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# History of Itsekiri

BY

WILLIAM A. MOORE

(Williamsville, Warri, Nigeria)

SECOND EDITION

*With a new introduction by*

Dr. P. C. LLOYD

*Reader in Social Anthropology, The University of Sussex*



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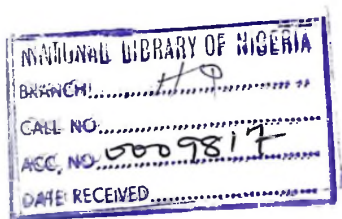
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## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

WILLIAM MOORE'S *History of Itsekiri* resembles other Nigerian local histories in which educated men have recorded the oral chronicles of their own towns and their people. It goes further than these, however, in developing into a polemic attack upon the Paramount Chief of the Itsekiri, Dore (or Dogho) Numa – and, inasmuch as this office was created by the British colonial administration, upon this pattern of rule. Yet the effect of the book was never felt as its author had intended. The last event recorded is in 1930 but the book was not published until 1936. Chief Dore Numa died in 1932 and in 1936 the Itsekiri installed a new *Olu* or king, thus ending an eighty-eight year interregnum. Whatever hostilities Dore Numa aroused among the Itsekiri during his lifetime were quickly forgotten after his death; he is remembered as the man who maintained the prestige of the Itsekiri and their superiority over neighbouring peoples. Moore's book was thus discredited and, in Warri, copies were destroyed or hidden by their owners so that very few are now in circulation.

The Itsekiri are a very small ethnic group, numbering in 1952 just over 30,000 people. Their homeland is in the western area of the Niger delta and the estuary of the Benin River. Their settlements were sited along the landward margins of the mangrove swamps – where they were neighbours to the Edo-speaking Urhobo (or Sobo) people – and along the sandy beaches of the Bight of Benin. The area embraced by these settlements exceeds 1,500 square miles, but most of this is mangrove swamp in which Ijoh (or Ijaw) fishermen have settled. These three groups – Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijoh – are culturally and linguistically very different, though their economies are interdependent.

Their numerical size notwithstanding, the Itsekiri are one of the most interesting of Nigerian peoples. When the Portuguese missionaries were spurned in Benin, they were welcomed by the Itsekiri rulers; the early development of the kingdom is believed to owe much to this contact with Europeans. For two hundred years

Roman Catholic missionaries visited Warri though their proselytizing effect was minimised by their high death rate and the frequently long intervals between postings. The Portuguese and other nations traded with the Itsekiri; but it was with the development of the palm-oil trade in the second half of the nineteenth century that the Itsekiri became wealthy as the middlemen between the, then, mainly English traders whose ships lay off the mouth of the Benin River and the producing Urhobo people in the interior. This monopolistic position, skilfully manipulated by the leading Itsekiri trader, Nana, led to the latter's downfall in a war with the British in 1894, and to British penetration into the interior. However the Itsekiri feelings of personal superiority remained and many were able to hold prestigious positions as clerks in the newly administered areas. Arrogance, nevertheless, is a declining asset and the Itsekiri now feel themselves overwhelmed by neighbouring peoples – and particularly in their 'own' town of Warri.

The traditional capital of the Itsekiri, now called Ode Itsekiri or Big Warri, is four miles from the modern town of Warri, on an island within the creeks. British traders and consular officials built their own settlement on the landward edge of the swamps and this has grown to embrace pre-existing Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijoh settlements to comprise the modern Warri. This is a cosmopolitan town of 20,000 people (1952), only a sixth of whom are Itsekiri. Yet since it lies within the traditional boundaries of their kingdom the Itsekiri look upon it as their capital even though there are more Itsekiri living in Sapele, 30 miles to the north (the new palace of the *Olu* was, moreover, built just beyond Warri's town limits). Warri is a lively commercial centre and port; for many years it was the local headquarters of United Africa Company; it is the terminus for John Holt's Niger fleet; and in the last few years it has become the centre for the oil field of the Western Niger delta.

Moore's chronicles of the Itsekiri rulers seem to follow quite closely the oral history still recounted by the people. (In fact, a published version of local history always tends to become an 'official' version, casting doubt on the authenticity of the numerous variants of the legends which had circulated previously).

The relative space given to the foundering of the kingdom, the intermediate reigns and the last century and a half replicates the pattern common to such oral accounts. Moore's version of the earlier Itsekiri myths and legends does not seem to have been distorted to suit his later polemics. For the documentary references Moore probably borrowed from P. Amaury Talbot, an administrative officer once posted to Warri and author of a four-volume historical and ethnographic account of the peoples of Southern Nigeria published in 1926. The petitions and legal judgements quoted *in extenso* in the later part of the book come from Moore's own files for he was, as he describes, one of the leading actors in the agitation against Chief Dore Numa.

Moore's book may now be supplemented by research conducted within the past fifteen years, the more significant published results of which are listed below. I lived in Warri for a year in 1955-56 being engaged then in an ethnographic study of the Itsekiri people and an examination of ethnic relationships in the town. Later, I was able to comb the consular records for references to the Itsekiri and to construct an outline history of their social and political development in the nineteenth century. In 1958 I led a commission which reported to the Minister of Lands and Labour, Ibadan, on the legal status of Warri lands. Professor Alan F. C. Ryder, of the University of Ibadan has, in exploring Catholic mission archives, discovered numerous documents from which one can amplify the history of the Itsekiri in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The more recent period has been covered by Dr. Obaro Ikime, a Urhobo by birth and a graduate of the University of Ibadan, who has examined Itsekiri-Urhobo relationships – a theme in which the career of Chief Dore Numa plays a dominant part. Our writings obviously amplify and occasionally correct Moore's statements. Nevertheless his work is still the most complete published account of Itsekiri oral history and his partisan approach to the local politics of the 1920's constitutes a valuable contemporary document. I conclude this Introduction with a few brief comments on Moore's text.

The myths of origin of an African kingdom are prominent in its oral history for they legitimate the power of the ruling

dynasty. The stories of Ginuwa's flight from Benin is corroborated in the legends of the Benin people and we would now place this event in the mid-fifteenth century – somewhat before the first arrival of the Portuguese in Benin in 1485. Ginuwa seems to have settled first near the mouth of the Forcados River and only later did his successors found the capital at Ode Itsekiri. In this new kingdom, probably subordinate to Benin in its early years, Benin chieftaincy titles were adopted. But the indigenous people of the area – the *umale* – were, it seems, proto-Yoruba; that is to say, they spoke a Yoruba dialect and their religious system was that of the Yoruba before the introduction of kingship and of the pantheon of deities recognised today. The Yoruba dialect has persisted though, oddly, Edo words are used in the kinship terminology; Itsekiri social structure is very different from that of most contemporary Yoruba or Edo speaking peoples. The settlements close to Ode Itsekiri would have been incorporated into the kingdom at an early period. Those by the sea seem to have retained a large measure of independence and their chiefs are now apt to say that they have never owed allegiance of the Olu of Warri. The court case involving the people of Ogidigbe reflects this viewpoint.

The Itsekiri are extremely proud of their connections with the Portuguese. They ascribe many heirlooms to this source, even when obviously incorrect (as when a Victorian jug and basin are inscribed in English): they use words of European derivation for many imported goods – e.g. shoes, plate: they point to the ruins of the chapel in Ode Itsekiri. Yet this contact is described in respect of the reign of one ruler; it is however not unusual for oral histories to assign a wide span of events to a single glorious reign. Ryder's research has shown that Portuguese influence was strong at the end of the sixteenth century and that the reigning Olu sent a son to Portugal to be educated; this youth, Domingos, returned ten years later with a noble Portuguese wife and later reigned. He was succeeded by a mulatto, probably his son. Subsequent rulers were also baptised although Christianity seems to have remained a court religion. The Itsekiri themselves are adamant, as Moore confirms, that their mulatto ruler Oyenakpagha, was son of an Itsekiri princess and a Portuguese trader. The reason for the reversal is not clear:

documentary evidence suggests that Domingos was a legitimate candidate for the throne whereas oral history makes Oyenakpagha's succession anomalous. One would suspect that the oral tradition became altered to provide a precedent in a later succession dispute, but we have no indication if and when this occurred. Most Itsekiri mulattos in the last century were fathered by European traders of local women and this has perhaps influenced the interpretation of the past.

With the reign of Akengbuwa in the first half of the nineteenth century the legends become more detailed and the reader will begin to grope through the endless succession of names. Many of the events cited are remembered because they illustrate the development of the trading Houses in the latter part of the century; others seem to have no major relevance but are, perhaps, perpetuated by small groups who use them to establish their own status in Itsekiri society.

By the end of the eighteenth century European trading vessels no longer visited Ode Itsekiri or Ughoton, the port of Benin; they anchored instead in the lower reaches of the Benin River or outside the treacherous bar. The Itsekiri migrated to found new settlements in this area from whence they could perform the middleman role between the traders and the now more distant suppliers of slaves and palm-oil. The slave trade declined however several decades before the oil trade became really profitable in the 1850's. Moore's story of the battle with the last ship almost certainly refers to the seizure of the "Veloz" by the British navy in 1837; but slaving had declined long before this as the estuaries were effectively blockaded. The decline in the wealth of the kingdom was probably an indirect factor in the collapse of political order and the long interregnum which followed the death of Akengbuwa in 1848. The traditional chieftaincy system fell into abeyance and a novel political structure emerged with leadership passing to the heads of the big trading Houses one of whom was recognised by British consuls as 'Governor of the Benin River'. These Houses were grouped into two major factions; one set traced descent from the chief Ologbotsere who had, in the late eighteenth century, led the establishment of the Itsekiri settlements on the north bank of the Benin River; the other descended from Emaye, successively wife of Olu Erejuwa and his son Akengbuwa,

whose children settled on the south bank. Rivalry between these two factions was often intense and the Governorship passed from one to the other. The trading empires of these Governors, and especially of Diare and Nana of the Ologbotsere faction, extended primarily into the hinterlands of the Benin and Ethiope Rivers. A third faction comprised the sons of Akengbuwa (other than those born to Emaye) who were more active in the more southerly area around Ode Itsekiri, an area which grew in commercial importance in the later years of the century. Nana's monopolistic control of trade in the Benin River was overthrown by the British in 1894 and in the following decade a form of direct administration was set up, largely using 'warrant' chiefs – i.e. men selected for their ability who usually had no traditional claim to such office.

Dore Numa rose to prominence among the Itsekiri through his opposition to Nana, both within the Itsekiri community and in the assistance rendered to the British. He was literate and, by all accounts, a very able man. He belonged both to the House of Emaye (paternally) and to the House of Ologbotsere (through his mother) which at this period was generally hostile to Nana; he thus won the support of these two major factions. He was given the office of Political Agent first for the Benin River and its hinterland and then for the Warri area too; in both of these offices and in that later created – Paramount Chief of the Itsekiri – Dore Numa exercised jurisdiction not only over the whole of Itsekiri country but also most of Urhobo land; he was able to perpetuate Itsekiri influence throughout the latter area.

For thirty years Dore Numa was virtual ruler of the Itsekiri. He seems to have been an able and just chief, though a man in so autocratic position was bound to make enemies. Communication between the Itsekiri people and the colonial government almost invariably passed through him. The British strongly supported him in his office suppressing, as Moore's narrative often shows, any opposition. As the price of such support Dore Numa had to bear responsibility, in the sight of his people, for such unpopular measures as the introduction of tax.

Opposition to Dore Numa crystallized around charges that he was usurping the sovereign powers of the Olu of Warri: these rights,

it was argued, should have passed to the heirs of Olu Akengbuwa. William Moore, related to Akengbuwa through his mother, was a local political leader who was largely instrumental in mobilizing these heirs. Ultimately charges were made that Dore Numa wished to be crowned as Olu of the Itsekiri, tracing his royal descent through Emaye; but he himself denied this. His efforts to revive rituals at Ode Itsekiri were however seen as a proof of such intentions; in so doing he was usurping the duties of the *olotu* or regent – an elderly member of the royal family who exercised, by tradition, none of the effective powers of government but merely performed rituals within the palace. It was not difficult for Dore Numa as ruler of the Itsekiri to show that sovereignty resided with him (as it had formerly passed to the nineteenth century Governors). He thus established his right to receive the subsidies paid by the British administration in lieu of the traditional 'comey' or customs duties levied on European traders, and to share these in fixed proportion among the heads of Houses. Whilst these issues were relatively clear-cut, those involving land rights engendered such confusion that there has been almost unending litigation since the early years of the century. Most cases revolved around the right of Chief Dore Numa to sign leases to government and other bodies on behalf of the people (variously described in the documents as the Itsekiri, the people of Warri, etc) and the distribution of the rents so received. This issue is not unique to Warri; many Nigerian traditional rulers have received substantial cash sums as rents or royalties and have become unpopular in as much as they appear to use the money for the enrichment of themselves and their immediate family rather than for the benefit of the whole community; Dore Numa's position was weaker in that he was not a traditional ruler. The three lawsuits cited by Moore are but a fraction of this litigation, yet they do illustrate the major issues which have arisen during this century.

In the first case the people of Ogidigbe, a village near the shore at the mouth of the Escravos River, disputed the sovereignty of the Olu of Warri over their territory; this was confused with a claim to rents received from this land. The Ogidigbe claim was not well formulated and was lost. The second case lay between the heirs of Olu Akengbuwa and Chief Dore Numa, with the former claiming

ownership of some parts of Warri town and entitlement to rents therefrom: the courts held, quite properly, that the land in question was not a private estate of the royal family. The third case relates to the rights of the Agbassa people – a Urhobo clan – whose long established village now lies within Warri town. The Agbassas first denied the overlordship of the Olu of Warri, a claim which, in the light of other litigation, was doomed to failure; it also united the Itsekiri against them. Latterly however they have been more successful in arguing that, as occupiers of the land, they are entitled to a major share of any rents collected and that the sovereignty of the Olu is recognised by a token sum only.

The use and distribution of land rents in Warri continues to be a contentious issue, involving the Olu, his chiefs and prominent Itsekiri in litigation and government commissions of enquiry. Whether the pattern of authority among the Itsekiri was highly formalised in the eighteenth and earlier centuries we shall never know. Oral history is not likely to be elaborated significantly beyond the description given by Moore though an abundance of detail relating to specific village communities or families might be collected. Nor is it likely that documentary evidence will throw more light on the Itsekiri political structure. As Moore has vividly shewn the nineteenth century interregnum produced a system in which political power was wielded by those with wealth and influence. There still exists today an intense competition for power and for the resources on which this is based.

The University of Sussex,  
April, 1969

P. C. LLOYD

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## FOREWORD

IN response to the felt need of the Itsekiri people, both literate and illiterate, for a written History of our Nation, I essayed the production of this book, which I trust may serve as an incentive or torch-light to a more complete History of Itsekiri in the future, by an abler writer than I am at present.

My language may be crude and ungrammatical, but if, in the midst of such acute need, we had to wait for a scholar with academic degrees, much of the best part of the tradition would become lost in oblivion, considering the high rate of deaths of the elders as the years roll by. Once a start is made, we shall attain or gain refinement and perfection in later editions.

Authentic corrections, alterations, amplifications and amendments by any Itsekiri, be he or she educated or uneducated, and all others who have the interests of the Itsekiri Country at heart, will be welcomed by the author with gratefulness, for they, by so doing, will assist him to get the second edition fairly enlarged.

WM. A. MOORE.



## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL NOTES

PRIOR to the advent of the Bini Prince Ginuwa, the territory now known as the Kingdom of Itsekiri or Iwẹrẹ, was inhabited by three tribes, namely, Ijaws, Sobos, and the Mahins. The most populous amongst these were the Sobo. They occupied the hinterland, while the Ijaw occupied the coast-line, and the Mahin squatted on the sea-shore near the Benin River.

There are four principal Sobo towns, whose inhabitants migrated from Benin City at different periods, namely, Agbassa-Otọ, Ughele, Iyede, and Ugọ. Prominent among the Ijaw tribe are Gulani (Gulagha), Mehin (Mẹghini), and Erogbo; while the Mahins (Ulaјẹ) hailed from Akoko and Ikaļ in the Province of Ondo, Nigeria.

There was, of course, according to tradition, a peculiar species of some immortalised beings known as Umalẹ, who lived amongst and intermarried with these three tribes in the pre-Ginuwa days.

The settlers in this region all recognized the suzerainty of the Oba of Benin, to whom they paid tributes. When the headman of each of the four Sobo towns died, his corpse was carried to Benin City for interment. The rites or ceremony by which their heirs obtain title from Benin, before assuming the deceased's position in town, is called Oghorogho-Oba-nu-lfẹ.

When the Kingdom of Iwẹrẹ (Warri) was established in the fifteenth century, their interests became divided ; and having no king (Olaja) of their own, some acknowledged the Olu of Itsekiri as their over-lord, whilst others still adhered to the Bini throne.

In its initial stage, and for more than two centuries, the Itsekiri kingdom was very extensive, and most populous and prosperous, owing to the righteous and godly disposition of our forefathers ; but when the interests of the well-to-do class became centred in self, it had begun to wane, and its glory faded fast away. Thanks be to God Almighty, there is now an *esprit de corps* among the present generation, whose activities shall effect the needful rebirth of the kingdom's lost prosperity.

The Umalẹ were a peculiar people, very ingenious, powerful, and rich. Children born to them were the giants of this land, such as Akpajigha (Olokun-ri-Jedo) of Omadinọ, Imutsi of Obodo, Ebele of Orere, and Arigbọn of Ikẹrẹnmu.

Owing to constant wars waged against them by the Olus, who fought and deprived them of their wealth, coupled with the unholy manners of the party from Benin, which the Umalẹ abhorred, they were said to have dematerialized into the ethereal world, and, having ceased to appear physically, to dwell among the Itsekiris. Our nation's name, Itsekiri, was the name of one of those Umalẹ on the spot and he was the owner of the quarters where Ijijẹn and Iramẹ landed at Ode Itsekiri. Several of Itsekiri's compatriots fled at the sight of the Iroko Box and the crowd which rushed out of it, but the man, Itsekiri, with the other inhabitants of Okorotom Quarter remained and acknowledged the Olu's superiority,

and dwelt with him as his subjects. The title Olu (King) was derived from the exclamation of the Umalẹs of Ode Itsekiri at the first sight of the Iroko Box. The ejaculation in question was "*Mori olu urun,*" meaning, "I see the king of things."

The Itsekiri language bears a striking similarity to either Ekiti, Igara, or Mahin ; but the race did not originate from any of these places. Yet the fact remains that it is a dialect of Yoruba, and considering that Ile Ifẹ was the home of us all, this aspect of the Itsekiri history should create no doubt in the mind of the student. Though Benin was our immediate ancestors' homeland, there is a great gulf between the Bini (Edo) and the Itsekiri languages which is difficult to bridge. One thing is noteworthy, and that is, that while the divergences in the language are so wide, the customs in most material respects are identical.

## CHAPTER II

### GINUWA'S EXODUS FROM BENIN CITY

NUWA, one of the Obas of Benin City, was warned by his grandfather, named Aghen (Oba) not to celebrate his late mother's funeral, because he (the Oba) had beheaded her for having done wrong within his harem, and, that if he did so when he happened to become an Oba, his reign over the Binis would become infamous, and his lot would be disrespect.

After some years, the Benin throne fell to Nuwa's lot, and then, his reign started, he told himself that it was a disgrace for a big king like him not to celebrate his mother's funeral; and accordingly, being drunk with pride of position and power, he made elaborate preparations, and celebrated the funeral obsequies of his late mother, in apparent disregard of his grandfather's warning. The evil reaction, of course, soon followed, even while the funeral rites were on; and thus he acquired his infamous title or name of "Nuwa Olękpętu" (The Troublesome Nuwa). He was said to have destroyed, in his frenzy, a great deal of the Benin royal robes and corals, after giving one-half to Ginuwa.

In view of the fact that the Binis had become disloyal to him, and continued to display an indifferent attitude towards him, he decided to send his eldest son, Ginuwa, to reign over the territory now known as the Itsekiri

Kingdom. So he conferred with Ogifa, the Chief Oracle Diviner of Benin, who, having consulted his oracle, divined that an Iroko Box, in the form of an ark, should be carved, into which Ginuwa and the children (first-borns) of the seventy headmen (Ojoye Oguadoręn), with their retinue and property, must be placed by means of a charm, and dispatched to the water, via Ugharegin. The Oba then summoned a Council-meeting of his seventy Chiefs or Headmen, and told them of his intention to send a sacrifice in an Iroko Box to the water, via Ugharegin, and requested their assistance, by allowing their first born sons to accompany the sacrifice. They all agreed and did as their Oba desired; and on the appointed day, the Iroko Box was conveyed down to Ugharegin, where it was placed on the shore, near the water.

The journey was begun about the year A.D. 1480. At that time Benin, Escravos, and Forcados Rivers were very shallow. The journey from Benin City to Ugharegin, through bush paths, occupied three days. Immediately they arrived at Ugharegin, Prince Ginuwa dressed himself up properly as the Oba of Benin, inside the box; and then, by a certain feat of his, the box was opened, and he jumped out, and said in a commanding voice, "You Binis, will you not accompany me to where I am going?" They fell on their faces and did him obeisance, and they all, of one accord, answered, "Master, we will follow you wherever you go." Ginuwa then ordered them into the box, and they obeyed him.

After waiting for a long time, and seeing that their sons did not return, the Binis realized that they had been deceived by the Oba, and so they sent warriors to Ugharegin to fetch their sons home.

The news of the approach of the Benin warriors reached Prince Ginuwa, but he could not sail off the shores, as he did not know how to remove the box into the water. So, in his anxiety, he took a kola nut, and standing on the shore of Ugharegin, he prayed to Umalokun (God of the Sea) to save him from the hands of the Binis, promising the god that, if his prayer were answered, he would, when he had established his kingdom, offer sacrifice annually to him. A response to this prayer came almost instantaneously—the water came and floated the box, which drifted into the mid-stream just before the Bini warriors arrived there. The latter saw the box afar off, and said, “*Ogun ra me eghija ghonrin*,” which means, “Warring on water is impossible with us, because we do not know how to swim.” This was the origin of Umalokun Olaja, whose Priest was at Ureju, Benin River.

The box drifted up the river, and the first place where Ginuwa and his party landed was Efurokpe, on the Jamieson River; and there Oyeifo, sister to Ginuwa, remained, as she was expecting the birth of a child, and her time of delivery was at hand.

When Ginuwa left Efurokpe, he was drifted through Arun-owun into the Escravos River (Odoęgbere), and at last settled on the sea bank of Amatu (Aleodiaja) or Dighinni, where he squatted for about three decades. Then, owing to the place being too sandy and much exposed to the sea, and to the unfertility of the soil, he removed to Oruselemo, where he married an Ijaw woman named Derumo. After several years' stay at Oruselemo, a dispute arose between him and the Ijaws of Gulani, on account of the woman Derumo, who was killed by him; the Ijaws brought war against him. Whilst they laid themselves in ambush,

Prince Ginuwa advised his people to cry day and night mentioning Derumọ's name, as if her death were a grief to all ; and this being done daily and nightly caused the Ijaws to withdraw, the latter believing that their daughter, Derumọ, was not killed, otherwise the people would not have bewailed her loss so seriously and continuously.

A few years later, Prince Ginuwa decided to remove from Oruselemọ, as it was likely that the Ijaws of Gulani might renew their attack, when they chanced to learn of the trick he played them in the matter of Derumọ's death. By this time one Idibię, the great doctor, had joined him, and was staying with him at Oruselemọ, and so he asked Idibię to assist him in seeking for a much safer land whereon to dwell. Idibię, after consulting his oracle, gave Ginuwa the assistance craved, and piloted the party to the land which Ginuwa called Ijala, and where they built a town and dwelt. It was at this place, Ijala, that the Portuguese first had intercourse with Prince Ginuwa, namely, about the year A.D. 1516.

## CHAPTER III

### ESTABLISHMENT OF WARRI KINGDOM BY IJIJEN

AFTER three decades' residence at Ijala, news reached Prince Ginuwa that the Binis had heard of his whereabouts, and were bringing war against him on account of the sons of the seventy Ojoyes taken away by the Oba by a trick. He felt embarrassed by this news and planned a further removal from Ijala; and accordingly Idibię, the great doctor and medicine-man, was instructed to consult his oracle again about a suitable land to remove to. While this arrangement was in process Prince Ginuwa died at Ijala, after a short illness, and was buried there. Thus Ijala was recognized as the Olus' Burial Ground by the Itsekiri law and custom, because it held the first Olaja-Itsekiri's grave.

Ijijen and Irameę, sons of Ginuwa, were of age long before their father's demise. Ijijen, being the senior, assumed his royal father's position and authority amongst his entourage, and it was he who led the party from Ijala to Iwęę (Warri) following Idibię's divination and direction. On arrival at Iwęę, Idibię was the first to come out of the Iroko Box, and, accompanied by his hound, he went to the spot where his spear (magic), which was thrown at Ijala, rested. The journey from Ijala to Alę Ode Itsekiri (about nine English miles) was done, owing to shallowness of the

river, by following a charm prepared with a dried carp covered in a small pair of calabashes. The dried carp was transformed to a raw carp fish, which was thrown into the river, and then, in whichever direction it went, the Iroko Box followed after it, till at last Iwẹrẹ was reached.

The man Itsekiri, who was met there, and after whose name our nation is called, belonged to Okorotom Quarters. The late Chief Pessu Ebiyowa, of Pessu Town, Warri, was a descendant of his. These people (Okorotom Compound), after several centuries, removed from their original settlement, and came and dwelt close to the Olu, by reason of Olu Erejuwa's marriage with one of their noble ladies, named Ogiẹre ; and their present quarters at Ode Itsekiri, commonly called Big Warri, is Irigbo.

When the Benin Warriors arrived at the shore on the opposite side of the Warri River, they saw the people's settlement afar off—there being no forest then—but water prevented them from attacking ; and many of their number, in attempting to cross over the Iwẹrẹ River on foot, by wading, were drowned.

Having failed to gain their objective, the remainder of those forming this expedition, which was the third one from Benin, decided not to return to Benin City, and so they settled down at the place where they generally encamped, and called it Okere.

Ekpẹn was the Chief Warrior who headed the expedition from Benin, and his descendants, of whom Ilikoro is the present head, are the owners of Okere Town. Very recently, one Akomagba, a descendant of the Sobos of Idimi Sobo quarters in Okere, the ancestors of whom had settled down there by sufferance, on the authority of Ogitsi, a descendant of the

Chief Warrior Ekpeñ, tried to establish a fraudulent claim on a portion of Okere land, on account of a small plantation of Para rubber which he was allowed to make ; and this led to prolonged litigation in the Warri Native Court between him and Ilikoro. The case was won by Ilikoro in the year 1927.

When the Kingdom of Iwẹre was founded, there was no nation or tribe known as the Sobo on the coast-lines of Warri River, nor was there any settlement on the land besides those at Ode Itsekiri. However, there were, of course, the four large Sobo towns far away in the hinterland, namely, as already stated, Ugo, Agbassa-Oto, Iyede, and Ughele, the people of which had all come from Benin at different periods, they having originally migrated from Ureli in the Ikaḷe country of the Province of Ondo.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ITSEKIRI DYNASTY

THERE were sixteen Olus from Ginuwa to Olu Akengbuwa, within the period of three hundred and sixty-eight years, that is to say, from the year 1480 to 1848.

The activities of the whole of them are not known, as the stories concerning them and their deeds have all been forgotten, save those of the following, viz. :—  
1. Ginuwa ; 2. Ijijęn ; 3. Iramę ; 4. Oyenakpagma ;  
5. Erejuwa ; and 6. Akęngbuwa, of whose deeds very meagre hints were handed down to the present posterity as recollections of traditional facts.

I have already treated of two of the six mentioned above, and I will now confine myself to the remaining four ; but before doing so, it might be useful to state the Royal Tree, which was :

- |                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ginuwa.      | 2. Ogbowuru (Ijijęn). |
| 3. Iramę.       | 4. Ojọluwa.           |
| 5. Esigie.      | 6. Atọrọngboye.       |
| 7. Atuwatse.    | 8. Omọluyere.         |
| 9. Oyenakpagma. | 10. Abejioye.         |
| 11. Akęnjioye.  | 12. Omagboye.         |
| 13. Akęngboye.  | 14. Atọgbuwa.         |
| 15. Erejuwa.    | 16. Akęngbuwa.        |

The reigning principle, according to custom, was from father to son, and the eldest son was, as of right,

the one to succeed (heir-at-law) ; but there have been cases where brothers and half-brothers occupied the Itsekiri throne, if the deceased Olu had no male issue, in which case the throne was usually contested by nearest relatives or next of kin. In such instances, the wealthiest and most powerful amongst such contestants often succeeded, for such readily found favour with the chiefs (Ojoyes) and other nobilities in the country.

Children (male issues) of Princesses are not eligible for appointment as Olu, and for this reason they are allowed the especial privilege of wearing boots and shoes at Big Warri. There was, however, at least one occasion in the annals of the Itsekiri nation when the son of a princess occupied the Itsekiri throne, and that was the Olu Oyenakpaha, who was a mulatto, and the grandson of the Olu Atorogboye. His case was certainly one where great wealth and power were deciding factors in his securing the throne (*vide* Chapter VI).

## CHAPTER V

### OLU IRAME

IRAME was the second son of Prince Ginuwa. After Ijijēn's (the Ogbowuru) demise, Iramē became the Olu of Itsekiri. It was during his regime that Ibirikimō, Otuekinē, Ike, and their followers came from Abala in Gulani to stay at Big Warri. Owing to the continuous noise as was the custom of the Otuekinē, the Olu Iramē found it was not safe to dwell with them, and he therefore ordered them to remove to a small patch of forest land—Origho-ugbo—no very far from Warri. They then went and brushed the place and dwelt there, which is the present town of Orugbo (about two nautical miles off Big Warri).

It was Iramē who fought and conquered Akoko king of Apoh. He took the crown of Akoko (a very huge wooden headgear, on which were carved curios of various design), and carried away a lot of booty as spoils of war. Out of these spoils, he sent a present to his grandfather, the Oba of Benin, who appreciated the valuable present, and expressed his gratitude to his grandchild for it. From that period friendly messages and presents continued to be exchanged between the Benin and the Itsekiri thrones, till the time of Olu Oyenakpaga, who, seeing that the presents from Itsekiri were being treated as tribute, abolished the practice. At this time—Oyenakpaga's

—the Olu's power was so great, that he could destroy his ancestral home (Benin) in the twinkling of an eye.

It was during Iramẹ's reign, also, that the Sobos began to establish settlements near the river, by applying to him for permission to dwell near him, and be under his protection. The first batch of Sobos who came were the Agbassa; and, after apportioning to them lands sufficient for dwelling and farming purposes at the site called Ubaumalẹ, just above Ekperuma pond. Iramẹ entrusted to them the cassava plant for cultivation. The cassava was presented to Ginuwa, at Ijala, by the Portuguese, in the year 1516 (*vide* Chapter XIX of this book).

The Ijaws also made their appearance in the regions under the Olu's domain during this reign, and were given lands by the Olu Iramẹ. Both tribes commenced to recognize the Olu's suzerainty, and paid tributes to him; and in view of his kindly disposition and good government, Ekperen and his followers, at Okere, surrendered themselves to him peacefully and became his subjects.

One Efedundun, who lived between Asagba and Ogbe Sobo, rebelled against the Olu Iramẹ, and it was determined to go to war with him. Efedundun was a rich and powerful potentate, whose position it was impossible to disturb or shake by the Olu's very weak army existing then at Big Warri; but the Olu Iramẹ had three sons, who were all giants—they did not live with their royal father at Ode Itsekiri, but each stayed in his mother's town, their names, according to age or seniority, being: 1. Akpajigha (Olokunri-jẹdo) of Omadinọ; 2. Imutsi of Obodo; and 3. Ebele of Orere—and he sent them a message, telling them to come and war with Efedundun, who had

become grossly insolent and rebellious towards him. Imutsi and Ebele at once sent a return message to say that they would go and avenge themselves on the offender ; and then, having fixed between themselves the date on which to start, they arranged that Ebele, who was at the farthest end of the creek (at Orere), should call at Obodo for Imutsi, and that then both of them should call at Omadinḡ for Akpajigha, who was their senior. But when the appointed day arrived, Ebele started straight away to Warri ; and then Imutsi, learning that Ebele had broken the arrangement, quickly followed after him, without informing Akpajigha.

Before they got to Odobuluku, opposite Aghighḡ, they found that Akpajigha, whom they had intended to boycott, had tied string across the river, and now forbade them to pass under it. Ebele wanted to ignore this warning, but Imutsi advised that it should be obeyed.

Ebele then opened his wicker basket containing medicines, took out a magic hoe, and threw it into the bush in front of his canoe. This hoe was self-acting. It started digging, and in no time dug a fine canal or channel through which Ebele's canoe passed.—This channel is called Abe-Ekete, and is still in use up to the present day, from Warri to Sapele, by creek.—When, however, Ebele got to Ejere, he had there to moor his canoe to await the incoming tide.

Then Imutsi came on the scene, and he, finding Ebele and his men asleep, ordered all their paddles to be taken from them and put into his own canoe. That done, he started off alone, with his men ; but whilst he branched off at Big Warri, to inform his father that he was now passing on to fight Efedundun,

Ebele and his men woke up from sleep, and discovered that their paddles were gone. Ebele knew at once what had happened. He again opened his wicker basket of war medicine, took up his *ugbado* (small species of gourd), and placing a little quantity of its contents in the palm of his left hand, blew it into the air, and told his men to do as if they were paddling. They did so, and the canoe went faster than ever. He overtook Imutsi, got first to the scene of war, fought Efedundun, and had just beheaded him, when Imutsi, in utmost fury, joined him.

Had they not returned to their canoes when they did, the blood of Efedundun would have drowned them, for it flowed like a fountain of very strong current, till it found its course into the river. And once every year, during the rainy season, the noise of Efedundun's blood is heard at the ruins of his estate between Asagba and Ogbe Sobo; and that is the place called Ofo at the present day—near Asagba, up the Warri River, about three nautical miles from New Warri.

The two brothers then returned to Ode Itsekiri (Big Warri), and announced their victory to their father, who was over-joyed at his sons' triumph over his enemy, and made them presents of many goodly things. He also bade them remain with him for some time, rejoicing, ere returning to their respective places of abode; and they obeyed, not leaving for their respective homes until some time afterwards.

All this time, Imutsi's rancour against Ebele for his effrontery had not been appeased by his father's solicitations, and, in pursuance of his desire to avenge himself on Ebele, he obtained an injurious medicine from the hands of the satyr (*Arọṅ-Obodo*) of Obodo. The medicine was for use with bow and arrow, and one

day, at noon, Imutsi came outdoors, with the bow and arrow in his hand, and, after performing certain incantation rites and repeating the prayer to make the medicine effective upon its victim, Ebele, shot the arrow into the sky. And it was never seen to descend to the ground.

Ebele was no sooner affected by the magnetic power of this bad medicine than he started to fight from one town to another, in the Ukpesobo, till he was heard of no more.—It has been said, and that correctly, too, for it is supported by tradition, that there are descendants of this giant Ebele still traceable among the Ukpesobos to-day, and that the famous Otomewo family are some of them.

## CHAPTER VI

### OLU OYENAKPAGHA

ROTATIONALLY, Oye-qlakpagma, alias Benighere, was the seventh Olu-Itsekiri. He was grandson of the Olu Atorogboye, and Atuwatse and Omoluyere were half-brothers of his (Oyenakpagma's) Princess Mother, named Oyeomasan, alias Magheghoeye. He was much loved by his royal grandfather, Olu Atorogboye, because he was a mighty man of valour.

It was also said of him that there was never a man so inquisitive as Benighere. He was a keen lover of anatomy, and a profound inquirer into the science of being. The following are two conspicuous instances in the series of his many researches :

One day he slaughtered a crocodile and prepared a feast for his right-wrist (*O tse akaton rowun*), after the custom of the Itsekiri. As soon as the ceremony was over, he took a knife and lanced his wrist : to his surprise, he found quantities of the marched yam (*ikpikpa*) inside it.

