

FOOTBALL, RACISM AND PEACEBUILDING IN COLONIAL NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The ubiquity of academic works on colonial Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This has increased especially in the 21st Century such that there seems to be no area uncovered. But unfortunately, majority of these academic endeavors have been channeled to such areas as wars, resistances, imperialistic exploitations and so on. Little or no attention has been given to such areas as racism and leisure in colonial Nigeria. It then surfaces to argue that with the preponderant literature on colonialism, racism seemed to have only existed in such settlement colonies as South Africa, Kenya and so on. This research argues otherwise. Relying on oral interviews, archival materials, government gazettes, and relevant secondary data; the research employed historical and qualitative research approaches to fill this gap in scholarship. The work noted that racism punctuated the colonial regime in Nigeria, though not in the same extent with South Africa and other settlement colonies. The research further adds that the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized in Nigeria was not an all-time jigsaw nexus, as there were instances of recreational activities where the both parties participated alike. Soccer was such a recreational activity that eased the tensions of the time and also served as a peacebuilding measure between the opposing colonial rulers and the aboriginals. Filling the foregoing academic gaps is the major concern of this work, while recommending public and private partnership in promoting the culture of peace through football.

Key words: Football. Culture. Peacebuilding. Colonialism. Nigeria.

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RESUMO

Futebol, racismo e construção da paz na Nigéria colonial

A onipresença de trabalhos acadêmicos sobre a Nigéria colonial não pode ser subestimada. Isso aumentou especialmente no século 21, de modo que parece não haver área descoberta. Mas, infelizmente, a maioria desses esforços acadêmicos foram canalizados para áreas como guerras, resistências, explorações imperialistas e assim por diante. Pouca ou nenhuma atenção tem sido dada a áreas como racismo e lazer na Nigéria colonial. Em seguida, surge para argumentar que, com a literatura preponderante sobre o colonialismo, o racismo parecia ter existido apenas em colônias de assentamento como África do Sul, Quênia e assim por diante. Esta pesquisa argumenta o contrário. Baseando-se em entrevistas orais, materiais de arquivo, jornais do governo e dados secundários relevantes; a pesquisa empregou abordagens de pesquisa histórica e qualitativa para preencher essa lacuna na bolsa de estudos. O trabalho observou que o racismo pontuou o regime colonial na Nigéria, embora não na mesma medida com a África do Sul e outras colônias de assentamento. A pesquisa acrescenta ainda que a relação entre os colonizadores e os colonizados na Nigéria não foi um nexo de quebra-cabeça de todos os tempos, pois houve casos de atividades recreativas em que ambas as partes participaram da mesma forma. O futebol era uma atividade recreativa que aliviava as tensões da época e servia como uma medida de paz entre os governantes coloniais opostos e os aborígenes. Preencher as lacunas acadêmicas anteriores é a grande preocupação deste trabalho, ao mesmo tempo em que recomenda a parceria público-privada na promoção da cultura de paz por meio do futebol.

Palavras-chave: Futebol. Cultura. Construção da paz. Colonialismo. Nigéria.

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the 20th century gave birth to a political geography known as Nigeria. Prior to that time, there were the influx of people; especially from the European continent, as well as presence of different cultural practices that came to either displace the aboriginal cultures or exploit them.

The presence of these cultural practices and peoples greatly turned the trend of events during the century up to the present day. It is on the foregoing premise that emergent researchers have concentrated their works on the assessment of the nature of relationship that existed.

One of the dominant views of researchers is that the mingling of peoples of European continent and the Nigerians was nothing but a cat and dog relations as held by Okafor, (2018), Nwabara, (1977), Afigbo, (1972), and Onwuka, (2015), among other scholars that are of this opinion.

Similarly, other scholars described the cultural infiltration into Nigeria as that which threatened Nigerian indigenous culture.

Captured this view when he argued that the impact of Western imperialism and colonialism threw our indigenous cultural practices overboard, made Africans idle as they were left with observing of the western culture which they could not do like the Europeans.

The simple interpretation of the foregoing is that during the colonial era, the Nigerian people were helpless as the colonizers go about with their cultural practices in the Nigerian colony.

