

NTE-OSWINA ORACULAR DEITY IN IKWO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: A HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION, 1800-1970

Amiara, Solomon Amiara

*Department of History and International Relations
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki
sologanza@yahoo.com*

&

Kenneth I. Nwokike, Ph.D

*Department of History and International Relations
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki*

Abstract

Nte-Oswina was one powerful deity unknown to the Europeans during the processes of colonialism. A deity whose powers were used to resist British invasion of Ikwo, became prominent following the outbreak of the Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967-1970 about a century ago when the people used the oracle as an instrument of protection. Within this period however, and when the Nigerian soldiers conquered the old Ogaja province and detonated bomb at "Eke Igboji Market", there were several Ikwo people who ran into the Nte-Oswina's forest for protection hence, there were heavy smokes that appeared and covered the forest and began to hypnotize the soldiers until they were driven away by bees. Against this background, this paper seeks to unveil the mystic powers of this deity with the aim of finding out whether the failure to document the activities of Nte-Oswina especially in the area of conflict resolution by Igbo historiographers like other powerful deities such as "Ibinukpabi" and "Igwekala" whose records dominated African history was a deliberate attempt or lack of interest from Igbo historians. Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary methods while data collected were analyzed through the application of historical narration. Preliminary investigation revealed that the unpopularity of this powerful long "juju" wasn't deliberate but rather, lack of interest particularly from the Ikwo people who refused to provide information to early historian that sought to reconstruct the history of the preliterate people like the Ikwo society.

Key Words: Nte-Oswina, Oracular Deity, Traditional society, Historical Synthesis, Conflict Resolution

Introduction

The nature of Igbo societies in the pre-colonial times revealed that Ikwo evolved into strong decentralized political system headed by paramount chiefs who became the leaders of the autonomous communities that exist in Ikwo Local Government today. Peopled in the five principal communities of Alike, Echara, Mgbabu, Unweka and Okpuitumo, the people traced their ancestral father to Enyi Nwengu, who is believed to have migrated from Igala sometime around the mid-10th Century except the few war captives of Nkala-Oswo and Ebier of Ekpa-Omaka in Echara and Mgbabu Autonomous Communities respectively. Each principal community has its own spiritual deity that guides, protects and blesses their farm products every year. This implies that the Ikwo society was highly religious that they believed in spiritualism prior to the incursion of the European imperialism. Among the deities that existed in Ikwo Noyo clan, Nte-Oswina became the most revered and accepted deity among the people and beyond. It was worshipped as the Supreme Being in Ikwo traditional society hence Ikwo was dominated by traditionalists.

Just like other ancient traditional societies, Ikwo imbibed African traditional religion which according to J. Uwalaka was couched most often in mythological, anthropomorphic, mystical, metaphorical and symbolic language that at times defies the logic of contradiction and non-contradiction, while at other times it would require a sound hermeneutic to disengage the latent meaning.¹ whether or not the practice was iconoclastic remains to be determined by Africans themselves but in a strict sense, the people favoured their religion more than the orthodox religions that tend to decimate African cultures, traditions and discriminate between Christianity and other forms of religions. To this extent, one would say that African traditional religion is not a bundle of codified and systematic dogmas but rather belief systems of symbols which provide explanations for the apparent mysteries of existence and also prescribe behavioural patterns through rituals.² The Nte-Oswina oracular deity provides such belief system for analytical discussion of African traditional religion in Ikwo traditional society.

