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Editorial Note

Unlike our established tradition, this volume was delayed. The delay is not unconnected with the instability in the university system occasioned by the long-dawn strike of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the intransigence of the federal government in the resolution of the impasse. It is better late than never and we have in this volume, diverse articles that we hope, may quench our intellectual thirst and possibly, advance the frontiers of historical knowledge. We thank you for your sustained interest in Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies (IJOHIS).

Professor S.O. Aghalino
(*Editor*)

***Disclaimer:** The views expressed in the articles in this Journal do not necessarily represent the views of anyone affiliated with IJOHIS or of the Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN TO THE INFORMAL
AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

The involvement of women in the informal agricultural sector in the Benue Valley has not been adequately documented, even if acknowledge. Women are deeply involved in the sector and play very critical roles in it's sustainability over generations. In addition to being a major source of the labour force in the sector, they are also reproducers of labour. This paper examines how women have survived and navigated both socio-cultural and historical challenges and maintain their dominant of and relevance in the informal agricultural sector from generations to generations. It also demonstrates the inadequacy of government policies to ameliorate their situation. Based on painstakingly garnered ethnographical data from the field, the paper made far-reaching recommendations on how women can be empowered to meaningfully contribute to the informal sector.

Introduction

Agriculture remains the mainstay of developed, developing, underdeveloped and undeveloped nations of the world because of its centrality to human existence. The agricultural sector provides food for human consumption and cross-cutting services to other sectors of the economy. Globally, informal agricultural activities are undertaken by both men and women. There are records that

The Contributions of Women to the Informal Agricultural Sector in Nasarawa State

women contribute significantly to informal agricultural production in various parts of the world. In Asia and the Pacific regions, informal agriculture in rural areas constitutes 33% of men and 43% of women.¹ In Southern Asia, the estimated population of men in the informal agricultural sector stood at 44% while women at 62%.² A similar experience is in the Middle East and North Africa where men's engagement in the informal agricultural sector stood at 29% and 51% for women.³ In sub-Saharan Africa, the estimated figure is 67% for men and 62% for women. In all these regions, women occupy impressive percentages of the working population in the informal agricultural sector. Although this trend is different in Southern Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean where the percentages for women in the informal agricultural sector stand at 15% and 14%, respectively. Women's engagements in the informal agricultural sector, therefore, contribute majorly to global food security. It is in this wise that the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) reported that about 70% of women live in rural areas and contribute 44% of family feeding and income through agriculture.⁴ Agricultural sector development is a tool to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and feed a projected 9.7 billion people in the universe by 2050.⁵

In Africa and Nigeria in particular, the informal sector provides jobs which have increasingly become scarce in the formal sector of the country's economy. This is because the informal sector constitutes 80.4% of the labour force while women occupy a significant proportion of this percentage.⁶ Supporting this fact, the National Gender Policy in Agriculture⁷ averred that; "Women carry out about 80% of agricultural production, 60% of agricultural processing activities, and 50% of animal husbandry and related activities, yet women have access to less than 20% of agricultural assets". Therefore, the informal sector is a ready and available opportunity for women whose significant population is found in agricultural production.⁸ Thus, it is estimated that Nigerian women contribute 37% in areas of smallholder farms. They produce much of the food for domestic consumption and they are the drivers of food processing, marketing, and preservation but have limited access to land, credit facilities, farm inputs, training and advice, and technology. Nigerian women, therefore, contributed 60-80% of agriculture production.⁹ Okojie¹⁰ based on this knowledge, declared that "women's greatest contribution to the Nigerian economy is in the agricultural sector in the rural areas where the majority of Nigerians live". Nigerian women contribute to the production of grains and cereals, tubers, vegetables, *et cetera* all year round. This is because the majority of farmers in Nigeria are smallholder farmers and the majority of the smallholder farmers are women.. They produce the bulk of the food that the nation feeds on. However, SHWF faces huge challenges in the areas of access to land, finance, and other farm inputs.¹¹

There is a paucity of academic research on women in the informal agricultural sector. However, few studies that document this aspect of studies include Adekanye¹² whose work focuses on the role of women in agricultural development

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amidst problems and challenges. Adekunye's contention focuses on the different social economic activities of women across the length and breadth of the Nigerian state. The study underscores the fact that women are mainly involved in the production, processing, and trading of such food crops as maize, rice, cassava, yam, and palm oil. Women are rarely connected to agricultural export crops such as cocoa, cotton, and groundnuts.¹³ The study also observed that women who were farmers undertake most farm operations themselves, including the more difficult ones such as land clearing and land preparation for planting. When necessary, they used supplementary families and hired labour. The work is apt in submitting that women in this regard felt left behind in the general drive toward development. Tinuke¹⁴Farrel¹⁵Akintoye¹⁶Haan¹⁷Ad¹⁸Ojo¹⁹, Kagbu²⁰ in their various studies gives the nature of the informal sector generally in Nigeria and how women are affected negatively in this regard. The formal sector according to these studies denies women opportunities because of family responsibilities, lack of skills, and social and cultural barriers; while the informal sector provides women with better access to employment and to earn an income. Consequently, women dominate the informal sector, although it must be noted that policies and developments affecting the sector have a distinctly gendered effect in the final analysis.²¹ Therefore, this study is an addition to the body of literature on the subject matter in Nasarawa State of Nigeria. The paper's major contribution is majorly in the area of assessing informal agricultural works which women have carried out in Nasarawa State since its creation, underscoring the challenges they face.

Geographical Location and Population of the Study Area

Geographically, Nasarawa State is located in the North-Central part of Nigeria on latitude 7° 45' and 9° 25' N of the equator and between longitude 7° and 9° 37' E of the Greenwich meridian.²² The state shares borders with Kaduna State in the North, Plateau State in the East, Taraba and Benue State in the South, Kogi and Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and Abuja in the West.²³ Nasarawa State covers a landmass of 27, 137.8 square kilometres with an estimated total population of 1, 869, 377 according to the 2006 population census. The population distribution of Nasarawa is captured in Table 1.

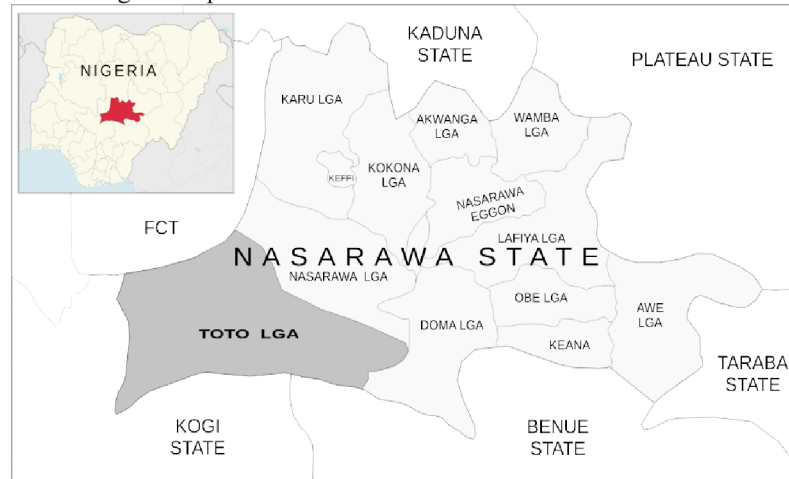
Table 1: Population Distribution of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

S/No	L.G.A	Area (sq. Km)	2005 Pop. Estimates	Population Density
1.	Akwanga	1000.04	104671	104
2.	Awe	2800.00	116080	41
3.	Doma	2729.0	137,220	50
4.	Karu	2810.39	181,702	64
5.	Keana	1075.00	69,694	64
6.	Kokona	1847.03	110,591	59
7.	Lafia	2797.53	364,013	130
8.	Nasarawa	5743.84	193,373	33
9.	Nasarawa Eggon	1199.34	110,613	92
10.	Obi	955.20	152,882	160
11.	Toto	2743.89	135,521	49
12.	Wamba	1276.00	58,621	45
13.	Keffi	140.47	91,902	654
	Total	27,117.73	1,826,883	67

Source: Area from Bureau of Land & Survey; 2005 Population estimates computed using 3% growth rate.

Table 1 shows an estimated total population of 1.8 million in 2005 and this has risen to 2.8 million in 2022 representing a 100% increase (The estimated total population of Nasarawa State in 2022 stands at 2,886, 000 people).²⁴ Keffi, Obi, Akwanga, and Lafia have higher population intensities, while Awe, Nasarawa, Toto, and Wamba have population densities of less than 50. This implies that there is a vast landmass for agricultural production in areas with lower population densities. The state is characterised by agrarian and mining operations as its main sources of revenue. The state is broadly divided into three religious sects- Christians, Muslims, and traditional worshippers and politically cut into three senatorial zones, Keffi, Akwanga, and Lafia of which there are a total of 13 local government areas. The geographical location of Nasarawa State in Nigeria is captured in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1: Map of Nasarawa State



Source: Adopted from Girei, A.B., and Ndanitsa, M.A. 'Smoked and Fresh Fish Marketing in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis. *Acta Sci. Pol. Zootechnica*, vol. 20, No. 1., 2021. P.17.

Fig. 1 captures the geographical terrain of Nasarawa State, and her various Local Governments vis-a-vis her borders with neighbouring states. The topography of Nasarawa State encompasses hills, undulating plains, and lowlands. The Southern parts of Awe, Doma, Nasarawa, and Toto are bordered by River Benue. Its valleys and trough extend inland for some 30 kilometres and it is made up of flood plains below 250 metres.²⁵ The flood plains also cover the coast of River Dep, Mada, Guma, Ayini, and Farin Ruwa draining up into River Benue. The floodplain covers 25% of the landmass of the state. The hills range between 600-1200 metres high and are scattered all over the landmass but with higher concentration in the northern part of the state especially with Monkwa hills. Soils in these hilly enclaves are volcanic in nature therefore loamy and rich for agricultural production.²⁶ The climatic conditions are characterised by a long period of extensive rainfall (April – October) with an annual average of 1200-2000 mm.²⁷ Although, there are variations in rainfall between the Southern and Northern parts of the state. The temperature of the state is generally moderate especially in January as a result of harmattan. The suitable topography, weather, and climatic conditions of Nasarawa state are conducive to the production of various agricultural activities throughout the year. Although no formal estimates are available from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Nasarawa economy is largely agrarian, with informal calculations indicating as much as 70% of economic activities in the agricultural sector.²⁸ The state has natural geographical advantages for agriculture (vast lowlands, proximity to River Benue), and crops such

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as maize, soybeans, rice, guinea corn, cassava, and yam among others are produced in larger quantities.

Conceptual Clarifications

The informal economy encompasses a huge diversity of phenomena that vary in composition and size within economies and across regions.²⁹ Although estimating the size of informality is challenging, there is a consensus that the informal economy is the most important source of employment in developing countries and it also plays a significant role in providing employment and income for marginalized people in developed economies.³⁰ However, defining informality in any economy is complex but easily recognisable. The international statistical standards adopted by the 15th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), cited in Bonnet, Venek, and Chen³¹ look at the informal sector as consisting of:

A subset of unincorporated enterprises (i.e. not constituted as separate legal entities independent of their owners) that are also not registered with a national government authority. Most informal enterprises are single-person operations or family firms/farms; very few are owned or operated by employers with hired workers. Typically, they operate at a low level of organization, on a small scale, and with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production. Households with persons working in a farm or private business in which the destination of production is wholly for their final use are excluded from the scope of the informal sector but included as part of the household sector.

Similarly, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)³², therefore, assert that:

People who work in the informal sector typically operate at a low level of organisation, with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production and on a small scale. Labour relations- where they exist- are based mostly on casual employment, kinship, or personal and social relations rather than contractual arrangements with formal guarantees.

From the foregoing definitions, the informal sector encompasses economic activities in all sectors of the economy that are operated outside the purview of government regulation. This sector may be invisible, irregular, parallel, non-structured, backyard, underground, subterranean, unobserved, or residual and agriculture is not any exception.

According to Ojo,³³ the informal agricultural sector belongs to a set of small and unorganised farmers and farming activities that occupy the largest category of

the labour force in Nigeria. The Nigerian agricultural enterprise employs a vast segment of the nation's unemployed population. This sector is predominated by peasant farmers whose incomes are not directly taxed nor regulated by the government. It is estimated that agriculture's share of informal-sector jobs is even higher, although data are unavailable. In rural areas, women occupied a significant working population in this category arising from the fact that they lack access to viable jobs in the formal sector. Generally, women form the bulk of marginalised persons in the context of the African social settings in the informal sector. Based on this knowledge, the theory of ecofeminism explains the dynamic role and challenges of women in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa State.

Feminism as a theoretical current is a diverse, competing, and often opposing collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies. It is largely motivated by or concerning the experiences of women, especially in terms of their social, political, and economic inequalities.³⁴ The feminisation of agriculture generally seeks to examine the expansion of women's roles in agriculture relative to men's. Another interpretation of the feminisation of agriculture in the body of literature is of 'women being left behind' when men disengage from agricultural work and move into non-agricultural employment.³⁵ In an aspect of agriculture, feminisation lies with the Eco-feminism thesis coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne, who illustrated the potentialities of women to move an ecological revolution, in her book: "Le Féminisme ou la Mort" (1974).³⁶ Although, ecofeminism does not place women in the ruling position of power, but craves a collaborative and connecting society.³⁷

Ecofeminism has branches including liberal ecofeminism, spiritual/cultural ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism.³⁸ The attention of this study resonates with the central argument of ecofeminism rather than its historical development. The inner logic of ecofeminism explores the relationship between women and the environment which Brizioli³⁹ argued rest on the principle that; "Nature herself is the experiment and women, as sylviculturalists, agriculturists and water resource managers, the traditional natural scientists". In line with this knowledge Mies⁴⁰ called women's work in producing sustenance "the generation of life" which implies that women not only collect and consume what has grown in nature but they make things grow. Put differently, ecofeminism tries to explain the connection between women to earth and men to social life: a dualistic framework that reinforces the oppression of women and Nature and favours men's control.⁴¹ Brizioli⁴² emphasizes that:

The main assumptions of *ecofeminism* are the central role of women as mothers or nurturers of life and their natural vocation to respect, protect and take care of the environment without clamming exclusive rights or imposing enclosures so that women do not consider themselves as owners of the earth but they co-operate with biological resources to let grow and make grow.

The strength of ecofeminism theory in the context of this paper therefore lies in its ability to question the logic for women's marginalisation in food production by their male counterparts. It again questions women's attitude as custodians of the ecological systems based on the biases the society held against them. Besides these posers, ecofeminism has illuminated the dynamics of new opportunities for women's empowerment arising from such changes in household arrangements or other agrarian, demographic, or economic changes.⁴³

Another theory that underscores the role of women in the informal sector is⁴⁴ structuralism theory. Structuralism acknowledges the coexistence between the formal and informal sectors in the global economy. Structuralism theory was put forward by Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes in 1989. The author recognizes the role of informal producers in the creation of economic value for a nation's competitive advantage. Castells and Portes⁴⁵ opined that there are individuals whose activities are unregulated by societal intuitions, heterogeneous, universal, and linked to formal organizations. In other words, though not regulated they contribute immensely to the performance of formal organizations. For example, organizations buy raw farm produce from middlemen who buy from informal farmers. The relationship that exists between these actors, informal producers, middlemen, and formal organizations is structural and they depend on each other for performance. In the context of this study, rural women farmers in Nasarawa State are informal producers who make the produce available for middlemen (wholesalers) that sell to formal organizations and this has contributed to the economic development of the entire Nigerian society. The centrality of this theory to this study is underpinned by the fact that there is a structural relationship between the farmers, middlemen, and the formal organizations which enhances the availability of agricultural produce for consumption and the economic performance of Nigeria in which the role of women in this regard cannot be overemphasised. However, benefits emanating from the hard work of women go to the middlemen in the structural chain of production who take advantage of the poor infrastructural amenities such as bad roads, low adoption of technological equipment, illiteracy, poor storage facilities, and lack of unity among the farmers to exploit the farmers and take advantage of the consumers. In the final analysis, women who form a reasonable proportion of this category live in poverty and marginalised economic settings.

Assessing Women and the Informal Agricultural Sector in Nasarawa State

Nigerian women have been supportive of the development of their various communities. In the South-West and South-Eastern parts of Nigeria, the Yoruba and Igbo women are active participants in formal and informal trade. Apart from this craft, women in these regions have contributed greatly to the informal agricultural sector in terms of supplying raw materials to the agro-industrial and manufacturing sectors. They also supply agricultural food products to their various communities and the entire nation at large, while providing employment opportunities, income

generation, and serving as contributors to foreign exchange earnings through exports.⁴⁶ Similar and remarkable contributions have been made by women in Nasarawa State in the informal agricultural sector. Although, there is a great dearth of statistics to justify this position. However, evidence gleaned from oral interviews has justified that women in Nasarawa state have played crucial roles in this sector by working on agricultural farms (weeding, ploughing, fertilizing, and harvesting), storing, processing, and have contributed to other supplementary economic ventures that sustain their families. Zaynab Usman⁴⁷ in a personal conversation with the researcher(s) established that:

She has been actively involved in farming for eighteen years, dedicating eight to ten hours per day; she still needs to augment what she gets ...in making soap which she does at home during weekends. Some aspects of her farming activities include land clearing and weeding... to produce food for household consumption, to earn income from the sale of crops, and to supplement income with a sense of satisfaction. As much as she would love to help with her farm, she can only afford two hands that help out with her harvest surplus though not on every harvest. From harvesting, she heads to her storage house to keep her produce of rice and benny seed. Most times, when luck smiles at her, she makes an average of six to eight bags of rice at 10kg per bag and four bags (large) at 10kg per bag... Moreso, as a small-scale agricultural trader, she engages in sales, marketing, and distribution of rice and soda soap once a month. Although she makes five to six bags, she finds herself buying from others and reselling when she does not have enough; the same also occurs with her sale of soda soap which she produces less.

Another woman with a similar experience is Juliana Gambo⁴⁸ who disclosed to the researcher(s) thus:

She and her husband make sure that twenty percent of the household income comes from agricultural activities of processing and trading of farm produce which they have been actively involved in for the past eleven to fifteen years dedicating over eleven hours per day to it, just so they can pay up tax from their income. As a subsistence processor, she engages in the packaging of fresh produce and the making of bread and biscuit once a month for household consumption, to earn income, to supplement income, and other essentials which at the moment is at a very satisfied level as she engages in the processing activity of cassava (gari) with forty to forty-three large sacks. This enables her to employ about eight to ten hands to help out as she has a steady supply of farm produce. More so, as a medium-scale agricultural trader, she engages in packing and packaging once a month, transportation of produce

once a week, and sale, marketing, and distribution of gari and cassava peels once a month.

From the above testimonies, it is clear that women are active participants in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa State in the production of food and services. Their contributions in this regard provide succour to their various families in terms of food supply, and general economic sustenance. Table 2, therefore, succinctly captures evidence-based documentation of these facts.

Table 2: Women's Contributory Roles in the Informal Agricultural Sector in Nasarawa State

S/N	Name	Level of Edu.	Age	Type of Farm	Yield per year (100kg)	No. of Hectares on Farm	Family Size	Other Business	Income Per Month (Naira)	Income from agric. in %	Pay Taxes	Govt. Loans
1	Zaynah Usman	Primary	30-39	Rice	6-8 bags	10 hrs	6	Storage, processing	51-100	Nil	No	No
2	Bilkisu Musa	Primary	20-29	Cassava, Rice, Groundnut	18 bags of rice, 11 bags of groundnut, 19 bags of Maize	8-10 hrs	16-20	Trading, processing of groundnut, Rice, and maize	101-200	Nil	No	No
3	Juliana Gumbo	Primary	40-49	Cassava	41 bags of Garri, 35 bags of cassava peels	11 hrs	9	Processing of Garri, trading, etc	101-200	20%	Yes	No
4	Ladi Galatu	None	30-39	Commercial Agriculture processor	Nil	6-8 hrs	16	Packing of produce, sale, and marketing activities	51-100	21-40%	Yes	No
5	Aweyi Osweyi	None	60-70	Cassava, Maize, yam, Soy, Beans, and Corn	5 bags of maize, 100 tubers of yam, 8 bags of corn, 3 tubers of soybeans	6-8 hrs	9	Trading and Processing of Cassava	101-200	Nil	Yes	Yes
6	Faida Muhammad Oyigbo	None	30-39	Maize, Rice, Millet, Guinea-Corn	Nil	3-10 hrs	8	Trading and processing of agric. goods	51-100	61-80%	Yes	No
7	Majima Ladi	None	30-39	Maize, Guinea-Corn, Groundnut	5 bags of maize, 3 bags of guinea corn, 5 bags of rice, 7 bags of groundnut	3-4 hrs	7	Trading, and processing of maize, groundnut, and Guinea-corn	101-200	40-61%	Yes	No
8	Fatin Ruwa	Sec.	30-39	Maize, beans, Rice, Cassava	4 bags of maize, 4 bags of beans, 3 bags of rice, 6-8 bags of Garri (per month), 8-10 bags of flour	6-8 hrs	5-10	Processing for household consumption	50	41-60%	Yes	No
9	Mariam Wazirifor	Sec.	20-29	Small Scale Agriculture	Nil	3-5 hrs	4	Processing and packaging of groundnut oil, Kuli-kuli	51-100	80%	No	No
10	Faida Galadima	Primary	30-39	Garden Egg, Pumpkin	Nil	3-5 hrs	11-15	Trading in agricultural goods	101-200	Nil	No	No
11	Ashraf Adoka	None	20-29	Millet, Guinea-Corn, Maize	4 bags of maize, 5 bags of millet, 6 bags of guinea corn	3-5 hrs	4	Trading in agricultural goods	51-100	21-40%	Yes	No
12	Zainab Ali	Primary	60	Maize, Rice, Cassava, and groundnut	Nil	3-5 hrs	16-20	Storage and sale of agricultural produce	50	0-20	No	No
13	Aline Bala Rim Ulu	None	40-49	Small size agric. farms	Nil	3-5 hrs	6	Processing of agricultural produce	50	20	Yes	No

14	Christiana Moses	None	50-59	Maize, millet, groundnut, yam, melon, Cassava	4-5 bags of melon, 8-9 bags of groundnut, 3-4 bags of rice, and 10-11 bags of maize (per month)	8-10 hrs	20	Agriculture processing	100-200	Nil	No	No
15	Fina Malsala	Primary	40-49	Cassava, maize, beans, millet	4 bags of Garri, 4 bags of maize, 3 bags of beans, 2 bags of millet	3-5 hrs	3-10	Trading and agriculture processing	51-100	Nil	Yes	No

Source: Fieldwork Survey by the Researchers, July 2017.

The above table shows the active participation of women in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa State in the year 2017. The table is not comprehensive but it has been able to illustrate how diligent and committed women are in terms of agricultural productivity in Nasarawa State. The table portrays the level of educational backwardness of women in this area. This is because most of these women are illiterate, while insignificant numbers of them are with formal education at the elementary level thus becoming unfit in the formal sectors of the Nigerian economy. The table also demonstrated that Women in Nasarawa state committed a good number of hours working on small agricultural farms with few members of their families. Although, others engaged the assistance of labourers who are paid at the end of their contracts. On their farms, they carried such functions as weeding, harvesting, packing, and processing of farm produce. Some of the women were breadwinners of their various families, while others assisted their husbands on the farms for sustenance. Furthermore, the table demonstrated that between 50-200 dollars are been made as income by these women, while a good percentage of this income comes from agricultural production and processing. It is observed that most of these women could not pay their taxes partly because of the distance the government has created from local people at the grassroots. Thus, this justifies why the government did not adequately cater to social amenities nor provide this category of farmers with financial assistance in the form of loans to expand their agricultural farms.

Besides, women keep and look over livestock like cattle, sheep, goats, swine, and poultry. Birds for instance serve as soup for the family and also provide a good source of delicacy for visitors. Reinforcing this position, Ayoade, Ibrahim, and Ibrahim⁴⁹ averred that:

Women generally contribute more labour inputs in areas of feeding, managing vulnerable animals (calves, small ruminants, and sick, injured, and pregnant animals) cleaning barns, dairy-related activities, (milking, butter, and cheese making) transportation of farm manure and sale of milk and its products than men and children. Men own

most of the livestock species and put up for sale animals and meat. Women own a small proportion of the large animals as well as chickens and are milk managers in the smallholder system.

Although, women are fully responsible for the keeping of poultry in most African societies but also in certain circumstances hold and manage large livestock. This is obvious, especially in circumstances whereby women serve as the breadwinner in the family. Table 3 buttresses this argument better.

Table 3: Women and Livestock Keeping in Nasarawa State

S/N	Livestock	Frequency	Percentages	Ranks
1	Cattle	18	8.26	4 th
2	Sheep	37	17.0	3 rd
3	Goat	55	25.2	2 nd
4	Swine	18	8.26	4 th
5	Poultry	90	41.3	1 st

Source: Ayoade, J.A., Ibrahim, H.I, and Ibrahim, H.Y. (2009). 'Analysis of women's involvement in livestock production in the Lafia area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria, *Livestock Research for Rural Development* Vol. 21, No. 12, p.4.

The above table demonstrates that women also participated in livestock production in Nasarawa State. They mainly keep poultry, goats, sheep, and swine for domestic consumption and sale. While, women who inherited the wealth of their deceased husbands, or live independently as breadwinners in their families keep cattle on small and larger scales. Despite these contributions, women are exploited even in the chain of agriculture production by men. The government also compounded this problem with weak agricultural policies. This in the final analysis makes the feminisation hypothesis a defeated theoretical construct. The proceeding section accesses some of the challenges that impede the viability of women in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa State.

Constraints to Women in the Informal Agricultural Production in Nasarawa State

Several constraints have been registered for the ineffective performance of women in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa State. One of these problems is the lack of improved seeds, and this challenge stems basically from low rates of certified seed available in the Nigerian state⁵⁰. It is therefore estimated that about 5 to 10 percent of Nigerian farmers have access to improved seed while a large percentage of farmers do not. Corroborating this fact, it is estimated that there was about 7.2 percent of certified maize, 4.8 percent of certified rice, 2 percent of certified cowpea, 1.8 percent of certified wheat, and 1.7 percent of certified sorghum planted in 2011 and 2012 in the entire country. This is grossly inadequate

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considering the number of farmers who need such seeds in the country. On this note, Onyekpere and Bako⁵¹ lamented 'that Nigerian farmers would require an estimated 1 million metric tons of improved seeds to cover each of these cereals and pulses, whereas the formal commercial seed industry currently supplies just 20,000 to 50,000 tons of seed annually covering all crops'. Corroborating the above information with the fieldwork report, Victoria Uchuman⁵² claimed not to have access to either improved grains or extension services since she has been working on her farm for the past 26 years. This position was a general opinion held by most women interacted with in the course of this study.

Other similar problems of farm inputs included lack of fertilizer hence the Fertiliser Blending Plant, Lafia, the National Fertiliser Company of Nigeria (NAFCON) established in 1988, and the Federal Super Phosphate Fertiliser Company (FSFC) established in 1976 are unable to meet up with the demand of farmers as a result of poor management despite the abundance of phosphate and natural gas in Nigeria.⁵³ World Bank establishes that fertiliser consumption in Nigeria is as low as 600,000-700,000 tons annually compared to the potential market size of about 10-12 million tons. While the government tries to cushion the effects of fertiliser hikes by subsidizing the product only 11-30% reaches the poor farmers nationwide. In Nasarawa State for instance, in 2021 Governor Abdullahi Sule bought and distributed 38 trailers of fertilizer to farmers at the cost of N4,500 per bag, and the fertilizers were distributed to all the 13 local governments and 18 development areas in the state.⁵⁴ In 2022 as well, the Governor also inaugurated the sale of 1,035 metric tons of NPK fertilizer to farmers in the state at a subsidized rate of 10,000 Naira.⁵⁵ Although, because of diversion most women in this sector were unable to access it. The implication is that there is a low level of fertiliser application by women in the state which stood at 13 kgs per ha, or just about 6 kgs per ha in terms of nutrient content.⁵⁶

Another constraint women grapple with in this regard is the lack of farm mechanisation like tractors. For instance, the average of 1,000 tractors that Nigeria imports annually is less than adequate to mechanize Nigerian agriculture. Chemicals like herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, and so forth are a challenge as well. In a personal conversation with Magaji Mariam⁵⁷, she admitted not having access to mechanized farming methods. However, on an average level, produce five large bags of Mellon at 100kg each, three large bags of maize, three pick-up vans of cassava, and seven large bags of groundnut at 100kg each. Other women like Murjanatu Sabo,⁵⁸ Farin Ruwa⁵⁹ and so forth shared a similar experience of not having access to farm mechanisation. It should be noted at this juncture that tractor imports are themselves duty-free; however, high tariffs are charged on imported spare parts, leaving tractors with a short average life span of about six years – compared to other countries in which tractor life spans can be as long as 15 years. Tractors in Nigeria operate an estimated 507 to 682 hours per year, again very few compared to the

1,500 to 2,000 engine hours recorded in other countries. These factors among others, therefore, accounted for the lack of agricultural mechanisation in the state.

Accessibility of credits or loans for the acquisition of farm inputs poses another daunting challenge. Most women who have found themselves in the informal agricultural sector are illiterate and cannot avail themselves of credit facilities. Some of these loans are given collectively to farmer's organisations but the uninformed women are not in such farmers' organisations. Although there existed some women farmers organisation in Nasarawa state like the State Chapter of Small Scale Women Farmers Organisation in Nigeria (SWOFON), which was established in 2014.⁶⁰ The SWOFON Nasarawa State chapter has about 14,283 individual women farmers registered in the State while 1,217 cooperative groups are also registered. However, SWOFON Nasarawa faces several challenges that threaten its continued existence in the State. The protracted farmer-herder crises between 2014 and 2022 left many local farmers displaced, leading to migration while the less fortunate were killed. Women were also killed during the Ombatse conflict (2011 – 2015). As a result of these, the women farmers could no longer carry out farming activities due to the fear of death, kidnap, and torment of rape while on their farms. Another challenge the group grappled with was the lack of support from the government. The recent COVID-19 pandemic further marginalised the organization. Therefore, the inability of women in Nasarawa state to have a viable farmers association that could translate into gaining benefits from the government and international bodies, as well as projecting their cause impedes development in the informal agricultural sector.

Government Support for Women in the Agricultural Sector in Nasarawa State

The Nigerian government over the years implemented agricultural programmes and policies that could enhance women's participation and productivity. One of these programmes is the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). ADP is a major channel used for ensuring the availability of agricultural Information to farmers whether rural or urban; typically referred to as extension service.⁶¹ Agriculture extension service has different phases including the Women in Agriculture section; aimed at meeting the information needs of farm women. From fieldwork research records, women in Nasarawa state have not adequately benefited from this programme hence most of the women interviewed claimed ignorance of agriculture extension service. For instance, Yakubu Maryam⁶² who resided in Awe LGA as a farmer and sells in Tunga Market lamented that:

I have never obtained credit for my agricultural activity and have no access to it. I am not aware of the extension services in my area nor have I received agricultural inputs from the government or any organization. I would love to receive regular agricultural training to improve my farming and trading skills.

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Similarly, Muiratu Dalhatu,⁶³ claimed never to have access to agriculture extension service because of their distance location to her place of residence. Nevertheless, for extension service to work in Nasarawa state, the Nigerian government must first understand what farm women's information needs are and then grow a dissemination and management strategy towards actualising this policy.

Over the years, the Nigerian government's drive for enhanced inclusive agricultural production led to the formation of such agricultural policies like Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise (LIFE) which was designed in response to expanding livelihood options for women and youth in the communities in 2016.⁶⁴ According to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD)⁶⁵, LIFE focuses on:

The Specific target is to directly empower approximately 3,000,000 rural youths and women in on-farm and off-farm value chains, produce about 14,000,000 metric tons of food across the 774 Local Government Areas nationwide from 2016 to 2019 focusing on key national commodities while reducing rural food wastage by 20% through the establishment of rural cottage industries and organized link to competitive markets.

