

# **THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS OF AGATU IN DOMA AREA IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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## **Abstract**

By the last quarter of the 19th century, European powers converged in Berlin, Germany and partitioned Africa among themselves. Following the partitioning, all forms of resistance by Nigerians against British imperialism were quelled and by 1903 the entire country was under the British imperial power. Agatu land, could not escape the menace. This study is an attempt at reconstructing the socio-economic and political history of Agatu people of Doma following the introduction of colonial rule at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The study argues that colonialism has eroded much of Agatu pre-colonial socio-economic and political practices to the point that some practices are under threat of extinction. The methodology adopted in this work engages primary and secondary sources of history from the point of view of critical historical analysis. The approach combines both written and non-written sources within the frame of primary and secondary sources of history.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, socio-economic developments.

## **Introduction**

A 20th century discovery by scientists have found strong evidence that Africa is the cradle of humankind. Thus, validating the fact that the evolution of the modern man (*homo sapiens*) and by extension civilization originated in Africa some 500,000 to 200,000 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Societies both inside and outside of Africa have followed different developmental paths since the time of this exodus: some have remained or have transitioned to tribal hunter-gatherers, while others have become sedentary agriculturalists. Powerful nations advanced militarily, politically, and economically. Industrialization revolutionized societies from the 18th century onward, first in Europe and later also in many other parts of the world. Some societies became wealthy, while others remained in poverty. All of these changes happened in different ways and at different times, depending on a variety of historical circumstances. For the Agatu and to comprehend where they are today, there is the need to know where they as a people come from and what has influenced their diverse pathways of development, that enduring significance of deeply ingrained, pre- colonial, ethnically

unique institutional, cultural, and economic characteristics associated with political leadership, the subsistence economy, clan organisation, and polygyny.<sup>2</sup>

It is also a fact that for a long period of time, and in the quest to interrogate the diverse pathways of development of human civilizations, historians have concentrated their attention on the large centralized states to the detriment of the smaller decentralized communities. Thus, the histories of smaller polities, like the Agatu has not been comprehensively studied. To begin with, the pre-colonial socio-economic and political organization of the area before the advent of colonialism was basically communal, based on lineage production. This provides the basis for labour for agricultural activities. Though the family was the most important unit of production, every male adult played a part in the social production process. Land therefore was very crucial to the people, since all their activities were directly related to it as their source of food, shelter and clothing.<sup>3</sup> Hunting and fishing were also carried out alongside with farming. Other forms of economic activities of the people were local industries such as basket, mat making, rope making, blacksmithing, cloth weaving among others.<sup>4</sup>

The Agatu are an ethnic group that is found in the present day Nasarawa State and Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. The Agatu, until the colonial era had not developed a form of writing neither had they known how to read nor write in English or any other language, prior to the colonial time. Thus, they preserved their history mostly through oral traditions. Their history of origin, migration, settlement pattern and their political development in the pre-colonial period were not recorded in form of writing. This has therefore left room for the possible distortion in their history. We do not mean here that written documents cannot be distorted, for all sources of historical reconstruction have their peculiar weaknesses.

Understanding the development of any society is tied to some extent to its history. This is because since history deals with the past experiences of man in relationship with the present, it is possible that history can suggest for future development. History vividly reveals the culture of a people, while culture lays the skeleton on which the future innovations can be made. When a people know their background, they draw from the experiences of that background to further their development. This, according to Erik Green, forms the basis towards "the increased capacity of a society to meet its citizens' basic human needs and raise their standard of living".<sup>5</sup> Arguing in this line, Agba contends that "history enables a society to manipulate its collective action as a people in order that they would advance and not stagnate".<sup>6</sup>

The Agatu people have not been able to come up with their comprehensive history from the earliest times to the colonial period in a documented form. Even in the colonial era, British agents only documented so little of the history of Agatu.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the elders who have the knowledge of Agatu's history for the simple reason of death are reducing in number, hence the fear of losing the people's history. Colonialism and post-colonial structures have promoted cultural imperialism in Africa in general and Agatu in particular. There is therefore the need for a careful

articulation and documentation of Agatu history for the purpose of preservation for future generations.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### **Colonialism**

The concept of colonialism is associated with the idea of the imperial conquest and control of foreign lands by Europeans in the 19th century. In other words, it was the forceful subjugation and dominations of foreign lands by the Europeans in order to accumulate raw materials for their industries and creation of foreign market for their finished goods. It is the imperial policies by which the European great powers seized control of territories throughout much of the world, but especially in Africa.<sup>8</sup>

