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The Development of Underdevelopment in Andoni (Obolo) of the Niger Delta

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ABSTRACT

Andoni (Obolo), the earliest settlers in the eastern Niger Delta, is one of the most underdeveloped in the region in the post-colonial era. It is this paradox that the present study aims to explain by identifying the causative factors and analyse the historical origins of the underdevelopment trajectory in Andoni (Obolo). Adopting an eclectic theoretical and methodological approach utilizing archival records, oral tradition sources, commission reports, published and unpublished works, this article explains the dynamics of the interaction of external, internal, and environmental factors in the development of underdevelopment in Andoni (Obolo) in a historical perspective. The study shows that Andoni had started negotiating its development pathway from the pre-colonial period, but became blocked by the historical factors of the trans-Atlantic trades; British colonialism; environmental constraints; internal schisms; and the post-colonial politics of patrimonialism, resource predation and primitive accumulation that collectively caused the underdevelopment of the social formation. The work concludes that modern-day Andoni (Obolo) is a manifest product of the interaction of environmental constraints, external factors of near perpetual subjugation and internal social forces of underdevelopment.

Keywords: Andoni, Backwardness, Development, Marginalisation, Underdevelopment.

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of underdevelopment of rural societies has become a critical issue in the contemporary political economy of Nigeria. It has generated considerable debate bordering on the historical origins and theoretical perspectives to overcome it. Its complexity in the Niger Delta makes the transformation of the societies in the region difficult. The discourse on the underdevelopment of African societies has always been framed to portray it as exclusively the product of the dynamics of exogenous factors (Rodney 2009: 26). Arising from this background is the need for an inquiry into the historical origins of the problems of contemporary rural backwardness and the crisis of development in Andoni (Obolo) to deconstruct this orthodox stereotype, and offer an alternative prism. The primary objective of the work is to explain the paradox why Andoni, the earliest settlers in the eastern Niger

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Delta and the first to interact with the Europeans, would become the most underdeveloped in the region in the contemporary period. The uniqueness of this study is embedded in its specificity to avoid the obvious generalisations that characterised a large body of literature on the causes of underdevelopment in African social formations.

Andoni, an ethnic group speaking the Obolo language, are the earliest settlers in the eastern Niger Delta (Anene 1966: 7). Geographically, it is bounded on the West by Bonny, on the East by Opobo and Ibibio, on the North by Ogoni, and on the South by the Atlantic Ocean. Its territory is broken into numerous islands by a network of salt-water rivers, rivulets, creeks and estuaries. The Imo (Nkon-Toru) River cuts it into two major halves, East and West, in the present-day Akwa Ibom and Rivers States respectively (Ejituwu 1991). Andoni is regarded as the ancestral home of the Oron and Ibeno groups in Akwa Ibom State; some Ohafia groups in Abia State (Uya 1984, Ejituwu 1991); some groups in Abalama, Ido, Kula, Tombia in Kalabari; and Ogoloma, Ogu and Bolo in Okrika (Horton 1998, Ejituwu 1991). Andoni is largely a republican society with tutelary heads over component segments and not a city-state. It developed well organised socio-cultural and political institutions that collectively demonstrated a stable system, as well as relevant rudimentary tools and mechanisms that enhanced the people's adaptability to the dynamics of the hunting and gathering economy in its post-settlement period.

The development of specialised economic activities of fishing and indigenous salt-making launched the people into the prospective local long-distance trade with the Ogoni, Ndoki, and Ibibio neighbours prior to the advent of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the Ibani (Bonny) in the Niger Delta (Anene 1966: 7). The end of the Andoni dominance of the slave trade occasioned by the end of the Portuguese era, the silting of its estuary, and the emergence of the Dutch, Britain and Bonny, led to its peripheralisation in the Atlantic economy. It deepened in the nineteenth-century commercial transition which created the social and economic conditions that initiated British colonial rule in Nigeria that subjugated Andoni under Opobo and Bonny, and attendant socio-political and economic marginalisation in the post-colonial era (Asuk 1996: 67-8). Meanwhile, even under the weight of British colonialism, the Andoni demonstrated a resilient spirit in the traditional fishing occupation and generated enormous wealth that marvelled the colonial officials who saw 'no signs of poverty among the people' (Knight 1927: 5). Historical evidence pointed to the fact that post-colonial politics of marginalisation and exclusion, patrimonialism, resource predation, and primitive accumulation only heightened Andoni's underdevelopment and rural backwardness.

Methodologically, three theoretical perspectives were utilised to reinforce the core argument of this work. Firstly, with reference to the modernisation paradigm (Offiong 1980; Rodney 2009: 161-174), it is argued that western colonialism, the most strategic medium through which the transmission of modernity was expected, emerged as a basic mechanism of the underdevelopment of Andoni. Secondly, it is argued that the dependency status of African societies like Andoni is the outcome of its forceful integration into the exploitative international capitalist system which manifested internal inequality, bred the alliances between local classes and international capital, and produced authoritarian forms of government in the post-colonial era (Caporaso and Zare 1981: 44-6). Thirdly, in order to account for the role of environmental factors (Peet 1991: 15) in the underdevelopment of Andoni, it is argued that the physical and social environment of the Niger Delta where Andoni belong is both tyrannical and unfriendly. The data for this work were derived from primary and secondary sources which include: archival records, oral tradition, commission reports, published and unpublished works.