The expected outcome of LIFE was:

To establish at least 150,000 LIFE cooperatives nationwide under Crops, Live Stock, and Fishery Value Chain groups using a cooperative and cluster model, focusing on the areas of production, agro-processing/value addition, and services. To reach out to about 85% of the 150,000 LIFE cooperatives identified nationwide within three years. Approximately 1,995,500 youth and 997,500 women will be directly reached with agricultural resources for enhanced productivity. Establish and operate up to 1,500 cottage industries in the country within the program life span to reduce product wastage, and improve shelf life and value while enhancing profitability (minimum of 1 per Local Government Area) through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) Platform. An estimated 14,000,000 Metric tons of foods will be added to national production through the LIFE program.⁶⁶

Although, the impact of this programme has not been felt in Nasarawa State. LIFE has taken off in those states of Niger Delta but neglected states in Central Nigeria where the majority of women are engaged in agriculture production. According to the Nasarawa Economic Development Strategy (NEEDs)⁶⁷, as of 2019, Nasarawa State had an unemployment rate of 27.4% (27th highest in the country) and an underemployment rate of 24.3%. Besides, the state remains heavily under-industrialised and several agro-allied industries or projects remain comatose, including the Sesame seed cleaning plant.

The 'Anchor Borrowers Programme' (ABP) was launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2017 to facilitate the interface between smallholder farmers (mostly women) and agro-processors (described as anchors). The small-holder farmers supply their products to the agro-processor (anchors) who pay the cash equivalent to the farmers' accounts.⁶⁸ The programme also targeted to provide loans to farmers to invest in their farms and pay back at harvesting time. In Nasarawa State, farmers who produced grains benefited much from this programme. The ABP faces the daunting challenges of non-payment of loans by farmers.⁶⁹ Arising from this particular challenge, farmers were expected to make an initial deposit of 20% of what they intended to collect as loans in the programme before accessing their farm inputs. This had a lot of negative implications, for instance, many women in informal agriculture did not have the finance to deposit to acquire farm inputs.

Other policies and programmes adopted by the Nigerian government to boost agricultural production including Nasarawa State are; the Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016 – 2020), with emphasis on women and gender as one of its key pillars.⁷⁰ In 2018, the Nigerian Government launched the 'Nigeria for Women Project' with support from the World Bank. The project focuses on creating an enabling environment for women to overcome institutional failures (including market) and barriers to enhance productive livelihoods and socioeconomic advancement, through the formation and strengthening of Women Affinity Groups (WAGs) with a strong livelihood focus to enhance household income. The support to WAGs and livelihoods support to members are being implemented following graduation and a phased approach to ensure beneficiary readiness to access and use resources offered by the project Poverty reduction.⁷¹ In recent times, the Economic Sustainability Plan (2020-2021) focused on laying a foundation for rapid agricultural development using comparative advantage exploration, climate change adaptation, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, agro-enterprise promotion, and market access linkages. As a result, massive investments were attracted into agriculture making Nigeria closer to self-sufficiency, particularly in rice and poultry production.⁷² However, the impacts of these programmes have not been so much felt by women in Nasarawa as found in the course of fieldwork study documented in Table 2.

There is also the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF), initiated by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). ACGSF is expected to provide 75% of loans to farmers in Nasarawa state including women. The scheme is designed to enable farmers to collect loans through designated commercial banks hence they serve as guarantors. Loans accessed by farmers through this scheme from 2015 and 2020 are captured in Table 4.

Table 4: Nasarawa State Beneficiaries of CBN Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF) Disaggregated by Gender, 2015-2020

Year	Male		Female		Total	
	Number of beneficiaries	Amount	Number of beneficiaries	Amount	Number of beneficiaries	Amount
2020(Jan - Dec)	102	16,930,000	37	6,360,000	139	23,290,000
2019	--	--	--	--	405	47,420,000
2018	360	39,610,000	112	11,290,000	472	50,900,000
2017	340	47,130,000	176	22,200,000	516	69,330,000
2016	592	85,480,000	232	29,740,000	824	115,220,000
2015	--	--	--	--	1,211	328,564,000
Total	1,394	189,150,000	557	69,590,000		

Source: CBN Website on Agriculture Credit Guarantee Scheme⁷³ and CBN Yearly Statistical Bulletin 2015-2019⁷⁴

From the above table, a few women totalling 557 have accessed agricultural loans through this scheme within the span of six years (2015-2020), representing 28.5 percent, while men constituted the significant beneficiaries with 71.5 percent. The implication is that illiteracy accounted for this problem hence most women who found themselves in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa State are backward in terms of formal education as captured in Table 2. Therefore, there is every need for special measures to be taken to target women accessing the Scheme. This is because women constituted a significant number of agricultural production in the state.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The foregoing analysis has established the centrality of women in the informal agricultural sector in Nasarawa state. Women engage in agricultural production, processing, and marketing, and constitute the majority group in the informal agricultural sphere in the state. Their contributions to the informal agricultural sector have enhanced food security and availability of agricultural products for agro-allied industries. Sadly, women constituted the bulk of the poor and disadvantaged group in the state despite these contributions. This is because the socioeconomic structures and cultural contexts of African societies place women in a disadvantageous position. In Nasarawa State, women are marginalised in terms of landholding and inheritance and this has constituted a serious challenge in agricultural production. These problems have been compounded by illiteracy hence most women in the informal agricultural sector have not acquired Western

education. The lack of formal education hinders women in the state from having access to government policies and programmes. Besides these disadvantages, the government's weak policies and implementation strategies affected women in informal agricultural settings. This explains and justifies the paucity of agricultural extension services, agricultural mechanisation, and farm inputs like improved seedlings, fertiliser, insecticides, herbicides, and so forth.

Arising from the foregoing, this study made the following recommendations. First, the state government should endeavour to put in place an inclusive customary landholding law that guarantees women ownership and inheritance of family lands. This is because a significant number of women found in the informal agricultural sector exist on land but have access to none and this hinders their productivity and income viability. Besides, Nigeria as a member of several international organisations like the United Nations, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, *et cetera* has domesticated several international treaties that emphasized gender equality; Nasarawa State should not be an exception. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁷⁵ for instance, article 14 categorically stated that:

States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

Reinforcing this debate, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in Article 15⁷⁶ emphasises that:

States Parties shall ensure that women have the right to nutritious and adequate food. In this regard, they shall take appropriate measures to (a) provide women with access to clean drinking water, sources of domestic fuel, land, and the means of producing nutritious food; (b) establish adequate systems of supply and storage to ensure food security.

Besides, 5 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on this point of reference. Specifically, Target 1.4⁷⁷ of Goal 1 states:

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services, including microfinance

These are clear justifications to re-evaluate the system of customarily land holding in Nigeria that is not favourable to womenfolk.

Second, the government should redirect its attention to eliminating illiteracy among women in the state because education is a major key to social and economic empowerment. Without requisite formal education, women cannot be empowered even when government policies and programmes in agricultural sectors are available. This is obvious in Table 4 above where only a few women access the CBN Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund from 2015 and 2020 in the state. And lastly, there is a need for the government to put in place viable mechanisms for actualising agricultural programmes like farmers' extension services, and farm inputs for women in this sector.

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CRISES OF FEDERALISM AND NATION-BUILDING IN POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper critically probes the intricate relationship between the problematic federal system of government in post-colonial Nigeria and her nation-building quagmire. This is because the intersection between Nigeria's defective federal structure and nation-building has been a major subject of intellectual debates, discussions and controversies in recent times. Arising from these debates and controversies are the various calls for the reorganization or restructuring of the country's political system. This paper is a contribution to the ongoing debates through the lens of history. The paper utilises secondary sources of data and subjects them to analyses. The paper found that the root of the problems of federalism in Nigeria can be traced to the dynamics of colonial rule and policies. The paper also reveals that issues of over-centralization of power, unfair revenue-sharing formula and the lack of autonomy for local government councils are the major impediments to the realization of true federalism in Nigeria. It argues that a combination of these critical issues has produced a gross centrifugal impact on the country's nation-building process. The paper concludes that Nigeria only experienced a true federal system from 1954 to 1966 and that ever since then, the country has been a federation without federalism.

Keywords: Federalism, nation-building, colonial rule, restructuring and autonomy

Introduction

It has been argued that the adoption of federalism is compelled and propelled by the desire to promote national integration and nation-building efforts in pluralistic societies.¹ In this sense, federalism is seen as an effective political method or strategy for achieving and preserving both integration and stability in deeply divided societies. It is not only democratic, complete with the institutionalization of most essential ingredients; it is creative and flexible enough to incorporate several accommodation formulas.² In short, it is considered the most appropriate framework for governing multi-ethnic societies.³ It is a mark of the truth of this assertion that all

known federations today, including those that have formally abrogated their federal constitutions like Cameroon and Uganda, are multi-ethnic.⁴ In the same vein, Nathan Glazer opines that "to couple federalism and ethnicity immediately suggests one similar solution to the problem of a state containing several ethnic groups varying in language, culture and religion."⁵

Without mincing a word, federalism is a veritable tool of national integration as it accommodates diversity while attempting unity in diversity. As Duchacek puts it, the aim of the federal constitution is an institutionalized balance between national unity and subnational diversity.⁶ To this extent, federalism is a cure for micro-nationalism.⁷ For where, federalism is an appropriate form of government to offer to communities or states of distinct, differing nationality who wish to form a common government and to behave as one people for some purposes but wish to remain independent and, in particular, to retain their nationality in all other aspects.⁸ Thus, federalism is reputed to be an effective political-cum-constitutional design for managing complex governmental problems usually associated with ethnic and cultural diversity.⁹ It is against this background that in Nigeria, federalism offers a reasonable alternative with inherent prospects of accommodating the ethno-linguistic and religious diversities.

Indeed, some of the states that practice this political arrangement have derived immeasurable benefits that have manifested in the political, economic and social development of such entities. As a system, federalism has helped a lot in stabilizing the politics and economy of the United States, Canada, Australia, India and Belgium. Federalism promotes economic and political stability in those countries by pooling public resources together and disseminating them in the form of intergovernmental transfers and grants to subnational governments.¹⁰ The nations that benefited immensely from the practice of federalism have been able to attain this enviable height because the practice of federalism in those countries follows stringently the essential principles and tenets of fiscal federal arrangement. On the contrary, however, the Nigerian experience is far from quality results. The reason is not farfetched; Nigeria is awkwardly operating a federal system and this has made frictions and clashes possible which are currently posing a threat to nation-building in the country. However, despite the integrative merits of the federal system of government, it has failed to promote national integration and the nation-building in the Nigerian polity. Indeed, since 1954 when Nigeria formally embraced federalism, the country has been wallowing from one problem to the other, thereby undermining national integration and nation-building process. Put differently, the practice of federalism in Nigeria has been bedeviled by a myriad of problems and burning issues since it was introduced by the Lyttleton Constitution in 1954. This is why E.N. Blessing contended that Nigeria's federalist concept has been distorted, consequently impacting negatively on her national development; political stability, economic growth and nation-building process.¹¹

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Undoubtedly, the practice of federalism in contemporary Nigeria has received some attention from scholars in the social sciences and humanities. Some of these scholarly works have scanned aspects of the evolution, development and issues of federalism in Nigeria.¹² However, the intricate relationship between the dynamics of federalism and nation-building in Nigeria has not been adequately examined especially from a historical perspective. This is the gap the study attempts to fill. The paper is structured into five dimensional segments. The first part is the introduction, followed by the conceptualization of basic concepts such as the concept of federalism and nation-building. Part three interrogates the evolution of Nigerian federalism. The fourth segment scrutinizes the contentious issues in Nigeria's federal arrangement and the challenges they pose for nation-building and national stability. Part five is the conclusion.

Federalism and Nation-Building: Conceptual Analyses

Arowolo has offered the etymological conception of the word 'federalism', that it is a concept derived from the Latin word *foedus*, meaning 'covenant'.¹³ It is a political concept that defines a situation which a group of members are bound together by a covenant with a governing representative. Two schools of thought offer some explanations on the concept and nature of federalism. The orthodox school led by Wheare sees federalism as a condition and the revisionist school led by Friedrich sees it as a process. It is agreed that discussions on contemporary federalism seem to have started with K.C. Wheare.¹⁴ Wheare conceptualizes federalism as "the method of dividing powers so that federal and regional governments within a sphere, co-operate and are independent".¹⁵ Wheare sees federalism as a constitutional arrangement which divides the lawmaking powers and functions between two levels of government in such a way that each within its respective spheres of jurisdiction and competence is independent and coordinated. Odion avers that once a country can satisfy these conditions, such a country is said to practice federalism.¹⁶ But to what extent can Nigeria be labelled a federal state given the conditions above? In other words, is Nigeria practising federalism given Wheare's conditions? This question will be answered in the course of our analyses. It should, however, be noted that Wheare's conceptual framework of federalism has been subjected to criticisms by other commentators for being legalistic, formal, rigid, euro-centric and idealistic. But despite these criticisms, Wheare's theory continues to serve as the springboard for subsequent analyses of federalism.

The second school of thought led by Friedrich picks some inadequacies in Wheare's conceptual analyses, pontificating that the concept is best described as "a process of federalising".¹⁷ In an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of Wheare, Friedrich subscribes to a rather broad view of federalism and argue that federalism is a process rather than a design. He argued that federalism should be seen as a process by which unity and diversity are politically organized and this process, like all political

phenomena, includes persons, institutions and ideas. What this implies is that sociological factors such as diversity in culture, religion, ethnicity, race etc. that make federalism important in the first place cannot be sacrificed on the altar of purely constitutional and legal connotations. Friedrich asserts that federalism is dynamic and that the federal instrumentalities can be found in several forms of political systems, ranging from centralized to decentralized systems.¹⁸ He affirmed that studies in contemporary times sort the dynamics of federalism not within its legal construct or constitutional document, but in the social forces that link or underline the political process.

Be that as it may, a critical look at Friedrich's conceptual explanation would reveal that the Nigerian type of federalism coincides with this definition since the government from 1967 has tried to create states and local governments for people of identical cultural and social backgrounds. Thus, from the civil war period in 1967 to 2000 the government has engaged in the creation of states and local governments for several reasons. The primary justification for state creation in contemporary Nigeria is hinged on the need to bring government nearer to the people and promote even development.

Based on the conceptual explanations given by the two schools of thought above, certain points are crystal clear. First, is that federalism is a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constitutional political units (like states or provinces). In other words, a federal system is one in which the powers of government are divided between a central government and regional governments of some kind, with each level having some independence of action in exercising their powers. Secondly, constitutional specification is the starting point of any federal arrangement. Thirdly, social, political and cultural factors determine and affect the nature of any federal system. Finally, as a system, it aims at promoting unity in diversity and has to be worked upon by the country to reflect economic, social, cultural and historical reality.

As regards the concept of nation-building, Eme and Onyinshi have noted that nation-building is synonymous with national integration.¹⁹ They contended that National integration refers to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. According to Deutsch and Foltz, nation-building refers to the efforts of newly independent nations, notably the nations of Africa but also in the Balkans, to reshape territories that had been carved out by colonial powers or Empires without regard to ethnic, religious, or other boundaries.²⁰ Hippler sees nation-building as a process of socio-political development which allows loosely knitted communities to become a common society with a nation-state corresponding to it.

Hippler further noted that nation-building connotes the different dimensions through which diverse segment of society is fused into a functional whole.²¹ It has within it economic integration, cultural integration, political centralisation,

bureaucratic control and democratization and establishment of common citizenship.²² According to Hippler, nation-building consists of three essential elements namely: ideology, integration of society and a functional state apparatus. Summarily put, nation-building can be conceptualized as the process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller ethnic groups, villages or petty principalities to the larger central political system. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run.²³ Nation-building also includes efforts to promote institutions which will provide for economic well-being and social equity.²⁴

A Historical Overview of Federalism in Nigeria

The evolution and development of Nigerian federalism dates back to the period of colonial rule. Odojin has divided the evolution of Nigerian federalism into four (4) phases. According to him, the first phase started in 1900 and ended in 1946. This phase is the period of informal 'colonial federalism' because there was no constitutional provision recognizing the colonial entity called Nigeria as a federation.²⁵ It has been observed that with the amalgamation of 1914, governmental power that existed in Nigeria started to be shared between the central government headed by the Governor-General and the governments of the then Northern and Southern Protectorates headed by the lieutenant Governors. In fact, with the existence and recognition of the two autonomous parts of Northern and Southern provinces, the administrative system of Nigeria somehow finds the outlook of a federation. The further division of the country into three regions by the Governor of Nigeria Sir Authur Richards under the Richards Constitution of 1946 gave more support to the emergence of Nigerian federalism.²⁶ During this period, the colonial government and their representatives (governors) had powers – political, administrative fiscal, and so on, to veto any decision-making and political actions affecting the colonial territory.

The second phase (1946-1967) has been regarded as the era of 'transitional federalism' when the country constitutionally gained recognition as a federation under the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. During this period, the country was divided into three regions – the North, South and East by the Richard constitution. Through decentralization, political power was very much resident in the regional government such that each region pursued policies and programs that were inimical to the corporate existence of Nigeria.²⁷ Some of the policies of the regional governments at this period constituted a serious threat to nation-building in Nigeria as the seed of discord continued to germinate.

The third phase (1967-1999) was the period of 'federal centralization' of power. During this period, the military intervened in the political process, and considering the precariousness of federalism in Nigeria decided to gravitate power to the center to effectively govern the federation, exploit distribute resources generated

within the component units to the central government.²⁸ The outbreak of the Civil War (1967-1970) further motivated the federal government to centralize power even more.²⁹ By 1979, the military handed power to civil authority. However, the military once again truncated democracy in 1983 and continued to rule until 1999, when they exited from power. State and local government creation was another prominent feature of this period. The first set of states was created in 1967, numbering 12 and by 1976, another seven states were added bringing the total to 19 within a period of nine years. By 1989, it became a federation of 21 states, increasing to 30 by 1991 and by 1996 it had subdivided to become a federation of 36 states.³⁰ In addition, the creation of more states has always been accompanied by the creation of additional Local Governments Areas. Between 1976 and the advent of the fourth republic, the number of local government councils in the country soared from 301 to 774.

Odojin argues that the fourth phase (1999-date) is the period of 'contested federalism'. Odojin opined that though Nigeria has returned to civil rule, ethnic nationalities are contesting the practice of federalism over a several issues, which include among others, marginality question by the ethnic minorities, religious bigotry, movement for self-determination, power-sharing formula, resource control, resources allocation and distribution, political recognition and participation in the affairs of the federal state.³¹ This phase, which has given birth to contestations and ungoverned spaces, has also led to several moderations to enable the consolidation of democracy and federalism.³²

Suffice it to state that in the process of federal construction in Nigeria, the dominant interest of Britain played out virulently. Indeed, the divide and rule policy of the British colonial administration was a primary factor that propelled the adoption of this system. The British policy of divide and rule was a deliberate attempt to keep Nigeria weak and decentralized. The British considered unity among the various ethnic groups as a threat to their imperialistic interest. From the point of the amalgamation of 1914 up to the period of independence, the colonialists in many instances created imbalances, particularly in the federal structure of the country to favor their surrogates in Northern Nigeria. According to Lenshie and Henry, the physical mass of the Northern region attests to this, which also gave it a headstand in terms of population.³³ With the power of population, Northern Nigeria throughout the first republic (1963-1966) dominated the political landscape of Nigeria. Contemporary realities still attest to this fact that Northern Nigeria is a force in deciding the wave of governance in the country whether at the legislative or the executive level.

Impediments to Federalism and Consequences on Nation-Building in Nigeria

Constitutionally, Nigeria is a federation, but in practice, and with the assumption of power by successive military administrations, the constitution has always been suspended and the country ruled more or less like a unitary state.³⁴ The imposition of a centralized unitary system on a federal structure under successive

military administrations partly explains Nigeria's experience of poor fiscal management and low economic performance which over the years had adversely inhibited the true practice of fiscal federalism.³⁵ Nevertheless, the issues in Nigerian federalism are many. What are these issues and how do they affect nation-building in Nigeria? The issues include over-centralization of power at the center, revenue sharing formula among the tiers of government; state and local governments creation, as well as resource control and power sharing.

To start with, one major issue in Nigerian federalism that has continued to pose a serious threat to nation-building in the country has to do with the structural imbalance inherent in the Nigerian system. As noted earlier from the point of amalgamation up to the period of independence, the colonialists in many instances created these structural imbalances, particularly in the federal structure of the country to favour Northern Nigeria. For instance, the 1951 Macpherson Constitution created a central legislature which had 136 elected representatives and of which the Northern region alone had 68 members, thereby, making it possible for the North to swallow other regions put together or hold them to ransom.³⁶ This structural imbalance was retained by post-independence governments. The implication of this on nation-building is that it continues to generate fear of domination among various groups in the country, most especially the minority ones. This fear of domination was one of the factors responsible for military interventions in the early years of independence and the outbreak of the Civil War between 1967 and 1970, which nearly tore Nigeria apart.

Added to the problem of structural imbalance is the menacing issue of revenue allocation and resource control which has been threatening national integration and nation-building in the country. Revenue allocation can be described "as a method of sharing the centrally generated revenue among the different tiers of government and how the amount allocated to a particular tier is shared among the components".³⁷ In Nigeria, there are two components of revenue allocation, viz: vertical sharing and horizontal sharing.³⁸ Vertical sharing is the revenue allocation between the three tiers of government (Federal, State and Local Governments) while horizontal sharing has to do with the allocation of the share of the States and Local governments from the vertical sharing basis among the existing State and Local governments.³⁹

Unfortunately, the revenue allocation formula in Nigeria (both vertical and horizontal), over the years has continued to generate conflicts among the tiers of government on one hand and the six geopolitical zones on the other hand. The failure of the federating units to agree on an acceptable and equitable formula has had serious consequences on nation-building in Nigeria.

The major effect of this issue is the fight to control the centre. Undoubtedly, Nigeria's vertical revenue sharing formula allocates too much money to the Federal government. That has been the main cause of every ethnic group fighting to be in

control of the centre.⁴⁰ The North, South, East, and West, at one point or the other claim it was their turn to be the president of this country.⁴¹ Most ethnic insurgence in this country like Niger Delta Militants, Boko Haram, Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB) are all ethnic reactions to their inability to control the centre at one point or the other.⁴² Indeed, the cumulative repercussions of the issue of revenue allocation and resource control in Nigeria is that it has triggered dangerous rivalries between the central government and the thirty-six state governments over revenue from the country's oil and other natural resources. This has further promoted bitter struggles between interest groups to capture the state and its attendant wealth; and facilitated the emergence of violent ethnic militias, while politicians exploit and exacerbate inter-communal tensions for selfish reasons. Hence, communities throughout the country increasingly feel marginalized and alienated from the Nigerian state. In addition, the huge financial resource at the disposal of the Federal government is the root cause of the high-level corruption at the centre.

Coupled with this is the issue of the quota system and federal character principle which despite their merits for nation-building have continued to threaten the socio-economic advancement of the Nigerian nation. It is widely believed by advocates of the principle that federal character would deeply promote nation-building and national integration, both of which are sized as the panacea for peaceful co-existence. Giving the problems inherent with federalism, federal character principles were introduced along with national integration and nation building as a palliative measure in the 1979 (section 14 subsection 3) and 1999 constitutions respectively. These principles were introduced for the purposes of ensuring ethnic balance. Unfortunately, the federal character principle has been manipulated and channelled to serve the overall interest of the petty bourgeoisies ruling class. Citing Gboyega, Cornelius and Esheya confirmed this by submitting as thus:

Federal character principle is merely an elite ploy which could not materially improve the lot of the down-trodden in whose name it is raised. They constitute corrupt cabals and use ethnic sentiment to cover their ills. They strategically position their few agents in offices who act as political representatives against the set-out goals of the establishment where they work. Besides, it has continued to promote mediocrity on the altar of ethnic balancing.⁴³

Another serious issue in Nigerian federalism that has produced tremendous effects on nation-building is the problem of over-centralization of power. Unlike Switzerland, despite being a very small country, and one of the most decentralized countries in the world, Nigeria's federal system is highly centralized in all its ramifications. On this problem, Coleman observed that "excessive centralization and statism of most developing countries not only means greater vulnerability as a result of unfulfilment of populist expectation, it also means heightened inefficiency". Hence, Nigeria has a strong center and weak states. The states have become

administrative units of the federal government. The federal government pays the piper and is happily dictating the tune to the states. The states are so weak and so generally impoverished that they have no capacity even to negotiate meaningfully with the centre. None of the states as it is now can generate enough internal revenue to execute any appreciable social and economic development. Instead of pillars, the states have become a burden on the federation. Again, the excessive centralization of power in Nigerian federalism has made the centre ineffective and inefficient since there is too much burden on the centre. The ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the central authority is really biting hard on national development and nation-building. For instance, the ineffectiveness of the federal government has manifested in the area of security of lives and properties in the country and this has propelled the call for state policing.

Besides, this phenomenon has also made the contest for political power at the federal level a lot more intense among the different federating units and laid the foundation for many years of crisis and instability. The over-concentration of power at the centre in Nigeria's federal system continues to exacerbate primordial fault lines as one group competes against the other for the purpose of controlling the centre. This has become a very disintegrative factor to managing our diversity as Obiyan argues:

A major factor in group conflict in the country is the quest to control the national purse through the mechanism of state power at the federal level. Given the enormous resources at the centre, therefore, groups do not see any need to concentrate on the sub-national units, as lack of access to federal power makes many of these sub-units unenviable. This in effect, means that even though in law, Nigeria is a federal state, in reality, it does not provide the real basis of a federal state. This situation reduces the effectiveness of federalism in Nigeria to serve as a federal solution to the great diversity in the country.⁴⁴

The creation of states which was a product of the structural imbalances in the federal arrangement of the country has also produced both positive and negative effects on national development and nation-building. One major aim for the creation of more states was the need to minimize or possibly eliminate conflict between different states or regions and also conflicts within each state or region. This is because the major characteristic of the old regions and states was the actual or potential reason for conflict.⁴⁵ The main intra-state conflicts arose because some ethnic nationalities complained of being dominated within the states. The main inter-state conflicts were connected with the demand for the transfer of sections of one region or state to another. Interestingly, grassroot participation and development is increased as a result of state creation. The people at the local level benefited directly from the creation of states they were being dominated within the existing structure.

The creation of new states provides them with greater opportunities for cultural, political and economic development and also the greater scheme of integration into the Nigerian state. Indeed, the creation of states in Nigeria has gone a long way in fostering unity, minimizing conflicts, and bringing government closer to the people, while avoiding the domination of the country by one section of the state by another and ensuring a reasonable level of economic development of all parts.⁴⁶ This does not mean that there have not been complaints about uneven development which has further led to demands for more states. Thus, state creation has positively aided nation-building to an extent.

On the other hand, however, the creation of states has produced negative consequences on nation-building. First, adjustment crises have occurred over the decades in the different stages of state creation, leading to inter-state disagreements and conflicts. As more states are created in Nigeria, more conflicts arise due to feelings of marginalization by certain groups in the state. Besides, the creation of states has given way to statism, which in effect engendered a greater sense of loyalty to one's state of origin than to the Nigerian nation. It is well known that the creation of three regions by Richard's constitution of 1946 engendered regionalism and ethnic jingoism, which became a major bane for national cohesion. However, with the creation of states in the post-independence period, regionalism gave way to statism.

The absence of true federalism has led to the non-viability of many of the created states in Nigeria and this poses a major challenge to nation-building. The issue of lack of autonomy at the state and local government levels impedes the capacity of these component units to boost internally generated revenue, hence, stamping and enhancing their viability. Today, many of the states have become so economically handicapped and non-viable. Statistics indicate that in 2022, only 7 out of the 36 states of the federation were viable while the remaining 29 were relatively insolvent. The viable Nigerian states in 2022 included Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, Kaduna, Kwara, Oyo and Edo. The IGR of the 36 states of the federation totaled N1.8trn in 2022.⁴⁷ Out of this figure, a total of internally generated revenue of N1.5trn from the seven most viable states in 2022, was almost twice the total IGR of 29 states put together that merely generated about N650bn.⁴⁸ The 2023 statistics on the viability of states in Nigeria were not significantly different from those obtained in the previous year. Therefore, most of the states now find it difficult even to pay the salaries of their civil servants and the minimum wage of N30,000 agreed with the Federal Government. Many of the states can be said to be hovering on the brink of bankruptcy. The point being made here is that states are not created due to their propensity to sustain themselves, but rather due to federal government's allocation of resources. This does not conform to the operational tenets of federalism. This, to a large extent, does not encourage positive commercial competition among the States. It will even affect their creativity and productivity because whether they work or not,

the federal government is constitutionally obliged to allocate some funds to the states at the end of every month from the national treasury.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that the practice of federalism in Nigeria is a distortion of true federalism as a political arrangement based on the autonomy of the units of government. This has produced tremendous implications for Nigeria's nation-building efforts since the attainment of independence in 1960. The paper has shown that Nigeria experienced true federalism only between 1954 and 1966, after which it resorted to the practice of what may be aptly described as pseudo-federalism or quasi-federal arrangement. It contends that the non-adoption of fiscal federalism in Nigeria's democratic governance has occasioned numerous abnormalities and absurdities in the areas of Revenue Formula and Allocation, political structure, resource control and human/economic rights. Suffice it to state that if Nigeria desires to practice true federalism, it is expedient that it begins to willingly and genuinely redefine the constitutional framework under which it currently operates so that its federal structure can be greatly enhanced towards a more effective nation-building effort. But this can only be achieved if her leaders allow each level of government to be autonomous and play according to the 'rules' of fiscal federalism.

It should, however, be noted that despite the negative consequences of the issues in Nigerian federalism on nation-building, the existence of quasi-federal arrangement has achieved a great deal in winning for the political system the loyalty and commitment of its subjects. Put differently, despite its shortcomings in Nigeria's nation-building process, defective federal practice has produced some centripetal impact on Nigeria. It has encouraged cooperative practices among the three tiers of government in Nigeria through various mechanisms of interaction. It has also helped in promoting unity in diversity. By fostering democratic pluralism, it expands government on national, state, and local levels, giving people more access to leaders and opportunities to get involved in their government.

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ALMOST A STILLBIRTH: DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF *AJAMI* IN ILORIN EMIRATE¹

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Abstract

As Islam spread around the various cultures of the world, the Arabic alphabet was adapted to writing the various languages of the new non-Arab Muslims, known as *Ajami*. Although Islam has made its presence among the Yoruba since the 17th century, its development was slow and not widespread until the emergence of Ilorin as an emirate in the early nineteenth century. Ilorin became a lighthouse of Islam among the Yoruba. *Ajami* first made its appearance at the end of the nineteenth century in the verses of Sheikh Badamasi and a few others. They also appeared as commentary on texts in the various languages of the early scholars of Ilorin such as a Hausa, Fulfude, Nupe and Yoruba. The birth of *Ajami* (*anjemi*) in Ilorin was almost a stillbirth as it encountered colonialism soon afterwards which disrupted the universal paradigm of Islamic education with the introduction of Western education and the Latin script. This truncated the further development of *Ajami* as a means of knowledge generation, expression and transmission. Nonetheless in the postcolonial period there emerged a few scholars who tried to revive and promote *Ajami* as a medium of knowledge expression. This paper explores the history and development of *Ajami* in Ilorin from the pre-colonial beginning to the postcolonial era. It argues that although colonial encounters truncated the full development of Yoruba *Ajami*, its non-usage by Muslim Yorubas has contributed to its near comatose status. Lack of a standard Yoruba *Ajami* orthography, the tonality of the language and a focus on Roman orthography for Yoruba and standard Arabic for Islamic knowledge has further made the development of *Ajami* difficult. Technology offers a new opportunity for its revival and promotion through ease of usage and recording but without human agency, *Ajami* will remain underutilised and in danger of extinction as a knowledge tool.