However, football was one of those socio-cultural activities of European origin that did not know the boundaries between these two different groups of people as they all played on the same field with a team composing of people of the different races.

Through this game, it became obvious that the question of race which was a social construct that divided these people was greatly subdued to a reasonable extent.

By extension, this peaceful intermingling went a long way to create peace as against the conventional believe that the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized was largely conflictual.

The next section of the article centers on conceptual clarification.

Conceptual Review of Literature

Football

A very brief description of football has it that it is a “game played on a rectangular field by two opposing teams with an inflated leather ball that is roughly oval in shape.

The object of the game is to score points by carrying the ball across the opponent’s goal line or by kicking the ball through the opponent’s goalposts”.

The foregoing view was further expanded by Davis, (2008) who maintained that in football, the target of the players is “to knock a round ball through the opponents’ goal, using any part of the body except the hands.

Generally, players use their feet and heads as they kick, dribble, and pass the ball toward the goal. One player on each team guards the goal. This player often called the goalkeeper is the only player allowed to touch the ball with the hands while it is in play”.

Among other things, it is a physical activity engaged in for pleasure. Football is the world’s most popular sport, played by people of all ages in about 200 countries. The sport has millions of fans throughout the world, (Davis, 2008).

It is majorly called football in the United States and Canada. Outside these countries, the sport is commonly called soccer which is originally known as association football (Davis, 2008).

By its nature, football is a free-flowing game that has relatively few rules and requires little equipment. All that is needed to play is an area of open space and a ball, (Davis, 2008).

Sequel to this advantage over other sporting events, “much of the world’s football is played informally, without field markings or real goalposts.

In many places, the game is played barefoot using rolled-up rags or newspapers as a ball. This was majorly the nature of the game during the colonial times. In an interview explained that in many cases, school children went to school with any oval object they could lay their hands on. These objects served as football for them.

According to him, in many cases, their teachers joined in playing while white headmasters either watched or served as the referees.

Further explaining the nature of the game in the colonial era, the Nigerian Former Head of State, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe corroborated the foregoing in an experience he shared thus:

When I arrived in Lagos, at the age of eleven, I found the open spaces in front of King's College, to our neighborhood boys known as Toronto, a mecca for juvenile sports. We played football there with mango seed, limes or oranges or old tennis balls.

Any collection of boys would be divided into two sides and a spirited game would ensue. We made and altered our rules to suit each game and so we emerged to become self-made footballist (Azikiwe, 1955).

Racism

One of these researchers went to a dry cleaning and laundry services in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria to pick his clothes.

He plunged into the dry cleaner's shop and witnessed how the owner of the shop and another customer were caught up in a heated argument on racism. After listening to them for some time, he asked rhetorically, "what is racism?" The customer replied on a calm voice that "racism is when this dry cleaner chose to wash white shirts with neater water than my black shirt that I bought very expensive last month." To this dissatisfied customer, racism simply means giving preferential treatment to white colour at the detriment of black. In line with the foregoing, it can be said that racism is a belief in the superiority of one's own colour, (Redmond, 2008).

Van Dijk (2021) holds that racism can be better understood as a complex societal system that promotes ethnically or "racially" based domination and its resulting inequality.

Extend the definition of racism when he argued that it is social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on certain characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color) ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history and ethnic classification. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups" Becker on his view observes that "racism can be understood as a distaste for certain races, a negative preference for the interaction with people from certain races", (Becker, 1973).

From the foregoing definitions, it is glaring that in a racial society, there is an obvious differentiation that runs in line with colour of the skin.

With this configuration, people cannot mingle together as there is always separate motor parks, railway services, playgrounds, market centers, residential areas and so on.

A session in this work will be devoted to unraveling the racial relations between the colonial people of Nigeria and the colonizers.

Peace

Traditionally, peace covers a social environment that is devoid of war and conflict. It is represented by the state of security, development, harmony and so on. Historically, it can be argued that this perception of peace prevailed before the end of the Cold War in the 1990s.

Then, the idea was that for peace to exist, wars should be avoided. Recently, the idea of peace has taken a multi-dimensional status. It includes both the absence of war, elimination of environmental hazards, freedom of association, absence of undue preferential treatment, and lack of any form of threat to the manifest destiny of man on earth.