Nte-Oswina was and still a religious doctrine of what was typical of African societies. It is a religious practice of those who believe in its mystical powers to obtain a direct justice against wrong or evil doers. By this, it punishes offenders of justice such as those who involved in poisoning, murderers and ritualists. Without equivocations, it's powers

are so mysterious that can visit his name sakes in the night and men of good hearts with crabs, butterflies, bees and flame of light, while diabolic men and those who incur his wrath are warned with thunder storms and lightening of strange fire on their houses. Appeasement by those warned with thunder lightening is done through sacrificial goats, cow, tubers of yam, pepper, salt, kola nuts and ram. Those whose sacrifices were accepted are usually visited in the mid night with strange crab which will appear at the centre of the parlour, while those who seek the mercy of the oracle normally consult the chief priest and pick a date with him "*ogba te oge*", he will give them list of items to buy and he will on that day perform many incantations. He will call on the deities of the land by breaking the chambers of kola nut into four and uses them for incantation after which he will throw them up and if two fall facing downwards, then it is presumed that the gods have accepted the sacrifice otherwise the man will go back and announce to his family members about his anticipated calamities and sudden death. By this, B. N. Amiara supplied information about the oracle as being mighty whose powers transcend human imagination that people believe he is the creator of the universe. According to him, Nte-Oswina's powers are beyond human explanation, no mortal can explain it and whosoever that incurs his wrath, will be killed with his head chop-off.³

According to their philosophy of life and as a super natural deity, it is believed that Nte-Oswina operates independent of any other god. Its operational areas stretch from Opfia Nkpoke of Ndifu-Echara to Obeguazu Azuoswe in Ndiagu-Echara where he kills some evil men as he makes a journey away from his shrine. Imperatively, those who die within this period of brief journey are usually not buried at home as lizards often climb on their graves to show that they were diabolic and evil. This is in connection with the cultures, customs and traditions of Ikwo Noyo clan. Aside this, basic contentious issues are decided in the shrine through sacrificed cocks that will be denoted by the contestants. The cocks will be killed by the chief priest while the observers of the judgment will carefully cook the cock to determine whose claim is true. Therefore, cock without any dotted spot on its testis is presumed winner while the loser of the case will be asked to appease the god or face its wrath. In fact, this was mainly to serve as an act of maintaining justice among the people of Ikwo local government and to reduce the rate of injustice usually meted out the commoners in the area.

Tradition of origin

The historical origin of Nte-Oswina is shrouded in mystery. The mystery provides the empirical search for which our understanding on when and how the Nte-Oswina came to be found in where it is today. By this, those who made excursion toward revealing its historical origin ended up creating another myriad of information that seems to demystify such mystery as transcendental of human experiences. For them, the tradition of origin, history and existence of Nte-Oswina is as old as the evolution of Ikwo Noyo clan. This account is held by some elders of the entire Echara Nkpoke autonomous community and does not represent the opinion of the people in general. However, while the protagonists of this earlier presupposition seem to be more comfortable with that account, they further maintain that Nte-Oswina originated from one woman called Ugbala. According to them, Nte-Oswina was found by a barren woman who went into the forest to fetch firewood. While she was fetching firewood, she saw a maggot-like insect that called her "Ugbala, Ugbala come and carry me...I am the child you have been looking for".⁴ As she wanted to run away, she kept repeatedly hearing her name till she went and carried her and immediately a cry of a new born baby began to echo from the forest. Others who didn't subscribe to this proposition maintain that Ugbala, was an Unwuche-uphere woman from Arom Ugbala kindred who was married into the family of Uche Nwaka of Unwenyita kindred. She was barren and left to fetch firewood where she saw Nte-Oswina crying in the forest and she went and carried him home from where he became a spiritual father to Echara Nkpoke as whole.⁵ This argument represents how the people accord themselves respect during the festival of the oracle and reflects in the traditional sitting arrangement of all the kindred that make up the Echara Nkpoke autonomous communities. In the traditional stool of the oracle called "Ugba Nte-Oswina", the Unwenyita kindred will stay closer to the oracle and will be preceded by Arom Ugbala kindred before Nducha kindred. This explains the order of seniority and how they share their items at individual communities and in the shrine particularly. According to Aku Okpara, whenever we converge to make some sacrifices to Nte-Oswina, Unwenyita who own the deity will be the first to collect from the share of items before Unwuche-uphere can collect.⁶ In this way, N. B. Amiara maintains that in Nte-Oswina's shrine, Unwenyita hold the custodian of the shrine and produce the chief priest while the Unwuche-uphere from Arom Ugbala maintain the second

in command, collect and provide the chief priest with all items for sacrificing to the oracle.⁷

