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PEOPLES OF THE NIGER BENUE CONFLUENCE 1955

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ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA

EDITED BY DARYLL FORDE

WESTERN AFRICA

PART X

PEOPLES OF THE
NIGER-BENUE CONFLUENCE

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PEOPLES OF THE NIGER-BENUE CONFLUENCE

THE NUPE by DARYLL FORDE

THE IGBIRA by PAULA BROWN

THE IGALA by ROBERT G. ARMSTRONG

THE IDOMA-SPEAKING PEOPLES by ROBERT G. ARMSTRONG

LONDON

INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN INSTITUTE

1955

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This study is one section of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa which the International African Institute is preparing with the aid of a grant made by the Secretary of State under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, on the recommendation of the Colonial Social Science Research Council.

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FOREWORD

THE International African Institute has, since 1945, been engaged on the preparation and publication of an Ethnographic Survey of Africa, the purpose of which is to present in a brief and readily comprehensible form a summary of available information concerning the different peoples of Africa with respect to location, natural environment, economy and crafts, social structure, political organization, religious beliefs and cults. While published material has provided the main basis for the Survey, a large number of unpublished documents—reports and records in government files and in the archives of missionary societies, as well as field notes and special communications by anthropologists and others—have been generously made available and these have been supplemented by personal correspondence and consultation. The Survey is being published in a number of separate volumes, each of which is concerned with one people or a group of related peoples, and contains a comprehensive bibliography and a specially drawn map.

A committee of the Institute, to determine the scope of the Survey, was set up under the Chairmanship of Professor Radcliffe-Brown, and the Director of the Institute has undertaken the editing and organization. The generous collaboration of a number of research institutions and administrative officers in Europe and in the African territories was secured, as well as the services of senior anthropologists who have been good enough to supervise and amplify the drafts.

The work of the Survey was initiated with the aid of a grant from the British Colonial Development and Welfare Funds, on the recommendation of the Social Science Research Council, to be applied mainly though not exclusively to work relating to British territories. A further grant from the Sudan Government has assisted in the preparation and publication of sections dealing with that territory.

The Ministère de la France d'Outre-Mer and the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire were good enough to express their interest in the project and through their good offices grants have been received from the Governments of French West Africa and the French Cameroons for the preparation and publication of sections relating to those areas. These sections have been prepared by French ethnologists with the support and advice of Professor M. Griaule of the Sorbonne and Professor Th. Monod, Director of I.F.A.N.

The collaboration of the Belgian authorities in this project was first secured by the good offices of the late Professor de Jonghe, who enlisted the interest of the Commission d'Ethnologie of the Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales. The collaboration of the Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale has also been readily accorded. Work relating to Belgian territories is being carried out under the direction of Professor Olbrechts at the Centre du Documentation of the Musée Royal du Congo Belge, Tervuren, where Mlle. Boone and members of her staff are engaged on the assembly and classification of the vast mass of material relating to African peoples in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. They work in close collaboration with ethnologists in the field to whom draft manuscripts are submitted for checking.

The International African Institute desires to express its grateful thanks to those official bodies whose generous financial assistance has made the carrying out of this project possible and to the many scholars, directors of research organizations, administrative officers, missionaries, and others who have collaborated in the work and, by granting facilities to our research workers and by correcting and supervising their manuscripts, have contributed so largely to whatever merit the various sections may possess.

Since the unequal value and unsystematic nature of existing material was one of the reasons for undertaking the Survey, it is obvious that these studies cannot

FOREWORD

claim to be complete or definitive; it is hoped, however, that they will present a clear account of our existing knowledge and indicate where information is lacking and further research is needed.

We are grateful for help given in the preparation of the present volume by Professor S. F. Nadel, who read the first draft of the Nupe section. Thanks are also due to Miss Freda Hands and Miss Barbara Pym for editorial assistance in the preparation of all the sections.

DARYLL FORDE,

Director,

International African Institute.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	xiii
<i>I. THE NUPE</i>	
TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY	17
Introduction	
Nomenclature	
Location	
Neighbouring tribes	
Nupe sub-tribes	
Demographic data	
TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY	22
LANGUAGE	23
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	23
MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY	24
General	
Agriculture	
Organization and division of labour	
Livestock	
Hunting and fishing	
Markets and trade	
Industries, crafts and professions	
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM	31
Local and kinship grouping	
Forms of settlement : house types	
The political system	
Status and titles	
Patronage	
Age-sets	
Government	
Village organization	
The political system of the Kyedye	
Organization of Kutigi town (Beni sub-tribe)	
Legal procedure	
Inheritance	
Land tenure	
Slavery	
Pawning	
Position of women	
CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE	42
Physical characteristics : tribal marks : dress	
Birth	
Circumcision	
Marriage	
Divorce	
Burial	

CONTENTS—continued

	PAGE
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS	45
General	
Spirits	
Cults	
The <i>gunnu</i> cult	
Medicines	
Divination	
Witchcraft	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	50
 <i>II. THE IGBIRA</i> 	
GROUPING AND DEMOGRAPHY	55
Location	
Neighbouring tribes	
Nomenclature	
Groupings	
Demographic data	
TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY	57
LANGUAGE	58
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	58
MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY	59
Agriculture	
Livestock, fishing, and hunting	
Trade	
Crafts	
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM	60
The family	
Kinship terminology and behaviour	
Forms of settlement : house types	
Clans	
Local organization	
The compound	
Land tenure	
Village organization	
Political units	
Chiefship	
Succession and Inheritance	
Slavery	
Legal procedure	
Warfare	
CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE	67
Birth	
Initiation	
Tribal marks	
Marriage	
Death	

CONTENTS—continued

PAGE

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS	70
General	
Gods and spirits	
Ancestor worship	
The cult of the Panda "divine king"	
Village cults	
Medicine men and fetish priests	
Witchcraft	
Divination	
Fishing and hunting rites	

BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
------------------------	----

III. THE IGALA

NOMENCLATURE AND DEMOGRAPHY	77
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	78
LANGUAGE	78
TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY	80
MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY	83
Agriculture	
Livestock	
Markets and trade	
Modern developments	
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM	86
General	
Forms of settlement: house types	
The kingship	
Position of women	
Slavery	
MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES	88
Mental and physical characteristics: dress	
Life cycle	
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS	89
<i>A Note on the Ibaji</i>	89

IV. THE IDOMA-SPEAKING PEOPLES

LOCATION AND MAIN GROUPS	91
LANGUAGE	91
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	93

CONTENTS—continued

PAGE

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY	93
Agriculture	
Markets	
Crafts	
House types	
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM	94
The compound family	
The lineage	
The Land	
Settlement pattern	
Chieftaincy	
Modern developments	
Age-sets and associations	
Legal procedure	
Slavery	
Position of women	
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS	100
THE IDOMA " PROPER " OF IDOMA DIVISION	100
General	
Districts of Idoma Division :	
Agatu : demography ; traditions of origin and history ; social organization and economy	
Ocheku : demography ; traditions of origin and history ; social organization and political system	
Adoka : demography ; traditions of origin and history ; social organization	
Boju : demography ; economy ; traditions of origin and history ; social organization and political system	
Yangedde : demography ; physical environment and economy ; traditions of origin ; social organization and political system	
Oglewu : demography ; physical environment and economy ; traditions of origin and history ; social organization and political system	
Oturkpo : general ; social organization and political system	
Okwoga : demography and physical environment ; social organization and political system	
Edumoga : demography ; physical environment, economy and crafts ; social organization and political system ; Edumoga proper	
Ichama	
Otukpa : traditions of origin ; demography and physical environment ; social organization and political system	
Orukpa	
Orokam : nomenclature ; demography and physical environment ; traditions of origin ; political system	
Agala : general ; demography and physical environment ; history ; forms of settlement ; social organization and political system ; other cultural features	
Igumale : demography ; traditions of origin and history ; social organization and political system ; religious beliefs and cults	
Ulayi	
Ijigbam : demography ; traditions of origin ; social and cultural features	

THE ARAGO	125
Demography	
Language	
Traditions of origin and history	
Social and cultural features	
THE IYALA	128
Location and demography	
Language	
Physical environment and economy	
Traditions of origin and history	
Social organization and political system	
Age-sets and associations	
Legal procedure	
Main cultural features	
Religious beliefs and cults	
THE NKUM	133
Traditions of origin	
Social and cultural features	
THE NKIM	134
THE ETULO	134
Location and demography	
Language	
Traditions of origin and history	
Social and cultural features	
THE AFU	136
Location and demography	
Physical environment	
Language	
Traditions of origin and history	
Main features of economy	
Social and cultural features : general	
Social organization and political system	
Legal procedure	
THE EGEDE	140
Location and demography	
Physical environment and economy	
Traditions of origin and history	
Language	
Social organization and political system	
Legal procedure	
Political system of Worku	
Religious beliefs and cults	
THE AKWEYA-YACHI	148
Demography	
Language	
The Akweya of Akpa District, Idoma Division	
The Yachi of Ogoja Division	

CONTENTS— <i>continued</i>		PAGE
THE UTONKON-EFFIUM		151
Nomenclature and demography		
Language		
Social and cultural features		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		153
INDEX		156
MAPS		
1. Idoma Districts		101
2. Egede-speaking Districts of Idoma Division		142
3. Tribal Map of the Niger-Benue Confluence		AT END

INTRODUCTION

The confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers has for long been a focal area of migrations, commerce, and conquest, which have set up cultural cross currents of many kinds. The Igala, the Jukun, and the Fulani have at various times conquered large parts of the region and these wars have left deep impressions on the institutions of the peoples.

The area as a whole is fairly open savannah or "orchard bush," but it is fly-infested and cattle cannot be reared successfully. The agriculture, which dominates the economy, includes the cultivation of crops, such as guinea-corn and yams, characteristic of Northern and Southern Nigeria respectively, hence the term "Middle Belt" which is frequently applied to the Niger-Benue region. The Nupe country is one of the northernmost areas in which the oil-palm and kola nut are found; the Niger watershed in Igala and the southern fringe of districts in Idoma also lie within the "palm belt." Settlement is fairly continuous over the area as a whole and there is considerable intermixture of ethnic groups. Population is moderately dense—between 30 and 60 persons per square mile over wide areas—though it is considerably sparser north of the Benue and in some Nupe districts west of the Kaduna River.

Continuous European contact with the Niger-Benue region began with Lander's descent of the Niger in 1830. In 1832–33 the Laird and Oldfield expedition succeeded in getting some distance up the Benue and visited the whole river front of the Igbara and Igala countries. They found the country north of the Benue much disturbed by Fulani raids. The markets around the confluence were major centres of the slave trade¹ and in 1855 Crowther heard Igala, Igbara, Nupe, Kakanda, Hausa, Yoruba, Idoma, Jukun, and Ibo being spoken at the Igbede market at the confluence.²

The tribes of the Niger-Benue confluence speak Kwa languages, while to the east the region borders directly on a solid block of tribes speaking so-called "Semi-Bantu" languages.³ But there has been great terminological confusion, with reference to both languages and ethnic groups, especially concerning the large body of Idoma-speaking peoples lying between Igala and Tiv country, where the name Akpoto or Okpoto was used in various 19th-century accounts to include all the region from the confluence to the Tiv border. Whatever the original situation may have been, however, the only group in the area which today calls itself and its language Akpoto is the peoples of the central and western Idoma-speaking districts. The situation is further confused by the fact that there is a district of Igala called Akpoto, south of Ankpa. This district borders on Idoma, and the people on both sides of the border are largely bilingual. As will be seen from the section on the Idoma, many of the "languages" of this region which have hitherto received separate treatment in the literature can now be shown to be closely related dialects of Idoma. Although north of the Benue the situation appears simpler, this may well be due to continuing ignorance of the ethnography and linguistics of the area.

Politically the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence exhibit widely differing systems, ranging from the highly organized state of the Nupe with a ruling dynasty of Fulani descent, and the Igbara and Igala chiefdoms with their "divine kings," to the fragmentary statelets of the Idoma-speaking peoples and the small autonomous "clans" of the Egede. The Nupe are the only people to have been Islamized to any considerable extent.

In describing these very diverse peoples, who have nevertheless been in contact over long periods, it has been found most convenient to deal first with the Nupe

¹ Clapperton and Lander, 1829, p. 297.

² Crowther, 1855, p. 167.

³ See Crowther, 1855, p. 65, and below, pp. 78–9, 90–3.

INTRODUCTION

of Niger and Ilorin Provinces, on whom there is a considerable literature. An account is next given of the Igbira and the Igala of Kabba Province; this is necessarily uneven and provisional in view of the very limited sources. The account of the Idoma-speaking peoples of Benue Province is based mainly on Dr. Armstrong's field investigations and his study of unpublished local records. The peoples have been grouped by him as follows: first the Idoma " Proper " of Idoma Division, with their outliers the Iyala and Nkum and the so-called Arago of Doma and Keana, and secondly other groups speaking languages closely related to Idoma, namely, the Afu of Nassarawa, and the Egede, Akweya-Yachi and Utonkon-Effum of Idoma and Ogoja Divisions.

THE NUPE

NUPE—NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The symbols employed by Nadel (1942) have generally been followed in this section: η = nasalization of preceding vowel; ξ = s in lesion; ' indicates the high tone and usually the stressed syllable in a word.

THE NUPE

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

The Nupe, speaking a number of related dialects, number about 360,000, and consist of the inhabitants of Bida Emirate, Niger Province, together with several politically separate sections. They do not form a territorially united group and, although every Nupe should extend hospitality to his fellow-tribesmen, they are not characterized by close internal cohesion. There is considerable variety of custom among the various "sub-tribes." Outstanding common features are: the cycle of myths of the culture-hero Tsoede, the observation of the *gunnu* ritual, belief in the supreme sky-god Soko, and the general structure of political ranks, age-sets, kinship system, and marriage rules.¹

NOMENCLATURE

The Nupe call themselves *Nupeci* or *Nupenci* (sing. *Nupeci* or *Nupenci*), their language *Nupe* or *Ezi Nupe*, and their country *Kin Nupe* ("the land of Nupe"). But Nupe in Zugurma and, generally speaking, north of the Kaduna River, also call themselves *Agabi*.² They are known by neighbouring tribes by the following names:³

- By the Hausa: *Ba Nupe* or *Nufawa* (sing. *Nufe*).
- „ „ Gbari of Kuta: *Abawa* (sing. *Bawa*).⁴
- „ „ Gbari of Paiko and Birnin Gwari: *Ampeyi* or *Nife*.
- „ „ Akanda (Yoruba): *Anupecwayi*.
- „ „ Yoruba, Kambali, and Fon: *Takpa* or *Tapa* (*Tappah*).
- „ „ Ijumu (Yoruba) and Igbara: *Anupe*.
- „ „ Ebe (Nupe sub-tribe): *Anuperi*.
- „ „ Lopawa: *Duma*.

LOCATION

The Nupe live in the low basin formed by the valleys of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers, between 9° 30' and 8° 30' north, in an area roughly 7,000 square miles in extent. Their northern boundary runs from Share (Tsaragi) to the Niger south of Baro; the western boundary is the Niger from Leaba to Jebba and south to Share; the eastern boundary is the line of the foothills east of Lapai and Gidi. Small sections of the Nupe are also scattered through Nigeria, especially in villages and towns on the Niger. The largest of these groups is that of the Basa or Basa Nge, in the north-west of Igala Division of Kabba Province opposite Lokoja.

The Nupe form the great majority of the population in the Bida and Agaie Emirates of Niger Province, and in the Pategi-Lafiagi Emirate of Ilorin Province. There are also Nupe in the north-east of Ilorin and in the south of Borgu Emirate. They form a compact minority of the population in other chieftainships and political districts under the authority of Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbara chiefs, as follows: around Zugurma in the Kontagora Division of Niger Province, under the Hausa Emir of Kontagora; in Shona and Share Districts of Ilorin Province, under the

¹ Nadel, 1942, pp. 12-26; 1935a, pp. 278-9; Meek, 1925, Vol. I, p. 24. Thanks to the publications of Professor S. F. Nadel, based on intensive fieldwork in Bida Emirate and elsewhere in the thirties, it is possible to treat many aspects of Nupe culture and social organization more systematically and also more briefly than is the case for most of the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence.

² Mathews, 1926.

³ Nadel, 1942, p. 12; Temple, 1919, p. 282 and index.

⁴ The Ebe sub-tribe is also called Abewa by Hausa speakers.

Fulani-Yoruba Emir of Ilorin; in Eggan District, Koton Karifi Division, Kabba Province, under the *Ata* of Igbira.⁵

NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

Neighbours of the Nupe to the west are Fulani and Ilorin Yoruba; to the east and north-east, Gbari, Basa, and Igbira; to the north, Kamberi, Kamuku, and Hausa; to the south, Yoruba (Ilorin, Yagba, Bunu, and Aworo); to the north-west, Bussawa and Borgawa.

NUPE SUB-TRIBES⁶

Nupe sub-tribes are both territorial and cultural entities, each speaking its own dialect and often united by a network of kinship ties and a belief in common descent. But a great deal of migration has taken and still takes place between one sub-tribe and another. Some other peoples, such as the Kakanda, are in the process of being assimilated as Nupe sub-tribes.

Beni (Bini): one of the "original" Nupe sub-tribes which, together with Kyedye and Bataci, forms the nucleus of the Nupe kingdom. Traditionally Beni became a political unit when the 12 towns of the Beni confederacy recognized the supremacy of one of their number and gave allegiance and tribute to its chief; they were bound to fight together and support each other in times of war. The 12 towns share common insignia, a common mythology, and a specialized form of the *gunnu* cult. To-day the Beni are concentrated mainly in and around Bida, Kutigi, and Lemu, but there are a few living near the confluence of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers. They have a high reputation as farmers and craftsmen.

Bataci (Batachi, Bataciži): also an "original" sub-tribe, coming under the local overlordship of the Kyedye. They are considered to be the original inhabitants of the riverain area and live on the pools and backwaters of the lower reaches of the Niger.

Kyedye (Kede): a term often used for all canoe- and fishermen on the river, referring specifically to a group known as *Eyapaciži* ("canoe-men"). They in turn refer to all other groups of Nupe collectively as *Laticiži* ("farmers"), and call the non-Kyedye sub-tribes *Kintsoži* ("owners of the land," i.e., original inhabitants). The Kyedye had established themselves on the Kaduna River and on Jebba Island about 40 years ago. The emergence of this sub-tribe consisted in the growth of a colonizing and dominating group, expanding from Muregi at the confluence of the Niger and Kaduna,⁷ and although they form a minority in the area they have established themselves as local rulers over the Bataci.

The Kyedye do not intermarry with Bataci and other sub-tribes but, on the contrary, stress a sharp tribal and cultural division. They are the only purely riverain Nupe sub-tribe and are said to "rule the water." They are to be found mainly on the left bank of the Niger and on the Kaduna River, in the Bida, Agaie, Lapai, and Kontagora Emirates of Niger Province. Others are on the right bank of the Niger in the Ilorin, Lafagi, and Pategi Emirates of Ilorin Province, and in the Koton Karifi Division of Kabba Province. There are 10 main villages, Muregi being the only purely Kyedye settlement; all the others are built on sites of "native" villages. Another small group lives at Onitsha as canoe builders, and there is a large and prosperous colony at Lokoja.

They are divided into two sections, of which one, Kyedye Tifin or Gbède,⁸ a semi-riverain group upstream from Jebba Island, is subject to the other, Kyedye Tako,⁹ who live downstream.

⁵ Nadel, 1942, p. 13; 1937b, p. 424.

⁶ Nadel, 1942, pp. 19-26; 1935a, pp. 258-9, 237, 275; 1940a, pp. 164-71.

⁷ According to Nadel, this colonization is still going on.

⁸ The main Kyedye Tifin villages are: Muregi, Cegu, Leaba, Shankyedye, Yankyedye, Sambo, Sonka, Egwa, Bazumagi, Buka, Bele.

⁹ The main Kyedye Tako villages are: Kpakefu, Ogudu, Ketsogi, Lepkata, Endozigi, Ela, Difu, Gbaradozi, Dokomba, Kpatagba, Kacha Wunengi, Gungi, Etsumutum, Gidi.

Nupe "Zam": a group in Trans-Kaduna (Kutigi) believed to be the oldest section of the Nupe; calling themselves *Nupe*, they have no secondary name.

Ebagi: an "original" Nupe sub-tribe, who claim to be the descendants of a dynasty superseded by the Fulani now ruling in Ilorin Emirate.

Ebe (Abewa): an "original" sub-tribe living in Yelwa District, but, according to Mathews, they call themselves *Asu* and claim to have come from what is now Yoruba country.¹⁰

Gbedye (Gbedegi): on the borders of Yoruba country in Niger Province, possibly of Yoruba origin.¹¹

Kupa (also, erroneously, called Gupa; Kupachi):¹² said to be of Ebe origin, having arrived at their present site on the southern bank of the Niger around Eggan and, in small numbers, in Bunu District, in about 1800. Some are also to be found in the Koton Karifi District of Kabba Province, where they form a section of the "host" population and, together with the Dibo (see below), account for some 10% of the population. There are also others in Kupa District of Koton Karifi Division. They are said to be not fully "Nupeized."

Cekpay: on the southern bank of the Niger.

Kusopá: in the Labozhi District, in thick inland forest west of the Kaduna River, where they cultivate the kola-nut plantations of Labozhi and Kudu; they are also to be found in the rich oil-palm district of Yeti. Their origin is unknown but they may be comparatively recent immigrants.

Benú: a recently formed sub-tribe of Bornu origin. They came from Kukawa at the end of the 18th century as wealthy traders and owners of cattle and horses and now predominate in Kutigi and in the neighbouring villages of the Trans-Kaduna area, where they are the economically and politically dominant group.

Dibo (also known as *Žitako* ("men down below") and *Ganagana*, a Hausa name: a recently assimilated sub-tribe. As lately as 1931 they were not fully "Nupeized" nor universally accepted as a Nupe sub-tribe.¹³ They live in the southernmost part of Lafiagi and Agaie Emirates, also in the extreme north of Koton Karifi Division, on the eastern slope of the Gurara valley north of the Kunama-Okyia watershed, their chief towns being Pandegi, Agyana, Ebagi, Rimbo, Kibogi, Rijaya, and Chigbwechi. There are also a few hundred in Toto and Umaisha Districts of Nasarawa Emirate. They are the predominant tribe at Ashera in Abuja Emirate.

Gwagba: a recently formed group, essentially a political section. The name is said to be deprecatory and applied to those living in and around Zugurma.¹⁴ According to Mathews,¹⁵ the Gwagba consist of the indigenous Ebe, Basa, and Bedegi of the district. He suggests that the name Gwagba was given to them at the time of their original conquest by the Agabi (the descendants of Tsoede, among whom are the present "royal family" of Zugurma), and that it may even be the original name of a people.

Basa-Nge: a group speaking a Nupe dialect which appears to have left the mother country about a century ago, before the Fulani conquest. They lived first

¹⁰ Mathews, 1926.

¹¹ There is a Yoruba sub-tribe called Gbedde in Kabba Division of Kabba Province. One section of the Kyedye sub-tribe is also called Gbede and also inhabits the upper stretches of the Niger.

¹² The name Kupa is said to be a corruption of Oku-Pari, meaning canoe-men of the Oku river. Kupa and Gupa are enumerated separately in the 1931 Census list of Nupe sub-tribes. Nadel names the Kupa only; Temple gives the Gupa as an offshoot of the Gbari, and the Kupa as a Nupe sub-tribe; Meek uses the name Gupa in his text and Kupa on his map; MacBride refers to those in Koton Karifi Division as Kupachi.

¹³ They are, however, listed by Nadel (1942, p. 19) as one of the five "original" Nupe sub-tribes which, according to Nupe tradition, were in existence at the time of Tsoede.

¹⁴ Nadel, 1942, p. 20.

¹⁵ Mathews, 1926.

on the right bank of the Niger, where Lokoja now stands, but at its founding moved over to the left bank where they are to-day, in the Basa-Nge District of Iga Division, Kabba Province. The District contains 12 riverain and nine inland units which are mostly Basa-Nge, except for five Igala and two Igbira-Panda-Kakanda. The largest is Gbonoko, the District headquarters. The Basa-Nge are subject to the *Ata Gala*.¹⁶

Other groups, originally alien, but now Nupeized

Konú (Eyagi-Nupe): of Yoruba (Yagba) origin, brought to Nupe country by slaves to introduce the Yoruba arts of weaving and indigo-dyeing. They are to be found in Kutigi and the neighbouring villages.¹⁷

Gbari Bautá ("Gbari slaves"): in the north of Nupe territory near the Gbala border.¹⁸

Kakanda (Hyaba, Akanda):¹⁹ on both banks of the Niger, north of its confluence with the Gurara River. They are of non-Nupe stock, though, according to Temple,²⁰ they have always lived among the Nupe. Clifford, however, says that they were formerly (? c. 1750) subject to Igala.²¹ They have certainly undergone cultural assimilation to the Nupe and have adopted the language of the Nupe "proper." According to Westermann and Bryan, they speak either a dialect of Nupe or a closely related language.²²

Ibanji: a sub-tribe mentioned in the 1931 Census, which has not been identified.

In addition to the groups mentioned above, Temple gives several names which are villages or settlements and not sub-tribes.²³ Her *Bata* (misprinted *Bafa* in the 1931 Census) and described as an agricultural people living in Lapai Emirate are not Nupe but probably Gbari. Her *Bororózhí* (nomadic cattle Fulani) only come to Nupe on seasonal migration and are not Nupeized; her *Góizhi* (settled Fulani) are the Fulani ruling class of Nupe Emirate and not a group in a tribal sense.²⁴

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Population Estimates

1952 Census:	348,979	(Northern Region)
	10,198	(Eastern and Western Regions)
1931 Census:	326,017	(Northern Provinces)
1921 Census:	349,008	(Northern Provinces)

Sub-tribes²⁵

1931 Census: ²⁶

Beni		48,595	Ebe		9,100	Dibo		18,220
Bataci		4,627	Kupa		15,470	Kakanda		4,518
Kyedye		2,493	Benu		7,457	Basa-Nge		19,163

The figures of the 1931 Census show a decrease of 23,000 or 7% on the figures for 1921. Fluctuations in the earlier numbers given for the populations have resulted

¹⁶ Nadel, 1942, p. 12; Hopkins, 1934; Westermann and Bryan, 1952, p. 86.

¹⁷ Nadel, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁹ They should not be confused with the Akanda of Kabba and Koton Karifi Divisions, Kabba Province, who are Yoruba. The Kakanda are said by Meek (1917) to call themselves Ashe. They are known to the Hausa as Bunu (the name of a Yoruba section) and to the Igbo as Ehabe (MacBride, 1935).

²⁰ Temple, 1919, p. 167.

²¹ Miles Clifford, "A Nigerian chiefdom," *J. roy. anthrop. inst.*, LXVI, 1936, pp. 392-43.

²² Westermann and Bryan, loc. cit.; Nadel, op. cit., p. 13.

²³ e.g. Baedegi, Sakpe, Etsu, Pateji, Kutegi, Enagi, Gbachi, Duchu, Zumbufu.

²⁴ See Nadel, 1942, p. 71.

²⁵ Figures for all the sub-tribes listed above are not available, but the Census gives 11,900 for "Ibanji," which has not been identified.

²⁶ Later figures are not available.

in part from erroneous naming of some tribes and sub-tribes as Nupe and the omission of others.²⁷ Marked decreases in the population are probably due to continuous small scale emigration, especially since 1930. This has been mostly in a southerly direction, to Ilorin, Lokoja, Ibadan, Oshogbo, and Lagos, i.e., to the wealthy and less heavily taxed districts of the south. In one or two cases, people of one sub-tribe have migrated into the district of another. Other significant reasons for the decrease in population may be venereal disease, abortion, and contraception, and the high infant mortality rate, though abortion is said to be practised only in the larger towns and before marriage. Infant mortality is probably the greatest single cause of the decline; many infants die of malaria.²⁸

No detailed analysis has yet been made of the 1952 Census figures which, for the Northern Provinces, show an increase of about 23,000 on those of 1931.

Density of Population

The following estimates are available:

<i>Division or District</i>	<i>Persons per square mile</i>	<i>Date</i>
Bida	35.22	1931 Census
Agai-Lapai	21.7	" "
Lafiagi-Pategi	30	" "
Badeggi	22	1934 (local census)
Gbangba	50	" " "
Jima-Doko	53	" " "
Kacha	60	" " "
Mokwa	12	" " "
Kutigi	13	" " "
"Trans-Kaduna" (districts west of Kaduna river)	17.6	" " "
"Cis-Kaduna" (districts east of Kaduna river)	55	" " "

The difference in density east and west of the Kaduna River may be explained by the Fulani conquest of the Nupe and the consequent emigration of the Fulani rulers and their dependents into the area east of the Kaduna.²⁹

²⁷ Nadel (1942, pp. 9-10) gives as examples the Ganagana (Dibo) who were sometimes classed as a separate group, and the "Tapa" (Takpa) who were listed separately in the Southern Provinces until it was discovered in 1936 that Takpa was the Yoruba name for Nupe.

²⁸ See Brooke, *Census of Nigeria* (1931) Vol. II, p. 29; Nadel, 1942, pp. 6-8; Weatherhead, M.S.

²⁹ Nadel, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY¹

The Nupe kingdom was, according to their own traditions, founded by the culture hero Tsoede or Edegi, born, according to the genealogies of the Nupe kings, early in the 15th century when the Nupe were grouped in various small chieftainships subject to the *Ata* of Igala at Idah, to whom an annual tribute of slaves—traditionally sisters' sons, had to be paid. The son of the *Ata* at this time was hunting in Nupe country, fell in love with a chief's daughter, lived with her for some time, and she became pregnant. On the death of his father the son returned to Idah to succeed but he left a chain and a ring with the woman to give to their child when it was born. This child was Tsoede, who, when he was 30 years old, was sent to Idah by his mother's brother as part of the slave tribute. He enjoyed considerable favour and success at his father's court but was eventually forced to flee because of the jealousy of his half-brothers. He travelled upstream in a bronze canoe to his own country and after many adventures established himself as king of the Nupe.

Tsoede is held to have introduced the arts of iron and brass working and the practice of human sacrifices. He died at the reputed age of 120, on one of his military expeditions to the north in which direction the Nupe kingdom was then expanding. Some of his belongings, two stirrups and a sword, are still treasured by the people of Gbagede, who are not Nupe but Kamberi.²

The first Nupe king to become a Moslem is thought to have reigned about 1770. The Nupe kingdom reached the height of its power during the periods when the *Etsu* Ma'azuṅ was on the throne (1759-67 and 1778-95).

After the Fulani conquered the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria in the Jihad of 1805, the Nupe came under the domination of the dynasty of the Emir of Gwandu. About 1810 Mallam Dendo, a Fulani from Kebbi, who was to play an important part in its history, appeared in Nupe country as an itinerant preacher, diviner, and charm seller. He gathered around him a following of cattle Fulani, Hausa and Fulani mercenaries, merchants and priests. Taking advantage of the dissensions which broke out after *Etsu* Ma'azuṅ's death, he established himself as a military leader. The Nupe kingdom was at this time split into two halves, with *Etsu* Jimada ruling at Gbara, the ancient capital, and *Etsu* Maija at the newly built capital of Raba on the Niger. Maija gained the support of Mallam Dendo and his followers and attacked *Etsu* Jimada, routing his forces and killing him. Eventually, however, fearing that Mallam Dendo might become a dangerous rival, he drove him from his territory across the Niger into the Yoruba country of Ilorin, and later made war against him and the ruling Fulani in Ilorin. Here Maija was defeated and driven back into the interior of Nupe country, leaving Raba open to Mallam Dendo who established himself there as ruler over the Nupe.

After his death in 1833 Dendo's second son Usman Zaki succeeded him and the old Nupe dynasty, exiled to Zugurma, abandoned all claim to the rulership. For some 10 years there were constant intrigues and quarrels among the sons of Mallam Dendo, and wars against other tribes. Usman Zaki renounced the throne in 1841 but reoccupied it in 1850. Bida then became the centre of the new kingdom in a period of comparative peace.

Between 1870 and 1890 the Niger Company established trading posts along the Niger. They, and later the Government of Nigeria, detached outlying portions of the kingdom. The Yagba and Bunu Yoruba, Gbari, Basa, and Kakanda became independent in 1900-05; the territories on the south and west banks of the Niger were taken away and given to the Emirs of Ilorin, Shonga, Lafiagi, and Pategi. The northern Nupe territories came under the Emir of Kontagora, and only Bida Division remained of the former Nupe kingdom. As a result of this fragmentation there are now groups of Nupe in areas under non-Nupe chiefs.

¹ For fuller accounts of Nupe history see Temple, 1919, pp. 524-8; Nadel, 1942, pp. 72-8; Hermon-Hodge, 1929, pp. 102-10.

² According to Nadel. But Mathews (MS, 1926) describes them as "pagan Nupe."

LANGUAGE

Nupe belongs to the Larger Unit³ of Kwa languages of West Africa, which also includes the languages or dialects spoken by the Igbara, Igala, Idoma, and other peoples dealt with in this volume of the Ethnographic Survey.⁴

The Nupe Dialect Cluster together with those of Igbara and Gbari⁵ make up the Nupe Language Group. But the Nupe are not linguistically homogeneous or exclusive. The bi-lingual Gbari of Paiko and Lapai also speak Nupe, while some of the split-off sections and colonies of Nupe have lost their native tongue. The Kakanda are said to speak a closely related language which may be a Nupe dialect. Although Gbari is a separate dialect cluster of the Nupe Language Group much of its vocabulary is identical with Nupe, which also has a close structural resemblance to both Gbari and Kakanda.

The Nupe cluster consists of five markedly different dialects: Nupe proper; Ebe, spoken by the Ebe sub-tribe; Zitako or Dibo, more closely related to Gbari; Kupa, spoken by the Kupa and Cekpan sub-tribes; Basa-Nge, spoken by the Basa-Nge, a split-off section. The Gbedye sub-tribe are said to have spoken a separate dialect which is now lost. Nupe proper is spoken by the Kyedye sub-tribe and others and there are only insignificant dialectal differences between the areas where it is spoken. Bida Nupe ("higher Nupe") exhibits a fondness for Hausa words and phrases which have replaced many Nupe words. The other four dialects differ considerably from each other and from Nupe as spoken in the rest of the country, but most of the speakers of these dialects are bi-lingual and also speak Nupe proper.^{6A}

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Nupe country is low-lying and undulating, not more than 200 ft. above sea level in most parts. A few ridges of rocky hills and some flat-topped hillocks rise above the plain; the highest of these are not more than 800 ft. above sea level. On the banks of the Niger there are stretches of thick riverain forest alternating with shrub and low bush. During the rains, the forest-covered banks and the open bush are flooded far inland and become vast swamps.

The Niger and the Kaduna Rivers form the two axes of the country. A network of smaller rivers and creeks, rich in fish, provides an efficient system of natural irrigation. Upstream from Jebba Island the Niger is narrow, with rapids and dangerous rocky passages. Between Jebba Island and Baro it is broad and navigable for big steamers for half the year.

The soil is mostly rich and fertile, especially in the thinly populated districts to the west of the Kaduna River. Round Bida town fertility has been much reduced by over-cultivation. The soil consists of red earth mixed with laterite and is rich in silicates. There is some iron ore which is mined by the natives on the slopes of the low broken hills.

The vegetation is typical for an area of transition from the southern forest belt to the northern savannah. Narrow strips or patches of thick forest vegetation lie in the river valleys and watercourses; inland, thick forest, shrub, and orchard bush alternate with open parkland, except round Bida and Agaie, where it has been cleared by intensive cultivation. There is virgin forest west of Kaduna.

Nupe country is the most northern area for oil-palm, yam, and the southern variety of maize; it is at the southern limit for date-palm, shea-nut, and millet. Other trees are: locust-bean, indigo, silk-cotton, mango (a European importation), kola-nut, and banana.⁶

³ Westermann and Bryan, 1952, pp. 85-6. Their terminology is used here.

⁴ See below, pp. 55-155.

⁵ To be dealt with in a forthcoming volume of the Survey.

^{6A} Nadel, 1942, pp. 13-14, 18, 23, 132; 1940, p. 165; Westermann, 1935; Meek, 1925, p. 137 (and map); Temple, 1919, pp. 113, 117, 320, 324.

⁶ Nadel, 1942, p. 1; 1940a, p. 194.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

GENERAL

Most of the Nupe participate in a complex exchange-economy. Before the introduction of British money, cowrie shells were used as currency and are still used for funerals, and in reckoning marriage and other traditional payments.

The trans-Kaduna area and the country north of Bida (e.g., in Lemu), where the land is fertile and plentiful, is the most prosperous. Wealth is greater where the household has a large labour unit or where a craft is practised in addition to farming work. Bida town exhibits greater extremes of poverty and wealth than the rest of the country but outstanding differences are not between individuals, but between groups, for example, urban and rural populations. It is said to be unusual to see badly-clothed men, women, or children, and under-nourishment is rare.

The traditional political offices are no longer inseparably linked with wealth, though high social status still attaches to them. Members of the *elite* can maintain their prestige fairly cheaply, as symbols of status (glazed turban or silver sword) are either heirlooms or not costly; the inherited house shows status even if in disrepair. Polygyny is facilitated by the low marriage payment for "marriage in the family" and travelling can be sustained by claiming hospitality from relatives.²

AGRICULTURE³

Nupe farming shows considerable technical knowledge and little magic or ritual is associated with it. Shifting cultivation is practised but plots are worked for 3–5 years (Doko), 4–5 years (Mokwa), and 6–7 years (Kutigi) before they are allowed to lie fallow for from 4 to 15 years. Rotation of crops is not generally practised though Line reported it from the area round Jima, where three years of groundnuts were followed by two of guinea-corn. Intercropping is practised and two or three crops are often grown together. The size of a plot worked by one man is usually 2–2½ acres.

A large heavy hoe (*zuku*) is used for throwing up mounds and ridges, and a small hoe (*dugba*) for weeding and lighter work. A long bush knife (*gada*), now made of European manufacture, is used for cutting grain stalks and digging out yams.

Farms are cleared and burnt during the dry season. First-year cultivation after clearing is in mounds; those made for yams are 2–3 ft. high, 4–5 ft. apart, and in rows 6 ft. apart. Subsequent cultivation is in ridges 1 ft. high and 3 ft. apart. Groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and some vegetables are planted in this way. Mars cultivation is carried out in small areas of 4–6 parallel ridges. Around Doko (Ber sub-tribe) manure is obtained from the cattle of nomad Fulani, who are invited to camp on fallow plots during the dry season.

In the area west of the Kaduna River the chief cash crop is groundnuts, and cotton also grows well there. The staple food crops are millet, sorghum, yams, and to a lesser extent, rice. Cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes are less important. The most profitable commercial crops are rice, groundnuts, cotton, and shea-nut. There is a poorer range of crops round Bida town owing to the scarcity of land; fewer yams are grown there than elsewhere and there is no bulrush millet.

In the Nupe areas of Ilorin Emirate yams are not regarded as a Nupe crop but in close contact with Yoruba farmers is said to have improved the Nupe methods of cultivation. In Share⁴ each farmer has two farms, one for grain and the other for

¹ See below, p. 43.

² Nadel, 1942, pp. 339–65; Line, 1947.

³ Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–14, 237–8; Line, 1947.

⁴ Anon. 1934–5.

yams, where beans and other crops may also be sown. In Lanwa⁵ yams and guinea-corn are planted on the same plot in alternate years, but where the land is less exhausted yams and cotton may be planted together on the same plot. In Kakanda yams were hardly grown at all when Meek was writing (1917),⁶ and guinea-corn was the staple.

Two types of millet—bulrush millet and "late" millet—are widely grown. Besides being staple crops, these are the only grains which may be used for ritual offerings. Cassava, introduced by the Hausa since 1910, is of minor importance and is grown during the dry season following the rice crop on irrigated land. Two varieties of rice are grown and practically all of it goes to the south as a cash crop. Onions are grown after rice in the river marshes.⁷

Within the settlements, house plots, often tended by old men, are cultivated, the main crops being green vegetables, beans, sorrel, red peppers, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and hemp. Sugar-cane, rice, and bananas are grown on the strips of marsh running through Bida town.⁸

The Bataci and Kyedye sub-tribes, who are mainly canoe-men and fishermen, have more recently been paying greater attention to agriculture. They grow catch crops of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and rice on their small marshland farms. There are generally two harvests each year, crops being planted as the Niger floods recede. Deep-water rice seed was asked for by a large number of Kede District inhabitants for cultivation when fishing was slack. Round Muregi rice has recently been introduced.⁹

Some crops (yams, sweet potatoes, etc.) are stored on the farm; others in home-stead granaries (*edo*). Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed; bulrush millet may have to be dried in an oven before storing. Crops for export are not stored.

The Government established 17 mixed farms around Bida Emirate during 1937-40. Each was about 12 acres and was equipped initially with a plough and two bulls, and employed two labourers.¹⁰

The soil and climate are not, on the whole, conducive to successful tree cultivation, except in the forest area west of the Kaduna River, where considerable initiative has been shown in tree-planting. The only trees to be cultivated are the citrus and mango (recent introductions) and the banana. With the exception of the oil-palm and kola, the produce of all trees is collected by women. Kola-nuts are collected by men; the produce of the oil-palm is divided between the occupier of the land and the chief of the town. Trees growing on farms are left standing and not cut down.

The banana is cultivated only round Bida, Pategi, and Labozhi. Kola (*ebi*) is grown mainly by the Kusopa of Labozhi and its cultivation is a long and difficult process. The locust-bean grows well in the town and open bush and is one of the most important trees in Nupe. The skins of the bean are used for dye and for ink, the powder in the pods for sweetening, while the seeds are an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking. The shea-nut grows wild in thin bush country; it is picked by the women, who also extract the fat (shea-butter). Even remote hamlets have their shea-kilns and the shea-nut is the main cash crop, 75% being sold as dried nuts for export. It is little used locally, except for lamp-oil. The oil-palm grows near watercourses and in the dense forest near Yeti. The extraction of the oil is women's work as is the manufacture of soap from the oil. The oil is most important in Nupe cooking but not in external exchange. Indigo grows wild but is occasionally cultivated in two forms, grass and tree. Men make and use dye from the grass and women that procured from the trees. It is traded to Yoruba.

⁵ Davies, 1920.

⁶ 1917.

⁷ Nadel, 1942, pp. 205-7.

⁸ Ibid.

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Plants important for trade and in native industry include cotton, henna (*lahi*) and hemp, both introduced from Hausa country, and gourds. The by-products of agriculture, such as grain stalks, are used by the cultivator and his family for making fences, beds, and mats; sorghum stalks yield black and red vegetable dyes. Occasionally large non-fruit-bearing trees are cut down and sold to carpenters.¹¹

ORGANIZATION AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

A two-fold principle of collective family work (*efakó*) and individual work (*bucá*) applies to farm labour, and to its products, income, and granaries. Each male member of the household owns a *bucá* farm, while all work on the *efakó* farm the produce of which is stored in the *efakó* granaries, the head controlling the disposal. Sometimes forms of productive labour other than farm work are organized according to the *efakó* system, e.g., indigo-dyeing at Mokwa.

All those who share in the *efakó* group work are housed, clothed, and fed, and have their tax and marriage payments met by the household head, who also supplies tools and pays for their repair. Personal requirements beyond this are paid for from the proceeds of the *bucá* work. The present tendency is for large *efakó* groups to disintegrate on the death of the household head, the members of the group demanding a larger measure of freedom than the *efakó* system provides.

Mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour is of two types: *egbe*, for *efakó* farm work (mainly tilling and weeding), and for work for the community as a whole, e.g., building or roofing of a chief's house, repair of a bush bridge or road or of a town wall or the N.A. rest-house, etc. *Egbe* farm work is, on the whole performed by younger people, often members of one or more of the age-set associations; it is accompanied by drummers and musicians and concludes with a feast. Help is generally enlisted for tilling and for the first and second weeding, and *egbe* is performed first and on the largest scale on the chief's farm.

The second type of mutual assistance—*dzolo*—is less important. It is an arrangement among a number of farmers to work on each other's farms in turn usually for the harvesting of groundnuts, cotton, and beans.

Wage labour (*kantsú*; Hausa, *lada*) plays an insignificant part in Nupe production. It is found only in large commercial centres, such as Kacha and Jebba and in Bida for temporary employment only.

Women do practically no farm work, but they undertake the processing of agricultural produce for market and the actual marketing, and the exploitation of the shea-nut tree is entirely in the hands of women.¹²

Floor-beating is an important women's task and is made something of a ceremony. While the old women pour water on to it the young women beat the floor with wooden beaters wrapped in rugs in time to the rhythm of drums.¹³

LIVESTOCK

Cattle are of minor importance in Nupe economy. They are owned only by butchers who buy from Bornu and Fulani traders. The cattle are of the northern humped breed and are not immune from trypanosomiasis. Sheep are rarely kept for breeding but are fattened and sold.

No pigs are kept and no pork is eaten.¹⁴ Every household keeps chickens which are bought and sold regularly in the food markets of all the larger villages. Eggs are not marketed and are eaten only rarely in Nupe country. Donkeys are kept as transport animals. Horses (mainly in Bida) are a symbol of high rank and status.¹⁵

¹¹ Nadel, 1942, pp. 59, 230-7, 238, 205-14; Line, 1947: Temple 1919, p. 236.

¹² Nadel, 1942, pp. 241-56.

¹³ Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. P. G. Harris.

¹⁴ Pigs were reported in Sharagi (Share) in 1918 and Pategi in 1912 (Notes by Biscoe and Budgen).

¹⁵ Nadel, 1942, pp. 201-4.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Hunting is a significant if minor activity in some villages where it is practised by the special guild of hunters under their hereditary head *ndace*, "father of the hunters"). Nets, traps, bows-and-arrows, and occasionally flintlocks are used. Among the separated sections of the Nupe in the more sparsely populated areas, e.g., the Ebe and Basa-Nge, hunting plays a much more important part in the local economy. In the country surrounding Bida hunting has disappeared altogether.

The smaller rivers and creeks of Nupe country are rich in fish,¹⁶ which are caught by spear, line, and basket; larger fish are also caught by traps and seine nets. The Kyedye use hooks laid in lines of about 100. The Bataci fish mainly in pools to which special rights attach (see below, p. 40). Nupe women trade dried fish to the Igbona (Yoruba) area of Ilorin Emirate. Dried fish are also exported to Ilorin and farther south from Pategi-Lafiagi.

MARKETS AND TRADE¹⁷

Bida town has six markets, including one night market, and every other town and village has its regular market. Specialist traders travel long distances to the markets, though women who trade only as a side-line rarely attend markets more than 10 miles from their homes. Villages on the trade routes to places such as Bida or Ilorin become "relay stations" at which local traders sell to wholesalers. The stores of the European and Asiatic traders are centres for the marketing of commercial crops.

Specialist traders are usually men and women from Bida town. Those who go outside Nupe country may stay months or years in one place, sometimes forming a Nupe enclave. There is a distinction between traders and brokers (*dilali*); the latter undertake to sell goods on commission and are organized under a guild-head.

Market prices are well defined and those of local produce fluctuate by season. But many goods have fixed prices and bargaining is rare except for the expensive, more rarely sold commodities.¹⁸ Prices in Bida market are nearly always higher than in the country districts. In the country districts food prices are commonly quoted in cowries, the exchange value of which varies.

Railways, river steamers, and road transport have become important for marketing and in the development of production, and Nupe country is an important transit area in the north-south trade across Nigeria. The Kyedye¹⁹ sub-tribe have a monopoly of the river traffic. Muregi is an important ferry point for Hausa traders. The ferrying rights and duties pass from compound to compound in a cycle which, together with the ferrying fees, is regulated by the Chief of the Kyedye and the village head of Muregi. The Kakanda, who are traders, formerly had the monopoly of the river traffic south of Egan, but now share this with the Kyedye. The Basa-Nge²⁰ also trade by canoe: their exports are handled by Nupe, Kakanda, and Igbara canoe owners, and include palm kernels, palm-oil, and cotton to Lokoja and Itope, yams, maize, and beans to Onitsha.

Exports from Nupe country consist mainly of agricultural produce—rice, shea-nuts, good quality kola-nuts, smoked fish—and products of the local industries, cloth, straw hats, mats, etc. Imports include foodstuffs, mainly palm-oil, salt, and cheap kola-nuts, also potash and livestock. Re-exports include potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. The import or export trade in one commodity is generally combined with a return trade in another.

¹⁶ See Hermon-Hodge, 1929, p. 181 for a list of Niger fish with their Nupe names.

¹⁷ This section is based mainly on Nadel, 1942, pp. 314-34, and relates to the period before the 1939-45 war.

¹⁸ But according to Malam Aliyu Bida, Nupe are excellent bargainers and are known to the Hausa as *Masu Kolo Kolo*, "the hagglers."

¹⁹ Notes on Kede District, 1950.

²⁰ Hopkins, 1934.

INDUSTRIES, CRAFTS, AND PROFESSIONS

Industries and crafts are practised for the most part by men in their homes or in attached workshops. Some involve co-operative group production, for which the labour unit is an *efakó*, corresponding to the *efakó* for farm work (p. 26). In most cases such work is supplemented by individual (*bucá*) work. Slave labour was formerly employed. Production is organized in guilds controlled by a guild-head and thus considerable control is exercised, through the political system, over all the more important industries of the country.