With this definition, it will be imperative here to note that colonialism is that system of domination of the third world countries by the Europeans for economic and political gains and not for civilizing purpose and better government as postulated by some bourgeois-oriented scholars of the western bloc such as Lugard.<sup>9</sup> To buttress this idea that the colonial masters were on exploitation mission of the third world countries, *Agbo* maintains that the prime motive of the colonialist in Africa was to exploit its resources and not to provide better government and the benefit of civilization.<sup>10</sup>

Colonialism in the 20th century involved disparity of power between the imperial capitalist countries of the Western Europe and largely less developed feudal and semi feudal societies of the third world, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Inequality therefore facilitated the fulfilment of the motive of domination. The achievement of the expansionist drive through subjugation and domination required the imposition of the political will, culture, and military might of the capitalist states upon the host countries so as to facilitate the plunder of the latter by the former. Nevertheless, overpopulation and land hunger as well as the will to criminally plunder, have propelled nations to dominate less-powerful ones throughout epochs of history. Agatu society of Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State was enmeshed in the phenomenon of colonialism in the 19th century.<sup>11</sup>

The British colonial government conquered the people and established British policies in the area. According to Osonboya Adikwu, the phenomenon of colonialism was in full force in the area in the 19th century.<sup>12</sup> During this period, traditional ways of life which cut across all spheres of life were eroded, cash money was introduced in Agatu land and cash crops, wage and force labour were also introduced. A new system of government was also brought by the colonial regime. Adikwu concludes that many strange things were introduced to Agatu people of Doma Local Government Area. Elijah Madaki also attested that it was during the period of colonialism that our people were forcefully taken to Jos-Plateau tin mines.<sup>13</sup>

## **Development**

The concept of development means different things to different people. According to Rodney, development can be seen from two different levels namely individual and social group. At the individual level, it means increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, material well-being and relations of men in the society. At the level of social groups, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships, how men were able to organize themselves in a group to exploit and harness their environment for their own benefits.<sup>14</sup> His definitions show the multidimensional nature of development.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, Todaro explains development as the process of improving the quality of all human lives.<sup>16</sup> To him, development is characterized by three basic aspects. Firstly, the rising living standard of people, their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education, among others, as a result of relevant economic growth processes. Secondly, it is about creating conditions conducive for the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political, economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect; and thirdly, increasing people's freedom by enlarging the range of their choice variables by increasing varieties of consumer goods and services. Hence, development can be summarized as all processes that bring about improvement in human life, enhanced environment, healthy living, access to knowledge, availability of sufficient resources for decent living standards, and conducive democratic atmosphere necessary for peaceful co-existence and stability,<sup>17</sup> which the Agatu people enjoy since the pre-colonial days.

Seeing development along similar lines, Sen cited in *Frankemal et al*, describes development as "a process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy". Development thus depends on the ability and capacity of people to make choices in their personal and social lives. The process of expanding people's freedoms requires removing many different kinds of material and immaterial barriers to freedom, such as poverty and insecurity<sup>18</sup>

Other scholars such as Barkindo, *Omolewa* and *Babalola* explain development in three different forms. Firstly, it entails the improvement in the living conditions of a people, partly by supplying them with good and suitable infrastructure, such as roads, funding, railway, well-equipped schools and medical facilities.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, development has to do with the supply of social amenities, such as electricity and clean water, a healthy environment and recreation facilities, and it also means giving the people good education so that they can become enlightened and be able to appreciate the facilities provided for them.<sup>20</sup> Lastly, it is characterized by more employment opportunities for the people, either in government, private sectors or through self-employment. The employment opportunities in the advanced nations are hinged on the availability of modern industries that are concerned with providing citizens the necessities of life.<sup>21</sup>

### **British Colonial Conquest and Rule**

The colonial administration introduced the policy of indirect rule in Agatu land to ensure the effective exploitation of the colonized people. Under the indirect rule system, the natives-Agatu indigenes were forcefully integrated into the British colonial system of administration. The indigenous traditional rulers controlled their subjects but with strict supervision by the colonial masters. Lord Lugard (then) Governor-General of Northern (Protectorate) Nigeria, who introduced this system of government, portrayed the system as "the rule through which the native chief integral part of the machinery of government with well-defined powers and functions recognized by government and by law, and not dependent on the caprice of an executive officer".<sup>22</sup> With the introduction of indirect rule, Agatu land was incorporated into Lafia Emirate of Nasarawa province. Meanwhile, it was the Kambari (Kanuri) that were appointed chiefs to rule over Agatu on behalf of the colonial regime. Under the indirect rule system, Agatu people were made to pay taxes. Such taxes were used in running the machinery of government created by the British.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Colonial Economic Structures-Cash Economy and Taxation.**

