

N S R
JACOB U. EGHAREVBA

The City of Benin

Benin, 1952

Benin Law and Custom

Benin, 1949

Some Stories of Ancient Benin

Benin, 1951

Some Tribal Gods of Southern Nigeria

Benin, 1951

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THE CITY OF BENIN

BY

JACOB U. EGHAREVBA

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JACOB U. EGHAREVBA
Is Printing on his own machine

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PREFACE

The necessity for the production of this Booklet is not burning desire of the author but that I was invited to Edo College on the 28th May 1952, to lecture on the old streets and their names in Benin City, to the students of the Antiquities society. I therefore choose:

" THE CITY OF BENIN "

to be my subject as may be read in the text of my lecture here in brief.

The old streets here enumerated are those which survived after the general and gradual depopulation of the City from the time of Oba Ewuare to the punitive expedition in 1897.

The students were highly interested and asked me to publish the Text of the Lecture in book form as herein.

JACOB U. EGHAREVBA

Benin Museum
Benin City, June 1952.

CURATOR
Benin Museum
Benin City.



The Late Mrs. Hannah Omonzuwa Egharevba

She departed this life to eternal rest on the 1st of March 1941. She was specialized in every kind of Trade, especially in Pottery. She was survived by three Children, Comfort, Eunice and Joseph as seen in the picture.

THE CITY OF BENIN^e

CHAPTER 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY AND
CAUSE OF ITS DEPOPULATION

The City of Benin lies in the centre of the ancient Kingdom, the influence of which extended as far as Dahomey and the Congo, and especially over Nigeria. Many towns and countries paid tribute to the King of Benin at Benin City through the Governors or chiefs of Benin who were in charge of the various towns and countries in those by-gone days.

The view of the City of Benin usually seems or appears dull, insignificant and uninteresting at the first sight to strangers, so that one can hardly believe that it was once the capital of a powerful kingdom and large Empire in West Africa. But when you have chance to stay longer in the City and visit places of interest to look more closely you find traces of the past greatness and splendour. Such as the moats a tremendous work of rampart round the City, the Brass casting, wood

THE CITY OF BENIN.

ivory and coral beads carving, Terracotta, pottery and iron works of art. Joyous title dances and funeral processions, the ceremonial performances, especially the scene in the Royal Palace and the Benin Museum, then you see wonders and take it to be a City indeed.

Tradition says that at a certain time before the reign of Oba Ewuare, the City of Benin was very large and thickly populated, with many straight and broad streets, nearly twice the size of the present one. Indeed, it was one of the largest Cities in Nigeria or West Africa as a whole.

But it is sad to say that it was depopulated and gradually began to decay about 1460 A.D. from the reign of Oba Ewuare down to the punitive expedition in 1897. Ewuare made inhuman murdering laws over the deaths of his two sons, Kuoboyuwa, the E aiken (Crown Prince) of Ushin, and Ezuarha, the Ogie (Duke) of Iyowa, who poisoned themselves and both died on the same day,

The law forbade anyone in the land, of either sex, to wash and rub with native grease and dress up, to eat delicious food, or even to have sexual-intercourse for a period of three years.

THE CITY OF BENIN.

The law however, caused great confusion among the people, for the Oba had two of the three chiefs, who opposed him on the law killed and seized their properties, He was hunting to kill the third or the most popular and universally beloved Oza, who by an instinct, was timely warned of the Oba's intention, and accordingly took to flight accompanied, by three fourths of the inhabitants of the City, which Oba Fwuare observing, immediately assembled a number of men from the neighbouring towns, and caused the fugitives to be pursued in order to make them to return: but they were warmly received by Oza and his party, who forced them to return with bloody noses, and gave the Oba the account of their misadventure.

But he resolved not to stop there, made a fresh attempt which succeeded no better than the former. This was not all, for the fugitives thoroughly incensed and flushed, came directly to the City which they plundered and pillaged sparing no place but the Royal palace, after which they retired, and this continued incessantly for about ten years to rob the inhabitants of the

THE CITY OF BENIN.

The Oba and his bodyguard did not return, but permanently remained in the Island of Eko or Lagos founded by the Benin Royal troops.

Several of the citizens were drowned with Oba Ehengbuda in Agan river while on his way to Eko (Lagos) to visit the new Colony founded by his father.

Many of the citizens took flight with Ozuere to Ise (Uhen) in the Ikiti country when Ozuere was defeated by Akenzua I about 1713 A. D.

Several thousands of the citizens perished and a quarter of the city, now upper Mission Road was made extinct in the civil war caused by the murder of Osopakharha of Ugbague by Oba Obonosa in 1815 A. D.

It is impossible to give a correct estimation in regard to the loss of lives ruined and desolated houses during the civil war between Prince Ogbobo and Erediatwa in 1816 A. D.

Very many of the citizens perished in Amaho and other wars caused by Prince Ogbewekon in 1850, and 1864.

One could hardly imagine the countless human sacrifices which took place in the reign of Oba Ovonramwen. The depopulation of the City was gradually

THE CITY OF BENIN,

Continued till it was mercifully relieved by the punitive expedition in 1897.

For instance, in the year 1891, Cyril Punch the friend of Oba Ovouramwen was present during the performance of the Anniversary of the Oba's father (Ugierhoba). He told the Oba that he disliked the idea of the human sacrifices. Ovouramwen in turn replied in affirmative that he also disliked the idea himself, and that he used to feel it very painfully when the Executioners were performing the odd task. He would have it abolished, but his chiefs strongly protested against it as it may tend to undermining their custom or principle. It was however stopped since 1897 till now.

When the British troops entered the City in 1897 they found many human sacrifices, with blood on the altars, hence Captain Boisragon called it the City of Blood.

According to H. Ling Roth "As we neared Benin City we passed several human sacrifices, live woman slaves gagged and pegged on their backs

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to the ground, the abdominal wall being cut in the form of a cross, and an injured gut hanging out. These poor women were allowed to die like this in the sun. Men slaves, with their hands tied at the back, and feet lashed together, also gagged were lying about. As our white troops passed these horrors one can well imagine the effect on them, many were roused to fury, and many of the younger ones felt sick and ill at ease. As we neared the City, sacrificed human beings were lying in the path and bush, even in the King's Compound the sight and stench of them was awful. Dead and mutilated bodies seemed to be everywhere by God! may I never see such sights again.

The troops had a tough time to clear the remains away from 'The City'.

In fact just before the punitive expedition in 1897, the City of Benin was like a Village apart from the Royal Palace (Eguae) because of the events described above.

Had it not been for the British influence in Nigeria, the outbreak of lawlessness in the Political war by

THE CITY OF BENIN.

the Otu Edos in Benin in 1952 could have caused another terrible loss of lives and depopulation of the City. It however went by the name Okpughe

CHAPTER II.

NAMES OF THE CITY.

The City is known by four names respectively. It was first called Igodomigodo and "He in the days of Ogisos or Kings of the first period of the Benin Empire, Oranmiyan, changed it to "He-Ibinu. The Land of Vexation, on account of its abundant sacrifices. Oba Ewedo called it "Ubinu" But in order to immortalize the name of his deified friend Edo, for the good service he rendered to him, Ewuare changed the name of the City to Edo according to his friend's name. It was afterwards known as 'Edo Nevbo Ahire' meaning Edo or Benin, the City of Love. Because through love Edo was able to save Oba Ewuare from a sudden death.

Ruy de Sequeira discovered Benin City in 1472. He does not appear to have known of the new name as it was by the old name Benin that he made the country known to Europe.

THE CITY OF BENIN.

The present expansion of the City with uncountable new streets and roads is due to the wise and peaceful rule of the British government.

Really 'Edo or Benin City is the City of love now more than ever, because some of the strangers who came in it since the punitive expedition in 1897, for the purpose of trade or other works are not willing to return to their own towns again, but to stay permanently in the City of Benin.

CHAPTER 111.

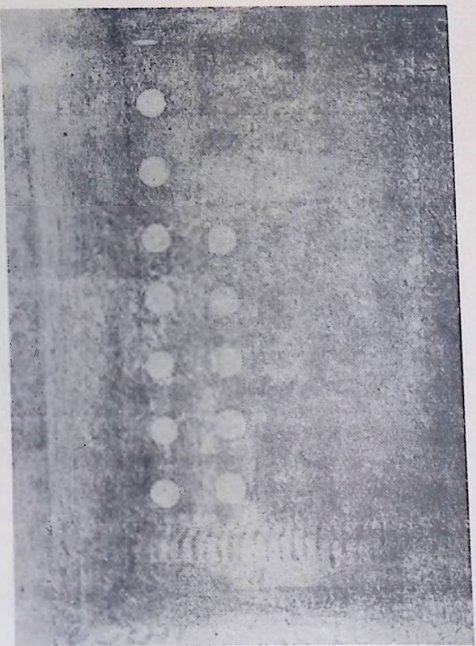
THE OLD PALACE ITS

ENTRANCES AND INMATES.

The Eguae or Palace of the Oba was the principal feature of the City. The Eguae was about three quarters of a mile long and one quarter of a mile wide and extended from Alaka to Ekiokpaga and in Oghedegun to Ogbelaka. The P. W. D., Police Barrack, Hospital, Clerks' quarters, and Prison Yard are in the old palace. It contained several council chambers and there was a quadrangle or courtyard for each departed Oba. Each sacrificial chamber contained a very deep pit called Ihan into which the human sacrifices were thrown. The Oba's wives



Pottery Work in the
City of Benin



A hood decorated with cowries in the City of Benin.

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(Iloi) lived in ten quarters which were called Erie. At the time of Ogisos the senior wife was called Esagho. From Eweka 1 to Ozolua she was called Enahen, and since then up to the present time she has been called Oka-Erie. Head of the harem. The handmaids of the wives were called Ighiberie. The eunuchs serving in the palace were called Oruerienogun-àn, and the lame porters at the gates were called Ike.

Royal sword bearers with brass anklet are called Emada. They are not allowed to come out, but at all times remain with the Oba. Those without brass anklet are called Urhonisen. They are sent on special errands by the Oba both in the city and the Villages. The Ibiogua, also without brass anklet attend to special works in the Royal palace. So are the Ibiughas, the Royal house boys.

The open space in front of the Palace now named King's square was called Unuogua.

There were nine Urho or entrances to the Palace :—

Urho Eho, through which the Ewaisse passed on special occasions

THE CITY OF BENIN.

Urho Okpere, the main entrance.
 Urho Oghunmwun, the prisoners' gate
 Urho Emehe
 Urho Ovio.
 Urho Ogbe Eweka I.
 Urho Uzamokon N'oghin-oba
 Urho Ogisos.
 Urho Edaiken

CHAPTER 17
 PROCESS OF RANK AND FILE,
 OF THE THREE PALACE
 SOCIETIES

The three palace Societies, Iwebo Iweguae and Ibiwe are entered on initiation. The oath is sworn on jaju. The duration of the initiation ceremonies is seven days. Having completed this the new initiate becomes an Ibie-rugha, Royal House boy or servant, he may be made Olian—Eguae, the first step, there to Odaien-Vbenoreguae from this to Uko and thence to title holder. Any man can be given a title without being initiated in any of the the three palace Societies. But it is incumbent on any member of the three Societies to initiate. The members of the three Societies are directly responsible for the care of the Royal palace. The Uzama Nihinron and some of the Eghaevbore are honoured with initiation to the

THE CITY OF BENIN.

three Societies as members without the duties of the houses imposed on them.

The *Enwinroba-evbo* in *Benin City* are those citizens who belong to no class or rank in the community or non-member of the Royal Societies. The *Enwinroba-evbo* in the Villages are those who are not in the *Eghele* or *Eroghae* ranks. But the influential or spokes men from both the *Eghele* and *Eroghae* ranks are termed "*Asù-ìpèkhae*".

Any young man of the land who reaches the age of taking up arms is called '*Ominigie*' or *Otu Ominigie* rank.

The *Egbeseanwen—egie*, are those considered suitable to take up any of the state titles, but have not yet had titles conferred on them.

The '*izua*' are those citizens who are considered suitable for any of the State titles but have no means to it and then refused to become title holders.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMPOUNDS OF THE CHIEFS.

The house or compound of each of the higher ranking chiefs, such as the *Iyase*

THE CITY OF BENIN.

(Premier) of Bénin, the Oliha, the Ezomon, the Esogban, the Ero etc. occupied a large area of land, and was surrounded with walls with several chambers and apartments. The wives or women's quarter is called Erié, servants and dependent's quarter is called Iyekogbe. In the ancient days it is a rigid custom that a common man should not build a house with its gate along the public road, except in the compound of a titled chief.

The houses are built with an impluvium and with piazza (Ogbore) in the front like the style of house building by the ancient Arabians and the Romans.

The houses are kept clean by sweeping them daily. The walls are properly built, thickly, high and straight, beautifully adorned or cut in most attractive designs. The floor of some of the houses were decorated with cowries which are polishing at all times. They are very fine and attractive.

The following are types of the old houses which have survived. The Royal Palace (Egwe), the houses of chief Agho Obaseki the Iyase of Benin, of Okoro-Otun the Iyase of Benin, of the Ogiamwen, of the Oliha, of Orokhirbi, the Eson of Benin, of Iyamué, the Ine of Benin, of Osunde, the Aiyobalan of Benin, and of

THE CITY OF BENIN.

Ughogbo, the Aideyanba.

The type or style of the old, old house buildings from the beginning to the time of Oba Ozola in the 15th century was called "Oghizi" it was in the form of quadrangle. With apartments, of the inmates on both sides, and the house owner's apartment situated at the centre end of the house. The decaying one is from the time of Oba Esigie, and is called "Ikua" or impluvium or atrium.

The style of dress with apron of the Binis was introduced from Egypt in the very early days, as well as the art of hands shaking. Hands shaking is a prevalent custom in Benin from the very beginning till this day.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GATEWAYS TO THE CITY.

There are also nine roads or gateways to the City according to the nine entrances to the palace, in those days:—

- 1 Akpakava or Ikpoba road
- 2 Ughoton (Gwetto) road
- 3 Udo or Siluko Road
- 4 Uantan or Saroba Road.
- 5 Uadu or Ifon Road.
- 6 Ihuasa or Ogba Road.
- 7 Inuse or Sapele Road.
- 8 Okborho Road, which led to Aho, Ayen and Obadan
- 9 Ugbo or Ugbeu road The tenth is Uhu—mwindunmwun road which led to kogo.

THE CITY OF BENIN.

It was along this last named road that Iyase Ogunan passed when he was banished from Benin City by Oba Olutan, Oba Osemwede also passed this way to Ugo and Egbokhumwin when he escaped from the city to avoid being killed by Ogbebo in the civil war of 1816, and it was by this same road that Oba Ovonramwen returned to Benin City on August 5, 1897 to surrender himself to the British.

The *Ogisos* or Kings of the first period of the Benin Empire lived in the east circular areas, between Ikpoba and Sapoba roads. There were no moat or ditches in those days. The present palace area was founded by Oba Ewedo about 1255 A.D.

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CHAPTER VII.

OLD STREETS IN THE CITY OF BENIN

- 1 Akpakava
- 2 Idunmwun Ewaise or now Forest Road
- 3 Iguisi or now Lagos Street
- 4 Idunmwun Ibiwe (or old Siluko Road,
- 5 Utantan or Sapoba Road.
- 6 Oroghotodin
- 7 Iduumwingun Eronmwon
- 8 Idunmwun Qwinna
- 9 Idunmwun Oza
- 10 Arosa
- 11 Idunmwun Frie
- 12 Isin-emweno
- 13 Idunmwun Iboyanyan
- 14 Idunmwun Ugboha
- 15 Idunmwun Ivbiawo
- 16 Idunmwun Esasa
- 17 Ogboka
- 18 Idunmwun Igbensanmwun
- 19 Idunmwun Ikpeman
- 20 Idunmwun Iwefenmwun
- 21 Ewaisede
- 22 Eguadase
- 23 Eyan — enugie
- 24 Isiruhe
- 25 Idunmwun Iwegie
- 26 Idunmwun Iriamila
- 27 Idunmwun Ogiefu Nozeben or now Nevins
Road,
- 28 Idunmwun Ike or now Mission Road.
- 29 Ugbagus
- 30 Idunmwun Omon

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- 31 Iduumwun Itebite
 32 Iduumwun Ivbizua
 33 Iwenoga
 34 Alaka
 35 Oguanogbe
 35 Iduumwun Iweho
 37 Ekpennende
 38 Ogoe Ezoti (or Ezoti Street)
 39 Iduumwun Aghorhan
 40 Iduumwun Iwogun
 41 Iduumwun Isihun-an
 42 Iduumwun Oloton
 43 Iduumwun ihogbe
 44 Iduumwun Oliha
 45 Iduumwun Aragua
 46 Iduumwun Eviemwen
 47 Iduumwun Iwehen
 48 Iduumwun Ebo
 49 Isegherbe
 50 Iguisi Nuuvun
 51 Iduumwun Edohen
 52 Iduumwun Oliha Ogiawwen
 53 Iduumwun Osun-aa
 54 Ukrege
 55 Iduumwun Eben
 56 Iduumwun Isekpokin
 57 Uha nwindanwun
 58 Iduumwun Ugbizebu
 59 Iwogizana
 60 Isekpokin
 61 Eboran
 62 Iduumwun Ekpeman
 63 Iduumwun Esi, etc. Iduumwun Esi was
 founded by Ezomon Agban. It is where he
 put his bush pigs for care in those days.

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Chapter VIII

UZEBU AND USELU.

Beside these, Uzebu and Uselu are both quarters of the City. There are Streets, at Uzebu, such as Ogb-Iwebo now (Izabayo Street), Ehaekpon, Ogbe-Ewaise. Most parts of Uzebu has ruined owing to solders fallen in the wars.

The upper Uselu known as Eguadaiken was founded in the days of the Ogisos or Kings of the first period of the Benin Empire. Agba was the Official title of the rulers of it. Iken, was its last ruler before Kuoboyuwa the eldest son of Oba Ewuare was sent there as Deputy, Edaiken (Edayiniken) of Iken who, left for Owo campaign. Idunmwun-Ebo, Igun, Isinemwenro and Idunmwun-oho are the Streets there.

The Lower Uselu entitled Eguayo-ba was founded by Oba Esigie about 1504. A. D, and sent his mother Idia

THE CITY OF BENIN.

there as a Queen Mother, "Iyoba."

At the same time Ero was sent by the Oba from Ugbeku his original home on Saponba Road to his present abode, Urubi purposely to be taking care of the Queen Mother. The Emehe of Urubi were sent there by Oba Orhogbua shortly after his arrival to Benin City from Eko or Lagos.

With the influence of the British Government and the activities of the Missionaries the atrocious Habit of human sacrifice has been purged off the minds of the Binis. Thanks be to the Father of light for the salvation of Edoland. I pray that liberty, justice, righteousness, and peace may be established in Edoland, and the whole world.

BENIN LAW
AND CUSTOM

by

JACOB U. EGHAREVBA



THE AUTHOR

THIS WORK IS
DEDICATED TO THE
MEMORY OF EWUARE
THE GREATEST KING OF BENIN
POPULAR AUTHOR OF
THE BENIN LAWS & CUSTOMS

First Edition January 1946.

Second Edition January 1947.

Third Edition August 1949.

Preface

The Binis are said to have come originally from the East in one of those migrations common to many tribes seeking more fertile land, or a more secure retreat from an enemy. Having settled in Benin they gradually developed their own Laws, Customs and Institutions and some of these will be set out below.

As early as 1934 friends requested me to make a compilation of these, but at first I felt it was too great an undertaking. However I at once began to collect data round the Benin Division: one incident also decided me. At the ceremony held on April 4th, 1943 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the accession of Akenzua II Oba of Benin there was some discussion as to the right posture which should be taken up by the Osodin. There was no authority to which we could refer to clear up this matter, and the argument and confusion served to show very clearly, alas! that the old Customs were being forgotten. This thought oppressed me greatly. From that time I determined to do my utmost to preserve in writing the ancient Laws and Customs, so that they might always be for future reference, and the above incident need not be repeated.

Having finished the compilation, I took it to the Oba of Benin Akenzua II to go through, and he returned it to me with best wishes for its success.

Readers are asked to pardon whatever they may find, amiss, and to remember that this book is not written with the hope of producing a piece of literature, but solely to preserve from oblivion the ancient Laws and Customs of an ancient race.

In 1934, I allowed Mr. A. K. Ajisafe of 8, Botanical Gardens Road, Ebute Metta, Lagos, to make use of my Manuscript on Benin Law and Custom etc., when he told

me that he was preparing the Nigerian Laws and Customs.
The following are letters of gratitude from him.

I sincerely thank friends for aids and advice.

JACOB U. EGHAREVBA
*A member and Recorder of
the Royal House of Iwebo,
and Curator of the B.N.A. Museum*

Jos, N.P. (On tour)
28 : 4 : 34.

Jacob U. Egharevba Esq.,
Uselu, Benin City.

My dear good friend,

I am very sorry that since I left I have not been able to write to thank you for the wealth of your knowledge of the history and institutions of your land which you gave to me in effect of the success of my tour. I would have written you long before now but I cal. God as my witness on my saying there was no chance for me to do so.

I thank you very sincerely for your great and large heart. May God bless and support you. I hope to return early in July. Then I shall not fail to communicate regularly with you.

Any help you require of please don't be ashamed to ask me and I shall give you my best. My compliments to one and all.

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd.) A. K. AJISAFE.

v

Owo (on tour)

7:6:34

J. U. Egharevba Esq.,
Uselu, Benin City.

My dear Friend,

As I am sending my boy to Benin, I seize the chance to draw you a few lines to enquire after your health. I have visited Kano, Sokoto, Jos, Bornu, Zaria, Kaduna, Lake Chad and I am now returning home. I am now at Owo. I shall leave here on Saturday for Okiti-Pupa.

When I reach home I shall be free to make regular communication with you.

May God bless and support you, and may your life be spared to continue in your good work for the benefit of your land. God shall help you if men's help fails. You will hear from me when I reach home.

My home address is P.O. Box 41, Ebute Metta and I am staying at 8, Botanical Gardens Road, Ebute Metta.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) A. K. AJISAFE.

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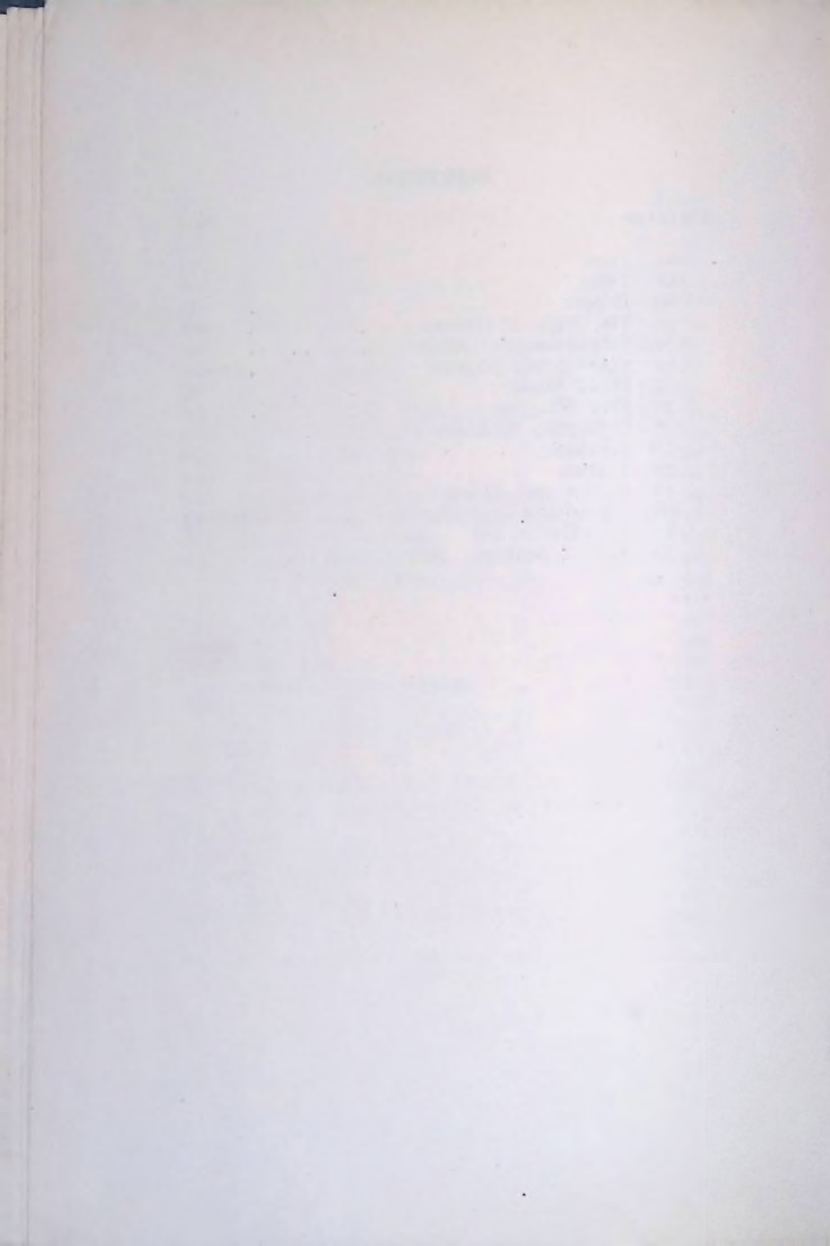
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CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY

1. For the purpose of this chapter the word community is taken to mean a group of people observing the same laws and customs and enjoying the same privileges. The community may not constitute a whole town or village, but a group within the town.

2. It may even be only one large family, with all its branches; but generally it is more than one whose numbers have intermarried and who keep together as a kind of "clan".

3. The community may be, however, one quarter (or ward) of a town. Whatever the group, each has its own council, where civil affairs are discussed, but major matters which concern the whole town or village must go before the King in Council, e.g. the Oba of Benin, or the Enogie or Odionwere of the town or village.

4. All criminal cases, such as murder, manslaughter, treason or disputes between rival claimants to the succession, are brought before the King's council at Benin City for trial; the last named cases sometimes lasting for a year or more, (see chapter 26 of the Judicial system, section 9.)

CHAPTER 2

COMPOUND LIFE—ITS RELATIONSHIP AND GOVERNMENT

The sense of family relationship is exceedingly strong among the Binis bringing with it a certain amount of protection and also many responsibilities.

Any member of any branch of family, however distantly connected, is hailed as "brother" or "sister". It is the custom for the grandparents and married sons and

daughters to live in one large compound, generally consisting of a courtyard with women's quarters built around it. Within the same family intermarriage is allowable from the fifth generation, or "ghabiona", onwards.

The following is a list of names for various relationships :-

Erha	means	Father
Iye	...	Mother
Omo	...	Child
Omokpia	...	Son
Omokhuo	...	Daughter
Ey'okpia	...	Grand son
Ey'okhuo	...	Grand daughter
Ihienhien	...	Great grand child
Ihienhien okpia	...	Great grand son
Ihienhien okhuo	...	Great grand daughter
Isakpamwenghodin	...	Fourth generation
Ghabiona	...	Fifth generation
Omokpia odion	...	Eldest son
Omokhuo odion	...	Eldest daughter
Ey'odion	...	Eldest grand child
Ovbierhokpia	...	Brother
Ovbierhokhuo	...	Sister
Ovbierhavbiyeokpia	...	Full brother
Otinerhokpia	...	Uncle
Otinerhokhuo	...	Aunt
Ov'biotonkpia	...	Nephew
Ov'biotonkhuo	...	Niece
Ov'biovbio	...	Children's children
Egbee	...	Relative or relation
Oka egbee	...	Head of family
Oten	...	Kin
Otonberha	...	Paternal relative
Otonbiye	...	Maternal relative
Unien	...	Lineage

Ukhuaha	means	Affinity or alliance
Umobo	...	Stepchild
Iyegbeko	...	A dependent
Oguomwandi	...	Servant
Oguomwandiokpia	...	Man servant
Oguomwandiokhuo	...	Maid servant
Akhowa	...	Family house regent
Arowanokpia	...	Master
Arowanokhuo	...	Mistress
Ayakhion omo	..	Adopted child
Ayakhin erha	...	Adopted father
Ayakhin-iyé	...	Adopted mother
Arowa	...	Master or guardian
Omaemwin	...	Teacher or tutor
Oruemwin	...	Learner or scholar
Erherha	...	Grand father
Erh'odede	...	Great grand father
Iyiye	...	Grand mother
Iy'odede	...	Great grand mother
Oruan en okpia	...	Father-in-law
Orun okhuo	...	Mother-in-law
Ovbi orun okpia	...	Brother-in-law
Ovbi orun okhuo	...	Sister-in-law
Olotu	...	President
Okpomwan	...	Labourer or carrier
Ore	...	A Generation
Ore	...	Out, outside

The father is the head of the Compound, and is known as "Odafen Noyanwa" or "Edionmwan". He must be obeyed and honoured by all living in the compound and in his turn is responsible for their protection and is answerable to the authorities for their good behaviour. Any trouble in the compound can be reported to him by any member of the family. The Odafen has power to settle minor palavers not worth the interference of an outside authority and he can punish by fines, or if the culprit is young, by flogging,

whipping, binding or chaining according to the nature of the offence. He is specially vigilant over cases of misconduct and indeed over any kind of ill-treatment of any member of his family.

The wives in the compound are under the care of the most senior or the oldest of the senior wives and her orders have to be obeyed by the women in the compound just as the men obey the Edionmwan. Other senior wives have the title "Okhuo Odion," if their husband is an ordinary citizen, while senior wives of titled chiefs are called "Eson".

Most polygamists have a favourite wife "Amwenbo". It is to her counsels that the husband listens, so that the other wives are very careful to keep in her good graces. They usually pay her outward respect and honour while secretly nursing feelings of jealousy and hatred.

The senior wife of the king of Benin has always had great influence. The senior wife of the Ogisos, or kings of the first period of the Benin Empire, was known as "Esagho". Every one of these was full of cunning and cruelty. The senior wife of the "Obas" of the second period was known as "Enahen", today she is called "Oka Eric".

She is still a powerful figure at the Oba's court. Her special care is the royal harem; she has to train all the members in court manners and customs, and the Benin Royal Palace still holds first place in the Benin land for correct royal etiquette and polished court behaviour.

The wives as a rule are responsible for that very essential part of family life, the cooking, and it is a pleasant custom of the Binis to give a special salutation of respect and honour to the mistress or master of the house, after a specially well-cooked meal. This lightens and cheers what might otherwise be at times rather thankless work.

Titled chiefs usually have their own private kitchen as

well as one for general household use; and the wives of some prominent chiefs have an enviable carefree life as their husbands prefer to hire male cooks.

It is also the custom in a Benin compound to have three latrines, one for the house owner in the courtyard, and two outside for men and women respectively. It is against the customs of the land for men and women to use the same latrine. The children use a dung hill.

CHAPTER 3 MARRIAGE

1. Marriage holds a central place in any society and among the Binis, it is regulated by many customs, down to the smallest details.

2. First, there is the betrothal ceremony. The father sees an eligible young man and makes careful enquiry as to his suitability. Is there insanity, or epilepsy or any other fell disease in the family? Is he and his family free from debt, from crime, from witchcraft, etc?

3. Meantime, the family of the suitor makes similar enquiries about the girl's family and if both sides are satisfied, the proceedings go forward.

4. The father next invites the young man to his house where he is asked to kneel down and calls him by his name four times. The fourth time, he replies "Heyo!". He then continues by saying, "Imade (or whatever her name may be) is betrothed to you this day", to which all the families who are present for the ceremony reply "May you live to marry her". "Ise" (Amen) is the general response.

5. Of course, money has to come into it, and a fixed fee of two shillings, four pieces of kola-nuts, and a demijohn

of palm wine are paid by the bridegroom-to-be. This fee is known as "Iwanrien omo".

6. Sometimes a man or woman is appointed as adviser to both man and girl; he helps to see the thing through and acts as G.P. between for the two parties. He is called "Osuomwan". The suitor must give him a present, also money or drink in addition to the fixed betrothal fee. The bridegroom's expenses have already started. From now onward to the end of his life, he is never allowed to forget the responsibilities he has taken on. Thenceforth he must send to the girl's parents annually seven yams in a bundle, one shilling in cash, and four pieces of kola-nut, all this is called "Agban or Ikuangban." The suitor is also expected to help his father in law with any house building or farm work, as part of the dowry, so that he is very much tied to the girl's family, as well as to his wife.

7. When the girl reaches the age of puberty, she has to receive the tribal marks "Iwu," though the parents bear the actual expenses of this, the suitor must give an incision feast, "Emiwu".

8. But he is not halfway through with his expenses yet. There follows the ceremony of wedding preparation "Imiomo" for which the bridegroom has to provide twenty pieces of Kolanut, twenty pieces of cocoanut, two bundles each containing seven yams, two legs of antelope, a calabash of palm oil and "ugiamwen" or six shillings and sixpence, and a bottle of gin.

9. In case the bridegroom is unable to procure all the above articles, the whole may be counted for a money payment of one pound.

10. Now, at last, a day is fixed for the actual marriage ceremony which may be settled for two weeks or three months ahead. During this time the oracle is consulted,

and the ancestral gods propitiated, to try to ward off any mishap, and make the bride happy and prosperous in her husband's house.

11. At last the long expected day arrives and at eight o'clock in the evening, the bridal procession sets off from the bride's to the bridegroom's house. The bride is accompanied by men, women and maids, and as she nears her future husband's house, she finds that the ceremony of cutting the tree roots has already been held and the way has been prepared for her to enter. Once inside she is at once placed on the thighs of her husband. She has been handed over, and her escorters prepare to return home. Before they go, however, the bridegroom again has to give presents all round, the amount this time being regulated by the length of his purse. Although the bride is now in her husband's house and they may now be considered husband and wife, the wedding ceremonies are not yet over.

12. On the third day of the wedding, the bridegroom must go with some of his friends to his wife's parents to salute them and offer thanksgiving. On the fifth day the wife's father visits her in her new home, and accepts as a present any gift his son-in-law likes to give him.

13. The last visit is that of the bride's mother on the seventh day and the bridegroom prepares a special feast for the occasion. She is very proud and joyful if she can carry home the white cloth of virginity to show that her daughter had kept herself pure, (She also receives the customary sum of twenty-one shillings). The bridegroom also gives to a virtuous bride a large present such as an ox, or a coral necklace, etc.

