpogho traditions, Igbo Omaka Ejali was said to have married his own sister called Orié Imomo because both the Egu and the Nkalu refused to give any of their daughters in marriage to him. As a result, Igbo grew annoyed and decided to deal squarely with them. Other sources have confirmed the name of Igbo's wife to be Orié. It is doubtful if Igbo could have married his own sister under the matrilineal marriage taboo in Ehugbo. If he did, then he must have been granted a special dispensation!

It should also be remembered that the Igbo groups were strangers in the area, so to say. They had moved into an environment occupied by the Egu and the Nkalu who were non-Igbo elements. There is no doubt that mutual suspicion must have existed. Such a pathological suspicion was bound to occur where peoples of different ethnicity, culture, and language occupied the same milieu. Such a phobia can lead to a conflict and confrontation, which sociologists regard as normal social phenomena.

Thus, the Igbo groups and the earlier settlers felt insecure. The Egu and the Nkalu must have been apprehensive while the Igbo groups must have felt uncomfortable with strange neighbours who appeared uncompromising.

In addition there was the usual question of who should control who. The original settlers must have felt that it was their right to do that while the Igbo groups saw themselves

sandwiched between the Egu to the north and north-west and the large Nkalu to the east and south-east. One could not also rule out the question of boundaries and spheres of influence. Conflicts were therefore bound to occur. Under such conditions, war loomed. It was only a question of who would strike first.

Delay could be dangerous. Conscious of the impending danger Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu, the legendary founder of Ehugbo, summoned all the Igbo groups to his residence at Oroghoro. It was there that a decision was taken to declare war against the Egu and the Nkalu - the war that is celebrated in Igbo history as the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu war. It was launched around the dawn of the 18th century.

The war was launched at various fronts. War leaders were appointed to command the various fronts. There were basically three major sectors. First, the east and south-east axis which was the stronghold of the Nkalu and some egu groups. It was the most formidable front in view of the numerical strength of the Nkalu. It was felt that in view of the large population of the Nkalu and some Egu groups, Igbo-Ukwu Omaka should command the area with a number of war lords under him. The war lords were the people who actually featured at the war fronts. Those to whom this first sector was assigned were the Ime-Ogo groups comprising Nkpogoro, Ugwuegu and Itim, and led by Igbo Omaka Ejali.

The second sector was the north and north west axis, which was commanded by Aja Iberekwu with a number of veteran war leaders. It was the area now occupied by the Ohaisu group. By then Isu Nkalu had not fled from Nkalu. It was still the early stage of the war.

The Ozizza group took care of the third sector which was part of the north and north-east. It is recorded that the

Ebiri veteran warriors demonstrated their skill in warfare. They played a major role in the north and north-west sectors of the war.

In his unpublished write-up, E. Agha Uchay said:

The Imeogo segment of Ehugbo (Nkpoghoru, Ugwuegu and Itim) led on the expedition by Igbo Omaka Ejali first settled at Oroghoro and waged war on the south-east area of the settlement. While the Ohaisu segment with Aja Iberekwukwu and other associate veteran war leaders fought and defeated the Egu on the northern area. The Ozizza carried on warfare on their southern area. Thus, the Egu were completely routed and subjugated.

However, tradition has it that the most formidable resistance was encountered on the eastern and south-eastern side - the Nkalu area. Apart from commanding a sector, Igbo-Ukwu Omaka still co-ordinated the activities of the other sectors. After all, it was his war lords that actually featured at the war fronts.

What made the war somehow chequered was the carrier of a run-away soldier called Isu Nkalu. He was a veteran soldier who fled from Nkalu in the heat of the war with a large number of followers. He first settled at Amangbala and then moved over to Amachi where he was a security risk. He threatened the area now called Ohaisu with his large followers. This diverted the attention of the other sectors especially the Nkalu sector. All efforts to arrest him proved abortive.

In the heat of the apparent confusion, Igbo Omaka Ejali adopted a propaganda strategy to deal with the situation. He ordered his Igbo groups and followers to announce that they had cut down a big **akpu** tree and caught and held it in mid-air so that it would not touch the ground. Igbo's

soldiers and followers began to sound the **ikoro** - (the talking drum) in jubilation and celebration of the "feat". The Nkalu people were called **mba ukwu** or **oke mba** because of their large number while the Igbo group were called **mba nta** or **nwata mba** because their population was not as large comparatively.

The propaganda spread like wild fire. It is said that when the Nkalu group heard of this great feat by the **mba nta** (the Igbo group), they decided to do the same with their large number to prove that they were more than equal to accomplishing the same task, and so that they would not be called cowards. As a result, all their able-bodied men were assembled and lined up in readiness to catch in mid-air a very big **akpu** tree that was being cut down. But of course the attempt was futile and the weight of the crashing tree crushed all of them to death! It was a disaster. Their population was now dangerously decimated, and that was precisely what Igbo wanted.

Although a legend, one can see the cleverness and wisdom in such a stratagem. It was typical of the enigmas usually associated with Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo Ukwu. Taking advantage of the disaster that befell the Nkalu group, Igbo Omaka Ejali struck. His belligerent allied forces besieged the already shattered Nkalu forces, leaving them in disarray with no alternative but to capitulate.

Igbo Omaka Ejali's strategy had worked. After all, propaganda was a veritable and legitimate instrument of warfare even in modern times. With the unbridled activities of the run-away but veteran Nkalu soldier, Isu Nkalu, and the alarming numerical strength of the Nkalu, danger was not only brewing but imminent. The situation required immediate action. And only the type of stratagem thought up by Igbo Omaka could have saved the situation as it did.

Because of this, Igbo Omaka Ejali was described by his contemporaries as a strategist, a warrior, a visionary, an adventurer, a conqueror, a wise man, a man of great intelligence and an integrated personality.

It was a combination of these attributes and others that earned him the epithet **Igbo -Ukwu**, which means "Igbo the Great" or "the Great Igbo".

It was really Igbo Omaka Ejali's unrivalled capacity for strategies that stood him in good stead in those days of ever-present danger when one false step could easily mean ruin. He was an embodiment of unity in Ehugbo.

It is said that even before the surrender of the Nkalu, Isu Nkalu had joined forces with the Ohaisu allied group to wage the war against the Egu group at the north and north-west sector. He also took part in the mopping up operations which were the last phase of the war. It is said that many Egu and Nkalu elements went into hiding. Isu Nkalu was also the brain behind the combing out of the run-away soldiers, and led the Ohaisu group to end all the pockets of resistance. Aja Iberekwukwu, who initially led the group now known as Ohaisu, was already old and incapacitated.

It is recorded that before the emergence of Isu Nkalu, there was no name like Ohaisu, only a group of people occupying a large area who were antagonistic to one another. It was Isu Nkalu who commanded the north and north-west sectors of the war towards the tail end. It was he who united the various warring factions in that large environment now known as Ohaisu. His achievements in the area were proverbial. He was regarded as a gallant soldier who left no stone unturned. His later role in the Igbo-Egu-Nkalu War earned him the title of a hero. His single effort in the combing out and mopping up operation was unprecedented. It was because of his act of heroism

that Ogo Amachi has become a reception ground for heroes.

There were a lot of migrations within Afikpo during the War. We can count Isu Nkalu as number one. A group called Ubam Itigiri migrated from Ozara Akpuemeghi near Amaelu Amankwo to join their Egu brothers at the place now called Ubam. The Agba (Ameta) migrated from their original home called Ebo Akpata near Ugwuegu to Oke Otum Agba where Ameta is now located. Being an Egu group, the Agba people were probably looking for a place of protection in their present location.

A large number of the Egu and the Nkalu migrated to places outside Afikpo. Such places include Ikwo, Itigiri, Igbo (Agbo Clan), Erei, Ediba, Ezza, Ezzaegu, Nkalegu, Izzi, Amasiri, Nkwoegu, Akataka, Effium, Abakaliki, Akunakuna etc. An exclusive interview carried out at Ikwo gave a startling revelation. It showed that most of the people who live in that area came from Afikpo. They even refer to themselves as Egu people from Afikpo. As a result, an Afikpo man is usually given a safe passage in the area.

However, the Egu who were left behind were assimilated into the Ehugbo society. Afikpo people did not kill their war captives. Such captives were treated as equal members of the society. What was paramount was peaceful co-existence, because there were still pockets of resistance, or a sort of intermittent guerrilla warfare. But those moves no longer posed any serious threat; for the community was then under the full control of the Igbo group.

The Peace Covenant

After the war, there was need for appraisal, for reintegration, for merriment, for consolidation, for security, for relationships and, above all for unity. A peace covenant

was readily agreed upon by all Ehugbo. The venue was the place now called Amaizu. The choice of Amaizu was not only because of its central location but because of its close relationship with Nkpogoro through marriage. An Amaizu man is said to have married the daughter of Igbo Ukwu, called Oriete or Nwata Orie.

The exact covenant ground was Ogo Okpoota. The ingredients used for the covenant were finally dumped into a special ritual pot and buried at Ogo Okpoota Amaizu. The burial of the pot signified the sowing of the seed of unity. Since then Ogo Okpoota became the Ehugbo traditional meeting ground. Amaizu derived its name from the historic assembly. Thus, **Amaizu** means an assembly ground. It was at Ogo Okpoota that Ehugbo people assembled and made a treaty which brought permanent peace. Since then, if Afikpo people want to discuss any matter concerning the peace of the town, it must be at Amaizu.

Because of the ritual covenant, Ogo Okpoota is regarded as sacred ground where a speaker must speak the truth, otherwise he would be visited by retribution. The punishment is still there for those who think they can manoeuvre the truth.

One important aspect of the covenant was its emphasis on the unity of Ehugbo and the equality of the villages. The covenant stated unequivocally that there was no victor and no vanquished. The republican posture of the Afikpo society is rooted in this provision. It is instructive that every Igbo village in Afikpo took part in the war. Its success was therefore the collective effort of the villages as constituted at that time. Since then, it was agreed that the founding patrilineage had no right to rule others and that there should be no hereditary rule in Afikpo. Thus, equality of all the

villages in Afikpo, was guaranteed and verbally sealed. That is also the reason why the people view seriously, any attempt to call a member of any village in Afikpo a stranger.

The question of the position of the Egu and the Nkalu remnants was also tabled. All the Igbo villages were ordered to assimilate any Egu and Nkalu man found in their midst as part and parcel of the Ehugbo society. Thus, all the Egu and the Nkalu remnants were absorbed into the Ehugbo society. Today we do not talk of the Egu and the Nkalu, but of the people of Ehugbo into which the Egu and the Nkalu had been assimilated. However, history will continue to remember the Egu and the Nkalu as a people who once settled at the place now known as Afikpo.

To perpetuate the ritual covenant, an annual festival called **Iko Izu** was fixed for a particular period of the year at Ogo Eziukwu Amaizu where **Orie Amaizu** - the deified effigy of Oriete or Nwata Ori - is erected on her grave. As mentioned earlier, the **Iko Izu** feast was to serve a dual purpose. First to commemorate and renew the peace covenant made at Ogo Okpoota and second, in memory of **Orie Amaizu** (the deified effigy of Igbo-Ukwu's daughter). The feast was also designed to end all the **Iko Udumini** (rainy season feasts) in Afikpo and mark the inception of **Okochi** (dry season).

It was customary for all the elders of Afikpo from the **Ekpuké Eto** to **Horri** to attend the **Iko Izu** ceremonies in order to renew the covenant's pledges, while the youths also attended as observers. Like many of our dying customs, only Nkpoghoró elders now attend the memorable ceremony. The chief priestess of **Orie Amaizu** called Osim, attended in her own right until women were manoeuvred out of that position. However, on that Izu Day, the priests and elders of Amaizu usually staged a re-enactment of the ritual

covenant by encircling a ritual pot called **Oku** in the local dialect. And through an act which appears like magic, the contents of the **Oku** (pot) would be commanded to produce stupendous foams or effervescence, which held spectators spell-bound. Then there would be a cry that **Izu** was foaming (**Izu na-agbo**). A large heroic wooden gong called **ikoro** (the 'talking drum') would be beaten and the sound echoed in the air to the jubilation of all.

CHAPTER FIVE

Religion And Cosmology

Like their counterparts in Africa, the people of Afikpo were very religious. And like their Igbo counterparts, they worshipped and still worship a myriad of gods or deities, as evidenced by the numerous shrines in the area. These gods were dotted here and there; around the water pots, in the backyard, in front of the house, near the source of water, on the entrance to the village, in the yam barn, at cross-roads, in the ancestral temple (**Obu**), etc. In the words of Ottenberg (1968:17) 'everywhere one looks there are shrines'. There were also matriclan shrines; yam gods (**Njokuji**) whom a farmer had to consult before planting and after harvesting of yams; and a god of war, lightening, and thunder called **Nkamalu**.

Above all, the people believed and still believe in the existence of a Supreme Being whom they variously called **Chineke** (God that creates) or **Obasi di n'elu** (God on high). They believed that he controlled all things above and below and that he dispersed rewards and punishments according to merit. That is the principle of distributive justice.

They believed that men were accountable for their actions and would receive rewards and punishments accordingly. Religion was securely enshrined in their philosophy of life. Thus, like the Stoics and Augustine of Hippo (354-430), the Afikpo people believed in the idea of a universal law of nature - a cosmic principle linking together all living beings and directing them to the proper fulfilment of their respective natures. But the form of **Chineke** himself was not known to them; as a result they have never represented him in any carved or moulded form or cult symbols.

As a matter of fact, they did not know how exactly to worship Chineke formally and directly. Hence they approached him through intermediaries ("erusi"), who according to them were kept by Chineke himself as agents to carry out a variety of functions; and in the normal prayers to their ancestors, **Chineke** was mentioned first (Ewa Utom, 1975).

So, associated with the belief in a Supreme Being was the worship of a multitude of gods or deities. These gods which were legion, were dotted here and there as we had earlier mentioned.

The Afikpo belief in and worship of 'ali' (land), regarded as the goddess of the earth and of fertility, was closely linked with their philosophy and cosmology about Chineke and their ancestors. 'Ali' was the most important single deity equated with Chineke and regarded as the queen of the underworld and the 'Owner' of men, dead or alive. According to Ndukwe Azu (August, 1975), 'before we eat kolanuts or drink palm wine, we must first give to her'. Thus, land was highly valued and ritualized in Afikpo as was the case in parts of Igboland. This arose from their corollary belief that land is an indispensable economic factor.

Like their Igbo counterparts, the people of Afikpo revered and worshipped their ancestors. **Maa Obu** (ancestral cults), were closely associated with **ali** and acted as her agent and regarded as the judge and guardian of human morality. The people also believed that each individual had a spiritual - double known as his **uwa** or **chi**, which was associated with him from the moment of conception until he went to his grave. They further worshipped a multiplicity of village - group deities. The most important ones included **ekwetani**, **ezeayi**, **nneeko**, **onumgba**, **mkpurukem**, **itara**, **ekuma ukwu**, **iyiobasi**, and **orie-amaizu**. The deities were said to have all-purpose

functions. During the people's historic wrestling contests, prospective wrestlers consulted these deities for help to throw down their opponents.

Other recognised deities included **njoku**, **nkamalu**, **eguru**, **ibinukpabi**, **adudo** or **okike uwa**, **oma ezi**, **egbo**, **egwunsi** and **nja ikwu**. Some of these deities were said to have adhoc functions while others were omnibus. **Njoku**, for instance, was primarily the god of yam which should be consulted by a farmer before and after planting of yams. As a rule, **njoku**, **nkamalu** and **ibinukpabi** must first 'eat' new yam before the people tasted it. **Nkamalu** was specifically a personal war god which a warrior must consult before going to war. Both **eguru** and **adudo** were fertility cults, while **egwunsi** was a special god, kept at the advice of a diviner, for a person who suffers from constant misfortune. **Egbo** was a deity fixed high at the entrance of a village to ward off epidemics (small pox) and prevent bad spirits and other dangers from entering the village. According to Chief Otuu Oyim and Mr. Ewa Utom, we always said, '**Egbo na-egbobe ndu** (egbo that protects life). Then, **oma ezi** or **eja ali ezi** (the heart or earth of the village) represented the land on which the people lived. It was the owner of the village and was installed by the very founders of the village as the centre of their power. It had its counterpart at Ogo, called **Oma Ogo** (the heart of Ogo). **Nja ikwu** (matriclan shrine), served as a binding force for the **ikwu** members or **umune**. Besides offering sacrifices to it, **ikwu** members discussed matters of common interest there. Finally, the people also worshipped **anyanwu** (sun god) and **onwa** (moon goddess). They equated **anyanwu** with **Chineke** and **onwa** with **ali** (earth deity). It was **anyanwu** that gave warmth to (i.e., impregnated) ali and she then produced what they ate.

In fact, religion was so interwoven with the social

customs that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. For example, initiation into the secret societies could not be done without religious rites; the woman who gave birth to twins could only be accepted again after a religious purification; a new-born baby must go through a religious ceremony called **itaye ose** or **ikwo eka** four days after birth; the funeral and second burial ceremonies of the deceased were associated with religious rites; the woman or the uninitiated man who saw the **ogo** secret cults or **egbele** had to undergo a thorough religious cleansing; title taking was connected with religious rites; the young warrior going to war must consult his war god (**nkamulu**) before proceeding; a farmer who was going to plant his yam must consult his yam god (**njoku-ji**) before and after harvest, prospective wrestlers could not engage in contests until they had seen their **nkamalu** and other deities; the married woman who had illicit sexual intercourse had to give a goat to appease the ancestral gods (**maa-obu**) and **ali**; the festivals of **iko**, **ikeji**, **mbe** and **nri nsi omumu** (fertility), could not be celebrated without sacrifices. One could continue *ad infinitum* to make a litany of how the Afikpo social organisation was intricately interwoven with their religious beliefs and practices. In effect, their religion was really a way of life.

Like the Egyptians and their other Igbo counterparts, the people believed in re-incarnation and life after death. Unlike the Egyptians, they did not build pyramids (burial places) or mummify their bodies. But they built ancestral shrine temples (**Obu**) where gods called **maa-obu** (ancestral spirits) and **Uwa** (personal spirits of the living) were jealously kept for the dead and living males respectively. The corpse of a man was usually buried with some cooked and raw foodstuffs to feed him in the next world. The person has

not really died; he has merely changed his abode from this world to the next. He will soon come back in the form of another living person within the kinsgroup.

As soon as a baby boy began to toddle, a personal spirit called **Uwa**, in the form of a small clay pot, was placed for him in the ancestral shrine. This arose from the people's corollary belief that each individual has a spiritual double called **Uwa** or **Chi**, which is associated with him from birth to death. A person's **uwa** became a **maa-obu** (ancestral spirit) upon his death. A ritual ceremony done usually during the second funeral of the man completed the transformation (Ottenberg 1968:49). After the ritual, the dead person could then re-incarnate. The people's belief in re-incarnation - a complex phenomenon that cannot be discussed here - is spiritually linked with the concepts of **maa-obu** and **uwa**. However, it was believed that the dead person (now an ancestor) could re-incarnate, that is, come back in the form of a living person or persons. The person to whom an ancestor had re-incarnated in his form would, from time to time as the need arises, perform rituals for him through his visible spirit called **maa-obu**. This was symbolic for it meant the dead man had come back to life.

We can conclude that there are fundamentally different types of divinity in Afikpo religion: the One Creator God (Chineke), who is usually remote from daily religious life, and the many lesser gods and spirits which are constantly involved in everyday religious experience. One can readily see Afikpo religion as fundamentally monotheistic or essentially polytheistic, or a kind of pantheism. This appears to be characteristic of African religions generally. It is also in tune with a research carried out by B. C. Ray (1976:50), which suggests that African religions are better understood as involving elements of monotheism, polytheism, and

pantheism at different theological levels, and in different contexts of experience.

It is a truism that Afikpo religion, and indeed Igbo religion, like all religions, possesses an element of finality clearly expressed in the notion of the Supreme Being called **Chineke** (the Spirit that creates) or **Chi Ukwu** (the Great Spirit) or **Obasi di n'elu** (the Spirit on high). He rarely receives sacrifices directly, but he is regarded as the ultimate recipient of all the sacrifices offered to the inferior or lesser spirits. The sacrifices are really offered to him but through the lesser spirits (erusi).

The people's worship of their ancestors is predicated on the belief that the spirit continues to influence the living relatives. It is believed that their characters have not been changed by death, for they are as prone to jealousy as they were while living, and would unleash their wrath on the living relatives who neglect their wishes or infringe upon the ancient laws and customs of their land. They were regarded as being ever willing to help those of their lineage who treated them with suitable respect and obedience. The dead were especially interested in the affairs and behaviour of their own living family, and without their help and guidance, their living descendants could not hope to flourish. The dead had not really died but had simply changed their abode. The dead could come back in the form of a living relative (within his kin-group). It is on this that the people premise their belief in re-incarnation - a complex phenomenon that cannot be discussed here. It is also on this premise that the people revere their ancestors, but it is doubtful whether they worship them in the real sense of the word as Eurocentric writers are wont to say.

Finally, there was inter-village solidarity maintained through a collection of norms, customs, beliefs, rules,

conventions, regulations, taboos and sanctions. It was through the application of these beliefs which ran across the whole gamut of the people's cosmology, and the observance of the taboos, rules, and sanctions that their society was ordered.

Ehugbo Festivals And Cultures

Afikpo people have a myriad of festivals and cultures. Each Igbo group arrived with its culture. This accounts for the variety of cultures in Ehugbo. The result is that almost every village in Ehugbo has one or more festivals and cultures to its credit. Later, these cultures were cleverly and systematically fitted in the Ehugbo annual sequence of events.

The festivals and cultures were and are still performed in the villages of origin as and when due within the Afikpo calendar year. Each festival usually marked the end of one event or the beginning of another. In most cases, their celebration was precursory to the next annual event, all lined up in a moving circle.

A lot of work still has to be done on the evolution, genesis and significance of the festivals and cultures of Ehugbo. This will involve interviews with knowledgeable elders of the villages of origin of each culture. It will also involve interviews with knowledgeable elders of the neighbouring villages. It may even be necessary to interview also, a cross-section of the elders of Ehugbo villages. It is only in this way that we can unearth the facts. This is very urgent because we have to retrieve the materials before our ageing elders die out.

Investigations into Afikpo festivals and cultures will constitute a very important aspect of the cultural history of Afikpo. It therefore requires a separate exploration so that

the details of the evolution and significance of each festival and culture would be exposed. I have personally explored the origin and significance of some festivals and cultures including the carrier villages. The details of my investigations are beyond the scope of this book; Afikpo cultural history requires a separate volume which will be undertaken later. So, suffice it to give an outline of the festivals and cultures associated with the various villages in Ehugbo.

1. **Nkpogboro**

Ibo Ogo Ibe and **Mgba Ogo Ibe**; **Iko Ogo Ibe**; **Iko Okochi** starts; the first to be mentioned in libation pouring in Ehugbo; the first in traditional order of village groups in Ehugbo. Wrestling contests cannot start in Afikpo until Ogo Ibe has been weeded.

2. **Amaobolobo**

Igbo Omaka Ejali and the Ogo culture; **Egwu Ehihie** culture; the first village in Ehugbo to weed **Ogo** and **Igba Ajaba**; dead masquerade rituals, centre for **Ulo Ogo Ehugbo** rituals.

3. **Amuzu**

Egbele Ogo; **Egwu Ehihie**; Ikpem initiation; first village to weed **Ogo** and **Igba Ajaba**; dead masquerade rituals; Ogidi Amuzu where "Ikpem" initiation takes place in Afikpo.

4. **Amangwu**

Specialists in constructing complex traditional burial chambers for the repose of the corpse of an **Omezue**.

5. Ndibe

New yam festival and **elom ji**.

6. Amaizu

Traditional meeting place for Ehugbo; **Iko Izu**; Legend of Oriete or Nwata Ori (daughter of Igbo Omaka Ejali) and Ori Amaizu. On the eve of **Iko Izu** all folktales and **Erebe ikeji** are stopped in Afikpo. The Okpoota covenant.

7. Ugwuegu Elu

Iko Ote. Initiation into **Ekpuke Eto** and **Ekpuke Essa** age grades.

8. Ubam

New yam festival rounds

9. Amangbala

Mbe dance; assembly ground (refugee camp).

10. Egeburu

New yam festival rounds

11. Ngodo

Akpoha Ngodo and **Urobo Chiali**

12. Ukpa

Aja Iberekwu and the '**Aho**' legend

13. Amachi

Ogo Amachi - **Erebe**; Reception ground for heroes; place

for declaration of war. Weeding of Ogo Amachi and inception of **erebe unwu**.

14. Ibii

Terminus of **Iko Okochi**

15. Amuro

Ebu mbe; Isubu Edda; Onu Ogo Onyeani

16. Mgbom

Rain making; **Ebu mbe; Isubu Edda**

17. Enohia Nkalu

Eleri Aja and Elom Ji; Egwu Imo; Isubu Edda

18. Enohia Itim

Ukpo

19. Ozizza

Akwari; New yam starts.

20. Agba (Ameta)

Iko Onoka

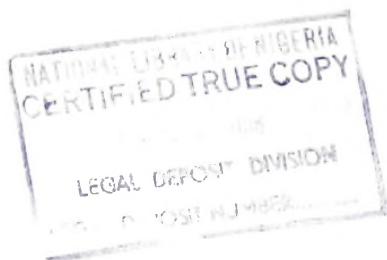
21. Amaorie

Iko Onoka

22. Imama

Ika in Amika and Onuogo Onyeaani in Amaoge

The above list is by no means exhaustive, for the research continues. However, the festivals and cultures



are a manifestation of the significant role which each village plays in the Afikpo social set-up. The characteristic cultural diversity of the people is the product of their complex migration phenomenon.

It should therefore be noted that part of the Afikpo culture was borrowed from the Efik and the Ibibio, even from Arochukwu. In fact, some Afikpo cultural and social organisations, including language, are akin to those of Arochukwu. Cultures such as the **Ekpe** and the **Okonko** societies are certainly of the Efik and Ibibio type. The **Ekpe** society in Afikpo performs almost the same social, cultural, religious and political functions as it does among the Efik. Besides, the Afikpo dialect contains a lot of words which are cognate with Efik mainly in phonemic analysis. Some of these words which had found their way into the Afikpo dialect were certainly borrowed from the Efik or the Ibibio.

Such words include:

Afikpo	Efik	English
Usari	Usan	plate
ikpan	ikpang	spoon
Inya	Inyang	name of person
ekpe	ekpe	secret society
okonko	okonko	masquerade
eboo	iba	two
eto	ita	three
Oko	Okon	name of person

This cultural diffusion resulted partly from trade contact and partly from accident of migration.

Igbu Isi (Head-Hunting)

Bravery was an important aspect of character training

of males in Afikpo. At the age-grade of **Isi Elia** (middle age-grade), a man cannot be given any recognition as a brave man until he had chopped off a human head ("igbute isi"). He can only proudly assert his bravery within his age-set after he had done this. Wars were held occasionally with neighbouring communities to give men the opportunity to cut off heads and return with them.

At warfares, a man manifested his bravery among his age-grades by the number of heads and prisoners he was able to capture. Those who returned from war with heads, were usually greeted and welcomed with the sound of **Ikoro** (wooden drum), while they danced to the tune of the drum, displaying and gesticulating their military tactics as the "talking drum" called them brave names. They were accorded a lot of social rights and privileges as **dike**, and **ogbu agha**. Those who could not return with heads, were given a withering ridicule as cowards ranked with women-folk. Such cowards laid themselves open to public ridicule. It should be noted that the "**igba nnunu**" (shooting of a bird) ceremony of today, is simply a re-enactment of the "**igbu isi**" (head-cutting) of those days.

That is why on the "igba nnunu" day celebration, there is usually hysterical junketing by the father and mother of the boy who shot a bird ("**gbari nnunu**"), jubilating that their son has successfully returned from war with "a head". This time around, it is a bird's head, not a human head, as human head is now statute barred. Nonetheless, the father of the "bird shooter," still has to "answer" and dance to the tune of the "**ikoro**" (the "talking" drum), on behalf of the son, while the whole village is thrown into merry-making, dancing and feasting, because **nwa o gburu agha** (their son returned with "a head" from the war).

CHAPTER SIX

Pre-Colonial Socio-Political Organisation

The indigenous socio-political organisation of Afikpo was similar to that of most parts of Igboland. A major striking characteristic of the Igbo was its political decentralization. In pre-colonial Afikpo, the family was the smallest unit of socio-political organisation. This nuclear family or extended family was called **umudi**. That is, different families with close paternal or agnatic relations, and who could trace their origin to a common ancestor. The head of this minimal lineage, **umudi** was called **Okpara**, who was usually the oldest man of the lineage. The Afikpo community in effect had, and still has five clear levels of lineage structure.

The **umudi** (minimal lineage) graduates to minor lineage, major lineage, then maximal lineage (sub-village group), and ultimately to a village-group or town which is the largest unit of political organisation in Afikpo as we shall see shortly. The government was both segmentary and unitary. The major lineage constituted an autonomous village in Afikpo. There was inter-village solidarity maintained through a collection of norms, beliefs, rules, conventions, sanctions and taboos. These forces constituted instruments of social and political control through which the society was ordered.

