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**COLONIALISM AND THE AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: THE
EXAMPLE OF THE OSONI IN THE FORMER EASTERN REGION OF NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

The work is an attempt to examine African Indigenous Knowledge Systems during the colonial era using the Ogoni of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria as an example. The paper, which adopts the multi – disciplinary approach, reveals that a great deal of correlation existed between the colonial ideology and the neglect, disappearance and total abandonment, in some cases, of the traditional knowledge of Africa in preference for the erroneously and purportedly superior Western science, values, and cultures. The work maintains that it was the inglorious encounter with the European colonial enterprise that systematically denigrated the African Knowledge Systems. This development underscores the widespread European culture which is still practice by Africans several years after the attainment of political independence instead of their indigenously devised technology which corresponds adequately with their ambient environment. The paper opined that African history must be reconstructed by Africans so as to promote the African customs that have been badly damaged and some made to go into extinction.

Keywords: Colonialism, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Technology, Culture, Belief.

Introduction

Colonialist usurpation into the heart of African cosmogony profoundly altered the structure of the traditional African cultures. To make economic and political control perfect and complete in the African continent, the colonizing power made several proactive measures to control the African cultural values, history and cultures. These came mainly through the imposition of their so – called superior values and cultures which took the forms of education, religion, language, literature, western knowledge, history, among others. Africa and its peoples were systematically denigrated, misinterpreted and ridiculed so as to becloud the actual

realities on the ground. The Eurocentric writers like the explorers, missionaries, colonial administrators, ethnographers, anthropologists, amateur historians and so on, who wrote from the stand point of colonial mentality, presuppositions, ignorance, biases, linguistic barriers, over – dependence and total insistence on written documents, dangerously attacked the African cultures, heritages, values, religious systems, history, and indigenous knowledge. In fact, the cultural imperialism was so grave and grievous to the extent that all African creative cultures, sophisticated civilization, brilliant heritage and knowledge of immense complexity were derogatory believed or attributed to have been imported from outside the continent of Africa, usually Europe and the Middle East. Worst still, Africa highly developed political organization, resourceful economic activities, innovative technology, beautiful advancement in science, workable religion and cosmology as well as exceptional creative works of arts and crafts were wrongly ascribed to the Hamites, a branch of the European race. They are said to be a Caucasian race which infiltrated into the Africa continent and become indigenes. For instance, the Eurocentric writers feigned ignorance of the existence of the rock churches carved out of the rocky ground in Ethiopia by highly skilled architects and crafts people during the reign of Lalibela (Salter, 2008). Also the highly skilled African crafts people built several stone walls that surrounded the Shona capital of Great Zimbabwe. All these were wrongly appropriated as part of a non – African heritage. Queerly enough too, strategic silence were made concerning the African artistic creativity like the famous Mapungubwe (in today’s South Africa), and Manekweni (in the present day Mozambique). Consequent upon the above, most African Indigenous Knowledge systems were willfully undermined, underrepresented and stigmatized.

Indubitably, colonialism left a lot of sour grapes for the Africans in the area of Traditional Knowledge Systems. Patently, many African and European scholars and writers alike have discussed and expressed divergent views on the positive and/or negative legacies of colonialism on African socio – economic and political development. However, there appears to be a general dearth of literature that analyses and assesses the real negative indelible impacts on the Africans heritages, philosophy, way of life, belief systems, ethics and mode of dressing which have been replaced by the purportedly superior western values and philosophies. Basically, there is the crying need for African scholars to reconstruct the constructed African histories, cultures and African Knowledge that have been badly harmed by the colonial enterprise. As Curtin (1981: 54) maintains, “it is important to show the African past from an African point of view”. African scholars must document the African past in order to regain its knowledge that has almost gone into extinction. It is, therefore, the business of this paper to examine the nexus between the British colonial rule and the African Indigenous Knowledge. The Ogoni ethnic nationality in the former Easter Region of Nigeria provides it empirical illustration and the emphasis needed here. Adopting content analysis, textual narrative and historical methods, the work reveals that a great deal of correlation existed between the colonial ideology and the neglect, disappearance and abandonment of the traditional knowledge of Africans in preference for the western science and ways of doing things. The paper shows clearly that there is no doubt that the British intruder systematically denigrated the histories, values, philosophy, cultures and indigenous technology of the people. This partly explains why several years after the termination of colonialism most Africans prefer western culture instead of theirs. The paper is structured into four closely knitted sections. Section one which is on –

going is the introduction. The second section defines the concept of African Knowledge Systems (AKS). The third section examines the geographical and historical background of the Ogoni. Section four takes a bird's eye view of the extent to which colonial rule altered and blended with the people traditional knowledge while the last section concludes the paper with some solutions to promote Africans' cultural and technological developments.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of African Knowledge Systems (AKS), which is the main concept in the work, is explained to establish their meanings as applied to this paper so as to appreciate the level of deliberate distortion, and disruption done to African ways of knowing as exemplified in their beliefs, practices, customs, world view, technology, agriculture, medicine, oral tradition, to mention but a few.

African Knowledge Systems (AKS): This concept has been variously referred to as Indigenous Knowledge (IK), Endogenous Knowledge Systems (EKS), Local Knowledge Systems (LKS), Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS) and Traditional Ecological Knowledge Systems (TEKS). Derefaka (2008:61) defines Indigenous Knowledge as "the knowledge that has been garnered by a people in a given locality, which is unique to their society or culture". He further explains that "they represent an important aspect of a people's heritage because while accumulating received knowledge from earlier generations, the people recognize the necessity for innovative thinking that would generate change and improvement". Quoting Horsthemke (2008), Gundu (2012: 454) understands African Knowledge Systems as "an umbrella reference to other ways of knowing that are informal, traditional and encapsulated within cultural contexts of local beliefs, practices, customs and world views". To Mgbeoji (2007), AKS are "cultural experiences, epistemologies and empiricisms implicated in ecology, agriculture, medicine, oral traditions and technology" (as quoted by Gundu, 2012: 454). For the International Council for Science (2002:3), Traditional Knowledge (TK) refers to the:

Cumulative knowledge, know how, practices and representations, maintained and developed by people with extended histories of interaction with the natural environment....Encompasses language, naming and classification systems, resource use practices, ritual, spirituality and world view.

In the context of this work, AIK is seen as the unique traditional knowledge devised by man in a given society to solve his social, economic, environmental and spiritual challenges so as to support human life. The fundamental components of AIK include but not limited to language, philosophy, crop production, heritage, folklore, cultural experiences, ecology, botany, medical practice, engineering, music, arts and literature, epistemologies, empiricisms, world view local beliefs, practices, customs, political institutions and other facets of human endeavor. They are often transmitted orally through proverbs, oral traditions, rituals, drum beats, folklores, religious and cultural practices to mention but a few. Oddly, enough, the European undermine these AKS which best suited the African environment and replaced the valid ways of knowing with their western systems of knowledge based on 'science'. As a result of this dislocation, many AKS have been discarded and western values imbibed. Regrettably, however,

those that outlived the colonial onslaught are gradually going into extinction in post – colonial Africa.