14. So ends the actual marriage ceremony which lasts for one week, but as was said above, the man still has many obligations to his wife's family, which last for life. The last ceremonial visit between the two families is in the third.

month after marriage, when the bride visits her parent's house with a large retinue of her husband's people. A great feast is prepared for her, but it was customary for this to be carried to her husband's house and consumed by the household there.

15. The new bride is now put under the care of one of her husband's senior wives, who is now her mistress. She sees that the new bride attends to sweeping and rubbing the house, drawing water, getting firewood and doing any other ordinary domestic duty. The new wife must also swear on a juju to be faithful to her husband. It is repugnant to Benin custom for a Bini woman to marry a white man.

16. Polygamy is the universal custom in Benin and each man is at liberty to take as many wives as he likes; but adultery is not according to custom, and in olden days it was very rare due to heavy punishment inflicted on an adulterer. In the case of an ordinary citizen the offending man was heavily fined, or his property confiscated or his houses passed to the crown; the woman was punished by flogging, chained by leg—irons about the feet. In the case of titled chiefs like the Uzama Nihinron, the Eghævbo-nore and Eghævbo-nogbe, the punishment was death. It was also unpardonable in the case of the king's wife "Oloi", but adultery on her part was very rare in the olden days and it is still rare now.

17. Today the penalties for adultery are as follows:- For an ordinary man, £5 or three months' imprisonment. A woman £2:10s or one month's imprisonment. For any man who commits adultery with any of the wives of Uzama Nihinron, the Eghævbo-nore or the Eghævbo-nogbe, a fine of £10 or six months' imprisonment, and for the woman £5, or three months' imprisonment.

18. For committing adultery with any of the king's wives "Oloi", a fine of £100 or three years' imprisonment

is inflicted, while the adulteress is liable to a fine of £50 or one year's imprisonment, and she is entirely rejected from being the king's wife.

19. Many other circumstances are covered by the Benin laws of sex relationship. If a girl has misconducted herself before marriage, she loses the "white cloth of virginity" which the mother is so proud to carry home; but no further punishment seems to follow.

20. If an unbetrothed girl is pregnant by a man, the parent may or may not allow their daughter to marry the man but the man has no right to claim the child as his without paying the customary expenses to the parents. An illegitimate child born before marriage belongs to the girl's father. If, after marriage, a girl has a child by a man not her husband, the child will be the property of the husband. A child of another man, born after marriage is called a bastard "Ovbioyi", and is treated as a slave. It may be given to the Oba in exchange for a title or it may be sold as a slave. Such a child can be redeemed by its father on payment of legal fixed fee.

21. Should a betrothed girl die before her marriage, it is contrary to Benin law and custom for the parents to refund the dowry. They may betroth another daughter in her place if they think the man will make a good husband.

22. On the other hand, the husband has many expenses. Should one or other of his wife's parents die, he is bound to take part in the funeral ceremonies and share the expenses. His share used to consist of one piece of white cloth, two shillings for washing the dead body, one mat, one she goat, fourteen yams, one gourd of palm oil and salt, one leg of antelope, coconuts and an "okun". An "okun" is a white ornamental eye box carried on the head of one of the

dancers in the funeral procession. However, today, all these can be counted for £3 money payment.

23. A sacrifice should be first made to the goddess of the sea, *olokun*, of the bride by the bridegroom. And at the first pregnancy of the bride a she goat termed "*Ew'Ikpese*" is given by the bridegroom to the bride's father for sacrifice to the spirits of his ancestral gods for her safe delivery and fruitfulness. The bride's father also gives a she goat to the bridegroom for sacrifice.

24. It is contrary to Benin laws and customs for husband and wife to live separately from each other except in the time of sickness, disagreement or during the period of female treatment by the wife or nursing of a child. She should not be allowed a refuge or abode in any other house than those of her parents.

25. It is prohibited by the law of the land for any man to marry two full sisters except the king of Benin. It is the usage for every king of Benin to marry his eldest daughter to the *Iyese* (Premier) of Benin and the second daughter to the *Edogun*.

26. It is against Benin Laws and Customs to betroth a girl to two men at a time, just to deceive one of them to get money from him. Any one who does this is liable to fines or imprisonment.

CHAPTER 4

DIVORCEMENT AND DOWRY

1. According to Benin law and custom no divorcement or refund of dowry was known in ancient days. The modern system of divorcement or refund of dowry is quite foreign and is an introduction of the British Government. In the olden days nothing could cause the separation of husband and wife, except death, impotency or a dangerous and infectious

disease. It is now customary for a betrothed girl to refund her dowry to her proposed husband, if she changes her mind before marriage. This is termed infant marriage.

2. Ever since the days of the punitive expedition in 1897 the dowry has been fixed at various amount, but now it is £12; an unreasonable divorcement is £17.

3. In the good old days people were not so particular to get their money back. If a girl died before marriage, and her dowry had already been paid, the parents were not necessarily, obliged to refund the dowry.

4. Similarly if a man had put his goods to be stored in a friend's house and they were accidentally destroyed by fire, they were not expected to be replaced. Or if a friend was shipping them and the canoe was wrecked, the friend needed no claim. And goods hid in another person's house, if they were accidentally destroyed by the termites, stolen or lost, you would not expect them to be replaced.

CHAPTER 5

CHILDBIRTH, CIRCUMCISION, TWIN CHILDREN AND THE USE OF GARLANDS

1. On the day of her purification the wife must throw away the fuel of private apartment called "Owehe", rub the room and the ancestral shrine of her husband, and also prepare a delicious food for her husband. Sexual union must take place that very night.

2. The next morning she must wash herself carefully before cooking any food and the husband must do the same before touching his apparel or eating. Anything touched by either before washing, is considered unholy and it must be destroyed. The Binis, like the Jews of old, are very conservative about this.

3. Immediately a child is born, the placenta is cut off with Palm pole's knife, and the child is washed. The placenta is then buried in the ground and with petty ceremonies after the washing of the child and placed on the thighs of its mother by the lady who washed it, special ceremony is performed daily for seven days at the spot where the placenta was buried.

4. On the day which a Bini woman delivers a child, garlands or slips of palm leaves are put at the entrance to the room as a sign that her husband should not enter. This is called "Owaden". It has not only a practical use in warning the husband to keep away but that it might not weaken any talisman or preservative medicine of war, and also to ward off evil spirits against the child.

5. It is customary to place a yam at the headside of a new born child on the bed from the date of its birth to the seventh day of the naming ceremony while the yam is cut into pieces and shared among the women with cocoanuts, etc., the head of the yam would be planted. This purports that yam is the chief food of the land on which the child would live. This custom is gradually dying out because of the activities of the Missionary Maternity Homes.

6. On the seventh day the naming ceremony, takes place. between 9 and 10 o'clock in the morning, the oracle is consulted and the necessary sacrifices are offered, to pacify the anger of the gods, and to obtain long life for the child. After this the child is named. The final ceremonies and sacrifices are performed in the evening, whilst seven songs are sang and a shout of joy follows each song. An offering to the "gods of devil" in the square, ends all the ceremonies, and every guest then retires home.

7. On the fourteenth day the mother washes herself and her clothes very carefully and then returns to normal life

again: she can enter any part of the house and touch anything. This is called "Iheto".

8. It is a Bini custom for all to be circumcised, both male and female. This may be done at any age from time a child is seven days old upwards. Some are circumcised as adults. It is believed that this custom of circumcision was originally introduced to Benin from Asia by Asiatic travellers very early in the first period of the Benin Empire.

9. In some parts of Nigeria twin children used to be killed, but in Benin City they are welcomed. The king makes presents to the parents for the care of the children. If any of the children is a male, the parents can give him when he is old enough to the Oba, to act as one of the Royal sword bearers. This is in return for the king's gifts for the child.

10. In some of the villages, however, the parents are fined heavily, to pay for sacrificial victims for the ransom of the twin children. Usen town was a very black spot, for here the custom was to kill twin children immediately on birth while the mother had to redeem herself by sacrifice and stay in the bush for a period of three lunar months. The killing of twin children is now against the law of the British Government and the practice is stopped.

11. GARLAND—(Ome) is generally used by the Binis in putting up across the gate ways or entrance of every sacred grove, shrine, juju shrine, house, disputed farming, etc., as a symbol of warning to prevent another person's entry therein especially non-members of a certain society. It is also a common dress of the masquerades or masqueraders. Garland plays prominent parts in special ceremonies.

12. In all cases, anything touched by an unpurified woman is to be sanctified rather than being destroyed.

13. It is forbidden by the law of the land to kill a pregnant woman.

CHAPTER 6

KINGSHIP AND ITS POWER

1. The following is an account of kingship as it used to be in Benin before the area came under British rule.

2. According to the Bini theory of government, the King is the head of the nation and his person is held sacred. He was the source of law. He could make and repeal laws, pardon or punish offenders by the death penalty, if necessary, and declare war and peace. He could order the execution or expulsion of traitors or rebels, liberate slaves, and suspend any titled chief from his post, but the chief must still hold his title for life.

3. Kingship in Benin has always been kept in one family although at first the brothers were allowed to reign, however, since about 1711 primogeniture has been the rule. Women are forbidden to reign. If there is no son, a brother may succeed the throne, but this is only in an emergency.

4. The king lives in his Royal Palace, and only comes out on special occasions. One of these is to perform a certain ceremony known as "Eguamaton", and this he does in Ozolua's Chamber: there he also receives complaints and settles cases, (though he may delegate chiefs to do this for him). It is necessary for him to come out in person to receive strangers or Ambassadors from foreign towns or countries. Many times a year, he has religious ceremonies to perform. Two of these are during the festival of the god of war "Ogun" called Isiokuo, and the acrobatic dance "Amufi", accompanied by a parade with drums.

5. The king's wives "Iloi" were over 2,000 in those days

and were not allowed to come out at all, and they are not allowed to come out till today, unless they are sick or under pregnancy. They have as escorts emasculated eunuchs and the lame porters who keep the gates of the harem. Their maid-servants wear brass anklets like those of the king's sword bearers "Emada".

6. The Iloi do not need to wear any headtie, but they wear their hair dressed high on their heads, which gives the appearance of a turban or a bishop's mitre covered with hair. This style of hair dressing is called Ukpoho.

7. The king marries freely and pays no dowry, but he may make presents to the girl's parents, and also may use his influence to help them in case of any palaver.

8. The king's messengers are known as Ukoba, and were very hard and merciless in the olden days. They had great power, and punished people harshly, especially in the villages.

9. The Iberughas or House servants receive gifts sent to the king such as money, cattle, coral beads, yams, etc. They are responsible for keeping them in the Royal Stores.

10. Any man wishing to check a disobedient wife might send her to the king's harem for special training by the Oka-Erie.

11. In accordance with the custom of most early kings, the Oba has certain dues which he may claim as his right. A hunter of elephants in the Benin forests (whether he had a permit or not) has to render to the king one leg and the biggest tusk. The fishermen in the rivers of the land, must send a certain amount of fishes to the king through the Minister of Fish "Ogua" appointed, by the king. Every leopard killed or caught alive in any part of the Benin Kingdom has to be taken to the king as a special tribute.

12. An inquest usually held over every leopard killed and brought to the king at Benin City. The inquest matter, usually, the Uwangué or any member of the House of Iwebo who represents him would ask the killer seven times as follows: What leopard do you kill? The killer shall then answer thus "Ekpen n'oha I gbe I ma gbe n'owa" meaning, "I killed bush leopard and not house one". Because the king represents house leopard, and the leopard represents king of the bush. Any mistake in answering would cost his life in the olden days. If no mistake in answering, the king marries wives to some or confer the honour of the beads on the others. Any mistake in answering now under the British Flag may only cost the loss of his reward and not life anymore.

13. Special officers are appointed for the care of different animals, e.g.

Iriakpen	care of	leopards.
Iboyanyan	„ „	horses.
Iriamila	„ „	cows.
Omare	„ „	dogs.
Aduhanhau	„ „	sheep.
Amufi	„ „	a water-bird (oghohon).

14. The king sends his sons as dukes or princes to various towns and villages in the Benin division. The eldest son is known as Ekaiken, Crown Prince of Benin (similar to the title of Prince of Wales in English custom and is customarily sent to the Upper Usele as Prince of Useleu.

15. The king's mother is also sent to the Lower Usele as the "Iyoba" (Queen Mother) and ranks with the Egha-ebonore or next to the Eson in rank.

16. Anything sent to the king is private even down to firewood sent from the bush, and water from the river. Whatever is sent must be tied in palm-mats, and certain leaves "Ebahe", must be tied to the edges of the mats. The

bearers are usually the Ibierughas of the House of Ibiwe, and they carry in their hands the sacred peeled wands or sticks called Uwenrhiontan, with which to make way through the people. Every one is bound to give way for them, and anyone who neglects to do this is liable to the punishment of whipping.

17. Nobody in the land is supposed to know what things are sent to the king at any time.

CHAPTER 7

CORONATION

1. The coronation ceremonies of the new king begins as soon as the funeral ceremonies of the old king have been completed.

2. The Edaiken (Crown Prince) leaves Uselu which is his official residence and comes to Benin City, visiting on the way a sacred palm tree "Amamienson aimiuwa" (meaning "work before pleasure"). He used to climb this palm tree, but now he merely touches it with his feet. Having arrived at the city he stays for two days, at Ek'ohae (the Bachelors' Camp,) and from there he proceeds on the third day to Usama.

3. On the third day he goes via Urubi and Idunmw-hogbe to Usama, the site of the old Palace of Prince Oran-miyan, and now the coronation shrine. He stays here until the seventh day, when he visits Use, in order to choose a title at the spot where Eweka I played and won his memorable seed game "akhue". Coronation usually takes place at Usama on the 8th day, i.e. the one following the visit to Use. It is the custom for Edaiken or the king elect to kneel on a heap of cowries while he is being installed into office by the Oliha after the usual promise by the Edaiken of a just

rule in conformity with the Benin laws and customs. Then dressed in the royal robes, and proceeds to the Palace.

4. He has to cross the bridge by Isckherhe's premises, and here he must pay for toll, a wife, and six shillings and six pence to the Isekerhe. Having crossed the bridge, his way is blocked by the Ogiamwen and his soldiers, but by the aid of the Royal troops headed by the Edogun, the new king manages to proceed to the Palace and the Ogiamwen retires to his quarter. He first takes a hen which was hanging round the neck of the king: this has a symbolic meaning.

5. A period of seven days is allowed for preparation and on the seventh day a mock fight is held between the Royal army and the Ogiamwen's, in which the leader of the Ogiamwen's army, entitled Oliha Ogiamwen is killed, the Ogiamwen is pursued and defeated at Ekiokpagha, where he surrenders and peace is made. The treaty of peace is called treaty of Ekiokpagha

6. All this done as a commemoration of the events in Ewedo's reign, which led to the crowning of the king. The new king usually enters the inner chambers of the palace between the House of Iwebo and Iwoghona by the direction of the Emehe of Urubi.

7. The purport of the treaty is that Ogiamwen, the former ruler of Benin (before Oranmiyan's arrival from Ife) to hand over the land and sovereignty of Benin to the new king; and that he is no longer a ruler, but a higher ranking titled chief, by the will of the people.

Note:— Esukporu is the only virgin wife of the king elect for the two days stay at the Ek'ohae: (Bachelors' camp); she is no longer a wife for the rest of her life.

CHAPTER 8

TITLES AND CHIEFTAINCY

1. Every title in Benin is conferred by the king or by those commissioned to act on his behalf. The titles are normally won by merit, and special duties as well as privileges are attached to each. Should any chief abuse his office, he is punished by fine, or by losing some of his privileges, but his titles cannot be taken from him. Some titles are made hereditary in their family, such as the Uzama Nihinron, the Ogiamwen, Elema, Ogiefa, Ihama, Osa, Osuan, Ologbose, and now the Obaruviedo, etc.

2. The following is a list of the order and ranks of chiefs:-

(a) The Uzama Nihinron, the seven Councillors of the State (or Kingmakers) headed by the Oliha who installs the King into office.

(b) The Eghaevbonore, the State Councillors, headed by the Iyase (the Premier) of Benin.

(c) The leaders of royal Houses of Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe known as the Eghaevbonogbe headed by the Uwangue.

3. The above named prominent classes of the chieftaincy make up the Executive Council, the Eghaevbonogbe forms the "Cabinet." The king usually discusses matter of vital moment with the Cabinet members in secret session before the general council meeting of the three above named groups (which together form the Executive Council). (Until 1897 the Eghaevbonore and the Eghaevbonogbe principally directed the government of the country, while the Uzama Nihinron remained independent chiefs, each as they were from the beginning).

4. There are a great many minor ranks of titled chiefs

each with their own duties and privileges. Below is a list of twenty-one of these:—

- (i) The Ekaiwe or the Royalists headed by the Edogun.
- (ii) The Iwegie and Ebo (Senior Royal doctors and diviners) headed by the Odionweres.
- (iii) The Ewaise (the junior doctors and diviners) headed by the Egezigbon.
- (iv) The Ihogbe (worshippers of the King's ancestors and recorders of the departed kings) headed by the Ihama.
- (v) The Efa (the sanctifiers of the Palace, worshippers of the gods of the earth, and the King's Good Luck) headed by the Ogiefa.
- (vi) The Avbiogbe (the Commissioner of lands, Police, Town Criers, or bell Ringers who announce new laws, and declaration of war and peace) headed by the Oka'vbiogbe.
- (vii) The Eben, headed by the Oka-Eben, who inters the remains of the kings.
- (viii) The Ogbelaka, the Royal bards, headed by the Odionwere.
- (ix) The Igun-eronwom, the Royal Brass-smith, headed by the Inenigun.
- (x) The Igbesanmwon, the Royal Carvers and Carpenters headed by the Eholo.
- (xi) The Igun-ematon, the Blacksmiths, headed by the Eholo-Nigun.
- (xii) The Ikperma, Royal drummers headed by the Omemu.

(xiii) The Iwoki, the Royal Astrologers, headed by the Odinonwere.

(xiv) Owinanido, the Royal weaver, headed by the Okao.

(xv) The Uhegie, the doctors of medicine and surgery, headed by the Inogun.

(xvi) Isekpokin, the Royal leather workers, headed by Okao.

(xvii) The Emezi, the caretakers of the king's children, the bearers of the Royal corpse to Ile Ife and also the royal Farmers. To this farm the Iyase, the Esogban and other Eghaevbo are sent by the king to get yams at harvest time.

(xviii) The Iwaranmwun or the Butchers, headed by the Ehondo who kill the sacrificial victims.

(xix) The Isienmwunro, the public executioners, headed by the Amaghizemwen.

(xx) The Odionmwun, the ceremonial Executioners headed by the Oka Odionmwun.

(xxi) The Evbogida, the doctors who treat serious cases of women's travail, headed by the Ogida.

5. There are fixed fees for the investiture of every title from the king downwards, and the sharing of this fee is also carefully regulated.

6. The fee for the king's coronation is £65 (Ehuri) exclusive of enormous expenses incurred in the entertaining and in giving of presents. The Uzama-Nihinron share this £65 among themselves. The king himself installs the O'iha into office and he receives the commission.

7. The fixed fee for the investiture of every title of both Eghaevbonore and Eghaevbonogbe is £15 (Eb'chanyan yeva to be shared as follows: £5 to the king, £5 to the Eghaevbonore £5 to the Eghaevbonogbe: of these amounts, the Iyase (Premier of Benin) is entitled to 13s, the Uwangne, 13s, the Ihaza, 13s, the Esogban, 9s 9d, and each of the other Eghaevbo chiefs 6s 6d. Besides these fixed fees, there are heavy expenses incurred in entertaining and making merry. The Eghaevbonogbe of the House of Ibiwe are excluded from having shares of the fees.

8. The stipulated fee for the investiture of minor titles is £3 (Ebihirin) and is to be shared as follows:—
£1 to the king, £1 to the Eghaevbonogbe, and £1 to the Eghaevbonore. Again, there is over and above this, the expenses of dancing and merriment.

9. It is the Bini custom for a titled man or chief to be known by his title or office, it is an insult to use his ordinary name. In the olden days, a chief could report any such offender and he could be fined. But the educated title holders are now signing their family names before their title.

10. Titled chiefs are generally held in high respect, anyone who insults or strikes a minor chief is fined £5 or three months' imprisonment, while anyone who strikes the Uzama Nihinron, both the Eghaevbonore and the Eghaevbonogbe is liable to a fine of £10 or six months' imprisonment.

11. Every titled chief and also the Royal House servants, old and young, must take an oath of allegiance to the king. The oath is sworn on 'uju.

12. Others too, have to swear allegiance on juju, as a safeguard. For instance, a doctor before prescribing for the king must swear his allegiance on juju. If he refuses, his services will not be required. In the olden days, refusal to swear on juju used to cost him his life.

13. Similarly, any person suspected as a spy is required to swear on juju an oath of fidelity to the king.

14. Only members of the Royal Houses of Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe are allowed to enter the royal chambers in the palace of Benin. Other titled chiefs may not enter. The only way to gain access is by initiation into one of those Societies. Slaves are not allowed initiation into any of the three Houses.

15. Some women hold titles in Benin and these are the leaders of various gangs or guilds, *Iyeye*, is a childless woman, and the king inherits her property, when she dies. The Oka Isikhian, Oka 'mche, Oka gbezuzu, Okasiento. The Emelu is the title of the only wife of the king who is allowed to live outside the palace. The other wives must live in the harem and no other woman is allowed to visit the Royal Chambers in the palace— should one do so, she must offer the necessary sacrifices to make her peace and for purification. Women may however, visit the harem.

16. A native Foreigner is allowed to take the State Title should he nationalize himself. Under the old Government of Benin, a man without a tribal mark about his body was not eligible for State Title, but now the law is modified.

CHAPTER 9

GOVERNMENT AND TRIBUTE

1. The king is an absolute ruler and resides in Benin City, the capital city of Benin Empire. The chiefs under him (Dukes or Enigies) are appointed by him and owe allegiance to him and he rules through them.

The orders of the king must be carried out by them and his decision is final, though a certain amount is left to the discretion of the chiefs who are carrying out the law.

2. We have already seen that there are three principal classes of titled chiefs in Benin for the government of the country, viz— The Uzama-nihinron, (Seven Councillors of State or Kingmakers) headed by the Oliha, the Eghaevbonore, headed by the Iyase (the Premier) of Benin, and the Eghaevbonogbe headed by the Uwangue. These are the highest ranks of the titled chiefs who take their seats with the king for legislative and judicial matters and for the organising of trade.

3. There are at present only seven titles in Uzama, but many in both the Eghaevbonore and Eghaevbonogbe. The Uwangue is the kings' deputy and the Eribo, the old Treasurer of state.

4. The both high and minor titled chiefs are put in charge of various towns and villages under the Benin Empire, especially the chiefs of the Houses of Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe. They have judicial authority in their own districts for civil cases, but criminal cases and cases of disputed claims to the throne must be taken to the king's council in Benin City. The king of Benin is called Oba. This word has various meanings. Oba means king. It may also mean the government or administration of a country.

Ogaba means the king's service.

Arioba means kingdom or dominion

Oto arioba means territory or sway.

The form of government of Benin is for the most part democratic originally.

5. Throughout the old Empire of Benin, yearly tributes were paid by the tributary countries and towns to the king of Benin, at Benin City through the Governors and Chiefs of Benin who were in charge of the towns and countries in those days such as:—Ishan, Eka, Kukuruku, Lokoja, Ibo (on both sides of the Niger), Owo, Ekiti, from Akure to Otun, Ondo, Idanre, Ikale, Sobos, Ijaws, Itsekiri,

Lagos, etc. The tributes were being paid in slaves, leopards, cattle, fowls, ivory, grindstone, native soap, rolled tobacco, goods and money in cowries: cowries being the currency of the time.

CHAPTER 10

ANCIENT WARS

1. The conduct of war was the responsibility of the king in Benin, and it usually happened that a king would declare war about three years after his accession to the throne.

2. A new king must visit the Aro Osa shrines or sites of the old Roman Catholic Churches at Ogbelaka, Idumwerie and Akpakpava for thanksgiving. As a sign of rejoicing, a knob of chalk would be sent to all the ruling Princes (Eniges, Ezes or Obis, Olojas) of the Benin Empire. If any chief refused to accept the chalk he was considered a rebel, and war was declared on him and his town. After such a town had been conquered, its ruler would be brought to the king of Benin, who might pardon him or execute him or deprive him of office and put another member of the same ruling family in his place.

3. The Iyase (premier) of Benin was the commander-in-Chief during war, and the Ezomo (Ojomo) was second in command. Then came the Ologbose (Ologbosere), the Imaran, the Edogun, the Ezomurogho, the Enogie of Ugo in Iyekorhionmwon and the Enogie of Ebue. The Ohen-Okhuahe (priest) of Ogheghe was the doctor of the Royal Army. If the lesser generals were unable to conquer a town, the Iyase would be sent, but if he was successful he would not be allowed to return to Benin City, in case he should feel too important and create trouble. He was usually appointed Governor of some town at a sale distance

from Benin City. No other Iyase would be appointed until after his death.

4. It was possible however, for an ordinary man to be appointed Captain general, if he showed conspicuous ability and should his campaign be successful, he would be rewarded with a title.

5. The principal weapons of the Binis were the long cutlass or sword, called *umozo*, a spear called *ogan*, bows and poisoned arrows: and since the reign of King Esigie guns. An Army of from twenty to fifty thousand men could be raised within a few weeks.

6. It was the custom, as soon as a town or a village had been conquered by the Benin Army, to send some of the soil from that town in a leather box to the king of Benin, and sometimes the box would be accompanied by the head of a stubborn ruler. This would be carried by a member of the Avbiogbe telling the king that this land had been added to the Benin Empire.

7. The chief spoils of war had to be sent to the king, that he might take his share first and then the chiefs would be allowed to take their pick, subject to the king's approval.

8. It has always been considered the duty of any citizen of the soil to take up arms for his country voluntarily. No payment is expected, other than maintenance while fighting. The Binis have usually shown themselves brave soldiers.

CHAPTER 11

HERITAGE

1. The system of primogeniture holds in Benin, both with regard to the crown and to all inherited property.

If the king has no surviving male child a brother may succeed to the throne.

2. In infancy, the heir apparent is put under the guardianship of one of the Eghaevbonores and one of the Eghaevbonogbes. Generally the guardian is the *Iyase*.

3. When the child is of age, the king invites both the high and minor titled chiefs to the palace, to present the heir to them. He does this more than once, and on one of the occasions he says "Ye elders of my people, see herewith my eldest son and heir apparent to my throne, whom I present you this day". Then the *Uwangué* will announce this more loudly so that the assembled company of the chiefs and people of Benin may hear. The *Iyase* will reply on behalf of the chiefs and people "Ghara omo" or "Your Highness, we have seen your eldest son and heir apparent to your throne, we are pleased with him and accept him".

4. A plentiful supply of kola-nuts and drinks are then passed round, and prayer by the *Iyase* or any prominent chief closes the ceremony.

5. The heir apparent must now be sent to the Ogboka following which he is invested with the customary title of Edaiken of Uselu (which is similar to the English Prince of Wales). The Edaiken must now live at Upper Uselu, the lawful residence of the Crown Prince of Benin. Here he is supposed to study the art of governing and also the mystery of the religions of the land. He pays occasional visits to his father in Benin City, until his father's death.

6. When the old king dies, the Edaiken is proclaimed as king elect, and remains in this position through the funeral ceremonies which usually occupy two years. He is eventually crowned king after the funeral obsequies are over.

7. He can make presents to his brothers and sisters from

the Royal property, but it is against the law to share it all out equally.

8. This same law of primogeniture holds for all citizens; but though the eldest son is the heir and gets the greatest share of his father's property, the other children do get some share. For example, after a father has died and the funeral ceremonies are over, the elderly members of the family, *i.e.* uncles, aunts and other relations share the property among the children in order of seniority, *viz.* eldest son house, (if only one) some virgin wives and childless wives, slaves, coral beads, money, clothes, cattle, rubber or cocoa, plantation (if any), etc. The same things but less in number are given to the second and third son respectively and to the other children, according to the position held by their mothers. But no reasonable share is given to any son or daughter who does not contribute satisfactorily to the funeral rites.

9. The wives or women who have already had children by the deceased man, are let go absolutely free by the law of the land, they are free to marry any man they like. No dowry is necessary in their case, but the man may give presents if he likes. He must, however, take care of her children, and if the widow acts honourably to him, her children by the deceased husband, may marry any of their step-sisters, and that without dowry also.

10. If the deceased man leaves no surviving child, a full-brother or sister or brother or sister on mother side may inherit the property, failing these, a nephew or niece: and after them any kin or relative. Should there be no relatives the property reverts to the crown.

11. Wives or women are not allowed to inherit their husband's property, except such things as were given to them before their husband's death. But the husband may inherit the wife's property, if there is no issue.

12. If a wife dies leaving children, they are entitled to inherit her property. The children of a bought wife have the same rights and privileges to their father's property, as the children of a freeborn wife.

13. If the eldest son does not perform the funeral ceremonies at once, and dies before he has completed them the right of inheritance goes to the second son and his children, provided he carries out the funeral rites. If, however, the eldest son has spent a good deal of money on the house before he died (probably instead of spending it on funeral ceremonies) perhaps partially rebuilding it, or roofing with corrugated iron sheets, the second son who inherits the property must compensate the children of the first son, to the amount he spent on the improvement of the house. If he does not compensate, he must seek another site and build another house for himself.

14. In these modern days, however, the custom of making a "Will" according to European fashion is growing. Those who make a will, hope in this way to avoid unnecessary disputes over their property.

CHAPTER 12

GUARDIANSHIP

1. When an infant loses both its parents, the orphan is put into the care of one of the uncles on either the maternal or paternal side. The property which the infant should inherit, is put in the charge of another uncle who is called the "Akh'owa" or supervisor. He must take care of the property, house, plantation or shop (if any), and is entitled to his own chop-money for his pains, but he ought not to take anything more than that out of the child's own possessions.

2. He ought to hand it over in good order, otherwise he will have trouble from the family, or even find that the king interferes in the matter and forces him to make good whatever was wasted. Out of the proceeds of the property, he should send money to the guardian of the child for its maintenance and schooling, and the rest should be handed over in good condition when the child reaches puberty. Some Akho'was are faithful and do this, but others are not.

3. If the ward is a female, when the property is handed over by the supervisor, the husband will assume the office of supervisor for the wife. Should the woman die without issue her full brothers, sisters or brothers or sisters on mother side, nephews or nieces may inherit her property. On no account may her husband become the inheritor. This is a law of the land.

4. In no way that the Guardian should sell anything therein, or over the house. If this is unavoidably taking place the Guardian or his children after him shall make return of these.

CHAPTER 13

TRADE

1. The Binis are keen traders: to strike a good bargain seems to be in their very blood; even children will bargain to get their purchase for one onini less, (an onini is one tenth of a penny). No prices are fixed, but the same to be paid is agreed upon after a quarter or half an hour's "haggling of the market," each side beginning by naming a price at least twice as much as they ever hope to receive, and coming down step by step until a common mean is reached.

2. From ancient times, markets have been established in certain towns and villages. The original trades of the land were in various foodstuffs and commodities made in

the country, such as yam, plantain, maize, sugar-cane, etc. and simple manufactured things such as spun thread, waterpots, baskets, wooden dishes, plates, and drinking cups, wooden spades and shovels, cutlasses, axes, knives, brooms, native lamps, mortar and pestle, clay pipes, etc.

3. From the 15th century to the advent of the British, the people dealt largely in slaves, ivory, Benin cloths, palm oil, peppers and so on in exchange for European goods, such as gold and silver, cloths, velvets, silk and damask, jugs, looking glasses, gin, pen-knives, drinking glasses, big chiefs' umbrellas, etc.

4. Today, with the exception of the slave traffic, a similar trade goes on, though rubber is now the chief export and next palm oil, palm kernels, cocoa, timber, etc.

5. The Uwangué and the Eribo of the House of Iwebo were in charge of European trade, and heavy duties had to be paid on imported goods. These duties went to the king and some of his officers of state especially the Uwangué and the Eribo. A special permit had to be obtained from the king before taking part in any direct trading business with the European traders at Gwatton (Ughoton) the old port of Benin.

6. To sell anything away to another person and receive the payment and afterwards falsely claiming it back when found that such a thing had been improved by the buyer, is an offence and is punishable by fines or imprisonment.

CHAPTER 14

INDUSTRY

1. Benin is chiefly famous for her brass-casting and wood-carving. These are still carried on, though it is increas-

other task at an agreed price, but he cannot claim it as his right.

3. Some of the highest titled chiefs occasionally sent an elephant hunter to the forest, to kill elephants for them.

4. Any hunter in the villages is bound to send every hand of the animal killed to the Enogie of such a town or village, and this applies to both native and non-native hunters.

5. Some expert elephant hunters have special charms or medicine to enable them to get out of the thick forest or bush, even if they have penetrated into it for four or five years.

6. The chief gods of the elephant hunters are the god of War "Ogun", and god of medicine, "Osun".

7. The place where the king usually stationed his elephant hunters in the early days, is now known as Oregbeni (Ore Ogbeni) meaning the elephant hunters' town.

8. In the old days, no permit or licence was necessary before hunting elephants, and there was no restriction on the sale of ivory; but the British Government has taken over the control of this now.

CHAPTER 17

TAXATION

1. In the olden days there were different petty taxes in the Benin area but there was not general taxation by the state, such as is now imposed by the British Government. Two of these petty taxes were the sacrificial tax collection, and the toll tax collected by the porters at every gate of the city or town.

2. The sacrificial collection was an incidental tax. Should there be any sign of plague or impending distress of any kind the king and the chiefs of the town or village would meet, and discuss the matter. Then the oracle would be consulted, and a conclusion arrived at, which usually was, that a sacrifice should be offered, and everyone must contribute toward payment for it. In the villages this did not exceed 2d. for every adult man, and 1d. for every adult woman. In Benin City it was paid only by the chiefs, and did not exceed two shillings to three shillings.

3. When the money had been collected the necessary victims for the sacrifice were bought, and sacrifice offered to avert the impending calamity. The sacrificial tax is still going on.

4. *Toll Tax.* — The collection of toll at the gates of the chief towns is a very usual method of raising money among many different nations in the early stages of their development. Benin was no exception to this. A porter was posted at each of the nine gates of the city, and it was his duty to shut the massive gate door at sunset, or at about 7.30 p.m. and open it again when daylight returned. These porters were each under the control of a chief who resided permanently near to a particular gate, and the porter was to live in that chief's house. Thus, the Oka-Avbiogbe lives on the Benin-Agbor road: the Edogun on the Benin Old Siluko road: the Oka-Eben on the Ifon road: the Ezoba on the Sakpoba and Sapele roads: the Ediowere of Oria on the Benin Ughoton (Gwatto) road: the Odionwere of Ogbelaka on the Benin, Irhuasa and Ugbeu roads: the Ogiefa on the Benin Okhorho or old Ayea road.

