

THE HISTORICAL TRADITION OF OGONI, NIGERIA

VOLUME I

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the University of London

by

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Dedicated to the Memory  
of my beloved parents  
Chief Feeba Kpone-Tonwe  
and Madam Leyo Kpone-Tonwe  
for their foresight

Abstract

The thesis is a study of oral tradition preserved in the Ogoni district of Eastern Nigeria. The Ogoni, who occupy the mainland coast of south-eastern Nigeria, between the Imo and the Bonny rivers, are culturally and linguistically distinct. Their ancestors arrived in the area by sea in canoes many centuries before their present neighbours came to settle. Their social organization was based on class distinctions, with success in agriculture as the chief means of social mobility. Yams and plantains, which, they claim, were domesticated by their ancestors, constitute the main crops. Their religious-cum-military system included the award of titles, the highest of which is the basis of ancestral spirit-possession among the Ogoni. Contrary to long-held opinions, the thesis reveals that the Ogoni controlled the long-distance trade of the Eastern Niger Delta in pre-European times. Trade routes linked the hinterland to market towns on the coast of Ogoni. The main items of trade consisted of salt, slaves and sea foods, and the medium of exchange was an iron currency. The study showed that the ancient Ogoni regarded the acquisition of domestic slaves as a mark of social distinction. Furthermore, the thesis clarifies several issues concerning the early Portuguese contacts in this region and identifies the trading places described in the early Portuguese writings. The thesis is based entirely on primary material collected from selected informants during my fieldwork in the area from June till October 1981, and from November 1983 till March 1984. The type of informants included traditional rulers and chiefs, priests, spirit-mediums of founding ancestors who were currently possessing living descendants, recognized hunters, heads of traditional institutions, leaders of occupational guilds, heads of secret societies, etc. Interviews were recorded on tapes, transcribed and translated into English. The thesis is an analysis of this final material.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- J.A.H. Journal of African History
- J.H.S.N. Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
- J.A.S. Journal of African Studies
- I.J.A.L. International Journal of American Linguistics
- J.A.L. Journal of African Languages
- A.L. Anthropological Linguistics
- Calprof Calabar Provincial Papers
- S.O.A.S. School of Oriental and African Studies, University  
of London
- J.R.A.I. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
- S.W.J.A. South-Western Journal of Anthropology
- R.L.J. The Rhodes-Livingstone Journal

PREFACE

My interest in this research grew out of my family background. My grandfather on my mother's side was a medicine man and a member of the House of Hunters. His name, Kuwete, father of the Leopard, was famous for his hunting charms. On my father's side, the Tonwe family is a royal house in the Boue kingdom. Gbenekiri, my ancestor, was the founder of Uwegwere town in Boue. Sometime in the sixteenth century during the Baan war, apart from Yobue, who was not a citizen, Gbenekiri was the citizen commander of the Boue forces. After the war, Gbenekiri became King of a greater Boue. He had to move part of his compound from Uwegwere to Kono Boue, the capital town, where he was given a permanent piece of ground. For men with the title of Gbene were not supposed to be tenants on another person's land.

This partial removal of Gbenekiri to Kono Boue resulted in the establishment of two Gaan Noobana, namely Gaan Noobana Uwegwere, and Gaan Noobana Kono. The line of rulership passed to the latter. Gbenekiri was later deified as the "god of wine" Yomii, in memory of his work and for introducing the raffia palm and the palm wine industry into Ogoni. Besides, Gbenekiri had many great sons, four of whom attained the title of Gbene, namely Gbeneaka-kiri, Gbenesute, Gbenekpanidookunu and Gbenewee. These and other descendants of Gbenekiri were not only interested in Ogoni history but they were also the makers of the history. With this family tradition, in addition to my own knowledge of Ogoni languages and traditions, I felt strongly that I was sufficiently equipped to undertake this research.

Besides family background and interest, I also drew inspiration from the work of other scholars on the region. These include Professor Alagoa's A History of the Niger Delta, The Small Brave City-State, and Alagoa and Fombo's Chronicle of Grand Bonny; Professor Isichei's two volumes on the History of the Igbo People; Professor Horton's work on the evolution of the Kalabari state, "From Fishing Village to City-State", N.C. Ejitwu's Ph.D. Thesis on the history of the Obolo (Andoni); as well as the earlier work by Professor G.I. Jones, The Trading States of the Oil Rivers; and the more recent work by David Northrup, Trade without Rulers.

Considering all these works, I noticed how close these scholars have come to completing the history of the region, except Ogoni. Therefore I decided to fill the gap.

All this notwithstanding, I probably would not have been the one to do this research but for the advice of my M.A. degree examiners at the University of Minnesota. After the oral examination in the spring of 1980, these men told me to consider seriously the idea of taking up a university teaching appointment when I returned to Nigeria. This advice was given in the knowledge that I was already in government service and that I was going back to resume my duties as a senior official in the Rivers State Civil Service Commission. And, of course, the prospects were very attractive. This advice set me thinking more than seriously. It brought all the other factors into bold perspective. The decision was not easy but I acted on the advice. I resumed duties in the Commission in August, 1980, then in October I accepted an appointment in the University of Port Harcourt as an Assistant Lecturer in African History. By June 1981, I began work on this project.

Once started, other people came to my assistance, to whom I express my gratitude. First, to my supervisor, Professor Roland Oliver, who despite his very busy schedule, took time to read every line of this thesis; and that he did from my long-hand, not minding my bad handwriting. This gave him the opportunity to see clearly where I was going, and he offered me useful advice and guidance throughout the project. Moreover, Professor Oliver kept every appointment I booked with him throughout the years of this study and responded promptly to my letters when I was on fieldwork in Nigeria. These qualities both impressed and inspired me, and I shall ever be grateful for them.

Other persons who contributed to the success of this work include Professor J.R. Gray, who read some of my drafts and offered me valuable suggestions; Dr. R.J.A.R. Rathbone, who also offered me valuable advice; I am especially grateful to Dr. Susan Mary Martin, for the great amount of time she was willing to spare in reading through the whole thesis and making useful suggestions. Similar thanks go to Professor G.I. Jones of Cambridge University, who allowed me to see many of his papers, and some chapters of his forthcoming work on Eastern Nigeria; to Professor Kay Williamson of the University of Port Harcourt, for allowing me to read a typed copy of her latest work, "Linguistic Evidence of the Pre-history of the Niger Delta". I am also grateful to Professor J.D. Fage of Birmingham University, for his useful criticisms and suggestions with respect to my treatment of fieldwork material and my use of European sources; to Dr. Andrew Roberts of S.O.A.S., London, whose helpful criticisms and suggestions broadened my perspectives regarding the problems of methodology; Professors E.J. Alagoa, S.J.S. Cookey, Robin Horton; Dr. P.D. Kinako, Dr. Nwana Nzewunwa, and Dr. Peter Okafor, all of the University of Port Harcourt, to which I am grateful for providing

the financial assistance for this research.

I should also like to thank Professor Paul Marschke of Concordia College, St. Paul, and Professors Lansine Kabba and Allen Isaacman, for their continued support. My thanks are also due to the Staffs of the University of London Libraries, more especially the Staffs at S.O.A.S. Library, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, Rhodes House, Oxford, for their co-operation and willing assistance. I am grateful also to the Curator and Staffs of the Ethnographic Department, Museum of Mankind, London, for sparing the time for me to visit their store, where I was able to identify some items of Ogoni origin, such as the iron money described by Dapper. Similar thanks are also due to the Staffs of the National Archives, Enugu, Nigeria, and to the Staffs of the Rivers State Archives at the Centre for Arts and Culture, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, for their co-operation.

Perhaps this work would never have been written without the co-operation and the great interest shown for it by the many informants whom I interviewed during my fieldwork. I would have liked to list all their names here, but I cannot do this for lack of space. I therefore wish to extend my warmest gratitude to all of them for their willingness to respond to my many questions during the interviews, many of which were without prior notice. In that regard, I like to mention His Royal Highness, J.P. Bagia, the Gbenemene of Gokana; His Royal Highness, G.N.K. Gininwa, the Gbenemene of Tee; His Royal Highness, M.A.M. Tonwe III, the Gbenemene of Boue; His Highness Edward Nwebon Kpea of Mogho; Chief J.D. Osaronu of Ogoloma, Onne; Chief Oji Awala of Ogaale; The Reverend S.O. Laake of Agbeta, Onne; Chief Obo Ngofa of Aleeto; Chief Mbaedee Francis Mpeba of Nyoogo; Prince F.B. Teedee of Gure;

Prince Teera Inayo of Kono Boue; Chief M.D. Nwikogbara of Sii; Chief J.P. Tigiri of Bien; Chief E.B. Nyoone and Elders of Lewe; Chief Emmanuel Adookon of Bien; Chief J.B. Yomii of Ko; chief J.B. Obuh of Kabangha; Chief Dominic Keekee of Kpong; Chief G.N. Nwikogbara of Tem; Chief G.N. LooLoo of Ko; Chief M.N. Akekue of Kpuite; Chief Nnaa Kpugita of Keneke; Chief Uranee Frank Iwerebe of Uwegwere; Chief D.D. Deemua of Gbam; Mr. D.L. Ejoo of Agbeta; and Mr. A'Ean Gbigbo of Kwaakwaa.

Finally, I like to thank my Field Assistant, Mr. Gbenetee Boobura, because of his excellent qualities. This young man did not disappoint me one day throughout the fieldwork; and we did not miss a single appointment. One may not fully know the importance of those qualities until one has to deal in business with a people according to those people's time and not according to the time one likes. In the same vein, I must thank Mrs. Ruth Cranmer, who like Gbenetee Boobura, has the ability to respond to duty promptly, so that she was able to produce this fine typing within the shortest possible time.

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

In most theses, written with the aid of secondary materials, the authors usually devote a considerable space in the introduction comparing the secondary sources with the new work. This thesis, however, is based entirely on my fieldwork material, because there were no secondary works available on the area. For this reason, much of this introduction will be devoted to explaining this material, as used in the body of the thesis. In the case of secondary sources, copies are normally available in libraries for readers to check on points of interest. This is not quite the case with fieldwork materials. This introduction is therefore intended to serve also as a reference source for certain materials used in the thesis which could not be explained in detail for obvious reasons. Some comparisons with works of a similar kind will, however, be made in Chapter Two, where the problems of methodology are discussed.

The Ogoni are located on the mainland fringe of the Eastern Niger Delta. The territory extends from the Imo River in the east to the municipality of Port Harcourt in the west, and from Ndoki in the north to the Andoni flats and Bonny in the south. Ogoni land is an agricultural region and it is heavily cultivated with yams as the principal crop. There are not many big rivers, except for the Imo, which forms the boundary between Ogoni territory and Ibibioland. The climate is generally humid and the vegetation is of the equatorial rainforest type.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For details about the climate and geography of this region, see Reuben K. Udo, Geographical Regions of Nigeria, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 1-9, 46-98.

"Environments and Peoples of Nigeria" in Obaro Ikime, ed., Groundwork of Nigerian History (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., 1980), pp. 7-24.

There are three languages spoken in Ogoni, viz. Kana, Gokana, and Leme. The Kana language is spoken by the largest number of citizens, and it is spoken in the eastern half of the territory on both sides of the Luubaara river. Gokana is spoken in the west-central part of Ogoni division, while the Leme language is spoken in the western sector. All three languages are inter-related, but they are all distinct from all the other languages spoken in the area.

Joseph H. Greenberg in 1963 classified the Ogoni languages as belonging to the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo family of African languages.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of Greenberg's classification, Professor Kay Williamson of the University of Port Harcourt has distinguished seven linguistic groups or clusters within the Niger Delta. Three of these are from the Benue-Congo branch and four from the Kwa branch. The languages spoken by the neighbours of Ogoni, viz. Ijo, Igbo, Edo, Itsekiri-Igala, etc., belong to the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family of African languages, while the Abua-Ogbia and the Efik-Ibibio clusters are from the Benue-Congo branch. The Ogoni languages are classified as a distinct group within the Benue-Congo branch. On the other hand, Andoni (Obolo) which is a southern neighbour of Ogoni, is classified as a separate language within the Efik-Ibibio language cluster.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Hans Wolff, who published his analytical work on the Niger Delta languages in 1959, and on the Ogoni languages in 1964, concluded that the Ogoni languages were "certainly neither Ijo, nor Kwa

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2. Greenberg, Joseph H., The Languages of Africa, 2nd edn. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. 162-171.
  3. Williamson, Kay, "Languages of the Niger Delta", Nigeria Magazine, Vol. 97, (1968), pp. 124-130.

languages".<sup>4</sup> Then after comparing the Ogoni languages with the two other Niger Delta language groups within the Benue-Congo branch, he also found that the Ogoni languages revealed "no special similarities to Ibibio-Efik, their closest neighbours to the east, or to the Abua group of languages spoken in the Eastern Niger Delta ... " <sup>5</sup> On the basis of these linguistic comparisons, Wolff concluded that until further comparative data were available, "Ogoni must be regarded as a distinct group within that branch".<sup>6</sup>

The linguistic differences did not prevent the flow of trade and cultural contacts between Ogoni and her neighbours. It will be shown in this study that there was a great deal of contact between the various ethnic groups throughout this region, not only through trade but also through cultural and diplomatic exchanges. For example, there was exchange of secret cults between Ogoni and Ibibio. There was also the transmission of some instruments of social organization, such as the use of elite titles, as demonstrated by the transmission of the leopard tradition between Ogoni and Igbo, and the head-hunters society between Kalabari and Igbo.<sup>7</sup> There were also great overland trade routes from trading points or market-places on the Ogoni coasts to the Igbo hinterland. These market-places or centres of trade operated in some

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4. Wolff, Hans, "Niger Delta Languages I : Classification", Anthropological Linguistics, Vol. I, 8 (1959), p. 36 and pp. 32-55.
  5. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni Languages", Journal of African Languages, Vol. III, 1 (1964), p. 38, and pp. 38-51.
  6. Ibid.
  7. Nzimiro, Ikenna, Studies in Ibo Political Systems, (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1972), pp. 33-36.

respects like the 'Ports of trade' described by Karl Polanyi.<sup>8</sup> They were located at strategic points on the Ogoni coasts. They operated an equitable and durable medium of exchange in the form of iron money. There was also an active brokerage organization which provided brokerage services and credit facilities.<sup>9</sup> Thus the long-distance traders were assured of the sale of their goods. For the safety of both local and foreign traders and for the security of their goods, markets were entrusted to the protection of powerful gods.<sup>10</sup>

The trade between the Ogoni coast and the Igbo hinterland and the trading arrangements described above existed before the arrival of the first Europeans in the Bight of Biafra. The pre-Portuguese trade with the hinterland was based on the exotic products of the sea as well as on salt. The peoples of the hinterland valued these things exceedingly. There was a big salt industry in the city of Bangha, which was located on the coast of Ogoni. Duarte Pacheco Pereira, who visited the Bight of Biafra at the end of the fifteenth century, described this salt industry and the volume of trade that came from the hinterland and from other coastal areas as a result of it.<sup>11a</sup>

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8. Revere, Robert B. "'No Man's Coast': Ports of Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean" in Karl Polanyi et al, Trade and Markets in Early Empires, (Glencoe: The Free Press, Illinois, 1957), pp. 38-63;  
Arnold, Rosemary, "A Port of Trade: Whydah on the Coast of Guinea", in Karl Polanyi et al, Trade and Markets .... , pp. 154-176.
9. Barigwere, Inee, (Chief) of ILooLoo (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at ILooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-173  
J.B. Yomii, (Chief) of Ko, Interviewed at Ko on 15.3.84. Text 29, pp. 104-107
10. Baedee, Eli (Chief) of Eepie (Aged c. 55). Interviewed at Eepie on 23.12.83. Text 43, pp. 147-151.
- 11a. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, (Vers 1506-08). Tr. Raymond Mauny, Centrode- Estudos da Guine Portuguesa, No. 19. (Bissau / 1956), p. 147.

Although Pereira did not mention the name of the town of which he estimated its population to be about 2,000 households,<sup>11b</sup> some historians of this region have identified the town as Bonny.<sup>12</sup> Some scholars, however, do not think that it was Bonny, notwithstanding the fact that Bonny was the leading trading town in the area in the nineteenth century. For example, Professor Cookey suggests that the town was neither Bonny nor Elim Kalabari, but that it was nevertheless close to both of these towns in that general area. According to Professor Cookey:

The traditions of the Central Delta recorded by Alagoa tend to emphasize the Central Delta as the original source of salt manufacture. However, as noted in the account of Pereira, another centre close to Bonny and Elim Kalabari was producing salt by the end of the fifteenth century. (13)

When the early Europeans arrived on the coasts of the Bight of Biafra, it was at one of the ports of trade located at Gbee, near Mogho on the coast of Ogoni that they found an indigenous standard means of exchange - an iron currency.<sup>14</sup> For, as Dr. Northrup has recently argued, this iron money was not introduced by Europeans.<sup>15</sup> Through linguistic studies in the Niger Delta, Professor Kay Williamson has traced the movement of trade and cultural exchanges from original centres

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- 11b. Professor J.D. Fage has given the appropriate translation of the original Portuguese word, vezinhos, used by Pereira, as "heads of households". See J.D. Fage, "A Commentary on Duarte Pacheco Pereira's Account of the Lower Guinea Coastlands in his Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis and on Some Other Early Accounts", History in Africa, Vol. 7, (1980) pp. 48-75.
  12. Isichei, Elizabeth, A History of Nigeria, (Lagos, London, New York: Longman, 1983), pp. 166 and 153.
  13. Cookey, S.J.S., "Trade, Social Mobility and Politics in the Niger Delta: A Reconsideration", Journal of African Studies, Vol. 7, 2 (1980), pp. 83-90.
  14. Dapper, Olfert, Description of Africa, Vol. II. Tr. John Ogilby (London, Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.
  15. Northrup, David, Trade Without Rulers: Pre-colonial Economic Development in Southeastern Nigeria, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) p. 159.

of distribution to various areas or communities in the Niger Delta, as well as to the hinterland. One of such words studied by Professor Williamson was the Ogoni word for money, kpugi.<sup>16</sup>

The name Ogoni is not well-known, neither in Ogoni itself, nor in the outside world. Apart from the few linguistic studies cited above, nothing has been published on Ogoni. No ethnographic study or anthropological report has been done on Ogoni. Thus one of the difficult problems of this study is that there is no extant material on Ogoni to which one could refer in a study of this kind. It is therefore of vital importance to note from the outset that the history of Ogoni is a history told by the Ogoni themselves. It is a history told from the inside to the outside world, even though the people who told it hardly knew of any other world outside of their own. This places the history of Ogoni in a unique category.

In contrast, however, almost all the neighbours of Ogoni whose histories have been written, have some kind of published accounts in European books showing their dealings with europeans in pre-colonial times. For example, Professor Isichei has published two volumes on the history of the Igbo, one of which is entitled Ibo People and the Europeans: The Genesis of a Relationship.<sup>17</sup> And Professor Ryder has published, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Professor Alagoa has published several works on the history of the Ijo people.

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16. Williamson, Kay, "Languages of the Niger Delta", op.cit., pp.124-30.

17. Isichei, Elizabeth, A History of the Igbo People, (London: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1976).  
The Ibo People and the Europeans: The Genesis of a Relationship to 1906, (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1973)

18. Ryder, A.F.C., Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897, (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1969), Paperback 1977.

These and many other historiographical works on the Niger Delta in particular, and on Southern Nigeria in general, contain substantial references to published accounts in European works, showing the nature of their relations with Europeans.

With Ogoni history, the position is the contrary. The early Portuguese who traded with Ogoni in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, left no records with direct reference to the name Ogoni. As shown below, one reason for this is because Ogoni is not only a corrupted name, but it is also a complete misnomer. It will be argued in this study that terms like "Calbonger", "Calborg", "Calapongas", etc., used by the Portuguese, are references to Ogoni towns like Bangha, Kabangha, etc.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, it will be argued that the cause of the confusion had never been told, and that as a result, further complications resulted, manifesting in such other misnomers in the Eastern Niger Delta as "Calabar", "Old Calabar", and "New Calabar".<sup>20</sup>

The initial missionary effort begun in Ogoni by the Portuguese during this early period ended prematurely by the mysterious disappearance of the missionary. Although the missionary was later deified as Barigokana<sup>21</sup> (Gokana deity), this was done by incorporation into the

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19. Cf. Waddell, Hope Masterton (Rev.). Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858, 2nd edn. (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 309.

P.A. Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. I, p. 184.

20. Finn Fuglestad has written about a similar confusion arising between the names of the two neighbouring countries of Nigeria and Niger, especially when reference is made to the citizens of the two countries. A History of Niger, 1850-1960, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.

21. Kpea, Edward Nwebon (His Highness) of Mogho, (Aged c. 89). He was interviewed at Mogho on 7.2.84. Text 6, pp. 20-24.

local religions. Because such local religions were surrounded by so much secrecy and mysteries, no researcher has been able to gain access to any artifacts left behind by this early missionary. I visited the priest of this cult at Mogho in March 1984. Though he confirmed that the 'god' left certain things behind, including a bell and a certain image, which are now among the sacred items preserved in the cult's shrine, I could not see them because the shrine could only be opened traditionally for rituals once a year. Thus the chances of gaining access to the interior of this shrine have always been very slim for researchers. But it must be stated that this missionary, who is now worshipped as a god, was one of the earliest Portuguese missionaries to this part of West Africa, probably the predecessor of the Capuchin missionaries of the early seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding the above problem, the lack of European records on Ogoni history does not constitute a particularly serious weakness. Major A.G. Leonard, the only European who made a brief description of Ogoni, did not visit Ogoni. As it will be shown later, his description is full of errors, and could not be useful.<sup>23</sup> Ogoni history therefore may be seen as one example in African history in which the full impact comes from the people themselves without the influences of external cultures or of individual or group biases.<sup>24</sup>

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22. Ryder, A.F.C., Benin and the Europeans ..., op.cit., pp. 99-100.

23. Leonard, Major A.G., The Lower Niger and Its Tribes, (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1906), pp. 24-5.

24. cf. Susan Mary Martin, "The History of the Oil Palm Industry in South-eastern Nigeria: The Case of the Ngwa Region", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1984, pp. 45-46.  
Thornton, John Kelly, "The Kingdom of Kongo in the Era of the Civil Wars, 1641-1718", Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979, pp. 10-12.

The ancestors of the Ogoni who came into the territory by sea in canoes, first settled in the area south of the Luubaara River. They called themselves Kana people (Pya Kana). The name Ogoni is new. Their chief towns included Nama, Kugba, Gure, Kono, Luawii, Sii, etc.. Subsequent settlements were founded in the area north of the river with chief centres at Kpong, Ko, Kabangha, etc.. The last two were ports of trade on the Imo River. From Kpong area, subsequent settlements were founded in Tee area with Uweke as the main town.

In the Tee area, they found some autochthonous peoples. Because of trade and cultural contacts and intercourse with the autochthonous inhabitants in this area, the Kana language began to alter progressively from this area westwards. Certain towns in this area still bear autochthonous place-names, such as Gio, Goyi, Ogoyi, Ban, Horo, etc.. War broke out between the Kana immigrants and the autochthonous inhabitants. The latter were overcome and absorbed. A great number of them migrated to the area now known as Gokana, and some to the area now known as Leme. (Map p. 14) A small group drifted along the edges of the Imo forests into what is now Teebaan (Taabaan) area. A remnant remained in the area as dwellers in the autochthonous towns referred to above. Professor Kay Williamson recently discovered that the inhabitants of these autochthonous towns speak a distinct dialect which was still different from the dialect spoken in the rest of Tee:

This group (Ogoni) has been very little studied. Eleme is considerably distinct from Kana and Gokana, while Ogoi (recently drawn to my attention by Nwinee Williamson) appears on quick inspection to be intermediate but in some respects closer to Eleme (25).

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25. Williamson, Kay, "Linguistic Evidence for the prehistory of the Niger Delta". Forthcoming.

Similar wars also took place in the west-central part of the territory, where there was a concentration of autochthonous inhabitants. The conquest of the people in this area and the merger of their population with that of the invading Kana-speaking people gave rise to the nomenclature Gooh-Kana or Gokana. Because of the higher concentration of the autochthonous population in this area, their linguistic impact on the invading Kana population was much more pronounced. Thus a Gokana language emerged.<sup>26</sup> As in the Central (or Tee) area, some place-names of the autochthonous inhabitants of this area survived, like the (now extinct) towns of Goi and Gooh (or Koh).

For purposes of regional or geographical identification, certain terms were invented. Those Ogoni people who had occupied the eastern half of the territory, and who had retained the original Kana language retained the name Kana People (Pya Kana). Those in the central area, whose Kana speech had been affected somewhat through contacts with the autochthonous inhabitants of that area, were described as the "Central People" or "Pya Tee-Yee", from which the shortened form Tee is derived. Those who had occupied the predominantly autochthonous territory in the west central area, were referred to as the Gooh-Kana, from which the shortened form Gokana is derived. The term Gooh-Kana or Gokana is descriptive, and it means "the Kana who settled on the former territory of the Gooh", or "who occupied Goohland".

In the Kana language, a thing possessed precedes the possessor in the genitive. For example, To Bari means God's House, or House of God.

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26. cf. Wolff, Hans, "Niger Delta Languages ...", op.cit., pp. 23-53.

An analogy may be drawn from such modern terms as England or the English, which refers to the descendants or the inhabitants of the land of the Angles; and Scotland or the Scotch, which refers to the descendants or the inhabitants of the land of the Scots. In the case of Gokana, the idea of land or territory is implied.

From the foregoing analysis, it is presumed that the ethnic name of the autochthonous inhabitants of these areas was something like "Gooh" or Goh. This assumption is supported by the predominance of the "Go-" root in their place-names, as indicated above. Furthermore, it is significant to notice that the eastern Kana who were the contemporaries of these autochthonous peoples, described them as "Go-", and their Kana counterparts who had settled in the conquered territory, as the Gooh-Kana. On the basis of these facts, the autochthonous inhabitants of these areas will be referred to in the rest of this study as the "Gooh peoples".

The Leme area was occupied by emigrants from both the Gokana and the Tee areas. These migrants came into the area in different periods and for different reasons. Some groups migrated into the area as a result of the wars of conquest which took place between the Kana (Ogoni) and the Gooh peoples, first in the Tee area, and later in the Gokana area. Other groups migrated to the Leme area as a result of persecutions in Gokana. In addition to these fugitive emigrants from the Tee and Gokana areas, there were also some scattered autochthonous groups in the Leme area itself. With these groups, the newcomers from the Tee and Gokana areas lived together side by side for a considerable period. One of the most notable of such autochthonous inhabitants of

the Leme area was a group called the Etabajo, who occupied the part of the land opposite Okrika island. They were famous agriculturists who were noted for planting large, smooth yams. One of their kings named Sauwe boasted that he was the greatest yam king in all the world. This boast provoked the anger of other yam kings, who allied together against him. The long-drawn-out war which resulted ended with the extermination or the dispersal of the Etabajo people. Their territory was occupied by the victorious newcomers from the Gokana area.<sup>27</sup>

The tradition that the Okrikans migrated from the Ijo area to settle in the Eastern Niger Delta, and that they began to worship a deity called Fenibeso, was derived from the Etabajo people. Although the autochthonous inhabitants of the Leme area were eventually conquered and their remnants scattered or absorbed into the population, the impact of their language effected further modifications in the speech of the immigrants from Gokana. The result was the emergence of a Leme language.<sup>28</sup>

The groups from Gokana became dominant in the Leme area. Their leader, who is acknowledged as the ancestor of the Leme people, was called Lene. The term Leme is said to have been derived from this name. I was able to visit the original compound of this ancestor in the town of Lewe in Gokana. There I recorded a brief but important statement from a man said to be the only surviving descendant of the original lineage, described as the lineage or kindred of Giokpee (Gaan Giokpee).<sup>29</sup>

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27. Wolff, Hans, "Niger Delta Languages...", op.cit.

28. Ibid.

29. Nteyoo, Ndi of Lewe, Gokana (Aged c. 65), interviewed at Lewe on 12.2.84. Text 4, pp. 12-13.  
E.B. Nyone, (Chief) and Chiefs and Elders of Lewe, interviewed at Lewe on 26.2.84. Text 3, pp. 9-11.

The oral tradition records that Lene escaped from Lewe in Gokana when he and his entire family were faced with imminent death because his wife gave birth to twins. And rather than give up the 'abomination for destruction' he defiled himself by physical contacts with them. To save his own neck and those of his wife and the young babies, he got up in the middle of the night and escaped, being assisted by a younger brother, who bore the family or lineage name Giokpe.<sup>30</sup>

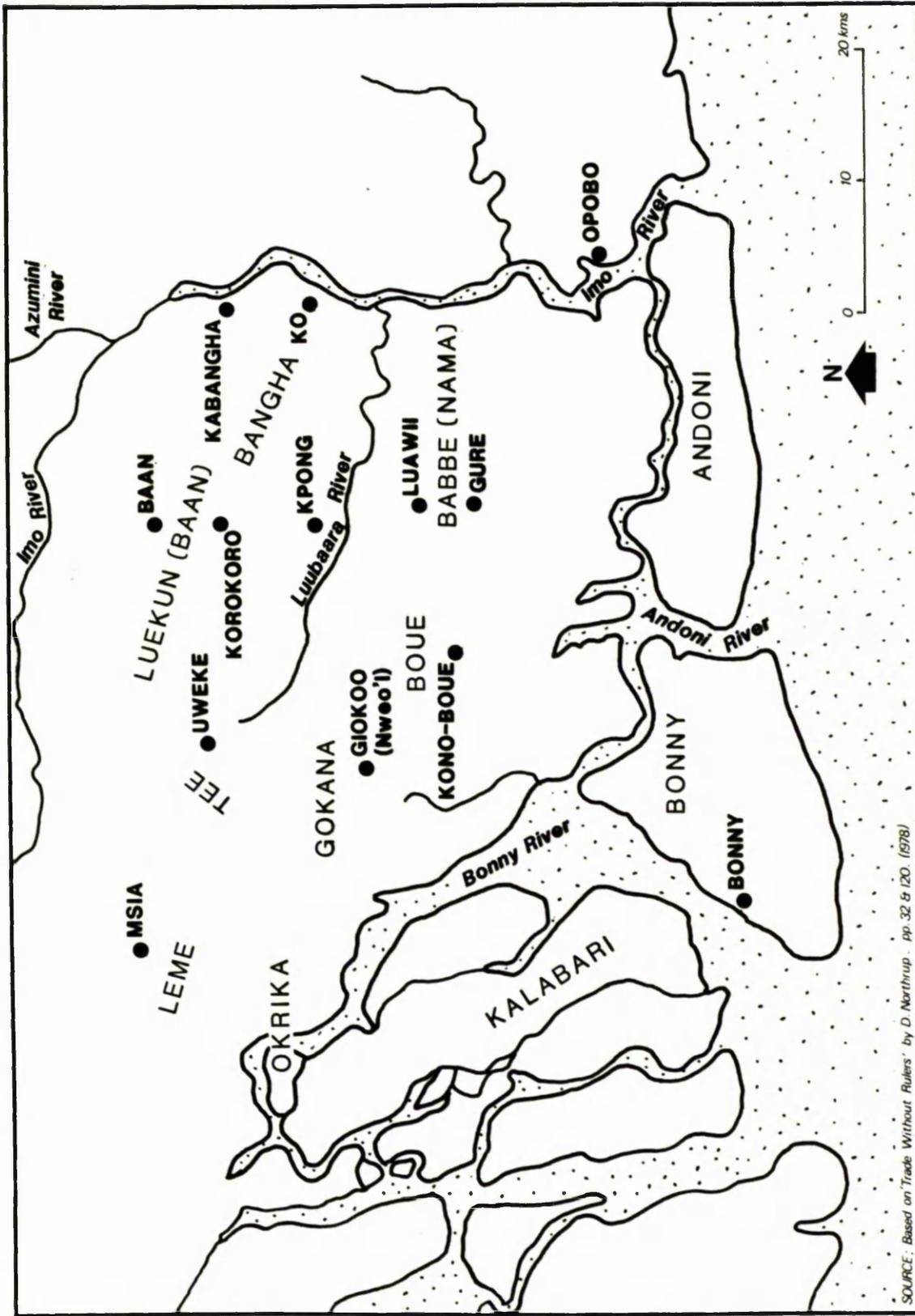
#### Political Divisions

As stated above, the name Ogoni is not known to the ordinary non-literate Ogoni person. It is not used in the daily social communications. How the name came about is explained below. The Ogoni know and call themselves Pya Kana or Kana people. There was no one single term which applied to the entire geographical area. Because of their religious beliefs, the ancient Ogoni seemed to have been married to the number Seven, which is to them a sacred number. Thus politically and geographically, the Ogoni divided the whole territory into what is known as "The Seven Cultural/Political Divisions of the Kana People" ("Ereba Edo Kana"). These were Boue, Babbe, Baan, Bangha, Gokana, Tee and Leme. (See Map).

The term Edo, which has been translated "Cultural/Political Divisions" does not seem to have an exact equivalent in the English language. Literally the phrase "Ereba Edo Kana" means "The Seven Multitudes of Kana People". Although each of these divisions represents a cultural/political area, there were a few exceptions. For example, in Bangha, the City-State of Ko (i.e. Opuoko) was politically independent even though

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30. Laaka, S.O. (Rev.) of Ekara, Onne (Aged c. 67). Interviewed 21.2.84.  
Ejoo, D.L. of Agbeta (Aged c. 65). Interviewed on 25.2.84.  
Text 8, pp. 28-36 (Laaka) and Text 11, pp. 49-53 (Ejor).



SOURCE: Based on 'Trade Without Rulers' by D. Northrup, pp. 32 & 120. (1978)

**The Seven Cultural/Political Divisions of Kana (Ogoni)**

the entire area shared a cultural affinity. Similarly in Babbe, before the sixteenth century, i.e. before the Baan war, Boue and Kpong were politically subordinate to Nama, whose political centre was then at Luawii. After the Baan war, Boue emerged as the leading political power south of the Luubaara, and Kpong became an independent kingdom. Apart from these two exceptions, each of the Seven Divisions remained a cultural and political unity. "Cultural unity" here does not mean that there were different cultures in each of the Divisions. It means that within each of these cultural/political areas, there was co-operation in cultural practices. For example, Ogoni cultural practices were closely related to agriculture and to the yam crop. Thus all Ogoni did not begin their farming season in the same week or in the same month. They did not celebrate their annual feasts or yam festivals in all the Divisions in the same month, or in the same week of the month. Each of these cultural/political areas celebrated its annual feasts separately even though the essential traditions were the same. The same 'regional' co-operation applied in matters of trade and in the regulation of market days and market-places or ports of trade. For the same reasons, the incidence of marriage was higher within each cultural/political area than between them. None-the-less, the contents of the traditions in all the different areas are the same.

The next important problem in the study of Ogoni history is the question of place-names. Ogoni ethnic and place-names may sometimes be confusing, unless the researcher is aware of how they were formed. Many Ogoni ethnic and place-names have been corrupted. This was due to the influence of certain neighbours of Ogoni who, because of their unique relations with the Europeans in the late pre-colonial and colonial

periods, represented Ogoni to the literate outside world. These neighbours were the Ibani and the Igbo.

As a first step towards the solution of this problem, I have endeavoured throughout this study to use the correct forms of the place-names and to insert the corrupted forms in parenthesis. When it was inevitable that a corrupted place-name must be used, the actual place-name has also been inserted in parenthesis alongside it.

The name Ogoni seems to have been derived from the Gooh peoples. As noted above, they had a predominance of the "Go-" root in their personal, ethnic and place-names. For instance, a personal name like Ogosu is from a Gooh origin. One of my informants pointed out that the name Ogosu was a popular family name of the now absorbed autochthonous people of Etabajo.<sup>31</sup> It will be argued below that this Etabajo people were one of the first groups of autochthonous inhabitants who escaped from the Tee area to settle in Leme when war first broke out there between them and the invading Kana (Ogoni) people, and that the name Ogoni derived in part from them. But in the form it now exists, it has been corrupted.

To illustrate how Ogoni place-names were corrupted, two examples outside Ogoni will be demonstrated. As shown later, the two examples are names which were originally derived from Ogoni sources, but in their present forms, they have also been corrupted. The two names are Bonny and Okrika. It is hoped that if it can be demonstrated how these two

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31. Laaka, S.O. (Rev.), op.cit. Text 8, pp. 28-36.

names were corrupted, it will be clear how Ogoni place-names were similarly corrupted. Briefly stated, the proposition is as follows:

First, it is argued that the Ogoni name for Okrika is Kirika. That this name was given to them by the Etabajo who were their nearest neighbours when they initially settled on the Ogoni mainland.

Next, that the term Okrika is not Ijo. The 'O' in Okrika is an Igbo augmentation. This augmentation therefore appeared after the seventeenth century, because, if it had appeared earlier when Dapper and the Barbots recorded information about Okrika up to the end of the seventeenth century, they should have recorded the term Okrika. The form Krike and Crike recorded by Dapper and Barbot respectively, is Ijo. Therefore, this Ijo form was adopted later, after the development of Okrika nationalism. (32)

The Ijo form appeared too late after the Igbo had already learned the Ogoni form. Otherwise, the form should have been Okrike instead of Okrika.

Thus Dapper and Barbot did not learn the Ogoni form because they came from across the ocean, and met a nationalist Okrika first.

Now the term Kirika or NKirika was a popular Gooch word for the idea of perfect beauty with regard to form and size. The word is still a popular personal name or nickname in Tee and Gokana areas today. W.B. Baikie records that the Igbo pronunciation of the term Ebane was Obane; that the Kabari pronunciation of it was Ibani, and that the standard usage at Bonny was Ebane. (33) It is shown below that the terms Bani (from which the European form Bonny was derived) and Ebani (from which the Ijo form was derived), are Ogoni terms for Bonny and Bonny people respectively.

From the foregoing, it is argued that the "go-" root in Ogoni was a Gooch derivative but that the prefix "O" was an Igbo augmentation.

Thirdly, in addition to the preceding illustrations, the following list of Ogoni ethnic and place-names are known to have been corrupted by the Igbo and the Ibani, which suggest that the name Ogoni was also corrupted by the same peoples:

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32. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report on the Okrika Clan Degema Division, Owerri Province". NA/E, CS026/3, File 29004, 1933, p. 11.
  33. Baikie, W.B. Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Bi'nue ... in 1854 (London: John Murray, Albemarle St., 1856), p. 335.

Table 1

OGONI PLACE-NAMES

<u>KANA/GOOH</u>	<u>IGBO/BONNY</u>	<u>TYPE OF NAME</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
Kwaa	Okwali	Place-name	Igbo corruption
Ko	Opuoko	"	Bonny "
Buon-ko	Kalaoko	"	Bonny "
Goyi	Ogoyi	"	Igbo "
Goi	Ogoi	"	Igbo "
Leme	Eleme	Ethnic name of an Ogoni group	Igbo "
Tee	Tai	" " "	Igbo "
Boue	Bewa	" " "	Bonny "
Kana .	Egane (34)	" " "	Bonny "
Teebaan	Taabaa	Place-name	Igbo "
Kpuite	Kpite	"	Igbo "
Kaa	Ika	"	Igbo "
Koloma	Okoloma	"	Igbo "
Keneke (35)	Kereke	"	Bonny "
Bubu	Ebubu/Ibubu	"	Igbo/Bonny "
Gosi (36)	Ogosu	Personal name	Igbo "
Kporo	Ekporo	Place-name	Igbo "
Te'ol (37)	Eteo	"	Igbo "
Msia (38)	Ncha/Nchia	"	Igbo/Bonny "
Ogaale (39)	Ogale	"	Igbo "
Aleesa (40)	Alesa	"	Igbo "
Aleeto (41)	Aleto	"	Igbo "
Kpaa jo (42)	Akpajo	"	Igbo "
Boomu (43)	Bomu	"	Igbo/Bonny "
Boodoo (44)	Bodo	"	" " "
BooLi (45)	Bori	"	Igbo "
Gbomsia (46)	Agboncha/ Agbonchia	"	Igbo/Bonny "

34. Baikie, W.B., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage ..., op.cit., p. 309.

35. This is the name of a town in Boue area. Keneke is the short form of Keneke-Maala, meaning, "where land and sea met", or "Lands-end". According to tradition, the founder described the settlement thus because it was the last settlement of dry solid ground, after which the topography changed into mangrove and sea. See Chief Nnaa Kpugita, interviewed 2.1.84. Text 46, pp. 159-163.

Footnotes continued:

36. Gosi is a personal name from Gook origins. It means shy-face. cf. Rev. S.O. Laaka, interviewed 6.3.84.
37. Te'ol is a Gokana word, and ultimately of Gook origin. It means "far inside the bush". It was descriptive of how the original village or settlement was located.
38. Msia was the original name of the chief town of Leme. According to tradition, Lene, the ancestor of Leme people was from Gokana. But his wife bore twins. Faced with annihilation, he fled with his family. After many days of bush trek, he arrived there exhausted. So he said, "I will not run again. I will stay here. Where else should I go?" Gokana "Msi-an?", Kana "Msia?". He gave this name to his first son born there saying, "I said, 'Where else should I go?'" "Msia?". The compound of the son developed into a town and bore its owner's name.
39. Ogaale means "It will be well". It was a declaration with prospects of future well-being. Ogaale is a community in Leme. It was originally the compound of the first son of Msia, who gave the name to his son in memory of his father's strong faith in the future. That he said, "'It will be well' with me".
40. Aleesa is the name of another community in Leme. It grew out of the compound of the fourth son of Msia. Aleesa means, "It's well already". According to tradition, when people asked Lene (now called Leme) whether he thought that it would be well with him (in view of the fact that he did not submit to the tradition of twin births) he replied "It's well already", "Aleesa". Thus Msia gave this name to his fourth son in retrospect of his father's advance faith in the future.
41. Aleeto: Again this is a Gokana word. Literally it is pronounced Aleeto(n). It means, "It is time for action", "I'm ready", It was the name of the third son of Msia. According to tradition, Msia gave this name to his third son saying, "With three sons, I will no longer lie low, I am ready to defend myself, I will act". This name was obviously given as a warning to their autochthonous neighbours.
42. Kpaajo: This is the name of the westernmost town of Leme. The name developed from the circumstances in which it was founded. According to tradition, the founder was banished from Aleeto because it was alleged that he put his hands into that which was evil. No-one is sure whether the allegation was true, but the name remained. Today the town is one of the best Christian towns in Leme.
43. Boomu is the name of a Gokana town. It derived its name from its position on the coast. It means "on" or "built on water".
44. Boodoo is the name of the most populous town in Gokana. It also derived its name from its location on the sea coast. It means "built on" or "overlooking the sea".

The Ogoni lived in compact communities. The communities consisted of large compounds of rectangular houses. A town (bue) comprised a number of communities. One such a community was called Jongo. A compound was called Be, while an individual house within a compound was called To. The head of a compound was usually a man of title of the rank of Elder. This means that he was a man who had performed the traditional rites as far as that of Yaanwii, and had planted the Tree of Wealth (Te-Mene) in the centre of his compound, if he was an ordinary citizen; or the Tree of God (Te-Bari) if he was from a royal lineage. He then attained the title and rank of Kabaari and head of a compound or House.

The compounds, like the houses, were also rectangular. The house of the head of the compound stood at the back of the enclosure and fronted a wide courtyard or open ground across which was the entrance to the compound. Other houses in the compound flanked the main house right and left, all of them facing the wide central courtyard. Usually a second line of houses was erected behind the first. A strong fence was erected behind the main house. There the head of the compound stored his yams meant for domestic use and other valuables. Similar enclosures were erected behind the houses of the principal wives.

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Footnotes continued:

45. Booli is the name of the capital town of Ogoni. It derived its name from an ancient village which was located on a high ground or hill near it. The name has a Gooh origin, and it means "on the hill top".
46. Gbomsia is the short form of Gboo-Msia; and it means the "gateway" or "open space of Msia" or "Msia Square". The name derived from the location of the compound of the second son of Msia. His actual name is now unknown. His compound was situated at or near the gateway or crossroad leading to Msia's settlement. The compound became a separate community.

When there was no more space for expansion within a compound, some of the members built their own houses outside the compound. But such out-houses or cluster of houses were not separate independent compounds. They were still regarded as members of the main compound, whose name they bore. They could not perform certain types of rituals in such outside houses or compounds. They must bring such rituals to the main compound. As stated above, each such main compound continued as a unit of society. The heads of these compounds formed the governing body of a Jongo. The head of the compound (Be) was called Mene-Be, the head of the Jongo was called Mene-Jongo, and the head of the town (Bue) was called Mene-Bue. The ruler of several towns together or a territory was called Gbenemene, (Great Ruler or King).

The economy was based on agriculture. Farming was therefore the main occupation and the yam was the principal crop. As farm work required many hands, a prosperous man needed a large compound full of able men and women. Marriage was therefore a key factor for success in life. And before a man was given the hand of somebody's daughter in marriage, that man must have demonstrated on the farms that he was a hard working person. Similarly, before the parents of a young man approached the parents of a girl or young woman to ask the hand of their daughter in marriage to their son, they must have seen some evidence of hard work in the girl, as demonstrated by her work for her parents on the farms.<sup>47</sup> This was one of the main reasons why the Ogoni did not intermarry with their Ijo neighbours, since the two ethnic groups had contrasting occupations, the Ijo being mainly fishermen. Moreover, the system of marriage between the two peoples was different. The Ogoni

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47. Ejoo, D.L. of Agbeta, Onne (Aged c. 65). Interviewed 25.2.84. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

practised the patrilineal exogamous system while the Ijo practised the matrilineal endogamous system.<sup>48</sup>

However, the majority of Ogoni men preferred to marry from their own ethnic group. Only a very small minority, mostly the elite, 'married' from outside. These were the wealthy men who have gained some social titles and who wanted to make their status in the society known in a special way. Locally, the term used was yae gbon (buying a slave) but when negotiating with the parents of the women, they used the term 'marriage'. Such wealthy men travelled long distances to Igbo or Ibibio land to 'marry' additional wives.<sup>49a</sup> Sometimes girls of marriageable age who had not found husbands among their own people, were brought by agents from farther away in the hinterland to the coastal markets, where they were seen and 'married' by prospective husbands. Some of the slaves reported about at the end of the fifteenth century by Duarte Pacheco Pereira were of this category.<sup>49b</sup>

Since the Ogoni economy was completely rooted in agriculture, the signs of a young man's future prosperity were not judged by what he inherited but by whether he would have the ability to utilize the land. Thus if a young man showed a tendency to consume wealth rather than to produce it, he was not favoured. And no one would give him their daughter in marriage. Thus if he did not marry, he was not only regarded as a failure, but he was also considered as occupying the lowest level

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48. In the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there was a trend towards a dual system in Ijo land, as prosperous men married wives from Igbo land. See E.J. Alagoa "The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., History of West Africa, I, (London, Longman Group Ltd., 1971), pp. 269-303.