The Supreme Council

Igbo Omaka was a democratic man, but very courageous. As soon as he established his authority and consolidated his position, he inaugurated a Supreme Council made up of all the elders of Ehugbo as understood at the time. He

was the President of the Council, which had supreme authority over the whole of Ehugbo. It was like a chief-in-council, for he did not override the decision of the Council.

The Age Grade System

As more groups arrived from various places, there arose the problem of administering a large group of people and territory. Remember that all the Igbo groups were allowed to settle at Ehugbo in the name of Igbo Omaka Ejali. Igbo was not only a brave warrior but also an administrative wizard. He quickly surmounted the problem posed by the new development by organising an Age-Grade System of government. Afikpo (**Ehugbo**) was then ruled by a hierarchy of age-grades at the apex of which were the **Oniikara** and **Horii**. It was a brilliant innovation which forebodes the application of democratic principles in government. It helped in the allocation of functions and in participatory democracy. However, there was overlap of power here and there since the council of elders, which was a legislative body, also performed judicial functions. Nonetheless, there was an executive arm to water down the arrangement. Otuu (1977: 26) has noted that the peculiar settlement pattern of Afikpo made the existence of the system necessary. Whatever be the case, it was adopted to take care of the various shades of opinion.

Igbo did not abolish the supreme council. He rather made use of particular age-grades called the **Ekpuke Essa** as members of the supreme council. Every village in Afikpo was represented in the Council since it was made up of all the seven age-sets in Afikpo who had attained the age of about 65 and above. The **Ekpuke Essa** age-grades were then members of the supreme council and thus constituted the ruling age-grades. They were representatives of the

villages in Ehugbo. The **Ekpuke Eto** age-grades sat in Council with the Ekpuke Esaa. The **Eto** was, however, the executive arm of the **Esaa**. Igbo Omaka continued to preside over the council.

Traditional Role of the Ekpuke Esaa and Ekpuke Eto in Council

1. They were and are the custodians and interpreters of the customs and traditions of Ehugbo.
2. They maintained law and order; arbitrated in civil matters such as matrimonial disputes, land cases etc., following the traditions of Ehugbo.
3. They adjudicated criminal cases such as theft and murder.
4. They determined the timing of Ehugbo Calendar Year from which other traditional events followed.
5. They had the power of life and death.
6. The institution guarded, and still guards jealously any interference with its traditional role.
7. The **Ekpuke Esaa** was the legislative body, while the **Ekpuke Eto** was the executive organ.

The **Onikara** age-grade was made up of elders who had retired from **Esaa** age-grade. Their ages ranged from 80 to 100 years. Although retired from active politics, they still constituted an advisory body to the Esaa and could be consulted before a decision was taken on intricate cases. They were and still are the embodiment of wisdom in Ehugbo and could be likened to the English Lords in British Parliament.

The **Horii** (oldest age-grade) were those who had attained the age of 100 years and above, and have graduated through

the Onikara age grade. They no longer take part in politics but could be consulted in matters that are obscure.

At the village level, the middlemen age-grade, called **Uke Ekpe** or **Isi Elia**, had the responsibility to organise young men for communal work. They provided town criers, and carried out functions as assigned to them by the **Ekpuke Eto** from time to time. They also helped to discipline their members and to supply the society with warriors.

In the villages, the elders of the various patrilineages settled domestic disputes, and so helped to maintain law and order in the villages. The Afikpo traditional system of government, therefore was and is a sort of gerontocracy - government by a council of elders. The only difference is that the government was structured on a hierarchy of age-grade system. The age-grade was therefore a determinant ingredient at all levels of leadership in the Afikpo society.

The choice of the elders as the locus of political authority in Afikpo, and the final say on judicial and religious affairs, stems from the belief that they were closer to the gods and ancestors, and thus the custodian of the village shrines, custom and tradition of the people. This unique and privileged position also qualified them as the trustees and controllers of the basic means of production - the land.

A closer study of the organisational structure and functions of the Afikpo age-grade reveals that the traditional government of Afikpo was and still is both segmentary and unitary. It is segmentary in that each of its thirty villages has its own internal administration and development and is therefore autonomous. On the other hand, the government is unitary in the sense that Afikpo has a unitary political framework over its villages typified in the **Ekpuke Esaa** and **Eto** council of elders. The village-group (town) forms the largest unit of political integration in Ehugbo. The decision of the Council of Elders on legislative and judicial matters in Afikpo Society is final.

Commenting on the traditional political organisation of the Afikpo villages, L. H. Shelton said:

The administrative body consists of the **nd'isi** of the villages (i.e. village heads), and the elders or **nzenze**, the latter comprising the two age-classes, **Onikara** the oldest of all the classes, and the **Akpo Uke Asa (Ekpuke Esaa)**, the class next junior to the **Onikara**. In each village, the **onyisi** and the **nzenze** form the village council. The council for the whole of Afikpo is formed of all the **ndisi** and the **nzenze**.

Commenting also on the traditional role of the Esaa council of elders, S. Ottenberg said:

The resolution of conflict and dispute at Afikpo falls largely to the elders. When these old men (Esaas and Etos) sit down to discuss a matter, it is Afikpo sitting down (*Leadership And Authority In An African Society: The Afikpo Village Group*, Seattle, 1981 p. 246).

Earlier in his Intelligence Report on the Afikpo Village Group in 1931, the then District Officer of Afikpo, Captain H. Waddington said:

Each village (in 'Afikpo) recognised an **onyisi** (village head), as did each family - but none of them was acknowledged to have any powers outside his own village. No person was recognised as the senior of the **ndisi** of all Afikpo. The administrative body consisted of the **ndisi** of the villages (village heads), and the elders or **nzenze** - the latter comprising the two age classes - **Onikara** and **Ekpuke Esaa**. In each village, the **onyisi** and **nzenze** together were the council of the whole of Afikpo. Both executive and judicial authority were vested in the council without distinction. There were no permanent spokesmen. Men of exceptional fluency were selected to

N.B: L. H. Shelton was the Administrative Officer for Afikpo and Acting Resident for Ogoja Province.

act in that capacity, but the office was not specially recognised. There was an age class called Ekpuke Eto whose duty was to assist the Council by executing its orders."

Kingship Institution In Ehugbo

Tradition has it that after the death of Igbo-Ukwu Omaka, Ehugbo (Afikpo) became a typical republican society and a classic example of 'village democracies' in Igboland. It was segmentary in structure. Igbo Omaka did not establish any hereditary rule. If he did, it would have been the right of his direct or immediate descendants - the Amaobolobo village - to rule Ehugbo. But as has been pointed out earlier, Igbo was a democratic man who wanted all the villages he had allowed to settle to share in the machinery of government. Hence, every village was represented in the supreme council epitomized in the Esaa ruling age grade. He did not therefore establish any hereditary rule or dynasty in Ehugbo. Professor Ottenberg agrees with this assertion. According to him:

The Afikpo histories do not say that the founding patrilineage has the right to rule others and there is nothing like hereditary rule in Afikpo (*Leadership and Authority in an African Society: The Afikpo Village Group, 1981:49*)

Since then, no single person or group of persons, besides the **Esaa** and the **Eto**, has ever had any successful authority over the thirty villages collectively called the Afikpo village group. The question of who arrived first which was raised in Afikpo after the death of Igbo-Ukwu, led to a great political upheaval and eventually to blood-shed.

This was the notorious **Ogburucham** episode - an episode which Afikpo people feel nervous to remember. Even

an attempt made later by those who bought a juju called **otosi**, alias **amadi**, to do the same was vehemently resisted by the Ehugbo people.

The people insisted that the democratic principles of equality handed down to them by their great founder, Igbo Omaka Ejali, should be religiously adhered to. It was an expression of the republican character of the Ehugbo society which does not permit overlordship by any section of the community. It stresses the concepts of equality and independence which find expression in the saying: **O bughu na-ani m nri** ? meaning, "Are you the one who feeds me?" Although the saying viewed from the stand-point of modern times, could be regarded as an anachronism, it did give, and still gives psychological satisfaction to the sayer.

The government of this ancient republican society had been and is still carried out by a hierarchical age-grade system with the Esaa as the administrative, legislative, and judicial body and the Eto as their executive wing. It is this discharge of their traditional rights that Professor Ottenberg meant when he said:

The resolution of conflict and dispute at Afikpo falls largely to the Elders. When these old men (the Esaas and the Etos) sit down to discuss a matter, it is Afikpo sitting down (*Leadership and Authority in an African Society: The Afikpo Village Group, 1981:246*).

However, in view of the fact that Igbo-Ukwu Omaka came from the Nkpoghoru sub-village group, Nkpoghoru always traditionally takes precedence over the others in whatever is being shared among the five sub-village groups in Ehugbo. It is for the same reason that Nkpoghoru is always mentioned first during libation pouring or ritual incantations in Ehugbo community.

Omaka Ejali

Most Afikpo traditions say that Omaka Ejali was the name of the father of Igbo Omaka alias Igbo-Ukwu. However, a few of the traditions say that Omaka Ejali was the name of the son of Igbo-ukwu. The latter version is contained in the Waddington report of 1931, paragraph 30, page 8. Whatever be the case, it is clear from the two versions that Igbo's father's name was Omaka Ejali hence his son's name Igbo Omaka Ejali. Following the second version, Igbo probably named his son Omaka after his father, which is the Ehugbo customary method of naming their first son. It was gathered that Igbo's son was called Omaka Igbo Ejali. Nonetheless, almost all the sources agree that Igbo Omaka's father's name was Omaka Ejali, hence his son's name Igbo Omaka Ejali, alias Igbo-Ukwu. As a matter of fact, Igbo Ukwu was synonymously called Ehugbo which signified Igbo's Ownership of the community which was named after his authority. Igbo or Ehugbo is still a common name for menfolk in Ezi Idume and Ezi Ike lineages in Amaobolobo where Igbo-Ukwu had lived.

The people of Afikpo always use the expression "Igbo Omaka Ejali!" or "Ehugbo Omaka Ejali!" in exclamations of astonishment or surprise. They thus cry respectively and invoke the memory of their legendary founder by calling his full names: Igbo Omaka Ejali! or Ehugbo Omaka Ejali! indicating that Igbo Omaka Ejali is their ancestor or owner of Ehugbo.

Origin of Otosi, Amadi, and Imete

The words **otosi**, **amadi**, **obu eno** and **imete** are synonymous terms used by the amadi lineages. All these terms are the offsprings of **Otosi** - a fetish juju cult bought from one Alika Obeni by those lured by the seemingly

potential power of it. Alika Obeni, the Arochukwu leper, had told his prospective customers that Otosi juju would confer on the possessor the title of **amadi**. But it is clear that a juju cannot confer on a person the title of amadi which can only be inherited by birth. If you read the history of the Aro, you will discover that they had social differentiation, based on the original settlers and the conquered people. The original settlers and the conquerors called themselves "amadi" (free born) while the vanquished were called slaves. In Arochukwu, only the free born were allowed to have **otosi juju** which was regarded as **ofo** (staff of office and symbol of authority) as applied to other Igbo areas. It is this foreign culture that Alika Obeni wanted to introduce into Afikpo. It is clear from Aro history that the words **otosi** and "**amadi**", are not Afikpo dialect. The two words found their way into Afikpo dialect during Alika Obeni's adventure. Before the intrusion of **otosi** in Afikpo, there was no social differentiation of the type in Afikpo. But when Alika Obeni came to Afikpo to sell the **otosi** (amadi) a number of Aro "amadi" migrants joined with him to entice Afikpo people to buy "otosi" so as to qualify as "amadi" social group. Those who refused to buy it were called **umu ogbenye** (poor people). The truth is that some of the people who migrated from Arochukwu carried their Aro **amadi** to Afikpo. Such a group felt that in order to qualify for **amadi**, one must buy **otosi** which is the symbol of **amadi**. But they forgot that it was not the culture of the people into whose area they had migrated. The Afikpo people resisted the **amadi** culture because it was foreign to them.

The origin of Otosi in Ehugbo

The accidental emergence of a social group known as

amadi marked a new epoch in the socio-political organisation of Afikpo. The **amadi** originated from the purchase of a juju called **otosi** which made its debut in Afikpo around the mid-nineteenth century. Many years after the death of Igbo-Ukwu, probably around the mid-nineteenth century, one Alika Obeni (a leper from Arochukwu) arrived at Ibi in Afikpo. He had been driven away (ostracized) from Arochukwu because he had leprosy. He had left Arochukwu with a juju called 'otosi' which he had contrived. It was an oval stone covered or wrapped with leather and trimmed with copper wires; painted or smeared with **nzu** (white wash) and decorated with feathers (see National Archives, Enugu: Afikpo Traditional Organisation File N. A. 212). Because he wanted a means of livelihood, Alika Obeni enticed people to buy the **otosi** by saying that it would confer on the possessor the social category of amadi and the privileges of looting people's property such as goats, fowls, sheep, selling people into slavery etc. (see National Archives, Enugu OG. 317 vol.2:15/1/2 - Afikpo Clan Social Organisation pp 34-35. See also Waddington's Report 1931: The **Otosi** Juju par. 103 pp. 34-35.

Otosi introduced social differentiation into Afikpo by creating a social group called **amadi**. Armed with **otosi**, the group forced its way into the Afikpo social organisation and acquired certain social and legal rights, which included looting of a non-amadi's livestock, yam barn and other movable property, selling people into slavery and judicial powers. These rights were often abused, thus making the conduct of the amadi inimical to peace and orderly development of Afikpo. The council of traditional rulers of Afikpo stepped in to bring sanity to Afikpo. The struggle that ensued as a result of this development will be discussed in the later paragraphs.

Imete

As mentioned earlier, Alika Obeni (the leper), brought Otosi juju to Ibii in Afikpo many years after the various villages had already got settled. Tradition has it that Alika Obeni was seen straying around the road junction between Ibii - Akpoha - Amasiri. He was accosted by one Uduma Uga of Ibii who was going to farm. After Alika had narrated his story and ordeal, Uduma Uga brought him to one Orji Uduma, who was the village head of Ibii. Alika recounted his adventure and finally broke the news that he had a juju, **Otosi**, otherwise **amadi**. He was received by the men and to enable him to be admitted into the community, he accepted to belong to their matriclan group (ikwu), "Imete". It is pertinent to note that the people of Ehugbo had and still have matriclan groupings (ikwu). It was difficult for a stranger to be absorbed into the society unless he identified himself with one of the matriclan groupings. To avoid being killed, so the story goes, Alika agreed to belong to Imete matriclan (ikwu) which was Orji Uduma's own matriclan grouping. Armed with this social weapon, he moved up to Ehugbo Town and started selling his Otosi juju to those who wanted it. Those who had their own juju and had no need for it refused to buy it, like Aja Iberekwu of Ukpa and other village chiefs. Those who had bought it began to call themselves **umu-otosi** (children of otosi) and thus qualified as members of the **amadi** group.

This account was collected from elders of Afikpo and cross-checked with archival records, and other written sources. (see also Captain Waddington's Report: The Otosi Juju, paragraph 103 pp, 34 -35).

Post-Igbo Council of Elders

Igbo-Ukwu, the founder of Ehugbo was not an amadi.

Otosi had not been brought to Afikpo until many years after Igbo's death. The death of Igbo heralded the end of a presidency for the council of elders, because no member had such an outstanding, imposing and charismatic personality as Igbo-Ukwu. In response to the needs of this republican society, the council resorted to the selection of one of its members as a spokesman or leader or speaker. The person so selected was in no way higher in authority or status than others. The phrase *primus inter pares* could be applied to this position to some extent. The person, however, was simply selected on account of his eloquence and probably sound knowledge of the custom and tradition of Ehugbo. Any member possessing such outstanding attributes could be selected as a speaker whenever the council was being constituted without any sectional discrimination. (see Afikpo Clan Intelligence Report No. OG. 317/A/5 of 27th November, 1931 by L. H. Shelton, Administrative Officer for Afikpo and Acting Resident for Ogoja Province - National Archives, Enugu).

In that Report, L. H. Shelton said:

There is no such thing as a president of the Council, the Elders refusing to recognise the Onyisi as such. Spokesmen are selected on account of their fluency. Both executive and judicial authority vests in the Councils without distinction. The Councils are assisted in their work by the age class Ekpuke Ato. This class carries messages etc. ...

The decision of the Essa council of elders was by consensus. It was the duty of the speaker, who also had a deputy, to ensure that this status quo was maintained. If he behaved otherwise, a vote of no confidence could be passed on him through known conventional procedures. If carried, it would result in his deposition and the selection

of another speaker. The above traditional and ancient arrangement predated the advent of Ototi, otherwise called 'amadi' which was discussed earlier. The council of elders could be likened to the British Parliament except that it was unicameral and combined legislative & judicial functions.

Council of Elders Versus Ototi Holders, alias "Amadi"

However, those who bought **Ototi** began to claim to be 'amadi' or free born. The term 'amadi' is a strange word in Afikpo dialect. It was imported from Arochukwu through Alike Obeni, the hawker of Ototi juju. In Arochukwu and some other Igbo-lands, the word 'amadi' connotes first settlers. But in Afikpo nobody was referred to as 'amadi' by reason of being the first to arrive at the place now called Ehugbo. In fact, the first settlers in Ehugbo did not call themselves 'amadi' because the word had not been introduced by Alike Obeni. Even Igbo Omaka Ejali, the founder of Ehugbo, was not an 'amadi' because his age predated the introduction of the term 'amadi'. By the way it was applied in Afikpo society, 'amadi' meant those that had bought otosi juju. Alike Obeni had told his prospective customers that otosi juju would confer on the buyer the social category 'amadi'. But it is clear that a social group like, 'amadi' which can only be acquired by right of early arrival or inherited by birth, as applied in other Igbo areas, cannot be rightfully acquired by the purchase of a juju. Besides, the question of who arrived first and its application had led to internecine war and bloodshed in Ehugbo society, an incident known in Afikpo history as **Ogburucham**. Nonetheless, those who refused to buy otosi juju were derogatorily called '**Umuogbenye**' which again is not an Afikpo dialect, but which in Arochukwu dialect literally means poor people.

But this reference to the non-otosi holders as 'umuogbenye' or poor people was a misnomer that has no support by available evidence. It is understood that many of the non-otosi holders were really wealthy leaders of their villages. They did not purchase the 'otosi' juju simply because they had no need for it, not because they were poor as stigmatized. In fact, non-amadi village founders and leaders like Agbo Oti Mgbo of Ukpa, Enwo di Ugo Enyi of Mgbom, Ewa Ukwu of Amaechara Agbo, Ugwu Oke Ilum of Amuzu Nkpoghoru, Anuma Ija of Amaelu Amankwo, Aja Iberekwukwu of Ukpa, Nnachi Akpu Egwu of Amaobolobo, Ugwu Ereghe Ejali of Amaobolobo, Aja Anuma of Amankwo, Okpani Orié Otu of Amangbala, Ota Okoche of Mgbom, Isu Nkalu of Amachi, to mention but a few, were really wealthy men who could easily afford the otosi juju if they had wanted. For instance, Aja Anuma and Oti Ude of Amaelu Amankwo took the Omume title, the highest title in Ehugbo as far back as the 19th and 20th centuries respectively. Other non-amadi personalities who performed the prestigious Omume title include Ibe Uro, Inya Akputa, Abagha Ota - all of Mgbom, Oko Idam Ukpam of Amuzu Nkpoghoru, Urom Nta of Amuro, etc. Those respected Omezues had the money to purchase otosi if they had wanted. Thus, to have referred to them as 'umuogbenye' was a misnomer.

The truth is that some of those great men had already installed a village juju which they very much cherished and which they felt could not co-exist with the otosi juju. According to records, Aja Iberekwukwu of Ukpa refused to buy otosi because he had a powerful village juju called **mkpurukem**, while Isu Nkalu of Amachi and Anuma Ija of Amaelu Amankwo refused to buy it for similar reasons.

However, the holders of 'otosi' began to press their influence in the Esaa council of elders. They forced their

way into performing the judicial functions of the government. They claimed that 'otosi' gave them the right to do so. This generated a struggle for power between the holders of **otosi** and the non-holders who constituted the greater majority of the Ehugbo community. It was more or less an intra-group struggle, and a ding-dong affair.

In his report in the 1930's, Captain Waddington said, "It appears that the otosi (amadi) priests were originally local agents of the Aro who constituted themselves into an aristocratic governing class". The truth is not that the otosi priests constituted themselves into an aristocratic governing class, but that a group of 'amadi' migrants from Arochukwu in the early years of the 19th century, introduced the new brand of the slave trade into Afikpo. They were slave dealers who had close link with the famous and notorious Arochukwu oracle popularly known as **Ibinukpabi**.

Those Aro (amadi) migrants quickly and cleverly linked themselves with some Afikpo groups who had bought the 'otosi' juju and who now claimed to be 'amadi'. The otosi holders alias 'amadi' became local agents of the Aro slave dealers and drove the people of Afikpo into the orbit of that ignoble trafficking in human beings called the slave trade.

Then through the 'amadi' as their local agents, the Aros attempted to get hold of the superstructure (the political system) in order to control the infrastructure (the economic base). But the ancient Afikpo political system, which was structured on an echelon of age-grade system, was too deep-rooted to be overthrown. It was a sort of gerontocratic government based on a council of age-grade elders. It stuck firmly to its guns - a phenomenon which has continued to this day.

However, the struggle continued until the colonial period when in 1931, the colonial administration set aside the **otosi** juju alias **amadi** which it described as an

anachronism and therefore undesirable for any modern system of political organisation. The Administration therefore upheld the authority of the Esaa council of elders as the original and indigenous political organisation of Ehugbo. See L. H. Shelton's Intelligence Report No. OG. 317/A/5 of 27th November 1931 addressed to the Secretary Southern Provinces, Enugu.

Warrant Chiefs were then appointed from the various segments of the Ehugbo society by the colonial administration. See chapter eleven for appointment of warrant chiefs. Peace returned once more to Afikpo. Since then, the people have been living together in harmony without any form of discrimination. They vowed never to repeat that ugly and divisive experience of the late 19th and early 20th centuries during which an intrusive, foreign, aggressive juju called **otosi** disturbed the peace and tranquillity of their ancient town and nearly destroyed it.

Unfortunately, in 1976 this **otosi** which generated a social category known as 'amadi' reared its ugly head once more and created dichotomy within the fabrics of the Ehugbo society and crippled developmental moves. We have also noted the harm it has done to Afikpo history in the Archives.

But we are happy that through the instrumentality and early intervention of the Ehugbo Youths, the 23 years stalemate between the amadi and the non-amadi has been amicably disposed of. We are grateful to the youths of Ndibe and Ezi Agbi in particular for their role in this regard. Most importantly, we thank the Echara Icha of Ibii/Ozizza autonomous community, Late Eze Vincent O. Inya for initiating the measure which helped to defuse the tension and crisis between the two brothers of Ehugbo who had co-existed since the twilight of history. The name of Eze

Vincent O. Inya will continue to be engraved in the annals of Ehugbo history.

Finally, we have to say a great bravo to the members of the Afikpo Town Welfare Association alias ATWA who took the bull by the horns by providing a forum for discussing the peace moves.

Our appreciation cannot be complete without remembering the men who started the struggle in 1976 to ensure the unity of Ehugbo. They are Nze M.S.C. Abani, Barrister C.O. Okpani of blessed memory, Mr. Ewa Udu, Omezue Anthony O. Ekoh, Nze Law E. Oko, Mr. Raphael O. Aja, Mr. Ekoh Dike, Nze Daniel Ugwu, Mr. Oko Okpara, Mr. Chukwu Ube, Mr. E. A. Nwachi, Mr. Pius Otuu, Mr. Eko Okpani, Mr. Elechi Uzor, Mr. Elem Uche, Mr. Ndukwe Uro, Chief Okpani Nkama, Mr. O. Eloy, Mr. Gab. Aja Ewa, Mr Sylvester Okpani, Eze Akama, Mr. G. O. Otu, Hon. Nnachi Enwo, Omezue Oko Omaka, Chief Okpara Oko, Chief Oti Abali, Chief Alazu Ewa, Chief Ibe Uro, and Mr. G.A. Agwo, who joined the group in 1978. These visionaries felt that if this adventitious social out growth called 'amadi' was not checked and nipped in the bud, the future of Ehugbo society would be bleak. They therefore passed sleepless nights, making fantastic personal donations on behalf of Ehugbo at a time when many people, even the non-amadi groups, did not understand the implications of the otosi/amadi factor. It is this type of vision that has eventually lifted Afikpo society from the social mess in which it had found itself. If those men had not made the sublime sacrifices which they made at that time, the story of Afikpo could have been different today. We therefore, thank them immensely.

The end of the fuss and crisis is a milestone and marks a new-epoch in the socio-political history of Ehugbo. History will continue to do justice to those who helped in

one way or the other to break the deadlock which had rocked the Afikpo social fabric and virtually paralysed all developmental efforts of the people. In "the spirit of the Ehugbo of my Dream", it is bravo to and hurrah for all.

Future of the Council of Elders

Although Colonial rule has eroded and whittled away some of its functions, the Esaa and Eto council of elders still perform legislative and judicial functions in matters that fall within the purview of native law and custom. It has been able to weather through socio-political crisis by adapting to the political climate of the day and also by identifying itself with the activities of the Afikpo Town Welfare Association alias ATWA. It has equally successfully defused many socio-political tensions in Ehugbo.

It is noteworthy that local administrations in Afikpo always liaise with the Afikpo council of elders, and any that fails to recognise the important role of this ancient institution, is doomed to failure from the start. Thus, the council is a necessary adjunct to any Local Administration in Afikpo.

However, the council's continued existence would depend very much on the extent to which it is prepared to bend to changes. That is, its ability to reconcile the old and the new. Otherwise, it may be swept away by the current of history.

It is often believed, especially by scholars with socialist views, that a traditional institution like the council of elders, has no function in a democratic set up. By implication, it means it is too conservative to fit into a system which does not adhere to the rigid sanctions of the traditional system. In short, it is regarded as an anachronistic heirloom which has no place in a modern democratic set up. That is why

faint cries for its reform have started to be whispered.

What is likely to sustain the institution for a longer time is the fact that many educated men are now becoming members of it. This crop of men will certainly inject a new blood into its proceedings along democratic lines; provided they can arrest the current wave of corruption which is cutting deep into the fabrics of the institution. Complaints about this corruption have already reached a dizzy-height although still behind the official scenes.

One important feature of the Ehugbo Council of Elders is that it is not hereditary as the only qualification for its membership is the attainment of a certain age. This makes the institution very democratic, at least, in composition. As people join the age queue they can afford to wait for their turn as members of this coveted supreme authority in Afikpo. It is this prevalent feature and others that have made us to nurse the hope of the continued existence of the ancient council.

In addition, the willingness of the council to continue to adapt to changes and liaise its functions with the activities of the Afikpo Town Welfare (ATWA), can further help to prolong its life. Here again, it will depend on the calibre of the Chairman of ATWA and the members of its executive. It is common knowledge that the council of elders is now being teleguided by the chairman of ATWA. The trend can be dangerous if such a chairman is not a man of integrity. The council can easily be led astray to take decisions that are ill-digested and unsound; and thus bring the reputation of the ancient house to question.

Above all, the feeling that this ancient body is occupying a very important vacuum which would be difficult to fill, is again a point in favour of its continued existence. It is for these reasons that the knell for its reform or abolition is still too faint to be heard.

Nonetheless, unless some of its apparent deficiencies are remedied the council is likely to face the wrath of the future generation. Such a protest was successfully experimented in 1990 and led to the 'dethronment' and imposition of fines on the leading speakers of the ancient house. That action was symptomatic!

In 1995 history repeated itself when nine prominent members of the traditional council of elders were expelled for life from the Afikpo traditional council of elders with no option of fine at the instance of the **Isi Elia** (Youths). In an article captioned, "*Traditional Council of Elders purged,*" it was reported that:

Nine prominent elders in Afikpo have been stripped of their membership of the Ekpuke Esaa ruling class for what is generally seen as an unprecedented move by the 'Isi Elia' (Youths) to purge the traditional law-making body of the bad eggs in the system. (*Afikpo Today*, vol. I, No. 7, 1996 : 16)

This action was another signal warning to our law-making body to beware! We are not expecting a sledge-hammer to fall on the ancient house yet; because whether we believe it or not, the council of elders is still occupying a unique position that would be very difficult to fill. It is the pivot around which the Afikpo unwritten constitution revolves. In a society without kingship institution, the ancient house is the embodiment of Afikpo constitution and democracy. It helps to maintain peace and order, and to sustain the unitary structure of the Afikpo governmental system. It serves as the highest traditional court of appeal and supreme court. It serves also as the custodian of the Afikpo custom and tradition, and a port of call for the interpretation of these. It is thus the assemblage of the Afikpo ancient wisdom. Its procedure follows the principle of arbitration,

and judgement passed under it does not breed acrimony, and is not also as painful as that of the law court. Without mincing words, the abolition of the ancient house, will leave a vauum that will be difficult to fill and this may cause things to fall apart. All we need to do is to reform it by making it more adaptable to changes while expunging from it the widespread corruption that has recently bedevilled it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Agricultural Economy

Farming was the most important single occupation in Afikpo as elsewhere in Igboland. It has been estimated that over ninety five percent of the population derived their livelihood from agriculture in pre-colonial Afikpo (Agha Isu, May 1988). It is further said that every able-bodied person - male or female - participated in agriculture. This assertion should not give the impression that the people did not engage in other types of economic pursuits. It simply means that any other type of occupation was subsidiary to agriculture.