This dimension therefore places peace as a concept that has multidisciplinary nature. This study further examines the roles of football in creating peace and harmonious relationship between the colonial people and the colonized Nigerian citizenry.

Colonialism

Colonialism simply means one country's domination of another country or people - usually achieved through aggressive or military actions, (Cell, 2008).

It is also the direct and overall domination of one country by another on the basis of state power being in the hands of a foreign power, argued Nwankwo, (1998).

It has to do with manipulating the economy, politics, culture and military might to conquer and subjugate a particular country or people.

Once a colonial government is imposed on a second country, every mechanism needed to retain the hegemony by the first country is employed and planted.

In many cases, the harsh treatments melted on the colonial people were not the original intentions of the colonizers; rather, they were deployed as adaptive measures to retain their authorities and enforce obedience in their new environment where they were fewer than the colonized. This view was promoted Alozie, (2020). In Africa, division of the continent for colonial purposes was done in the closing years of the 19th century.

By the dawn of the 20th century, colonialism kicked off in earnest. Different colonial governments of the European powers introduced different colonial administrative patterns.

One of the major effects of colonialism was the mingling of different cultural activities in the colonial empires. In some cases, while these cultural activities co-existed, they displaced the indigenous ones. One of the colonial activities that was enjoyed by the two different racial people was football.

Nigeria

In the contemporary parlance, the name Nigeria is used to describe a sovereign republic in West Africa, with a coast along the Atlantic Ocean on the Gulf of Guinea, (Stock, 2008). Before the year 1914, there was no country in the world known by the name, Nigeria.

On the other hand, for hundreds of years, there existed within the geographical space known today as Nigeria, peoples and nations identified as Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Benin etc, argued Ezeani, (2013).

This is to say that when one talks about the Nigerian people before one hundred and ten years ago and beyond, the person is talking about the histories of the various kingdoms or ethnic nationalities that were controlled by the Royal Niger Company that lived in the South and North of Idah. Ezeani, (2013) concurred to this when he wrote that 'historically, indigenous societies ante-dated Nigeria, and consisted of three largest ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Yoruba in the southwest.

But with the amalgamation of 1914, the birth of a new nation was witnessed thereby making another historical epoch in the region under discourse.

Ezeani, (2013) went on to observe that 'Nigeria as a political and social entity, has two main histories: the histories of the different peoples who make up the country and the history of Nigeria as one political entity' which started in 1914.

Although one may argue that the nomenclature and the geo-political environment called Nigeria, existed before 1914, Ezeani, (2013) argued that 'Flora Shaw, the then mistress to Frederick Lugard coined the name Nigeria, earlier in 1897 in the articles she wrote in The Times of January that year. That was three years before Lugard had joined the British firm called the Royal Niger Company in 1894.

He further argued that Flora had only the present day Southern Nigeria in mind when she coined the name, (Ezeani, 2013).

But contrary to this, Ojukwu, (1989) argued that Flora never had a definitely defined area in mind. He argued that "the name we were told was born of the amorous dementia of a certain Flora Shaw.

It was coined some four thousand miles away to encompass peoples on whom the romantic eyes of the lady had not set. The name became a burden" This fact is to buttress the argument that Nigeria as it is today is a 1914 creation.

Surfaces to add here is the fact that if the name, Nigeria existed before the amalgamation as was argued by Ezeani above, the occasion of 1914 was a mere adoption of the Northern part of Idah into the body polity.

Whatever was the case; these researchers posit that a new nation, Nigeria was either conventionally or unconventionally given birth to in 1914. It can be said to be the first bold move made by the colonial rulers to make what is today called Nigeria a single state. Lord Lugard was the Governor General while Lieutenant Governors worked in the two protectorates: North and South, thereby making the two regions to continue with their separate administrations, (Ojukwu, 1989).

There were also many institutional changes to suit the indirect rule system of colonial administration. Okafor, (2018) noted that inasmuch as the institutional arrangements were neither coterminous with village nor clan boundaries [of the colonial peoples], but they offered the people the opportunity for the first time to interact closely.