49a. Laaka, Rev. S.O. of Ekara, op.cit., Text 8, pp. 28-36.  
Osaronu, J.D. (Chief) of Ogoloma (Aged 47). Interviewed 25.2.84, Text 10, pp. 42-48.

49b. Pereira, Duarte Pacheco, op.cit., p. 147.

of poverty in society, and would have no voice in social decisions, since he was not considered fit to make decisions which could affect other men's wives, or their sons and daughters.<sup>50</sup> With the exception of trade relations, the absence of marriage relations between Ogoni and her neighbours was one of the causes of the isolation of Ogoni. In the recent pre-colonial period, the Ogoni appear to have shifted their interest more towards marrying Igbo wives.

Trade was an important aspect of the economy. Many trade routes linked Ogoni land and the Ogoni coast with the Igbo hinterland. They enabled the Ogoni to have intimate knowledge of Igbo traditions and customs, and vice versa. In the course of trade, certain Ogoni cultural practices and institutions were transmitted to the Igbo hinterland. One example was the institution for the award of certain social titles, such as the Leopard tradition.<sup>51</sup>

Long-distance trade was in the hands of only a very small group, the class of rulers, including priests and ritual medicine men. They had the means to travel, and they could travel farther afield because they were not afraid, since they commanded respect on account of their rank and ritual powers. This class of traders dealt in slaves and in other items as well. They also acted as the middlemen when long-distance 'marriages' were contemplated.

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50. Notice that when Duarte Pacheco Pereira visited the city of Bangha at the end of the 15th century, that it was on that basis that he made his estimate of the population of the town, namely, on the basis of heads of households only, i.e., married men with families only. Presumably, he got his estimate from the Ogoni themselves. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis (Vers. 1506-1508) Tr. Raymond Mauny, (Bissau, 1956), p. 147.

51. The Leopard tradition is in connection with what Professor Ikenna Nzimiro has described as the Igbo title in Western Igbo. See I. Nzimiro, Studies in Ibo Political Systems (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1972), pp. 33-35.

As high social titles were awarded to able farmers for success in the production of yams, the Ogoni produced surplus yams and other agricultural produce for sale in their coastal markets. These market places were regularly visited by their Ijo neighbours, who also brought their fish to the markets to trade.<sup>52</sup> Besides agricultural produce, another important item of trade for which the Ogoni enjoyed a monopoly was the trade in pots. As is shown later, Ogoni pots dominated the entire Eastern Niger Delta and a considerable part of the Igbo and Ibibio hinterland. This trade was carried on by Ogoni men in canoes through the coastal and inland waterways.

In the article by Professor Cookey referred to earlier, he described this item of trade in the pre-colonial period. According to him, there were two supply centres of pots to the Eastern Niger Delta region, one in the Itsekiri area, and another to the north of the Eastern Niger Delta.<sup>53</sup> Although Professor Cookey went on to suggest that this centre was probably around Umuahia, but I like to point out that it was at Kono Boue in Ogoni.<sup>54</sup> Some communities in Igbo and Ibibio areas made pots in the pre-colonial period, but the quality of their pots was poor and their method of production was crude and too slow to meet the demand for pots or to compete with the comparatively speedier and higher quality Ogoni production.<sup>55</sup> By inventing the Laadem (a type of potter's wheel

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52. cf. John Barbot, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V. (London: printed by Assignment from Messrs. Churchill, for John Walthoe; Tho. Watton; Samuel Birt; Daniel Browne; Thomas Osborn; John Shuckburgh; and Henry Lintot, 1732), p. 461.

53. Cookey, S.J.S., op.cit., p. 84.

54. Jeffreys, M.D.W., "Ogoni Pottery", in Man, Vol. XLVII, 84 (June 1947), pp. 81-83.

55. Some pottery centres were at Afikpo and in the Efik area of the Cross River basin. Pots from these centres supplied the Central and Eastern Igbo and the Cross River markets. (Note continues on p.25)

or turn-table) the Ogoni introduced a fast method of producing fine-finished, standardized pots, which were in high demand throughout the region.

Another commodity of long-distance trade for the ancient Ogoni was iron. Iron weapons and tools were very important possessions. Without iron tools and weapons, they could not have survived, especially when they had to fight wars against the autochthonous peoples. With iron tools they were able to attack their environment and clear the forests. The Ogoni ancestors were familiar with the use of iron and the making of iron tools and weapons from their place of origin before they settled in their present territory. As shown in the next chapter, among the items reported by Gbeneyaaloo's spirit-medium that they brought with them at the time they arrived, were iron tools and weapons.<sup>56</sup> The fact that they did not wander far away from their initial point of landing before settling down finally showed that they had the necessary tools and weapons which enabled them to create a home immediately. There is also evidence in Ogoni oral tradition that there was a trade in iron-ore between Ogoni and some distant part of the hinterland, probably Igbo,<sup>57</sup> in pre-colonial times. With the iron so obtained, the Ogoni blacksmiths made their weapons and tools.

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55. (Cont.) See Simon and Phoebe Ottenberg, "Afikpo Market" in Paul Bohannan and George Dalton (eds.) Markets in Africa, (Northwestern University Press, 1962; 2nd Printing, 1965), pp. 118-169. Rev. H.M. Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa: A Review of Missionary Work and Adventure, 1829-1858, (London: 1st edn. 1863; 2nd edn. with a New Introduction by G.I. Jones, Frank Cass & Co., 1970), p. 326.

56. Gbeyeyaaloo's Spirit-Medium of Gure. Interviewed at Gure on 12.3.84. Text 16, pp. 71-74.

57. cf. Elizabeth Isichei, Igbo Worlds, (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1977), pp. 53-59. See also A.E. Afigbo, Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture (Nsukka, University of Nigeria Press, 1981), pp. 10-24. Revd. H.M. Waddell suggests that the iron used in Eastern Nigeria was obtained from the Qua Mountains before European iron was brought into the area. op.cit., p. 320.

The oral tradition states that the ancient Ogoni farmers employed migrant labourers from the ancient Asa and Ibibio to do the annual bush clearing for yam cultivation. This did not mean that all the bush clearing was done by the migrant workers from these places. The Ogoni farmers did most of the bush clearing themselves. As shown later a time came when Ogoni farmers began to plant numerous yams for winning traditional titles.<sup>58</sup> This meant that such yam chiefs owned several extensive farms which were cultivated during a single farming season. To clear such extensive farms at the start of the season, the farmers needed extra labour. It was in this context that the migrant labourers were hired to do some of the bush clearing for pay. The fallow period at that time was very long, about ten to fifteen years. Thus during that length of time, the farms grew into forests, almost like virgin forests. It is said that the soil was extremely fertile at that time, so that the bush quickly grew into forests. At the present time, the fallow period in Leme area is still eight years.<sup>59</sup>

It is significant to notice that paid labour and the use of money had begun in this part of West Africa as early as the period under reference. And this was before the fifteenth century. We suggest the fifteenth century because when Pereira visited Bangha market at the end of the fifteenth century, he saw a well-developed economy and system of

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58. Professor A.E. Afigbo has described a similar practice among the Igbo, namely the establishment of the "Ezeji (Yam King) title". According to Professor Afigbo, this was an indication of the primacy of Yam in Igbo agriculture. A cursory examination of the two practices reveals both similarities and dissimilarities, which suggest some degree of cultural contact between the two peoples. What has not yet been determined, however, is which of these two practices preceded the other. See A.E. Afigbo, op.cit., pp. 127-128.

59. Rev. S.O. Laaka of Ekara, op.cit., Text 9, pp. 37-41.

exchange. More importantly, among the agricultural products which he saw were numerous yams and 'farm' animals.<sup>60</sup> When Dapper's informants visited the Gbee market near Mogho in the seventeenth century, they also saw a well-developed economy and a system of exchange based on iron money.<sup>61</sup> Thus the use of money for social services and for developing the economy antedated European contact in this part of West Africa. It is not certain whether the migrant farm labourers from the hinterland came with their own tools. But it must be presumed that the Ogoni farmers who hired them also provided them with the necessary tools. At the end of the bush clearing period, the migrant farm labourers went back to their own places, where they spent the money which they had earned in performing marriages and for initiations into traditional rites, secret societies, and for other social services. They returned at the beginning of the next farming season. Those who could not go back periodically settled in camps on the outskirts of the communities. One of such camps developed into a town. This is the town of Mogho, which I have referred to above.

Social classes were not determined by age. The determinant of social classes was the traditional rite of Yaage. This represented a period of about two years during which all the young men and boys of one of the seven cultural/political Divisions of Ogoni were initiated through a series of spiritual, physical and psychological experiences in preparation for a noble adult life. Young men whose parents could not afford the cost, worked very hard in later life to sponsor themselves. During

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60. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo ..., op.cit., p. 147.

61. Dapper, Olfert, Description of Africa, Vol. II. Tr. John Ogilby (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.

the period of the initiation, the candidates were taught hard work and good behaviour. For example, they were taught to behave nobly; to think, act and speak nobly; and to separate themselves from mean persons and profane things. A man was not supposed to sleep with a woman before he had gone through the rites of Yaage. A man who was found guilty of this offence was treated in the same way as a woman who bore twins. He was called elo. The same term was applied to the woman who bore twins and to the man who had sex with her after that. Elo means "to miss the mark", or "error". He was no longer eligible for anything whatever. It was believed that such a young man was spiritually cut off from his ancestors. Socially, his life from that point on was a complete wreck. According to one informant, such a young man was sold into slavery.<sup>62</sup>

The initiation through the traditional rite of Yaage was a preparation for a life of leadership and for high performance in society. The whole process combined some aspects of military training. Although the term Yaa has no equivalent in the English language, the suffix ge means sword. Thus Yaage means the "Yaa of bearing the sword". It was an experience in which the young man was trained to master the use of the sword.

All those young men who had performed the traditional rite of Yaage were regarded as the members of the elite class, irrespective of their age. From that point on, a young man could rise to the highest level of society, depending on his ability in one of the various activities

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62. Nwilabba, Teetee Edamni (Chief) of Buon, Ko. (Aged c. 120).  
Interviewed at Buon at 15.3.84. Text 31, pp. 110-2.

through which social ascendancy was measured, such as success in farming, palm wine tapping, hunting, etc.. But in every case hard work was the basic factor.

#### Ancestral Spirit-Mediums

Apart from the normal categories of social classes which were attained by achievement, there was a small group of professionals in society who, in addition to their ability, attained high social levels by some supernatural means. This group consisted of spirit mediums, priests, ritual medicine men, craftsmen, including blacksmiths, etc. The ancient Ogoni were a highly spiritual people. The spirit-mediums played very vital roles in society. From the ruler and his chiefs to the ordinary man on the street, all depended on the services of spirit-mediums for their important problems. No major undertaking was embarked upon without consulting the ancestral spirit first with rituals and sacrifices and with petitions asking for support and guidance.<sup>63</sup>

The services of spirit-mediums were also very highly required in times of great crisis such as war, famine, epidemics, etc.<sup>64</sup> On occasions of great events such as the celebration of a national festival like Yomii, or the show of a national sport or dance like the Kanikpo, or the performance

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63. Professor Robin Horton has described the practice of divination among the Kalabari of Ijo. Although the Ijo are one of the neighbours of Ogoni, the practice of divination is very rare in Ogoni. In recent times, however, some water-spirit possessions have been noticed among Ogoni women. But these appear to be a phenomenon of inter-ethnic cultural transmission. These minor spirits (usually feminine) are highly disregarded by the majority of Ogoni people. The ancestral spirit-medium which is practised in Ogoni is a very different thing altogether; cf. Horton, Robin, "Kalabari Diviners and Oracles", Odu, Vol. I, 1 (July 1964), pp. 3-16.
64. The recent work by David Lan on Zimbabwe is a clear example of this kind of belief and practice as demonstrated by the Shona during the guerrillawar in that country; Lan, David, Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit-Mediums in Zimbabwe, (London, James Currey Ltd., 1985) pp. 197-223.

of great traditional rites like the Yaage, Yaanwii, or Bina, renowned spirit-mediums, priests and medicine men were invited to offer their services.<sup>65</sup>

Because of the importance of ancestral spirit-mediums in the social, political and economic life of Ogoni; and because of the contributions which ancestral spirit-mediums can make towards historical research, not only in Ogoni but, possibly, elsewhere in Africa, I will devote a considerable part of this introduction to explaining what ancestral spirit-mediums are.

The centre of Ogoni ancestral spirit-medium was at Nama only. That was the first settlement of the Ogoni ancestors as they arrived from the sea. It also became the centre of their religious-cum-military institution.<sup>66</sup> In ancient Ogoni, great warriors who had achieved all the traditional titles, and who wanted to possess their descendants, went to Nama to perform the rituals for the title of Gbene, which means Great. Those of them who successfully completed the 'rituals' did possess their descendants. According to one informant, some even did so while they were still alive, and continued to do so after they had died.<sup>67</sup> As stated above, when possessed, the possessed person changed in all other characteristics, except in appearance. He acted and spoke like the ancestor in voice, articulation, etc., and revealed events that took place during his (the ancestor's) life time. He pointed out his landed property, including

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65. Lan, David, Guns and Rain:, op.cit., pp. 157-158f; Kpugita, Nnaa (Chief), interviewed at Keneke 2.1.84, Text 46, pp. 159-163; Gbigbo, A'ean, of Kwaakwa, Interviewed 27.12.83, Text 42, pp. 141-6.

66. Nwikogbara, M.D. (Chief) of Sii, (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Sii, 8.3.84, Text 18, pp. 78-81.

67. Ipaan, Tobina of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 63). Interviewed at Kwaakwa, 9.1.84. The informant told me that his ancestor, Gbenebaara, was one of those who possessed their descendants while still alive.

those that were unknown to the descendants, but which were in illegal or legal occupation by other people, and explained how and why the other person was using the land.<sup>68</sup> He then urged his descendants to claim it back by refunding such and such amount of money to the descendants of his contemporary with whom he struck such and such a deal or agreement. Since all such ancestors were rulers (i.e. from the rank of head of a compound up), the medium, when possessed, assumed the same type of position and the type of role which the possessing ancestor played in society during his lifetime on earth. He recited his titles in exaltation of his person and achievements.

Because the ancient Ogoni perceived that, as in human society, there were false spirits in existence, they devised a method of investigating and certifying actual ancestral spirit-possession. The procedures were set in motion immediately any signs of spirit-possession were noticed in a son or daughter of a Compound or House with a known ancestor. The elders and all other spirit-mediums and priests must be satisfied before they approved a spirit-possession as the genuine spirit of the declared ancestor.<sup>69</sup> As stated above, the Ogoni regard the existence of an upper class spirit-medium of this kind as an asset to the society. As already pointed out, nothing of any significance could be done or could happen in the state without consulting or informing them.

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68. Nwilogbara, M.D., op.cit., Text 18, pp. 78-81.

69. The Ogoni do not use any formal testing as is practised in Central Africa, especially in Zimbabwe among the Shona people. In Ogoni, ancestral spirit-possession is not induced; it is spontaneous. When it happens, the possessed subject is not asked to do or say anything. His actions, utterances, movements, etc., are closely watched and certified, or questioned. Later on the elders appoint representatives to consult mediums outside the area, who know nothing of what is happening, in seance to 'see' and explain what really is happening to the subject. All this investigation is carried on in the absence of the subject. The results will determine what the  
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It was a unique opportunity for this study that I was able to secure a direct recording of the Spirit-Medium of Gbeneyaaloo, the man held by tradition as the founder of Nama, Kugba and Gure, the most ancient towns of Ogoni.

There are classes and distinctions between spirit-mediums and spirit-possessions. The ancestral spirits are called Zim. Within the class of ancestral spirits there is a hierarchical distinction. Spirit-mediums of ancestors who were founders of towns are called Zim Te-ere-Bue. Examples of such chiefly spirit-mediums are the Spirit-Medium of Gbenekote of Kono Boue, the Spirit-Medium of Gbeneyaaloo of Gure, the Spirit-Medium of Zah of Gure, the Spirit-Medium of Bariyaayoo of Luawii, the Spirit-Medium of Gbenebega of Gwaara, etc. The last three, viz. Zah, Bariyaayoo and Gbenebega are not associated with the founding of specific towns. They were the royal princesses and the direct descendants and heirs of the original founder and first ruler of Ogoni, Queen Kwaanwaa or Gbenekwaanwaa. She was the ruler of her country of origin but because of war, she escaped from there with the young prince Yaaloo and his sister princess

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69 (Contd.) next steps should be. David Lan has described the method of testing spirit-possession among the Shona, which is entirely different from what is done in Ogoni. Quoting Kingsley Garbett (1977), David Lan described one of the tests used by the Shona to certify a genuine ancestral spirit-possession. The possessed medium is asked to enter a crocodile-infested pool to search for and secure a stone. If he secured the stone from the pool unharmed, he was said to have passed the test, and thenceforth he was to use the stone as his head-rest or pillow.

Another test required that the aspirant medium should become possessed at a large public gathering and there before the chiefs and other mediums recite the genealogy of the royal ancestors as well as the details of their history - where they lived, and who they married; the battles they fought. After that the final test was for him to select from a pile of staffs the one used by the previous medium of their royal ancestor (Mhondoro) or by the ancestor himself. Lan, David, op.cit. pp. 52, 181.

Zah.<sup>70</sup> They were the royal family of the party that landed at Nama from sea and founded what has become Ogoni today.

Thus because Ogoni was originally ruled by a woman, and because royal succession was originally matrilineal, the spirits of these royal princesses and their mediums do not consider themselves and are not considered by the people merely as rulers of the towns in which they reside. They consider themselves and are considered by the people as rulers of Ogoni as a whole. They are at the top of the hierarchy of ancestral spirit-mediums. Their influence extends over Ogoni as a whole. Thus any person crowned a traditional ruler or chief in Ogoni must go to Gure, Luawii and Gwaara to do obeisance to these royal personages, and pay the traditional fees and gifts.<sup>71</sup> On such occasions, the spirits of these royal personages possess their mediums and preside at the ceremony.

After the spirit-mediums of these original royal ancestors come the spirit-mediums of the founders of towns and territorial rulers, such as Gbenekiri, Gbenesaakoo, Gbenesaagba, Gbenekuapie, etc. Next in the hierarchy are the mediums of those ancestors who were the Right-Hand men or Deputies to the founders of towns. The official title of such ancestors

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70. "Statement of Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium at Gure, 12th March 1984"  
Text 16, pp. 71-74.  
See also "Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium of Gure, 24th March 1984",  
Text 17, pp. 75-77.

71. The gifts would include a prescribed sum of money, goats, yams, fish, plantains, gin, palm wine, beer, white chalk, imitation gold powder, alligator pepper, etc., as well as the ingredients for cooking these foods.

was Lah-Bue.<sup>72</sup> Because in their official capacity they acted as the priest of the Land deity (Asaan Bue), their spirit-mediums are called Zim Asaan (Spirit of the Land). If there was a procession of ancestral spirit-mediums, the medium of the founder of the town would lead and would be followed by the medium of the Lah Bue. They follow the same procedure in their sitting order, and when libations are poured to the ancestors and their names are recited, the same order is observed.

Now in certain towns, according to tradition, when the founders come to the place they discovered that a certain spirit existed in the area with whom they had to communicate before the town was founded. Examples of such towns are Sii,<sup>73</sup> Kono,<sup>74</sup> Luuyo,<sup>75</sup> etc. In the case of Sii and Luuyo, the spirit revealed itself in a standing rock in the forest. In the case of Kono, the spirit revealed itself in a piece of ground which was unusually kept clean inside the forest. The discovery of these spirits attracted the ancestors to the place and resulted in the founding of towns in those places. The founders then adopted the autochthonous spirits to guide them in the administration of the towns.<sup>76</sup> For, as one informant

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72. The word Lah is the title of the second-born son in a family; and Bue means town or country. Thus the man next to the ruler is pictured as the second son of the town or country.
73. 'Report of Field-Study Visit to Nama and Kugba, 24.3.84', Text 15, pp. 66-70.
74. Opusunju, Na'ue Leonard of Kono (Aged c. 72). Interviewed at Kono, 23.10.83. Text 25, pp. 94-95.
75. Adookon, Emmanuel (Chief) of Luuyo (Aged c. 77). Interviewed at Luuyo on 4.3.84. Text 23, pp. 90-92.
76. Discussing the influence of some autochthonous spirits among the Korekore of Zimbabwe, Bourdillon explains that they were the spirits of an ancient dynasty defeated centuries ago by the invading Korekore. And he points out that such autochthonous deities are usually more powerful in matters relating to the fertility of the soil than the gods of the conquerors. Bourdillon, M.F.C., The Shona Peoples, (Gwelo, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1976), pp. 299-300.

explained, "If the spirit had been a man, it would have been the founder and owner of the town".<sup>77</sup> Such spirits are called Bari Asaan or Yo Asaan (God of the Land). The word Zim is not applied to them because they are not spirits of ancestors. But because they associated with the founding ancestors from the beginning, their mediums are rated third in the hierarchical order, and they fulfil the functions of the Lah-Bue with reference to the land.<sup>78</sup> Chief Emmanuel Adookon, one of my informants in the Gwaara area, is possessed by this type of autochthonous spirit, the name of which is called Buga'uwe. Because Chief Emmanuel Adookon is also a descendant of the founder of the town, he combines in himself the ritual functions of the three hierarchies, namely the ritual functions of the Te-ere-Bue, of the Lah-Bue and of the Bari Asaan.<sup>79</sup>

One of my most important informants in the Nama area, John Iwuagbu of Sii, is also possessed by this type of spirit, the name of which is called Yogurezoghomo or Bari-Sii. Because this autochthonous spirit was worshipped when the ancestors of Ogoni were still at Kugba, and Sii was then a forest, and because this spirit knew and associated with the ancestors then, its medium holds the title and performs the functions of "priest of Nama and Kugba deities". He is the person who performs the rituals and pours the libations in these two places. It was he who led the field trip which I made to these two sacred places on 24th March 1984. And he told me that most of the things which he narrated had been revealed by this spirit during possession sessions. The same spirit had possessed

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77. Iwuagbu, John, in "Report of Field-Study Visit to Nama and Kugba, 24.3.84". Text 15, pp. 66-70.

78. cf. Bourdillon, M.F.C., op.cit., p. 299

79. Adookon, Emmanuel (Chief) of Luuyo (Aged c. 77). Interview 4.3.84. Text 23, pp. 90-92.

his father and grandfather. The latter was named Kina. His grandfather was so identified with this deity that he was often called Kina-Bari-Sii, i.e. Kina of Bari-Sii.<sup>80</sup>

Another class of ancestral spirit-mediums are the spirits of those ancestors who were not founders of towns, nor associated with the founder of a town from the beginning, but who, because they were renowned medicine men, were invited by the founder of a town to come and make medicine for the stability of the town, such as medicine for war, or for the success of the ruler in his exercise of authority over the inhabitants of the town, etc.

If such a medicine man was successful, he was usually persuaded by the rulers to stay on indefinitely. And he was given an autonomous section of the town over which he exercised perpetual authority as a ruler. Examples of such medicine men were Yoko of Kwuribue, who was invited from Kwuribue by Gbeneloo the founder and ruler of Keneke,<sup>81</sup> and Yobue of Bonny, who was invited from Bonny by the rulers of Boue during the Baan Wars in the sixteenth century.<sup>82</sup> When such medicine men died and their spirits possessed their descendants, their mediums usually occupied the fourth rank in the hierarchy of authority next to the mediums of the autochthonous spirits.

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80. Iwuagbu, John, op.cit.

81. Kpugita, Nnaa, (Chief) of Keneke (Aged c. 55). Interviewed at Keneke on 2.1.84; Text 46, pp. 159-163.

82. Deemua, D.D. (Chief) of Gbam (Aged c. 62). Interviewed at Gbam on 5.12.83. Text 45, pp. 157-158.  
Inayo, Teera (Prince) of Kote House, Kono Boue (Aged c. 55). Interviewed at Noobana on 7.3.1984. Text 52, pp. 187-191.

The next in the hierarchy of spirit-mediums in Ogoni are the spirits of renowned warriors. These ancestors were basically professional soldiers. They were also very wealthy, and as such, they were able to achieve all the traditional titles, except that they did not found any towns of their own. When such a warrior had achieved the highest title, namely the title of Gbene, his name was proclaimed from town to town throughout Ogoni that such and such had entered the ranks of the Great (Gbene). He was automatically given a piece of 'territory' in the town where he lived, over which he exercised perpetual authority as a ruler. An example of such a warrior ancestor was Gbenebaara, who was cited for bravery in the Baan Wars, when he entered Baan and captured the famous Tingtán Drums.<sup>83</sup>

It is unusual that all these categories of spirit-mediums can be represented in one town in the same period. The above explanation is given only for the purpose of clarity. However, on great occasions such as the annual feast of War (Yonwidam), when spirit-mediums from different parts of Ogoni assembled together, the complete array can be represented and the full order of seniority or ranks can be followed. Even in this particular example, when the war drum known as Koogian is played and the war dance, which is supposed to re-enact the battle actions, begins, it is not the king or ruler who leads the procession of warriors in the 'dance', it is the principal medium who prepared the war medicines that takes his medicines and leads the king into battle, followed by other mediums and warriors.<sup>84</sup>

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83. Ipaan, Tobina of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 63). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 9.1.84. Text 56, pp. 205-207.

84. Gbigbo, A'Ean of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 43). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 27.12.83. Text 42, pp. 141-146.  
Nuaka, Lemue of Tego (Aged c. 90). Interviewed at Tego on 2.12.83. Text 59, pp. 212-214.

The above is an analysis of what I should call the institution of ancestral spirits or spirit-mediums in Ogoni. References in this study are to this type of spirits or spirit-mediums. They are the historic spirits. By that I mean that their origin and history are known, and that these spirits also know the history of the societies. As far as Ogoni is concerned, I would strongly suggest that researchers should interview only this type of spirit-mediums. And to obtain the best results, they should be interviewed when possessed.

As Bourdillon has rightly pointed out in the case of Shona spirit-mediums, when the medium is possessed, it will be clearly seen that one is dealing with quite a different personality altogether. The volume of voice and tone will be different. The speech will be archaic and it will be sandwiched with idioms and proverbs, which may be difficult to understand. According to Bourdillon, "The possessed mediums of very ancient spirits often speak in what is supposed to be an ancient dialect which is not readily intelligible to the modern people and which includes words known only to the more elderly in the community".<sup>85</sup> And Michael Gelfand states:

It certainly is an impressive sight to see a person in a state of possession; it is as if the whole body has been occupied by a new personality". (86)

The important thing is that when possessed, they do go back in time to reveal things which are vital to the work of an historian who is concerned with research in an oral society.

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85. Bourdillon, M.F.C., op.cit., pp. 274-275.

86. Gelfand, Michael, The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of an African Culture. (Gwelo, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1973), p. 133.

After the ancestral spirit-mediums come the medicine men and priests. Normally a priest is not possessed. He is the man who takes care of his ancestral shrine and relics or of the shrine of an autochthonous spirit or deity. When the ancestral spirit possesses a medium, the priest becomes the personal assistant to the spirit-medium. Because the medium does not know what the spirit said or did when he was possessed, it is the priest who listens and takes note of these things and rehearses them to the medium after possession has ceased.<sup>87</sup>

When an ancestral spirit possesses a new medium, for a period of time, the new medium continually takes his personal assistant or priest out privately to the site of an ancient town which is now a forest or bush. There he will become possessed. While possessed, the spirit will show to the priest the different types of herbs, roots, barks, etc., for different purposes, and will enumerate all the ingredients that go with them and how they should be prepared. The priest would take note of these things and would rehearse them to the medium when possession has ceased. This process would continue for some time until the new medium becomes fully instructed in the art for which the ancestor was noted.

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87. In the case of the Shona spirit-mediums, Bourdillon observed, "He is supposed to remember nothing of what happened while he was possessed - it was the spirit and not himself who was supposedly present - so usually the attendants immediately inform him of what the spirit did or said". Bourdillon, M.F.C., The Shona Peoples, p. 275.

In his own comment, David Lan wrote: "When possessed, the medium is thought to lose all control of body and mind. He may be referred to as homwe, which means pocket or little bag. The medium is simply a receptacle, the vessel of the spirit. He has no specialized knowledge or unusual qualities of his own. But this attitude to the medium contains a paradox. Although the medium is thought of as an ordinary person, when a particular woman or man is selected from all others, they are marked out as extraordinary, as unique". Lan, David, Guns and Rain, p. 49.

For this reason, a priest who is attached to a renowned spirit-medium usually knows a lot, but they keep what they know secret.<sup>88</sup> One of my informants, Prince Inaatura Inayo<sup>89</sup> of Kote House, Kono Boue, told me that that was how his ancestor, Gbenekote, while possessing his medium, showed him the site where the women fired their pots when they lived at Kwuribue, a town described by Dapper, writing in the seventeenth century.<sup>90</sup> This evidence therefore suggests the importance of priests in historical research in Ogoni.

Sometimes a priest who was attached to an important ancestral spirit-medium may live longer than the medium himself. When that happens, the priest becomes a medicine man. With the knowledge acquired when he was attached to the spirit-medium, he can perform many things on his own. But he must always go back to acknowledge the ancestral spirit with sacrifices and rituals. This was the way another of my informants, Lemue Nuaka, became a medicine man and priest. He was formerly attached to the Elders and to Gbigbo, the spirit-medium of Yobue, who died in 1976.<sup>91</sup>

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88. This type of attitude is also maintained by the group of Priest Councillors in Bemba. According to Audrey Richards, "To begin with, the work of the bakabilo is extremely secret". Richards, Audrey I., "Social Mechanisms for the Transfer of Political Rights in some African Tribes", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 90, (1960), pp. 175-190.  
See also Roberts, Andrew, A History of the Bemba, (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1973), pp. 13-14.
89. Inayo, Inaatura of Kote House (Aged c. 62). Interviewed at Noobana, Kono Boue on 27.12.83. This informant took me to the site at Kwuribue. It is now an old forest, but a palm wine camp has been built nearby on the bank of a stream.
90. Dapper, O., Description of Africa, Vol. II. Tr. by John Ogilby. (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.
91. Nuaka, Lemue of Tego, (Aged c. 90). Interviewed on 30.11.83. Text 58, pp. 210-211.  
Gbigbo, A'Ean of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 45). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 27.12.83. Text 42, pp. 141-146.

Sometimes the medicine man may do so well that the ancestral spirits come to 'like' him. When that happens, he himself becomes possessed. This was how another of my informants, Chief Dike Iyoro, became a double spirit-medium, being possessed both by the ancestral spirit of Assobienee and by the town deity of Kono Boue.<sup>92</sup> He was originally attached to the previous spirit-medium of Assobienee named Lagagboro. The latter died in the 1960s.

In addition to the above, there is one more type of ancestral spirit which is a class by itself. This class of ancestral spirit is called taa. In Ogoni the word taa is a term applied to all wicked and unclean spirits. These spirits are said to have existed naturally from the beginning but have been banned from human society and confined to what are called "evil forests". But they occasionally managed to sneak into society because some men (wizards, sorcerers, etc.,) invited them. Thus when a man who was known to be a wizard or sorcerer died, his remains were not buried in the community. They were taken away and buried in the evil forest, the abode of wicked spirits.

Somehow some of such ancestors, as spirits, found their way back into society and possessed their descendants.<sup>93</sup> When this is known, such spirit

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92. Iyoro, Dike (Chief) of Noobana (Aged c. 70). Interviewed at Noobana on 5.2.84. Text 55, pp. 197-204.

93. Among the Shona, the taa are included in what they generally describe as 'alien spirits', mashave (sing. shave). According to Bourdillon, "When one asks Shona people what mashave are, a common explanation is that they are spirits of aliens who died away from home or if young unmarried persons. Such spirits would not have been settled with the final funerary ceremony and therefore wander around restlessly. Having no living descendants, they seek to express themselves by taking possession of unrelated persons". Bourdillon, M.F.C., The Shona Peoples, p. 282.

The Mashave are thought of to include the spirit of animals. David Lan reports that the hyena shave when it takes possession of a woman or a man, the person becomes a witch or a wizard. Lan, David, Guns and Rain, (1985), pp. 36-38. (Note continued on next page).

mediums are excluded from the hierarchy of ancestral spirits. Accordingly they do not deal in public or state matters. Hence they do not possess historical knowledge. Their main area of operation is what the people regard as evil matters, such as rituals concerning persons who died of the swelling; rituals concerning twin births; rituals concerning elo, that is, men who had sex with twin mothers, etc. They also provide services for evil men who wish to 'hire' wicked spirits to do harm to other men or to their business.

Outside the categories of ancestral spirits enumerated above, all other kinds of spirits or spirit-mediums are regarded by the Ogoni as minor spirits. Their mediums are a small minority; and they are mostly women. Their history and origins are not known, and they have no titles. The Ogoni believe that these minor spirits, like the wicked and unclean spirits (taa), existed naturally from the beginning; but unlike the taa, they are not confined to any particular location or environment.<sup>94</sup> They are all grouped under the general name of poro-edon (evil spirits). The taa are also a class of poro-edon.

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93. (Contd.) The Ogoni do not believe in animal spirit-possession. And the Ogoni cannot imagine the spirit of young persons who have not performed the highest traditional rites and who have not achieved the highest title at Nama, to be capable of possessing living persons. To the mind of the Ogoni person, ancestral spirit-possession is a matter of higher dimensions; it is quite outside the sphere of ordinary contemplation. Men who attempted it were rare, and those who succeeded were considered extraordinary and worshipped, as shown above.

94. This sense of not being confined to specific locations is also expressed by the Shona when they say that these minor spirits "wander around restlessly". Bourdillon, op.cit., p. 282.

The Elders despise the minor spirits and their mediums do not come near where the Elders are. Whereas the ancestral spirit-mediums are public figures, the minor spirits are the private concerns of the individual mediums who operate from the viewpoint of gain only; and their clients are usually the members of the lower classes of society.<sup>95</sup>

The foregoing analysis puts into perspective the type of spirits and spirit-mediums existing in Ogoni. It is important that historians working on Ogoni oral tradition be concerned only with ancestral spirit-mediums, priests and medicine men. Because of the traditional expenses involved, it may not be necessary to interview so many ancestral spirit-mediums while they are possessed. But a selected number can be useful. This should be supplemented by interviewing a good number of notable and experienced priests and medicine men. That was what I did in this present study.

Depending on the type of information being sought, the selection of ancestral spirit-mediums for interview should be from the mediums of ancestors who were in the top level of the hierarchy of rulership during their lifetime, or were noted for something of special importance. For example, these should include ancestors of the original royal dynasty; ancestors who were concerned with war and government; those who were famous for war medicines; those who were celebrated as renowned warriors; those who were credited with the founding of some ancient institutions; those who were deified and worshipped as national gods; those who were territorial rulers, etc.

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95. Professor Horton has described similar minor spirit-possession in the Kalabari area. According to Professor Horton, "Such a possession can involve a variety of spiritual agencies; but the great majority of orukuroapu are women possessed by the minor water spirits". Horton, Robin, "Kalabari Diviners and Oracles", Odu, Vol. I, 1, (July, 1964), pp. 3-16.

In the Leme area, however, ancestral spirit-mediums of the type described above are completely absent. This is due to the circumstances under which Leme was founded. Lene, the founder and ancestor of the Leme, was said to have committed the crime of elo because he had sex with his twin-mother wife, and both he and his wife were liable to be killed. His escape from Lewe in Gokana resulted in the founding of Leme. But the other consequence of that incident was that he was not only physically separated but more importantly, he was also spiritually cut off from the ancestors of Ogoni. He was no longer eligible to perform the necessary traditional rites for himself and for his sons, which could have earned him the appropriate titles, and would have finally brought him back to Nama from where he could have obtained the ultimate title of Gbene (Great). For that reason, the title of Gbene is very rare, if not completely absent, in the names of the Leme ancestors. For the same reason also, the Leme ancestors did not possess their descendants. The severance of this religious and traditional link on the national level was also partly responsible for the extent to which the Leme descendants lost the Kana element in their language and culture. Although much of that was also due to the fact that they had to live among a large number of mixed autochthonous peoples. In my consideration of these problems, I became convinced that there would be no need to extend my research methods in this part of Ogoni to the realm of spirit-mediums.

#### Fieldwork Material

At this point I will turn attention to my own fieldwork material, on which I hope to expand more in Chapter II. But in order to convey a better understanding of the nature of Ogoni oral tradition, it is necessary for me to draw attention to some examples elsewhere in Africa.

Similarities in the history of Ogoni can be found in that of Bemba. For example, the ancestors of the Bemba migrated from the Congo to settle in their present country in north-eastern Zambia.<sup>96</sup> Ogoni oral tradition also asserts that their ancestors migrated from a foreign land to settle in their present home. Like the Bemba, the Ogoni ancestors were rulers in their country of origin before they settled in their present country. Like the Bemba also they had to fight wars of conquest in some parts of their new territory. In other respects, however, Ogoni history is a contrast to that of Bemba. For example, since the Ogoni settled in their present territory, they had never been moved either by constraint of economic conditions or by external intrusions such as the white settlers in Central Africa.

Like the Bemba,<sup>97</sup> the Ogoni do not have official historians such as are found among the Yoruba<sup>98</sup> or among the Kuba.<sup>99</sup> However, as Andrew Roberts has clearly stated, the Bemba do have in the priest-councillors, groups of men who are "experts of chieftainship ..... ritual, government, and the choice of successors. These subjects involve recourse to history since practice is based on precedent".<sup>100</sup>

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96. Roberts, Andres, A History of Bemba, p. 23.

97. Ibid., p. 12.

98. Biobaku, S.O., "The Problem of Traditional History with Special Reference to Yoruba Traditions", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. I, 1 (1956), pp. 43-47..

99. Vansina, Jan, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba I and II", Journal of African History, Vol. I, 1 (1960), pp. 45-53 and Vol. I, 2, (1960), pp. 257-270.

100. Roberts, Andrew, op.cit., p. 13.

In Ogoni, the functions of the class of ancestral priests and mediums may be compared to those of the priest-councillors of the Bemba. The ancestral priests and the old mediums are responsible for the installation and training of new mediums, who are the successors of the founding ancestors. Like the Bemba, the Ogoni practise ancestor worship. This practice provides the social mechanisms for preserving historic knowledge and for transmitting such knowledge from generation to generation.<sup>101</sup>

However, the preservation and transmission of historical knowledge in an oral society like Ogoni has its problems. As Professor G.I. Jones has rightly pointed out:

Most of these traditions begin strongly with details about the origin and founding of the Community, and they end as strongly with details which relate to the existing social structure and its institutions and which can often be shown to be historic facts. But details which should belong to the period in between are elided; they tend to lose their true position and are pushed to the beginning or to the end of the scale. The main problem is how to expand or reconstruct this middle section. (102)

This problem is not typical of oral tradition in Eastern Nigeria alone, it is a general problem of oral tradition everywhere; and the Ogoni oral tradition is just one of the many.<sup>103</sup> But the greatest asset in my research on Ogoni oral tradition was my use of spirit-mediums. This will be dealt with as I proceed with the discussion of my fieldwork material.

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101. cf. Richards, Audrey I., "Social Mechanisms ...", J.R.A.I., op.cit., pp. 175-190.

102. Jones, G.I. "Time and Oral Tradition with Special Reference to Eastern Nigeria", Journal of African History, Vol. VI, 2 (1965), pp. 155-160.

103. Henige, David, "Oral Tradition and Chronology", Journal of African History, Vol. XII, 3 (1971), pp. 371-389.  
See also, Akinjobin, I.A., "A Chronology of Yoruba History, 1789-1840", Odu, Vol. II, 1 (1965), pp. 81-86.  
Roberts, Andrew, A History of Bemba, pp. 23-27.

The recorded interview with the spirit-medium of Gbeneyaaloo of Gure while he was possessed yielded information which formed an important key for the interpretation of the early Ogoni history. For example it gave information which helped in tracing the direction of expansion within the territory. Secondly, it provided information about the nature of the country of origin, namely a country where people walk and walk for days without seeing water. Thirdly, it gave the reason for leaving that country, namely because of war. Fourthly, it gave information about the status of the immigrants, namely that his own mother was the ruler of that country. But she had to escape from the war with him and his sister, and gave the name of the sister as Zah.

It described the nature of the country when they arrived and how they proceeded to establish an environment. More importantly, it provided linkages and explained the relationships between the members of the royal family, and made it possible to fill important gaps and to correct some of the distortions that had existed in the oral tradition. For example, in the oral tradition, Zah, Bariyaayoo and Gbenebega were presented like mythical personages who appeared on the stage of history without parents, without beginning and possibly, without an end; but who wielded great power.

Some of the distortions in the oral tradition regarding the royal ancestors included the identity of the sex of Bariyaayoo, who was often described as a man.<sup>104</sup> Similarly the name of Queen Kwaanwaa was also

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104. Tigiri, John (Chief) of Luuyo (Aged c. 83). Interviewed at Luuyo on 10.3.84. Text 22, pp. 86-89.  
Tonwe III, M.A.M. (H.R.H.) of Kono Boue, (Aged 43). Interviewed at Noobana, 21.1.1984. Text 40, pp. 130-134.

distorted. She was often referred to in the oral tradition as Tiginanwaa.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, the oral tradition treated each of these ancestors as isolated personages, without any relationships at all. All these distortions, which are explained fully in Chapter III, were taken away after the interview with the spirit-medium of Gbeneyaaloo, when possessed.

Another important source of evidence with regard to the early period was the field-trip to Nama and Kugba and the testimony given by John Iwuagbu, the priest of Nama. John Iwuagbu himself is not connected with the Gbeneyaaloo House of Gure. He is not even from Gure; he is from Sii. The members of the Yaaloo family of Gure co-opted him into the team because he is possessed by the autochthonous land deity of Sii, referred to above. As already mentioned, this deity was secretly worshipped by the Ogoni ancestors while they were still living at Kugba, and Sii was then a forest. Its first priest and medium, named Gbeneyiranam, lived at Kugba. His grave, which was shown to me, has a shrine over it and is marked out inside a farm. Some details about the early ancestors have been revealed by this deity while possessing its mediums, because it knew the ancestors from the beginning. From that time till today, that deity has maintained a line of mediums. As stated above, John Iwuagbu's grandfather, named Kina, was one of them. Much of the information which John Iwuagbu provided was collected when Kina was the medium of this autochthonous deity. Some of that information has also been corroborated with the information obtained from the spirit-medium of Gbeneyaaloo of Gure.

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105. cf. "Statements of Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium", 12.3.1984, Text 16, pp. 71-74.  
Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium of Gure, 24.3.1984, Text 17, pp. 75-77.  
See also Teedee, F.B. (Prince) of Gbeneyaaloo House of Gure (Aged c. 43), interviewed at Gure on 18.3.1984. Text 14, pp. 60-65.

Information about the social life of the ancestors which concerned emphasis on the training of the youth in the art of using the sword, was revealed by that deity.<sup>106</sup> This has also been corroborated with evidence from other parts of Ogoni. The oral tradition describes the institution of Yaage, Yaanwii and Bina, as the basis of Ogoni social and military titles, but the oral tradition does not state the origin of these institutions, and why the last in the series had to be performed only at Nama and nowhere else. Again this piece of evidence has also been corroborated with information derived from the interview with the Spirit-Medium of Gbeneyaaloo at Gure.

In connection with that, the spirit-medium, during the interview also corrected another distortion which existed in the oral tradition. In the oral tradition, the ancestor was called Gbeneyaaloo; from which we know that his actual name was Yaaloo. But on that occasion, he corrected the oral tradition when he said that his full name was Saarogbeneyaaloo-baari. Now in Kana language, the suffix Baari from which the modern term Kabaari is derived, means Elder, which is a title and not 'elder' in the sense of age.

Now the context in which this was spoken was that he was describing how he, as a boy who could remember something, and his sister were pulled by their mother and they ran from their country because of terrible wars. Then he went on to say that they were on that journey until he grew up, and performed all the traditions and became an Elder (Baari), and took over the leadership of the expedition from his mother. In Ogoni tradition

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106. Iwuagbu, John, in "Report of Field-Study Visit to Nama and Kugba, 24.3.1984", Text 15, pp. 66-70.

when a youth has performed the first in the series known as Yaage, he automatically becomes recognized as an "Elder in the making". From this fact, it can only be suggested that in the present context, he was referring to the tradition of Yaage. And from the fact that he attached the term Baari as a suffix to his name, one might go further to suggest that the word Baari was then a title by which one who has performed the tradition of Yaage was known.

The evidence I obtained from Sii and those from Gure dealt with the same period, that is, the early period. The informants in those places provided information which embraced the whole of Ogoni. All the names of the titled ancestors and founders of the different kingdoms of Ogoni are remembered there, whereas informants in places farther away from these original centres, like Tee, Gokana and Leme, remember only the ancestors who founded their own areas. Chief M.D. Nwilogbara of Sii was among some of my best informants in the Sii and Gure areas.

My greatest sources of information for the reconstruction of the period which ended in the sixteenth century were in the Gwaara and Boue areas, that is, the middle-southern portion of Ogoni. Chief John Tigiri (J.P.), who was secretary to the Babbe Council of Chiefs under the late Gbenemene I of Babbe, M.D.K. Tonwe II, was well-informed about the type of traditional government which existed during the Bariyaayoo dynasty, which collapsed in the sixteenth century, as a result of the Baan Wars. Then from the Testimony of Chief Emmanuel Adookon, Spirit-Medium of the autochthonous deity referred to above, I got some material which helped in the reconstruction of the beginning of the Gbenebega dynasty, a dynasty which has survived into the present, despite its destruction by the British

Colonial forces at the beginning of this century.<sup>107</sup>

But the oral tradition as recounted by Chief Adookon was deficient in many important details. In the first place, it lacked in-time depth. Secondly, it was mythical in content, in that it portrayed Gbenebega like a spirit in the form of a "young woman with standing breasts", which, without a beginning, just "appeared in Gwaara from the sea".<sup>108</sup> But it was the information collected from the Spirit-Medium of Gbeneyaaloo at Gure which added flesh onto the skeleton presented by the oral tradition. One can notice the cliché in the oral tradition coded in the idea that Gbenebega came from the direction of the sea, which is a reference to the original arrival of the Ogoni ancestors by sea in boats. Then some evidence collected in the Boue area, particularly from Tonwe III, put the whole framework in a time perspective.

According to the "Gbeneyaaloo" source at Gure, Bariyaayoo was the first daughter of Zah, and Bega was another daughter of Zah.<sup>109</sup> Now in the

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107. Gibbons, E.J. "Intelligence Report on Ogoni"(1932), p. 13.  
N.A.E. File No. 28032 CS026/3, Opobo Division, Calabar Province.