From the foregoing, it appears that there is a logically interrelated intuition from the two schools of thoughts even though both have failed to establish whether the deity was a man-made who was found abode in the forest by his maker or would have originated there by himself? This line of argument is capable of provoking a sound rhetorical question like what is the metaphysical ability of a man-made deity to call a woman whose name, he has never known before? An insight to what might have constituted its mystical powers could be found from the fact that our forefathers reported that at the time Nte-Oswina was found in a thick forest of Opfia Nkpoke, it was talking and calling peoples' name just like human beings but had since become speech impaired after Nchifpu Alike and Igbeta became its chief priests.⁸ They hold that when "Ugbala returned home with this strange deity...he summoned for the kinsmen particularly the elders whom he narrated how they could worship him to. Nchifpu Nwanchor Oke added that he further told them that he came in peace and not to fight the righteous but those who are sinister."⁹ Since then, there has been untimely death of people with evil minds especially when there is a movement away from his shrine at Opfia Nkpoke to Ndiagu-Azu on what is called "*Ogborogbu uzo Nte-Oswina*"(the road). People who passed on this road in the night usually confirmed that during this period, there were evidences of strange signs like butterfly, bees, crab and smoke being witnessed on the road. While those named after him are identified with the bees and butterfly parching on their left side chest as a symbol of peace, others who just believe in him are visited with crabs while returning back home. In fact, women who give birth within that night usually name their children "Nte" for male and "Nte Nwanyi" for a woman to signify the peace he has brought to the family. Therefore, Nte-Oswina is a spiritual being who communicates with human beings; people consult him for solutions to their problems and it has assumed to be the highest god in Echara Nkpoke and Ikwo in general.

Another historical challenge confronting those who accounted for the origin of Nte-Oswina is the inability to establish the exact period this oracle might have existed in the forest of Opfia Nkpoke before it was found by Ugbala. There was no information as whether Ugbala was among the first inhabitants who lived within the vicinity of Nte-Oswina's shrine or had she known that she would come across the oracle before

leaving to fetch firewood? This question left much to be desired from the origin, period and ownership of the oracle. In fact, it is possible that this oracle might have belonged to the non-Ikwo speaking people of Okum who were driven away by the powerful Ikwo warriors who engaged them with internecine wars during the migration times. Or they had completely lost the memories of how the powerful oracle came to be found in where it is. Therefore, one common feature that can be derived from this rhetoric is that linguistically “Oswina” is Ikwo phonology, it does not show non indigenous of the deity but unanimously a deity that might have come with our ancestors. However, there is also a consensus that Ugbala was his mother and was barren before she found the deity in the forest. This statement was both accepted by Unwenyita and Unwuche-uphere of Arom Ugbala kindred that Ugbala is the mother of the oracle.

Again, there are confusions created by those who made inquiry to ascertain the use of Ugbala with Nte-Oswina. While some people would use the name “Ugbala” as the wife, others would use it as the mother but in general, it could have been more appropriate if Ugbala is referred to as his wife instead of his mother hence he is more often called Ugbala Nte. Secondly, there is also another confusion concerning about his paternal father. While those who made inquiry to ascertain his divinity and supreme existence have linked Nte-Oswina to Ibinukpabi of Arochukwu, others have rejected such claim doubting the reality of its origin. According to them, Nte-Oswina is an artificial man-made god that does not have any power. They have asked that if Nte-Oswina is not man-made, who is his father? This question again left much to be known of a deity whose powers were so transcendental that nobody could delve into questions that surround its history of origin. However, this issue has been debated but has also been confirmed and agreed that the deity is from Aro Chukwu and his father is Ibinukpabi.