Introduction

Communication is an important facet of human relations and for millennia, humans have sought to keep records of their communications in various forms, and from pictographs, hieroglyphs to alphabetical systems of writing. Record keeping is

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important for knowledge generation and transmission and writing systems have always been associated with a higher form of culture. While there are many writing systems throughout the world, some are more widely used across cultures; the Latin and Arabic writing systems have remained some of the most widely used and adapted writing systems found across cultures. The Arabic script in particular has been aided in its widespread due to the influence of Islam. As a system based on sound symbols, it is easily adapted to other cultures with a strong presence of Islam.¹

As a scholastic region, as Islam spread across the globe, its knowledge system also followed, based on Arabic as the language of transmission of knowledge and in the course of this journey, the Arabic alphabet took on new roles as the alphabet of the languages of the various people converted to Islam. The metamorphosis of Arabic into a world language owes its development to the religion of Islam. With the sacred book of Islam written in Arabic, the need to preserve this orally transmitted book in its pure form as it comes into contact with other cultures and tongues led to the refinement and development of the Arabic language, its grammar and its script.² In the centuries of spread and consolidation of Islam across the globe, many cultures adopted the Arabic script to record their languages, usually at the beginning for religious purposes and eventually it can spill into non-religious uses as well.³

The use of Arabic letters to write other languages is referred to as *Ajami*, from the Arabic word (*ajam*) which is a term referring to a non-Arab speaker, which is also an expression of the superiority of Arabic and the Arabs over the *ajam* (non-Arab).⁴ *Ajami* (usually rendered as *Ajemi* or *Anjemi* in Yoruba language) generally develops in communities with a long history of the practice of the religion of Islam which goes hand in hand with its scholarship.⁵ Usually, by the end of a century of a strong practice of Islamic scholarship, *Ajami* would have been developed. Devotion and long practice of Islamic scholarship in particular places are the twins enabling factors for the development of *Ajami* literature in any Muslim society. This usually develops from its use as a device to aid religious instruction or religious practices. From this, it spills into non-religious uses for administrative record keeping, commercial records and personal records.

This paper is divided into several sections. In the first section, the history of Islam in Bilad al Sudan and the *ajamisation* of scripts are explored to foreground the subsequent sections. In the next section, the agency of Ilorin in the spread of Islam among the Yoruba is explored as well as the development of Yoruba *ajami*. This section also examined the significance of colonial encounters in the history of *Ajami* as a script. From there, we move into the postcolonial period, examining the contributions of some individuals, some clerics, and some academics and their contributions to the development of Yoruba *Ajami*. The challenges of the development of *Ajami* are also explored as well as the new opportunities that digital technology offers for the advancement of Yoruba *Ajami*.

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Islam in Bilad Sudan and Ajamisation of Scripts

Islam first came to the Bilad al Sudan in the 10th century through Kanem-Borno and from there it spread to Hausaland and the adjoining areas. In the centuries, as Islam and its scholarship got stronger and more widespread among the Hausa, the realisation must have come to scholars that the Arabic script as symbols of sounds can be used to write Hausa language with slight adjustments to accommodate phonetic differences, such as sounds or phonemes found in Arabic but that are not found in the local languages such as Hausa, Fulfulde or Kanuri.⁶ Invariably in all cultures, the use of the *Ajami* script was first used to serve religious purposes before it developed wings to venture into secular and non-religious issues. The Arabic script itself is a ready example of the journey of a script from religious origin to non-religious use.⁷

The Arabic script in pre-Islamic times was used mostly for recording poems and business transactions and on a very limited scale such that the earliest use of the script for writing substantial record was the Quran. The study of the Quran, especially as non-Arabs became Muslims led to further development of the script and the grammar of the language to preserve the purity of the divine text.⁸ Thereafter, the script was adapted for long prose, recording of history, language, grammar, literature and scientific knowledge both for religious and non-religious purposes.

In the same way *Ajami* evolved, first, for religious purposes, before it was deployed for non-religious writings. From Persia to the Asian subcontinent, from Spain to North and Sudanic Africa, the development of *Ajami* followed the same pattern. In Hausaland, *Ajami* developed slowly over the centuries and got a significant boost in the course of the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in the nineteenth century. *Ajami* was used widely for preparing the psyche of the people for the jihad through didactic poems in Hausa and Fulfulde by Uthman Dan Dan Fodio and his lieutenants.⁹ The progress of *Ajami* was truncated in the course of the colonial encounter and was relegated to the background alongside religious knowledge. Although it was initially used together with Arabic in the early colonial period for official records, it was eventually jettisoned for the Latin script, which remains the dominant script for writing both Hausa and Fulfulde into the twenty-first century.¹⁰ It has continued to struggle for relevance since then. Its full potential as a tool for knowledge generation and transmission as well as record keeping has not been achieved yet.

The Agency of Ilorin in the Spread of Islam among the Yoruba and the Development of Yoruba *Ajami*

Evidence suggests that Islam has had contact with Yorubaland, at least since the 16th century, through traders from Mali as well as the Kanem-Borno empire. However, it was not widespread. The emergence of Ilorin in the early

decades of the nineteenth century as an emirate gave the greatest push for the spread of Islam among the Yoruba.¹¹ Ilorin was built on a nascent Islamic community at Okesuna, a community of exclusive Muslim scholars and traders.¹² Throughout the nineteenth century, Ilorin consolidated as a lighthouse of Islam, a multi-ethnic ensemble of Muslims whose identity rests primarily on being Muslim, and one of the streams of the Sokoto jihad movement of nineteenth-century West Africa.

Led by Fulani Emirs, Muslims and scholars were attracted to settle in Ilorin to fortify its Islamic identity and defend it against the many wars waged against it by Yoruba armies. They were dissatisfied with its emergence and the fact that it was Ilorin that eventually sacked the old Oyo empire, setting in motion the wars and displacement of populations that rocked nineteenth century Yorubaland. Ilorin became a renown military power in Yorubaland and an active participant in the nineteenth century civil wars of Yorubaland. While the wars were going on, on the home front, Muslim scholars were developing their scholarship, consolidating the heritage of Islamic scholarship of Ilorin, from diverse Hausa, Fulani, Borno, and Nupe backgrounds among others.¹³ Because of the wars going on in the region, Muslims in the region found Ilorin a safe haven to practice their religion and develop Islamic knowledge and many settled in the city.

As noted earlier, *Ajami* invariably develops from the strong practice of Islam in particular places. The Ilorin experience followed this pattern. Although the people of Ilorin were of different ethnic origins, Yoruba became the lingua franca and by the second and third generations after the establishment of the emirate, most of the people had lost their original languages with only some words now mixed with Yoruba, which makes the Yoruba spoken in Ilorin slightly different from other dialects of Yoruba.

From records, we can safely assume that the practice of Yoruba *Ajami* in Ilorin began in the nineteenth century and was not widespread. Within a couple of years of the passing away of the author of the oldest Yoruba *Ajami*,¹⁴ Ilorin was conquered by the British with the attendant consequences of the colonial encounter for a Muslim society. In the manuscripts of Ilorin, scholars are to be found snippets of *Ajami* of Hausa, Nupe,¹⁵ Fulani and Yoruba, reflecting the multi-ethnic origins of its people.¹⁶ Yoruba *Ajami*¹⁷ developed gradually in the nineteenth century. At the initial stage, they were used largely for personal communications, medicinal recipes, writing of transactional agreements, comments on the religious scripts and poems of exhortations (*wa'z*).¹⁸

Hence, the oldest recorded and remarkable Yoruba *Ajami* writing in Ilorin was from a scholar by the name of Sheikh Badamasi bn Musa Agbaji who died in 1895.¹⁹ He used his *Ajami* for exhortation (*wa'z*). There were others who used *Ajami* to record names not found in Arabic or names of flora and fauna of the locality for medicinal recipes or simple notes on the edges of religious texts.²⁰ As pioneering work, Jimba noticed a number of difficulties in the earliest effort of Sheikh Agbaji, such as the use of a single Arabic letter such as 'ب' for three different Yoruba phonemes 'b'

‘gb’, ‘kp’(p); using two different Arabic letters such ‘ل’ and ‘ض’ for a single Yoruba phoneme ‘L’; using a phoneme that has no equivalent in Yoruba such as ‘ع’ to represent ‘q’; using ‘ع’ and ‘و’ for ‘o’ and using ‘ا’ for ‘i’ ‘e’ and ‘e’. This makes understanding the writing rather difficult.²¹

Below is an excerpt from the writings of Sheikh Agbaji:

Ka dupẹ lẹdọ ọba Alikadiru ** كَدْبَا لُدْعَبَا الْقَادِرُ ** عِبَا تُولُغُو تُسِي شَغَوْدَرَا
 ọba t’ologo tosi şogo dara
 O şogo, o ş’awa awa je ‘mọle عَشُوْعُوا عَشُوا عَوْجَا مَلِي ** عَشُوا اِرْعُو عِلْمِي وَجَا كَافِرَا
 ** o se’ru awon elomi won je kafira
 O to siwa k’ama mon fun un p’otawalore عُنُوس كَمْفُو بُنُولِرَا ** كَتِجْمُوَا كَبَرُوَا كَشَى دَرَدَرَا
 **k’a tiju, k’aberu, k’ase daradara
 Ohun t’ofe, ohun t’okọ in fin han wa هُوْنُفْ هُوْنُتْكَ عِنْفِي عَوَا ** نُرِي جَو تَوْبُوِي بَادِي مَحْشَرَا
 **tori’jo tio pe wa b’ade mahşara

Translation:
 Let’s be grateful to the King, the Able**
 The owner of glory and who perfects glory
 He is glorious, he made us Muslims**
 He makes others unbelievers
 It behoves us to appreciate his generosity on us**
 So, let us be prudent, be fearful and do good
 What he loves, what he abhors, he shows us**
 Because of the day, we will be at *mahşar* (the gathering)²²

Unlike the Hausa societies with centuries of the practice of Islam, Ilorin as an emirate and as a regional centre of Islamic scholarship was barely a century old before the colonial conquest disrupted its socio-economic and political milieu. This encounter makes *ajami* almost a stillbirth birth in Ilorin. When colonialism began in northern Nigeria among the Hausa, *ajami* was already well developed and was being used for purposes other than as ancillary to religious practice. Thus, it was first tolerated by the British colonial masters as part of their indirect rule policy, which left much of the governance in the hands of the traditional rulers, who in turn relied on Muslim scholars as scribes and judicial workers who used Arabic and *ajami* for record purposes. Even before this period, we have recorded such as the history of events such as that of imam Umaru who also recounted his knowledge of happenings in Ilorin in Sokoto dialect *ajami*.²³

The colonial encounter was a great challenge for all Muslim polities in northern Nigeria, not the least because the new overlords were ‘Christians,’ but also because the new system introduced by the colonialists went against their worldviews. Muslim scholars were particularly distressed as the new education system introduced by the colonial masters relegated the Islamic education system against the then newly introduced Western education which was considered ‘Christian’ by Muslims and they bitterly opposed it.²⁴ Given the nascent development of *ajami* at this period, its further refinement and development was almost a non-starter. It remained largely in hibernation till the post-colonial period when we began to see some revival of *ajami*.

Two major developments stultified the development of *ajami* in Ilorin. First, the introduction of Western education quickly overshadowed Islamic education under whose rubrics *ajami* would have been further developed. Although Muslims in Ilorin, like in most Muslim regions during the colonial era, were wary and objected to their children acquiring Western education, this rejection quickly gave way to acquiescence and accommodation as people realised it was a new and fast route for social and economic mobility. Christian missionaries had from the early nineteenth century put the Yoruba language into writing using the Latin script and that quickly gained ground as the most important medium of writing the Yoruba language.²⁵ By the beginning of the twentieth century when *ajami* had only a few practitioners, working independently of each other with no standard orthography accepted by all, Yoruba in Latin script had gained more ground with the bible already translated into Yoruba and a leading newspaper in Yoruba in circulation. In consequence, Yoruba Muslims, especially in Lagos and South-western Nigeria generally knew written Yoruba as only possible in Latin script. When we take into cognisance that Islamic education in sub-Saharan Africa taught the Arabic language largely for religious purposes and not as a working language and scholars with linguistic competence in Arabic were limited, then we begin to see why *ajami* could not have been widespread during period of the colonial encounter nor gain further traction under colonial conditions.²⁶

Thus, western education, which Muslim Yorubas quickly adapted to, despite their misgivings,²⁷ trained Muslim Yorubas to be competent in English and Yoruba Latin script. Because of this, the need for *ajami* competence did not arise nor was *ajami* well developed and in wide use enough to compete or serve as an alternative to the Latin script. Many Yoruba Muslims were not aware of the existence of *ajami* even when they had attended Quranic schools.²⁸ Not much has changed in this regard even in the twenty-first-century. The Yorubas are known as the leaders in Western education in Nigeria, with Yoruba Muslims on the heels of their Christian counterparts, whose missionaries were the earliest purveyors of Western education as an adjunct of evangelisation. Although Ilorin Muslims were slower than the rest of Yoruba speaking people in the attainment of Western learning, they have also covered much ground since the early days when they were

wary or opposed to western learning. Western learning, based on the English language and Yoruba orthography in Latin script, nipped the bud of Yoruba *ajami*.

A second development which stifled the development of *ajami*, is related to the first. Islamic scholars were among the leading opponents of colonialism in Ilorin and some fought in the skirmish that led to the colonial conquest of Ilorin. When Western education was introduced, many scholars distanced themselves from it and discouraged many from attending Western schools.²⁹ However, this did not last long as people realised that Western education was the new route to social mobility and power. As Muslims began to attend Western schools, it drew away pupils from the Qur'anic schools, with its informal structure and limited economic prospects for its graduates. Until the colonial encounter, Muslim scholars in Ilorin were the elites in a tripartite coalition of aristocrats, scholars and warriors.³⁰ Colonialism effectively relegated the scholars and their Islamic education institution to the background.

Some scholars realised the need to counter the relegation through reform of the Islamic education system, which until then had no formal structure. Leading this reform was Sheikh Muhammad Kamalud-deen Al-Adaby. Suffice to say, he reformed Islamic education by borrowing from formal settings of the Western system as well as inspiration from the Muslim Middle East. His reforms fast-tracked the learning of Quranic sciences and paid particular attention to the promotion of Arabic and its literature for his students. Sheikh Al-Adaby also favoured Western learning and promoted it even in his madrasah (pl. *madaris*) by introducing Western learning for Muslims. Later, he was joined by Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Iluri who paid particular attention to Arabic learning, differing from Sheikh Al-Adaby in not favouring the co-habitation of the two educational systems within the same space. Other reformers, more or less were to follow in the footsteps of these two scholars.³¹ What this meant was that *ajami* did not feature in their reforms. The avant-garde scholars they produced favoured mastering Arabic as a language on its merit to foster religious learning. With these leading lights of Islamic scholarship and their network of students not looking in the direction of *ajami* as a medium of transmission of knowledge, *ajami* was further weakened. This continued until the postcolonial period when new efforts in reviving Yoruba *ajami* again appeared.

A One-man Squad in the Development and Usage of Yoruba *Ajami*: The Case of Sheikh Abubakar Yusuf Agbade

By the time Nigeria gained independence in 1960, reforms in Islamic education had been set on course and many scholars had taken the formats of the Adabiyya or Markaziyya schools even when they did not belong to these networks. Efforts to revive *ajami* as a knowledge tool got a boost in the early 1970s through the efforts of Sheikh Abubakar Yusuf Agbade. Before him only a few other scholars were known to have produced some remarkable works written in *ajami*, verses of exhortation, deriving from Islamic practices. Other *ajami* writings were largely used

for personal notations in amulets and study materials. There was Sheikh Badamasi (d.1895) and Sheikh Salihu Apomu who lived during the reign of the sixth emir of Ilorin, Suleiman (d.1915) and Sheikh Muhammad Bello Ajongolo.³²

Sheikh Agbade was one of the scholars who established a madrasah for the teaching of Islamic sciences according to trends set since the colonial period. He had both Western and Islamic education and worked for many years as a civil servant before retiring in 1982 and thereafter dedicating himself fully to Islamic scholarship. He is also a leading Sufi, Tijjaniyyah leader with followers in Nigeria and the West African sub-region. He is the only known scholar who teaches *ajami* as a formal subject in his madrasah. His interest in *ajami* may have been inspired by his sojourn among the Hausa (with a stronger tradition of *ajami*) and the Nupe.³³

He differs from early writers of *ajami* by trying to formalise its use and by making it a subject among other subjects taught in his school. His Western learning no doubt influenced his attempt at formalising its teaching and usage. This is what Iris refer to as the encounter of diverse knowledge in this case Islamic and Western-enabling innovation and creative purposes, such as the sheikh has done for *ajami*.³⁴ He has written several pamphlets introducing the readers to *ajami* and how it can be written. He also translated a number of Islamic books into Yoruba using *ajami*. His son, sheikh Ibrahim Abubakar Yusuf Sufi³⁵ and some of his students also followed in his footsteps by translating and writing works using *ajami*.

In trying to make *ajami* popular, his *ajami* writings include short stories like is found in school textbooks, a little deviation from preoccupations with religious themes. Nevertheless, religious themes predominate his writings and he is primarily concerned with using *ajami* to promote religion and Muslim interests. As observed by Jimba, Sheikh Agbade made what can be considered original contributions to the use of *ajami*. For example, he introduced new diacritical marks for sounds that are found in Yoruba but not in Arabic. He used three dots on *ghain* (غ) to represent /gb/ sound and three dots on ba (ب) to represent /kp/ sound, not available in Arabic. Influenced by Arabic, he introduced long vowels (*huruf al-madd*) as found in *daadaa* (دادا) and *mo fara* (مفرا) and *mumini* (فمومني). He also introduced new orthographical signs for four Yoruba vowels / *ai* / غ / for e; / *ey* / غ / for e; / *o* / و / for o; and / *oo* / و / for o.³⁶

A problem with the efforts of Sheikh Agbade was that it got little reception from other *madaris* which he tried to encourage to promote the teaching and use of *ajami* in their schools. He showed his efforts to the founder of the Markazi school, Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Iluri who appreciated his efforts but told him that his hand was full with the Markazi tradition he had instituted; so, he defended his inability to include it in his school. To add *ajami* to his oeuvre is to increase his already heavy burden. Sheikh Al-Iluri also forewarned him that he would get little support in Ilorin. Sheikh Agbade also shared his efforts with leading scholars in Ilorin such as Sheikh al-Adaby and Sheikh Abubakar Agbarigidoma (a renowned Sufi scholar). Although his efforts were appreciated, they nevertheless showed little

interest in promoting it. Sheikh Agbade also tried to enlist the support of the Emir, Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, as the spiritual head of the Ilorin. Although the emir showed interest, his leading religious advisors saw little value in the project and thus discouraged the emir.³⁷

He organised workshops and promoted *ajami* in *madaris* in other cities such as Ibadan and Lagos and gave certificates to participants. His efforts in this regard were noted by Ogunbiyi when he wrote ‘of a vigorous campaign for the promotion of Yoruba *ajami* during the closing years of the twentieth century by a Sufi Muslim scholar based in Ilorin, a bastion of Islamic propagation and education in northwest Yorubaland.’³⁸ This was the height of his one-man jihad.

With his efforts not widely accepted, his works largely circulated within his network of students. Cognizance must be taken of the financial implication of promoting *ajami*. Most proprietors of the *madaris* struggle financially to maintain their schools even for the well-accepted study of Islamic sciences. Most operate tuition-free and rely on their network of ex-students for teaching, who get a little financial reward (most offer their service as compensation for the training they too had gotten virtually free and for the *baraka* (blessings) in the service (*hidma*) to their teacher). Financial wherewithal is also a challenge to a promoter of *ajami* such as Sheikh Agbade; the cost of printing materials and organising workshops can be herculean.

In the absence of wide circulation of his efforts and critical engagements with his efforts by others, little improvement could be added to what he had improvised and with time, his interest waned, engaged as he was with da’awah and Tijaniyya activities. His efforts were largely a one-man jihad. He has written over a dozen pamphlets on *ajami* on a variety of subjects, showing the possibility of using *ajami* for record and transmission of knowledge among Muslims who would have had some knowledge of Arabic script reading and writing from Quranic schools. Among the works of sheikh Agbade are: *الْيُورَابَا تِرَا أَكُونِي* *الْيُورَابَا أُونُ غُوَاغُو أُوْرِي* *أنجم الیورابا تیرا اکونی* ‘Anjemi Yoruba-Tira akoni ni eko ajemi fun awon ogo were’ (Book for Teaching Ajemi to Little Ones)³⁹ and *كِيَا نُفِي بِي خَرَف لَارُبُت* *Kika Nupe Be Harufan Larabci* which he translated the title into Hausa and English respectively as ‘Rubuta Nufanci da Harufan Larabci’ and ‘Writing Nupe Language with Arabic Letters.’⁴⁰ With most Muslims lacking a working knowledge of Arabic beyond reading and writing, particularly for religious rituals, *ajami* holds the possibility of a wider usage for knowledge transmission in Yoruba. However, its knowledge, usage and acceptance have been minimal even among the Islamic scholars who are most familiar with Arabic scripts and most qualified to promote it.

The Interventions by Academics on *Ajami* Development in Ilorin

Apart from Sheikh Agbade who promotes the use of *ajami* by setting an example and teaching it in his school and publishing books on it, two other scholars

have also invested interest in *ajami* in Ilorin. They differ from Sheikh Agbade in being academics and whose interests were sparked by their academic pursuits in the subject matter. The first, Shehu Ahmad Abdussalam, a Professor of Applied Linguistics, was one of the beneficiaries of the reformation of Islamic education that took place during the colonial and postcolonial periods. Having trained through the Markazi mode in Nigeria, he also studied in Sudan and Saudi Arabia.⁴¹ His interest began as part of his thesis, ‘Predicative Structure in Arabic and Yoruba languages: a Contrastive Study’⁴² in which he examined *ajami* as part of his research.

A problem of Yoruba *ajami* is captured in the proverb ‘*oni anjemi ni anjemi n ye*’ (only an *ajami* writer understands his *ajami*). In the absence of standardised orthography, each writer of *ajami* in Yoruba uses alphabetical devices as he deems fit. What one writer uses for a particular sound or phoneme will be different from what another writer uses. This often complicates the reading of *ajami*. Using his expertise as an applied linguist, Abdussalam worked to improve and standardise *ajami*. He proposed a logo syllabic theory for simplifying *ajami*. He published a pamphlet with the Arabic title ‘*هيا نكتب لغة ا ليوربا با لرمز العربي*’ (Let us write the Yoruba Language with Arabic Orthography).⁴³

However, his efforts complicated the problem of comprehension and usage. He sought to write Yoruba as syllables against the natural ways they are articulated in the Latin script.⁴⁴ For example *esin* (religion) is rendered as *ىسى* *esin* in *ajami* (the nunation was not indicated. Only with contextual understanding will a reader know this); *ijeri aso* *ىجىرى اسو* *i+jɛ+ ri* and *oba kan* (One God) as *وبكا* the nunation ‘n’ missing. This appears to be an imitation of the Yoruba Latin script where consonants and vowels are letters unlike Arabic where short vowels are diacritics *ـا* (a), *ـي* (i), *ـو* (u) with its long vowels (*madd*) being letters without diacritics *اىو*.

Words of Arabic origin were rendered in ways religiously sensitive persons will not be pleased with, such as ‘Mu hah mah du’ *مو حاه ما دو* for Muhammad, against the Arabic *محمد* (including the use of the Arabic long vowel u and a (*و* & *ا*)). This approach lacks economic use of symbols. It means more extended use of letters for Yoruba sounds than earlier writers of Yoruba *ajami* had used. For example, he used *(غب)* *g+b* for the digraph *gb*, pronounced as a single phoneme, an influence of the Latin rendering of the same grapheme. However, he took note of the inability of the Yoruba speaker to pronounce the Arabic zain ‘Z’ (*ز*) which does not exist in Yoruba and which the Yoruba speaker uses ‘s’ (*س*) in its place such as his rendering of Arabic word *zakat* (poor due) as ‘saka’ even as he further complicates this rendering with the use of Arabic *madd* making it sound as *sah + kah* (*ساحا*). There is no doubt that his Western learning influenced the style he adopted, such as the format for the digraph *(غب)* ‘gb’ which is direct copy of the Latin Yoruba script. The same can be seen in his using Arabic letters for vowels as we see in Latin script. In doing this, he neglected the nunation sounds in Yoruba and relied less on Arabic diacritic (*was*) for his vowels. His work did not gain much traction beyond the academic writings he produced about *ajami* and did not gain popularity as many

considered his effort a further complication of an already complicated situation. No one has adopted his efforts and he did not do much in promoting it afterward.

The table below illustrates the evolution of Yoruba *ajami* and its developments from the precolonial to the postcolonial period. Areas of convergencies, divergencies and innovations can be seen in the efforts of the leading scholars of Yoruba *ajami*.

	Yoruba Latin script	Pre/Colonial period		Postcolonial period		
		Badmasi ⁴⁹	Apomu ⁴⁸	Agbade ⁴⁷	Abdussalam ⁴⁶	Akorede ⁴⁵
1	B	ب	ب	ب	ب	ب
2	D	د	د	د	د	د
3	F	ف	ف	ف	ف	ف
4	g	غ	غ	غ	غ	غ
5	gb	ب	ب	غ	غ	كب
6	h	هـ	هـ	هـ	هـ	هـ
7	j	ج	ج	ج	ج	ج
8	k	ك/ك	ك	ك	ك	ك
9	l	ل/ل	ل	ل	ل	ل
10	m	م	م	م	م	م
11	n	ن	ن	ن	ن	ن
12	p/kp	ب	ب	پ	پ	پ
13	r	ر	ر	ر	ر	ر
14	s	س	ظ	س	س	س
15	ş	ش	ش	ش	ش	ش
16	t	ت	ت	ت	ت	ت
17	w	و	و	و	و	و
18	y	ي	ي	ي	ي	ي
19	a	ا	ا	ا/ا	ا	ا
20	i	ي	ي	ي/ي	ي	ي
21	e	ا	ي	ي/ي	ي	ي
22	ẹ	ا	هـ/ي	ي/ي	ي	3
23	o	ع/و	و/ع	و/ع	و	6
24	o	ع	و/ع	و/ع	و	E
25	u	ا	ا	ع	ا	ا

Table 1. Evolution of *ajami* in Ilorin and its major contributors.

A second academic, Abdulghaniy Abdulhameed Akorede⁵⁰ at the instance of Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation ISESCO also made efforts in standardising *ajami*. In 2007, he was invited by ISESCO for a workshop on *ajami* in Sudan. He was made the point man for organising a forum of proponents of Yoruba *ajami*. He thereafter organised a workshop of scholars with an interest in *ajami* in Ilorin to brainstorm on the way forward for developing and promoting *ajami*.⁵¹ Abdusalam's preceding work was used as a template to improve upon. At the end of the workshop, little was agreed upon and he had to go ahead with his ideas about writing *Ajami*.⁵² The logosyllabic style of Abdussalaam was retained while his radical idea on tonal signs was not adopted. Amidu holds the view that among the reasons the workshop was not very successful was the limitation of participants to scholars based in Ilorin and that Ilorin is not a standard point of reference for the Yoruba language even with the oldest extant *ajami* text coming from Ilorin.⁵³ He is alluding to the multicultural antecedents of Ilorin and its unique position as the only emirate among the Yoruba-speaking people.

Among the innovations he brought into *ajami* was the use كب for the Yoruba digraph 'gb' unlike Sheikh Agbade's (غ) and Abdussalam's (غب). In his innovation, he used Arabic, Latin and Arabic numerals for his vowels: a (ا) i (ي) e (ى) ẹ (3) o (6) o (٥) e (٤). These further complicated the understanding of *ajami*. These vowel innovations meant those who were not versed in Latin script and Arabic numerals would not be able to use it even if they were versed in Arabic script. This shuts out many of the potential promoters and users of *ajami*. A positive addition to his innovation was the inclusion of tonal marks from the Yoruba Latin script which the other scholars have not used. Tonal marks are crucial to understanding written Yoruba. Being a tonal language, the meaning of many words may not be understood without the tonal marks. Like Abdussalam before him, his efforts did not gain traction beyond the academic activities around it. It did not circulate among the networks of Islamic scholars in the *madaris* who are best positioned to promote its usage. With little acceptance and without much follow-up, the effort became ossified within the world of academic records.

What is discernible from the dyad of academic efforts is that they complicated the development and usage of *ajami* with their complex additions and innovations. There were no continuous efforts to improve on the problems noted with their works nor was there any remarkable interface with Islamic scholars of the *madaris* who are best positioned to teach and promote it among their students. They were largely academic exercises that did not translate to popular usage and were largely unknown among the potential users and promoters of *ajami*. A major conundrum for the reformers of Yoruba *ajami* is finding the right letters or symbols for the four Yoruba vowels of o, ọ, e, ẹ. There are no Arabic diacritics that can serve and the innovators have not been able to invent any yet. Instead, various consonants are being used and these can easily confuse the readers. Digital technology offers the

possibility for innovating on these problems as can be seen with other West African *ajami* innovators.⁵⁴

Despite the obstacles against the popular usage of *ajami*, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers new opportunities for popular usage of *ajami* as well as standardisation of its orthography. Digital technology offers unlimited opportunities for developing *ajami* orthography and popularising its usage. Examples of such possibility can be seen in the use of social media handles such as Facebook and cartoons using *ajami* for popular expressions. For example, a young composer of Islamic songs took to his Facebook page to express the dire economic situation in Nigeria. The still photograph on his music video has a map of Nigeria with background colours of green-white-green, the Nigerian national flag and photographs of past Heads of State of Nigeria to a side and his own photograph on the other side, he wrote أَكُوَافَرَادَ اِلُوِي 'Aku ifarada ilu yi' which translates as "I salute our endurance of (the conditions) this land."⁵⁵ Another digital-savvy youth with a background in Qur'anic education created a comic cartoon showing how to spell 'Motiyo,' مَوْتِيُو meaning "I have had my fill," in the manner young pupils of Quranic schools are taught to join Arabic consonants and vowels.⁵⁶ *Ajami* is used in this instance for learning and humour. Digital technology also allows for easy printing and transferring of such writing onto T-shirts and walls of houses, forming new media of expression for *ajami*. Perhaps this is what Sanni referred to as a 'new medium for an authentic African voice in socio-cultural expression.'⁵⁷

It is noteworthy that all the post-colonial efforts to promote *ajami* had influences on Western learning paradigm. All the innovators and promoters of *ajami* have had Western learning, two being professors in the Nigerian university system. As such western orthographical traditions informed and influenced their efforts at standardising *ajami*. All future innovations or reforms to promote *ajami* will always have this Western orthographic influence. That Yoruba *ajami* emerged into the arms of Western learning system and paradigm assures of this cross-fertilization of ideas and innovations around Yoruba *ajami*. While Yoruba *ajami* was almost a stillbirth, it has shown some resilience against all the odds against it. ICT is helping to give it a new lease of life. However, it needs the agency of Yoruba Muslims to ensure its continual relevance as a valid mode of expression.

Conclusion

This work has explored the development of *ajami* among the Yoruba Muslims, particularly Ilorin. It posits that Yoruba *ajami* was a late development, compared to other Sudanic regions due to the late development of Islam among the Yoruba. The emergence of *ajami* coincided with the onset of colonialism which halted its development with the introduction of the Latin script of Western education system which Muslims quickly adapted to despite initial misgivings. Halted at infancy, *ajami* remained largely in hibernation till the post-colonial period when

Sheikh Agbade took to developing and promoting its usage. He was a lone reformer and had limited success among his network of students. A couple of academics also tried to innovate and promote *ajami* but their efforts not only complicated the dire conditions of *ajami*, it was also not popular. Yoruba *ajami* is challenged by its birth at the cusp of colonial encounter, the popularity of Latin script, the tonality of the language and very low awareness of its existence among Muslim Yoruba and the unsettled standardisation of its orthography. Despite these setbacks, *ajami* has shown some resilience and digital technology offers new opportunities for its development and usage like never before. However, it needs the human agency of Yoruba Muslims who will patronise and promote its usage. This can be seen in its usage on social media platforms by tech-savvy youths with backgrounds in Islamic and Arabic education. While *ajami* cannot replace the Latin Yoruba script, it offers Muslim Yorubas another medium of expression not only for religious ideas but also socio-economic and political expressions, rooted in their religious history but also having values of expression in other spheres of life.

