

NR

NC
DT
515.9
D12
B56

Anayo Enechukwu

NSR

THE HISTORY OF OBE

A Reflection of Igbo Society



Kaufhof Publishers



* OBE is about 19 Kms South of Enugu

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the following people:

My Grand Parents: Chukwu Onovo and Mgborje Onovo whose souls are marching on even though their bodies lie mouldering in the grave.

My Parents: Eneonyibo Chukwu and Christiana Chukwu who laid all these visions into my cradle and lapped them in my blood which is circulating from their inimitable care for me from the kindergarten to the tertiary crescendo of my education.

All the founding fathers and people of Obe (dead and alive) for their labour and sacrifice in making the existence, development and longevity of Obe a reality.

Ab initio,

Lurking were the reverberating echoes of gargantuan
confusion impelled by the search for the veletudinarian
vacuum in this historical vademecum.

But

Ad finem

Came that flickering twilight of agonizing miasma of this
historical exposition and the dawn of chirrup of melody that
heralded this gigantic discovery

—Anayo Enechukwu.

CONTENTS

		Page
	Preface	ix
	Foreword	xi
	Acknowledgement	xiii
	Introduction	1
	The Origin of Igbo People — A Prelude to the Origin of Obe	5
Chapter		
1	THE ORIGIN OF OBE	10
	The Founding Fathers of Obe The First Migration from Ugwuede to Obodo Adaka or Obu aflu. The Second Migration from Ugwuede and the Settlement at Obe	
2	REMOTE MIGRATIONS AND PRIMORDIAL SETTLEMENT	20
	The Origin of Ewaa. Ewaa Towns and Villages. Earliest Migration and Settlement at Mbidi, Agu Ewa and Ugwuede	
3	THE DERIVATION OF THE NAME "OBE"	25
	The Etymology of the name Obe. Obe as a derivational morphology. How the name Obe Odume came about and why Odume was later dropped	
4	THE DATE OF THE FOUNDATION OF OBE	31
	Problems of chronology. Dating the Migration of Igbo People. The Genealogical Chronology of Obe	
5	IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION	35
	Migration from Ugbawka. Migration to Ogbaku, Nara, Amurri and other trickles of Migrations	
6	VILLAGES, KINDREDS AND LINEAGES IN OBE	44
	Umuofujam, Enugwu, Obuofia, Umungwutowo, Umucnenta, Umuikcowo, Ihuako and Obodoukpa	

7	POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES	51
	Democratic Segmented Kinship. Agriculture — the pivot of Obe Economy. Trade and Marketing and Local Technology.	
8	TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY	57
	The Origin of Religion. Deities and Shrines in Obe. Calendrical Organisations, Feasts and Festivals. Omenani — the pillar of Obe Religion	
9	PRE-COLONIAL CONFLICTS — WARFARE	63
	Obe-Agbogugu War, Obe-Awkunanaw War and Obe-Amurri War	
10	THE ARRIVAL OF THE BRITISH AND THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION (1900-1960)	68
	Colonialism and British Expeditions. The Acquiescence of Obe in 1910. The Colonial Administration (1910-1960)	
11	MISSIONARY EVANGELICALISM AND WESTERN EDUCATION (1932-1960) 73	
	The Genesis of Christianity and Western Education. Methodism, Catholicism and Pentecostal Prophetism	
12	THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA (1960-1988)	84
	The Politics of Early '60s and the Biafran War (1967-1970). The Return of the Dynamics of Socialization and Conviviality. New Horizons and Political Innovation	
	EPILOGUE: <i>Compromise Is Not Cowardice</i>	92
	Appendix	96
	Bibliography	97
	Index	101

Preface

This book is just a summary of my manuscript titled "The Complete History of Obe — From the Earliest Times to the Present Day" which I could not wholly publish as planned due to financial constraint. However, this is a pioneering endeavour to research and construct an authentic, authoritative, and fast-moving concise history of Obe as an Igbo community. Since ages, little or nothing has been meticulously and elaborately done in this respect of which the cumulative effect has been that an indepth analysis and knowledge of the making of Obe seems to be rapidly eluding the memories of the present generation.

In writing this book, I relied profusely on oral tradition for primary information and to lend credibility and authenticity to the work, I made well reasoned research on the points made by the people I interviewed. Then I was able to identify and solidify the problems imposed by conflicting information from them.

I did not limit my oral enquiries to Obe alone. I travelled to many other communities in Nkanu, Awgu, and Udi Local Government Areas to collect and tidy some fibres of information which inescapably arose during the course of interviewing at home for which a corresponding cross-check would lend weight and credibility to this work. All the relevant facts from my numerous informants, sometimes tapped to help me in the final correlation, were dressed and penned down in lofty diction, bearing in mind that history is not a record of dry facts. Confidently, I can say that the qualitative majority of the intelligent elders of Obe who are well known in matters of history and chronology were interviewed by me and what I was able to gather from them formed the oral foundation of this book.

Apart from the oral history, I equally did substantial background studies in which dozens and scores of books, articles, journals, and seminar papers on Igbo history and ethnology were consulted in order to keep abreast of the trends in Igbo history so as to avoid derailing into anachronism and misconceptions and to give this book a touch of literary contentment and illumination in the general context of progressive Igboland.

The quest for this also carried me to National Archives Enugu where Obe was merely lumped together with Ozalla by an imperialist anthropologist. It was sketchy and so compounded that its credibility was questionable. However, lines of facts have been culled from it for supplementary suppleness.

The episodic approach of this book from the unknown to the known makes it an exciting amalgam of a people's history. I therefore believe that it will be an invaluable possession to the people of Obe from generation to generation whose hunger for the knowledge of what their past was like are insatiable.

Finally, in the Lockean philosophy, it has been said that "truth could only be discovered through clashes of freely expressed, adversary concepts," But I strongly believe that it is by objective and constructive criticisms given in the spirit of tolerance, give and take, live and let live, and mature deliberations that more truth and facts about Obe could emerge, for it is only the truth that shall make us free. "Do not condemn mine and go, please stay and do the better," Willy Durant in his book *The Story of Philosophy*, puts it this way: "I do not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Actually, whatever I aspired to do and did it comforts me.

Umungwutowo Village, Obe
1989

Anayo Enechukwu

Foreword

When I was teaching Anayo Enechukwu — then known as James Anayo Chukwu — at the University of Nigeria the rare subject of German Language and Literature, little did I anticipate that he would turn out to be such a studious and thorough chronicler of his home-town Obe. But more importantly, someone who has opened his eyes and his mind to a foreign culture, will be often more inclined to focus his attention on his own cultural roots, the history and way of life of his people and to develop that deep affection for his fatherland and mother-tongue, which permeates this book. After all, African cultural nationalism and *Négritude* were propagated by those who had gone through the painful experience of estrangement and separation from their roots, be it at the other side of the Atlantic Ocean or in Europe. The immersion into a foreign culture need not end in the alienated "been-to" mentality, but can be a strong motivation to return, to re-define and to rehabilitate the own cultural background.

Anayo Enechukwu's study of his home-town displays all the feathers and colours of a university graduate. He has read widely and quotes profusely from scholarly works, but he has not built his vision on library sources alone. He has gone round to listen to his people, to the elders of his community, in whose memory is enshrined what cannot be found in any library or archive. Citizens of Obe will be pleased to find their testimony respected and reflected in the same careful manner as the quotations from illustrious men of letters. Historians, on the other hand, will appreciate the diligent preservation of sources, which would otherwise be lost to posterity. Anayo Enechukwu has done a very worthwhile study and recording of the origin, history, customs and religion of his community.

As a graduate at a time when unemployment threatens to destabilize the mind and the life of many university products, he has made excellent use of his time and talent by delving into creative writing and the productive and useful venture of composing the captivating story of the people of Obe. He has tapped resources which would not be easily accessible to any non-indigene of this town and organized his findings in a very readable and enjoyable book. In his presentation of the ancient and recent history of Obe, we find a healthy balance between appreciation of the past without wrong romanticism, and critical evaluation of modern trends. In spite of the unexcusable evils of colonial imposition, progress in education and technology cannot be rejected, as long as the spirit of humane living prevails. Anayo Enechukwu has imbibed much of Chinua Achebe's message that the dignity of traditional Igbo culture is not one of shallow romantic sweetness, but also full of conflict, antagonism and even suffering, while modernization is not simply identical with progress and happy life.

As an alumnus of the University of Nigeria, Anayo Enechukwu has paid with this book his own tribute to the motto of this great institution of learning, "to restore the dignity of man". I have all reason to be proud of this my former student. I congratulate him on the achievement of this book and Obe community on a worthy son.

Professor (Mrs) Edith Ihekweazu
Dean, Faculty of Arts,
University of Nigeria, N'ukka.

Acknowledgement

I am deeply grateful to my uncle, Walter Okoro, Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia, Ichie Orienta Udeh, elders Nwankwo Ede Igwesi, *Onyia Nwaene*, Nwanze Ogbodo Aniuoku, Nnamani Nwachukwu Owo, Nwigwe Nnaji, Nwigwe Ani, Onovo Chukwu, Dickson Orji, Godwin Okeifufe, Nwachukwu Ugwuegbo, Nwansi Nwokoro Ajiogbu, and many other uncountable informants from all the villages of Obe and other communities for the valuable information and stimulating encouragement they gave me during the course of collecting oral information which formed the bedrock of this book.

My sincere appreciation goes to some of the 1988 staffers of the National Archives Enugu, the 1988 staffers of Nkanu LGA Secretariat at Agbani, the 1988 members of staff of the Africana Section of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, UNN, the 1988 members of staff of the Library of the Institute of African Studies, UNN, and the 1988 staffers of Onitsha Divisional Library, Onitsha, for their assistance, cordiality and quick attention to my uncountable request without which this work could not have been possible to this extent.

I have to express my thanks to Mr Benjamin Ekwedigwe, my teacher at C.C.S., Obe and also to Monsieur A. Anyaegbunam, my French Master at Boys' Secondary School, Umueze Awkunanaw, for the winks of encouragement they gave me which carried me through the arduous ordeal of arriving at this academic level.

I also have to fasten my thanks to all my Lecturers at the Department of Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, especially Prof. (Mrs) Edith Ihekweazu and Dr I.T.K.

Egonu, who inspired me during my University days at Nsukka.

Special mention must be made of Mr Stephen Ogbodo, the late Assistant Area Manager of Union Bank Enugu, for the special interest he took in me and for the winks of encouragement he gave me when I started writing this book.

I equally valued the inestimable support and encouragement given to me by my friends during the course of writing this book. They are Barrister Emeka Nwuba from Ohuhu in Umuahia, Gab. O. Onwuchekwa from Nkerehi in Orumba LGA, M. I. Maduekwe from Umudioka, Ossie Ezenwa from Abagana, Kenneth O. Nwosa from Oba, F. N. Onyekwuluje from Umunya, Ben Okoro from Arochukwu, Barrister M. I. Igbokwe and F.A.O. Onyekwele from Imo State, Sunny Onu from Nara-Unateze, Dan Chukwu and Innocent Chukwu from Umuenuenta Obe, C. I. Dike from Enugwu Ukwu, Dr Jerome Dike from Arondizuogu and Patrick Chukwuani from Obe.

In the same vein, a big realm of thanks should go to all my colleagues at Girls' Secondary School, Eziowelle for the inestimable co-operation and encouragement they gave me when the writing of this book was at its climax.

My thanks should also go to Rev. Sr. A. A. Eronini and Barrister M. C. Nwuba who read the manuscript of this book and made some suggestions that gave this piece a touch of spice. And I should also thank Mrs C. N. Asikwo and Emeka Ojukwu for proof-reading the page proofs of this book.

Above all, my deep-seated gratitude, indebtedness and unqualified thanks should go to my brother-in-law, Mr Sunday A. Okereke and my inestimable sister, Mrs Joy Amuche Okereke (née Chukwu) for their numerous assistance throughout the period of writing this book. Their assistance at various times was among the greatest barrels of strength.

My respect and appreciation should go to my mother, Mrs Christiana Ujo Chukwu, and my kinsman, Mr Joseph Onovo Ogbodo, who both stood by me throughout the tempting and critical period of writing this book.

The assistance of my sister Ifesinachi, my nephews Chidozie, Ikemefuna, Udoka and Zimuzo, my nieces Adaora and Melum are equally valued and appreciated.

I am also greatly indebted to numerous authors whose works formed parts of my sources of information.

Finally, I am very much aware that this type of research work can hardly go without errors or omissions and then criticisms. Others should join to correct these errors and omissions and continue with the work which I have begun, for the history of Obe is as inexhaustible as the river of time. In other words, it is a story *ad infinitum*. But if it is a sin for me to trace the origin and metamorphoses of the people of Obe, then, I am the most offending soul alive.

October 1, 1989

Anayo Enechukwu

MAP OF OBE

OBUOFIA AWKUNANAW



KEY

- | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--|-------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Major Roads | | PS: Primary Sch | | GSS: Girls Sec Sch |
| | Village Roads | | Mkt: Market | | Town Boundary |
| | Church | | BSS: Boys Sec Sch | | |



Introduction

Obe is one of the twenty eight autonomous communities in Nkanu Local Government Area of Anambra State. She lies approximately between Latitude 6° 30' North and Longitude 7° 30' East¹ and can be located along Enugu-Ozalla-Agbani Road, or exactly between Ozalla and Umueze Awkunanaw communities along the same road. She is about 19kms South-East of Enugu and occupies an area of about 20 square kilometres."² The area lies on an outcrop of low hills. The soil is largely of laterite nature, but it appears to be quite fertile. The area is fairly well wooded and very well watered"³ and its centre is over 180 metres above sea-level. The population of the town by 1934 was 2,020.⁴ In 1953, the people of Obe were 2,940 (1,332 males and 1,608 females).⁵ But according to the 1963 Nigerian Census, the population of Obe was 4,941⁶ and she was about 8,213 in 1987 and over 8,418 in 1988.⁷

Obe is bounded on the North by Obuofia Awkunanaw, on the South by Amurri and Agbogugu, on the North-East by Umueze Awkunanaw and on the West by Ozalla. Basically, the people of Obe are mainly agriculturists, but due to the advent of Western civilization, they engage themselves in some other profitable economic ventures such as trading and marketing.

Obe as an Igbo community was linguistically classified by Greenberg under "kwa" division of the Niger-Congo family of Negro-languages which Murdock also classified as migratic language group.⁸

The people of Obe equally belong to the group referred to as WAWA. The origin of the name Wawa was attributed to the mass production of food crops in Obe and other neighbouring communities like Awkunanaw, due to the

2 *The History of Obe*

fertility and arability of their land which resulted into the mass transportation of the food crops to Enugu for sale. It was through their act of agitation and protestation against the undue exploitation of their agricultural products by the migratory occupants of Enugu, especially the "ndi ijeko ebee or agba-enu" that led to WAWA romanticism. WA means no, and WAWA means emphatic no. It was tagged and coined from the refusal of the people of Obe and her neighbours to unmerited and arrogant political, social, economical and cultural exploitation, manipulation and propaganda which was gingered by ndi Ijeko ebee at Enugu. Connotationally, WAWA means the "Wisest Area in West Africa", afterall, Enugu has been the centre of Igbo civilization since 1900.

Generally, Obe is made up of eight villages with about 29 kindreds, 85 lineages and more than 1,867 families. The villages are grouped into two: the Ezi Ama and Ibite (Ezi na Ibite). Ezi Ama is made up of three villages namely: Enugwu, Ihuako, and Obodoukpa, while Ibite is made up of five villages namely: Umuofujam, Obuofia, Umungwutowo, Umuenenta and Umuikeowo. Traditionally, Enugwu is the oldest village in Ezi Ama, while Umuofujam is the oldest village in Ibite. Things are customarily shared into two among the two groups and each group in turn shared them among themselves according to the seniority order as presented above.⁹ Apart from the traditional ceremonies concerning Ani Obe, Umuofujam is the oldest and therefore, comes first before any other village in Obe.

The genesis or the origin, migration and settlement of the people of Obe is tucked away in the eclipsing horizons of distant time, so far and dim that it has almost eluded the trappings of human memory. But from what could be pieced together from oral traditions and written documents about her past, the problem seems to have been solved. Thus, putting paid to the misconception that she may be probably one of the Igbo communities with questionable genealogy and doubtful ancestry.

This book is made up of twelve chapters. Chapters one to nine examine the events in Obe before the coming of the

white man and the period is referred to as the pre-colonial era. The origin of Obe, especially the migrations and settlements of the people are treated here. Her political, economic, social and cultural activities are equally treated in these chapters. The pre-colonial era of Obe was a quintessence of traditional aesthetics and a marvel of cultural plenitude. Obe remained, despite her internal dissensions and external misapprehension a free-flowing society, stabilized by the soundness of her three-legged economy, anchored on a mature political and social system, and sanctioned by the oracles, the gods and the ancestors.

Chapters ten and eleven focus on the colonial period in Obe: how the British came to Obe, and the unmitigated confusion that followed them, the capitulation of Obe to the caprices of the imperialist British; how the people of Obe came to be followers of Jesus Christ and his eschatology at the expense of their traditional religion; and the consequences of which the appendages of her cultural plenitude wobbled.

Chapter twelve deals with the post-independence Obe: how the joy of Independence dried up into salts of sorrow as the new nation plunged into civil war during the Biafran secession; how the people of Obe came back from the war with psychological dislocation and the reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstructions of the 1970s and how the people of Obe struggle for survival is finally taken care of in the epilogue titled "Compromise is not Cowardice."

4 *The History of Obe*

References

1. Readings from West African Map (England, Macmillan, 1978).
2. Information from the Survey Division of Anambra State Ministry of Works, Lands and Transport, Enugu.
3. NAE, OP 1115 Onprof 8/1/4736: Intelligence Report on the Ozalla and Obe Village Group, Udi Division, Onitsha Province by Mr S.P.L. Beaumont A.D.O. (1934).
4. *Ibid.*
5. Federal Office of Statistics, Enugu: Population Census of Eastern Region of Nigeria, 1953 Bulletin No. 7, Onitsha Province, p. 18.
6. 1963 Nigerian Census, National Population Bureau Enugu. See also the Research and Development Unit of Anambra State Ministry of Information, Enugu.
7. Estimated population of Anambra State, Statistics Division, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Enugu, p. 17.
8. G.P. Murdock, Africa: Its People and their Culture History (New York, 1959) Map 6, p. 14815.
9. Oral information from Walter Okoro, Ani Nwaonyia, Orienta Udeh. Nnamani Nwachukwu Owo, Ani Nwene Onyia and Nwanze Ogbodo Aniukwu.

THE ORIGIN OF IGBO PEOPLE — *A Prelude to the Origin of Obe*

The history of Obe will be baseless, meaningless and incomplete without a brief survey of the origin and early settlement of the Igbo people in general of which Obe is inevitably a component part. This will immensely assist in understanding the events that led to the formation of Obe as an Igbo community, because to discuss the history of Obe in isolation from that of Igbo nation would be like writing a history in a geographical vacuum.

The origin of Igbo race is a very controversial issue. There are various theories and speculations to the very origin of the Igbo people. One of these theories is the "Oriental Hypothesis" propagated by some eminent scholars and writers such as H. R. Palmer,¹ M. D. W. Jeffreys,² Olaudah Equiano,³ and Mokwugo Okoye,⁴ among many others, that the Igbo nation originated from Israel or Egypt. Equiano has strongly believed that the Igbos were most likely to be one of the lost tribes of Israel, because of such practices in Igboland like the seclusion of women after child-birth, the naming of children after specific events and causes, circumcision, etc, which were found in Israel.