The Mystical signs of Nte-Oswina and their significance

There are several signs used by Nte-Oswina to indicate his presence, pay homage and carry out functions within its locality and Ikwo in general. The type of sign to be adopted is depended on the kind of mission it wants to embark on at that particular time. However, there are instances where thunder lightening will be used as a sign of warning to its offenders or crab, bees and butterfly for reciprocal gesture or sacrifices made to him by his adherents. Implicitly, each sign connotes different

meanings or interpretations. For instance, the meaning it conveys when he visited a man with crab in the afternoon is not the same meaning it conveys when it does the same in the night. Therefore, the choice of sign depends on the kind of sacrifices made individually to the deity and not whether the person is evil, diabolic or kind hence each of these items for visitation will be adumbrated one by one.

Crab: An Oxford Advance Learner's dictionary defines a crab as a sea creature with hard shell, eight legs and two pincers.¹⁰ It moves sideways and often lives in swamp land hence it is rarely found in upland. It is practically based on this that people usually found the crab strange and eerie whenever it is seen in someone's house. The interpretation is that when a crab appears in someone's house, it is perceived that the oracle has come to remind the person of a promise he made before which was and has not been fulfilled. According to the chief priest, Onele Nwite, the appearance of a crab in one's house represents a sign of reminder. It is carried out by the oracle to remind followers of a promise that has not been kept and at times to inform such person whose house the crab appears that Nte-Oswina had fought a war on his behalf and prevented the evil plans that would have befallen on him from the evil men.¹¹ In other words, crab is mostly used for reminding of unfulfilled promises and the people have seemed to be aware of that.

Bees: Bees are highly respected in Ikwo. They are not expected to be killed. The assumption is that when a bee hovers around someone's head, it is Nte-Oswina that has paid visit to such person. This implies that bees in Ikwo are significant to the existence and operations of the oracle. B. N. Amiara revealed that in 1984, there was an occasion of a traditional marriage ceremony at the neighbourhood where beers were served to them, each person got a bottle of the beer and before he could open it there was a bee that hovered around him and the next thing was that the bottle broke at the heel and fell on his thigh.¹² He interpreted the presence of the bee as a fortune revelation of what was planned against him which Nte-Oswina did not want to happen to him. He further maintained that he consulted a soothsayer who told him that the deity intervened in order to protect him from being poisoned by his enemy. Therefore, it is agreed that Nte-Oswina uses bees to reveal to people about the evil plans against them. Hence there is a common agreement among the people that there are instances, in which bees would appear and start stinging someone on

the road without any reason and investigation has revealed that those kinds of people usually go home and die mysteriously.

Butterfly: The symbolic meaning of butterfly in the operation of Nte-Oswina is peace. It represents happiness, care and love for the adherents hence it is adjudged that those the oracle visited with butterfly are those who are in his state of mercy and do not have stains in their hands. Meanwhile, it showcases the serenity of the oracle towards his followers hence James Nwite opines that the people Nte-Oswina visited with butterflies are those whose hands were clean. They have not committed or wronged the deity that is why sometimes, you see butterfly perching on their shoulders, beds and heads.¹³ Indeed within the period of this study, it was learnt that even though butterflies are common in Ikwo however, they don't just perch on people. James Nwite collaborated in the above statement when he asserted that you can only see a butterfly perching on a man especially when he is walking, drinking palm wine in his house or sleeping. According to him, there would be instances in which a man will be drinking palm wine and a butterfly will fly and perch on his cup when you ask he will tell you it is Nte-Oswina that pays me a visit. He further reveals that he has witnessed a butterfly perched on him, sometimes in the presence of his father who would always carry out some incantations on the deity for my protection as his name sake.¹⁴

Thunder or thunder lightening: Thunder lightening is one of the negative signs of Nte-Oswina. It is used as a warning to the offenders of the deity and before it will strike you with thunder it must have given several signs like lightening of your house with thunder or appearance of strange flame of light. People who ignore these signs were usually struck with thunder and this can be avoided when this there is always quick response to its early warning signal.