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**A REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY DILEMMA AND REFORM
IN THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES
(ECOWAS), 1977-2007**

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Abstract

Although it had high expectations that it would spearhead the process of economic regionalism in West Africa by embracing the principle of supranational, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is still struggling to achieve its fundamental objectives of establishment. Most of the blame lies in the inefficient functioning of the Executive Secretariat charged with the onus of superintending the community's integration. To rectify these, the ECOWAS reform was made in 1993 to transform the Executive Secretariat into institutional machinery capable of executing the organisation's foundational goals. The reform granted the Secretariat the mandate to exercise supranational functions and to reassert its supervisory powers over all ECOWAS institutions. However, scholarly researches on this historical development are limited, particularly relating to the impact of the reform on the capacity of the Secretariat to superintend ECOWAS integration. Using historical analysis, this paper shows how the regional governance framework prescribed in the reform limited the capacity of the Executive Secretariat to successfully achieve the region's integration objectives.

Keywords: ECOWAS Secretariat, West African Integration, Reform, Regional Governance Structure, Institutional Capacity

Introduction

On 28th May 1975, Heads of State and Plenipotentiaries, representing fifteen post-independent West African countries signed the treaty establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) after a series of historic failed attempts to establish a regional organisation covering the entire West African region.¹The goal of ECOWAS formation was to manage the economic interdependence of West African states, create opportunities for regional economic self-reliance, and address emerging security issues bordering on non-traditional security threats that challenged the survival of several countries in the region. The

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move to establish ECOWAS was initiated by the Nigerian and Togo military leaders in 1972. The initiative later received the endorsement of other regional states and the support of international goodwill partners and non-state actors, thus, culminating in the launching of the West African regional economic integration organisation (ECOWAS) in Lagos, Nigeria.

As enshrined in Article 2 of the foundational treaty, the organisation aims “to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activities” by implementing measures that would help raise the standard of living of the people and foster closer relations among the member states.² To achieve the objectives, the treaty also provided for an intergovernmental regional hierarchical structure that comprised two arms of governance, namely the Executive and the Judiciary.

At the apex of the ECOWAS governance hierarchy, is the Authority of Heads of State and Government, whose chairman is the Head of State of a member country appointed by the other Heads of State to pilot the affairs of the organisation. Next is the Council of Ministers, also headed by the Minister in charge of ECOWAS affairs in the country of the Chairman of the Authority. These two organs were the only decision-making bodies of the organisation recognised by the 1975 treaty. The Authority is the overall decision-making organ of ECOWAS closely assisted by the Council of Ministers which the treaty mandated with the powers of reviewing regional policies and regulating the operation of all other subordinate institutions of ECOWAS on behalf of the Authority. In that regard, the directives of the Council are binding on all subordinate institutions of the community and it also has the mandate to exercise other powers and duties assigned to it by the Authority.³

Down the ladder, the treaty established an Executive Secretariat for practical administrative purposes. The secretariat is to be headed by an Executive Secretary, who is to be assisted by two Deputy Executive Secretaries, a Financial Controller and other relevant staff. The strategy as stipulated by Article 12 of the Treaty was for the Executive Secretariat to facilitate the establishment of a West African Customs Union by progressively harmonising the elimination of customs duties and other levies with equivalent effect on imports, as well as enhancing the process for the removal of all restrictions, prohibitions or administrative obstacles to trade among the member states within the course of the fifteen years transitional period set from the definitive entry into force of the treaty.⁴

However, the Secretariat did not begin to function until the first quarter of 1977 due to several challenges including the delay in negotiating the five key operating protocols for institutional formation and functioning, and other regional political schisms mainly relating to the right for hosting the headquarters of the key regional institutions and contest for selection of the principal officers to lead them. Since then, the institution has been making efforts to achieve the primary objective of establishing a West African Economic Union as envisaged in the ECOWAS statutes. Some of the significant achievements of the ECOWAS Secretariat include;

facilitating the adoption of supplementary protocols on the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment adopted in 1986 and 1990 respectively; the signing of the protocol on the ECOWAS Court of Justice in 1991, the protocol on the ECOWAS Community Parliament adopted in 1994, and the protocol relating to the fight against corruption signed in 2001.

However, in line with the critical objective of the ECOWAS foundational treaty of establishing a free trade area fifteen years from the effective entry of the 1975 treaty, the secretariat achieved very little tangible result. Particularly as it relates to the communities necessary economic integration goals of promoting ‘cooperation and integration’ by; removing all barriers to free regional trade and exchange; suppressing custom duties and equivalent taxes; establishing a common external tariff; harmonisation of economic and financial policies and the effective implementation of a protocol on the Free Movement of People, Goods and Services.

Hence, over the years, most regional stakeholders concluded that the Secretariat had failed to engineer a successful integration process, as envisaged in the foundational treaty.⁵ The assertion was featured in the report of the Eminent Persons Committee that reviewed the 1975 ECOWAS establishment treaty in 1993. Additionally, the committee’s findings also discovered severe defects in the institutional and operational framework of the ECOWAS institutions and the decision-making processes and procedures of the organisation.

The committee analyses these issues and asserted that the ECOWAS governance structure had denied the Secretariat any meaningful role in regional decision-making and implementation, thus effectively restricting its capacity to oversee ECOWAS programmes and the gamut of the integration process. In the final report, the committee also claimed that it was these defects that were responsible for the failure in the delivery capacity of the Executive Secretariat and were central in hindering the delivery of the ECOWAS treaty’s foundational objectives.⁶

Strikingly, existing literature has not paid sufficient attention to the Secretariat’s dilemma in the ECOWAS West African integration scheme. To date, only a few official studies have identified the issues of lack of bureaucratic capacity as a major impediment to ECOWAS integration.⁷ Instead, most researchers argued that ECOWAS integration is hampered mainly by the prevalence of neo-colonial agenda-driven regional institutions with the same mandate and objectives as ECOWAS. Indeed, agencies like the Union douanaire de l’Afrique occidentale (U.D.A.O.), Organisation commune Africaine et mauricienne (O.C.A.M.), Communauté économique de l’Afrique de l’ouest (C.E.A.O.), Union douanaire des Etats de l’Afrique de l’ouest (U.D.E.A.O.), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine, UEMOA in French)⁸ were used in the promotion of neo-colonial schism. However, on the positive side, they were also useful in the pursuit of multilateral diplomacy, developmental goals and integration, particularly among the francophone block of countries. Other scholars claim that the lack of adequate infrastructure and the

problem of inclusiveness in policy and programme coordination between the ECOWAS and member states were partly responsible for the under-performance of the Secretariat in facilitating the ECOWAS programmes for West African economic integration.⁹

This research examines data obtained from the archives and libraries of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and the ECOWAS Commission to establish that, in addition to the above, ECOWAS integration is particularly hampered by the institutional capacity deficit of the Executive Secretariat. The research has found that efforts aimed at addressing the capacity dilemma in the ECOWAS administration have failed despite the many rationalisations and reforms including the famous 1993 treaty review. The study analyses ECOWAS policy documents, official reports and the 1993 ECOWAS treaty reform to identify some of the key gaps in the treaty preventing the Executive Secretariat from achieving the integration objectives of ECOWAS. The policy documents examined by this research have proved to be very valuable and the discussion presented as a result is significant for its contribution to understanding the historical and contemporary challenges of West African integration. The dialogue contained in them sets out the historical context of the issues and challenges that determined the decisions taken by the political organs to guide ECOWAS integration.

Furthermore, the article is also especially significant in identifying the bureaucratic challenges of managing ECOWAS integration by distinguishing the shortfalls in the regional governance framework, institutional model and the ethics and practices guiding ECOWAS integration. It is also important to examining the limited success of the Executive Secretariat in accomplishing the ECOWAS foundational goals after several decades of repeated postponements and expiry of the timeframe set in the establishment treaty.

The study covers the period between 1977 to 2007, representing the entire lifespan of the Executive Secretariat. Although ECOWAS was established in 1975, the appointment of the Executive Secretary and the commencement of formal activities at the Secretariat were delayed by technical and political challenges until the first quarter of 1977. The study therefore evaluates the Institutional capacity challenges of the Secretariat from its inception in 1977 to 2007 when the Executive Secretariat was transformed into a Commission with a new governance structure and mandate. The transformation marked a turning point in ECOWAS integration efforts, notably with the affirmation of supranationalism and the subsequent implementation of the transformation agenda.

Functioning of the ECOWAS Secretariat

The Historical Context

At the Lagos maiden summit of May 1975, the ECOWAS Authority scheduled another summit to be held in Lagos in November or December 1975. The summit aimed at adopting the ECOWAS operating protocols as soon as possible to get the Executive Secretariat and other institutions functioning. The protocols were considered crucial in determining the operational modules of the community and its institutions. They were expected to provide guides on issues such as the regional policy on the re-exportation of goods from third countries, the classification of products of origin, the formula for the payment of compensation for losses resulting from trade liberalisation, the template for calculating member states' contributions to the community budget and the structure and functions of the ECOWAS Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development.

To that effect, at the end of the Lagos maiden summit, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of States and Governments issued a provisional proclamation for the establishment of the organisation's Executive Secretariat. The leaders envisaged that the immediate establishment of the Secretariat would provide ECOWAS with the foundational secretarial services required to facilitate the formulation of the protocols, and the implementation of the provisions of the foundational treaty and aid the smooth take-off of community institutions. In the same respect, the regional leaders also facilitated the immediate ratification of the ECOWAS foundational treaty which came into force definitively on 20 June 1975, barely three weeks after the landmark Lagos summit.¹⁰

The desire of the leaders to have the Secretariat functioning was, however, hampered by a myriad of challenges. Notably was the persistent bickering among the member states regarding the location of key community institutions; the delay in the allocation and appointment of statutory officers of the community; and the successive military coups and political changes that affect some of the member states including Nigeria, and Niger.

However, by late 1976, these contentious political issues were resolved when Nigeria and Togo negotiated a compromise in Lome. Soon after, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of States adopted the Nigeria/Togo deal and commenced the community-building process. Thus, both the Executive secretariat and the community Fund began operations almost simultaneously in the first quarter of 1977.

Sadly, no sooner had the community institutions begun functioning another debilitating administrative crisis erupted thus, delaying further the take-up of ECOWAS programmes for another two years. The administrative crisis was instigated and fueled by gaps in the institutional governance framework prescribed in the 1975 treaty regarding the scope of powers of the community chief executives. The crisis also lingered because, at the time, the ECOWAS founding treaty lacked

formal legal mechanisms for resolving inter-agency disagreements and had vaguely left some of the details regarding the structure and functions of the institutions to be determined by the Council of Ministers, in addition to its mandate of overseeing the recruitment of staffs and determination of the condition of service of personnel at the Secretariat and the Fund. As a result of the gaps in the governance framework and issues of interpersonal relations, progress in ECOWAS formation and programme implementation stagnated thus, hindering the integration efforts for another two years.

Issues Affecting the Secretariat Administration of Ecowas Integration

In November 1977, the members of the Council of Ministers approved and forwarded a proposal submitted by the Executive Secretary requesting the ceding of some of the reserved decision-making powers of the ECOWAS Authority under the 1975 treaty to the Executive Secretary and the Secretariat.¹¹ In anticipation of the Authorities' positive response, the Council also granted immediate provisional authorisation to the Executive Secretary to access reports and documents prepared for the member states by international organisations. The Council also authorised the secretariat to liaise with mainly the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, specialised agencies of the United Nations (UN), Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO), and relevant institutions, to obtain information on the economic environment of the ECOWAS member states. In so doing, the Council also authorised the Secretariat to maintain cooperative relations with the same bodies and to negotiate and administer technical assistance and cooperation that might be provided by the appropriate international organisations and other bodies.¹²

The Council's action was aimed at empowering the effective functioning of the Secretariat by mitigating the deficiencies that stalled the functioning of the ECOWAS governance system. The Ministerial authorisation laid the foundation for a series of ad hoc political interventions, amendments and reforms aimed at enhancing the powers of the Executive Secretary and the capabilities of the Secretariat. The action was clearly in line with the ministers' recognition that, the attainment of ECOWAS integration objectives is contingent on the effective functioning of the Secretariat.

Since the secretariat is the administrative nerve centre of the ECOWAS integration scheme, the Council's decisions were intended to be the first step to developing the set of appropriate mechanisms and policies that would help bridge the obvious lacunas in the governance framework prescribed in the establishment treaty. However, the in-house adjustments and rationalisations by the decision-making organs made little impact in bolstering the capacity of the Executive Secretariat to discharge its mandate as demonstrated by its inability to achieve the objectives of the maiden programmes of the Free Movement Protocol and Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) Launched in May 1979. As a result, ECOWAS had to

embark on a holistic reform of the foundational treaty by setting up a review committee in 1993. The 1993 treaty review committee report made fundamental recommendations that would reform the ECOWAS. The key recommendations were vetted and adopted. However, after more than a decade of operating the reviewed treaty, the Executive Secretariat still could not make tangible progress in administering ECOWAS integration due to persistent but mutating internal and external issues.

At the formative stage, the external factors were linked to the changes in the then global economy that undermined the economic capacities of the ECOWAS member states. This was primarily the problem of Neo-colonial meddling, the lack of sufficient funding resources, the lack of political will, and the apprehension of economic dominance and hegemony by smaller member states. Gaye identified these problems when he lamented that the parameter by which the under-performance of ECOWAS could be measured was the degree of lethargy that ECOWAS itself encountered.¹³

...no one can deny that up-to-date ECOWAS has fallen far below the expectations raised by the prospect of building an economic Community. It has failed to achieve a sizeable regional trade flow roughly between 5-10% of the total trade of West Africa and the rest of the world. It has made no decisive progress towards the realization of an Economic Union. ECOWAS is yet to promote effective monetary or fiscal harmonization; and has also failed to facilitate an effective free movement of persons, goods and services.¹⁴

He blamed the unsuccessful progress of ECOWAS integration on the adamant stance of the member states on sovereignty issues, which constrained the Secretariat's capacity in the process and, therefore, resulted in a loss of credibility with the West African public. Under the 1975 treaty, the ECOWAS decision-making bodies particularly the Council of Ministers, was given powers for executive management and institutional oversights.¹⁵ The Council were designed as a buffer between the Authority and the community institutions such that, all matters dealt with by the institutions passed through the Council to the Authority whose decision was final.

As mentioned above, during the ECOWAS formative stages, the Council ceded parts of its powers to the Secretariat to monitor implementation and compliance of community decisions. The Council acted in recognition of the fact that, for ECOWAS to have any chance of success, the bureaucracy had to have the leverage to oversee the management of all community institutions without political interference. However, over the years, the enthusiasm of the Ministerial Council began to wane despite the glaring utility the action had in ensuring institutional cohesion and delivery of policy objectives. The surprising reluctance of the Council to continue to delegate the necessary powers to the Secretariat to plan and monitor

the integration process has effectively slowed the tempo of the ECOWAS integration drive.¹⁶

While it is clear that, the reluctance of the Council has to do with the apprehension of member states bordering on sovereignty. It is also a recognised fact that, without improving the powers and operational capacity of the Secretariat, there was little hope of ECOWAS succeeding. It is also clear that the non-compliance of member states to community decision underlined the problem of continued cooperation and the political will of the member states and institutions, including financing.

But, had the Council continued to transfer some of the supervisory powers to the Secretariat, it would have boosted the Secretariat's capacity and enhanced the integration process. Consequently, however, as a result of the Council's reluctance, the operation of ECOWAS institutions and the Secretariat suffered from a lack of focus. Hence, after more than a decade of experimentation, ECOWAS only made partial success in solving the economic problems of the West African region.

In a paper delivered at the regional integration forum in Dakar, President Rawlings of Ghana made the following glaring but alarming remarks; "the ECOWAS integration is at a virtual standstill," noting further that, if one views it from the contemporary global norm "... as the developed and the developing countries were increasingly integrating their economies, West Africa was still struggling to take the first step."¹⁷ He further suggested that, as leaders of the region, it behoves us "... to stop paying lip service to ECOWAS and commit ourselves to the full implementation of ECOWAS programmes, protocols and decisions."¹⁸ The statements by the Ghanaian leader affirm that, to advance the ECOWAS integration, member states must avoid the coloniality of power by placing the legitimating structures required to exercise the hierarchy of power and functions in the governance system of the organisation.¹⁹

In the same vein, the inaugural ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr Aboubakar Diaby Ouattara also questioned the efficacy of the ECOWAS strategy, model, priorities, ideology, regulatory and administrative procedures. He pointed out that, the state of the region after three decades of attempts to achieve regional integration has revealed that, regional integration in West Africa had not been very successful. He contended that, in economic groupings of developing countries like ECOWAS it is necessary that, 'a discussion be held on the regional approach to be adopted if market integration is considered as an absolute necessity.' In such situations he asked:

Would it not be better to accord priority, for instance, to macro-economic policy coordination to enhance the ability of our regional economies to adapt to external market and physical infrastructural development trends and to facilitate the harmonization of administrative and regulatory procedures?²⁰

The former Executive Secretary highlights the primacy of institutional structure, and administrative processes in achieving the objectives of ECOWAS. His assertions underlined the important variables that define the ECOWAS integration scheme which envisages taking advantage of aggregate regional economic factors of production to promote intra-regional trade, economic development and integration among the member states. According to the treaty, this goal was to be achieved by promoting cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity, particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters.²¹ However, achieving the above objectives requires not only the material resources but also, the structural institutional framework that would provide the facilitating role for effective policy harmonisation and programme implementation.

But, instead of the treaty creating an institution geared towards the pursuance of the above objectives, it birthed a lame bureaucratic institution. Considering the expected role of the Executive secretariat as enshrined in Article 4 (1)²² and Articles 5-11 and the Authority's 'demonstrable will' to have the community institutions up and running, it is surprising that the secretariat could not still deliver the ECOWAS objectives.

After over a decade without a significant achievement in economic integration, the same questions as the one asked by Dr Quattara above were again asked regarding the mandate, model, and operational conduct of the institutions within ECOWAS. Indeed, the formative years of ECOWAS were marred by political issues. But, the inability of the regional officials to devise appropriate lasting measures that will address the lacuna in the structural governance of the organisation compounded its weaknesses. Therefore, these gaps and the issues of disagreement on the location of key community institutions, nomination and appointment of the chief executives of the community and other institutional superiority and personality debacles all combined to hamper institutional formation in the community.

To make matters worse, by 1985, when ECOWAS entered its second decade, economic development in many of the member countries remained at a very low pace. The rate of inflation rose to unprecedented levels and unemployment became rife.²³ Therefore, with these and other related security concerns, the focus and attention of the community leadership was diverted away from ECOWAS integration to state survival. Consequently, in the bid to protect their national economies and prevent the growing tide of internal dissension, the member states resorted to accepting the strict conditions imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions and began receiving foreign loans.

The handouts, however, failed to improve the economic conditions in the region and thus, compounded their socio-political crises. In the end, all the important ECOWAS programmes, including the harmonisation of trade, customs and

economic policies, implementation of free movement of persons, goods and right of establishment, defense cooperation pacts (for example, the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC)), stagnated and failed to materialise in the prescribed time-frame. Studies have shown that ECOWAS member countries account for 35% of the African LDC making West Africa the foremost LDC in Africa and the world. No less than 11 of the 15 ECOWAS countries exhibit some of the lowest socio-economic development indicators, including the lowest Human Development Index ratings in the world. Significantly, Usman and Adeyinka posits thus:

...with about 80% of them falling below human development index counties and characterized by widespread poverty and inequality. ... according to human development reports 2016: Benin 0.485 ranked 167th, Burkina Faso 0.402 ranked 185th, Cape Verde 0.648 ranked 122nd, Cote d'Ivoire 0.474 ranked 171th, Gambia 0.452 ranked 173rd, Ghana 0.579 ranked 139th, Guinea 0.414 ranked 183rd, Guinea-Bissau 0.424 ranked 178th, Liberia 0.427 ranked 177th, Mali 0.442 ranked 175th, Niger 0.353 ranked 187th, Senegal 0.494 ranked 162nd, Sierra Leone 0.420 ranked 179th, Togo 0.487 ranked 166th and finally Nigeria as Africans leading oil producer and the most populous black nation in the world is scored as low as 0.531 and ranking of 152nd out of the 188 counties.²⁴

Ironically, even the much-taunted IMF-financed national reforms embarked on by most of the member states also failed to spur meaningful economic development of the states. Rather, the Western capitalist induced reforms caused a more calamitous economic decline with social, political and developmental fallout on the member states. Thus, forcing them to resort back to the ECOWAS framework for solutions.

The 1993 Reform

Since it entered into force on 20th June 1975, regional operators and observers have begun noticing gaps in the ECOWAS establishment treaty. For example, the treaty had been criticised for not paying enough attention to issues such as political cooperation and regional peace and security. There was also the issue of the lack of a binding effect to the decisions of the Authority and the Council and the question of supranationality of ECOWAS and its institutions in the gamut of the regional integration scheme. These defects left a wide gap both in the ability of ECOWAS to integrate the economies of its member states and the quality of policy and programme delivery of its implementing institutions.²⁵ Thus, since its ratification, regional stakeholders across the community have argued that the treaty needed an urgent review. Particularly, on the aspects that relate to institutional mandate/model, governance structure, funding, community work ethics, and the

rules and procedures that govern the operations of the regional agencies and the bureaucracy.²⁶

Since then, a series of low-level internal administrative adjustments aimed at addressing some of the glaring lacunas in the treaty were embarked upon particularly between 1979 and 1990. However, the low-level nature of these efforts fell short of engendering a far reaching reform in ECOWAS operations and thus, failed to facilitate the delivery of scheduled regional programmes or boost the capacity of the Secretariat to oversee the integration process.

Therefore, in 1989, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in conjunction with ECOWAS organised a series of conferences on West African integration in Dakar, Lagos, Accra, Ouagadougou and Abidjan to formulate possible solution to the community debacles. Participants at the conferences call on ECOWAS stakeholders to consider a change in strategy if the regional experiment is to have any chance of success.²⁷ Unfortunately, while the stakeholders were considering embarking on a holistic reform as recommended, the region woke up to the news of a rebellion in Liberia, one of the key member states of ECOWAS, on 24 December 1989.

The Liberian Civil War was later discovered to have been an aggression aided by some ECOWAS member countries. The aggression dimension of the conflict was a clear and serious danger that posed a direct threat to peace, security and the economic prosperity of the entire West African region. Thus, the outbreak of the civil war in Liberia diverted the attention and energy of the organisation and the entire West African community. As the conflict escalated, the ECOWAS decision organs summoned their annual meetings in Banjul Gambia in May 1990. In a statement to the Council, the Executive Secretary informed members that, upon the recommendations of the Authority, the Executive secretariat had drafted two separate agenda for the 27th session of the Council. The first part from 22nd - 24th May was devoted to the consideration of the economic issues on the agenda and the second part, from 25th - 26th May, was allotted for the consideration of political matters. While the first part of the session was meant for the ministers responsible for ECOWAS affairs, the second part was reserved for the ministers of foreign affairs.²⁸

The ministers recommended the adoption of a sweeping set of political measures by the Authority aimed at restoring political cohesion and regional security, and to get ECOWAS on the path of progress. Immediately after the Council meeting, the authority met and deliberated on the Council's recommendations at its 13th Ordinary Summit also held in the Gambia. The summit adopted the Council's landmark recommendation and issued; Decision: A/DEC. 10/5/90, dated 30th May 1990, directing the Executive Secretary to set up a Committee of Eminent Persons to undertake a review of the ECOWAS treaty and to also set up a Special Ministerial Committee to find ways of resolving the civil war in Liberia.²⁹

In conjunction with the decision of the organs, the Executive Secretary constituted and inaugurated the review committee on the 27th of May 1991 with the mandate of overhauling the 1975 establishment treaty. Upon inauguration, the committee formed four sub-committees each of which was further devolved into sectoral sub-committees. Six plenary sessions were later held by the entire review committee between the 27th of May 1991 and the 9th of June 1992. The plenaries were convened to harmonise the recommendations of the sectoral sub-committees. Finally, on 9th May 1992, the Eminent Persons review committee headed by the former Nigerian military leader and one of the founders of ECOWAS, General Yakubu Gowon, submitted their final report to the Executive Secretary.

Upon receipt of the final report, the secretariat immediately commenced the process of subjecting the reviewers' recommendations to administrative and legal scrutiny for the consideration of the Council of Ministers. The legal experts met in Lagos from the 13th – the 21st of October 1992 and examined the draft treaty report and the observations of the Council made at its Dakar meeting on the 23rd – 25th of July. The legal experts made their professional recommendations which the Council later met in Abuja on the 4th & 5th of December 1992 to consider and make further recommendations to the Authority for adoption. At the Abuja meeting, the Council again tendered additional reservations on Articles 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 34, 44 and 46, 54, 58, 75, 78, 82, 88 and revert to the legal experts for further examination.

Finally, after a series of back and forth, the Council reconciled its position and passed resolution C/Res. 1/7/93, at its ordinary sessions of 17th - 20th July 1993 in Cotonou and recommending same to the ECOWAS Authority for its adoption.³⁰ Thus, on July 24th, 1993 the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of States and Governments met in Cotonou, Benin Republic, and approved the revised ECOWAS treaty, ushering a regime of a major reform and total overhaul in ECOWAS.

The revised treaty introduced some changes in ECOWAS operations but fell short of engendering the holistic overhaul needed to ensure the effective implementation of ECOWAS economic and political policies and programmes of integration in the West African region. For example, Chapter III, Article 6 of the revised treaty amended Article 4 of the 1975 treaty and provided for the setting up of additional institutions. Articles 6 and 15 provided a new framework that established a Community Court of Justice, despite the provisions in Articles 4 (1) (d), 11, and 56 of the 1975 treaty and, Protocol A/P. 1/7/91 which gave effect and operationalised Article 11 of the 1975 treaty that established the community tribunal. Also, Article 13 of the revised treaty created the ECOWAS parliament and introduced major changes in the ECOWAS structure and operations including a new governance structure, a provision for a regional levy to fund community integration and the granting of supranational mandate to the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat.

However, as stated above, in addition to the continued adherence to the bureaucratic model of administration, even the details of the structure, composition,

and competence of the newly promulgated regional legislature (parliament) and the modalities for the operation of the Court of Justice of the community were left out by the revised treaty to be decided later by the decision-making organs. The Court was finally inaugurated in November 2000 after a tedious negotiation process that culminated with the adoption and signing on 6th August 1994 of the protocol relating to the Court competencies and operational modules, and to date, the parliament is still evolving its competence and functions.

The Deficiencies in the ECOWAS Governance Framework

The quality of the governance framework of a regional organisation is determined by the political competence (autonomy of institutions), capacity (ability to devise and implement policies), legitimacy and the interactions between formal and informal regional political institutions and their relations with the international society.³¹ Effective regional governance, therefore, requires rules and qualities of systems, cooperation to enhance legitimacy and effectiveness, and new processes, arrangements and methods.³² For the West African ECOWAS integration scheme, the major defects that stagnate its operations were embedded in its form of regional governance framework. These defects mainly concern the role and power of the political organs vis-a-vis the mandate, political competence, powers and capacity of the community bureaucracy.

As indicated above, deficiencies were identified early in the ECOWAS integration process but were not adequately addressed. While the dilemma of the ECOWAS administration began in the form of a disagreement over key political decisions among some Member States, the crisis came to a head due to the gaps in the regional governance structure and procedural issues that sparked administrative and personality conflicts. Admittedly, the issues bedevilling ECOWAS integration were multidimensional, ranging from the Neo-colonial economic interference that affects funding of community development to issues of lack of political will as manifested in the implementation failures of regional integration schemes like the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS).

However, it is also obvious that the issues surrounding the delivery capacity of the Secretariat cannot be disconnected from ECOWAS regional integration failures. It was because of the primal place of the Secretariat in the gamut of the integration efforts that the Authority and regional leaders urged the treaty reviewers to pay careful attention to the decision-making procedures of the Authority and the council of ministers, vis-a-vis the capacity dilemma of the Secretariat as crucial areas needing improvement.

As a result, in its final report, the review committee recommended that additional provisions be made in the preamble to the revised treaty for "the pooling of national sovereignties and the establishment of supranational bodies endowed with relevant and adequate powers."³³ The report also recommended that the main body of the revised treaty should have:

...provisions explicitly designating ECOWAS as the sole economic community for regional integration in West Africa and clearly defining relations between the executive secretariat and the specialised institutions of the community; provisions which introduced the principles of supranational into ECOWAS...; provisions that authorise the executive secretary to convene sectoral ministerial meetings as and when necessary; provisions specifying the status of the executive secretary as chief executive officer of the community and all its institutions and extending his powers to include initiating drafts texts or decisions for adoption by the decision-making bodies of the community.³⁴

Indeed, the 1993 revision exercise corrected some of the deficiencies of the ECOWAS governance structure. The reform formalised the establishment of the community tribunal and parliament and expanded the mandate of the Secretariat with supranational functions. Additionally, the revised treaty also consolidated the powers and functions of the Executive Secretariat, as contained in Article 17- 1 and 2 and the provisions in Article 19-2 and 19-3.

Theoretically, these amendments were supposed to grant the Secretariat substantial authority over policy recommendation, formulation, adoption, implementation and monitoring of community institutions and organs, including budget implementation. But, a close examination of the scope of the powers granted to the Executive secretariat shows that it fell short of granting it sufficient powers to discharge its functions without hindrance. Yes, the reform did improve the functions of the Secretariat but, the decision-making bodies still maintained the actual executive and supranational powers to execute them.

Thus, even after the 1993 reform, and despite the granted elaborate functions, the ECOWAS Secretariat was left with marginal roles in decision-making and implementation both at the economic and security levels as policies and programmes continued to stagnate on account of the ratification threshold requirement.

Hence, in 2006, the ECOWAS stakeholders had to once again reach another consensus address the issues impeding the performance of ECOWAS, including the regional governance structure. As a result, a new reform was inaugurated in January 2007, tagged the 'ECOWAS Trans-formation Agenda'. The crux of the agenda was to further enhance the powers of the newly established Commission by removing the lingering encumbrances in the governance structure.

This study has found that the choice of the bureaucratic approach adopted in the reform as opposed to the agency model has failed in creating a professional management system to oversee the integration process. And that the trail of programme and policy failure in ECOWAS integration schemes since inception is

pinned on the little attention paid to the institutional model, the governance processes, and issues of capability, work ethics and practice standards in the regional bureaucracy.

There was also a lack of consistency in strategy and programme due to the short tenure of statutory political officers. Additionally, the legislative and political appointees spent much of their time on travel and other engagements rather than contributing tangible value to the integration programme. Procedural and personality issues continue to linger despite the lessons of the mediation efforts of key regional governments, the Council of Ministers, and the ECOWAS Authority in May 1979.³⁵ The intervention brought some stability in the administration of the community, but the challenges that precipitated the crisis continued to impede the implementation of regional policies. Added to the above, redundancy was also a significant hindrance to the integration scheme.

Conclusion

A review of the functions of the Executive Secretariat in ECOWAS integration reveals a noticeable decline in efficiency. Since its formation, the Executive Secretariat has undergone a series of rationalisations and reforms to enhance its capacity. However, many of the attempts were a disappointment. Flaws in the regional governance structure of the Secretariat continued to hinder its ability to liberalise the member states' economies and gradually remove all economic barriers in regional trade among the West African member states. Initially, the ECOWAS treaty laid down both the strategy and timetable for achieving the goals and objectives of the community. The treaty also designated the Executive Secretariat as the main institution responsible for overseeing the administration of the community and coordinating the integration scheme.

However, the gaps in the treaty led to disagreements over structural governance and the relationship between the community institutions and the officials. Together with the inappropriate choice of institutional model for the regionalisation process and the lack of standard work ethics and practices, the Executive Secretariat's ability to effectively oversee the integration process was seriously impeded. These shortcomings of the ECOWAS were also due to the lackadaisical attitude of the member states towards the integration scheme. Most member states constantly withheld vital operating funds. There was also a lack of political will on the part of the states to ensure that national agencies comply with the implementation of regional policies. These shortcomings were found soon after the treaty ratification ceremony, leading to a series of attempts by the governing organs to resolve them with little or no success over the thirty-year lifespan of the Secretariat.