The colonial regime introduced the use of cash money- British pounds and shillings became the medium of commercial exchange. The barter system which was operation before the advent of British currency eventually went into oblivion. Cash money became the standard medium of measurement for value of goods and services. Thus, goods and services were henceforth paid for in cash.<sup>24</sup>

Where the colonial regime introduced taxation in Agatu, it generated revenue for the imperialist government. Such revenue was used in running the day-to-day administration of the land by the colonial government. Taxation was generally introduced in northern Nigeria in 1910.<sup>25</sup>

By this time, local currencies like cowries, shells, etc, had been replaced with British pounds and shillings. *Bama* argues that taxation was a compulsory transfer of money or goods and services from private individuals or groups to the government. In Agatu land, three kinds of taxes were introduced in the colonial era. These were general tax, cattle tax and mines tax. The colonial Agatu people were (then) engaged in one activity or the other in order to raise money for paying tax(es). Such activities ranged from waged labour to the production of cash crops and the selling of personal property".<sup>26</sup> Any man who failed to pay tax was punished. He was beaten by way of caning and his property confiscated too. Thus, taxation served as a means of extortion of the peasants, as a tool for intimidation, exploitation, impoverishment, etc.<sup>27</sup>

### **Introduction of Cash Crops and Labour**

The colonial regime introduced cash crops, especially cotton which had flint (wool) as raw material obtainable from it. Also, there was Bene-seed of which the colonial agents used the oil and grit as raw materials. The Agatu were introduced to these crops and were as well compelled to produce them for sales to agents of European companies who shipped the crops to Europe for use in their industries. The Agatu on their part sold the cash crops and used the proceeds to pay taxes. The British colonial authority also fiercely advanced the process of the commoditization of labour in Agatu land. Agatu indigenes were conscripted into the British army.<sup>28</sup> A good number of them were also recruited to work in the Jos tin mine.<sup>29</sup> Some served as colonial administrative assistants, clerks, cooks, cleaners and gardeners.<sup>30</sup> Those who had the opportunity of serving in the positions mentioned were paid wages. Such wages were used to pay taxes and also expended on other comforts of life.

### **Introduction of Western Education**

In Agatu, the colonial regime introduced western education which entails teaching the people the art of writing and reading in English as well as arithmetic principles. Prior to the introduction of western education, the Agatu had a form of moral and traditional education grounded in diverse aspects of life experience. It embraced teaching, both the young and the old, moral values and was well used in meeting the demands of daily life.<sup>31</sup> Colonial education facilitated the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer. People were given education as typists who handled all kinds of documents that enhanced for effective colonization and exploitation. Others were trained as drivers, interpreters and cleaners.<sup>32</sup>

In Agatu land, various schools were established, for example, RCM primary school Agbashi was established in 1955.

### **Changing Pattern in Agatu: Social, Economic and Political Development**

It is argued that with the introduction of colonial rule in Africa, phenomenal transition took place, leading to dramatic changes not only in the traditions, thought, beliefs and action of human inhabitants.<sup>33</sup> Agatu land and, indeed, the people of Doma were also affected by these changes.

In this section, attempt is made to discuss the changes that took place as a result of British establishment of her rule in the study area, which resulted in the transformation of the area socially, economically and politically. Perhaps, to begin with, the establishment of colonial rule discouraged the Agatu traditional religious worship. Religious practices of the Agatu people and Alago people like *keku*, *Ibaku* and *Aklo* were not only discouraged and heavily monitored, but specific campaigns were launched by the colonialists and threats issued to die hard practitioners of the traditional religions.<sup>34</sup>