Craft guilds control the mining and smelting of ores, iron-working, brass-working, and silver-smithing, glass making, weaving, bead-work, building, wood-work and carpentry, and butchery. Individual crafts are tailoring and embroidery, leather-work, indigo-dyeing, straw-hat making, mat and bag making, basket-work, rope and twine making. Cloth, mats, bags, rope, and twine are commonly made in many villages, though they appear for sale only in the larger markets. Free professions include barber-doctors, drummers and musicians, and dancers and singers (men and women).²¹

Iron-ore workers are called *edudacuži*. The mines are on the slopes of the low, flat-topped hills and consist of shallow pits; the smelting furnaces are close by. A large proportion of the iron now used in smithing is bought in bars from European firms, but native-smelted iron is considered superior as it is said to be stronger and more durable. It is regularly used for the blacksmiths' own tools.²²

Blacksmiths are called *tswata* or *tswata gbagba*. There are one or two workshops in every village, and three "wards" of smiths in Bida. The guild-head lives in Bida and his control extends in certain respects over the whole country. It is a "closed" craft. The forge is generally in a separate hut at some distance from the compound. There are usually three or four workers, who are related, in a unit. The work is mainly *efakó* but there is some *bucá* work, consisting mainly of repairs to hoes, etc. The main products are blades for hoes, bush knives (though these are now mostly bought from the European trading stores), large nails and hooks for building, and the small brackets used in canoe making; blacksmiths also make some of their own tools, hammers, etc. Charcoal required for the furnaces is produced at intervals in quantities by two or three men of one workshop. The early rain is the smiths' busy season.

There are a number of blacksmiths in Basa-Nge District who sell their wares in the Igala markets.²³

Brass- and silver-smiths work almost exclusively in Bida town where the furnace is often in the entrance-hut of the compound. The materials are obtained by melting down pennies (for "copper"), rifle cartridges and rods (for brass), and silver coins. The main products are brass and copper sword-hilts, daggers, horse-trappings, bowls, jugs, trays, ladles, and receptacles; brass, aluminium, and silver bangles, rings, hair-pins, and chains; signet-rings are made by a crude *cire-perdue* method. Some work is designed specifically for European buyers. The work is largely individual, but there is a system of apprenticeship.²⁴

Weavers, known as *edeluciži*, are found in three guild sections in the three parts of Bida town. Most of them are Nupeized Yoruba. The looms are of the narrow horizontal treadle type producing cloth in strips 5 ins. wide, and of a standard length, approximately 10 yds. They are set up in a row in a half-open shed in the courtyard. The thread is now mostly of European manufacture, native-ginned and dyed cotton being rarely used. Members of the same household occupy a common workshop, but the work is mainly individual (*bucá*). A broad upright loom is used

²¹ Nadel, 1942, pp. 257-9, 293-4, 299; Line, 1947.

²² Nadel, op. cit., pp. 259-69.

²³ Nadel, loc. cit.; Hopkins, 1934.

²⁴ Nadel, op. cit., pp. 269-74.

by women mostly among the Bida upper classes.²⁵ Their work is not organized in a guild.

Beadworkers are known as *lantana* and their craft, a luxury industry, consists of the "refining" of crude beads bought from Hausa and Arab traders; it is carried out in the entrance-hut of the compound and is entirely individual. The majority of the workers are paid at piece-rates, one of them acting as contractor, and the chain of finished beads is traded by his wife. This industry is being extinguished by imports of European beads.²⁶

Glass-makers (masaga) claim to have originated in Egypt. Members of the guild are Moslems. The head (*tura*) is elected by popular vote. They have the most strongly organized and conspicuously self-contained of the Nupe craft guilds and there is a regular system of apprenticeship. This craft is mainly concentrated in Bida town. Black glass (*bikini*) is made, but this is being largely replaced by coloured glass (*kwalaba*) obtained by melting down bottles which have been bought by women traders. The native glass is made in one workshop, while fabrication is completed in others. Glass-workers have their market in their own quarter. Their main products are brightly coloured beads and bangles. Unlike other craftsmen, glass-workers undertake no agricultural work. There is no *bucá* work, all work being *efakó* with small wages.²⁷

Tailoring and embroidery are individual crafts and members of the same household may belong to different professions. Tailors, including machine tailors, sometimes visit surrounding villages on their market days to find work. Their main products are caps, plain and embroidered gowns, trousers, and saddle-cloths. Their embroidered gowns are famous all over Nigeria.

Straw-hat makers use a "shape" of clay or wood and the crown of the hat is sometimes partly covered with leather. This is considered a "lazy" occupation, but a few craftsmen who have been taught European designs are well-to-do.

Mat-makers of certain villages, e.g., Kutigi, are famous, and make oval or square, multi-coloured grass mats. The Basa-Nge of Igala Division make baskets and mats.

Leather-workers formerly supplied a large part of the military equipment of the Nupe army—saddlery, leather shields, sword sheaths, quivers for arrows, etc. They work mainly in Bida town.²⁸

Barber-doctors cut hair for men, women, and children; shave the head and cut the tribal marks of new-born babies at the naming ceremony and cut toe and finger nails. Individuals specialize in tattooing, medicines for diseases, contraceptives, cures for barrenness, treatment of lunacy, inhalants (*turare*), and minor operations such as circumcision and blood-letting. Hausa barbers remove the uvula of children.

Bida barbers, who are busy and prosperous, do not farm and their sons always become barbers, but this is not a "closed" craft. The length of apprenticeship varies. The most highly paid jobs are regarded by the family group as *efakó*, other jobs as *bucá*. There is a three-fold guild organization in Bida, corresponding to the territories of the three royal houses. Contributions from all *efakó* income are paid to the guild-head, who administers the guild fund, deducting money for common expenses and paying the rest in full to each member of the guild in turn.

There are also "medicine-men," whose craft is based on magical ideas and closely connected with divining and the Nupe religious system.²⁹

Drummers and dancers, organized in mainly hereditary guilds, but with a system of apprenticeship, are found in all villages. Drumming may be recreational, for ceremony and ritual or ancillary to agricultural production (e.g., farming *egbe*). In

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 278-82.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 282-5.

²⁷ Nadel, op cit., pp. 274-8; 1940b, pp. 85-6; Robertson, 1935.

²⁸ Nadel, 1942, pp. 286-90; Line, 1947; Hopkins, 1934.

²⁹ Nadel, op. cit., pp. 298-301, and see below, pp. 46-7.

the villages drumming is mainly a side-line to farming. Drummers in Bida form small bands or companies, the origins of which, and the type of their performance, vary. Both men and women perform and women sing. Members of a single group may come from different families. There are no *efako* arrangements. Such a band may be in a *bara* (client) relationship to a nobleman. The various bands or companies do not co-operate. The drums are made by wood-workers on the river.³⁰

Western crafts are practised for wages in the workshops of the N.A. Public Works Dept. These craftsmen include blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, and bricklayers. Temporary unskilled labour is employed mainly in occasional work demanding a large body of unskilled labour, such as construction work of various kinds. Most of these labourers go home and return to their permanent work at the end of their temporary employment. Those who are farmers seek temporary employment during the dry season only, to supplement the normal source of income.³¹

Women's crafts

Pottery is practised individually. Jebba Island, Baro, Badeggi, and Bida are famous for their pottery and there is a regular trade in both potters' clay and pots. The main products are small water jugs and large water containers. Clay is prepared from swamps at Gbako River, at Badeggi, and sold by the villagers. It is tempered with powdered potsherd or brick. The building of the pots is individual work, but firing is undertaken collectively. Pots are simply fired, then given a brown wash or blackened with a concoction of shea-nut bark.

Shea-butter manufacture is carried out by women, but the roasting ovens are built by men.

Indigo-dyeing is practised only by a few *Konú* groups, where the men are weavers and the women dyers. The indigo-grass and the indigo-tree are cultivated by men, but where the indigo is picked and prepared from wild growing grass, the work is done by women. The dye-pot platforms are made by women; the dyeing is carried out individually. There are a few groups of male dyers (e.g., in Mokwa), who use a rather different technique from that employed by the women.

Women's weaving is done on upright looms 21 ins. broad, which may be of Yoruba origin. Among the Basa-Nge, older women weave patterned raffia. Fishing-nets in Kede are made by old men and women from *rama* fibre.³²

Weapons and tools include spears, bows and poisoned arrows used by the more remote groups, and knives with blades 8 to 10 ins. long. A few men use flint-locks, and formerly a whole section of the Nupe army was equipped with guns.

Dug-out canoes are used by the Bataci as well as the Kyedye. Those of the latter are large and square with caulked top strakes. They are mostly obtained from Onitsha and the lower Benue.

Musical instruments include a central-hole flute (the blow-hole is midway between the ends of the tube), pipes, clarinets (of Hausa origin), various drums and rattles, long bronze trumpets (forming part of the royal insignia), and, in some areas, bull-roarers and animal horns.

Gabi figures are statues of different origins. Two bronze figures stand unprotected in the centre of the village of Jebba Island near a dilapidated hut which is said to have been formerly a temple. There are seven figures at Tada village which are kept in a round hut and carefully tended; some of these are human figures and some animal and they appear to be of diverse origins, but are regarded traditionally as having been left by Tsoede on his flight up the Niger.³³

³⁰ Nadel, *op cit.*, pp. 301-3. For an outline of the *bara* system see below, p. 35.

³¹ Nadel, *op cit.*, pp. 304-8.

³² Nadel, *op cit.*, pp. 235, 293-7; Hopkins, 1934; Notes on Kede District, 1950.

³³ Temple, 1919, pp. 114, 117, 198, 332; Meek, 1925, vol. I. p. 108; Walker, 1934; see also Palmer, 1931.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

LOCAL AND KINSHIP GROUPING

Descent and succession to offices and the inheritance of rights to land and other property are normally patrilineal among all Nupe. At the same time kin ties traced through the mother may afford opportunities for advancement and, especially in Bida the capital, maternal connections with persons of rank may be used to advantage in the political sphere. The Nupe term *dengi* connotes kinship in the widest sense to include all recognized cognates, but the effective *dengi* of an individual consists mainly of his agnates or patrilineal relatives descended from a common ancestor several generations back. Maternal kin ties, on the other hand, are rarely traced or effective beyond one or two generations. Groups of male patrikin are significant both as the nuclei of residential groups in extended families and in the status system of the chiefdom.

The domestic unit is usually an elementary or polygynous family, i.e., a man, his wife or wives, and unmarried children.¹ This, or a larger group consisting of a man, his wives, married sons, their wives and children, or of a set of brothers, their wives, children, and grandchildren, the nucleus of which is thus a patrilineage of small span, inhabits a division of the compound, keeps house and eats in common, and forms a single productive or labour unit. No special name exists for this group apart from that referring to its organization as a labour unit or *efakó*. The larger unit was formerly general, but under modern conditions the family has tended to divide when sons become adult. The domestic family normally forms part of a larger social unit, the "house" (*emi*), which is both a kinship and a territorial group and may also be referred to as a *kalamba*, a term for the common gateway or entrance to an enclosed compound. An *emi* may be localized in one compound or may be distributed over a number of adjacent compounds, occupying either the whole or part of a ward (*efu*). In Bida the *emi* tends to be more widely scattered. The nucleus of an *emi* again consists of a body of patrikin to which wives and others are attached. Its head is known as the *emitsó* ("owner of the house"), a position which falls to the senior male member of the group, who is succeeded by the next in seniority of the same generation, and so on. When a section of an *emi* separates physically it continues to recognize its former head while he lives, but on his death it often attains an independent position with its own head. The size of the *emi* varies considerably. In Bida, those of commoners are often small and may contain no more than six or eight individuals; in the smaller settlements and among the nobility they may include as many as 60 persons.

Beyond these groups the Nupe also often recognize kinship over a still wider field. Thus a whole village may be regarded as descended from one ancestor, but such essentially mythical kinship links do not involve any specific kinship claims and obligations.

The three royal houses of Nupe may be regarded as large lineages or "clans," for they claim to observe rigid patrilineal descent believed to have proceeded from sanctified "first ancestors."

FORMS OF SETTLEMENT: HOUSE TYPES²

Nupe live in compact villages or towns (*ezi* is the term for both) which vary considerably in size; in Bida Emirate, besides the capital, there are three considerable settlements: Doko (800), Mokwa (2,000), Kutigi (3,000). Some, on the other

¹ Nadel, 1942, pp. 25-33.

² Nadel, 1942, pp. 24, 27-32, 34, 36-226-7; 1938; Temple, 1919, p. 324; Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. Harris.

hand, are hardly larger than a *tunga* (see below). An *ezi* used to be encircled by a large wall, the ruins of which can still be seen in many places, which formed a protection from the dangers of war. Some Nupe villages of to-day have sprung from the amalgamation of smaller groups, fusing for purposes of protection against Fulani raiders.

To-day there is at least one small mosque in every Nupe settlement except in the riverain villages, while pagan shrines are concealed in the houses. All settlements have good wells and round roasting-ovens of red clay. A square of open booths forms the market. To the west of every village is an open space (*finzo*) where corn is threshed.

An *ezi* usually has several *tunga* settlements or hamlets; Kutigi, for example, has six, founded between 1860 and 1910. The *tunga* are much smaller "daughter settlements" or "colonies" of the *ezi*. They seldom consist of more than three family groups (*emi*—see p. 31 above); they are less permanent than the "real" village, and lack the religious and ancestral bonds which tie a village to its locality. They have no separate markets or age-sets. *Tunga* settlements have been formed by groups moving out into the bush in search of new farmland; they are always referred to as the *tunga* of a certain *ezi* and rarely, if ever, develop into villages themselves. Close contact, intermarriage, and new emigration link a *tunga* with its *ezi*.

The ward (*efu*) is a sector of a large village or town and is made up of a number of compounds; except in some riverside villages they are often separated from each other by stretches of open land or cultivated fields studded with clumps of trees. Each *efu* has its own name, derived from a topographical peculiarity or a sociological feature, or from the origin of the inhabitants. The number of *efu* in an *ezi* varies; the old city of Bida had four, Doko has five.

The walled compound or "house" (*emi*), already mentioned with reference to its occupants, consists of a number of huts, mostly round, with very thin walls of clay and grass-thatched roofs. The high mud wall surrounding the *emi* opens upon a path or open space where there is a gateway or entrance hall to the compound, consisting of a larger hut known as *katamba*. The *katamba* is used as a meeting place for the men, as a guest house for strangers, or for the carrying out of part-time industries such as mat- or net-making. Within the *emi* are smaller partitions and a number of smaller *katamba* invisible from the outside. A chief sometimes has a larger and more imposing *katamba* with a high gabled roof and windows. Huts and entrance hall are often decorated with ornaments worked in relief into the clay. Signs of occupational specialization, such as a blacksmith's furnace, are sometimes found. A man and each of his wives has a separate hut.

Granaries (*edo*) which stand among the living-huts in the compound, are egg-shaped, raised off the ground, about 7 ft. high and 4 ft. in diameter, with thick clay walls and a grass roof. The opening is about halfway up one side and has a clay lid. There are also cylindrical ovens, 5 ft. high and 3 ft. wide, for drying bulrush millet and shea-nuts, and for making soap, outside the compound. These are communal property, owned by the women.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM³

The political organization of the Nupe is centralized under the *Etsu* Nupe, who is the highest title-holder in a nobility graded by precedence but within which there is provision for promotion. Little is known of the system of kingship in pre-Fulani times, though some features from the ancient Nupe system doubtless survive in the original Nupe dynasty at Patigi. In former times there were ritual taboos in conformity with which the *Etsu* wore only white, ate food prepared only by his wives, and might not be seen eating by any stranger. The *ndakó gboyá* cult⁴ for

³ Nadel, 1942, pp. 87-91.

⁴ See below, pp. 48-9.

the detection and killing of witches might not be performed in or near the town in which the *Etsu* was living, nor might anyone be put to death there. All these features, together with the ancient rule of inheritance whereby the first son born during his father's reign as *Etsu* became the heir, have disappeared, while a new background of respect for the memory of Mallam Dendo,⁵ the first of the Fulani rulers of Nupe, has been created. What was once probably a divine kingship has been replaced by a system of rule by the militarily strong and the king has become *primus inter pares* among the hierarchy of rank holders.

The three dynasties stemming from Mallam Dendo to-day succeed to the throne in strict rotation. The *Etsu* is the head of the reigning house, the *Shaba*⁶ ("heir-presumptive") the head of the dynasty next in succession, and the *Kpotuy* the head of the third house. Bida town is divided into three sections (*eka*) each bearing the name of one of the royal dynasties and each having its own royal palace. The country around is similarly divided into three parts.

Every *Etsu* Nupe has sought during his reign to increase the power and wealth of his house. Former sources of income were the royal monopoly of the kola-nut trade,⁷ the control of the *ndakó gboyá* anti-witchcraft society, and profits from the royal estates and from the slave trade. To-day, apart from his salary, the *Etsu* receives only profits from the royal estates and from occasional trading.

STATUS AND TITLES⁸

There are marked status differences in Nupe society and many symbols of social distinction, such as the wearing of an indigo-blue glazed turban by the nobility, ways of greeting equals and superiors, the giving of kola-nuts (the number and quality reflecting precisely the social status of the donor and recipient), and the right to go about on horseback. Families and lineages appear to fall into class divisions according to the status in the system of ranked titles ascribed to or achieved by some of their members. While each class is, in the main, a closed group, there are opportunities for promotion within the higher classes and also some inter-class nobility, whereby entry into the higher orders may be obtained through wealth, war service, marriage, or "clientship."⁹ Social ascent is controlled and marked by the hierarchy of titles. Within a grade of titles promotion to a higher title entails a reshuffle among the holders of the lower titles.

Of the three classes, the first, *waci* or *gitsúzi* (the royal nobility) consists of the descendants of Mallam Dendo in three royal houses, Usman Zaki, Masaba, and Umaru, under their heads, *Etsu*, *Shaba*, and *Kpotuy*. This class is detached in origin and status from the rest of the community on account of the part it played in the wars and its position as royal fief-holders (*egba*)¹⁰ in charge of large districts of the kingdom. The new king is elected from the *gitsúzi*, every title-holder in which has in principle a chance of becoming king, though the royal prince who succeeds to the throne will generally have attained the rank of *Shaba*.¹¹ As well as the reshuffle of personnel holding the various titles which takes place on the death of a high title-holder and the subsequent appointment of his successor, there is a large-scale exchange of residences, younger brothers or sons moving into houses vacated by the death or promotion of their older brothers or fathers, for the residences of

⁵ See above, p. 22.

⁶ This office has been allowed to lapse since 1935 and the main functions have devolved upon the next in rank.

⁷ i.e., the best kola-nuts grown at Labozhi.

⁸ Nadel, 1942, pp. 93-103.

⁹ See below, p. 35.

¹⁰ See below, p. 36.

¹¹ Nadel states that only twice was a man who had not acquired the title of *Shaba* (or *Kpotuy* if the *Shaba* had died) made *Etsu*. Of the 41 royal titles held in 1936, 10 were held by Usman Zaki, 17 by Masaba, and 14 by Umaru, the ruling house at that time. See Nadel, 1942, pp. 95-7, for a detailed list of titles held by the various houses in 1936. Apparently new titles are often introduced.

the highest *gitsù* ranks go with the title. First appointment to a title and promotion to a higher one are granted by the king in council with the royal princes and other officers of state. Any able-bodied man of senior age, proved loyalty, and ability and good health, of the Fulani families, is eligible for admission to a *gitsù* title, but favouritism, intrigue, and bribery also play a part, and the titles which a family has been able to accumulate are an indication of its influence at court and its favour with the ruling king. When a title-holder becomes incapable, through age or illness of fulfilling his duties, a younger man is appointed, the former holder being styled "old *Kpotuy*" or whatever the title may be. Nobody with any kind of deformity can hold a title, since the system was originally based on service in war and office vital to the safety of the state. Investiture takes place in the *Etsu's* house, in the presence of the *Alkali* or *Liman*, a propitious day having first been selected by mallams or diviners. The candidate is addressed by the *Etsu*, then clothed in cloak and embroidered gown by the *Alkali* who also places a turban on his head. After prayers in which all join, the new holder rides through the town accompanied by other title-holders, and dismounts to greet princes or heads of houses at the residences.

The second class is that to which the *ticiži* or *rowni* (office-holding nobility) belong. The name *rowni* means "turbans" and refers to the fact that the bestowal of such a title is symbolized by the gift of a turban from the king. There are three groups of *ticiži*, each of which is regarded as a sharply defined social order: the *sarakiži*, the *ena manži*, and the *ena wuži*. The *sarakiži* is a group of civil and military nobility consisting of town elders (*ena ndeji*) and war leaders (*ena 'kuy*). The second order, *ena manži*, comprises the mallams, the religious and judicial officials, such as the *Alkali* (judge), and the *Liman* (religious head), with their assistants and scribes. The third order, *ena wuži*, which is the lowest in rank but still possesses great influence, consists of the court slaves.

Many of the *saraki* titles are identical in name with those bestowed on the village elders, but the symbols of status, even when similar, refer to very different social contexts. *Saraki* titles are, like *gitsù* titles, generally granted by the *Etsu* in council with princes and other officers of state. Theoretically, at least, outsiders, even commoners, who have won his favour may be admitted to the ranks. Only a few of the higher titles, which have become the prerogatives of certain families, are hereditary. Several titles cannot be accumulated in a single family. They are bestowed exclusively on one member of the family group; no other close relative can then claim a title or office in addition to the one already bestowed on his "house." To-day wealth and financial influence are important factors in gaining titles and the *saraki* group includes rich traders, as well as descendants of the old official nobility of pre-Fulani Nupe, and Nupe families who became partisans of the Fulani conquerors. These *sarakiži* received no salary, but were formerly granted land and slaves.

The *Ndeji* ("father of the town"), the head of the *ena ndeji*, is in charge of the affairs of Bida and the most powerful of the officers of state because he is closest to the king. At the head of the other civil title-holders he holds the daily council (*nkó*) with the king himself. The military titles (*ena 'kuy*) were formerly those of war leaders, the different titles being associated with special responsibilities.

The *ena manži*, the order of mallams, is "a class between classes, a mobile privileged intelligentsia." It includes the *Alkali*, the *Liman*, and their assistants. The detailed knowledge of Moslem law and literature and the specialized training required limits the number of candidates. But the offices of *Liman* and *Alkali* are sometimes hereditary, reflecting a tradition of learning in certain families, and political influence, for many eminent mallams are of Fulani stock. Mallams are highly esteemed by everyone and are placed about commoners even when they are without rank or title and have only little learning. They are allowed to marry daughters and sisters of higher born families.

Below the *sarakizi* comes a group of minor office-holders, heads of the Bida craft guilds, who receive their titles and the customary gift of a turban from the *Etsu*. The head of the Bida brokers, who acts as an agent for the king in trade and commercial matters in the capital, holds a similar position.

The lowest titled class in the Nupe social order is that of the *ena wuži*, whose members bear the titles of the former court slaves.¹² Formerly these titles were held by men of high birth captured in war and given titles in return for loyal service; they could rise in the service of the king as bodyguards, police, messengers, tax collectors, etc. A new king usually took over the officials of his predecessor.

Below the orders of title-holders come the commoners (*talakizi*), who constitute the great majority of the population.

PATRONAGE¹³

A system of patronage or clientship is an important feature of Nupe society. The client (*bara*) attaches himself to the household of his patron as a servant or in some other capacity from which he may rise to the position of a trusted friend and may even marry into the patron's family. Clients may be divided into three categories: those who seek political protection without surrendering their independence, who do not work for their patron but are regarded rather as "adopted children"; those who are poor and anxious to avoid hard work on the land; and those who hope to achieve some eminence by attaching themselves to a man of position and influence. The clients of the royal princes may rise to high positions and eventually become the *bara* of a ruling king, their rank then being almost equal to that of the official nobility. Indeed, rich and ambitious men may even buy themselves a clientship in the house of a royal prince or of the king.

The system is beneficial to both parties, the client receiving material benefit and protection and possibly a title, and the patron acquiring servants, soldiers for the contingent he must provide for the king's army, and followers to add to his prestige.

AGE-SETS¹⁴

Boys and young men in a village or town are grouped in three graded associations: *ena wāwāgiži*, for boys between the ages of about 10 and 15; *ena dzākangiži*, of ages c. 15 to 20, and *ena gbarifuži*, of ages c. 20 to 30. Every age-set (*ena*) passes successively through these grades. Except in the capital, there is only one set or association in each grade within the local community at any one time. Each is led by an older man or by a boy from the highest rank of the next grade. The head of the highest, known as *ndākotsi*, is chosen from among adults and has considerable influence. The main emphasis within the age-sets is on seniority. Titles, often copying those for adults in the wider society, are distributed by the leader on the basis of reputation, ability, and merit, sometimes anticipating the future rank of the holder. Those acquired in the highest grade may be retained by the young man for life. The chief public functions of the sets lie in the execution of co-operative tasks, but they also have a recreational side.

For girls, an association (*ena*) exists only for the lowest age-set.

GOVERNMENT¹⁵

Prior to the more recent developments of local government, the Nupe kingdom was divided into four zones for the purposes of political, judicial, and tax administration. The first was the territory of the conquered and tributary "outside" peoples; the second, within the boundaries of the kingdom proper, included the

¹² For a description of slavery proper, see below, p. 41.

¹³ Nadel, 1942, pp. 122-7.

¹⁴ Nadel, op. cit., pp. 383-401; 1935a, pp. 269-71, 292.

¹⁵ Nadel, 1942, pp. 115-18.

countries of Beni and Kyedye; the third comprised a wider ring of remaining towns and districts of the kingdom, mostly in Trans-Kaduna; the fourth was Bida town the seat of the central government, which formed an administrative district of its own.

The "outside" peoples consisted of Yoruba (Yagba and Bunu), Kakand, Kamberi, Gbari, and Gbira, with some Nupe sections (mostly Dibo and Ebe). The districts were not regularly administered by the central government, but they were recognized as being under the "protection" of Bida, and paid an annual tribute in slaves, collected by royal agents (*tuci* or *ajele*). Other Emirates and chieftainships were bound by "treaties" not to raid Bida's dependent territories, though Bida itself could raid its own "outside" peoples. The royal messengers visited the territories with small armies and the possession of such a force was an essential qualification for the post of *ajele*.

The kingdoms of Beni and Kyedye,¹⁶ the two small "states" within the State, were directly under the king and their chiefs acted as a kind of royal agents, the appointment and succession being subject to confirmation by the king. They could administer law in cases which came into the category of *gyara*, "reparation," and collected tax in their areas on the king's behalf.

The rest of the Nupe kingdom was divided into areas each containing a town with its dependent villages and *tunga*, which were administered as fiefs by the lords (*egba*). The latter might be members of the royal house or of the official nobility, or court slaves. Each received his fief from the *Etsu*, together with the title with which the fief remained permanently linked; the appointment to an *egba* post thus conferred a definite status. Fiefs were also bestowed on individual usually relatives or favourites of the king, independent of rank or office. A lord rarely visited his fief; his representative, usually one of his slaves or serfs living on his lands, collected tax for him. The *egba* had to give a proportion of this tax to the king. Among his other duties was the administration of justice in lesser cases.

Bida town was administered directly by the king and his officers of state, but like the kingdom, was divided into areas, the inner city, where the Beni of present Fulani Bida lived, "greater" Bida, and the strangers' quarter. Cutting across these divisions were the small local units, described by Nadel as "factions rather than organized town wards," consisting of the followers of various members of the powerful nobility. In fact, the people of Bida refer to the different parts of the town by the titles of the nobility who have their houses there.

In more recent times the affairs of Bida Emirate have been in the hands of the *Etsu* and a council of four, consisting of the *Ndeji*, President (formerly "father of the town" of Bida), the *Maiyaki* or *Sarkin Yaki*, Minister of Public Works (formerly Commander in War), the *Nagya*, formerly District Head of Mokwa and member of the nobility, and the *Etsu Tafeyi*, official representative of the commoners and formerly chief of the Beni confederacy.¹⁷ Other officials include the *Gab Seidi*, formerly the *Etsu*'s chief slave and now the official messenger between the Emir's residence and the Divisional Office of the Nigerian Administration. Several District Heads are appointed by the *Etsu* from the ranks of the higher royal nobility. Exceptions are the *Kuta* of the Kyedye sub-tribe,¹⁸ who is the District Head of Kuta District, and the *Sheshi* of Kacha. The District Heads live in the largest town of their District and make frequent tours of inspection of the area and regular visits to the *Etsu*. They are responsible to the *Etsu* for law and order in their District and for the collection of taxes.¹⁹

The *Dikko*, head of the nomadic Fulani (*bororoŋi*) in Bida Emirate, fills a traditional position in Fulani social life and ceremonial. He acts as liaison officer

¹⁶ See below, p. 38.

¹⁷ c. 1936.

¹⁸ See below, p. 38.

¹⁹ Nadel, 1942, pp. 158-65.

between the central administration and the Fulani, counts Fulani cattle and collects *jangali* (cattle tax).²⁰

The Districts of Ilorin Province with a mixed Nupe and Yoruba population sometimes had two District Heads. When Sharagi District was placed in Ilorin Emirate (c. 1913) the Nupe chief (*Ndakpoto*) was made District Head, though he is said to have had no control over the people as a whole. The Igbona Yoruba head (*Ohupo*) is said to have been effective among the Yoruba. The District Heads of Lafiagi and Pategi are called *Rani*, that of Kupa *Makun*, of Kakanda *Aganshu*, and of Shaku *Kpotuy*.²¹

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

Every Nupe village constitutes a separate political entity, each with its own head (*žitsu*) who "owns" the village, controls its main resources and the lives of its inhabitants, and often assumes its name. In Jebba and Mokwa the position of head is filled by the promotion of one of the senior elders of the village. Elsewhere it is hereditary in one house (*emi*). In either case the appointment has to be confirmed by the *Etsu* Nupe. The interregnum before the appointment of the new head is filled by a high ranking elder, *ndeji*, "father of the town." Some villages have heads officially appointed by the administration who are distinct from the traditional heads, called *Etsu nyenkpa* ("money," i.e., tax, "chief") as opposed to *žitsu*, "town chief." In some riverain villages, e.g., Funga, Nantu, Batachi, Edogi, and Badeggi, the village head is called *gago*, a title said to be used by Hausa speakers.²²

The Basa-Nge of Igala Division are divided into 14 inland and riverain units under a village headman responsible to the *anaja* (? District Head). These headmen are chosen by the elders of each unit, but their appointment is subject to the approval of the *Ata* Gala, from whom many of them hold titles and beads of office.²³

The village head is responsible for the appointment of the village elders from the ranks of the family heads, the control and apportionment of land, and the enforcement of fishing rights. He organizes and partly finances certain religious rites linked with chiefship, though he is not regarded as the religious head of the community. He arbitrates in disputes and has certain limited and informal judicial powers; he also organizes any concerted action of the community or large-scale work such as road-making. Formerly he had special prerogatives and still receives annual gifts in kind in some small villages.

The village head is assisted by a council of elders (*yusaži*, sing. *yusa*, the "old ones," or *ticizi*, the "titled ones") who act as mouthpieces, agents, and informants of the chief. They are the heads of families or groups of families who live together in one ward (*efu*). Their titles are conferred on them by the chief, some titles reflecting the occupation followed by the elder and his family. The position of an elder as head of a specific group is recognized by the community, as is the division of the affairs of the village between a number of elders.

In villages where the headship is hereditary, important priestly offices are not usually identified with political office, the office of village priest (*žigi*) being kept in the junior branch of the house. *Žitsu* and *žigi*, "town chief" and "town priest," often appear in genealogies as elder and younger brother in the classificatory sense. In those villages where the head is elected from the senior title-holders, religious ceremonies are performed by the elder who is entrusted with the rule of the village during an interregnum and whose office is hereditary, so that instead of there being a hereditary chief there is, as it were, a hereditary "king-maker."

²⁰ Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.

²¹ Biscoe, 1918; Notes on Kakanda District, 1934.

²² Rochfort Rae, 1921; Notes on Kakanda District, 1934. The title *gago* is also found in the Kamberi areas north of the Nupe country. Mathews (1926) says that it is generally used by Hausa speakers to mean village head. In Bargery's Hausa dictionary the meaning is given as 'a pagan chief.'

²³ Hopkins, 1934.

The full council of elders is summoned only on important occasions. The normal routine of village government is carried on by an inner council, consisting of two or three elders of the highest rank who meet informally at the village head's house.

Succession to the highest titles may, like the headship, be either hereditary or by promotion; but succession to the lower titles is nearly always hereditary.²⁴

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE KYEDYE

The government of the Kyedye sub-tribe is centralized from Muregi and is the monopoly of a selected and privileged body consisting of the Kyedye chief (*Kuta*, also called *Etsu Nya Nuwa*, "the king of the water") and his titled councillors. The *Kuta* has always been subordinate to the *Etsu Nupe*, but, although the district is now administered centrally from Bida in the same way as other districts in the Emirate, no attempt has ever been made to displace the hereditary rulers.

The office of *Kuta* is hereditary in two of the three chiefly lineages, these two being the "founders" and claiming a common ancestor. The rules of succession are not rigid, however, since the wishes of the *Etsu Nupe*, the title-holders, and the people, and administrative ability are also considered. The *Kuta* appears in public with impressive ceremonial and travels in a state canoe which must never be entered by a woman and must never touch the bank. His authority derives from the tradition that the first *Kuta* was invested by Tsoede, his strong economic position and the fact that most of the important political offices are allotted to his kinsmen. The heir-apparent is known as the *Egba*; the post is held by the most senior of the *Kuta*'s relatives.

The offices of state fall into two categories: first the *ticiži*, title-holders and councillors, with five offices, four of them hereditary; second the *egbaži*, who are delegates in charge of settlements and colonies. There are many grades of *egbaži* following a strict system of precedence and promotion. Succession in most cases is not automatic but goes to the most suitable candidate of sufficient seniority. In the early days, three title-holders acted as the *Kuta*'s district heads. Each was allotted a section of the river and was formerly allowed to levy tolls on river traffic. To-day these title-holders have no executive power, though they are still accorded respect, and village heads deal directly through the *Kuta*. There are also "household" titles, mainly in Muregi town, bestowed by the *Kuta* upon his followers.

The *Kuta* had at one time a council of state with advisors, though in effect he was an absolute ruler responsible only to the *Etsu Nupe*. In 1945 a district council was formed, consisting of the *Kuta*, *Alkalin* Muregi, village head Muregi, *Tsado Kuta*, *Liman Kuta*, district scribe, and Muregi school mallam. Meetings are not held regularly, but only when matters of importance need to be discussed.²⁵

ORGANIZATION OF KUTIGI TOWN (BENI SUB-TRIBE)

Kutigi town comprises four originally independent groups: the *Kintsóži* "owners of the country," the original inhabitants under their head (*žitsu*) who was formerly town chief; the *Ndaceži* (hunters), aboriginal Nupe but from another village; the *Kónu* (prisoners of war), freed slaves of Yoruba (*Yagba*) origin, occupied in weaving and indigo-dyeing; *Benú*, the largest group, providing the tribal name, but of alien origin, having arrived in the country from Bornu about 1800. The *Benú* gained political supremacy over the other sections and became the recognized rulers of Kutigi and the neighbouring villages. They are Moslems, wealthy traders and owners of horses and cattle.²⁶

²⁴ Nadel, 1942, pp. 50-8.

²⁵ Nadel, 1942, pp. 24-5; 1940a, pp. 174-81; Notes on Kede District, 1950.

²⁶ Nadel, 1938.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

The village head has limited and informal judicial powers. Minor cases are settled by him with two or three members of the council and the elders of the ward to which the litigant belongs. The procedure is informal and discussion rarely becomes heated. The authority of these courts is gradually being surrendered to the officially recognized courts. Cases requiring formal justice are referred to the Native Court under the professional Moslem judge (*Alkali*) of the District.

In modern Nupe, Moslem law is paramount; the judges (pl. *Alkalai*) reside in Bida and the other Districts. The Bida town court is both a local court and appeal court for the Districts. The *Etsu* and his councillors form a higher court of appeal for cases concerned with land.

A marked disparity has been reported between Moslem law and the traditional culture, particularly in rural communities, where the social and economic conditions differ most widely from the social life of which Moslem law is an expression. Peasants who were familiar with and understood the old customary law, often insist, when they come before the courts, on being accompanied by a mallam or person of standing who is familiar with the "new" law.

Among the Kyedye the *Alkali* holds his court in Muregi; the *Kuta* (chief) and delegates (district heads) have no judicial authority.

Jurisdiction over grave crimes was formerly the responsibility of the *Etsu* Nupe. The death penalty was exacted for theft in the night, "big theft," murder, and treason. Traditionally the only villages in which executions could be performed were the *ledu* (pl. *leduzhi*) villages—Jebba, Gbere, Tada, Jiragi, Sulati, Fofu, Taiji, and Cewuru, which lie along the banks of the Niger 10 to 15 miles apart, between Jebba in the north and Eggan in the south. The king's hangmen resided here and a criminal was generally taken for execution to the *ledu* village nearest to his home.

Each of these villages possesses a "chain of Tsoede," generally kept at the chief's house; it is a typical heavy iron slave or prison chain, up to 30 ft. long, with arm- and leg-irons. Traditional sacrifices of beer and blood are made to it, and it protects the village from sickness and brings fertility to women. Jebba and Tada, the oldest of the *leduzhi*, also possess bronze figures.²⁷

INHERITANCE

The personal property of men is inherited by their sons, that of women by their daughters. The family farm goes to the relative next in seniority, younger brother or eldest son, in the classificatory sense.²⁸

A widow may be inherited by her husband's sister's son or her husband's younger brother; custom forbids remarriage with an elder brother. Islam, however, allows remarriage with elder or younger brother.²⁹

LAND TENURE

Land tenure in different parts of the country has been variously affected by two factors, namely the appropriation as estates held by the nobility of parts of the tribal lands after the Fulani conquest, and the density of population.

The royal house of Bida holds the title to certain lands by right of conquest. Land was also bestowed on others by the royal house for services rendered, and all individual titles to land are held to be ultimately derived from this one source. The clearing and first hoeing of the royal estates is done by large-scale communal labour. The subsequent work was formerly done by slaves, but to-day by paid labour.

Most of the appropriation of land occurred in the area east of the Kaduna River. Here population is more dense and there is a complex system of land ownership and transfer. Owing to the consequent shortage, disputes are frequent and particu-

²⁷ Nadel, 1942, pp. 56-8, 165-79; 1940a, p. 181; 1935b.

²⁸ Nadel, 1942, pp. 31-2, 245.

²⁹ Nadel, 1954a, pp. 249-50.

larly bitter in Bida. In the area west of the Kaduna River, there was less appropriation and there is less pressure on land. Land tenure is on a traditional tribal or village basis; there is no severe competition for possession and land disputes are rare.

Traditionally men only could hold land; acquisition by women is still comparatively rare and occurs only around Bida. Rights may be acquired in various ways:

- (1) By a member of a non-land-owning family exercising his right as a member of the village community; land thus acquired is inalienable.
- (2) By short-term lease from an individual land-holder for two to five years, this method is known as *aro* ("borrowing"); land thus acquired is also inalienable.
- (3) By a member of a land-owning family exercising his claim, on his marriage, to part of the land held by the family.
- (4) By a stranger adopted into the household, in the same manner as (3).
- (5) By lease for an indefinite period, against payment plus rent in kind; this has now become tantamount to purchase.
- (6) By hereditary tenantry; no rent is paid but a share in the produce is given.
- (7) By "primary" tenantry; rights are ceded to another in recognition of services rendered, but the tenant must provide a share of the produce. If the primary tenant is not himself a farmer, as is often the case among members of the Nupe nobility, he will sub-let the land for a high initial fee and rent in kind.

Village land is held and apportioned by the chief. It is of three types:

- (1) Land in the hands of families or individuals, whether worked or fallow (*lati*).
- (2) Vacant land which has reverted to the chief for future allotment (*gonta*).
- (3) The fringe of "reserve" land or bush, the boundaries of which are unmarked (*cika*).

Village land rarely stretches more than three miles from the village. Small individual plots (*bucá*) are mainly near the village; larger family plots of 12-16 acres (*efakó*) are generally farther afield. Family plots do not all lie near together. Land is not fenced except on the marshland plots near Kacha.

No fruit trees on village land may be cut down without the permission of the head, who has a special right to all fruit-bearing trees. Shea-nut trees on vacant land are common property, and women collect the fruit and share it. Shea-nut trees on occupied farmland belong to the owner of the farm. Farm plots in the village itself are owned by the people living in the compound adjoining the plot; they are apportioned and inherited within the houses and never left uncultivated.³⁰

Tenure of fishing pools is important among riverain groups. Among the Bataci every pool has a name and a specific owner. A pool may be owned by the village collectively or by an individual or it may be attached to a title and change ownership with it. Pools owned by individuals can be inherited. Rents are fixed by custom and do not vary from year to year; yearly fishing rights may be bought by individuals.³¹ Strangers in Kede district seek formal permission to fish from the *Kuta*, through the village head in whose area they settle. The period of settlement varies from a few months to about three years, but there is no permanent settlement. Presents of fish may be made to the village head and the *Kuta*, or strangers' tax paid to the Bida Treasury.³²

³⁰ Nadel, 1942, pp. 180-204; Temple, 1919, p. 331.

³¹ Prices given in the appendix to the Notes on Kede District (1950) vary between 2s. 6d. and £2.

³² Notes on Kede District, 1950.

SLAVERY

Slaves attached to the royal house and the nobility could rise to positions of wealth and influence, and some of the former titled court slaves have in recent times become Native Authority officials. Slaves had a certain measure of social and economic independence; though female slaves had no income and their earnings belonged to their master, they might become the concubines of a free man and be given their freedom. Any children born would in any case be free. Male slaves could seek to purchase their independence.

Slaves were obtained both by capture in war and by purchase in the Bida market. Owners had the power of life and death over slaves, though in practice they rarely maltreated them. Indeed, when slavery was abolished, many former slaves elected to remain as unpaid servants with their former masters. Children born to a man's slaves were called *mangi* ("children of the house") and could not be sold, maltreated, or killed. They were brought up as members of the household but were not entitled to a share in the master's inheritance. A master would, however, provide the marriage payment for a marriage arranged by him for one of his slaves with another slave.³³

PAWNING

The practice of pawning human pledges grew to enormous proportions before its final suppression in 1933-34. Under the pressure of unexpected or imperative demands, one person in a family, preferably a male, would be pawned for 5-10 years. Pawning was regarded as a disgrace and the pawns were looked down on by their masters and even by the household slaves.³⁴

POSITION OF WOMEN

Women's activities, other than household tasks, include spinning, weaving, cooking cakes for sale in the market, and hairdressing (a lucrative profession). Women are also doctors and traders, though those whose professional duties keep them away from home for long periods are commonly regarded as "loose" women. They collect the produce of all trees except palm-oil and kola; they cultivate and sell groundnuts and root crops and help to trade some of the men's crops.

A woman's earnings as a trader cannot be touched by her husband, but remain her property until her death, when he inherits them. Among commoners a woman is often better-off than her husband and may lend him money for taxes and the purchase of tools, and even provide for marriages and funerals. The inter-sex hostility, which has been accentuated by the economic independence and consequent sexual freedom of women, also shows itself in the Nupe conception of witchcraft, where a witch is thought to do mystically what a woman actually does in everyday life.³⁵

The most important women's titles are those of *nimwoye*, of the royal house of Masaba, and *sagi*, of the royal houses of Umaru and Usman Zaki alternatively. Quarrels between women are brought before women holding these titles and the women of Bida town and the villages bring them gifts. *Sagi* is also the title of the "head of the women" in every Nupe village. The chief woman commoner in Bida has the title of *sonya*; she organizes all large-scale women's work and is entrusted with the supervision of the market. She is now an official of the Native Administration, receiving a small salary. The status of a woman by descent is not reduced on marriage, since Nupe class sentiments cannot admit a lowering of the status of anyone high-born.³⁶

³³ Nadel, 1942, pp. 103-8, 157.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 311-13.

³⁵ Nadel, 1954a, pp. 172-81.

³⁶ Nadel, 1942, pp. 331-4, 147-56; Temple, 1919, p. 326.

CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: TRIBAL MARKS: DRESS

While the aboriginal Nupe sub-tribes (Ebe, Beni, Ebagi, and Bataci) are negro in appearance, there are indications of considerable non-negro elements in their ancestry. A striking type with oval face, high cheekbones, and slightly mongoloid eyes is often found among those of mixed Fulani descent.

The Nupe are known all over Nigeria as an industrious and formerly warlike people. They are progressive and anxious to try new methods, e.g., in agriculture. The women are keen and successful traders.

There are no facial marks common to the Nupe people as a whole, but sub-tribes are distinguished to some extent. Many sub-tribes have to-day adopted "Bida" marks in addition to their own.

Commoners wear a loincloth, with a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder and the blue phrygian cap, said to be the traditional headgear of the Nupe. Nobles and other well-to-do men wear trousers and a flowing white robe and turban.¹

BIRTH

The rituals surrounding childbirth begin at the time of conception and culminate in the naming ceremony. As soon as the pregnancy becomes noticeable (generally in the third to the fifth month) the parents must discontinue sexual relations and the mother must avoid places inhabited by spirits and abstain from eating certain foods which are thought to have a harmful effect on the unborn child. Special rules or avoidances may be prescribed by the diviner whom the father will consult immediately, and again at the beginning of the confinement and before the naming ceremony. The father keeps away during the actual birth, his elder sister, mother, or other kinswoman assisting the mother, and his father or father's brother cutting the umbilical cord and disposing of the afterbirth, which is buried outside the hut. Thereafter the child's paternal grandfather plays a more important part than the father, announcing the birth of his grandchild and receiving congratulations.

The naming ceremony (*sunu*) usually takes place eight days after the birth. It is traditionally preceded, on the seventh day, by a libation of beer to the ancestor thought to be reborn in the child. The name used always to be announced by the child's grandfather before a group of relatives, without any particular ceremonial. To-day, however, with the spread of Islam, the announcement is usually made by a mallam. It is at this time also that the child's hair is cut and the tribal marks scratched on the cheeks and forehead.²

Twins are generally welcomed, but infants born with teeth are regarded as a bad omen.³

CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision (*zuy'ba*) is universal, but it does not appear to be regarded as one of the more important rituals. It is performed on boys individually between the ages of 8 and 11, whenever the father thinks fit, by a barber, who is usually paid sixpence or a shilling. Women must be away from the house when it is done, otherwise there is no ceremonial.⁴

No corresponding ceremony is reported for girls.

¹ Nadel, op cit., pp. 25, 237, 362, 405-6 (sketches of tribal marks); Meek, I, 1925, pp. 28-9; Line, 1947.

² Nadel, 1954a, pp. 115-18

³ Nadel, personal communication; Malam Aliyu Bida, Ms. Notes.

⁴ Nadel, op cit., p. 118.

MARRIAGE

Marriage among the aristocracy is largely endogamous, i.e., within the ruling class, this "family marriage" as the Nupe call it being characterized by a much lower marriage payment than exogamous marriage. Parallel and cross-cousin marriages are encouraged by Moslem custom, though the former is contrary to the traditional marriage rules, so that the scope of "family marriage" is considerably widened. The practice of polygyny, and the fact that the number of wives indicates wealth and status, leads men of wealth and position to marry outside their social group. In order to keep within the Moslem law of four wives only, further wives are relegated to the position of concubines. Ageing wives of the nobility are divorced and replaced by younger girls.⁵

According to Temple,⁶ betrothal may be as early as 5-7 years for a girl and 10-12 for a boy, but this is not usual. The marriageable age for girls is usually 16-17, but may be as late as 20. Some of the wealthy Bida families marry off their sons very young to enhance their own prestige.⁷

Provision of the marriage payment (*ewó yawó*, "money of marriage") devolves on the head of the family section which is united in the labour unit (*efakó*).⁸ It is made up of a series of payments of varying amounts, each of which has a special name. These are: "greeting," "small thanks," "great thanks," "money for henna," and "money for pots," as well as gifts to the bridesmaids and small annual presents of food to the girl's parents. The payments are usually spread over a period of three to five years. They are now valued as a total sum in money which has fluctuated considerably. In pre-British times it was about £3, but later rose to as high as £20, until, in 1934, the Administration intervened and fixed the upper limit at £7. It is becoming customary for the family head to provide the marriage payment only for the eldest son, younger sons having to contribute part of their own, or even bear the whole cost. It is usual for the bride's father to provide her with a dowry, generally consisting of gifts in kind.⁹

Among the Dibo sub-tribe, according to Temple,¹⁰ girls may be betrothed before birth. The marriage payment is high, but may be paid in farm work. The suitor may, however, be outbid by another and his presents returned before the consummation of the marriage.

A form of "woman marriage," similar to that practised by the Yoruba of Kabba Province, is recorded by Temple for the Nupe of Gurara District (Lapai Emirate). Here a rich woman goes through a form of marriage with a girl and allows men to have access to her. Any children born belong to the female "husband."¹¹

The wedding ceremonial occupies a period of 12 days, divided into three phases of four days each. It begins when the bride, assisted by her young female companions, puts on her dress and veil and receives visitors in her house, the climax being reached on the fourth day when professional musicians and drummers are hired and the bride's father offers food and drink to the guests. Among these will be two envoys of the bridegroom, who will be present at a sacrifice offered by the bride's father to ensure a prosperous marriage blessed with children. Among Moslems a mallam makes a public announcement of the marriage at this stage, which legally establishes the bond. In pagan families, however, the bride is taken to her new home by the bridegroom's envoys, where she is received by her parents-in-law and taken to her newly painted sleeping-hut. The next morning the bridegroom's father performs a sacrifice at which the bride's mother's brother is present,

⁵ Nadel, 1942, p. 150.

⁶ Temple, 1919, p. 322.

⁷ Nadel knew of two such cases where the husbands were still pupils at the Government school.

⁸ See above, p. 26.

⁹ Nadel, 1942, p. 51.