Notes and References

- ¹ The countries that signed the ECOWAS foundational treaty were Benin (formerly, Dahomey), Burkina Faso (formerly, Upper Volta), Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Cape Verde joined ECOWAS in 1977 and Mauritania withdrew its membership in 2000.
- ² The section also called for the creation of a common customs tariff in respect of all goods imported into the member states from third countries within the same period. See, Article 2, Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations Treaty Series 14843, 1976, p. 20.
- ³ Article 6, paragraph 2a & d and paragraph 3, Treaty of the Economic Community, pp. 21-22.
- ⁴ Article 12, Treaty of the Economic Community, p. 24.
- ⁵ See, G. Piccolino, and S. Minou "The EU and regional integration in West Africa: effects on conflict resolution and transformation.(February 1, 2014)." *University of Pretoria RegioConf Working Paper* 5 (2014), 27. &, MT Bala, "The challenges and prospects for regional and economic integration in West Africa." *Asian Social Science* 13, no. 5 (2017): 24-33.
- ⁶ Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Final Report by the Committee of Eminent Persons for the Review of the ECOWAS Treaty, 1992, p. 5.
- ⁷ Ama Konadu and Maty Fall, "Sustaining Regional Integration through Research and Analysis," *Regional Integration Observer*, 1(1), (2013).
- ⁸ See, S. Grimm, "Institutional change in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) since 1994: A fresh start after the devaluation shock? *Africa spectrum*, (1999), Pp: 5-32; and DC Bach. "The politics of West African economic co-operation: CEAO and ECOWAS." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 4 (1983): 605-623; and Amuwo, Kunle. "France and the economic integration project in Francophone Africa." *African Journal of Political Science/Revue Africaine de Science Politique* 4, no. 1 (1999): 1-20.
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- ¹⁰ Y. Gowon, "The Economic Community of West African States: a study in political and economic integration." PhD diss., University of Warwick, (1984), p. 394.
- ¹¹ ECW/CM (2)/1, Meeting of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, Lagos 18-19 November 1977.
- ¹² The Council passed Resolution ECW/CM/ (2) / Res. 2 Concerning Access of the Secretariat of the Community to the reports and Documents prepared for Member States and ECW/CM/ (2) /Res. 1 concerning Technical Assistance and Cooperation.
- ¹³ A. Gaye, ECOWAS AT 20: The Challenges of a Community, *The West African Bulletin*, Department of Information of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 1995, p. 2.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Article 7 addressed the decision-making powers and retained the powers to decide the process for the transmission of decisions and directives by the Authority and the Council of Ministers, as well as matters relating to their entry into force by the Authority. Article 6 (2) a-b-c-d & (3) conferred on the Council the powers of management, monitoring, decision-making and directions and made them binding on all the subordinate institutions of the Community, unless otherwise decided by the Authority.
- ¹⁶ In his remarks at the 27th Session of the Council of Ministers, held between the 22-27 May 1990 in Banjul, the Executive Secretary, Dr Abbas Bundu, suggested that the integration scheme be more rationalised and urged the Council to consider setting up an interim ministerial committee to monitor member states' program and policy implementation. Both proposals were rejected by the Council. See, ECW/CM/XXV11/17/Rev. 1, 22-27 May 1990.
- ¹⁷ J J Rawlings. "Time to Act", A paper delivered at the regional integration forum, Dakar, in the *The West African Bulletin*, p. 3 - 4.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ RB Persaud, N Kumarakulasingham, "Violence and ordering of the Third World: an introduction." *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2019): 199-206.
- ²⁰ D Quattara Aboubakar "Rethinking Regional Integration," in, *The West African Bulletin*, p. 5.
- ²¹ The Treaty of the Economic Community 14843, p. 20.
- ²² Article 4(1) provided that the institutions of the community shall be: (a) the Authority of Heads of State and Government; (b) the Council of Ministers; (c) the Executive Secretariat; (d) the Tribunal of the Community; and (e) the following technical and specialized commissions: the Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payments Commission; the Industry, Agriculture and Natural Resources Commission; the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Commission; the Social and Cultural Affairs Commission; and such other Commissions or bodies as may be established by the Authority of Heads of State and Government. See, The Treaty of the Economic C, 14843, 1975, 21.
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DRESS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY AMONG THE YORUBA DURING THE PRECOLONIAL TIMES

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Abstract

The study focuses on the relationship between dress and the Yoruba people; ranging from class, status and identity periods before western influence. The place of dress in society has been for a long time an aspect that has limitedly aroused the interest of scholars and researchers as a social-historical issue. This study is situated to focus on this area that has been hugely overlooked in the studied past of the socio-cultural lives of the Nigerian people, as regard the Yoruba people. This paper examines the significance of dress and its role in shaping the cultural identity of the Yoruba during precolonial times. Specifically, it discusses the various forms of dress used by different classes of people in the Yoruba kingdom, including the types of fabric, colour, complexity, and decoration employed to emphasise gender, rank, and occupational status. It analyses how the Yoruba constructed and expressed their individual and collective identities, and how Yoruba dress reveals the level of wealth that certain members of the society held. In addition, this paper looks at evidence from ethnographic, and historical sources, by examining various visual and material artefacts from the period, including clothing material and styles, that illuminate how dress communicated and reinforced the values, beliefs, and cultural norms of precolonial Yoruba society. The evidence revealed in this paper demonstrates how dress served as an important factor in the formation of an African identity before the onset of foreign invasion and colonialism.

Keywords: Culture, Dress, Identity, Traditional, Yoruba

Introduction

Culture is seen as the totality of the way of life evolved by people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment. Culture in essence simply implies a particular set of people's linguistic, social, political, economic, aesthetic, religious and philosophical modes and organization of a people, nation or ethnic group. In other words, it means the hallmark of the distinction as well as the

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- ²⁵ AO Victor Adetula "The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Challenges of Integration in West Africa," In *ECOWAS: Milestone in Regional Integration*, (Lagos: The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 2009), 40
- ²⁶ In an address to the 26th and 27th sessions of the Council of Ministers meetings of 29 November 1989 and 22 May 1990 at Lomé and Banjul respectively, the newly appointed Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr Abbass Bundu, urged the Council to find ways of propping up the implementation of ECOWAS cooperation programs and to begin the political process that would lead to the rationalization of the institutional arrangement in ECOWAS as a way of enhancing performance and delivery of objectives. See, ECW/CM XXVI/11/Rev. 1, 29 – 30 November 1989 Lome and ECW/CM/XXVI/11/Rev. 1, 22-27 May 1990 Banjul. Other IGOs and NGOs like the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) also made calls for changes in strategy by ECOWAS during series of conferences on West African integration, organized in Dakar, Lagos, Accra, Ouagadougou and Abidjan. See, Sunday Babalola Ajulo "The Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993): A Synopsis," *The Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 21 No. 1 & 2, (1995), p. 120.
- ²⁷ Babalola, "The Revised ECOWAS Treaty.
- ²⁸ ECW/CM. XXVII/17/REV. 1, Final Report, 27th Session of the Council of Ministers, Economic Community of West African States, p. 4.
- ²⁹ At its 13th ordinary summit in Banjul the Gambia, the Authority adopted and issued a decision tagged A/DEC. 10/5/90, 30 May 1990. By that decision the Authority directed the Executive Secretary to set up a Committee of Eminent Persons to undertake a review of the ECOWAS treaty.
- ³⁰ ECW/CM/XXXI/18/Rev. 1; 17 -20th July 1993, Cotonou.
- ³¹ DC Christopoulos, "Regional governance capacity and political agency: a comparative study of EU regions." *Available at SSRN 1366147* (2005).
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connection between one person and another. Dress style therefore reflects the culture and ecological zone of a particular set of people in a particular area. In all societies, dress beauty attractiveness has made it a status symbol, a suitable mode of communication whereby people with common interests can attain a common goal, not leaving out the Yoruba people.¹

Nigeria is seen as a multi-ethnic or multi-national entity in which the Yoruba ethnic group belong. The Yoruba culture areas are said to be so politically safe that the admittedly culturally distinct peoples have no common name for rhetorical rule;² but rather, within the boundaries of the competing pre-colonial states into which the distinct culture areas were organized. Thus, looking at the state of culture of the Yoruba people in the pre-colonial times, it tended to transform politics and politicization, due to the inter-state conflicts that took place amidst them. The major focus in this study though has nothing to do with the above stated point, but the fact remains that this laid the foundation for the state of culture of the Yoruba people today which due to the politics and politicization has opened itself to western influence which therefore becomes responsible for the state of the Yoruba dress culture today.³

The Yoruba people are seen as those who ascended from the generation of Oduduwa, who was believed to be the progenitor of the Yoruba race as sent by their god. These sets of people are believed to be spread all across the whole world with their culture. The culture (tradition and customs) of the Yoruba people is often displayed alongside their traditional religious practice, what this means is that there is always a sign of their belief and religious practice when the Yoruba people display their culture at every point in time. An instance is their mode of dressing which is often believed to depict the act of '*omoluabi*' and which portrays "the act of a child of God". Also is their act of help (*iran ara eni lowo*), which has a lot to do with their religious belief. Among all the people of the world, the Yorubas are seen to be part of the sect that successfully makes use of cloth, be it for work, parties, casual, mourning, festivals and all kinds of events done in the traditional Yoruba society. Cloth is seen by them as an instrument that portrays the glory of a household even before the coming of the foreigners into the land.

During the stay of W.H. Clarke in Yorubaland, precisely Lagos as noted in the work of Euba, part of what he noted is that dress, its size, colour, quantity and quality, played a vital role in the people's class system, even more so than the class system of the United States from where he came.⁴ In addition to this is the fact that "Yorubas are exceedingly fond of dress and fine clothes," and that "there is a variety of dress that is found in other countries and about with as much pride in the selection of style, colours, etc., even among the boasted civilised."⁵ The Yoruba people in their dress culture have different clothes which they wear at different seasons, times and occasions. Traditionally, in the Yoruba dress culture, the women's dress was not as much as those of the men, unlike today where women tend to have more clothing

styles and materials than men. In discussing the Yoruba dress culture this study will classify the dress worn by the Yoruba women from that of the men, since they are two different styles and materials.

Traditional Dress Style and Identity of the Yoruba People

Dress and style are two different concepts but in which one still cannot be separated from the other. The pre-colonial style of dress among the Yoruba people played fundamental roles in the creation of a person or a group's ideal personality. Historicizing how the body is adorned and what this means in the creation of a person's ideal personality is fundamentally about two phenomena that are deep in the history of the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria.⁶

Before the advent of the Europeans, men and women who took their origin from the Yoruba race were known to have clothed themselves most traditionally. The styles of winding cloth about the body varied including a wrapper worn by women, drawn up under the arms, and a wrapper worn by men, drawn between the legs. As far back as 1300, the city of Oyo-Ile was known logically to be the probable centre of clothing styles and development and probably played a link with Sudan, an important role in the introduction of flowing gowns and embroidery patterns from the ancient cities of Northern Nigeria and from further afield in North Africa.⁷ So therefore, the traditional clothing comes with a blend of preferences of beads coiffure and wrappers inherited from antiquity, with styles received from different parts of Yorubaland.

The notable styles of the Yoruba people in the past are said to be loose flowing robes like the people of the East, where one of the traditions of origin of the Yoruba have been traced to.⁸ The men in the pre-colonial times wore gowns, vest, and a very free and ample kind of trousers called *sokoto*. Instead of the gown sometimes a sheet of cloths three yards by two is thrown around the body for a covering, passing under the right arm-pit, and overlapping over the left shoulder. In ancient times the gowns were made very plain and were of purely native manufacture.⁹ They were without embroidery on the breast and around the neck; only the notable people like the kings and chiefs wore gowns made of superior stuff richly embroidery. The covering for the common people is known as *elegodo*. The gown often referred to as the *agbada* was a hand-woven textile which comprised two sorts, namely the *suliya*, and *giriike*. The *suliya* is the smallest, plainest and lightest; always made of white material, it reaches more down much below the knee, open at the sides, with the arm stretched the sleeve would reach as far as the wrist, but long and pointed below. The *giriike* is the largest and heaviest, it is like *agbada* but ampler; it is much embroidered, reaching also as far as the ankles, and extends beyond the arms.¹⁰



An example of the *girike* and *suliya* traditional style of Yoruba cloth for men

As for the vest, this is known as *kukumo* over which the gown or loose cloth is thrown. It is sleeveless and without a collar, and open in the front. The vest was made of different stuff, like the native stuff or the one made of crimson dye (*alari*) or of rough silk (*sanyan*) which were the most respectable and more costly. Apart from the *kukumo*, there was also a vest termed *ewu*, which looks much like *kukumo*, but what makes the difference is that the *ewu* has sleeves and even was more commonly used. It was often worn under the gown as underwear and made of white stuff. These were the originally produced vests that dominated the traditional Yorubaland.¹¹

There was also the trouser called *sokoto* by the Yorubas which were made into different shapes and lengths, but were all kept around the waist by a strong cord reaching down through the legs. They are worn below the vest and include types like; *ladugbo*, *aibopo*, the *alongo*, the *kafo*, *kembe*, *efa* also known as *abenughangba*, *wondo* and lastly the *agadansi*. With each of them having its own style as being sown.¹²

There were also clothes of different styles for women as the men in the past, but at this point women's clothing was much simpler than men. For instance, two or three wrappers and a head-dress or circlet complete their toilet.¹³ In those days, there were many differences in the selection of clothes for married women and unmarried. There was the belief that if a woman is getting married there has to be few changes in the kinds or styles of clothes she wears. As for the unmarried women, they used two wrappers, the unmarried woman uses generally two wrappers, the under wrapper being fixed above the breasts. This was made of fine cloth and was heavier. The

upper cloth was fixed about the middle of the body; and made of lighter cloth. To these married women added a third, used as a shawl, or covering for the head and back. Underneath all these, and immediately next the body was worn from the age of puberty a short apron or petticoat reaching the knees, and tied around the waist with a strong cord or band, which was called *tobi*.¹⁴

In an interview with an old tailor at Lagos Island, he said that according to oral tradition (what he heard from older generations who were tailors too), all the Yoruba people in pre-colonial times wore the native/traditional cloth, in which the materials in vogue then were the *aso-oke*, *saflet*, etc. are sown into certain styles. He also stated that styles in the traditional Lagos were not much, only the common *buba* and *sokoto* for the youth, this also becomes applicable in other places.¹⁵

The Yoruba people in their dress culture have clothes for the purpose of mourning, the old men cover themselves with the covering cloth (*aso ibora*), while the young men wear the normal *buba* or *dansiki*, not better than casual wear. The women at this point wore casual clothes till the period of mourning was over. All the clothes worn by the men and women to mourn were black in colour.¹⁶ In cases where the person who died was very old, the children of such household or the person who died would wear their best clothes '*itele apoti*' because it was seen as a good thing if children succeeded their parents, those who were older than or the same age as the deceased would cover themselves with black covering cloth and the adult women would tie a dyed black cloth. The wife of the deceased will also wear black cloth without the '*yeri*' (the under-skirt worn by the Yoruba women) and costumes for three months.¹⁷

The Yoruba people of Nigeria were known to cherish their traditional clothes so much that they have proverbs that show the importance they attach to it. Just like every other traditional African society the Yoruba people exhibit the value of cloth and dress. The Yoruba will say *eniyan l'aso mi* equating the value of cloth to human beings, also is the saying that '*ki araye ma gba aso iyi lara mi*' here cloth is being compared to honour and respect which most people aspire not to lose. The ubiquitous use of family dress or *aso ebi* is of relevance in this discussion.¹⁸ *Aso ebi* practice which is a cultural tradition, has endured despite modernization, among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. *Aso ebi* which means family cloth among the Yoruba was practised at the onset among the families of the Yoruba and originally meant to be a family uniform to enable the quests to identify members of the family during the occasion. However, it was discovered in recent times, that it has diffused into other groups in Nigeria. '*Aso ebi* practice is a popular trend that has taken over the Nigerian fashion scene.'¹⁹ The *aso ebi* dresses were mostly made from *aso oke*, *java*, *ankara*, *silk*, *george* and *guinea* materials. There were lots of commemorative cloths of different themes and motifs, in all the Yoruba societies and largely elsewhere. Within a short period, there can be nearly a complete turnover in the patterns and colour combinations available in the market. Some prints commemorate events and do not last on the shelf, and this even gave the subject of history to research into

such events through the use of the commemorative cloth that was used at such period.²⁰

Clothing and textile products were very lucrative once they entered the local market. Their value was mainly determined by the taste and understanding of the buyer. Likewise, the product's aesthetic qualities, functionality, ritual history or status as souvenir attracts the buyer. Yoruba dressing culture in all spheres of life has had a great impact on other cultures, through trade, movements and linkages, etc.²¹ The Yoruba people have developed distinctive forms of dress to communicate and enhance cultural meanings.²² It has been noted that traders carried with them richly decorated traditional costumes across the borders to other countries, in the traditional past and till these contemporary times clothing and textiles art are being valued for economic empowerment within Africa and beyond.²³

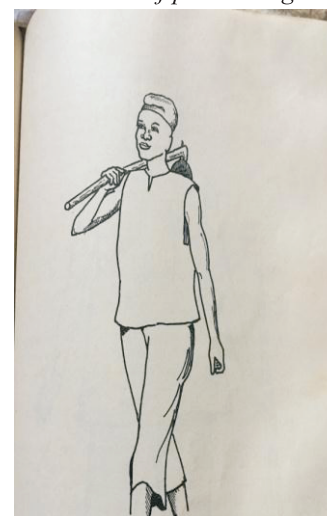
The value of the local textile materials ranged from the durable and thick *kijipa* (calico) which was much demanded and used extensively for farming to ceremonial textile materials such as *petuje*, *etu*, *alaari*, *adire*, *okitiponpon* (handwoven cloth accompanied with *gbariye* (flowing robe) and *kembe* (wide trousers) etc.²⁴ Apart from the stated function alongside religious and royal usage, some other values of textile weaving included being used as protective materials for the body against rain, sun and other dangers on the body. Decency was attached to the weaving of the Yoruba traditional cloth apart from its reflection of identity and status for men and women.²⁵



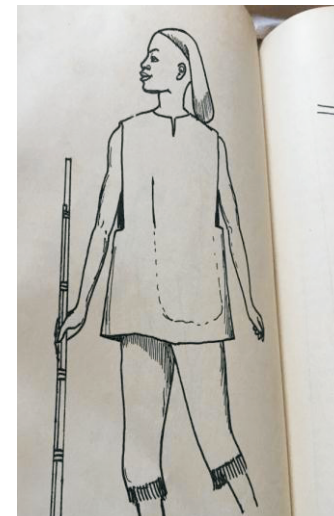
The *gbariye agbada* with *kembe* trouser for the traditional Yoruba rich men

Identity and the Yoruba day-to-day use of dress

The Yoruba people in their dress culture have different clothes which they wear at different seasons, times and occasions. The Yoruba dress culture includes the 'work dress' (*aso ise*), for this the Yoruba men who are farmers wore what they called *ewu gberi* and *sokoto digo*, while the women in all their occupation such as trading, farming, etc wore the usual *buba*, *ilabiru*, and *iro*.²⁶ All the clothes worn at this point in time were dyed, and the dyes used are in most cases used to name the cloth. The hunters wore *gberi* (with pockets in front and back), while some others wore the usual *buba* (with short sleeves) alongside *sokoto penpe* (shots), while those of them who had attained a high positions in the occupation wore what was known as *sokoto soro* (lengthy trouser), and their *buba* will have side and front pocket. The iron smiths wore *kijipa* with *digo* trousers also like that of the farmers and hunters.²⁷



A work cloth for a Yoruba farmer
(*aso ise agbe- gberi agbe*).



A work cloth for a Yoruba hunter
(*aso ise ode- gberi ode*)

For casual wears, the Yoruba men wore clothes according to their social status that is their outfits often depict their richness. The kind of casual clothes worn by the rich might be better than that of the poor. The most commonly worn is the *gberi* and *sokoto digo* or *abidan* for casual. Others are *buba* and *soro*, *dasiki* and *soro*, *sapara*, *oyala*, and *sokoto soro* or *latan*. After work, some of these men tie wrapper (*aso ibora*) to enjoy the breeze in the evening.²⁸

For great occasions, Yoruba men dress well to party to be noticed among friends and peers. This is evident in the Yoruba proverb which says '*aso ti o ba ye ni laa ro, ewu ti o ye ni laa wo*' meaning 'cloth is worn according to one's riches' and another which says, '*aso igba ni aa da fun igba; bi a ti mo laa se, enikan kii sin omo*

ni iyawo ki o fi omo sofa’ interpreted ‘each cloth has its own time; and one should not do beyond his capacity’.²⁹ This becomes applicable because, some of those men go to the extent of borrowing cloth so that they will also be recognized among their peers.³⁰ Also, those men who held high positions in society like kings, chiefs, rich, wealthy, and enlightened wear clothes that portray their position in society. This is evident in the proverb which says “*a kii fi ola jeyo, sugbon a maa fi ola lo aso*”.³¹ For the average/not well to do people in the Yoruba society, on great occasions, they wear the *buba*, and *sokoto soro*; *dasiki* and *sokoto soro*, or *latan*; *oyala* with *sokoto atu* and *sapara* with *sokoto soro*.³²

For rich men and chiefs in the society, they wear *dandogo* (a big and expensive cloth), *gbariye*, *agbada*, *sapara*, *oyala*, *dansiki*, *buba*, *sulia*, *kafutaani*, *jalabu*, all these comes with their own trouser. Other trousers in Yoruba wears included; *digo*, *bante*, *latan* (also known as *abidan*), *soro*, *atu/kembe*, *kamu*, *agbantara* and *idan/nangudu*.³³



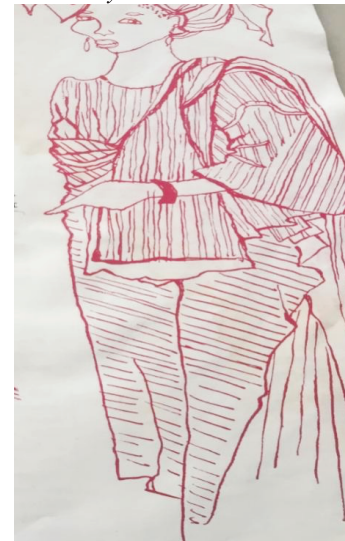
Example of the Sapara style and Dandogo style of dress for Yoruba rich men in the pre-colonial times

For women, the most common casual wear is the *buba* and *iro* with *ilabiru*, *tobi* or *yeri* which are cheap. There was a huge difference between the rich women, who portray the wealth of their rich family in the way they dress, and poor women when it comes to dress. It was also through this dress that they were able to identify which woman was from a royal household or from the chief’s household and those who were not.³⁴



Example of Yoruba women complete traditional casual and work cloth

For great occasions, Yoruba women’s clothing was not as much as that of the men, but the materials used such as the *sanyan*, *etu*, *alaari*, and all kinds of *aso-ofi*, are expensive. The women also used clothes like *damasiki*, *alagbaa*, *aran*, *erinje*, etc. wrapper cloth (*aso-iro*) and top (*ewu buba*) which is a top little lower than the navel with long sleeves worn. The *tobi* or *igbanu* is used alongside the *aso iro*, and used to keep money, while the *yeri* is worn as underskirt.³⁵



Yoruba rich women traditional dress

Conclusion

Based on the study so far, cloth/dress/textiles among the Yoruba people have been turned into a scroll where the socio-cultural map of the society can be viewed and enjoyed; it often documents the historical and symbolic past and also serve as a reference point not only in the traditional Yoruba society but also every part of the world. The act and art of dress have been revealed as appealing to aesthetic senses and contributing to culture. It helps establish pride in the community and gives inspiration to people; this is seen in the attitude of the Yoruba people when it comes to covering their nakedness. It has also been revealed as an instrument that helps to relieve boredom with the transformation made in the decorations on cloth, such as sowing styles and different embroidery/designs made on it.

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Abstract

The paper examines the historical antecedents of the domestic and global factors responsible for the multi-dimensional conflicts that characterise the Nigerian polity. These internal conflicts have resulted in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as gross violations of human rights. These conflicts have ultimately led to the near collapse of the Nigerian state as they have produced severe economic crunch, and disrupted the provision of public services by government institutions. Using a qualitative-dominant approach comprising the analyses of secondary sources, the paper contends that the conflicts are largely reflections of the crises of state-building which are perpetuated by structural and global conditions ranging from the nature of post-independence Nigerian state, the inability to develop an inclusive and accountable political system, the manner of Nigeria's incorporation into the global economic system, to the deplorable social, cultural, economic and political consequences of globalisation, among others. The paper concludes that when these debilitating conditions are addressed, the country will be on the way to curbing the scourge of internal conflagration.

Keywords: Conflicts, structural, domestic, global, historical antecedents, Nigeria.

Introduction

Internal conflict and all forms of insecurity in Nigeria such as insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflict, mass killing of innocent peoples, gender based and sexual violence, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, as well as violent separatist agitations are perpetrated by different groups. The result was the emergence of several millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as gross violations of human rights. Whatever character the conflicts may have assumed, they have ultimately led to the near collapse of the Nigerian state, producing severe economic downturn and disrupting the provision of public services by government institutions. It is argued that these conflicts are manifestations of a crisis of state-building which are perpetuated by structural and global conditions

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such as the nature of the post-independence Nigerian state, the inability to develop an accountable and inclusive political system, the manner of Nigeria's incorporation into the global capitalist economic system, as well as the deplorable social, cultural, economic and political consequences of globalisation, among others. All these have undermined the state-building and nation-building processes in the country, thereby giving rise to internal conflagration. This paper is aimed at examining these domestic and global factors with a view to proffering solutions to the menace.

It is a well-known fact that during the colonial era Europe had exploited the human and material resources of Africa. Africans laboured to keep the European industries in motion through the supply of raw materials and the consumption of imported industrial goods of Europe. In this process, certain colonial and administrative policies of Europe reduced African businessmen and traders to mere marginal agents of the European companies,¹ such that as Europe developed, Africa was underdeveloped. From about the early 1960s, most African countries had gained their independence from the European colonial powers. It was then thought that the debilitating effects of colonialism on African development would be a foregone conclusion. As the African nationalists took over the mantle of leadership from the departing colonial administrators, they geared towards improving the political and economic fortunes of the continent. But it is amazing that after several decades of this independence, post-independence African leaders and politicians would appear to have performed worse than their forebears (the pre-colonial African potentates and war-lords) who perverted their local resources and institutions and sold their kith and kin into slavery to increase their wealth during the era of the Atlantic slave trade.² Karl Maier notes that 'in their current incarnation, they sell their resources - oil in the case of Nigeria - instead of human beings'.³ It is also true that the proceeds from this oil business are stashed away in their personal bank accounts in the developed countries of the world, thereby impoverishing the masses and consigning them to 'modern economic slavery'.⁴ This abysmal performance was the result of neo-colonial strategies implanted by the erstwhile colonial administrators and their collusion with the post-independence African leaders who have been serving as their internal lackeys. Thus, a formerly colonised nation has no hope of developing until it breaks effectively with the vicious circle of dependence and exploitation which characterises imperialism'.⁵

Almost all countries in Africa, at present, could be adjudged a 'failed state'. A failed state, here, refers to a state that is incapable of meeting the needs and aspirations of its citizens.⁶ In such a state, the leaders fail to accomplish their own part of the social contract they willingly enter into with the governed. In the social contract, the masses or the governed place their destiny and welfare in the hands of the political leaders, while the leaders on their part pledge to meet the needs of the governed. Put succinctly, a failed state is a state that has failed to provide the basic needs of living to its citizens, such as adequate security, healthcare, food, water, a

good road network and electricity, among others. In this connection, Nigeria has been adjudged to be within the category of failed states in the Global South.⁶ The paper is divided into five sections beginning with the abstract, followed by the introduction which gives a general background of the study; the next section deals with a survey of the domestic factors responsible for intrastate violence in Nigeria; the fourth section is an analysis of the international factors that aided the emergence of this malaise; this is followed by the last section, the conclusion.

A Survey of the Domestic Front

The nature of the Nigerian colonial state is a critical factor in the lingering political crises that have engulfed the Nigerian project in the post-independence era. The crises are a result of a fragile political entity bequeathed by the erstwhile British colonial administrators. The country was ushered into independence on a tripartite arrangement to keep it perpetually divided and under the British sphere of influence, even after the phone independence. The political leadership of the country was split into three to achieve the British motive of 'divide and rule'. For instance, the British governed Northern and Southern Nigeria as separate administrative units. In 1946, the South was bifurcated into East and West by Richard's Constitution of that year, thereby dividing the country into three regions, with Lagos as the overall coordinating centre. And by the Tripartition Act, 'the British deliberately placed a greater percentage of the land and people of Nigeria in the North, putting the percentages of the population at 54.5% (North), 20.0 (West), 23.0 (East), and 2.5 (Southern Cameroon which was then part of Nigeria)'.⁷

Thus, arising from the divisive colonial Constitutions and the disproportionate distribution of political gains and roles to the three major ethnic groups, there was no genuine attempt by the British at creating an enduring political entity, national integration or democratic unity.⁸ The British contrived Clifford's (1922), Richard's (1946), and Macpherson's (1954) Constitutions used for administering an amalgamated Nigeria and 'entrenched regionalism and ethnic sentiments in the country. By October 1953 when the federal constitution was introduced into Nigeria, the North, by the deliberate act of the British had become larger than the other two (East and West) combined, against the principle of true federalism in which the federating units are, more or less, equal. With this scenario, conflict and instability became inevitable'.⁹

Conscious of this anomaly, independent Nigeria's political leaders, both civil and military, began to tinker with different strategies and ways to institute a viable, durable and coherent political system for the country. But this task of nation building has been made more complex by the multi-ethnic character of the Nigerian state as well as the mutual fears of domination by the various ethnic groups that make up the country – a situation that has been exploited by some ethnic chauvinists to fan, *ad nauseam*, the embers of discord within the polity. Thus, harmonising the centrifugal and divergent ethnic interests into productive national endeavours

became a major challenge to the emergent political leadership of post-independence Nigeria.

Given that Nigeria is a product of liberation struggle, it is expected ideally, to be an agent for the empowerment of its citizens. Again, the state being an overarching organisation of all citizens, the terms of membership or incorporation should be subject to inclusive decisions. In addition, policy decisions should be products of the democratic process which create an environment conducive to cooperation among the various actors, including the government, private sector, civil society groups, intelligentsia, and various ethnic groups. It is only such an accountable, inclusive, and transparent process that assures the citizens that policy decisions are based on broad societal interests. It is also such features that give the state the internal dynamics to nurture a cohesive political community and to develop its administrative capacity. But all these qualities are lacking.

Another structural problem is the inability to develop an inclusive and accountable political system that benefits all citizens of the Nigerian state. It is incontrovertible that an inclusive and accountable political system is a critical factor in bonding the different ethnic groups into a cohesive political community, and this will go a long way in promoting national loyalty and state-building. We note that in this modern era when the concept of democracy has gained universal acceptance, some religious and ethnic chauvinists may resist incorporation into a state if they perceive that their collective interests and advancement will not be assured by the state, and if the cost of incorporation exceeds the benefits they could derive from such a union.¹⁰

This brings to the fore the renewed quest for the actualisation of the sovereign state of Biafra by several Igbo separatist groups such as the Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Independent Movement (BIM), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Though IPOB is the most active, the membership of these political movements is dominated by youths who did not experience the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970. Therefore, the renewed resurgence of agitation for Biafra by the younger generation – ‘secondary victims’¹¹ – is a pointer to the fact that the post-civil war reconciliation efforts of the federal government is a farce as the Igbo have continued to suffer political and economic exclusion within the Nigerian union since the end of the war. The unceasing disillusionment of the Igbo in the Nigerian union arising from several anti-Igbo policies and actions lends credence to James O’Connell’s assertion that ‘many Igbo remain secessionists at heart even though they accepted the Biafran defeat’.¹²

Analysing the Global Factors

Evidence has shown that the manner in which Nigeria, and Africa in general, was incorporated into the global economic system undermines her state-

building process. This process of incorporation entailed four different phases, the first one occurring roughly between the middle of the fifteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century, which in itself had at least two stages. These include the period of the early commercial incorporation and the pillage of Africa during the era of the European slave trade between 1500 and 1890. It was during this period that roughly twenty-two million slaves were forcefully exported out of Africa.¹³ It is now generally agreed that the Atlantic slave trade and slavery, that the commoditisation and dehumanisation of peoples of African descent in the New World, are important factors in the economic underdevelopment of Africa. But apart from the monumental economic dislocations, the slave trade left lingering negative effects in the form of inter-ethnic tensions in many parts of Africa and Nigeria, in particular, so that it became difficult for the different groups to forge the necessary bonds needed for a unified and cohesive political entity.