It was even acclaimed by some scholars that a clan of the tribe of Judah called Schenigbo, situated between Bethlehem and Hebron, sailed in 638 BC through the River Jordan to Cairo and then to Northern part of Nigeria before they finally settled in Igboland in 710 BC; that the name "Igbo" was derived from "Jabborigbo", the leader of the migratory clan of Schenigbo.

Barrister O. M. Ugo who at one time lived in Israel has narrated many similarities between the Igbo ways of life and those of the Hebrews.⁵ And there is a strong belief among the Igbos that they are Hebrews in attitude, outlook, disposition, and general characteristics. The Igbos, just like the Jews, have the answers to resourcefulness, hard work, extreme perseverance amidst odds, and continuous endurance to achieve gainful objectives.

Mokwugo Okoye, in his own view, has claimed that the deep religious nature of the Igbos, among other things, carried them to the Orient as their area of origin. The Igbo sun-worship, dual organisation in their social structure etc, argues Jeffreys, could be indications that the Igbos originated from Egypt.

But while this "Oriental Theory" was gaining momentum, another group of scholars such as Yehuda Karmon,⁶ Arnold Rubin, and Henderson,⁷ among others, have expressed the belief that the Igbos probably originated from the region of the confluence River Niger and River Benue. Some of the proponents of this theory have believed that linguistically and paleobotanically, the Igbos may have lived in this Niger — Benue confluence area before migrating to their present homeland.

And yet, another group of scholars have believed without reservation that the Igbos were neither of Jewish-Egyptian origin, nor Niger-Benue confluence area. They claimed that the Igbos originated from Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe axis. There is also the strong belief among the Umueri communities that many other tribes of Nigeria came from nowhere outside their homeland. The Umueri group has strengthened this theory of autochthony and maintained that they emerged from nowhere other than the area of their present location. According to Nri legend, which was confirmed by C. M. Ezekwugo,⁸ their legendary father, Eri, descended from the sky, hence it is a common view among many that Eri was a "sacred king." They believed that Eri was sent down from heaven by Chukwu during the onset of historic times; and that is why "eri mgbe" (Eri) in Igbo language is taken to mean "for a long time or since, or since the beginning of time."

Admittedly, it is not easy at all to prove that the Igbos originated from Israel or Egypt. It is equally not easy to prove that they originated from the Niger-Benue confluence area, for in the very words of Prof. Adiele Afigbo, "we know next to nothing about this as hardly any reference to it survives in the tradition of Igbo people."

But after the studies of the above theories and speculations about the origin of Igbos, and after a series of recent researches conducted on Igbo History and Archaeology, Geography and Ethnography, Sociology and Anthropology, Ethnology and Ecology, Linguistics and Paleobotany by renowned professors such as A. E. Afigbo, C. C. Ifemesia, J. C. Anene, V. C. Uchendu, M. A. Onwuejeogwu, among many others, one can successfully proclaim that the Igbos were first seen around Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe area, which is regarded as the heart or core of Igboland, before they migrated to different places, establishing lineages. And so, it is from this axis that the origin, foundation, and peopling of Obe will be sought.

References

1. H.R. Palmer, "Tribes of Nigeria," Kaduna Archives, Lokoprof 159/1921.
2. M.D.W. Jeffreys, "Dual Organisation in Africa," *Africa Studies*, Vol. 5, pp. 82-105, 155-176.
3. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narratives of the life of Olaudah or Gustavus Vassa the African* (Norwich).
4. Mokwugo Okoye, *Storms of the Niger* (Enugu, Eastern Nigerian Printing Corporation, 1964), p. 13.
5. Barrister O. M. Ugo. See the Tape on "The Philosophy of the Igbo People", NTA, Enugu, Sunday, June 2, 1984.
6. Yahuda Karmon, *Geography of Settlement in Eastern Nigeria* (Jerusalem, Magness Press, 1966), p. 22.
7. R.N. Handerson, *The King in Every Man* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972) p. 39.
8. C. M. Ezekwugo, *Ora-eri and Nri Dynasty* (Lenjon, Enugu, 1983), p. 1.

xv

MAP OF OBE & HER NEIGHBOURS



2 0 2 4

Scale: 1 : 100,000

Source: Survey Department,
Ministry Of Works, Land & Transport
Enugu.



Chapter 1

THE ORIGIN OF OBE

There are different versions of the origin, migration, and settlement of the people of Obe. There is a minority view, backed with circumstantial inferences, that the people of Obe migrated to the present location from different places at different times, and therefore, have no common ancestral foundation. But this version is very unpopular and insubstantial, and therefore, could not survive my rigorous research. In all intents and purposes, it cannot stand the test of truth. So the claim that the founding fathers of Obe migrated from different places at different times is a mere historical revisionism and *argumentum ad ignorantia*. On the contrary, the people of Obe, in all its ramifications, as maintained by my uncountable informants and chroniclers, have common ancestral founding fathers.¹ And the taxonomical and systematic analysis of this tradition of common ancestry will help one to understand the origin, migration, and settlement of the people of Obe.

According to oral tradition of Obe, the present geographical frame of Obe has never been subscribed to the theory of autochthony—an idea of aboriginality. But the territorial integrity of Obe is, instead, a by-product of a band of migratory hunters led by the sons, grandsons, and great grandsons of Odume Okpatu Oke. The oral tradition of Obe has it that a man called Okpatu Oke, a farmer and a hunter, who originated from Okpatu in Udi LGA of Anambra State, settled with his family at Ugwuede—a strip of land that lay between Ozalla and Ituku on one hand, and Ozalla and Udi

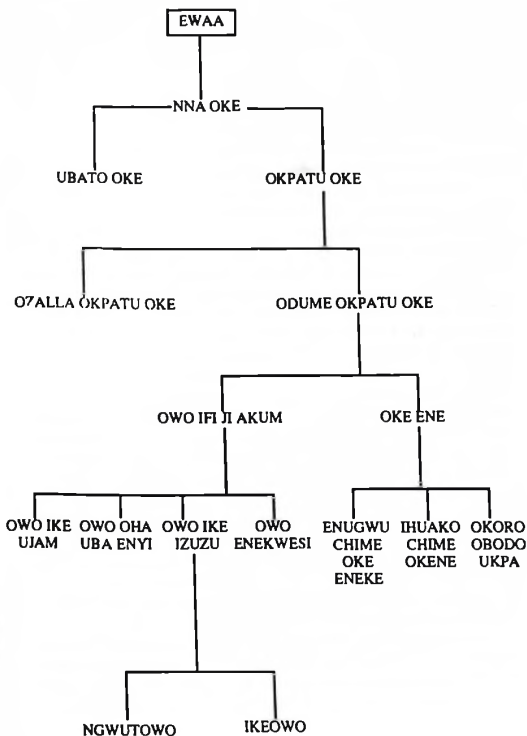
on the other hand. This piece of hilly land, according to Nwigwe Nnaji, is called Ugwuene. To Nwankwo Ede Igwesi, it is called Ugwu Esere Ovu, and in the humble opinion of Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia, it is known as Ugwu Anem Uvu. And yet, to Onyia Nwaene, the hill is referred to as Ugwu Nvene Ovu. Other authoritative informants still call it Ugwuede or Ugwuagwede.

Okpatu Oke is said to have been blessed with three sons: Ituku, Ozalla, and Odume, the last two from one wife, who became the founding fathers of the present Ituku, Ozalla, and Obe communities.² Okpatu Oke himself was said to have had five younger brothers called Udi, Isu, Ogbaku, Akpugo, and Agbani, the founding fathers of these communities.³ But this claim was denied by the people of Agbani and Akpugo.⁴

According to Obe oral tradition, Odume, one of Okpatu Oke's children, had two sons: Owo Ife Ji Akum and Oke Ene. Owo Ife Ji Akum had four sons: Owo Ike Ujam, Owo Oha (a.k.a. Uba Enyi), Owo Enekwesi, and Owo Ike Izuzu (Owo Ike Onicha). Owo Ike Izuzu (Onicha) in turn had two sons: Ngwutowo and Ikeowo, while Oke Ene himself had three sons: Enugwu Chime Oke Eneke, Ihuako Chime Okene, and Okoro Obodoukpa. These sons of Owo Ife Ji Akum and Oke Ene, who were also the grandsons of Odume Okpatu Oke, the great grandsons of Okpatu Oke, the great great grandsons of Nna Oke, and descendants of Ewaa, of course, became the founding fathers, originators, makers, and protagonists of the present eight villages of Obe conglomeration, namely: Umuofujam, Obuofia, Umungwutowo, Umuenenta, Umuikeowo, Enugwu, Ihuako, and Obodoukpa.

The land of Ugwuede where this group lived with other descendants of Nna Oke, later became a bone of contention between Ituku and Odume. The land was said to have been fertile and due to its fertility and arability, both Ituku and Odume were squabbling for its possession. This rivalry at the early stages was only diversionary as it had not reached where it might become explosive. But eventually, as the cold war unabatedly raged on and the cloudy cacophony degenerated into uncontrollable orgy of fraternal chaos.

CHART OF OBE FOUNDING FATHERS



assistance from the influential Ozalla was sought by Odume. But Ozalla, who was not ready to help on gratis, glibly attached a compensatory conditionality to it. Ozalla wanted to be bribed. A cow was demanded from Odume by Ozalla as a prerequisite for the rescue mission of quenching the uprising torments and state of confusion at Ugwuède. The cow was given to Ozalla without hesitation and jaw-jaw negotiation. Ituku, who was very much aware of the contractual covenant between Ozalla and Odume, went berserk with jealousy and unrestrained anger. Ituku saw it as the height of an outright manifestation of brotherly partiality, suffocating affection cum over-rigid regimentation; and it resulted into a fight between Ituku and Ozalla.

Fully aware that they were the cause of the fraternal chaos at Ugwuède, the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke unanimously and heuristically agreed to embark on a hunting expedition, thereby equally searching for a new base they could live in peace and harmony, bearing in mind that they were sitting on a keg of gunpowder. They conclusively lapped their plan and finally left the territorial insecurity of Ugwuède for a search for a new geographical entity through hunting expedition. They migrated towards the East of Ugwuède and eventually struck at a place, a tinted forest and virgin land, made up of sea of trees that was not yet a geographical expression or a political entity. They saw the area in its envelope of virginity and the newly discovered area was excellently rich in bee-hives (añu) from where they harnessed honey (mmanu añu). It was not only richly beehived, but also rich in wild animals, mainly gorillas and monkeys. They named the discovered zone "Obodo Adaka" (Gorilla Home) and "Obu Añu (Bee-hives Zone). And just like gorillas themselves, it signalled the beginning of their primordial settlement and the nucleus of evolving a geographical frame. That was the beginning and threshold of a bubbling community that is known today as Obe

The *prima facie* intention of the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu was to make use of that initial opportunity to cement and consolidate their holds on the new haven-environment and to constitute a

community which would facilitate in accelerating the pace of their territorial and demographic expression. Ozalla, having waited in vain for Odumes, then anxiously embarked on an endless and limitless search for them. The search painfully continued until a Daniel came to judgement, Ozalla succeeded in spotting them at Obodo Adaka or Obu aflu where they had taken refuge in the forest of the present Ime Ani Obe. Ozalla insisted that the Odumes must go back with him to Ugwuède, but they refused. After some meaningful persuasions by Ozalla for their *retour au pays natal*, as Aimé Césaire, the eminent poet from Martinique, would put it, they reluctantly hearkened to Ozalla and went back to Ugwuède.



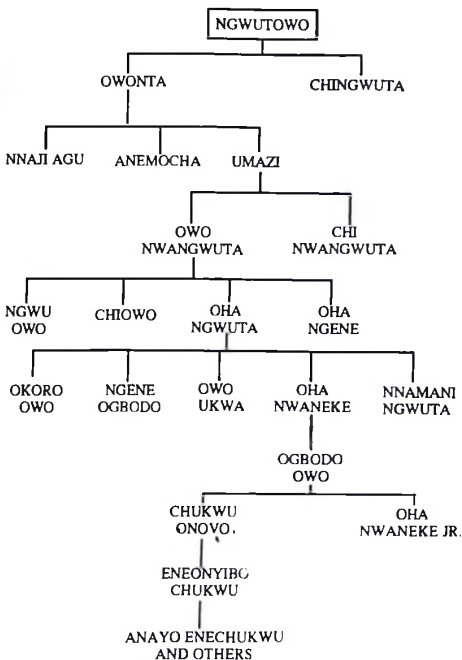
Elder Onyia Nwaene (Over 120 years) during an interview with the author

At Ugwuède, the oral tradition of Obe states categorically and pin-pointedly that the Odumes had an ambiguous nostalgia to go back to the ambient Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu. Although they loved their brother Ozalla, they loved their freedom and identity much more, so they had a rendezvous and concluded unanimously to commence their migration to Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu in the evening of an agreed date. On the D-day, when sunset was gathering its last rays of light, the Odumes, except Enugwu, left Ugwuède for Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu. The schemed evening journey was violated by Enugwu who sneaked out of Ugwuède unceremoniously by the noon of the appointed day and had already settled at Obodo Adaka before the arrival of his brothers. Enugwu therefore became the first grandson of Odume Okpatu Oke to settle at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu during this second migration to the area where he laid the foundation of the present Enugwu Obe. Eventually, it signalled the general foundation of Obe as a community. Enugwu was therefore nick-named "Enugwu Unagu" (Afternoon Enugwu). The morphological suffix "unagu" (afternoon) was attached to Enugwu, because he supplanted other founding fathers of the remaining villages of Obe by leaving Ugwuède in the after-noon before others. The oral tradition of Obe acclaimed this to why Enugwu became the first village in Obe and monopolist of Ani Obe priesthood which is still under the custody of Umuchi Atu, the oldest kindred in Enugwu Obe. However, Owo Ike Ujam, the founding father of Umuofujam village, was the oldest of all the founding fathers of all the villages of Obe and that is the more reason why the right of primogeniture in Obe is accorded to Umuofujam village.

Another group of informants, pioneered by Ani Nwaonyia and Walter Okoro maintained that the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke hunted on many occasions at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu before they finally settled down there. According to Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia, one of the grandsons of Odume Okpatu Oke discovered the Ime Ani Obe forest during a hunting expedition of the area. He went back to Ugwuède to inform his brothers about the richness

of the newly discovered zone. They doubted him, but later sent four men including Enugwu Chime Oke Eneke to investigate his claims and inspect the area. They eventually found out that Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu was rich in honey and gorillas and monkeys; and was equally located on hilly land, full of stones, unlike the sandy Ugwuede where erosion disrupted their buildings and farmland. So they went back to Ugwuede and narrated their experiences and observations to other descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke. They later migrated together to Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu on an agreed evening, except Enugwu who had left in the afternoon before others.⁵

Then, during their primordial settlement at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu, Enugwu Chime Oke Eneke, the father of Ozizikoko, Ozizikoko, the father of Ngeneowo Ukayi, Chi Atu and others settled near Ime Ani Obe, and other descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke radiated out to the South, South East, South West, and West of Ime Ani Obe. Each cleared a small portion of land and pitched his tent with his family there. Ihuako Chime Okene, the founding father of Ihuako village camped at Ndiechichi, Owo Ike Ujam, the founding father of Umuofujam village camped at Nkwo Atu, Owo Ike Izuzu, the father of Ngwutowo and Ikeowo, who fathered the people of Umungwutowo and Umuikeowo respectively left their luggage at Isiona where they first settled before they later camped at Obodo Amiogwu. Okoro Obodoukpa, the founding father of Obodoukpa village settled at Ugbo Obu Nagu; Owo Enekwesi, the father of Eneshinne (who had no male child) and Enenta, the father of Enene and Enene, the father of Itene, and Itene, the father of Ovovo Ite, the father of Ukwuoka Nwite etc, camped and settled at the first Eziobodo Umuenenta at Umunowo and Owo Oha (Uba Enyi), the founding father of Obuofia village settled in his own Eziobodo at Owo Oha Square.



The Genealogy of the Author - An Example of Individual Pedigree

In turn, the children of each of the founding fathers of the eight villages of Obe expanded territorially. And as a result of the increase in population, the younger generations were compelled to leave the family circle to move further afield in search of suitable farming and living land, and thus had led to the formation of a number of kindreds and lineages. This tertiary dispersal and settlements are still going on in all the villages of Obe as both her forest and grass lands are gradually giving way to the invading and more meaningful housing and other occupations. And to this day, Obe is no longer an ordinary and mean expression of geographical entity, but a bubbling reality of progressive history.

The pre-colonial pattern of settlement was simply ordinary. It was mainly a clustering of compounds in cleared paths radiating from a central meeting place. Each compound was made up of many huts depending on the number of wives in it. Some of these houses were classified as agbara, ufu obodo, and unata. Members of a kindred or lineage lived within the same locality, each being a next-door neighbour to the other. By this arrangement, the loyalty of members of the group was ensured. Their unity was strengthened because in effect, "residential unity strengthens social cohesion and interaction."

Indeed, "the history of any people begins with a founding father⁶ and group "migrate out of choice, in response to some disasters or pressure."⁷

References

1. Oral information from Ani Nwaonyia, Orienta Udeh, Nwigwe Nnaji, Nwene Onyia, Nnamani Nwachukwu Owo, Nwankwo Ede Igweshi, Nwanze Ogbodo Aniukwu, among others.
2. NAE; OP 1115—Onprof 8/1/4736: Intelligence Report on the Ozalla and Obe Village Group, Udi Division, Onitsha Province by Mr. S. P. L. Beaumont A.D.O. (1934)
3. *Ibid*
4. NAE, EP. 11718 A CSE 1/85/5717—Intelligence Report on Agbani-Akpugo Village Group of Nkanu Area, by Mr. S.P.L. Beaumont, 1936.
5. Oral information from Native Dr Ani Nwaonyia in an interview held with him on 30/7/88.
6. Elizabeth Isichei: *The Ibo People and the Europeans—the genesis of a Relation ...* (London, Macmillan, 1973), p. 9.
7. A.E. Afigbo: *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Nsukka, University Press Ltd., 1981), p. 7.

Chapter 2

REMOTE MIGRATIONS AND PRIMORDIAL SETTLEMENT

We have dealt on how the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke migrated from Ugwuède to the present location of Obe and how they lived with other sons of Okpatu Oke and Nna Oke at Ugwuède. One question that agitates the mind is how this group found themselves at Ugwuède. There must have been other remote migrations and primordial settlement by Okpatu Oke and his group before they finally settled at Ugwuède with their families. They definitely came to Ugwuède from somewhere and it is these earlier migrations and settlements that will immensely aid us to fully understand the cosmogony of the people of Obe.