Thus, the numerous politically independent units began to identify with one another. The little units received the impetus to aggregate together into bigger units.

Empirical Review on Origin of Football in Nigeria

Looking at the history, evolution and the place of football in the present day Nigeria, Elder Julius Onuachu, the father of the Nigerian Supper Eagles Player, Paul Onuachu, who also plays for the Genk Football Club of Belgium maintained that “what started as a strange game of the white was to be intermixed with traditional Igbo recreational activities such as drumming, wrestling, boxing and so on.

These were done to give the game an Igbo blending and definition. Today, football has become so cherished in Nigeria that every family wants to have an international footballer”, (Onuachu, 2021).

Tracing the origin of football in Nigeria is close to tracing the origin of missionary activities, colonialism and the dynamics of the missionaries’ and colonizers’ recreational lives in their Nigerian colonies.

The foregoing assertion is because football followed the European officials who came into the hinterlands through the coastal towns of Calabar, Lagos, Warri, and Port Harcourt. Then, the game had little or no historical significance.

Trying to pinpoint the origin, Boer, (2018) asserted that inasmuch as it is difficult to stress the exact year and place football was first introduced, it is germane to emphasize that the early colonial officers in Nigeria, soldiers and so on played football matches at the fringes of Nigerian coastal villages even as early as the mid-1800s.

Like the origin, the first place of play is also contentious. But majority of the known evidence are pointing that the first place football was played was in Calabar.

Boer (2018) argues that it was from Calabar that the game was first played before it spread to such places as “Lagos, Zaria and beyond as the influence of the colonial state began to permeate into the Nigerian hinterlands”. To buttress the argument that Calabar was the first place the game was played, James (1929) wrote that “the road to Calabar lies through the Island of Jamaica and

this facilitated football games which was played by European who shuttled these two locations.

The juxtaposition of these two locations: Jamaica and Calabar at this point is epochal. The relationship is because Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), a Black Nationalist leader, born in Saint Ann’s Bay, Jamaica created the “Back to Africa” movement in the New World.

Garvey was “a rough, tough, colorful politician who loved crowds, uniforms, parades and high sounding titles, argued Colin (1966). He called his movement the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and proclaimed himself Provisional President of a Racial Empire in Africa, added Colin, (1966).

Unlike his contemporary, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963), who believed that the Negroes had to fight to establish themselves in ‘exile’ Garvey insisted that it was only in the African soil that the Blackman would feel relaxed, homely and freer to assert her influence and to contribute meritoriously to the world.

This idea steered up millions of Negroes as he raised “large sums of money to establish the Black Star Line which was to transport Negroes back ‘home. Inasmuch as Garvey’s lofty plan did not materialize, there is no gainsaying that it was of enormous impacts.

Boer, (2018) and Ogbu, (1996) observed that the Jamaican Presbyterian Church was inspired by both Garvey’s “Back to Africa Movement” and the clamor by Thomas Fowell Buxton to take the evangelization of Jesus Christ to Africa.

The call which was strongly supported in Scotland had to be implemented when an Irish minister, Hope Waddell who was serving in St James Parish in Jamaica spearheaded the team that finally received an invitation from Obong Eyamba to come to Cross River in 1844, added Ogbu, (1996).

Two years later, 1846, the meeting at St Ann’s Parish, Jamaica which was attended by clergymen, ex-slaves and European missionaries accepted the request to visit Cross River.

The team that was led by Hope Waddell visited Calabar as was agreed at the Parish of St Ann’s. Boer, (2018) observed that the journey from Jamaica to Calabar went with it some socio-cultural activities which football was part of.

According to him, in a newspaper article published in 1953, it was evident that football was already played in Calabar as far back as 1847 which was during the period Waddell and his team arrived Calabar, (West African Pilot, 1953).

But this does not mean that the game played then was originally football in the sense of what we have today as has been explained above under the conceptual clarification.

The above assertion is because as at 1862, football was still undergoing evolution process such that in the same year, J. C. Thring of the Uppingham School drafted the first laws of the modern game, and by 1863, an epochal meeting was held in England where the first football association was formed. By 1871, the FA Cup was established and more refinements were given to the game of football.