It also means that a man could be a trader or hunter or craftsman but would still participate in one form of agriculture or the other. For example, women were pot makers, traders and still farmers. As Ewa Utom (August 1975) aptly puts it, "whatever occupation a person pursued, he would still run some farms, at least, for subsistence production." Oti Abali (May 1988), has also noted that long-distance traders in Afikpo still had to break off for one or two months during the farming season to plant their yams before continuing their trading activities; and Oko Omaka (May, 1988) has also added that during the farming season (February -May) all hands were usually on deck as people temporarily suspended their other jobs for farming. It is easy to discern from the above illustrations that everybody in Afikpo was virtually a farmer. Uchendu (1965:30) has, therefore, rightly pointed out that farming was, 'the Igbo staff of life'.

In Afikpo, as in most parts of Igboland, land (**ali**) was a valuable property and meant much more than that to them.

According to Uchendu (1965:22):

Land means many things to the Igbo. It is the domain of the earth goddess (Ana), a burial place for the ancestors, a place to live on and make a living. Land is therefore the most important asset to the people. It is ... emotionally protected from alienation.

An Igbo ex-slave Oluadah Equiano had this to say about agriculture in pre-colonial Igboland, 'Our land is commonly rich and fruitful All our industry is exerted to improve these blessings of nature. Agriculture is our chief employment (Edward, 1969:7).

It was for this reason that land (**ali**) in particular and agriculture in general were highly ritualized in the area. Land itself was and still is regarded as the earth goddess and fertility, and a sacred object which is connected with the ancestors. Thus, all ceremonies and festivals connected with farming were attended by one form of ritual or the other. All these ceremonies underscore the importance of agriculture and testify to its antiquity in the area. Afigbo (1981:126) has noted that, "Agriculture in Igboland was highly ritualized. This would point both to the importance of the occupation and to its antiquity among the people." As a matter of fact, the above expressions are in consonance with the people's philosophy about land and agriculture, as Ewa Utom (August, 1975) once said:

Land is the mother earth. It is the god of life and fertility. It is where our ancestors live. Whatever we eat we must give to it. We pour rituals into it so that it would continue to yield fruit which we eat. It is the source of our life in union with our ancestors.

In fact, the beginning of the farming season in Afikpo which starts in February was a formal occasion

characterised by rituals. This symbolic ritual was meant to 'cool down' the land and to ensure high fertility and yield. The purpose was firstly, to thank the ancestors through the yam god (njokuji), and secondly to usher in the new year. Generally, the rituals were, among other things, considered necessary for the welfare of the village - group and their crops.

Parinder (1962:83) has observed that, "all over Africa, when the land is filled and planted, the blessings of the spirit is demanded by the prospective producer ...it was believed that the spirits if deprived of their priority in the hierarchy, would revenge by threatening harvests." In Afikpo, one important festival called **Iko Okochi** - dry season festival - ushers in the farming season. The festival, which is usually held between November and December every year, is also important because it serves as the farming calendar as it marks the inception of the farming season.

Land Tenure System

Ownership of land in Afikpo was basically communal as elsewhere in most parts of Africa. But in actual fact, it was controlled or held in trust by the elders, that is by the **Okpara** - the eldest man/men of a patrilineage or by the oldest man/men of a matrilineage. In Afikpo where double descent system of kinship was strongly enshrined in their custom and tradition, inheritance of property generally, including land, was the double-unilineal type. A child inherited both from the father's and the mother's sides.

The people, therefore, operated two distinct systems of land tenure. The first was the matriclan land tenure system called **ali ikwu** (literally, matriclan land). It has been estimated that matrilineage groupings (ikwu) which are scattered all over Afikpo controlled about 80% of the farmlands in the community (Ewa Utom August, 1975). Rights of ownership of such land belongs to the matriclan as a corporate entity (group). Any member of the matrilineal

group had a right to be given a portion of the land for his farmwork provided he had shown sufficient interest in the land. Rights to use such land were periodically assigned to bona fide individuals by the matriclan through its accredited trustees, usually the elders among the group. The person to whom such a portion was allocated usually enjoyed usufructuary rights over it for the period (Obiahu Chukwu, Sept., 1975).

The second system of land tenure was the patrilineal called **ali umudi** or **umunna** as in some other parts of Igboland which would translate to land belonging to children of a common paternal ancestor. About 20% of the farmlands in Afikpo were, and are known to be patrilineally administered (Ndukwe Azu, August, 1975). The system of ownership of land in Afikpo has not shown any remarkable change except for the Land Use Decree of 1978 in Nigeria, which has not, in practice, destroyed communal ownership of land in Nigeria.

As a matter of fact, the right to use patrilineal land was open to any adult male lineage member. Farmland was allocated according to relationship, age (the older the man the larger the share), willingness to farm and sufficient interest in the land. The individual expressed this interest and willingness by helping to clear the bush on days set aside by the lineage elders, and by payment of dues for redemption of the land and for its ritual purification as occasion demanded. During the allocation exercise, provisions were usually made for the largest share to go to the old men in compensation for their services as trustees.

It is pertinent to note that in Afikpo, no single man controlled the lineage lands or knew all the boundaries between his lineage lands and others. In fact, the interest of the lineage in their land as against others, was watched

over by the oldest men among them whether patrilineal or matrilineal. Any action to be initiated in case of encroachment or trespass by another lineage or village was decided upon by a council of the oldest men of the aggrieved lineage. The elders who acted as land trustees were rewarded with gifts of not only a larger part of the land to farm, but also, as in the case of Ozizza village-group, a special king-size yam called **Eze mbaji** during the annual new yam festival (Otuu Oyim, August, 1975).

Land in Afikpo was also acquired for farming through marriages into many matrilineages. The man, thus got land for cultivation from his in-laws on the grounds that his children belonged not to his matriclan but to that of his wives. The people practised both endogamous and exogamous marriages. A man could marry the daughter of his father's sister, that is his cross-cousin. Such a marriage to a cross-cousin meant a marriage of a man's son to his father's matrilineage. The son was then entitled to be allocated a portion of the father's matriclan land for farming. However, the fact that a son (through marriage) had the right to use his father's matriclan lands, did not qualify him to join in the ownership of such land.

One important aspect of the Afikpo land tenure system that needs emphasis is the position of women in the whole set up. No woman has direct right and authority over land as such in Afikpo. It is true she could inherit the land of her deceased brother; but in actual fact, it is her son(s) who has more say over such land. A woman's father or brother could, out of sheer love, give her a piece of land. But the exercise of control over such land rests with her husband. A man could as well share some of his lands with his wives. He could, for instance, give them poorer portions of his land to grow cassava. Sometimes, he allows

them to grow vegetables and other inter-crops in his yam farm which, in effect, amounts to mixed - cropping.

In pre-colonial Afikpo, land was never sold. It was only pledged or mortgaged usually in exchange for services rendered or debts owed. The system still operates today. This system of land ownership makes it difficult for outright sale of land. Under the communal or joint land ownership, the community or group that owns the land is conceptualized as embracing not only the living but also the dead and generations yet unborn. This concept is best epitomized in a reply to an interview granted a certain man in 1921. In that reply, the man stated *inter alia*, "I conceived that land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless numbers are still unborn (Meek 1957:121)

Organisation And Sources Of Labour

It was relatively easier and cheaper to recruit and organise labour in pre-colonial Afikpo than it is at present. The basic unit of labour was the household. That is, the nuclear family and members therein including slaves. The farmer organised and controlled labour. Afikpo was a segmentary society like most of her counterparts in Igboland. Thus, individual farmers made their arrangements to ensure a continuous flow of labour.

Sources of labour in Afikpo were elastic. In other words, labour was drawn from a variety of sources. The main catchment area was the household itself. Big and celebrated farmers married many wives ranging from five to ten and even more (Ewa Utom 1975). The wives and the resultant numerous children from such marriages provided the immediate sources of labour.

Besides, a successful farmer could utilise the services of the general public called **ozi oha** or labour pool. Usually all the able-bodied men who had been initiated into Ogo secret

cults took part in the work. This particular source of labour could be drawn from the farmer's compound or the whole village or an age-grade. The group was usually notified through the performance of the traditional 'coconut breaking' ceremony called **igbuje akeeke**. No formal payment in the form of cash was made to the group after the job. They were simply fed fat while working on the farm and later treated to a feast of food, dry meat or fish and drinks.

Another source of labour was that provided by sons-in-law; here, sons-in-law, in company of their age-sets and friends arranged to assist their fathers-in-law in their farm work. It was a reciprocal sort of arrangement. Afigbo (1980:7) calls this, 'reciprocal exchange of labour; as applied in Igboland generally. A successful farmer could also secure labour from his brothers, relatives and well-wishers. Other sources included **iba ozuzu** - a sort of cooperative voluntary work-group to help one another alternatively. This particular source was ideal with women who bargained among themselves to return labour for labour.

Finally, like other parts of Igboland, slave labour was extensively used. According to local records, the Afikpo people did not indulge very much in slave selling but in slave buying, mainly for domestic and exchange purposes. However, more will be said about slavery and its origin later. The above examples constituted the various methods adopted to ensure adequate and continuous flow of labour for abundant crop production. Most of the above sources of labour are now difficult to come by.

The place of women in the whole set up was intriguing. In fact, house wives, as stressed earlier, provided the major source of labour for farm work. It was the men that made the yam heaps (mounds) called **okwu**. Women helped in

planting the yam tubers. They weeded both their husbands' yam farms and their own cocoyam, cassava and maize farms. It is said that weeding of this type was the exclusive job of women. In pre-colonial Afikpo, women did not take part in cutting the bush or forest, but helped in gathering and removing the burnt pieces of plants, sticks and cinders to make room for heap making. They prepared the food to be consumed on the farm and ensured that necessary services, like providing of drinking water, were rendered to the heap makers. Hired labour was hardly known in the earlier period of the people's economic history.

But their oral evidence shows that about the close of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the farmers began to secure the services of migrant labour from Ezza in Abakaliki, Ebonyi States (M. N. Agada, May 1988). These Ezza labourers sold their services to the Afikpo farmers. This marked the beginning of hired labour in Afikpo. It was, however, seasonal in nature as the labourers were only hired to make heaps (mounds) in the farms after which they went back until the next planting season. They were paid in local currency like brass rods, one brass rod called **Okpogo aani** in local language, being equivalent to six pence. Later coins were used (M. N. Agada, 1988 and Oko Omaka (May 1988). Brass rods were said to be the most popular currency used in the area. It was even used side by side with English money. Because of this, its value vis-a-vis English money was never in doubt. For example, one brass rod was equivalent to six pence, two = one shilling; five = two shillings six pence (Okpogo ise) etc.

In pre-colonial Afikpo, the farmer was the entrepreneur - the coordinator and managing director of his agricultural enterprise. He organised and controlled the factors of production - land, labour, capital and other variables. He

ensured maximum utilization of these factors.

Afikpo was a typical segmentary society in Igboland or what sociologists call acephalous society. As a result, production and distribution were not controlled at the state level. Individual farmers were the managers of their farms. A big farmer had about three or more parcels of land each measuring about three acres (Michael Abani, May 1988). A successful farmer always had enough land on which he planted his crops. Land scarcity was not experienced in the area nor did they suffer from land exhaustion. The type of land exhaustion, or what may be described as 'ecological upheaval' resulting from over-cropping, which hit some parts of the northern and to some extent, north-western Igboland (Afigbo, 1980 8, 10-11), had no parallel in the economic history of the north-eastern and Cross River Igboland to which Afikpo belongs.

As a result, professional traders hardly emerged in Afikpo as they did in the northern and north western Igbo at the time. The area had rich loamy, gravel and clay soil. It was well - watered with fertile agricultural plains on the foot of the hills. Rainfall was high enough - about 77 inches annually [Ottenberg 1968:15; Aja 1976:2] to support the growing of both root crops and grains such as yams, cassava, cocoyam, maize, groundnuts, **ekidi** (cowpeas), **azama** (yam bean) and melon or gourd. Afikpo lies in a transitional zone between open grassland and tropical rain forest (Ottenberg 1968:15). The grains thrive well in the northern part of Afikpo which approximates to grassland area.

Capital For Farming

A young farmer could start his business with a gift of about 400 seed yams called in local language **nnu ji**. This constituted the capital for starting farm business. The gift could come from his father or from a rich farmer for whom he had rendered a service. Such a service would normally

include helping him in his farm work. Alternatively, he could get the gift from his kinsmen either patrilineal or matrilineal. He was always rescued by the benevolence of this latter group whenever he fell into financial difficulties. It was socially obligatory in pre-colonial Afikpo for the family to ensure that its member was not a loafer, otherwise, the shame would go to that family. For, the question always asked was - which family does he come from? So, the young farmer could start in this small and humble way and grow later to become a celebrated yam farmer. Successful farmers in Afikpo were called **Okogbue ekwu** (reducer of thick forest to nothing). In other parts of Igboland they were called **di ji** (literally, yam husbandman) or **eze ji** (yam king). A successful yam farmer was a man who could boast of at least a certain quantity of yams counted in units of 400 (nnu) annually.

It was in this way that a young farmer raised capital for starting farm business. It can be seen that in a segmentary society like Afikpo, production was undertaken by individuals. The individual took his personal economic decision. He decided on what to produce, how to produce it, where to produce it and, the quantity to produce at any given period of time, usually a year. The distribution of his products equally lay squarely on his shoulders. If his production was the subsistence type, he knew how to redistribute it among the members of his household.

Mode Of Production And Distribution

The mode of production in pre-colonial Afikpo was predominantly the lineage type in which the elders played an important role. The position of the elders could only be properly understood when one considers their social, ritual and political functions.

In pre-colonial Afikpo, the family, as stressed earlier, was the smallest unit of social and political organisation. The head of the family was the husband. Different families constituted the compound or minimal lineage under an elder

called **Okpara**. The head of the household (lineage), was also the controller of the economic unit; because one characteristic feature of the lineage mode of production is that age played a very important role.

This arises from the people's cosmological belief that the elders are nearer to the gods and ancestors. They thus stood between the living and the chain of gods and ancestors. They performed rituals like sacrifices in times of crises to appease and expiate the gods. They adjudicated in disputes affecting the various interests in the community. They also determined when and how much of the land would be cultivated. Because of their privileged position and role in the society, the elders became trustees and controllers of the basic means of production - the land.

They were not the owners of the land. They were, however, given a larger share for cultivation in compensation for their services as trustees. This did not amount to expropriation as such as it had been interpreted by some people. Nor should one regard this as exploitative in the sense it has been twisted. It should be understood that the proceeds of the farms were usually redistributed among the members of the household. The lineage mode of production was regarded as a pool from which individuals received according to their needs. The terms exploitation and expropriation as usually understood are therefore not applicable to the pre-colonial economic analysis of Afikpo.

Animal Domestication

Both crop and livestock farming were practised in pre-colonial Afikpo. In other words, apart from crops the people kept livestock such as goats, sheep, cows - the humpless short-horned - and also poultry. The following striking account by a Missionary titled, 'From Afikpo to Uburu and Back' in 1918, confirms that the people of Afikpo

kept cows:

From the top (of a hill in Afikpo) there is a view for miles and miles - no longer bush but prairie grass, with here and there a clump of palms and trees marking springs. Herds of cows feed here and there, and the broad government road, like a brown ribbon winds over the prairie. Great vultures wheel over-head. Every herd of cows, too, has its attendant flock of cow birds. (Mrs Arnot, 1918 pp. 141, 157).

The antiquity of animal domestication in Afikpo had been established by the excavations carried out at the Ugwuogu rock - shelter, Afikpo. Artifacts found include bones of domesticated chicken (*gallus domesticus*), dogs (*canis familiaris*), goat and those of the humpless short - horned cattle (*bos boris*) and the sheep (Chikwendu, 1980:8). The evidence also shows that these animals constituted an appreciable source of animal protein in the diet of our ancestors. It should be noted that apart from the humpless short-horned cattle, whose breeding had been outlawed in the nineteen thirties because of their tendency to devastate crops (Agha Isu, May 1988), the people still keep other animals. The animals and birds were usually left at free range, that is, to roam about but within certain limits. The birds came to roost at night while the animals were kept in shelters provided for them. It was the duty of the farmer's children to take care of the livestock.

Both subsistence and peasant farming were pursued in pre-colonial Afikpo. Subsistence farmers could produce for the consumption of their immediate household while peasant farmers produced enough for their domestic use and still had some surplus for sale. Peasants have been defined as 'small agricultural producers who intend to make a living by selling part of their crops or herds' (Parsons & Palmer

1977:2). Evidence abounds here and there in the peoples oral traditions that at the earliest times, subsistence production was the order of the day. But that as time went on and as population increased, people began to produce not only for their own use but for sale to others to obtain their needs. This brought about the idea of exchange economy. According to Oko Omaka:

My father told me that long, long ago people produced just what they ate. But with time, a lot of farmers produced enough for themselves and their families and still had a spill-over. They had to sell the excess to others in exchange for other things they needed. A farmer, for example, could exchange yam for salt. Yam was also sold for money. That time five big yams could be bought with **okpogo aani** (one brass rod) which was equivalent to six pence. My son, things have changed. (Oko Omaka May, 1988).

In pre-colonial Afikpo, farmers worked on their own. They did not sell their labour for wages. Clientage system was operated but was not widespread. Under this system, successful farmers had some youngmen who helped them in their farm work. They did not serve as hired labour, but were paid in the form of reciprocity. After some two to three years services, such young men could be given a piece of land and a unit of 400 seed yams (nnu ji) by their masters to start their own farm (Ndukwe Azu, August 1975 and Oti Abali May, 1988). It is said that they could in this way, rise to become celebrated yam farmers or yam kings.

Stages In Agricultural Evolution

It is possible to discern three major stages in the evolution of agriculture in Afikpo as in Igboland generally. The first stage was the experimental domestication of some local wild crops such as certain species of yams, cocoyam, palm tree, maize, yam bean (azama), melon and cowpeas (ekidi)

which are said to be indigenous. The people say the above crops have been with them. Some fruit trees such as **udara** (Cherry tree), **ugba** (oil-bean) and **ube** (native pear) were said to have been growing wild in the forest. The story of how yam came to be domesticated in Afikpo is shrouded in their myth and legends. But the truth is that both *dioscorea rotundata* (white yam) and *dioscorea cayenerensis* (yellow yam) are indigenous to Igboland.

The most popular of the legends is that which says that at a period of famine a certain man appealed to Chukwu (God) for food. He was ordered to use his son for a sacrifice. He made the sacrifice but used a slave boy instead of his son as ordered by God. The following morning, he discovered that the crop that grew over the grave of the slave boy reincarnated into a slave yam, *mvila* (water yam). The yam did not give him the satisfaction he wanted for it was bitter to the taste. He went back to Chukwu who ordered him to use his first son for the sacrifice if he wanted to get a better specie of yam. This he did and got a proper yam called **akiri** (white yam), (Ewa Utom 1975 and Oti Abali 1988).

Another version of the legend says that a matriclan, Ibe Aliocha, made a sacrifice of their first son to an oracle, Ibini Ukpabi. The following morning yam shoots were seen growing out of the grave. As a corollary, there is a saying in Afikpo which runs thus: **Aliocha jiri madu zata ji**, literally, that Aliocha used human being to get yam crop (Oko Omaka, August 1988).

In fact, legends of the origin of yam and cocoyam in other parts of Igboland show striking similarities to those of Afikpo. For example, Jordan (1948:54) formerly of the Onitsha Catholic Mission, quoted the leader of Nri as saying that yam grew over the graves of a son and a daughter of the king of Nri, both sacrificed by their father to propitiate or

appease a god that caused famine.

Similarly, Northcote W. Thomas, former government anthropologist, recorded an Awka tradition which ascribes the presence of yam to Chukwu who is said to have given a piece of yam to the first king of Awka. After eating the yam, one of the kings, Adama, asked for another piece. This time Chukwu directed him to plant the yam which he did. The family had enough yam to eat and to preserve for the next planting season (Thomas, 1913:50 - 51). Both Afigbo (1980:4-5) and Isichei (1976:7) have given similar versions of the yam legend in Igboland.

What has come out of these local traditions is that yam was the gift of the gods to the Igbo people. This implies that they have had it for all time and therefore establishes its antiquity and indigenoussness in Igboland. Incidentally, the thesis is now generally accepted that yam cultivation may be very ancient in West Africa. It is now accepted that the two species of yam - *dioscorea cayenensis* and *disoscorea rotundata* are indigenous to West Africa especially around the Guinea Coast (Miege 1954:7-8). Coursey (1976:198) has also established the antiquity of yam cultivation in the Guinea Coast and Igboland in particular.

There is strong evidence in Afikpo oral traditions to suggest that certain species of these crops namely - yams, cocoyam, palm tree, maize, yam bean (azama), rice (*oryza glaberima*), melon, okro (*hibiscus esculentus*), cowpeas (*ekidi*) are indigenous to Afikpo. The story narrates of how in the far distant period a variety of wild yams called **okpule**, **asu** and **kpokpokume** were harvested and eaten. Okpule was called **Ji ohia** (wild yam). Some varieties of these wild forms were later domesticated by the people and these gave birth to their indigenous yam known as **akiri** (white yam) botanically known as *dioscorea rotundata*. The 'akiri' specie

of yam was a true cultivar or cultigen; it had no wild form. Culturally, the 'akiri' still occupies a premier place among the various species of yams in Afikpo. Formerly, it used to be the first yam to be harvested for the annual New Yam festival, and the only specie used for rituals. According to Ewa Utom (August 1975) and Agha Isu (May, 1988), traces of the wild **okpule** and **asu** yams could still be found in thick virgin or near vrgin forests in Afikpo. The people say that they also planted other varieties of yams at this stage. They are **mkipayi** or **oku** (yellow yam) called *dioscorea cayenensis* and 'mvila' (water yam) called *dioscorea alata*. It is known that *dioscorea cayenensis* (yellow yam) **mkipayi** or **oku**, and light yellow yam (abi) had wild forms and are hybrids. Coursey (1980:69-71) holds that *dioscorea alata* which is a true cultigen in Asia was introduced into Africa from Asia. But the Afikpo yam legend of origin lends weight to their claim that both *dioscorea cayenensis* and *alata* were indigenous to them. It is possible that they might have had their own indigenous species of *dioscorea alata* (water yam) which Coursey probably did not know. The presence of proto-domesticates in Afikpo were never in doubt. Both *dioscorea esculenta* (cocoyam), *dioscorea bulbifera* (edu) and *dioscorea dumentorum* (ona) are indigenes of Afikpo as contained in their tradition.

Maize is said to have been growing wild in the bush like grass and was later domesticated. The indigenous specie of maize is called **akpukpa igumee** meaning red-sheath maize or maize with red-sheath cover. They also had indigenous variety of beans which they call **azama** (yam bean) and **ekidi** (cowpeas). Protein content of yam beans (azama) is very high. There is an annual fertility festival in Afikpo called **omumu**. Only yam, cassava and 'azama' meals are used for the ritual of the **omumu** or fertility festival. This

again goes to confirm that these three crops, except cassava, may be indigenous to Afikpo people. Their tradition states that only yam bean (azama) meal was formerly used for **omumu unwu** fertility festival.

Some varieties of yam are said to have been planted by women hence categorized among women crops. Such varieties include *dioscorea alata* (mvila) or water yam; *dioscorea dumentorum* or three-leaved yam (ona); *dioscorea bulbifera* (edu) which is a bulbil or vine bearing potato-like yam specie, and *dioscorea esculenta* (cocoyam).

These crops and others mentioned earlier are indigenous to Afikpo in particular and Igboland in general. Wild forms of these crops were found almost everywhere in Afikpo. They are secondary to the major breed of *dioscorea rotundata* and *dioscorea cayenensis*. It is noteworthy that *dioscorea rotundata* and *dioscorea alata* are true cultivars in their respective areas of origin. Both have no wild forms. *Dioscorea bulbifera* is the only species indisputably common to both Africa and Asia. The African form is, however, quite distinct and is sometimes regarded as a separate specie - *dioscorea latifolia*. The people of Afikpo are expert yam cultivators - with *dioscorea rotundata* as their main cultigen while *dioscorea cayenensis* has wild forms.

Coursey (1980:68-79) has noted that there is no single centre of yam domestication in the world and that the species *dioscorea rotundata* and *dioscorea cayenensis* are indigenous to Africa especially around the Guinea Coast. He has also noted in a separate work (1967:198) that :

In Southern Nigeria, the densest population is found among the Ibos who are, 'the most enthusiastic yam cultivators in the world'; who have converted the greater part of their rain forest into oil palm bush. Thus, there

is probably a quite simple explanation for the density of population in Iboland, the antiquity and effectiveness of yam cultivation and the exploitation of the oil palm (Coursey, 1967:198).

It is necessary to note that *elaeis guineensis* (oil palm) is a native of the Guinea Coast particularly Igboland. On the other hand, yam was clearly the most staple and highest food of the people at the time. Its primacy in the agricultural economy of the people was never in doubt. It was adored, and had its own god or spirit force called **njokuji**. Yam did not only serve as a major source of food, but served other utilitarian, social and cultural purposes. It was used for marriages, reciprocal exchange of services, title taking ceremonies, initiation and other rituals. It also served as a source of income and gifts on ceremonial occasions. Strictly speaking, a man's wealth was really measured in terms of the size of his yam barn and the number of yams therein. Most importantly, yam was the male crop and the 'king' of crops.

Maize (*zea mays*), rice, (*oryza glaberima*), okro (*hibiscus esculentus*) and bitter-leaf (*vernonia colorata*) are indigenes of Igboland. At least the Igbo have their own indigenous variety of these crops. For instance, while the American variety of rice is called *oryza sativa*, the African (Igbo) variety is called *oryza glaberima*. Furthermore, while *dioscorea alata* is a true cultigen and native to Asia, *dioscorea rotundata* is a true cultigen and native to Africa (Igboland). On the absence of any mention of the other indigenous crops like maize, beans (*azama*), breadfruit and oil palm in their legends, Isu Oko (May 1988) said that their legends cannot mention every food crop. He added that it mentioned only those ones that were domesticated first and were important food crops like yam. It should be noted that oil palm was

only of subsidiary importance in Igbo economy before the rise of the oil trade in the 19th century. The breadfruit is said to be of servile origin having derived from a female slave (Afigbo, 1980:5). In Afikpo, breadfruit was not regarded as important food but inferior food meant for the poor. It was allowed to mature, ripen and fall at will and lie for animals to devour. In fact, it was after the Nigerian civil war that the people started taking it as a part of their meal. On the other hand, the Igbo generally did not regard maize as 'food' in the sense that it would not normally be taken as either breakfast, lunch or super. It served more as snacks.

Archaeological evidence at Afikpo has further lent strength to the people's claim of crops domestication at a very early stage (between 5,000 -3,000 BC). This period falls within the later Stone Age in West Africa or later Holocene in geological table. From the finds at the Afikpo site, it has been suggested:

That the appearance of pottery for the first time, as well as axe-like and adze-like tools, all lend support to the view that there may have been a change in mode of livelihood from hunting and gathering to food production. If this was the case, it would mean there was a change to cultivation somewhere between 5,000 and 3,000 years ago. Although analysis of artifacts is still at the preliminary stage, one may still compare Afikpo I and II with known later Stone Age and Neolithic assemblages in West Africa. Andah and Anozie (1980:102).

It has also been suggested that the ancient use of digging sticks for planting and harvesting yams is an indication that yam cultivation predates the Iron Age and further lends support to its antiquity in Igboland. Similarly, the prohibition on the use of iron tools at certain rituals associated with yam cultivation further strengthens the

suggestion. We cannot forget the elaborate social and ritual ceremonies usually associated with the New Yam festival in Afikpo. The period is usually marked with pomp and pageantry for four market days. During the four new yam festival days, it was customary to eat only pounded yam foofoo as the major meal with soup made with mashed egusi balls, dry fish, pepper, no vegetables and oil, to match. This is called "**ohe sarara**" in Afikpo dialect (ohe Afikpo). No other meal was usually taken, except yam either pounded or chewed. Roasted yam was not eaten within the four days.

Sacrifices were made to God through the yam god (njokuji) thanking him for keeping the people alive to witness another new year and for his blessings in the preceding year. It is necessary to note that of all the crops in Igboland, only yam has a god called **ahiajoku** or **njokuji**. The annual **Iri ji** or new yam festival heralds the end of the old year and the inception of a new year in Afikpo and Igboland. This annual harvest festival of the yam is a mystic ceremony that symbolizes the power and "majesty" of the yam as the premier and most important crop - the 'king' of crops. Dr. Okigbo (1986:6) calls it, "the mystic, near religious symbolism of the yam culture of which the "Ahiajoku" lecture is but one of the many aspects of sacrament." Yes. The annual **Iri ji** or new yam festival symbolises a sacramental communion and homecoming for all Igbo indigenes wherever they may be. Nor shall we forget the romantic songs (by women), which accompany the **Ichu Aho** ceremony on the eve of the new yam day, ending with fire-works (by men) - all of which symbolize bidding goodbye to the old year with all its fortunes, and ushering in the new year with all its hopeful promises. All done in honour of the 'majestic' yam crop.

In fact, the numerous theses on the domestication of some crops in Africa and the antiquity of African agriculture

have already gained general acceptance in most parts of the world. Thus, it is becoming fruitless to explain the origin of African agriculture in terms of lessons learnt from outside the continent. What appears certain is that certain crops and certain species of crops found their way through known suspected routes into Africa and added to the complexity of indigenous crops already in the continent.