Oral tradition of Obe strongly maintains that the people of Obe belong to a clan known as Ewaa (Ewe, or Awaa). The communities that made up this Ewaa clan are Obe, Ozalla, Ituku, Isu, Ogbaku, Ugbo, Obeagu, Agbudu, and Amoli (sometimes referred to, though erroneously, as Ama Owelle). The actual origin of Ewaa is shrouded in mystery and efforts to unravel it are often futile. There are diversified views on the origin of Ewaa by my numerous informants. According to Nwigwe Nnaji, "the nine communities that made up Ewaa clan originated from Nmaku and Ogwurugwu."¹ Some other informants said that Ewaa originated from Nkwere Inyi in Oji River LGA of Anambra State. Igwe E. A. Chukwu, the traditional ruler of Amoli community, in his own contribution, maintained that Ewaa originated from Umueze Achi in Oji River LGA, and not from Nkwere Inyi. According to him, "the origin of Ewaa should be sought somewhere in the present Oji River LGA,"² for Ewaa came into Agu Ewaa from Oji River. And according to Agbudu community, "Ewaa was a wrestling giant from the Oji River estuary."³

EWAA CLAN AND VILLAGES

- (1) **OBE**..... Umuofujam, Obuofia, Umungwutowo, Umuenenta, Umuikeowo, Enugwu, Ihuako, and Obodoukpa.
- (2) **OZALLA**..... Amaigbo, Amaechi, Obeagwu, Ezi, Enugwu Agu, and Umuokorouba.
- (3) **ITUKU**..... Amakolo, Umukulu, and Amata.
- (4) **ISU AWAA**..... Ezioka, Umuamanu, Egedu, Enugwu, and Obinagu.
- (5) **OGBAKU**..... Odume, Umuizim, Orto, Umuatubo, Umuobene, Umuawusi and, Mbio or Owom.
- (6) **AMOLI**..... Ihama, Ifite, Odume, and Ohumagu.
- (7) **AGBUDU**..... Enugwu, Ibite, and Owelede.
- (8) **UGBO**..... Ugbo-Okpala, Ugbo-Nabo, and Ngene-Ugbo.
- (9) **OBEAGU**..... Amaorji, Uhueze, Agbani, Ogwuagbom, Amagu, Umuoji, Abougwu, Amabo and Ebenebe.

There is still another proclamation that Ewaa came from somewhere else, outside the acclaimed Oji River. The Ugbo community contends that "tradition has it that the descendants of Ewaa started their movement from Imo State, there was a brief settlement around Mgbidi in Awgu LGA, before settling at Agu Ewaa from where Ewaa people dispersed."⁴ This school of thought maintains that Ewaa precisely migrated from Orlu area which was equally regarded as the "Igbo core or centre."⁵ G. I. Jones has stated that "one can assume an early dispersion from this drift southwards to the coast..."⁶

Jones was not the only scholar who has suggested that Igbo migrated from Orlu axis. In his own contribution, Prof. A. E. Afigbo has stated that "... we may consider what is also described as the Awka-Orlu uplands as forming part of the North-South highland first settled by the Igbos."⁷ In accord with the authority cited so far, Prof. C. C. Ifemesia stated that:

It was believed that there was an early homeland and on the Northern Igbo plateau; that it is in what are today parts of Awka, Orlu, Owerri, Okigwe areas. From this heartland, the people dispersed at different periods in various directions —to the South and Southeast towards the Eastern Delta, and the Cross River area, and the North and North-East towards the Awgu-Udi and Nsukka uplands."⁸

From all indications, the communities that made up Ewaa clan migrated from one area and they have a common ancestral foundation. P. P. Grey has equally noted that "the towns of Amoli, Agbudu, Isu, Ogbaku and Obeagu were related having Ozalla as their parent town and that Agt ɪdu and Isu apply the name Ewe to this group of five towns."⁹ Although the account of P. P. Grey may not be absolutely correct, it has shown that Ozalla is a part of Ewaa and this automatically qualifies Odume, the younger brother of Ozalla, as a descendant of Ewaa.

It could be inferred that the people of Ewaa left the Igbo heartland or core and camped at Mgbidi in Awgu LGA of Anambra State, then they later migrated to Agu Ewaa before dispersing to Awgu areas. They hunted around Ozalla on many occasions. It was in one of the hunting expeditions

that Nna Oke, the father of Ubato Oke and Okpatu Oke, finally settled at Ugwuède, from where the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke later migrated to the present geographical frame of Obe. Ozalla equally migrated from Ugwuède to other villages of the present Ozalla community. Ituku also migrated from Ugwuède and finally settled at her present location. It is worth mentioning that the founding father of Ituku community was Ubato Oke, contrary to the popular view in Obe oral tradition that Ituku, Ozalla, and Obe were of the same father. Okpatu Oke, the younger brother of Ubato Oke, was the father of Ozalla and Odume (Obe) and both communities go with the name "Obe Odume-Ozalla Okpatu Oke" (see the chronological chart of Obe).

It could therefore be concluded that the genesis or the origin, migrations and settlement of the people of Obe started from Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe axis and boiled to Mgbidi in Awgu LGA of Anambra State and later moved to Agu Ewaa; it then shifted to Ugwuède before finally cooling down on the present location of Obe. Thus, putting paid to the misconception that the people of Obe originated from Okpatu community in Udi LGA. Infact, Okpatu is one of the autonomous communities in Ojebeogene Clan of Udi which is believed to have migrated from Ebe. It could be that Nna Oke, the father of Ubatoke and Okpatu Oke married from Okpatu in Udi LGA and that could be the only proximity between Obe and Okpatu.

In short, the ancestral genealogy of Obe started from Ewaa down to Nna Oke, Okpatu Oke, Odume Okpatu Oke, and boiled to Owo Ifi Ji Akum and Oke Ene, before cooling down on Owo Ike Ujam, Owo Oha (Uba Enyi), Owo Enekwesi, Ngwutowo and Ikeowo via Owo Ike Izuzu (Owo Ike Onicha), Enugwu Chime Oke Eneke, Ihuako Chime Okene, and Okoro Obodoukpa.

References

1. Oral information from Nwigwe Nnaji in an interview held with him on 24/07/88.
2. Emmanuel Chukwu et al (eds.) "The Brief History of Ewaa," as produced by the elders of Amoli on 30/01/71—Committee on Write-ups of Ewaa History, p. 1.
3. "Agbudu—Origin and Politics," article submitted by Agbudu people to the Committee on Write-ups of Ewaa History, p. 1.
4. John Chukwunta (ed.) "Ugbo in Ewaa Community," Committee on Write-ups of Ewaa History, p. 6.
5. G. I. Jones: *The Trading State of Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development—Eastern Nigeria* (London, 1976), 16.
6. *Ibid.*
7. A. E. Afigbo: *Ropes of Sand ... op. cit.*, p. 7 (see hapt. 1, No. 8).
8. C. C. Ifemesia: *Traditional Humane Living Among the Igbos: An Historical Perceptive* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), p. 21.
9. NAE EP. 1068 A Milgov. 5/1/19: Intelligence Report on Abudu, Ama-Owelle, Isu, Ogbaku, Obeagu and Ugbo, Awgu Division by P. P. Grey, ADO (1934).

Chapter 3

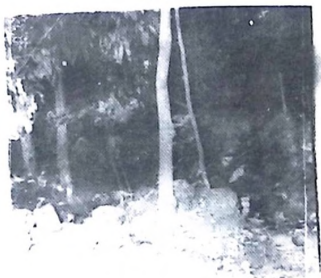
THE DERIVATION OF THE NAME OBE

The name "OBE" was a manufactured word. It was a derivational morphology. There was a subscription to the idea of the name "OBE" being an innovation by the oral tradition of Obe. Prof. Sanyo Onabamiro, *ad referendum*, rightly said in his book, *Philosophical Essays*, that "there is a reason and a history behind the names given to every object. But time invariably effaces human memory. So after a time, the name remains, but the reason why the object is so called is lost."¹ It is actually not in every case, however. When the name is the product of recent history, we can easily dig up the meaning. Even when it is of ancient history, careful research often yields the meaning to us.

The etymology of the name "Obe", according to oral tradition of the community, was an after-thought nick-name given to the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke by Ozalla.² Specifically, the nick-name was meant for the sons of Owo Ifi Ji Akum and Oke Ene who settled at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu during their earlier settlement and expedition of the area. Obe, as a name, was coined from the linguistic and syntactic phoneme of the morphological phrase "anyi ebeworo ebe anyi bere" (we have stayed where we are). This statement was made by the descendants of Odume to Ozalla at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu while rejecting the idea of going back to Ugwuède.

The Odumes refused vehemently to go back to Ugwuède with Ozalla and told him that "anyi ebeworo ebe anyi bere" (we have stayed where we are, i.e. we have decided to live permanently at Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu). Obe was coined

as a nick-name by Ozalla from the syntactic onomatopoeia "ebeworo ebe anyi bere" (Obe Mbekwu). The phrase is made up of two Os, three Bs, and six Es, the three letters that made up the word and the name OBE.



Ime Ani Obe - the ancestral centre

Another group of informants, pioneered by elder Nnamani Nwachukwu Owo, maintained the view that "Obe" was coined and formulated by Ozalla from the word "Obu Añu" (beehived zone).³ But whatever may be the case of the etymology of the name Obe, one thing is clear. Obe as a name was an artificial creation by Ozalla which specifically applied to the earliest settlers who migrated from Ugwuede and settled at Ime Ani Obe. By now, the geographical entity of the people of Obe would have been answering either Obodo Adaka, Obu Añu or Odume. But since Ozalla popularised and dramatized the nick-name "Obe", the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke adopted it for their virgin land. Therefore, Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu was adoptedly called OBE.

One may be forced to ask why the sons of Owo Ifi Ji Akum and Oke Ene even refused to answer the names of their fathers as their surnames, just like their fathers did (Odume Okpatu Oke and Okpatu Oke). Although the sons of Owo Ife Ji Aku and Oke Ene accepted and adopted Obe as the name of their entity, they preferred the name of their grand father, Odume, as a surname (Obe Odume) to that of their father (Owo Ifi Ji Akum and Oke Ene). They preferred to answer the name of their grand father (Odume) who had the credit of fathering the whole people of Obe, in order to avoid multiplication of surnames. It would have been very difficult and problematic to refer to Obe as either "Obe Owo Ifi Ji Akum" (Obe Ibite) or "Obe Oke Ene" (Obe Ezi Ama), bearing in mind that the founding fathers of the villages of Obe were from two separate fathers (Owo Ifi Ji Akum and Oke Ene). Since they were living in the same geographical expression, adopted and accepted as Obe, they wanted to avoid the misunderstanding that could have arisen as a result of answering different surnames.

They sought for unity first, afterall "what is in a name?"⁴ Their primary intention was to unite and be a force to be reckoned with in the area. They were fully conscious of the fact that Ozalla would mock at them in case of any eventual disruption, distortion or misconception within their territorial integrity. They adopted a universal unification formula. This

universal unification formula was nothing, but an unalloyed decision to answer one name (Obe) and one surname (Odume) for their territory which gave rise to the compound name "OBE ODUME".

The name Obe Odume was to prove to Ozalla that union of purpose and unity of purpose were the necessary necessities for cementing their brotherhood and mutual understanding, which the proverbial doctrine of "united we stand, divided we fall" (*idi n'otu bu ike*) manifested itself. The acceptance of the name Obe Odume was in recognition of the truism that no human society, no matter how talented, can peer into real greatness in a cultural *mêlé* of perjorative sectionalism. And since there was element of heterogeneity occasioned by a combination of language, biological and psychological circumstances, the acceptance of the name Obe Odume was inevitable, because integration and harmony do not mean absence of differences, but accommodation of differences for the attainment of a higher ideal of communal greatness. They wanted to prove to Ozalla in practical terms that meaningful societal progress cannot be based on a platform of disruptive social dichotomy, so their broad parlance was not a political bogey.

The Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu coinage Obe Odume had a moral and political connotations. Morally, it was symptomatic of their belief in unity and harmony which reflected the general will of the early descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke to live in peace. Politically, it stressed their willingness to carve out a geographical entity for themselves and constitute a potent weapon of social progress through independence, thereby justifying their existence as functional rather than dysfunctional elements in the society which their exploration for a new social and geographical emblem stood for. They successfully handled the campaign wrangles of Ozalla that heralded the nick-name "Obe Mbekwu". They had fashioned out their own existence, for according to Jean Paul Sartre, "*L' existence commence par soi-même.*"

That was the origin of the name "Obe Odume". But in the 1970s, Odume was dropped and it gave way to only Obe. The reason for dropping Odume was to avoid clashes

of names, hence there are many villages already known as Odume (Odume Ogbaku, Odume Amoli, and importantly, Udume Achara which is phonetically pronounced like Odume). Obe Odume could be mischievously misconstrued, misconceived and misinterpreted to mean that Obe town is under their own Odume villages. But in the actual sense of it, Obe Odume and particularly Udume Achara could be described as coincidental opposition. It has not been proved beyond all reasonable doubts that they have common ancestral lineage, but in any case, they are bound by proximity. What is more, in 1970s, school equipment meant for Obe Odume community was mistakenly taken to Udume village in Achara community.⁵ Therefore for unsuspecting identification, linguistic demarcation and ethnological differentiation, Odume, as a surname of Obe, was dropped and officially allowed to die and has been buried since 1970s.

The name "OBE", in all its ramifications and diversifications, is a cognomen. In other words, it is nothing but a descriptive nick-name. It could therefore be concluded that Obe as a cognomenous community was independently founded by a band of coterie made up of the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke on where she is now located. Obe, therefore, emerged as a conclusion of the metabolic processes of origin. Firstly, as a settlement area of a large family fleeing from the congested Ugwuede for their precious lives. Secondly, as a piece of human geography struggling to have its own stamp of identity on the ecology and socio-politics of the area. Lastly, as a peace-loving set of people who wanted to give themselves a sense of belonging through union and unity of purposes. Indeed, the founding fathers of Obe were "cementers" doing the work of "cementing" in what Gordon Raffray has referred to as "prognostication" through their unificational communalism.

References

1. Sanyo Onabamiro: *Philosophical Essays* (Ibadan, Evans Publishers, 1980), p. 69.
2. Oral information from almost all my qualitative and quantitative informants.
3. Oral information from elder Nnamani Nwachukwu Owo in an interview held with him on 23/09/88.
4. William Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet* (The Oxford and Cambridge Edition), p. 29.
5. Oral information in an interview held with Dickson Orji on 24/09/88.

Chapter 4

THE DATE OF THE FOUNDATION OF OBE

More than any other issue, the date of the foundation of Obe is perhaps the most controversial and obscure. Opinions on this differ widely and ranged from possibilities to impossibilities, because much of the history of Obe passed on to the present generation came from "that corpus of orally transmitted material which addressed itself specifically to recounting the past."¹ However, by using oral tradition to recount the past, one finds it difficult to assign accurate dates to the events. The use of oral tradition in the reconstruction of the history of any community, therefore, raises the problems of chronology, "the science of computing dates"² and relating them with past events. Chronology, according to Vansina, "is the backbone of history"³ and in the words of McCall, "history without a time dimension is impossible."⁴ And in the case of a community like Obe, one has to be contented with relative chronology which gives the relative age, that is, the sequence of events in a series without a definite time scope and it often "floated on a limbo between the centuries or even millennia."⁵

There are even claims and counter claims on the dates of origin, migrations and settlement of Igbo people in general. Yet it has been propagated that Igbos migrated from Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe area, in which the missionaries hailed as the "Mecca and Holy City"⁶ of Igboland, as far back as 1200 BC,⁷ which was regarded as the period of their "earliest" expansion. From 1200 AD to 1635 AD has been regarded as the time of "later" movement of Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe who migrated to other areas to establish influences and

lineages. And according to Prof. John Hatch, most of the immigrants came from Nri-Awka-Orlu axis, in the acclaimed Igbo centre, from where groups of Igbos "spread across surrounding areas," dispersing at different periods to various directions.⁸ Prof. A. E. Afigbo's theory supported that Igbo "late" migration "was from the centre to the periphery and not from the periphery to the centre."⁹ In this regard, Prof. C. C. Ifemesia's belief, supported by Prof. V. C. Uchendu, that the people of Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe area dispersed at various times to various directions probably "between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries (1200 AD - 1600 AD),"¹⁰ should be seen as in order, G.T. Strike and C. Ifeka in their book, *Peoples and Empires of West Africa*,¹¹ supported the above assertions.

Then, to find the probable date of the foundation of Obe, one has to consider the genealogical chronology. Some of my informants were able to trace the genealogies of their families only between 6 to 13 generations backwards to Odume Okpatu Oke. Then, taking 30 years, for instance, for one generation, 13 generations from 1988 backwards to Odume Okpatu Oke will be 1598 AD. This 1598 AD also falls within the period of Igbo "later" dispersal from the Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe area when group of people migrated to other surrounding areas.

Since the Igbos were acclaimed to have migrated from the Nri-Awka-Orlu-Okigwe region—the Igbo heartland or what Major A.G. Leonard has called "the heart of Igbo nationality,"¹² which is presently considered by many scholars¹³ as the place where the Igbos as a group were first seen or found, it is reasonable to infer that the founding fathers of Obe descended from among the set of Igbo people to have migrated lately from this Igbo heartland from 1200 AD to 1600 AD.

For the fact that Ewaa and his group first settled at Mbidi and later at Agu Ewaa, coupled with the truism that Nna Oke, Okpatu Oke and Odume Okpatu Oke settled at Ugwuode during their *Wanderjahre* before the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke migrated to Obodo Adaka or Obu Añu, the probable period and date of the foundation of what

is today known as Obe could not escape the period between 1262 A.D. and 1675 A.D., that is between 13th and 17th centuries A.D. In other words, since Obe was believed to have been founded between 1262 AD. and 1675 AD., she, therefore, probably came into existence about not less than three hundred and thirteen years ago and not more than seven hundred and twenty six years ago, *mutatis mutandis*.

References

1. David Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 2.
2. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (eds.) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 212.
3. Jan Vansina et al "Introductory Summary" in J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L. U. Thomas (eds.)—*The Historians in Tropical Africa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 62.
4. D. F. McCall, *Africa in Time Perspective—A Discussion of Historical Reconstructions from Unwritten Sources*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 120.
5. *Ibid*
6. J. Jordan, *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria* (Dublin, 1971), p. 35.
7. C. C. Ifemesia's lecture titled "Remote Origins and Early Beginnings of Igbo Society", History 427, UNN, 1983/84.
8. John Hatch, *Nigeria: A History* (London, Secker and Warbury, 1971), p. 62.
9. A. E. Afigbo, "Prolegomena to the Study of Culture History of the Igbo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria, in F. C. Ogbalu and E. N. Emenanjo (eds.), *Igbo Language and Culture* (Ibadan, O.U.P., 1975), p. 45.
10. V. C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 3.
11. G. T. Strike and C. C. Ifeka, *Peoples and Empires of West Africa* (London, Nelson, 1971), p. 347.
12. A. G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes* (London, F. Cass, 1968), p. 35.
13. (i) C.C. Ifemesia, *Traditional Humane Living... op. cit.* p.21 (see chapt. 2, No. 8).
 (ii) G. T. Basden, *Niger Igbos* (London, F. Cass, 1966), p. xx.
 (iii) Oby Nwude, "The Place of Nri in the Contemporary Igbo History," *Weekly Trumpet*, Sunday, January 4, 1981, p. 8.
 (iv) G. I. Jones and H. Mulhall, "An Examination of the Physical Type of Certain People of Southeastern Nigeria", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 79, (1949), pp. 11-18.