Structurally, the work is divided into seven sections which include: the introduction, the analysis of the theoretical and conceptual framework, and the examination of pre-colonial developments in Andoni before the advent of Europeans. This is succeeded by the discussion of the beginnings of underdevelopment in Andoni from the period of the Atlantic trades. It is followed by an overview of the impact of colonial dynamics in the underdevelopment of Andoni, the role of the post-colonial Nigerian-state and the negative environment in the underdevelopment of Andoni. The last section of the work is the conclusion.

2. Andoni (Obolo) and the Development/Underdevelopment Debate

Development and underdevelopment are inherently related and comparative (Myint 1980: 7-8, Offiong 1980: 73). Development is a normative concept involving a multidimensional process and

conditions of progressive change and social transformations (McLean and McMillan 2003: 148; Adeyemo 2003: 11; Rodney 2009: 1). It reflects man's ability to exploit his environment for increased general social welfare, improve economic and quality of life, and the increasing satisfaction of basic needs (McLean and McMillan 2003: 148). Man's progression from the use of crude stone tools to the use of metals; the transition from hunting and gathering economic activities to specialised fishing and salt-making; the domestication of animals and growing of food and cash crops; and, the movement to the organisation of work in a social character, are the most critical dimension of development (Austen 1987; Rodney 2009: 1-3).

On the other hand, underdevelopment is the outcome of a truncated development through certain historical processes (Rodney 2009: 3-4, Offiong 1980). It implies a state of unsatisfactory societal well-being compared to existent conditions elsewhere (Adeyemo 2003: 14), or concrete conditions of loss of self-reliance, dependent survival, and lack of advancement (Rodney 2009: 17; Ake 1980: 55). It generates backwardness and promotes inequality, dependency, poverty and social conflicts. According to Himmelstrand (1994: 19), 'underdeveloped societies are societies which, as a result of colonialism or later neo-colonial dependency, have increasing difficulties in solving some of their basic problems of subsistence without foreign inputs'. The development of underdevelopment refers to the evolution of the processes of a general societal retrogression.

The debate on the development of underdevelopment has been dominated by the modernisation, dependency, and environmental determinism theoretical paradigms. The modernisation thesis, popularized by W.W. Rostow in his *The Stages of Economic Growth* (2003: 123-131), argues that non-western economies are underdeveloped because their traditional societal structures and institutions have been sustained to impede development. To the modernists, the traditional society remained undeveloped due to the existence of extended kinship structure with multiplicity of functions, little spatial and social mobility, a deferential stratification system, mostly primary economic activities, a tendency towards autarchy of societal units, an undifferentiated political structure with traditional elitists and hierarchical sources of authority (Valenzuela and Valenzuela 1981: 18). It emphasised the replacement of traditional institutions, ideas, values and structures with western ones for the attainment of societal development. However, western colonialism, which constituted the most strategic medium through which the transmission of modernity was expected, emerged as the basic mechanism of dependency of the underdeveloped on the western societies. Thus, modernisation dynamics directly produced dependency (Offiong 1980; Rodney 2009: 161-174).

On their part, the *dependencia* examined the link between contemporary underdevelopment and past economic and social history in the emergent internal structures and conditions of the underdeveloped economies as part of the world economy (Frank 1970: 4; Santos 2003: 278). They demonstrated that underdevelopment was the result of the same historical processes that generated capitalist economic development in the West, and the determined outcome of the historical relationship between the dominant centre and subordinate periphery through external control mechanisms like colonialism (Frank 1967; Frank 1970: 9). However, Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (cited in McLean and McMillan 2003: 146) de-emphasised Frank's deterministic typology. The dependency status of Andoni is the outcome of the forceful integration of vulnerable social formations into the exploitative international capitalist system which disintegrated and disconnected their various component parts. This forceful integration distorted the internal system and manifested internal inequality in the periphery, bred the alliances between local classes and international capital, and produced authoritarian forms of government in the post-colonial era (Caporaso and Zare 1981: 44-6). The structural distortions and alliances produced systematic marginalisation of some social groups whose reactions evolved the culture of poverty, 'an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified ... society' (Lewis 2003: 250). The causes of economic backwardness in African social formations like Andoni are all exogenous, while what exist in them are symptoms of underdevelopment and secondary causative factors of poverty (Rodney 2009: 26).