This brings us to the second stage in the evolution of agriculture in Afikpo. The people's oral traditions mention a number of crops suspected to have come from outside. These included a certain species of water yam, cocoyam, onions, plantain, banana, sweet potato, rice and some vegetables (Ewa Ucha, May 1988) and Oti Abali (May, 1988).

The people could not remember exactly when and from where the new crops came. Some elders mentioned Japan, thus pointing to eastern origin of this particular group of new crops (Oti Abali and Oko Omaka, May 1988). According to Oti Abali, "The new species of yam, cocoyam, banana, sweet potato, and even rice came from Japan before the advent of the white man." It is likely that this new group of crops belonged to the South-East Asian crop Complex with which scholars are familiar. These crops are said to have found their way into the African continent, probably through Egypt or across Equatorial Africa or through the Cape of Good Hope during the Portuguese and Arab trade with India and East African Coast in the 15th century. Afigbo (1981:126) has also mentioned the coming of the Southern East Asian crop complex which included certain species of yam, cocoyam, banana etc - either by the northern routes via Egypt and the Sudan, or across equatorial Africa or by the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope. This breed of yams include *dioscorea alata*, *dioscorea esculenta*, *dioscorea hispida*, *dioscorea japonica* etc.

Most of these crops were typical root crops grown in the

tropical rain forest for which Afikpo was quite suitable. Afikpo lies in a transitional zone between open grassland and tropical rain forest with an annual rainfall of about 77 inches (see chapter I). It has rich swamp fields suitable for rice growing. The crops therefore easily adapted to their new environment which, in many ways, was indetical to their old environment. Thus, Afikpo for long has been associated with rice production in Nigeria.

The arrival of more new crops, probably from America heralded the third stage in the people's agricultural development. The crops included certain species of maize, cassava, mango, guava, pawpaw, pineapples, coconuts, sugar cane and so on. The people's oral traditions say that these crops especially cassava, came from the Ibibio, Calabar and "Panya" (Fernando Po); while other traditions state that cassava was introduced by "the Potokiri" (Portuguese). According to Agha Isu (May, 1988) "the Potokiri" (Portuguese) brought cassava to Ibibio and Calabar and we got it through the Aro traders. The mention of the Portuguese and Aro traders at this time directly points to the period of the slave trade, probably, around the 17th or the 18th century when Europeans, especially the Portuguese had linked West Africa with America. Afigbo (1980:3) has also noted that many food crops like certain species of maize, mango, bread fruit, cassava and so on were brought into Igboland when European enterprise linked West Africa with America and the Caribbean. The presence of these crops added to the variety of cultivable food crops in the area. It also helped to support a larger density of population and to widen the consumption pattern of the people. There has been a great deal of diffusion of food crops. For example, some African yams are now found in both Asia and America and vice versa, while Nigerian oil palm is growing in

Indonesia and Malaysia.

The people cultivated large areas of individual farms. Their method of agriculture has been described as both intensive and efficient. Apart from rotational bush fallow, the people practised mixed-cropping which allowed for maximum utilization of land. In this sense, yam farm carried a number of inter-crops which included cassava, maize, fluted pumpkin, melon, yam bean (azama) etc. These crops are known to feed at different levels of the soil and so no part of the moulded heap was wasted. This idea is quite scientific and economical.

Pre-colonial Igbo agriculture has been described as very efficient. In fact, Flint (1966:63) described it as, "perhaps the most efficient in Africa," while Afigbo (1980:3) added "that it was also intensive as shown by the fact that using such simple tools as the matchete and hoe, the Igbo reduced to either grassland or palm bush vegetation which most authorities think must have been originally tropical rain forest."

The exact quantities of crops produced by individual farmers or by the entire farming population per year are not known. The statistics are not available. The population census had not been taken at the time. So, population statistics or figures on which to base analysis of the quantities of crops produced by the farming population are simply not available.

But one can hazard a guess with regard to yam production based on oral evidence available or on the traditional method of categorizing a successful yam farmer. With that, one can possibly compute the quantity of yam produced annually by an individual farmer.

In Afikpo, yams were stored in yam barns. An individual farmer's yam barn was usually very large. Yams were tied

after harvesting on a row of bamboos (stakes) about 12-15 feet high (between November and January). Each row contained an average of about 30 yam tubers (depending on the size of the yam). There were usually about 100 rows on one line or side of the yam barn (Otuu Oyim, 1975 and Oko Omaka, 1988). A successful yam farmer, **Okogbue ekwu** (reducer of virgin forests to nothing), as called in Afikpo, or **eze-ji** (yam king) was a man who could boast of at least a certain quantity of yams counted in units of 400 (nnu) annually. For a farmer in Afikpo to merit that coveted title **Okogbue ekwu** or **eze ji**, he must have at least two lines or 200 rows of yams in his barn (apart from contingent supplies).

Since each row contained an average of 30 tubers of yams, this would translate to 6,000 tubers of yam annually. This was regarded as the minimum number of yams that an **eze ji** (yam king) should produce annually. The result of this analysis is that it has given us some idea (even if tentative) about the number or quantity of yams an individual farmer could produce in pre-colonial Afikpo in the absence of any recorded statistics. There is still the problem of estimating the total quantity produced by the entire farmers annually since the population of farmers was not known.

However, it appears, from the oral evidence collected, that the quantity produced followed the normal sequence of gradation and that more was really produced as the population increased to meet the demands of the increasing population. It is said that by 1902 yam production in Afikpo had greatly increased and was heading towards its maximum, but for the events of the fateful year which marked the British conquest and occupation of Afikpo (Nwabara 1977:109-111 and Afigbo 1973:16).

It is said that in subsequent years, yam production fell

drastically as attention was then diverted to palm oil production for export, especially when John Holt and Company Limited was established at Amaozara Beach, Afikpo (on the Cross River) to handle palm produce (M. N. Agada, 1988; Oko Omaka, 1988; and NAE:Og. 1630/VI and VII; 15/1/481, 1910-1935).

Agricultural Mechanization

Agriculture was not mechanized in pre-colonial Afikpo. The chief agricultural tools were made up of simple implements such as hoes, machetes, digging sticks with pointed tips and so on. Hoes were of different sizes corresponding to the age of the user. There was, for example, the smaller type designed for weeding and was used by women for that purpose. The digging stick, specifically used for harvesting yam, had a pointed tip. It represented one of the earliest farm implements for harvesting purposes. It had earlier been pointed out that the use of digging sticks for harvesting yam is an indication that yam cultivation predated the Iron Age and shows the antiquity of the crop in Igboland as a whole. It is said that as time went on, probably with the coming of metallurgy, the farmers began to use digging sticks tipped with iron heads for harvesting yams.

As to how these tools were procured, the elders say they were initially made locally. They named a village called Ezi Uzu, meaning literally smiths - village, which specialized in black-smithing (Ewa Utom, 1975 and Agha Isu 1988). The location of the village could still be identified at Ugwuegu where the original non-Igbo inhabitants of Afikpo, the 'Egus' occupied (Agha Isu, 1988). It is, however, gathered that in later years the tools were obtained from itinerant traders like the Aro, Ezza, Awka, Ikwo, Uburu, Nkwerre, Akunakuna, Abiriba (Agha Isu and Oti Abali, 1988), probably after the original **Egu** inhabitants who previously made the tools had

been scattered during the Afikpo - Egu war which echoes in Afikpo oral traditions (Chapter Two).

According to these traditions; after the war, the Egu who were worsted, dispersed to various directions including Nkalegu, Ezza, Amasiri, Erei, Ikwo and so on. (Agha Isu and Oko Omaka, 1988). It is possible as contained in their oral traditions that the people later procured the implements from the Ezza and Ikwo who were excellent traders and smiths as could be seen from Charles Partridge's account titled '*The Ikwo and their Neighbours*', (1903 - 1904): *Cross River Natives* (1905:171-4, 183-7, 198 and 203-6):

Ibo smiths ply their craft in many towns of the district, particularly at the Ikwe (Ikwo) town of Otubu Ebudu. Formerly, indigenous iron ore was used; but now they prefer to purchase bars of iron imported from England, and brought up river by the Efik or Akunakuna middlemen. They forge hoes, axes, spades, knives of various kinds ... fishing spears, arrow-heads, gongs, personal ornaments ... etc.

Writing in the 1930s, Chapman (1930:72, 241) also stated that the major industry of the Ikwo town was blacksmithing. As mentioned earlier, Afikpo had direct trade link with Ezza and Ikwo (Abakaliki). They attended the Ezza markets of Eke Imoha and Orié Egbe which are 20 and 17 miles away from Afikpo respectively, and the Ikwo market about 22 miles away from Afikpo. They could have equally procured them from the Abiriba, Aro, Nkwerre, and Awka as claimed, for these groups were professional traders and specialist smiths in Igboland (Afigbo, 1980:15).

However, with the use of these simple tools, the people were able to reduce the tropical rain forest to grassland and palm bush vegetation as in other parts of Igboland. The machete described as a narrow long blade with a wooden

handle is reputed as having 'revolutionized' agriculture in Igboland (Chubb, 1961:104).

The question of the use of mechanization or any form of automation in Afikpo pre-colonial agriculture was completely ruled out. The people felt that their hoes and knives were quite efficient at the time. They complained it would have cost much to purchase machines that could clear the thick forests and uproot the stumps and rocks. It is necessary to note that Afikpo is a hilly region which lies in the trough of a syncline of sandstone ridges (Oyeka, 1971:2). As a result the rich surface soil is very thin and so did not require deep tillage otherwise the poor sub-soil would be scooped out to the surface and this might not augur well for crops.

It was a question of ecology which involves adaptation and control. Adaptation entails conforming oneself to the environment, and control entails man conforming the environment to his needs. Man responds to his environment by making changes. Since the Afikpo environment had thick forests with rich thin layer of surface soil which did not require very much the services of a plough, the people resorted to the use of simple farm tools like the hoe. Through experience, their harvests have been fantastic.

We may conclude that the domestication of yam and other crops in Igboland in general and Afikpo in particular may be viewed as an essentially indigenous process based on wild African species. The domestication was a gradual process, involving a close relationship between man and yam, and understanding the physiological nature of the yam plant. Childe (1951) has also noted that the "domestication of such vegetatively propagated crops like yam etc, could not have been a sudden cultural change comparable to the 'Neolithic Revolution' of South-Western Asia but rather a gradual evolutionary process." Coursey (1980:85) has also

expressed the view that, "the initial moves towards domestication, consisted not of any sudden and traumatic changes, but rather of the gradual evolution of a symbiotic relationship between man and yam. This involved a realization of the physiological nature of the yam plant as needing protection from exploitation at certain stages of its growth cycle for the purpose of providing food for man's immediate and long-term needs". This led to a complex of rituals and socio-religious sanctions aimed at regulating the behaviour of man towards the yam plant in such a way as to facilitate the emergence of stable cultivars and cultivars.

In the light of this study, Igboland should be ranked among the cradles of early civilization in the world. Apart from the artifacts and bronze technology of Igbo-Ukwu dating to 850 AD (C14), and the Afikpo pottery industry dating as far back as 3,000 BC, being the oldest radio-carbon dated pottery in West Africa (Shaw, 1968:459 & Nzewunwa, 1983:93), we also have the Igbo "Neolithic Revolution" dating as far back as 5,000 - 3,000 BC contemporary with Egypt, Nuclear Mande and the Highlands of Ethiopia. Consequently, there has been concentration of population in Igboland where we have the highest population density in West Africa.

Formerly it was thought that the Egyptian "Neolithic Revolution" began in about 5,000 BC, gathering momentum in about 4,000 BC, while that of Africa South of the Sahara began in about 3,000 BC, gathering momentum only in about 2,000 or 1,000 BC (Oliver & Fage, 1970:24). The Afikpo case study has proved this assertion wrong. It shows that contrary to the above view, the Igbo "Neolithic Revolution" began in about 5,000 BC (fifth millennium BC), gathering momentum in 3,000 BC contemporary with Egypt

(Andah & Anozie, 1980:102).

Whether it was a "Neolithic Revolution" or a "Neolithic Evolution", the fact remains that Igboland participated in the process of early indigenous and independent domestication of food crops like the Middle East, the Nile Valley (Egypt), Nuclear Mande and the Highlands of Ethiopia, and therefore contributed to world civilization.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Local Industries And Other Economic Activities

Apart from agriculture and trade, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the people engaged in the manufacture and making of a wide range of items. They also carried out other economic activities such as hunting. But it was done more as a hobby than as a regular or permanent occupation. The manufacturing sector or crafts constituted a significant aspect of the people's economic activities. The crafts could be classified as pottery, mat-making, basket-making, soap-making, palm wine brewing, woodcarving, smithery, and fishing.

The products served a wide range of purposes - as agricultural tools, war implements, vessels for moving wares and farm products, ritual objects, household furniture, and other domestic and commercial purposes. One can easily discern the close link between agriculture, trade and manufacture in pre-colonial Afikpo economy. What is more, the products of the local industries provided the articles for both domestic and long-distance trade. And in turn, trade distributed the products of both agriculture and manufacture, while agriculture provided food for the traders and craftsmen. It is this type of symbiosis that has always tickled the imagination of any researcher that has engaged in inquiry about the pre-colonial economic history of Afikpo in particular and Igboland in general.

It is intriguing to observe the large number of people involved in these crafts. Some of the crafts could be, and were practised by anybody; either because the necessary raw materials were easily available or because the manu-

facturing process did not require any speciality. This was the case with basket making, soap making and, to some extent, pot making. This group of craftsmen practised largely on part-time basis. They were also farmers who used these crafts to dovetail with their intermittent farming periods. Other types of crafts, however, could only be practised by certain villages in the Afikpo community, because, for ecological reasons, they possessed the necessary raw materials and the expertise and speciality. Such crafts and industries include mat-making, wood carving, smithery, fishing and palm wine brewing. These crafts and industries demanded so much time, energy, and expertise that they could not be combined effectively with full-scale farming.

This crop of craftsmen and local industrialists operated on permanent and full-time basis, and their crafts were not, relatively, of seasonal nature. They were not therefore easily affected by the vagaries of weather or by the whims and caprices of natural disasters. Most of the crafts such as pot-making, mat-making, smithing, and woodcarving, were sedentary in nature, and required much patience and care. Specialist villages included Ozizza and Nkpogoro for pot-making and fishing; Enohia Nkalu, Itim and Kpoghirikpo for fishing; Ugwuegu for smithing and wine brewing; Amuro, Mgbom, and Ubam for mat-making; and Ukpa and Mgbom for wood carving. We shall now examine the crafts and industries more closely and in detail.

Pottery

Of all the industries under consideration, pottery was about the most widespread in Afikpo. This was due to the fact that the necessary raw materials were evenly and generously distributed in the area. The raw materials were so abundant that they attracted the attention of the Department of Commerce and Industries in Lagos, Nigeria in 1948. In fact, a report on various samples of clays received

from the Department of Commerce and Industries, Lagos, described the Afikpo clay as 'strong, dense type of clay which showed high shrinkage and good for the manufacture of pottery, bricks and tiles' (Pottery: National Archives, Enugu, 1948 - 51, OGPROF 2/1/3107). The plethora of clay which is the raw material for pottery made the people to be one of the earliest Pottery manufacturers in Nigeria, indeed, in West Africa.

It should be noted that pottery was exclusively a craft for women in Afikpo. Archaeological excavations carried out at Eziukwu Ukpa Rock-Shelter in Afikpo produced, among other artifacts, "pottery shreds" carrying a radiocarbon date of 3000 B. C. (Shaw, 1968:459 & Nzewunwa 1983:93). However, a later review of the Eziukwu Ukpa site by Andah & Anozie (1980:102) dates the "Pottery" to between 5,000 and 3,000 B.C. According to Ifemesia (1980), evidence from this excavation has not only proved that the pottery (Afikpo Red Ware) is among the earliest found so far in Nigeria, but indicates that there had been human habitation and exploitation of Igboland for several thousands of years. In fact, Afikpo traditions confirm that the first inhabitants of Afikpo, the Egu (see chapter two) were renowned pot-makers. There is a proverb in Afikpo which says, **Egu na-akpu ite na-eri ihe na mgbeju** meaning 'Egu, the pot-maker, who eats from potshreds' in reference to a miser. This attests to the fact that pottery was of ancient origin in the area.

The raw materials for the Afikpo pottery existed in two different forms. The first was the plastic clay known as the Afikpo Red and Grey Wares. Another was a yellowish substance called grog or **ezi uria** (fine clay) in the local dialect. This yellowish substance served as a tempering material. It was kneaded with the clay and helped to reduce its plasticity. This would make the clay stronger

and more stable for pot-making. Preparation of clay pottery in Afikpo passed through many manual and physical processes. No element of mechanization was employed. The kneading was simply done by a physical and manual process involving a series of unintentioned rhythmic movements with one foot on the mixture. Water was added at intervals until the required result was obtained.

The techniques employed in the actual making of pottery were the pinching and thumbing, and coiling methods. According to Chukwu (1982:48), under the former, the form was made by pinching from a thumbpress round and round until the desired shape and thickness was achieved; while by the latter, clay coils were used to mould a form. In each case, it was the deft movement and dexterity of the potter's fingers that was used in working the mass of the clay and building the vessel up from the base to the required shape and size. No mould of any kind was used. The products were of various shapes and sizes according to the designs of the potter and purposes they were to serve.

Firing was the final stage in the process of pot-making in Afikpo. Firing of the raw pots was done in a special place called '**ohuhu**' in local dialect. It was done with the aid of a special type of firewood and bunch of grass or faggot called **nku ite** (pottery firewood). All efforts were geared towards a successful firing. This was said to have been achieved when the colour of the wares turned red, and when there were hardly any cracks and breakages. With this, the products were then ready for use and marketing.

Pottery products served diverse purposes. Some served domestic purposes as utensils while others were used as ritual and cultural objects. The products included such varieties as **nja ohe** and **nja ogodo** (soup dishes or earthen wares), **oku** for taking bath **ite mgbuku** (pitchers or

earthen - jars for drawing water and served also as palm wine containers), **adu** (used for cooling and storing water and for crops preservation). There were also **nja bororo** and **ite ekpurukpu** which were ritual and ceremonial pots, and lastly **ite ike**, the cleansing and purification pot. The large pot, which could hold seven gallons of liquid were used for preserving food crops such as maize, okro, melon, and pepper for the next planting season. They were also used for storing water and fermenting cassava.

Finally, the pots served as commodities for both the local and long-distance trade. They constituted one of the most important single products of the people that found its way into the long-distance trade (see chapter nine). Afikpo pots were easily identified by their smooth natural surfaces and characteristic simple designs. They were highly valued and therefore attracted great demand in the long-distance markets. They, however, easily got broken when hit with a hard object. Outside this physical encounter, Afikpo pots could last for years except those not properly fired.

The exact yearly production of pottery in pre-colonial Afikpo is difficult to quantify as the statistics are not there. But one can venture a guess for individual production in a year. It is estimated that a well-known potter could produce about 500 pots of various sizes a year (Ehiahia Ubi, May 1988). This number, and probably more, was easily attained by women of Ozizza - the sub-village group which specialized in the art of pottery in Afikpo. Pottery was a full time occupation, but potters were still part-time farmers.

The fate of pottery in Afikpo is uncertain. It is said that many women have now taken exclusively to trading and farming at the expense of pottery. This led Ehiahia Ubi (May, 1988) - a potter to lament that pottery is fast becoming a craft of the past. She noted that almost all the Afikpo women have abandoned the craft for trading, and as a result young

girls no longer have the opportunity to learn the craft. Besides, young school leavers show no aptitude for the craft. It has therefore been speculated, that pottery as a craft in Afikpo, might one day be a tale of the past. It may be a mere speculation, for what would be the fate of pottery in the area is only anybody's guess.

There were a lot of changes in pottery production in Afikpo over the years. It is true that the industry was never mechanized but there has been progressive refinement in both the design and weight of pots in Afikpo. Pottery started in a crude form and the earlier products were very heavy. By about the mid-nineteenth century (Agada, M.M. May, 1988) better and more refined products were made. The pots were not only larger in size but also stronger in make, and were thus able to respond to the ever-increasing demands for them.

By 1900, pottery as a local industry had begun to decline. This was due in part, to the fact that the emergent colonial administration discouraged the establishment of local industries, and to the fact, that foreign goods, which could render the same services as the local products also began to arrive. The local products could not withstand competition from the foreign ones. The resultant dwindling demand for the local pots led progressively to the decline of the Afikpo pottery industry. Today, only a few women mainly old women, still engage in the production of pottery in Afikpo. Pottery is thus a dying industry in Afikpo.

The abundant clay which is found in commercial quantities in the area could be used for the establishment of viable bricks and tiles industries as it had already been tested and proved suitable for that purpose (NAE, 1948-51, OGPROF 2/1/3107). It could equally be used as raw material for ceramic industry in Nigeria.

Mat-Making

Mat-making, unlike pottery, was and still is an exclusive craft for men in Afikpo. It is one of the crafts that is localized in the area. The reason is because the raw material: screw pine or pandanus or waterflag, is also localized. For this ecological reason, only the villages where the raw materials are found carry out the industry. It would appear that the people also possess the expertise. The villages that have the advantage of the raw materials are Ubam, Amuro, Mgbom, Amaechara, Amangbala, and Ukpa. According to Agha Isu (May, 1988), the six villages excelled in mat-making in pre-colonial Afikpo. The screw pine was, and still is found along streams or in swampy areas and the leaf is about 4 metres long.

The first process in mat-making is the cutting of the leaves of the waterflag called **ute** in Afikpo dialect. The next step is the removal of the spikes on both edges of the fresh leaves (blades) with a sharp knife. Leaves or blades of screw pine are naturally heavy. To make them lighter, they (leaves) are mangled with a blunt knife to expel water from them. They are then left in the sun to dry for about four days. The leaves turn grey in colour when dried. They also become very light and flexible in texture and ready for use. The dried leaves are cut into narrow parallel strands with a knife, and mat-making then starts.

The technique for making mats is the weaving method called **ikpa ute** in Afikpo dialect. It is a complicated process which is highly sedentary and demands skill and dedication. This skill is easily discernible from the deft movement of the fingers of the mat maker. My informant, Alazu Ewa (May, 1988) confirmed that a professional mat maker in Afikpo can produce four to six mats a day working from dawn to dusk.

Mats served a number of purposes. In the first place, they were and still are used as 'bedmates' and for ceiling,

drying of grains, and even for the burial of the dead. Above all, they constitute a source of income to the weavers. As a matter of fact, mats were among the articles of trade for local and regional markets. It is said that Afikpo mats were not massively used as their pots for the long-distance trade. This is explained in part to the fact that many of their Igbo and Cross River State neighbours also produced mats. Uturu in Okigwe, Osiri (Ezza), Ekuri and Adoni in Obubura, have been cited as examples of their neighbouring communities that were also mat makers. Besides, the quantity produced was not enough for a wider market (Alazu Ewa, 1988). Mats are still made and used in Afikpo as in other parts of Igboland, indeed Nigeria. They still provide a good proportion of the maker's income. There has been no much change in design and make of Afikpo mats.

Basket-Making

Another craft of importance in pre-colonial Afikpo was basket-making. It is a craft which was widespread in Afikpo. This is due in part to the fact that the raw material, palm tree, was widely and almost evenly distributed in Afikpo. Even in areas that approximate to Savannah belt, one could still spot a few palm trees. Besides, basket making did not demand much expertise or speciality. It was so simple and easy to weave that any good observer could readily pick up the techniques of weaving it. Chukwu (1982:19) described the technique as 'a textile art with machinery'. Basket making was a part-time economic pursuit.

As mentioned earlier, the raw material came and still comes from palm tree bamboo. Baskets were therefore made from thinly split cane (ekwere) derived from the palm tree bamboo. This constituted the earliest and most commonly used material for basket weaving. Another material later used was a type of cane called **ana** in local dialect. The use of the cane material was an improvement on the former

material. The cane was stronger and produced more refined, stronger and more durable baskets. The disadvantage of the palm bamboo cane is that it could easily snap when subjected to extreme bending while the wild cane material (ana) could maintain its elasticity under the same pressure. As a result, baskets made from the bamboo-cane materials did not last for more than a year while those from the wild cane material lasted for years. The use of the palm tree bamboo material in Afikpo in particular and most parts of Igboland in general for basket making is a matter of ecology. In the northern parts of Nigeria, for the same ecological reasons, baskets were made from grass. while in Ikot-Ekpene, (Akwa Ibom State) they were raffia-woven.

Perhaps, the most striking feature of the Afikpo basketry was the variety of the products and the purposes they served. Afikpo baskets were of various sizes and shapes depending on the purposes for which they were made. The commonest ones were the round-shaped called **nkata** in local dialect. They were used for carrying light commodities like palm kernels, melon, vegetables, tomatoes, beans, okro, pepper and so on. The smaller ones were used for fishing in ponds (okpe) and lakes. There were also the flat base oval-shaped ones with a flat or lid, used for storing dried fish and other minor crops such as grains and seeds. The oblong-shaped type of baskets called **abo ngada** or **abo ogologo** were used to carry wares to the market, and crops such as yams from and to the farm.

There was still the flat type called **umume** used for drying fish and pepper in the sun or for smoking them. The making of these types did not demand much expertise. The average size of the round baskets (referred to earlier) were particularly in great demand between the months of January and March when the people of Afikpo held their annual general fishing or exploitation of their three popular lakes - Ehoma, Iyi-

Eke and Umi. Baskets constituted the most important single materials used by girls and women during this annual fish harvest. Finally, there was a type of basket called **ika** in local dialect designed for entrapping fishes. This type of basket was common with the fishing villages of Ozizza and Enohia-Kpoghirikpo.

By 1900, basketry had not shown any remarkable change in design and size. However, Oko Omaka (1988) explained that better and larger products were made to enable them catch up with the increase in and complexity of the services they rendered. There is no doubt that by 1900, the Afikpo products had faced sharp competitions with foreign products that could equally, if not better, render the services they rendered. Today, basket making in Afikpo is highly limited in quantity and type. The types one still finds in the markets are the round-shaped baskets for the annual fish harvest by women, the **ika** type for entrapping fish; and interestingly, the round king-size baskets still very much in demand for carrying dried fish, fresh tomatoes, peper, beans, vegetables, groundnuts, okro etc.

Baskets were important items of trade in pre-colonial Afikpo. Basketry as a part-time craft provided a reasonable income which supplemented the maker's annual income.

Soap-Making

Soap making was one of the oldest local industries in pre-colonial Afikpo. It was an occupation open to both men and women. The process of soap-making in pre-colonial Afikpo was not complex and as such did not demand any speciality. It did not also involve much capital.

Anybody with an average means could undertake soap manufacture. Furthermore, the raw material was evenly spread in the community. So the question of comparative cost or advantage did not arise.

The original raw materials for soap making were dr: palm

fruit bunches called **isisi ekwu** in local dialect and palm oil. The dry palm fruit bunches were burnt to ashes. The ashes were sifted out from the burnt bunches by the use of a special basket or perforated calabash. Other raw materials that were later used are dry yam, bean pods and dry outer cover (pericarps) of cassava tuber and plantain.

These materials went through the same process of burning to produce ashes - the real raw material for the industry. Later, wire gauze was used for sifting out ashes from the cinders and burnt bunches.

The actual production involved the heating of palm oil in a clay pot to a boiling point. Some ashes were dumped gradually into the boiling oil in a pot and stirred vigorously. The content was simmered for some hours. Plenty of foam was formed and the mixture soon thickened into a soft black mass like a bloom which hardened after cooling. It was then cut into smaller blocks called in local language **ncha isisi ekwu** (literally, soap from palm fruit bunches). The reason for this name is that the original raw material for the manufacture had been palm fruit bunches. The soap was then ready for use and marketing.

Production did not consume much time nor was it labour or capital intensive. Again, producers did not organise themselves into a guild system and so production was open to any individual who cared. Soap manufacturing was a part-time economic pursuit. Thus, it did not support a family as a permanent occupation. But if soap manufacturers had gone into real specialization and increased their scale of production, they would have wholly depended on it for their livelihood because there was sufficient market for their product.

However, this local soap, as we would call it, served a number of purposes. Apart from being used as toilet soap

and for other domestic purposes, it also served as one of the items of both local and regional trade in pre-colonial Afikpo. Besides, it was reputed to be medicinal and thus capable of curing some skin diseases like mild scabies, eczema, rashes, pimples, acnes etc. The authenticity of this claim has been proved in many cases. Although soap-making was not a permanent occupation, it did supplement the annual income of the producer. And by 1900, it had become a household industry in many villages, but with no capacity of independently supporting the lineage which had still to depend on farming for its survival.

But colonial rule which began in the area in the early twentieth century spelt doom to the industry. The British administration, as was their general policy on all local industries, never encouraged the soap industry. The industry had to battle for survival in the face of apparent competition with its foreign counterparts. It later found its level and was therefore not killed. It is now celebrated in the people's economic history as one of the few local industries that survived colonial rule. It has undergone a number of changes especially in the realm of raw materials. For example, since the early twentieth century, dried yam, bean pods, and dried outer cover (pericarps) of cassava tuber and plantain have also been used as raw materials, either mixed with palm fruit bunches or separately. There has also been an improvement on the quality of the product. These new brand of raw materials were widely used during the Nigerian-Biafran War when the soap assumed the name 'Biafran soap' as an anti-economic blockade of the War.