Chapter 5

IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

In the history of Obe, there are stories of people who came to Obe from different areas at different periods and finally settled in the community with the original inhabitants. Some of these immigrants greatly contributed to the establishment of families, lineages, kindreds and villages as to attract commendation and pride of place in Obe oral tradition. Even some groups within the geographical frame of Obe, left their families, lineages, kindreds and villages to join others, due to some social or political reasons. These immigrants were assimilated into the mainstream of interaction in Obe to the extent that everybody had become just one group, under the umbrella of Obe citizenship.

Likewise, many people from Obe left the territorial entity of the community and established families, lineages, kindreds and villages in different areas at different times.

But to hold the opinion that this group or that group came from somewhere, which means that they are not sons of the soil, is completely ridiculous and simply an exhibition of ignorance, ignominy and a symptom of primitive eccentricity. Therefore the reference to these cross-cuttings of people in this chapter is just for the purpose of historical knowledge and nothing more.

Oral tradition of Obe maintains that the founding father of the greater part of Umuaneketa kindred in Enugwu Obe came from Ihuona in Isigwe Ugbawka. The lineages of Umuchime Onyeabor, Umuan Nwachi, Umuogbodo Ite Onyeabor, and Umuan Nwogbodo, all of Umuaneketa kindred of Enugwu Obe, are said to be descendants of

Chime Ani Nwa Onyeabor Achime, an immigrant from Ihuona in Isigwe Ugbawka.¹ Chime Ani Nwa Onyeabor Achime was acclaimed to be a great warrior and his migration to Obe coincided with the period of great war between Obe and Awkunanaw. He volunteered to fight for the people of Obe against Awkunanaw. He constituted himself into a one man squad and raided and defeated the people of Awkunanaw in the battle field. So in appreciation of his great deed, he was fully accepted as an Obe man and was equally given a woman known as Oba (Oba Chime Onyeabor) as a wife. And the people of Umuaneketa, except the lineage of Umuaneketa Ocha, commonly offer sacrifices and observe religious ceremonies in honour of their great ancestor, Chime Ani Nwa Onyeabor Achime.

The oral tradition of Obe maintains that there is a group of people in Obe who are referred to as "ndi obia" or "ndi ohu". This group can be found in all the villages of Obe, except in Enugwu Obe. Their fore-fathers were believed to have been bought from other areas, outside Obe, by some original inhabitants of Obe who kept them as their servants (ohu) and it was a common practice throughout Igboland during this endangered period of slavery (*ito madu* or *ipa mmadu*). Those servants were assimilated by their masters to the extent that their descendants are parts and parcels of some lineages, kindreds and villages in Obe.

But, inspite of good interaction, amicable neighbourhood and other positive social intermingling, this group of "ndi obia", who presently refer to themselves as "Amaorji", are still segregated by other groups in Obe, due to some prejudiced and stereo-typed superstitions. And this segregation is more pronounced in marriage institution. But these days, the segregative reference to this group as "ndi obia or ndi ohu" is illegal and illegitimate, especially since slavery was universally abolished in 1807 and censored and tabooed by the Eastern State House of Assembly in 1956. And under section 39 of the 1979 Nigerian Constitution, slavery is regarded as an act of illegality. It is worth mentioning that the controversial "osu" system does not exist in Obe. The only osu man in Obe died before the Nigerian

civil war (1967-1970), and therefore, had no lineage. Distinctively, *osu* were people sacrificed to and owned by deities, while *ohu* were people owned by individuals in pre-colonial and colonial epoch.



The Author taking note from oral tradition.

Some elders of Obuofia Obe have claimed that they have no common ancestral foundation with other villages of Obe. According to Nwanshi Nwokoro Ajiogbu, Nwobodo Ene and Nwachukwu Ugwuegbo, the people of Obuofia Obe descended from Ogui Nike.² And in the same vein, there is a strong belief among the people of Umuenenta that they originated from Ituku, hence the shouting of the name "Okoro Ituku Ubato Oke" whenever a house is on fire in their village. Likewise, some people equally believe that Umungwutowo and Umuikeowo people came from Agbogugu. But further research into these claims only revealed that the mother of Obuofia came from Ogui Nike which is acclaimed to be the oldest community in Nkanu, while the mothers of Umuenenta and Ike na Ngwuta (Umungwutowo and Umuikeowo) came from Ituku and Agbogugu respectively.³ Nwujishiakum was the mother of Ike na Ngwuta.

Enenta, the founding father of Umuenenta people, was referred to as "Nwoke Ituku" (Ituku man). This reference was just symptomatic of the fact that Enenta was the name-sake (ogbo) of his mother's father, who was of course an Ituku man. Eneshinne, the elder brother of Enenta, was the name-sake of his father's father. For the fact that Eneshinne had no male child which resulted in the right of primogeniture falling on Enenta, coupled with the dictum that Enenta was the name-sake (ogbo) of his mother's father does not mean that maternity, instead of paternity, prevails in Obe custom. Had it been that Eneshinne had male children just like Enenta, the present Umuenenta village would have been answering Umuenekwesi, because Owo Enekwesi was the father of both Eneshinne and Enenta. And Owo Oha, the founding father of Obuofia Obe, who married from Ogui Nike, was popularly called Uba Enyi. He was very fond of hunting and was later given the name "Obu n'Ofia" (Obuofia) by other descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke, because he always absented himself from the meetings of the group,⁴ due to his love for hunting inside the thick forest and since then, the descendants of Owo Oha (Uba Enyi) retained the name "Obuofia" as the name of their entity.

There were numerous emigrants from Obe who migrated to different towns at different periods in the pre-colonial days. Prominent among them was Achuene Ani from Enugwu Obe who migrated with his family to Ogbaku. There is a strong belief in Obe oral tradition that Odume, the oldest village in Ogbaku community, was founded by Achuene Ani and other emigrants from other villages of Obe.⁵ Oral tradition of Obe has it that Achuene Ani was forced to migrate to Ogbaku by one Chu Nwaomo, who constantly fought with him. The fight was caused by Achuene Ani who stubbornly destroyed the mud walls of Chu Nwaomo. Chu Nwaomo retaliated and vowed to eliminate Achuene Ani and his family. There was a day, according to Ani Nwanonyia, Chu Nwaomo armed himself with a machet and pursued Achuene Ani, who luckily escaped the threat. Achuene Ani was terribly terrified and the episode prompted him to leave with his family to Ogbaku, in order to avoid his elimination by Chu Nwaomo.

There were still other emigrants from Umuofujam and Umuenenta who migrated to Ogbaku in the onset of Obe pre-colonial time. Ani Ogbaku and Nfu Ogbaku, according to Ani Nwaene Onyia and Orienta Udeh "are the same with the people of Obe, because the originators were from Obe," and the people of Odume Ogbaku, according to Goddy Okeifufe and others, "used to come to Obe yearly to worship Umuofujam." And according to Onyia Nwaene, there was a group known as Nnegbune who lived between Obe and Ozalla that later migrated to Ogbaku to join other Obe emigrants. Nnegbune group was part of Umuenenta village.

However, Obe is not the only community that claims the foundation of Odume Ogbaku. There is a village in Amoli community which claims to be the founder of this Odume Ogbaku. Oral tradition of Amoli maintains that the people of Odume Ogbaku migrated from Odume Amoli. On the other hand, the oral tradition of Ogbaku disagrees with the claim of Amoli people and sees the reverse as the case. It is believed that Odume Amoli, instead, originated from Odume Ogbaku. And if it is true that Odume Amoli migrated from Odume Ogbaku, it all means that both Odume Amoli and

Odume Ogbaku are parts of Obe and the people are the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke, the founding father of the present Obe community, for the *viro voce* tradition of Obe maintains that emigrants from Obe founded not only Odume Ogbaku, but the entire Ogbaku community which is made up of seven villages.

But it should be well noted that "members of the Ogbaku village group," according to Okolo Isaac O. Nwaorji, an Ogbaku scholar, "had migrated to their present habitat from different other places at various times and under varying circumstances in the remote past."⁶ It all means, therefore, that Ogbaku community is made up of different emigrants from different places or communities which invariably included Obe.

There are still other emigrants from Obe who comfortably settled in other communities. According to Obe oral tradition, the people of Amaofia Nara, Enuagu Amurri, Umuedum Amurri, and Umungene Ike, Umah in Akagbe, all migrated from Obe. The people of Amaofia Nara, for instance, are the descendants of Odume Okpatu Oke. The oral tradition of Obe maintains that Amaofia people migrated from Obe in the pre-colonial time. Precisely, the people of Amaofia, a lineage in Umuofujam village left Ugwu Nkwò Atu, Obe during the reign of Owo Oko Ujam and Ngwu Chime Ngwu who were very popular in the political and social affairs of Obe community in pre-colonial period. And the migration of this group coincided with the feast of Ngene Ukwu Obia Ogboru Ogu, an ancient feast of the people of Umuofujam, which was popularly known as Itotegbabara.

Their migration to Nara was an end-product of a war between Umuofujam and Obuofia Obe which resulted into the genocide and massacre of the people of both villages on and after the feast of Aja Obodo Isi Nwa Enyi, otherwise known as *Egbujiri gi aka akutahu* or *Tohahaha*, an elitist feast of the people of Obuofia Obe. On their arrival at Nara, the people of Amaofia were fully received by the Nara aborigines. The people of Amaofia were then told to man the Nara-Ugbawka border, because the two communities (Nara and Ugbawka) were at war. The decision to let Amaofia

people, a lost lineage of Umuofujam village, to man the border was based on the known ability and capability of the people of Obe in warfaric activities throughout Nkanu area, and the people of Amaofia were no exceptions.

So the people of Amaofia, just like Obe founding father, Odume Okpatu Oke, who was well noted for his militant nature which earned him the nick-name "Odume Nnaji Ugwueke nchi anu mkpu ogu (Odume Nnaji Ugwueke who was always ready to fight or who responded actively to war), accepted to protect Nara from the invasion of Ugbawka people. This act of boundary protection was known as "iche agu". Significantly, it signalled their acceptance and willingness to be the first set of people to meet the people of Ugbawka in times of war. Expectedly, the Amaofia warriors always defeated their Ugbawka counter-parts in the battle field and it also meant a sound victory for the entire populace of Nara. And in appreciation of this great protective role and military superiority, the people of Amaofia were accorded the right of primogeniture in Nara and since then, Amaofia has been regarded and treated as the oldest village in Nara till this day. It should be noted that the name "Amaofia" was derived from Ofia deity of Umuofujam and according to Godwin Okeifufe, the people of Amaofia Nara celebrated their own Ofia deity at the same period with the people of Umuofujam and their Ofia deity is just a replica of that of Umuofujam Obe.⁷

Then the people of Enuagu Amurri, according to oral tradition of Obe, originated from Obuofia Obe. They left Obuofia Obe after the barbaric war between the people of Obuofia and Umuofujam. The people of Enuagu Amurri are up till date treated as foreigners in Amurri, because according to Nwachukwu Ugwuegbo and Nwanshi Nwaokoro Ajiogbu, they are prevented by the original people of Amurri from *ima oghu*, a ceremony exclusively reserved for the indigenes of Amurri community in Nkanu LGA. In the same vein the people of Umuodum Amurri, according to a version of Obe oral tradition, originated from Umuofujam village Obe, while the other version claims that they originated from Umuikeowo village Obe. According to

elder Nwankwo Ede Igweshi, Agu Owo Ike from Umuikeowo sent his servants to Amurri to acquire land for him. They agreed and left, but eventually settled permanently there as they increased in number.

In conclusion, therefore, it is undoubtedly comprehensible that the present people of Obe are to some extent the end-products of interaction and fusion; and some people left Obe to establish lineages, kindreds and villages in pre-colonial time.

Reference

1. Oral information from Nwaene Onyia, the oldest man in Enugwu Obe, which was confirmed by Nnaji Nwa Onovo, the oldest man in Umuanekeeta kindred and reaffirmed by other numerous informants from all the villages of Obe.
2. Oral information from the elders of Obuofia Obe in a group interview held with them in June, 1988.
3. Oral information from Nwankwo Ede Igwesi, Orianta Udeh, Ani Nwanene Onyia and at last Nwachukwu Ugwuegbo, among others.
4. Oral information from Nwachukwu Ugwuegbo, an elder statesman from Obuofia Obe.
5. Oral information from Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia in an interview held with him on 30/07/88.
6. Okolo Isaac O. Nwaorji: *The History of Ogbaku Origins, Migrations and Settlement ...* B. A. Project, Dept. of History, UNN.
7. Oral information from Godwin Okefife in an interview held with him on 24/09/88.

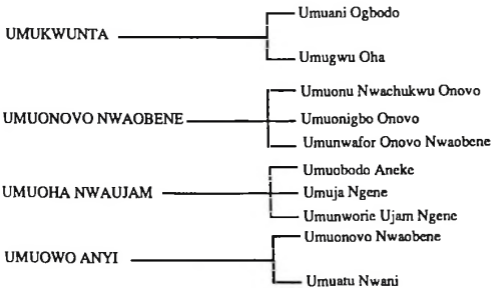
Chapter 6

VILLAGES, KINDREDS AND LINEAGES IN OBE

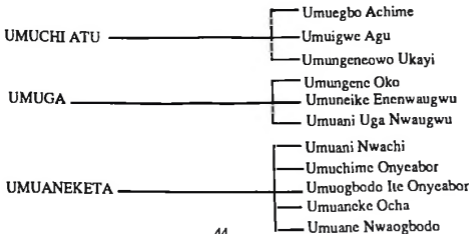
UMUOFUJAM VILLAGE

KINDREDS

LINEAGES

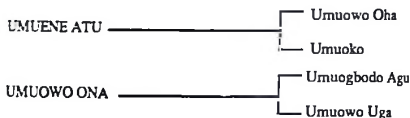


ENUGWU VILLAGE

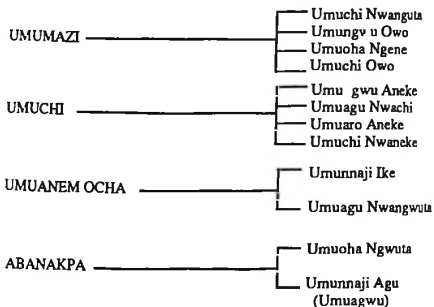




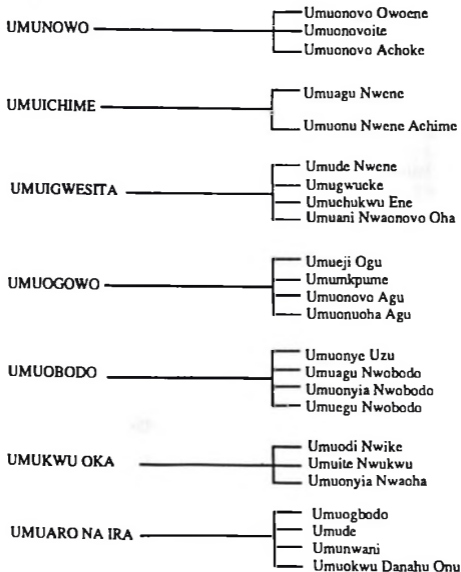
OBUOFIA VILLAGE



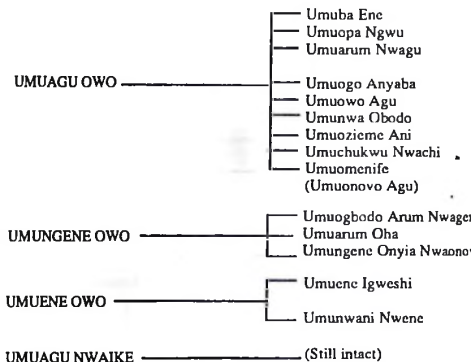
UMUNGWUTOWO VILLAGE



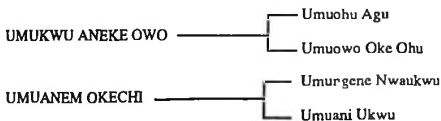
UMUENENTA VILLAGE



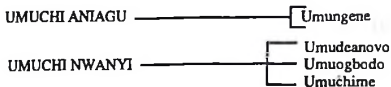
UMUIKEOWO VILLAGE



IHUAKO VILLAGE



OBODOUKPA VILLAGE



The kindreds in each village of Obe are arranged in seniority order as narrated to the author of this book by the elders of the village, except in Umukeowo village where seniority is determined gerontocratically. Umuchime Anem kindred of Enugwu Obe was originally a part of Umungwutowo village.¹ In pre-colonial days, Umungwutowo and Enugwu Obe fought on many occasions, but the latter was no match to the former during those conflicts in which staffs and sticks were used as the only weapons in order to avoid the loss of blood due to the fraternal nature of it. The causes of those conflicts were some social misunderstanding which ranged from assault to misinterpretation of ideas and concepts.

An Umungwutowo warrior, Aharu Nwachiowo, who was a self-constituted, self-anointed, and self-proclaimed king of Obe probably between 1787 and 1830, gave Umuchime Anem to Enugwu Obe, in order to balance the fight, because he was irritated by the easy defeats of Enugwu Obe by the people of Umungwutowo.² Coupled with the fact that his mother came from Enugwu village, it therefore, became a sympathetic gesture in recognition of the fact that a village where his mother came from should not be humiliated in times of conflicts. And since then, Umuchime Anem ceased to be a part of Umungwutowo village. Although Umuchime Anem was accepted as a part of Enugwu Obe, the people were discriminated against by other original kindreds of the village. For instance, there was no dynamics of cultural socialization and conviviality between Umuchime Anem and other kindreds of Enugwu Obe during the Ita Ugba and Ikwa Be (Isi nri ani) ceremonies. And the right of primogeniture in Enugwu Obe was never accorded to the elders of Umuchime Anem.³

"Aharu Nwachiowo", according to Walter Okoro "was a real dictator,"⁴ With his philosophy of "*l'état, c'est moi*", as propagated by Louis XIV, Aharu equally gave the Umuoha Ngwuta lineage of Umumazi kindred of Umungwutowo village to Umunnaji Agu (Umuagwu) kindred of the same village so that Umunnaji Agu would be able to pay their taxes which were divided among the four

kindreds in Umungwutowo. Another reason why Aharu Nwachiowo bounced and harmered on the people of Umuoha Ngwuta was that the people challenged him and questioned his leadership capability. Umuoha Ngwuta always refused to bribe him in order to get a favour from him. He therefore gave Umuoha Ngwuta to Umannaji Agu and named them "Abanakpa Marumaru", and since then, the two groups were adoptedly called Abanakpa kindred.⁵ Aharu Nwachiowo, the egoistic self-acclaimed king of Obe, who later ended up in ruins at Obuofia Akegbe, was said to have been murdered by Oha Igwesi, another terrorist from Ozalla.

All in all, the founding fathers of Obe from whom all the names of the villages, kindreds, lineages and families were derived, inspite of their internal dissensions and external misapprehension, lived in close proximity, maintained direct and indirect contact of interest and equally stabilized their territorial and demographic entity. And it was their cemented beliefs, coupled with their quintessence of deep-seated traditional aesthetics and a marvel of fraternal plenitude that necessitated the survival of Obe community. With their operational framework of sensibility, Obe was able to survive the vicissitude of life with their inherent attributes of ingenuity, dexterity and adoptability. The founding fathers of Obe undoubtedly contributed diamondly to the threshold of humanity and civilization. Happy cheers for their labour and sacrifices in making the existence, development and longevity of Obe a reality.