¹⁰ Temple, 1919, p. 114.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 324.

and after this festivities begin, ending on the ninth day with the segregation of the bride. The last ceremony, on the 12th day, consists of a ritual meal of a cock and hen by the bride and bridegroom and their close relatives, after which the marriage may be consummated.¹²

DIVORCE

According to Temple¹³ a woman may divorce her husband if he has been convicted of crime, if he fails to maintain her, or deserts her for three years. A man may divorce his wife for adultery but seldom does so, since, as Nadel points out, the economic dependence of many husbands on their wives discourages them from seeking a divorce on these grounds. They also feel that it involves a loss of prestige to appear in the rôle of a wronged husband. Adultery is, indeed, widespread among women of every status, particularly in Bida.¹⁴

BURIAL

According to the traditional ceremonial, burial (*mba*) takes place as soon as possible after death and at any time of day when there is enough light to see by. The grave-diggers (*goro*), who also prepare the body for burial, are sent for immediately death has taken place. The age and kinship position of the deceased determines the place of burial, old men and women, and family heads, being buried under the floor of their sleeping-huts, with a sacrifice performed (by the *goro*) over the grave. Others are buried without ceremony in the space between the huts, by the compound wall, or in a disused, roofless hut. People dying of smallpox are buried in the normal way, except that the body is wrapped in old rags instead of a new cloth. Lepers are buried in the bush. The grave is oblong and shallow, only about 2 ft. below the ground, with a roof of wooden beams covered by a white grass mat, to keep the earth off the corpse. The body is placed on a similar mat, lying on its side, Moslems facing east. A grave is not marked in any way, the earth being carefully levelled, indeed, if burial has been in a sleeping-hut, the hut continues to be used.

At the death of chiefs or priests any particular ritual "owned" by them is performed. The full funeral ceremonies consist of three rituals, carried out after 8, 40, and 120 days, bearing the names of these time intervals. The full series is performed only for married men; old men, without surviving widows, do not have the last ritual. In general, children, unmarried young men, and women have only the "eight days."

Mourning must be kept up for eight days, during which relatives of the deceased must not wash, dress their hair, or change their clothes, but men observe this rule for only four days so that they may make preparations for the "eight days" feast. Widows observe mourning until four months after the "eight days" and may not think of re-marriage until then.

In Moslem funerals, the *goro* grave-diggers are replaced by mallams, who speak or read prayers in the presence of the men of the house, both before the body is buried and again before the grave is finally closed. The mallams are offered food and money, in payment for their services and as a "pious offering" to be distributed among the other mallams of the town. The subsequent ceremonials have also been made occasions for alms-giving.¹⁵

¹² Nadel, 1954a, pp. 19-21.

¹³ Temple, 1919, pp. 321-2.

¹⁴ Nadel, 1942, pp. 152-3.

¹⁵ Nadel, 1954a, pp. 121-30.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

GENERAL

The majority of the Nupe are now Moslems and there is at least one small mosque in every village. The 1931 Census gave 235,990 Moslems out of a total of 324,375 for all religions.¹ But in many communities pagan ritual exists side by side with some Moslem observances, the latter being increasingly adopted for reasons of prestige.

Among the pagans there is common belief in a sky god *Sokó*, who is believed to have created the world and then withdrawn himself from communion with man. The Nupe concept of the cosmos is, according to Nadel, fundamentally amoral. God, having created the world, gave men access to certain mystical forces, making them at the same time subject to these and leaving them to make such use of these "powers" and of the material world as they would and could. First among these mystical forces is *kuti*, the compelling power of ritual, believed to be harnessed in varying degrees in a multiplicity of rites belonging to persons, communities, and associations, and conferring both special benefits or protection and increasing general well-being. At the same time, invocation of the ancestors of kinsfolk, of the people at large, and of the ancient rulers, can afford some measure of benefit or protection. This can also be gained through a separate use of "medicines" which are believed variously to combine pseudo-therapeutic and magical properties. Finally, the evil power of witchcraft, which God also put into the world, has to be discovered, punished, and driven out by special rites. Since, moreover, there are these alternatives with reference to both good fortune and bad, divination has a great part to play in determining the rites to be performed in particular situations.²

SPIRITS

The Nupe believe that immaterial beings, existing in their own right and with some human attributes, live in the bush or in hills, trees, watercourses, and other natural features. Their Hausa-Arabic name (*aljenízi*, sing. *aljénu*) suggests that some aspects of this belief may be borrowed from Islam. The spirits may be male or female, friendly or hostile, though only two—*Nááduma* (Father Niger) and *Ketsá* (associated with a rock in midstream near Jebba Island)—are thought to possess any considerable powers.³ Another group of spirits is vaguely associated with animals. The least clearly conceived are personal spirits or spirit doubles, which belong to every individual from birth to death and cannot be changed. These may be good or bad.⁴

Spirits of the dead (*kuci*) may be reincarnated in their own descendants. Approach to the Supreme Being can be made through ancestral spirits. Special sacrifices are performed either in the house or on the grave of a particular ancestor and the *kuci* are invariably invoked in the ceremonies surrounding birth, marriage, and death. Otherwise it seems that ancestral sacrifices are performed only sporadically and for a specific reason, such as illness in the family.⁵

Tsoede, who is regarded by all Nupe as their common ancestor, is venerated in an elaborate cycle of myths and rituals surrounding sacred objects—chains and bronze figures—connected with him.⁶ He is, however, outside the general framework of Nupe religious beliefs.

¹ Census of Nigeria, vol. II, p. 63. Unfortunately there are no later figures available for comparison.

² See below, pp. 47-8.

³ See below.

⁴ Nadel, 1954a, pp. 26-31.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 23-5.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 31-2.

CULTS⁷

Certain cults and rituals are peculiar to particular Nupe sub-tribes.

The Ebe have a *zikinta* masked hunting ritual, which is associated with the ancestral spirits and may be performed to remedy sickness or barrenness; the Gbedye have the masked rituals known as *elo* and *mamma*, while the Benu, although professing Islam, perform a *gani* masked ceremony in which many characteristic features of the *gunnu* cult have been incorporated. The Kusopa offer sacrifices to a mythical ancestor of *kola-nut* planting; the Dibo also have an ancestor cult, the rites for which are performed in the now deserted town of Forgwé in Abuja Emirate, where the ancestral graves are. Another form of ancestor cult, *gugu*, derived from the Yoruba *egungun*, is performed at funerals by the Konú of Kutigi town, who were originally Yoruba slaves.

The Kyedye, although now strongly Moslem, and other riverain groups such as the Bataci and the Kakanda, have cults concerned with water and fishing. These include *ndáduma*, in which annual sacrifices are made to the spirits of the river to ensure and limit the annual flood, and *ketsá* in which sacrifices to the spirit of a large rock in mid-stream near Jebba are made to cure illness and bring good fortune in fishing. The chains of Tsoede, which may be used as instruments of ordeal, are also the centre of numerous sacrificial rites. In the Kyedye villages of Giragi and Fofa sacrifices are offered to protect the village from sickness and to bring fertility and prosperity. Usually performed in December at the time of the Niger's second flood, and in February before the start of the fishing season, they are repeated later as a kind of "harvest thanksgiving," when palm-oil and beer are poured over the chain. Each village has a priest whose duty it is to safeguard the chain and make sacrifices to it.

*The gunnu cult**

The *gunnu* cult, the most vital religious cult in Nupe, is concerned with fertility, crops, health, and general prosperity. It is performed both on fixed dates and in times of misfortune such as drought, epidemics, failure of crops, etc. It is common to all sections of Nupe, though according to legend it originated among the Beni, but is not necessarily enacted on the same date by all. The date chosen is generally one of three: the fifth month, the beginning of the harvest of early bulrush millet; the ninth month, the beginning of the guinea-corn harvest; or the 13th month, the end of the dry season. Rites are generally performed towards the end of the month, when the moon rises late. There is a *gunnu* priest in each community who is called *ndazó* or *gunnukó*. There are drummers everywhere, but the ritual dress, sacrificial food, and the duration of taboos vary from section to section. The performance is in three parts: the first performed at night by boys and men; the second next morning when there is a sacrifice and communal meal and short dance by the men—this part is secret; the third part consists of a general dance by men and women performed later on the same day.

MEDICINES⁸

Medicine (*cigbe*) is regarded as an important means of contending with the power of evil, though it may serve both good and evil ends. Rituals or cults are regarded as, in a sense, a delegation of God's power in compensation for his remoteness, and are in the hands of sub-tribes or villages. Medicines, on the other hand, are, except in aberrant form, in the hands of individual practitioners and put to use for individuals.

Nupe medicines are concoctions of roots and other ingredients which may have to be found under particular circumstances or treated in a particular way, used

⁷ Nadel, 1942, pp. 23-5; 1940a; Temple, 1919, pp. 113, 331-5; Notes on Kede District, 1950.

⁸ Nadel, 1954a, pp. 77-84; see also Nadel, 1937a, for details of the ritual and a study of its significance.

* Nadel, 1954a, pp. 17-21, 132-62 and *passim*.

either with or without specified actions and utterances. Their avowed purposes are frequently therapeutic, but also include defences against theft, witchcraft, and devices to render one invisible. Nupe leech-lore includes both rational empirical cures and mystical rites which can produce no result beyond increasing the confidence of the user. Nor is there any distinction in Nupe vocabulary, for the term *cigbe* is used for all medicines. Medicines may be distinguished as those which are practically effective or may be easily taken as being effective by practitioners, and those whose objective irrationality cannot be mistaken. The latter class may include devices for rendering a man invisible, medicines for killing thieves and fending off witchcraft, and for making hoes do their work in half the normal time.

There are four main types of practitioners of medicine: the guild of Moslem barber-doctors, the pagan order of *cigbeciži*, and two kinds of individual practitioners.

The barber-doctors' guild is recognized by the *Etsu* Nupe but is confined almost entirely to the towns. The guild head occupies an important position at court. They are entirely concerned with therapeutic medicines, but are regarded with contempt in the country districts where people feel that a barber cannot know about such things.

The *cigbeciži*, formerly recognized by the *Etsu*, but since replaced by the barber-doctors, are much more loosely organized than the guild. Whereas the latter keep their knowledge mainly within their lineages, the *cigbeciži* crafts can be bought by anyone. There is little corporate activity beyond occasional gatherings at the local head's house to discuss practice. The head is traditionally responsible for all new medicines. Offerings are made to the spirits of the order and through them to *Sokó*, the ultimate source of *cigbe*, whenever a new medicine is discovered. The names of spirits may also be introduced in the application of medicines, but there appears to be no invocation. With this mystical approach there is a greater sense of the implications of "medicine" for good and for evil. While Moslem barbers, though not concerned with the more "dangerous" medicines, sell without scruple medicines for immoral purposes, such as those to induce barrenness in women, *cigbeciži* claim to be very particular as to whom they sell the more powerful *cigbe*. The powers of witchcraft are often said to require medicines, while the conflict between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft is sometimes represented as a struggle between good and bad *cigbe*.

Individual practitioners are of two kinds: those who provide cures for petty ailments, and Moslem mallams and scholars who write a passage from the Koran which is washed off and drunk by the patient. They also provide amulets containing Koran texts, as elsewhere in Islamic West Africa.

Some medicines, the ingredients of which are not known, belong to descent groups and are kept in vessels into which libations of beer and offerings of blood are poured to the ancestors.

The neophyte to the order of witches as imagined by the Nupe must, it is believed, bathe himself in certain medicines and observe certain taboos, and the masked dancer who impersonates and is possessed by the spirit of the anti-witchcraft society¹⁰ uses certain medicines while others are placed on the mask to give it and its dancer their unique character. There are in addition individual medicines used as defences against magic, and ordeal medicines which will kill the witch who drinks, but leave the innocent unharmed.

DIVINATION¹¹

Divination plays an important part in Nupe life and is used not only to determine the rites to be performed in particular situations but to decide such matters as the election of a high officer of state. The two methods used are the old system,

¹⁰ See below.

¹¹ Nadel, 1942, p. 379; 1954a, pp. 38-67.

widespread in West Africa, based on the patterns made by strings of shells when they are thrown, and a form of Arabic sand pattern divining performed only by Moslem "teachers."

Shell divination (*eba*) is similar in technique to Yoruba *ifa*, and is practised mainly in the villages and pagan districts. The diviner's apparatus consists of the divining strings themselves and a series of marked slabs which serve as a key for interpreting the throws. He receives a small fee—money, rice, or kola-nuts—each time he is consulted, but these payments are regarded as "gifts," and diviners can not live on what they earn in this way. Most of them are also farmers and some are medicine experts at the same time. The skill is only incidentally hereditary in a family and is generally learned from an expert, payment being made for tuition.

Sand divination (*hati*) is an even more thoroughly learned skill than *eba*, though its performance is less dramatic. The craft can only be acquired by mallams, i.e., men who have at least some rudiments of Moslem learning. The various signs are drawn with the finger-tips on sand smoothed out on the ground. The "key" is carried in the diviner's head, though there is a book on divination written in Arabic which some diviners possess but which they do not consult when actually divining. *Hati* diviners are of widely differing status and learning, but in general the more scholarly mallams do not engage in divination and diviners are often men who have been unsuccessful as mallams.

WITCHCRAFT

The Nupe conceive of witchcraft (*ega*) as a supernatural power by which people can be possessed; they then use it for evil and anti-social purposes. It is believed to be practised mainly by women; male witches are said to be "good" people, who would curb the evil desires of the female witches, though the killing of the victim is thought to be the work of both sexes in "partnership."

A witch (*gaci*) is thought to belong to an organization (*ena gaciñi*) whose head is known as *lelu*. This title used to be officially bestowed by the Nupe chiefs on a woman who was believed to be the most powerful witch in the village. Her secret knowledge could then be used for the benefit of the community. The equivalent title to-day is that of *sagi*,¹² although a change in the significance of the rank has taken place and the *sagi* is now concerned with more prosaic business.

The powers of a witch are not hereditary but a witch may pass them on to her child by feeding it on witchcraft *cigbe*. A person desiring to become a witch may also approach anyone known to be one and thus gain entry into the circle of witches, or may buy a witchcraft medicine.

Witchcraft is believed capable of making its possessor invisible and of enabling her to recognize other witches; a witch is thought to be fully conscious of her secret powers and does not act against her will. Witches attack people at night when they are asleep and feed on the life force (*rayi*) causing them to fall ill and waste away. Only rarely are they thought to spirit away the body itself.¹³

There are two methods of combating witchcraft. One, applied to individual cases and when a definite person is suspected, consists of an ordeal or other test of guilt, whereupon the witch is heavily fined and expelled from the village. The other is effected through the activities of the *ndakó gbóyá*, a "secret" but officially recognized anti-witchcraft society which is applied only when a large-scale outbreak of witchcraft is believed to have occurred. The head of the society (*Majin Dodo*) comes from a particular lineage of Kusogi Danci, a small riverain village. Initiations take place here, the training lasting five years. Initiates are said to be able to make spirits materialize and to exercise control over witches. Paraphernalia associated with the society include a medicine for ritual washing, a white cloth mask on a pole, and magical objects for producing rain, etc., including the chain of

¹² See above, p. 41.

¹³ Nadel, 1935c; 1942, pp. 148-9; 1954a, pp. 163-87.

Tsoede which links the society to the paramount political authority of the country. Some of these become the property of the initiate and are kept in a shrine in his compound, where they become the centre of a general magical cult performed annually.

The society holds a special ceremony in which masked dancers¹⁴ single out alleged witches and take them into the bush for ordeals, where, it is said, victims are killed unless they are able to buy their freedom. The ceremony is never performed in Bida town but produces much social and economic disorganization elsewhere. It is unknown among some groups, such as the Ebe and Dibo. It was formerly controlled by the Fulani Emirs who shared the proceeds with initiates, but this exploitation of the society was ended in 1921, when it was forbidden in what was then Nupe Province. It still functions in Pategi Emirate and in small remote villages in Bida Emirate, where it sometimes takes the form of a spectacular display at festival times. A form of *ndakó gboyá*, under the Hausa name of *magiro*, is found among the Kamberi, Kamuku, Gbari, and other tribes in the north of Niger Province. Among the Gbari, however, it seems to be connected with the cult of the ancestral spirits.¹⁵

¹⁴ The mask consists of a long tube of white cotton cloth suspended from a wheel-shaped bamboo frame fixed to the top of a pole about 12 feet high; the man representing the spirit stands inside the cloth tube, which comes down to the ground, and holds the pole in his hands. The *ndakó gboyá* masks are unlike any others used in the cults of Nigerian peoples.

¹⁵ Nadel, 1954a, pp. 188-201; Glasson, 1937 (?).

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THE IGBIRA

II. THE IGBIRA

GROUPING AND DEMOGRAPHY

LOCATION

The Igbira, i.e., people speaking the Igbira language, occupy the areas north and east of the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers in Northern Nigeria. Thus, Igbira are to be found in the Koton Karifi and Igbirra Divisions of Kabba Province, in the riverain districts of Nassarawa Division, Benue Province, and in parts of Bida and Abuja Divisions, Niger Province. More recently, a few Igbira have settled in Southern Nigeria, in Kukuruku Division, Benin Province, and among the Yoruba.

NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

In the Panda and Koton Karifi areas, Igbira live among Basa, Gbari (Gwari), Agatu, Nupe, Fulani, and Dibo (Ganagana). To the south of the Igbira are the Basa-Nge, Basa-Komo, and Igala; to the north and east, Nassarawa Emirate, populated mainly by Fulani, Afo, and Agatu-Idoma. West of the Igbira are various Nupe-speaking groups: Kakanda, Eggan, Kupa, and the Nupe of Bida Emirate; to the south-west are the Bini and Yoruba-speaking peoples.

NOMENCLATURE

Igbira is the term by which the people refer to themselves. They are called Egburra by the Igala, and Kotokori by the Yoruba. The Hausa and Fulani call them Kwotto, Koto, or Kwotto-Gara, which is believed to be a Hausa corruption of Okpoto-Igara, as the Igbira claim Igara (Igala) ancestry from the originally Okpoto town of Idah.¹ Clifford, however, discounts this claim and the linguistic evidence available does nothing to substantiate it.²

GROUPINGS

Igbira were the dominant group, politically but not numerically, in the chiefdoms of Panda and Koton Karifi, which share a myth of common origin with local variations. These chiefdoms were located along the northern bank of the Benue River: Koton Karifi occupied the eastern bank of the Niger, just north of its confluence with the Benue, and Panda was east of Koton Karifi on the Benue River.

Igbira Panda are also known as Kwotto or Kwato. This chiefdom is now divided between Toto and Umaisha Districts, Nassarawa Division, Benue Province. Within Panda the Igbira population is said to be divided into Igbira Lele (bush Igbira), referring to the invading, ruling group, and Igbira Rehi (town Igbira), the aboriginal inhabitants.³ The latter term is applied also to the Igbira of Igbira Division, Kabba Province.

Egu or Igu is a term often applied to the Igbira of Koton Karifi, as their earliest capital was Igu. The term Koton Karifi, a Hausa name referring to the Koto (Kwotto) commercial centre for brass rods (*kerife*, metal), was later applied to this chiefdom.⁴

A third, and by far the largest, group of Igbira is the Igbira Hima, or the Okene or Okengwe group, in Igbirra Division, Kabba Province. This group is

¹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, pp. 140 ff.

² Clifford, 1936, p. 400.

³ Cullen, n.d.; Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b.

⁴ Temple, 1919.

said to be of more recent origin than Panda and Koton Karifi, and comprises the Okengwe, Odabi (Adabi), Ihima, Ika (Eika), and Ekehi (Okehi) branches. Egain may be a sixth branch.⁵

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Population Estimates

Temple,⁶ writing of the 1916 estimates, divides the Igbara population among the old Provincial areas as follows:

Agbaja Division, Kabba Province	23,254
Southern Division, Kabba Province	1,120
Western Division, Bassa Province	8,553
Riverain Districts, Nassarawa Emirate, Nassarawa Province ..	4,728
Near Wushishi and in Koton Karifi, Niger Province	7,117

The total Igbara population, according to Temple, was thus about 45,000.

Census figures,⁷ however, give much higher estimates:

1921:	
Igbara (mainly in Kabba Province)	118,310
1931:	
Igbara (mainly in Kabba Province)	147,325
Kwotto (mainly in Benue Province)	6,831
Total	154,156

1952:

Igbara (in Kabba Province)	147,630
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Still different figures are given in reports for particular districts. Thus Cator,⁸ writing in 1917, estimated 70,000 Igbara in the Egbira District, Kabba Province. MacBride⁹ reports 4,411 Igbara tax-payers (men and women) in Koton Karifi Division, 1935. Igbara comprised about one-third of the population of the Koton Karifi chiefdom, which was 17,242. More specific data are available for the Umaisha and Toto Districts, Nassarawa Division, Nassarawa Province (now Benue Province).¹⁰ In Umaisha District the Igbara population numbered 3,471, forming 20% of the population. The "Kwato" population of Toto District numbered 5,182, comprising 22% of the total. A 1950 report estimates 150,000 Igbara in Kabba Province, divided between Igbirra and Koton Karifi Divisions.¹¹ About 140,000 of these are in Igbirra Division: Okene, 31,983; Okengwe, 17,688; Adabi, 40,059; Eika, 16,794; Ihima, 24,046; Ajaokuta, 1,806; Egain, 6,671.

Density

It is very difficult to estimate density for the Igbara, since they live, in Koton Karifi and Panda, among members of other ethnic groups. Cator's figures¹² provide a density of 260 per square mile in the Igbirra District, Kabba Province. In Umaisha and Toto Districts density of the total population is 38 and 48 respectively,¹³ while the Koton Karifi figure is 28.8 per square mile.¹⁴ Local variation in density is clearly indicated.

⁵ Cator, 1917; Groom, 1910.

⁶ Temple, 1919.

⁷ Brooke, 1933.

⁸ Cator, 1917.

⁹ MacBride, 1935.

¹⁰ Cullen, n.d.

¹¹ Notes on Kabba Province, c. 1950; Okene Report, 1950.

¹² Cator, 1917.

¹³ Cullen, n.d.

¹⁴ MacBride, 1935.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

All Igbira groups claim colonization from the Igala of Idah.¹ They also unanimously claim ultimate ancestry from Wukari, the capital of the Jukun State. Igbira Panda and Igu agree in tracing Igbira origin to Ohimi, the son of an early *Ata* (chief) of Idah, who crossed the Benue about 1750. The Igala claim that Panda and Igu were external fiefs in the 18th century, and one Igbira legend states that Ohimi was slain by the then *Ata* of Idah for establishing an independent state. Various Igbira legends recount a quarrel over succession between the sons of Ohimi, or between the daughter and grandsons of Ohimi, which led to the establishment of the separate states of Koton Karifi and Panda.

According to the Panda legend,² Ohimnagedu, the son or grandson of Ohimi, established a chiefdom at Panda, 20 miles north-east of the present town of Umaisha, adopting the Igbira language from the local inhabitants. He was given the royal staff of office by the *Ata* of Idah and subsequent Panda chiefs sent gifts to the *Ata* when assuming office. The link with Jukun was retained, as materials for the royal ritual were imported from Wukari. About 1850, the ninth Panda chief was slain when the Fulani captured Panda.³ The inhabitants dispersed towards the towns of Toto and Umaisha, but eventually surrendered to the Fulani. The first Emir of Nassarawa held the title "Sarkin Kwotto," conferred on him by the Emir of Zaria.

The legend of origin of Koton Karifi⁴ records that after the succession dispute, Ohaiten, the son of Ohimi, established a chiefdom at Igu. He was recognized by the *Ata* of Idah as *Ohimegi* Igu (chief of Igu). The Koton Karifi royal genealogy contains seven generations (21 rulers) since Ohimi, with succession between the branches founded by Ohaiten and O'ortu, his brother. Until the 12th *Ohimegi* Igu, the *Ata* of Idah recognized Koton Karifi chiefs before they took office, but local installation rites were established by the 12th *Ohimegi* Igu. Each town has its own foundation legend, and the ethnic population of Koton Karifi to-day is very mixed. Laird⁵ visited Koton Karifi in 1833, 12 months after it had been sacked and burned by the Fulani. He reported the population as about 5,000, but said that judging by the extent of its walls it must previously have been four or five times that number. In 1860 it was again invaded by the Fulani from Bida, and later most of the chiefdom was under the Emir of Nassarawa.

The Okene group of Igbira also claim origin from Idah. Conflicting legends tell of early colonization across the Niger from Idah and of flight from Panda and Koton Karifi after the Fulani invasion. If the Okene group are offshoots of the Panda and/or Koton Karifi Igbira, they probably left that area before the Fulani invasion, as their language is a distinct dialect of Igbira. The local legend traces descent to Igbirra, the first chief. Branches were founded by Okengwe, Odabi, Ihima, Ika, and Ekechi, his five sons, the eldest (Okengwe) becoming *Ohindashi*, the chief priest. By 1917 the Ihima, Ika, and Odabi had their own headmen.⁶

British Administration

Koton Karifi has been in several administrative divisions since 1900. It now forms, with Kakanda, Kupa, and Eggan, the Koton Karifi Division of Kabba

¹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b; 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, I); Temple, 1919; MacBride, 1935; Smith, 1934.

² Wilson-Haffenden, loc. cit.; Cullen, n.d.; Smith, 1934.

³ Crowther gives a vivid account of the human effects of the Fulani depredations. The Baikie-Crowther expedition took place only nine months after the fall of Panda; see Crowther, 1855, pp. 152-3, 157-9.

⁴ MacBride, loc. cit.; Temple, loc. cit.

⁵ Laird, 1837, p. 214.

⁶ Cator, 1917; Groom, 1910.

Province. Koton Karifi has its own Native Authority under the chief of Koton Karifi. The former Panda chiefdom is now separated politically from Nassarawa Emirate and administered as Umaisha District and Toto District in Nassarawa Division, Benue Province. The Okene group are under the *Ata* of Igbara or chief of the Igbara Tribe, Igbirra Division, Kabba Province.

LANGUAGE

Igbara is a dialect cluster of the Nupe language group containing the Panda Ihima (Okene), and Igu dialects. A fourth dialect, "Igara," is spoken in Igara village, in Kukuruku country near the Semolika.⁷ Koelle gave two Igbara word lists.⁸ According to MacBride, the language is uniform from Umaisha and Toto to Igu and Gerinya. The dialect of the Okene group is slightly different, and shows Yoruba and Kukuruku influences, but all Igbara dialects are mutually intelligible.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In area, the Koton Karifi District is 670 sq. m., the Umaisha District is 450 sq. m., the Toto District is 500 sq. m., and the Igbara District is 270 sq. m. The distribution of ethnic groups is, as noted previously, very mixed, and the territories listed do not indicate the area inhabited by Igbara people. According to Cator (1917), the Igbara population of Igbara District were concentrated in a circle six miles in radius. This area is considerably expanded to-day. No comparable information is provided for Igbara in other districts, but MacBride reports that the Igbara of Koton Karifi are more numerous along the Niger than in other parts.

Geographically, the Igbara area can be divided into two main regions: a low-lying dense deciduous forest forming a riverain stretch with a width of up to five miles along the Niger and Benue Rivers, and undulating or hilly savannah extending in all directions from the riverain section.

The rainy season lasts from April to October, while November–March are dry months. The following figures are available for Lokoja, the administrative center of Koton Karifi Division: altitude 320 ft., mean temperature 83° F., range 53°–100° F., average annual rainfall 53 ins.

Both transport and fish are provided by the Niger and Benue Rivers. The riverain section is inundated in the rainy season, and fish are numerous in the pools and marshes which remain when the water recedes.

While yams are the most important crop for Igbara, typical savannah crops (beans, guinea-corn, millet, maize, etc.) are also grown. There are few trees beside the oil-palm and locust bean. A middle belt, between the river forest and the hilly northern section, provides the richest soil in Koton Karifi. A plateau rises to 1,200 ft. south of the Kunama River. Toto, and Umaisha north of the river forest are undulating and hilly parkland.¹⁰

⁷ Westermann and Bryan, 1952, p. 87.

⁸ Koelle, 1854.

⁹ MacBride, 1935.

¹⁰ Cator, 1917; MacBride, 1935; Nigeria Handbook, 1933 and 1936.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the main occupation of most Igbira. Yam is the staple in Okene, where it provides food for seven months of the year, and in the southern part of Koton Karifi. Other crops, which provide subsidiary food in the southern Igbira area and the staples in the north, are beans, guinea-corn, maize, cassava, ground-nuts, sweet potatoes, and millets. Palm-oil is collected, but almost all is used locally for cooking. Kernels, however, are exported.

In the Okene area, land adjoining villages is cut up into fields and fenced by stone walls or cactus hedges. These are used every year, the only fertilizer being ashes.

Most farm work, and all commercial farming, is done by men. Only the domestic crops near the compounds are cultivated by women. Of the field crops grown by men, some beniseed is sold. Igbira cotton is of superior quality; a ginning factory has been established by the British Cotton Growing Association. Some tobacco is also grown.¹

LIVESTOCK, FISHING, AND HUNTING

Information on domestic animals is given only by Cator, writing in 1917. The only cattle found near Okene were 1,700 of the dwarf variety. These were driven into the villages in the evening. Other animals included sheep, goats, horses (owned only by a few headmen), dogs, and fowls.²

The riverain Koton Karifi Igbira population depends on fish from pools and marshes left by the receding waters.³ In the Panda area, small rivers and pools as well as the Benue are fished with nets. The local inhabitants along the Benue, where the largest fish are found, own fishing rights and may rent sandbanks and islands to outsiders. The catch of large-scale fishermen is smoked and dried on the spot, and then sold in distant native markets. In the smaller rivers and pools, fishing battues are held; while men do most of the fishing, women and children take part in these.

In the Panda area, periodical communal hunts are held. In such hunts all the men from several neighbouring villages take part. A central space is burned for clearing, and the animals are driven in by beaters. The weapons are bows and arrows. Each man is entitled to dispose of the animals he kills. Temple also reports large hunts, and states that the village headman receives a share of all game killed. In the Okene area about 20 men hunt together. The leader is given the first shot, and if he misses, all the others fire together.⁴

TRADE

Most trade is carried on by women who sell their husbands' produce as well as their own. The women keep for themselves the proceeds of the sale of their husbands' produce at one market out of every three that they attend.⁵ In 1917 there was a market every day at Okene and every fourth day at Nagazi and Manika, as well as many small markets. Igbira women travel great distances to trade.⁶ Oldfield stated that Arab horses, brought from Sokoto, could be bought at Toto for £5-£6 sterling.⁷

¹ Cator, 1917; Temple, 1919; MacBride, 1935.

² Cator, 1917.

³ MacBride, 1935.

⁴ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b; Temple, 1919; Groom, 1910.

⁵ MacBride, 1935.

⁶ Cator, 1917.

⁷ Oldfield, 1837, II, p. 315.

CRAFTS

Igbira crafts, though extensive, are all subsidiary to agriculture. Igbira cotton spinning and weaving are among the best in Nigeria. Some dyeing in pots is also done. A few villages are known for their pottery, and mats, including mat coverings for women's loads, are made. Iron work is reported from Koton Karifi and Okene. Women in the *Ata* of Igbira's household in Okene import silk thread to weave silk cloth by hand.⁸ According to Temple, grave-digging is a craft whose workers have a medicine to make the ground soft.

Laird, who visited Panda in 1833, stated that the only manufactures carried on there were cotton cloths, dyeing, and iron and copper utensils. Cotton was spun by everyone, from the king downwards, the thread being rough but strong. Hatchets, chisels, nails and clamps were made from native iron, and copper was used to ornament and fasten large calabashes and to make bowls for tobacco pipes. The ore was said to come from the east down the Benue. Smiths were ranked next to the king and were of equal importance. The unsettled state of the country and the tyranny of the king, who had a reputation for robbing and detaining merchants, restricted trade, but it had formerly been considerable, and Panda had been a large market for the exchange of European goods for slaves.⁹

According to Oldfield, the people of Toto made copper and clay pipes, spears, bows, arrows, drums, stirrups "fashioned like shovels," bridles and saddles, sandals, robes, Hausa trousers, straw hats trimmed with leather and a great variety of other articles. They also worked calabashes in many patterns.¹⁰

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

THE FAMILY

Descent among the Igbira is patrilineal both for inheritance and for clan membership. A wife generally, but not always, joins her husband's paternal household at marriage and bears her children there. Children are commonly adopted, girls by the father's sister and boys by the father's brother, after weaning. While the father's brother would ordinarily live in the same compound as the parents of the adopted child, the father's sister, after marriage, would not. Wilson-Haffenden does not tell us where a girl lives, whether with an unmarried father's sister in the same compound or in the compound of the father's sister's husband. Polygyny is practised.

The elementary family forms part of an extended family household, composed of close patrilineal relatives under the control of the oldest male member. According to Wilson-Haffenden, wives of men in the extended family do not become members. However, a wife is regarded as belonging in some sense to the whole family group, as are children. A married woman is responsible to her husband's parents, paternal uncles and their wives, and elder brothers, and must assist them whenever they require it.¹¹

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR

Kinship terminology and behaviour is described in some detail by Wilson-Haffenden. The term for father is also applied to the father's brothers and

⁸ See photographs in *Nigeria*, June, 1938, p. 319.

⁹ Laird, 1837, pp. 230-2.

¹⁰ Oldfield, 1837, II, p. 315.

¹¹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, chaps. 22-3; Walker, 1917.

mother's sister's husband; the term for mother is applied also to the mother's sister and father's brother's wife. Mother's brother's son is called "mother's brother," as he will inherit the headship of that family. An Igbira treats all his maternal relatives with respect, as they will intercede on his mother's behalf in any dispute between his lineage and his mother. A father's sister is also treated respectfully and all older patrilineal relatives are invested with authority. Informal behaviour and joking is permitted between a man and his grandparent, brother's wife, mother's brother's wife, father's sister's husband, grandchild, wife's younger sister, wife of son (except eldest, who is avoided), and spouse of grandchild. A man avoids his mother-in-law, and shows respect towards his wife's brother and wife's brother's son.¹²

FORMS OF SETTLEMENT: HOUSE TYPES

Laird gives an interesting account of Panda before its destruction by the Fulani. He describes the town as being built in the shape of a half-moon, walled and defended on three sides by a ditch 10 ft. deep, on the fourth by a ravine. The wall was 12 ft. high and 6 ft. thick. The width of the town from the east to the west gate was two and three-quarter miles. There was a sizeable open space between the houses of the town and the surrounding wall. The king's palace was in the form of a horse-shoe and covered 9 or 10 acres. It consisted of an immense assemblage of circular huts, surrounded by a mud wall about 15 ft. high and 3 ft. thick. Beyond this wall were three principal gateways and several other doorways which led into an outer court; strangers were not allowed to pass beyond this court, where the king's wives resided in small huts. The streets of Panda were narrow and dirty, except for the street around the king's compound. From the principal gate of the royal compound to the eastern gate of the town there extended an avenue 200 ft. wide and about a mile long, where the market was held every Friday. The houses were all circular and built of clay, with conical roofs, except for the chief mallam's house, which had a gable end. Many houses had verandahs in front of them. Laird estimated that the town contained from five to six thousand huts and that the average number of persons per hut could not have been less than six, of whom two-thirds were children.¹³

Oldfield says that Toto, which was not actually visited by the expedition, had the reputation of being the largest town in that part of the country.¹⁴

CLANS

Exogamous totemic clans are reported by Wilson-Haffenden. These are mainly named after wild animals—lion, crocodile, leopard, python, monitor—the goat clan is the only one carrying the name of a domestic animal. Each person is believed to have a patrilineal soul, inherited from an older clansman, usually a deceased close relative, but sometimes a man still living. The clan name is used as a term of address. Clansmen are prohibited from killing or eating their totem animal, but not the totem animal of other clans. However, if a man kills an animal believed to be more powerful than his own totem animal, he must propitiate the chief of this clan.¹⁵ When an individual animal of the totem species is proving troublesome to men of that clan, they may request a member of another clan to kill that animal. The belief in this case is that the animal is a malevolent person changed into an animal shape. Harmless members of the totem species, on the other hand, are believed to be ancestral spirits.¹⁶

The five Okene branches have been called clans, but no details are available.

¹² Wilson-Haffenden, loc. cit.

¹³ Laird, 1837, pp. 205, 208, 221-3.

¹⁴ Oldfield, 1837, II, p. 315.

¹⁵ This is the only mention of clan chiefs among the Igbira.

¹⁶ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, chap. 13; 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, I).

LOCAL ORGANIZATION

A major distinction must be made, in Koton Karifi and Panda, between the original settlers and later arrivals. In Koton Karifi, most Igbara are original settlers, and so are many Ganagana and Kupa, while the later arrivals consist of most of the Basa and Gbari, and some Igbara. In Panda a distinction is made between Igbara Rehi, and original Igbara inhabitants, and Igbara Lele, the invaders who took over government. This distinction, clearly in Koton Karifi but less definitely in Panda, accounts for the relation between "landlords" or "hosts" and "tenants" or "guests." According to local traditions, the "hosts" in Koton Karifi established walled towns and claimed rights over all the land cultivated. As the population decreased (in the Fulani wars) and others settled, the descendants of the earliest settlers allowed those who arrived later to establish dependent hamlets and farm land near them, but retained certain rights and demanded service of their "guests." Thus a walled town maintains authority over a number of scattered hamlets. In Panda, the ruling group holds rights similar to the "hosts" in Koton Karifi, and land is nominally controlled by the village chief, a member of an Igbara ruling family.¹⁷

THE COMPOUND

Very little information is available concerning this small unit. Cator tells us that the compound in the Okene area is built in a quadrangle, with narrow houses surrounding an open place. Important compound heads may have a separate house in the centre. The population per compound, computed from Cator's figures, averages from 10 to 30 in different districts.¹⁸

According to Wilson-Haffenden, the compound is inhabited by a number of close patrilineal relatives: a man and his grandfather, grandfather's brothers, father, father's brothers, father's unmarried sisters, brothers, father's brothers' sons, father's brothers' unmarried daughters, unmarried sisters, sons, unmarried daughters, brothers' sons and unmarried daughters, grandsons, grand-daughters, as well as adopted children and, in the past, household slaves. When this group is large, it may be divided among several compounds in the village, and may constitute an entire village. Wives of these men, while normally resident there, are not regarded as members of the extended family.¹⁹

LAND TENURE

Sons assist their fathers on farms until, and even after, marriage. A father gives his son a separate farm at marriage. Formerly, when no bride-price was paid, a young man worked on his future father-in-law's farm for three years before marriage.²⁰

A "guest" household holds only usufruct rights to the land which has been granted to them by their "hosts." This dependent relationship lasts several generations at least. The "guests" must apply to the "hosts" for any extra land, make annual presents of first fruits, and work on the "hosts'" land.²¹ The "hosts" retain rights to all oil-palms on land under their jurisdiction, including palms which have grown during the period of the "guests'" occupancy.²²

In the Panda area, land is said to be held on trust by the political chief for the community, and leased out to families by tribal custom.²³ The village headman among the Igbara, Temple says, allocates the rights of use of oil-palms and

¹⁷ MacBride, 1935; Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b; Cullen, n.d.

¹⁸ Cator, 1917.

¹⁹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, ch. 23.

²⁰ Temple, 1919, p. 158.

²¹ The amount of this work is not mentioned.

²² MacBride, 1935.

²³ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, p. 175.

fishing pools, and gets free labour in return for providing the workers with beer. He holds on trust the land in the neighbourhood of his village.²⁴

In the Okene area, customs with reference to land tenure vary locally. All bush land is nominally held by the *Ata*, who grants usufruct rights to individuals. At the death of such a grantee, the land passes to his younger brother, and at the death of the brother, to the sons of the grantee. Succession thereafter is not clear: there is a category of "family land" vested in the extended family head or subdivided among branches of the extended family, but the origin of this is not described. Farms may be as far as 25 miles from the village or town in which the users reside. Land which has been abandoned for ten years reverts to the *Ata*. Although land cannot be permanently alienated without the *Ata's* permission, it can be rented.²⁵

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

MacBride states that in Koton Karifi the highest functioning administrative unit was a "host" community and its nearer "guests." The host community consisted of one village, or possibly more, with a rotating title. In every community the chief was responsible to an executive council of title-holders. Most village chiefs inherited titles granted to their ancestor by the *Ohimegi* Igu and were installed by him; only a few of the later arrivals had independent local communities and a chief whose title was bestowed upon him by the chief of a nearby "host" community. MacBride classifies the existing systems of appointing members of the village council as variant combinations of the Idah, Nupe and Zaria systems. The three basic types are: Idah, titles conferred by each chief on his accession, often to members of his extended family; Nupe, every householder has a title, and promotions are made by the chief and council as vacancies occur in the highest ranks, from which promotion to chiefship is automatic; Zaria, the council consists of the hereditary heads of senior "commoner kindreds."²⁶ In most of the composite communities, certain "kindreds" must be represented on the council. The chief is controlled in his choice of councillors by public opinion, and a title once given cannot be revoked "except for the gravest public reasons."

Very little information is provided concerning the duties of the village chief and council. The chief was for the most part independent of the *Ohimegi* Igu; tribute was collected only from villages near Koton Karifi, and the *Ohimegi* often made counter-gifts. The village chief was responsible for the maintenance of public cults, and in the pagan communities still carries out this function. However, in practice this duty is often delegated to a senior councillor. The village council often settled dispute cases, and in some cases collaborated with the chief and council of another village when there was a dispute between members of two villages.²⁷

Cullen's report on Umaisha and Toto Districts (constituting the former Panda chiefdom) presents a similar picture. The Igbira village areas (village and attached hamlets) "almost invariably have definite ruling families with one or more branches, the members of which branches only are eligible to hold the title of chief. The pedigrees of these branches are usually well known, and the village headship alternates between the branches. . . . In all units, however, the chief is advised by a council of elders, which co-opts members to fill vacancies as they occur." Fewer than half the 13 Umaisha village areas have Igbira headmen by tradition, the rest being Basa. In the Toto district, 15 of the 16 village areas have Igbira headmen by tradition. Basa headmen are chosen by the council from the most senior clan on the grounds of age and merit.²⁸

²⁴ Temple, 1910, p. 156.

²⁵ Unsigned notes.

²⁶ MacBride is probably referring to the extended family.

²⁷ MacBride, 1935.

²⁸ Cullen, n.d.

POLITICAL UNITS

The chiefdoms of Panda and Koton Karifi were independent small states for a century or more, from their establishment about the middle of the 18th century to their conquest by the Fulani late in the 19th century. For a short time, both paid tribute to Fulani conquerors: Panda to the Emir of Nassarawa and Koton Karifi to the *Etsu* Nupe and, later, to the Emir of Nassarawa. From the beginning of the 20th century both have been under British Administration.

The date of establishment of the Okene group is uncertain. Political unification was limited, but the ritual authority of the head of the senior branch was recognized. The Okene Igbira were not conquered by the Fulani, but have also been under British Administration since the early 20th century.

CHIEFSHIP

Wilson-Haffenden's data on chiefs refers mainly to Toto; he states that the chief of Panda was regarded as the incarnation of the deity, a divine king and rainmaker. The present District Head of Toto is related to the Nassarawa ruling family and was appointed from Nassarawa. After conquest by Nassarawa, the dependants of the chief of Panda re-established themselves at Umaisha about 1871. The District Head of Umaisha is called *Sarkin* or *Ohimegen* Umaisha, and is a direct descendant of the Panda chiefs. There are four branches of the ruling family, from which the chief is selected in turn. A member of each of these branches holds a title, and succession is automatic. If no suitable candidate can be found, a member of the branch next in line is chosen, to be followed by a member of the branch which has missed its turn. The genealogy of Panda chiefs contains 21 previous holders of the office.²⁹

Koton Karifi was burned and sacked in 1832 and was later again attacked by the Nupe Fulani and by those of Nassarawa Emirate. Igu, the capital, however, was not taken until 1892, and the chiefship was only interrupted for a few years before British Administration re-established it. The present *Ohimegi* Igu is a descendant of the ancient chiefs of Koton Karifi, 23rd in line. Like the chief of Umaisha, the chief of Koton Karifi is chosen from among the branches of the ruling family in rotation. The Koton Karifi House of Ohimi (descendants of the founder of Panda and Koton Karifi, according to local tradition) contains eight branches. A council, consisting of one titled member of each branch of the ruling family, including the chiefs, is said to advise the chief. Most of the titles are open to members of any branch, but all branches must be represented on the council. When an office falls vacant at the death of its holder, the *Ohimegi* Igu may fill it by promoting a councillor from another rank, or by a new appointment.

The council also includes two "household" officers, one of whom may deputise for the chief. A commoner assists the senior councillor. The successor to the *Ohimegi* Igu is not chosen until after the death of his predecessor, and is then chosen by the council from the branch whose turn it is.

The rights and powers of the *Ohimegi* Igu are discussed by MacBride. With very few exceptions, village chiefs received their titles from the *Ohimegi*, and all villages whose chiefs were installed by him were regarded as equal partners in a community of which Igu was the focus. Tribute was collected only from towns near Igu, and the *Ohimegi* often made counter-gifts. The *Ohimegi* had the right to receive leopard skins, and was given masterless slaves and convicted murderers; he might execute, emasculate or enslave the latter if he wished. He had the right to hear any serious cases in the chiefdom and appeals from inter- or intra-village disputes could be taken to him. The *Ohimegi* sent his own messengers to the villages on occasion, and some Igbira might communicate with him through the heads of the branch of the ruling family to whom they were related by marriage.

²⁹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, p. 249; 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, I).

³⁰ Cullen, n.d.

Although the *Ohimegi's* rule was thus rather loose, he did on at least one occasion send a force to compel a rebellious Basa group to acknowledge its Igbira landlord.³¹

The tradition of the Okene group recounts a division into five branches (Okene, Ihima, Ika or Eika, Odabi or Adabi, Ekehi or Okehi) descending from the five sons of the founder. These branches are sometimes called clans, but no evidence of the characteristic features of clans is given. The senior branch, centred first in the village of Okengwe and later in Okene, is headed by a chief, the *Ohindashi*, who at first ruled over all branches, but later had little power except among the Okene branch. Only priestly functions are ascribed to him. In 1945, the *Ata* of Igbira was the grandson (through a daughter) of Omadabi, who had been chosen by the *Ohindashi* to succeed him about 1900. At the death of Omadabi, the *Ohindashi's* successor became *Ata*, but was dismissed in favour of the present *Ata*. To-day each of the other four branches has its own headman, chosen, as is the *Ohindashi*, by rotation among several "families" (presumably lineages or sub-lineages). Four of the five branches, i.e., all but Ekehi, subsequently sub-divided, and the present organization of each branch consists of a number of sub-groups or towns under a village head, or, sub-divisions of these may have their own village head or sub-village head.³²

SUCCESSION AND INHERITANCE

In the Okene area, succession is by a younger full brother, unless the eldest son of the deceased is senior to him, in which case the son inherits. When the younger brother dies, the property is inherited by the sons of the older brother; the eldest son receives one-half of the property, the remainder being divided among the younger male children. Female children may have the use of certain goods, such as beads, but these revert to the heir at their death. A woman's household goods are inherited by her daughters, while other property falls to the sons.³³ In contrast, Wilson-Haffenden states that a man's property "is divided among his brothers and sisters (a woman's share being half that of a man), or, failing them, among the children or brother's children. The eldest son usually gets a share in any case. Failing children and brothers' children, the property passes to any relatives reckoned through the male line of descent. . . . When a woman dies, her estate is divided in the same manner as above, with the exception that her own children are not eligible to inherit because they belong to their father's and not their mother's kindred."³⁴

SLAVERY

Laird noted that in Panda the proportion of slave population to free was about five to six. The slaves appeared to be well treated, but were badly and scantily fed. In contrast to Wilson-Haffenden's statements, Temple reports that slaves were obtained by purchase only, as the Igbira were "of a peaceful disposition."³⁵

LEGAL PROCEDURE

MacBride³⁶ presents most of the available information on legal procedure, referring, of course, to Koton Karifi only. In the village, the solidarity of the community was the first consideration in dispute cases, and reconciliation was the aim of dispute settlement. A diviner, working with the village chief and council, decided the fine and presided over offerings made to a cult-shrine or the earth. The food was shared between the chief, the principal elders and the parties to the dispute. When disputes occurred between communities which recognized a common interest, the two sets of chiefs and council, or a third party (a senior chief in the area on friendly terms with both villages) attempted to reconcile the disputants by arbitra-

³¹ MacBride, 1935.

³² Cator, 1917; Groom, 1910; Temple, 1919, pp. 156-7; Notes on Kabba Province, c. 1950.

³³ Walker, 1917.

³⁴ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, II, p. 42).

³⁵ Temple, 1919, p. 156.

³⁶ MacBride, 1935.

tion. When the villages whose members had a dispute were not on friendly terms, raids were sometimes made. If such a case became inconvenient to both sides, the chief and councillors of the communities concerned ended the conflict by reconciliation. The *Ohimegi's* authority would be invoked by villages to end serious community or inter-community disputes, to prevent hostilities or to relieve the local leaders of the task of inflicting serious punishment. Judicial authority, according to MacBride, was a source of the *Ohimegi's* income, and a jealously guarded acknowledgement of his otherwise nebulous suzerainty. He was concerned to prevent and check civil war, but malefactors brought to him were regarded as tribute. It has always been the practice of Igbara communities to settle disputes locally. In 1935 neither the *Ohimegi's* court nor sub-divisional Native Administration courts were much used.

Among the Igbara of Koton Karifi a murderer was usually executed locally, but the *Ohimegi* was sometimes invoked. Adultery was settled by a fine and a purificatory offering, but wife abduction could lead to feud. Theft called for an admonition by the chief, restitution, and a feast and libation. The most common disputes were over land and oil palms.³⁷

There is an ordeal in the Okene area given to men accused of theft or adultery, consisting of placing medicine on the tongue of the accused and passing the quill of a fowl's wing-feather through his tongue; if the feather breaks he is deemed guilty, but if it does not he is believed innocent.³⁸ Other ordeals are also used by the Igbara.³⁹

Political chiefs of the Panda Igbara were believed to possess certain supernatural attributes useful to them in their judicial capacity. The custodians of powerful fetishes were also believed to be able to detect criminals. Both these public authorities were called only when the parties could not agree to a settlement. When a fetish was invoked, it was believed to be able to kill those who swore falsely, or to cause the death of an unknown offender. The fetish priest confiscated the property of one whose death was thought to have been caused by such a spirit, to protect the community against its ill effects. Oaths were commonly sworn in dispute cases by the accused party. Murderers were usually put to death, unless they killed in self-defence or killed a man caught in the commission of some crime.⁴⁰

WARFARE

The aboriginal weapon of the Igbara was the bow and poisoned arrow, and guns have not yet entirely taken its place. In war, the heads of enemies killed in battle were taken, for it was believed that the power of the deceased could be acquired for the victorious community, the enemy community thus being deprived of the soul of the deceased. The skull was hung on the town wall to deter future enemies. Admission to warrior rank depended on taking the head of an enemy, and the most successful warriors were accorded great honour, often being given the daughters of the chief in marriage. There was a warrior chief, a title earned by the taking of numerous heads and retained only by continuing to take heads. Wilson-Haffenden states that the war chief had to maintain a weekly supply of heads to retain his title. He also states that cannibalism was practised in time of war.