Globally, the spread of football "began in the late 1800s, when British traders, sailors, and soldiers carried the sport all over the world. Germans, Italians, and Austrians were eager converts in Europe, while Argentines, Uruguayans, and Brazilians took quickly to the sport in South America, wrote Davis (2008).

This is to argue that colonialism that was thriving within that time contributed tremendously to the spread of the football sport.

Comparing the spread of football like a wild fire with other sports, Hill (2010) opined that "Athleticism was manifested in specific 'codes', which were 'played out' on an Empire-wide field.

The irony is that football has transcended the boundaries of colonial empire to become 'the global game. For instance, in South Africa, football established its first significant foothold in the Natal Colony, where schools, mission stations and colonial soldiers popularized the game. A subfield developed along the Durban-Johannesburg axis after the discovery of gold in 1886, Hill (2010).

With the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, both codes were firmly established in all the major urban areas.

In Nigeria too, the case was the same. Football followed the routes of Christianity and European colonizers. Onojaria maintained that:

The coastal towns such as Lagos, Calabar, Warri, Port Harcourt in Nigeria were the first to experience the game of football. This was through the activities of Europeans who came to the West Coast of Africa.

Later, the missionaries that came to churches and schools introduced the game to the missions they started. The game has become very popular in Nigeria today. It is played in all schools and both boys and girls participated. The Nigeria Football Association was formed in 1945, (Academia, 2020).

Trying to be particular with the date football came to Nigeria, Ani et'al noted that football started in Nigeria in the early 1900s, and was introduced by Baron Mulford, who organized weekly matches between European and Nigerian youths in Lagos.

From thence, it continued to spread to hinterlands as several clubs sprouted out over time.

During that time, football matches were played among the colonizers and the indigenous Nigerian people.

By 1960, the game was a strong sporting event in Nigeria such that today, football is certainly an indigenous Nigerian game with rural and urban youths growing up and playing the game on the football pitches that dot the Nigerian landscape.

Methodology and Theoretical Background

This study was developed using qualitative research approach. The study essentially used a number of interviews. The respondents were randomly sampled and their responses were documented.

Ten purposively sampled respondents were interviewed. They were all above sixty-five years of age. Similarly, the researchers conducted ten focus group discussions on participants.

Each of the focus group has five to ten respondents. They were interviewed on the place of football in racism and peacebuilding.

Again, it should be noted that documentary analysis was central in the development of this study.

Documentary analysis of colonial writings, colonial writings and reports as well as published and non-published primary and secondary materials were gathered from many sources in order to ensure a rich content analysis in the study.

This study is rooted in the theory of social inclusion. The theory centers on the strategies of advancing conditions and opportunities that drives individual and group

integration as well as participation in societal activities.

The study noted that the colonial period was characterized by relatively high level of exclusion caused by racism and entrenched colonial policy of exploitation of human and natural resources in the country.

However, football in its characteristic manner encouraged advanced level of inter-group integration and racial peace as well as friendship which had direct positive implication for peace and group relations in the colonial era of Nigerian history.

Discussion and Findings on Football, Racism and Peacebuilding in Colonial Nigeria

In the explanations of racism given above, it is obvious that a parallel line exists between people of different racial origins.

A large number of historians of African history have all agreed that the policy of segregation is undoubtedly a resented feature of colonial rule in Africa.

Alozie, (2020) argued that while the settler colonies had important dimensions in this inter-racial relationship, colonial Nigeria was not spared in the experience of such racially motivated segregation, as the indigenes took to petitions and other means to protest this racial policy.

The foregoing is evident as already pointed by Alozie (2020) that the Nigerian colonial people questioned the colour dichotomies melted upon them by the colonizers. For instance, writing to the District Officer, Itu on March 7th, 1941, Smartt (a colonial person) reprimanded him for his 'ill-treatment to a black man'. Three months later; June 16th, he observed that his previous letter was not effective.

Therefore, he wrote another one informing the Officer that "it is not the colour that counts' as Africans are now too good for half-baked measure

These researchers do not refute the place of colonial boundaries and subjugations as agreed by scholars like Okafor, (2018) and others.