References

1. Oral information from all my major informants from Umungwutowo and Enugwu Obe.
2. Oral information from Onyia Nwaene, the oldest man from Enugwu Obe in an interview held with him on 12/08/88.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Oral information from Walter Okoro in one of the series of interview held with him in March, 1988.
5. Oral information from my father, Enconyibo Ogbodowo Chukwu in 1985, reaffirmed by other elders of Umungwutowo.

Chapter 7

POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Politically, a form of democracy was practised in Obe before the arrival of the white man. The political system in Obe was based on simple democracy—a system of which the Igbo people as a nation were known for. There was a chain of structures in this political set-up arranged for the purpose of running the machinery of the civil administration which was resolved in the following synopsis: the family, the extended family, the lineage, the kindred, village and town units. Each had its separate, but common organisations and endeavoured to conduct its own affairs in so far as it could.

At the lowest level was the nuclear family, made up of a man, his wives and children. Following the family was another group of extended families. The extended family (Umunne or Ime Afor) is known as lineage or what Prof. J. C. Anene has called the "localized lineage."¹ The Umunna came immediately after the lineage. According to H.A. Gailey, the Umunna is known as the "patrilineage."² To M. S. O. Olisa, it is called the "kindred,"³ or "quarter"⁴ in the view of D. Okafor-Omali. The kindred was the basic political and social unit in the pre-colonial administration in Obe. A group of Umunna in turn constituted the village (mkpukpu). Finally, a number of villages in turn constituted the town or the community (Obodo).

The political echelon of the pre-colonial Obe was, therefore, like A. O. Ojo's set-up in which "a number of related families formed a kindred and a number of kindred formed a village,"⁵ while a group of villages in turn

constituted the town or the community. The extended family and the kindred were the eventual smallest and basic political units respectively, while the village and the town were the larger units. But each segment, according to M.M. Green, was independent of the other and mainly "managing its own affairs,"⁶ though they descended, according to Prof. A. E. Afigbo, "from a common founding father, and they see themselves as ranked in an order of seniority"⁷ which was also according to J.C. Anene "derived from a single lineage genealogy."⁸

Meetings, be it at the family, lineage, kindred, village or town levels, were the common junctions where issues of common interest were tabled, debated and concluded after full deliberations. Meetings, according to Nnamani Nwachukwu Owo, were called Okwu Ututu (morning talk), and just like any other organised community in Igboland, meetings were the life-wire of Obe political system. The family meetings were presided over by the Diokpara, who in the opinion of D. Forde and G. I. Jones "arbitrates in internal disputes, adjudicates cases and represents the group in its external relations."⁹ The lineage, the kindreds and the village meetings were similar to that of the family. It was the duty of the oldest man among a group to call up meetings and the oldest man among the group presided over the meetings, usually held at his house. The Ani Obe priest (Onye na-eji Ani) was responsible for summoning meetings and presiding over it at the town's level.¹⁰ Obe, whose political leadership entrenched popular participation, ability and experience in governmental processes, could be said to be one of the Igbo communities where leadership was gerontocratic. And the main reason for the prominence of this elderly group on the antenna of authority stemmed from unwavering belief among the people that the elders knew the traditions and customs. This is the reason why N. E. Njaka has postulated that "wisdom comes with age."

The political and administrative eudaemonism in pre-colonial Obe, inspite of the absence of a central authority and an autocratic potentate, did provide the chain-link constructed *en palier* through social and cultural ties which

brought together the ancestrally connected groups from the nuclear family to the town's level under one political shade where consultation and consensus were the common "denominators"¹¹ and where issues of common interest were adopted or rejected in unison.

Economic activities in Obe before the invasion and intrusion of Europeans were largely restricted to the production of subsistence goods, the goods for local consumption. Men, women, and children took part in profitable economic ventures, because nobody wanted to be idle. And in line with what Olaudah Equiano has stated of the Igbo people, the people of Obe were "unacquainted with idleness."¹² Men tried to compete among themselves for economic acquisition. Even among the Igbos as a whole, "competition was the life principles. Individual rivalled individual, social segment rivalled social segment and god rivalled god."¹³ This became necessary because they believed that competition kept "everybody and every group up and doing in order to retain his or its rightful position in Igbo scheme of things."¹⁴ This was economic drive among the Igbos made some men of letters to call them a nation with the tendency to materialism resulting in a highly competitive and economically stratified society.¹⁵ The Obe economic activities and organisations could be broadened into three major areas such as agriculture, trade and marketing, and local technology.

In ancient Obe, agriculture was the major source of livelihood and it was, in the view of N.E. Njaka, the "mainstay of Igbo society." To Olaudah Equiano, it was the "chief employment" of the Igbos and to V. C. Uchendu, it was the "staff of life." Agriculture in pre-colonial Obe was the "matrix in which economic activity was set."¹⁶ It was the means by which the inhabitants of Obe community bathe themselves in "warm water of stomach satisfaction and considerable wealth." It was the pillar and pivot of the people's survival from time immemorial. Some of the food crops cultivated in Obe included different types of yams (*Dioscorea alata*, *Dioscorea rotundata*, *Dioscorea cayanensis*, *Dioscorea praehensilis*, *Dioscorea dumetorum*

and *Dioscorea bulbifera*), cocoyams (*Colocasia esculentus* and *Xanthosoma saggitifolium*) and cassava (*Manihot utilissima*).¹⁷ In Obe, tilling of farmland was prohibited for women, and normal farming activities were pursued everyday, except on Orié days which were religiously sacrosanct and explicitly defined mundane activity like farming was forbidden. Orié days were the Holy Days in Obe, just like Sundays and Fridays were the Holy Days for christians and moslems respectively. It was believed that the Nze (deities or gods) in Obe used Orié Days to rest.¹⁸

Although agriculture was the principal means of livelihood for the quantitative majority of the people of Obe, trading and marketing were so common among them. The acts of trading and marketing were the central features in the life of every Obe man and woman.

The development of markets in Obe may have occurred soon after the earliest settlers in Obe found it necessary by the urge to dispose of the surplus food items from their farms. Thus, local markets which were named after the days on which they were held, emerged at some strategic places in Obe, mostly on sideyards of shrines. Among them were old Orié Obe, Afor Ani, Eke Orurumili, Eke Agu and Nkwo Atu. But because of the atrocity committed by an Obe man at Eke Agu (selling of a woman who attended the market into slavery), all the markets in pre-colonial Obe evaporated and vanished and since then, the dream of having reputable markets in Obe has been a mirage and an illusion.¹⁹

Technologically, Obe had variety of specialists on whom her economic foundation stood. The occupational specialities included carving, basketry, smithing, pottery, sculpturing and other miscellaneous activities.

The economic activities in pre-colonial Obe were interwoven as one angle of activity led to the other. Her three-legged rudimentary economic activities (agriculture, trading and local technology) helped the pre-colonial people of Obe to lead a life of economic stability and social satisfaction without much willow and the money realised, according to J.W. Lieber, was "used for the day to day running of the household."²⁰ The people of pre-colonial Obe were able to

survive the vicissitude of time and bathe in a scented lubrication of life through their agricultural contentment, commercial effervescence, and technological ingenuity and dexterity.

References

1. J.C. Anene: *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1855-1906* (London, C.U.P. 1966), p. 12.
2. H. A. Gailey: *The Road to Aba* (London, Uni. of London Press, 1971), p. 2.
3. M.S.O. Olisa: "Political Culture and Stability in Igbo Society" (*The Conch*, Vol. iii, No. 2 1972) p. 19.
4. D. Okafor-Omalu: *A Nigerian Village in Two Worlds* (London, Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 32.
5. A. O. Ojo: *Political Science and Government of Nigeria* (Nigeria, Ilesanmi Press, 1973), p. 92.
6. M. M. Green: *Igbo Village Affairs* (London, Frank Cass, 1964), p. 3.
7. A. E. Afigbo: "The Indigenous Political Systems of the Igbo" *Tarikh*, Vol 4, No. 2, (1973), p. 17.
8. J. C. Anene: *op. cit.*, p. 12 (see No. 1).
9. D. Forde and G.I. Jones: *The Ibo and Ibibio Speaking People of Southern Nigeria* (London, Frank Cass, 1967), p. 15.
10. Oral information from Orienta Udeh, Nwankwo Ede Igwesi, Nwanze Ogbodo Anjukwu, Ani Nwaonyia, Ani Nwene Onyia etc.
11. S. N. Nwabara: *Igboiland: A Century of Contact with British, 1860-1960* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 23.
12. P. Edward (ed.), *Equiano's Travels. His Autobiography — The Interesting Narratives of the life of Olaudah Equiano* (London, Heinemann, 1967).
13. A. E. Afigbo: "The Indigenous... *op. cit.*, p. 22 (see No. 7).
14. *Ibid*
15. S. N. Nwabara, *op. cit.*, p. 23. (See No. 11).
16. P. Hill, "Some Characteristics of West African Economic Enterprise, Economic Bulletin of Ghana" No. 6, (1962), pp. 13-14.
17. See B. N. Okagbo, "Plant and Food in Igbo Culture" 1980 Ahiajoku Lecture, (Owerri Govt. Printers, 1980).
18. Oral information from all my major informants and chroniclers.
19. Oral Information from all the elders of Obe I interviewed
20. J.W. Lieber: *Igbo Village Communities* (Ibadan, Inst. of Education, University of Ibadan, 1971), p. 41.

Chapter 8

TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Before the introduction of Christianity and Mohamedanism in Igboland, Igo Mmo or Igo Alusi was the ancestral religion of the people of Obe. It was part and parcel of Obe heritage and the thinking and experiences of their forefathers. They formed religious ideas, formulated religious beliefs, observed religious ceremonies and rites; they told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they evolved laws and customs which safe-guarded the life of the individual and his community. They taught it formally and informally to their children through conversations, proverbs and myths, as well as through practice.

The origin of traditional religion in Obe or Igboland cannot be said, but Prof. J.S. Mbiti has pointed out that "African religious ideas and practices arose out of man's search for answers to the question of making human life safer and better."¹ A German writer, Arthur Schopenhauer, has equally noted that gods were invented by men for their own defence and to guarantee them an endless life. According to another German writer, Lüdwig Feuerbach, religion came into being as a result of human feelings of dependence on nature.²

The pre-colonial people of Obe were very religious. In short, Igbos in general, according to Prof. Isichei, "were nothing if not profoundly religious"³ and to Samuel Crowther, the "Igbos are in their way, a religious people."⁴ For Igbos "life is religion and religion is life." "Everybody is a religious carrier and people do not know how to exist

without religion." The people of Obe, just like any other community in Igboland believed in the existence of a supreme being called Chukwu (Almighty God) and Chineke (The Creator).⁵ Chukwu or Chineke was the principal God in Obe. Next to Chukwu was a pantheon of gods through which, according to Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia and F. C. Ogbalu,⁶ sacrifices and offerings were made. These pantheon of gods included Anyanwu (the sun god), Igwe (the sky god), Amadi Oha (the god of thunder and lightening) and Ani (the earth goddess). Other godlings in Obe included Agwu (the god of divination and herbal medicine), Ogbu Chi (the deified spirit of personal god), Ikenga (the god of adventure), Ofiri (god of multiplication), and tree gods like akpu, udara, ichikere, ngwu, ogurisi etc.

Ani Obe was the most important deity in Obe. She was the controller and custodian of morality⁷ and the "unseen president of the community."⁸ And Prof. J. C. Anene has rightly noted that no community in Igboland was complete without the goddess of the land⁹ which served as the central meeting place of the community and was regarded, according to Geoffrey Parrinder, as the greatest integrating force in Igbo society.¹⁰ In Obe, when a thing was declared as aru (abomination), it meant that such social offence infringed the laws of the earth goddess. Other earth goddesses that existed in pre-colonial Obe before the formation and acceptance of the present Ani Obe were Ani Ikweke, Ani Ididikoko (Ozizikoko), Ani Ubaenyi, and the controversial Ani Umudum (Ogbu n'uru) which was under the priesthood of Umuani Igwe, a lost lineage of Umuanem Ocha kindred in Umungwutowo village, Obe.

Apart from Ani Obe, there were other innumerable deities in Obe. Each village in Obe had its own deities and shrines. Among them were Orurummili in Umungwutowo, Ogbukwa in Obuofia, Ngene Ogburi in Umuikeowo, Nfu in Umuenenta, Enugwu and Obodoukpa, Ofia in Umuofujam and Inyiesu in Ihuako. These deities had feast moons (months) which formed the Obe traditional calendar and demonstrated her traditional civil year.

Obe native year consisted of twelve moons. Each moon consisted of seven native weeks (Izu Asaa) and each week consisted of four days (Eke, Ori, Afor, and Nkwo). The Obe lunar calendar was as follows:

- (1) Owa Iri Ofia (April/May): Celebration of Ofia deity at Umuofujam village.
- (2) Ume Owa (May/June): The celebration of Orurummili, Ngene Ogburi, Ogbukwa and Nfu deities during the rainy season.
- (3) Owa Obodo (June/July): Sacrifices and offerings were made at every ancestral compound in all the villages of Obe, except in Umuenenta village. They celebrate theirs in Ume Owa.
- (4) Owa Ani Udummili (July/August): The first feast of Ani Obe was observed.
- (5) Owa Inyesu (August/September): The feast of Inyiesu featured within this moon.
- (6) Owa Ato Ofia (Sept./Oct.): The second feast of Ofia deity in the dry season.
- (7) Owa Ano (Oct./Nov.): The second feast of Orurummili, Ngene Ogburi, Ogbukwa and Nfu deities during the dry season.
- (8) Owa Ise Ani (Nov./Dec.): Another feast of Ani Obe. It was known as Ani Okochi.
- (9) Owa Ishi (Dec./Jan.): The second feast of Inyiesu was observed. It was called Inyiesu Okochi.
- (10) Owa Isaa (Jan./Feb.): The period of hunting expedition for Ani Obe (Ichu nta Ani), after which the people of Obe became free to search for agricultural drop-outs in other people's farmland (ikpa ihe).
- (11) Owa Isato (Feb./March): The feast of Igba Aju was observed which was the last feast in Obe. Igba Aju was an occasion whereby sacrifices and offerings were made to the forefathers and ancestors in Obe.
- (12) Owa Iteghete (March/April): This was the last moon of the year used for ichu afor or ichu mmo.¹¹

The philosophical beliefs of the pre-colonial people of Obe were centred on African traditional religion. They ineffably believed and respected the Almighty Chukwu o

Chineke at all times and encomiums were daily showered on him. The town's deities were imperatively believed to be the disciples of Chukwu, through which the supplications of the people reached both their ancestors and Chukwu. To maintain an umbilical rapport with Chukwu, their ancestors and their deities, series of sacrifices and offerings were made, and feasts and festivals were observed by the people in glorification and sanctification of these gods. In this way, a dose of morality was injected and planted in the veins and arteries of the people's mannerisms which was a *sine qua non* for a protected and progressive community.

All rites, ceremonies, sacrifices, and observances, either in ritual avoidances, ancestor worship or burial ceremonies, were all strenuously pursued towards the common goal of falling in line with the goodness of Chineke which could free man from the machinations of the evil spirits.



The author taking note of Obe traditional religion at Ime Orurumili - a river goddess at Umungwutowo

Traditional religion in pre-colonial Obe was, therefore, a means of renewing contact between the people and God on one hand, and on the other hand, between the people and the invisible world. It was used as a means of creating harmony in the world of mankind. Through traditional religion, man exercised his position as the priest of the universe, the one who awoke the universe and linked it with God. It was a means of linking the spiritual and physical worlds, putting the invisible into touch with the visible. It made man to feel that the relationship between him and God was possible,¹² because "... the encounter with God is the most supreme archetypal social relationship."¹³

Igò ọfọ was the commonest method of approaching Chukwu or Chineke in Obe and Igboland.¹⁴ The people prayed, because they believed that Chukwu listened to them, accepted and answered their prayers. Igò ọfọ strengthened the link between man and God, man and his fellow man.

The fact that our forefathers lived in close proximity, shared common values and maintained contact of interest with each other on one hand, and with their gods and ancestor on the other hand, was a vivid manifestation of their cemented beliefs in African traditional religion. The factors that necessitated the well-being of the pre-colonial people of Obe were, therefore, umbrellared by their operational framework of sensibility and acute observation of limitations, coupled with their reverence to Chukwu and their ancestor, including their acceptance and recognition of the truism that gods and goddesses, oracles and shrines, taboos and abominations, were the moral bulwark of a traditional community. In all intents and purposes, traditional religion and philosophy in pre-colonial Obe were the people's diet of spiritualism and soul of beautification.

References

1. J.S. Mbiti: *Introduction to African Religion* (London, Heinemann, 1975), p. 14.
2. Ludwig Feuerbach: *Das Wesen der Religion*. Bd. 1, Leipzig, 1946, p. 117.
3. Elizabeth Isichei: *A History of Igbo People* (London, Macmillan, 1976) p. 24.
4. *Journal of the Rev. James Frederick Schön and Samuel Crowther... in 1841* (London, 1842), pp. 50-51.
5. (i) G.T. Basden: *Niger Ibos* (London, F. Cass, 1966), p. 36.
(ii) G.T. Basden: *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London, 1921), p. 215.
(iii) N.A. Odoemene: *The Fundamentals of Traditional Religion—A key to African Development* (Enugu, Institute of Ecumenical Education, 1988), pp. 37-38.
6. F.C. Ogbalu: *Igbo Institution and Customs* (Onitsha, University Publishing Company), p. 45.
7. Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart* (London, HEBS, 1958), chapter 3, p. 16.
8. (i) P. A. Talbot: *The People of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. 11 (London, 1926), p. 43.
(ii) G.H. Jones: *The Earth Goddess* (London, 1936), pp. 6-7.
(iii) C. K. Meek: *Law and Authority in a Nigeria Tribe* (London, O.U.P., 1937), p. 25.
9. J. C. Anene: *Southern Nigeria... op. cit.*, p. 13 (see chpt. 7 No.1).
10. Geoffrey Parrinder: *West African Religion* (London, Epsworth, 1949), p. 37.
11. Oral information from all the elders of Obe I interviewed.
12. J. S. Mbiti: *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55 (see No. 1).
13. Robin Horton; *African Conversion Africa*, Vol. XLI, No. 2 Apuk (1971), p. 95.
14. Oral information from Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia.

Chapter 9

PRE-COLONIAL CONFLICTS—WARFARE

The pre-colonial Obe was not without the chaotic constancy of warfarism which was the tune of events throughout Igboland, especially in 1890s¹ before the final assault on Igbos during the period of great colonial expeditions of 1901-1926. Obe had chains of war (*ogu isi agu*) with her neighbouring communities, inspite of the integrating role played by the forces of intermarriage, commercial co-operation, linguistic communality, cultural influences and geographical proximity. Strained relationship existed between Obe and other communities like Awkunanaw (Akegbe), Amurri and Agbogugu at different periods between 1837-1909 which were settled through armed conflicts.

Obe-Agbogugu-Awkunanaw-Amurri Wars

Inspite of the fibres of interaction and the role of unity and cohesion between the pre-colonial people of Obe and Agbogugu, the people of Agbogugu, yet had the audacity and alacrity to massively extinguish and exterminate Obe traders in their multitudes after they attended their Orié Agbogugu market. This outrageous crime signalled the beginning of the aged animosity, hatred and conflicts between Obe and Agbogugu. And since then, the two communities began to see each other from the prisms of separatism and elongated distinctiveness. Then, the phrase "Obe and Agbogugu" (Obe na Agbogugu), therefore, stood for the English idiomatic expression of "Cat and Dog".