5. The Office of each of the above chiefs is hereditary and each is responsible to the king: the porters in each case being responsible to the chiefs.

6. The porter was obliged to collect the toll from both

native and stranger, and anyone refusing to comply, was heavily fined: his goods, however, would not be touched. The porter himself had power to impose fines, but he had at once to report the incident and deliver the money to his master. He also had the right to open and examine any baggage, and seize any prohibited article, or goods suspected to have been stolen. He could also detain anyone suspected of being a fugitive, escaped slave, prisoner or a spy, but such action had to be reported to the chief at once, who could see that a proper enquiry was held.

7. There are two Bini proverbs which show the power of a porter, "A ma ze n'ukonurho ai la" meaning "You cannot pass a porter without paying him" and the other "Ole vb'ukonurho," "He used force like a porter."

8. But in spite of his seeming power, a porter was not in an enviable position, for should a thief get in through any of the nine gates and steal away a human being, or any goods, the porter was held directly responsible, and was instantly arrested and tried, and if found guilty he would be executed or strangled for the crime. Hence the proverb, "Ugbemwenugbemwen a gbukonurho," "Porters were customarily killed." It was there the custom, to employ slaves as porters, and not the freeborn citizens of the land.

9. Thus in the old Benin Empire the taxes were few; namely:—sacrificial tax and toll tax which could be paid in money or in kind.

10. Today the following taxes are imposed by the British Government— poll tax on every male over 16 years yearly, income tax, car and bicycle, radio licence, water rate, etc.

CHAPTER 18

PROVOCATION

1. Provocation is a serious offence in the land, and is punishable by law. Anyone who provoked another to commit suicide, was punished by death, now by a long period of imprisonment.

2. A man who provoked a king to anger or the mismanagement of affairs of the state, would be punished by imprisonment or death: similarly, one who provoked another to commit murder had to serve a long term of imprisonment. Anyone who provoked another man's wife to commit adultery is guilty of both instigation and provocation, and is liable to a heavy fine or imprisonment.

CHAPTER 19

SUICIDE

1. If a man, urged on by disease, disappointment, shame or other circumstance which he feels he cannot bear, commits suicide, this is against the law of the land.

2. If the king urged a man to commit suicide, or a man was summoned to his presence by an offence, and asked to stay a night in the royal palace, he may from sheer fright as to the reason of his summons, commit suicide. In this case, the king would be guilty of provocation, but being the king (and the fount of law) he was free. If however, any other man were to act in this way, he would be punished by heavy fine or imprisonment.

3. A certain ceremony must be performed by the Ebos of Idunmwebo before the dead body of anyone who

committed suicide (by hanging) can be buried. If this is not done, the body is denied burial, and may be thrown into the bush or left to be eaten by vultures.

CHAPTER 20

ADULTERY

1. This has already been dealt with in the laws of marriage, but a brief summary may be helpful here.
2. A man who commits adultery with another man's wife is liable to a fine of £5 or three months' imprisonment; a woman, a fine of £2. 10s. or one month's imprisonment. If however, she is forced and report at once to her husband or any of his family, she is acquitted, but she must sacrifice to her husband's ancestral gods for propitiation.
3. He who commits adultery with any of the higher ranking titled chiefs' wives is liable to a fine of £10 or six months' imprisonment; and the woman £5 or three months' imprisonment.
4. To commit adultery with the king's wife "Oloi" used to be punishable by execution, but now it has been changed by the British Government, to a fine of £100 or three years imprisonment. The woman "Oloi" must pay £50 or be imprisoned for one year.
5. It is against the law for a son to commit adultery with his father's or brother's wives, which is still the custom of the Sobe people. Should such occur, a she goat must be sacrificed to placate the spirits of the paternal gods.
6. A son-in-law who commits adultery with his father-in-law's wife loses his own wife married to him by the father-in-law.

CHAPTER 21

BRIBERY

1. Bribery is very common among most nations including the Binis, and there was originally no law against it, though, it was not done openly, which suggests that a taint was attached to it. The Binis have a proverb :—"Igh Edo re," "Money is the food of the Binis" and also "Igho o gbemwen n'Edo" "Money finishes matters in Benin.

2. Under British law, however, those guilty of Bribery are punished by fine or imprisonment.

CHAPTER 22

MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER

1. Murder is called 'Izigha' in Bini, and is punishable by death according to Benin native law and custom.

2. Manslaughter is called "Izighoyewu". Any wound caused by cutlass, fist or any pointed instrument is called "Izighoyewu" and is punished by fines or imprisonment.

CHAPTER 23

CATTLE AND POULTRY

1. The rearing of cattle, poultry and other domestic animals is a widespread practice among the Binis.

2. If an animal becomes troublesome, and strays on to a neighbour's premises, destroying any useful material complaints must be made to the owner of the animal. If the owner takes steps to restrain the animal, he shall be

pardoned for the first offence. But if the owner makes no serious effort to prevent the animal straying, he must pay for whatever damage done.

3. If a person gets angry with a neighbour's animal and kills it at once without first reporting to the owner, the person must pay for the price of the animal. If the person frequently kills his or her neighbour's stray animals he or she can be charged for witchcraft and tried by ordeal. If the trial goes against him or her, he or she can be punished by sashwood.

4. If a man has a farm or a vegetable garden near a village within the reach of cattle and poultry, he must make a strong fence round it, otherwise he has no right to claim any damage. He is liable to prosecution if he ill-treats an animal, and if he kills one he must pay the cost.

5. In the hope of avoiding much palaver and litigation over stray animals, it is forbidden to keep cattle or poultry outside a village, and farm near to the village boundry.

6. Anyone who kills the king's cattle or poultry must pay double or triple recompense.

7. Sometimes, cattle or poultry is put out to a caretaker to be reared, in which case arrangement has to be made as to the sharing of the proceeds. In the case of cattle, the first calf goes to the owner, the second to the caretaker. If there are two calves the first time, the female must go to the owner, and the male to the caretaker, and the next time *vice versa* and so on alternately.

8. Should both parties wish to close the contract because the cattle has ceased to breed, if the cattle has been with the caretaker over a year, it must be sold and the money divided equally between owner and caretaker. The same principle applies to poultry. Each time the breed is shared,

the caretaker must bring certain gifts to complete the sharing ceremony. If cattle is shared, the caretaker must bring five shillings, four pieces of kolanut and some cocoanuts. For a goat, he must bring one shilling, four pieces of kolanut, cocoanuts and some guineacorn. For poultry, he should bring four pieces of kolanuts and one coconut to the owner.

CHAPTER 24

MEDICINE

1. In the good old days native doctors and warriors were the most popular of all classes in Benin, they were also the most feared, honoured and respected by all. Any young man who wanted to make a name for himself, would take up the art of medicine studying first under an able native doctor as an apprentice (Ovbiewaise). When the apprenticeship is over, he makes a great feast to celebrate the occasion: his master then authorises him to practise on his own.

2. There are three kinds of native doctors: (a) medicinal or curative doctor, (b) divination doctor; (c) priest or juju doctor, though, in many cases their functions overlap. For instance, the majority of juju priest practise divination as well, by means of their juju, without consulting any oracle. People frequently apply to them to curse or anathematize their enemies, and the doctors live on the animal victims these people bring for sacrifice.

3. Some curative doctors practise both medical and divination arts together, and live on the animals brought for sacrifice, plus the fees by patients. Some of these doctors are really skilled in the use of native medicine and do effect quite marvellous cures. The advent of European doctors has decreased the need for native doctors, but some of their cures, if only they would impart them

to European trained men might prove useful to the whole medical profession in Nigeria.

4. The awe in which doctors are held extends to their property and dwelling. No woman is allowed to enter their medicine store or yard, and should anyone venture, that person is compelled to make an atonement.

5. There is a settled custom for fees, and before the treatment is started, the native doctors take a fee of fourpence halfpenny and a cock, then the patient vows to pay so much when the cure is complete. This last is called a vow fee (Aze).

6. If a man is poor and helpless and cannot pay any fee at all, he may promise to work for the doctor for a fixed period after which he may go free. In the case of an indigent woman, the doctor may take her to wife in place of the vow fee provided the cure is complete. She can be discharged by the native doctor if anyone in her family comes forward to pay the fees owed; they must be paid in a lump sum, no instalments are allowed.

7. The kings of Benin usually held their doctors and juju priest in high esteem, giving rich presents to one who has made many successful cures, and conferring a title on another. However "stingy" a king of Benin may be, he must always offer the requisite number of sacrifices, (to the royal gods or devils.) He always sends any sick or pregnant wife to the native doctor for treatment, and he and his wives frequently consult the oracle and offer the sacrifices stipulated. While the king makes much of his doctors and priests, they also have a certain standing of their own, and the king must acknowledge their position. For example, the juju priests do not kneel when paying homage to the king, or in stating cases; they simply sit on the bare floor.

8. It is also against all customs and good form for anyone to strike a doctor or priest, any such bold piece of audacity is severely punished by fine or imprisonment.

9. There are still many native doctors in the Benin area; and many people pay pounds, or that value in goods, to get their help. But with the educated classes, this is becoming more and more common to attend European hospital; indeed no Government employee can be away from work without a medical certificate. It seems likely that with the spread of education, the post of native doctor will fall into oblivion. It would be a loss, however, if this happened before they had divulged some of their secrets to the European medical profession.

10. It is repugnant to Bini law for a native Doctor to prepare medicines to a married woman without the knowledge or consent of her husband.

CHAPTER 25

TRIAL BY ORDEAL

1. Trial by ordeal is a recognised method in primitive African societies, of detecting a criminal. It has its place in the Bini law, and many Binis firmly believe today that when the court has entirely failed to clear up a matter, trial by ordeal is an unfailing method of finding the criminal.

2. In the case of theft, perjury, witchcraft, etc., if the offender denies the charge and continues to defend himself, he must undergo a trial by ordeal before an ordeal master, and when detected, he has to make a shameful confession before crowds of people, collected to witness the ceremony. Then he is taken for punishment, which may be by binding, flogging, fining or imprisonment.

This is supposed to mark the amicable settlement of the case and show that the two parties are friends. The drinks are brought by both parties.

9. Criminal cases and disputes as to succession go before the king. Hence the adage among the Binis, "Ezo imwon'-hunmwun ai guiee no'gie Eghaevbo nene ile," meaning "Hopeless civil cases are not brought before the king, so that the four State Councillors (Eghaevbo) may not have a chance of exercising their influence."

10. Members of various secret societies hear and decide their own cases, but women are not admitted into the Ovia cult. Any culprit in a society is dealt with by the rules of that society.

CHAPTER 27

PUNISHMENT

1. Benin Native Law settles the punishment to be allotted to each crime. Robbery, lying, adultery, rape, seduction and abortion are punishable by binding, flogging, whipping, chaining, imprisonment or heavy fines. Sedition, arson, smuggling are punishable by imprisonment, heavy fines or banishment. Witchcraft, murder, piracy, conspiracy, highway robbery, malicious administering of medicines or ordeal, spying, treason, are punishable by banishment or execution.

2. Imitating or personating the king is a serious offence. Any offender may be punished with a heavy fine, expulsion or execution.

3. In all cases, a chief may buy himself off by a lavish expenditure of money, and substitute a slave to suffer the punishment. In serious cases, two to three slaves are needed

for substitution. No substitution is allowed however, for a man who commits adultery with one of the king's wives (Iloi). The man must meet his death.

4. It must be understood that the above are Benin laws and customs, as they stood before the advent of the white man. Some of these have been modified, (the last one, for instance, where death is never exacted but a fine of £100 or three years' imprisonment).

CHAPTER 28

CRIMINAL LAWS AND PRISON

1. The punishments for various crimes were fixed by Benin Law and Custom. Perjury, larceny, receiving stolen property, manslaughter, burglary and false accusation were punishable by heavy fine or imprisonment, while the more serious offences, murder, rape, sorcery, witchcraft, spying, malicious administering of native medicines, the practising of quack remedies and treason, were punishable by execution, banishment or sometimes only imprisonment.

2. Many other cases were provided for by Binin native law. Should a free-born man or one of noble birth murder the slave of another man, the murderer had to substitute another slave, or pay the cost to the owner. If a man murdered his own slave, this was not considered a crime and the law had nothing to say.

3. Conspiracy to steal, murder, or to undermine the law of the land was considered a serious offence, and the culprit would be punished by flogging, binding, heavy fine or long term of imprisonment.

4. If a murder was committed, or any property lost

the man nearest at the time of the crime, would be held responsible, and punished accordingly. Should the defendant recover the culprit, he would be bound over for ever, for the safety and the property of the person conspired against.

5. Benin law also considered the recipient of stolen property equally guilty with the thief and he would receive the same punishment. According to a Benin proverb "Umobo oyi or'oyi", meaning, "the recipient of stolen property is also a thief".

6. Swearing on juju was and is to a large extent a great deterrent of crime, and a means of ascertaining true facts in investigating the cases. Even those who claim to be Christian will often do right for fear of the consequence the juju will bring on them, when the claim of their Christian conscience has no power over them.

7. The following story from the reign of Akengbuda illustrates the power of juju. A certain man was going on a journey, and he put two pieces of ivory, ten inches respectively, into the care of a chief, asking him to hold them until the journey was over. Now, it happened that while the traveller was away, the chief died, and on his return, the traveller thought he could make a capital of this. So he sought out the chief's son, and demanded two pieces of ivory, five feet long or else payment for the same. The son in consternation, made search through all his house and compound.

8. The servants were searched and threatened, but no ivory could be discovered. In despair of finding it, the son was preparing to make payment, when a slave who had been absent from the compound returned. It was he who had put away the ivories for his master, and at once he went and brought out two pieces of ivory, each ten inches long, wrapped in a cloth.

9. The traveller was now in a predicament, but he stuck to his point, and alleged that his pieces were five feet long. At this point recourse was had to the juju; he was asked to swear on the juju that these ivories were not his. That was too much, had he done such a thing, he would have feared the revenge of the juju for ever. So he made open confession, before the whole assembly and was thereupon charged for perjury.

10. The only way out now was to plead for mercy before the elders of the court of that quarter, which he did and was eventually fined heavily with a serious reprimand and warning for the future.

11. *Prison.* The first prison in Benin for the confinement of criminal, was built by the orders of king Ewedo, and the building went by his name "Ewedo". It was he who also invented leg iron, staples, handcuffs, etc.

The Keeper or Warder of the Prison was called Erigbo; his helpers Esegban or (Esueghan) and the prisoners are called Olegban.

CHAPTER 29

CORAL BEAD DRESSING

1. A distinctive dress for the king and royal family, and for the most prominent chiefs, is usual among most nations, and the Binis are no exception. Among them the special insignia of royalty are the coral or stone beads. The smaller pieces are used in making the most striking royal robes, crowns of different designs, coral collars, shoes, and the round belts. The medium sizes are made into necklaces, wristlets and anklets and the bigger sizes into decorative head dresses.

2. The king of Benin bestows these gifts on his chiefs,

interesting ceremony accompanied the occasion, characteristic dances being given by the different classes of chiefs who came to honour their king, and speeches being made by the Oba, Resident and others amidst a great crowd collected to witness the ceremony.

10. There is also an annual ceremony called "Ugivie" or "The Coral Beads Ceremony" which was last held on May 21st, 1923 when the non-title holders (Ibierugha) of the House of Iwebo, appeared in fine dress and paraded the streets.

11. The Ibierughas of Iwebo headed by the Enisen, are entitled to arrange the throne (Ekete) in advance, in any chamber in the palace in which the king wishes to appear in state.

12. The members of the House of Iwebo are the royal Umbrella and Fan bearers, the Ekete (preparers) and royal cloths' weavers and washers. They also support the king's hands and carry the State Sword (Ada) on ceremonial occasions. The Iweguae are the bearers of the State Swords and the wooden stool (Agba), and the receivers of provisions into the Royal House. They are the house servants. Members of the House of Ibiwe are the caretakers of the Royal wives "Iloi" under the Osodin and the Ine, and water and firewood fetchers.

CHAPTER 30

SOCIETY

1. There are a number of societies or guilds in Benin. They do not correspond to the Trade Unions of Mediaeval Trade Guilds of Europe, for men of many trades belong to the same guild, but they satisfy the same need. The needs to belong to something bigger than oneself, any yet to be

treated as a full individual whose presence is necessary to the whole.

2. These societies admit their members by initiation ceremonies, most of which involve large expenses. Some of the societies are secret and any member who reveals any of the rites or ceremonies is liable to a heavy fine, flogging or expulsion from the society. The non-member to whom the secret is revealed is not troubled, unless he persistently spreads the information, when he is liable to the same punishment as a member.

3. Within each society itself, the rules are rigidly upheld, and failure to comply with them is punished by heavy fines in which are usually included one case of gin, a she goat and some kolanuts.

CHAPTER 31

BORROWING MONEY ON PLEDGE

1. When anyone in Benin needs to borrow money it is customary to do so, not on his goods but on his person, or that of his family. It is most usually done in lieu of payment of debt, or until that debt can be paid.

2. A man may give as hostage or security, himself, his brother, sister or child, and the one who receives such person exacts work from him. The work done is not counted as part payment of the debt but as interest on the capital. If the hostage is an adult he (or she) is allowed a week every month to attend his work so that he may have some hope of redeeming himself as time goes on. This continues until such time as the debt is fully paid.

3. Any damage which the hostage (or pawn) causes to

his pawnbroker during such time is added to the capital of the debt. If there are several hostages, male and female and the pawnbroker commits adultery with a female hostage, he is prosecuted for committing adultery and his money is forfeited. If the woman is not married or engaged, no such prosecution is carried out: and if he takes her to wife, he must pay an additional dowry to the pawnbroker. If a male hostage wishes to take a female hostage to wife, he may do so if he wins her consent, but the dowry money must go to the pawnbroker for whom they are both working. This entails a longer period of services to pay off this extra money as well as the original debt.

4. If one hostage proves unsatisfactory through laziness or disobedience, the pawnbroker may demand a different and more tractable hostage.

5. If a woman has too many children and cannot support them all, she may give one of them to a master in return for money borrowed. Should the child run away from the master the woman must herself serve until the debt is paid. It is a very frequent custom among the Binis, for a woman to send her child to a master or mistress, to work for him or on condition that he or she pays the school fees. This is another factor besides polygamy, which militates against family life. In such case the master or mistress must provide food for the child, but this does not apply to clothing. The child is allowed to visit its parents quite frequently, and may not be prevented from doing so. If a child or adult in charge of a master or mistress is sick, the master or mistress must at once inform the parents: if he or she fails to do so and the child or adult dies, the pawnbroker is responsible and must forfeit the money owed him or her.

6. If the hostage has served his or her master or mistress for a number of years, and had no chance to work for himself or if the one who gave him or her as hostage cannot

redeem him or her, he or she may go free without payment of the original debt.

7. According to the Bini proverb, "Vba ta kpokpan ya ci gi iyoha wi" meaning "an agreement makes no forfeiture of the pawn or hostage.

8. The daily and monthly paid labour has now taken the place of the hostage system.

CHAPTER 32

SLAVERY

1. Slave dealing was once a widespread practice in Benin not only by Europeans, but by Africans themselves until a stop was put to it by the British Government.

2. There were two classes of slaves in Benin, the king's slaves, and the slaves of ordinary citizens. The king's slaves were well treated as long as they remained in the king's service and lived a fairly normal life. It was not considered that they needed to redeem themselves. With the slaves of ordinary citizens the case was different. Some who had behind them a long life of faithful service were set free: sometimes the master would marry his daughter to one of them, and in other cases they were made worshipper of the ancestral gods by their masters. Others were allowed to redeem themselves by money payment.

3. Should a master entirely refused to grant redemption to a slave who produced the necessary money, the slave could apply to the king and the king would send to the slave owner the advice to free his slave at once. If the master refused to comply, the king himself would then grant the freedom: if the master still tried to hold him, punishment would follow. The slave was entirely free and no stigma

was attached to him, he was at liberty even to receive any state title conferred on him by the king.

4. Slave owners usually marry their female to their male slaves, and any issue was then their property. The children were called "Ibiedo" (Slave born). Any slave bought by the original slaves were also claimed by the head slave owner as his property.

5. A freed slave might prefer to remain with his master, because his children were there (this is more frequent in the case of woman) in which case he or she, might do so but is liable to be called on to work as a slave, at his master's wish though at other times, he could be treated as a free person. If a master marries one of his own female slaves, the children were considered free born, and they could inherit their father's property.

6. Unruly and disobedient slaves were severely punished by being beaten, bound, hand-cuffed; by being tied to staples, or by being starved. A very unsatisfactory slave was usually sold at once and replaced by a more tractable and willing worker, or he might be sent to prison (Ewedo) where, with the king's approval, he might be exchanged.

7. Slaves were allowed to do their own work at leisure hours.

8. If a female slave had issue by any other freeborn man, except her master, such a child was still the property of the slave master, unless the freeborn man could buy the freedom of his child.

9. Such was the ancient law of slavery now happily at an end, and children instead of being sold as slaves, are more and more being sent to school, though often as a reward for working for a master, as we saw in the last chapter, but this is very different from slavery.

CHAPTER 33

CONTRACT AND BREACH OF CONTRACT

1. The usual contracts among the Binis are agreement for the payment of dowry, for house rent, for money lent, for wages or an agreement as to the sharing of the issue from cattle or poultry put out to another man for rearing.

2. In the case of failure to fulfil the dowry contract, the man is not always forced to pay it all. If he can fully explain why he does not wish to marry the girl and the girl and her parents consider this satisfactory, the engagement can be broken off, and part of the dowry money paid by the man is refunded.

3. The Binis originally had no punishment for breach of contract, other than a petty fine, and forced fulfilment of the contract stated. It is now a punishable offence under British law, either by fine or imprisonment.

CHAPTER 34

FARMING AND FISHING

1. Any visitor to Benin, if he rises early enough, would notice men, women and children hurrying out to their farms in the first light of dawn, carrying cutlasses and usually a lighted faggot, with which to kindle fire when they arrive at the farm. Then again in evening just before dark, he would see the party returning home, laden with yams or corn, or whatever is ready at that season, and also bundles of wood for fuel. Quite small children carry loads of prodigious size on their heads, sometimes looking tired out, but on arrival home, a large meal awaits them and then sound well-earned sleep.

2. Some people have farms far out of the town and put up a hut there, where they stay, sometimes with the family as well, at all the busy seasons of the year.
3. Any native of Benin may make a farm on any plot of ground in the town or village areas, if rubber or cocoa plantation, is his for life, and also will pass to his heirs. Practically, all people in Benin have farms; even clerks and teachers who spend most of their own time indoors, have farms on the outskirts, worked by paid labour.
4. Having obtained a plot of land, the farmer will proceed to put up a boundary (Uwu or Eben); though others may pass through his farm on the way to their own land, provided no damage is done. It is also permissible to gather fuel on a neighbour's farm, provided a man's own wood is finished and he can find no bush land from which to get it. Normally, wood is gathered from a person's own farm and there is no trouble or trespass.
5. The Binis have developed their own ways of farming, and as these are traditional, they are willing to adopt new methods suggested by the British Agricultural Depts. There is a name for each process, and a definite order in which each process is carried out. First comes "Ifie", or clearing of the thick bush, creepers and low bushes. Next comes the felling of trees which are not wanted on the farm: sometimes some small ones are left in to be used as yam sticks; this is called "Egbo". Any tree may be felled except iroko which the king alone used in the olden days. The rubbish and other growth not wanted is now burnt "Iyerhen" and then swept up and cleared 'Ekhuen'. The yams are planted on little conical heaps about a foot high so that the new yams may have soft surface soil in which to form. The making of these heaps is called (Egua), and the planting of seed yams (Iwema). Small sticks are put on each heap for the first tendrils to climb up "Ibaeghe" and later longer sticks are

put up, "Ifiema". The land between the yams has to be kept fairly clear that is to say long grass must not be allowed to grow, and this clearing is called "Igbinrunmwun".

6. The yams are put in about May when the first rains have well soaked the ground, their tendrils climb high and also along connecting rods so that all the plants are joined together. By November to December the yams should be ready, and the harvest is gathered "Ipkenma and Ihaiyam". The yams which are not used must be carefully stored, else they will rot. A simple form of storing shed is made with a conical roof of palm leaves, under which is a long rod over which the yams are hung in bundles. This shelters pretty well from rain, while allowing the air to circulate freely round them. Much more elaborate shed may be made where hundreds of yams may be stored but the principle of air and dryness must be adhered to. This process of storing is called "Eru" or "Igberu".

7. Some of the small yams are left in the soil attached to the plant, which is covered again. These continue to grow for a time and then are rooted up and used for seeds. The season of the rooting up of the seedyams is called "Ifin-gbin".

8. Besides yams, maize, plantain, kokoyams, cassava, beans, melon, okro and other vegetables are grown, while some farmers have plantations of palm from which to get kernels. European introduction are rubber, cocoa, coffee, rice, etc. Rubber has done very well indeed, also cocca and rice is now coming to play its part.

9. The whole family will turn out to work on the farm, school children help at the weekends. Women and children normally do not help with heavy clearing but from the time of sowing onwards they are expected to do their part.

10. A certain ceremony of pinning or planting an

Ikhinmwini tree on the premises of any farming camp or cottage is usually performed by the aboriginal inhabitants or owners of the place, for any applicant before sanction on the land or bush is recognised and sexual intercourse allowed; especially where the goddess Ovia is worshipped, and also for the peace and fruitfulness of the place.

11. An Ikhinmwini tree is also used for demarcating or fixing of boundaries.

12. The Binis are not good fishermen, but the Itsekiris and the Ijaws, further down the river are very keen, and the Oba of Benin gives them permission to fish in the rivers. In return they send him some of the bigger fishes in payment of the lease, and also a settled tribute in fish to the Minister of Fisheries, as appointed by the Oba.

13. The rivers in the Benin area are, Ovia, Ohosu, Ogbehe (Ogbere), Ethiope, Jamieson (Igbagbor), Osiomo (Orhionmwon), Siluko river (Oha) etc.

CHAPTER 35

STORY-TELLING

1. The Binis are great story-tellers. When the day's work is done, they love to gather in groups in a neighbour's compound, to hear and to tell stories. If the moon is shining the stories will continue far into the night.

2. The women often tell theirs to "Arowa" or head of the compound, and their stories are usually interspersed by songs, with choruses in which all can join. The children soon pick up this kind of story-telling, and in their own way can do it as effectively as their elders.

3. The men usually tell their stories to the accompa-

niment of the native guitar (akpata); an interesting story-teller may keep his hearers spell-bound until dawn. Good story-tellers may be invited by titled chiefs to visit their compound, and in a single night may earn £3 to £5, if the story pleases. But they seldom visit the king's compound, as there is a superstition that any one who tells story to the king with an akpata will shortly die. It is customary for every Crown Prince to learn how to tell these native stories to the accompaniment of the guitar. King Ewuakpe was the most expert in this.

CHAPTER 36

BURIAL RITES AND CEREMONIES

1. There are many rites and ceremonies connected with the burial, and these vary according as the deceased is a king, titled chief, or ordinary citizen: they also vary according to the age of the deceased.

2. The death of the king is formally announced by the Iyase of Benin in these words:—"Edo, Udo, Uzebu, kevb 'Uselu, Oba — gbera:" meaning "The Edo, Udo, Uzebu and Uselu, the so and so king has passed away". The assembled crowd will at once express suitable signs of sorrow. After the formal announcement by the Iyase, if anyone else dares to say outright "The king has died", he will be arrested and executed, instead he must say "Owen d'okun;" meaning, "The sun has set". or "Oto riorhue"; meaning, the ground eats chalk, etc. It is necessary to speak in this euphemistic way, because the king is more venerated than any being on earth.

3. The king's grave is then prepared. This has several chambers, and takes about three months to complete. When all is ready, the king is formally interred in a sitting position enthroned in state. In olden days, a large number of

courtiers, both male and female were buried alive with the king, in order to attend him in the next world; and the grave was ceiled with thick iroko planks and then covered with mud and earth. Countless human sacrifices were also offered but at the funeral ceremonies of king Ovonran-emwen in 1914 and of his son Eweka II in 1933, bullocks, dogs, sheep, goats and fowls were used in place of human being.

4. The royal "Okun" used to walk by itself without being carried. The head of the royal corpse was subsequently exhumed and taken to the royal ancestral grave at Ile-Ife: but this was only done in every third reign. The bearers were only allowed to make very slow progress, and each journey lasted about two years. Every passerby was obliged to make way for the royal corpse-bearers.

5. No other funeral ceremonies of any other person in Benin might take place during the two years beginning with the death of the king, and during his funeral ceremonies.

6. The burial rites of titled chief and ordinary citizen are much the same, except that the sacrifices offered in the case of chiefs, are greater than those of ordinary citizens. In the case of a titled chief, the announcement of his death is sent to the king. If the chief had been of service to the king and of good life, the king has to send him a white cloth called "Ukpon-Eguae", symbolic of his life, in which the corpse can be wrapped. In the case of a man who has not yet completed the final rites for receiving his title, a certain ceremony called "Iyanhien" has to be performed in front of or on the dead body by the Esekurhe before the burial rites can be begun. Every person must be formally and properly buried by members of his or her family, all relatives must be present to perform the requisite ceremonies, and finally make a feast for any society to which the deceased may have belonged.

7. The sacrifices in the case of a higher titled chief used to be one or two slaves, cows or bullocks, goats and fowls, but of course, human sacrifice is not now permitted. Lesser rank titled chiefs need bullocks, goats and fowls for the funeral ceremony: but in the case of an ordinary person goats and fowls only would suffice.

8. The ceremonies as a whole last seven days, of which the first is called "Iwa orinmwini," and the third day "Izak-hue." On the fifth day called "Isotan", each of the children of the deceased must come with bullocks, goats, fowls, yams, meat, salt, kolanuts, chalk, white cloth, palmoil and a nicely decorated box called "Okun", sacred to the god of the sea "Olokun". This box ensures the deceased a safe passage to the next world and it also witnesses to the number of children with whom the deceased had been blessed.

9. Sometimes, parsimonious family may try to evade these obligations, but the relatives of the deceased have power to send back any inferior victim or gift. If a son-in-law fails in his duty to his father-in-law when he was living, his gifts at the funeral will be refused; the same applies to a son or daughter who was not legally married.

10. Attendance at the funeral ceremonies and a willingness to share in the cost, is a very strict rule, and any relative who fails to attend comes under strict censure. A son-in-law who fails to fulfil his duties loses his betrothed wife, and is cut off by the family from all connections with them, even to sending back to him any part of the dowry already paid.

11. The sixth day is called "The god starvation day." "Ede na gb'erinmwini ohanmwini" when no sacrifices are offered but plays and dances take their place and these may go on until the dawn of the seventh day called "Okpebie". At dawn on this day, a lighted torch is thrown and gun fired; this is called "Isuerhanfua" and this ends all the ceremonies; though gun-firing is done throughout. The

funeral ceremonies of Ezomo family usually end on the fifth day.

12. Now comes the actual burial. Each wife of the deceased must confess on the dead body any crime, direct or indirect against her husband, and she must declare if she wishes now to marry any man with whom she has had sexual intercourse during her husband's life time. This done, the body is at last laid to rest.

13. It is customary for the family to appoint two supervisors (a man and a woman) called "Adan" to see that all the above ceremonies are carried out.

14. Immediately after the burial is completed, the property is shared out as described in Chapter XI on Heritage.

15. Certain classes of people are not allowed funeral ceremonies, i.e. murderers, childless slaves and children. In the case of a person who hanged himself, the members of the Ebos of Idunmwebo, royal diviners or doctors, must execute certain rites before the dead body can be buried. There is also a special ceremony to be done by the Sango worshippers, before the burial of a person killed by lightning.

16. Creditors come into their own after the death of their debtors. If they state their claim at once, the family is bound to pay, otherwise after an oath sworn on juju, the debt will be forcibly paid. In the case of a person struck by lightning or killed by juju, the children of the deceased must purchase or redeem both the property and the dead body from the priest of the juju which killed their parent, before burial is allowed; unless appeal is made to the king and he orders the priest to let the body be taken away free of charge.

17. Permission must be obtained from the king before burying his enemy.

18. The final ceremony of all is called "Ukomwen," meaning "the establishment or dedicating images of the ancestral gods for worshipping and for annual anniversary".

19. The remains of every Akaronmwom (royal jester) is usually taken to Okhorho road for interment by the members of Isepkokin. It is forbidden by the Benin Laws and Customs to bury a dead pregnant woman with the womb. The term generally used when a pregnant woman dies is "Kiri kuuva defi uhac;" meaning, "the rope and the vessel fell into the well".

CHAPTER 37

WIDOWHOOD

1. When a Bini man dies, it is customary for his wife or wives to mourn for him for three lunar months.

2. For the first seven days after the death of the husband, the wives do not come out of the house at all. Each of the women rubs her forehead with pounded charcoal as a sign of mourning; and, this gives them a sad and rather frightening appearance, especially, as they must leave their hair loose and unplaited. They must not bathe and must sleep on the bare ground throughout the whole seven days. They must not exchange their mourning clothes for any more gay apparel.

3. After seven days they are allowed to bathe. All the wives, escorted by relatives walk together, wailing painfully to the nearest river where they are allowed to bathe and wash their clothes. The ragged clothes called "Ukpon orhon" are hung on sacred trees especially prepared for the occasion.

4. On their return to their deceased husband's house

they must all remain there until the funeral ceremonies are completed, and each must take her proper share in these. Among other duties, each wife must give one she-goat, one piece of white cloth, one new mat, one new razor or shaving penknife, one new hair pin, one new sponge, one bottle of gin, etc.

5. After this, each wife who has had a child or children by the deceased man, is allowed to go free. Before leaving she should cast her soup pot on the ground until it breaks into pieces as a sign that she has this day severed all connections with her husband's family and is leaving his house forever. She must be ceremonially let out of the house through the back house by the eldest son or the next one available and thenceforth she is her own mistress.

6. The childless wives and virgins usually stay and are given as wives to the sons. Some childless aged wives are allowed to remain in the house permanently under the care of the eldest son, and they must in return help in taking care of the children of the house, and in guiding the young wives.