Then, he said it was useless to sacrifice to sticks, and all that sort of nothingness. To satisfy his curiosity in this direction, he made a meat sacrifice to the forehead of one of his largest canoes, and afterwards ordered all the marched yam strewn on the canoe's forehead (*ta gba tse Oguariko*) to be washed out. He then sawed it into two, and his surprise was great

when he found the stuff (marched yams) properly deposited there.

At the Olu Atorogboye's demise (Ota-tse or Alẹ jẹfun), the Itsekiri throne was open to three contestants (two being sons, and the third, a grandson), namely, 1. Atuwatse, 2. Omọluyere, and 3. Benighere (Olu Oyenakpaga). They were each ordered by the Itsekiri National Council to retire to their mothers' homes, to obtain necessaries with which to reign; and accordingly Atuwatse went to Benin City, Omọluyere to Gborodo, and Oye, being a mulatto, born by his Princess Mother, Maghẹghoẹye, to a Portuguese trader named Mingo, resolved to go to Portugal.

Now, Oye was an intimate friend of the Satyr of Ikpisan (Arọnẹ Ikpisan), and, while preparing for his gloomy and horrible journey, he, in his anxiety, crossed over to Ikpisan, to tell and discuss his fate with his friend. The latter, after hearing him, said that if he would spare his only pet goat, i.e., his only beloved son—at this time he had only one son, a child about five years of age—for an offering, he, the Satyr, could, and would, prepare for him a mascot or talisman, by the influence and action of which he would obtain success in his journey to and from Portugal. With manly determination, coupled with faithfulness to the course he resolved to pursue, Oye unhesitatingly gave up the child, his one and only son, for the proposed sacrifice. His friend then ordered him to place the child in a wooden mortar, and pound it with the pestle. He obeyed, and the beautiful boy was thus pestled to a pulverized mass, following on which, the talisman was prepared within seven days, cocked in a small gourd (ugbado) and handed to him (Oye). He then

started on his journey via Benin River. On the day of his departure from Ode Itsekiri, he nailed (kan) his two rivals down with a charm, thus preventing them from returning to Warri before him (*o ka gba aban bha kanghan male*).

A long period of interregnum ensued, during which two Olotus (Regents), namely Isi and Eghereje, were appointed successively, who looked after the country and controlled its affairs.

Oye managed to join a Portuguese vessel at Benin River and was taken to the Portuguese colony of Angola, where he was educated to read and write, and speak the Portuguese language fluently. About the year 1640, he was brought back to Warri in a Portuguese vessel, bringing with him a great quantity of goods.

Immediately preceding the date of his arrival in Warri, the two other competitors arrived, one after the other. When Atuwatse, from Benin City, arrived, he feasted the Itsekiri people with yams and palm-oil, and was approved and acclaimed by all to be installed as the Olu; but then, when Omoluyere arrived, and feasted the Itsekiri people with fishes and shrimps, from Gborodo, they promptly disapproved of Atuwatse, and acclaimed him, Omoluyere, as the person fit to be their Olu. But then Oyenakpagma arrived, and he feasting the people with pure rum from the cask, tobacco, provisions, pipes, and various other fancy goods from Portugal, the Itsekiris shouted, "This is our Olu (King)!" and with joy and gladness they crowned him Olu Itsekiri.

He reigned over the Itsekiris for about eight years; and he was the King who was described—though not quite correctly—by the English adventurers in the

year A.D. 1644 thus: "The King (of Warri) was a mulatto or half-black, whom the Portuguese called Anthonio de Mingo; for his father, who was named Mingo, had married a Portuguese girl, whom he brought from Portugal and by whom he had a son."

He it was who invited the Roman Catholic Mission to Warri, which, with his ready assistance and influence, laboured unsuccessfully for four years to convert and Christianize the Itsekiri race. These missionaries were recalled home immediately after *King Anthonio de Mingo's* (Olu Oyepakpaha) demise, to avoid their being killed by the people.

He it was who fought and conquered Ajodo (Umale), and seized all his wealth. It was also he who fought and conquered Bamite Oļ-Erogbo in the Province of Ondo.

## CHAPTER VII

### OLU EREJUWA

EREJUWA was the fifteenth Olu Itsekiri. He had, so far as I am informed, and according to best traditional authority, fifteen children, whose names were :

- |                      |                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Ijède.            | 2. Okunuwa, <i>alias</i>         |
| 3. Ugbęrun.          | Olufọghọfẹn.                     |
| 5. Erefeoluwa.       | 4. Eyolusan.                     |
| 7. Ibaraka or Ikaka. | 6. Idesọ.                        |
| 9. Ogiyede.          | 8. Igisọn.                       |
| 11. Uwala.           | 10. Oghanranro.                  |
| 13. Ayọnwirigbo.     | 12. Udorolusan, <i>alias</i> Iye |
| 15. Efeyuku.         | 14. Ebiminọ.                     |
| 17. Imane.           | 16. Ijaletine.                   |
|                      | 18. Atsuwa.                      |

During this reign the Itsekiris started to disperse from Big Warri, and founded settlements of their own individually on the banks and in the creeks of the Benin River, in pursuit of Ikpi Industry (manufacture of salt from brass skimmed out of the river bank) Places like Utọnlila, Bobi, Olobẹ, Ebokiti, etc., were founded by and settled at by various Nobles (Ojoyes) for the express purpose stated above. Scarcity of fresh water led Ologbotsẹrẹ Eyinmasan to found Bobi, and Otsodi to found Olobẹ. But Ogharanmi and his junior brothers and sisters (Imaran, Ukutserun,

and Asoruku) had long before founded Okokporo during the reign of Olu Atogbuwa, and settled there and afterwards removed to Eghoroke (Ogheyeye), Benin River, and made there their permanent settlement.

It came to pass that Ogbaranmi and his family happened once upon a time to send a message, with presents, from Eghoroke to Olu Atogbuwa, and one, Ojigbere, a nephew of Ogbaranmi, was deputed to be the bearer. After Ojigbere had arrived at Warri and fulfilled his mission, he chanced to be in the company of friends who were also his compeers, at a time when drink was being served. There was a gentleman present who was accustomed to be very ostentatious and most officious by reason of the fact that he was a brother-in-law to Olu Atogbuwa; and when the glass came to Ojigbere's turn, this man—his name was Ebebe—seized it out of the waiter's hands, and drank it. Ojigbere went home with shame and indignation; and when he returned to his parents at Eghoroke, he narrated, among other things, this sad experience of his at a public meeting at Ode Itsekiri. His parents there and then resolved to train their young daughter, Idumigben, whose mother was Motsudanri, so that when she arrived at the age of puberty, they might present her to the Olu for wife, with the intent that, in course of time, if she chanced to have an issue by him, they might find occasion to avenge themselves on their offender. This they did, and carrying out their resolution with the utmost care.

In due course Idumigben arrived at the age of puberty, and was espoused to Olu Atogbuwa, through the medium of the courtiers (Omeren-ogua) who were sent on an errand to Benin River. Shortly afterwards the Olu sent a canoe to fetch her to Warri, and she

became his wife, afterwards bearing him a son named Dede. After Olu Atogbuwa's demise, this lady became wife to Olu Erejuwa, to whom she bore a male child, who was named Eyolusan, and who, at Erejuwa's demise, was installed as the Olu Itsekiri, his Coronation name being Akengbuwa.

The incident of Ebebe and Ojigbere was the origin of the Itsekiri song which says, "*A su emo gbe Ojigbere omere oha, Ebebe ka gbe mo ana olu,*" which, literally translated, means, "Prince Ojigbere was served with a drink, but the king's brother-in-law drank it."

The innovation of Ejeolidiro and Etete Aya Ugala at Bobi, took place during this reign.

Ologbotsere, who was permanently staying at Bobi, was reported for having built and lived in a cloth house (Uli-atso), which according to custom, nobody save the Olu had the right to do. In view of this report, Ologbotsere was sent for, to come to Big Warri; but before the messengers arrived at Bobi, he had been told of the false accusation lodged against him, and privately advised to take the starch-sifter cloth (akpasa) with him in support of his explanation, as otherwise he would be killed. He did as his kind informant directed.

Arrived at Big Warri, he was brought before the Olu-in-Council, and charged and tried. He denied the false accusation, and defended himself by saying, that owing to intolerable molestation of mosquitoes in that place (Bobi), he had been forced to devise that sort of remedy, which he only used at night, but hauled it down, folded it, and kept it out of sight, during the day. He was asked to produce it. He did so, and opened it to the Olu and his Councillors for inspection.

After a thoughtful deliberation, the Councillors returned a verdict of not guilty, and he was acquitted. The Olu, however, warned and advised him to remove from Bobi, and come back to Warri, because, if such a serious trouble befell him again, the result might be fatal—and that might happen against his (the Olu's) wishes.

Ologbotsere took the caution, and soon removed from Bobi, which he left in charge of Prince Eyolusan, and settled down at Warri, where he breathed his last. Some of his sons, Iya and others, remained at Bobi.

It is not correct to say that under Erejuwa's reign the Itsekiri nation rose to its highest point, and was marked with prosperity and success everywhere, unless that is to be indirectly inferred from the succession of Eyolusan (Olu Akengbuwa), who was crowned in his stead, and who was indubitably the longest occupier of the Itsekiri throne and the wealthiest of all the Olu's.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OLU AKENGBUWA.—I

PRINCE EYOLUSAN had only one brother in the person of Dede, a son of Olu Atogbuwa. This Dede begat Onerimiri who was the father of Iten (father of Okoro, who begat Ameyi of Obodo, Emçrenbirçen the mother of Umoghen, Ebiewubokan, Arieto, and Ati), Oluluwewo, Olugbokun, and Jede (father of Imamigbe of Ode Itsekiri and Igangan of Orere).

Prince Eyolusan had seventy-one children, the first three of whom were born at Bobi long before he became the Olu Akengbuwa of Itsekiri. The names of these three were, 1. Ogbogbo, 2. Ileyi, and 3. Agbaga. Ogbogbo and Agbaga predeceased their father, and Ileyi died at Okolobę (Bonny).

In his youthful days at Eghoroke, Prince Eyolusan was so over-cared for by his mother's family, that even when he wished to go out to play with his mates, they ordered an umbrella to be carried over his head. He many times refused to be so trained, and, at last, in order not to become familiar with such high life, and spoil his career by becoming lazy and idle, if so brought up, he planned to remove from Eghoroke, and take up his abode at Bobi. Gradually he carried out his determination in this direction, and at last removed completely to Bobi.

Ologbotsçrç was at Bobi at that time, and he, observing how industrious and ingenious Prince

Eyolusan was, took a fancy to him, and was kind and obliging to him. This friendship continued till Ologbotsẹrẹ's trouble came on, after which, as already stated, Ologbotsẹrẹ gave Prince Eyolusan full control of the town of Bobi and returned to Warri permanently.

Not very long after Prince Eyolusan took up his abode at Bobi, a woman named Egbejule-Eguawọbọn wandered from Gborodo, on foot, to Bobi, on the sea bank. At times she appeared to be eccentric, but at others she was perfectly normal. She used to take a canoe from Bobi, paddle all the way alone to Ajebile (Igun), there load her canoe with rejected plantains, thrown away by the Sobos of that market, and then bring them to Bobi and distribute them to people freely. She did this several times. One day the young Prince Eyolusan looked at this woman with no small amount of admiration, and then said to his comrades, "Let us drum for this woman, and see what she can or may do." His suggestion was quickly agreed to, and two drums were fetched, and then, Prince Eyolusan manipulating the small drum, a play was started. This woman, Egbejule-Eguawọbọn, soon jumped into the midst of the play, and danced, and then, being drunk with the prophesying spirit of the gods, started to prophesy. Among other sayings of her prophecy, she said to Prince Eyolusan, "There's an umbrella on your head." Neither the Prince nor anybody else there on that day understood the meaning of this prophecy: it was not anticipated that Prince Eyolusan could become the Olu Itsekiri, because several of his senior brothers were alive then. This woman became feared, and her words were respected and heeded, for the verity of many of her prophecies.

Prince Eyolusan was so much interested in her,

that he became the chief drummer. One day at the dance, whilst the Prince was drumming, the woman was again moved by the spirit of prophecy ; and this time she laid her hand on the Prince's head and said, " Olighanran, there is an umbrella on your head—you shall become the Olu Itsekiri ; and the woman who shall conduct and guide you safely into that throne is coming, and will arrive at this town of Bobi, three lunar months from the date of this prophecy." And she ordered that there should be continuous drumming of tom-toms within the prescribed period. One day, whilst this ceremony was on, Mamako, a daughter of Otsoror-Ogborikēn, who was the only wife of Prince Eyolusan, went to Obi-Bobi (Atafia), to buy palm-wine, for she was a dealer in palm-wine. As was her practice, she used to cook her husband's food and lay his decanter of rum where he could easily find it, ere she left home ; but on this occasion, she chanced to lodge the chop and rum in a spot where the Prince never expected they would be kept. Accordingly, when the latter came home at noon, he found there was no chop ready for him, and also that Mamako was overdue to return from Obi. He was annoyed, and started on foot towards Obi-Bobi in search for his wife. He waded across Utōn-ajija, Olobē, Afēfē, and Gbotsēye ; but then, when he was about sixty yards away from Gbotsēye, he was so angry, that a desire to commit suicide took hold of his mind. So he removed his loin-cloth, made a loop at one end of it, and then started to fasten the other end to a mangrove-tree which he climbed. But as he was doing this, suddenly a voice from the bush shouted to him, " Olighanran, please be sorry for your children." He looked all round, but saw nobody. He was making

the attempt a second time, when again a voice—this time from the water—shouted, “Olighanran, will you please be sorry for your children?” He looked all round again, but still saw nobody. But he now became afraid, and, abandoning the idea to commit suicide, he turned homewards. After wading across Afere for a short distance, he looked back and there he saw Mamako coming homeward. He at once hailed her. She looked at him, and observing that his feet were muddy, she knew he must have walked into the bush with some ill motive, and she upbraided him for his quick-temper, and prayed him to forbear and endure all conditions of life. He was properly pacified by her admonition and they went home together. Prince Eyolusan learnt afterwards that the two voices were those of Arọṅ-Okposo and Okposo the Etete-Aya-Ugala.

When there remained seven days of the three lunar months ere the arrival of the woman predicted by Egbejule-Eguawọbọṅ, the latter renewed her orders for regular drumming, day and night, during these remaining seven days, to ensure the fulfilment of her prophecy. This was carried out, Prince Eyolusan providing all necessaries.

Early on the morning of the seventh day, the prophetess said that the woman had now started her journey Bobi-ward, but that she would go to salute Arunguṭọṅ, then Urẹjusinsin, Adagbarasa, Olure, Olẹrọ-Obaritebu, Olaguç, and lastly Jorojoro. And then, by the floodtide, at even, Egbejule-Eguawọbọṅ announced that the woman was then at Arungha Bobi (entrance of Bobi creek); and she ordered that drums be put into the canoe got ready for this purpose. Then, by Egbejule’s direction they started for Utọṅ-Ajiya,

with a great deal of drumming, singing and dancing. While there, in the midst of this great gathering, which had mustered to mock at her prophecy, Egbejule jumped on the cross-beam at the utmost end of the forehead of the canoe, with a basket in her hand, and shouted, "*Eje-Olidiro, Ofudatseguen, Ikparikpa oneoboro*, you it was who promised to come and instal Prince Eyolusan to be the Olu-Itsekiri! Will you please come and fulfil your word to-day? It was your promise, your word, not mine!"

A thin rising of water, like that caused by the fins of swimming fishes, was then seen coming towards her, and into the water under this rising, she dipped her basket; and when she drew the basket up, it was seen, to the consternation of the onlookers, to contain a large white cowry-shell (*Iyogho* or *Oghoçje*). She handed the shell over, and it was placed inside the canoe; and then the process with the basket was repeated until seven of these beautiful, large, chalky-skinned cowry-shells were salved from the water, the seventh being the biggest. Then the canoe returned home with great rejoicing, and a wooden tray, made out of a worn-out canoe, was dressed, into which the seven cowry shells were placed and covered with white cloth (*Atsq-oke* or *Kano cloth*).

Next morning, when all necessaries were got ready to do sacrifice to Eje-Olidiro, there was one thing wanting, and that was kola-nuts; and at that, Egbejule prophesied that the man whose duty it was to supply this need was already on the way.

While the play was going on, *Isçrigho*, one of the *Ojoyes* who was passing to *Ebokiti*, on his way from *Warri*, heard the sound of drumming, and he turned his canoe into the direction of *Bobi*, to look at the

play. He arrived at Bobi, and went ashore. When he got to the dancing-place, Egbejule saluted him, saying, "Oliran-rubeji, I salute you, Oliranrubeji!" Isẹrigho could not understand what she meant, until it was interpreted to him that it was all salutation. "But," he then said, "I am not Oliran." But she challenged him, saying that what is called Iran was in the right-hand pocket of his gown. He dipped his hand there, and fetched out a snuff-pouch. She nodded, and said, "Not this—it is still there." So he dipped his hand there the second time, and fetched out two kola-nuts, at the sight of which Egbejule jumped, and shouted with joy, "This is the Iran!"

Everybody shouted in wonderment, and Isẹrigho went to his canoe and brought a new pod of kola-nuts, which was gladly accepted from him for the sacrifice to Eje-Olidiro. It was in return of gratitude for this that Isẹrigho was later appointed to be the Priest of Eje-Olidiro at Bobi, by Olu Akẹngbuwa.

## CHAPTER IX

### OLU AKENGBUWA.—2

AFTER a few years of Eje-Olidiro's innovation at Bobi, the demise of Olu Erejuwa was proclaimed; and as by this time several of the princes who were senior to Prince Eyolusan, were dying in rapid succession, the lot fell on him to be made an Olu Itsekiri. A message was sent from Warri to fetch him from Bobi. When he was apprised of the news that he was urgently wanted at Ode Itsekiri, it was a surprise to him. He at once sent word to inform his mother's family at Eghoroke that he had been asked to come to Warri, in haste, but for what purpose he did not know; and they returned a message to say he must get ready to go, and answer the country's call. He got seven large canoes ready, which were manned by his own slaves; and as the courtiers had orders to wait for him, and produce him unhurt, at Warri, he made haste, and they all started for Warri together.

Immediately they arrived, he was introduced to the Ojoyes by the courtiers, and then conducted to the Palace (Aghofen) and there installed as the Olu of Itsekiri. This was done without any formality; neither was he himself sworn in, nor did he swear the people, as was the custom. This was partly due to the fear entertained by the nation, owing to the high rate of death among the Princes; but it was also partly

occasioned and made possible by his influence, as he had become very rich, and was greatly assisted by his friend Uwankun, and the latter's father, Ologbotsere. It had been said that this Uwankun was afterwards created Uwanguẹ by Olu Akẹngbuwa, in gratitude for the assistance he rendered to him on the occasion of his coronation and installation.

One day, prior to his removal from Bobi, as he was crossing from Eghoroke to Bobi, he found that the estuary of the Benin River was obstructed and become shallow by the sudden collection of loam or silt, caused by surf, and so much so, that it was impossible for any canoe, however small, to go across; and he got stranded upon it. After a strenuous effort, however, he got afloat at even. Exhausted and almost overcome with thirst, he, on meeting an Ijaw man on the Bobi side of the sea-bank, fishing, begged from him a cup of water to drink; but the man refused to supply him with water. He arrived at Bobi safely, though very late in the night; and when, the next day, the news of his catastrophe and escape was proclaimed at and around Bobi and Eghoroke, there was general rejoicing.

After some years, he decided to avenge himself on the Ijaws of Orubu-Bobi for such harsh treatment, and so he fought and conquered them, and drove them away, they returning to their original settlement, which is Yokri Bank. Thenceforward he peopled the Bobi Bank with his own slaves—this accounts for his ownership of the Bobi Bank. His last Head-slave (Olorukọ), who was in control of Oke and Orele (in Orubu-Bobi)—his name was Uwakenẹ—was killed by order of Chanomi, on the latter's return from the Olomu War, for refusing to supply men for the war

when so requested. In that war, Chanq̄mi was bitterly defeated.

It was during this reign that the British Commercial Sphere of Influence was extended to Benin River about the year A.D. 1841, when Governor Omoku of Bobi received the comey or custom for the Olu (King) of Warri, which consisted of thirty pieces of the most common cloth, six guns, one barrel of gun-powder, one cask of rum, and some other articles. Long before this time, however, small Liverpool trading vessels had occasionally called, ever since the first known British Expedition to Benin occurred under Captains Windham and Pinteado, in the year A.D. 1553.

There were at least eight Governors who took dash or comey for the Olu during his life-time. Their names were: 1. Uwanguę-Os̄lupalu, 2. Uwanguę-Onukula, 3. Iyats̄rę-Okorodundun, 4. Of̄luwa-Otseyen, 5. Agboghroma, 6. Agbaga, 7. Omoku, and 8. B̄d̄d̄. The office of Itsekiri Governor was neither hereditary nor permanent, but its holder was chosen from time to time at the Olu's pleasure.

The introduction of comey was ushered in with the presentation of a silver-mounted Royal Staff sent to the Olu Akęngbuwa by Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria of Blessed Memory, in token of the Olu's willingness to welcome British influence for legitimate commerce. Whoever was sent to the merchant vessels with the said staff, by the Olu, to receive the custom or comey, was designated the "Governor."

## CHAPTER X

O.I.U AKENGBUWA.—3

As previously stated, in Chapter VIII, Prince Eyolusan had three children before he was crowned as the Olu-Itsekiri. Immediately after he ascended the Itsekiri throne, however, he ceased to beget children; and this state of things continued for such a long period that at last the question became an anxious and burning problem with him, and he gave orders for doctors, medicine-men and diviners to come and minister to him, and to find out the cause of his barrenness. Several quacks were summoned, some from Aboh and surrounding districts, who each tried unsuccessfully to solve the problem. At long last, he recollected the name of that woman, Egejbule-Eguawoḅon, at Bobi, by whose prophecy and activity he attained the Oluship, and he forthwith gave orders that she must be sent for. She was immediately sent for, and when she arrived at Big Warri, was set to the test. This was done by placing an empty kola-nut pod in a white plate, and covered up, and a species of coral beads (Ikanran-robi) in another white plate, and also covered up, and asking her to name the contents of the two dishes.

She ran, followed by a great crowd, to Obite Oroke (Oroke Waterside) with a fan (ukpona) in her hand, stepped into the water about knee-deep, dipped the

fan in the water for about ten minutes, raised it up, and then returning to the Palace, sang, "*Iwe tse, ejurun niko aghan gba dan mi gho? Iwe tse; Uluobi tsitsan aghan gba dan mi gho, iwe tse. Ikanran-robi aghan gba dan mi gho, iwe tse.*" This, literally, means, "With what was I tested?—The medicine is effective! They tried me with empty kola-nut pod—the medicine is effective! They tried me with coral bead—the medicine is effective!"

The whole multitude shouted in approbation, and everybody present wondered at her accuracy.

She then danced, and danced, and danced, and told Olu Akęgbuwa, who she still styled Olighanran, that because he forgot that kind woman, Eje-Olidiro of Bobi, who was instrumental in the matter of his reign, he had been afflicted with barrenness, which was to draw his attention to his gross ungratefulness towards her. He recollected, repented, and confessed his uncharitableness towards that gracious lady, when he heard this, and awarding Egbejule-Eguawoḃoḃon with a lot of goodly presents, he at the same time prepared a canoe, into which necessaries for sacrifice to Eje-Olidiro were placed by the direction of Egbejule. Then, remembering the man Iserigho's past action at Bobi, in connection with sacrifices to Eje-Olidiro, he appointed Iserigho to be the Priest of Eje-Olidiro, and commanded him to proceed forthwith to Bobi. Both Iserigho and Egbejule started for Bobi together.

Soon after the sacrifice was done at Bobi, Asọyanghanrunju, a daughter of Otsodi (an Ojoye), and one of the wives of Olu Akęgbuwa, conceived, and in due course brought forth a female child, who was named Olunḡḡḡḡ (Omaipilotu); and thenceforward children were born, to the Olu, in rapid succession,

till his Princes and Princesses numbered seventy-one ere his demise

Of these seventy-one, the names of those whose descendants are still traceable, and even form practically a majority amongst the Itsekiri population of the Warri Province to-day, were :

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Agbaga (M.).*    | 23. Iyõnrõnyì (F.).      |
| 2. Olunõghõ (F.).   | 24. Oge (M.).            |
| 3. Omateye (M.).    | 25. Esuku (M.).          |
| 4. Ejo or Joe (M).. | 26. Ikẽnren (M.).        |
| 5. Oritsemõnẽ (M.). | 27. Wẽnresigha (M.).     |
| 6. Ejimoghõ (F.).   | 28. Alubõ (M.).          |
| 7. Agbanmu (M.).    | 29. Ijowẽ (F.).          |
| 8. Ejoki (M.).      | 30. Omajuokõ (F.).       |
| 9. Ituma (F.).      | 31. Imama (F.).          |
| 10. Iyõnwurẽn (M.). | 32. Ekpẽn (M.).          |
| 11. Ewolufun (M.).  | 33. Itõn (F.).           |
| 12. Agbẽn (F.).     | 34. Ideyi (F.).          |
| 13. Aranku (F.).    | 35. Imaghõsa (F.).       |
| 14. Eri (M.).       | 36. Ejo-Ugbõnẽ (F.).     |
| 15. Ogbobiri (M.).  | 37. Ejo-Akiyan (F.).     |
| 16. Eyimõtse (M.).  | 38. Itobo (F.).          |
| 17. Obugben (M.).   | 39. Ejo-Ilare (F.).      |
| 18. Ipayan (M.).    | 40. Oluetsetunõkan (F.). |
| 19. Okonõdo (M.).   | 41. Edeyolu (F.).        |
| 20. Ejele (M.).     | 42. Imerieyi (F.).       |
| 21. Atsegõ (M.).    | 43. Isepanghan (M.).     |
| 22. Iteteye (M.).   | 44. Adedemigbaghan (M.). |

\* M stands for male, F for female.

## CHAPTER XI

### OLU AKENGBUWA.— 4

AFTER the Olu Erejuwa's demise, a young girl who was espoused to him, and was undergoing training at the hands of Olufuaghofen's mother, in the Olu's harem, was chosen by the Olu Akengbuwa to be his wife. As she was under the age of puberty then, it was not until a year and a half later that the Olu took her to wife. He then found that she was not a virgin, and, questioning her, obtained her confession that it was Olufuaghofen who had robbed her of her virginity.

This news was painful to Olu Akengbuwa, because Olufuaghofen, alias Okunuwa, was his bosom friend, and according to the law of the land whoever committed adultery with the Olu's wife was guilty of a capital offence and must be killed. However, it was impossible to conceal such an occurrence from the knowledge of the State-men, and so the matter was formally reported to the Itsekiri National Council.

In consequence of the report, Olufuaghofen was summoned before the National Council, which was the highest tribunal in the realm, to give an account of the charge preferred against him, to wit, committing adultery with a wife of Olu Akengbuwa. He offered no defence, but pleaded guilty, and appealed to the Council for mercy.

The Olu, who was desirous to assist him (being his half-brother and friend) out of the trouble, advanced a suggestion to his Councillors that Olufuaghofen's offence be punished by a heavy fine or banishment; but the Councillors (Ojoyes), headed by Uwankun, the Uwanguę, who was the most influential among all of them at Big Warri just then, were, in all points vindictive, firm in declaring that the man must die by hanging (*gba ododo or soku*), for that was the dictum of the Itsekiri law in such circumstances.

This case was the daily topic for a considerable period, during which the Olu keenly sought the Uwanguę's co-operation to influence the Council to accept his suggestion, and so save his friend, Olufuaghofen, from death. The Uwanguę, however, stoutly refused to assist; on the contrary, he insisted that the sentence of death, as passed on the offender by the Council, must be carried out.

The Olu was very much grieved at heart by the Uwanguę's strictness in this matter; and, finally, finding that all his attempts at revising or altering the death sentence failed, he advised Olufuaghofen to escape for his life, before the time appointed for the execution of the sentence was at hand. So, one night, Olufuaghofen packed up, and ran away from Big Warri, and went to the entrance of the creek Remure, opposite Gborodo, on the Escravos River, and settled down there.

He dwelt at Remure for a little over two decades, being, during that time, in regular communication with his royal friend, Olu Akęngbuwa. One day, while pacing to and fro in his dancing hall at Remure, a thought of his home land struck him. He halted, paused for a while, and then exclaimed, "Oh, my

dear self, Prince Olufuaghofen of Big Warri (Aliwẹrẹ), I was born a prince, a prince I am, and a prince I shall be, from time to eternity! I cannot live bush life any longer—to-day must commence the end of it all!" He then called out his people (wives, children, relatives, slaves, and hangers-on), and ordered a dance which was at once begun.

He kept on the dancing, while feasting the people sumptuously, for seven days. On the seventh day, he dressed himself up gorgeously in the best silks and corals of all he had, drank and ate well, and then, at even, cut poison into his body, and succumbed peacefully to its effects.

When the sad news of his death spread to Big Warri, and was told to the Olu, the latter went to the inner chamber of his Palace, to weep over his friend's death (*eri tsi ni Aghofen*); and he mourned for several months.

The phrase "Otolu Remure" (Prince of Remure), in the annals of Itsekiri, is symbolic of this incident.

## CHAPTER XII

### OLU AKENGBUWA.—5

IDOLU (Iye) had a daughter born to a man named Ide of Eghoroke, Benin River. It happened that Ibòdò, who was the maternal cousin of the Olu Akengbuwa, fell in love with this girl, the daughter of Iye, whose name was Diçyin-uwa, and in course of time she conceived a child by him. Unfortunately, an abortion resulted, the effect of which terminated Diçyin-uwa's life.

By this time, Prince Omateye had become popularly known as the Crown Prince of Warri—since Prince Agbaga had predeceased his father, after the rivalry between the two princes reported in another chapter of this book—and now, being the brother of Princesses Uwala and Iye, and closely attached to Iye in all things, he moved the country, trying to enforce a decree that Ibòdò must be killed for having murdered his niece Diçyin-uwa; and as Emaye's children also had become very powerful by this time, he prevailed over the wishes of the Ojoyes, and an arrangement was struck by which Ibòdò was to be summoned before the National Council, and, notwithstanding any defence he might tender, be sentenced to death for having murdered Diçyin-uwa.

Ibòdò, having watched and seen all this intrigue mature, stole into the Olu's private court one day,

and narrated the whole circumstances of Dięyin-uwa's death and the Crown Prince Omateye's plot to kill him, to Olu Akęngbuwa. He was advised by his Royal cousin to act as if he knew nothing of Prince Omateye's plans ; then, when the day of his execution was at hand, he should again come and inform him, the Olu, before presenting himself up to the people to be hanged ; and, finally, when he mounted on the gallows, he must stand still, and to whomsoever ordered him to put the crimson (execution) cloth round his neck, he should reply, " You come and put it on my neck." Ibọdọ took the advice and returned to his house much comforted.

In due course, he was summoned before the Council on the charge of having murdered Dięyin-uwa ; and in spite of all his attempts to establish a plea of innocency, the Council found against him, and he was sentenced to death by hanging.—The Crown Prince, Omateye, did all this without the knowledge of his father.

When the day appointed for his execution arrived, Ibọdọ went privily and informed the Olu, and then returned and placed his body in the hands of the people, to be killed. All who mattered and who ought to be present at the execution, save the Olu, had mustered on the spot just before noon. Ibọdọ was then ordered by Prince Omateye to mount on the gallows, and he obeyed ; and then, when the second order came from the Prince, that he should put the execution cloth round his neck, the quick answer from him was, " You had better come and put it on me, Prince !" This bold expression surprised all the people ; and Princess Ejimogho, the junior sister of Princesses Uwala and Iye, and Princes Omateye and

Ejo, agreed that there must be something mysterious underneath the matter. Almost simultaneously with Princess Ejimogho's gesture and admiration, the State Umbrella was seen coming from the Palace towards the scene, and the crowd observing that it was the Olu, dispersed in disorder.

The Olu, arrived on the spot, and met by Prince Omateye and the Ojoyes present, then severely upbraided the Crown Prince for his effrontery in trying to kill the Olu's own cousin—"your very own uncle, on account of your sister's daughter, who died a natural or, perhaps, accidental death!" And in anger, he added, "You, Prince Omateye, is this the way you propose to reign over and rule the country, I wonder?"

Then turning to the man on the gallows, he said, "You, Ibọdọ, dismount therefrom, and go to your home free. There is nothing against you in the Itsekiri Law and Custom to warrant your being pilloried in any way."

Prince Omateye and his sisters went home with vexation, but the Prince was soon reconciled to his uncle, Ibọdọ, by his affectionate father, at a family meeting held in the inner Court of the Palace (Aghọfẹn) the next day.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OLU AKENGBUWA.—6

ABOUT twenty-five years after Olu Akęngbuwa's accession to the Itsek ri throne, there were two men who were most prominent and influential in the City of Iwęřę, the one, a wealthy lord (Ojoye), in the person of Uwankun, the Uwanguę, and the other a wealthy commoner (Oręnręn-oniye), in the person of San San, who was a son born to a Portuguese trader by Princess Ekpedure, who was also the mother of Otoluetsoye, of Ugbęge fame. These two men vied astutely for supremacy among the Nobles of Warri at this time; and San San, always in much closer touch with Olu Akęngbuwa, was stigmatized as the King's *Fidus Achates*. He was, indeed, a clever hypocrite.

It came to pass at this time of rivalry between these two great men, that a rumour spread through the City of Warrito the effect that there had been misconduct between Omagęnę, one of the sons of Ologbotsęřę Eyinmasan, and a half-brother of Uwankun, the Uwanguę, and the Princesses Uwala and Oghanranro, and that both ladies were in a state of pregnancy.

This news spread by leaps and bounds, and so soon got to the hearing of the Olu. An enquiry into the truth of it was ordered by the Olu, with the result that the two Princesses concerned were found to

as had been said, and that both named Omageṅṅ as the one responsible for their condition. The matter was then referred to the National Council for trial and determination.

Accordingly, Omageṅṅ was summoned before the Council, indicted with an offence that implied that the Olu was his slave—an act punishable only by death, according to Itsekiri law. Omageṅṅ made no defence, as, the condition of the two Princesses being quite apparent, it would have been foolish, as well as ignominious, for him to deny the offence; but he implored the Olu-in-Council to temper justice with mercy, and to deal with him leniently.

The Council, after a serious consideration, found him guilty of the offence, and returned a sentence of death by hanging.

His senior half-brother, Uwankun, the Uwanguṅ, tried his utmost to influence the Olu to revise and reduce the sentence of death to be that of a fine, but each time he made this attempt, he met with disapproval, because San San was hard after his heels, persuading the Olu not to yield to such solicitations, and reminding him of Uwankun's attitude in Olufuaghofṅ's case. However, Uwankun continued begging till, at last, the Olu was obliged to retort, "Had you been sympathetic and favourable in that sad and regretful incident of my late dear brother and friend, Olufuaghofṅ, of blessed memory, I would now have been equally sympathetic and favourable for your sake, in Omageṅṅ's case, and perhaps might have been able to prevail over the Council to revise its decree. You see, the law of the realm must be honoured and upheld by great and small citizens alike."

As Uwankun, the Uwanguṅ, saw that all his efforts

to save his brother from death failed, he called a family meeting of all the Ologbotsẹẹ children, one night, whereat it was resolved that, rather than face death on the gallows, which would be a public disgrace to the family, Omageṅẹ had better resort to poison, and die on the following day, towards sunset. Acting upon this resolution, Omageṅẹ cut poison into his body, and died of its effects. He was buried at Big Warri. His death was a puzzle to everybody, owing to its suddenness.

At that very same meeting of the Ologbotsẹẹ family, a decision to migrate from Warri, and seek refuge elsewhere on the coasts of Benin River was arrived at; and so, not very long after Omageṅẹ's death, Uwankun, the Uwanguẹ, and his family removed from Big Warri. He at first settled down at Ugbuwanguẹ, but finding that that place was too close to Big Warri—for he wished to withdraw himself entirely from meddling with Itsekiri politics just then—he removed to a place called Evoronagbọn (Benin Territory).

When the news of his settlement at Evoronagbọn reached the Olu, the latter sent a message to his father, the Oba of Benin, stating that his Uwanguẹ had deserted him, and that, as, from information to hand, he was said to be living in Benin territory, he, the Olu, desired that the Oba should assist him to get him (Uwanguẹ) to return to Warri.