Beyond the *dependencia* are the environmental determinists who suggested that societies occupying different natural environments are differently endowed in the struggle for survival, and predisposed them towards particular development trajectories (Peet 1991: 15). The Niger Delta environment where Andoni belong is both tyrannical and unfriendly. The communities of the Niger Delta "have never had even an opportunity of emerging from the grip of an environment that has

arrested development and kept them in the same backward condition of their forefathers" (Leonard 1968: 1). The social environmental dynamics appeared even more critical as societies in this environment struggling for survival exploit differential opportunities and resources at the detriment of disadvantaged neighbours in ethnic competition. The present work adapted a macro-state level analytical matrix to an explanation of a micro-society condition within the framework of an eclectic methodological approach that combined the three theoretical perspectives and internal political economy dialectics to explain the historical processes of underdevelopment in Andoni (Obolo).

3. Aspects of Andoni Indigenous Developments in the pre-European Era

From her settlement period to the sixteenth century, Andoni was on the path of progressive and transformative evolution. The republican patriarchal Andoni society evolved numerous communal monarchies and socio-cultural institutions, developed a high level of sophistication and theocracy woven around a national god, *Yok-Obolo*, and a pantheon of gods with priests exercising the most profound influence on the society. Below it was the *Ofiokpo*, a strictly male-dominated cult with such strategic executive and judicial functions as punishment of defaulters of communal laws, collection of taxes and tributes, maintenance of law and order, and ensuring observance of traditions and customs to enhance socio-political stability. *Aman-Obolo*, the national women cult regulated the activities of the womenfolk for cultural and traditional sustainability (Ejituwu 1991; Asuk 1996: 37).

During the hunting and gathering economy, Andoni evolved effective means and techniques like *ufe* (trap) to intensify their expeditions following the failure of *ekan* (a sound-producing mechanism) to ward off dangerous animals (Asuk 1996: 16-17). The salt-water environment influenced the evolution of the fishing and salt-making specialised economic activities that reached its peak in the sixteenth century with profound impressionable impact on the fifteenth-century Portuguese visitors (Ejituwu 1978: 30). Fishing and salt-making generated sufficient internal long-distance commercial exchanges between Andoni and such hinterland neighbours as Ogoni, Ndoki, and Ibibio. The Andoni were adroit in their fishing economy and dominated the coastal areas and rivers of the eastern and western Niger Delta regions (Ejituwu 1991: 49). This fishing economy encouraged individualism, enterprise and achievement in all spheres of life (Horton 1969: 44). The local long-distance trade provided their base capital for entry into the trans-Atlantic slave trade with the Portuguese, enhanced the development of diplomatic relations with the hinterland societies, and cultural integration and innovation (Asuk 1996: 30-1).

By the thirteenth century, Andoni had evolved a well-organised taxation and tribute system in which 'all males were subjected to a flat rate of four *manillas* payable at the feast of *Ibot-acha* (New Year)' (Jeffreys 1930; Ejituwu 1978: 31). At the turn of the nineteenth century came an income tax payable upon one's wealth and the size and number of canoes when the *Okwut* (Mahogany tree) came into flower at the beginning of the dry season. The Portuguese got to Andoni before mid-fifteenth century in search of gold and ivory² and introduced *ekwe* (manillas) of various sizes as currency to facilitate the emergent commercial exchange (Alagoa 1970; Ejituwu 1978: 31-4). Eastern Niger Delta communities were already exchanging her dried fish, salt and crafts for slaves (*ebi-usun*) from the hinterland for incorporation into their households as wives or children for expanded labour force before the advent of Europeans (Horton 1969: 44; Hopkins 1973: 23; Ejituwu 1991: 66). Some of these slave later became leaders and kings like King Esoyork Asuk of Asarama, and Chief Job Ogbilikan of Dema (Unyeada) (Eneyo 1981: 37-8).

Similarly, contrary to long-held views that Andoni merchants did not sell their kiths and kin into the Atlantic slave trade, historical evidence demonstrated that its communities were raided by indigenous merchants like Nna Biget of Unyeangala, whose raiding activities like those of Agbaniye Jike of Bille in the Kalabari, caused massive movement of populations (Asuk 2014: 8). Ejituwu (1981: 19) noted that European slave dealers like John Barbot and John Brazilhler bought slaves, ivory and livestock in Andoni, and confirmed that 'the price of slaves in Obolo was cheaper than in Bonny'. The Andoni also competed with Elem Kalabari and Bonny for slaves in the hinterland markets very far from

² Oral traditions offered by Clinton Z. Utong, Loveday Uneh and certain Andoni war songs recanting Andoni-Portuguese relations, especially the war between them in the sixteenth century pointed to this fact.

the coast (Jones 1963: 37-8). Orlando Patterson (1975: 123) demonstrated that the Andoni constituted almost five percent of the entire slave populations in Jamaica.