7. The proper mourning ceremonies are now over but the mourning charcoal on the forehead must remain there for three full lunar months.

8. A Bini widow must never marry the first man with whom she has sexual intercourse after her husband's death because the man is considered "Nava zorhon" meaning "One who cleans dirt off the body" or for purification.

9. Widows do not inherit any of their husband's property, but they may carry away such things as he gave them as gifts during his lifetime. If a man pays dowry on a widow and she is afterwards divorced, he may receive the full dowry back again or whatever he pays on her.

10. Should a widow's child die and she has no other surviving child about one or two years after the death of her husband she is termed "Nobo kon-en", and she must in consequence refund her dowry to the children of her deceased husband.

11. If however, the child has married or attained puberty before his or her death, the mother is free from refunding her dowry.

12. It is also customary for a man to mourn his wife by sleeping on the bare ground with ragged cloth for days without coming out at all.

CHAPTER 38

LAND TENURE

1. The land in Benin is communal or belongs to the people as a whole. The monarch, representative of the people, has certain rights and duties towards them. He is regarded as the trustee for the nation: he carries out their wishes for their benefit.

2. The Bini people are reminded of their duties at each coronation, when to each of them a portion of the land is to be given over again. These are the duties which are said to him. "K'ere gharae nu vbe ghakha yan oto Edo, kevb' meaning "From this day forth I give you all the land of Benin and those who are arrested and killing if necessary."

3. Any land granted to a man for erecting a house, if the owner dies without children, it goes to his brothers or sisters;

to any relation on either side of the family. If there are no surviving relations whatever, and house begins to fall into decay the king has the right to assign the plot of land and house to another applicant.

4. Before such a plot of land or decayed house is assigned to an applicant, the king would first of all instruct the Oka-Avbiogbe (Commissioner of land, etc.) to find out properly whether the deceased person has any next of kin or not.

5. If a stranger wishes to build a house and stay permanently in the city or town, he must be taken to the king by the elders or the chief of the ward or quarter where he wishes to reside. The king must give his approval to the quarter-chief, and the chief will assign the land: then the grantee must begin building at once. He must pay a fixed fee to the quarter-chief but that is not rent, it is merely an isolated payment or commission made on the assignment of the land. The system of land rent was unknown in Benin before the advent of Europeans.

6. Certain services had to be rendered to the king and certain public work had to be undertaken, but the payment of money for a certain piece of land was not known. In the villages any native or native-foreigner had to take part in the customary work of the village, and to give as a present to the Enogie or Odionwere, seven yams a year if a farmer, and the foreleg of every animal killed if a hunter.

7. If a stranger wanted to remove to another place, or return to his own native land he would not be allowed to sell his house or the land which had been assigned to him for farming. It must revert to the crown. Similarly, if a stranger was unsure of remaining in that place he would not plant permanent crops such as palm, rubber, etc. and if by any chance he did so, if he should leave, he would not be allowed to sell them.

8. A change is, however, coming over the whole system of land Tenure. More and more, the right of each man to ownership of his land is being recognised (as in Yorubaland) and this is largely due to the permanent crops put down. The land for these plantations of rubber, palm or cocoa is surveyed and approved by the Native Authority: and should a non-native wish to leave the district, he may sell to a native of the soil. This is entire reversal of the policy of olden days.

9. Every native is free to cultivate a farm in any part of the Benin district, except in the part which is now reserved by the British Government.

10. Each town, village and clan has its own boundary or demarcation, and the respective Enigie or Odionwere is trustee for his own portion, under the authority of the king and people. Any dispute about boundary or land cases must go before the king-in-council.

CHAPTER 39

MORNING SALUTATIONS OF THE BINIS

Each important family in Benin has a special morning salutation. The words used for "Good morning" are different in each case, so that one can tell to which family a person belongs, by the salutation he or she gives.

The Family of the

Salutation

1	Kings or Ogisos of the first period	Dclaiso
2	King Eweka 1 of the second period	Lamogun
3	Iyase (premier) of Benin	Lavbieze
4	Oliha	Laogele
5	Edohen	Latose
6	Ezomo (Ojomo)	Lagiesan

The Family of the	<i>Salutation</i>
7 Ero	Lamosun
8 Eholo Nire	Laire
9 Oloton	Lamehi
10 Ogiamwen	Laire
11 Elema	Lagba
12 Ogiefia	Larendo
13 Inenigun	Delani
14 Osa	Delaiki
15 Iyase of Udo	Lagiewan.
16 Enogie of Ugo Agbor Road	Delakun
17 Enogie of Ugo Sakpoba Road	Labo
18 Elawue of Usen	Delauhe
19 Iyase of Uselu	Layede
20 Ezima of Okeluhen	Layeru
21 Enogie of Uvbe	Lauvbe
22 Enogie of Ehor	Delacho
23 Enogie of Igieduma	Delaihon
24 Ohenukoni of Ikhuen	Delaihe
25 Olokunmwun of Okhunmwun	Delagun
26 Enogie of Irhue	Delalu
27 Enogie of Ute	Lagite
28 Ise of Utekon	Delaru
29 Enogie of Umoru	Lamoru
30 Enogie of Evbokabua	Lavbiuwa
31 Aide	Laide
32 Emeri	Lameri
33 Agia	Lagia
34 Egie	Laijie
35 Oloke	Laloke
36 Ere	Lamere
37 Emezi	Lamezi
38 The old Emehe	Lamehe
39 Umekon	Lamekon
40 Umoko	Lamoko
41 Ughe	Laughe
42 Igienna	Lagienna

*The Family of the**Salutation*

43	Eni of Uzae	Lamore
44	Akpan	Delakpan
45	Umodu	Lamodu
46	Umolu	Lamolu
47	Ize	Laize
48	Ugha	Laugha
49	Umokun	Lamokun
50	Ureni	Lareni
51	Idu	Laidu
52	Iren	Lairen
53	The Eholo of Isi Laeru	

It is customary for every married woman in Benin to give the morning salutation of her husband's family. Slaves give the morning salutation of their masters and mistresses.

CHAPTER 40

DAYS OF THE WEEK

1. There are four days in the week representing the four corners of the earth.

Eken	the	east
Orie	the	west
Aho	the	south
Okuo	the	north

Eken is a day of rest. People do not as a rule go to the farm on that day, but they may do any work in the home. Councils are usually held on this day, but the Iyase (or Prime Minister of Benin), is not allowed to visit the Royal Palace. He offers his sacrifices on Eken.

3. Okuo is the day on which the king of Benin performs most of his ceremonies (Ugie and offers all kinds of sacrifice).

CHAPTER 41

MARKET DAYS

1. The old Agbado market was founded by Ene, one of the Ogisos, and improved by later Obas. The Oba's Market and Okpagma market were founded by King Ewedo. Later, King Ewuare the Great planted an okpgaha tree at the Okpagma Market in place of the ogheghe or the okhikhan planted by Ewedo. It was since called Ekiokpagma or Okpagma Market.

2. The Oba's Market also has a tree. This is how it came to be planted. There was a certain woman called Emotan. She was kind and did good service to the King. She used to sit in the Oba's Market selling her petty food-stuffs. In some way she earned the king's special favour. He must have had some liking for her, for when she died, the king had her buried in the Oba's Market, and in order that she should not be forgotten, he had an oruhe tree planted on the spot where she used to sit to sell her wares. King Ewuare then deified Emotan, and made the Ekpate to be her worshipper. The original tree planted by King Ewuare has long since perished, but a new tree was planted by King Ovonramwen, which stands beside the road between the C.M.S. Bookshop and the market. Everyone invested with a title must visit this tree, and so must all funeral processions, to pay reverence to the spirit of Emotan the famous trader.

3. The Okpagma, Uselu and Oba's Markets usually fall on same day. Okpagma Market takes place from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Oba's Market from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Oba's Market days are considered lucky, and are therefore chosen for important events in the land, such as the

conferring of titles, marriage, laying the foundation stone of a new building, the first cutting of the bush for a new farm and so on. Children born on the Oba's Market day are considered to be very lucky. Uselu Market takes place at 8 a.m. to 12 noon.

4. Eghaiki are the supervisors or caretakers of the markets, who usually see to the peace and welfare of the markets. They make a sort of rules and regulations for the guidance of the marketers, approved by the king.

5. The Oba's Market is usually closed up on the death of a king, being temporarily removed to the Edogun's gate at Ibiwe street, Benin City; and again resumed immediately after the accession of a new king.

6. The royal jester (Akaronmwon) and the Ekpate are entitled to seize some misappropriating articles in the Oba's Market.

CHAPTER 42

RELIGION AND THE BINI DEITIES

The Binis are polytheists, and the following is a list of the Bini Deities:—

1. OSAONBUA or OSA is the chief God, the god above all other gods and an immortal being. He is also known by other names: Akpama, the creator of all living things; Udazi, the giver of all life, and all powerful, to whom everything is subjected; Oghodua; the Almighty; omnipresent and omniscient; Ohovba, the merciful, loving and kind. This god Osanobua, was never worshipped with human sacrifices, but the offerings might be pigeons, white cocks, white cloth, scarlet, chalk and peeled wands called "Uwenrhiontan" and a kind of pumpkin called "Umwenken". This worship was being done by every person in his or her own house or

front house; until the Roman Catholic Missionaries preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ which teaches love, truth, peace and purity in Benin in the sixteenth century and taught the Benins the right way of worshipping the true God of the universe. There is also the C.M.S. with other denominations now in Benin for the work of salvation and light.

2. OLOKUN (or Neptune) the great god of the sea is considered to be the son of Osanobua. He is the fountain of good luck, riches and goodness. His favourite wife is named Ora or Mammy Water. Before Olokun can be worshipped, Ora must be called loudly four times, "Ora o; Ora o; Ora o; Ora o;" so that she may take the people's prayers to the god. The sacrifices offered to Olokun are pigeons, white fowls, white goats, white cloths, chalk and peeled wands. The state dress of the kings of Benin is a copy of Olokun's dress. The worship of Olokun was begun by King Ohen. Olokun is also the god of inspiration and idealism, and works upon the hidden spirit of man. Those who come under his influence are original, often eccentric, usually of highly sensitive natures and may be geniuses in one line or another.

3. OBIEMWEN (or Uranus) is a wife of the Earth or "Ge". She is the Mother of all human beings and all living things, and is the source and goddess of breeding. The Binis call her "Obiemwen nuhe niro", meaning "Obiemwen the path of mankind". She is worshipped with the same sacrificial victims as Osanobua and Olokun.

4. OGIUWU is one of the great chiefs of Osanobua. He is the author of death, and is thought to eat human flesh and drink human blood, and he has an almost insatiable desire for human sacrifice. His shrine was situated where the Education Office now stands. The altar and its surroundings were rubbed with human blood. Ofoe is his head messenger. The worship of Ogiuwu was begun by King Ewuare.

5. ESU the devil is the Premier of the unseen world. He is the director of knowledge, cunning, art and power. He has been worshipped since time immemorial among the Binis. The sacrifices offered must be according to the prediction of the oracle, but the principal victims are he-goat, roasted yam, pounded or mess yam, black cloth, cudgels, etc.

CHAPTER 34

UGIE OR CEREMONIAL PERFORMANCES

With one exception each of the thirteen lunar months of the year is known by an "Ugie" or ceremony which is celebrated in that month

1. IKHURHE is the first month of the year. In it "Ama" the festival of the king's children is observed. It was instituted by taking Ehengbuda, and every year the children, both sons and daughters of the reigning king are sent goats, fowls and snails to celebrate the occasion.

2. EGHORHAN: this is the only month in which no ceremonies at all are performed by the king.

3. UGIVIE: the ceremony of washing the royal coral or stone beads takes place in May of each year.

4. UGIORO: The king and the chief appear in many different grand dresses during the ceremony. The Ogbelaka (the Royal Bards) sing and beat drums. The ceremony was introduced by king Ewedo. But the ceremonial bird (Ahianmworo), cast in brass, which the king and the chiefs beat on the beak while dancing was introduced by king Esigie.

5. IKPOLEKI: This ceremony is in memory of Okhu-aihc one of the deified heroes who lived in the time of Ewuare the Great. It is performed at Ikhuen.

6. EGHUTE: Messengers are sent to Prince Aruanran's gardens at Udo for a herb with which to make medicine that will cause corn and yam to fructify the same day as planted. It is also said to have made Osuan as pregnant as a woman. In fact all pregnant women are made to leave Benin City before the ceremony begins, and are not allowed to return until rain has fallen to wash away the effect of the medicine. This rule is observed to prevent abortion. This ceremony of Eghute (or using this special medicine) was introduced by king Esigic. Every alternate year, on the day before the Eghute ceremony, another called Ububan (nailing) would be observed when a man was nailed in a sitting position on a wooden stool by a long nailed through his head and body. This was to commemorate the cruel deeds of Iyase Ogina, and took place at his compound. It also commemorated a cruel act in the reign of King Olua.

7. EHO: This takes place eight days after Eghute, and is the festival of worshipping the spirits of one's departed parents. The Iyase of Benin usually starts this ceremony. Every eldest son or child is the priest of the paternal gods but individual of the children in the same family is entitled or at liberty to worship the maternal gods. Two days later, the Oru ceremony's held, which consists of the worship of Azama, the god of Prince Oranmiyan by the sons and daughters of the reigning king. For this the Queen Mother provides pounded yam and soup prepared without palm oil. Eight days later the festival (Ehovia) takes place, for the worship of Ovia the Deified lady of Uhen. Women are rigidly excluded from this cult, and only those who have been initiated into the mysteries of the cult are allowed to enter the sacred groves or take part in the ceremonies. Dancing and masquerades form an important part of these, which were elaborated by King Esigic who made the grove at Unuame the centre of the cult. Later on, Eresoyen forbade the dance in Benin City, and substituted the Ododua masquerades.

8. UGIGUN: This ceremony is for the worship of the departed spirits of the kings of Benin. From the time of King Eweka I human sacrifices were offered. People known as "Okhianson", armed with iron cudgels and making strange noises would come out at night and kill anyone they found out even not sparing their own children. Another set of people known as "Oton" went about the streets during the night, making curious noise with a flat piece of stick on the end of a cord, which they swung around and round in the air. These were known as "bull roars".

9. UGIERHOBBA : This is the anniversary of the death of the reigning king's father. In the reign of King Ovonramwen, he sacrificed twelve fowls, twelve goats, twelve dogs, twelve sheep, twelve cows, a fish, and twelve human beings. Criminals were mostly sacrificed. Titles were conferred at this anniversary. Each titled chief concerned would send his quota of sacrificial victims to the king for ceremony.

All human beings sacrificed were deposited in the pits called "Ihan". Before the ceremonial performance the king formally sent a set of men or officials known as "Idemwin" from the house of Ibiwe to go to the various villages to purchase the cheap rated sacrificial victims as follows: cock at 3d, hen 1d. to 2d, goat 1s, a cow 5s, etc. The practice was however abolished by the opposition of the Rev. W. J. Payne Superintendent of C.M.S. works in Benin in 1929.

10. IGUE: The festival was instituted by King Ewuare the Great. The king first made his offering to the god of good luck, usually a leopard and other victims: next the princes and princesses, then the people of Benin made their offerings of she goats and cocoanuts. This festival usually takes place in November. Dances are displayed with the lucky or blessing leaf "Eb'Ewere" round the whole City, or from doors to doors: gifts are given and received.

11. ISIOKUO: This was to honour Ogun, the god of war (or Mars). It was usually held in December and was a very spectacular ceremony. First there was a parade in which the king and his war chiefs and followers took part. Then the Ilobi would have a mock fight. The Ilobi were worshippers of the Ake of Ilobi in Isi, one of the deified heroes of Benin. They fought with bow and poisoned arrow invented by Ake, and the fight ended with the sight of a fowl falling into the ground. Then men called "Amufi" were suspended by ropes from an Okha or cotton tree, and perform a kind of dance or acrobatic display ending up with a fight with "Osogan" the great monster of the sky.

Meantime Ezoba would dance round the players, waving a magical burning firebrand which he carried in his hand.

12. AGUE (or Native Fast): Those taking part in this ceremony would each receive a cross from the Ohonsa of Akpakpava, the descendant of the Roman Catholic native Fathers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The king and his chiefs took part in the ceremony which usually lasted seven days, during which no beating of drums or firing of guns might take place: and the king could not be seen by anyone except those participating in the ceremonies. This took place during the first week in January, and two days after the completion of the ceremony, new yams might be eaten. King Ovonramwen was keeping this festival when the Acting Consul General (Mr. Phillips) and his party wished to make their visit, and refused to postpone it for two months as requested by the king.

It used to be the custom since the days of King Oguola to sacrifice an aged woman to the god of the sun, so that heat might not be too great, and to keep away pestilence through the year. Similarly, during the rainy season, a man would be sacrificed to the god of rain to make the rain cease. Both would be crucified on the crucifixion trees near to the palace. The god of the hand has also been worshipped annually by the king and chiefs since the time of King Ewuare. Its

image went by the name "Ikegobo" and the shrine is called "Arobo".

13. IHIEKHU: This is the festival in which the Binis exhibit their riches in slaves and other property. It is the close of the year. A grand feast usually takes place in this ceremony, and it is the harvest thanksgiving festival to the gods of the hands.

The following official members of the Esasa:—Olukoto, Olukoi, Esagbua, Ekoghae, and Okanranghae are the worshippers of the king's god of the hand.

CHAPTER 44

OLD AGE CELEBRATION

1. Most of the kings of Benin who lived to old age had a brass staff made in commemoration of it. This was called the staff of old age. A ceremony would be held, offerings made and finally a horse would be sacrificed. This was done for King Ewuare, Esigie, Ehengbuda and Akengbuda.

2. Okhunmwun, a village about ten miles from Benin City is noted for the extreme old age to which many of the inhabitants have lived. Some people there are thought to be over one hundred and twenty years old. A former Odionwere named Uwaifo who died on January 6th, 1936 was born during the Civil War between Osemwende and "Ogbebo" in 1816. A special staff was made for his funeral obsequies, which was carried in front of the family dancers.

CHAPTER 45

SACRED TREES

There were many sacred trees in Benin City and district in the olden days, at which special rites and ceremonies were performed.

1. EMOTAN'S TREE is in front of the Oba's market in Benin City and was planted to mark the grave of Emotan the famous petty trader, who sat daily in the market with her wares. It is customary for funeral processions both in back and front of titled chiefs to halt and dance by the tree, as a mark of profound respect for the departed spirit of lady Emotan.

2. CRUCIFIXION TREES: One was situated in front of the Tower of the old Palace, another near by.

3. AMUFI TREE: An Okha or cotton tree stood near the Tower of the old palace which the Amufi soldiers made war against Osogan the heavenly monster during the festival of Isiokuo the god of war.

4. ESOGBAN'S TREES: An okha (cotton) tree in front of the old palace by the side of the house of Esogban, the leader of the magicians, witches, wizards, etc. False doctors and magicians were executed under this tree, as a warning to others.

5. IMARAN'S TREES: An 'okha' or cotton tree and uruhe tree planted in front of the house of the first Imaran, one of the great war chiefs of the reign of King Eresoyen. Every Imaran paraded his troops under these trees before sending them out to a campaign.

6. All these trees, with the exception of Emotan's tree, were cut down by the British Government in 1897. There are, however still a few more trees to be enumerated.

7. EYAN-EN MARKET TREE: An iroko tree stood at this market on the Benin Ehor road, witches and wizards were said to hold their meetings under it every night.

8. ARUANRAN'S TREE: There is an iroko tree planted by Prince Aruanran at Udo, under which he used

to parade his troops. He ordained that the branches of the tree should not kill any person, or any cattle or poultry, and this has been adhered to.

9. **EZOMO'S TREE:** This is an iroko tree at the gate of the compound of Ezomo at Uzebu. It was planted by Ezomo Ehenua. A propitiation ceremony is performed under this tree ere sending soldiers to battle.

10. Lastly, there are two gods, Enina and Avbavba, gods of mercy and forgiveness. Their worship was inaugurated by King Ewuare, and was intended to make the Binis merciful and forgiving to one another, and to make the Binis in abroad remember their native land. The Eriyo is their priest.

11. We have now seen something of the religion of the Binis, of their ceremonies and sacrifices, of their sacred trees and of their many ancient customs. Truly Benin is a land of mystery.

CHAPTER 46

THE CORRECT STANDING POSTURES OF THE CHIEFS AT THE VARIOUS CEREMONIES AT THE KING'S PALACE

1. In the ceremonies or *ugie* held at the royal palace the Uwangué stands in the chief position on the left side of the king. He opens the ceremony, and also announces to the other chiefs, and general public, what the agenda is to be.

2. Next to the Uwangué on the left of the king, but further away from the king stands the Iwoki who bears the shield (*Asa*).

3. The Ezomo and the Edaiken support the king's arms, and they also stand next to the Uwangue, and after them comes the Eribo. Following in other, after the Eribo, stand the Ovienirioba, the Osague, Aiyobahan, Olaye, Obaduagbon (Obaruagbon) and others. Since 1937, the Esere has stood next to Eribo. The Eghaevbos of Iweguae may stand among these now.

4. The Osodin, the guardian of the royal wives "Iloi" escorts some of them to the ceremony, for it is customary for them to take part. Before the wives approach, the Osodin gives the code word "Hiefo" meaning "stand back." When the wives are settled, the Osodin says "Hiere" after which the attendants of the Iloi, the castrated eunuchs are now ordered by the Osodin to surround and guard their mistress, after which the Osodin steps into his place on the right hand of the king, facing the Uwangue, but he uses the left hand only when the king's wives are present.

5. The Iwoki, the bearer of the shield (Asa) stands next up the Osodin then follows the Eriyo, Ihaza, Ine, Obazuaye, Obahiagbon, Obamwonyi, Aiyobagiegbe, Obayuwana and others.

6. Both Eghaevbos stand facing each other at the end of the parallel lines (away from the king) while the Uzamas stand across the bottom of the hall, facing the king.

7. Part of the ceremonial is a dance by the Uwangue from the left, and the Osodin from the right of the king. They dance with their (eben) or dancing sword, then fall back to their places, and each of the other couples of the titled chiefs take up the dance in return right down the line.

8. After the ceremony "Iloi" retire and the Osodin gives the same word "Hieyo" as a warning of their approach, and then "Hiere" after they have all gone.

9. The Ugie is brought to an end by the Iyase (Premier) of Benin dancing with his "eben" then he clears the sacred ceremonial stick away from the assembly. Lastly, the king dances with eben and then retires home. Thus end the ceremony. During the hours of the ceremonial performances, the Enobore, Enisen and Ibierugha of the house of Iwebo, also the Ihogbe mix freely with the king, passing quite near to the throne in familiar way.

10. At the Igue festival, the Efas are allowed familiarity with the king and at this ceremony it is the Uwanguie who clears away the ceremonial stick.

11. The Avbiogbe, being the State Policemen headed by the Oka Avbiogbe, have the duty of keeping order during these ceremonies. The Oghaeguae as an observer.

12. The Osa and the Osuan are the two supporters of the king's arms on special occasions. e.g.

(a) On Coronation Day.

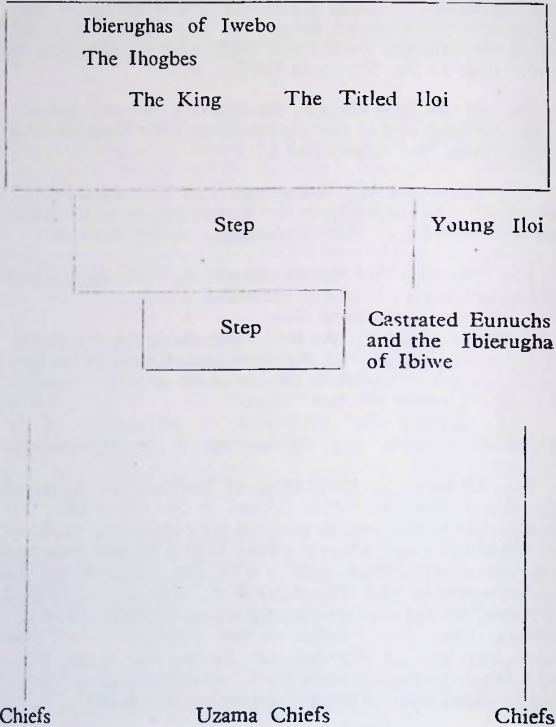
(b) On the day the king visits the Arosa, the shrines on the sites of the old Roman Catholic Churches, accompanied by the Ezomo's wives in procession.

(c) During the fast "Ague."

(d) During the celebration or performance of the Ododua ceremony and the dancing of its masquerades.

13. Ukueben of the House of Iwebo is the bearer of the Royal Dancing Sword (Eben) in the ceremonies. He is also sent by the king to perform the ceremony in the house of any titled chief who would like to have his title confirmed ere the confirmation hour. With the Ukueben are the Nokhanunuedo and Omuekpokin of Iweguae. Their fixed commissions for the confirmation ceremony are the following: Eb'eva (13s.), two bundles of yam containing seven yams each, two legs of antelope, one folding fish, twenty pieces of kolanut, twenty cocoanuts and one bottle of gin. Money can be substituted if the articles are not procurable.

**SKETCH OF THE
CORRECT STANDING POSTURES
OF THE CHIEFS**



CHAPTER 47

**THE SHARING OF THE
CEREMONIAL MEATS**

1 At the festival of "Ugigun" described already the departed spirits of the kings of Benin are worshipped, especially spirit of Eweka I. Human sacrifices were offered, but there were animals as well. The meat from the animals sacrificed had to be shared round in a special way.

- (a) One leg with tail of a cow to Oranmiyan (often sent to the Enogie of Ego instead)
- (b) One leg to the Oliha
- (c) One foreleg to the Olomuza of Use
- (d) One foreleg to the Edogun
- (e) The ribs, liver and heart to the Ogiefia
- (f) The breast meat with the hide to the Iyase
- (g) The neck and fowls to the Ihama of Ihogbe
- (h) The kidneys to the Escdeni
- (i) The rump to the Emelu, the only titular outside wife of the king
- (j) The head to the Oka-Erie
- (k) The blood to the Oza
- (l) The lungs to the Oka-Odionmwan

2 The food and meats offered at the Oru ceremony are shared by the Uzama Nihinron, the Eghaevbonore and the Eghaevbonogbe respectively. Messengers are also sent to each of the nine gates of the city, bearing meat in wooden plates, and crying "Elesemuze owegbe do rhie" meaning "Elesemuze the stronger come and take". Each messenger carries a cudgel and a whip with which to make his way very quickly through the crowds of people. Meat is also taken to the Aragua, Ekiefia and Aroemotan, as sacrifice to the spirit of Elesemuze the stronger.

3. It is the duty of the Iwaranmwun, the royal ceremonial butchers, headed by the Ehondo, a branch of the huose of Ibiwe to cut up the ceremonial meats and see that they are sent round to the doors of the various titled chiefs and the societies concerned. The Oka Avbiogbe is the person who pronounces by order of the king, to whom the meats shall be sent.

4. The meats from the Ugierhoba ceremony are shared among all the chiefs from Iyase downwards, special portion are not reserved for particular chiefs.

5. A human being sacrificed in the City to propitiate the god of Devil for the peace of the land usually being sent to Eyan'en square after three miles Benin-Agbor road. A human being sacrificed for the sanctification to the Soil of the City is sent to Okho:ho road.

CHAPTER 48

THE IMPERATIVE ORDER

1. The imperative Order went by the name "Igban" and its administrators were known as "Ukibaigban". It was particularly assigned to, or practised by the members of the House of Ibiwe in those days prior to the punitive expedition of Benin in 1897.

2. Everyone in the land was subjected or bound to obey the imperative order under the penalty of death. It was severer than the sentences of excommunication when it was uttered or pronounced on any one as follows:—"Amwon Oloi", *i.e.* "Your wife is the king's wife" or "Ovbue nokhuo Oloi", meaning "Your daughter becomes the king's wife" or "Ovbue nokpia Omada" meaning "Your son is the king's sword bearer", etc.

3. Instantly, the woman, the girl or the boy as well as any other thing would be taken to the king. If it was uttered on anyone, not to stand or rise up from his or her sitting position, or not to sit down at all either under the sun or rain with an encircled bracket round the party or even to stop eating in hours of meal, the party or parties were bound to obey the imperative order "Igban" at all costs.

4. Heavy fines in money, goods, cattles or slaves usually being sent to the Osodin by the party concerned for the nullification or revocation of the imperative order. Those of the king's wives usually being revoked or nullified by his special order to the Osodin. The nullification is still being done to the rejected wives of the king.

5. Everyone in the whole land was daily under the impression of fear on account of this imperative order in those days. The practice was however, abolished immediately after the punitive expedition owing to adoption of British Law. The term of the imperative order by the "Ogisas" or Rulers of the first period of the Benin Empire was "Alalutan" and the revocation or nullification was "Kereghe".

CHAPTER 49

RIGHT AND PRIVILEGES

1. The king is the paramount ruler and overlord of the Benin Empire. All the other chiefs or lords and overlords are subjects to him, and he rules through them. They are appointed into office by him. The king has unbounded rights and privileges due to him.

2. The Crown Prince "Edaiken," whose official seat or residence is at the Upper Uselu called "Egua Edaiken" has the right and privileges similar to those of the king,

except three, *viz.*:— Sword bearers with brass anklets, Ewa and Ugbeku. The Edaiken is a regent during the old age of his father the king, and becomes the king elect on the death of the king.

3. The Ezomo is the generalissimo of the State Army and the overlord of Uzebu a quarter of the City. He is in the same rank or grade with the Edaiken and is granted many rights and privileges similar to those of the Edaiken, which other chiefs are not enjoying.

4. The Iyoba (Queen Mother) ruled the Lower Uselu which is known as "Egua Iyoba." She has many rights and privileges granted to her also. She is the only Lady in the land who has voice in the National Affairs or Politics of the State. The mother of every reigning king is made Iyoba a year or two after the accession of her son. If she dies before the accession of her son, her corpse is proclaimed and made the Iyoba. Should the Iyoba of the deceased king be still living, the mother of the new king should not be sent to Uselu, although she assumes the title.

5. The Edaiken Ezomo and the Iyoba are allowed to use or wear coral robes and headgear or coronet. Every chief also has the right and privileges attached to his office.

CHAPTER 50

THE BENIN ROYAL COURT ETIQUETTE AND PROHIBITED EXPRESSIONS

1. It is not customary to come near the King of Benin while addressing or saluting him; one should stand a few yards away. Even the Courtiers who usually come near the king's person must cover their mouths with their right hands when whispering to the king so that the breath from their mouths may not touch his person.

2. It is forbidden to say the king is asleep or is on bed; but the lawful expression is "Ekpen rirhu" meaning "the Leopard is in the shelter or shade." It is unlawful to say the king dies, but the right term is "Owen Dokun" meaning "the sun sets" or "Oto riorhue" meaning "the Earth eats chalk" or "Orhue bunrun" meaning "the chalk is broken" it is also forbidden to say the king eats, etc.

CHAPTER 51

DETHRONMENT

The question of the dethronement of the king does not often arise, but the king can be disregarded or boycotted and set at defiance till reconciliation is made, except in a serious case of maladministration which sometimes causes abdication or suicide.

CHAPTER 52

INTERREGNUM

The Chiefs of Benin City headed by the Leaders of Iwebo, Iwague and Ibiwe usually directed the Government of the country during the Interregnum. But the Iyase of Benin is still the Premier. The Uwangue is the king's deputy. Iyase of Uselu acts for the Edaiken during the age of minority.

CHAPTER 53

REFUGEE

The childless "Iloi" or wives of the king were originally sent to Ugbeku after the death of the king where they lived

unmarried for the rest of their lives. But the customs was abrogated for the adoption of the British Law. They could now marry any man and they could no longer be sent to Ugbeku.

CHAPTER 54 TRIBAL MARK

During the olden times, the Binis were generally known by their tribal marks. The males have incision marks on their bodies and foreheads, the females have the same incision mark on their bodies, foreheads and faces. But the princes and princesses have only these marks on their bodies. At the present day the custom of making these marks is gradually dying out.

CHAPTER 55 GUARDS AND LOSS OF GOODS

Guards or Watchmen (Ode) were usually posted to every quarter or street in the City, especially during the war time, or in order to prevent thieves from stealing. Any lost property, cattle or child, if found, could be detained and cared for by the guards, chiefs, in authority or ordinary persons until delivered safely to the owner or parents. Rewards might or might not be given or received.

CHAPTER 56 DESERTION

If a slave deserted and was ultimately found he or she should be punished by flogging, chaining, binding, etc.

But if the desertion was a frequent or repeated nature, he or she must be sold away. A deserted wife or servant was punished by flogging, binding or chaining. But binding and chaining are now things of the past.

CHAPTER 57

UNLAWFUL EXPORTATION AND IMPORTATION OF GOODS

Secret exportation of provisions or foodstuffs, to prevent famine, and importation of unlawful goods especially in the time of war, famine and blockading of roads are strictly prohibited. The offender may be fined or the goods confiscated or both.

CHAPTER 58

ENMITY

The Binis did not encourage a long standing enmity. For instance, if two persons have quarrelled, and are in malice against each other, the malice or enmity is set aside when the birth of a child, marriage, or bereavement occurs on the part of one of them and the other resumes friendship by paying a visit to the affected one to rejoice or mourn with him. This rightly fulfils the Scriptural injunction which says "Mourn ye with those that mourn, and rejoice with those that are rejoicing". As Benin is a land of freedom and liberty, her people move freely among themselves without the thought or fear of any danger. In fact the Binis never aim at murdering or poisoning one another by the means of injurious medicines, but to bring an opponent or offender to justice as does any civilised nation on the globe.

CHAPTER 59

ILLEGAL ACTS

It is against the Benin Laws and Customs to have sexual intercourse with one's own mother. In the event of a commission of this crime by any man, the members of Eghorhan are invited to perform the usual ceremony which often lasts seven days. The same ceremony should be performed by a man who had sexual intercourse with his daughter. It is also against the customs of the land to have sexual intercourse with one's own sister, niece, aunt, first or second cousin. If this happens a she goat would be sacrificed to the paternal gods for propitiation. It is contrary to Benin Laws and Customs for a man to have sexual intercourse with both mother and her daughter. It is repugnant to Benin Laws for another man to step across a woman's feet or leg while stretched on the floor, or to hold her by the wrist or grip her cloth. He who wilfully does this will not escape the punishment for doing so. It is rigidly forbidden to kill a pregnant woman in Benin Law. Anyone who does this is said to kill two persons, and is termed, "No gbozi vbeken".