When the Oba's envoys started to trace Uwankun, the Uwanguẹ, at Evoronagbọn, in Uguoṭoṭo, they were regarded by Uwankun as enemies bringing war against him, and so he and his people fled from Evoronagbọn to Ugbo.

After building mat huts at Ugbo for his people,

Uwankun went on an excursion by himself along the coasts of Benin River, in a medium-sized canoe; and so it happened that, just at the entrance of a small creek, he met the man who was the founder of Utɔnlila. He asked of the man where this small creek led to, and the man replied, "The creek leads to nowhere, but it has a small patch of forest land, if you went a little farther inside it." So Uwanguę turned his canoe into the creek, by way of reconnoitring, and finding the place to be very quiet, he decided to remove from Ugbo, and to dwell on that small patch of forest land. He then returned to Ugbo, removed his property to the creek, brushed the forest land, and built a town, which he named "Ajakpuarere" (meaning *a quiet town*). This is the present town of Jakpa. Later he collected all his father's children from Bobi, and they built new quarters; thus Jakpa expanded, and up to the present generation it was the largest Itsekiri town.

It should be worthy of note to record that each of the two Princesses referred to in this anecdote, in due course gave birth to sons. Uwala's son was named Pedro, senior, and was brother to Numa, the father of Chief Dore, and Oghanranro's child was named Ejoti. Both children belonged to Omagęņę.

It has been said by the Uwanguę family, that their father swore, and warned them, that none of his pedigree should marry any daughter of the Royal Blood of Olu Akęngbuwa, and that he would not give any of his own daughters in marriage to the Princes of Olu Akęngbuwa; and, in addition, that they must have nothing to do with the political affairs of the Itsekiri Nation. But I cannot find that either of these alleged prohibitions could be true of the loyal, good

old man, Uwankun, the Uwanguę, of blessed memory, because, according to tradition, he remained loyal and faithful to his king and lord, the Olu Akęngbuwa, whose subject he was, up to his last days on earth. This last fact is supported by the incident of the Olu's war against Botęmimikayęti, popularly known as Ikayę, of Ologbo. When this war was waged and the position of Olu's armies became untenable, and substantial reinforcement was of paramount necessity to save a wholesale defeat, Uwankun, the Uwanguę, was sent for at Jakpa, by the Olu, to prepare and go to the war for him. On receipt of the Olu's command, the Uwanguę quickly mobilised his men and munitions, got his war canoes ready, and proceeded to the scene of action without delay.

When the news of Uwanguę's presence on the scene reached Ikayę, who had not before come personally to the fight, he said to himself, " Now I will go in person to the war, for one of my equals is come to fight against me, with whom to die is sweet, so far as I am concerned." In the evening of that very day he took his carbine (atariugbugbo), stepped into a small canoe as if he were going fishing, and started towards the spot where all the Olu's war canoes were moored. Having got near, he steered his canoe slowly as he passed closely by each and scrutinized the Chief Warrior, in his most careful search for Uwankun, with whom he had resolved to die. At last he saw Uwankun sitting amidst a host of war-clad men in a very large war canoe, with a table spread in front of him, upon which lay several decanters of rum and glasses. As the canoe was delightfully lighted, he could aim at his victim with perfect immunity.

Just at this critical moment, when Ikayę picked

up his carbine (atariugbugbo), to aim at Uwankun, the latter took up a glass full of rum from the table, and held it, bending to the water, to make sacrifice to Umalokun. Ikayę's eyes caught sight of this, and he lowered his arm from his shoulders, in curiosity to see and hear what Uwankun was doing. To his astonishment, he heard him praying for the life of his compeer, Ikayę, who was being destroyed in his innocence.

This honest prayer went so deep into Ikayę's heart, that he was overwhelmed with love for Uwankun—his hatred was subdued by the man's love of him ; and softly putting his canoe nearer, he quickly called the Uwanguę by his nickname, " Oriękun." Uwanguę turned round in surprise, and asked, " Who knows it ? " Ikayę replied, " It is I—Ikayę, your bosom friend ! " Uwanguę then called Ikayę by his nickname, " Atarumogun," and when Ikayę had answered, " Here am I ! " he bade him come into the cabin. Ikayę entered, and they shook hands ; and then Ikayę was offered a seat and drink, which he accepted with pleasure.

They chatted freely together, though secretly, and Ikayę told Uwanguę frankly that he had come out purposely to die with him, but that his prayer to Umalokun had converted his heart from hatred to a sincere love of him.

After they had chatted for a long time, and enjoyed several glasses of rum together, Ikayę said, " If you, Uwanguę, had not come, I would never have yielded, but now, for your sake, I must give up." He then urged Uwankun to start very early the next morning, well ahead of the others, so as to start firing on his, Ikayę's, town by dawn, and then, landing, to burn

a few houses on the water-side, and seize all guns found there. He would be able to do so in safety, said Ikayę, as he would order his men to use no shots or bullets, but only powder, in firing at Uwankun's canoes. Uwankun agreed to do this, and also promised to reciprocate in the firing matter. But this undertaking given, Ikayę then strictly warned him to retreat before noon, as he, Ikayę, wished to kill some more men of the Olu's armies before submitting. He then took leave of his friend, and returned to his home.

His advice was carefully followed, so that before the day dawned, Uwanguę was in close proximity to the town of Ologbo. Then landing, he burned houses, took spoils, and quickly turned his canoes homeward, long time before noon.

The others, who came behind him, seeing his canoes returning home, singing songs of victory, then tried to land, in turn, and seize some booty, but were subjected to such severe fire, that their number was decimated, and they were forced to retreat in confusion. Thus Uwankun, the Uwanguę, carried the glory and honour of the victory of that war, and in respect of it, was much commended and rewarded by the Olu Akęngbuwa for his gallantry.

Then, the falsity of the warning regarding marriage between the two families was evidenced not only by Prince Omateye's marriage with Metsetemiwęre, sister of Diare, but has also been proved by the hundreds of other marriages that have taken place since then, right up to the present time, between the sons and daughters of the families who peopled Jakpa, Batęre, and other important Itsekiri towns.

## CHAPTER XIV

OLU AKENGBUWA.—7

THE circumstances which surrounded the contest for the Itsekiri throne between Princes Agbaga and Omateye in their royal father's lifetime were, in certain respects, fraught with rancorous incidents, and in others with most interesting ones. The first 'point scored by Prince Agbaga was the nickname or second appellation adopted by him when he first knew his father was arranging for him to reign in his stead. This appellation was "Ojogboriumalç," meaning "The Serpent has taken the Devil's or Juju's head." When Prince Omateye heard of the name, and knew what his half-brother meant by it, he was discontented ; and he having stated the cause of his discontentment and grievance to his sister Iye (Idolu), the latter privately connived with him to try to exceed Prince Agbaga in the matter of nickname or second appellation. To this end Iye invited the Ijaws of Saba to "bring a dance" to her at Big Warri.

The Ijaws of Saba came to Big Warri on the appointed day, and after having been entertained by Princess Iye and her brothers (Princess Omateye and Ejo, they were told of the reason why their dance was invited, namely to give an appropriate nickname to Prince Omateye that would overweigh that of Prince Agbaga. The Ijaws said this was an easy matter

with them, and the dance was soon started. When it rose to its highest state of grandeur and sweetness, and the crowds of spectators were at the height of excitement, the chief dancer called Prince Omateye and told him, "Your second appellation from to-day is, Dadi, Akalipara logbe." This meant, "Try it! The moon never appears hidden in the firmament."

The crowd shouted in approbation, and after the close of the dance, Princess Iye gave the Ijaws a lot of presents, and they returned to their home.

The second incident of the contest was, that of a cloth. There was a costly cloth called Ukp̄nr̄n, which was wearable only by the Olu and other dignitaries, but by no commoner. In order to single out Prince Agbaga as the child who was to succeed him as the rightful heir to the Itsekiri throne the Olu Ak̄ngbuwa gave some of this cloth, Ukp̄nr̄n, to Prince Agbaga, to wear on special occasions, and when attending the National Council. The first time Prince Agbaga wore this cloth, Prince Omateye saw it on him, and he ran home to inform his sister, Princess Iye, with tears in his eyes, that his father had made every arrangement already for Prince Agbaga to succeed him. When asked how he knew that, he replied that Prince Agbaga wore the Ukp̄nr̄n, and had come to the National Council with it.

The sister said, "Do not worry! We will get it for you at all costs"—and a canoe was immediately got ready, and despatched to Abo, where this special cloth was obtainable. Before three months had elapsed, the canoe returned with two different kinds of Ukp̄nr̄n for Prince Omateye, and at the following State Meeting, the Prince appeared in one of them. When Prince Agbaga saw him dressed with Ukp̄nr̄n,

he was grieved ; and after the meeting closed, he went in privately to his father, and asked why he was being deceived.—“ If you, Father, did not give Prince Omateye an Ukpẹnřen, where has he got the one he wore to-day from ? ” His father denied having given Prince Omateye any Ukpẹnřen, but suspected that he must have got it through the assistance and co-operation of his sister, Princess Iye.

By way of a r emedy to such a growing trife between the two Princes, the Olu ordered that Ubat er e should be brushed, and a town built there for Prince Omateye and his sisters to stay at. Thus the town of Bat er e, on the Benin River, was founded, to which Prince Omateye and his hosts of families removed.

The third incident was that of the Governorship (Gofune). Prince Agbaga was appointed Governor by his father. As the Governor, he went to Benin River, to collect comey from time to time ; and the emblem of this office was the Olu’s Silver-mounted Staff and a Flag. Prince Agbaga also had his own quarters at Bobi. During Prince Agbaga’s regime as the Olu’s Governor, Prince Omateye and Princess Iye secretly gave an order for a Flag of a similar design, to a merchant-vessel, to be brought from England. In due time the Flag arrived, was paid for, and kept by Prince Omateye. Then, when the time to receive or collect the custom arrived, before Prince Agbaga from Warri arrived at Benin River, on his mission as the Olu’s accredited messenger, Prince Omateye hauled up his own Flag in one of his many canoes, and, with his sister, Princess Iye, went to the merchant-vessels (Okoyibo), and was paid the comey.

On his arrival, Prince Agbaga was informed by the European traders that the comey had already been

paid to Princess Idolu and her brother, before he arrived, for, as the royal Flag was flown over their canoe, their mission had been considered to be genuine, and so they, the traders, had dealt with them.

With this sad news and disappointment, Prince Agbaga returned in haste to Warri, and on arrival there, ran to the palace (Aghofen), and said to his father, in rage and despair, "Now I know that all your dealings with me have been purely meaningless. Your true arrangement being, to get Prince Omateye brought up as your select heir to the Itsekiri Throne. —Why did you not reveal your real intention to me all the time?"—And he wept bitterly and would not be comforted, even though his father, full of sorrow, did all he could to convince him that he was innocent of Prince Omateye's pranks. Not very long after this incident, Prince Agbaga was taken ill, and died.

Prince Omateye thenceforward assumed the Governorship, the functioning of which, however, was later delegated to Omoku, by arrangement, as by this time Omoku had won the affection of Princess Iye—who was previously wife to Ide of Eghoroke (Ogheye)—and with the consent of Olu Akengbuwa, took her for wife.

Governor Omoku was permanently stationed at Bobi, Benin River, and his wife, Princess Iye, lived in a village of her own, in the Bobi Creek. Her village is called Ajiye.

## CHAPTER XV

### OLU AKENGBUWA.—8

AFTER Prince Agbaga died, there was no other rival of Prince Omateye, for he and his brother, Prince Ejo, were then the surviving senior sons of the Olu Akęngbuwa; and it was definitely pronounced that he was the heir to the Itsekiri Throne.

By this time Prince Omateye was in full control of his own, as well as of his father's, trade at Benin River. As age was now telling on him, the Olu Akęngbuwa, observing that Prince Omateye had become so formidable in wealth and ripened in experience, invested him with full power to govern the Kingdom and represent him in all affairs of the State and rule over the Itsekiri people.

Prior to, and during this time, the European trading firms did business with the natives alongside their sailing vessels (okoyibo), hulks (oliki), and schooners (itsukunę) anchored or moored alongside the coast lines of the Benin River.

As soon as Prince Omateye perceived his position to be that of supreme ruler of the people, he changed his attitude and demeanour so as to warrant their admiration and approbation; and he became so genial, generous, sympathetic, magnanimous and philanthropic, that another nickname was added to his appellations, namely, "Akpojorukuda," which is

to say, "He who changes the day of death to that of salvation." The invention of this name or title was Ugbodundun's. The story is briefly narrated as follows:—

There was a man called Ugbodundun, who was one of the slaves of Olu Akęngbuwa. This man was a rogue, a gambler, and an assaulter of all women; in a word he was a reprobate or vagabond; and his malpractices increased to such an extent, that at last his master ordered him to be killed.

Prince Omateye took him from the Olu's presence, and, after hiding him in his quarters secretly conveyed him to Batęre, giving orders that he was to be placed in charge of Okoridęsu, who was to take the best care of him.

While at Batęre, Ugbodundun resolved to amend his ways. The effect of such a resolution was soon noticeable in him, for, changed completely from bad to good, he became so industrious that his comrades admired his success; and in a very short time he, specializing as a dealer in pepper, was able to buy slaves with his own money.

When the good news of his progress reached Prince Omateye, the latter was very pleased, and the man was then commanded to trade with a canoe of his own, independently of Okoridęsu. This he did, and, in the course of a few years, his success was so marked, that he brushed a village of his own where he carried on his pepper industry; and that village, thanks to the marvellous prosperity he gained within so short a time, expanded to a large town, called after his name, Ajugbodundun, on the Benin River, about ten miles up from Koko to Sapele. At this place he had and controlled thousands of slaves, and amassed an untold quantity of wealth.

He was inherited by Prince Omateye, long before the latter's royal father's demise; and at one of the annual festivals at Big Warri, he came, properly attired in all costly costumes, after the Itsekiri style, as behoved a rich man in those days, and brought canoes full of goodly things as perquisites to his master and saviour, Prince Omateye. It was on this occasion that he gave and saluted him with the name, "Akpo-jorukuda," because the Prince had saved him from death, and made him to live and enjoy prosperity.

Early in the eighteenth century, the firm of Messrs. Alexander Miller Brothers, having obtained permission of the Olu, through Governor Omoku and Prince Omateye, built a factory at Bobi Point. Their business fared well till about the year 1835, when pirates raided the factory, and carried away much booty. On investigation, it was discovered that Chanomi, who was at Bobi then, had connived with the pirates, and had had a share of the loot.

In consequence of the report sent to the British Consul, in charge of the Bight of Benin, by the agents of European traders at Benin River, Consul John Beecroft visited Benin River in the *Ethiops*, in the year 1836, when he bombshelled the town of Bobi, which was aflame within a few hours' firing. But before Consul Beecroft commenced to fire on the town, all the inhabitants fled and took refuge at Ugbotseye.

Ejoti, who was asked to accept a share of the booty, but refused, suffered equally in this affray, by the destruction of his two large houses plastered with white chalk (Uliḡfun) at Orubu-Ejoti in Bobi.

After this incident, raiding of merchant-vessels on the Benin River, by the Ijaws and other pirates, ceased for several years, till that notable one of Mr.

Smart (Misimatę), whose little blockade or fort was destroyed by the Bluejackets in the twinkling of an eye, about the year 1850.

Many years before 1836, Prince Omateye's men were trading to Lagos (Ikurameę), and friendly messages used to be exchanged between the Prince and Akitoye, the then King (Oba) of Lagos. In the course of this friendship, King Akitoye of Lagos visited Prince Omateye at Benin River, in one of the British men-of-war. His visit was purposely to advise his friend how good and protective the English people were, and to influence him to persuade his father, the Olu-Itsekiri (Akęngbuwa), to grant British merchants sites for trading purposes throughout his dominion. King Akitoye was successful in his mission, as Prince Omateye quickly yielded to all his propositions—for Prince Omateye's "Yes" meant his father's agreement.

During King Akitoye's visit, bartering in the form of a bazaar was commenced on cleared spots by the merchants who were living in their vessels; and King Akitoye often took Prince Omateye and many other important Itsekiri traders round the bazaar, where he would take up each article on show there, and placing it before the Prince's face, and say, "*O kpo li Eko!*"—meaning, "Cheap at Eko!" (Lagos).

Immediately after King Akitoye returned to Lagos, Prince Omateye came to Warri, and advised his father, Olu Akęngbuwa, that it was necessary to grant British merchants sites for the building of their factories, because he observed that they were good traders and the best protectors. After hesitating for a while, his father agreed. So the Prince returned to Benin River, and gave the merchants plots of land,

on which they erected trading factories, which were called, after King Akitoye's words, "Okpọleko," by the Itsekiris. These merchants did not pay yearly rentals in respect of sites so granted to them, but only paid for the labour of brushing bush and reclaiming swamp land, in view of the fact that they all were paying the comey.

## CHAPTER XVI

### OLU AKENGBUWA.—9

THE following events were memorable of the earthly career of Olu Akęngbuwa, and ought to become part of the historical records of the Itsekiri Kingdom, for the edification of the rising generation.

1. Creation of Ogbanranmi as the Iyatsęre-Utę.
2. San San and Otoluetsoye in exile.
3. The tragedy of the medicine-man from Ifę, called at the instance of Iropli, the mother of Prince Ikęnřen.
4. The Olu Akęngbuwa's remarks to his anxious Crown Prince, Omateye.

#### i. Creation of Ogbanranmi as the Iyatsęre-Utę.

Ogbanranmi was an uncle of the Olu Akęngbuwa in the female line. It was with his able aid and that of his other brothers and sisters, to wit, Imaran, Ukutserun and Asęruku, that Prince Eyolusan attained to the Oluship. As was the custom, all Olus are duly sworn in by the Nation to rule justly and righteously, and not to oppress, suppress, coerce, or distort justice, or practise partiality against his subjects; and the nation, in return, reciprocated by taking the oath of allegiance to be loyal, respectful, truthful, faithful and obedient to His Majesty, the Olu, as their overlord. But when the lot fell on Prince Eyolusan to be made

Olu Itsekiri, he came to Warri from Bobi with so great a number of followers and wealth (seven very large canoes full of men and all goodly things), that the country was awestruck ; and because his preparation was so much more elaborate, and unprecedented in the annals of the Olu Dynasty, nobody dared to suggest the enforcement of the rudimentary ceremonial principles that normally preceded the installation of an Olu. He was straight away conducted to the Palace (Aghoḡen), and installed as the Olu Itsekiri ; and this was acknowledged by all to be the reason why he was the Olu who reigned longest over the Itsekiri Kingdom, from Ginuwa's right down to his own time.

All the time he was on the throne his trade at Benin River was being done under the direction and supervision of his uncle, Ogbanranmi, and others, till Prince Omateye evolved and assumed complete management of it. He was the wealthiest Olu who ever occupied the Itsekiri Throne : that no one was rich before being made an Olu, bore no reference to him.

After having been Olu for about ten years, his maternal uncles appealed to him, that his mother's house desired and deserved a title amongst the nobilities (Ojoyes) of the country and he agreed with them. Just about this time, the post of Iyatsęre became vacant, owing to the death of the then occupant, and so he seized the opportunity of creating his uncle, Ogbanranmi, the Iyatsęre. When the question of appointing Ogbanranmi to be the Iyatsęre was mooted before the National Council, it received the unanimous approval of all the Ojoyes. Thus Ogbanranmi was made the Iyatsęre and he chose for his nickname, from that day forward, " Utę." So he was called Iyatsęre-Utę, which means the " Immovable

War Lord." This title was still used in conjunction with the other similarly important cognomen, "Ute-  
eni"—which means that a child cannot fathom an  
elephant's leg—at yearly commemoration of the souls  
of the departed ancestors of the greater family of  
Ogbanranmi, Imaran, Ukutserun, Idumigèn and  
Asoruku, etc.

2. San San and Otoluetsoye in exile.

San San and Otoluetsoye were sons of Princess  
Ekpedure, who was a daughter of the Olu Atogbuwa.  
San San was born to a Portuguese trader, and Otsoye  
to an Itsekiri man. They were both men of importance  
in their days in the City of Iwẹrẹ, but neither attained  
any title (Oye) before they fled from Warri to the  
Mahin and Ijaw country (Ulajẹ).

It has been said that before Prince Eyolusan became  
the Olu, he had a common name, "Onumalẹ," with  
Otoluetsoye, by which they as comrades called each  
other; and that this practice they did not break  
even after he became the Olu.

On the other hand San San took the lead to befriend  
the Olu Akẹngbuwa, and was popularly known as his  
"Fidus Achates" throughout the City of Iwẹrẹ.  
The notorious fashion by which he gained favour in  
presence of the Olu was too well-known a story to all  
and sundry among the notable families of Itsekiri for  
its reiteration to be necessary in this book, even if I  
had a desire to repeat it; but, in any case, justice  
to his descendants of the present and future genera-  
tions, forbids my doing so, and that especially as I  
am at a loss to find decent language in which to express  
the same, without incurring somebody's displeasure  
and umbrage in my humble attempts to reduce into

writing the much distorted, as well as mutilated, Itsekiri history.

After several unhappy incidents, which caused some of the important houses to quit Warri, all the Ojoyes of Warri, coupled with the support of all the Orɔnrɔn-niyes (Commoners) who mattered in the political affairs of the country then, plotted against San San and accused him of misconduct with one of the Olu's wives (Onori). This offence is called in the Itsekiri language, "*One to renle aya Olu or one to gun arikpe,*" meaning one who walked over the Olu's wife, and was an act punishable by death, according to Itsekiri law and custom.

The matter rose to such a high pitch, that San San was called upon first to explain himself before the Olu in chambers. This was done without Otoluetsoye's knowledge. As soon as he heard that his brother was before the Olu on a capital charge, he hurried up to the Palace (Aghɔfɛn), where he found his brother, San San, on his knees before the Olu, and a great number of Ojoyes present. He stepped forward in front of his brother, and slapped him in the face twice, at which his brother jumped on his legs and walked fast out of the Palace, to the astonishment of the audience.

Otoluetsoye then turned towards the Olu, and having done obeisance, as was the custom, said ironically, "Onumale, is this the way you treat me? Ought I not to hear if my brother had done aught amiss against you?" And not waiting for an answer from the throne, he also walked out of the Palace.

The Ojoyes there present, declared, after a serious discussion, that this arrogant deed of Otoluetsoye's was a gross insult to His Majesty the Olu, and deter-

mined to subject him to an equally serious impeachment ; and steps were at once devised by which to give effect to their resolution. But Otoluetsoye and his brother, San San, foresaw what was coming, and hastily packed up and fled to Ugbokoriko via Erogbo (Ondo Province), where they joined a friendly society styled " Egbesu."

They remained in exile for a period of thirty-two years, till the Olu graciously approved of their return to his territory, through much solicitation, and by the instrumentality of Uwankun, the Uwanguẹ, and Prince Omateye. When they were being brought home from Ugbokoriko, under the guide of Uwanguẹ's messengers, they got to a place with a fine well in the bush thereof, near the inlet leading from Erogbo to Ijorojoro (Eghoroke or Ogheye Creek) ; and at this place they halted, and sent word to Uwanguẹ that they would not come much more closer, but preferred to stay on that spot. This was agreed to, and they brushed and built a town there, and called it Ugbo-ẹge (a forest of well). This is the present town of Ugbo-ẹge, which is the home of the descendants of San San and Otoluetsoye, in the hinterland of Ijorojoro Creek, Benin River.

The circumstances which led to their exile and subsequent repatriation were the origin of the Itsekiri saying, "*Ukegba San San to lele Otsoye re Ugbege,*" meaning, "San San's trouble which pursued Otsoye to Ugbo-ẹge." There are still traceable among the Ijaws of Ayakrama to-day, men and women who claim to be some of the descendants of San San. They are of very fair yellow complexion, which is suggestive of their mulatto origin. He was said to have married an Ijaw woman of Ayakrama, with

whom he had issue while living at Big Warri ; but that this lady refused to accompany him into exile, and then returned with all the children to her home.

### 3. The tragedy of the medicine-man from Ifẹ.

In the declining years of Olu Akęngbuwa, a young wife of his, named Irọli, had no issue, and she implored her royal husband to assist her out of the disgrace of barrenness, which was the anxious problem confronting her. In compliance with her supplications, the Olu sent and fetched a doctor or fetish-man from Ife, to minister unto her. The man came, and after divining and tracing the cause of her barrenness, prescribed and offered sacrifices to the gods, and afterwards treated her with medicine.

Incidentally, Omateye, the Crown Prince, heard of the arrival of this Ifẹ doctor, and so he sent for him on account of his elder sister, Princess Iye, whose children had been dying, some in their infancy. The Ifẹ doctor answered his invitation, and after consultation, he divined, offered sacrifices, and administered medicine to Princess Iye.

Irọli heard of this, and, exceedingly annoyed with the doctor, came to Prince Omateye and quarrelled. In the course of the quarrel, she became so enraged that she slapped the Prince on the face ; and the Prince, losing his temper, thrashed her severely with the whip, till her skin was sore and bleeding. She ran in confusion to her husband, the Olu, showed him the cuts in her body, and narrated the circumstances which led to the fracas. As was generally known, this lady was the idol pet of her royal master and as such, she ever found favour in his sight. The Olu immediately called for Prince Omateye, and in the greatest

indignation, said, " Oh, Omateye, my accredited son, is this the way you repay my goodness? I delegated the entire reins of my Government into your hands, though yet I am alive, but you act against me as one without compunction. All right, if the Oba sailed away to-day, the ferryman shall sail away to-morrow." (*Oba ma gua oni, ojigwe a gua ola.*)

Subsequently, Irqli requested that the Ife doctor should be beheaded, and the Olu at once commanded that the man be brought before him and killed. The doctor was soon fetched before the Olu, to die. He said, " I am willing to die at Your Majesty's command, but in justice to God and the continuity of Itsekiri and your dynasty, let me be removed from your presence and be killed outside this City, or, if I am to be beheaded here, see that my blood shall not be allowed to drop on the ground. But if this warning be disregarded, and my blood happens to touch this land, then it shall come to pass, that, after you, Akengbuwa, the present Olu, there shall be no other Olu on the Itsekiri throne for more than three generations hence."

Prince Omateye now interceded that the doctor should be entrusted to him to be slain in the bush across the Warri River; and to that his father agreed. But the woman Irqli ejaculated, " Suppose he is taken from your presence and not slain at all, how could the trick be discovered, seeing the extent of influence Prince Omateye wields over the country? "

So, with reluctance, the Olu directed that his original command be executed forthwith, and the courtiers, in performance of their duty, beheaded the Ife doctor on the spot.

In spite of all possible precautions, immediately

the man's head was cut off, his blood gushed out like a running fountain, and a good quantity of it drizzled on to the ground ; but his head, though separated from its trunk, disappeared, to the consternation of all the people present at the scene.

Before the date of this horrible tragedy, the woman, Irqli, had conceived, and in due course she brought forth a male child, who was named Prince Ikenřen.

4. The Olu Akengbuwa's remarks to his anxious Crown Prince, Omateye.

A few years after the tragedy, the Olu having become senile, Prince Omateye, being over-anxious to reign in his father's stead, as he himself had become comparatively old, one day plucked out a lock of his grey hairs and sent it in a parcel to his father. On the receipt of this parabolic present, the Olu was very sorry ; and in reciprocating this omen, he made up two parcels, one containing honey (oyin), wrapped with clean European paper, and the other containing wild honey (atone), wrapped in a dry plantain leaf, and sent them to his son, with a message that he should taste both separately, and return him a message, reporting on them.

The Prince opened the parcel of sweet honey first, and when he had tasted it, he exclaimed, " What a sweet thing this is ! It is nothing else but honey ! " He then opened the second parcel, containing the wild honey ; and when he had tasted it, he spat it out of his mouth with no small amount of detestation, and ejaculated, " What is this that my father has done, by sending me such a nasty rancid fruit in the form of sweet ? What can he have meant by these two things ? "

He at once sent a return message to his father, giving a full report of his test of the contents of the two parcels, and said among other things, that he was in a dilemma as to what the presents portended.

His father replied by the messengers, " You know the world is sweet like honey, and to die is sour like wild honey ; why then your importunity that I must die before my time is up, in order that you may ascend my throne earlier ? Again I say, remember, if the king (oba) sailed away to-day, the ferryman (ojigufe) shall sail away to-morrow."—(*Oba ma gua oni, ojigufe a gua ola.*) And he swore to it. But from that moment he (the Olu) grew despondent.

## CHAPTER XVII

### IMI, THE WAR MINISTER

IN the reign of Olu Erejuwa there lived a man in the City of Iwçerç whose name was Imi. He was one of the sons of the then Iyatsçerç.—The office of Iyatsçerç is tantamount to that of a War Minister in Europe.

Imi, by nature, was a man of valour, and in social circles he was very brilliant and progressive among his companions. He was of the family tree to which Ubotçemimikayçeti (popularly known as Ikayç) the founder of Ologbo belonged.

It happened that this man, Imi, had misconducted himself with one of his father's wives, and the news of it spread all over the town. As was wont, according to Itsekiri law, he was banished from his father's presence, and ordered to quit Warri. He removed from Warri, and went and dwelt at Ologbo in exile.

Many years had elapsed, when there broke out a war between the Olu Itsekiri and certain Mçhinni-Ijaws over a boundary dispute. The Ijaws, who rebelled, were very formidable, and the war was serious. While this war was being waged, Iyatsçerç, the father of Imi, died at Warri. In the Olu's plight, searching for a suitable commandant to conduct the successful prosecution of the war, his mind came across the name of Imi, who was then in exile at Ologbo. He at once ordered a canoe to be prepared and des-

patched to fetch Imi from Ologbo, for him to come and take his late father's post ; and this was at once done. When the royal envoy delivered his message to Imi, the latter replied, saying, " If my father be really dead, and I am to be repatriated by the Olu's authority, with the object that I should take my father's place, I must see some of my late father's personal effects produced in support of message, before I shall proceed to Warri."

The Envoy brought this reply of Imi's to Olu, and was then handed the Hat and Staff of Imi's father, with which to return to Imi, together with the message that the latter's presence was badly needed at home.

Arrived again at Ologbo, the Envoy delivered his second message to Imi, and handed him both Hat and Staff. The sight of these articles greatly appealed to Imi's heart, and since, also, Olu had honoured his reply, he was agreeable to return to Warri in answer to the call. Accordingly he ordered all his canoes to be drawn up, dressed and hauled into the water, and then he packed up, and removed permanently from Ologbo to Warri.

On his arrival at Warri, he sent a message to his late father's compound, to inform the widows that he was now on the shores of Warri, but that he would not disembark, unless they first came to welcome him.

The widows, in gleeful answer to this message from their husband-elect, rushed down to the waterside, and as they went they sang this song of welcome :

*" Imi do, Imi romijen ; Imi okomi, Imi okenren ogun ; irati uwo e koma we ra ri Imi, Imi okomi."*

With this song, Imi came ashore, amidst this flock of beautiful women, in piteous mourning dress ; and

as he was being conducted to his father's compound, they sang, "*Imi do oli ori oye.*"

Literally this welcome song meant, "I salute Imi the man of war. If you were not prepared, you cannot see or meet with Imi. I salute you, Imi, the predestined ruler."—This song occupies a prominent position, among many others, in the famous Uluomi Dance of the Itsekiri people up to this present age.

After a few days' residence in Warri, Imi went to salute the Olu, and, having done obeisance as was wont, he was formally created *Iyatsęę* in his father's stead, and was at the same time commissioned to go and prosecute the war against the Ijaws.

Just a couple of days after celebrating his installation, he left the shores of Warri for the war against the Ijaws, on the River Niger. When he got to the scene of action, instead of fighting with guns and other implements of war, he simply washed his head with an emulsion of soap, prepared with poison, in the river, and then returned home; and it came to pass that whosoever among the Ijaws drank the river water was poisoned and died. This death toll so reduced the populations of almost all the towns on the banks of the Niger River, that the insurrectionists had to come to the Olu, and, prostrating themselves, ask for mercy and reconciliation. Their supplications at last received the Olu's consent, and they were reconciled to him, after paying a very heavy war prize. Then Imi, the *Iyatsęę*, was pleased to go and pour relief (*Erọ*) into the water of the affected areas, so that it resumed its normal nature.

## CHAPTER. XVIII

### PRINCESS EMENUGO, THE HEROINE

THERE lived in the capital city of Warri a Princess who was called Emenugo. She was in her days what may properly be described as the "Queen of Beauty."

According to the laws of the land, cohabitation between the royal children, or children belonging to one family tree, was punishable by death. It transpired that this beautiful Princess had become a victim under theclutches of this law, and having been declared guilty of the offence, was to be killed. The Olu was reluctant to surrender his graceful daughter, and in his anxiety he sought to gain the country's unanimous consent to the alteration of this law. In order that such a material alteration in the law might not re-act evilly upon the nation, he ordered a general consultation of oracles to inquire for the best method possible of amending the law effectively. As the result of these consultations, Princess Emenugo was to be made a living sacrifice to the souls of all departed ancestral Elders (Egharulietseje) of the royal and other big families, to atone for those of the future generation who might become guilty of the same crime. The prescription for the manner in which Princess Emenugo was to be buried alive was as follows: a robe of white cloth, half-piece of a broken calabash containing water mixed with white chalk,

and a broom of bamboo (Ugban), with an egg parcelled at the extreme tiny end of it. These articles were accordingly got ready and a day was appointed for the sacrifice.

When the appointed day arrived, Princess Emęnugo, dressed in the white robe, with the calabash and its contents on her left hand, and the Ugban on her right hand, appeared on the sacrificial scene to be buried alive. As soon as the preliminary ceremony, as divined by means of oracle, was over, she was ordered to enter into the grave prepared for her, in her own presence. As she was entering her grave alive, she said these words in her lamentation: "*Akpate kuri obon di omeyin rubo na obon toli ren o.*" Literally this is, "The lady-trader now vacates the market, so that the last-born may market and return safely home."

Thenceforward this law was altered so that any offender under it was no longer punished by death, but was amenable to fines. And the custom of doing sacrifice (*ta gba ka eko eguere*) on the Princess Emęnugo's grave at Big Warri, by two relatives who chanced to have cohabited, was thus introduced, and has been observed up to date. The officiating priest (Ebalę) is always a woman, and in extraordinary cases a male child uncircumcised (*arefan*) under age may be a useful substitute.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE PORTUGUESE

IN the first quarter of the sixteenth century, i.e., in A.D. 1516, the Portuguese came into contact with Prince Ginuwa at Ijala. This was the first time that Prince Ginuwa's Clan, later stigmatized the Itsekiri Race, ever had any acquaintance with Europeans.

When Ginuwa, the first Iwẹrẹ king who hailed from Benin City, was dwelling at Ijala, it happened one day that women who had gone out in small canoes fishing (ubaradẹ), saw on the Warri River at Ejere a strange huge canoe (sailing-vessel); and returning home in confusion, they reported that they had seen a Fairies' canoe (ọkọ egungun). The king sent spies to the spot to verify the women's report, and the messengers came back and said the news was correct. This created a panic or sensation at Ijala.

Ginuwa then called upon the great doctor, Idibiẹ, to find out what sacrifice the Fairies would accept by way of a prophylactic. As the result of his divination, Idibiẹ told the king that a banana sacrifice would meet the case. So bananas were loaded into a canoe and arranged so exposed, that people standing on the strange vessel's deck might see them. The canoe was manned and started off. When it came near to the sailing-vessel, the crew of the latter saw it and beckoned to the men to come alongside. They steered near, and the crew gave them a rope to fasten to the "stuff" (Banana), bunch by bunch. By means

of this rope the canoe was unloaded of all the bananas. The men then pushed off, to start homeward, but the crew shouted and called them back, and then reloaded their canoe with goodly things, namely, rum, garments, tobacco, and provisions, in payment for the bananas; and they requested that they should go and fetch more of the "stuff." In this way, friendly relationships commenced.

After several visits, the skipper and crew of the vessel joined the canoe, to go to Ijala, to salute the town's people; and when they arrived, the King mustered all his people together before the white-faced guests.

The Portuguese skipper now inquired who was the Headman amongst the whole lot of them; and Ginuwa was pointed out. The skipper then directed them to lay a mud stool (first introduction of a throne), on which the Headman Ginuwa was to sit down, while the people must sit down before him on either side. This was quickly done to his satisfaction, and he eventually returned with his crew to the vessel.