A successful battle was celebrated by a victory dance. The *ahangi* festival (see below, p. 71) was held annually.⁴¹

Laird describes the army at Panda as being "very insignificant," consisting of not more than 300 footmen armed with bows and arrows, and 30 horsemen; "artillery" was three serviceable and three unserviceable muskets.⁴²

³⁷ MacBride, 1935.

³⁸ Groom, 1910.

³⁹ Temple, 1919, pp. 160-1.

⁴⁰ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, pp. 223 ff.

⁴¹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, Chap. 18; 1927-8 (Ethnological Notes II).

⁴² Laird, 1837, pp. 221-3, 225-9.

CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE

The bulk of the material in this section is taken from Wilson-Haffenden, and refers to the Igbira Panda. Some additional data are available on the Okene Igbira.

BIRTH

Conception is believed to be due to the entry of an ancestral spirit, usually that of a paternal grandfather of the child, into the womb of the mother, but the Igbira are aware of the necessity of sexual relations to pregnancy. From the time a woman first feels the child's movement in her womb, she and her husband dress in old, ragged and dirty clothes. This is an indication to the spirits that the pregnant woman and her husband have surrendered themselves into their hands. It has the further effect of discouraging illicit relations with the woman.

The child is delivered from a sitting position onto a flat stone or mud-brick wall. The mother is assisted by older women and female friends, while the husband must not be present. The navel cord is cut with a razor, put with the placenta into a pot, and thrown into the river or buried by an old woman. The diviner is consulted to decide whether the child should be born in the house of the husband or in that of the wife's parents. Most children are now born in their fathers' houses, but a woman may live in her parents' house until she has borne several children.

Fourteen days after birth the child is given a name, usually that of a paternal ancestor or of his living grandfather. Special treatment is accorded the first child: he or she is never called by name and is treated more severely than other children. Boys are adopted by the father's brother, and girls by the father's sister. Later children may also be adopted. The foster parent assumes all responsibility for the child, including marriage payments. Boys are circumcised before they reach the age of four.¹

INITIATION

When a boy's education is sufficiently far advanced, Wilson-Haffenden says, he is sponsored by his guardian at a public initiation ceremony. The ritual has the combined functions of giving the boy political membership of the tribe, social membership of men's associations, and communion with his ancestral spirits. No ceremony is described for girls.²

TRIBAL MARKS

The use of tribal marks is dying out, as is tooth chipping, but scarification of the face and (in the case of girls) of the body also, is undertaken for decorative purposes.³

MARRIAGE.

Betrothal often takes place in childhood. According to Walker, describing marriage in the Okene area, the father of a boy approaches the girl's parents when he decides the girl is suitable, and, with their consent, pays 7s. 6d. and 240 cowries. The prospective bridegroom then pays the girl a visit, offering her 6d. or some cowries; if she accepts the gift, the engagement is considered settled, but her refusal

¹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, chaps. 20, 22.

² Wilson-Haffenden, op. cit., chap. 22.

³ Ibid., p. 247.

requires her parents to repay the boy's father. A formal engagement is followed by further payments and labour for the girl's parents. The girl may remain in her parents' house, in which case the bridegroom brings the marriage mat there when the marriage is consummated; otherwise the bride joins her husband's household when the marriage takes place. Rights in *genetricem* are held by a husband only after the cowries are paid and the marriage consummated. Two-thirds of the marriage payment is given to the bride's father's family, one-third to her mother's family.⁴

Wilson-Haffenden records quite a different procedure for the Igbira Panda. Betrothals, he says, are arranged by the bridegroom's father's sister and the bride's father's brother. Pre-marital sexual relations with the fiancé and with other men are allowed, but pre-marital pregnancy by anyone but the fiancé is disapproved and may be the reason for breaking the engagement. In such a case, the suitor may repay the fiancé and the girl's parents, and then marry her.

A young man is assisted with the marriage payment by his paternal and maternal relatives. Formerly three years marriage service for the bride's father was the custom, but this has been replaced by a payment of £11. If the engagement is broken by the girl, the fee and gifts are returned, but if the man breaks the engagement, no return is made. A wedding festival takes place at the bridegroom's house, after which the bride remains at his home. For the first three months of marriage, she may not speak to her husband, nor have sexual relations with him, and she eats only the food prepared by her relatives. In the ceremony, a young girl of the bride's extended family represents the bride's mother and remains as the bride's servant for three months. At the end of this period, the bride takes her place in the husband's family group. The husband gives his bride a marriage name, which all his family use. He may pay to have her teeth chipped, but this practice is dying out.

The first wife has authority over all those later married, and uses the name which their husband has given his new wife. Junior wives call the senior wife by a term of respect, and call each other "fellow-wife." The husband is addressed with a term of respect by all his wives.⁵

DEATH

When a person dies, gongs are beaten and women and children wail. This brings a crowd of fellow-villagers, while messengers are sent to notify friends and relatives in nearby hamlets and villages. Burial takes place within 24 hours of death. All work is done and expenses paid by the junior male relatives of the deceased man, and only the juniors mourn for him. When a woman dies, her relatives are called and they remove the body for burial. Expenses are shared between her relatives and her husband's junior relatives. The grave is made in the bush or in the courtyard of the compound, and marked. Laird describes the burial of an elderly chief at which one of his 15 wives was hanged and buried with him to accompany him to the next world. The execution was performed "in a very solemn manner," the people appearing to regard it as a sacrifice.⁶ The grave of an important chief or elder is marked with his image, as is the grave of the chief of Panda.

The widow is expected to mourn for six months, spending the first three months of mourning in seclusion. At the end of this period, she marries a member of her husband's extended family. The other mourners include the deceased's younger brothers, younger cousins, sons, nephews and grandchildren; female mourners are not mentioned.

When the mourning period is over and the family can afford a funeral feast the final ceremony is held. This is a community celebration consisting of beer

⁴ Walker, 1917.

⁵ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, chaps. 22, 23.

⁶ Laird, 1837, pp. 221-3.

drinking, drumming, singing and dancing. On these occasions masked "Dodo" dancers appear, to represent the spirits of the dead. As the family must often save for the funeral celebration and these are usually held after the harvest, such rites are common at that season.⁷

A special ritual is held for the Panda chief.⁸ In the Okene area, the death of a chief is announced by drumming. The body is then washed and laid on a bed, wrapped in cloths. A cow or sheep is sacrificed in the doorway and the body buried beneath the house. If the family lacks sufficient funds at the time of death, the body may be dried and kept until the funeral expenses are available. Besides patrilineal relatives, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law contribute to the funeral costs. Celebrations vary with the wealth of the family of the deceased and his status.⁹

⁷ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, chaps. 24, 25.

⁸ See below, p. 71.

⁹ Walker, 1917.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

GENERAL

Laird¹ noted that in Panda most of the "respectable inhabitants" were Moslems, and both Islam and Christianity are now taking the place of the aboriginal religion described below. In 1917, most Igbara of the Okene area were pagan, but to-day they are being converted to Christianity and Islam in equal numbers. The chiefs of Okene, Toto, Umaisha, and Koton Karifi are Moslems, as are many of their subjects. The Gbari of Koton Karifi have been most affected by Christian missions, while the Basa have for the most part retained their native religion in Koton Karifi and Panda.²

GODS AND SPIRITS

The supreme god is called Hinegba or Ihinegba, and is believed to reside in the sky. He is the creator of the earth, animals and man, and controls the universe. Hinegba is a beneficent being who gives rain and sunshine and punishes evil by sickness. He is not approached directly, but reached through intermediaries such as the ghosts of animals or persons, other spirits, and non-human spiritual beings.

Spirits are believed to animate many natural objects and magico-religious objects. The larger trees contain spirits of considerable influence in the supernatural world, and receive offerings from travellers. Before cutting a tree, or taking bark or leaves for fetishes or medicines, an Igbara will propitiate the tree spirit.

An invisible forest dragon is greatly feared and believed to cause palsy. Other dangerous spirits include evilly disposed human ghosts, mischievous dream spirits and evil nocturnal spirits.³

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The Igbara believe that the ancestors are the humble agents of Hinegba. Only deceased older relatives (grandfather, father, father's brother, older brother, father's sister and older sister) are invoked. The worship is carried on mainly by men, but women may pray to the ancestors through a male relative. These spirits are invoked to ward off disease, witchcraft and spiritual dangers. Certain household spirits and the ancestors may be asked to bring children to a barren household; in cases of disputed parentage, a diviner calls on the ancestors of the disputing men to select the correct father. Certain trees, stones and ant-heaps are believed to contain the spirit of a specific deceased ancestor. A man may in his lifetime pray and request to be allowed to enter some object near his village after death. When an important man dies, a diviner is consulted to find where he has taken up residence. Ancestors are worshipped at the graveside, in the presence of an animal into which a given ancestor is believed to have turned, or in the presence of the natural object in which he resides.⁴ According to Groom the greatest insult that can be given is to curse a man's father's spirit. Diviners may prescribe an offering to the father's spirit.⁵

THE CULT OF THE PANDA "DIVINE KING"

The ritual surrounding the chiefs of Igbara states is described only for Panda. The chief of Panda was regarded as the incarnation of divinity, his person was sur-

¹ Laird, 1837, pp. 221-3.

² MacBride, 1935; Cullen, n.d.; Cator, 1917; Notes on Kabba Province, c. 1950.

³ Groom, 1910; Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, I, II, III).

⁴ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, I, II).

⁵ Groom, 1910.

rounded by taboos and ritual prescriptions protecting his spiritual essence, and a number of magico-religious objects were associated with him. He had 20 or 30 wives, the eldest of whom had control over the women of the palace and was buried with him on his death. Two female relatives of the chief—his sister and a member of a different branch of the royal house—held royal rank. The chief was buried in secret by his male relatives and attendants three days after his death, the death being announced only after three months had passed. After the announcement, a fourteen-day ritual was celebrated. The heir presumptive took part in a ceremonial ordeal to prove that he was chosen by the gods to succeed.⁶

VILLAGE CULTS

Cults of various kinds are found in Igbira villages, the priesthoods being for the most part handed down within a family. Rain-making is especially important; villagers sometimes pray at the grave of the village founder. The chief of Toto town invokes his ancestors for rain in times of drought.⁷ Most Koton Karifi villages have rites for rain and fertility, but these are more important for the Basa and Gbari than for the Igbira.

Harvest festivals are held in some Igbira villages. Among the Okene these are led by the *Ohindashi* and *Okukubete*.⁸ In Koton Karifi an esoteric men's society is associated with these celebrations.⁹ A common Panda village cult is the *akangi*, for the war god and defender of the town. In those villages which possess the cult, the priesthood is in the hands of the ruling head of the village.

The *bori* society, better known among the Hausa, is found also among the Panda. Initiation involves spending seven days in the society hut, where a rather high fee is collected and offerings are made to the cult objects. Both men and women may join and the hypnotic trance in which members dance is produced by inhaling the fumes of certain herbs.¹⁰

MEDICINE MEN AND FETISH PRIESTS

These ritual officials have supernatural power derived from the spirits controlling the rites they perform and dwelling in fetish objects. The power is transmitted by heredity or by gift, but the novice must not use the power without the permission of the owner before his death. After the owner dies, his student sacrifices at his grave and may then act as medicine man or fetish priest.¹¹

WITCHCRAFT

Deaths, except from old age, are often thought to be caused by witchcraft. The Igbira believe that senior relatives can bewitch junior ones, but juniors have no power to bewitch their elders.¹² According to Groom, a witch possesses the evil eye and casts spells which cause the death of persons or animals.¹³ Wilson-Haffenden records the belief that a witch may change himself into a wer-animal. He obtained a confession of guilt by an accused witch, who admitted to having changed himself into a cheetah and killed a man while in this state.¹⁴

DIVINATION

In Koton Karifi the art of divination is hereditary. While a senior councillor may be a diviner, and will accordingly take charge of village cults, divination is

⁶ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, II, III, IV).

⁷ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, V).

⁸ Cator, 1917.

⁹ MacBride, 1935.

¹⁰ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, III).

¹¹ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, II).

¹² Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, p. 228.

¹³ Groom, 1910.

¹⁴ Wilson-Haffenden, op. cit., pp. 160 ff.

neither an attribute nor a qualification for public office.¹⁵ In Panda, diviners were consulted on all matters in which the careful treatment of spiritual beings was considered necessary to success. A council of seven diviners was consulted by the chief on matters of public policy. Various techniques of divination were used: seeds threaded together, cowries stirred in water, antelope horns, etc. Diviners renewed their powers with medicine from time to time.¹⁶

FISHING AND HUNTING RITES

Communal, as well as individual hunting and fishing, were undertaken only after the appropriate rituals had been carried out. Purificatory magic was especially important in hunting.¹⁷

¹⁵ MacBride, 1935.

¹⁶ Wilson-Haffenden, 1927-28 (Ethnological Notes, II).

¹⁷ Wilson-Haffenden, 1930b, pp. 169-70.

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THE IGALA
AND
THE IDOMA-SPEAKING PEOPLES

III. THE IGALA¹

NOMENCLATURE AND DEMOGRAPHY

Despite the strategic location of the Igala kingdom and the length of time during which there have been important European contacts between it and governmental, missionary and trading agencies, extremely little is known of its ethnography. What recent literature there is, published and unpublished, has been mainly concerned with attempting to establish, on fragmentary data, the Jukun or, conversely, the Benin, origin of the Igala kingship.

The name Igala is by now established for the language, the people and the administrative Division and is the only form I heard used by the people themselves. The form "Igara," found in much of the earlier literature, is Yoruba.

The Igala Division of Kabba Province covers an area of about 5,000 square miles. It is bounded to the north by the Benue River and to the west by the Niger. To the east is Idoma Division of Benue Province and on the south are the Ibo peoples of Onitsha Province. The 1952 Census gives a total of 294,392 Igala, mainly in Igala Division. The total population of the Division was given as 295,000 in 1944, of which 200,000 were estimated to be Igala, the rest being Basa-Nge, Basa-Komo, Igbira and Ibaji. The average population density is 59 per square mile. Idah, the capital, is a centre of river trade and has a population of about 5,000, including many foreign traders, craftsmen and labourers. In 1931 the number of adult males in the Division was given as 76,171, but only 73,432 appeared on the tax rolls in 1944. These figures may represent a real decline, but the discrepancy is more probably due to difficulty in making an accurate census with reduced staff in wartime. Nevertheless, early estimates suggest a higher population a hundred years ago. Oldfield, describing what may have been the *ocho* festival of 1833, says that "there were nearly 15,000 people assembled in the town (Idah)".^{1a} Trotter estimated in 1841 that there were 2,000 huts in Idah and a probable population of 8,000 to 9,000.² Crowther noted in 1853 that the population of Idah had sharply declined since his first visit in 1841, but that refugees from the Fulani wars had greatly swelled the population near the confluence.³

The northern part of the Division is largely occupied by non-Igala groups who came in about the middle of the 19th century as refugees. The Basa-Nge around the confluence are Nupe-speaking and are considered elsewhere (see pp. 19-20). The Basa-Komo,⁴ further east along the Benue as far as Idoma, are an entirely different people, speaking a Semi-Bantu language. South of Idah, in a large district along and beyond the Niger, are the Ibaji, a primitive group about whom almost nothing is known.⁵

¹ The following account of the Igala, Idoma and related peoples is based on my work during the first year in the field, 1951-52. The study was sponsored by the Colonial Social Science Research Council, under a grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. The actual writing was made possible by a grant from the International African Institute, who also made available their considerable file of unpublished reports on this region. I also had the full co-operation of the Idoma Divisional Office and the Idoma Native Authority while in the field. Through them I was able to consult many unpublished documents and to enjoy the full hospitality of Idoma Division. The assistance of these and many other persons and agencies is hereby gratefully acknowledged. R. G. A.

^{1a} Oldfield, 1837, p. 230.

² Trotter, 1848, p. 318.

³ Crowther, 1855, pp. 34, 37.

⁴ To be considered in a forthcoming volume of the Ethnographic Survey.

⁵ See below, pp. 89-90.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Allison describes the physical environment as follows:

"The crystalline rocks of the western bank of the Niger extend into Igala between Echau and Etobe, but almost immediately dip under the cretaceous sandstones which constitute the rock formations of the greater part of the country. The country rises in the centre to a series of indented plateaux sometimes with bare ironstone caps, and an elevation of 1,000–1,200 ft.

"Rainfall statistics are available from Ankpa for the years 1911–1928, and the average monthly rainfall for this period was as follows:

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
.32	.66	2.2	4.02	6.47	7.53	6.41	7.15	11.08	6.63	1.52	.42	54.42

"This adequate and well distributed rainfall and the deep red sandy soils give rise to a high forest vegetation, interspersed with areas of close growing savannah woodland. The crystalline soils between Etobe and Echau support a very much poorer type of open savannah woodland, and the vegetation of the alluvial soils south of Idah, between the Niger and the Anambra Creek, consists of seasonably flooded grassland with stands of *Borassus* palm and swamp forest.

"The population of the central area is fairly dense, and as the Igalas prefer to farm the high forest and live in widely scattered settlements, the forest is seldom allowed to attain any great age and consists mostly of secondary growth in varying stages of advancement. The conditions in these areas of secondary high forest are extremely favourable to the growth of rubber vines and oil-palms."⁶

LANGUAGE

No adequate study of Igala has ever been published. The great stumbling-block, as with the other Kwa languages, lies in the systematic transformations which the sounds and tones undergo in various morphological and syntactic contexts. Until these are worked out there can be no secure grammar or lexicography, and the interpretation of printed texts remains largely guesswork.⁷

The final placing of Igala in linguistic relation to its neighbours must also await the careful study of better materials than are available at the present time, with the exception of those for the Oturkpo dialect of Idoma, which has by now been comparatively well studied. Nevertheless, a broad picture is beginning to emerge which is not likely to be radically altered by further work.

Apart from the several short word-lists in Clarke,⁸ the first published study of Igala was that in Koelle in 1854.⁹ On the basis of a vocabulary of upwards of

⁶ Allison, 1946.

⁷ Subject to these limitations, one must mention with respect the pioneer work of the Rev. Mr. Hewstone, of the Akpoto Bible Mission, Ankpa, and the Rev. Mr. Dibble, of Ayangba, in the translation of the New Testament into Igala. Mr. Dibble was kind enough to allow me to use his grammatical notes and his card-file dictionary of over 8,000 words, during my brief survey of the Igala language. W. T. A. Philpot has also published a short study of Igala which must be reckoned a pioneer attempt to deal with the problem of tone. (See Philpot, 1935.)

⁸ Clarke, 1848, pp. 14, nos. 212, 214; 20, nos. 117; 22, nos. 163, 164; 24, no. 218; 56, XVII (a list of 46 words).

⁹ Koelle, 1854. It is certain that Crowther had a copy of Koelle's book with him when he visited Igala in 1854.

three hundred words, Koelle did not hesitate to class Igala, as a language of the Yoruba group, although not a dialect of Yoruba. I agree with Crowther in accepting this. Igala is, however, also closely related to the Idoma language to the east, and therefore also to Egede and Afu and, less closely, to Akweya and Etulo. Its relationship to Idoma is at least as close as to Yoruba, while Idoma is not so close to Yoruba as is Igala. Igala is related in the same way to Egede, but not so closely as is Idoma. The nature of these linguistic relationships is such as to be most easily explained by the hypothesis that the various groups have been derived from a single social group, parts of which have at various times become separated. The spatial distribution of the peoples concerned would seem to correspond roughly to the length of the period of separate development. The degree of development of political institutions seems likewise to parallel the linguistic relationships and spatial distribution. Thus the Egede, with no political organization beyond their lineage institutions, are spatially and linguistically the most remote from the Yoruba. Their nearest relatives, the Idoma, who are nearly all located somewhat closer to the Yoruba, had developed petty kingdoms in a number of places. The Igala, still closer, both geographically and linguistically, have traditions of derivation from the Yoruba, and have never in fact entirely lost contact with the Yoruba. It is to be noted, however, that their kingship, while it is of the same general level of development as many Yoruba kingdoms, differs in many respects from the Yoruba pattern, and they do not share the Yoruba legend of origin from Ife.

The fairly obvious resemblances between Igala and Idoma have often been explained by the suggestion that the original Yoruba dialect of the Igala invaders became mixed with the language of the original Akpoto (Idoma) inhabitants. Despite some borrowing of words, this explanation must be rejected, since Iyala, geographically the most remote dialect of Idoma, bears almost as close a resemblance to Igala as do the Akpoto and Agala dialects, where contact is or has been close. Even the existing, very inadequate, word-lists show half-a-dozen Iyala words which are closely similar to Igala but not to the Oturkpo dialect.

The word-lists of Clarke, Koelle and Crowther afford a means of estimating roughly the amount of change which has taken place in the last 100 years in the languages of Igala, Basa Komo, Tiv, and the Arago and Iyala dialects of Idoma. This material requires separate study, but few Europeans taking word-lists in these respective regions to-day would arrive at as close an approximation of the modern speech as these old word-lists represent; it may therefore be concluded that for upwards of a 100 years the five languages and dialects have remained fairly stable.

The languages under consideration fall together, as opposed to Yoruba, in having a peculiar syntactic construction which has been called the pre-posed object, with the meaning of completed action. This construction is missing in Yoruba and cannot have spread by diffusion among the Benue Valley languages, since the morpheme prefixed to the object shows much variability. A highly specific morphological correspondence between Igala and Egede has been noted in this construction, the two languages resembling each other and not intervening languages in this respect. A significant correspondence between Egede and Yoruba is the word for "not" in negative sentences. It is highly probable that further study will reveal other such correspondences.

Igala is fortunate in not being deeply divided by dialect differences. A central dialect, an Idah dialect and an Ankpa dialect may be distinguished, but they seem not to be so different from each other as to make communication difficult.

The earliest travellers found that Hausa was much used as a *lingua franca*. It is still used, and to-day one would have little difficulty in finding English-speaking persons in most communities. Since a great deal of trade and transport is in Ibo hands, a knowledge of Ibo would doubtless carry one a long way in Igala.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The most definite historical statement that can be made about the Igala is that they had a common origin with the Yoruba and that the separation took place long enough ago to allow for their fairly considerable linguistic differences.

Crowther quotes two different origin traditions. According to the first, the King of Yoruba made a journey to Raba, the old Nupe capital on the Niger, and asked the *Ata* to indicate a suitable place for him to settle. The *Ata* accordingly took a canoe and dropped down the river till he came to Idah where the Akpoto, who lived there, allowed the Yoruba king to stay. The *Ata* had great influence and precedence over the Akpoto.¹⁰

Crowther was told at Idah by a chief related on his mother's side to the Akpoto that the country had belonged originally to the Akpoto and that the king was named Igala. The first *Ata* was a hunter by profession who came from a tribe named Ado, to the west of the Niger. He ingratiated himself with Igala by gifts of big game and then, when a quarrel arose, drove out Igala and became king himself. Crowther was also told that the Akpoto were now subject to the *Ata*, and that their language was the same.¹¹ The chief said, moreover, that the *Ata* of Igala and the kings of Nupe and Aboh (in Ibo country) all came from Ado; he listed twenty *Atas* of Idah, inclusive of the reigning one. Crowther identified several places called Ado in or near Yoruba country, one of which is Benin.¹²

Burdo does not mention having landed at Idah or having met the *Ata* in the course of his journey up the Niger in 1878. He nevertheless gives another version of this same origin story, which, one presumes, he obtained from his interpreter or some other informant. "After the annexation of the Yoruba to the Fulani Moslem empire, by the King Umoru, the dispossessed sovereign asked the Sultan of Rabbah for another state, in exchange for that which he had lost. . . Far from being angry, the sultan set out, descended the Niger, and arrived at Iddah, which the Akpotos then inhabited. He bought their territory and installed there the defeated sovereign who there took the title of *Attah*, which in Hausa signifies father or patriarch."¹³

Seton says, without giving authority for his statement, that the Igala were driven across the Niger from Yoruba country by the King of Benin, in the 16th century.¹⁴ Allison states that "early Portuguese mission chronicles relate that Portuguese priests accompanied the Benin army on an expedition against the *Atah* during the 15th century, and armies apparently met on the right bank of the Niger." I have not had the opportunity to check these chronicles.

If several stories appear to bring Igala from what is now Nupe, we have, on the other hand, the Nupe story to the effect that at one time Nupe was tributary to the *Ata* of Idah.¹⁵ Yet again, Clifford argues not only that the ruling group in Igala had a separate origin from that of the Igala generally, but also that the present dynasty is Jukun in origin and was founded by a noble of the court at Wukari some time during the first half of the 18th century, a tradition in favour with one section at least of the ruling house. He admits, however, that there are to-day few points of resemblance between the two kingships. Thus the person of

¹⁰ Crowther, 1855, p. 65. The story is obscure, but suggests that the Igala were pushed into Idah by the Yoruba.

¹¹ Crowther, 1855, p. 174.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 206. Mr. R. E. Bradbury, in a personal communication, comments that both the Yoruba and the Ibo call the Bini "Ado," and adds that most of the peoples of this region—Kukuruku, Ishan, Onitsha, Western Ibo, Urhobo and Ijaw—claim to have come from Benin. It should be mentioned that the Igala language is much more closely related to Yoruba than it is to Edo.

¹³ Burdo, 1880, p. 207.

¹⁴ Seton, 1930, p. 149.

¹⁵ Nadel, 1942, pp. 73, ff. See also above, p. 22.

the *Ata* is not identified with the crops, as is that of the *Aku* of Wukari; the *Ata* was not therefore subject to sacred regicide, and was able to be himself a farmer. His health, unlike that of the *Aku*, could be a matter of public discussion. If anything, the *Ata* is concerned ritually more with the hunt than with the crops. The act by which an *Ata* is installed is a ceremonial rebirth from under the robe of one of the male elders of the Idah district. Linguistic evidence of connection between Igala and Jukun is entirely lacking, and no author has shown evidence of word borrowing from Jukun, with the possible exception of the word *Ata*, which, in addition to being the title of the king in Igala, means "father" in both languages. The tones of the two words are different, however. On the other hand, traditions collected by Shaw¹⁶ from Ocheke and Agatu, and by Leslie¹⁷ from Yangedde districts of Idoma afford further evidence for credence in stories of direct Jukun intervention in Idah.

G. T. Mott, a former District Officer in Kabba Province, in an unpublished report, argues that the origin of the Igala kingship was not Jukun but Bini. Beyond a certain geographical plausibility he can point to the facts that the famous brass mask worn by the *Ata* is most probably of Benin workmanship,¹⁸ that the wearing of beads on the wrist as a symbol of chieftainship is common to Benin and Igala, and that in both places, the death of the king was kept secret for from one to three years. The last custom is also found more widely among, e.g., the northern Idoma and in the Worku district of Egede. Mott gives a list of titles in both Igala and Benin which he claims were borrowed in Idah from the Bini originals, but the alleged resemblances do not appear very convincing.¹⁹

As various writers have pointed out, it is by no means easy to pursue these investigations further at Idah. The *Ata* and his immediate entourage simply say that his ancestor was one Agenapoje, "who landed on a rock near Idah, being sent from the Gods."

Nevertheless, even if we should admit a Jukun or Bini origin for the ruling group, we have contributed little to the explanation of the phenomena. Apart from the fact that the connections of Igala with Yoruba are far from having been explored, it is by now obvious that very considerable development of political institutions has taken place at Idah itself, although not indeed in isolation from outside influences.

The earliest European explorers and travellers found the King of Idah in control of the whole east bank of the Niger from Adamugu, at the edge of Ibo country, to above Koton Karifi. The two Igbira kingdoms of Koton Karifi and Funda (Panda) were tributary to him, although the Fulani were beginning to make inroads. Slave-raiding and slave-trading had for long been a regular part of the economy and, indeed, one of the major objects of the early expeditions was the

¹⁶ Shaw, 1934.

¹⁷ Leslie, 1935.

¹⁸ Murray, in his discussion of the royal masks at Idah, says that in general style they are most like Yoruba masks, but that in the use of abrus seeds as decoration they most closely resemble the masks of Igbira, Chamba, Jukun and Kutev. He adds that although enquiries were made by him and many masks seen at Wukari, none had any resemblance to those at Idah, although it is believed there that the style of the carvings is Jukun in origin. Commenting on the almost life-size bronze mask, *ejube' aulo*, "the eye which brings fear to other eyes," he says that it is a very beautiful example of Benin work of a fairly early period (i.e., when Ife influence was strong). He adds further that true bronze masks are extremely rare in Nigerian art, that this and the Obalufon mask at Ife are possibly the only two in existence and that both happen to be among the finest examples of West African Art. (Murray, 1949, pp. 85-6, 92).

¹⁹ According to Palmer (1928, p. 255) the paramount chief of the older community was called the *ashadu*, and this title is still found among some of the Yoruba or semi-Yoruba communities on the right bank of the Niger near Lokoja. It is interesting that the title *asaju* has been reported as a war title in the Anago area of Ilaro Division, next to Dahomey. Among the Ihumbo, a notably unwarlike group, the *asaju* was chief of staff. Among the Egbado of Ilaro Town, *asaju* was one of the seven war titles. (W. T. Hatch, The Ihumbo Group, Ilaro Division, MS. notes, 1935; The Egbado of Ilaro (anon), MS. Notes, 1935.)

attempt to stop these activities at their source. The early explorers, however, were witnesses to a sharp transformation of the slaving pattern which resulted from the Fulani conquests.

When Laird visited Panda in 1833, he was told that it had once been a much more important centre of trade, "a sort of entrepôt where Arabs and Felatahs [Fula] exchanged European goods for slaves."²¹ What seems to have happened is that with the extension of the Fulani empire and the coming of Fulani raids in force into this region, the trade by which the town had prospered became increasingly difficult. Crowther gives us almost a war correspondent's report on the final destruction of Panda in 1853,²² and Allen provides an interesting description of what might be considered the older type of slave raid which he witnessed at the confluence in 1833.²³

At the time of the Laird and Oldfield expedition there were, in addition to Idah, two important Igala markets on the left bank of the Niger: Adamugu on the northern tip of an island about fifteen miles south of Idah, and Ikiri or Boqueh, about 24 river miles above Idah. Both were important centres of the slave trade. The Landers, in 1830, met both Nupe and Bonny (Niger Delta) slave traders at Adamugu.²⁴ It was also a centre for the ivory trade, and to this day there are elephants in the riverain marshes from this region south to Onitsha. In the time of the first expeditions, Adamugu was under a chief by the name of Abokko, who also controlled one of the wards of Idah, was the principal contact man for the Europeans, and was even then quarrelling with the *Ata*. After Abokko's death Adamugu was abandoned, apparently as a result of factional quarrels. Crowther reports that by 1854 these quarrels had become very serious and had resulted in a great decline in the population of Idah since his first visit in 1841. The Abokko party had left Idah and had settled up and down the Niger from Ibo country to the confluence. They controlled most of the trade and had forced the break-up of the great market at Ikiri. Trade at Idah had nearly ceased.²⁵

Clifford says of the period under discussion that the political functions of the king were greatly reduced. A plethora of titled office-holders came into being, the titles bearing few duties with them. The sons of the king's mother's kindred formed a corporate bodyguard, which, under the *Ata* Amochéje, at mid-century virtually took over the kingdom, causing great unrest. They and the titled officials kept the *Ata* increasingly isolated from the practical conduct of affairs,²⁶ and he became more and more an inaccessible religious symbol. As such, however, his reputation went far beyond the effective political limits of Igala. From all over Idoma and from other places newly chosen chiefs would make pilgrimages to Idah to be confirmed in office and to receive from the *Ata* the bead bracelet of office. The *Ata* was also called upon to arbitrate chieftaincy disputes. The cult of the *Ata*, it would appear, was a profitable one.

By 1854 the Fulani had become a really serious threat to the Igala. They had raided all the way down to the Delta along the west bank of the Niger, burning and pillaging towns and taking large numbers of slaves. North of the Benue, the situation was even worse. In 1853 Panda was finally destroyed, and the Emirate of Nassarawa was founded. The districts along the Benue River became flooded with refugees. The Basa-Nge came into the confluence region after 1840, many Igbara after the fall of Panda, the Basa-Komo in 1860. The power of the *Ata* had weakened to such an extent that he was unable to keep the Basa-Komo from spreading out much farther than he had intended.²⁷

²¹ Ibid., p. 232.

²² Crowther, 1855, pp. 157-8 et passim.

²³ Allen, 1840, p. 13.

²⁴ Lander, R. and J., 1832, III, p. 96.

²⁵ Crowther, 1855, pp. 171-3.

²⁶ Clifford, 1936, p. 401.

²⁷ Clifford, 1936, p. 404.

Closer European control of the Mediterranean, beginning with the collective *démarche* of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1819 against piracy in Tunisia and culminating in the French conquest of Algeria, 1830-48, together with the wars with Morocco in 1844-60 and the British intervention in Tunisia beginning in 1855, closed the main outlet for Fulani slaves. It is worth considering the possibility that this, together with the general decline in the world market for slaves after 1850, deprived the Fulani of their principal motive and their principal source of weapons for their wars. It is often said that the tsetse fly prevented the Fulani from establishing themselves south of the Benue, by killing the horses on which they depended. The fly may indeed have played a part, but the early accounts tell of many more horses in Igala than one sees there to-day,²⁸ and the tsetse fly population may not yet have been so heavily infected with sleeping sickness.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the Igala seem to have turned to river piracy, and the Royal Niger Company punished Idah on more than one occasion. The Igala and their neighbours were a constant source of trouble to early administrations, even after the raising of the British flag at Lokoja in 1900. In 1904, and for 30 years thereafter, a garrison of troops was stationed at Ankpa in eastern Igala. For a time the boundary between the Northern Provinces and the Eastern Provinces passed through Igala in such a way as to cut Idah off from northern Igala, but this was corrected after 1918.

The effect of Government policy in modern times has been to strengthen the position of the *Ala* with respect to his officialdom and to encourage him to be more accessible.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE

According to Allison the Igala system of agriculture has more features in common with Northern Yoruba farming practice than with that of the high forest farmers of the south. The work of clearing, heaping and planting is performed by the men and boys; crops are planted in sequence and the same ground is used for two or three years before being left to revert to bush. The most valued food crop is the red yam, for which a high forest soil is required, and a certain amount of tree cover is left during the growing period of this crop. The land is subsequently completely cleared and farmed, usually for another two years, the main crops being millet, maize, guinea corn, beans and bambara groundnut (*Voandzeia sp.*). Small quantities of cotton are also grown, and in the Ife district to the north of Ankpa it is one of the major crops, part of which is sold to the trading firms at Bangana and part headloaded down to the Ibo markets of Nsukka. During recent years an increasing quantity of castor seed has been grown for the export trade and small quantities of cocoa are produced, but, with the exception of the Ife district, cash crops are not raised to any extent in the Igala farms.²⁹

LIVESTOCK

Dwarf cattle, sheep, goats and fowls are kept and play a definite, though subsidiary, role in the village economy. During the Second World War there was a fairly extensive export trade in livestock to Onitsha and Enugu, probably as a result of the wartime prosperity of those cities.

MARKETS AND TRADE

Markets are of great importance and are held every four days in villages of any size. Allison points out that, including the terminal towns themselves, there

²⁸ For example, see Oldfield, 1837, I, pp. 247, 409, 410; II, p. 132.

²⁹ Allison, 1944 and 1946.

are eight large markets on the 80 miles of road between Idah and Ankpa. During the war over 30 main markets were listed for the collection of rubber, and rubber appeared in many more besides.³⁰

In 1833 Oldfield visited the ten-day market at Alburkah near the confluence and found maize, Nupe mats, elephants' tusks, Hausa robes, spiced balls, flour, a small breed of horses, slaves, native-made blue beads, beer, and a few coconuts, goats and dogs offered for sale.³¹ Along the river, in addition to other food products, rice, in specially made grass bags, was a popular commodity.³² Allen, who with Laird accompanied the Laird and Oldfield expeditions, wrote that trade was the ruling passion, but that "the staple commodity, alas, is *man*."³³

In 1841 the Trotter expedition found the market at Idah operating under a regular market judiciary, which maintained very good order. The *Ata* kept a close control of trade and attempted to enforce a royal monopoly, especially in ivory. He levied a small tax on all commodities brought to the market, and the market chiefs made sure that the articles were properly classified and offered for sale in their appropriate sections. Trotter noted "various native manufactures of cotton for tobies and body clothes; red and blue cotton and grass threads, raw cotton of very short staple; native-made swords, knives, spears, and little calabashes of dye powders, pephrosea, oxides of iron and camwood, as also grass and ivory ornaments for the body, and pipes of clay or iron, very neatly made." Cowries were the only currency, but much business was done by barter. Blacksmithing, including the making of weapons, was a major occupation, but already completely dependent on supplies of iron from the coast. There was excellent leather work of many kinds. Fishing, by net or by poison, and largely in the hands of slaves, was extensively practised. The expedition considered that the Igala "are industrious and evidently more advanced in civilization than their neighbours lower down the river. Their grounds are much better cultivated, manufactures more encouraged, and their social comforts increasing."³⁴

There are in the early sources many other indications of the existence of a considerable group of large-scale traders, some of them women. In Igala, the great bulk of the petty trade is in the hands of the women, who take little part in agricultural production. They also produce some cotton cloth in a number of villages pots and native soap, and, in the country north of Ankpa, waist-beads from the shell of the fan-palm tree. Allison states, however, that there is no home industry on a comparable scale to the cloth-weaving, matting and pot-making carried out by the women of many Yoruba communities. Whether the Igala women once carried out these manufactures on a large scale is a matter for conjecture, but to-day their main occupation, apart from normal household duties, is the collecting, processing and marketing of palm produce and rubber. The Igala men, on the other hand, continue to pursue their traditional agricultural occupations more or less unmodified by modern trends, while the women by their participation in production for the export trade provide the bulk of the cash income, which is expended on goods no longer provided by home industry.³⁵

The situation among the Igala appears at first sight to be the reverse of what acculturation studies made in various parts of the world have led us to expect. By and large, it is the men's world which shatters on impact with strong European influence, and the women's world which remains conservative. The present situation becomes much more intelligible if we bear in mind the general situation at the contact period, a situation which must then have been fairly old, when both men and women seem to have been about equally and vigorously engaged in trade. But there was a considerable difference in the pattern of trading activities by the

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Oldfield, 1837, I, p. 409.

³² Laird, 1837, p. 169.

³³ Allen, 1840, p. 10.

³⁴ Trotter, et. al., 1848, pp. 31-2.

³⁵ Allison, 1944 and 1946.

two sexes. The men were more concerned with large-scale enterprise such as the capture and marketing of slaves, the trading and marketing of horses and other livestock, wholesaling or brokerage and the defence of the movement of commodities. In the more primitive regions, subject to slave-raids from the outside and the constant threat of head-hunting internally, the role of the men in providing armed defence for the movement of the women traders bulked larger and their own trading activities assumed somewhat smaller proportions. The Idoma *ayula* societies and dance guilds can be understood in this light. The 50 years following 1830 saw the break-up of the world market for slaves, and in this period too the Fulani Empire reached its greatest extent and radically altered the pattern of movement of slaves with respect to Southern Nigeria. States which had made a profitable business of slaving were now themselves subjected to devastating raids. The abandonment of the great markets at Adamugu and Ikiri at this time also makes sense in these terms.

The ending of the Fulani wars and the coming of the Royal Niger Company and the Pax Britannica saw no immediate recrudescence of large-scale African trading enterprise. There was no ready substitute for the slave trade. As late as 1905 the money value of palm-oil exported from Igala was only a quarter as great as that of rubber (£9,000 and £36,000 respectively). Furthermore, the large-scale transport of manufactured commodities had previously always been by slaves. The supply of these must have fallen off very rapidly and likewise the long distance overland movement of goods. On the Niger and Benue Rivers, the European steamboats began to play an increasing role.

After 1870 increasing security from attack made itself felt. The Fulani had largely spent their force. Through most of the region there was some slaving going on until the time when the particular districts were occupied and pacified, but the scale diminished continually. The Pax Britannica led to the fairly rapid abandoning of most of the walled towns, which had been a necessary feature of the previous period, and to a large-scale movement out on to the land in scattered settlements, a process that is still going on in some districts.

The Igala and the Benue Valley do not constitute an exception to the general rule that in a culture contact situation it is the man's world that is changed first. It was precisely the man's world which was completely transformed during the period for which we have records. The women continued their interest in petty trade and manufactures in very much the same way as before, the biggest change being that from textile to palm-oil production, in the regions where the oil palm flourishes. The relative withdrawal of the men from trade is seen to be recent—and superficial.

MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

Towards the end of the 19th century, the trade in rubber, collected from the *Caropodinus hirsutia* and *Landolphia owariensis* vines, became increasingly important. Up till 1910 the most valuable export from Northern Nigeria was rubber, some 70% of which was estimated to come from Igala. Because of the inefficiency of the methods of native rubber production, buying ceased during the twenties, but was resumed for a period during the Second World War and the period of high prices.

The collection, manufacture and marketing of palm produce is largely the work of the women. The excellent river transport facilities to the north place Igala in a favoured position, and in 1944 the entire supply of oil, surplus to home requirements, was bought up by merchants from Northern Nigeria.^{35A} The recent construction of modern oil-extraction mills should considerably increase the income from palm-oil.

^{35A} Allison, 1946.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

GENERAL

Little is known about Igala social organization. Clifford says: "The country was divided into 'fiefs': microcosms of the Idah chieftaincy, the fief-holder (*onu*) receiving a title and an official 'salutation' from the *Ata*, together with a gift of bead bracelets which were—as they are still to-day—the outward and visible sign of his authority." The tribe consisted of nine "moieties" each under its own elder.³⁶

Allison speaks of a "systematic hierarchy of *Gagos* and *Onus* (village and district heads) culminating in the *Ata* 'Gala as the supreme priest king.'" ("*Gago*" is in all probability a borrowing from Hausa.) He goes on to say, "the typical Igala village consists of an agglomeration of separate compounds and hamlets, each owning the authority of a *madachi* (a title of Hausa origin) through whom much of the administration appears still to be carried out. This apparently patriarchal system is presumably the indigenous Akpoto organization which continues to function beneath the various foreign cultural strata."³⁷

Meagre as this information is, it suggests a resemblance to the Idoma system, which may well in fact have preceded it in the same area. We may assume that the *onu*, or district chief, is at least roughly comparable with the Idoma "chief of the Land," except that instead of being independent he is in some way subject to the *Ata*. It is of course improbable that his relation to the *Ata* is sufficiently like the European feudal relation to justify the use of a term like "fief" to describe his district.

FORMS OF SETTLEMENT: HOUSE TYPES

In sharp contrast to the rectangular houses seen in Yoruba, Benin and parts of Ibo country to the west and south, Igala houses are nearly all round, with conical thatched roofs. In this they resemble house types to the north and east. They differ from Idoma houses in that instead of their roof-beams resting directly on the mud walls, they usually rest on a ring of vertical posts which stand just outside the wall, or are sometimes embedded in it. The wall itself supports no weight. The older type houses were quite small, but in recent years a considerable increase in size and an improvement in the quality of construction is to be seen. Compounds are not usually walled, nor are they constructed of inter-connecting houses, except in the case of chiefly compounds. Rather they consist in clusters of huts around open spaces. The several early descriptions of the *Ata*'s palace at Idah agree that it was situated near the top of the well-known cliff on the bank of the Niger, and that it consisted of many dozens of inter-connecting circular huts of the type described. The entrances had the low lintel and raised sill commonly still seen to-day. Allen's drawings show verandahs similar to many still to be seen in northern Idoma, and his description of the house type of 1833 is of interest, since it is easy to find precisely similar houses to-day.

"No difference is found between the palace and the poor man's hut; the former being in fact but an assemblage of the latter, proportioned to the number of wives and slaves of the possessor. These are thrown together apparently without plan, being merely inclosures made by joining with a low mud wall the circular huts which seem dropped by accident on a large piece of ground. They usually contain but one chamber each; although sometimes a small space is partitioned off for a store or lumber closet. The only admission of light and air is by a small doorway. . . . A communication with the street, and from one courtyard to another, is by a hut called *Zauli*, having two of these inconvenient apertures."³⁸

³⁶ Clifford, 1936, pp. 395, 398.

³⁷ Allison, 1944.

³⁸ Allen, 1840, p. 11.

Trotter described Idah in 1841 as follows: "There are on a rough computation about 2,000 huts, with a probable population of 8,000 to 9,000. On all sides the plantations are kept in nice order. . . . The palace is situated in the most secure place, being naturally protected towards the river by the abrupt and precipitous cliffs, while, on the other sides are the surrounding villages as well as an intermediate thick mud wall, which encloses it perfectly. It is, moreover, guarded by a militia, armed with spears, a few muskets, and swords. . . . The higher classes observe the same protective system as the Attàh, having the huts of subordinates and slaves, and often a clay wall, surrounding them, so that in the event of an attack their persons or houses are less exposed.

"The streets are very irregular and numerous; the principal market is held in the Attàh's or northern division, on a clear level space, shaded by numerous trees."³⁹

THE KINGSHIP.

The main features of the kingship, so far as they are known, have already been outlined. Bearing in mind that "divine kingship" may mean very different things in various parts of Africa, we can with justice call the *Ata* a divine king. The *Ata* himself told the Trotter expedition: "The river belongs to me a long way up and down on both sides, and I am King. . . . God made me after His own Image: I am all the same as God and He appointed me a King."⁴⁰ It is worth noting additionally that the nine elders mentioned above, who were probably heads of the leading lineages of the Idah District, collectively formed the *Ata's* council, called the *Igala mela*. Their power seems to have been broken during the troubles in the middle of the 19th century. This council, together with the *ashadu*, had the power of selecting the new *Ata*, after the death of an incumbent. Their choice was limited in practice to eligible members of one of the four royal lineages whose turn it was to supply the *Ata*. These four lineages traced their descent from the sons of Ayagba, the second *Ata* after Agenapoje. The *ashadu* was a sort of permanent lord chamberlain and king-maker: the descendant in office of the first *ashadu*, the husband of Omeppa, the founding queen, according to one legend. On her death he summoned her brother, Agenapoje, and "married" him, thus making him the first *Ata*.⁴¹

There is no trace in the later writings of an important office of queen mother. Nevertheless, it is worth noting early evidence that points towards such a personage. The report of the Trotter expedition says: "The government of the Eggarah country is monarchical, and vested in the Attàh, the succession is hereditary in the female line, the eldest son of the sister; thus, it is said, Ochejih, the present Attàh, succeeded, taking precedence of the many children of the former king."⁴² Oldfield, in 1833, had many dealings with the "queen," who was not only quite an august personage with many attendants, but also an extremely active trader in ivory and other articles. On an occasion which may have been the *ocho* festival, she bought a quantity of gunpowder. She is several times noted as referring to the *Ata* as her brother.⁴³

POSITION OF WOMEN

Most of what little is known about the position of women has already been stated in connection with the discussion of economic organization. Oldfield says that when a prince he knew was killed, while on what must have been a slaving

³⁹ Trotter, 1848, pp. 318-321.

⁴⁰ Cited in Clifford, 1936, p. 415.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 395, 416.

⁴² Trotter et al., 1848, pp. 325-6.

⁴³ Oldfield, 1838, II, pp. 221 ff., 230, 245, 247, 253, 269, 270; see also Partridge, 1908.

expedition, his 60 wives had to drink poison (sassawood?) to see if any of them had wished his death. Over half of them died.⁴⁴

SLAVERY

Enough has been said about slavery to show its economic and political importance. There were many household slaves, but, as often elsewhere in West Africa, slaves could participate in trade. As has been noted, fishing was done chiefly by slaves, according to Trotter.⁴⁵ There is no evidence of any use of slave labour for anything resembling a plantation system. The *Ata* and other chiefs made considerable use of eunuchs as palace officials. Slaves were always liable to be sacrificed on the death of the *Ata* and of other important personages.

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: DRESS

Little can be stated reliably about distinctive features of Igala temperament. Seton and Allison have both emphasized the Igala dependence on diviners, which seems exaggerated to the point where it interferes with capital accumulation.⁴⁶ Most early observers have commented that the Igala are a relatively industrious people, and my own impression was one of quiet prosperity. In 1951 there were 35 Native Authority schools in addition to a vigorous system of mission schools.

In physical type the Igala seem indistinguishable from their Idoma neighbours to the east. This means that on the whole they are of medium stature, with a fairly rugged build and rather less of the facial paedomorphism that one sees in districts nearer the coast. I found no evidence to support Temple's statement that there is a "marked Hamitic strain" in the population.⁴⁷

The earliest travellers found that Hausa mallams had considerable influence in Idah and made a good business out of selling charms, verses of the Koran, carefully wrapped in leather for wearing on various parts of the body. Hausa-type dress, more or less modified, and also the wearing of a cloth wrapped around the body and draped over one arm are described and portrayed by Allen and others.⁴⁸ The children went naked—boys until adolescence, girls until marriage. At the present time one sees rather fewer naked children in Igala than in neighbouring districts.

LIFE CYCLE

The life cycle has been very incompletely investigated. Some data are given by Seton,⁴⁹ who says that the marriageable age for a girl is eight to ten years, for a boy sixteen to eighteen years. A girl may be betrothed at four to five years of age, the fathers arranging the match, though the later consent of both parties will be necessary also. The youth undertakes seven years of agricultural labour for his father-in-law, and brings gifts to him and the girl. Marriage is not permitted between closer relatives than first cousins, but a man will often marry his wife's sister.