108. Adookon, Emmanuel (Chief) of Luuyo, Gwaara. (Aged c. 77). Interviewed at Luuyo 4.3.1984. Text 23, pp. 90-92.

109 Bariyaayoo was no longer alive in the sixteenth century, but her dynasty continued into the sixteenth century. It was Bega (later Gbenebega) who lived in the sixteenth century. The reference to Bega as a daughter of Zah, would appear to be an example of perpetual kinship described by Ian Cunnison in the political system of the Luapula people. According to Ian Cunnison, perpetual kinship arises directly out of the system of positional succession. Evidence from this study has shown that the early Ogoni were a matrilineal people, and that they practised matrilineal succession. But the change to patrilineal succession only began in the sixteenth century after the Baan Wars. What is not clear is whether their system combined an element of positional succession as well.

Ian Cunnison explains that "Women also occupy positions which are perpetuated, succession going preferably to sister, then to sister's daughter's daughter; then in extremity to sister' daughter. In the case of women again, the sister's daughter's daughter is called 'sister'. The sister's daughter is called 'daughter'". Cunnison, Ian, "Perpetual Kinship: A Political Institution of the Luapula People". The Rhodes-Livingstone Journal, Vol. 20, (1956), pp. 28-48.

testimony I collected from Tonwe III in Boue, it was stated that Bega (who later became Gbenebega), was the most glamorous lady of her time,<sup>110</sup> and was always associated with the famous men of her age. The statement went on to say that when the elders of Boue had brought the famous medicine man and sorcerer, named Yobue, from Bonny in order to use his art for the Baan War, that in order to make him feel at home, they persuaded Bega to be his 'wife'. Later on it was reported in the same account that when the war had ended, one of the warriors named Gbeneteebete, the man who gave his land<sup>111</sup> for the settlement of Yobue, assassinated Yobue in the former's house. When Bega saw this heinous act, she became terrified and escaped to Gwaara, her home town, taking with her Yobue's medicine bag, with which she established herself at Gwaara and later got the title Gbene (Great). Thus her name became known as Gbenebega.

If we go back to the oral tradition collected at Gwaara, we notice that there was living at Gwaara at this time a great lady with the title of Gbene. It was to this lady that Bega returned after the crisis at Boue referred to above. According to the oral tradition, the name of this great lady was called Gbenenyanagwaara (i.e. Gbenenyana of Gwaara). Now who was this Gbenenyanagwaara? What relationship did she have with Bega? Why did Bega return to her, and why did she receive Bega into her home? This lady who bears the great title in this period, was she really an ordinary lady? Was she not one of the great matrilineal descendants of the royal ancestors of the Ogoni? Why did Bega become Gbenebega? Did

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110. The oral tradition in some parts of Ogoni has lost her real name, but in place of her real name, only her title, "Most Glamorous Lady" has survived. Thus in Tee area, she is called Lewa; and in Leme area she is called Ndowa; all meaning "Most Glamorous Lady". See Ejoo, D.L. of Agbeta, Onne (Aged c. 65). Interviewed 25.2.1984. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

111. Naasa, Agbeebe of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 63) Interviewed 4.12.1983. Text 64, pp. 256-257.

she succeed Gbenenyagwaara? Attempt will be made to answer these and other questions as we progress further. In the meantime, I will devote some attention to the sources derived from the Boue area.

I consider a discussion of the sources in the Boue area very appropriate because, apart from Nama area (which includes Gure and Sii), Boue stands out as the greatest reservoir of Ogoni traditional history. Some of my most important informants come from this area; and in that respect, Tonwe III stands out as the most informed informant of all in all respects. This is not a coincidence. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that Tonwe III is a cousin of this writer and that Tonwe II was his paternal uncle, if only to indicate that I am not just learning about these things but that I actually grew up in the very family where these things were taking place; and that, as a boy, I have myself performed the traditional rite of Yaage.

Tonwe II was very interested in traditional government. He wanted to be known not just as a ruler but as the best ruler in all Ogoni. And he set out to work for it. He began very early, about the 1930s, to enquire into Ogoni oral tradition, how Ogoni was governed in the past. He collected information from a large number of elders, most of whom had lived from the nineteenth century. Some of the information he collected was hand-written in a large book (the type used as ledgers by big companies), which is now in the possession of Tonwe III. But most of what is written therein is shallow, unsystematic and unorganized.

Originally, Tonwe III wanted to hand over this hand-written document to me so that I could get whatever information I wanted from it. But after looking through it, I discovered that it contained mostly matters relating to the writer's own administration and very little on the history

behind those things that were written therein. I also noticed that some pages had been ripped or torn out of the book. I therefore decided to interview Tonwe III directly. My interviews with Tonwe III produced very good results. It brought out a large amount of information covering many areas of the traditional history of Ogoni, most of which were either not written down or were kept secret. These include among others, the tradition about the origin of the House of Elders, which is the basis of traditional government in Ogoni; the tradition about the constitution of the House of Elders; an account of the judicial system of the House of Elders; the tradition concerning the relationship between Gbenebega and Yobue, and therefore between Boue and the Gbenebega dynasty; the tradition about the origin and migration of Boue people; the tradition about the coastal City of Bangha which traded with the early Portuguese; the account of the fall of that city; the causes of the Baan Wars; the tradition about the cause of the separation between Boonen and Gbenesaakoo, his elder brother; etc.. The generation from whom Tonwe II derived his information have been dead long ago. Tonwe II himself died in June 1975. I regard this source as very important because as I went through Ogoni, I could hardly find any other source which covered such variety and depth of the traditional history of Ogoni as this one.

Other important sources in the Boue area were the sources which derive from Gbenekote and Gbenekwerre House in Kono Boue, which dealt with the city of Kwuribue, a city which, as already stated, was also mentioned by Dapper writing in the seventeenth century.<sup>112</sup> This source and the source which described the city of Bangha enabled me to put absolute dates on certain periods. For, as it is argued later on in this study, the oral

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112. Dapper, O., Description of Africa, Vol. II, Tr. John Ogilby (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.

tradition which describes the city of Bangha, corroborates with the description of the large village mentioned by Pereira, writing at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>113</sup>

Another important source in the same Boue area was the testimony by Chief Kpoko Kinanwii who died in 1985. This source mentioned the introduction of the gun in the Eastern Niger Delta. This source therefore enabled me to date some political developments in Ogoni during this period; such as the collapse of the Bariyaayoo dynasty in Luawii, the rise of the Gbenebega dynasty in Gwaara; the establishment of the Gbenekiri dynasty in Boue and Babbe; the dynamic change from matrilineal to patrilineal succession in Ogoni; the political change from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy via the introduction of the House of Elders, etc. All these events took place after the Baan Wars which were brought to an end by the introduction of the gun in the sixteenth century.<sup>114</sup>

In the peripheral areas like Ko, Kabangha and Buon, which lie on the bank of the Imo River, the oral tradition retained bits of information which referred to the early contacts between the Ogoni and some of their neighbours, particularly Bonny people, when they were coming down from the Ndoki area through Ogoni by land until they arrived in their present home.<sup>115</sup> Ethnographic data such as place-names, eponyms, etc., found in the oral tradition provided material for reconstructing the early external relations

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113. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, op.cit., p. 147.

114. Dike, K.O. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 106-107.

115. cf. Afigbo, A.E., "The Ndoki from the Earliest Times to 1901: An Introductory Survey", Oduma, Vol. 2, 1 (1974), pp. 16-20.

between Ogoni and Bonny. As stated above, names like Ebani, Bani, Opuoko, Kaloko, etc., remain as landmarks of that early contact and trade relations between the two peoples. The oral tradition also showed that the external relations between Ogoni and Bonny had continued into modern times. There is corroboration in the oral tradition of the two peoples. Much of the evidence has also been corroborated with data found in the reports of early European travellers, such as Dapper and the Barbots; and in the nineteenth century by such European travellers as the Reverend H.M. Waddell and W.B. Baikie.

Evidence collected in this area also revealed that there were some military connections between Ogoni and Ibibio, which resulted in the establishment of some Ogoni settlements on the east bank of the Imo River.

In Gokana area, particularly in the old town of Giokoo, which lay on an ancient trade route from the hinterland to Bangha market on the coast, I collected bits of evidence which reveal an early contact between the Ogoni and the Asa of Southern Igbo land, who the Ogoni regard as an autochthonous people who originally lived farther north but whom the southward coming Igbo pushed further south to their present location. Professor A.E. Afigbo, however, appears to have overlooked this point in his latest work, Ropes of Sand, published by University of Nigeria Press, 1981.<sup>116</sup> Before the late 1950s, the Yorubas had also believed that all the people who are today known as Yorubas migrated from somewhere north of the Niger.<sup>117</sup>

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116. Afigbo, A.E., Ropes of Sand: (Studies in Igbo History and Culture) (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press 1981), p. 8.

117. Beier, H.U. "Before Oduduwa", Odu: (Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies), Vol. 3, (1957), pp. 25-32.

In the same Gokana area, I collected some useful material which established that some of the markets described in the Eastern Niger Delta in the accounts of European travellers were in fact markets located on the coast of Ogoni. Such market towns were Bangha and Kwuribue, referred to above, and Mogho.<sup>118</sup>

Also in Gokana area, I collected bits of ethnographic evidence, which, with the aid of linguistic analysis, established that there were some autochthonous inhabitants in the area, as explained above.

Oral tradition collected in the Leme area coupled with ethnographic traces found in the language and in family names, provided material for reconstructing the trade relations and the activities that went on between Ogoni and the Igbo, particularly the Aro and the Nkwerre, in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Again ethnographic data in the Leme oral tradition provided material for establishing the character of the initial settlement of the Okrika ancestors on the mainland coast of Ogoni. Evidence of such ethnographic materials included the joint worship of Fenibeso, an ethnic deity which the oral tradition asserts the Okrika ancestors brought with them from their place of origin. But Okrika oral tradition, however, appears to suggest that that deity was an Okrika national hero deified in a period of national consciousness in their present home, when the Okrika immigrants were struggling with their Ogoni mainland neighbours.<sup>119</sup>

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118. Dapper, O., Description of Africa, op.cit. p. 482.  
Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V, (London: 1732), p. 380.
119. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report on Okrika, Dagea Division, Owerri Province" (1933), pp. 9-10. N.A.E. File No. 29004, CSO 26/3.  
cf. Alagoa, E.J. "The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours 1600-1800" in J.F. Ade Ajayi & Michael Crowder (eds.) History of West Africa, Vol. I, (London: Longman Group, 1971), pp. 269-303.

With the aid of ethnographic data available in the oral tradition which I collected in the Leme area, and in other parts of Ogoni, coupled with evidence found in European travellers' records, it was possible to establish the pattern of the early Atlantic slave trade through overland routes between the Igbo hinterland and Ogoni on the coast. The evidence suggests that at that time the Igbo hinterland traders did not deal directly with the Ijo coastal buyers. The first stage of the transactions stopped on the Ogoni mainland, where the Ogoni middlemen bought the slaves and other goods from the hinterland traders. The Ogoni middlemen then resold the slaves and other goods on the coast to the Portuguese (in the time of the Portuguese) and later on to the Ijo middlemen who in turn finally sold them to the Europeans who replaced the Portuguese, namely the Dutch and the English traders. One of the several data found in Ogoni oral tradition in support of this explanation is that which revealed that Igbo influence did not appear in Okrika social and cultural life until sometime after the seventeenth century; and that the Igbo first learned about Okrika through trade contacts with the Ogoni long before they ever actually had direct contacts with the Okrikans themselves; and that that period of direct contacts (a period which also represents a significant decline in the special role of Ogoni in the trade), could not have been before 1700. More facts will be adduced later on to support this argument.

From the Leme area also I collected some useful data which provided a better understanding not only of the organization of yam production and the yam industry in Ogoni, but also about how the trade in yams became an integral part of the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, the evidence on

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120. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage to New Calabar or Rio Real in the Year 1699" in John Barbot (ed.) A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V (London: Printed by Assignment from Messrs. Churchill, 1732), p. 460.

yam production also showed how the Aros used the existence of this industry in Ogoni, which incidentally lay near the coast, to lure young persons from the hinterland to the coast where they were sold as slaves; and from there exported overseas with the yams.<sup>121</sup> This piece of evidence thus revealed one more of the stratagems employed by the Aros during the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

It will be shown later how, by this method, the Aros persuaded the great majority of the persons who were sold as slaves into ignorantly cooperating in their own exportation without knowing it.

The most important informant in the Leme area was the Reverend Solomon Laaka of Onne. In my view, it is quite fortunate for an historian to meet an informant of this kind. Reverend Laaka descended from an old family which migrated from Barako in Gokan and settled in Onne at an indeterminate period in the past. Their family are the landlords and land priests of a section of Onne. The present paramount Ruler of Onne, retired Chief Justice of the Rivers State of Nigeria, Justice Wai-Ogosu, is from that family. This writer personally knew Reverend Laaka as a fellow student at the Lutheran Seminary at Obotldim, Uyo, in the 1960s. As then, he is still a highly gifted man of integrity. Currently he is the Chairman of a committee translating the Bible into the Leme language. Like Tonwe II of Boue, he has great interest in the traditional history of the Leme people. In addition to the wealth of information which he gathered from his ancestors, he has also personally collected a lot of information from the elders of Leme and from their roots in Gokana. Without doubt, he is the

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121. Barbot, James, "An Abstract ... ", op.cit., p. 465.

most informed traditional historian in all Leme today, as is also acknowledged by another informant, Chief Obo Ngofa of Aleeto.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, this introduction cannot be properly ended without mention of the impact of the gun on the ancient Ogoni society. The gun was introduced into Ogoni in the sixteenth century. At that time a devastating and protracted civil war was going on in Ogoni between the states north of the Luubaara River and those south of it. The Kingdom of Boue, which first got the gun, triumphed out of the war.

The introduction of the gun also revolutionized the hunting and the political systems in Ogoni. A powerful elite emerged, who seized state power and changed the political system from monarchy to a type of 'constitutional monarchy'. They effectively shifted the seat of political or state power from the king to a new institution known as the "House of Elders", To Pya Kanee.

It is suggested in this study that the evolution of a type of constitutional monarchy in Ogoni in the sixteenth century was a direct result of the impact of the gun. This was because it grew out of a powerful class of hunters who possessed the gun, which was then a new weapon. This class of hunters formed themselves into an elite club in the house of their leader; and from there they formulated a system of rules for the control of hunting and for the annual harvesting and sharing of game. Their meeting place became known as the "House of Hunters", To Uwegbo. Since membership was restricted to the topmost echelon of the ruling class, they quickly introduced

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122. Ngofa, Obo (Chief) of Aleeto (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Aleeto on 4.3.1984. Text 12, pp. 54-56.

the idea into the full government of society. A governing body known as the "House of Elders" emerged.

From the introduction of the gun also a class of blacksmiths known as the "gun-makers" developed. This class of blacksmiths succeeded in making an imitation type of the old danish guns. They also repaired damaged guns. Because of their ingenuity, they became popular with the ruling classes. They thus became a powerful professional group in the society. With the emergence of these powerful groups, a great many changes took place in the organization of society and in the system of government from the sixteenth century on.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF METHODOLOGY

The question whether oral tradition is a valid material for historical analysis has been so successfully discussed by historians in the last three decades that it is now no longer necessary to continue the debate.<sup>1</sup> For that reason, the main focus in this chapter will be placed on the problems of methodology. This will include an examination of the approach and the methods used, which have led to the conclusions suggested below. We shall also examine those methods and conclusions to see whether there are similarities or contrasts when compared with the methods or conclusions suggested by other scholars and attempt to explain why the similarities or contrasts exist.

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1. For details about this debate, the following works are important. Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology, Tr. H.M. Wright (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965); Jan Vansina, The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978; Jan Vansina, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba I and II", Journal of African History, vol. I, 1(1960), pp. 45-53; and Vol. I, 2(1960), pp. 257-270. cf. Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition as History, London: James Currey Ltd., 1985. Daniel F. McCall, Africa in Time Perspective, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; David P. Henige, The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974; David Henige, Oral Historiography, London, New York, Lagos, Longman Group Ltd., 1982; Joseph C. Miller, ed., The African Past Speaks, Folkestone, Kent, England: William Dawson and Sons, Ltd., 1980. Joseph C. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1976. G.W. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1946. Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft, Tr., Peter Putnam, Intro. by Joseph R. Strayer, Manchester University Press, 1954. Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, English Tr., London, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1966; Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Story of Asdiwal" in The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism, ed. Edmund Leach, London: Tavistock Publication Ltd., 1967, pp. 1-47. B.A. Ogot, History of the Southern Luo, Vol. I, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967.

The study of oral tradition demands certain prerequisite conditions. First the historian must have a sympathetic attitude towards the culture being studied. Secondly, he should endeavour to master the language of the particular society.<sup>2</sup> The historian who fulfils these prerequisite conditions will be more than a mere observer of cultures. He will not only become a participant in the culture but he will also be able to delve deep into the interior reaches of an African tradition and unlock many of its often guarded mysteries. But because of the unique peculiarities of African societies, the nature of a particular society which produces its oral traditions cannot be predetermined simply by some general rules.

For instance, Jan Vansina's Oral Tradition and David Henige's Chronology of Oral Tradition are both classic works on oral tradition. They contain a wealth of information on the general principles of methodology and provide basic reading for the historian of oral tradition. However, while they must remain as important guides in the subject, they cannot be regarded as the panacea for the problems of oral tradition in every society in Africa.

In his earlier study of Kuba oral traditions, Vansina distinguished between two types of sources - official/fixed and free or other sources; or between royal and ethnic or village history.<sup>3</sup> He also distinguished between the two kinds of transmission - at random, from generation

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2. Vansina, Jan, Oral Tradition, (Chicago, 1965), pp. 183, 187-19.

3. Vansina, Jan, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba I", J.A.H., Vol. I, 1(1960), pp. 46-7; Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition, pp. 49-50.

to generation, and by specialists, in formal, controlled performances.<sup>4</sup> He speaks of a chain of witnesses stretching from the original eye-witness to a present-day witness.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, Robert Harms has noted in his study of Bobangi oral traditions that there was no continuity in transmission, and no official or fixed traditions, or specialist historians. According to him, the traditions were constantly being altered as a result of changing conditions, relationships and perceptions. These shifts on the one hand, occurred between the Bobangi and their homeland in Bobangi Essenga on the Ubangi river, and on the other, between them and their Tio neighbours of the hinterland in their new home on the Zaire River. He discovered that the Bobangi oral tradition was tantamount to a declaration of independence. Robert Harms found that the proper interpretation of the oral traditions depended on a study of the changes, with a view to discovering the underlying shifts in the cultural, social and political realities that the traditions reflected, rather than concentrating on the traditions themselves.<sup>6</sup> He revealed that the Bobangi society in their new environment was individualistic, and based on an economy of fishing and trading. The occupation of fishing encouraged the movement of people from one location to another following the movement of fish. The absence of corporate kin groups resulted in the absence of ethnic or lineage traditions. This condition encouraged the formation of fishing and trading parties on the basis of friendship and mutual interest rather than on kinship.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Vansina, Jan, The children of Woot, op.cit., p. 19; "Recording the Oral History ..." op.cit., p. 48; Oral Tradition, p. 52.

5. Vansina, Jan, "Recording the Oral History ..." op.cit., p. 45.

6. Harms, Robert W. "Bobangi Oral Traditions: Indicators of Changing Perceptions" in J.C. Miller, ed., The African Past Speaks, pp. 178-200, esp. pp. 194-7, 180.

7. Ibid., p. 180.

On the changing perceptions and relationships with the mainland, Robert Harms noted that when the Bobangi initially settled in the area, they had entered into a contractual arrangement with their Tio neighbours of the hinterland in which they acknowledged the latter as the landlords.<sup>8</sup> With the advent of the colonial period, however, the Bobangi saw an opportunity to alter this contractual arrangement. As part of the scheme, they deliberately altered their traditions of settlement.

In many respects, the Bobangi oral tradition is a contrast to the Kuba example. But it reflects some similarities in the oral traditions of some states in the Niger Delta. In that region, there have also occurred some changes in relationships and perceptions between those states and their Ogoni mainland neighbours. For example, the oral traditions of the Okrika, the Ibani (Bonny), the Obolo (Andoni), the Opobo, etc., do not admit the existence of any contractual relationships between them and the Ogoni. Yet all their oral traditions acknowledge that they initially settled on the Ogoni mainland at the beginning of their settlement in the area.<sup>9</sup> As Robert Harms discovered, the result of deliberate changing of traditions and perceptions was that the oral traditions of these peoples do not go back much further than a few generations.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar vein, David W. Cohen became convinced that the key to

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8. Harms, Robert, "Bobangi Oral Traditions... , op.cit., pp. 194-7.
  9. Porter, J.C., "Intelligence Report on the Okrika, Degema Division, Owerri Province", 1933. File 29004, CS026/3; E.J. Alagoa A History of the Niger Delta (Ibadan; Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 148.
  10. Harms, Robert, op.cit. p. 180; G.I. Jones, The Trading States of the Oil Rivers, (Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 35.

interpreting the Bunafu traditional history was not in the narrative tradition as such but by studying what he termed the "intelligence of everyday life transmitted through open social networks in non-specific situations and without specialized privilege".<sup>11</sup> According to him, the story of conflict between Womunafu and Nafa is not found within the narrative historical tradition spoken by the people of Busoga or of the people of Bunafu. "(Nor is it found in the notes of travellers, missionaries or early Protectorate agents stationed in the area; nor in the written accounts produced by local historians in the century)".<sup>12</sup> David Cohen noted that the evidence for reconstructing a relationship of conflict between Bunafu and Mukama Womunafu was derived from the reality of the latter's numerical and positional dominance in the society.<sup>13</sup>

He was critical of Vansina's emphasis on what he called 'formal, cogent and important texts' in his analysis of Kuba history.<sup>14</sup> According to him, "the major accounts assume a central place in Vansina's reconstruction of the Kuba past because of his assumption that modern Kuba traditions have origins in some ancestral setting and that what he recorded in modern times were variants of these proto-traditions altered by process of selection, distortion and structural amnesia. Treating the modern traditions as reflexes of earlier historical texts, leads him to devote considerable space in his volume (Children of Woot, Madison, 1978), to exploring variants among the major accounts and showing how the Kuba have over time reconstructed their distinctive conception of the past".<sup>15</sup>

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11. Cohen, D.W., "Reconstructing a conflict in Bunafu: seeking evidence outside the narrative tradition" in J.C. Miller, ed., The African Past Speaks, pp. 201-220; see p. 204.

12. Ibid., p. 204.

13. Ibid., p. 205.

14. Ibid., p. 206.

15. Ibid., p. 218.

In contrast Cohen sees the differences between Vansina's central role of the formal traditions in the shaping of Kuba historical knowledge and the absences of similar focal compositions in the Lakes Plateau Region "not in terms of varying degrees of reference to the past in the two cases, nor in terms of the question of how much history is contained in myth". Rather he sees the differences "at a level of implicit social theory, either the social theory of the Africans or that of the historians who study them." Vansina's sociology assumes some former ancestral society ... for the Lakes Plateau region of East and Central Africa, by contrast, it is difficult to reconstruct such an 'ancestral society' or even to imagine that one ever existed. If two such distinct modes of social formation in fact occurred among the Kuba and in the Lakes Plateau Region, then this difference would have coloured in important ways the historical consciousness of each people and thereby explain why each constructed their portrayal of the past in such distinctive ways. If on the other hand we are talking about societies that do not reflect real historical differences, then one or the other of these assumed theories may distort at a profound level how we represent the ways in which Africans construct historical knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

In the foregoing examples both Harms and Cohen disagree fundamentally with Vansina on various points. In particular they disagree with his emphasis on what he called formal, fixed or official texts, as shown above. They also disagree with him on the manner of transmission which not only entertains a notion of chain of witnesses, but also emphasises transmission by specialist historians in controlled oral performances.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Cohen, D.W., "Reconstructing a conflict..", op.cit., p. 218.

17. Vansina, Jan, The Children of Woot, op.cit., p. 19, cf. p. 82.

Harms appears to suggest that the root of the differences between his methodology and that of Vansina lies in the nature of the two societies - the Bobangi society being essentially a non-traditional society, given to change in accordance with prevailing conditions, and the Kuba society being strictly traditional and based on a sedentary economy, such as agriculture.

Cohen, on the other hand, argues that the differences between his methodology as well as his interpretation of Bunafu and Busoga history and that of Vansina with respect to Kuba history, did not lie in differences in the nature of the societies but in the historians' different sociological exegeses. He argues that Vansina's sociology assumed the existence of some former ancestral society and asserts that such former ancestral society did not exist in the Lakes Plateau Region of Uganda. Because of his assumption of proto-traditions, Cohen argues, Vansina devotes "considerable space in his volume to exploring variants among the major accounts and showing how the Kuba have over time reconstructed their distinctive conception of the past".<sup>18</sup> He appears to have summed up the basis of his analysis and interpretation of Bunafu history in two principles, namely, David Henige's notion of "history as present politics"<sup>19</sup> and Marc Bloch's "evidence of witnesses in spite of themselves."<sup>20</sup>

While no historian worth his salt would ignore the highly scholarly exploitation of historical resources recommended by these authors, certain questions still remain to which Cohen has not fully addressed

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18. Cohen, D.W., "Reconstructing a conflict ...", *op.cit.*, p. 218.
  19. Henige, David P., The Chronology of Oral Tradition, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-70.
  20. Bloch, Marc, The Historian's Craft, (Manchester University Press, 1954), pp. 61-2.

himself. Why could there not have been an ancestral society in the Lakes Plateau Region of Uganda? Why is there an absence of proto-traditions in that region? If the absence of such historical factors is assumed for the Lakes Plateau region of Uganda, can that assumption apply to all societies in Africa?

Contrary to Cohen's hypothesis or assumptions, by the example of Ogoni oral traditions, it will be shown in this thesis that there existed in Africa both ancestral society and proto-traditions. It will also be explained how and why these historical traditions existed in Ogoni society.

#### The Ogoni Oral Tradition

In Ogoni oral tradition, there are no court or official traditions, and no specialist historians as such. That does not mean that there are no 'experts' in traditional affairs.<sup>21</sup> In Ogoni society, oral tradition comes to the individual like sunrise in the morning. If one was exposed to tradition, one could easily see, feel and recognize oral tradition in society, as it goes through its normal annual cycles of activities. But if one was on the leaside of society, i.e., descended from an ancestry or lineage which was not exposed to traditional activities, the contrary would be the case.

Oral tradition consists in the peoples' practical daily life, in the form of rites and rituals, ceremonies, including the pouring of libations, food types, taboos, customs, musical instruments such as drums and drum-language, place-names, some personal names, societies

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21. An example of this type is the Bemba tradition. Details of comparisons are set out below. See Roberts, Andrew, A History of Bemba: Political Growth and Change in North-eastern Zambia Before 1900, (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1973), pp. 12-13.

(open or secret), titles, occupations, offices, positions, seats, fortifications, ancestors, shrines, patterns of social organization, some marriages, wars, weapons, tools, proverbs, metaphors, etc..

If the researcher or historian will ask the right questions concerning these things, the oral tradition will be produced. It is here that the researcher's knowledge of the language and culture will be of great importance. It should not be assumed that these 'artifacts' are lying around everywhere for the researcher or historian to see and investigate. One may be lucky enough to actually see a few of these things. Many are no longer in existence. Many have been replaced by entirely new things with new names. Sometimes the sight of an artifact may provoke some pertinent questions from a curious researcher, which may in turn result in what Vansina has called "occasional comments".<sup>22</sup> Rarely will the historian in Ogoni find such objects. How can the historian know what to ask in such circumstances? This is why a deep knowledge of the culture is essential. It should not be assumed that any resident of an area would know these things as a matter of course. None should be surprised that many local people are as ignorant of these things as the foreign researcher.

The selection of the proper informant is therefore crucial. The best informants are not the oldest persons. Many researchers have the wrong notion that if they could find enough old people in a given community, they would be able to obtain enough information about the past from them. Much will depend on the type of old person concerned. Besides, many old persons do not remember very much. The type of old person who

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22. Vansina, Jan, Oral Tradition ..., op.cit., p. 163.

will be useful are those whose predecessors and themselves were 'practitioners' of traditions. Such old men may not be able to speak so many words but the few things they say will be wholly useful. Sometimes the heirs-apparent of such old persons will be of great assistance. they will be able to elaborate on points which the old men will only barely touch upon.

Literacy or a certificate in western education is not a qualification for a good informant.<sup>23</sup> Many literate persons including some university graduates are very ignorant of their local traditions. Hence they cannot be useful as informants. Sometimes the literate interpreter can be a stumbling block, especially if the historian was himself ignorant of the tradition and weak in the language. On the other hand, if a person was educated in the western style of education as well as in the local tradition, such a person will be an asset.

It is therefore necessary that the historian should first scrutinize the informant concerning his personal credentials. Personal credentials here mean traditional background. The historian should know enough about the traditions to be able to judge whether the credentials given him are correct. He should also confirm the credibility of the informant from other local authorities.

The danger is that the educated persons often assume that they know the historical traditions until one interviews them. Even then they

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23. cf. David Henige, Chronology of Oral Tradition, pp. 97-103.  
David Henige, "The Disease of Writing", in J.C. Miller, ed.  
The African Past Speaks, pp. 240-61.

can easily slip through the interviewer's net, unless the historian was himself alert on the subject. It is therefore vital that the historian should be well-prepared before embarking on fieldwork research. For example, during my fieldwork, I interviewed only a small number of literate persons, among whom were a few university graduates. Two of these had already taken the bold step and had recently completed writing each a separate history of Ogoni. One of them had already sent his work to the press, while the other was raising the necessary funds to do so.

I decided to interview these two men, not necessarily because I found them to be suitable informants, but because I wanted to compare their work with my own and to share experiences with them. These gentlemen were kind enough to grant me each several hours of interview during which they discussed with me the contents of their work. I was impressed both by the amount of material which they had gathered and by the great effort they had made in producing their works. Nevertheless, except for one reference which concerned a boundary<sup>24</sup> arrangement in the colonial period, none of the generous materials which I collected from the two men was useful for my purpose, because most of their material dealt with the recent past. One of them actually dated the early beginning of Ogoni in the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, I could easily see that much of their arguments were based on feedback derived from outside Ogoni in the recent past. My only satisfaction was that I was convinced that I have not left any stone unturned. Thus from that point on, I began to concentrate

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24. Akekue, M.N. (Chief), interviewed at Kpuite on 16.3.84.  
Text 74, pp. 275-6.

25. LooLoo, G.N. (Chief), interviewed at Port Harcourt on 25.3.84.  
Text 75, p. 277.

my full attention on those whom I considered as the practitioners of the traditions.

#### The Real Informants

In Ogoni (i.e. in the Kana language), the word Doonu Keneke (tradition) literally means "the doings of the ground or of the land", i.e. what must be done in order to make life on the earth real and meaningful. In Ogoni idiom, the ground here represents the origin of all things. People must not live or do things as though they have no origin. Thus the Ogoni have a proverb which says, "the arrow that is shot into the sky will ultimately return to the ground" (akpa ba ta ture bu nyone sa a obia lu keneke). In other words, a person who neglects tradition, will sooner or later discover that he could not do without it after all.

Tradition involves all aspects of life. For example, in marriage, after the young woman had been selected and all negotiations with the parents concluded, the day of "father's drinks" traditionally marked the beginning of the marriage ceremonies. On that day, the family of the young man and their relatives brought drinks and other accessories to the home of the girl's parents. That evening the latter invited their close relatives and the two families sat together to a drinking party. The ceremony involved the pouring of libations, during which the 'history' (i.e. the genealogy) of the girl through her father was recited. All present, including her future husband, learned about the girl's ancestral origins on that day.

At the close of the ceremony, the father of the girl announced that he did not pick up the mother of the girl from the streets or from the air. She was married from the home of people. Therefore the young man

and his parents should also go and inform those people that the girl whom they are marrying is a fruit of that womb, so that those people may know who they are and bless the girl also. Thus another marriage drinking party, known as "mother's drinks" was fixed to take place at the home or compound of the grandmother of the girl. On that occasion, also, the 'history' of the girl on her mother's side was recited. In ancient times this was done up to the great-grandmother. (nama kaama).

Another example was when a new play was shown to the public for the first time. Before any such play was shown, the proprietors of the play or society brought drinks, money, etc., in a dressed traditional basket to the house of the founder of the town to say that such a thing was going to take place. During the ceremony, libations were poured and the names of the founders and other great men who had played some part in the town's history, were recited. Their spirits were invoked to come to the occasion, because such and such was going to take place. Similar ceremonies were performed at the House or compounds of the founders of the component parts of the town before the play was finally made public.

A third example may be observed at the yearly opening of the farming season, when the land priests performed a similar ritual during which the names of the founders or the original landlords were recited with libations. Without this ceremony, nobody could begin farming in any particular farming area any year. <sup>26</sup>

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26. Laaka, S.O. (Rev.) of Onne (Aged 67). Interviewed at Ekara on 6.3.84. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

These examples represent the different ways oral traditions are kept alive in Ogoni society. J.C. Miller reports that Mbundu oral tradition relating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not say anything about individual names.<sup>27</sup> This is a contrast to Ogoni oral tradition in which individual names as well as events and institutions are often well remembered to periods much farther back than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This has been achieved through the practice of tradition as illustrated above.

The types of informants then who will be in a position to provide the necessary information include ancestral priests, ancestral spirit-mediums, traditional rulers, titled men, traditional priests, such as Yam priests, Land priests, lineage heads; heads of secret societies, occupational heads, such as palm wine tappers, potters, canoe makers, blacksmiths, hunters, medicine men, etc. These types of informants or their descendants will provide the right information, if they are asked the right type of questions.

To locate this type of informant throughout the fieldwork area, I did a number of things. I divided the field into areas. Then I made enquiries about the oldest settlements or villages in each area, including both extinct and surviving villages. Then by aid of some local people, I searched out and identified in those places the type of informant listed above, without actually approaching them until the right moment. This period of field survey and preparation began from June to October 1981, during which I collected my first materials.

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27. Miller, J.C., Kings and Kinsmen (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 12.

The practice of not approaching the informants long in advance is useful. There were about three instances when the informants were informed about the interview in advance, some youths of the community persuaded the informants not to co-operate because they suspected that I was going to use the information for some political purposes. Another disadvantage is that some informants spend the interim period trying to 'borrow' some ideas from some educated persons whom they wrongly believe to know more than themselves. In the period from November 1983 to March 1984, during which I collected the bulk of my data, I endeavoured to prevent such mishaps.

#### Recording the Information

The historian will need a really small but expensive high fidelity tape recorder. The attempt must be made to avoid carrying many recording gadgets. Such will have a distracting effect. When some informants are conscious that they are being taped, they attempt to 'refine' their story or account in order to sound more 'modern'. They also attempt to hold back or omit those traditional elements which modern influences have condemned as primitive or evil and try to speak in terms which, in their judgement, will suit the modern visitor and his equipment. The effect will be distortion. To safeguard against this, it is necessary for the historian to be accompanied by a respected and enlightened local person who should do the introduction and explain the fact that no harm is intended and that the purpose of the exercise was to preserve the valuable work of the ancients and of the ancestors for posterity.

The best results will be obtained if there are fewer people in the interview room. The whole affair should be informal and relaxed. For

example, I sat face to face with my informant in a conversational posture. I had my small tape recorder ready fitted with a new cassette tape or adjusted the partially used one well in advance before arriving in the informant's house. What remained was just to press the button at the right moment. I either placed the tape recorder on the floor between my legs or slipped the small strap onto my wrist and let it dangle from my wrist while I looked straight at my informant and engaged him in a direct person to person conversation.

Once the interview had begun, the informant was fully and actively engaged with one question after the other without pauses. There were no pauses to write anything or to look at the next question. In this way the full attention of the informant was retained throughout the duration of the interview. To do this successfully, the historian must be well prepared in advance. Some starting questions must be ready in the historian's mind. The bulk of the questions will come up during the interview. This will depend on the alertness of the historian in relation to the subject matter. No ambiguous names, allusions, or statements should be allowed to go by without querying for more explanations. At the beginning of the fieldwork I drew up a total of 276 questions covering almost every area of the culture. With this number of questions at my disposal, in addition to new questions that cropped up during the interviews, I kept my informants busy throughout the period of the interview. Usually we had a break at a certain point when we knew that we were both exhausted and called for a local drink.

At this moment the interview looked more business-like, and most informants appreciated this moment very much. Some informants used this moment to pour libations to the ancients and recited some names in

the traditional way. One of these was the head of the Kpaankpaan Secret Society at Kwaakwa<sup>28</sup>. After this short break, the interview resumed with even greater vigour till every relevant question was exhausted and every issue dealt with. I used the 90 minutes quality cassette tapes. An interview of this kind can be really exhausting. There is no gainsaying this, especially if the informant was one of the type who knew his subject well. For this reason, the time of the interview should be arranged so as to suit the informant.

Often an informant met for the first time may be ready for interview immediately. Such an opportunity should never be missed through deferment by the historian. Some of my best informants were people I had never met before. This means that the historian on fieldwork should always carry his tape recorder with some blank cassette tapes and reserve batteries. For accurate recording, no trouble should be spared in calling for a repetition of any statement that was not quite clear. Trivialities or detractions such as being invited to a drink, should never be allowed before the interview, as this can subtly do harm to the interview without anyone knowing it.

As stated above, group interviews with a number of informants sitting together in the same interview may not always yield the best results, because the informants tend to strike a compromise over important issues. But where a principal informant personally requested the assistance of one or two auxiliary informants to assist him on some points, this should be welcomed.

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28. Imene, Nwii of Kwaakwa, Boue (Aged c. 64). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 28.12.83. Text 66, pp. 259-61.

All points raised by a recognized informant should be taped regardless of whether they make sense or not, because one never knows the importance of a point until the thesis has been written.

#### Transcription and Translation

As already stated, there is no official Ogoni oral tradition; and there are no special persons who might be described as the Ogoni oral historians. A person knows about the Ogoni traditions because he happens to occupy a certain position and performs certain functions in society. If such a person was asked to tell about Ogoni oral tradition, he would certainly reply that he did not know what it was. But if the same person was asked to say something about Kana people, or about the functions of his office, or about the "doings of the Land", he would certainly have more than enough to say. This then gives an idea of how the material that has now been assembled together, which can henceforth be properly described as "the Ogoni oral tradition", has been collected.

The material or texts were recorded from informants in the form of responses to questions. Sometimes the responses were short statements, at other times, they were long explanations. Occasionally my questions prompted the recall of some old stories or narratives. In transcription, everything the informant said was transcribed from tape on to paper in the way he or she said it.

Here a word must be said about the mastery of the language of the society being studied, and possibly, a knowledge of one or two of the languages of the neighbouring peoples. David Henige has stressed the point that "It is unwise to think that translation consists largely in

references to dictionaries for possible meanings of terms or phrases".<sup>29</sup> And he went on to point out that in languages for which there is no lexical material and which have peculiar characteristics such as tonal systems, it will be necessary to know the proper denotation and connotation of words, and to understand the different uses of the same word on different occasions or contexts and in different cultures.

The Kana language which is the original language and which is spoken by the majority in Ogoni, is essentially a tonal language. The same word can mean different things in different contexts, and quite often in the same context, depending on the tone or accent of the speaker. The awareness of the historian of the different uses of the same words is crucial in transcription and translation. This is where a thorough knowledge of the language will pay off. Otherwise the historian with only a smattering of the language will transcribe and translate the ordinary meaning of a word, when in fact the informant had used it as an idiom, or with quite a different meaning intended. The result is that the text will be distorted and very confusing.

I certainly have a very good advantage in this respect. This is because I am not only a born speaker of Kana language, but I was also born and bred in a family which practises the traditions on which the language itself is based. And not only that, as stated above, I have also participated in one of the richest and most exciting of the traditions - the Yaage, the impressions of which remain as indelible in my mind as though it was done only yesterday. This is a rare privilege or experience which most Ogoni men and youths living today do not have;

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29. Henige, David, Oral Historiography (London, New York, Lagos: Longman Group Ltd., 1982), p. 69.

and therefore cannot speak on the traditions direct from experience.<sup>30</sup> Besides, I also possess a good knowledge of the languages of the neighbouring peoples, particularly Igbo.

Thus my texts hardly read like the words of 'illiterate' persons. And here I enclose 'illiterate' in inverted commas because I was convinced that most of my informants were certainly well educated in their fields. When they spoke on tapes, they also sounded as an educated German, English or French person would sound when speaking on a subject in which they were experts.<sup>31</sup>

None-the-less, the historian must be cautious because some of the stories or statements would not make sense in 'modern' terms, but that did not mean that they were useless. Many of such statements or stories were in fact idioms or 'coded' speech. It is important therefore that no statements or stories should be omitted or discarded, even if they do not make sense. An example was the story of 'Wa'nape', the wife of a prominent ruler of Ko, who regularly observed that after she had

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30. In this respect I fulfilled an important condition lacking in most translators, which David Henige, reviewing the observations of some literary critics, referred to when he wrote:

However deeply the translator (who may not be the historian) has immersed himself in the nuances of the second language, he can never have the life experiences that are indispensable to understanding the real, the deeper, the non-lexical meanings of words in that language.

Henige, David, Oral Historiography, op.cit., pp. 68-69.

31. cf. Roberts, Andrew, A History of Bemba, op.cit., p. 13.

completed the day's work in her farm and returned home, a certain fugitive who had been hiding in the forest near to her farm entered the farm and did additional work in the farm. Having discovered this, she regularly brought food from home and left it on the farm for this fugitive, who did work for her, to eat. This continued for some time until one day, with the help of some assistants, she caught hold of the fugitive and brought him into the town to her husband.

When the citizens wanted to kill the man, the Chief said, "No, no-one should kill him", because if the Gbenemene (the King) of Ko should hear about it, he himself would be in trouble. So they brought the man to the Gbenemene, who painted the man's head with white chalk and red camwood powder, and declared that no-one should touch him because he had become a citizen. However, when the son of Gbenemenebere<sup>32</sup> saw what had happened, he became afraid and fled from the town to across the Imo River, where he founded his own town, which became known as Wiisue Ko.<sup>33</sup>

Now this story was in fact a coded or veiled speech about a serious case of 'high treason' or adultery involving the wife of a ruler and another ruler, which resulted in war and the ultimate capture and execution of the latter. The latter being a brave warrior, his skull was used in making a war medicine and placed at the gate of the town.

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32. Gbenemenebere was the name of the man. He was actually the ruler of another community, as shown by his title.

33. Yomii, J.B. of Ko, (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Ko on 15 March 1984. Text 29, pp. 104-107.

Although the man was killed, he was not killed in the way the general mob had demanded. But because the younger minds of the society were still querying to know what the Gbenemene did to the man, the older eye-witnesses or elders coded an explanation, as stated above, which only the really grown-up could understand. The story ended with a very significant statement thus:

From that day it became a law that if two wives of a man quarrelled and fought, the more beautiful of the two would be asked to quit her husband's house to live in the compound of Gbenemenebere. She would cease to be the wife of her husband. (34)

This statement is the key to understanding not only the cause of the episode but also why the story about the episode became a tradition and the purpose or social basis of the tradition,<sup>35</sup> namely that it might be a warning to wives against extreme jealousy.

The historical truth of this story is the fact that an Ogoni community, founded by the son of the man exists on the east bank of the Imo River. Now if one were to discard this story as fable, one would never have known the history of the founding of this particular Ogoni settlement. The historical facts of this story therefore represent a strong argument against the structuralists.<sup>36</sup> Similar examples of such coded speech or stories may be found in the reported quarrel between Gbenesaakoo, King of Gokana, and his brother, Boonen; and in the story that seeks to explain the cause of the Yam War between the

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34. Yomii, J.B., op.cit., Text 29, pp. 104-107.

35. cf. Henige, David, Oral Historiography, op.cit., p. 68.

36. For example, see Levi-Strauss, Claude, "The Story of Asdiwal...", op.cit., pp. 1-49, esp. p. 30.

Etabajo and the United Leme immigrants from Gokana. The foregoing illustrations explain the fact that in transcription as well as in translation, there should be as little editing as possible. In this study, the editing was mainly in the area of grammar and tenses.

#### Inadequacy of Language

Even with my good understanding of Kana language and culture, I still had to face other difficult problems with the translation, because of the inadequacy of one language to the other. The search for the proper word, phrase or expression, which would adequately convey the meaning of the original, made the translation difficult. As stated above the use of tools of language, such as a good dictionary, were indispensable but it was not the only requirement. My advantage was that I have had a very good background in the English language. Coupled with that, my years of training and experience as a Christian Minister, particularly my training in the New Testament Greek, which was essentially a training in exegesis and translation from an original language to a second language; all this helped to put me in a very good position. Thus my aim was not just to translate but to translate into the most appropriate meaning or its nearest equivalent. In many cases, I copied down the Kana word or phrase, or even a whole sentence side by side with the English translation, in order to give opportunity to the language specialists to compare and make up their own minds. The existence of a complete translation of the Christian Bible in Kana language was an asset; and I made profitable use of it.

Despite all this, some instances occurred in which there was no solution to the problem. An example was when an informant described the position of the town square of the early settlement of the town of

Kono Boue, by saying that it was located at the place where the compound of a certain man, X, used to be. With me and the informant there was no problem, because we both knew the certain man, X, as well as the place where his compound used to be. But the certain man was no longer there and his compound was destroyed during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70). The place is now a bush. The question was how could I make this thing intelligible to someone who reads this manuscript, who did not know these facts?

I decided to use the geographical cardinal points in combination with some permanent topographical features in the vicinity to locate the site. Then I discovered that in Ogoni (i.e. Kana) language, there was no simple word or expression for east and west. For these they used the expression "the place where the sun rises", for east, and "the place where the sun sets", for west. There was no doubt in my mind that this kind of expression was very imprecise, and therefore inadequate. Remembering that Jesus once said, "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God" (Luke, 13:29), I decided to check in the Kana Bible to see how the translators translated the geographical directions mentioned in the above-quoted scripture into the Kana language. There I found that they also used the expressions, "the place where the sun rises" and "the place where the sun sets". I was not satisfied. I therefore invented what I considered a more precise expression for these geographical directions in the Kana language, viz. enaaniLoole (east), enaaniuune (west). Deenyon (north) and Deeke (south).

EnaaniLoole (EL) literally means 'Morning sun', but geographically it should mean east. Similarly, enaaniuune (EU) literally means

'evening sun', but geographically it should mean west. Deenyon (DN) means north, and Deeke (DK) means south. A complete diagram of these cardinal points and their corresponding quadrantal points has been included in an appendix. The point here is to indicate that where all other means have failed, it is the responsibility of the historian to invent or create something that can help to convey the meaning intended. In my translation of the particular text, I located the site of the ancient town square at a point situated about 400 metres northwest of the local stream known as Maawaabogo.<sup>37</sup>

Now why did I use this method? Undoubtedly, there are other methods by which the site of the ancient town square could have been equally located. However, my contention is that such other methods would have contributed nothing to improve the efficiency of the Kana language with respect to geographical directions. Since a living language should not be static, I felt a burden to do something about the problem. It is also evident that most of the advanced languages of the world like German, English, French, etc., have been improved in this way over the centuries.