Geographical and Historical Background of the Study Area

The Ogoni are one of the culturally distinct, earliest and largest ethnic groups of the about forty different groups, speaking almost two hundred and fifty languages and dialects in the oil – rich Niger Delta, South – South Geo- Political Zone of Nigeria. Their area lies between longitude $7^{\circ} 10^1$ and $7^{\circ} 30^E$ and between latitude $4^{\circ} 30^1$ and $4^{\circ} 50^N$ of the Green which Meridian and a land mass of about 404 square miles. They are one of the most attractive rural compact – settlements in the continent of Africa (Kpone – Tonwe, 1990, Saro – Wiwa, 1992, Igbara and Keenam, 2013, N-ue, 2018).

The territory is bound to the north by the Ndoki and Asa, Annang/Ibibio to the east; South by Opobo, Nkoro, Obolo (Andoni), Bonny and Okrika, and to the west by Ikwerre. The Ogoni ethnic nationality traditionally consists of six kingdoms: Babbe, Nyo Khana, Ken Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme. However for administrative convenience and expediency, the kingdoms is currently balkanized into four local government areas. They are Khana with headquarters at Bori, Gokana with headquarters at Kpor, Tai with headquarters at Saakpeanwaan and Eleme with headquarters at Nchia - Ogale.

The climate of the people falls under the climate aptly describes by Fubara (2013:11) as “humid, semi – hot equatorial type” of between $30^{\circ}c$ and $36^{\circ}c$. Its climate and weather conditions are greatly manipulated by two essential surface air masses which flow from the North and the South. These are the North – East (NE) Trade Wind blowing from the Sahara desert. It is usually dry, dusty and hazed causing harmattan. The second is the South – East (SE) Trade Wind, which carries a “South – East warm moist air masses” (Fubara 2013: 13) from the Atlantic Ocean, causing wet season. Topographically, the territory has a gently sloping plateau with the central part having about 100 feet above sea level (Kpone – Tonwe, 1990; Saro – Wiwa, 1992). Thus, the relative absent of hill and mountain, the presence of several streams, creeks and rivulets which criss cross the area, and the high incidence of rainfall make flooding and erosion frequent phenomena in the area.

Linguistically, the people like Khana, Gokana and Tai aside from Eleme, speak mutually intelligible languages said to be mutually distinct from other languages spoken in the Niger Delta (Wolff, 1964). Arising from her study of the languages of the people, Williamson (1988a and 1988b) classified the three Ogoni languages as belonging to the Delta – cross sub – branch of the Cross – Rivers branch in the new Benue – Congo family of the Niger – Congo phylum. The traditions of origin of the Ogoni people, like most ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and Africa, are mere conjectural works of story tellers, writers and scholars without enough archaeological, anthropological, sociological and ethnographic finds. Nevertheless, it is currently believed that the Ogoni might have migrated from the Cameroon – Nigeria border in the vicinity of the Oban forest, the acclaimed original habitat of the Bantu, rather than from ancient or modern Ghana as widely speculated previously. Naaneen (1983/84: 5), the arch – proponent of the Eastern theory maintains that the Ogoni could have been one of the ethnic entities which migrated from the Cameroon – Nigeria border due to over – population or warfare, arguing that upon their arrival at the Eastern shores of the Imo River, they were further propelled to cross the Imo River and arrived probably at Ko (corrupted to be Opuoko and Kalaoko) due to

their insignificant numerical strength. It is considered that it was from Ko, the primary dispersal centre, that secondary waves of migration took place and they spread out to found settlements at the present day Nyo – Khana, Ken – Khana, Babbe, Tai, Gokana and afterward Eleme. All in all, suffice to note that the Ogoni had lived in their present territory centuries ago before the colonial intrusion. They also evolved a sophisticated indigenous political, social, cultural, religious and military organizations. Saro – Wiwa (1992:12) takes the stand that “throughout their (Ogoni) recorded history, there is no instance of any of their neighbours being able to impose upon them in any manner whatsoever. They were never defeated in war and were not colonized by anyone except the British”.

Colonialism and the Ogoni Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

Colonialism was introduced into Ogoni through the means of treaty and brute force, while its imposition on Eleme clan was by Treaty of protection in April 1898, colonialism crept into the rest parts of Ogoni from 1901 onwards through violent means. The Ogoni sternly resisted the British incursions but like other ethnic nationalities, they were forcefully incorporated into the British Empire with the aid of their superior fire power backed up by volleys. The interloper euphemistically called the various wars of subjugation in the area “Pacification” which culminated into the destruction of the shrine of Gbenebeka at Ka – Gwara in 1914. With the successful and complete imposition of alien rule in Ogoni, colonialism bequeathed several remarkable changes which significantly altered the people’s Traditional Knowledge. As Afigbo (1974:11) concurs, “colonial conquest involves more than military defeat. It includes the successful control of the needs of the colonial power”. Thus, the African Knowledge Systems were strongly condemned, vehemently calumniated and systematically treated with contempt to make them feel docile and culturally as well as technologically inferior to the supposedly superior values of Europeans. To properly analyse and discuss the profound impact of colonialism on indigenous ways of knowing, the various far – reacting implications are coalesced into the following sub – themes discussed below:

Religion, Philosophy and Cosmological World View

The Ogoni people are intensely religious society like other African people (Mbiti, 1997). Their religious belief, faith and practice, which were anchored on African culture, were the overriding measures used in assessing their cosmological world view. As noted by Ray (1976: 16) several scholars of African stock “have recognized African religion as part and parcel of the whole fabric of African cultural life”. Thus, religion permeates most of the daily activities of a typical Ogoni man. Their religion, which was the cultural, spiritual, political and religious manifestations, were transmitted orally to the present generation or votaries mainly through myths, folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs, pithy sayings and names as well as other sacred institutions.

They believe in the concept of a Supreme Being and array of supernatural spirits believed to influence the lives of the living. The status of a supreme and all powerful being was accorded God, the creator of the universe, whom they called **BARI** in Khana, Tai and Gokana Local parlances and **OBARI** in Eleme. He was believed to live in the sky from where he intervenes, controls and directs the wellbeing of creative nature, the people of Ogoni gave God a famine attribute. Hence, the name **WA – BARI** (meaning Woman of God) or **KAWA – BARI** (literally meaning Mother of God). Being considered with great awe, sacrifice was not made

directly to God but sometimes direct supplications, justice and retribution were made to him as the final supreme authority (Kpone – Tonwe, 1990; 2003a; 2003b; Anokari, 1986, Saale, 2001 and Igbara and Keenam, 2013).

The lesser gods ranked next to BARI. They were seen as powerful gods and goddesses of fertility and protectors of every autonomous village in Ogoni (Tordee Asukpughi, 28 – 09 - 2019). Accordingly, sacred groves were reserved for them. Among the Khana and Gokana people, *Sibaribue* and *Sibaribon* were sacred groves meant for earth goddess known locally as *Yor Asaa*. In some Ogoni communities, the earth gods or goddesses are accommodated in a hut located at the centre of the village square flanked by mystical trees (Anokari, 1986). Other groves of importance were those dedicated to the gods or goddesses of fertility. These were located at strategic positions in the farm. The Khana people called it *Si yor Wii* while Gokana people called it *Si Zor Wii*. The land priests make seasonal sacrifices to the deity before the commencement of any new planting and harvest seasons. There also existed the evil forest known as *Kuetaa* and *Koltah* by the Khana and Gokana people respectively. Evil doers, premature deaths, victims of accidents, those who committed suicide and so on were interred in the evil forest to foreclose another occurrence (Igbara and Keenam, 2013). They also believed in ancestor worship. These spirits and hero founders called *Pya Zim* or *Namateh* are regarded as the mediators between the living and the Supreme Being. For this reason, they are worshipped, and venerated through sacrifice, libation and incantation. Almost all Ogoni families and lineages had shrines or altars dedicated to the spirits, deities and/or founder – heroes. Other beliefs systems of the Ogoni include divination, magic, witchcraft, and medicine, and libation, life after death, totemism, and so on.