Palm Wine Tapping And Brewing

Palm wine tapping and brewing was one of the local industries in pre-colonial Afikpo. As noted earlier, the people, like their other Igbo counterparts, had plenty of oil palms which provided the raw material for the brewing

industry. The oil palm sap was tapped and brewed as palm wine. It was locally called **mai nkwu** as opposed to **mai ngwo** (raffia palm wine) which was brewed in some other parts of Igboland and the neighbouring communities of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. Palm wine was tapped from an erect oil palm tree which was usually very high. It could also be tapped from an oil palm tree that had been felled. But wine from a standing palm tree was regarded as superior.

However, after tapping, brewing then started. Brewing of palm wine was a very simple process. It only involved mixing the original wine with water at a reasonable proportion depending on the solution desired. Usually, highly concentrated palm wine, that is, with little water added, was stronger and had greater alcoholic effect. It is said that with the passage of time, the process of palm wine brewing took a dramatic turn as substances called saccharin came to be used. According to Aja Obiahu (May, 1988) "even before 1902 brewers of palm wine had acquired some substances called saccharin with which they added to palm wine to make it sweeter to the taste". He said that this substance was procured from Aro traders who traded with Europeans on the coast. Since then the use of saccharin in palm wine brewing had increased with the years. Unadulterated palmwine is called **akuru** in local dialect.

It should be noted that brewing of palm wine was a job for men. In the first instance, climbing of oil palm was forbidden to women in Afikpo in particular and Igboland as a whole. Although palm trees were found almost everywhere in Afikpo, brewing of palm wine was really localized. The major reason for the localization of the industry was that only those people who had acquired the manipulative skill to climb palm trees could become wine tappers and

brewers. Oil palm trees were exceptionally high, about 60 to 80 feet high. There was also the question of the tapping technique which again was possessed only by those who were able to climb up the high tree. The difficulty of climbing up the palm tree was therefore the first major factor that eliminated people from the wine brewing industry. As a result a few group of villages in Afikpo with men who possessed first the technique and skill of climbing palm trees became wine tappers and brewers. Such villages included Ugwuegu Elu, Amangbala, Amankwo, Imama (Ozizza), Amaozara and a host of other minor brewers.

Although palm wine tapping and brewing was a part-time economic pursuit, it demanded so much time from the tapper and brewer. It was tapped twice a day. If left for a day without being attended to, there may be some problems the following day. The area in the oil palm where the tapping took place must be kept fresh all the time by dressing, otherwise the quantity of wine produced would fall. This is so because the daily quantity of wine produced depends on the regular and periodic dressing of the area by peeling off old and dead cells which encourages exuding of the sap. Because of the amount of time and attention tapping demanded, a wine tapper hardly had time to do effective farming. However, most wine tappers were also farmers. They usually cleaned and dressed the area and tapped some wine in the morning and shuttled to the farm to come back in the afternoon to dress the area again, and probably do the evening tapping and brewing around 6 p.m.

Fresh palm wine is reputed to contain plenty of yeast which is good for the eye. It also contains plenty of alcohol, and was relatively a cheap way of obtaining the two substances, yeast and alcohol. Palm wine fetched a lot of income for the producers. It was not a commodity for the

long-distance markets, but was disposed of in the local markets.

Palm wine brewing has considerably diminished in Afikpo. One major reason for the decline is that only few people are prepared to risk the danger of climbing palm trees. Besides, there has been a change in taste from oil palm wine to the more popular raffia palm wine brewed in the neighbouring Igbo and Ibibio communities.

Wood Carving

Another important craft in pre-colonial Afikpo was wood carving. It was yet another craft set aside exclusively for men. One never heard of a woman carver in Afikpo. Carving was an art which required great skill and aptitude. The Afikpo people believe that an artist is born, and not made. It is a truism that carving was not an art for everybody. It is an art that was acquired naturally, although it could also be learned. As a result, the craft was limited only to a few families in Afikpo to whom nature had endowed with the talent. Although it was uncommon to get a whole village specialize as carvers, Ukpa village broke the record as the village in pre-colonial Afikpo to produce the largest number of good and expert carvers (Ewa Ucha, May, 1988). A number of other villages also produced celebrated carvers in pre-colonial Afikpo. They included Mgbom, Amechara, Amangwu and Ukpa villages.

Afikpo carvers were really men of imaginative skill. It is believed that any type of art is a creative activity which involves the use of mental images to represent an object. Carving as an art was therefore no exception. Carving was a very popular and prestigious occupation for only a few people possessed the skill required for the job. Thus, although the word "Omenka" (literally maker of art) could be applied to any highly skilled man in the manufacturing professions, it was applied more often to carvers. In pre-

colonial Afikpo where carpenters hardly existed, most of the wooden tools, utensils and furniture, were the products of carvers (Ewa Ucha, 1988). Goody (1980:75) has also noted that Africans were wood-carvers but few carpenters.

Carving was a lucrative occupation in pre-colonial Afikpo, where it met the needs of religion, of practical utility and of entertainment. It is on record that each of the myriads of gods and goddesses in Afikpo, like Orié Amaizu (a goddess said to be related to the founder of Afikpo), was represented in wood. However, owing to the ravages of white ants and other destructive forces, some of the wood representations had gone, while most significant ones had been replaced. The headpieces of the numerous masquerades, which are ritually connected with the Ogo Secret Society (chapters 3 & 5), are the handi-work of Afikpo carvers. A good number and variety of masquerades' headpieces recovered from Afikpo could be found in the Archaeology Museum of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Apart from serving as ritual and religious objects, the products also served as utensils like wooden spoons, mortar and pestle, flat wooden boards (for holding cut vegetables) and so on. The carvers also made stools, doors, wooden gongs, panels and other types of furniture. Some of the objects, however, were cherished for aesthetic reasons and for decorations.

Smithery

Another craft of importance in pre-colonial Afikpo was smithery which was, however, limited to a few lineages. The people's tradition is clear on the question of the existence of indigenous smiths in Afikpo. These were probably the non-Igbo groups, the Egu who were reputed to be expert smiths (Ewa Ucha, May, 1988). The existence of villages popularly known as Ezi Uzu (smiths' villages) in Ugwuegu where the Egu lived, Amuzu Nkpogoro and Mgbom gives credence to this assertion. They plied their craft on full-time basis and

relics of their forges could still be seen in those villages. They were said to be working under the inspiration of a certain cult which gave them the advantage of speciality in the craft. The craft thus acquired esoteric character.

Ottenberg (1968:165-166) has also noted that the craft was associated with certain lineages which had shrines to help ensure the efficacy of their work. As a result, smithing was regarded as a speciality of the villages mentioned above. Afigbo (1981:140), has similarly observed that smithing was believed to be a mystical profession which established special links between the smith and the spirit world.

Asked how they obtained the iron ore, some informants like Oti Abali (May 1988) said it was produced locally. However, there are others like Oko Omaka (May 1988) who said they procured it from their Igbo neighbours like the Abiriba with whom they traded in pre-colonial days. It is pertinent to note that archaeological excavations (see ch. 2) carried out at a habitation site in Afikpo showed no evidence of iron working. But this does not dismiss the fact that the people were smiths. What appears most likely is that the people obtained iron ore from the Agbaja of Udi, the Nsukka, and the Abiriba with whom they had trade contact through the Uburu market. These three Igbo groups, according to Afigbo (1981:140) are said to have mined and smelted their own ore.

Afikpo smiths made a variety of products, ranging from iron implements for farming and warfare to ritual objects and domestic tools. They forged hoes, knives, swords, spear, axes, gongs, yam skewers, and so on. It is believed that the scattering of the Egu group by the Igbo elements during the Egu - Igbo War (see chapter four) about the early eighteenth century, was greatly responsible for the decline of Afikpo smithing. It appears the new Igbo comers did not

acquire the art since it was surrounded by some cults. Hence, the indigenous craft disappeared with the exit of the Egu.

It is said that about the later part of the nineteenth century, some itinerant smiths from Abiriba and Ezza (Agha Isu, May 1988) visited Afikpo where they lived and practised their crafts for certain periods of the year. Ottenberg (1968:166) has also noted that blacksmithing was carried out in the 1950s by an Igbo stranger who visited Afikpo for periods of time, mainly from the Ezza area.

Nonetheless, iron implements had advantage over stone and wooden tools. With these implements, the Afikpo farmers were able to reduce the forest to bush and the hard soil to powder. The weapons also helped the people to stage their successful wars against their neighbouring communities and to engage in head-hunting for which Afikpo was known. Hopkins (1973:44) has noted that iron implements improved the efficiency of hunters, made it easier to clear the forest, and placed more power in the hands of the builders (and destroyers) of towns and states. Afikpo people were warriors who took delight in head-hunting which was regarded as an act of gallantry and bravery as celebrated in their myth and legend. The possession of iron implements gave them advantage over their neighbours who were less favoured.

Fishing

Finally, fishing was one of the major industries of Afikpo people in pre-colonial days. It is natural that people have to interact with their environment. A number of Afikpo villages located close to the Cross River naturally had to exploit the river for their needs. These villages which include Ozizza, Enohia Itim, Enohia Nkalu and Kpoghirikpo, and to a lesser extent, Ndibe, Amaobolobo and Amankwo have been described as fishing villages of Afikpo. They have

therefore been traditionally associated with the fishing industry. However, earliest evidence of fishing industry in Afikpo dates back to the neolithic times. An archaeological excavation carried out at Ugwuegu Rockshelter in Afikpo (Chikwendu, 1980:6) showed evidence of bones of mud skipper (*Lophius piscatorius*). This is a clear indication that fishing industry is as old as the people themselves. Their oral tradition confirms that they have been fishing in the Cross River and in the adjoining lakes from time immemorial.

The people of the above vilages were fishermen as well as farmers. It is known that older men from these villages concentrated on farming, while the younger ones were away from home from November to May, when the water was low and the fish, which had come up during the rainy season had been trapped. The fishermen lived on sandbanks on the river, where they established temporary fishing settlements or villages. They travelled as far south as the port of Calabar, and as far north as the Cameroon border, pitching their fishing villages on sandbanks.

Various methods and implements were used in catching fish in pre-colonial Afikpo. One of the earliest implements were the **ekpoko** and **ika**, which were made mainly from palm tree materials. They were ingeniously contrived baskets, cylindrically shaped, and used for entrapping small fishes, shrimps, lobsters and crayfish. The **ika** and **ekpoko** had a small aperture with a hollow inside. These traps, were set in the shallow parts of the river, especially near the banks where there were plenty of small plants. They were allowed to stay overnight, and were collected the following morning, when smaller fishes and crayfish had been caught. This type of method was also used in the Andoni area of Rivers State, where the trap was called **ikata** (Nsanowaji, 1984:21-

22), which compares with the Afikpo local dialect of **ika**. Later, the use of other techniques like lines of hooks, fence traps, weirs and various types of nets, was devised. The use of the new fishing technology was said to have been borrowed from the **Ijaw**, the **Ibibio** and the **Efik** peoples, with whom the Afikpo people had had trade contact for ages (Oko Omaka, 1988).

There was also another type of fishing method which involved the use of **ekobi**. The **ekobi** was a flat oblong-shaped basket, made from the wild cane material and measuring about 15 feet long and 10 feet wide. It was operated by two men standing on a slowly moving canoe. It was a shallow sea fishing technique used specifically during the rainy season, when the river was in flood. This method was locally devised. A new element was later added to the Afikpo fishing industry when a kind of a large, complex net - woven instrument called **Owo-inang**, was introduced into Afikpo by an Efik man by name Ndara King. It was made of net and operated upon by four persons, hence its name **Owo-inang**, the Efik word for four persons. The **Owo-inang** could net over two hundred fishes at a draught (Omiko Udume, 1985). The instrument was very expensive to produce, but it paid its way.

It should be noted that migrant fishing in Afikpo was divided into two periods, the rainy season fishing period and the dry season. The former started after the men must have planted and staked their yam crops, while the latter began after the yams must have been harvested. The significance of this kind of arrangement is that it made it possible for a person to be both a crop farmer and a fish farmer. The Afikpo farmer was therefore gainfully employed throughout the year.

Apart from river and lake fishing, the Afikpo people also

practised pond-fishing. Here ponds (okpe) were sunk in farmlands around the three great lakes of Afikpo (**ehoma**, **iyieke** and **umi**). The ponds, which were and are still owned by individuals or families, provided a breeding ground for fishes. Here fishes laid and hatched their eggs when the river overflowed its banks. When the river went down, many of the fishes were trapped in the ponds. They were harvested on maturity during the dry season. It is pertinent to note that the Cross River is not a tidal water. What happens is that fishes migrate (swim up) from the sea during the rainy season when the river is in flood. They remain here to spawn and breed and provide the catch for fishermen during the dry season.

In time, fishing industry in Afikpo became revolutionized as new and improved instruments came to be used. For example, the **ika** and **ekobi** referred to earlier, which were formerly made from palm tree bamboo materials, came to attract the use of wild cane materials which were stronger and lasted longer. The use of the **owo-inang** added yet another dimension to the fishing industry in Afikpo. The fishermen were not only able to trap larger catches, but were also able to increase the quantity of catches. Fishermen in Afikpo were rated among the wealthy citizens in the town especially in those good old days. This was because **owo-inang** could en-mesh and net over 200 fishes at a draught. Even today they are still relatively ranked among the rich men in Afikpo.

Today, fishing industry in Afikpo is passing through a very trying period. There are complaints about scarcity of fishes in the Cross River - the people's main source of the industry. It may be necessary to diagnose the causes before one can prescribe the treatment. The use of sophisticated and poisonous weapons like gamaline-20 (**taritari**)

and dynamites (**egbemini**) for catching fish, has been suggested as one of the causes of fish scarcity in the Cross River. These weapons and chemicals do not only kill both big and small fishes, but also pollute and poison the river water, making it hygienically impossible for fish and other marine organisms to flourish in it. In his Seminar Paper titled '*The Roots of Fish Scarcity in the Brass Local Government Area of Rivers State*' (Okorobia, 1988:17) expressed similar views on the use of the above chemicals for fishing. Quoting from Erekosima and Namapele, he remarked that their use has not only exposed innocent citizens to food-poisoning and accidental deaths, but has also destroyed the whole food chain in the ecosystem.

Another factor identified as one of the causes of fish scarcity in the river is the use of nets with small meshes for fishing. The new device, which has been described as fishing right down to the 'embryo', is reported to have spelt disaster to the fishing industry along the Cross River basin. Its negative effect lies in the fact that it collects the smallest fishes in their very embryonic stage, thus making it impossible for further procreation of fishes for human consumption. This over exploitation of the river, it is said, has greatly contributed to the obvious fish scarcity in the Cross River today.

Other factors identified include unpredictable changes in weather and flood. It has been observed that any year the river overflows its banks there would be plenty of catch, and vice versa. As we know, inundation is a natural phenomenon. The Afikpo fisherman is thus sandwiched between the two phenomena which militate, in varying degrees, against his business.

There is no doubt that fishing industry in Afikpo has witnessed progressive changes both in its methods and

techniques. It has also weathered through crisis, and continues to pass through crisis occasioned on the one hand by natural changes, and on the other by overfishing and the use of destructive methods. Its survival would depend very much on the extent to which it could adapt to natural upheavals such as vagaries of weather. It would also depend on how far it could adopt a more progressive method of fishing technique and exploitation.

This would include a fishing technology that would leave the smaller or younger fishes uncaught. Such a technology would involve, among others, the use of fishing nets with wider meshes. In addition, the use of poisonous chemicals and other destructive weapons like dynamites, should be avoided. Finally, the solution should include any device that could replace the uncountable number of fishes being lost daily by the use of various conventional and unconventional methods.

Interestingly, there has been a steady transition in modern times from the traditional fishing to the establishment of fish ponds, to breed and domesticate wild fishes. The fish is harvested periodically under controlled conditions. This transition could be likened to the transition from gathering of wild crops and hunting of wild animals to domestication of plants and animals.

Analysis of economic history of any pre-literate society is fraught with inherent problems. The greatest problem is the non-availability of statistics to quantify production. In most cases, it is not even possible to venture a guess, unless one wants to run the risk of being too hypothetical. What is certain was that the local industries churned out enough products for domestic uses and surpluses for exchange purposes.

Our analysis has shown that some crafts did not require

special training or periods of apprenticeship. In some cases, it was a natural possession or speciality, while in others it was acquired through training. There is a saying that teachers are born not made. But it has been argued that such born teachers would have been wonderful if they were also trained. This is also applicable to carving as a profession. The point at stake is that the people of Afikpo, and indeed the Igbo, believe that a natural born carver, would normally show his mettle in boyhood before being apprenticed to a master-carver. It was then the duty of the master to help him to develop by teaching him the motifs, concepts and techniques of Afikpo carving. It is known that some men learnt the art of making certain crafts by mere observation. This was the case with mat-making and pottery. Young Afikpo girls were said to have stayed by their mothers' sides watching them while at work with pottery. They quickly acquired the techniques and even excelled their mothers in some cases.

It is clear that most of the crafts were exclusively handi-craft (needing skill with the hands). It is also on record that the local industries did not employ any element of mechanization. Even in the pottery industry no kilns of any type were used. It was only the deft movements and dexterity of the fingers that shaped the pot, and built it up from base until the required size was attained. The acquisition of such a technique and skill is still a wonder to those who have had the opportunity to see the Afikpo potter at work.

CHAPTER NINE

Trading Activities: Afikpo And Her Neighbours

As stressed earlier, agriculture was the premier economic activity in pre-colonial Afikpo. It was also the bedrock or main-stay of their economy. Nonetheless, trading activities still occupied an important position in the economy. Trade, therefore, could be said to be the next in importance to agriculture. It also played a unique role in the economy. It was, for example, the mechanism through which products of agriculture and manufacture were distributed as we shall see shortly.

Markets And Origins

The market place, usually located in an open space, was the main venue for commercial exchange. The people had four market days, corresponding to the four 'native' week days as found elsewhere in Igboland. There were four main local markets within the cluster of village-groups that constitute Afikpo community. The markets were **Ogbanja** at Ndibe village, which became the main market in Afikpo; the ancient **Ahia Okpu** at Ugwuegu; Amaechara village market, and **Nkwo Ozizza** market. In addition to these major markets, there were a number of 'mushroom' evening markets located within village-group centres and collectively called **Ahia Ogo** (village-centre markets). The markets served the immediate needs of house wives who, for one reason or another, could not attend the general or major market, or who forgot some necessities. One could therefore see the establishment of the evening village-centre markets, as an attempt to minimize the inconveniences, that a highly centralized major market that came up only once every four days might have caused the people. These

markets at first only served the needs of local or internal commerce. The market calendar was so arranged as to avoid any unhealthy rivalry or clash. To further this objective, markets were held on different market days. This rotatory arrangement also helped to cater for the needs of a daily market, which was not then available. Any way, there were always three or more markets holding everyday in the four native days of the week - Eke, Orié, Aho, Nkwo which the traders and consumers attended according to choice.

It is, however, difficult to trace the origins of these markets. It is also difficult to date them as oral traditions are equally helpless. In fact the search for their origins is like searching for a pin in a hay -stack. Hopkins (1973:75) made a similar observation. According to him, "The search for the origin of markets in West Africa is as fruitless as the search once undertaken by political philosophers for the origin of the state." Afigbo (1978:45) is of the view that we may never be able to know for certain how trade and marketing developed in Igbo culture. However, Ukwu (1978:129) is of the opinion that, "periodic markets in Iboland developed out of the custom of the rest day;" while Orijí (1981) in his study of the Ngwa Igbo, seems to be arguing along the same line with Ukwu.

The latter might be true of Afikpo because certain days in the week were designated as work-free days. The two days, Eke and Aho (Afo) were specifically set aside for offering of sacrifices, consulting native doctors and diviners and celebration of feasts and other types of carnival (Oko Omaka, 1988). There is hardly any doubt that markets grew out of the circumstances of the time. The need to dispose of surplus products in exchange for the other things that man needed but could not produce, normally necessitated the establishment of a forum for such exchanges. Necessity, they

say, is the mother of invention. Apart from serving as centres for exchange, the local markets were also important forums for cross-fertilization of ideas, socialization, and dissemination of information. They, as well, served as a relief from the tedious and monotonous farm work. In fact Fyfe (1965:236) summed it up in the following words:

The market was not solely an economic institution. People went there to meet their friends, hear news, and repeat rumours. It was also a centre for political activities.

One striking aspect of the activities in the local markets was its composition. The people involved were mainly women. From all indications, it appears that in pre-colonial Afikpo, men were busy attending to other necessities at home, while women carried farm crops to the local markets for sale. Oti Abali (May, 1988) has pointed out that, "Afikpo men were usually occupied with fencing their compounds, repairing their houses or staking their yams in their barns, while their wives carried agricultural products to the market." Hopkins (1973:56) seems to be making the same point when he observed that, "local trade was a convenient adjunct to household ...activities." Ekejiuba (1967:634) further confirms this observation by stating in her article, *Omu Okwei. The Merchant Queen of Ossamari* that during the pre-colonial times, "Igbo men generally took no part in the actual buying and selling of goods in the local markets." Fyfe (1965:235) also maintains that, "in the Ibo villages, markets were carried on largely by women for whom it was part-time occupation."

The articles of trade in the local markets at this time were predominantly agricultural products. These included yams, cocoyam, maize, palm oil, vegetables, melon, domestic animals, dried and fresh fish etc. Other articles were clay

pots, for which Afikpo has been identified for ages, palm wine, native cloth (aji) made from the fibrous bark of certain trees especially aji tree (Oke Agbo Oti, May 1988).

Types of Trade

Trade in Afikpo was initially carried out only at the local or village level. It later attained the regional level, and finally graduated to long-distance trade. These two levels of trade are referred to as external trade.

As we shall see later, the Afikpo main market called "Eke Ukwu Market," subsequently developed to cater not only for the needs of local trade but also for those of external commerce, epitomized in regional and long-distance trades. The two aspects of trade in this context could be described as long-range or external trade.

Afikpo oral traditions are quite clear on the development of long-range trade in their area. The important point here is that as the people produced more than they could consume, they had to dispose of the surplus, perhaps, in exchange for their needs. This could be as a result of differential ecological conditions or comparative advantage as Oti Abali (1988) noted:

dried fish which we carried to inland markets at Owutu, Nguzu, Item, Akunakuna, Igbere, Uzuakoli (Bende); Eke-Imoha, Ori Egbe, Ikwo (Abakaliki). We exchanged these products for our needs such as salt, cloth, horses, beads, slaves, palm oil, hoes, matchets etc.

About this regional or relay trade, Orji (1981) said, "because of lack of well-maintained and secured trade routes... commodities were relayed from one ecological zone to the other during the period of regional trade." One may add that it was not so much of lack of well-maintained or secured trade routes that led to the relay method of the trade than the difficulties of head-lifting the heavy com-

modities by one person for longer distances in the absence of the wheel. Hence the need for some relief operations to ease the trekking and load burden.

It may be necessary at this stage to draw a distinction between regional trade and long-distance trade as it affected Afikpo. Under the former, the people traded with other communities within Igboland as outlined above. Long-distance trade which we shall be discussing presently, is the long-range trade which linked the people with their neighbours outside Igboland. Afigbo also expressed the same view in his book titled, *Ropes of Sand Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (1981:131). The constant mention in Afikpo oral traditions of Ezza, Ikwo, Awka, Nkwere, Abiriba and Aro as the places from where they procured their farm implements (for the people were smiths), lends further weight to the existence of this regional trade between the Afikpo and their other Igbo neighbours.

It is often argued that regional trade predated long-distance trade. Well, it is a common sense knowledge that people first traded with their immediate kith and kin. This was because either for language reasons or fear, most people did not venture outside their village. But it would be wrong to assume (as has been the impression) that regional trade specifically meant the trade which developed within the Igboland or between the Igbo villages. In Afikpo the so-called regional trade or better short-distance or medium trade was going on side by side with that of their immediate Cross River State neighbours - the Ebom, Uzumutong, Eke Aki, Itaba, Afafa Enyum, Ediba, Erei, Ogada, Itigidi, Ekuri, Andoni, Agwugwuna etc.

The Afikpo people had established early social and economic contact with these groups who live on the opposite side of the Cross River in the same way as they had established with their immediate Igbo counterparts. The

Cross River was used as the gateway for this contact as would be seen under trade routes and transportation later. The languages of trade were Igbo and Efik. There is hardly an Afikpo man today in his fifties (especially illiterates) who could not pick few sentences (orally) in Efik. The truth is that, as time went on, that is, probably when conditions in terms of socialization and security improvement, people began to venture farther beyond the precincts of what has often been described as their immediate neighbourhood. The idea of long-distance trade, which forms the topic of the next paragraph, was born out of this venture.

It is quite comprehensible that the long-distance trade developed out of the need to make up for the economic deficiencies of the local and regional trade discussed earlier. The people were great producers of clay pots, dried fish, melon etc., the surplus of which they wanted to dispose of. They needed other commodities such as **anam** - a special cotton woven towel used as cloth, horses for funeral purposes, hoes, matchets, salt, slaves etc. These needs they satisfied through participation in the long-distance trade.

The traders involved were mainly men. There were no professional traders as such in pre-colonial Afikpo as could be found among the northern and north-western Igbo such as Okigwe, Nsukka, Awka, Orlu, Nkwerre, etc. This is because, like the local trade, long-distance trade was done on part-time basis. Most of those involved in the trade were also big farmers. But their business trip was so planned as to coincide with the period of little or no farm work.

It is important to note that long-distance trade in Afikpo fell into two types. The first was the land-borne and the second the water-borne. Both went simultaneously. The over-land long-distance trade linked the people with their Igbo neighbours and beyond through the southern trade

routes which passed through Nkalaegu to Nike, Uburu, Uzuakoli, Bende and finally to Cross River and Rivers State States (Ifemesia, 1978:32).

The water-borne long-distance trade was carried out along the Cross River between the Afikpo people and their Cross River and Akwa Ibom States neighbours.

Many communities in the Cross River State were involved in the trade. These included, the peoples of Uzumutong, Eke Aki, Ebom, Itaba, Itigidi, Ediba, Ugep; Mbembe-speaking peoples (Adoni, Obubra, Apiapum, Ovombone), Ikom and Ogoja districts, even up to the Cameroons. Others were Ekpiriobio, Nfuma, Ijokwe, Omi up to Isi Mkpume (Izzi) in Abakaliki, and parts of Idoma (Benue State). Down stream, the people traded with Ogada, Ijom, Amon, Agwugwuna, Itu, Evieyor, Oron and Calabar even with the fishing villages of Ijaw, Kalabari, Bonny and Andoni in the Rivers State (Obiahu Chukwu September, 1975) and (Ifemesia, 1978:54).

The beginning of the long-range trade in Afikpo as in other parts of Igboland is difficult to date with precision. Archaeological excavations carried out at an old settlement site in Afikpo showed no evidence of trading activities. The site which recorded a radio-carbon date of between 3,000 - 5,000 B.C. however, showed evidence of food crop cultivation (Andah and Anozie, 1980:102). This would suggest that commercial activities of recognisable magnitude had not started at this early period of their history.

But information from the Igbo-Ukwu site shows that by 9th century A.D. (850 A. D.) the long-range trade linking Igboland and the one linking them with their other Nigerian neighbours had been established. The Igbo-Ukwu findings suggest that by that date Igboland was already engaged in the exchange of slaves and ivory for horses, beads and bronze

from the north (Shaw, 1960).

In fact, evidence which suggests that the trade between Igboland and their neighbours predated the advent of Europeans abound here and there. E. J. Alagoa (1970:319-329) for example, has uncovered evidence which suggests that the trade between the Ijaw and their hinterland neighbours was already firmly established before the dawn of the era of European contact. Following this discovery and other available evidence, one can safely assert that the water-borne trade between the Afikpo people and their Cross River and Rivers States neighbours, is of distant origin. The routes they followed and their modes of transportation systems. will be examined in the next paragraphs.

Routes And Transportation System

Under the overland trade, the traders followed definite and familiar paths known as trade routes. A complex labyrinth of such routes was created to connect the long-distance markets. Most of the routes were bush-tracks which improved with time. In Afikpo, the routes went to various directions and finally joined the main routes that cut across south eastern Nigeria. One such route passed from Afikpo through Amasiri and Okposi to Uburu which was a 'market fair'. It is said that Uburu market was the centre for salt, horses, cloths, slaves and that all sorts of business were done there. It was particularly a slave centre (Ewa Utom, 1975 & Agha Isu, 1988) and a gateway to Nike (Enugu), Nkalagu, Nsukka, Idoma, Oturkpo, Igala, and Hausalands (Agha Isu, 1988).

Nwalá (1985:179) has noted that:

Surplus yam and rice from the northern Igboland; products of craftsmen and pottery makers from Awka and Afikpo areas; cattle, horses and natron from the north (beyond Igboland); salt from Uburu - these and many other commodities constituted important items

which different sections of Igboland exchanged among themselves and with their neighbours.