#### Content, Perspective and Scope

In Chapter I, I covered a considerable ground with regard to the content of the tradition. In this section, the main effort will be placed on those aspects of the content which have not been dealt with in the previous chapter.

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37. Inayo, Teera (Prince) of Kote House, Kono Boue (Aged c. 55)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 7.3.1984. Text 52, pp. 187-191.

A few versions of the oral tradition revealed evidence of material introduced from outside, i.e. by means of feedback. As already stated, there are no written sources on Ogoni. Therefore it was easy to trace such material to sources other than to any published work on Ogoni.<sup>38</sup> This outside material was easily identifiable because it all dealt with the origin of Ogoni and it also invariably connected the Ogoni with Bonny and with the British anti-slavery campaign of the nineteenth century. From the name Ogoni, the propagators of this version speculated that the Ogoni must have settled for some time on Bonny Island from where they derived the name Ogoni from the Ibani word igoni, which means stranger.<sup>39</sup> They claimed that the Ogoni ancestors were a group of seamen from the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), who worked in collaboration with European slave traders, using light boats to bring slaves from the mainland through the network of creeks.

Some versions assert that those who became the Ogoni ancestors were out on what later became the Ogoni mainland catching slaves, when their boat, which was anchored off shore, spied a British anti-slavery squadron; it escaped by another way, leaving behind those who were out on shore. The latter finding themselves abandoned settled in the area and began to cultivate the land. One informant named a former schoolmaster, who is known to have taught at Bonny in the early decades of this century as his source.<sup>40</sup>

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38. cf. Henige, David, "The Problem of Feedback in Oral Tradition: Four Examples from the Fante Coastlands", Journal of African History, Vol. 14, 2 (1973), pp. 223-235.

39. LooLoo, G.N., Sunday Tide, Issue of 25 July, 1976, p. 5.

40. LooLoo, G.N. (Chief) of Ko (Aged c. 57). Interviewed at Port Harcourt on 25.3.1984. Text 75, pp. 277-279.

Ogoni is a small territory, but it is thickly populated, i.e. it is dotted with crowded communities. Consequently, everyone seems to know everyone else. Versions of a story or information spread quickly from one corner to the other within a day or two, since a man can easily walk across the whole territory in a day's journey. Thus it was no surprise when I discovered that the version of tradition described above had already permeated the whole territory, especially the eastern half of Ogoni. Even the traditional head of Luekun had also recently incorporated traces of this version into his own testimony. I say recently, because there was evidence that he had not digested much of it. All that he could say, and that from the very beginning of his testimony was this:

When you hear people say 'Kana', as you are hearing, what they are saying is 'Ghana'. The 'Gokana' which you hear, and who live at yonder, they were Ghana, but what they are saying is that they are 'Go Pya Ghana' (Ghana kinsmen). (41)

One small paragraph out of four pages of testimony; that was all he had been able to imbibe from that spurious version; and after saying it, he reverted back to his own original testimony.

It is believed that this version was derived from Christian teachings in mission schools at Bonny in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about the British anti-slavery campaign and the resettlement of freed slaves in Sierra Leone and later in other parts of West Africa by the efforts of the Christian missions. It is believed that the

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41. Mpeba, Mbaedee Francis (Chief) of Nyoogo (Aged c. 98).  
Interviewed at Nyoogo on 10.3.1984. Text 27, pp. 97-100.

Ogoni schoolmaster who worked at Bonny during this period adopted this type of teaching and reshaped it as a way of explaining the origin of Ogoni people. It is to be observed that this particular version is only wide-spread among a generation of school teachers and pupils, who have had very shallow backgrounds in the actual traditions; and that only very superficially has it managed to trickle through to the older generations by the influence of their educated sons and daughters, as illustrated above. But, as Bradbury has noted, once a thorough understanding of one culture (in this case Ogoni culture) is acquired, it is often not very difficult for the historian to pick out material derived from outside.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the influence of feedback referred to above, Ogoni oral tradition is especially rich in ethnographic data, some of which I have outlined in the previous chapter. There are clichés about the direction of the sea. As noted earlier, Gbenebega is often spoken of as having come from the direction of the sea, an obvious reference to the original arrival of the Ogoni ancestors by sea. The sea itself is also regarded as a dumping place for anything evil - material or immaterial. Rituals and sacrifices for the removal of evil influences were sent away to be dumped into the sea.<sup>43</sup> There is also a cliché about a silent trade in gold and cloth with a white race called "children of the Sun" (from the colour of their skin) or 'gods'. As a child, I heard this story from my own mother. It was among the afternoon stories told by the women while they made pots. My mother, whose

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42. Bradbury, R.E., "The Historical Uses of Comparative Ethnography with Special Reference to Benin and the Yoruba", in J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L.V.Thomas (eds) The Historian in Tropical Africa, (London, Ibadan, Accra: International African Institute, Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 145-164.

43. cf. Iyoro, Dike (Chief) of Noobana, Kono Boue, (Aged c. 70) Interviewed at Noobana on 5.2.1984. Text 55, pp. 197-204.

father was a spirit-medium, explained that the imitation gold powder, which the mediums used in making libations when possessed, was derived from the original gold which the ancestors used in that trade. All that remains of the story is the cliché "Du Bari le Nee" (the Trade of God and men"). It is not certain when this cliché entered Ogoni oral tradition; whether it is the short-hand form of a longer story carried by the Ogoni ancestors from their country of origin, no-one is certain. My investigation of this cliché revealed that it was well-circulated among the older generation of the Ogoni, although only very few understood its actual meaning.<sup>44</sup>

The most difficult problem of the oral tradition is chronology. Telescoping is very evident. As explained in Chapter I, there is a fairly articulated early period in which names of personalities and some special events are well-remembered; but in the period from the sixteenth century to the later part of the nineteenth century, very little is remembered.<sup>45</sup> There are no references to astronomical phenomena, even though several eclipses are known to have occurred over the territory or close to it during several centuries. These would include the eclipses of 15th January 1032; of 26th February 1126; of 24th October 1161; of 10th January 1377; and of 16th March 1466.<sup>46</sup> The people of

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44. cf. Henige, David, Oral Historiography, op.cit., p. 87.

45. This characteristic of oral tradition described both by Audrey Richards and by G.I. Jones, and which David Henige has called telescoping, is referred to in Chapter I. See Richards, Audrey I., "Social Mechanisms for the Transfer of Political Rights in Some African Tribes", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 90 (1960), pp. 175-190; Jones, G.I., "Time and Oral Tradition with Special Reference to Eastern Nigeria", Journal of African History, Vol. VI, 2 (1965); Henige David, Oral Historiography, pp. 100-101.

46. Gray, Richard, "Eclipse Maps", Journal of African History, Vol. VI, 3 (1965), pp. 251-261.

Bangha would have seen the eclipse of 1466, but because the population of that city was destroyed by a small-pox epidemic, there was little hope that that memory would have survived.

Except in a few cases, the genealogies are generally very short, going back only for a few generations. Because of problems such as telescoping, duplicating of names, combining variants, inserting etiological names or eponyms; dropping collaterals, or making them into direct ancestors; making gods into men or vice versa, etc., which are associated with genealogies, they have not always been found useful as a means of calculating dates in oral tradition.<sup>47</sup> Many of these problems may not have actually taken place in Ogoni oral tradition, but the possibility does exist that some may have happened. For example, Gbenebega, who lived and married in the sixteenth century is today being worshipped in some parts of Ogoni, not as an ancestor, but as a goddess, as this testimony illustrates:

To prevent Ndowa from inflicting the small-pox on the general public, the Elders annually or periodically make appeasement sacrifices to Ndowa on behalf of the community. Individuals who commit offences may then see to their own cases with Ndowa. Ndowa is a goddess. Ndowa is the Leme name. In parts of Tee she is called Lewa; in Kana and Gokana, the name is Gbenebega. (48)

And, as noted earlier, Gbenekiri, who also lived in the sixteenth century, and of whom this writer is a descendant, is also worshipped by people throughout Ogoni annually in the feast of Yomii (god of wine),

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47. cf. Henige, David, Oral Historiography, pp. 97-100; Biobaku, S.O., "The Problem of Traditional History with Special Reference to Yoruba Traditions", J.H.S.N., Vol. I, 1 (1956), pp. 43-47; Alagoa, E.J., "Dating Oral Tradition", Oduma, Vol. III, 1 (1976), pp. 19-22.

48. Ejoo, D.L. of Agbeta, Onne (Aged c. 65). Interviewed at Agbeta on 25.2.1984. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

without the slightest idea that Yomi is the deified name of Gbenekiri.<sup>49</sup> These problems make it imperative that genealogies must be carefully scrutinized.

Radiocarbon dating will therefore be the obvious consideration. This will not only help in determining the date of the initial settlement by the Ogoni ancestors, but it will also help to measure the extent of telescoping between the early period and the present or the recent past. Unfortunately, however, no archaeological excavations have been done in Ogoni. Recently, the Department of History of the University of Port Harcourt began an archaeological survey of the area. I personally visited some of the important sites in company of suitable informants during my fieldwork in 1983/84. Until some excavations have been done in the area, and the results carefully studied, the benefit of archaeology in historical analysis through radiocarbon dating will still be awaited for some time.

All dating so far has been based on ethnographic data contained in the oral tradition itself, and by corroboration with information derived from European sources. Such ethnographic data include references to wars within Ogoni itself, and to wars between some of her neighbours, in which Ogoni also participated, as well as references to the manner of warfare and to the type of weapons used. These references were very helpful in reconstructing the nature of the external relations between Ogoni and her neighbours during the nineteenth century and for reconstructing developments within Ogoni itself during a considerable period in the distant past.

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49. Iwerebe, Urane Frank (Chief) et al of Noobana, Uwegwere, (Aged c. 65). Interviewed at Noobana, Uwegwere on 22nd January, 1984. Text 44, pp. 152-156.

Arrangement of the Texts

The whole work has been divided into two volumes. Volume I is the main thesis. All translated texts, including those cited in the thesis have been combined in an appendix volume, designated as Volume II, and subtitled "Selected Texts". Cross-references from the thesis are directed by page references to the appropriate texts in the Appendix Volume.

Each text in the Appendix Volume has two sections: Section A is a list of all the questions asked during the interview. Section B is the text; and it represents all the responses made by the informant to the questions listed in the first section. The object of listing the questions was to give an opportunity to interested readers who might wish to follow the progress of the interviews.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROCESS OF SETTLEMENT

In this chapter, the main object is to consider the process of settlement within the Ogoni territory. Our analysis will focus on certain basic questions. First of all we want to know whether there were any previous inhabitants in the area before the arrival of the Ogoni migrants. Secondly, we will look for certain clues which will help us to determine the point in time during which the settlements occurred. Finally, we will examine the settled communities to see what type of societies they represented.

Three characteristic features will be noticed during this early period of Ogoni history. First, there was fighting for the acquisition of settlement lands and for the establishment of small chiefdoms. Secondly, there was a noticeable avoidance of settlement sites too close to the open sea or to a large river. Thirdly, the chiefdoms established took the form of compact clusters of densely populated settlement. These characteristic features seemed to have been consistent throughout Ogoni history, despite apparent diversities in the form and nature of development in these communities. Nine such chiefdoms will constitute the basis of our discussion in this chapter. These will include Nama, Kpong, Tee, Gokana, Boue, Leme (Eleme), Luekun, Bangha and Ko (Opuoko).

NAMA

The oral traditions assert that the ancestors of the Ogoni arrived in their present territory by sea through the mouth of the Teenama River. This is a small river flowing southeastwards into the sea

opposite the Andoni Flats (Map p.96). The direction from which they came - whether from the east or from the west - is not certain.

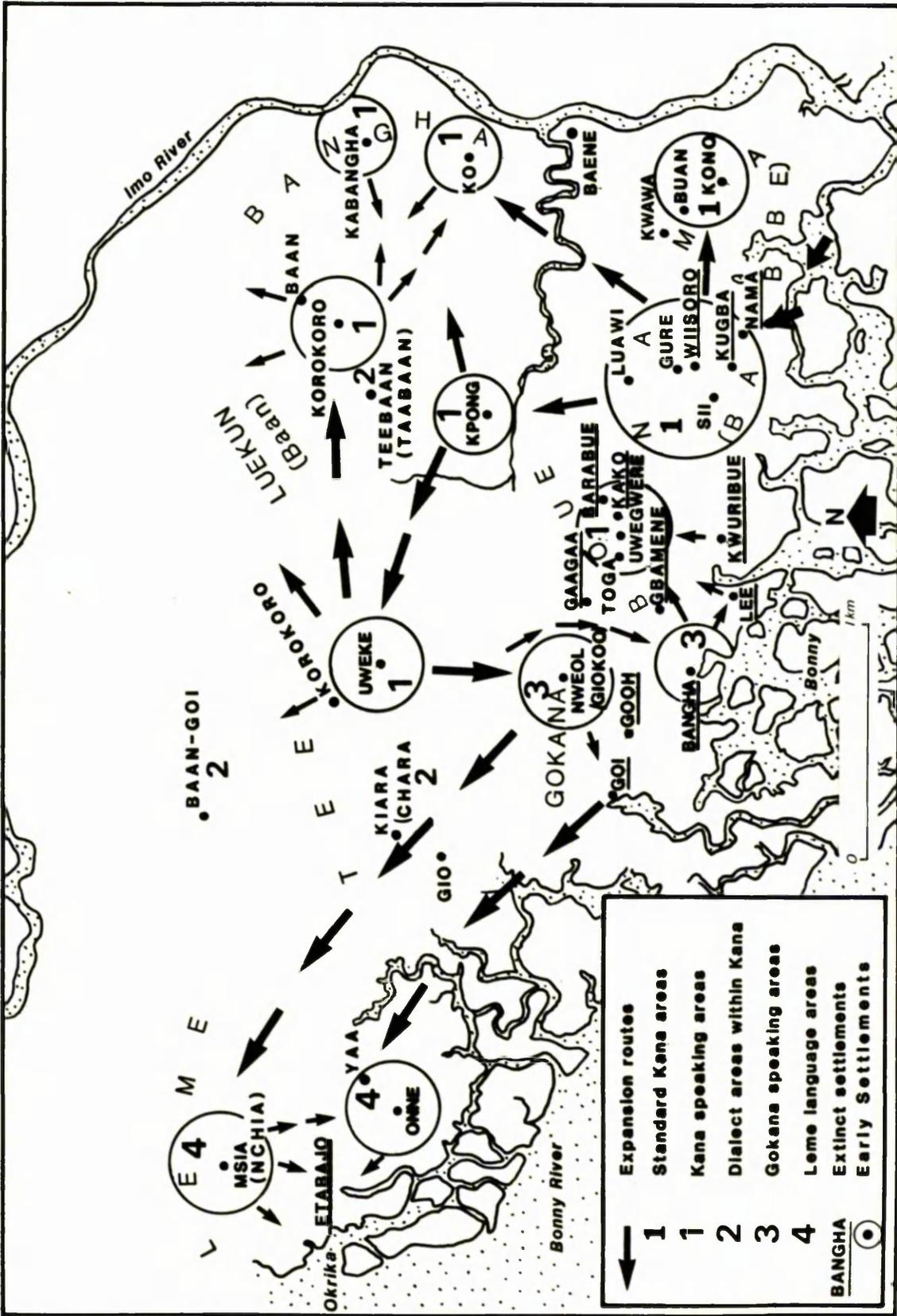
Though we do not know the exact place from where the founders of Nama and Kugba came, we know that they came from the direction of the sea. That was why their first settlements were on the coast. Secondly, when they moved from Nama and Kugba into the hinterland, they always came back to Nama to do rituals and sacrifices because they regarded Nama as the land of their ancestors, and as their ancient home. (1)

The ancestors arrived from the sea at an unknown period in the past. An account in the traditional history reports that when their boat came near to the point where the village of Teenama now stands, they saw a great rock, which stood out of the water and towered high above it. They berthed their boat near the rock<sup>2</sup> and took shelter under it for some days before continuing for some two to three kilometers up the river. There they landed on the east bank of the Teenama River and began to establish their first settlement, which they named Nama.<sup>3</sup>

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1. M.D. Nwilogbara of Sii (aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Sii on 8 March 1984, and previously on 17 October 1981, on the oral history of Sii, Kugba and Nama. Text 18, pp. 78-81.
  2. At Gure, reputed as the oldest surviving town in Ogoni today, the members of the Founding House told me that, fortunately, the founding ancestor, who founded Nama and Gure, took possession of a young man of the Royal House on 3 December 1982. They suggested that the best thing to do was to ask his spirit-medium to go into possession, so that during possession, the founding ancestor himself would narrate what happened. I quote below a direct statement recorded at the subsequent interview which referred to the incident of the rock at Teenama: Text 16, pp. 71-4.

"At Nama, we saw a great rock which grew out of the water high above the water. We stayed under the rock, but we did not know what was under the ground in the water".  
(Gbenyaaloo Spirit-Medium during possession, 12.3.84).

3. Nama: In the recorded statement, the Spirit-Medium, during possession, used the term Nana. Whether Nana was the original name, or that it was later corrupted to Nama, is a matter for further investigation. It was also observed that the language spoken then (as used by the Medium during possession) had changed very greatly. Tape is preserved. Ibid.



**Internal Migration and Expansion of Settlements** SOURCE: Based on Map of Opani, Ministry of Lands, River State of Nigeria.

The account records that, when they left the place of the rocks of Teenama, as they attempted to pilot their boat through a narrow passage in the rocks, the bow struck against the rocks, which broke off a piece of the boat; so they named the place "the place of the broken canoe" ("Nyon Eba Fah")<sup>4</sup>, which became the name of that place from then on. But the possibility remains that the incident could have just as well taken place at some later stage of the settlements at Nama and later at Kugba. It is also possible that the place-name could have evolved over a period of time as a result of the repeated re-occurrence of this type of incident in that particular place.

Certain names were mentioned as those of the leading members of the party that landed at Nama. The oral evidence suggests that Gbeneyaaloo was the leader of the party.<sup>5</sup> An old man among them was named Gbeneakpana. Another leader mentioned was Gbeneyiranam. Two women were mentioned; one was named Kwaanwaa, and the other Yaagunwaa. Kwaanwaa was the mother of Gbeneyaaloo and Zah. It was this Zah who became known in Ogoni oral tradition as the "Mother of

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4. This account was given to me by John Iwagbo, priest of Nama deities, on 24.3.84. On that occasion, he was the leader of a field study party to the sites of Nama and Kugba, traditionally held to be two most ancient settlements in Ogoni. His own grandfather named Kina, was a medium of one of the Nama deities. He claimed that a lot of the things he knew about Nama and Kugba were narrated to him by his father and grandfather, sometimes when he was under possession. (See S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study visit to the sites of Nama and Kugba, 24 March, 1984"). Text 15, pp. 66-70.
  5. F.B. Teedee (Prince) of Gure (aged c. 43).<sup>o</sup> He was interviewed at Gure on 18 March 1984. He is the head of Gbeneyaaloo House of Gure and was a member of the field-study team who visited the sites of Nama and Kugba on 24 March 1984. Text 14, pp. 60-65.

the World" ("Ka a mee nyowe").<sup>6</sup> This was because she was extraordinarily prolific. One explanation for that was that she was the only woman of child-bearing age mentioned among the group that landed at Nama. However, the second woman mentioned above, Yaagunwaa, was reported to have given birth to Gbeneakpana the Younger, when they had moved from Nama and had founded a new settlement at Kugba. One report said that this Gbeneakpana the Younger was begotten by Gbeneakpana the Elder, who was a member of the pioneer party. Other reports suggest that Gbeneakpana the Younger was actually fathered by Gbeneyiranam, the second man in command of the expedition.

Gbeneakpana the Younger grew up to be a wild man who gave much trouble to the community from his youth on. He became a fierce warrior and a superb wielder of the sword. Because his ambitions could not be contained within the confines of the community, he had to move away quite early to found a new settlement at the eastern end of Ogoni, near the mouth of the Imo River, at a place which became known as Kono.<sup>7</sup>

At Gure, the members of the Royal House were especially interested in this research because the interview with Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium on 12 March 1984 revealed to them things which they would otherwise never have known concerning their ancestors. For example, by oral tradition, they knew the elder woman named Kwaanwaa as one of the

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6. Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium interviewed on 12.3.84. See also "Gure Spirit-Medium: statements and Explanations", a follow-up interview recorded on 24.3.84. F.B. Teedee (Prince), interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study Visit to Nama", 24.3.84. Texts: 16, pp. 71-4; 17, pp. 75-7; 14, 60-5; and 15, pp. 66-70.
  7. N.B. Nwikogbara (aged c. 58) of Sii, interviewed at Sii on 8.3.84. John Iwagbo (Priest of Nama deities), interviewed on 24.3.84. Text 18, pp. 78-81.

founding ancestors of Gure Town and as one of those who landed at Nama when they came. But they did not know their relationships. Secondly, they did not know that the name by which they knew her was a corrupted name. They identified her by the name Tiginanwaa. But on the day of the interview, the spirit-medium during possession and in answer to questions, revealed that her name was Kwaanwaa.

Although they knew by oral tradition that Gbeneyaaloo, their ancestor, was the founder of Gure Town, and that he was one of those who landed at Nama, they did not know his parental relations and many other facts. On the day of the interview, they learned for the first time that he was actually the leader of the expeditionary group that landed at Nama and founded that town and later founded Kugba and Gure. They also learned that Kwaanwaa was his mother and that Zah was his sister.

Thirdly, until that date, Ogoni people only knew that Zah was the ancestress, or the "mother" of all Ogoni people. But that was all they knew by oral tradition. They also knew by oral tradition that although Gbenebega was deified, she was a human being who, as a young woman, came to Ogoni from the direction of the sea. On that interview day, the people learned that Gbenebega was a granddaughter of Zah, Bariyaayoo being her first daughter.

The interview also revealed that the complete name of Gbeneyaaloo was Saarogbeneyaalooaari. This should not be perceived as one simple name. It is in fact a combination of name and several titles or honours. In Ogoni, Saaro is the title of the first born son. Gbene was the highest military title attainable in ancient Ogoni. It is

believed that the title was introduced by this people because it was granted only at Nama, their first town. Baari is short for Kabaari and Kabaariwa (feminine). It was the highest social title; and it belonged to the upper cadre of the ruling class.

The immigrants or colonists began to create a community at Nama. They introduced their religious system which consisted essentially in the attempt by individuals to attain the highest spiritual level possible; that of becoming a spirit and being able to possess their descendants after they had died. It was the highest ambition in this society for anyone who wanted to be great. As religion and politics were very closely related at that time, this highest ambition was sought after when a person had already attained the highest political status, that of being an Elder (Kabaari).<sup>8</sup> It was only when a man was sufficiently wealthy, courageous, and as physically strong and powerful as a warrior, that he could attempt the highest title - to be addressed as Gbene-X or Gbene-Y - and by it they were sure that they would have the power to influence the affairs of living persons, even after they had died and gone out of this world.<sup>9</sup>

As the population of Nama increased, the people soon discovered that its security was inadequate, probably because it was too close to

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8. Kpugita, Nnaa (Chief) of Keneke (aged c. 55). He was interviewed at Keneke on 2.1.84. Gbigbo, A'ean of Kwaakwa (aged c. 45), interviewed at Kwaakwa on 27.12.83. Teedee, F.B. (Prince) of Gure (aged 43), interviewed on 18.3.84. Texts: 46, pp. 159-63; 42, pp. 141-6; 14, pp. 60-65.
  9. Nwikogbara, N.B. (Chief) of Sii (aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Sii on 8.3.84. During the interview, the informant and others present explained at length the ways a spirit possession was tested and certified before it was authenticated as genuine. Text 18, pp. 78-81.

and directly accessible from the open sea. It was then that the old man, Gbeneakpana, summoned a meeting of the people with Gbene-yaaloo as one of the presiding elders; he told the people that the place was not suitable for further development as a town, giving insecurity as one of the reasons.<sup>10</sup> A search for a new place for settlement began. Without delay they searched out the place which became known as Kugba, which was about two or three kilometers north-north-west of Nama. With the movement from Nama to Kugba, the process of expansion within the Ogoni territory began.

The big question that stares everyone in the face up till now is, when did all these things take place? Within the oral tradition itself, no clue has been offered. One encouragement lies in the fact that the sites of Nama and Kugba are still well preserved and presumably it should not be too difficult for archaeologists to carry out the kind of small-scale excavations that would lead to the recovery of samples for radio-carbon dating. Until that happens, we must depend on information offered by other collateral sciences, such as linguistic analysis.

The history of Ogoni is fortunate in this respect, because the Ogoni languages have been fairly extensively studied. For example, Ogoni is one of the few Nigerian languages which have a complete translation of the Bible.

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10. Iwagbo, John, (Priest of Nama deities), testimony in S.Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study Visit to the sites of Nama and Kugba on 24th March 1984". Text 15, pp. 66-70.

In 1953/54, Hans Wolff carried out an extensive analysis of the Ogoni languages. These studies have placed Ogoni as a distinct group within the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo family of African languages.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of his comparative analysis of the languages of the Niger Delta, Wolff came to the conclusion that the Ogoni languages did not relate closely to their surrounding neighbours. In a more recent study of the languages of the Niger Delta, based on an analysis of the names of some food plants, Professor Kay Williamson of the University of Port Harcourt, suggested that the Ogoni languages began to diverge from a common parent something like two thousand years ago.<sup>12</sup>

On the question of food domestication in West Africa, Professor Williamson noted that certain food crops like yams were indigenous to West Africa:

We must however note that the proto-Lower Niger way of life could not have been purely aquatic; the speakers were constantly acquainted with yam, for the word for yam can be traced back beyond proto-Niger, at least to proto-Eastern South-Central Niger-Congo, and perhaps even to proto-Niger-Congo. (13)

One important fact was brought out clearly in Williamson's analysis. It showed the Ogoni as the earliest settlers of the Eastern Niger Delta, before their neighbours round about them. The study

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11. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni languages" in Journal of African Languages, Vol. III, 1 (1954), pp. 38-51.
  12. Williamson, Kay, "Linguistic Evidence for the Prehistory of the Niger Delta", (forthcoming).
  13. Ibid. See also, Kay Williamson, "Some food plant names in the Niger Delta", International Journal of American Linguistics, Vol. 36, 2 (1970), pp. 156-167.

revealed that the Ogoni name for the indigenous food crops of the area were stable and distinct, whereas with the other linguistic groups in the Niger Delta, the names of such food crops tended to "jump" the linguistic boundaries, showing them to be loan words which did not originally belong to the core vocabulary of the established linguistic groupings.<sup>14</sup> Collateral evidence from the oral traditions of these linguistic groups also indicates that when they began to arrive in the Niger Delta, they found that the Ogoni were already well established there precisely in their present locations.<sup>15</sup> The language studies therefore suggest that the Ogoni have known about the yam crop for a very long time, which is also an indication of their long settlement in the area. Until some archaeological excavations have been done on the sites of the earliest settlement in Ogoni, no clear idea can be formed about the approximate date of settlement.

#### MOVEMENT FROM NAMA TO KUGBA

Kugba at first proved a very good location. It had fresh water supply, fertile land and by the configuration of the land the town was naturally protected. And it still had easy access to the sea. Evidence suggests that the people were agriculturists before their arrival at Nama. This is borne out by the fact that they began a sedentary culture from the moment of their arrival at Nama. According to the oral tradition, the whole place was one impenetrable forest. It was after their arrival in the area that they began to attack the virgin

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14. Kay Williamson, "Some food plant names in the Niger Delta", International Journal of American Linguistics, Vol. 36, 2 (1970).
  15. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report on Okrika Clan, Degema Division, Owerri Province, 1933", NA/E, File CSO 26/3; Alagoa, E.J., A History of the Niger Delta, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 148. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A., A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 3.

forests to create space for settlements and farms. Their ability to accomplish these feats was an indication that they possessed iron tools.<sup>16</sup> This was also borne out by the fact that they had river and sea-worthy boats and were able to navigate through the seas.

As the life at Kugba flourished, they did not forget or sever contacts with Nama. There were several reasons for this. It was at Nama that they had established their state ritual centre when they first arrived. Nama became a sacred, religious holy land to them, a memorial place of rest after a final sea journey from their place of embarkation. Moreover, the oral tradition states that while they were on the journey to Nama, an important member of the royal family died at sea, and that when they arrived at Nama, they held a funeral service for him. On 24 March, 1984, when I went on a field-study visit to these ancient sites, a shrine covering the grave of this man was one of the things they showed to me at Nama. His name was given as Gbenegaragiri.<sup>17</sup> From his name, it is evident that he was a titled man, a member of the ruling group of that society. Given the circumstances under which he died, it is unlikely that his complete body would be lying in that grave. Most probably, part of his body, or an element or object representing his body might have been buried there. He was said to have been a brother of Gbeneyaaloo, the commander of the expedition. It is possible that other members of the expeditionary team must have died also at sea, but his own death was especially remembered because of his

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16. See "Statement of Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium", interviewed at Gure on 12.3.84. Text 16, pp. 71-74.

17. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study Visit to the ancient sites of Nama and Kugba", 24.3.84. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

rank and because he was a relation of the King. These things made Nama a place never to be forgotten. It continued to be a sacred religious, and military base till this day. No matter to where they migrated, the Ogoni always came back to Nama to do rituals and sacrifices. Over the centuries, Nama continued to be the only place in Ogoni where the highest title and power could be obtained.

After sometime, the community at Kugba became prosperous and the population increased. Then something happened. The oral tradition states that Gbeneyaaloo told the people that the town had become too crowded.<sup>18</sup> With that observation, we could sense another question. "Why don't some of these people go and found another settlement for themselves, in order to ease the pressure on this environment?" About this time, the virile young man named Gbeneakpana, who was born by Yaagunwaa sometime after the foundation of Kugba, had become famous for his prowess and mastership of the sword. The oral evidence reports that "he gave them too much trouble at Kugba". He probably needed outdoor space for hunting and for venting his youthful exuberance.

Now the problem of over-population at Kugba raises other questions about the number of women present in the group at the time of their arrival. How was it possible that the only two women mentioned among the immigrant party that landed at Nama could have increased the population so dramatically? Could it be that there were other women among the group who were not mentioned? Could it be that when the

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18. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study Visit to the ancient sites of Nama and Kugba", 24.3.84. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

people came they found some earlier settlers in the territory whom they over-powered in war and seized their women? Either of these conditions could have been possible. But in our present circumstances, the latter case was not true. There is no evidence to support the latter proposition. My field research here has shown me where such conditions existed, which I will discuss in the appropriate sequence. The testimonies about Nama, Kugba, and all the surrounding places, suggest that at the time of their arrival the whole area was a seamless forest.

The first proposition is what seems to be true. There were other women in the party, and for that matter also other men, who were not mentioned. It is possible that these were not mentioned because of class distinctions. The two who were mentioned, were mentioned because of their high position and rank. One young woman is now known to have been among the party, but she was not mentioned in the oral tradition. This was Zah. It is she who later became known in Ogoni oral tradition as "the mother of Ogoni people", and "mother of the world".<sup>19</sup> Thus it could be seen that the group that landed at Nama was of a considerable size.

The question of over-population at Kugba continued to dominate the minds of the leaders. It was in the course of exploring the forests in search of a suitable site for further settlements that one of the leaders, Gbeneyiranam, discovered the existence of a supernatural "force" occupying a tall rock in that forest, at a place which later

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19. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study ....."; Teedee, F.B. (aged c. 43), interviewed at Gure 18.3.84. Texts: 15, pp. 66-70 and 14, pp. 60-65.

became the site of Sii town. He kept this discovery to himself; but the only person with whom he shared his discovery was his senior in command, Gbeneyaaloo. The oral tradition records that the two men made this supernatural being their secret deity, to which they often retired for power and strength.<sup>20</sup> The control of this part of the territory by the two men delayed the effective founding of Sii town until a later date.

#### Evacuation of Kugba

Besides the problem of over-population, Kugba was also vulnerable to constant flooding because its southern approaches were exposed to an arm of a creek. This was the passage the inhabitants used to gain access to the resources of the sea shores. As is often the case with over-populated communities, people built their houses closer and closer to the water fronts. During one unusual rainy season, coupled with a high tide of the sea, flood struck the town one night and a number of children perished in the rushing waters.<sup>21</sup> The ancestors did not see this calamity as coming purely from natural causes. They saw in it some divine reprimand for staying too close to the sea. After this incident, the ancestors never founded their towns again too close to the sea fronts. The oral tradition reports that this calamity hastened the abandonment of Kugba. Gbeneyaaloo led the exit movement from the town. First, they founded Wiisoro and then Gure.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Iwagbo, John, op.cit., Text 15, p. 67: M.D. Nwilogbara (58), op.cit., Text 18, p. 79.

21. Ibid., p. 69.

22. "Statements of Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium, 12.3.84", op.cit., Text 16, pp. 71-74.

Settlement of Wiisoro and Gure

When they moved from Kugba, the first place they settled was Wiisoro, a place situated at about two to three kilometers north of Kugba. It was at this place that they built their first inland community. Wiisoro was located in the heart of a low-lying fertile country. The oral tradition explains that it was at Wiisoro that a further population explosion was witnessed:

When I moved from Kugba, the place I rested for a while was 'Soso' (Wiisoro). Wiisoro was the first settlement of Gure. When my sister (Zah) arrived at Wiisoro, she gave birth to many more children. The population grew and the town was established. My mother and my sister, they were there, and I was their leader. There was no more war then; and the town became crowded with people. Houses squeezed together, foundation to foundation, and frontage to backyard. It was then that I moved to clear the site of Gure. (23)

Two population booms are reported in the oral tradition during this period, one at Kugba and one at Wiisoro; and all within the lifetime of some of the youngest of the original ancestors or immigrants. This raises some questions. What criterion did they use in reckoning a population boom? What was the area of the early towns? Why was population a very important issue during this period? It must be realised that this people were colonists in a country of virgin equatorial forests, the extent of which they did not know. They needed to increase in population for numerical strength. This was a very important necessity not only for their survival in a wild environment, but as a safeguard in the event of war against any aborigines. As the oral tradition indicates, the Ogoni were a warrior nation from the very beginning. No war can be fought without an army, and no army can exist

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23. Gbeneyaaloo, Statements ..., op.cit., Text 16, pp. 71-74.

without a population of people. This was the viewpoint with which the ancestors reckoned every child that was born during this period. For the same reason, marriage and family life became a very important social institution.

Another point to remember is that the early towns were not very extensive in area. People lived in compact communities. Naturally this was desirable because it served as a safeguard against wild beasts and insects. Thirdly, it is noticed that Zah is especially mentioned in the oral tradition in connection with child-bearing. If we consider for a moment the way the modern mass media report about pregnancy and child-bearing in a royal family, particularly the British royal family, we would not be surprised at what happened to Zah in this period. Zah was the royal successor to Queen Kwaanwaa. This relationship placed her in a special position in the society. Every child she bore was like a thousand, everybody talked about it. Whereas thousands of other women were bearing children during the same period, yet nobody knew about them. Viewed against this background, the position of Zah in connection with child-bearing will be understood. Thus when she is fondly called the "Mother of Ogoni" or "of the world", it should be understood that these are figurative expressions endearing her memory to the people, not only because of her position as a royal ancestress, but also because she was known as the first woman who bore a child on Ogoni soil. Other women also bore children, but they were not known.

Nonetheless, as explained above, there was emphasis on population increase; and accordingly there was an actual increase in population growth, notwithstanding the over-exaggeration in the oral tradition. The conscious encouragement of marriage and family life, the availability

of surplus food supply, and the surplus intake of protein resources from forest meat and from the resources of the sea-shores; these elements encouraged a fast and healthy population growth.

The implication is that the ancestors were well conversant with the science of agriculture. I had referred to this earlier on when I stated that it explained why they began their society immediately at Nama and Kugba with a sedentary mode of life. It explains also why the Ogoni did not wander far and wide over a large expanse of territory, even till recent times. Rather they chose to build compact, densely populated communities<sup>24</sup> with agricultural lands on the outskirts.<sup>25</sup> There is no reference in the oral tradition to wandering or hunting for survival. Instead the oral tradition is replete with testimonies of the existence of various species of yam (Ka Zia) and plantains (Ka ebue). In every Ogoni village, there is a hut erected containing holy shrines dedicated to the yam, with a plantain tree planted on its premises. They claim that this practice began in ancient times, as far back as Nama.<sup>26</sup>

The oral tradition gives a list of food crops which they claim were known and used by the ancestors. High on the list of these food crops are yam (Ka Zia) and plantain (Ka ebue). The yam and the plantain are used as ritual foods for gods and for ancestral spirits.<sup>27</sup> The Ogoni have very deep religious and cultural applications for these food crops

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24. Williamson, Kay, "Linguistic Evidence for the Prehistory of the Niger Delta" (forthcoming)

25. Professor Robin Horton suggests that the type of community developed out of need for security. See "Stateless societies" in History of West Africa, Vol. I, ed. J.F. Ajayi and M. Crowder, London, Longman Group Ltd., 1976, pp. 72-113. My view is that the basic characteristic is sedentary culture.

26. Nwilogbara, M.D., of Sii (Aged c. 58), interviewed at Sii, 8.3.84. Text 18, pp. 78-81.

27. Nwilogbara, M.D., (58), Gbenenee Idag (65), Doba Nwilogbara (68), and Nwibira Kagbo (70); all of Sii. Interviewed at Sii on 8.3.84. Text 18.

which I consider inappropriate to discuss in this chapter. I will deal with the ritual aspects of these food crops later. The above explanation indicates that the ancestors had access to certain food crops, among which were the yam and the plantain. The question that must be asked is whether they brought all the food crops into the area, or whether they did not bring any food crops with them, but that they found all these food crops after they had settled in the area. Or whether they brought some food crops into the area and found others in the course of their settling in the area. The oral tradition states:

According to our ancestors, the first food items they discovered were the ya and the gura and the ka ebue. They found the ya in the forest; when they roasted it in the fire, it was good for food. So they planted it. As for the ka ebue (plantain), they seem to have brought it with them when they came. (28)

Another informant claimed that his own ancestor domesticated both the yam and the plantain in Boue kingdom. It was for that reason that the office of Yam Priest became hereditary in his ancestor's family, his ancestor having been the first yam priest:

I am the Yam Priest in all Boue kingdom. I do the libations and perform the rituals connected with yam in Boue kingdom. I keep the sacred instruments in the House of Yam (To Zia)..... The Ka Zia (Yam) was in the forest. It was Gbenetanwaayo, my ancestor, who brought the yam from the forest into the towns. Gbenetanwaayo was the first man who planted yam in Kana before anyone else planted it. That was why the yam head used to be in Gbenetanwaayo House.

The plantain was also in the forest like the yam was. When Gbenetanwaayo went to search for wild yams on a certain day, he could not find enough of wild yams. But he saw the plantain. So he brought it home. When he cooked the yam and the plantain, he discovered that the two mixed very well, and that the plantain increased the quantity of the food to be eaten for a meal. From that

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28. Nwikogbara, M.D., (58), Gbenenee Idag (65), Doba Nwikogbara (68), and Nwibira Kagbo (70); all of Sii, interviewed there on 8.3.84. Text 18, pp. 78-81

day Gbenetanwaayo knew that the plantain and the yam together produced a good edible food. People came to observe him, and many people began to eat the plantain as a complementary food together with the yam. (29)

The ancestors devoted the first few months of their arrival in cultivating the food crops, which they carried with them. It was during this period that they also inaugurated their religious culture.<sup>30</sup> These two things attracted them to remain in the area. In the meantime, they searched the immediate vicinity for edible vegetation by observing what the birds and the animals ate. During the interim period, they also depended on the fish from the nearby sea, and game from the forests. They continued this mode of life until their first harvest was ripe. With this first harvest they celebrated their first religious festival at Nama. It was under these conditions that they experienced the population boom which is reported in the oral tradition.

When Wiisoro became over-populated, Gbeneyaaloo took the first steps. He went and cleared the site of Gure town. With this clearing, one could envisage the transfer of certain tree crops, the construction of dwelling sites and the marking out of farmlands. Also one could envisage the burning down of unwanted trees and bushes, the marking out of the local water supplies and many such like actions, far in advance of actual movements of certain families.

Other versions state that besides over-population, there were other reasons for leaving Wiisoro. One of the reasons was that the Land Deity of Wiisoro made unbearable demands on the women. They could not give birth to their babies within the town. They had to go outside

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29. Igbug, Deebari of Eepie, Kono Boue (67), Priest of Gbenetanwaayo and Yam Priest of Boue. Interviewed 22.1.84. Text 60, pp. 215-219.

30. There are two periods of heightened religious devotion in all Ogoni; at the opening of the farming season and at the harvest. They probably inherited these practices from the early ancestors.

the town to a bush under a tree. After the delivery, they went back to Nama for a ceremonial purification bath before they could return to Wiisoro with the new-born baby.<sup>31</sup> Gbeneyaaloo was determined that his sister should not be subjected to such unbearable conditions. So he left Wiisoro with his mother and sister, and a large number of nephews and nieces, and founded the town of Gure. It is remarkable to note that one of the notable leaders of the time was born at Wiisoro, after the founding of the city. The oral tradition gives his name as Gbeneatekina.<sup>32</sup>

The oral account states that Gbeneatekina was born at Gure. Later on we heard that this Gbeneatekina was one of three leaders who came up afterwards to join Gbeneyaaloo, after the latter had already established the town of Gure. The statement explains that this Gbeneatekina and two others together held their hands ceremonially on the hilt of Gbeneyaaloo's sword and planted its tip at a sacred spot in the town, acknowledging that he was the founder and ruler of the town.<sup>33</sup> From these two accounts, several issues arise, which must be explained. First, if this Gbeneatekina was born at Gure, he could not have grown up to meet Gbeneyaaloo, who must have been a very old man by the time he founded Gure Town. Were there two Gbeneatekinas then? This would be unlikely; and the oral tradition does not suggest anything near to it.

My suggestion is that Gbeneatekina was born at Wiisoro. It is also possible that he was born at Kugba towards the tail-end of the migrations from there to Wiisoro. Several points will explain this

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31. Nwinedam, Michael, et al. "Gure Spirit-Medium". Statements and explanations. Interviewed 24.3.84. Text 17, pp. 75-77.

32. Iwagbo, John, et al. in S. Kpone-Tonwe "Report of Field-Study ..." 24.3.84. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

33. "Statement of Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure", interviewed at Gure, 12.3.84. Text 16, pp. 71-74.

hypothesis. This man named Gbeneatekina, his actual name was Atekina. By the standard prescribed by Ogoni oral tradition, the title "Gbene" was a title of achievement. It was counted one in several thousands or even millions, spread over several generations. For Atekina to rise in his generation to the status where he was called Gbeneatekina, meant that he was a man of significant achievement.

Like Gbeneakpana the Younger, who of all the children born at Nama and Kugba was mentioned by name, so also, of all the men born in the population boom which occurred at Wiisoro, Gbeneatekina was the only man mentioned by name. It is no surprise then, that he was one of the notable three who became associated with Gbeneyaaloo in the founding of Gure town.

There was no war then and the place became crowded with people. Houses squeezed together, foundation to foundation; and frontage to backyard. It was then that I moved to clear the site of Gure Town. When I had settled down, three other leaders joined me, following my back. These were Gbeneatekina, Gbenetiginagure and Gbeneakaka. They all joined hands together and held the hilt of my sword. Together they planted its tip to the ground. This happened after I had established the town deity, and the land deity. Thereupon, I appointed Gbeneatekina to be my Right Hand Man, to act as the Land Priest. (34)

The phrase "following after my back" is indicative that the three men were leaders of later waves of migrations from Wiisoro to the new town of Gure. We see here a solemn agreement between the three new, and presumably, younger, immigrant leaders, and the old King, Gbeneyaaloo. They jointly acknowledged his leadership and authority. In return he distributed to them certain functions of state. To the young and able leader, Gbeneatekina, he gave the important office as his Right

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34. "Statement of Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure", interviewed at Gure, 12.3.84. Text 16, pp. 71-74.

Hand Man, or Second-in-Command, and with it, the important function as Land Priest.

It was an agreement by the old man by which he made arrangement for the continuance of the State and for the perpetuity of his name and work. For it was evident that he did not have many more years to live. For it was at Gure that Gbeneyaaloo died. It was there that his mother, Kwaanwaa (known in oral tradition as Gbenetiginanwaa) and his sister, Zah, died. The graves and shrines of all three of them are at Gure. And they all possessed their descendants.<sup>35</sup>

There is one other question that needs to be settled. One version of the oral tradition suggested that the cause of the migration from Wiisoro was a set of unbearable ante-natal laws imposed by the Land Deity against women. In the light of other available evidence, I am inclined to raise an objection against that assertion. First, if the migration from Wiisoro was as a result of the ante-natal laws, it would have occurred earlier. But evidence from the passage quoted above suggests that this did not happen. The town grew to full capacity and became over-populated. The statement of the pioneer emigrants from the town made no reference to such laws as the cause of emigration. Secondly, it took many generations for the town to grow to the stage of over-population. Similarly, it took many generations for the town to produce such renowned new leaders like Gbeneatekina, Gbenetiginagure and Gbeneakaka; and probably others not mentioned. Thirdly, the migration was not automatic, or en masse. It was a gradual process,

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35. At Gure, these three ancestors have their Priests. Presently, there is one priest serving both Gbeneyaaloo and Gbenetiginanwaa (or Kwaanwaa). A different priest serves the shrine of Zah.

spread over many generations. This is shown by the fact that by the time the three leaders named above migrated from Wiisoro to Gure, Gbeneyaaloo had done so some years earlier. Fourthly, if the emigration was a protest against the ante-natal laws, part of that law should not have been carried over to Gure.<sup>36</sup> As it is, part of that law had been retained at Gure till this day. For example, in Gure, a woman who gives birth to twins must be taken to the ancient site of Nama with the babies. They must not be washed anywhere else until they have had a purification washing in a special stream at Nama.<sup>37</sup>

During my field-study visit to Nama and Kugba in March, 1984, I also passed through the site of Wiisoro. Like Gure, it was situated in the middle of a level plain, a very fertile and well-drained country. It is an area located in the rich oil-palm belt. From what I saw, if the area was still as fertile as it was at the time of our visit, I imagine that it must have been many times richer and much more fertile in the period of the ancestors. It is my submission that it was this fertility of the land, coupled with the ability of the ancestors to tap the resources of the land, that was responsible for the population explosion spoken about in the oral tradition.

#### MULTIPLE MIGRATIONS AND EXPANSION FROM WIISORO AND GURE

"The first place they settled was Nama, where they stayed for many years. After they moved from Nama, they advanced further into the hinterland, and then they spread to all directions. Thus Nama was the first settlement of Kana.