⁴⁴ Oldfield, 1837, II, p. 278.

⁴⁵ Trotter, 1848, p. 324.

⁴⁶ Seton, 1930, p. 42; Allison, 1944, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Temple, 1919, pp. 149, 154.

⁴⁸ Allen, 1840, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Seton, 1930, pp. 42-52, 149-163.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

Clifford lists four principal annual religious ceremonies. The most important of these is the *egu* festival, in commemoration of the ancestors. It is celebrated at the beginning of the yam harvest (i.e., usually in July or August). So far as the *Ata* is concerned, this ceremony consists of the sacrifice of nine animals to the ancestral spirits of his nine immediate predecessors, represented by their staves of office (*okute*), which are displayed for the occasion. Two days later a sacrifice is made to the memory of the founder, Ayagba, and on this same day the *ashadu* carries out his own *egu* rites, corresponding closely to those of the *Ata*.⁵⁰

According to Seton, the *egu* or *ambegu* are the spirits of the dead and may be represented by a mask. "A curious tight-fitting red suit with strange ornaments and surmounted by a carved headdress is used on occasions. It is put in bush the previous night so that the *egu* may enter it, though it is actually worn by the men the following day. . . . When the figure enters the village, all the males are expected to follow it with drumming and shouting, while the women hide away. The chief object seems to be to awe the women."⁵¹

The *ocho* is a hunting ceremony, celebrated when the grass is ready for burning. The exact day is selected in advance by a diviner and is kept secret. On the proper morning the *Ata* is called and goes secretly to a prepared place in the bush. At noon he sends a message home to the effect that he is out hunting and has no food or drink. A party is formed, including his senior wife, which brings the required food to him. At about three o'clock the *Ata* must shoot an arrow at a blindfolded goat. If he hits it there is great rejoicing, for this is a good augury for the hunting season. At home in the evening there is feasting and dancing.

The *ogaigainye* ceremony follows immediately on *ocho*. There is a week's merrymaking, after which the *Ata* in a public address reminds the people of the royal perquisites in ivory, leopard skins, etc., and officially opens the hunting season.

The *enekpe* ceremony takes place the day after *ogaigainye*. Enekpe was, according to tradition, the young and beautiful daughter of Ayagba, who was once faced with imminent defeat at the hands of the Jukun and was advised by a mallam to sacrifice her. He could not bring himself to do this, but when Enekpe heard of the mallam's words she insisted on being buried alive. She has become a tutelary goddess and watches over the destinies of Igala. On the day of her celebration sacrifices are made at her monument, a cone of mud four or five feet high, the only ornament of which is a pair of female breasts. In recent times the monument has been plastered with cement. Blood and palm-oil are poured over it, kola is placed on the ground in front and a cloth is draped over the monument. Having been fed and dressed, Enekpe is begged to care for her people during the coming year. The *Ata* then steps barefoot into the Niger and, turning around, walks back. This seems to be a symbol of the fertilization of the land by the Niger, and it is the only time the *Ata's* feet are allowed to touch the ground.

A NOTE ON THE IBAJI

The Ibaji occupy a large area south and south-east of Idah down to the border of Igala Division and west to the Niger. On the map at the end of his *Die Westlichen Sudansprachen*, Westermann includes this region in the Edo-speaking area. A missionary who has travelled in this country told me of having seen carved wooden masks there. Allison writes: "On the alluvial soils of the Ibaji country, rubber vines are uncommon and the palm produce collected by the primitive Ibaji

⁵⁰ Clifford, 1936, pp. 431-2.

⁵¹ Seton, 1930, p. 46.

fishermen, about whom little is known, is sold at the Anambra creek trading station of Oguruguru and at Ilushi on the Niger."⁵²

The proximity of these people to Adamugu, at one time a great market for ivory, and the probability that the country is favourable for elephants (as is also the adjoining region south to Onitsha) suggests that the people described in 1833 by Oldfield in the following passage were in fact Ibaji: "A great number of the natives whom I found with Abokka [at Adamugu] were elephant hunters and had a very ferocious appearance. They were destitute of every article of clothing. Their skin was of a dark copper colour, their limbs of fine symmetrical formation, and their hair, after being plaited straight down, was inclosed in a little bag, resembling in appearance a bag-wig. Their guns were their idols; several of them were hung with charms enclosed in leather, and one was literally covered with small studs of lead about the size of a nail's head."⁵³

⁵² Allison, 1944

⁵³ Oldfield, 1837, II, pp. 184-5.

IV. THE IDOMA-SPEAKING PEOPLES

LOCATION AND MAIN GROUPS

The Idoma-speaking peoples, numbering in all about 250,000, are spread over a wide arc from Keana, east of Lafia town, through the Doma and Agatu Districts of Lafia and Nassarawa Division to Idoma Division, ending with two separate outliers, the Iyala and Nkum, in Ogoja Province.¹ This arc is flanked by three groups of people speaking closely related languages: the Afu in Nassarawa, the Akweya-Yachi of Akpa District of Idoma Division and the northern border of Ogoja Division, and finally, the Egede, who live mainly in Idoma Division. If these groups are included in a somewhat looser notion of "Idoma-speaking peoples," then the distribution of the whole group is continuous from Keana south to Okuku, five miles north of Ogoja Town, apart from the Nkum, still further south on either side of the Cross River, north-west of Ikom. Another isolated group should perhaps be included: the Etulo (Utur) of Katsina Ala, since their language is closely related to Idoma.

The unity of these peoples is linguistic and only to a lesser extent cultural. There is no evidence that they have ever formed a political unity. On the contrary, political fragmentation is one of the most characteristic features in the whole region. At Doma and Keana in the north, states have existed for a long time. That of Doma in particular seems to be about 700 years old. The only other chieftaincy in the whole area which is developed enough to qualify even approximately as a state is Agala, the southernmost district of Idoma Division. The rest of the region was splintered into lineages or clusters of three or four allied lineages, usually at war with their neighbours.

L A N G U A G E

The linguistic unity mentioned above is a conscious cultural reality and is paralleled by traditional ties, expressed in kinship terms, between the various Lands.² An intelligent adult of Oturkpo will name, as speaking related dialects to his own and as being in some way related to him, all the groups, except the Nkum, listed in the narrower concept "Idoma-speaking."³

The broader relationships of the Idoma and related languages have already been discussed (see above, pp. 78-9), and it has been noted that they are considered to be members of the Kwa language family, closely related to Yoruba. It is impossible to say without further study whether they are equally close to Ibo and Nupe. Mention has also been made of some of the confusions that have arisen around the word Akpoto, which, apart from being the original name for the whole of the region that is now divided into Igala and Idoma Divisions, is also the name of

¹ Northcote Thomas was perhaps the first to see the full extent of the relationships of the dialects of the Idoma cluster. He wrote "... the Cross River Nkum (Yala) ... is identical with Okpoto (I) and nearly allied to Arago, north of the Benue." (Thomas, 1927, p. 65.)

² For a definition of this term see below p. 95.

³ It is of course true that the traditional relationship to "Apa," the Jukun empire, and the combination of traditional and practical day-to-day relationship with Igala bulk larger in the consciousness of the central Idoma than do their ethnic ties with other Idoma-speaking groups.

a District of Eastern Igala and the word which the central Idoma apply to themselves and their language.⁴

Idoma is so deeply divided by dialects that it is probably best considered a "dialect cluster," the full name of which might well be "Idoma-Akpoto-Iyala dialect cluster." Abraham, who has made a very thorough study of the Oturkpo dialect, has noted that these dialects are by no means easily mutually intelligible. Oturkpo people tell me, however, that with three weeks' residence in Agatu or Igumale they learn to understand the respective dialects of those places. Mutual intelligibility is to a considerable degree relative to the experience one has had in listening to foreigners and strange dialects.

Inside Idoma Division four and perhaps five dialects can be distinguished:

- (1) The Central or Oturkpo dialect, spoken in Oturkpo, Adoka, Boju, Oglewu and Yangedde.
- (2) Igumale-Agala, a very distinctive dialect.
- (3) The Western dialect, spoken in Otukpa, Orukpa, Ichama, Orokam and Edumoga. Abraham says that it has been influenced by Nsukka Ibo.
- (4) Agatu, spoken in Agatu District and also in Ocheke and in the Agatu District of Nassarawa, north of the Benue.⁵
- (5) Okwoga, possibly. It resembles the Igumale-Agala dialect.

The Arago dialects, that of Doma and that of Keana, differ considerably from each other and are most closely related to the Agatu dialect. Finally, Iyala and Nkum must be recognized as distinct dialects also, giving us a total of nine.

The Iyala and Agala dialects have been listed as "Semi-Bantu" languages by Johnston.⁶ Westermann, in the same way, lists "Arago," Afu, Agala and Yala as "Benue-Cross," the classification which in his system corresponds to Johnston's "Semi-Bantu."⁷ Greenberg lists Afu and Iyala as "Central Branch-Cross River," which in his system also corresponds to Johnston's "Semi-Bantu."⁸ I dissent from all of these identifications, but they are quite excusable in view of the extremely poor materials at the disposal of the authors in question. Koelle called Iyala "an unclassified Niger-Delta language," thus tentatively putting it with Ibo. His method was not yet sufficiently refined to make the real relationship of Iyala stand out sharply amid the welter of languages with which he dealt, but the relative closeness of Iyala to Igala is actually demonstrable from the lists that he gives. Crowther, who was himself Yoruba-speaking, saw at once the wider connections of the Doma dialect: "From the above comparison it will be seen that the Doma appears to be a kindred language to the Yoruba, both from the formative prefix, construction of sentences, and by a careful trace of many of its words, which seem to have Yoruba roots and ideas for its origin [*sic.*]: when the language

⁴ I agree with Westermann's statement that "Igala and Okpoto are closely related to Yoruba," but find the evidence on which he bases his judgment faulty. He used F. F. W. Byng-Hall's *English-Okpoto Vocabulary* (Zungeru, 1908), to which I have not had access. But from the "Okpoto" words which Westermann cites, it is clear that what Byng-Hall actually recorded was the Ankpa dialect of Igala—an easy mistake for a European to make in an essentially bi-lingual district that calls itself "Akpotó."

Talbot (1920, I, p. 226; IV, pp. 64, 222) lists an Okpoto sub-tribe and an Okpoto clan of the Orri peoples of Abakaliki Division, Ogoja Province. This is no doubt the group Thomas (1914, pp. 29 ff. and map) had in mind when he listed the Orri language as "Okpoto II." Okpoto I, on which, to my knowledge, he never published, is presumably Idoma. Johnston (1919, I, p. 713) follows him in listing Orri as Okpoto II. Both Thomas and Johnston agree in calling Orri a Semi-Bantu language. I agree with this to the extent of saying that Orri is only remotely related to Idoma and that if it is a Kwa language, the fact remains to be demonstrated. I have not myself visited the Orri group in question, although I have visited Utonkon and have an Effium vocabulary which agrees very closely with Thomas's "Okpoto II." An Idoma who does know the region tells me that the word is pronounced Okpoto. If so it must be considered as quite a different word from Akpoto, and the confusion between them ascribed to inadequate orthography.

⁵ Abraham, 1951, p. 4.

⁶ Johnston, 1919, pp. 731 et passim.

⁷ Westermann, 1927, pp. 12-13.

⁸ Greenberg, 1949.

is properly reduced, it will not unlikely be found to partake of Yoruba, and other neighbouring languages, with which it has become mixed in course of time, like that of the Igarra and Akpotto."⁹

A still earlier, though erroneously interpreted, notice of the Idoma language is Clarke's No. 149, consisting of eight words obtained from a slave. The item is labelled "Gold Coast," but the eight words are absolutely correct Idoma.¹⁰

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The ecological adjustment throughout the whole area of distribution of the Idoma-speaking peoples is on the whole quite similar. The country is nearly all "orchard bush," changing to rather more open grassland in parts of Iyala country in Ogoja and into the beginnings of the rain-forest along the southern fringes of Idoma Division. There has been a movement of recent years into small farm settlements and away from large compact settlements. The increased efficiency of agriculture which has resulted is probably an important factor in the extremely rapid increase of population revealed by the last census in Idoma Division.

Elephants were common in the Oturkpo region until two or three generations ago, but they were nearly all killed off by Hausa ivory hunters before the beginning of the British Administration. There once were lions in Idoma, but they are all gone too.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE

Throughout the region the annual cycle is one of hoe agriculture during the rains and hunting with bush fires during the dry season. The crops grown include most of those typical of both Northern and Southern Nigeria, but in varying proportions.

MARKETS

Markets, large and small, are ubiquitous. The word for market varies from district to district, but usually means "that which has yams," or "among the yams," or, simply, "yams." They meet according to a four-day rotation schedule (five days by Idoma reckoning). The four day-names are derived from Ibo. In Iyala and Agala the week has five days and the names are not Ibo.

Traditionally the market was usually under the control of an official known as the *okpooju*, a compound word which probably once meant "he who holds the crowd or group." He was appointed by a lineage and was assisted in his somewhat arduous task of keeping order in the market and keeping open the paths to the market on the proper day by a constabulary of young men, known in some places as *awga* and in others as *ayuta*. Since some of the larger markets served more than one Land, this organization was politically the most extensive found at the time when the British Administration began. The *awga* showed some tendency to operate like the semi-judicial dancing guilds¹¹ and membership must have overlapped considerably.

⁹ Crowther, 1855, p. 211.

¹⁰ Clarke, 1848, p. 10.

¹¹ See below, p. 98-9

CRAFTS

Iron-smelting was an important part of the economy in aboriginal times but has by now completely died out. Smiths are still to be found in every settlement of any size. They are quite skilled, and can make most parts of a "dane gun," good iron traps, and a surprisingly large number of parts for a motor car. Their tools have changed little.

There is much weaving and dyeing of cotton cloth in Yangedde.

HOUSE TYPES

The fundamental house-type throughout is the round mud hut with conical thatched roof. The wall bears the weight of the roof and the Igala house, where the mud wall is essentially just a screen, is seldom seen in any Idoma district. From Iga north one sees many houses with the Igbira-style verandah of poles or of sculptured mud. Nowadays one sees a fair number of Ibo-style rectangular houses in many districts. Igumale and Agala have a distinctive style of compound which is seen in simpler form in Egede and Ito.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

THE COMPOUND FAMILY

The basic unit of Idoma social structure was the compound family, consisting of a man, his wives, their children, and the wives and children of his sons. This family (*ɔle*) usually occupied a group of huts around an open space, one hut for each wife, one for the owner of the compound, and various other huts, "club-houses," granaries, grinding "tables," etc., necessary to make the compound (also called *ɔle*) a largely self-supporting unit.

THE LINEAGE

Several *ɔle* related in the male line made up a sub-lineage (*ipɔɔma*, "those of one birth"). Smaller *ipɔɔma*, theoretically of more recent origin, are often subsumed under what might be called a major lineage (still *ipɔɔma*). Several related *ipɔɔma* constituted a still wider lineage (*ipɔɔpu*). The units in question are political groups normally possessing a more or less unified, fairly identifiable tract of land whose members are related to each other in the male line and claim descent from a common male ancestor. The name of the group is usually quite literally "the sons of—" (*ai*—). Neither the *ipɔɔma* nor the *ipɔɔpu* is exogamous, although it is considered a good thing to marry outside one's own *ipɔɔma*. The rule is simply that persons having in common either the father's father or the mother's father should not marry. The dynamics of this type of lineage are necessarily quite different from those of strictly exogamous groups. It should occasion no surprise that a strong tendency towards social fractionization is characteristic of practically all Idoma groups.

The word *ipɔɔpu* means "those of one playground or council ground." This is the most vital political unit in Idoma life at the present time. Its chief is the senior elder. He is the "owner" of the ancestral cult and in this capacity is known as *adaalekwu*, "the father of the dead." As owner of the earth-shrine he is also "owner of the land," *olaje*. The office of *efɔle ipuɔle* in Iyala corresponds at least roughly to this.

THE LAND

Two to four related *ipɔɔpu* are at least in principle usually united to form a Land (*aje*) or (*ipaaje*). There should be an earth-shrine for the whole Land. The chief of the Land (*ɔcaaje*) is chosen by the lineages that make it up, the office usually going by rotation from lineage to lineage, and the chief serving until he dies. In the districts from Boju north the Land chief is also the *adaalekwu* and *olaje* for the whole Land. In the central and western districts he is usually the secular head only, and religious functions are entrusted to a senior elder. In nearly all districts there is theoretically a hierarchically ordered group of titled elders known as the *igabo*. The titles themselves have names which are either of Igala origin or are common to Igala and Idoma. In Iyala and Egede, the cognate word *ugabo* (plur. *egabo*) stands for senior elders with quite different functions.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Apart from the fortified towns of the north, about whose internal social structure little is known, the original settlement pattern was probably very similar to that described by Frampton for Egede (see below, p. 143). There would be a group of related sub-lineages (*ipɔɔma*) around a common *ojira* or council ground. Or, if the site in question were the central or the original village of a lineage, the council ground, or playground, might be called the *ɔpu*, the place where the lineage ceremonies were performed. The term "land" (*aje*) was applied, as in Egede, to one of these villages, but also to the lineage lands as a whole, and finally, as has been stated, to the politically united lands of two or three lineages. Each of these units had its appropriate land-shrine, served or "owned" by a senior elder. The smallest *aje* or *ipaaje* ("within the land") would contain several *ipɔɔma*, sub-lineages or parts thereof (*ɔle*). The unit might also be known as *ipɔle*, but this term also has the meaning of the central, the lineage village. With the spreading of settlement in more recent times and the development of Native Courts, the "village head" has become a more important figure. In most places he is simply called "Court Member," *ɔcalia*. There will also be an elder who controls the land-shrine and who is called "owner of the land," *olaje*.

In the rather extensive literature of unpublished notes on the area, the term "village" is often used to refer to "sub-lineage" (*ipɔɔma*) or even "lineage" (*ipɔɔpu*). There is no Idoma word which means "village" and nothing else. The word could best be used to mean the smallest of the land units and this, as has been pointed out, includes parts of several *ipɔɔma*. From a local point of view, the lineage, or at least its central settlement, might well be called a town. The ambiguous word "kindred" has been much used for *ipɔɔpu*, and the word "clan" for the union of several lineages into the unit which, following Idoma usage, I have called a Land. The Idoma unit in question is not exogamous and I know of no evidence that it ever has been. It would be more defensible to call it a "tribe."

It should be noted that the word "senior"—a key word in Idoma as in many other parts of Africa—does not and cannot mean "eldest," although age is a major factor in its definition. No Idoma knows his age with any exactness. He knows his age relative to a limited number of people. But in questions affecting a whole far-flung lineage there is no way of establishing the relative age of the contenders for an important position. In the case of political appointments the rotation principle takes precedence over that of absolute age. The senior elder of the lineage is, for religious purposes, the man most closely related to the founder. Difficult cases may be settled by divination.

CHIEFTAINCY

Whether or not in fact the Idoma had chiefs at all, their elaborate ideology on the subject notwithstanding, remains a problem. In nearly every district of the

Division, the Land titles were all or nearly all vacant at the beginning of the British Administration and they are filled to-day at the insistence of the Administration. In Iyala and Egede there seems not to have been any tradition of Land chiefs in the Idoma sense. Nevertheless, Idoma concern with chieftaincy as an institution is very strong. Chieftaincy disputes are passionately conducted, and the ancestral masks and staves of the dead chiefs are among the most sacred relics of the Land. It would also seem that chieftaincy was formerly much stronger in Idoma, for, once agreement has been reached on a chief, there is an elaborate and well understood etiquette which immediately surrounds him. We have further evidence of the sort related for Ochobo in Oglewu, where, when it was possible to install a chief again after generations, it was apparent that the sacred chieftaincy articles had been carefully preserved for many years for just such an event.

It may reasonably be conjectured that at the earliest period of which we have any inkling, the Idoma-speaking peoples were distributed through a large area east of Idah, encompassing most of present-day Igala and Idoma Divisions and probably some considerable part of Tiv Division. Traditionally many groups extended as far east as Wukari. This region was known as Akpoto and its people likewise. At the western end of this region the Akpoto would have been in contact with peoples known to have had a considerable development of petty state structures: the Nupe, the Igbira, the Yoruba, the Bini and probably the Igala. The Iyala may well then have lived in Southern Akpoto, as their own tradition claims. Koelle's informant, who arrived in Freetown about 1834, said that "Yala lies between Ibo and Igala; also near Idoma, Okere [Ukelle], Idun, i.e., Okam".¹² As will be seen, *okam* is the proper name for Orokam District, the extreme south-westerly district of Idoma Division. This would place the Iyala in a peripheral position, and we may reasonably assume that they never shared in the development of a chieftaincy pattern, or that if they did, it was so weakly developed that it disappeared with little trace after they arrived in Ogoja.

North of the Benue from the confluence eastwards are the Igbira, with their series of kingdoms, who seem to be ancient in the region. The next group to the east of them were the Afu among whom Rohlfs describes a series of petty chieftaincies considerably more highly organized than anything found there to-day. Next came the probably large kingdom of Idoma, occupying most of present-day Lafia Division. The northern and western limits of Idoma and Akpoto lands cannot at present be stated with any certainty. Most of the present-day Central Idoma groups say that they came from what must have been the northern and eastern "marches" of the whole area. After a time the Idoma kingdom split and the Keana kingdom was formed. The assumption that Idoma consisted of a number of petty states, perhaps organized into a larger whole only involves the additional assumption that a pattern found both to the east (Jukun Empire) and to the west of the region in question also roughly characterized Idoma as their own tradition claims.

The relation of the Idoma to the Jukun at this period is obscure. The petty states we are considering may have ante-dated the rise of the Jukun or, on the other hand, the Jukun may have played a large role in organizing them. The Idoma, except for the Iyala, are nearly unanimous in insisting that they originated in Apa and that Apa is Wukari. There can be no doubt about the connection of the word Apa with the Jukun.¹³

It seems quite clear that the Idoma have derived many cultural traits from the Jukun. Some of the oldest masks at Oturkpo have the Jukun cloth pattern which is still in use at Wukari. It seems entirely probable and is corroborated not only

¹² Koelle, 1854, Introduction, Part II, XII D.

¹³ Koelle says "Dshuku called 'Kurorofa' and 'Kóana' [Keana?] by the Bornuese, Hausas and Nupes; and 'Apa' by the Igalas and Ibos. . . Bioka (Wukari) the Dshuku capital is three weeks journey east of Panda, which is subject to it." [His informant had been in Sierra Leone since about 1841.] (Koelle, 1854, Addendum VIII C.) Clarke (1848, p. 72) writes "Apa or Appa . . . is high to the town of Funda [Panda] and south of the River Tshadda [Benue]."

by Koelle's informant and by the traditions of many Idoma groups, that the Jukun Empire at one time included both the Igbara kingdoms and Idah, as well as the Idoma kingdom. That it included Central and Southern Idoma Division is more doubtful. That region may well have been partially uninhabited at that time, or inhabited by the Iyala, who have no tradition of belonging to Apa. It must be realized, however, that the Idoma are not Jukun, ethnically speaking. The two languages are related to each other only in the sense that most of the languages of Southern and Central Nigeria are distantly related. Jukun bears as close a relationship to Tiv as it does to Idoma, or for that matter to Igala. The whole elaborate identification of the Jukun king with the crops and the custom of sacred regicide are as strange to the Idoma as to the Igala. Idoma chiefs are often old men when they assume office, and they die of old age. In Oturkpo, people are of two minds on the subject of menstrual blood. It cannot be said that as a group they share the absolute Jukun taboo as described by Meek. In Agala, however, this taboo is strong.

The first change in the situation suggested above seems to have been the coming of the Igala. This was apparently a fairly gradual process, resulting partly in the displacement and partly in the absorption of indigenous Akpoto groups. Some of the lineages with traditions of Igala origin may in fact be displaced Akpoto groups. In time Idah came to have great prestige, and Lands which certainly never paid tax to Idah would send new chiefs there for a proper installation.

Next came the Fulani in what the Idoma know as the "Horse War" and the migration of a whole group of Idoma peoples to their present location in Idoma Division followed. The first group to arrive in Central Idoma seems to have been Oglewu, and they say that they found the land empty. Edumoga and Oglewu both have traditions of having lived at Upu in the Oturkpo District, and the Oturkpo agree that they bought their land from Oglewu. It has been argued that this migration occurred too early to have been caused by the Fulani and was more probably caused by civil wars in the Jukun Empire. But the Idoma are explicit in saying that their enemies were the Fulani. The movement probably took place however some considerable time before the big Fulani push against the Benue in 1853, described by Crowther and by Baikie. At that time the Tiv were already substantially in their present position, south of the river, and many Idoma traditions explicitly involve residence in what is now Tiv country for some period after their displacement and before their arrival in their present homes. Early travellers along the Benue are unanimous in describing the settlements as being defended with walls and deep, wide ditches. The remains of fortifications of this kind can still be seen as far south as Oturkpo at least. Although the Fulani did raid south of the Benue on several occasions, they never established themselves there, and never reached Oturkpo.

The fall of Panda and the establishment of the Emirate of Nassarawa in the mid-1850s marks the high point of Fulani power in the Benue Valley. As suggested in the Igala section, it was not mainly the tsetse-fly that prevented their coming in force into such places as Igala and Idoma.¹⁴ After 1860 the world market for slaves collapsed. The decline of the slave trade meant that the coastal supply of firearms was cut off, and this probably meant that the Fulani military advantage over the dismounted pagans, with their poisoned arrows, declined. In 1889 the Emir of Nassarawa paid a midnight visit incognito to the Mockler-Ferryman Expedition at Loko to plead for arms, saying that pagan resistance had increased and that without arms he could hardly meet his annual requirements of 200 slaves as tribute to Sokoto. It would seem that when the Fulani established themselves on the Benue they were in fact over-extended.

With the subsidence of external danger the urgent reason for maintaining political unity behind a chief disappeared likewise. Jealousy between the lineages, always present, became relatively more significant, and, while the ideology of

¹⁴ See above, p. 83.

chieftaincy remained strong, the lineages could never agree on the succession. In this situation chieftaincy as an operating social reality may simply have evaporated. This was the state of affairs in nearly every district at the time of the British occupation. The situation in Iyala and Egede can be explained either on the assumption that these people never did have chiefs, or on the assumption that since they had been longer in a relatively secure region the process here suggested had gone further.

MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

Several phases of administration can be distinguished in Idoma. The first phase was that of occupation, which began with the Niger-Cross River Expedition of 1908-9, as a result of which military headquarters were set up at Okwoga for the southern part of Idoma, which was first administered as part of Obolo Division, Onitsha Province.¹⁵

Policy until the nineteen-thirties required the appointment of executive officials called Warrant Chiefs in the Southern Provinces and District Heads in the Northern Provinces. The early District Heads were often foreigners, but after the First World War it was more usual to appoint Idoma. The Government also did what it could to persuade the Idoma to fill the chieftaincy posts. By 1930 considerable progress had been made in unifying the two policies in such a way as to revive the old chieftaincies and the traditional methods of selection. The thirties saw an extremely vigorous programme of reorganization and a study of the various districts. Until 1948 the Native Authority for Idoma Division was the *ojira* or council of chiefs. In that year a paramount chief, known as *ocidoma*, or chief of Idoma, was elected by the *ojira*.

The development of the court system in Idoma would be worth a separate study. At present each district has a Native Court, which is the court of first instance. These courts are made up of the village heads, with the district chief sitting as president. There are four intermediate courts, whose members are district chiefs and which meet quarterly. The *ocidoma* and his council make up the central court. A medicine (*eci*) for swearing oaths is a regular part of the equipment for all court sessions. In many of the districts (e.g., Yangedde, Edumoga) the court has been formed by the federation of several Lands. Each Land retains its autonomy in local affairs, but has surrendered a portion of its authority with respect to judicial affairs and the supervision of tax collection. In such districts the President of the Native Court is often known as *ocumbekee*, "European chief."

AGE-SETS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Age-sets (*ego*) are found throughout Central and Southern Idoma, but are nowhere so highly developed as among some of the Ibo or among the Akweya-Yachi, in the Division itself. They function mainly as mutual-aid clubs for funerals.

The dance-guilds were semi-secret societies with a continuous distribution from central Idoma into Ibo country and Ogoja. They were associations of young men, the warriors, under varying degrees of control by the *ojira* or council. The most

¹⁵ Later a separate Okwoga Division was set up. In 1910 occupation of the northern districts began and troops based on Ankpa were stationed first at Boju Bariki and later at Bopo. This region was organized as the Eastern Division of Bassa Province. In 1918 Okwoga Division was taken over by the Northern Provinces as a part of the newly organized Munshi Province. At the same time the Eastern Division became Ankpa Division of Munshi Province. In 1923 the northern Districts were severed from Igala and formed into Idoma Division. In 1922 the Egede-Ukelle escort occupied all of Egede and established the Northern-Southern Provinces boundary in that region. Meanwhile in 1920 the old Okwoga Division was first assessed for tax. With the establishment of Divisional Headquarters at Oturkpo in 1924 and with the opening of the new railway in the same year, the Division took substantially its modern form, which was completed with the establishment of Benue Province and the merging of Okwoga Division into Idoma Division in 1928.

powerful of these was the *ogrinya* society, with membership limited to those who had killed a man, a lion or an elephant. Some had bigger reputations for theft and extortion than for justice. Headhunting was practically universal among the Idoma and among such neighbouring groups as the Egede, Akweya and Orri, whom we shall also consider. The victim had to be an enemy, but the ordinary community had no dearth of enemies. No evidence of cannibalism by these people has come to my attention.

Circumcision is universal at about eight years of age. Most Idoma groups do not practise clitoridectomy.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

Idoma distinguish two kinds of law, *ine* and *ula*. *Ine* were ordinances and regulations proclaimed by the chief or by other persons and groups with authority to do so. The word has a precise cognate in Igala, where it additionally means a taboo. The verb used with this noun is *tā*,¹⁶ in Idoma, "to pass a law" and *tā* in Igala, meaning also "to lay a taboo; to set a trap; to shoot." *Ula* is customary criminal law. The word may be an old deverbal noun cognate with the Igala verb *ta*. The elders knew *ula*, but it is doubtful whether they could change it.

Ula was in the hands of a constabulary, the *ayula*, "the sons of *ula*," whose chief, the *scula*, was in most places identical with the *okpooju* or market chief. He was appointed by the *ojira* or council. As has been noted, there was some tendency for the constabulary and the dance societies to get mixed and for the latter to act *ultra vires*.^{16A}

SLAVERY

Slavery in Idoma had an internal and an external aspect. Idoma land was repeatedly raided for slaves by Nassarawa and by Igala. A great many Idoma were sold into slavery by other Idoma. The Abakpa market in Yangedde, Utonkon and Igumale were all big slave markets and were regularly visited by the Nupe and by Arochuku Ibo slave dealers. The Idoma kept a limited number of slaves themselves, but mainly for purposes of sacrifice or as household servants. They made little economic use of them. In Idoma thinking, a slave was somebody without a family to defend him. One chief told me, "In the old days if a stranger came here and was not related to anybody, he would be either killed or sold as a slave." The only way to say "I freed a slave" in Idoma is "I made him my son."

POSITION OF WOMEN

The position of women is relatively high in Idoma. They are excluded from the *ojira* (council) and from most phases of the mask and ancestral cults. Funerals for women, however, are as large as those for men. Petty trade is here, as elsewhere, largely in the hands of the women, who often make more money than their husbands do. Beer-making is a women's monopoly and a profitable one. Idoma men say that men work harder and longer than women. The women say that the men work harder and the women longer. Women are ceremoniously greeted with the titles appropriate to the Land where they were born. In principle the property a woman accumulates during her married life is the property of her husband and may be claimed by his heirs when he dies. The widow herself will be taken as a wife by one of the brothers of the deceased. A woman may escape this necessity by refunding the marriage payment or by paying £5 if the exact payment can no longer be ascertained. In the case of a young woman this is not difficult, since her next husband will make the payment. An old woman must have quite special reasons for anger with all her husband's brothers before she will prefer separation to maintenance as a wife.

¹⁶ High tone in Idoma, mid-tone in Igala.

^{16A} For a detailed account of an Idoma court of lineages, see Armstrong, 1954a.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

All the Idoma groups have forms of the same word for an impersonal god, *ɔwɔ* or *ɔwɔico*, "god above." The cult of *ɔwɔ* is always a personal and never a group affair. *ɔwɔ* is symbolized by a white silk-cotton tree in Oturkpo and by a species of fig tree in other districts. Such a tree is personal and planted for the individual. The word *ɔwɔ* is always the word for rain, but the Idoma insist that there is no connection between the two concepts.

Each district called a Land has a Land-shrine (*ikpaaje*) where sacrifices are made to *aje*, usually at the beginning of the hunting season in Central Idoma. The Idoma explicitly deny that either *ɔwɔ* or *aje* are persons. I have never heard an Idoma spontaneously say that either has any attribute of personality, but in response to a direct and leading question they will say that sky is male and earth is female.

The ancestral cult (*alekwu*) is fundamental in all Idoma groups. In Central Idoma and as far north as Bopo, in Igumale and Agala and in Orokam there is the cult of masked ancestor impersonation. Where this is absent, as in the south-western districts generally, there are ancestral sacrifices, nonetheless. Much of the ritual of *alekwu* is rigidly kept secret from the women. There is a ceremony, however, whereby women who have learned what they should not know and seen what they should not see may be purged and rendered fit to bear children. There is a good description of this ceremony in Abraham.¹⁷ Details of the *alekwu* generally are contained in an article by Monckton.¹⁸

Witchcraft is present in Idoma, but on the whole it is not stressed.

Divination with strings, each one strung with four seedpods of the "African mahogany" tree (*Azelia africana*) is of great importance.

There is a high development of society masks and of night masks, especially in the central districts. They are usually quite colourful and often function as a symbolic representation of the whole men's society which uses them, their secrets being jealously guarded from the women. Other masks seem to be mainly for entertainment. Many masks perform divination for women, but I have not heard of any masks specifically for women.

THE IDOMA "PROPER" OF IDOMA DIVISION

GENERAL

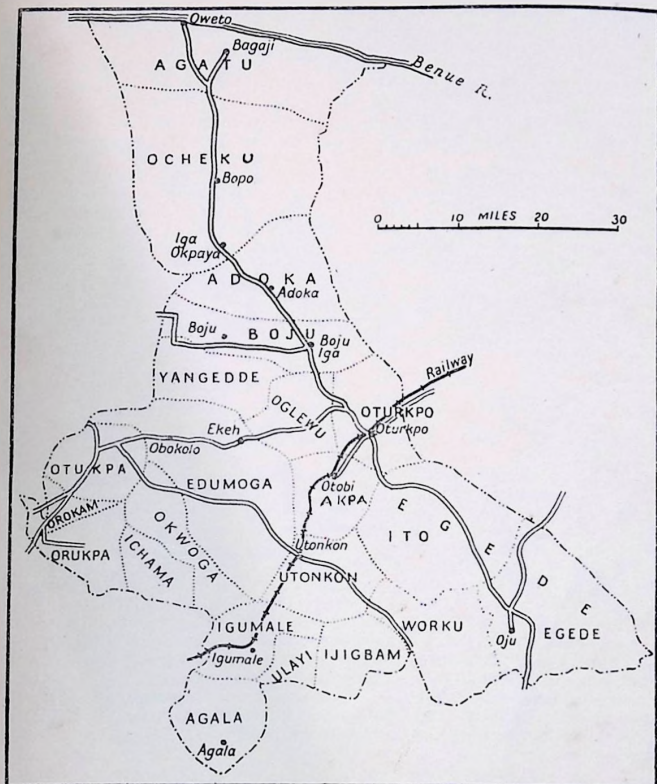
Sixteen of the 22 districts of Idoma Division¹⁹ are occupied by Idoma. Six (Egede, Ito, Worku, Akpa, Utonkon and Ulayi) are largely occupied by non-Idoma groups. A seventh, Ijigbam-Ishieke, on the southern border, also has by now a considerable majority of Ibo settlers who, however, still recognize the indigenous Idoma as owners of the land. Non-Idoma peoples in all account for rather more than a third of the population of the Division, which was 316,000 in 1952. The 1952 census gives 203,479 Idoma, nearly all of whom are in Idoma Division.

It is uncertain how many of these districts originally applied to themselves the name "Idoma" (*Idoma*). At the present time, certainly, the name is accepted by

¹⁷ Abraham, 1951, Chrestomathy, text: *Ekwu*: The *Alekwu*.

¹⁸ Monckton, 1928, Appendix C. *Ekwosfia* ceremony [ekwaafia].

¹⁹ Idoma Division is bounded on the north by the Benue River, on the west by Igala Division of Kabba Province, on the south by Nsukka Division and Abakaliki Division of Onitsha and Ogoja provinces respectively, and on the east by Tiv Division, Benue Province. The extreme north-south length of the Division is just under 100 miles, along a line from the southern tip of Agala, through Boju Bariki to Oweto. East to west, the division is 17 miles at its narrowest point and 66 miles in the south, which however includes the six non-Idoma Districts.



Administrative boundaries of Idoma Districts, corresponding approximately to the ethnic groups.

all districts and has the sanction of the Nigerian Government. The northern districts explicitly reject the name Akpoto, used by the central districts of themselves and of their language (*Akpoto*). In Oturkpo these districts are often specifically referred to as "Idoma." Early reports from Okwoga Division referred to Okwoga, Edumoga and the western districts as "Akpoto" and to Oturkpo and Oglewu as "Idoma."

One can say roughly that the Idoma live in a strip of land about 90 miles from north to south, which averages slightly more than 20 miles from east to west. Most of the country is fairly open "orchard bush," but the southern districts are in the palm belt where the country is decidedly more humid. Throughout the region, settlements tend to cluster along perennial streams, and where this is not possible the problem of getting water is an extremely difficult one for two or three months at the end of the dry season. Tsetse-fly prevents the keeping of cattle or horses.

The districts are often called "clans" in the Government reports. On the whole they correspond to what might be called "truce areas," i.e., regions whose lineages and Lands were not actively at war with each other in the period before British Administration. The peoples of a district usually feel that they are related to each other genealogically and therefore belong together. There is frequently a totemic animal associated with a district which the people involved are forbidden to eat. From another point of view, a district represents the largest grouping of people who would agree to federate for judicial purposes during the reorganization of the thirties. Where such a modern district is composed of distinct Lands, I refer to it as a "federated district."

DISTRICTS OF IDOMA DIVISION

AGATU¹

DEMOGRAPHY

This, the northernmost district of Idoma Division, has a distinctive dialect. The population in 1952 was 21,545, which is quite large compared with other parts of the Division. Most of the villages are not along the Benue, but along minor streams. Bagaji (*ɔbagazi*; Oturkpo form, *ɔbagaji*), population 1,616 in 1938, which shows considerable Hausa influence and even has a small mosque, is closely settled and the compounds are surrounded with zana mats. One sees many houses with verandahs very much like those depicted in Allen's sketches of Panda and Idah in 1832.

There is a large group of Agatu on the north bank of the Benue in Nassarawa, extending west from Loko for a considerable distance. The Rev. Mr. Dibble, who has visited this latter district, reports that it is of all Idoma groups by far the least affected by modern contacts. The people still desert their villages and hide in bush at the approach of visitors. There are also Agatu enclaves in the Doma district of Lafia Emirate. Agatu was frequently raided by the Fulani from across the river and there are many refugee groups in it who came in as a result of the Fulani wars.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Most Agatu groups have a tradition of having come from or of having been a part of "Apa," the Jukun Empire. According to Shaw, the Agbaduma clan claims that from the foundation of its present settlement tribute was paid to

¹ The names of the various districts which are established in official use, apart from being anglicized in various degrees, are only rarely based on the names by which the districts call themselves. The original of the official name is often the Hausa name for the district or, failing that, the name in the Oturkpo dialect. In the following brief sketches of the several districts, I give first the name in official use, then the name actually used in the district itself, where this is reliably known to me. If I know of an Oturkpo variant I give that also.

Wukari. The Ikobo and Agbaduma clans claim that they formed the Apa force ordered by their chief to take vengeance on the founder of the present Igala dynasty who, on his marriage to Enekpe, a daughter of the royal house, aspired to independence, threw off the Apa yoke and fled to Idah with the symbols of one of the major royal cults.²

The region was first visited by Europeans in 1833, when Oldfield stopped at a town on the north bank called Dagbo, a part of the kingdom of Doma at that time. The population fled on the approach of Oldfield's Kroomen and fled again, leaving behind livestock, when he entered the town himself the next day.³ It seems apparent from his account that at least the main weight of the Fulani aggression had not at that time come so far south. He mentions trouble between the king of Doma and the "sheikh of Bornou" three months previous to his arrival, but the group involved was most probably the Kamberi at Lafia town. He was prevented by them from visiting Doma town.

The region was next visited in 1854 by Baikie and Crowther. Crowther wrote that the town of Dagbo was by that time nearly deserted, and the people had moved to a more secure place near the river. He mentions a "village" of Agatu on the south bank, just before Akpoko, which was at that time located on the north bank. His map shows a second Agatu on the north bank. He refers to the people as "kaferi" and comments in detail on how thinly populated the banks of the Benue are along what is now the Tiv border.⁴

Much more can be inferred from Crowther's account than is indicated directly about Agatu. He tells of great numbers of refugees and of many movements of groups to the south shore, and present day Agatu is indeed the most ethnically heterogeneous district in Idoma.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND ECONOMY

The district has 28 autonomous villages and was the only district in Idoma where it was necessary for the Administration to nominate and appoint a district head during the reorganization of the late thirties, since the only point on which the various villages were agreed was that they would never succeed in choosing a court president themselves. It was a point of honour for each village to vote for its own man and for no one else. The present district head (1952) is a Moslem.

According to Shaw, the *ofese*, the titular head of the "clan," was in fact present in almost every clan, actively participating in public affairs.⁵

The fact that the district is favourably situated for trade on the river has undoubtedly helped the growth of the population and the development of ethnic heterogeneity. There is a hamlet called Boju Amaga, near Okokolo, which is said to be a section of the Boju people which got left behind as the main group passed through this region to their present location.⁶ The district remained relatively inaccessible to the rest of the Division until very late, however.⁷

According to Money, there were, in 1935, numerous kilns for iron-smelting in the hills to the south, which form a natural boundary between the Agatu and Ocheku, but, as elsewhere in the Division, iron-smelting has now entirely disappeared, having been rendered uneconomic by cheap iron from European sources. As in every district from Oturkpo north, there are remains of old town fortifications to be seen in Agatu.

² Shaw, 1934. This story may be compared with Clifford's version of the Enekpe legend, given in the Igala section. See above, p. 89.

³ Oldfield, 1837, pp. 441-4.

⁴ Crowther, 1855, pp. 53-4, 58, 151. The word "kaferi" is actually a Hausa word for pagans generally.

⁵ Shaw, 1934.

⁶ Elliot, 1937.

⁷ The motor road north reached Bopo only in 1937 and Agatu later than that. Before this, it was easier to go to Agatu from Oturkpo by way of Makurdi and down the river than directly by land. The district is in other ways isolated. It is the only place in the Division where elephants and leopards are still found.

OCHEKU (očekwù)

DEMOGRAPHY

This district, with a population of 21,330 in 1952, is the most heterogeneous of the districts which have been able to establish a democratically chosen federal court and court president. The district is crossed by two small rivers, the Ocheku and the Okpoku, both flanked by thick forest in which the bulk of the people live in scattered villages and hamlets. Most of the district is largely deforested, low-lying, subject to flooding in the rains, and thinly populated.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Idoma of this region share the general tradition that they originated in "Apa," the Jukun Empire, and that they were driven from it in the course of the "Horse War" or "Abakpa War." The enemy in these wars is generally supposed to have been the Fulani, although Shaw argues that the real Fulani attack came too late to account for the migration.⁸ There is a strong tradition in Ocheku, as in other Idoma groups, of residence for a time in what is now Tiv country, but when Baikie came up the Benue in 1854 the Tiv were substantially in their present position.

The relationship of the Ocheku groups to the Jukun cannot have been so solid as that of the Agatu; but one "clan," Ediku Ojope, says that it formed part of the Igala rebellion, and finally took refuge in Ocheku, while another, Bopo (Ogbokpo), claims descent from the royal house of Apa. There is also a story of an attempt by a branch of the Nupe royal house to organize resistance against the Fulani. The general trend of the migration was in a westerly and south-westerly direction. The earlier settlers probably lived in walled towns for protection against the Abakpa raiders, but later disintegrated into scattered villages and hamlets.⁹ In addition to the Tiv group mentioned below, there are Igala stranger groups and even an old Hausa stranger group, the Aigaabakpa, who accompanied the movement from Apa. Like the Igala, they are now completely absorbed culturally into the various "clans."

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

There are 14 "clans" in the district, one of which is Tiv. Several of the rest have Igala elements. The *oche* (Oturkpo *oce*, Agatu *otse*) is the titular head of the "clan," and, in theory at least, was at once the religious and political head. The office rotated among the constituent kin groups. At the time of Shaw's investigation, the office of *oche* was in complete abeyance in four of the 13 "clans" and in abeyance *de facto* in six more.¹⁰

There was in principle a hierarchically graded group of title-holders, known as *igabo* (*igabo*). The top two of these titles belonged to the next two men in line for the chieftaincy. In fact, Shaw reported that in only two of the 13 clans was the *igabo* system functioning.¹¹

There is no land shortage in Ocheku and for this reason the boundaries between the lands of the various groups have never been very clearly defined. Subject to this limitation, Shaw defines "clan" in Ocheku as a territorial unit, claiming complete autonomy in and ownership of its lands. It is additionally a non-exogamous unit, claiming descent from a common ancestor, having a common *aje* or earth-shrine, and acknowledging a common authority in the person of the clan head, the senior elder of the group. The Idoma word for the unit in question is *aje* or *ipaaaje*, "land."

⁸ Shaw suggests that the wars in question may have been the Chamba attacks on the Jukun Empire, which seem on the whole to be rather too early, or they may have been recurrent civil wars in the Empire itself. See also below, p. 135.

⁹ Shaw, 1934.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Ocheku country was first visited in 1907, when it was reported that the various units were entirely independent. Effective administration began in 1910, based on Ankpa in Eastern Igala. With the establishment of Idoma Division in 1923 the political organization of this region took substantially its modern form. Elaigu was appointed district head of Ocheku and remained in office until his assassination in 1933.

In the reorganization of 1934 the various Ocheku groups asked for a district court with a permanent court president, to be elected, and a federal council, the Native Authority, composed of the 14 clan councils, recognized as Subordinate Native Authorities. This was granted. The federal council meets at Bopo (Ogbokpo) and the Northern Intermediate Court meets at Iga.

ADOKA (*Adoka*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Adoka lies to the south of Ocheku and also borders on Igala in the west and on Tiv in the east. It is much more homogeneous than the two northern districts. Its population in 1952 was 13,958. In about 1935 the population was estimated as 9,208, of whom 7,444 belonged to the dominant Adoka clan. There are in addition two small Idoma stranger clans, two Igala stranger groups and two immigrant Tiv groups, of the Mbakpa and Raav Tiv clans respectively.

The district is nearly flat, rising slightly from east to west. It is crossed by two rivers, tributaries of the Benue. There is a large market and cotton has been grown for sale for some time. Quite a number of dwarf cattle are kept.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

According to Elliot, the Adoka claim to have come from Apa. They first settled at the mouth of the Ojaji River, in what is now Mbakpa Tiv country along the Benue, but the spread of the Tiv compelled them to move by stages up the Ojaji River to approximately their present location.¹² There is some evidence that for defensive reasons they once lived in large towns. With the coming of peaceful conditions these have broken up, and the people have moved out on to their lands in small settlements which tend to cluster round the two rivers.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The district was administered from 1910, and took its present form as part of Munshi Province in 1918. There had traditionally been a single head to this group, but at the time of the British occupation it had broken into three parts. It was not until 1933 that the Adoka could agree on an *oce*—a man so old and infirm that he was not able to take any active part in affairs. He was succeeded, however, by a vigorous man who has since been elected Paramount Chief of Idoma. As elsewhere the real authority rests with the council of elders, senior members of the various village and lineage groups. The several stranger groups were constituted subordinate Native Authorities.

A group of titled councillors, the *igabo*, existed in theory, but was ineffective in practice. The top two titles, *ochai* and *aidokainya* are Igala. There are also titles for two age groups, one originally a war group, which are without significance now.

BOJU (*Ugboju*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Boju is the southernmost of the four districts which border on both Igala and Tiv. Its dialect is the Central or Oturkpo dialect, whereas in Adoka there is already some admixture of the Northern or Agatu dialect.

¹² Elliot, 1937.

Boju was an undivided district, the population of which was reported as 9,372 in 1937 and 15,773 in 1952. This is unusually large for an undivided group and in fact the process of division was beginning at the time of the British Administration. The fact that there are no stranger lineages seems to result from a strong tendency towards absorption, for in the west there are numerous villages genealogically attached to the main lineages through women which are still to-day bilingual, speaking both Igala and Idoma.