Early missionary activities in Ikwo

There are diverse opinions on the time Christian missionary activities started in Ikwo. One of those opinions as represented by Oliver, N. U. Eze holds that the Europeans arrived first at Ndegu Igbudu where they met one prominent man, Alobu Nweke.¹⁵ He narrated that it was one Alobu Nweke and his brother Oreke that was popularly called Kidim and others that helped them to establish the first church in Ikwo at Igbudu and by 1905-06, they established their first school. This was refuted by some informants who maintained that the first crop of Christian missionaries to

come to Ikwo were the Presbyterians, who came through Obubra in the Old Ogoja province passing along Enyibichiri Alike to first settled at T-junction in a place called "Ngangbo Azugbu" in Nzashi Echara.¹⁶ From that junction, they proceeded to establish Presbyterian Church in Ndiagu Echara before establishing the Rural Improvement Mission (RIM) in 1959 by E. M. Hutchison and his wife. Elder Chukwu Omenyi maintained the hospital was first known as Dispensary and Maternity.¹⁷

In fact, it was learnt that what is called Abakaliki town today was to be established in a place called T-junction at Nzashi Echara in Ikwo and according to Nwomege Gladys Amiara, "we were told that the white men first wanted to establish Abakaliki at Ngangbo Azugbu but due to the hostility of the Echara people, they scarified a ram to Nte-Oswina who used bees and chased the people way".¹⁸ The T-junction is located at Ndiagu Echara ward 1 in Ngangbo Azugbo in the present Ikwo Local Government Area. It is evident that these people might not have wanted any white settlement in their land hence they imposed a fierce resistance to the missionaries and like Prof S. C. Ukpabi wrote that Ikwo clan was the last to resist missionary activities in the north eastern Igbo. According to him, by 1918, Ikwo were still fighting colonial wars with the Europeans, they were used by the Aro to resist the British penetration of north eastern Igbo by fighting from the flank of Cross River. Evidences of this stern resistance reflected on their inability to produce one priest up till 2009 before Eleke Echara community became the first to produce one Roman Catholic Priest after 100 years of missionary activity. However, within these periods of evangelism, those who were converted newly tried to desecrate the shrine but were struck death except one Daniel Nwanchor that was left almost paralyzed. Therefore, the Ikwo people used Nte-Oswina to disrupt the propagation of christianity between 1800 up to 1950. In fact parents refused their children to be converted and communities were not willing to denote plot for the building of churches. Private individuals who offered their land were banished and some handed over to BOFF to be killed.

Nte-Oswina and the Nigerian-Biafra war

Between 1800 up to the September 30, 1960, the seed of destruction had already been planted in what was to be known as Nigeria by the British imperialists. The activities of the colonial governors polarized the people along ethnic and religious considerations despite the purported attempt