Hence various villages and communities which contained many avowed traditional worshippers began to lack common ritual sites; such are the characteristics of indigenous Agatu communities in Doma, thus a reflection of breakdown of traditional religion practices.<sup>35</sup> Colonialism also brought about changes in the humanist value system which inherently reconciled material development with moral value and social justice in the pre-colonial era. People began to perceive life from the materialist point of view.<sup>36</sup> It is the loss of this value system that constitutes the greatest intellectual obstacle to the search for a meaningful approach to the economic and social development of tropical Africa.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the structure of traditional village society of the area was undermined because its traditional function became displaced.<sup>38</sup> With the migration of Agatu people to an open land from the forest, government found it difficult now to control the activities of the youths who were no longer directly under the influence of *Igabos*.<sup>39</sup> The roles played by this body (*Igabos*) were taken less seriously as they were more or less becoming local agents of the colonial government and less emphasis was placed on ritual activities and land.<sup>40</sup> Also, social control system such as *Isengwulo* and *Isonwo* which were put in place during the pre-colonial era to ensure compliance with society's norms was brushed aside as archaic, naive, primitive, and repugnant by the colonialists.

The presence of colonial rule also brought about drastic changes in the marriage institution. In pre-colonial Agatu of Doma, the choice of a girl for marriage was the sole responsibility of the groom. But during the colonial period, these arrangement was no longer respected. Prospective suitors had a field day in mate selection. This was further accentuated by the opening up of roads which facilitated the movement of people. Again, in pre-colonial times adultery was abhorred by the Agatu people of Doma, and once it was noticed, the necessary rites were carried out to cleanse those involved but this was discouraged during colonial regime. Similarly, the ease with which divorce could be procured in the courts and tribunal affected the stability of indigenous marriage institution.

Again, prior to British conquest and domination, bride price was paid by the suitor working in the farm of his proposed father-in-law for several years, in addition to sending food stuff to the proposed wife so long as the courtship lasted. Other items for the bride price were paid in kind. This, however, changed to cash in the form of money in place of human labour. The system of divorce also by repayment of the bride price was introduced. In addition, *Enu* period in which the girl was required to spend some time in the proposed husband's house was no longer observed during the colonial period.

Colonialism also took its toll on circumcision and clitoridectomy. Before the advent of colonial rule, male children from five years had to be circumcised while girls underwent clitoridectomy before marriage. Both were not allowed to experience sex before marriage. While it is true that male circumcision continued during the colonial era, the reverse was the case with clitoridectomy. Other changes within the social set up included changes in dresses, changes from round hut to rectangular buildings with features such as windows to facilitate ventilation and adoption of

aluminum in the place of roofing material, use of cement, and painting of the houses. Changes were also seen in the indigenous people's health habits, particularly the prevention and treatment of diseases. The British administered vaccines to prevent the spread of small pox, cholera, malaria and typhoid fever. Also, sanitary measures such as digging of wells and dispensaries for the communities were provided, which changed the source of their drinking water.

In economic spheres, it has been argued that peasant agriculture was allowed and even encouraged which formed the basis of colonial agriculture in colonial Nigeria, and that Lugard's concern was not to disrupt the indigenous social and economic arrangements of the society. This, in fact, is inaccurate; in the first place, the very fact of colonial conquest negates any claim of concern for indigenous institution on the part of Lugard, who himself commanded the military operation of conquest.

Thus, contrary to the Eurocentric view, the imposition of colonial rule disarticulated the Agatu economy by halting the indigenous development of the area. In Agatu land and Agatu people of Doma area, with the presence of British colonial rule, their traditional crafts were influenced in so many ways. The importation and availability of cheap and sub-standard foreign items led to total decline and even the demise of many flourishing crafts of the Agatu people. For instance, the importation of cheap iron bars into the area by the British had an evidently destabilising effect on the people's iron smelting industry, hence local blacksmithing went comatose. The importation of cheap iron and sale of cheap scraps by the railways during the period ensured that local iron and blacksmithing became unnecessary. Again, aluminium pots and spoons and plastic jerry cans became substitutes for storing water. Cooking habits also changed with people using the aluminium pots thus causing a fatal blow on the Agatu pot making industry (local). In the same manner, the craft and weaving industry experienced a drastic decline such that most locally woven products which were revered in the pre-colonial era went into oblivion due to mass importation of European fabrics. The introduction of the Whiteman materials reduced the prosperity of weaving industries of the area as locally woven cloths became less profitable and admirable.

Closely related to the above was wood carving which faced the same fate. Wooden spoons and dishes were replaced with western aluminium or metals. Similarly hunting implements such as spears, bows, arrows, and others were replaced with metals and guns.