The commercial transition from slaves to agricultural produce in the nineteenth century evoked certain forces of social and economic change, and peculiar conditions in the Afro-European relations that culminated in the imposition of colonial rule. Andoni participation in the palm oil trade occasioned such historical developments and events as the Old Unyeada (Andoni)-Bonny wars of 1826 and 1846, the settlement of Jaja in Andoni 1869 and founding of Opobo in 1970, Jaja-Ibeno war of 1881, and the British declaration of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1885 (Ejituwu 1981: 17-33). British colonialism in Nigeria from 1900 heightened Andoni progressive decay like many other Niger Delta communities exposed to a number of vicissitudes after centuries of great prosperity (Anene 1966: 325, Walker 2003: 348, Okorobia 2012: 48). According to Ekeh (1972: 93), 'colonialism is to Africa what feudalism is to Europe ... they have determined the peculiar characteristics of modernity in each of these areas'.

4. The development of underdevelopment in Andoni (Obolo): The pre-colonial era

Though the Atlantic slave trade led to the emergence of a merchant class in Andoni, it announced the onset of the dramatic reconfiguration of its socio-political structures. Besides foreclosing the development of the indigenous specialised prosperous salt-making industry, it opened the window to the strange attempt at the centralisation of traditional political power under the ruler of a segment over the entire Andoni society, similar to a city-state structure, and evolved the *Oru*, the Andoni traditional council (Eneyo 1991: 40). The emergent rudimentary form of political centralisation in Andoni was due to commercial rivalries and wars prompted by the arrival of the *Ibani* (Bonny) on the *Rio Real* following the development of the slave trade. This novel political practice began with the selection of King Ogbolikana of Old Asarama as the first pseudo-king of Andoni (*Okaan-Obolo*). Subsequently, the practice generated pre-colonial intra-Andoni and personality rivalries and conflicts so that the High Priests (*Obran Yok-Obolo*) acted as Andoni leaders in periods of interregna.

Commercial dynamics, spirits (*gin*), and arms associated with the transaction in slaves compelled African suppliers to aggressively embark on slave raids and wars to satisfy the interests of European slave merchants (Awolowo 1977: 21). Intra-Andoni raids for slaves destroyed communities like Okwala and caused the movement of the *Ewile* lineage from Unyeangala during the reign of Nna Biget to found Ido in Kalabari, while inter-communal wars caused the massive dispersions of groups out of Asaramatoru to different parts of the eastern Niger Delta (Asuk 2014: 9; Horton 1998: 195-255). The trade brought Andoni into the real world of inter-ethnic rivalry for control of trade routes or access to hinterland markets, resulting in the Andoni-Bonny wars of 1690-7 and 1702-1708 (Jones 1963: 135-6; Enemugwem 2000: 108), alliance constructions and diplomacy in the eastern Niger Delta (Asuk 2013)³. The end of Portugal's dominance and monopoly in 1640 (Boogaart 1992: 382), and the ascendancy of Britain caused the diversion of trade from the Andoni ports of Old Asarama and Ilotombi to Bonny (Ejituwu 1991: 71), as Portugal's human and economic resources proved unequal to the burden of imperial ventures when challenged by the Dutch, French and English with superior military and naval chests (Dike 1956: 2; Ryder 1965: 226).

The trade diversion caused Andoni's marginalisation in the Atlantic economy from the early decades of the eighteenth century (Cookey 1974: 40; Ejituwu, 1991). From then on, Andoni slave merchants struggled to utilise the port facilities of Bonny, which has become a clearinghouse and Africa's greatest slave market (Njoku 2007: 118). The nineteenth-century commercial transition heightened inter-city-states rivalry and Andoni's marginalisation (Asuk 2013: 146-65). Its struggles for control of access to the hinterland markets and retention of a middleman role conflicted with Bonny desire to break her monopoly for free passage (Alagoa and Fombo 1972; Alagoa 1980: 252; Asuk 1996: 45). Britain saw Andoni's struggles as intolerable trade disruptions and acts of subversion prompting an

³ Commercial rivalries among trading states in the pursuit of conflicting interests always resulted in wars and the construction of fluid alliances or covenants cemented with human blood to achieve a balance of power or increase states' capabilities against perceived mutual security threats upon the outbreak of hostilities in a multipolar system like the Niger Delta.

Anglo-Bonny alliance which outcome was a fake 'Andoni-Bonny Treaty of 1846' that reduced the former to a vassal of the latter (Ejituwu 1989: 59-74; Eneyo 1991: 67)⁴.

Andoni, however, also struggled to send her oil trading canoes through all the hazards of the long stretch of creeks to the Old Calabar port (Eneyo 1991: 102), while Bonny dominance of the palm oil economy on the African periphery was severely affected by the internal crisis of 1869 that warranted the evacuation of Jaja's Annie Pepple House and the founding of Opobo in 1870. Andoni's acceptance to resettle the Jaja's group between the strategic Otu-Nkon (Nkon-toru) now Imo River facilitated by two European traders, Comte C. N. de Cardi and Arthur McEachean later worked against her commercial interest (Ejituwu 2004: 35). This Andoni's silent determination to diplomatically block Bonny's access to the hinterland markets and divert British palm oil merchants to the Andoni territory was altered by Jaja's erratic commercial manipulation of the Anglo-Bonny established apathy towards his host (Eneyo 1991: 104-110). Bonny had lied to Consul Livingstone that allowing British trading ships and diversion of trade to Andoni 'will be but another road to the oil markets inferior to that of Bonny' (Eneyo 1991: 106). On his part, Jaja wrote to Lord Granville stating that

In my letter to the Consul, I have explained how the treaty of 1846 between Bonny and Andoni if applicable now, applies to me, and not to Manilla Pepple House, for it cannot be denied by any one conversant with the facts, that since I was acknowledged King of Opobo in 1873, the Andonis have been looked upon and treated as my subjects⁵.