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36. See F.B. Teedee of Gure (43), "Gure oral traditions and Laws" interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. Text 14, pp. 60-5.
37. This special stream was one of the things that was shown to me at Nama on 24th March 1984 when I made a field-study visit to the area. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

"people in Babbe. Nama was situated on the coast, very near to the present site of Sii town. When they left Nama they moved to Gure. It was at Gure that they spread out to all directions; some to Kani-Babbe, some to Luawii, and some to the different parts of Babbe, including Gwara. Three men among the leaders moved into the area of Babbe called Gwaara and founded the three towns of Gwaara - KaGwaara, Luuyo and Bien. The three formed the Gwaara Federation." (38)

Although the above passage leaves out certain links in the chain of migrations up to this point, it nevertheless represents one of the most accurate descriptions of the early migrations of the Ogoni's ancestors. Notice that it has left out the settlements at Kugba and Wiisoro. The important point of interest in this particular account is the fact that it recognized that it was at Gure (it should have added "and at Wiisoro") that the people spread to all directions. This is an important statement. Gure and Wiisoro were the first watershed of the early Ogoni internal expansions and settlements. Not all the people who moved from Wiisoro settled at Gure. The majority did, but a great number took other directions and founded other towns.

A group of emigrants from the Wiisoro-Gure nucleus moved west to Gwaara area and founded the towns of KaGwaara, Luuyo, Bien, Kabyon and Eeke. The founding of Sii, however, took a special turn. It should have been the next settlement after Kugba, but its founding was delayed until after the deaths of the two topmost leaders, Gbeneyaaloo and Gbeneyiranam. While they were still at Kugba, just at the time when the problem of Kugba's over-population was being felt among the leadership, these two men, in the course of searching the forests for a suitable new site for expansion, discovered a supernatural force in a

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38. Tigiri, J.P. of Luuyo (aged c. 87), interviewed at Luuyo on 10.3.84. Text 22, pp. 86-89.

huge rock which stood out from the ground in the forest. The two men established contact with this supernatural being by means of "elements" which they possessed.<sup>39</sup> They adopted it as a source of strength and power. They worshipped this supernatural being and made frequent visits to it secretly while they were still at Kugba, and after they moved from Kugba.

Because Gbeneyiranam was the first priest of the deity, he did not move from Kugba. When he did, he did not go to either Wiisoro or to Gure, but to somewhere in the vicinity of this new and powerful deity, so that he could continue his functions as priest to it. At the same time, they made sure that no other person came near to the new area. One could see here the beginning of the Secret Society among the Elders of the Ogoni ancestors.

Another man who did not emigrate to Wiisoro or to Gure was Gbeneakpana Junior. It was he who was closer and helping his father, Gbeneyiranam, who must have been very old by this time. His step-father, Gbeneakpana, the elder, had already died long before at Kugba; and he had inherited his "medicines" and charms. His father, who was now already old, was also the priest of this new, powerful deity. So he kept very close at hand. By now he himself was already a medicine man.<sup>40</sup> in the days of his youth he was described as "wild and masterful with the sword; a man who gave the people much trouble".<sup>41</sup>

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39. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study Visit .... " 24.3.84. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

40. Na'uwe, Leonard Oposunju of Kono (aged 72). He was interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-95.

41. Iwagbo, John, op.cit.

Now he has become advanced in age and matured in outlook. It was during this time that he made exploratory trips eastwards to the area where he later founded the town of Kono.

Because Gbeneakpana the younger was a man of energy and drive, a man with strong ambitions, who had already made a name for himself, as he frequently went afield to the east for hunting, he discovered a beautiful site in the forest there, which was very good for the establishment of a town. He immediately took steps to found the town of Kono. Before this time, a rumour had already circulated concerning him. When they saw him, going towards that area so frequently, they thought that he was probably engaged in cannibalism. On the inaugural day of the town of Kono, he made a speech. In the speech he said:

When I was quietly going about this business, people said that I was walking the walk of cannibalism. Now here it is. This is cannibalism. (42)

So from that time the name of the town was called Kono. With the founding of Kono, Gbeneakpana the younger now concentrated his efforts in developing the new town.

By this time, his father Gbeneyiranam had died. So had Gbeneyaaloo of Gure. It is very likely that Gbeneakpana the younger also inherited the "medicine bag" of his father Gbeneyiranam. Nevertheless, from now on, he was to concentrate his attention at Kono, in order to make the new town successful.

While these things were taking place at Kono, something dramatic happened at Sii. With Gbeneyiranam and Gbeneyaaloo dead, and Gbeneakpana

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42. Fogho, Donee Nwibue of Sii (aged 70). He was interviewed at Sii on 21.10.81. Text 20, pp. 83-4.

himself also out of the way to where his interests lay, the way was open for some strong-willed men to move into the forest at Sii to take possession of the area and to clear it for settlement. Because of the daring circumstances under which the "forbidden forest" of the secret deity of Gbeneyaaloo and Gbeneyiranam was invaded and cleared for settlement, the men who attempted it were described as "fearless", "daring" ("Sii"). That was how the name of the town came to be known as "Sii", meaning daring, or "dared to do".

The men who did this work were not some new men from some place. They were part of the same people, a select group of daring men, who were there in the neighbourhood, but who were staying on the periphery, keeping a low profile and waiting patiently for their opportunity. For while other men feared to go near that forbidden forest, there were other men who were too anxious to know what was going on there between the two great leaders. Thus after the two men had died, and the third man had also given way, they could not wait to rush in to take possession of the area.

The above analysis explains why the founding of Sii was done by so many leaders at once, like a city invaded by many armies from different fronts at the same time; each founder carving out a section into a separate town, with himself as its ruler.

They first settled at Nyowii. From Nyowii they cleared all the other parts of Sii. They then divided the area into separate towns, with each one of them becoming the founder and ruler of one town. Gbene-anwaka took Bara and became the ruler. Gbenesirakinaebi<sup>2</sup> took Ebia and became its ruler. Another leader, Berezi founded additional town called Tem, and became its ruler. Then Gbenekaratee cleared another area known as Korogbere and became its ruler. (43)

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43. Nwikogbara, M.D., of Sii, (58), Interviewed at Sii on 8.3.84.  
Text 18, pp. 78-81.

The leader at Nyowii, which was a peripheral camp where they all first stayed, was Gbeneteetagana. He not only became the ruler of that place, which he now extended into a town, but he was also given the honour as the general founder of Sii.<sup>44</sup> Other names mentioned as having taken part in the operations were Gbeneguasoo, in connection with Bara; and Gbeneteenwaanwoo, who was said to have settled with Gbeneteetagana having emigrated from Luawii.<sup>45</sup>

There are some slight contradictions and variants in the reports. For example, one report stated that the first man who settled at Nyowii was Gbeneteetagana, who had two brothers with him, Gbaneanwaka and Gbenesirakinaebia. Another report stated that "the founder of Bara, Sii, were two brothers, Gbeneguasoo and Gbeneyaanwaaka"<sup>46</sup> Notice that Gbaneanwaka and Gbeneyaanwaaka are likely to be the same person but with some spelling modifications by each reporter. Despite the variants my analysis of the reports represents a balanced view of what happened. We may reckon that Sii was founded during the second century after the landing at Nama.

#### THE GWAARA - SII WARS

The circumstances of the founding of Sii towns will explain the causes of these wars. As I have stated above, when the movement from Kugba took place, the veteran leader, Gbeneyiranam did not move completely from that vicinity. Gbeneyaaloo had to move quickly because his old mother was still alive, and he had to take care of her.

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44. Nwikogbara, N.B. of Sii, interviewed at Sii on 17.10.81.  
Text 19, p. 82.

45. Ibid.

46. Fogho, Donee Nwighbue of Bara, Sii (aged c. 70). He was interviewed at Bara, Sii on 21.10.81. Text 20, pp. 83-4.

Besides, his prolific sister, Zah, and her many children, were also a responsibility to him. These were some of the reasons why he took the first step to move away when the flood calamity struck at Kugba. In the case of Gbeneyiranam, he did not seem to have any dependents. This also was why he was the proper candidate to become the priest of the mysterious deity in the "Forbidden Forest". His only son (probably an illegitimate son, for he did not bear his family name) Gbeneakpana the younger, was already a famous man. So when the populations moved forward to settle at Wiisoro, he remained behind in the vicinity of the "Forbidden Forest" to serve the mysterious deity in that forest. As would be expected, a small group of servants and attendants remained with him. This group formed the nucleus of what is today Sii Town.

It was this small group of people who rumoured about the movements of Gbeneakpana the younger, that he was probably a cannibal (Kono), a term from which the name of Kono later derived; for it was the same group who attended the inauguration ceremony of the new town.<sup>47</sup> Since at that time their settlement existed merely as a camp, for it had never been classified in the proper way as a town or settlement, they could not be identified by a name. They were still being regarded as the remnants of Kugba. That was why when Gbeneakpana the younger came from there to found Kono, it was said in the oral tradition that the founder of Kono came from Kugba.

Gbeneakpana was the founder of Kono. He came from Kugba. He was a priest and a medicine man. (48)

Now when emigrants from Gure moved westwards into the area to found the towns of Gwaara, they clashed with this people who had been there some

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47. Fogho, Donee Nwigbue of Bara, Sii (aged c. 70). He was interviewed at Bara, Sii, on 21.10.81. Text 20, pp. 83-4.

48. Opusunju, Na'uwe Leonard of Kono (aged c. 72). He was interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-5.

generations back. This was the essence of the series of wars between the various Gwara groups and the Sii people.<sup>49</sup>

#### WHY THE TRADITIONS OF KONO ARE OF SII

In the oral tradition, the people of Kono claim that the founder of their town came from Kugba, yet they also assert that their traditions and culture are based on those of Sii. The history of the founding of Kono, as explained above shows why they make such contradictory claims. From the very beginning the proto-Sii settlers had connections with Kono through the influence of Gbeneakpana the younger, its founder, who kept contacts between the new town and the proto-Sii settlers. One factor that kept these contacts alive was the Forest Deity at Sii, which was then called Yogurezoghomo.<sup>50</sup> When Kono was founded, the first immigrants were from the proto-Sii settlers.<sup>51</sup>

Like all traditional towns of Ogoni, these immigrants kept contacts with their original home in Sii, especially in connection with the powerful deity worshipped there. It was these proto-Sii people who established a deity at Kono, which they called Gbeneyokono.<sup>52</sup> They also depended on the proto-Sii people for defence and for protection. For soon after Kono was founded, war broke out between the new settlement and some other people over land.<sup>53</sup>

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49. Adookon, Emmanuel of Luuyo Gwaara (aged c. 77). He was interviewed at Luyo on 4.3.84. Text 23, pp. 90-2.

50. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe "Report of Field Study Visit....." 24th March, 1984. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

51. Opusunju, Na'uwe Leonard of Kono, op.cit. Text 25, pp. 94-5.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

Because of these connections, the traditions and culture of Kono were bound up with those of proto-Sii people, and later, with those of historical Sii.

All traditions of Kono, including annual feasts, are based on the traditions of Sii. Anything of traditional importance to be performed by Kono people must first have approval from Sii. The population of Kono was dominated by immigrants from Sii. Consequently, the culture of Kono was dominated by the culture of Sii. (54)

#### EASTWARD EXPANSION

The people who made war against Kono were called Buan people. Included in that group of towns were Kpean, Kwaawa, and Buan. They were a number of towns dotted on a line running eastwards from the Wiisoro-Gure axis. Kpean was nearest to Wiisoro and Gure, and Buan was furthest to the east. In relation to Kono, Buan was on the northwest of Kono, about five kilometers inland, while Kono was the easternmost town, though more to the southeast. Like those who moved west from the Wiisoro-Gure nucleus to found the towns of Gwaara, they had been founded by those who moved eastwards from the same area.

They were Kana people, and they knew about Gbeneakpana the younger and about his connections with the powerful deity of the forest of proto-Sii people. That was why their chief invited Gbeneakpana to make charms for him so that his towns might be united.<sup>55</sup> These were inland towns, whereas Kono was the farthest from the centre of populations, to what was to become the eastern boundary of Ogoni, on the mouth of the Imo River. The oral tradition states that the whole of that area was a massive forest; and it is still very much so till today.

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54. Opusunju, Na'uwe, Leonard of Kono, (aged c. 72), interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-5.

55. Ibid.

According to one informant, it was in the course of penetrating into these thick forests in search of the ingredients to use in preparing the charms that Gbeneakpana the younger discovered that the interior of the forests was good and pleasant for settlement.<sup>56</sup> Gbeneakpana proceeded to establish a settlement there. When the people of the Buan group of towns saw that a new town had been established there to cut off their access to the eastern sea, they reacted swiftly against it. War broke out between the Buan group of towns and the new town of Kono.<sup>57</sup>

From these accounts several conclusions become clear. The first obvious conclusion is that the Buan group of towns were older than Kono. On the other hand, Kono was older than historical Sii, but younger than proto-Sii. For example, in proto-Sii, the powerful deity of the forbidden forest was known as Yogurezoghomo. In historical Sii, the deity became the Land Deity of Sii, and was known as Bari-Sii (or the Town Deity of Sii).<sup>58</sup> It became the unifying factor of all the separate parts of Sii. At the time I visited Sii, my informant, John Iwagbo, was its Priest. His grandfather Kina, had been its Priest and Medium; and he was better known as Kina Bari-Sii.<sup>59</sup>

#### THE NORTHERN EXPANSIONS

The greatest number of emigrants from the Wiisoro-Gure axis went northwards to Luawii and Kpong. The oral tradition places Luawii as the second oldest surviving town of Ogoni. According to the evidence

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57. Opusunju, Na'uwe Leonard of Kono, *op. cit.* Text 25, pp. 94-5.

58. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field Study ....", 24th March, 1984. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

59. Ibid.

these towns maintained the direct links of the founding ancestors of Ogoni. They maintain the main line of expansion from Nama, through Kugba, Wiisoro, Gure, Luawii and then to Kpong.

All the towns discussed up to this point have been grouped under the kingdom of Nama. The reason for this approach is that the original rulers of Nama and Kugba were still the powers controlling the affairs of the whole area. Gbeneyaaloo, the leader and founder of Nama and Kugba was alive till after the founding of Gure. His mother, Gbene-kwaanwaa, and his sister, Zah, were alive at the founding of Gure. It was at Gure that the three of them died. All the three have their shrines at Gure. Throughout this period it was Zah who was especially mentioned as bearing many children. For that reason she was called "the Mother of Ogoni People". As stated above, the expression is also used in a special sense as honorific compliments to her name. Among her famous children were Gbenebega and Bariyaayoo.<sup>60</sup> The Bariyaayoo dynasty, based at Luawii, was the centre of power in the period before the Baan war, i.e. in the sixteenth century.<sup>61</sup> It was at this centre that the famous All-Ogoni conference took place in the 16th century, in which the Ogoni Calendar was drawn up.<sup>62</sup>

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60. Teedee, F.B. of Gure, (aged 43). He was interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. Text 14, pp. 60-65.

61. Tigiri, J.P. of Luuyo Gwaara (aged 83), He was interviewed at Luyo on 10.3.84. It was the Spirit-Medium of Bariaayoo. For she was already dead long, long before the 16th century. Text 22, pp. 86-89.

62. Ibid.

### KPONG IN THE EARLY AGE

From Luawii the migrations took a big leap across the narrow neck of the Luubaara River to Kpong. Kpong grew into a great Kingdom. This was probably about the third century after Nama. Nevertheless, this early kingdom was overthrown by later immigrants from the northwest. The founders of this early Kpong kingdom were descendants of Zah. I will come to that later. Meanwhile, we will concentrate on the pattern of immigration during this first era of the settlement of Ogoni.

After the population of Kpong had increased, large numbers of emigrants began to move northwest along the northern banks of the Luubaara River into Tee area and settled in the area of Uweke. From there they spread to all the Tee towns.

During the same period, a branch moved southwards from the Uweke central area into the Gokana area and settled at Giokoo (now called Namabon in Nweol). It was at Giokoo that the seat of the Gokana kingdom was established.

### GOKANA

In Gokana area, the settlement process took a different dimension. Here, the Gokana ancestors met tough resistance from an autochthonous people who spoke a different language. Some scattered groups of this people existed also in the Tee area, but these were quickly overcome by the Kana immigrants. The bulk of them was concentrated in the Gokana area. Although the oral tradition does not directly make reference to them, there are unconscious facts which point to them in the oral evidence. The first hint of them was shown in the manner the settle-

ment of Gokana began. It began in the process of an invading army, with the headquarters at Giokoo. The Leader of this invading force was Gbenesaakoo, who established his base at Giokoo.<sup>63</sup> The second hint of them is an element in the narrative which emphasizes that all the early Gokana towns had their origin from Giokoo. Under normal circumstances, this should not have been the case. The area is a broad hinterland country and people could have settled wherever it suited them without having to come to Giokoo first. Yet the oral evidence states that every group that came settled in Giokoo first.<sup>64</sup> But Giokoo itself was not a town or settlement as such.<sup>65</sup>

Giokoo was not a town or village then, and it is not a town or village now. The word Giokoo is a combination of two words, each meaning a different thing: Gion which means a "ward" or "section", and Koo which means "mate", "fellow", or "associate". An idiomatic translation of Giokoo therefore would mean "Camp for the fellows, associates, or comrades."<sup>66</sup> The founders of Gokana towns had to come to Giokoo first; and they must have the approval of Gbenesaakoo.<sup>67</sup> The question then arises, why was it that every comer into Gokana area had to report at Giokoo? And why must they stay there and have the approval of Gbenesaakoo first before they could even begin to search for a place to settle?

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63. Bagia, J.P. of Giokoo (aged 70). He was interviewed at Giokoo in Nweol on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

64. Ibid. See also the evidence of Dimkpa Giah of Gbee (note 65)

65. Giah, Dimkpa, of Gbee (aged 75). Interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-19.

66. Ibid.

67. Bagia, J.P., op.cit.

The fact is that Gbenesaakoo was a military man, a warrior in command of all the Gokana forces which were set against the former inhabitants of the area. Giokoo was a military camp where Gbenesaakoo was based. That was why Giokoo was not given the definition of a town. There is no mention of when it was founded, and who founded it. Gbenesaakoo just emerged at Giokoo, and at that moment Gokana was founded! There is no account of the growth of the population. There is no mention of children being born, traditions established, as we found in other places. Because Giokoo was not meant to be a town, it did not have the ingredients and the machinery that make up a town. It was a warrior camp. That was why no women or children were found there.

As I said earlier, the Ogoni ancestors met some groups of these autochthonous peoples in the Tee area. It was there that they first clashed with this people. In this area, the combined Kana forces won an easy victory over them. The rest of them scattered. The Ogoni ancestors seized their women as wives.

In Gokana area however, their concentration was greater and their resistance was even tougher than anything they met in the Tee area. For that reason the war against the autochthonous peoples in Gokana area lasted for some generations. During that period, the bulk of the would-be Gokana ancestors remained in the Tee area. Some of them even began to move slowly northeast and east into Lueku, Baan and Ko (Opuoko). For sometime, the autochthonous peoples proved a serious threat to the Ogoni ancestors, until Gbenesaakoo appeared on the scene as the Leader of the Kana forces.

I have already mentioned that certain unconscious elements in the

oral tradition pointed to the identity of these autochthonous peoples. For example, Gokana oral tradition lists the names of the oldest Gokana towns. Apart from Giokoo (which is a category by itself) Gbee stands on the top of this list of oldest Gokana towns. Yet Gbee oral tradition suggests that there was an older town near to the site where Gbee was built. This town became extinct when Gbee was founded. The name of the town which was not a Gokana town, was called Gooh (or Kooh).<sup>68</sup>

It is my suggestion that this Gooh town belonged to the autochthonous peoples, who became extinct following their defeat in war by the Gokana ancestors. It is also my suggestion that the names of such old and, in some cases, extinct, towns like Goi (in Gokana), Goi, Gio, Ban and Horo (in Tee) were derived from these Gooh peoples.<sup>69</sup>

Thirdly, I suggest that the prefix Go- in Gokana was a derivative from the Gooh people. I will explain how that came to be so.

Originally all Ogoni ancestors bore one name and identity as Kana (or Kana) people. They bore the same name and identity throughout the period of conquest of the Gooh peoples who occupied that part of the territory. The names of Tee, and Go-Kana emerged during the period of social and political consolidation, probably in the later part of the twelfth century. These names were not given by the Gooh peoples nor by the Gokana or the Tee themselves. They were applied by the Kana of the east and southeast to their brethren living in the Gokana

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68. Giah, Dimkpa of Gbee (aged 75). Interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-19.

69. History is full of examples of this type. In the U.S.A. alone we have names like Minnesota, Dakota, etc., which were American Indian names but which have remained even though those Indians have long been defeated and scattered, and some have even become extinct.

and Tee areas of the territory. This is explained by the nature of Kana language in which a qualifying word precedes the noun that is qualified.<sup>70</sup> First, they distinguished between the Kana people occupying the eastern half of the territory simply as Kana. Secondly, they distinguished between those Kana and the Kana occupying the former territory of the Gooh peoples by adding a distinctive qualifying word, derived from the territory which they were occupying, namely Gooh-Kana. This has been modified over the centuries to the form we have today as Gokana.

Thirdly, they distinguished between those Kana occupying the central position between the Kana and the Gokana. These they called the "Middle" or "Central" Kana, Tee Yee Kana. Again over the centuries, the Central Kana people were simply referred to as Tee. In the case of Tee, the name was a positional derivative. However, in the case of Gokana, the name has a geographical, sociological and biological connotation. Geographical, because they occupied the former territory of the Gooh peoples; sociological and biological, because after the conquest of the Gooh peoples, these Kana people took large numbers of their women as wives; and the children produced had created a mixed population of Kana and Gooh people in that area. It is my suggestion that the mixture of large populations of Gooh-Kana children with their Kana fathers was responsible for the emergence of a Gokana language. A similar example of this type happened in Northern Nigeria where the Fulanis conquered the resident Hausa peoples and took the

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70. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni Languages", Journal of African Languages, Vol. III, 1 (1964), 38-51.

----- "Niger Delta Linguistics I: Classification", Anth. Linguistics, Vol. I, 8 (1959), 32-53.

Hausa women as wives. After some generations the children produced lost the language of their fathers and spoke only the Hausa language. The dominance of the Hausa language was especially accelerated because the Fulani conquerors adopted a sedentary mode of life in Hausa communities.<sup>71</sup> In the case of Gokana, a great deal of the original Kana language was present due to continuous contacts between the Kana and the Gokana over the centuries.<sup>72</sup> The same linguistic effect, though to a lesser degree, took place in the Tee area. Because they were not as concentrated in Tee area as in the Gokana area, their impact on the Kana language there was considerably less, but very noticeable.

Three mutually intelligible dialects may be distinguished in Kana: Tai (Tee), in the vicinity of Chara, Northern Kana, around Taabaa (Teebaan), and Southern Kana, recognized as the standard and occupying the south-eastern part of the Division, including Bori (Booli) and the village of Kono on the Imo River. (73)

This linguistic description within the Kana language area supports the expansion data of the Ogoni ancestors, who called themselves Kana people (Pyä Kana). The area described as the part where the standard Kana is spoken coincides roughly with the area of Nama Kingdom, including Gure and Kono. With regard to the dialectic areas pointed in Tee and Northern Kana, it will be seen that a branch of the populations from the Tee area moved north-east and east to Northern Kana area, after they had already been affected by the linguistic impact of the Goooh population there. And it would not be surprising if a remnant group of those peoples joined in the movements to that direction. In some old but isolated village communities like Goi, the linguistic accent is still

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71. Smith, M.G., Government in Zazzau, 1800-1950 (London, Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1960), pp. 4-5.

72. Williamson, Kay, "Linguistic Evidence for the Pre-history of the Niger Delta", (forthcoming).

73. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of the Ogoni Languages" op.cit., pp. 38-51.

markedly different from that of the rest of Tee, suggesting the possibility that a remnant of the original inhabitants must have survived there. Recently, Professor Kay Williamson of the University of Port Harcourt confirmed the linguistic variance of Goi with regard to the rest of Tee.<sup>74</sup>

### TEE

Tee oral tradition asserts that Tee people came from Kana; but the parts of Kana which it attempts to suggest, namely Lueku and Bangha areas, must be doubted. According to this particular source:

Tee people came from Kana. Tee came from Lueku. For example, Bunu is a town in Kana, there is also a town in Tee called Bunu. There is Bangha in Kana, and there is Bangha in Tee. There is Nonwa in Kana, and there is Nonwa in Tee. There is Korokoro in Kana, and there is Korokoro in Tee. If you listen to Kana speech and Tee speech, you will notice that there are not many differences. It is especially so in Lueku and Bangha areas. The tone may differ slightly but the speech, the words, and the names of things do not differ very much. In tradition, the traditions in Kana and the traditions in Tee are the same. (75)

My analysis agrees to a large extent with the points raised in the above passage, except in one essential point - the suggestion that Tee people migrated from Lueku and Bangha areas. The results of my own research indicate that the contrary was the case.

What happened was this. After the Kana (Ogoni) ancestors had moved from Gure and Luawii, they crossed the narrow neck of the Luubaara River and settled in Kpong. During the age of expansion

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74. Williamson, Kay, op.cit.

75. Gininwa, G.N.K., of Korokoro (Aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Korokoro, Tee, on 19.3.84. Text 38, pp. 125-7.

of that Kingdom, a great number of the populations moved west and north-west along the northern banks of the Luubaara into Tee and settled at Uweke. As the population of Uweke increased and as the people began to expand in Tee area, they came into contact with the Gooch peoples. The strife that resulted between these two peoples brought war. As the war hardened, the leaders retraced their steps back to the religious centres in Nama and Kugba to "strengthen" themselves for the purpose of winning the wars.

The founders of Kugba came from Nama. While they were at Kugba, Nama became a holy land where they went to do traditional ceremonies for power and popularity. From that time on, Nama became the place where all Kana leaders went to do the ceremonies for the title of "Gbene-". (76)

That practice of always going back to Nama for war power and for strength, popularized the greatest Kana (Ogoni) title of Gbene- in Khana, Gokana, and Tee areas. It will be seen that all the great leaders of these places had the title of Gbene-, which means Great. It will be seen also that the names of the leaders of these areas were well-remembered in Nama oral traditions, but very rarely did the oral sources of these areas recall the names of the leaders of Nama and Kugba. Some Nama sources, passed down by several versions in Gure and Sii oral traditions, would run like these:

Gbenesaakoo founded Gokana  
Gbenekuapie founded Tee  
Gbeneguasoo settled at Bara  
Gbenekombari settled at Nyowii  
Gbenesirakinaebia founded Ebia  
Gbeneteetagana was the general founder of Sii  
Gbenenwaawoo came from Luawii and settled with  
Gbeneteetagana. (77)

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76. Nwikogbara, M.D. of Sii (aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Sii on 8.3.84. Text 18, pp. 78-81.

77. Ibid., interviewed on 17.10.81.

Another source reads:

Gbenemene Nama was the highest authority in Nama. He ruled with a Council of Chiefs. Among others who also came from Ghana were Gbeneyaanwaaka, Gbenesaakoo, Gbenekuapiedam, and Gbeneyaaloo. Gbeneakpana moved to Kono and founded the town of Kono. (78)

As the circumstances for the founding of Eleme were different - circumstances which severed the essential links with the original ancestral "home", and the centres for spiritual power - the title of Gbene- will be conspicuously absent in Eleme oral traditions. Nevertheless, they still remembered that somewhere around south-eastern Kana, the people possessed potent spiritual powers for war.

Tee oral tradition states that Gbenekuapie was the founder of Tee, and that Uweke was the oldest settlement in Tee. One Tee source, however, named Gbenegininwa as the founder of Tee and Korokoro as the first settlement in Tee. This latter claim has not been supported; neither by other Tee sources,<sup>79</sup> nor by collateral evidence, such as the Nama sources like those quoted above. Moreover, unconscious evidence in the very text itself suggests that Uweke was indeed the first and oldest Kana settlement in Tee. Therefore Gbenekuapie must be acknowledged as the founder of Tee:

In Tee area we usually have much argument concerning the first man who founded Tee, or concerning the first ancient town in Tee. Some people used to say that Uweke was the most ancient town in Tee, some say it was Korokoro. I know that Uweke and Korokoro were the two most ancient towns in Tee. There is no other town in Tee older than these two. All matters

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78. Fogho, Doonee Nwibue of Bara, Sii (aged c. 70). He was interviewed at Bara on 21.10.81 Text 20, pp. 83-4.

79. Ngito, L.N. of Kpiite (aged 99). He was interviewed at Kpiite on 17.3.84. Text 37, pp. 122-4.

pertaining to Tee traditions are done in Uweke and Korokoro. These towns were two brothers. As I said earlier about Kpa, Uweke people have their own. They call it Bina. Korokoro people have their own, which they call Kpa. (80)

The Bina was one of the highest ceremonies a great man performed as part of the requirements towards his obtaining the title of Gbene-at Nama. In Kana the ceremony was called Kpa Bina. The word "Kpa" is a Kana verb meaning "play" (a musical instrument or drum). The Bina was a set of eleven drums of varying sizes which were played at this ceremony with other accompaniments. Notice that the original word Bina, which originated from, and connected with Nama, was retained at Uweke, but lost in the other towns of Tee, including Korokoro.

According to Uweke oral tradition, Korokoro was not a town during the time of Gbenekuapie. The testimony suggests that while Gbenekuapie was the king of Uweke, what is now Korokoro was a forest behind the town of Uweke. Inside this forest, which was quite close to the town, Gbenekuapie made a secret camp where he often retired with a select number of Elders to deliberate on important state matters, unknown to the general public. The evidence asserts that the very name of Korokoro was a functional derivative applied as a result of the functions which the place served during the time of Gbenekuapie:

Gbenekuapie and all Uweke made Korokoro their secret place for consultations (ke bira-bira) their hide-out (ke goa), their retreat (ke begia loo to), their sanctuary (korokoro ke). When they had a very serious matter to deliberate upon, they went there to discuss it. They also prepared "somethings" and kept them there - things that would make the decisions that took place there

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80. Gininwa, G.N.K. of Korokoro (aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Korokoro on 19.3.84 Text 38, pp. 125-7.

become strong and buttressed; things for for national ceremonials and rituals, etc. That was why whenever the traditional rites of Yaa were performed, they went there to the front of that sacred thing (Akob) inside their sanctuary (Korokoro Ke) to do certain ceremonies and rituals..... Gbenekuapie gave land there to one of his servants (probably a priest) to live there so that he could watch over the national things preserved there ... That was the reason they used to visit there with new plays and dances. (81)

The time of Gbenekuapie was a time of war in Tee area. It is possible that under Gbenekuapie and the leaders of that time, what later became the town of Korokoro was, in fact, a military base, or a war camp, where the important plans and decisions about the wars were made and carried out. In ancient Kana the Yaa traditional rites were an initiation, or rather a recruitment into the "army". Virtually every Yaa candidate was a soldier; its training was militarily oriented.<sup>82</sup> The place or location for such things in Ogoni (Kana) is usually a secret place. Those in the above passage, described as "the front (or face) of that sacred thing inside their sanctuary", were highly sacred things; and because they were highly sacred, they were kept secret, that is, out of the way of profane persons. In Kana there were two of such things. One was called Apapee,<sup>83</sup> which in Tee was called Akob; the other, which was an underground spot in a sacred grove, was called Si Yo'uwe Yaa (Face, or Front of the Yaa Deity). The Apapee was used in selecting the actual soldiers, because in that night of the Yaa dance, the profane persons would not be able to place their hands on the Apapee.<sup>84</sup> The essence of this was that the ancient Kana (Ogoni)

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81. Gookinanwaa, Ibeyo Gbenegbara of Uweke (aged 98). He was interviewed at Uweke on 19.3.84. Text 39, pp. 128-9.

82. Iyoro, Dike, of Noobana, Kono Boue (aged 70). He was interviewed at Noobana on 5.2.84. Text 55, pp. 197-204.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

believed that the greater part of a warrior's make-up depended not on his weapon but on the quality of his spirit. That was why they placed great emphasis on the soundness of a man's spirit and the Yaa initiations were connected with that. The historical beginnings of Korokoro therefore developed out of the special position which its site enjoyed in the early period of Tee during the Age of Gbenekuapie.

We noticed also that when the war shifted from Tee to Gokana area, Gbenesaakoo's Giokoo seemed to have been an improved version of Gbenekuapie's Korokoro Ke in Tee.<sup>85</sup>

#### THE AGE OF EXPANSION

After the era of Gbenekuapie had passed, a period arose in Tee during which Korokoro developed into a flourishing town. That period could be called the Age of Expansion. With the passing of the era of wars, an era of peace and development followed, during which the forest of Korokoro was gradually cleared and settled. Emphasis shifted from war preparations to cultural and religious developments. The cultural, social and religious aspects of Yaa, Be and Bina became prominent, while the military aspects were relegated to the background. The appointment of national items preserved in the forest of Korokoro was an important ingredient which enhanced the development of the place into a town. For in the era of peace and developments, the descendants of the priest became the landlords of that place and its surrounding landscape, since their ancestors must have put portions of that land under cultivation for their survival. This is clearly stated in the text:

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85. See text at note 81. See text 39, pp. 128-9.

Gbenekuapie gave land there to one of his servants to live there so that he could watch over the national things that were preserved there. (86)

What comes out very clearly is that in the period when Korokoro developed into a town, the conquest of the Goooh people had been completed. The impact of the Goooh populations resulting from the marriage of their women, had begun to have a telling effect on the Kana language in that area. It was at this time that the mixed populations of the new town of Korokoro lost track of the original Kana word for Bina, where as it was still retained at Uweke, two towns not much more than a kilometer apart. Some of the original inhabitants survived the wars. These were those who escaped into the peripheral forests to the north-west, where they became the remnants of such old outpost towns as Baan, Goi, etc., where their dialect is still slightly different from that of the rest of Tee.

#### LUEKUN

During the war period in Tee, some of the Kana immigrants in the area tried to avoid the wars by moving east and north-east into Lueku and Bangha areas. Some moved further still into Ko (Opuoko) on the Imo River. The movements from Tee into these areas intensified in the age of expansion. By that time, most of the towns in Tee had been founded and were multiplying demographically. The emigrants from Tee towns carried with them memories of the cultures and traditions in their original homes in Tee. In the new places immigrants from particular towns or communities lived in clusters according to those towns or communities. Consequently, many of them were identified by the communities from which they emigrated. That was how the names of certain

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86. Gookinanwaa, Ibeyo Gbenegbara of Uweke (aged 98). He was interviewed at Uweke on 19.3.84. Text 39, pp. 128-9.

towns in Tee were duplicated in Lueku and Bangha areas. For example, the names of such Tee towns as Bunu, Nonwa, Bangha, Baan, Korokoro, etc., were duplicated in those parts of Ogoni.<sup>87</sup> Notice this statement from Lueku oral tradition:

Gbenetiginagua was the founder of Lueku. He came by way of Tee and entered Korokoro where he first settled. When he looked carefully, it seemed to him that the place was too narrow and would not have enough scope for expansion. He therefore moved from Korokoro and began to search out suitable land for himself. Gbenetiginagua found his way through the forests to Baan area. At that time there was no Taanbaan. The first site he settled in Baan area was Korokoro. All that time, Gbenetiginagua and Gbeneatee travelled through the forests and occupied territories, they left their wives at Korokoro Tee. After they had cleared and marked out their towns, and had built themselves houses, they went back to Korokoro Tee to take their wives. (88)

There are several vital historical facts in the above passage. Gbenetiginagua, the founder of Lueku, migrated from Kana, but he settled for a while at Korokoro Tee. In relation to Uweke, Korokoro Tee was at this time a new town; a popular cultural centre, where newcomers to Tee liked to settle. While there, Gbenetiginagua discovered that all that territory was virtually occupied. He therefore moved eastwards to the area of Lueku, where there was spacious lands.

In the new territory, they continued to regard themselves as the citizens of the town from which they emigrated. The new settlement was to them just a colony of Korokoro people, or a colony of Nonwa people, etc. An example in history was in 1620, when a group of English

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87. See text by G.N.K. Gininwa of Korokoro Tee (Aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Korokoro, Tee, on 19.3.84. Text 38, pp. 125-7.

88. Mpeba, Mbaedee Francis of Nyoogo Lueku (Aged 98). He was interviewed at Nyogor on 10.3.84. Text 27, pp. 97-100.

Pilgrims settled in North America, they called their settlement "England". The settlers from Tee in Lueku and Bangha commuted frequently between the new settlements and their former town in Tee, particularly during the great annual feasts, or on the great religious occasions. In that way, the culture and traditions of Tee were gradually transmitted into the new areas. It is quite significant when we noted in one Tee source that the culture and traditions of Tee and Kana were the same.<sup>89</sup> And a Lueku source recalled that one of the taboos of the Lueku National Deity was the snail. For that reason, Lueku people did not eat the snail. Moreover, the source recalled that incidentally the people of Korokoro Tee, from where Lueku people were said to have come, also did not eat the snail.<sup>90</sup>

Thirdly, the settlers from Tee in Lueku and Bangha went back to Tee to marry wives. Notice that those wives were married from Tee at a time when the linguistic impact of the Gooch peoples of that area was already well established in the local cultures of that area. I suggest that this practice of cross-marriages from Tee area into that part of Kana was a significant explanation for the linguistic divergence in the Baan area of Kana pinpointed by Hans Wolff.<sup>91</sup> For the linguistic culture of those women and their children formed the dialectic basis of the speech of that area.

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89. Gininwa, G.N.K. of Korokoro, op.cit. Text 38, pp. 125-7.

90. Mpeba, Mbaedee Francis of Lueku, op.cit. Text 27, pp. 97-9.

91. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni .... ", pp. 38-51.

KO (OPUOKO)

Two versions of Ko oral tradition tell similar stories of how Ko was founded. According to one version, two brothers who were hunters crossed the Imo River from Ibibioland to the west bank of the river. One of them went to Baene and the other one remained at Ko. The man who stayed at Ko built his hut by the edge of the river. What happened after that was the story of how Ko was founded:

While there he met another man who had settled on the land above the river. When the man who had settled on the land above the river demanded to know who he was, he introduced himself as a "friend", which was interpreted in Kana as "Koo". The two men lived together. Gbenesaagba was the man who had settled on the land above the river. Gbenesaagba continued to call the man who settled by the edge of the river "my friend" ("Koo"). In the course of time, the two men divided the control of the territory. Gbenesaagba took control of the land, Koo, the river ways. There was intermarriage between the two peoples. Gbenesaagba got a son, Gbeneiloo, Koo also got a son, Gbenemeneko. (92)

The other version tells the story like this:

Two friends who were hunters came across the Imo river and settled on this side. One of the two men settled at Ko, the other at Baene. The friend who settled at Ko was called "Konee", while the one who settled at Baene was called "Baenee". When they first arrived, they did not see or find any person in those parts. Apart from those two men who migrated to this side in the earliest times, no other Ibibio people migrated to this side. (93)

Each of the two versions of the story given above appears to be too symmetrical to be true. A glance at the first version of the story raised several questions. Why must they be two brothers?

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92. Yomii, J.B. of Ko (Opuoko), (Aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Ko on 25.10.81. Text 28, pp. 101-3.

93. Ibid. Interviewed on 15.3.84. Text 29, pp. 104-7.

And why must the two brothers be hunters? Assuming that they were hunters, must they also come the same way as they do in the above story? What type of weapons did they possess at that time, which enabled them to penetrate that impregnable zone by that early date? In the second version the two men are friends; they are not brothers. But both are nevertheless hunters. The intriguing thing about this second version is that although the two men are Ibibios, yet they bear Ogoni (Kana) names, for Konee and Baenee are Kana names. According to the version, when the men came there, they did not see or find any other person in the area. The question then arises, how did they get the Kana names? And why must both their names be derivatives of the towns they supposedly founded? In view of these problems, these stories must be kept under critical scrutiny until more facts are known concerning the beginnings of Ko (Opuoko).

First of all, it is to be noted that it is a highly unusual phenomenon to find in Ogoni, especially in Kana, names of towns derived from personal names. Perhaps the only exception would be in Leme area, where almost every town there is supposed to have been the name of a son of their ancestor. But even that is very highly questionable. In Ogoni, towns and places were usually named either because of an incident that occurred there, or because of the most impressive phenomenon or natural feature of the landscape. For example, the name of the town of Boomu in Gokana was derived from the topography of the place because it was "built on water".<sup>94</sup> Similarly, the town of Boodoo derived its name from its topographical location "on the sea".

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94. Nyone, E.B. et al. of Lewe, (Aged 67). They were interviewed at Lewe on 26.2.84. Text 3, pp. 9-11.

The towns of Uwegwere in Kpong and Uwegwere in Boue derived their names from the most significant natural feature of their locations, namely the existence of so many Gwere trees in the area.<sup>95</sup> The village of Temaa in Kono Boue derived its name from its location at "the tail-end of the river": and Boue, which means "in the centre of the fields" also got its name in that manner. Other examples are Uwekuwe (Leopards' Bush), Eeken (Clean ground), Korokoro (Deepness, Secret, Sanctuary), Kani (Much firewood), Deken (Ground above the depth of river), Nweol (Behind the farmlands), etc..

On the other hand, the Ogoni name places like camps (usually palm wine camps) after their owners. Normally the general name for such places was NuLoo or Iloo, meaning a palm wine camp or hut. It included the owner's hut and all the surrounding grounds and farmlands. To specify, the NuLoo or Iloo was prefixed to the name of its owner, as NuLoo-X or Iloo-Y. Where, as it has happened, such places developed into a town or village, the name of such towns or villages remained as before, for example, IlooLoo<sup>96</sup> in Keneke.

Another example of how place names developed in Ogoni was where a person cleared a virgin forest and made it into a farming land. Such a farming area was usually named after the person who cleared the virgin forest. Now the general name for farming areas was Wii. To specify therefore, the Ogoni prefixed the Wii to the name of the person who

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95. Iwerebe, Frank U. of Uwegwere et al. (aged 65); Baridon, Zaga, also of Uwegwere (aged 60), explained that the town got its name from the existence of many gwere trees in the area. Interview took place at Uwegwere on 22.1.84. Text 44, pp. 152-6.

96. Bariwere, Inee of IlooLoo (aged 98). He was interviewed at IlooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-73.

cleared the virgin forest as Wii-X or Wii-Y. If later on a town should develop in that farming area, the name of such a town would still be called "The Farming Area of X or of Y" (Wii-X, or Wii-Y). An example of this type is the town of Wiiyaakara<sup>97</sup> on the Luubaara River.

In all these examples, the case of Ko stands separate. The Kana word "Ko" was the name of a rare type of hard wood tree, which was also sacred. In some parts of Kekana (Southern Ogoni) the name of this tree Ko was given to individuals as personal names, in the hope that they should grow up to be strong, stately and "indestructible". However, in Ogoni where the name of a certain type of tree or topographical feature was adopted as the name of a town or settlement, it happened indirectly and it was unplanned, such names having existed previously as descriptive of that environment. For example, if a rare type of tree such as Gwere, which were also regarded as sacred, was exceptionally plentiful and prominent in a certain area, that area with its surrounding environment would derive the name from the name of that particular type of vegetation (or tree). Now the general name for a bush or field was Uwe. The Ogoni would then prefix the general name to the specific name of the prominent vegetation or feature of that environment. In our example of gwere, the area would be called Uwegwere (gwere bush). If a town or settlement should spring up in that environment, it would not have a different name; its name would still be Uwegwere (gwere bush). That was exactly how the towns of Uwegwere in Kpong and Uwegwere in Boue got their names<sup>98</sup>. That was

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97. Keekee, Dominic A. of Kpong (Aged c. 63). He was interviewed on 24.10.81. Text 34, pp. 118-9.

98. Menewa, Pei'or of Kpong (aged 85). He was interviewed at Kpong on 24.10.81. Text 33, pp. 114-7.

also how the town of Uwekuwe in Boue got its name, which means Leopard's Bush.<sup>99</sup>

Thus it can be seen that the Ogoni did not have much interest in putting their names on the towns and settlements which they founded. Even the most ambitious of them did not consider that option as something desirable. That is why it is very rare if not impossible to find towns in Ogoni, especially in Kana, Gokana and Tee with personal names. It is therefore questionable that Ko (Opuoko) should be the only exception. The great ambition of the Ogoni ancestors was to have their names prefixed with the title of Gbene-, which means Great or Mighty. Once that was achieved (and only very few could achieve it), they knew that their memories had been perpetuated. It was therefore unnecessary for them to attempt to perpetuate their memories by attaching their names to the towns and cities which they founded. Instead, they sought to perpetuate the memory of that environment which was kind enough to receive them. To do this they named the town or settlement according to the most prominent feature through which that environment made itself attractive to them.

Having said that, what then are the explanations for the founding of Ko (Opuoko)? First, assuming that some settlers came into the territory from Ibibioland across the Imo River, such immigrants must have been very insignificant, and they were probably assimilated without trace, or destroyed by the overwhelming Kana populations in the territory. Secondly, there is no evidence of early Ibibio settlements or

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99. Gbarato, Adoo of Kono Boue (Aged 72). He was interviewed at Kono Boue on 18.1.84. Text 49, pp. 174-8.

contacts in the area. There is no linguistic evidence, and no traditional relationships between Ibibio and Ogoni.<sup>100</sup> Other Ko sources do not even mention Ibibio.<sup>101</sup> The mention of Ibibio in the Ko and later Bangha sources must be regarded as an anachronism of the informants, and of recent introduction.

It is generally agreed that Gbenesaagba was the founder of Ko (Opuoko), and that he came from Tee:

Gbenesaagba was the founder of Ko, he was the leader of the group who came from Tee. At first they all settled at Ko. After some time Gbenesaagba told Gbeneiloo to move to another place because Ko would not provide sufficient space for all of them. Thereupon Gbeneiloo moved to Buon and cleared the site of Buon. (102).

And another Buon source reports:

The founder of Buon Ko was Gbeneabee. In these parts the name was pronounced Gbeneobia, but it is the same person. He was among those who came from Tee. Gbenesaagba and Gbeneiloo were the people who founded Ko. Gbeneoso and Gbeenabee were the first founders of Buon Ko before others came to join them. (103).

Gbenesaagba probably moved from Tee along with some others either before or during the early stages of the war with the Gooh peoples in that area. This was the age of Gbenekuapie in Tee, when the linguistic impact of the Gooh peoples had not yet taken root among the Kana of Tee. That would explain why the pure Kana language is spoken in Ko and the surrounding areas.

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100. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni Languages", Journal of Afr. Languages, Vol. III, 1 (1964), pp. 38-51.
  101. Yomii, J.B. of Ko, (Aged 62). He was interviewed at Ko, on 15.3.84. Text 29, pp. 104-7.
  102. Nwilabba, TeeTee Edamni of Buon Ko (Aged c. 120). He was interviewed at Buon Ko on 15.3.84. Text 31, pp. 110-2.
  103. Duunwaa, Edward of Buon Ko (Aged 58). Interviewed at Buon Ko on 15.3.84. Text 32, p. 113.