In pre-colonial Agatu, the household was the basic unit of production. It was from the family and *Oluma*, a form of rotational co-operative work among age grades, that the household head got the necessary labour for his farms.<sup>41</sup> With colonialism, the need arose for the supplies of raw materials for British industries and to create markets for European manufactured goods. Labour became monetized as people's attentions were geared towards the consumption of the whiteman's goods and payment of taxes.<sup>42</sup>

The basis of any economic foundation is the land. Land in pre-colonial era was communally owned.<sup>43</sup> But with colonialism European concepts of land tenure system became the order of the day. People therefore began to evaluate the use to which land was to be put to use in many ways.

In the area of agriculture, subsistence farming was replaced with cash crop production.<sup>44</sup> The monetization of the economy and the British pressure on the usage of their currency as the only medium of exchange and payment of the new tax also led to changes within the economy. In the first place the people had to produce what the British needed in order to get money for tax.<sup>45</sup> This continued production of cash crops at the expense of other staple foods and the failure to produce such crops on the part of the people meant that almost the whole of his harvest for the year was confiscated to pay the tax, thereby starving the people.<sup>46</sup> This money economy created some form of individualism in the society, that is rich and peasant farmers, which at the end threatened the corporate existence of the extended family structure.

There were also changes in the economic infrastructure, e.g. transportation system. Generally, before the British conquest, means of transportation and communication in Africa depended mainly on head portage.<sup>47</sup> Although these might appear poor and primitive, they found it very difficult to meet the basic transportation demands of the people.<sup>48</sup> Although these traditional means might have met pre-colonial needs, they were grossly unable to meet adequately the ever-increasing demands exerted by the fast changing circumstances generated by colonial imperialism.<sup>49</sup> Thus, owing to the inability of the traditional means of transportation to meet the ever expanding economic activities, the colonial government decided to construct the federal road linking several Agatu communities to Doma town and then Lafia to link the railway line at Lafia town. With this development and the introduction of Lorries, the traditional means of transportation was slightly disorganized.

In the political spheres, the British colonial authority foisted an alien political system of government on Agatu. Thus, a British official attested to this fact when he stated that: "the administration of the time sought the solution to their political problems in perpetuating the powers and influence of aristocracy where they found one". In exceptional cases where the institution of chieftaincy had not previously existed, they vested similar powers in an artificial aristocracy of their own. Chieftaincy institution was thus introduced in the area by the British and, according to the colonial overlord, chieftaincy implies the recognition of an individual as the chief and the legitimization of the power exercised by the individual acting in his official capacity. But the fact of the matter is that Agatu land before the European conquest was a decentralized polity in the sense that the *Ose (Agaba)* who headed the *Igabos* performed both political and religious functions and could not take decisions on his own.

Thus, the introduction of a paramount chief (chiefdom) who replaced the traditional structure of the people meant a complete change in the political arrangement of the people and erosion of the power of the different layers of

political heads and their council members. With this, all the traditional administrative structures like *Igabogonusambali* and *Igabogonyagba* were no longer given the desired attention. The minor chiefs and their council almost usurped their powers. Apart from introducing chieftaincy system as a new element in the political structure, the imposition of native court and tribunals affected the traditional administrative structure since they were alien to the people. This was because people had to travel long distances to Lafia to obtain justice.<sup>50</sup>

There has been a sharp argument by Afrocentric and Eurocentric scholars on the issue of colonialism.<sup>51</sup> Afrocentric scholars are of the view that colonialism disarticulated the development pattern and pace of the colonized; hence, the colonized has suffered from arrested development and underdevelopment. Eurocentric scholars, on the other hand, argues that colonialism brought about positive development among the colonized, including the Agatu. Their argument hinges on the fact that colonialism-built roads, and railways, introduced western education and Christianity, and built hospitals, all of which have served the colonized to their benefits. They further stated that colonialism has delivered Africans from barbaric civilization. Whichever way one may advance his argument concerning colonialism, the truth of the matter is that colonialism in all its ramifications has had profound effects on the socio-political, economic and cultural lives of the Agatu people.

### **The Lingering Socio-Economic Effects of Colonialism on Agatu**

The colonial administration established churches, schools, health clinics and maternity homes. The church (western church) has brought about so many changes in Agatu land. *Aleknu-Agatu's* deity has lost significant population of adherents due to the massive inroad of Christianity in the area. Christianity, through the church, has condemned traditional worship of deities such as *Aleknu*. In *Aleknu* worship, people who commits crime mostly confessed when they are caught. This is because they fear that *Aleknu* can cause death to anybody who commits crime and refuses to confess. In the Christian churches and Islamic mosques, most people secretly commit heinous crimes and go scot-free. Many have been found to be hiding under Christianity to carry out criminal activities in the society.