Jaja successfully diverted the palm oil trade to Opobo and effectively checkmated the penetration of Christianity and Western education into Andoni (Okorosaye-Orubite 1990: 85-6, Ejituwu 2004: 29; Naanen 2006:79). However, Jaja's ambition to checkmate European penetration of the hinterland markets to resolve the crisis of the 1870 economic depression brought him into collision with Britain's economic interests (Hopkins 1973: 146-8). British firms ignored the provisions of the 1873 Anglo-Opobo Pact and penetrated Qua Iboe to trade directly with the Ibeno to warrant Jaja's attack on Ibeno (Andoni) in 1881 (Talbot 1926: 207-11; Ejituwu 1991: 145), Britain's declaration of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1885 and Jaja's deportation in 1887 (Ejituwu 1981: 25). By 1900, the Oil Rivers Protectorate had become part of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria with headquarters at Calabar and the official beginning of colonial rule in Nigeria.

5. Colonial dynamics and the underdevelopment of Andoni

Colonial rule heightened the spectre of the underdevelopment of Andoni (Asuk 1996: 70). The passage of the 'Ordeal, Witchcraft and Juju Proclamation' in 1903 prompted the punitive expedition of 1904 and the destruction of Yok-Obolo shrine, the detention of the Paramount Ruler (*Okaan-Ama*) of Agwut-Obolo (the sanctuary of the Andoni) at Degema, the destruction of *Ofiokpo* (the traditional police system) and *ifum* (the traditional prison system), the wanton destruction of cultural artefacts of the people, and day-light robbery of Andoni antiquities (Owonte 1978: 16). The traditional political establishment cults and institutions in Andoni that constituted the bulwarks of the social dynamics of the people were interpreted as dysfunctional and uncivilised. Therefore, the punitive expedition 'was strategically employed to manipulate the psyche of the Andoni leadership' (Eneyo 1988: 4), and change the orientation and attitudes of the people towards the institutionalisation of colonial rule (Asuk 1996: 71-2). Punitive expeditions were necessary to eliminate the competition that official law courts face from the traditional and cultural institutions (Tamuno 1972: 35-6).

British Indirect Rule system suppressed Andoni under her neighbouring ethnic groups of Opobo, Bonny and Ibibio and the strange authority of warrant chiefs who presided over the colonial Native Courts, which the Andoni attended. The entire Andoni was balkanised and organised into four clans with Ngo, Okoroete, and Unyead and Asarama in the Opobo Division of Calabar Province; and

⁴ The 'Andoni-Bonny Treaty of 1846' is considered 'a diplomatic curiosity' due to the circumstances of its origins (Ejituwu 1989: 59-74). Oral traditions of Niger Delta city-states acknowledged that Andoni won the 1846 Andoni-Bonny war to which this treaty is referred, but a peace covenant was reached by traditional blood oath-taking for peaceful co-existence and interaction. While Nkoro was not an Andoni village, the Andoni communities on the treaty document had no knowledge of its existence and did not participate in any treaty-making parley summoned by any British agents. More so, by 1846, Britain had not been involved in settling crises among Niger Delta city-states, which only started after the establishment of Consular Rule in 1849. The document has not been found in any European sources or archives (Dike 1956).

⁵ F.O.403/18 292n. No.3 King Jaja to Granville, 28 July, 1881.

Ataba in the Degema Division of Owerri Province. The Andoni of Ngo clan attended Native Courts at Opobo Town; those of Okoroete clan attended Native Courts at Ukam, Essene and Ibeno; those of Unyeada clan, including Asarama, attended Native Courts at Bori and Kono; and those of Ataba attended Native Court at Bonny in the Degema Division (Ejituwu 1991: 167). Apart from imposing the transition from the traditional means of problem solving and conflict management to the modern system of petition-writing and litigations, it heightened the structures of group differentiation, social disorientation and disarticulation, political subordination, accelerated underdevelopment and national disintegration.