The era of direct colonialism between the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 and the decolonisation process of the 1960s corresponds to the second phase of this incorporation. That conference, convened by leading European powers without African representation, gave rise to what we now call the Scramble for Africa, and it ‘created new boundaries that did violence to Africa’s ancient societies and resulted in tension-prone modern states’.¹⁴ Nigeria’s political map and economic structures, just as any other former African colony of Europe, were formed during the era of colonialism. Africa’s place in the global division of labour was entrenched during this phase. No doubt, fundamental and lasting changes in Africa’s indigenous cultures and institutions took place during this period. But the legacies of colonialism, including fragmented economic and political structures, conflictual state boundaries and ethnic animosity cultivated through divide and rule tactics and differentiated treatment by the European powers, have constituted serious setbacks to post-independence African states in nation-building.

On 12 June 2006, former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and his Cameroonian counterpart, President Paul Biya, endorsed an international document known as the Green Tree Agreement, formally transferring the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon. The document also dealt with how Nigeria would vacate the region, richly endowed with mineral oil and marine resources, following the 10 October 2002 verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), after a series of long-drawn conflicts. The judgement of the ICJ was clearly a repetition of the mistake made in the 1913 Agreement which did not take into consideration the historical and cultural imperatives of the boundary peoples. The Nigerian government, on its part, did not put forward adequate representation and were quick in yielding to the pressures of international politics at the political and economic detriment of the country and the Bakassi people in particular, who had been uprooted from their ancestral homeland.

The genesis of the conflict over the control and ownership of the Peninsula goes back to the early colonial boundary demarcation exercise. That 1913 Agreement clearly surrendered Nigerian territory to the Germans and this has led to

series of post-independence conflicts between Nigeria and Cameroon beginning in 1994, as that exercise failed to take cognizance of the demographic complexion of the boundary zone from the pre-colonial times. The historicity of the Ibibio, and later, the Efik as the earliest settlers of the zone cannot be overemphasised.¹⁵

The three decades between the beginning of decolonisation in the early 1960s and the end of the Cold War in 1991 marks the third phase of Nigeria's incorporation. Despite the loosening effects of decolonisation and the Cold War on African countries and Nigeria in particular, such as diversified trading partners and the expansion of public services by African states, the proto colonial nature of the Nigerian state, alongside fragmented and distorted economy and weak civil society, hamstrung Nigeria's ability to redefine her term of integration into the global economy. The situation ultimately worked against her state-building endeavours.

The fourth phase corresponds to the post-Cold War era of globalisation which represents a significantly modified term of integration of African economies into the global economy. With globalisation came the withdrawal of state involvement in economic activities, alongside policies of liberalisation – the openness of the economy. These became some of the conditions for the integration of the economies of the Global South into the global economy dominated by the Global North. Thus, countries of the South have been unable to reap benefits from globalisation due to several weaknesses. Following their colonial experience, they became economically weak due to lack of domestic economic capacity and weak social infrastructure. Low export prices and marked decline in terms of trade were the order of the day. Added to these are the unending debt crises and the burden of debt servicing. Other factors that undermine the development process in the South include the tough conditionalities attached to loan rescheduling packages, unequal capacity between the North and the South in the development of information and communications technologies, dictatorships, abuse of power and economic mismanagement. Put differently, the South was consigned to a weak position to face the challenges of globalisation because the conditions for success in the liberalisation process were absent.¹⁶

No doubt, the consequences of globalisation have led to several social, economic and political problems in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, including the intensification of social inequalities, deindustrialisation and further loss of sovereignty of the African state in policy-making. These unhealthy developments have exacerbated the crisis of state-building in Nigeria, manifesting in various forms of conflict situations.

Conclusion

With the foregoing analysis, we can pontificate that Nigeria can make real progress in averting conflicts of all forms, including violent extremism, and accelerating state-building by democratising her political economy. This is because

the country has been wobbling through the vicissitudes of nationhood arising from both inept handling of its national affairs and deliberate denials of socio-political and economic opportunities to the citizenry. It is these deprivations that have led to myriads of conflict, manifesting in ethnic militias, kidnappings, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, insurgency and secessionist agitations across the country.¹⁷ As a matter of urgency, official policy and implementation, there is a need to maximise Nigeria's human and material resources, granting equal and unfettered access to gainful and legitimate opportunities to all Nigerians.

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A RE-EXAMINATION OF ESAN ORIGIN

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Abstract

In the study of the origin of Esan, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the Benin tradition of origin. This is because the Benin palace historians wrote the early history of Esan. The Benin palace historians have maintained that the Esan people originated from Benin to claim superiority over Esan. Recently, scholars have rejected the notion that Esan originated from Benin. They hinged their argument on the idea that Esan existence predated the reign of Ewuare, the great of Benin in the fifteenth Century, under whose reign the Esan people were said to have fled Benin to their present location. Unsurprisingly, the Esan-Benin tradition of origin has a high place in the discussion of the tradition of origin among historians. This paper, therefore, examines the origin of the Esan tradition. The study will bring a clear understanding of the origin of the Esan people of the present Edo state of Nigeria by analyzing some contentious issues surrounding the origin of Esan. Using primary and secondary sources, the paper finds and explores that the Esan people of the present Edo State existed before the reign of Oba Ewuare in the 15th Century. The paper further finds out that the Esan people, for a long time, left the history of the origin of the Esan in the hands of the Benin palace chiefs, and hence, they tell the story to suit their interest.

Keywords: Re-examination, Origin of Esan, Benin, Historian, Reign, Palace Chief

Introduction

Recently, studies on the origin of Esan have gained academic attention in Nigerian historiography. Generally speaking, the studies on the origin of Esan may be categorized into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The pre-colonial period covers the oral stories told before the coming of the British colonial government. The oral stories were dominated by Benin palace chiefs who told the story to suit their interest or to maintain superiority over other groups around them. The second study on the origin of Esan was conducted during the colonial period. In 1897, the British punitive forces captured Benin following the massacre of seven

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English visitors, and this led to the deportation of Oba Ovonramwen to Calabar.¹ Eweka II, who succeeded Oba Ovonramwen, was forced to submit to British rule in colonial Nigeria.

In colonial administration, Esan was a division in the Benin Province with these districts - Ubiaja, Uromi, Irrua, Ekpoma, and Ewohimi. The British colonial government wrote a lot of intelligent reports on the origin of Esan. Since they have no good knowledge of the local conditions of the people, most of their reports need more substance. Apart from the challenge of good local knowledge, the intelligent report of the British colonial government was primarily conditioned by the need to prepare a smooth ground for the implementation of colonial policies.² The Intelligence report aimed to examine if the existing system of native administration was acceptable to the people.

The Benin tradition of origin largely dominated post-colonial studies on the origin of Esan. In recent times, the Benin tradition of origin was interrogated by scholars like A. E. Afigbo, Anthony Okoduwa, Leonard Otuede, Efosa B. Oseghale, and Williams Ehizuwa Orukpe, to mention a few. The scholars above have rejected the notion that Esan originated from Benin. They based their argument on the idea that Esan existence predated the reign of Oba Ewuare the great of Benin, under whose reign Esan people fled Benin to their present abode in the fifteenth Century. This paper aims to re-examine the origin of the Esan people in the Edo State of Nigeria. The paper is structured into four parts, starting with the introduction. The background of the Esan follows the introduction. The third part examines the various traditions of the origin and other information surrounding the origin of the Esan people. This section extensively discusses the challenges in the Benin tradition of origin. The final section is the conclusion.

The Esan People

Esan is the second major ethnic group in Edo state, located on a plateau about 134 meters above sea level. Esan people are in the Central Senatorial district of the present Edo State of Nigeria and occupy a land mass of about 1,858 square kilometres northeast of Benin, the Edo State capital.³ The people are in five local government areas: Esan South East, Esan North East, Esan West, Esan Central, and Igueben. Esan is bounded in the West by Orhiomwon Local Government Area while on the North by Etsako East and West local government areas. On the south, the area is bordered by Ika, Aniocha, and Oshimili North local government areas of Delta State, and on the East by River Niger and Ibagi local government area of Kogi State. Esan polities include: Uruwa (Irrua), Uronmun (Uromi), Uwoka (Ugboha), Orikhiri (Ewohimi), Ubiaza (Ubiaja), Ekunma (Ekpoma), Eilu (Ewu), Okhodua, Uzea, Ebone (Ebelle), Amaho (Amahor), Emulun (Emu), Udo, Okalo, Ugbegun, Ewatto, Opoji, Ekpon, Okhuesan, Ewossa, Ogwa, Oria, Ugun, Urohi, Ukhun, Egoro, Ujiogba, Ido. ⁴ The bracketed equivalents are the Anglicized form of the original words. "It is also

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claimed that some Esan settlements exist outside its immediate boundaries in places like Owan, Etsako and even Akoko-Edo."⁵

The Nigerian 2006 population census put the population of Esan at 591,534, and the people have the propensity for a steady demographic growth.⁶ Esan has a tropical climate characterized by the dry and rainy seasons. While November to April is dry, December to February is usually the period of dry wind and harmattan occasioned by the northeast trade winds. The rainy season starts in late March or early April. Esan people are predominantly farmers, even though other economic activities such as hunting, basket weaving, blacksmithing, and cloth weaving exist.⁷ Because of the fertile nature of Esan's soil, Agricultural activities thrived well in the area. The cultivation of cash crops for export and local consumption flourishes highly in the area. The economic activities practised in Esan revolved around agriculture. Okoduwa affirms this: "Pre-colonial Esan society depended on agriculture, which provides a suitable foundation on which other economic pursuits were based".⁸ In the same vein, Osagie also maintains that: "despite the existence of other economic activities such as cloth weaving, basket weaving, blacksmithing, and hunting, Esan was an agrarian society."⁹

The availability of arable, fertile land made the people depend more on land cultivation and less on trade and other aspects of production. Okojie recorded that "the Ishans are poor traders, but for Uromi women who are tireless traders, one would have been correct to say that the only trade in Ishan until recently was limited to the sale and buying of local foodstuffs in the markets."¹⁰ Apart from this factor, the land was surplus and not scarce in Esan. By 1910, save for patches of resistance in the region, the entire Esan area had succumbed to British rule."¹¹ The British colonial government administered Esan under the Benin Province in colonial times. Esan was located in the Western Region, when Nigeria had three regions, and in the Mid-Western Region, when the country became four regions. When the Nigerian-Biafran war broke out in 1967, the area was under the Midwestern region. Ishan is the Anglicized form of Esan, which resulted from the British colonial government's inability to pronounce the word correctly. Esan is the ethnic group that occupies central Edo State.

Esan Tradition of Origin

In most pre-literate societies (Esan inclusive), the matter of origin and migration is very controversial. This is because many African communities define themselves through their tradition of origin, which is the basis of unity. The tradition of origin cannot be ignored because they are part and parcel of the mental and intellectual equipment communities use to define who they are.¹² Okoduwa notes that "the origin of Esan has been the subject of great controversy since the major tool for reconstruction of the early Esan history has been oral traditions in which various communities lay claim to one migration or the other."¹³

Among the Esan traditions of origin, the Benin tradition enjoys prominence. Okogie states that the word Esan is a Benin word meaning jump or flee. He affirms further that before the use of the word Esan to describe the present geographical location of Esan, many vital groups like Ubiaza(Ubiaja), Uromun(Uromi), Ekunma(Ekpoma), Owoha(Ughoha), Orikhimi(Ewohimi) to mention a few were already in existence without a familiar name.¹⁴ Esan migration from Benin took place in the 15th Century when Oba Ewuare the Great, enraged by the death of his two sons in mysterious circumstances, enacted obnoxious laws forbidding sexual intercourse in the land, washing, sweeping of the houses or compounds, drumming and dancing, and the making of fire in the land for three years. The laws were to be observed for three years as a mark of respect for the sons of the Oba who died. The laws "resulted in hunger and starvation, diseases, unsanitary conditions and other form of human degradation."¹⁵ The hardship associated with the new laws made many people leave Benin.¹⁶

According to Okojie, It was easy for the inhabitants of Benin to live a filthy life; it was easy to live on raw food like bananas, ripe plantains, and fruits; the people could live without dancing for a decade. But for a man to live with his wife in the house and not to respond to nature was not conceivable.¹⁷ J Egharevba also notes, "The early people of Esan or Ishan were Bini emigrants from the first and second periods of the Bini Empire. Esan is the name of the first man who migrated and became the founder and progenitor of Esan."¹⁸

Oseghale, in his submission, maintains that the Benin tradition of origin is prominent among the Esan tradition of origin. He affirms that:

Esan traditions of origin stated that at a point in the history of Benin, certain groups left the Kingdom to form new settlements. Some emigrant groups eventually settled northeast in different parts of what later became Esan. These emigrants... were either criminal or discontented and dissident Binis, or were royal emissaries or Equerries sent to form new settlements by the Oba of Benin.¹⁹

Osaghalé also affirms that the hardship created by Oba Ewuare's obnoxious laws occasioned by the mysterious death of his two sons made many citizens of Benin flee to places beyond the reach of the Oba. Among the fleeing people were Esan ancestors²⁰. These emigrants established the early Esan chiefdoms, which according to Oseghale, include: "Ekpoma (Ekumma), Uroni (Uronmun), Ubiaza (Ubiaja), Ugboha (Uwoka), Ewohimim (Orikhimi), Ewu (Eilu), Uzea, Emu (Emihun), Irrua (Uruwa), Ohordua (Okhuodua), Ebelle (Ebene), Amahor (Amaho), Ohalo, Izen, Ugbegun"²¹.

Bradbury affirms that the word Esan is a corruption of the Benin word esafua, which means those who fled. Many early Esan communities were founded by

immigrants from Benin who left to escape the oppressive laws enacted by Oba Ewuare.²² Bradbury also supported the Esan Benin tradition of origin when he stated that Esan cultural and social characteristics are closely related to Benin's. The traditional political framework of the Esan Kingdom is similar to that of the Benin Kingdom.²³ According to Bradbury, in Esan:

All the chiefdoms have grown with the addition of immigrants of widely diverse Edo-speaking and non-Edo origins, who accepted the authority of Onogie in whose territory they settled. The result is that nearly all the chiefdoms are of very heterogeneous composition. Most people claim descent from people who emigrated from the Benin kingdom for various reasons. They included warriors who did not return to Benin after fighting campaigns (e.g., against Idah and Uzia); relatives of the Oba and others who offended him; individuals placed by the Oba to guard shrines; craft or trading and ritual specialists who came to seek their fortunes or were invited by the enigie; enslaved people or servants sent down to the farm for chiefs in Benin who were responsible to the Oba for the administration of Ishan, etc. The enigie often encouraged settlers by giving them titles, honours, and privileges. Within Ishan, there was much migration from chiefdom to chiefdom, and many allegiances shifted from one one to another.

Bradbury accepted that there were immigrants from Benin and other places aside from Benin who must take the authority of the Onogie before they could settle in the place, which is a testimony to the fact that Esan communities existed before the arrival of these Benin and non-Benin migrants. Ekpoma, like other communities in Esan, trace their origin to Benin.²⁴ Burtcher's intelligence report on Esan concurred with the Benin tradition of Esan origin when he declared that the Esan's "tribal marks, type of features and other physical characters also proclaim their Edo origin."²⁵ J. U. Egharevba and Ryder also argued that Esan migrated from Benin due to the similarities in language and culture between the Esan and the Benin people. They should have realized that the migration of Esan and Benin from the same source and time may result in language and cultural similarity. Okoduwa states, "Esan progenitors may have had a common migrating stock with early Bini settlers."²⁶ Tradition has it that the founder of Egoro, Ekpoma, and Opoji came from Benin, with the title Ogie from Oba.²⁷

Scholars have contradicted the Benin tradition of the origin of Esan. They argued that people had occupied the geographical location called Esan before the reign of Oba Ewuare, the Great of Benin. There is evidence in the pre-colonial history of Esan that Esan land had long existed before the 15th Century. According to them, Benin palace historians have maintained that the Esan people originated from

Benin to claim superiority over Esan. Okoduwa notes, "Bini traditional or palace historians who are essentially imperial in their outlook see the origin of Esan as beginning from the reign of Oba Ewuare."²⁸ The history of small societies around the big Kingdom in Africa is derived from the big Kingdom or empire. Afigbo affirms this thus:

For all these reasons, small-scale societies adjoining ancient kingdoms or empires like Benin were considered, without much argument, as dependencies of those empires, or in any case, the political systems of such small-scale societies were regarded as political derivations from the systems of the said empires. For the same reasons, the history of these empires also became the history of the small scale Societies on their frontiers, or at least the primary source for explaining every critical aspect of the life of that society – the origins and migrations of their people, their political stricture and dynamics, their economic systems, their art, dance, and overall cultural heritage.²⁹

This is so because the big empire or Kingdom tells the history of the small societies. The various intelligence reports on Esan by the colonial master uphold the tradition that Esan people migrated from Benin. In these various intelligence reports, the colonial master's preoccupation was the administration problem; hence, the quest for proper historical knowledge was not in them. This is how the history of the Esan people became a footnote to the history of the Benin Empire. The campaign to create the Midwest emphasized the cultural and ethnic unity of the region, which tended to be strengthened by the concept that the entire area was under the Benin Empire. The whole region's history, including Esan, was considered an adjunct to Benin history.³⁰ Afigbo called this "The Benin Mirage."³¹

Scholars need to question this existing Benin tradition of origin: Esan originated from the Benin word Esafua, meaning those that fled. However, Ehiabhi explained why the region's history is predominantly about Benin. This is hinged on the concept of Edorisagbon and Obayanto, which means that Benin is the originator of human culture and race and, therefore, that the Oba of Benin possesses the universe. This development has influenced the construction of history in the region, especially in Edo-speaking communities like Esan.³² Okojie rejected the notion that Esan migrated from Benin during the reign of Ewuare the Great when he said:

It would at first appear that Ishan (Esan) originated after 1440 when Oba Ewuare imposed his egotism and wickedness on the great Benin stool. Before this time, there were inhabitants scattered in the jungles now comprising Ishan, as evidenced by our own Ishan (Esan) folklore, which featured Ogiso, the common name for Bini rulers before the great Oranmiyan. In the same way, we have

many of our stories featuring Asijie (Oba Esijie) and Aguaran (Arua-run), his warning giant brother.³³

It would be rational to say that the migrants who left Benin as a result of Oba Ewuare's tyrannical reign must have met people who can be called aboriginal. Okojie maintains that "during the organized mass exodus of Binis in 1460, those who finally reached the present Uromi area found human habitation. That place was Oto- Egbele and its people could be taken as the aboriginal settlers of Uromi or even Ishan."³⁴ The migrant must understand the place, as Okoduwa argued: "Naturally, people hardly migrate to a place unknown."³⁵ This false assumption that societies have originated from kingdoms and empires that immigrant princes built is not only peculiar to Esan. This school of thought dominates Nigerian historiography.

Ehizua Orukpe notes that the origin of Esan "dates back to the division of human languages at Babel that halted Nimrod's gigantic Tower construction of the Sahara. It argued that the arrival of Benin emigrants into their forest settlement region in the fifteenth Century only increased the demography of Esanland."³⁶ The Benin migrants met established polity in Esanland, which they integrated with. There is a tradition of origin among the Ewohimi, Opoji, Uromi, and Ewu that their ancestors came out of the ground or sky. The Ewu have a separate tradition of origin that after the arrival of their ancestors from the sky, he was conquered by the Oba of Benin, who gave their leader the title of Onogie. This myth of origin is still connected to Benin.³⁷ Bradbury recognized the fact of multi-directional migration other than Benin. He affirms that some Esan groups came from Ife and Ifeku Island but were later absorbed by conquest or peacefully into the Benin Empire.³⁸

Another tradition has it that the Esan people were among the Hebrews who fled King Herold's murder of children in the 4th Century. They settled in Egypt briefly and then traveled to Sudan, where they came to Ife through Nupe land. From Ife, they moved to Ugboka (now Benin), and they made farms. After the farming season, they harvested all their crops and returned to Ife to meet Obaigodo. When they returned to Ugboka, Obaigodo lorded himself over them as the Ogiso (king of the sky).³⁹ The shepherds and hunters that first settled at the place felt threatened by the Obaigodo lordship over them. They jumped into the bush because they were afraid of Obaigodo's authoritarian rule. These groups of shepherds and hunters first came to Benin, resisted the imposition of Igodo leadership, and jumped into the bush. Egharevba in Ojiefoh "asserted that the Esan people are early Benin people who fled when Obaigodo imposed himself on them and named the settlement Igodomigodo."⁴⁰

Irrua is believed to be one of the Esan groups that migrated from Ife at about the same time as Benin. Another school of thought claimed that Irrua migrated from Ifeku, an Island on the River Niger. From there, Amilele took them to Benin to see Oba Ohe, who gave his daughter, Urowa, to Amilele in marriage. They returned and settled in a place named after Amilele's new wife, Urowa.⁴¹ We cannot dispute

the fact that before the coming of Benin migrants to Esan, there were groups in the place that had already been established. As attested to by Okojie: "practically all the ruling house of Ishan came direct from Benin to rule the people they found... already truly established".⁴² The first Enijie of Esan has family ties beyond the reign of Oba Ewuare of Benin, and some Enijie claimed that their descendant ruled before the founding of the Eweka dynasty.⁴³

The origin of Uromi has been traced to the Idu civilization, which began in 599 AD. This civilization traces its origin to the Uhe civilization, which thrived across the Niger in about 550AD. The civilization was under the leadership of Idu, and the death of Idu at about 599 AD led to persecution against Idu's family members. The persecution made Idu descendants migrate toward the bank of the River Niger. The children of Idu were Akha, Efa, Emehi, Uwa, Iro, Ehi, and Ose. The migration process continued until Akha died and was buried in 600 AD. The place where Akha was buried became known as Irua, and Esan, the son of Ehi, remained in this place where his uncle was buried. This place became the centre from where other Esan migrated.⁴⁴

Archaeological surveys and linguistic evidence proved that over 3000 years ago, the Esan forest was occupied by humans. From 500 to 750 AD, hunters occupied the Esan and Benin forests. These hunters and gatherers founded pre-Esan and pre-Edo societies that built a wall around properties. Settlers further enlarged those properties to become villages.⁴⁵ Patrick Darling's archaeological survey of the Benin-Esan earthwork showed that the Benin, Isoko, and Urhibo migrated from the Esan plateau. Darling's "studies show that Binis & Urhobos migrated from the northern part of the Esan plateau from 500 AD to 1100 AD. The Esan area is located east of the Bini-speaking region & according to Benin cosmology, the east is the "root of the world," which is the location of great Oghane."⁴⁶ Darling came out with other studies which proved that the Benin Esan tradition of origin may not hold water:

The Ishan forest was entered and settled by those early settlers using Neolithic ground stone axes 2000-3000 years ago. By about A. D. 500, early users of iron tools in northern Ishan dug low banks around family compounds, possibly the first earthworks of the gigantic rural cluster that was developed. As settlements grew in size and complexity, ditches and banks became more profound and extensive, superimposing their territories over long-deserted compound banks. Ishan settlements were concentrated close to permanent springs along the northern plateau scarp while the other colonizers moved on south, eventually creating Benin. The mass movement from Benin to Ishan may have occurred in the mid-fifteenth Century with the actions of Oba Ewuare. Still, they

cannot explain Ishan's high population densities and commercial wealth (based on gold in Ekpoma and cotton in Uromi).⁴⁷

The fertility of the soil of Esan served as a factor that propelled the mass exodus of people to the area long before the reign of Ewuare the Great of Benin. Okojie maintains that even though Esan is a waterless plateau, soil fertility induced early settlers. Okojie says: "From the history of individual settlement and the fact that all Ishan is an agricultural district, the one deciding factor which must have induced our people to settle in such a waterless area is fertility."⁴⁸ The founder of Irrua Amiele, who migrated from Ifeku, an Island on the River Niger, was said to have refused to pass on to his destination because of the rich, succulent palm nuts he saw at a place called today Irrua."⁴⁹

Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the historiography of the origin of Esan beyond the Benin tradition of the fifteenth Century. The paper believes that the Benin tradition of origin enjoys prominence because Esan was a small society around the big Benin kingdom. So, the history of Esan became a footnote to the history of the Benin Empire. The paper also argued that the prominence of the Benin tradition of origin was occasioned by the fact that Benin palace chiefs and historians told the early history of the origin of Esan, and they told the story to maintain superiority over Esan. The paper explored archaeological and linguistic findings to expand the existing information on the origin of Esan.

The tradition that Esan migrated from Benin covered about 500 years. The fact that there are communities in Esan that can trace their ancestors more than 500 years ago shows that Esan existed before the reign of Oba Ewuare of Benin. Esan land already existed with different names before the arrival of the Benin migrants. The influx of Benin migrants only gave them a common name, Esan, the Benin word Esafua. Despite this, the Esan people speak the same language with little dialectal difference. Esan people should participate actively in writing their history. They can tell their true history better than outsiders. A situation where the history of Esan is left in the hands of outsiders will result in the outsiders telling the history to suit their interest. Benin tradition of origin dominated the Esan tradition because the early Esan historians were Benin.

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OGBOO ESWI SOCIETY IN PRE-COLONIAL IKWO POLITICAL
ORGANISATION

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Abstract

Ogboo eswi is a class distinction that started when Njioke titled Men began to discriminate against women. Thus, women who had excelled in the society sought to be classified by killing cows, hence, it marked class distinctions. The study situates *Ogboo eswi* as cultural in Ikwo historical context. It argues that *Ogboo eswi* is a popular age grade system which exists as a cultural symbol. Its origin is ancestral Ikwo culture. Membership is restricted to only women who had made cow sacrifices to their parents. As a socio-cultural class, it challenged men dominated society in Ikwo. The study uses primary and secondary data to chronicle *Ogboo eswi* society before the advent of Christianity. It found that *Ogboo eswi* was formed as a response to class discrimination. The methodology is analytical. It concludes that *Ogboo eswi* is a society that exists to address class distinctions.

Keywords: Eswi, Ogboo, Organization, Political, Pre-colonial

Introduction

Ikwo is in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. It is one of the thirteen local government areas that lies on the geographical coordinates of 6° 5' 0"N, 8 ° 6' 0" E. It is one of the three most populated local government areas after Izzi and Ezza, and the largest local government with twenty (20) political wards in Ebonyi State. Ikwo is famous for the production of rice and other food crops. Their main occupation is agriculture. However, the people have a unique culture. One of such cultures is the *Ogboo eswi* society.

The origin of *Ogboo eswi* society in Ikwo has remained obscured and cannot specifically be traced to any known history, woman or group of women. However, we were told that the *Ogboo eswi* was a cultural practice bequeathed to the Ikwo people by their great-grandmothers and has continued to be passed on from generation to generation. This obscurity cannot be explained without reference to what seem to be identical errors of human nature. These errors are; undocumented

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records, illiteracy and the advent of Christianity, which made the study of Ikwo history practically impossible. In this regard, there is a complete absence of written documents and illiteracy occasioned by the protracted British resistance of the people, which not only resulted in the explosion of the missionaries but also in the absence of an established Western education system within the first 20 years of the British occupation of the area. A. E. Afigbo, opines that Ikwo was one of the clans in Northern Igboland, whose history had remained unstudied because the people refused to reveal information about them.¹

Similarly, A. S. Amiara, maintains that Ikwo like every other clan in Igboland had suffered a lot of negligence. However, its predominant role during and after the British invasion of Igboland had failed to bring them to the limelight of historical survey. Hence, the area remains the most understudied.² *Ogboo eswi* society is not different from those aspects of Ikwo history, which had remained unstudied except that few elders who could still remember how the society first began, maintained that before they developed into maturity, it was already in practiced as a cultural rite of the various communities in Ikwo. This means that it exists among the village groups that make up the Ikwo clan today and has been in existence before this generation.

Specifically, Nkwegu Oke asserts, that the history of *Ogboo eswi* started as a sign of respect which a husband shows to his wife. She maintained that in early 1930s, a revered woman was given a cow by her husband during her father's burial. The woman would travel to her father's compound in company of her friends and well-wishers.

She would carry food items, a mat, logs of firewood, horsetail (*Nza inya*) and would be shouting *gbooga nna la ewsio* (great father here is your cow) as she moved towards the compound.³ While on the way to join her kinsmen, she would be consoled by her fellow women as she cried along the road to her father's compound. There, the husband would present the cow to his brothers' in-law while the woman would be allowed to sit in her mother's hut.⁴

She further maintains that within the neighbourhood, some women who come around often go into the hut to appreciate and congratulate the woman, while others would stay outside to gossip about how the husband gave her cow to sacrifice to her father. This means that every *Ogboo eswi* woman is well respected and envied. Similarly, D. N. Oguji, says that *Ogboo eswi* practice first started as a class distinction by prominent Ikwo women, who wanted to be distinguished from the men's domination.⁵ He opines that, in the olden days, men married many wives to have many hands among other reasons. Consequently, it was therefore never expected that any woman would be able to utilize the very little time she was not labouring at her husband's farm to achieve anything for herself. Such a woman was a rare breed compared to when she made enough proceeds to present a cow at her father's burial single-handedly. This means that such women were rare to find and

society invariably revered anyone who attained such a feat. Hence, such a woman is called *Nwanyi ogbu eswi* (the woman who killed the cow) a furor into men's exclusive preserve.

Instructively, the process brought out the best in women in their various endeavours like farming, trading and traditional medical practices. As more women excelled and attained this prestigious rank of *Ogboo eswi*, they became referred to as *Umuanyị Ogboo Eswi*. Again, they organized themselves in a such way that it became a cult of sorts as non-initiates (those who have not taken the title), were never admitted into such cubicles (*Akpata nku*) where they gather for any function like the burial of their members. Furthermore, the *Ogboo Eswi* Society is designed for and to showcase the wives of the rich and titled men in Ikwo clan. It is an indication, in the first instance, of being loved by one's husband or a woman's rich sons who initiate the woman into society.

In fact, Leonard Nte Onwe maintains, that the political power of the *Ogboo Eswi* Society is a derivative power from the wealth of the family group, which is the nucleus of Igbo socio-political institutions.⁶ Although, it is believed that a woman is an appendage of a man's property and in that whatever she achieves belongs to her husband. This means that a woman who intends to be a member cannot do that without the knowledge or in the absence of her husband, the son (s) except in some cases where the husband is dead.

Against all odds, the above assertion still points to the fact that, it is the men who still support women's membership of *Ogboo Eswi*, even though its history and practice arose from class distinction or discrimination meted out to women, whose essence was to justify why and how women became susceptible to men. Oliver Eze, stresses that *Ogboo eswi* is a title of honour bestowed on Ikwo women and it comes with certain dignities and attributes to any woman who attains such feat.⁷ It qualifies such a woman for admittance into *Umuanyị Ogboo Eswi Society* and such a person is very rare, highly regarded and respected.