Among other things discussed between the parties, by signal, on that day was this: The Portuguese skipper asked Ginuwa how it was that his people were so very much emaciated? Ginuwa replied that yams, corn, plantains, pepper, and, in fact, all the crops he brought from Benin City (his original home) were cultivated, but would not thrive well on the Ijala soil, and so there was not sufficient food for the people, and they became emaciated by starvation.

Before he sailed away, the Portuguese skipper brought ashore to Ijala, several bags of *Gari* as a present for King Ginuwa and his people.

This vessel was apparently navigating the Niger Delta on a reconnoitring expedition, and she did not revisit Ijala till several years later, by which time

King Ginuwa had died, and the Portuguese skipper had to trace Ijijẹn and Irameņ all the way to Iwçrę, where they had removed to.

It was on the occasion of this second visit that the Portuguese presented the Olu Itsekiri (King of Itsekiri) with cassava plant, and showed him the process of manufacturing starch, farina, and gari with cassava roots. The cassava plant was afterwards entrusted to the Sobos of Agbassa for cultivation by the Olu Irameņ. Thus food derivable from cassava plant became our national staple food.

They (the Portuguese), during the second visit, also introduced musical instruments, utensils, and many other articles of domestic usefulness, as well as live-stock, such as muscovy duck (kpakpayęķę) and turkey (tolotolo).

By the year A.D. 1588 they had become so friendly with the Itsekiri, that they had established trading stations at Warri and Gborodo. Their export was principally slaves, and spices and pepper from Benin City, and occasionally elephant tusks.

Among the Portuguese traders was one magnate named Mingo, who took one of the Olu's daughters, Princess Maghęghoęye, for wife, and by her had a son, whom he named Anthonio. Anthonio went to Angola for education, and when he returned to Warri, he struggled for, and gained, the position of Olu, although he was a mulatto, and, coming from a female side of the Royal Tree, had no right to the throne of Iwçrę. But wealth and might won the field for him. This was the Olu Oyenakpagha, who was referred to by the English explorers in the year 1644 (*vide* Chapter VI of this book). He was a staunch Christian and through his influence, a Prefect, one Bishop, and several priests (prominent among whom were the

Reverend Fathers Angels Maria d'Aiaccis and Bonaventura de Firenze) were sent to Warri under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Mission. The Mission worked for about four years, but then, unfortunately, Oyenakpagha died, and as a result, the Capuchin missionaries' work came to a sudden close; and owing to the apathy of the Itsekiri, at that time, against Christian or foreign religion, there was nobody to assist them to make their way safely back home, to Europe, and the fate of some of them is one of the sealed mysteries of this country to-day.

The year 1837 saw the complete clearance of the Portuguese from the waters around and within the Warri Kingdom, when their slave vessels were captured by the British Government on the Benin River. It was a dreadful fight according to the story of an eye-witness. The thundering of cannon and guns between the two conflicting powers was fearful, and convulsed the foundations of the very earth. They fought from the Benin River seaward till their ships were no longer visible over the horizon.

Some families at Benin River picked up a booty, or, rather let me say, a boon of thousands of slaves deserted or landed by force and in confusion, by the Portuguese, who were ruthlessly pursued by their antagonists, the English.

Although it was in the year 1833 that the British Government passed an Act abolishing slavery in British Dominions, and also wisely forewarned all dealers in the nefarious and infamous traffic, the Portuguese, relying on their sea power then, mocked at them, until, at last, war was staged by the English, and justice at the hands of our good and noble Queen Victoria of blessed memory, triumphed over the power and audacity of a lustful nation.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE INTERREGNUM

THE beginning of the present interregnum was fraught with panic and awful tragedies, as the result of which there was an efflux of all the important families, who fled in disorder and confusion from the Capital City of Warri, some taking refuge at various places in the Benin River region, and others founding hamlets and villages in the creeks around Warri.

This confusion was the upshot of a skirmish so fatal and of such magnitude, that some people termed it a Revolution or Civil War; but it was purely a skirmish, for which the head laves (Olorukòs) of Princes Omateye and Ejo were responsible.

It came about in this wise.

After Olu Akęngbuwa had sent the two parcels to the Crown Prince Omateye (*vide* Chapter XVI), he became, as has been stated, despondent, and eventually died. When his death, which took place on the 14th June, 1848, was promulgated all over the Itsekiri Kingdom, there was no anxiety felt among his subjects, because all felt confident that Prince Omateye would automatically reign in his stead. But contrary to the expectation of the people, while Akęngbuwa's funeral celebrations were still in full swing, Prince Omateye suddenly died—on the 18th day of June, 1848. Still there was not much alarm,

as his junior brother, Prince Ejo, would fitly take his place. But then no sooner had he been installed on the throne than he was taken ill ; and his disease growing from bad to worse, he, at the end of three lunar months, died, too.

At the worst stage of his illness, when the said Olorukṣ saw that he could not recover, they held a secret meeting, whereat it was resolved that, since their lords failed to reign, owing to the unprecedented successive and untimely deaths, they would see to it that no other person was installed as the Olu of Itsekiri ; and thereupon they planned a wholesale massacre of the adult princes of Olu Akęngbuwa, and to scatter the nation. They were so formidable in wealth and men, that no power or force could withstand their offensive in those days. The ring-leaders among them were, 1. Okoridṣu, 2. Ebrimoni, 3. Ugbodundun, 4. Akębṣ, 5. Ebeleje, and 6. Okubṣ.

The opulent avarice of these men, who were the backbone of the Omateye and Ejo House, met a sad disappointment in the deaths of the two Princes, and that they felt the losses grievously was displayed in the senseless outrage which dispersed the population of the city many years before the second depopulation in 1901, when slavery was declared illegal by the British Government, on the 26th day of November, and the greater number of the slaves, who were in the majority so far as the Itsekiri population was concerned, ran away to Ekotogbo, Atijere, and Ekpe.

During the outrage, Princess Iye was guarded by Okubo, and was secretly ferried over to Okere for the safety of her life. When the skirmish subsided, at the free will and at the pleasure of the outragers, Princess Iye returned to Warri, and essayed to restore

law and order. She was in this way controlling the affairs of the Itsekiri nation, with the assistance of a Council of State, consisting of the Princes of the Olu Erejuwa-Akẹngbuwa House, and the Free Citizens (Omajajas), including the said Olorukọs, whose names I have already mentioned. Prominent among the Omajajas at that time were Governor Ibọdọ, Dibofun, and Diare.

About four years after Olu Akẹngbuwa's demise Governor Ibọdọ died, and Idiare was chosen and appointed by the Council of State, headed by the noble lady Princess Iye, to be the Itsekiri Governor.

No sooner was order restored, and the Council of State was functioning regularly, than three members of the Royal Family, to wit, 1. Prince Idesọ, son of Olu Erejuwa, 2. Prince Oritsẹmọnẹ,<sup>1</sup> son of Olu Akẹngbuwa, and 3. Prince Ejoki, son of the Olu Akẹngbuwa,<sup>2</sup> contested for the Itsekiri throne, but none was successful. Failure of each of these candidate's case arose from birth on the mother's side, for, according to custom, he only that was free-born right and left (akọtọn-kosi) was eligible to be made the Olu Itsekiri.

When Princess Iye saw that it was impossible to have an Olu crowned at that time owing to the disability already stated, and that it was necessary to have a temporary ruler representing the Olu in State affairs, as well as in the sacrificial office of high priest, in the matter of offering of oblations to the souls of the departed Olu, she set herself the task of appointing an Olotu (Regent). The lot fell on Prince Eri, a son of Olu Akẹngbuwa.<sup>3</sup> Prince Eri was then in his

<sup>1</sup> No. 14 in Chap. X.

<sup>2</sup> No. 8 in Chap. X.

<sup>3</sup> No. 5 in Chap. X.

mother's town, Gborodo (Ogidigbẹ). He was sent for, but he refused to come. At last Princess Iye packed all the late Olu Akẹngbuwa's widows (Onoris) into a canoe, and sent them to Prince Eri, to beg him to come. When Prince Eri saw them he was afraid to receive them into his unworthy and unsacred home, and so he hurried up and accompanied them to Warri. He was at once set the task of performing the customary rites in connection with the appointment of an Olotu, after the completion of which he was formally created the Olotu of Warri. Thenceforward, meetings were called and held at his place, and all national affairs were discussed and settlements effected thereat, as a matter of policy.

Before this time, or, rather, within it, certain members of the Ologbotsẹrẹ and Uwanguẹ family, at Jakpa, who had been living with Dibofun and Diare, namely, Ifie, Aliqba, Olomu, Edo and Dudu, decided, on the ground that Diare would not allow them to expand commercially, to segregate, and they removed from Jakpa, under the leadership of Ifie-Agbuje, who built the town of Tebu in Benin River. His followers later founded and established towns of their own, such as Ajaliqba, Obaghoro, Ebroghimi (Brohimi) and Obọn-Egharẹda. At first, Dudu stayed with Olomu at Ebroghimi, and it was not until the second quarter of the year 1894 that he removed permanently from there to Obọn-Egharẹda, for a similar reason to that which had caused the emigration from Jakpa.

It happened that a widow of the late Olu Akẹngbuwa was captured by the Ijo pirates of Eghoro-Ujọ. After most diligent enquiries, on which Princess Iye spent a lot of money, it was discovered that she was held

by the Ijaws of Eghoro. How to get her back was a difficult problem, for nobody dared carry war into the Ijaw country at this time, and expect to return to his home victorious. As a coincidence, Olomu, who was the late Olu Akęngbuwa's maternal nephew, fell sick of a most fearful malady. His family sent for a medicine-man (Ewo), who, when he came, divined that it was the Olu who was angry with him, and wanted to take away his soul, because he, being his nephew, alive, and strong enough to avenge his (the Olu's) enemies, and so remove the shame and disgrace which hung over his realm, by bringing back the captured woman, yet sat quietly by, and refused to do what he ought really to have done. Consequently necessaries for offerings were sent to Big Warri, and propitiations were made in behalf of Olomu, the latter promising that if he could recover from the malady, he would lose no time in going and taking vengeance on the Olu's offenders. This prayer was successful, and within a very short time Olomu recovered completely; and then, in fulfilment of his promise, he prepared war canoes, went to Eghoro-Ujọ, fought and conquered the Ijaws, and brought back the Olu's widow, together with many captives of war, several of whom were killed on the Palace grounds at Big Warri, while others were carried home by Olomu as prisoners of war, and therefore held as slaves.

During his regime as the Itsekiri Governor, Diare, in league with his other brothers and friends, after a period of about seven years in the Governorship, arranged an intrigue to oust the British merchants, and to invite and welcome in their stead the French, with whom the nefarious traffic of slave-dealing could be resumed. Feeling certain of the success of their

plot, they thought there was no harm to publish it, and so the news spread. In this way it came casually to the hearing of the British merchants at Benin River, namely, Messrs. Snape and Hearne, agents of the firms of Messrs. Horsfall and Harrison respectively ; and they, in turn, reported the same to Consul Campbell.

Consequent upon this report, the Consul, after burning Smart's (Misimatę) residence, for his plundering of one of the large schooner-rigged launches (itsukunę) near Jakpa Creek, the property of the firm of Charles Horsfall, formally deposed Governor Diare in the year 1858, on the strength of the British traders' report. After Governor Diare's deposition, the Consul, acting upon the information furnished him by the traders, suggested Ebrimoni's name for the appointment of Itsekiri Governor ; and this suggestion receiving the universal approval of the Itsekiri Council of State, Ebrimoni of Batęř was appointed Governor.

#### Destruction of Ugbęgunřen, Prince Oritşemņę's largest village, by Olomu.

Some years after the demise of Olu Akęngbuwa, Olomu sent some of his Olorukọ to dwell and trade for him in the district of Ukan, up the Warri River. His trade there expanded rapidly, and in course of time he passed up the river, with nine large canoes, to convey his produce to Benin River. As soon as he passed up to Ukan, a rumour spread that his intention was to capture and monopolise the trade in palm produce all over Warri ; and this news causing great anxiety among the Otolus, they at once sought occasion to find fault with him.

With such object in view, they plotted for some days, and ultimately manufactured an allegation that, because he covered his canoe with a crimson canopy, which act was the prerogative of the Olu's envoys or ambassadors, he must be waylaid and destroyed when returning from Ukan to his home. A certain hypocrite conveyed this resolution secretly to Olomu, at Ukan, or somewhere about Jeremi, as he was on his way homeward, and having been thus forewarned, he at once converted his trading canoes to war ones, and determined to escape these most formidable intriguers' snare.

On the day he was coming down the stream, he was told that the Itsekiris lay in ambush, right and left of the river, at Egbudu. When he got to the curve facing Egbudu Town, he moored his canoes at a distance of about two nautical miles away from those who were waylaying him. It was reported by an eye-witness that though the distance was so great, those in ambush distinctly heard his thunder-like voice praying to the Soul of his deceased Royal Uncle, the Olu Akęngbuwa, for salvation, and that the terrible grinding of teeth, as was wont with him, was perfectly audible.

After a few days' preparation there, he let go his canoes, which were soon subjected to the most desperate firing by his assailants, but through all the volleys he passed unhurt. He was keenly pursued by the Otolus till they got to Ejere, where Prince Oritsemọnc ordered a halt, remarking, "It is enough; you cannot dwell in a town without men." This happened at the moment when one of Olomu's canoes was badly hit and broken, and some of the men shot dead, and others drowned. The survivors escaped overland to Okere, where they were guarded and taken to the

family of a wife of Olomu (Eriqmala's mother) at Efurun, being subsequently led to their destination, Ebrohimi.

In revenge for this, Olomu brought war against Prince Oritsemone's largest village, Ugbegunren, and destroyed it, because Prince Oritsemone was the ring-leader among the Otolus who fought and destroyed one of his canoes containing a load of wealth. And the Otolus made no attempt to save the village or to retaliate, for they knew the result would be much more disastrous.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SOME NOTABLE EVENTS DURING THE INTERREGNUM

ON account of an outstanding old debt, there arose a dispute between Chanq̄mi and Olomu, which resulted in a war. The history of the Chanq̄mi and Olomu War is briefly as follows :

Before the demise of Olu Akęngbuwa, he adjudged that Princess Iye should pay a debt of eight men (slaves) she was owing to Olomu. This judgment was suffered to remain unsatisfied for many years by the judgment creditor, Olomu, and when he thought it was time to demand it, he increased the number of slaves he would accept in settlement of the judgment debt. Chanq̄mi, who long ago before this time, was in full responsibility for his mother's house (she was alive, but had become senile), refused to entertain Olomu's claim. There was a lot of quarrelling and cavilling over this debt, until owing to persistent refusal to pay on the part of Chanq̄mi, Olomu threatened to recover it by force. Consequently there was war between these two great men. Attempts to effect a compromise by Diare and other neutral nobilities at Benin River, at the instance of Prince Yq̄nwuręn, would have succeeded—as Olomu showed no inclination to fight—but that Chanq̄mi, being bluffed and goaded by his brothers (the House of Emayę) into entering the war at all costs, stoutly refused to listen to any suggestion of reconciliation.

At the long last, the war was waged and Olomu was victorious. In this war, Chanq̄mi's eldest son,

Golley, was severely wounded with a spear which pierced through the ribs on the right-hand side.

Before proceeding to this war, Uwakenę, the last Olorukọ amongst the slaves of Olu Akęngbuwa, in charge of Oke and Orele, Bobi Bank, was beheaded by order of Chanọmi, for refusing to supply him with men for the war when asked to. He was killed in the night, and the executioners took his spoils to their master. This took place about the year 1865.

A year after the Chanọmi-Olomu War, Prince Yọnwuręn suggested to the meeting of the Itsekiri Council of State, that in view of the very heavy loss sustained by Chanọmi in that war, the Itsekiri Governorship should be given to him to assist him in his endeavours to renovate his house. He appealed strongly to the sympathetic consideration of all Itsekiri, and his suggestion was adopted. By the coincidence of Governor Ebrimọni's death about this time, the suggestion came as a welcome one and at the right moment; and so Chanọmi was appointed to be the Itsekiri Governor. Three years afterwards, the good Prince Yọnwuręn died on the morning of St. Patrick's Day, March 17th, 1871. The day of the demise of Prince Yọnwuręn was a special day at Ugbuwanguę, his homestead, and to all the surviving members of the Royal Family; and particularly so to his prosperous son, the late Chief Richard Ogbe, whose mother, Ekpeku, returned that self-same morning after two months' absence in Benin City for trial by ordeal (*Iyin*), she having been accused of practising witchcraft. She passed her examination, being declared innocent by ordeal (*Iyin fenren win*). Chief Ogbe's lot on that day was grief commingled with mirth.

Not very long after the Chanọmi-Olomu War, there

was another war between Diare and Olomu, in which the latter also won triumphantly.

There was a war between the Itsekiri and the Gbangolọ and Okpokunu Ijọs (Ijaws). "The Itsekiris entered this war to help the Ijaws of the Town of Kiagbodo with which there existed an obligatory alliance and, the Pere or Ovie (King) of Kiagbodo having lived under the Olu's suzerainty, it was agreed that whenever the town of Kiagbodo is in danger, the Olu must come to her aid, in any case, to save her from fatal attacks of other Ijaws or Itsokos (Igabo) Sobos. This tribe of Sobos are called by the Itsekiris 'Atse-Ujo-tsusobo' (Ijaw-Sobo bred)." All sections of the Itsekiri country participated in this war. The journey from Warri to Gbangolọ and Okpokunu, or, rather, to the scene of action on the Niger River, by canoe, is about three days yet the Itsekiri paddled all the way through, and fought and conquered the Ijaws. Though the Itsekiris suffered heavy casualties, they returned home victorious, carrying much booty and a great number of captives. The Gbangolọs would have stood invincible, had not the elders discouraged the young men, after taking up and inspecting some of the lead balls which were fired into their town from the canon of the Itsekiri people, and which destroyed houses and property, they saying that it was death in itself, and sudden death, too, to stand and face such destructive lead-balls.

About the year 1882, a dispute arose between the Sobos of Ewurughele and Ofori. As it was developing into a tribal fight, and in order to prevent Eriomala (Nana) from extending his system of produce trade monopoly to the Warri area, the Otolus arranged for a deputation to proceed to Mọgba, to effect peace between the two Sobo towns. This deputation was

composed of the following members of the Royal family, delegated by Chanomi (Governor): Fręęęę, Otuęęę, Anugu, Etchie, and Dore. Anugu, who was son of Governor Chanomi, had a large State Umbrella placed over the mat sun-deck of his canoe.

Erięmala arrived two days after the Otolus' arrival at Męęba, and when he saw such an umbrella, with rich silk frills, over Anugu Chanomi's canoe, he took serious objection, and said only Fręęęę and any other Prince of Olu Akęębuwa could and ought to have a State Umbrella on such an occasion as that; and, in a rage, he turned to Anugu, and said, "I order you to take the umbrella down." An altercation ensued, and then there was a short discussion of the great Nana's objection, by the Otolus. The umbrella was eventually taken down to avoid friction.

The next day the people of the two Sobo towns were got together and a compromise was made between them, which, on its acceptance, the Itsekiris sealed by giving them a lot of presents, consisting of drinkables, tobacco, common cloths, and what not. They also advised the Sobos to live friendly and peaceably together, and then departed, and returned to their respective homes.

Erięmala, who had by this time become very prosperous and mighty, now sought occasion to overthrow Chanomi, and become the supreme ruler of the Itsekiris. In fact, he had closed all the avenues of trade in the Ethiope River, and prevented all other Itsekiri traders from going to Okpara, Kokori, and Abraka for produce, or any other trading, and actually monopolised the trade in that region. And there was no Sobo of any importance who could resent his action. The Sobo warrior, Ogieęba, of Amukęę, had once set a blockade over the river, but he had had

war waged against him by Olomu, the father of Eriomala, and had been badly defeated after a changing fight of a few days' duration that was disastrous to both combatants. From that time Olomu placed Sibogi, his senior Oloruko and comrade-in-arms, in charge of Amukpe, who in turn delegated his duties there to one of his own slaves named Osagie (Sagay).

Eriomala had a desire to extend his scheme of trade monopoly to Warri, and with that object in view, he brushed the land of Oteghale about two miles square, where he wished to establish his kingdom; but this ideal was never fully realised, as the Brohimi Expedition of 1894 doomed the progress of that great potentate.

The murder of Atunu Numa, who was the junior brother of Chief Dore Numa, caused the Itsekiris to wage war against the Sobos of Ogbe Sobo. The circumstances which led to this trouble were these. During the Otuekinç Juju Play at Orugbo, Atunu came up the river to Warri, to witness this great occasion at Urogbo. As he was passing by Ogbe Sobo, it happened that they were doing sacrifice to their war medicine, and would not let any canoe pass down or up the river the whole of that day. Atunu was not aware of this and continued on his way. When his canoe was passing by, the men on the shore shouted for him to return, or he would be killed; and then, as he paid no heed to their warning, some of them, in their indignation, rushed into a canoe and followed after him, to capture him. They were properly armed, in their own way, but Atunu had his rifle loaded and placed near him, and as they approached he warned them not to come alongside his canoe. They, however, full of cursing, cared not for what he said, and so he then raised up his rifle and fired at them,

hitting two men, who, both dying, fell into the water. In spite of that, the rest of them came alongside him, and, his boys deserting him, he was seized and taken to Ogbe Sobo and chained ; and while he was in chains, one of the relatives of the two men shot dead by him, fell on him with a hatchet and slew him.

When the news of his murder was published at Warri and around, it caused a great sensation ; and before the Otolus could get ready to go and inform Numa and his family at Batęř, the three brothers, Ofoni, Okorogheye, and Pessu, preceded them, by immediately dispatching a canoe, in which Okorogheye himself went, and narrated the story to Numa. This news caused no less a sensation at Batęř than it had done at Warri.

Preparation for war against Ogbe Sobo was at once commenced : it took, however, nearly three months to mature.

At the time when the news reached Batęř, there were about a dozen or more Sobos of Ogbe Sobo there, who had come to trade at Benin River, and were the guests of Etchie. These were told to leave Batęř at once, and they did so ; but as soon as they were on the main river of Olaguę, they were seized and destroyed.

The town of Ogbe Sobo was strongly prepared for the war ere the Itsekiris arrived, but, unfortunately for them, there was a traitor among them, in the person of one, Oyęn, who was their kith and kin. This man directed a company of the Itsekiri forces to take a bush path which the town people never had reason to suspect any stranger could know ; and so the success of the Itsekiri in this war, which was waged within the duration of two to three days, was achieved by a trick. The town was entered and burnt,

and spoils of war and captives were carried away by the victors.

On the 26th day of August, 1884, a Treaty was concluded between the British Consul, Hewett, and the Itsekiri Chiefs, at Forcados, on board the steamship *Dodo*. The following notable Itsekiris were present: Governor Chanomi, and Chiefs Nana Olomu, Kpereg-beyi, Numa, Dore, Boborokun, and Akębọ, all of Benin River.

On the 27th August, the s.s. *Dodo* proceeded to Big Warri, with all the above-named on board; and on arrival there, Dore and Johnson Nana were sent to Ugbuwanguę, to fetch the Chiefs Ogbe, Okoromadu, and Nesiama. Messages were also sent to the other members of the Itsekiri Royal Family at Uşę, Ubęji, Ife and Ugbori, to come to Big Warri the next morning.

At about noon on the 28th, a meeting was held in the Palace grounds, when the Treaty was read and interpreted to all. They all agreed to its terms, and it was formally ratified. At this juncture presents in the form of barrels of rum, tobacco, and common cloths were made to the people by Consul Hewett; and then the meeting dispersed.

The next morning, the s.s. *Dodo* sailed from the shores of Big Warri, with the Benin River party on board, for Burutu, where, on arrival, all the Ijọs were invited, and presents, in kind, were given to them by the Consul, through Governor Chanomi.

The ship then proceeded to Benin River, but halted at Okęnręnghigho, where all the Ijọs of Bakokodię, Olueginmeji, Oपुरaja, and Okęnręnghigho itself, were called together. They came alongside, and presents, in kind, were made to them, just as had been done to the people of Burutu.

The ship then proceeded to Benin River, where, on arrival, the Itsekiri Chiefs disembarked on the 1st of September, 1884.

From that time onward, the Itsekiri Kingdom became part and parcel of the British Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, and a Consulate was established at Benin River in charge of a Vice-Consul, the Consul himself paying occasional visits from old Calabari.

In the year 1887, the Protectorate over the Niger districts was formed by virtue of Treaties made between the nations of the Protectorate and Her late Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria. These Districts comprised the territories on the coast-lines between Lagos and the eastern bank of the Rio del Rey and those in the basin of the Niger and its affluents. Further, by Order in Council, in 1889, Her Majesty was empowered to exercise Consular jurisdiction in the Protectorates.

The general purport of the Treaties concluded with the Natives was to the effect that, while Her Majesty undertook to extend her gracious favour and protection to the natives, full and exclusive jurisdiction, civil and criminal, over British subjects (those persons enjoying such protection being included) and their property, was to be exercised by Consular officers; that slavery was to be abolished and every kind of arbitrary aggression or coercion restrained; and that there was to be mutual co-operation between Her Majesty's Representatives and the Natives in all matters relating to the administration of Justice, or in any other matter pertaining to peace, order, or good government and the general progress of civilisation.

In the year 1900, the Consular jurisdiction ceased, and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was founded under a High Commissioner, the late Sir Ralph Moor.

Nana Olomu, who was the great and keen rival of Governor Chanḡmi within the revolutionary period, was not sparing in his endeavours to overthrow Chanḡmi and become the Itsekiri Governor. Reports of misrule, oppression, and coercion by Governor Chanḡmi were infrequently made to the British Consul, and as the result of them, the Governor's Staff was taken from Chanḡmi by the British Consul. About six months later, the Consul returned to Benin River with the Governor's Staff, and summoned a meeting of the Itsekiri Chiefs; and at that meeting he informed them that the Staff was now brought back, and that it was for them to decide who should now hold it. All the Chiefs retired for a private discussion. When they returned, Chanḡmi was asked to take it again, but he refused. It was then proffered to Nana Olomu, whereupon Dudu said, "Eriḡmala, you can hold the Staff. If it wanted to eat cow, goat, sheep, cock, or fish, you have everyone with you to slaughter for it. It is only the Olu Itsekiri who has the prerogative to offer human sacrifice, and that only you cannot do." Nana then accepted the offer, and the Staff was handed to him by the Consul, and he was there and then formally declared to be the Itsekiri Governor in lieu of Chanḡmi.

Shortly after this, Governor Nana sent for all the descendants of Olu Akḡngbuwa at Warri to come to him at Benin River to receive their own shares of the comey paid by the European firms trading at Benin River. In answer to this call, Prince Ikḡnrḡn, Egbḡgbe, Ogbe, Omamuminḡghḡ, Etie, Okotie, and Ebiuwa Itḡn proceeded to Benin River. When they arrived Governor Nana invited Chanḡmi, Numa, Frḡḡḡḡḡ, Kperḡgbeyi, Etchie, and the Jakpa people to a general meeting, to be held at the African Association's Beach.

In declaring the meeting open, Nana said, " I called this meeting in the interests of the Princes and Princesses of the Olu Akęngbuwa, of whom my late father Olomu was a nephew. I hold the Governor's Staff on account of and for the children of Olu Akęngbuwa. The Eghorolobites were generally not gifted in riches, but the blessings which were bestowed upon my father by the Olu Akęngbuwa made him rich. Now, you Royal Children (Otolus) of the Olu Akęngbuwa, if anybody cheated or deprived you of your lawful property, please tell me, and I will cause its restoration. Chanomi and Numa are sons of rich men's sisters, but are not rich men themselves. If any of you have complaints, they had better be lodged with me here and now."

Egbęgbe, son of Prince Ejo, rose up and said, " My late father was a Prince of the Olu Akęngbuwa and he was a very wealthy man ; but when he died Chanomi and Numa took all his belongings and squandered them."

Omamuminoghọ, son of Prince Teteye, also rose up and said, " My late father was a Prince of Olu Akęngbuwa, and he was a rich man, but I have been deprived of all his property since his death."

At this juncture Numa rose up and said to his cousin-german, Chanomi, " You had better get up and let us go, or else you will be insulted, and be impertinently treated at this meeting." This met a ready answer in the form of interference by Ololo, who said, " I am equal in rank, according to birth, with Numa, because we are all brothers of rich men, but are not rich men ourselves."

The meeting then dispersed in disorder and confusion.

All the guests from Warri were lodged at Ebrohimi by Nana, who was propitiatorily lavish in hospitality

to them during their short stay with him. In due course, the comey was collected by Governor Nana, and equitably distributed to the quarters which were entitled to share it.

As Nana had become censorious and scurrilous towards Chanq̄mi and Numa, long before Chanq̄mi's dismissal from the Governorship, and his subsequent death, the House of Emayē determined to set up Dore to compete with him. Dore was but young then, but he was prominent in social circles, as well as promising and progressive in political affairs. To achieve this purpose the House of Emayē set itself the task of enriching Dore and placing him at the head of their affairs, so as to make him appear in the eyes of the people their compeer in any step or march of life. Dore, being a wise and clever young man, knew that to oppose the great Nana openly would spell his own speedy downfall, and so he refrained from confronting him publicly, and chose, instead, the sly and clever method of fanning the reports brought to the British Consul by offended parties, through him as the peoples' interpreter, concerning Governor Nana's despotism. And he was strongly aided by his cousin, Harrison Dudu, a man of no mean order in those days, who, also, had conceived rancour against Governor Nana, for the severe punishment meted out to him in the matter of the European trader whom he conducted to Uguōton to trade.

After many years of secret carping, in the year 1894 Governor Nana (Dedekum̄, Opubeni), as God willed it, fell from his lofty estate by being insolent and discourteous to the British Consul, Hensley, for, by way of retribution, the Consul took the Governor's Staff from him, cut it in twain, and throwing the tail-end

of it into the water, took the other half of it with him aboard the man-of-war, and sailed off. This was the end of Itsekiri Governorship.

Early in August, 1894, a war was launched on Nana by the British Government (Brohimi Expedition, 1894), and by the middle of October, 1894, the town of Brohimi was destroyed. Nana fled, but was pursued, and captured in his hiding-place—somewhere about at Ekotogbo. He was then taken to Lagos, and deported to Accra, where he was in exile for a period of twelve years, until, in the year 1906, he was repatriated by the grace and permission of His late Britannic Majesty King Edward VII. On his arrival in this country, he built the town of Koko, which his sons called "New America," whereas he himself called it "Marken."

His spoils, comprising some tens of thousands of slaves, and immeasurable quantities of wealth, were carried away as booty of war by the victors, the slaves being set free, and the bulk of his wealth sold to his fellow countrymen by public auction. Besides the Ologbotsęřę-Uwanguę family, the only people who did not meddle with Nana's wealth were the members of the Olu Akęngbuwa Royal Family (Otolus). Although the descendants of Olu Akęngbuwa contributed men and material for the prosecution of the war against him and they did so in obedience to the demand of the British Government ; but the blood relationship between them and the family of Asęruku forbade them from enjoying the fruits of victory of the Brohimi Expedition. Had they done so, they would have been guilty of violation of the principle laid down by their ancestors, for what more visible or lasting emblem of consanguinity could there be than that, at the



given to understand that the revenue of the Courts was theirs equally as was the Native Court itself, and that such revenue might be devoted to development and progressive causes in the matter of good administration of their country; and also that they were entitled to sitting fees in addition to payments to them of Subsidies in lieu of the *Comey*, which latter had then been replaced by Subsidies, by the Government, who had commenced to tax the trading factories with the payment of Import and Export Duties.

In the year 1898, or a little earlier, Mr. Farquah, on behalf of Messrs. Alexander Miller Brothers, Limited, of Liverpool, obtained a piece of land from the Itsekiri Chiefs at the entrance of Okere Creek, whereon he built a trading factory. Soon after this, Mr. Bleasby, on behalf of The African Association, Limited, was also given a portion of land by the Itsekiri Chiefs for trading purposes. They were not charged, nor was there any stipulation made as to annual rents; but there was an arrangement to the effect that, on the occasion of every yearly Festival in commemoration of the *Olus*, these firms were to supply presents in drinkables and provisions, to a reasonable extent, in consideration for the lands made over to them.

In the year 1900, the Government of Nigeria applied for, and, by the year 1901, were granted, a large piece of land known as "New Warri," on a yearly rental basis for the term of ninety-nine (99) years, for the purpose of erecting residential quarters, barracks, and offices. The deed of this grant was signed by Chiefs Dore and Ogbe for and on behalf of themselves and the Itsekiri people. Later, in the year 1908, an extension was required, and so Ogbe Ijoh land

was annexed under a separate deed, the Ijoh inhabitants there being ejected by the Itsekiris, who were the landlords by virtue of the Olu-Itsekiri. Then, in the year 1911, a still further extension was necessary, and Alder's Town was annexed, this grant also being made under a separate deed, and on the same terms of yearly rental basis. Within this period (1900-1911), portions of Sapele land were also conveyed to the Government and the two pioneer trading houses already mentioned by the Itsekiris, the Government paying for this Sapele land the sum of £100 annually as rent to the grantors.

In the year 1900, the Chiefs were asked by Sir Ralph Moor, the High Commissioner, to bring each a son for education at the Ogungunmanga Government School, Bonny. Their reply would have been exactly in accord with the conversation between Olomu and Bishop Samuel Adjai Crowther in the year 1882, but for fear that refusal might entail deportation, they having Nana's case still green in their memory; and so they agreed, and the following are the names of the children sent: Edun Fręęęę, Jemitualę Dudu, Abigho Awala, Omejalile Gbekọba (Chief Dore's nephew), Atikpokpo Egbęębe, Awanomere Okorofianyębe, Okorięę Ogbe, Onukewu Etie, Ariolu-kuņęęyin Awani, Omirin Eyubę, and Sadagbaga Itsalukpęn.

Three years later a Government School was opened at Warri under the Headmastership of Mr. J. B. Bar-Rolle; and, early in the year 1904, a Government Intermediate School was opened at Sapele, on the Sapele-Benin Road, under the Headmastership of Mr. E. O. Oyisilę, with the following pupils as boarders: Edun Fręęęę, Jemitualę Dudu, Abigho Awala,

Onukewu Etie, Awanomere Okorofianyegbe, Omirin Eyubę, Sadagbaga Itsalukpęn, Omejalile Gbekoba, Jofotan Oporoku, Kubęyinję Ogbugbu, Męņę Pira, William Moore, Ariję Dudu, Eminokan Golley, Akudiowa Tonwe, Malory Kay, and Atimomọ Uyawiri. Most grateful mention must here be made of Mr. Ikuke Etetoma of Usele, whose indefatigable efforts at training the boys, most of whom were green, in the art of gymnastics, besides making himself their beloved brother and comrade in and out of the schoolroom. Mr. Etetoma was the Assistant Master then, and he was, and is still, a picture of a real Itsekiri of the gentry class.

For the information of those who might wish to know what it is, I quote *in extenso*, hereunder, the Crowther-Olomu conversation referred to by me, from pages 342 to 343 of *The Black Bishop*, with humble apologies to its author.

“ On one occasion the Bishop, accompanied by his son, the present Archdeacon, visited a powerful Chief named Alumi, who lived in a town seven miles up the river from Benin. The object of the journey was to secure some premises for a mission station, which building had been hitherto used for trading purposes. They had to paddle the native canoe through the narrow and dangerous creek in a heavy storm of rain and flashes of lightning, the thunder crashing above and echoing in the dark forest close by. Eventually, however, they reached the great man’s hut, and as he boasted the luxury of a table they were entertained with supper of ‘ palm oil chop,’ and after this repast they squatted on the ground and commenced the palaver. The quick eye of the Bishop noticed how fitful the light was, now dull almost to darkness, then

blazing up quite brightly. This he discovered was because the lamp was of a most primitive character; simply broken bits of calabashes used for years in carrying oil, and therefore well saturated therewith, cut into small pieces, and stuck on an arrangement resembling a saucepan lid. Several naked boys were told off to keep this illumination in good order, deeping the bit in fresh oil to awaken the light when it drooped. Sometimes these lads would forget their duty, and an elder chief would shout sharply, 'Alupa!' meaning lamp, with sundry dashes at the forgetful youngsters to administer chastisement.