Another passed from Afikpo through Owutu Edda and Nguzu to Abiriba, then to Uzuakoli, Bende, Ohafia and Arochukwu. Yet another went through Okpoha to Aba-Omeghe, Orié Egbe, Eke Imoha through Nwankwo - all in Ezza Abakaliki - and finally burst at Uburu market (Oko Omaka & Ewa Ucha, 1988). This description appears to fit into the general pattern of trade routes in South-eastern Nigeria during this period. Describing the pattern of trade routes in South-eastern Nigeria, C. C. Ifemesia said:

From the Calabar - Arochukwu road branch routes struck north-west to Bende, Ndizuogu, Awka, Amokwe and Agbaja in the present - day Enugu area; other routes drove northwards to Uburu, and further north to Nkalagu, Nike, Aku and Ibagwa in the Nsukka area (Ifemesia, 1978:32).

The commonest means of transport at this time was headportorage. Afikpo traders did not make use of pack-animals or beast of burden like camels, horses, donkeys, bullocks etc. These animals could not be used because they are susceptible to the attack of trypanosomiasis - a disease carried by tse-tse flies.

Although Afigbo (1980:12 -13) has described it as the least efficient form of transportation, human headportorage remained the commonest and most extensively used means of transport on land, rendering services which pack-animals could not render for reasons already given. It appears that slaves were the major source of headportorage. Afikpo oral traditions make an unending references to how slaves and those about to be sold into slavery were made to carry traders' wares for long distances (Oti Abali & Aja Obiahu, 1988). Afigbo (1980:13) has also noted that, in the main, slaves constituted the bulk of the porters; while Hopkins

(1980:72) has added that professional carriers, who were often slaves, could head-load 55-65 lbs and cover an average of twenty miles a day.

The major disadvantage of headporters was that the quantity of wares they carried could hardly support a large - scale commercial trade. Besides, it was a slow process of moving wares to consumers and it also encouraged social stratification. Both Ekundare (1973:49) and Hodder (1973:193) have also observed that headportage had shortcomings. For instance, that the carrying capacity and distance coverable by a man was limited. In his recent critique titled, *'Colonialism and the process of underdevelopment in Nigeria'*. Coockey pointed out that:-

Traders under the headportage system, followed established bush-tracks over long distances. But that these routes were subject to unpredictable interruptions as a result of local wars, and that in any event, the volume of commerce that they could support was limited, especially in the forest belt where the tse-tse fly limited the use of beasts of burden (p. 23).

As a matter of fact, movement of goods and persons was extremely slow. It is reported, for example, that it took Afikpo traders two days to travel to and from Uburu - a distance of about 16 miles. But with the modern transportation system, like the motor vehicle, the distance can be covered under half an hour. And this would help to accelerate the tempo of economic activities. The concept of speed is important in economic history. It affects both the producer and the consumer. The producer would like his products to be distributed quickly to the consumer and at the correct time. Because the consumer would like to have the goods and services at the time he needs them; hence the relationship between speed (time factor), price, supply and demand. Besides, perishable goods such as vegetables,

tomatoes, fresh fish and so on, need to reach the consumers quickly before they go bad.

It is a truism that long-distance trade was full of hazards. Apart from the tediousness of transportation of heavy and bulky goods, there was also the ever-present danger of wild beasts and head-hunters. However, in Afikpo as in other parts of Igboland, a system of ensuring the safety of traders and their goods, and of maintaining peace was devised. Such devices included the use of rituals, blood bonds (*igba ndu*), secret societies, inter-marriages etc.

Blood bonds were extensively used and proved to be the most effective device for guaranteeing freedom of movement. By this, the traveller-trader established a kind of ritual blood relations or kinship with an influential member of the village he was passing through. The parties agreed not to do harm to each other, and the host protected his guest in the community. He also escorted his departing guest to the place of **Ogbugba ndu** (blood covenant spot) usually village boundaries, and formally handed him over to the next village. In this way, the trader-traveller shuttled between the villages through the help of a relay of hosts (M. N. Agada & Aja Orie, 1988).

The whole of Afikpo village-group, for example, entered into blood relations with the neighbouring Amasiri clan about 1917, and this ended their age-long feud and hostility (Oko Omaka & Ewa Ucha 1988). The covenant spot (now covered by a cluster of trees) still stands half-way between Afikpo and Amasiri. Since then, an Afikpo man and Amasiri man cannot spill each others blood. The Afikpo villages of Ozizza, located close to the cross river and very adjacent to their Cross River State neighbours also entered into ritual blood pacts with their Cross River State neighbours for exploitation of the Cross River which separates the two

communities, and for peaceful social and economic co-existence. Thus, Amaorie Ozizza village had blood pact with Afafa Enyum; Amikpo village with Itaba; Orra village with Ebom, Eke Aki and Uzumutong; while Imama Ozizza had with Akpoha (Ajuka Ugwu, 1988).

Ekejiuba (July, 1972:16-17) has also outlined the importance of trade partnership and blood pact (igba ndu) in enhancing peaceful resolution of disputes and cementing relations among the various trading group within Igboland and beyond:

The supreme importance of trade partnership was given ceremonial form in "Igbandu" (blood pact). The belief in the efficacy of magic dominated the pact and its obligations bind not only the trade partners but members of their household and trading units. Trade partners exchanged visits and gifts from time to time. Since their economic interests were closely knit they acted as allies and supported each other in disputes involving outside group. Thus the Efik traders settled the quarrel between Asang and Aro-Ibom on the one hand and Aro Amangwu on the other. The quarrel between these groups involved Efik trade partners to whom the Efik traders had advanced several hundreds of pounds worth of goods. The Asang were alleged to have seized these goods at the instigation of the Ibom. Jaja's trade partners from Obinkita Aro were also said to have attended his funeral with the Ekpe Club - the highest honour the Aro give to the Aro initiates and, it is claimed certainly the first time this was done for a non-Aro (Ekejiuba, July, 1972: 16-17).

In order to solve the dangers posed by head-hunters, traders travelled in a convey of caravans, and also employed the services of armed escorts and spies. In addition to the exploitation of diplomatic and commercial marriages, Afikpo

traders also got initiated into the secret societies of the areas with which they had commercial linkage. They thus became initiates of the **Ekpe** and **Okonko** societies of the Ibibio and Efik types. This culture has now occupied a comfortable seat among the cultural heritages of Afikpo. All the same, the measure helped the traders and fishermen to carry on their business unmolested, especially as the password of the secret societies was understood by both parties. It was the same pattern within the Igbo trading region as Oriji (1981) has observed:

Membership of Okonko could confer a pan-Igbo Commercial passport on it's holder. For example, the Aro Caravan comprising people from Aro-Chukwu, Ohafia and Bende and other parts of Igboland who have been initiated into Okonko society, were known to have stopped in Okonko "Club house" which were often located near the major trade routes in Ngwa land. They joined their colleagues in eating, drinking and dancing. Besides providing accommodation and hospitality to the caravan, leading Okonko members purchased some commodities like salt, cloth, beads, guns and iron tools and at times the Aro granted them credit facilities... (J. J. N. Oriji, *Ikenga*, vol. 5, No. 1, 1981).

Canoe transportation was very important to the people for their water-borne long-distance markets. As stressed earlier, water-borne long-range trade constituted an integral part of the commercial activities of the Afikpo people. The Afikpo villages, which are located close to the Cross River, knew no other trade than the water-borne long-distance trade for which the Cross River was the gateway. For centuries until about 1960, these riverine group of villages had little to do with overland trade which was carried out only by a few inland traders. Besides, the riverine villages

played a middleman role between the inland villages of Afikpo and their Cross River State neighbours (Ajuka Ugwu, 1988). A good number of the traders from the interior also took part in the water-borne trade. It is known that the red wood (osisi uhie), which was a major commodity for the overland long-distance trade was, in fact, a product of the water-borne trade.

This red wood (osisi uhie) was bought at Nkum in Ikom and conveyed by canoe to Ozizza beach Afikpo from where it (the red wood) found its way overland into the Uburu market. In fact, the town Nkum was nicknamed "Nkum Uhie" by the Afikpo traders because of the abundance of redwood (osisi uhie) found in the town. It is even argued that many wealthy men in Afikpo in those days made their fortune more from the water-borne long-distance trade than from the land-borne (Oko Omaka, 1988). As to when the canoe came to be used as a means of transport, the people say that it is as old as themselves. As long as the people live close to a river, they find a means of crossing it. As we know, necessity is the mother of invention.

According to Aja Obiahu (1988):

The cross river has been with us. Our Cross River State neighbours have been living on the opposite side from time immemorial. We have been having social and economic contact with them. We had no aeroplane to fly us across the river. So, we have been using the canoe. We carried our products, pots (ite) by canoe to Adoni, Obubura, Ogurude, Ikom, Bansara and Ogoja. At Ikom, we bought yams, cocoyams and maize which we carried by canoe to Itu, Oron or Calabar for sale. On our return journey (which took four days) we bought crayfish, chewing sticks, small dried fish (ikpayi), coconuts and so on for sale at Afikpo.

This informant took part in the trade, from the age of fifteen

years as a trainee until he attained the age of 30 years, when he became an independent trader. It is at this juncture that one can dare to query the assertion made by my revered lecturer, Professor Afigbo which runs *inter alia*:

The Igbo for the most part were landlubbers, apart from the Aboh and some other riverine Igbo communities who learnt to travel and move their wares by canoe, on the Niger. Transportation by canoe was never developed on the Imo River which passes through the heart of Igboland, probably because it is a small river whose course was often blocked by snags and fallen trees. It was only in the second part of the nineteenth century that the Opobo and Bonny men started navigating its larger lower course in search of palm produce. No other river which drained Igboland offered significant facilities for the development of canoe traffic (Afigbo, 1981:137).

While it may be true that, because of its small size and presence of some physical obstructions, the Imo River could not attract canoe transportation before the 19th century as most of its counterparts in the lower Niger, it is certainly not true that no other river which drained Igboland offered significant facilities for the development of canoe traffic. In fact, there is sufficient evidence to show that the Cross River which drains Afikpo, Unwana and parts of Abakaliki (Ikwo, Izzi), offered significant facilities which led to the development of canoe traffic in the areas.

Firstly, the Cross River is large, it is four times, and in its lower courses five times as wide as the Imo River. It was deep enough and was not blocked by any such manifest obstructions that could impede the use of canoes. Thus, it admitted and floated canoes of large sizes even in the high-noon of the dry season. Canoes were the only means of transport between the Afikpo people and their Cross River

State neighbours in the pre-colonial days for both travellers and traders. Even vessels of deep draught were floated on the river.

J.B. King's Records of the Cross River Explorations of 1841 and 1842 titled, '*The Cross River in 1841 and 1842*', gives us an idea of both the width and the depth of the Cross River as far back as the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. The records show that the width varied from 360 to 180 yards, even 400 yards; and the depth between 4 to 7 fathoms or (between 24 to 42 feet). The records read thus:

Our course for above a mile was to the N.E.; the river then rounding to the north and west, and extending in a fine reach varying in width from 360 to 180 yards, with soundings 4 to 7 fathoms. Further on, the river trends a little more to the west, opening up gradually to about 400 yards. It then stretches N.W. by N., with an average width of 300 yards, as far almost as the eye can see. The soundings thus far are from 4 to 7 fathoms (24 to 42 feet). (J.B. King, 1844 & Isichei, 1977:224).

There is no doubt that the above depths can easily float vessels of deep draught. A lot of men made their living through ferrying travellers and traders across to and from Afikpo where the canoe constituted the only vessel for this continuous traffic flow. The Cross River was big and deep enough to carry British launches and lighters from Calabar up stream, through Afikpo to Ikom and Bansara in Ogoja, collecting bags of palm kernels and drums of palm oil from the John Holt Trading Stores, dotted along the banks of the Cross River and back to Calabar, where steamships awaited in the high seas (M.N. Agada, May 1988). In fact, the volume of canoe traffic which flowed along the Cross

River between the Afikpo communities including Unwana and their Cross River State neighbours and between Abakaliki communities of Ikwo, Izzi, Akataka etc, and their Cross River State neighbours on the other side, was indisputably tremendous.

The only connecting link between these Igbo communities and their Cross River State neighbours on the opposite side of the river in pre-colonial days, was the canoe. The 'wonderful' wooden canoe was, first and foremost, used daily for ferrying travellers and traders over. Furthermore, long-distance traders travelled by it from Afikpo upstream to as far as Obubura, Ogurude, Ekpiriobio 'Bansara, Ogoja, Okuni, Nkum and Ikom - a distance of about 100 miles.

Besides, the canoe provided transport for fishing and distribution of the catch to consumers from the hinterlands, who came down to the river bank fish markets for purchases (Ndukwe Azu, 1975). It is simply incontrovertible that in pre-colonial days, the Cross River served as the main artery of trade and social contact between the people of Afikpo and their Cross River State neighbours. Even their earliest contact with Europeans in the fourth decade of the 19th century, was made possible by the Cross River.

For example, it was through the Cross River that the first Europeans - Beecroft and King - made their contact with the people of Afikpo on their expedition up the Cross River between 1841 and 1844. Beecroft had left his base at Fernando Po in 1841, for a trip up the Cross River accompanied by King (J.B. King in *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*) 1844, also Ottenberg (1968:22). There was another Missionary expedition by Reverend Sheter and Dr. Peter Rattray all of the Church of Scotland Mission from Calabar on 1st October 1881 through the Cross River to Unwana, Afikpo. They made a second visit in 1883 and yet

another in 1888 (MC Farlan, 1946:77). Since then, the Cross River has served as the only highway (until the 20th century), through which the Church of Scotland Mission Headquarters in Calabar, paid visits to their Branch at Unwana Afikpo on regular basis (Presbyterian Mission Afikpo; MC Farlan (1946:77), Ottenberg (1968:22-23), Aja (June, 1976:9).

Furthermore, it was through the Cross River that the British, after their conquest of Afikpo on 28th December 1902, visited Ozizza group of villages (Afikpo), Itigidi and Ediba; even before then, Sir Harry Johnston, Acting British Consul for Fernando Po, had concluded a protectorate treaty with Akunakuna in 1888, and between 1841 and 1902 both the British agents and Christian Mission had visited Emuramura, Oban, Ediba, Unwana, Uwet, Amon, Ogurude, in fact parts of Afikpo, Abakaliki, Ogoja and Ikom - all through the Cross River (Nwabara 1977:111). One can see that the Cross River, which drained Afikpo and parts of Abakaliki, offered one of the best facilities which gave birth to the development of canoe, boat and even launch traffic. As a matter of fact, the river was navigable from Calabar through Afikpo up to the Cameroons and from Ogurude up to its headwaters at Isi Mkpume after Ijokwe in Abakaliki Division (Aja Orié and Oko Omaka, May 1988).

It is pertinent to note that the canoe was a comparatively cheap and efficient means of transportation. It has been estimated that a porter can only carry between 60 to 70 pounds of load. But that a small canoe can carry 20 to 30 tons (Hopkins, 1973:72). It has further been estimated that a large canoe carried between 1,600 to 2,000 sizeable yams from Ikom to Itu, Oron or Calabar rowed by five or six persons (Okó Omaka, and Aja Orié, 1988). The myriad of articles used for the long-distance trade and the media of

exchange form the topic of the intervening paragraph.

Commodities

The commodities involved in this trade were varied and complex. The articles of trade included red wood (osisi uhie), fowls, dried fish, melon, slaves, baskets of various shapes and sizes (abo or nkata), yams and clay pots. The most important single product of the people for long-distance trade was pottery. Clay pots were made by Afikpo women. Traders procured the pots from women and carried them mainly to Owutu and Uburu markets where they exchanged them for horses, salt, cows, cloth (anam) - "loin-cloths" woven at Bende; beads, hoes, gin, tobacco, chalk slabs (nzu) and so on. The markets at Owutu (Edda), Uburu, Bende and Uzuakoli where the people attended, were described as being very large. They were market fairs. An account by a missionary stationed in Arochukwu gave a vivid description of the Uburu market. The account titled, "from Afikpo to Uburu in 1918" (Mrs Arnot) reads thus:

Uburu is one of the big market centres of the southern province, and the markets are held every eight days when 10,000 people are said to attend the big markets. The Chief industry of the town is salt-making (Mrs Arnot, 1918:141, 156).

A somewhat similar description was given of the Owutu (Edda) market in 1903 also attended by the Afikpo traders:

On the next day, while I was occupied attending to a long "palaver," my wife went back to see the great market at Owutu. She said she had never seen such a multitude of people, either at home or in this country. Crowds of women ran away as she approached, but some Unwana women attending the market came and greeted her, ... The market is divided up into sections; at one place yams are sold, at another gin and, at another cloth etc.

(Cruickshank, 1918:260-261).

Although these accounts were recorded in the early years of the 20th century, they do give an insight into the economic activities of the people before 1900. They, in a sense, give a retrospective view of the people's economic past; or as historians often put it, that the present sheds light on the past. Slaves also constituted important articles of trade.

It may be necessary at this point in time to say something about slave trade in Afikpo. Slavery was an old institution in Afikpo as elsewhere in Igboland. Slavery at this stage was the domestic type. Domestic slaves in Afikpo were kindly treated and regarded as integral members of the household. In fact social differences between them and the free born were hardly noticeable. They were not called names or made to feel, in any way, that they came from without the nuclear family circle. Most of them were therefore fully assimilated into the family. They constituted an invaluable social and economic factor in the traditional society. They were used for domestic work, for carrying luggages, for farm work, for messages, and mainly as domestic servants.

A slave's master could set him on a social pedestal if he proved his energetic mettle, approximating almost to what happened in the Niger Delta States. The master married for him, and could and did bequeath some portions of land to him at death along with his children. But the concept of slavery changed with the emergence of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade about the 17th century. Africans were carried across the sea to mainly America and other European countries. They were now regarded as mere chattels of trade and treated as such.

There is no room in this book to go into the details of the horrors of the slave trade. Besides, it is not the focus of

this work. Suffice it to say that by the 18th century, the trade had increased in volume with its attendant evils, which are well-known to historians. It is true, as stressed earlier, that Afikpo people initially, did not involve in much selling of slaves, but in buying for domestic and exchange purposes. But they still tasted the 'bitter pill'. A group of migrants from Arochukwu at this period was said to have introduced the new brand of slave trade into Afikpo. They were slave dealers who were linked with the famous and notorious Arochukwu oracle called **Ibini-Ukpabi**. They quickly joined with some Afikpo groups who had bought **Otosi** (fetish juju) which was associated with the long juju (Ibiniukpabi). It was believed that the possessor of the **Otosi** juju could be **amadi** (free born) and could sell others into slavery. Some **Otosi** holders who had now acquired a new social category of **amadi**, became local agents of the Aro slave dealers and drew the people of Afikpo into the orbit of that ignoble trafficking in human beings called the slave trade (Otuu M. O., 1977)

The Aro were mainly interested in commercial activities especially slave trading. They used trade, the Ibinukpabi Oracle, founding of colonies and mercenaries to establish their commercial domination throughout Igboland. They hardly showed any interest in controlling the government of the people. The only clear example in Igboland where the Aro tried to control the village government was in Afikpo. Through the influence of the **amadi**, the Aro forced themselves into being members of the village councils, and tried to influence the course of justice.

The Afikpo were warriors, as a result, the Aro never made any attempt to conquer them by physical means. Rather they tried to use Afikpo people as mercenaries as they had used the Abam, the Edda and the Ohafia. The main interest

of the Aro was to build a commercial empire. The seemingly Aro political influence in Afikpo was made possible by the presence of the **amadi** social group most of whom were themselves slave dealers. Because of this influence, the long juju of Arochukwu called **Ibinukpabi** was installed in every compound in Afikpo and worshipped as a part of Afikpo deities. This "micro-Ibinukpabi" at Afikpo represented the "macro-Ibinukpabi" at Arochukwu. It was a microcosm of the Aro macrocosm.

Thus the infiltration of the Aro into the social and political life of Afikpo has been traced to the social and commercial romance between the Aro and the **amadi** group in Afikpo. It was this relationship that eventually drew the people of Afikpo into the vortex of that ignoble trafficking in human beings called the slave trade during the age of commercial capitalism or mercantilism.

Through the **amadi**, as their local agents, the Aro attempted to get hold of the political system in order to control the economic base or infrastructure. In his report in the 1930s, Captain Waddington who was the British Administrative Officer of Afikpo said, "It appears that the Otosi Priests ("amadi") were originally local agents of the Aro, who constituted themselves into an aristocratic governing class' (Waddington's Report, parag. 10 also pp. 34-35 parag. 103), Ottenberg (1968:21-22). The truth is that their linkage with the Aro and **Ibinukpabi** (which was feared), made them appear to be apparently so.

But the ancient Afikpo political system which was structured on a hierarchy of age - grade system was too deep-rooted to be over-thrown. It was a sort of gerontocratic government based on a Council of age-grade elders. It stuck to its guns - a phenomenon which has continued to date. There is no doubt that the emergence of **Otosi** and the

accumulation of surplus wealth by successful traders during this period shook and threatened the ancient political system of Afikpo and nearly destroyed it.

It should be noted that during the period of the slave trade, agricultural production dropped drastically; partly because indigenous traders who made fortune from the lucrative trade paid less attention to farming and, partly because of the insecurity of life which it occasioned. It was still within the period (1600 - 1800) of informal contact between the Europeans and the West African peoples or what is often called the period of mercantilism or commercial capitalism. West African slaves were transported to America by European slave dealers. The Aro were the coordinator of the trade throughout Igboland and beyond.

During the period (1800 - 1900), slaves constituted very important articles of trade that fed the long-distance markets. Those involved in the trade in Afikpo were mainly agents of Aro slave dealers. Majority of the people were opposed to it. This led to a serious clash (Otuu Oyim, 1975) between the **amadi** agents of Aro slave dealers and the majority of the people of Afikpo.

It is pertinent to note that the **Ogbanja** market, referred to earlier, was later abandoned, and in its place a new central market called **Eke Ukwu** was established. It is this market that has become the main market of Afikpo. It is located in the heart of Afikpo. Its establishment 'dwarfed' the village markets mentioned earlier. They shrank into obscurity providing only for the needs of local trade.

The Eke Ukwu market was to meet the demands of the increased external trade. It was attended by traders from the neighbouring Igbo and Cross River State communities including Edda, Uburu, Okposi, Amasiri, Akaeze, Akpoha, Agbo clan, Ishiagu, Awgu, Ezza, Abaomege, Ikwo; the Yako-

speaking peoples of Ikumoro, Ebom, Eke Aki, Afafa Enyum, Ediba, Ogada, Ijom, and Uzumutong. Others were Erei, Itigidi, parts of Enugu, Mpi, Nkporo, Abiriba, Aro, Akunakuna and some other Efik-speaking peoples of the Cross River State. Commodities found in the market included fish, yams, cassava, palm oil, cocoyam, melon, vegetables, red wood, maize, clay pots, bush meat, fresh fish, baskets of various sizes and shapes, fruits, palm wine, native soap, mats, fowls, goats, loin-cloth (**anam**), yam bean, cowpeas (**ekidi**), works of art, matchets and so on.

Some of the articles were brought by traders from the neighbouring communities, who were said to have used the market as a 'dumping ground' for the sale of their excess products. Records show that slaves were hardly seen at the **Eke Ukwu** market. Rather, slaves were negotiated for privately by the Aro slave dealers and their agents, who took them to Uburu, Uzuakoli and Bende markets (Otuu Oyim 1975 and Ewa Ucha, 1988)

The reason for this could account in part to the fact, as earlier stressed, that the people did not involve very much in selling of slaves but in buying. It also appears that the Eke Ukwu market was established after the abolition of the slave trade, probably after 1807 and the bargain was then made behind the market scenes in the area. Finally, Eke Ukwu was a peripheral market, which was never regarded as a slave centre in Igboland, contrasted with Uburu, Bende and Uzuakoli.

The commodities of the water-borne long-distance trade included yams, cocoyams, maize, crayfish, shrimps and lobsters Pottery (from Afikpo), palm oil, dried fish, water snails and periwinkles, tobacco, gin, cloths, chewing sticks, coconuts, red wood, and pepper. It is regrettable that the above

commodities cannot be quantified as their statistics are not available. It is not even easy to hazard a guess as that would be too hypothetical.

One important item of trade was red wood ("osisi uhie"), which was bought at Nkum in Ikom and brought through the cross river to Ozizza Beach, Afikpo. It finally found its way into the Uburu markets through Afikpo traders. It was greatly in demand both at Uburu, Okposi and Eke Imoha (Abakaliki) markets (Otuu Oyim, 1975). Red paint ("uhie") from the wood was and still is used by both men and mainly women to smear over their bodies on certain ceremonial occasions.

From their oral traditions, it is understood that the people of Afikpo did not pay much attention to palm oil and palm kernel production in the pre-colonial period. What they produced was only for home consumption and local markets. They did not produce enough to be sold to neighbouring communities. Rather, the people augmented their production with supplies from Owutu Edda (Ebonyi State), Ogada, Ebom, Amon (Umon), and Akunakuna markets in the present Cross River State. The people stepped up production of palm produce only during the period of the so - called 'legitimate trade' in the 19th century (Aja Obiahu, 1988). Even then, they still depended heavily for their supplies from their Igbo and Cross River State neighbours as would be gathered from J. B. King's Records of the Cross River Explorations of 1841 and 1842:

We weighed at an early hours and proceeded, taking with us as passenger one of the Omum (Umon or Amon) 'gentlemen', named Anna, who requested to be permitted to accompany us as far as his plantation, some distance up the river. At 11 hours we opened another reach extending N.E. by N., and passing a small woody island.

came to our Omum (Amon) friend's plantation shortly above it, and anchored. We met here several Eboes (Ibos), who were come to visit Anna, one of whose wives residing here, a remarkably fine-looking woman, is of their country, which extends along the opposite or west side of the river. These people differ greatly from the Eboes (Ibos) of the Niger, and did not understand one word of what was spoken to them by a Niger Eboe, whom we had on board as one of our firemen. On more particular inquiry (in Akunakuna) we learned that palm-oil was made, but not extensively, and that it was disposed of to the Eboes on the opposite side of the river, who at present dispose of it to the native traders from New Calabar and Bonny." (King, 1844).

J.B. King was the ship's surgeon, and the expedition was led by Beecroft, a British trader, explorer, and later Consul. The account is the earliest extant description of the Cross River. It mentions the Igbo from time to time, but gives little explicit description of Igbo Communities; the visitors gave most of their attention to the important trading states of Umon and Akunakuna. Nevertheless, long stretches of the west bank of the Cross River border on Igboland - Afikpo, Unwana, Izzi, Ikwo - and the account sheds a vivid light on the peoples of the Cross River, the riverine Igbo among them (Isichei, 1977:224).

However, this live account shows that the Afikpo bought some of their palm oil from their Cross River State neighbours of Umon (Amon) and Akunakuna. It also further confirms the already established fact that the people had trade contact with not only their Cross River state but also their Rivers State neighbours of New Calabar (Kalabari) and Bonny. The Igbos mentioned in the context are no less than the Afikpo Igbo who differ greatly from the Niger Igbos,

and who live on the opposite side of the Cross River. They had, for long, established trade contact with the Amon and the Akunakuna.

Another account shows that the commercial contact continued into the later part of the 19th century. It does not only shed light on the contact but also confirms it. The account runs thus:

Two years later, in October 1893, Macdonald intervened in a serious quarrel between the people of Akunakuna and those of Afikpo, on the Cross River, in the interior. It is said that, consequent upon a dispute on the river, an Akunakuna Chief, Akpotem by name had killed some Afikpo traders. Therefore, the Afikpo kidnapped and killed any Akunakuna person who set foot on their soil. Part of the settlement which Macdonald eventually negotiated with the parties concerned was that Akpotem should be brought to book. After some armed resistance by his people, Akpotem was captured and hanged in the market - place at Afikpo (Ikime in Odu, 1970, pp. 22-24).

Claude Macdonald was the Commissioner and Consul-General for the Oil Rivers and Niger Coast Protectorate from 1891-1895.

This trade contact has continued to date. It has even assumed a different dimension. For example, with the emergence of motor vehicles, there has been a shift in the direction of transportation. The traders formerly travelled by river from Afikpo to Ogada, Akunakuna, Umon (Amon), then Itu, Oron and finally Calabar. Today, the traders have their canoes anchored at Calabar. They go by motor vehicle from Afikpo to Calabar and use their canoes in the creeks to buy crayfish, shrimps, and small dried fishes. After buying the quantity needed, they retire to Calabar or Oron their base.

Here their commodities are stuffed into bags and moved by lorries to Eke Ukwu Market Afikpo, from where other retailers from the neighbouring Igbo communities of Edda, Okigwe, Abakaliki, Okposi, Uburu, Ezza, Ikwo, Agbani, Awgu, Ishiagu, Enugu etc, come to buy en bloc for re-distribution to other consumers. The traders always talk of their customers that is, the fishermen as the Ibibio, Ijaw from Nembe and Brass, the Kalabari and Bonny. They had established good trade relations among themselves. Efik and pidgin English were used as trade languages.

Currencies Used In Trade

In pre-colonial West Africa, different types of currencies were used for exchanges. In Afikpo, like other parts of Igboland, different types of currencies operated. Most of the currencies were of general application while some were really localized. Figure IV shows the currencies from the Long Juju of Arochukwu; while Figure V shows those found among the Igbo. The main currencies used in Afikpo were brass rods, cowries, T-shaped iron money (**apa**), iron and copper manillas.