Oral tradition of Obe has it that there was a time when the people of Obe were busy preparing for a feast, the people of Agbogugu were also busy preparing for war against Obe. It all started on a day the people of Obe went to Orié Agbogugu to trade in preparedness for this feast. They were, as usual, allowed a free entry into the market. But when the market was sensed to be in full session and the traffic of Obe traders into it terminated, the only road leading to Obe from which those traders entered Agbogugu was blocked with heaps of trees and ridges. The blockage was timely executed to prevent the people of Obe from escaping from their planned genocide and massacre. The built *oubliette* was meant to facilitate their slaughterous carnage and elimination of Obe people.

Then, when the weary Obe traders were innocently returning home, they were outheroedly murdered and massacred by the people of Agbogugu who laid ambush at the road-block waiting for them with knives, axes and guns. Only very few Obe traders managed to escape the Agboguguphobian outrage and mangled their way home. They, then narrated this episodic and sporadic carnage and massacre to their people.

The people of Obe were surprised by the act of extreme barbarism exhibited by the people of Agbogugu which was *contra bonos mores*. A handshake that passes the elbow, according to an Igbo proverb, is an invitation to fight. Something was expected to happen, because whoever gathered firewood infested by ants has "thrown open invitation to lizards." So the people of Obe, without dilly dally, prepared to waylay Agbogugu, because they had seen the last straw that had broken the camel's back, for according to Theodore Rossevelt, "when bad men conspire, let good men combine." In the assertion of elder Nwigwe Nnaji, the people of Obe had series of attacks against Agbogugu in retaliation of their slain people. This cat-and-dog terrorisation between Obe and Agbogugu continued until the catholic colonisation of Igboland by the British.

Further research into the cause of this genocide revealed that the people of Akegbe (Awkunanaw) had a hand in it.

Awkunanaw was in alliance with Agbogugu and since both Agbogugu and Awkunanaw ancestrally belong to Ntegebe clan, one could rightly conclude that Awkunanaw, who was already at war with Obe and Ozalla, instigated Agbogugu to make a massacre of the people of Obe, thereby making it easy for the strangulation of Ozalla people, so that both Agbogugu and Awkunanaw, who belong to Ntegebe Nese clan,² could have more meaningful and fraternal relationship. The people of Awkunanaw wanted to eliminate Obe and Ozalla or force them to evacuate their territories, so that she could share a common boundary with their kith and kin from Agbogugu who all belong to Ntegebese group. Obe and Ozalla stood in *Loco parentis* to the union which lay between them, and therefore, prevented other socio-cultural intercourse among them.

The causes of the wars between Obe and Awkunanaw, and Obe and Amurri were the humorous desire to acquire land and demonstration of combatant superiority and egoistic militarism. Igbo communities, according to Prof. Isichei, "were almost constantly at war"³ and land disputes, according to Sennia Bleeker, "were the most common causes of conflicts among the Igbos..."⁴ And since the Igbos attached great importance to land, which was variously described by many scholars⁵ as the traditional source of wealth and life substance, they could fight to any level if their lands were interfered with. Mcphee has rightly noted that land was Igbo people's source of livelihood and any interference with it would braze up into rebellion.⁶

The desire to acquire land, therefore, resulted into wars between Obe and Awkunanaw, and Obe and Amurri. Obe was down-trodden by these communities, until she proved herself to be a force to be reckoned with in times of war. In actuality, Obe was the smallest of these communities in terms of population which made them to have no reverence for her until she was able to curtail their warferic aggression. In the assertion of Ani Nwaonyia, "Obe raided Amurri and Awkunanaw on many occasions." In Obe-Awkunanaw war, for instance, Obe warriors reduced their Awkunanaw counterparts to nothingness to the extent that Awkunanaw

hired the dreaded Edda warriors to fight against Obe. Nevertheless, the Obe warriors successfully punctuated and tactically defeated Awkunanaw and their Edda mercenaries, and Awkunanaw finally surrendered after Anem Ebe, their greatest warrior, was killed.

Amurri suffered the same fate in the hands of Obe warriors. Obe was then, described in her warfaric unicity as a "Super Power"⁷ due to her strong military headedness and her univocal capability to extinguish and exterminate her opponents, especially in those days when human heads were in great demand as trophies to enable them dance the *abia egwu udene, egwu adaka, Ikoru Ani, ekwe nato or okete ekwe* and the the man-slayers in Nkanu, according to P. A. Talbot, "were saluted publicly as heroes."⁸

The pre-colonial people of Obe, who through acts of extreme provocation, punctuated the barbaric aggression of Agbogugu and successfully carried out military offences against Awkunanaw and Amurri, were indeed, unquavering set of people, blessed with great warriors with steady flow of strength that powered their war engine. The outrageous crime committed by the people of Agbogugu, who showed no sign of contrition, left the two communities in a state of permanent animus and perpetual animosity, especially as Agbogugu could not meet the conditionality of providing an osu man for Ani Obe which was a prerequisite for peace as demanded by Obe elders.

The icicles of vitality emanating from the bond of maturity and mutual understanding shown by Obe, Awkunanaw, and Amurri by the settlement of their wars through the use of *nwa egbu* or *nwa atakata*, was emulative and eminent. It enthroned social harmony in these communities. Obe was, indeed, a local super power that successfully defended her geographical entity which was under simultaneous bombastication, intimidation and suppression by the three gigantic and intrusive communities of Awkunanaw, Agbogugu, and Amurri in pre-colonial era.

Reference

1. Elizabeth Isichei: *A History of Igbo People... op. cit.* p. 75. (See Chapter 8, No. 3).
2. NA/3/1: Intelligence Report on the Ntegbu Nese Clan by Mr. S. P. L. Beaumont, A.D.O. 1932-1935, UDDIV. 4/1/34.
3. Elizabeth Isichei: *op. cit.* p. 78 (See Chapter 8 No. 3).
4. Sennia Bleeker: *The Ibo of Nigeria* (N.Y. Willam Morrow and Co., 1969), p. 26.
5. A. O. Okore: "The Political Economy of Igboland: An Historical Overview" (Seminar Paper presented at the Workshop on the state of Igbo Studies, Institute of African Studies, UNN, 7th-10th July, 1982), p. 7. See also A.A. Mere: "Social Values Heritage of the Igbos," (*Ikenga* Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 94; Ukwu I. Ukwu: "The Economic Organisation of Igboland" (Seminar paper presented at the Workshop on Igbo Culture, -Inst. of African Studies, UNN, 4th-7th April, 1977), p. 15.
6. A. Mcphee: *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa* (London, F. Cass, 1971), p. 130.
7. Oral information from Nwigwe Nnaji on 28/07/88.
8. P.A. Talbot: *The People of Southern Nigeria, Vol. 111*, (London, F. Cass and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 841.

Chapter 10

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BRITISH AND THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION (1900—1960)

The year 1900 is, in many ways, significant in Igbo history. On January 1, the British Government officially assumed direct responsibility for the Niger Districts which, since 1886, had been chartered to the National African Company (later Royal Niger Company). On that day too, the whole of Igboland became part of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

And in desirability of getting the Igbos fully under the umbrella of British colonial administration, the Protectorate Government planned and executed a series of military manoeuvre and punitive expeditions between 1900-1926, which resulted in total conquest and occupation of Igboland. Under the triple hammer of colonial administration, imperial business and missionary evangelicalism, the Igbo society lost its poise and began to collapse, and Igboland was practically *terra incognita* to the British.

The military expeditions deployed in the subjugation of the Igbo people started from the Aro expedition of 1901 and 1902 to Awka Patrol of 1905 and 1906 and the Udi Patrol of 1909.¹ And in 1910, the British soldiers arrived Obe. According to Nwankwo Ede Igwesi, the soldiers were led into Obe by an Awka man, who was well known in Obe. To Ani Nwaonyia, the people of Udi led the British soldiers into Obe and acted as their interpreters at Ime Ani Obe. But from the reliable mouths of Oryia Nwaene and Orienta Udeh, the British soldiers were led into Obe by the people of Ozalla, especially Onovo Nwachukwu and Chief Chukwuani

who did all he could to protect Obe from the bombastic shootings of the British soldiers.

By then, the Divisional Secretariat of the British Administration was based at Udi from where they monitored the activities of the people of Obe. And for the easy supervision of Obe and her environs, Chief Chukwuani from Ozalla was made to sign a treaty to rule the whole of Nkanu. He was issued with a warrant and he, therefore, became the Warrant Chief of Nkanu from 1910 to 1929. And that was the beginning of the fumble colonisation that ushered in traditional adulteration in Obe and since 1910, the Obe community gradually began to glide towards the new horizons and the people were in a deep emulsion of British cultural imperialism.

As the British Government took control of the whole of Nigeria in 1900, Igboland became part of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1907, the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria were amalgamated, and the new unit was divided into three provinces. Igboland was divided between the Eastern Province, with its capital at Calabar, and the Central Province, with its capital at Warri. Obe belonged to the Eastern Province. In 1914 during the amalgamation of Southern and Norther Protectorates, there were more administrative units; and the Eastern Province was divided into four smaller units namely: Onitsha, Owerri, Ogoja and Calabar Provinces and Obe belonged to the Onitsha Province. Further more, during the creation of subdivisions in Onitsha Province, Obe community belonged to Nkanu Native Authority in Udi Division.

There were other socio-economic changes introduced by the white man immediately after the colonisation of Igboland. The Enugu-Port Harcourt railway, surveyed and began in 1913, was opened to traffic in 1916 which brought the colonial masters nearer to Obe. By 1914, bicycles, motorcycles, cars and lorries were increasingly replacing human transportation and head portorage. Motor cars, for instance, were fist imported into Nigeria in 1907 and Chief Onyema of Eke had his first car in 1918.² But motor cars were very common in Obe by 1943 when the Enugu-Ozalla-

Obe-Agbani lower road was opened on October 30, 1943 to motor traffic not in excess of 2 tons unloaded; and on December 13, 1944, it was opened to heavy traffic.³ Then in 1946, Ede Ogbodo from Umuogbodo Arum Nwaigene lineage of Umungene Owo kindred in Umu^ukeowo village became the first Obe man to own a car (Morris Minor).

From 1910-1929, Chief Chukwuani solely represented Obe and Ozalla at Udi and later at Agbani courts. Between 1929 and 1937, a new political system was introduced by the British Government after the women uprising in the Eastern Province which was necessitated by the decision taken in 1926-1927 by the British, and implemented in 1928, to extend direct taxation to Eastern Province, and the taxation was to include the women. This resulted into the abolition of Warrant Chief system in 1929 by the British Government and the conduction of Intelligence Reports in all the communities in Igboland between 1930 and 1936. There was, therefore, a reorganisation of the judicial system in Nkanu. Obe and Ozalla successfully arranged an amalgamation for judicial purposes with the people of Awkunanaw. A group court named Awkunanaw Native Court was established at Agu Obeagu (Okoroma) on the border between Ozalla and Awkunanaw and was given 'D' Grade Powers with extended jurisdiction to imprison someone for one year in cases of praedial larceny.⁴ The Appeal from the court was forwarded to the District Officer under Section 28, Ordinance No. 44 of 1933. The court members were selected from the three communities and many people from different villages of Obe represented Obe at different times.

There was also the introduction of Native Authorities which were separate from the Native Courts. In 1952, for instance, the Nkanu Native Authority consisted of 51 members elected from different communities in Nkanu Area, with an estimated population of 163,374 (79,147 males and 84,227 females) as at 1953.⁵ Mr Dennis Ofor Nnaji from Umuagu Owo kindred of Umuikeowo village was elected to represent Obe community. Ozalla had two members, while Nike, Awkunanaw and Akpugo had six members each. In

another election held at Obe on Wednesday, March 24, 1954 by 10.00 a.m., Mr D. O. Nnaji (43 years) was returned unopposed to represent Obe in Nkanu Native Authority Council⁶ at Agbani where he was made the chairman of the Council for years.

In the final analysis, the introduction of Warrant Chiefs, Native Courts and Native Authorities by the British failed to yield its expected result. In short, all was just quiet and fair in Obe until the wind like a gasping messenger announced the arrival of the British, then came their branches mind in agony. The British came, saw and conquered Obe in 1910 and the people of the community unavoidably allowed them to stay and since then, "things have fallen apart."

References

1. A. E. Afigbo: "Patterns of Igbo Resistance to British Conquest," *Tarikh*, Ibadan, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1973), p. 17.
2. D. Onyema: *Chief Onyema* (Enugu, 1982), p. 57.
3. NA/11/1/1/ Vol. 11: Roads and Bridges, Government and Native Administration, Udi Division 1932-39, UDDIV 4/1/21
4. EN. 63, Native Courts, Nkanu Area 1932-39, UDDIV 3/1/21.
5. NA/10/31: Nkanu Federal Union 1953, UDDIV 4/1/171.
6. NA/4/3/2: Local Elections, Nkanu Area 1952-1954, UDLIV 4/1/45.

Chapter 11

MISSIONARY EVANGELICALISM AND WESTERN EDUCATION (1932—1960)

The history of Christianity in Igboland began in 1841, when Simon Jonas, an Igbo who had been sold into slavery, but rescued and resettled in Sierra Leone, spent three weeks at Aboh, where he preached to the children who flocked around him; and the first Christian mission station in Igboland was established at Onitsha on July 27, 1857.¹ This was in agreement with the earlier attempts made from England through the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) founded in 1799 with the aim of evangelising the heathen lands of Asia and Africa. Members of the C.M.S., Reverends S. C. Crowther, J. C. Taylor and Simon Jonas, shortly after their arrival at Onitsha in July 1857, initiated the vital channel of communication between them and the London C.M.S. Headquarters which opened the door for an elaborate exposure of the Igbos and their institutions to the literary world.

The genesis of Christianity and Western Education in Obe dates back to 1932, two decades and two years after the introduction of colonialism in the community. It all started when the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), based at Port Harcourt indicated its willingness to open up a mission at Obe in 1932.² The application was granted and a mission was then husbanded in Obe in 1933 by the C.M.S. members from Agbani led by John Nwokedi, Nelson Okoye, George Okonkwo, Innocent Obika and their families who assembled at Chukwu Nwachi Square at Umuikeowo and preached to the people of Obe on one Sunday morning.

A piece of land (an evil forest or mmutu) was later offered to them by the people of Umungwutowo during their second trip to Obe. But the mission was later abandoned and was effectively taken over by the Methodist Church and the year 1934 witnessed an unprecedented bazaar of Methodism in Obe religious filament. From 1934 to 1960, Christianity and Western education in Obe had acquired a definite foothold, not only in its strength, but also in the social life of the people, especially with the introduction of Catholicism in Obe in 1953 and Pentecostal Prophetism in 1959.

Methodism

The origin of Methodist Church would be associated with John Wesley (1703-1791), an eighteenth century priest of the Anglican Church who was trained as a minister at the University of Oxford. Wesley and his followers were nicknamed "Methodist", because they lived strictly by the rules of the New Testament. In Nigeria, the Methodist Church owed its beginning to the work of Thomas Birch Freeman who introduced the church in 1885. In 1895, it was introduced at Port Harcourt under the general supervision of Rev. John Milum, and it was from Port Harcourt that it penetrated Igboland. It was the establishment of the railway from Port Harcourt to Enugu in 1916 that led to effective Methodism of Igboland, with Uzuakoli as Headquarters (1923) from which places like Umuahia, Ovim, Nara, and Agbani were reached with financial support from the Methodist Society in London.

The "Primitive Methodist Church/School Obe Odume", as it was called in 1934, was first headed by an Owerri man called Mr Nwadimoha who later disappeared from Obe with the £7 (seven pounds) realised from the sales of the church cassava cultivated by the school children and nobody saw him again in Obe.³ Mr Vincent Eze from Awka then took the administrative mantle of the school cum church. Parents allowed their children either to go to the school or the church. People like Vincent Chukwu, Samuel Aneke, Mba Nnamani, Okorie Ogbodo, Simeon Chinwike, Samuel Okonkwo and many others were the pioneer members of the

Methodist Church, Obe in 1934. Among the pioneer pupils of the Methodist School in 1934 were Dickson Orji, Walter Okoro, Nwigwe Ngene, Nathan Onovo, Gibson Echi, Michael Onu, Nelson Agu, Atu Nwene, Ogbodo Nwachukwu, Richard Egbogu, Daniel Okorie, Arum Ogbu, Gibson Chinwike, Nwigwe Nwaneke, among others.

The colonial educational system was grouped into two: the "Infant" and the "Standard" Schools. The Infant School was made up of three steps: ABC, class one and class two, while the Standard School was made up of six steps: Standard 1-6. A child normally spent 9 (nine) years in Primary School—three years for Infant School and 6 years for Standard 1-6.



*Community Central School, Obe
(formerly Methodist Central School)*

Between 1934-1955, the Methodist School, Obe was given a status of a Junior Primary School with a total number of 54 scholars and only 4 teachers (A. O. Ekere, A. Ogbu, G. N. Onyekwugo and B. A. Ilukwe); and the school was under the managership of Rev. S. W. Smith of the Methodist Mission, Ovim. With this status as a Junior Primary School, Obe had, therefore, only Infant School and Standard 1 and 2. In other words, the pupils attended only A.B.C, Classes 1 and 2, Standard 1 and 2 at Obe, before going to Methodist Central School, Agbani for Standard 3-6. The Methodist Central School Agbani, founded in 1921, was then the only Standard Six school in Nkanu. There was equally a time between 1937-1953 when some Obe pupils joined their Awkunanaw counterparts in attending the group school at Okoroma.

But with the assistance of Mr D.N. Achara, who was then the Supervisor of schools at Agbani, the Methodist Junior Primary School Obe was upgraded to a Senior Primary School in 1956 after the erection of the present buildings and that signalled the beginning of Standard 3-6 in Obe Community. In 1959, twenty-two pupils registered for the standard six examination for the first time in Methodist Central School Obe and half of this number (eleven) came out in flying colours. These successful pioneer standard six pupils included Sunday A. Okereke, Anene Okonkwo, Nwafor Ofor Nwangwu, among others.



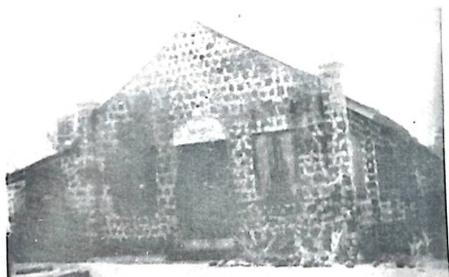
Methodist Church, Obe

The Methodist Central School, Obe, later changed to Community Central School, Obe due to agglomeration of events, shared the same building with the Methodist Church, Obe until May 27, 1984 when a new Church building was commissioned by Rev. B. U. Okorie from Agbani circuit, but the foundation stone of the church was earlier laid on March 19, 1981. The Methodist Mission that successfully nurtured and mothered Christianity in Obe was the people's eye-opener to Westernization. It opened a gate into the frontiers of modern civilization through which a performed taste is brought into the ripples of the people's *Weltanschauung*.