"After resting awhile and talking about everything else, according to African custom, the Bishop broached the subject of the premises, and then the Chief called his visitors into an inner court, with one of his sons, who talked English pretty well. The Bishop reminded his host of certain promises he had made for a mission and school where the children might be taught the white man's book. At the suggestion of books the chief showed a spirit of reluctance, saying, 'Book palaver will not do for Sekeri people.'"—(this is the proper name of the the people inhabiting Benin River; Benin proper is some days' journey inland)—" 'that they will not wish to get their hands dirty, will get lazy, and will not work after knowing book.'

"The other younger son sitting close by, added that their custom of kneeling before a father or elder will be done away with when book is taught, and shaking of hands will be substituted, while such an impertinent act from a younger to an elder is criminal in Sekeri, and is accompanied by death.

"The Bishop listened patiently to this opposition to education, and then quietly took up their objections

one by one. He wanted to know why Sekeri people are supposed to be different from other folks in the world, as, for instance, Lagos, Niger, Brass, New Calabar and Bonny people ; for if the teaching of God's Word and the ' knowledge of book ' were good things for them, why not the same for those at Benin River ? Trade, he observed, seemed in their opinion to be good for them, as for other nations and tribes. Then as to the charge of their being lazy, the opposite is proved to be true ; book knowledge makes men more active—as for instance, the Bishop asked Chief Alumi who are those who manufacture cloths, silks, which are brought up these rivers for sale ? Are they not made by the book people ? Who are those who plant wheat and corn for bread, make biscuits, kill bullocks which are salted, and the various eatables brought here and to other rivers in great quantities, and sold to them ? Who are the workers of all these, but people of book knowledge ?—and are these things signs of lazy people ? Further, he went on to say, that some of the richest people in England are farmers who had been toiling with sleeves rolled up and with dirty hands working and turning up the ground. Then by a happy thought, the Bishop suggested the English engineers in steamers, and asked the Chief which Sekeri man is more dirty than, and as hard a workman as, an engineer from the engine-room, with black, oily hands, and oftentimes face ; and can ignorant man ' make ship move ' ?

“ Then turning again to the younger son, about shaking hands, the Bishop told him that the Bible taught the young obedience to elders, more than Sekeri people ever knew, and that the Bible will not interfere with such customs as those ; that they will

find in course of time that those who know what is in the Bible are sincere in their obedience inwardly, and not outwardly, through fearing death.

“The Chief could not gainsay this reasoning, but found another excuse, explaining that ‘he did not exactly mean to say that Sekeri people were incapable of learning, but that those who had been sent to know book die away, and are never seen again.’ To support this extraordinary statement, he gave instances of boys going to Liverpool and Portugal, who never came back. ‘So,’ he said, ‘if a mission be established to teach all Sekeri people, their time on earth will be limited, especially old men such as he is; that he had better wait after this generation of old men has passed, then the young people can do what they like.’

“In spite of all the Bishop could say, it was evident that a superstitious fear of death was at the bottom of the Chief’s objection. He stood firm, in spite of the fact that the visitors stayed far into the night, and afterwards in the darkness rowed back down the creek and river unsuccessful.

“With a parting ‘good night,’ which ought rightly to be ‘good morning,’ we turned into bed, but not before asking the God of Missions to open in His good time the dark eyes of the heathen, to bless and strengthen our weak effort of that night to the extension and glory of the Redeemer’s Name.”

The Bishop, in writing to his “brethren and fellow-labourers” from the Mission House, Bonny, on 26th February, 1883, after speaking of the good way the Lord had brought him hitherto, tells what has been specially his prayer and heart’s desire in his working on the Niger.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CHIEF DORE NUMA

THE Itsekiri History would be incomplete without a special chapter devoted to the activities of this august personage. Paternally, he was a descendant of Olu Erejuwa, being son of Numa, who was begotten by Uwala, a Princess of Olu Erejuwa. Maternally, he was a descendant of Ologbotsere, being son of Ejuononowo, who was begotten by Ogię, son of Ologbotsere. He was brought up and trained by Princess Iye, who was his aunt.

In his youthful days, he was one of the élite of society, and was the contemporary of dandy young men like Ugbona of Usele, Okotie Ebo of Bateře, and Tonwe Ogiri of Dale-Okęta, Jakpa.

He became a man of renown four years before the Brohimi Expedition of 1894, as he made his mark with the British Government in the year 1890, at the time when Sir MacDonald was the High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, and Mr. (now Sir) Henry Gallway was the Vice-Consul. A meeting of all the Benin River Chiefs was summoned by Mr. Gallway at the Consulate, and then a request was made for a canoe and men to convey him (Mr. Gallway) to Lagos through the creeks. At this meeting Numa and other Itsekiri dignitaries, including the late Chief Nana Olomu, were present ; but they all refused to supply a canoe, with men, giving as their reason that their men (slaves) would run away when they

got to Lagos. When, however, the matter was referred to Dore, he there and then willingly volunteered to supply a canoe, with men, in spite of such a risk; and he accordingly did so, supplying a large canoe, well furnished, and with twenty-nine men, which took the Vice-Consul, Mr. Gallway, to Lagos. In recognition of, and as a guerdon for, this yeoman service, he was created the first Political Agent for the Benin River area.

He was instrumental in the success achieved by the British Government in the Brohimi War of 1894.—As has already been shown, he had known of the intrigues of Chief Nana Olomu, and the latter had been so angered with him because of his so strongly supporting the British authorities against him in all things, that he had sent to destroy his (Dore's) trading canoes and men up the Ethiope River (Obi Abraka).—From that time on he was a member of all Expeditions and Patrols in which the British happened to be engaged in this country, and he rendered valuable services, in the estimation of the Government.

The following are some of the occasions on which he accompanied the Political Officers: the Benin City Expedition, the Kwale Patrol (on account of the murder of Reginald William Bird, Esquire, District Commissioner, 1906), the Abbi Rising, 1910, and the Ijaw Patrol twice (one on account of the murder of Henry P. James, Esquire, District Commissioner, Forcados, by the town of Adagbabiri or Kuno, and one other); and he was awarded medals for all, except the Owe Patrol, in respect of which no medal was issued.

His yearly earnings were increased by the Government in consideration of these services, till in the year 1916, when Harold Mordey Douglass, Esquire, then

Resident, Warri Province, caused the withdrawal from him of his £100 annual allowance for travelling expenses; and it was not till the year 1920, when he petitioned His Excellency Sir Hugh Charles Clifford, K.C.M.G., etc., Governor and Commander-in-Chief of United Nigeria, on the occasion of that great statesman's visit to Warri, that the grant of that allowance was resuscitated.

He was honorary interpreter between the Government and the Itsekiri people prior to the year 1894; and after that, he was created Warranted Chief and made the Political Agent, when the late Herbert C. Clarke was appointed salaried interpreter in his stead.

At the time when he was created to be the Political Agent over the regions from Benin River right up to Abraka, Chief George Eyubę, son of Tsemudiara of Obodo, was also created the Political Agent for the Warri region; and when, in May, 1901, Chief George Eyubę accidentally shot himself dead with his revolver, in the course of the Odokpọ Patrol, Dore pushed his way to Warri, and became head of affairs for all Itsekiri. He attained greatness all round by the able support ever accorded him—mainly by Chief Fręęęę and other important men and women of the Princes Omateye and Ejo House.

A woeful leaf in the history of his life was turned in the year 1921, when the descendants of Omateye, Ejo, and Ejimogho, were constrained to find fault against him, and the upshot was the *cause célèbre*—Chief Denędo, William Moore, and Omasantsitse *versus* Chief Dore Numa. A sequence to this case was the treatment he received at the hands of the Itsekiri people during the introduction of the Native Revenue Ordinance, otherwise called Direct Taxation

or Poll Tax, in the year 1927. By reason of his tacit consent and acceptance of the scheme, without consulting the people in the first instance, he was accused of unfaithfulness, and of being a traitor to his country ; and all possible marks and acts of respect were withdrawn from him, and the Itsekiri ceased to repose any confidence in him. The Government did its best to maintain him on the pinnacle of power over the Itsekiri ; but all availed nothing, and to-day the slogan against him is, " Fie upon thee ! Fie upon thee ! " He might not have been a victim of this curse, if he had not, prior to the payment of tribute tax in Warri Province, been making sweeping statements to the effect that he had called for the imposition of the tax solely to punish those descendants of Olu Akęngbuwa who took action against him and deprived him of the full enjoyment of annual rents (some £360), which in time past he had been receiving yearly on behalf of the Olu and the Itsekiri people, but had squandered *ad lib*, without anybody raising a dissentient voice. To the surprise of everybody, when the day of payment came, thanks to British justice and fair play, he was the first man to pay.

He is said to be the worst usurper, throughout the Itsekiri history, of the Olu's rights and properties. He also might correctly be said to be the worst profaner of the Olu's honourable name and of the sanctity of his status, for he, by word of mouth and implication, declared himself to be the Olu Itsekiri. He also ordered out from England, and used on important occasions, flags with the inscription, " Honourable Paramount Chief Dore Numa, the Olu of Itsekiri, Sobos, and Ijaws, Warri." Further, he proclaimed himself Royal Priest, and built a sacred hall at his

little village of Odogęņ, in which he has done annual sacrifice by the slaughtering of bullocks to the Souls of departed Olu. According to Itsekiri law and custom, Royal Priesthood is specifically the prerogative of the Olu or Olotu only, and of none other, no matter how great and powerful that other may be; and the deed of making or offering sacrifice to the Souls of departed Olu, outside the Palace and the Itsekiri Capital, which is Big Warri (Alęode Itsekiri), is punishable by death. The only one similar instance preceding this of Dore's was that of Prince Otsęlogun, and he was hanged.

Naturally, no one could be said to be the Olu's representative, save the Olotu; but in modern days a person at the head of the country's affairs may be so termed for legal convenience. In the days when Chief Fręęęņ and several other men (important descendants of Olu Akęngbuwa) were alive, Chief Dore did not dare to advance such an audacious claim, although he was then what he is now, in the affairs of the Itsekiri nation; and so one might be correct in saying, that it was because of the British Government's influence that he wielded, and the pusillanimity of the Itsekiris of this generation, that he thought it was safe to display such audacity, though he knew fully well that it was a violation of our laws and customs. What followed as a natural sequence was the withdrawal of all honour and respect hitherto accorded him by the majority of the Itsekiri people; and the indelible mark which is thus being made on the chart of his life's career is deplorable and gloomy, and unless things take a turn for the better ere he passes on, his end will be pitiable and undignified.

When he was appointed Political Agent at Benin

River, that position did not make him become a participant in the matter of annual Festivals in commemoration of the Olu at Big Warri, nor did it give him the attribute of Royal Priesthood. It was not until some years after the death of Olotu Eri, when all the surviving Princesses of the Olu Akęngbuwa felt tired of subscribing monies to provide food for the Agbassa Sobos, for cutting grass yearly at Big Warri, besides spending heavy sums of money in connection with the annual Royal Festival, that, not being so rich as they had been, they sent to enquire of a native doctor, what to do to get themselves released of this burden. The result of that consultation was, that they must offer oblation to their Royal Father, imploring him to choose a fitting son who would come to undertake the whole responsibility, and so remove the yoke off their neck. They did according to the doctor's divination, and shortly afterwards a report came to the effect that Chief Fręęneę, the remaining senior son of Prince Omateye, was seriously sick at Batęreę. He discovered during his illness that his grandfather, the late Olu Akęngbuwa, had need of him to come to Warri and shoulder the responsibility attendant upon the yearly Royal Festival. He agreed, and promised action as soon as he was convalescent. His recovery was accelerated, and he then lost no time in coming to Warri and fulfilling his promise. He called a meeting of the descendants of Olu Akęngbuwa, and of all important families at Warri, and formally installed Prince Atseęo as the Olotu, after consultation of the oracle and getting advice from Benin City, as was customary in such a case.

It was Chief Fręęneę who roofed the present forlorn Palace at Big Warri with corrugated iron sheets,

purchased with the prize-money paid by the Asagba people as indemnity for some Itsekiri royal robes stolen by them. It was at this time that Chief Dore, who was a nephew of Chief Frẹgẹnẹ, commenced to accompany his uncle from Batẹrẹ to Big Warri, twice yearly, for the purpose of the Royal Festival, the purchase of all necessaries for which was chargeable to yearly rents collected from the Government, presents by the European trading houses, and Burial Fees account. But then, a few years after Chief Frẹgẹnẹ's death, and at the time when Chief Okorofianyegbe was the Olotu, Chief Dore, having removed permanently from Batẹrẹ to Warri, snatched the position of heading the Royal Festival, and, soon disregarding Chief Okorofianyegbe, the Olotu, he commenced to do the Royal Festival at his newly-built town of Odogẹnẹ, against the law and custom of the land, and in the midst of strictures levelled at him by the surviving weak descendants of the Olu Akẹngbuwa, who were sometimes stigmatised by him, in their own presence as "big fools."

Before his death, on the 16th day of January, 1921, Chief Okorofianyegbe, the Olotu, petitioned the Government on this and other matters relating to the disgraceful state of the Olus' Palace and Capital several times, but was hopelessly disappointed, as deaf ears were turned to his supplications—for reasons too obvious to require reiteration.

Chief Dore was nominated and appointed to be an unofficial Member for Warri Province, of the Nigerian Council, by the Government, through the recommendation of Mr. (now Sir) Frederick Seton James, in the year 1913. He had attended three sessions of that honourable institution, when it was found that his

presence there was useless ; and his connection with it ended many years before the dissolution of the Nigerian Council, and the inauguration of the present Legislative Council of Nigeria, by Sir Hugh Charles Clifford, K.C.M.G., etc., Governor and Commander-in-Chief of United Nigeria, in the year 1923.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE LAWSUITS

THERE were three important litigations worthy of historical record, from the year 1920 to 1929. The first two were between the Itsekiris themselves, and the third was between the Sobos of Agbassa and the Itsekiris. All three arose over the question of title to land. I will deal with them serially, according to date, in my commentary.

The first is entitled, "Chief Dore *versus* Chief Olowẹ and others of Ogidigbẹ"; the second, "Chief Denẹdo, William Moore, and Omasantsitse *versus* Chief Dore Numa"; and the third, "Ogegede *versus* Chief Dore Numa."

#### I. CHIEF DORE *versus* CHIEF OLOWE AND OTHERS OF OGIDIGBE.

This case arose from a dispute between the Ogidigbẹ people and Edede a son of Prince Iyọnwurẹn, son<sup>1</sup> of Olu Akẹngbuwa, of blessed memory, on account of title to the land of Edede Town and fishing rights on the Yokri sea bank in the Forcados District, in the Province of Warri. An action was brought against Edede by Chief Oluẹ and the people of Ogidigbẹ, in the Provincial Court at Forcados; but on permission by the Resident, at Warri, the issue was transferred to the Warri Native Court of Appeal, of which Chief Dore is the President, for determination.

In due course, the case was heard, and Chief Dore

<sup>1</sup> No. 10 in Chap. X.

gave judgment in favour of the Defendant, Edede, declaring that all Itsekiri lands belonged to the Olu-Itsekiri, and in as much as Edede was a grandson of the Olu Akęngbuwa, he had the right to live in and pursue any means of livelihood for himself and his dependants on the land in question. This decision irritated the Ogidigbęs so much that they went to the late Mr. Herbert C. Clarke of Ekurede, then Honorary Assistant Superintendent of Police, and Chief Inspector of Police, Warri, and begged his assistance in the case they had in contemplation, announcing that the Gborodo and Ogidigbę lands belonged to their immortalised ancestor named Olaja-Ori, and that they were not subject to the Olu Itsekiri. After much agitation, the Resident, then Frank Hives, Esquire—he is now a pensioner in England—advised Chief Dore to proceed to Forcados and get Chief Oluę and his followers to sign a declaration before the District Officer there, acknowledging the Olu's overlordship, and also that the Olu was the owner of Gborodo and Ogidigbę lands. Chief Dore was indisposed to go, but Chief Skin, *alias* Atsibutsere, the President of Warri Native Court, and the late Madame Enętsemi Ogbe, volunteered, and went down to Forcados for this purpose.

Chief Oluę and his people, when called before the District Officer, Forcados, still maintaining their vague claim, refused to sign such declaration; thereupon Chief Skin, on behalf of the Olu, took action against Chief Oluę and others of Ogidigbę, in the Provincial Court, claiming the sum of £2,000 in respect of rents due by the Defendants for Ogidigbę land. This case was formally transferred to the Supreme Court, on application by the Defendants' Counsel,

Mr. Sigismund L. H. Bucknor, B.L. ; and before it came on for hearing in the Divisional Court, at Warri, Chief Dore's name was substituted as Plaintiff, instead of Chief Skin's, and the claim was also amended to that of " the declaration of title." This substitution was not the outcome of the presumption that Chief Dore was the Olu, but because in the legal sense, he was the Olu's representative.

This case, from first to last, cost the Plaintiffs, who contributed the sum of £800 (eight hundred pounds sterling) against its prosecution, a little over £400, the Survey alone, which was undertaken by the Government, costing £70. The balance, including the sum of £105, being costs in the cause awarded Plaintiffs at the final end of the suit, was redistributed among the subscribers ; whereas the Defendants spent some £1,400 odd.

After the holding of three Assize Courts at Warri, the suit was, in all details, matured for hearing, and in the fourth Assize Court, holden at Warri in the month of November, 1921, it was heard by Mr. Justice Allen Frederick Clarence Webber, Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, whose judgment was based on the terms of a settlement arrived at by Counsel, and signed by them on behalf of the parties. The said terms of settlement and the judgment arising therefrom are reproduced herein :

#### TERMS OF SETTLEMENT.

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria at Warri.

*Between Chief Dore, Plaintiff, versus Chief Olue and others, Defendants.*

The Plaintiff in this action, defines his claim as follows:

1. He is Olu or King of Warri and the Head of the Olu or Royal Family and the Defendants are subject to his jurisdiction.
2. The Plaintiff admits that his position is restricted and that his actions are subject to review in the Supreme Court as the Keeper of the Royal Conscience and Nigerian Court of equity.
3. In particular as regards land in the jurisdiction of the Olu Itsekiri the land in question in this Suit such Plaintiff defines himself to-day to be the following :
  - (a) He cannot eject any Jekri people from the land they occupy for habitation, cultivation, or otherwise.
  - (b) Where strangers require land as Tenants or otherwise they cannot have same without the approval of the Plaintiff, which cannot reasonably be refused and only the Plaintiff or someone authorised by him can receive rents or tribute for any land.
  - (c) Where rent is received by the Plaintiff from such strangers it should be shared equitably with any people who have been deprived of their occupation in whole or in part by reason of the grant to strangers.
  - (d) Plaintiff agrees that neither he nor the Defendant can sell outright any land whatever within the jurisdiction.

- (e) Subject to the restrictions and limitations herein before stated the Defendants are the owners of the land in dispute.

Dated at Warri this      day of November, 1921.

(Signed) G. W. PAUL,  
*Council for the Plaintiff.*

Declaration by the Court (Signed) S. L. H. BUCKNOR,  
as above accordingly      *Counsel for the Defendant.*  
agreed to by the De-  
fendant.

#### JUDGMENT.

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria.  
Divisional Court at Warri.

*Saturday, the 26th day of November, 1921.*

Before His Honour Mr. Justice A. F. Webber, Judge.

Chief Dore  
*versus*  
Chief Oluḡ.

In this case Judgment was entered on the 16th November, 1921, in terms of a settlement arrived at by Counsel and signed by them on behalf of the parties. There now remains the question of costs. The action started in the Provincial Court and the Plaintiff then Chief Skin acting for the Olu of Warri, outlined his cause of action, which he stated to be :

- (a) Ownership by the Olu of the land Ogidigbḡ and all the surrounding land for many miles round.
- (b) The denial of the right of the occupants, the Defendant and his people, to let or alienate the land to Ijaws without his permission.

This right appears to have been claimed by Defendant, in the presence of the Resident and Chief Skin, who stated that the land belonged to the Olaja-Ori and not to the Olu of Warri.

The original claim, it is true, was for that portion of land known as Ogidigbẹ, but this might mean a claim for a declaration of title or a claim for the recovery of possession.

There was, however, no justification for the conclusion that the Olu was seeking to eject the defendant from Ogidigbẹ. The opening statement before the Resident contained no such claim to eject but merely a right to control the letting of land in cases where it is sought to transfer the land to strangers.

When the case came before the Supreme Court on transfer an amendment of the claim was allowed and rightly allowed owing to the vagueness of the original claim, and the amendment contained no new claim and was substantially the same which Chief Skin urged before the Resident, namely :

- (a) that the Olu was the titular owner of the land, and
- (b) that no land should be alienated without his permission, and
- (c) that if alienated with his permission, he has the right to control the distribution of the rents.

The exact position of the Defendant was never recorded or stated until his plea was taken before the Supreme Court. Before the Resident the vague plea of " Not admitted " was given and no cross-examination of Chief Skin was attempted.

The Defendant's plea denied the very existence of an Olu, denied that Chief Dore was Olu or was ever

appointed. The defendant further claimed exclusive ownership and the full enjoyment of the land in question.

When the terms of settlement are considered and compared with the pleas, there is not a single ground of defence upon which the defendant can rely.

In my opinion the plaintiff has substantially succeeded in his action and he is entitled to full costs, which if taxed would considerably exceed the amount of 100 guineas which Plaintiff's Counsel has generously suggested as minimum which his client can reasonably be expected to take.

The Defendant to pay costs assessed at 100 guineas.

(Signed) A. WEBBER,  
Judge.

Certified true copy.

(Signed) C. DECARDI NELSON,  
Registrar, E.D.

## 2. CHIEF DENEDO, WILLIAM MOORE, AND OMASANTSITSE *versus* CHIEF DORE NUMA.

The subject which gave birth to this *cause célèbre* was fully brought into "the limelight" by the author of the *History of Itsekiri*, in his article published in a local weekly journal, "The African Messenger," in the year 1922, which article is here reproduced, *mutatis mutandis*, as a *précis* of this costly lawsuit, which lasted three years :

THE IMPOSSIBLE DOCTRINE OF "MIGHT IS RIGHT" AS  
PRACTISED BY AN AFRICAN POTENTATE AT WARRI, IS  
NOW BEING WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE.

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As the result of a long-felt desire for concerted action, the descendants of Omateye, Ejo, and Ejimogho

successfully organised a family Society in April, 1921, which they designated the "Omateye-Ejo-Ejimogho Clan League." Our aim is to renovate the state of the Houses of our said parents and the foremost item in our plan is the rebuilding of the palace of our father and King as well as the reviving of his dignity and honour.

As soon as Chief Dore heard of the inauguration of our Clan League, he started to set snares for our downfall. He called Chief Jim Etchie, and enquired of him if it was true that the children of Omateye, Ejo, and Ejimogho had organised a family society. Chief Jim Etchie told him it was so, and that the organization was for the express purpose of endearing and renewing in every detail the status of our Ancestors' house. Chief Dore would not plainly put forward that he is offended by the exclusion of the names of Uwala and Iye from the Clan League, but cynically told or warned Jim Etchie to withdraw himself from the movement, because it was illegal, and that he was going to get all people connected with it into trouble, by the authority of the Government.

When we heard this, a resolution was at once passed, that, "for the safety of our cause, it is advisable to register the League and inform the Government of its existence, knowing as we do, it is not an unlawful society." Thereupon I was charged with the duty of discussing the subject with the Resident, pending the return to Warri of Benin River members of the League. I interviewed the then Resident, Major H. O. Swanston, and explained the situation to him. He advised me to reduce everything into writing and forward it along with the Bye-Laws; so that he might hand all to the Station Magistrate to be scrutinized, before submitting it to the Government.

On the day we went to see the Resident with the Bye-Laws, when ready, Chief Dore had been to see him and told him a volume of falsehood against the Omateye-Ejo-Ejimogho Clan League. On the strength of this information, the Resident refused to take the papers from us as he had previously promised; and after having questioned me, as President of the League, a few minutes, as to whether our movement purported to hamper or destroy wholly the working of the Native Courts, and received a negative reply, he told us that inasmuch as the organisation was purely a family concern, but not an unlawful society, he had no objection to raise why it should not be encouraged, and that no registration was necessary.

Seeing that a sinister influence to destroy this our newly-formed institution was at work, and knowing no other means to resort to, in case the Government were inclined to believe Chief Dore's incorrect report and so pounce upon the League, the progress of which would then be doomed, and the members be subject to an unjust pillory, we resolved to send delegates to Lagos, to secure the services of a reliable Solicitor, so as to be able to present a tenacious front. The delegates left Warri for Lagos on the sixth of October last, and, having succeeded in their mission, returned to Warri on the eleventh of December, 1921.

As the result of a letter written to the Government by the Solicitors of the Omateye-Ejo-Ejimogho Clan League, informing them of the formation of such society at Warri, and requesting recognition of same we were privileged to have an interview with the Honourable Col. H. C. Moorhouse, C.M.G., D.S.O., etc., the Lieutenant-Governor, Southern Provinces, Nigeria, during His Honour's recent visit to Warri, in February, 1922.

The following is an epitome of the conversation which took place between the Lieutenant-Governor and the Officers and Elderly Members of the League in the Resident's Office, the Resident James Davidson, Esquire, and Chief Dore being present :

*L.-G.* : I understand you wanted to see me. I saw the correspondence addressed to me by Messrs. Alakija and Alakija, Solicitors on behalf of the League, and I also read the Bye-Laws of the Omateye-Ejo-Ejimogho Clan League, which I found to be good. According to the object set forth in the constitution, the League is well founded. I do not wish to prevent, nor am I able to prevent, if I wished, the establishment of such a society, inasmuch as it is formed for the good of the family ; such a society exists everywhere in the civilised countries. Your asking for a special recognition is not possible, because that would mean another Administration. The British Government is ruling in the country at present with the aid of the Chiefs. The Government will only recognise the Officers of the League. But should the society be found to be unlawful, I shall have to enquire into it and cause it to be stopped and the members punished. Apart from this, as I have already said, I cannot prevent, even if I wished, the organisation of such a society, because it aims at the promotion of the interests of the whole family. Another point or reason why I would not encourage the formation of such a society is, if it were founded by the junior members of the clan with the object of overriding or subjugating the authority of the elders. I cannot tolerate or sanction a society with that intention, I am glad this is not so.

*Chief Denedo* : We, on behalf of the Members of the

Omateye-Ejo-Ejimogho Clan League, come to welcome you, and to inform you that owing to the lowly state of our Ancestors' House, the League is organised with the express purpose of renovating the condition. Omateye, Ejo, and Ejimogho were Pr nces and a Princess of the late Olu Akęngbuwa, the last King of Itsekiri.

*Ogoru* : We are the descendants of Akęngbuwa Olu Itsekiri, since the demise of whom there has never been another Olaja (King). We wish to rebuild his palace at Big Warri and make the place or town worthy of a king's dwelling-place. There is no money with which to carry on this work, which is become incumbent upon us as direct offspring of his, according to Royal Pedigree.

*William Moore* : Now we have seen you, we will withdraw. Anything we may want to do or say will be done with the Resident.

*L.-G.* : Yes, you can go.

At this juncture, Chief Dore interfered, and said, "As this matter happened in my presence, I wish to ask a question."

*L.-G.* : Yes, go on.

*Chief Dore* : Are you all not my family ?

*Chief Denedo* : We are not your family, you do not belong to Olu Akęngbuwa.

*Chief Dore* : So you say, Chief Denędo.

*Ogoru* : We are not Chief Dore's family, Your Honour. We are the children of the last King of Itsekiri, the Olu Akęngbuwa, but Chief Dore is not.

*William Moore* : Your Honour, may we go now, Sir ?

*L.-G.* : I think you had better go.

As evidenced by Chief Dore's question in the

foregoing conversation, it is apparently true that he might have been telling the Government something which was not true concerning the great house of Omateye and Ejo, possibly even that of our King and father, the late Olu Akęngbuwa. In order to prove the veracity of our answers to the said question, we shall now institute litigation claiming every royal right and property of ours which are being enjoyed by him, and which have been placed under the bushel by his sly ways, which facts are solely responsible for the sinking condition of the late King's dominion. Having now launched out in the struggle for our natural birthright and property, we dishonour favouritism and befriend truth.

The only relationship between us and Chief Dore is maternal, and has nothing in common with the royalty which counts. This maternal relationship he has been using in duping us all along, but now we have become weaned children and cannot be hypnotised by his haughty camouflage any more.

Let me give an illustration of this much talked-of relationship. A woman chanced to have married two husbands, one after the death of the other. She had two female children by the first husband, two male children and one female child by the second husband—in all, five children. When the first husband died, the two children shared their father's estate with their father's other sons and daughters. When the second husband (who was very rich) died, unfortunately the two sons died not long after their father's death, but left a horde of children who were being cared for and looked after by the Headmen (Olorukọs) of the members of their houses; the two maternal sisters stepped into possession, with their offspring,

squandered, and have been monopolising almost all the estate of their mother's second husband, by virtue of the greatness of their two brothers. The other children of their mother's second husband, were about sixty-nine in number, and for fear of the greatness and the authority invested in their late half-brother by their father during his lifetime and after his death, they were unable to demand their legitimate estate for sharing. When the children of the said two great sons of the said second husband grew up, they discovered that their paternal right has been infringed and their property squandered by the descendants of their father's maternal sisters, and instead of gratitude being shown them as rightful heirs, they have jointly with their wealthy father's other children been subjected to serfdom and degradation ; and they feel compelled to demand restoration of their property. Now let me ask, would their claim be, in these circumstances, a questionable and disputable one ? Certainly not. This was the situation of Emaye's five children, namely, Uwala, Iye (daughters of Olu Erejuwa) ; Omateye, Ejo, Ejimogho (sons and a daughter of Olu Akęngbuwa).

Chief Dore, in his letter to Col. H. C. Moorhouse, the Lieutenant-Governor, dated February 23rd, 1922, said :

“ The action of William Moore, who came over to Lagos and consulted a barrister, and wrote for the registration of a certain society, is contrary to my wishes, as his sole objects are to lower my position and that of the other chiefs, in order that he, with his followers, may have the full power in this Province. The members of this society are the same family with me at Bobi and Batęre (Benin River), and I was not consulted by them of their intention, which

indicates that one of their objects is to go against me.

“ Mr. William Moore has been promising his people that he would be able to do what Mr. Herbert Macauley had done, but I would say that his intention is far from this, as he desires to set downfall of the old men here, to lower the progress of the Native Courts, and to go against all native customs, in order that he and his followers may have the full power in the Province.

“ His intention therefore is to lower the progress of this Province. They are aware that I would not entertain such ideas, hence I was not informed by them. . . .”

I am being made the target at which Chief Dore and his associates are shooting daily and hourly, because my people thought it expedient to appoint me to be the President of the League, for purposes of good government, and to guide the destiny of their movement. But if I, as my people's champion, chance to be wounded by the shots and so succumb in the course of the campaign, I shall gladly meet my lot with a smiling face, for I reckon it is more honourable to die or suffer for the commonweal of one's clan and country, than to die or suffer as a wretched coward and traitor.

I wish the public to observe that our activity is not prompted by selfishness and bigotry, but purely by patriotism and altruism.

(Signed) WILLIAM A. MOORE,

*President, Omateye-Ejo-Ejimogho Clan League.*

At Lagos, April 24th, 1922.

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The sequence to this article was an application for

a writ of Civil Summons against Chief Dore, the facsimile of which is reproduced below :

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

Suit No.                      of 1922.

Chief Denedo, William Moore, and Omasantsitse for  
and on behalf of themselves and the members of the  
Olu Akengbuwa Family .....Plaintiffs.

Between                                      and

Chief Dore Numa .....Defendant.

The Plaintiffs seek a declaration that they are the owners of all that piece or parcel of land known as Ogbe-Ijoh and Alder's Town at Warri and that they and the members of their family are entitled to rents and profits accruing therefrom.

2. An account of rents and profits received by the Defendant from the Nigerian Government in respect of the said lands.

Dated at Lagos this                      day of June, 1922.

(Signed) ALAKIJA & ALAKIJA,

*Plaintiffs' Solicitors.*

Plaintiffs' address - - Warri.

Defendant's address - - Warri.

At the initial stage of the case, the rest of the descendants of Olu Akengbuwa did not participate in its prosecution, but when they heard of the merciless scurrility that was directed on their Royal Father, the Olu Akengbuwa, by Chief Dore and his associates on the occasion when the case was first called at Warri Assizes, 21st November, 1922, and the Plaintiffs had to pay costs up to date as arranged between Solicitor and Client, amounting to one hundred and

twenty-five guineas, and the Court ordered Plan and Pleadings, they felt the sting of such untrammelled vituperations affected them—for they are not better off than the children of Omateye and Ejo in the Olu Akęngbuwa's family—and so they took sides with them. This reinforcement strengthened the Plaintiffs' position both numerically and financially.

This lawsuit cost the Plaintiffs the sum of £2,041; and the Defendant spent as much, if not more, before the finish.

The death-roll among the descendants of Akęngbuwa during this legal campaign was colossal and as well as it was equally dreadful: it was, indeed, unprecedented in the annals of this country. Prominent amongst those who passed on were: Chief Denędo Etuwewe, Chief Jim Ukuejunę Etchie, Chief Ekeke Ekenusi, Edęma Etuwewe, Odiębara Etuwewe, Mafięni Etuwewe, Sub-Chief Lord Enęņę Etuwewe, Sub-Chief John Ederogun Etchie, Okikiribata Fręęņę, Ezekiel Etikpokpo Egbęgbe, Ešębo Umatie, Ebiareņęyin Ebọ, and Edodo Etuwewe.

The full text of the proceedings including the Judgments of the Divisional Court and of the Full Court of Nigeria is here reproduced, it being as follows:

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

Warri Assizes—24th April, 1923.

Before His Honour Mr. Justice A. F. C. Webber,  
Judge.

Chief Denedo, William Moore, and Omasantsitse for  
and on behalf of themselves and the members of the  
Olu Akęngbuwa Family

*versus*

Chief Dore Numa.

Declaration of title.

Statement of claim and of defence taken as read.

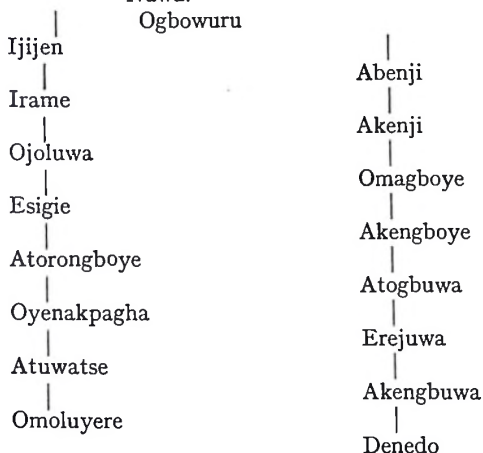
Thompson led by Alakija, with Johnson and Savage.

It is now argued that the issue is whether the representation of the Olu can go through the female line.

Plaintiffs contend that this representation comes through the male line.

The following tree is agreed upon.

Ginuwa, first Olu Itsekiri, son of Oba of Benin called Nuwa.



Deft's Line.

Akengbuwa (then followed a revolution and split).

Erejuwa

Iye or Idolu (daughter) controlled descendant of Akengbuwa could not hold their own.

Chanomi, son of Iye, took control.

Numa, a nephew of Chanomi and son of one of Erejuwa's daughter of Uwala.

British Government found Numa in charge.

Chief Denedo sworn :—I am Chief Denedo. I am descended from Akengbuwa. My father Etuwewe and his father Iteye, his father Akengbuwa. I am now the surviving son and the eldest now of Etuwewe. Akengbuwa was the Olu Itsekiri, Akengbuwa died, leaving Olunowo (f.), Iteye (m.), Ejo (m.), Oke (m.), Ochemone (m.).