CHAPTER 60

HOUSE BUILDING

The Binis are very keen and clever in the art of house building. The walls are properly built thickly, high and straight. The walls of the king's palace are beautifully adorned or cut in most attractive designs. The front walls of some titled chiefs, are also similarly done by special order of the king or according to the dignity of their titles or offices. Every house in the land is built under the free labour system by joining hands together in building it rotationally. No proper payment is necessary under any condition or

obligation. Prospective house owners now employ building contractors on payment of agreed charges. As a state building the king's palace is also built under the same free labour system by the people, but now labour can be employed.

CHAPTER 61

TOGHA-ISE

Togha-Ise are the terms usually applied by the Binis to ascertain the truth, the real truth and the perfect facts of such truth. Anyone who wants to know the real truth about anything from his or her informant in Benin, he or she would apply the interrogative term: Togha; and the informant would in turn answer "Ise" or rather "Togha-Ise."

The Binis are thus bound up by their religion or gods to be truthful and never to tell a lie.

CHAPTER 62

DISEASES

Of all the infectious or contagious diseases, leprosy, epilepsy, syphilis, lunacy, etc. are held very serious. For this reason, lepers and those suffering from serious cases of syphilis, epilepsy and lunacy are usually sent away from the City and are isolated in the bush for treatment to avoid infection.

CHAPTER 63

UKPUKPE OR MATCH

1. One kind of Ukpukpe is a wrestling match, when two quarters of the town challenged each other to wrestle in the

moonlight. A suitable place was chosen, the site in front of the Oba's market being a favourite. Here the Og'be and the Ore nokhua quarters often competed. An expert wrestler would win a prize, and an unbetrothed girl often sought his hand in marriage. Stirring songs were sung the whole time the wrestling was in progress. As a rule, no punishment by law was inflicted on any man who wounded, maimed, or even killed his opponent.

2. A man who shirked the manual labour due to his village or the state, was sometimes made to wrestle or he would be punished by binding, lashing or a heavy fine, or both.

3. There is also a Match for War or Victory, a Match or parade of School Children, a Joyous or Jubilant Match, and a Funeral Match to the Cemetery.

CHAPTER 64

MEALS TAKING, SALUTATION OF REVERENCE, ANSWERING A CALL, ETC.

1. As a special mark of honour, Benin nobles never eat in the public. It is customary to shut the doors at meal times. The chief food of the land is foo-foo. The soup is well prepared and must be cooked every day. Benin nobles do not care for soup prepared the day before, it must be fresh. A salutation of reverence is often given after meals. The male salutes "Kada" and the female "Bukpe".

2. As a custom, a Benin servant or maid, etc. usually holds a waterbowl on knee for his master or mistress to wash hands before and after meals, as well as giving drinking water on knee when drinking. The same salutation "Kada" and "Bukpe" are also given when an elderly person sneezes.

3. It is unusual to say a Benin noble is eating, but the

right expression or term is "O gha ruemwin" meaning "He is busy".

4. In answering a call of an elderly person, the male answers "Heyo" and female "He-omo".

5. The Term usually applied by the Binis for keeping Audience when the king is speaking is 'Daeho Eguae' meaning "be attentive or listen to the Royal Speech".

CHAPTER 65

CHILDREN

Children are generally trained to pursue some proper work when they are grown up, as farming, hunting, trading being a native doctor, or entering the Royal Services. They are checked from wrong doing while young by lashing, binding, harsh treatment and lecturing. A disobedient and troublesome child is usually sent to the king for proper training.

CHAPTER 66

GRATUITY

It is customary for a Bini noble or ordinary citizen to marry a wife or wives to his brother, servant, dependent or step-son, who has been most useful to him as a gratuity. The king does the same.

CHAPTER 67

TRAPS

It is strictly forbidden by the customary laws for anyone to set a snare or a trap near a house or any out-building in

a town, village or hamlet. If any such trap is set any cattle or poultry killed, the trapper must pay the costs.

CHAPTER 68

TITLES

Under the old form of Government before the British came to Benin, every chief had not only his title, but duties to perform connected with his title, and for these he was paid. His title was no mere decoration, but involved hard work as well.

CHAPTER 69

BEGGAR

It is not usual to see any native beggar in Benin, and this has been so from the olden days for it has always been the custom for poor people to put themselves under the protection of the nobles for support. The kings themselves often fed, clothed and made provision for the upkeep of such people. Consequently there was no need for any one to beg.

CHAPTER 70

THE RIGHT OF DEFENCE

1. Every Bini man or woman has the right of defence, or is at liberty to defend himself or herself either at his or her own premises or any other place from the unlawful assault of a neighbour or other persons. The aggressor both in insult and assault is usually found guilty and punished by fines.

2. If the assaulted person is a criminal, no fine would be inflicted on the assailant or assaulter. A brother, sister, cousin

or friend could be defended from the hands of a stronger opponent or assailant likewise if an attempt to appeasement is entirely failed.

3. But the attention of the Police could now be called. Otherwise the charge of the breach of the peace would be preferred on both the combatants and the defender.

CHAPTER 71

SALUTATIONS AND MUSIC

1. The music of the Binis, and kind of words they use in saluting one another, are expressive of social amity and good fellowship.

2. The most common kind of Bini music is called 'Ugho' and is played with drums, ornamental calabashes and native bells. The Royal Music is of many different kinds and employs a greater variety of instruments. All Bini music is rather wistful and plaintive.

CHAPTER 72

VISITING AND STRANGER

1. On paying a friendly visit to a neighbour, it is always customary to knock the door before entering or send a message to the head of the household through member of the household, if no one meets him at the door. It is quite contrary to custom to pass into the inner apartment without being invited.

2. When the host arrives, he will give his visitor kolanuts, who before breaking them, will offer a prayer for his host, for any other person present, for the land and finally for the King of Benin. The visitor then breaks the kolanuts

and he must take a piece himself first, then offer some to his host, and then the rest are handed round to any other people present.

3. Drinks are then brought. The first glass after prayer must be given to the host, then to the visitor, and then to the others by seniority of title or age.

4. The Binis never allow their visitors or guests to go unentertained, especially with kolanuts, smokables and drinkables. Kolanuts play a prominent part in all affairs of the land, mostly in ceremonies.

5. It is the duty of a house owner to report to the Authorities concerned, in case a stranger who lodges in his house is sick; failing to do so, he will be held responsible by the Authorities should the stranger die.

CHAPTER 73

HAND SHAKING

1. Shaking of hands takes place when a visitor is welcomed to his friend's house and when he departs. Ordinary citizens must take both hands to shake hands with a titled chief, nobleman, or elderly person, while such people themselves only need to offer one hand.

2. It has always been repugnant to the Benin Law and Custom for the king to shake hands with anyone save those of his own rank, but now he may shake with whitemen, magistrates, lawyers, doctors and men holding the higher post.

CHAPTER 74

HAIR SHAVING

One sign of mourning for the death of a king is the shaving of the hair of the head. Normally, titled chiefs wear their

hair long, but at the death of the king, and during his funeral obsequies, they shave their heads. The new king does the same and so do the princes and princesses. But the women of the land are not allowed to shave, because they are subjected to their husbands and not to the king. The women will shave when their own husbands die.

CHAPTER 75

COLLECTION OF DEBTS

1. The following system was adopted by the Binis in the olden days, for the collection of debts. If an ordinary man found that his debtor did not pay him, he would apply to the Violent Royal Debt Collectors, such as castrated eunuchs, Oruerienoguan and the Ikpokpan who would promptly lay hands on the offending debtor and deliver the money. For this they received commission from the creditor often paid beforehand.

2. The titled chiefs usually seized some of the property of the debtors, such as male or female servants, cattle, goods etc. until the debt was paid. This was with the approval of the king. If the debt was still not paid, the debtor's property itself would be forfeited.

3. A debtor can now be sued in the Courts for the recovery of the amount owed.

CHAPTER 76

KITCHEN

1. Titled Chiefs usually have their own private kitchens as well as one for the general household use; and the wives of some prominent Chiefs have an enviably carefree life as their husbands prefer to hire male cooks.

2. The kitchens are kept perfectly clean by sweeping the floors and rubbing the hearths daily or every morning before starting to cook.

CHAPTER 77

LATRINE

1. It is also the custom in a Bini Compound to have three latrines; one for the Arowa or master of the house in the courtyard, and two for men and women respectively. It is against the custom of the land for men and women to use the same latrine. The children use a dung hill.

2. The latrine of the Arowa or Odafen Noyan owa is kept clean and hot water is poured into the hole almost every week in order to kill germs. But by the advice of the British Doctors or Medical Officers, women's and Home Public latrines are now built and carbolic acid is used in them to quell the bad odour and also to prevent infection.

3. According to the Benin custom, married women are forbidden, fall in the latrine and on the kitchen floor. If these happen, oracle will be consulted as to the cause, and sacrifices usually follow the prediction of the oracle. But with the influence and spread of Christianity, these customs are gradually dying out.

CHAPTER 78

RICHES AND DEATH

1. In the olden days wives, children, servants slaves and cattle were counted as the major riches of the Binis, but plantations, cattle and particularly money are generally recognised by all to be riches of the modern day. With love, harmony, honesty and unselfish spirits, our fathers were very happy

with their riches and glory in their days, though, there were no pleasure of bicycle, motor, trains and other movable, vehicles as we are now enjoying.

2. Death is inevitable consequence of all persons on earth, and with death every hope is ended and vanished, either Laws or Customs, riches or poverty, pleasure or woe, etc., etc., for ever. The Binis care very little for death because of their belief in reincarnation.

CHAPTER 79

HISTORICAL CITY OF BENIN

1. The City of Benin situates in the centre of the ancient Kingdom, the influence of which extended to everywhere; Dahomey, Congo, especially Nigeria.

Many countries and towns were tributary to the King of Benin at Benin City, through the governors or chiefs of Benin who were in charge of the various towns and countries in those days.

2. The view of the City of Benin usually seems or appears dull, insignificant and uninteresting at the first sight to strangers so that one can hardly believe that it was once the Capital of a powerful Kingdom and large Empire in West Africa. But when you are chanced to stay longer in the City, and visit places of interest to look, more closely traces of the past greatness and splendour, such as the moats, a tremendous work of rampart round the City, the brass casting and wood carving of art etc., joyous title dances and funeral processions, the ceremonial performances, especially the scene in the House of Iwebo in the Royal Palace, then you would see a wonder, and acknowledge it to be a City indeed.

3. Tradition says that at certain time ere the reign of King Ewuare, the City of Benin was very large and thickly popu-

lated nearly three times the size of the present one. Indeed it was one of the largest cities in Nigeria or West Africa. But it is sad to say that it was depopulated by one of the atrocious and selfish Kings of Benin as the following extract—

In the beginning of my description of this City in 1702, writes, Nyendael, "I informed you of its mean state at present that the greatest part of it lies desolate; which is indeed deplorable for the surrounding country is as pleasant as could be wished: there is no interposing hill or wood to rudely interrupt the agreeable prospect of thousands of charming trees, which by their wide extended branches full of leaves, seem to invite mankind to repose under their shade.

The ruin of the town and the surrounding land was occasioned by the King Ewuare causing two kings of the streets (Rio de Aro) to be killed under pretence that they attempted his life, though all the world was satisfied to the contrary, and thoroughly convinced that their over-grown riches was the cause of their death so that the King might enrich himself with their effects as he did indeed. After the barbarity, the King found also a third man that stood in his way, who being universally beloved, was timely warned of that prince's intention, and accordingly took to flight accompanied by three-fourths of the inhabitants of the town which the King observing, immediately assembled a number of men from the bordering country and caused the fugitives to be pursued in order to oblige them to return: but they were so warmly received by the king of the street and his followers, that they forced them to return with bloody noses, and gave their master an account of their misadventure. But he resolved not to rest there, made a fresh attempt which succeeded no better than the former: but this was not all, for the fugitive thoroughly incensed and flushed, came directly to the city, which he plundered and pillaged sparing no place but the king's court, after which he retired, but continued incessantly for the space of ten years to rob the inhabitants of Great Benin, till at last by the mediation of the Portuguese

a peace was concluded between him and the King by which he was entirely pardoned all that was past, and earnestly requested by the King to return to his former habitation. However, he would not trust himself there, but lives two or three days journey from Benin where he keeps as great a court and state as the King. The returning citizens were affably and amicably received, and given honourable positions in order to induce the rest to return which probably they will not as they are very well satisfied where they are. It is therefore to be feared that the greater part of the town is still likely to continue uninhabited."

Vide "Great Benin" page 14, by H. Ling Roth.

CHAPTER 80

THE CONCLUSION

1. We have now completed our recital of the most important Laws and Customs of the Bini people. Although not as far advanced as the Europeans yet our social life before their advent was not a chaos. Our method of government, our administration of law, our system of land-holding, our farming and forced labour, and our social festivities, were all regulated. Each man knew his place and his work and could regulate his daily life accordingly.

2. The Christian Gospel, and some of the European institutions and ways of living which we see to be good have to be fitted in with our older framework. At some points the bad old ways must give way to the new, at other points the good old ways must be kept. It is no easy task. But a pre-requisite of any success is a proper understanding of the old Benin way of life. Perhaps the above pages, in which I have tried to save from oblivion our cherished Customs and ingrained Laws, may be a help to this misunderstanding.

NATIVE AUTHORITY NEW CONSTITUTION

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTION

1. DIVISIONAL COUNCIL (Ikogbakha)
 - (a) This is the superior Native Authority for the Division.
 - (b) Its duties are:—
 - (i) To decide important matters of policy.
 - (ii) To approve the estimates of revenue and expenditure for each year.
 - (iii) To hear members' grievances and to discuss matters of mutual interest.
 - (iv) To appoint Committees to carry out Native Administration work.
 - (c) It should sit quarterly, and there should be budget session in November in the same way as the House of Assembly.
 - (d) It must not waste its time in discussing matters of detail. These should be referred to the appropriate Committee or Department to deal with.
 - (e) It should appoint the following Committee:—
 - (i) Administrative Committee.
 - (ii) Staff Discipline Committee.
 - (iii) Finance Committee (for estimate).
 - (iv) Income Tax Appeal Committee.
 - (v) Education Committee.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

This is a Committee given powers by the Divisional Council to take decisions on all matters of administrative detail on behalf of the Benin Native Authority. It is a very responsible body and the members will be paid for their services. It must be prepared to issue all instructions necessary for carrying on the work of Native Administration. Any matters on which it feels it cannot give decision will be referred

to the Divisional Council. Its duties should cover:-

- (i) General administration.
- (ii) Supervision of staff.
- (iii) Control of votes of expenditure.
- (iv) Works (both recurrent and extraordinary).

It will NOT deal with staff punishment which is a matter for the staff Discipline Committee. The Administrative Committee should meet at least weekly to give decisions on day to day business. Its decisions will be recorded briefly in a ledger which must be shown to the Oba regularly. It should seek advice whenever necessary from the Oba, the District Officer or the Departmental Officer concerned. Such advice does not have to be accepted.

3. STAFF DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

This will only deal with actual punishments to staff *i.e.* reprimands, loss of increments, suspensions, dismissal or any other punishment they wish to give. It will NOT deal with petitions, rates of pay, transfers, promotions or appointments. These are all Administrative matters to be dealt with by the Administrative Committee. The staff Discipline Committee will sit when called to do so by the Secretary. The Committee's decisions will take effect immediately. Appeal will lie to the full Divisional Council in other cases, but dismissals must be subject to the approval of Iko-gbakha.

4. FINANCE COMMITTEE

This will be a select Committee appointed annually in November to consider the estimates. It will prepare and present draft estimates to the Divisional Council for approval.

5. CITY COUNCIL (Ikoredo)

This is the subordinate Native Authority for Benin City only. Its duties are to discuss town matters, make bye-laws and appoint Committees to assist its work. It should appoint:—

- (a) Town Planning Committee.
- (b) Market Committee.

Both these Committees apply to the City only, not to the District.

6. TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE

This should work in close conjunction with the Town Planning Officer who will advise them. Its duties are to decide on the layout of the town, the distribution of plots, and the approval of building plans.

7. MARKET COMMITTEE

This will supervise the running of all markets in the City. It should control the distribution of stalls and settle any market complaints. It should advise the Administrative Committee on any works required to be done in the market.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY

The Administrative Secretary will be the Senior Officer of the Native Administration Staff. His duties are:—

- (a) To run the N. A. Administrative Office.
- (b) To distribute all correspondence to the appropriate Departments.
- (c) To act as secretary to the Administrative and Finance Committees.
- (d) To keep in touch with the Oba and the District Officer in all N. A. affairs.

He will draft all instructions, orders, letters, etc. on behalf of the Native Authority and will file himself. He is not a clerk and should do no clerical work. He should let the Oba see all important papers but otherwise no routine files should leave his Office.

9 POSITION OF THE OBA

The Oba is the President of the Divisional Council and the Head of his people. He will sign all orders, rules, leases etc., approved by the Divisional Council. He will be kept in touch with the public affairs by the Administrative Secretary and will be shown the decisions of the Administrative Committee in their ledger.

10. POSITION OF THE DISTRICT OFFICER

The District Officer has no direct control over N.A. works or staff. His work is both advisory and supervisory. He will give advice and encouragement on all matters at any time. But the actual administration must be done by the N. Authority. The District Officer is still finally responsible for the good order of N.A. Finances, and therefore has power to give orders regarding accounts, etc. Correspondences will always be between "District Officer" and "Native Authority"

Approved (Sgd) Akenzua II, Oba of Benin
President.

Approved (Sgd) G. I. Obaseki ch Iyase
Chairman.

(Sgd) E. O. Gbinigie,
Ag. Administrative Secretary.

(Sgd) J. D. Hamilton.
District Officer.

Benin City,
6th December, 1948.

One man from each of the twelve re-grouped Wards form members of Benin City Native Court and selected men for the Benin Divisional Appeal Court till a trained Native Judge will be appointed.

Twelve men also form members of each group Native courts in the villages.

CONSTITUTION- BENIN NATIVE AUTHORITY

DIVISIONAL COUNCIL (Ikogbakha)

1. Ex-Officio Member.

The Oba, President :
 The Iyase:
 The Esogban:
 The Eson. (Etc.)

2. Extraordinary Members.

The Uzama, Eghaevbo-n'ore, Iwebo,
 Iweguae and Ibiwe Chiefs at present members of
 Ikogbakha (excluding) the Esogban); 16

3. Members elected for three years,

Three Uzamas; 3
 Four Eghaevbo-nore; 4
 One representative of Ibiwe-Nekhwa; 1
 Three representatives from each of the
 Palace Societies, Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe; 9

Two representatives from each of the twelve re-
 grouped Wards, of whom at least one from each
 ward must be educated; 24

Two representatives from each of the twenty Districts
 outside Benin City, of whom at least one from each
 District must be educated; 40

The Administrative Secretary
 Two selected literate members; 2

Summary (excluding 16 Extraordinary Members)

- 1 Ex-Officio Member; (the Oba)
- 17 Elected Chiefs;
- 64 Elected Ward and District Members;
- 2 Selected Members;
- 1 Administrative Secretary.
- 85 Members altogether.

Ikeredo (City Council):

The Chairman	1
Two Uzamas	2
Two Eghaevbo-nore	2
Two representatives from each Palace Society, of whom at least one shall be an Oghaevbo	
Two representatives from each of the twelve Wards	
The Administrative Secretary	1
Two selected extra-ordinary members	2
	<u>38</u>

A Vice Chairman shall be elected for six months at a time and shall not be eligible for re-election.

The Uzamas, the Eghaevbo-nore, and the representatives of the societies and of the wards may or may not be the same persons as those elected to Ikogbakha.

SOME STORIES OF
ANCIENT BENIN

By

Jacob U. Egharevba

1950



DR. CHIEF. JACOB U. EGHAREVBA M.B.E.
The Obakhayaye of Benin
THE AUTHOR.

SOME STORIES OF
ANCIENT BENIN

BY

Jacob U. Egharevba.

FORWARD.

Author has done me a kindness and asking me to write a short forward and edition of Benin Stories. I have a little assistance in the preparation of the book, which will be of interest to all.

Among these books Chief Jacob Egharevba is doing good service to his people which I think they fully appreciate at present. It will come when he will be crowned King and received the praise and admiration of his people. No Nation or Race can flourish without its own literature. Benin has a wealth of stories and fables, but they have no interest in them, and were it not for Chief Egharevba these stories would be lost. In modern times children are not prepared to listen to tales and fables told them by their Fathers, and if they are not written down they will be forgotten.

I only recommend this book to all who are interested in the Benin people, but I recommend it very strongly to the Benin people themselves who should be proud of their own stories and I would advise parents to tell these stories to their children as the lessons they learn by them are still as applicable as when the stories were first told.

G. F. HARRIS.

The Assistant District Officer,
BENIN DIVISION, BENIN CITY

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3
P R E F A C E.

This small volume was written in answer to the many requests of friends and acquaintances, especially Mr. J. G. Speer, the Education Officer, Benin Province, Benin City.

Any short coming it may have, will, I hope, be forgiven in the thought that this is yet one more effort to save another part of the past of one ancient city from an undeserved oblivion.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr Raymond Tong for his assistance in reading through and correcting my manuscript.

JACOB. U. EGHAREVBA.

A member and recorder of the
Royal House of Iwebo, and Curator
of the Benin N. A. Museum,

Lagos Street,
Benin City.

February, 1951.

I THE HUNGRY MESSENGERS OF IDANRE

At the close of the reign of Oba Olua, the Oludanre of Idanre (Eruaren) sent two messengers to Benin City to learn the art of making Bini tribal marks, in order that it might be copied and used in Idanre.

The Oba sent these messengers to an "Osiwu" or tribal-mark specialist to learn his art and introduce it in Idanre. The messengers spent a week in learning the art and then departed to Idanre. They arrived home in the afternoon of the fourth day after they left Benin City. They were half-dead with hunger.

They went to the Oludanre directly to report their arrival and asked leave of him to go first to their homes for food before returning to the palace to give account of their newly-acquired art of making tribal - marks. Unfortunately, the Oludanre absolutely refused to allow them to go home for food, but detained them and sent for the Idanre tribal-mark specialist so that he could be directed by them before going home.

The messengers reluctantly directed the Idanre specialist with words:- "Benren, Benren, Benren". They were then dismissed by the Oludanre who said, "You can now go home in peace and have your meal."

The Idanre tribal-mark specialist set to work at once, using the rough directions of the messengers. But when the messengers returned to the palace in the evening, they were greatly surprised and sad to see that the tribal-marks were wrongly cut by the Idanre specialist.

They therefore approached the Oludanre with these words "Your Highness, this is not the way to make tribal marks. They are not made according to our directions."

The Oludanre replied: "You have lied then. This is the exact manner in which you directed the tribal-mark maker. He marked according to your directions. Do not lie, but rather tell me the truth! Your hasty directions were governed by your lies! You have misled our specialist. Therefore let the Idanre tribal-mark remain forever in this fashion, as you wrongly directed."

Hence the Idanres have had their marks crossed ever since; and hence we have our adage:- 'A hungry stomach tells no truth.'

In all case, the Oludanre should have allowed his messengers to go home for their meals before giving directions of the tribal-mark. For a hasting climber has a sudden fall.

II OKPUGHE.

About one hundred and fifty years ago; there was a well-organised secret fraternity

called "Eniwanren - ason." Its members were admitted on sacred oath, which was binding unto death.

Osopakharha of Ugbagè, the son of Ahiyè the then Esogban, whose mother was commonly-known as Oyara was the President of the fraternity; Akengbuda was the Patron; and the Oba's wife Oşè, the mother of Obanosa, was the Matron. At that time, Obanosa was at Uşelu as the Edaiken (Crown Prince).

Osopakharha owed his name to his excessive luxury and pride. He was generally known as Osopakharha or "the proud one." He usually appeared in gorgeous attire with carved coral-beads round his neck and ankles. He had almost as many followers as a prince or an Oba. He was constantly served and attended and was famous throughout the land.

Osopakharha was born and grew up at the same time as Osifo or Obanosa, the Edaiken. Moreover both had the same stature, quality and ability. Obanosa the Edaiken, therefore disliked Osopakharha with all his being and often he would say, "Osopakharha pretends as though he were the Oba, and myself the Edaiken. Very well, I shall punish him when I become the Oba of Benin."

Osopakharha would always reply by saying "If you kill me, be sure that you will not live. You will follow me immediately. The hand that opens a door must go with the door."

Hearing of these things, Oba Akenbulu invited his son, the E laiken, to come to see him from Urelu. He reasoned with him on the subject of initiation into the fraternity, but Obanosu refused to be initiated. Wishing to help him in spite of this refusal, the Oba warned his son that he must not kill Osopakharha when he became Oba of Benin, Ose Obanosu's mother gave the same advice to her son the E daiken. But Obanosu would not listen to any advice. He had recently heard that Osopakharha, in the secret Fraternity, was termed "The Oba or King of the night" a title which surpassed, he thought, that of the Oba of the Day.

Accordingly, when Obanosu came to the throne after the death of his father, he obstinately had Osopakharha killed after a long and hard struggle involving civil war.

In this war the Oba's party began to sing the following marching song:—

"Obanosu Udeyanwun o, ee (Chorus). Obanosu Udeyanwun o ha." Meaning Obanosu the conqueror etc. Whilst Osopakharha's party sang the following song in reply:—

I ma le nenwende, I ma le nenwende (Chorus) I ma le nenwende etose. Meaning "I never ran to meet trouble, for I am under oath, oh! I have sworn to that respect."

All the members of the Secret Society or Fraternity including Ose, the Oba's mother, who

was the Matron of the Fraternity, joined together as a body to punish the Oba for his selfishness in killing Osopakharha. Those in this body were known as witches and wizards. They used to sing seven marching songs. When the situation became very desperate at last, the Oba had his mother killed. Soon after this act of matricide he himself died in agony.

The wonderful deeds of the members of the fraternity of those days went by the name "Okpughe." Five thousand people perished. This means to be loveable, truthful and honest to one another and a quarter of the City now upper Mission road was made extinct in the civil war caused by Obanosa's murder of Osopakharha. The members of the Secret Society are known as Eniwanreṅ-asṅn even till this day.

III THE LAME MAN AND THE BLIND MAN.

A lame man and a blind man were friends. They were miserably poor, because they could not work for their living. So they resorted to being beggars. They did this for many years untill the almsgivers were tired of giving alms.

The two friends now decided within themselves and said: "Let us go into the woods to die rather than die in the streets unburied leaving our corpses to the mercy of the dogs and vultures."

So the blind man was led by the lame man into the forest. They eventually arrived on the bank of a river where a large elephant lay dead

As there was no fire they went to a certain farm not very far off to get the necessary fuel to start one. Having made the fire, the lame man began to roast the elephant meat and eat it.

Whilst he was eating, the blind man said to the lame man:- "Will you roast some of the meat for me so that I too can eat something? To this the lame man replied that he would do so. Instead of doing this however he quickly killed a toad which had jumped out of the water on the back, roasted it and gave it to the blind man to eat.

"Here is the elephant meat", he said "Thank you. You are kind" replied the blind man.

While the blind man was eating the toad the water from it gushed into his eyes and suddenly he could see again. In anger at being tricked he furiously knocked the lame man down. In falling to the ground the lame man suddenly ceased to be lame. As though by a miracle he could walk once more.

The lame man then said to the blind man:- "It was I who gave you back your sight". The blind man then said to the lame man "Yes, but it was I who cured you of your lameness." After this they ceased to fight and were reconciled.

Finally, they picked up the elephant tusks and meat to sell them in the town. From this business the two friends became wealthy men.

Later the lame man married a widow, who bore him a girl named "Iyagbaye" (or remembrance). She was betrothed to the blind man as a remembrance of their past days of misery together.

Strange indeed are the ways of the Almighty. The wretched can gain happiness even as the happy can become miserable.

IV ODUNDUN, THE TYRANNICAL DEJI OF AKURE

Odundun was a famous Deji of Akure who lived at the close of the nineteenth century. He was a tyrannical ruler unrivalled in acts of cruelty. It is said that he greatly enjoyed the suffering of others. On one occasion, it is said he called his servants in the middle of the night commanding them to bring him two hundred human right eyes in order to prepare for him a special medicine.

This order was quickly carried out. Within a week his servants returned and said:- "Your Highness, we have done according to thy command. Here are the two hundred human right eyes". With an evil calmness the Deji gave them his many thanks.

In his reign children were not allowed out at night nor even allowed to walk alone in the streets during the day-time, because Odundun used to kill children for making his medicine.

On one occasion he had a certain powdered poisonous medicine prepared in a cylindrical vessel, to which he added palm wine. This brew was designed for his chiefs and he commanded

his house-servants to serve them with it. "Please serve the elders with the best wine" he said with an evil grin. Having taken the wine, the chiefs would soon die in agony, one after the other. Gradually he almost killed all the elderly chiefs in the town of Akure. Everywhere there were cries of mourning and misery.

Unfortunately for the wicked Deji, one morning at sunrise, his favourite wife by mistake served him with his own poisonous medicine instead of wine. In terrible agony, Odundun asked his beloved wife from which vessel she had served him with wine. She replied that she had taken it from the cylindrical vassel.

"Ah! Olikei, the god of Akure, my end has come" said Odundun. In great anger he ran wildly after his wife to cut off her head. But she was too quick and ran away to safety. After violent convulsions, the Deji died on the evening of the same day.

Thus ended the life of the tyrannical Deji. When the people heard of his death there was great rejoicing throughout the land. No one mourned his passing. The biter had been bit. Everyone in Akure felt in his heart the truth of the saying, 'Do unto others as you would wish they should do unto you, and felt that the terrible agonising death of the Deji was merely poetic justice.

V THE WISE SON.

Amuniwaiye was one of the Alafins of Oyo in the early days. He was very popular through his tyranny, selfishness and stinginess.

After a few years of his reign, he once invited the young men of intelligence into his palace and secretly spoke to them thus:- "You young folks of Oyo, our historic City, I like you all for your intelligence!" "Such people as yourselves who understand the affairs of modern days are suitable to manage the affairs of Oyo at the present. For your fathers are very weak in sound reason. But the obstacle is that your fathers are still living. Get rid therefore of your fathers. Otherwise you cannot fill the coveted posts in the government of the country.

Through these deceptive words of the Alafin, the sons of the chiefs began to kill their fathers. But one of them, however secretly sent his own father to a village at midnight and hid him. When all the chiefs were disposed of, they went to the Alafin and told him, 'Your Majesty, we have cleared away the obstacles, and nothing now hinders us filling the vacant posts.' The Alafin replied "All right, I shall keep my promise but just go home first and give me the chance to ponder awhile." Meanwhile he kept his promise by conferring titles on them.

Two years after this, the Alafin invited them into the palace with these words, "My honest and intelligent chiefs, I have determined to rebuild the front of my Palace in an attractive design to suit the name and dignity of the Alafin of Oyo. You shall be the builders. Mark you, the wall will be built from the air downwards! The building will be started four days hence." He emphasised the threat of the death-penalty should they fail in this building. Hearing this they returned home with heavy hearts, utterly down-cast and perplexed, bemoaning their evil fate. Each of them cried out, "I am lost! I am lost!"

The next day, the wise son went to the village to consult his father on the subject and the father accordingly advised his son to tell boldly the Alafin on the appointed date these words, "Your Majesty, as a custom, you should first of all, lay the foundation as the owner of the house and then we shall start the building."

The Alafin was surprised to hear this from the wise son on the appointed day and after long hesitation and silence he sent his young chiefs home. "Go home in peace" he said, "the mechanical sense of the wise son has saved you."

The Alafin then secretly sent and asked the wise son where he had found such wisdom. The wise son replied, "Your Majesty I

have to confess to my lord that I was taught to say this by my father whom I hid in the village during the murders of the chiefs." The Alafin then told him to repeat his words again. The wise-son did so, then said 'Your Majesty, I did not kill my father, but hid him in a village during the outrage.'

Said the Alafin:- "Do you say you did not kill your father, but hid him in the village while your comrades killed theirs?" The wise-son nodded his head.

The Alafin then said:- Ah! you are indeed a wise-son. Go and bring your father home and I shall do what I think necessary." The wise son accordingly set off for the village and brought his father before the Alafin.

After all necessary questions by the Alafin and answers from the old man, the Alafin prayed—"May God not let Oyo lack aged men." He then sent the old man away with many precious presents. The next day the Alafin conferred the title "Basorun" or Oyo Premier on him saying: "You are the old man whom I think will help me to manage the affairs of the land with sense and patience." He then blamed those foolish sons who had acted unwisely by killing their fathers merely to become powerful themselves,

VI THE FAITHFUL FRIEND.

There were once two friends who were very fond of each other: One was a farmer

and the other a hunter. On one occasion, it happened that the hunter accidentally shot a man dead while hunting in the bush for deer. The hunter in fear and trembling ran to his friend the farmer and told him of his terrible accident and how he had mistaken the dead man for a deer.

On hearing all the details of the accident, the farmer told the hunter to go and bury the corpse properly so that the accident would not be known to anybody. "As for myself" he said, "I shall keep the secret as far as possible." The hunter accordingly did as he was advised by his friend.

For three years the secret of the accident was kept. Then one day the farmer said to his friend, the hunter. "It is now three years since the accident. I have kept your secret but now I feel that at last you should tell your mother." The hunter agreed to do this.

Accordingly he told his mother. But immediately she heard her son's secret she cried out:—The man who died three years ago was killed by my son. Hearing this terrible news, many people rushed on to the scene. The parents of the dead man ran lamenting to the Palace and told the Oba the terrible news. He at once ordered the arrest of the hunter who was duly charged with murder; put in chains and confined to the Ewẹdọ or Prison. He was then tried and sentenced to death.

The hunter now sent for his friend the farmer to bid him an affectionate farewell. On the arrival of the farmer, with the permission of the Warder, he went to a corner to speak to his friend, who advised him to pretend to be mad till the day of his execution. The hunter obeyed this advice.

The next day in the afternoon, the hunter began to talk wildly and insanely. The sayings went something like this: "The man who died yesterday, I killed him. The man who died twenty years ago, I killed him. The man who died five years ago, I killed him. The child who died yesterday, I killed it. The woman who died five years ago I killed her." He continued repeating such things until the Warder went to report this apparent madness to the Oba in the palace. The Oba at once sent two of his chiefs to ascertain the truth. They brought news back to the Oba that the man was indeed very mad.