ECONOMY

Elliot states that the people of Boju live almost entirely in the thick belt of forest bordering the Ogori River or one of its tributaries. Outside the forest is the orchard bush, which is continually cleared with shifting cultivation for their farmlands. Beyond that again is the hill country near the northern and southern boundaries of the district in which the laterite ironstones make farming impossible and in whose neighbourhood the people hunt at the appropriate season. There are still occasional leopard and bush-cow in these forests and hartebeeste in the wilder parts of the orchard bush.¹³

Despite the fact that the railway is only 10 miles away and that it was largely built with labour recruited from Boju, the district has remained extremely conservative to this day, although the coming of a good road has encouraged sufficient trade, so that one now sees a fair number of bicycles and other types of European merchandise. Boju Land at one time participated actively in the Abakpa market organization, according to Heath.¹⁴ Representatives (*oteyi*) were sent to the court of the market chief (*okpooju*) there.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Boju people claim to have come from Apa about seven or eight generations ago. They settled then along the Benue at the mouth of the Ogori River, but the spread of the Tiv forced them, like their Adoka neighbours, to move up the Ogori to their present home. Elliot states that this section of the Apa people migrated under the leadership of Oga, the founder of the Boju clan, a small section of which proceeded down the Benue and can be traced to-day in the Agatu hamlet of Boju Amaga, near Okokolo. Oga's grandson, Ejeba, finally brought them to the district now known as Boju, and his three sons are the founders of the three lineages of the Land to-day. One son, Oko, then moved south, married an Ibo woman and founded the Orakamu clan. The clan heads of Boju and Orakamu are thus related to each other and their friendly co-operation has been of considerable importance in the functioning of the Idoma Central Tribal Court.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

According to Elliot the Boju "live in compounds consisting of huts occupied by a man and his wives and sons and their wives and children (i.e., patrilineal grouping). The 'village' is a collection of these, united under a common name and usually recognizing a common elder: but the group is by no means necessarily a single kindred unity and the compounds may be separated from each other by any distance varying from a 100 yds. to several miles, usually extending on both sides of the river."¹⁵

The Boju chieftaincy is in theory one of the best organized and most elaborate in Idoma, but the complicated hierarchy of offices was empty when the Administration took over and was only filled at their insistence. Elliot's comments on the Boju chieftaincy are not without an echo in other districts: "The pre-British system of government contained many elements both of a monarchy and a democracy but seems to have bordered most frequently on anarchy. It will be appreciated that

¹³ Elliot, 1937a.

¹⁴ Heath, 1937.

¹⁵ Elliot, 1937a.

complete disintegration as a result of rivalry for the position of clan-head was the normal state of affairs."¹⁶ This situation does not prevent Boju from having in theory a chieftaincy structure that approaches kingship in its complexity. The *oce* was both the civil and religious head of the Land, these two functions never having been separated in Boju. In form his pronouncements were those of an autocrat. In fact he was totally dependent on the *ojira*, the popular assembly. The *ojira* is not a body of councillors, but a mass meeting which anyone who likes may attend. Village and kin groups similarly had each their own *ojira* and for the most part regulated their own affairs without any reference to the *oce*. The oldest member is normally the head of each, is addressed as "father" and accorded great respect, but is usually too old to take much part in affairs.

The position of *oce* is held in rotation by the three main patrilineal, non-exogamous lineages or kindreds. Although one of these includes three-quarters of the whole population and occupies two spatially separated areas, it was content to await its turn.

Titles are numerous and prominent in Boju. The more important group of title-holders is the *igabo* (*igabo*) and the most important of these are the senior members of the respective groups, who are in line of succession to the *oce*. In order of seniority they are: *ocai*, salutation *alapa*; *aidokaanya*, salutation *itodo*; *omadaci*, salutation *okaula*. The first two of these titles are Igala; the third is of Hausa origin. There are also many other titles, mostly connected with war, some of *igabo* rank. They are now nearly all functionless except as marks of prestige or distinction. The *acadu* is an elder of the lineage attached genealogically to the main lineage through a woman; he is thus ineligible to become *oce*. He is entrusted with burying a deceased chief, with removing the beads of office, with taking charge of affairs during the interregnum, and with the proclaiming of the new *oce*. This title and position is also not unconnected with Igala *ashadu*.¹⁷

Elliot endorses Money's view that Idoma titles were merely social distinctions awarded to men who through their personality and generosity had earned the approbation of the people. Their heirs expected to be reimbursed for the amounts spent by the deceased in gaining popularity, and in default of anyone being able or desirous of so doing, they considered that they themselves held the title.¹⁸

The death of the *oce* was kept secret for three years, it being publicly announced that he was indisposed and could not leave his house. A similar custom has been reported for Adoka by the present Paramount Chief of Idoma.

The Boju have a common forbidden animal, the Senegal bush shrike, a bird with a curiously human whistle, which is supposed once to have warned the Boju people of danger.

YANGEDDE (*onyagede*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Yangedde is a federated district made up by the union of four Lands, all of which speak the Central or Oturkpo dialect of Idoma, with a total population in 1935 of 6,841. The four are: Yangedde, population 1,931; Okpiko, population, 2,009; Agadagba, population 1,537; Awume, population 1,364. The 1952 Census gave the population as 8,948. Leslie gave the population density as 59 per square mile, but pointed out that the population is almost entirely confined to the forest bordering the streams and rivers. The district borders Igala on the west, Boju District on the north and Oglewu and Edumoga Districts on the east and south.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

The country is fairly flat, on the whole, the northern part of the district lying in the valley of the Ogoli River of Boju. A range of confused hills, the watershed

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See above, p. 87.

¹⁸ Elliot, 1937a.

between the Cross River and the Benue drainages, isolates Okpiko from Boju and from the rest of Yangedde. The country is largely covered with orchard bush, but in the west there are enough palm trees to ensure a considerable supply of palm wine for the Abakpa market.

Although Yangedde was one of the last districts to be brought under administration (1926), the large and historic Abakpa¹⁹ market in its north-west corner has for long been well-known both to the Idoma generally and to the Government. The market serves not only Yangedde, but also Boju and a part of Igala. It was once an important point in the slave trade. The association of the four Lands around this market has undoubtedly facilitated their federation.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

The people of all four Lands have traditions of having been driven south of the Benue by wars. Okpiko, Yangedde and Awume claim subsequent residence in or near Idah. Okpiko came after vicissitudes into its present location, and bought the land from the chief of Oglewu. Yangedde claims to have been driven out of Idah by Apa, a rather surprising tradition. The Yangedde people bought their land from Okpiko. Akogo, the common ancestor of the people of Awume, was driven by war from near Idah. The Agadagba people have no tradition of having lived in Igala, but say they settled for a time in Ocheku. They bought their land from the chief of Oglewu. Okpiko, Yangedde and Awume claim that the titles of their founders were granted by the *Ata* of Idah.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The district was first visited in 1910, but administration and tax collection did not begin until 1926 with the appointment of a district head, the chief of Yangedde Land, and a centrally located headquarters at Idankari. In 1928 the district head died and was replaced by Ochai, the chief of Awume. By the time of the 1935 reorganization, Ochai was thoroughly unpopular even with his own people. A federal court was then set up with a rotating presidency, each Land to elect one of its members for the position for one month. The new court met at Abakpa. The system worked very imperfectly and most of the time was taken up with quarrels over who should be chosen. Later the system now normal in Idoma, of Federal Court President in Council, was adopted.

The Lands each had a chief (*oce*), who combined in his person the headship of the ancestral *alekwu* cult and, together with the *ojira* or popular assembly, political leadership. Rotation among the lineages was quite regular. The Okpiko Land has no common earth-shrine (*aje*), but the various villages celebrate *aje* simultaneously on a day set by the chief. In the thirties a list of 15 successive chiefs was given.²⁰ Awume has no longer a common earth-shrine nor a common *alekwu* or ancestral staff. Six chiefs from the founder were claimed. Agadagba claimed a succession of six and Yangedde of five chiefs.

No distinction between the judicial and administrative functions of the *ojira* has been indicated. The *okpooju* or chief of the Abakpa market had a powerful and more secular function. He held a market court and was responsible for the preservation of order there, being assisted by a group of able-bodied representatives of the participating villages of the various Lands, including Boju. This "constabulary" was known as the *awga* or *ayuta*. There seems to be unanimous agreement that this body often acted *ultra vires* and in an arbitrary fashion.

There was a small group of *igabo* or holders of titles which were conferred by the chief, with the advice and consent of his council. The most important of these titles was the *ocai* or heir-apparent to the chief, and the *aidokaanya* or next in line, who could on occasion deputise for the chief. All the *igabo* titles were vacated on

¹⁹ The word "Abakpa" is Idoma for "Hausa."

²⁰ Leslie, 1935.

the death of a chief. It is not clear to what extent this system was still functioning, but at the time of the 1935 reorganization only one of the four Land chiefships was actually occupied *de jure*.²¹

Okpiko and Agadagba are noted for their spectacular stiltmasks (*ekwibo*).

OGLEWU (*oglewu* OR *gleu*) AND OCHOBO (*Ocoobo*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Oglewu is a federated district composed of Oglewu Land and Ochobo, a Land composed of one lineage. The people of both Oglewu and Ochobo speak the central or Oturkpo dialect of Idoma, otherwise known as Akpoto. The number of aliens, either Idoma or non-Idoma, is negligible. In 1938 the population of Oglewu Land was estimated at 3,025 and that of Ochobo 676, the total for the district being 3,701. The density of population was about 32 per square mile. In 1952 the population of the district was estimated at 5,378.

Oglewu is the only Idoma-speaking district in the Division without at least one border on a neighbouring Division, its actual boundaries being Boju, Yangedde, Edumoga, Akpa and Oturkpo Districts. Of these Akpa is not Idoma-speaking. In the days before British Administration, Oglewu was consistently at war with both Oturkpo and Edumoga.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

The country is mainly orchard bush, with low waterless hills of laterite ironstone, which are uninhabited. There are two perennial rivers, close to which most of the population is clustered. The main road from Onitsha to Makurdi and Jos goes through the district. The Ochobo people live in a small area near where this road crosses the Okpoku River (Ilobi on the Land and Survey map). The Oglewu people live mainly in the valley of the Okpobi (Oiyona) and its tributary the Ilulu.

The presence of a major road and the proximity of the Divisional Headquarters town of Oturkpo and of the railway have brought remarkably few changes in the way of life of this district. There is a small but vigorous market on the road at Ochobo, and another in northern Oglewu, but it is little used by outsiders. Oglewu people often go to markets outside the district, especially that at Oturkpo, but also to Boju, the Abakpa market in Yangedde, Ekeh, Edumoga and even Akpa and Utonkon markets.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Oglewu know little and seem to care little about their past. They say they came from Apa, and some say they had to cross a big river. The various lineages cannot agree on who the common ancestor of Oglewu Land was. Some groups say they came to their present home by way of Ankpa, others that they came through what is now Tiv country, where they first met the Oturkpo and were driven west. Wright thinks that they may in fact represent a coalescence of originally distinct groups.²² They all have a tradition of having stopped for a time near Ochaku, in present-day Okpiko Land of Yangedde District. The Okpiko tradition already mentioned, that their land was bought from the chief of Oglewu, may be compared with this. The Oglewu insist, at all events, that their country was quite uninhabited when they arrived. Wright argues that in the absence of land shortage, and, one might add, in the absence of well organized enemies in the vicinity, there was little inducement to centralized control. Oglewu seems to have kept on good terms with the groups that now make up Yangedde District, but warfare was constant and bitter with Oturkpo, Boju and Edumoga. The Oturkpo say that Oglewu originally lived at Upu, in the present Oturkpo District. The Oturkpo say they bought their land from the chief of Oglewu.

²¹ Heath, 1937.

²² Wright, 1938.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

There was, in theory at least, an *oce*, salutation *obande*, whose functions were entirely secular. He was little more than the spokesman for the *ojira* (council). Mathews reports that the titles of *alapa* and *aidokaanya* were known to them, but that their memory even of the names of the titles was hazy. Nevertheless, apart from even the hint of an Igala title given here, it is interesting that the chief, like the chief of Boju, should have an Igala salutation.²³ Leadership in ritual was in the hands of the senior elder, who held the *okwute* ancestral staves and had charge of the *aje* or Land ceremony. The Oglewu *aje* shrine is at Ojo between Angule and Alaglanu. There seems to have been no tradition of the *oce* having priestly functions. His installation ceremony was elaborate, lasting many months.²⁴

The chief at Ochobo, on the other hand, combines secular and priestly functions in the fashion of the chiefs in the northern districts. According to tradition the Ochobo were driven out of Apa a little later than the Oglewu and first settled at Otea on the banks of the Benue.²⁵ The last *oce* before the coming of the British was Agbo, one of the sons of Agagbo, the founder of the present settlement. Each of the five kin groups was autonomous. When the British took over the district, the title of *oce*, salutation *Agbo*, was revived in the person of Oto, a warrior of great repute.

Oglewu and Ochobo were originally included in the Okwoga Division of Onitsha Province, which was first entered by the Niger-Cross River Expedition in 1908-09, but the district was not visited until 1910. The Onitsha-Jos Road, which passes through the district was constructed in 1933.

OTURKPO (*Otukpo*; OTHER DIALECTS OFTEN SAY *Otrukpo*)

GENERAL

Oturkpo is the district where the Divisional Headquarters has been located since 1924. Around this headquarters has grown up Oturkpo town with a large daily market and a large stranger settlement, with Hausa, Ibo, Igala and Yoruba quarters.

The dialect spoken is the Central or Oturkpo dialect, also spoken by Oglewu, Boju, Yangedde and Adoka. In fact most of the dialects of Idoma as well as most of the other principal languages of Nigeria can to-day be heard in Oturkpo. There are constant and major movements of cattle through the town, driven by Hausa and Fulani, to the markets of Enugu and Onitsha.

The growth of Oturkpo town has been greatly aided by the fact that it is the first point north of Onitsha where the Onitsha-Jos road crosses the Nigerian railway. Oturkpo has also become an important centre of missionary activity. The Methodist Central School, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Diocese of the Benue (including Igala), and the new Mount St. Mary's Catholic Teachers' Training College are all located in Oturkpo.

The area of Oturkpo is 106 square miles. The population in 1935 was 6,946, giving a density of 65.9 per square mile; but the 1952 estimate was 13,140. The country is typical "orchard bush," with no rivers of any size and water is a severe problem in the last two or three months of the dry season. The most prominent physical feature is the small plateau on which are located Oturkpo town and the Government Station.

²³ Clifford (1936, p. 413) says that the west gate of the *Ata's* palace compound was called *Ega Obanda*, "named after some potent 'medicine' which is buried in the foundations of the gate house." If "ega" is taken to be an Idoma word, the name would mean "the place of the *Obanda*."

²⁴ Wright, 1938.

²⁵ Ibid. For their traditions of migration.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

After the exodus of the Oturkpo people from Apa, led by Nyoko, they are said to have wandered north of the Benue and then through what is now Tiv country. After arrival in their present location they were at first under a single *oce*. Later they divided under two and then three separate lineage chiefs for several generations.²⁶ Finally, urged by the Administration, the whole Land was again united under one *oce* in 1930.

Oturkpo is the most remote of all Idoma Districts, from the point of view of pre-European contact with the more advanced cultures of the region. Its Idoma-speaking neighbours are Oglewu and Boju of whom only the latter had an organized chieftaincy. None of its non-Idoma-speaking neighbours, the Tiv, the Egede, and the Akweya, had any pretence to chieftaincy.

Money reports that in 1922 each lineage had at least one *oce* and each of these claimed to be the rightful chief of the whole Land. Policy at the time required the appointment of a District Head by the Administration, and Ogbole, the *ocesu* (war chief) of the Ai-Agboko lineage was selected. Abraham has pointed out that he was also in fact *ocuta*, head, that is, of the *ayuta* "constabulary."²⁷ Ogbole was not eligible in principle to be *oce*, but he managed to establish his position and in 1930 he was finally confirmed in office and given the salutation *odu* and the "chief's property," sandals, tall red hat, *akpa* royal stool, sacred ancestral staves, and bead bracelet to be worn on the left wrist. Apparently the offices of *ocai* and *aidokaanya* were filled at the same time.

Thirteen *igabo* titles were reported by Mathews²⁸ for the Oturkpo district in 1933, but most of these were vacant. The death of the chief at this time, for whom a slave was secretly sacrificed, before a new *ocai* could be selected from the lineage of the old one, precipitated a battle for succession which lasted 11 years. The Oturkpo succession was put before an *ojira* of the chiefs of all the Idoma Districts in 1939, which recommended an order of succession different from that implicit in the position of the titles granted during Ogbole's lifetime. A new chief was finally installed in 1944, but by the end of 1952 there was still no agreement on an *ocai*, although the incumbent chief was a very old man and no longer able to attend court sessions.²⁹

Before the coming of the British there were few strangers in the Oturkpo Land or markets of any size. The Land had a common earth-shrine (*aje*) and was unified enough to feel that there "ought" to be a single chief. The remains of defensive moats in the Oturkpo region can still be seen.

OKWOGA (*okpoga*)

DEMOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

This district was once the centre and headquarters of Okwoga Division, Onitsha Province, which included Edumoga-Obokolo, Ichama and, in theory at least, Agadagba Land of Yangedde District. Abraham³⁰ thinks that there may be a distinct Okwoga dialect; in any event, its closest affinity is with the Agala-Igumale dialect.

Okwoga Land has an area of 76 square miles. Its population in 1935 was 4,060, with a density of 53.4 per square mile. In 1952, however, the population was 9,093, including 630 Ibo and 32 Hausa.

²⁶ Heath lists five of these for each of the two lineages which had a complete series. According to a history which I collected, the split occurred sometime before the arrival of the Oturkpo in their present location.

²⁷ See also above, p. 108.

²⁸ Mathews, 1933.

²⁹ Heath, 1938.

³⁰ Abraham, 1951, p. 4.

The country is orchard bush, with some good timber. There are few settlements of any size, except for the site of the old Divisional headquarters, now the Okwoga Native Court, reached to-day by a good all-season road. The long eastern boundary is with Edumoga, and for shorter distances with Igumale, Ibo country (Eastern Provinces), Ichama, Orokam and Otukpa. Interest in commerce is still minimal.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The area was first visited in 1909 by the Niger-Cross River expedition and was for a time part of the Obolo Division of Onitsha Province. In 1918 it was taken over by the Northern Provinces and made a part of Munshi Province.

Money wrote of the Division in 1935 that although it had been under administration for some 25 years, little progress was visible. No attempt had been made to exploit the area commercially and trade was confined entirely to immediate neighbours.

In theory there existed titular "clan" heads surrounded by courts of titled officials who ruled the clan and dispensed justice, but in practice it seems to have been almost impossible to agree upon a titular head. In the few cases in which an appointment is said to have been made, his authority depended on the number of sections—if any—other than his own who agreed to follow him and he was always "either a dictator or a nonentity."

The clan head had no religious standing, age alone giving a right to the priesthood. Not only had the senior elder no prescriptive right to appointment, i.e., to the chieftaincy, but such a person would be considered a most unsuitable candidate. In this respect the conception of a titular head differs fundamentally from that of the clans occupying the northern areas of the Division. The difference may be attributed to the example of Idah rather than to early government influence.³¹

After the removal of the Divisional Headquarters from Okwoga to Oturkpo in 1924 mutual hostility among the diverse groups that made up the Division increased, and in 1935 the Okwoga District was broken up into three parts: Okwoga, Ichama and Edumoga. The two latter districts will be discussed below. The remainder of this section is concerned with the Okwoga District in its present, reduced form.

The Okwoga people are thought to be of Igala origin and to have come to their present location by way of the territory that now forms part of the Ai-Ifamu area of the Orukpa District. The chief still goes there periodically to perform rites pertaining to his office. There is a common earth-shrine (*aje*), and, according to Money, the senior elder of the Land is responsible for the performance of the rites of the ancestor cult in respect of all the kindreds descended from the founder. In practice, however, the kindreds are quite separate religious units, although this is strongly denied by the senior elder.³² The chief's title is *oce*, salutation *onagane*, which may be Igala.

Okwoga Land is composed of six localized lineages and six stranger elements which are said to have placed themselves under the protection of Okwoga long before the coming of the Government. Money wrote in 1935 that the clan proper and the stranger elements at that time formed a homogeneous unit and that no distinctions were observed between members of the sections except that the stranger groups were ineligible to succession to the chieftaincy.³³ In fact, after the 1935 reorganization, a serious dispute broke out between Okwoga proper and a stranger group, the Ai-Ikwafia, which Heath calls a sub-clan made up of six kindreds.³⁴ The most important title in this stranger group is that of *ogu*. The *ogu* holds his position for life or until the appointment of a new *onagane* [chief of Okwoga Land]

³¹ Money, 1935a.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Heath, 1940.

on the old one's death, when it is the duty of the old *ogu* to tie on the wristlet beads of office. He then retires and the new *ogu* is appointed by the new *onagane*.³⁵ Heath reports that the Ikwaia now dislike the *ogu* title, which they regard as a "slave" title, because there are a number of ex-*ogu* alive whom the *onagane* has power to appoint, which makes their whole sub-clan the vassals of the *onagane* of Ai-Oche [Okwoga Land].³⁶

EDUMOGA (*edumoga*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Edumoga, created out of the old Okwoga Division in 1935, is a loosely-knit federal district, the largest in the Division, formed by the federation of the Obokolo (*Ogboklo*) Land and Edumoga Proper, which is itself a federation of five Lands. It had an area of 309 square miles after the reorganization of 1935, with a population of 11,812, giving a density of 38.2 per square mile. After Oglewu, this is the lowest density in the Division. The population in 1952 was 23,315, including 556 Ibo, and, as has been noted, the area of the district has been reduced slightly. Some of the increase shown by the later and more accurate statistics is likely to be only apparent.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY AND CRAFTS

The country is largely orchard bush, with some forest near the fairly abundant streams, but water is a problem during the latter part of the dry season. The Onitsha-Jos road passes through Obokolo where there are two large markets, a Hausa stranger settlement, several settlements of Ibo carpenters and a small settlement of German-speaking carpenters from the Cameroons. Oturkpo traders say that for a number of years the Land chief used to levy a regular toll on lorries passing through.

There seems to be no cult of ancestral resurrection in masks, but there are many masks for other purposes and, as I have noted in other parts of the Division, where the masks sing or talk they often do so in foreign languages. Igala is frequently used for this purpose, but I have heard a mask in Obokolo, close to the Igala border, singing in Egede. Dance groups from Akweya-speaking Akpa frequently visit Edumoga to assist at important funerals.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM: OBOKOLO

The Obokolo are of Igala origin, and although they have by now largely adopted Idoma culture there are still a great many bilingual persons in the group. They are said to be descended from one Amogu of Ogumi, 30 miles west of Ankpa (Egume on the Land and Survey map). The Land consists of eight lineages descended from the founder, three sections linked by female ties and two Igala stranger settlements. There is a common earth-shrine (*aje*) and, in theory, a single titular chief. In fact, there have been sharp disagreements and, according to Money, a state of war existed between two factions on the advent of the Government.³⁷ Before the reorganization of 1935, Obokolo was administered as a village area of Okwoga District, the titular head being vice-president of the Okwoga Native Court.

EDUMOGA PROPER

Edumoga is in fact a confederation of five Lands. They are believed to have migrated about 200 years ago from the hills forming the natural boundary between the present Ocheke and Agatu Districts. Money says that the Ikobe and Ojantelle

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Money, 1935a.

"clans" of the Ocheku District have similar traditions. I was also told that at one time the Edumoga people lived in what is now the Oturkpo District.

Upper Edumoga Land is made up of two localized lineages with a population in 1935 of 954 and 1,171. A third is theoretically related to these by female links and is supposed to have come from Ogugu in Igala country. This holds the title of *ashadu*, salutation *ojoku*. It had a population of 541 in 1935. Money says that in theory the council of the first two lineages is one but that in practice this was not the case. The third claimed to hold the title of *ede* and to regard itself as an entirely separate unit.³⁸

Lower Edumoga is a geographical term referring to two Lands, Ujugu (Ojiugo) and Ogengen Ogeege), but in Ujugu there are three lineages each of which claims the right to appoint the titular head for the whole without reference to the others. Each keeps a "mask" (*ekwu nokwu*) which is supposedly a chiefly monopoly. Money notes that the extent to which a section regards itself as distinct depends on personalities and is liable to sudden changes. In addition to the three main lineages there are three others related through female links. The population in 1935 was 3,365. Ogengen consists of three lineages plus four sections related through female links. It usually agrees to one titular head and recognizes the senior elder as religious head of the whole Land. The population in 1935 was 1,238.^{38A}

The fifth component of Edumoga Proper is Ekeh Land, whose historical connection with the other units is obscure. According to some it is descended from Aba, legendary founder of Edumoga as a whole. Others say that the people of this Land came from Adoka. They consist of three lineages plus three other sections related through female links. The population in 1935 was 2,179. It is worthy of note that it borders Ochobo Land of Oglewu district, a group of similarly obscure relation to the major Oglewu group. War was chronic between Edumoga as a whole and Oglewu.

There is no evidence that there have ever been walled or fortified towns in the region. The chiefs are said to have gone to Idah for confirmation in office, but it is highly doubtful whether the king of Idah ever collected taxes or tribute there.

The federation of so many diverse groups into one district has worked reasonably well. The first Federal chief came from Ekeh, and the Native Court for the Division was established there, despite its non-central location (it is on the Onitsha-Jos highway). The Western Intermediate Court meets at Obokolo, and the present Federal chief is Land chief of Obokolo.

ICHAMA (*Icaama*)

During the 1935 reorganization Ichama was adamant in its insistence on being made a separate district from Okwoga, and despite its small size this was finally granted. It has an area of 42 square miles and had then a population of 2,361, giving a density of 56.2 per square mile. The population in 1952 was 3,185. The district borders on Okwoga, Orukpa and Ibo country. A considerable number of Ibo have come to live and farm here as in the other southern districts of Idoma, and there is a good deal of trade and contact across the border. Ichama has a sizeable market, reached by a dry-season road. It is in the palm belt and produces both wine and oil.

The Land consists of five lineages of Igala origin, descended from one Unoda, and two stranger elements, one from Otukpa and one from Eha Amufu (Ibo). The Otukpa group has been well assimilated into the Land, but the Ibo group, according to Money, has only a territorial association. He writes "the kindreds are localized to a certain extent, but there are several villages containing members of all kindreds, notably the village of Igbokobono which (including the stranger

³⁸ Ibid.

^{38A} Ibid.

elements) contains nearly 50 per cent. of the total population of the clan, but nevertheless has no corporate existence.³⁹

One needs only a brief visit to see and to feel the sharp difference between Ichama and the other western districts, with which, however, it shares a common dialect. It is the only district in which I have seen the people go down on their knees while the chief is drinking and stay there until he has finished, repeating the chiefly salutation the while.

OTUKPA

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

This district is a federation of three Lands, the people of which seem unrelated as regards their traditions of origin. Money reports a generally accepted version that the Ai-Ochagbaha first came to the area from Imani (in Igala Division). They have a tradition that the country was originally occupied by the Yachi-speaking Akpa people, or by a people who later joined them, but there is no corroboration of this either within the district or in Akpa. After a short time the Ai-Ochagbaha were joined by the Ai-Onu, who believe that they originated from Idah. Later the Ai-Odo had moved up from Ibo country and had established themselves in a heavily-wooded area in the south of the district. Another version is that the founders of all three sections established themselves in the neighbourhood of Oto and swearing friendship, probably for defensive reasons, decided to live as one. An earth-shrine common to all three sections is said to exist at Oto, but only Ai-Onu appears to have any interest in it.⁴⁰

DEMOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The district borders on Igala Division, Edumoga, Okwoga, Orukpa and Orokam. In 1935 the total population was estimated at 13,613 in an area of 84 square miles, giving a density of 162 per square mile. In 1952, however, the population was 19,440, giving a density of 231 per square mile. The total population and the density are thus very much greater than the average for the Division. Otukpa, like its neighbour Orokam, is situated on a great sandy ridge, the Niger-Cross River watershed, a good route for the Onitsha-Jos road. The problem of water is very difficult and in the dry season it must frequently be head-loaded for distances of from 7 to 10 miles. Nevertheless the district seems to be able to support its large population because it is in the palm belt and palm-wine can be largely substituted for drinking water during the dry season.⁴¹ The district was probably heavily wooded at one time, but the forest has had to give way to agriculture and only in the vicinity of the villages is timber retained.

Despite the density of population there are no large settlements. The people live in compounds situated in clearings in the village forest belt, each extended family occupying a separate clearing. Money regards this mode of existence as "borrowed from the Igala, to whom [the Otukpa peoples] seem closely related."⁴² There are signs of the existence of iron-smelting kilns scattered throughout the area, believed by the Otukpa to be the result of operations carried out by the Edumoga, who came to Otukpa at their invitation and smelted iron on payment. It is possible, however, that the slag heaps are of very much greater antiquity. During well-sinking operations in the Orokam district close to the Otukpa border parts of a kiln were found at a depth of over 15 ft. It is a curious point that kilns seem to have been established at places where none of the necessary iron-bearing stone is to be found.⁴³

³⁹ Money, 1935a.

⁴⁰ Money, 1936.

⁴¹ Money, 1936.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The region was first visited by the Niger-Cross River Expedition in 1908, but although Otukpa was a very troublesome area no organized resistance was found there.⁴⁴ The district was first included in the Okpoto District of Okwoga Division of Onitsha Province, but remained almost unadministered until after the First World War. In 1918 the district was placed in the Northern Provinces and was represented on the Okwoga Native Court by two members. Before 1925, when an Otukpa Native Court was established, administration was largely confined to tax collection. In 1924 a new district head from Ai-Onu was appointed and more or less accepted by the rest of the district on condition that he did not interfere in the affairs of Lands other than his own. His attempt in 1927 to intervene in Ai-Odo clan affairs nearly cost him his life and hostile action on a major scale between the two clans was narrowly averted.⁴⁵ In 1930 a complete deadlock between the Lands had to be settled by an administrative decision that the headship should pass in rotation between the three Lands.

Money comments that under the protection afforded by Government occupation, the Ai-Onu and Ai-Odo have considerably expanded their areas of settlement.⁴⁶

The chief of the Ai-Onu has the title *atamata*, salutation *onagane*. The chief of the Ai-Odo has the title *och'orukpa*, salutation *olema*. The chief of the Ai-Ochagbaha has no particular title, but is known as the *oce*, salutation *agbo*. The Ai-Onu and the Ai-Ochagbaha believe that they obtained their titles from Idah, and the Ai-Odo make a half-hearted claim to the same effect. All three Lands give lists of hierarchically ordered titles similar to those noted in other districts. Money says that none of these titles was actually in use at the time of the occupation or thereafter. The possible exception to this is the *kpoju*, an official who seems to have had charge of the markets and external relations generally. An *okrobia* ("chief of the young men") was also occasionally appointed. His titles corresponded to those of the village head.⁴⁷ In all three Lands the senior elder is *de jure* ritual head and *de facto* the secular head or chief. The clan head seems to have no logical standing *vis-à-vis* the senior elder. He is given great respect on account of his position in the clan, but is rarely, if ever, invited to take part in discussions. Possibly the titular head is a relic of the days when the clans may have been under Igala rule, and the person holding it was either a representative of the *Ata* or the *Ata's* nominee, and not a member of the actual clan at all.⁴⁸ Thus, the chief here seems to be the titled deputy of the senior elder, who is content to remain in the background and to concern himself only with important matters.

Money goes on to say that "the senior elder of the clan is the senior person in the senior generation and is not therefore normally the oldest man in the clan . . . seniority is determined by divination, nobody being in a position to declare with any certainty what persons belong to the senior generation."

"The senior elder in each kindred has the custody of the Ofo or kindred token. This is believed to be an Ibo custom, although the holders do not carry the emblem with them as is the custom of the Ibo kindred heads (at least those in the neighbourhood of the Idoma Divisional boundary and those Ibo units which form part of the Orakamu Federation) . . ."

"The clan council is the council of the kindred elders, but it is customary to invite (or permit) the attendance of all intelligent people."⁴⁹

There seems to have been little clear-cut judicial procedure. Matters could be brought before the elders on market days, when they were all assembled. Arbitration and divination were both much used to settle lesser cases. Murderers

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Money, 1936.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Money, 1936

should be handed over by their kin, who were also called upon to pay the expenses of the necessary sacrifice. Unpaid debts could be liquidated by selling the debtor (unknown to himself) to another person who might require a slave for funeral purposes, whereupon the unsuspecting victim would be lured to some convenient place and butchered. It is difficult to say whether such occurrences were customary or merely isolated incidents.⁵⁰

ORUKPA (OWRÚKPA;⁵¹ OTURKPO FORM: *Olúkpa*)

There is little information on this district which is in the palm belt, has a good perennial water supply and a large population (16,226 in 1952). There is a shortage of farm land. It borders on Ibo country, Ichama, Okwoga, Otukpa and Orokam. Connections with Ibo country for trade and other purposes are close; the masks of the Ibo *ekpe* cult visit Orukpa on occasions. The western dialect is spoken in Orukpa.

The district seems to consist of one Land with two sections, Utabono and Ehaje, descended from the founder by different wives. These sections alternate in possession of the chieftaincy (*onagene*) of the whole Land. The Ehaje ("lower") section is further subdivided into three groups, one of which is attached by female links. Each of the two sections has its own *onagene*, but the one who is chief of the whole Land is the senior *onagene*, and each section possesses a set of beads and a staff (*okwute*) for the use of its *onagene* in his capacity as Land chief, when his turn comes to assume the office. The heads of the three groups that make up the Ehaje are *oteyi* ("headmen"). The district was originally attached to Okwoga Native Court.

OROKAM OR OROKAMU (*ɔkam, ɔɔɔkam, ɔɔɔkram, ɔɔɔkramu*)

(OTURKPO FORM: *ɔlɔɔkam*)

NOMENCLATURE

The different spellings of the name of this district reflect the variability of native usage; the forms Orakamu and Orokram are also found. The Land chief is known as *ɔɔɔkam*, and so *ɔkam*, or perhaps *ɔka*, is the real name of the Land. This hypothesis is partly confirmed by the story quoted by McCreery to the effect that the name derives from the title *ɔka* ("expert, skilled, immune") conferred on Inamu, the founder, by the *Ata* of Idah.⁵² The initial element in the Land name is *ɔre* or *ɔle*, "compound," used broadly to mean "the whole land and people." Oturkpo Land is also often referred to as *ɔloutukpo*.

DEMOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

McCreery gave the area of the district as 40 square miles and the estimated population as 11,510 in 1927. The density of population was therefore 287 to the square mile. The population in 1952 was 12,528, giving a density of 313, the highest figure for the Division. Like Otukpa, Orokam is situated on the great sandy waterless ridge that forms the watershed between the Niger and Cross-River drainages, where the water supply is a severe problem. The district is bounded by Igala Divisions, Nsukka Division (Ibo), and by Otukpa and Orukpa districts of Idoma Division.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

The district is divided into six quarters, Iru, Oko, Igu, Aiona, Ako and Adupe, each of which has separate traditions of origin. Briefly, the inhabitants are a

⁵⁰ Ibid. Captain Money has told me that his information on the practice mentioned derives from certain court cases.

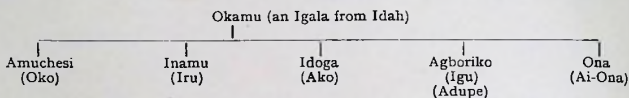
⁵¹ *ur* as in English "wrong", but more heavily labialized.

⁵² McCreery, 1927.

fusion of Idoma, Igala and Ibo. The six quarters quarrel among themselves and often break into actual warfare.⁵³

The Iru origin story, cited by McCreery, is to the effect that the founder was Inamu, a refugee member of the royal family at Idah, who later befriended and invited to settle with him the ancestors of the other quarters, he himself being the founder of Iru. Inamu later went to Idah and received from the *Ata* an *okwute* staff and the title *aka*. He was succeeded by his son Onyijeu (*onyejefu*). The connection between the Ai-Oko lineage of Boju and the Ai-Oko of Orokam has been noted in the discussion of Boju.⁵⁴

The Igu state that Okamu was the father of all Orokam and give the following table:



The name Igu is derived from the market tree Igu and is an Ibo word.

Adupe is an offshoot from Igu, with many persons from other quarters and other parts of Idoma. It is a large village situated in the corner of Idoma, Igala and Nsukka Divisions and has had a turbulent history.⁵⁵ The origin stories disagree sufficiently to provide ample excuse for chieftaincy disputes. In addition fights over land have been constant between Ako and Igu lineages.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Iru, traditionally the direct descendants of Inamu who had obtained recognition from Idah, have been heavily outnumbered by the Oko, Igu and Ai-Ona lineages and these had by 1927 taken over the chieftaincy by turns. The Ako have the title of *ochai* although there was no incumbent when McCreery wrote. They tie the *aka* wristlet on the new *idoga*, or chief, of Orokam. They also supply the market chief.

A chieftaincy dispute in 1951 was settled with administrative assistance. A literate man was selected as chief, the first such in an Idoma-speaking district.

Orokam is the only one of the western districts which has the *ekwaafia* cult of masked ancestral figures.

AGALA (*Agla, Agila*)⁵⁶

GENERAL

The districts of Agala and Igumale speak a dialect which is sharply distinct,⁵⁷ and their life and culture differs from that of the rest of Idoma. Although the coming of the railway has brought Igumale particularly into extensive contact with the rest of the Division, the two districts were formerly cut off geographically from other Idoma-speaking areas, except through the almost uninhabited southern part of Edumoga. Agala borders on Igumale in the north, but apart from this, its long border is with the Ibo peoples of Onitsha and Ogoja Provinces, into whose country it projects deeply. There is a good deal of Ibo influence to be seen in these districts, but the political system of Agala, in particular, contrasts sharply with the Ibo. House and compound types likewise differ from those seen at the Ibo town of Eha Amufu, nine miles from Agala town. Although the institutions of Agala and Igumale are similar, they seem better preserved in Agala.

⁵³ McCreery, 1927.

⁵⁴ See above, p. 106.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The name Ubiri, used for this district by Talbot, appears to be an Ukele term of contempt (Brooke, 1922).

⁵⁷ Thomas collected an Agala vocabulary in 1912 (Thomas, 1914, p. 22 et passim.).

DEMOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

No figures for the area of Agala are available, but a rough estimate based on the Land and Survey map gives 83 square miles. Abraham gave the population as 6,474 in 1935, which gives a density of 78 per square mile. Recently there has been a notable influx of Ibo and the 1952 Census showed 7,672 Idoma and 7,344 Ibo, giving a total of 15,016 and a density of about 180 per square mile.

Although the country is well watered and in the palm belt, it is fairly open orchard bush, with some patches of high forest. The streams in Agala are heavily infected with guinea-worm. At the height of the rains travel with a bicycle is not easy although native bridges are usually maintained over two or three of the most difficult streams.

HISTORY

Both Igumale and Agala were originally included in the Okwoga court area. In 1922 they were constituted a separate area and transferred to the Northern Provinces. Later, Agala was put back into the Southern Provinces, but was eventually restored to the Northern Provinces, and set up as a separate district with its own Native Court in 1935. The present chief of Agala is the senior chief in Idoma.

FORMS OF SETTLEMENT

Agala "town" is divided into twelve wards, plus a central ward, with the two royal compounds fronting on to it. It is strikingly beautiful and represents the best preserved example of a once widespread pattern of settlement, the clustering of compounds in a patch of high forest which is carefully preserved from the bush fires which the hunters set in the surrounding country during the dry season. Each ward has its own "playground," where dances and meetings are held, and paths lead from these playgrounds to the various compounds that make up the quarter.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Agala clan is divided into three sub-clans: Usilagama (the royal sub-clan), *edogogbo* (Ogblolo) and *Otsogbo* (Akpoge). The two Usilagama family groups, *Ajegba* and *Otsirabe*, hold the chieftaincy alternately. The *edogogbo* are divided into eight family groups living in six wards on the north side of the town. The *Otsogbo* are divided into four family groups living in four wards. There seems to be no precise relation between family groups and wards. The two *Otsogbo* family groups of the *Osuudu* and *Ogblolo* wards are divided into four and three families respectively. The others are not subdivided into families.⁵⁸

Fifteen chiefs are listed as having ruled over the whole of Agala, of whom five were of the *Ajegba* and ten of the *Otsirabe* family groups.⁵⁹ About the middle of the last century there was a long period of internal strife and the next chief was appointed by the British when they reached Abakaliki. Subsequent Agala political life has been stormy.

There is an elaborate system of hierarchically graded titles in full operation. These are of two orders, civil and military. The five principal civil title-holders are called the *otrefu* or "headmen." The second of these in order is held by the *edogogbo* sub-clan. Three are held by the *Otsogbo* sub-clan, and the fourth one in order rotates between them. There are five additional civil titles called *ichogwa*, the most important of which is that of the chief of the *ekwaafia* cult of ancestral masks. This office is held by the *edogogbo* ward, *akpatoobo*, where the sacred ancestral enclosure is located. The remainder of the *ichogwa* titles are held by the *Otsogbo*, except for one held by a small stranger group. The holders of the civil titles wear the flat double-pointed hat known as *akpalewo* ("dogs' ears"), as do

⁵⁸ Abraham, 1935.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the holders of the highest military titles. The war-officers are known and saluted as *otsɔkpa* ('spear-thrower') and, except as noted, wear the tall pointed hat, *ogoglo*. Abraham lists twelve military titles, six of which are held by the *ɛdɔɔgoogbo* sub-clan and six by the *Otsogbo*. In terms of rank, however, the distribution is such as to favour the *Otsogbo*.

The *Usilagama* or royal sub-clan is not eligible to hold other titles.⁶⁰

I witnessed a distribution of meat at a meeting of the full *ojira* or council of titled elders. The rank order of the various titles was expressed very graphically in the order in which the more important parts of the goats were given to the highest titles and the order in which the lesser title-holders were allowed to choose from the remaining pieces. I thus obtained a ranked list of twenty-four titles.⁶¹

According to Abraham there is only one priest for the whole clan, not one for each sub-clan, as with many *Idoma* clans. His title is *otsɔba* ('lord of the granary'), salutation *olagye* ('lord of the soil'). The office is filled by members of the *ɛdɔɔgoogbo* sub-clan, but only those who live in the *Onogwu* ward.⁶² At the New Yam festival meeting of the *ojira*, which I attended in 1951, the *otsɔboolagye* was 19th in the order of 24 titled men to receive meat. The president of the *ekwaafia* was 13th in the same series, although in the meeting in question his role was an important one. All four of these priestly offices (including the two assistants of the *otsɔba*) are held by the *ɛdɔɔgoogbo*, although the *ekwaafia* does not in the main include the *Otsogbo*, where the *enkpe* cult is the chief form of ancestral impersonation and is decentralized into family groups. Thus the unbalance in the distribution of secular offices is to some extent made up with a clustering of the top religious offices in the *ɛdɔɔgoogbo*.⁶³ It is apparent, however, that these religious offices as a group rank very low in the hierarchy of the *ojira*.

Bearing this in mind, we may consider some aspects of the religion, as described by Abraham.

The most important religious ceremony is the earth cult (*agye*), in which, if it is to be efficient, five staffs (*ɔkwute*) must participate. Two of these are held by the assistant priests and the other three are one each from the sub-clans *Usilagama*, *ɛdɔɔgoogbo* and *Otsogbo*. This emphasizes the essential unity of the religious and civil functions, for the *ɛdɔɔgoogbo* staff is in the possession of the chief priest, while the *Usilagama* staff is held by the clan head. That is to say, his function as clan head is to guarantee prosperity to the clan, although this can only be inferred since he possesses no staff for the whole clan, but merely the staff of his sub-clan *Usilagama*, showing that his larger office has grown out of his religious functions in his family group only. The third *ɔkwute* staff, that of the *Otsogbo* sub-clan, is held by the *eki embi* [*ecembi*], the third in rank of the civil officers. After the earth-cult ceremony the staffs are left in the sacred enclosure for the night and restored next morning by the *ogene*.⁶⁴

The two royal houses each have an elephant's tusk, said to have been conferred by the founder, *Usilagama*, on his two sons, *Ajegba* and *Otsirabe*. These replace the more usual *ɔkwute* staffs as emblems of the chiefly office, although the personal staffs of the various chiefs are also carefully preserved.

Agala and *Igumale* masks are the most elaborate and colourful in *Idoma*. In addition to the elaborate *ekwaafia* and *enkpe* masks already mentioned, there

⁶⁰ Abraham, 1933, pp. 3-5; 1935.

⁶¹ Abraham's lists date from 1933 and of his ten civil titles, six appear on my list. From a comparison of the two lists it would appear that the title system has been extremely stable in *Agala* during the eighteen-year interval between the two inquiries.

⁶² Abraham, 1935.

⁶³ An attempt to calculate what might be called the titular weight of the two sub-clans by means of a comparison of the number and rank-order of the titles held by them suggests that the favoured sub-clan has a smaller population. It remains to be investigated whether or not a strictly numerical weighing of the relative importance of the various titles does serious violence to the realities of the situation.

⁶⁴ Abraham, 1935.

are what might be called the "historical masks," the most honoured of which is *ekwaja*, "mask of Aja," the Queen of Idah.⁶⁵ Others are the large *unaloko* mask, representing one of the King of Idah's female slaves, and the *arkweeka*, which comes out only at night and is heard but not seen. The *akatakpa* are a group of energetic pranksters, "slaves of the King of Idah," dressed in brown raffia knitted costumes of a type widespread in Africa. The Ibo *ekpe* mask makes frequent visits from neighbouring areas.

The chief of Agala is involved in considerable ceremonial. Apart from the leopard-skins, etc., which are the universal perquisites of Idoma Land chiefs, he receives the first meats of the hunt which he redistributes according to an elaborate schedule. At the time of the new yam festival he should sit with the night-meeting of the full *ojira* while new laws are decided upon for the coming year. The next day there is a procession to a large dance-ground, where, dressed in full array, he meets the assembled people of Agala. Groups of titled men from the Otsogbo and *edogogbo* sub-clan alternately do elaborately stylized dances before him. Should they refuse to do this, he would die. After thanking them and the women for their work during the difficult harvest period, he announces the new laws and officially opens the new season. He then retires to his compound and receives guests for the rest of the day.

Agala has a very strong tradition of connection with Idah and of having come from there after leaving Wukari. We have seen how the mask cults derive from Idah, where, in addition, there is a persistent legend of an earlier Akpoto kingdom which was displaced or absorbed by the Igala. It seems certain that however and whenever the Agala came to their present location, they continued in contact with Idah. A number of considerations, however, militate against too easy an acceptance of a migratory hypothesis. In the first place, as far as can yet be seen, the relationship between the Igala language and the Agala-Igumale dialect of Idoma is no closer than that between Igala and other Idoma dialects, nor, up to now, has my own work confirmed the existence of the special relationship claimed by early investigators. In the second place, the style of the masks and hats which form so striking a part of the titled elders' regalia has no parallel in Igala. Further investigation may modify this picture, but at present the Agala-Igumale mask and hat styles seem unique in Nigeria. In the third place, the Agala system of titles is less like the Igala system than is the system of any other Idoma Land. Igala titles like *ocai*, *acadu* and *aidokaanya* which are, in theory, practically universal in Idoma are absent in Agala. Even Igumale has an *acadu*. Only the title *Ata* is found at Agala, but as the title of the head of a family group, not as a Land title.⁶⁶ In the fourth place, the house and compound types found in Agala and Igumale are strikingly different from those found anywhere else in Idoma or Igala; nor do they resemble Ibo styles. As in the whole Benue region, the huts are round, but two or three will be connected by a "porch" about 4 ft. high, consisting of heavy timbers laid so as to leave open spaces between. This platform (*oda*) is used for storage of food above, and most of the cooking, eating, etc., is done underneath it. Around the outside of the *oda* there is a lean-to palisade of heavy planks. Several of these complexes form a compound, which occasionally has a low mud wall, but much more usually a fence of live trees or a palisade of heavy vertical planks.^{66a} As in Idoma, the house roof is usually supported by the mud wall and not, as in Igala, by a separate system of upright poles. A close parallel to the double-roofed chiefly gate-houses seen in Agala and Igumale appears, unexpectedly, in Rohlf's account of his visit to the Afu in 1867. He describes the gate-house of the King of Akum in what is now Nassarawa as having "a double roof as an ornament: the large roof was capped by a smaller one,

⁶⁵ It is possible that *aja* may be identified with the first element in Clifford's rendering of the name of the legendary first Queen of Idah, Ejaunu. In any case, the mask has the honorary name of *ekwataida*, "mask of the King of Idah."

⁶⁶ Abraham, 1935.

^{66a} I have seen much less elaborate versions of the same thing in Egede.

which gave the whole the look of a church tower.⁶⁷ I do not know how widespread such houses may be, but I have noticed them only in Igumale and Agala.

I feel that the evidence suggests that whatever the migrations and ancient contacts of the Agala people, they have had a long period of independent development and their culture contacts have been in many directions.

OTHER CULTURAL FEATURES

Age-grade systems are nowhere very highly developed in Idoma, but in Agala and Igumale the 15-year-old boys and girls have a "year of glory," culminating in a big festival at the end of the dry season, when the boys from the wealthier families expect to choose wives. This age-grade is in both towns divided into rival "moieties," each of which finds a friendly partner in one of the "moieties" of the other town.

Girls usually go naked until their marriage, commonly about the age of 16 to 18; boys wear a small cloth on reaching adolescence. Adults of both sexes usually wear a cloth or towel around the waist. Elders wear a large cloth thrown together over one shoulder. Linear body painting designs are finely developed.

Considerable Ibo influence is to be seen in both Agala and Igumale. Jones suggests that Ngbo Ibo show Agala—or Igala—influence.⁶⁸

IGUMALE (*Igwaale*. OTURKPO FORM: *Igwumale*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Igumale is a district of about the same size as Agala, which borders it on the south, and is culturally similar to it in many ways. Its western boundary is with Onitsha Province, its eastern with Ulayi and Ijigbam-Ishieke, and its northern with Utonkon and Okwoga. Apart from Agala, only the last of these is predominantly Idoma-speaking. The population in 1935 was 2,989, of whom 228 were strangers, including railway workers. The population in 1952 was 7,144, however, and included 3,576 Ibo and 25 Hausa. Taking the area as being about 80 square miles, we get a present-day population density of about 89 per square mile. But in 1935 over 2,500 out of the total of 2,989 persons lived in Igumale town itself, which extends through a fine grove of trees for over a mile along the Okpokwu river.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Igumale claims to have come from Apa. I was told by an Oturkpo elder that the Father of Igumale was Aanawoogene, the Chief of Apa. For this reason Igumale is generally regarded as the senior Idoma "clan," although this fact has never given it a preferred position politically. Nowhere in the Benue Valley does seniority in the ritual sense imply any political prerogatives. The *Ata* of Idah was—and is—senior to Idoma, but never collected taxes or tribute. The Chief of Agala told me that the King of Wukari is still the most senior of all. Meek says that the Igumale claim origin from Olefu in the Southern Provinces, presumably after leaving Apa.⁶⁹ Igumale used to be an important slave market,⁷⁰ which may partly account for the genealogical and residential heterogeneity of the district.

