

**CHANGING IDENTITIES AND INTER-GROUP RELATIONS
AMONG THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI OF ONDO STATE,
NIGERIA, 1915-2007**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my well-cultured and widely travelled father of extraordinary honour, late *Alaowe* George Umenren and my successful mother of rare honour, late *Alaere* Moyo George, nee Okoro.

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ABSTRACT

The Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi are sub-groups of Ijo of the Niger Delta, located in the Western Delta region of Ondo State, Nigeria. Existing studies on the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi have focused largely on issues of origins, economic and political developments of each group, but paid little attention to how the changing identities of these two groups have affected their relationship. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the changing identities and inter-group relations among the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi from 1915, when they were brought under Ondo Province, to 2007, when a violent conflict occurred between them, with a view to analysing the economic and political dynamics of their relationship.

The historical method was adopted, while the interpretative design was used. Primary and secondary sources were utilised. Primary sources included archival materials, namely, government gazettes, Intelligence Reports, magazines and newspapers from the National Archives, Ibadan. Oral interviews were conducted with 96 purposively selected key informants from Arogbo-Ijo (58), Apoi (26), Okitipupa (3), Ondo (2) and Akure (7), comprising 28 community leaders, 29 civil servants, 18 politicians, nine fish traders, three palm wine tappers, four religious leaders, four lecturers and one canoe-carver, aged between 40 and 97, due to their knowledge of Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations. Secondary sources included books, journals, and doctoral theses, sourced from the libraries of the University of Ibadan; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; University of Benin; and University of Port Harcourt. Data were subjected to historical analysis.

The Arogbo-Ijo migrated to their present location with the Gbaraun identity, which later changed to Ukparama, and thereafter to Arogbo-Ijo. Though still Ijo-speaking, they also became fluent in Yoruba. While the Apoi and Ijo cultural traits remained intact, the linguistic identity changed to Yoruba. The British rule, which brought them under the same administrative umbrella, namely, Ondo Province (1915) and Ese-Odo District Council (1955), introduced new changes that affected their hitherto existing economic and political relationship. In 1955, the Arogbo-Ijo wards, Ukpe and Erubiri, changed to 'Ijaw-Arogbo', while the Apoi wards, Kiribo and Barate, changed to 'Ijaw-Apoi' in 1976. From the colonial period, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were entangled in economic and political conflicts. There were conflicts of ownership and control of resources. For instance, the Apoi's claim of rights to fishing ponds located in Arogbo-Ijo resulted in seizure of fishing traps between 1970 and 1980. In 1998, 2004 and 2007, there were boundary conflicts occasioned by Apoi's claim over Osari-Ugbo and Igangbo, which are Arogbo-Ijo's communities. The creation of local government areas in 1955 and 1976 led to conflicts on the sharing of political offices that were conceded to the two groups. This necessitated the 1979 Accord which collapsed in 1983 due to mutual distrust. The 1996 Accord sustained the peace until 2007, when a violent conflict led to the destruction of houses.

The historical and linguistic homogeneity of the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi, from 1915 to 2007, proved to be insufficient unifying factors that could prevent political rivalry over contestation for space and power.

Keywords: Arogbo-Ijo, Apoi, Inter-group relations

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> (in the year of the Lord)
AD	Alliance for Democracy
AG	Action Group
AGIP	<i>Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli</i>
APP	All Peoples Party
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BL	Bachelor of Laws
<i>C</i>	<i>Circa</i>
CNC	Congress for National Consensus
CSS	Church and Schools Supplies
DAM	Democratic Advance Movement
DIV	Division
DLGA	Director of Local Government Administration
D O	Divisional Officer
DPM	Director of Personnel Management
DPN	Democratic Party of Nigeria
DR	Doctor
EG	<i>Exempli gratia</i>
ED	Edited or Editor (one editor)
EDS	Edited or Editors (More than one Editor)
ESQ	Esquire
<i>ET AL</i>	<i>Et alia</i> (<i>alii</i>)
<i>ETC</i>	<i>Et cetera</i>

FEDECO	Federal Electoral Commission
GDM	Grassroots Democratic Movement
H/Q	Headquarters
HEBN	Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Limited
HIM	His Imperial Majesty
HOD	Head of Department
HON	Honourable
HPM	Head of Personnel Management
HRH	His Royal Highness
HRM	His Royal Majesty
INC	Ijaw National Congress
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
LGA	Local Government Area
LGC	Local Government Council
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
LLM	Master of Laws
LTD	Limited
MA	Master of Arts
MDJ	Movement for Democracy and Justice
MILAD	Military Administrator
M PHIL	Master of Philosophy
NA	Native Authority
NAI	National Archives Ibadan

NBCL	Nigeria Bitumen Corporation Limited
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later changed to National Council of Nigerian Citizens in 1962)
NCPN	National Centre Party of Nigeria
NDC	Niger Delta Congress
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NECON	National Electoral Commission of Nigeria
NIG	Nigeria
NO	Number
NPC	National Population Commission
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NRC	National Republican Convention
NSM	National Solidary Movement
NULGE	Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees
ODIEC	Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission
OK	Okitipupa
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission
OSOPADEC	Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
P	Page
PDP	People Democratic Party
PHD	Doctor of Philosophy or <i>Philosophiae Doctor</i> (Latin)
PLC	Public Limited Company
PP	Pages
PROF	Professor
PRP	Peoples Redemption Party

REVD	Reverend
RTD	Retired
SAFRAP	<i>Societe Africaine des Petrole</i>
SDP	Social Democratic Party
UDP	United Democratic Party
UNCP	United Nigeria Congress Party
UPA	Ukparama People Alliance
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
UPP	United Peoples Party
VOL	Volume

GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS

Ab initio (Latin)	From the beginning
Agbeju-tughun (Ijo)	A locally woven hat
Abu (Ijo)	People
Akoriko (Ijo)	Hard timber tree
Alaowei (Ijo)	Noble man
Alaere (Ijo)	Noble woman
Amabra (Ijo)	Right hand
Apokoi (Ijo)	Lizard
Aru-dinmo (Ijo)	The rear part of a canoe
Aru-ikulo (Ijo)	The front part of a canoe
Aru-kara (Ijo)	Canoe-carving
Aru-oturu (Ijo)	The middle part of a canoe
Baara-kiri (Ijo)	Dry season
Bakwa (Hausa)	Pure or legitimate
Bana (Ijo)	Mud
Banza (Hausa)	Impure or illegitimate
Beriba (Ijo)	Plantain
Biri (Ijo)	Quarters (in this context)
Bile-koro (Ijo)	Capsized
Bosumofiye (Ijo)	Garri
Bouabo (Ijo)	The inhabitants of the bush or forest
Bousuwosi okuba (Ijo)	Money paid for fishing activities
Boutoru (Ijo)	A short cut or short bush path
Bunghinokuba (Ijo)	Large sums of money
Bowei-kiri (Ijo)	Rainy season
Buru (Ijo)	Yam
Conditio (Latin)	Condition
Conditio sine qua non (Latin)	A necessary condition
Coup detat (French)	A sudden change of government that is illegal and often violent

Coup de grace (French)	A final decisive blow
Crème de la creme (French)	The best people or things of their kind
Dau wari (Ijo)	Father's house or side
Déjà vu (French)	Already seen or experienced
Dibi (Ijo)	To bury
Dimo-ikun (Ijo)	Back seat
Divide et impera (Latin)	Divide and rule
Dramatis personae (Latin)	All the characters in a drama or play
Ere (Ijo)	Wife
Eri (Ijo)	Kiln
Ere iko (Ijo)	Bride price
Ere wo (Apoi)	Cowry
Et cetera (Latin)	And so forth or other similar things
Fini (Ijo)	Fire or firewood
Fonctionnaires (French)	Functionaries
Grundnorm (German)	Fundamental rule or order that forms underlying basis for an action
Ibe (Ijo)	Kingdom
Idem (Latin)	The same
Idiba (Ijo)	Fishing
Ibiyodos (Ijo)	The worst form of slavery
Idumu (Ijo)	Quarters
Ifinighen (Ijo)	Cassava meal
Igina (Ijo)	Pepper
Ikulo-ikun (Ijo)	Front seat
Ikun (Ijo)	Cross bar
Ijo wuru (Ijo)	Palm wine
Inter alia (Latin)	Among other things
Ire (Ijo)	Hard timber tree
Isenna-biri (Ijo)	Nine quarters
Iyekojujudo (Ijo)	Trade by barter

Iyoro okuba-atoru (Ijo)	Female cowry
Jeghi (Ijo)	Husband
Jeghi wari (Ijo)	Husband's house or side
Jiniama abu or otu (Ijo)	Non-Ijo peoples
Kala-uba (Ijo)	Small fishing stream
Keniidifuna (Ijo)	One bundle of fish
Kiribou-gban (Ijo)	Farming
Koroo (Ijo)	Palm tree
Koroo-pin (Ijo)	Tapping
Kuru (Ijo)	Hard timber tree
Lingua franca (Italian)	A language chosen as a medium of communication among speakers of different languages
Maakiriarede (Ijo)	Double gain
Mabrafiniabu (Ijo)	Free born
Mabrafinighanabu (Ijo)	Slaves
Mariage de convenance (French)	Marriage for reasons of material advantage rather than love
Miniye (Ijo)	Pupuru, a traditional smoked-dried cassava food
Modus operandi (Latin)	A habitual way of working or mode of operation
Modus vivendi (Latin)	Mode of living or way of life
Obine (Ijo)	Mat
Obiri (Ijo)	Dog
Obori (Ijo)	Goat
Ode (Ijo)	Cat
Ofini (Ijo)	Fowl
Oke (Ijo)	Rat
Okosuwei (Ijo)	Oldest or eldest man
Okuba-atoru (Ijo)	Cowry shell

Opiya (Ijo)	Machete
Oporopo (Ijo)	Pig
Opotoi-omomoron (Ijo)	Seaweeds
Opu-arua (Ijo)	Big canoe
Osi (Ijo)	Snail
Ovuwo (Ijo)	Convenant
Owei okuba-atoru (Ijo)	Male cowry shell
Par excellence (French)	Superior to all others of the same sort
Pax Britannica (Latin)	British Peace
Pere (Ijo)	King or Oba
Pere wariabu (Ijo)	Royal family
Problematique (French)	Problematic
Raj (Indiana)	Rule or government
Sajeri (Ijo)	A credit facility or trust system
Sei-ogonowei (Ijo)	December
Se defendendo (Latin)	Self-defence
Sensu stricto (Latin)	Strictly speaking
Sibiri (Ijo)	Alligator
Sine die (Latin)	Indefinite
Tala (Ijo)	Hard timber tree
Tubo tuwa (Ijo)	Trading
Tuwo wuru (Ijo)	Locally fermented dry gin from palm wine
Ugo-adi mo zaa-adimo (Ijo)	Fresh and smoked fishes
Wowopulo (Ijo)	Red oil
Yabi (Ijo)	The brother of one's mother
Zaa (Ijo)	The traditional process of smoking fishes

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The etymology of the concept of identity is from the Latin word *idem*, meaning the same. Identity is, indeed, essentially comparative in nature and must be understood as originally connected to the inclusion/exclusion dynamics.¹ According to Week, identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what distinguishes you from others. At its most basic level, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality.² Alubo sees identity as a combination of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share, or are presumed to share, with others on the basis of which one group may be distinguished from others.³ Identity, according to Jenkins, is better described as something that individuals ‘do’ rather than something that they ‘have’, as a process rather than as a property.⁴

As a process, therefore, identity formation is the development of an individual’s distinct personality, which is regarded as a persisting entity in a particular stage of life by which one is recognised. Thus, whenever a person seeks to create a distinct personality or image for himself/herself and demands that he/she be so treated in form of that image, a process of identity formation has begun. The various factors or issues that are germane to identity formation include ethnicity, religion, occupation, and gender/sex.⁵ Apart from these factors there are also a number of processes that affect the formation of identity, which include

¹ La Barbera, M.C. 2015. Identity and Migration: An Introduction. La Barbera, M.C. Ed. *Identity and Migration in Europe: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Switzerland: Springer International Publisher, pp.1-13.

² As cited in Animashaun, M. A. 2012. Identity Crisis and Indigene-Settler Question in Nigeria: The Constitutional Review Option. Ogbogbo, C.B.N. et al. Eds. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, p. 75.

³ Alubo, O. 2009. Citizenship and Identity Politics in Nigeria, Conference Proceedings, Lagos: CLEED Foundation.

⁴ Jenkins, R. 2008. *Social Identity*. London: Taylor and Francis.

⁵ Howard, J. A. 2000. Social Psychology of Identities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26:365-93.

migration, integration, inter-group marriages, and colonialism. Succinctly, identity can be explained simply as the strong feeling of belonging to a group. It defines elements of similarity (we) and of differences (they or others). As argued by William, identity is dynamic and responsive to changing conditions. It is bound to shift with changing technologies, culture and political systems.⁶ In Ojoajogwu's view, identity contains elements that distinguish a particular person or group of people from another person or group of people.⁷ According to Olaniyi, identity refers to people's source of meaning and experience. It symbolises the process of construction of meaning on the basis of culture and historical experiences. Hence, identities are ever emergent and always in the making.⁸ No wonder, experts in the field of identity discourse have shown that identity is a process, never finalised or fixed but always in the making. Akinyele, therefore, pointed out that the political elites can manipulate public space to create new forms of identities in a bid to exert control and distribute resources.⁹

Granted that identity formation is a historical process, history is replete with various instances of changing identities over time and space. In other words, identity formation is both a historical reality and a global phenomenon. For instance, in the bilingual Canada, there exists an identity question between the French-speaking Quebecers and the English-speaking Canadians.¹⁰ In Poland, we have identity formation issue within the context of majority-minority relations. The case of the Polish Tartars, who are the smallest ethnic and Muslim religious minority living in Poland with the Polish majorities who are Catholics, is a good example.¹¹ In contemporary Ukraine, two identities in the context of linguistic divide are the Russian and the Ukrainian speakers.¹² This probably informed the submission of Otite¹³ that ethnic identity related issues are found with the Welsh, Scottish and Irish peoples

⁶ William, I. 2008. The History of Religious Diversity and Identity Construction in Nigeria. *Ife Journal of History (IJH)*, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 5.

⁷ Ojoajogwu, O. N. 2012. Cultural Identity and Democratic Global Culture: A Nigerian Experience. *Journal of African Politics and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 203.

⁸ Olaniyi, R. 2013. Identity and Solidarity in a Yoruba Diaspora: The Egbe Omo Oduduwa in Northern Nigeria, 1948-1966. *Ife Journal of History (IJH)*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 105.

⁹ Akinyele, R. T. 2014. *Nigeria: Contesting for Space, Identity and Security*. Ibadan: Connel and Rex Charles Publications, p.177.

¹⁰ Canadian Identity and Language. The Canadian Encyclopedia. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/a. Accessed online 11-04-2017.

¹¹ Warminska, K. 2001. Identity Formation in the Majority-Minority Relations. *Polish Sociological Review, Polkie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne*. No. 134, pp. 209-220.

¹² Himka, J.P. 2006. The Basic Historical Identity Formation in Ukraine: A Typology. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Vol. 28, No. 1/4, pp. 483-500.

¹³ Otite, O. 1983. *The Presence of the Past*. An Inaugural Lecture. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, pp. 1-27; See also, Welsh, D. 1996. Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Ethnicity

in the United Kingdom, as they are found among the various ethnic groups in the United States of America, Belgium, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Nigeria.

Therefore, identity formation and characterisation have always formed a major undercurrent for people's reactions to their neighbours in the course of human history, and those reactions have gone a long way to significantly affect inter-group relations among or between them.

Inter-group relations, a term first brought to academic limelight by William Graham Sumner to embrace interactions in whatever form between two or more groups, is now a common and universal phenomenon.¹⁴ According to Ogbogbo, *et al.*, inter-group relations underpin inter-connections and networks that override relations between states, empires, political units and formations to relations that are communal, familial, social, economic and cultural.¹⁵ Sherif and Sherif see inter-group relations as state of friendship or hostility, cooperation or competition, dominance or subordination, alliance or enmity, peace or war between two or more groups and their respective members.¹⁶

Following the above conceptualisation, inter-group relations can be and has often been either constructive or destructive. It is constructive when it encourages mutual understanding, cooperation or, at least, tolerance and compromise, but destructive when it creates tension, mutual suspicion, racism or even war. Throughout ancient and modern history, inter-group relations have manifested in different forms of human conduct ranging from sheer hostility, on the one hand, to hate and stereotypical perception of a group by the other, on the other hand. Therefore, in joining the conversation of the concept of inter-group relations as a global phenomenon, it is germane to state that many countries of the world are multi-ethnic. Consequently, real-life inter-group relations involve an array of groups that differ in ethnic background and other related characteristics such as language, race, religion, *et cetera*, which are criteria for group status. In Europe, for example, the emphasis is on majority members' attitudes about immigrants and ethnic majorities. In line

and International Relations), pp. 477-491; Francis, M. D. 1997. Ethnicity: An African Predicament. *The Brookings Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 28-31.

¹⁴ Landecker, W.S. 1940. International Relations as Intergroup Relations. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 335-339.

¹⁵ Ogbogbo, C. B. N. *et al.* Eds. 2012. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp.1-2.

¹⁶ Sherif, M. & Sherif, C.W. 1969. *Social Psychology*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, USA.

with the above conventional wisdom, Verkuyten and Zaremba examine the ethnic majority-group (Dutch) and minority-group (Turkish-Dutch) in Netherlands. They concluded that it is important to study inter-group relations across time, in relation to political circumstances, from the perspective of both majority- and minority -group members, and in relation to different ethnic out groups.¹⁷

Remarkably, in the United States of America, language is one of the most sensitive and dominant issues in inter-group relations. Simply put, in some areas, Spanish and other non-English languages are being used more often and many established residents resent this. The latter perceive *foreign* languages as a threat not only to English, but also to American culture in general. In some cases, language differences may even create tension among groups from the same cultural background. In Houston, some Vietnamese residents dislike the use of Chinese characters on street signs in predominantly Chinese districts, and some US-born Latinos avoid social settings where interaction is carried on mainly in Spanish.¹⁸ In the modern State of Israel, apart from the conflict between Arabs and Jews, inter-group relations between Ashkenazim and Sephardim (groups of European or Asian-African origin), and relations between the religious and non-religious sectors, are two major foci of inter-group conflict and social strain within the Jewish community of Israel.¹⁹

In pre-colonial Africa, societies and groups related with one another for various reasons, such as social, economic, political, and so forth. This is in direct contrast to the questionable Eurocentric view, which regarded societies in Africa as ‘tribes’, which were isolated and antagonistic to each other in their relationship.²⁰ Buttressing this argument, Hodgkin submits thus:

...A variety of links existed between the various states and peoples. These relationships sometimes took the form of war and enslavement. But they expressed themselves also through

¹⁷ Verkuyten, M. and Zaremba, K. 2005. Interethnic Relations in a Changing Political Context. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4, pp. 375-387.

¹⁸ Rodriguez, N. 1999. US Immigration and Intergroup Relations in the late 20th Century: African Americans and Latinos. *Social Justice*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (65), Immigration: A Civil Rights Issue for the Americans in the 21st Century, *Social Justice/Global Options*, pp. 111-124.

¹⁹ Levy, S. and Katz, E. 2005. Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Israel: 1967-2002. In Memory of Guttman. Springer: *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 74, 2, pp. 295-312.

²⁰ Uji, W. T. 2015. Migrant Groups and Inter-Group Relations in Tiv Society of Central Nigeria: Pre to Post-Colonial Era. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 88-97.

diplomacy, treaties, the visits of wandering scholars, the diffusion of political and religious ideas, the borrowing of techniques and above all trade.²¹

Therefore, suffice it to say that, situated within the socio-cultural and economic relations, the Trans-Saharan Trade linked North Africa with West Africa. For instance, the ancient Ghana Empire (about 300 AD-1240 AD), with its market centres, stood at the southern end of the trading caravan routes, which crossed the Sahara from North Africa and the northern end of the trading routes, which came northward from the gold-producing country of West Africa. Equally of note, economic and cultural relations had existed between Borno in North-eastern Nigeria, on the one hand, and North Africa and Egypt, on the other hand.²²

Arguably, the advent of colonialism in Africa and the subsequent imposition of the policy of *divide et impera* created new identities that became the basis for inter-group relations. In a number of African societies, such new identities compounded the pre-colonial complex identity situation and, therefore, became one of the major causes of many conflictual inter-group relationships in the continent before the 1960s, and even in the very contemporary times.²³ The Tutsi and Hutu relations in Rwanda which snowballed into the historical Rwanda *déjà vu* of 1994, the Krio and Mende relations in Sierra Leone, the Bassa, Gio, Mano, Krahn and Kpelle inter-group relations in Liberia, and the Nawuri and Gonja relations in Northern Ghana are some examples of conflictual relations in Africa.²⁴

Before focusing our historical searchlight on inter-group relations in Nigeria, it is pertinent to note that identity formation in Nigeria, for example, within the context of contemporary

²¹ Hodgkin, T. quoted in Okpoh, O.O. Jr. 2007/2008. Patterns and Dynamics of Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria, 1800-1900 AD. *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.17, pp. 123-137.

²² Asiwaju, A. I. 1997. The Evolution of Nigerian Culture. Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Ibadan: Davidson Press, pp. 22-43.

²³ Awasom, N. F. 2003. Anglophone/Francophone Identities and Inter-Group Relations in Cameroon. Akinyele, R. T. Ed. *Race, Ethnicity and Nation Building in Africa: Studies in Inter-Group Relations*. Lagos: Rex Charles Publications, pp. 203-238; Fanso, V. G. 1986. Traditional and Colonial African Boundaries: Concepts and Functions in Inter-Group Relations. *Presence Africaine*, Nouvelle Serie, No. 137/138, pp. 58-75.

²⁴ Agara, T. and Ajisebiyawo, K. 2012. Understanding the Nature of Conflicts in Africa: Some Analytical and Theoretical Explanations. Osuntokun, A. and Okaogo, V. Eds. *Niger-Delta, Politics of Despair, Deprivation and Desperation*. Lagos: ICS Limited, pp. 214-238; Akinyele, R. T. 2000. Power Sharing and Conflict Management in Africa: Nigeria, Sudan and Rwanda. CODESRIA: *Africa Development/Africque et Developpement*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4, pp. 199-223; Cletus, K. M. 2014. Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and their Impact on National Development, Integration and Social Cohesion: A Study of the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict in Northern Ghana. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 7, pp. 108-118.

ethnicities such as the Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Idoma, Ijo, among others, is a recent development.²⁵ Taking the Yoruba as a case study, the various groups of Oyo, Ijebu, Ondo, Ekiti, Egba, *et cetera* originally had no common name as an identity for themselves as we have it today. In fact, the term ‘Yoruba’ was the Hausa designation for the Oyo dialect speakers specifically, and it was only from the 19th century that it came to be extended to the other groups by Christian missionaries.²⁶ Equally, the search for identity is often unveiled in the myth of traditions of origin of various Nigerian groups. The Oduduwa myth or legend is a good example of a deliberate statesmanship of identity formation of regarding the various Yoruba groups as descendants of Oduduwa.²⁷

On a significant note, inter-group relations in Nigeria have taken different forms and have been both cooperative and antagonistic between different Nigerian groups. In the pre-colonial period, and as Asiwaju²⁸ has shown in cultural terms, inter-group relations between the peoples of Nigeria were of benefits in creating what he calls the ‘Nigerian culture’. This, to him, was done through shared mythologies and traditions of origin, including linguistic and economic relations. For example, it has been shown that, although the Jihad of Uthman dan Fodio in the early 19th century succeeded in overthrowing the then existing Hausa states causing significant wars of regime change in Nigeria, over the years, even the victorious Fulani became acculturated into the Hausa linguistic culture to the extent that the language of the conquered Hausa became, by a master stroke of exigency and wide usage, the language of the conqueror and the *lingua franca* of Northern Nigeria even up to the present.

²⁵ Ikime, O. 1985. In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation State. Historical Society of Nigeria. Presidential Inaugural Lecture delivered at the 30th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, pp. 1-36; Ikime, O. 2005. Thoughts on Isoko-Urhobo Relations. A Keynote Address delivered at the Sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society, on Saturday, 22 October, 2005, at Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Nigeria, pp.1-25.

²⁶ Johnson, S. 1971. *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Lagos: CSS Bookshop Ltd., pp. 6-7; and Oduwobi, T. & Iwuagwu, O. 1997. Nigeria: An Ethno-Historical Survey. Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Ibadan: Davidson Press, p. 10.

²⁷ Ikime, O. 2006. *History, The Historian and The Nation: The Voice of a Nigerian Historian*. Ibadan: HEBN Publishers, Plc., pp. xx; 86; and Falola, T. 1989/1990. Pre-Colonial Origins of the National Question in Nigeria. The Yoruba Identity as a Case Study. *Africa: Revista do Centro de Estudos Africanos*. USP, S. Paulo, 12-13(1) 3-24.

²⁸ Asiwaju, A. I. 1997. The Evolution of Nigerian Culture. Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Ibadan: Davidson Press, pp.22-43.

Furthermore, the shared traditions of origin of some of Nigeria's major nationalities have also reflected a significant degree of harmonious inter-group relations among them. This is exemplified in such traditions of origin as those of Kisra legend which unmistakably connects and shows the Yoruba (Western) with the Kanuri (North-Eastern), Jukun, and Bariba in the North-Central region of Nigeria as being people of the same ancestral origin. Also, the traditions of origin join the Yoruba and the Nupe (Tapa) nationalities in every manner, while the Bayyajida legend finds a single ancestral accommodation for the Hausa of Gobir, Zazzau, Kano, Rano and their neighbours further south such as Gwari, Nupe, Yauri and even the Yoruba, who are collectively referred to in that tradition respectively as the Hausa Bakwai and the Hausa Banza ('pure' and 'impure' Hausa). Again, the Oduduwa tradition of origin inextricably connects the Yoruba to the Edo (Bini) and the Nupe creating a picture of people of the same ethnic and cultural affinity.²⁹ This explains why Olaniyan and Ogunyemi argued that it was not colonialism that first brought the peoples of Nigeria together as a community of people of shared ancestry and political relations but their shared commonality in cultural, religious, social and economic relations dating back to more than five centuries before the advent of colonialism.³⁰

In spite of the above and other historical instances of harmonious inter-group relations among the Nigerian peoples, there were, and there are still, several cases of acrimonious relations among the various groups over time. These included relations between the Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State on boundary and land disputes; Ife and Modakeke in Osun State concerning contested spaces; Fulani pastoralists and Berom farmers in Jos on issues of indigeneity and claims to grazing rights; Yoruba and the Hausa in Agege, Mushin, and Obalende in Lagos State; Tiv and Jukun in Wukari, Taraba State.³¹

²⁹ Asiwaju, I. A. 1997. The Evolution of Nigerian Culture. Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures...* pp. 22-43; Ogbogbo, C. B. N. *et al.* Eds. 2012. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70.* Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp.1-2.; Ajayi, S.A. 2013. The 1914 Amalgamation and the Challenges of National Integration in Post-Colonial Nigeria. Ibadan: BWright Publishers, p. 14.

³⁰ Olaniyan, R. A. and Ogunyemi, A. O. 2014. Nigeria's 'Disamalgamation': A Chronicle of the Codes and Conduct of its Advocates. Ayoade, John A. A. *et al.* Eds. *Nigeria: Descent into Anarchy and Collapse?* Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Ltd., pp. 29-60. See also, Alao, A. and Ogunyemi, A. O. 2020. Nigeria: A Review of Its History since the Pre-colonial Times. Alao, A. and Ogunyemi, A. O. Eds. *Contending Issues on Nigeria's Development Trajectory Since 1914.* Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, pp. 5-15.

³¹ Gatawa, M. M. 2013. Inter-group Relations in Historical Perspectives: A Case Study of Yoruba and Hausa Communities in Agege, Lagos, Nigeria. *African Journal of History and Culture*, Vol.5, No.9, pp. 171-177; Ajigbade, I. 2012. The Ugbo-Mahin Conflict and its Implications for Social Development in Ilaje Society. A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of African Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Ibadan, pp. 14-15; 50-57.

In the Niger Delta, the various groups, such as the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ibibio, Isoko, Ijo, and more, forged different forms of cordial links with one another. These were along political, social, cultural and economic ties.³² Ogbia relations with Nembe have been long-standing in various spheres of human endeavours such as trade, politics and socio-cultural affairs. The Isaba also had close contacts with the Ogbe-Ijo, Itsekiri, Urhobo and other groups in the Niger Delta. The Gbaramatu and Diebiri have commercial and other contacts with the Urhobo and Itsekiri. Also, the Ogoni, being predominantly farmers, provided the Andoni with yams, cassava, corn and several forest products in exchange for fish and other sea foods.³³ The above cordial relationships notwithstanding, there have been many instances of conflicts among the various groups in the Niger Delta. Okrika against Eleme, Ogoni against Andoni in Rivers State in respect of fishing rights, the Urhobo against Itsekiri, Ogbe-Ijo against Itsekiri, Ogbe-Ijo against Aladja in Delta State; Arogbo-Ijo³⁴ against Ilaje in Ondo State, are few examples of conflictual relationships among them.³⁵ This explains why Ikime argued that history of inter-group relations in Nigeria has revealed that the diverse ethnic and cultural groups in Nigeria had found common grounds to interact and resolve whatever conflicts that such interactions generated. Although such resolutions were not necessarily peaceful, invariably statesmanship and diplomacy prevailed giving chance to meaningful relationship.³⁶

Briefly put, in the riverine part of the present-day Ondo State in Southwestern Nigeria, there exist various distinctive groups, such as the Ikale, Ilaje (both are of Yoruba-origin), Arogbo-Ijo (Ijo-origin and Ijo-speaking) and Apoi (Ijo-origin, but now Yoruba-speaking) with evidence of economic, political, social and religious interactions dating back to the pre-colonial period. The Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, the focus of this study, at different occasions in

³² Akpan, N. E. 2012. From Alienation to Activism: Women and the Niger Delta Crisis. Osuntokun, A. and Ukaogo, V. Eds. *Niger Delta: Politics of Despair, Deprivation and Desperation*. Lagos: Intergrated Corporate Services Limited, pp. 10-34.

³³ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp.421-429.

³⁴ Ijo is written in many literature as *Ijaw* or *Izon*. But, the correct spelling based on the etymology of the language is Ijo. Therefore, wherever and whenever the said spelling, *Ijaw* or *Izon*, is found in this work, it is a direct quotation from earlier works, such as *Arogbo-Ijaw* or *Ijaw-Arogbo* and *Apoi-Ijaw* or *Ijaw-Apoi*. For further details on the said three spellings, *Ijo*, *Ijaw* and *Izon*, see Alagoa, E.J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp.1-3.

³⁵ Akaruese, L. O. 2012. "Historical Stencil" as Dominant Axis of Niger Delta Crises: Allegorizing Obaro Ikime's Historicity. Ogbogbo, C. B. N. *et al.* Eds. 2012... pp. 37-52; and Asiyanbola, A. R. 2009. Ethno-Communal Conflict in Nigeria: A Study of the Ife-Modakeke Conflict. *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 1-10.

³⁶ Ikime, O. 2006. *History, The Historian and The Nation. The Voice of a Nigerian Historian*. Ibadan: HEBN Publishers, Plc., pp. 41-58.

the pre-colonial era migrated from the central Niger Delta of Gbaraun and Apoi Creek respectively in the present-day Bayelsa State. They finally settled in their present-day locations in what is now Ondo State.³⁷ In addition, apart from mutual point of origin of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, their new geographical location predisposed them towards production of different agricultural items. This necessitated economic relations. There were also socio-cultural relations such as marital and cultural ties across both groups.

Concisely, on the pre-colonial *Yorubisation* process of these two interacting groups, it is germane to state that the Apoi proto-language, right from their ancestral home to their present-day home, was Ijo. Geographically, they share physical boundaries with the Yoruba sub-groups of Ikale and Ilaje, and the Arogbo-Ijo. As a people located at the fringes of the Western Delta, the Apoi became direct neighbours to the Ikale and Ilaje, with whom they conducted profound degree of unrestricted economic and socio-cultural relations, with special reference to inter-group marriages. In that process, they lost their primary Ijo language and adopted Yoruba as their medium of communication with their neighbours. Consequently, the original Ijo language of the Apoi has become the secondary language in their cultural activities.³⁸ In other words, the Apoi succumbed to the linguistic influence of their Yoruba neighbours such that they are now Yoruba-speaking, but retain their Ijo cultural traits, thereby creating a pseudo-Yoruba identity. The Arogbo-Ijo, equally with a history of varied contacts with their Yoruba neighbours are now bilingual in Ijo and Yoruba. Though they also share physical boundaries with the Ikale, Ilaje, Apoi and Egbema-Ijo as neighbours, they were able to retain their Ijo language and cultural traits because of their Delta location south of the Apoi and their Egbema-Ijo neighbours to the southeast.³⁹

In summary, therefore, although there were instances of strained relationships in the pre-colonial period, the advent of the British colonial rule sharply introduced new dynamics in their relationship and this was carried over to the post-colonial era. As a further shaping of these dynamics, changing identities and ethnic differentiation issues were at the core of their

³⁷Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 32-34.

³⁸ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 401-403.

³⁹ Oral interview held with Chief Happy Kawei Atili (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 88 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 August, 2015; and Ogen, O. 2011. Interrogating the Memories of Slavery and the Slave Trade among the Ikale-Yoruba, c1640-1890: The Poverty of European Accounts and the Response to Olatunji Ojo's Critique. *Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lagos, Vol. 11, (116) 113-148.

relations. Thus, whereas both groups are from the same stock, they began to diverge in most material particulars, both in linguistic and cultural identities, in the course of their interactions with their Yoruba neighbours. This identity divergence, to a large extent, affected their socio-cultural and political relations. Meanwhile, as a necessary background, Figure 1.1 on page 11 is the Map of Nigeria, showing Ondo State, while Figure 1.2 on page 12 is the Map of Ondo State, showing the Study Area, Ese-Odo Local Government Area.

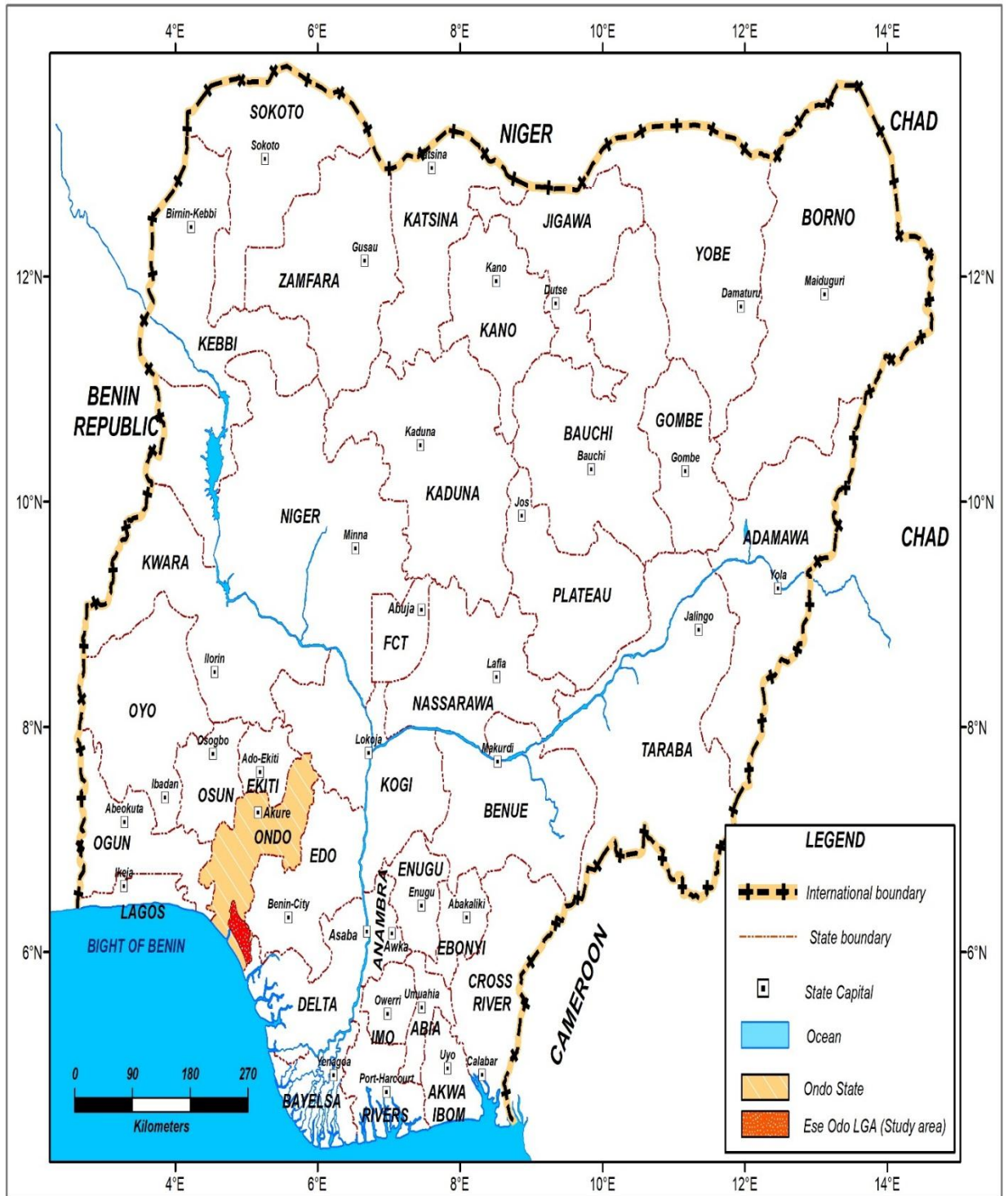


Figure 1.1: Map of Nigeria showing Ondo State.

Source: Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2015.

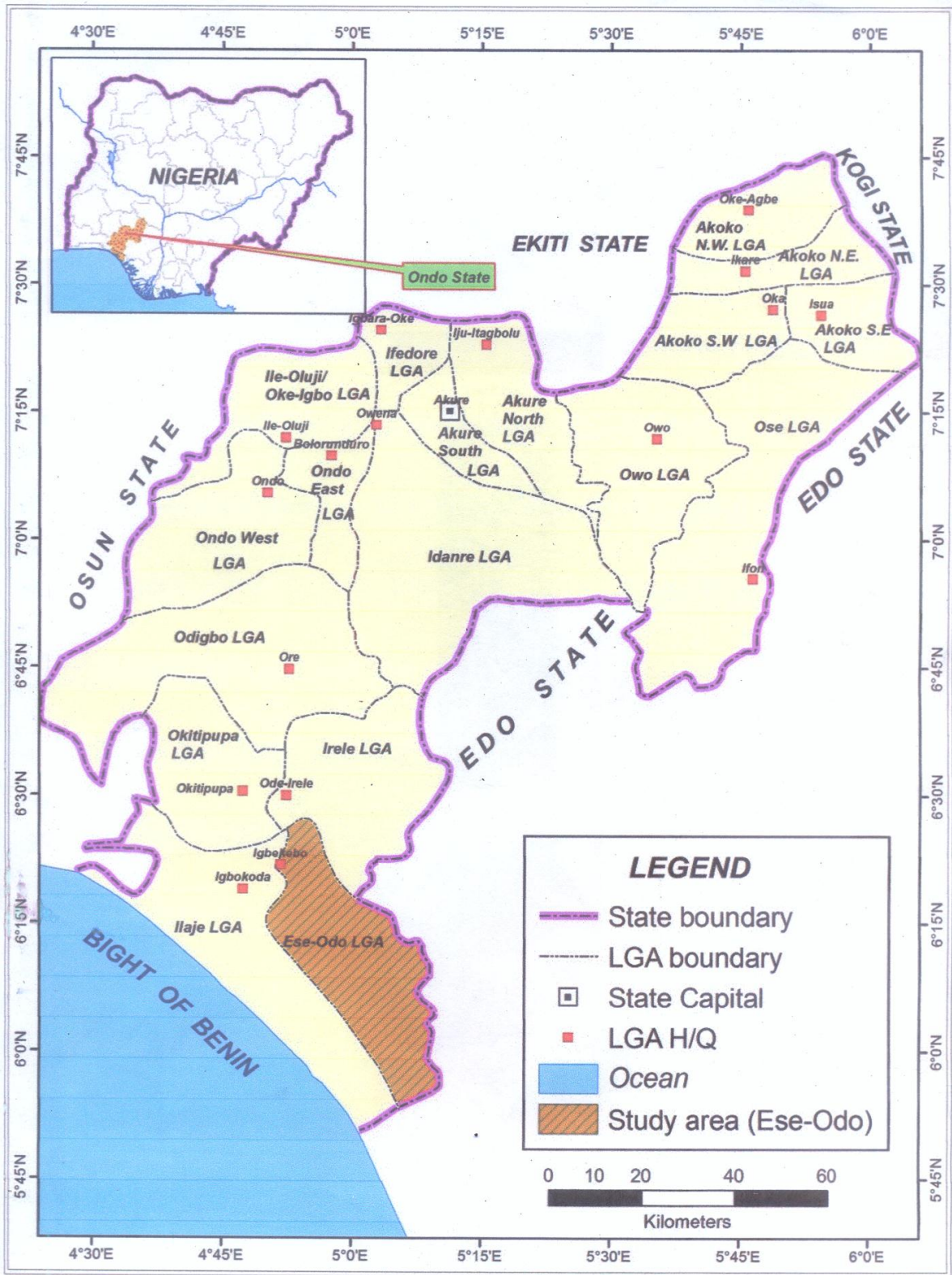


Figure 1.2: Map of Ondo State showing the Study Area.

Source: Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2015.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although both Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi are of a common origin, there has been a considerable shift in their identity formation since the pre-colonial period. Their new identities have resulted in intense rivalry and, thus, affected the nature of inter-group relations between them. The colonial period saw to the consolidation of their divergent identities and their interaction on the basis of the new identities. This period, which forms the chunk of the period of study, witnessed considerable transformation in the inter-group relations among both groups. The changing patterns of relations between these two groups were characterised by intensified relationships which resulted in accommodation and conflict. Within the context of the Ondo State political terrain, their dominant Yoruba neighbours seem to have capitalised on their new identities to play a divide and rule politics. Thus, given that the relationships between the two groups have appreciably affected the political stability of Ondo State (being the oil-producing part of the state), moments of conflict have resulted in grave consequences for the state and the country at large. Yet, the nature of the relations that at times breed conflicts has not received adequate attention from historians. Existing studies on the two groups have focused largely on issues of origins, economic and political developments independent of each group, but paid little attention to how the changing identities of these groups have affected their relationship. It is this *problematique* that recommended this study for a doctoral thesis.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

This study examined the changing identities and inter-group relations among the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, 1915 – 2007. In respect of the specific objectives, the study:

- i. Interrogated the transformation and consolidation of Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi ethnic identities.
- ii. Analysed how the colonial period affected the nature of inter-group relations between Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi.
- iii. Examined the dynamics in the postcolonial relations of the two groups.

1.4 Scope of the Study

In terms of spatial coverage, this study is limited to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi areas of the defunct Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province of Southwestern Nigeria. The defunct Okitipupa Division is now made up of four local government areas in Ondo State, namely, Okitipupa, Irele, Ilaje and Ese-Odo. Groups in the defunct Okitipupa Division are Arogbo-Ijo, Apoi, Ikale and Ilaje. Of these groups, our discussion is mainly restricted to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, who are found in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State. Although the work, where necessary, had a glimpse of the relations between them and their Yoruba neighbours in the defunct Okitipupa Division, such as Ilaje and Ikale, the main focus of the study is on the socio-economic and political relations between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi during this period.

In respect of time scope, the starting date of this work is 1915. In that year, Ondo Province was created with Akure as the provincial headquarters. Significantly, by this development, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were formally brought under the administrative umbrella of Ondo Province in the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria. Consequently, this altered the socio-economic and political lifestyle of the people, and this, in turn, affected their relationship with one another and with their neighbours. The terminal date for the study is 2007. That was the year in which a major violent conflict between the two groups occurred. The relationship between the two groups worsened considerably and this marked a major departure in the existing pattern.

1.5 Sources and Methodology

This study derived information from primary and secondary sources, which were considered relevant to this work. The use of primary sources included archival materials such as government gazettes, Intelligence Reports, magazines and newspapers in the National Archives, Ibadan, and government publications in Akure and Yenagoa were obtained. Oral interviews were conducted by the use of open-ended questions with respondents from the two interacting groups as well as their Yoruba neighbours, who were conversant with or well-informed of the trends in the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relationship during the period of this study. These key informants were community leaders, former and present political

leaders, retired and serving top civil servants at the local, state and federal levels and opinion leaders. Secondary sources included published and unpublished works, such as books, journals, and doctoral theses and the Internet. These materials were sourced from various libraries in institutions of higher learning, such as the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan; Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; John Harris Library, University of Benin; Donald Effiong Udo Ekong Library, University of Port Harcourt; and National Library, Oda Road, Akure.

On methodology for the study, historical methodology was employed. The historical method is a descriptive system of scholarship which deploys the essential properties of chronology and periodicity in the critical interrogation of the issues raised in a narrative. Above all, information collected were subjected to critical analysis.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study filled a yawning gap in the history of inter-group relations among two prominent groups in the periphery of the Western Niger Delta that are grouped administratively under the umbrella of Ondo Province in Southwestern Nigeria. Thus, given the long history of relationship and the turbulence that attended the Niger Delta area, this study enabled us understand better the shifting paradigms of relationship among these groups.

It also enabled us comprehend what factors have shaped and necessitated the paradigms identified and how these have impacted on the good health of the peoples, the state and the country. Therefore, this study contributed to knowledge not only on the subject area but also in enhancing our understanding of the approaches to inter-group relations in Nigeria.

1.7 Literature Review

In providing an answer to the question, what is inter-group relations? Nwabueze, in his paper entitled *Towards a Wider Understanding of Inter-Group Relations*, submits that the preposition 'inter' is literally taken to mean 'between or among'. Then on 'relations', he states that it simply means the way in which one thing is associated with or connected to the other. According to him, inter-group, therefore, means the simple or complex, conflicting or accommodating, cooperating, consensual; peaceful or acrimonious; intense, dense or

indifferent way that one group is connected or associated with another in the course of their interaction with each other. Nwabueze further argues that all human societies have been characterised by differences within their economic, political and socio-cultural systems. These perceived differences and conflicts of interest often lead to the emergence of groups for the promotion of sectional interests. Concomitantly, these relations of conflict and competition threaten not only group harmony but also inter-group cohesion.⁴⁰ Nwabueze's piece helped this work to establish a conceptual clarification of the usage of the term inter-group relations.

Dioka's work, *Inter-Group Relations among Nigerian Communities*, defines inter-group relations as the interactions between two or more distinct cultural or linguistic groups. He, then, examines various dimensions of inter-group relations among Nigerian peoples, and points out that such interaction could be peaceful, through trade, migrations or marriages; they could also be violent, through wars and conquests.⁴¹ Dioka's piece is useful in complementing our discourse in understanding the dynamics of inter-group relations.

Ikpe, in her paper entitled *Food and Inter-Group Relations in Ibibioland*, defines inter-group relations as the direct or indirect relationship between peoples or groups whether cordial or conflictual. The work further investigates the role of food trade in inter-group relations among the Ibibio or between Ibibioland and her neighbours as they imported yam and exported fish products. She argues that the need to control food resources such as land and fishing grounds led to aggressive inter-group relations between the Ibibio and their neighbours. Attempts to secure peace have equally led to the rise of peace negotiators and peace committees in the Ibibio-Igbo border lands. She concludes that food trade plays a significant role in inter-group relations because it is sometimes fostering good neighbourliness, co-operation and unity, and sometimes, serving as a source of conflict, migration and diplomacy or creating dependence on external food aid.⁴² Though Ikpe's

⁴⁰ Nwabueze, N. 2003. *Towards a Wider Understanding of Inter-Group Relations*. Akinyele, R.T. Ed. *Race, Ethnicity and Nation Building in Africa: Studies in Inter-Group Relations*. Lagos: Rex Charles Publications, pp.1-29.

⁴¹ Dioka, L.C. 1997. *Inter-Group Relations among Nigerian Communities*. Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Ibadan: Davidson Press, pp. 56-79.

⁴² Ikpe, E. B. 2003. *Food and Inter-Group Relations in Ibibioland*. Akinyele, R. T. Ed. *Race, Ethnicity and Nation Building in Africa: Studies in Inter-group Relations*. Lagos: Rex Charles Publications, pp. 31-53.

work is limited to Ibibioland, its analysis is valuable in interrogating the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi food culture, which was an aspect that influenced their inter-group relations.

Ikime's seminal book, entitled *Niger Delta Rivalry, Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*,⁴³ principally deals with the relations between two peoples of the Niger Delta, the Itsekiri (fisherfolks and traders), who occupy the coastal belt, and the Urhobo, a hinterland, agricultural people. Geographical location not only determined the nature of their relations during the period covered by the study, it was also one of the vital consequences for the relations of each of these groups with the Europeans operating in the area. The other major factor which determined their relations was the imposition of British colonial rule as from 1884. The reactions of these two groups to this episode sharply differed. So also was the British attitude to these two respective groups. The Itsekiri at the coast were the first to come in contact with the British imperial power, and soon became trusted friend of the British. So, when the British were seeking to penetrate the Urhobo hinterland, they found in the Itsekiri useful allies and tools. The Urhobo resented not only the role played by the Itsekiri during the period of pacification but also the favoured position the latter enjoyed in the various institutions the British introduced. Though not directly related to the present study, Ikime's work offers a chief contribution to the historiography of inter-group relations in the Niger Delta.

Another major contribution on inter-group relations by Ikime is entitled *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation State*. In this work, Ikime describes and analyses historical events and social conditions in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era of Nigeria, and further shows what influences the shapes of inter-group relations in the country. According to him, we have not yet produced Nigerians who genuinely believe in this country, and are prepared to yield instinctive loyalty, not only due to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the Nigerian state, but because previous governments have adopted a winner-take-all stance and so engaged in lopsided development. Thus, the search for patriotic Nigerians continues to be unproductive, so long as Nigeria fails to guarantee the genuine protection of the interests of all constituent

⁴³ Ikime, O. 1969. *Niger Delta Rivalry, Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*. London: Longman Group Limited.

units.⁴⁴ Although this work does not directly relate to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, it covers many aspects of inter-group relations, which are useful to the present study.

Ogbogbo, *et al.*⁴⁵ see inter-group relations as a complex and dynamic phenomenon that feeds into almost every aspect of our national history, politics and public memory. Thus, it centres on ethnic pluralism and competition, interrogates the ways in which social and cultural differences were transformed into a theatre of struggle over identity, power and resources. Putting it in another way, they posit that inter-group relations are characterised by social consciousness, feeling of solidarity, indifference towards ‘others’ and interest articulation which shape contest for power and resources as well as protection of socio-cultural values in a competitive plural society. Borrowing their cherished words, inter-group relations ‘oscillates between harmony and hostility; accommodation and conflict.’ Although the above work brilliantly covers different aspects of inter-group relations of various groups in Nigeria, it does not directly focus on the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, the focus of our study. Hence, this work filled the gap.

The scholarly work of Banigo, entitled *Reflections on the Ijo Struggle for Self-Determination in Nigeria*, examines the long struggle of the Ijo people in the Niger Delta. He traces the historical root of the titanic struggle to the colonial era. He, therefore, concludes that, as a *conditio sine qua non*, the durability of our nascent democracy rests on the preparedness of the Nigerian government to make sure that every group, irrespective of its size, should have a comfortable political space to thrive.⁴⁶ Though the work provides vital information on the Ijo struggle for self-determination over time, it does not discuss the inter-group relations among the various Ijo subgroups in the Niger Delta, with particular respect to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi.

⁴⁴ Ikime, O. 1985. In *Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation State*. Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria, pp. 1-33.

⁴⁵ Ogbogbo, C.B.N. *et al.* Eds. 2012. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960. Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp.1-2.

⁴⁶ Banigo, Y. 2012. *Reflections on the Ijo Struggle for Self-Determination*. Ogbogbo, C.B.N. *et al.* Eds. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp. 315-332.

Okpeh's piece, *Patterns and Dynamics of Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria, 1800-1900 AD*⁴⁷ examines inter-group relations between or among the various peoples and communities of Nigeria during the 19th and 20th centuries. In doing justice to the work, Okpeh examines the extent to which these relations have changed and how geographical, socio-cultural, economic and political factors have necessitated these fundamental changes. The work further shows that interactions between groups in Nigeria predated the British *raj* and the historic 1914 amalgamation, which Ahmadu Bello, the then Sark of Sokoto, described as 'the mistake of 1914.' In spite of the relevance of the work to this study, the primary focus was on pre-colonial inter-group relations. Hence, the discussions on colonial and post-colonial inter-group relations appeared to be scanty, which this work filled, especially with particular reference to the Arogo-Ijo – Apoi relations.

The paper of Gatawa, entitled *Inter-Group Relations in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Yoruba and Hausa Communities of Agege, Lagos, Nigeria*,⁴⁸ posits that, before the advent of the British colonial rule in Nigeria, the various ethnic groups had already achieved a high level of ethnic and cultural integration. According to him, this was made possible by long distance trade, migratory movements and socio-economic factors. In the case of Yoruba-Hausa relations in Agege, he describes it as that of peaceful co-existence *par excellence*, owing to inter-communal mechanisms, such as the establishment of Hausa communities, commerce, cementation of inter-ethnic marriages, the growth of Islam, and the formation of community associations. Despite the fact that the work is a useful contribution on inter-group relations in Nigeria, it primarily focused more on the positive aspects of their relations, thereby neglecting the bitter ones between them.

The article of Egbefo, entitled *Aspects of Intergroup Relations in 21st Century Nigeria: Emblem of Ethnicity, Religious Fundamentalism and National Security Crisis 2000 – 2014*,⁴⁹ argues that inter-group contacts of the various ethnic nationalities started in the pre-

⁴⁷ Okpeh, O. O. Jr. 2007/2008. *Patterns and Dynamics of Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria, 1800-1900 AD. A Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 17, pp. 123-137.

⁴⁸ Gatawa, M. M. 2013. *Inter-Group Relations in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Yoruba and Hausa Communities of Agege, Lagos, Nigeria. African Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. 5, No. 9, pp. 171-177.

⁴⁹ Egbefo, D. O. 2015. *Aspects of Intergroup Relations in 21st Century Nigeria: Emblem of Ethnicity, Religious Fundamentalism and National Security Crisis 2000 – 2014. International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH) Bahir Dar-Ethiopia*, Vol. 4 (1), No.13, pp. 66-83.

colonial period, and, thus, ought to have been consolidated before now. But, Nigeria is still trapped in the woes of ethnicity, religious extremism and national security crisis. Thus, meaningful inter-ethnic/group relations elude Nigeria. According to Egbefo, Nigeria is presently experiencing disintegrating challenges. He concludes that, among others, good governance, good leadership and the rule of law are the preconditions for the elimination of ethnicity, religious extremism and internal threats in Nigeria. Though relevant to this study, the work does not examine in detail pre-colonial and colonial inter-group relations among the various groups in Nigeria. Rather, it mainly focused on the 21st century intergroup relations in Nigeria. This is a major gap, which the present study filled.

The book of Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, which heavily relies on archival documents, focuses on the external relations of the Oil Rivers States and of British foreign policy towards them. That is, Dike dwells on the development of the economic and political institutions in the Niger Delta in the context of the European commercial engagements.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Jones' work, inspired by the work of Dike, examines not only the development of 'canoe houses' and trading companies that dominated much of the life of the ports of Eastern Nigeria, but also the organisation of the slave trade, and the nature of slavery itself in the region. In fact, Jones' work, which relied more heavily on oral tradition and archival documents, has two main aims. The first, being historical, is to trace the history of the Eastern Delta states, while the second, which is anthropological, is to analyse their systems of government.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Dike and Jones limit their studies to the Eastern Delta and its trading states. Hence, none of them attempts an overview of the entire Niger Delta, with special respect to the Arogo-Ijo and Apoi of Western Niger Delta.

Alagoa's *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition* is a significant contribution to the existing body of literature on the Niger Delta in general and the Arogo-Ijo and Apoi in particular. The most valuable feature of this seminal work is that it is the first attempt to provide a historical perspective, not just on the Eastern Delta trading states, but also on the peoples and politics of the Niger Delta as a whole. It is equally

⁵⁰ Dike, K. O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. London: Clarendon Press.

⁵¹ Jones, G. I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press, pp. 58-62.

noteworthy for its use of oral tradition, which, whilst critical, is much more thorough than that found in the works of Dike, and Jones. He sub-divides the Ijo people of the Niger Delta into six convenient units, namely, the Western Delta fringe, the Western Delta, the Central Delta, the Eastern Delta, the Eastern Delta fringe, and Northern Delta fringe. As a point of interest to this study, which is on the Western Delta fringe, Alagoa focuses on the Apoi, and traces their migration from the Apoi Creek in the Central Niger Delta to the southwestern part of the Niger Delta in the present location of Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State. He not only further mentions the nine major Apoi communities, but also highlights the Apoi contacts with their neighbours, such as the Ilaje, Ikale and the Benin peoples. In furtherance of the above, Alagoa dwells on the Arogbo-Ijo people by tracing their historical migration from Gbaraun of Central Niger Delta in the present-day Bayelsa State to the southwestern part of the Niger Delta in the present-day Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State.⁵² However, as useful as this pioneer work on these two ethnic groups is, it focused little attention on their history of migrations, contacts with their neighbours and, above all, does not discuss the Arogbo-Ijo – Apoi relations in any form. The work is more of a general survey of their history. Hence, no detailed analysis is given in terms of their socio-cultural, economic and political relations. As such, this present work addressed these perceived gaps and critically examined the Arogbo-Ijo – Apoi relations under the period of this study.

Alagoa in his, *The Uses of Hindsight as Foresight: Reflections on the Niger Delta and Nigerian History*, Alagoa discusses the Ijo in the Niger Delta. Though the scope of this work is on the issue of origin and migration of the Ijo, the primary position is that, although historians primarily engage in supplying society with hindsight, they may also be vital in discussions of contemporary issues and in the search for solutions to current societal challenges. Thus, historians might equally contribute a touch of foresight to the development of society. Meanwhile, as of direct relevance to this work, in chapter four, *The Western Niger Delta: Origins and Relations*, Alagoa describes the Central Niger Delta as the dispersal centre for the Ijo sub-groups that made up the area identified as Western-Ijo, including the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi peoples, the subjects of this study. He further pinpoints

⁵² Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 32-36.

language and history as means of identifying the various Ijo sub-groups within the Niger Delta and singles out those who ‘have lost their Ijo dialect, or retain it only for special cultural or ritual purposes.’ According to him, these are the Apoi of the Western Delta fringe, who now speak Yoruba in Ondo State, and the Ibani in Rivers State who also speak a dialect of Igbo.⁵³ Though the work provided useful insights into the issue of origins and migrations of the Ijo people in the Niger Delta and other related information that are of interest to this work, the Arogbo-Ijo – Apoi relations in any form was never discussed. Thus, adequate attention was given to it in this study.

Another relevant book is *The Land and People of Bayelsa State: Central Niger Delta*. This book of twenty-nine chapters, edited by Ebiegberi Joe Alagoa, contains contributions from distinguished scholars from various fields, such as history, geography, economics, dramatic arts, literature, archaeology, sociology, religious studies, political science, and zoology. The book points out that the Ijo are today found in Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Edo and Ondo States, but that Bayelsa State has the largest concentration of Ijo communities. This concentration of Ijo communities has erroneously led to the historical perception that the state is homogeneously and exclusively peopled by the Ijo. Therefore, in correcting this historical fallacy, scholars argue in the book that Bayelsa State is heterogeneous, although predominantly populated by the Ijo. They also contend that Bayelsa State has a mix of languages of dialectical families. Hence, there are a small number of Urhobo speakers in Ofoni and Isoko speakers in six communities in Sagbama Local Government Area, and the languages spoken are classified as Edoid, that is, related to the Edo language of Benin. The book is quite relevant to this work primarily due to the fact that the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi traditions of origin are linked to Gbaraun and Apoi Creek in the Central Niger Delta as their primary point of dispersal.⁵⁴ Therefore, having a fair historical knowledge of the Central Niger Delta enriched this work. Nevertheless, the work focused on the people of Bayelsa State alone, hence, no discussion on inter-group relations between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi of the Western Niger Delta.

⁵³ Alagoa, E. J. 2004. *The Uses of Hindsight as Foresight: Reflections on the Niger Delta and Nigerian History*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 17-56.

⁵⁴ Alagoa, E. J. Ed. 2009. *The Land and People of Bayelsa State: Central Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 74-85.

Another valuable book for this study is the *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, edited by Ikime,⁵⁵ with chapters contributed by a team of experts on various aspects of Nigerian history. For instance, in a chapter entitled, The Peoples and Kingdoms of the Delta Province, Ikime highlights the role the Apoi in Southwestern Nigeria played by supplying canoes to other Niger Delta dwellers and how trade and other inter-group relations were promoted. The above obviously refers to the Apoi of the present-day Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State and, thus, a further confirmation of tangential inter-group relations between them and other dwellers of the Niger Delta, such as the Itsekiri, Urhobo, and Aboh peoples. Similarly, the works of Ajayi and Alagoa, entitled *Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of Economic Developments and Inter-group Relations*,⁵⁶ and Alagoa's *The Eastern Niger Delta and the Hinterland in the 19th Century*,⁵⁷ though not directly focused on the Arogbo-Ijo – Apoi social, economic and political relations, are useful contributions to this study.

Alagoa's *The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours, up to 1800* is another useful work for this study. Though it limits the term, Niger Delta, to include the Eastern Delta kingdoms of Bonny, Elem Kalabari, Okrika and Nembe,⁵⁸ it nevertheless contains relevant information on the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi of the Western Niger Delta fringe. Alagoa further posits that the Ijo, East of the Forcados River did not come under the direct political control of the *Oba* of Benin, but scattered groups of Ijo West of the Forcados, specifically on and west of the Benin River, truly had visible contacts with Benin. He then buttresses this claim with one Benin historian, who states that *Oba* Olua (c1473) gave 'orders' to 'Ijaw men' to ferry his son Iginua (Ginuwa) and his followers to found the Itsekiri kingdom of Warri.⁵⁹ As a direct reference on the Apoi of Okitipupa Division, the most western Ijo sub-group, Alagoa equally states that, at one of their earlier settlements at Okomu or Akpaka, they

⁵⁵ Ikime, O. Ed. 1980. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., p. 20.

⁵⁶ Ajayi, J. F. A. and Alagoa, E. J. 1980. *Nigeria before 1800: Aspects of Economic Developments and Intergroup Relations*. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., pp. 224-235.

⁵⁷ Alagoa, E. J. 1980. *The Eastern Niger Delta and the Hinterland in the 19th Century*. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., pp. 249-261.

⁵⁸ Alagoa, E. J. 1976. *The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours, to 1800*. Ajayi, J. F. A. and Crowder, M. Eds. *History of West Africa*, Volume One. Harlow Essex UK: Longman Group Limited, p. 331.

⁵⁹ Alagoa, E. J. 1976. *The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours, to 1800*. Ajayi, J. F. A. and Crowder, M. Eds. *History of West Africa*, Volume One... p. 335. The Benin Historian referred to is Jacob Egharevba, for further details see Egharevba, J. 1966, 3rd Edition. *A Short History of Benin*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, pp. 22-23.

acted as paddlers for the messengers of the *Oba* of Benin on several occasions while going to see his friend, the Olugbo of Ugbo,⁶⁰ an Ilaje *Oba* at the southwestern end of the Niger Delta, a neighbour to the Arogbo-Ijo. Similarly, an Intelligence Report of Apoi- Ijaw of Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province, 1940⁶¹ also confirms this historic claim. In a similar vein, Alagoa, while relying on the records of the Portuguese captain, Duarte Pacheco Pereira, suggests that those Ijo groups now living west of the Forcados and east of the Bonny had not yet arrived at their present area of occupation by 1500. He goes further to state that Arogbo was first mentioned around 1644.⁶² This invariably implied that the founding of Arogbo predated 1644 and, thus, thrown more light on the history of Arogbo-Ijo in Ondo State.

Babarinsa's masterpiece, *House of War*, brilliantly discusses the collapse of Nigeria's Second Republic in 1983, which he describes as a victim of the ingrained contradictions in the Nigerian federation. He further posits that Nigeria is a deformed federation because the component nationalities have few logical bases for relating to one another. This is understandable because a federation is supposed to be a state where the federating units should have a measure of control over their destinies and, above all, autonomous and economically viable. In fact, the book essentially dwells on the old Ondo State political crisis of 1983 between Chief Michael Adegunle Ajasin, the Governor, and Chief Akinwale Michael Omoboriowo (popularly known as Chief Akin Omoboriowo), his erstwhile Deputy Governor, on the platform of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). The climax was the decamping from the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) to the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) by Chief Akin Omoboriowo and his supporters, including Chief Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo (an Arogbo-Ijo), who was head of business (Speaker) in the Ondo State House of Assembly. On the other hand, Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo (an Apoi), a Commissioner, was one of the die-hard supporters of Chief Michael Adegunle Ajasin.⁶³ Thus, between the

⁶⁰ Alagoa, E. J. 1976. The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours, to 1800. Ajayi, J. F. A. and Crowder, M. Eds. *History of West Africa*, Volume One..., p. 336.

⁶¹ NAI. Ondoprof-1024: A Covering Report to an Intelligence Report on the Apoi-Ijaw District of the Okitipupa Division of the Ondo Province, 1940, pp. 1-2; Apoi-Ijaw Intelligence Report, No. 17572/40, dated 14 June, 1941, pp.1-3; No. 624/154, dated 9 November, 1941, p.6.

⁶² Alagoa, E. J. 1976. The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours, to 1800. Ajayi, J. F. A. and Crowder, M. Eds. *History of West Africa*, Volume One... p. 338.

⁶³ Babarinsa, D. 2003. *House of War*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.

Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi peoples, it simply put on an ethnic political colouration, as majority of Arogbo people queued behind Jolowo and, likewise, majority of Apoi people stood for Osomo. Therefore, the work, as it relates to Ondo State, though limited to the Second Republic, is a good source material for this study, especially on the political relations between these two groups.

Another indispensable book is that of Alagoa, *et al.*, entitled *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. This 33-chapter work of 49 contributory authors is indeed a compendium of the history of the Ijo people in the Niger Delta and those in the Diaspora. On a general note, the work posits that the Central Niger Delta is the ancestry root of the Ijo of the Eastern and Western Niger Delta, and traces their history from the earliest times to the present and their relations with other ethnic groups in Nigeria. The work does not stop at that; it proceeds to state that the Ijo are found not only across the length and breadth of Nigeria, but also along the entire length of the Atlantic Coast of West and Central Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and in the Caribbean or West Indies.⁶⁴ This, thus, counts as one of the most cerebral contributions to our knowledge of the African Diaspora studies. As a contributory factor, the work posits that the trans-Atlantic slave trade also led to the Ijo's Diaspora spread as noted above. The work also states that, though the Ijo people acted as the middlemen in the African side of the human trade, they were also victims because of internal conflicts between the Niger Delta Ijo communities.⁶⁵ Specifically, chapter 18, entitled The Western Delta Limit, discusses the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi ethnic groups, and points out that they are found in Ondo State and live among the Ilaje and Ikale sub-groups of Yoruba. The work further states that the Apoi, who no longer understand Ijo, are now Yoruba-speaking but still use Ijo in their religious rituals, funeral songs and masquerade plays. The Arogbo-Ijo, on the other hand, are still Ijo-speaking, but they use Yoruba as a second language. On their origin and migration, the work traces them to the Apoi Creek and Gbaraun of the Central Niger Delta.⁶⁶ Though a good source material for this study, the work does not discuss Arogbo-Ijo – Apoi relations in any form. Hence, this study filled the gap.

⁶⁴ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications.

⁶⁵ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 377-380.

⁶⁶ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. The Western Delta Limit. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 401-407.

Another valuable work which is indispensable to any student of Arogbo-Ijo history is Peretei's *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. This is an important contribution to the social and political history of the Arogbo-Ijo people. The book provides useful insights into the historical background of the people and the establishment of the Perebiyenmo dynasty and the Arogbo-Ijo traditional chieftaincy institution. It goes further to dwell on the struggle for self-preservation, how Western education and Christianity came to Arogbo, traditional festivals and institutions, the self-determination and identity struggle in Ondo State and the Agadagba-Obon Road Project. The book concludes with a personality profile of eminent Arogbo-Ijo sons and daughters across all walks of life.⁶⁷ As a gap, the book has nothing to do with the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations, but mainly on the Arogbo-Ijo people, as the title clearly shows. Apart from a few footnotes on the introductory background, the author failed to provide any bibliographical information at the end of the book. This made it difficult for readers to verify some of the claims made in the book.

The book of Eshofonie, entitled *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*, is also important. The book developed out of the concern of the author that none of the existing works discusses Arogbo-Ijo history in an in-depth manner, as he posits. However, the work too fails to perform this academic task. Above all, there is no discussion on inter-group relations between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, nor any other group in the region in any form. Nevertheless, the work discusses the geography, people, location and origin of the Arogbo-Ijo people. It further discusses some aspects of the Arogbo-Ijo culture, such as tribal marks, dressing, occupation, and concludes with historical events and dates.⁶⁸

Ehinmore, in his Ph D thesis entitled *A Socio-Economic History of the Ilaje of Southwestern Nigeria, 1500-1900*, states that the Ilaje land is located in the coastal, and part of the rain forest region of the present-day Ondo State. According to him, the Ilaje land comprises four major kingdoms, namely, Ugbo, Mahin, Etikan and Aheri. In correcting the erroneous view of some writers that the Yoruba people never ventured through the Atlantic surf on the open sea, he points out that the Ilaje (a Yoruba sub-group) right from pre-colonial times are

⁶⁷ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition.

⁶⁸ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson & Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers.

mainly fishermen like the Ijo in the Niger Delta. Relying on oral traditions, Ehinmore states that inter-group relations cutting across socio-cultural and economic ties did take place between the Ilaje and their Bini, Ijebu, Ikale, Itsekiri and Ijo neighbours.⁶⁹ In his geographical description of Ilaje land, Ehinmore submits thus: *as it is known today, the Ilaje are found in the coastal part of southwestern Nigeria, especially the coastal zone of present day Ondo State. They are bound by the Ikale in the North, the Ijebu in the west, the Itsekiri in the East and in the south by the Atlantic Ocean.*⁷⁰ A careful look at the above shows that the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi are curiously omitted; whereas as neighbours to the Ilaje, they also share boundaries with them. Interestingly, writing on the Apoi, Alagoa points out that the Apoi are bordered to the north by the Ikale Yoruba, to the west by the Ilaje Yoruba...the Arogbo-Ijo as neighbours to the south...⁷¹ According to Ikime, since the canons of historical scholarship insist that the historian must be faithful to his evidence,⁷² for the record, Ilaje land is bounded by the Ijebu to the West, the Ikale to the north, the Itsekiri to the east, the Apoi and Arogbo-Ijo to the northwest, and the Atlantic Ocean on the southern boundary.⁷³ The above shortcoming notwithstanding, the work, though not directly related to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, significantly enriched this study.