The Colonial Administrative Officer at Opobo, M. D. W. Jeffreys (1930) confirmed that the colonial intention of splitting Andoni was to 'detrribalise' the people who were always in unison when confronted by matters of external origins. It was a British colonial instrument for the liquidation of the socio-cultural and political strength of the people and subjugation under Opobo (Asuk 1996: 73). According to Cooley (1974: 88), 'gradually, the whole of Andoni began to be known as Opobo, although the latter constituted a small minority of the population in the area'. The Opobo began to see the Andoni as *nkpokoro* (nonentity), while Andoni (Obolo) Oru was closed in 1926 at the instigation of Chief Mac-Pepple Jaja of Opobo. According to Afigbo (1972: 261-2),

The Andoni were the owners of the island on which Opobo stands and had leased it to King Jaja after his flight from Bonny ... The establishment of the Opobo Native Court and the inclusion of the Andoni in it strengthened Opobo's unjustifiable pretensions. Through the Native Court, heads of Opobo houses made the Andoni supply them with timber, mud, mats and other building materials without any payment. The Andoni who spoke different language from the Opobo and had no representatives in the court, never won any case, in which Opobo men were on the other side ... the Opobo Native Court, which was supported by the might of the colonial government, was, for the Andoni, the most hated manifestation of Opobo imperialism.

Several boycotts to protest their maltreatment at Opobo and demand for a Native Court prompted the conduct of three political studies of Andoni. While Dr. C. K. Meek supported Jeffreys' recommendation for the establishment of a Native Court for Andoni, Mr. E. Falks suggested the subjection of Andoni to a higher taxation and a lump sum assessment to test her qualification (Eneyo 1991: 123). However, a Native Court was approved by the Governor and declared open by Mr. Cheeseman, the District Officer for Opobo, in 1931 at Agafor, Andoni, while the Oru was rejuvenated in 1933 (Asuk 1996: 75-6). British colonial activities 'coalesced to limit Andoni barely to the periphery of colonial rule and sought to give to Opobo, the rights of ownership of Andoni territory which King Egongo had, in a previous period, fought hard to preserve ...' (Eneyo 1991: 123)⁶.

Between 1900 and 1931, the entire revenue generated in Andoni through direct taxation was wholly spent in developing Opobo and paying stipends to Chief Mark Pepple Jaja (Eneyo 1991: 133). Britain wholeheartedly surrendered all socio-political and economic incentives that Andoni deserved to Opobo to emphasise the impression that the former was a dependency of the latter (Asuk 1996: 76). The traditional (paramount) rulers and canoe-house chiefs became subordinate to the warrant chiefs as the one appointed as President of the Native Court was granted kingly rights and privileges. According to Sorgwe (1989: 132),

The 1904 colonial interference in the internal affairs of the Andoni adversely affected the Andoni institution of Okan-Obolo (Paramount Ruler). The traditional court of justice, the ORU, was replaced by the Andoni Native Court. The chiefs who served in the Native Court established by the colonial authority were not recognized by the Andoni people. The people expressed their dissatisfaction by asking the colonial authorities to re-establish the ORU traditional court. The Andoni case is a good illustration of the fundamental faults of the warrant chiefs system by which rulers were imposed on communities.

Chiefs Ereforokuma Arong of Ngo and John Ikuru of Ikuru Town, both of the Ngo Clan, contested for the leadership of the Andoni Native Court and polarised the Oru. The subsequent recognition of Chief Ereforokuma Arong of Ngo as President of the Oru and payment of 10% rebate to

⁶ Engogo was an Andoni King on the Qua Iboe River axis who granted Mr. George Watts, a British merchant, the rights to settle and trade on the Qua Iboe River to the chagrin of Jaja.

him originated contemporary cleavages in the Andoni chieftaincy institution. His opponent, Chief John Ikuru, whose mother was Opobo, plotted his fall with petitions to the District Officer accusing him of embezzlement and deepened the fracturing of the social formation (Asuk 1996: 77-8)⁷. Andoni had to contend with competing claims to the non-existent pseudo-*Okaan-Obolo* (King of Andoni) stool, with the struggles between traditional and warrant chiefs for recognition by government, and with the colonial subjugation of Andoni under Opobo (Asuk 1996: 78). Consequently, no chieftaincy stool in Andoni was recognised and classified as *First* or *Second* class for the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs at Enugu by the G. I. Jones Commission of Enquiry to Identify Chieftaincy Institutions and Chiefs in 1956. Moreover, the Jones Commission refused to set up a special commission of enquiry for Andoni as it did for her neighbours, which recommended the recognition and classification of the *Ados* of Okrika, *Mingis* of Nembe, and *Amachrees* of Kalabari as *First Class* kings. It was only in 2017 that two *First class* stools were created in Andoni after a long period of damaging marginalisation and deprivation.