The Oba therefore had the hunter discharged from the prison and sent for his parents and said to them. Your son is suffering from insanity. Take him home for proper treatment. On reaching home the hunter began to knock his head against the walls and to stone his parents. Wild with grief they ran to look for a doctor who could effect a cure. Hearing of this, the farmer told the parents that he knew a certain doctor who could cure him permanently. He told them also that he himself could try a cure.

The farmer took his friend the hunter to his farm, put him in a hidden place and said to him, "Wash yourself and eat and drink of the best I have." Three years after this the farmer brought his friend the hunter back to his parents and told them: "I have done my duty through the aid of God and here is your son completely cured."

The parents expressed their unbounded gratitude to the farmer. "May Heaven bless you for your kindness," they said. At the same time the farmer was led to the Palace to inform the Oba of his success with his mad friend. The Oba rewarded the farmer very satisfactorily. Thus the farmer had saved his friend, the hunter, from death. The farmer had been a true friend to the hunter.

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

VI THE FICKLE NATURE OF MAN.

Man is a fickle creature. He is never satisfied. His opinions are never sure. In the dry season, we usually say the sun is too hot and we crave for rain. In the rainy season, we say it is too cold and that we are in need of sun. We are most changeable creatures.

Once upon a time there was a certain wise man in Ilesha named Agiriasasa. He was as wealthy and prosperous as he was kind, gentle, generous and prudent. He had many wives, children and cattle. He was a great friend of the then Owa who loved him as dearly as did every citizen of Ilesha.

Agiriasasa often told the Owa and other people that man is a fickle creature, but nobody seemed to believe him. To illustrate his belief to the people, on one occasion, he went to the palace and arranged a certain plan with the Owa secretly "Your Highness" he said, "summon your chiefs and people to the Palace tomorrow and tell them that Agiriasasa is a bad man and that he is your bitter enemy. Tell them that he is plotting and stirring the people against you, that Agiriasasa is very insulting and consider himself too important. Will you therefore get rid of the wretch who thinks so much of himself on account of his riches?" The Oba was in agreement with this plan.

As a stratagem, Agiriasasa took his rich apparel, a horse, attendants and dancers to the outside of the town wall that very day in preparation for the next two days. The Owa invited the chiefs and people into the Palace accordingly for the above false accusation. After relating these lies to them he added: "Send for him now so that he may defend himself. He may either suffer the penalty of death or banishment."

The chief replied, "May the Owa live long! The enemy of our lord deserves the penalty of death." Agiriasasa was summoned to the Palace and asked to make his defence of the charges prepared against him by the Owa.

Agiriasasa knelt down at the feet of the Owa, pleading for mercy and pardon. "Your Highness" he said, "forgive thy humble servant in the accusation prepared against me, of which I am innocent; from my youth everyone in this town knew me very well to be very obedient. I entreat my lord and his noble chiefs to overlook this malicious prosecution against me."

The chiefs then said, "Do you think that the accusations against you are false? Do you think that the Owa is capable of talking lie? Agiriasasa said, "No Sirs, I do not." The Owa said, "Chiefs and my people, I rule that you send this man away from the town in banishment rather than kill him. Agiriasasa was now led out of the town by violence. He was beaten, kicked and spat upon. He was called all manner of evil things

The next day at 4 p.m. Agiriasasa washed himself, dressed himself in gorgeous attire and mounted himself of a white charger. He then rode in great dignity back into the town.

Dancers followed him, drummers beat their drums, trumpets were all about him. People followed in large crowds shouting out: "Hail Agiriasasa, the good! Welcome! You are, not the enemy of the Owa. You are good, kind and generous to all! Welcome! Agiriasasa kind hearted man!" They continued these cries of praise right up to the Palace.

The Owa appeared in state to witness the scene and was greatly surprised to see the praise and adoration which were poured on Agiriasasa by the people who yesterday had beaten, kicked and insulted him, "Truly, said the Owa, "Man is a fickle creature, a changeable being."

It is true. Man is a fickle creature. He is never satisfied. His opinion are never sure. If you have money today, men will praise you. But if you run short tomorrow, they will surely heap scorn upon you and call you a stupid unprovident wretch. A man who is great today can be struak down equally tomorrow by those who now praise him.

VIII ETUROHUN

Long, long ago, there was a prince named Eturohun. He was a son of the old Enogie of Benin. He was a farmer.

One fine day at sunrise Eturohun went to his farm as usual. He was surprised to see a human head at the side of an Acacia or locust tree. This head addressed itself to Eturohun! and called him by name, 'Eturohun! Eturohun!' "I am here," replied Eturohun. The head then said, "All right go in p:ace but never must you tell anybody at home of what you have seen and heard this day." Eturohun agree.

On reaching home, Eturohun went to the palace immediately and said to the Oba, "Your

Majesty, I was greatly surprised to see a human called my name and spoke in strange words to me in my farm just now. To ascertain the truth of that which I speak, you may send two men with me as witness."

The Oba was very interested and accordingly sent two messengers with Eturohun to see the human head which talked. Unfortunately this time the head remained mute when the Oba's messengers went to view it. They addressed it seven times in the Oba's name with these words. "His Majesty, the Oba has sent us to you. Why do you not reply?" But the head remained silent.

So the messengers returned home and told the Oba that Eturohun was a liar, that the head did not speak at all. Eturohun was therefore charged with perjury by the Oba and sent to the prison. He was then tried and condemned.

When he was being led to the place of his execution, Eturohun suddenly cried out. "I am the son of an Enogie! I am the son of an Enogie (a Duke) Please remember and comply with the law of the land! It is repugnant to kill or execute any son or daughter of an Enogie. Hearing this the executioner paused. He then reported it to the Oba, who, after a hasty investigation, accordingly, ordered Eturohun to be set free, with the remark, "You are lucky Your royal blood and noble ancestry have saved you. Go in peace and tell no further lies!"

Hence it is a common saying among the Benis ever since: "Unu Eturohun o gbe Eturohun. Unu Eturohun o vbe min Eturohun fan," which means "It is the mouth of Eturohun which killed him and it is his mouth which also saved him."

Beware therefore of telling that which you have seen and heard. It is not wise to tell all that one sees, nor is it wise to say all that one thinks.

IX THE MOATS.

There are three main moats or ditches surrounding the whole city. The first and second were dug by Oba Uguola. The first, with a radius of five miles was dug about the year 1280, A. D. as a barrier to keep off the invaders in time of war especially against Akpanigiakon the Duke of Udo, who was then harassing the city. The second moat about three miles off was dug in or about 1290. A. D.

The tremendous work of digging the first moat is said to have been completed in a period of three years. After the completion, Oba Oguola proudly and boastingly said, "I ghi zamete" meaning, 'I no longer pay heed to invaders.'" Every town or village under the old Empire of Benin took part in the work.

By the order of Oba Oguola, all the important towns and villages in Benin copied the example and dug similar moats or ditches round their villages as ramparts against enemies.

According to research, the third or the deepest moat in the heart of the city was dug by Oba Ewuare about 1460 when the city was entirely depopulated as a result of his inhuman mourning law. Ewuare's first two sons, Kuoboyuwa, the Eɗaiken or Crown Prince of Uselu and Ezuwarha, the Duke of Iyowa poisoned themselves and both died on the same day. In mourning for their deaths, Ewuare forbade anyone of either sex in the land, to wash and dress up, to have sexual intercourse, or move freely for three years.

He furiously had two of the great chiefs who opposed him in this law killed. He sought to kill a third, Oza, the worst of them, who was the most popular and universally beloved. But the chief knowing his life to be in danger, took flight accompanied by three quarters of the inhabitants of the City. He eventually became the founder and a ruler of Umoru, entitled "Olumoru," a group migrated to Iruwa (Irrua) and others became the founders of Kwale - Ibo etc.

Ewuare made several attempts, both by force of arms and entreaties to bring the people back, but all proved abortive. They entirely refused to return home. Worse than this for Ewuare, they came directly to the City of plunder, pillage and kill the remaining quarter to the people of Benin, sparing nothing and no one except the Royal Palace.

In consternation, the Oba then dug the third moat which took him several years to finish. This was to prevent further desertion or emigration and also to keep out the merciless plunderers. After the completion, he made powerful charms, and had them buried at each of the nine gate-ways to the City to nullify any evil charms which might be brought by the plunderers and people of other countries to injure his remaining subjects.

The remaining inhabitants of the City then hysterically cried, "Ewuare gi Edo gha bun", meaning "Ewuare, let Benin be increased." This caused the introduction of the tribal mark by Oba Ewuare, so that his remaining subjects might easily be known and identified amongst the people of other tribes in case of further desertion.

X ISE OF UTÈKON.

Ise was one of Oba Ozolua's Sword-bearers. He was a bold, powerful and lion-hearted young man. On one occasion, in the palace, Ozolua was giving the account of his various victorious campaigns. He mentioned Utèkon village, the birth place of Ise, to be the next campaign to be undertaken by him.

Ise at this point interrupted the Oba and said, "Don't brag about Utèkon, my native village, which you will never conquer. "What an audacity", exclaimed Ozolua, "could you offer me any challenge?" Ise replied bravely, "Most certainly, I will do my best if I am

discharged from being your sword-bearer." "I shall order your discharge," replied Ozolua. So Iş ceased to be one of Oba Ozolua's sword-bearers.

After the short performance of the discharging ceremonies, Iş proceeded to Utekon. Ozolua sent a special man to watch his movements as to whether he would look back before passing through the Iguisi (now called Lagos Street). Iş did not look back at all till he reached the town of Utekon. Ozolua was surprised at this, and then deemed it wise to postpone his going to Utekon to meet Iş for the fight on the date previously fixed. Boasting continued through on both sides.

About two years after this event, Ozolua proceeded to Utekon, with a formidable army. Iş was unprepared. Indeed Iş was absent from his home Eruvbi, Iş's mother offered a strong resistance. But she was ultimately killed by Ozolua.

The news reached Iş in his farm and he came home with all haste. First of all he had many of Ozolua's warriors killed for the interment and funeral ceremonies of his mother. He then faced Ozolua for combat.

After a fierce battle Iş killed many of Ozolua's warriors, he captured others and the survivors deserted. Ozolua therefore retreated.

Ise vigorously pursued him. In order to avoid being killed or taken prisoner by Ise the Oba climbed up a kola-nut tree before Ise could overtake him.

When Ise was about to cut down the kola-nut tree in his anger, Ozolua quickly said to him, "Wait! Remember that it is forbidden by the law of the land to cut down a kola-nut tree because kola-nuts are used for sacrifices to the god of destiny, the god of good luck and the spirit of departed parents." Ise stopped cutting down the tree but remained there, eargerly parading round the kola-nut tree and washing his opportunity when Ozolua should come down.

Meanwhile, a certain man named Orimwonrin, who was passing by, was surprised to see the Oba on the Kola-nut tree and Ise under it. Having questioned some body about this he was told what took place. Orimwonria then asked Ise to let Ozolua come down from the Kola-nut tree and simply wrestle as friends to finish the whole matter and not to draw swords any more. Both Ise and the Oba agreed.

After a long wrestling match, Ozolua, who wrestled like a spider ultimately knocked Ise down by the help of Orinwonria. According to the custom of the time, should a hero fall in such a manner, he would not rise again on account of his shame. Ozolua therefore took off Ise's head with three strokes of the sword.

Ozolua thanked Orimwonria warmly at first for his kindness, but when Orimwonria repeatedly bragged about the help he had rendered the Oba, Ozolua cut off his head with a stroke of his sword with the words, "May your blood be on yourself, you selfish brute." Ozolua had the remains of Orimwonria buried. He planted an Ikhinmwin tree on the spot and appointed a priest to worship at the shrine. Isẹ was cast in brass by Oba Ozolua and preserved in the Royal House of Iwebo for his heroic deeds.

XI THE THREE ROBBERS

A long time ago there was a woman at Iyekogba in Benin named Amadin. She was a notorious robber. She had three sons whom she named according to different kinds of robbery. She did this to ward off the "jujus" of those whom she robbed. The eldest son she named Morhiere meaning "I took it" The second she named Ebeigbe meaning "Juju don't kill me." The third son she named Imasufen, meaning "I did not invent robbery".

Whenever she robbed anybody and whenever her victim cursed her for her evil-deed she would hastily call her sons saying loudly, "Morhiere, Ebeigbe, Imasufen." In doing this she hoped to reverse the curse which was upon her. She committed robbery far and wide through out the ancient kingdom of Benin. When she died she bade her sons to follow her example, and they too became most notorious robbers.

Unlike their mother however, they would steal any things. Fowls, goats, sheep, dogs, cows or even human beings; there was nothing which they would not take, Imasuḗn the youngest was the cleverest and the most vicious of the three. He was capable of stealing anything.

On one occasion Imasuḗn went to the market where he saw a lady buying a white goat. Imasuḗn watched her carefully; then followed her to her home to see where she tied the goat. He then stole the goat that same evening. He tied it up in his own compound and fed it frequently until the next market day. He then took the goat to market. The goat suddenly escaped and was caught by its real owner. The lady immediately said

“This goat is mine!” Imasuḗn replied: “That is impossible; I bought it when it was very young, and have fed it ever since. “Becoming very angry, the lady called Imasuḗn a liar. Imasuḗn remained very calm. “Oh! charming lady,” he said “you should not allow lying to mar your beauty, especially on account of a mere goat.”

The lady was not fooled by this remark. “I swear by the gods of the land” she said, “that I bought this goat in this very market. That is the truth. Therefore let me have my goat.”

Imasuḗn now pretended to be very angry “I thought you were joking at first, but I

see that this is a case for the authorities. Justice will surely be done" he said. Imasuen then dragged the lady before the village Judge. "Your Worship" he said, "I come to obtain justice. Do not allow this lady to deprive me of my property."

The Judge on hearing the nature of the case said that each must swear an oath before giving evidence according to their religion. Imasuen hearing this said: "I have no religion. I can swear anything." This caused some consternation, but eventually he swore his oath by the "Juju Ogun."

Imasuen then told the Judge that he had bought the goat for five shillings and six pence when it was very young. "I used to tie it up every night, and let it loose every morning," he said, "Then one day, along came this lady to say it is hers. I hope Your Worship will give me justice."

When questioned by the lady as to how long ago he bought the goat, Imasuen replied that he bought it over a year ago.

When asked from whom he bought it he replied that a certain Ishan woman sold it to him. Hearing this the lady asked him if there were witnesses to this sale. Thinking of his evil brothers he replied triumphantly that he had two witnesses.

The judge then asked him to produce the woman from whom he bought the goat. Imasuen was a little dazed at this request. "I

cannot produce her" he said, but she is an Ishan woman who used to sell her goats here. Besides I have other witnesses to support my case." When he was further asked by the Judge where he kept the goat Imasueñ replied that he kept it in his house. At this point Morhiere and Egbeigbe were called as witnesses and of course both supported their brother's evidence.

The accused lady being a pagan now swore an oath to ogun the god of war and gave her evidence. "This goat is mine" she said "I bought it from certain woman in the market. She is here as my witness.

At this point Imasueñ asked: "How can you prove the goat is yours?" To this the lady replied "Because it is white and I bought it myself." Imasueñ now laughed triumphantly; Were you the only person to buy a white goat then? The lady was forced to reply in the negative

The Court then asked the lady how it was possible for her to be sure it was hers. The lady said that she knew beyond all doubt that the goat was hers.

The lady's witness, one Aihomø, was then called and swore an oath to Ogun. She said "I sold this white goat to the accused" Imasueñ then asked; "Can you be sure of the size of the goat which you said you sold to this lady? Aihomø said that she could not be sure. She said: "I cannot swear in this matter because it is not the only white goat in this area."

The Judge then pointed out that the evidence of Aihom̄ was hardly reliable. He said: "There is no proof that you bought this goat. However before coming to a final conclusion I intend to try an experiment. I will let the goat go free and I will send a messenger to follow it and to see to which house it will go."

A court messenger accordingly followed the goat until it entered the house of Imasuen. He then reported to the judge what he had seen. Imasuen was then awarded a favourable verdict in the case.

Imasuen was full of gratitude and turned to the judge and said: "How divine is judgment. May the honourable Judge live long to bring justice to our nation."

Hearing these words, the lady was overcome with grief; "Where are the Gods of our fathers? How long must falsehood and evil be our master? These are most terrible times!"

XII THE CORNFIELD.

It was harvest time in the Enogie's village. When Imasuen decided to steal all the corn in the village, one moonlight night.

Imasuen asked Morhiere to carry him on his shoulder to the cornfield, Ebeigbe went with them with a basket on his head. In this manner they cleared the whole field. When the Enogie awoke the next day, he was

surprised to find his harvest gone. In anger he sent his servants into all the houses of the district to find the missing corn.

Eventually it was in the house of the three robbers. On hearing of this, the Enogie said. "Yes I had a suspicion, we should find it there." As the robbers denied stealing the corn, the Enogie said that trial by ordeal should be resorted to

The three robbers were accordingly led to the Ordeal Master. Before the ordeal could be administered Morhière suddenly said (being advised by Imasuen): "If I ever cut any of the Enogie's corn, then, may the Ordeal go against me." Morhière was declared innocent.

Imasuen then told Ebeigbe to say: "If I ever cut any of the Enogie's corn, may the Ordeal go against me." Ebeigbe was declared innocent.

Imasuen then stepped forward: "If ever I set foot in the Enogie's cornfield, let the ordeal go against me. If not, let me be set free as an innocent man." Naturally, Imasuen was declared innocent.

All three robbers had been declared innocent by the Ordeal Master. Accordingly they were richly compensated by the Enogie for having been forced to undergo trial by ordeal. Moreover by their cleverness they had acquired enough corn to last them for many years.

XIII THE KOLA — NUT TREE

Imasuen once found a kola-nut tree belonging to the Ohen Ogba (the Priest of Ogba) of Irhirhi with many rich pods on it. He sent for Morhier to pluck them from the tree. He told him to leave one pod on the tree, and to leave the rest of the pods at the foot of the tree.

Imasuen then told Ebeigbe to go and gather all these kola-nuts into a basket without bringing any of them home. Ebeigbe did so.

Finally Imasuen himself went and brought the basketfull of kola-nuts home. He then thanked Ogba in these words "Ogba the merciful and generous goddess of Irhirhi, thank you for this beautiful basket of kola-nuts which I found waiting for me under this tree." He then carried the kolanuts away and sold them at a good price

The Ohen Ogba was surprised and angry when next morning he found only one kola-nut on his tree. He quickly picked this one kolanut broke it, and ate it. He then caused the thieves who had robbed his tree with the curse of the Ogba juju. Not long after this the Ohen Ogba was taken very ill with a swollen stomach and swellings on his feet and other parts of the body. On consulting the oracle, it was found that his own goddess Ogba, was troubling him on account of the single kola-nut he had eaten.

The 'Native doctor' said : "Unless the goddess Ogba is propitiated with various sacrifices such as goats, dogs and fowls, the Ohen Ogba must surely die.' The sacrifices were then made, but unfortunately before they could be completed the Ohen Ogba was dead,

There is a saying among the Binis ever since which says: 'Igha gho ebo. Igh'Ogba ihunmwunda Ogba. E b o n'irhirhi gb'ohen oren"—which means: 'If I worship the gods, I shall not worship the goddess. 'Ogba who killed her Priest.'

XIV AKONNIGHANGBAN AND THE FOUR BROTHERS

Akonnighangban was the son of the Enogie of Erua in ancient Benin. There were also four brothers in the same village. The first was a farmer, the second a hunter, the third a thief, the fourth a wiseman (Umowan-en)

In the nearby forest there was a big mango tree with many fruits on it, which were usually eaten by animals. One day, at dawn the hunter went to the tree and saw that something was moving in it. He took aim and shot at it. To his horror, he found he had killed Akonnighangban, the son of the Enogie.

In fear and trembling the hunter returned home to ask his brother, the Umowan-ren for advice. He offered him two hundred animals if he would save him. The Umowan-en told the hunter to take the corpse of Akonni-

ghangban to his brother's farm before the brother returned home that morning. The hunter did this.

When the farmer saw the dead body of Akonnighangban in his farm he was horrified, and hurried to Umowan-en to ask his advice. For this he offered to pay many thousands of yams. The Umowan-en told him to tie the corpse in a fine mat and lay it down where some people were playing marbles. He then told him to sit on it and to join in the game of marbles. After this he was to leave it and go home. The farmer did this and like his brother before him faithfully paid the Umowan-en the promised amount.

The third brother who was a thief, seeing the mat by the marble players stole it thinking it contained something precious. When he saw the corpse of Akonnighangban he was horrified and ran to ask his brother the Umowan-en for advice. For this he said he would pay two hundred goats.

The Umowan-en smiled to himself then said 'Take the corpse from the mat to the harem of the Enogie. Knock at the door and when the lame-port at the door asks who you are Akonnighangban the son of Enogie. Say then that you wish to see Enomoseş, the Enogie's wife. If the lame-porter still refuses to open the door, tell him you are going to commit suicide. Quickly, at this point, cut Akonnighangban's throat. Then kill a dog and pour the blood into it. Leave the knife there and

return home immediately with the dead dog. The chief did exactly as he was advised and and grateful paid the Umowan-en the two hundred goats he has promised him.

The next day, the corpse of Akonnighangban was found at the harem-gate. The Enogie was quickly informed, and he was wild with grief. He went to the lame-porter who told him how Akonnighangban had knocked at the harem-door the night before, how he had asked to see the Enogie's wife, Enomosesẹ, and how he had committed suicide on being refused entrance.

The Enogie was very angry. "Better to allow him to visit my wife Enomosesẹ than permit him to commit suicide," he said bitterly. The executioner was then called to execute the lame-porter. Before being killed the lame-porter said, "Noble Enogie, I have only done my duty according to your command"

"That is true" replied the Enogie. "Nevertheless you must die" Ever since this time, the Binis have had the following saying: "Emwan Eriẹ o gb'uke," which means the lame-porters were customarily killed because of the harem.

XV THE KING AND THE POOR MAN

In days of yore there lived in a big town a great and wealthy king who had many children. His Lords or chiefs were always rebelling against him on account of his harsh and tyrannical government. There was also a miserably poor man with an only son who placed him

self under the protection of the king for fear of ill-treatment from other people due to his poverty. Unfortunately instead of protection and good treatment, the king himself treated the poor man and his only son very harshly, and supplied him with no food and no reward or wages for the heavy work with which he saddled the poor man and his son. The poor man often went round to beg and console the king's chiefs on his behalf through their rebellion against him.

A little while after, the son of the poor man bought a dog and called it name 'Aghamjive-kè Omworukhò' meaning "We shall see the end of a wicked person". The king was much enraged by the name of the dog, and therefore began to trouble the poor man and his son more than ever. But the king died not long afterwards in a further outbreak of war.

The children of the king at home made preparations for the funeral ceremonies, and those abroad also came home for their father's funeral rites. Unfortunately, a cow dragged two of his king's sons into a well in the evening when they were bringing the cow home for the funeral ceremonies and both died in the well. When the rest of the children heard of this they were greatly alarmed. The bodies of the two unfortunate sons were taken home out of the well. When the other sons were gathered in the house of the eldest son of the king, during the night, a child was searching for somethin

in the corner of the house with a torch. Unluckily a spark reached a keg of gun powder for the funeral ceremonies and all the other kegs also caught fire and burnt the house down. All the children of the king perished in the fire. It exceedingly astonished the populace and they said that the end of a wicked man is seen indeed according to the name of the dog of the poor man's son.

The Elders of the town therefore made the poor man king in succession to his master because of his generally good conduct or behaviour towards them. He was feared, honoured and respected throughout his days. His offspring then became the ruling family of the country and have continued so ever since.

(From "OKHA EDO" (Benin City) by Chief Jacob U. Egharevba. Vide Chapter 36. Pages 44 to 45.)

XVI QBAGHAFEMWEN AND OSAGHAFEMWEN

A long, long time ago, there were two intimate friends in the land who assumed nicknames respectively. One assumed the nickname of Obaghafemwen, which means "the Oba will enrich me," and the other assumed Osaghafemwen (Elhighafemwen) meaning "God will enrich me."

Soon after this, the fame of these two friends and their nicknames reached the Oba. One day the Oba sent for them, wishing to know more of their nicknames. Having appeared

before the Oba and explained everything to him satisfactorily about their nicknames, the Oba asked them to wait for some presents.

The Oba went in, and sent yams through a messenger to the two friends. The Oba stuffed that of Obaghafemwẹn with precious coral and stone beads, and preserved the same properly in the bottom of an agban (cane tray).

The Oba lodged them in the same house, but each in a different room. He continued to send rich food stuffed with coral beads twice a day to Obaghafemwẹn: Osaghafemwẹn chiefly lived on plantain.

Obaghafemwẹn usually passed the remainder of his food to Osaghafemwẹn, who often found the coral beads stuffed in the bottom of the wooden plate (okpan) and kept them hidden, unknown to Obaghafemwẹn. One day, the Oba proudly said, "I shall see whether God would certainly enrich Osaghafemwẹn, as I, the Oba, would enrich Obaghafemwẹn.

On the seventh day, the Oba sent rich food in much bigger size of wooden plate to Obaghafemwẹn. This time he stuffed the food with coral beads and two pieces of silk cloth, all in the bottom of the plate. Obaghafemwẹn ate the top of the food and as usual passed the remainder to Osaghafemwẹn. On this day, the Oba invited his chiefs and people for an exhibition in the Palace.

Obaghafemwen first left for the Palace after the meal without anything to make up his dress. But Osaghafemwen loaded and adorned himself with those stored up coral beads and the cloth sent to Obaghafemwen by the Oba. Everybody, including Obaghafemwen himself, was surprised to see Osaghafemwen so gorgeously attired.

The Oba was great disappointed and surprised when he saw Obaghafemwen himself appear before him without any fine dress and his friend Osaghafemwen adorned with coral beads.

The Oba then asked Obaghafemwen whether he had received all the beads and cloth he had sent to him. Obaghafemwen replied that he received nothing at all.

The Oba then asked Osaghafemwen where he had got all the beads and cloth with which he had dressed himself. He explained to the Oba how he had obtained them. Then the Oba said, "Most certainly Osaghafemwen surpasses Obaghafemwen." Osaghafemwen was then raised to a high post and awarded a great title and more riches by the Oba.

As the Oba himself said, "He who God enriched the same the Oba will enrich."

Readers, Here you see the limited power of a king and the unlimited power of the Almighty God.

XVII EZOMO AGBAN WHO MADE WAR ON THE THUNDER IN THE SKY.

At the close of Oba Orhoghua's, reign and the beginning of that of Ehengbuda's lived

Agban, one of the most renowned warriors and prosperous Ezomons of Benin. A year after Orhogbua's arrival from the Sea Coast Wars about 1577 A. D., he found most of the tributary Obis of Eka and other towns on this side of the River Niger in state of rebellion, and utterly neglecting their usual tributes to the Empire of Benin.

He therefore despatched Agban, the Ezomon, to teach them a severe lesson and bring them to their sense. It was indeed a long struggle, but the most successful expedition Agban had undertaken in his life. It lasted over two years, and he captured their towns one after the other. Igidi which was changed and renamed Agban (corrupted to Agbor) after the conqueror's name by the order of the Oba was the first captured. Having returned home, and while he was giving the account of his victorious campaign to Oba Ehengbuda in the Palace one day there was a sudden terrible roar of thunder

Agban was very angry, and in consequence left the Palace. He said to his servant, build me a scaffold I will wage war on the thunder in the sky, which has dared to interrupt me while I was speaking to the Oba" So he built a very high scaffold or tower to which he tied many calabashes of Palm Oil and set them on fire, Tradition says that as the flames went up in the air, there came a down pour of rain, and some thunder-bolts fell from the sky which was taken as a sign that Agban

had gained a victory over the thunder,

When the burning scaffold fell the top of it touched the ground at a spot about three miles from Benin City on the Benin—Sakponba road. Two Ikhinmwini trees were planted, one there and the other at Idunmwennie his old house. They are still known as Aro Ezomon Agban or Ezomon Agban's shrine. Eversince every man who is invested with a title has to visit the shrine at Idunmwennie to honour the spirit of Agban, the Ezomon and pray to him for prosperity and renown.

XVIII WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE REJOICING OF THESE PEOPLE OVER THE FRAGMENT CALLED LIFE ?

Ogun was one of the famous Ezomon of Benin after Ezomon Agban in ancient time. After his many victorious campaigns, Ezomon Ogun wished to achieve more noble deed like that of Ezomon Agban, who waged war against the thunder in the sky.

Ezomon Ogun once sent his servant to go and catch a lively elephant for him in the forest for sacrifice to the god of his good luck, and this was done within two weeks. When the elephant was brought home, they chafed it up tied garlands to it and danced with it round the Streets at Uzebu Benin City.

Many people rushed on to the scene but when a certain old man saw this, he sighed saying "What is the cause of rejoicing of these

people over the fragment called life? The people angrily conveyed the word to the Ezom̄on who was surely irritated by it. He therefore sent messengers to bring the old man to be sacrificed to the god of war. When he was brought. Ezom̄on Ogun asked him to repeat what he has said before. The old man first of all greeted the Ezom̄on with honour and humility, He said I did not say any contemptuous word to you nor find fault with you. All said I is, "What is the cause of the rejoicing of these people over the fragment called life? Because it is impossible to get an elephant killed from Benin City to the Bank of river Ovia from the beginning to the days of Ezom̄on Agban. This is what I said oh! my lord, May you live long"

Ezom̄on Ogun was much affected by the old man's words. He shook his head violently saying. "Truly had it not been the bush which now got near to the heart of the city in the place of the old building there before one could not have been able to get an elephant killed there" Ezom̄on Ogun therefore rewarded the old man for his wise saying and left him in peace,

Ezom̄on Ogun was the first to sacrifice an elephant in Benin in the seventeenth century. The Iyase Oh̄enmw̄en came second in the nineteenth century, and then Oba Akenzua II in February 1936.

XIX OGUN OF IFE.

Ogun was a great warrior of untold ability in Ife in early days. His victories over the various towns and villages in those parts are unparalleled. There were no troops capable of facing or challenging Ogun personally to a fight.

On one occasion, when Ogun was returning home from a long tour of expeditions, he was very hungry and thirsty. When he reached the town of Ire, he saw many calabashes of Palm wine on the ground with a large number of people sitting round. Ogun asked them to give him a drink from their wine, but they told him that the wine was finished.

Ogun thought this to be a deliberate lie when he saw so many calabashes of Palm wine on standing; and in a hurry he had the people executed with his massive sword. On examining the calabashes he found all empty. So he expressed pity and regret over the loss of the people. Ogun therefore ordered that all the empty calabashes of Palm wine must be made to lie down thence forth to the present day in all the towns in Yorubaland. Some of the appellations of Ogun are:—"Ogun Onire, Agbadamu, Oranmwun erhen no siso." Ogun was in consequence defied and worshipped after his death, not only in Yorubaland but every town or village in the Southern Nigeria.

At any rate, Ogun should have exercised patience and examined the calabashes first rather than causing the loss of so many people's lives.

How poor are they that have no patience.

XX OKPESIBURUKĘ

Many years ago, there was a man named Okpesiburukę in Itsekiri. He was a richman of considerable ability and had many wives, children, slaves, cattle and other treasures. Every day is like Christmas in his house. He was in consequence loved, honoured and respected by all.

But it is sad to say that he recurred to unnecessary boasting and bragging. For instance, he would always say "With the exception of the Olu, who are there in the whole of Itsekiri land like myself?"

Consequently, he was struck with palsy by unseen power, which rendered him very weak and useless. Gradually, he began to deteriorate in the worse form. He was treated in several places by several doctors, but no cure was able to help him.

At last his many wives deserted one by one, his children died from one course to the other. Most of the cattle were sold and the costs used for his treatments, and other became ruined. He ultimately died in misery.

Indeed, some persons are usually drunk by their riches, and even blaspheme against God and man disaster and failure are often the end of a boaster, braggart and blasphemer.

XXI THE CALABASH OF WISDOM.

A long time ago a Tortoise was universally known to be supremely wise. He was always boasting that he was wiser than all the people in the world. Therefore, the Tortoise said he would pack the sense of the world and put it in a calabash and cork it up so that no one should have any sense at all.

He did so one day, and tied up the calabash of wisdom and hung it on his neck in front so that no other person might take it from him suddenly as they could if he put it on his back.

When he reached a place where a big tree had fallen across the road, the Tortoise tried to climb the tree and pass safely. Alas! he was prevented by the calabash of wisdom on his chest. While he was patrolling up and down near the tree for some time, a man who was passing by met him and told him with anger; "Are you so foolish Tortoise? Why could you not put the calabash of wisdom on your back first before climbing the tree? The Tortoise did so and passed on safely and comfortably.

After this, the Tortoise was much ashamed to see the man who taught him how to climb the fallen tree. He said, "Indeed none is wise through". At the same time, he angrily broke the calabash of wisdom into pieces.

A similar case to this was when Saint Paul told the people of Corinth that "If a man thinks that he knows everything he is a fool he does not know as much as he ought to know.

Therefore it is not necessary for a man to think what he says or dictates in a country or meeting should be done always because none is supremely wise and no one is wise at all times. Nature is infallible in humans as it is in wisdom. Some times the sense of fool is better and more straight than that of a wise man. Wisdom and right motives are special gifts from God to man irrespective of a ruler, richman or poor man.

Some times, the sense and motive of a poor man are far better than those of a ruler and a richman. For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

XXII A WISE STRATAGEM.

In those days, there were two inveterate enemies of Oronmila. They, on one evening hid themselves near the shrine of the devil, which Oronmila constantly worshipped being a worshipper of the devil.

In view of this, Oronmila approached a diviner who advised him to beware of a quarrel, and to take heed not to fall into the hands of his enemies. The diviner further advised Oronmila to tie two empty calabashes and a stick together and put the same on his shoulder for sacrifice to the devil, and shall surely get rid of his enemies.

Having put the stick and the empty calabashes on his shoulder, Oronmila started off for the shrine of the devil to make sacrifice. The two calabashes began to knock each other as Oronmila was marching saying, "Kill ye Eture and kill ye Okanran, kill ye Eture and kill ye Okanran." So the two enemies of Oronmila, who were in hiding to kill Oronmila, fearfully and hopelessly escaped, thinking that Oronmila was coming with a large number of troops for them. Oronmila thus overcome his enemies by the wise advice of the diviner.

So the Almighty God will often guard and guide us from the hands of our enemies if we would always follow the good advice of our advisers.

Therefore it is necessary that we should be acting with good advice in all our affairs.