Another study on Apoi which is relevant to this work is Iroju's M Phil Thesis, A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. The work not only critically examines and identifies the historical root of the Apoi and explains the evolution and growth of their language, but also throws more light on their socio-political and economic heritage. In furtherance of the above, the work dwells on their relations with neighbours, such as the Ikale, Ilaje and the Arogbo-Ijo. The work concludes that the Apoi, who are originally of Ijo origin, are now Yoruba-speaking due to their in-depth interactions with their Yoruba

⁶⁹ Ehinmore, M. O. 2010. A Socio-Economic History of the Ilaje of Southwestern Nigeria, 1500-1900. A Ph D Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

⁷⁰ Ehinmore, M. O. 2010. A Socio-Economic History of the Ilaje of Southwestern Nigeria, 1500-1900. A Ph D Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

⁷¹ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 27.

⁷² Ikime, O. 2006. *History, The Historian and The Nation: The Voice of a Nigerian Historian*. Ibadan: HEBN Publishers, Plc., 145.

⁷³ The free encyclopedia, http://naijasky.com/ilaje/19//Ilaje-history/6368/accessed_online21/7/2016.

neighbours.⁷⁴ Interestingly, Mesarawon posits that the Apoi are not alone in this dialectical crossroad because there are other Ijo sub-groups who are equally in this predicament. He, therefore, clearly posits thus:

There are even some cases of IZONS who have partially or completely lost their IZON language to other ethnic languages. That is why, for instance, many people of Bonny and Opobo in Rivers State speak IBO instead of IBANI which is their IZON dialect; in Bendel State [now in Delta State] many people from Kiagbodo and Egodo find it easier to express themselves in Urhobo instead of IZON and in Ondo State, people of IZON Apoi retain only the IZON traditional ceremonies like Bouabu and Oborowe but they cannot speak IZON. This is a dangerous trend which must be corrected if we want to protect our identity as a people...⁷⁵

The various works already assessed do not directly deal with the changing identities and inter-group relations of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, but the information provided and analysed is of great relevance to the present study on some aspects of their relations from 1915-2007.

⁷⁴ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

⁷⁵ Mesarawon, A. A. 1981. *Asuwaye, IZON (Ijaw) Tolumo Fun*. Akure: Olotu Publishing Press, p. 6. Note: The word bouabu is also spelt in the following ways, boabo, buabo, bouabo and bou-abhu. Therefore, for the purpose of uniformity, the spelling BOUABO shall be used throughout this work, except on direct quotation(s) where applicable.

CHAPTER TWO

LAND, PEOPLE AND SOCIETIES OF THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI UP TO 1915

2.1 Geographical Location and Peculiarities of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi Peoples

Alagoa, in his sub-divisions of Ijo into geographical, cultural and linguistic groups, describes the Arogbo-Ijo as one of the inhabitants of the fringes of the Western Niger Delta.¹ Today, due to various political and structural reorganisations, the Nigerian state has passed through since the colonial era to the present, the Arogbo-Ijo are found in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State in the Southwestern part of Nigeria.

In exact geographical terms, Arogbo-Ijo is located between longitudes 40 and 50E and between latitudes 60 and 70N in the Southeastern part of Ondo State.² To the east, Arogbo-Ijo is bound by Safarogbo, and Egbema-Ijo speaking people, who are found in the present-day Edo and Delta States respectively.³ In the west and southern part, Arogbo-Ijo is bordered by the Ilaje, a Yoruba sub-group. Currently, the Ilaje people, who previously shared the then Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area, with the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, are found in Ilaje Local Government Area with its headquarters at Igbokoda. The Ilaje communities directly sharing physical boundaries with the Arogbo-Ijo are Orotu, Ilowo, Oropo, Obe-Jedo, Obe-Adun, Obe-Ogbaro, Ebijimi, Ilepete, and Ibila. In the northeastern part, Arogbo-Ijo are bound by the Apoi. But, the Apoi settlements or towns directly sharing physical boundaries with the Arogbo-Ijo are Kiribo and Igbekebo. And, in the North-

¹ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 25.

² Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 406.

³The people of Safarogbo are historically of Arogbo-Ijo origin, and thus, directly under the Arogbo-Ijo traditional institution during the pre-colonial era. But, the British colonial rule brought them under Benin Division of Benin Province, while the Arogbo-Ijo were brought under Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province of Southern Nigeria. That was the root of Arogbo-Ijo Balkanisation into different administrative units within the Southern part of Nigeria. Consequently, today, the people of Safarogbo, Oforojoh-gbini, Mamagbini, Kolombo and Bilebuwei-ama are found in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State, but their traditional institutions are under the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo (the traditional head of the Arogbo-Ijo).

western part, Arogbo-Ijo is bound by the Ikale, a Yoruba sub-group.⁴ The Ikale settlements that are neighbours to the Arogbo-Ijo are Ajagba, Akotogbo, Barogbo and Iju-Osun, now found in Irele Local Government Area of Ondo State. Meanwhile, it must be pointed out that the settlements, with particular respect to Akotogbo, Barogbo and Iju-Osun are historically of Arogbo-Ijo origin, but later mostly populated by the migrant Ikale people from Bini. It was based on this earlier Bini historical claim that the District of these Ikale settlements, was called Bini Confederation in the early part of the British colonial rule. Thus, it was only from the 1970s that the said Bini historical claim was changed to Yoruba. Hence, the settlements, which had been part of the then Ese-Odo District Council alongside the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi from the 1950s to 1970s, were put under Ikale Local Government Council in 1976.

The above, therefore, informed the submission of Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo that after all, only ‘yesterday’ Bini Confederation declared themselves Ikale and no tongues wagged. Nevertheless, *Ijo biri* (Ijo quarters) still exist in the said Ikale settlements, thereby indicating, strongly, that Arogbo-Ijo people are still living in those settlements as aborigines. Throwing a further historical weight to the above submission, Iroju argues that the land presently occupied by the Ikale settlements such as Akotogbo, Barogbo, and Iju-Osun aboriginally belonged to the Arogbo-Ijo who are the earliest settlers in the area(s). Further evidence affirming the Arogbo-Ijo aboriginality in those settlements is the presence of *Ijo biri* (Ijo quarters) since the primordial period and uptill date in those settlements. In fact, in Ijo cosmology, the usage of *Ijo biri* is usually an establishment of a dominance or aboriginal ownership of a land or settlements. This is abound in so many other Ijo clans or settlements across the Niger Delta region. Therefore, in historical sense, the Ikales in those settlements are to be described as later arrivals on those Arogbo-Ijo territories.⁵

⁴ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Delta Delta...* p.406; and Oral interview held with Mr Jikeri Godwin Uttoh, 46 years, Community Leader, Ugoububogho, Akpata, Arogbo, 26 March, 2018.

⁵ Oral interview held with Opeyemi Anthony Iroju, lecturer, 40 years, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, (place of interview, Igbotu, Apoi), 25 March, 2018; Obolo, Z. O. 2005. *The Struggles and Development to Date 24th December, 2005 and the Way Forward*. Being the Lecture Topic to Mark the Golden Jubilee Anniversary Celebration of His Royal Majesty, *Oba* S. A. Oladiran, the 11th Kalasuwe of Apoiland, p. 8; NAI: Ondoprof 4/4: Documents Relating to Arogbo-Ijaw District Council; Ondoprof 1/1 1024 Ijaw-Apoi Native Authority; Documents Relating to Bini Confederation Native Authority Standing Rules F/090/5/24; and Ondoprof-2906/5 W. R. L. N. 265 of 1955. *The Western Region Local Government Law, 1952* (No. 1 of 1953), B 775-778. Note: The above historical claims on Akotogbo, Barogbo, and Iju-Osun sharply differs from that of Ogen, which details need not to detain us here. However, for the record, see, Ogen, O. 2011. *Interrogating the Memories of Slavery and the Slave Trade among the Ikale-Yoruba, c1640-1890: The Poverty of European Accounts and Response to Olatunji Ojo’s Critique*. *Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lagos, Volume 11, pp. 113-148.

In geo-physical terms, Arogbo-Ijo area is a combination of three distinctive belts or ecological zones. These are (i) the sandy beach ridges, with fresh water; (ii) the fresh water swamp area; and (iii) the salt water swamp area. The sandy ridge belt consists of many Islands, running along the river that are raised from about 2 to 5 feet above river level, hence, are free from seasonal flooding. Notable examples of such communities are Arogbo (the settlement, which provides the name by which the whole Arogbo-Ijo kingdom is known), Amapere, Agadagba-Obon, New Jerusalem, New Ajapa, Pere-Ama, Tuwei-Ama, Igaliga-Ugbo, Osari-Ugbo, and Igangbo. Apart from these Arogbo-Ijo communities that are located on land within the fresh water swamp area; there are other settlements which are not on land, strictly speaking. Such Arogbo-Ijo communities are often subjected to seasonal flooding during the rainy season, because they exist at levels either on a par with the river level or barely one foot above river level. Examples of such communities are Adoloseimo I, Adoloseimo II and Adoloseimo III, Awodikuro, Biagbini, Ebibotei, Israel Kiri Zion, Ogidigba I, Ogidigba II and Ogidigba III, Opubabilebu, Ewerebubogho, Dibigbini, Aseri-Ama (formerly called Agoeri), Fiyebrasintei, and many others. These communities or settlements are above water level during the dry season, but are flooded during the rainy season. Significantly, the predominant vegetation in this area is the mangrove, which is so impressive and thick all over the belt that it is appropriately referred to as the mangrove belt; thus, giving visitors the characteristic images they are used to, of the Niger Delta.⁶

The salt swamp water area, with its clay reddish brown soils, is above water level during the dry season too, but flooded during the rainy season. Examples of such communities are Akpata, Tamaraubotei, Ojudou-Ama, Opuba, Bolowou, Otuwokubu, Ukpe, Pina-Ama Zion, Asere, Dababilebu, Ajapa, Amatibi, *et cetera*. The salty nature of the water in this area is due to its geographical proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, with a direct bearing on the unconducive ecological influence on the people. Despite the above, as a natural geographical advantage, sea incursion into this area has never been a phenomenon to worry about, unlike their Ilaje neighbours whose proximity to the Atlantic Ocean has often led to

⁶ Eshofonie, G.A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers, pp. 1-3. Note: Aseri-Ama (formerly called Agoeri) is partially on land. Furthermore, the name *Agadagba* is the traditional title of the *Pere* (King) of the Arogbo-Ijo people, while *Obon* is an Ijo word meaning a market. Therefore, Agadagba-Obon simply means the King's market. Historically, Agadagba-Obon itself, was originally known as Agadagba-Bou. *Bou* is an Ijo word, meaning forest or bush. Hence, Agadagba-Bou as it was then known simply means Agadagba's Forest. It was after the establishment of the market in the area that the name, Agadagba-Bou eventually changed to Agadagba-Obon. As a matter of fact, from the pre-Colonial period to end of this study, this is the only Arogbo-Ijo market which can be reached by water and land.

frequent cases of sea incursions. Generally, the climatic conditions of the three distinctive belts are dominated by rainy and dry seasons. The rainy season is known as *bowei-kiri* while the dry season is known as *Baara-kiri* in Arogbo-Ijo dialect. The rainy season is usually marked by two peak-periods, which are between May and June, as well as September and October every year. In addition, there is a slight break between July and September. This short dry season is called the August break. The duration of the dry season is comparatively short, starting from December and extending to February. Therefore, as similar to most parts of the Niger Delta, it is not uncommon to experience occasional rainy days and storms even during this short dry season.⁷ As a distinctive geographical feature, in both salty and fresh water swamp areas, houses are built on posts over the water level (as a precautionary measure against seasonal flooding), with the floors made of midribs of the palm tree.

Therefore, as peculiar to all riverine areas, Duckworth appropriately describes the area thus:

...The only way of visiting the area is by canoe. Here live thousands of sturdy, independent fisherfolk, in an area almost completely devoid of dry land apart from a small few islands...The men, women and children of the creeks are all expert at handling canoes with poles or paddles; it is the one and the only way of getting from village to village or even house to house...But in most cases there is no dry land and the houses are built on poles with their floors about 3 ft. above the swamp. The raffia palm provides much of the material for house building. The leaves make good thatch and the midribs of the leaves, bamboo, form roof members, walls and floors...⁸

As a matter of fact, because of this geographical location, the fauna includes monkey, buffaloes, bush-pigs, antelopes, reptiles and birds. Again, in line with the dictates of the environment, transportation and economic engagements have been largely restricted to the use of canoes in the pre-colonial era. But, starting from the colonial era, the means of contact was canoes and outboard engine wooden boats of different types and sizes.⁹ Thus, the navigable waterways served as the main routes of contact and trading entry points with them and their neighbours. As a dual advantage, due to the location of Agadagba-Obon, which is

⁷ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers, p. 1-3. Note: Bolowou is partially on land, with particular respect to where the gigantic building of the Cherubim & Seraphim Church of Zion, Nigeria and Overseas, Bolowou headquarters is located.

⁸ Duckworth, E. H. Ed. 1947. Exploring Nigeria: *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 26. London and Hull: A Brown and Sons Ltd., p. 334.

⁹ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., p. 3.

directly opposite Arogbo, being separated by Arogbo River, it has direct land linkage with the Apoi and her Ikale neighbours, who are mainly on land.

Unlike the Arogbo-Ijo neighbours, however, the Apoi, who are also in the southwestern part of Ondo State dwell almost entirely on land. Like her Arogbo-Ijo neighbours during the colonial era, they were located in Ese-Odo District Council of Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province of Western Nigeria. Today, they are found in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Southwestern Nigeria. They occupy an area between latitude 6°20' and 6°26' North and longitude 4°50' and 4°55' East in the Southwestern part of the Niger Delta.¹⁰

From the pre-colonial territorial enclave, the nine major Apoi settlements comprise Sabomi, Oboro, Inikorogha, Igbobini, Kiribo, Igbotu, Igbekebo, Ojuala and Ipoke, confederated under the Kalasuwe of Apoi land.¹¹ The Apoi are bound in the North by the Ikale of Ode-Irele and Ode-Omi, in the North-West by the Ikale of Okitipupa and Ode-Aye, in the West by the Ilaje, in the South by the Arogbo-Ijo, and in the East by the Ikale of Ajagba and Iju-Osun.¹² All the above are Yoruba-speaking sub-groups, except the Arogbo-Ijo. The above clearly shows that the Apoi are mostly surrounded by different Yoruba sub-groups. For instance, the Apoi share physical boundaries with Ajagba, Iju-Osun, Ode-Irele, Ode-Omi, Okitipupa and Ode-Aye (all Ikale settlements and a Yoruba sub-group) and Ilaje (also a Yoruba sub-group). As a further distinctive feature, all the nine principal Apoi settlements are on land and, at the same time, can be reached by water.¹³ Consequently, this settlement pattern supports both human and goods movement in the hinterland and in the waterways. For instance, Shaluwa stream links Kiribo, Oluwa River links Igbekebo, Ipoke, and Ojuala and, by extension, Arogbo; Otu River links Igbotu, Sabomi, Oboro and Inikorogha, and Irogbo River links Igbobini straight to Oluwa River.

¹⁰ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p. 23.

¹¹ The title of the ancient throne of the paramount ruler of the Apoi is Kalasuwe, which is in 'Ijaw Apoi means God among humans'. See, Kalasuwe Events Brochure 1st Coronation Anniversary, His Imperial Majesty, *Oba* (Prof) Deacon Sunday Adejimola Amuseghan, Lawe II, Kalasuwe of Apoiland, Sunday, 18 May, 2019, p.13.

¹² Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 402.

¹³ As a matter of fact, this present researcher personally visited all the said nine Apoi settlements during the field work, and confirmed same that both are on land, and at the same time, can be reached by water.

A 1937 Illustrative Map of Bini Confederation, which later became the Map of Ese-Odo District Council in 1955, shows both Oluwa and Otu as Rivers, but in actual geographical sense, except Oluwa River, Otu, Shaluwa and Irogbo can be best described as creeks or streams because it is the Oluwa River only that forms a diversion towards the eastern region to form and link Otu and Shaluwa creeks which are streams or inlets to the major Oluwa River. Perhaps, it is because of this geographical distinction that Iroju calls Shaluwa ‘a creek with suds demarcating Kiribo and Arogbo-Ijo’, and posits that ‘the waterways in Apoi territory are an extension of Oluwa River, hence, Oluwa River forms the shores of all the Apoi settlements.’¹⁴ Therefore, the Apoi territorial enclave has the characteristics of both upland and riverine peoples. The various settlements are situated on land, though separated from one another by the thick mangrove forest, but they have road linkages too. As it is common to most Ijo settlements in the Niger Delta, the Apoi means of water transportation and contact in the pre-colonial era was largely by the use of canoes. Nevertheless, the colonial era witnessed the use of outboard engine wooden boats as a modern means of transportation with their neighbours, with particular respect to the Arogbo-Ijo. For the record, Figure 2.1 on page 35 is the said 1937 Illustrative Map of Bini Confederation, which later became the Map of Ese-Odo District Council in 1955.

¹⁴ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, pp. 23-24.

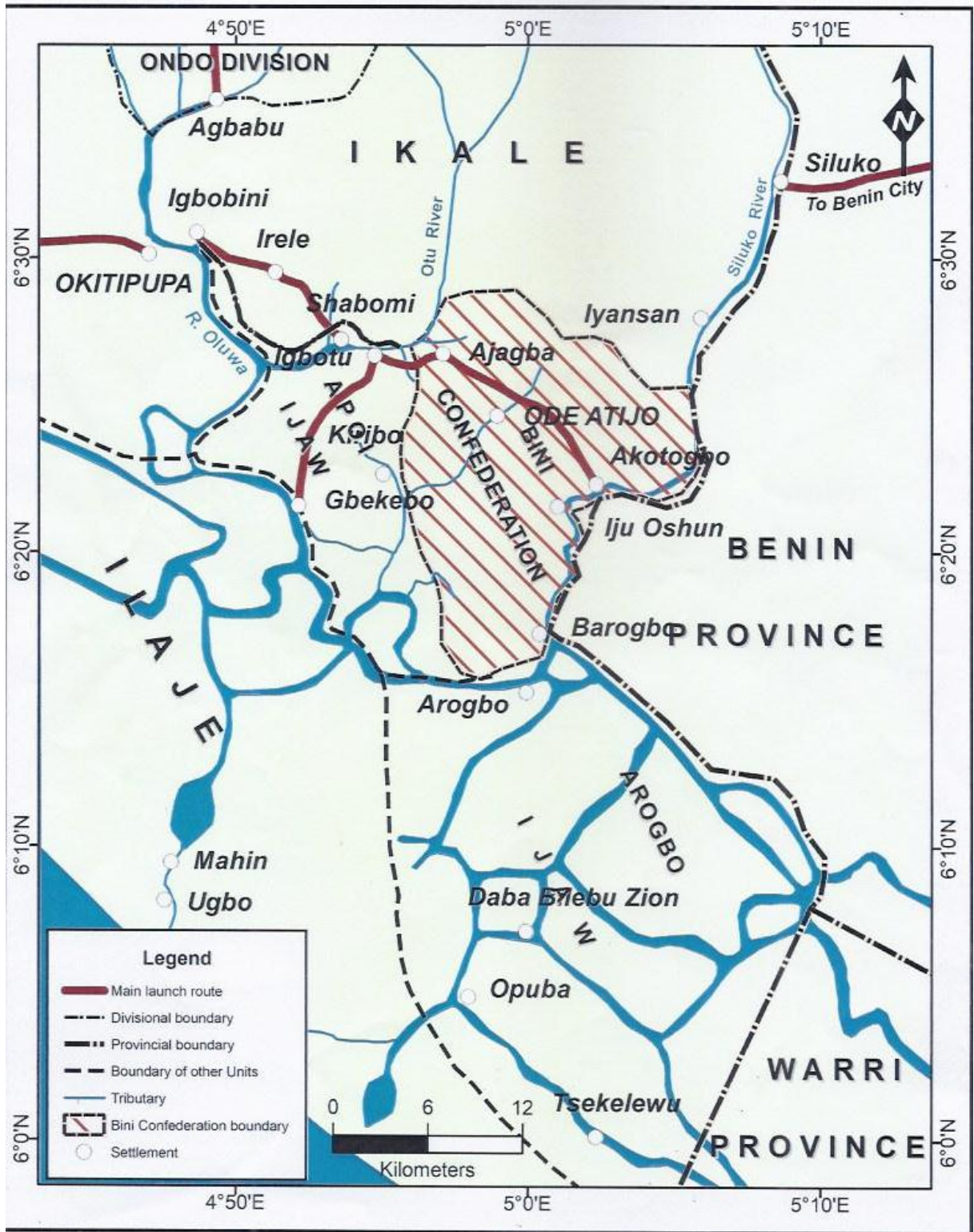


Figure 2.1: A 1937 Sketch Map Illustrating Bini Confederation- Intelligence Report.

Source: NAI.Ondoprof-2960/5, File No. 1024/70. Redrawn by the Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2015.

The rainy and dry periods are similar to those of Arogbo-Ijo because they share the same geographical location. The wet season, which is more or less the rainy period, is between the months of March and November. There is a slight break between July and September. This is generally known as the August break in most riverine communities; thus, the duration of the dry season is comparatively short, starting from December and extending to February.¹⁵ As an additional advantage, because the Apoi are not close to the Atlantic Ocean, their water system is fresh throughout all seasons.

On the peculiarities of the two groups, Ogen submits thus:

...The Apoi and Izon-Arogbo speak different dialects of two major languages that are not mutually intelligible. Indeed, irrespective of their traditions of common origin, the Apoi speak a dialect of the Yoruba language while the Izon-Arogbo speak a dialect of the Izon language. Both groups also settled in different geographical locations mainly within Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State. The Apoi live mostly on the mainland while the Izon-Arogbo could be found along the swampy coastal belt. Thus, it will be analytically untidy to lump the two groups together, ... What is more, even E. J. Alagoa has always treated the Apoi and Izon-Arogbo as two separate sub-groups of the larger Izon nation.¹⁶

In summary, the range of contact and interaction between these two groups during the pre-colonial era was made possible by the geography of the region. The geography of the area did not constitute any serious impediment to inter-group relations. While the Arogbo-Ijo are mainly on the riverine area, with rivers, creeks and streams cutting across all their settlements, the Apoi are mainly on land, with water linkages both by river and streams to all their settlements. These rivers, creeks and streams served as waterways, not barriers. The result was free movement of people, goods and services between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi during the pre-colonial era. After all, canoe-carving, a major occupation of these two

¹⁵ Oral interview held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 61 years, (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 13 August, 2015. For further details on Ese-Odo geographical features, see Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers, pp. 1-3.

¹⁶ Ogen, O. 2011. Interrogating the Memories of Slavery and the Slave Trade among the Ikalẹ-Yoruba, c1640-1890: The Poverty of European Accounts and Response to Olatunji Ojo's Critique. *Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lagos, Volume 11, pp. (116) 113-148.

groups, was made possible by the availability of hard timber trees, such as *akoriko, ire, tala,* and *kuru*.

2.2 Historical Origins and Migration of the Arogo-Ijo and Apoi

Generally, the Ijo are today found in six States in Nigeria. These are: (i) Akwa Ibom, (ii) Rivers, (iii) Bayelsa, (iv) Delta, (v) Edo, and (vi) Ondo States. Therefore, before narrowing down our discussions to the Arogo-Ijo, there is the need for us to first look at the submission of various scholars on the origin of the Ijo people in Nigeria. This is considered necessary because Arogo-Ijo tradition of origin is in the mainstream of Ijo traditions of origin and migration from the Central Niger Delta to the Western Delta.

In his book, *Tribes of the Niger Delta*, Talbot submits thus:

The Ijaw people inhabit practically the coast, some 250 miles in length, stretching between the Ibibio and Yoruba. The Niger Delta, therefore, is, with the exception of a few small tribes, occupied by this strange people – a survival from the dim past, beyond the dawn of history – whose language and customs are distinct from those of their neighbours and without trace of any tradition of time...¹⁷

Coleman, in his book, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, states that:

The Ijaw tribe, divided almost evenly between the Western and Eastern regions, is perhaps the most ancient in West Africa. Its language has little affinity with any others in Nigeria. Except for a small enclave of Jekri, the Ijaw are the principal inhabitants of the Delta region of the Niger. So situated, they were among the first to feel the impact of westernization through their contact with the European traders and later missionaries. Their political fragmentation, caused in part by the dense swamp forest and the hundreds of small creeks in the Delta, has been perpetuated by their administrative division, first between provinces, and lately between regions.¹⁸

¹⁷ Talbot, P. A. 1932. *Tribes of the Niger Delta, their Religion and Customs*. London: Sheldon Press, p.2.

¹⁸ Coleman, J. S. 1958. *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.28.
Note: The group, Jekri, in line 4 of the above quotation, is now known in contemporary literature as Itsekiri.

Owonaro, in his book, *The History of Ijo (Ijaws) and her Neighbouring Tribes in Nigeria*,¹⁹ identified Ijo to be the first son of Oduduwa. In that account, Oduduwa is said to be the son of Lamurudu (corrupted form of Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah in the Holy Bible). Owonaro further posits that the ancestor, ‘Ijo’, became the first son of Oduduwa – the progenitor of the Yoruba people. On a critical look, this claim cannot stand the historical test of time because even Samuel Johnson, in his book, *The History of the Yorubas*, does not list ‘Ijo’ as one of the sons of Oduduwa. In his contribution, while rejecting Owonaro’s claim, Okorobia argues that it is apparent that Owonaro was familiar with Samuel Johnson’s *History of the Yorubas*. Because, even Benin had traditions tracing its kingship institutions and arts to Ile-Ife. This probably informs his choice of Ile-Ife as the historical root of the Ijo.²⁰

Dike, in his book, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*,²¹ postulates the Ijo to have been originated from Igbo and other migrants into the Delta around 1450-1800. In his fervent defence, Dike states that the Niger Delta was settled by three waves of migrations from the tribal hinterland. The first wave came from Benin, the second from ‘all tribes to the Delta hinterland’, and the third was from a wave of slaves brought into the Delta against their will in the course of the slave trade. But, Alagoa categorically posits that Dike’s postulation lacks any acceptable historical foundation, hence, cannot be accepted because of the antiquity of the Ijo language. He, therefore, in furtherance of the above, states that Ijo has been calculated to be, at least, five thousand years distant from Ibo, Yoruba and Edo, a calculation which accords with the geological age of the Niger Delta itself.²² Simply put, the Ijo language is of greater antiquity than that of their neighbours and so could not have

¹⁹ Owonaro, S. K. 1949. *The History of Ijo (Ijaws) and her Neighbouring Tribes in Nigeria*. Lagos: Niger Publishing Works. For further details, see, Okorobia, A. M. 2009. History. Alagoa, E. J. et al. Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 36; Johnson, S. 1971. *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd.

²⁰ Okorobia, A. M. 2009. History. Alagoa, E. J. et al. Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 366. For a similar argument, see Eboime, O. J. 2014. Colonial Foundations of Majority and Minority Identities: The Conceptual Issues and the Development of Epie-Atissa Ethnic Consciousness and Ijo Nationalism in Nigeria. Egwemi, V. et al. Eds. *Federalism, Politics and Minorities in Nigeria, Essays in Honour of Professor G. N. Hembe*. Lagos: Bahiti and Dalila, pp. 29-30.

²¹ Dike, K. O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 24. See also, Okorobia, A. M. 2009. History. Alagoa, E. J. et al. Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 362.

²² Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 16-17.

originated from them. Therefore, putting the above historical discourse into consideration, Alagoa argues that tracing Ijo origins to any of these groups outside the Niger Delta cannot be sustained, because the Niger Delta is ten thousand years old and the Ijos who are the aborigines of that region have lived within and with the Niger Delta for over eight thousand years.²³ For the purpose of illustration, the Niger Delta States and their neighbours, Dike referred to in his book, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, are briefly shown in Figure 2.2 on page 40.

²³ Alagoa, E. J. 1979. *The Python's Eye: The Past in the Living Present*. An Inaugural Lecture Series 1. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press, p. 18; and Alagoa, E. J. 1999. *The Ijaw Nation in the New Millennium*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 3.

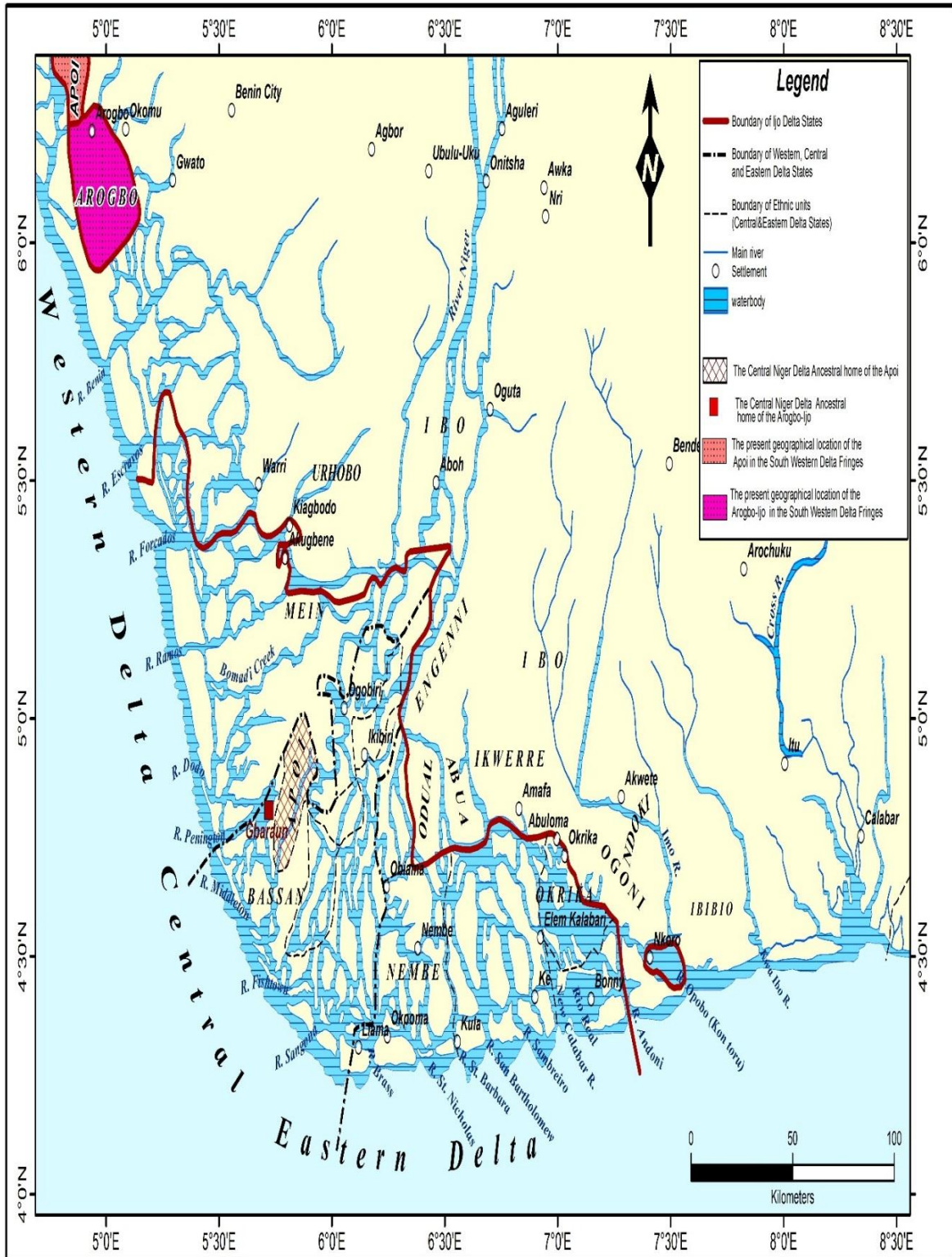


Figure 2.2: The Delta States and their Neighbours.

Source: Ajay, J.F.A. and Crowder, M. Eds. 1976. *History of West Africa. Vol. 1.* Second Edition, pp 332-333. Redrawn by the Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2015.

Therefore, on Ijo background, Alagoa posits that a preliminary survey or interrogation of Ijo oral traditions throughout the Delta suggests the central area of the Delta as the heartland from which various groups migrated to outlying regions of the Delta. Then, concerning major centres of outward migration, Alagoa names Ogobiri, Ikebiri, Oporoma, the Apoi Creek, and Obiama in the central Delta as primary places of outward migrations. On secondary centres of migration, Ke and Oboloma (Nembe) in the Eastern Delta, and Oporoza in the Western Delta are known places that Alagoa points to.²⁴ Putting into consideration Apoi Creek as one of the primary areas, and Oporoza as a secondary place of outward migrations, it is time to discuss the origin of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi in the present-day Southwestern Nigeria. As a further point of note, the Ijo of Western Delta fringe, with particular respect to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi about to be interrogated are shown in Figure 2.3 on page 42.

²⁴ Alagoa, E. J. 1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and Eastern Niger Delta. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., p. 68.

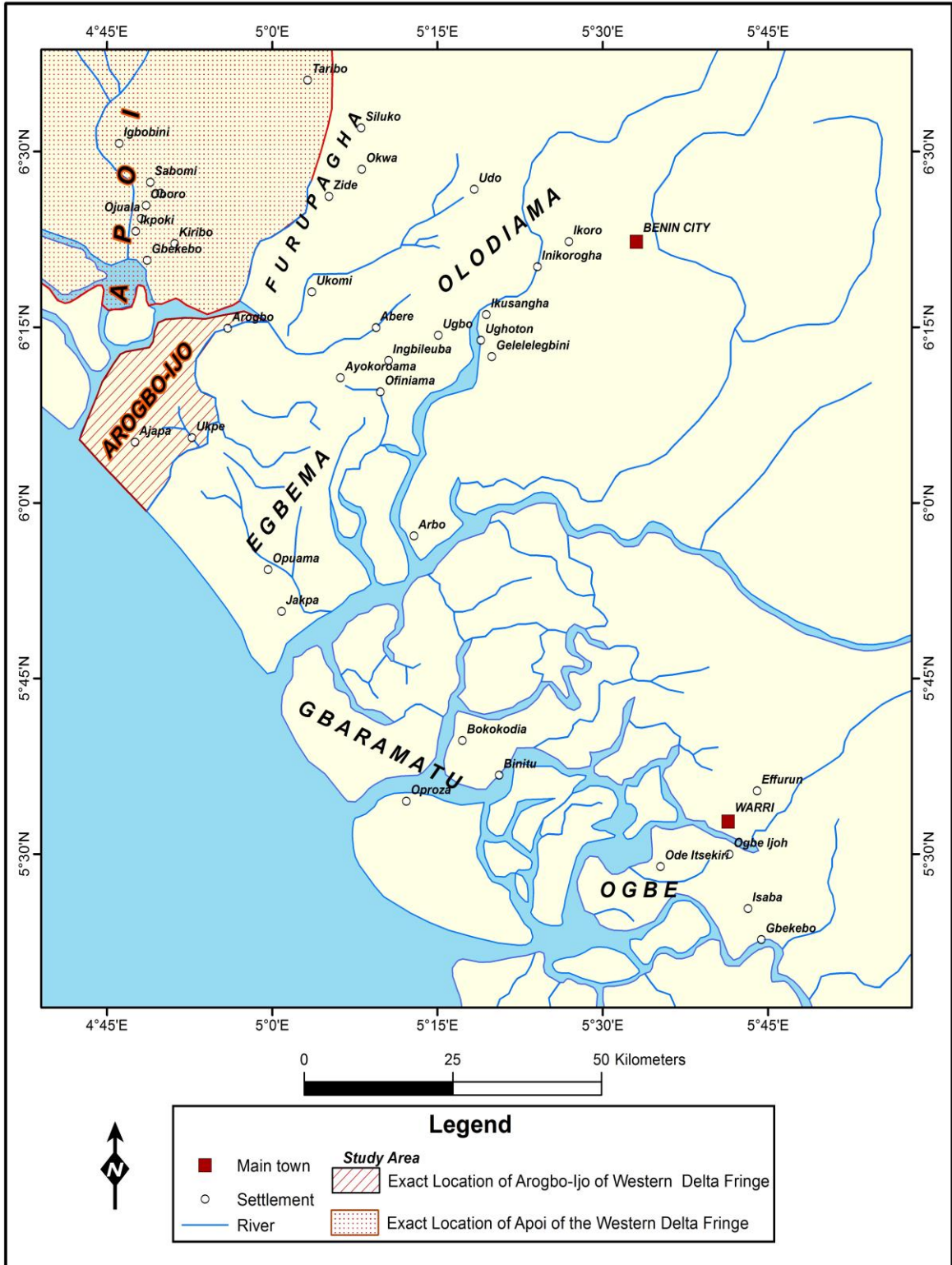


Figure 2.3: The Ijo of the Western Delta Fringe.

Source: Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta...*, p.24. Redrawn by the Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2015.

As it is with other groups, the Arogbo-Ijo have their own tradition of origin recorded. Oral sources, consisting of oral traditions and oral history, local historians, and earliest scholars on it, conclude that they are people who could remember their root. According to Alagoa, the origin of the Arogbo-Ijo is traceable to Gbaraun, in Apoi Creek of the Central Delta in the present-day Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The epoch-making migration, led by a crown prince, Perebiyenmo, son of Ogbonu, with overwhelming followers, was in search of a better area for fishing and more congenial habitation. The first place of settlement was Oporoza in the present-day Gbaramatu kingdom of Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State.²⁵

According to Morgenthau, the most stable factor upon which the power of a state depends is obviously geography.²⁶ The geographical position of Oporoza was not satisfactory and favourable in terms of territorial defence against external invasion and, thus, Perebiyenmo and his followers had to move to Ekpetonron (near the present location of Opuba), the geographical coverage of which is now known as *Ukparama*, that is, a town or settlement with substantial structures erected with wood firmly pegged or pushed into the ground in conformity with the dictates of the ecological system.²⁷ Today, the entire geographical area is extensively occupied by the settlements of Akpata, Opuba, Ajapa, Amatibi, Asere, Bolowou, Otuwokubu, Pina-Ama Zion, Ukpe and so on.

Briefly put, while they were at the settlement of Ekpetonron, Okpo Muhanyain (a great warrior, hunter, fisherman and canoe-carver), was said to have discovered a vast virgin land with innumerable logs suitable for canoe-carving. He then returned to Ekpetonron to inform his people of the new discovery. Subsequently, a good number of the people started moving into the said new land to carve canoes and returned in the evening to Ekpetonron. Eventually, they decided to build houses and stay in order to save time and energy in paddling from Ekpetonron to the new canoe-carving site on daily basis. Thereafter, the new

²⁵ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 407.

²⁶ Morgenthau, H. J. 1978. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred A. Knoff, p. 117.

²⁷ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.4; Oral interview held with Sir Titus Karinatei Ganfo (later installed as Chief Okpo of Egbesubiri, Arogbo), 55 years, teacher, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 19 December, 2017.

site ultimately became a permanent settlement.²⁸ After a brief stay at the said Ekpetonron, specifically for a period of two *Peres*, namely, Perebiyenmo Ogbonu and Tabaimotimi Perebiyenmo, *Pere* Barakumo Perebiyenmo (the third traditional head), moved the administrative headquarters to the then new settlement, discovered by Okpo Muhanyain. Significantly, the logs from the big trees were turned into dug-out canoes for use by the people. From this occupational work of canoe-carving on the Island, the settlement was christened *Aru Kara Ugbo* (*Aru* means canoe, *Kara* means carving and *Ugbo* means forest, meaning a canoe-carving forest). However, this name has since been corrupted over the years to read and sound Arogbo, the name with which all the Ijo-speaking people of the area are now identified and, thus, addressed and known as the Arogbo-Ijo.²⁹

Fundamentally, this change of location was on two grounds: the search for big trees for carving-canoes and gun-boats building, and on the religious belief that a swampy area like Ukparama was considered unsuitable for Egbesu – *the god of war and peace*, whose regular rituals and ceremonies are best performed on land. Arogbo, since then, not only has a common identity, but also serves as the administrative and religious headquarters of the entire Arogbo-Ijo people. As a corroborative evidence, the major institutions in Arogbo show greater affinity to those of their original homeland. As a case in point, Egbesu, the national god in Arogbo, also exists in Gbaraun and other Ijo settlements. These institutions, namely, religious, political and social, are preserved and sacredly guarded from the earliest times to date.³⁰ Historically, Arogbo was originally divided into nine quarters, namely, (i) Agwobiri, (ii) Egbesubiri, (iii) Erubiri, (iv) Akpoghobiri, (v) Ekanabiri, (vi) Kapabiri, (vii) Laghabiri, (viii) Angalabiri, and (ix) Ekeinbiri.³¹ Hence, the popular saying and description of Arogbo as a settlement with *isenna-biri* (nine quarters). But, at present, on grounds of administrative convenience, the said historical nine quarters have been reduced to three,

²⁸ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.5; Oral interview held with Sir Titus Karinatei Ganfo (later installed as Chief Okpo of Egbesubiri, Arogbo), 55 years, teacher, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 19 December, 2017.

²⁹ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta...* Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p.33; Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., p.9; and Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.3-4; Ora interview held with Sir Titus Karinatei Ganfo, 55 years, teacher, Erubiri, Arogbo, 19 December, 2017.

³⁰ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 33-34.

³¹ Chief Happy Kawei Atili (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 88 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 August, 2015; Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p.407. Note: In respect of the sixth quarters, Alagoa mis-spelled Kapabiri as Kakabiri. Hence, according to Atili, the correct name or spelling is Kapabiri.

namely, Agwobiri, Egbesubiri and Erubiri, in order of seniority. Remarkably, these three administrative quarters are headed by the following chieftaincy title holders: The Agwo of Agwobiri, the Egbesuwei of Egbesubiri and the Eruwei of Erubiri.

On a significant note, writing on the settlement of Arogbo in the 1940s, Duckworth reveals thus:

... Arogbo consists of about two hundred houses crowded on a three-acre patch of clay soil that rises about six ft. above the creek and the swamp forest. It is a stopping place for canoe travellers does 'see life' since tug-boats and lighters pass along the creek in journeys between Lagos and Sapele. Once a year or so the Governor's big stern-wheel vessel, the *Valiant*, may pass Arogbo when all the small boys of the place dash into the water and swim out to enjoy the thrill of being tossed up and down in its wake. In the several parts of the town are old iron cannons lying rusting on the ground... The patch of high ground at Arogbo has no doubt been inhabited for hundreds of years, a reminder of this is the white outline of human skeletons to be seen in some of well-worn pathways of the town. We spent the night in the Court House...³²

According to Alagoa, estimates based on the king-lists suggest dates of migration into the area to the first half of the eighteenth century.³³ But, if Arogbo was first mentioned around 1644,³⁴ as recorded by Alagoa himself, the first half of the eighteenth century estimation may not be appropriate. After all, according to oral traditions, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi migrated from the Central Niger Delta to their present-day locations within the same time frame. However, the Arogbo-Ijo, migrated a bit earlier than the Apoi. On a remarkable note, therefore, Ogen put the interactions between the Apoi and their Ikale neighbours within the period of 1200-1665 AD.³⁵ Thus, an estimation of 1100 AD or thereabouts should be appropriate for the Arogbo-Ijo because the Arogbo-Ijo settlement predated that of the Apoi.

³² Duckworth, E. H. Ed. 1947. Exploring Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 26. London and Hull: A Brown and Sons Ltd., p. 390.

³³ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 35-36.

³⁴ Alagoa, E. J. 1980. The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours, to 1800. Ajayi, J. F. A. and Crowder, M. Eds. *History of West Africa, Volume One*. United Kingdom: Longman Group Limited, Second Edition, p. 338.

³⁵ Quoted in Iroju, O. A. 2012. *A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000*. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p.9.

The Apoi, one of the smallest sub-groups of Ijo of the Niger Delta, is today found in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. According to oral traditions, unlike their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours, the Apoi have two traditions of origin. The first traces the Apoi to Ile-Ife, while the second traces them to the Apoi Creek in the Central Niger Delta. On the first, the Yoruba version of the Apoi oral tradition states that the progenitor of the Apoi was one Ojoo, the first born of Oduduwa. This version further states that Oduduwa became blind at a latter part of his life and, as revealed by Ifa divinity, Ojoo was instructed to go and fetch sea water for the preparation of a traditional medicine. This tradition claims that Ojoo migrated southwards from Ile-Ife and his first point of call was Ojo and, thus, became the founder of the modern day Ojo in Lagos State, Nigeria. Ojoo finally fetched the sea water and returned to Ile-Ife, but his blind father, Oduduwa, was already dead. Based on the right of primogeniture, Ojoo, as heir apparent, struggled for the throne, but was defeated by his counterparts. Out of annoyance and frustration, Ojoo and some of his supporters migrated out of Ile-Ife and arrived at their present territory. Hence, that was the emergence and expansion of the Apoi people in the region they presently occupy.³⁶

On a critical assessment of this tradition of origin, this version is even not popular among the Apoi, hence, lacks general acceptability. For instance, even Yoruba historiography does not support the claim that Ojoo was the eldest or one of the children of Oduduwa. Specifically, according to Samuel Johnson in his book, *The History of the Yorubas*, the eldest son of Oduduwa was Okanbi,³⁷ and not Ojoo as claimed by the Yoruba version of the Apoi tradition. Probably, this claim may have been engineered by the present forms of linguistic and cultural affinities the Apoi share with the Yoruba people. Duyile, in his argument against this Yoruba version, submits that the Ile-Ife claim of origin was an attempt by the Apoi of slave origin to trace their origin outside the Niger Delta, calculated to have political gain in the predominantly Yoruba-speaking Southwestern Nigeria.³⁸

³⁶ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, pp. 27-28.

³⁷ Johnson, S.1971. *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd., p. 9. See also, Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p. 30.

³⁸ On Duyile's submission, See, Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 404.

Above all, the name or word Apoi is even strange to the Yoruba lexicon and have no Yoruba-origin in any form. Interestingly, as revealed by Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo, the name Apoi is an Ijo expression of admiration about the naming rites symbolising a significant cultural background.³⁹ Also, Kalasuwe and other titles of their traditional rulers are purely Ijo in origin. *Par exemple*, the title of the paramount traditional ruler of the Apoi, known as the Kalasuwe of Apoi, in Ijo Apoi means, ‘God among humans’.⁴⁰ The traditional ruler of Igbekebo (one of the nine principal Apoi settlements), now known as the Odogun of Igbekebo, was initially known as the ‘Amananawei of Igbekebo’. Similarly, the title of the traditional head of Igbobini (also, one of the nine principal Apoi settlements), which is now known as the Olu of Igbobini, was initially known as the ‘Amananawei of Igbobini’. The name ‘Amananawei’ itself, is a combination of two Ijo words: ‘Ama’ simply means a town or settlement, while ‘nanawei’ means owner or head. ‘Amananawei’, therefore, simply means, the owner or head of the town.

The second school of thought on the Apoi traces the Apoi to the Apoi Creek in the Central Niger Delta. According to Alagoa, the first stopping place on which all accounts agreed is Okomu in the present-day Edo State. The Apoi, after staying at Okomu for a long period of time, left for Akpaka, about a mile from the present-day town of Kiribo. But, out of the original nine lineages, one refused to move out; hence, the final journey was made with eight lineages.⁴¹ Alagoa further posits that, after five Kalasuwes at Akpaka, the Apoi experienced a long period of political interregnum. Thereafter, the eight lineages from Okomu to Akpaka founded the settlements of Igbobini, Igbotu, Oboro, Inikorogha, Ojuala, Igbekebo, Kiribo and Sabomi. But to increase the number to nine lineages from the Central Delta, Ipoke, initially an offshoot of Kiribo (the cradle or the oldest of the nine settlements), was elevated to the ninth one.⁴²

³⁹Obolo, Z. O. 2005. The Struggles and Developments to Date 24th December, 2005 and the Way Forward. Being the Lecture Topic to Mark the Golden Jubilee Anniversary Celebration of His Royal Majesty, *Oba* S. A. Oladiran, the 11th Kalasuwe of Apoiland, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Kalasuwe Events Brochure: 1st Coronation Anniversary of His Imperial Majesty, *Oba* (Prof) Deacon Sunday Adejimonla Amuseghan, Lawe II, Kalasuwe of Apoiland, 18th May, 2019, p. 15.

⁴¹ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 404.

⁴² Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 28-29. Note: These Apoi names, which were spelt as ‘Ikpoki, Shabomi and Gbekebo’ by Alagoa are now being spelt ‘Ipoke, Sabomi and Igbekebo’ by the Apoi. Therefore, to avoid the use of the said different spellings interchangeably, the latter spellings shall be used throughout this work, except in respect of direct quotations.

This account of Apoi, which traces them to Apoi Creek in the Central Delta, enjoys popular acceptability than the Yoruba origin's version. For instance, apart from the Apoi Intelligence Report compiled by E. A. Lewis,⁴³ the immediate past Kalasuwe of Apoiland, His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran (who reigned from 1955 to 2007), in his memorandum submitted to the Ondo State Council of Chiefs on Chieftaincy Matters for his recognition as a First Class *Oba* with a permanent seat in the Ondo State Council of *Obas*, posits thus:

The Ijaw Apoi in Ondo State has nine principal towns, each ruled by an *Oba* and is historically all under one traditional umbrella, that of the Kalasuwe of Apoi land, the alter ego of the Apoi nation... There are two major tribes in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State. They are the Ijaw-Apoi and the Ijaw-Arogbo Ibe. The Ijaw-Apoi speaks a mixture of Ijaw and Yoruba and are distinct tribe in Ondo State. There are nine principal towns in Ijaw-Apoi or Apoi for short. They are headed by recognized *Obas*. The principal towns are Igbekebo, Igbotu, Inikorogha, Ipoke, Kiribo, Oboro, Ojuala, Igbobini and Sabomi.⁴⁴

Casting more light on the Apoi, a former regent, the Kalasuwe of Apoiland, Princess Joyce Ibimidun Adesola Oladiran-Ebiseni, who reigned from 2011 to 2018, submits thus:

... By history, we are Ijaw-Apoi and we migrated from Bayelsa to the present Apoi land... Our neighbours are the Arogbo-Ijaw with whom we share the same Ese-Odo Local Government Area... We are Ijaw evidenced by several aspects of our culture, tradition, deity and festivals and no less deeply rooted in Yoruba tradition and culture so much that the language we speak is Yoruba. You may be correct if you say Apoi are Yoruba-speaking Ijaws. We are the only Ijaw whose traditional rulers are called *Obas*...⁴⁵

⁴³ National Archives, Ibadan. Ondoprof-1024, A covering Report to the Intelligence Report on the Apoi-Ijaw District of the Okitipupa Division of the Ondo Province, 1940, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Memorandum submitted by His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, Ugele Udumu III, the Kalasuwe of Apoiland to the Ondo State Council of Chiefs on Chieftaincy Matters for his recognition as a First Class *Oba* with a permanent seat in the Ondo State Council of *Obas*, undated, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *The Nation*, Wednesday, 12 March, 2014. See also, Apoi may support either Toru Ebe State or Oluwa State –Regent of Apoi land, posted by Dr Segun Omosule and Oyesanmi Joseph James on 23 June 2011; and, Behold the First Woman Traditional Ruler in Ijawland posted by Damisi Ojo in Southwest, Nigeria, 12 March, 2014. <http://www.ikalevoice.com> and [the nation online.net](http://www.thenationonline.net)>Home>Southwest. Accessed online (4/2/2015).

Therefore, the national god in Apoi in the present-day Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State is known as Oborowe, located at Igbekaramo quarters, Igbobini. Similarly, in the Central Delta Apoi, the historical root of the Western Delta Apoi, the national god is also known as Oborowe. Equally, in Okomu in the present-day Edo State, the secondary place of Apoi migration, the national god is equally known as Oborowe. Above all, the Oborowe shrine, in the central Niger Delta, Okomu and Igbobini, is located at the beachfront or waterfront. Meanwhile, Igbobini, the seat of Oborowe, has eight traditional quarters, namely, Ademinighan, Aduwo, Arubeghan, Ajana, Barate, Igbekaramo, Odede and Peti.

In a nutshell, the above interrogation of the traditions of origin clearly shows that the inability of the Apoi to communicate in their original Ijo language and the consequential *Yorubanisation* notwithstanding, the two groups (Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi) are Ijo-sub-groups of the larger Ijo Nation, who during the pre-colonial times migrated from their ancestral central Niger Delta homeland to their present-day locations in the Southwestern region of Nigeria.

2.3 The Transformation of the Ethnic Identities of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi in their New Settlement(s) during the Pre-colonial Times

As revealed in our background to the study, the various factors that are relevant to identity change or transformation include ethnicity, religion, occupation, and gender/sex. Besides, there are also a number of processes that affect the formation of identity, for instance, migration, integration, inter-group marriages, and colonialism.⁴⁶ Frankly speaking, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi identity transformations are no exception. During the pre-colonial times, as Ijo-origin and Ijo-speaking people, they migrated from the central Niger Delta to their present-day locations in the defunct Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province in Southwestern Nigeria. But, in the course of their interactions with their Ikale and Ilaje neighbours, they continue to diverge in identities to the degree in which the Apoi are now Yoruba-speaking, but retain Ijo (which they no longer understand) in their religious rituals,

⁴⁶ Howard, J. A. 2000. Social Psychology of Identities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26:365-93.

funeral songs and masquerade plays. On the other hand, the Arogbo-Ijo are now bilingual in Ijo and Yoruba.⁴⁷

Therefore, to have a meaningful interrogation of the *Yorubanisation* process of these two interacting groups, necessitated by the influence of their Yoruba neighbours, it is considered appropriate to tackle them severally. For instance, the Arogbo-Ijo identity change in respect of a common identifiable nomenclature can be best traced from their story of migration. At their central Niger Delta ancestry home, they were known as Gbaraun *abu* or *otu* (people), as those who stayed behind are still known and addressed in the present-day Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. At their brief stay at Oporoza in the present-day Gbaramatu Kingdom of Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State, the Gbaraun *otu* identity was yet to change, but started to experience a unique change consequent upon their arrival at the fringes of the Western Delta in Ekpetonron. Thus, the Gbaraun identity changed to Ukparama, a settlement with substantial structures erected with wood firmly pegged or pushed into the ground in conformity with the ecological system of the area.⁴⁸ Again, when they moved further westward to found the present-site of Arogbo, the Ukparama identity gradually subsumed, and thus, changed to Arogbo, a name derived from their canoe-carving occupation as earlier pointed out. Hence, their traditional ruler is known as the Agadagba of Arogbo, while that of their ancestral home is still known as the Agadagba of Gbaraun.

Apart from the above environment and occupation necessitated identity changes, it is pertinent to point out that the Arogbo-Ijo, with varied contacts with their Yoruba neighbours are now bilingual in Ijo and Yoruba. Though they also share physical boundaries with the Ikale and Ilaje, Apoi and Egbema-Ijo as neighbours, they were able to retain their Ijo language and cultural traits occasioned by their Delta location south of the Apoi and their Egbema-Ijo neighbours to the South-East.⁴⁹ The above notwithstanding, according to Ajama, the Arogbo-Ijo were able to retain their Ijo linguistic identity because their pre-

⁴⁷ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 401-409.

⁴⁸ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.1-5.

⁴⁹ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 406-407.

colonial contacts with their Ikale and Ilaje neighbours were jealously guided and carefully restricted to economic necessities.⁵⁰ *Sensu stricto*, unlike the Apoi, inter-group marriages were *ab initio* prohibited by their customs and traditions so as to avoid socio-cultural intrusion from their Yoruba neighbours whom they referred to as *jiniama otu*.

In respect of the Apoi, the name Apoi as an identity did not change right from their central Niger Delta ancestry home to the present-day location in Southwestern Nigeria. Similarly, the traditional title of the ruler remains the Kalasuwe of Apoi as we have it in the Apoi of the central Niger Delta of the present-day Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The nine historic Apoi settlements in the present-day location are all Ijo names, namely, Igbekebo, Kiribo, Igbotu, Sabomi, Oboro, Ipoke, Ojuala, Inikorogha and Igbobini. In fact, the identities of the two ruling houses in respect of Kalasuwe Chieftaincy stool are all Ijo names, namely, Ebeli Idumu Ruling House of Oboro and Ugele Idumu Ruling House of Sabomi respectively. While Ebeli and Ugele are names of historic persons, *Idumu* is an Ijo word meaning quarters.⁵¹

On the *Yorubanisation* process of the Apoi, the proto-language, right from their historic root to their today's home, was Ijo. By geographical proximity due to migration during the pre-colonial era, they share physical boundaries with the Yoruba sub-groups of Ikale and Ilaje, and the Arogbo-Ijo as neighbours. As a people located at the fringes of the Western Niger Delta, the Apoi became contiguous neighbours to the Ikale and Ilaje with whom they conducted profound magnitude of unrestricted socio-cultural and economic relations with special reference to inter-group marriages. In fact, Adeyoriyu argues that, at the dawn of colonial rule in Nigeria, there was no lineage in Apoi genealogical tree without consanguineous ties with their Yoruba neighbours, either paternally or maternally.⁵² Because, the Apoi menfolk not only generously allowed their daughters to cement marital relationship with their Yoruba neighbours, the menfolk also embraced conjugal ties with

⁵⁰ Oral interview held with Chief Peter Ajama, 70 years, former palm wine tapper, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015.

⁵¹ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 402-406; Western State of Nigeria: Western State Chieftaincy Declarations, Okitipupa Division, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, p.3; Ondo State of Nigeria, White Paper on Ajakaiye Chieftaincy Review Commission, June 1989, p.14.

⁵² Oral interview held with High Chief Sunday Adeyemi Adeyoriyu, 78 years, community leader, Igbotu, Apoi, 4 September, 2015.

the womenfolk of their Yoruba neighbours. Thus, the highly favoured and convenient medium of communication became the Yoruba language at the domestic front and other related external contacts.

In that process, the Apoi lost their primary Ijo language and adopted Yoruba as the medium of communication among themselves and with their Yoruba neighbours. As an irony, perhaps, the aboriginal Ijo language of the Apoi has become the secondary language in their cultural activities. Iroju⁵³ has, therefore, argued that language is susceptible to changes, and in the historic case of the Apoi, the migratory factor is at best the remote cause of the pragmatic, noticeable and phenomenal changes in their language shift. He further states that their profound socio-economic interactions with their Yoruba neighbours accentuated and accelerated the Apoi linguistic change during the pre-colonial era. And, this was further consolidated during the colonial era with the Awolowo factor as the *coup de grace* or the final decisive blow to the Apoi *Yorubanisation* episode.

Alagoa, therefore, argued that geography determines frequency of intercourse by borrowing of language items and exchange of cultural traits and ideas. In that circumstance, any innovation achieved by one group of people is conveniently and quickly adopted and adapted by their neighbours, and the linkages are strengthened for the mutual benefits of the concerned groups. Relatively, some cultural elements result from such adaptation to the environment.⁵⁴ Consequently, the Apoi have adopted Yoruba type of housing in their new environment, along with the linguistic change and dress pattern, unlike their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours.

However, as earlier pointed out, in traditional activities, the Apoi overtly kept to their ancestry home's cultural heritage. Therefore, the Yoruba linguistic identity of the Apoi against all odds covertly failed to obliterate the Ijo imprints in their cultural traits as visibly shown in their annual festivals. For example, the yearly Bouabo festival at Igbobini is usually held in the month of December for two days. It has no fixed dates within the month

⁵³ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, pp. 39-46.

⁵⁴ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Ed. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 393.

of December, but the Ijo traditional counting of the moon determines the two days. In fact, the word *Bouabo* itself is an Ijo word meaning the inhabitants of the forest or bush, while the month (December) in Ijo dialect is called *sei-ogonowei*. *Sei* means bad, and *ogonowei* means the moon. The above literally means the bad month; thus, significantly marking the end of the year's activities and, at the same time, the preparation for the beginning of the new farming and fishing year.⁵⁵ Bodunwa points out that the traditional songs of the Bouabo festival are all Ijo songs inherited from their forefathers. Unfortunately, while singing or invoking the spiritual forces of the forest for blessings, they no longer understand the deep-rooted spiritual connotations depicted in their Ijo origins.⁵⁶

On his submission, Okoroboh describes the Apoi as a unique hybrid of two different cultures. According to him, under a careful scrutiny of their adopted Yoruba language, it has a mixture of Yoruba and Ijo words. For instance, the Apoi will say, *oko ti bi le koro ni kala uba*. From the above Apoi hybridised expression, *oko* is a Yoruba word for canoe; *ti* is a Yoruba word for has; *bile koro* in Ijo means capsized; *ni* is a Yoruba word for in; and *kala-uba*, *kala* in Ijo means small, and *uba* means fishing stream. Therefore, *kala uba* means a small fishing stream. *Oko ti bile koro ni kala uba* simply means the canoe has capsized in a small fishing stream. Again, Apoi has another expression: *bami ni boutoro*. *Bami ni* is a Yoruba expression which means meet me, while *boutoro* is an Ijo word for a short cut or a short bush path. The above, simply means meet me at the short bush path.⁵⁷ Iroju, thus, submits that the Apoi *language*, itself, is hybridised in nature. The language spoken, which scholars generally refer to as Yoruba, is a combination of both Yoruba and Ijo languages in some instances. But to a very large extent, there is much reflection of Yoruba features in their daily communication.⁵⁸ Succinctly, Okunrinmeta, therefore, argues that the Apoi speak about 98% of Yoruba. Thus, one cannot treat the dialect spoken by the Apoi in Ondo State as a dialect of Ijo since Ijo elements are only found in place names, religious rituals, funeral

⁵⁵ Oral interview held with High Chief Eburnlewa Ibiyo, The Adamana of Igbobini, 70 years, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 November, 2017.

⁵⁶ Oral interview held with Mr Felix Bodunwa, 50 years, community leader, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 November, 2017.

⁵⁷ Oral interview held with Chief Rotimi Okoroboh, 55 years, Head of Personnel Management (HPM), Irele Local Government Area, Irele, (place of interview, Erubiri, Arogbo), Ondo State, 30 November, 2017.

⁵⁸ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, pp. 3-6.

songs and masquerade plays.⁵⁹ No wonder, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the immediate past Kalasuwe of Apoi (who reigned from 1955 to 2007), submits that the Apoi speak a mixture of Ijo and Yoruba, hence, a distinct tribe in Ondo State.⁶⁰

As shown above, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi changing identities were largely a product of inter-group relations with their Yoruba neighbours. Though the degree of the *Yorubanisation* remarkably differs, the Arogbo-Ijo who are bilingual in Ijo and Yoruba continued to stick to and fiercely defend and protect their Ijo identity, while the Apoi succumbed to the linguistic influence of their Yoruba neighbours. Hence, they are now Yoruba-speaking, but retain their Ijo cultural traits, thereby creating a pseudo-Yoruba identity.

2.4 Political Relations of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi Peoples before 1915

Before directing the historical searchlight on the political relations of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi peoples before 1915, it is necessary to first examine their political organisations. Therefore, on the pre-colonial Arogbo-Ijo political organisation, Reuben Amatarwei Bekewe posits that the first structure is *jitu* headed by *Jitu Okosuwei*. *Jitu* means both the nuclear and extended families, while *Okosuwei* means the oldest or eldest man. He attends to all matters concerning his family, including marriage, death, and any other related family matter. The next political structure after *Jitu* is *Idumu*, which literally means quarters, and is headed by the *Idumu Okosuwei*, meaning the oldest or eldest man in the quarters. All affairs concerning the *Idumu* rest with the *Idumu Okosuwei*. Then, in respect of every village/town, the primary daily governance rests with the *Ama-Okosuwei*. *Ama* means village/town, and *Ama-Okosuwei* simply means the oldest or eldest man in the village/town. In essence, inter-communal matters that are crucial or critical are best handled at the level of the *Ama-Okosuweis* of the concerned villages/towns; while minor issues involving *Jitu*

⁵⁹ Okunrinmeta, U. 2010. The Influence of Izon on the Syntax and Lexis of the English of Izon-English Bilinguals. Being A Thesis Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph D) in English, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria, p. 29.

⁶⁰Memorandum Submitted by His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, Ugele Udumu III, the Kalasuwe of Apoi to the Ondo State Council of Chiefs on Chieftaincy Matters for his recognition as a First Class *Oba* with a permanent seat in the Ondo State Council of Obas, undated, p. 2. Note: The title Kalasuwe is also spelt in the following two ways, namely, Kalasuo and Kalashuwe. But for the purpose of uniformity, the spelling KALASUWE shall be used throughout this work, except in respect of direct quotation(s), where or when applicable.

and *Idumu* of different villages/towns are best and often treated by the *Jitu* and *Idumu Okosuweis* of the respective villages and towns without involving the respective *Ama-Okosuweis* of the affected villages and towns.⁶¹

The above clearly shows that the political organisation of the Arogbo-Ijo during the pre-colonial era can be best described as gerontocracy (government of the elders). Reuben Amatariwei Bekewe in his explanation concludes that, at the level of the entire kingdom, the Arogbo-Ijo traditional and political head, the Agadagba, was within the religious context known as the Chief Priest or the *Eru Kariwei* in the pre-colonial era. *Eru* in this context simply means *Egbesu – the god of war and peace*, while *Kariwei* means the chief priest. All the *Ama Okosuweis* of the different villages and towns hold their allegiance to the *Eru Kariwei* (Agadagba) of the kingdom because of the mystical powers attached to the *Egbesu* deity and its worship.⁶²

The Apoi political organisation is similar to that of their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours during the pre-colonial era. Perhaps, this similarity may be attributed to their common central Delta historical roots. At their arrival at Akpaka, their first place of settlement after Okomu, *Jitu* or *Idumu* (the family or lineage system) as a unit of the political organisation was in operation. Under this arrangement, every family was headed by the head of the family, known as the *Jitu Okosuwei* – the family head. The various family or lineage heads were under the ruler with the title known as *Kalasuwe*. Thus, under the Apoi political arrangement, the family or lineage was the primary unit of their internal relations.⁶³ That is, within each family or lineage, the unit head was referred to as the *Jitu* or *Idumu Okosuwei* in the early period of their emergence in this region. This was the period all their social, political and cultural relations were tied along the general Ijo pattern of relations. Accordingly, the primary responsibility of the *Okosuwei* was the preservation of peace and harmony in the family and, by extension, in the entire community. The selection of the *Okosuwei* and the *Kalasuwe* in the daily governance, like in most African societies, was

⁶¹ Oral interview held with High Chief R. A. Bekewe, 76 years, Secretary, Arogbo-Ijaw Traditional Council, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

⁶² Oral interview held with High Chief R. A. Bekewe, 76 years, Secretary, Arogbo-Ijaw Traditional Council, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

⁶³ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p. 46; Oral interview held with High Chief Ayodele Ogeh, 75 years, Okemoyo Street, Igbotu, Apoi, 4 September, 2015.

based on traditional beliefs and customs and, thus, had nothing to do with any modern electoral process. Above all, age was a major determinant in the choice of the *Okosuwei* in all families and lineages in Apoi. Iroju specifically points out that, at Akpaka, the Apoi family system was divided along the pre-existing patterns in their aboriginal domicile in Apoi Kolokumo in the Central Delta. In other words, each of the lineages was able to identify with their pre-existing quarters at Kolokumo as the dividing line of their genealogy.⁶⁴

As a unique political arrangement under the same pre-colonial era under discourse, after they dispersed from Akpaka and, thereafter, founded the nine Apoi settlements, the adoption of the Baale title as the head of every settlement cropped up. Consequently, the Baales became the respective heads of their communities and the title *Ama Okosuwe* was dropped, as a result of the *Yorubanisation* process. In throwing more light on this pre-colonial Apoi socio-political structure, Iroju posits thus:

The modus operandi of the political system was such that each of the nine Apoi settlements exercised political autonomous – styled administration. With the emergence of new settlements and their respective Baales, the pre-existing centralized form of government gradually evolved into loose confederacy with Kalasuwe the paramount ruler at the centre with royal supreme powers. However, the political arrangement was such that the Baales owed allegiance to Kalasuwe, the paramount ruler.⁶⁵

The Apoi political structure and that of the Arogbo-Ijo remained independent of each other during the pre-colonial era. These well-laid down structures served as the administrative mechanisms in the preservation of peace and the maintenance of orderly conducts in the pre-colonial era. These internal political structures endured to the colonial era and served as the foundation for the colonial government at its inception in the early nineteenth century.

⁶⁴ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p. 46; High Chief Sunday Adeyemi Adeyoriyu, 70 years, Igbotu, Apoi, 4 September, 2015.

⁶⁵ Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p. 49.

As autonomous groups visibly conscious of protecting and maintaining their separate sovereignty notwithstanding, strategic political understanding were often sealed by the two groups. So, in respect of political relations between the groups before 1915, no expansionist effort was covertly or overtly made by any of the groups calculated to lord it over the other in any material form. Consequently, the administrative or traditional rulers of each group ruled over her own subjects independent of the other without making any practical or tangible move to pursue ruthless and unnecessary territorial expansionist policies. Nevertheless, as earlier pointed out, crucial political and diplomatic contacts were some times embarked upon whenever the critical need arose. It was these contacts and other related occasional visits that provided the necessary social impetus or stimulus for *Pere Perebiyenmo Ogbonu*, the progenitor of the Arogbo-Ijo to have successfully forged marital ties with an Apoi woman, named Olayinka from Igbobini. This strategic royal union further significantly promoted mutual political relations and harmonious co-existence among the two groups.⁶⁶

As revealed by Kurokokonghan Kowei, in time of crisis between the two groups, shuttle diplomacy at the level of the Agadagba, the traditional head of the Arogbo-Ijo, and the Kalasuwe, the traditional head of the Apoi were skilfully employed to resolve disputes considered inimical to the interest of both groups. Hence, the 1876 tragic and catastrophic crisis between the people of Agwobiri in Arogbo and Polugbini quarters in Kiribo, Apoi, is a celebrated case study in that direction. That is, the diplomatic ingenuity of the then Agadagba of Arogbo, *Pere Aaga Thinba Bibija* and the Kalasuwe of Apoi, *Oba Lawe* (Toru Abukuba), finally resolved the impasse from further escalation, which necessitated the people of Agwobiri to give Cibai, the daughter of Tubeligha Beki as a wife to Boubi of Polugbini quarters, Kiribo, Apoi. This strategic marriage alliance led to the final resolution of the crisis, which was earlier considered intractable, courtesy of the two traditional rulers. Briefly put, as a background to the said 1876 episode, an Agwobiri man was reported to have killed a prominent woman trader of Polugbini quarters, Kiribo. As a counter retaliatory action led by Poporowei Niyon which details may not be necessary here, precipitated heavy casualties on the side of the Agwobiri people, who were not prepared for war at the time of

⁶⁶ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, p.10; Oral interview held with Falolu Kpiliboh, 71 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 December, 2018.

the said incident.⁶⁷ The above ugly episode notwithstanding, as a people of common historical origin, calculated for the promotion of harmonious relationship, the traditional rulers of both groups were said to have paid periodic royal visits to each other, apart from sending special emissaries to settle disputes that entangled their subjects capable of igniting conflicts.