Trade by barter was the most ancient medium of exchange in Afikpo as elsewhere in Africa. Here articles such as pots, salt, cows, fowls, yams, slaves, towels were exchanges for other goods. It is not easy to say precisely when currency was introduced into Igboland. There is no doubt that it is of great antiquity. Afigbo (1981:139) has pointed out that it preceded the dawn of Europeans. He has also named cowries, brass rods, copper rods, salt, and manillas as currencies in use for commercial transactions in pre-colonial Igboland. Talbot (1926: 876) also believes that currencies in use in pre-colonial Igboland included cloths, head of tobacco, and gin. Jeffreys (1954:405-415) has also enumerated a number of Negro currencies used in Nigeria, and assigned brass rods, cowry shells, T-shaped iron money,

and Arrow-head money called **Umumu** among the ones used in Igboland (figures IV and V).

NEGRO CURRENCIES IN NIGERIA

- 1:2: Brass manillas used in Ibibio & Ogoni respectively.
- 3:4: Iron and copper manillas respectively
- 5: T-shaped iron money used in Aro, Afikpo, Edda etc
- 6: Brass rod
- 7: Cowrie shells
- 8: Arrow-head money (umumu)

Hustrations of money

SOME NEGRO CURRENCIES IN NIGERIA

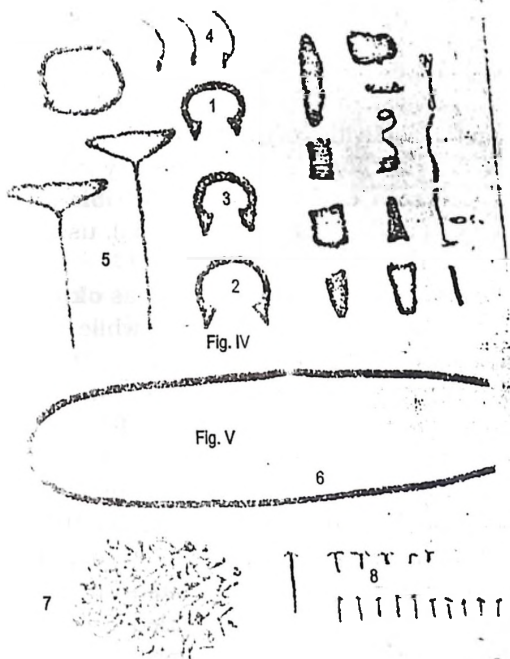


Fig. IV. African Currencies from the Long Juju

Fig. V. African Currencies amongst the Igbo.

Source: After Jeffreys M.D.W. 1954

- 1,2: Brass Manillas used in Ibibio & Ogoni respectively.
- 3,4: Iron and Copper Manillas respectively.
- 5: T-shaped Iron money used in Aro, Afikpo, Edda, etc.
- 6: Brass rod
- 7: Cowrie shells
- 8: Arrow-head Money (Umumu)

From the barter system, the people changed to the use of local currencies for their transactions. The change from the barter system to currency marked a new epoch in the commercial activities of the people. The currencies included brass rods (**Okpogo ogologo**) literally long money, copper wires (**mkpola ocha**), cowries (**ikiribie**), T-shaped iron money which they called locally (**apa**), used both as a currency and ritual object.

The smallest unit of brass rod was **okpogo aani**, which was equivalent to six pence (6d), while **okpogo ise** was equivalent to two shillings six pence (2/6d) (Ewa Utom, 1975). Ifemesia (1978:46) has noted that copper rod was valued at about three pence (3d) in 1851. The truth is that the values of the local currencies fluctuated. They generally commanded a higher value in the hinterlands and a lower value along the coast. Ekejiuba (1972:15) has observed that in 1902, the brass rod fluctuated from one shilling to three pence along the coast, but was worth three shillings in Afikpo. An account titled '*From Afikpo to Uburu in 1918*' given by Mrs Arnot, shows that these currencies were still in use around Afikpo in the early part of the 20th century. It also gives us an idea of the extent of the Uburu Market and the variety of currencies used at this period and their rates of exchange:

From every district people are already beginning to come in for the market. All roads are dotted with black figures. From our verandah I can count 79 in one string and 154 in another, all with loads on their heads. Aro is dominant and the power of the Aro is tremendous. The salt is moulded into little cones and sold in the market: 15 for a rod; 45 rods = #2, or roughly, 1 rod = 6d. Tomorrow is the big market, and already the paths over the prairie are dotted with a continuous line of folk coming to the

market. At Calabar they buy cloth or gin for English money. At Ada (Edda) they sell for brass rods which they use at Uburu to buy horses, and somewhere else they sell cows for English money and with this go back to Calabar to buy more cloth and gin. They spend their life going from one market to another" (Arnot, 1918, pp.141, 156, 157).

The scene was at Uburu Market - the main long-distance market attended by the Afikpo people in the pre-colonial and colonial days. It is a vivid account of the commercial life of the Afikpo people in particular and the north-eastern Igboland as a whole. The Church of Scotland Mission had been fully established at Unwana, Afikpo by 1888. It should be finally noted that prior to the introduction of English monetary system, the different local currencies formed the medium of exchange. One can safely close this paragraph with the unavoidable conclusion that by 1918, local currencies were still in use in Afikpo and other parts of Igboland.

It should be noted that British silver coins were introduced into British West Africa in 1886. In 1912, West African Currency Board was established to supply currency to British west African colonies. In 1913, the Board issued coins of two Shillings, one shilling, six pence and three pence and in 1916, it issued currency notes of one pound ten shillings and two shillings. These currencies replaced the old or local currencies of cowries, brass rods, manillas, copper rods, cases of gin, cloths, salt, T-shaped money etc. But by 1918 these old currencies were still used side by side with English money, as confirmed by the above account.

CHAPTER TEN

The Advent Of Christian Missions In Afikpo And Unwana

I have decided to include Unwana in this chapter. The reason is because of the early arrival of christian missionaries there, and their subsequent role in shaping the socio-political history of Ehugbo. As we know, the christian missionaries were the agents and collaborators of European imperialism. It was through their support at Unwana that the British colonial power launched a war of conquest against Afikpo in 1902.

The Church of Scotland Mission, under the leadership of Reverend Sheter and Dr. Peter Rattary, first visited Unwana from Calabar on 1st October, 1881. They made a second visit in 1883 when they converted the late Elder Inya Agha of Unwana, who was taken to Calabar and given his primary education.¹ In 1888, the Church of Scotland Mission (Presbyterian) decided to establish fully at Unwana. As a result, on 25th October, 1888 the Reverend J.F. Gartshore, a young recruit from Europe, began work at Unwana as the resident minister.²

With Unwana as its base, the Presbyterian Church later spread to Afikpo town. Here it was started by one Mr. Chima Okpani of Amaechara Village Afikpo, who had embraced christianity as a worker in Calabar, and came home with the zeal of founding a church in his village.³ Assisted by other enthusiasts, such as Messrs Okoronkwo Oji, Ugwu Otu, Egwu Otu, John E. Iduma, Nwata Mbuto and Nnachi Ewa, the first organised prayer group was formed in 1923. They used the native court building as a temporary place of

worship and had other non-native church members, such as Mr. Dorfi (prison clerk), Mr. Okunzua (then postmaster) and Mr. Philips (the dispenser).⁴ The first church building was then erected in 1927 at the P.W.D. camp, Afikpo where Mr. J. C. Nwachi's house stands today. With the assistance of the late Mr. John Egwu Otu, the members secured from Chief Egbudu of Amaechara Village the present church land, between Amaechara and Ukpa, where a new church building was set up in 1931.⁵ The late Elder Oko Alu was the first Elder of Afikpo church followed by the late Elder Akpu Ewa, who returned from Itu leper colony to be one of the most influential christians in Afikpo town. Reverend Mcloclor, who was the officiating minister of Unwana church paid regular visits to Afikpo church and in 1916, he extended the church to Ozizza people of Afikpo.⁶ It is significant to note that Doctor Akanu Ibiam, former president of the World Council of Churches and well-known church leader, was one of the early converts at Unwana.

On the other hand, the Catholic Missionaries of the Holy Ghost Congregation from Uturu (Okigwe) paid a number of visits to Afikpo each year in the early nineteen thirties. In 1932, for example, one Rev. Father Trech who based at Uturu, visited Afikpo and made contacts with a few converts.⁷ From 1933, the founders of the Society of Saint Patrick's Congregation, continued to visit Afikpo from their headquarters at Abakaliki; and in February 1933, a Rev. Father visited Afikpo, met the Chiefs and elders who demanded for a Vernacular school which was started in 1935 at Ngodo Village with thirty-three boys on roll.⁸ In the fall of 1938, Father Mac Manus of the Congregation of Saint Patrick's Society was appointed the resident minister of Abakaliki, but he was also given Afikpo area to administer. In 1939, he became the first Catholic resident Priest for

Afikpo in the village of Ngodo, where a school and church had been erected.⁹

It is significant to note that up to 1970, the Presbyterian and the Catholic missions had been the only dominating christian missions in Afikpo. There is evidence, however, that the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Zion Mission tried to establish at Afikpo, but they were phased out by 1943 and thus made no significant impact on the society.¹⁰

Christian Missionary Activities

After his primary education in Calabar, Mr. Inya Agha was brought back to carry out the pioneer missionary work among his own people. Together with the white resident minister, J. F. Gartshore, many other converts were made at Unwana. Among the earlier converts were, the late Elders Egwu Idam, Agha Okoro, Agha Ude, James Njoku Enyoka, the Late Uguba Ibiam, the Late Evangelist Okota Agha Ude, the late Oji Agha and the late Owora Ibiam, to mention but a few. The early organisers of the Afikpo Presbyterian Church included Messrs J. O. Mbrey, D. E. Okereke and Allison.¹¹ The early organisers of the Ozizza Presbyterian church included the late Elders Peter Enyum Isu, John Ihe Otu, Jacob Okpani Oko, Ebi Ezeali and David Uro. In 1925 these christians had embarked upon the erection of a church at Ozizza where Reverend Mcloclor had visited in 1916 from Unwana.¹² By 1949, the Presbyterian church at Afikpo had taken a proper shape and had won a teeming population of indigenous christians.¹³ The Catholic mission had also won a large body of converts.

The white missionaries had thus succeeded in winning a large number of adherents who were prepared to spread christianity to all the nooks and crannies of Afikpo. As

elsewhere in Igboland, the new culture affected school children most, especially those who attended mission schools, for they formed the bulk of the church congregation during the period under review. However, adults were also affected by this 'contagion' (christianity). The early converts saw themselves as the leaders and directors of the christian revolution. They had been taught by their white 'spiritual masters' that their traditional religion was false and that they should destroy their idols. The overzealous converts did of course destroy their idols. They even proceeded to destroy and desecrate the gods of their fathers and to violate their social norms.

Devices Employed in Conversion

The christian missionaries employed various devices in their endeavour to propagate christianity and change the culture of the people. The method which was most popular with the Presbyterian Church, was open-air preaching followed at times by house to house evangelism. They went out in groups for evangelical crusades. The Catholic mission hardly adopted this open-air or house to house preaching method. They rather adopted, as their major weapon, mass infant baptism.

By far, the most important instrument for conveyance of the christian religion to the people was the teacher. The teacher, was first and foremost, a catechist and then a teacher. For example, Messrs Agha Okoro and J. K. Oyeoku were both catechists of the Presbyterian church, while Mr. Elias Onuaku was both a catechist and teacher of the Catholic Church.¹⁴ If a teacher did not take active part in the spread of christianity, his appointment was terminated.

As a matter of fact, children who attended mission schools were automatically converts of that mission; even

children who attended the only government primary school in Afikpo in 1943, still belonged to one religious denomination or the other, as the christian missionaries still extended their influence there. According to Afikpo Division Annual Report of 1943, "All the pupils of Afikpo Government School profess one religious denomination or another. According to the records, 163 are protestants and 85 are Catholics."¹⁵ It is doubtless that the school and the church were made the twin agents of the christian revolution, and the converts and teachers, the leaders and directors of that revolution. This was really the policy of the christian missionaries as Mary Slessor of Calabar is reported to have once declared: "Schools and teachers go with the gospel. You cannot have one without the other."¹⁶

Other devices employed were the idea of heaven and hell, which was very popular with the Catholic mission; the use of local catechists; making gifts to the people; promoting of converts to the ranks of elders and evangelist; giving of free education to the sons and daughters of influential chiefs in the hope that through them their parents might be converted.¹⁷

The Catholic mission, it is said, were more subtle and diplomatic in dealing with the people, and appeared more prepared to graft the new faith onto the old, and so won a larger body of converts within a very short time in Afikpo more than their Presbyterian counterparts. According to Mr. O. A. Oti, "The Roman Catholic Fathers appeared to come nearer to the people's way of life wherever they went, while the Presbyterians stuck rigidly to their dogma."¹⁸ It has also been noted that the personality of Reverend Father Mac Manus, who did most of the early pioneering work, helped very much to mould the character of the history of catholic missionary enterprise in Afikpo. It is said that he

was a man of adaptation, who visited and chatted with the people in the villages and so became a part and parcel of the society.¹⁹

Impact on the Society

The people of Afikpo will for ever remain grateful to the christian missionaries for initiating a process of social change, which led to the stoppage of the killing of twins and abnormal babies; for their superb health services which had saved uncountable souls; for their development of roads which had helped social mobility; for helping to chase away some superstitious beliefs and practices which had formerly gripped the people, and what is more, for their unparalleled programme of systematic education of the youth, most of whom have formed the bulk of the much needed manpower not only in Afikpo but all over Nigeria.

All these really represent a tremendous positive social change. But the christian missionaries in Afikpo, inevitably could not escape the often repeated accusations of 'builder' and 'destroyer;' for their enterprise had as its concomitant, negative social revolution in its trail. Out of sheer ignorance of the content and significance of the philosophy behind the religious beliefs and practices, some harmless and sound practices of the people, upon which the missionaries could have built a solid foundation of their new faith, were condemned.

It is significant to note that the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Afikpo people, deeply ingrained in their minds and lives, provided them with social and psychological security and helped to regulate their actions and lives. Their religion was really a way of life rather than a mere theoretical dogma. They knew, for example, that certain actions such as murder, abortion, theft and adultery were all offences

against the land and against **Chineke** (God) who dispensed rewards and punishments according to merit. As a matter of fact, the people were formerly knit together in social, cultural and religious cohesion, which was maintained through divination and sacrifices, collection of norms and regulations, taboos and sanctions, appeal to the countervailing powers and forces of the ancestors as against the malignant and non-ancestral spirits (**ekwensu**), and re-alignment in social groupings with the same school of thought in matters of religion. And what **Chineke** had put together, an alien and aggressive religion tore asunder.

The converts had cast off the garment of their traditional religion and proudly embroidered themselves with the cloak of a foreign religion. They had turned over to European culture as theirs had been branded 'uncivilized' and 'devilish'. It may be true, however, that some of the beliefs and practices of the people were superstitious and as such could not stand the tests of the new spiritual and scientific age. But the real truth lies in the fact that the Christian missionaries were imbued with the idea that indigenous religion must be uprooted, if christianity was to grow and effect the expected changes in the society and free the neophytes from contagion and contamination. Ancestral worship and the worship of other deities was regarded as opposed to the establishment of the 'true' faith, and under no circumstances, therefore, should the new religion be grafted onto the old; for it would mean pouring new wine into an old bottle.

Destruction of their idols and change of their natal names were made a *sine quo non* for admission into baptism, and since the converts must be baptized in order to be true christian believers, their **uwa** or **chi** (personal gods) and natal names had to go. The religion of their fathers and

their cherished age-long social norms were condemned, flouted and desecrated. The converts lost their natal names or suppressed them; Egwu or Oko became Joseph or Aloysius or Ignatius; Ogeri or Mgbo became Florence or Anastasia or Matilda.²⁰

It is significant to note that in fairness to the christian missionaries in Afikpo, there was no large-scale destruction of works of art - such a wave of iconoclasm which swept some parts of Igboland, had no parallel in Afikpo christian missionary history. The new religion had also influenced the non-converts in the performance and observance of their social norms. This general haphazard attitude towards the traditional religion and social norms by some non-converts could only be explained in terms of western civilization - the process of which was set in motion by the christian missionaries.

Finally, the converts in the guise of the new religion, ignored their civic responsibilities and often flouted and under-mined the authority of their elders and fathers who were the traditional legislators and custodians of the laws and customs of the land- an action which was tantamount to an attempt to overthrow established social order and which was never heard of in those old 'good' pre-christian days.

As a matter of fact, the converts had imbibed a new set of religious beliefs and ideas which were detrimental to the welfare and solidarity of the community - in a society where every individual was a unit in an organic whole; in a community where religion was the 'glue' that grafted it together, as Professor Ayandele once remarked:

In a country where religion was the cement of the society, the guarantor of moral principles and the basis of secular authority, renunciation of the traditional religion implied

renunciation of the moral, civil and political obligations to the community as well.²¹

It was even truer of Afikpo where religious beliefs and practices were so intricately interwoven with the social organisation that it was very hard to say where religion began and social custom ended. By interferring with the indigenous religion of the people, the christian missionaries were really disorganising, disrupting and upsetting the indigenous social set up whose framework was founded on those beliefs and practices of the people. And so the centre could no longer hold and things fell apart.

It is significant that in the main, even though the converts tried to evade the social norms and mores of the community, they were still made to conform to them. This has led some people to say that in some cases a sort of sycretism might even develop as the christians tried to strike a balance between their worship of christianity and their practice of the traditional religion.²² This also agrees exactly with Professor Webster's assertion that:

Shortage of funds and personnel prevented the thorough christian indoctrination of the new converts which the first and second generation had received. Thus, the new christians freely mixed their paganiŝm and christianity. They might dress in European clothes and attend church on Sunday, then put on African dress and consult the diviner on Monday. They presented their babies, decorated with protective charms, to the christian Clergyman for baptism.²³

Traditional music and songs, drama and dance were totallŷ denounced and labelled heathen and immoral. As a result, christian poets, musicians and drumers refused to offer their services in the famous **Okumkpo Dance**, during

which Afikpo traditional literature is revealed in drama, music and songs. It is through the **Okumkpo** drama, that a person's deeds and misdeeds are openly exposed without qualms, under the immunity of **Okumkpo** as a spirit (nde maa).

It has been suggested that the unpreparedness of the early christian missionaries to graft the new faith onto the old, the unpleasant role of the early converts, which Mr. Ulu Ewa calls "bad initial approach", lack of understanding of the custom of the people by the foreign missionaries, and the fact that the Afikpo people guarded their custom and religion jealously, accounted for the slow pace of the christian social revolution in Afikpo.

Thus, although christian religion has today made deep inroads into the culture of the people, it has not succeeded in destroying it. But it is making a steady impact on the Afikpo society. What has led to its success in modern times is its preparedness to marry the people's culture, especially where no visible sacrifice is involved. Scholars may call this syncretism. The two pioneer orthodox christian churches - the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church - have been in the vanguard of this mutual marriage. It has been suggested that the ordination of indigenous priests has led to this mutual development. Because, unlike the foreign priests they (indigenous priests) understand what in their custom constitutes sacrifice and what does not. The traditional or orthodox churches will continue to grow by leaps and bounds through this mutual understanding and preparedness to graft the new onto the old.

What the people of Afikpo should watch closely is the overzealous activities of the so-called "mushroom", pentecostal or puritan churches who cannot distinguish between what they

call sacrifice from the people's custom. The Afikpo Council of Elders, has already made it categorically clear to these pentecostal and puritan neophytes, to leave their custom alone and go about their preaching business. This stand should be drummed into the ears of the "born agains". It is a laissez-faire policy of live and let live.

Whether we believe it or not christian religion and practices have invaded our culture and eroded into its fabrics. Our old customs are gradually dying out, and the number of christian converts is increasing. Traditional religion is now a ghost of itself. However, the number of christian drop-outs is also increasing. And since the production of christian adherents is increasing by geometrical progression whereas the number of christian drop-outs is increasing by arithmetical progression, and since these drop-outs neither follow the christian nor the traditional religion, it is postulated that after about two generations, there may be no adherents of the traditional religion, which may only be remembered in tales. It may be hypothetical, for what the state will be after two generations is only anybody's guess.

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4. " " " p. 2
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14. " " " " " "

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16. Grimley, J. B. & Robinson, G. E: *Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria* (Michigan William, B. Eerdmans Publishing Coy. 1966) p.276.
17. James B. Oko - Headmaster interviewed at Ngodo Afikpo, 16/9/75.
18. Oti Aja Oti: Headmaster, a Church Elder interviewed at Mgbom Afikpo, 24/9/75.
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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Britain And The Conquest Of Afikpo (August 1902 - December 1902)

By May, 1902, the people of Arochukwu had been completely subjugated by the British troops with the long Juju, alias **Ibinukpabi** destroyed. The major aims of the expedition¹, according to Ralph Moor, were:

To open up the whole of the Ibo country lying between the Cross River and the Niger to civilization and trade; to abolish the slave which is actively carried on throughout the entire territories belonging to, and dominated by the Aro tribe; to introduce a currency in lieu of slaves, brass rods, and other forms of native currency that exist in the territories, and finally to establish throughout the territories a labour market to take the place of slavery.²

The truth is that it was the policy of Britain at this period to 'pacify Igboland' and make room for extension of British influence and eventual occupation of the area. Lieutenant - Colonel Montanario, the officer commanding the Aro Field Force, had thought that once the Aro power was broken, the entire Igboland was safe for British political administration. But the fact that it needed several military encounters with the natives of Afikpo and Bende districts before colonial administration was established there, gives credence to the contention that the Aro people did not hold sway over Igboland. British attack on Afikpo in 1902 was really a continuation of their conquest of Igboland which started with Arochukwu in November, 1901.

However, in August, 1902, the British invaded Afikpo.

The military expedition was under the command of Major Heneker - who was the Commander of Column 4 of the Arochukwu Expedition. The campaigns were being directed by the Southern Nigeria Protectorate under Sir Ralph Moor who was the High Commissioner (1900-1903). The headquarters of the Protectorate was in Calabar. It is clear that it was in Calabar that the British troops which launched an attack on Afikpo were hatched. It was the same troops which had defeated the formidable Aro people and had thus acquired experience of war with the natives, that were dispatched to attack Afikpo. The troops had landed at Unwana where they made their bridge-head, under the support of the christian missionaries.

The main aim of the Afikpo front was to extend British occupation of the areas north of Arochukwu which they (the British) discovered were outside Aro sway. It is, however, said that the ostensible reason for the attack was to obtain a suitable position in Afikpo for district headquarters, as well as divisional headquarters (for the Cross River Division), and further, to ensure the safety of the Presbyterian mission station at Unwana³. The Cross River Division comprised five districts namely - Afikpo, Obubura, Bende, Okuni and Arochukwu with Afikpo as headquarters.

As we know, the Church of Scotland Mission (now Presbyterian Church of Nigeria) had been established at Unwana as far back as 1888. The Missionaries had in their first visit in 1883 converted the late Elder Inya Agha of Unwana who was given primary education in Calabar and sent back to Unwana in 1888 as a Catechatical teacher⁴. It is pertinent to note that Christian Missionaries were agents and collaborators of European imperialism. They had also established good relationship with the people of Unwana who were their christian brothers. They thus got the consent of the Unwana people to allow the British forces to

use their place as a bridge-head for the proposed attack on Afikpo. It is also recorded that the British bought over the people of Enohia Itim against Afikpo people.

Meanwhile, the Protectorate government had levelled trumped up charges to justify their imperialist conquest of Afikpo. In one isolated case it was reported that an agreement had been reached with the people of Afikpo following the fall of Arochukwu, allowing the British to occupy their land; but that the people later dishonoured the agreement. It is, however, doubtful if such an agreement was signed with the Afikpo people.

Whatever be the case, the operation on Afikpo was directed by Major W. C. G. Heneker assisted by some Officials. Altogether there were 15 Europeans, 262 rank and file, and 39 enlisted gun carriers. Twenty of the carriers were chosen from different ethnic groups so that when they returned home at the end of the war with handsome amounts of money in their pockets, they would form a nucleus in each tribe of men experienced in the white man's ways, and having been well treated, their influence is in our favour, and tends greatly to establish confidence in us ⁵. In addition, 250 carriers were recruited from their friendly town of Unwana.⁶

Major Heneker was instructed to convene a meeting of the Afikpo people, possibly at Unwana, to persuade them to provide a suitable site where the government could be established peacefully. At the meeting the people were to be informed that the government would protect them from hostile enemies once the headquarters was established, but that if they would not yield by peaceful means, the government would establish itself there by force if necessary ⁷.

In fact, no such meeting was held. Efforts made by the political officer to reach a settlement with the Afikpo people

through an Unwana Chief failed because no Chief would volunteer to travel to the town of Afikpo. The people of Ehugbo (Afikpo) were so fierce and warlike that no Chief or elder from the neighbouring clans would agree to take messages from the white man to them⁸. According to Professor Afigbo:

The people of Afikpo would not allow a government post to be established in their territory and would not even receive messengers sent to negotiate with them. They went so far as to attack the village-group of Enohia Itim which was Pro-British, and to ambush British fact-finding parties. So stubborn and determined was the Afikpo resistance to the British that none of their neighbours friendly with the government would take messages from the white man to them.

The truth is that after the capture of Arochukwu, the warlike Afikpo people became apprehensive. They had also received some information about possible British attack. They were prepared to face the British and to defend their town with all the instruments at their disposal. They decided to keep vigil and all able-bodied men were instructed to guard all the major routes especially along Ndibe beach and Enohia Itim through which they suspected the British might want to send their troops. This vigilant action was taken eight days (izu eto) before the actual British attack. The British had amassed their troops at Unwana from where they sent spies for reconnaissance along Enohia Itim-Afikpo road. For example, on 20th December, 1902, a British soldier, Lieutenant Croly and his force were waylaid as they were reconnoitering Enohia Itim, north of Unwana ⁹, by Afikpo native soldiers who had laid ambush near Iyioaka.

However, on 28th December, 1902, a British military force was set out from Unwana to attack Afikpo. Having received

some information about the attack, the Afikpo people had entrenched the road from Enohia to Afikpo while the native warriors also guarded the road to Ndibe beach in the hope that the British would attack from the waterside (Cross River). But a little distance from Enohia Itim the British troops were able to extract information from some women hiding in the long grass about the position of the 'native' warriors. With the information from those frightened women, the British troops were able to move in such a manner that they attacked the main Afikpo fighting force from the rear, while the Afikpo were expecting an attack from the front. The war was really fought at the outskirts of Afikpo town towards Iyioka-Enohia Itim axis. The people of Afikpo had emptied their town awaiting the British troops along Ndibe beach road and Afikpo-Enohia Itim road. Unfortunately, they were outflanked because of the information the British troops had earlier received about their location.

When the Afikpo soldiers discovered that their rear was heavily outflanked, they opened fire on the enemy. Both parties suffered heavy casualties. But the British forces with their sophisticated weapons took the upper hand. By 5 p. m. the battle was over. Although eventually defeated, the people of Afikpo exhibited great courage. According to Major Heneker, the people showed great bravery in crawling through the grass to get close quarters.¹⁰

Warrant Chiefs

After the conquest in 1902, the British colonial power settled down to tackle the intractable business of administration. Following its policy of Indirect Rule all over Africa, the British colonial administration appointed warrant chiefs from the various sections of the Afikpo villages. Like all other parts of South Eastern Nigeria, the appointment was

not selective. Those who were bold enough and daring as to come near to the whiteman were appointed warrant chiefs to assist him in the process of local administration. The 'warrant' was a letter or certificate of authority. Only those given such a warrant were allowed initially to participate in the colonial administration. Those so appointed were not necessarily the accredited recognised natural rulers of the villages. The appointment was, in most cases, indiscriminately done. It was, at times, based on the whims and caprices of the colonial administrators. The British colonial power has thus been accused of creating artificial chiefs, decorated with a foreign authority called 'warrant', and empowered to masquerade as traditional rulers. This was not peculiar to Afikpo, but to the whole of Igboland, and indeed South Eastern Nigeria. However, those appointed as warrant chiefs in Afikpo from 1902 to 1950 were:

1. Egwu Chukwu (Enohia Nkalu)
2. Obia Uka Ibe alias Obiaogburuka (Ndibe)
3. Inya Oke Ehi (Ukpa)
4. Egwini Inya (Amangbala)
5. Egwu Idume (Ngodo)
6. Udume Ikwor (Amaizu)
7. Uche Inya (Ugwuegu)
8. Uhere Oko Otum-Uka (Ugwuegu)
9. Agha Isu Oti (Amaizu)
10. Agbo Oti Mgbom (Ukpa)
11. Ibe Uro (Mgbom)
12. Nkaa Oyari (Imama Ozizza)
13. Ogbuu Obila (Amankwo)
14. Eleje Egwu (Ngodo)
15. Okpani Orte Otu (Amangbala)
16. Uka Ibe (Ndibe)
17. Egwu Eni (Orra Ozizza)

18. Urom Nta (Amuro)
19. Oko Eni (Ugwuegu)
20. Otu Agbo (Amaechara)
21. Oti Ude (Amankwo)
22. Okorie Uro Egwu (Amaobolobo)
23. Oko Okpara (Enohia Nkalu)
24. Oko Idam Ukpam (Amuzu)
25. Otu Eke (Ugwuegu)
26. Ogbupie (Amangbala)
27. Eni Okoro (Ugwuegu)
28. Enwo di Ugo Enyi (Mgbom)
29. Isu Egwu Orié (Ngodo)
30. Obiahu Ibe (Ndibe)
31. Ibe Enya (Enohia Itim)
32. Ukata Orié Eke (Ndibe)
33. Aja Okoro (Kpoghirikpo)
34. Inya Uwa (Enohia Itim).