Theoretical Understanding of *Ogboo Eswi* Society in Ikwo Clan

The theoretical understanding that underpins the study of *Ogboo eswi* society, its origin and practices in Ikwo, is anchored on men's class domination against women. As men dominated society, Ikwo men were driven by a cultural practice that transferred the rights of women to them as mere property. Through that practice, women who had attained certain prominence began to distinguish themselves by making cow sacrifices and as a result, organized themselves into an association of *umunwanyị ogboo eswi* to strike a balance between the social inequalities that existed in Ikwo pre-colonial society.

As a cultural practice, it encouraged hard work and determination as most women who laboured tirelessly sought to be classified and recognized as women of honour. This was rare among the generality of the women population, who became motivated and sought to be classified rather than being dependent or get approval

from their husbands. To that extent, Nwomege Amiara, contends that *Ogboo eswi* society is a class of cultural practice in which its historical understanding, origin and meaning transcend the present generation.⁸ This is not because, the people are unwilling to know their traditions but because nobody showed interest. As a result, those who would have told the accurate story of how it started had all died.⁹ What this means, however is that *Ogboo eswi* is spiritual and can mean more than class distinction. It connotes faithfulness, sincerity and righteousness as members are banned from behaving in a manner that depicts immorality or a criminal practice. Similarly, it is believed generally that, *Ogboo eswi* society emerged to checkmate men domination. However, its membership further strengthens women discrimination among women. It is a cult-sort society in which non-members are not allowed into the cubicles where the *Ogboo eswi* women gather.

This implies that among the women themselves, non-*Ogboo eswi* members are perceived as low social class women feeling of being motivated to work hard to achieve the *Ogboo eswi* title. In this context, the mystique surrounding the spirituality of *Ogboo eswi* society is found in its unique cultural practices which make it an essential cultural organization and institution for maintaining peace and harmonious relationships. It complements the functions of the Council of Elders as custodians of tradition, custom and cultural values.

Apart from the *Umuada* age grade, the *Ogboo eswi* women have played a significant role in settling disputes among themselves, and between non-members of the *Umuada* age grade. It is the apex body of the women socio-cultural organization and its members are drawn from different communities. Their meetings are held periodically within the members' communities.

The Ogboo Eswi Women

The *Ogboo eswi* women are existing in all the various communities in Ikwo. Its historical origin has defied all traces. However, some informants have often maintained that the exact date when its practices started remained obscure. Nevertheless, Nkwegu Oke, maintains that apart from its unknown history, its origin could be traced to Nwambuke Egede and Nchikfu Ukwa.¹⁰ These women were the first people in Ikwo who began the *Ogboo eswi* practice. She gave their names as those who brought *Ogboo eswi* society to the Ndiogadoshi Echara community and continued to practice it, till many other women began to join them. Furthermore, she maintained that before their number increased, they often travelled to join other members from other communities. However, many other women might have practised this *ogboo eswi* culture before Nwambuke Egede and Nchikfu Ukwa, as they were not the first generation of *Ogboo eswi* women in Ikwo.

Amiara opines that as a result of an increase in population and the existing three kindreds (*Ndiucha*, *Umuchephère Arom* and *Umuenyita*), the society became highly popularized with Nwambuke Egede and Nchikfu Ukwa of Ndiucha and Arom

Ugbala respectively, and they were the most revered persons who enjoyed special treatment whenever they gather.



Plate 1. An Ogboo eswi woman special attire

In fact, whenever the *Ogboo eswi* women gather, they would be provided with one basket of salt, twelve tubers of yam, a bundle of sugar cane, a bunch of bananas, coconut, half basin of groundnut, one stick of grass cutter and one basket of food. The salt is often divided into two with other items. One of the items is given to the *Umuchephère* kindred the oldest people in the practice while the grass cutter is used to cover the soup. There are certain ceremonies the *Ogboo eswi* women can be invited to and these items must be provided for them to honour their invitation. Hence, it is important to note that members could stage a walkout during the ceremony if any of the items that were to be presented to them were not included. In fact, Mbam Ucheoke opines that the importance of the items shows that the women would stage a walk out if any of the items are not complete.¹¹ During the time of the walkout, one woman usually stays behind to call back others in case the remaining items are provided. She further stated that this is very normal among the *Ogboo eswi* women, as the availability of the required items shows how respected the woman is to her husband.

Meanwhile, in each of the communities, *Ogboo eswi* women have its temple located at the right-hand side of the village square. The temple is the meeting point in which all the items provided are deposited and shared among the members. The temple has no deity found around it except that it serves as a meeting point, where members can come together to evaluate their past activities. Therefore, memberships are open to every adult woman who is married and has made a cow

sacrifice to either her father or mother. Offia Ogodo notes that people do not just get admitted into society by persuasion or force. It is for only women who had made cow sacrifice to their parents.¹² She further notes that the consequence of being a member without cow sacrifice is death. In other words, such cow sacrifice should be made by the woman, while she is still alive, otherwise, she should not expect the same from her children too.¹³ She further noted that such women would not eat items provided to the *Ogboo eswi* women and must not get close to, where they gather for celebration. Such a person cannot be offered a cow unless the same is done to her mother or father. In this context, making a cow sacrifice is the highest respect one can accord to the death in Ikwo clan. Those who sacrificed a cow to their parents during their funeral ceremonies always organize themselves into such associations of like minds and dance in solidarity with their new members.

In this regard, the benefit of a woman who presents a cow for the burial of her parent is the respect that comes with it. Such a woman is highly respected and she is exempted from all other duties, such as cooking, fetching water or firewood, pounding food and going to the market which could be assigned to other women. She is highly respected and treated differently by her relations.



Ogbueswi title holders dancing Oshita music

Plate 2. Ogboo eswi title holders dancing.

The Pre Colonial Ikwo Political Organization

The explanation of political organization in Igboland during the pre-colonial era has always remained the same. Most writers have always talked of it as being vested in the village council. In an essay of 1965, J. C. Anene says of the Igbo, that the nearest one can get to what may be regarded as an organ of government was

the council of elders who were 'father' of component family segments.¹⁴ In this regard, what became common knowledge was that decisions making was the responsibility of the family heads. However, Anene was an early member of the Ibadan School of History and his scholarship was not focused on Igbo studies. He was rather handicapped by the fact that the study of Igbo history then was still in infancy. Similarly, in the 1970s, it was commonplace for scholars to speak of the Igbo political organization generally in line with Anene's argument. However, there were these anthropologists who were in the habit of classifying the Igbo under that political system, where political authority was vested in the village councils.

This was indeed the case among the political units of the Igbo people which Ikwo forms part in pre-colonial times. But it would be inadequate to assume that only the council of elders could make or influence decisions in Igboland. There were other institutions such as the *Umuada*, *Umuokorobia*, and Women Societies etc. For example, Brown notes that the Igbo government was exercised mainly by a loosely constituted council whose personnel included kin-group heads, elders, and other notables and, in some places, members of title societies.¹⁵ This is where the *Ogboo eswi* council women are important in the study of Ikwo political organization.

The pre-colonial Ikwo political administration is structured into five political administrations which include: the council of elders, *ozo*/title holders, age grade (*ogboo*), priests/fortune tellers and council of women. The council of women is mainly constituted from influential women basically from the *Ogboo ewsi* women, whose duties complemented the council of elders.

The Ikwo Pre-Colonial Political Institutions

Several political institutions exist in Ikwo pre-colonial political system. They include the council of elders, the *Ozo* title holders, the age grade system, the priest and fortune tellers as well as the council of women. Each of these political institutions is discussed below:

The Council of Elders

This is the highest political organ in Ikwo and it is headed by an *Ekpeli* man as the chief priest and custodian of Ikwo traditions. Ascendancy to this throne is usually by age. It is headed by the oldest person (*okpara*) from the eldest family of Ikwo ancestral home. The ancestral home in Ikwo is the *Ekpeli* in *Umueka* autonomous community. The other four sub-class or autonomous communities of *Alike*, *Echara*, *Mgbabu* and *Okpitumo* also have members nominated from the oldest persons from the eldest families. These members are Council of Elders and constitute the highest decision making organ. Hence, they double as both legislative and executive bodies in Ikwo political system. They deliberate on sensitive issues such as war, levies and land disputes.

Ozo/Title Holders

The ozo title holders are a powerful group whose functions complement the council of elders. Unlike other Ozo in other parts of Igboland, Ozo title in Ikwo is different. It is inherited from the ancestors of the family that have Ozo deity. They play a very significant role in the traditional government in Ikwo. They serve as the leaders of the war. However, they do not participate in fighting but instead, provided spiritual backing during wars. They do not tell lies, steal, kill or plan evils against their neighbours as they are considered sacred and this sacredness employs them to settle disputes with utmost honesty and sincerity. Whatever verdict they give in disputes is final, except where the verdict is considered injustice, such a person can appeal to the council of elders.

The Age Grade System

The age grade is another important administrative organ or body in Ikwo. They are mainly people of the same age bracket, whose responsibilities include the construction of roads, clearing of village and market squares, and ponds, going to wars, collection of levies or fines and execution of the decision of the council of elders. Chapman notes that there is a uniform system of age grades throughout the clan. Within each age grade, there is a selected committee but there is no evidence of any secret society.¹⁶

The Priest/ Fortune Tellers

In Ikwo traditional society, the chief priests of the various deities that exist in the area are powerful instruments for maintaining laws and order. These deities include *Nte Oswina*, *Ali Igbudu*, *Ali Amegu*, *Eze Ikelegvu*, *Ugbokoro*, *Ogbekpa*, *Nkwo Ameka* and many others. Together with the fortune tellers, they are recognized for meditating between spiritual and physical worlds. They are consulted in times of calamities for advice and direction on what to do and made sacrifices to the gods. These groups of people commend high respect from the general public.

Council of Women

This organ comprises different categories. They include *Umuada* and *Umunwanyi Ogboo eswi*. Like the Council of Elders, they participate in mediating peace among women who have disputes. They make decisions to enhance and influence their well-being and whatever is decided is taken to the villages for implementation. Their members are treated with reverence and dignity in the community. The *Umuada* and *Ogboo eswi* societies are powerful organs of government in the Ikwo clan.

They constitute the bedrock of women in both political and family issues and indeed, a good forum for women. They are an administrative arm of the traditional Ikwo clan participating in major decision-makings. During the pre-

colonial era, Ikwo women were more involved in the government, participating in the various levels of governance and holding positions of authority in the markets.

Aside from this, they help to implement law and order and ensure the smooth running of the village programme.

The Qualities of an Ogboo Eswi Woman in Ikwo

The qualities of *Ogboo eswi* women in Ikwo are many. They include:

1. Purity: an *Ogboo eswi* woman is not expected to commit adultery. It is expected that any member who does this would be cast away from the group and thrown out of her husband's home. Such a woman is often disgraced and taken back to her parents by the group.
2. Sincerity: she should at all times tell the truth and uphold justice.
3. Witchcraft/poison: as it is the tradition of Ikwo, witch crafting and poisoning are serious crimes in Ikwo customs and tradition. So, a member of *Ogboo eswi* society loses her rites if she is known to have committed any of the crimes. The group will stage a walk out if they had gathered to pay the last respect to the member who is found to have been guilty of the crime.
4. Respect and dignity: an *Ogboo eswi* woman must be respected and one who commands dignity in society. She should not be found wanting in all aspects of her life and must be capable of paying the little contribution required of any member to assist their needy members.
5. Hard work: she must be a hard working woman ready to assist the less privileged ones.
6. She must be a custodian of good moral behaviour and be ready to bring that moral to bear at all times, promote the ethics of the *Ogboo Eswi* society and defend its objectives.

Conclusion

An *Ogboo eswi* society is a prestigious cultural organization in Ikwo. It emerged out of women's oppression by the male folk and the quest to be classified and distinguished among other women. The fame, popularity and dignity associated with *Ogboo eswi* title made it unique and competitive. In other words, its uniqueness exclusively depends on the fulfilment of the requirements for admittance. Indeed, the title is not conferred or awarded, it is attained. It makes the children of *Ogboo eswi* woman to work hard in life because at the death of the mother, they must present a cow to *umunwanyi Ogboo eswi*.

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A HISTORY OF *ONJO BI INA* MUSIC OF OGUNDARE FOYANMU: AN
ETHICAL EXISTENTIALIST YORUBA MUSICIAN, 1956-2012

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Abstract

The existence of man necessitates the free choice of either good or bad made by man and the definition of morality as expressed in the *Onjo bi Ina* music of Ogundare Foyanmu in the second half of the 20th-century to the early part of 21st-century as observed in the Yoruba value system and traditions. This study explores the facts that man has not been pre-designed into a particular formation or human condition at the negligence of his choice. Rather, man has been wired to make choices freely and live as he pleases within the frame of the human condition. Standing on this consciousness that existence predated essence for man, and that there is no ultimate end or purpose for man as a concrete social reality in time and space as a result of free choice in human activities. The existence of Ogundare Foyanmu is examined in this study as a revealed concrete reality of a music portrait in the existence of Ogbomoso space in Yoruba history between 1932 and 2012. The choice he made as an Ijala musician despite discouragement by his environmental situation made him a free man and an ethical existentialist in the period under review. His dimension of music called *Onjo bi Ina* between 1956 and 2012 trailed anxiety, despair, freedom and choice as expressed in his music as an indigenous musician furnished and qualified as an Ijala-Ode/Akintinpa performer in time perspective in Yoruba history.

Keywords: *Onjo bi Ina*, Ethical Existentialist, Ogundare Foyanmu and Akintinpa

Introduction

The study seeks to explore the expression of man as both a spiritual and material being in explaining the personality of Ogundare Foyanmu and his music career as an ethical existentialist in existence and as an authentic social reality in the history of man in Ogbomoso space in Yorubaland. The concept of existentialism popularized by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche emphasises the consciousness of a free man who is a concrete social reality.¹ Exploring this thinking of a free man as a concrete social reality by understanding a man, and a man knowing himself as a

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concrete social reality is unprecedented in this discourse on Ogundare Foyanmu and his music of *Onjo bi Ina* between 1932 and 2012.² According to Kierkegaard, God is the ultimate reality that influences the choice made by man. In Yoruba mythology the gods are the intermediaries between man and God (Olodumare) while Nietzsche believes that man is the ultimate reality without God because God is dead. Making inference from the two positions on existentialism, it is observed that man plays a central role in its interpretations as one who chooses freely to know himself either by God or independent of God by looking inward using human ability to find value for himself through self-discovery and self-actualisation which Nietzsche denoted as 'Superman'.³ In addition, Nietzsche opines further that every man is a super social reality in space-time where God is dead.⁴ This understanding of the material nature (existence) of Ogundare Foyanmu as a Yoruba musician influenced the spiritual nature (essence) of his trajectory which was not predetermined as assumed in a way, but by choice which he made expressive in his sojourning on earth between 1932 and 2012. This consciousness of choice made in life interprets his activities from 1956 to 2012 as a product of self-actualisation and spiritual realisation which depicts the consciousness of choice of a man.⁵

This discourse is to emphasise that there is hope for any man even when separated by societal factors or from predetermined social structures that seem to exist in his environment. This hope lives in the enclave of choice made by man which is central to the human condition. Man has no human condition that determines his choices. Therefore, the personality of man is the product of the choices he makes which are dynamic depending on who he thinks he is in the human sphere. Human choice in this paper as expressed by Ogundare Foyanmu was the one that reconstructed and queried the assumed human condition as predetermined as a result of an ethical existentialist choice. This ethical existentialist choice of Ogundare Foyanmu played out with a historical consciousness in his music as it is discussed in this research. His ethical existentialism unleashed his concrete social reality between 1956 and 2012. This in a way has provided this research a base for interrogating his musical career in Yorubaland. In the thinking of history, man creates his meaning by being decisive in the decisions he makes in a space at a particular time. This has represented his trajectory as one who took full control and responsibility of his life as a free man as observed in this study in the period under review.⁶

Conceptual Clarification

This section of the study seeks to give a conceptual interpretation of two major working tools: Ethical Existentialism and the personality of Ogundare Foyanmu as it relates to the discourse on Ogundare Foyanmu's *Onjo bi Ina* music between 1956 and 2012.

Ethical Existentialist

An Ethical Existentialist is a man who makes himself a principled being who believes in the thought of the social reality of man in space time as an embodiment of choices made to be free and live a life as an authentic existence. Hence, such a being has a passion for whatever he does at a particular time in a space. In addition, an Ethical Existentialist is a doing being in a space time whether influenced by God or not. He takes responsibility for anything he does as a social reality.⁷ More so, he is a man who concentrates throughout his life only on being himself and not doing many things in life although he plays many parts based on his interactions with other realities as explained by Sartre.⁸ Hence, he is a man who is intentional with life, a life that is a blank sheet and an unfinished product with an amount of energy put into his historical trajectories as initiated by his choices in space and time. The awareness of the being of a man makes him an ethical being because the morality in his being lies within the social structures as believed by other relatives in the social (Yoruba) space where he was found as being there with the morality of free will choices for his real self between 1956 and 2012.⁹

Personality of Ogundare Foyanmu Ogunsina

Ogundare Foyanmu James Ayano was one of the salient bards gifted with unparalleled skills in African music performance between 1944 and 2012.¹⁰ He became an existence as the first male child of his parents in 1932 through the instrumentality of the Late Pa. Akinlabi Akande Ogunsina and Late Mrs. Oropeji Mary Arinola Oropeju Amope Ogunsina¹¹ at Aniyaalorun Eji Dongari, Kaaba, Kogi State.¹² By 13th October 2012 at the age of 80 he stopped existing as a concrete man.¹³ He was of Afilemu's¹⁴ Compound also known as Ile Alagbo Omo/ Ile Foyanmu at Taara in Ogbomoso.¹⁵ In existence, he emerged as the third child of his immediate family. He got married to his first wife at the age of thirty-one (31). He eventually married five (5) wives who were Ijadun (5th May 1963), Adenihun (7th November 1971), Rebecca (12th March 1975), Alan (1st May 1976) and the last wife whose name was made secret was married on the 20th June 1987.¹⁶ In 1944 Ogundare, Foyanmu's father died when he was twelve (12) years old. This action led to his sojourn with his uncle Late Pa. Taiwo Akanmu Oke.¹⁷ However, he was not opportune to acquire the western education as it were. However, he was a blessed Professor of Cultural Arts in Oral Poetry. He got this skill through his uncle and his father both were Egungun musicians. *Esa Egungun* is a kind of music of *Pindanpindan* performance in Ogbomoso community.¹⁸ This music style was the one he changed from to depict his Ijala-Ode musical style by blending the skills of *Rara*, *Esa Egungun* and Ijala-Ode to create his own Akintinpa music of the Ijala-Ode genre which was criticised by his relations and friends and later named the genre of music as *Ise Ole* between 1944 and 1956, this dimension of his music was actually the first phase of his music practice style known as *Onru bi Efin*.¹⁹

Literature Review

An attempt is made here to review some existing works as they affect and help explore the discourse on the history of *Onjo bi Ina* music of Ogundare Foyanmu who portrayed himself as an ethical existentialist Yoruba musician between 1956 and 2012. To start with Ogunjimi defines music as oral poetry and a class literature. This definition by Ogunjimi has helped situate this study on the music of Ogundare Foyanmu as oral poetry and a class of literature.²⁰ In addition, Ajayi opines that music is a creative idea of people. It is also an element of human culture. This has established that music is a cultural phenomenon in human society.²¹ Read affirms that music reflects a society with culture and traditions that are well displayed in fullness as verbal expression of personal and social experiences. In other words, it mirrors the society in a perspective as a token of mutual understanding in a society among its relations. This explains that the music of Ogundare Foyanmu reflects the society of Ogbomoso in particular and the Yorubaland in general as a depth of unconscious collective forces of relationships.²²

Bamidele avers that the Marxist ideology of historical materialism should be adopted in the critiquing of music as a logical narration of human existence in a space time. This understanding has retained the ethical existentialist perspective of Ogundare Foyanmu's *Onjo bi Ina* music between 1956 and 2012 as it is focused on in this paper.²³ According to Mekinzewi, music is a historical song which reminds people of the past and the values of the society which require a level of orature for it to be understood. This has further contextualised the consciousness of ethical existentialism in Yoruba music like that of Ogundare Foyanmu emphasising the past and values and ethics in the society.²⁴

The Alienation of Ogundare Foyanmu, emergence and the development of his *Onjo bi Ina* music, 1956-2012

Original Version in Yoruba

Won ko ko se bi yoo baje ni, ni won yoo sese nigba ti oro yi, o baje mo ni oju ti egbon, ojuti aburo, ojuti omo ise, ese oga wole gbururu, Olorun doju oro yi ti elegan o di a yonu so, ojuti enitori ni to n ponju, ojuti eniti to ri ni ti nunu...

Translated version in English

They all thought at first that it would be a stillborn, so they celebrated. When it was no longer stillborn, they were put to shame; the elders, young ones, apprentices and the masters' legs freeze. God disappointed the eavesdroppers and it became a mess and shame on them, those who saw me and were not happy and those who cleanup their mouths...²⁵

The above quotation shows alienation as it played out with Ogundare Foyanmu's experience. This alienation manifested itself in the life of Ogundare Foyanmu as a man in various dimensions which were anxiety, despair and forlornness, among others.²⁶ Fundamental to existentialism ideology is the place of man as the *de facto* subject around which every thing else revolves. Man is a social being whose existence precedes his essence.²⁷ Corroborating the above assertion, Peter Daniel Edeh in his article 'The Idea of Auto-Transcendence and its Implication for the Human Person'; B.N. Tripathi in his book, *Meaning of Life in Existentialism*; M. Chatterjee in his book *The Existentialist Outlook* and F.C. Copleston in his work *Contemporary Philosophy: Studies of Logical Positivism and Existentialism* discuss Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to have laid the groundwork for Existentialism in the 19th-century. The above authors added that there are two forms of Existentialism; Theistic (Theocratic) and Atheistic (Egocentric and Philanthropic).²⁸ The awareness of theocratic existentialism in history explains the history of man and the influence of divinity on man as a movement per time of human experiences in space as observed in the life of Ogundare Foyanmu James Ayano a Yoruba Akintinpa musician between 1944 and 2012. His musical career has two major historical dimensions on his existence which are *Onru bi Efin* (1944-1956) and *Onjo bi Ina* (1956-2012).²⁹

Ogundare revealed that this Akintinpa music started in 1944, eight decades ago while he was still 12 years old. Apart from the fact that he got some skills in his style of music transferred from his father and uncle, the ingenuity of his gift made a difference in space and times coupled with the spiritual forces' influence on him. The spiritual forces that influenced him were Ogun, Egbe Olode Orun and Emere Omo, among others. They taught him and informed his art of Akintinpa music, a style of Ijala-Ode in Ogbomoso space in the period under review.³⁰ This influence of the spiritual forces mentioned above shaped him and made his choice of music unique compared to all other Ijala-Ode chanters such as Alabi Ogundepo, Buraimo Ojetunji, Okunade Womiloju etcetera in Yoruba worldview. These forces according to him visited him at night and thereafter ministered to him the art of Akintinpa music.³¹ This impartation was usually made when he was asleep in a social function atmosphere in his dreams. He added that he was able to retain the skill, language and knowledge of the music for the appreciation of Yoruba ingenuity ditto for Africa at large for the past 68 years of his active stage performances between 1944 and 2012. This was accompanied by powerful language as a form of African technology in contemporary times.³² The expression here is that Ogundare Foyanmu did not have predestined status as a man or musician because he was a social fact that must relate with other realities to find existence and essence in the social world of Yoruba music between 1956 and 2012 that regulated his interactions with other things: tangible and intangible as mentioned above in providing meaning for his life despite the alienation around him.³³

This study explores further the dimension of *Onjo bi Ina* which some of the recorded tapes of his existence were interrogated as the life of Ogundare Foyanmu is put on a slab for a review as an ethical existentialist in Yoruba musicians' history.³⁴ Hence, this dimension of *Onjo bi Ina* was between 1956 and 2012. This period of his life's activities was that of the studio work experiences in his career as a music performer with over forty (40) albums in his kitty.³⁵ The title of some of the album are *Olorun ma je Ari Ija Oba* (OLPSL 363), *Orin Mess* (SSAL 405), *Ooni* (SSAL 410), *Omiyale Ibadan* (SSAL 413), *Ofofo* (SSAL 415), *Egbe Onigbagbo* (SSAL 417), *Ojowu 'Binrin* (MOALP 005), *Owo Kerere Kotona* (MOALP 005), *Orin Mess* (MOALP 009), *Orin Obun* (ODEC 047), *Orin Onisina* (ODEC 056), *Eku Ewu Omo* (Vol. 1, ORCLP 90), *Odale Ore* (Vol. ORCLP 31), *Elejigbo* (Vol. 4, ORCLP 60), *Ogbomosoland* (Vol. 6, ORCLP 118), *Ikini Omo Yoruba* (Vol. 6, ORCLP 119), *Omiyale Ibadan* (Vol. 7, ORCLP 120), *Eyi Wumi ko wuo* (Vol.8, ORCLP 135), *Naijiria Yoo Si Dara* (Vol. 10, ORCLP 181), *Itaniji* (Vol. 11, ORCLP 187), *Ibadan Ilu Ologun* (Vol. 13, ORCLP 301) and *Igbadun Tabetabe* (Vol. 14, ORCLP 302), among others.³⁶

It was during this stage of his growth that he grew his team to seventeen (17) which was initially four (4) persons' idea who started it in 1944.³⁷ He built the household name of his music as Akintinpa of Ogundare Foyanmu which was also known as Ogundare Foyanmu and his Popular Hunters' Chant. The seventeen-man band was structured for his performance's formation as this: seven (7) singers, four (4) drummers, four (4) elegbes, two (2) Janajanasi (Special Effect Makers), and one (1) lead vocal who was Ogundare Foyanmu.³⁸ This structure explains further the consciousness of the history *Onjo bi Ina* music of Ogundare Foyanmu between 1956 and 2012.³⁹

The music of Ogundare Foyanmu between 1956 and 2012 has the concrete reality of pleasure and beauty. This pleasure and beauty gave it a level of worthy commitment/passion as revealed during his practical existence in the period under review. Also, Ogundare Foyanmu has given attention to some music compositions that encouraged good morals and rebuked bad attitudes and also proffer solution to human society's problem most especially in Yorubaland. Some of such works are reviewed in this paper to bring out the ethical exist samples in his works. The dichotomy of good and bad made the moral world of a man like Ogundare Foyanmu existence in Ogbomoso space in the 20th-century. Ogundare Foyanmu between 1944 and 2012 has focused on the consciousness of an idea society as it affects the morality of the Yoruba worldview as a serious warfare between good and bad.⁴⁰

These activities of his choice as a concrete man were continuous and paramount actions in human society, however, it was not enough to determining his being there as a man. The choice between good and bad was the crux of his being there as defined by his society. On this statement stood the thought of Ogundare Foyanmu in his existential experiences as being thrown and being there in his

Akintinpa music which expresses choice on the evils of his society and way forward as a member of the society. He could have chosen any other music or profession based on the rebuke by his uncle and the society where he was thrown in the 1940s as observed in the above opening quotation of this section of the study when he left the family's traditional style of music. However, the understanding of himself as an ethical existentialist which later played out in his existence between 1956 and 2012 could not be underemphasised. This thought existence has influenced him in sustaining his choice of Akintinpa music and the performance structure as explained above even when his uncle detested it and saw it as a beggar's occupation. Rather than seeing what his uncle said he chose to build his career in the hunter kind of music which has earned him an existence in Ogbomoso and Yoruba history of musicians in the 21st-century reconstruction of human history.⁴¹

Ogundare Foyanmu and his *Onjo bi Ina* Ethical Existentialist Yoruba Music, 1956-2012

This section of this paper discusses the trajectory of Ogundare Foyanmu's *Onjo bi Ina* as an ethical existentialist Yoruba music between 1956 and 2012. Going by the second phase of his music career known as *Onjo bi Ina*, it was pretty clear and it depicted the reality of fame and it's impact on society which could not be shared away from by the people around him. At this stage it was no longer smoking but burning and it was generating heat in the Yoruba music industry in the period under review. Some templates are discussed in this work showcasing Ogundare Foyanmu as an ethical existentialist Yoruba musician:

The choice of Foyanmu slogan and the experience of the existence of the Beautiful Slave Woman in his *Onjo bi Ina* Music, 1956-2012

Foyanmu as a phenomenon had taken over Ogundare Ayano James Ogunsina, the original name given by his parents in 1932. According to Ogundare in an interview session and the work of S. Alagbe, *Ijala Ogundare Foyanmu ... Ijinle Ede Ohun Enu Yoruba* he states that his ancestors at an encounter with a woman who was made slave. She was a beautiful damsel who was later made a wife. This beautiful woman although a slave in the Afilemu's family compound got pregnant by his ancestor. She later gave birth to a free boy who was made a slave too. From this narration, one can see choice as played by Ogundare's ancestors by changing a free being into a slave. His ancestors, the beautiful damsel turned slave and her slave child existed in the Afilemu trajectory before the change of name of the compound.⁴² In the Afilemu family there exists a tradition that a slave mother would not be allowed to take pap either solid or liquid except meshed pounded yam. Taking such meals was reserved for the free born child. Working with this standard whenever a slave mother was about to wean her child she would be fed with meshed pounded yam which must have lasted for two days.⁴³

After teething, the elders in the compound would be gathered and ask the slave mother to make some ritual presentation with materials such as kola nut, two snail, one solid pap and bean cake to appeal to gods for her slave child to be permitted to eat solid or liquid pap. When the beautiful slave woman was asked to respond to the tradition she quickly made the effort to make her child free and enjoy what free children do enjoy. The beautiful slave woman was not happy about the whole process of the Afilemu family. She was indeed maltreated and her child too, thereafter, she became sick afterwards she died. Before she died she laid a spell on the Afilemu people. And she instructed Afilemu people that no woman in the family would escape the curse if she failed to feed with meshed pounded yam till the child teethes. Failure to abide by her dictates the family such child would not survive it into becoming an existence in life. This has shown that the existence of Ogundare Foyanmu was a result of his parents obeying the statement of the beautiful damsel turned slave.⁴⁴

Ogundare Ayano Foyanmu also dared the instruction of the beautiful slave woman, the experience he had was worrisome; he had the experience of his infant children dying like twelve (12) of them. Not until he took to the instruction of the beautiful slave woman seriously things get better for him. The meshed pounded yam as meal became the remedy by feeding all other children he got who later survived the curse. The meshing of the pounded yam into water and drinking it made people refer to the compound Foyanmu *as the place where they meshed pounded yam and drank it*. Gradually the compound got the name Foyanmu until it overwhelmed the initial name of the compound Afilemu.⁴⁵ Another display of the expression of the beautiful slave woman as it influenced the existence of Ogundare Foyanmu was 'Foyanmu' overriding the christened names of Ogundare James Ayano Ogunsina till when he died in 2012. He could not just use Afilemu to praise-sing himself whenever he was on a stage to perform. It was very difficult for him because God decided to favour the beautiful slave woman. But it was more convenient for him to praise-sing himself by saying Ogundare omo Foyanmu (the child of Foyanmu). This became what the people he interacted with through his music called him in Ogbomoso and Yorubaland at large. The society accepted Foyanmu as his actual name. Foyanmu existed at the expense of Ogunsinas or Afilemu Compound. Ogundare Foyanmu took to the social reality that he has no other name than Foyanmu. Whenever he wanted to start his performance he used these words:

Original Version in Yoruba

Emi Ogundare omo Foyanmu
Keru o beko
Pa'gbin je keru o b'oosa
Ori da mi joko lemi
Emi o jeni ori n le kiri

Ayano
Eni ori nle kiri leemo han⁴⁶

Translated version in English

'I Ogundare the child of Foyanmu
Who scared pap
Eat the snail and the gods are frightened
I am the one whose head made to sit
I am not the one whose head is pursing about
Ayano
It is me whose head is pursing about that you know.'⁴⁷

The acceptance of Foyanmu as indispensable in the life of Ogundare James Ayano Foyanmu and his music established the ethical existentialist thinking in his concrete social reality. According to Ogundare Foyanmu he states, it was this Foyanmu of a thing that had hindered many from know that my family compound was Afilemu, not Foyanmu. The overwhelming slogan 'child of Foyanmu' has reduced the name of our family compound Afilemu. This action led to the consensus to change the name of our family compound to Foyanmu till today.⁴⁸