As a further consolidation of political and diplomatic relations, when Nana Olomu, an Itsekiri chief, palm oil super magnate, nationalist and the governor of Benin River, ran into trouble with the acting Consul-General Ralph Denham Rayment Moor (31 July, 1860-14 September, 1909), he was first sheltered in the palace of the then Agadagba of Arogbo, *Pere Aaga Thinba Bibija*, before leaving for Lagos en route Igbotu, Apoi, in 1894. The point obviously being made is that the said *Pere Aaga* only provided the earlier needed strategic safe-haven, and thereafter duly handed him over to the Kalasuwe of Apoi, *Oba Lawe* (Toru Abukuba), who equally offered the desired protection for him at Igbotu which aided him to escape to Lagos. In essence, the collaborative role of the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi traditional rulers, therefore, made it possible for Nana to escape to Lagos. But through the help of Dore Numa (Dore, being the British rendition of Dogho the shortened form of Omadoghogbone), Nana was later captured, tried and exiled to Accra, Gold Coast (now Ghana) from 1894 to 1906.⁶⁸

2.5 Socio-Economic Relations of Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi Peoples before 1915

The Arogbo-Ijo pre-colonial social system is unique and, thus, based on virilocal and patrilocal rules. Under the virilocal rule of residence, on marriage (*jeghi nana*), the *ere* (woman or wife) joins her husband (*jeghi*) to settle in his father's quarters (*jeghi idumu*) which, in English, is referred to as the patrilocal rule – a form of marriage in which the wife goes to live with the husband's group or family. Under the Arogbo-Ijo social organisation, there is no room for uxrilocal or matrilocal system – a form of marriage in which the husband (*jeghi*) goes to live with the wife (*ere*). Thus, in line with the social system,

⁶⁷ Oral interview held with Chief Kurokokonghan Kowe, 50 years, Community Leader, the Orubaiegberigbakaramowe of Arogbo-Ibe (Kingdom), Agwobiri, Arogbo, 30 December, 2018. Note: The said 1876 episode occurred at the time of Chief Kino of Kiribo, who was installed in 1863, and joined his ancestors in 1928.

⁶⁸ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.11–13. Meanwhile, on the explanation of the name, Omadoghogbone, see, Ikime, O. 2018. *Can Anything Good Come out of History?* Ibadan: Bookcraft, pp.291-292.

marriage itself is contracted through the payment of necessary bride price called *ere iko*, which the husband makes to the woman's family (*ere wari*). With this payment, he acquires the right to incorporate the children (*owoghu*) he procreates with his wife (*ere*) into his descent group (*uni wari*).⁶⁹

According to Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu, the payment of the bride price and the patrilocal rule of residence notwithstanding, consequent upon the death of the woman, the husband's family is duty bound to return the corpse and her property to her *dau wari* (father's house) for *dibi* (burial). The Arogbo-Ijo social customs hold on to this rule so dearly and jealously that the *dau wari* would never allow the corpse to be buried in the husband's house (*jeghi wari*) because the bones do not belong to the husband, but to her family.⁷⁰

In his explanation, Ebenezer Titiboh posits that the Arogbo-Ijo traditional practice of patrilineal system notwithstanding, special importance is attached to matrilineal practice to the degree in which one can sell the children of his sister to pay debts without being questioned by the parents, especially the father. Similarly, one can in turn inherit any property belonging to his mother's brother, which is known as the unquestionable *yabi* factor in Arogbo-Ijo customary practice.⁷¹

Again, looking at the Arogbo-Ijo pre-colonial social organisation, one would see a clear evidence of rigid stratification. There existed what is called the blue blood or royal family, ordinary citizen or free born, and the slaves. As a lucid show of its belief, inter-marriage was either between the royal family (*pere wariabu*) and the free born (*mabrafiniabu*); but neither group was permitted to cement marital relationship with the slave lineages (*mabrafinighanabu*). Slave lineages can be traced to any of the following grounds: by war captive, by status of being bought, and being abandoned but found in the bush. Slavery by marriage and birth is another conspicuous part of the slavery institution. A slave lady can partially assume royal status by getting married to someone from the royal lineage.

⁶⁹ Oral interview held with High Chief R. A. Bekewe, 76 years, Secretary, Arogbo-Ijaw Traditional Council, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

⁷⁰ Oral interview held with Hon S. E. Yayu, 70 years, retired Principal, Minority Leader, Ondo State House of Assembly (October, 1983- 31 December, 1983) and Chairman, Ese-Odo, L.G.A., Igbekobo (2007-2009), Arogbo, 29 August, 2015. Note: He was later installed as High Chief Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu, the Head of Ereh Lineage of Perebiyenmo Ruling House by His Imperial Majesty, *Pere* (Barr) Zacchaeus Doubra Egbunu (JP), Opukutu III, the Agadagba and Paramount Ruler of Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom.

⁷¹ Oral interview held with Boanerge Ebenezer Titiboh, 70 years, Religious Leader, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

Nevertheless, the chain of bondage is not totally loosen because, if she produces a female child, she can easily get married in the community, but a male child of the same mother will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to be fully integrated into the free born social circle by marriage, for the society conveniently links him to his matrilineal side of slavery than his patrilineal royal and /or free born side. In like manner, if a male slave had delivery with a woman from any free born or royal family, the slavery bondage remains embedded.⁷²

Under the same social stratification, the worst type of the slavery institution is referred to as *ibiyodos*, whose origin cannot be traced. These groups of persons are treated as social lepers that can only marry among themselves. This rigidity in turn added an insult into injury, in which two *Ibiyodos* produce offspring contaminably known as *Ibiyodo Kunein* (*kunein* means excreta) which denotes the worthlessness of the said offspring.⁷³ In fact, the Arogbo-Ijo pre-colonial social system encourages the slavery institution to the magnitude in which a man's wealth is determined by the number of the slaves he owns while alive. The above was more of the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, but with the magnitude so strong that, even in the 21st century, slave lineages are still identified in certain families, with its concomitant corollaries in societal matters.

According to oral traditions, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi social or marital relations date back to the earliest times of their existence in the southwestern part of Nigeria. For instance, Perebiyenmo, the founder of Arogbo-Ijo married an Apoi woman from Igbobini, called Olayinka, by whom he had his youngest son, Ereh. Also, Apasu, the mother of Gbaluwe, the founder of Igbotu, Apoi, was from Akpata, an ancient Arogbo-Ijo settlement. Iroju, one of the sons of Gbaluwe, married his second wife (Ooruh) from Egbesubiri, Arogbo. Today, while some descendants of the Iroju lineage are permanently dwelling at Arogbo, some are equally indigenes of Igbotu in Apoi. Ebelu Okobo of Egbesubiri, Arogbo cemented conjugal ties with Mrs Beima Pelubo from Igbekebo, Apoi, and the marriage was blessed with two female children, namely, Arayetan and Ekuegbola. Yoyin Pawei of Egbesubiri, Arogbo (a renowned warlord, and one-time Amananawei of Arogbo) married a woman from

⁷² Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.8.

⁷³ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.8. See also, Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers, pp. 47-48.

Madagbaya quarters, Kiribo, Apoi, named Borietene Takunbe. Disegha Owei from Ajapa, Arogbo, also married Madam Jimine Poporowei from Polugbini quarters, Kiribo, Apoi. In fact, Poporowei Niyon was a generalissimo at that time known to have carried out many exploits in the interest of the Apoi.⁷⁴ Aginaghan Pawei, one of the Arogbo-Ijo warriors of old, not only had an Apoi ancestral linkage, but also allowed two of his daughters, Lobe and Kuru, to marry at Igbotu in Apoi.⁷⁵ The above points to the fact that inter-group marriages were not only a feature of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations but had been a long established mode of social relations and conviviality.

In respect of historical religious festivals and other socio-cultural activities, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi had a robust and vigorous relations. Hence, highly revered religious festivals existed in Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi. But many of them have gone into extinction with the coming of the British colonial rule, with sepecial reference to Christianity. Binikurukuru, Igodo, Jighosei, Sanghanton, Opele, and Kpokotin are some that are remembered with a pang or wave of nostalgia in a few quarters in Arogbo-Ijo.⁷⁶ Equally, among the Apoi, there existed pre-colonial religious festivals and other socio-cultural activities in all the nine Apoi ancient settlements, except Ipoke. Significantly, because of the Apoi's Ijo historical background, all the religious festivals are known with distinguished Ijo identities. The following are prime examples: (i) Igbobini: Bouabo festival; Oguberiberi and Benipereya masquerades; (ii) Igbotu: Igwe festival; (iii) Oboro: Tuketretubu masquerade; (iv) Inikorogha: Kesimotie masquerade; (v) Ojuala: Bouabo festival; (vi) Igbekebo: Gbolomokopri masquerade; (vii) Kiribo: Ekpo-Osaugale masquerade; (viii) Sabomi: Tuofabokerebele, Bunafabosudougha, and Jubolaye-Tubolagha masquerades; and Okorobiti festival. As was similar to the Arogbo-Ijo, many of the above ancient cultural festivals have gone into extinction due to the British colonial rule.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Oral interview held with Mr Allen Abudu, 70 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 December, 2018; Mr Falolu Kpiliboh, 71 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 December, 2018; Oral interview held with Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, Civil Servant, Kiribo, Apoi, 23 December, 2017; and oral interview held with High Chief Sunday Adeyemi Adeyoriyu, 78 years, Community Leader, Igbotu, Apoi, 4 September, 2015.

⁷⁵ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.10 -12.

⁷⁶ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.7

⁷⁷ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 27.

Meanwhile, Ipoke, the ninth settlement is not considered, because it is an offshoot of Kiribo. According to Alagoa, and oral tradition, when the Apoi left their central Niger Delta homeland, they, first settled at Ikimu (Okomu) in the present-day Edo State. But when they were to leave for their present-day location, out of the nine lineages, one opted to remain at Ikimu. Consequently, the eight lineages from Ikimu were recreated in their new settlements of Igbobini, Igbotu, Oboro, Inikorogha, Ojuala, Igbekebo, Kiribo, and Sabomi, but the original number of the nine lineages from the central Niger Delta was made up by elevating Ipoke (originally an offshoot of Kiribo) to the status of the ninth in their new area of settlement.⁷⁸

The celebration of these festivals have their different historical imports across both groups. For instance, Kpokotin festival among the Arogbo-Ijo was uniquely concerned with festivity of women, detection of criminals and the general well-being of the people. Concerning the Apoi, Ekpo-Osaugale masquerade celebration was to prevent sudden and untimely deaths in the community. The Chief Priest of Ekpo-Osaugale festival is called Iba-Imole, while other priests are called Obi-aghoro. Out of the Obi-aghoro, one is chosen as the Iba-Imole. Before its celebration, Kiribo settlement was terribly afflicted and gravely haunted by strange and untimely deaths that made longevity a mirage.⁷⁹ Therefore, as occasions for rigorous socio-cultural interactions, the above celebrations at different periods of every year attracted people from all walks of life among the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi. These celebrations and their huge attendance across both groups promoted unity and harmonious relationships among them. The celebrations provided rallying points and golden opportunities for the interacting groups to engage meaningfully.

Nevertheless, the occasional occurrence of conflicts associated with these religious festivals were visibly apparent as well. *Exempli gratia*, Kpokotin festival was noted for its associated controversies. Sacred animals, such as *obiri* (dog) and *ofini* (fowl) were only at the mercy

⁷⁸ Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 29. Meanwhile, contrary to the generally known fact, the improvised yearly festival in Ipoke community is the yam festival. Oral interview held with Mr Felix Bodunwa, 50 years, community leader, Igbobini, Apoi, 28 December, 2018.

⁷⁹ Oral interview held with Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, former Leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo (now a teacher), Kiribo, Apoi, 28 December, 2018.

of the Chief Priest of Kpokotin of Arogbo. A melancholic event which negatively affected Kpokotin celebration took place at Arogbo in 1895. As part of social interaction among the two groups, Leghi, an Apoi from Igbotu visited Arogbo. Then, there existed a historical *ovuwo* (covenant) between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi that any covenant visitor could kill the first *obiri* (dog) he saw whenever he visited and serve himself with one-third of the meat and surrender the two-thirds to his hosts. In accordance with the *ovuwo*, Leghi killed the first *obiri* he saw on arrival at Arogbo settlement. Unfortunately, the *obiri* he killed belongs to Kpokotin; whereas only the custodians of Kpokotin in line with its sacred rule are at liberty to kill any animal belonging to it.⁸⁰

The Eji Ogbonu family, the custodians of the Kpokotin were promptly intimidated, and Ukporu a brave adherent of Kpokotin furiously took *opiya* (machete) and pursued Leghi until he got to him at Eepu Idumu (quarters) where he macheted Leghi's *amabra* (right-hand). In self-defence, Leghi brought out a short gun and fired at Ukporu, who died on the spot. Consequently, pandamonium ensued, and Arogbo people sent for Leghi's kith and kin at Igbotu. At the end of the deliberation by both groups, a death sentence was passed on Leghi with the proviso that somebody would shoot at him at the very spot he fired Ukporu to death. Daniel Ashidi, the son of the deceased was mandated to carry out the act accordingly. But as a small lad who lacked the desired courage and could not guarantee accurate shooting, he vehemently rejected the assignment. The lot then fell on Kurokimifatei, the then Chief Priest of Kpokotin, who in line with the said *conditio* shot Leghi to death. This noisome incident badly affected the Kpokotin yearly celebration, especially the Apoi visitors were thereafter, scared stiff of coming.⁸¹

Lawal, in his *The Economy and the State from Pre-colonial Times to the Present*, clearly states that from time immemorial, the business of exchange and production of goods and services had engaged the attention of the various peoples of Nigeria. Indeed, their economic activities were influenced by changing conditions and adoption of new technologies.⁸² In a

⁸⁰ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp. 29 -30; and Oral interview held with Chief Rotimi Okoroboh, 55 years, Head of Personnel Management (HPM), Irele Local Government Area (place of interview, Erubiri, Arogbo), Ondo State, 30 November, 2017.

⁸¹ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp. 29 -30.

⁸² Lawal, A. A. 1997. *The Economy and the State from Pre-Colonial Times to the Present*. Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Ibadan: Davidson Press, p.178.

similar vein, Orughani states in his article, Resources, that the economic development of any people is influenced among other things by the resources available in their environment.⁸³ The above assertions lucidly show the economic portrait of the Arogbó-Ijò and Apói under our period of discourse.

Therefore, in the pre-colonial era, the business of exchange and production of goods and services did not escape the attention of the Arogbó-Ijò and Apói peoples. Hence, they learnt how to engage in and utilise available material and human resources, especially fishing, canoe-carving, palm wine tapping and farming, for their well-being. These economic activities were significantly influenced by their riverine environment. Thus, they established different markets and had trading partners for their locally produced goods. These goods were distributed through a means known as barter system of exchange, prior to the introduction of assorted currencies. Simply put, direct exchange of goods against goods without the use of money was called barter exchange or trade by barter. Alternatively, any economic exchange without the medium of money was referred to as barter exchange.⁸⁴

As was common to most pre-colonial societies, some drawbacks associated with barter exchange were: lack of double coincidence of wants, lack of common measure of value, lack of standard of deferred payment, difficulty in storing wealth and the indivisibility of goods.⁸⁵ Clearly, all the above inconveniences of barter exchange are self-explanatory, there is no need going into microscopic details. Nevertheless, double coincidence of wants which was the main drawback of the barter exchange system required a brief elucidation with particular respect to the Arogbó-Ijò and Apói pre-colonial exchange system. It simply means that the producer of fish may want paddle in exchange for his fish. In order to successfully carry out the transaction, he might find it difficult to get a paddle carver who was also willing to exchange his paddle for fish. This invariably means that a seller had to find a person who wanted to buy what the seller wanted to sell. Therefore, in order to overcome the shortcomings of the barter system of exchange, modern currency had to be

⁸³ Orughani, A. 2009. Resources. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 285.

⁸⁴ The free encyclopedia, <http://www.mint.com/barter.system.history.the.past.and> present. Accessed online on 2 November, 2015.

⁸⁵ The free encyclopedia, <http://www.economicsdiscussion.net/exchange/barter.exchange.meaning.and.problems.of.barter.exchange/595>. Accessed online on 2 November, 2015.

introduced by the early merchants.⁸⁶ The above innovation notwithstanding, the barter system of exchange as a pre-colonial economic practice of Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi has endured till date.

However, apart from barter, there were other means of exchange. According to oral traditions, a local object was used as a medium of transaction where goods and services were not immediately or easily interchangeable. This local currency which enjoyed general recognition and acceptability among the people was an object, known as cowry (cowry or cowrie is the singular form, while cowries is the plural form). The Arogbo-Ijo called it *okuba-atoru*, while the Apoi called it *ere wo*. In his explanation, Boboh⁸⁷ stated that the Arogbo-Ijo had two types of cowries, described as *oweí okuba-atoru* (male) and *iyoro okuba-atoru* (female). The smaller one (*iyoro okuba-atoru*) was regarded as the female, while the bigger one (*oweí okuba-atoru*) was regarded as the male because it carried a higher monetary value. Similarly, Tolo,⁸⁸ an Apoi man, stated that there were two types of cowries in Apoi, and that the smaller one was called *ere wo*, while the bigger one was called *odowo*. In fact, he describes the *odowo* as the king *because of the higher monetary value attached to it*. Both Boboh and Tolo also agreed that the cowries were got from the seaside, and equally dug-out from sacred forest grounds.⁸⁹ Hence, cowries were regarded as natural blessings because they were found in the ground, or washed up on the shores of lakes or rivers. These two types of cowries were used and, thus, facilitated commercial transactions among them. Though with teething problems, these pre-colonial local currencies truly, effectively and efficiently performed the same functions of the modern-day currencies. On a general note, in order to frontally address the challenges associated with the pre-colonial barter system of exchange and local currency, the British colonial government embarked on far reaching and enduring measures. While writing on the British colonial rule in the

⁸⁶The free encyclopedia <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/economics/money/5.main.difficulties.found.in.barter.system.discussed/37849>, Accessed online on 2 November, 2015.

⁸⁷ Oral interview held with Chief Adura Boboh, 82 years, Community Leader, Tebubeleu, Arogbo, 8 November, 2015.

⁸⁸ Oral interview held with Chief Olatunde Tolo, the Ogeleyinbo of Kiribo, 78 years, Kiribo, Apoi, 9 November, 2015.

⁸⁹ Oral interview held with Chief Adura Boboh, 82 years, Community Leader, Tebubeleu, Arogbo, 8 November, 2015; Oral interview held with Chief Olatunde Tolo, the Ogeleyinbo of Kiribo, 78 years, Kiribo, Apoi, 9 November, 2015. Please note that this position of Boboh and Tolo cannot be factual for, cowry shell is the shells of a particular species of Snails that are found mostly in the Maldives Islands. They were brought to Africa from the general areas of the West Indies and used in exchange for slaves and other African products. See, Hogendorn, J. and Johnson, M. 1986. *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, African Studies Series 49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eastern Niger Delta with special reference to monetary proclamations, Enemugwem, J.H. *et al.* posit thus:

Moreover, the British Government set out to destroy all local substitutes or competitors for imported goods...Furthermore, measures were taken by the colonial administration to replace indigenous currency such as manilas, cowries, iron-bars, etc. with official British currency. This was done through the Native Currency Proclamation of 1902, Cowries Prohibition Proclamation of 1904, the Native Currency Proclamation of 1911 and other proclamations...The aim of the policy was to introduce a uniform currency system. Though the indigenous population in the Rivers area resisted the policy, it is clear that by the early 1930s, the new official currency covered wide areas in commercial transactions. The area was subsequently tied to metropolitan economy.⁹⁰

As earlier pointed out, the economic development of any group of people is conditioned among other related things by the natural resources available in the environment.⁹¹The Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were no exception to this economic rule. As riverine dwellers, the rivers, streams, creeks, and waterways were, arguably, the most valuable resources available to them. Thus, to start with, fishing was their single most important occupation for survival. As a clarification, though the Apoi were also fishermen during the pre-colonial era, in absolute terms, they were not producers of fish in large quantities when compared to the Arogbo-Ijo. Rather, they participated in fish trading with their immediate Arogbo-Ijo neighbours on the one hand and with their immediate Ikaile neighbours and the Ondo people in the hinterland on the other. According to Iroju, since the emergence of the Apoi in this region, the practice of fishing on a large commercial scale seemed not have been part of their economic fortunes.⁹² Rather, they practised a sedentary fishing culture which mainly supported subsistence purposes.

⁹⁰ Enemugwem, J. H. *et al.* 2010. Colonial Rule. Alagoa, E. J. and Derefaka, A. A. Eds. *The Land and People of Rivers State: Eastern Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p.328. Also, see, Ogunyemi, A. O. 2012. The Nigerian Naira: Its Origin and Challenges Up to 1993. *Journal of African Politics and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 60-63.

⁹¹ Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 11-12.

⁹² Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700 – 2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p. 54.

The Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi pre-colonial fishing methods and materials included the use of wicker-fish traps locally woven by men and women with raffia fronds, leaves and sticks. According to Ayo Kile, a fisherman of old, notable examples of such locally woven wicker-fish traps were *ite*, *igun*, *ikime*, *binibinyen*, and *bomu*.⁹³

Out of the above, a locally made fencing, which is known as *bomu* in Arogbo-Ijo dialect, effectively performed the primary function of a barrier in controlling the tide of the water and, consequently, the movement of fishes to one particular direction, which significantly aided their capturing or catching in large quantities. Thus, these different fishing gears were used in good numbers seasonally in catching different types of fishes. Some of the different types of fishes traditionally caught were *bou-iyoro*, *toru-iyoro*, *olumo*, *odia*, *atan*, *epele*, *agbaru*, *kele*, *ekeu*, *pomu*, and *imunu*. As a matter of fact, most of the species of pre-colonial fishes survived the vicissitudes of environmental hazards till date in the riverine areas of the present-day Ondo State; but the quantities earlier caught have drastically reduced due to environmental pollutions and degradations occasioned by human activities.

The fact that the two groups are living in a similar environment notwithstanding, the basis for economic relations was *sine qua non*. Apart from the grand economic rule or economic *grundnorm* that no group of people can live in isolation of other groups, the Apoi were not producers of fish in large quantities whereas the Arogbo-Ijo were known producers of fish in commercial quantities. Similarly, because of the land advantage enjoyed by the Apoi, they were farmers (though in small scale), with the opportunity of getting additional agricultural products from their Ikale neighbours on grounds of geographical proximity. Grounded on the above juxtaposition and fulcrum, the Arogbo-Ijo were in dire need of agricultural products on one hand, while the Apoi were equally in crucial need of fish, on the other hand. Therefore, the Arogbo-Ijo exchanged their fish for the agricultural products of the Apoi. The above significantly formed the bedrock of the economic interaction between the two groups.

As was common to most Ijo sub-groups in the Niger Delta, pre-colonial fishing lacked the modern preservation techniques because they were not available in the dug-out canoes used in fishing expeditions. Consequently, the main fish preservation and processing technique

⁹³ Oral interview held with Mr Ayo Kile, a fisherman of old, 74 years, Tebubeleu, Arogbo, 8 November, 2015.

used by the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi was smoke drying with the aid of locally constructed kilns. In this technique, fresh fishes caught were heated at high temperatures with the use of *fini* (firewood) as the energy source. These traditional smoking kilns, called *eri*, were simply constructed with *bana* (mud) and other materials pegged with sticks into the ground. The Arogbo-Ijo refer to this process of smoking fishes with the use of *eri* (kiln) as *zaa*.⁹⁴ In line with individual's choice, these traditional smoking kilns were either constructed or erected inside or outside the kitchen. Thereafter, fishes beyond local consumption were given out as gifts or traded by barter at different trading points.

As fishermen/women, it is germane at this juncture of our discourse to state that there were episodic conflicts between the two groups caused by contest for fishing ponds or areas during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, mainly in the 1930, 1940, 1970 and 1980. Such occasional occurrences were found among the various settlements that directly shared physical boundaries with each or one another. Although, there were often no conspicuous demarcation of physical boundaries, every community was clearly aware of her boundaries. After all, fishing has been an all-seasonal occupation be it *bowei-kiri* (raining season) or *baara-kiri* (dry season) generally. In clear terms, the two Apoi settlements that obviously shared identifiable boundaries with the Arogbo-Ijo are Igbekebo and Kiribo. On the other hand, the Arogbo-Ijo settlements that apparently shared physical boundaries with the Apoi are Osari-Ugbo, Igangbo, Ebiaye, Akorikotu, Amapere and Agadagba-Obon. For instance, the ancient physical boundary between Kiribo, Apoi and Akorikotu, Arogbo, is Dinokoromobou. And that of Kiribo, Apoi and Ebiaye, Arogbo, is Itibitibi-kiribubogho.⁹⁵

Basically, contested fishing ponds or areas at times resulted in seizure of fishing traps or materials, such as *igun*, *ite*, *aru*, etc. across both groups. Meanwhile, as a traditional mechanism for conflict resolution, the perceived group or individuals who trespassed often pleaded for the release of the seized materials without the use of *emissaries* and with that understanding, such fishing gears were returned to the concerned owner(s) right inside the

⁹⁴ Oral interview held with Madam Ebierin Thomas, 55 years, fisherwoman, Igangbo, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015.

⁹⁵ Oral interview held with Boanerge Musinghan Muleboh, 85 years, Religious Leader, Ebiaye, Arogbo, 23 November, 2017. Apart from pre-colonial instances, celebrated instances of fishing ponds conflicts occurred in 1930, 1945, 1970 and 1980.

contested areas in the forest. Nevertheless, the most intractable cases were eventually addressed at the communal level by the respective heads of the concerned families or settlements as applicable. Even in the colonial period, the Shaluwa River Forest boundary dispute between the Arogbo-Ijo and Kiribo, Apoi which eventually entangled the traditional rulers of both groups did not degenerate into a full-blown war due to skilful diplomacy employed by both groups. Meanwhile, the traditional rulers of the two groups at the time of the said Shaluwa River Forest impasse and the abortive attempt to make it a reserve (Shalowa River Proposed Forest Reserve) in the early 1940s, were *Pere Mesarawon Poro*, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo (installed in 1933 and died in 1960); *Oba Oto*, the Kalasuwe of Apoi (installed in 1922 and died in 1942); and by extension, Chief Tenekanren or Tenukarem, the Oluhogho of Iju-Osun (installed in 1927 and died in 1945). Though attempts were made, but due to shortage of staff, the untimely demise of one of the principal signatories (*Oba Oto*), and the outbreak of the Second World War, the said proposed forest reserve was never finalised and gazetted. Hence, strictly speaking, there was nothing like Shaluwa Forest Reserve because the said efforts were aborted at the embryonic stage of the said proposal. In respect of geographical description, the area in question lies between the lands of the Arogbo-Ijo on the South, the Kiribo, Apoi on the North and West, and the people of Iju-Osun on the East. However, the impasse remained unresolved up to the end of this work.⁹⁶

Concerning contact or transportation in the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi pre-colonial societies, the only means available was the use of canoes of different sizes. As such, another important economic pre-occupation for these two Ijo sub-groups was canoe-carving. Therefore, the art of canoe-carving was fundamental to them for their daily transactions. Perhaps, as a natural advantage, the required hard woods or timber trees were also readily available in large quantities. Consequently, different types and sizes of canoes were manually hewed from logs or big tress, and artistically dressed, softened and expanded by the use of wild

⁹⁶ Oral interview held with Boanerge Musinghan Muleboh, 85 years, Religious Leader, Ebiaye, Arogbo, 23 November, 2017; NAI. Reserve-Shalowa River Forest, Okitipupa Division, Ondo Province, File No. 2787, 23-9-41. Note: Though spelt as Shalowa in the above document, the 1937 Sketch Map Illustrating Bini Confederation-Intelligence Report, NAI.Ondoprof-2960/5, File No. 1024/70, spelt it as Shaluwa. Hence, the spelling Shaluwa is used throughout this work.

fire.⁹⁷ These expanded canoes were provided with seats, called *ikun* as cross bars for the sitting comfort of the users while paddling. As a matter of fact, even the smallest canoe had four *ikuns*, while the biggest canoe had as many as possible, depending on the intended size and purpose of the carver. Again, every canoe had three unequal shapes, no matter the size. Thus, the front part, which is naturally the narrowest, was called *aru-ikulo* (*aru* means canoe, while *ikulo* means front). The middle part, which is the widest, was called *aru-oturu* (*oturu* means middle). And the rear part is called *aru-dinmo* (*dinmo* means back), which is a bit wider than the *aru-ikulo* and, thus, distinctively crafted or carved for the sitting comfort of the users while paddling. However, because of the labour intensive nature of canoe-carving, unlike fishing and trading, it has been an occupation for the menfolk.⁹⁸ As a graphic illustration, Figure 2.4 on page 71, is a picture showing the process of firing a dug-out canoe.

⁹⁷ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., p.29. Then on canoe generally, see, Anderson, M. G. 2009. Canoes and Fish in Ijo Art and Ritual. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 150-162.

⁹⁸ Oral interview held with Emmanuel Ogidio (later installed as a Chief), a canoe-carver, 60 years, Obontoru, Arogbo, 8 November, 2015. For further information on the above, see, Anderson, M. G. 2009. Canoes and Fish in Ijo Art and Ritual. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 155.



Figure 2.4: A picture showing the process of firing a dug-out canoe, so that it can be bent into shape.
Source: Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta...*, p. 154.

In fact, canoes were used for a number of purposes. According to Anderson, ‘besides being used as a means of transporting people, farm produce, fishing, building materials, trade goods, corpses to burial forests, and war expeditions, when moored at the beach, canoes provide convenient places to play, eat, launder clothes, bathe, defecate, *et cetera*.⁹⁹ Hence, to paraphrase or borrow from the words of Anderson, canoe operates as a common denominator of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi pre-colonial societies.

Perhaps, more than the Apoi, the Arogbo-Ijo were practically noted for carving more durable canoes due to the availability of hard and big timber trees in their geographical location. Thus, Ikime’s submission is appropriate: ‘most people in the Delta knew something about the making of canoes. But not all the delta had the right types of timbers for canoe building: canoes are not made from the red mangrove tree, for example’.¹⁰⁰ Both smaller and bigger canoes were carved from hard timber trees such as *kuru*, *ire*, *tala*, and *owoso* which were strong enough for commercial fishing and other related activities. These canoes were not only lighter and faster because of their carving nature, but could also carry many persons; hence, the high demand for them from their neighbours and beyond.

In his attempt to point out the significance of their canoe-carving skills, Faluyi states that the canoe building families in Lagos probably learnt the art from the Ijo because it does not appear that the people of Lagos built their own canoes at the early stages of their development of the settlement. He further submits that, as long distance traders, their contact with Lagos brought far reaching improvement as they introduced their skills in canoe building to the Ilaje and later to the people of Lagos.¹⁰¹

In pointing out the pivotal role of canoe in the economic life of the Ijo man generally, Orugbani states thus:

⁹⁹ Anderson M. G. 2009. Canoes and Fish in Ijo Art and Ritual. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 150-155.

¹⁰⁰ Ikime, O. 1980. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., p. 102.

¹⁰¹ Faluyi, K. 2001. Migrants and Socio-Economic Development of Lagos: From the Earliest Times to 1880. *Lagos Historical Review*, University of Lagos, Volume 1, p. 73.

Another important economic activity of the Ijaw people is carving. The forest of Ijawland abounds with timber which is used the Ijaw for carving. By far the most important product of this industry is the canoe and the paddle. The Ijaw are the best canoe carvers in Nigeria. The canoes vary in size...The canoe is the most important means of transportation of the Ijaw people, and in years gone by the canoe was a status symbol.¹⁰²

Orugbani, in his attempt to shed more light on the importance of canoe to the Ijo man, quotes Talbot to cap it all in the following words: perhaps, it is not wonderful when one considers how large a part canoes play in the lives of waterside peoples that all such crafts are thought to have souls living in the bow.¹⁰³

On canoes and fishes as valuable vehicles for exploring how the Ijo respond to their God-given riverine environment, Anderson referred to canoe as the 'river horse' because of the role it plays in riverine cultures.¹⁰⁴ By adding another historical ingredient in explaining how canoe often functions as a tool in facilitating production, Anderson posits thus:

Paddling a canoe constitutes a form of work, because it involves the expenditure of energy and fulfills several other criteria of a 'fork work' concept...both canoeing and fishing... may be work or recreation, or simultaneously work and recreation, depending on the mental attitude of the fisher or the paddler.¹⁰⁵

The significance of paddle, too, which is used in paddling or pulling the canoe, needs to be shown in respect of gender relations and usage. Right from pre-colonial times, there exists two types of paddle. The type for men, which is bigger and wider as regards the pulling edge, requires more muscular strength and energy to handle and pull. This type of paddle

¹⁰² Orugbani, A. 2009. Resources. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 285.

¹⁰³ Orugbani, A. 2009. Resources. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 285.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, M. G. 2009. Canoes and Fish in Ijo Art and Ritual. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 147.

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, M. G. 2009. Canoes and Fish in Ijo Art and Ritual. Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* Eds. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, pp.148-149.

for men is called *oweí joweí* (*oweí* means male, while *joweí* means paddle). On the other hand, the type for womenfolk, which is lighter, smaller and narrower, is called *iyoro joweí* (*iyoro* means female, while *joweí* means paddle). This type requires less muscular strength to handle and paddle because it is for the weaker sex.¹⁰⁶

On trading, canoe was the only means in which economic transactions were carried out in the pre-colonial era. The Arogbo-Ijo exchanged fish and other items for agricultural products, such as garri, pupuru, red oil and vegetables, with their Apoi and Ikale neighbours. In the course of this transaction, the Arogbo-Ijo patronised Kiribo and Igbekebo markets in Apoi, and Akotogbo, Iju-Osun, and Barogbo markets in Ikale alternatively. Similarly, the Arogbo-Ijo markets patronised by the Apoi for their transactions were located at Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, and Akpata. On the other hand, because of the inability to swim, the Ikale often patronised the Apoi markets, which were all located on land. But on the side of Arogbo-Ijo markets, the Ikale only patronised Agadagba-Obon, the location of which required no crossing of the Arogbo River, their only barrier. As a pre-colonial legacy, all these markets are still in existence, except the one at Akpata (an ancient Arogbo-Ijo community), which has gone into extinction with its unique and characteristic feature of being transacted on canoes, being purely a riverine community.¹⁰⁷ As a descriptive display and nostalgic memory, Figure 2.5 on page 75 is a picture of women traders paddling their canoes, while Figure 2.6 on page 76 is a picture of the main thoroughfare at Akpata, a waterway.

¹⁰⁶ Oral interview held with Mr Emmanuel Ogidiogo (later installed as a Chief), a canoe-carver, 60 years, Obontoru, Arogbo, 8 November, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Oral interview held with Mrs Iyabode Bolodokun, 55 years, Ademinighan quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 12 November, 2015; and Oral interview held with High Chief Jimoh Tunfawei, 69 years, the Pawei of Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 9 November, 2015.



Figure 2.5: Women traders paddling their canoes on Akpata lagoon (an Arogo-Ijo ancient community). The brown balls (*pupuru*) filling the canoes are made of cassava brought from up-country down to the sea coast area. The big hats (*agbeju-tughun*) protected them against rain and sun.
Source: Duckworth, E.H. Ed. 1947. Exploring Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 26, p. 372.

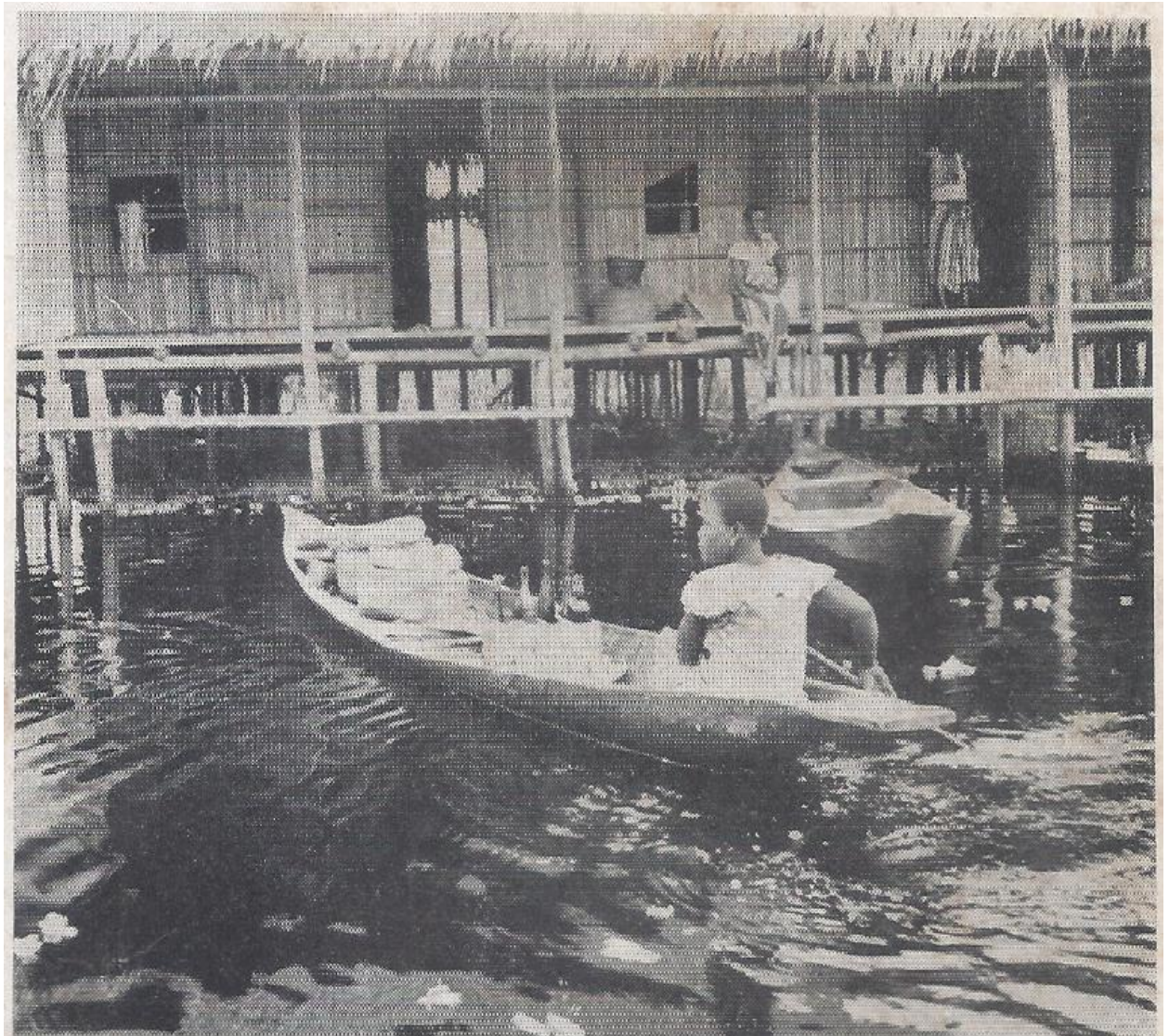


Figure 2.6: The main thoroughfare at Akpata, a waterway. A big market is held every few days. All the market women and the buyers attended in canoes, because there is no dry land during the rainy season.

Source: Duckworth, E.H. Ed. 1947. Exploring Nigeria: *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 26, p.389.

Another Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi pre-colonial economic activity equally peculiar to their riverine environment was the tapping of palm tree. The palm wine called *ijo wuru*, a product of the palm tree, was highly valued because, according to Mada Ijanpele, palm trees were the cornerstone of economic activities as the wine derived from them had very high market and socio-cultural values in the pre-colonial economy because they (palm trees) provided the only fresh wine drunk in different social functions.¹⁰⁸ Itinu Isepe, while corroborating the submission of Ijanpele, further posits that the palm wine not only remains till date a valuable drink on social occasions but the best traditional medicinal cure for *pajupaju-osoba* (yellow fever).¹⁰⁹ Longlife Titiboh, an Arogbo-Ijo devotee of Egbesu, clearly states that, right from time immemorial, *ijo wuru* (palm wine) was the only natural liquid substance for purification rites at the shrine of Egbesu as it is sprinkled on devotees (*oparanabu*) with the aid of traditional seaweeds (*opotoi-omomoron*). This act was very important at the shrine, but special importance is attached to it when preparing for war and any other related expeditions requiring bravery, manhood and purity.¹¹⁰ In a similar vein, the explanation of Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi equally shows that palm wine, which the Apoi initially also called *ijo wuru*, but now *oguro*, played a similar role at the shrine of Oborowe, the Apoi god of war and the yearly Bouabo festival, all located at Igbobini, Apoi.¹¹¹

Apart from the above functions, palm wine was also locally distilled into dry gin called *tuwo wuru* (ogogoro) which the colonial masters declared as illicit gin in order to sell their imported hot drinks of different brands. Besides its economic significance among the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi, this product also functioned immensely in religious acts as there was no traditional activity carried out in the shrines of Egbesu, Bouabo and Oborowe that did not require its use.¹¹² Thus, ogogoro and palm wine performed almost similar functions

¹⁰⁸ Oral interview held with General Boanerge Mada Ijanpele, former palm wine tapper, 75 years, Tebubeleu, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Oral interview held with Chief Itinu Isepe, a former palm wine tapper, 70 years, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015.

¹¹⁰ Oral interview held with Chief Longlife Titiboh (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), an Arogbo-Ijo devotee of Egbesu, 50 years, Erubiri, Arogbo, 11 November, 2015.

¹¹¹ Oral interview held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 61 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 9 November, 2015.

¹¹² Oral interview held with High Chief Ayodele Ogeh, 75 years, Okemoyo Street, Igbotu, Apoi, 7 November, 2015; and oral interview held with High Chief Benjamin Omotayo Kukoyi, the Ofola of Igbobini, 97 years, Okitipupa, 13 November, 2015.

in the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi pre-colonial societies to date. Therefore, across both groups, the significance and consumption of palm wine during social gathering and other related religious ceremonies cannot be overemphasised.

As further revealed by Awuleghan Umenren, the palm tree had other economic values. After being tapped consistently for wine, the palm tree (locally called *koroo*) usually dies off after about two months. From the decaying stem of the tree, different types of insect larva called *gbe*, *ubulo* and *donghon* were formed after about five or six months. Those insects were collected as food, and eaten in roasted or in raw form as delicacies by both male and female of different ages, apart from generating wealth. The consumption of such delicacies contributed greatly to their nutritional desires and values.¹¹³

Peter Ajama, a former palm wine tapper, posits that the palm tree had various uses in the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi traditional economy and food culture. According to him, out of the palm tree, raffia fronds were used to produce local roofing sheets called *okanghin* (bamboo), which were used in covering the roof top of houses. The stems were also used to produce *obine* (mat), *epere* and *akurukuru* (baskets) for domestic and commercial purposes. From the same stem, tiny hard ropes called *idorou* and *funba* were derived in their natural forms. These were, then, twined into or twisted together to form ropes for climbing palm tree, and also as a seat (*pereiye*) while tapping. These stems were also used in the making of traditional wicker fish traps for catching fishes of different sizes. These local ropes (*idorou*), also derived from the palm tree at an early stage of its growth were equally used in tying (*kaka*) canoes to a pegged stick at the beachfront to prevent the water current from taking them away.¹¹⁴

Snail, which the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi initially called *osi*, but now called *ugben* by the Apoi, also added value to their pre-colonial economy. Snails were generally and abundantly found in the bush, especially in cool, shady and wet places. Because, most land surfaces were covered by water during the rainy season, the snails swam from one palm tree to the other

¹¹³ Oral interview held with High Chief Awuleghan Umenren, a former palm wine tapper, 72 years, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Oral interview held with Chief Peter Ajama, a former palm wine tapper, 70 years, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015.

for shelter. This claim should not give room for scepticism because, in the riverine areas, apart from human beings, *oke* (rat), *ode* (cat), *oporopo* (pig), *obori* (goat), *obiri* (dog), *apokoi* (lizard), and *ofini* (fowl) naturally know how to swim. In making a similar historical assertion concerning Akpata (an ancient Arogbo-Ijo community), Duckworth states thus:

We had been told that in this part of Nigeria even pigs swim. We found this difficult to believe, but sure enough, we did see several pigs swimming from houses to houses and among the water lilies, where they appeared to be hunting for roots. Many of the houses have small Islands in front of them, some obviously built with intent, others formed by an accumulation of thrown-out rubbish.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, as a taboo, many Arogbo-Ijo people refused to eat snail, rather they traded it by barter exchange for agricultural products with their Apoi and Ikale neighbours who value them, especially because they provide meat and add nutritional value to soups.

On pre-colonial farming, the Arogbo-Ijo were not good farmers because of their geographical location. But, the Apoi combined farming with other economic activities because of their land-bound settlement pattern. This explains why Alagoa describes them as one of the most land-bound Ijo sub-groups.¹¹⁶ As a further advantage, because of their proximity to the Ikale, who were predominantly farmers, the Apoi produced different types of agricultural products which they mainly traded with the Arogbo-Ijo by barter as earlier pointed out. The above discussions clearly show the productive nature of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi pre-colonial economic societies, which transactions were carried out through the barter exchange system, and the then existing local currencies. All the economic activities, such as *aru-kara* (canoe-carving), *idi ba* (fishing), *koroo-pin* (tapping), *tubo tuwa* (trading), and *kiribou-gban* (farming) were influenced by their natural Niger-Delta swampy and riverine environment.

In addition to the basis of economic relations earlier interrogated in this chapter, the above shows that the relationship between the two groups was economically symbiotic and interdependent, and thus, mutually beneficial. For instance, though both groups are comparatively good canoe-carvers, some Arogbo-Ijo preferred to use canoes manually

¹¹⁵ Duckworth, E. H. Ed. 1947. Exploring Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 26, London and Hull: A Brown and Sons Ltd., pp. 331-371.

¹¹⁶ Alagoa, E. J. et al. Eds. 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 402.

carved by the Apoi, while some Apoi also preferred canoes manually carved by the Arogbo-Ijo. It was definitely a matter of interest and choice anchored on the size, type of hard wood used for the carving and the artistic carving style(s) deployed by the canoe-carvers in question. These canoes were secured through the means of barter exchange or the use of local currencies that existed at that time.

In fact, history recorded that fishermen of both groups secured locally made fishing materials from each or one another for fishing activities. Quiet frankly, the Arogbo-Ijo were into large scale fishing than the Apoi who were into farming on grounds of land advantage and the proximity to their Ikale neighbours, the Arogbo-Ijo thus, exchanged their fresh or smoked fish for the Apoi agricultural products. These economic activities were transacted at the respective Igbekebo and Kiribo markets in Apoi and that of Agadagba-Obon and Akpata in Arogbo-Ijo. Even as tappers of palm wine, the two groups secured the products from each or one another, with particular respect to the settlements that shared physical boundaries.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURE AND CHARACTER OF AROGBO-IJO AND APOI RELATIONS, 1915-1960

3.1 The British Colonial Rule and the Political Relations between Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi

The British occupation of Nigeria started on the Christmas Eve of 1851, with the naval bombardment of Lagos, and its annexation on 6 August, 1861 via the Lagos Treaty of Cession. Hence, Lagos became the first part of Nigeria to be formally integrated into the British colonial empire.¹ As a further strategic and commercial interest to the British colonial government in Lagos, Arogbo-Ijo territory, located in between Lagos to the westward and Benin River² to the eastward, had trading links in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, carving, ivory and birds as prime articles of sale with the early European traders. Ostensibly with a zeal to stop the inhuman trade totally, the British colonial government erected a post of sanctuary or freedom post for slaves at Egbesubiri, Arogbo in 1885 during the reign of *Pere* Aaga Thinba Bibija (Aaga I), the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo. As an import of the above, it signalled the abolition of the trade in slave and slavery, and the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo was conferred with the great honour and authority by the colonial administration to set free all slaves that embraced the post of sanctuary.³

¹Falola, T. *et al.* 1991. *History of Nigeria 2. Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria Plc, p. 189. For further details on the panoramic view of Nigeria's political evolution, see, Osuntokun, A. Ed. 2016. *Festus Samuel Okotie-Eboh: In Time and Space (1912-1966)*. Ibadan: Bookcraft Ltd., pp. 1-18. Note: According to Sir William Neville Montgomerie Geary, Lagos is not on the Niger, but is an Island in a lagoon running parallel to the sea for some 200 miles. To the west of Lagos the lagoon reaches Badagry and Dahomy and the Coast towns of Kotonou and Whydah; to the east part of Epe and Lekki, to Benin River, and so communicates with the Niger. See, Geary, W. N. M. 1927. *Nigeria under British Rule*. Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., p. 25.

²The name, Benin River, was so named because it was only through it that Benin City could be reached in the old days. Joao Alfonso, a Portuguese and the first European to 'discover' Benin named the river *Rio Feroso*-the 'beautiful river'. The English, French, Dutch and other northern European called it Benin or Argon River. See, Salubi, A. 1960. The Origins of Sapele Township. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Volume 2, Number 1 (December) 115-135.

³ Oral interview held with High Chief R. A. Bekewe, 78 years, Secretary, Arogbo-Ijaw Traditional Council, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015; A Memo forwarded by His Royal Majesty, *Pere* Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer

As vividly revealed by Happy Kawei Atili, what the Arogbo-Ijo referred to as the post of sanctuary or freedom post is the same thing as the British Union Jack. Significantly, apart from the British Union Jack, other historic structures built by the British were the police post, court and a residential building for the clerks and other colonial *fonctionnaires*. Though gone into extinction, the Arogbo-Ijo still refers to the beach leading to the then colonial structures collectively as *Cotu Poughu*. The word *Cotu* is an Arogbo-Ijo corrupted form of Court, while *Poughu* simply means a beach in Arogbo-Ijo dialect. Atili further graphically disclosed that, the British Union Jack was hoisted in-between-the said buildings, and the area in question became known as the first administrative seat of the British Colonial rule in Arogbo-Ijo.⁴ In other words, the hoisting of the British Union Jack indicated the incorporation of the Arogbo-Ijo country into the British sphere of influence and domination. Furthermore, because of the strategic location of Arogbo country, and for the proper protection of the British commercial and other related interests, the Lagos Constabulary established a police post in 1885 behind the said freedom post (the British Union Jack) at Egbesubiri, Arogbo. From the above and other related diplomatic manoeuvres, Arogbo-Ijo became part of the British colonial administration in Lagos, and was put under the Epe District from the 1890s to the early 1900s. Arogbo was only officially excised from Epe and joined with other groups in the old Okitipupa Division to form the Ondo Province in 1915, with the Provincial headquarters at Akure.⁵

The Arogbo-Ijo's administrative links with Epe (an Ijebu coastal settlement) in the early days of the British colonial rule have been corroborated by a series of colonial correspondences. For instance, the Acting Officer, Okitipupa Division wrote to the

Eperetun, (JP), Aaga II, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom, to His Excellency, Chief Adebayo Adefarati, Executive Governor of Ondo State, Governor's Office, Akure, entitled Re: The Justice Adeloje Commission's Report on Chieftaincy: Plea for Rectification on Anomalies on Part One of the White Paper as it affects the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom, dated 26 November, 2002.

⁴ Oral interview held with Chief Happy Kawei Atili (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 88 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 August, 2015.

⁵ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.11; Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers, p.13; Duckworth, E. H. Ed. 1947. Exploring Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 26, London and Hull. A Brown and Sons Ltd., p.350. On the Lagos Constabulary, kindly notes that, Captain John Hawley Glover (1829-1885), the Lagos Colony's administrator (1863-1873), created a militia of Hausa runaway slaves on 1 June, 1863. This became the Lagos Constabulary, and subsequently the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Army. In fact, the title 'Captain Glover' was often used in the documents, but Glover's rank from 1862 was Commander. 'Captain' was a courtesy title which was used in addressing Commanders; Glover was not gazetted Captain until 1877. For further details, see, McIntyre, W. D. 1963. Commander Glover and the Colony of Lagos, 1861-73. Cambridge University Press. *The Journal of African History*, Volume 4, Issue 1, pp.57-79.

Resident, Ondo Province in a letter entitled 'Arogbo Intelligence Report, No. 512/18' on 12 May, 1942, stating thus: 'I should be grateful if I might be allowed to borrow any files or warrants from your office which deal with the Arogbo Area in this Division'.⁶ The Resident, Ondo Province replied thus: 'Arogbo Intelligence Report: Reference your letter No. 512/18 of the 12th May, 1942; I am unable to trace any files dealing directly with Arogbo. You will have a copy of the warrant appointing Arogbo Court in your possession'.⁷ The correspondence of 3 November, 1942 clearly unveils the administrative links thus:

I obtained a considerable amount of information regarding the History of the Arogbo people under British Colonial Rule. Particularly concerning the warrant chiefs and administration of Arogbo from Epe. This latter fact of which I was slightly aware surprised the District Officer Epe considerably. Research amongst the old papers and files in the District Office resulted in the following books being borrowed from there: 1. Confidential letters and replies (1905-1915). 2. Annual Political Report 1910. 3. North Eastern District M. P. Book from December 1899-24th April, 1902. 4. Record Book containing information likely to be useful to Epe District Commissioners directed by Circular No. 2 of 1900; [and] 5. Miscellaneous confidential papers relating to the period 1910-1915.⁸

Unlike the Arogbo-Ijo, the Apoi had no official political contacts with Epe in any form. Rather, it started with Mr Ehrhardt, a British travelling Commissioner from Lagos, who visited and established his presence at Igbobini on Saturday, 14 August, 1897 through Oluwa River. In fact, the said British travelling commissioner was received by Aduwo, the fourth *Amananawei* of Igbobini. He made Igbobini his administrative headquarters in his further contacts with the Ikale and Ondo peoples. Remarkably, within three months of his stay at Igbobini, he was able to identify the people of Apoi as a group that needed to be part of the British colonial territory in Nigeria. Ehrhardt was succeeded after three months by Major W. G. Ambrose on Tuesday, 3 November, 1897. Major W. G. Ambrose was equally, succeeded by Major J. H. Ewart, who only spent little time in Apoi, and transferred the

⁶Arogbo Intelligence Report, No. 512/18/12 May, 1942, NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5, File No. 512/18.

⁷NAI. Ondoprof- 2960/5, File No. 1024/70.

⁸NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5, File No. 1024/72.

headquarters to Ode-Ondo in May 1899, and stayed there permanently.⁹ Thus, the Apoi district was administered from Ondo, and Ondo eventually became a province in 1915.

It is fundamental at this juncture to point out that the old Ondo Province had five administrative Divisions, namely, Akoko, Ondo, Ekiti, Okitipupa, and Owo. Meanwhile, in 1915, when Ondo Province was created, Owo and Akoko were not part of it because, Owo was initially a part of Benin Province until 1917, while Akoko was a part of the Kabba Province up to 1919. These five divisions were later increased to nine, namely, Akoko, Akure, Ekiti-Central, Ekiti-North, Ekiti-South, Ekiti-West, Okitipupa, Ondo and Owo.¹⁰ In furtherance of the above as a brief background, the Government Notice No.11 of 21 January, 1915 provided for the division of Southern Provinces into nine administrative Divisions among which were Abeokuta, Benin, Calabar, Ogoja, Ibadan, Ijebu, Owo, Oyo and Warri. According to this notice, Ekiti, Ondo and Okitipupa divisions were included in Ijebu Province. On grounds of administrative convenience, these arrangements were adjusted in Government Notice No. 99 published in Gazette No. 67 Vol. 2 of the 23 December, 1915. Consequently, Ijebu and Ibadan Provinces were abolished and renamed Ondo and Oyo Provinces respectively. Thus, Ondo Province was officially created on Thursday, 23 December, 1915.¹¹ On a similar note, Okitipupa Division, our secondary area of interest, was made up of Ikale, Ilaje, and Ese-Odo Districts.

Meanwhile, according to Asiwaju, the term Travelling Commissioner was initially applied to the British administrators in charge of the various districts of the protectorate. Thus, the Travelling Commissioner or the Resident, as he later came to be called, was in the performance of his duties of administration guided by the Ordinance of the Governor of

⁹NAI. Ondoprof-1024. A covering Report to an Intelligence Report on the Apoi-Ijaw District of the Okitipupa Division of the Ondo Province, 1940, p.2; Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, pp. 65-66. Note: Alagoa wrongly put the name Major J. H. Ewart as Major H. H. Ewart. See, Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 31, foot note 2.

¹⁰Adedayo, E. A. 2014. A Historical Survey of Colonial Administration in the old Ondo Province up to 1960. *ANSU Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 3(1) 65-75.

¹¹ Ibadan Province - Ijebu –Province-Ondo Province- National Archives...www.nigerianarchives.gov.ng. Accessed online 23-05-2018; Adesote, S. A. 2015. Colonial Rule and Socio-economic Changes in Ondoland, 1915-1951. Olaoba, O. B. *et al.* Eds. *Yoruba History and Historians: A Festschrift for Professor Gabriel Olorundare Oguntomisin*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Limited, pp.101-103.

Lagos to whom he also rendered the account of his activities.¹² It is interesting to note that the same Major J. H. Ewart, who transferred his initial headquarters from Igbobini to Ode-Ondo, also contributed significantly in incorporating the Ikale people into the British colonial rule. Adesina, therefore, argued that about the year 1897, Major Ewart came from Lagos and made his headquarters at Igbobini, and during the following six months he visited the various Ikale settlements. His court at Igbobini was attended by other Apoi settlements, Ikale and Ondo peoples. A few months later, Major Ewart transferred his headquarters to Ondo, and from then until the year 1928, the Ikale District was directly administered from Ondo.¹³

On a historic note, as revealed by Ikale Intelligence Report, the first government official to arrive in Ikale country was Captain John Hawley Glover (later Sir), Governor of the Lagos Colony, in about 1860. No further visit by a government official can be traced until 1883, but during the fifteen years which followed this date, several missions were sent by the Governor in Lagos to settle disputes and investigate purported cases of murder among the Ikale.¹⁴ Zebulun Otokunrin Obolo, thus, argued that history records that the provincial colonial administrative headquarters which later moved to Ondo first started in Igbobini, where the Travelling Commissioner was paddled in canoe to Agbabu, Ayi's camp, from where he was carried on hammock to Ondo. Ayi was an Igbobini man who was exploiting the forest to build canoes. Agbabu, the only access into the hinterland for decades, grew to become a flourishing centre of timber business, and an ancient seaport as Ayi grew up to become the first Baale.¹⁵ However, according to *Oba* Rufus Olugboyega Akinrinmade, the Orunja of Odigbo, Agbabu was never an indigenous town and it was a no man's land *ab initio*. He, therefore, described it as a settlement of people, mainly traders from various

¹²Asiwaju, A. I. 1980. The Western Provinces under Colonial Rule. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., p. 435.

¹³Adesina, O. A. 2017. Domestic Upheaval in Colonial Ikaleland of Southwestern Nigeria. Adesina, O. C. Ed. *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century, History, Governance and Society*, Ibadan: Connel Publications, pp.194-195.

¹⁴Ondoprof-113: Covering Report on An Intelligence Report on the Ikale District of the Okitipupa Division of the Ondo Province, p.6.

¹⁵Obolo, Z. O. 2005. The Struggles and Developments to Date 24th December, 2005, and the Way Forward. Being the Lecture Topic to Mark the Golden Jubilee Anniversary Celebration of His Royal Majesty, *Oba* S. A. Oladiran, the 11th Kalasuwe of Apoiland, p.6. Note: The description of *Oba* S. A. Oladiran as the 11th Kalasuwe of Apoiland may be historically wrong. Because at the same occasion in a speech the said *Oba* S. A. Oladiran personally delivered, he described himself as the 10th Kalasuwe. Similarly, Alagoa also described *Oba* Oladiran as the 10th Kalasuwe of Apoi. See, Alagoa, E. J. 2005. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p.197.

towns and villages in today's south-west geo-political zone, which included Akure, Apoi, Arogbo, Ikale, Odigbo, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, etc. transporting goods to Lagos. He further explained that most of the traders came to the place for business and sold items to the white men who used to rest at the settlement before proceeding on their journey to the upland. In that process, the place gradually became a community where traders made a stopover.¹⁶

In his argument towards the same direction in respect of the said Igbobini, which laid the historical background to the official creation of Ondo Province in 1915, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the 10th Kalasuwe of Apoi land (who reigned from Friday, 8 July, 1955 to Sunday, 7 January, 2007) posits thus:

Ladies and gentlemen,...I made bold to say authoritatively that the first headquarters of the Ondo Province was Igbobini in Apoiland and the Judicial headquarters was later moved to Igbekebo as the highest court from where the whole of the then Ondo Province was administered by colonial administrator. In 1916, two years after the amalgamation of Nigeria, Lord Lugard, the first Governor-General visited Apoiland and was hosted by Kalasuwe Jubo at Sabomi. This culminated into the official recognition of the Kalasuwe stool as a native authority as Oba of Ijaws in 1919... I was installed during colonial rule when traditional rulers were under the direction of British District Officers, but I was able to instill traditional discipline and direction in Apoiland. Before Nigeria had her independence, I was elected to represent Okitipupa South Federal Constituency now Ilaje, Ese-Odo and part of Irele Local Government in the Federal House of Representatives. Between 1960 and 1964, I did my best to unite the various...groups in Okitipupa division. As a member of the House of Representatives, I moved the motion for the electrification of the southern part of Okitipupa division; the first beneficiary was Ode-Irele...¹⁷

¹⁶ Trouble as traditional rulers bicker over ondo bitumen community. <https://www.tribuneonline.com>. Accessed online 07-05-2019.

¹⁷ A Speech Presented by His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran (Ugele Idumu III), the 10th Kalasuwe of Apoiland on the Occasion of His 50th Year Coronation Anniversary on Saturday, 24th December, 2005, pp.3 and 1. Note: The above quotation is re-arranged in descending order for the primary purpose of chronology.

As it also relates to the Apoi, in 1901, the Native Council Ordinance was promulgated in Nigeria. In 1902, Major W. R. Reeve-Tucker, who relieved Major Ewart at Ondo, summoned all the Apoi chiefs at Igbotu and created the 'Ijaw Apoi Confederation' with a Central Council, Baale of Igbotu as the president. This was so because, the period of its creation coincided with the period when the seat of Kalasuwe, the paramount ruler of Apoi, was vacant. Nevertheless, with the installation of *Oba* Jubo from Oboro as the new Kalasuwe of Apoi in 1914, and his subsequent recognition by the District officer (Mr Findlay) in 1917, the responsibility of running the affairs of the Apoi Confederation rested on him.¹⁸ Generally, writing on the Native Authority system at that time, Monehin, who is arguably an authority in local government administration, argued as follows:

The Native Authority System comprises of four (4) main parts.

- (i) The British Resident, who provided direction and control of the Native Authority System through the local Chief;
- (ii) The Native Authority, usually headed by a local Chief who enjoyed legitimacy under the political system that was indigenous;
- (iii) The Native Treasury, which provided the source of funding for the Native Authority; and
- (iv) The Native Courts, composed of representatives of the Native Administration. These Courts were used to adjudicate in land disputes and expropriation of offences against the community.¹⁹

In 1914, Sir Frederick John Dealtry Lugard (22 January, 1858-11 April, 1945), the first Governor-General of Nigeria (1914-1919), consciously extended to the Southern Provinces the emirate-based type of administration, popularly known as Indirect Rule, which he had tried in the Northern Provinces with a considerable degree of success. Through the execution of provisions contained in the Native Courts Ordinance and Native Authority Ordinance, when direct taxation was authorised, Lugard vested administrative and judicial responsibilities upon recognised chiefs and placed them on a more secured financial basis.

¹⁸NAI. Ondoprof-1024. A Covering Report to an Intelligence Report on the Apoi-Ijaw District of the Okitipupa Division of the Ondo Province, p. 2; Iroju, O. A. 2012. A History of the Apoi Speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria, 1700-2000. An M Phil Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, pp.66-67.

¹⁹ Monehin, T. 2015. *Rudiments, Principles and Practice of Local Government Administration in Nigeria*. Akure: Kulo Printers, p.19.

Under this new arrangement, the Native Authorities, as the *Obas* and Chiefs came to be called, replaced British Commissioners as Presidents of the recognised Native Courts and Councils. This new position restored to the Obaship institution much of the prestige it lost under the preceding order.²⁰

Meanwhile, in respect of the British colonial administrative or political hierarchy, Ikime clearly disclosed that each province was headed by a British political officer called a Resident. Under the Resident were District Officers in charge of the various divisions in every province. The District Officers were duly assisted at divisional headquarters by Assistant District Officers. Sometimes, the Assistant District Officers were deployed to take charge of districts or sub-districts where such units were created out of existing divisions, after series of agitations. Put differently, the British colonial administration operated at two levels, namely, central and local. At the central level, power lay significantly in the hands of the white officials, especially in the period up to about 1952. At the local level, the Residents, Divisional Officers and Assistant Divisional Officers (or officers with equivalent titles) worked with Nigerian chiefs and other duly recognised community leaders.²¹

In line with the above administrative changes, the traditional head of Arogbo-Ijo, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo, and that of Apoi, the Kalasuwe of Apoi, became presidents of their respective Native Authority Courts and Councils. The headquarters of the Arogbo-Ijo Native Authority was located at Arogbo, while the headquarters of the Apoi Native Authority was located at Sabomi. Accordingly, the traditional rulers of the two groups administered justice over their respective subjects. And those who were dissatisfied with such judgements also filled appeals against them in defence of their fundamental human rights. Such appeals were held at the Okitipupa Divisional Headquarters, Okitipupa. Apparently, curious to know the progress reports of such appeals against their judgements and the urge for a timely dispensation of justice, the letter, a one-time traditional ruler of Arogbo-Ijo, *Pere Mesarawon Poro*, Opukutu II, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo (reigned from 1933 to 1960), wrote to F. E. G. Reed Esq, the Divisional Adviser, Okitipupa Division, Ebute-Irele,²² dated 7 May, 1956, shed more light on the nature of cases filled, judgements

²⁰Asiwaju, A. I. 1980. The Western Provinces under Colonial Rule. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., pp.437-438.

²¹ Ikime, O. 2018. *Can Anything Good Come Out of History?* Ibadan: Bookcraft. pp. 125-131.

²² The Headquarters of Okitipupa Division, Okitipupa, was moved to Ebute-Irele in 1949 and fully operated from 1951 and there, the Divisional Officer and his Lieutenants resided until it was relocated to the former

delivered and how appeals were lodged. One of such letters the said *Pere Mesarawon Poro* wrote, and the reply from the Divisional Officer, Okitipupa Division, are hereby quoted in part thus:

... This is to inform you that the above quoted case No.16/56, which was two accd [accused] persons [namely Kuyami and Ezekiel Haman] were charged for stealing in my court, and the case was also tried of which those two accd [accused] persons were sentenced to 3 months I.H.L.each [3 months imprisonment with hard labour each]; since 23/3/56. And when they were brought before you, they lodged their appeal before you of which you granted to them on 24/3/56. On the 30th March, 1956, they came to receive the copy of proceedings: and since that time and up to this date, nothing heard concerning their appeal. 2. I shall be grateful if the Divisional Adviser will let me know the position of their appeal; and whether they only took the appeal to prevent their imprisonment and go home quietly.

Your Good Friend,
Agadagba,
The President Native Court.²³

The subsequent reply of the Divisional Officer, Okitipupa Division, addressed to the President, Arogbo Native Court, Arogbo dated 22nd May, 1956 is equally quoted in part thus:

...Arogbo Native Court Case No. 16/56
I have to refer to your letter No. ARNo.106C/1/ of the 7th of May, and to inform you that the appeal in connection with the above case will be heard on the 1st of June, 1956.

Your Good Friend,
Divisional Adviser,
Okitipupa Division.²⁴

In a related manner, for us to have a knowledge of the meagre salary structure payable to traditional rulers at that time, the letter *Oba Oto* (1922-1942), the 8th Kalasuwe of Apoi wrote to the Resident, Ondo Province, Akure, on 1 June, 1938 provides the necessary and other related information thus:

location at Okitipupa in 1960. This was as a result of disagreement between the folk at Idepe-Okitipupa and the colonial administration over land. Idepe people even threatened to relocate their town from the original location on account of this disagreement.

²³ NAI. OK./DIV.2/1, File No. 15/1956.

²⁴ NAI. OK./DIV.2/1, File No. 15/1956.

I have the honour most humbly and respectfully to inform you that I thank God Almighty and the British Government, by including Lord Lugard the then Governor in Nigeria when he formed native administration in the year 1917 that each the District Head to have his own native court and he entitled to his own native court as President of which the Government placed me in since my reign in this Ondo Province. 2. I beg to state that I am the Kalashuwe of all Ijaw-Apoi who have reigned about 20 years ago and I have experienced the judgment in my native court to the satisfactory of the British Government, my faithful leaders. 3. There is a certain point that I wish the Government see to, is that I am a man of many family (sic), a crowned chief having many wives (sic) and children and according to the law and custom, I am not a man to go out for work as a canoe dresser or timber contractor owing to my chieftaincy as others do in this area, more also I am receiving £2.10.00 (two pounds and ten shillings) as I am getting old a such poor salary. Therefore, your Honour and your Worship may see to my poor petition for an increament (sic).

I am awaiting to hear your favourable reply.

I remain to be

I am your obedient servant, Kalashuwe.²⁵

Obviously, indication for further administrative changes became apparent in the 1930s. The chief factor which brought about this re-organisation, which was aimed principally at democratising the Lugardian System of Indirect Rule, was the arrival of Sir Donald Charles Cameron (3 June, 1872-8 January, 1948), the Colonial Governor of Nigeria (1931-1935), whose views about indirect rule sharply differed from Lugard's. There was also the desired need to prevent the type of open confrontations which the colonial regime faced in the course of a series of armed revolts, such as the anti-tax Riots in Warri Province (1927-28) and the Aba Women's Riots (November-December 1929). Other related issues were the excessive concentration of powers in the hands of recognised native authorities, and the agitation of educated elites against their obvious exclusion from the indirect rule system. The combined effect of all these considerations was the re-organisation in the early 1950s under Sir John Stuart Macpherson (25 August, 1898- 5 November, 1971), the Colonial Governor of Nigeria (1948-1955). This prepared the way for the establishment of

²⁵ NAI. Ondo prof^l/1 1024, No. O.W.611/2.

democratically elected District Councils which were eventually set up in line with the provision of the Western Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952.²⁶

Prior to 1952 as it relates to Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province, the Division was divided into five Native Authorities. These were 'Ikale Native Authority, Ilaje Native Authority, Ijaw-Apoi Native Authority, Ijaw-Arogbo Native Authority, and the Bini Confederation Native Authority'.²⁷ But under this new arrangement, Okitipupa Division was divided into three District Councils, namely, Ikale District Council, comprising Ode-Irele, Ode-Iyansan, Ode-Omu, Idepe-Okitipupa,²⁸ Ayeka, Igbodigo, Erinje, Ode-Aye, Ikoya, Igbinsin-Oloto, and Osoro, with the headquarters at Idepe-Okitipupa; Ilaje District Council (W. R. L. N. 264 of 1955), comprising Ugbo, Mahin, Aheri and Etikan, with the headquarters at Atijere; and Ese-Odo District Council (W. R. L. N. 265 of 1955), comprising 'Ijaw-Arogbo, Ijaw-Apoi and Bini Confederation' (Ajagba, Akotogbo, Iju-Osun and Barogbo), with the headquarters at Igbekebo, an Apoi settlement.²⁹ Meanwhile, 1956 witnessed further division of Ikale District Council into three District Councils, namely, 1. Ikale Idapo Marun District Council (W. R. L. N. 260 of 1955), comprising Idepe-Okitipupa, Ayeka, Igbodigo, Erinje, and Ode-Aye, with the headquarters at Idepe-Okitipupa; 2. Ikale Orisun District Council (W. R. L. N. 262 of 1955), comprising Ikoya, Igbinsin-Oloto, and Osoro, with the headquarters at Ikoya; and 3. Ikale Idapo Meta District Council (W. R. L. N. 263 of 1955), comprising Ode-Irele, Ode-Iyansan, and Ode-Omi, with the headquarters at Ode-Irele.³⁰ Meanwhile, all the above District Councils were merged together to form Okitipupa Divisional Council in 1972, with the headquarters at Okitipupa. In 1976, the said Okitipupa Divisional Council was divided into two, namely, Ikale, and Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Councils, with the headquarters at Okitipupa and Igbokoda respectively. How these administrative changes affected the relationship between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi

²⁶Asiwaju, A. I. 1980. The Western Provinces under Colonial Rule. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., pp.437-438.