to unite the people with diverse languages, cultures, customs and traditions. For the Brit, the attempt was aimed at civilizing Nigerians and preparing them for independence but on the contrarily, it was a grand design to rob the people off their senses of identity. Eventually, the October 1, 1960 saw a transition away from colonial chauvinism to national statehood that was built on ethnic discrimination, domination and supremacy and continued to provide a litmus test for a country that was newly created to experiment her independent political administration. From that period up, the country was committed to finding national cohesion and a system that will be generally acceptable by all the ethnic groups that made up the country. The quest for this workable political system deepened the ethnic distrust that came with lot of coups and counter coups and engulfed the new state of Nigeria into festering crises which resulted to the proclamation of the independence of Biafra on 30 May, 1967. One of the advantages of such problems and instability of the Nigerian political system was the unity in the Biafran spirit to defend their newly created country from the attack of Nigerian soldiers. According to S. C. Ukpabi, by 5.00 am on July 6, the federal forces crossed the starting line into Biafra, thus heralding the commencement of the civil war.¹⁹ Therefore, he further maintained that the Army Headquarters in Lagos had planned the war in four phases to capture Nsukka, then Ogoja, Abakaliki and finally Enugu. Nworie Nwanchor who narrated her experience during the war maintains that as civil war intensified, the Nigerian troops came into Ikwo through Obubra and detonated bomb at Nsobo in Cross River State before moving along Agubata to land at Igboji Market.²⁰ She further maintained that the soldiers were at Igboji molesting young women, killing their goats and eating up their food however, community leaders ran to Nte-Oswina and pledged a cow to him and immediately bees appeared from nowhere and started stinging them. At Onunebonyi Echara, the Nigerian soldiers that came through Ogoja to Abakaliki moving easterly to Ikwo had shot down the Ebonyi bridge and those living within that axis ran into Opfia Nte forest for protection. Otubo Uneke reported that those who sought protection from the oracle were not harmed but rather they were smoke that covered the whole place and the soldiers were chased back.²¹

Nte-Oswina and conflict resolution in Ikwo

Ikwo is a warlike area that has intermittently witnessed different kind of wars ranging from intra communal to inter communal wars. Some of

these wars were never allowed to last long except that occasionally, they would resurface like an ember of fire. By the end of the missionary activities and the Nigerian-Biafran war, Ikwo, particularly the Echara people had learnt how to use Nte-Oswina as an instrument of war. During this period, Nte-Oswina assumed a powerful instrument that used bees to fight for his people. This is usually not the case in intra communal wars. War among people of the same community is often seen as a taboo and whenever there is an occurrence of such war, negative signs such broad day cry of a dog would begin to occur, premature death of young people and appearance of vulture within the village square. Community leaders usually converge to deliberate on such issue and a selected delegation would be sent to consult the oracle and possibly enter into covenant before the oracle.

In the case of inter communal wars, the chief priest would consult the oracle to speak on the fortune of the war and communicate back to the entire community. If it is a just war, a sheep would be sacrificed to the deity and dropped in the enemy's border who would come and take it thinking that they had caught their enemy's sheep. Investigation reveals that as many as those who ate the meat usually died. Therefore, it was a tactics employed during the war to create fear to their enemies and like Nworu Igwe, this was the strategy adopted against the people of Nsobo when a war broke out between them and the people of Echara community in 1987.²² The Ofenikpa Ikwo-Nsobo war broke out on April 9, 1987 following the abduction of two primary school boys from Ofenikpa by Nsobo warriors. The causes of the war hinged on the border dispute between the two communities and long contested portion of land lying along "ebe" in Ofenikpa and Nsobo forest. The two communities have both maintained the authority to cultivate on the land till war broke out between them on April 9, 1987. The war, seen by many as minor skirmish, dragged on for eight years when Colonel Temy Ejoor, the then sole Administrator of Enugu State and Franklin Ogbuewu, the then Executive Chairman of Ikwo Local Government decided to broker peace between the two communities. However, neighbouring communities such as Ebura, onyirigbo, and Ndiagu-azu all got the spill-over effects. As the Nsobo attacked Ofenikpa from the flank of Onyirigbo, the latter decided to ambush the former and shell them from Nsobo-Echara border. This led Nsobo to launch a surprising attack against Echara who were driven up to five kilometers away to Opfia tsitso before they were able to repel the Nsobo by the unprepared Ikwo warriors who managed to put up little

resistance through local den guns denoted by some private individuals. This resulted to Echara community sacrificing sheep and dropped at the border for which the Nsobo came and took away and a day later they bought their first Ak47 rifle.