A second hypothesis is that Gbenesaagba came directly from Kana area; either from Gure, Luawii, or from Kpong. In that case, the group would have migrated east along the north banks of the Luubaara River and then turned northwards to Ko. This would have taken place during the period of the Old Kpong Kingdom. This again would indicate why Ko and its surrounding towns retained the original Kana language and traditions. According to one informant, Ko was as old as Gure. Like Gure, Ko began its existence by a strong emphasis on the separation of twin mothers from the rest of society, a tradition which was well rooted in Kekana, particularly at Gure.<sup>104</sup>

This tradition led to the founding of a second Ko town, known as Buon-Ko (Kalaoko).<sup>105</sup> Other towns founded as off-shoots of Ko were Luwa, Bianu, Wiikuwe, Bara, Taego, etc. Each of these sub-towns was founded by a leader. For example, Gbenesaagba was said to have founded the original Ko town known as Gamenebaan Ko.

#### THE COMING OF THE IBANI

Ko developed into a flourishing town on the west bank of the Imo River. It was well-located on high ground above the river and well-drained. Before it stretched vast fertile agricultural lands and an extensive forest along the Imo and the Luubaara valleys. With these economic reserves, Ko became a very prosperous town, although its economic potential was only minimally exploited because only few markets existed at that time.

Then came the Ibani, who were by this time at the later stages

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104. Teedee, Frederick B. of Gure (Aged 43). Interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. Text 14, pp. 60-65.

105. Yomii, J.B. of Ko (Aged 58). Interviewed at Ko on 25.10.81. Text 28, pp. 101-3.

of their migration from the central Delta Via Ndoki on the Imo River to their present location on the Atlantic Coast.<sup>106</sup> Oral sources at Ko report that when the Ibani, who came in small batches, arrived at Ko, they found this sprawling Ko town on the west bank of the river at that point. Near to it was another Ko town, which was smaller. This was Buon-Ko, the first offshoot of Ko. With this initial external contact Ko developed into a large market town on the Imo River, trading with the Ibani, whose home at that time was up the river in the region of Ndoki and beyond.

One characteristic of the Ibani, the Ibo, and most of the neighbours of Ogoni, was that they tended to augment or corrupt Kana names and words. For example, for Kwaa, a northern town of Ogoni, they substituted Okwale; for Goi, a north-western community of Ogoni, they had Ogoi; for Tee, they had Tai; for Leme, they had Eleme, etc..<sup>107</sup> Thus the Ibani called the Ko towns Oko. And to distinguish between the Greater and the Lesser Ko towns they appended their own ethnic descriptive words Opu, meaning Great, and Kala, meaning Little, or less. That was how the names of the Ko towns were corrupted from their original forms of Ko and Buon Ko<sup>108</sup> to Upuoko and Kalaoko respectively.

#### THE NAME 'IBANI'

When the Ogoni at Ko first encountered the Ibani, they did not

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106. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A. A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press (1972), p. 3; "Ijo Origins and Migrations" Nigeria Magazine, xci, (1966), and xcii, (1967), pp. 47-55.

107. For analysis of more of these corrupted Ogoni names, see Ch. I.

108. The word Buon was derived from the Kana word Buun (or Buu), which means "double" or "joined". It is also the word for a kola nut (Buu[n]) because a kola nut consists of several sectors joined together. Hence Buon-Ko.

know them nor from where they had come. The Ibani themselves could not explain exactly from where they had come, nor did they at that time have a definite name or identity. Thus the Ogoni at Ko were only able to identify them as a people from Ebani, a Kana word meaning afar off, distant or beyond. Individually they were called Bani (or Beeni). The name stuck. Soon the "strangers" began to identify themselves as Ebani (or Bani) people. Up till today the Ogoni still call Bonny territory Bani, and its inhabitants Pya Bani (Bonny people). Olfert Dapper, who identified Bonny by name, his informants visited the Ogoni towns of Mogho and Kwuribue before 1668. Since he wrote down these names in their correct Kana forms, I presume that his informants learned them directly from the Ogoni themselves.<sup>109</sup> In 1854, W.B. Baikie, while discussing the fact that the Ibani were related to the Ndoki wrote, "Ndoki is the Mina of Ebane ... " He went further to explain that the form 'Ibani' was used only in Kalabari area, but the (Kana) forms Ebane and Bani were the standard usage at Bonny at that time, and that the form Bonny was the usage by European traders.<sup>110</sup>

Thus it was significant that the good neighbourly relationships which were to exist between the Ogoni and the Ibani for centuries to come began not only with the friendly exchange of trade goods, but also with the memorable exchange of names.

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109. Dapper, Olfert, Description of Africa, Vol. II, Tr. John Ogilby. (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.

110. Baikie, W.B., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage ..., 1854, London, John Murray, Albemarle Street, (1856), p. 438.

BANGHA

In Bangha area, the oral evidence suffers from the same type of distortions as was apparent in one of the Ko narratives. It is the same hunter-founder story. The hunter also coming across from the Imo River from Ibibioland, only to discover that the territory had been occupied by Kana people. So there followed the same process of sharing power in the territory between the hunter-founder and the man who was already in occupation of the land. After that the hunter-founder disappears without trace.

It is not necessary to repeat the details here since I have already discussed the weaknesses of this type of evidence in the chapter on methodology (Chapter Two). Moreover, many of the arguments presented in the section on Ko (Opuoko) are also applicable in the Bangha area. Although the oral tradition suggests that a man from Kugba named Namayo <sup>111</sup> first settled in the area at Gbaragbo, the evidence must be carefully examined. First, if a man by that name existed, and if he was really connected with the founding of Kabangha, then he must have come from somewhere else other than from Kugba. Secondly, the names of the towns in Bangha indicate that they were founded by immigrants from several different places in Ogoni, including Tee, Lueku, Kó, Kpong and Kekana. For example, such names as Kere, Bionu, Lumene, Nyobe, Bunu, Nyokuru, Luubara, Gbaragbo, Nyogo, Bara, Taeke, Yaakoo, etc., represent Kana, Tee and Lueku names. It is an area with similar culture and traditions as their surrounding neighbours. Such traditions as Yaa, Bogonoo, and the isolation of twin mothers in separate villages were practised also in Bangha.

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111. Obuh, J.B. of Kabangha (Aged c. 74). He was interviewed at Kabangha on 15.3.84. Text 30, pp. 108-9.

Until we have more positive evidence for example from archaeological excavation, we might suggest that this area was settled by immigrants from various parts of Ogoni in about the fourteenth century.

SETTLEMENT OF LEME (ELEME)

The Leme oral tradition is full of many variant accounts on how Leme was settled. Some accounts tell the story of two brothers, Lene and Giokpe, who escaped from Gokana because Lene's wife gave birth to twin babies and was to be killed together with her babies. As Lene was determined that his wife and the babies should not be killed he quickly and secretly escaped from the town with them. At the time he escaped his brother Giokpe accompanied him.<sup>112</sup> Having travelled as far away as possible (probably many days' journey), they settled at a place which later became known as Msia.<sup>113</sup>

Other sources state that the place they first settled was Ogale, also in Msia.<sup>114</sup> Still other sources narrate that when they escaped from Gokana, they first settled at a place which became known as Gbomsia.<sup>115</sup> In actual fact, these places are not more than a few kilometers apart.

Similarly, there are many variants with regard to the actual identity of the original ancestors. As stated above, one source reports

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112. Laaka, S.O. of Onne (Aged c. 67). He was interviewed at Onne on 21.2.84. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

113. Ibid.

114. Osaronu, J.D. of Onne (Aged 47).. He was interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 10, pp. 42-48.

115. Awala, Oji of Ogale, (Aged 55). Interviewed at Ogale 4.3.84. Ngofa, Obo of Aleto (Aged 58). Interviewed at Aleto on 4.3.84. Texts: 13, pp. 57-9 and 12, pp. 54-6.

that the original ancestors were Lene and his brother Giokpe. The oral tradition records that while in the new place the name of Lene was corrupted to Leme, and subsequently from Leme to Eleme.<sup>116</sup> After sometime, the two brothers separated as a result of a quarrel which broke out between them, with Giokpe moving southwards and settling at a place on the coast which later became known as Onne.<sup>117</sup>

Another source suggests that the original ancestor was Nchia; that this Nchia had four children (sons), Ogale, Agbonchia, Aleto and Alesa, who founded the four original towns of Nchia.<sup>118</sup> Other sources state that the ancestor was Eleme; that this Eleme had two sons, Nchia and Odido, from which two sons the Eleme communities were established. Nchia produced six sons, namely, Ogale, Agbonchia, Aleto, Alesa, Alode and Akpajo. These six sons founded the six Nchia communities. Odido had four sons, namely Ebubu, Onne, Eteo and Ekporo. Each of these four sons also founded a town. According to the oral tradition these ten sons founded the ten towns of Eleme, with each town bearing the name of its founder.<sup>119</sup> Yet other accounts state that the name Eleme actually derived from the Gokana word Aleema Me, meaning "I like it", "I am satisfied with it". According to the source, this statement was made by Lene when he was asked concerning how he felt about his condition in the new environment, having been ostracised from his original

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116. Laaka, S.O. of Onne, (Aged 67). Interviewed on 21.2.84.  
Text 8, pp. 28-36.

117. Ibid.

118. Ngofa, Obo of Aleto (Aged 58). Interviewed at Aleto on  
4.3.84. Text 12, pp. 54-6.

119. Awala, Oji of Agale (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Ogale  
on 4.3.84. Text 13, pp. 57-9.

home and people, to which question he made the above reply. Then from that time the saying became popularized that Lene said that he was "satisfied", that he liked it. ("Aleemam"). From that word, the name Eleme developed.<sup>120</sup>

#### MIGRATIONS FROM GOKANA TO LEME

After examining the above sources, certain questions emerge. Did the Leme (Eleme) ancestors emigrate from Gokana? What is the evidence to suggest a Gokana origin? Was Leme settled by immigrants from Gokana only or by some other peoples as well? What evidence exists to show that Leme was also settled by peoples other than the immigrants from Gokana?

Gokana oral tradition is replete with testimonies about the Gokana origin of Leme. There are many versions explaining the causes of the emigration from Gokana to Leme. In some cases the cause of the emigration was some bitter land dispute, such as happened at Lewe.<sup>121</sup> In other cases references were made to bloody civil wars, in one case following a masquerade dance, during which the masquerader fatally wounded a man who died. The vengeful killings that followed after that resulted in a bloody civil war which forced many people to escape from Gokana to as far away places as possible, many to Leme.<sup>122</sup>

The Gokana sources do not directly mention the incident of the twin births, although the names of Lene and his brother Giokpee are clearly

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120. Ejoo, D.L. of Onne (Aged 65). He was interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

121. Nteyoo, Ndi of Lewe, (Aged 65). He was interviewed at Lewe on 12.2.84. Text 4, pp. 12-3.

122. Giah, Dimkpa of Gbee, (Aged c. 75). He was interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-9.

stated. This is probably because it has become unpopular to talk about such matters.

A certain Lewe man named Digi had a son whose name was Gbara. Gbara begat Kpui, who had two sons, the name of one was Nteyoo and the other Lene. All these came from the kindred of Giokpee in Lewe. There was a quarrel between Nteyoo and Lene over a plot of farm land. The trouble grew so big that Lene had to quit the town into voluntary exile to Leme. While there he introduced himself as a man from Lewe. From Lewe, the name Leme developed. For the people thought that he said "Leme". While in the new place, he practised the traditions of his ancestral kindred (Gaan). When he was asked what those things meant, he replied that he was following the traditions of his ancestral kindred back in his place of origin. When asked what his ancestral kindred was, he replied "Giokpee". From there it was known that he originated from the House of Gbara Digi in Lewe, Gokana. (123)

The oral evidence continues to state that these immigrants named one of their sons after one of their ancestors, Kpui. This son was Tetenwi (or Ntetenwi). The family of Tetenwi in Onne established links with the House of Gbara Digi in Lewe, and have been coming to Lewe during the Zua feasts each year, to do rituals and to pour libations to their ancestors.<sup>124</sup> According to the source, these annual traditional pilgrimages from Onne to Lewe have continued till today. They also founded a kindred organization (Gaan), involving all the descendants of Giokpee in Lewe and of Tetenwi in Onne.<sup>125</sup>

I personally visited the so-called Gbara Digi House in Lewe, where I recorded this brief statement from one of the descendants of the House, who at that time was very ill:

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123. Nyone, E.B. (Aged 67), et al, of Lewe. They were interviewed at Lewe on 26.2.84. Text 3, pp. 9-11.

124. Ibid.

125. Ibid.

The people who founded Onne came from our House. The people of Lewe troubled them. They finally expelled them from the town, after confiscating their land and possessions. Being desperate, they ran away into the wide world. That place they ran to was what became Leme. The place was broad and good for them. They remained there and did not return back to Gokana. Their ancestor was Digi ... The trouble which caused their expulsion was about land. They seized the land from them. Having left the town they never came back. After a long time a certain man was always on his journeys to that part. His name was Deera of Nweól. On a certain occasion of Zua feast he observed that they did like Gokana people. When they cut the palm fruit, they did like Gokana people. So he asked them. They explained to him that their ancestors came from Gokana. That they belonged to the kindred (Gaan) of Giokpee. Hearing that he knew that they came from Gokana. For it was the House of Gbara Digi in Lewe which belonged to the kindred of Giokpee. (126)

In view of all these testimonies, there is no doubt that emigrants from Gokana settled in Leme. But the circumstances of the migrations from Gokana area into Leme were much more than what the oral testimonies say. Linguistic evidence is very strong that Leme people came from Ogoni, more especially from Gokana area.<sup>127</sup>

The emigration of large groups of people from Gokana and Tee into Leme began in the period of the Gooh wars in Gokana area. The Gooh wars were longer and more bitter in Gokana area, much more than in the Tee area. It was in the Gokana area that the Gooh people put up their toughest resistance against the invading Kana peoples. Notice that at that stage of the war in Gokana we hear of no other names again except the name of Gbenesaakoo, who

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126. Nteyoo, Ndi of Lewe (Aged c. 65). He was interviewed at Lewe on 12.2.84. Text 4, pp. 12-13.

127. Wolff, Hans, op.cit.  
Williamson, Kay, op. cit.

distinguished himself in the war to such an extent that he was described as an embodiment of military genius. According to the source, he was called Ereba Mene, Ereba Gian (The Seven Sevens).<sup>128</sup>

The implications of this were several. It meant that the conquest of the Gooch peoples was a difficult task. It also suggests that the Gooch peoples were a very strong people, probably possessing some effective weapons. When their line of resistance was finally broken, their forces were in utter disarray; and they scattered in many directions. Many of those who were able to escape made it to some parts of Leme. In some parts of that land they became the original settlers, who formed part of the autochthonous peoples of the area. Later immigrants from Gokana encountered all these groups, including all the autochthonous peoples of the area, such as the Mbulee, the Etabajo, the Oku, the Mgube, and the Ebregu.<sup>129</sup> The immigrants from Gokana included the Nchia Groups, the Onne Groups and the Eyaa Groups.

At first all these groups and peoples lived together as peaceful neighbours:

The daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Alode had a friend who was also the daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Etabajo. (130)

One reason for the initial peaceful co-existence among the various groups was the fact that there was plenty of good agricultural land for

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128. Bagia, J.P. of Biara (Aged 70). He was interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

129. Laaka, S.O. of Onne (Aged 67). He was interviewed at Onne on 21.2.84. Text 8, pp. 28-36.

130. Ibid. Interviewed on 6.3.84.

all of them. During the period of peaceful exchange, a gradual cultural and material synthesis began to take place. The great incentive for this was the existence of intermarriages between the various groups.<sup>131</sup> A period of linguistic transformation began. This process continued for a long time without incident.

Then a period arrived when, as a result of bloody civil wars in Gokana, large numbers of immigrants began to pour into Leme from Gokana. The influx of large numbers of people exerted severe pressures on the social and economic system in the area. Questions about who occupied the largest and choicest lands began to arise. Envy and jealousy about the largest and choicest lands developed. By the slightest pretexts Leme became a theatre of wars just as Gokana before it had been, with those from Gokana fighting against the autochthonous peoples and siezing their choicest lands from them.<sup>132</sup> According to the oral tradition, one of the most prosperous and strongest among the autochthonous groups was the Etabajo people, who occupied a coastal town and all that territory between Onne and Nchia, on the land side, and opposite what later became the Island of Okrika, on the sea side. Under their leader Sauwe, they defeated all the Nchia groups of Gokana immigrants in several battles. They were only finally defeated and destroyed when the Nchia groups appealed to the Onne and the Eyaa groups and persuaded them to join the war. Although these groups joined the war because they were 'brothers', the main motive of their joining the war was because they too coveted the land of the Etabajo people.

As Onne and Alode (Nchia) lived adjacent to Etabajo territory, their land was divided between Onne and

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132. Osaronu, J.D. op.cit. Text 10, pp. 42-48.  
Ejoo, D.L. of Onne (Aged 67). He was interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

Alode ... The remnants of the Etabajo were scattered all over Eleme. They are in Onne, in Alesa, in Alode, in Agbonchia, in Ebubu, etc.. Wherever you find them, they are always very industrious and prosperous ... But there is no Etabajo town again in Eleme today. The name Ogosu is a common Etabajo family name. Wherever you find this name in Eleme, know that the person is a descendant of the ancient Etabajo. (133)

Notice the Go- stem or root in Ogosu in the above passage. Notice also that it is said that it is a common root (or family) name of the ancient Etabajo people. Earlier on I had explained the significance of the -Go- root in Ogoni history, such as the Go- in Gokana, the Go- in Ogoni, and in the names of such old towns and communities as Goi in Gokana and Goi in Tee. Those Go- roots have been derived from the Gooch peoples who occupied part of Tee and the whole of Gokana territories.<sup>134</sup>

In Onne area, the Gokana immigrants were more virile and more powerful than their neighbours. Under their leader Eyaa (or Yaa) they succeeded in bringing all the scattered groups together to form a larger community under one central authority with Eyaa as the Ruler.<sup>135</sup>

#### LINGUISTIC TRANSFORMATIONS

In the section dealing with the Gokana, it has been explained how the Kana people conquered the Gooch peoples, but by intermarriage with the Gooch women the Kana language was transformed from Khana to Gokana.

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133.Laaka, S.O. of Onne (Aged 67). Interviewed at Onne on 6.3.84.  
Awala, Oji, of Ogale (Aged 55). Interviewed at Ogale on  
4.3.84. Texts: 9, pp. 37-41; 13, pp. 57-9.

134. For more details see Chapter One.

135.Laaka, S.O., op.cit.  
Ejor, D.L., op.cit.

As pointed out above, the prefix Go- in Gokana was derived from the Gooh peoples, partly because they were the part of the Kana nation who occupied the former territory of the Gooh peoples.

These Gooh-Kana speakers now moved into Leme area and conquered the various autochthonous peoples, some of whom were the original Gooh peoples who had escaped to that area during the wars in Gokana. The same process took place in Leme area. The Gokana (Gooh-Kana) language was further transformed to the Leme language. The process described above explains why the three languages are so related, with Kana closer to Gokana, and Gokana closer to Leme.<sup>136</sup>

Hans Wolff suggests that because the Leme language was more divergent from the Kana than the Gokana, therefore it was the more archaic.<sup>137</sup> In my view that explanation has no relevance to historical fact.

#### THE SETTLEMENT OF BOUE

The founding of Boue was the indirect result of a serious quarrel which occurred between two brothers. According to Boue oral tradition the first ancestor of Boue people was a man named Boonen, who was a brother of Gbenesaakoo. They were the descendants of the original Kana people who migrated from overseas to settle in what is now Ogoni territory. At some point during the military operations at Giokoo, it was alleged that Boonen committed adultery with his brother Gbenesaakoo's wife, probably during the latter's long absence at the war front-

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136. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni...." op.cit., pp. 38-51.  
Williamson, Kay, "Linguistic Evidence ....", op.cit.

137. Wolff, Hans, op.cit., p. 38.

fighting against the Gooch peoples. The incident created a big quarrel between the two brothers; and it resulted in their final separation and the introduction of a devastating curse between them and their descendants.<sup>138</sup>

Boonen went away to found the town of GaaGaa. According to the oral tradition, the curse of Gbenesaakoo attacked the settlers of GaaGaa and forced them to abandon the town.<sup>139</sup> Today GaaGaa is a farming area between Boue and Gokana. I passed through the site of GaaGaa on several occasions during my fieldwork. One could still see numerous potsherds and old seashells dug out and scattered about by the farmers during cultivation. Of those who fled from GaaGaa, some moved to settle at Yeghe, and others went to found the town of Bangha on the coast. The oral tradition states that Bangha grew to become a very large market town on the Ogoni coast, which was visited by foreign traders from across the sea.<sup>140</sup> These white traders could be no other than the early Portuguese who made contact with this part of West Africa in the early 1470's and in the 1480's. It was during that time that they discovered and colonized the previously unoccupied islands of Sao Tome and Principe. These Atlantic islands lie slightly north of the Equator and directly opposite the Ogoni coast in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>141</sup> During

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138. Bagia, J.P. of Biara (Aged 70). He was interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.
139. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 48). In J.P. Bagia of Biara. Interview at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, p. 6.
140. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 48). He was interviewed at Noobana, Kono Boue, on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-34.
141. Ryder, A.F.C. Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897 (London, Longman Group, Ltd., 1977), pp. 24-27.  
Ryder, A.F.C., "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade" in Groundwork of Nigerian History, Obaro Ikime (ed.) For the Historical Soc. of Nigeria. Heinemann (Nig.) Ltd., (1980), pp. 236-246.

this initial period, it was naturally necessary and desirable for these early Portuguese island colonists to contact and trade with their mainland neighbours for they needed supplies, especially because the islands which they settled were devoid of people.

Bangha itself was settled probably in the early 1300's, or before 1300. Sometime in the decade following their initial contacts with white traders from across the seas, a deadly epidemic of small-pox struck the populous town of Bangha, devastating it of its inhabitants. The oral tradition records that the epidemic was introduced by the white traders who frequented Bangha markets.<sup>142</sup> The survivors spread out to found the early towns of Boue. Among these early Boue towns were Gbamene, Lee, Kwuribue, Toga, Kako, Barabue, etc..

Some of the survivors who escaped from Bangha were the descendants of Boonen. They founded the town of Toga. Other groups founded the towns of Gbamene, Kako and Barabue. A branch from them that moved eastwards along the coast founded the towns of Lee and Kwuribue.<sup>143</sup> From Toga, Gbenekiri, a descendant of Boonen, moved further east and founded the town of Uwegwere in the Boue kingdom. Since there were very many Gwere trees in the area, they referred to the place as "the Gwere bush", which became the name of the town, namely Uwegwere.<sup>144</sup> Some sources at Uwegwere state that after Gbenekiri had founded the town more immigrants from Kpong area came and settled at Uwegwere.<sup>145</sup>

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142. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 48). Interviewed at Kono Boue on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

143. Ibid.

144. Zaga, Barido et al of Uwegwere (Aged 60). Interviewed at Uwegwere on 22.1.84. Text 44, pp. 152-6.

145. Iwerebe, Urane F. et al. of Uwegwere (Aged 65). They were interviewed at Uwegwere on 22.1.84. Text 44, pp. 152-6.

Other Boue sources, such as sources at Kwaakwa, explain that the settlers of Kako and Barabue, which later became towns of Uwegwere, were autochthonous people, who never remembered having come from any other place but had always lived there from time immemorial.<sup>146</sup>

#### DEMOGRAPHIC EXPANSION

Like the earlier sea-coast town of Bangha, Lee and Kwuribue grew to become very large towns. Kwuribue in particular became very famous and full of many powerful leaders. The oral tradition expressed it in this way:

There were many great men at Kwuribue; men like Gbenegarakara, Gbenetigina, Yoko, Gbenegoo, Gbenekarayoo, etc.. Gbenegoo was from Kwuri. Those who founded towns and owned the ground were Gbenekarayoo, who founded Tego; Gbenegarakara, who founded Eepie; Gbenetigina, who founded Kwaakwa; Gbenetibarakan, who founded Noobana.(147)

Notice the word Kwuri in the above passage. This was the general name of the country or district. The word Kwuribue is a combination of the district name suffixed by the word Bue which means town. A well-known characteristic of Ogoni language (Kana) is the "placing of the thing possessed before the possessor in the genitive".<sup>148</sup> The explanation is that this particular town (Bue) was the owner or ruler of all the district. Kwuribue was therefore the principal town or capital of the district. The statement that "Gbenegoo was from Kwuri" means that Gbenegoo was an autochthon of the district or area.

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146. Gbigbo, A'ean of Kwaakwa (Aged 45). He was interviewed at Kwaakwa on 27.12.83. Text 42, pp. 41-46.

147. Inayo, Prince Teera of Kono Boue (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Noobana on 7.3.84. Text 52, pp. 187-91.

148. Gibbons, E.J., Intelligence Report on Ogoni, (1931), p. 8. Gibbons was quoting the Reverend P. Kingston of the Primitive Methodist Church of Kono, who translated the Bible into the Kana language. See also, Hans Wolff, "Niger Delta Languages I: Classification", op.cit., pp. 32-53.

One of the reasons for the rapid growth and for the political and demographic expansion of Lee and Kwuribue was their access to sources of large supplies of protein resources as supplements to their surplus vegetable foods. Such protein resources were bush meat and sea foods such as fish, crabs, winkles, shrimps, volutes, clams, ceriths, mussels, cockles, vase shells, etc., which they collected from the sea shores.

Olfert Dapper's Description of Africa, published in 1668, contained information gathered from an early period. In that work, Dapper made a brief but useful description of some Ogoni towns. For example, he mentioned Moko (Mogho), a coastal town in the Gokana area where he stated that the people made iron money, and proceeded to describe in clear detail the shape, form and size of the currency. He also mentioned the important town of Kwuribue which he called Kuleba. Although his description failed to make a clear distinction between the Ogoni town and Bonny, he nonetheless was accurate in stating that Kwuribue was the principal town in the area, which is what I have shown above from Ogoni oral tradition.<sup>149</sup>

Another description of these Ogoni towns was by John Barbot, whose Description also contained some information gathered by James Barbot from his voyage to the area in 1699.<sup>150</sup> In his own description, John Barbot reproduced Dapper's earlier description of the Ogoni towns:

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149. Dapper, Olfert, Description of Africa, Vol. III, Tr. John Ogilby, (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.

150. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage to New Calabar River, or Rio Real, in the year 1699", in John Barbot (ed) A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V, (London: Printed by Assignment for Messrs. Churchill, 1732), pp. 455-466.

"The territory of Crike (Okrika) lies some leagues north-north-west of Rio Real, and borders towards the south on that of Moko (Mogho), which lies near the sea, as well as that of Bany, another territory, where a large village called Culebo, and eight or ten other smaller villages in the compass of about four leagues, all of them under the government of a captain as are also the other territories above mentioned.... " (151)

In the above description, the geographical position of Crike (Okrika) in relation to the Ogoni town of Moko (Mogho) is accurate. (See Map, p. 96 ). Similarly the geographical position of Bany (Bonny) and the Ogoni town of Culebo (Kwuribue) is also accurate. But the description failed to show the distinction between Kwuribue territory and Bonny. One explanation can be attributed to the lack of information and the poor communication skill existing at that time.

That aside, it has to be stated that the description of Kwuribue as "a large village" with eight or ten smaller villages under it, is again an accurate description of what Kwuribue was at that time, as I have shown from the oral tradition quoted above. Significantly enough, Bonny oral tradition is completely silent about a major town called Culebo.<sup>152</sup> Another important point to note is the fact that Dapper did not offer any particular description of Bani<sup>153</sup> and Crike, except to mention them in their geographical relation to Moko; and he appears to suggest that Bani was one of the "eight or ten smaller villages" under the so-called Culebo. The implication is that at the time Dapper's

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151. Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V, op.cit., p. 380.

152. Jones, G.I., "The Trading States ... ", op.cit., p. 35.

153. Notice that Dapper uses the appropriate Ogoni (Kana) names for Bonny territory or town. Presumably his informants learned them from Mogho traders. See Dapper, O., op.cit., p. 482.

report was collected, Bonny was still a small village in comparison with Kwuribue, which was built on the resources of the populous town of Bangha that was deserted because of an epidemic of smallpox.

Compare Dapper's with John Barbot's own report based on information gathered in later years, probably including the Voyage of 1699, and, possibly, up to 1706, as suggested by John Barbot himself:<sup>154</sup>

"The town of Great Bandy, consisting of about three hundred houses divided into parcels, stands in a marshy ground made an island by some arms of the river from the main: It is well peopled with blacks who employ themselves in trade and some at fishing like those of New Calabar town..."(155).

From the above description, we observe that by 1699 (and possibly up to 1706) Bonny was still a moderate town of about three hundred houses. But by that time Bonny had already begun to participate in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Obviously, there is still a great deal to be done to clear up the mysteries of this period, especially those that surrounded the early Ogoni towns which existed in this area of the Niger Delta coast, and about their own contacts with the early Portuguese traders.

But first, I have to explain why later Europeans, after Dapper, never saw Culebo (Kwuribue) again.

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154. Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V., op.cit., p. 381.

155. Ibid., p. 381.

Sometime in the 1600's, Kwuribue and Lee were abandoned because of the Baan War, a war that shook the whole area at that time.<sup>156</sup> It was during that crisis that three brothers from Kwuribue founded the town of Kono, which became the capital town of the Boue Kingdom. These three famous brothers were Gbenekwere, Gbenekote and Gbenetibarakan. They were among the great men of Kwuribue.<sup>157</sup> With the able leadership and manpower drawn from Kwuribue and from the subordinate towns, the new town of Kono in Boue area emerged out of the Baan war as the leader of all that part of Southern Ogoni known as Babbe.<sup>158</sup>

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156. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego (Aged 87). He was interviewed at Tego on 5.1.84. Text 50, pp. 179-182.

157. Inayo, Prince Teera of Kono Boue (Age 55). He was interviewed at Nobana on 7.3.84. Text 52, pp. 187-91.

158. Tonwe, M.A.M. (His Highness) of Kono Boue (Aged c. 48). He was interviewed at Nobana on 21.1.84. Text 41, pp. 135-40.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENCE OF THE KINGDOMS

The Kingdom of Nama

The colony of Nama was perhaps founded around the eleventh century A.D. or earlier.

King Gbeneyaaloo was the leader of the founding fathers. Under his leadership the small colony developed and expanded rapidly as towns and communities were founded. King Gbeneyaaloo was assisted by a group of leaders with whom he exercised control over the affairs of the colony. Among his most important supporters were Gbeneakpana the Elder and Gbeneyiranam, who held the post of Priest of the State deity known as Yogurezoghomo.<sup>1</sup>

During the early years of the colony, there was no elaborate definition of the functions of the state officials. However, evidence gleaned from the oral tradition suggests that there were consultations between the King and a group of Elders or chiefs. One instance of such consultations was when they decided to establish a new town at Kugba. Another instance was when as a result of a flood disaster, Gbeneyaaloo consulted with the Elders and they decided to move the capital from Kugba to a site further inland.<sup>2</sup> The result of this decision was the establishment of a new capital at Gure.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Iwagbo, John of Sii (Aged c. 70), in Sonpie Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field Study Visit to the sites of Nama and Kugba on 24 March 1984." Text 15, pp. 66-70.

2. Ibid.

3. Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure. Interviewed during possession at Gure on 12 March 1984. Text 16, pp. 71-4.

At Gure there was a significant evolution in the structure of Government. According to the oral tradition, Gbeneyaaloo appointed some of the leading men to be in charge of certain offices of state with specific functions. For example, he appointed Gbeneatekina to the post of King's Right-Hand Man (Lah-Bue), a post which was the equivalent of the modern Chief Minister. As the Lah-Bue, his functions included the control of land. He appointed Gbenetiginagure to be the Ruler and Protector of all that territory in the area of Sii; and the Gbenemene took special control of Wiizo area. The title Gbenemene in Kana (Ogoni) is the equivalent of the English word King, and it means Great Ruler. Here King Gbeneyaaloo set aside a special territory to be under his own direct rule.

Before these appointments were made, King Gbeneyaaloo first established certain instruments of state power and authority at Gure, which was now the new capital of Nama Kingdom. These were the establishment of a National Deity (Bari-Bue) to which every citizen would pay allegiance, thereby honouring the King; and the establishment of a Land Deity (Bari-Asaan), which would serve as the instrument for the King's control of the land. These state deities had highly placed officials appointed to be in charge of them as their priests.

After establishing these instruments of power and authority, the King had all his officials joining hands together in a solemn ceremony to acknowledge his perpetual rulership. Three topmost men of the state, Gbeneatekina, the Chief Minister (Lah-Bue) as well as Priest of the Land Deity (Bari-Asaan); Gbeneakaka, the War Chief and Priest of the National Deity (Bari-Bue); and Gbenetiginagure, Ruler and Protector of Outside Towns and territories (Gbara-Gboo); these three and the

King joined hands together. The King held his hands firmly on the hilt of his sword, while these three men placed their hands on the King's, and held the King's hands firmly to the hilt of the sword. Together they planted the sharp iron into the ground in solemn acknowledgement of the King's perpetual rulership as lord of the land (Te-Ere-Bue).<sup>4</sup>

This was the earliest recorded statement about the inauguration of a king in Ogoni 'history'; and it took place at the ancient town of Gure, the second capital town of Nama. Over the centuries, the offices mentioned in this first inaugural ceremony by the first king of Ogoni have passed down as hereditary positions in Ogoni constitutional 'history'. For example, the office of Lah-Bue became the second highest office of state after the king. According to oral tradition the Lah-Bue was the first man who joined the original founder during the founding stages of a town, thus contributing to the founding of the town.

As Nama expanded, new towns and communities were founded. These communities developed close ties with one another and regarded Nama as their metropolis from where they derived cultural, political and ritual powers and authority. For example, a source from Kono, which was one of the towns founded during the great expansion from Gure states it thus:

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4. Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure. Interviewed during possession at Gure on 12 March, 1984. Text 16, pp. 71-4.

All traditions of Kono, including all annual feasts, are based on the traditions of Sii (Nama). Anything of traditional importance to be done in Kono must first have the approval of Sii (Nama). (5)

The source further explained that in 1976, Chief Birinee of Kono was installed at the ancient shrine at the site of Kugba, the first capital town of Nama before he returned to rule at Kono.<sup>6</sup>

As the territorial boundary of Nama expanded, local autonomous areas were created within the kingdom. Such local areas retained some political powers in certain matters, but in other matters, such as murder, sorcery, war and the major traditions, they referred decisions to the centre:

Nama in Babbe was the first settlement of Kana (Ogoni) people. It was situated on the coast, very near to the present site of Sii town. When they left Nama (Kugba) they moved to Gure. It was at Gure that they spread out in all directions; some to Kaani-Babbe, some to Luawii, and some to the different parts of Babbe, including Gwaara. Three men among the leaders moved into the area of Babbe called Gwaara and founded the three Gwaara towns, namely, KaGwaara, Luuyo, and Bien. The three towns formed the Gwaara Federation. (7)

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5. Opusunju, Na'uwe Leonard of Kono (Aged 72). He was interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-5.
  6. Ibid.
  7. Tigiri, John P. of Luuyo Gwaara (Aged c. 83). He was interviewed at Luuyo Gwaara on 10.3.84. Text 22, pp. 86-9.

After the death of King Gbeneyaaloo and of his mother Queen Gbenekwaanwaa, there appears to have been a change in the line of succession. The line of succession now went to Gbenekwaanwaa's first granddaughter by name Bariyaayoo, who was married to Luawii during the great expansion from Gure. Bariyaayoo was the first daughter of Zah, who herself was the first daughter of Queen Gbenekwaanwaa, while Gbeneyaaloo was the first son. According to oral tradition, both Zah and Gbeneyaaloo were children of about eight to ten years old at the time their mother fled with them from their country of origin at an unspecified date because of war. The evidence recalls that the mother and the children were of a royal family in their country of origin and that they were accompanied in their flight by a large number of important dignitaries, mostly warriors, mediums and medicine men.<sup>9</sup> No male partner is mentioned in connection with this royal lady Gbenekwaanwaa, and the father of her two children was not named. The account states that the flight involved years of long treks through stretches of territories where there was no water or food until they eventually came to where there was water. By the time they finally arrived at Nama, Gbeneyaaloo had become a man and the leader of the group.<sup>10</sup>

Assuming that it took about ten years from the beginning of the flight to the time they arrived at Nama, Gbeneyaaloo would then have been a young man of about twenty years old, and his sister Zah

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9. Iwagbo, John of Sii, op.cit. Text 18, pp. 78-81

10. See also Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure, op.cit. Text 16, pp. 71-74.

would probably have been a young woman of about eighteen. Since they were royal children, Gbeneyaaloo's promotion to higher ranks and eventually to the kingly position would not have been delayed, especially because their mother, Queen Gbenekwaanwaa was alive and in control and, like all rulers, her greatest desire was to see that her son and daughter assumed the leadership while she was alive.

Assuming that Gbeneyaaloo lived to a ripe age of about eighty to ninety years, he would still have about seventy years to live on Ogoni soil. Assuming also that their flight took place early in the second half of the eleventh century, since it is obvious that they spent a considerable number of years in their migration before arriving at Nama, we may assume that they arrived at Nama some decades later in the second half of the eleventh century. On the basis of these assumptions we might suggest that Gbeneyaaloo probably lived into the twelfth century by several decades.<sup>11</sup> The first few decades in the twelfth century would seem to be a reasonable estimate in view of the fact that Gbeneyaaloo was responsible for the founding of Gure and saw through a

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11. For the basis of the above chronological assumptions, see Ch. I, where I have argued that the Ogoni settled on the Eastern Niger Delta Coast before their Ijo and Igbo neighbours. The estimated date the Ijos are said to have settled on the Niger Delta coast is "before 1400". But how much earlier than 1400 has not yet been made clear. 1200 is suggested for the beginning of their migration from Ikibiri. See E.J. Alagoa "Ijo Origins and Migrations: II Migrations", Nigeria Magazine, xcii (1967) pp. 47-55. Now this research has shown that when the Portuguese visited the Eastern Niger Delta Coasts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the Dutch in the seventeenth century, it was in Ogoni territory that they found a highly developed culture, with making of indigenous iron currency, large canoes, long-distance traders, offensive weapons, large communities with organized governments, e.g. Kwuribue, etc. For details, see Ch. V.

considerable part of its development and expansion. He probably lived longer than any other man in the immigrant group, except his sister Zah, for he and his sister were the youngest members of the group. Queen Gbenekwaanwaa also lived to a very old age, since she died at Gure. Her grave, as well as those of Gbeneyaaloo and of Zah are at Gure.<sup>12</sup>

According to oral tradition, Gbeneakpana who founded Kono, some time after the founding of Gure Town, was born at Kugba, the first capital of Nama. According to the same source, Gbeneatekina, who participated in the state inaugural ceremony at Gure referred to above, was born at Gure.<sup>13</sup> These facts enable us to determine the chronology of the period. Thus the ceremony referred to above must be seen as not referring to the founding of Gure Town but to the establishment of the Kingdom. Since Gbeneatekina was given not only the post of Chief Minister (Lah-Bue) but also the office of Land Priest (Te-Ere-Eba-Asaan), it means that his father was next to Gbeneyaaloo in the founding of Gure; and his father must have been one of the men who came with Gbeneyaaloo from abroad, and was dead by the time the Kingdom was established by a formal ceremony as described above.

#### The Matrilineal Succession

After the death of Gbeneyaaloo, the oral tradition did not mention any male successor at Gure again, instead the succession passed to the female line, which was the line of Zah.

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12. Nwinedam, Michael, *et al*, "Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure: Statements and Explanations". Interview at Gure on 24 March, 1984. Text 17, pp. 75-7.
  13. Iwagbo, John, of Sii, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Field Study Visit to to Nama", 24 March, 1984. Text 15, pp. 66-70.

Since Zah only began to bear children after she arrived in Ogoni she was called "the Mother of Ogoni" (Ka Amae Pya Kana). In some versions she was called "Mother of the World" (Ka Amae Nyowe).<sup>14</sup> Now among her many children the only two whose names were mentioned were also females. These were Bariyaayoo (or Bariaayoo) and Bega, who became Gbenebega.<sup>15</sup>

These two female descendants of the great ancestress Gbenekwaanwaa became dominant in different periods. Bariyaayoo became the dominant figure at Luawii in the period after the reign of Gbeneyaaloo. Nama had already extended its influence beyond Luawii as far as Kpong during the reign of Gbeneyaaloo, but it appears that after that period Luawii became politically dominant in Nama, while Gure retained only the military traditions.

It would seem that in the kinship system of the Ogoni ancestors, the sons played only the military role, while the daughters exercised the real political powers. For this reason, the line of succession passed to the female line. This becomes clear when we observe that the Bariyaayoo dynasty became dominant in Ogoni from this period till the end of the Baan War in the sixteenth century, when Gbenebega, another female descendant of Zah also became dominant in Ogoni. An example from the oral tradition describes the political influence of Bariyaayoo in these words:

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14. Nwinedam, Michael, et al. "Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure: Statements and Explanations", Interview at Gure 24.3.84. Text 17, pp. 75-77.
  15. Teedee, F.B. of Gure (Aged 43), interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. Text 14, pp. 60-5.

Those who went to Luawii, Kaani-Babbe, Boue, Eeken, Gwaara, etc., all joined together to have one centre in Babbe where they gathered every year to take part in certain customs, rituals and deliberations. That place was at Luawii in the House of Bariyaayoo. Representatives of founding ancestors of important Houses (Be) gathered there to discuss plans for further activities. If a person broke a law, he would be taken to Luawii to the House of Bariyaayoo for judgment, if found guilty, he would be executed there. Such offences would be murder, sorcery, or witchcraft. Representatives of all the Great Houses in every town would gather there to pass judgment. If a person was made a Great Ruler or King (Gbenemene), he must go to Bariyaayoo to do homage and receive the approval of the founding ancestors. He would do obeisance to the founding ancestors there, while the spirit medium of Bariyaayoo would pass wine around him and pour libations to the founding ancestors, supporting and approving his rulership. Again, when men had selected a ruler, they would take him to the House of Bariyaayoo at Luawii for the final consecration and approval by the founding ancestral spirits. (16)

The oral tradition at Gure claims that Bariyaayoo was the founder of Luawii, but sources at Luawii mention the names of several founders, all of whom came from the direction of Gure. No mention is made of a female founder at Luawii. <sup>17</sup>

The implication is that Bariyaayoo was married by one of the noble warriors and contemporaries of Zah and Gbeneyaaloo, who became a founder of Luawii during the great expansion from Gure. However, because she was a royal descendant of Queen Gbenekwaanwaa and heiress of Zah, she was given the credit for the founding of Luawii. But the significant thing about the Luawii dynasty of Bariyaayoo was that it enjoyed the support and co-operation of the Gure House. There was a mutual co-operation, yet each dynasty maintained a specific role.

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16. Tigiri, John of Luuyo Gwaara (83). op.cit. Text 22, pp. 86-9.

17. Nwimea, Teewoo of Luawii, Spirit-Medium of Bariyaayoo. (Aged 87). He was interviewed at Luawii on 19.3.84. Text 24, 0. 93.

The Zua feast in Gure and in all these parts of Kana (Ogoni) is like this. The Kaan Zua (Lean feast or Old Year) takes place in July. The Aan Zua (New Year) takes place in August. The celebrations begin after ritual foods have been offered to Gbeneyaaloo. Gbeneyaaloo was the founding ancestor (Zim Te-Ere-Bue) of Gure. After the ritual foods of the new crops harvested that year are offered to all ancestral spirits and gods ... After the gods of Gure had 'eaten', the Elders and the Priests went to Luawii to consult with Bariyaayoo concerning the proclamation of the New Year. Bariyaayoo was the ancestral founder of Luawii Town (Zim Te-Ere-Bue). Bariyaayoo was a human person who existed. She was a niece of Gbeneyaaloo, and the first daughter of Zah.

At Luawii they began the ceremony by collecting the annual tribute from the traders at Duko market, which was held on Deeko days. The next Deeko, they moved to Boue, where they received tribute of pottery, that is Kono Boue pottery; and so forth. (18)

The political influence of Luawii, continued to be dominant until about the first quarter of the seventeenth century, when as a result of the Baan War, the political power of Luawii declined. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Gbenega, another female descendant of Queen Gbenekwaanwaa through the line of Zah, had become dominant at Gwaara, although as a result of the Baan War, her political centre was considerably eroded. Meanwhile, Boue had emerged from the Baan war as the leading political and military power in the Babbe Federation. Before we discuss the part that Boue played in that crisis, it will be appropriate to examine the background that led to the decline of Luawii.

#### The Old Kpong Kingdom

During the era of Gbeneyaaloo, the kingdom of Nama at Gure had extended its influence across the Luubaara River into Kpong. Kpong became a meeting point and a watershed between Kana, Tee and Gokana. Kpong soon developed into a great kingdom.

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18. Teedee, F.B. of Gure (Aged 43). Interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. Text 14, pp. 60-5.

Brief references to the emergence of this Old Kpong Kingdom occur in Nama oral sources, such as this one:

Kugba was the second settlement after Nama. When they had moved from Kugba to Gure, they began to spread to different places; some of them went to Kpong, some to Kono; a man like Gbeneakpana, who founded Kono, came originally from Kugba. (19)

Kpong sources present slightly variant accounts, for example:

The founder of Kpong was Ateeh. Ateeh came from Ba, Tee. He escaped after killing his brother and took refuge in Kpong. At that time there were no settlers at Kpong, and no villages. Ateeh built a hut there. He married a woman named Yiranwaa. Before the marriage Yiranwaa had had her first son by a previous marriage at Luubaara. That son was called Saah. Yiranwaa brought Saah to the new husband's place ... Gbeneyokpong (Gbeneakpong) was a deity which existed in the area before Ateeh came there. It became the Land Deity of Kpong. Zah was another name connected with the founding of Kpong ...

Ateeh was a slave trader in the time of the (Atlantic) Slave Trade. He sold Saah, but Saah escaped and returned home. (20)

Another Kpong source states thus:

He (Ateeh) divided the territory and gave one part to Gbeneakpong, one part to Gurete, one part to Yaakaragute. Then he sent colonists to Luawii and Baene. It was people from Kpong who went to settle at Baene ...

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19. Teedee, F.B. of Gure (43). op.cit.