The missionary enterprise, which penetrated into Ogoni land through its neighbours and other foreign missionaries, in many ways substituted the people’s religion, cosmological world views, cultural practical and ideas with those of Europeans. The Indigenous Religion of the people was attacked because it was considered to be full of barbaric acts and practices, fetish and out – modelled. Christianity has forced certain Traditional Knowledge in Ogoni to natural death. This is typified by the stoppage of the worship or reverence of the ancestors, hero – founders and gods/goddesses which were seen as idols by the missionaries. Special groves, which served as the abodes of the pantheon of Ogoni gods and divinities, were destroyed and disrupted. The sacred groves and evil forest which cut across the length and breadth of Ogoni ultimately became mission sites for the Christian faithful and their “strange God”. It is instructive to note that in Zor – Sogho Town where Deeper Life Bible Church, the Ascension Apostolic Church and St. Michael’s Christ Army Church now stand were groves specially dedicated to and reserved for the people’s god/goddesses and divinities (Margaret Adoo-e and M-mea Augustine, 21 – 07 - 2019).

While the Christian missions were busied indoctrinating their new converts to abandon their “old ways” and denounce the worship of Gbenebeka cult, the colonial government launched several punitive attacks on Ogoni deities believed to wield enormous religious, political and cultural powers on the people. The Gbenebeka and Ejile deities are classic examples which merited our consideration here. The brutal expedition, led by Major Webber and supported by a large Police escort under a Major G.H. Walker, D.S.O, in 1914 badly damaged the shrine of Gbenebeka at Ka – Gwara in today’s Khana Local Government Area. But

the colonial authorities clamp down on the priest and devotees of the “Great Mother” (Ndornwa or Gbenebeka) continued unabated. The British colonial overlords who served in the area believed that Gbenebeka was the main source of the strength of the Ogoni secondary resistance against British colonial rule (Tor Tsaaro Deeyah and Deebari Nwilene, 08 – 08 – 2019). Emphasizing this position was Shute, D.A.F, a colonial District Officer, who stresses that Gbenebeka was “the chief cohesive force’ (Shute, 1935:16) and another colonial District Officer, Gibbons E.J. regards the deity as “the most important juju in Ogoni” (Gibbons, 1935:19).

Thus, it was the general belief of all the colonial administrators posted to Ogoni area that the revival of Gbenebeka which was widely feared and had the power to inflict its defaulters with small pox (locally called *beka*) was the major cause of conflict with the British colonial Government, especially among the Ogoni tax payers. According to Shute (1933: 18) the reappearance of the Gbenebeka cult with its threats that “villages who paid their tax would be smitten with small pox caused considerable delay and obstruction in the collection of tax in the Southern Khana area”. He further documents that the worship of Gbenebeka at its shrine at Ka – Gwara was not in the favour of the colonial government. In his own words:

Half the Gokana and some of the Northern Kana villages followed instructions with admirable results, the majority of the people charged with evasion paying tax as soon as they learned that action had been taken against them.... The primary cause may be found in the revival of the Gbenebeka cult, which appears to have made Southern Kana and some Gokana villages fear that a small pox epidemic would result from prompt attention to tax collection (Shute, 1933:26).

Against the backdrop of these surmises, those suspected or genuinely connected with the restoration of Gbenebeka “Juju” like its priest and followers were arrested, tried and imprisoned at Egwanga, the divisional headquarters. A case worth noting was that of Mr. Nwigbo Piam, the Chief Priests of Gbenebeka deity. In 1919, he and five devotees were convicted of holding an illegal court and sentenced, four to one year’s imprisonment and two to six months. In 1930, he along with three believers were convicted on one or more of the charges of holding an illegal court, possessing human skull for the innovation of the “Juju” and having a “Juju” alleged to have the power of causing small pox. Nwigbo Piam was sentenced to one year imprisonment with hard labour. The Chief Priest of Gbenebeka was again arrested and jailed in 1935 for nine months and in 1947 sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour (Gibbons, 1935, Ogoni District, 4/1/45). Others sent to jail on account of their religious beliefs and practices were the ardent – followers of Ejile deity whose shrine was located at Eteo – Eleme. In 1939, its Chief Priest Mr. Onyekwe Okondo and its messenger Osaro Chindo were convicted and sentenced to one and half years imprisonment. Furthermore, in 1947 its Chief Priest, Amanikpo Saronwada and Obe Olungwulo, the deity’s messenger were sentenced to two years, four month and six months respectively (Report on Ejile Juju, 1947).

In addition, the Christ Army Church of Nigeria, an Independent African Church, established by Garrick Sokari Braide in about 1910 to resist the imposition of European culture and project African culture and spirituality was intensely criticized by the colonial administrators. C.A.C, which perfectly harmonized European Christian attributes with the African traditional practices and customs, preaches teetotalism and campaigns against shrines and images of the traditional religion. Ironically, the church supports and permits polygamy, an

aspect of the A.T.R other special attributes of A.T.R adopted were “shaking”, “speaking in tongues”, “prophesying”, faith healing, the use of holy oil and holy water to anoint the sick. A colonial district officer in Ogoni documents:

Large gatherings assembled at the churches of this people and carried on what they called prayer all night. The leaders would sing and beat drums, and the others would sing in reply and clap hands. In time they got worked up; their singing became shouting which could be heard from miles, the spirit enter into some who then lost all responsibility for their actions and became “shakers”; some in their shaking state rushed to bush, some spoke with the voice of God and some led parades which had destroyed one or two heathen glades and taken money (As quoted in N-ue, 2016: 36).

Its African content coupled with the proselytizing efforts of Prophet John Gbo (1890 – 1985) made the Ogoni people to give the church a warm embrace. However, the church’s doctrine of complete abstinence from alcoholic beverages which led “to a dramatic decline in (European) liquor imports” (Isichei, 1983: 464) and fierce opposition of European colonial mentality made C.A.C a frequent target of hostility by the colonial government. In Ogoni, must believers were castigated and often times incarcerated. For example, in 1932 W.T.W. Chessman, a colonial administrator, notes that “Christ’s Army Church has given trouble during the year especially in Ogoni, where their “shaker” practices led to provincial court action. In three villages the ring leaders were sent to prison and misguided followers chastised. The chief justice upheld all these cases”. Again, while other European Churches in Ogoni like the Methodist Mission, the Roman Catholic Church and so on were granted express permission to open clan schools in the area, C.A.C, which had the financial resources and personnel to sustain their schools, was denied the opportunity. Gibbons (1934: 68) records that “The Christ’s Army Church continued to provide the Southern area of Ogoni with unseemly disputes which fled to applications to open schools being opposed by the Native Authorities and finally turned down”. Indeed, the relations between the colonial authorities and the C.A.C. as a church were largely strained on account of its Africanity and anti – colonial posture.