Catholicism

The Roman Catholic thrust in the evangelization of Igboland started in 1885 under the leadership of the French born Fr Joseph Lutz. By 1914, the Roman Catholic Mission

(R.C.M.) made its definitive break-through in Igboland.⁴ From 1914 onward, the Roman Catholic faith began to spread unobtrusively and imperceptibly to many Igbo communities. In 1917, St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Mission, Amaigbo Ozalla (now Community Primary School) was founded during the reign of Chief Chukwuani and it was the first mission school in Nkanu. In 1942, Nkanu became part of Udi Parish which was under Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Burke and at this period, the nearest Catholic Mission to Obe was St. Paul's Catholic Church/School, Ozalla. The headmaster of this institution, Mr Joseph Ofodu, instructed one of the pioneer instructors of the school, Mr B. M. Onovo, to reside at Obe (in Nnaji Nwangene's house at Ihuako) in order to campaign for more school children to attend their school at Ozalla and for him, Mr Onovo, to conduct church services on Sundays at Obe. Nnaji Nwangene's Agbara or Sabanga house was used during the conduction of the church services and catechism classes. Some of the pioneer converts included Samuel Oko, Gab Nnaji, Godwir Chukwu, Edmund Okorafor, Christopher Udeh, James Agu, Stephen Nwafor and others.



*St Anthony's Catholic Church/School, Obe
(founded in 1953)*

In 1947, frantic efforts and enquiries about the feasibility and possibility of husbanding a Catholic school in Obe were made at the wake of the unflinching enthusiasm of some villages of "Obe Ugwu". This was as a result of unresolved conflicts among the villages of Obe over the administration of Methodist Central School, Obe. In 1948, as Agbani Parish was carved out of Udi Parish, Mr Emmanuel Ngeneoke, a teacher from Ituku, was posted to Obe for the possibility of establishing a Catholic school. And in order to nurse and nurture the baby faith, Mr Ngeneoke, who resided at Thomas Ngene's house, dedicatedly campaigned for Catholic illumination and Mr Ngene Nwonovo, a.k.a. Nge Agu Abaru Aku, freely and whole heartedly donated a site for the construction of the school which resulted in the eventual establishment of St. Anthony's Catholic Church/School, Obe on May 27, 1953 under the managership of Rev. Fr. B. McMahon of Catholic Mission, Agbani. Mr Emmanuel Ngeneoke, who had been in Obe since 1948, was the founder, originator and proinator of the name "St. Anthony's Catholic Church/School, Obe," replica name of St. Anthony's Catholic Church/School, Ituku, his home town. With the inestimable assistance of the primordial teacher of St. Anthony's Catholic Church/School, Obe such as Messrs Clement Chiawa, Joseph Chukwuani and James Ilo, the dreaded thick evil forest (mmuru) adjacent to the baby School/Church was cleared, where the present St. Anthony's Catholic Church building stands.

In 1957, the Catholic Mission added another credit to its expansionist programmes as a new school, St. Benedette's Catholic School, Obe was established. It became a feeder school to St. Anthony's Catholic School, Obe, until 1970s when it became a full-fledged school with the name Union Primary School, Obe. The name St. Anthony's Catholic School, Obe was equally changed to Community Primary School when the Government took over schools from the missionaries on April 1, 1974.



*Union Primary School Obe
(St Benedette, founded in 1957)*

From 1960-1988, the Catholic Church in Obe has recorded a tremendous progression. St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Obe is increasingly becoming indigenous to the extent that on September 10, 1988, Obe ordained her first indigenous Catholic Priest in the name of Rev. Fr. Charles Okey Chukwuani, which made the Catholic Church to be firmly rooted in the soil of permanence in Obe.

Pentecostal Prophetism

The Abosso Apostolic Church, Obe was the first ever Prayer-Healing-Prophetic type of Church to be established in Obe in 1959. The origin of the Church in Igboland is carefully traceable to Amaba. It was founded by Moses Okama, an Amaba man who came back from America in 1940. He founded the Church on October 24, 1941 at

Amaba, establishing branches at Aba, Port-Harcourt and later at Amodu Awkunanaw.

In 1950s, a handful of indigenes of Obe residing at Port Harcourt attended the church there. They included Arum Owo, Beatrice Egbogu, Okeke Okorowo, Nworie Ngwu, Gibson Chinwike, Simeon Chinwike, Anna Okereke, Agu Nwangwu, among others. The church was not in Obe at that time and the Obe converts at home attended church services at Amodu Awkunanaw, until Elijah Nnamene and his congregation from Amodu Awkunanaw came to Obe in 1959 to convert new souls. A temporary church was then established at Simeon Chinwike's house, but was later shifted to Arum Owo's house as Mr Chinwike's house could not accommodate the church members who were increasing in geometrical progression. The Church was finally built at Ugwu Nso in late 1959 at a site freely donated by Mr Oko Nnamani of Umuikeowo Obe.⁵



Abosso Apostolic Church, Obe

The Abosso Apostolic Church caused a real evangelical revolution in Obe as many traditional worshippers and other Christians from both Methodist and Catholic Churches decamped and cross-carpeted to the new faith. People were attracted to the church, because of its genuiness for prophetism in the form of vision seeing and vision interpretation which was seen by the people of Obe as a branch of their traditional divination.

Since 1960, Obe, just like many other communities in Igboland, is turning into agglomeration of mushroom churches which equally extol the personality and gospel of the famous Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the sinned world. These churches are contributing in the moulding of acceptable character, the charting of the course of truth and the maintenance of physical fitness through their intoxicating singing and dancing, resulting in the spiritual enrichment or secular equanimity of the people.

References

1. F. D. Walker, *The Romance of the Black River: The Story of the C.M.S. Nigeria Mission* (London, 1931). See also K. O. Dike, *Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891* (Ibadan 1957).
2. NA/16/2: N. A. Schools Instructions, 1954, UDDIV 1/1/136. See also (a) NAE, OP 1115 Onprof 8/1/4736 (b) NA 16/2/1, UDDIV 4/1/237. (c) Research and Development Unit, Anambra State Ministry of Information, Enugu.
3. Oral information from Dickson Orji, a pioneer scholar of the Primitive Methodist Church/School, Obe Odume in 1934.
4. J. Jordan, *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria* (Dublin, 1971), p. 100.
5. Oral information from Prophet Simeon Chinwike, a founding member of Abosso Apostolic Church, Obe.

Chapter 12

THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA (1960—1988)

In the year 1960, a political innovation was ushered into Nigeria on October 1, as Nigeria got her Independence. But as time went on, clouds gathered above the conspiracy of optimism. Ideologically, Nigeria was empty, and as Prof. Bretton has noted, Nigeria came to Independence "without any real ideology..."¹ By 1965, the malaise of Nigerian political life was nationally felt. And due to the disillusionment of independence, coupled with the failure of post Independence anticipations, plus the total collapse of social, economic and political order in Nigeria, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu had to strike. That was the background of the Nigerian first military coup of January 15, 1966. The aim of the coup was a mirage as it failed and was later labelled the evil machinations of the Igbos.

Few months later, on July 29, 1966, the military struck again. But this time around, it was against what they termed Igbo domination. Igbos were generally killed in the North and the entire country was enveloped in confusion as General Gowon became the Head of State.² Gowon compounded the issue when he promulgated a decree on May 27, 1967, dividing Nigeria into twelve states and excluded Port Harcourt from Igboland. General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu disagreed with Gowon on many issues and on May 30, 1967, Eastern Nigeria strode into limelight of history as the Republic of Biafra was created with General Ojukwu as her Head of State. And the attempt by General Yakubu Gowon and his Federal side to stop the secession of the Igbos resulted into the cataclysmic

Nigerian-Biafran War (1967-1970).³ In Obe, people like Jonathan Okoro Oji, John Ugochukwu Ngwu, Gibson Ogbodo, Ogbani Nwaneke and many others joined the Biafran army.

When some parts of Obe were captured in early 1968, some Obe citizens sought political asylum at Amurri, Ugbawka, Nomeh, Amaba etc. Some of them were manhandled and slaughtered by the people of Amurri who accused them of attracting the federalist Gowon and his fierce looking soldiers to their land. According to Native Dr Ani Nwaonyia, "men and women from Obe were secretly slaughtered like goats by the people of Amurri" and the phrase "Ukwa asugbo ya", "was popularly used by the people of Amurri to decode the secret murdering of human beings"⁴ Umuenenta village, especially the kindred of Umunowo and Obuofia Obe did not witness much of the agonies of the war as most of the people stayed intact throughout the war. In Obe, the Nigerian soldiers camped at Nkwo Ufi market, Akwa Ngene Ofeke, Akwa Ngene Ububa and Ishiona.

Between 1968 and 1969, Biafrans lacked food and they were starving to death in numbers that shook the conscience of the whole world. The dreaded Kwashiokor was rampant among children. Humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross society rescued the people with foodstuffs for onward distribution to the localities. Obe got her own share which was distributed at Community Central School Obe (Ogum) under the astute Chieftainry of Ene Ani Obodo of Umungwutowo.

On January 12, 1970, the Biafrans made an unconditional surrender after Ojukwu had fled to Cote d'Ivoire and that brought the war to an end. The people of Obe and other Igbos started to return home without the Biafran Republic they had cherished, fought and died for. And life returned to its normalcy in Obe as the Biafran-Nigerian dust finally settled. The war ended, but the effects remained. Those who lost their livelihood, the youths who permanently lost their educational opportunities, the orphaned, widows, widowers; the war-blinded, the

amputees, and the permanently "Kwashiokored" children, were the tell-tale of the war.

In a civil war, whatever side that calls itself the victor may be wrong, for according to Naville Chamberlain, "there are no winners, but all losers,"⁵ and in the words of George Bernard Shaw "Nine soldiers out of ten are born fools."⁶ At the end of the war the people of Obe in particular and the Igbos in general engaged themselves in a speedy reconstruction and transformation of their battered hemisphere. And a birth was then given by the people of Obe to greater materialism, greater cynicism and greater hedonism, which were even Igbowide.

But in the mid 1970s, an attempt was made to give Obe town a befitting traditional ruler as was the case in other places around her. This new trend of chieftom was aimed at facilitating in the governance of the people at grass root level. Two men: Dennis Ofor Nnaji from Umuikeowo and Richard Chukwu from Umuenenta vied for the throne and the efforts made by the people of Obe to resolve the issue hit the rocks. Then on November 23, 1977, the Government of Anambra State recognised Dennis Ofor Nnaji as the traditional head and Chief of Obe town. Chief D.O. Nnaji was later installed the Okpuwe II of Obe by the group that supported him. The other group that supported Richard Chukwu went ahead to install him as the Igwe of Obe. The Chieftaincy tussle resulted in the division of Obe town into Obe one and Obe two with two different Chiefs.

However, the chieftaincy pandemonium ushered in the journey of academic captaincy in Obe. Two super Post-Primary Schools were built by the people of Obe within a record time of three years. Firstly, it was the Girls' Secondary School, Obe, founded in 1979 and built by the group that supported Chief D. O. Nnaji. The group that supported Chief Richard Chukwu felt challenged and this made them to initiate their own college and that idea finally gave birth to Boys' Secondary School, Obe in 1982. Obe, therefore, became the first community in Nkanu LGA to build two Secondary Schools on their own. The schools in Obe (three Primary Schools and two Post Primary Schools)



*A Section of Girls' Secondary School, Obe
(Founded in 1979)*



A building of Boys' Secondary School, Obe

are so significant and important in Nkanu and in Anambra State to the extent that the first civilian Governor of Anambra State, Chief Jim Nwobodo, launched the 1982 National Youth Service Corps Community Development Programme in Anambra State at Girls' Secondary School, Obe.

During the Second Republic (1979-1983), Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) were the two main political parties in Obe. NPP dominated the political scene of Obe, because of the influence of Dr Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik) and the son of the soil, Chief James Ifeanyichukwu Nwobodo (Jim). During the governorship of Chief Jim Nwobodo, Obe was lucky to have received the attention of the Anambra State Government. Some illustrious sons of Obe were appointed into some key posts of the government and government parastatals. Mr Paul Egbogu, the first Obe Lawyer (1972),⁷ was appointed the Secretary to Anambra State Government, while Dr A.S. Chuks-Orji became the Chairman of Anambra State Housing Corporation. Then, Mr Gabriel Nnaji, the first Obe graduate (1965),⁸ became the secretary of Anambra State Rural Electrification Board.

But Mr K. C. Onyia, the *gentilhomme* from Enugwu Obe joined NPN and contested in 1979 for a seat in Anambra State House of Assembly for Nkanu West Constituency, made up of Obe, Amurri, Ozalla, Akegbe Ugwu, Obuofia Akegbe, Umueze, and Amodu Awkunanaw. During the NPN intra-party election, he defeated Barrister N. C. N. Ugwu from Akegbe Ugwu, but during the main election into the Assembly, he lost to Mr David Okeke Ngene, the NPP candidate from Obuofia Akegbe, who was the Chairman of Nkanu LGA Council before he resigned to contest under the platform of NPP. Mr K. C. Onyia made great impact in the political scene of NPN as he later became the secretary of the party in Anambra State in 1983 and was subsequently appointed the Chairman of Nkanu LGA in December, 1983 when Chief C. C. Onoh of NPN became the Governor of Anambra State. The regime of Chief C. C. Onoh of Anambra State and Mr K. C. Onyia of Nkanu LGA could not last as the military struck on

December 31, 1983. Navy Commander Alison Madueke became the Military Governor of Anambra State in 1984. His regime attracted no dividend to the people of Obe. Group Captain Emeka Omeruah captained the Government of Anambra State from 1985 after Alison Madueke and the people of Obe felt the impact of Governor Omeruah's administration. At least, Obe marched into history on October 16, 1986 as the second town in Nkanu LGA, after Umueze Awkunanaw, to be "NEPAnized". That was the day the Anambra State Rural Electrification Programme, started by the Government of Chief Jim Nwobodo, executed with a foreign loan of Dm143 million, financed by West German financial institutions (AKA and Commerz bank), initially meant to electrify 117 towns in Anambra State, and contracted to Brown Boveri Company (BBC) of Mannheim, West Germany, was finally commissioned at Boys Secondary School, Obe. Electrification has opened the gate for industrialization and urbanization in Obe with Mr Daniel Onwuka Nnaji leading the way with his food processing industry, located at Nkwo Market square.

After the electrification of all the villages of Obe in October, 1986, a new wave of soccer enthusiasm grew among the youths of Obe. In December 1986, inter-village football competition was intelligently organized in Obe under the chairmanship of Mr John Anem. A trophy, known as "Chinemeze Cup," was donated by Mr Innocent Chukwu from Umuikeowo for this inter-village soccer competition. On December 28, 1986, Umungwutowo Football Club, under my team managership, lifted the maiden edition of the cup.⁹ and I then wrote this octave titled "Silver in our hands":

Joy clashed all over Umungwutowo
 Smile dimmed like golden sparklers
 From the smithereens moulding's park
 Umungwutowo, the heaven's palace
 The giant of delicious December
 Hard cracking nut of the year
 Uncovered lion heart; stone legged team
 My heart, proudly conquering king¹⁰

The importance of this yearly soccer competition in Obe cannot be over emphasized. It was one of the prime movers of unity and happiness in Obe.

Football talents abound in Obe. Group Captain Emeka Omeruah, the one time Military Governor of Anambra State, even noted this and commented on October 16, 1986 that "Obe has produced many football stars for Anambra State and Nigeria"¹¹ such as Christian Chukwu, Tony Orji, Uche Nwachukwu, Gab. Okonkwo and many others.

"Chairman" Christian Chukwu, for instance, was the greatest defender and field marshal in Nigeria soccerdom. He was the "Captain for all seasons" both for the Rangers International Football Club of Enugu and Green Eagles of Nigeria from 1976 to 1981, and he won laurels at home and abroad for Nigeria. In the defence, he was as solid as the rock of Gibraltar, unbeatable, unstoppable and in the taking of free-kicks, he was a specialist.¹² Anthony Oji (Iron Gate) in his own soccer youngsterism was a regular in the Rangers and was meritoriously invited into the national camp where he played for Nigerian National Team, the Green Eagles, in 1982 edition of the African Cup of Nations in Libya.

In short, the Post-Independence Obe, inspite of the civil war, is an era with a new chapter of happier time, beguiled with modernity; and the people of Obe now breathe the scented air of modern civilisation. Obe is unobstructively on her march to progress and she can boast of substantial and rapid progress since 1960.

References

1. Quoted in Basil Davison's book *Which Way Africa? The Search for a New Society* (England, Penguin Books, 1964), p. 160.
2. Walter Schwarz: *Nigeria* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1968) p. 215.
3. For Details of the War, read: (a) Frederick Forsyth: *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafra Story* (N.Y. Penguin Books, 1977); (b) Nelson Otuah: *Rebel Against Rebels* (Lagos, Manson and Co, 1981); (c) Alex Madiebo: *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980); (d) Niven Rex: *The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970* (Ibadan, Evans Brothers, 1970); (e) Kalu Okpi: *Biafra Testament* (London, Macmillan, 1982); (f) J. J. Strcmiau: *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970* (N.Y. Princeton Uni. Press, 1977).
4. Oral information from Native Doctor Ani Nwaonyia, supported by Nnaji Nwaonovo, Nwigwe Nnaji, Nwankwo Ede Igwesi, Walter Okoro and Sunday A. Okereke.
5. Naville Chamberlain, quoted by Sister Eileen Sweeney in *Another Country: The Land of Literature* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1979), p. 99.
6. George Bernard Shaw: *Arms and the Man* (London, Longman, 1955) p. 22.
7. F.C. Ogbalu: *Animo - A Directory of Anambra and Imo States* (Onitsha, University Publishing Co., 1982) p.67
8. *Ibid*
9. (a) Malachy Ugwo: "Innocent Chukwu Soccer Context Concluded in Obe", *Satellite*, Monday, January 5, 1987, p. 11; (b) Anayo Enechukwu: "Talents Abound in Obe", *Daily Star*, Friday, March 6, 1987, p. 14.
10. Anayo Enechukwu: "Silver in our hand", from *Dance of Death* an unpublished anthology.
11. Speech from Capt. Emeka Omeruah during the commissioning of the Rural Electrification in Obe on October 16, 1986.
12. "Christian Chukwu", The Cover Story of the *Sunday Concord*, September 13, 1986, p. 2.

EPILOGUE

COMPROMISE IS NOT COWARDICE

OBE KWENU!

I need no prophet to tell me
That we are brothers and sisters
I need no oracle to remind me
That chieftaincy is never a battle
I need only to know myself that
Blood is thicker than water
I need no political Juggernaut
To remind me of this adage:
That no permanent enemies
And no permanent friends
Are the big political twins
I need no philosopher to remind me
Of the impermanent condition of existence
Forget yesterday and think of today
To make tomorrow a success
United we stand, divided we fall.

—Culled from my unpublished
anthology "Salt of Sorrow".

From 1976-1988, Obe was in disunity. The divisive politics that emanated from the chieftaincy affair were eminent in the community. There was dichotomy in the town which eclipsed all efforts at any other meaningful development in Obe after the two Post Primary institutions. Some progressive elements in Obe made futile attempts to sue for peace and unity. Even the efforts of Obe Patriotic Union, Lagos Branch to restore peace in the town proved abortive. There was no organized central executive for the entirety of Obe people. The people only came together to mourn the deads as if to say that they were in a community of vultures. They could not come together to discuss their own affairs and the community was threatened by forces of

retrogression. Obe was, therefore, noted for her non-compromise and ever sectional attitude to issues affecting her. This malfeasance was caused by the political puppets and puppeteers of the community who politically disinigorated Obe.