Crises confronted by Ogundare Foyanmu in the *Onjo bi Ina* Music, 1956-2012

Ogundare Foyanmu was confronted with different forms of crises between 1944 and 2012. One of such crisis was that he was faced with a lack of funds. Funding his musical career was a fundamental crisis which he faced and partially surmounted which led him to collaborate with some studio sponsors. It was one of the major confrontations he had to face for him to be an authentic man within the ethical existentialist consciousness. This challenge hindered him from producing his music by himself and this made the producers of his music harvest the bulk of the profit from his music for themselves while a token was given to him for all of his albums between 1956 and 2012.⁴⁹ In addition, to the above crisis, he had to face the challenge of plagiarism. Many of his works were plagiarised and sold out without his knowledge. This wicked act by people he had to interact with as concrete social reality hindered him from making a corresponding profit as he had put efforts in his album's project in the period under review.⁵⁰

The failure to acquire a western education was another challenge which limited his success and it was one of the crises he had to battle all his life. This challenge delayed him from progressing meaningfully as established in the thought of the ethical existentialist. The reason was that his failure to read and write made him not to be able to put some of his work in written form for literary appreciation of the Yoruba heritages which is to be celebrated and promoted. It was not this alone, the challenge hindered him from travelling abroad to Europe and America. He was able to travel within Africa with his Ijala/ Akintinpa music to project the music to

the world, the countries included Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Benin Republic, among others.⁵¹

The last challenge that confronted him that would be mentioned here was the ban placed on him by one of the former Military Governors of Oyo State, Late Major General Adedeji Oresanya in 1999 during the commissioning of the electricity at Gambari. It happened that in the course of his performance on the occasions there was a misbehaviour by Ogundare Foyanmu to Soun of Ogbomoso, Oba Jimoh Oladunni Oyewumi Ajagunbade III at the ceremony. In respect to this, he was suspended for complete six (6) months not to perform publicly. Although he was allowed to perform just for living purposes, this period was indeed a trying time for him. Even after the expiration of the ban, the trying time continued because people were afraid to invite him to their occasions. Four (4) months later, his lovers began to invite him to occasions because of the announcements on media; print and electronic. Thereafter, his light shone again till when he died in 2012.⁵² These crises have revealed Ogundare Foyanmu as an ethical existentialist who obeys the law of the land and goes through the good and bad times in life with good faith by not compromising the value of dedication and commitment to a course. This attitude of his support the thought of Isaiah Berlin on the types of freedom which are positive and negative.⁵³

Praise-singing sustained Onjo bi Ina Ogundare Foyanmu Music, 1956-2012

Praise-singing was one of the cardinal tool used by Ogundare Foyanmu in his *Onjo bi Ina* music in the period under review. In some of his music, it was observed that praise-singing of a town and man is key as an apologist of ethical existentialism because every man lives in a space per time. The praise-singing of a town was very important to his kind of music of Akintinpa because it revealed the uniqueness of each town and man in Yorubaland. It was a well-established fact that any musician in the Yoruba world who fails to understand the place of praise-singing of a town and man might not excel in his chosen career. The reason is that the musician should be able to praise-sing a man about his/her town because he is evidence of existence in that town in a particular time. Many people are bearing the same name but from different towns and communities and this emphasises the uniqueness of man to a space and time. Also, for people to show the level of relationship among themselves, the need for appreciation in the form of praise-singing of such individuals is indescribable.⁵⁴ There is no town he does not know its cognomen. Perfectly he praise-sings individuals in relation to their towns. An example is the reference to Late Ayinla Omowura who hailed from Abeokuta and was a popular Apala musician in his days. It is not for exaggeration,⁵⁵ Ogundare Foyanmu knows about praise-singing of towns and for man very well. In one of his albums: His praise-sings Ayinla Omowura:

Original Version in Yoruba

Eja nla lo ninu omi
Eniyan nla lo nile Oba Egba Alake
... Awon lomo Iremogun
Alagbede ki i tewo gbowo
Bo ba fun won lowo won a ni ki o ju sile
Ayinla lomo mimi lora
Omo amikan ti n be loke ewiri
Egbon n mi, aburo n mi
Bi won b abo sile aro
Gbogbo won a maa mi gbokan gbokan
Bi mob a tete daye
Omo alagbede ni n ba maa se
Bo ba finna won a lo o seun
Bo o si finna won a lo o seun
Finnafinna n be lenu alagbede
Agbede Iwoya ki i ba omo re wi boroboro
Omokunrin kagun kagun bi Igbo Ijebu o
Asare mo ni tan, opo eniyan bi onidaruke...⁵⁶

Translated version in English

A big fish is gone from the water
A big man is gone from the kingdom of the King of Egba Alake
... They are the children of Iremogun
The blacksmith does not present his palm to receive money
If you give him money he will say drop it on the floor
Ayinla is the child of swallowed fat
The child of the swallowing of soul who resides at the hill of Ewiri
My elder one and younger one
When they get to Aro's house
They will all be gasping for breath
If I have arrived in the world earlier
I would have chosen to be a blacksmith
When he makes fire, he will be appreciated
And if he did not make it, he will be appreciated
Fire maker is on the mouth of the blacksmith
The Blacksmith of Iwoya does not discipline his children always
The man of Kagun Kagun like Ijebu forest
Will rush at one, a multitude of people like the goods carrier...⁵⁷

The Theme of Good Behavior and Encouragement to Parents in the *Onjo bi Ina* Ogundare Foyanmu Music, 1956-2012

One of his albums with title *Ekú Ewu Omo*, it was an album dedicated to celebration of the arrival of a newborn child. Ogundare Foyanmu advises parents to take responsibility in training their children in all areas of life for the children to give them peace and to be well-behaved citizens of their communities. Living right according to Ogundare Foyanmu is all about passion and dedication. His experience as one with no Western education, pleaded with parents in the music as he congratulated the parents for the gift of a baby. In this albums, he advises parents to avail their children of sound education. He opines further that no heritage a parent can bequeath to their children order than education both moral and secular. Ogundare Foyanmu added to the above opinion that any child who is not trained will sell all the properties of his parents:⁵⁸

Original Version in Yoruba

...Eni to ti bi, ko ni ku
Eniyan ti ko si ti i ri bi
Oba mi oke yoo pese omo foluwa re
Ta a ba wa bi mo naa tan
Bo seko ise, bo seko kewu
Bo seko iwe, e je ka gbiyanju
Ka komo wa lekoo to ye kooro
Nitori aabo eko ni i jomo ni ya
Ni e je omo onilari
E ma gbagbe pe
Beniyan ba bimo re ti o ko o
Ti n ba n fowo kole kiri bi eye
Iru omo bee ni ta ile obi leyin ola...⁵⁹

Translated version in English

...Those who have given birth to children, they will not die,
And those who have not been privileged to give birth,
My King above will give such children.
When we have now given birth to children,
If it is craft Education, if it is Arabic Education,
If it is Western Education, let us make an effort
To give our children a good education,
Because half-baked education ruins a child,
And do not allow the child to be useful.
Do not forget that,
When one gives birth to children and fails to train then,
And such a person goes about building houses all over like bird,

Such a child sells the houses built by the parents in the future...⁶⁰

Rebuke of Bad Attitude revolves *Onjo bi Ina* Ogundare Foyanmu Music, 1956-2012

In his music titled Ore Odale (The Betrayer), he discourages betrayers in any form. In this section of the study of Ogundare Foyanmu's music titled: Ore Odale. He observes that no matter how a man tries to appeal to another man doing evil or evil incarnate does not decide to be evil. A man in this level of behaviour will surely showcase evil because the being is not an ethical being and he encourages disorder in a social order in the human relationship. According to him whosoever is ethical will showcase morals that will sustain the system:

Original Version in Yoruba

Puropuro lo ku soju eeru o
Sikasika ku o nase saaro
Sootosotoo nikan lo ku sinu posi ide
Won a fi eyin ti amu segi ileke
N lo difa ojo kan f'Orunmila
Lojo tifa n lo sodu sooto
Ore mi ododo ni e je ka ma aba raw a so
Enikeni ti n ba n soro otito
Oluware ni ile o gbe
Ko seni ti yoo huwa ika
T'Olorun Oba ko ni I mu
Eni to mo on pa to mo on bo
Olorun Oba nikan soso
Nii gboko lowo oluwa re
Enikeni to ba bere ti n ba n wole Okete
Olorun n wo di ti e naa leyin⁶¹
...O o ri o purupuro o ku so soju eeru
A la a fewure joye ewure n jewe odan
A la a fagutan joye won a si ma je iyefun
A la a folonginni joye oke aja ni n fo fere
A sese n damoran wi pe a foloffofo joye
Ofoto n ba igboro je kiri
Agbalagba ofoto n gbon wu ete kiri kale onile o
Olori olofofo gigise lo fi sapoti o nile onile o
Eniyan lo loo wi oko lobinrin o mo n ta a se
Ofoto wi tan oju e da oran ti oba kun ni loju.⁶²

Translated version in English

Liars died shamefully disgraced
 The wicked one died stretching to the cooking burner
 It is only the faithful who die and his buried in the golden casket,
 They will rest their backs on the water reservoir and fetch wood of beads.
 This interprets a day in particular that Orunmila,
 On the day ifa was going to make a divination for truth.
 My friends let us be faithful to one another always
 Whosoever speaks the truth
 Such people will be favoured while living
 No evil-doer.
 The Almighty will not catch up with or not punish
 The hypocrite
 It is the Lord King only
 Who can shame such a fellow
 Anyone who stoops and pulls down the house of a rat
 The Lord is also pulling down his too...⁶³
 ...Interestingly, the liar who died, died disgraced
 We said, we made goat a chief, goat eats the leave of oak
 We said, we made sheep a chief and it will be eating sieve of the beans
 We said, we made the cat a chief of the hill, it is busy jumping about in the roof
 We were just planning that we will make a gossips a chief
 She is busy destroying the town
 The chief of the gossip went about sowing seed of conflict in the homes
 The head of the gossips stoops at another man's house
 Saying the husband is committing adultery
 The gossip reported and initiated problems that would have interested one
 Alas! The reportage did not affect the King's palace...⁶⁴

The highlighted music in his *Onjo bi Ina* music has revealed the ethical existence of Ogundare Foyanmu and his music as one who rebukes the bad behaviour of gossip in his music in the space he found himself between 1956 and 2012.

Conclusion

Ogundare Foyanmu is seen in this research as one who was responsible for his deeds and accountable to his world of music in Ogbomoso as a being for himself and others which reflected in his music. The life and music of Ogundare Foyanmu have expressed positive and negative freedom as it influenced his art of *Onjo bi Ina* music in Yorubaland between 1956 and 2012. This music of his was based on his choices which later gave him existence and then essence. The study observed that his

existence as a product of history has manifested in choice, anxiety, and free will. The ethical existentialist choice that Ogundare Foyanmu made goes beyond him in defining him and his society as an embodiment of an existentialist social reality in Yorubaland and its music. Ogundare Foyanmu kept in sight the consciousness of authentic and ethical existence in his more than three experiences in Yorubaland and the land at large. This has revealed the evidence of the historical materialism perspective as proposed by the Marxists in the logical narration of existence.

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A HISTORY OF OVUOS (COVENANTS) IN KOLOKUMA/OPOKUMA AND YENAGOA SOCIETIES OF BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Ovu (covenant) is an agreement between two parties established by oath taking. Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies engaged in ovuo (covenants) making as a form of diplomatic practice. In the societies, an ovuo served as a tool for conflict resolution between families, compounds, villages and clans. Sealing of an ovuo in the societies involved pouring of libation to ancestors, sharing of items used for libation and oath-taking among participants. Once concluded, an ovuo became binding on all indigenes of the parties involved. Due to the processes involved in the making and the impact ovuos had on parties involved, communities took necessary caution before one was sealed. Existing literature on relations of the societies shows that there are no studies on ovuos in the societies covered by this study. Hence, this article helps to cover the existing gap. The study also serves as a means of preservation of the history of ovuos in the societies. Also, the study will help serve as a tool for reference for future researchers on covenants in Niger Delta societies and Africa at large. The research utilised oral literature and oral history collected through interviews. Books, newspapers, journals and other secondary sources were also utilised. Data derived from the various sources were analysed using analytical tools of history and diplomatic studies. The use of analytical tools ensured objectivity. Findings of the work showed that ovuos (covenants) helped to promote peace and engender development of Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies.

Keywords: Ovuo (covenant), Kolokuma/Opokuma, Yenagoa, Societies

Introduction

Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa local Government Areas, Bayelsa State comprise nine (9) clans namely; Kolokuma, Opokuma, Gbarain, Ekpetiama, Atissa, Epie, Biseni, Okodia and Zarama. According to Aaziagha (2010:20), Kolokuma towns include Igbedi, Seibokoragha (Sabagreia), Okoloba, Ayibabiri, Olobiri, Kaiama, Kala-Ama, Sampou and Odi. Towns that make up Opokuma Clan are;

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Gbarainama, Ayakoroama Orubiri, Ofonibiri, Igbanwari, Oyobu/Ebiam, Akanranbiri and Gbaranbiri. Towns that make up the Gbarain Clan, also referred to as Taylor Creek include; Polaku, Koroama, Obunagha, Okotiam, Ogboloma, Okolobiri, Assaingbene, Ayama, Nedugo and Agbia, (Tuaweri, 2008). Ekpetiama clan consists of Gbarantoru, Tombia, Agudama, Akaibiri, Bumoundi and Ikibiri. Yakie (2011:9-12) states that there are twenty-nine (29) towns in Epie-Atissa. They are Yenizue, Ekeki, Amarata, Yenegwe, Okutukutu, Akempai, Agudama,-Epie, Akenfa, Azikoro, Akaba, Etegwe, Yenebeli, Fangbe, Obogoro, Zarama-Nyanbiri, Yenagoa, Ovom, Ikolo, Swali, Onopa, Agbura, Igbogene, Kpansia, Ogu, Opolo, Edepie, Yenaka and Biogbolo. Communities that make up the Zarama Clan are Epie-Zarama, Nyanbiri-Zarama, New Jerusalem, Akinfa, Obiogbo-Ama, Akinbuo, Isoki and Ikeledu. Okordia Clan consists of Agbobiri, Ayamabele, Ikarama, Akumoni, Freetown, Kalaba and Ikarama¹¹.

The climate of the area is characterized by Rainy (wet) and sunny (dry) seasons. The rainy season spans from March to November. In April and May, the rains come with heavy down pour accompanied by thunderous storms, which sometimes destroy farms and house roofs and partial flooding. Around August, there is a brief dry period or interval known as “August break” called “*Awaran*” in the local parlance. The peak of the rainy season comes around September. The dry season starts in early November and lasts till March every year. Between December and January, the area also experiences harmattan. The harmattan period is marked by high temperature and humidity. During this period, the atmosphere is hazy and humid; the sun’s shine is also usually intense (Nyanayo, 1999:45).

The geography of the area entails numerous creeks, swamps and stretches of land typical of the fresh-water region of the Niger Delta. Major creeks found in the area are Igbedi Creek, Taylor Creek and Epie Creek. The creeks and other water bodies served as places for fishing, means of transportation and communication and religious purposes. Sometimes, Creeks in the area also serve as a boundary between towns and clans. For instance, Taylor Creek served and still serves as the boundary between the Gbarain Clan and Sabagreia-Okoloba and in Kolokuma, as well as the Gbarain Clan and Opokuma clan. Available land in the area is used by the people for various purposes. It served as places for building homesteads, used for farming, paths for communication and other services. Due to the significance of the waterways and land, Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa people, place high value on their ownership and control. To avoid the loss of the assets, the people take necessary steps to protect them.

Due to the proximity of the clans, the people of Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa interacted extensively. The interactions took the forms of fishing on the same water bodies, farming on the same lands, trading together in the same markets, having inter-marriages, and engaging in wrestling and other sporting activities. Owing to the interactions, there have also been conflicts between people of the

societies. Some of the conflicts were Kalama Vs Abadan Conflict, Seibokorogha Vs Okoloba (Ogbai suu), Ekpetiama-Kolokuma Conflict; Amassoma- Ikibiri conflicts. The societies have also developed measures of dealing with the conflicts to ensure peaceful co-existence. According to Etepke (2007), the principles and instruments adopted in conflict resolution by traditional Niger Delta societies were; the principles of impartiality, principles of accommodation and compromise, principles of moderation and principles of separation (Etepke, 2007: 189-191).

Impartiality by arbitrators in the adjudication of a conflict was highly valued by the Kolokuma/Opokuma people in any conflict. Arbitrators, who were most times the heads of the communities or their representatives, ensured that this expectation was met. However, when a party was dissatisfied with the decisions of arbitration, it took the case to oracles. This is because the people regarded oracles as impartial judges that dispense flawless judgements and give divine sanctions. Before the oracles in the shrines, judgment was dispensed through divination and trial by ordeal. Parties to a conflict were also made to swear to an oath administered by the priest of the oracle or shrine. Judgments of the oracles were regarded as finality on a matter by the people. (Ugo, 2022:377)

Traditional modes of conflict resolution in Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies also involved entering into ovuos (covenants). Webster’s Dictionary, 2004, defines a covenant as a agreement entered into by two or more persons or parties. Fleming (1990) states that every covenant entails laid down rules of responsibilities and benefits for parties to it. According to (Charles: 2017:9), covenants have three characteristics, namely; parties involved, terms of reference and privileges and punishments derivable which comes as punishment/reward.

Existing in the communities are mainly covenants between towns and clans. However, individual covenants also exist. Examples of inter village and inter-clan covenants in the area include the Abadani/Kaiama covenant, Kolokuma/Ekpetiama covenant, Kpansia/Ekeki covenant, Yenagoa/Ikibiri Covenant and others. Individuals, families, towns and clans made covenants, mostly after arms struggle between them. This makes an ovuo a product of conflict, as well as a mechanism for conflict resolution in societies. Yakie (2011:29) states that Epie-Atissa towns borrowed ovuo-making from their Izon neighbours. This implies that, interactions between the people of Epie-Atissa and their Izon neighbours caused cross-fertilization of cultures in the societies. People of the area are not able to state when and where the covenants were exactly contracted. However, they claim that most of the covenants have their origins in pre-colonial times.

Characteristics of Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa Ovuos (covenants)

In all the Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies, Ovuo entails the same attributes. The processes of sealing, items used for sealing and privileges and liabilities were similar. Existing ovuos in the societies were necessitated by the occurrence of war. The wars were caused by disputes over economic assets (land,

ponds, raffia palms, lakes etc). Sometimes, wars were also caused by maltreatment of women by husbands or in-laws, rape cases, manslaughter and murder coincidences. For instance, the Ise na tara owou of Sabagreia- Igbedi conflict was caused by claims of ownership and fishing right to Opouba Lake in Duala Bush on Wilberforce Island. The Burudani Vs Abadani Conflict was caused by the destruction of raffia palm trees by Burudani people on Abadani land in Okoloba town. the Okoloba- kaiaama Conflict was caused by mockery of a Kaiama fisherman by Appah Ibou and his followers who were on their way to Odi for marriage. The conflict between Amassoma and Ikolo was caused by the theft of plantain on farms located in their land boundary at Wilberforce Island by people of the area.

Ovuo making in the Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies involved several processes and steps. The first step is the acknowledgement by people of the existence of a conflict and the need to resolve it. Conflicts, especially wars that ensued between the communities caused several evils. The wars caused human losses, and destruction of properties and disrupted economic activities. They also create hatred, and division, separate families, etc. The realization that these occurrences hinder their relations and inhibit the development of the societies necessitated the entering of an ovuo by the societies. They believe that once an ovuo is contracted, wars between them will be minimized or eliminated.

The second step was the determination of personalities that should represent a community Ovuo making was taken very seriously. People of Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa Societies regarded ovuo-making as a serious venture. Therefore, the oath taking was done mostly by the oldest man of the community, who doubled as the chief, the chief priest and others who were knowledgeable in the traditions. These people negotiated the venue where the ovuo was to be concluded, the terms of the ovuo, as well as items to be used.

The third step is the sealing of the ovuo. This is also the final stage of ovuo making in the societies. On the agreed date and time, representatives of the communities meet at an agreed venue, where the ovuo will be sealed. The representatives exchange pleasantries through cracking jokes. This is followed by the presentation and consecration of items required for the ovuo. The items were palm wine and garri and sometimes, local gin called "kon uru) in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Ekpetiama and Gbarain clans. Items used for the oath-taking were consecrated through libation and incantations that invoked the presence and approval by ancestors. Consecration of items was mostly done by the priests or traditional heads of the two communities. Once the consecration was done, the items were regarded as sanctified for use for the ovuo. The garri was then soaked in the palm wine and drank by all those present at the venue. Once an ovuo was concluded it became binding on all parties and irrevocable until it was nullified. This is because; the people believe that oaths taken during the contraction are established on ancestral spirits and gods of the lands. If a party knowingly breaks the covenant, the person's

belly becomes swollen for days. This is to allow the person to appease the covenant by doing necessary cleansing rituals. Failure to do the appeasement rituals results in the death of the person. When this happens, the corps of the person is considered desecrated and buried without honour. For an ovuo to be nullified, it must have the approval of all parties to it including the ancestors. In addition, the elders will have to undo all the processes that were followed during the contracting.

Privileges /Rewards of Ovuo on Parties

Ovuos in Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies confer certain responsibilities and privileges on parties to it. Privileges derived from an ovuo include the playing of Ovuo by citizens of parties to it, liberty to take animals or food items from citizens or communities of the other party without payment, non-sanctioning or payment for damages caused to the other party citizen, etc. The responsibilities and privileges are clearly defined in the agreements sealed by the oaths. Yakie (2010:10) summarises the provisions of the ovuos in Epie-Atissa communities as follows;

There was a strong feeling of brotherhood among some towns and villages in the Epie-Atissa clans. They made covenants (ovuoo) with one another. A man could harvest any crop or food item from the farm belonging to another person or even kill any domestic animal in any village if his village had a covenant with that village. The issue of paying adultery fees did not affect citizens of villages that were covenanted.

Alazigha (2010:10), corroborates Yakie's submission about ovuos in the Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies. This can be found in his remarks on the provisions of the Abadani/ Ekpeinbiri (Kaiama) ovuo. See his comment as follows:

The Abadani people as well as the Ekpeinbiri people were living in parts of Agadagbabou near Igbedi. They had several years of sporadic warfare. Many lives were lost on both sides and their relationship was strained very badly. Therefore, the Ekpeinbiri people made a move for peace. Thereby both sides were called together and peace which resulted in a covenant "ovuoo" was concluded before Kolokuma representatives between Ekpeinbiri and Abadani as follows: 1 All wars open or secret between the two communities should cease; 2. They must not think evil of each other; 3. Both communities shall be friendly and have a cordial relationship; 4. They are free to eat freely from each other and pay no damages for such food; 5. No adultery fees have to be claimed from each other; 6. That the covenant was perpetually irrevocable forever and ever.

Existing Covenants in Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa Societies

There are no pronounced ovuos involving individuals in Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies. But there are several ones between towns and clans in the area. Some of the inter-community and inter-clan ovuos are; Olobiri/Kilegbegha/Kaiama Ovuo, Abadani/Kaiama Ovuo, Abadani/Ayibabiri Ovuo, Kaiama/Okordia Ovuo, Kolokuma/Ekpetiama Ovuo. Kpansia/Epie-Ekeki Ovuo, Yenagoa/Ikibiri Ovuo, Ogu/Ayanma Ovuo and Ikolo/Amassoma Ovuo. Though contracted long ago, these ovuos are partially observed by people of the communities. As stated above, people of the communities are not able to state the dates and places where these ovuos were exactly contracted.

Abadani –Ayibabiri

The Abadani –Ayibabiri ovuo is a covenant between the Abadani people of Okoloba Town and Ayibabiri (usuma Dani), all in the Kolokuma Clan. Chief Okobatin of Dagbowari, Abadani narrates that, the two communities lived as neighbours sharing a common boundary in between the Asoama community and the Olodani Compound. While living as neighbours, people of the two communities related in various ways including farming on the same farmlands. There were also moments of squabbles between them arising from individual disagreements. On one occasion, an Ayibabiri man raped an Abadani woman thereby incurring the wrath of the Abadan people. For fear that the Abadani people would retaliate by engaging in war with them, the Ayibabiri people relocated to sojourn with Akaran, the founder of Akaranbiri in Opokuma Clan. While under Akaran's protection, the Ayibabiri people sought to make peace with the Abadani people through Akanran the founder of the Akaranbiri compound in the Opokuma Clan. The mediation by Akaran led to the entering of the Abadani –Ayibabiri ovuo by the two communities. The terms of the ovuo were that the Abadani people should not take retaliations over the rape of their daughter. They should also desist from killing each other in the future.

Kolokuma/Okordia Ovuo

The Kaiama/Okordia Ovuo is a covenant between the Kolokuma and Okordia clans. The ovuo was caused by a boundary dispute between the Sampou community and an Okordia community. The dispute resulted in secret killings of each other by the communities. Over time, the conflict escalated to involve other communities in both clans. The climax came when the two clans engaged themselves in a war that led to the killing of Okobai, Egbesu priest by Okordia hero. The death of the Kolokuma hero necessitated an agreement by both clans to enter into an ovuo. The Kolokuma/Okordia ovuo stipulated that people of the two clans maintain a friendly cordial relationships at all times; people can freely harvest crops or catch and kill animals belonging to the other party for consumption without payment; no adultery fees should be claimed from each other. Since the ovuo was concluded,

people of Okordia and Kaiama have been playing the ovuo whenever they are in each other's communities.

His Highness, Nionio, a native of Zarama –Epie, in an oral interview stated that his cousin claimed to benefit from the Okordia and Kolokuma ovuo, while he was a student in Kaiama. According to him, due to the ovuo, the cousin was treated fairly by the people of Kaiama. He was given the privilege to eat from any family in the town freely. There were also times he killed and ate fowls belonging to the people of the town without any harassment or claims of payment by the owners.

Kolokuma - Ekpetiama ovuo

The Kolokuma-Ekpetiama ovuo was an inter-clan ovuo, made between the people of the two clans. Interviews conducted in Ekpetiama reveal that not many persons in the Ekpetiama clan are familiar with this ovuo. Dauebi Nimizuo and Amapamo zige, who claim to know the ovuo, could not also provide details of the cause of the ovuo. However, Aro Timineri, a native of Okoloba Town, narrated that, before the ovuo was made, people of the two clans did not consider themselves as close kinsmen. As such, any male that killed a man from the other clan earned the heroic status called "kiile" given only to people who killed animals such as Tigre, lion, Buffalo or a man from a distant land. This necessitated unprovoked killings of each other by people of the clans. With time, it occurred to people of the clans that the practice of killing each other to acquire the status of *Kile* was misplaced, as neighbours. Hence they decided to enter into an ovuo to avert the trend. The terms of the covenant state that the people of Ekpetiama and Kolokuma should no longer engage in war for any reason; every feud between them should be resolved through peaceful negotiations; and the killing of a person from the other clan by a person from either sides should no longer constitute an act of heroism.

Chief Okobatin Aro, from Okoloba, in an oral interview at Okoloba stated that the sealing of the Ekpetiam-Kolokuma ovuo enabled people of the clans to relate as kinsmen. Due to the Ovuo, incidences that usually caused a war between the clans were now settled by peaceful means. According to him, there was a time; people of Kolokuma went to *Omu aru* (a war canoe) to avenge the maltreatment of their daughter by her husband at a community in southern Ijaw. On their way back, a bullet from a canon shot by a Tombia man killed one of the occupants of the war canoe Lamugoodagha, from Kaiama. But because of the ovuo between the people of the two clans, the Ekpetiama people were made to provide a maiden as restitution for the dead. The money paid was then used to acquire a woman through a big dowry marriage for Umanu, the father of Lamugoodagha.

Ikolo-Amassoma Ovuo

Ikolo-Amassoma Ovuo is an inter-community ovuo. It involves the people of Ikolo Town in the Atissa Clan of Yenagoa Local Government Area and those of Amassoma Town in the Ogboin Clan, in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area,

Bayelsa State. The two communities share a common land boundary around the Bayelsa State Cargo Airport in Wilberforce Island. H.R.H. Dele Jones Ere, in an interview in Amassoma with Mr. Ogonodi Tekena narrated, that people of Ikolo and Amassoma entered the ovuo to stop the killing of each other. According to him, the killings were caused by stealing of plantain from farms around their land boundary in Wilberforce Island. Due to the killings, people were afraid to go to the area for any farming, hunting, gathering and even canoe carving activities. Amid those circumstances, the people decided to enter into ovuo to live in peace. The ovuo provided that; people of the two communities should consider themselves as kinsmen and desist from killing each other; they were also free to harvest crops or animals belonging to each other for eating without charges.

Impact of Ovuos on Parties

Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa ovuos have impacted societies in so many ways. The ovuos prescribed privileges and sanctions, which bind indigenes of the two communities when an indigene of one community committed an offence against an indigene of the other. Through the provisions, the Ovuos served as a social control mechanism in the societies, helped to eliminate wars, promoted unity and enhanced the general development of the societies.

Once an ovuo was sealed, it became binding on parties and operational in the societies that are parties to it. Consequently, parties could invoke the rights and privileges prescribed in it when there was a conflict between indigenes of the communities involved. They also provided opportunities for Indigenes of the communities to crack jokes and expensive jokes called locally (ovuo zoru). Sometimes, the jokes cracked by the people contain derogatory remarks that should ordinarily generate bad blood. But such remarks were not taken as an offence by the parties. Even when a person was embittered by a remark and tried to pick a quarrel, the move was doused by reference to the existence ovuo.

Ovuos in the societies also served as conflict resolution mechanism that promoted unity and ensured lasting peaceful relations in the societies. Parties to an ovuo regard themselves as kinsmen and relate as such. The feeling of brotherliness enabled one party to have sense of belonging in the territory of the other party. This situation allowed for the increased interactions of the people without fear of molestation or discrimination. When a person was in a community in ovuo with his community, he or she was free to harvest crops and animals for eating without payments. This provision encouraged parties to settle in each other's territories as well as sharing of necessities.

Conclusion

Making of ovuo was an integral part of the relations of Kolokuma/Opokuma and Yenagoa societies. The societies resorted to it as a means

of resolving and preventing incessant warfare between them. In this regard, the ovuos served as a conflict resolution mechanism that promoted peaceful co-existence between the societies and a panacea for the development of the communities.

Despite the positive impact ovuos had on the societies in the past, people of the area no longer make communal or clan ovuos. This was due to the influence of Christianity on the societies. Christians regard the acts of pouring of libations and oath-taking in the name of ancestors or gods as idolatry (James 5:12). They also regard the sin of adultery as a grave sin that should be discouraged in its entirety. Therefore, they condemned the prevention of payment of adultery fees by those caught in adultery provided in the ovuos as ungodly. For these reasons, most of the people of the area, who are now Christians, dissociate themselves in ovuo making as individuals or in the name of their communities.

Notwithstanding the condemnation of ovuos by Christians, some persons in the communities still regard ovuos as essential practices that communities should continue with. In an interview at Yenagoa, Aro Timineri, a supporter of ovuos practice, stated that there was nothing wrong with entering or continuing with old ovuos the people. According to him, the provision of ovuos, preventing payment of adultery fees does not amount to the promotion of immorality as claimed by Christians. The provision only applies to men who commit the offence, not knowing that the woman was the legal wife of another. Therefore, even when the man was exonerated on the grounds of ignorance, the woman was made to face some sanctions. Besides, married women who engaged in adultery and failed to confess were afflicted with sickness and some cases death by the gods of the land. This implied that the societies do not condone or promote adultery.

Notwithstanding the arguments about desirability or otherwise, some people in the communities still play ovuos and lay claims to it when the need arose. In any case, much information about the ovuos has been lost due to lack of documentation. Most people can only claim the existence of the ovuos, but are not able to narrate details about them. This is due to the lack of preservation of the history of ovuos in the area in secondary source forms on the societies covered by this study.

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