Other important religious beliefs and cultural practices of the Ogoni that witnessed the weighty influence of the European were the beliefs in totems twin murder and ostracisation of twin mothers. These traditional practices have been eradicated. The Ogoni, like other ethnic groups in Nigeria, believed that every human had a powerful animal in the bush or river as affinity. Totemization known as *Kinanu* and *Kinum* in Khana and Gokana mother tongues respectively. Strong animals like Elephants, gorilla, crocodile, leopard, tiger, antelope, tortoise, turtles and monitor were regarded as totem animals. It was also believed that whatever ill luck that happened to totem animal will affect its human associate at home. This underscores the sanctities and taboos placed on the consumption of such animals as well as the totemistic rites and ceremonies at the lineage’s shrine called *Siku* (Loolo, 1981, Anokari, 1986 and Igbara and Keenem). Also, disrupted was the practice of killing of twins and the banishment of twin mother to a specific forest. In Ogoni during the Pre – colonial days, it was believed that women who gave birth to twins were cursed by the gods and the offspring regarded as cursed children from

the evil spirit world. On the strength of this, the babies would be killed or thrown to the forest and twin mothers ostracized. The practice was to appease the gods and prevent the further spread of the bad omen, the men were prevented from having sexual intercourse with them as they were believed to have lost their spiritual, military, and customary powers to perform certain traditional rites as well as lessen the potency of their personal protective charms and amulet (Bob Agbozi and Benneth Dimkpa, 20 – 09 – 2019). Indeed, it was generally regarded as an abomination punishable by the ancestors to have any relationship with twin mothers. Mr. J. V. Dewhurst, a District Officer, confirms that in Ogoni “sexual intercourse with a twin mother is morally worse than culpable homicide” (Dewhurst, 1937:4). European civilization had frantically fought against this uncivilised and inhuman cultural practice and belief, leading to its abandonment. Although, Loolo (1981:28) makes us to understand that “the birth of twins was an anathema among the Ogoni, up to the 1950’s”, current investigations reveal that the banishment of twin mothers or separation from their husbands is still vogue in most Ogoni communities. They are apportioned free land separate from those of normal birth to settle with their offspring. Twin mothers are still stigmatized and discriminated against in the communities up to now. The women cannot become women leaders or community leaders, they only exercise their fundamental human rights in the church. More so, their children are deprived of the citizenship rights as they cannot be elected as elders, chiefs, and community leader (Letam Senator and Juliet Uebari, 20 – 10 – 2019).

There are overpowering proofs that most Ogoni religious customs, beliefs and practices like funeral ceremonies, wake – keep, sacrifices, libation, divinations, feasts and festivals like new Yam festivals (*Zua*), Palm wine festival (*Dee mii*) and *Naabiradee* festival, witchcraft, ancestral veneration, and so on are still in vogue. It has to be stressed that while western civilization phenomenally changed the cosmology of the people especially the concept of law of causation of deaths previously attributed to unforeseen spiritual forces, it is yet to reverse the custom of the rights of passage or funeral rites. In most contemporary Ogoni communities, those who died unnaturally through mysterious circumstances like accidents, drowning, detestable diseases like elephantiasis, insanity and leprosy, suicide, witchcraft, sorcery and other nefarious activities, and during the *Zua/Dua* annual festivals are still interred in the bush designated the “bad bush” with no proper funeral rites performed. Nonetheless, fitting burial rites are accorded peaceful transition to the great beyond. It is believed that the soul of the deceased will move to the realm of the spirit where another cycle of life is said to begin. Currently, the degree of achievement, age and the societal status of the bereaved still account for the luster, style and colour of the funeral obsequies.

In the religious front, there are ample evidence of religious syncretism. Some features of Indigenous Knowledge Systems like sacrifice, prophecies, drumming, music, clapping, dancing, and seeing of vision exist side by side with the western values. Most of it have been modified and blended with the new religion (John Ndolo and Fidelis Kagbara, 28 – 09 - 2019). Afigbo (1985: 488) testifies that “with ease many indigenous African institutions and ideas survived the impact, or even blended with, alien European values”. The fact is that the core values of a people as replicated in their knowledge systems cannot be easily wipe – out, destroyed and replaced by alien culture.

Traditional Education

The Ogoni people were not an illiterate society if the essence of education is for man to dominate and control his environment. Prior to the advent of western or bureaucratic education, there was informal training of the youth in different fields of human endeavours. They taught and transmitted their values, belief systems, traditions, vocations through oral, and informal ways like by observing, assisting and imitating the skill. Education acquired include the knowledge of religion, oral literature, skill training in agriculture, local industries and craft, the building of physical strength and agility, fishing, swimming, mental development, attitude, and so on (Lekara Nsaanee, 21 – 09 – 2019, Lebari Nbiabu 28 – 09 - 2019). Like elsewhere, western education was one of the paraphernalia of Christianity in Ogoni. The church and western education were fused into a watertight organic unit in order to ‘catch’ the youth into their relentless missionary and evangelical enterprises. As Henry Venn succinctly put, “you must seek to convert the heart before you can instruct the mind” (quoted by Fafunwa, 1991:84). The Christian missionaries were quick to discover that to make an impressive impact in the area, there was the urgent need to educate the people in the western tradition. Western education, therefore, occupied a strategic place in the avowed goal of the various missions to propagate the good news of Jesus Christ in Ogoni. Most missions, bribe the church converts with gifts like used European clothes, mirrors, umbrellas, and wrist watches to lure them to the new religion. W.J.W. Chessman, an Assistant Colonial District Officer (ACDO), in 1932 supports this position when he writes that “education even more than Native Courts and Warrant Chief has done its share in breaking down the indigenous customs and system of administration. It has been used to foster sects of religion and is a definite bribe to attract church members”. This phenomenon raised surprises question as to whether the people were genuinely converted from strong belief or due to subterranean mundane things.

As a vehicle of westernization, schools were established in Ogoni by the missionaries not only to train Ogoni children to acquire essential skills in writing, reading and other trades but also to subjugate physical body, the mind and the spirit. Indeed, the establishment of formal education in the area was more or less a psychological violence used to wittingly back guard and sweepingly replace cultural practices and AKS. Fanon (1968: 48) explains that:

Psychological violence represents the attempt, conscious or unconscious, by the colonizer to create alienated colonized individuals who reject indigenous values and institutions because they are deceived or brainwashed into believing that these values and institutions are inferior to those of the colonizer.

Accordingly, many Ogoni people who desired to acquire western style education and knowledge which was seen as a new passport into the economic world were culturally colonized. They were indoctrinated to accept the western ways of life. Having accepted western education and knowledge. In essence, therefore, most Ogoni elites began to look down and discard traditions, values and concepts of the people. This is because the Ogoni initiatives and ways of knowing were misrepresented as useless and ought to be discarded. Indigenous title taking like *Yaa, Bogo ko, Yee – ya, Pee kue – gia, Gbene* and membership of various traditional secret societies like *Duduude, Amanikpo, Kpaakpan, the Awugbo, Kuogia, Koroeteh, O – u – olu* (If you want to die come), to mention but a few were rejected and attacked. Men of those status especially elders (*Pya Kabari*) were relegated to the background and replaced with new

class of men with western education and values on account of not having acquired formal education.