²⁷Adesina, O. A. 2017. Domestic Upheaval in Colonial Ikaleland of Southwestern Nigeria. Adesina, O. C. Ed. *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century, History, Governance and Society*. Ibadan: Connel Publications, pp.194-195.

²⁸Okitipupa is also called Ode-Idepe, and the name Okitipupa originated from the elevation of the settlement and the colour of the soil which is red referred to in Yoruba language and its dialect as *pupa*. The term is, therefore, derived from Yoruba *okiti* (hilly) and *pupa* (red), used by people travelling from other communities to trade in Ode-Idepe and its environs. At present, people used the names Okitipupa and Idepe interchangeably. Linkback:<http://Naijasky.Com/Okitipupa/196/History-Of-Okitipupa/94/01>. Accessed online 5 December, 2017.

²⁹<https://www.ikalevoice.com>. Accessed online 13-5-2015; Oral interview held with Chief. S. E. Iwabi (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 67 years, retired Headmaster, Erubiri, Arogbo, 7 December, 2017.

³⁰<https://www.ikalevoice.com>. Accessed online 13-5-2015; Ondoprof-1/6.

(our main concern), shall be discussed towards the end of this chapter, with special reference to cordial and tense moments.

In respect of the Ese-Odo District Council created in 1955, the primary interest of this research, this was the first time at the district level, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were brought under the same administrative umbrella along with the Ikale of Ajagba, Akotogbo, Iju-Osun and Barogbo, who then claimed Bini origins, hence, the appellation Bini Confederation. However, this was reversed in 1976 when they were brought under Ikale Local Government Council, along with the Ikale of Okitipupa and Irele, with the headquarters at Okitipupa. As a further division, on 27 August, 1991, Ikale Local Government Council was divided into Okitipupa Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Okitipupa and Irele Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Ode-Irele. Hence, the Ikale of Ajagba, Akotogbo, Iju-Osun and Barogbo, formerly of Bini Confederation of Ese-Odo District Council, are now found in the present-day Irele Local Government Area.

Coming to the nitty-gritty of this study, the creation of Ese-Odo District Council in 1955 (W. R. L. N. 265 of 1955) visibly and sharply divided the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi on many fronts. Hence, political rivalry, mutual suspicion and distrust characterised their political relations. The Bini Confederation often allegedly aligned with the Apoi on grounds of linguistic identity against the Arogbo-Ijo. For instance, the first controversy generated was on the name 'Ese-Odo' as an identity. The Western Region Local Government Law, 1952, the Instrument that established the Ese-Odo District Council, Section 1 states that:

In exercise of the powers conferred upon the Regional authority by section 3 of the Western Region Local Government Law, 1952 (hereinafter called 'the Law'), a District Council entitled 'Ese-Odo District Council (hereinafter called 'the Council') shall be established upon the 12th Day of October, 1955.³¹

The Arogbo-Ijo vehemently protested against the nomenclature, 'Ese-Odo', as an identity for the District Council because it lacks Ijo bearing and identity, as they argued. As an alternative identity, they opted for 'Ijaw-Arogbo, Ijaw-Apoi and Bini Confederation District Council'. In fact, the name, 'Ese-Odo', in Yoruba means Riverine Area. The Arogbo-Ijo premised their argument on the grounds that it was the merger of the former 'Ijaw-Arogbo Native District Authority, Ijaw-Apoi Native District Authority and Bini Confederation

³¹ NAI. Ondoprof-2906/5, W. R. L. N. 265 of 1955. The Western Region Local Government Law, 1952 (No. 1 of 1953), B 775.

Native District Authority' that gave birth to Ese-Odo District Council of 1955. Hence, they argued for the 'Ijaw- Arogbo, Ijaw-Apoi and Bini Confederation District Council' as the only appropriate identity.³² The Apoi, a Yoruba-speaking-Ijo group, on the other hand, vociferously opposed the move of the Arogbo-Ijo. The Bini Confederation tactically sat on the fence, but surreptitiously supported the Apoi on grounds of linguistic solidarity as Yoruba-speaking groups.³³ As revealed by Perewei Amalagha, the Arogbo-Ijo viewed the political move of their Apoi kinsmen as a betrayal of trust calculated to besmear and obliterate the Ijo identity in a predominantly Yoruba-speaking Western Region. The Arogbo-Ijo political discomfort with the Ese-Odo identity became the Apoi's ostensible comfort.³⁴ These divergent views, thus, created an air of dissension and acrimony among them in the course of their relations. Perhaps, Ikime's assertion that just as the name we give to our administrative units³⁵ has some implications, may have direct bearing in respect of the Ese-Odo identity crisis. At the end of the day, all frantic efforts made by the Arogbo-Ijo to change the identity of Ese-Odo to reflect Ijo proved abortive.

Another cause of political rivalry and allegation of domination and marginalisation that the Arogbo-Ijo fingered against the Western Region Government at Ibadan was the disproportional representation in the Council among the three groups. For instance, Section 5 of the Western Region Local Government Law, 1952, states that: 'the Council shall consist of thirty-two members, namely, the President, Six Traditional Members and Twenty-Five elected members'.³⁶ Section 9 further states that the twenty-five elected members of the Council shall be elected by the registered voters of one of the following wards in accordance with Table 3.1 on page 94. On the other hand, Table 3.2 on page 95 is the list of the 25 elected Councillors of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, 1955.

³² Oral interview held with Chief Happy Kawei Atili (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 88 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 August, 2015.

³³ Oral interview held with Revd Kola Hugah, 65 years, Religious leader, Igbekebo, Apoi, 9 December, 2017.

³⁴ Oral interview held with Perewei Amalagha (later installed as a Chief), 82 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 13 November, 2017.

³⁵ Ikime, O. 2005. Thoughts on Isoko-Urhobo Relations. A keynote Address delivered at the Sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society, on Saturday, October, 2005, at Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Warri, Nigeria, p. 20.

³⁶ NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5, W.R.L.N. 265 of 1955... B 775.

Table 3.1: List of the 25 Wards of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, 1955

S/No	Name of Ward	Group	Number of persons to be elected
1	Akotogbo I	Bini Confederation	1
2	Akotogbo II	Bini Confederation	1
3	Akotogbo III	Bini Confederation	1
4	Larogbo	Bini Confederation	1
5	Ahaba	Ajagba ...	1
6	Fayo	Ajagba ...	1
7	Jima	Ajagba ...	1
8	Bale	Ajagba ...	1
9	Bateru	Ijuoshun ...	1
10	Jomu	Ijuoshun...	1
11	Arubeghan	Ijaw Apoi	1
12	Barate	Ijaw Apoi	1
13	Shabomi	Ijaw Apoi	1
14	Ojuala	Ijaw Apoi	1
15	Gbekebo I	Ijaw Apoi	1
16	Gbekebo II	Ijaw Apoi	1
17	Igbotu I	Ijaw Apoi	1
18	Igbotu II	Ijaw Apoi	1
19	Kiribo I	Ijaw Apoi	1
20	Kiribo II	Ijaw Apoi	1
21	Erubiri	Ijaw Arogbo	1
22	Egbesubiri	Ijaw Arogbo	1
23	Agobiri	Ijaw Arogbo	1
24	Upe	Ijaw Arogbo	1
25	Apata	Ijaw Arogbo	1

Source: NAI: Ondoprof -2960/5, Ese-Odo Council Membership List. Note: In respect of numbers 9, 10 (groups), 13, 15, 16, 23, 24, and 25 (name of wards), they are now spelt Iju-Osun, Sabomi, Igbekebo, Agwobiri, Ukpe and Akpata. Furthermore, in respect of Table 3.2, same is applicable.

Table 3.2: List of the 25 Elected Councillors of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council 1955

S/No.	Name of Councillor	Name of Ward	Group
1	Mr Matthew Deye	Akotogbo I	Bini Confederation
2	Mr Moses Obanor	Akotogbo II	Bini Confederation
3	Mr J. Lugard Ogoro	Akotogbo III	Bini Confederation
4	Chief Larogbo	Larogbo	Bini Confederation
5	Mr Ojimu	Ahaba	Ajagba ...
6	Mr J. Emoruwa	Fayo	Ajagba ...
7	Mr F. P. Arogbo	Jima	Ajagba ...
8	Mr P. D. Luyi	Bale	Ajagba ...
9	Mr J. N. Gboroye	Bateru	Ijuoshun ...
10	Mr A. A. Ukuemonehan	Jomu	Ijuoshun ...
11	Mr J. M. Ajele	Arubeghan	Ijaw Apoi
12	Mr T. M. Netufo	Barate	Ijaw Apoi
13	Mr S. A. Lucky Job	Shabomi	Ijaw Apoi
14	Mr D. O. Ajibike	Ojuala	Ijaw Apoi
15	Mr E. T. Daran	Gbekebo I	Ijaw Apoi
16	Mr A. William	Gbekebo II	Ijaw Apoi
17	Chief N. K. Ogeh	Igbotu I	Ijaw Apoi
18	Mr E. Ojo	Igbotu II	Ijaw Apoi
19	Mr J. M. Feludu	Kiribo I	Ijaw Apoi
20	Mr M. O. Sowore	Kiribo II	Ijaw Apoi
21	Mr M. S. Okoro	Erubiri	Ijaw Arogbo
22	Mr J. K. Oyobolo	Egbesubiri	Ijaw Arogbo
23	Mr J. T. Akerele	Agobiri	Ijaw Arogbo
24	Mr E. G. Toikumo	Upe	Ijaw Arogbo
25	Mr T. Mode	Apata	Ijaw Arogbo

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Ese-Odo Council Membership List: NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5 W.R.L.N. 265 of 1955. Note: In respect of numbers 15 and 22, they were not elected in 1955 because their nomination papers were rejected on technical grounds. Hence, a Bye-election was later held, which led to the election of the duo in 1956. Thus, they were not part of the first meeting of Ese-Odo District Council, held at Gbekebo (now spelt Igbekebo) on Wednesday, 12 October, 1955. So, the first meeting they attended, was held on 9 November, 1956.

Based on the above and other related provisions of the instrument that established the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, the composition was clearly in favour of the Apoi and the Bini Confederation as against the Arogbo-Ijo. Accordingly, in the first composition of Ese-Odo District Council membership at Igbekebo in 1955, the Apoi had three traditional members and ten elected councillors; the Bini Confederation had three traditional members and ten elected Councillors; and Arogbo-Ijo had one traditional member and five elected Councillors only.³⁷ Therefore, putting the traditional members and elected Councillors altogether, out of the statutory thirty-two members, the Apoi had thirteen members, Bini Confederation also had thirteen members and Arogbo-Ijo had six members only. Thus, the Arogbo-Ijo, with a clear numerical inferiority, existed at the mercy of the two other groups with their numerical superiority. After all, politics is a serious political business and a game of numbers. The Arogbo-Ijo, on grounds of their Ijo-speaking identity in the midst of the Yoruba-speaking predominated region, allegedly shifted the blame to the Western Region Government in which Chief Obafemi Awolowo was charged with the responsibility for Chieftaincy and Local Government Affairs.³⁸

The Council also approved four standing committees, and the composition took the following order(s) as well: The Finance Committee consisted of the following eleven members: Chief N. K. Ogeh (Apoi), Mr F. P. Arogbo (Bini Confederation), Mr M. S. Okoro (Arogbo), Mr T. M. Netufo (Apoi), Mr J. T. Akerele (Arogbo), Mr Moses Obanor (Bini Confederation), The Kalasuwe of Apoi (Apoi), Mr J. Emoruwa (Bini Confederation) and the Chairmen of three Standing Committees. The Establishment Committee had the following ten members: Mr T. M. Netufo (Apoi), Mr M. O. Sowore (Apoi), Bale of Akotogbo (Bini Confederation), Mr Noah Gboroye (Bini Confederation), Mr J. Lugard Ogoro (Bini Confederation), Chief Larogbo (Bini Confederation), Chief Ojimu (Bini Confederation), Mr T. Mode (Arogbo), Mr R. T. Wewe (Apoi co-opted), and Mr J. O. Eniwari (now spelt Niwari) (Arogbo co-opted). The Works and Health Committee consisted of the following eight members: Mr P. D. Luyi (Bini Confederation), Mr J. M. Ajele (Apoi), Mr D. O. Ajibike (Apoi), Mr Matthew Deye (Bini Confederation), Mr A. A. Ukuemonehan

³⁷ NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5, Ese-Odo District Council Membership list.

³⁸ Oral interview held with Hon S. E. Yayu (later installed as a High Chief), 70 years, retired Principal, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

(Bini Confederation), Mr J. T. Akerele (Arogbo), Mr M. S. Okoro (Arogbo), and Mr J. B. Duyile (Apoi co-opted). The General Purposes Committee consisted of ten members: Mr J. Emoruwa (Bini Confederation), Mr E. Ojo (Apoi), The Agadagba of Arogbo (Arogbo), Mr J. M. Ajele (Apoi), Chief Larogbo (Bini Confederation), Bale of Akotogbo (Bini Confederation), The Oluhogho of Iju-Osun (Bini Confederation), Mr E. G. Toikumo (Arogbo), Mr O. E. Kurah (Bini Confederation co-opted) and Mr E. E. Olowoparija (Apoi co-opted). In addition, those also in attendance at the first Ese-Odo District Council meeting, held at Igbekebo on Wednesday of the 12th Day of October, 1955 were: Hon C. A. Tewe (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Development), Mr R. O. Adegboye (Secretary, Okitipupa Divisional Council), Mr S. O. Reju (Government Visiting Teacher, Planning), Mr E. O. Ojo (Government Visiting and Planning Teacher), Mr A. Medun (Senior Sanitary Inspector) and Mr R. O. Dabo (Acting Secretary/Treasurer Ese-Odo District Council).³⁹

Meanwhile, in her defence to the allegation of linguistic identity politics, the Western Region Government anchored its position on the political wards delineation exercise which worked to the disadvantage of the Arogbo-Ijo in line with the 1952 census figures. As it relates to the subject areas under Okitipupa Division, the Apoi total population figure was 13,565; Bini Confederation was 12,489; and Arogbo-Ijo was 6,410.⁴⁰ The above defence fell on deaf ears, as Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu argued that the said census figure allegedly allocated to Arogbo-Ijo was not the real population figure because many of their communities were not counted due to the difficult nature of the terrain. He further argued that, in the said Bulletin in respect of 'Ijaw Apoi District', about thirty-eight settlements were listed to arrive at the said 13,565 population figure; with respect to the Bini Confederation, about sixty-one settlements were listed to arrive at the said 12,489 population figure; while concerning the Arogbo-Ijo, the bone of contention, contrary to the above detailed breakdown of the other two groups, only 'Ijaw Arogbo District' was listed to arrive at the 6,410 population figure.⁴¹ Meanwhile, for the record, see Appendix I for the

³⁹ File No.OK. Div 1/1/1886 Ese-Odo District Council Minutes of the first Meeting, held at Igbekebo on Wednesday of 12 October, 1955.

⁴⁰ Oral interview held with High Chief P. I. O. Odejimi, 63 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 13 August, 2017; and NAI. File No. 447/Vol. III, Bulletin No. 3 Ondo Province Population Census of the Western Region of Nigeria, 1952, pp. 4-5.

⁴¹ Oral interview held with Hon S. E. Yayu (later installed as a High Chief), 70 years, retired Principal, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

breakdown of the said December, 1952 Census figures concerning the Bini Confederation, Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi (known as Ijaw Arogbo and Ijaw Apoi in the said record).

As a contributory factor perhaps, according to Peretei, the 1952 and even the preceding 1963 population censuses were largely boycotted by the Arogbo-Ijo who felt that it was the government's booby trap to trick them into heavy taxation, because the introduction of Poll tax collection in 1921 at Arogbo was still fresh in their memories.⁴²

Apparently as a show of discomfort, while the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi warmly embraced the Action Group (AG), with its motto, 'Freedom for all, life more abundant', at its formation in 1951, the Arogbo-Ijo later shifted allegiance to the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), with its motto, 'One God, one country, one destiny', and the Niger Delta Congress (NDC), with its motto, 'Live and Let Live'. As a matter of fact, under the Harold Dappa Biriye-led NDC, Samuel Eda Oriamaja (an Arogbo-Ijo) contested the Western Region House of Assembly Election in 1959. The Niger Delta Congress, as a political party, used the following as its campaign strategy and slogan: 'Away! Away! Away! With the NCNC. Away with the Action Group. Vote for the Niger Delta Congress. Vote for the fish in a triangular net or trap.' Though it was keenly contested, Oriamaja lost to the Action Group's candidate, Arowaju (an Ajagba man of the Bini Confederation) because of the Apoi's massive and unalloyed support. Prior to that, Simeon Ade Lucky Job, an Apoi from Sabomi, had earlier represented Ese-Odo District Constituency in the Western Region House of Assembly, Ibadan. Similarly, under the platform of the Action Group, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the Kalasuwe of Apoi, was elected to represent Okitipupa South Federal Constituency at the Federal House of Representatives, Lagos, 1960-1964.⁴³

But as a dismay, the Arogbo-Ijo had no elected representation beyond the Ese-Odo District Council, Igbekebo. Representations at the Western Region House of Assembly, Ibadan, and the Federal House of Representatives, Lagos, were dominated and monopolised by the other two groups. Therefore, as a calculated political game, being Yoruba-speaking, the Apoi

⁴² Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p. 34.

⁴³ Alagoa, E. J. Ed. 2003. *Harold Dappa-Biriye: His Contributions to Politics in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p.199; Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise... p.17; and A Speech Presented by HRM, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran (Ugele Idumu III), Kalasuwe of Apoiland on the Occasion of His 50th Year Coronation Anniversary on Saturday, 24th December, 2005, pp.1-3.

political allegiance was tailored towards the dominant party (AG) in the region, while that of Arogbo-Ijo was geared towards the opposition parties, namely, the NCNC and the NDC.⁴⁴

Even at the level of Traditional members of the Council, an unhealthy relationship relatively existed among them. The Kalasuwe of Apoi, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, Ugele Idumu III, and the Ahaba of Ajagba, *Oba* Michael Elumaro Olaheyinde II were appointed as the President of Ese-Odo District Council on several occasions. As a Herculean task, before his demise on Wednesday, 3 August, 1960, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo, *Pere* Mesarawon Poro, Opukutu II, made frantic efforts before he was appointed as the President of the Council. For instance, his spirited attempt to become the President of the Council hit a brick wall in 1957, when the appointment of the Ahaba of Ajagba, *Oba* Michael Elumaro Olaheyinde II, which initially ignited a heated controversy, was finally approved by the Provincial Adviser, Ondo Province, Akure, on Tuesday, 19 February, 1957.⁴⁵ Figure 3.1 on page 100, Figure 3.2 on page 101 and Figure 3.3 on page 102 are pictures of the said three traditional rulers just discussed above, namely, the Kalasuwe of Apoi, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, Ugele Idumu III, the Ahaba of Ajagba, *Oba* Michael Elumaro Olaheyinde II, and the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo, *Pere* Mesarawon Poro, Opukutu II.

⁴⁴ Oral interviews held with High Chief Michael Lemo Meretighan, 78 years, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 December, 2015; and Kola Hugah, 65 years, Religious leader, Igbekebo, Apoi, 9 December, 2017.

⁴⁵ NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5; and Oral interview held with Chief Happy Kawei Atili (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 88 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 August, 2015.



Figure 3.1: His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the Kalasuwe of Apoi, Ugele Idumu III (reigned from 1955 to 2007).

Source: The Palace of the Kalasuwe, Sabomi, Apoi, 2018.



Figure 3.2: *Oba* Michael Elumaro Olaheyinde II, The Ahaba of Ajagba (reigned from 1952 to 1985).
Source: The Palace of His Royal Highness, *Oba* Thomas Oluwole Adesayo, Ikujumi I, the Present Ahaba of Ajagba, 2018.



Figure 3.3: *Pere* Mesarawon Poro, The Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo, Opukutu II (reigned from 1933 to 1960).
Source: The Palace of *Pere* Mesarawon Poro, Erubiri, Arogbo, 2018.

Added to the above, all the fourteen traditional members were from the Apoi and Bini Confederation, except the Agadagba of Arogbo, because section 7 (1-2) states thus:

Four of the six traditional members shall continue to hold office and shall not retire with the elected members, and shall be the person for the same time being holding the following titles: The Kalashuwe of Ijaw-Apoi; The Ahaba of Ajagba; The Agadagba of Arogbo; the Oluhogho of Ijuoshun; and the Bale of Akotogbo...The remaining two traditional members shall be elected annually by secret ballot...among from the following Chiefs: The Amananawe of Igbobini; The Okiribiti of Shabomi; The Gbaluwe of Igbotu; The Pekagha of Gbekebo; the Niyon of Kiribo; The Kenme of Oboro; The Jowe of Inikorogha; The Ibini of Ojuala; and The Tabube of Ipoke.⁴⁶

In respect of salaries payable to the permanent traditional rulers in the then Ese-Odo District Council, that of the Arogbo-Ijo, was the least paid. Comparatively therefore, the annual salary of *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin, the Kalasuwe of Ijaw Apoi was £185; *Oba* Michael Elumaro Olaheyinde II, the Ahaba of Ajagba was £175 per annual; and that of *Pere* Mesarawon Poro, Opukutu II, the Agadagba of Ijaw Arogbo was £149 per annual.⁴⁷ In fact, the order of rotation as it relates to the President of the Council was also to the disadvantage of the Agadagba of Arogbo because of the eligibility for appointment and re-appointment clause. For example, Section 4 of the Instrument Establishing the Ese-Odo District Council states that:

The President of the Council shall be appointed from the following persons in annual rotation in the following order: The Kalashuwe of Ijaw-Apoi; The Ahaba of Ajagba; The Agadagba of Arogbo; and a Chairman shall be elected in accordance with paragraph 14 of this instrument.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, as revealed by the minutes of Ese-Odo District Council meeting held on Monday, 31 March, 1958, and minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held in the Council Hall, Igbekebo, on Wednesday, 30 April, 1958, *Pere* Mesarawon Poro, the Agadagba of

⁴⁶ NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5. W. R. L. N. 265 of 1955. The Western Region Local Government Law, 1952 (No. 1 of 1953), B 775.

⁴⁷ NAI. File No. OK.1886. Ese-Odo District Council Minutes of Meeting held in the Council Hall, Gbekebo (now spelt Igbekebo), on Thursday, 25 September, 1958.

⁴⁸ NAI. Ondoprof-2960/5.W.R.L.N. 265 of 1955, B 775.

Arogbo, had a taste of the *oval office* of the President of Ese-Odo District Council in 1958.⁴⁹ As a further recognition, and an honour, Sir James Wilson Robertson (27 October, 1899 - 23 September, 1983), the last Colonial Governor-General of Nigeria (15 June, 1955 – 16 November, 1960), on his farewell visits to some paramount traditional rulers of Western Region, Nigeria, paid him a courtesy visit at his Palace, Erubiri, Arogbo, on Friday, 15 August, 1958. The historic visit was marked with a photograph, which is shown in Figure 3:4 on page 105, where he, *Pere Mesaranwon*, was in his full traditional regalia.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ok. Div 1/1 .OK.1886: Ese-Odo District Council Minutes of Meetings.

⁵⁰Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons Enterprise..., pp.9-10.



Figure 3.4: Sir James Wilson Robertson (1899-1983), the last colonial Governor-General of Nigeria and *Pere Mesarawon Poro*, The Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo, Opukutu II (reigned from 1933 to 1960). This historic photograph was taken when the former paid him a courtesy visit at his palace, Erubiri, Arogbo, on Friday, 15 August, 1958.

Source: The Palace of *Pere Mesarawon Poro*, Erubiri, Arogbo, 2018.

For the record, concerning Figure 3.5 on page 107, contrary to the impression in respect of the representative of Her Majesty, the Queen of England, Nelson Tokunbo Kepomikan Job revealed that the Queen of England, Elizabeth II (Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor) was never represented. Rather, it was Mr Harrison Watford, George Bent Olivant (G.B. Olivant) West African Representative, and Mr Edison Macpherson, George Bent Olivant, Co-ordinator, Nigeria, that represented George Bent Olivant on that historical occasion. This was so because *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran served as a Senior Storeman, Grade B, before he became an *Oba*. He further revealed that the original photograph may have been corrupted. Though Nelson Tokunbo Kepomikan Job himself failed to provide the said original photograph, he boldly averred that from left to right in that original photograph was Mr Harrison Watford (but never appeared in this present one); middle, the *Oba*, and Mr Edison Macpherson in third position. Therefore, in its present form from left to right: *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran; middle, the same *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran in suit (but never in the original picture); and Mr Edison Macpherson in third position.⁵¹ See Figure 3.5 on page 107 for the said historic picture.

⁵¹ Oral interview held with Captain Nelson Tokunbo Kepomikan Job (Rtd), 67 years, Sabomi, Apoi, 21 January, 2018.

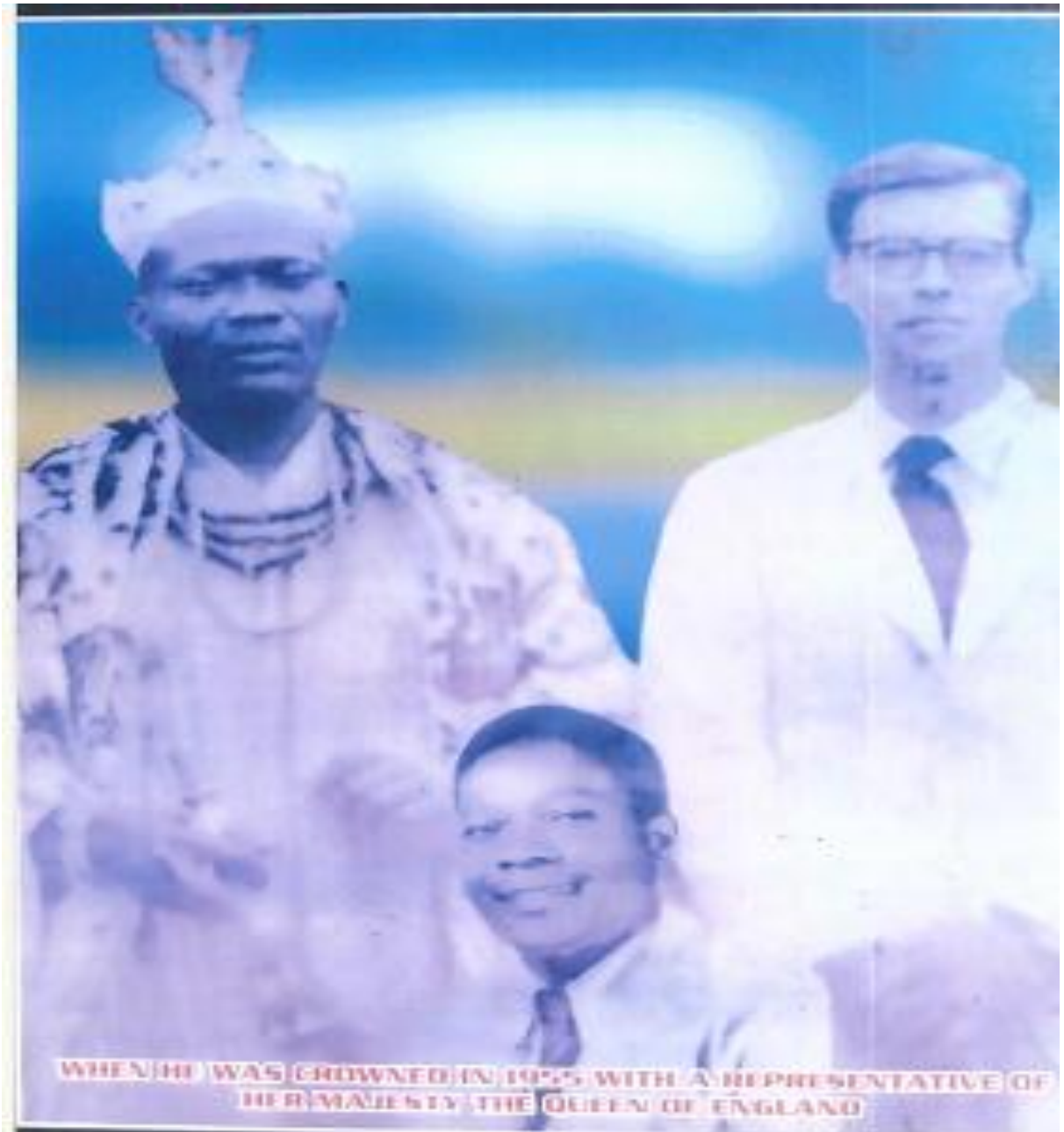


Figure 3.5: *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the Kalasuwe of Apoi, Ugele Idumu III (reigned from 1955 to 2007) and the representative of Her Majesty, The Queen of England on his installation in 1955.
Source: The Palace of the Kalasuwe, Sabomi, Apoi, 2018.

Therefore, as a measure to address the disadvantaged position of the Arogbo-Ijo at the level of traditional members in the Council, an amendment to the Law was sought in 1956 after much pressure. For instance, the letter Ese-Odo District Council wrote on 3rd December, 1956, through the Assistant Local Government Inspector, Okitipupa Division, Ebute Irele,⁵² to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice and Local Government, Western Region, Ibadan, states thus:

The Ese-Odo District Council had taken decision at paragraph 11 of the minutes of meeting held on the 7th of June, 1956 that the Instrument Establishing the Ese-Odo District Council be amended at Paragraph 7(2) to include the name of 'The Toru Tarabiri of Arogbo' immediately after the last name of 'The Takube of Ipoke'.⁵³

The letter the Divisional Adviser, Okitipupa Division, forwarded to the Provincial Adviser, Ondo Province, Akure, on 17 December, 1956, speaks volume of the feeling of marginalisation of the Arogbo-Ijo on the said subject matter thus:

The present position is that of the 3 districts composing Ese-Odo District Council area, Ijaw Apoi provides 3 traditional members, Bini Confederation also provides 3, while Ijaw Arogbo provides only one. The Ijaw Arogbo are a small but vigorous community, nonYoruba speaking, and the council are anxious that they shall have no cause for feeling at a disadvantage in Council affairs. Therefore, they wish a second Arogbo chief to be among the Traditional members and he is the Toru Tarabiri of Arogbo. I recommend.⁵⁴

By virtue of the above recommendation, and a subsequent approval, Chief Joachim Ogongolo Ajuwa, who was in line with the Arogbo-Ijo Customary Law earlier installed as the Torhu-Tarabiri of Arogbo on Thursday, 15 September, 1955, became a permanent Traditional member of Ese-Odo District Council in 1957, as a second Arogbo-Ijo chief. That obviously brought the Arogbo-Ijo traditional membership to two. Hence, the first

⁵² Once again, the headquarters of Okitipupa Division was moved from Okitipupa to Ebute Irele in 1949 and fully operated from 1951 and there, the District Officer and his Lieutenants resided until it was relocated to the former location at Okitipupa in 1960. This was as a result of the disagreement between the folk at Idepe-Okitipupa and the colonial administration over land. Idepe people even threatened to relocate their town from the original location on account of this disagreement.

⁵³ NAI. Ondoprof-1024/No. EODC, 1/14. Note: 'The Torhu-Tarabiri of Arogbo' is now known as the Tarabiri-Torhu of Arogbo, while 'The Takube of Ipoke' is now spelt the Takunbe of Ipoke.

⁵⁴ NAI. Ondoprof-1024/No. 1531/16-17.

meeting of Ese-Odo District Council, the said Chief Ajuwa attended as the Torhu-Tarabiri of Arogbo, was held on Tuesday, 2 July, 1957.⁵⁵ However, the historic title, Torhu-Tarabiri of Arogbo, was later changed to Tarabiri-Torhu of Arogbo. As a significance, therefore, whenever vacancy occurs in respect of the Agadagba's stool, the Tarabiri-Torhu Chieftaincy title holder acts pending when a new Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo is installed. In line with the Arogbo-Ijo sacred tradition, and the Declaration made under Section 4 (2) of the Chiefs Law 1957 of the Customary Law Regulating the selection to the Tarabiri-Torhu of Arogbo Chieftaincy, the following twelve-chieftaincy title holders (Kingmakers) of four per quarters elect the Tarabiri-Torhu whenever vacancy occurs: **Agwobiri**: (1) Chief Atila, (2) Chief Dighipele, (3) Chief Nanaghan, (4) Chief Okpoka; **Egbesubiri**: (5) Chief Eepu, (6) Chief Epini, (7) Chief Ofiniege, (8) Chief Pawei; and **Erubiri**: (9) Chief Benitei, (10) Chief Bolikoti, (11) Chief Ikeli, and (12) Chief Miyenbai. In fact, according to the said 1957 Declaration, the three (3) Ruling Houses in order of rotation are: (1) Erubiri House, (2) Agwobiri House, and (3) Egbesubiri Houses.⁵⁶

In a nutshell, before the imposition of colonial rule, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi had separate traditional political structures, independent of each other. These different structures were headed by their respective traditional rulers, namely, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo and the Kalasuwe of Apoi. But with the introduction of the British colonial rule, these hitherto separate territories with their distinct rulers and structures were lumped together under the same administrative unit, eventually named Ese-Odo District Council, including the Ajagba, Barogbo, Iju-Osun and Akotogbo of the Bini Confederation.⁵⁷ Under this odd administrative arrangement, the district headquarters of Ese-Odo itself was sited at Igbekebo, an Apoi settlement. The above arrangement, thus, altered the earlier traditional administrative systems enjoyed by both groups separately. This new administrative structure, the British

⁵⁵ Western Regional Notice No. 395 in Gazette No. 21 of the 22nd of May, 1957; NAI. Ok. 1886 Ese-Odo District Council Minutes of Meetings.

⁵⁶ Oral interview held with Chief Happy Kawei Atili (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 88 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 28 August, 2015; See also, The Declaration made under Section 4 (2) of the Chiefs Law 1957 of the Customary Law Regulating the selection to the Tarabiri-Torhu of Arogbo Chieftaincy, made by the Chieftaincy Committee of Ese-Odo District Council which has been designated as the competent Council by WRLN No. 22 of 1959 and signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Committee this 18th day of February, 1960.

⁵⁷Ondoprof 4/4: Documents Relating to Arogbo-Ijaw District Council; Ondoprof 1/1 1024 Ijaw-Apoi Native Authority; and Documents Relating to Bini Confederation Native Authority Standing Rules F/090/5/24.

colonial rule introduced, provided new platforms for interactions which bred cordial and tense moments in divergent ways.

Thus, with the introduction of *Pax Britannica*, the two groups relatively cooperated in running the affairs of their peoples in the provision of social amenities and other related benefits accompanied it thereafter. In the struggle that emanated, every group was furiously determined to manoeuvre the other group to maximise political gains. Hence, tensed moments abound in their relations on several occasions. These new dynamics and their associated trajectories manifested in the struggle for the district headquarters, among others. For instance, after much horse-trading, the eventual choice of Igbekebo (an Apoi settlement), as the district headquarters, gave the Apoi an added advantage over the Arogbo-Ijo. This laid the fertile background for mutual suspicion and political rivalry among the two groups in the course of their interactions. Basically, the nomenclature, Ese-Odo, itself, created room for discordant views, air of dissention and acrimony. The Arogbo-Ijo argued for an Ijo identity, while the Apoi on grounds of her Yoruba-speaking status, saw nothing wrong with the Ese-Odo identity, This expression of divergent views on the most appropriate name for Ese-Odo was part of the tensed moments.

Concomitantly, the disproportional representation at the district council in which the Apoi had ten councillors as against five for Arogbo-Ijo made the Arogbo-Ijo felt marginalised, dejected, suppressed and dominated. After all, democracy is a game of numbers, and this gave room for antagonism. This was also apparent at the level of traditional rulers of both groups. Therefore, both at the levels of elected and traditional members, political rivalry and mutual distrust characterised the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations, courtesy of the Instrument that established the Ese-Odo District Council under Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province which brought these two groups under the same administrative umbrella.

3.2 The Nature and Dynamics of Economic Relations between Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi under Colonial Rule

Right from the pre-colonial period, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi had close and mutually beneficial relationships in economic sphere. Clearly, the British colonial rule, with its often exaggerated *Pax Britannica*, relatively increased and expanded economic relations between

them. Thus, the colonial period significantly witnessed an influx into the Arogbo-Ijo communities, with particular respect to the interior by the Apoi women on trading missions. Prior to that, economic contacts between these two interacting groups were mainly geared towards the established market centres.⁵⁸ Therefore, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi economic relations under the period of this study can be best examined from two cardinal levels, namely, (i) the buying and selling, and the exchange of goods and services at the various markets; and (ii) the direct penetration into the interior of the Arogbo-Ijo settlements by the Apoi women for the sale of their agricultural products and the purchase of Arogbo-Ijo smoked fishes in large quantities.

The first is on market relations which involved the act of buying and selling, and the exchange of goods and services between them. The Arogbo-Ijo market patronised by the Apoi was located at Agadagba-Obon,⁵⁹ while the Apoi markets often patronised by the Arogbo-Ijo were located at Kiribo and Igbekebo. As a matter of fact, all the ancient Apoi settlements have established markets, but Kiribo and Igbekebo were the Arogbo-Ijo preferred ones on grounds of geographical proximity, the only Apoi settlements that shared direct physical boundaries with the Arogbo-Ijo. Specifically, Kiribo shared physical boundaries with the Arogbo-Ijo settlements of Agadagba-Obon, Amapere, Ebiaye and Akorikotu. Igbekebo, on the other hand, shared physical boundaries with the Arogbo-Ijo settlements of Osari-Ugbo and Igangbo.⁶⁰ Figure 3.6 on page 112, Figure 3.7 on page 113, Figure 3.8 on page 114 and Figure 3.9 on page 115 are pictures showing Kiribo market and Agadagba-Obon (market) scenes at the beaches of the said two communities.

⁵⁸ Oral interview held with Mr Eniowo Abednego, 65 years, trader, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 12 November, 2017.

⁵⁹ Once again, the name *Agadagba* is the traditional title of the *Pere* (king) of the Arogbo-Ijo people, while *Obon* is an Ijo word for market. Therefore, Agadagba-Obon simply means the king's market. Right from the pre-colonial period to the end of this study, this is the only Arogbo-Ijo market which can be reached by water and land.

⁶⁰ Oral interview held with Chief Boro Naboboh (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 50 years, the Amaseikunmoh of Ogidigba I, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 13 November, 2017.

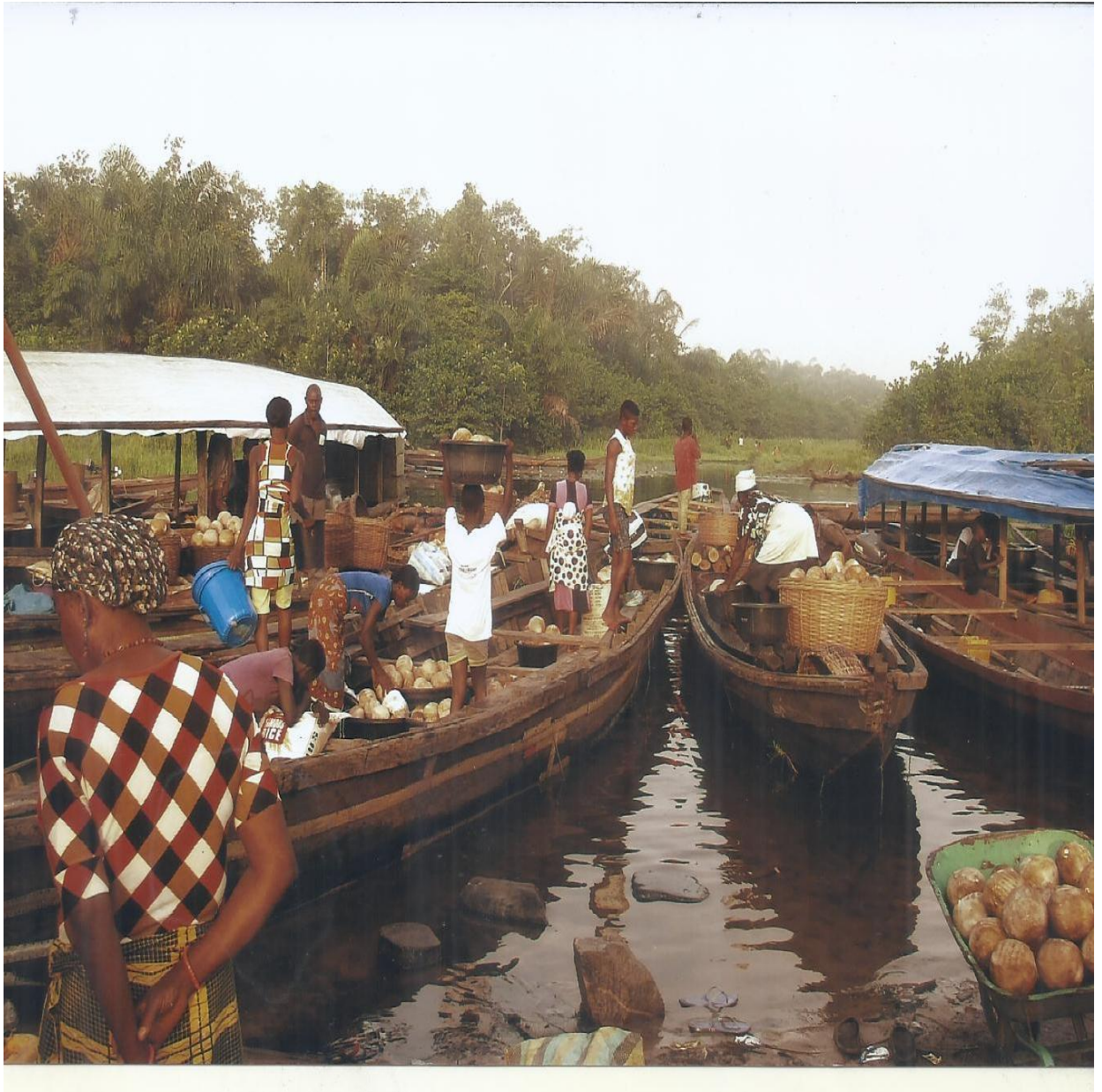


Figure 3.6: Kiribo Market scene at the beach.
Source: Picture taken during fieldwork, 2018.



Figure 3.7: Kiribo Market scene at the beach.
Source: Picture taken during fieldwork, 2018.



Figure 3.8: Agadagba-Obon (market) at the beach.
Source: Picture taken during fieldwork, 2018.



Figure 3.9: Agadagba-Obon (market) at the beach.
Source: Picture taken during fieldwork, 2018.

In all these markets, the Arogbo-Ijo exchanged different kinds of smoked/dried and fresh fishes for the Apoi agricultural products such as *beriba* (plantain), *buru* (yam), *wowopulo* (red oil), *bosumofiye* (garri), *miniye* (pupuru-a traditional fermented, smoked-dried cassava food), *ifinighen* (cassava meal), and *igina* (pepper). This mode of transaction which the Arogbo-Ijo called *iyekojujudo* (trade by barter), started from the pre-colonial period, and endured to the colonial period. Nevertheless, this ancient practice is still very much popular among traders of both groups in the various markets, alongside the direct buying and selling of goods and services with the use of modern currency. This perhaps informed Perewei Amalagha⁶¹ to argue that the British colonial rule introduced direct taxation and monetary economy to replace the traditional system of revenue prohibition and the ancient trade by barter, but the cherished trade by barter is still very popular and widely practised by both groups in their various markets, even including the Ikale markets at Barogbo, Iju-Osun, and Akotogbo. Again, as a unique feature, apart from the British introduced *lingua franca* (the English language), the language of communication in these markets from the pre-colonial period to the end of this work, is Yoruba. This was made possible by the Arogbo-Ijo bilingualism in Ijo and Yoruba, while the Apoi and Ikale are all Yoruba-speaking.⁶²

On the second type of trade relations beneficial to both groups, the Apoi women traders in large numbers in *opu-aru* (big canoes) transported their agricultural products direct to the various Arogbo-Ijo communities, namely, Ogidigba I, Ogidigba II, Ogidigba III, Opubabilebu, Gbarangbini, Awodikuro, Biagbini, Adoleseimo I, Adoloseimo II, Adoloseimo III, Ajapa, Opuba, Akpata, and so forth for sale and exchange for *ugo-adi mo zaa-adi mo* (fresh and smoked fishes), *osi* (snails), and *sibiri* (alligator). These journeys at times took them a number of days because they often settled in communities of their choices to carry out their transactions before returning home with their well-arranged bundles of smoked fish being tied together with ropes, obtained from raffia palm.⁶³

⁶¹ Oral interview held with Perewei Amalagha (later installed as a Chief), 82 years, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 13 November, 2017.

⁶² Alagoa, E. J. *et al.* 2009. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p.401.

⁶³ Oral interview held with Boanerge Luke Ajama, 70 years, Ogokiri Zion, Arogbo, 20 November, 2017.

Seigha Ajama, a fish trader, explained that her grandmother (Mama Dawei Esintuwei, nee Ganfo) and her mother (Madam Moyo George, nee Okoro) in those days often left very early in the morning to buy dried fish from fish farmers in the neighbouring communities, and gather them together for proper storage. At times, they bought fresh fish which were cheaper than the smoked ones, and personally smoked them in their locally constructed *eri* (kilns) which foundation was made with *bana* (mud). These were later sold, on wholesale, to their Apoi customer, called Mama Mayigbo, from Igbobini ⁶⁴ Mamayi George, nee Titiboh further explained that, at times, the Apoi traders scrambled and jostled for fishes on retail and wholesale basis from the Arogbo-Ijo. The fishes bought in retail were cheaper, but often very time consuming and laborious in the course of getting enough for a trip because it entailed the act of moving from one community to the other.⁶⁵ Basically, a trip loading required about 120 bundles of smoked fish, carefully arranged in canoes, covered with *obines* (mats) and thick nylon rubbers, particularly during the raining and harmattan seasons.⁶⁶

As explained by Titus Karinatei Ganfo, eighteen fresh fish or fishes called *buo-iyoro* or *olumoh* or the combination of both pinned together with the aid of materials derived from palm front called *bulai*, and thereafter smoked, constituted *keniidiopa* or *kenipiti* (one set of fish pinned together). Again, twenty sets of such pinned together ones formed *keniidifuna* (one bundle of fish). And about one hundred and twenty bundles, carefully and orderly arranged, and tied together with ropes in the canoes constituted a full load for a trip.⁶⁷

As a matter of fact, the business was very laborious during the dry season because most of the Arogbo-Ijo creeks were often blocked by water lettuce, called *itibitibi*, and other related water hyacinth and weeds. It, therefore, required about three persons with the needed muscular strength to paddle the heavily loaded canoes with bundles of smoked fish. On communal efforts, the villagers at times cleared the waterways of these water-borne weeds obstructing the free flow of the movement of canoes. Though the British colonial

⁶⁴ Oral interview held with Mrs Seigha Ajama, nee George, 60 years, Israel Kiri Zion, Ogidigba I, Arogbo, 11 November, 2015.

⁶⁵ Oral interview held with Mrs Mamayi George, nee Titiboh, 75 years, former fish trader, Ogidigba I, Arogbo, 5 October, 2016.

⁶⁶ Oral interview held with Mrs Esther Jebe, 72 years, Opubabilebu, Arogbo, 19 September, 2017.

⁶⁷ Oral interview held with Sir Titus Karinatei Ganfo (later installed as Chief Okpo of Egbesubiri, Arogbo), 55 years, Teacher, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 20 December, 2017.

government's Inland Waterways Department occasionally cleared most of the creeks, the communities located in the interior were often left unattended to under the flimsy excuse of very difficult terrain.⁶⁸

In furtherance of the above, Peter Ajama argued that quite often, the Apoi traders did not come with *bunghinokuba* (large sums of physical cash); rather, they came in *opu-aru* (big canoes) fully loaded with agricultural products, which they sold to the Arogbo-Ijo, and the money realised from such sales, was used to purchase the needed smoked fishes. At times, they exchanged their agricultural products for the Arogbo-Ijo smoked fishes, as practised in the various market centres. Hence, there was no time in those days when the Apoi traders came to Arogbo-Ijo communities with empty canoes for their transactions. Thus, it was a trade of *maakiriarede* (double gains) on the part of the Apoi traders. Similarly, on the part of the Arogbo-Ijo, it was an opportunity for them to sell their smoked fishes, and thereafter purchase their needed agricultural products without necessarily going to the periodic faraway or distant markets for such transactions.⁶⁹

To be gender-specific, Samson Ebigha Iwabi revealed that it was a female dominated trade on both sides, except on few cases. For instance, Iye Tomi, whose community in Apoi, Iwabi could no longer remember, was always coming with her thingummy husband to Ogidigba I community. According to him, the husband always sat at the *dimo-ikun* (back seat), while Iye Tomi sat on the *ikulo-ikun* (front seat), paddling the *opu-aru* (big canoe). Apart from the above, he also assisted her in the course of buying and tying the smoked or dried fish into bundles, and personally arranged them in the canoe. Iwabi, therefore, concluded that it may have been a joint trade of the duo.⁷⁰ Similarly, Yiboh Ajama, nee Umenren revealed that one Apoi trader, popularly known as *Baba olu-usu gbogboro*, was a male trader who dealt mainly in the sale of yams and/or the exchange of yams for fish. Hence, the Yoruba nick name, *Baba olu-usu gbororo*. *Baba* means old man; *olu-usu* means

⁶⁸ Oral interview held with Chief Isaiah Ganfo, 60 years, fisherman, Israel Kiri Zion, Ogidigba I, Arogbo, 27 December, 2017.

⁶⁹ Oral interview held with Chief Peter Ajama, a former palm wine tapper, 70 years, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 November, 2015. Note: On fish or fishes as used interchangeably in this work, fish is the plural form of fish as well. The older form, fishes can be used to refer to different kinds of fish.

⁷⁰ Oral interview held with Chief Samson Ebigha Iwabi (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 76 years, retired Headmaster, Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 April, 2017.

owner of yam; and *gbogboro* means very long, which literally means the old man with very long yams.⁷¹

On the part of the Arogbo-Ijo, it was also a female dominated trade. But one noticeable exceptional case was that of Mr Johnson Ganfo from Ogidigba I community, who actively participated in the trade to the magnitude in which he eventually married Oke, an Apoi trader from Igbotu. The marriage produced a female child, named Dupe, who later married one Mr Seiyefa Philip Seniboh in the same Ogidigba I community. The marriage produced Fejigha (female), Ajike (female), and Taye (female) and Kehinde (male).⁷² As disclosed by Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo (a son to Mr Johnson Ganfo), consequent upon irreconcilable differences between Seiyefa and Dupe, Dupe eventually left for her maternal home at Igbotu, and later married an Apoi man at Igbotu.⁷³

Dola Duyile, whose grandmother and mother also participated in the trade, states that the head of every crew normally hired the services of about two or three paddlers, with the required muscular strength and ability to paddle a big fully loaded canoe. Often, the head of the crew did not paddle, although he had a personal paddle only used in time of difficulty associated with the blockage of the waterways by water weeds, or when the canoe is grounded while passing through *boutoru* (shallow creek or short cut). But in normal circumstances, the head of the crew did not paddle and, thus, often slept while on the river.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, for the prevention of sun and rain, every crew member was entitled to a locally twisted hat with palm fronds and bamboo called *agbeju-tughun*.

In respect of accommodation while on business trips, Ebipaghatei Ofoyeju explained that the Apoi traders always slept in the houses of their respective Arogbo-Ijo customers free of charge. But curiously, they often spread their locally twisted *obine* (mats) either at the corridors or sitting parlours of the houses to sleep in the night.⁷⁵ On the reasons for the

⁷¹ Oral interview held with Mrs Yiboh Ajama, nee Umenren, 80 years, a former fisherwoman, Israel kiri, Arogbo, 7 November, 2017.

⁷² Oral interview held with Mrs Mamayi George, nee Titiboh, 75 years, Ogidigba I, Arogbo, 5 October, 2016.

⁷³ Oral interview held with Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, 58 years, retired Civil Servant, Akure, 30 November, 2017.

⁷⁴ Oral interview held with Mr Dola Duyile, 55 years, Community Leader, Barate Quarters, Igbobini, 20 December, 2017.

⁷⁵ Oral interview held with Mr Epipaghatei Ofoyeju, 45 years, teacher, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 14 December, 2017.

above sleeping manner or habit, Titus Karinatei Ganfo argued that in most instances, the needed rooms to sleep in were not available.⁷⁶ On the other hand, Dola Duyile submits that the chief reasons are on security grounds and the need to be closer to their fully loaded canoes, which often required bailing of water at night with particular respect to leaky canoes during the raining season, to avoid a possible canoe capsizing with its disastrous consequences.⁷⁷

On returning home, the Apoi traders in turn sold their smoked fishes to their Ikale neighbours at Ajagba, Irele, Okitipupa, and to hinterland traders from Ondo, Akure, Owo, Ekiti, and Ile-Ife. In fact, according to Dola Duyile, there then existed a very big fish market located at the beach of Arubeghan quarters, Igbobini, called Ugele (market), primarily for this trade.⁷⁸ As an advantage, all the Apoi settlements are located on land, and at the same time can be reached through Oluwa River, Shaluwa and Otu Streams. Furthermore, the hinterland traders did not know how to swim and, because they were scared of water, the Apoi traders seized the opportunity, and acted as the intermediaries between the riverine Arogbo-Ijo and the hinterland traders in the then lucrative trade. Moreover, Pius Odumayo Ikusedun revealed that a similar fish market also existed at the beach of Kiribo, and other Apoi communities. Above all, most of the agricultural products the Apoi took to the interior of the Arogbo-Ijo settlements in exchange for smoked fish were derived from their Ikale neighbours, who engaged in commercial farming more than the Apoi who were only known for subsistence farming at that time.⁷⁹ Subsistence agriculture or farming is a self-sufficiency farming system in which the farmers focus on growing enough food to feed themselves and their families. The output is mostly for local requirement with little or no surplus for trade.

⁷⁶ Oral interview held with Sir Titus Karinatei Ganfo (later installed as Chief Okpo of Egbesubiri, Arogbo), 55 years, teacher, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 19 December, 2017.

⁷⁷ Oral interview held with Mr Dola Duyile, 55 years, Community Leader, Barate Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 December, 2017.

⁷⁸ Oral interview held with Mr Dola Duyile, 55 years, Community Leader, Barate Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 December, 2017. Note: Ugele simply means a market in Ondo dialect.

⁷⁹ Oral interview held with Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, former leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government, currently, a teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2017.

3.3 Social Relations between Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi under Colonial Rule

Social relation is a blanket term for interactions between two or more people, group or organisations. Individual social relationships are composed of an immense number of social, physical, and verbal interactions that create a conducive climate for the exchange of feelings and ideals.⁸⁰ As it relates to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi under the British colonial rule, attempts shall be made to examine their social relations from the angles of inter-group marriages, yearly traditional or socio-cultural festivals across both groups, and the historical Empire Day Celebration.

Inter-group marriage, as a pivotal and cardinal form of social relations between the two groups, predates the colonial period as earlier pointed out. Nevertheless, the colonial period tremendously witnessed more marital cementation than the preceding period. Reuben Amatariwei Bekewe revealed that the Arogbo-Ijo had marital ties with all the ancient Apoi settlements, namely, Igbekebo, Kiribo, Igbotu, Sabomi, Ojuala, Oboro, Ipoke, Inikorogha and Igbobini.⁸¹ For instance, Chief Peni Julius Naboboh (an Arogbo-Ijo) married an Apoi woman from Igbobini, named Towumi, and gave birth to Adewole and Ayetan. Significantly, while Adewole (male) married from his maternal country home at Igbobini, Ayetan (female) married an Arogbo-Ijo from Ajapa community in her paternal country home. Perhaps, as a coincidental social balancing of permanent places of dwelling, Adewole and his nuclear family are currently living with his mother's kinsmen in Igbobini, while Ayetan is living with her husband in her father's country home. In his characteristic nature, Adewole often paid visits to his father's home, especially on the dead of family members and other related socio-cultural events. As a clear show of influence from their Yoruba-speaking Apoi mother, the duo were given Yoruba names.⁸²

Again, as a noticeable feature in such inter-group marriages, while the Arogbo-Ijo prefer given their children Ijo names, the Apoi, on the other hand, prefer Yoruba names. For example, the marriage between Mr Johnson Ganfo (an Arogbo-Ijo fish trader) and Mrs Oke

⁸⁰Social relations definition/psychology glossary/alleydog.com.www.alleydog.com. Accessed online 05-01-2018.

⁸¹ Oral interview held with High Chief R. A. Bekewe, 76 years, Secretary, Arogbo-Ijaw Traditional Council, 29 August, 2015.

⁸² Oral interview held with Mr Eniowo Abednego, 65 years, trader, Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo, 12 November, 2017.

(an Apoi fish trader from Igbotu) is a celebrated case study in that direction. The said marriage, necessitated by fish trade relations, produced a female child, named Dupe (a Yoruba name) as a clear demonstration of the influence from her Yoruba-speaking Apoi mother. When Dupe reached maturity, she contracted marital ties with Seiyefa Philip Seniboh from her paternal country home, Arogbo-Ijo. Fruitfully, the marriage produced four children, namely, Fejigha, Ajike, and Taye and Kehinde (all female except Kehinde). A careful look at the names of the above children shows the predominant influence of the mother in line with her linguistic identity, because only Fejigha happened to be an Ijo name, while the remaining three bore Yoruba names. In addition, as a dual linguistic advantage, the children of such bi-cultural relationships ended up fluently bilingual in Ijo and Yoruba to the benefits of the interacting groups.⁸³

As a noteworthy instance, *Alaowei* Yeiyah Gbodo, an Arogbo-Ijo, had eight (8) wives, among whom five (5) are indigenes of Apoi, while the remaining three (3) are indigenes of Arogbo-Ijo. The five wives from Apoi are Mami, the daughter of Omoleye in Igbobini; Satei from the family of Iji in Igbobini; Nayeju; Koye of Ajanah quarters, Igbobini; and Ajanine. On the other hand, the remaining three (3) from Arogbo-Ijo are Fikatei, Yalama and Janelala. While some of the descendants are living at Arogbo-Ijo, others are living at their mothers' home at Apoi.⁸⁴ Similarly, *Alaowei* Tiewei Gbodo, an indigene of Arogbo-Ijo, had two Apoi wives, namely, Gbajumo, the daughter of Pepagha from Kiribo, and Oro from Ipoke. In the characteristic manner of such children or descendants, some of them are living at their mothers' country homes at Kiribo and Ipoke in Apoi, while some are dwelling in Ewerebubogho, Arogbo.⁸⁵ As also revealed by Samson Ebigba Iwabi, one Mr Ikupoluyi from Igbobini also married Youokilolo from Perebiri, Arogbo, and gave birth to Mafoifiana

⁸³ Oral interview held with Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, 58 years, retired Civil Servant, Akure, 30 November, 2017.

⁸⁴ Oral interview held with Mr Akin Tiewei, 55 years, Teacher, Saint Arenibaro Memorial High School, Amapere, Arogbo, 8 January, 2018.

⁸⁵ Oral interviews held with Mr Akin Tiewei, 55 years, Teacher, Saint Arenibaro Memorial High School, Amapere, Arogbo; and Hon Japhet Yeiyah, 57 years, former Councillor, Arogbo Ward II, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 8 January 2018.

and Masowo, all bearing Yoruba names, indicating, the paternal influence of the linguistic Yoruba identity.⁸⁶

It is, therefore, little surprising that, while writing on the Arogbo-Ijo inter-group marital relationships with the Apoi and other Nigerian groups, Eshofonie states thus:

Social interaction arising from trade and inter-group marriages has given to relationship beyond the immediate locality. It is no more an exaggeration to say that there is no family be it nucleus or extended among the Arogbo-Ijo which traces its origin to the third or fourth generation without sourcing from Apoi, Yoruba, Urhobo or any other Nigerian tribe...Perhaps, this accounts for the non-Ijo surnames borne by some families of the area up to date.⁸⁷

Other avenues for social interactions between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi between 1915 and 1960 were the annual Bouabo festival at Igbobini, Apoi, and the Kpokotin festival at Arogbo. In the highly honoured and admired Bouabo festival, many Arogbo-Ijo sons and daughters not only visited Igbobini, but also joined their Apoi kith and kin in the two-day *ogele* procession (parade) which entails the beating of traditional drums, singing of Ijo socio-cultural songs and dancing to the rhythm of the drum. As revealed by I. O. Biobaku, the festival provides a golden opportunity for the two neighbouring Ijo groups to interact and mix together in celebration, thereby preserving the Ijo social-cultural heritage in their Yoruba-dominated geo-political zone.⁸⁸

Specifically, on the Bouabo festival, Eshofonie also submits thus:

The literal Ijaw meaning for Bou-abhu is the people of the forest...Bou-abhu controls all the living and non-living things in the forest and portion these things to man according to their wishes. Man must be in good relationship with the forest gods...in order to have enough animals and fish from the forest...It is significant that the Apoi Ijaws who are the immediate neighbours of the Arogbo Ijaw hold tenaciously to the belief in the existence and worship of Bou-abhu. They went further to say that these invisible forest gods visit

⁸⁶ Oral interview held with Chief Samson Ebigha Iwabi (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 76 years, retired Headmaster, Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 April 2017.

⁸⁷ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., p.15.

⁸⁸ Oral interviews held with High Chief I. O. Biobaku, 60 years, Koni, the Chief Priest of Bouabo festival, Bouabo Cultural Centre, Igbobini, Apoi, 21 December, 2017; and Mr Balogun Abayomi, 75 years, a devotee of Bouabo festival, Bouabo Cultural Centre, Igbobini, Apoi, 21 December, 2017.

mankind once every year in human appearance. This is the truth behind the annual celebration of the highly revered and crowd pulling Bou-abhu festival among the Apoi Ijaw centrally at Igbobini every year.⁸⁹

Vividly, some pictures of the Bouabo priests on procession are shown in Figure 3.10 on page 125, Figure 3.11 on page 126 and Figure 3.12 on page 127 for the purpose of clarity.

⁸⁹ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos. Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., p.65. Note: Once again, the word bou-abhu is also spelt as bouabu, boabo, buabo, and bouabo. Therefore, for the purpose of uniformity, the spelling BOUABO shall be used throughout this work, except on direct quotation(s) where applicable.



Figure 3.10: Bouabo Priests on procession to the Bouabo Forest
Source: Picture taken at the yearly Bouabo Festival at Igbobini during fieldwork, 2017.

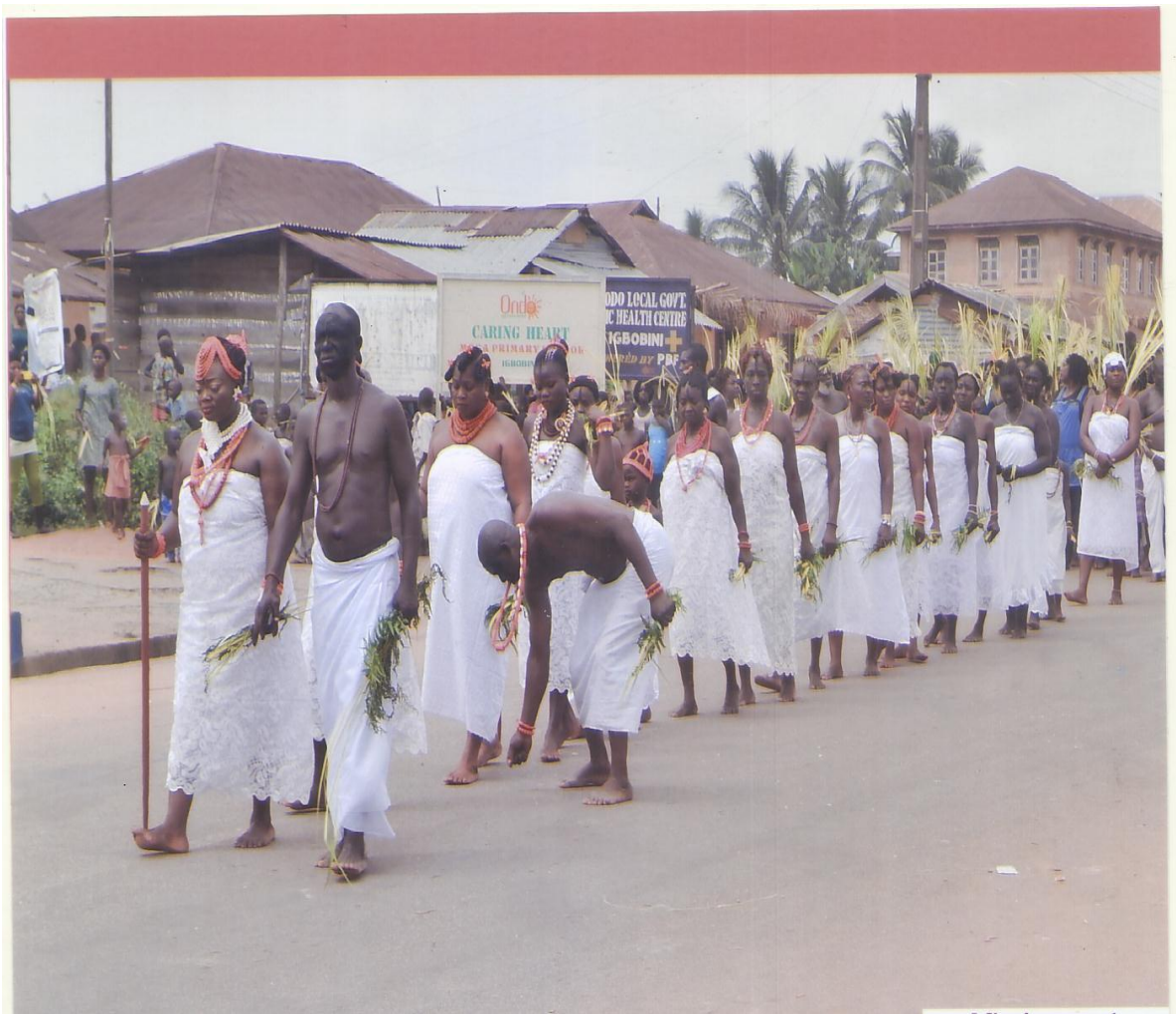


Figure 3.11: Bouabo Priests on procession from Bouabo Forest to the Water Front of Igbobini.
Source: A Picture taken at the yearly Bouabo festival at Igbobini during fieldwork, 2017.

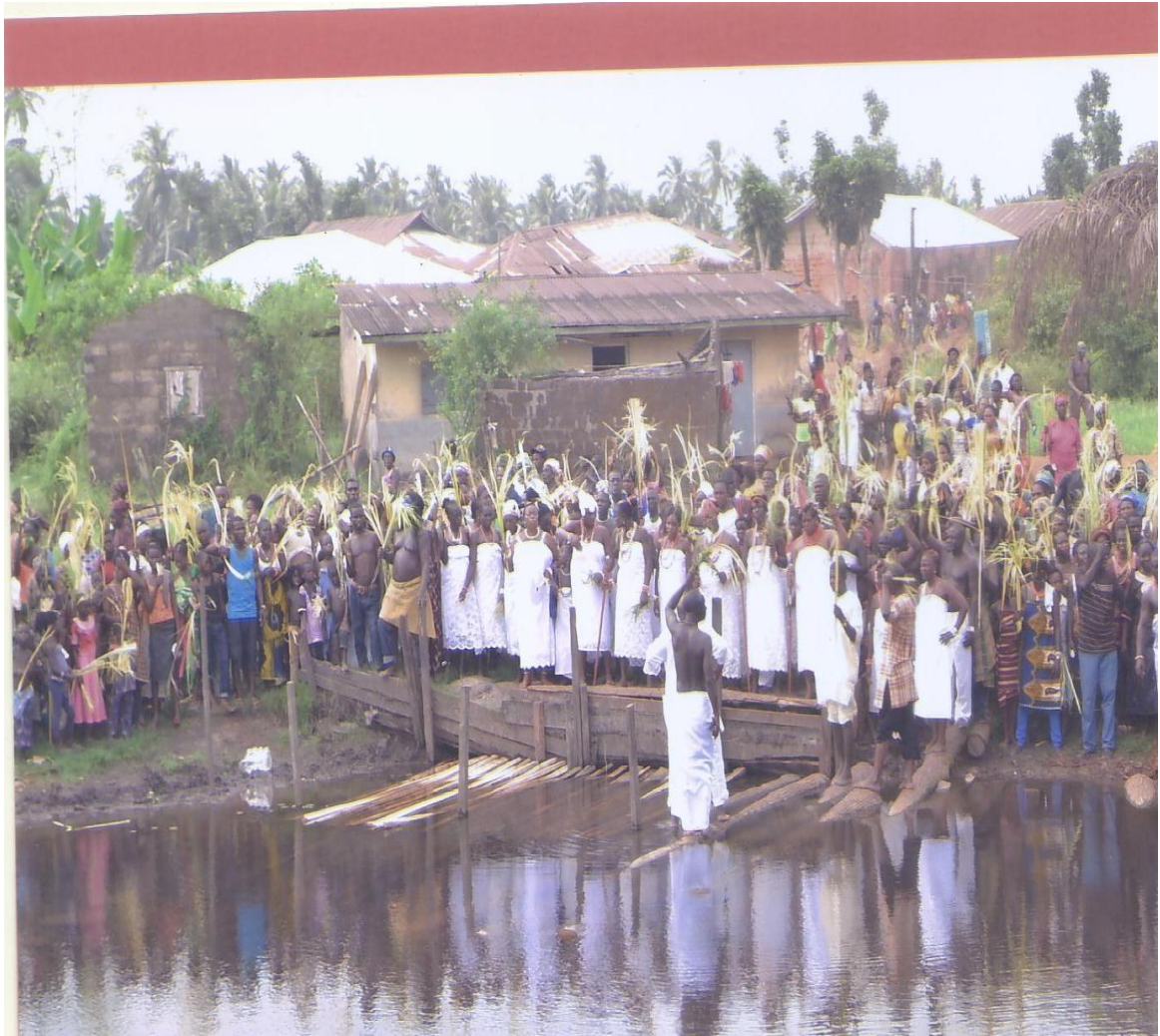


Figure 3.12: Bouabo Priests and other celebrants at the water front of Igbobini.
Source: A Picture taken at the yearly Bouabo festival at Igbobini during fieldwork, 2017.