When he, Akengbuwa, died Iteye and Ejo died quickly after and no one succeeded him. There was a revolution and Oke and Ochemone took control, but soon died and did not succeed. Then when the palaver subsided Eri (another son of Akengbuwa) took control. He did not succeed to the Oluship, but made sacrifices, and he died and Achego another son. He died and Okoro Ofia Igbe, son of Teteye, son of Akengbuwa's son, took control. That was three years ago. No one has taken the control since. Iteye was dead and never succeeded to the control. When a man is made Olu Itsekiri, he controls his brothers and sisters. They are no longer princes and princesses. They become ordinary citizens—Omajajas. I know Chief Dore Numa. His father was Ochemowo, who was never a chief. He was a fisherman. He married Uwala, daughter of Erejuwa. Numa was not the son of Chanomi. Iye or Idolu never succeeded to the control nor did Chanomi. He never took control, but he took dashes from white men and they called him Governor. The Itsekiris gave Chanomi

a staff, but Eri represented the Olu. Eri had no staff. The staff is to take dashes for the king. There was no king. He divided the dashes.

xxd. Eri sacrificed to the dead. He was appointed to do that. I claim for the descendant of Akengbuwa, who was the owner of the land. He became owner because his father is the owner of the land. All the children of Akengbuwa are not owners. Nor are the descendants of Atobua or Atogbue. I heard of Oyenakpagha, he was son of Oyemasa, Oyemasa daughter of Irame. The dashes were from Europeans who came to trade—the Europeans dashed because of the Olu and because of the land. Chanomi divided among the chiefs. He acted for the Olu. I am the surviving eldest son. Six months ago my elder brother died. He was alive when we brought this action. Okoro Ofia Igbe died three years ago. Achego made sacrifices also Okoro Ofia Igbe. Chief Dore and the whole town initiated those appointed to make sacrifices. Chief Dore has leased the land to the Government, the land in dispute. I know this for a long time, also my brother. Members of Akengbuwa family have not received rents. I receive no share.

Rexxd. Eri sacrificed as a priest. No one else can do it, only Eri. He is the Prince. I have never sacrificed. You have to be appointed before you can sacrifice. When I say the Olu owns the land, he owns for self and people. My eldest brother knew of this action, and came to Court. My brother was very old.

2. William Moore sworn :—I am a member of the Akengbuwa family. The land in dispute belongs to Akengbuwa family on behalf of the people. The history of our country is unwritten. There were the

Olus who have reigned. Akengbuwa was the last. I know the defendant. He was not to my knowledge appointed Olu. He has control of the land, but he has no right to this control. I have received no rent. I am son of Tetsoma, daughter of Abalagbeyi, son of Omateye, son of Akengbuwa.

xvd. Coming through the female line I have a right to represent the people in an action. I heard of case Dore *vs.* Olowe. I was not in Warri then. I cannot say who granted leases prior to Dore. Very many years ago, I heard that Dore granted leases. I did not tell my people. I knew Dore had no right to grant leases. I never told my family, but the old men of the family were against it. Government Gazette "A," I have never seen it before. Inu is not native title. Unu means spokesman. Chief Skin is a member of Akengbuwa family.

3. Charles A. Barnes sworn:—I am Licensed Surveyor. I tender Plan made by me. Admitted.

4. Atima sworn:—Chief Ogidigbe. I know Chief Dore. His father was Numa. Uwala is Dore's grandmother. The Olus own Jekris lands. They live in Big Warri. There was a big palace belonging to Olu. The Olu's son succeeded the Olu. Chief Dore has never lived in the Palace. Denedo has not lived in the Palace. Okoro Ofia Igbe lived in the Palace. He made sacrifice, so he had a right to live in the Palace. Any member of Akengbuwa family can be appointed to make sacrifice. No one made it now.

xvd. Emaye is mother of Omateye, Ejo, and Ejimogho. The Plaintiffs are the descendants of these three men and of Emaye. Achego is descended

from different woman. He is royal blood because his father is Akengbuwa and being of royal blood he can become a Priest. One priest and two Orieni made the sacrifice. All must be of the royal blood. Achego could succeed as Olu being the son of Akengbuwa. No Olu succeeded because there was fighting. Skin brought action against Olu about Ogidigbe lands as representing Ogidigbe people. It was settled. I am aware of the settlement. Numa dealt with Government about Jekri lands. Chanomi received dashes from the European traders. He received a staff from Jekri people. The staff authorised him to receive dashes from the traders. The Government had not then come. When Government came Chanomi was dead. Numa was not given the staff. It was given to Nana, who was not royal blood. The staff was taken from Nana by Government. Chanomi is son of Iye and is of royal blood. Numa was son of Uwala, daughter of Erejuwa. Iye was daughter of Erejuwa. Emaye was Erejuwa's wife. They gave Chanomi staff because he was son of Iye. Akengbuwa's children did not get staff. Staff given only to Omajaja—the citizens who used to put the king in the chair. The Olu gives the staff to the head citizens—not necessarily of royal blood. The money collected was taken to the Olu who divided it. Chanomi divided it because there was no Olu. Since the last Olu died the palace was not lived in and sacrifices were made there and he who will go there will go there and then go away again.

5. Nikoro sworn:—I live at Okere. I represent the Okere people. I instruct Mr. Bucknor to bring an action against Chief Dore. It has not yet matured.

Someone showed me a book from Dore to Bucknor. I agree that the Judge should see the letter.

xxd. I am Jekri. I occupied land around here. It belonged to me. Unoccupied forest land is not under a paramount chief. I am not a warranted chief. I receive no instructions from Chief Dore. There are two warranted chiefs at Okere and Dore sent them messages.

6. Bucknor sworn :—I am Barrister-at-Law practising Eastern Division. I was instructed by last witness about Okere land which is not in dispute in this case as far as I am aware. I received a letter from Chief Dore. I receive a communication from Dore in connection with Okere case. This is a copy of what I received. The original is with me. In the interest of Chief Dore I object to produce it.

By Clinton :—After this action was brought, I was consulted by Chief Dore before I received this communication. I drafted it on behalf of Dore. It was a letter from Chief Dore to myself. I was not then acting as his solicitor. He consulted me and I proposed a certain condition which he agreed to. One of the conditions was that he should recognise the title of my client (Okere). He agreed—I drafted it and it was sent to me as a solicitor.

Objection withdrawn.

Document admitted "C."

Adjourned to 2 p.m.

Bucknor asks for leave to withdraw from the case. Leave granted.

7. Chief Pessu sworn :—I belong to Pessu of Warri. I am Jekri. I do not belong to house of Olu Jekri.

I am descended from the people whom Genuwa met. I recognise Genuwa as king. Pessu town is a portion of land in dispute. The Olu is over-lord over our land. The king must give permission before I can grant lease. I go to Dore if I wish to grant lease. I go to him because he is the man in town, not because he is Olu.

8. Chorkor sworn:—I live at Burudu, a day's journey from Warri. I descended from Akengbuwa. Dore has never been Olu. When Akengbuwa died I heard there was no fight—only a quarrel over the estate of Akengbuwa. The children quarrelled. Chief Dore has nothing to do nor Chanomi nor Numa. Ochemone settled the palaver and then Eri performed the sacrifices—after Eri, Achego, and then Okoro Ofia Igbe. These people were called Olotus.

There was a break in the line from father to son when Oyenakpaga came to the throne. Irame was a man and he had three sons, Omaluyere, Atuwatse, and Oyemasa. These three fought for the throne. Oyenakpaga was made king.

xxd. After Akengbuwa died Omateye died a few days after. I know how long the ceremony lasts when one Olu succeeds another. After the two sons of Akengbuwa died the rest of the children squabbled over the property. I do not know why no one succeeded Akengbuwa as Olu. Boddo took the dashes and handed them to Olu. Chanomi had not collected dashes nor did Numa. Ndiare collected, Nana collected. I do not know who collected after Nana. Ogidigbe and Burudu are the same. I remember the action between Skin and Dore *vs.* Olowe. I did not come to Court.

9. Omasa Chiche sworn :—I live at Batere. I am one of the Plaintiffs. I am son of Etiwewe, who is son of Omateye, who was son of Akengbuwa. He is the last of the Olu—the over-lord of lands indispute. Akengbuwa children disputed amongst themselves. It lasted six or eight months. The title of Olu has died out since. Eri then controlled the land, then Achege, then Okoro Ofia Igbe. Dore gave the land to the Government. Oyenakpagha did succeed through a female, but I do not know how. He succeeded because of his character. No woman has controlled the lands. Iye never, Uwala never, Dore never, Numa never.

xxd. When an Olu dies the people assemble and come to an arrangement as to who shall be Olu. Erejuwa's wife became Akengbuwa's wife. Emaye's family and children were powerful people and had a lot of slaves and money. When Omateye and Ejo died the slaves seeing the line through Emaye was impossible, they make great confusion. I heard that Akengbuwa's children scattered, going in every direction. Ndiare was alive when Iye was alive. Ndiare was not of royal blood. He was appointed to collect the dashes by the Jekris. Chanomi was appointed. Three men before Chanomi. Then Nana. I do not know after Nana. Okoro Ofia Igbe was last man to sacrifice. All he did was to sacrifice.

10. Newton Nana sworn :—I am son of Nana. I am not of the Royal line. I am a cabinet maker, my father died 1916. He controlled the lands of Jekri. He never controlled Big Warri, which belong to the Olu and the issue of the late Akengbuwa. I am related to Akengbuwa on Akengbuwa's mother's side.

The title Olu is hereditary from father to son. Ogeluwo begat Abejei, who begat Esigie. When Esigie died he had no male issue, so his daughter's son was created Olu. Nana never owned the lands. He collected dashes and divided it first amongst the Olu children. His office was ministerial. After my father this office was abolished. He was called Governor. Before Nana Chanomi, Diare before Bordu, Bordu before Aboroma, before Ofoluwa Ocheyen, Iyachere Okorodudu, Nwangbokule, Osolupalu. They were all Governors. They lived in the time of the Olus. Government appointed Nana and Chanomi with consent of Town Council. Ndiare was appointed by Native Council. At the Benin expedition, Consul Hensley cut the staff into two and the office was abolished. Then they instituted Warrant Chiefs. Dore was the first. I never heard that Numa had control. The Jekri natives did not like the succession among younger sons on account of their youth. The slaves made confusion and the younger ones scattered. No final settlement before the Government came.

xxd. If the two sons had not died there would have been an Olu, and if the children had not gone there would have been an Olu. There was then no control of the land and never has been since up to the time of this action. Bordoo is Governor and the Jekri appointed him "Governor" to control. As Governor he granted land with consent of Native Council. No leases made. He gave land to Mr. Clair Powis Neuil—no other. No Government then. He divided rent among the whole natives. After Government came, they recognised Nana as the man who controlled the nations. As the head of Jekriland and nation they gave him a staff, which Consul Hensley cut in two.

Nana was deported in 1894. Chief Dore was created as Paramount Chief of Town. Numa died before my father was deported. I never heard Numa came between Chanomi and my father. I do not know if the natives approved of Dore. Omateye died suddenly. Also Ejo. Only some of Akengbuwa children ran away. There was civil war amongst the slaves and free-born and some of the Royal blood fled.

Clinton here admits that Olu when he was Olu, or when there was an Olu, was overlord over the land, had full control over the land, and if there was an Olu he would not defend the action.

Case for the Plaintiffs closed 4.20 p.m.

(Signed) A. WEBBER,  
J.

24th April, 1923.

25th April, 1923.

Defence. Clinton for the defence.

1. Ogbolimiogo (Ogborimeyi) sworn :—I am descended from Akengbuwa. My father, Konedo, was his son. My grandfather was last Olu of Kekri. Erejuwa was the father of Akengbuwa. I knew Emaye. I am not descended from her. I have heard what followed after Akengbuwa's death. No one succeeded to the Oluship. Akengbuwa had by Emaye two sons, Omateye and Ejo, and Ejimogho, a daughter. There were two half-sisters by Erejuwa. The children of Emaye were very powerful. Omateye was looked upon as the successor to Akengbuwa. He died, soon after (three days) Akengbuwa. Ejo died also within seven months. When they died the slaves drove away the Olu's children. There was

fighting and firing of guns. The Olu's children scattered in every direction. It was not settled. Chemone was a great man, and he said he wanted to be Olu. Ejoki said he wanted and Deso said he wanted. Ejoki was Akengbuwa's son. Deso son of Erejuwa. Chemone son of Akengbuwa. Iye was guarded as she was half-sister to the king. These three claimants appealed to Iye and she referred them to the free citizens, who appointed Olu. There was a meeting at Iye's house. The people said they wanted Deso to reign because he was half-brother, but Erejuwa changed it. Akengbuwa children refused. Deso was the poorest of the three. The free citizens of Jekri said they would not have Akengbuwa's sons because they spoil the house. There was no Olotu when Akengbuwa lived. The Olotu sacrificed to the dead Olu. Eri was appointed Olotu after Akengbuwa's death. Bordo was a free citizen of Jekri. When the Olu was alive Omoku collected the rents. Agbaga was the oldest son of Akengbuwa. He predeceased his father. He collected the dashes for the king and he distributed between chiefs. Agbaga did some wrong and they gave it to Omateye. Ndiare collected for Akengbuwa up to his death. After Ndiare, Chanomi. The people including the Royal Family appointed Chanomi. Then Nana was appointed. Ndiare was called Governor and so were Chanomi and Nana. When Europeans came these Governors gave them lands. Nana was deposed by the Government. They cut his staff in two. Then Jekris held a Council and appointed Chief Dore to be their spokesman, i.e., Unu. The Government then made him Paramount Chief and I was at the meeting when Sir R. Moor appointed him. At this meeting all the chiefs assembled

and they elected Dore. He has been our head ever since. Eri's duties were to make sacrifices to the dead.

xxd. The Olotu is a man in place of Olu. There is no Olotu when an Olu reigns. There have been three Olotus since Akengbuwa died, Eri, Achego, Okoro Ofia Igbe all descendants of Akengbuwa. They were appointed by the people. Their duties were to sacrifice to the Royal Dead. I witnessed their appointments. They met at Chief Dore's place and then proceeded to the palace. Dore confirmed the appointment of Achego. I was present. I have heard of Ijijen. He was son of Ginuwa. Irame was son of Ijijen. Ojoluwa was son of Irame. Ndiare collected the rents during the lifetime of the Olu. Olu gave him staff and called him Governor. Iye sent for Eri because she considered he was the next man to be Olu.

2. Omagbemi sworn:—I am a Warranted Chief. My father was Mamah. Grandfather Ijedi, and his father was Irejuwa. The last Olu was Akengbuwa. There has been no Olu. Olotu is the man who sacrifices to the Royal dead. Okpanran is the one who sacrifices to the dead. The man who collected the dashes was the Governor. Omoku collected the dashes. Bordo also collected. Chanorni also collected. I knew him. He was a Governor. Chanomi apportioned lands to Europeans to build on. The man who has the staff has the mouth and can tell the people what to do. Nana was a powerful Governor, when he was deported Dore took his place. He was a chief whom Nana consulted. There was a meeting presided over by Sir Ralph Moor and the Council of Chiefs chose Dore as their spokesman and representative.

Sir Ralph Moor agreed. I don't think Chanomi gave land at Warri, but at Benin River. The Chiefs said to Dore, "You speak to white man and what you say we do." I have heard of Ginuwa, Ijijen was his son. Irame was Ijijen's son. Ojoluwa was Irame's son. If Omateye had been Olu and his son, Akengbuwa's children would become Omajaja.

Rexxd. Chanomi was Governor of the whole Jekri kingdom. Nana apportioned lands at Benin River. When Penriorlas and others came, the Royal family assembled and took dashes to Iye and she distributed them. Iye looked after all Jekris when Akengbuwa died. Iye instructed Chanomi to call the Jekris together. After Iye died Chanomi collected the dashes.

Chief Dore sworn :—I am Dore, Warranted Chief, President Native Court. I am son of Numa—son of Uwala daughter of Erejuwa. I was not born when Akengbuwa died. There was no Olu then. The head-quarters of Olu was Big Warri. Benin River was part of Warri Kingdom. The Royal Family scattered because the slaves of Owala and Iye fought with them. The quarrel was settled. Three people claimed the Oluship. No one chosen and there was no Olu. The Jekris were then governed by Iye. After Iye died Chanomi looked after the country. He was appointed Governor by the Royal Family and the free citizens. Chanomi was dismissed, Nana succeeded and was deposed. I succeeded Nana. The Jekris appointed me as spokesman. This was at Benin River and Warri. I was the first Unu. Sir Ralph Moor confirmed the people's selection. All the big chiefs selected me as their head, all agreed. I have

been so for over 30 years. As head I have dealt with Jekri land. There are leases I executed. No one has interfered with my right to grant leases. Chief Ogbe used to sign with me. I sign first. Ogbe grandson of Akengbuwa. Skin has signed since Ogbe died. Skin is descended from Akengbuwa. I do not claim the land as my own, but in trust for the Olu and Jekris. If an Olu were appointed, I would hand up my staff at once. The crown jewels are in my possession. Okoro Ofia Igbe I appointed to give the dead Olu chop. I have distributed the rents between the Royal family and the Jekris and the remainder to sacrifice to Olu.

xxd. I told Clinton I was representative of Olu, I provide the sacrifice. I represent the Olu because I am head and because I am Paramount Chief. If I were not Paramount Chief I should not represent the Olu. Ndiare was called Unu. I have faithfully distributed the rents. I keep no books, I have no clerk. I got £90 a year rent for Big Warri. Skin gets £6. Jimetchie £1 to £2. Denedo and Moore nothing. When I repaired the Palace I got the crown jewels.

Chief Ereko sworn:—I am a Warranted Chief. I am Omajaja. I know the parties in this case. I remember Sir Ralph Moor. There was a meeting. Sir Ralph Moor asked the Chiefs whom they wanted to take Nana's place. The Chiefs elected Dore. He has been head of Jekris since then. I was a man when Nana was Governor. Nana was a big man and had power over all Jekris. I heard of Olotus. There are no Olotus now.

xxd. My father was half-brother of Ndiare. At that meeting Dudu, Fregene, Kperegbeiyi and others

were elected as Chiefs. A Native Court was constituted. Chief Dore had been appointed spokesman before the meeting and at the meeting he was elected head of all. We did not elect Dore because he spoke English.

5. Tele sworn :—I belong to Akengbuwa family. I am a grandson. Chief Dore was appointed by the Chiefs to be spokesman and head. This was before Sir Ralph Moor's arrival. When Moor came the Chiefs appointed Dore as head of all Jekris. Moor suggested one head. The Jekris elected Dore as their head. At that meeting Native Courts were constituted. Awala was the first man to put up his hand. All the Chiefs did likewise. Before Dore was appointed Nana was the biggest man in the country to deal with the land. When Nana left Dore had power to deal with the lands. The last Olotu died about one and a half years ago. His duty was to sacrifice to the royal dead. Dore provided the necessaries. When the Olu dies the sons or half-brothers succeed. The Jekris assemble and appoint. He need not necessarily be the eldest son.

xxd. I am also Tele Kebua. I am orderly to Fregene, a son of Akengbuwa. I knew the king's palace. It was repaired by Fregene and Dore. Numa does belong to the Royal Family. I was flogged by Chief Dore the other day.

6. Dodo Ogbe sworn :—I am son of Ogbe. I am free citizen and descended from Royal Family. I knew the parties in this case. I remember Nana. He was the mouthpiece of Jekris. When he was alive he controlled Jekri lands. After he died Dore succeeded and became head by the vote of the chiefs. I was interpreter. Sir Ralph Moor spoke to the meeting

and said he wanted a person to represent the people. The Chiefs then pointed to Chief Dore.

xxd. Chief Ereku was there. Omagbemi was also there. Chief Ogbe was present. I cannot say if Big Warri people went to Benin River. There were two meetings, one at Benin and one here. Both meetings relate to same matter, but at Warri meetings land was given to Government. All the Chiefs were present. Dore was the head of Jekris present.

By Court. I cannot give the date when Sir Ralph Moor came.

J. A. Bassej sworn :—I am acting Deputy Registrar-Court. In my custody are records of Court. I have record of case Dore *vs.* Olowe. This case is in respect of Jekri land.

The Court does not admit the documents.

Case for defence.

(Signed) A. WEBBER,

J.

25th April, 1923.

*Hearing resumes, 27th April, 1923.*

Clinton addresses Court for the defendant and states Renner is now with him in the case.

- (1) Statement of Defence not proved—representation not proved, either by appointment or naturally. No evidence of how many sons Omateye had.
- (2) If Akengbuwa claimed it in his representative capacity as his own, then only one person as descendant could according to Plaintiffs claim. No evidence as to who would succeed Omateye. Land never vested in the Olu's children. Claim cannot be determined by Municipal Court.

- (3) We are the chosen representative Olotus. None of the Plaintiffs are Olotus. Olotu should bring the action.
- (4) Dynasty died. An effective revolution.
- (5) Nana—the power in the land.
- (6) Dore unanimously elected.

Thompson for the Plaintiff.

Claim founded on right and justice.

Right has been violated—lands have been extricated.

- (1) Representation. Descent of land from father to son. Eldest lineal descendant of eldest son. No other proof. Natural representation.
- (2) We claim as titular owners—the land is vested in us.
- (3) Land vested in Akengbuwa as titular head of Jekri—could only be divested by death. Fee simple in land can never be *in nubibus*.

Sovereign rights acquired by

Settlement, coercion, conquest, treaty, purchase.

- (4) Dynasty can only be overthrown by strangers to the Family.  
This was a family palaver.
- (5) Dore was chosen as spokesman. As Paramount Chief no lands vested in him.
- (6) Acquiescence by leases only.
- (7) Land never vested in Governors. Ndiare officiated in Akengbuwa's time.
- (8) Olotus.
- (9) Motives underlying this action.
- (10) In whom is the legal estate vested.
- (11) Dore not representative of the Olu. Not a member of Akengbuwa family for purpose of succession.

(12) Quasi trustee *de son tort*.

Decision reserved.

(Signed) A. WEBBER,  
J.

27th April, 1923.

Certified true copy.

(Signed) JAMES F. OSHO,  
Registrar E. D.

5th November, 1923.

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

Divisional Court, Eastern Division.

Assizes at Onitsha, the 2nd day of May, 1923.

Before His Honour Mr. Justice A. F. C. Webber,  
Judge.

Chief Denedo, William Moore, and Omasachiche, for  
and on behalf of themselves and the members of the  
Olu Akengbuwa Family

*versus*

Chief Dore.

#### JUDGMENT.

The Plaintiffs, Chief Denedo, William Moore, and Omasantsitse, seek a declaration that (a) they as the descendants of the Olu Akengbuwa and the natural representatives of Olu-Itsekiri are the owner of that piece or parcel of land known as Ogbe Ijaw and Alder's Town Warri, and that (b) they and members of their family are entitled to the rents and profits accruing therefrom. They also claim an account of rents received by Defendant from the Nigerian Government in respect of the said lands.

In his statement of Defence, Chief Dore admits that the Plaintiffs are descended from the late Olu Akengbuwa, but he denies that they are the present representatives of the Olu-Itsekiri. He denies that the Olus exercised acts of ownership over the land as individual and says at the bar that the Olus controlled the land as trustee for the people.

In addition to other defences he pleaded estoppel, laches and acquiescence.

The case is an interesting one and to the several parties of great moment and importance.

It cannot be said that there is any disagreement between the parties as regards the history of the Olu dynasty. As the history becomes more modern, the parties divide in their historical facts. All agree that sixteen Olus reigned, that Genuwa was the first Olu, and that Eregua and Akengbuwa were the last two. That there has been no Olu since. There also can be no doubt that the usual line of succession was from father to son and it was not denied that at least on one occasion the succession passed through the female line. The last Olu, who was Akengbuwa, must have deceased over 60 years ago, and perhaps over 100 years ago.

Although the eldest surviving son usually succeeded, he did not as of absolute right do so. He was not the successor *de jure*. One witness for the defence said the selection of an Olu was made by the free citizens amongst the sons of the deceased Olu. The third Plaintiff told us that when an Olu died the people assembled and came to an arrangement as to who should be Olu.

The evidence shows that at the time of Akengbuwa's death the house of Imaye predominated in wealth

and power and slaves, and the Olu's subjects appeared determined not to have any of the sons of Akengbuwa succeeded. The two eldest sons died in rapid succession and then followed civil war. The Plaintiffs' Counsel called it only a palaver, his clients called it a quarrel, the defendant said it was a fight with guns, and defendant's Counsel revolution.

One witness called it rightly a civil war, and the parties all agreed that the Royal family fled in every direction and even Iye, the daughter of Eregua, had to be guarded. It was quite clear that during the flight of Akengbuwa's sons Iye was left in control. As one witness said, the children of Imaye were very powerful, and it is not surprising that a descendant of Eregua assumed the temporary reins of Government.

When the war came to an end the succession of Oluship was again brought forward and the people determined not to have an Olu. There were three claimants, the last claimant was disqualified through an inflexible rule alleged to have been made by Eregua ; the people preferred no Olu at all to having any son of Akengbuwa succeed.

Ever since, the third Plaintiff tells us, the title of Olu has died out.

The subsequent history bears this out—there has been no recorded instance of a descendant of either Akengbuwa or Eregua claiming the Oluship. The monarchy was overthrown and the Jekris themselves directed how and by whom their country was to be ruled. The hereditary system to them had proved a failure. No sons of Akengbuwa were invited to take control or to take part in the government of the country—a descendant of Akengbuwa was appointed only to sacrifice to the Royal dead.

After Iye, Chanomi succeeded and assumed control. His title was Governor—evidently a title borrowed when white men came to trade. He was in every respect in the position of an Olu. He was the supreme ruler of the Jekris and controlled their lands. He collected the dashes and distributed them as he thought fit. Chanomi did not succeed as of right. He was the son of Iye and was the most natural person to be appointed as apart from his relation to Iye he was eminently fit to succeed. Nana followed Chanomi. He, Nana, was appointed by the people and assumed the same powers which were vested in Chanomi. Dore succeeded Nana. There was no change in Jekri Government. Nana was deposed and Dore was acclaimed successor by all the chiefs who mattered. He took the reins of Government from Nana—there was no curtailment of powers—on the contrary when Sir R. Moor came he was again acclaimed. Sir R. Moor appointed him Paramount Chief of all the Jekris. It was not to be expected that the title of Governor would be allowed, but in appointing him Paramount Chief and spokesman of all the Jekris he was officially recognised as the head of the Jekri nation and the man with whom the Government would negotiate in all matters connected with the Jekri nation and their land. It is now argued by Counsel for Plaintiffs that the title to the land was never vested in those who succeeded Akengbuwa, that it was vested only in the lineal descendants of Akengbuwa. Now the Olu never owned Jekri land as an individual. The land belonged to the community and the Olu was trustee. In him, as trustee, was vested the land. When Akengbuwa died, the title might have become vested in one of his sons if he succeeded. The sons

fled, but even suppose it could be said that the title was vested in the successor although not crowned, it was divested when the successor fled.

During the civil war the title vested in Iye, who was the Regent. And when Chanomi was appointed by the people, did this not *ipso facto* create him a trustee of the people's property? Are we to believe that the people retained the descendants of Akengbuwa as trustee of their land, the very descendants whom they rejected as unfit to rule? When Chanomi ruled as head of the Jekris his powers were the same as the Olu's. When Nana and Dore succeeded they assumed the trusteeship.

Dore has dealt with the people's land for over 30 years and there has not been a dissentient voice amongst them. Chief Pessu, a witness for the Plaintiff, is a Jekri man, but not descended from Olu Itsekiri. His land is in the land in dispute. If he wishes to grant a lease of his land he goes to Dore and when asked why he replied because he is the man to go to. The Court can find no evidence in the record on which they could be justified in declaring that the three plaintiffs are the owners of the land. It was contended by Counsel that only one man can be trustee. Does each plaintiff claim to be a trustee? Suppose the title vested in the eldest son of Omateye and the eldest son lineally downwards, none of the plaintiffs has proved this descent or his right to be declared the person in whom the title vested, but why the claim of the descendants of the eldest son of Akengbuwa be ignored.

I am of opinion that the Plaintiffs have not proved their claim to the declaration sought, and as they also claim all the rents and profits and an account *qua* owners of the land this must also be refused.

The action is dismissed and judgment entered for the defendant.

Having regard to the fact that the Plaintiffs have been ordered to pay costs up to November, 1922, which already have been assessed, I shall assess costs as from that date, which I fix at 75 guineas. The Plaintiffs must bear the whole cost of the Survey.

(Signed) A. WEBBER,

J.

Certified a true copy.

(Signed) J. A. BASSEY,  
Deputy Registrar.

4th May, 1923.

This judgment was soon appealed against by the Plaintiffs to the Full Court of Nigeria. After having complied with all conditions required or ordered by the Divisional Court, the Appeal matured for hearing and was placed on the Cause List of appeals to be heard by the Full Court sitting at Calabar on the 12th December, 1923.

On the 28th November, 1923, Plaintiffs' Party, comprising of Messrs. William A. Moore, the late John Ederogun Etchie, and Edun Igbenę in attendance, left Sapele for Calabar, via Lagos, for the appeal. Later Mr. Wilson Ibobi Omatsola arrived Lagos on the 6th December, 1923, per s.l. *Dorothy*, to accompany the party to Calabar. He arrived just in time, when the Calabar Express Mail liner, the s.s. *Ekari*, was about leaving Lagos for Calabar this self-same day. The party, with their Counsel, namely, Messrs. J. Egerton Shyngle (the late Leader of the Nigerian Bar), Olayimika Alakija, and Montacute Thompson, then sailed per s.s. *Ekari* for Calabar, where, on Monday, the 10th December, 1923, they disembarked.

The Full Court sat next morning, that was Tuesday, the 11th December, 1923, and no sooner was the business of the Court begun than Mr. Graham W. Paul, Counsel for the Defendant-Respondent, informed the Court that he had received a telegraphic communication from Warri stating Chief Denedo was dead. The Court was overwhelmed with sorrow, and for some minutes there was dead silence. Then the then Chief Justice, Sir Ralph Combe, K.C., called on Mr. Moore, one of the Plaintiffs-Appellants, who was present in Court, and asked if he had received similar news from Warri? Mr. Moore replied through his Counsel in the negative, and promised to despatch an urgent telegram quickly to Warri, straight away from the Court House, for confirmation or otherwise of the news, remarking as he walked out of the Court House, "I left Chief Denedo at my village, Williams-ville, in sound health on Sunday, the 25th November, 1923." His eyes were heavy with tears as he spoke, and all in the Court gazed on him with deep and sincere sympathy. Next morning a telegram from Chief Skin reported that Chief Denedo Etuwewe had died on Sunday, the 9th instant. The Court was accordingly moved that the appeal be transferred to Lagos for hearing, while a substitute for Chief Denedo was arranged for without delay. This motion was granted, and the appeal was listed for hearing at Lagos by the Full Court on Friday, the 1st day of February, 1924. Thus the party, with the Lagos Counsel, returned to Lagos on Saturday, the 22nd December, 1923, having left Calabar on the 16th. Mr. Etchie, however, broke journey at Port Harcourt on the 18th, to go overland to Warri, via Onitsha, to fetch the late Chief Denedo's successor or substitute to Lagos.

On the 3rd of January, 1924, Chief Omagbemi Ewolufu, the Olotu-elect, Omasantsitse, and Mr. J. E. Etchie, arrived at Lagos per s.l. *Dorothy*. Chief Dore's delegates in the persons of Chief Omatsola and Mr. Omejalile Gbekoba, also arrived at Lagos by the same launch.

Long before the appeal was ready, the Resident, Warri Province, Warri, made efforts to settle the dispute. The terms upon which the Olu Akengbuwa family would acquiesce to settlement were embodied in the subjoined letter, viz. :

Warri, Nigeria.

8th June, 1923.

The Resident,  
Warri Province.

Sir,

With reference to our interview with you on the subject of land case between Olu Akengbuwa Family and Dore Numa which you intend to settle, we respectfully beg to submit the following points for your consideration.

1. That, the case had been adjudged and judgment given in favour of the Defendant Dore Numa with 75 guineas costs in the cause ;
2. That the copy of the said judgment which contained several calumnious remarks against our father Olu Akengbuwa's House in the country, which must necessarily be in the possession of the Defendant, remains an indelible record until it is set aside by a much more competent Court of Law when the contrary is proved ;
3. The settlement cannot be arrived at if we had to sign on a new arrangement with Dore, because our

main contention, which is still pending, is, to restrain him from anything bearing the title or superscription of Olu Itsekiri, of which Akengbuwa was the latest holder—consequently the national “ Bride-elect ” must be traceable amongst us blood descendants of his according to Itsekiri immemorial laws and custom in the land to-day ;

4. As we are going before the Full Court at Lagos, we have been ordered and have duly complied with the following conditions : (a) deposited £20 into Court for the transmission of records, (b) given Bonds for £100, and (c) cost of prosecution at the Full Court.

If you could kindly suggest a permanent remedy of these conditions, we shall be quite prepared to settle with him, and the reason why we attended or honoured your invitations of 25th May, 1923, and 1st June, 1923, respectively was to display our continued loyalty and unqualified obedience to you as our supreme ruler. The points mentioned above are those which made us take leave of you on both occasions. In this connection, with due deference to your person and office, we humbly suggest it is not wisdom to exclude Plaintiffs proper from where terms of compromise were to be discussed.

Living directly with you as your humble servants, we are ready to abide by your gracious advice, provided always it tends to protect and safeguard our rights and interests ; and we from past experience must confess hereby that we are very glad to have been privileged to embark upon this matter in your time because you knew us and our ways too well that even recommendations from a native or foreign party would not be wanting.

Please take no notice of the misrepresentations to the intent that we are preparing to fight fatally—ask

people to quit land, etc., etc. We would ask you in certainty to rest assured, such misrepresentations are utterly the false posts put up to prop a faulty position of someone.

Thanking you sincerely for efforts already made to achieve a redress,

We have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

For and on behalf of Olu Akengbuwa Family,

(Signed) CHIEF OGBOBINE. Their X

(Signed) CHIEF OMAGBEMI. X

Writer and witness to marks marks.

Gratis. (Signed) WM. A. MOORE.

As the Resident's endeavours fell through, a Petition dated June 11th, 1923, was addressed to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, Southern Provinces, Nigeria, by the Olu Akengbuwa Family, thus :

COL. H. C. MOORHOUSE, C.M.G., D.S.O.,

The Lieutenant-Governor,

Southern Provinces, Nigeria.

Your Honour,

The Petition of your humble Servants respectfully sheweth :

1. That we the undersigned, live warrant Chiefs in the Province of Warri, are all members of the late Olu Akengbuwa Family.

2. That Akengbuwa was the last Olu of Itsekiri, and we and many others are the Royal Children representing his House in this land to-day.

3. That the lawsuit between us and Chief Dore Numa to which we called Your Honour's attention

in our letter dated December 3rd, 1922, wherein it was pointed out that we have no quarrel with the Government, is a domestic contention. It has also been pointed out in our subsequent correspondence of 12th March, 1923, that we have naught against the Government of Nigeria.

4. That our case is solely in regard to our Father's title that involved properties (land, etc.) which Dore took off us by force, and has been in complete usurpation of, masquerading his sly deeds by Warrant Chieftaincy, a title quite foreign to us, which has been created and introduced by the Government.

5. That what we drew attention to in the previous correspondence relative to misrepresentations of an enemy, which, if believed by the Government, may militate against us, became noticeable some time before, during and after the trial of the case at the last Warri Assizes.

6. That we are pleased, having been fortunate enough in that we have been privileged to start this matter during your regime, because you knew us all so well, that Your Honour will not sanction any proposal of drastic measure as a novice would.

7. That it has often been alleged small boys are responsible for the action against Dore: admitting even that that was true, Dore is a big man, and before small boys comprising approximately one-half or three-quarters of the whole of Itsekiri population could rise against him, you will agree with us that something had gone wrong somehow.

8. That we once emphasized, *vide* our letter of March 12th, this litigation is more advantageous to the Government than to ourselves because Dore contracted wrongly and without right: take, for instance. the

Okere land question. He made that land over to the Government about ten years ago as if he had right or title to, but now immediately the Okere people find they are strong enough to question his authority he surrendered their land to them.

9. That we of Olu Akengbuwa Family are superior both quantitatively and qualitatively to him and those behind him; and it should be observed that but for us who helped to maintain his dignity (you no doubt will remember how many times complaints of malpractice by him from Sobos and Ijaws reached you), he would have been nowhere to-day. We are the door, seeing in and out, yet are not fault-finding, and our only contention now is just to recover our property.