The European schools brought about by colonialism introduced western education in Agatu land. The advent of Western education, has exposed Agatu to multiple vices common with western values such as greed, individualism lose morals. Education which was hitherto aimed at inculcating moral values such as respect for law and order, respect for elders, and being one's brother's keeper has been distorted. The development of western education in Agatu and elsewhere in Africa has thwarted the indigenous development of Africans.

The health centres and maternity homes introduced by missionaries and colonial authority replaced orthodox medicines. These health facilities have helped

tremendously in addressing some ailments such as malaria, small pox, skin diseases and the nagging challenge of infant and maternal mortality. Commenting on the efficacy of western medicine, Mohammed argued that, "these drugs have helped us truly but they have as well caused damage, as many of the drugs have many negative effects". *Iyu*, on his part contends that, "Western drugs have rather disrupted our indigenous medicines ... They are sold exorbitantly; the West has created the way where they would perpetually be exploiting us...<sup>52</sup> *Achigili* in his own remarks asserted thus "I don't take those drugs that were introduced to us by the white man. The herbs which my grandfathers introduced to us which I have been using since I was young have continued to serve me as good medicine whenever I am sick... and beside jaundiced I have not in my life time suffered from any debilitating ailment."<sup>53</sup>

*Adi* posited that he visits the health clinic in Doma whenever he is sick, and most often gets well.<sup>54</sup> However, whenever he developed pains in his ear, the western drugs administered on him could not solve his problem. It was traditional medicine that cured him of the ailments.<sup>55</sup> *Adi* stressed further that European church and schools have exposed the Agatu to so many immoral values. That Christian and Islamic religions have provided shades where people hide and cause all sorts of negative things. Before the coming of the white man, there was no experience of fighting in the name of religion.<sup>56</sup> It is an irony if Christianity and Islam which assert that they preach peace, love and unity, to have their adherents engage in a continuous battle that claims lives and properties. Western education has rather exposed the Agatu to sophisticated ways of executing crimes in the society.

Colonialism introduced Christianity in Agatu land, and Christianity in turn forbids the practice of marrying many wives. Hitherto, the Agatu were known for marrying more than one wife if a man was capable. The idea of polygamy stemmed from the fact that the greater the number of wives, the higher the chance of having plenty children.<sup>57</sup> Many wives and plenty children in pre- colonial Agatu society implied two major things: first, it accorded a man prestige among his peers and in the general community. Secondly, they provided him labour meant for production. Summarily, many wives and children implied wealth.

Christianity has introduced white wedding. It has been observed that white wedding brings about additional financial strains on couples. This is so because after the traditional way of wedding which involves paying bride price, buying of items such as salt, palm wine, amongst others, the expenses inherent in white wedding adds strain to wedding couples and families. Colonialism has also created room for procreating less as hitherto was the case in the pre-colonial period. The idea of one wife as professed by Christianity reduces the number of children when one has just one wife. According to *Adamu*, "less number of children have had negative impact on agricultural production".<sup>58</sup> *Adamu* asserts further that "since access to tractors and herbicides are a major challenge to us here, we prefer to have plenty children who will provide labour for our agricultural production".<sup>59</sup>

*Inalegwu*,<sup>60</sup> however argues that the young these days don't like to stay in the village and help their parents in the farm. Instead, they prefer to enlist themselves in

schools, staying in the town, either as idle men or to do one wage labour or the other. He succinctly captures it thus:

The young in Agatu land (including his children) prefer to go to the White man's school. They have paid employment in the town, rather than work on the farm. This experience these days is terrible".<sup>61</sup>

In pre-colonial Agatu society, the practice was that the young people worked for their elders and chiefs. Gerontocracy was well respected. But since the commercialization of labour which was introduced in Agatu by the colonial regime, the practice ceased. Elders in contemporary Agatu society directly worked on their farms or pay for labourers to work for them. It has been observed that the practice before colonialism was better as it took care of even the aged who were without children. In his comments, Imanche<sup>62</sup> argues that "for the aged like me who don't have children and near relations, we cannot farm on our own. It is my candid prayer that government should do something to alleviate our plight". *Agaba* also contends that "since the disarticulation of communal life in Agatu land by the white man, life has become precarious for some of the elderly people, especially those who do not have children and close relations".<sup>63</sup>