On a similar socio-cultural import, the yearly Kpokotin festival at Arogbo attracted people from across all walks of life among the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi. In fact, Kpokotin, one of the most prominent and highly celebrated traditional festivals, greatly influenced the unity of the people and their convergence in great numbers from every nook and cranny, including the Apoi neighbours. Writing on the historic Kpokotin festival that attracted multitudes of people to Arogbo and its socio-cultural significance, Olopele states that:

Significantly, the attendance at the festival further provided the platform for people who had seen themselves last for donkey's years to see and meet one another again for discussion and catch the fun of it. Casual and actual friendships were established as a result. Marriages and other ceremonies were also fixed for this period because of the guarantee of attendance in great numbers. Masquerade's dance from the shrine, rendition of songs and traditional parade (ogele) round the town gave the festival more cultural colour and flavour...The festival spanned...days to come to a close annually.⁹⁰

Going into memory lane, towards the end of the British colonial rule, the Kpokotin festival in Arogbo came to an abrupt end, unlike the Bouabo festival at Igbobini, Apoi, which endured to the end of this work. On the circumstances leading to the controversial end of the festival, Peretei explains thus:

One prominent traditional festival in Arogbo-Ijo was the Kpokotin festival. Kpokotin, a god concerned with fertility of women, peace of the land, detections of criminals and general well-being of the people was an annual festival that brought multitudes to Arogbo...Before the emergence of the big masquerade from the shrine, several other smaller masquerades would come to dance. Usually, it took three days for the festival to come to a close...Kpokotin was probably the most controversial of the gods in the land...Gold Pemi a Christian fell sick and investigation revealed that Kpokotin was responsible for the illness. The only connection between Kpokotin and Pemi being that Pemi's wife Nitei was a devotee for Kpokotin. When he recovered enough from the illness, he went straight to the shrine and carried the carved masquerade and buried it in the front of his house [at Agwobiri, Arogbo in 1957]. The Chief Priest of Kpokotin Mone could not believe it. He reported to [the then] Agadagba [of Arogbo-Ijo] Pere Mesarawon Poro, [Opukutu II] who

⁹⁰ Olopele, K. T. 2017. *History of Arogbo-Ijaw Ibe Day Celebration*. Akure: Hallmark Prints, pp. 4-5.

could do little because of the religious nature of the matter. Not even the police could resolve the fiasco...The Kpokotin festival was never celebrated since then...⁹¹

The above abrupt end of the Kpokotin celebration towards the end of the British colonial rule negatively affected the cultural interactions of the two groups in someways. Meanwhile, as earlier pointed out in this work, prior to the said ugly development of the Kpokotin festival, many of the ancient cultural festivals of the two groups have gone into extinction due to the British colonial rule and the introduction of Christianity. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to state that the historic Bouabo and Kpokotin festivals acted as the links, and further provided the needed avenue or occasions for meaningful and fruitful socio-cultural interactions between the two groups during the colonial period.

Lastly, another avenue for social interactions between the two groups, with special reference to children, was the yearly Empire Day Celebration—the British anniversary of Queen Victoria’s birthday. On the historic occasion of the Empire Day, the 24th of May every year, pupils from selected primary schools in Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, led by their teachers, gathered together at the headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, Igbekebo, an Apoi community. As revealed by Samson Ebigha Iwabi, the events participated were, march past or parade, cultural displays and other related activities associated with school children, as they waived the British Union Jack in excitement. At the end of all participated events, awards and prizes were duly given to those pupils who clinched the 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions as a show of honour and further motivation in years to come.⁹² Remarkably, apart from children, it was an opportunity for people from all walks of life to converge at Igbekebo, the district headquarters, for socio-cultural interactions.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to state that the historical root of the Empire Day is traceable to Queen Victoria, who was born on 24th May, 1819 at Kensington Palace, London. She became the Queen of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on 20th June, 1837 at London, Westminster Abbey, and died on 22 January 1901 at Osborne House, Isle of Wight. The first Empire Day took place on 24th May, 1902, celebrated prior to 1901 as the

⁹¹ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.29-30.

⁹² Oral interview held with Chief Samson Ebigha Iwabi, 76 years, Retired Headmaster, Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 April, 2017.

birth day of Queen Victoria. In 1905, Lord Meath, the 12th Earl of Meath, instituted it and made it extensively practised throughout the Commonwealth countries at the time.⁹³

The Empire Day was, therefore, a system of that unity of feeling to those ideals of freedom, justice and tolerance for which the British Empire stood throughout the colonial world. Significantly, therefore, the Empire Day reminded children, that they formed part of the glorious British Empire. In addition, it was instilled in the young that the strength of the Empire depended upon them. In 1958, Harold Macmillan, the Prime Minister of Great Britain (1957-1963), informed Parliament about the re-naming of the Empire Day as Commonwealth Day.⁹⁴

⁹³ Empire Day: <https://www.jstor.org/stable>. Accessed online 4 January, 2018.

⁹⁴ Empire Day: Historic UK. www.historic-uk.com. Accessed online 4 January, 2018.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGING PATTERNS IN AROGBO-IJO AND APOI RELATIONS, 1960-1996

4.1 New Trends in Socio-Economic Relations

The smoked fish transaction between these two interacting groups continues unabated, though with some noticeable changes and innovations introduced into its *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*. This trade relation, which was of great benefits to both groups, actually reached its apogee in the 1960s. The first dynamics of its style of transaction was the introduction of a credit facility system popularly known as a Trust system, but locally called *sajeri* by the Arogbo-Ijo traders. Under this Trust system, after the Apoi traders exhausted their physical cash in purchasing their needed bundles of smoked fish, the Arogbo-Ijo traders allowed the Apoi traders to go with some fishes on credit with the hope of coming back to pay after sales. Truly, on many occasions, the Apoi traders fulfilled their promises, but there were also instances of breaches occasioned by unforeseen circumstances as the Apoi traders also, at times, sold on credit some of their fish products to the hinterland traders from Ondo, Akure, Owo, and Ile-Ife. Unfortunately, these hinterland traders at times failed to come back on time to pay as earlier promised, and even when they eventually returned, they came with concocted stories of bad markets and other related occupational hazards. This, thus, systematically created a business atmosphere of hanky-panky and lack of trust among the respective traders involved in this *sajeri* system of fish trade.¹

As further disclosed by Dauphin Dighitoghi Moro on the Trust system, the trusted Apoi traders were often given the fish on credit by the Arogbo-Ijo women. There was a very good customer of his mother (Ladia Lele Moro), called Lakimu from Igbobini in Apoi who used

¹ Oral interview held with Most Senior Evangelist Perebo Iwabi, 62 years, Community Leader, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 20 January, 2018; Oral interview held with Mr Dola Duyile, 55 years, Barate Quarters, Igbobini, 20 December, 2017.

to go with credit facilities worth thousands of Naira which she paid within 6 months. On several occasions, most Apoi business women could not afford the total cost of the fish they buy, so were given credit facilities by the Arogbo-Ijo women². As a reciprocal trade relation, Joseph Ebikhinmo Feku revealed that the wealthier traders among the Apoi also, after buying all their required fish products, often handed over their remaining money to their Arogbo-Ijo customers to assist in buying fish for them. The primary purpose was not to waste too much time in looking for fish to buy when they eventually returned for another round of business transaction. Hence, with such an advance buying before their arrival, some of the needed quantities of fish had already been bought and gathered for them. Thus, only little time is spent in moving from one house to the other or from one community to the other in purchasing the additional ones needed to complete the full load of about one hundred and twenty bundles, required for a trip.³ Obviously, the point of emphasis is that a breach of the delicate Trust system often created nervous tension and anxious moments among the traders and by extension the interacting groups.

According to Jomo Kondigha, as additional innovation and dynamics to the ancient locally carved canoes being manually paddled by the Apoi traders in the course of the business, modern means of the use of outboard engine wooden boats emerged in the early 1980s. Therefore, the locally built wooden boats or canoes are now mechanically driven by outboard engines such as Yamaha 5 horsepower, Yamaha 8 horsepower and Yamaha 15 horsepower. This not only made the Apoi trading expedition or mission faster, but also greatly reduced the heavy and hard human labour associated with the trade. Consequently, Iye Rotimi, a notable Apoi trader from Igbobini, who married at Igbotu, started to use Yamaha 8 horsepower engine wooden boat in the 1980s to ply the various trade routes of Arogbo in the course of her trading missions.⁴ Dola Duyile also revealed that Madam Christina Mofesola Duyile and Madam Elizabeth Emoma Duyile of Igbobini that actively participated in the said business also used Yamaha 8 horsepower engine wooden boats to

² Professor Dauphin Dighitoghi Moro, 54 years, Egbesubiri, Arogbo (Lecturer, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos), 26 March, 2009.

³ Oral interview held with Mr Joseph Ebikhinmo Feku, 56 years, former Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 20 January, 2018.

⁴ Oral interview held with Chief Jomo Kondigha, 67 years, Chief Afuna of Egbesubiri, Arogbo, Community Leader and former boat operator, 20 January, 2018.

carry out the trade in the 1980s and 1990s. As such, the use of outboard engine wooden boats not only reduced the hard human labour in the trade, but also saved the time the Apoi traders often spent in looking for able-bodied paddlers or pullers as their services were no longer needed.⁵ Titus Karinatei Ganfo equally revealed that one Iye Idowu, who was plying the creeks of Ogidigba I, Ogidigba II and Ogidigba III, was personally operating or driving her Yamaha 8 horsepower outboard engine wooden boat in the 1990s.⁶

As part of the dynamics associated with the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi socio-economic relations, the locally built engine wooden boats were not only used to transport passengers and goods from one place to another, but also in market related economic transactions. The outboard engine wooden boats carry Arogbo-Ijo traders and their goods to Apoi markets located at Igbekebo and Kiribo. The owners or operators of such outboard engine wooden boats often charged transport fares per head of every passenger, and the loads of passengers were separately charged. In fact, while going to the various periodic markets, the boats stop at various communities to carry passengers and loads. Similarly, while returning from the markets, the boats often stop at every necessary point to discharge passengers and goods.⁷ At any rate, the above dynamics not only reduced the hard human labour associated with the trade, it also tremendously increased the volume of transactions and further promoted cordial relationship between the two groups.

This period also witnessed another remarkable trend in their socio-economic relations. A good number of Arogbo-Ijo women, who were anglers, temporarily migrated to settle at various Apoi settlements of their choice for fishing activities. The Arogbo-Ijo referred to this act as *sigbinisuwo*. The fishes caught were sold to their Apoi hosts, and Ikafe neighbours at Ajagba, Irele and Okitipupa both in fresh and smoked forms. As customary, before granting fishing rights, the Apoi host communities duly collected minimal or reasonable levies from them, which the Arogbo-Ijo referred to as *bousuwosi okuba*. Simply put, *bousuwosi okuba* means the amount of money paid before going into the forest for fishing activities. As a further clarification, the said money was not directly paid to the entire community, but to the respective heads or the concerned families that own the fish ponds in

⁵ Oral interview held with Mr Dola Duyile, 55 years, Community Leader, Barate Quarters, Igbobini, 20 December, 2017.

⁶ Oral interview held with Sir Titus Karinatei Ganfo (later installed as Chief Okpo of Egbesubiri, Arogbo), 55 years, teacher, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 19 December, 2017.

⁷ Oral interview held with Chief Jomo Kondigha, 67 years, Chief Afuna of Egbesubiri, Arogbo, Community Leader and former boat operator, 20 January, 2018.

the forests. Equally, as a noticeable feature associated with this migratory fishing expedition, at the end of every fishing year, often at the Christmas period (*kuraitibi*), the Arogbo-Ijo will come back home, and only return to resume fishing activities at the end of January or early February of the New Year.⁸

Cemes Taiakimi revealed that the Apoi menfolk (as skilful carpenters) often came to Arogbo for the purposes of building houses and the construction of outboard engine wooden boats. He further recounted how he personally brought Mr Moses Omomofe Olomu, who later became an *Oba* known as the Takunbe of Ipoke, to build one of his outboard engine wooden boats which he used to carry Ogogoro (dry gin) from Arogbo to Idumagbo in Lagos on commercial basis in the 1970s.⁹ Similarly, Iye Kike,¹⁰ an Ijebu trader from Ijebu-Mushin, near Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, who lived at Arogbo from the early 1980s to the late 1990s, also recounted that most of her inboard engine wooden boats were built by Apoi carpenters from Inikorogha and Igbotu. These inboard engine wooden boats were used to carry Ogogoro from Arogbo to Ejirin or Ejinrin and Idumagbo in Lagos State once every week. In a similar way, according to Israel Timi Emokenighan,¹¹ Mr Olu Afolabi, a skilful Apoi carpenter from Igbobini, worked in Biagbini (an Arogbo-Ijo settlement) from the 1970s to the late 1990s, when age no longer permitted him to carry on his work.

Specifically, on the decline and the eventual halt and/or collapse of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi fish trade relations, Jomo Kondigha puts it as towards the end of the 1980s to the late 1990s. The first reason he advanced was the emergence of similar other fish markets at Igbokoda and Okitipupa in Ondo State, Sapele in Delta State and Idumagbo in Lagos State; and second, the consequential direct participation and entry of the Arogbo-Ijo into the fish trade. By their entry, the Arogbo-Ijo traders broke the Apoi monopoly in the age-long trade by directly taken their fish products either in fresh or smoked form to the said market centres

⁸ Oral interview held with Mrs Clementina Opirijitei, 60 years, Egbesubiri, retired civil servant, Arogbo, 21 January, 2018.

⁹ Oral interview held with High Chief Cemes Taiakimi, 85 years, the Egbesuwei of Egbesubiri, Tolukiribou, Arogbo, former transporter, 23 January, 2018.

¹⁰ Mrs Iye Kike personally revealed the above information to this researcher in the 1990s while he was in the business, assisting his late elder sister, Ainu George in selling Ogogoro (dry gin) in Ejirin and Idumagbo markets in Lagos State. Throughout his stays in the business, Mrs Iye-Kike boat carried the Ogogoro (dry gin) stored in Iron-drums/rubber drums and loaded from Fiyebasintei, Arogbo to Lagos once every week.

¹¹ Oral interview held with Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, 55 years, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Erubiri, Arogbo, 21 January, 2018.

at comparatively lower prices. In fact, with the Arogbo-Ijo entry into the trade, the *idi-opa* system of pinning together of about eighteen fish or fishes was drastically changed to *lapete* which consists of about six or eight pinned together fishes of two *opas* (sets) to form one set. Thereafter, about twenty sets are tied together to form one bundle. As a systematic home advantage for the Arogbo-Ijo traders, the Apoi traders gradually found it very difficult to face the keen competition of buying the needed fishes from the source of production as previously done when there was no competition from the Arogbo-Ijo.¹²

As further made known by Thompson Ominisan, the Igbokoda market (in Ilaje) became the most populous, and prosperous in the 1980s as it relates to this trade and other economic transactions generally. This was due to the fact that the General Olusegun Obasanjo Local Government reforms of 1976 merged the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, Igbekebo, and the Ilaje District Council, Atijere, to form the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, Igbokoda (1976-1996). Consequently, Igbokoda became the new local government headquarters for the Ilaje, Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi groups. Thus, to effectively link the new administrative headquarters (Igbokoda) to Ore, the Federal Government constructed the Igbokoda-Okitipupa-Ore Road in the 1980s. Therefore, because of the new good road network, the Okitipupa, Ondo, Akure, Owo, and Ile-Ife fish traders from the hinterland abandoned the ancient Apoi markets of Kiribo, Igbotu, Igbobini, etc. known for their bad road network, for the new Igbokoda market.¹³ As an added advantage, Igbokoda can be reached through Oluwa River with the use of boats by the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi traders, and through the Okitipupa-Ore land route by the hinterland traders.

In fact, Jomo Kondigha, Thompson Ominisan, and Dola Duyile¹⁴ all agreed and affirmed with a wave of nostalgia that the then most populous and prosperous Igbokoda market, itself, experienced an abrupt and temporary halt in 1998. The major contributory factor was the

¹² Oral interview held with Chief Jomo Kondigha, 67 years, Chief Afuna of Egbesubiri, Community Leader and former *boat operator*, Arogbo, 20 December, 2018.

¹³ Oral interview held with Chief Thompson Ominisan (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 60 years, Community Leader and former boat operator, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 25 January, 2018.

¹⁴ Oral interviews held with Chief Jomo Kondigha, 67 years, Chief Afuna of Egbesubiri, Community Leader and former boat operator, Arogbo, 20 December, 2018; Chief Thompson Ominisan (later elevated to the status of a High Chief), 60 years, Community Leader and former boat operator, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 25 January, 2018; and Mr Dola Duyile, 55 years, Barate Quarters, Igbobini, 20 December, 2017.

Arogbo-Ijo/Ugbo-Ilaje crisis of 1998.¹⁵ This made the waterways unsafe for business activities, hence, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi traders abandoned the Igbokoda market.

Be that it may, the point that must be made is that the introduction and the emergence of new fish markets altered the age-long pattern and nature of inter-group relations between the two groups. That is, with the introduction of machines, the Arogbo-Ijo were able to carry their fish products to faraway market centres for sale at comparatively higher prices with its attendant profits. For example, by the use of outboard engine wooden boats, it was a journey of about four hours for the Arogbo-Ijo to transport their fresh and smoked fishes to Igbokoda market in Ilaje, for direct sales to hinterland buyers. Similarly, with the use of inboard engine wooden boats, it took about two days to travel by water through the Ilaje territorial waterways to link Epe, via Langbasa to Idumagbo beach (the Ogogoro and fish market) in Lagos State. Likewise, with the use of inboard engine wooden boats, it took the Arogbo-Ijo traders about a day to travel by water through the Benin River to Sapele beach market in Delta State to sell their fishes to Edo, Urhobo and Itsekiri buyers. Therefore, the trade relations that hitherto existed between the two groups only within the same geographical enclave moved beyond their immediate environment to cover far distant locations. So, with the above spread to faraway other locations, the trade monopoly exclusively enjoyed by the Apoi was broken. That is the intermediary role of the Apoi was frontally challenged and reduced to that of a keen competition to the magnitude in which the Apoi could no longer even face the Arogbo-Ijo traders who directly transported their fishes to the distant buyers. Negatively, this also altered the economic fortunes of the Apoi to an unbearable level, but to the advantage of the Arogbo-Ijo.

¹⁵ For details on the said Arogbo-Ijo/Ugbo-Ilaje crisis of 1998, see, Magi, J. M. 2003. *Arogbo-Ijaw/Ugbo-Ilaje Fratricidal War*. Akure: Feylas International Print.

4.2 State and Local Government Council Creation and New Patterns of Political Relations

At independence on Saturday, the 1st Day of October, 1960, Nigeria had three regions, namely, Northern, Western and Eastern. On Friday, 9 August, 1963, the fourth (Mid-West Region) was created out from the Western Region. As argued by Ekanade,¹⁶ two self-serving reasons necessitated the creation of the Mid-West Region. The first was the burning desire by the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) coalition to deflate the political influence of the Action Group (AG) in the Western region and reduce its national reach. The second was to create simultaneously in-roads into the area for political incursion by other parties, particularly the NCNC, while keeping the North and East intact.¹⁷ Similarly, Akinyele argued that the Mid-West was created in order to extend the influence of the NPC and NCNC opposition into the West and not because the Federal and Regional Governments were convinced that the action was necessary to save the mid-westerners from Yoruba domination.¹⁸

Furthermore, Ikime¹⁹ argued that the Mid-West Region was created not out of a desire to do justice to the minority groups of the then Western Region, but out of the determination of the unholy alliance of the NPC and the NCNC to emasculate the Action Group and reduced the influence of its leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. In actual fact, the Mid-Westerners overwhelmingly voted yes in the referendum for the creation of the region. They

¹⁶ Ekanade, O. V. 2013. Nigerian Leaders, Proliferation of States and Federal Finance in Nigeria: 1955-1996. Sofela, B. *et al.* Eds. *Nigeria at 50: Politics, Society and Development*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Limited, pp. 159-178.

¹⁷ Ekanade, O.V. 2013. Nigerian Leaders, Proliferation of States and Federal Finance in Nigeria: 1955-1996. Sofela, B. *et al.* Eds. *Nigeria at 50: Politics, Society and Development*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Limited, pp. 159-178. Note: The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons formed on 26 August, 1944, was later changed to National Council of Nigerian Citizens in 1962 at the historic NCNC National Convention held at Port Harcourt. For further details, see, Crowder, M. 1965. *The Story of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 316.

¹⁸ Akinyele, R. T. 2001. The Creation of Ondo State and the Emergence of the New Minority. *A Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History, University of Lagos, Vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

¹⁹ Ikime, O. 2018. *Can Anything Good Come Out of History?* Ibadan: Bookcraft, p. 247. Closely related but with further details, Ikime unravelled that Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Premier of the Western Region, believed in the creation of more regions, but vehemently insisted that such exercise should be nationwide. The creation of the Mid-West Region in 1963 was made possible by the Federal Government which was an alliance between the NPC and the NCNC. That these two parties did not support the creation of the Middle-Belt Region and a Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers Region in their respective regions, reveals the bad faith in which they acted. The primary aim was to reduce the area over which Awolowo could exercise authority. See, Ikime, O. 2018, as quoted above, p.150.

wanted to opt out of the Western region for several reasons, which details need not detain us here. Nevertheless, as vividly revealed by Omoigui,²⁰ on 29 March, 1963, the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs of Nigeria was saddled with the responsibility for the organisation of a referendum to decide whether a new region should be created out of the Western Region in the sub-region called the Mid-West, comprising of the Benin and Delta Provinces. The total number of eligible voters (Benin and Delta) being persons whose names appeared in the Federal Electoral register of 1959 was 654,130. Of this number, the percentage that voted in the affirmative was 89.07% (579,077 voters), well in excess of the required 60% (392,478) for the creation of the Mid-West region; while 7,218 voted against its creation. Hence, the Mid-West region that was born on Friday, 9 August, 1963 as a result of the Saturday, 13 July, 1963 Plebiscite remains the only major administrative unit of Nigeria created by due constitutional process.

Significantly, therefore, this encouraged a new wave of agitation which began in Ondo Province ostensibly because of its geographical proximity to the Mid-West. Thus, the case for upgrading Ondo Province into a State was argued by a body known as the Ondo Provincial Front.²¹ Nevertheless, the four regional structure remained as the major administrative units in Nigeria until the demise of the First Republic on Saturday, 15 January, 1966 when the military seized political power.

On Saturday, 27 May, 1967, General Yakubu Gowon (then a Lieutenant Colonel) divided Nigeria into twelve States. The new States were Western, Lagos, Mid-West, East-Central, Rivers and South-Eastern from the old South, and North-Western, North-Central, Kano, North-Eastern, Kwara and Benue-Plateau from the old North. Indeed, the 'monolithic' North created in 1914 was dismantled on paper. Arguably, the creation of the twelve state structure, which replaced the four regional structure, was an exercise in power politics. The immediate goal was to make secession very unattractive to the leaders of the Eastern Region

²⁰ A Speech entitled Benin and Mid West Referendum of 1963, Delivered by Nowamagbe A. Omoigui, on Friday 20 December, 2002 at *Oba Akenzua II Cultural Complex*, Airport Road, Benin City on the Occasion of the Fifth late Chief (Dr) Jacob Uwadiae Egharevba (MBE) Memorial Lecture and Award Ceremony, under the Distinguished Chairmanship of S. A. Asemota, Esq (SAN), Sponsored by the Institute for Benin Studies. www.waado.org/.../fifth-omoigui.htm. Accessed online 03-02-2018.

²¹ Akinyele, R.T. 2001. The Creation of Ondo State and the Emergence of the New Minority. *A Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History, University of Lagos, Vol.1, p. 20.

by isolating the Igbo from their neighbours, such as the Ijo, Efik, and Ibibio.²² Meanwhile, in respect of the Western Region, Akinyele argued that the Federal Government created Lagos State from the Western Region not so much from the desire to honour the wishes of Lagosians, but to deny the Western State the claim to the Federal Capital and the major sea port.²³

According to Mgbada, the exercise was intended to minimise or eliminate marginalisation and quench all flaming embers of rancour and acrimony, which characterised the relations between and among the various Nigerian groups.²⁴ In his own contribution, Obi argued that it was an attempt to grant minorities a measure of self-determination and break the unwieldy influence of the regions, the Gowon-led federal military government created twelve states in 1967, to replace the old regions.²⁵ But contrary to the above point of argument, the creation of the twelve States gave birth to other myriad of problems in the inter-group relations of the various Nigerian groups. For instance, under the twelve State structure, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi in Okitipupa Division of the old Ondo Province became part of the Western State, as they were under the Western Region (1946-1967).

Precisely, the 1967 state creation exercise failed to bring to reality the Ondo State dream by the Ondo Provincial Front. Emmanuel and Olorunyolemi, therefore, revealed that on Thursday, 5 March, 1970, some prominent leaders of Ondo Province wrote a letter to the then Head of State of the Federal Military Government, General Yakubu Gowon. The correspondence was titled 'Creation of a Yoruba East State comprising Ekiti, Akoko, Owo, Akure, Ondo and Okitipupa Divisions'. The letter prayed for the translation of the Ondo Province to a State that should be called 'South Western State'. As shown by the above, the letter started with a title 'Creation of a Yoruba East State', but as a contradiction ended with another identity known as 'South Western State'. The signatories to the letter were Chief Olu Akinfosile (Okitipupa), Chief G. B. A. Akinyede (Ekiti Central), Dr O. A. Akintoye (Ondo), J. B. Daramola (Ekiti North), S. Abiodun (Akure) and R. A. Olusa (Akoko). Others

²² Ikime, O. 2018. *Can Anything Good Come Out of History?* Ibadan: Bookcraft, p. 279.

²³ Akinyele, R.T. 2001. The Creation of Ondo State and the Emergence of the New Minority. *A Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History, University of Lagos, Vol.1, pp.11-31.

²⁴ Mgbada, C. O. 2012. State Creation and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria: The Izzi-Ukelle Experience Since 1996. Ogbogbo, C. B. N. *et al.* Eds. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960. Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, p. 113.

²⁵ Obi, C. I. 2000. Oil Minority Rights and the Question of Democratic Stability in Nigeria. *Journal of Cultural Studies*. Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria, Nigerian Group for the Study of African Cultures, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.75-95.

were Chief S. B. Aruwajoye (Owo), Chief H. A. Akinloye (Akure), S. O. Lasebikan (Ekiti West), E. A. Ojuolape (Ekiti South), O. Bademosi (Ondo), J. A. Akintoba (Akure) and M. O. Rotimi (Ekiti North).²⁶

After waiting in vain for four years, another letter, and this time with a clear title: ‘Petition for the Creation of Ondo State’, was submitted to General Yakubu Gowon on Saturday, 16 March, 1974. The first paragraph of the petition, duly signed by 74 signatories, stated *inter alia*:

We, the representatives and leaders of the people of nine administrative Divisions of the Western State, namely, Akoko, Akure, Ekiti Central, Ekiti North, Ekiti South, Ekiti West, Okitipupa, Ondo and Owo Divisions, together, comprising the Ondo Province, on behalf of ourselves and the entire people of the said area, humbly pray Your Excellency to create the area into a state to be known as ‘Ondo State’ within the constitutional framework and political structure of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.²⁷

In tracing the agitation for the creation of Ondo State beyond the above two historic letters, Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin, the first civilian Governor of Ondo State (1979–1983), briefly submits thus:

I have mentioned that some leaders from Ondo Province had met in Ibadan on 11th August, 1966 and decided to press for the creation of the Ondo Province into a state. I also mentioned that it was at the instance of Chief G. B. A. Akinyede. I must point out here that even though I presided at the meeting, Chief Akinyede was the prime mover of the activities leading to the creation of Ondo State. Long before

²⁶ Emmanuel, G. H. S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing Company, pp. 20-23.

²⁷ Emmanuel, G. H. S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing Company, pp. 21 - 23. For the record, the 74 signatories from the **Nine Divisions** were: **Akoko**: R. A. Olusa, I. A. Olukoju, R. A. Olagunju, J. O. Arogbofa, E. K. Ogunleye, S. K. A. Adedoyin, O. Adeyemi, S. O. Animasaun and Chief D. K. Olumofin; **Akure**: G. Akin Deko, Chief R. F. Fasoranti, Chief H. A. Akinloye, J. A. Akintoba, Blessing Kayode, M. Olu Bello, Jaiyeola Ola Faloye, Awolaye B. Agunbiade, Deji Adegoroye (Secretary) and A. Adegbonmire; **Ekiti**: J. A. Ani, Chief G. B. A. Akinyede, J. Ade Fashuba, Prof G. J. Afolabi Ojo, J. O. Ogunleye, S. B. Kowee, J. A. Fapohunda, Ademola Ajakaiye and Revd Canon G. I. O. Olajide; **Ekiti**: Chief R. O. Areola, J. B. Daramola, J. F. A. Ogunlayi, Olawumi Falodun, A. A. Oguntuwase, V. A. Daramola, A. O. Adeyemo, S. Adeleye Rotimi, M. B. Alonge, A. O. Akanle, and Dr G. Olu Alabi; **Ekiti**: B. A. Ajayi, Segun Asho, P. A. Akomolafe, I. A. Ogunjemilua, E. A. Ojuolape, Olufemi Areoye, Dosu Okeya and Dr Olu Agbede; **Ekiti West**: Chief J. O. Osuntokun, Chief J. A. Adeniran, Ayo Fasanmi, S. O. Ifeola, Chief R.A. Ogunlade, A. Fayawo and Prof V. A. Williams; **Okitipupa**: Chief Olu Akinfosile, Chief H. O. Kuewumi, Chief I. A. Leji, E. O. Agagu and A. O. Ariyibi; **Ondo**: O. Badamosi, Jerome O. Ojo, J. O. Olorunyolemi, F. O. Akinsiku, A. Ola Akindiose and Dr O. A. Akintoye (Constitutional Adviser); and **Owo**: M. A. Ajasin, Chief S. B. Aruwajoye, S. R. Babatunde Okoro, David Adebayo Ijalaiye, T. D. Odenusi, J. F. A. Orikun, P. E. Addo, R. M. Oroware and Chief S. A. Ogunleye. pp. 22-23.

the meeting, Chief Akinyede has been working with some people in championing the agitations for the creation of the state. Among such people were Dr O. Akintoye, Mr Adeleye, Chief Koboye and Mr Awolola. I knew virtually nothing about this group before the Ibadan meeting or their activities on the creation of the State. But I later learnt that they had been writing a lot of petitions to the authorities on the matter under the name of Ondo Provincial Development Union.²⁸

Though the above two historic letters were written during the time of General Yakubu Gowon, the request was ultimately granted by his successor in office, General Murtala Ramat Muhammed. Hence, according to Olusegun Obasanjo,²⁹ to retrieve the image of the military which had been dented by Yakubu Gowon's change of mind regarding the return to civil rule in 1976, on Tuesday 29 July, 1975, General Yakubu Gowon was overthrown in a bloodless coup while attending a meeting of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), Conference in Kampala, Uganda. Consequently, Brigadier (later General) Murtala Ramat Muhammed, Inspector of Signals in the Nigerian Army and Federal Commissioner for Communications in the Gowon Administration became the new Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.³⁰ On the need, therefore, to create more States, on August 7, 1975, the Federal Military Government appointed a Panel under the Chairmanship of Justice Ayo Gabriel Irikefe (1922-1996) to:

- (i) examine the question of the creation of more States in the Federation and, should the Committee find the creation of more States necessary and desirable to:
 - (a) advise on the delimitation of such States;
 - (b) advise on the economic viability of the proposed states;
 - (c) advise on the location of the administrative capitals of the proposed States, and
 - (d) examine and advise on all other factors that may appear to the Committee to be relevant, so as to enable the Government to take a decision which will ensure a balanced and stable Federation.

²⁸ Ajasin, M. A. 2003. *Ajasin Memoirs and Memories*. Ajasin Foundation, Lagos. Quoted in Emmanuel, G. H. S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing Company, pp.19-20.

²⁹ Quoted in Kukah, M. H. 1993. *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, p.172.

³⁰ Uwechue, R. Ed. 1991. *Africa Today*. London: Africa Books Ltd., p.1462.

(ii) receive and examine written representations from individuals, groups, organisations or associations who may have views on the desirability or otherwise of creating States in particular areas.³¹

On Tuesday, 23 December, 1975, the panel submitted its report to the Supreme Military Council. Thus, on Tuesday, 3 February, 1976, Murtala Ramat Muhammed announced the creation of seven (7) new States, making the number of States to nineteen (19), while the Federal Capital Territory was to be moved to a site in the centre of the country. The new States were Imo, Ondo, Ogun, Benue, Gongola, Niger and Bauchi. While the old States were Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Plateau, Sokoto, Borno, Oyo, Lagos, Anambra, Bendel (the name Mid-West was only changed to Bendel), Rivers and Cross River.³² In respect of Ondo State, Akure was made the capital, and it formally took off on Thursday, 1st April, 1976, with nine administrative divisions of the former Western State. These nine divisions were Akoko, Akure, Ekiti Central, Ekiti North, Ekiti South, Ekiti West, Okitipupa, Ondo and Owo.³³

As a demonstration of how the road to the creation of the state affected inter-group relations, it is imperative to state that it created new patterns of political relations. For instance, the choice of Akure as the capital of Ondo State did not go down well with the Ondo people as a group. This is because, prior to the announcement, the Ondo (people) and Akure (people) bitterly contested against each other for the state's capital. The proponents for Ondo as the capital anchored their demand on historical, geographical and social grounds. On the other hand, the proponents for Akure, argued on the grounds of being the provincial headquarters of Ondo Province on its creation in 1915 that branches of government offices were already located at Akure, and that some of these could form the nuclei of offices to serve the new government. As a fall out of the creation, therefore, it ignited sharp political division and

³¹ Federal Military Government Views on the Report of the Panel on Creation of States. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information Printing Division, 1976, p.5. For the record, the other members of the Justice Gabriel Ayo Irikefe-led Panel were: Dr Patrick Dele Cole, the Secretary of the Panel, who was then a Senior Administrative Officer, Political Division, Cabinet Office, Lagos; Dr Alli Danlami Yahaya, who was then a Senior Lecturer at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Mr Solomon Daushep Lar, then a Jos based lawyer; Brigadier Godwin Ally, then Commander of the Lagos Garrison; and Mr C. Audifferen.

³² Ekanade, O. V. 2013. *Nigerian Leaders, Proliferation of States and Federal Finance in Nigeria: 1955-1996*. Sofela, B. *et al.* Eds. *Nigeria at 50: Politics, Society and Development*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Ltd., p. 163.

³³ *The Executive Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May – July, 2010, p. 4. For further details on the creation of Ondo State, see, Emmanuel, G. H. S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing Company, p.21.

acrimony between the two groups (Ondo and Akure), and by extension the Ekiti who openly supported the Akure group. The State, thus, took off on mutual distrust and disharmony among the major groups, with particular respect to Ondo, Akure and Ekiti.³⁴

Though the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi of Okitipupa Division played no significant role in the bitter contest between Ondo and Akure in any form, at their level, they were also sharply divided on whether to join the then new Ondo State or not. In point of fact, as far back as the early 1963-1970s, the Arogbo-Ijo continually expressed her desire to be part of the Mid-West Region, Mid-Western State and Bendel State, but the Apoi reasoned to the contrary. The letter Gabriel Aramiakeleni Eshofonie wrote to the Editor of *The Renaissance* Newspaper, dated Saturday, 5th January 1974, entitled 'We Belong to the Mid-West', speaks volume on the stand of the Arogbo-Ijo thus:

...Arogbo and Apoi...numbered 17,646 and 18,469 respectively according to the 1963 population census figures, fall within the Western fringes of the Niger Delta. But since the division of the country into three administrative regions by the Richards Constitution in 1946 these two Ijaw groups were politically under the former Western Region. One could have expected that with the creation of the Mid-West [Region] in 1963 the Arogbo and Apoi could have joined their kith and kin in Benin and Delta Provinces of the Mid-West. It is sad to mention that some hungry local politicians in the district then influenced the people to relinquish their demand for inclusion into the Mid-West...Issues since then have proved it beyond doubt that the West is not for the Ijaws...This being the plight of the Ijaws in the West, I am taking the advantage of Decree No.14 which provides for a State Delimitation Commission which will ensure that any divisions or towns not satisfied with the States in which they are initially grouped will obtain redress to make it clear to the Federal Military Government that the Arogbo Ijaws in particular are not at all satisfied with their present grouping with the Yoruba West...it should be grafted into the Mid-West.³⁵

³⁴ Akinyele, R. T. 2001. The Creation of Ondo State and the Emergence of the New Minority. *A Lagos Historical Review*. A Journal of the Department of History, University of Lagos, Vol. 1, pp. 22-23; Adedayo, E. A. 2014. A Historical Survey of Colonial Administration in the Old Ondo Province Up to 1960. *ANSU. Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 3 (1) 65-75; Adesote, S.A. 2015. Colonial Rule and Socio-Economic Changes in Ondoland, 1915-1951. Olaoba, O. A. et al. Eds. *Yoruba History and Historians: A Festschrift for Professor Gabriel Olorundare Oguntomisin*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Ltd. pp.94-104.

³⁵Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., pp.104-105.

Thus, when the 3 February, 1976 creation of Ondo State included the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, the Arogbo people vehemently protested against their inclusion. In line with the above political reasoning, the Action Committee of the Arogbo-Ijaw Development Council wrote to the Secretary, Boundary Adjustment Commission, Lagos, in a memorandum on the question of delimitation of the Ondo/Bendel State Boundary in March 1976, stating thus *inter alia*.

The Arogbo-Ijaws...in Okitipupa Division of the Ondo State live in an area which is situated roughly between Latitude 60N and 60. 20N, and Longitude 40.54'E and 5.15'E of the Greenwich. The territory...is about 400 square kilometres. To the East and South of the territory are the Egbema Ijaws of the Benin West Division of the Bendel State, to the South and South West are the Ilajes of Yoruba origin of the Ondo State; to the North East are some Arogbo Ijaws already in the Benin West Division of the Bendel State and to the North and North-West are the Apoi and Ikale of Okitipupa Division of the Ondo State. According to the 1963 census, the population of the Arogbo Ijaw territory is 17,646... BE IT RESOLVED and it is hereby resolved...that this memorandum be submitted to Boundary Adjustment Commission, so as to advise the Federal Military Government to alter or redefine the boundary between the Okitipupa Division of Ondo State and the Benin West Division of the Bendel State on the other hand, in order to transfer to the Bendel State of Nigeria, the territory now being occupied by the Arogbo...³⁶

In her frantic efforts to achieve her political desire, at the 1976 Justice Mamman Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission sitting at Ayetoro (an Ilaje settlement) in Ondo State, the Arogbo-Ijo diplomatically sought excision from Ondo State, and a merger with her Egbema-Ijo kith and kin in the then Bendel State (now Edo and Delta States) on grounds of general neglect and discriminatory practices. The Apoi, on the other hand, preferred to remain in the newly created Ondo State. The pro-Ondo people labelled this merger agitation as mere oil diplomacy and further stated that Ondo Province was generally neglected in the former Western State, and that the few amenities allocated to Okitipupa Division were evenly shared among the five District Councils. This implies that, even if there was any element of neglect in the then Okitipupa Division, it was peculiar to all and not to the

³⁶Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., pp.112-116.

Arogbo-Ijo in isolation. The Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission granted the Arogbo-Ijo request and, thus, recommended that they should be allowed to merge with their Egbema-Ijo kith and kin in the then Bendel State on the grounds that the demand was unanimous and expected to create greater sense of belonging. However, this recommendation was rejected by the then General Olusegun Obasanjo-led Supreme Military Council on the grounds that the then new local government system was capable of solving most of the problems of the Arogbo-Ijo for the rapid development of the area.³⁷

This development negatively affected the Arogbo-Ijo relations with their Apoi brothers. As a people of common stock, the Arogbo-Ijo ordinarily expected the Apoi to team up with them in their historical merger struggle. However, the Apoi decided to the contrary on grounds of their Yoruba linguistic identity. Like the Arogbo-Ijo, the said Egbema-Ijo kith and kin the Arogbo-Ijo were anxious to join in the then Bendel State, are also of Ijo-origin and Ijo-speaking; and above all, are direct neighbours to the Arogbo-Ijo. Thus, the Arogbo-Ijo pointed accusing finger at the Apoi, whose refusal to toe the same political direction, was considered a crucial factor that led to their failure to achieve their merger dream with their Egbema-Ijo kith and kin in the then Bendel State (now Edo and Delta States).

While the pang of frustration and anger over the failure to realise the merger request was still very fresh in their political memory, a Squadron Leader at the time of his appointment, Wing Commander Ita David Ikpeme, the pioneer Military Governor of Ondo State (3 February, 1976 – 23 July, 1978), on Saturday, 21 August, 1976, announced the creation of seventeen (17) Local Government Councils. Meanwhile, prior to December 1972, the old Ondo Province had twenty-seven (27) District Councils and six (6) Provisional Authorities. The District Councils were Oka, Ikare, Akure, Idanre, Ifedore, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo, Ondo South, Ondo Central, Ondo West, Ikale Idapometa, Ikale Idapomarun, Ikale Orisunmeta, Ese-Odo, Ilaje, Ekamarun, Irekari, Owo, Ado, Gbonyin, Omuo, Ikole, Ekiti North, Ekiti

³⁷Federal Military Government's Views on the Report of the Boundary Adjustment Commission. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information Printing Division, 1976, p.18. For the record, apart from Justice Mamman Nasir, the five other members of the Commission were: Justice Joseph Diekola Ogundire, who was then the Solicitor-General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice; Mr R. O. Coker, Director of Federal Survey; Mr G. E. Menkiti; Mr Andrew Izikwu Obeya, who was then Secretary to Plateau State Government and later became the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission; and Mr C. O. Ikpi.

South, Ekiti West, Ido-Osi, Otun and Ijero. While the Provisional Authorities were Akoko Central, Akoko North, Akoko North East, Akoko West, Akoko East and Akoko South. Apparently, in order to ensure effective performance, in January 1972, the Western State Military Governor, Brigadier General Christopher Oluwole Rotimi (1 April, 1971-30 July, 1975) decided to merge together some of the above District Councils and Provisional Authorities. Consequently, thirteen District Councils emerged at the end of the day. These were Akoko, Akure, Idanre, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo, Okitipupa, Ondo, Ose, Owo, Ado, Ekiti North, Ekiti South, Ekiti West and Gbonyin.³⁸

A careful scrutiny of the above political re-organisation revealed that Ikale Idapometa District Council, Ikale Idapomarun District Council, Ikale Orisunmeta District Council (for the Ikale), Ilaje District Council (for the Ilaje), and Ese-Odo District Council (for the Arogbo-Ijo, Apoi and Bini Confederation) were merged together to form Okitipupa Divisional Council, with the headquarters at Okitipupa (an Ikale settlement). Hence, it was from the above thirteen District Councils that Wing Commander Ita David Ikpeme reconstituted the then new Ondo State into seventeen Local Government Councils in 1976. Concomitantly, it was out of the said Okitipupa Divisional Council created in 1972, that Ikale Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Okitipupa and Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Igbokoda (an Ilaje settlement) were created in 1976. The list of the said 17 Local Government Councils of Ondo State in 1976, with the final list of voters and their headquarters are provided in Table 4.1 on page 147, while the Map of Ondo State showing the 17 Local Government Councils at the time of its creation in 1976 are in Figure 4.1 on page 148.

³⁸Emmanuel, G.H.S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing Company, pp.157-158.

Table 4.1: List of the 17 Local Government Councils of Ondo State in 1976, with the final list of voters and their Headquarters

S/No.	Name of Local Government	Number of Voters	Headquarters
1	Akoko North	175,115	Ikare-Akoko
2	Akoko South	180,181	Oka-Akoko
3	Akure	212,392	Akure
4	Ekiti Central	236,067	Ado-Ekiti
5	Ekiti East	129,697	Omuo-Ekiti
6	Ekiti North	210,620	Ikole-Ekiti
7	Ekiti South	206,633	Ikere-Ekiti
8	Ekiti Southwest	121,382	Ilawe-Ekiti
E	Ekiti West	177,468	Aramoko-Ekiti
10	Ero	212,546	Ido-Ekiti
11	Idanre/Ifedore	113,381	Owena
12	Ifesowapo	156,469	Ore
13	Ijero	138,607	Ijero-Ekiti
14	Ikale	192,041	Okitipupa
15	Ilaje/Ese-Odo	114,305	Igbokoda
16	Ondo	228,323	Ondo
17	Owo	166,574	Owo

Source: Compiled by the researcher through information obtained from Emmanuel, G.H.S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure: Lord Keynes Publishing Company, pp.158, 162.

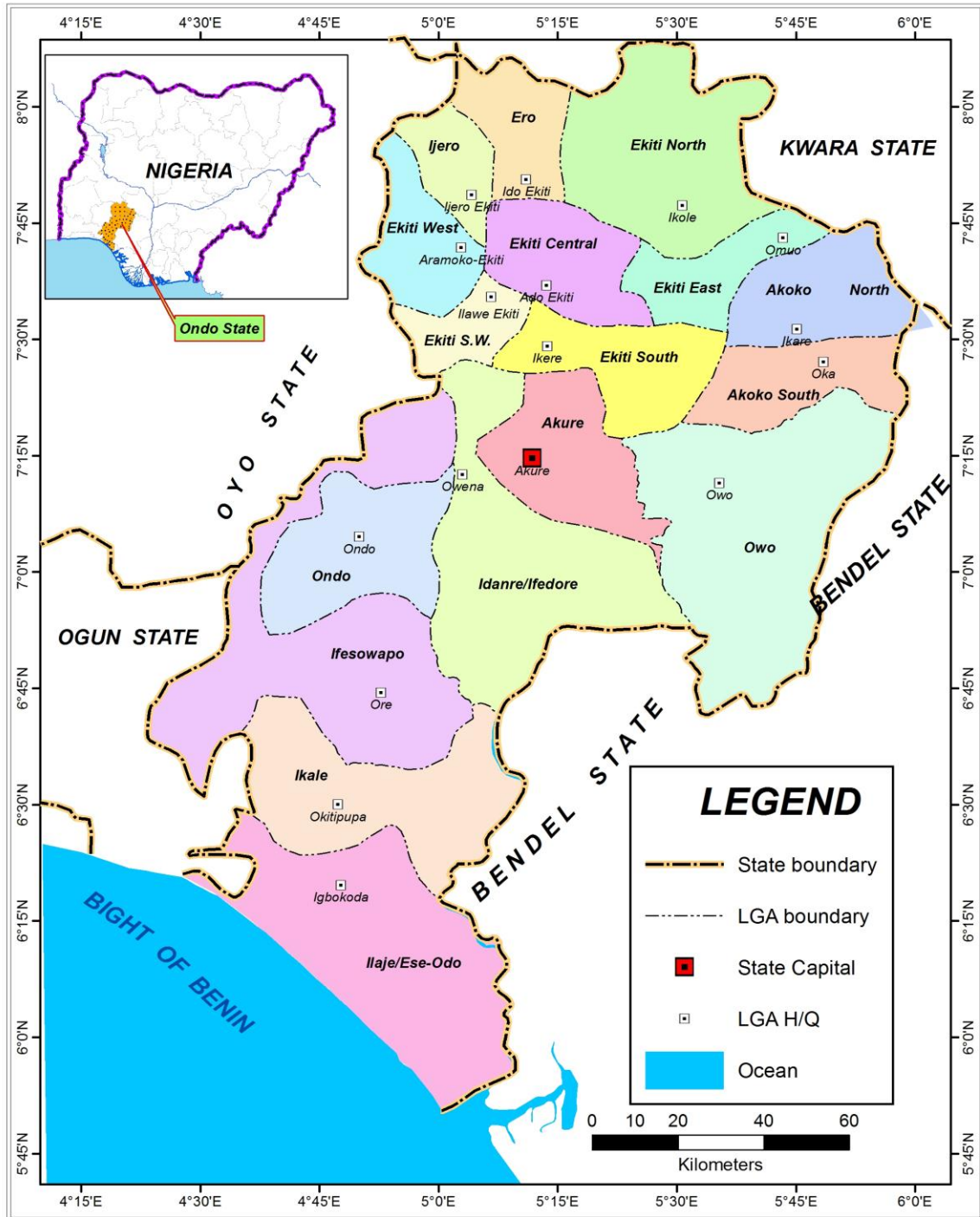


Figure 4.1: Map of Ondo State showing the 17 Local Government Councils at the time of its creation in 1976. **Source:** Ondo State Ministry of Works and Housing, Survey Department, Akure (1977). Redrawn by the Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2018.

In respect of Arogbo-Ijo, the creation of Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council for the Arogbo-Ijo, Apoi and Ilaje ignited another political discontent. Contrary to their expectation, the Local Government Edict, 1976, which created the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, states thus:

In exercise of the powers conferred on the Executive Council by Section 1 of the Local Government Edict, 1976 (hereinafter called 'the Edict') a Local Government entitled 'the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government' (hereinafter called 'the Local Government') with the headquarters at Igbokoda shall be established on the 1st day of September, 1976. The area of authority of the Local Government shall be the same as the areas of authority of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council as published in W.R.L.N 265 of 1955, excluding the following towns, Ajagba, Iju-Osun, Akotogbo, Ogedengbe, Ajijoh, Sarogbo (sic), Talawa and the area of Authority of the defunct Ilaje District Council as published in W.R.L.N. 264 of 1955.³⁹

As a bone of contention, in his reaction against the nomenclature 'Ese-Odo' as an identity, Christopher Eshofonie expressed the general feelings of the Arogbo-Ijo in the following words:

Launching the new Local Government Councils recently in Ondo State, His Excellency, Wing Commander I. D. Ikpeme, the Governor of Ondo State re-constituted the State into 17 Local Government Areas... Luckily for the people of the riverine areas of the state the Ilaje/Ijaw Local Government Council was created for them. According to the very clear announcement of the Governor on this subject he made it clear that this new council is to replace the defunct Ilaje District Council and the former Ese-Odo District Council less the Ikale group which is always referred to as 'Ado/Ikale' or 'Bini Confederation' in the former Ese-Odo District Council... The new Ilaje/Ijaw Local Council therefore comprises three groups known as the Ilaje, the Arogbo Ijaw, and the Apoi Ijaw. This is why His Excellency had rightly christened the new Council the Ilaje/Ijaw Local Government Council. But in recent publications of the Nigerian Dailies and the utterances made by some important government functionaries in the State one becomes surprised and shocked to read and hear the new Council renamed ILAJE/ESE-ODO

³⁹OD: S.L.N. 19 of 1979. The Local Government Edict, 1979, Instrument Establishing the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, B52. Note: The said excluded towns were brought under the defunct Ikale Local Government Council, Okitipupa. Note: The name Sarogbo is wrong, the correct name is Barogbo.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL. Why is this irrelevant change of 'Ijaw' for Ese-Odo? Is the word 'Ese-Odo' a Yoruba equivalent for the name 'IJAW'? NO!...It is another calculated attempt to becloud the identity of the two Ijaw communities which are component parts not only of the Ilaje/Ijaw Local Government Council but also of the Ondo State as a whole. If the Ilaje...group can retain their name...what disqualifies the two Ijaw communities from upholding their tribal name as was rightly given by His Excellency? If the brains behind this change feel that the substitution of 'Ese-Odo' for 'Ijaw' is an identification symbol for the riverine nature of the Council, there is a world of parochialism in its application in that it cannot eliminate the name 'Ijaw' alone since 'Ese-Odo' means riverine area whose people both the Ilajes and the Ijaws are...⁴⁰

As a further protest against the name 'Ese-Odo', the Arogbo-Ijaw Community, Rivers State Branch, Port Harcourt on Monday, 31 January, 1977, also wrote an open letter to the Military Governor of Ondo State, praying for a proper name to reflect the Ijo identity. The said petition states thus:

...Our objection to the ...name 'Ese-Odo' is not far fetched. On one hand it does not stand the test of time and on the other it has no historical affiliation or some reasonable meanings with reference to the two clans viz: Ijaw-Apoi and Arogbo-Ijaw which it is meant to stand for...We have enquired and found out that 'Ese-Odo' has no connection whatsoever to either the Apois or Arogbos rather it was used as compromise among the three...groups namely, Apoi, Arogbo and Benin (sic) Confederation which formed the so called defunct Ese-Odo District Council...But now that Benin (sic) Confederation which was the odd area in the use of a common term is not in the present Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area, why still maintaining the alien name which is purported to have stand for the two clans. This is a misnomer, Arogbo and Apoi are all of Ijaw origin and are urgently appealing to the Military Governor to change the name of the Local Government Authority area to Ilaje/Ijaw Local Government Area.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Quoted in Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise Publishers and Educational Materials Suppliers, pp.120-122.

⁴¹ Quoted in Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., pp.128-129. Note: Though written as 'Benin Confederation' in the above quotation, the correct name at that time was Bini Confederation.

Briefly put, as implications for their relationship, the above contest for the rightful name for the newly created local government council terribly sown a seed of political discord between the two groups. Hence, from the onset, concerted efforts needed to jointly fight for their common political interests were no longer feasible in their relationship with their Ilaje neighbours, who had more political wards in the new administrative configuration. Consequently, playing the second fiddle to their Ilaje neighbours was the order of the day.

As it was in the days of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, despite the consistent and pragmatic efforts of the Arogbo-Ijo to change the Council's name to reflect their common Ijo identity, the Apoi did not make any visible effort to alter the position of the Ondo State Government. Therefore, the Arogbo-Ijo felt terribly disappointed once again and viewed the attitude of the Apoi as anti Ijo interest because of its Yoruba linguistic identity. Meanwhile, since all humanly possible efforts to change the 'Ese-Odo' identity to Ijo ended in a fiasco, the Arogbo-Ijo had no option than to participate in the first Local Government Council election slated for Tuesday, 28 December, 1976 alongside the Ilaje and Apoi groups.

On a critical look, the composition of the Council itself was not clearly in favour of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi. For instance, Section 4 (1) of the Instrument that established the Council states thus: 'The Council of the Local Government shall consist of thirteen members, namely, (a) the President; and (b) Ten elected members: Provided that the Military Governor may in his absolute discretion appoint not more than three nominated members in exercise of his powers under the Local Government Edict, 1976'.⁴² Furthermore, Section 5 states that:

⁴² OD.S.L.N. 19 of 1979. The Local Government Edict, 1976. Instrument Establishing the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, B 52.

The President of the Local Government who shall not be an executive president shall be appointed from the holders of the following traditional offices in annual rotation in the following order: (i) The Amapetu of Mahin, (ii) The Olugbo of Ugbo (iii) The Kalasuwe of Ijaw Apoi; (iv) The Agadagba of Arogbo; (v) The Maporure of Agerige; [and] (vi) The Onikan of Etikan.⁴³

In respect of the ten elected members as contained in Section 4 (1 and b), Section 6 clearly states that: The Local Government Council shall consist of the following wards in tabular form as provided in Table 4.2 on page 153.

⁴³ OD.S.L.N. 19 of 1979. The Local Government Edict, 1976. Instrument Establishing the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, B 52.

Table 4.2: The 10 Wards of Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council

No.	Name of ward	No. of persons to be elected
(i)	Mahin I	1
(ii)	Mahin II	1
(iii)	Aheri/Etikan	1
(iv)	Ugbo I	1
(v)	Ugbo II	1
(vi)	Ugbo III	1
(vii)	Ijaw Apoi I	1
(viii)	Ijaw Apoi II	1
(ix)	Ijaw Arogbo I	1
(x)	Ijaw Arogbo II	1

Source: OD. S.L.N. of 1979, the Local Government Edict, 1976. Instrument Establishing the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, B 53. For the record, in the above quoted Edict, 1976, Ugbo I, Ugbo II and Ugbo III, were wrongly spelt as Ugbe I, Ugbe II and Ugbe III.

On a careful scrutiny, first in respect of the non-executive president and the traditional offices in annual rotation as contained in Section 5 earlier quoted, the Ilaje had four traditional offices, namely, The Amapetu of Mahin, The Olugbo of Ugbo, The Maporure of Agerige, and The Onikan of Etikan. The Apoi had one, namely, the Kalasuwe of Ijaw Apoi, and Arogbo also had only one, namely, the Agadagba of Arogbo. Also, the breakdown of the ten elected members into wards as contained in Section 6 earlier quoted shows that Ilaje had six (6) elected members or councillors (i-vi); Apoi had two (2) only (vii-viii) and Arogbo also had two (2) only (ix-x).

Consequently, the majority (Ilaje) and minority (Arogbo and Apoi) relationships characterised and enveloped the council throughout its existence (1976-1996). Since democracy is a game of numbers, needless to say that in the twenty years history of the Local Government, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were unable to occupy the Chairmanship seat through the electoral process. The two Ijo groups lived at the political shadows of the Ilaje group. Perhaps as a divine intervention through the instrumentality of military *coups d'etat*, the only instances the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi briefly occupied the chairmanship seat at Igbokoda, were as appointed Sole Administrators and Caretaker Chairmen during the various military regimes. Ruelly, out of fourteen persons that ruled the council, nine were Ilaje, three were Arogbo, one was Apoi and one was a non- indigene from Otun-Ekiti. Thus, between January 1984 and November 1985, Mr Allen Yanki (an Arogbo-Ijo from the settlement of Bolowou) was a Sole Administrator; between 1985 and 1986, Mr Joel Muboteighi Magi (an Arogbo-Ijo from the settlement of Biagbini) was also a Sole Administrator. Between August 1995 and February 1996, Major Gabriel Aramiakeleni Eshofonie (Rtd) (also, an Arogbo-Ijo from the settlement of Arogbo) was Chairman of a Caretaker Committee; while Chief Olufemi Iji (an Apoi from the settlement of Igbobini) became a Caretaker Committee Chairman from April, 1994 to 1995.⁴⁴ Ordinarily, this development ought to be a reason and a desideratum for them to come together as marginalised groups in the council to fight for their common interests, but that was unfeasible. Apart from the dearth of unity among the political leaders of the two groups, who engaged in unhealthy rivalry on infinitesimal positions specifically conceded to them,

⁴⁴Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.44-56.

the needed numerical strength in electoral contest against their Ilaje neighbours was also grossly lacking. For the record, see Table 4.3 on page 156 for the list of Chairmen of the defunct Ilaje/Ese Odo, while their pictures are displayed in Figures 4.2 - 4.15 on pages 157-170.

Table 4.3: List of Chairmen of the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (1976 -1996)

S/N	Name	Group	Elected/Appointed	Party	Year
1	Prince Olu Mafo	Ilaje	Elected	Zero Party	1976 – 1978
2	Mr S.M. Aribó	Ilaje	Appointed		1978 – 1979
3	Mr Ikanah Sunday Ewarawon	Ilaje	Appointed		1980 – 1982
4	Mr Fola Iwatan	Ilaje	Appointed		1982 – 1983
5	Mr Allen Yanki	Arogbo	Appointed		1984 – 1985
6	Mr J. M. Magi	Arogbo	Appointed		1985 – 1986
7	Mr Benson Ekujumi	Ilaje	Appointed		1986 – 1987
8	Chief A. B. Igbayisemore	Ilaje	Elected	Zoro Party	1987 – 1989
9	Mr J. A. Ibidunmoye	Otun-Ekiti	Appointed		Jan.1990 – Mar. 1990
10	Chief Sola Ebiseni	Ilaje	Elected	SDP	1990 – 1993
11	Mr Glover Odidiomo	Ilaje	Appointed		1993 – 1994
12	Chief Olufemi Iji	Apoi	Appointed		1994 – 1995
13	Major G. A. Eshofonie (Rtd)	Arogbo	Appointed		1995 – 1996
14	Mr Aseph Coker	Ilaje	Elected	Zero Party	1996 – 1997

Source: Compiled by the researcher through information obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.

Chairmen of the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (1976-1996)



Figure 4.2: Prince Olu Mafo (Ilaje) 1976-1978.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.3: Mr S.M. Aribó (Ilaje) 1978-1979.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.4: Mr Ikanah Sunday Ewarawon (Ilaje) 1980-1982.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.

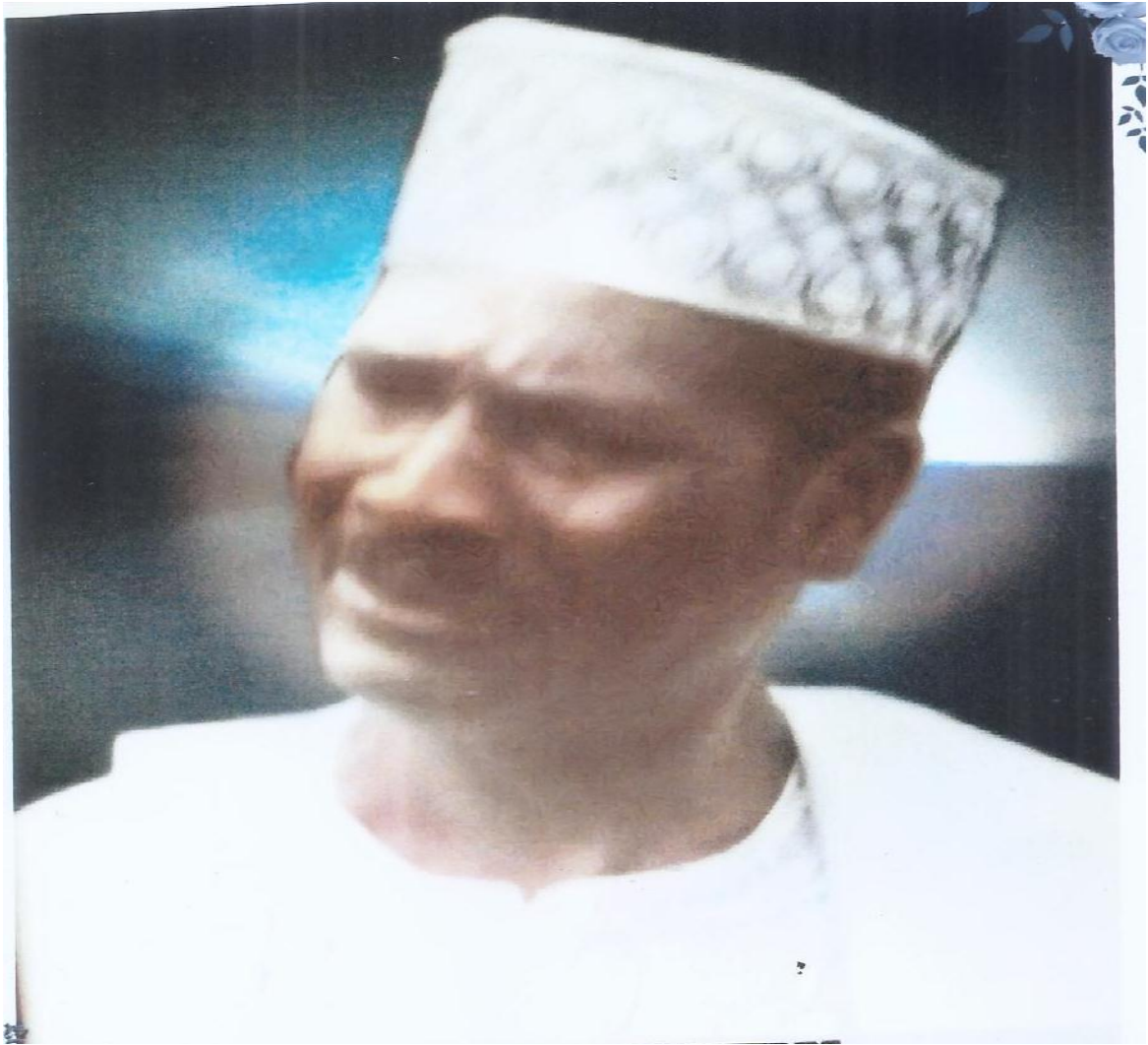


Figure 4.5: Mr Fola Iwatan (Ilaje) 1982-1983.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.6: Mr Allen Yanki (Arogbo) 1984-1985.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.

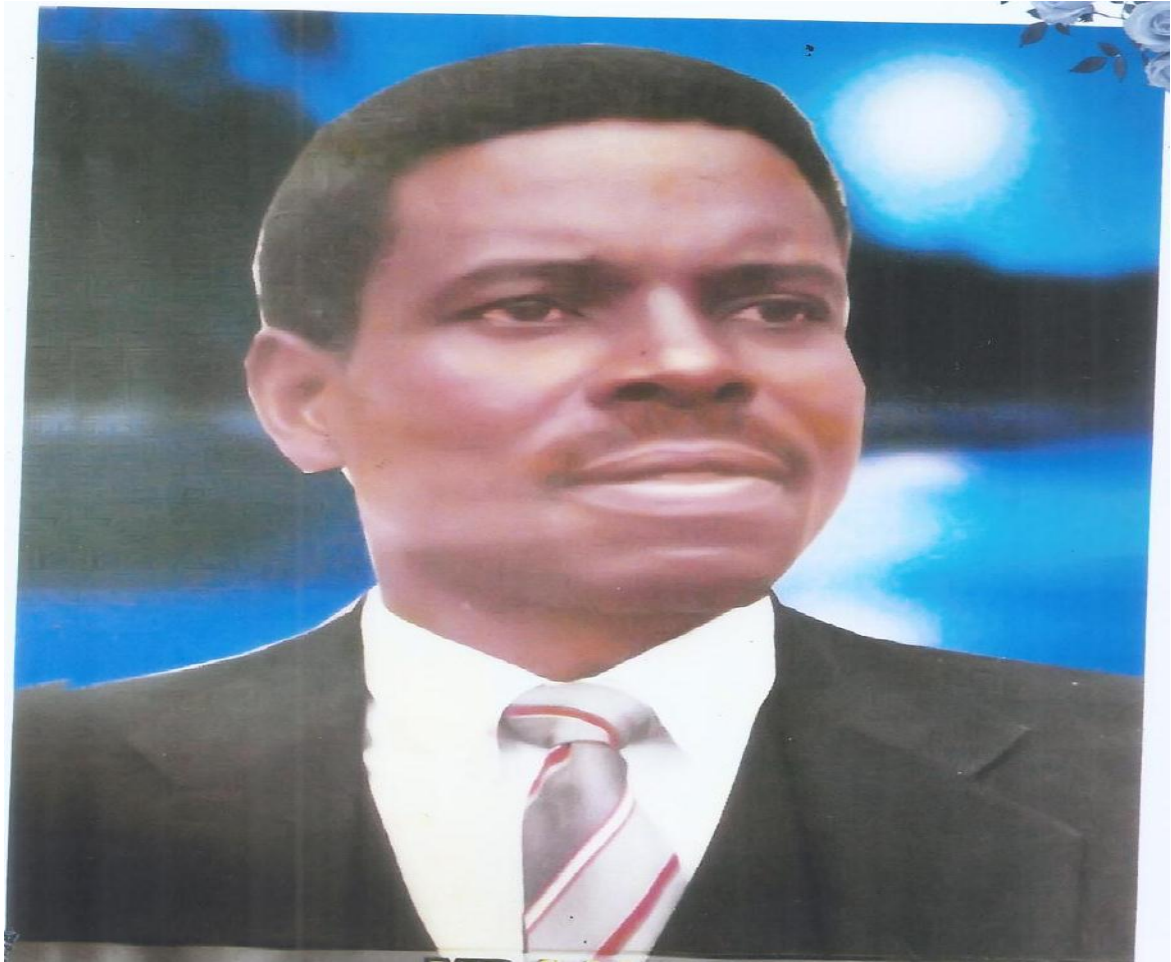


Figure 4.7: Mr J. M. Magi (Arogbo) 1985-1986.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.8: Mr Benson Ekujumi (Ilaje) 1986-1987.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.9: Chief A .B. Igbayisemore (Ilaje) 1987-1989.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.10: Mr J. A. Ibidunmoye (Otun-Ekiti) January 1990-March 1990.

Source: The Fountain of Bureaucrat, *The Journal of Ekiti State Civil Service*, Maiden Edition, Vol.1, No. 1, p. 25 (No Date of Publication).



Figure 4.11: Chief Sola Ebiseni (Ilaje) 1990-1993.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.12: Mr Glover Odidiomo (Ilaje) 1993-1994.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.13: Chief Olufemi Iji (Apoi) 1994-1995.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.14: Major G. A. Eshofonie (Rtd) (Arogbo) 1995-1996.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.



Figure 4.15: Mr Aseph Coker (Ilaje) 1996-1997.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ilaje Local Government Secretariat, Igbokoda, Ondo State, 24 April, 2018.

The political situation, therefore, half-heartedly warranted the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi to reach an agreement in sharing of political offices that were conceded to them at the State level. Hence, at the dawn of the Second Republic in Ondo State, Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency had three seats, in which the Ilaje group had two seats and the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi had one seat only (Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency III). In order to eschew unnecessary political rivalry, the leaders of the two groups met at the United Native African Church, Arogbo in 1979. The Arogbo-Ijo representatives were His Royal Majesty, *Pere* Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer Eperetun, the Agadagba of Arogbo, Koropinwei Ojijoh, Michael Lemo Meretighan, Noah Mese Monene, Julius Omomowo Niwari, Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo, and many other leaders. The Apoi representatives on the other hand, were Alice Mobolaji Osomo, Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo, Folarin Abraham Dabo, and many other representatives. Being political and ethnic in nature, the meeting was attended by traditional and political leaders of the two groups.⁴⁵

As an outcome of the said historical meeting, a gentleman agreement was cemented in which the House of Assembly seat for Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency III was conceded to Arogbo, while the Commissionership position at the State level was conceded to the Apoi. In the spirit and letter of this agreement, these two positions were expected to be alternated at the end of every four years.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the 1979 agreement was limited to the above two offices at the State level only, one elective and one appointive or non-elective.

Concerning the legislative office that was conceded to Arogbo, Chief Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo, Esq was unanimously picked and, thus, contested the Ondo State House of Assembly election on Saturday, 21 July, 1979 under the platform of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and won with 37,662 votes out of 38,368 votes. He eventually became the Speaker of the 66-member Ondo State House of Assembly in 1981, consequent upon the impeachment of the first Speaker, Hon Bola Akingbade, an indigene of Erinjyan-Ekiti, from Ekiti West State Constituency IV (1979 – 1981). Meanwhile, for the record, see,

⁴⁵ Oral interviews held with High Chief Michael Lemo Meretighan, 78 years, Retired Civil Servant, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 December, 2015; and High Chief P. I. O. Odejimi, 61 years, (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 28 August, 2015.

⁴⁶ Oral interviews held with Hon S. E. Yayu (later installed as a High Chief), 70 years, retired Principal, Minority Leader, Ondo State House of Assembly (19 October, 1983-31 December, 1983); Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekobo (2007-2009), Arogbo, 14 December, 2015; and High Chief P. I. O. Odejimi, 61 years, Igbobini, Apoi, 28 August, 2015.

Appendix II for the full list of the said 66-member Ondo State House of Assembly (1979-1983). Similarly, in line with the 1979 Agreement, Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo (nee Albert Gogo) became the Commissioner for Trade, Industries and Co-operatives, on Monday, 8 October, 1979, the only female cabinet member under Chief Michael Adegunle Ajasin (1908–1997), the Governor of Ondo State under UPN (1979 -1983).⁴⁷

As a show of *mariage de convenance*, towards the beginning of the 1981, the sign of political distrust and mutual suspicion started to rear its ugly head in Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi political relations. In fact, crisis first started at the state level between Chief Michael Adegunle Ajasin, the Governor, and his erstwhile Deputy Governor, Chief Akin Omoboriowo (1979–1982). Ajasin started to develop interest for a second term, while his Deputy was equally interested in the same seat. The climax was the decamping from the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) to the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) by Omoboriowo and his supporters, including Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo (an Arogbo-Ijo), who was the Speaker of the Ondo State House of Assembly. On the other hand, Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo (an Apoi), a Commissioner, and one of the die-hard supporters of Ajasin, did not decamp. Thus, between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, it simply put on an ethnic political colouration, as majority of the Arogbo-Ijo people queued behind Jolowo, and likewise, majority of the Apoi people stood up for Osomo.⁴⁸ As discussed above, and a further pictorial evidence, see Figure 4.16 on page 173, Figure 4.17 on page 174, Figure 4.18 on page 175 and Figure 4.19 on page 176 for the pictures of Chief M. A. Ajasin, Chief Akin Omoboriowo, Hon R. A. Jolowo and Chieftess A. M. Osomo.

⁴⁷Babarinsa, D. 2003. *House of war*. Ibadan. Spectrum Books Limited, pp. 16-271.

⁴⁸High Chief Michael Lemo Meretighan, 78 years, retired Civil Servant, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 December, 2015. Note: Omoboriowo resigned on 29 October, 1982 as the Deputy Governor, but the Jolowo-led House of Assembly refused to approve the nomination of Dr Falaye Aina as a replacement throughout the remaining part of the tenure.