10. That he falsely presented himself by word and implication as the Olu Itsekiri by reason of his Government-given name or title of Paramount Chief. Thus he used to haul over his canoe on special occasions a flag with the inscription, "Paramount Chief Dore Numa, the Olu of Itsekiris, Sobos, and Ijaws"; and it was with this glossy pretension that he deceived and intimidated the old men who passed on before us, that whoever opposed him would be punished by the Government and be made to suffer late Nanna Oloma's fate: naturally they were afraid, but warned the rising generation to leave no stone unturned when the hour to strike the blow arose, and they all died with the thought of this matter in their mind. But we have outgrown this tomfoolery: it is very clear Paramount Chieftaincy has nothing to do with the Oluship.

11. That, however, we of present day, who now start the action, see enough still of Dore's effrontery,

for he continues to say Government would punish anybody who opposed him, and that the Government is prepared to assist him to the end : surely we have been shuffled a great deal : this was the reason why the elders who died before us raised no dissentient voice. We have been able to pursue our righteous cause unmolested by his tall talks, because we know now British Government is a just one and deals squarely with all.

12. That to speak the truth, Dore is not doing things in the right way : when a man in high position misrules, complications, yea, contentions, must occur now and again. We ask Your Honour's leave to repeat again, if you recollect, the Sobos and Ijaws oftentimes lodged important complaints to you, some of which used to occasion Your Honour's visit to Warri to adjust things ; and, in addition, the fact that our peace-loving and law-abiding country ceased to be represented in the now defunct Nigerian Council is sufficient to dispel all doubts in this respect.

13. That we respectfully beg leave to reiterate the question of the Okere land of which we crave your indulgence. This land was given to the Government ten years ago by him ; but now, when the Okere people sued him, he wrote a letter to them saying the land belonged to them, and that he is willing and prepared to pay over to them the sum of £20 presented to him by the Government in respect of Okere land. What does this mean? His letter referred to was put in evidence by us at the hearing of our case.

14. That we wish to point out, when there is an important dispute between two sections of a nation or community, and the judgment of him who was to

settle it is unjust, imperfect, and partial, the dispute is never permanently settled, and there is bound to be unrest for an indefinite period.

15. That Dore used to do annual sacrifice to the Royal Dead (a duty which is not his) outside our capital town of Big Warri, which is contrary to Itsekiri Laws and Custom. Whoever sees it, but objects not, dies for negligence. We are all Government Officers like Dore, and there is no reason why we must sit down with our hands folded, beholding him usurping our birthright all the time. All we know him for is his post of Political Agent, in respect of which he receives annual salary from the Government.

16. That he has drawn plenty of monies from time to time, the property of our late father, Olu Akengbuwa, and utilised it lavishly as he chose. It is rather funny, Your Honour, that he will not act justly till he is summoned in Court; e.g., he surrendered Okere land because they sued him. We complained that he took our money, but resigned our Father's Palace and Capital to ruin, when he started clearing Big Warri. He appears a horse that moves only at a stroke of the whip—awfully disgraceful! When we consider these acts of his, they make us laugh exhaustively.

17. That this case against Dore, we would remind Your Honour once more, is instituted by Olu Akengbuwa Family. Dore's family in comparison with ours, is just like a house-fly on the skin of a huge elephant. It is useless regarding this matter as an insignificant one—we represent the majority of the whole of Itsekiris. It has often been alleged, too, that our Mr. William Moore, who heads the movement, is only a small boy. We wish it to be noted, Your Honour, that a man of William Moore's age and stand-

ing is by no means a small boy ; and, besides that, he is not acting of his own will, but that the elders, including ourselves and the rest of Olu Akengbuwa Family, took him into confidence and duly authorised him to act on their behalf inasmuch as he does not do things against their instructions. We all know you are conversant with the affairs appertaining to our country, because your continuous endeavour to help us progress remains ever fresh in our memory : therefore we have no hesitation in stating everything in white and black before you.

18. That since we were dissatisfied with the judgment of the Divisional Court, we are appealing before the Full Court ; and if still unfortunate, we shall be forced to seek justice somewhere, having now prepared to prosecute the case seven good years. On the contrary, if it could be settled justly at any time, i.e., lie is not made to triumph over truth, and *might* not made to subdue *right*, we are only too anxious and ready to let go once for all.

In conclusion, we beg humbly to mention for your information that your local representative (the Resident) invited us twice to meetings in his Office, on May 25th and June 18th, 1923, respectively, to discuss terms of settlement. We might have liked to tell him he should have made this noble attempt long before, but as it is not our desire to prolong the litigation, and as we concede the maxim that " it is never too late to amend," we went to discuss the matter with him. The attached copy of a letter addressed to him (the Resident) on the 8th instant, contains our ultimatum. If anything can be done at any time to effect a reasonable compromise, we shall gladly welcome same.

And for this, your humble Servants as in duty bound will ever pray.

	CHIEF OGBOBINE.	Their	X
	„ OMAGBEMI.		X
(Signed)	„ SKIN.		
	„ JIM ETCHIE.		X
	„ DENEDO.		X
	„ GBEMINEBITSE.		X
	„ EKEKE.		X
	„ EDUN KPEREGBEYI.		X
	„ OMATSULI EGBEGBE.		X
	„ ERUWA OKORODUDUN.		X
	„ OTSEJU CHEKE.		X marks.

Writer and witness to marks

Gratis. (Signed) WM. A. MOORE.

W.I., Omatsola.

To this the Acting Secretary, Southern Provinces, in a correspondence No. A1388/1922, dated at Lagos the 14th July, 1923, replied, *inter alia* :

2. The Acting Secretary, Southern Provinces, is to add that nobody regrets more than His Honour that the question should have resulted in litigation, and that as soon as the parties have accepted the decision of the Courts, His Honour will be prepared to do all he can to effect a reconciliation as far as it is possible to do so within the decision.

(Signed) W. BUCHANAN SMITH,  
Acting Secretary,  
Southern Provinces.

On the first of February, 1924, the Full Court heard

the Appeal, and its judgment, which was delivered on the 16th February, 1924, was as follows :

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA.

FULL COURT.

Friday, the 1st day of February, 1924.

CHIEF OMAGBEMI (SUBSTITUTED FOR CHIEF DENEDO)  
AND OTHERS—PLAINTIFFS-APPELLANTS

*versus*

CHIEF DORE NUMA—DEFENDANT-RESPONDENT.

The Appellants, who were Plaintiffs in the Court below, sued on behalf of themselves and the members of the Olu Akengbuwa family for a declaration that they are the owners of certain lands at Warri and for an account of rents and profits received by the Respondent from the Nigerian Government in respect of the said lands.

While the Appeal was pending one of the Appellants, Chief Denedo, died, and Chief Omagbemi was substituted by an order of this Court.

The Appellants claimed to be the direct descendants of Akengbuwa, who was the last Olu Jekri, that is the Chief of the Jekri people, who, by virtue of his title exercised control over the lands of the tribe.

At the hearing of the Appeal the Appellants' Counsel applied for leave to amend the summons by adding after the claim the words " the Plaintiffs sue as representative of the Olu Jekri people for and on behalf of themselves and the Jekri people." This application was opposed by the Respondent's Counsel, who argued that the Appellants had in the Court below claimed the land as having been the land, not of the Jekri people, but of the Olu Jekri, and could not now be heard as claiming in any other capacity than as for themselves and the Akengbuwa family.

The Court upheld this contention and refused to allow the amendment.

Ten grounds of Appeal had been filed, but the Appellants at the hearing relied only on the second, third and tenth grounds, which was as follows :

2. Judgment against the weight of evidence.
3. Court was wrong in law in holding that the Defendant was entitled to hold the lands as against the Plaintiffs.
10. Court was wrong in entering Judgment for the Defendant, which presupposes that the Defendant has a title to the lands as against the Plaintiffs.

The last ground was not seriously maintained as the Respondent's Counsel admitted that the judgment merely decided that the Appellants were not entitled to the declaration for which they asked, and that the Respondent would not be able to plead *res judicata* in a similar action by other plaintiffs or even by the same plaintiffs suing in a different capacity.

There is equally no doubt as to the position of the person holding the title of Olu Jekri with regard to the lands of Jekri people. It was admitted by the first witness in the Court below, Chief Denedo, himself one of the Plaintiffs, that the Olu held the land as trustee for the people and not as individual owner or on behalf of his family.

The history of the matter, which, so far as this appeal is concerned, begins with the death of Akongbuwa, the last Olu, some 60 to 100 years ago, is clearly sketched in the judgment of the Divisional Court. It may, however, be convenient briefly to recapitulate the main facts. On the death of Akongbuwa his two eldest sons died in rapid succession, and a civil war broke out which resulted in the dispersal

of Akengbuwa's family and the flight of his other sons. Iye, who was daughter of Eregua, and half-sister to Akengbuwa, was left in control.

The three claimants to the Oluship, two of whom were sons and one a half-brother of Akengbuwa, were referred by her to the free citizens who had the right by tribal custom to elect the Olu.

No appointment was made, apparently because the people's experience of the Akengbuwa family had disgusted them with the system under which they had hitherto been ruled. In the expressive language of one of the witnesses, "the free citizens of Jekri said they would not have Akengbuwa's sons because they spoilt the house."

After the death of Iye, Chanomi, her son, was appointed Governor with powers similar to those of the Olu as regards the lands of the people. It appears during the lifetime of Akengbuwa one of his sons was appointed by him to collect the rents or "dashes" payable in respect of the land and distributed them among the Chiefs. This appointment was held by Abaga, who was unsatisfactory and was replaced by Amateye, who in turn was succeeded by Ndiare, who held the appointment up to the time of Akengbuwa's death.

These functions then became vested in Iye by virtue of the position which she assumed, and she was succeeded by Chanomi, her son, who either assumed or carried on the title of Governor. He did not succeed merely by right of descent from Iye, but was appointed by the free citizens.

Whether Chanomi was the first person to assume the title of Governor is not quite clear; but this is not a matter of great importance. There is some evidence that the person who collected the rents or "dashes" for the Olu was given this title and that Ndiare was

known by it: on the other hand it may have been assumed by Chanomi for the first time when he came into contact with Europeans, as the learned Judge in the Court below seems to have thought. In any case it is clear that the management and trusteeship of the lands of the Jekri people passed naturally and logically into the hands of Chanomi, and so became vested in the Respondent, who was selected by the important Chiefs in the place of Nana, who also had been appointed by the people, but had been deposed by the British Government. The Respondent is not, and does not claim to be either the Olu or the owner of the land. He says himself, "I do not claim the land as my own, but in trust for the Olu and Jekris. If an Olu were appointed, I would hand up my staff at once. . . . I represent the Olu because I am head and because I am Paramount Chief. If I were not Paramount Chief I should not represent the Olu." It seems to me that the Respondent's position could not have been more clearly or more convincingly stated.

It was argued for the Appellants that in the absence of an Olu, his powers are exercised by the Olotu, and that since all the Olotus appointed since the death of the last Olu have belonged to the family of Akengbuwa, the Appellants are, in some way which I do not clearly apprehend, entitled to exercise the same powers. Now the truth of this matter appears clearly from the evidence. Since Akengbuwa died there have been three Olotus, the last of whom died about eighteen months before this action was commenced. Their functions were purely sacerdotal in character, and were limited to the offering of sacrifices to the Royal Dead. That is, the spirit of departed Olu. They were never endowed with, and never laid claim to, any functions of an administrative nature, and no

argument in favour of the Appellants' case is to be deduced from their appointment.

In my opinion it is perfectly clear that the Appellants can have no claim to the land as representatives of the Olu Jekri. They must then fall back on the position that they, as representatives of Akengbuwa family, are the owners of the land.

Clearly such a position cannot possibly be maintained in the face of the evidence. Akengbuwa himself, the last Olu, held the land, not by virtue of his position as head of the Akengbuwa family, but because he had been selected by the people as Olu to hold the land, in trust for the people. Akengbuwa's family, as such, had never any interest in the land beyond the beneficial interest enjoyed by all the Jekri people.

I am of opinion that the judgment of the Court below should be affirmed and that this appeal should be dismissed.

(Signed) M. L. TEW,  
Judge.

I concur.

(Signed) R. M. COMBE,  
C. J.

I concur.

(Signed) F. A. VAN DER MEULEN,  
J.

Appellants to pay fifty guineas the costs of the appeal.

(Signed) R. M. COMBE,  
C. J.

Certified a true copy.

(Signed) J. H. STANLEY-ROBIN,  
Chief Registrar.

Then in November the same year, 1924, when His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, Southern Provinces,

Nigeria, visited Warri on a tour of inspection, the following arrangement was effected which gave birth to the Itsekiri National Fund known as the "Olu Fund," and now in existence under the control of three trustees. The said arrangement which is reproduced herein is recognised by all Itsekiri as "Col. Moorhouse's Reconciliation."

"I saw the Jekri Chiefs on the morning of the 13th November with a view to obtaining settlement of their disputes following the judgment of the Supreme Court. After considerable discussion, the following points emerged :

- (i) That the only people now living who could arrange for the sacrifice to the Olu were Chief Dore and Chiefs Ogbobine and Omagbemi, who were all present at the meeting.
- (ii) That the following amounts were the rents drawn by Chief Dore either from the Government or from Firms :

At Warri from Government	£190
„ John Holt ..	£35 or £30

The amount is in dispute, but the Resident is ascertaining which sum is correct from the Agent of John Holt.

Koko .. .. .	£40
Sapele .. .. .	£100
Ikerimu Ijaws .. .. .	£6

A total taking John Holt at £30 of £366. From this must be deducted £60 which is paid to the Sobos Chiefs at Sapele, leaving a total of £306.

2. It was suggested by Chief Skin that this amount should be divided into six parts, of which one part should be paid to Chief Dore and the remaining five parts banked for the purpose of being used for looking

after the Olu's house at Old Warri and for carrying out various sacrifices.

3. I eventually put forward the following proposal, which was agreed to practically unanimously :

- (i) That the money should be divided as suggested above.
- (ii) That one-sixth should be given to Chief Dore in recognition of the fact that he had, as far as the Government was concerned, been in the position of the Olu.
- (iii) That the other five-sixths should be paid into the bank and that Chief Dore and Chiefs Ogbobine and Omagbemi should be the Trustees of the Fund which should be expended for the purposes mentioned in the previous paragraph.
- (iv) That these three Trustees should have power to add to their number in accordance with native custom after consultation with the Resident.
- (v) That no question was to be raised as to the steps taken by Chief Dore for the administration of the funds in the past, but that this arrangement should apply to the rents accruing in 1925.

4. This arrangement should be put into operation at the beginning of 1925 and arrangements made with the Bank to secure that this Fund can only be operated on by the Trustees with the approval of the Resident.

5. Since the meeting I have received a letter from Chiefs Ogbobine and Omagbemi, a copy of which is attached in which they raise the question of certain further rents received from Ijaws and Sobos in Benin River area. They should be informed that I have received that letter, but, as no question was raised at the meeting in connexion with these rents, I do not propose to include them in the arrangement, more

particularly as I asked at the meeting, on more than one occasion, whether there was anything more to be added in the way of rent and I was told distinctly no.

6. In making the arrangements with the Chiefs, it should be distinctly impressed upon them that if the arrangement now come to is not found workable, the Government will have no option but to enforce the Judgment in the case by the Supreme Court and hand over all the rents to Chief Dore.

(Signed) H. C. MOORHOUSE,  
Lieutenant-Governor,  
Southern Provinces.

At Benin.

(On tour.)

16th November, 1924."

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### 3.—OGEGEDE *versus* CHIEF DORE NUMA.

The parent of this litigation may rightly be styled "ill-advice." A certain class of Foreign Natives (according to the British Government's definition of Africans who chanced to become resident in a sister colony within the British Empire) who happened to befriend the Sobos of Agbassa, considered it was a good job to instigate the Agbassas to bring or start an action against the Itsekiri people for letting on hire what they fancied to be the Agbassa Sobos' land or property to the Nigerian Government and Mercantile Firms.

This sort of goading went on for years and the lobbyists were immensely well paid by the gawkies of Agbassa. The Itsekiri's first experience of what pessimists term the baneful effect of the so-called Western Civilisation was the arrogant attitude and the awful audacity of the Agbassa young folks during the hearing of this case. Of all Sobos, Agbassa, though

not the least populated, is admittedly the meanest. Since the advent of the British Government, there has never been one Warranted Chief produced by her : yet her immediate neighbour, the Efurun, has produced, and continues producing, Warranted Chiefs and men of renown in the commercial sphere, in increasing quantity. The Efuruns, and even all other Sobos, have often expressed, and are still labelling, the Agbassa populace as purely plebeian, and the facts of daily life go always to confirm this.

Had they started the action rightly, that is to say, if they had recognised the Olu Itsekiri's overlordship, and only claimed for a share of the annual rents derivable from lands given out on hire by the Representative of the Olu to Aliens, the action might not, and possibly could not, have been contested by the Itsekiris at all.

The costs of this lawsuit to the Agbassa were incalculable, involving them in loans of hundreds of pounds ; while the expenditure of the Itsekiris, which was borne by the " Olu Fund," amounted to about £500.

After oscillating between the Full Court of Nigeria and the Divisional Court, Eastern Circuit, this suit was finally heard during the November, 1929, Warri Assizes, and judgment was entered by Mr. Justice A. F. C. Webber, in favour of the Defendant. Chief Dore Numa, with one hundred guineas costs.

Although the Efuruns are said to side with the Agbassas in a way, and some go the length of giving them pecuniary support, the recent land dispute between Ugbəḍon, representing Otomẹwọ Family of Ukpẹ-Sobo, and Chief Sam Jekri, *alias* Majemite, son of Irerọ of Efurun, exposed the falsity of Agbassa claim. The land in dispute in this action is ten miles away from New Warri, on the Warri-Sapele road

between Efurun and Ukpę-Sobo, yet the litigants acknowledged the Olu's title. This action was commenced at, and heard by, the Native Appeal Court of Warri, on Monday, the 18th day of February, 1930, when both parties to the action declared that the land belonged to the Olu Itsekiri. The truth averred by these gentlemen unsolicited is, or rather ought to serve as, an eye-opener to those busy-bodies who sponsored the cause of the Agbassas, who, as knavish peasants, are easily susceptible to mesmerism by the feats of clever rogues. Mr. Justice Thomas Doveton Maxwell's judgment in the Agbassa land case is therefore most picturesque and philosophical in this respect, and I have no hesitation in quoting it with pleasure, here, *in extenso* :—

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA.

DIVISIONAL COURT, EASTERN DIVISION.

WARRI ASSIZES, the 6th day of November, 1925.

Before his Honour Mr. Justice T. D. Maxwell, Judge.  
OGEGEDE (on behalf of himself and the Agbassa people)

*versus*

DORE NUMA.

Claim :—An account of rents.

JUDGMENT.

I see no reason for granting the application which was before me yesterday, viz., that Chiefs Ogbobine and Omagbemi should be joined in this case as co-defendants.

2. Plaintiffs' claim is for an account of rents collected by the defendant in respect of portions of Agbassa land leased to the Government since 1908. No explanation has been given me as to why there has been a delay of 17 years in preferring it.

They come to this Court in the persons of a series of utterly illiterate peasant witnesses. Of the first three each seemed to me merely senile; and I accept (not without hesitation) their Counsel's assertion that they were sober—or at least normal in the witness-box. Each of the others seemed to me to be abysmally stupid as well as ignorant.

The evidence such as it is of the whole set of them is a tissue of hearsay, of rumour, of contradictions, of absurdities. Where it is not merely fatuous it is obviously fictitious.

The local (and legal) position of the defendant was on 1st February, 1924, finally laid down by the Full Court in *Denedo v. Dore Numa*.

That decision has been acted upon by the Executive without any opposition or criticism until the filing of this case, which if successful would strike out its very roots.

I do not consider it necessary to call upon the defendant or his witnesses; the onus of proof is on the plaintiffs and they have in my opinion signally failed to discharge it.

Their claims seems to me both idle and preposterous. The fact that they have made it at all (and of that I can take judicial cognizance) has caused no little local excitement, and has to a certain degree dislocated trade and might even have led to a breach of the peace.

I dismiss the plaintiffs' claim and award costs to defendant assessed at one hundred and twenty-five guineas.

(Signed) T. D. MAXWELL,  
J.

6th November, 1925.

Certified a true copy.

(Signed) J. A. BASSEY,  
Registrar, E.D.

7th November, 1925.

The site where the town of Agbassa is situated was called by the Itsekiris, Ubumale, meaning a "Juju Village." It had been the settlement of an Umale named Ekperuma, who had a tree the seeds of which were used for manufacturing crystal blue bead "Egiugo" (second in value to the coral bead, in the estimation of the Itsekiriman). Owing to frequent demands for the seeds (ugo) by the Olu, the owner hewed the tree down and he himself dematerialised.

During the reign of Olu Irame, a fatal skirmish occurred at Agbassa-Oto, and the quarters which suffered most in casualties resolved to migrate, and so they came to Olu Irame and begged for a place wherein to dwell. He apportioned to them the place Ubumale, where they built a town (present town of Agbassa) and settled down. It was to these emigrants, also, that he entrusted cassava plant for cultivation. Several years afterwards, some of the Agbassas founded settlements in the nature of villages and hamlets, namely Jesse, Otegehele, and Ukpokiti, all under the authority of and by permission of the Olu-Itsekiri.

In payment for these presents, the Agbassa Sobos used to render service of grass-cutting at Ode-Itsekiri yearly for the Olu. When it is remembered that the descendants of the Agbassa emigrants have become so audacious, so fraudulent, and so ungrateful to their benefactor, in this so-called civilised age, one is shocked to imagine what atrocities lie buried in the womb of nature and which may again hatch in the unknown future. All the same, the invincible Truth is ever intact to conquer error, however formidable this may seem at first sight.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### TAXATION AND NATIVE ADMINISTRATION

THE introduction and enactment of the following Ordinance by the Legislative Council of Nigeria, stirred what I may call anti-tax agitation.

“ A Bill entitled an Ordinance to regulate the levying and collection of a general tax in the Colony.

Be it Enacted by the Governor of Nigeria, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof as follows :—

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the General Tax (Colony) Ordinance, 1927, and shall apply to the Colony only and shall come into force on the 1st April, 1928.

2. There shall be levied and collected, in manner hereinafter mentioned, a tax (hereinafter called “ the general tax ”) of ten shillings per annum payable by every male person of the age of sixteen years and upwards resident in the Colony.

A person shall be deemed to be resident in the Colony in any calendar year for the purpose of this Ordinance if his ordinary place of residence is in the Colony for any part of that year or if he is actually in the Colony for any part or parts of a year exceeding three months in all.

The onus shall be upon any person found at any time within the Colony who alleges that he is not resident within the Colony within the meaning of this Ordinance to prove his allegation.

3. The Administrator shall be responsible for the

collection of the general tax and shall pay the same to the Treasurer to form part of the public revenue of Nigeria. The Administrator may appoint suitable persons as assistants to him in the collection of the said tax.

4. It shall be the duty of every employer of labour, of every head of a family, of every householder and of every person who may be so required to give all such information (verbally or in writing) as may be required of him as an assistance to the collection of the general tax, by the Administrator or any of his assistants; and every such employer of labour, head of a family, householder, or other person who shall neglect or refuse to give such information or who shall wilfully mislead or attempt to mislead the Administrator or any of his assistants on any matter connected with the collection of the said tax shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of one hundred pounds or to one year's imprisonment or to both.

5. The Governor may exempt any class of person from the general tax.

6. Any assistant to the Administrator or any person employed by the Administrator or one of his assistants in connexion with the collection of the general tax who—

- (a) demands from any person any amount in excess of ten shillings:
- (b) withholds for his own use or otherwise any portion of the amount collected:
- (c) renders a false return, whether verbal or in writing, of the amounts collected or received by him:
- (d) wilfully misrepresents the number of persons from whom he is authorised to collect tax:
- (e) defrauds, embezzles, or otherwise uses his position so as to deal wrongfully either with the Administrator, a chief, or the individuals of any community:

shall be guilty of a felony and liable to a fine of three hundred pounds or to imprisonment for three years or to both.

7. Any person who shall unlawfully refuse or neglect to pay the general tax, or who shall incite any other person so to refuse or neglect, shall be liable to a fine of one hundred pounds or to imprisonment for one year or to both.

The offender may be arrested without warrant by any Administrative Officer assisting the Administrator in the collection of the said tax or by any police officer not below the rank of Superintendent.

8. Any person who shall attempt to evade payment of the general tax by falsely pretending that he has already paid such tax or any other tax the payment of which carries exemption from payment of the general tax shall be liable to a fine of two hundred pounds or to imprisonment for two years or to both.

9. It shall be the duty of every person to whom any receipt or token evidencing payment of general tax is given to take such steps as will ensure that that receipt or token is not used by any other person for the purpose of evading the payment of any tax, and any person failing in such duty shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of one hundred pounds or to imprisonment for one year or to both: and if it is proved that he has allowed such receipt or token to pass into the possession of another person with the intention that such other person should, or the knowledge that such other person might, use such receipt or token for the purpose of evading the payment of any tax, he shall be liable to a fine of two hundred pounds or to imprisonment for two years or to both.

10. Any person who, not being authorised under

this Ordinance so to do, shall collect or attempt to collect any contribution or tax under this Ordinance shall be guilty of a felony and liable to a fine of three hundred pounds or to imprisonment for three years or to both.

11. Proceedings to enforce payment of the general tax may be taken before the Supreme Court, a Provincial Court or a Native Tribunal.

12. The Governor in Council may make regulations for further or better carrying into effect any of the purposes or provisions of this Ordinance.

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*Objects and Reasons.*

To provide for the levy and collection of a tax of ten shillings per annum, payable by every adult male person resident in the Colony, with effect from the 1st April, 1928, the date upon which it is proposed to apply the Native Revenue Ordinance to those provinces of the Protectorate to which it has not yet been applied.

(Signed) DONALD KINGDON,  
*Attorney-General.*

Supplement to the *Nigerian Gazette*, No. 1, of 6th Jan., 1927."

As the agitation was heightening in the Warri Province, William Edgar Hunt, Esquire, Acting Secretary, Southern Provinces, visited Warri, and on Monday, the 16th day of May, 1927, held a meeting with the Itsekiris and Sobos of Warri, at the Native Court Hall, at which the problem of general tax was discussed. The Warranted Chiefs headed by Chief Dore all agreed to pay; but the people objected to

pay on the ground that they had not been properly and sufficiently educated as to the usefulness or the benefits accruing from the payment of tax, and stoutly protested against the imposition of Poll Tax, and demanded extension of time to consider the matter. The Acting Secretary informed them, the Law had been passed by the Government already, and therefore, willing or not, all must pay.

The people's conduct was not honourable during the discussion that day, and the meeting was brought to a close almost in disorder.

From that time onward, the anti-tax agitation throughout the Province of Warri grew to such a magnitude, that the people in the hinterland became almost lawless and untamed, closing Native Courts by stifling litigation and placing a sort of embargo upon trade generally, and in produce trade particularly, so that there was a complete deadlock.

The ringleaders were: Egbele and Ofomala of Ukpę-Sobo, Omotsuę of Obodo, Okokporo of Efurun, Roberts of Kroo-Coast (Liberia), Taylor of Sierra Leone, J. E. Otuędęn of Gbonokposo, Okę Diare of Jakpa, and Ogborimoyi of Big Warri.

With the exception of Warri, Sapele and one or two others, all Native Courts throughout the Province were practically closed down.

On Monday, the 22nd August, 1927, the Itsekiri Tribe, headed by Ogborimeyi and Okę Diare, submitted a monster petition on the subject of the imposition of Poll Tax, through Chief Dore Numa to the Government of Nigeria. By Thursday, the 8th September, 1927, fearing or rather entertaining some doubt that this Chief might suppress the original petition, the Itsekiris handed the duplicate copy of it to Mr. Dundas,

the Resident in charge of Warri Province, for transmission to Headquarters.

On Tuesday, the 27th September, 1927, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria, F. M. Baddeley, Esquire, arrived at Warri, per s.s. *Ajasa*, and on the following day held a meeting with the Chiefs and People of Warri at the Resident's Office on the subject of Poll Tax. The people were indignant, but no breach occurred. In passing, tribute should be paid to Captain R. A. Wortham, Commissioner of Police, Warri-Benin Division, and his men for having excellently maintained order throughout the proceedings.

On the 29th September, 1927, His Excellency held a similar meeting at Sapele; and immediately after his departure from that port, there was a riot, in which an Ukpe-Sobo man named Iyakaighę, was shot dead by the police with a rifle, and a few others (all Sobos) were wounded.

At the November Assizes, presided over by Mr. Justice T. D. Maxwell, which commenced on Thursday, 3rd November, 1927, the ringleaders of the Sobo rioters at Sapele, amongst whom was one, Mr. Isaac Oghumu, were tried on the indictment preferred by the Crown Counsel, convicted, and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

Later, the ringleaders at Warri, whose names I have already mentioned, with the exception of Mr. Taylor, who eloped while on a mission with Mr. Otuedon at Sierra Leone, were all arrested and prosecuted for supposed treasonable crimes, at the Warri Assizes, held on the 13th day (Monday) of February, 1928, and presided over by Mr. Justice P. B. Petrides. Ogborimeyi, Okę Diare, and Okoporo were acquitted,

while Otuędön, Roberts and Omotsuę were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. They were ably defended by Mr. Montacute Thompson, M.A., B.C.L., LL.B. (with Hons., Lond.). Egbele was too old to stand any punishment, and so was not brought up at all, but the ex-convict and dismissed Chief, Ofomala, who was most vehement and active during the agitation, had become the wonderful Crown Witness used against the others.

Thenceforward several informal meetings took place between the Government and the people, Mr. Hunt having been permanently stationed at Warri as the Senior Resident charged with the duty of designing the scheme of taxation which might be workable in the Warri Province. After much pioneer work, payment of what is called "Tribute Tax," of seven shillings per head per year, was commenced eventually in the Provincial areas in June, 1928. Income tax, within the townships, was also commenced at the same time.

In accordance with the Public Notice issued by the Resident, Warri Province, in May, 1928, one half of the tax collected was to be administered by the people's own chosen Representatives, and, therefore, with the utilisation of that portion of the tax arose the question of the necessity for a stable Native Administration. Joint endeavours of the Government and the Itsekiris in formulating an Itsekiri Native Administration from February, 1928, to March, 1930, are clearly sketched in the following document :—

PETITION

to

His Excellency Sir Graeme Thomson, K.C.B.,  
Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony and  
Protectorate of Nigeria, etc., etc., etc.

The Humble Petition  
of

John Eda Otuędon,  
William Akpicyi Moore,  
Edema Arubi and Others

Representing the Mass of Itsekiri People of Warri  
Province in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria

HUMBLY SHEWETH :—

1. That Your Excellency's humble Petitioners are the aggrieved majority of the Itsekiri tax-payers and submit this petition, as a vehement protest against the matter of the autocratic conduct of Mr. J. W. C. Rutherford, Resident, Warri Province, in connexion with the constitution of the Itsekiri Native Administration, a necessity brought about by the Native Revenue Ordinance of Nigeria.

2. That it would be long remembered that during the introduction of tax throughout Nigeria in the year 1927, there was a turbulent opposition in Warri and districts which resulted in loss of human lives before the opposition was quelled.

3. That the unprecedented fierce agitation arose owing to the following reasons :—

(a) That one, Chief Dore Numa, made the matter of the tax a private personal concern of his own with the Administrative Officers in Warri. He gave them his consent, and said that the Itsekiri people are under his control and so long that he had agreed, they would all agree and that there was no further need to bother about them.

(b) That the said Chief Dore Numa took no trouble whatever to call the Itsekiri People together

to inform and explain to them the object and necessity for the imposition of the tax, as the matter was explained to him by the Administrative Officers.

- (c) That the tax proposition came to the hearing of the Itsekiri people informally and, in their bewildered position, by not being properly informed, they naturally became exasperated that they were being made slaves to pay perpetual ransom for their heads ; they thought that to live under such conditions, it was better to die : hence they adopted that measure of a strenuous opposition.
- (d) That the said Chief Dore Numa self-established himself as the Head of the Itsekiri people, whereas he was never so made by the Itsekiri people, because they only regarded him as a chief created by the Government in like manner as other chiefs.

4. That the facts stated in the foregoing paragraph 3 were embodied as the foundation of grievances in a petition dated September, 1927, submitted through the said Chief Dore Numa for the information of Your Excellency and which petition he suppressed.

5. That it was when Mr. W. E. Hunt and Major G. H. Walker came from Sapele to Warri that they summoned a meeting of Itsekiri Chiefs and people, and at which a copy of the petition suppressed by Chief Dore Numa was produced and the contents were laid bare and discussed, and the grounds of grievances as already stated in paragraph 3 hereof were exhaustively dealt with, when Mr. Hunt told Chief Dore Numa that his conduct towards the people was wrong as it was in duty bound that he ought

always to call meetings of Itsekiri and not to represent them unauthorised, which is bound always to cause trouble.

6. That the tax agitation having ended, on or about the 15th February, 1928, Mr. W. E. Hunt (then Senior Resident, Warri Province) held a meeting at the Residency with a fully representative body of all Itsekiri people and advocated for reunion and to let all "bygones be bygones," so as to prepare for the formation of Native Administration in view of the imposition of tax.

7. That on or about the 22nd December, 1928, at the instance of Mr. F. P. Lynch, Resident, Warri Province, Mr. J. W. C. Rutherford, District Officer, Warri Division, held a meeting with Itsekiri people at Big Warri and there stated that the Government required that an Olu Itsekiri be installed with the least possible delay. He was informed that it was impracticable to create an Olu immediately, but that an Olotu could be first created to represent the Olu till all necessary arrangements shall have been completed for the installation of Olu.

8. That on the 20th January, 1929, a meeting was held at Big Warri by all those who mattered, and an Olotu was selected and appointed, and the Government informed accordingly.

9. That on the 26th June, 1929, a meeting was held at Big Warri, presided over by Capt. J. C. F. Pender, District Officer, Warri Division, and the subject was to compile the native law and custom of the Itsekiri people. Capt. Pender, who wanted to write the law and custom of the Itsekiri people, was told to leave the matter in the hands of the people themselves to put their facts as correctly as far as it is possible, and

Mr. William A. Moore was responsible for the writing. This was completed and delivered to the District Officer, Warri Division.

10. That all on a sudden the question was mooted by Mr. Rutherford and Capt. Pender that Chief Dore should be given the appointment as Governor of Itsekiri. That at the requests of Mr. Rutherford, Capt. Pender and Chief Dore, a general meeting of Itsekiri people was held at Big Warri on the 13th September, 1929, and the people perforce with one accord gave consent. In fact, the message sent by Chief Dore through his own messengers was to the effect that he was to be created as an Olu. It was the message of Dore that led the people as a precaution to be insistent that they agree that Chief Dore be Governor and that an Olu is to be installed immediately. Now the office of Governor is a messenger of the Olu, and that since there has ceased to be Olu, the last Governor (an envoy to collect customs from European merchants) was Chief Nana, and after him there has ceased to be any such office, which in fact was no longer necessary. It dawned at the long last as it ought to be, that Your Excellency is unable to approve of such title of office for a native administration, otherwise, with that title of Governor Chief Dore aimed to abolish the installation of an Olu during his lifetime.

11. That another proposition has been that of the formation of a Council, of which Mr. Rutherford again, as he is wont, appointed Chief Dore to be the President, disregarding what are the wishes of the people. That in this connexion, at the instance of Capt. Pender, a meeting was held at Big Warri on the 23rd October, 1929, for the express purpose of: (a) whether the

persons or representatives of those towns who attended the meeting at Big Warri on the 22nd December, 1928, with the District Officer now Resident Rutherford, are agreed to the appointment of Chief Dore as Governor of Itsekiri according to the minutes of the general meeting of the 13th September, 1929, and (b) the inauguration of a council and the nomination of seven councillors with Chief Dore as President.

12. That with reference to the foregoing paragraph 11, it is abundantly clear that owing to Press exposures, it became evident that the appointment of Chief Dore as Governor was not with the uninfluenced consent of the people. That as regards the presidency of Chief Dore over the Council, the meeting of the 23rd October, 1929, emphatically rejected Chief Dore and resolved that the Olotu should be the rightful president, in accordance with the Itsekiri native law and custom. That the resolution and the proceedings of the meeting were communicated accordingly to the Resident, Mr. Rutherford.