Colonialism has also entrenched in Agatu culture English language, Agatu language is nearly going extinct as observed by Ogwuche when he succinctly states as follows:

Most Agatu youths, even men and women in Our contemporary times don't know how to speak nor do they understand Agatu. They only understand the foreign language, (referring to English language).<sup>64</sup>

Traditional dresses which hitherto existed in Agatu such as *Tikidi* or *Oiki* have gone extinct, so also have traditional liquor-*Ize*. The implication of this is that Agatu's scientific and technological enterprise can no longer be expressed. European science and technology now hold sway in Agatu land. Consequently, the Agatu are dependent on European science and technology. The extended consequence of this dependence on European science and technology is economic exploitation of the Agatu by the Europeans. This phenomenon is seen in almost all African and other third world countries.<sup>65</sup> Overdependence of Africa on Europe and the rest of the developed nations has greatly hampered Africa's growth and development, hence the prevalence of high incidence of poverty in Africa.

Prior to the emergence of colonialism in Agatu Land, the Agatu main economic activity was agricultural production. They produced a wide variety of agricultural products, such as yam, cassava, maize which provided them food security. Colonialism, however, introduced cash money, cash crops, waged/forced labour and taxation. Taxes were to be paid in European currency-pounds, pence and shillings. The colonial regime needed cash money for the day-to-day running of the administration of the colony. Thus, the introduction of the above placed the Agatu people in a vicious circle of making cash money for the Europeans to run the colony,

at the former's expense. The springboard for which this circle rested on was taxation. The Agatu people were compelled to pay one form of tax or the other in pound sterling. What did they do to acquire cash to pay the taxes? They necessarily must produce a cash crop which would be sold to the colonialists at determined prices. As expected, the colonialists never paid commensurate prices to the Agatu farmers and others who offered one service or the other in the exchange that took place.<sup>66</sup>

Some Agatu also engaged themselves in wage labour so as to earn cash money and pay taxes, Meanwhile, the production of cash crops hindered the bountiful production of food crops, as the labour requirements to embark on the production of both were most often inadequate. The result was that most families experienced perennial food shortages and hunger.<sup>67</sup> The negative impact of these colonial activities was that instead of speeding up growth and development, they rather speeded up the decay and impoverishment of the Agatu people.<sup>68</sup>

Some Agatu men abandoned farming when they were forcefully recruited to work on the colonial infrastructural development projects such as railway, construction of schools, lock up cells, rest places and resorts etc. Such men never had the opportunity to farm again. Meanwhile, the stipends which they were paid as wages were normally not enough for them to buy enough food for their family members. Their absence however, in most cases disrupted how work could be organized and executed in their families. This phenomenon also caused food insecurity in some Agatu families. There were other men who though were predominantly wage earners still embraced farming and agricultural production. These were those whose places of work were within their locality. These categories of Agatu however were in most circumstances unable to produce enough food for their families. This was because since they were engaged in dual production engaging in waged labour and agricultural production- their attention was divided in between and so they could not produce enough food crops.

Forced and wage labour also brought hardship and underdevelopment to Agatu land. Agatu people who were conscripted to work in road and railway constructions and mining etc. were not paid what was commensurate with the labour they offered. The Agatu were thus compelled to commoditize their labour as well as their agricultural activities at the expense of their development.

Prior to the advent of colonialism, the Agatu were involved in long distance trade and the booming regional trade in salt with the salt producing communities of Keana and Obi. Colonialism however introduced European salt in the region. This European salt disrupted the trade in local salt. The traders hitherto involved in this trade took to other colonial economic activities where they sold their labour at cheap rates. They provided labour for railway and road construction, the mining. etc.

## **Conclusion**

This paper unfolded how Agatu people of Doma were brought under British Colonial rule through brute force and political subjugation and occupation of their land by forces and agents of imperialism such as European companies, missionaries and colonial administrative mechanism. Beyond the trauma of the conquest, the colonial regime introduced, new cash crops, new general-purpose currency, imposed taxation, levied people through their chiefs for forced labour and the construction of infrastructure such as offices, railways, roads and markets. Most fundamentally, colonization changed the economic, social and political life of Agatu and her neighbors in the most dramatic ways throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

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