Figure 4.16: Chief M. A. Ajasin (1908-1997), the First Executive Governor of Ondo State, 1979-1983.
Source: Retrieved online <https://www.Ajasinphoto>, 2018.



Figure 4.17: Chief Akin Omoboriowo (1932-2012), Deputy Governor of Ondo State, 1979-1982.
Source: Retrieved online <https://www.omoboriowophoto>, 2018.



Figure 4.18: Hon R. A. Jolowo (1945-2004), Speaker of Ondo State House of Assembly, 1981-1983.
Source: The Office of the Speaker, Ondo State House of Assembly, 2018.



Figure 4.19: Chieftess A. M. Osomo, Commissioner for Trade, Industries and Co-operatives, Ondo State, 1979-1983

Source: Retrived online <https://www.osomophoto>, 2018.

As a calculated political permutation, the Arogbo-Ijo political class, headed by Jolowo, were interested in retaining the Assembly seat, while the Apoi political class, headed by Osomo, argued against the move in line with the 1979 Agreement. According to Samson Ebigha Iwabi,⁴⁹ the Arogbo-Ijo decided to go for a second term contrary to the spirit and letter of the 1979 agreement because Ajasin was suspected to be bent on equally retaining Osomo as his Commissioner, if he eventually won the second term. If that happened, as speculated, the Apoi would end up getting both the Assembly seat and the commissionership position. The issue increasingly became more complex as Hon Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu⁵⁰ further revealed that Ajasin made it clear that all political appointments at the state level were at the mercy of the Governor. Hence, any internal political agreement he was never party to was never binding on him, but the sole business of such co-operating groups. The said co-operating groups in this case, are the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi in the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council of Ondo State (1976-1996).

The political abracadabra which started at the state level eventually led to the collapse of the 1979 agreement between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi. Politics being a game of permanent interest, therefore, the Arogbo-Ijo fielded Hon Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu for the Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency III seat under the platform of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), while the Apoi fielded Chief Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo for the same seat under the platform of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the dominant party in the State.

On Friday, 23 September, 1983, the Ondo State House of Assembly election was held amidst great tension. But in respect of the Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency III for the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) Returning Officer for the two Apoi wards, Mr Martins Olarewaju Omotuyole (an Apoi), did not return the Apoi election results and, thus, purportedly went to an undisclosed hospital on grounds of ill-health. Putting into consideration the legal impasse this might likely create, FEDECO waited for about three days in vain. As a tactical way out, based on the returns from the Arogbo-Ijo Returning Officer for the Arogbo-Ijo two wards, Mr Gabriel Better Kuete,

⁴⁹ Oral interview held with Chief Samson E. Iwabi, 76 years, retired Headmaster, Erubiri, Arogbo, 10 April, 2017.

⁵⁰ Oral interview held with Hon Sunday E. Yayu, 70 years, retired Principal, Minority Leader, Ondo State House of Assembly (19 October, 1983-31 December, 1983); Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo (2007-2009), Erubiri, Arogbo, 14 December, 2015.

FEDECO declared Hon Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) as the winner with 44,000 votes out of the total registered Arogbo-Ijo votes of 52,000. Granted on the political doctrine of necessity and a simple arithmetical calculation, FEDECO successfully did that because Hon Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu of the NPN scored 44,000 votes, while Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) scored 1,000 out of the 52,000 registered Arogbo-Ijo votes. On the other hand, the total voting strength of Apoi was 28,000. Therefore, even if Obolo had scored all the said 28,000 votes of Apoi, he could not have won the election with 29,000 votes because the declaration of a winner in respect of any House of Assembly election was by a simple majority. With that victory, Hon Sunday Erepaghamini Yayu, who was, before the election, attached to the Governor's Office in the employment of the Ondo State Civil Service, became the Minority Leader of the Ondo State House of Assembly on Wednesday, 19 October, 1983.⁵¹ In respect of the full list of the said 66-member Ondo State House of Assembly (19 October, 1983-31 December, 1983), see, Appendix III.

Prior to that, at the State level, in the bitterly contested gubernatorial election held on Saturday, 13 August, 1983, Joseph Adedapo Alibaloye (an indigene of Ire-Ekiti, Ondo State, now in Ekiti State), the Gubernatorial Returning Officer, announced Chief Akin Omoboriowo and his running mate, Prince Banji Adewole of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) as the winners. Consequently, violent conflict beclouded the political space of Ondo State. As per the magnitude of the said violent conflict that visited the state, Kolawole submits thus:

...However it was the governorship election that ignited the state after Chief Omoboriowo was declared the winner. There was a wide spread act of violence in the state resulting in arson, looting and murder...The militant rioters burnt several houses and properties including the NPN secretariat in the state, the FEDECO office, the Federal ministry of information, and police vehicles while attempts were made to storm the police command headquarters in the state. Furthermore, many prominent members of the Omoboriowo group like Mr Olaiya Fagbamigbe, a former member of the national assembly, Mr Tunde Agunbiade, a former majority leader in the state house of assembly, Chief Agbayewa, the Chairman of the NPN in Akure [Local Government], Mr Ebun Sule, the Organising

⁵¹ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.37.

Secretary of the NPN in the state and a host of others were murdered. Indeed, subsequent elections in the state had to be postponed to allow passions to cool down...Chief Omoboriowo himself had to flee to Lagos at the heat of the violence to save his life...⁵²

This led to a protracted legal battle that ended at the Supreme Court of Nigeria in favour of Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin and his running mate, Dr Falaye Aina of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Consequently, Ajasin was sworn-in for the second term on Monday, 17 October, 1983 by Justice Dr Joseph Olakunle Orojo (1923-2009) (the Chief Judge, Ondo State, 1978-1985) at the Government House lawn, Alagbaka, Akure.⁵³

And as earlier envisaged, Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo was re-appointed as one of the Commissioners in the State. But as a political tragedy, the 50 months old Second Republic was truncated by the Buhari's coup on Saturday, 31 December, 1983. In fact, according to Matthew Hassan Kukah, eight coup attempts had been made to unseat the government of Shagari before that of 31 December, 1983. The ninth coup attempt swept Shagari away from the pinnacle of power. Alhaji Shagari was human, for the nine lives, at last, belonged to the proverbial cat. As an irony, Shagari was detained in 1984 by Buhari when the latter overthrew him. He was initially held in captivity and incommunicado, and later placed under house arrest in his village, Shagari in Sokoto State, for 30 months. He was even

⁵² Kolawole, D. 1986. Violence in Nigerian Political History: Case Study of Ondo State. *Essays in History*. The Journal of the Historical Society, University of Lagos, Nigeria, Volume 5, pp.79 – 80.

⁵³ In respect of the said legal battle between Ajasin and Omoboriowo, the first judgement delivered on Saturday, 10 September, 1983 by the High Court of Justice of Ondo State by Dr J. Olakunle Orojo- the Chief Judge, and Justices E.A. Ojuolape, S.A. Afonja, S.A. Akintan, A.O. Ogunleye, was unanimously ruled in favour of Ajasin. On Tuesday, 27 September, 1983, the 7-member Appeal Court, sitting in Benin, Capital of the then Bendel State, rejected the Appeal of Omoboriowo. Justices Othman Mohammed and Nnameka Agu ruled in favour of Omoboriowo, while Justices Omo-Eboh, Sunday Efe, Adenekan Ademola, Rowland Okagbue and Barclay Pepple ruled in favour of Ajasin. On Saturday, October 15, The Supreme Court, sitting in Lagos, finally dismissed Omoboriowo's appeal. The only dissenting vote out of the seven Judges was that of Justice Ayo Irikefe. Those in favour of Ajasin were Justices George Sowemimo, Mohammed Bello, Andrew Obaseki, Kayode Eso, Augustine Unamani and Mohammed Lawal Uwais. Ajasin's legal team was led by Godwin Olusegun Kolawole Ajayi, SAN; while Omoboriowo's was though originally billed to be represented by Chief Frederick Rotimi Alade Williams, was led by Duro Ajayi. But that of the Appeal Court Benin was led by Dr Mudiaga Odje, SAN. For details on the 1983 political crisis in Ondo State and the legal battle between Ajasin and Omoboriowo, see, Babarinsa, D. 2003. *House of War*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited; Ogunyemi. A. O. Ed. 2015. *Mojisoluwa Akinfenwa: Footprints since 1931. The Story of a Nigerian Teacher and Politician*. Ile- Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, p. 90.

prevented from going to Sokoto. But General Buhari on the other hand, was also detained by General Babangida who also overthrew him on Tuesday, 27 August, 1985.⁵⁴

During General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's aborted Third Republic (27 August, 1985-26 August, 1993), a similar discordant political scenario played out between the two groups. Specifically in 1992, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi failed to agree in presenting a common candidate for the Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency II seat in the Ondo State of House Assembly, which was meant for the two groups. In pursuance of their separate interests, the Apoi presented her candidate, Mr Raphael Oyedele, from the dominant party in the State, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), while the Arogbo-Ijo fielded her candidate, Duerimini Isaacs Kekemeke, Esquire from the non-dominant party in the State, the National Republican Convention (NRC). With the Arogbo-Ijo's massive votes, Duerimini Isaacs Kekemeke, Esquire won the election conducted by the Humphrey Nwosu-led National Electoral Commission (NEC) and, thus, became the Minority Leader of the 51-member Ondo State House of Assembly (7 January, 1992-17 November, 1993). His tenure ended when General Sani Abacha sent politicians packing on Wednesday, 17 November, 1993.⁵⁵ For the record, see, Appendix IV for the said 51-member Ondo State House of Assembly.

Basically armed with her clear majority votes and even on subsequent military regimes 1993-1996, the Arogbo-Ijo continued to dominate the political space. For instance, Engr Benson Ayubapiriye Egbekun was the first Arogbo person to be appointed a Commissioner, Ministry of Trade and Industries, Co-operatives and Tourism and later in a Cabinet reshuffle, moved to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Ondo State (1994-1995).⁵⁶ As a contributory factor, the population figures of the Apoi could no longer match those of the Arogbo-Ijo from the 1970s. For instance, in 1952, the population of Apoi was 13,563, and Arogbo was 6,410; in 1963, Apoi was 18,469, and Arogbo was 17,646.

⁵⁴ Kukah, M. H. 1993. *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, pp.114-171; Oral interview held with Dr S. T. Okajare, 45 years, Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (place of interview, Alagbaka, Akure), Ondo State, 25 March, 2018.

⁵⁵Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo people and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.37, 59-61.

⁵⁶Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo people and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp.47-48.

The census of 1973 was cancelled nationwide; so, in 1991, the population of Arogbos was 62,136 and Apoi was 31,160, and in 2006, Arogbos stood at 105,687 and Apoi at 52,569.⁵⁷

4.3 The Oil Economy and the Arogbos-Ijo - Apoi Relations

In his efforts to trace the historical roots of the Nigerian oil industry, Ogbogbo in his seminal work states that although oil exploration is widely believed to have started in 1908, it would however appear that the search for petroleum pre-dates that year. The first company in the search for mineral oil in Nigeria was the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation Limited (NBCL), a German Company incorporated in England on Monday, 6 November, 1905. He further argued that the company started its operation activities with a capital of £200,000. However, she began work on Saturday, 1 December, 1906 and by Tuesday, 1 January, 1907, she was already working on her second well.⁵⁸ *Ab initio*, the then colonial government did not show enough interest in the search for oil, but the high hopes of discovering oil in Southern Protectorate and the likely derivable gains necessitated her to show nominal interest in the oil industry. Hence, on Wednesday, 12 February, 1908, the government of the Colony of Southern Nigeria entered into an agreement with the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation under which it agreed to advance for drilling purposes the sum of £25,000, an interest free loan at the rate of £3,125 every three months. But payment to the company would stop upon oil being struck in commercial quantity anywhere in Nigeria. These advances would be repayable only out of the oil produced by the company.⁵⁹

After receiving two government installments totalling to £6,250, the company struck oil for the first time in November, 1908 around Araromi in Well No. 5 at a depth of 633ft. This discovery, though not in commercial quantity encouraged the oil explorers into increasing their efforts. However, the Well No. 5 where oil was first struck, and other subsequent ones

⁵⁷NAI. File No. 447/Vol. III. Bulletin No.3 Ondo Province Population Census of the Western Region of Nigeria, 1952, p.5; National Population Commission Census'91 Final Results, Ondo State; Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, No. 2, Vol. 96, Legal Notice on Publication of 2006 Census Final Results, Abuja, B1-42.

⁵⁸ Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 1987. A History of Petroleum Industry in Nigeria, 1906-1979. MA Dissertation, Department of History, University of Ibadan, p. 20. Meanwhile, according to Ogbogbo, the term oil connotes the same as petroleum, mineral oil, crude oil and black gold, p.7. Therefore, the said terms shall be used interchangeably in this work.

⁵⁹ Ogbogbo, C.B.N.1987. A History of Petroleum Industry in Nigeria, 1906-1979. MA Dissertation, Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp.23-24.

in the area that gave more hope had to be abandoned because of the larger quantities of water present.⁶⁰ The said Araromi where the discovery was made is today found in the present-day Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State.

In corroborating the above, Steyn states that between 1908 and 1912, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation Limited drilled about fifteen wells in its Lekki Lagoon concession under the supervision of Mr Van Sickle. Indeed, Oil was struck in November 1908, and by 1909, John Simon Bergheim (the Chairman of the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation) intimated the Colonial Office that the company was producing oil at a rate of 2,000 barrels per day. Unfortunately, the company did not succeed in exploiting their find profitably and struggled especially with water intrusion. For instance, their Makun well yielded oil of good quality but they did not have the needed equipment to separate the water that flowed continuously into the well. By July 1912, the company had only little capital to continue her operations for another six months. Bergheim, therefore, approached the Colonial Office in vain for another loan that would enable the company drill in deep strata with their newly acquired Parker Rotary drill.⁶¹

This was the situation when the licence held by the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation Limited expired on Friday, 14 April, 1911, but the British Government refused to honour the re-registration application for another four years' period of extension. As revealed by Ogbogbo, the action of the British Government was strategically engineered by the following reasons:

The Company did not fall fully under the control of the British government in conformity with section 15 of the Mining Regulation Oil Ordinance of 1907...The colonial government's attitude is also explicable when one considers the international situation at this time. The Anglo-German naval race was getting to its climax and the relationship between both countries was estranged. This explains her stand in not allowing the continuation of the company with its roots in Germany to operate in any of her colonies. More importantly, oil was a growing source of energy for the British Navy ...and so to allow a German Corporation to dominate the exploration of oil as she was ...doing would be tantamount to placing the source of fuel for the

⁶⁰ Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 1987. A History of Petroleum Industry in Nigeria, 1906-1979. MA Dissertation, Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp. 24-25.

⁶¹ Steyn, P. 2009. Oil Exploration in Colonial Nigeria, c1903-1958. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37 Issue 2, pp. 249-274. Accessed online 12-02-2018.

British Navy in the hands of their rivals. It was therefore considered expedient to stop the German experiment in Nigeria...⁶²

The result of this was the grounding to a stop of all its exploratory activities. Concomitantly, the coming of the First World War in 1914 and the stifling of the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation Limited could be said to have painfully marked the end of the first era of oil exploration in Nigeria.

On a significant note, Bergheim made an enduring contribution to the Colonial Oil Industry through his involvement in the development of oil legislation. From the outset, he maintained that the general mining legislation was not sufficient in regulating the oil industry. He, therefore, lobbied and persuaded the Colonial Office and Southern Nigeria government for the development of oil regulations. Modelled mostly on the Trinidad oil mining law, the only region in the British colonial empire that produced oil at that time, the Southern Nigeria Mining Regulation Oil Ordinance of 1907 was drafted by Frederick Butler and Charles Strachey, clerks in the Nigeria Department in the Colonial Office, and an unnamed government legal adviser. Thus, the 1907 Ordinance promulgated by Edward Percy Cranwill Girouard (1867-1932) granted not only oil exploration concessions to companies registered in Britain or its colonies, but also made the search for oil in Nigeria a British monopoly.⁶³ Accordingly, Section 15 of the 1907 Oil Mineral Ordinance states thus:

No licence or lease shall be granted under the provisions of this Ordinance to any firm, syndicate, or company, which shall not at all times be and remain a British company, registered in Great Britain, or in a British colony, and having its principle (sic) place of business within His Majesty's dominions, and the chairman of the said company and all the remaining directors shall at all times be British subjects, and the company shall not at any time be or become a corporation directly or indirectly controlled by foreigners or foreign corporations.⁶⁴

⁶² Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 1987. A History of Petroleum Industry in Nigeria, 1906-1979. MA Dissertation, Department of History, University of Ibadan. p.27.

⁶³ Steyn, P. 2009. Oil Exploration in Colonial Nigeria, c.1903-1958. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37 Issue 2, pp. 249-274. Accessed online 12-02-2018. Note: The name, Edward, is also spelt Edouard in some instances.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Steyn, P. 2009. Oil Exploration in Colonial Nigeria, c.1903-1958. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37 Issue 2, pp. 249-274. Accessed online 12-02-2018. Note: The word 'principle' in the above quotation should be principal.

After the liquidation of the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation Limited, no any other company did respond quickly to the stage set by it until the arrival of Shell-D'Arcy, an Anglo-Dutch Consortium. Therefore, in 1936, the British colonial government granted sole rights to Shell D'Arcy to explore for hydrocarbons all over the country, and prospecting works began in 1937. As a temporary setback, the Second World War put paid to that effort. In 1947, Shell D'Arcy teamed up with British Petroleum (formerly known as Anglo Persian Oil Company), and on Monday, 30 April 1956, formally changed her name to Shell-British Petroleum Limited in Nigeria. This change was carried out in order to reflect their dual participation (Shell and the British Petroleum) in the oil industry. Remarkably, Shell-BP discovered oil in commercial quantity at Oloibiri (in the then Eastern Region, now in the present-day Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State) on Sunday, 15 January, 1956; and the commencement of full commercial exploration actually began in 1958 at the rate of 5,100 barrels per day which was mostly exported to Europe. As Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the group's concession area was formally limited and, thus, invited other companies to explore for oil. Hence, licences were granted to other companies. Consequently, Socony Vaccum (now Mobil) got its licence in 1955; Jenessee (later Tenneco), 1960; Gulf (now Chevron), 1961; American Overseas (later Amoseas), 1961; Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli (AGIP), 1962; Societe Africaine des Petroles (SAFRAP) (later ELF), 1962; Philips, 1965; and Esso, 1965.⁶⁵

Therefore, throwing more light on the above, Ikporukpo, states thus:

In the case of Nigeria, the search which began in 1937 was spearheaded by Shell D'Arcy, a multinational corporation incorporated in Nigeria in 1937 and jointly financed by the Royal Dutch Shell Group of Companies and the British Petroleum Groups. The name was changed...to Shell-BP...The search was then centred around the northern fringes of the Niger Delta with the base in Owerri. The search was interrupted by the Second World War and it was only in 1946 that the search resumed...The first exploration well was drilled at Ihuo, 16 kilometres north east of Owerri, in 1951. No oil was found. Another well (Akata 1) was drilled in 1953.

⁶⁵ Agekameh, D. 2010. Niger Delta: The Road to Peace. Nigeria at 50: The New Face of the Niger Delta. *The Capitol*. Vol. 4, Number 5, p.51; Musa, H. *et al.* 2000. An Overview of the Petroleum Industry and Associated Environmental Issues: The Case of Niger Delta of Nigeria. Osuntokun, A. Ed. *Environmental Problems of the Niger-Delta*. Lagos: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, pp. 223-224.

Although, some oil was found, this was not in commercial quantity. Frustrated by lack of success, further drilling was terminated in 1954...The search subsequently moved to the Niger Delta and the company moved its base from Owerri to Port Harcourt in 1957. A year earlier (in 1956), the first commercially viable oil well was discovered near the town of Oloibiri... However, as the first Nigerian oil well dried up, the area was virtually abandoned by the government that had benefited so much. The lamentation of the people of Otuogidi community (near Oloibiri, the actual location of the first oil well) is pertinent...⁶⁶

See Figure 4.20 on page 186 and Figure 4.21 on page 187 for the pictures of the historic Nigeria's First Oil Well at Oloibiri.

⁶⁶ Okporukpo, C. O. 2017. *The Mythology of Oil*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, pp.16 & 86.

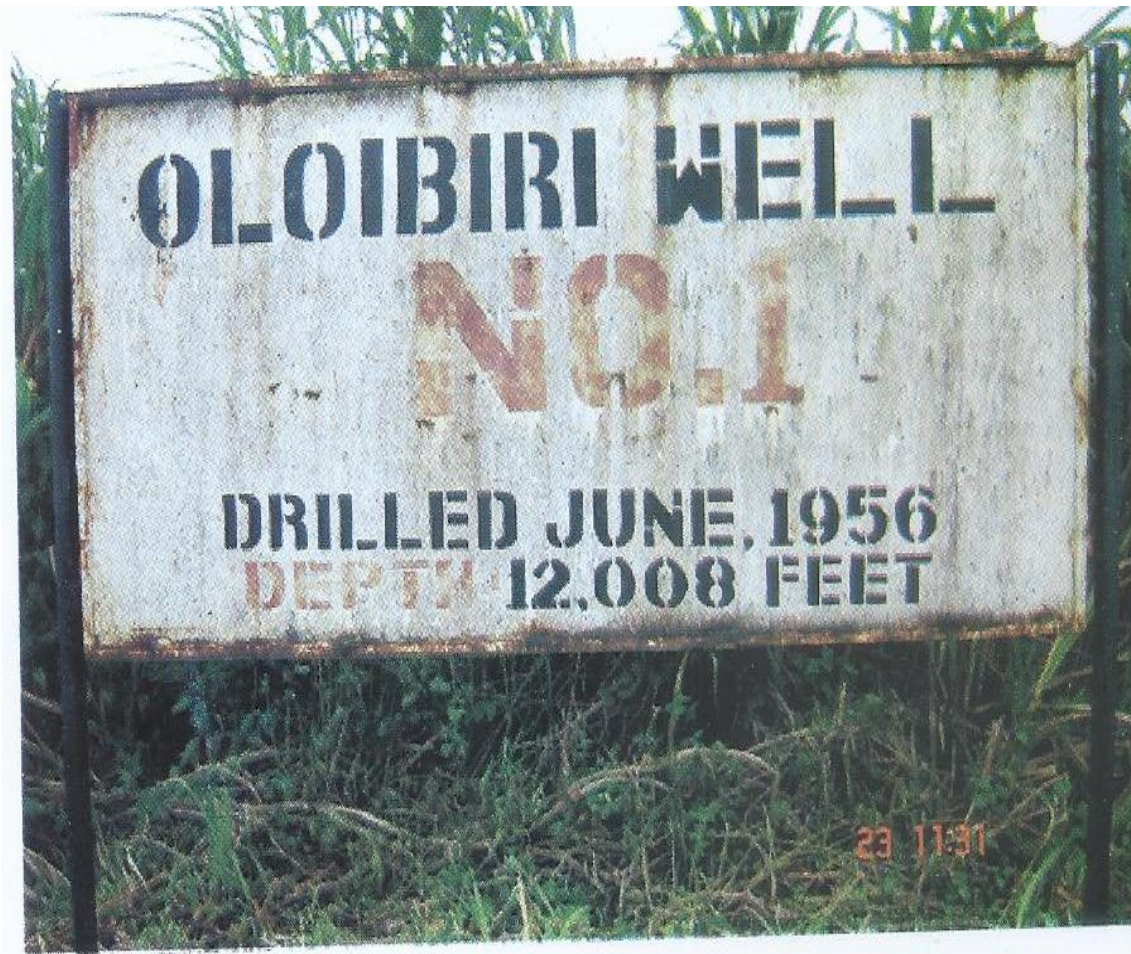


Figure 4.20: Oloibiri Oil Well No.1.

Source: Yanga, W.G. 2006. *Bayelsa: The Glory of all Lands at 10*. Lagos: Samtob Productions, p.58.



Figure 4.21: Nigeria's First Oil Well at Oloibiri.

Source: Yanga, W.G. 2006. *Bayelsa: The Glory of all Lands at 10*. Lagos: Samtob Productions, p.59.

Specifically, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation's exploratory activities of the early 1900s in the old Okitipupa Division of Ondo Province extensively covered the territories of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi as well. No major discovery was made in respect of oil, except the abundant presence of bitumen in both territories, with special reference to the Apoi area. Similarly, in respect of oil exploration and exploitation in the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi areas, a considerable degree of works, and with a special reference to the Arogbo-Ijo area, were reported to have been carried out by Shell D'Arcy starting from 2 November, 1939, and the 1950s. As usual with its operational activities known for environmental pollution and degradation, very many places were detonated with dynamite and other related high explosives in the search for the black gold.⁶⁷

Later, other oil companies, such as Western Geophysical Company, Philips and Conoil, followed the footsteps of Shell. As an outcome, the specific locations identified in Arogbo-Ijo area to have abundant deposits of crude oil include Ajapa, Akpata, Asere, Awodikuro, Biagbini, Dababilebu, Egbeleu-Uba, Ogidigba I, Ogidigba II, and Ogidigba III, Opuba, Otuwokubu, Ukpe and many other communities, but in Apoi, only few locations, Igbekebo, Kiribo, and Ugbanran (all sharing boundaries with Arogbo, except Ugbanran), are reported to have been blessed with the black gold.⁶⁸ As an evidence of oil related activities associated with its seismic activities, Shell eventually built a helipad (a landing and take-off platform for helicopter) right at the middle of the river at Biagbini, Arogbo in 1959. This, since then, though now recklessly and negligently abandoned, has been constituting a serious dangerous death-trap to lives and property of travellers on the waterways, particularly at night.⁶⁹ The pictures provided in Figure 4.22 on page 189 and Figure 4.23 on page 190 are the abandoned platform of Shell at Biagbini, Arogbo, built in 1959.

⁶⁷ Oral interview held with His Highness, Amos Ogbaghaminibofa Sofiyea, 81 years, the Regent of Arogbo-Ijo Kingdom, Agwobiri, Arogbo, 13 November, 2017.

⁶⁸ Oral interviews held with His Highness, Amos Ogbaghaminibofa Sofiyea, 81 years, the Regent of Arogbo-Ijo kingdom, Agwobiri, Arogbo, 13 November, 2017; and Mr Olu Johnson Egbodofa, 58 years, former Special Assistant to Dr Olusegun Mimiko, the Governor of Ondo State (2009-2017), Igbotu, Apoi, 15 November, 2017.

⁶⁹ Oral interview held with Mr Jerimiah Duninbainimibofa Goh, 58 years, Vice-Principal, Saint Arenibaro Memorial High School, Amapere, Biagbini, Arogbo, 27 January, 2018.



Figure 4.22: The Abandoned Platform of Shell at Biagbini, Arogbo, built in 1959.

Source: A Picture taken (from the right hand side while approaching Biagbini from Arogbo) during fieldwork, 2016.



Figure 4.23: The Abandoned Platform of Shell at Biagbini, Arogbo, built in 1959.

Source: A Picture taken (from left hand side while approaching Biagbini from Arogbo) during fieldwork, 2016.

As a recall, it was the above oil politics that invariably compounded and complicated the Arogbo-Ijo merger agitation request with the then Bendel State at the Justice Mamman Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission in 1976. Hence, the old Ondo State vehemently mounted serious opposition against the move because of the oil wells located within the boundary of the Arogbo-Ijo with her Egbema-Ijo neighbours of Tsekelewu (now Polobubogho) in the then Bendel State (now found in the present-day Warri North Local Government Area of Delta State). To throw more light on the said oil related inter-state boundary dispute, relevant portions of the said report of the Nasir-led Commission are hereby quoted:

97. The Commission noted the unanimous desire of the Arogbo-Ijaws to be merged with Bendel State where they would have a greater sense of belonging. Even though the Commission noted that there might be some 'oil politics' behind the Arogbo-Ijaw demands, it said it was still convinced that the Arogbos should be merged with their kith and kin in Bendel State...Government rejects this recommendation because the new Local Government system is capable of meeting most of the demands of the Arogbo-Ijaws for the development of their area...

98. Since the creation of the then Mid-Western region, the Southern portion of its boundary with the Western Region had always been in dispute. Dispute had centred on the ownership of Omolumo or Omolomo, later known as 'Molume' or Imolume. The Bendel State Government argued that the village of Omolomo or Omolumo no longer existed and that the area occupied by Molume should be regarded as part of the Ijaw speaking villages of Egbeoma [Egbema] Local Government Council in Warri Division of Bendel State.

99. The Ondo State Government produced maps which showed that Omolomo or Omolumo had always been part of Ondo Province. It argued that the Mid-Western State map shown to the Commission had shifted the boundary westwards and could not be relied upon.

100. The Commission found that the area in dispute was within Arogbo-Ijaw area and it therefore recommended that it be resolved in favour of Bendel State. It said, however, that all available maps published before the reorganisation of the country showed the position of Molume to be consistently on the Ondo side of the boundary. Government does not accept

this recommendation in view of the Commission's findings quoted in the last sentence above.⁷⁰

This informed Francis Kebieri Ajih to argue that there are only 3 on-shore oil fields in Ondo State, namely, Tsekelewu, Opuama and Opuekeba, comprising several oil wells- with special reference to Oil Mining Leases 1, 40, 49 and 102; all located within the Arogbo-Ijo axis of the said disputed area, now found in Ese-Odo Local Government Area.⁷¹ As a background, these oil fields were the subject of controversy between Ondo State and Bendel State, later Delta State. The Nasir Commission had earlier recommended a merger for the Arogbo-Ijo with her kith and kin in Bendel State, and that, because the area in question belongs to Arogbo-Ijo, it simply ruled in favour of Bendel State. Therefore, today, Ondo State can only boast of on-shore oil wells in Tsekelewu, Opuama and Opuekeba, just because the Federal Military Government's White Paper on the Commission refused the Arogbo-Ijo merger request.⁷²

In a similar vein, Francis Jibowu Williams also revealed that Ondo State became oil-producing when, the critical decision was taken in 1977 by General Olusegun Obasanjo to credit the revenue accruing from the oil wells on 50-50 basis to the then Bendel and Ondo States; because of the imprecise nature of the boundary between Arogbo-Ijo of Ondo State and Egbema-Ijo of Bendel State. Nevertheless, the said 50-50 decision was not implemented until 1980 when Ondo State was formally credited with a cheque of ₦2.6 million for the first time when Michael Adekunle Ajasin was the Governor of the State. Thereafter, with the abrogation of the onshore-offshore dichotomy in 1992, and the restoration of Ondo State as a full-fledged and bonafide oil-producing state, the then Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (consisted of the Ilaje, Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi) had the privilege of being credited with the sole oil-producing status in Ondo State. The two cardinal reasons are, first

⁷⁰Federal Military Government's Views on the Report of Boundary Adjustment Commission. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information Printing Division, 1976, p.18.

⁷¹An Official letter Dr F.K. Ajih, the Executive Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, wrote to Chief Adebayo Adefarati, the Governor of Ondo State (1999-2003), entitled 'Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC): The Need for a Revisit', dated 15 March, 2002.

⁷² Memorandum on Request for the creation of Arogbo-Ijaw Local Government Area from the present Ese-Odo Local Government Area with headquarters at Arogbo, 2011, Annexure V.

because it bordered the entire coast line of the state, and secondly because all the onshore fields were on the Ese-Odo axis of the local government area.⁷³

It was equally on the grounds of the said oil politics that Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin (1908-1997), the Governor of Ondo State (1979-1983) created the defunct 'Ijaw Arogbo/Tsekelewu Subordinate Area Authority' in 1980.⁷⁴ But, the fact that the people of Tsekelewu obdurately refused to join their Arogbo-Ijo kith and kin notwithstanding, part of the area in question is still put within the Dababilebu axis of Arogbo in the administrative map of Ondo State; hence, the oil-producing status of Ese-Odo Local Government Area. In fact, Figure 2.4 on page 35 of this work, the 1937 Sketch Map Illustrating Bini Confederation-Intelligence Report clearly indicated the geographical location of Tsekelewu to that effect. Richard Soritei Kekemeke, therefore, argued that the creation of the defunct 'Ijaw Arogbo/Tsekelewu Subordinate Area Authority' in 1980 itself was not out of demonstration of love, but a grand political design tailored to woo and tantalise the oil-rich people of Tsekelewu and other neighbouring Egbema-Ijo communities of the then Bendel State to Ondo State. Hence, when it became visibly clear to the Ondo State Government that the people were intransigently not interested in joining her, occasioned by the high-powered politics of the then Bendel State Government, the Subordinate Area Authority earlier created was never upgraded to a full-fledged Council. Rather, its name was changed to 'Arogbo-Ijaw Subordinate Area Authority' in 1983. It is, today, existing as a Subordinate Area Office, Arogbo, under Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, with limited powers.⁷⁵ The above accounts for the oil-producing status of Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State.

On the grounds of oil politics, the defunct Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (Rtd) on Thursday, 9 July, 1992, when he signed into law Decree No. 23. But, the subsequent oil politics associated with it was dominated by the Ilaje people in the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (1976-1996). In fact, as argued by Nwala, the principal

⁷³ Oral interview held with High Chief Francis Jibowu Williams, 68 years, an Arogbo-Ijo Community Leader, Oba-Ile Housing Estate, Akure, 20 January, 2016.

⁷⁴ An Official letter Dr Francis Kebieri Ajih, the Executive Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, wrote to Chief Adebayo Adefarati, the Governor of Ondo State (1999-2003), entitled 'Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC): The Need for a Revisit', dated 15 March, 2002.

⁷⁵ Oral interview held with Mr Richard Soritei Kekemeke (later installed as a High Chief), 57 years, Senior Staff of NDDC, and former Commissioner, Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 2 February, 2018.

objective of OMPADEC, among others, was to compensate materially the communities, local government areas, and states which have suffered damage of deprivation as a result of mineral oil prospecting in their territories.⁷⁶ Olaogun, on the other hand, revealed that, because of incessant communal clashes and disaffection in the oil-producing areas, Babangida set up the Belgore Commission to, among other things, identify the root causes of the restiveness and suggest the best way forward. This led to the establishment of OMPADEC in 1992.⁷⁷

Going beyond the above submission of Olaogun, in his scholarly work, Ekwueme traced the historical background of the formation of OMPADEC to the campaign promise of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979. Ekwueme, therefore, states, *inter alia*, as follows:

At a political rally in Ogbakiri village in Rivers State, on a Sunday afternoon in June 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari made a campaign promise that, if elected President, he would ensure that a certain percentage of the revenue accruing to the federation account, from mineral exploration, would be applied in developing the actual mineral producing communities, in addition to whatever may be allocated to the state by way of derivation. This was the predecessor of OMPADEC. This promise was made as a result of the obvious lack of development of many oil-producing communities and because the additional revenue allocated to the oil-producing states was applied in developing the state capitals and the non oil-producing parts of the state, as in Bendel.⁷⁸

In respect of representation at the Board of OMPADEC throughout its existence (1992-1999), the Arogo-Ijo and Apoi had no opportunity. Rather, the Ilaje did, and even the few projects allocated to them were left uncompleted. The first Ondo State representative at the Board of the Chief Albert Horsfall-led OMPADEC, was Prince Adebajo Omolade Edema, an Ilaje. He was appointed by Babangida through the recommendation of Evangelist Isola Bamidele Olumilua (1940-2020), the Governor of Ondo State (1992-1993) during the third

⁷⁶Presidential Directive No. 1, 16 November 1992 on the Operations of OMPADEC, p. 2. Quoted in Nwala, U. E. 2003. Dappa-Biriye's Principles for Development of the Niger Delta Region. Alagoa, E.J. Ed. *Harold Dappa-Biriye: His Contributions to Politics in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 97.

⁷⁷ Olaogun, F. 2010. NDDC Must be well funded. *The Capitol: Nigeria at 50: The New Face of the Niger Delta*. Vol. 4, Number 5, p. 56.

⁷⁸ Ekwueme, A. I. 1999. The Changing Faces of Nigerian Federalism: Which Way Forward? Eperokun, O. *et al.* Eds. *Nigeria's Bumpy Ride into the 21st Century*. Ibadan: The House of Lords, p.127.

Republic under the platform of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP). At the Board, Edema was made the Commissioner for Community Affairs, and later the Commissioner for Planning, Research and Statistics. The second appointment of Mr Adeyinka Gbegudu (an Ikale), was bitterly resisted and rejected by the Ilaje elite on the grounds that he was not from an oil-producing area of the State. He was finally dropped, and another Ilaje, Chief Fola Iwatan (a one-time Chairperson of the former Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, Igbokoda, 1982-1983), replaced him.⁷⁹

On the issue of uncompleted projects, the letter that Chief Samson Ebigha Iwabi, the then headmaster of Saint Vicent Roman Catholic Mission Primary School, Orieran, Arogbo, wrote to High Chief (also known as Dr) Francis Kebieri Ajih, the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, on Friday, 12 October, 2001, is an example of the many cases of OMPADEC's uncompleted projects in the area at that time. The said letter is hereby quoted:

RE: OMPADEC BUILDING

I wish to inform you that the defunct Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) awarded a building of six classroom at [S]t Vicent R.C.M. Primary School, Orieran in 1996 which construction work commended (sic) immediately... The contractor was, however, able to put up the structure why (sic) leaving the flooring, walling and ceiling undone since 1996. I therefore humbly invite (sic) you to note that the building is in a poor condition and there is no visible hope that any efforts could be made by the Federal Government/NDDC that replaces OMPADEC to complete it... Kindly take up the completion of the building by covering the ridge piece, flooring, walling and ceiling, please...I thank you for your kind co-operation and easy response to our plight... Please.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Oral interviews held with Mr Olu Johnson Egbedofu, 58 years, former Special Assistant to Dr Olusegun Mimiko, the Governor of Ondo State (2009-2017), Igbotu, Apoi, 15 November, 2017.

⁸⁰This present researcher, was the Councillor that represented Arogbo Ward II, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo from 1999-2002. And, that Orieran is one of the settlements in Arogbo Ward II, hence, he was also copied by the then headmaster, Chief S.E. Iwabi (later elevated to the status of a High Chief). Note: Orieran is now known as Ebiaye, but the name of the said Primary School, is yet to be officially changed. Furthermore, the words written in the above quotation, and thus, indicated with the word sic, such as 'commended', 'why', and 'invite' are not correct. Therefore, the correct words are: commenced, while and wish.

On the demise of OMPADEC, Agekameh disclosed that it was initially better poised to make some impact in the development of the region before it suffered various setbacks arising from lack of a clear road map to define its developmental objectives and strategies, inadequate funding and unfavourable political climate, among other problems. Consequently, its untimely demise witnessed pockets of unfinished projects; thus, compounding the economic, ecological and environmental woes of the Niger Delta.⁸¹ Nwala, therefore, concluded that the shoddy performance of OMPADEC, whereby only 200 projects out of 1, 338 initiated by it and 1,347 inherited from a previous 1989 Presidential Task Force were purported to have been completed within the four years of the pioneer Board, is truly not what the intended beneficiaries of its service desire. It is for this reason that Chief Dappa-Biriye described the performance of OMPADEC as a ship wreck.⁸²

Furthermore, in describing the numerous problems associated with OMPADEC and its eventual demise, Banigo submits thus:

In 1992 the Nigerian State set up the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) to decisively deal with the problems of the area. The Commission was a huge failure. Between 1992 and 1999 when it finally collapsed OMPADEC bequeathed numerous abandoned or unfinished projects and huge debts. There is no reliable information on the total amount the Commission received from the Federation Account but what is clear is that OMPADEC suffered from lack of focus, inadequate and irregular funding, official profligacy, corruption, and excessive political interference, lack of transparency and accountability and high overhead expenditure. OMPADEC was long abandoned before it died naturally.⁸³

⁸¹Agekameh, D. 2010. The New Face of the Niger Delta. *The Capitol*. Nigeria at 50. Vol. 4 Number 5, p.17.

⁸²Nwala, V.E. 2003. Dappa-Biriye's Principles for Development of the Niger Delta. Alagoa, E. J. Ed. *Harold Dappa- Biriye: His Contributions to Politics in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, p. 98.

⁸³ Banigo, Y. 2012. Reflections on the Ijo Struggle for Self-Determination in Nigeria. Ogbogbo, C.B.N. *et al.* Eds. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Ibadan: Department of History, University of Ibadan, p.329.

CHAPTER FIVE

AROGBO-IJO – APOI RELATIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN THE NEW ONDO STATE, 1996-2007

5.1 The Politics of the Creation of Ese-Odo Local Government Area

By the States (Creation and Transitional Provisions) Degree, 1976, the old Ondo State was carved out of the then Western State on Tuesday, 3 February, 1976 by General Murtala Ramat Muhammed (8 November, 1938-13 February, 1976). On Tuesday, 1 October, 1996, General Sani Abacha (20 September, 1943-8 June, 1998) (viz Transitional Provisions Decree No. 36 of 1996), created Ekiti State out of the old Ondo State which logically gave birth to the new Ondo State within the context of this work.¹ Thus, Ondo State lies in the South-western part of Nigeria between latitudes 5° 45' and 7° 52' N and longitudes 4° 20' and 6° 5' E. Its land area is about 15,500 square kilometres. It is bound by Kwara, Kogi and Ekiti States in the North, Edo and Delta States in the East, Ogun and Lagos States in the West, Osun State in the North-West, and in the South by the Atlantic Ocean.² According to the report on the census 2006 final results, the population of Ondo State was 3,460,877, comprising of 1,745,057 males and 1,715,820 females.³

Prior to the creation of Ekiti State, the old Ondo State had twenty-six (26) Local Government Councils, in which the two groups (Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi), alongside their Ilaje neighbours were found in the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Igbokoda. But, the said creation of Ekiti State out of the old Ondo State led to further administrative changes within the new Ondo State. Consequently, Ondo State was reconstituted into eighteen (18) Local Government Areas, in which the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council was split into two. The Ilaje became the only group found

¹ Ehindero, T. J. 2000. Ondo State: A Place of Pride. *The Executive Magazine*, Vol.1, No. 1, p. 4.

² Mgbada, C. O. 2012. State Creation and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria. The Izzi-Ukelle Experience Since 1996. Ogbogbo, C.B.N. et al. Eds. *The Dynamics of Inter-group Relations in Nigeria Since 1960: Essays in Honour of Obaro Ikime @ 70*. Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp.113-144; Ehindero, T. J. 2000. Ondo State: A Place of Pride. *The Executive Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 1. p. 4.

³ Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, No. 2, Voume 96, Legal Notice on Publication of 2006 Final Results, Abuja.

in Ilaje Local Government Area, with the headquarters at Igbokoda, while the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were brought under the same administrative umbrella called Ese-Odo Local Government Area, with the headquarters at Igbekebo (an Apoi settlement).⁴ How these administrative changes altered and affected the pattern of inter-group relations between the two groups, shall be the thrust of our historical interrogation. Meanwhile, as a necessary background, see Figure 5.1 on page 199 for the Map of the old Ondo State showing the twenty-six (26) Local Government Councils, before the creation of Ekiti State in 1996. On the other hand, see Table 5.1 on page 200 for the list of the twenty-six (26) Local Government Councils of the old Ondo State before the creation of Ekiti State in 1996.

⁴ Emmanuel, G.H.S. and Olorunyolemi, A. 2016. *From the Rising to the Shining of the Sun*. Akure. Lord Keynes Publishing Company, p. 160. Note: At the time of the creation of Ekiti State in 1996, the old Ondo State had twenty-six (26) Local Government Councils (LGCs). Out of the said number, twelve (12) Local Government Councils (LGCs) fell within the geographical space of Ekiti State, and fourteen (14) Local Government Councils (LGCs) fell within the geographical boundary of the new Ondo State. In addition, four (4) new Local Government Areas (LGAs) were created for each of them. Consequently, Ekiti State was reconstituted into sixteen (16) Local Government Areas (LGAs), while the new Ondo State was reconstituted into eighteen (18) Local Government Areas (LGAs).

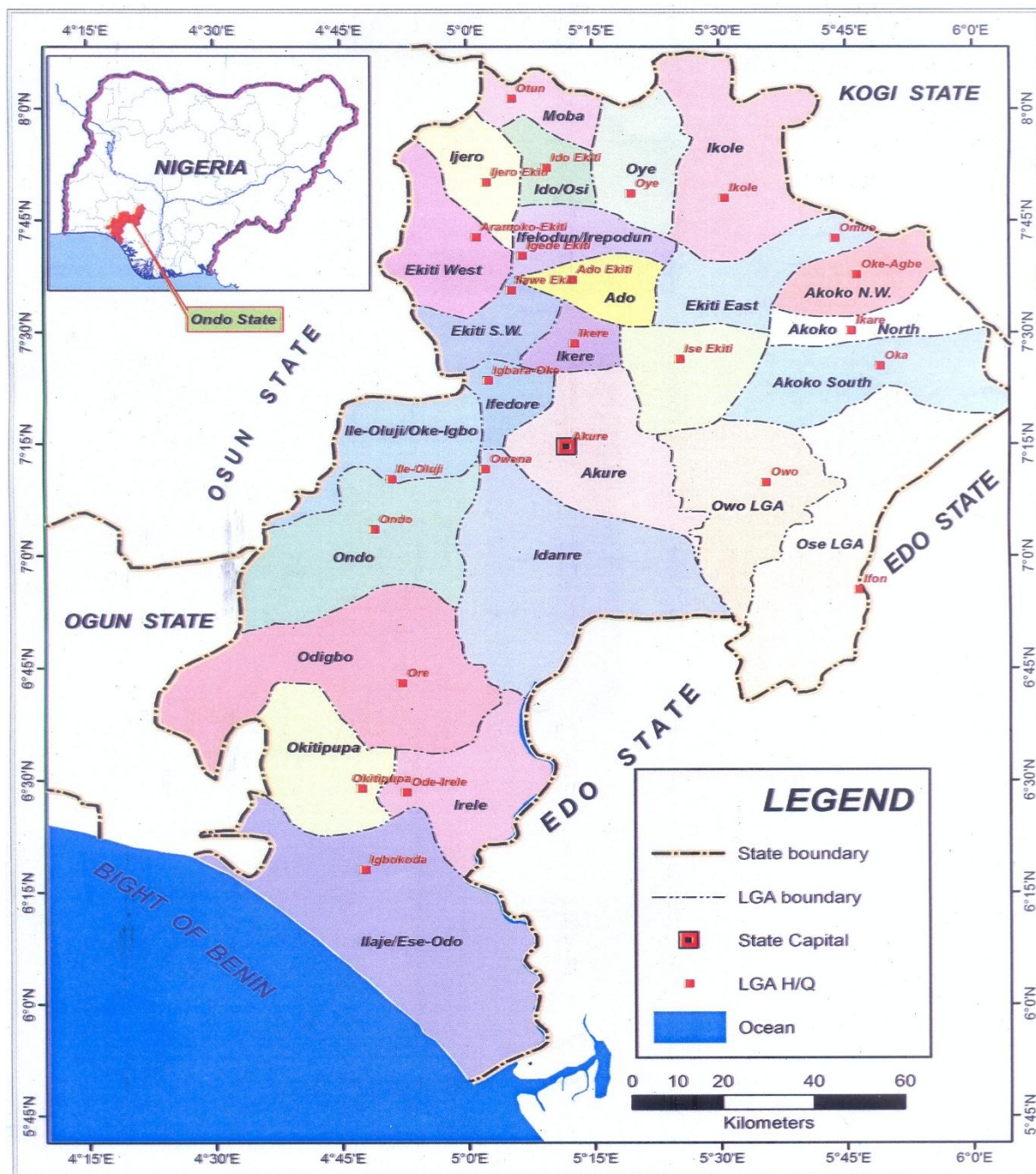


Figure 5.1: The Map of the old Ondo State showing the 26 Local Government Councils before the Creation of Ekiti State in 1996.

Source: Ondo State Ministry of Works and Housing, Survey Department, Akure (1993). Redrawn by the Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2018.

Table 5.1: List of the 26 Local Government Councils of the old Ondo State before the Creation of Ekiti State in 1996

S/No	Name of Local Government	Headquarters
1	Moba	Otun-Ekiti
2	Ijero	Ijero-Ekiti
3	Ido/Osi	Ido-Ekiti
4	Ikole	Ikole-Ekiti
5	Ekiti-West	Aramoko-Ekiti
6	Ifelodun/Irepodun	Igede-Ekiti
7	Oye	Oye-Ekiti
8	Ekiti South-West	Ilawe-Ekiti
9	Ado	Ado-Ekiti
10	Ekiti-East	Omuo-Ekiti
11	Akoko North-West	Oke-Agbe
12	Ikere	Ikere-Ekiti
13	Isokan	Ise-Ekiti
14	Akoko-North	Ikare-Akoko
15	Ifedore	Igbara-Oke
16	Akoko-South	Oka-Akoko
17	Ile-Oluji/ Oke-Igbo	Ile-Oluji
18	Akure	Akure
19	Owo	Owo
20	Ondo	Ondo
21	Idanre	Owena
22	Ose	Ifon
23	Odigbo	Ore
24	Okitipupa	Okitipupa
25	Irele	Ode-Irele
26	Ilaje/Ese-Odo	Igbokoda

Source: Compiled by the Researcher through the help of information obtained from **Figure 5.11: The Map of the old Ondo State** on the preceding page. Note: At the dawn of the colonial rule in Nigeria, the Local Administrations were called Native Authorities; from 1952 to 1976, they were called District Councils; from 1976 to 1996, Local Government Councils; 1996-todate, Local Government Areas at the States level and Area Councils at FCT, Abuja. Hence, there are 768 Local Government Areas and 6 Area Councils in Nigeria. See, Section 3 (6) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended.

The demand for a local government council among the Arogbo-Ijo began in 1979, three years after Ondo State was created. In fact, as a necessary background, in 1976, the Arogbo-Ijo opted to merge with their Egbema-Ijo kith and kin across the border in the then Bendel State on account of neglect and marginalisation before the Justice Mamman Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission. The Nasir Commission upheld the demand for merger. However, the Federal Government rejected the recommendation, only promising that, ‘the new Local Government system was capable of meeting most of the demands of the Arogbo-Ijo for the development of their area’.⁵ Anchored on the above, they had hoped that a separate local government council would be created for them to enable them put up plans of their own, as a minority group, for developing themselves at the grassroots level. But contrary to their expectation, when the new Local Government Council, Ilaje/Ese-Odo was created in 1976, they were grouped together with their Apoi and Ilaje neighbours.⁶

Therefore, dissatisfied with the above new administrative arrangement, when Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1909-1987) in the course of his Presidential Campaign tour visited Arogbo on Friday, 22 June, 1979, a passionate request for a separate local government council, with the headquarters at Agadagba-Obon was made by His Royal Majesty, *Pere Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer Eperetun* (1946-2007), Aaga II, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo (1976-2007). Chief Obafemi Awolowo in his reply, openly promised to grant the said request within six months of a Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) Government in Ondo State, if voted into power. That special campaign promise was greeted with a loud and thunderous ovation. Chief Adekunle Ajasin won the election under the platform of UPN, and became the first Executive Governor of Ondo State in 1979.⁷

On Thursday, 8 November, 1979, the Arogbo-Ijo formally forwarded a memorandum to the Secretary, Committee on the Review of Local Government structure, Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Akure, requesting Arogbo-Ijo Local

⁵ Federal Military Government’s Views on the Report of the Boundary Adjustment Commission. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information Printing Division, 1976.

⁶ Oral interview held with Hon S. E. Yayu, 70 years, retired Principal, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

⁷ A Memorandum the Arogbo-Ijaw wrote, entitled A Plea for Political Justice and Equal Right to Self-Determination: The Case of the Arogbo-Ijaw Speaking People of Ondo State for their Separate Local Government, to the Secretary, Committee on the Review of Local Government Structure, c/o Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, dated 8 November, 1979, p.4.

Government Council, with the headquarters at Agadagba-Obon. The memorandum, among other reasons, specifically posits thus:

We, the Ijaw-speaking people of Ondo State know our own problems better than other people do and we have our own priorities. We, therefore, hereby, seek the political freedom within the framework of which we can manage our own affairs, along our own lines, as dictated by our linguistic, political, cultural, social, and geographical circumstances. We want to be constituted into our own Local Government comprising only the Arogbo-Ijaws... It is pertinent to mention here that it was because of the promise of a Local Government that the Arogbo-Ijaws voted en masse for the UPN in all the five recent elections. Of the 66 state constituencies, our constituency consistently registered the highest number of votes for the party in the elections. For instance, our Assembly man, Mr Richard Jolowo, had 37,662 out of 38,368 votes cast. This was easily the highest in the state. The pattern of voting was the same.⁸

Firmly rooted on the above, therefore, Governor Michael Adekunle Ajasin in his attempt to fulfil the aforesaid campaign promise created the 'Ijaw Arogbo/Tsekelewu Subordinate Area Authority' on Thursday, 23 October, 1980.⁹ But, the Arogbo-Ijo elite regarded that exercise as falling far short of the expectations and aspirations of the Arogbo-Ijo for a full-fledged and homogeneous Local Government Council. Besides, the inclusion of Tsekelewu (a neighbouring Egbema-Ijo Community, not willing to be part of Ondo State, but Bendel State), a disputed oil-producing border community did not help matters.¹⁰ In other words, the creation failed largely for two reasons: (i) It failed to meet the aspirations of the people for a full-fledged Local Government Council and (ii) It included an unwilling partner,

⁸ A Memorandum the Arogbo-Ijaw wrote, entitled A Plea for Political Justice and Equal Right to Self-Determination: The Case of the Ijaw-Speaking People of Ondo State for their Separate Local Government, to the Secretary, Committee on the Review of Local Government Structure, % Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Akure, dated 8 November, 1979, pp. 4-5.

⁹ An Official Letter: Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, Administration Department, No. IELG:1/78: Creation of Ijaw Arogbo/Tsekelewu Subordinate Area Authority, Addressed to His Highness, *Pere Kuku Aaga II*, The Agadagba of Arogbo, dated 23rd October, 1980. Note: The name, Kuku was later changed to Eperetun by the Royal family.

¹⁰ Memorandum submitted to the Committee on Creation of New Local Government Areas in Ondo State by the People of Ukparama Community in Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom, Demanding the Creation of Ukparama Local Government Area with Headquarters at Ekpetorun from the present Ese-Odo Local Government Area, dated June 2011. p. 5. Note: Though spelt as Ekpetorun in the above memorandum, it is also spelt as Ekpetonron and Ekpetoron in some instances.

Tsekelewu (now known as Polobubogho in Delta State). Nevertheless, the Local Administration operated from its Secretariat, Agadagba-Obon, shared statutory allocations with the mother council (Ilaje/Ese-Odo) on a 40:60 basis, had its own Secretary/Treasurer and Local Teaching Service Committee, generated its own revenue and prepared its own estimates.¹¹

Determined to have a full-fledged Local Government Council, the Arogbo-Ijo wrote another memo to the Chief of General Staff, General Staff Headquarters, Dodan Barracks, Ikoyi, Lagos, on Thursday, 10 November, 1988, insisting on the creation of 'Arogbo-Ijaw Local Government' from the then Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, with the headquarters at Agadagba-Obon. The memo expressly states thus:

We the undersigned, on behalf of all Ijaw-speaking people of Ondo State wish to express our unanimous desire for the creation of a separate Local Government to be known as AROGBO-IJAW LOCAL GOVERNMENT with the headquarters at AGADAGBA-OBON... The political history of Ijaws in Ondo State has been an agonisingly disturbing one. It has been a continuous struggle for autonomy, self-determination, fulfilment and actualisation.¹²

The said memo duly signed by *Pere D. M. E. Eperetun*, Aaga II, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo; Chief *F. J. Williams*, Councillor, Arogbo Ward II; Chief *R. A. Kekemeke*, Councillor, Arogbo Ward I; Chief *J. M. Ashidi*, the Tarabiri-Torhu of Arogbo; Chief *Titus Ekiki*, the Iginabou of Ajapa; Chief *A. D. Pounah*, the Neinabiri-Torhu of Opuba; and Chief *M. M. Odogbo*, the Egbeghene of Akpata, advanced the following reasons, among others, for their request:

(i) We are linguistically, socially and culturally distinct from all the Yoruba sub-groups in the state; (ii) We constitute a disproportionate minority not only in the state but also in the Local Government and as a result suffer untold political, social and economic deprivations; (iii) A separate Local Government for us will create opportunities for self-reliance

¹¹ Memorandum on Request for the Creation of Arogbo-Ijaw Local Government Area from the present Ese-Odo Local Government Area with Headquarters at Arogbo, dated June 2011, pp. 4-5.

¹² A Request for the Creation of Arogbo-Ijaw Local Government from the present Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government in Ondo State with Headquarters at Agadagba-Obon by Arogbo-Ijaw Community, c/o Chief *F. J. Williams*, Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, Igbokoda, Ondo State, Forwarded to the Chief of General Staff, General Staff Headquarters, Dodan Barracks, Ikoyi, Lagos, 10 November, 1988, p.1.

and self-fulfilment at least at the rudimentary level of governance;...(vi) Creating a separate Local Government for us will bring development nearer to us and will enhance our effective participation in governance... and (x) The tension, social strife and threats to law and order which often characterise both social and political relationships between us and our Yoruba neighbours would be a thing of the past if a separate Local Government is created for us...¹³

Specifically, on account of the Ondo State Government's failure to honour the previous plethora of requests, the agitation took a dramatic dimension, in which the Arogbo-Ijo wrote an open letter to the President and Members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council, on Monday, 7 October, 1991. Accordingly, the said letter is hereby quoted in part thus:

The Arogbo-Ijaws at present occupy the South-Eastern extremity of Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State sharing a common border with their kith and kin, the Egbema Ijaws, in Edo and Delta States...Since the 1976 Local Government creation exercise, we have been using every available opportunity to demand for a separate Local Government of our own...The only flicker of hope came in April 1983 when the Arogbo-Ijaw Local Administration was created...We had hoped by then that in due course this semi-autonomous Local Government would grow into a full-fledged Local Government. However, subsequent events... proved us wrong... To show the extent of neglect..., there is only one road linking the Ijaw-speaking area to the rest of the State. This is the famous Agadagba-Obon Road. The road appeared in the Budget of the State in the early part of the last decade and became a spill-over project for four State budgets...The same pathetic story can be told of two major canal projects meant to link the minority riverine areas to the proposed road project...In the face of all these, we...come to the...final conclusion that we the Arogbo-Ijaws no longer have any future in Ondo State and accordingly request His Excellency, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Armed Forces Ruling Council to please in the name of justice and fair play implement the recommendations of the Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission by merging the Ijaw-speaking areas of Ondo State with Edo or Delta State and create Arogbo-Ijaw West and Arogbo-Ijaw East Local

¹³ A Request for the Creation of Arogbo-Ijaw Local Government from the present Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government in Ondo State with Headquarters at Agadagba-Obon by Arogbo-Ijaw Community, c/o Chief F. J. Williams, Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, Igbokoda, Ondo State, Forwarded to the Chief of General Staff, General Staff Headquarters, Dodan Barracks, Ikoyi, Lagos, 10 November, 1988, pp.2-3.

Governments with headquarters at Agadagba-Obon and Safarogbo, respectively.¹⁴

Similar other memoranda and open letters were written to appropriate quarters, requesting a separate local government area in subsequent years. In all the above said requests, they were consistent and passionate on the need for them to have a separate local government of their own, excluding any other group, calculated to avoid unnecessary political and other related rifts.¹⁵

Therefore, it was in pursuance of this age-long demand, the Arogbo-Ijo hopefully stormed the December 1995 Arthur Mbanefo Committee on the Creation of States, Local Government Areas and Boundary Adjustments during its sitting at the Ondo State House of Assembly Complex, Alagbaka, Akure, on Wednesday, 6 March, 1996. The memorandum presented states *inter alia*:

...The Arogbo-Ijaws presently occupy the South-Eastern Boundary of Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government of Ondo State with Headquarters at Igbokoda, sharing common boundary with their kith and kin, the Egbema-Ijaws, in Edo and Delta States. The history of our struggle for self determination dates back to several decades. It began with the Willink's Minority Commission in 1958 when we joined forces with other Ijaw Minority groups for autonomy and self determination. The same struggle was carried over and became more intense, dogged and even pathetic when Ondo State was created... The Arogbo-Ijaws in a disproportionate minority, fearing domination and marginalisation in the affairs of the state, seized the opportunity of the setting up of the Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission in 1976 to demand for a merger

¹⁴ An Open Letter to Mr President and Members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council: A Request for Merger of the Arogbo-Ijaw Area of Ondo State with Edo or Delta State and the Creation of Ijaw West and Ijaw East Local Governments. Published in *The Punch*, Friday, October 11, 1991, p.7.

¹⁵ An Open Letter to the President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and the AFRC Members over the Gross Neglect of the Arogbo-Ijaw People in the Creation of Local Government Areas in Ondo State, Nigeria, in August, 1991, Submitted by the Arogbo/Furupagha Association, Port Harcourt, dated 31 January, 1992; Memorandum presented by the Arogbo-Ijaw Community in Ondo State to the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, CFR, FSS, MNI, and Members of National Security and Defence Council on the Request for Merger of Arogbo-Ijaw Area of Ondo State with Delta State and Creation of Arogbo-Ijaw Local Government with Headquarters at Agadagba-Obon, dated 3 June, 1993.

with their kith and kin in the then Bendel State (now Edo and Delta States) ...¹⁶

The memorandum made further revelations by alleging the Ondo State Government to crown up their demands thus:

...The then Ondo State Government has since frustrated every effort we made for a separate Local Government to enable us have some autonomy at least at the grassroots level of governance and to enable us put plans of our own for self development... The result of this neglect has been apathy, loss of sense of belonging, insecurity, unending agitations and downright resignation... In the light of the above...the several decades of our marriage with the majority Yoruba group in Ilaje/Ese-Odo...has proved beyond doubt that: we stand the risk of losing our identity, our soul and existence as a distinct socio-cultural group...In the face of all these, we cannot but come to the...conclusion that we the Arogbo-Ijaws, the only non-Yoruba speaking tribe in Ondo State...request for the creation of Arogbo-Ijaw North Local Government with headquarters at Arogbo Town and Arogbo-Ijaw South (Ukpara-ama) Local Government at Akpata...¹⁷

The kernel of their argument for wanting a local government of their own centred on the dire need to have a sense of belonging in a predominantly Yoruba-speaking state, thereby bringing development nearer home. This was expected to enhance effective participation in governance at the grassroots level. As a change of strategy in pursuance of their dream, the desire to join their kith and kin assumed the centre stage of the struggle. This was hinged on the fact that the Arogbo-Ijo occupy the South-Eastern end of Ondo State, sharing a common boundary with other Ijo-speaking groups, such as Egbema, Olodiana and Furupagha in Edo and Delta States. Obviously, it was the use of the upper and lower Siluko River as geographical demarcation between the former Ondo, Benin and Delta Provinces by the colonial administration that led to the balkanisation of these hitherto contiguous Ijo communities into different administrative units in Ondo, Edo and Delta States; since State creation had largely followed the old Provincial lines. Based on the above import, and to

¹⁶ A Memorandum submitted to the Local Governments, States Creation and Boundary Adjustment Committee by the Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom in Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, dated this 9th Day of January, 1996.

¹⁷ A Memorandum submitted to the Local Governments, States Creation and Boundary Adjustment Committee by the Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom in Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, dated this 9th Day of January, 1996.

further sustain and maintain their socio-cultural heritage and values, and the thrust for self-development, requesting a separate local government became the most crucial political tool.

Similarly, the Apoi as a group also had their age-long history of the struggle for a local government area of their own, though comparatively not as furious and rigorous as that of their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours. This may probably be due to their cheerful disposition towards the various governments on grounds of their linguistic Yoruba identity. Nevertheless, their agitation for a separate local government area also visibly attracted the attention of the Ondo State Government since the creation of Ondo State in 1976. They actually did a presentation for a separate Local Government to the Committee on Review of Local Government Structure in December 1979, led by Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo, then a Commissioner for Trade, Industries and Co-operatives, under Governor Michael Adekunle Ajasin (1979-1983).¹⁸

As revealed by High Chief Folarin Abraham Dabo, in the said 1979 request, the Apoi argued that in consonance with the philosophy of a just, free and egalitarian society, creating a separate Apoi Local Government Council with the headquarters at Igbekebo, was the only guarantee for a full political participation. In fact, F. A. Dabo further disclosed that before the Apoi finally agreed on the choice of the said Igbekebo as the headquarters, Igbekebo and Sabomi were the two proposals on ground that generated heated debates among the Apoi. Accordingly, James Pelubo Mein, the *Amananawei* (owner or head) of Igbekebo, Chief Rufus Olayinka Dabo and High Chief Folarin Abraham Dabo vociferously rooted for Igbekebo on the grounds of being a one-time colonial judicial headquarters and the headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, with existing facilities for a smooth take-off. But, to the contrary, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the then Kalasuwe of Apoi, and with the support of Paul Ola Joshua, the *Amananawei* (owner or head) of Igbobini in particular, stridently argued for Sabomi to be the proposed headquarters of Apoi Local Government. Their argument was grounded on the fact that Sabomi was the traditional seat of the then Kalasuwe of Apoi (*Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran). Above all, the choice of Igbekebo as the then headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council in 1955 was

¹⁸ Oral interview held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 64 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 5 March, 2018.

agreed on by the Apoi, and Bini Confederation because of the Arogbo-Ijo, who were also then part of the Council.¹⁹ This, thus, created a political logjam for the Apoi on the choice of the headquarters for the proposed Apoi Local Government Council. At the instance of Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo, a meeting of the representatives of the nine Apoi ancient settlements was held at Sabomi. The issue became intractable to the magnitude in which the representatives eventually agreed on voting, and majority of them voted for Igbekebo. Though the Apoi dream for a separate local government council did not see the light of the day, the issue of the proposed headquarters for an Apoi Local Government became a settled political matter in subsequent requests.²⁰

In furtherance of the above, according to High Chief Solomon Olagoke Surulere, in 1982, the Apoi requested a separate local government in which the headquarters was to be sited at Igbekebo. The said request was presented to the Ondo State House of Assembly Committee on the creation of new Local Government Councils. High Chief S. O. Surulere further disclosed that Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo, then a Commissioner for Trade, Industries and Co-operatives, employed all the needed political connections to achieve the Apoi dream, but failed.²¹

In his contribution, High Chief Pius Ayodele Jeje disclosed that the Apoi made similar requests in 1988 and 1994. The 1988 request for the creation of Apoi Local Government with the headquarters at Igbekebo was addressed to the Chief of General Staff, General Staff Headquarters, Dodan Barracks, Ikoyi, Lagos.²² In a similar token, the 1994 demand for the creation of Apoi Local Government with the headquarters at Igbekebo was forwarded to the Chairman, National Constitutional Conference, Abuja, through Chief (Dr) Abiodun Ijose, National Constitutional Conference, Abuja, dated Monday, 1st August, 1994.²³ On the choice of the headquarters, the Memo clearly states that, ‘in our continuous demand for

¹⁹ Oral interview held with High Chief Folarin Abraham Dabo, 83 years, the Obateru of Igbekebo, Apoi, 13 March, 2019.

²⁰ Oral interview held with High Chief Folarin Abraham Dabo, 83 years, the Obateru of Igbekebo, Apoi, 13 March, 2019.

²¹ Oral interview held with High Chief Solomon Olagoke Surulere, 77 years, the Saniwei of Sabomi, Apoi, 14 March, 2019.

²² Oral interview held with High Chief Pius Ayodele Jeje, 89 years, the Saraki of Igbotu, Apoi, 15 March, 2019.

²³ Oral interview held with High Chief Pius Ayodele Jeje, 89 years, the Saraki of Igbotu, Apoi, 15 March, 2019.

Apoi Local Government, we reaffirm that Igbekebo being the headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, should be made the headquarters of the new Apoi Local Government. All infrastructural facilities of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council are still in place and could be utilised by the new Local Government at Igbekebo'.²⁴ Meanwhile, as an implication for their relationship with the Arogbo-Ijo, a careful perusal of the above requests unveiled that on the grounds of their Yoruba linguistic identity and other cultural differences apparent in their deep interactions with their Yoruba neighbours, the Apoi would like a situation where they can keep their cultural values and institutions without undue interference, superimposition or suffocation from their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours.

Another apparent chance once again in the 1995 Arthur Mbanefo-led Committee on creation of States, Local Governments and Boundary Adjustments, the Apoi, in their memorandum, requested the creation of Apoi Local Government Area with the headquarters to be sited at Igbekebo. The said memorandum, duly signed by His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the Kalasuwe of Apoi (reigned from 1955 to 2007), and other 18 signatories,²⁵ states *inter alia*:

The rationale for demanding a separate Apoi Local Government Area with headquarters at IGBEKEBO [to be] carved out of the present Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area is based on... land area,... ethno-cultural diversities,... the need for total as against partial development,... reversing rural depopulation,... and political participation... Igbekebo is proposed [as the] headquarters of APOI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA because Igbekebo was the headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council embracing Apoi and Arogbo-Ijaws, with existing facilities for

²⁴ The Memo the Apoi wrote to the Chairman, National Constitutional Conference, Abuja, through Chief (Dr) Abiodun Ijose, National Constitutional Conference, Abuja, entitled, The Demand for the Creation of Apoi Local Government with the Headquarters at Igbekebo, dated 1st August, 1994.

²⁵ The said other 18 signatories were: His Royal Highness, *Oba* E. Odofin, The Gbaluwe of Igbotu; HRH, *Oba* E. O. Egbukuyomi, The Odogun of Igbekebo; HRH, *Oba* M. O. Olomu, The Takunbe of Ipoke; HRH, *Oba* Paul Joshua, The Olu of Igbobini; HRH, *Oba* Benjamin Debi, The Lebu of Ojuala; Chief Omotayo Reju, The Regent of Oboro; Chief Kulubo, The Oloja of Kurugbene; Chief Lot Moghanbo, The Acting Regent of Sabomi; Chief T. Olowoparija, The Jagun of Kiribo; Chief Jacob, The Ofo of Inikorogha; Chief F. A. Dabo, The Obateru of Igbekebo; Chief P. A. Jeje, The Saraki of Igbotu; Chief Ade Sheile, The Balogun of Ojuala; Chief Joseph Leji, The Ogbimi of Sabomi; Chief E. J. O. Ojo, Igbotu; Mr Akin Fauga, President, Apoi Elite Congress; M. O. Omotuyole, Secretary, Apoi National Movement, and Chief Z. O. Obolo, President of Apoi National Movement.

a smooth take off. The town is accessible by land and water, has enough space to accommodate developments...²⁶

A similar memorandum the Apoi wrote to the Secretary, Committee on the Creation of New Local Government Areas, duly signed by HRM, Joyce Ibimidun Adesola Oladiran-Ebiseni (Regent), the Kalasuwe of Apoi, and other signatories, disclosed vital historical facts for their agitation for a separate local government area:

...As a people, we have lived peacefully and in harmony with and among our Arogbo-Ijaw brothers for a very long time. This dates back to the Colonial days in the then Ese-Odo District Council (1955) through Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council since 1976...Our agitation for a Local Government Area of our own, like our Arogbo-Ijaw, has not seen the light of the day...The Apoi people are one of the earliest settlers in the coastal part of Ondo State. They were formerly referred to as Western Ijaws alongside the Arogbo and the Egbema-Ijaws...The paramount ruler of the Apoi people, the Kalasuwe of Apoiland, was listed as second class Chief on page 343 of the Nigerian Gazette of 26th June, 1924 alongside the Abodi of Ikale, Osemawe of Ondo, Owa of Idanre and the Amapetu of Mahin. Hence, the Kalasuwe of Apoiland remained the President of the then Ese-Odo District Council at the time first class traditional rulers were appointed head of District Councils...Our demand for a separate Local Government of our own dates back to 1982 during the Pa. Adekunle Ajasin administration...The most recent being in 1996... It is, therefore, our resolve to demand for creation of three (3) Local Government Areas for the Apoi people as this will open up the political space for self-realisation and fulfilment as well as economic and infrastructural development.²⁷

The memorandum even described the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo as a forced union when size per se was the overriding principle for creating local governments. But as an instrument for growth and development, sheer size has outlived the rationale for its existence. Thus, its continued existence was defeatist to the philosophy of manageable local government, and

²⁶A Memorandum by the Apoi to the Chairman, Creation of State, Local Government and Boundary Adjustment Committee, Room 191, Annex 34, New Federal Secretariat, Shehu Shagari Way, Maitama, Abuja, 6 January, 1996.