NB. The appointment of the warrant chiefs outlined above is by no means exhaustive.

NOTES:

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3. CO 520/16: Moor to Secretary of State for the Colonies No, 549, 1 December, 1902.
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- D. M. Mc Farlan: *Calabar: The Church of Scotland Mission, 1846-1946*, (London, Thomas Nelson, 1946 p. 77)
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7. CO 520/16: Memorandum of Instructions with regard to patrol and possible operations for the establishment of the government in the Afikpo country.
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Summary And Conclusion

I have tried in this book to give a comprehensive chronological analysis of the history of Ehugbo since its establishment around the mid-seventeenth century. It is certain that the earliest settlers of what is today known as Afikpo were non-Igbo groups called the Egu and the Nkalu. The two groups belonged linguistically to the Benue-Congo group of the Niger-Congo Family of languages.

We have also seen that the Egu and the Nkalu groups were defeated in a war by the Igbo group led by Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo Ukwu. Most of the Egu and the Nkalu settlers dispersed to various places outside Ehugbo while a few that remained were assimilated into the Ehugbo society.

The survey reveals that those who constitute what is now known as Afikpo came from different places and at different times with their associated cultures. Each group was led by one or two brothers. These leaders became the founders of their group or lineage. The characteristic cultural diversity of the Ehugbo society is, therefore, the product of their complex migration phenomenon.

It is clear that the putative and legendary founder of Ehugbo was Igbo Omaka Ejali alias Igbo Ukwu. It was he who 'welded' the various independent Igbo groups together and sheltered them under the umbrella of his geographical environment known as Ehugbo, carved out of his mystic name, anglicized Afikpo.

The survey also reveals that the people's religion and cosmology was and still is their way of life: That their religion was so intricately interwoven with their custom that it was difficult to know where one be-

gan and the other ended. Thus, their religion was so firmly attached to the apron-strings of their custom that you could not touch one without touching the other. Their religion and cosmology therefore constituted their philosophy, which exposed them to the world of meta-physics and ushered them into the realms of ontology. It was also observed that their festivals and cultures are a manifestation of the significant role which each village plays in the overall Afikpo social set up.

The study also shows that the founding fathers of Ehugbo did not establish hereditary rule or dynasty. As a result, the founding patrilineage has no right to rule others. Professor Ottenberg echoed the same thing when he said that:

The Afikpo histories do not say that the founding partilineage has the right to rule others. (Ottenberg 1981:49)

That is why Igbo Omaka Ejali ruled through a council of elders whose membership was drawn from the various Ehugbo villages. As a matter of fact, Igbo Ukwu, the founder, regarded the various groups as integral equal members of the same community where villages still maintained their identities, and had the ultimate rights and privileges thereof to perform their customs. However, the festivals and cultures were fitted in a framework of the Ehugbo annual sequence of events as later directed by the Council of Elders. Even at the village level, there was a local village council made up of the elders of the various lineages (Umudi).

The members of the local village council consisted of Nde Nzenze or Ndi Ichie (the oldest members of the village) and Ndeisi (village heads) of the various lineages that make up the village. To qualify as **onye isi** (lineage head) the person must have attained the age of at least middle Esaa age grade

(about 75 years).

Elders were highly respected in the Ehugbo socio-political set up. This stemmed from their privileged position as being closer to the gods and ancestors, and thus the custodian of the custom and tradition of the people and the mediator between the ancestral spirits (Nde-ichie) and the people.

It is on record that the ancient town of Ehugbo has never had any kingship institution. After the death of the legendary Igbo Omaka Ejali, probably about the mid-eighteenth century, Ehugbo became a typical republican society of segmentary village democracies, where sovereignty was vested in an Elders Age Grade called **Ekpuke Esaa**, which provided the unitary structure of the Ehugbo governmental system. It would, therefore, be ridiculous to talk of kingmakers in a society that has never had kingship institutions.

The various villages were sufficiently autonomous thus meeting the needs of the segmentary structure, and yet unified under the unitary authority of the **Ekpuke Esaa** and the **Ekpuke Eto** age-grades who constituted the Council of Elders.

With diffusion of authority at the village level and yet centralised under the authority of the Council of Elders; with democracy fashioned and securely enshrined in the unwritten constitution, the diverse villages with their festivals and cultures, were fitted in a framework of the annual sequence of events and integrated into an agglomeration known as Ehugbo which is a symbol of unity.

The study of the economic activities of Afikpo shows that the basic economic unit was the household. The study has also shown that the extended family erroneously assumed to be parasitic, was rather the economic base of the individual. As stressed earlier, it was the extended family that provided

the individual with initial capital for business and still came to his aid when he failed. The extended family in precolonial Afikpo was, therefore, the economic backbone of the individual. This was true because under their double descent system, the matrilineage was ever ready to provide such a capital where the patrilineage failed to do so.

The Afikpo case has also demonstrated that labour was organised, in most cases, on contract terms contrary to eurocentric assumption. The youngman who had agreed to work for a rich farmer had known, as well as his parents, that after two or three years, his master would make capital available for him to start off his own farm. It was not a written agreement; it was a verbal one; it was tacit, and therefore carried contractual obligations. If broken, it was actionable in the traditional way. So it was as good a contract as any written one of the European style. Similarly, a man was hired for a series of trading trips on a yearly basis at the expiration of which his master paid him a bulk amount to set up his own business. We have also seen that, with the passage of time, Afikpo farmers resorted to hiring of migrant labour for making of yam heaps (mounds) on seasonal basis.

The study further reveals that there was really a clear element of division of labour if not specialization. Women, for example, specialized in cocoyam, cassava, maize and vegetable growing while men specialised in yam cultivation. In terms of division of labour, it was the duty of men to clear the bush or forest, make the heaps, plant the yams, tend their tendrils and dig them out at harvest. But women had the duty to weed the yam farms and plant their own crops. It was the man who climbed palm trees and cut off the fruit bunches; but it was the woman who, in company with the children, carried them (fruit bunches) home and

processed the palm oil. There were also specialist craftsmen - smiths, carvers, potters, brewers etc. One can see that it amounts to all bunkum to make such a sweeping assumption, that there was the absence of division or even specialization of labour in precolonial African society.

The Afikpo case has also lent weight to the argument that it would be wrong to talk of stateless or classless societies in pre-colonial Africa even in the segmentary or the 'so-called' acephalous societies. For example, the existence of slavery in Afikpo was a clear reflection of social stratification. Furthermore, the emergence of a group which called itself **amadi** (free born) as a result of the possession of juju called **otosi** was another reflection of social stratification. The group, which was an agent of Aro slave dealers, acquired both economic and military weapons, with which it tried to overawe, and did shake the original political system. It really did inject some element of class distinction into the Afikpo society which lingered around until the period of colonial administration. Even the ruling age-grade in Afikpo called the Council of Elders constituted an element of social stratification. Anthropologists believe that age-grade system is a vital element of social differentiation. It is, therefore, a utopia to talk of stateless or classless societies in pre-colonial Africa even in the segmentary societies like the Igbo.

The study shows that the people's decision not to use the plough or any type of automation, was not due to ignorance or conservatism, but to economic reasons and reality. Firstly, the plough was unsuitable for their soil because it was not fertile. It had a thin layer of rich gravelly surface (top) soil which did not require deep tillage, because the underlying sub-soil was made up of hard sandstone rock. The people had known this from experience over the

years. They knew it required the use of simple tools like the hoe. With this they easily gathered the rich surface soil (advertently avoiding the sub-soil) into a heap or mound in which they planted their yams and other crops. The hoe thus made it possible for them to utilize only the fertile part of the soil for planting their crops.

Besides, the plough as we know, was an expensive device especially at their level of production. Thus it would be uneconomical by way of overhead costs to use the plough. It is said that one does not use a sledge hammer to crack a nut.

No one really doubts the value of machinery in terms of the area of land that could be cultivated within a short time and with little effort and the resultant higher productivity. But greater part of Afikpo lay in thick tropical rain forest region which was most unsuitable for the use of the plough. Again, their major crops were root crops, especially yam, which feeds deep in the soil and could only benefit from the rich surface soil collected and built up in the form of a heap or mound. Hoes were specifically designed for this process and for the nature of the soil. The people, as had been noted also grew plenty of vegetables, which again did not require very much the use of such expensive device like the plough. Goody (1980:25) has noted that in "forests the plough clearly has many limitations. Nor does it improve vegiculture to the same extent as it does the cultivation of cereals". There is no doubt that with the use of the plough and all the concomitant aspects of intermediate technology, the people would have been able to match the developments in productivity and skill that characterised the agrarian societies of early medieval Europe.

In the light of this study, it would be necessary to reconsider the assumption that land was communal. In an

apparently segmentary society like Afikpo, land was held in trust by the elders. Under their peculiar land tenure system, the farmer acquired land for cultivation from various sources almost on permanent basis. This is because a farmer could continue to farm on a piece or portion of land until his death, after which he passed it on to his son, who in turn passed it on to his son at death. This cycle continued with the result that individual ownership of land became unconsciously established.

Today, individuals in Afikpo talk of 'my land', which is land *not* purchased, but inherited through this process. A man who was in need could even sell a piece of land (in the name of pledging) on which he had been farming, and instances of such sales abound. The only snag in it is that the man's children could redeem or buy it back at any time if ownership could still be established. The truth is that the concept of communal ownership of land in West Africa and Africa generally, has been so exaggerated and blown out of proportion by Eurocentric writers who, out of ignorance or ridicule or both, want to give the impression that African traditional society was static.

We have also observed, that the system of landlordism of the European type never developed in pre-colonial Afikpo, and so the question of exploitation as was found in feudal Europe was not applicable to medieval Afikpo. It is clear that land was owned in common, and that the elders in such a segmentary society only played the role of trustees. That although they were given a greater share of the land for cultivation, it did not amount to exploitation and expropriation in the sense it has been painted and understood. The elders really rendered social, ritual and political functions. They, for example, performed sacrifices in times of crisis to appease or expiate the gods and

ancestors. They also adjudicated in disputes affecting the various interests and groups in the community. They also determined when and how much of the farmland should be cultivated. Because of their privileged position and role in the society, the elders became trustees and controllers of the basic means of production - the land. It was simply fair and reasonable that the elders should be rewarded for these services and functions. After all, it is said that a labourer is worthy of his hire.

Besides, the proceeds of the farms were usually redistributed among the members of the household (lineage). The lineage mode of production was thus regarded as a pool from which individuals received according to their needs. We can therefore conclude that the terms exploitation and expropriation, as usually understood in feudal Europe, are not applicable to the pre-colonial economic analysis of Afikpo.

In fact, pre-colonial Afikpo society was progressive enough to allow individuals or prospective innovators to accumulate savings for investment. For example, savings accumulated by wealthy farmers were re-invested in keeping livestock - poultry, goats and especially cows. Both wealthy farmers and traders also invested their savings in title taking, which gave them an assured income for life from the fees paid by new entrants. For example, a person who performs the highest title in Afikpo called **Omume** has a guaranteed fantastic income for life. Today it costs about ₦250,000.00 (Two hundred and fifty thousand naira) if not more, to perform the title.

The Afikpo case study has also dismissed the erroneous notion that subsistence economy pre-dominated the West African economy of which Afikpo is a part. On the contrary, we have seen from the study, that exchange was wide-

spread and that markets of complex varieties existed. There was division and specialization of labour. Many commodities were involved in trade, and currency was extensively used in transactions. There was visible progression from Subsistence Oriented Trade to Market Oriented Trade.

The people had their own economic system, which ensured that material goods were provided at the time needed to satisfy both biological and social wants. Their economic behaviour, contrary to the assumption, did follow the principles of supply and demand in the sense that they did increase their supply when demand increased, and did withdraw their supply when demand was low. For example, they stored their yams in the barn waiting for a period of scarcity and offered them for sale according to the rise and fall of the price graph. Their economic behaviour was certainly guided by the forces of supply and demand - a principle which they practised consciously. They even pegged down prices of commodities to ensure that nobody was cheated or exploited in market transactions.

The rules they followed might have not centered on the European style of economizing and maximization of profits. After all, the question of economizing arises out of scarcity of the factors of production, and the African societies at that point in time hardly experienced this problem. Nor were they supposed to have imitated the 'so-called' modern societies when their social and economic conditions were completely different. In Afikpo, for example, transactional rules were more important than prices in determining the terms on which goods and services were to be exchanged. Such transactional rules were aimed at preventing cheating, profiteering, and exploitation rather than promoting profit maximization. The rules did not dislocate the economic system nor did they prevent profit maximization.

The Western economic theory might have isolated the concept of ethics in its economic analysis. This is understandable because it is modelled on capitalism. But the people of Afikpo combined both ethics and conscience in their economic behaviour which ensured profit maximization, but not by fair or foul means as the Western economic theory embodies. Ethics was an integral part of their societal value system, and was, therefore, taken into account in both social and economic decisions. They, therefore, saw profit maximization as something, which should be done within the framework of prescribed social values and ethos.

In the light of this study, one can conclude that pre-colonial Afikpo society exhibited the characteristics of a dynamic economy. There were progressive changes in the agricultural, manufacturing and trading economies. The agricultural sector was transformed from the gathering and hunting stage into that of domestication of both plants and animals. This in turn ushered in settled and sedentary life which was reminiscent of incipient civilization. Later, varieties of other crops diffused from other places, as we have seen, and added to the complexity of crops in the society. These new crops were made to adapt to their new environment leading to what could be described as advanced form of domestication of crops.

Today, Afikpo is celebrated as one of the agricultural zones of Nigeria. Although mechanization was not attempted in pre-colonial Afikpo society, as we had noted, the people continued progressively to improve their farm implements - the hoe, the knife (matchet), the digging stick etc. With the passage of time, stronger, bigger and better hoes and matchets were produced and these implements were able to reduce to bush, area formerly clad in forests; and to powder areas formerly blanketed with hard soil. From the

use of ordinary digging stick, the people changed to a digging stick with tipped iron head and finally to a complete iron digging bar. These developments represent a wonderful innovation and progression in the absence of mechanization. In the manufacturing (crafts) sector, refined and stronger products and objects, which could stand the test of time, were made and adapted to changing needs and conditions. The trading sector of the economy was not left out in this wind of change. From Subsistence Oriented Trade (SOT), the people moved up to Market Oriented Trade (MOT), by establishing commercial contacts not only with their immediate neighbours, but also with their distant neighbours.

Finally, from trade by barter the people changed to the use of currencies for their commercial transactions. The dynamism which pre-colonial economy of Afikpo exhibited could only be imagined than described. Therefore, the popular but erroneous assumption that pre-colonial African economy was static and unchanging can no longer be accepted. It was a mythology, which grew among Eurocentric writers aimed at ridiculing the traditional African society. And to continue to remain wedded to that view (in the light of the prevailing evidence), would amount to prejudice or ignorance or racial bigotry or intellectual straitjacket or all.

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Oral Traditions and History

Below is a select list of informants whom I consulted during my extensive fieldwork.

Informant	Age	Status and Occupation	Village	Date Interviewed
Ewa Utom	120 yrs	Head of lineage and Retired Member Council of Elders. Ex-trader and farmer. Traditional Historian	Ndibe Afikpo	15/8/75
Obiahu Chukwu	100 yrs.	Head of lineage and Retired Member Council of Elders. Ex-Farmer and Trader.	Amankwo Afikpo	14/9/75
Chief Otuu Oyim (Omaka Ejali of Afikpo)	75 yrs.	Ex-John Holt worker and later farmer. Spokesman of the Council of Elders. Afikpo	Amangbala Afikpo	9/8/75
Ohia Mbrey	70 yrs.	Retired Headmaster and Church Leader	Ukpa Afikpo	4/7/78
Ewa Udu	50 yrs.	Director Public Complaints Commission. Leading member of ATWA	Amaechara Afikpo	18/8/88
Ndukwe Azu	86 yrs.	Chief of Ukpa Village Member, Council of Ruling Elders. Ex-farmer and Carver.	Ukpa Afikpo	30/8/75
Agha Isu (Umar)	78 yrs.	Moslem scholar and Traditional Historian. Retired Civil Servant	Amuzu Afikpo	7/5/88
Aja Obiahu (Omezue)	100 yrs.	Ex-Member of Native Court. Retired Member of Council of Ruling Elders. and Ex-Trader and Farmer. Titled Elder.	Amankwo Afikpo	15/5/88
Eze Akama	100 yrs.	Retired Member of Council of Elders.	Amuro Afikpo	7/5/88
Cyril Ajuka Ugwu	80 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Retired Civil Servant.	Ozizza Afikpo	9/5/88
Ewa Ucha	72 yrs.	Prominent Member of Council of Elders. Farmer.	Amazu Afikpo	7/5/88

Informant	Age	Status And Occupation	Village	Date Interviewed
Oko Omaka (Omezue)	82 yrs.	Leading Member of the Council of Elders. Ex-Trader and fisherman, now farmer. Titled Elder.	Amaobolobo Afikpo	16/5/88
Isu Oko (Akpa I)	76 yrs.	Former Member, House of Chiefs Eastern Region(Enugu)	Ezi Nnali Amuku Afikpo	16/5/88
Obiahu Oko Ali	78 yrs.	Spokesman of the Afikpo Council of Elders.	Ugwuegu Afikpo	16/8/88
Oti Abali	80 yrs.	Spokesman of the Afikpo Council of Ruling Elders. Retired Road Overseer, now Farmer.	Amachi Afikpo	24/5/88
E. A. Uchay	77 yrs.	Secretary Afikpo Council of Elders	Amaechara Afikpo	24/5/88
Nze Michael Chukwu Abani	58 yrs.	ExM.P., Retired School Principal Ex-President of Afikpo Town Welfare Association, President of Afikpo Customary Court. Commissioner Public Complaints Commission. Imo & Abia States (Retired)	Amaizu Afikpo	18/5/88
Nkama Okpani	78 yrs.	Founding Father of ATWA Native Court member Retired Farmer.	Kpoghrrikpo Afikpo	7/4/88
Nnali Mbe Agada (Omezue)	78 yrs.	Member of Ruling Council of Elders. Retired Civil Servant. Founding Member of Afikpo Town Welfare Association. Titled Elderstaesman. Former Chairman Local Government Reform (Imo State)	Ndibe Afikpo	18/5/88
Aja Orié	70 yrs.	Member of Council of Elders. Ex-Trader, now farmer.	Amankwo Afikpo	10/5/88
Igariwe Nnachi Enwo	76 yrs.	Retired Headmaster Omaka Ejalj of Ehugbo	Mgbom Afikpo	3/8/88
Francis Ama Ugwu	64 yrs.	Retired Headmaster Member Council of Elders	Amaekwu Nkpoghor Afikpo	10/8/90
Omiko Udume	85 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Traditional Historian. Ex-Fisherman.	Amikpo Ozizza Afikpo	16/7/85

Informant	Age	Status And Occupation	Village	Date Interview
Ehithia Ubi	76 yrs.	Women Leader. Potter and Farmer.	Amankwo Afikpo	16/5/88
Alazu Ewa	100 yrs.	Retired Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Ex-Mat-Maker.	Amuro Afikpo	10/5/88
Okpara Oko	82 yrs.	Member Council of Elders Retired farmer.	Amachi Afikpo	10/5/88
Elu Anuma	70 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Farmer.	Amankwo Afikpo	13/5/88
Okoko Agboti	85 yrs.	Leading Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Ex-serviceman and retired Native Court Member.	Ukpa Afikpo	15/5/88
Uche Osi	80 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Council of Elders.	Ndibe Afikpo	4/6/91
Edward Idam	64 yrs.	Retired Civil Servant	Ngodo Afikpo	6/8/91
Otuu Chukwu	55 yrs.	Civil Servant	Enohia Itim Afikpo	8/4/91
Gabriel Agha Mbey (Mbeyike)	60 yrs.	Retired School Teacher. Educationist and Historian.	Ugwuegu Afikpo	9/3/91
Ekuma Egwu	86 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Native Doctor	Amankwo Afikpo	8/2/91
Ugwu Okoro	65 yrs.	Ekpukte Eto. Community Leader Trader.	Amooge Ozizza	3/5/91
Ibe Mgbo	78 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders. Ex-Fisher man and Trader.	Orra Ozizza	3/5/91
Onya Ugwu	83 yrs.	Member Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders.	Imama Ozizza	9/2/91
Isu Ugwu	82 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders. Ex-Trader	Imama Ozizza	3/5/91
Oyim Oko	85 yrs.	Member Afikpo Council of Elders.	Ezi Onuu Amanghala Afikpo	6/3/91

Informant	Age	Status And Occupation	Village	Date Interviewed
Azu Ewa	68 yrs.	Retired Broadcaster, Former Chairman. Afikpo L.G.	Ukpa Afikpo	3/5/92
Sebastine Oka	64 yrs.	Retired Headmaster	Amikpo Ozizza	13/2/91
Chukwu Okorie	84 yrs.	Member Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders. Ex-Fisherman and Trader.	Amabolobo Afikpo	6/8/88
Oti Irem	80 yrs.	Member Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders. Ex-farmer	Ukpa Afikpo	6/3/90
Ehugbo Chi	80 yrs.	Member Afikpo Council of Elders. Retired Farmer and fisherman.	Amabolobo Afikpo	6/8/90
Imo Oko Ewali	64 yrs.	Community Leader. Ekpuke Eto Elder. Farmer.	Amuro Afikpo	7/3/91
James B. Oko	62 yrs.	Retired Headmaster. Palace Secretary of Omaka Ejali	Amangbala Afikpo	10/4/91
Egwu Omagha	82 yrs.	Member of Afikpo Council of Elders. Traditional Historian. Ex-fisherman.	Amikpo Ozizza	13/2/91
Elder Ulu Ewa	70 yrs.	Retired Principal Secondary School; Palace Secretary of Omaka Ejali	Ukpa Afikpo	8/2/91
Nwachi Oku	68 yrs.	Member of Council of Elders. Surveyor.	Ndibe Afikpo	18/3/90
Paul Idam Aluu	50 yrs.	Retired Headmaster Boys' Scout Leader Afikpo	Ukpa Afikpo	8/2/91
Okwa Agbl	75 yrs.	Retired Civil Servant. Former President Customary Court	Ukpa Afikpo	16/8/91
Hon. Nnachi Enwo II	80 yrs.	Ex. M.P., Member Afikpo Council of Elders. Traditional Historian, Founding Father of ATWA	Mgborn Afikpo	9/3/90
Aja Oko Okpara	68 yrs.	Retired Civil Servant	Enohia Nkalu	6/4/91
Sir Michael O. Chukwu (Omaka Ejali of Ehugbo)	70 yrs.	Retired Chief Education Officer. The Omaka Ejali of Ehugbo. Trained Historian.	Amazu Afikpo	7/4/91

Informant	Age	Status And Occupation	Village	Date Interviewed
Obila Agha	78 yrs.	Member Afikpo Council of Elders	Amankwo Afikpo	5/2/91
Azu Egwu	85 yrs.	Member Council of Elders. Retired Farmer.	Amankwo Afikpo	2/1/91
Gabriel A. Agwo	60 yrs.	Retired Superintendent of Schools. Ex-Secretary ATWA. Former Deputy Chairman. Afikpo L.G., Educationist.	Amaizu Afikpo	3/4/91
Emmanuel Ohuche	67 yrs.	Retired Headmaster	Ngodo Afikpo	2/1/91
Oti Aja Oti	76	Retired Headmaster	Mgbom Afikpo	8/6/91
Oko Nwachi	66 yrs.	Member Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders. Farmer	Amuzu Afikpo	7/3/91
Nze Law Enya Oko (Okongodo)	60 yrs.	Retired School Headmaster. Ex-Chairman Afikpo county Council. Educationist and Ex-Chairman, ATWA. Former Majority Leader, Abia House of Assembly.	Ngodo Afikpo	8/6/91
Ukpal Eze	66 yrs.	Retired Civil Servant. Member Afikpo Council of Elders. Community Leader.	Amuzu Nkpoghoru Afikpo	7/3/91
Abagha Ogbuu	65 yrs.	Member Afikpo Council of Elders. Farmer.	Amankwo Afikpo	8/4/91
Ulu Irem	78 yrs.	Member Afikpo Traditional Council of Elders. Farmer.	Amaechara Afikpo	8/5/91
Edward Eleri	55 yrs.	Community Leader. Retired Civil Servant	Enohia Nkalu Afikpo	6/4/91
Omezue Ama Isu	78 yrs.	Member Afikpo Council of Elders. Retired farmer	Mgbom Afikpo	8/5/91
Okpara Irem	67 yrs.	Retired Civil Servant	Mgbom Afikpo	16/5/91
Ugwu Oko Agwo	76 yrs.	Community Leader Member, Council of Elders	Ezi Oti Amauku Afikpo	15/6/91

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In 1963, he passed the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level. In later years, he bagged four papers (History, Geography, Economics and British Constitution) of the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE) at the Advanced Level.

In 1965, he proceeded to England having won the Commonwealth Bursary Scholarship for Teacher Education Overseas. He studied in the University of Exeter, Institute of Education, Devonshire, England and obtained a Diploma in Education and English.

He was acting principal of St Enda's Secondary School, Abakaliki and Tutor at C.K.C. Onitsha from where he obtained his Teachers' Grade One Certificate in 1973.

In September, 1973, he proceeded to the University of Nigeria Nsukka where he obtained his B.A (Hons) History/ Archaeology in 1976. He was acting Vice Principal of Sir Francis Ibiam Girls' Grammar School, Afikpo (1976-1977). He later joined the Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, Imo State and rose to the rank of Principal Information and Public Relations Officer.

In 1987, he proceeded to the University of Port Harcourt where he obtained a Masters Degree (M.A.) in History in 1989. His Excellent performance proved him a doctoral material. Consequently, he was admitted into the University of Port Harcourt to pursue a Ph.D degree in History in the 1991/92 session. But his appointment as a Political Assistant to the first Executive Governor of Abia State in 1992 pulled him out of that academic laurel.

Mr Aja was a Lecturer in African History and Anthropology



in the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu, Port Harcourt from 1988 - 1992.

He was also a Part-time Lecturer in History in the University of Port Harcourt College of Continuing Education from 1987 - 1992.

He is currently a Research Fellow I (Lecturer I) in the centre for Igbo Studies, School Humanities, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria.

As an academic luminary, he has a number of published and unpublished scholarly works to his credit. They include:

1. Christian Missionary Impact on Afikpo, and Unwana, 1883 -1965.
2. Socio - Political History of Ehugbo (1988)
3. Pre-Colonial Economic History of Afikpo, C. 1600 - 1902. (M. A. Thesis, Uniport, 1989).
4. The Debt Crisis in Africa - A Political Economy Analysis (1988)
5. Saharan Iron Technology versus Sub-Saharan African NOK Iron Technology (1988).
6. Modes of transportation in Africa from Headporterage to the Railways (1987).
7. The Military in African Politics - A case study of Nigeria. (Uncompleted Ph. D. Thesis)
8. Editor-in-Chief of the Abia State Better Life Magazine, christened *Ezinne* - four publications
9. Book Review: *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony* by Onwuejeogwu, MA.
10. Igbo Philosophy: The Idiom of Igbo Personality (A Seminar paper delivered at the Centre for Igbo Studies, ABSU).
11. Domestication of Food Crops in Igboland: A case study of Afikpo (A Seminar delivered at the Centre for Igbo Studies, ABSU).
12. Education in Contemporary Afikpo Society (An Article)
13. Religion and Culture in Afikpo Society (An Article)
14. Elitism and Development in contemporary Afikpo Society (A Paper delivered at the Afikpo Students' Week, University of Port Harcourt)

RECOMMENDATION

Mr Aja is a man of many parts: a historian, an archaeologist, an academic, an educationist, a journalist, a public relations officer, a philosopher, a writer and so on.

Mr Aja in **A History of Afikpo** makes an important contribution to our understanding of the issues and trends in the social, economic and political processes of the Igbo. The work is extensively researched, lucidly delivered and marked with balance. **Mr Aja** has done for the Afikpo what many an educated Igbo ought to do for other communities as part of the urgent need to salvage information on Igbo life and culture or to preserve *Igbo Identity*. The book is a welcome brilliant addition to Igbo studies in particular and African studies in general.

Prof. U. D. Anyanwu

Director,
Centre for Igbo Studies,
Abia State University, Umuahia.

Mr Raphael Aja's A History of Afikpo is undoubtedly a major achievement. The book is a product of a scholarly mind, unencumbered by private interests, prejudices or biases. For the first time in recent times, "a son of the soil" is telling it as he understands it, doing so with pride and confidence.

Mr Aja's aim is not to shower himself with praises and congratulations. He is too serious a scholar for that. His **History of Afikpo** is aimed primarily at exposing and analysing the various forces that helped to shape the Ehugbo society, and also helping us to get a sense of identity.

I am excited at the appearance and quality of this monumental work. For us Ehugbo scholars, it is a harbinger of great achievements in the days ahead.

Prof. Austin Chukwuakpu Chukwu, Ph.D

Department of English,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.