Though with great skillfulness and knowledge of Khana dialect of Ogoni language, the Reverend Paul Kingston of the Wesleyan Mission and other Primitive Methodist missionaries wrote an Ogoni primer and translated part of the Bible and prayer book (Chessman, 1932; Smith 1936), they were disproportionately influenced by the Igbo settler and missionary perfection of the Eurocentric stand point. Thus, they played down on African concept they did not quite comprehend (Nicholas Adoo, and Sunny Aziaka, 03 – 10 – 2019). The Christian missions imposed English and Igbo languages on the Ogoni people as languages of formal education and evangelism. At the neglect of the people's indigenous language, competency (even if imperfect or ungrammatical) in English language was more of a launch pad to economic and social greatness at the time. As a status symbol it conferred on its fluent seekers some level of reputability and placed them in the middle class on the Ogoni social ladder. While as a guarantor of paid employment, it automatically gave jobs to its speakers as interpreters, stewards, messengers, court clerks, policemen, political agents, and so on in the colonial service as subordinate staff. The insistence on English language during the colonial dispensation in Ogoni as language of instruction and evangelism had effectively undermined Ogoni languages as high class transmitter of the people's knowledge. This development is regrettable because as Roy – Campbell (2006: 2) articulates:

African languages were vehicles for producing knowledge – for creating, encoding, sustaining and ultimately transmitting indigenous knowledge, the cultural knowledge and patterns of behaviour of the society. Through the lack of use of African languages in the educational domain, a wealth of indigenous knowledge is being locked away in these language and is gradually being lost as the custodians of this knowledge pass on.

The people were also massively intimidated and cruelly exploited by the Igbo interpreters due to the former lack of proficiency in English language. For instance, prior to the appointment of the indigenes as interpreters, the Igbo interpreters in Ogoni Native courts utilized their position as court clerk and interpreters to achieve their selfish ends. D.A.F. Shute, British colonial administrator, submits that "The Native court opened at Soo (Sogho) in 1912... was looked upon as a local centre of government to which the extortionate Nkwere traders resorted to collect their debts" (Shute, 1933: 15). Another British District Officer, W.J.W. Chessman notes that the "Nkwere traders in Ogoni are (were) usually friends of the police and help (helped) them over the language difficulty – I fear not always to the benefit of the Ogoni" (Chessman, 1932: 39). In this wise, colonialism is partly accountable for the speaking of Igbo language in Ogoni and other parts of Niger Delta that the Igbo lived, served and traded during the colonial era.

Traditional Medicine and Health Care Systems

The Ogoni, like other African societies, exhibited flourishing indigenous medicine and health care practices before the colonial encounter to prevent, suppress and overcome disease infections. The traditional or unorthodox system of health care delivery is basically concerned with "the total body of knowledge used to treat diseases and ill – health of members of a traditional community having the same cultural beliefs and values" (Atemie, 2006: 125 – 126).

This was necessitated by the seasonal outbreaks of diseases and scourges threatening African life in their complex environment. According to Isichei (1983: 297) “traditional societies accumulated an immense knowledge of herbal medicine which modern scientists are still involved in studying”.

The indigenous practitioners sometimes called “herbalists”, “traditional doctors” or “healers” are commonly referred to as *Pya dambie* among the Khana people. They responded immediately to ill – health and misfortunes by applying natural curative devices. These include the knowledge of herbs, barks, roots, flowers, plants, seeds and so on available in their ambient environment. Most times, animals and its products, for example, honey from bees, cow and human urines and so on are used for healing while a chicken, egg, fish, or a goat is sacrificed to appease the evil agents or spirits alleged to have caused the illness or bad luck after divination. They also treated mental disorder, mend and set bones, massaging, and assisting pregnant mothers to give birth. The traditional doctors in Ogoni made extra ordinary feats when they treated sexual impotence and infertility, thereby inspiring good health, hope of competence (Mbiti, 1997). These traditional healers, who mostly learn their trade form their parents and through apprenticeship, believed in a healer – god, the patron of herbalism, the lord of forests and leaves. The natural and supernatural practitioners were highly respected and valued in Ogoni because it was believed that God divinely bestowed on the power to heal the sick through the manipulation of physiological, psychological and physical processes.

The introduction of western medicine and health care systems made the endogenous medical practice to suffer terrible attacks and set – back. The Eurocentric writers pejoratively called these medicine – men and women “witch – doctors” and their indigenously devised methods ridiculed, stigmatized and discouraged. The pattern of traditional health – care practice was described by the European writers as native concoctions which were diametrically opposed to “scientifically” prepared medicine. To improve the life of the people and to dispel superstitious beliefs, the colonial authorities through the native administration opened a dispensary at Kpor, the headquarters of the Gokana clan, in August 1934 which Gibbons (1934: 43) vividly describes as being “increasingly patronized”. A dispensary attendant was also trained to make the health care delivery a huge success. Subsequently, dispensaries and maternity homes were established in all the clan headquarters in the area (Loolo, 1981, Akekue, 2004). The efforts of the colonial authorities in this direction was crowned with the successful and official inauguration of the General Hospital in Bori on Friday (Deemua) 23rd May, 1952 (Anokari, 1986, Akekue, 2004). Quoting the *West African Pilot* edition of Monday October 26, 1952, Ntor – ue (2005: 125) describes the hospital as “one of the best modern hospitals in the country”. Consequently, illnesses like malaria, small pox, fever, yaw and others were treated with modern medicine and health care. Medical doctors who served in the hospital embarked on serious campaigns against some deadly communicable diseases and taught the people the basic rules of hygiene and sanitation. Prior to this time, it was the duty of the medical doctors to travel about 200 miles from Egwanga, the then headquarters of Opobo Division, to Ogoni for routine checks, ensure clean environment and prevent the spread of diseases in the area. Both Dr. Fitzgerald Moore and Hope – Gill embarked on a fort night inspection of the dispensaries with the assistant of a sanitary inspector and two vaccinators, and an intensive anti - yaws campaigns, applying mass therapy. Expectedly, this lead to the drastic reduction of the disease.

Also, school inspections which aimed at improving the diet of the pupils in particular and the Ogoni society at large was started by Dr. Hope – Gill (Gibbons, 1934; 1935). The point to establish is that even though these western health care services were directed at the members of the missionaries' families and the auxiliaries of the colonial administration, the Ogoni benefitted in one way or the other. Gbenenye (1988:86) maintains earnestly that “old concepts of law of causation came under attack. Diseases which had previously be ascribed to some malignant spiritual or human agency were shown by modern science to be the product of natural events”. Ntor – ue (2005: 126) strengthens that the advent of western science in Ogoni has tremendously “reduced the once unshakable Ogoni belief in traditional religion, poisons and jujus. It has revealed the power of western science in the cure of some deadly diseases like leprosy, small pox, etc which had no remedy in Birabi’s days”. What remains to be added is that irrespective of the western or scientific medicine, cases of ill – health arising from mystical causes that completely defied western medical practices are successfully handled by Ogoni traditional healers and African Indigenous Churches. In most communities, the people still resort to the unorthodox means for healthcare needs. Isichei (1981: 297) concurs that “traditional doctors may actually have treated mental illness more successfully than western medicine... Traditional medicine treated mental patient with drugs and elaborate ritual of healing and protection”. Understandably, the Ogoni, who understood and trusted their indigenous medicine – men and women, did not completely forsake their traditional means of healing or therapies. They masterfully combined the western and traditional practice together, believing that western medicine was an additive excogitation to their age – long indigenous medical practice.