²⁷A Memorandum submitted by the Apoi to the Secretary, Committee on the Creation of New Local Government Areas, c/o Director of Local Government Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, State Secretariat, Alagbaka, Akure, 25th June, 2011.

has been the bane of development in the area. The memo further argued that the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government alone harbours three groups (the Ilaje, the Apoi and the Arogbo-Ijo). The Ilaje and the Arogbo-Ijo are in the creeks while the Apoi are largely on the mainland. Thus, the varying and often mutually exclusive needs of these culturally and linguistically diverse elements or groups are regular source of conflicts and obstacles to progress. In arguing for a separate local government, the memo further posits that since the Apoi needs are fundamentally different from others, there is no time Apoi needs can be served without the instrumentality of Apoi local government.²⁸

Based on the requests severally made by the two groups, they hopefully waited for the realisation of their age-long dreams. But against all expectations, the unpleasant political pill too bitter for them to swallow was the creation of ‘Ilaje-West Local Government Area’ with the headquarters at Ode-Ugbo (an Ilaje settlement) by General Sani Abacha in October 1996. Under a microscopic scrutiny, the former Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Igbokoda, was merely split into two. Thus, under the new political configuration of ‘Ilaje-West Local Government Area’, the groups included were the Ugbo people of Ilaje extraction, and half of the Arogbo-Ijo, before then known as ‘Ijaw Arogbo Ward II’ under the former Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council. The remaining part of the former Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council was renamed Ilaje Central Local Government Area with the headquarters at Igbokoda (the same headquarters of the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo). The groups or people reconstituted into it were the Ilaje people of Mahin, Aheri and Etikan, the remaining half of Arogbo, then known as ‘Ijaw Arogbo Ward I’, and the Apoi people, known under the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council as ‘Ijaw Apoi Ward I and Ijaw Apoi Ward II’.²⁹

The above balkanisation necessitated the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi to come together for the first time in their political history to demand a joint Local Government Area. This unity was fostered because it became crystal clear to the duo that only a collaborative or joint effort

²⁸ A Memorandum submitted by the Apoi to the Secretary, Committee on the Creation of New Local Government Areas, c/o Director of Local Government Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, State Secretariat, Alagbaka, Akure, 25th June, 2011.

²⁹ Oral interviews held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 64 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 5 March, 2018; and Chief Pius Michael Sylvester Olopele, 75 years, politician, Oba-Ile Housing Estate, Akure, 7 March, 2018.

could salvage them from the political armpit of their Ilaje neighbours. As revealed by Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, few leaders of the two groups first met at the Ondo State Council of Nigeria Union of Journalists Press Centre, Alagbaka, Akure, and agreed on the need to request a joint Local Government Area as the only panacea, to get out of the political spider's web of their Ilaje neighbours. In an enlarged and well attended second meeting, the leaders of the two groups met at the First Baptist Church, Igbekebo, and wrote a strongly worded petition against their unwholesome bifurcation into two Ilaje Local Government Areas and, thus, formally requested one Local Government Area. As an outcome of the struggle, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, with headquarters at Igbekebo, was created on Thursday, 2 January, 1997. Meanwhile, as an initial hiccup, instead of putting together all the Ilaje people of Mahin, Ugbo, Aheri and Etikan in the new Ilaje Local Government Area with the headquarters at Igbokoda, the Ugbo people, with four political wards were grouped alongside the Arogbo-Ijo (with three wards) and Apoi (also with three wards) to form the new Ese-Odo Local Government Area. As expected, the Ugbo people like a wounded dragon, bitterly resented and, thus, refused to join the new Ese-Odo with the pain of losing their earlier announced 'Ilaje-West Local Government Area'. This was corrected as the Ugbo were formally brought under Ilaje Local Government Area, leaving Ese-Odo for the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi as formally requested by the duo.³⁰

Kennedy Ikantu Peretei, therefore, argued that the struggle continued until 2 January, 1997 when government announced the New Year gift of Ese-Odo Local Government Area. The struggle to prevent another partition into two Ilaje Local Government Areas, perhaps, consumed more energy than was dissipated on the search for a local government.³¹ The above also informed Ojogo to submit thus:

³⁰ Oral interviews held with Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, 58 years, retired civil servant, Akure, 30 November, 2017; and Mr Worikunmoh Wednesday Joseph Gunugunu, 60 years, politician, Perebiri, Erubiri, Arogbo, 4 March, 2018.

³¹Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.37.

Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, today, is fondly called the ‘Youngest and the Best’; suggesting that, it is the newest of the local councils created by...the administration of late Sani Abacha in 1996. But inquisitive observers may contend why...referred to as the youngest. It is here then that we will make our point of departure. Upon the creation of the new Councils by the late Head of State, the hopes of the Arogbo Ijaws and Ijaw Apoi became dashed, as they were not given even a single Council for both groups; courtesy of the instrumentality of the initially approved ILAJE WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT. The above, which sought to balkanise the entire Arogbo/Apoi Ijaws into two thickly-populated Ilaje Local Governments..., hence became fraught with cries of apparent injustice and marginalisation...These humble cries and civil protests truly won the heart of the then Military Administrator of Ondo State, Navy Captain Anthony Onyearugbulem, who also saw no wisdom in keeping the Arogbo/Apoi...perpetually divided into two Local Government Councils. Hence, the Ugbo Ilajes, Arogbo-Ijaws and the Apoi were grouped together to form a re-coded entity called ‘ESE-ODO LOCAL GOVERNMENT’ on January 2nd, 1997. Yet, the then MILAD showed no complacency to the un-thinkability of keeping the three ethnic groups in an unnatural union, as he...relocated the Ugbo Ilajes, with the then NECON’s consent and Federal Government’s approval, to their natural base, which is Ilaje Local Government...³²

Thus, the politics that turbulently greeted and characterised the eventual creation of Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, with its headquarters at Igbekebo on Thursday, 2 January, 1997 can be best described as tripartite and a child of political circumstances because, its political intricacies entangled the Ilaje, Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi groups of the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (1976 - 1996). The above, therefore, shows that the post 1976 agitations did not yield much because the two groups were not united in putting up a common front in demanding for a joint local government area. But, with a concerted effort, and the willingness to come under one local government administration, their agitations in the 1990s finally came to fruition. Hence, with this development, we now have eighteen Local Government Areas in the present-day Ondo State. The State is further divided into twenty-six State Constituencies, nine Federal

³²Ojogo, K.D. 2000. *Steps of Vision: A Documentary Booklet of the First 365 Days of the Present Administration in Ese-Odo Local Government of Ondo State* (June 2nd 1999-June 2nd 2000). pp 13-14.

Constituencies and three Senatorial Districts. Meanwhile, for the purpose of this work, see Table 5.2 on page 215 for the list of the 18 Local Government Areas and other necessary information of Ondo State, while Figure 5.2 on page 216 for the Map of Ondo State showing the 18 Local Government Areas, indicating the Study Area (Ese-Odo). Similarly, the pictures of the two traditional rulers of the two groups (Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi) at the time of the creation of Ese-Odo Local Government Area, are also provided in Figure 5.3 on page 217 and Figure 5.4 on page 218.

Table 5.2: The List of the 18 Local Government Areas of Ondo State

No	Local Government	Male	Female	Total	Headquarters
1.	Akoko North-East	92,456	86,636	179,092	Ikare-Akoko
2.	Akoko North-West	107,076	104,791	211,867	Okeagbe-Akoko
3.	Akoko South-East	42,175	40,268	82,443	Isua-Akoko
4.	Akoko South-West	114,733	113,650	228,383	Oka-Akoko
5.	Akure-North	66,526	64,239	130,765	Iju/Itaogbolu
6.	Akure-South	178,672	181,596	360,268	Akure
7.	Ese-Odo	79,812	78,444	158,256	Igbekebo
8.	Idanre	67,531	62,264	129,795	Owena
9.	Ifedore	89,574	86,798	176,372	Igbara-Oke
10.	Ilaje	145,859	142,979	289,838	Igbokoda
11.	Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo	87,104	84,772	171,876	Ile-Oluji
12.	Irele	72,861	71,275	144,136	Irele
13.	Odigbo	116,299	115,988	232,287	Ore
14.	Okitipupa	117,594	116,544	234,138	Okitipupa
15.	Ondo-East	38,851	37,241	76,092	Bolorunduro
16.	Ondo-West	141,759	147,109	288,868	Ondo
17.	Ose	73,119	71,020	144,139	Ifon
18.	Owo	112,056	110,206	222,262	Owo
	Ondo State	1,745,057	1,715,820	3,460,877	Akure

Source: Ondo State Profile: Investment Potentials Akure: Olaniyan Publishing Company Ltd., p. 23; The Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette. No. 2 Abuja-2nd February, 2009 Vol. 76, B 37 (Report on the Census 2006 Final Results).



Figure 5.2: Map of Ondo State showing the 18 Local Government Areas, indicating the Study Area (Ese-Odo).

Source: Department of Geography, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 2015.

The two Paramount Rulers of the two Groups at the time of the Creation of Ese-Odo Local Government Area in 1997



Figure 5.3: His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, the Kalasuwe of Apoi, Ugele Idumu III (reigned from 1955 to 2007).

Source: The Palace of the Kalasuwe, Sabomi, Apoi, 2018.



Figure 5.4: His Royal Majesty, *Pere Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer Eperetun, Aaga II*, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo (reigned from 1976 to 2007).

Source: The Palace of the *Pere Eperetun*, Erubiri, Arogbo, 2018.

5.2 Political Wards Delineation Controversy between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi

On the creation of Ese-Odo Local Government Area on Thursday, 2 January, 1997, the Ugbo-Ilaje group had four political wards, Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi had three each, all totalling ten political wards in line with the electoral law of the then National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), headed by Chief Sumner Dagogo Jack (1994-1998). Pointedly, because the Ugbo group refused to be part of the new Ese-Odo, and consequent upon their request, NECON transferred them to the then newly renamed Ilaje Local Government Area, Igbokoda. With the exit of the Ugbo-Ilaje with their four wards, the rest of Ese-Odo had to remain with six wards, with Arogbo and Apoi sharing three apiece.³³

In fact, with the said six wards, they went into the local government elections on 16 March, 1997, in which the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship positions were won by Chief Francis Kebieri Ajih of Arogbo and Mr S. O. Leji of Apoi respectively under the platform of the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP). The six Councillors equally elected were: Hon. Wonatei Ofoyeju of Arogbo Ward I (National Centre Party of Nigeria); Hon Corporal Nanaopiri of Arogbo Ward II (United Nigeria Congress Party); Hon (Mrs) Taye Abise of Arogbo Ward III (Democratic Party of Nigeria); Hon Richard Omosehin of Apoi Ward I (United Nigeria Congress Party); Hon Felix Koledoye of Apoi Ward II (Congress for National Consensus); and Hon Iwarere Iji of Apoi Ward III (United Nigeria Congress Party).³⁴As clearly shown by the above results, the Arogbo-Ijo produced the Chairmanship position while the Apoi produced the Vice-Chairmanship position. Similarly, the Arogbo-Ijo had three councillors and the Apoi also had three councillors. This marked a period of political co-operation and understanding between the two groups.

The above unity of purpose notwithstanding, despite the land slide victory, Ajih was not sworn-in for what the then NECON cited as a constitutional constraint of two-thirds of ten wards, which is seven wards, at least expected to form any government. Contrary to the above necessary requirement of the electoral law, Ese-Odo went into that election with six wards only. The obvious or critical question one may be tempted to ask is whether the same

³³Ojogo, K. D. 2000. Steps of Vision: A Documentary Booklet on the First 365 Days of the Present Administration in Ese-Odo Local Government of Ondo State (June 2nd 1999- June 2nd 2000), pp.13-14.

³⁴ Oral interview held with Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, former Leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, now a Teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2018.

NECON was unaware of the said constitutional constraint before it conducted the said elections. It was, indeed, a colossal waste of human and material resources. Hence, while all the other 17 Local Government Areas in Ondo State enjoyed a bit of democratic experience before the sudden death of Sani Abacha on 8 June, 1998, for the whole of 1997 and part of 1999, Ese-Odo Local Government's affairs were handled by appointed officials. The first, was Mr Ola Orimoloye (an indigene of Owo, and a civil servant) who ruled the council as a Sole Administrator (January, 1997-July, 1998); while the Secretary to the local government was Mr Femi Ogundayomi, also a civil servant and an indigene of Okitipupa. The second, was Mr Augustus Ajayi Akinlofa (a civil servant, and an indigene of Akunnu-Akoko in the present-day Akoko North-East Local Government Area), who ruled the council as a Caretaker Committee Chairman (July, 1998- June 1999), with four other members. These four members were: (i) Mr T. A. Omosehin (an Arogbo-Ijo) as the Supervisor for Agriculture; (ii) Mrs V. E. Williams (an Arogbo-Ijo) as the Supervisor for Health; (iii) Mr A. A. Olajobi (an Apoi) as the Supervisor for Education; and Pastor S. A. Dabo (an Apoi) as the Supervisor for Works. The third, was Chief F. K. Ajih (an Arogbo-Ijo), who was sworn-in as the first Executive Chairman of the Local Government on Wednesday, 2 June, 1999 under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).³⁵ Obviously, the constitutional hurdle experienced by the two groups brought them together to fight a common political course. The result was the emergence of the first duly elected political office holders in Ese-Odo Local Government Area.

Now, the nitty-gritty of the controversy, before the exit of the Ugbo-Ilaje with their four wards, the six wards of the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi were delineated with the following identities: Arogbo Ward I, Arogbo Ward II, Arogbo Ward III; and Apoi Ward I, Apoi Ward II and Apoi Ward III. But when NECON finally released the breakdown of the statutory ten wards in Ese-Odo after the relocation of the Ugbo-Ilaje, the delineation now took the following order with three identities: Arogbo Ward I, Arogbo Ward II, and Arogbo Ward III; Ukparama Ward I, Ukparama Ward II, and Ukparama Ward III; and Apoi Ward I, Apoi Ward II, Apoi Ward III, and Apoi Ward IV. A careful scrutiny of the above reveals that the Arogbo-Ijo now have six wards with two different historical identities (Arogbo and

³⁵ Oral interview held with Mr Baratei Zik Kegbe, 51 years, Senior Staff, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 9 May, 2018.

Ukparama). On the other hand, the Apoi now have four wards with the hitherto known historical Apoi identity. This sharply and furiously divided the two groups into divergent fronts both internally and externally. The first furore was the question of Ukparama identity within the Arogbo-Ijo on one hand, and between the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, on the other. That is, the creation of two identities for the Arogbo-Ijo was given different political interpretations by both groups.³⁶

Going into memory lane, this was not the first time changing identities in respect of ward delineation occurred among the two interacting groups. For instance, during the time of Ese-Odo District Council created in 1955, the identities of the Arogbo five wards were named after quarters and settlements. These were Agwobiri, Egbesubiri, Erubiri, Ukpe and Akpata Wards. Distinctively, Agwobiri, Egbesubiri and Erubiri are the three main quarters in Arogbo settlement, the traditional headquarters of Arogbo-Ijo, while, Ukpe and Akpata are names of two ancient settlements in the Ukparama axis of Arogbo-Ijo. In like manner, the identities of the Apoi ten wards were named after ancient settlements and traditional quarters. Igbekebo ward I and Igbekebo ward II were named after the settlement of Igbekebo; Igbotu ward I and Igbotu ward II were named after the settlement of Igbotu; Kiribo ward I and Kiribo ward II were named after the settlement of Kiribo; Ojuala ward was named after the settlement of Ojuala; Sabomi ward was named after the settlement of Sabomi; Arubeghan and Barate wards were named after two quarters in the settlement of Igbobini. As a further demonstration of changing identities, with the creation of the then Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (1976-1996), the earlier five political wards of Arogbo during the time of Ese-Odo District Council were not only reduced to two, but the identities also changed to 'Ijaw Arogbo ward I' and 'Ijaw Arogbo ward II'. In a similar vein, the earlier ten political wards of Apoi were not only geometrically reduced to two but the identities also changed to 'Ijaw Apoi ward I' and 'Ijaw Apoi ward II'.³⁷

³⁶ Oral interviews held with Mr Worikunmoh Wednesday Joseph Gunugunu, 60 years, politician, Perebiri, Erubiri, Arogbo, 4 March, 2018; and Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, former Leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, now a teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2017.

³⁷ Mr Ebenezer Korijo Egeni, 70 years, former NECON staff, Oba-Ile Housing Estate, Akure, 5 June, 2018. See, also, Ondoprof 1/1-2960/5 W.R.L.N. 265 of 1955, The Western Region Local Government Law, 1952 (No. 1 of 1953), B 775; OD.S.L.N.19 of 1979. The Local Government Edict, 1976, Instrument Establishing the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government, B 52.

Meanwhile, on the background to the Ukparama identity, it is pertinent to state that when the Arogbo-Ijo left their central Niger Delta home as Gbaraun people in the present-day Bayelsa State, they first settled at Oporoza in the present-day Delta State. After a brief stay, they left for a place called Ekpetonron, which entire geographical area later became known as Ukparama in their present-day location in Ondo State. It was after the reign of two *Peres* that the third *Pere* Barakumo Perebiyenmo, moved the headquarters eastward to the present-day site of Arogbo, which ultimately became the administrative seat and the common identity of the people.³⁸

The identity, Ukparama, itself is of Ijo origin with two words, namely, *Ukpara* and *Ama*. Peretei referred to Ukparama as a town built with wood firmly pegged or pushed into the ground in conformity with the ecological system of the area.³⁹ Worikunmoh Wednesday Joseph Gunugunu in his exposition described *Ukpara* as a mangrove tree, popularly known as *Agala*, and *Ama* as a settlement.⁴⁰ Richard Soritei Kekemeke and Tomson Akah's arguments corroborated that of Gunugunu where it was boldly and convincingly argued that *Ukpara* simply means mangrove tree popularly known in Ijo as *Agala*, while *Ama* means a settlement or town. Therefore, according to them, Ukparama means a settlement in which large quantities of mangrove trees are found. As a natural distinction, the area (Ukparama) is known for its salty water and shallow rivers because of its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. On the other hand, the Arogbo axis is known for its fresh water and deep rivers. It was from the above historical points of reasoning that the Ukparama identity was resurrected. Meanwhile, in the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council (1976-1996), the area in question was known as 'Ijaw Arogbo ward II'.⁴¹

³⁸ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, pp. 4-6; Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Gabson and Sons (Nig.) Enterprises..., p. 9.

³⁹ Peretei, I. K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Oral interview held with Mr Worikunmoh Wednesday Joseph Gunugunu, 60 years, politician, Perebiri, Erubiri, Arogbo, 4 March, 2018.

⁴¹ Oral interviews held with Mr Richard Soritei Kekemeke (later installed as a High Chief), 57 years, Senior Staff of NDDC, and former Commissioner, Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 2 February, 2018; and Mr Tomson Akah (later installed as a Chief), 56 years, former Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Egbunu Quarters, Ukpe, Arogbo, 24 March, 2018.

According to Prince Joel Toboukakpo Arigidi, because of the feeling of domination and marginalisation from the then 'Ijaw Arogbo ward I', the idea for a separate identity started with the formation of the defunct Ukparama People Alliance (UPA) in 1988, with Mr Ebaragha Eliphus and Prince Joel Toboukakpo Arigidi as the President and Secretary respectively. He further revealed that it was out of the fear of internal political domination from the former 'Ijaw Arogbo ward I', now Arogbo ward I, Arogbo ward II and Arogbo ward III, that they secretly resurrected or re-created the Ukparama identity for their three wards even without the knowledge of His Royal Majesty, *Pere* Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer Eperetun, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo (1976-2007). They were able to bring to the political limelight their ancient Ukparama identity through the help of the then Ondo State Administrative Secretary of the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), Mr Ebenezer Korijo Egeni, who incidentally hails from Opuba, one of the ancient settlements of the said Ukparama as a political identity under interrogation.⁴² Hon Ezekiel Corporal Okolofinighan, therefore, argued that the Ukparama identity within the Arogbo identity succeeded in promoting internal sense of belonging and historical consciousness among the people.⁴³

However, the claim of Prince Joel Toboukakpo Arigidi may not be totally correct, but rather the formation of the said socio-cultural organisation, Ukparama People Alliance (1988), only assisted in promoting the consciousness for a separate micro-identity within the people at that time distinct from that of the macro-Arogbo identity. Significantly, Mr Bekekhinmi Idhiarhi and Mr Bonsuo Ogonobibi Ominidougha disclosed that, even the first secondary school in Arogbo-Ijo Kingdom, Ijaw National High School, Arogbo (founded on Tuesday, 27 September, 1977), has four historic houses for sporting activities, namely, Agwobiri House (in red colour), Egbesubiri House (in green colour), Erubiri House (in blue colour) and Ukparama House (in yellow colour). Similarly, when the second secondary school in Arogbo-Ijo Kingdom, though the first in the said Ukparama area in question was founded on Monday, 8 January, 1979, it was distinctively named Ukparama Grammar School, Bolowoghu (but now spelt Bolowou). As a further distinction in respect of financial

⁴² Oral interview held with Prince Joel Toboukakpo Arigidi, 54 years, Vice-Principal, Alagba Quarters, Opuba, Arogbo, 4 March, 2018.

⁴³ Oral interview held with Hon E. C. Okolofinighan, 70 years, former Vice-Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area (2004-2007), Ukpe, Arogbo, 10 March, 2018.

contributions toward the establishment of these two historical schools, that of Ijaw National High School, Arogbo, was collectively done by the entire Arogbo-Ijo; but that of Ukparama Grammar School, Bolowoghu was done only by the ancient Arogbo-Ijo towns and other satellite communities located within the said Ukparama area under discourse, namely, Akpata, Ajapa, Asere, Bolowou, Opuba and Ukpe, to mention but a few.⁴⁴

As a show of complexities, the fact that many of the political leaders of the former 'Ijaw Arogbo ward I' were initially not too comfortable with the two identities, particularly as they were completely kept in the dark notwithstanding, the Apoi viewed it as a clandestine political step of their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours to divide themselves into two groups so as to have more dividends of democracy in the new Ese-Odo. The Apoi further argued that the creation of dual identities for the Arogbo-Ijo was a dangerous ominous sign of a future political domination and marginalisation, putting into consideration their ill-fated political experiences of 1983 and 1992 as earlier discussed in this work.⁴⁵ The Apoi leaders, therefore, rallied round and rejected the 6:4 administrative structure even if the Ukparama identity was to remain as an internal historical affairs of Arogbo. Their argument was based on parity of wards (five wards for Arogbo, and five wards for Apoi) because in the days of the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, both groups had two wards each. Above all, Ese-Odo, at its inception, was created on the basis of six wards in which Arogbo was given three and Apoi was equally given three, excluding the four wards of Ugbo-Ilaje. The Apoi, led by Chief Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo, openly and bitterly accused Mr Ebenezer Koriyo Egeni, the then Ondo State Administrative Secretary of NECON, for manipulating the delineation exercise into a 6:4 administrative structure in favour of his kith and kin.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Oral interviews held with Mr Bekehinmi Idhiarhi 59 years, Akure, former Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Ondo State, now a Principal, 10 February, 2018; and Mr Bonsuo Ogonobibi Ominidougha, 57 years, former Education Secretary, State Universal Basic Education Authority, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ominidougha Quarters, Bolowou, Arogbo, 13 March, 2018. Note: Ominidougha further states that the correct spelling of the town is Bolowou and not Bolowoghu as in the establishment name of the school. The school still maintains the old spelling, 'Ukparama Grammar School, Bolowoghu' because the records have not changed officially.

⁴⁵ Oral interviews held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 64 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 5 March, 2018; and Mr Benson Abednego, 56 years, civil servant, Ojagbemi Street, Okitipupa, 11 March, 2018.

⁴⁶ Oral interview held with Mr Felix Bodunwa, 50 years, Community Leader, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 November, 2017.

Meanwhile, in his defence, Mr Ebenezer Koriyo Egeni, who was at the centre of the delineation storm argued that the 6:4 structure delineation had no ulterior political colouration. Rather, landmass, terrain, historical affinity and the 1991 census results, were the necessary criteria that guided the exercise. As a prime criterion according to him, the Shehu Musa-led National Population Commission which conducted the census on Wednesday, 27 November to Monday, 2 December, 1991 (under Decree 23 of 1989), put the population of Arogbo-Ijo at 62, 360, and Apoi at 31,160. Furthermore, in respect of the Ukparama identity, he argued that it was purely historical, hence, never his own creation because as he claimed, it even predated the Arogbo identity itself. Therefore, his action only succeeded in giving the desired electoral or political seal of approval to the age-long Ukparama identity. E. K. Egeni further emotionally disclosed that what saddened and broke his heart was that apart from the petitions the Apoi wrote against him, the then Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo, *Pere* Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer Eperetun and Akpata community also wrote petitions against him on different grounds. In clear terms, the anger of the Apoi was on 6 wards for Arogbo-Ijo with two identities and 4 wards for Apoi, instead of 5:5. On the other hand, the annoyance of *Pere* Eperetun was on 3 wards for Arogbo and 3 wards for Ukparama, instead of 4 wards for Arogbo and 2 wards for Ukparama and/or 6 wards for Arogbo-Ijo with the identity, Arogbo wards I-VI, without the Ukparama identity. Again, within the confines of Ukparama, the vituperation of the Akpata community was its being grouped along with Opuba and other satellite settlements under Ukparama ward II, and by extension making Opuba (Egeni's country home) as the ward collation centre.⁴⁷

The above, was the catch-22 situation and/or political trilemma E. K. Egeni found himself, and thus, received suicidal political missiles from three unfavourable fronts under the same subject matter. As all political measures internally embarked on by the two groups to resolve the impasse proved abortive, the struggle was shifted to Akure and Abuja respectively. Therefore, it is important to note that these new political administrative changes created tension between the two groups that had hitherto cooperated against their Ugbo-Ilaje neighbours in the course of the struggle for a joint local government.

⁴⁷ Oral interview held with Mr Ebenezer Koriyo Egeni, 70 years, former NECON staff, Oba-Ile Housing Estate, Akure, 5 June, 2018.

Basically, as a factor that weakened the Arogbo-Ijo generally, many of the leaders of the former 'Ijaw Arogbo ward I' (now Arogbo ward I, Arogbo ward II, and Arogbo ward III) argued that, *ab initio*, the internal delineation of six wards in Arogbo into Arogbo ward I, Arogbo ward II, and Arogbo ward III, and Ukparama ward I, Ukparama ward II and Ukparama ward III ought to have been Arogbo ward I, Arogbo ward II, Arogbo ward III, Arogbo ward IV, Arogbo ward V and Arogbo ward VI. They, therefore, considered the creation of the Ukparama identity or micro-Ukparama identity as unnecessary, which provided the fertile ground for the Apoi to reject the 6:4 structure. The leaders of the former 'Ijaw Arogbo ward II' (now Ukparama ward I, Ukparama ward II, and Ukparama ward III), argued to the contrary with the backing of the Ondo State Administrative Secretary of NECON, Mr Ebenezer Koriyo Egeni. With this sharp internal division, the Arogbo-Ijo were unable to put up the desired and necessary common front to fight the political battle of retaining or maintaining the 6:4 administrative structure.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the Arogbo-Ijo half-heartedly put up her defence in favour of the aforementioned 6:4 administrative structure based on population, landmass, terrain, and other necessary criteria. Expectedly, they hammered more on the population issue because, according to the 1991 population census, Arogbo-Ijo was 62,360, and Apoi was 31,160 respectively.⁴⁹

On the other hand, the Apoi were initially united in their struggle to change the 6:4 administrative structure to 5:5, but were also sharply divided at the end of the day. Under the aforesaid 6:4 administrative structure, the former 'Ijaw Apoi ward I' and 'Ijaw Apoi ward II' in the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council now had two wards each. The first problem that confronted and haunted the Apoi was the issue of which of the former two wards was to be given the fifth ward, if eventually retrieved from either Arogbo or Ukparama. The Apoi leaders at a general meeting held at Igbekebo agreed to carve out a new ward from the old 'Ijaw Apoi ward I' and 'Ijaw Apoi ward II' to form the fifth one, which would consist of Ojuala (formerly of the old 'Ijaw Apoi ward I', but also now in the

⁴⁸ Oral interview held with Hon E. C. Okolofinighan, 70 years, former Vice-Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area (2004-2007) Ukpe, Arogbo, 10 March 2018.

⁴⁹ National Population Commission Census'91 Final Results, Ondo State, NPC Secretariat, Igbatoro Road, Akure.

new Apoi ward I), Inikorogha and Oboro (formerly of the old 'Ijaw Apoi ward II', but now in the new Apoi ward III).⁵⁰

Consequently, the Apoi leaders of thought, in a well-worded position paper, forwarded their proposal to Akure and Abuja respectively in 1997. The Apoi leaders waited in vain to hear from Akure on the likely outcome of their letter. Due to the sensitive nature of the issue, and the fact that they were anxious to know the update, Chief Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo, Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi and Solomon Olagoke Surulere were mandated to leave for Akure, where it was discovered to their dismay that another group in the present-day Apoi Ward III used the letterhead of the Kalasuwe of Apoi, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, to submit another proposal for the same anticipated ward. Under the said proposal, Sabomi and Oboro were proposed to form the new ward, contrary to the stand of all the nine ancient Apoi settlements. As a further cause for worry, *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran, whose royal letterhead was surreptitiously used, was incidentally from Sabomi, and the Kalasuwe Chieftaincy is rotated between the Ugele Idumu Ruling House of Sabomi and the Ebeli Idumu Ruling House of Oboro.⁵¹ Though *Oba* Samuel Adetimehin Oladiran's Royal letterhead was used without his consent, this development not only visibly divided the Apoi, but also the then new Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)- headed by Justice Ephraim Omorose Ibukun Akpata (1998-2000) was put at a dilemma on what to do.

As revealed by Felix Bodunwa, in a tortuous manner perhaps, two Lagos based elite groups in Igbobini (Igbobini Flagbearer and Igbobini Island Club) in which Professor Funso Akere, Chief Mosanlehinwon Ajinde and Mafolabomi, among others, were members, championed the move that the fifth ward should be delineated based on the 1991 population census results in respect of the nine ancient Apoi settlements.⁵² Accordingly, the said 1991 population census figures were: (i) Igbobini was 5,569; (ii) Igbotu was 3,460; (iii) Kiribo was 3,179; (iv) Igbekebo was 2,400; (v) Sabomi was 1,963; (vi) Ojuala was 1,627; (vii)

⁵⁰ Oral interview held with Mr Felix Bodunwa, 50 years, Community Leader, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 November, 2017.

⁵¹ Oral interview held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 64 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 5 March, 2018; Ondo State of Nigeria, White Paper on Ajakaiye Chieftaincy Review Commission, June, 1989, p. 14.

⁵² Oral interview held with Mr Felix Bodunwa, 50 years, Community Leader, Igbobini, Apoi, 20 November, 2017.

Ipoke was 1,216; (viii) Oboro was 1,064; and (ix) Inikorogha was 982.⁵³ As an escape route in 1998, INEC humbly bought this political formula and, thus, the fifth ward was retrieved from Ukparama ward III, and conceded to Igbobini in addition to her earlier one from the rejected 6-4 structure. Consequently, Ukparama wards II and III were merged together on grounds of geographical proximity to form Ukparama ward II. Therefore, under this new arrangement, the ten wards of Ese-Odo are as follows: Arogbo Ward I, Arogbo Ward II, Arogbo Ward III, Ukparama Ward I, Ukparama Ward II, Apoi Ward I, Apoi Ward II, Apoi Ward III, Apoi Ward IV and Apoi Ward V. Hence, Chief Zebulun Otokunrin Obolo (an indigene of Igbobini, Apoi), who once represented Ilaje/Ese-Odo Federal Constituency at the National Assembly, Abuja (2003 – 2007) while writing on the Arogbo-Ijo/Apoi 6:4 struggle, concludes thus:

The most testy problem we have ever had in politics was the 6/4 deal concluded with Arogbo by some of our boys,-it was nullified at great cost. If we had been careless our future would have been compromised forever. In fact, some of the functionaries of the council today would never have been able to aspire to any Position of Chairman, Vice Chairman, House of Assembly and House of Representatives.⁵⁴

Though the Apoi succeeded in winning the 5:5 struggle, it equally sharply divided them, hence, the collective anger of the remaining eight ancient Apoi settlements against Igbobini since then to the end of this work. Therefore, the delineation of the Apoi five wards based on the nine ancient settlements and Apoi Zion, excluding the modern-day satellite settlements and camps, cast more light on the above saga: Apoi Ward I–Igbekebo, Ojuala and Apoi Zion; Apoi Ward II-Kiribo and Ipoke; Apoi Ward III- Sabomi, Igbotu, Inikorogha and Oboro; Apoi Ward IV- Igbobini; and Apoi Ward V- Igbobini. In fact, on a critical look, Igbobini ward IV and Igbobini ward V are only divided into two, apart from her satellite settlements, by the Igbobini road leading to Ode-Irele in Irele Local Government Area. As a frosty relationship, the Apoi throughout the struggle boycotted Local Government elections to be conducted under the 6:4 structure until it was changed to 5:5. And because

⁵³ National Population Commission Census'91 Final Results, Ondo State, NPC Secretariat, Igbatoro Road, Akure.

⁵⁴ Obolo, Z. O. 2005. The Struggle and Developments to Date 24th December, 2005 and the Way Forward. Being the Lecture Topic to mark the Golden Jubilee Anniversary Celebration of His Royal Majesty, *Oba S. A. Oladiran*, the 11th Kalasuwe of Apoiland, p.11.

of the 2/3 electoral requirement to form any government at the local government level, NECON could not conduct election in Ese-Odo until 5 December, 1998 when the then new INEC conducted the nationwide local government elections in Nigeria under the transition programme of General Abdulsalami Abubakar.⁵⁵

Another issue that generated crisis between the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi in respect of delineation of voting units was the inclusion of Igangbo and Osari-Ugbo settlements under Apoi ward I against their wish to be part of Arogbo ward II. These two Ijo-speaking settlements laid claim to Arogbo-Ijo under the rulership of the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijo.⁵⁶ On the other hand, the Apoi equally laid counter claim to these Ijo-speaking settlements to be under the Odogun of Igbekebo.⁵⁷ Curiously, the incorporation of these two settlements into the INEC registration of voters into Apoi units was cleverly done. The Osari-Ugbo people as voters were registered under Apoi ward I in a unit encoded 'Unit 006: Open Space, White Sand, Osari', while Igangbo people as voters were registered under Apoi ward I in a unit encoded 'Unit 007: Open Space, Koni, Igangbo'. To the anger of the two affected settlements, INEC consistently rejected all their passionate appeals and requests to be part of Arogbo ward II. The relationship considerably worsened to the extent that the Igangbo and Osari-Ugbo communities in *se defendendo* invaded Igbekebo (an Apoi settlement and the administrative headquarters of Ese-Odo) on Saturday, 3 February, 2007. Apart from human casualties, many houses were destroyed and burnt down. Notably, the palace of *Oba* Emmanuel Omotumilara Egbukuyomi, the immediate past Odogun of Igbekebo, the magnificent building of High Chief Folarin Abraham Dabo (a prominent community and political leader), a storey building belonging to Chief Rufus Olayinka Dabo and the First African Church Mission House were touched, among other houses.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Oral interview held with Mr Kennedy Ikantu Peretei, 51 years, former Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Erubiri, Arogbo, 6 February, 2015.

⁵⁶ Oral interview held with Mr Jacob Fieleifa, 61 years, community leader, Igangbo, Arogbo, 13 February, 2018.

⁵⁷ Oral interview held with Revd Kola Hugah, 65 years, Religious Leader, Igbekebo, Apoi, 9 December, 2017.

⁵⁸ Oral interviews held with Oreosi Kuete, 70 years, retired civil servant, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 14 February, 2018; and Kola Hugah, 65 years, Religious Leader, Igbekebo, Apoi, 9 December, 2017. Note: Prior to the said 3 February, 2007 invasion, Igangbo and Osari-Ugbo communities on 25 March 2004 invaded Igbekebo, and burnt down the building of the Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission (ODIEC). The primary calculation, was to prevent the then forthcoming Local Government Election from holding on 27 March, 2004. Nevertheless, the election was held as planned, because the office aides of Mr Sufficient Uguoji (an Arogbo-Ijo from Biagbini in Arogbo Ward III), the Administrative Secretary, ODIEC, Igbekebo, escaped with the sensitive electoral materials before the building was set on fire. In fact, in 1998, there was a similar crisis, but not to the magnitude of the crises of 2004 and 2007.

After the said horrific invasion, for fear of retaliatory measures, the Arogbo-Ijo civil servants, traders, fisherwomen, *et cetera* who were residing at Igbekebo (the headquarters of Ese-Odo Local Government Area) in a mass exodus hurriedly fled to Arogbo by water and land. Truly to their trepidation, Igbekebo youths in reprisal action brought out all the property left behind by the Arogbo-Ijo, such as wears, beds, mattresses, tables, chairs, and other domestic materials, and openly burnt down to ashes. Consequently, within this matrix of apprehension, suspicion and hostility, the economic fortune of Igbekebo was sadly crippled to an unimaginable proportion. This was further worsened as the Arogbo-Ijo temporarily boycotted the ancient Igbekebo market, hitherto patronised on the grounds of proximity and strategic location along Oluwa River, leading to Arogbo and its environs.⁵⁹

With the above ugly developments, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) promptly suspended voting *sine die* in the two controversial units. And equally, as a tactical and temporary way out, some eligible voters in the two affected communities (Igangbo and Osari-Ugbo) thereafter, registered as voters in a neighbouring polling units at Ebiaye and Ewerebubogho in Arogbo ward II and, hence, exercising their voting rights since then. On a critical examination of this crisis, it goes beyond Igangbo and Osari-Ugbo on the one hand, and Igbekebo, on the other. On a fundamental note, it is actually a slippery crisis between the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi as the crisis is frankly grounded on the controversy of who owns the lands because the areas are reported as being rich in mineral resources.⁶⁰

The foot-dragging or dilatory nature in frontally addressing the issue compelled the two affected communities to engage the legal services of Festus Akpoghalino and Co., Legal Practitioners, to write the Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission, Abuja, thus:

1. Your petitioners are the entire peace-loving and law-abiding people of Igangbo and Osari...in Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom of Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State.
2. Your petitioners state that by the defunct NECON'S arrangement ...1997, they were properly [put] in Arogbo...Ward II ...

⁵⁹ Oral interview held with Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan (later installed as a High Chief), 55 years, Arogbo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 9 July, 2018.

⁶⁰ Oral interview held with Mr Abiye George, 49 years, Teacher, Unity Secondary School, Ode-Aye, Okitipupa, 12 March, 2018.

3. Your petitioners were subsequently excised from their place in Arogbo ward II and placed under Apoi I in 1998 during the reformed transition programme...
4. Your petitioners have persistently protested against this express marginalisation that has hitherto disenfranchised them since 1998.
5. Your petitioners state that such protest letters have been given deaf ears by the appropriate bodies...
6. Your petitioners state that the non-responsive nature of INEC in the past to the plight of your petitioners has incurred untold hardship on them as voting under a ward (Apoi ward I) that they believed they don't conspicuously belong to have been protested against during election periods persistently leading to their massive disenfranchisement...
7. Your petitioners therefore pray the National Chairman...to address the anomaly caused by the reformed transition programme in 1998 which places petitioners under Apoi ward I completely excising them from their Arogbo-Ijaw kith and kin; and to acknowledge the fact that Igangbo and Osari are towns in Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom, Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State...⁶¹

Though the suspension of voting in the said two controversial units by INEC temporarily made the concerned communities heave a sigh of relief, Igangbo and Osari-Ugbo have ceaselessly forwarded a plethora of requests and reminders to INEC on the urgent need for them to be properly put in the ward of their wish (Arogbo Ward II). As an implication of the above, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations have been far from cordial since then. Mutual suspicion, political antagonism and rivalry have continued to characterise their relationship under the slightest provocation.

5.3 The 1996 Gentlemen's Agreement and its Challenges

The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language defines gentlemen's or gentleman's agreement as an agreement, usually diplomatic, or political, and less formal than a treaty or contract, guaranteed only by the honour of the

⁶¹ A Petition Festus Akpoghalino and Co., Legal Practitioners, plot 589 Blantyre Street, Wuse 2, Abuja, wrote to the Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission, Zambezi Crescent, off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja, entitled: 'Petition of Igangbo and Osari Communities in Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom of Ese-Odo Local Government Area in Ondo State under Apoi ward I instead of Arogbo ward II', 4 February, 2011. This petition was made available to this researcher by Mr Benson Abednego, Ojagbemi Street, Okitipupa, Ondo State. Note: Though written as Osari in the above petition, the correct name of the community is Osari-Ugbo.

parties concerned.⁶² Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary equally sees it as an agreement secured only by the honour of the participants.⁶³ The Black's Law Dictionary describes it as an unwritten agreement that, while not legally enforceable, is secured by faith and honour of the parties concerned.⁶⁴ Essentially, it is an informal and legally non-binding agreement between two or more parties. It is typically oral or simply taken as part of an unspoken agreement by convention or through mutually beneficial etiquette. In essence, it primarily rests on the honour of the parties for its fulfilment, rather than being in any way enforceable. It is, therefore, different from legal agreement or contract, which can be enforced if breached by any of the parties concerned.⁶⁵

As it relates to the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi, the 1996 agreement was a product of political necessity. As a necessary background once again, both groups requested separate Local Government Areas at the Arthur Mbanefo States Creation, Local Government Areas and Boundary Adjustments Committee, sitting at the Ondo State House of Assembly Complex, Alagbaka, Akure, in 1996. But, what was eventually created by General Sani Abacha in October 1996 was 'Ilaje-West Local Government Area', with the headquarters at Ode-Ugbo, an Ilaje settlement. As a further shocking revelation, Arogbo-Ijo was partitioned into two, in which the former 'Ijaw Arogbo Ward II' was brought under the newly created 'Ilaje West Local Government Area', and the former 'Ijaw Arogbo Ward I', and the former 'Ijaw Apoi Ward I' and 'Ijaw Apoi Ward II' remained in the old Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Area, which was renamed as 'Ilaje Central Local Government Area', with the headquarters at Igbokoda.⁶⁶ The above clearly shows that the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi were brought under two separate Ilaje Local Government Areas which appears like political enslavement under the Ilaje people.

⁶² The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language- Encyclopedic Edition. 2010 Edition, Typhoon Media Corporation, p. 527.

⁶³ Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary 2002. Federal Street Press, A Division of Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, p.766.

⁶⁴ Black's Law Dictionary 2009 Ninth Edition. Thomson Reuters, p.755.

⁶⁵ <https://www.thefreedictionary.com.org>. Accessed online 03-03-2018.

⁶⁶ Eshofonie, G. A. 2009. *The Arogbo Ijaws of Nigeria*. Lagos: Gabson & Sons (Nig.) Enterprise..., p. 23; Peretei, I.K. 2014. *Arogbo Ijo People and Events*. Abuja: Mentors Communications Limited, Revised Edition, p.37.

The common burning desire to set themselves free from the political yoke engineered the two groups to hold their first meeting at the Ondo State Council of Nigeria Union of Journalists Press Centre, Alagbaka, Akure. The second meeting was held at the First Baptist Church, Igbekebo, the headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council. It was, indeed, an assemblage of the *crème de la crème* of both groups. Arogbo-Ijo was duly represented by the Agadagba of Arogbo, *Pere* Defaye Mejuya Ebenezer Eperetun, Chief Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo, Chief Julius Omomowo Niwari, Duerimini Isaacs Kekemeke, Esq Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, and the rest, while Apoi was equally duly represented by His Royal Highness, *Oba* Emmanuel Omotumilara Egbukuyomi, the Odogun of Igbekebo, Chief Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo, Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo, High Chief Folarin Abraham Dabo, and High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, to name but a few.⁶⁷

As an outcome, all the delegates agreed on the need for the two groups to request one Local Government to be known as Ese-Odo Local Government Area, with the headquarters at Igbekebo; since it was the 1976 Local Government Reforms that merged the then Ilaje District Council with the headquarters at Atijere, and the defunct Ese-Odo District Council with the headquarters at Igbekebo to form the now defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, with the headquarters at Igbokoda (1976-1996). It is, therefore, logical that if these two district councils merged in 1976 were to be separated, they should be parted along the old line. Based on the above political wisdom, a committee was set up to write a memorandum for the creation of Ese-Odo, and with a further mandate to follow it up to a logical conclusion.⁶⁸

In furtherance of the above, for a smooth and cordial relationship, the delegates agreed on the following terms which became the canons of the 1996 agreement. Since Igbekebo, an Apoi settlement, was proposed as the Local Government headquarters, the first elected Chairman was to come from Arogbo, while the Vice-Chairman was to come from Apoi, and the representative of the two groups at the State House of Assembly, Akure was also to come from Apoi. The political calculation of balancing these two sensitive elective positions was to prevent them from coming from one group at the same time. Similarly, the Secretary

⁶⁷ Oral interview held with Chief Pius Michael Sylvester Olopele, 75 years, politician, Oba-Ile Housing Estate, Akure, 7 March 2018.

⁶⁸ Oral interview held with Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, 58 years, retired civil servant, Akure, 30 November, 2017.

to the Local Government, though an appointee of the Chairman, was to come from Apoi. These offices were expected to be alternated among the two groups in that order at the end of each tenure. Those also affected were all the political parties and their structures at that time: the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), the Congress for National Consensus (CNC); and the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN). That is, the Chairmen of the different political parties must not come from where the council chairman was expected to come from. Though unwritten, the two groups were expected to duly and religiously honour the above cardinal terms, but political events later proved to the contrary in some few celebrated instances.⁶⁹ Though the above agreement was reached during the transition programme of General Sani Abacha, the 6:4 wards delineation controversy and the sudden death of Abacha did not create room for its full implementation.

Consequently, the first implementation started with General Abdulsalami Abubakar's transition to civil rule programme. Specifically, under the Justice Ephraim Akpata-led Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), nine provisionally registered political parties participated in the 5 December, 1998 Local Government elections nationwide. These were: (i) Alliance for Democracy (AD), (ii) All Peoples Party (APP), (iii) Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), (iv) Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), (v) National Solidarity Movement (NSM), (vi) Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), (vii) Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), (viii) United Democratic Party (UDP) and (ix) United Peoples Party (UPP). See Table 5.3 on page 235 for the breakdown of the said nationwide 5 December, 1998 Local Government Election results.

⁶⁹ Oral interview held with Chief Pere-Egbe Ganfo, 58 years, retired civil servant, Akure, 30 November, 2017.

Table 5.3: The breakdown of the nationwide 5 December, 1998 Local Government Election Results

S/No.	Political Party	Chairman	Councillor
1.	Alliance for Democracy (AD)	100	1,071
2.	All Peoples Party (APP)	188	2,589
3.	Democratic Advance Movement (DAM)	—	4
4.	Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ)	3	61
5.	National Solidarity Movement (NSM)	2	8
6.	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	459	4,650
7.	Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)	2	21
8.	United Democratic Party (UDP)	—	12
9.	United Peoples Party (UPP)	1	26

Source: Quoted in Aina, A. 2006. From the Native Administration, Divisional Administration to Council Membership and Local Government. Aborisade, O. and Aransi, I. O. Eds. *State and Local Government in Nigeria: The Changing Scene*. Charlotte: Catawba Publishing Company, p. 294.

Meanwhile, the original guideline of INEC states that for the nine provisional parties to have their registration confirmed, they must receive at least 10% of the votes in a minimum of 24 States (the Federal Capital Territory is considered a State for electoral purposes). In response to discussions with the political parties and other stakeholders, INEC later reduced it to 5%. Granted on the above, and the outcome of the Saturday, 5 December, 1998 Local Government Elections, the first three political parties were formally registered, namely, Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).⁷⁰

In line with the spirit and letter of the 1996 agreement, out of the nine provisional political parties, only three political parties duly fielded their Chairmanship candidates from Arogbo, and Vice-Chairmanship candidates from Apoi respectively. Accordingly, the APP Chairmanship candidate was Mr Ikiyou Tunyan (Arogbo ward II), while his Vice-Chairmanship candidate was Mr Moses Elumaro, aka ‘Wadi’ (Apoi Ward III); the AD Chairmanship candidate was Mr Mathias Tamaraumiye Agitan (Arogbo Ward I) and the Vice-Chairmanship candidate was Mr Emmanuel Gbenga Ojo (Apoi Ward III). The PDP Chairmanship candidate was High Chief Francis Kebieri Ajih (Arogbo ward I) and his Vice-Chairmanship candidate was Mr Raphael Oladipupo Abejoye (Apoi Ward III). In that keenly contested election, Ajih and Abejoye of the PDP emerged as the winners, and were subsequently sworn-in on Wednesday, 2 June, 1999 by the Executive Governor of Ondo State, Chief Adebayo Adefarati of the Alliance for Democracy (AD).⁷¹ On the other hand, the Legislative Arm of the Council was dominated by the AD with six Councillors against the PDP with four Councillors. For the record, see Table 5.4 for the 5 December, 1998 Ese-Odo Local Government Chairmanship and Councillorship Election results on page 237.

⁷⁰Uchendu-Ozoka, U. 2000. *Nigeria's 4th Republic: A Compendium of the Executives, the Legislators and the Judiciary*. Abuja: Nigerian GONG Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., pp. 6-12; Adeola, G. L. 2009. From Native Authority to Local Government: Is there a System of Local Government in Nigeria? Odion-Akhaine Ed. *Local Government Administration in Nigeria: Old and New Visions*. Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarisation. Lagos: Panaf Press, p.15.

⁷¹ Oral interview held with Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, former Leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, now a Teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2018.

Table 5.4: The result of 5 December 1998 Ese-Odo Local Government Chairmanship and Councillorship Elections

S/N	Ward	Position	Name of Candidate	Sex	Party	Votes Scored	Winning Party	Remark
1		Chairman	Agitan, Mathias T. Tunyan, Brass I. Ajih, Francis K.	M M M	AD APP PDP	17,807 3,006 18,169	PDP	Elected
2	Arogbo I	Councillorship	Kondigha, Pius K. Ebidighi, Samuel Soriwei, Ebitoru	M M M	AD APP PDP	1236 0047 0909	AD	Elected
3	Arogbo II	Councillorship	George, Felix Ebijo, Oloruntola Egbekun, Wariebi	M F M	AD APP PDP	2,434 0026 1,736	AD	Elected
4	Arogbo III	Councillorship	Bowei, Zachariah Nanaopiri, Corporal	M M	AD PDP	1,435 4,025	PDP	Elected
5	Ukparama I	Councillorship	Teri, Shame Governor, Noah Okolofinighan, E. C.	M M M	AD APP PDP	1,610 682 1,644	PDP	Elected
6	Ukparama II	Councillorship	Boyo, Femi Abise, Taye	M F	AD PDP	1,384 5,501	PDP	Elected
7	Apoi I	Councillorship	Egbukuyomi, A. S. Omosehin, Richard	M M	AD PDP	1,256 1,286	PDP	Elected
8	Apoi II	Councillorship	Ikusedun, Pius O. Sowore, O. Ajayi, Agboola A.	M M M	AD APP PDP	1,566 219 1,089	AD	Elected
9	Apoi III	Councillorship	Koledoye, F. Ade Iroju, Stella Ayedun, Deborah	M F F	AD APP PDP	2,256 525 1,006	AD	Elected
10	Apoi IV	Councillorship	Iji, Iwarere Temitan, Ayorinde Ogele, Funmilayo	M F F	AD APP PDP	1,142 94 470	AD	Elected
11	Apoi V	Councillorship	Duyile, P. O. Omolere, Y. Iranlowo, Adeolu	F F M	AD APP PDP	1,296 818 925	AD	Elected

Source: Office of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 1998.

The above shows that the Alliance for Democracy (AD) produced six Councillors. These were: Hon Pius Kejewei Kondigha (Egbesubiri, Arogbo Ward I), Hon Felix George (Israel Kiri Zion, Ogidigba I, Arogbo Ward II), Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun (Kiribo, Apoi Ward II), Hon Felix Ade Koledoye (Sabomi, Apoi Ward III), Hon Iwarere Iji (Igbobini, Apoi Ward IV) and Hon Perekebuna Olawumi Duyile (Igbobini, Apoi Ward V). On the other hand, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) produced four Councillors. These were: Hon Corporal Nanaopiri (Adoloseimo III, Arogbo Ward III), Hon Ezekiel Corporal Okolofinighan (Ukpe, Ukparama Ward I), Hon Taye Abise (Opuba, Ukparama Ward II) and Hon Richard Omosehin (Igbekebo, Apoi Ward I).

The next stage of the agreement was the person to represent the two groups at the Ondo State House of Assembly, and the election was slated for Saturday, 9 January, 1999. As a practical attempt to breach the second term of the agreement, while the AD fielded an Apoi candidate, Hon Ernest Abiodun Anifowose (Ojuala, Apoi Ward I), the PDP fielded an Arogbo-Ijo candidate, Mr Kennedy Ikantu Peretei (Arogbo Ward I). This action of the PDP, thus, frontally challenged the 1996 agreement. Hence, uncertainty beclouded the political environment, as mutual suspicion engulfed and took the centre stage of Ese-Odo political space.⁷²

As a saving grace, this episode failed to assume a full blown ethnic colouration, unlike the celebrated 1983 and 1992 cases that tore the two groups apart, with particular reference to that of 1983 that even involved the Ondo State Government. Hence, the Arogbo-Ijo members of the AD-led by Chief Julius Omomowo Niwari, Chief Jimoh Tunfawei and Apostle Mathias Tamaraumiyensintei Agitan, among others, firmly in line with the spirit and letter of the agreement stood by their Apoi candidate, Anifowose, which led to his victory with 22,292 votes. In fact, as a contributory factor which acted to the disadvantage of the PDP candidate, Peretei with 15,002 votes was the electoral materials of Arogbo ward II that were carted away, which prevented the election from holding. As a result of this development, the declaration of Anifowose as the winner of the election was done by INEC with the returns of the remaining nine wards in Ese-Odo. Meanwhile, one other political development that took the Apoi by surprise was that PDP not only won in Arogbo Ward I,

⁷² Oral interview held with Mr Worikunmoh Wednesday Joseph Gunugunu, 60 years, politician, Perebiri, Erubiri, Arogbo, 4 March, 2018.

Arogbo Ward III, Ukparama Ward I, Ukparama Ward II, but also in Apoi Ward V. As disclosed by Peretei, this happened because the Chairman of Ese-Odo PDP, Ibine Obolo was from Apoi Ward V, hence, he vehemently stood by the candidate of his party to the annoyance of his Apoi kith and kin. With this extraordinary display of loyalty to his party, Ajih, the Chairman of the Local Government subsequently appointed him as a Special Adviser on Chieftaincy Matters.⁷³ As an implication, the above action created room for bad blood and lack of trust in their relations. Meanwhile, in respect of the full list of the said 26-member Ondo State House of Assembly (1999-2003) in which Hon Ernest Abiodun Anifowose was the representative of Ese-Odo State Constituency, see, Appendix V.

Sunday E.Yayu,⁷⁴ one of the chieftains of PDP later disclosed that fielding Peretei as the PDP candidate by the Arogbo-Ijo PDP leaders was primarily to teach the Apoi the needed political lesson because, after the aborted council election from 16 March 1997 to early December, 1998, they held Ese-Odo hostage by boycotting the local government elections on several occasions because of the 6:4 struggle at the detriment of Arogbo-Ijo. But Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi argued to the contrary that the Apoi were not surprised because most of the chief actors of the historic 9 January, 1999 episode, who planned to destroy the 1996 agreement, were the same *dramatis personae* of the 1983 and 1992 episodes that sharply divided the two groups and, therefore, prayed that the 1996 agreement must be allowed to heal the then wounds.⁷⁵

Kennedy Ikantu Peretei, the PDP candidate of the 9 January, 1999 Ondo State House of Assembly Election, while commenting on the said 1996 Agreement states that:

...Yes, there was an accord, I do not intend to open old wounds but for the purpose of keeping the records straight, it is important for me to stress the fact that the accord was threatened by the refusal of our Apoi brothers to contest the election under the 6:4 ward delineation in favour of Arogbo. We felt that since the Arogbo-Ijaw area is larger and by population far more than the Apoi, then 5:5 ward delineation will be unfair and that prompted us...to disregard any understanding earlier made by virtue of their refusal to participate in the elections based on 6:4 ward

⁷³ Oral interview held with Mr Kennedy Ikantu Peretei, 51 years, former Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Erubiri, Arogbo, 6 February, 2015.

⁷⁴ Oral interview held with Hon S. E.Yayu, 70 years, retired Principal, Erubiri, Arogbo, 29 August, 2015.

⁷⁵ Oral interview held with High Chief Philip Idowu Oluwasoga Odejimi, 64 years (Oretu Defila I), the Odede IV of Odede Quarters, Igbobini, Apoi, 5 March, 2018.

delineation...As long as the statistics remains what they were during the elections, the 5:5 delineation is not justifiable. In spite of this fact, we still know that the Apois are our brothers and we need peace to develop and that is what we are doing now...⁷⁶

Just as the political dust raised by the above episode was gradually dying down, the titanic issue of the appointment of the Secretary to the Local Government ignited another crisis. As argued by the Apoi, the Secretary to the Local Government should come from the Apoi in the eyes of the 1996 agreement, and they requested the Chairman to act accordingly. But High Chief Francis Kebieri Ajih, the then newly elected Chairman of Council, insisted that it was not part of the agreement, hence, he was at liberty to appoint his Secretary either from Arogbo or Apoi, depending on the person of his primary interest and choice. He, therefore, appointed Chief Success Torhukerhijo (from Arogbo ward I) as his first Secretary to the Local Government on Wednesday, 22 September, 1999. The Apoi, led by Chief Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo, promptly rejected the said appointment and described it as a fatal breach of the 1996 agreement that must not be allowed to see the political light of the day. In their determined efforts to resist and reject this appointment, several protest letters were sent to the then Speaker of the Ondo State House of Assembly, Hon Ayo S. Agbomuserin (31 May, 1999 - 1 April, 2001), and Chief Adebayo Adefarati, the then Governor of Ondo State (29 May, 1999 - 29 May, 2003).⁷⁷ These protest letters were written under the auspices of Apoi socio-cultural organisations, such as Apoi Pelupelu and Apoi National Movement, among others. For instance, the protest letter the Apoi Pelupelu wrote and duly signed by Chief Ade Sheile, the Secretary, on Monday, 27 September, 1999 posits thus:

...That though the councillors were equally sworn-in, they, of Apoi origin and the Vice-Chairman were totally kept out of all decisions even though Apoi and the Ijaws are 50/50 stakeholders in the local government...That Ajih's alleged selection of the political secretary from his Ijaw sector is a breach of the last of three props- parity, rotation of posts and power-sharing on which the accord of the togetherness stood...It was, therefore, moved and unanimously resolved, having regard to the earlier violations of parity and rotation of posts, the alleged breach of power-sharing formula which

⁷⁶ *The Vision News Magazine*, No. 5, No. 46, Oba Adesida Road, Akure, 31 October, 2001, p. 22.

⁷⁷ Oral interviews held with Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, 55 years, former Leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, now a Teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2018; and Mr Joseph Ebikhinmo Feku, 56 years, former Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Egbesubiri, Arogbo, 20 January, 2018.

recognised the position of the political secretary as a counterpoise to that of the Chairman, is deemed fatal to the continued existence of Ese-Odo, the unequal yoke which automatically dissolved...⁷⁸

Another protest letter, pregnant with several allegations, and a threat to separate from their Arogbo-Ijo neighbours, addressed to the Governor of the State, duly signed by Chief Raphael Oladipupo Abejaye, the Vice-Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, and all the five Apoi Councillors, dated Wednesday, 29 September, 1999 states thus:

...Before Ese-Odo Local Government was created, the two groups...agreed to come together on terms of parity, rotation of posts and power-sharing to ensure balance, especially in relation to the position of the political Secretary, which was considered as counterpoise to that of the Chairman goes to the other sector. Unfortunately, however, the Ijaws have consistently reneged...(i) The 3/3 parity was subverted and changed to 6/4 until restored to 5/5 after a bitter strife (ii) Mr Peretei was fielded against Mr Anifowose for the present House of Assembly even though the Ijaws had represented the constituency on the three earlier opportunities...(iii) Twice the Chairmanship of the Local Government to the same Ajih, whose election in 1997 was voided because of the wards status of the Local Government which was less than ten.

The letter, having chronologically stated the above gravamen against F.K.Ajih and, by extension, the Arogbo-Ijo as a group, concluded with a demand to dissolve the political marriage between the two groups:

...Since by honouring the accord, Ajih become a beneficiary of the accord as Chairman; since the same accord simply spelt out the positions of Chairman and Secretary...Since the accord is at the national level of the two communities and already honoured in performance, Ajih cannot unbound himself and refuse to concede the post of Secretary to Apoi, regardless of his excuses of not being party to the accord or there being no written documents to the effect...It is, no doubt, visibly, patent that the Apoi and Ijaws are immiscible elements. We have got to the end of our forbearance. Our patience has been taxed to the limit...therefore, as a marriage of convenience, proved unworkable, Ese-Odo should be

⁷⁸ Quoted in A Protest Letter the Apoi Pelupelu wrote entitled 'Apoi Resolution at the Just Concluded Pelupelu for the Attention and Necessary Action of Mr F. K. Ajih, Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government, dated 27 September, 1999.

allowed to dissolve into two separate and autonomous Local Administrations. We want peace and development, not war and destruction...⁷⁹

The Apoi National Movement, in which Chief Zebulon Otokunrin Obolo was the President, even engaged the services of Prince Olu Mafo & Co., to write to the Clerk of Ondo State House of Assembly on the same subject matter and other related issues against F.K. Ajih.⁸⁰ Ajih, having seen that the persistent pressure and vitriolic attacks of the Apoi from different fronts were given his government sleepless nights and further reducing the popularity of his new government, bowed to pressure from the Apoi, and subsequently replaced Chief Success Torhukherhijo (Wednesday, 22 September 1999-Thursday, 4 January, 2001) with Mr Segun Dabo (an Apoi from Igbekebo). This forced willy-nilly action of Ajih laid to rest the issue of the Secretary; nevertheless, it strained the personal relationship between Ajih and the former Secretary, Chief Success Torhukherhijo.⁸¹ In describing the then concomitant sour relationship between the said duo, Sam Kuro Ebidighi and Mike Barakumo Kpemi state thus:

So, Chief Success Torhukherhijo, the sacked Secretary to the Local Government decamped [from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)] to the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and amidst pomp and pageantry in the presence of the Governor [of Ondo State, Chief Adebayo Adefarati] and [other] highly placed government functionaries during the commissioning of a project at Arogbo. [As a clear demonstration of the magnitude of his annoyance, he also openly burnt his PDP membership card on that ill-fated day on Friday, 30 March, 2001]. He has since been an ardent critic of the administration. Since they fell apart, he along with prominent elders and political opponents especially of

⁷⁹ A Protest Letter the Apoi forwarded to His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Ondo State, Governor's Office, Akure, Ondo State, entitled 'Ese-Odo Local Government: Ijaw Expansionist Agenda and Apoi 50/50 Rights'; dated 29 September, 1999.

⁸⁰ A Petition Prince Olu Mafo and Co. (Legal Practitioners, Erejuwa Chambers, 76, Iretolu Street, Okitipupa, Ondo State), wrote to the Clerk of the House, Ondo State House of Assembly, Akure, entitled, 'Brief in Respect of Ese-Odo Local Government, Complaints of Financial Mismanagement and Impropriety Against the Chairman', dated 19 November, 1999. As a Councillor of Ese-Odo Local Government Area, representing Arogbo Ward II at that time (1999-2002), this researcher obtained a photocopy from the then Chairman, High Chief F. K. Ajih. Note: In the above quotation, the then Chairman of Ese-Odo was addressed as Dr Francis Kebieri Ajih, because he received an honorary doctorate degree (*Honoris Causa*) in Business Administration (DBA.) from Stanton University, Tampa, Florida, USA, in 2000.

⁸¹ Oral interview held with Hon E. C. Okolofinighan, 70 years, former Vice-Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area (2004-2007), Ukpe, Arogbo, 10 March, 2018.

the AD, had it rough with the administration in the quest to make the administration address what they considered as the nagging problems confronting the Local Government. At different occasions, these people had come out strongly to denounce some of the policies of Dr Francis Kebieri Ajih, which they considered unpopular...⁸²

Though the legislative arm of the Council was not part of the 1996 Agreement between the two groups, its inauguration on Friday, 15 October, 1999 at Igbekebo, was significantly guided and influenced by it. Calculated, therefore, to balance the Arogbo-Ijo/Apoi political equation, the head of the legislative arm, called the Leader of Council and the Chief Whip were produced by the Apoi. On the other hand, the Deputy Leader, Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the Council were produced by the Arogbo-Ijo. Accordingly, the 10-member legislative arm of the council was inaugurated in the following order as provided in Table 5.5 on page 244.

⁸² Ebidighi, S. K. and Kpemi, M. B. 2001. Two years of Ajih in Ese-Odo Local Government. *The Vision News Magazine*, No. 5, No. 46, Oba Adesida Road, Akure, 31 October, 2001, pp. 25-26.

Table 5.5: The Ten-member Ese-Odo Local Government Legislative Arm with the five Principal Officers as inaugurated on 15 October, 1999

S/N.	Name of Official	Name of Ward	Sex	Position	Party
1	Hon Pius K. Kondigha	Arogbo I	M	—	AD
2	Hon Felix George	Arogbo II	M	Majority Leader	AD
3	Hon Corporal Nanaopiri	Arogbo III	M	Deputy Leader	PDP
4	Hon E. C. Okolofinighan	Ukparama I	M	—	PDP
5	Hon Taye Abise	Ukparama II	F	Minority Leader	PDP
6	Hon Richard Omosehin	Apoi I	M	—	PDP
7	Hon Pius O. Ikusedun	Apoi II	M	—	AD
8	Hon Felix Ade Koledoye	Apoi III	M	Chief Whip	AD
9*	Hon Iwarere Iji	Apoi IV	M	Leader of Council	AD
10	Hon Perekebuna O. Duyile	Apoi V	F	—	AD

*Consequent upon the impeachment of Hon Iwarere Iji from Igbobini in Apoi ward IV on 17 May, 2000, Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun from Kiribo in Apoi ward II was unanimously elected the new Leader of the Council the same day.

Source: Compiled by the researcher, 2018.

In fact, as a further precautionary political measure to protect the sanctity of the agreement, when Ajih was to be suspended by the Legislative Arm of the Council on purported grounds of financial impropriety, the Vice-Chairman, Chief R. O. Abejaye, who was ordinarily not the principal target, was painfully suspended alongside F. K. Ajih in June, 2001; because, in conformity with the 1996 agreement, an Apoi cannot act on behalf of an Arogbo person. Similarly, consequent upon the suspension of the duo, the then Leader of Council, Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun, who was ordinarily to act pending the outcome of an investigative panel set up by the Governor, could not do so being an Apoi. Thus, as an odd temporary way out internally mapped out, the Apoi Leader of Council (Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun) stepped down for the Arogbo-Ijo Deputy Leader of Council, Hon Corporal Nanaopiri to become a momentary Leader of Council. With this arrangement, Hon Nanaopiri was duly sworn-in as the first Acting Chairman of the Council on Monday, 9 July, 2001; and thereafter, Hon Pius Odumayo Ikusedun assumed his Leader of Council position again. Nevertheless, Ajih was later reinstated on Sunday, 27 January, 2002, consequent upon his exoneration by the investigative panel, which looked into the said allegations.⁸³

The point being made is that the above cosmetic and odd arrangements were fashioned out primarily to protect the soul of the 1996 agreement, as it was not yet the turn of the Apoi to assume the Chairmanship seat at that material time of political trial. Similarly, during the brief stay of Hon Nanaopiri as the Acting Chairman, he duly appointed Mr Rufus Omotayo from Igbekebo in Apoi ward I as Secretary to the Local Government in accordance with the 1996 agreement. In like manner, when Ajih was eventually reinstated, putting into consideration the political trajectory that characterised his administration over the issue of the appointment of the Secretary and the magnitude of political suffocation and the sour relations created, he equally appointed Mr Love Olawumi from Igbekebo in Apoi ward I as his Secretary. Thus, on the grounds of the earlier hiccup and political turbulence that greeted the tenure, it took four Secretaries (Arogbo-Ijo, one and Apoi, three) to complete the three year tenure of High Chief Francis Kebieri Ajih, the first elected Chairman of Ese-

⁸³ Oral interviews held with Hon Pius O. Ikusedun, 55 years, former Leader of Council, now a teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2017; and Hon E. C. Okolofinighan, 70 years, former Vice-Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, (2004-2007), Ukpe, Arogbo, 10 March, 2018.

Odo Local Government Area (2 June, 1999- May 29, 2002).⁸⁴ For the record, therefore, see Table 5.6 on page 247 for the 1996 Agreement as implemented at a glance (1999-2002/2003).

⁸⁴ Oral interviews held with Hon Pius O. Ikusedun, 55 years, former leader of Council, now a teacher, Kiribo, Apoi, 22 December, 2017; and Hon E. C. Okolofinighan, 70 years, former Vice-Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, (2004-2007), Ukpe, Arogbo, 10 March, 2018.

Table 5.6: The 1996 Agreement as implemented at a glance (1999 – 2002/2003)

Office	Arogbo	Apoi	Party
Chairman	High Chief F. K Ajih (2 June, 1999- 9 July, 2001)	—	PDP
	Hon Corporal Nanaopiri (9 July, 2001-27 January, 2002)	—	PDP
	High Chief F. K Ajih (27 January, 2002- 29 May, 2002)	—	PDP
Vice-Chairman	—	Chief Raphael O. Abejoye (2 June, 1999- 9 July, 2001)	PDP
	—	Chief Raphael O. Abejoye (27 January, 2002- 29 May, 2002)	PDP
Leader of Council	—	Hon Iwarere Iji (15 October, 1999- 17 May, 2000)	AD
	—	Hon Pius O. Ikusedun (17 May, 2000 – 29 May, 2002)	AD
Secretary to Local Government	Chief Success Torhukerhijo (22 September, 1999 – 4 January, 2001)	—	PDP
	—	Mr Segun Dabo (January, 2001 – 9 July, 2001)	PDP
	—	Mr Rufus Omotayo (2001 – 29 January, 2002)	PDP
		Mr Love Olawumi (February 2002 – 29 May, 2002)	PDP
State House of Assembly	—	Hon Ernest Abiodun Anifowose (31 May, 1999 – 29 May, 2003)	AD

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from the information unit, Ese-Odo Local Government Secretariat, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018.