So Obe remained in a state of dismayedness, disarray and derision for over a decade. She was left to decay and wobble like a tired hippopotamus. There is no gain saying the fact that the root cause of this unhealthy situation was the absence of a dedicated leadership and a committed citizenry. This social and political atomism of man-for-himself and God-for-us-all or total indifferentism to the betterment of Obe was due to lack of patriotism and the inability of the political leadership of the town to queue the indigenes to a desired direction. The political leadership, which was supposed to be the powerhouse of inspiration and motivation, was in itself sick and marred by dichotomy. The administrative and political scene of the community was filled with old brigades, who were the political tragedians, instead of the new breeds, the comedians. The administrative puppetry and the political hara-kiri in Obe, therefore, resulted in moral imbecility, intellectual cowardice, and selfish materialism.

The leadership was not only paralysed by internal dissension and scandalised by charges of dereliction and corruption, but was also bogged down by personality clashes.

In 1987, during the Nigerian Local Government elections based on non-political party basis, Obe was unable to peacefully select a councillor to represent her at Agbani. Three persons: Romanus Edeh, DSP emeritus from Enugwu Obe, Onwuka Nnaji from Umungwutowo and Michael : from Obuofia Obe, contested for the councillorship which Romanus Edeh later won in an election held on December 12, 1987.

The political chaos at Obe continued and some people were tired of the divisional wrangles in Obe, especially those who are yet to see the better side of Obe. The new generation of politicians in Obe could not remain silent and watch Obe

sinking further to a state of derangement. So people started to speak, because, according to Prof. Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Prize winner for literature, "the man dies in him who keeps silent in the face of tyranny." To champion this peace movement for the unification of Obe was a group known as the Obe Constituent Committee on Unity. Mr Romanus Edeh was the co-ordinator of this committee, while Mr Innocent Chukwu was the chairman. Other members of the Committee were drawn from all the villages of Obe. They held series of meetings in 1988 with excellent excogitation for the reunification of Obe. They simultaneously embarked on a campaign of reunification which led them to enlighten the ready-to-listen-people of Obe on a chameleonic situation of the town along the rail of years and to highlight the shameful danger therein.

To this effect, a rally was called by this Committee and it was held on Sunday Eke, October 30, 1988 at Community Central School, Obe. The day was tagged "Obe Day"—a day the light for the reunification of Obe people was lit. The author of this book reported the outcome of the rally in "Nigerian Mirror", an Onitsha based Daily Newspaper. as thus:

"The people of Obe in Nkanu LGA have indicated their willingness to work together as one community. This consensus was reached at a rally organised by the Obe Constituent Committee on Unity, held on October 30, 1988 at the Central School, Obe. Speaking during the occasion, the Councillor for Obe, Mr Romanus Edeh reiterated the importance of unity in Obe. He called on the people of Obe to accept collectively the quilt for all the past and put themselves together to learn from these mistakes and march forward to progress. Mr Edeh, who is also the supervisory councillor for Agriculture and Industries in Nkanu LGA, reminded the people that the wisdom and progress of a people are judged by how well they settled their differences. In his own contribution, the chairman of Obe Constituent Committee on Unity, Mr Innocent Chukwu, called on all great sons and daughters of Obe to come together wherever they may be to concretise this foundation for Obe unity..." (*Nigerian Mirror*, Friday, Nov. 4, 1988).

On December 27, 1988, birth was given to a new association in Obe which is today known as "Obe General Assembly" which envelops all the people of Obe. The fight for the final elimination of disunity and inertia in the politico-socio-economic fabrics of Obe community has just started.

And I must finally say in confidence that the future of Obe is bright and promising. She will soon leap with new strength, new leaders, new ideas, and above all, a patriotic citizenry. In the years to come, Obe will be armed to the teeth in terms of infrastructural facilities and psychological sophistication which make communities tick in the extremity of fame and development, especially nowadays where modern science has invaded the society. "If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of our enormous wealth", in the view of Kwame Nkrumah, "we must unite to plan for the full exploitation of our human and material resources, in the interest of all our people." According to a Chinese proverb, "it is better to light a candle than to cause the dark," and in the philosophical opinion of Lewis "peace after war doth greatly please."

People come and go,
But Obe has come to stay,
This is my own contribution.
Ad perfectionem!

APPENDIX

The Nigerian National Serials Data Centre, a division of National Library of Nigeria, has assigned the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 1115-0009 for the publication of *OBE KWENU* a yearly magazine for Obe Community in Nkanu Local Government Area of Anambra State. *OBE KWENU*, which is to be published annually by Kaufhof Publishers, will take effect from 1990.

The aim of the magazine is to create social, political, economic, educational and cultural awareness in Obe and her environs. The motto of the magazine is *GWA NWANNE GI EZIOKWU* (Tell your brother/sister the truth).

Letters and articles are invited from well meaning Obe citizens and should be sent to:

Anayo Enechukwu
Editor/Publisher
OBE KWENU
P.O. Box 18030
Enugu, Nigeria

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Documents

- OP 1115—Onprof 8/1/4736: Intelligence Report on the Ozalla and Obe Village Group, Udi Division, Onitsha Province by Mr S.P.C. Beaumont A.D.O. (1934).
- EP 10698 A Milgov 5/1/19: Intelligence Report on Abudu, Ama-Owelli, Isu, Ogbaku, Obeagu and Ugbo, Awgu Division, Onitsha Province by Mr P.P. Grey, ADO (1934).
- EP 11718 A CSE 1/85/5717: Intelligence Report on Agbani-Akpugo Village Group of Nkanu Area, Enugu Division, by Mr S.P.C. Beaumont ADO (1936).
- NA/3/1: Intelligence Report on the Ntegbé Nese Clan by Mr S.P.C. Beaumont, ADO, 1932-1935, UDDIV 4/1/34.
- EN 63: Native Courts in Nkanu Area, 1932-1939 UDDIV 3/1/21.
- NA/4/3/2: Local Elections in Nkanu Area 1952-1954 UDDIV 4/1/45.
- NA/10/31: Nkanu Federal Union 1953, UDDIV 4/1/171.
- NA/11/1/Vol. 11: *Roads and Bridges, Government and Native Administration*, Udi Division 1943-48, UDDIV. 4/1/175.
- NA/16/1/1: Native Authority Schools—General 1952, UDDIV. 4/1/237.
- H. R. Palmer, *Tribes of Nigeria*, Kaduna Archives, Lokoprof 159/1921.

Articles

- Afigbo, A. E. "Patterns of Igbo Resistance to British Conquest", *Tarikh*, Ibadan, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1973); "The Indigenous Political Systems of the Igbo," *Tarikh*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1973)
- Enochukwu, A.: "Obe Community Sues for Peace", *Nigerian Mirror*, Friday, Nov. 4, 1988; "Obe kwenu!", culled from an unpublished anthology titled *Salt of Sorrow* (1986); "Silver in Our Hands." from *Dance of Death*," an unpublished anthology (1987); "Talents Abound in Obe, *Daily Star*, Friday, March 6, 1987.
- Hill, P.: "Some Characteristics of Indigenous West African Economic Enterprise", *Economic Bulletin of Ghana*, No. 6 (1962).
- Horton: "African Conversion" *Africa*, Vol. XLI, No. 2 Apuk (1971).
- Jeffreys, M.D.W.: "Dual Organisation in Africa", *African Studies*, Vol. 5.
- Mere, A. A.: "Social Values Heritage of the Igbos", *Ikenga* Vol. 11, No. 1.
- Nwude, O.: "The place of Nri in the contemporary Igbo History", *Weekly Trumpet*, Sunday, Jan. 4, 1981.
- Okore, A.O.: "The Political Economy of Igboland: An Historical Overview", Inst. of African Studies, UNN, (1982).
- Olisa, M.S.O.: "Political Culture and Stability in Igbo Society", *The Conch*, Vol. 111, No. 2, 1972.
- Okigbo, B. N.: "Plant and food in Igbo Culture", Ahiajoku lecture, (1980).

Ukwu, I. U. "The Economic Organisation of Igboland", Inst. of African Studies, UNN, 1977.

Books

- Achebe, C.: *Things Fall Apart* (London: HEBS, 1958).
 Afigbo, A.E.: *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Ibadan, University Press Ltd., 1981).
 Ake, C.: *Revolutionary Pressure in Africa* (London, Zeb Press Ltd, 1978).
 Anene, J.C.: *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1855-1906* (London, CUP, 1966).
 Bascom, W.: *Ifa Divination: Communication Between God and Men in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana Uni. Press, 1969).
 Basden, G.T.: *Niger Ibos* (London, F. Cass, 1966); *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London, F. Cass, 1921).
 Bleeker, S.: *The Ibo of Nigeria* (N.Y., William Morrow and Co, 1969).
 Brasch, R.: *How Did it Begin? Customs and Superstitions and their Romantic Origins* (N.Y., Simon and Schuster Pocket Books, 1969).
 Buah, F. K.: *The Ancient World*. (London, Macmillan, 1964).
 Chukwuemeka Ike: *Sunset at Dawn* (London, Fontana, 1973).
 Carr, E.H.: *What is History* (London, Thomas and Hudson, 1969).
 Davidson, B.: *The Africans: An Entry to Cultural History* (London: Longmann, 1969).
 Dike, K.O.: *Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891* (Ibadan, 1957).
 Diop, C.A.: *Antériorité des Civilisation Nègres: Mythe ou Vérité Historique* (Paris, Presence Africaine, 1967); *Nations Nègres et Culture* (Paris, Presence Africaine, 1955).
 Ejiufor, P.N.O.: *Cultural Revival in Igboland* (Onitsha, Uni. Pub. Co., 1984).
 Ekechi, F. K.: *Missionary Enterprises and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914* (London, Frank Cass, 1972).
 Ezekwugo, C.M. *Ora-Eri Nnokwa and Nri Dynasty* (Enugu, Lenjon, 1983).
 Fanon, F.: *The Wretched of the Earth* (N.Y. Grove Press, 1963).
 Floyds, B.: *Eastern Nigeria. A Geographical Review* (London, Macmillan, 1969).
 Forde, E. et al.: *The Ibo and Ibibio Speaking Peoples of Southern Nigeria* (London, Frank Cass, 1967).
 Forsyth, F.: *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafran Story* (N.Y. Penguin Books, 1977).
 Gray, N.: *Gen Nicht Zurück, Die Geschichte einer Flucht*, (München, Weismann Verlag, 1980).
 Green, M.M.: *Igbo Village Affair* (London, F. Cass, 1964).
 Handerson, R.N.: *The King in Every Man* (New Haven, Yale Uni. Press, 1972).
 Hatch, J.: *Nigeria—A History* (London, Secker and Warbury, 1971).
 Henige, D.: *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (London, Oxford Uni. Press, 1974).
 Ifemesia, C.C.: *Traditional Humane Living Among the Igbos: An Historical Perceptive* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980).

- Ilogu, E.C.O.: *Christianity and Igbo Culture* (New York: Nok Publishers Ltd, 1977).
- Isichei, E.: *A History of Igbo People* (London, Macmillan, 1976).
- Izuakor, L.I.: *The Political Organisation of Igbo Communities in Pre-Colonial Era* (Nsukka, 1972).
- Jones G.I.: *The Trading States of Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development—Eastern Nigeria* (London, 1976).
- Kagha, H.U.B.: *Africa: Comparative of the Origins, Structure and Development of States in Pre-colonial Africa* (Nsukka, UNN, 1976).
- Kajubi, W.S. et al: *African Encyclopaedia* (London, O.U.P., 1974).
- Karmon, Y.: *Geography of Settlement in Eastern Nigeria* (Jerusalem, Magness Press, 1966).
- Leith. Ross, S.: *African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria* (London, Faber and Faber, 1939).
- Leonard, A.G.: *The lower Niger and its Tribes* (London, Frank Cass, 1968).
- Lieber, J.W.: *Ibo Village Communities* (Ibadan, Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, 1971).
- Madiebo, A.: *The Nigerian Revolution* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980).
- Mbiti, J.S.: *African Religion and Philosophy* (New York, Frederick Praeger, 1969); *Introduction to African Religion* (London, Heinemann, 1975).
- McCall, D.F.: *Africa in Time Perspective—A Discussion of Historical Reconstruction from Unwritten Sources* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1969).
- McPhee A.: *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa* (London, F. Cass, 1971).
- Meek, C.K.: *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe* (London, OUP, 1937).
- Mendelson, J.: *God, Allah and Juju*: (Boston, Bescon Press, 1965).
- Murdoch G.P.: *Africa: Its People and their Culture History* (New York, 1959).
- Odoemene, N.A.: *The Fundamentals of African Traditional Religion—A key to African Development* (Institute of Ecumenical Education, 1988).
- Ogbalu, F.C.: *Igbo Institutions and Customs* (Onitsha, Uni. Publishing Co.); *et al: Igbo Language and Culture* (Ibadan, O.U.P., 1975).
- Ojo, A.O.: *Political Science and Government of Nigeria* (Nigeria, Ilesanmi Press, 1973).
- Okafor-Omali, D.: *A Nigerian Village in Two Worlds* (London, Faber, 1965).
- Onabamiro, S.: *Philosophical Essays* (Ibadan, Evans Publishers, 1980).
- Onwuejiogwu, M.A.: *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony* (Benin, Ethiope Publishers, 1981).
- Parrinder G.: *Religion in Africa* (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1969); *West African Religion* (London, Epsworth, 1949).
- Rex, N.: *The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970* (Ibadan, Evans Brothers, 1970).
- Schwarz, W.: *Nigeria* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1968).

- Shaw, T.: *Lectures on Nigerian Pre-History and Archaeology* (Ibadan, Ibadan Uni. Press, 1969).
- Smith, E.W. (ed.): *African Ideas of God: A Symposium* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1950).
- Strauss, L.: *What is Political Philosophy?* (N.Y., The Free Press, 1959).
- Stride, G.T. et al: *People and Empires of West Africa* (Condon, Nelson, 1971).
- Talbot, P.A. *The People of Southern Nigeria*, Volumes 11 and 111 (London, F. Cass & Co. Ltd, 1969).
- Ukwu, I.U. et al: *Markets in West Africa* (Ibadan, Ibadan Univ. Press, 1969).
- Vansina, J. et al: *The Historians in Tropical Africa* (London, Oxford University Press, 1969).
- Walker, F.D.: *The Romance of the Black River: The Story of the C.M.S. Nigeria Mission* (London, 1931).
- Walker G.: *Traffic and Transport in Nigeria* (London, 1959).
- Wieschoff, H.A.: *Colonial Policies in Africa*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944).

INDEX

A

- Afigbo Adiele 6 - 7, 32, 52
- Agba-enu 2
- Agbani 1, 9, 11
- Agbogugu 1, 9, 63 - 66
- Agbudu 20, 21
- Agu Ewaa 20, 22, 32
- Agriculture 53-54
- Aharu Nwachiowo 48
- Akupgo 11, 70
- Amaorji group 36
- Anene, J.C. 6, 51-51, 58
- Armord, Rubin 6
- Awkunanaw Native Authority 70

B

- Biafran civil war 84-86
- Bibliography 97 - 100
- British 3, 68 - 71
- catholicism 77 - 80
- Chief Chukwani 68 - 70
- Christianity 7, 73
- chronology of Obe 31
- Chukwu 6, 58, 59 - 61
- Church Missionary Society 73
- civilization 2
- Crowther, J.C. 73

D

- deities and shrines 58
- democracy 51

E

- economic activities 53 -55
- Edda Warriors 66
- emigration 35 - 42
- evangelicalism 73
- Ewa towns and villages 20 - 21
- expedition 68
- extended family 51 - 52

Ezckwugo, C. M. 6

F

- Feuerbach, Ludwig 57
- Forde, D. 52
- Foundation of Obe 31
- founding fathers of Obe 11 - 12

G

- Gailey, H.A. 51
- genealogy of the author 17
- gerontocracy 52
- Green, M.M. 52
- Grey, P.P. 22

H

- Hatch, John 32
- Henderson, r.N. 6

I

- Ifeka, C. 32
- Ifemesia, C.C. 7, 22, 32
- Igbos 5, 6, 73
- immigration 33 - 42
- Independence 3, 48
- Infant School 75 - 76
- Isichei, E. 57
- Jaborigbo 5
- Jeffreys, M.D.W. 5-6
- Jones, G.I. 52

K

- Kindreds in Obe 44 - 49

L

- Lieber, J.W. 54
- Lineages in Obe 44 - 49
- localized lineage 51
- local technology 54
- lunar calender 59

102 *The History of Obe*

M

- Map of Obe 9
- markets in Obe 54
- Mbiti, J. S. 57
- Mc Call, D. F. 31
- Methodist Church 74 - 77
- Mohamedanism 57
- Mokwugo, Okoye 5 - 6

N

- Native Courts 69 - 71
- Niger-Benue Confluence Area 6
- Njaka, N.e. 52 - 53
- Nkanu Native Authority, 69 - 70
- Nri legend 6

O

- Obe founding fathers 11 - 12, 23
- Ojobogene Clan 23
- Ojo, A.O. 51
- Okafor-Omali, D. 51
- Olaudah, Equiano 5, 53
- Olisa, S.O. 51
- Onabomiro, Sanyo 25
- Onwuejiogwu, M.A. 7
- Oriental Hypothesis 5 - 6

P

- Palmer, H.R. 5
- Parrinder, Geoffrey 58
- patrilineage 51
- Pentecostal Prophetism 80-83
- political organisations 51 - 53
- Post-Independence Era 84 - 90

Q

- quarter 51

R

- Raffray, Gordon 29
- Ressevelt, Theodore 64
- Roman Catholic Mission 77 - 80

S

- Schenigbo 5
- Schopenhauer, Arthor, 57
- Second Republic 88 - 89
- Standard School 75 - 76
- Starke, G.T. 32

T

- Talbot, P.A. 66
- Theory of Autochthony 6, 10
- traditional philosophy 57
- traditional religion 3, 57

U

- Uchendu, V.C. 7, 32, 53
- Vansina, Jan 31

W

- warfare 63 - 66
- Warrant Chief 69 - 71
- Wawa 1 - 2
- Weltanschauung 77
- Wesley, John 74
- Western education 73 - 82

X

- Xanthosoma saggitifolium 54



Anayo Enechukwu is a product of Community Central School, Obe, Boys' Secondary School, Umueze Aw' unanaw, and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He also attended University of Saarland, Saarbrücken, West Germany and University of Languages and Letters, Grenoble France.

He writes about black people and most of his publications reveal his interest in his country, continent, and black world—their beauty, problems, and pride: their dreams and people's struggle for freedom.

His manuscripts include *Dance of Death, Salt of Sorrow, Essential Literature and Pleasure is Pain*. He has published numerous articles and poems in different Newspapers in Nigeria as a freelance journalist.

This book portrays the historical root of Obe as an Igbo community and highlights other crucibles of Obe etymology. It shows how Obe has carved out a niche of existence and endurance for herself in the ecology of a historical nation.

The extent of research done and the level of judgement and conclusion in this book will not only help in the comprehension of comprehensive Obe as an Igbo community, but will also become a stepping stone for further wade into other vistas of her past events for the history of Obe is a story without an end.

KAUFHOFF PUBLISHERS



ISBN 978 - 2032 - 00 - X