Indigenous Technology

Indigenous Technology is another crucial nucleus of the Traditional Knowledge developed by man in his environment to solve problems. The people of Ogoni qualitatively observed and accurately understood their environment during the pre – colonial era. Accordingly, they translated this novel body of knowledge into pragmatic uses as reflected in their impressive fields of manufacturing, mining, agriculture and civil engineering. Through the applications of these material means, the people were able to exploit their environment for the satisfaction of their needs and desires. Pitiably, the colonial interlude led to the decline and to some extent the extinction of African Traditional Technology. The most affected local industrial and technological initiatives were those considered to be primitive, substitutes or favourable competitors for European wares. These included local spirit called *Miibeke, Kai – Kai* or *Ogogoro*, metallurgy, pottery, and so on.

In Ogoni, indigenous skilled and versatile smiths, produced products to enhance their wellbeing. The most common products they made were axes (*Sii*), Knives (*ge*), hoes (*tua*), spears or javelin (*kon*), chisel and adzes (*Kpa - kue*) to meet the economic, social, military and political needs of the people. “It is clear that the indigenous product was very often of better quality” (Isichie, 1983: 50). For example, metallurgy brought an unprecedented revolution in the economic life of the people as iron tools gradually replaced wooden and stone implements, and hunting expeditions. Culturally, there was the strong, socio – cultural preference for *Kpoje* for ritual purposes. Most *Kpoje* were preserved as symbol of accumulated wealth (Saturday Nwi – eekpughi, 09 – 10 – 2019 and John Deedua, 10 – 10 – 2019). To Gbenenye (1988: 42) the

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works of indigenous smelting “enabled the Ogoni to fight many inter – group wars and to put up resistance against British invasion”. Again, Isichei (193: 43) correctly asserts that the working of iron “simultaneously enhanced the productive capacities of the individual in the exploitation of the land in agriculture, and his destructive capacities, in that extraordinary exercise in mutual injury we call war”.

It has to be noted that blacksmithing was originally the preserve of the itinerant Nkwerre and Ahirba blacksmiths who manufactured wrought iron, tools, gun barrels and even guns for the Ogoni (Gibbons, 1932, Ofonagoro, 1979, Strides and Ifeka, 1986). They jealously guarded their trade and wrapped the process in utmost secrecy. The children of their hosts, friends, and trade partners from Ogoni were later trained as apprentices and meant to earn the techniques from them (Gbenenye, 1988). It is also probable that given the dearth of iron ore in Ogoni land, iron ore, the main raw material for blacksmithing, was imported into the area through exchange of goods for goods by the Nkwerre or Abiriba people who plied the trade in the territory.

Instructively, the decisive turning point in the history of the people was the introduction of fire arms from Bonny by the 16th century (Kpone – Tonwe, 1990) and other metallic European manufactured products such as European made swords, machetes and shovels which appeared in Ogoni markets by the dawn of the 20th century. All these iron wares competed favourably with the locally made tools. Kpone – Tonwe (1990: 219 – 300) contends that the lighter European machete was preferred to the heavier Ogoni *Kuna*. By the 1950s, the *Kuna* had disappeared from popular usage, being replaced by the European Matchet.... In recent years, however, both the men and the women have come to prefer the shovels to the traditional hoes. Thus, under these conditions, the role of the traditional Ogoni smiths has drastically declined. In effect, colonialism brought about the stagnation and ultimate abandonment of the Ogoni traditional knowledge of iron smelting. The children of the Ogoni craftsmen and artisans regarded the techniques as impertinent in this modern age of science and technology which spread to Africa due to colonization. Attributing the decline of iron smelting in Nigeria to colonialism, Isichei (1983: 50) observes:

By the 1930s, indigenous smelting was deep in decline; by the 1950s, it was extinct.... Like so much else in Nigerian history, the decline of iron smelting offers problems of historical interpretation. In a sense it is one of the classic examples in world history of de – industrialization caused by colonialism, comparable with the often analysed decline of the handloom textile industry.... The history of Nigeria iron smelting is to an astonishing degree, a lost one.

Another prominent Ogoni indigenous technology that was stagnated by colonial contact was ceramic or pottery industry. The Ogoni were outstanding potters. The craft of pottery was exclusively the preserve of women of Kwawa, Kono-Boue, Luubara Buan and Luumene, all in today’s Khana local government area. Gokana clan is also a known pottery manufacture centre (Anokari, 1986). Their products, which were exemplary stunning beauty and high sophistication, spring from the women’s creativity and ingenuity. They are adorned and decorated with different distinctive styles, different motif and various shapes; most of them are large, and some small with large and small mouths respectively. Earthen pots were highly patronized by

the citizens and other ethnic groups within the sphere of the Niger Delta in the pre – colonial times due to non – availability of metallic and plastic merchandise coupled with the forte of the Ogoni earth wares. The pots perform a variety of purposes. Pots were used for preparing, storing and preserving food stuffs like cassava, and liquid such as water, gin and palm wine. They also serve as cooking and eating utensils. Most of the specially and exceptionally designed pots are used for sacrifice and rituals purposes. These ceramic products are also used for washing, music and herbal preparation purposes.

Following the introduction of aluminum buckets and plastic containers by the European, the cottage industry suffered a steady decline due to low patronage and western ideas. Derefaka (2002: 227) supports that “the introduction of western education, culture, and alternative cheaper and more durable receptacles and utensils from the period of European contact” was a major reason for the decline of pottery, stressing that “with the emphasis on western education for girls and availability of paid employment and easier economic ventures, daughters became reluctant if not unwilling to learn the trade from their mothers and so the manufacture of ceramic products was virtually ceased in most of the communities listed above, which were famous for ceramics production in the past”. However, the preference of earthen pots for European iron and plastic wares like jar, tin, bucket, pots, and so on even in this 21st century underscores the relevance of the indigenous cottage industry.

A wonderful display of traditional technology is the conversion of palm wine to the local brand of gin called *gini*, *miibeke*, or *kai – kai* by the Ogoni. Gin distillation which is one of the oldest industries, is a subsidiary of the palm wine indigenous technology. The locally made spirit was used in the pre – colonial and colonial times to perform very many ritualistic, ceremonial and religious functions. *Kai – Kai*, which unarguably predated the colonial presence, enjoyed very high popularity in the area and so favourably competed with the European imported rums and spirit like London Gordon dry gin, Schnapps, Whisky, and so on. Consequently, proactive measures were taken by the colonial government to discourage the manufacture, consumption and sale of the *Ogogoro* (Gbenenye 1988, Derefaka, Nzewunwa and Okpara, 1989, Diayi, 1991, Derefaka 2002). For instance *Kai - Kai* was prohibited under the Liquor Ordinance which designated the local brew “illicit”. The effect was that the Ogoni were to buy European made guns sold at higher prices in order for the metropole to raise enough revenue. Also, the French authorities did not allow indigenous technology to thrive in their Francophone colonies. The production of local “Whisky” made from banana and maize was outlawed so as to force the colonized to patronize the European liquors and red wine (Oyono, 1956). Likewise, the Christian missionaries and their priest discouraged the local brew, maintaining that its intake blackens the teeth and the soul of the believers. This implies that all Christian believers who drink were guilty of “a mortal sin” (Oyono, 1956: 16).