But stands to argue here is that the question of race and the British "mission to civilize" were not all encompassing in every field. To buttress this opinion, Alozie in a

Facebook chat with one of the researchers on 14th January, 2019 explained that on 11th March, 1919, W.C.

Bottomley who was a first-class clerk of the East Africa Department of the Colonial Office reiterated that the motive of the colonial government is the development of the African continent so that Africans can take a proper share of their own country.

This is to argue that the question of race was not always emphasized as the sole primary propeller of British colonial policies and practices in her African colonies.

In certain occasions where segregations were witnessed in the colonies, the motive was not entirely to dehumanize the colonial people.

Stoler (1989) pointed that colonial cultures were never direct translations of European society planted in the colonies. Rather, colonial projects and the European populations to which they gave rise were based on new constructions of Europeanness - demographically, occupationally, and politically distinct.

Alozie (2020) was of the same view when he argued that some of the racial cases in such colonies as the Nigerian colony emerged out of challenges and interactions within the dynamics of local political, social, and economic colonial exigencies. In some cases, this was a means of maintaining the subjectivities of the colonies as the empires sought legitimacy of their colonial territories

Furthermore, when it was reported in the 1887 Official Sanitary Report of the colonial government that drastic efforts should be made to combat malaria which was drastically harmful to the Europeans, calls were made to create separate residential areas for Africans (especially children whom it was believed were carriers of the disease) and the Europeans.

The belief was that allowing the Africans and Europeans to live together would expose the Europeans (who could not live with the fever) to malaria parasites and yellow fever which Africans were immune to.

But this was not executed as many colonial officers kicked against it. Alozie (2020) concurred that though heavily parasitized African children and asymptomatic adults - rather than mosquitoes - represented the greatest danger to Europeans, many governors realized

the dangers of such segregationist policies and warned against the move.

One of the strongest objectionists of this segregation policy was Governor William MacGregor of Lagos Colony. He argued that the implementation of such policy would lead to a social divide in the colony and attendant racial problems.

As a medical doctor and British health administrator, he believed that separation of the colony along racial lines would not necessarily eradicate the source of the contamination, (Alozie, 2020). Reporting on the policy, he stated that:

It is strongly recommended in certain competent quarters that to get away from infected mosquitos (sic), Europeans should live at places apart from the natives.

This may be called the academic view. From the administrative point of view; it is an unacceptable doctrine.

The academic view is ungenerous, and would afford no radical remedy and would it practicable, which it is not. The policy followed in Lagos in this as in other matters is to take the native along with the European on the way leading to improvement.

Here they cannot live apart nor should work apart and they not try to do so. Separation would mean that little, or at least less, would be done for the native, and the admitted source of infection would remain perennial.

To simply protect the European from fever here would make Lagos the great commercial port that it should become. What we can do in this matter for the uneducated part of the Lagos population will be effected chiefly by reclaiming the swamps and administering quinine (William MacGregor, "A Discussion on Malaria and its Prevention" *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 2124 September 14, 1901): 682.)

He therefore pushed that a health program that would ensure the containment of the threat of malaria in the colony through the introduction of sanitation courses, hygiene culture and free distribution of quinine, (Alozie, 2020).

The forgoing accounts were to buttress the argument that race was not the primary mover of the colonial regime.

The following session revealed how football contributed its quota in knitting together the colonial Nigeria, limiting the lines of racial constructs and bring peace in the colonial

Nigeria. James captured a true atmosphere of football sports in the colonial Nigeria when he maintained that:

We all gathered at the Army goal to hear that one of our teachers had used insulting language: he had said 'You d-d white man!' I asked him why. 'Well sir, he called me a d-d nigger!' And the game [football] was resumed... 'That was well done, Sir!' And that is how to play the game: keep colour out of it, (James, 1929).

This report is among many accounts of how football served as a peacemaking tool by blurring the lines of such social constructs as racial dichotomies in the colonial communities. For instance, on the 15th of June, 1904 at Hope Waddell Training Institute, the first recorded football game took place.

The game was played between a team made up of both students and White staff on the one hand, while on the other hand was a team from the HMS Thistle- a British ship dock at the port, (Boer, 2018).