XXIII. MR. ALLWISE AND MR. COUNSEL.

Several years ago, there were other two friends in the land who assumed nicknames according to their choice and likeness. One assumed the nickname of Allwise and the other Counsel. Soon after this, both friends went to the palace together to tell the Oba of their nicknames. The Oba told them that their nicknames are very interesting and pleasing.

A little while after this, wishing to test them as a proof of their nicknames, the Oba invited them to the palace one fine day, and gave each of them a leg of slaughtered

bullock to take home and return the same back to the Palace on the seventh day.

On reaching home Mr. Allwise tied his own up and hid the same in a corner of his house. But Mr. Counsel went out to invite his friends to reason with him as how to preserve the leg of the slaughtered bullock from getting rotten before the appointed date. After a short deliberation, a decision was taken among the friends to fry and eat the meat, which, was accordingly done.

The friends of Mr. Counsel subscribed money and bought a big bullock, which they slaughtered in the very hour of the fixed day, and gave a leg to Mr. Counsel to take to the Oba in the Palace with fresh blood. Mr. Allwise also took his own bullock's leg to the Palace where he preserved it in a bamboo mat, but it was rotten and produced a bad smell.

When both of them exhibited the legs of the slaughtered bullock to the Oba, that of Mr. Allwise was rotten and stinking, being full of worms. So the Oba ordered it to be thrown away and he therefore loaded Mr. Counsel with praise; married a wife to him and finally awarded him with a high title, because of his good nickname. The Oba ordered Mr. Allwise to be driven away from his sight on account of his bad nickname after both of them had reported to the Oba the method which was applied by each of them for the preservation of the bullock's legs.

Hence it is a common saying among the Binis ever since "Counsel is better than Allwise" because one person cannot think or reason on a special thing to be done without being missed. This story is similar to the story of the Talents in the Scriptures.

XXIV OLOKUN.

It is said that Olokun, (the great God of the sea) is the eldest son of Father God. He was very rich, and because of his great riches he resorted to boasting that father God did not surpass him in anything. A little while after this, a special date was fixed for an exhibition between the Olokun and the Father God, to know who was most superior in riches, power and splendour.

Before the hour of the exhibition on the appointed day Father God gave a chameleon a shirt of changeable colour and sent him to tell the Olokun to dress in gorgeous attire, as a large crowds of people has reached the Palace. When the Chameleon got to the Palace of the Olokun he sent one of the servants of the Olokun to tell him that he had a messenger for him from Father God, that he should dress up well and come to the Palace now. The Olokun appeared with a coral shirt wrapper and crown. He had also a brass swork and stool with some of his beautiful wives and sword bearers and two fine hand supporters to see the chameleon.

At the same time, Olokun was greatly surprised to see the chameleon with the same dress and everything as those of the Olokun. The Olokun quickly retired and appeared in more superior dress, he found the same with the chameleon. The Olokun again retired and appeared in more wonderful attire. Alas! he found the same kind of the dress he put on with the chameleon. It was seven times that the Olokun changed his dress and found the chameleon with exactly the same dress each of the seven times.

The Olokun, therefore sent his own messenger with the chameleon to tell Father God that He is the King of the Kings, Lord of the Lords, Power of Powers and in Whose Palm are the lives of human beings. He also said he the Olokun submitted to Him henceforth for ever. For, if the chameleon His messenger could compete with him in dress, how much more for those of the Almighty Himself?

When the chameleon and the messenger of the Olokun had delivered the Olokun's message to Father God, there was a shout of applause and acclamation by the people in the Palace of Father God, and the assemble crowds dispersed.

The chameleon, therefore humbly approached Father God to grant him the changeable power forever, which was done; this goes with him thenceforth till this day. If he sees white,

he becomes white and if he sees black he also becomes black.

Beware of boasting, for a boaster can do nothing.

Ogiegbonghudu, Ugbolu, Atetewere, the King of the water who surpasses those of the hinterland are the appellations of the Olokun. It is said that the Oba of Benin's dress is a copy of the Olokun's dress.

From Okha Edo by the same author

XXV. THE WISEMAN AND THE VULTURE.

Many years ago, the people of the world wanted to kill and eat Vulture as they did other birds. They therefore sent the Wiseman (Umowaen) to Heaven to request Father God to allow the people to eat the Vulture.

Hearing this, the Vulture left the next morning for Heaven to request Father God not to allow the people to kill him. On the advice of a diviner the Vulture sacrificed a parcel of kola-nuts in the square between this world and Heaven and left a single kola-nut on the parcel. Both the Wiseman and the Vulture were warmly received in Heaven.

Father God sent the Wiseman to go and buy kola-nuts for Him in the market of the world as there were none in Heaven for entertaining His visitors in the Palace of Father God. The Wiseman quickly took the parcel of kolanuts sacrificed by the Vulture at the

square between this world and Heaven and brought them to Father God. Father God at once shared them round the visitors including the Vulture.

To the astonishment of Father God, the Vulture said "These are the kola nuts which I sacrificed to the gods on the square yesterday and I cannot accept and eat sacrificial kolanuts" Having said this the Vulture refused to accept the kola-nut offered to him. On enquiry by Father God, the Wiseman confirmed the assertion of the Vulture by saying "yes Sir, I brought the kola nuts from the square so that I might return quickly not knowing that they are sacrificial nuts.

Father God was much enraged at this, saying, "Why did you bring me sacrificial kola-nuts?" The Wiseman was therefore charged for falsehood and permanently detained in Heaven never to return to the Earth any more. Father God set the Vulture free to return to the world with imperative warning to the people of the world never to kill vultures and eat them. Hence it is a common saying among the people ever since the Wiseman is in Heaven and the Vulture in the World. If the Wiseman had returned from Heaven the Vulture might be eaten. Therefore beware of telling falsehood, and doing things with sacred advice.



MASQUERADES

XXVI. MASQUERADE.

Masquerade (Ekpo) is an object which the pagans usually applied to propitiate the anger of the Devil so that he may not spoil things, cause confusion, trouble and worries in the realm.

At any time which the masquerade appears for the yearly dance, Esu or the devil will

be very pleased, all his minds and thoughts and anger will go down peacefully if he see the garland with which the masqueraders decorated themselves. His heart will be pleased indeed, that the people are worshipping him in the best degree.

This was the introduction of Masquerades which children dance in Benin and other lands where the devil and the Oronmila are worshipped ever since to the present day.

The making of masquerade is a wide spread one in every town or village throughout Southern Nigeria.

XXVII. SENCE NEVER FAILS THE TORTOISE.

Once Erha-mwomsa, Father God appeared in the state to receive the homage of the official figure of the people. The Olokun, the great god of the sea and the heavenly prince sat next to the Father-God on the right hand side, then the Esu (Devil), the heavenly prime minister, the Adabi, the keeper of the heaven, and earth square or junction, the Olode, the peacemaker etc., the Oguiwa, the master or director of death, the Ogun, the commander in chief of the heavenly Army, the Uza, the minister or director of the quarrels, palaver, fighting, etc., the Ofoe, the Messenger of death etc. sat on the left hand side and all heavenly on both sides of the Father-God; after they had paid their homage.

Finally came the tortoise, all gazing intently on it as to who it will first salute after that of the Father-God, but to their great surprise the tortoise stretched its both hands at the same time to the right and left hand sides, saying I salute the figure of

the right hand side and left hand side: your honour, each with high ranking !! All claped their hands in applause saying, indeed sence never fails the tortoise.

Therefore it is necessary to follow this kind of salutation taught by the tortoise, to be saluting people in group rather than in singular or one by one.

SOME TRIBAL GODS

OF

Southern Nigeria

BY

JACOB U. EGHAREVBA

PREFACE

During the course of my tours round the Districts in Benin Division, for the collection of antiquities for the Benin Museum a juju priest friend asked me to write something about the Benin Religion in the form of a booklet for the preservation of the records of historical fact to posterity. After a long meditation over the request, I ultimately choose 'SOME TRIBAL GODS' to be my subject.

At the same time I was invited to Edo College, Benin City, on the 6th October 1948, to deliver a lecture on Benin Religion to the students of the Antiquities Society as may be read briefly herein.

Hence, the production of this book. I also thought it wise to touch the gods and fusions of other tribes, towns, and countries with Christianity in West Africa in brief.

From the days of Antiquity, most of the arts of Nigeria or Africa as a whole, were symbols sacred to the Gods for religious purposes, which modern civilisation is outsting. Therefore, efforts should be exercised to preserve the continuation of art in the modified way to suit the modern day, and pass on the same to posterity.

I was one of the delegates of the International West African conference expedition in seven motor cars sent from the University College Ibadan, to Ife on Monday the 12th December 1949, for a research to the antiquities in the cradle of the Yoruba race; and was able to visit many important and interesting shrines,

I have to express my cordial thanks to friends who have gone through the Manuscript and offered valued advice.

JACOB U. EGHAREVBA

A member and Recorder of the Royal House of Iwebo, and Curator of the B. N. A. Museum,
Lagos Street, Benin City, March 1950.

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CHAPTER I.

RELIGION.

Religion is the constitutional law of nature which binds the nations of the world. Religion begun from the cradle of human race to Egypt and thence reached to the rest countries of the world. Every nation or tribe has its own religion before the Christian era.

Polytheism is the religion of the whole world from the beginning. The Jewish nation was the first to adopt or practise monotheism. But the question at the present age is that a nation must accept or addict itself to a social and progressive religion; either indigenous or exotic. For instance, a pure pagan is now ashamed to worship the god of devil or posting the same on his gate, owing to the prevalent civilization all over the world.

The gods of wood, stone, palm-nuts, jar, cylindrical vessels etc, etc. are no longer necessary of acceptance or worshipping, except to be placed in the museums for preservation of antiquities, but the Almighty and everlasting God, the creator of universe and author of science alone deserve adoration.

After passing the act of freedom of worship or exercise of religion in Europe in the middle ages, some selected men from the different nations held a conference to choose the best religion. Some adopted Deism, some Atheism, some Agnostism, some Rationalism some Muhammedanism etc. But the majority of them accepted Christianity.

6. SOME TRIBAL GODS.

Like Voltaire of France, let us pray God to save the Atheists from the error of atheism, which, denies His existence, and from the superstitious people who outrages His name and fill ours with horror.

The same question that Joshua asked the children of Israel in those days now arose again:-- Choose this day whom ye will serve, but, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15.

Religions are of more numerous kinds than can well be classified. At the present time it is estimated, there are throughout the world about 900,000,000. adherent Christians, 400,000,000 Confucians and Taoists, 300,000,000 followers of Hinduism, 250,000,000 Mohammedans, 180,000,000 Buddhists, and 18,000,000 members of the Jewish faith, 150,000,000 Greek Orthodox Church etc.

CHAPTER 2.

REVELATION

Ifaology, Ominigtonism (or divination) etc. are believed by most of the pagans as divine science or revelation, which were fortunately imparted for the director or guardiance of mankind. But some critical minds among them hold that the undue sacrifices that attached to them are immaterial, foolish superstition and exaggeration of the early narrow-minded people. For instance, according to Biblical phrase, "Behold, warning is better than sacrifice and hearken than the fat of arms". I Samuel 15 : 22.

As for me, I believe in science, and divine revelation. Also in love, truthfulness, honesty, kindness, sincerity and nothing else. These are the source of real sacrifices that makes up atonements and salvation.

CHAPTER 3.

SCIENCE.

Science, is now the real god, and universally prevailing all over the world, for the gods are gradually yielding grounds to it. In fact science has brought great miracles for the improvement of the world. Through science ships of different designs were built, locomotive, telegraph, telephone, telescope, television, gramophones, sewing machine, bicycle, motor car, clock, airplane, wireless, and various other steam engines for various daily works, above all the different medicines for treatment, cure and comfort of mankind were invented.

What have the gods done? The gods teach believe, submit and give: Science teaches-learn, see and be wise. The gods are darkness, while science radiant light. The gods impart fear and ignorance, while science imparts learning. The gods demand autocracy and adoration, while science demands knowledge, democracy and liability. At any rate Science deals with the things of the world, but the creator of the world, the God of christian Revelation, the One and only true God, made these things, and consequently science can never disprove a Revealed, because truth

is one, and God is the author of all truth.

CHAPTER 4

THE GODS OF THE YORUBAS

IFE

It is said that the early Yorubas came from Egypt to Ife the capital and first settlement of the Yorubas, who were in the land for centuries before advent of Oduduwa, who came from Mecca in Arabia. and became the dominant ruler or Oni of Ife about the early period of the 12th century.

The religion of Ife people is polytheism and the people themselves were polytheists from the early days. They worshipped their departed heroes and heroines as the following:-

1. Oduduwa the dominant ruler is one of the principal gods of Ife. It is not allowed to visit his shrine though the grave can be visited by special order of the Oni.
2. Orisanla (or Omolurogbo tiko Jaiye baje) meaning the son of God who does not let the world-spoil, or who was sent by the Almighty to reorganise or regulate the life of the Yorubas of old with his wife Yemo, According to the accounts, he was unfortunately detained on the way by some ill chances or drunk and slept as a result of the palm wine he took. Oduduwa, who was later sent reached Ife and dominated the people before the arrival of Orisa-nla. Hence the worshippers of Orisa are forbidding to drink palm wine in Ife and all Yorubaland ever since.

Evidently, this was one of the Christian Missionaries or messengers of the Gospel of

the time. As was the case of European Missionaries who were in Benin in the 16th century. On their departure they left the affairs of the Churches in the hands of the Benin Native Fathers, who, subsequently lapsed into idolatry and converted the Churches to juju shrines called Arosa (Arousa).

3. Orunmila who came with Odudua from Mecca to Ife was a great and skilled diviner. He was the founder of Ifa Oracle or divination, which was spread all over the towns in southern Nigeria. He was deified and adored after his death.

4. Ogun was a great and victorious warrior of Ife, and was in consequence deified and worshipped after his death.

5. Obalase, probably was the law-giver or author of laws of the time. He was deified and worshipped after his death.

6. Osogun-Osi was also one of the deified heroes of Ife.

7. Olofin, was a great and successful hunter of Ife; he was ultimately deified and adored after his death. His favourite wife Rere (or the Good) and his body-guard Idena or Adena were also deified and worshipped.

8. A special ceremony is performed at Opa Olanmiyan or Olanmiyan's staff at Ikogun Street, Ife. Olanmiyan a popular son of Odudua was the father of Oba Eweka I of Benin and the first Alaafia of Oyo of the second dynasties.

9. OGUNLADIN, was a great and most

qualified Smith of Ife; he too, was in consequence deified and adored.

10. Esu the devil and Iku the author of death are powerful deities.

11. Aramufe (the pioneer of Ife of Odudua's set), Esidale, Obameri were some of the deified heroes of Ife. Qbalufon is one of the deified Onis of Ife.

12. Besides these deified heroes or gods, there is supreme deity known and called Olorun, God, the owner of Heaven, Eleda, the creator of human beings and all living things.

There are several bronze and terra cotta heads of the highest quality of the ancient artistic works of Ife. Some of these were dug up at a dept of two feet at the digging of foundation of a new building in Ife in 1938. The bronze heads were taken to the British Museum London in 1948 to clean by Mr. K.C. Murray, the Surveyor of Antiquities in Nigeria. They were cleaned by Mr. W.E.B. Fagg, of the British Museum, London, and brought back safely to Ife, on the 19th December 1949, and stored in the Museum, built ready for them after having been exhibited at the University, College, Ibadan for a week.

Judging from the different aspects of the bronze heads it appears that some of them

NOTE:- Like Jerusalem, Ife is the religious centre and the Oni of Ife, the spiritual head of the Yorubas; Oyo seems to be the political station and the Alafin of Oyo the political head of the Yorubas since the days of Oranmiyan.

were artistic work of the early inhabitants of Ife preadvent of Oduduwa. As Arabians Oduduwa and his wife Olokun dressed in Arabian Caliphate and Caliphates styles. Their bronze heads does not seem to be of a remote period in comparison with some others:

Ife is the capital and religious centre of Yorubaland. It was once the home of art; brass casting and Terre-cotta sculpture un-surpassed in Africa were carried on here. But it is sad to see that there is no trace of this art here now. It is said that the extent of Ife township in those days was ten miles square before the dispersions of the people to various places in the southern Nigeria:

SANGO:- The god of thunder and lightning. This also assigned to Sango, the deified Alafin of Oyo, and his wife Oya, the goddess of river Niger.

OBATALA: One of the greatest Yoruba goddesses, supposed to be framer of human body in the womb.

Osun : This is a special river goddess, and it is mostly worshipped at Ibadan, Oshogbo and other towns in Yorubaland. The priests of these gods and goddesses were greatly venerated throughout the Yorubaland before the Christian era.

SOPONA:- This is the fierce god of small-pox. It often creates fear and perplexity among the people.

All of these and other petty gods and

goddesses were spread into every town and village all over the Yorubaland and Yoruba speaking people. Including the Egbas who came from a place in Ibadan, or the new site of the University College, to Abeokuta in 1830, the Ijebus, the Ijesas, Owos, Idanre, Ondos etc.

Besides these gods and goddesses mentioned above, each of the towns has its own tribal gods and religion:

For instance, the Egbas in Abeokuta worship "Olumo" their protective "Rock" since 1830 till the present day. Christianity was brought or preached in Abeokuta in 1842.

The Ijebus worshipped Igbe, Osu, Ebi, Sopona, Sango, Orunmila, Erinle etc. these were the principal gods of Ijebuland before the Christian and Moslem era. Though the Ijebus are Yoruba speaking people, yet their first ruler Aghuzale was the son of Qba Olua of Benin who was sent there as a ruler of the people by Qba Qzqlua. Ijebu is one of the prosperous towns in Nigeria.

Ilesha was one of the most famous towns in Nigeria from the beginning. The Ijesas worshipped Orisalufon, Qrunmila, ogun and many other petty gods of Ilesha before the Christian era.

The first recognised Qlowo of Owo was the son of Qba Qzqlua of Benin. Osogboye was trained by Oba Ehengbuda at Benin City before he became Olowo of Owo.

The artistic work of Owo is a copy of the Benin art work of the early days when

Owo, like other tribes, was under the Benin Empire. The Owo people trace their origin from Ife.

The Owo originally worshipped Ọṛṣin, Umadẹ, the Royal god, and other minor gods of Owo. Human sacrifice formed part of the ceremonies before the British advent.

“Gogo” is the festival for eating the new yams by the Olowo and the chiefs of Owo concerned. Wrestling form an important part of the ceremonies.

CHAPTER 5.

IDANRE.

Idanre is one of the oldest towns in Nigeria. The early people of Idanre, headed by Ọṛṣin, came from Ife along with Prince Oranmiyan, the first Ọba of the Benin Empire of the second dynasty. The ruler of Idanre is titled “Oludanre of Idanre.” In antiquity, Idanre is older than any of the towns in those parts. In the ancient days, it is a rigid usage to appoint a new Oludanre on the very day of the death of the old one. So that the stool of Idanre never remains vacant at any time.

Among the most treasured Royal relics at Idanre, there is one crown, which is said to be an old copy of Odudua’s crown in Ile-Ife.

Ọṛṣin, being the founder of Idanre was deified and worshipped after his death, as well as Orosun his wife. Therefore, the principal gods the people of Idanre worship are, the spirits of Ọṛṣin and his wife Orosun or Ororhun; Babaji and small others. A human being was annually

sacrificed to the Qlōfin before the British advent. Qlōfin is the god of existence and protector of Idanre. A tremendously high Rock of Idanre was sacred to the name of Orosun where her remains were interred.

Ever since the Rock was known as Orosun, the goddess of Idanre. Orosun, is the goddess of mercy, breeding and protection. No cracking of kernel is allowed in any part of Idanre on the third day of the start of the ceremonial performances of the goddess Orosun, when the priest of Orosun is said to be ascending up the Rock Orosun. A dog is the victim for the sacrifice. Babaji is the god of riches and prosperity. A white he-goat, white cock, white cloth and a dog with strings of cowries tied round their necks, are the victims usually sacrificed to the god "Babaji".

CHAPTER 6.

ONDO.

The early inhabitants of Ondo migrated from Udo in Benin to their present region very early in the sixteenth century during the conflicts between Oba Esigie and his brother Arun-anran, the Duke of Udo. The aboriginal settlers of Ondo before the arrival of Enudo or people of Udo were Iforęs. The popular gods worshipped by the people of Ondo before the Christian era were:- Orō of Idoko, Qdumoko, Aramufe, Jomufa of Igbindo, Babaji, ancestral gods of Udo and others of less importance. Women are rigidly forbidden to enter into the groves of these gods

and to take part in the ceremonies. Wrestling formed an important part of the ceremonies of the god Ọdunmoko. A human being was the victim for sacrifice to the Aramufe annually before the British advent and the Christian era.

The first C.M.S. Mission begun at Ondo in 1875.

CHAPTER 7. AKURE.

The first settlers of Akure originally came from a place in Ekiti to their present region, but not a very long time ago. The first Deji of Akure was the son of a Bini woman married to Atakunmasa, the Owa of Ilesha, by Ehengbuda, the Oba of Benin, at Benin City in the sixteenth century of the Christian era. The title of the old rulers of Akure before the "Deji" was known as "Alakure".

The chief gods the people of Akure worship are:- The Olike, Arigbo, Iyegun, Oluloro, Oyinle, Oluroko, Ọbalufe, Ofosu, the goddess Iyegbo, Iwesu and other minor gods. Whipping with peeled wands formed a prominent part in the ceremonies of the Oluroko at the new yams' season. At the end of the Ofosu festival new yam is eaten. Iwesu, is the worship of the Devil, where-in the devilish masquerades called Ọyeyeyu usually appear. This tends to propitiate the anger of the devil against the people of the land during the year.

The first C.M.S. Mission begun at Akure in February 1897. The present Deji of Akure was installed in July of the same year.

CHAPTER 8.

IKALE.

The entire people of Ikalẹ were polytheists or worshippers of many gods from the early days. They were very versed in the art of divination. Their chief gods were Oṛo of Ikalẹ, the god of palsy, Aiyelala and other minor gods. Aiyelala is also the god of the llajẹs and the ljaws of those parts. Most of the people have now embraced Christianity and they are devout Christians as they had previously been deep in paganism.

Ikalẹ, has for time immemorial been under the Benin Sway.

From the beginning to the present time. Ancestor worship or animism was and is the prevalent practice in any town and village throughout the whole of Southern Nigeria.

CHAPTER 9

THE GODS OF THE EKITIS.

Though Ekiti is a Yoruba-speaking region, yet it is necessary to say something briefly about it, because it had been under the Benin Empire for many centuries. The early inhabitants of Ekiti were a group of the second wave of people who inhabited the Southern Nigeria long before the arrival of Odudua who dominated them to Ife.

Before this time Ore of Otun was the leader of the ruling princes of Ekiti. There are many towns in Ekiti. Each town has its own ruler, and manages its affairs. The following are the names of the important

towns:- Otun, Ikole, Addo, Ijero, Efon, Udo, Akure, Ikere, Ise, Ire, Oye, Aiyede, Igbajo, Oke-Igbodo, Ara, Imesi etc. Each ruler is known according to his town as follows:- The Ore of Otun, the Elekole of Ikole, the Ewi of Addo, the Ajero of Ijero, the Alara of Ara, the Alaye of Efon, the Olojido of Udo, the Deji of Akure, the Ogoga of Ikere, the Onire of Ire, the Oloye of Oye, the Ata of Aiyede, the Arungbajo of Igbajo, the Oloja Oke-Igbodo.

In the Akoko country, the Alani of Uduani, the Onirun of Irun, the Olomuo of Omuo, the Olisua of Isua, etc. Of these, the Alani of Uduani was the son of Oba Ozoqua. The entire town of Ekiti were conquered by the Benin troops under Ekpennede, the then Iyase of Benin during the reign of Oba Ehengbuda, in the 16th century and ruled by Benin. Owing to the Akure revolt it was reconquered in the 19th century before the British occupation of the land after the fall of Benin in 1897. While under the Empire of Benin, Ekiti people were very loyal and law abiding subjects.

The different towns in Ekiti have now incorporated under one Administration known as Ekiti Native Administration, with their Central Council at Addo, the most central place. Akure has just separated from the Ekiti Native Administration and formed a quite small independent District of its own under an Assistant District Officer of the Ondo division.

Ekiti people were pagans who worshipped many gods from the beginning. The ways and

methods of their worship are alike, and their images were of the same kinds before the Christian era.

These are the chief of their gods:—

Orobo, the god of Otun, Obalufon, the god of Ikole, Oloto, the god of Addo, Aokore, the god of Ijero, Atogun, the god of Udo, Atita, the god of Efon, Ogun, the god of Ire, Apoporo, the god of Oye, Agbigba, the god of Aiyede, Alele, the god of Ara, Olike, the god of Akure, Olosunta, the god of Ikere, Alile, the god of Ise, ect.

The first C.M.S. Mission at Ijero in Ekiti begun in 1895.

CHAPTER 10.

LAGOS.

The small Island of Lagos was founded by Oba Orhogbua and the Bini troops in the sixteenth century in one of their campaigns. Here Oba Orhogbua made his war camp (Eko) and thence conquered the neighbouring towns including Iddo, Badagiri and other towns.

The Bini troops were the first settlers of the Island, and also governed by Benin before the occupation of the British Government there in 1841. It was ceded to the British Government by Eleko Dosumu in 1862, and from 1914, it became a Colony of Lagos.

It now forms part of the protectorate of Nigeria. Lagos is a commercial town of great importance. The bulk of the inhabitants

of Lagos were pagans, but a greater number of them now profess Christianity and Islamism.

CHAPTER 11

THE GODS OF THE IBOS.

The earliest Ibos came from the East after the Yorubas and the Binis. The Ibos tend towards individualism in politics and social and material culture including art. There are large number of defined sub-styles often apparently unrelated to each other unlike the Yorubas and the Binis:

Chuku or Chineke:- God; Diety, the Supreme Being, the chief God of the other gods. Chuku-Ale:- The Earth goddess.

AMADUOHA:- The god of thunder and lightning. OGBA - The fierce god for detecting thieves and liars. Udo and Ogugu, are the couple gods, or god and goddess.

Among the Etche Ibo, especially those of the West of the Otaminni river, worship Igwe, the god or Lord of the Bright and Dark Sky. In Abakaliki Division, the god of lightning, thunder and rain is called Igwe, a term applied to the sky or heaven. He is thought to dwell in the sky either in or far beyond the sun. In some parts of the central Iboland, both Igwe and Amaduoha are equally worshipped. There is a shrine of Igwe at Omonoha in Owerri District. Ibinokpabi the great Goddess of Earth is principally worshipped by Aro-Chuku people. It is also their god of oracle: The Aro-Chuku people were the most powerful and warlike tribe in Iboland in the ancient

days Some of the tribes came from Bauchi as result of their expalsion by the Hausas

The first C.M.S. Niger Mission begun at Onitsha in 1857.

The first baptism on the Niger took place in 1862.

The first C.M.S. Mission begun at Bonny in 1865. Iguanas, the grand juju at Bonny destroyed in 1867.

CHAPTER 12.

THE GODS OF THE IBIBIO.

The Ibibio is Semi - Bantu, and one of the old regions in Nigeria.

Ete Abbassi, the father God and Eka Abbassi the Mother God, who live in the far depths of the Sky, are the creators of the universe. Ete Abbassi creates man, while Eka Abbassi fashioned him later in the womb. Their functions are to prevent sickness. The Ete Abbassi imparts fertility of crops, and Eka Abbassi procreation and child birth.

Earth Goddess. Isong, the Earth Goddess holds a much lower position to Abbassi. She apparently did not assist in the creation of the world at all, but her main duty is to watch over the fertility of the crops. Her most usual symbol is a tortoise shell pinned to the ground by a stick from the Awka or Ihommaw tree and surrounded by Ngwegwepp plant.

The Anang represent her by a clay pot containing knobs of chalk, water, palm wine, a piece of yellow - wood, a stick of fish and a tortoise shell, and the Ibionnaw by flat

stones, an old currency rod and a tortoise shell.

ORRI: For the Effium the Earth Goddess holds a more important place than the god of the Sky, Lokpata, in that she made the Earth, and other living things, though amongst the Okpoto clan this was done by the latter, who of late years was called Ibinokpabi and may take the place of the creator of early times.

UKELLE: The Ukelle people worship three deities; the creator Obashi, Lotsi, the Earth, and Lukpata the Sky. It is the two latter mentioned who look after human beings. Lukpata manages affairs in the sky and sends the rain, while Lotsi rules all things on earth. Everyone, even children, possess a symbol of Obashi a pot or bowl of water given them when seven years old and kept in front of an Ogbu tree.

A young child is told, "try and grow" and when you become a boy or girl, we will give you an Obashi." The sacrifices are offered in the presence of the whole family once in every two months. Prayers to the earth and gods of the sky are made to the same symbol.

IYALA: Among the Iyala, Aje, the Goddess of Earth, is considered nearly equal in power to the Supreme God Owo. In sacrifices to the latter, the senior man of the village or compound, through whom all offerings must be made, say, "Let rain fall. Make our yams, corn and other crops grow,

and let us get plenty of food etc. etc.”

MUNSHI: The Munshi resemble the Bafumbun-Bansaw in that their Supreme God, who created every thing on earth dwells in the ground, Bafumbun-Bansaw and Bali the Bikom Bafumbun people worship a sky god. Fregenne and his wife Ase, the Earth Goddess, but much attention is paid to them. Because in most of the tribes, however, the supreme God or Goddess for the sex is unknown, but lives in the ground. His symbol is pot at the foot of a big tree, to which offerings of goat's blood, palm wine, corn, salt and other things are made at seed and harvest season.

BAMENDA: The people of Bamenda chiefly celebrated the Bamungkum festivals for the fertility of crops and increase of children.

BANTU: The Bantus usually worship Obassi or Ovassi, the Creator; the God of the sky, the Diety, Supreme Being, the merciful and beneficent! the giver and provider of all good things.

CHAPTER 13

THE GODS OF THE IJAWS.

Tamaran or Aiyiba by Brass people and Tamuno by the Kalabaris: Diety, God, the supreme Being; the Creator.

EGBESU:- The god of defence or protection; next to Tamaran both in power and importance. But very antagonistic against the evil doers, it is also the god of war; A tiger or leopard is usually sacrificed to it.

PELEWE: The god of mercy, sympathy and protection.

AYANKA: The god of protection and defence.

DUINANA: The god of vengeance; very harsh and inveterate against evil spirits, enchanters etc. Amakiri; The God of Earth. Prayers are made to Amakiri for peace, to ward off all sickness and trouble, and to give or produce plenty of food, while Tamuno is asked for children, since it is she who is thought to make women conceive. The Ijo or Ijaws are perhaps one of the most ancient people among other tribes in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole. They are the best canoe men and also the best fishermen and swimmers on the coast. They are very clever in the art of wrestling. Most of the Ijaw people trace their origin from Benin.

Lango Nimm, Ogboloma etc. are the principal gods and goddess of the Kalabaris. Nimm is a Goddess of Nature, snake, crocodile and tortoise are the emblems of these gods. Hence the people are rigidly forbidden to kill or eat the snake, crocodile and tortoise.

The first C.M.S Mission begun at Twon in Brass in 1868.

CHAPTER 14

THE GOD OF THE URHOBOS.

The Urhobos or Sobos migrated from Benin in successive waves to their various localities from the first to the second periods of the Benin Empire. The first wave under the leadership of Uhobò, migrated from Use, on Benin City and Siluko road. Ugele, Abraka and Kwale-Ibo from Benin City. The Isoko from Owe in Iyekorhionmwon, Ukpè (or

now Olomu clan) was founded by Ogbęze one of the princes of Benin. The Ovie of Ughela was a prince of Benin who was sent there. The early people of Agbarha (Agbasa) migrated from Ogbelaka, Benin City to their present abode. The Ovie of Agbarha was a prince of Benin sent there as a ruler of the people. The early settlers of Iyede and Ugo with their rulers were Bini immigrants thither. The people of Ugo migrated from Ugo Benin-Agbor road. The early inhabitants Otudu migrated from Ogbe quarter, Benin City to their present place. The other towns are offshoots of other of these. The Urhobos are very keen in palm nuts cutting and palm oil making, and also in trade.

The principal gods of the Urhobos are:- Oghene, the supreme deity; the Almighty; God etc. Oyise:- The family god in wooden figure, usually placed on the front of an individual house. Ovieta:- The god of the sea, of riches and splendour, and also the god of vengeance. Owon, the god of protection, Oriri, the merciful god; Egba; the elderly god; to which an Okpako is usually appointed during its festival, Barigu and Usokoro: are the gods of war or iron. Edo:- The ferocious goddess. Aka:- The god which mercilessly kill evildoers, especially thieves, liars, witches and wizards, murderer etc. Ekele:- The god of trio or trinity, or unseparable god of salvation. Emile:- The superior god of medicine etc.

The first C.M.S. mission begun at Ole in Isoko in 1862.

CHAPTER 15

THE GODS OF THE ITSEKIRIS

Orise or Orisenoburuwe:- God; Diety; Supreme Being etc.

Malokun:- The sea God or God of riches, grandeur, fruthfulness or progeny.

Igbasala:- God of mercy, forgiveness, protection, but very harsh against evildoers or sinners.

Ogun:- The god of iron or war.

Birikimo and Ike are the Royal Gods of Itsekiri. In those days, human sacrifices formed part of their rites. Each has emblems and method of worshipping.

The Itsekiris are mostly the offspring of Benin. Their first Olu Iginua, was the son of Olua, one of the Obas of Benin; and their chiefs and wives were the sons and daughters of the early chiefs of Benin, who were sent with Iginua by his father the Oba, to found a kingdom now known as Itsekiri Kingdom in the sea in 1480 A.D. The Itsekiris are good canoe men, Fishermen and swimmers. And also traders and expert wrestlers.

It is curious to see that the majority of Itseklri men prefer marrying Urhobo women to their own Itsekiri women. While asked an old Itsekiri man at Warri some time ago the reason for this, he replied saying that the Urhobo women are good, obedient, domiciled and fruitful. The educated Itsekiris however, prefer marrying their own Itsekiri women hence forth.

Christianity was introduced to Itsekiri country by the Portuguese of the Roman Catholic Missionaries at the end of the 16th century, and it was very successful. According to Father Jerom Merolla da Sorrenti (Churchill I. P. 676,) Vice-Superior Father Angelo Maria d' Aiaccio of Corsica and Father Bonaventura da Firense of Florence requested the King (Olu of Itsekiri) to cause his subjects to be properly married, and not allow them to go about naked until they were marriageable. The king's acquiescence was made conditional on their obtaining for him a white woman for a wife, so they obtained a young Portuguese lady from the Island of St. Thomas. The king married her, and his subjects reformed. About this time, there was another Missionary in St. Thomas, who visited Warri every six months to baptise people, for doing which he obtained two slaves.