In Ogoni, the raid to suppress or forbid the production, sale and consumption of *Khai – Khai* was intensified. The police detachment at Egwanga was empowered with general search warrants, to embark on raids after raids to stifle the traditional technology (Gibbons, 1934). Commenting on the role of the Police, Chessman (1932: 39) discloses that “They have made great efforts to suppress illicit distillation, carrying out numerous raids, under great difficulties. Latterly large wholesale raids which were causing a certain amount of unrest amongst the people, have given way to small parties taking action on definite information. This has had good results with less friction”. The average of those arrested in connection with the distillation of

the local dry gin was high. According to Chessman (1932: 41) “Practically all this was due to illicit liquor cases, but some is due to the actions taken in the Ogoni courts against bad medicine or juju owners. 134 have been convicted under Cap. 131 and nearly all of their sentences were over three months”.

It was against this unfortunate development that the Ogoni distillers devised other means to be in the business. They tactically and clandestinely hid the distillation still in the thick forest and sometimes heavily descended on spies who served as undercover agents of the police. Gibbons (1934: 47 – 48) recounts that “it has been found that the detection of offence against this (liquor) Ordinance is becoming more and more difficult. Apparatus has found its way more deeply into the bush where it is better concealed, while informers, who are beginning to appreciate the unpopularity they will have to face, are becoming more reluctant to come forward” to expose the producers. It is gratifying to note that “on the 27th August (1934) the unpopularity of a strange informer who was directing the operations of two (Police) constables on a liquid raid in the Ogoni village of Kpean led to the constables being set upon by a mob and beaten”. In spite of these survival methods, the product became as scare as the urine of chicken and the industry was truncated. The stigma was only reversed in Nigeria years after independent in 1960. Like other colonizers, the British were not interested in the development of the colonized economy, they were only interested in the purloining of African resources for the benefit of the metropole.

Indigenous Military/Security Systems

In the pre – colonial period, there were incessant threats to live and property in Africa. These insecurities and threats existed in forms of kidnapping, murder, head hunting, plain pirates, brigand, marauders and so on (Caldwell, 1985, Anikpo 1991, Kpone – Tonwe and Gbeneye, 2006, Ejituwu and Okoroafor, 2009). Unlike other African societies that are situated on defensive locations, Ogoni communities are defenseless. No natural boundaries are found in the North and West. Rivers exist to the East and South. Thus, the geographical position of Ogoni and the obvious absence of standing army (*Gbo be*) necessitated the development of inaccessibility security devices during the pre – colonial times. They indigenously developed fortifications in the forms of trenches, dishes, and/or moats. These were strategically designed to secure their environment against external aggressions and enforcement of internal social, political and economic order.

Static fortifications, as military tactics and security strategy, wide moat or trench (*Bana*) was dug about twelve feet deep across the road, leading into most Ogoni gateway villages to checkmate and prevent easy access of intruders, unwanted persons, visitors and enemies. A log of wood or trunk (drawbridges) of tree was used to bridge the moat which was withdrawn in times of insecurity, threats and war (Kpone – Tonwe, 1990, Anokari 1986, Igbara and Keenam, 2013, N-ue, 2018). Achi (204: 9) avers that “the digging of deep and wide moats round the wall (or communities) acted as the first obstacle. Drawbridges were provided at each gate to enable people to cross into the city. These were withdrawn when the city was to be assaulted”. The existence of the war gods called *barinor* believed by the people to spiritually cleanse, guide and protect those assigned to launch a war or defend the towns in terms of aggression notwithstanding. The people indigenously developed another powerful defense mechanism called *Gba*. It was usually placed at the entrance or strategic corners of the communities. It

used to house the spirit that protected the village from attackers, thieves, kidnappers and enemies (Anokari, 1986, Ngofa, 1988). N-ue (2018: 140) vividly explains that “it was the duty of the village priest to appease the protective spirit with a fowl at intervals. The sacrificial fowl was not consumed but allowed to dangle helplessly on the *gba* until it is dead and rotten. This appeasement was done, believing that it would ward off enemies, thieves and unwanted elements, the *gba* would raise alarm, notifying the warriors or the youths of their unwanted presence and arrival. The warriors and the youths would prepare themselves, lay ambush and quickly arrest the armed bandits who would not decipher or decode the coded security language of the *gba*. The moat and *gba* indigenous customs continued in the land until the arrival of the British colonizers in the area. The British military and administrative officers who witnessed the military device in the land bare their minds on the military device. One of them was Captain E. H. Smith, who led the Aka 1907 punitive patrol. He has this to say:

Another Ogoni custom not completely discontinued by even the friendly towns was to dig very deep trenches across the roads entering their towns. These were bridged by single narrow logs. It was easily for them to catch any stranger who come uninvited to their markets. He could easily be overtaken or intercepted when trying to cross the log (as quoted in N – ue, 2018: 140).

Also, E. J. Gibbons, a Colonial District Officer (D. O.) in Ogoni who saw the remains of the moat offers his own line of story thus:

Where the path penetrates the shadows of this belt of untouched forest it crosses, by means of a tree trunk, a Bana or trench about twelve feet deep and extending some twenty yards into the bush on either side of the path. The remains of fowls sacrificed to the Yo Bana, or protecting spirit of the village are usually to be seen suspended above one end of the bridge (As quoted in N-ue, 2018: 140).

Colonialism condemned these endogamous community security devices because they were “primitive”. The colonial authorities riding on the policy of *Pax Britannica* replaced them with police, court messengers, native courts, and the massive construction of motor roads that intractably linked Ogoni communities as well as her neighbouring communities together. These colonial ideas seriously ensured safety of travelers, free movement of people and goods across frontiers, and drastically reduced intra – inter community skirmishes. Speaking of due duty of the colonial police, Sorgwe (1989: 132) notes:

The fear of being punished by the colonial authority helped to reduce inter – community feuds. Incidents of violent inter – community clashes were reduced during the colonial period. Communities learned to complain to the colonial authorities for redress instead of waging wars against their neighbours who offended them.

The evolving intensive and disturbing wave of insecurity that is threatening communal security, peace, happiness and development nowadays has, among other things, thrown up the urgent need for the recognition of the strong community based security mechanisms initiated by the people of Ogoni during the pre – colonial and during the early colonial days.

The Economy

The Ogoni before the European incursion were essentially an agrarian society with farming as the primary occupation of both sexes. Customarily, farming practice was structurally divided along gender lines. Men, believed to be the superior sex, were meant to cultivate the traditional crop of yam which they combined with palm wine tapping, palm fruit cuttings and hunting. Women being regarded as the weaker sex were consigned to be the cultivators of food crops grown for domestic consumption. They complemented this with auxiliary activities like pottery, mat and basket weaving as well as the processing of agricultural produce (Margaret Adoo – ee, 21 – 07 – 2019 and Juliet Uebari, 20 – 10 - 2019). Women duties play complementary roles to those of men in the Ogoni traditional economy.