Furthermore, the tributes that were written in 1949 when Baron Mulford died provided another crop of evidence that football was an agency of peace and integration as it limited colour dichotomies in the colonial Nigeria. One of the tributes that stand out was written by Orija, (1949) who reported:

Those of us who know Pa Mulford in sports circles in Lagos realize that we have indeed lost a grand and noble sportsman whose death leaves a gap which will be difficult to fill. His 43 years as a sportsman in Nigeria placed him in a high esteem among sportsmen.

He was a Baron in the real sense of the name, kind, gentle and unassuming. He is a Britisher of the highest order and a Nigerian in white skin. I cannot help but pay my last tribute to him. Hats off for the late F. Baron Mulford, the father of our game-football.

The foregoing account is a clear depiction that the relationship between footballer of both Nigerian and European origins was cordial.

The people, as mentioned earlier could play with teams comprising of different colonial peoples against another.

Furthermore, describing football as "our game, Orija (1949) proved that there is unity and the spirit of collectivism in the game as their main goal was to have fun and win together irrespective of colour and other social constructs.

Similarly, Okorie (2020) in an interview to these researchers, narrated that along Umuakagu Road, close to Oriagu Nsu market, they were playing football with an ukwa (breadfruit) seed one evening when a white man came and interrupted.

They tried to run away thinking that the white officer was against them, but he requested that they should include him in the game. He removed his shoe to play in the same level with them.

This is to say that by playing together in a tensed colonial situation marked by power dominance and local resistance, in some cases, wars/conflicts, football made for peaceful coexistence. It further limited the assumed color superiority of the colonizer "White" over the colonized "Black".

Furthermore, interviews with Ebisike, (2015), Anyanwu, (2015), Ogu, (2014), and Ijere, (2015) show that football anchored peace between Agbaghara Nsu and Umualumaku¹ during the colonial era.

A participant in one of these conflicts, Anyanwu, (2020) in an interview narrated how football matches they played as pupils helped to save the faceoff between the youths of Umualumaku and Agbaghara Nsu communities.

According to him, the friendship created by the football matches later spread to their parents and subsequently contributed to the end of crises ravaging the communities. According to him, such Europeans as Fr. Welsh of St. Columba's Parish (the first Roman Catholic Church in the region) organized football games where youths of these communities played. Some of these matches were staged between the students of Agbaghara Nsu and Umualumaku as a team against the staff of Holy Rosary Grammar School, Umuakagu and Europeans on the opposing team.

Furthermore, football games served as uniting agents for change and nationalism towards the end of colonial rule and their roles in freedom fighting.

For instance, on the eve of independence, football games were often imbued with nationalist rhetoric, with matches serving as focused depictions of the climate of

socio-political struggle until 1960 when Nigeria gained her independence.

During this time, membership of both the colonial people and the colonizers in the army teams of Abakaliki Detachment from 1930s, the involvement of Igbo players in the 6th Battalion in Enugu from 1933 and so on played peacemaking roles and built a bridge between colonial army and the Igbo colonial people through the independence in 1960.

CONCLUSION

This study has presented the place of football in the colonial history of Nigeria. It argued that despite the dominant role race played in colonial politics, football in the British colony of Nigeria served as a unifying force which often made the racial dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized almost immaterial. It stressed that colonial relationship was not an all-time jigsaw nexus, rather, recreational activities provided the avenue for interracial relations irrespective of position or class.

Football was such recreational activity and particularly the most popular sport across all socio-economic classes in colonial Nigeria. Furthermore, this paper presented football as an enabling force - a representation of the fluidity of power, authority, race and a venue of human agency.

This is so because while football matches eased tensions of the time, they provided opportunities for peaceful coexistence and social control, and paradoxically, resistance by the indigenous people. It was also often imbued with nationalist rhetoric, with matches serving as focused depictions of the climate of socio-political struggle.

Thus, whether interpreted literally or symbolically, there was one goal- a win for one's team which may include both the blacks and whites.

Thus, football served the unifying interests of both colonizers and/or colonized while dramatically shaping the colonial society, politics and culture.

This study therefore introduced interesting dynamics and intersections of race,

¹ These two communities are in the present-day Imo State in Eastern Nigeria.

sports and peacebuilding in a tightly hegemonic colonial Nigeria

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