Why it could no longer talk

There are two groups with different opinions on why Nte-Oswina is no longer talking. One of those groups hold that the Nte-Oswina was talking when Ugbala found him in the thick forest of Amagu Echara but had since become speech impaired immediately he came in contact with evil men who first served him as chief priests. They hold that the great deity stopped talking after one or two chief priests became his first servants. About their name, they could not remember but they could be the first set of servants who did not want the oracle to expose their evil deed, so they went as far as impairing his tongue with poison.²³

Another group maintains that the oracle stopped talking because the people were so immoral and committed a lot of abominations which angered the oracle and it stopped revealing them calamities that await them. According to this group, the practice of human poisoning, envy and other different abominations became so common that the oracle was angry to our people. They further hold that those first priests might contribute to his inability to talk but the scores of evil men who found abode in this deity could be more responsible. This raises series of questions and doubts on the deity whose powers the people depend on to instill good moral practices in the land. Therefore, it could be that those who serve him have known the intricacy of his mystical powers and went as far as finding a means of stopping him from communicating their evil deed.

List and the choice of Chief Priests

The list of the chief priests may not have followed the order of service simply because the people have lost the memory of how they came on board. But accordingly it was learnt that nobody chooses for him who becomes the chief priest except the oracle himself. By search for who will become the chief priest, the oracle will visit the person he wants to serve him with a flame of light in the night and the fortune teller will carry out some incantations to convey the choice of the god to the congregations. In doing that, the person will move his family into the compound designated

for those who serve oracle. They are not expected to wear cloth or pant inside that compound, they only tie strip of cloth to cover up their nakedness. As time went on this method became abolished and people went on search for more easy means of choosing the chief priest. With the profanity of the whole order, the people reverted into self imposition of the priesthood. According to Otubo Uneke, when the oracle could no longer choose his servant we started going to Nchipfu for consultation, it was there that we were directed to see one woman at Amiara Egboma's compound for directives and it is always after the serving chief priest has died. The following are names of the past chief priests:

1. Ukoro Enyita
2. Nchipfu Ogboji
3. Egbata Ogozho
4. Onwe Ucheoke
5. Onwe ka Ima
6. Onwe Onele Uche
7. Onwe Okauche
8. Onele Nwite

Conclusion

The history of Nte-Oswina Oracular deity may not have been comprehensively exhausted in this study. The powers, history and mysteries of this deity require that a complete full text of research documentation however, what we have done here is to attempt its brief history of origin in what would be a guide for other researchers. Therefore, the origin of Nte-Oswina could be associated with the evolution of Ikwo clan. It is one of those powerful deities that existed during colonial era which the Igbo sub-group of Abakaliki found very useful in resisting the seed of colonialism. However, its activities, role and powers were not documented by Igbo historians simply because they might be dearth of information about it or the people were not interested in studying about the oracle. Scores of information derived from our informants revealed that this oracle possessed equal powers with other powerful long juju that were predominant in Igbo society like the Igwe kala, Ibinukpabi, Ugbala and the host of other deities that dominated African literatures. Thus, this negligence made this study prominent particularly in this period the curiosity for new knowledge is high.

Basically, Nte-Oswina is a super-natural deity whose existential powers are transcendental. However, there are special understandings attached to its modus of operandi, history and communication developed with the people by this deity. On the one hand, there is a conviction that the oracle is committed to instilling morality among the people of high immoral practices, while on the other hands there is the assumption that the origin of Nte-Oswina came so that evil men will die for the good land of Echara Nkpoke to be liberated. This is a manifestation of evil men who usually lost their lives whenever the oracle embarks on sojourn. Therefore, the deity has become a powerful instrument that was used to prosecute wars, resist the propagation of christianity and restoration of good moral practices.

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20. Nworie Nwanchor, c80, Traditional Midwife, Compound, Ndiagodoshi Echara, 8/6/2018, interviewed.
21. Otubo Uneke, c95, Farmer, Compound, Ndiechi, 6/6/2018, interviewed.
22. Nworu Igwe. C83, Native bonesetter, Compound, Ndiagodoshi Village, 5/6/2018, interviewed. Bartholomew N. Amiara, c70, 8/6/2018