20. Keekee, D.A. of Kpong (Aged 63). He was interviewed at Kpong on 24.10.81. Text 34, pp. 118-9.

What was called a Ruler, as far as the whole of these parts was concerned, was called Gbeneakpong. He was the Ruler of the whole of this area and the first to be recognized, even in matters of tribute (or taxation). Thus they used to say, 'The Ruler, Gbeneakpong; the Ruler Ateeh; the Ruler, Gurete', each one according to this order. When they offered food and libations to the ancestors during the time of feasts, they followed the same order. (21)

The two Kpong sources quoted above claim that Ateeh was the founder of Kpong. Apparently they are not referring to the later kingdom or dynasty but to the early settlement and the establishment of the early kingdom. One of the sources, however, mentions that Zah was one of the founders of Kpong. This testimony which related to the Zah connection confirms the evidence from Nama sources.

Secondly, the Kpong sources claim that Ateeh came from Ba (or Baan) in Tee and took refuge in Kpong as a fugitive from justice, having committed murder. They assert that while he was there he subsequently became the founder of Kpong. One of the sources further claims that when he first came there, he saw no houses or people. Both sources refer to Gbeneakpong (or Gbeneyokpong). In one source, it is claimed that he was a deity, in the other, it is said that he was a ruler or king.

These claims and assertions must be examined more critically. It is probable that Ateeh migrated as a fugitive from Ba (or Baan) Tee and settled in Kpong, but it is not correct to suggest that when he came to Kpong the place was unoccupied. During the period of expansion by the Ogoni, Kpong was the big centre of expansion north of the

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21. Menewa, Pia'oo of Kpong (Aged 85), interviewed at Kpong on 24.10.81. Text 33, pp. 114-7.

Luubaara river. It was from Kpong that the Ogoni moved west along the north banks of the river to occupy Tee and Gokana.<sup>22</sup> It was from this early settlement of Kpong that the Old Kpong kingdom emerged, as it is indicated in the Gure and Nama oral sources quoted above.

One of the Kpong sources states that when Ateeh came to Kpong, he divided the territory giving one part to Gbeneakpong, one part to Gurete and one part to Yaakaragute. There is an apparent distortion and an anachronism in the above statement, in that events of a later period have been pushed to the earliest beginnings. Nonetheless, the source appears to present an accurate picture by asserting that Gbeneakpong, Gurete and Yaakaragute were human persons and rulers of territories. In contrast, the other Kpong source contains serious distortions since it makes Gbeneakpong a deity and Yaakara (Yaakaragute) a son of Ateeh.

Evidence from the oral tradition would seem to suggest that these names belonged to the rulers of the Old Kpong kingdom whom Ateeh conquered and either eliminated or reduced to subordination. Notice this statement in the above passage, "What was called a Ruler, as far as the whole of these parts was concerned, was called Gbeneakpong", and notice also the fact that in ritual order, Gbeneakpong was first, not Ateeh. Gbeneakpong was probably the name of the previous King, whose ancestors were the founders of Kpong. In that case he was closely related to the sacred office of Land Priest, whose functions he delegated to another person, whose ancestors contributed to the founding of the land.<sup>23</sup> What happened was that Ateeh eliminated the

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22. For my analysis of this process, see Chapter III.

23. See above under "The Nama Kingdom", "The Inauguration of the Kingdom" and my explanation of the office of Land Priest, pp.

previous king but spared and subordinated his Land Priest. It was necessary for him to do so in order not to desecrate the land; for the preservation of the Land Priest accounts for the third name in the ritual order which now comes after Ateeh. The result of this was the preservation of the RITUAL ORDER, which, in a nutshell, was the 'history'. What happened in later periods was that, some versions of the oral tradition, not being able to account for these earlier names, have turned them into deities.<sup>24</sup>

Yaakara (or Yaakaragute) was the founder and ruler of the town of Wiiyaakara on the Luubaara river. The name Yaakara or Yaakaragute refers to the same person. The suffix -gute is a Kana alliteration used for name praise; it has no specific meaning by itself, except for its sound. The story was told that when the man Yaakara accomplished the impossible task of clearing the impenetrable virgin forest of that place, people marvelled at his industry and energy. They sang a praise of him using the sound of his name and of the knife he used:

Yaa - Ka - ra - gu - te

Ba - a - ga - ge - tob

Ba means hand; aga means firm or strong; ge means sword or matchet; tob means sharp. Literally it means a firm or strong hand makes the matchet sharp, which is to say that when an industrious and energetic person performs a task he does it so well that the task appears easy to the onlooker. It is not certain whether this was the famous Yaakaragute who was captured alive by the Boue armies during the Baan

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24. This example represents the opposite of euhemerism, a term used to describe the turning of gods into rulers. But such instances were common in highly mythological societies like Greece and Rome. See David P. Henige, The Chronology of Oral Tradition (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 48.

war.<sup>25</sup>

One Kpong version states that after Ateeh had arrived in Kpong, he married a woman named Yiranwaa together with her first son whom she had by a previous marriage. The version further explained that when Ateeh became a slave trader during the Atlantic Slave Trade, he attempted to sell his stepson, Saah, but the latter escaped to Baene. Then Saah plotted to kill his step-father; for which offence he was not given any inheritance in Ateeh.<sup>26</sup> Other versions, however, suggest that Saah was a son of Ateeh, and that both Saah and Ateeh were alike in temperament, being professional headhunters and warriors.<sup>27</sup>

The evidence presented in the above statements represents only fragments of history. In order to be able to piece together enough evidence to represent a substantial body of facts upon which to build the support for our arguments, it is necessary to bring in more evidence and to ask more appropriate questions to elicit more facts:

When Ateeh went over (the Luubaara River) to the place (Wiiyaakara), he saw Yaakaragute who had already crossed the river and planted his 'flag' there. So Ateeh told him to occupy that area and he named the place Yaakara. He then left that place and rushed to Luawii where he stayed for some time ....

Then he left Luawii and went to clear the site of Baene. After that colonists from Kpong came and occupied the whole of Baene both men and women, as you can see today ... (28)

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25. Baedee, Eli of Eepie (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Eepie, on 23.12.83. Text 43, pp. 147-51.
  26. Keekee, Dominic Anderson of Kpong (Aged 63). He was interviewed at Kpong on 24.10.81. Text 34, pp. 118-9.
  27. Menewa, Pia'oo of Kpong (Aged 85). He was interviewed at Kpong on 24.10.81. Text 33, pp. 114-7.
  28. Ibid.

In the above passage, Ateeh's movements do not represent the movements of one engaged in the task of founding a town, at least, not according to Ogoni standards. The founding of a town by Ogoni standards was a life-long preoccupation; and it was expensive. Secondly, apart from Gbeneyaaloo, which was a special case, it is yet to be discovered in Ogoni oral tradition any one who founded several towns in a life-time. Ateeh's movements in the above oral testimony represent the movements of a leader of armies engaged in a highly successful military operation.

#### Ateeh's Migration from Tee

In Chapter II, it was argued that when the Kana (Ogoni) moved west from Kpong along the north banks of the Luubaara River, they settled at Uweke in Tee. In that area, the Kana people met for the first time a new people known as the Gooh. A series of wars broke out between the Kana and the Gooh peoples; first in Tee, then in the area which later became known as the Gooh-Kana (Gokana) area.<sup>29</sup> The last of these wars was fought in Leme area against the Etabajo.<sup>30</sup>

Now when the wars began in the Tee area, the Kana forces broke the ranks of the Gooh armies, forcing the bulk of them to retreat to their haven in what has come to be known as Gooh Kana (Gokana). A part of them retreated to the periphery of the area in the extreme north-west of Tee, an area which was then an impenetrable forest. A small number of them moved eastwards along the edges of the impenetrable Imo River forests and parallel to the Kana lines of communication between Kpong and Tee and between Kpong and Ko (Opuoko) on the

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29. For my analysis of this subject, see Chapter III

30. Laaka, S.O. of Onne, (Aged 67). He was interviewed at Onne on 21.2.84 and 6.3.84. Text 9, pp. 37-41.  
Awala, Oji of Ogale, (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Ogale on 4.3.84. Text 13, pp. 57-59.

Imo River. This group quietly settled in the area which later became known as Baan in Lueku. Later on immigrants from Tee area joined them. This later group were concentrated in the section which was then called Tee-Baan. This word was later corrupted in the colonial era to Taabangh, and in more recent times to Taabaa. Tee-Baan was used to refer to the Tee community in the area belonging to, or within the neighbourhood of Baan-Lueku, as distinct from the actual Tee territory or people.

Prior to the invasion of Tee area by Kana people, there was a district or community of Gooch peoples living in Tee called Ba. When the aborigines scattered as a result of the wars, it was a group of people from this Ba community who moved east to settle in Lueku as the Baan-Lueku. It was argued (Chapter III) that this people, and a later group of mixed immigrants from Tee area, brought about the linguistic distinction in the Tee-Baan (Teebaa) area of Kana.<sup>31</sup> Part of this Ba Community of Gooch peoples also retreated into the peripheral forests to the north and north-west of Tee and settled there. In course of time it became necessary to distinguish between these two Ba (or Baan) communities, namely between the one in Lueku and the one in Tee. Thus those in Tee area were referred to as Baan-Goi (i.e. the Ba or Baan community of the Gooch remnants in Tee) and those in Kana as Baan-Lueku (i.e. the Ba or Baan community in Lueku). As in Teebaan (Taabaa) area of Kana, there is also a linguistic distinction in the Baan-Goi area of Tee.<sup>32</sup>

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31. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of the Ogoni Languages", Journal of African Languages, Vol. III, 1 (1964), pp. 38-51.

32. Ibid.

The above explains how Ateeh migrated from Ba (or Baan) in Tee to settle in Old Kpong Kingdom sometime in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. This is probably the most likely date, not only because Ateeh participated in the Atlantic Slave Trade but also because the events which followed took place around this period.<sup>33</sup>

#### The Emergence of the New Kpong Kingdom

By the late sixteenth century, a 'universal' crisis had engulfed the whole of Ogoni. That crisis was known as the Baan Wars.<sup>34</sup> It was during that crisis that Ateeh allied with his kinsmen of Baan-Lueku and overthrew the Old Kpong Kingdom, an event which took place in about the first quarter of the seventeenth century. It is this event that is hinted at in the oral tradition when it is said that Ateeh "divided the territory".

#### Background to Ateeh's Rebellion and Ascendancy

Since it was customary for a new comer to be conducted to the King's palace to be interrogated about his personal identity and about the reason for his presence in the realm, it should be expected that when Ateeh arrived in the Kingdom of Kpong, this happened to him, since without this formality he would be in danger of being regarded as a 'foreign' headhunter or cannibal, and could be killed before he had the chance to kill any citizen.<sup>35</sup> Undoubtedly Ateeh was able to

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33. Keekee, D.A. of Kpong, (63), op.cit.; Menewa, Pia'oo, (85), op.cit.

34. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego (Aged 87). Interviewed at Tego, 15.1.84, Text 50, pp. 179-82.

35. cf. Similar actions by the society of headhunters in New Calabar, described by Professor Robin Horton on p. 54 of his "From Fishing Village to City-State; A Social History of New Calabar" in Mary Douglas and Phyllis Kaberry (eds.) Man in Africa, (London, Tavistock Publishers, Ltd., 1969), pp. 37-58.

present his case in such a way that he won the sympathy of all the big Chiefs and Elders present, who then decided that he should be enlisted in the King's service. This brought him into close contact with the King's households; for he was occasionally sent to the King's farms to perform some of the heavy physical duties.

After some years in the King's service and in this close relationship to the King's households, an evil thing happened. Ateeh was accused of having an unfair dealing with one of the King's young wives. This was Yiranwaa, whom the King had married newly from Luubaara.<sup>36</sup> Following this accusation, Ateeh secretly disappeared from Kpong and went to his kinsmen in Baan-Lueku.<sup>37</sup> At this time, all Baan people were engaged in a bitter war against all Ogoni cities and kingdoms south of the Luubaara River. Baan people had persuaded all the Northern States to join in the war against the South; and many Northern States had done so because their grievances against the south were similar.

Apparently Kpong did not join in this war because Kpong was a vassal state of Nama, being directly under the control of Luawii, the seat of Bariyaayoo, who herself was the heir and successor of Zah. Ateeh's case presented Baan people with sufficient cause to regard Kpong as an enemy. A plot was hatched to overthrow the Kpong kingdom. Ateeh was determined to kill the king and all those who had accused him; for if he did not escape, he himself would have been killed.

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36. Keekee, D.A. of Kpong, (Aged 63). He was interviewed at Kpong on 24.10.81. Text 34, pp. 118-91.

37. The evidence that Ateeh left Kpong is not present in Kpong sources but in Lueku sources. As I have argued earlier, Ateeh was not founding Kpong from scratch. See Mbaedee, Francis Mpeba, of Nyoogo Lueku (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at Nyoogo 10.3.1984. Text 27, pp. 97-100.

Having taken the people of Kpong by surprise, the kingdom was overthrown and Ateeh declared himself King of Kpong. The plan was to take both Kpong and Luawii at once, to prevent reinforcements coming from Luawii. At the same time Wiiyaakara on the Luubaara River was held to prevent any crossing by southern forces, or any attempt by Wiiyaakara itself to come to the aid of Kpong. Meanwhile, troops were rushed to Baene on the Imo River to block any enemy troop movements through the Imo River in an attempt to cut them off from the rear. The plan was perfectly executed and Ateeh became the king of Kpong.

Baan forces were later driven out of Luawii by reinforcements from Gure and from other southern towns, but they continued to hold Wiiyaakara and Baene, where they were able to pour in constant reinforcements. Baan people were finally and completely defeated after Boue had entered the war. Because Kpong was cut off from the south, and because what took place there was in the form of a coup, people in the south did not know what actually happened at Kpong until a long time afterwards; and even then only very few knew the true facts about it.

King Ateeh now married the young Queen Yiranwaa of Luubaara, the woman whom he was accused of wronging. By then Yiranwaa had given birth to Saah. However, because Ateeh did not really father Saah, he did not truly love him. When Saah grew up, he learned secretly from his mother about what happened. This knowledge estranged the young man from the King. Having discovered this, King Ateeh now secretly arranged to sell Saah into slavery. However, the plot leaked at Baene and Saah escaped. For the greater part of his life Saah remained at

Baene as an exile and never returned to Kpong except when he unsuccessfully attempted to kill his step-father.<sup>38</sup>

As king, Ateeh spent the rest of his life engaging in the traffic of slaves, getting his subjects from the hinterland and using Baene on the Imo River as his depot, and the Bonny slave merchants as his major customers.<sup>39</sup>

Ateeh is remembered in the oral tradition for some of the developments that took place during his time. According to the account, he was said to have opened many roads; for example to Koo, to Baene, to Yoo, and to other parts of the kingdom. He extended the kingdom to these places and planted colonists in each of them. Above all, he divided the state into administrative units. For example, such administrative units included Bara, Gure, Korogbere, Yaagogbara, Keon, Taebara, and Uwegwere.<sup>40</sup> Notice that one of the administrative units or towns was called Gure. Notice also in one of the passages quoted above that one of the Rulers of the Old Kingdom at the time Ateeh took over was called Gurete, which means Father of the Gure community in Kpong.<sup>41</sup> The Gure community or town in Kpong was probably the location where the original founders from Gure settled.

#### THE KINGDOM OF BOUE

The term Boue does not refer to any particular town in the area. It was used generally with reference to the group of towns and communities, as well as to the inhabitants of the entire geographical area.

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38. Keekee, D.A. of Kpong, (63), op.cit.

39. Ibid.

40. Menewa, Pia'oo of Kpong (Aged c. 85), Interviewed at Kpong, 24.10.81. Text 33, pp. 114-117.

41. Ibid.

The word itself means "on the land", or "in the centre of the farming area" or "in the middle of the fields". Some versions of the oral tradition suggest that the name derived from Boone, the ancestor of Boue people, who was a brother of Gbenesaakoo. That, however, appears to be a distortion.<sup>42</sup>

The term began to be applied after the destruction of the metropolis of Bangha, which was on the coast. The groups of people who dispersed from there to settle in the middle of the virgin lands beyond the coast were described as "those on the land or in the centre of the fields" (Bo-òl), as distinct from "those on the sea coast" (Bo-doo).<sup>43</sup> Now the word bo-òl is a Gooh-Kana word meaning, on the land. As those who had settled further on the land continued to move east towards and associated with the pure Kana-speaking communities over the centuries, they dropped the Gooh-Kana ending, òl, and replaced it with its pure Kana equivalent ue, both of which mean a field, a bush or a piece of farmland; but they retained the Gooh-Kana prepositional root bo, which means on. Hence Boue. The implication of the above analysis is that the population of Bangha was made up of a mixed group of people with Gooh and Kana origins, and that their language was essentially Gooh based. This is a further proof of my argument (Chapter V) that the "very large village" mentioned by Pereira was Bangha, and that the word misspelt "bozy" in the Esmeraldo was indeed the Gooh-Kana (Gokana) word bòl, meaning sheep or goat.<sup>44a</sup>

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42. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue, (Aged 43). Interviewed at Noobana on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

43. Examples of such Gooh-Kana place-names are the towns of Boodoo, which means on the sea (or on the sea coast); Boomu, on water; Nweòl, "behind the farmlands, or fields".

44a. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo do situ orbis, Tr. Raymond Mauny, (Bissau, 1956), p. 147.

Among the towns founded by the groups who, having escaped from Bangha, settled further inland in the centre of the fields (Boue), were Gbamene, Toga, Kako, Baraboue, Uwegwere, Keon, Gbam, etc. Those who continued to live along the sea coasts founded their towns in the area generally called Kwuri. Such towns were Lee, Kwuribue, Nookwuri, Keneke, IlooLoo, etc.,<sup>44b</sup> In the German edition of Dapper's book, Naukeurige Beschrijng de Afrikaensche, he carried a description of these coastal Ogoni towns, among which he described the town of Kwuribue (Kuleba) as a large village having nine or ten other villages under its authority and extending its commercial empire west of the Calabarie river (the Rio Real) as far as Sangama.<sup>45</sup> Since it is generally believed that a lot of the material or information published in Dapper's book had been gathered from the beginning of the seventeenth century, or even earlier in some cases, the implication is that by the time Dapper's book was first published in 1668, new events had overtaken some of the things he described in the book. The case of Kwuribue (Kuleba) is a clear example.

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44b. Notice that even after a devastating plague like the small-pox, for which the people knew not even a preventive measure, nor its identity at first, the size of population that escaped was still large enough to form more than eleven separate towns, as enumerated above. No other city which existed in that general area could match that size of population except Bangha; and no other city could match the size of population described by Pereira, except Bangha. Moreover, the oral traditions of all the surrounding peoples have been studied and their histories written, none of them mentioned any city of any considerable size which existed in any period in their past. And in any case, the Ogoni would have been the first to know of such a city since they settled there before any other group.

45. Naukeurige Beschrijng de Afrikaensche (Amsterdam, Jacob van Meurs, 1676), p. 135. (i.e. p. 135 of the Section beginning with: Het Koningrijk van Biguba).

HISTORIC KWURIBUE

Besides the records of seventeenth century European travellers' accounts about Kwuribue such as Dapper's, Ogoni oral tradition also has quite a few things to say about the Kwuribue of history:

I heard from the ancients about the Baan war with Boue people. The place called Kwuribue was previously a town. Baan people invaded it. They also invaded Kako. The Zim (ancestor, now spirit) called Gbenebalikina which is now in Kono Boue, came from Kako. Others who also came from Kako were Gbeneyaapue and Aapieri. It was the Baan war that caused them to flee from Kako to settle in Kono Boue. (46)

Another version described Kwuribue in these words:

Our ancestors who founded this town (Kono Boue) came originally from Nweo'l to settle at Kwuribue. God gave to Kono Boue people a craft, the craft of pottery ... There were many great men at Kwuribue. Men like Gbenegarakara, Gbenetigina, Yoko, Gbenegoo, Gbenekarayoo, etc.. Gbenegoo was from (an autochthon of) Kwuri. Those who founded towns and owned the ground were Gbenekarayoo, who founded Eepie; Gbenetigina, who founded Kwaakwa; Gbenetibarakan, who founded Noobana. (47).

It is interesting to notice how comparable the above testimony is with Dapper's description of Kwuribue (Kuleba); for it certainly takes a large town, and one with many great men to be able to control nine or ten other towns and to operate a commercial fleet far beyond its borders.

THE EVACUATION OF KWURIBUE and THE FOUNDING OF KONO BOUE

During the seventeenth century, a great devastating war known as the Baan War broke out in Ogoni. In that war, all the Northern States allied together against the South. The Northern States overran the

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46. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego (Aged 87). Interviewed at Tego, 5.1.84. Text 50, pp. 179-182.

47. Inayo, Teera of Kono Boue (Aged 55). Interviewed at Noobana, on 27.12.83. Text 51, pp. 183-186.

South, almost bring it to its knees. This event forced the evacuation of Kwuribue. The transfer of this principal town from the coastal area to the central area known as Boue, appears to have been made not as a case of simple migration, but with a view to logistic expedience, in order to provide better and more secure defences against the enemy. It is probable that the site of Kwuribue did not provide for such effective defence, as the following testimonies appear to indicate:

While they were there, the place was no longer comfortable to them since they said 'that they were in a mighty sea'. So that brother named Kwerre began to explore the forests. (48)

It was the Baan War which prompted the ancients to dig deep trenches round these towns and round Baraboue. Everyman and woman in Boue went to dig that large trench. Whoever failed to attend the work was fined twenty old bronze manillas (Nama kpugi) and one bottle of wine. The women's task was to carry the earth removed from the trenches to another place. (49)

The sudden evacuation of Kwuribue (Kuleba) in the seventeenth century as a result of the Baan war explains why there were no new descriptions of Kwuribue (Kuleba) by later European travellers after the publication of Dapper's book, except the reproduction of Dapper's

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48. Inayo, Inaatura of Kono Boue (Aged 62). Interviewed at Noobana, on 27.12.83. Text 51, pp. 183-186.
49. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego. (Aged 87). Interviewed at Tego, 5.1.84. Text 50, pp. 179-182.

earlier description, notably by John Barbot.<sup>50</sup> The main reason for that was that at the time Kwuribue (Kuleba) was transferred as a result of the war, a new name was also adopted for the new site, so that there was not only the change of site but also a change of name from Kwuribue to Kono Boue, probably for political reasons. According to the oral tradition, they adopted the name of Kono which means the volute, because they likened themselves in the Boue area to the volute, lying deep down on the bed of the sea where people hardly know that it is there.<sup>51</sup>

With Kono Boue now endowed with the wealth and the able leadership of Kwuribue, a turning point arrived in the Baan war. Kono Boue assumed the leadership of the Boue armies and brought the war to the Northern States. They inflicted a complete and decisive defeat upon the northern armies and brought the war to an end. Boue, under the leadership of Kono Boue, emerged out of the war as the leading political and military power in Ogoni from that time onwards.

#### THE CAUSES OF THE BAAN WAR

Oral tradition does not say much about the causes of the Baan war. On the other hand, a great deal has been remembered about how the war

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50. Barbot, John, Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, (Paris, Henry Lintot and John Osborn, 1746), p. 380.

51. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 43). He was interviewed at Noobana on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

was fought and, about the names of the great warriors who fought in it. In contrast, however, the Northern States, though they fought the war with great might but lost, do not appear to have any account of this particular war in their oral tradition. According to the oral tradition, the Baan war was caused by reports brought home by some Northern women traders about sexual assault by certain Southern men when they were on their way from the south, where they attended the Nuubien market in the Boue area:

The Baan war was brought about because of Baan market women. Baan women used to attend market in Boue where they used to sleep overnight because of long-distance. It was not possible for them to come to Boue market and return to Baan on the same day. When the Baan women slept in Boue towns in order to attend market on the following day, some men of Boue demanded sex from them ... This thing reached the ears of Baan people. When they heard it, Baan Elders, Chiefs, and all their young men became angry. They stopped their women from coming to Boue market. Having done that, they proceeded to wage war against Boue people. When the war broke out all the Northern States supported Baan people in the war against Boue. That was how the Baan war started. (52)

Another version stated the cause of the war thus:

Those who migrated from Bangha to Boue later became involved in war. There was a market called Du Nuubien (Nuubie Market) which was held at Baraboue. People from many parts of Ogoni used to attend the market. Some Zaakpon men took advantage of the market situation to waylay and rape the Baan women, who were returning from the Nuubien market. When the women arrived in Baan, they reported the matter to their husbands. This was the cause of the Baan war. Baan people waged a full scale war against Zaakpon. They attacked Zaakpon and overran their towns. Zaakpon people fled from their towns and took refuge in Boue. When Baan people saw that Zaakpon people had taken refuge in Boue, they declared war on Boue also. This was what brought Boue into the war. (53)

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52. Inayo, Teera of Kono Boue (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Noobana on 7.3.84. Text 52, pp. 187-91.
53. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 43). He was interviewed at Noobana on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

The incident of the Baan market women might have been a cause of the Baan war, probably the immediate cause, but not the only cause, since there existed laws and taboos regulating sexual relationships and sexual offences throughout Ogoni. For example, it was forbidden for lovers or any persons to have intercourse in the bush. To do so was to pollute the land, and it was an offence against the Land Deity. Such an act was regarded as having serious repercussions for the whole society, since it meant that the ground would withhold its yield, unless purification was made. The penalty was therefore imposed and enforced by the co-operation of the whole society; and it was heavy enough to act as deterrent. Moreover, provisions existed for settling offences of adultery, theft, sexual assault, etc., between citizens of different towns or communities through the joint action and the co-operation of the chiefs and Elders of the towns or communities concerned, who made sure that the culprit was apprehended and punished according to the tradition. On the other hand, it was possible that in the course of individual personal contacts between men and women through trade, certain individuals in the group were bound to fall in love with each other.

There was also the possibility that the alleged attack on the women traders was the action of some thieves. According to the oral tradition the attackers came from Zaakpon, whose towns and communities lay along the trade route to the north. The main motive for such attack was probably to steal the luxury cloths purchased from the coast by these wealthy northern women long-distance traders, who usually travelled in large groups. Such an attack was indeed a serious threat to the supply routes to the northern states and could have provoked swift reactions from the north. However, the fact that the war quickly

spread to all the coastal towns, including Kwuribue, meant that there were other remote causes, or grievances held by the north against the southern towns. The most important of such remote causes or grievances was economic control by the south. We can understand how the method of economic control by the south became the major cause of the Baan War by an analysis of the trade situation in Ogoni in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

People from all these parts of Khana (Ogoni) attended the market Dukono (formerly Du Nuubien) with various items of trade. The Gokana brought yams, fowls; the Tee brought geere (the old cocoyam, colocasia esculenta); the Sogho brought tuu (sweet yams); the Kwaa (corrupted to Okwale) brought pepper; the Baan brought goats, sheep; the Kaani brought fowls; the Yeghe brought fowls; the Boue brought goats, sheep, fish; the Babbe brought goats, sheep, fish; Kono Boue brought pottery, fish, etc.

People from parts of Northern and Southern Khana (Ogoni) such as Kono, etc., came to buy these things which they took back to their own places to sell. To them it was like people go to the big cities like Port Harcourt today to buy goods, which they take back to sell in their own towns. People came from far and wide to buy Kono Boue (formerly Kwuribue) pottery especially water pitchers, which people who lacked drinking water during the dry season needed very much. People who lived in the drier areas used to say, 'I want to go to Du Kono so that I may buy some pitchers for storing cool drinking water for the dry season. For water stored in Kono Boue pitchers remains cool for a long time even in the hot season. Kono Boue was the only place where pottery was made for all Khana (Ogoni) people and beyond. Moreover, at that time the white man had not filled the whole place with different types of pans and pots. People from Gokana, Kono, Bani (Bonny), etc., used to come to buy the pots and pitchers, including the special types used for palm wine tapping. (54)

From the above passage it will be seen that that particular market, Du Kono, was a big centre of distributive trade in Ogoni. Before the Baan war, the market was called Du Nuubien, and it was located in Boue (lit. on the land) area in the town of Baraboue. There was another market on the sea coast in the Kwuri area. This seaside

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54. Baedee, Eli of Eepie (Aged 55). Interviewed at Eepie on 22.12.83. Text 43, pp. 147-51.

market was called Du Kwuri (Kwuri market) and it was controlled by Kwuribue, which was the capital town of the area. These two markets controlled the long-distance trade of Ogoni in the seventeenth century. And the dominant town in this trade was Kwuribue, which replaced its predecessor town of Bangha in that capacity of commercial dominance in the Eastern Niger Delta. Kwuribue controlled the trade not only on sea but also on land.<sup>56</sup>

#### How Kwuribue Controlled the Eastern Delta Trade in the 16th Century

The most important luxury items of trade for the hinterland peoples apart from those goods brought by the Portuguese, was fish or sea foods. Although the coastal Ogoni towns did some fishing to provide for their own local needs, the bulk of the sea foods was brought by the Ijo peoples of Bonny, Okrika, Kalabari, Andoni, etc.. The most important luxury item brought by the Portuguese was cloth.

The people living further inland regarded these sea foods as of extreme importance; and they not only highly desired these trade items but they actually craved or longed for them. For example, the idea of eating roasted fresh fish or lobsters, or crabs on burn-fires in

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56. cf. Dapper, Olfert, op.cit., 1676 ed. ("BIGU" Section), p. 135

the southern towns was to them a dream which could only be realised by making the journey to Boue on one of these market days (i.e. Deeko days), when they could spend the evening before the market day in the house of a friend enjoying these treats. For these things reached the hinterland peoples only in a smoked state, sometimes highly deteriorated. After the market on the following day, these long-distance traders carried home not only large quantities of smoked fish, shrimps, lobsters, etc., but also a great variety of shellfish which could remain alive and fresh for some days if properly packed, such as crabs (aka), the big crab (tuu), razor clams (looli), murex and vase shells (agboro), volutes (kono), ark shell and cockles (akoro), mussels (ise), ceriths and winkles (atuu), jingle shells (akpagara), etc.. These shell sea-foods were highly prized by housewives not only because of their freshness but also for their economy and usefulness in the preparation of the staple foods. Besides these, they also bought other kinds of essential goods such as the assorted types of pottery brought from Kwuribue (and later from Kono Boue). Other exotic goods included imported cloth brought first by the Portuguese and later by the other Europeans.

Apart from obtaining these luxury goods, the hinterland peoples were also able to sell their own agricultural and domestic goods, as demonstrated in the passage quoted above. For the Boue market was also the greatest centre for the sale of agricultural products, and the Kwuri market (Du Kwuri) at the seaside was the greatest centre for the sale of fish and other sea foods brought by the Ijo peoples, who themselves were the greatest buyers of the agricultural foodstuffs and other items from the hinterland. The Portuguese traders in their

own period bought considerable quantities of these agricultural and domestic goods, such as sheep, goats, yams, etc..<sup>57</sup>

The crucial aspect of the trading practice in these markets was that Kwuribue and all the Kwuri towns assumed the monopoly of both the land and the sea trade as middle men to the disadvantage of both the Ijo nations and of the hinterland peoples. For example, all the hinterland peoples were allowed to sell their trade goods at the Nuubien market (Du Nuubien) at Baraboue, which was located some kilometers inland in the Boue area. Their trade goods were bought by the Boue traders, particularly by Kwuribue merchants, who shifted the goods to the Kwuri market (Du Kwuri) on the coast to sell to the Bonny and to the other Ijo buyers, as well as to the Europeans. It is to be noted that this pattern of trade began during the period of the Portuguese. Similarly, neither the Bonny nor the Ijo were allowed to sell or buy directly in the Nuubien market (Du Nuubien). The Kwuribue merchants and all the Kwuri traders bought all the cloth and all other goods brought by the Portuguese, or all the fish brought by Bonny, and other Ijo peoples, to this seaside market. They then shifted these goods to the Nuubien market to sell to the inland traders.

Sometimes when a trader was unable to sell all his trade goods, whether it was fish or agricultural produce, they counted the value of all unsold goods, then such goods were handed over to the middle man, who sold the goods, took his own "commission" and rendered the account to the owner when he or she came again on the next two or three market weeks.<sup>58</sup> It was illegal for the inland towns to visit the seaside

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57. Pereira, Pacheco (Duarte), op.cit., p. 147

58. A (market) week was five days.

Kwuri market (Du Kwuri) to buy things for themselves, unless at Nuubien market. Similarly, the Ijo peoples were not allowed to visit the Nuubien market which was on the land.

At the time of the Okrika war, the Bonny people were not there, they were probably in their own place at that time. But they used to come to Kwuri market (Du Kwuri) though they had not come near to our area. When they came to Du Kwuri, they brought wine and spirits in casks, which they brought from the Europeans. They kept some in our compound where Boue people came to buy. Other things included tobacco, pipes, cloth, fish, etc.. There was no Port Harcourt at that time. I am older than Port Harcourt. The day the site of Port Harcourt was cleared two persons were conscripted from our compound, Iparabari Nyiakpuru and Kpaama Imana. They conscripted people from all Boue and from all Kana (Ogoni) The day they came back, not a penny was found on them. (59)

This system of controlling external trade appears to have been adopted throughout all entry ports of Ogoni in ancient times. A similar account of the same practice was recorded at the fresh-water port-town of Ko (Opuoko) on the Imo river:

There was a system of trade that existed at Ko (Opuoko) riverside market. When the Bani (Bonny people) brought their fish or other merchandise, the Kana (Ogoni) would act as middle men. They would buy these things from the Bani and take them to the main market on the land to sell. Similarly, these Kana (Ogoni) traders would buy food stuffs from the farmers and from the market women and shift it to the riverside market to sell to Bani people. The Bani were not allowed to buy directly from the producers in that market, or to sell directly to the buyers. (60)

By these methods of trade control Kwuribue dominated the external trade of the Eastern Niger Delta coast in the sixteenth century just as Bangha, its predecessor city had done in the fifteenth

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59. Barigwere, Inee of ILooLoo (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at ILooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-73.
60. Yomii, J.B. of Ko Town (Aged 58). Interviewed at Ko Town on 15.3.84. Text 29, pp. 104-7.

century.<sup>61</sup> This monopoly of both the luxury and the essential commodity trade by Kwuribue was bitterly resented by most inland states and communities. THAT was why when the Baan people attacked the Zaakpon communities for the alleged assault on the Northern women traders, the war quickly spread like wildfire into a full scale war against all the South, particularly against Kwuribue and all Kwuri towns. This economic domination by the South through their monopoly of both the internal and the external trade was the chief factor which united all the North against the South in the longest and bitterest war ever reported in Ogoni oral tradition.

#### THE COURSE OF THE WAR

The North overran the South. They sacked Zaakpon villages, whose inhabitants fled and took refuge in Boue towns.<sup>62</sup> They threatened Kwuribue, the principal town, and the chief commercial centre of the coast.<sup>63</sup>

When the leaders of Kwuribue discovered that the site of their town was unsuitable for effective defence, they quickly decided to transfer their capital town from the coast to a site further inland in the Boue area. Three famous brothers were credited for taking the initiative in searching out a new and suitable site and for beginning the process of founding the new town.<sup>64</sup> From the new town now called Kono-Boue, they began to prosecute the war against Baan people. The Nuubien market (Du Nuubien) was also transferred from Baraboue to

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61. See Pereira, op.cit., p. 147.

62. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue, op.cit.

63. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego, (Aged 87). Interviewed at Tego on 5.1.84.

64. Inayo, Teera of Kono Boue, op.cit.

Text 50, pp. 179-82.

Kono Boue and renamed Kono Market (DuKono).<sup>65</sup> Despite all these changes the war continued to drag on for a long time.

Meanwhile, a plot had been hatched in the North to attack Kpong, then a vassal state of the kingdom of Nama, apparently because it refused to join in the war against the South. Led by Ateeh, a former fugitive from Baan-Goi in Tee, who was received into the service of the King, a coup was planned and the Old Kpong Kingdom was overthrown. King Gbeneakpong was killed, including many of his chiefs and Elders. Baan people now moved swiftly across the Luubaara river and overran Luawii, the administrative seat of Nama Kingdom, stopping just short of Gure itself, which was the military centre of the Kingdom.

#### Deep Trenches

In Boue area the people began a gigantic defence project, that of digging deep trenches round their towns and at strategic points throughout the whole area:

Further striking examples of the distinct nature of Ogoni culture in its present home are the custom of protecting villages by deep trenches and the use of a five day week, unlike the four and eight-day weeks of the surrounding Ibibio and Ibo clans. (66)

This method of defence soon spread throughout the Southern States of Ogoni, and later on it became a common feature also in the North, for example in Kpong:

In those days, when there was war, the deep trenches acted to prevent enemy forces from entering the towns. If you were a warrior you would know your movements, how you would do to overcome the enemy who crossed the

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65. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue, op.cit.

66. Gibbons, E.J. "Intelligence Report on the Ogoni", National Archive, Enugu, CSO/26/3, Calabar, Opobo.

deep trenches and entered the towns. You would know that you have cut them off; and that they could not get away. When they would turn back to escape, you would ambush them. They would not know that you had taken up positions in the places you previously selected outside the communities. It was for that purpose that the ancients dug the deep trenches round the towns. (67)

Having completed these fortifications, Boue armies, led by a commander named Gbenekiri, began to take the offensive into the North, Then the combined Boue and Nama forces finally pushed out the Northern armies from Luawii, but the war continued to drag on from that point for many years.

#### FIRST USE OF FIREARMS

While the war dragged on indefinitely without a decisive victory, news was received in Boue through Bonny traders at Kwuri market (Du Kwuri), that the Europeans had introduced a new, powerful weapon (fire-arms) at Bonny. According to the oral tradition, a Kono Boue warrior, as he often went armed to the Kwuri seaside market to sell his palm wine, met his friend and customer from Bonny at the market, who broke the news to him that a new weapon had arrived at Bonny, which could help Boue people to win the war:

During the same war as it continued over many years, Gbenebalikina discovered the gun (Naa) through a Bonny man, as he was in the course of going armed to the Kwuri market (Du Kwuri), to sell his palm wine. He bought the gun. The Bonny man told Gbenebalikina that he had heard that there was a war between Boue people and another people. He persuaded Gbenebalikina that if he bought the gun, Boue people would win the war. For the gun had not reached anywhere in Kana (Ogoni) at that time.

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67. Menewa, Pia'oo of Kpong (Aged c. 85). Interviewed at Kpong on 24 October 1981. Text 33, pp. 114-7.

They tested the gun on a goat and it killed the goat. When Gbenebalikina saw this, he bought the gun. That was how Gbenebalikina became the first person to own the gun in Kana (Ogoni). That was why the people nicknamed the gun "Wife of Gbenebalikina" (Wa Gbenebalikina). When they took the gun to the war at Baan, they killed great numbers of Baan people. Baan people fled from their towns. Boue people entered Baan towns and took lots of booty. The war ended as Baan people did not attempt to fight again.(68)

Other sources state that at the same time information about the new weapon at Bonny was received in Boue, news was also received about a powerful medicine man at Bonny at Ikuba house. Thus while the Boue leaders negotiated to acquire the firearms, they also sent men to Bonny to bring the medicine man. Three men of the highest ranking warriors of Boue were sent to Bonny to bring the medicine man. These were Gbenekiri, Gbeneteebete and Gbenetaaduu.<sup>70</sup> It might be stated that this mission also acquired the firearms from Bonny. According to the testimony, the men actually brought the medicine man named Yobue from Bonny and settled him in Boue:

There was war between the peoples of Zaaakpon, Wiiyaakara, Baan and Kpong. The war spread as far as Sogho and to Boue. People scattered in all directions seeking places of shelter from the crisis ... It was at that time that Gbenetigina came from Nama and settled at Gbam Boue .... While he was there at Keon, the Baan war continued to rage. So they went to Bonny; for they had heard that there was a medicine man at Bonny. They brought Yobue from Bonny. When they had brought him, they settled

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68. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego, op.cit.
  69. Ikuba was the name of a Bonny national deity. See E.J. Alagoa and A. Fombo, A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, (Ibadan, Ibadan Univ. Press, 1972), p. 6.
  70. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue, op.cit. Naasah, Agbebe of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 63). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 4.12.83. Text 64, pp. 156-157.
  71. Other versions of the oral tradition suggest that Yobue was a wizard and sorcerer who was expelled from Bonny for committing murder by his sorcery; that the Elders of Boue took him into asylum because they thought that he would be helpful in the war by his sorcery. See Teera Inayo of Kono Boue (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Noobana on 7.3.84. Text 52, pp. 187-91.

him at Keon. I know the exact spot where he settled because the man who narrated it to me showed the place to me also. When Boue had settled down and the towns had spread out (72) the Elders of Boue came and said that the place where Yobue was kept at Keon was too secluded. So they removed Yobue from Gbam and brought him to Kono Boue where they settled him and gave him a piece of land. They told Yobue that if he could prepare medicines and charms so that they won the war, the piece of land should be his property. For Yobue was a stranger. (73).

Having introduced the new weapons into the war, and having secured the services of a powerful warrior and medicine man, who taught them how to use the firearms in battle, the Boue armies began a new offensive against the North. Baan people were decisively defeated, and the war was brought to an end. The Boue Kingdom emerged out of the war as the strongest military and political power in Ogoni from about the middle of the seventeenth century to the colonial conquest in the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### THE CHANGE TO PATRILINEAL SUCCESSION

One of the most significant changes that took place in Ogoni as a direct result of the Baan war was the change from matrilineal to patrilineal succession. The fall of the Bariyaayoo dynasty of Luawii marked the beginning of this change. Bariyaayoo was the heir and successor of Zah. Her dynasty rose to become the most powerful political institution in the whole of Ogoni during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With the fall of Luawii, her political power base eroded. The new kingdom that emerged out of the war and out of her demise, such as the

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72. This statement would probably refer to the completion of the new town of Kono Boue and its fortifications.

73. Deemua, D.D. of Gbam (Aged 62). Interviewed at Gbam on 5.12.83; Iyiinayoo: lit. it means one who enters the protection of a deity. In ancient Ogoni, people insured their lives and property by entering the protection of deities. Text 45, pp. 157-8.

kingdom of Boue and the kingdom of Kpong, were male dominated and male oriented.

In the latter part of the 17th century when Gbenebega, another great-grand-daughter of Zah, appeared on the scene at Gwaara, her political role became essentially ritualistic and ceremonial. Nevertheless, her fame increased throughout Ogoni, not only because she was the direct descendant of the royal ancestors of the Ogoni, but also because she was the glamorous associate and mistress of the great men of her time. For example, she was said to have, by arrangement of the Elders of Boue, become the mistress of Yobue, the famous medicine man and warrior-guest of the Boue kingdom in the seventeenth century.<sup>75</sup>

Owing to her glamorous character and association with the great, she became the third Ogoni woman to earn the title of Gbene- (meaning Great), which was the highest military title attainable in ancient Ogoni. The first woman was Queen Gbenekwaanwaa, who led the migration with her armies from their former country because of wars to settle at Nama, and who died at Gure about the end of the eleventh century. The second woman was Gbeneyana of Gwaara (Gbeneyana-Gwaara), the founder of KaGwaara.<sup>76</sup>

Gbenebega established herself at KaGwaara on the legacy of Gbeneyana-Gwaara, from where she continued to receive the courtesy and the homage of the great rulers of Ogoni, for ritual and for spiritual blessings.

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75. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue, op.cit.  
Inayo, Teera of Kono Boue, op.cit.

76. Adookon, Emmanuel of Luuyo, (Aged 77). Interviewed at Luuyo on 4.3.84. Text 23, pp. 90-2.



### THE KINGDOM OF GOKANA

The founding of Gokana, like that of Tee, took a certain dramatic turn quite distinct from the normal process by which most settlements and towns were founded. This was because Gokana was founded from the ruins of war, as a result of the conquest of the aboriginal inhabitants called Gooch peoples, who previously inhabited that part of the Ogoni territory.<sup>78</sup> Gbenesaakoo (Saakoo the Great) was the acknowledged leader of the migrant Kana 'armies' which conquered the territory. After the conquest, Gbenesaakoo became the dominant figure in the whole territory, and after building a war shrine at Giokoo, he established himself there as the first King of the Gokana people. The tenacity with which Gbenesaakoo ruled the Gokana kingdom comes out very conspicuously in the oral tradition. One of the methods he used was to ensure that no settler entered the territory without first obtaining clearance from himself. Thus it was that this practice was interpreted in Gokana oral tradition to mean that the founders of all the Gokana towns came from Giokoo, the dwelling place of Gbenesaakoo. An example from a testimony given in the town of Mogho will illustrate the point:

According to what I heard from the ancients, two men on their journey came to Gbenesaakoo .... He gave the land of Mogho to one and Kpoo to the other .... Gbenesaakoo was the king of Gokana, and he lived at Giokoo. All Gokana towns came from Giokoo before they were established in their different locations. (79)

### GIOKOO

Giokoo itself was not a town or settlement. It was the military

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78. See Chapter III for more details.

79. Kpea, Edward Nwebon of Mogho (Aged 89). He was interviewed at Mogho on 7.2.84. Text 6, pp. 20-24.

base from where the various commanders and leaders of groups launched their attacks against their Goooh enemies during the wars of conquest in the area. Gbenesaakoo himself remained permanently at Giokoo, from where he directed and co-ordinated the conquest and the settlement of the territory. There is no site in Gokana where one may be shown as the site of Giokoo. What remains of Giokoo, as far as I could see, when I visited the place, is a small section of the town of Nwebl, where stands the palace of the Gbenemene (Great Ruler or King) of Gokana. Behind the palace is another building, which, I was told, houses the shrine of Gbenesaakoo. While the Gbenemene's palace and the building housing the shrine are both modern buildings, it is probable that the shrine inside the building contains the relics or the remains of the original shrine of Gbenesaakoo. Apart from this, there is nothing else at the place (including the ground itself) to indicate the component parts of a town. Thus it is obviously suggestive when the oral tradition asserts that Giokoo was not a town:

Giokoo was not a town by itself. It was a place where all the great and mighty men of that time used to assemble. It was a place where men who were founders of towns and cities used to meet to discuss common problems and interests. That was why they called it Giokoo, (Ward, or quarter for friends or comrades). They called it Gion (ward, quarter or section) as distinct from Bue (town). Their leader who first settled there was Gbenesaakoo. He was the man to whom such great men used to come for conferences and for discussions. (80)

Perhaps a modern illustration which may help to illuminate the mystery of Giokoo is the U.N. Headquarters in New York, in the sense that the

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80. Nyone, E.B. et al. of Lewe (Aged 67). They were interviewed on 26.2.84. Text 3, pp. 9-11.

latter is only a section of the city of New York

Undoubtedly Major Arthur Glyn Leonard was in serious error when he wrote this description, not only about Giokoo, but also about Ogoni as a whole:

Of the Ogoni all that my agents and myself were able to find out was that one Ogbe-Saku (Gbenesaakoo), who was the first founder and King, lived in a town called Joko (Giokoo), which is situated in about the centre of the southern half of the country. By this ruler the latter was divided into four sections or districts, which were named after the principal towns, viz.: Joko, We-o (Nweo1), Bewa (Boue) and Boam (Boomu); the first of these being the capital of the N'galabia Ogoni, the second of Gogara (Gokana) branch, the third of Bewa, and the fourth of Boam; the people of the last mentioned locality being derived from Joko, while those of the We-o and Bewa are related. Including the chief towns, there are some seventeen communities in all; but of the northern portion I was unfortunately unable to get any further information....  
(81)

Obviously Major Leonard did not know that Moko (Mogho) and Kuleba (Kwuribue) which Olfert Dapper and John Barbot described were Ogoni towns.<sup>82</sup> It is important to point out here that there is no part of Ogoni called "N'galabia" Ogoni. Evidently Major Leonard collected his information at Bonny, which is only a few hours journey by canoe south of the place he was describing. The expression "N'galabia" is a Bonny idiom. The word itself consists of several words compounded together. Rendered in full it would read "Nnaa gala bia", which means, "I'm going and I'm coming back quick".