As has been mentioned, Igumale was originally part of Okwoga Native Court, while this whole area was administered as part of the Southern Provinces. After 1922 it was the central part of a large "Igumale District" which in 1935 was broken up into Igumale, Agala, Ulayi and Ijigbam-Ishieke.

⁶⁷ Rohlf, 1872, p. 72.

⁶⁸ Forde and Jones, 1950, p. 60.

⁶⁹ Meek, 1925.

⁷⁰ Abraham, 1935. I know of at least one case of an Idoma from a central district who was sold into Southern Nigeria at Igumale in about 1890.

Considering that it has had the longest experience of education, it is natural that leading Idoma teachers and the first Idoma capitalists should have come from Igumale. Up to the present, however, there has not been sufficient inducement to persuade Igumale to produce any large surplus of yams or other market crops.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

A list of twelve chiefs is remembered, inclusive of Agabaidu, the incumbent in 1935. There seems to be continuity in office, though during the period of British Administration the disputes over the chieftaincy of Igumale have been the stormiest in the whole Division and led in 1918 to a small civil war which had to be stopped by armed action.

The earliest remembered ancestor is Agbo Idogu from whose four sons the leading lineages trace their descent. The chieftaincy has tended to remain in one line, the Ajibo, though there seems sometimes to have been a kind of rotation.

Igumale Land seems to have grown by accretion. There are three main groups, Ebia, Olookwu and Ogbe, which do not claim genealogical connection. The Ogbe occupies a ward at the western end of the town, the Olookwu two wards at the eastern end. The principal group, the Ebia, occupy seven or eight more or less continuous wards forming the central part of the town and enclosing the market. Of the seven wards which Abraham lists as forming the Ebia group, two are not genealogically related, one is linked by female ties and one is mixed. There is also one ward of unknown origin and two stranger wards.⁷¹

As at Agala, the title system was a functioning reality at the time of British occupation and still is. The office-holders are divided into the civil group (*ichogwa*) and the military (*otokpa*), who sit on the left and right hands of the chief respectively. The senior civil title is that of the *achadu*, who acts as regent when necessary and carries the orders of the chief to the *ojira* and to the lesser *ichogwa*. The office is filled by the Osuukpo and Iga wards of the Ebia group, but as these are of unknown origins they are not eligible to supply successors to the chieftaincy.

It is of interest that the *achadu* title should be present in Igumale and with a position and functions very similar to those of the *ashadu* of Idah. None of the other titles, however, corresponds to any at Idah, nor, strangely enough, is there much correspondence with the Agala titles. Apart from the *achadu* title, *okpooju* is the only title Igumale has in common with Idoma Districts generally, and here it has nothing to do with market duties.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

The Olookwu and Ogbe groups have the *alekwa* ancestral ceremony, headed by three officials of more or less equal rank, whose respective jurisdictions cut across ward boundaries. The same groups and one ward of the Ebia group also have the *ekwula* and *enkpe* ancestral-type ceremonies. The Ajibo have the *unaaloko* (a royal ancestor cult), as have the remaining wards of the Ebia group, though theirs is known as *achukwu* or *alekwoche* and starts its procession of figures dressed up as ancestors from the palace. The *akatakpa* masked figures come from the whole town; their main activity, apart from intimidating the women, is a series of foot races run in costume.

It is of interest that only the peripheral groups have ancestral cults closely paralleling those of the rest of the Division, including Agala, which also has the *unaaloko* mask. The *achukwu* ceremony in Oturkpo is a very secret part of the *alekwooya* ceremonies and in Boju is not a group ceremony at all, but is performed by several families.

⁷¹ Abraham, 1935.

ULAYI

Ulayi is a small district on the Ibo border inhabited by five villages of Ezza Ibo and six villages of Effium (Orri), both of which groups count themselves subjects of the *Ogomola* of Ulayi, population 144 in 1935, with whose permission they settled in the district. In 1935 there were 2,113 Ezza and 1,289 Effium, giving a total of 3,546 for the district. The population in 1952 was 8,333. The main body of Ezza live in Abakaliki Division to the south, and of Effium-Orri in Utonkon District of Idoma Division and in Abakaliki Division. They speak a "Semi-Bantu" language.⁷²

Much of the region is swampy, the town of Ulayi being buried in a mass of dank groves. In the Ezza area the soil is particularly rich and the yam-heaps are of gigantic size.

IJIGBAM (*Ijigbam*)

DEMOGRAPHY

Ijigbam is a federation of the Ishieke sub-clan of the Izi Ibo clan with Ijigbam, who speak the Igumale-Agala dialect of Idoma, and the Ekele, a closely related group. Population estimates for 1935 were: Ishieke, 3,627; Ijigbam, 438; Ekele, 728; total, 4,793. The 1952 Census gave Idoma, 2,222; Ibo, 11,044; total, 13,266. In this, as in other districts, some of the increase must be ascribed to the improved accuracy of the Census count. The Ishieke Ibo, like their Ezza neighbours to the west, live in what might best be called "inhabited areas" rather than villages.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

The people of Ijigbam, Ekele and Ulayi come from Ngor in Ogoja Province and are closely related. This Ogoja tradition of origin is particularly interesting in view of the fact that these peoples are obviously closely related to the people of Igumale and Agala. According to Simey, Igumale, Ulayi, Agala and Ijigbam all entered the area at about the same time and there are definite boundaries between these clans based on hunting rights. It is recognized that the right to burn various areas of bush is vested in various communities and these rights are exercised annually.⁷³

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

In Ijigbam the chieftaincy rotates between two of the six family groups, in Ekele it remains with the Ipole family group.

In both Ijigbam and Ekele the earth cult is performed for the whole "clan" and the ancestral ceremonies by the separate family groups. The two Ipole (royal) family groups, of Ijigbam and Ekele have two royal ancestor ceremonies, the *achukwu* and the *unaaloko*. They also perform the *ekwula* or *ekwaafia* for the general population. Both *enkpe* and *ekwula* are performed by various other family groups in both places, *enkpe* being for commoner rather than royal ancestors.

⁷² Abraham, 1935.

⁷³ Simey, 1936.

THE ARAGO (ALAGO)¹

DEMOGRAPHY

North of the Benue, in Lafia Division, are the so-called Arago, with two kingdoms, Doma and Keana, and a number of independent villages. The population of Doma District was estimated at 8,845 in 1935, and the area (which includes a large forest reserve) as 1,001 square miles. The average density is therefore 8.8 per square mile, though the density of the parts actually inhabited must be considerably greater than this. The area of Keana district is given as 232 square miles and the population as 6,167, making the density 26.5 per square mile. These densities are much less than in the Idoma districts south of the Benue, the result, perhaps, of Fulani slave-raiding in the 19th century.

LANGUAGE

The Doma and Keana dialects of Idoma are quite distinct from each other and are most closely related to the Agatu dialect. No adequate study has yet been made of the Arago dialects,² but the admittedly scanty data seem to point to a closer relationship of Arago to Igala and Yoruba than is the case with the other Idoma dialects I have examined. In the pronouns the Arago dialects actually stand closer to Yoruba than does Igala. There are particular words in which Arago resembles Iyala of Ogoja Province more closely than it does the intervening Idoma dialects.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Meek reports that according to an Argungu manuscript the states of Doma and Keana were founded from Wukari, as was also the Igala kingdom. He also notes that Barth refers to them as a "birnin Kororofa," i.e., a town of Kororofa, the name of the ancient Jukun capital.³ It is also reported, with reference to the group of female intermediaries or "doors" between the Jukun King and the various districts of the empire, that the *angwu tsi* or "Queen mother" was the "door" for Keana at the capital.

Temple cites Arago origin stories to the effect that they came originally from the Jukun and more recently from Idah. Keana is said to have been founded as a separate state in order to take advantage of the salt workings which even today play an important part in the economy there. A list of 27 chiefs of Doma up to the year 1901 and 16 chiefs of Keana up to 1903 is provided.⁴

According to Warran, Temple and the Doma themselves, the original inhabitants of this region were the Koro, once a numerous and widely spread people. They are found in Lafia, Nassarawa, and Keffi, in Niger Province, and in the Kagarko District of Zaria Province.

¹ According to Elliot (1937b) Alago is the Hausa name for these people, who call themselves Idoma, or Idoma nokwu, "greater Idoma". Bearing in mind the well known equivalence of *n*, *l*, and *r* in many Nigerian languages, the word is seen to bear a close resemblance to Anago, the name given to the Yoruba of Southern Dahomey. I find that this word has a wide distribution as a foreigners' word for "Yoruba" and it might be worth investigating whether it is an old Hausa or Fulani word for Yoruba-like groups. Abraham thinks that it originated among Gold Coast immigrants to Nigeria.

² In 1854 Crowther made an extensive word-list on the pattern of Koelle's *Polyglotta* and Judd has also published a short study (see Judd, 1923). On the basis of a short word-list which I collected, I suspect that Judd's study is of the Keana dialect.

³ Meek (1931, pp. 23, 42) also points out the importance of the common possession of a taboo against menstrual blood, which meant that Jukun, Ankwe and Arago could have free dealings with each other.

⁴ Temple, 1919, pp. 26, 514-15.

In the 18th century, a group of Beri-Beri from Bornu settled at what is now Lafia town, with the permission of the King of Doma. They were at the same time connected with the Fulani Empire and relations between them and Doma have been chequered, as can be seen from the Crowther and Baikie accounts. Temple says that at one time in the 19th century Lafia and Keffi joined forces against Doma and captured everything but the town of Doma itself. In desperation Doma invited and received the assistance of some Tiv groups and succeeded in routing the besieging forces. Later on Zaria intervened to prevent further warfare.

Oldfield sailed up the Benue in 1833 and visited two river towns called Dagboh and Ogohbe. Doma town was reported as being two days distant, but when he tried to send messengers there they were turned back by some "Bornou soldiers," the King of Doma having been at war with the "Sheik of Bornou." The people of the two towns Oldfield visited all fled on his approach. He noted that the houses were of mud with conical roofs, that there was an abundance of sheep, goats and poultry, and that the two men he did see wore "skins of deer and monkey tied around their loins like an apron."⁵

The region was next visited in 1854 by Crowther and Baikie. Crowther comments that Dagbo seemed to have been deserted since Oldfield's visit and that the people had moved closer to the river where water barriers gave them more security from the Fulani. He says that Dagbo was "the beginning of the Doma District and language." At Akpoko they met a chief called Magaji who told them that Doma was subject to Bello of Sokoto, but that as governor of the waterside he (Magaji) would acknowledge no superior and that every chief ruled his own district in Doma.⁶ The town was on the mainland at that time, fortified with a 12 ft. deep ditch, but the Land and Survey map shows it now on an island.

Baikie writes that Doma, formerly powerful, had lately become a declining state and lost its independence, having, with Agatu, been subject to Zaria for ten years, while Keana paid tribute to Bauchi. Ojogo had formerly been part of Doma proper but had recently passed to Keana.⁷ Of Keana Crowther writes: "The chief town of this part of Doma is Keana, whose ruling king is Adaso, said to be an Hausa by birth, who pays an annual tribute of one hundred slaves to the Sultan of Sokoto."⁸ In the Keana king-list given by Temple, the 11th king is one Adasho, said to have reigned from 1830 to 1852.

With the establishment of the British Protectorate Doma and Keana were organized as third-grade chieftaincies and placed under the Emir of Lafia.⁹ Relations in recent times have been sufficiently good for the people of Lafia themselves to suggest, in a recent dispute over the succession to Lafia Emirate, that the King of Doma become President in Council of the Native Authority.

It should be noted that the Arago villages of Agwatashi and Obi, north of Keana, are independent groups. Beginning sometime after the Baikie expedition, there has been a large movement of Tiv north of the Benue and they now considerably outnumber the Arago in Keana District itself.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

At the time of the Baikie expedition dress consisted of a simple hip cloth, over which another piece of cloth was fastened, reaching the knees or below. A cloth might be thrown over the shoulders in cold weather, and those who could afford them wore Hausa robes. Most men carried swords 12 to 20 inches in length, slung over the shoulder. There were many armlets and wristlets of brass, some made of coiled brass rods.

⁵ Laird and Oldfield, 1837, p. 444 (Oldfield's narrative).

⁶ Crowther, 1855, p. 55.

⁷ Baikie, 1856, p. 112.

⁸ Crowther, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-4.

⁹ Temple, 1919, p. 514; Warran, 1933.

A form of money known as *akika*, consisting of a small iron hoe with a long spike, was in use. Thirty-six of these was the ordinary price of a slave. Baikie says that the money was known as far as Katsina, under the Hausa name of *agclema*.⁹

Doma is quite a large town, with a wide avenue leading from its edge to the royal compound, which is surrounded by a mud wall 12 ft. high and contains between 40 and 60 huts of various sizes. The King received me at the steps of a large throne of sculptured mud. The town shows a good deal of obvious Hausa influence in such things as the zana-mat compound walls and the dress of the people. One sees members of the royal family riding horses with elaborately decorated saddles. A principal dance style involves the shoulder blades and the back of the neck in a manner which looks anatomically impossible and is quite different from any other dance I have seen.

Not enough is reported about either the Doma or Keana chieftaincy to permit of a coherent picture of their political structure. Meek quotes at length an account by Judd of the annual renewal of the Keana king's divinity at harvest time, noting that important details are obviously lacking from the description.¹⁰ Doma is, however, the one place among all the Idoma-speaking peoples where I have seen a structure of symbolism around the chief that was elaborate enough to justify for him the appellation of "king." The land chief, *ose gaagye* (a phrase strictly cognate with the *ɔcaaje* or *ɔce kaaje* of the central Idoma dialect), seems here to have more narrowly religious functions. He lives in seclusion and I was told that people did not know him, but that he performed ceremonies for the Land in times of trouble.

⁹ Baikie, 1856, pp. 113-14. I have never seen this money, but an Oturkpo elder unhesitatingly volunteered the name *akika* when I showed him a drawing of it copied from Baikie.

¹⁰ Meek, 1931, pp. 142-3.

THE IYALA

LOCATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

The Iyala of Ogoja Division, Ogoja Province, occupy a district of 287 square miles, extending for about 30 miles on both sides of the Abakaliki-Tiv road to a point north of Ogoja town. On the south the district is bounded by the Aiya River, on the north it touches Egede and Yachi country. The population in 1932 was 19,690, giving a density of 67.2 per square mile. The 1952 Census gives a total of 25,640 under the name "Yala."

LANGUAGE

The Iyala language was first reported by Koelle,¹ and its close linguistic connection with the Agala dialect of Idoma has been noted by Thomas, Johnston and Talbot. As Idoma became better known, the wide extensions of this dialect relationship became more apparent, until Thomas in 1927² described the Iyala relationship to Idoma generally, including the Arago dialects of Lafia Division, substantially as it now appears. In the present state of our knowledge I can see no special relationship to any other particular Idoma dialect. Iyala shares features of sound and vocabulary with the Oturkpo, Igumale-Agala, and Arago dialects, and also possesses some special features of its own, including what seem to be the beginnings—or the remnants—of a prefix system, as noted also by Johnston.³

The relationship between Iyala and Igala is demonstrable even from Koelle's lists, although, as already noted, his method was not sufficiently advanced to make this readily apparent. Talbot says that Iyala is moderately close to Edo (Bini), and this statement may be taken as expressing his awareness of the connection of Iyala with the Kwa languages.⁴ The Yakoro, to the east of the Iyala, speak a "Semi-Bantu" language, while the Ukelle, to the west, speak a language which, if not "Semi-Bantu," is related only remotely to Iyala.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

The country is mostly undulating grassland and orchard bush, bounded to a large extent by rivers, though water becomes scarce towards the centre and wells are sometimes resorted to in the dry season.

The Iyala settlement pattern is much like that of Southern Idoma, consisting of fairly compact villages in groves of tall trees, which include banana, coconut, iroko, camwood, terminalia and palm. These groves can often be seen from miles away and are a typical feature of the countryside, the whole pattern being in sharp contrast to that of the Ibo. There is no land shortage, except towards the south-west; consequently no boundary disputes arise and the Iyala maintain friendly relations with their neighbours and farm together with the Ukelle. Yams are the staple crop.

To the north-east, between Akiriha and Umaji, there are sufficient oil-palms to justify a small oil trade. Salt is found in Ijegu, Aloda, Agaga, Igekuruku, Akurihia and Okpoma, and its collection, preparation and marketing form one of the chief female industries. There are only two markets in the district, at Okpoma and Okuku, the latter being the more important. They are held every five days, which is the Iyala week. When Riley was writing, the chief commodities sold were foodstuffs, and Tiv and Egede cloth. Native salt was frequently used in barter and brass rods were still in great demand for currency and as popular forms of

¹ Koelle, 1854; he called it "Yala, an unclassified Niger-Delta language."

² See above, p. 91.

³ Johnston, 1919, p. 731.

⁴ Talbot, 1926, IV, p. 92.

dowry payment. The price fluctuated around twopence. Cowries and manillas were not seen in Iyala. At that time there were no motor roads in the area, the main trade routes being from Ogoja to Okuku and thence to Okpoma and Ejekwe (in Ukele). Some villages do a large trade in yams which are bought by Akunakuna middlemen and shipped down the Onwul and Aiya Rivers to the Cross-River and Calabar. The Tiv buy large quantities of palm-oil for their own consumption.⁵

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Iyala are divided into two "sub-clans," Okpoma and Obeku, centring round the two markets, the whole "clan" claiming descent from one Ode, according to Jones.⁶ Ode is said to have lived in Ukele country and to have had seven sons. Riley and Jones both report an Iyala claim to have lived originally near "Okpoto."⁷ Neither Riley, Jones nor I have found any trace of a legend of origin from "Apa," the Jukun Empire. The Iyala appear to have been pushed eastwards into their present location by the Ukele; apart from this, Iyala history would seem to have been singularly uneventful.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

According to Jones, the seven sons of Ode were the founders of the seven Iyala lineages, but there is not sufficient information to indicate what the relation of these lineages may be to the villages. Riley insists that, apart from the feeling of common origin and of cultural similarity, there is no "clan" spirit as such, nor could he find any occasion on which the whole Iyala "clan" had ever met together. The two "sub-clans," Okpoma and Ibeku, had no formal heads, but the elders of their constituent villages occasionally met at the two markets when some serious crisis, such as an epidemic or crop failure, required common action.

Riley, Talbot and government reports generally describe an hereditary village head, called variously *ochuele*, *ipuole* (-i), or *eshole ipuoli* ("head within the compound"), which Riley says is the full form of the title.⁸ The correct form of this last is probably *efole ipuole*. In my two days in Iyala I was unable to elicit any information about these titles from the literate Iyala with whom I spoke. They were unanimous in insisting that there are no chiefs in Iyala and that these titles are merely respectful forms of address for elders. I could find no cognate for the word *oce*, "chief," which is heard in all the other Idoma dialects. The evidence suggests that an original chieftaincy with little development on the political side has now weakened sufficiently to escape the attention of the young literates. The statements they made to me would be impossible in Idoma Division.

Riley describes the functions of the chief (*ipuole*) and councillors (*egabo*) in pre-government times, when the *ipuole* came out only at night and supervised important discussions from the threshold of his compound. Important cases, such as murder, would be referred to him, and if the *egabo* could not come to an agreement he would be consulted and his verdict accepted as final. The *ipuole*, assisted by the *egabo*, also had executive functions, such as the appointing of an *ugabo*.⁹ From the religious point of view the *ipuole* was regarded as head of the town medicine (*aprija*) which was kept in the playground, but he had no duties to perform in this connection. To some extent it may be said that in the past the *ipuole* was merely the titular head of the village, but the position and rank were greatly respected and carried with them the right to wear the *ogbo* collar, a band of crocodile skin filled with certain medicines and worn around the neck of the *ipuole* alone as a sign of rank. Succession to the position of *ipuole* is hereditary, descend-

⁵ Riley, 1932.

⁶ Jones, MS notes. An Oturkpo elder confirmed this statement to me.

⁷ Riley, 1932.

⁸ Riley, 1932.

⁹ *Egabo* were appointed from among the heads of the various families, but I was told that there may be more than one *ugabo* in the same family.

ing from father to first-born son, and passing in rotation between two, three or four families. This method is strictly adhered to and in no single case did Riley encounter disputes as to headship.¹⁰ Each family possesses an *ogbo* collar which is worn only when it is the turn of their candidate to assume office.¹¹

The *egabo* were responsible to the *efole ipule* for order in the village, had some judicial importance and performed the principal sacrifices for the group.

In the earlier years of British Administration, Iyala saw little of the warrant chief system. The *ipule* were of course reluctant to leave their compounds, though Riley reports that by 1932 they moved about freely and all attended court as members. The scanty evidence at hand suggests, however, that the new court system had repercussions in the internal political structure, for it was felt that not only was the priest-chief compelled to break taboos, but that his person and dignity were endangered.

The 17 Iyala villages fall statistically into two fairly distinct types, according to the 1931 Census, nine villages having populations of over 1,200¹² and the remaining eight being systematically smaller. All but two of the villages are subdivided into "quarters," each with its own head. The quarters are further subdivided into varying numbers of "families." Riley lists 271 families in Iyala, which makes the gross average of persons per family 72.6, but a study of the relevant figures indicates that the total number of families in a village may vary from 6 to 38, and the average number of persons per family from 35.1 to 120.5, which gives some idea of the variability of the Iyala settlement pattern.

AGE-SETS AND ASSOCIATIONS

According to Riley age-sets existed but appeared to be only slightly developed. Boys of about 12 to 15 years of age would form a company, with a name which would be the same throughout Iyala country and would be retained during the life of the age-set. Members should settle minor disputes, which included adultery involving members of the same set, between themselves, though if the case proved too difficult it would go to the *egabo*. The rules were very loose, however, and much depended on the particular personalities that made up the group. Parallel groups, with much the same functions, existed for girls.

There were two clubs of importance, the *alohi* and the *alikepe*.¹³ The first was composed principally of wealthy traders and dealt with debts, enforcing its judgments by the seizure of either the property or the person of the debtor for sale. It was also concerned with the slave trade. Dissatisfied parties could appeal to the *ipule*, who would usually order a trial by ordeal.

The *alikepe* was the more powerful of the two clubs and wealth was also one of the principal qualifications for membership. It dealt with most of the cases of theft in the town and was also to some extent responsible for the preservation of order. The *alikepe* would tie up the thief until a sum more than equal to the value of the stolen property had been paid. In default of this, the thief would be handed over to the *alohi* for sale, and the proceeds divided between the two clubs and the complainant. All members would attend the funeral rites of one of their number and masked dances would be performed. No special observances followed the death of an *alohi* member.

Riley reports that both these clubs are now defunct, but that the opportunities they offered for blackmail and personal revenge were so great that few people mourn their passing.¹⁴

The *ogrinya* society was strong in Iyala, as also in Ogoja, Idoma and Iiv Divisions generally. Membership was limited to those who had killed a leopard,

¹⁰ This is in sharp contrast to the situation in Idoma Division.

¹¹ Riley, 1932.

¹² Two (Ijegu and Alebu) have populations of more than 2,000.

¹³ Also found in Egede and Yachi country.

¹⁴ Riley, 1932.

bush-cow, elephant or man, the last of these conferring the highest grade of membership. Riley, writing in 1932, did not believe that the society had been more than driven underground.¹⁵

Other clubs of a more purely social nature are: the *ahuhu*, principally a drinking club with an entrance fee of one goat; the *inyatu* and *igadi* clubs, which make farms and houses for their members on payment and perform dances at their funerals.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

According to Riley judicial matters in the village were settled by five different groups, according to the nature of the offence. The *ipuele* and *egabo* usually dealt with adultery, serious wounding, murder, land disputes, and important cases which other groups failed to settle. The *alohi* and *alikpe* clubs settled cases of debt and theft respectively; age-sets handled minor cases between their own members; families handled disputes concerned with marriage payments.

In adultery cases the complainant would usually lay the matter before the family *ugabo*, unless he belonged to the same club as the adulterer. The *ugabo* would tell the *ipuele*, who would instruct the *egabo* to settle the matter. Both parties had their say and might call witnesses, but no form of oath was taken. If found guilty, the adulterer might be ordered to pay up to seven goats or 200 brass rods (value fivepence each). These were shared between the *egabo* and the injured husband. The woman herself was not punished. If the accused refused to pay, the *egabo* would order the seizure of any goats, whether they belonged to the accused or not. The owners of the goats had to obtain satisfaction from the accused, and if he refused to pay would seize one of his relatives and sell him either to a neighbouring town or to someone outside the "clan." The amount raised from the sale was kept in satisfaction of the debt. Riley says that this primitive method of enforcing payment seems to have been effective.¹⁶

Trial by ordeal was commonly used, a favourite ordeal being the pouring of boiling oil over the hands of the litigant. The innocent man would not be burned. No swearing on "medicine" or ancestors ever accompanied any of the village trials, in contrast to the practice among neighbouring tribes and among the Idoma proper.¹⁷

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

In dress the Iyala resemble the central Idoma and Egede, men usually wearing the ordinary factory cloth or the native-made loin cloth from Egede. Singlets are worn by those who can afford them. The *ipuele* wears a gown of factory or Tiv-made cloth and his badge of office, the crocodile skin collar (*ogbo*). Girls, from the age of puberty, wear a cloth similar to that of the men.¹⁸

Circumcision of male children is universal and is generally done between the ages of four and six years, although it may be done six days after birth. There are no special rites connected with it. All girls undergo clitoridectomy at about the age of four years.¹⁹ In this the Iyala resemble their neighbours, the Yachi and Egede, since the Idoma of Idoma Division do not practise clitoridectomy.

In Idoma the Iyala have a reputation as excellent dancers and their songs are very popular throughout the Egede-speaking districts.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Riley, 1932. I have personally witnessed such a "seizure of a goat against a person" in Agala.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

As Talbot points out, the Iyala share with the Idoma the idea of a supreme god, *ɔwɔ*, and of a communal earth-cult *aje*.²⁰

The *ipuele*, though he takes no active part in the ceremonial, is head of the communal medicine called *aperija* (*aprija*), found in most villages under an iroko tree. It may consist of a small pot with a lid, raised on mud or sticks about 3 ft. from the ground. Sometimes a plate is substituted for the pot and placed on a white-ant hill. The sacrifice of a fowl or a goat will be made at the time of the new yam harvest, or in times of general sickness, decline of the birth rate, or lack of rain. Talbot's version of the *aprija* complex is rather different; according to his description they are spirits who can frighten children or make men half mad if they have not been given their appropriate sacrifices. "All are, however, ruled by the earth goddess and may not hurt a good man; they can only send sickness to one who has done some bad thing."²¹

Riley reports that the *mfam* charm, of unknown origin, had come into Iyala from the Boki country about three years previously, and was found not only in every Iyala village, but throughout Ogoja Division. It consists of certain pieces of sticks and roots in a basket and is thought, by its presence alone, to prevent witchcraft, poisoning and theft. Should a man attempt to poison his neighbour and fail to confess his crime to the priest of *mfam*, it will destroy him by causing his neck to twist until it breaks. A village which does not possess *mfam* may purchase it from one which does. A price, from £20 to £30, is agreed upon, and *mfam* is put on the doorstep in a deserted compound—it does not matter whose—and the senior man in that compound automatically becomes the head of *mfam*. After the duties and mysteries of *mfam* have been explained, it is buried in the compound and surrounded by a fence. The village may now pass on *mfam* to other villages, but must not charge more than they paid for it.²²

This cult seems closely allied to the *akpam* cult found in Egede, to the north in Idoma Division, where it is said to have arrived at about the same time as *mfam*. My own observations bear out Riley's statements as to its effectiveness as a solution to the problems raised by the Government's prohibition of the sasswood ordeal as a method of keeping witchcraft in check. As in Iyala, it has a spectacular influence on theft also.

Riley states that there is no definite form of ancestor worship apart from a possible connection between the "communal village Juju" and the burial place of the founder of the town. There is a firm belief in reincarnation, he claims, though my own observations indicate that it is regarded more as a possibility than as the necessity which Riley describes when he says that "every man must be born again a year or so after his death."²³ Talbot describes the ancestral symbols as little clay balls, representing all adults and kept in the compound of the eldest sons, where sacrifices are made to them at seedtime and to ensure the supply of children in the household.²⁴

Sudden death and other misfortunes are often ascribed to witchcraft. In the past the sasswood ordeal was used to detect witches, but to-day, as already mentioned, its place has been taken by *mfam*. Talbot was of the opinion that witchcraft in Iyala and Agala ("Ubiri") was only moderately strong.²⁵

²⁰ As in other Idoma dialects, *ɔwɔ* means "rain" in Iyala. I think that Talbot's terminology should be accepted only with caution, in so far as he ascribed attributes of personality to the *ɔwɔ* and *aje* notions. Talbot, 1926, I, p. 64.

²¹ Talbot, 1926, II, pp. 119-20.

²² Riley, 1932.

²³ Riley, 1932.

²⁴ Talbot, 1926, II, p. 325.

²⁵ Ibid.

THE NKUM

The Nkum are a branch of the Iyala, both by their own account and by that of the Iyala proper. They live on both sides of the Cross River, east of Ikom. They are sometimes known by the Iyala name for them, Iyalaci, "bush Iyala," a term of contempt.²⁶

Jones gives a list of upwards of 200 Nkum words with their Iyala parallels. From this their close connection is evident, but for the present at least it is conservative to speak of them as two separate dialects.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

According to their own account and that of the Iyala, the Nkum split off from the Iyala after their arrival in what is now Ogoja Division.²⁷ The Nkum say that originally they consisted of six "clans" or compounds: Orum, Okpochi, Inyanko, Bianam, Owom, and Nkum Okpambe, whose original name has been forgotten.²⁸ From Ogoja they went into the present Abakaliki Division and after various wanderings arrived on the right bank of the Cross River and settled in their present location (Nkumm).

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

The Nkum now live in five adjacent villages on the Cross River, each village bearing the name of the "clan" which occupies it. Their farms stretch inland towards Ikom and Akparabong and a certain number of people live on them.

Formerly each clan had its own head (*oshuwole*). They do not know which was the senior clan, but at the Government's request the Nkum elected an *oshuwole* for the five clans, and there had been four of these up to the time when Jones was writing. This official is a court member, as are also the heads of three of the other clans. The office of *oshuwole* apparently did not pass by succession, but by choice or election.

The *ekpo* club is found in Nkumm under the name of *nyanbe* and each town is supposed to have a lodge.

The Nkum worship a supreme god *oshowo*²⁹ or *ebutokpabi*, the two names being used indiscriminately. He is invoked every morning and sacrifices are made to him in time of trouble, though he has no altar or particular place of worship.

There is an "earth goddess," *aprija*, to whom sacrifices are made at seed-time and in crises. Jones mentions an *aprija* shrine standing in front of a tree where the path forks and consisting of a mound of earth about 3 ft. high, surmounted by a bowl and adorned with young palm leaves. He also mentions stone menhirs, 4 to 5 ft. high, called *nkpe* and now the object of a fertility cult, though their original purpose has been forgotten.

Each clan, extended family, and often each family has a shrine (*iyeku*),³⁰ which is said to represent the ancestors of the group. The senior male in the group sacrifices to it.

Twins are not killed, but certain expiatory sacrifices must be made at their birth.

²⁶ The Iyala use this same term in referring to the Idoma of Idoma Division.

²⁷ Riley, 1932. He thinks that the migration was probably for trading purposes and probably took place some time during the 17th century.

²⁸ Jones, 1930. All the rest of the information about this little-known people comes from this source unless otherwise stated.

²⁹ Probably analysable into *oshi*, medicine/*owo*; god, as in Iyala.

³⁰ The word seems formally identical with the Oturkpo *iyekwu*, "ancestral articles," analysable into *iyo*, property/*ekwu*, ancestral spirit.

A man's death is announced by the firing of guns, the signal for relatives to assemble at his house, collect his property and arrange the funeral. The wives, full brothers and other relatives of the deceased contribute articles such as mats, cloths, an umbrella, a bottle of gin, and a hat or cap. The corpse, after being washed, is wound mummy-fashion in 10 or more lengths of cloth, wrapped in a mat, and sometimes placed in a coffin. The body of an important man will lie for several days on his verandah watched by old women.

Grave-diggers lower the body into the grave, which is 4 to 5 ft. deep, a simple hole without chambers. The head of the corpse is placed to the east. Some of a man's property is placed in the grave with him, the rest is broken to prevent theft and placed on top. In the old days it was the custom to bury slaves (dead and alive) with great men. Many of the graves are placed at the entrance to the village. A wealthy man has a second funeral performed for him during the dry season within a year of his death. This consists of sacrifices to *iyeku*, a lavish feast and plays. There are no clubs or titles connected with funerals.

THE NKIM

There seems to be another group in the same region as the Iyala-speaking Nkum, bearing a similar name and speaking a language which may be "Semi-Bantu." According to Talbot this group and the Aferike are Semi-Bantu. The Akaju are said to speak a dialect of the same language, and both Akaju and Nkim are apparently related to Boki, whose language is called *nki* (and also *mfuaa*). The Nkim word-list which I saw at Ogoja is quite unlike any Kwa language.¹

The Nkim say that they lived originally at Nkimtal near the present Ikum Divisional boundary. From there two brothers, Onyan and Akpoto, led the beginning of their migration to their present location.

THE ETULO

TIV AND GOVERNMENT NAME: UTUR²

LOCATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

The Etulo are a small enclave living among the Tiv, their land covering an area of about 10 square miles, stretching for about three and a half miles along the west bank of the Katsina Ala River. The 1936 Census gave a population of 2,393, making the density about 240 to the square mile, which is just about twice the density of the neighbouring Tiv Districts. The total figure includes 210 Hausa immigrants in the village of Mgbakpa, now largely intermarried with the Etulo. The 1951 tax assessment figures gave the population of Utur District as 2,942, including the above-mentioned Hausa. Three other groups of Etulo are reported: on the banks of the Benue, on the Katsina Ala, and at Riti 11 miles from Wukari.

LANGUAGE

The Etulo speak a language closely related to Idoma, though it is certainly not an Idoma dialect. Both Abraham and I took word-lists and came to independent agreement on this point. A detailed comparison of both lists with the Jukun

¹ Chief, *ntul*, *oti* (cf. Boki *otu*); elder, *nemkul*; family head, *nemkul nip*; lineage head, *nemkum mfan*; messenger of the chief, *ngbantul*.

² The only written sources for the Etulo are Abraham's notes on Utur District, 1936, and a note in Temple, under "Turu or Turumawa." I visited the district briefly in 1962.

words given by Meek³ does not suggest that Etulo is any closer to Jukun than is Idoma.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Etulo say that they came from a mountain (Iko: Tiv, *ngokuwu*), visible from Katsina Ala, where they were part of Apa, presumably the Jukun Empire, and that their chiefs went to Wukari to be confirmed. The Idoma and Akweya were living in the region at that time. The Etulo were attacked first by the Ugenyi (Chamba) and then by the Fulani who drove the Idoma away. When the Tiv pushed in, the Etulo were driven by stages to their present location. Temple states that the towns were formerly surrounded by walls and ditches.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

The main occupation is fishing, but the Etulo also make pottery and grow all the usual crops of the region such as yams, millet, guinea-corn, cassava, rice, maize and beniseed.

Etulo Land is made up of three lineages which seem to occupy fairly unified territories and are divided into sub-lineages. Succession to the chieftaincy rotates between the three lineages and inside them among the sub-lineages. As with the Idoma, there are no marriage taboos except between very close relatives. The lineage and sub-lineage as such have no rules of exogamy or endogamy.

Agyishi, the chief whom I met in 1952, had been in office for about 24 years at that time. On meeting him, people go down on their knees and make the gesture of throwing dust on their shoulders. This is the only place where I have seen the custom in the Benue Valley, though it is remembered in Idoma. Women remain on their knees all the time they are in his presence. Temple states that the Etulo were loosely united under a paramount chief, and Abraham lists 12 chiefs, including Agyishi, in his table of succession.

Dress differs little from that of the neighbouring Tiv, except that one sees many Jukun-type "pigtailed".

Abraham lists the following ceremonies carried out to ensure good crops, and fertility of women and stock. The principal ceremony is *agashi* which is carried out when the grass is burned. Beer is brewed for five days and one man chosen from each kindred dances in turn with his face covered to the accompaniment of drums. *Aku*, a similar ceremony, has no fixed season and involves the killing of a goat, after which a man and woman in costume take part in a dance. The *kyakpo* and *akwaji* ceremonies are similar to *aku*. In the *asete* cult, which is to ensure fertility in women and to ward off madness, beer is brewed and three chickens killed, their blood being poured over an ant-hill planted with branches from three particular trees. Roasted grain is then strewn over them. A somewhat similar ceremony is the *agbadu* (or *wayo*) to cure swellings.

Of these ceremonies, the *agashi*, *aku* and *agbadu* are identical, at least as to the spelling of their names, with Jukun ceremonies described by Meek. I can see little resemblance as to form and meaning, although the Jukun *aku-ahwa* ceremony, as described by Meek⁴ is very much like the Idoma *achukwu* and *arekweeka* ceremonies. The secrecy which surrounds these rites is such that their nature and interrelations cannot be successfully studied in a brief visit.

Both Abraham in 1936 and Wright in 1938 comment that crime and litigation are notably rare in this district.

³ Meek, 1931, pp. 4-11.

⁴ Meek, 1931, pp. 238 ff.

THE AFU

LOCATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

The Afu, Afo or Afao (Eloi in their own language) live in the eastern part of the Nassarawa and Loko Districts of Nassarawa Emirate, roughly between 7° 50' and 8° 10' east longitude and between 8° and 8° 45' north latitude.

The area occupied by the Afu has been roughly estimated for the administration as 1,090 square miles. The 1935 Census gave the population as 6,582, of whom 5,282 are in Nassarawa District. This gives a figure of 6.03 persons per square mile, which is not, however, evenly distributed. The Nassarawa Afu live mostly at the foot of the hills, and considerable tracts of the plain country have never been inhabited. In 1918 and again in 1935 groups of Afu migrated north into Keffi Emirate. The 1955 Census showed 1,052 Afu in that area. This gives a grand total of 7,634 Afu at that time.

The population of the whole Udeni village area was reported in 1935 as 455 and of Udeni town itself as 416. Akum town in 1935 had a population of 152 and the whole village area contained 604 persons. I cannot identify Rohlfs' Atjaua or Ego.¹ Rohlfs' account is superficial and may contain exaggerated estimates, but it is hard to argue away the impression that in his day the Afu population was much greater than it is to-day. Their lack of political cohesion must have left the plains Afu singularly defenceless in the face of Fulani aggression.

The earliest mention of the Afu in the literature appears to be Crowther's. He refers to "Usha, also called Afo and Ekpe. . . ."² In the absence of direct inquiries, certain identification of these towns is not possible. Ekpe may be the small group called Epe living with the Afu near Loko, shown in the Land and Survey Department map (edition of 1950, 1:500,000). There is a small Epe enclave in Agatu, south of the Benue. Whether the Epe are in fact Afu is not known. Usha may be Ushan Bisa, in the Udagi village area, about 15 miles north of the Benue. In any case, Crowther, Rohlfs and other observers are all agreed that the social disturbance caused by the Fulani was very great indeed.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Afu territory is bounded on the south by the Benue River, on the east by Lafia and Keffi Emirates, and on the west by a broad belt of bush which has served to preserve Afu isolation. Only to the north and north-west is there regular communication with the rest of Nassarawa Emirate. The principal feature is a range of steep rocky hills, in which the Afu lived until 1918, which runs from south to north for some 15 miles and then curves eastwards to run in a continuous belt into Keffi Emirate. North of this belt are the settlements of Udagi and Udeni, and south of it Akum and Udenin Magaji.

LANGUAGE

A list of 27 Afu words in the Administrative records, with their equivalents in the Arago and Agatu dialects of Idoma, establishes the fact that Afu is a language very closely related to, though not a dialect of, Idoma. With reference to its broader relationships Afu can therefore be classed among the Kwa languages.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

There is a widespread legend that the Afu have a Kanuri origin and tribal marks still to be seen on the older men are cited by the Afu in support of this. But the linguistic evidence available is all against any such story although some

¹ See below, p. 138.

² Crowther, 1855, pp. 152-3.

Kanuri may well have settled in the Afu country at some time. Rohlf, however, was unable to find a single person at Akum who knew Kanuri. In addition to language there are many points of cultural similarity between the Afu and Arago to the east; in particular the use of similar loincloths and similar magic against the *agalabe* witches, although such cultural features may diffuse fairly easily.

The Afu were conquered by Zazzau (Zaria) at an unknown date. Tribute was sent yearly in the form of cowries and was still being paid at the time of arrival of the British. The Emir of Zaria sent agents at harvest time to collect the tax, which would be supplemented with slaves if there was any shortage. Except for Afao and Kana, both more secure in their rocks, every Afu town regularly paid this tribute.

After the foundation of Keffi and later of Nassarawa (1835) the revenue from the towns on the plain was allotted to the first Emir of Nassarawa; some towns resisted and were driven beyond the Benue but returned later. The remaining Afu were subjected to other unauthorized raids. The Afu were made part of the hereditary fief of the Madakin Kwotto, the heir-presumptive of the Emir of Nassarawa. Keffi, however, secured the tribute of an enclave in the south consisting of Akum and Udenin Magaji. The Emir's authority was in fact limited to tax collection and arbitration in disputes.

Like the Emirs, the British have not touched the traditional forms of Afu social life except to forbid slavery and the sassafras ordeal. Afao was given the alternative of following Nassarawa or Keffi and chose the former. In 1918 a revolt broke out, in consequence of which the Afu were compelled to abandon their strongholds in the rocks and to settle in the plain at the foot of the range. Afao divided along the line of its traditional feud. Before the British occupation the autonomous towns probably numbered 26. In 1932 the reorganization of the Afu into 10 village areas, each under a village head, was completed and for administrative convenience the Akum-Udeni enclave was transferred from Keffi to the Loko District of Nassarawa. It is reported that although the towns of which the areas are composed had in many cases been reduced by war to the status of small hamlets, they still preserved their attitude of independence and refused to recognize the village head. They repeatedly rejected all suggestions of combination, whether tribal or in the two groups of "hill" and "plain," their objection being rooted in a particularism sustained by custom, tradition and religion.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

The same mixture of northern and southern crops is to be seen in Afu country as in other parts of the Benue Valley. The Afu are said to be economically as far advanced as their Hausa neighbours. The hillmen plant guinea-corn, cotton, yams, dry-season beniseed, and tobacco. They are experts in weaving and dyeing for which there is a steady local demand, and travel as far afield as Makurdi or the Mada country to dispose of their surplus wares. In contrast the Afu of the plains are mainly farmers, growing, in addition to the above crops, maize, rice and beans. They do not practise trade on any serious scale, but obtain cash from the export of palm-oil and dried fish. The only markets in the country are of the small local type attended by the Afu themselves.

There are Afu blacksmiths, but their materials are imported. Some fine Afu wood carvings, which seem rather in the Yoruba tradition, are to be seen in the Jos Museum.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES: GENERAL

The Afu were visited in 1867 by the German traveller, Gerhard Rohlfs, who approached the country from the Bornu direction, where he had learned to speak Kanuri. Since his account is not easily accessible to the English-speaking reader, it may be as well to present fairly extensive sections of it:

" . . . The village of Ego, inhabited by the Afo Pagans, was surrounded by high granite rocks. (It had only) 500 inhabitants . . . (but was) independent.

" . . . at the entrance to the Sultan's house I noticed an idol of clay, as each person indeed—apart from the really great idols—has his house or private idols. For the most part these stand on a raised place and often form whole groups of five or more clay figures . . . often they are completely dressed and armed with bow and arrow.

" . . . The large town of Atjaua, which is surrounded by a deep trench, may have a population of about 5,000 of the Afo Negro tribe. . . . [South of Atjaua he passed many ruined towns, evidence of the depredations of the Fulani. He finally reached] . . . Udéni, surrounded by a beautiful oil-palm forest. . . . This town is closed in by a trench just as deep as that at Atjaua. Udéni seems also to have 5,000 inhabitants. There is a daily market held in the town for food products, and here too we were able to get fish from the Benue. [The people also express palm-oil]. . . . I also noticed much cotton cultivation in Udéni.

(South of Udéni I visited) " the ruins of the city of Akora, which has been destroyed by the Fellata [Fulani] and which must have been of enormous extent. From here to Akum there ran a man-made road about 8 ft. wide; this was the first time that I saw . . . such a sign of civilization.

" I found the Sultan [of Akum] in an enormously great house to which a pretty hut led which was decorated with arabesques on the outer clay wall. This hut had a double roof as an ornament: the large roof was capped by a smaller one, which gave the whole the look of a church tower. After they had led me through a number of courtyards, all full of male and female slaves, who were lounging and smoking long pipes on the hard mosaic floor on both sides of the way (the Negroes from Saso [Zaria] southwards know how to pave with mosaic), I came into a small room, where I found His Black Majesty entirely naked, squatting on the floor. He had a blue Sudan-shirt across his lap, so as to show that he did possess clothing, but that he did not consider it necessary to wear it. . . . We needed two interpreters, one to translate from Afo to Hausa and one from Hausa to Kanuri. I learned then that the Sultan had 300 wives . . . this is only the prerogative of the princes, who thus imitate their harem-keeping Mohammedan brothers.

(Next day he watched the sacrifice of chickens to the idols and a goat to the chief god Boka.)

" The city of Akum is of great extent, but is losing population rapidly: since the establishment of the dominion of Segseg [Zaria], taxation has risen sharply; even so it must still have 10,000 inhabitants. It is surrounded by good walls and deep trenches. . . . It is five hours from the Benue.

" . . . we landed at Loko, among hundreds of boats and at the foot of several hundred provisionally erected straw huts of the Bassa Negroes. An enormous throng surrounded us, of every age and sex, many dressed exactly as Adam."³

The double-roofed entrance as a sign of a chiefly compound can still be seen in southern Idoma. One does not to-day see naked persons in Loko, which has become an important centre for the purchase of cotton by European trading firms.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM⁴

The most striking characteristic of the Afu appears to be no mere aversion to mixing with alien tribes but a stubborn independence of each other which in the past caused frequent vendettas between Afu towns, or even, as at Afao, between component parts of the town itself. The village community is everything and the tribe nothing. Administrative inquiries have failed to reveal any form of tribal organization. The position has been complicated by the migration of a large section of the tribe to the plains south of the Afu Hills, at least a century before the foundation of Keffi in 1802, which has led to a considerable divergence of

³ Rohlfs, 1872, pp. 70-3, 77.

⁴ This account is based on Varvill, 1935.

custom, including economic, judicial and administrative differences. The plains-people fortify their villages and build large houses, even in Loko District adopting the Hausa pattern of compound. There is a system of age-grades which is partly based on wealth. They have abandoned the hill custom of female circumcision and the womenfolk no longer shave their heads. Finally, they speak a distinctive dialect of their own.

Despite the extremely small units of Afu society there are said to be many offices in connection with which the hereditary principle is deeply rooted, each being the prerogative of some patrilineal group.

The politico-ritual system appears to vary from village to village. Broadly speaking, however, the officials described below are found.

Each village has a chief, called *osu*, who is assisted by a council of elders. He is appointed from one of two or three "families" which alternate in the right to the succession. In the hills the council elects the new chief from among the two or three eligible candidates. On the plain the succession seems to be more automatic, and the *osu* holds office by virtue of birth alone.

The *gado* (Hausa, *magajin gari*) is the father of the community, the person closest to the ancestors and the final authority on Afu custom. He should be the oldest man and is selected as such by the chief and council. He orders the performance of village planting and harvest rites (*addakoba*) which must be carried out on the grave of an ancestor. Together with the medicine-chief (see below) he may order communal rites in emergencies such as war or epidemics. He may decide on questions of law and arbitrate when necessary between the chief and council. Since he is usually of advanced age, he is unable to take a continuous and active part in affairs. His authority is seldom invoked, but when resorted to is accepted as final.

The heir-apparent is given the title of *kaura* (Hausa, *madaki*) and must come from the proper alternate family. The chief usually names his successor soon after his own succession, on the plains. The title *kaura* is also met with in the hills, but not, it seems, with the meaning of heir-apparent.

The *asariki*,⁵ or elders, advise the chief and sit with him to try cases. If they disagree with the chief a deadlock may result which must be resolved by the *gado*. In the hills the *asariki* represent patrilineal groups, the number varying from three in Kama to nine at Kuri. On the plains the council is said to be based sometimes on a system of age-grades while the kin groups have generally disappeared in the larger unit of the ward.

Other officials of less importance are the *tukwurra*, or leader of the council, found only in the hills, the *oseshi*, "medicine chief," and the *assanga* or *anga*, who is the town crier and court summoner.

Although the practice of circumcision is general, only one kin group has the right to provide operators.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

Disputes between villages were dealt with by agreement after discussion or by feud. No distinction is made between civil and criminal causes within the community. Those found guilty of offences have to expiate these ritually. If the council appeal on a point of policy to the *gado*, the unsuccessful party has to make a sacrifice. In the hills the injured party is not necessarily compensated for his loss, the fine of goats and money being distributed according to custom to the various officials in proportion to the dignity of their office. On the plains murder was punished by execution, but in the hills it was ritually expiated together with confiscation of the goods of the offender's kin group.

Apart from limitations on their jurisdiction and the abolition of the sasswood ordeal, the indigenous courts were, in the thirties, still functioning according to custom.

⁵ A tempting but unproved etymology of the word *asariki* is the Hausa word *sarki* plus the ordinary Idoma personal plural prefix *a-*. It is not known whether this prefix is used in Afu.