The British colonial policy of forced labour to achieve her vested economic interests to link the hinterland to the coast through criminal exploitation impinged traumatically on Andoni. Its youths were forcefully recruited to open up such network of roads as the Calabar-Bonny telegraph line in 1910; the Calabar-Bonny-Eket-Opobo coastal forest strip; the road network connecting Oyorokoto at the mouth of the Andoni River with Ngo, Ekede, Ikuru Town and Iko to Agbama at the mouth of the Imo River; and the railway line linking Port Harcourt to Enugu (Ejituwu 1991: 81). The colonial forced labour also took many Andoni youths to Calabar in Nigeria, Tiko and Douala in Cameroon, and Fernando Po (Panya) in Equatorial Guinea, through Opobo colonial labour recruitment agents like J. S. Uranta (Ejituwu 1991: 81, Osuntokun 1992: 89). Psychologically, it caused the development of profound apathy among Andoni youths towards even paid employment in the colonial establishments. Economically, it caused the death of many thriving industries, technologies and indigenous craftsmanship, and the retardation of local technological development, while the importation of European manufactured goods as substitutes for locally-made items collapsed the critical aspect of the local economy (Ejituwu 1991: 186).

6. The post-colonial Nigerian-state and the underdevelopment of Andoni

Post-colonial Nigerian-state heightened the colonial fracturing of Andoni by dividing it between the Rivers and South-Eastern States in 1967, and Rivers and Akwa Ibom States in 1987, to increase its vulnerability, and throw it into perpetual obscurity. The inclusion of her western part in the Bonny Local Government Area following the merger with Rivers State in 1976 rather than making it a full-fledge local council area was devastating. The Federal Electoral Commission's (FEDECO) constituency delimitation exercise of 1979 dropped Andoni population from 66,506 in 1963 to 41,064 culminating in the loss of one of its seat in the Rivers State House of Assembly in Nigeria's Second Republic (Eneyo 1988: 11). It also affected Federal Government's subsequent creation of Local Government Councils as Andoni was denied appropriate recognition and attendant infrastructural development. The intensity of post-colonial marginalisation and underdevelopment of Andoni prompted Ataba's initial rejection of belonging to the newly created Andoni/Opobo Local Government Area in 1991 preferring to remain in the Bonny Local Government Area⁸.

Prior to 1991, political appointments from Bonny Local Government Area into State Boards, Committees, and Statutory Commissions were skewed in favour of Bonny and Opobo: Bonny had twenty-one superior positions with seventeen for Opobo and four weak ones for Andoni. Moreover, Andoni's thirty-nine primary schools were administered from Opobo with only nine. A science centre was allocated to Opobo with two secondary schools, and another to Bonny with three secondary schools, whereas Andoni with nine secondary schools had none (Asuk 1996: 94). Following General Ibrahim Babangida's acceptance of the Ibrahim Dasuki Report on Local Government Reforms, the Fidelis Oyakhilome-led Military Administration in Rivers State (1984-86) appointed councillors from Bonny and Opobo with none from Andoni with over fifty percent of the total population of the Local

⁷ While Chief Ereforokuma Arong died of the frustration of these circumstances, a grandson of Chief John Ikuru, His Majesty, King Aaron Miller Ikuru, has been recognised as a *First Class* traditional ruler in Rivers State.

⁸ In a Memorandum to the Resident Electoral Commissioner, National Electoral Commission, Port Harcourt, on behalf of Ataba Community, Chiefs O. G. Ogbulujah and E. E. Igbifa recalled the disorientation of the colonial rule due to Ataba's separation from the rest of Andoni and her inclusion in the Degema Province demonstrating that it is safer for the community to remain with Bonny rather than with other Andoni communities.

Government Area, while the Ngo (Andoni) campus of the Rivers State School of Basic Studies was removed to heighten educational underdevelopment (Asuk 1996: 95-6).

Environmentally, Old Asarama lost her pre-eminent position in the slave trade to Bonny due to the shallowness of her embarkation port (Ejituwu 1991: 69), while Bonny port naturally handled the largest ships and became the clearing house (Njoku 2007: 118). According to de Cardi (cited in Ejituwu 1981: 18-19),

during the slave dealing days, the Andoni were well known to the Europeans as the Bonny people, but owing to the greater measure to the deeper water at the entrance to the Bonny River than was to be found on the Andoni River ... the former giving more facilities ... for deep draughted ships, the traders gradually deserted the Andoni River altogether though these people were the original owners of the land that now formed the Bonny Kingdom...

During the colonial era, Henry Willink (1958) noted that 'communications are so difficult, building so expensive and education so scanty' in the Niger Delta. In the post-colonial era, while Bonny emerged as the Nigeria's oil and gas pipeline terminal, Andoni is critically marginalised. It was '... nevertheless necessary for the government to give extra attention to the need for more rapid development in this area' (Akilu 1970). Rather, the Federal Government implemented Justice Maman Nasir-led Boundary Adjustment Commission's adoption of the Imo River as the natural boundary and divided Andoni into West and East between Rivers and Cross River States respectively in 1976, and Akwa Ibom State in 1987.

Post-colonial ethnicity successfully subordinated Andoni under Bonny, Ibibio and Opobo as their appendage with public and private corporate institutions dominated by the Ibani (Bonny and Opobo). Aggravating this condition were the internal schisms and critical structural linkages and vestiges of colonialism. In fact,

The coming of the colonial administration and the introduction of warrant chiefs who were entitled to a 10% rebate on the successful collection of tax from their subjects. This brought in personal sentiments and clashes ... There were those who wanted to become warrant chiefs so that they could get the 10% rebate and among the warrant chiefs themselves, there was rivalry (Ereforokuma 1992: 35).