At Warri in 1769 writes Landolphe, in the middle of a large square, we observed a cross covered with about fifty Church lamps, which had been erected by the Brazil Missionaries, who had baptised the then King, under the name of Manual Otobia etc

There are many denominations now since the British occupation of the region.

CHAPTER 16.

THE GODS OF THE EKAS

The early people of Eka (or Ika) are emigrants from Benin. But the language of

the Ibos, their neighbours, especially those who migrated from Iboland to settle with them ultimately predominated over their original Bini tongue or speech. They however, still retain some of the customs, Institution, style of dress etc. They have the same or similar ways or method of worshipping the gods as the Binis. They sacrificed every living victim to the great god of the sea "Olokun or Mommon"

CHAPTER 17

ISHAN.

The Esan (Ishan), Ora and (Etsako in Kukuruku) worship the same Gods as the Binis in all aspects and similarity. They have the same name for God and other gods and the same method of worshipping throughout. They were Bini emigrants originally to those places in successive waves. Their spoken language is Bini. They are very keen and clever in the art of divination. Their Enigie are mostly the princes of Benin sent there.

CHAPTER 18

ORA

Omorodion popularly known as "Qdion" by the people of Uwokha, was one of the older sons of Qba Eweka I, the son of Oni Qranmiyan of Ife. He ranked next to the eldest son Omonuza of use. Omorodion's claim to the throne after the death of their father was passed over. He in consequence left Benin City, with his family and followers

in anger and became the founder of Uwo-kha in Ora. According to his expression "I am going to find abode in Uwoha or bush rather than be called a prince of Benin". The name Uwoha was afterwards corrupted to be Uwokha. Here Ozolua sought refuge when he was driven from Benin City in 1473 before he became Oba of Benin. From Uwokha Ozolua founded Ora.

Ozolua was the founder of Ora with Ijeba. His followers from Benin were the early people of Ora. He left Uguan, one of his sons in his home at Ora, when he became Oba Benin.

CHAPTER 19

ETSAKQ

The majority of people in Kukuruku, or the Etsako are Benin emigrants. Auch people migrated from Udo, Jato people from Ikpe, Uwareka people from Ezide, for refusal to bring tiger killed to the Oba of Benin at Benin City according to custom. The inhabitants of Ibie (Ivie) from Ugboka, Benin City, Ikpesi people from Isi, Benin Division, Okpera early people from Okha, The Agbèdè, Alegbètè and Unèmè people from Idunmwigun Ugboha, Benin City, the early settlers of Ekperi from Qbadan, Benin Division. People in Agenibode were the guard of the Benin Royal troops during the Idah war. Agenibode, means Agq ni bodè or camp of the guard. The early people of Ihevbe or now Isevbe from Ehq in Benin Division

The founder of Ọkpẹ was a Bini man who was sent to Ife on a special embassy. Having returned, he, in hurry, left with his family and followers and became the founder of Ọkpẹ. But the Ọlọkpẹ of Ọkpẹ was the son of Ọba Ọzọlua, who was sent there as a ruler of the people years afterwards. Others are offshoots of one of these.

CHAPTER 20

UMORU AND IFON.

The early people of Umoru were the Binis who migrated in a large group or three fourths of the population of Benin headed by the popular and universally beloved Oza, during the reign of Oba Eware, as the Oba was attempting Oza's life for opposing him, as a result of his strict mourning law over the deaths of his two sons: Kuoboyuwa, the Edaiken (Crown Prince) of Uselu, and Ezuarha the Enogie or Duke of Iyowa, and also the barbaric massacre caused by the Oba which followed it. Oza became the Olumoru or Oba of Umoru afterwards. The chief gods of Umoru are Ọkẹ and Ore. They are gods of defence, protection and salvation. The emblems are stones in a wooden box. Their festival and ceremonies are annually observed by the people. Also Aiguodinmi or aigbudinmwun the Royal god.

Ifon was founded by the Bini troops and eight people who migrated from Ekiti.

The chief gods of Ifon are:— Obalufon, Umoye, Ọtare etc. Ọtare is a god of love and

friendship. A cow is the victim for the sacrifice during its annual festival. Irado was the original title of the ruler of Ifon: Irado means, people from Benin. But it was recently changed to be "Olufon", by the present ruler in 1947.

There was a tight relationship between Umoru and Ifon from the beginning.

CHAPTER 21

SOBE.

The aboriginal settlers of Uhobe or Sobe were Benin emigrants from Iduminwun-Igun Eyannugie, Benin City headed by Akasan nicknamed Erere to their present abode in two successive ways:- during the reigns of Oba Ozolua and Esigie.

Akasan died and buried at Benin City on a visit immediately after the death of Oba Ozolua. Akasan was succeeded by his eldest son Ogieverhen as a leader of the people. He wielded much influence and gained popularity as a true leader. Ogieverhen died after a long rule and was deified. The chief god of the Sobes was the departed spirit of Ogieverhen, besides the petty gods, Modogbe, and Erere. His priest was known as Aruen before the Christian era. Aruen the priest of Ogieverhen remained the ruler of Sobe for a considerable number of years. Consequently, the policy was changed, and another leader known as "Odinbiado" was appointed in the place of Aruen. Ever since the Head chief in authority of Sobe was termed "Odinbiado", which equivalent

to the term *Odiṣṣwèrè* or *Enogie* in Benin.

Sobe and *Uzagba* are of the same tribes and under the same rule. *Sobe* is the capital town. *Osiba* of *Uzagba*, was the son of *Ogieverhen*. He too was deified and worshipped after his death. *Osiba* is the chief god of *Uzagba*.

CHAPTER 22

THE GODS OF THE BINIS.

The *Binis* originally came from Egypt in one of those migrations common to many tribes seeking more fertile land or a more secure retreat from an enemy. They halted first for a while at *Sudan*, there to live and thence to this land. The immigrations of both the earliest *Yorubas* and the *Binis* took place almost at the same time. The *Yorubas* halted and settled at *Iṣe*, The Capital of *Yorubaland*, while the *Binis* continued their journey and finally settled here after a short stay at *Ife*.

For a century the managements of affairs of the country were carried out under different leaders. By process of evolution the Empire of the first period or dynasty was founded about 900 A.D. The rulers or kings were commonly known as "*Ogiso*" before the arrival of *Odudua* (the superior personage and his party) to *Ife* about 12th century of the Christian era.

Odudua began a new dynasty known as second dynasty in Benin and *Yorubalands*. By special request of the *Binis*, he sent one of his sons *Oranmiyan* here as a king "*Oba*" as was ever since termed in Benin. He also filled many thrones with his sons afterwards.

With the setting up of this second dynasty Benin formed a great empire, and was at one time the most powerful race in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole.

The City of Benin lies in the centre of the ancient Kingdom, the influence of which extended to Dahomey, Congo, especially round the Eastern, Southern and Western Nigeria. Many towns and countries paid tribute to Benin, at Benin City, through the Governors and chiefs of Benin who were in charge of the various towns and countries in those days. The land and the City of Benin grew populous, but it began to decay about 1460 A. D. during the reign of Oba Ewuare, who made inhuman mourning law over the deaths of his two sons, Kuoboyuwa the Edaiken (Crown Prince) of Uselu, and Ezuarha the Duke of Iyowa, who poisoned themselves and both died on the same day.

The law forbidding anyone in the land, of either sex, to wash and dress up, to eat delicious food, or even to have sexual intercourse for a period of three years. This law however, caused great confusion for the Oba had two of the three chiefs, who opposed him on the law killed, and was hunting to kill the third or the most popular and universally beloved, Oza, who by an instinct, was timely warned of the Oba's intention, and accordingly took to flight accompanied by three fourth of the inhabitants of the City, which Oba Ewuare observing, immediately assembled a number of men from the neighbouring towns, and caused the fugi-

tives to be pursued in order to make them to return: but they were warmly received by Qza and his party, that they forced them to return with bloody noses, and gave the Oba the account of their mis-adventure. But he resolved not to stop there, made a fresh attempt which succeeded no better than the former. This was not all, for the fugitives thoroughly incensed and flushed, came directly to the city, which he plundered and pillaged sparing no place but the Royal palace, after which they retired, and this continued incessantly for about ten years to rob the inhabitants of the City". Qza and his followers became the founders of Umoru, and he the Olumoru, or ruler of Umoru.

In the midst of this, more large number of the citizens migrated in several groups and became founders and settlers of Kwale -Ibo, Iruwa (Irrua); Onitsha-Ugbo, Bida, etc.

The Oba then hysterically dug the third ditch or moat which in the heart of the City to prevent his few remnant subjects from further desertion. He began to tattoo their bodies so that they might easily be known and identified amongst the people of other tribes. This was the origin of the Benin tribal mark. In or about 1480 A.D., Prince Iginua, the eldest son of Oba Olua, and his followers migrated from Benin City in group and became the founders of Itsekiri town and kingdom.

The followers of the Oba Ozolua from

the city of Benin during his banishment became the settlers of Ora. Later Uhobe or Sobe was founded early in the sixteenth century or about 1504 A.D. There were a group of people who migrated from Benin City about 1505 and founded abode at Onitsha their present region, during the conflict of an empty "wooden coffin", between Esigie the Oba of Benin, and Arun-anran the Duke of Udo, his brother. The emigration took place, partly for being tired of frequent fightings, and partly because there was a great need for peaceful and secured habitation.

During this time the people of Udo "Enudo" migrated from Udo, Benin Division and founded settlement at their present home "Ondo" then known as Ifore. Another group became the settlers of Auchi, Iddo etc.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, or about 1553 A.D. the Benin troops headed by Oba Orhogbua went to the Sea-coast wars and founded the Island of "Eko" or Lagos as their war camp (Eko) and thence conquered many bordering towns, such as Iddo, Badagiry etc. With the exception of Oba Orhogbua and his body guard, the Benin troops did not return to Benin City, but became the aboriginal founders and settlers of the Island of Lagos. The then abode of Oba Orhogbua is now the residence of the Elekos or rulers of Lagos, being off-shoots of Esikpa or Asipa, one of the sons of Oba Orhogbua sent there as the first "Eleko"

The early people of Uhen or Ise in Ekiti were followers of Prince Ozuere, who tried to usurp the throne of his eldest brother Akenzua I. Having failed in his attempt, he took flight to Ise with many followers for fear of being killed by the successful Prince Akenzua I. The aboriginal settlers of Ise were commonly known as Oruns.

The Ishans, and the Etsako in Kukuruku were Bini emigrants to the regions by gradual waves from the early period of the first dynasty of of the Benin Empire.

The Ibo-speaking people on this side of the river Niger, with the exception of Akpanam were early Bini emigrants to the various places. The language of Ibos on the other side of the River Niger who settled with them through bartering and adventurous instincts predominated over their original Bini tongue.

The people of Aboh with their ruler, Obi, are offshoots of Benin. The first Obi of Aboh was the son of Oba Ozolua, who was sent there by the Oba as a ruler of the people in the fifteenth century. And his retinue were the sons and daughters of the Chiefs of Benin thither.

The atrocities and selfishness of some of our Obas usually caused the emigrations of our people to other lands or places. Especially during a conflict between two princes claiming the stool, or a civil war for succession.

The government of Benin was thoroughly organized from the beginning, so that every man or Minister knows his part to play. As well as military organization throughout.

CHAPTER 23.

BENIN DIETIES.

Benin religion is Polytheism and the Binis were polytheists originally. The Gods are divided into four main groups as follows:—
1. The deities, 2. Ancestors worship or worshipping of the departed parents of the chiefs and people of Benin; 3. The deified heroes and heroines and 4 the creative gods.

1. OSA or Osanobua is the chief God, the God above all other Gods and an immortal being. He is also known by other names; Akpama, the creator of all living things; Udazi, the giver of all life, and all powerful, to whom everything is subjected; Oghodua, the Almighty, Omnipresent and Omniscient; Oho-vba, the merciful, loving and kind. This God Osanobua, was never worshipped with human sacrifices, but the offerings might be pigeons, white cocks, white cloth, scarlet, chalk and peeled wands called "Uwenrhiontan" as emblem of worshipping, and a kind of pumkin called "Umwenhen" This worship was done by every person in his or her own house or front house with palm pole pinned or erected in the ground before the Christian era.

2. Olokun. (or Neptune) the great God of the sea is considered to be the son of Osanobua. He is the fountain of good-luck,

riches and goodness. His favourite wife is named Ora or Mammy water. Before Olokun can be worshipped, Ora must be called loudly (four times) Ora O, Ora O. Ora O, Ora O, so that she may take the people's prayers to the Olokun. The sacrifices offered to Olokun are pigeons, white fowl, white goats, white cloths, and chalk. Peeled wands, chalks and water in a jar are the emblems of worshipping the Olokun. The worship of Olokun was begun by Oba Ohen. Olokun is also the god of inspiration and idealism, and works upon the hidden spirit of man. Those who come under his influence are original, often eccentric, usually of a highly sensitive natures, and may be geniuses in one line or another.



SHRINE OF OLOKUN
The Great God Of The Sea.

3. **OBIEMWEN** (or Uranus) is wife of Ge. She is the Mother of human beings and all living things, and is the source and goddess of breeding. Binis call her "Obiemwen N'Uhe ni'ro", meaning "Obiemwen the path of mankind". She is worshipped with the same sacrificial victims as Osánobua and Olokun.

4. **OGIUWU**: is one of the great chiefs of Osanobua. He is the author of death and has charge over blood in human beings and all living things. He is therefore thought to eat human flesh and drink human blood, and he has an almost insatiable desire for human sacrifices. His shrine was situated where the Education Office now stands. The altar and its surroundings were rubbed with human blood. Ofœ is his head messenger. The worship of Ogiuwu was begun by Oba Ewuare. Ogiuwu was considered to be the god of thunder or lightning by the Binis before the introduction of Sango the Yornba god of thunder from Yorubaland to Benin.

5. **ESU**: The devil is the premier of the unseen world. He is the director of knowledge, cunning, art and power. He has been worshipped since time immemorial among the Binis. The sacrifices offered must be according to the prediction of the oracle, but the principal victims are he-goat, roasted yam pounded or mass yam, black cloth, cudgels etc.



SHRINE OF ESU
THE DEVIL.

CHAPTER 24

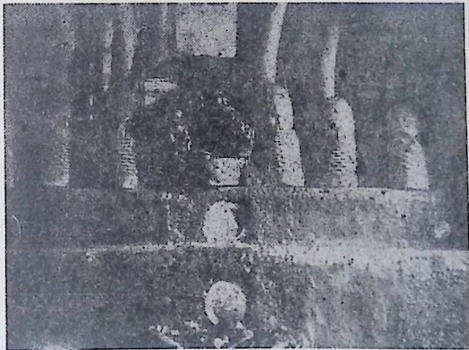
THE GODDESS OF EARTH.

6. OTO (Otoe) The Earth "Oto" is a female spirit, the most powerful in the world, but of a different rank to the gods. Her symbolic tree is "Ikhinmwin", and is planted near the house, farm, courtyard, boundary etc. No sexual intercourse is allowed in any new farm cottage if the symbolic tree Ikhinmwin is not planted there by the aboriginal settlers of the place. Otherwise the earth is considered to be polluted, and the persons concerned has to make sacrifices to propitiate the anger of the goddess of the eaath.

The personal name of the earth is "Yẹbẹtu" and her two children are Day and Night. In case of a serious offence, or if any person is suspected or found to be in possession of bad medicines with which to injure others.

A hole of about four inches square and four inches deep will be dug in the ground. Water is poured inside, and a piece of broken kola-nut put inside. The party is made to swear the most dreadful Goddess of earth, should he or she at any time intend to injure any citizen of such a town or village with the said medicine, or if he or she will not do away with it. Having sworn, the party will eat the piece of kolanut put inside the hole and drink from the water there-in. Prayers and sacrifices are usually made with snails and palmoil in the City of Benin, and in the villages to the Goddess of earth for the

fertility of the earth to make yams, corns, plantain, beans, and every crop in the farm rich and prosperous, though it is Osá or Osanobua who makes this possible by his gift of the rain. This sacrifice marks the beginning of a new year called "Ikhurhe", after the clearing of a bush for new farm. Yebetú means where every good or bad thing or rather dirt or waste from the body are deposited.



Ancestral Shrine of the Chiefs

CHAPTER 25

ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

Ancestorworship, is the worshipping of the departed parents of the chiefs and people of Benin. The ancestral shrines are nicely decorated with ivory, wodden and bronze heads especially those of the Obas which were adorned with carved ivories of prodigious sizes. Carved images and thunder bolts are the emblems; with bells to call the attention of the spirits. Here the Binis adore and pay a profound reverence to the authors of their beings. The annual festival or celebration of the ancestorship is called "Eho" where-in the chiefs slaughter bullocks, goats etc. for sacrifice. The Royal annual ancestorworship is called "Ugierhoba, in which the Oba usually sacrificed bullocks, goats, and every kind of victim. After sacrifice, Ukhurhe or Rattles are used to ensure answers to prayer.



THE BENIN ROYAL ANCESTRAL SHRINE

CHAPTER 26

HERO WORSHIP: AND CURATIVE GOD

This is the worship of the departed heroes and heroines of Benin, such as:- The Ovia and Osogho of Uhen, Okhuaihe of Ikhuen, Ovato of Igieduma, Emuēn of Uhi, Ezuku of Ogan, Ogan of Ekhuac, Ake of Isi, Ēbomisi of Ugo, Oravan and Ekiorho of Iyekogba, Ireghezi of Ēkac, Ogiemabo of Oka, Ezomo-Agban, Agbaghuzale, Ēkpennede, Emotan and Iden of Benin City, Ogina of Okogo Egban-ēn of Iwu, Ise of Utekon etc, etc.



THE GOD OF THE HAND

CHAPTER 27
CREATIVE GOD

Creative gods is the worshipping of the gods of goodluck, of destiny of the hand. Enina and Avbavba, the gods of mercy, pity or sympathy; Edion, the spirits of the departed elders, Akobie, the god of little children, Ogun the god of war, Osun the god of medicine, "Ihekhu" the god of harvest etc. etc. It is during the festival of "Ihekhu, the god of the hand or harvest that the Binis exhibit their riches in slave and other property; and it is the close of the year. The gods of sun and rain, Sacred trees etc. were also worshipped. Human beings were sacrificed to the gods of the sun and rain in the ancient days. To make the sun less severe and the rain to cease. Ighogiotq: The original god of Binin City; a human sacrifice used to be offered to it annually before the British advent.

Okpani:inrin : The fearful Royal god which was introduced from Ugho to Benin by Oba Ewedq.

Ekpurere; The ferocious god which killed an offender on the very day it was sworn.

Igbile and Okpotu: are fierce gods of Ijo or Ijaw which were introduced to Benin during the time of Oba Ewuare.

USEN

The Aboriginal settlers of Usen headed by Egberu and his wife Erede, came with Prince Oranmiyan from Ife in the 12th Century of the Christian era Usen was a large town and

originally thickly populated till the time of Oba Ozolua, when it was conquered and mercilessly destroyed by Prince Arunaran the son of Ozolua when he was returning from the Ekiti Campaign

Egberu and Erede were deified after their deaths. They ultimately became the chief god and goddess, or a father or a mother of the Use people. The Egberu is the god of Existence, protection and salvation; and the Erede is a goddess of mercy and breeding. But very harsh against the evil-doers or offenders "Egberu and Erede are also known as "Uwen-Vbora". They are god and goddess of Spirits, mystical or Spell for the Invocation of Spirits. "Ohun". A human sacrifice used to be offered to it annually from the time of Oba Ozolua before the British advent or the Punitive Expedition in 1897.

THE TITLE OF THE RULER OF USEN IS ELAWURE

CHAPTER 28

CHRISTIANITY IN WEST AFRICA.

Christianity, ever ancient and ever new was introduced to Benin by the Portuguese of the Roman Catholic Missionary at the close of the fifteenth century, and thousands of the Binis were converted and baptized. The first European Ruy de Sequeira visited Benin in 1472 at the close of Oba Ewuare's reign by his invitation, and the second John Alfonso d'Aveiro with the other Missionaries visited Benin City in 1485, during Oba Ozolua's reign and preached the Gospel of Christ here for

the first time. John Alfonso d'Aveiro made repeated visits, and the Missionaries finally remained in Benin City to carry on the Mission work on his third visit during the reign of Oba Esigie by the order of Pope Leo X.

In 1515, the Missionaries followed Benin troops with Oba Esigie to Idah war and returned to Benin City victoriously in 1516. The first Church "Owosa" at Idunmwennie was built this year. Here the victory celebration took place. The Akpakpava Church at Ikpoba road, termed Semi-Cathedral "Holy Cross" was built in 1520, then that of Ogbelaka followed. The Mission work progressed greatly. At this time several Firms were established at Ughoton (Gwatto) the old river port of Benin, by various European Merchants for the purpose of commerce.

The following letter was written during the Idah war by one of the Portuguese, Durat Piries, on October 20th 1516 to King Dom Miguel. "It is quite true, I am a friend of the King of Benin, because the King of Benin is a friend of a'l who tell him something well of your Highness. We ate with his son. When the Missionaries arrived, the King of Benin was very delighted. The Missionaries went with the King to the war and, remained a whole year. The King could not do anything until the war was over, as for the great Mystery, peace was wanted. At the end of the year, in the month of August, the King ordered his son and two of his greatest noblemen to

become Christians and built a church in Benin. They learnt how to read and did it very well.

The first English man Windham and his party came to Benin City in the reign of Oba Orhogbua in 1553. According to Hakluyt II 2nd, p.t.p. 12, he was accompanied by Francisco Pinteado a Portuguese navigator, who acted as an interpreter, as Oba Orhogbua could, read and write Portuguese. Because it is said that he visited Portugal and he was trained by the portuguese in one of their Colonial Schools in those days, and was baptized.

There were two visits by Englishmen, John Bird. Newton, James Welsh and others visited Benin City in 1588 and 1590 during the reign of Oba Ehengbuda.

At first the trades of European Merchants were very prosperous. Goods were sold to Bini traders in exchange of palm oil, palm kernel, pepper, ivory, Benin cloth etc. Because of the frequent deaths amongst the Missionaries owing to the then unhealthy climate, the European Fathers were recalled to Portugal and the Churches were left in-charge of the trained nativeFathers called Ohensa. The Portuguese Missionaries however, came to inspect the Mission work occasionally. The commerce of the European Merchants also ceased and they returned to Europe.

In 1651, Father Joseph of Xison came to Benin City to inspect the work of the Mission

in the reign of Oba Ahenzae. He came with a letter from Pope Innocent X to the Oba, encouraging him to embrace Christianity firmly in the absence of the European Fathers. Father Joseph did everything possible to obtain an audience with the Oba, but all his efforts were fruitless. He succeeded, however, in sending the Pope's letter to the Oba through one of his chiefs, who said he delivered it personally. Some days later he told Father Joseph that the Oba had read the letter and that an audience was unnecessary. In order to make his mission successful, he presented an alarm clock to the Oba through one of his boys, but all were to no purpose. Being entirely disappointed Father Joseph returned to Ughoton (Gwatto) after remaining in Benin for a whole month. Father Gavonzi, who came with Father Joseph wrote about his failure: why the audience was not granted by the Oba, was simply because he was told privately by one of the Oba's chiefs that they were warned by the prediction of an oracle that one of the Obas of Benin would die at the hands of the Europeans. This prediction however, was fulfilled in the Benin punitive expedition of 1897, as a result of the deportation of Oba Ovonramwen to old Calabar by the British troops where he died in Jan. 1914

CHAPTER 29

LAPSE OF THE BENIN OLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

During the reign of Oba Ahenzae, Father Denis de Carli, who came to Benin in Decem-

ber 1666, to inspect the Mission, was invalidated to Libson in January 1667, Father Francis de Romano and Filip da Figuar were in Benin in 1682, for inspection of the Mission work in the reign of Oba Akengbedo. The definite last visit of the Portuguese to inspect the Mission was in 1688, after which the affairs of the Church were left entirely to the Ohensa the native Fathers,

Four years later, shocking news reached Rome that, the work of the Mission in Benin was gradually under going a rapid change and dwindling. Thereupon, Pope Innocent XII. sent Father Angelus with a special letter to Ore-Oghene, the then reigning Oba of Benin. encouraging him to keep to the Christian faith and warning him against heresies. Father Angelus reached Benin City on the 10th of August 1692, and found the Mission or Churches in an alarming and deplorable condition. In reply to the Pope's letter, however, the Oba promised to keep to the Catholic faith and improve the Churches as far as possible as before.

Two other Fathers Capuchen and De Gar'y' were also sent from the Island of St. Thomas to visit Benin City in November 1695, by the order of the Pope in Rome; who unfortunately, found that all the Christians with their Native Fathers, Ohensa, had already lapsed into idolatry and converted the Churches to juju shrines "Arosa" with sacrifice in them. They returned homeward with heavy hearts. This corrupt

form of worship continued till the Gospel was preached here in 1900, by the C.M.S. and first Church was built in 1902. The Roman Catholic mission was reintroduced here again in 1924. The emblems of Catholicism, the Rosary and crucifix are still to be seen with the Ohensas of the old catholic churches of Akpava and Idunmwennie.

Besides the unhealthy climate of the country then, two principal causes largely contributed to the laxity of Portugal. First, the decline in power which necessitated the loss of most of her colonies, and second the disastrous earthquake which took place in Lisbon on Sunday Nov. 1, 1755, with the loss of over 50,000 people, plus fine buildings and other property.

CHAPTER 30

G A M B I A.

Gambia derived its name from river Gambia, which rises in French West Africa, and flows in to the Atlantic Ocean near Bathurst. It is 500 miles long and much of its course is navigable. It is a British Crown Colony and protectorate from 1888, consisting only of Saint Mary Island; four square miles in extent. The population is about 237,000 In the matter of religion, the majority of the people in Gambia are Muhammedans.

CHAPTER 31
SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone is a British Crown Colony in West Africa, ceded to Great Britain in 1787 by the aborigines of the place. A protectorate over the Hinterland was declared in 1896. The capital is Free Town, where the British negro slaves were liberated. Freetown has the best Harbour in West Africa, and from here there is a Railway inland for about 227 miles with a branch line 104 miles in length. The colony is administered by a Governor advised by an Executive Council. The universal religion of the region is Christianity. The principal exports are palm kernels, palm oil, kola nuts etc.

CHAPTER 32
LIBERIA.

Liberia lies between Sierra Leone and the French possession on the Ivory Coast. It was formed to provide a home for freed slaves from America. It is a Republic state in Africa, which dates from 1847, and is governed by a President and a Council of Ministers with a Parliament of two Houses. English is the official language. Greater part of the people are Christians, wholly protestants.

CHAPTER 33
GOLD COAST.

A greater part of the Gold Coastians especially the Gas or Accra were emigrants from Esi Benin Division in the years of Grace 1300,

to their present region. Gold Coast is now a British Colony in West Africa. It is so called because of the gold which was found in its beds in the 14th century. with coastline of 334 miles. Covering about 4,000 square miles or with Achanti and the so called Northern Territories is 80,000 square miles in extent. The three are under the same government which consist of a Governor assisted by a legislative and Executive Council. Cocoa, Gold, diamonds, palm oil, mahogany, etc. are the chief exports. Accra a Sea Port is the capital. The Portuguese visited the region in the 15th century, and during the 19th century it became British possession, partly by purchase and partly by cession. The entire people of the Gold Coast are pagans and polytheists from the primitive days before the Christian era. As worshippers of many gods, the following were chief gods.

Nyazi or Nyongbor The Diety, God Almighty, the God of all other gods, the Creator of universe etc.

Sinaman: The Great god of thunder and lightning.

Asas-Efua. The Goddess of the Earth, the author of fertility and product or procurer of food, or foodstuffs etc etc.

Nso-Jemawon: The goddess of the sea and Fa-Jemawon. River Goddess. Koni-Jemawon. The Gods and goddess of the bush.

CHAPTER 34

DAHOMY

Dahomey is one of the old regions and Kingdoms in West Africa. It is a French Colony adjoining Nigerian's West boundry, it runs from the coast Northward to other French Colonies The Westward lies French Togoland. Its coastline is only 70 miles long the total area is 62,800 square miles. Port Novo is the capital. The chief products are cocoa nuts, palm oil, kernels, cotton etc. Roads and Railways has been made. The Kingdom was annexed by France in 1894 The population is about 10,600, The people were pagans and polytheists from beginning, and indulged in human sacrifices .But many of them has now embraced christianity and Islamism. Lome is the real capital of Dahomey.

CHAPTER 35

NORTHERN NIGERIA.

The early pagan inhabitants of the region now known as Northern Nigeria, are said to be of Arabic origin. The Houses are said to have come from beyond Mecca, and there are records to show that they were in Sudan to the North of Nigeria from very ancient times. They conquered the territory they now occupy, Some times before the 9th century, and before their subjugation by the Fulanis headed by Othmadan Fodio at the beginning of the 19th century in 1820 they appeared to have formed a po-

werful Confederation of states. They are very industrious in every line of trade, especially in art. They are to be seen or met in all parts of Africa. A great number of the Housas professed Muhammedanism,

IDAH. The people of Idah generally worship the River Niger or goddess of the River Niger, Ojọ. God; the Creator; Supreme Being. Osebo. The goddess of the sea or Mammon, Ancestor worship and so on. Majority of the people has now professed Muhammedanism. after the defeat of Idah by Benin troops in 1516, it came under the Benin rule. Like the Binis, the Idah people has strong belief in Incarnation.

“ATTAH” IS THE TRADITIONAL TITLE OF
THE RULER OF IDAH

CHAPTER 36

L A N G U A G E.

Apart from the Tower of Babel and confusion of tongues; there is a theory that language is a natural thing which grows as the bones in human beings. To every fusion of tribe there is a birth of a new language.

If a man and his family with followers migrate from one place and founded settlement in another place between two towns, the second and third generations after him will derive their speech from the languages of the two towns; then a new language or tongue is born with inflection of the original tongue or the other.

The various tribe of people in Nigeria speak in different dialects or local form of speech. The language spoken by the Hausas is Arabic. The spoken language of Yorubas is Yoruba. But, the Yoruba language has many dialects, which in some cases are very clipped and difficult for the pure Yoruba to understand. The Yoruba "Bible" which can be read and understood by all the Yoruba speaking people has brought all under one language.

The language spoken by the Benins is Bini as well as Benin speaking people.

The Ibo language embraces several dialects which the Ibo on the West cannot be understood by the Ibos on the East. But the Church Missionary Society have produced a Bible called the "Union Bible" which can be understood by natives of all parts of the Ibo Country.

The Ibibios speak Ibibo; the Efik language is wholly a dialect of Ibibio. The language of the Ijaws is dissimilar to the surrounding forms of speech. The Urhobos, Ishans, Oras, Etsako and Sobes speak the Bini dialect and they are Benin speaking people.

The Itsekiri language was from those of Ijaw and Ilaje, who were in the land before the arrival of Igunua and his party from Benin City. The Ilajes originally came from Ugbo and Mahin as fishermen to a place known as "Eghoro" and became the first settlers of the place:

The Itsẹkiri dance and music were also derived from the Ijaws and Ilajes. But the style of dress with coat, shirt and hat over wrapper were copied from the Itsekiri, by both the Ijaws and Urhobos; being introduced by Kodjoe, the son of the Portuguese lady, who became Olu of Itsẹkiri. Itsẹkiri has become one of the most decent tribes in Nigeria since the time of Kodjoe.

Isẹkiri (Isoẹkiri) or Itsẹkiri is a Benin word expressed by Iginua when he reached his destination; meaning "I reached there precisely or successfully" "or I reached where my father sent me precisely". Uwuere Iye na, meaning I am in it now which was corrupted to Warri

The Ugbo people, the home of the Ilajes trace their origin from Ifẹ. The paramount ruler of the Ilajes is titled "Olugbo of Ugbo" and the next in rank is Amakpetu of Mahin. The Ilajes speak Yoruba dialect. Lagosian is the most fluent dialect, which all the modern Yorubas prefer to speak.

CHAPTER 37

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EVENTS

The first European Ruy de Sequeira (Portuguese) came	1472
The ferocious god Ekpurẹrẹ was destroyed and buried	1473
The second European John Alfonso-d' Aveiro came to Benin	1485

The first Roman Catholic Missionaries came to Benin	1515
The first Catholic Missionaries arrived Itsekiri	1590
The first Englishman Windham and his party came to Benin	1553
The Portuguese Missionaries left Benin for Europe	1688-1695
Members of the Catholic Churches with their Native Fathers Ohensa is Benin lapsed into idolatry	1695
Mungo Park discovered River Niger	1796
The C. M. S. West African Mission begun Clapperton and Richard Lander came to Nigeria	1825
The first C.M.S. Mission begun at Abeokuta	1842
Rev. H. Townsend first entered Abeokuta	1843
The Presbyterian Mission begun at Calabar	1846
The first confirmation in Lagos by Bishop Vidal.	1854
The first confirmation in Abeokuta	1854
The first baptism at Ibadan	1855
The C. M. S. Niger Mission begun at Onitsha	1857
The first C. M. S. baptism on the Niger	1862
Isoko Mission begun	1862
Rev. Crowther consecrated Bishop of Niger	1864
The first C.M.S Mission at Bonny begun	1865
Iguanas the grand juju at Bonny destroyed	1867
First visit of Missionaries to Ondo	1867
The first C. M. S. Mission begun in Brass	1868
Bishops Hill, Oluwole and Philips conserated	1873
Native African Church inaugurated	1891
The first Mission at Ijero in Ekiti begun	1895

The first Mission at Akure begun	1897
The Benin punitive expedition took place	1897
The first baptism at Akure took place	1898
Rev. James Johnson consecrated Bishop	1900
The first Mission at Owo begun	1900
Moslem introduced to Benin	1900
The first Mission begun in Benin	1900
The first Church Saint Matthew built and dedicated	1902
The first baptism at Zaria in Northern Nigeria	1907
Baptist Mission begun in Benin	1921
Roman Catholic Mission was re-introduced to Benin	1924
The Salvation Army Mission begun in Benin	1926
The United Native African Mission begun	1930
The Shrine of Awanuroho, the deified hound	
Oba Ewuare destroyed by Oba Eweka II	1932
It was rebuilt by Oba Akenzua II	1934