THE EGED E

LOCATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

The Egede-speaking peoples¹ live mainly in Idoma Division. There is an enclave of about 2,000 Egede in the Gabu section of Yachi District of Ogoja Division,² and there are scattered enclaves in other parts of Ogoja and Tiv Divisions. In 1952 Egede District had a population of 50,225, including 5,944 Ibo, and Ito had a population of 22,761. The 1952 Census gives a total of 68,413 for Egede. The total number of Egede-speaking peoples may therefore be estimated as upwards of 70,000.

Frampton estimated the area of Ito District as approximately 230 square miles and the density of its population as 80 per square mile; the population figure of 1952 gives a density of just under 100 per square mile. The whole area of Egede District is about 380 square miles and its average density in Frampton's time was 90.7 persons per square mile, though there was a greater concentration within a seven mile radius of Oju than in the less central parts of the District. Egede District as it exists at the time of writing consists of five main groups; whose areas and densities respectively have been estimated by Frampton as follows: Egede proper, 238, 81; Worku, 75, 93; Ainu, 60, 107; Oju, 7, 321; The fifth, Njelle (or Njellele), was transferred from Utonkon District to Egede in 1940.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

The southern boundary of Egede-Ito is with Abakaliki and Ogoja Divisions of Ogoja Province. The north-eastern boundary is with Tiv Division, the western with Oturkpo, Akpa, Utonkon and Ijigbam Districts of Idoma Division. There is a range of hills in Egede District running generally south-west from Ndibila to near the River Awo. The country undulates gently away from the hills and most of Ito is level.

The Egede have had little contact with the outside world, although by now a few mission schools have been established. There is a considerable movement of pots, palm-wine and firewood along the dry-season Oju-Ito-Oturkpo Road to the Oturkpo market. Talbot says that Egede was one of the two main sources of iron for the Ogoja region.³ My own information confirms the importance of iron-smelting in the Egede Hills, although the industry is now dead. The Egede manufactured and circulated two forms of flat, trifurcated iron currency; one (*okobo*) had stubby arms about 2 ins. long, the other (*ubeje*) had thin arms about 5 ins. long.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Frampton gives origin legends for the various "clans" which are remarkable for their heterogeneity, though they agree mainly in claiming that the original home of the group in question was beyond a large river "Ifu,"⁴ which is located variously.

The Egede District was the main scene of operations for the Ikerri-Egede Military Escort in 1922 which delimited the Northern-Southern Provinces boundary in this area. Captain Money, who commanded this and other operations, has told

¹ The Egede-speaking peoples are very little known in the literature but there exist extensive notes on them by A. Frampton, who lived in the region as an administrative officer for five years prior to 1935. A detailed comparison of Frampton's observations with my own has not been possible up to the time of writing.

² Cann, 1936.

³ Talbot, 1926, III, pp. 927-8.

⁴ The word, like Idoma *isu*, is used of the Benue, the Niger, the ocean, and any large body of water known to the people.

me that Egede was the only place in Idoma Division where he was opposed by an organized military force. The last and most serious resistance was shown by the Egede rising in 1928 which lasted for several months.

Egede District has its court at Oju, and Ito District at Ito. Recently (1953) Egede District has been divided, and a separate native court established for Worku, Njelele and Ainu.

LANGUAGE

According to Frampton, several Egede traditions involve the loss of an earlier language. The Worku think that their ancestors spoke an Ibo dialect, while at least part of the alien stock which later became Ito, Oju in Egede, and Ito in Ito, seem to have spoken a form of Idoma before they merged with the Egede.

The Egede words and phrases which I have collected make it quite clear that Egede is a Kwa language, probably most closely related to Idoma. Almost half of the words and forms in my lists have obvious Idoma cognates. Egede shares with Igala and Idoma the pre-posed object construction, and with Igala the morpheme *fú* (Igala *fú*) as a prefix to said object. In certain particular words Egede resembles Yoruba more closely than it does the intervening languages.⁵

My material indicates that the Egede sound system has four tonemic levels. This gives it a special position among the Kwa languages yet recorded, all of which seem to have three tones.⁶ Egede also differs from the other Kwa languages of Nigeria in having a host of plural nouns, distinguished by vowel prefixes from the singular. Except for the class of domesticated animals, one may say that there is a plural form for every noun which can logically have one. The verbs, with one or two exceptions, do not distinguish class or number. There is a slight dialect difference between the speech of Ito and that of Egede proper. The system of lineage exogamy probably slows up the tendency of the two dialects to diverge.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Frampton speaks of Egede-Ito as being organized into 13 or 14 "clans," which he defines as "self-contained, self-governing units . . . called . . . by a variety of names, some of which suggest community of blood and others no more than community of interest through past alliance." Individual movement within the tribal area is apparently very frequent, and newcomers are expected to recognize their duties and obligations towards their new home. The clan was an administrative unit only in so far as it was held responsible for the behaviour of any one of its members, unless, by taking action against him itself, it dissociated itself from his offence.

The real social and administrative unit, however, was the *epeji* (*epu*, belly; *epi*, land—cognate with Idoma *ipaaje*, "Land"), or *epu nyepi* (*ny-*, of; *epi*, land). According to Frampton, this is a purely territorial unit, and he insists that, apart from centring on a well-defined *ojiya*, or village meeting-place, membership of the *epeji* consists in adherence to a common *epi*, or earth-shrine, which provides "an ultimate sanction for enforcing a proper standard of good citizenship." Frampton considered that limits were set on the size of the *epeji* by the nature of the mass-meeting (*ojiya*) which was the real form of government in Egede (as also among the Idoma). It must also have been economically advantageous to form new settlements.⁷

Comparison of Egede social groupings with more or less parallel groupings bearing cognate names in Idoma and Iyala is tempting, but probably premature

⁵ I do not mean to suggest a special connection with Yoruba, but rather to show how intimate is the connection of this language with the whole Kwa group.

⁶ Igala has a fourth, very high tone on the pronouns and negative particles in negative sentences. The fourth tone in Egede is tied neither to syntactical constructions nor to phonetic environment.

⁷ It would be useful in this connection to study in contrast a densely populated region, such as Oju, and some much more sparsely settled area in the same ethnic grouping.

(AFTER
FRAMPTON)



Northern & Eastern Nigerian boundary + + + + +

Divisional boundary----- District boundary-----

Land or clan	Native Land subdivision
.....	

Motor Road

WORKU name of Land or clan

WORKU name of district

at this stage. Furthermore, there are significant differences as between Egede and Ito. The term "District" can also be misleading to one who knows the term in places like Idoma Division proper or Ogoja Division. Egede District, in terms of the development of administration in Nigeria, is much more nearly comparable to the old "Okwoga District" as it existed before the reorganization of 1935^a than it is to any of the present Idoma Districts. Ito is comparable to nothing so far considered in this study. Frampton lists the 13 "clans" of Egede District as having populations averaging between 2,000 and 3,000 each. Of this group the Alieche clan may be taken as more or less typical. It is divided into 10 villages (*epeji*) averaging about 200 persons each. The people of the clan are also divided into three "birth-groups" (*oneegba*), which are patrilineal and exogamous, and which do not correspond with village groupings.

In Ito District there are nine *epeji* which have an average population of upwards of 1,500 persons. They are thus much more nearly comparable with the "clan" in Egede or with the "Land" in Idoma. Frampton comments that the unity of the villages in Ito has been more theoretical than real.

Frampton gives a good description of the old settlement pattern which has now become almost extinct.

The typical Egede village was surrounded by an area of forest, "each compound [was] secluded from its neighbours, and approach from without to the houses inside was usually restricted to a single path leading from a point of entry on one side of the village into an open meeting place in its centre and continuing thence to a point of exit on the other side. Except from the meeting place, no subordinate paths branched off from this thoroughfare, and the whole village could be traversed without sight of a hut. The central meeting place [*ojiya*] is a small circular space kept free of undergrowth, and contains the biggest trees in the village, generally planted there to give shade. . . . From this open space one or more paths other than the village thoroughfare lead off to branch and branch again until access to the individual compounds is obtained. . . . All the villagers who enter the *Ojiya* by the same final path constitute an *Onegba* [patrilineage], and in this way each village consists of one or more *Onegbas*, which in this connection may be translated 'quarters.' The villagers who have made their homes outside the village are considered to belong to the quarter in which they lived before, while any new immigrant who settles outside can usually select to which quarter he will belong."

The system of exogamous patrilineages cross-cuts the village system. In addition to the exogamy rules with respect to his own lineage, a man may not marry women of his mother's, his maternal grandmother's, his paternal grandmother's and great-grandmother's lineages, nor a daughter or grand-daughter of a woman member of his own lineage, grand-daughter or great-grand-daughter of a male member. He may not marry a woman of his paternal grandmother's lineage. No man may simultaneously have two wives of the same lineage, nor, as a matter of pride, may he marry the divorced wife of a member of his own lineage. Without explicitly encouraging it, custom allows clandestine sexual intercourse between persons who are unable to marry because of the operation of the above restrictions, since the child will not belong to the father's lineage. The only restrictions on this last pattern are that intercourse with women of his own and his mother's lineages and with the wives of men of his own lineage are forbidden. With the Egede proper, Ito has a reputation for laxness in the observance of these exogamy rules.

Frampton mentions no ceremonies or officials that would tie together in an active way the parts of a lineage scattered in different villages. He says, on the contrary, that they are widely dispersed, and that branches of the same part in different villages or clans often call themselves by different names which may be unknown to the other branches.

The lineage (*oneegba*) may consist of one or more *ugbiegu*, or compound families. In fact, various statements in Frampton's account are seemingly incon-

^a See above, pp. 112-13.

sistent as to whether it is the *oneegba* or the *ugbiegu* which is the exogamous unit.⁹

The senior elder of each quarter of the *epeji* is senior in a territorial, residential, and also in a lineage sense. The same word, *oneegba*, is used for both lineage and quarter or ward. The senior elder of the quarter is called the *agabo* (plur. *igabo*). The *igabo* are the religious leaders of the whole community, and stand apart from the *ojiya*, which is the real political power and consists of all adult males. Important decisions are referred to the *igabo* for their blessing, but for the *igabo* to take independent action, or even to be called upon to arbitrate in important matters of policy, would be symptomatic of an acute constitutional crisis. A principal function of the *igabo* is the organizing of divine sanctions to back decisions of the *ojiya* and to bring recalcitrant persons and groups into line. A practical aspect of these sanctions is evident at the beating of the *achuku* drum, to summon the living as well as the spirits of the dead, when physical action may be taken against the property of recalcitrants without fear of let or hindrance. Frampton says that danger from the dead remains until the *igabo* say " *opiye* " or " *amen*," that is until they have given the dead satisfaction; they will only do this without having attained the ends for which the drum was beaten if the entire *ojiya* is against them, a position which would mean that the *igabo* were interfering in non-religious matters without having been requested to do so. In the past an *agabo* who interfered thus without public support and refused to lift his ban would have been deposed by banishment, unless he were the *agabo* of the whole lineage, which is without territorial limitations. In this case, he would have been murdered, and his successor would then have been expected to restore conditions of peace and safety.

The other principal political figures were the *adikrobia* (*ada*, father; *ikrobia*, young men), who were elected by the *ojiya* mainly to represent it *vis-à-vis* other villages, but also to keep order within the village. Since an *adikrobia* was elected, he could be deposed by the *ojiya* without the necessity of banishing or murdering him.

Frampton comments that in recent years there has been a tendency to ascribe to the *igabo* more power than they in fact possess, one reason for this being that European pressure has been in this direction. Another important reason is that members of the *ojiya* have found that it sometimes pays to shelter behind the *igabo*, "for whose infirmities allowances will be made and from whom less speedy performances will be anticipated." A further development of this same policy is probably to be seen in the fact that the *adikrobia* now rarely attend the Native Court at Ito, their place having been taken by a set of new officials called " *ociifu*," a term obviously borrowed from the English, who claim to be representatives of the *igabo*.¹⁰

The only other titled official of the *ojiya* is the *oga*, the "headman" or overseer of the young working members, of which he himself is one. He supervises communal tasks, collects absence fees and fines, and is to some extent a normal village messenger. A large village may have several *oga*.

There are loosely organized age-companies called *ekpa* which in the past had military functions. There were usually six or seven of these and a man remained in the same one all his life. Although all the "clans" had this type of organization, it cannot be said to have been co-ordinated as between groups. In more recent years the *ekpa* have become social clubs. According to Frampton, the most important social clubs for men were the *okum* societies, which act also as mutual benefit and burial clubs. In the past they also took part in head-hunting and

⁹ Frampton probably experienced the difficulty, much in evidence in Idoma, of eliciting from native informants a clear-cut consistent statement on the terminology of lineage or geographical units. The various terms are used metaphorically, to a large extent interchangeably, so that the outsider is in danger of imposing an alien pattern on the data. Frampton's discussion is interesting as far as it goes, but cannot be considered satisfactory.

¹⁰ The Councillor from Egede informed me that anyone who likes may attend the court, and if he does it often enough will become known as *ociifu*.

other illegal enterprises. The *oglinyē* society was formerly very strong in Egede and still exists in most places.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

The ancient judicial system in civil matters—i.e., in all cases of debt—was a compromise between self-help and a system of public action on behalf of the successful plaintiff. Small claims would be heard before the *adikrobia* of the litigants, large claims before the defendant's *ojiya*, which confined its action to verifying the genuineness of the complaint. The unsuccessful defendant was advised to pay up, but usually he did not, and the creditor might then proceed to seize any property seen in the debtor's village without incurring upon himself the charge of theft. Hearings were formal in civil cases and witnesses had to make statements on oath. Fees were paid by the successful party in the form of presents to his hearers or judges, intended mainly to bind them, in the event of future trouble, to testify on his behalf that he had first sued for debt, should he have to proceed by distraint. If the debt was large a successful plaintiff was entitled to seize a member of the debtor's village, usually a child, and hold him to ransom. The person could be sold into slavery if the money was not forthcoming within six days after notice had been given of the capture.

In criminal cases the *ojiya* and the *adikrobia* were under definite obligation to take action to punish the guilty person. Only certain crimes, murder, theft, wilful destruction of property, and certain slanders or false accusations, were recognized as criminal. Where members of two different villages or clans were concerned, criminal jurisdiction was almost entirely confined to murder and theft. A murderer was invariably hanged outside the victim's village, though he was given the option of hanging himself. An incorrigible thief might be banished, which probably meant his enslavement or murder by strangers. The *igabo* would be informed of the proceedings and of decisions taken, but appeal to them would be made only in the rare case where the *adikrobia*, having been called in, had brought in a finding totally against the general view of the *ojiya*. The real intention of such an appeal was to restrain him, by the counter-sanction of imprecation, from calling in the *alikpe* society.

The *alikpe* society in Egede seems to have been a more formidable institution than the club of the same name among the Iyala. Once its members were called into a case they could not be stopped, indeed, they were able to enforce a criminal judgment and exercise coercion without fear of opposition or reprisal. They had a special god of their own whose power was symbolized by a spear stuck in the ground in the compound where they were to levy a fine or which they were instructed to destroy. The *adikrobia* would not lightly call in the *alikpe*, since the latter could take their share of the fine and were entitled to any goods of the offender which they could find. A similar institution to the *alikpe* was the *alawu* at Ito.

Slavery cannot be said to have been strong as an economic institution in Egede and, as far as is known, the area was never seriously raided. According to Frampton there was an interesting form of secret prestige slavery, in which persons bought as infants were reared in ignorance of their slave status, which would be kept from them by a series of subterfuges, though they were allowed to marry other slaves.

POLITICAL SYSTEM OF WORKU

The Worku (*Uwɔɔkwu*; Oturkpo form, *Uwɔɔko*) section of Egede District has a political structure sharply distinct from that of the rest of the Egede-speaking peoples. There is a kingship institution, succession to which lies in one of the three lineages which make up Worku. The royal lineage has seven sub-lineages of which four hold the kingship in rotation. A fifth sub-lineage is linked by

female ties and holds the offices of diviner and charm-maker to the king. The last two sub-lineages are more recent accretions. By 1938 there had been 12 kings.

The position of the king is described by Johnston,¹¹ who says that he was not regarded as divine, had no compulsory daily routine or body of organized followers and was not killed. He was perhaps more akin to the elders than to the *adikrobia*; the routine matters dealt with by a Native Court were not his concern, though he would deliberate more important matters with the elders. Johnston considers that he is best described in Meek's words, as "the sacred repository of the people's prosperity." His death was concealed for a year and his burial accompanied by human sacrifice. Johnston also states that human sacrifices used to accompany initiation and that candidates had to be orphans (i.e., slaves). The Worku "kingship" seems in fact reminiscent of the *eshole ipuole* in Iyala, described above.¹²

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

The general outlines of Egede religious beliefs are similar to those of Idoma. There is a sky god, *Ohe*, and an earth spirit *Eji*.¹³ As in Idoma, *Ohe* is regarded as a supreme, all-pervasive being, but there is no social or clan shrine to *Ohe*, except at Worku. A fig tree, *Ficus thonningii*, for each member of the family is planted in a cleared space in the compound. This tree is the whole shrine and will not be cut down or destroyed as long as the compound is lived in. If the owner moves, he will take a cutting to his new place of residence.

The earth cult is always a community cult; the individual sacrifices to his *ohe* tree, but sacrifices at the *aji*-shrine are always made by the old men for the benefit of the whole Land. The smallest unit to possess an *aji*-shrine is the *epeji*, and it is in the charge of the senior *ogabo* living there. A shrine is established by drawing a small circle on the ground, usually at the foot of some long-living tree. A small pot is buried up to the brim within this circle, food offerings are placed in it and the whole covered with a thin layer of soil. Soon there is nothing to indicate to a stranger that it is a shrine. As many as four years may elapse between sacrifices. The *aji* cult has as its purpose the insuring of the security and prosperity of the Land. Frampton also insists on its importance in the ideological integration of strangers into the community.

The third great cult is that of the ancestors (*alegu*). However widely scattered the members of a lineage may be, they will on occasion resort to their original *alegu*-shrine, and only the formal establishment of a new one in a new place by permission of the *ogabo* in charge of the old one can relieve them of responsibility towards their "home" shrine. It consists of a handful of dried mud kept in the hut of the *ogabo* and moving with him. The *ogabo* has the power to refuse to make sacrifice for anyone and thus to threaten excommunication to any offender within the group who has broken a taboo and refused to purify himself. A new shrine may be established either because the new group is so distant that travel is highly inconvenient or dangerous, or because the group has become so large that it seems advisable to relax the exogamy rules by the formal recognition of a new lineage.

Frampton also describes upwards of half a dozen minor deities, which he thinks are old charms which have been "promoted."

Belief in witchcraft is very strong in Egede and Frampton describes several different kinds of witches. A person becomes a witch involuntarily by being given witch-making medicine in food or drink by another witch. Consequently a person bringing food or drink always tastes it before offering it even to his or her

¹¹ Johnston, 1938.

¹² See above, pp. 129-30.

¹³ Frampton calls *Ohe*, *Eji* and even *alegu* (the ancestors) "gods." I prefer not to follow him in this until I find real evidence of some attributes of personality in these Egede notions. He does not at any point speak of masculine or feminine qualities of *Ohe* and *Eji*.

most intimate friends and relatives. The medicine, if present, is drawn off into the person of the first taster of the dish. Fire is also a purifying agent and it is wise to reheat food which has stood for several hours. The sasswood ordeal was a principal means of detecting witches in the old days and Frampton tells of whole villages practically committing suicide to discover who among them were witches. I have had no opportunity to check such stories. More recently a charm called *akpam* has come in from the Cameroons; it is conferred on a village by another which already has it and protects against theft, snakebite and headache as well as witchcraft. The visible essence of the charm is a stone or piece of iron, over which the correct formula has been said, buried at the foot of a tree. It is believed that any witch in a village where *akpam* has arrived will die within seven to ten days of the first performance by him of an act of witchcraft subsequent to *akpam*'s arrival.

THE AKWEYA-YACHI (IYACE)

DEMOGRAPHY

These little-known people live in the Akpa District of Idoma Division and the Yachi District of Ogoja Division. Akpa District has an area of 83 square miles and in 1934 had an estimated average population density of 59 per square mile. The population in 1952 was 5,898, including 324 Ibo, which gives a density of 71 per square mile. Akpa is bounded on the east by Ito District, on the north by Oturkpo, on the west by Oglewu and Edumoga and on the south by Utonkon. At one time the Akweya people occupied parts of the present Ito and Utonkon areas, but were driven by the Egede and Utonkon peoples into their present location. The Yachi of Ogoja Division were estimated as numbering 6,600 in 1937. The total number of Yachi-speaking peoples is therefore probably more than 12,000.

LANGUAGE

The language spoken by these people is called Akweya and Iyace in the two districts respectively. I do not know whether there is a substantial dialectal difference between them. Akweya is undoubtedly a Kwa language and has a special version of the pre-posed object construction already noted in other languages of the Benue Valley. From word-lists collected by Brooke, Meek¹ and myself, it is evident that Akweya differs sharply from Idoma, both in vocabulary and in sound system. There is an elaborate series of compound consonants with as many as three simultaneous points of articulation. There is also a considerable series of stop-nasal combinations in which the principal stop is held while the nasal is sounded, the plosive release being velic.² (As in "tupmce ha-penny".) For these reasons neither the missions nor the literate Akweya have succeeded in producing a usable orthography, and the language has not yet been properly studied by a qualified linguist. Akweya resembles other Kwa languages in its paucity of plural forms of the nouns, the absence of noun classes and the extensive use of root verbs.

THE AKWEYA OF AKPA DISTRICT, IDOMA DIVISION

The Akweya have an origin story similar to that of the Idoma, claiming to have lived near Wukari and to have been part of the old Jukun Empire. When it disintegrated they fled south into Yachi country and later moved into their present location.

The Akpa "clan" is divided into three lineages, Akpa, Mgbo and Ekpari, which, as in Idoma, are substantially independent of each other, each having its own priest with his staff of assistants. The office of priest was held in turn by the senior men of the various family groups of which the lineages were made up. Akpa was considered to be the senior, and the first clan head, chosen in 1922 at the suggestion of the Government, was in fact the priest of that lineage. In most places villages settled by the Akpa lineage contain only members of that lineage; the Mgbo and Ekpari lineages, on the other hand, generally live together in the same village.³ All three groups live together at Otobi, the site of the Native Court. There are also two villages inhabited by the Ochowa, a lineage linked by female

¹ Brooke, 1922. Meek, 1925.

² "For convenience in this discussion the upper part of the soft palate facing the nasopharynx is the velic The closure of the nasal passages is therefore a velic closure." Kenneth Pike, *Phonetics* (Univ. of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1944), p. 58. See also pp 120, 133 in the same work.

³ Abraham, 1934.

ties. Here the system is somewhat different, since they have a head known as the *ata*, the office being held alternately by the two villages.⁴

At the time of the reorganization in 1934, Akpa had had twelve years' experience of the hitherto unprecedented institution of "clan head." Despite the difficulties caused by the fact that the first chief had been priest of one of the clans and not a person connected with civil affairs,⁵ the people expressed a much stronger desire for a unified chieftaincy than did most Idoma groups.

Civil authority, such as it was, seems to have been exercised formerly only through the lineage elders and through dance-guild courts, such as *ɔglinye*. An official (*uta*) was appointed by the elders to supervise the judicial and other activities of *ɔglinye*, but the balance between the two groups seems to have been an uneasy one. Besides *ɔglinye*, the *ichahoho* and *odumu* dance-guilds were strongly developed in Akpa District. Age-grade clubs flourish and maintain well-built club-houses.

Much of the best wood-carving in Idoma Division is done in Akpa, and within living memory the Akweya used the so-called "pagan harp" seen among the Birom and Jukun, which was regarded as a powerful charm.

Circumcision and clitoridectomy are universal.

THE YACHI OF OGOJA DIVISION

The Yachi of Ogoja also have a tradition of Jukun origin and say that they came from Apaluguli, a legendary name for the Jukun capital. They migrated first to a point north-west of their present location, into which they were driven by the Tiv.

Cann says that originally there were seven independent "village areas," corresponding to the Iyala *ɔca*.⁶ The population for these averaged 1,157, the largest being 2,656 and the smallest 228. Talbot states that the Yachi have three clans.⁷ Their constituent compounds are probably distributed amongst the "village areas," as in Egede and Idoma.

According to Cann, "each community which regarded itself as a separate unit had a priest who symbolized its unity. . . . His food and movements were subject to various taboos and . . . he was entitled to marks of respect . . . [and] was responsible for sacrificing to the ancestors of the unit. The priest had a special attendant through whom he communicated with the world outside his compound."

A matter of importance would be settled by a mass meeting of the unit concerned and the action supported by a majority opinion adopted, after the priest had added his blessing which would not be withheld unless the meeting were fairly evenly divided. In non-contentious routine matters the oldest man of the unit concerned was the executive authority. Cann says that whenever any recognized social body (village, club, company, etc.) wished to punish a person, it would kill some livestock "against" him, the livestock killed varying in proportion to the degree of punishment intended. The first animal seen of the required type would be seized and killed, regardless of the owner, who would have to claim its value as a civil debt from the person "against" whom it had been killed.⁸

There has been a tendency for the original village areas to disintegrate and nowadays each village regards itself as administratively independent of other villages in the same village area. There is apparently no stable unit below the "quarter"; family ties are not strong and members of one family may be found in different quarters or villages.⁹ The position of the priests too has seriously deteriorated, since by leaving their retreats when the Government made them

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Abraham, 1934.

⁶ I collected this word myself in Iyala but got no details concerning it, except that a person was in danger of losing his head when he left his own *ɔca*.

⁷ Talbot, 1926, III, p. 605.

⁸ Cann, 1936.

⁹ Ibid.

court members, they broke many taboos and have not regained the respect formerly accorded to them. In many of the villages the office has lapsed completely.

The *alikpe* club, found also in Iyala and Egede, seems in Yachi to have had very similar functions to the *alikpe* in Iyala. Its main function was the punishment of theft, acting either on its own initiative or when hired by the victim of a theft. It had the power to sell debtors to the *alohi* which was, as in Iyala, a trading association dealing largely in slaves.¹⁰ The *ogrinya* society, open only to those who have killed an enemy and brought back his head, is also strongly developed. According to Talbot, it possesses a charm which brings children and controls the crops.¹¹

As in Akpa District of Idoma Division, there is an elaborate system of age companies. Cann lists 18 of these. They are formed for adolescent boys, and although each village has its own, the names are uniform throughout Yachi. There is no "promotion" from one company to another; once a company is formed, its numbers vary only by the addition of stranger settlers of proper age and by the death of members. Each company therefore becomes smaller as time goes on and finally dies out.¹²

According to Talbot the Yachi have only two deities, Ppahia, who created everything, and his wife, Mbache, the earth. Ppahia is represented by a tall molia tree, at the foot of which are three large stones, surrounded by a fence of palm mid-ribs.¹³ The *apirija* charms, as in Iyala, are met with here in considerable variety. Belief in witchcraft is strong.

The Yachi ancestral cult has symbols for women as well as men but none for children. The dead are called *ufu*, and their symbol is a calabash of water and the *ogbu* stick.¹⁴

Twins are welcomed, but children born feet first or with teeth are thrown away into the bush;¹⁵ the taboo against children born feet first is also to be found in varying degrees of intensity in Egede and Idoma.

Neither the Iyala nor the Yachi have group food taboos, although particular persons may observe taboos.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Talbot, 1926, III, p. 789.

¹² Cann, 1928.

¹³ Talbot, 1926, II, p. 64.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 325, 335.

¹⁵ Talbot, 1926, III, p. 718.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 752.

THE UTONKON-EFFIUM

(*Utoṅko*: OTURKPO FORM, *itkɔm*)

NOMENCLATURE AND DEMOGRAPHY

The Utonkon District of Idoma Division is occupied by a little-known group calling themselves Ufia. The name *Utoṅko* or *Utoṅɔ* is applied to them by foreigners, but is disliked. In 1952 the district had a population of 12,339. They are closely related to the Effium (*ɛfiom*) of Effium District, Abakaliki Division, and these in turn are closely related to the Mtezi and Okpoto clans who live in an enclave north-east of Abakaliki town. Talbot gives the population of the Effium as 3,000, and the Okpoto-Mtezi as 6,340.¹

The name Orri is by now established as applying to this whole people and their language, which might better be called a "dialect-cluster." The idea that the Utonkon and Effium are Ibo is quite incorrect and seems to have arisen from the fact that the Ezza Ibo by far outnumber the Effium in Effium District. According to Chapman, the original inhabitants of the Ezza country were "Semi-Bantu races," remnants of whom, i.e., the Orri, are still to be found in Abakaliki Division.² It was in an effort to escape pressure from the Ezza that a part of the Effium moved northwards into what is now Idoma Division. There are groups of them in Agala and Ulayi Districts, but by far the largest number is in Utonkon, which may perhaps by now be considered the main centre of the Orri-speaking peoples, the total of whom to-day may safely be estimated as upwards of 25,000.

Utonkon is a prosperous district with a railway station and a new rice mill. A brisk trade in yams and firewood is done with the Enugu market. Utonkon is the seat of the Southern Intermediate Court of Idoma Division. A son of the Chief of Utonkon was the first person in Idoma Division to attend college anywhere.

LANGUAGE

Thomas's and Johnston's treatment of Orri as a Semi-Bantu language has already been mentioned in the Idoma section.³ Johnston considers it to be most closely related to Ukelle, the language of the people immediately to the east of Effium District. Talbot's classification of Orri, Iyala, Ukelle, Yachi into an "Orri Group" cannot to-day be supported. Even he admits that these four languages "are mainly classed together because they are even more different from those outside the group."⁴ Although I agree in classifying Orri as a "Semi-Bantu" language to the extent of saying that it seems to have many un-"Kwa"-like features in the sound system and that the vocabulary seems quite divergent, it should nevertheless be noted that even in the very inadequate word-lists available words cognate with the neighbouring Kwa languages are not lacking. It remains to be said that there seems to be a fairly pronounced dialectal difference between Okpoto,⁵ from which Thomas's word-list is taken, and Effium, for which I have a short list which I have also briefly checked with an Utonkon man. I found that the words I had collected fitted very easily into a three-tone system.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

Little is known of the indigenous social organization of these peoples.

Talbot writes: "Among the Okpoto each 'quarter' was ruled by its Eze-Ogu, who was succeeded by his eldest son, or by a rich man from any family, as nominated by the townspeople. The sub-chiefs were composed of those who had gained the Ogbinya 'title'."

¹ Talbot, 1926, II, p. 7.

² Chapman, 1932.

³ See above, p. 92 (f.n.4).

⁴ Talbot, 1936, IV, pp. 92, 97.

⁵ As I have stressed in the Idoma section the name Okpoto should not be confused with Akpoto (see above, p. 92 (f.n.4)).

"The three quarters of the Effium Orri were ruled by chiefs called Okpali, below whom were the Onegaw and Obotche, one for every 'quarter,' elected by the people. At Amuda the chief is called Olo. In no case is the successor chosen from a particular family."⁶

According to Talbot the Orri have adopted the age-class organization of their Ezza neighbours. He lists six age-classes in Effium.⁷ The Effium Orri also have a club called *mburuma* in one quarter of every village, the quarter being decided upon at a meeting of all the inhabitants. It is the duty of *mburuma* to see that judgments given by the chiefs are carried out, and they collect debts, being empowered to seize the debtor's property.⁸

Formal declarations of war were made by the Okpoto, but not by the Effium. All captives were killed. At certain times, fixed by a diviner for the whole town, the Effium made sacrifices—even occasionally of a whole cow—to their skulls, "with the idea of obtaining other heads through the help of the ghost-owners of those they had already." Peace was made on the boundary amidst eating and drinking, but with the Effium at least there was no sacrifice and no oath sworn. After such an occasion, anyone who tried to reopen hostilities was fined.⁹

Utonkon Town, like Igumale, was at one time a large slave market.

Circumcision and clitoridectomy take place before marriage and cicatrization is carried out at the same time. At Effium the girls go into a fattening house fifteen days before marriage. The Effium speak to the father of a girl about marriage as soon as she is born. If he consents, the betrothal is sealed with a gift of palm-wine and snuff. The girl is allowed to visit her fiancé freely and to stay with him if she likes; if he has too early intercourse with her and "spoils" her, that is his affair, but it is thought that the act may cause her breasts to dry up and may render her sterile. In any case, she must not conceive before her clitoridectomy.¹⁰

Ufia and Effium men wear at least a towel. The traditional dress of the women is a long narrow cloth in front, which reaches to the ground. I am told that the Chief of Utonkon last year forbade this dress.

According to Talbot, the Effium Orri give a more important place to the earth goddess than to the sky god, Lokpata. They hold that the earth goddess made the earth, men, trees, etc.,¹¹ though the Okpoto attribute this to Lokpata, who of later years was called Ibinokpabi, and may take the place of the creator of early times. The Okpoto Orri also believe in an "over-soul" (*lefili*), which is sometimes incarnated on earth but does not really have much power until after a person's death. The *lefili* may be one's dead father or mother and as many as six persons may have the same *lefili*. It is believed possible to have a different one in the next incarnation.¹²

The Orri pray to their ancestors for everything and among the Effium sacrifices are made directly on the grave, as they have no symbol for the dead. The Okpoto use a mound with a fish-eagle's feather in it as a symbol for a man and a small clay pot placed near the door for a woman. The father sacrifices on behalf of the son.¹³ Many Utonkon District groups have recently borrowed the Agala cult of ancestral masks; these masks talk in the Agala dialect of Idoma.

Witches appear to be rare among the Orri, according to Talbot.¹⁴

⁶ Talbot, 1926, III, p. 605.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 552, 560, 718.

⁸ Ibid., p. 792.

⁹ Ibid., p. 846.

¹⁰ Talbot, 1926, II, p. 452.

¹¹ Baumann (1936, pp. 129, 131, 151) singled out the Orri for special treatment in his study of African creation myths, saying that they are quite exceptional among the peoples of south-eastern Nigeria in attributing the role of creator to the earth goddess.

¹² Talbot, II, 1926, pp. 295-7.

¹³ Ibid., p. 325.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 217.

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INDEX

- Abawa, 17
- Abewa, 19
- Abortion, 21
- Administration, 35-6, 57-8, 98, 102-24
 passim, 126, 137
- Ado, 80
- Adoka District, 92, 105, 106
- Adoption, 67
- Adultery, 44, 66, 131
- Aferike, 134
- Afu, 79, 91, 96, 136-9
- Agabi, 17, 19
- Agala District, 79, 91, 92, 94, 97, 118-22,
 128
- Agatu District, 81, 92, 102-3, 104, 105,
 106, 126
- Agents, 36
- Age-sets, 35, 98, 105, 122, 130, 139, 144,
 149, 150, 152
- Agriculture, xiii, 24, 25, 26, 59, 83, 84, 93,
 137; rites connected with, 135
- Akanda, 17, 20
- Akpa District, 100, 148, 149
- Akpoto (Akpoto), xiii, 79, 80, 86, 91, 92,
 93, 96, 97, 102
- Akweya, 79, 99, 111, 135, 148-50
- Akweya-Yachi, 148-50
- Ancestors, 45, 70, 89, 100, 108, 123, 124,
 132, 139, 144, 146, 150, 152
- Ankwe, 125 (n)
- Apa, 96, 97, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 122
- Arabs, 29
- Arago, 79, 92, 125-7, 128, 137
- Arochuku, 99
- Associations, 71, 93, 98-9, 130-1, 144-5,
 150
- Aworo, 18
- Barber-doctors, 29, 42, 47
- Barter, 84, 128-9
- Basa, 18, 19, 22, 62, 64, 70, 138
- Basa-Komo, 77, 79, 82
- Basa-Nge, 17, 19-20, 23, 27, 28, 37, 77
- Bataci, 18, 25, 27, 30, 40, 42, 46
- Beadwork, 29
- Behaviour, 61, 68, 115, 135
- Beni (Bini), 18, 36, 38, 42
- Benin, 77, 80, 81
- Benu, 19, 46
- Beri-beri, 126
- Bini (Edo), 80, 96
- Birth, 42, 67; "birth groups," 143
- Body-painting, 122
- Boju District, 92, 95, 105-7
- Boki, 132, 134
- Borgawa, 18
- Bornu, 19
- Bororozhi, 20, 36
- Brasswork, 28
- Bricklayers, 30
- Burial, 44, 68-9, 130-1, 134
- Bussawa, 18
- Calabashes, patterned, 60
- Cannibalism, 66, 99
- Canoe-building, 30
- Carpenters, 30, 113
- Carving, 81 (n), 137, 149
- Cattle, 26, 38, 105
- Cekpan, 19, 23
- Chamba, 81 (n), 104 (n)
- Charms, 88, 132, 146, 147, 149
- Chiefs: Afu, 139; Arago, 126-7; Etulo, 135;
 Idoma, 95-8, 105-24 *passim*; Igala, 86-7;
 Igbira, 63, 64-5, 66; Iyala, 129-30;
 Nupe, 32-3, 38; Utonkon, 152; —burial
 of, 68-9, 70-1, 98, 146; —death of, 107,
 146; —warrant, 130
- Children, 31, 60, 65, 67, 88
- Christianity, 70
- Cicatrization, 152
- Circumcision, 42, 67, 99, 131, 139, 149, 152
- Clans: Akweya, 148-9; Egede, 141, 143;
 Idoma, 63, 102, 103, 104, 106-7, 112,
 116, 119; Igbira, 61, 63; Iyala, 129;
 Nkum, 133; Nupe, 31
- Classes, social, 33-5
- Clientship, 30, 35
- Clitoridectomy, 99, 131, 139, 149, 152
- Compensation, 66, 131, 139, 145
- Compounds, 31-2, 62, 86-7, 94, 106, 119,
 133
- Contraception, 21
- Cotton-spinning, 60, 84
- Councils, 36, 37, 38, 63, 64, 65, 66, 72, 87,
 98, 105, 116, 130, 139
- Courts, 39, 66, 95, 98, 105, 106, 114, 130,
 137, 139, 141, 149, 151
- Cowries, 24, 27, 67, 68, 72, 84, 129, 137,
 151
- Crafts, 28-30, 60, 94
- Crops, 24-5, 58, 93, 128, 135, 137
- Cults: Effium, 152; Egede, 146-7; Etulo,
 135; Idoma, 100, 117, 120, 124; Igala,
 89; Igbira, 70-1; Iyala, 132; Nkum, 133;
 Nupe, 46; Yachi, 150
- Currency, 24, 127, 128-9, 140
- Curses, 70
- Dance guilds, 93, 98-9, 149
- Dances, 29-30, 66, 69, 113, 121, 127, 130,
 131, 135
- Debt, 117, 130, 131, 145, 149, 152
- Dibo, 19, 23, 36, 43, 46, 49
- Districts: "federated," 102, 109, 113; of
 Idoma Division, 102-24, and map, p. 101
- Divination, diviners, 47-8, 54, 65, 70,
 71-2, 89, 95, 100, 116
- Divorce, 44
- Doctors, 46-7
- Doma, 91, 92, 125-7
- Dragons, 70
- Dress, 42, 88, 90, 122, 126, 131, 135, 138,
 152
- Drummers, 29-30, 46
- Dyeing, 20, 25, 30, 38, 60, 137
- Ebagi, 19, 42
- Ebe, 17, 19, 23, 27, 36, 42, 46, 49
- Education, 88, 122

INDEX

- Edumoga District, 92, 97, 98, 102, 113-14
 Effum, 92, 151-2
 Egede, 79, 81, 91, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 111, 128, 131, 132, 140-7
 Elders, 37, 38, 65, 95, 106, 107, 116-17, 129, 139, 144, 149
 Elephants, 82, 90, 93, 99, 103 (n), 131
 Embroidery, 29
 Emigration, 21
 Epe, 136
 Etulo (Utur), 91, 134-5
 Evil eye, 71
 Ezza, 124, 151, 152
- Family, domestic, 31, 60; —extended, 60, 62, 68
 Farming, mixed, 25
 " Fiefs," 36, 86, 137
 Figures, ancestral, 118; —*gabi*, 30
 Fishing, 27, 59, 84, 88, 135; —rites, 72
 Fon, 17
 Fractionization, 94
 Fulani, xiii, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 33, 34, 36-7, 55, 57, 64, 77, 80, 81, 82, 97, 102, 104
 Ganagana, 19, 62
 Gbari, 17, 18, 22, 23, 36, 49, 62, 70
 Gbari-Bautá, 20
 Gbedde, 19
 Gbedye (Gbedegi), 19, 23, 46
 Gbira, 36
 Glass-making, 29
 Goddesses, 89, 133, 150, 152
 Gods, 45, 70, 100, 132, 133, 145, 146, 150, 152
 Goizhi, 20
 Granaries, 32, 94
 " Guests," 62, 63
 Guilds, 28-30, 47; see also Dance guilds
 Gupa, 19
 Gwagba, 19
- Hat-making, 29
 Hausa, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 29, 55, 71, 79, 86, 88, 93, 107, 111, 122, 125, 126, 134, 137
 Head-hunting, 66, 99, 144, 150
 Heads: clan, 104, 129, 133; District, 36-7, 39, 64, 86, 98, 103; Fulani, 36-7; religious, 107; village, 37, 39, 63, 86, 129
 Hima, 55
 Horses, 26, 38, 59, 83, 127
 " Hosts," 19, 62, 63
 " Houses," royal Nupe, 31
 Housing, 31, 32, 61, 86-7, 94, 102, 118, 121, 126
 Hunting, 27, 59; —rites, 72, 89, 100
 Hyaba, 20
- Ibaji, 77, 89-90
 Ibanji, 20
 Ibo, 79, 80, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 100, 111, 113, 114, 117, 118, 122, 124, 151
 Ichama District, 114-15
 Idoma, 78, 79, 85, 86; —"proper," 100-27; —speaking peoples, 91-132
 Igala, xiii, 20, 22, 28, 37, 55, 57, 77-89, and *passim*
 Igara, 77, 92, 93
 Igbara, 17, 18, 23, 55-74, 81, 94, 96, 97
 Igbona, 27, 37
 Igumale District, 92, 94, 99, 118, 122-3, 128
 Ijaw, 80
 Ijigbam District, 100, 124
 Ijumu, 17
 Ika, 56
 Implements, 24, 30, 60
 Industries, 28-30
 Inheritance, 39, 65, 99
 Initiation, 67, 146
 Iron-smelting, 28, 103, 115, 140; iron work, 28, 60, 84, 94
 Ishan, 80
 Islam, xiii, 29, 45, 70
 Ito District, 94, 100, 140-7 *passim*
 Ivory, 82, 84, 87, 89, 90
 Iyala, 79, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 125, 128-32, 133, 150
- Jukun, xiii, 57, 77, 80-1, 91, 96, 97, 104, 122, 125, 126, 135, 149
- Kakanda, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 36, 46, 55
 Kambali, 17
 Kamberi, 18, 22, 36, 49, 103
 Kamuku, 18, 49
 Kanuri, 136, 137
 Keana, 91, 92, 96, 125-7 *passim*
 Kindreds, 63, 65, 95, 107, 112, 114
 Kings, 32, 33, 80-1, 82, 87, 127, 145-6, "divine" kings, 64, 70-1, 80-1, 87
 Kinship: Egede, 143; Igbara, 60-1; Nupe, 31; —terminology (Igbara), 60-1
 Konu, 20, 30, 38, 46
 Kroomen, 103
 Kukuruku, 58, 80
 Kupa, 19, 23, 55, 62
 Kusopa, 19, 25, 46
 Kotev, 81 (n)
 Kwotto, 55, 56
 Kyedye (Kede), 18, 23, 25, 27, 30, 36, 38, 40, 46
- Labour, division of, 25, 26, 28-30, 39, 59, 84, 85
 Land rights, 39-40, 62-3, 104, 128
 " Lands," 86, 91, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100, 102-24 *passim*, 127, 135, 141, 143
 Language, xiii, 23, 58, 77, 78-9, 91-3, 97, 105, 106, 109, 110, 113, 117, 118, 121, 124, 125, 128, 133, 134, 135, 136, 139, 141, 148, 151
 Law, Moslem, 39, 43
 Leatherwork, 29
 Legal Procedure: Afu, 139; Akweya-Yachi, 149; Egede, 145; Idoma, 99, 116-17; Igbara, 65-6; Iyala, 129, 131; Nupe, 39
 Leopards, 103 (n), 106, 130
 Lineages: Egede, 143-4; Etulo, 135; Idoma, 94, 95, 106, 107, 111, 113; Igala, 87; Nupe, 31
 Lions, 93
 Livestock, 26, 59, 83, 126
 Lopawa, xvii
- Malaria, 21
 Mallam Dendo, 22, 23

INDEX

- Mallams, 34, 42, 44, 47, 48
- Markets, 27, 59, 82, 83-5, 93, 105, 106, 108, 109, 137
- Marriage, 24, 43-4, 67-8, 88, 135, 143, 152; —payment, 43, 62, 67-8, 99; "woman" marriage, 43
- Masks, 46, 49, 69, 81 (n), 89, 96, 100, 109, 113, 118, 120-1, 123, 152
- Mat-makers, 29, 60
- Meat, ritual distribution of, 120
- Medicine, 29, 46-7, 110 (n), 132; —men, 29, 71
- Menhirs, 133
- Metal work, 28-9
- Missions, 70, 110, 140
- Monuments, grave, 68
- Mortality, infant, 21
- Moslems, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 70
- Murder, 39, 66, 116, 129, 131, 139, 145
- Musical instruments, 30, 149

- Names, naming, 42, 67
- Nkim, 134
- Nkum, 91, 92, 133-4
- Nupe, 17-52, 63, 80, 82, 91, 96, 104

- Ocheku District, 81, 92, 104-5
- Ochobo, 96, 109-10
- Odabi, 56
- Oglewu District, 92, 96, 97, 102, 108-10
- Okengwe, 56
- Okpoto, xiii, 92, 129
- Okwoga District, 92, 98, 102, 111-13
- Ordeals, 46, 66, 71, 130, 131, 132, 137, 139, 141
- Ornaments, 126
- Orokam District, 92, 96, 117-18
- Orri, 92, 99, 151-2
- Orukpa District, 92, 117
- Utukpa District, 92, 115-17
- Oturkpo District, 78, 79, 91, 92, 96, 97, 102, 110-11, 128

- Pawning, 41
- Physical types, 42, 88
- Polygyny, 24, 31, 43, 60, 138
- Population figures: xiii; Afu, 136; Akweya-Yachi, 148, 149; Arago, 125; Egede, 140; Etulo, 134; Idoma, 91, 100, 102-24 *passim*; Igala, 77; Igbira, 56; Nupe, 20-1, 31; Utonkon-Effum, 151
- Pottery, 30, 60, 135
- Priests, 37, 46, 57, 65, 71, 86, 112, 120, 127, 130, 149, 150

- Quarters, 130, 144, 149, 151-2

- Rain-making, 64
- Rank, 33-5, 120
- Religion: Egede, 146-7; Idoma, 100, 120-1; Igala, 89; Igbira, 70-2; Iyala, 132; Nupe, 45-9; Yachi, 150
- Rubber, 78, 85

- Sacrifice, human, 22, 68, 146
- Salt, 128
- Scarification, 67
- Sculpture, 30
- Semolika, 58

- Seniority, 95, 116
- Settlements, 31-2, 61, 95, 119, 128, 129, 143
- Silverwork, 28
- Slavery, slave trade, 41, 60, 65, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 97, 99, 108, 122, 127, 137, 145, 152
- Soils, 23, 78, 124
- Spirits, 45, 46, 70, 132, 144; —ancestral, 45, 49, 67, 70, 89; —evil, 70
- Succession, 63, 64, 65, 129-30, 135, 139, 152
- "Sultan" (Afu), 138

- Taboos, 32, 38, 61, 97, 102, 107, 125 (n), 146, 149, 150
- Tailors, 29
- Takpa (Tapa), 17, 21
- Theft, 39, 66, 131, 132, 145
- Titles: Egede, 144; Idoma, 104, 105, 107, 108, 111, 112, 113, 116, 118, 119-20, 123; Igala, 81, 82, 86; Igbira, 63; Iyala, 129, 130; Nupe, 33-5, 38, 41; Utonkon-Effum, 151-2
- Tiv, 79, 97, 104, 105, 106, 111, 128, 129, 134, 135
- Tooth-chipping, 67, 68
- Totemism, 61, 102, 107
- Trade, 25, 26, 27, 59, 82, 83-5, 99, 128-9, 137, 140, 151
- Traditions: Afu, 136-7; Arago, 125-6; Egede, 140-1; Etulo, 135; Idoma, 102-24 *passim*; Igala, 80-3; Igbira, 57; Iyala, 129; Nupe, 22
- Treason, 39
- Tribal marks, 42, 67
- Tsoede, 17, 19, 22, 30, 38, 39, 45, 46
- Twins, 133, 150

- Ukelle, 96, 128, 129
- Ulayi District, 100, 124
- Urhobo, 80 (n)
- Utonkon District, 92, 99, 100, 151-2
- Utonkon-Effum, 151-2

- Veneral disease, 21

- Wards, 32, 36, 119, 144
- Warfare, 66, 152
- Water rights, 40
- Weapons, 66
- Weaving, 20, 28-9, 30, 38, 60, 94, 137
- Widows, 39, 99
- Witchcraft, 48-9, 71, 100, 132, 146-7, 152
- Women, crafts of, 30, 85; position of, 40, 41, 65, 84, 87-8, 99, 100
- Worku District, 81, 100, 141, 145-6
- Wukari, 80-1, 96, 102, 103, 122

- Yachi, 128, 131, 148-50
- Yagba, 20, 22, 36, 38
- Yakoro, 128
- Yangedde District, 81, 92, 98, 99, 107-9
- Yoruba, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 36, 37, 38, 43, 46, 55, 77, 79, 80, 81, 92, 93, 96, 125, 127

- "Zam" (Nupe), 19
- Zitako, 19, 23

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