13. That with the decision of the meeting of the 23rd October, 1929, as already stated, Mr. Rutherford and Capt. Pender found themselves "on the horns of a dilemma," and the Council they expected to rush through in a fortnight came to a standstill. That it was the outcome of a letter dated the 20th January, 1930, signed by Mr. Edema Arubi and Mr. J. E. Otuedon, addressed to the Resident, Warri Province, through the District Officer, on the subject of the proposed formation of an Itsekiri National Union to function with the Itsekiri Native Administration, that awoke Mr. Rutherford and Capt. Pender from lethargy, to think about their Council and their Chief Dore.

14. That with renewed activity, Mr. Rutherford

with Capt. Pender convened a meeting of Itsekiri Chiefs and people on Monday, the 10th February, and Wednesday, the 12th February, 1930, the condensed report being as follows :

- (1) Monday, 10th Feb., 1930. The meeting began at about 10.45 a.m. in the Divisional Office. The Resident in his opening speech gave some historical data about the Itsekiri people, which he had collected from records and recent assessment reports: then followed a vivid narration of the faithful and long service of Chief Dore to the Government. He lavished praises on Chief Dore.
- (2) Among other matters, the Resident mentioned :
  - (1) That the position of Governor for Chief Dore is unapproved by His Excellency, there being but one Governor in Nigeria.
  - (2) That Dore would be Native Authority.
  - (3) That the Itsekiri people are averse to having an Olu installed during the lifetime of Dore. The Resident then informed the meeting that the subject for discussion was the formation of Itsekiri Council to consist of seven members and a president, and for the presidency he mentioned Dore. The Resident invited the views of those present.
- (3) Chief Skin was the first to speak: he gave an impressive sensible speech. Chief Skin, among other matters, pointed out that the statement of the Resident was incorrect, when he said, "that the Itsekiri people are averse to having an Olu installed during the lifetime of Dore." Chief Skin further stated that Dore also consented and that he himself would assist to have

an Olu installed. The Resident thanked Chief Skin and admitted the correction.

- (4) Chief Skin having ended his speech, Mr. Edema Arubi then rose up to speak, when Chief Dore raised objection that elders first be allowed to speak in rotation. The Resident asked Mr. Arubi whether he raised any objection? Mr. Arubi replied, "I submit, Sir, with all due deference." When the elders had spoken, Mr. Arubi, Mr. Otuedon, Mr. Egharegbemi, and Mr. Moore spoke severally.
- (5) To the remarks of the Resident that Chief Dore is the President of the Proposed Council, there was a dissension in that Omagbemi Ewolufu, the Olotu, is the rightful President according to native law and custom. The Resident gave a recess of about 10 minutes, after which the meeting resumed, and having heard few more speakers, he then summed up that those present should go and consider between Dore and the Olotu who should be president of the Council, and to submit names (even to the extent of one hundred) out of which selections would be made of the seven candidates or an increase if necessary:
- (6) The meeting was adjourned for Wednesday, 10 a.m., and that any one individual who wished could call on the Resident on Tuesday with any further views he might wish to bring forward.
- (7) Wednesday, 12th Feb., 1930. The meeting started about 10.30 a.m. There were about 10 minutes discussion. Then on the suggestion of the Resident it was resolved that all the chiefs and people should retire to confer and

submit names of the President and members of the Council. The Chiefs and people resorted to Miller Brothers and had a hot debate. The conclusions arrived at were :—

“ That there be two Councils :—

1. Executive Council with the Olotu as President.
2. Judicial Council, of which Chief Dore be President.

Cases tried in the Judicial Council are subject to appeal to Executive Council.”

(8) The meeting resumed at about 1.30 p.m., and report was given accordingly to the Resident, with the list of names of the prospective members of Councils. The Resident stated that he would again convene another meeting to be held either at Big Warri or elsewhere to be determined, for final settlement.

15. That according to paragraph 14 (8) hereof, Mr. Rutherford had an informal meeting on Friday, the 28th February, 1930, with the Olotu Chief Omagbemi Ewolufu and Chief Dore, and among other matters he said that any future meetings that he will hold with Itsekiri people he will exclude young men (meaning the educated ones), because with them things cannot work well: that being in order to pass over constitutional opposition. That in this connexion it becomes necessary to observe that there is a great mistake that educated Africans make and are making elsewhere, by secluding themselves from their native administration affairs, whereas they ought to come to the field of operations to checkmate evils instead of keeping aloof and later pounce on the Government with criticisms. In order to avoid this mistake, the educated Itsekiri young men have thought it fit to

associate themselves with the inception of the Itsekiri Native Administration, and to leave no stone unturned to see that things are done orderly to the material welfare of all concerned, by voicing out to Administrative Officers that the people be not overridden in the matter of choice of suitable candidates to manage their affairs, so that the people as well as the Government should not afterwards have troubles to trouble them.

16. That Mr. Rutherford, guided by Chief Dore as his adviser, invited selected Itsekiri elders (mostly chiefs and others who are subservient to Dore) and with them he held meetings at Big Warri on March 7th and 8th, 1930, and it becomes necessary to make the following observations :—

- (1) That Mr. Rutherford, before meeting with the Itsekiri people, went first to Dore at his town, Odogene, there privately to confer with and take advice from Chief Dore.
- (2) That at the meeting held at Big Warri on Friday, 7th March, 1930, Mr. Rutherford, among other matters, uttered these words :  
“ I have seen one or two old Itsekiri. It is not native custom to take a vote at public meeting. In the old days the big people had the word.” In old days of Itsekiri, the “ big people ” were those with slaves and wealth, who lived on captures and seizures as lords of oppression, and it is hoped that is not what Mr. Rutherford wants to revive. Would the Government help Mr. Rutherford to do that ? Mr. Rutherford said those words simply to pass Dore into position, so that whatever Dore says as a supposed “ big man ” (which he is not) must pass for law.

- (3) That at the meeting of 7th March, 1930, there was a sore need for, and it becomes necessary, to get an efficient interpreter. Mr. Rutherford was willing to accept and did ask Mr. Moore to be an interpreter, but Dore, who bears Mr. Moore malice, overruled, and Mr. Rutherford withdrew. The position of Dore is indeed great, for a native chief to rule a Resident.
- (4) That Mr. Rutherford, having addressed the meeting on 7th March, 1930, concluded that the Chiefs should confer and select the required Councillors, reminding them not to forget those educated ones who also have had long past Government service, and that the next day, 8th March, 1930, he would come to meet with them to receive the list of names. The mention of educated ones by Mr. Rutherford is a self-contradiction and apparently a delusion.

17. That on Saturday, 8th March, 1930, Chief Dore selected those over whom he holds sway and with them went to his house, into a room with closed doors, to select candidates.

18. That when the meeting sat, 8th March, 1930, the list of names selected by Chief Dore was handed over to Mr. Rutherford, who received it and expressed that he was glad that all was finished, but, he afterwards said that anybody who had anything further to say was at liberty to speak. Mr. Moore took the liberty and spoke, warning Mr. Rutherford that the arrangements which he carried through are bad enough and that a storm of opposition would be forthcoming, in that the wishes of the taxpayers have been wantonly disregarded. Mr. Moore made several pertinent observations to which Mr. Rutherford said that he would

not take heed. There were others whose speeches preceded that of Mr. Moore, and it was their correct feelings that Mr. Moore ventilated.

19. That it would be interesting to annotate on some of the candidates selected by Chief Dore, as far as they are known, the names not yet being published. . . .

20. That regardless of the people's persistently putting forward the Olotu as the rightful president for the Council, pending the installation of an Olu, Mr. Rutherford stoutly defied the people, because he has taken oath for Chief Dore, that he will set him (Dore) up as a Native Authority in place of Olu, as is evident from paragraph 14 (2) hereof.

21. That coming to Chief Dore personally, there are several others (men) who are equal to him by birth and some of them his elders. It is the desire of the people that the retirement of Dore from public affairs of the Itsekiri people was long overdue, so much so that when the Lieutenant-Governor, S.P., visited Warri in December, 1929, before and after his departure, there were rumours to the effect: (a) That the Government had already arranged the retirement of Dore with a compassionate retiring allowance of £300, and (b) that the Appeal Native Court, of which Dore is president, would be closed down as from 5th January, 1930. That these rumours afforded a great number of Itsekiri people not a small joy, but to their disappointment things continued as they were.

22. That Mr. Rutherford said: "It is not native custom to take a vote at public meetings," and thereby he admitted with self-complacency that he had passed Dore to the Itsekiri throne and all is well. But as partiality has drowned him, Mr. Rutherford was

partial enough in his reasonings, and so forgets that the imposition of tax is a new custom to the Itsekiri people, and that it is an axiom that "taxation goes with representation," and furthermore the Itsekiri are wise people who know that where there is equal contribution, every contributor whether small or great has equal rights, so that democracy is not a new thing to the Itsekiri people.

23. That the conduct of Mr. Rutherford becomes such that would eventually (if not checked) incense the Itsekiri people to another agitation fiercer than that which occurred when the Poll-tax was introduced, and as no one prays for such happening, so it is thought wise to submit the matter to Your Excellency, in order to avert the occurrence of riot and bloodshed.

24. That it becomes necessary to observe that a native Administration in essence is: (a) domestic life affairs of natives; (b) the half share of tax to the natives, the Government has no more share or concern in it; (c) it does not in any way compete with the Government or disturb its law and authority, and, as such, its matters are purely with the natives themselves, and should have less interference of Administrative Officers whose only duties are to protect and to advise, for the sake of justice and fair play.

25. That the imposition of the tax brought about a great unrest, but since it has been paid, the Itsekiri people should be allowed to use their portion to improve their country, that they may see and know that it was a blessing in disguise.

26. That three of the educated young men whose names head this petition have offered to the Resident, Warri Province, to get up and submit a constitution for the Itsekiri Native Administration, because the

framing of a constitution cannot be a duty for Administrative Officers who do not know the ethics of the Itsekiri, in that whatever their knowledge may be in that respect, it is only superficial. The educated Itsekiri know what their people are and what would fit them.

27. That the educated Itsekiri are the light and guide to their illiterate people, otherwise their education is useless. The educated ones are one and the same with their illiterate people, and one cannot be discarded from the other. There is not one of the educated Itsekiri that holds any grudge for the Government as to aim to mislead the illiterate mass against the Government by way of rebellion. The British Government is a sacred institution ordained by God. The misdeeds of some Administrative Officers as have been the subject of this petition, are the unruly wills and affections of sinful men.

28. That the agitation in connexion with the Poll-tax was carried beyond constitutional opposition as the result of Chief Dore and his followers, who proclaimed that the tax was being imposed to be shared between the Government and Chief Dore personally. This was the whole secret, and when the agitation was fierce, some Ijoh people had determined to loot the town of Chief Dore and to kill him, but some Itsekiri people warned them to refrain from such an act.

29. That the action of Mr. Rutherford to put Dore at the head of Itsekiri affairs against the will of the people is not far from a confirmation of the intention of Dore and his followers as stated in the foregoing paragraph 28. Funny as it appears, Mr. Rutherford, by words and demeanour, showed the inclination of

setting up a division among Itsekiri people (on account of Dore) when such a thing was unheard of in the annals of Itsekiri, and if Mr. Rutherford succeeds in effecting the division, that will mean two groups of Itsekiri Native Administration, one for Dore and his insignificant band of followers, and the other for the majority. It is a trite policy to divide and rule, for it is only a source of troubles to good Government, and the sooner this is realised, the better it will be for all concerned. Is there any wisdom in it, to force people to adore Dore, whose dealings and conduct they detest? In this petition there is no intention to deal with the faults, but that the few remarks about him are unavoidable, owing to matter of cause and effect.

30. That not wishing to weary Your Excellency by being prolix, it will suffice to say that this petition represents the actual feeling of the major mass of Itsekiri taxpayers, but not desiring to overcrowd the petition with a lengthy list of names, as such, the few names appended are quite sufficient, but when it comes to a matter of public demonstration, all the aggrieved taxpayers will muster strong.

31. That viewing circumspectly all the circumstances narrated in this petition, and reading between the lines, it is abundantly clear that the irregular mode in which Mr. Rutherford aims to build up the Itsekiri Native Administration, is to set up Dore as Head of the Itsekiri people, and subsequently, when Dore is in power, to turn round and say it is not possible to have an Olu installed, whereas the majority of the Itsekiri tax-payers want their Olu, in order to rectify the confusions created by Dore in the matter of deprivation of properties of individuals from their enjoyment, a condition which never before existed in Itsekiri land.

32. That it becomes Your Excellency's humble Petitioners to submit :—

- (a) That the Resident, Warri Province (Mr. Rutherford and his successors in office), be advised to allow the Itsekiri tax-payers without uncalled-for class distinction, to have voice and direct control over their own native administrative affairs, in the matter of selection and appointment of candidates to councils and offices as well as all other matters, subject to the indirect rule system of the Government ;
- (b) That the Olotu be not fettered in his office by placing Chief Dore over his head, as a clique to prevent the installation of an Olu Itsekiri ; and
- (c) That the Government be good enough to assist paternally, to enable the Itsekiri people to build up their country, which is already almost ruined by Chief Dore, who has long, unauthorised, self-styled himself as the representative of the Olu Itsekiri, and :

for the granting of these prayers, Your Excellency's most humble Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Dated Warri, 18th March, 1930.

(Signed) J. E. OTUEDON.  
,, WM. A. MOORE.  
,, EDEMA ARUBL.

#### APPENDIX I

List of men (Itsekiri taxpayers) who are in accord with the views expressed in the Petition, who wish their

names mentioned and who would have given their signatures to the Petition if they were literate.

These names are only few among the aggrieved major mass of Itsekiri tax-payers.

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Omasantsitse.        | 2. Igbene.               |
| 3. Ekegbuda.            | 4. Ugborugbo.            |
| 5. Popo.                | 6. Atselefun.            |
| 7. Efo.                 | 8. Eyughaghan.           |
| 9. Atirene.             | 10. Uyomere.             |
| 11. Juwatu.             | 12. Eweye.               |
| 13. Ajueyitsi.          | 14. Mone.                |
| 15. Otuaghanren.        | 16. Omereyonren.         |
| 17. Kulajolu.           | 18. Ewo.                 |
| 19. Kubeyinje.          | 20. Ebietsuwa.           |
| 21. Jemide.             | 22. Tonayon-atse.        |
| 23. Igengen.            | 24. Oghometse.           |
| 25. Kenekueyero.        | 26. Agburen.             |
| 27. Okonedo.            | 28. Debe.                |
| 29. Agbuwabi.           | 30. Ederogun.            |
| 31. Ekerele.            | 32. Oko.                 |
| 33. Eligbo.             | 34. Tiewe.               |
| 35. Mene.               | 36. Omatseyin.           |
| 37. Edun.               | 38. Ughara.              |
| 39. Omayone.            | 40. Osanweren.           |
| 41. Lakaloko.           | 42. Ulori.               |
| 43. Bokantero.          | 44. Eyito.               |
| 45. Mogbeyitenren.      | 46. Eyekosin.            |
| 47. Molu.               | 48. Ajomeyinje.          |
| 49. Ebiareneyin.        | 50. Eyikinmiaghan.       |
| 51. Thompson.           | 52. Atitan.              |
| 53. Okenrenkporo Tonwe. | 54. Ayegusa.             |
| 55. Megbeyi Okoromadu.  | 56. Eyin-oneagho Itseke. |
| 57. Oleju Ibojo.        | 58. Ayaomereno.          |

- |                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 59. Ikura Okorogheye. | 60. Ofosanren. |
| 61. Ayutsede.         | 62. Asanma.    |
| 63. Ayenwun.          | 64. Wilkey.    |
| 65. Kpeke.            | 66. Eyuren.    |
| 67. Kusanren.         | 68. Oboyonma.  |
| 69. Ayeaghanroro.     | 70. Ajagboma.  |

In answer to this Petition, the subjoined communication from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Nigeria has been addressed to the first signatory, Mr. John Eda Otuedon :—

No. 23610.26.35.  
Chief Secretary's Office,  
Nigeria,  
Lagos, 21st June, 1930.

MR. EDA OTUEDON,  
Warri, Nigeria.

With reference to your petition of the 18th of March and my letter No. 23610.26.30 of the 5th of April, I am directed by the Governor to inform you that the question is being dealt with by the Resident of the Province, who will communicate with you in due course.

(Signed) A. C. BURNS,  
Acting Chief Secretary to the Government.

## CHAPTER XXV

### RELIGION

THE Itsekiri was originally a pagan, and even at this moment, his belief in many gods still possesses him. The greatest among the gods worshipped by the Itsekiri, and to whom sacrifices and offerings of meat and drink are made is Umalokun (God of the Sea). In the early days, no fear was cherished for the immortalised beings (Umalẹ) commonly called Juju, but the Itsekiriman dwelt amongst and intermarried with them. This is not unusual for throughout the primitive ages of mankind such experience was common to nations in their infancy, the most authentic case of which is found in the Biblical Record, where, in Genesis, chapter vi, verse 2, it is said, "that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." It was not till after the Olu Oyenakpaga's merciless persecution which forced them to dematerialise that they were feared and adored as deities.

Right deep at the bottom of the Itsekiriman's mind is the belief in One Supreme Being whom he called Oritsẹ (God). He (the Itsekiri) regarded Him as the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and trusted Him as the Father of all. His true conception of this Supreme Being is crystallised in the form of sacrifice he makes and offers to Him. The symbol of His altar as erected by the Itsekiri, is a long plain bamboo staff plastered

white with chalk, pitched on the threshold of his house or in the centre of his compound. On the foremost end of this staff is a yam (*utsuokeren*), also plastered white, stuck in the forked furrow, round which is tied a string of cowries which is made to lap or hang at any length, with a piece of white baft and a white chicken, downwards; and on the yam is thrust a parrot's red tail-feather (*ilelealabara* or *eko-odude*). Sacrifices before this altar are made with nothing else than pure natural water and coco-nut juice. The meaning of this is not far to seek—it is a signification that *Oritse-nɛbruwe* (God Almighty) is holy and righteous, and therefore anything impure and unwholesome is unacceptable by Him. The Itsekiri of old feared and revered God immensely, hence he loved righteousness and loathed its contrary.

His idea of God is very lofty. His fundamental meaning of the words *Ukpɛn* (Soul) and *Esin* (Spirit) is God: therefore the phrase *Ukpɛn biri Esin* typified Father-Mother, God or Creator.

With the advent of the British Government, Christianity was ushered into the country when the Foreign Natives (Mostly Sierra Leoneans) in the Civil Service and mercantile firms started to hold Divine services in the piazzas of their quarters. These clerks and mechanics did much pioneer work in the matter of Christianising the natives (Itsekiri, Sobo, and Ijaw). No Itsekiri of average intelligence can boast of any knowledge of procedure, discipline, and etiquette in ecclesiastical, secular, political or any other society to-day, without first doffing his hat to the Sierra Leone man. We owe him and his immediate colleagues (Gold Coastians and Lagosians) a great debt of sincere gratitude.

As the years rolled by, when they (the foreign natives) saw that the multiplication of the flock demanded a shepherd, about the year 1903, or a little later, they invited the Niger Delta Pastorate Mission (C.M.S.), under the able ægis of the late Bishop James Johnson, D.D., to take over the field. This Mission came, fared well, expanding by leaps and bounds into almost all the ramifications of the country, until the year 1914, when a dispute arose at Warri and Forcados between the Bishop and the Itsekiri young men (the converts) on the question of the rights of Baptism, and another dispute of equal magnitude arose at Sapele, at the same time, on account of alleged misappropriation of Church funds by certain members. The Bishop did his best to effect a compromise, but all ended in a fiasco, and, segregations ensued.

This opened avenues for other Missionary competitors, and in due course the African Church made her appearance in Forcados and Warri, whilst the Baptist Church seized and saved the wandering flock at Sapele. Be it noted that, long before, and all this time, the Roman Catholic Mission was working its way quietly and lovingly on among the three tribes, and their gradual success was never hampered.

Comparatively speaking, the Itsekiri to-day does not believe seriously in the Christian religion. He does not find fault with it on the ground that it is inefficacious, but what he says is this: "If the Christian propagandist or promoter fears and honours God as he professes and teaches, why does he not live an exemplary life, for action speaks louder than voice?" He (the Itsekiri) therefore regards the Church of the present day as a money-making scheme of some sort, and a place of show, and he rather prefers being called

a heathen by his brother, while making the practice of righteousness in thought and action his daily aim, for, perhaps in the end, it might avail him of salvation before the Great Judge better than glorying in being called a staunch Christian, but, behold, a hypocrite!

To the unsophisticated Itsekiri, Christianity has been a problem fraught with all sorts of mysteries and confusion; and it still remains so in his estimation to-day; and because of his apathy towards it, he will not part company with polygamy; he is, in fact, strongly averse to monogamy, whereas the reverse is the case with the two other tribes. In any case, nobody could convince him to regulate his intellectual drift in this matter of religion at present; nor will that be possible for many years to come.

#### FETISHISM

Apart from the worship of Juju, there is this class of superstitious belief indulged by the Itsekiri as well as the worship of Souls of the Dead "Eburá." In most cases, his war, criminal, love-philtre, protective, and all imaginable paraphernalia of charms are entrusted to the custody of a slave specially detailed for such purpose. Such steward is called *Uwatsen* in the Itsekiri language. This slave performs all the rites for every fetish and it is in very, very rare cases that you will find the Itsekiri officiating as Fetish Priest. In such cases, he does the libation and meat offering himself. His belief in medicine was meagre, and because he considered himself too big to go from bush to bush, picking leaves, roots, barks, etc., he relegated that duty to one of his slaves or to a trustworthy dependant. As I have already said, he to whom such duty was delegated is called *Uwatsen*.

Unless an alien native (Iwodo), there was never, throughout the Itsekiri history, until recently, an Itsekiri known or heard of as doctor or medicine-man (Ewo) before: nowadays, however, there are several Itsekiri quacks posing about as doctors or medicine-men. This is one of the ills transplanted into the Itsekiri country, and it is an evil consequent upon the advent of Western Civilization.

The following is a table of principal Jujus (Umalẹs) worshipped by the Itsekiris as deities:—

Name of Town.	Name of Juju.	Purpose.	Nature of Sacrifice.	Owner.
Big Warri	Erikpe	Prophylactic	Human Being (Albino), meat and drinkables	The Olu
do.	Adda	Protective and Destructive	Ram, cork and starch water (Usin)	do.
do.	Ugbokua	War	Human Being and drinkables	do.
do.	Oweisiemo	do.	do.	do.
Ureju	Umalokun	Protective	Human Being (Albino), Ram, Goat, Cork and drinkables	The Olu but appointed Priest stationed at Ureju
Ureju	Ogheye-arunguro	Protective and Destructive	Goat, cork and drinkables	Urejus
Orugbo	Birikimo	do	Dog, goat, cork and drinkables	The Olu but appointed Priest at Orugbo
do.	Otuekine	do.	do.	do.
do.	Ike	do.	do.	do.

Name of Town.	Name of Juju.	Purpose.	Nature of Sacrifice.	Owner.
Orere	Otsighi	Protective and Destructive	Dog, goat, cork and drinkables	The Olu but appointed Priest at Orere
do.	Ejulube	do.	do.	do.
Gbonokposo	Agbionijoni	Protective	—	The Olu
do.	Atokowa	Protective and Destructive	Goat, dog, cork and drinkables	Gbonokposos
Kolokolo	Ekperuma	do.	do.	Oginin
Omadino	Ogheyekpata	do.	do.	Omadinos
do.	Orori	do.	do.	do.
Bobì	Egborijokun	do.	Goat, cork and drinkables	Bobis
do.	Ejelidiro	Protective	do.	do.
do.	Ogheye and Inama	Protective and Destructive	Dog, cork and drinkables	do.
Okoporo	Abrawa and Egolo	do.	Goat, dog, cork and drinkables	Ogbaranmi
Eghoro	Sapele	do.	do.	Prince Ewolufu

There are other fancy mask Jujus (Umalẹs) such as Ogienaga of Uşçlę, Jorojoro of Eghoroke, Odogęnę of Ugbęge, Onęmęnę of Jakpa, and a host of others, but these are played in the form of a yearly merriment and festival, and their masks were devised according to the fancy of the owners. It was the means of wasting money by the rich in olden days.

Birikimọ, Otuekinę, Ike, Otsighi, Ejulubę, Oghe-

yearungurọ, Ogheyeakpata, Egborijokun, Ogheye and Inama, Abrawa and Egolo, and Sapele, are also all fancy mask Jujus, but Birik mọ, Otsighi, and Ejulubs were never played when there was no Olu.

There are secret societies connected or associated with the Juju institution of each town, the membership of which is open to adult males only. The most mysterious of these societies are: Ekun Isẹkpere of Gborodo, Ekun Ibirikimọ of Orugbo, and Ekun Egborijokun of Bobi.

Since there was no Olu in the early days of the present interregnum, acts of plunder were the novelty of the age, when each tribe prey upon the lives and properties of the other. To remedy this evil, the Itsekiris devised some sort of a Truce (Ofọ), with the swearing of which (*ta gba bu ofo*) a human being was used. One was sworn between the Itsekiris and the Ijos of Erogbo, and that was called Bamutele. The most recent one, sworn about the year 1895, between the Itsekiris and the Sobos of Efurun, Obodo, Edile, Jẹrimi, and adjacent towns, was called *Emurobome 'Urun, ewomi'* (My *bona fide* property). On the day when this was sworn, a friction nearly occurred between the Itsekiris and the Efuruns, when the late Ikpẹkpẹ Numa, half-brother of Chief Dore Numa, ordered Erigbe (leader of the Efuruns) to take off his long Wellington boots, because Chief Dore wore boots. Erigbe, seeing disobedience on his part would entail a fatal fight, and because it was impossible to defy the Itsekiris, obeyed, and all was well. After the swearing of *Emurobome*, the Itsekiris made a present of several cases of gin, a quantity of tobacco, and a lot of other goodly things, to the Sobos, who, being filled with sincere gratitude for the Itsekiris' goodness, started

singing songs of joy and gladness, praising the Itsekiri Chiefs, before the parties dispersed.

When an Ofọ (Truce) is sworn between two tribes, each, by so doing, takes oath to watch and protect the life and property of the other. The breach or violation of this was supposed to be punishable by death and adversity, by the soul of the human being sacrificed in token of the Ofọ.

Now, anent his (Itsekiri) worship of the Souls of the Dead, this was a logical result of his understanding or belief of immortality of the Soul. Listen carefully to what he said concerning mankind: "This world is a large market full of all things: in it we all come to expose our different wares for sale. He who prospered in it would say, he would come to trade at this market again, while he who was ruined in it would say, he loathed to return to this market for trade no more."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### OYE—TITLE OR OFFICE-BEARING POSITION

THE title or office-bearing position in the Itsekiri country is called Oye, and its holder is designated "Ojoye." The word rendered 'Ojoye,' is a compound word Oje-oye, meaning he who holds a position of rank in the Olu's service of the realm. It was a custom as old as (possibly older than) the Itsekiri nation itself, and was, in essence, Benin. The number which accompanied Ginuwa originally from Benin was seventy, and to the best recollection of the Itsekiris only twenty-eight are known :—

- |                      |                                                                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Olẹkun.           | 2. Iyatsẹrẹ.                                                                |
| 3. Odofẹn.           | 4. Ero.                                                                     |
| 5. Olisan.           | 6. Akata.                                                                   |
| 7. Modun.            | 8. Mefẹorukọ.                                                               |
| 9. Otsorọn.          | 10. Udefi.                                                                  |
| 11. Ogbomudu.        | 12. Ologbotsẹrẹ.                                                            |
| 13. Uwanguẹ.         | 14. Ojọmọ.                                                                  |
| 15. Jatọn.           | 16. Otsodi.                                                                 |
| 17. Idibiẹ.          | 18. Ogiẹ.                                                                   |
| 19. Imaran.          | 20. Ibiẹgbẹ (Head of the warriors who went lost at Nembe or Idebe 'Brass'). |
| 21 Omoku the Egbẹwu. | 22. Oginis.                                                                 |
| 23. Ogoni.           | 24. Itiviẹ.                                                                 |
| 25. Osẹrigho.        | 26. Egbi.                                                                   |
| 27. Osọlọ.           | 28. Ctseyẹn.                                                                |

They each had a Quarter (Eghoro) at Ode Itsekiri, and their quarters were named after their titles, such as Eghoro Olẹkun in Oroke, Eghoro Ojọmọ in Irigbo, Eghoro Iyatsẹrẹ in Ogbe, and so forth.

In the cases of numbers 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27, their titles were lost in the Lethe by the best historians of the land to-day, and only their own names are remembered even by their very posterity. Ogoni and Itivię were Sobos, the former of Ukpę, and the latter of Mqgba. It has been said that an Abqman, who was a doctor, was also created to be an O oye by the Olu, and that his place of abode at Ode Itsękiri was in Irgibo.

The granting of these titles to persons, with the exception of that of Ojmq, which was hereditary, was the prerogative of the Olu, but was non-democratic. Attainment to it is possible only by wealth, special recognition, and merit: i.e., when a wealthy citizen (qronqn-niye) wished to become an Ojoye, he begged the position by giving presents to those in the position to speak good of him before His Majesty the Olu, to whom he also must severally send perquisites long before his wishes are introduced. In other cases, bravery in war and meritorious service are the essential qualifications. It is only in the case of a rich man begging for the position that the aspirant spends money before being created an Ojoye. Persons of other tribes such as Sobo, Ijo, and Igbon (Eboe) are eligible for appointment as the Ojoye Olu-Itsekiri, on application.

From the day of the installation of an Olu to the day of his demise, any gap in the ranks of Ojoyes which might be occasioned by death, dismissal, or otherwise, must remain unfilled till another Olu was installed. This was the custom: then the new Olu, after his installation, chose and created any person in his domain, who found favour in his sight, to fill vacancies in the Ojoyeship. This right was inherent in the Olu: by his grace, and at his pleasure, he could appoint or create whomsoever he willed to be an Ojoye.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE ORGANISATION OF ITSEKIRI VILLAGE COMMUNITIES WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO TRADE

1. With the Itsekiris, the date of birth is reckoned in terms of years ascertainable by unusual occurrences at the time of birth, and not by the actual date of birth, as the Itsekiris, being illiterate, do not calculate dates.

2. Naturally, a child passes through five distinct grades (the third ushers him into full-grown manhood, while in the fifth he becomes senile and decrepit), namely :—

1. Ometieonokeren (date of birth to youth—1 to 20 years of age).
2. Edema (Adolescence—between 21 and 33 years of age).
3. Ighele (Manhood—36 to 55 years of age).
4. Onare (Old man—56 to 75 years of age).
5. Eligbo (Aged—75 upwards).

3. *The training of the child from his earliest years—*1st grade. From cradle to youth—day of birth to 20 years of age—he is cared for by his parents or guardian. Within this age he is taught the arts of sweeping house and premises, washing and cleaning utensils, swimming, paddling. He is absolutely dependent, and not in any way responsible for his own actions.

When approaching the maximum of this grade he is taught either of the trades, which, principally (Nos. 3, 4 and 5 are secondary), are :—

1. Manufacture of alkalis (Owun), which are of two different qualities: (a) Igbaokun, salt manufactured from the ashes of young ash-trees and leaves burnt together, and (b) Ibojo, salt manufactured from the ashes of shoots of mangrove-trees burnt. The processes of these manufacture are tedious, and I am not here concerned with giving a treatise on the same.
2. Cray-fish industry (Ide ta de).
3. Carpentry and wood-carving (Agbede-ogbiegin).
4. Smith (Agbede-oguren).
5. Basket-weaving (Oghon-akpere).

In this age he assists the parents in their various occupations and trades, but receives no specific remuneration for his services, except that he is honourably maintained and upkept at their expense.

*2nd Grade*—ADOLESCENCE. On entering this grade, a wife is sought for him by the parents, all marriage expenses being borne by them. In the ordinary case, and where the parents are well-to-do, he is presented with a wife, a servant, cloths and garments, and a certain amount of goods with which to trade on his own account. Then he becomes a man of himself.

*3rd Grade*—MANHOOD. In this grade, he is the full-grown citizen, and is answerable to the elders for all affairs of the community. He is the figure-head, and is within the border line in the matter of conscription for inter-tribal warfare. He arranges community assemblages; in brief, he shares in the responsibility for the very life and existence of the village.

The steps by which he arrives at distinction and seniority are: Yeoman service, diligence, charity, wealth, valour, and patriotism. He can be promoted from grade 2 (adolescence) to this category if found to be proficient in any of these qualities.

*4th Grade*—OLD MAN. In this stage he heads all affairs of the village, and directs the middle-class in all matters concerning the community generally. Nearing his maximum, he retires gradually from trade as well as from politics.

*5th Grade*—AGED. In extreme old age, he does nothing; is cared for and maintained by his immediate relatives, and becomes a complete recluse.

4. TRADE.—The principal and secondary items of trades of the various Itsekiri Village Communities have already been stated.

The *Ikpi-cooking industry*, which was the chief trade in the reign of Olu Erejuwa (brass skimmed from the sands of sea and river banks from which salt is manufactured) was replaced by the manufacture of alkalies in later years.

*Igba-okun*. This is sold in pots (Eworowun), each costing locally 4,000 cowries (ugbabo), 2s. sterling. The principal markets where this commodity is disposed of are those of Alajigun, Abraka, Kokori, and Okpara, where it is sold to the Sobos at about 60 pots for a puncheon of palm-oil, and 30 pots for a cooler of palm-kernels.

*Ibojo*. This is richer than Igba-okun, and therefore correspondingly higher in price. Local value, 8,000 cowries (uliatsojeji), 4s. sterling. This is disposed of at the important markets in Warri region, to the Udu Sobos of Obodo, Asagba, Mogba, and Ughara.

*Crayfish.* In earlier days this industry was pursued for the purpose of consumption only. It was improved and became a marketable commodity in later years, when the system of fishing for it in canoes was introduced by one Okoro, a son of Governor Omoku, with his mates, at Bobi. It was then caught in greater quantities, and so the over-production commenced to be sold in measures (uwan). Locally, a measure of dried crayfish is sold at the price of 2,000 cowries (oguboru), 1s. sterling, or one bottle of gin. When this commodity became popular, it was disposable at the principal Sobo markets of Alajigun, Abraka, Kokori, Okpara, Asagba, Obodo, Jeremi, Mogba, Ughara, Elume, and Omereye near Orere in Ukpe-sobo, in barter or exchange for palm-kernels and food-stuffs.

The secondary items of trade are insignificant, and of not sufficient commercial importance to deserve detailed reference to them here.

5. WOMEN.—The part taken by the women in trade generally is to assist husbands and male relatives in the various industries already enumerated (excepting the secondary ones); and they mainly do the marketing.

Their own particular trades are: 1. Pottery; 2. Mat-spinning; 3. Fishing; and 4. Petty Trade (marketing). By one or more or all of these an industrious woman obtains her means of livelihood, and may better her position thereby, whether she be under a husband or independent.

*Domestic Utility.* She is responsible for the home. She does the cooking, arranges the menu, and does all petty marketing; supervises the stock and purchase of foodstuffs; and, above all, she is charged with the

welfare of the children and servants who may still be under age.

The organisation of women in the village communities goes in three different grades or categories according to age.

1. Emerentietie-onobiren, commonly called ometio-biren (female child), from the day of birth to 10 years of age. In this stage she is entirely dependent, cared for and nursed by her parents or guardian, and, when becoming sensible, is taught the arts of cooking, washing utensils, sweeping, swimming, and paddling.

2. Ermerenbiren (Belle), from 12 to 20 years of age. Within this age she is liable to espousal, begins married life, and becomes the controller of the *ménage* generally. Must obey her parents, by whose order and consent only she can be married. Disobedience deprives her of their gifts.

3. Ogbokposo (Lady), from 21 to 40. Within this period she specialises in one or other of the trades stated above.

She contributes to subscriptions for sacrificial or other political purposes which concern the whole community, provides missiles, etc., for use of the men in tribal wars, cares for the sick and wounded either in war, plague, famine, or any other kind of adversity, and, in extraordinary circumstances, acts the part of man. These are the ways and means by which she shares in the economic life of the village.