Complicating the schisms was the struggle by the educated elite for incorporation into the traditional chieftaincy institution thereby generating traditional/modernity contestations and leadership crisis (Akpa 1979: 21, Ejituwu 1991: 213). Its complexity was transformed into intra-generational and intra-class ideological differences, and subsequently became expressed as intra- and inter-communal clashes in the wider social conflicts of the post-colonial period with devastating impact on development⁹.

The advent of the petroleum economy completely reconfigured Andoni, accelerated underdevelopment and misery as the struggles for power and leadership for control of oil spoils rationalised corruption and mismanagement of community wealth, and heightened social conflicts and insecurity. In addition to its pervasive structural linkages with the local economy, 'the availability of crude oil ... made serious inroads into tribal loyalties in the area' (Irikefe 1976), transformed social relations, intensified rural dichotomies, and aggravated rural poverty and inequality in Andoni (Efet 1981: 49-50). The political economy of crude oil profoundly heightened Andoni marginalization and fractured its communities as few elites with access to oil rents developed patron-client linkages mediated by the malignant post-colonial Nigerian-state for its distribution. All oil facilities in the western part were identified under Opobo Channel, while those in the eastern part were classified into Ikot-Abasi's UTAPAETTE location by SHELL BP. The attendant benefits like employment opportunities and other corporate social responsibilities due Andoni were given to Opobo and Ikot Abasi.

After the Andoni-Ogoni conflicts of 1993, the Federal and State Governments, and Multinational Corporations voted funds for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the latter without any in the former. There was a barrage of propaganda of an Andoni-Federal-State Government alliance against Ogoni so that the reverberating effect of this propaganda skewed international attention, support and rehabilitation efforts in favour of Ogoni against Andoni. Currently, the Muhammadu Buhari-led Federal Government has yielded to Bonny false claim over Asaramatoru (Andoni) in the Trunk 'A' road design linking it with Ogoni due to its hosting of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas complex.

The underdevelopment of Andoni worsened in the contemporary predatory and patrimonial politics. The practice of democracy in Andoni rather than opening up the political and economic space contracted it (Asuk 2014: 595). It is characterised by the acquisition of state power for primitive accumulation against the upliftment of the masses with holders of power operating arbitrarily, unaccountable, and far removed from the people. Since political power guarantees unlimited and uncontrolled access to state resources and instruments of authority, it is appropriated for personal and parochial use and advantages. It is complemented by outright manipulation of a plethora of ingenious devices to block the democratisation of development and the accentuation of the criminalisation of politics and militarisation of democracy. These conditions heightened insecurity, social conflicts and the reconfiguration of Andoni communities and the institutionalisation of the culture of poverty reflected in gang wars, kidnapping for ransom, and crude oil theft (illegal bunkering) (Asuk 2013: 255-89). From 1999, Andoni became polarised politically (between political patrons, parties and groups) with attendant proliferation of arms, which gave the unemployed youths an edge and transformed existing social conflicts. Village chiefs involved in power struggles for control of crude oil funds began to align themselves with cult and militia youth groups to eliminate or suppress opponents (Naanen 2004: 4-9). The forceful recruitment of primary and secondary school children into armed groups and illegal crude oil bunkering grossly affected the educational development of Andoni.

7. Conclusions

This work has attempted to analyse the origin of contemporary underdevelopment, rural backwardness and poverty in Andoni. It argued that it is firmly rooted in the patterns of state-society relations in the three eras of pre-colonialism, colonialism and post-colonialism. Underdevelopment generated poverty, social conflicts and rural backwardness. The screening of the inter-related factors and processes through the three-time periods of Andoni history offered the opportunity of understanding the processes of historical change from development to underdevelopment. While the forceful integration of Andoni into the developed capitalist world economy through the pre-colonial Atlantic trades provided the conditioning dynamics for its marginalisation, colonialism systematically subjugated Andoni under her neighbours, progressively pauperised it, and set the template for its continued underdevelopment in post-colonial Nigeria. The deformations resulting from past global history were complicated by the fault lines of contemporary internal politics characterised by the privatisation of the post-colonial state.

Historically generated external and internal processes, and environmentally determined conditions, of dependency in Andoni appear to be gruesomely endemic to allow for the possibility of solving the problems of mass survival or opening up of the democratic space for the institutionalisation of a viable strategy to achieving sustainable development. Andoni history provides a model in the debate on the development of underdevelopment in African social formations. In the post-colonial period, democracy was expected to generate the forces of societal transformation, but was truncated by the culture of corruption, which underpin the politics of predation that has imperilled the very existence of the Andoni nation. Major stakeholders responsible for the health of the society have been bought off and could no longer effectively guard the best interests of the people. Fundamental to the transformation of Andoni and elimination of the deformations is the rise of productive entrepreneurship.

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