Fundamentally, with the increasing request for cash crops especially oil palm to serve as raw materials for European industries, Ogoni males began to dominate the cultivation of cash crops. The male folk, indeed, took over the ownership, control and management of the cultivation and production of oil palm. With the sole intention to exploit the palm produce available in the territory, the colonial authorities inspected the Northern part of Ogoni where there were large portions of land favourable for the cultivation of oil palm (Gibbons, 1934). As a result, Mr. Gabriel Ufford, an Epek born Ibibio Agricultural Assistant Officer, was deployed to Ogoni while serious efforts were underway to train an indigene as an Agricultural Assistant. He oversaw the pilot schemes which were established at Yeghe Central Council House, and nurseries at the four Central Native Courts in Ogoni (N – ue, 2018). He also taught the Ogoni oil palm cultivator new agricultural techniques. The Ogoni private oil palm farmers were also encouraged by the colonial government. Seedlings procured from Uhuahia were distributed to all of them in Ogoni (Smith, 1930, Gibbons, 1935). The Christian missions in tandem with their policy of “Bible and Plough” established oil palm plantation schemes at Bori, Taabaa, Nwenbiara and Kpor. Ziinu (1993: 89) contends that Rev. Paul Kingston of the Primitive Methodist family collaborated with the colonial government in the area “to ensure that seedlings were distributed to village churches which were encouraged to acquire and cultivate palm estates”.

Agriculture was vigorously encouraged by both colonial government and the missionaries in Ogoni as a way of stimulating the production of palm produce to serve the primary needs of the Christian Europe. By 1949, hand press were established at Gure, Bean, Nyokuru, Kaa, Nwenbiara, Ban – Ogoi and Ebubu – Eleme. Avowedly, these plantations and oil mills did not frantically and remarkably make appreciable and enduring foot prints on the process of oil extraction as the traditional system of production remained the entire affairs of Ogoni women.

Also to be emphasized is the fact that women folk in Ogoni were not completely sidelined in the local economy. Male movement into plantations within and outside Nigeria, fishing expeditions, the search for wage labour, education, and even at the battle fronts during the First and Second World Wars made women to play dominant role in the economy as heads of the families and bread winners. They helped to ensure that food supplies are constant and adequate while trying to protect the family rights to property. Ogoni women also served as political agents of decolonization and male dominance as expressed in the November 1929

Niger Delta Women War at Egwanga. Ogoni women's participation in the economy is ever rising a substantial number of them are teachers, Lecturers, Lawyers, Pastors, Singers, entertainers and so on to support the economy.

The British enforcement of the pathological shift from the African traditional economic system to the export or capitalist – oriented economy significantly altered the Ogoni land tenure system and created conditions such as land and fishing grounds' consciousness. The concept of land tenure system was based on the principle of unalienable right in the use of land and in the occupancy. In the pre – colonial times, the concept and symbol of land was of great importance, land was collectively owned by a family, clan lineage or community and they cannot be alienated from its use without their permission or knowledge. In most Ogoni communities, stiff penalty or sanction was enacted against the sale of land because it was seen as a sacred trust by the people on behalf of the “living” ancestors and on behalf of the generations yet unborn. According to Saro – Wiwa (1992: 12) “to the Ogoni, the land on which they lived and the rivers which surrounded them were very important. They not only provided sustenance in abundance, they were also a spiritual inheritance”. Land, therefore, to the Ogoni is a physical, economic wealth, cultural and religious entity which ought to be protected, and preserved for generations yet unborn. The British aggressive campaigns for expansion in cash crop production and the much commercial value placed on land through the Public Lands Acquisition Proclamation Ordinance of 1903 led to an increased in the race for individual or group acquisition/ownership of land. The maximal pressure exerted on land inadvertently produced persistent squabbles and/ sanguinary conflicts, ferocious claims and counter – claims over boundary line and ownership of farms ponds/swamps and or river which were hitherto not put forward during the pre – colonial times. Colonial records are replete with intra – community land disputes and inter – community claims and counter claims to rights and title to land, Shute (1932) reports that there were intra – community disputes between the people of Kaani and Zaakpon, and Lorre and Luebe over farming land in 1932. Similarly, there were inter – group violence and intense struggles between the Ogoni and their Ndoki and Obolo (Andoni) neighbours (Smith, 193, Thwaites, 1937). The Eleme and Okrika also had their own share of inter – community clashes (Mackenzie, 1932, Dewhurst 1937). Sadly, the several Panels of Inquiry and Boundary Adjustment Commissions set up by the British Colonial Administrators including the establishment of police station at hot spots could not prevent or solve the hostilities and violence that have transcended the colonial to post – colonial eras.

Conclusion

In this paper, attempts have been made to explain that Africa (Ogoni inclusive) had viable indigenously devised Traditional Knowledge Systems which straddled all their heritages prior to their inglorious encounter with European colonialism. It was also established that colonial rule systematically denigrated the African Knowledge Systems and replaced them with the erroneously and purportedly superior western ways of knowing that hardly meet the African cultural values and complex environment.

In the light of the above, the paper argues that African history must be rewritten by African leaders and statesmen with the aim to promote the African customs that have been badly damaged and some of them forced to go into extinction by the forces of colonialism and neo - colonialism. There is a crying need for a reconstruction of African constructed histories

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where the African core values, beliefs, and traditions must be told to bring about development in the Traditional Knowledge Systems. Lack of rapid development in Africa is somewhat predicated on the fact that post – independent institutions and programs designed to promote development are often laid on falsehoods and misinterpreted or assumptions created by the Eurocentric writers which ridiculed, truncated and consequently stagnated Indigenous Knowledge Systems. If the unhistorical constructed histories of Africa and its cultures are allowed to exist, the future development of Africa would definitely suffer.

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Name of informant	Social status	Approx. age	Place of interview	Date
Benneth Dimkpa	Police officer/Family head	50+	Ebubu – Eleme	20/09/2019
Bob Agbozi	Lawyer	50+	Bori	20/09/2019
Deebari Nwilenee	Chief	67	Kpean	08/08/2019
Fidelis Kagbara	Farmer	60+	B. Dere	28/09/2019
John Deedua	Civil servant	55+	Port Harcourt	10/10/2019
John Deedua	Clergy	70+	Ogale – Nchia	10/10/2019
John Ndolo	Businessman	55+	Kpor	28/09/2019
Juliet Akeeri	Trader	50+	Bori	21/07/2019
Juliet Uebari	Business Woman	50+	Port Harcourt	20/10/2019
Lebari Mbiabu	Retired School Principal	80+	Teka Sogho	21/09/2019
Lekara Nsaanee	Retired school Administrator/clergy	70+	Barakaani Sogho	21/09/2019
Letam Senator	Trader	55	Kwakwa	20/10/2019
Margaret Adoo – ee	Women leader/Prophetess	60+	Zor - Sogho	21/07/2019
M-mea Augustine	Clergy/school Administrator	60+	Bori	21/07/2019
Saturday Nwi – ee Kpughi	School Teacher	50+	Nonwa	09/10/2019
Tor Tsaaro Deeyah	School Administrator	56	Bori	08/08/2019

Tordee Asukupghi	Retired civil servant/chief in Sogho	65+	Zor – Sogho	28/09/2019
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