In line with Decree No. 36 of 1998 (Local Government Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provision), which brought elected officials to office for three years, the tenure of the 1999 elected Council officials ended nationwide on Wednesday, 29 May, 2002. To avoid vacuum in governance at the grassroots level, the then Governor of Ondo State, Chief Adebayo Adefarati (29 May, 1999 – 29 May, 2003) constituted Transitional Committees in all the eighteen (18) local government areas to fill the vacant seats created by the exit of the first elected Council *fonctionnaires*. In respect of Ese-Odo, putting into consideration the *grundnorm* of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi 1996 Agreement as the House of Assembly seat was then still occupied by an Apoi, Hon Ernest Abiodun Anifowose, a Transitional Committee was carefully constituted in the following order as shown in Table 5.7 on page 249.

Table 5.7: Ese-Odo Transitional Committee between 2 June, 2002 and 29 May, 2003

Name of Appointee	Sex	Position	Group	Party
Apostle Mathias T. Agitan	M	Chairman, 2 June, 2002 – 6 April, 2003	Arogbo	AD
Mr Joseph Ebikhinmo Feku	M	Chairman, 7 April, 2003 – 29 May, 2003	Arogbo	AD
Mr Ikoto Agabra Atili	M	Supervisor for Works	Arogbo	AD
Chief E. I. Yanboh	M	Supervisor for Education	Arogbo	AD
Comrade P.I.O. Odejimi	M	Supervisor for Health	Apoi	AD
Prince Taiwo Oladiran	M	Supervisor for Finance	Apoi	AD
Mr Rasaq Anthony	M	Supervisor for Agriculture	Apoi	AD
Chieftess G. M. Duyile	F	Supervisor for Women Affairs	Apoi	AD

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information provided by Mr J. E. Feku, former Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018.

By 2003, when the four-year legislative tenure of Hon. Anifowose ended, it was almost a settled political issue as all the participating political parties fielded their House of Assembly candidates from Arogbo-Ijo. Accordingly, PDP fielded Hon Kingsley Kimibradigha Kuku from Arogbo Ward I, and the AD fielded Mr Donald Kimikanbo Ojogo from Arogbo Ward I for the Ondo State House of Assembly election on Saturday, 12 April, 2003. Hon Kingsley Kimibradigha Kuku won the keenly contested election and became a member of the 26-member Ondo State House of Assembly between 2003 and 2007. In respect of the full list of the said 26-member Ondo State House of Assembly, see, Appendix VI.

Similarly, in the 27 March, 2004 Local Government elections conducted by the Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission (ODIEC), PDP fielded Mr Agboola Alfred Ajayi from Kiribo in Apoi Ward II as the Chairmanship candidate and Hon Ezekiel Corporal Okolofinighan from Ukpe in Ukparama Ward I as the Vice-Chairmanship candidate. Toeing the same political line, the AD picked Mr Olu Johnson Egbedofe from Igbotu in Apoi Ward III as its Chairmanship candidate, and Hon Felix George from Israel Kiri in Arogbo Ward II as the Vice-Chairmanship candidate. As the results turned out to be, Mr Ajayi and Hon. Okolofinighan won the election and were subsequently sworn-in by, the then Governor of Ondo State between 2003 to 2009 (Dr Olusegun Agagu). Therefore, to avoid the unhealthy relationship between the two groups during the period of F. K. Ajih, when Agboola Alfred Ajayi became the second Executive Chairman of Ese-Odo Local Government Area (2004 – 2007), he duly appointed Mr Richard Soritei Kekemeke from Biagbini in Arogbo ward III as the Secretary to the Local Government in compliance with the 1996 agreement, on Monday, 5 April, 2004. And consequent upon the resignation of R. S. Kekemeke on Tuesday, 10 June, 2004 for an NDDC civil service job in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Solomon Tunyan, Esq (from Ebiaye in Arogbo ward II) was appointed on Monday, 30 August, 2004 as the new Secretary⁸⁵. Meanwhile, see Table 5.8 on page 252 for the ten elected Councillors of Ese-Odo Local Government Area in the election conducted by the Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission (ODIEC) on Saturday, 27 March, 2004.

⁸⁵ Oral interview held with Mr Richard Soritei Kekemeke (later installed as a High Chief), 75 years, Senior Staff of NDDC, and former Commissioner, Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 2 February 2019.

Similarly, see Table 5.9 on page 253 for the 1996 agreement as implemented between 2004 and 2007. Equally, as a further note, see Table 5.10 on page 254 for the list of Chairmen of Ese-Odo Local Government Area, 1997-2007. Meanwhile, see Figure 5.5 on page 255, Figure 5.6 on page 256, Figure 5.7 on page 257, Figure 5.8 on page 258, Figure 5.9 on page 259, Figure 5.10 on page 260, Figure 5.11 on page 261 and Figure 5.12 on page 262 for their pictures.

Table 5.8: List of Elected Councillors of Ese-Odo Local Government Area, 2004 - 2007

S/N	Name of Elected Councillor	Ward	Position	Sex	Party
1.	Hon Charles Toikebi Okoro	Arogbo Ward I	—	M	PDP
2.	Hon David Ernest Oniyemofe	Arogbo Ward II	Leader of Council	M	PDP
3.	Hon Samuel Jemi	Arogbo Ward III	—	M	PDP
4.	Hon Shell Mujoh	Ukparama Ward I	—	M	PDP
5.	Hon Anthony Karina German	Ukparama Ward II	Chief Whip	M	PDP
6.	Hon Alaba Benjamin	Apoi Ward I	—	M	PDP
7.	Hon Akinbobola Fonghon	Apoi Ward II	—	M	PDP
8.	Hon Olajide Ebiekuraju	Apoi Ward III	Majority Leader	M	PDP
9.	Hon (Mrs) Bimpe Obolo	Apoi Ward IV	Deputy leader	F	PDP
10.	Hon Olajide Doye	Apoi Ward V	—	M	PDP

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information provided by Hon David Ernest Oniyemofe, former Leader of Council, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018.

Table 5.9: The 1996 Agreement as Implemented between 2004 and 2007

Office	Arogbo	Apoi	Party
Chairman	—	Hon Agboola Alfred Ajayi	PDP
Vice-Chairman	Hon E. C. Okolofinighan	—	PDP
Leader of Council	Hon David Ernest Oniyemofe	—	PDP
Secretary to Local Government	Mr Richard Soritei Kekemeke (5 April, 2004 – 10 June, 2004)	—	PDP
	Solomon Tunyan, Esq (30 August, 2004- April, 2007)	—	PDP
State House of Assembly	Hon Kingsley Kimibradigha Kuku (2003 – 29 May, 2007)	—	PDP

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information provided by Solomon Tunyan, Esq, former Secretary to Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekobo, Ondo State, 2018.

Table 5.10: The List of Chairmen of Ese-Odo Local Government Area between 1997 and 2007

S/N.	Name	Sex	Group	Appointed/elected	Date
1.	Ola Orimoloye	M	Owo	Sole administrator	1997-1998
2.	Ajayi Alfred Akinlofa	M	Akunnu-Akoko	Caretaker	1998-1999
3.	Francis Kebieri Ajih	M	Arogbo	Elected	2 June, 1999- 9 July, 2001
4.	Corporal Nanaopiri	M	Arogbo	Acting Chairman	9 July, 2001- 27 Janaury, 2002
5.	Francis Kebieri Ajih	M	Arogbo	Elected	27 Janaury, 2002-29 May, 2003
6.	Mathias T. Agitan	M	Arogbo	Caretaker	2 June, 2002- 6 April, 2003
7.	Joseph Ebikhinmo Feku	M	Arogbo	Caretaker	7 April, 2003-29 May, 2003
8	Agboola Alfred Ajayi	M	Apoi	Caretaker	2003-2004
9.	Agboola Alfred Ajayi	M	Apoi	Elected	2004-2007

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Hon Corporal Nanaopiri, former Acting Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Ondo State, 2018.

Chairmen of Ese-Odo Local Government Area between 1997 and 2007



Figure 5.5: Mr Ola Orimoloye (Owo) 1997-1998.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.



Figure 5.6: Mr Ajayi Alfred Akinlofa (Akunnu-Akoko) 1998-1999.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.



Figure 5.7: High Chief Francis Kebieri Ajih (Arogbo) 2 June, 1999- 9 July, 2001

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.



Figure 5.8: Hon Corporal Nanaopiri (Arogbo) 9 July, 2001-27 January, 2002

Source: Ojogo, K.D. 2000. *Steps of Vision: A Documterary Booklet of the First 365 Days of the Present Administration in Ese-Odo Local Government of Ondo State* (June 2nd 1999- June 2nd 2000), p.4.



Figure 5.9: High Chief Francis Kebieri Ajih (Arogbo) 27 January, 2002- 29 May, 2002.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.



Figure 5.10: Apostle Mathias T. Agitan (Arogbo) 2 June, 2002- 6 April, 2003.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.



Figure 5.11: Mr Joseph Ebikhinmo Feku (Arogbo) 7 April, 2003- 29 May, 2003.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.



Figure 5.12: Chief Agboola Alfred Ajayi (Apoi) 2003- 2007.

Source: A picture obtained from the Office of the Chairman, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, 2018, during fieldwork.

The Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) is the umbrella body of all local government employees in Nigeria. The body has executive committees at the national, states and local government levels, responsible for union activities.⁸⁶ In respect of Ese-Odo Local Government Chapter, its activities created the needed avenue in which both unified (senior) and non-unified (junior) workers engage and interact meaningfully. Remarkably, NULGE politics by Ese-Odo Local Government Chapter under the period of this study, was considerably influenced by the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi 1996 Agreement. Apparently, at the dawn of the creation of Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, on 2 January, 1997, the workers organised their own chapter, who were hitherto part of the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Council, Igbokoda. The historical foundation of NULGE politics at the level of Ese-Odo was laid with a three-member Caretaker Committee, which lasted for about three months. Though Ugbo-Ilaje was part of Ese-Odo Local Government Area at that particular time, the composition took into cognisance the two groups only, namely, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi. Accordingly, the Chairman was an Arogbo-Ijo, while the other two members were Apoi.⁸⁷ See Table 5.11 on page 264 for the said First Caretaker Committee Members, February 1997- May 1997.

⁸⁶ Akinbosade, A. 2011. *Management and Practice of Local Government Administration in Nigeria*. Akure: O & A Books (Publishers), pp.181 – 192.

⁸⁷ Oral interview held with Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, 55 years, Arogbo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 9 July, 2018.

Table 5.11: The First Caretaker Committee Members, February, 1997 – May, 1997

S/No.	Name of Official	Position	Sex	Group	Department
1.	Japhet Kimbeghi	Chairman	M	Arogbo	Primary Health Care
2.	Abisoye Martins Egbukuyomi	Secretary	M	Apoi	Administration
3.	Kikelomo Ebisanmi	Treasurer	F	Apoi	Primary Health Care

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Comrade Ranti Allen, an Apoi, former Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter (2010 – 2014); and Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, an Arogbo-Ijo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 2018.

On the non-inclusion of the Ugbo-Ilaje group in the composition of the above Three-member Committee, as argued by Richard Eshofonie, it was a retaliatory measure taken to teach them a lesson. This was so, because from 1976 to 1996, the dominant Ilaje groups (Ugbo, Mahin, Aheri and Etikan), based on their numerical superiority, painfully, prevented the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi from assuming the Chairmanship seat of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Chapter, Igbokoda, except once. Frankly, that noble feat itself was, indeed, a Herculean task before one Japhet Eregha (an Arogbo-Ijo) of the environmental department emerged as the Chairman. In fact, endless union crises characterised his tenure; and incidentally, he happened to be the last Chairman of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, the defunct Ilaje/Ese-Odo Local Government Chapter, Igbokoda.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, consequent upon the expiration of the Kimbeghi-led Three-member Caretaker Committee, a full-blown Seven-member Executive Committee, was duly elected in the following order to carry out the functions of the union. See Table 5.12 on page 266 for the Second Executive Committee Members, June 1997- November, 2002.

⁸⁸ Oral interviews held with Chief Richard Eshofonie, 55 years, Arogbo, Deputy Director Administrator, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 9 July, 2018; and Mrs Glory Degbe Ijeh, 46 years, Civil Servant, Road 5, Deeperlife Street, Ojojo Akinjagunla, Ondo, 10 July, 2018.

Table 5.12: The Second Executive Committee Members, June, 1997 – November, 2000

S/No.	Name of Elected Official	Position	Sex	Group	Department
1.	Olajide Daniel	Chairman	M	Apoi	Administration
2.	Bisi Osomo	Vice-Chairman	F	Ilaje	Primary Health Care
3.	Stephen Sobijoh	Secretary	M	Arogbo	Administration
4.	Bode Akinbinu	Assistant Secretary	M	Apoi	Community
5.	Mary Olowogunle	Treasurer	F	Apoi	Administration
6.	Ezekiel Dabo	Auditor	M	Apoi	Administration
7.	Akinbolade Elumaro	Trustee	M	Apoi	Treasury

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Comrade Ranti Allen, an Apoi, former Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter (2010 – 2014); and Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, an Arogbo-Ijo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 2018.

A microscopic analysis of the above shows that the Apoi had five elected officials, Arogbo-Ijo had one, and Ilaje also had one only. As explained by Mrs Mary Olowogunle, who served as the treasurer, the above composition though visibly in favour of the Apoi, it was truly the outcome of an election fairly and transparently conducted by an electoral committee the workers duly set up. As a matter of fact, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi dichotomy was never an electoral issue during the election. Hence, it was a matter of interest and active participation that led to the said outcome. It was after the election and its consequential one-sided outcome in favour of the Apoi that workers particularly from the Arogbo-Ijo extraction started to read meanings into it. She further disclosed that the emergence of one Ilaje official (Mrs Bisi Osomo), was because Ugbo-Ilaje was part of the then newly created Ese-Odo Local Government Area at that material time. The fact that Ugbo-Ilaje with four electoral wards was part of Ese-Odo at that point in time notwithstanding, the victory of Mrs Bisi Osomo was later clandestinely regarded as a slot for the non-indigenes generally. The non-indigenes capitalised upon that, and later boldly demanded for the chairmanship position to be alternated between the indigenes (Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi) and non-indigenes (workers outside the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi extractions).⁸⁹

As further revealed by Felix Ufewei, the request to share the Chairmanship position made by the non-indigenes as a right bitterly infuriated the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi workers. Therefore, as a counter measure calculated to checkmate the non-indigenes, a sharing formula of the seven statutory positions between the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi only at the exclusion of the non-indigene workers was carefully mapped out. These non-indigene workers, mostly senior workers of Grade Level 07 and above, generally referred to as Unified Staff were in clear minority. It was further alleged that the inclusion of the non-indigene (Bisi Osomo) in the second executive committee surreptitiously created cracks between the management and union officials on several occasions, mostly on managerial style and financial issues. Bisi Osomo was on several occasions alleged to have leaked the plans of the union to the management team. This was because the two persons who as civil servants that headed the council as sole administrator (Mr Ola Orimoloye) and caretaker committee chairman (Mr Augustus Ajayi Akinlofa) were all non-indigenes from Owo and Akunnu-Akoko respectively. In addition, the then said management team consisted of the

⁸⁹ Oral interview held with Mrs Mary Olowogunle, 52 years, Apoi, former Vice-Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter, 12 July, 2018.

Chairman of Council, Director of Personnel Management (DPM), the Head of Personnel Management (HPM), the Treasurer, the Auditor, and all the Heads of Departments (HODs) were all incidentally non-indigenes.⁹⁰

As argued by Ranti Allen, therefore, because of the unalloyed allegiance of the said Mrs Bisi Osomo to the management team as against the primary interest of the union, she was duly elected to serve and protect, he and some like-minded workers secretly took an oath in the sacred names of Egbesu and Oborowe, the two national gods of the Arogbo-Ijo and the Apoi respectively, never to give room for the non-indigenes to occupy any position in the activities of NULGE, Ese-Odo Chapter, thenceforth. In order to equally prevent unnecessary rivalries, mutual suspicions, and a reoccurrence of a one-sided elected executive members as was unfortunately the case of Olajide Daniel-led executive committee, the seven statutory positions were also shared by the two groups. Accordingly, Arogbo-Ijo to produce the following officials, namely, Chairman, Treasurer, and Assistant Secretary, while Apoi to produce the Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Auditor, and Trustee. These were to be religiously alternated at the expiration of the three-year tenure.⁹¹ As a contributory factor, according to Prince Abisoye Martins Egbukuyomi, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi 1996 political agreement guided and necessitated the union leaders of the two groups to have arrived at this sharing formula in 2000. With the above understanding as a weapon firmly sealed, they were able to successfully block the non-indigenes from contesting for elective positions in the NULGE politics of Ese-Odo. But, this has nothing to do with their inalienable voting rights in any form as they were at liberty to vote for any indigene of their choice in any election.⁹² As a credit to the above sharing formula, cleverly cemented by the two groups, the third executive committee smoothly emerged in the following order as provided in Table 5.13 on page 269.

⁹⁰ Oral interview held with Comrade Felix Ufewei, 55 years, Arogbo, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 9 July, 2018.

⁹¹ Oral interview held with Comrade Ranti Allen, 55 years, Apoi, former Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter, 12 July, 2018.

⁹² Oral interview held with Prince Abisoye Martins Egbukuyomi, 48 years, Apoi, Assistant Chief Community Department Officer, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 9 July, 2018.

Table 5.13: The Third Executive Committee Members, November, 2000 – January, 2004

S/No.	Name of Elected Official	Position	Sex	Group	Department
1.	Rotimi Okoroboh	Chairman	M	Arogbo	Administration
2.	Joyce Dabo	Vice-Chairman	F	Apoi	Administration
3.	Ranti Allen	Secretary	M	Apoi	Administration
4.	Joe Maka	Assistant Secretary	M	Arogbo	Primary Health Care
5.	Felix Ufewei	Treasurer	M	Arogbo	Administration
6.	Adebamibo Ashogbon	Auditor	M	Apoi	Administration
7.	Ilesanmi Tiwo	Trustee	M	Apoi	Treasury

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Comrade Ranti Allen, an Apoi, former Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter (2010 – 2014); and Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, an Arogbo-Ijo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 2018.

As shown by the above composition in accordance with the 2000 sharing formula agreed upon by the union members of the two groups, Arogbo-Ijo had three elected members and Apoi had four elected members. Therefore, in 2004, at the expiration of tenure of the above executive committee-led by Chief Rotimi Okoroboh (an Arogbo-Ijo), the offices in two separate blocks were faithfully alternated as agreed upon by the workers of the two groups. Hence, based on the said sharing order, the NULGE executive committee members of 2004 – 2007 came into office as shown in Table 5.14 on page 271.

Table 5.14: List of the Fourth Executive Committee Members, 2004 – 2007

S/No.	Name of Elected Official	Position	Sex	Group	Department
1.	Adebayo Williams	Chairman	M	Apoi	Community
2.	Western Pounah	Vice-Chairman	M	Arogbo	Administration
3.	Letimi Sobijoh	Secretary	M	Arogbo	Primary Health Care
4.	Isaiah Adeyemi	Assistant Secretary	M	Apoi	Treasury
5.	Ojukotimi Egbukuyomi	Treasurer	M	Apoi	Treasury
6.	Kirimini Oyinbo	Auditor	M	Arogbo	Administration
7.	Abiodun Kemokumo	Trustee	M	Arogbo	Treasury

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Comrade Ranti Allen, an Apoi, former Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter (2010 – 2014); and Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, an Arogbo-Ijo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 2018.

As a conspicuous feature considered unfriendly to the spirit of gender sensitivity, which elicited verbal condemnations against the Adebayo Williams-led executive committee, no female official emerged as a winner at the contest. Consequently, a prominent woman in Ese-Odo NULGE politics with an uncommon intestinal fortitude, Mrs Mary Olowogunle (an Apoi), vociferously painted it as a government that was hostile to the collective interest of the womenfolk and a pain in the neck of women. This non-gender sensitivity toga attracted heavy criticisms from many female union members and their sympathetic and associated few supporters from the menfolk throughout the tenure of the Adebayo Williams-led executive committee.⁹³ This non-inclusion of women agitation later turned out to be a campaign gimmick they effectively employed for future elective positions. Concomitantly, a female union activist, who once served as treasurer in the 1997 – 2000 executive committee, Mrs Mary Olowogunle (an Apoi) that was at the vanguard of the struggle, later emerged as the Vice-Chairman in the 2007 – 2010 executive committee. Similarly, another prominent woman, Mrs Catherine Ote (an Arogbo-Ijo) also emerged as the treasurer.⁹⁴ Though the said tenure (2007 - 2010) is partially outside the scope of our work, but for the primary purpose of the above analysis, the list is hereby provided in Table 5.15 on page 273.

⁹³ Oral interviews held with Mrs Mary Olowogunle, 52 years, Apoi, former Vice-Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter, 12 July, 2018; and Mr Olatunji Oke Lemikan, 60 years, Retired Civil Servant, House 1, Road 6, Funbi Fagun, Ondo, 10 July, 2018.

⁹⁴ Oral interview held with Chief Rotimi Okoroboh, 56 years, Arogbo, Director of Local Government Administration (DLGA), Ilaje Local Government Area, Igbokoda, 15 July, 2018.

Table 5.15: List of the Fifth Executive Committee Members, 2007 – 2010

S/No.	Name of Elected Official	Position	Sex	Group	Department
1.	Moses Yanki	Chairman	M	Arogbo	Administration
2.	Mary Olowogunle	Vice-Chairman	F	Apoi	Administration
3.	Ranti Allen	Secretary	M	Apoi	Administration
4.	Aaron Aiku	Assistant Secretary	M	Arogbo	Administration
5.	Catherine Ote	Treasurer	F	Arogbo	Adminstration
6.	Adebamibo Ashogbon	Auditor	M	Apoi	Treasury
7.	Ilesanmi Tiwo	Trustee	M	Apoi	Treasury

Source: Compiled by the researcher through the help of information obtained from Comrade Ranti Allen, an Apoi, former Chairman, Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter (2010 – 2014); and Comrade Israel Timi Emokenighan, an Arogbo-Ijo, Deputy Director, Primary Health Care Department, Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, 2018.

Therefore, the politics of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, Ese-Odo Chapter was tactically dominated and finally monopolised by the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi workers under the period of our study. In order to have a cordial working relationship, the duo worked out a sharing formula which endured to the end of our study. This sharing arrangement which discouraged the non-indigenes from contesting for any position in Ese-Odo NULGE politics was made possible by the numerical strength of the two groups both at the junior staff on Grade Level 06 and below and senior staff on Grade Level 07 and above. As an added advantage, the junior workers of the council generally referred to as non-unified workers, are mainly indigenes of Ese-Odo Local Government Area, Igbekebo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Conclusion

This study is on two separate sub-groups of the larger Ijo nation, namely, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi.¹ As revealed by the study, during the pre-colonial times, these two groups in search of greener pastures migrated from the central Niger Delta of Gbaraun and Apoi Creeks in the present-day Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, respectively. In the course of the said historical migration, the two groups are now found in the present-day Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, South-West, Nigeria. In terms of linguistic identity, these two interacting groups migrated from their ancestral Niger Delta homeland as Ijo groups and thus, as Ijo-speaking. But as an outcome of a typically robust and vigorous interactions with their immediate Yoruba neighbours such as the Ikale and Ilaje, the Apoi began to diverge in linguistic identity to such a magnitude that they are today, no longer Ijo-speaking but now Yoruba-speaking. As a further unique feature, the above linguistic identity change of the Apoi notwithstanding, they managed to retain some Ijo-vocabularies and concepts (which they no longer understand) in their religious rituals, funeral songs and masquerade plays. On the other hand, the Arogbo-Ijo, equally with a history of varied contacts with their Yoruba neighbours, not only retained and maintained their Ijo linguistic identity, but became bilingual in Ijo and Yoruba. Therefore, the Apoi linguistic identity change was occasioned by their new geographical location and the eventual unrestricted interactions with their Yoruba neighbours. The same also further

¹ Though a negligible few within the Apoi are still holding on to the Yoruba origin claim, it's no longer enjoying popular support among the people. Hence, the Apoi are today, duly recognised members of the Ijaw National Congress (INC) and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) Worldwide. For further details on the above two Socio-cultural and non-partisan Organisations, see, The Constitution of Ijaw National Congress (INC), 1993 as amended by resolution of the Patani Convention of Saturday, 10 February, 1996 and as amended by the resolution of the Yenagoa Convention of Saturday, 10 January, 2009; and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) Booklet: The Kaiama Declaration: Resolutions of the 11 December, 1998 All Ijaw Youth Conference Held in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. Published for the Ijaw Youth Council by the Ijaw Council for Human Rights, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1999.

influenced the Arogbo-Ijo to become bilingual, primarily due to their Delta location south of the Apoi and their Egbema-Ijo neighbours to the South-West.

Apart from mutual point of common origin of these two groups, there are evidence of economic, political, social and religious interactions dating back to the pre-colonial period. Apparently, there were and have been grounds for friendship or hostility, co-operation or competition, domination or subordination, alliance or enmity, peace or conflicts, on many occasions, as prevalent in inter-group relations generally. Consequently, as it relates to the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, although there were instances of cordial and strained relationships in the pre-colonial period, the advent of the British colonial rule which put these two groups under the same administrative umbrella sharply introduced new dynamics and paradigm shifts in their relationships and these were carried over to the post-colonial era. As a further shaping and sharpening of these dynamics, changing identities and ethnic differentiation issues were at the front burner of their relations, which to a very large extent obviously affected and altered their socio-cultural, economic and political relations.

In respect of socio-cultural relations, a significant degree of mutual understanding and co-operation existed in different forms among the two groups. As a clear demonstration to that effect, for instance, Perebiyenmo Ogbonu, the progenitor of the Arogbo-Ijo cemented conjugal ties with an Apoi woman from Igbobini, called Olayinka, by whom he had his youngest son, Ereh. Also, Apasu, the mother of Gbaluwe, the founder of Igbotu, Apoi, was from Akpata, an ancient Arogbo-Ijo settlement. Iroju, one of the sons of Gbaluwe, married his second wife from Egbesubiri, Arogbo. Consequently, while some of the descendants of Iroju lineage are permanently living at Arogbo, some are equally indigenes of Igbotu in Apoi. As a further attestation, Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo, an Apoi, who once served as a Commissioner for Trade, Industries and Co-operatives in the government of Ondo State and a two-time Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has ancestral roots to the Egbeghene lineage of Akpata, one of the ancient Arogbo-Ijo settlements. Aginaghan Pawei (an Arogbo-Ijo), not only had an Apoi blood linkage, but also allowed two of his daughters, Lobe and Kuru, to marry at Igbotu in Apoi. As a clear demonstration of how the above shaped inter-group relations, the numerous conjugal ties not only helped to cement and promote peaceful co-existence between the two groups, but also contributed immensely to defuse tension in anxious moments in their relations. The Agwobiri, Arogbo and Polugbini,

Kiribo, Apoi episode was a celebrated case study. The marital cementation the two groups had significantly led to the final settlement of the impasse.

The study revealed that inter-group marriage as a pivotal and cardinal form of relations between the two groups predated the colonial era. However, the colonial period tremendously recorded more marital ties than the preceding period. For instance, Chief Peni Julius Naboboh (an Arogbo-Ijo) married an Apoi woman from Igbobini, called Towumi and the union produced Adewole and Ayetan. Mr Johnson Ganfo (an Arogbo-Ijo) also married an Apoi woman from Igbotu, named Oke, who gave birth to Dupe. *Alaowei* Yeiyah Gbodo (an Arogbo-Ijo), had eight wives, among whom five were indigenes of Apoi, while the remaining three were indigenes of Arogbo-Ijo. Conversely, Mr Ikupoloye, an Apoi from Igbobini also married a woman named Youokilolo from Perebiri, Arogbo, and the marriage produced Mafoifiana and Masowo. The above simply points to the fact that inter-group marriages were not only a dominant feature of the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations but had been a long settled mode of social relations and conviviality. The import of the above is to show that with the introduction of the British colonial rule which brought the two groups under the same administrative umbrella, they witnessed more inter-group marriages than the pre-colonial times. This further promoted cordial relationship between the two interacting groups.

As a necessary background, there existed historical religious festivals and other socio-cultural activities among the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi during the pre-colonial period. Significant examples were Binikurukuru, Igodo, Jighosei, Sanghaton, and Opele, among the Arogbo-Ijo. Similarly, notable ones among the Apoi were Oguberiberi, Benipereya, Igwe, Teikeretubu, Kesimotie, Gbolomokopri, and Ekpo-Osaugale. The celebration of these festivals had their different imports across both groups. For instance, Kpokotin festival at Arogbo was uniquely concerned with fertility of women, detection of criminals and the general well-being of the people. In respect of the Apoi, for instance, Ekpo-Osaugale celebration at Kiribo was to prevent sudden and untimely deaths in the community. Hence, as occasions for rigorous socio-cultural interactions, the above celebrations at different periods of every year attracted people from all walks of life among the two groups. These events and their huge attendance across both groups promoted unity and harmonious relationships among them. These celebrations, thus, provided rallying points and golden

chances for the two groups to engage in meaningful interactions. Nevertheless, occasional occurrence of conflicts associated with these festivals were also apparent as well. The classical instance was the case of Leghi an Apoi from Igbotu, who eventually killed Ukporu of Arogbo as a result of the *obiri* (dog) saga, and its associated consequences. Meanwhile, across both groups, many of the said socio-cultural festival have gone into extinction due to the British colonial rule and the introduction of Christianity into the area.

With special reference to the colonial period, other avenues for socio-cultural engagements between the two groups identified in the work were the annual festivals, such as the Bouabo festival at Igbobini, Apoi and the Kpokotin festival at Arogbo. These historical festivals acted as the links, and further provided the needed mechanisms for meaningful and fruitful socio-cultural interactions between them during the period of this study. Related to the above, the Empire Day Celebration which was held at Igbekebo, the headquarters of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council, was another avenue for socio-cultural interactions between the two groups, with special reference to school pupils during the colonial days.

Concerning economic relations, the study revealed that geographical location not only determined the nature of their relations, it was also one of the vital consequences for the relations of each of these groups with the hinterland people, which worked to the advantage of the Apoi more than the Arogbo-Ijo on grounds of geographical proximity. In joining the conversation from the above, the Apoi who are on land and, at the same time, can be reached by water, are small scale farmers; while the Arogbo-Ijo who are found along the swampy riverine belt are good in fishing and other related occupations, such as palm wine tapping, canoe-carving, etc, on commercial scale. The two groups, thus, had a long-standing mutual and beneficial economic relations dating back to the pre-colonial era. But the British colonial rule, immensely increased and expanded the economic relations between them. This period, thus, witnessed the influx of the Apoi women into the Arogbo-Ijo settlements, with particular respect to the interior on trading missions. Prior to that, economic contacts between the two groups were mainly geared towards the established market centres, located at Kiribo and Igbekebo in Apoi, Akotogbo, Barogbo and Iju-Osun in Ikale, and Agadagba-Obon, in Arogbo-Ijo. In all these different markets, the Arogbo-Ijo exchanged different kinds of smoked/dried and fresh fishes for the Apoi and Ikale agricultural products such as *beriba* (plantain), *buru* (yam), *wowopulo* (red oil), *bosumofiye* (garri), *miniye* (pupuru),

ifinighen (cassava), and *igina* (pepper). These mode of economic transactions which the Arogbo-Ijo called *iyekojujudo* (trade by barter) started from the pre-colonial period, and endured to the end of our study, along with the direct buying and selling of goods and services with the use of modern currency.

On the second type of trade relations mutually beneficial to both groups, the Apoi women traders in large numbers in *opu-arua* (big canoes) carried their agricultural products directly to the various Arogbo-Ijo settlements for sale and exchanged these for fresh and smoked fish. These journeys at times took them a reasonable number of days because they often settled in communities of their choices to carry out their transactions before returning home with their well-arranged bundles of smoked fish being tied together with ropes, obtained from raffia palm. Tripartite in nature, on returning home, the Apoi traders in turn sold their smoked fishes to the Ikale neighbours at Ajagba, Irele, Okitipupa and the hinterland traders from Ondo, Akure, Owo, Ekiti, and Ile-Ife. Basically, the hinterland traders did not know how to swim because they were scared of water, the Apoi traders (mainly women) seized the opportunity, and acted as the intermediaries between the Arogbo-Ijo and the hinterland peoples who were in dire need of fish of different types.

Meanwhile, the study further unveiled that most of the agricultural products the Apoi took to the interior of the Arogbo-Ijo settlements in exchange for smoked fish were derived from their Ikale neighbours who engaged in commercial farming more than the Apoi who were only known for subsistence farming at that time. As an impact of this economic relationship, both groups derived much financial gains from the lucrative trade and this invariably promoted their economic well-being significantly. It was because of the gains made from the trade and its attendant economic fortunes that some of the Apoi traders were able to buy outboard engines to man the big wooden canoes to carry out the business and which further drastically reduced the hard human labour earlier associated with the manually paddled big wooden canoes. As an additional show of economic prosperity across both groups, they were able to put up new houses and further catered for other societal needs.

As disclosed by the study, the political relations between the two groups oscillates between harmony and hostility; accommodation and conflicts. In fact, a major factor which determined their relations, was the imposition of the British colonial rule and the eventual creation of Ondo Province in 1915. This brought them under the same administrative

umbrella, especially at the Provincial and local levels, though often along with their Ikale and Ilaje neighbours. This often led to political competition and rivalry as the political elites of both groups jostled for lucrative positions, this at times sharply divided them. As a political game, the Apoi on grounds of linguistic identity often aligned with their Yoruba neighbours against the Arogbo-Ijo on several instances as the days of the defunct Ese-Odo District Council clearly shows. Hence, political rivalry, mutual suspicion and antagonism characterised their relations.

Similarly, frosty political relations during the Second Republic and the aborted Third Republic existed between the two groups. Therefore, in order to promote harmonious co-existence, an agreement between the two groups on how to share political offices was reached in 1979. This was successfully implemented in 1979 as Chief Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo of Arogbo-Ijo and Chieftess Alice Mobolaji Osomo of Apoi became the first two beneficiaries. Sadly, the agreement broke down in 1983. This was caused by irreconcilable political differences between the leaders of the two groups led by Jolowo and Osomo, which was further worsened by the political tussle between Ajasin and Omoboriowo at the state level. The two groups, therefore, parted ways and both groups presented different candidates for the Ilaje/Ese-Odo State Constituency III seat of the Ondo State House of Assembly that was conceded to them. The two candidates were S. E. Yayu of Arogbo-Ijo under the political platform of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and Z. O. Obolo of the Apoi of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). A similar scenario also confronted the two groups in 1992 as Duerimini Isaacs Kekemeke of the Arogbo-Ijo under the political platform of the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Raphael Oyedele of Apoi under the political platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) keenly contested against each other. On the said two historic occasions the two groups parted ways, the Arogbo-Ijo candidates became victorious on grounds of their numerical superiority.

As a further revelation, necessitated by external political threat from their Ilaje neighbours, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi were united in praying for Ese-Odo Local Government Area in 1996. But its eventual creation in 1997, after all odds, visibly divided the two groups both internally and externally, with particular respect to the controversy of the delineation of wards and the associated three identities impasse. This was followed by the implementation of the 1996 agreement and its frontal challenges in respect of the Ese-Odo State

Constituency seat at the Ondo State House of Assembly and the position of the Secretary to the Local Government. The political relations between the two groups degenerated to the level that the Apoi threatened to pull out of Ese-Odo Local Government Area on the issue of the Secretary, which was, in the eyes of the 1996 agreement was conceded to them. Though the matter was laid to rest in favour of the Apoi, Chief Success Torhukerhijo (the beneficiary), who was at the centre of the political storm decamped from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the Alliance for Democracy (AD) on account of his unceremonious removal.

The crux of the matter, the putting of Osari-Ugbo and Igangbo settlements of Arogbo-Ijo into the polling units of Igbekebo in Apoi ward I, encoded Unit 006: Open Space, White Sand, Osari and Unit 007: Open Space, Koni, Igangbo, created bitter and intractable rift between the two interacting groups. The ferocious nature of the sour relationship eventually led to a violent conflict between the two groups in 2007 with its dire consequences. However, after the said conflict, both groups have decided to work together in accordance with the canons of the 1996 agreement, though mutual suspicion and political distrust are still palpable among the two groups.

Hence, the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi socio-cultural, economic and political relations, oscillates between harmony and hostility, accommodation and conflict, and continuity and change in their contest for power and resources within the scope of this study. Prior to this, existing works on the two groups have focused largely on issues of origins, economic and political developments independent of each other, but paid little attention to how the changing identities of these two groups have affected their relationship. Therefore, this work has interrogated the changing identities and inter-group relations among the Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi between 1915 and 2007, and has extensively brought them to historical limelight. In other words, the work has significantly enriched knowledge, deepened understanding and further widened our scope of scholarship on the two interacting groups.

The contribution to knowledge of this work is that of constructive engagement. The argument is that whereas fundamental differences may exist in the relationships between two or more minority groups, the need for survival within the context of a possible and perceived domination by the majority necessarily forces them to devise means of self-preservation and accommodation among themselves by suppressing such differences in

order to survive. This is the history of the nature and character of Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi relations during the study period. Furthermore, the Arogbo-Ijo, who are Ijo origin and Ijo-speaking, and the Apoi who, are Ijo in origin but now Yoruba-speaking had to devise political, economic and social means of engagement, despite the sharp differences, mutual suspicion, antagonism and many times, hostilities that characterised their relations in the last century in order to prevent their mutual assured diminution had they failed to do so. Therefore, the historical and linguistic homogeneity of Arogbo-Ijo and Apoi, from 1915 to 2007, proved to be insufficient unifying factors that could prevent political rivalry over contestation for space and power.

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Oral Interviews

Name of Informant	Age	Sex	Place of Interview	Occupation	Date of Interview
Abayomi, B.	75	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Community Leader	21 December, 2017
Abednego, B.	58	M	Ojagbemi, Okitipupa	Civil Servant	11 March, 2018
Abednego, E.	65	M	Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo	Fish Trader	11 November, 2017
Abudu, A.	70	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	28 December, 2018
Adeyoriyu, G.	50	F	Igbotu, Apoi	Politician	10 April, 2018
Adeyoriyu, S. A.	78	M	Igbotu, Apoi	Community Leader	4 September, 2015
Ajama, L.	70	M	Ogokiri Zion, Arogbo	Religious Leader	20 November, 2017
Ajama, P.	68	M	Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo	Former Palm wine tapper	10 November, 2015
Ajama, S.	60	F	Israel Kiri, Arogbo	Fish Trader	11 November, 2017
Ajama, Y.	80	F	Israel Kiri, Arogbo	Former Fish Trader	7 November, 2017
Akah, T.	56	M	Ukpe, Arogbo	Politician	23 March, 2018
Allen, R.	54	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Civil Servant	9 July, 2018
Amalagha, P.	83	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	13 November, 2017
Arigidi, J.T.	54	M	Opuba, Arogbo	Civil Servant	4 March, 2018
Atili, H. K.	88	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	28 August, 2015
Bekewe, R. A.	76	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	29 August, 2015
Biobaku, I. O.	60	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Community Leader	21 December, 2017
Boboh, A.	82	M	Tebubeleu, Arogbo	Community Leader	8 November, 2015
Bodunwa, F.	50	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Community Leader	20 November, 2015
Bolodokun, I.	55	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Former Fish Trader	12 November, 2015
Dabo, F. A.	83	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Community Leader	13 March, 2019
Duyile, D.	55	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Community Leader	20 November, 2017
Duyile, P. O.	62	F	Igbobini, Apoi	Politician	10 August, 2018
Egbodofo, O. J.	58	M	Igbotu, Apoi	Politician	15 November, 2017
Egbukuyomi, A. M.	48	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Civil Servant	9 July, 2018
Egeni, E. K.	70	M	Oba-Ile, Akure	Civil Servant (Rtd)	11 November, 2015
Emokenighan, I. T.	55	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant	21 January, 2018
Eshofonie, R.	55	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Civil Servant	9 July, 2018
Fieleifa, J.	65	M	Igangbo, Arogbo	Community Leader	10 March, 2018
Feku, J. E.	56	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Politician	20 January, 2018
Ganfo, I.	60	M	Israel Kiri, Arogbo	Fish Trader	27 December, 2017
Ganfo, P.	58	M	Akure	Civil Servant (Rtd)	30 November, 2017
Ganfo, T. K.	55	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant	19 December, 2017
George, A.	49	M	Ode-Aye, Okitipupa	Civil Servant	12 March, 2018
George, M.	75	F	Ogidigba 1, Arogbo	Former Fish Trader	5 October, 2016
Goh, J. D.	58	M	Biagbini, Arogbo	Civil Servant	27 January, 2018

Gunugunu, W. W. J.	60	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Politician	4 March, 2018
Hugah, K.	65	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Religious Leader	9 December, 2017
Ibiyo, E.	70	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Community Leader	20 December, 2016
Idhiarhi, B.	59	M	Igbatoro, Akure	Civic Servant	20 March, 2018
Ikusedun, P. O.	55	M	Kiribo, Apoi	Civil Servant	22 December, 2017
Ijanpele, M.	75	M	Tebubeleu, Arogbo	Former Palm wine tapper	10 November, 2015
Ijeh, G. D.	46	F	Ojojo, Akinjagunla, Ondo	Civil Servant	20 July, 2018
Isepe, I.	70	M	Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo	Former Palm wine tapper	10 November, 2015
Iroju, O. A.	40	M	Igbotu, Apoi	Lecturer (OAU)	26 March, 2018
Iwabi, P.	62	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	10 January, 2018
Iwabi, S. E.	76	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant (Rtd)	10 April, 2017
Jebe, E.	72	F	Opubabilebu, Arogbo	Former Fish Trader	19 September, 2017
Jeje, P. A.	89	M	Igbotu, Apoi	Community Leader	15 March, 2019
Job, N. T. K.	67	M	Sabomi, Apoi	Civil Servant (Rtd)	21 January, 2018
Kegbe, B. Z.	51	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Civil Servant	15 March, 2018
Kekemeke, R. S.	57	M	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo	Politician	2 February, 2018
Kile, A.	74	M	Tebubeleu, Arogbo	Fish Trader	8 November, 2015
Kondigha, J.	67	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	20 January, 2018
Kowei, K.	50	M	Agwobiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	30 December, 2018
Kpiliboh, F.	71	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	28 December, 2018
Kuete, O.	70	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant (Rtd)	14 February, 2018
Kukoyi, B. O.	97	M	Okeloro, Okitipupa	Civil Servant (Rtd)	15 November, 2018
Lemikan, O. O	60	M	Funbi Fagun, Ondo	Civil Servant (Rtd)	10 July, 2018
Meretighan, L. M.	78	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant (Rtd)	29 December, 2015
Moro, D. D.	54	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Lecturer (LASU)	26 March, 2009
Muleboh, M.	85	M	Ebiaye, Arogbo	Religious Leader	23 November, 2017
Naboboh, B.	50	M	Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	13 November, 2017
Odejimi, P. I. O.	61	M	Igbobini, Apoi	Politician	13 August, 2017
Ogeh, I. A.	75	M	Igbotu, Apoi	Community Leader	7 September, 2015
Ofoyeju, E.	45	M	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo	Civil Servant	14 December, 2017
Ogidiogo, E.	60	M	Obontoru, Arogbo	Canoe-Carver	8 November, 2015
Okajare, S. T.	45	M	Alagbaka, Akure	Lecturer (OAU)	20 March, 2018
Okolofinighan, E. C.	70	M	Ukpe, Arogbo	Politician	10 March, 2018
Okoroboh, R.	55	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant	30 November, 2017
Okunrinmeta, U.	51	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Lecturer (AAUA)	25 March, 2018
Olopele, P.M.S.	75	M	Oba-Ile, Akure	Politician	7 March, 2018
Olowogunle, M.	52	F	Igbekebo, Apoi	Civil Servant	12 July, 2018

Ominidougha, B. O.	57	M	Bolowou, Arogbo	Politician	13 March, 2018
Ominisan, T.	60	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	25 January, 2018
Omotayo, R.	55	M	Igbekebo, Apoi	Politician	5 June, 2018
Oniyemofe, D. E.	55	M	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo	Civil Servant	10 June, 2018
Opirijitei, C.	60	F	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant (Rtd)	21 January, 2018
Peretei, K. I.	51	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Politician	6 February, 2015
Sofiyea, A. O.	81	M	Agwobiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	13 November, 2017
Surulere, S. O.	77	M	Sabomi, Apoi	Community Leader	14 March, 2019
Taiakimi, C.	85	M	Tolukiribou, Arogbo	Community Leader	23 January, 2018
Tiewei, A.	55	M	Amapere, Arogbo	Civil Servant	8 January, 2018
Thomas, E.	55	F	Igangbo, Arogbo	Fish Trader	10 November, 2015
Titiboh, E.	70	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Religious Leader	10 August, 2015
Titiboh, L.	50	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	11 November, 2015
Tolo, O.	78	M	Kiribo, Apoi	Community Leader	7 September, 2015
Tunfawei, J.	68	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Politician	9 November, 2015
Tunyan, S.	50	M	Agwobiri, Arogbo	Politician	14 March, 2018
Uguoji, S.	66	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Politician	10 June, 2018
Umenren, A.	72	M	Opu-Erubiri, Arogbo	Community Leader	10 November, 2015
Uttoh, J.G.	46	M	Ugoububogho, Arogbo	Politician	28, March, 2018
Williams, F. J.	68	M	Oba-Ile, Akure	Community Leader	20 January, 2016
Yayu, S. E.	70	M	Egbesubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant (Rtd)	6 February, 2015
Yeiyah, D.	50	F	Erubiri, Arogbo	Civil Servant	8 January, 2018
Yeiyah, J.	57	M	Erubiri, Arogbo	Politician	8 January, 2018

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APPENDIX I

African Population of Town and Village Units in Ondo Province Classified by Sex and Distinguishing those in Specified Age Groups and Literates (Both Sexes), December, 1952.

Division (DV). District (Dist). Native Authority (N.A), Village Group (V.G.) Town and Village	Sex			Age group								LITERACY	
	Both	Male	Female	Male				Female				Standard II or over	Able to write in Roman Script
				0- under 7	7- under 15	15- under 50	50- and over	0-under 7	7- under 15	15- under 50	50 and over		
Bini Confederation	12, 489	6,359	6,130	2,300	1,096	2,348	615	2,180	833	2,695	422	865	427
Abusoro	172	107	65	52	17	38	-	27	2	36	-	9	-
Adjoma	110	55	55	20	9	20	6	15	11	23	6	5	1
Agboro	188	97	91	41	14	34	8	35	16	40	-	9	20
Ajagba	1,422	713	709	247	137	286	43	237	96	336	40	173	92
Ajewodi	210	95	105	24	20	33	18	44	17	33	21	8	4
Ajujo	174	80	94	18	14	30	18	22	17	43	12	22	-
Akotogbo	1,341	702	115	244	121	267	70	215	78	282	64	125	26
Akpotu	133	64	69	21	13	26	4	29	7	31	2	6	-
Arogbo	185	99	86	44	11	30	14	35	10	36	5	3	18
Barogbo	226	121	105	34	13	50	24	38	16	38	13	5	-
Deto	102	54	48	16	10	21	7	16	5	24	3	4	2
Gbogbolowu	375	205	170	84	44	67	10	55	24	84	7	34	17
Idekpe	182	83	99	24	16	38	5	36	15	47	1	13	-
Igodan	141	89	52	31	9	28	21	15	7	21	9	9	1
Ijushun.	561	256	305	79	41	121	15	96	45	150	14	14	6

Ijuoshun . . . . .	...	...	214	104	110	23	25	27	29	33	15	45	17	16	6
Iyekarawa . . . . .	...	...	133	80	53	30	13	19	18	18	6	20	9	6	-
Jegun . . . . .	...	...	103	47	56	6	14	17	10	17	12	25	2	8	-
Jomo . . . . .	...	...	197	101	96	25	19	40	17	37	10	35	14	15	7
Lema . . . . .	...	...	140	76	64	33	8	24	11	28	7	29	-	-	-
Lemo . . . . .	...	...	192	99	93	46	19	26	8	45	18	29	1	9	20
Lisah . . . . .	...	...	116	56	60	26	3	23	4	29	2	26	3	7	6
Lijirin . . . . .	...	...	303	152	151	64	22	47	19	67	18	40	26	8	11
Makinwa . . . . .	...	...	114	63	51	19	14	18	12	21	5	19	6	1	2
Mukoro . . . . .	...	...	143	78	65	38	13	24	3	24	15	25	1	6	16
Obamuwasan..	...	...	126	70	56	36	8	23	3	23	3	30	-	9	18
Odogbu. . . . .	...	...	179	99	80	38	14	40	7	21	10	44	5	14	6
Ogedegbe Camp ...	...	...	188	100	88	42	20	34	4	39	7	37	5	11	-
Ogeleyinbo	...	...	103	55	48	33	3	19	-	26	-	22	-	12	21
Ojimu Dada ..	...	...	160	77	83	24	11	19	23	32	8	30	13	6	6
Oke . . . . .	...	...	227	100	127	35	14	26	25	40	22	47	18	2	12
Okposho. . . . .	...	...	315	155	160	61	29	60	5	71	28	58	3	25	1
Okugredi. . . . .	...	...	111	53	58	16	11	11	15	22	9	27	-	6	-
Olomu . . . . .	...	...	106	56	50	20	13	18	5	15	5	27	3	-	2
Olorogun I. . . . .	...	...	208	109	99	54	11	36	8	42	13	42	2	9	16
Olorogun II.. . . .	...	...	160	75	85	17	15	28	15	30	9	32	14	14	3
Osalawa . . . . .	...	...	175	99	76	35	18	45	1	30	13	31	2	6	-

Oyofotu ...	...	...	204	103	101	44	8	43	8	44	10	44	3	4	15
Potogiri	...	...	465	225	240	86	46	79	14	85	45	101	9	44	1
Pupuru	...	...	111	52	59	19	11	22	-	17	8	33	1	3	3
Salawa	...	...	206	101	105	31	15	46	9	33	13	58	1	10	7
Uba-Poro	...	...	237	103	134	38	23	33	9	50	18	57	9	4	3
Wajoye Camp	...	...	288	181	107	84	36	56	5	39	15	53	-	46	-
Yasere	...	...	380	200	180	72	39	82	7	69	25	84	2	59	3
Other villages (17) ...	...	...	1,363	670	693	226	112	274	58	218	98	321	52	66	55
Ijaw Apoi Dist.	...	...	13,565	6,828	6,737	2,182	1,125	3,124	397	2,252	924	3,315	246	831	567
Derune	...	...	166	88	78	28	12	47	1	28	13	34	3	16	6
Gbekebo	...	...	1,873	902	971	245	153	469	35	291	144	493	43	140	-
Hun Igbarran	...	...	114	51	63	16	8	19	8	29	3	29	2	20	3
Igangbo	...	...	185	93	92	25	3	62	3	29	6	52	5	2	12
Igbobini	...	...	1,531	747	784	210	129	392	16	226	86	447	25	126	151
Igbotu	...	...	3,384	1,783	1,601	635	324	678	146	555	246	740	60	235	168
Ipoke	...	...	248	113	135	33	13	66	1	38	20	77	-	1	-
ItaOsari Osari	...	...	278	160	118	33	21	105	1	35	12	67	44	6	10
Iyara	...	...	147	72	75	33	13	18	8	29	20	20	6	21	33
Jalere	...	...	130	61	68	22	14	24	1	21	11	37	-	8	2
James	...	...	153	77	76	36	6	35	-	22	14	40	-	8	1
Jomo	...	...	307	164	143	83	10	68	3	65	8	68	2	45	1
Kiribo	...	...	986	446	540	144	72	215	15	197	82	248	13	51	51

Kiribo River Village	...	173	89	84	25	20	42	2	26	11	46	1	2	8
Lisere	... ..	123	74	49	41	4	29	-	26	2	21	-	6	7
Ojigboghini Kiribo	...	130	63	67	23	5	33	2	26	15	23	3	1	
Ojuala	... ..	946	467	479	113	106	238	10	154	53	262	10	8	1
Salawa	... ..	158	72	86	18	13	34	7	20	11	50	5	1	-
Shabomi	... ..	995	450	505	134	80	191	45	166	78	242	19	44	55
Ukrakpu	... ..	109	51	58	15	3	30	3	19	2	32	5	7	1
Umoro	... ..	198	97	101	42	15	30	10	38	16	39	8	-	12
Unmoron	... ..	113	58	55	27	8	17	6	30	11	13	1	17	20
Urogun	... ..	107	57	50	22	11	17	7	20	9	18	3	8	-
Yelo	... ..	137	89	48	48	3	37	1	24	1	23	-	9	9
Other Villages (14)	...	914	504	410	131	79	228	66	138	50	194	28	49	17
Ijaw Arogbo Dist.	...	6,410	3,088	3,322	1,168	642	1,019	259	1,2287	618	1,331	145	316	316

Source: NAI. File No. 447/Vol.III. Bulletin No. 3 Ondo Province, Population Census of the Western Region of Nigeria, 1952, pp. 4-5

APPENDIX II

LIST OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE ONDO STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BETWEEN 1979 AND 1983 WHEN HON R. A. JOLOWO (AN AROGBO-IJO) WAS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI

Hon (Chief) Bola Akingbade (Speaker I) 2nd October 1979 – June 1981

Hon (Chief) Richard Aiyetowonwo Jolowo (Speaker II) June 1981 – October 1983

Hon Olu Adesina (Deputy Speaker) 1979 – 1983

S/N.	Names	Constituency
1.	Hon Richard A. Jolowo Speaker II	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 3
2.*	Hon Adegbayemu	Owo
3.	Chief J. O. Adeoya	Ero 2
4.*	Hon (Mrs) J. O. Adeotoye	Ondo
5.	Hon J. A. Adeusi	Idanre/Ifedore 2
6.*	Hon A. H. A. Adeyemo	Ekiti Central
7.	Hon T. A. Adeseke	Ero 4
8.*	Hon Olu Adesina (Deputy Speaker)	Ekiti North
9.*	Hon J. A. Adebo	Ekiti South West
10.	Hon (Dr) Akerele Adu	Idanre/Ifedore 4
11.*	Hon F. O. Aladejebi	Ekiti South
12.*	Hon Owolabi Afuye	Ekiti South
13.	Hon Soji Akinlabi	Idanre/Ifedore 1
14.	Hon Patrick Akinyomi	Ikale 4
15.*	Hon P. Akomolafe	Ekiti South West
16.*	Hon T. Akinwande	Ondo
17.	Hon S. A. Ajiboye	Ekiti North 3
18.*	Hon Ajobiewe	Ekiti East
19.	Hon T. O. Aluko	Ekiti South 4
20.*	Hon J. A. Asanbe	Akoko South 1
21.	Hon J. A. Akinwumi	Ondo 3
22.	Hon J. A. Aiyedun	Ekiti West 1
23.*	Hon M. O. Iley-Obalokun	Owo
24.	Hon O. Atiroko	Ikale 5
25.	Hon Tunde Agunbiade	Akure 2
26.	Hon Bola Akingbade Speaker I	Ekiti West 4
27.*	Hon S. K. Babalola	Ijero
28.*	Hon Bode Babalola	Ekiti West
29.	Hon Fola Ebisemiju	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 2
30.	Hon J. S. Folayegbe	Akoko South 2
31.	Hon J. A. Famuyiwa	Idanre/Ifedore 3
32.	Hon J. A. Fapohunda	Ekiti East 3
33.	Hon O. Farunkanmi	Akure 3
34.*	Hon M. A. Jeje	Ijero
35.*	Hon J. E. Jegede	Ero 1
36.	Hon M. A. Giwa	Akoko South

37.	Hon Alex Adedipe	Akure 1
38.	Hon Kayode Iwakun	Ikale 3
39.*	Hon Ayodele Morakinyo	Ekiti South
40.	Hon Olu Mafo	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 1
41.	Hon (Chief) Bode Kuma	Ekiti North 1
42.*	Hon J. A. Olaoye	Ero
43.*	Hon Akin Olafunmiloye	Ifesowapo
44.	Hon A. O. Ogidan	Akoko North 1
45.*	Hon T. D. Odenusi	Owo
46.*	Hon Smart Omodunbi	Akoko South 1
47.*	Hon Obafemi Oyewole	Ijero
48.*	Hon L. K. Opeke	Ifesowapo
49.*	Hon Banji Olowofela	Ekiti South West
50.	Hon S. F. Ogunbodede	Owo 1
51	Hon E. K. Olanipekun	Akoko North 2
52.*	Hon Akinola Ojomu	Owo
53.	Hon R. A. Olademehin	Ikale 1
54*.	Hon I. O. Idowu	Ifesowapo
55.	Hon M. A. Omoyajowo	Akoko North 3
56.*	Hon T. S. Olaniyan	Ekiti Central
57.	Hon Dosu Okeya	Ekiti South 5
58.*	Hon E. A. Oyeneyin	Ondo
59.*	Hon J. A. Fagbuaro	Ekiti Central 1
60.*	Hon S. O. Famodimu	Ekiti West
61.*	Hon E. O. Obaweya	Ekiti Central 1
62.*	Hon T. O. Obe	Ero
63.*	Hon S. A. Oloketuyi	Ekiti Central
64.*	Hon O. Ilori	Ekiti West
65.*	Hon M. O. Babatunde	Ekiti
66.*	Hon O. Falohun	Ekiti North

Source: The Ondo State House of Assembly Diary, 2018. Note: Some Local Government Councils had more than one State Constituency, such as Owo, Ondo, Ero, among others, during the Second Republic. However, in the said Ondo State House of Assembly Diary, 2018, this was never distinctively indicated for researchers to know in some instances. In fact, Nos. 20 and 46 indicated the same Akoko South 1 for the two representatives. Also, Numbers 59 and 61 indicated the same Ekiti Central 1 Constituency for the two representatives. Sadly, all spirited efforts to get necessary clarifications from the Office of the Speaker (Right Honourable Bamidele Oleyelogun), Ondo State House of Assembly, Igbatoro Road, Akure, proved abortive. Hence, the decision to put asterisk in all the affected Constituencies.

APPENDIX III

LIST OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE ONDO STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BETWEEN 1983 AND 1984 WHEN HON S. E. YAYU (AN AROGBO-IJO) WAS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI

Hon F. Akin Olafunmiloye (Speaker III) October 1983-December 1983

Hon J. Odu (Deputy Speaker) October 1983-December 1983

S/N.	Names	Constituency
1.*	Hon F. A. Olafunmiloye (Speaker)	Ifesowapo
2.*	Hon J. Odu (Deputy Speaker)	Ekiti Cental 3
3.*	Hon I. B. Abuila	Ekiti South
4.	Hon J. O. Ade	Ijero 4
5.	Hon R. O. Adegoroye	Akure 1
6.*	Hon (Mrs) B. A. Adeleye	Ekiti North
7.*	Hon J. A. Adeutan	Ifesowapo
8.*	Hon I. B. Abegunde	Ekiti South
9.	Hon F. Aderemi	Ero 2
10.	Hon J. A. Adeyinka	Ekiti West 5
11.	Hon (Dr) Akerele Adu	Idanre/Ifedore 4
12.*	Hon A. Afowowe	Ekiti South West
13.	Hon J. A. Adedun	Ekiti West 1
14.	Hon J. O. Ajibola	Ero 3
15.	Hon C. Akin	Idanre/Ifedore 1
16.	Hon J. A. Akinduro	Idanre/Ifedore 2
17.	Hon C. O. Akingboye	Ikale 2
18.	Hon J. I. Akinnuoye	Ifesowapo 1
19.*	Hon A. Akinola	Ekiti East
20.	Hon S. Akinola	Ekiti South West 3
21.	Hon M. O. Alley-Obalokun	Owo 2
22.	Hon G. Alonge	Ekiti North 3
23.*	Hon J. O. Aluko	Akure
24.	Hon S. O. Animasahun	Akoko North 1
25.	Hon O. Atiroko	Ikale 5
26.	Hon S. B. Awopeju	Idanre/ Ifedore 3
27.	Hon I. O. Badmus	Ekiti Central 1
28.*	Hon T. Boluwade	Ondo
29.*	Hon A. Dada	Ekiti Central
30.	Hon S. O. Dani	Ekiti North 1
31.	Hon G. Egbale	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 1
32.	Hon E. Egbeyemi	Ekiti Central 2
33.	Hon J. A. Fapohunda	Ekiti East 2
34.	Hon O. Fasusi	Ero 1
35.	Hon J. A. Fatoyinbo	Akure 2
36.	Hon J. A. Ibitoye	Akoko South 1
37.	Hon J. A. Ijabiyi	Akoko North 3
38.	Hon K. Iwakun	Ikale 3

39.	Hon J. O. Fadahunsi	Ekiti South 4
40.	Hon S. F. Ogunbodede	Owo 1
41.	Hon E. B. Ojo	Ero 4
42.	Hon T. A. Oke	Ekiti West 3
43.*	Hon A. Oladele	Ekiti Central 3
44.	Hon B. O. Oladuji	Ondo 2
45.	Hon R. A. Olajide	Ekiti West 2
46.*	Hon E. K. Olanipekun	Akoko South 2
47.	Hon J. A. Olaoye	Ero 5
48.	Hon I. Olowu	Ikale 1
49.	Hon J. Olusegun	Ekiti West 4
50.*	Hon A. Ologun	Akoko South 2
51.	Hon A. Osho	Owo 4
52.	Hon P. A. Omogbemiro	Ondo 4
53.*	Hon A. S. Omolehin	Akoko South
54.	Hon M. A. Omoleye	Ijero 3
55.	Hon L. I. Omotoye	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 2
56.	Hon A. E. Omoyelu	Ekiti North 4
57.*	Hon A. Oni	Ekiti South West
58.	Hon P. O. Osowe	Ikale 4
59.	Hon J. A. Ogundola	Ijero 2
60.	Hon E. A. Oyeneyin	Ondo 1
61.	Hon J. A. Adeola	Akoko North 4
62.	Hon O. Oyewole	Ijero 1
63.	Hon E. G. Saporu	Owo 3
64.	Hon S. E. Yaju	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 3
65.	Hon F. O. Ogundeji	Ondo 3
66.*	Hon O. Oyedele	Ekiti Central

Source: The Ondo State House of Assembly Diary, 2018. Note: Some Local Government Councils had more than one State Constituency, such as Ekiti South, Ekiti East, Ondo, etc., during the Second Republic. However, the 2018 Diary of the Ondo State House of Assembly, failed to indicate such Councils accordingly. Even, Numbers 2 and 43 indicated the same Ekiti Central 3 for the two representatives. Painfully, all concerted efforts to get necessary clarifications from the Office of the Speaker (Right Honourable Bamidele Oleyelogun), Ondo State House of Assembly, Igbatoro Road, Akure, hit a brick wall. Hence, the decision to put asterisk in the few affected Constituencies.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE ONDO STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BETWEEN 1992 AND 1993 WHEN HON D. I. KEKEMEKE (AN AROGBO-IJO) WAS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI
Hon (Chief) O. T. Akinyemi (Speaker IV) 7 January, 1992 – 30 October, 1992
Hon Akinyemi Clement O. (Speaker V) 1 November, 1992 – November, 1993
Hon Ajayi Agboola Joshua (Deputy Speaker) 1992 – 1993

S/N.	Names	Constituency
1.	Hon Chief Akinyemi Olufemi (Speaker IV)	Ido/Osi 2
2.	Hon Ajayi Agboola Joshua (Deputy Speaker)	Akoko South 2
3.	Hon Adebayo Pius Tunde	Ikere 1
4.	Hon Adedugba Joshua Adebayo	Odigbo 2
5.	Hon Chief (Dr) Ademujimi Kolawole	Idanre 2
6.	Hon Adejumo Adeniran Tunde	Akoko North West 1
7.	Hon Adesokun Foluso	Irepodun/Ifelodun 2
8.	Hon Afe Samson Adebayo	Ekiti East 2
9.	Hon Aina Abiodun Emmanuel	Oye 1
10.	Hon Ajayi Olubanji	Akure 1
11.	Hon Ajayi Solomon Ilesanmi	Oye 2
12.	Hon Akinfesi Oladejo Martins	Ondo 2
13.	Hon Akinfenwa Lawrence Akintujoye	Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo 1
14.	Hon Akinyemi Clement Olufemi (Speaker V)	Irepodun/Ifelodun 1
15.	Hon Oladapo Onaolapo	Ikole 2
16.	Hon Aladekoye Emmanuel Adeolu	Irele 2
17.	Hon Aladetoyinbo Mike Obayemi	Ado 1
18.	Hon Araromi Adetunji Aderounmu	Ifedore 1
19.	Hon Ayadi Lawson Adegoke	Okitipupa 2
20.	Hon Ayeni Joseph Afolabi	Ijero 2
21.	Hon Jejelowo Ola Jones	Idanre 1
22.	Hon Borisade David Ayodele	Ekiti West 2
23.	Hon Kayode Oyetunji	Akoko North East 2
24.	Hon Duerimini I. Kekemeke	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 2
25.	Hon Kowe Issac Adebisi Joseph	Ekiti East 1
26.	Hon Kunlere Boluwaji	Okitipupa 1
27.	Hon Obazu Titus Kholly	Ose 1
28.	Hon Odundoro Peter Ojo	Emure/Ise/Orun 2
29.	Hon Ogunmade Idowu Anthony	Irele 1
30.	Hon I. Ogunsuyi	Moba 2
31.	Hon Ojo Felix Oluwafemi	Ikere 2
32.	Hon James Olanrewaju	Ado 2
33.	Hon Olowomeye Samuel Akinbobola	Odigbo
34.	Hon Oluwajana Jimisayo	Ifedore 2
35.	Hon Oluwatunsin G. Olowofela	Ekiti South West 2

36.	Hon Orisamika Moses Ilesanmi	Akoko North East 1
37.	Hon Chief Orisamoluwa Bode Dennis	Ilaje/Ese-Odo 1
38.	Hon Owoeye Adebayo Samuel	Ijero 1
39.	Hon Oyewole Sunday Akinloye	Ekiti West 1
40.	Hon Chief Olasehinde Jogunde Benjamin	Ose 2
41.	Hon Olasogba Rotimi Oyeola	Ondo 1
42.	Hon Olayemi Samuel Ajide	Moba 1
43.	Hon Olofinbiyi Charles Olufemi	Ido-Osi 1
44.	Hon Olanitoye Kunle Joseph	Ikole 1
45.	Hon Omojola Gideon Adeolu	Akoko South 1
46.	Hon (Chief) Omosebi Akinwumi Rufus	Akure 2
47.	Hon Subulade Olomi Babatunde	Ekiti South West 1
48.	Hon Sule Akinsuyi A. Hezekiah	Owo 1
49.	Hon (Chief) Taiwo Adebisi Ezekiel	Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo 1
50.	Hon Felix Omolade Oguntimehin	Akoko North West 2
51.	Hon Ogungbuji Stephen Olaniyi	Owo 2

Source: The Ondo State House of Assembly Diary, 2018.

APPENDIX V

LIST OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF ONDO STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BETWEEN 1999 AND 2003 WHEN HON E. A. ANIFOWOSE (AN APOI) WAS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI

Hon (Chief) Ayo S. Agbomuserin (Speaker VI) 31 May, 1999 – 1 April, 2001

Hon Kenneth S. Olawole (Speaker VII) 10 April, 2001 – 31 May, 2003

Hon V. A. Akinwe (Deputy Speaker I)

Hon (Rev) Aderobo (Deputy Speaker II)

S/N.	Names	Constituency
1.	Hon (Chief) Ayo S. Agbomuserin (Speaker I)	Ifedore
2.	Hon V. A. Akinwe (Deputy Speaker I)	Odigbo 1
3.	Hon (Rev) Samuel Aderobo (Deputy Speaker II)	Odigbo 2
4.	Hon Kenneth S. Olawale (Speaker II)	Akure North
5.	Hon (Chief) Babadele Foluso	Akoko South West 1
6.	Hon (Dr) E. E. Adesole	Ondo East
7.	Hon Afe Olowokere	Akure South 2
8.	Hon Shehu Lawalson	Owo 2
9.	Hon A. O. Ojo	Akoko North West 2
10.	Hon (Chief) J. I. Oguntoyinbo	Akoko South 2
11.	Hon P. K. D. Omoogun	Akoko South East
12.	Hon Amuwa Benson	Ilaje 1
13.	Hon (Chief) C. A. Ifayase	Ondo West 1
14.	Hon Omotinuade Bayegun	Akoko North East
15.	Hon (Prince) Ademola Adegoye	Akure South 1
16.	Hon (Otunba) Alex Akinnadeju	Idanre
17.	Hon Chief (Dr) A. Akinrelere	Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo
18.	Hon Ajibola Adegoye	Owo 1
19.	Hon Ofoesuwa B. Folorunsho	Ilaje 2
20.	Hon L. S. Adu	Akoko North West 1
21.	Hon Ola Oguntimehin	Okitipupa 1
22.	Hon Akinsoyinu Gbenga	Ondo West 2
23.	Hon (Chief) Oye Alademehin	Okitipupa 2
24.	Hon F. O. Alabi	Ose
25.	Hon Aderemi Olatubora	Irele
26.	Hon E. A. Anifowose	Ese-Odo

Source: The Ondo State House of Assembly Diary, 2018.

APPENDIX VI

LIST OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF ONDO STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BETWEEN 2003 AND 2007 WHEN HON K. K. KUKU (AN AROGBO-IJO) WAS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AROGBO-IJO AND APOI

Hon Olabintan Victor Adekanye (Speaker VIII) May 2003 – 2005

Hon Bolarinwa Oluwasegunota (Speaker IX) 2005 – 2007

Hon Akinfolarin S. Mayowa (Deputy Speaker) May 2003 – 2007

S/N.	Names	Constituency
1.	Hon Olabintan Victor Adekanye (Speaker)	Akoko South West 2
2.	Hon Akinfolarin S. Mayowa (Deputy Speaker)	Odigbo 1
3.	Hon Babalola Ademola Michael	Akure South 2
4.	Hon (Barr) Oludipe M.Olusola	Owo 1
5.	Hon Akinyode Olusegun	Irele
6.	Hon Fashua Olaniyi Michael	Ifedore
7.	Hon Akinfolarin Ayotunde	Ondo West 1
8.	Hon (Barr) Alhaji Abdussalam Olawale	Akoko North East
9.	Hon Abiodun Jerome	Akoko South West 1
10.	Hon (Dr) Adedeji Kehinde	Ose
11.	Hon Adesina Samuel	Odigbo 2
12.	Hon (Prince) Aiyemo Tunde	Ilaje 2
13.	Hon Aiyeyemi Issac	Akure North
14.	Hon Akinmade Titi	Ondo West
15.	Hon (Alhaji) Akinromade A. Nasiru	Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo
16.	Hon Akinyugha Niyi Jones	Idanre
17.	Hon (Chief) Alademehin Oye	Okitipupa 2
18.	Hon (Barr) Alao Francis Yemi	Akoko North West 1
19.	Hon Leko B. Oluwasegunota (Speaker IX)	Akoko North West 2
20.	Hon Eleko Olukanye	Akure South 1
21.	Hon Kemebradigha Kingsley Kuku	Ese-Odo
22.	Hon Logo O. Adetunji	Ilaje 1
23.	Hon Ode F. Abayomi	Owo 2
24.	Hon Okereji F. Felix	Akoko South East
25.	Hon Omogbehin E. Bamido	Okitipupa 1
26.	Hon (Dr) Chief Oyebade Jibayo Samuel	Ondo East

Source: The Ondo State House of Assembly Diary, 2018.