It is not at all clear why the Ibani should associate this particular expression with a part of Ogoni. If I may venture an explanation on the basis of the context, it is this. A glance at the

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81. The Lower Niger and Its Tribes, (London, MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1906), pp. 24-25.

82. O. Dapper "Naukeurige ..." op.cit., Het Koninkrijk section, p. 135. John Barbot, "Description ...", op.cit., p. 380.

map of the Eastern Niger Delta shows that the nearest mainland neighbour to Bonny is Ogoni territory, particularly the Gokana and Boue areas. As already explained in chapter III, neither Bonny nor any other Ijo towns produced their own food supplies. They depended on their mainland neighbours for food supplies. The Ibani in particular regularly sold their fish in the Ogoni markets, from where they also obtained most of their vegetable food.

Since these Ogoni markets were nearest to them, particularly those in the Gokana areas, it might be assumed that in the course of centuries of trade contacts and relations with Ogoni, the Ibani began to apply their local idiomatic expression "N'galabia" with reference to the part of Ogoni that was nearest to them, showing that it was near enough for them to attend the markets there for a quick trade and return to Bonny on the same day, in contrast to all other markets for which they required at least two days to be able to make the return journey by canoe. It was probably the inability of Major Leonard to grasp the meaning of this Ibani idiom which cost him the opportunity to visit Ogoni, where he could have had the chance to see and listen to the people themselves.

#### Unitary State

Owing to the type of military discipline under which the Gokana kingdom was founded, coupled with the personal dominance of Gbene-saakoo, who held together every town in Gokana under his personal authority, Gokana began from the outset as a unitary state, unlike the other states such as Nama, Kpong and Tee, whose component parts consisted of several autonomous units or 'federations'. An idea of

the unitary nature and the military discipline of the Gokana State may be gathered from the following testimonies:

Gbenesaakoo was the son of Gbenegboro Saah Feeh. Because Gbenesaakoo was a man of great power and popularity, his name became more widely known than that of his father. All people who came from wherever they came, settled first at Giokoo. Whenever a group came, they settled at Giokoo first. When they had found a place for themselves, they came to Gbenesaakoo, who gave them strength (ooge) before they went to settle in that place. As each found a site suitable for settlement, each one reported to Gbenesaakoo, who took the one round the place and vested him with authority to rule that place or town ...

This method continued until all the Gokana towns were founded. That was why they named all the Gokana towns 'Gokana Saakoo'. (83)

In Gbee, the oral tradition described the Giokoo connection in these words:

The founder of Gbee was Gbeneyogbaa. He was the first man who settled at Gbee. He came from Giokoo. When the founders of Gokana first came, they gathered at Giokoo. The reason they called that place Giokoo was because all the founders who gathered there were friends and equals or comrades ...

From Giokoo the people spread to the different places where they founded settlements and towns. (84)

The above testimonies suggest clearly that from the outset Gbenesaakoo was acknowledged by all as the King of Gokana. Such acknowledgement extended also to the neighbouring communities, such as Bonny, as shown in the passage quote above. According to one of the above-quoted sources, all Gokana towns were collectively called "Gokana Saakoo". That expression was a Kana idiom emphasising the fact that

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83. Bagia, J.P. of Baira, (Aged 70). Interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

84. Giah, Dimkpa of Gbee (Aged 75). Interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-19.

all Gokana was acknowledged as the 'land of Gbenesaakoo' or the 'Kingdom of Gbenesaakoo'. His authority and rulership were unquestionably acknowledged.

The magic of the name of Gbenesaakoo has, over the centuries, been the one factor that has continued to hold the Kingdom together as a unitary state, as there has been no ruler in Gokana who has succeeded in establishing a dynasty without claiming the accreditation of Gbenesaakoo, who was indisputably regarded as the national hero of Gokana people. Yet the name Gbenesaakoo was neither an eponym nor a patronym, nor a spurinum, since his genealogy and paternal relations are known.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the people of Gokana did not practise the system of positional succession, such as is common in the Yoruba kingdoms. For example, the King of Ijebuland was called Awujale, which was a positional title, quite distinct from the personal name of the incumbent of the office.<sup>86</sup> In such a case, the positional title remained perpetual, whereas some of the individual personal names of the various holders of the office might be forgotten.<sup>87</sup> This was not the case with the Gokana Kingdom, where the incumbent of the office of King (Gbenemene) retained his personal name. Yet the name of Gbenesaakoo appears to have remained permanent.

What seems to have taken place in the Gokana system is that every

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85. See Henige, David P., Chronology of Oral Tradition, op.cit. pp. 40-41. See also Appendix Genealogical Tables.

86. Ogunba, Onyin, "Ceremonies" in S.O. Biobaku, ed. Sources of Yoruba History, (London, Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 87-110. Notice on pp. 92-95, the practice of positional succession in Ijebu Kingdom.

87. Henige, David P., op.cit. pp. 37-38.

ruler who succeeded to the throne managed to identify himself with the name of Gbenesaakoo, without actually adopting this name for himself or as a title. But he nevertheless claimed some kind of relationship with the famous founder and ruler of the Gokana people.

#### Origin of the Name "Gokana"

In Chapter III, some likely explanations were suggested for the origin of the name Gokana. It will therefore not be necessary to repeat those arguments here, except to add one or two points. One is that the name Gokana did not come into use during the life time of Gbenesaakoo, or of any of the original conquerors of the territory. The term 'land of Gbenesaakoo' or 'Kingdom of Gbenesaakoo' appears to have been used at that time.<sup>88</sup> The name Gokana seems to have come into use some generations after the conquest of the territory, during which period the number of children born to the Gooh women by their Kana conquerors had greatly increased. The dramatic increase in the Gooh-Kana population in the area produced a linguistic impact, with the Gooh language becoming predominant.

#### Demographic Superiority

One characteristic feature of the Gokana Kingdom was its comparative demographic superiority. Although Ogoni as a whole was generally known to have a high population density,<sup>89</sup> however, when the separate political or geographical divisions were considered, Gokana stood out

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88. See above. The expression "Gokana Saakoo" was probably a later innovation.

89. Gibbons, E.J., "Intelligence Report on the Ogoni", (1932), p. 2. N.A.E. Calprof. Opobo Div. Ogodist File No. 28032 CS026/3.

as the most densely populated part of Ogoni.<sup>90</sup> Two explanations might be suggested for the demographic superiority of the Gokana kingdom. One explanation was its location in an area which gave its people easy access to rich sources of protein supplies. The sea provided the people with rich protein supplement to their diet. The specially fertile plain yielded bountiful supplies of agricultural food crops, particularly yams. With this combination the people were adequately fed with rich food resources.

The second explanation, which was what gave the Gokana a special advantage over the rest of Ogoni, was the availability of surplus women from the outset. Whereas in the pure Kana area, for example, the demographic growth depended on the number of Kana women available, who were married as wives by the normal traditional method, in the Gokana area, the conquest of the Gooch peoples meant, at least, two things. First of all, because of the war situation, only very few Kana women were taken into the area. Secondly, after the Gooch armies were defeated, the bulk of the Gooch women became the 'wives' of their Kana conquerors. Many of the Kana 'soldiers' probably took as many wives as they chose. Besides, there was a considerable number of Gooch women who remained floating in the society apparently without husbands. This class of women produced a large number of children who had no legitimate fathers, but who depended solely on their mothers, and learned the language and culture of their mothers.

Similarly, those who were actually taken as wives and concubines

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90. In the 1963 census, the population of Gokana was more than fifty per cent of the total population of Ogoni West, which included Gokana, Leme and Tee.

also produced large numbers of children, who learned the Goooh language from their mothers. Thus the surplus women available in the Goooh-Kana area at the time of the establishment of the kingdom following the conquest of the Goooh peoples was largely responsible for the demographic superiority of Gokana in comparison with the other parts of the Ogoni society. The result was the 'merger' of the Goooh and the Kana languages and cultures in that area, producing what came to be known as the Gokana language.

A few examples from history will substantiate the foregoing argument. The best and well-known example in West Africa was the conquest of the Hausa States of Northern Nigeria by the Fulani between 1804 and 1810.<sup>91</sup> The Fulani conquerors took the surplus Hausa women resulting from the conquest as wives and concubines. Some generations afterwards, the Fulani conquerors lost their language and much of their culture, while the Hausa language, sustained by the Hausa women and their children, remained supreme. According to C.K. Meek, "by free inter-marriage and wholesale concubinage with the races whom they conquered, the settled Fulani were fast becoming absorbed by the Hausas."<sup>92</sup> C.K. Meek, whose work was published in 1925, was actually writing about a century after the Fulani conquest of the Hausa States. He observed that even the very physical characteristics and appearance of the Fulani conquerors were visibly changing. "Their noses are broadening, their lips thickening, their hair is curling ...", etc.. On the other hand, the Fulani had also profoundly modified the Negro

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91. C.K. Meek, The Northern Tribes of Nigeria, Vol. I, (London, Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 99-101.

92. Ibid., p. 28.

characteristics of the Hausas, but, according to C.K. Meek "this modification, in the absence of fresh infusions of Fulani blood, must tend rapidly to disappear."<sup>93</sup> Writing in the same vein M.G. Smith observed:

Though originally of different ethnic stock, the Habe and their Fulani rulers are now normally referred to en masse as Hausa. Hausa was originally the name of the Habe language, which is now the native tongue of the conquerors also. After 1804, the Fulani rulers of Hausa states progressively adopted the sedentary habits of the subject population, together with language and other cultural elements. By interbreeding with the Habe, these Fulani conquerors came to form a group quite distinct from the pastoral Fulani, who have no share in the government of the conquered States. (94)

But this was a large-scale and well-known example. There were also many small examples which, like the Gokana case, were not well-known. One of such examples was the Isoko people of the Bendel State of Nigeria. According to Obaro Ikime, the term Isoko was originally a Bini word which was applied to those people who settled in the outskirts of the Benin Walls. There was no ethnic group nor ancestor called Isoko, and the word Isoko did not occur in the oral tradition of the various groups which constituted the Isoko people.

"Those who peopled the present Isoko country", Professor Ikime surmised, "probably first settled in the outskirts of Benin before they continued their journey. And the word Isoko may have thus been applied to them by those who lived within Benin itself."<sup>95</sup> But a study of Isoko oral traditions has shown that not all the groups which constitute

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93. Meek, C.K. "The Northern Tribes....", op.cit., p. 28

94. Smith, M.G., Government in Zazzan, 1800-1950, (London: Oxford University Press, for the International African Institute, 1960, pp. 4-5.

95. Ikime, Obaro, The Isoko People, (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 21.

the Isoko people migrated from Benin. The question then arises as to why all the groups collectively regarded themselves as Isoko people. Professor Ikime argues that it was because all the groups spoke the same language - a language which has come to be known as Isoko language. But this Isoko language was not spoken by any of the neighbouring peoples. Thus Professor Ikime explains that the Isoko language evolved "largely as a result of the interplay of the language of the predominantly Benin migrants on the language of whoever lived in the area at the time of the various migrations."<sup>96</sup>

The above examples will no doubt deepen our perspective in considering my arguments regarding the origin of the name and language of the Gokana people of Ogoni. But these arguments must be considered as tentative since more facts are yet to be brought out by continuous research on this and other relevant issues. Nevertheless, in the example of the Fulani conquest of the Hausa States, it may also be suggested that the demographic surge of the Hausa population in Northern Nigeria since the nineteenth century had its impetus from that conquest, which meant that the traditional barriers which controlled the kinship systems were broken down and unrestrained procreation took their place, at least, for a considerable period. Perhaps this was what C.K. Meek described as "free intermarriage and wholesale concubinage."<sup>97</sup>

Similarly the high demographic increase in the Gokana area of Ogoni created an optimum population after which there was too much pressure on the available usable land. The natural consequence was

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96. Ikime, Obara, The Isoko People, op.cit., p. 20.

97. Meek, C.K., The Northern Tribes...., op.cit., p. 28.

an early expansion by the Gokana into the Leme area, where there was surplus agricultural lands.

THE KINGDOMS OF TEE, BANGHA, LUEKUN AND LEME

Like that of Gokana, the settlement of Tee was also by conquest. Indeed it was in Tee that the Kana migrants first encountered the resistance of the Gooh peoples. Under the leadership of Gbenekuapie, the Kana migrants overpowered the Gooh peoples in Tee area, forcing a great number of them to migrate to the coast, and settled in the territory which later became known as Gokana. Gbenekuapie, the acknowledged leader of Tee people, consolidated all Tee under his control and became the first King of Tee people. However, in the period after the era of Gbenekuapie, certain units of Tee began to assert their own autonomy; some units even claimed supremacy over Uweke, which was the capital of Tee in the era of Gbenekuapie. One of such units was the City-State of Kaa, which came into prominence around the end of the seventeenth century, probably in the aftermath of the Baan war. Kaa became the most prosperous and powerful city-state in Tee in the eighteenth century.

It is not at all clear whether its leaders engaged in long-distance trade, particularly in the Slave Trade. Collateral evidence appears to suggest that this was the case, as Kaa was strategically located on a major trade route from the Igbo hinterland to the coast. (Map p. 207 ) Kaa was hated by her neighbours and by her subject towns. This hatred might have been caused by jealousy because of her prosperity or because of her oppression, or because of both of these causes.<sup>98</sup> The hatred resulted in a bitter war in which all of Kaa's

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98. R.P. 6401, pp. 37-43, 46. Report of Settlement of Land Dispute, between the communities of Kpuite in Tee and Deken in Gokana, under the Boundaries Settlement Ordinance on 13.10.36 by J.V. Dewhurst, D.O. Ogoni. N.A.E. File No. 28032 CS026/3, Ogodist, Opobo Division, Calabar Province.

neighbours and subordinate towns joined together against her. Kaa was eventually overcome and destroyed. The inhabitants scattered to other places. Some founded new towns.<sup>99</sup> Kaa's agricultural lands and surrounding territory were occupied and shared out by the former subject towns and neighbours. The evidence recorded at the beginning of the colonial administration in Ogoni states thus:

Long ago an old town called Kaa inhabited the whole of this land. The people of that town disappeared and as a result many towns - Kpuite, Deken, Kaani, Uweke, Yeghe and Deeyo shared out this land. The reason the town of Kaa was left by all the people was that Kaa had a war with another town and other towns joined in the war against them so that the people expected to be exterminated and fled away. This was before anyone now alive was born. (100)

Those towns which had joined together to fight against Kaa and had shared out the land which formerly belonged to Kaa became themselves embroiled in a dispute over that land. Some of those towns had sought to take advantage of the presence of the colonial administrators to resurrect the long-standing dispute over the sharing out of that land. Evidently some of the towns which had taken part in the war against Kaa had been cheated in the sharing of that land. As this problem had become perennially recurrent during the periodical farming on that land, some of those towns now sought to involve the colonial administrators, whom they expected to adjudicate the matter by adjusting the boundaries more equitably.

After the fall of Kaa, Kpuite emerged as the leading town in Tee under the leadership of King Yaah. According to the oral tradition

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99. Akekue, M.N. of Kpuite (Aged 55). Interviewed at Kpuite on 21.11.81. Text 35, p. 120.

100. R.P. 6401, p. 39. Testimony by a witness at the Inquiry into the Land Dispute between Kpuite in Tee and Deken in Gokana on 13.10.1936 by J.V. Dewhurst, D.O. Ogoni. N.A.E. File No. 28032 CSO 26/3, Ogodist, Opobo Division, Calabar Province.

King Yaah was a slave trader who had connections with the King of Ko (Opuoko) on the Imo River. The King of Ko himself was a close friend of the King of Bonny, with whom they carried on the trade in slaves. The King of Bonny brought firearms to the King of Ko, who passed on some of them to King Yaah of Tee:

One called Yaah was a ruler in Tee. He was a friend of the ruler of Ko. The Ko people and Bonny people were close friends, like two fingers of the hand together. The Bonny people passed many firearms to Ko people. Yaah obtained some of the firearms from his Ko friend. With these firearms Yaah became very powerful in Tee. People became afraid of him. Thus Yaah became a ruler in Tee, although the Houses of the Chiefs of the towns still existed. (101).

From the above testimony, it is evident that Yaah was not from a royal house in Tee. It suggests that Yaah was able to seize power because of his participation in the Slave trade and, consequently, his possession of firearms. But although Yaah had assumed the rulership, he nevertheless allowed the houses of the former rulers to survive. Apparently, this was because they no longer posed any threat to his rule. It was also probable that they willingly surrendered the rulership to Yaah since they recognized that it was he who possessed the means to defend and protect the kingdom. This is clearly indicated in the following statement:

Because of Yaah, who possessed the firearms, our towns were peaceful. All the other neighbouring communities relied on us for protection. They came to Yaah and pledged their loyalty. (102).

It is to be noticed that the eighteenth century represented the peak period in the transatlantic slave trade. The introduction of

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101. Ngito, L.N. of Kpuite (Aged c. 99). Interviewed at Kpuite on 17.3.84. Text 37, pp. 122-4.

102. Ibid.

firearms in the previous century had presented a strong temptation for ambitious persons who wanted power. In Ogoni quite a number of such men were readily found, such as Ateeh of Kpong, Yaah of Tee, and others. With such powerful weapons in their hands, such men fermented troubles and victimised their opponents. It might not be surprising if it was conjectured that the sudden overthrow of the city-state of Kaa in the middle of a night was the work of some slave kings. And it would be even more surprising, if Yaah, who had acquired these powerful weapons in Tee at the time, were to be ignorant of what had happened to the city-state of Kaa. For as the oral tradition has indicated, the overthrow of Kaa was a well-planned and calculated invasion, probably with some superior arms, such as the firearm.

Kaa was the largest city in Tee. The inhabitants scattered because when the town was invaded in the middle of the night, and the King was murdered, those who escaped from there founded other towns. GbaraKaa (Gbara of Kaa) founded Nwebiara in Gokana. Other villages founded by those who escaped from Kaa, Tee, were Deeyo, Kaani, Biara, etc..... The inhabitants scattered because they feared a repeat of the incident if anyone remained there. (103).

Other sources mention the market town of Kaa at the coast in Babbe as one of the towns founded by those who fled from the ancient Kaa in Tee. (104).

#### BANGHA, LUEKUN AND LEME AND THE TRADE ROUTES

Bangha, Luekun and Leme, like Gokana and Tee were located on the major trade routes from the Igbo interior to the coast. (Map p.14

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103. Akekue, M.N. of Kpuite (Aged 58). op.cit. Text 35, p. 120.

104. Dunwa, Edward of Buon (Aged 58). Interviewed on 15.3.84.  
Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 48). Interviewed at Noobana on 21.1.84. Texts: Dunwa, 32, p. 113, Tonwe, 41, pp. 135-40.

Consequently their importance depended on the fact that their rulers participated in the Slave trade in collaboration with Bonny. One of the main overland routes into Ogoni territory was dominated by the Aros, with the Nkwerre as their main subjects and collaborators, and it came from the western Igbo land, particularly from Onitsha, Awka, Oguta, Owerri, Mbaise, Nkwerre and Etche into Ogoni. Another route came from central Igbo land and from the fairs of Bende through Umuahia, Aba, Ngwa, Omuma and Akwete into Ogoni and thence to the coast.<sup>105</sup>

Professor S.J.S. Cooley describes how in 1880, Archdeacon D.C. Crowther discovered at Okrika an Igbo slave girl who had been kidnapped from her village Umuoji near Onitsha and sold into slavery. After passing through many hands and many markets along the routes through the Igbo heartland, she was finally sold at a market in Ogoni, probably at the Alesa/Onne market, where she was bought by Chief George of Okrika. According to the story, some years before her captivity, the girl, named Mgebeke, had seen Archdeacon Crowther in the church at Onitsha, where she attended church service and Sunday school. In 1880, after many years in her captivity and enslavement, she saw Archdeacon Crowther again at a church service in Okrika and recognized him. Professor Cooley has reproduced part of her story as recorded by the Archdeacon in a despatch to E. Hutchinson on 1st September 1880:

My name is M'beke (Mgebeke), me papa's name is Okori and my mother's M'leafo (Mgbafo), all of us belong to Omoji (Umuoji). there was a war at Omoji, and 'me papa' sent us little children to Onitsha for safety. I stayed more than two years there with a convent woman called Awansia-de through whom I

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105. G.I. Jones, "The Aro Trading System", Chapter VII, pp. 124-5. (In press).  
cf. David Northrup, Trade without Rulers, pp. 114-121 and p. 181.

attended Sunday School and Church where I used to see you (pointing to me). After the war was over at Omoji, we were taken home. One day four of us went to cut wood in the farm, two men met me in the bush and said that 'me papa' owed him and caught me, the rest of the girls ran away. I was taken to Mkpo-ho (Nkpo), then sold to Umutshuku, then to Bende, then to Oloko, then to Akwete and Igoni (Ogoni), and was lastly bought by Chief George of Okrika ... (106)

The above testimony is a first-hand eye-witness account of the fact that Ogoni was a major commercial highway from the Igbo hinterland to the coast. As already stated above, the Ogoni markets existed before the coming of Europeans. It was interesting to notice that even during the nineteenth century, it was still very much a revelation for Crowther and for most people at the coast when they learned from that slave girl that slaves were moved from as far away places in the Igbo hinterland as Bende on foot through Akwete into Ogoni territory, where they were sold at markets on the Ogoni coasts either to Bonny or to Okrika. But eventually Bonny was their final destination before they were transported overseas. According to Professor Cookey, "the most significant aspect of Mgbeke's story was the information that Bende, the great entrepot of Igboland, could be reached from Okrika through Oloko (Umuahia), Akwete and Ogoni, without a major impediment, and that the route constituted an important commercial highway".<sup>107</sup>

In Ogoni, the routes divided into several branches. The western branch went to markets in the Leme area, particularly the market at Gbomsia, and at Etabajo on the coast opposite Okrika. After the Etabajo war (or the Yam War), that market became known as the Alesa

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106. Quoted by S.J.S. Cookey in Ikenga: Journal of African Studies, Vol. I, 2 (1972), p. 1. (Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka).

107. Ibid., p. 1.

Onne market.<sup>108</sup> The central branch went to the markets in the Gokana and Boue areas. These markets included the Mogho market, referred to by Dapper as that where iron currency was locally made.<sup>109</sup> The Mogho market was known locally as the Gbee market, although Mogho was the principal town of the area and the controller of the market. The market was located at Gbee on the coast while Mogho was about one or two kilometers further on the land.

The most important market which existed on these coasts was the the Bangha market. This market existed in the pre-Dutch period. It was the market frequented by the Portuguese.<sup>110</sup> The oral tradition reports that Bangha was the most populous city that ever existed on these coasts, but that the white men (Portuguese) who traded in the market, introduced the small-pox into the town. The small-pox destroyed the population of the town. The remnants who escaped from the epidemic founded other towns. One of the markets founded after the destruction of Bangha was Kwuribue (Kuleba). The Kwuribue market was locally known as Kwuri market (Du Kwuri). As stated above, there was the Nuubien market further from the coast in the Boue area, where traders from the hinterland sold their goods and purchased their supplies. The market was later called Du Kono.

The eastern branch passed through Kaa and Korokoro in Tee and thence through Baan in Luekun to Ko (Opuoko) market on the Imo river.

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108. Laaka, S.O. of Onne (Aged 67). Interviewed at Ekara on 6.3.84. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

109. Dapper, Olfert, Naukeurige . . . ., op.cit., Biguba section, p. 135. See also, David Northrup, op.cit. p. 159.

110. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 48). Interviewed at Noobana, on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

A riverway route used the Imo River from Eastern Ngwa, Akwete, Ohambele and from Western Ibibio into Ogoni. The chief markets in Ogoni territory on this route were Daen in Luekun, Ko (Opuoko) in Bangha, Baene in Kpong and Yaakara/Kpean in Nama. In addition to these river port markets, there were also important inland markets, such as the Baan market located at Korokoro in Luekun.<sup>111</sup>

These towns which were located on the trade routes became important because they were active in the era of the Atlantic slave trade. Their rulers, such as King Ateeh of Kpong, collaborated with the kings of Bonny to provide captives from the hinterland, while the Bonny traders and the Europeans supplied them with firearms and money. These rulers also provided stopping places for the traders who had travelled from much more distant places in the hinterland.

The Aros, in collaboration with the Leme chiefs established a large settlement at Msia, where they kept large numbers of slaves after travelling through the overland routes from much further away in the Igbo hinterland.<sup>112</sup> The slaves were settled in special villages, from where they were taken to the Alesa/Onne market on the coast whenever news arrived that the slave ships had berthed at Bonny. Slave settlements were also established at places like Kpoopie in the Gokana area by the Bonny traders in collaboration with the Gokana chiefs. The Leme

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111. Mpeba, Mbaedee Francis of Luekun (Aged 98). Interviewed at Nyogo on 10.3.84. Text 27, pp. 97-100.

112. Bagia, J.P. of Biara (Aged 70). Interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.  
See also K.O. Dike, Trade and Politics, pp. 39-41.  
G.I. Jones, "The Aro Trading System", pp. 124-5.

slave settlement was established at Gbomsia and at other suitable places in Leme area. According to the oral tradition, the Igbo slave population became very numerous in Leme land. Therefore they began to settle down to cultivate the land.

When the Leme chiefs observed that the number of the Igbo slaves in their midst was getting out of proportion, they decided to drive them out of their land. To do this the Leme chiefs invited some warriors, medicine men and smiths from Kana, particularly from Sii area in Nama. The men secretly manufactured weapons for the war, while their medicine men and mediums treated such weapons with potent potions, poisons and charms for winning the war.<sup>113</sup> Thus with the aid of their Kana brethren, the Leme successfully defeated the Aros and their slave settlers and expelled them from their land. According to one source, the remnants of the Aros and their slaves who were pushed out of Leme land later settled at a place north of Ogoni on the Imo River, which later became known as Obigbo.<sup>114</sup> Many were, however, absorbed into Leme society. Their descendants represented a sizeable group in Leme society, whose personal names reveal Igbo roots, such as Olungwe, Igwe, Okparaji, etc.. According to the source, the Leme personal name Olungwe, for example, is a combination of the Igbo olu, meaning work, and the Leme mgwe, which was the name for the special "king yam", or the big round yam, which was the men's crop, as opposed to the smaller, hard and relatively undelicious type, designated as the woman's crop. While the women's crop was planted mainly for local consumption, the mgwe was planted competitively by the elite as a cash crop for

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113. S.O.Laaka of Onne (67). op.cit. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

114. Ngofa, Obo, of Aletto (Aged 58). Interviewed at Aletto on 4,3,84. Text 12, pp. 54-6.

export, as well as for winning the coveted yam titles, which were the chief means of social ascendancy in Leme society.<sup>115.</sup>

It is to be noted that the early European travellers who traded on these coasts also made a similar classification of yams. The bigger, smoother, softer and more delicious type like the mgwe they called 'King's yams'; the others like the women's crop, they called 'Slaves' yams'. It is probable that those Europeans discovered that the mgwe was an elite crop, or the yam for the rulers.<sup>116</sup>

The significant thing about this name mgwe was, as the slaves who had become absorbed into the society later recalled, that when they were recruited from their places of origin by the Aros, they had been told that they were coming to work (olu) on yam farms to produce the special yams (mgwe) for export to European countries, in return for which they were to receive 'pay' in the form of European goods. Thus this group which had become assimilated named their children Olungwe to remember the history.<sup>117</sup> One may therefore surmise that most of the slaves had been recruited by the Aros not by violence or force but by peaceful persuasion, and by promises of reward.

F.I. Ikejiuba has discussed a wide variety of methods used by the Aros in securing their slaves. Among such methods were large-scale

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115. See Chapter V. See also J.D. Osaronu of Onne (Aged 47).  
Interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 10, pp. 42-8.

116. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage to New Calabar or Rio Real in the Year 1699", in John Barbot, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. I, (London, Churchill and Churchill, 1732), p. 460.

117. Laaka, S.O., op.cit. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

kidnapping of children and young persons and the establishment of settlements in non-Aro villages from where they made contacts with some local influential persons who undertook to supply the slaves for European goods.<sup>118</sup> However, evidence from Ogoni oral tradition appears to suggest that violence and kidnapping were rated among the lowest in the scheme of their methods of recruitment. What seemed to have given them their greatest and most sustained success would appear to have been shrewdness and cunning persuasion, buttressed by a promise of reward, which they aptly demonstrated by a show of samples of European goods, such as cloth for parents and for the older men. There were also some promises of the actual 'cash', which the parents must have needed to pay for the cost of the traditional rites and for the cost of joining the secret societies.<sup>119</sup> Yet, in most cases, such parents did not realize that beneath all this lay the strong possibility that they were parting with their children or young men forever. It may be argued, that this method of cunning persuasion was one of the reasons for the Aros to spread out their recruitment centres or settlements far and wide,<sup>120</sup> since they must have to tap new areas where their methods had not been too familiar.

In Ogoni, the Aro settlements at Gbomsia and at Kpooie were not recruitment centres. They were depots from where the slaves were finally shipped to Bonny in preparation for their final journey to overseas. After the defeat of the Aros at Gbomsia, a remnant of

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118. Ekejiuba, F.I. "The Aro System of Trading in the nineteenth century", II, Ekenga: Journal of African Studies, Vol. I, 2, (1972), pp. 10-21.

119. cf. Ibid., p. 13.

120. P.A. Talbot reports that the Aro settlements were scattered throughout the former Eastern Nigeria from the Niger to the territory east of the Cross River, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. III, (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1926), p. 821.  
See also G.I. Jones, op.cit. chapter 7, p. 125.

them scattered throughout the Leme, Tee and Gokana areas. The secret camp or village where the Ogoni smiths and warriors were kept to prepare the weapons for the war became known as Alode. According to the source, the very name Alode means "village where people made weapons for war", because after the war, the place developed into a separate community in Leme.<sup>121</sup>

The defeat of the Aros in Ogoni has never been reported by historians or by the colonial administrators, whose accounts tended to portray the Aros as a kind of invincible war machine, who conquered and cowered every people in the territory extending from the Niger to beyond the Cross River. And yet these Aros were said to have depended entirely on the services of mercenary warriors recruited from among the Abam, the Ohafia, the Abiriba and the Edda; and they "conquered all the people who resisted their influence or killed their agents".<sup>122</sup>

Although the late Professor K.O. Dike appeared to have held the same view about the Aros in his book, Trade and Politics, in his latest article published jointly with F.I. Ekejiuba, this view of the Aros seems to have been modified considerably.<sup>123</sup> Professor A.E. Afigbo, however, appears to suggest that the only defeat which the Aros

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121. Laaka, S.O. of Onne, op.cit.

122. P.A. Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. I, p. 184.  
See also, David Northrup, Trade without Rulers, pp. 114-118

123. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885, (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 39-41. cf. K. Onwuka Dike and Felicia I. Ekejiuba "The Aro State: A case Study of State Formation in South Eastern Nigeria", Journal of African Studies, V, (1978), pp. 268-300.

suffered and which ultimately eclipsed their dominance in Eastern Nigeria was that inflicted on them by the British during the so-called Aro expedition of 1901-1902.<sup>124</sup> Even then, according to Professor Afigbo, the Aros continued to have effective control of the hinterland for the next thirty years.<sup>125</sup>

No doubt the Aros were a strong and courageous people who devised one of the shrewdest commercial methods known in history. Nevertheless, the suggestion is debatable whether they and their mercenaries were such a formidable force in pre-colonial Eastern Nigeria as to have every people in that region prostrate before them. Perhaps the defeat of the Aros by the Ogoni was the main reason why the slave raiders did not molest the Ogoni territory during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, as this report clearly indicates:

There is also a complete lack of any tradition with regard to slave raiding, and it would appear that the Ogoni were a favoured race in this respect. Further, although malefactors were sometimes sold as slaves, no form of domestic slavery would appear to have existed at anytime. It is probable that, as stated by Mr. Jeffreys, the geographical position of the Ogoni was responsible for their immunity from the attentions of slave-raiding parties, but it is, I think, also to be remembered that their numbers were such as to render attacks upon them a proposition rather more formidable than to be lightly undertaken except by a considerable army. (126)

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124. Afigbo, A.E., "Eclipse of the Aro Slaving Oligarchy of South-eastern Nigeria", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. VI, 1 (1971), pp. 3-24.

125. Ibid., pp. 21-22

126. Gibbons, E.J. "Intelligence Report on Ogoni", (1932), p. 9.  
N.A.E. Ogodist, Opobo Division, Calprof, File No. 28032, CSO 26/3

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NATURE OF THE ECONOMY

The object of this chapter is to examine the nature of the economy in Ogoni from about the beginning of the seventeenth century. To do so, we shall raise certain questions, some of which we shall endeavour to answer. For example, what was the nature of the Ogoni economy in the seventeenth century? What were the productive skills? What tools were available? How was labour organized? How was output distributed? How was production measured? Was there a medium of exchange? How was wealth measured and stored? Did the system of the economy provide for social mobility? What were the important means of transportation and communication? What markets or market-places existed? Were the Ogoni involved in long-distance trade?

According to David Northrup, the standard of an economy can be judged by the existence of certain basic economic factors. Such factors must include roads or trade routes, markets, and a standard currency.

The existence of markets and routes is one way of judging the sophistication of an economy, another way is its mode of exchange. Simple barter indicates a relatively primitive level of development, with goods being exchanged on an irregular or ad hoc basis. The use of a currency to facilitate exchanges indicates a more developed economy. (1)

Judging by the criteria established in the above statement, and by the testimony of oral tradition, supported by corroborative external evidence, there would be no exaggeration in stating that the Ogoni economy attained a highly sophisticated level of development by the beginning of the seventeenth century or earlier.

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1. Northrup, D., Trade without Rulers, Oxford Univ. Press (1978), p. 157.

TRADE ROUTES AND MARKET PLACES

The coastline between the eastern estuary of the Rio Real<sup>2a</sup> and the mouth of the Imo River is Ogoni territory.<sup>2b</sup> These coastlines were dotted by important Ogoni towns with market places which were open to external trade, and the citizens became involved in long-distance trade. Such ancient Ogoni towns and market places were situated in Etabajo (which was located on the coast opposite Okrika Island and between Onne and Aleesa), at Gio (in Tee), at Goi and Mogho (in Gokana), at Bangha and Kwuribue (in Boue ), and at Sii and Kpean (in Babbe). Ogoni also commanded the important trade routes via the Imo River into the hinterland by such strategic towns as Kono (on the mouth of the Imo), Baene (on the Imo-Luubaara confluence), Ko (Opuoko and Kalaoko), Kabangha, and Daen. Besides these external trade centres there were also other important market towns and trade centres in the Ogoni hinterland, such as Kono Boue, Luawii, Kpong, Korokoro, Luekun (or Baan), Korokoro Tee, Kibangha and Msia.

I have already argued in the foregoing chapters that Ogoni was the earliest settled territory in the Eastern Niger Delta. For example, when the Ibani were still on their migration stages, and were still in the region of Ndoki or beyond, their first contacts with Ogoni were through long-distance trade with the Imo Riverside towns of Ko (Opuoko)<sup>3</sup> and Kabangha. During such trading contacts, the Ibani 'discovered'

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2a. The eastern estuary of the Rio Real is better known as the Bonny River.

2b. The Andoni, of course, live on a stretch of islands known as the Andoni Flats off the Ogoni mainland. They are separated from the mainland by the river known as the Andoni River. (See Map, p. 207.)

3. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A., A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press (1972)), p. 3.

their present settlement. It may be suggested that the Ibani learned about the existence of unoccupied islands to the south from the Ogoni at Ko, who were themselves expert sea men, fishermen and canoe makers.<sup>4</sup>

The Ogoni currency was the first indigenous currency described by the early European traders who visited the Eastern Delta coast. Olfert Dapper, whose Description was first published in 1668, described the Mogho market where the early European travellers saw the Ogoni indigenous currency:

In Moko they have Coined Money, made of Iron in the form of a Roach, the Rundle as big as the Palm of a Hand, with a Handle about an Inch long. (5)

According to Dapper, the iron currency was actually made in Mogho, that is to say, in Ogoni. The statement therefore places the Ogoni economy at that time at a level which was a distinct contrast to that of the rest of the Eastern Delta.

John Barbot's description of the Ogoni currency showed a slight expansion on Dapper's earlier description:

The money of Moko (Mogho) is of iron in the shape and figure of a thornback, flat, and as broad as the palm of the hand, having a tail of the same metal, of the length of the hand. (6)

Referring to Dapper's description of Mogho currency, David Northrup argued that iron money may have been the oldest form of currency in use in south-eastern Nigeria, since when it was first reported by Europeans

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4. Yomii, J.B. of Ko (Aged 58). Interviewed at Ko on 25.10.81 and 15.3.84. Text 28, pp. 101-3.
  5. Dapper, O., Description of Africa, Vol. II, Tr. John Ogilby (London: Tho. Johnson, 1670), p. 482.
  6. Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V., (London: Messrs. Churchill & Churchill, 1732), p. 380.

in the seventeenth century (as quoted above), it was already well established.<sup>7</sup>

However, it would appear that David Northrup ignored the geographical limitations imposed by Dapper in his description when he suggested that the identification of Moko (Mogho) should be sought among the Annang of Ibibio.<sup>8</sup>

From Mogho, Dapper proceeded to describe another important Ogoni town, which lies also on the coast, some distance further east of Mogho and directly north of Bonny Island. This was Kwuribue, which he called Kuleba. Dapper described Kwuribue as a very large village, having eight or ten other villages under its authority.<sup>9</sup> Professor G.I. Jones seems to suggest that Kuleba (Kwuribue) was one of the local names for Bonny.<sup>10</sup> There is no evidence in Bonny oral tradition to support this. Professor E.J. Alagoa and A. Fombo, who are also writers on Bonny oral traditions and history, do not even mention Kuleba in their latest work on Bonny, which all the more proves that the so-called Kuleba was not an Ijo community.<sup>11</sup> In fact according to Professor K.O. Dike, the local name for Bonny is Okoloama.<sup>12</sup> This view has also been supported by Professor E.J. Alagoa.<sup>13</sup>

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7. Northrup, David, Trade Without Rulers, p. 159.

8. Ibid., p. 159, n. 42.

9. Dapper, O., op.cit., p. 482.

10. Jones, G.I., The Trading States of the Oil Rivers, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 36.

11. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A. A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1972.

12. Dike, K.O., Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 24.

13. Alagoa, E.J. "Ijo Origins and Migrations: II Migrations". Nigeria Magazine, Vol. XCII (1967), pp. 47-55.

From Dapper's account, we notice that at the time his informants visited the Eastern Niger Delta coast, there was a claim by the rulers of Kwuribue to control the trade of the region as far as Sangama. We notice also that Dapper tried to play down this claim by stating that it was an empty boast. What is important to us here is the fact that such a claim existed at that time.<sup>14</sup> For the rest of this chapter, I shall endeavour to show why such a claim existed.

#### Agricultural Production

I have shown in the previous chapters that at the time the ancestors of the Ogoni settled at Nama, they were already a people with an advanced culture. They settled also as a people schooled in the hardened experiences of war, long marches without food and water, and long sea voyages.<sup>15</sup> These experiences conditioned the early Ogoni man for a life of hard work, team work and solidarity; yet with opportunities for individual advancement.

The advanced culture of the Ogoni ancestors was indicated by their possession of iron tools and iron weapons.<sup>16</sup> It was also indicated by their possession of a sophisticated religious-cum-military system which provided for the highest titles in ancient Ogoni society.<sup>17</sup> With such a background and experience, the early Ogoni began with a sedentary, collective society, based on agriculture. Their possession of iron tools enabled them to attack their environment. They cleared the forests and turned them into farms and towns.

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14. Dapper, O., op.cit., (German edn.), p. 135.

15. Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure. Interviewed at Gure on 12.3.1984.

16. Ibid.

17. Nwikogbara, M.D., of Sii (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Sii on 8.3.1984. Text 18, pp. 78-81.

According to the oral tradition, the first crops were yams and plantains.<sup>18</sup> Jack Harlan has explained that before rice was introduced from the savanna, a well-developed yam-based agriculture existed in the forest zone of West Africa. And he explains that there is a clear-cut division between rice-eating people and yam-eating people in West Africa:

There are profound ethnic, linguistic and social differences between the two groups as well. The remarkably sharp differentiation can be explained by the assumption of an early yam-based agriculture in the forest zone which was already well-developed before the rice-based agriculture arrived from the Savanna to the north. (19a)

And Frederick Irvine explains that there are at least seven species of Wild Yam in West Africa, two of which are partly cultivated.<sup>19b</sup>

Although these specialists, particularly Frederick Irvine, think that the plantain closely resembles the banana in appearance and requirement,<sup>19c</sup> the Ogoni consider them very distinct crops. According to the oral tradition, both the yam and the plantain, as well as the old cocoyam (geere) [colocasia esculenta], originally grew wild in the forests at the time the Ogoni ancestors arrived in the area.

For some time they collected these food items from the forests. Later on they cultivated them.<sup>20</sup> Yams and plantains are also the main

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18. Deezua, Prince Koanye of Kono Boue (Aged 87). Interviewed at Noobana 27.12.83. Text 53, pp. 215-9.

19a. Harlan, Jack R., "The Origins of Indigenous African Agriculture", in The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. I From Earliest Times to c. 500 B.C., (ed.) J. Desmond Clark, General Editors J.D. Fage Roland Oliver (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 624-657.

19b. Irvine, Frederick Robert, West African Crops, Vol. II, (Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 160.

19c. Ibid., p. 86.

20. Igbu, Deebari of Eepie (Aged 67), Interviewed at Eepie on 22.1.84. Text 60, pp. 215-219. Continued on next page.

ritual food items for traditional ceremonies and for feeding ancestral spirits.<sup>21</sup> Over the centuries, the yam and yam cultivation have developed into a very big institution in Ogoni. Yam shrines and yam priests are to be found in every village and at national centres.<sup>22</sup> Titles of honour and distinction were earned by distinguished men as a result of hard work and success at yam cultivation and yam production. The highest title in ancient Ogoni, Gbene (Great), was inseparably prefixed to the name of its owner. Thus Ogoni titles were not hereditary. For example, such men were Gbeneyaaloo, Gbeneyiranam, Gbeneakpana, Gbenesaagba, Gbenesaakoo, Gbenekuapie, Gbenekiri, Gbenekote, Gbenegarakara, Gbenetibarakan, etc., to mention just a few.<sup>23</sup>

To earn this title, a man was not only the greatest in yam production and the greatest warrior, but he was also the greatest in everything. They were not just occupiers of land, they were called Owners of the Ground (Pya Te-Ere-Eba-Esaa).<sup>24</sup> Any ancient Ogoni leader who bore this title was never again to become the subject of another man. He was ruler of his own town or territory, or part of a territory.<sup>25</sup>

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20. (Contd.) Bagia, J.P. of Biara (Aged 70). Interviewed at Giokoo, Gokana, on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.  
Nwikogbara, M.D. of Sii, op.cit., Text 18, pp. 78-81.
21. Gbarato, Aanee of Lewe (Aged 110). Interviewed at Lewe on 5.2.84. Text 2, pp. 7-8.
22. Deezua, Prince Koanye, op.cit., Text 53, pp. 192-4.
23. Gbigbo, A'ean of Kwaakwa (Aged 45). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 27.12.83. Text 42, pp. 141-6.
24. Kpugita, Nnaa of Keneke (Aged 55). Interviewed at Keneke Boue on 2.1.84. Text 46, pp. 159-63.
25. Ibid.

In Leme, success at yam production was the road to social distinction and political power.<sup>26</sup> The number of large quality yams produced by a farmer at a single harvest was recognized by the granting of social titles of honour, followed by the elevation of the individual farmer to a higher social class of the society.<sup>27</sup> For example, the first title just to be recognized as a good farmer was for a man and his single wife to be able to produce at one harvest Two Hundred Stakes of yams, each stake consisting of twenty-two large quality yams.

This did not include the ones consumed by the family during that year. This first title was known as the Aachu (Two Hundred). There were also titles for Four Hundred Stakes, (Obo), Eight Hundred Stakes (Obere-Obo), etc.. The highest title was the Four Thousand Stakes (Achu-Ete), plus One Hundred Stakes of Superweight Yams (Ewo Achu Nsi).<sup>28</sup> Farmers who had attained from the Obo title up, were known as the Yam Chiefs, and they constituted a special social class. Those who had attained the highest titles also combined political rulership as well.

In addition to yam production and yam cultivation, the Ogoni produced other crops as well, peppers, vegetables, fruits, nuts, coco-yams (colocasi esculenta), oils, palm wine, etc. As there were high rewards in being a successful farmer, every Ogoni farmer aimed at becoming an expert yam cultivator. In fact yam farming in Ogoni developed into a sacred institution.<sup>29</sup> These large numbers of yams

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26. Osaronu, J.D. of Ogoloma, Onne (Aged 47). Interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 10, pp. 42-8.

27. Laaka, S.O. of Onne. (Aged 67). Interviewed at Onne on 21.2. and 6.3.84. Text 8, pp. 28-36.

28. Ejo, D.L. of Agbeta, Onne (Aged 65). Interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

29. Gbarato, Aanee of Lewe (Aged 110). Interviewed at Lewe on 5.2.84. Text 2, pp. 7-8.

were produced for export in order to earn money for storing, for marriages and marriage-customs, and for the performance of the traditional rites such as Yaa-Ge, Yaa-nwi, Yaa-Be, Kpa Bina and for a pilgrimage to Nama.<sup>30</sup> For example in Leme after a man had earned his first title as a recognized farmer, before acquiring a second title, he was expected to marry up to two wives from his own ethnic group; and for any additional higher title, he was required to marry at least two wives from 'abroad', usually from Igbo or Ibibio.<sup>31</sup> Now the question is, who and where were the buyers and consumers of these large quantities of agricultural produce exported from Ogoni each year? Here again we are face to face with the question of the markets. None of the Ijo states grew all the food they ate, including garden vegetables. The following passage supports this view:

To this day, the salt water peoples are not agriculturist to more than a very meagre extent. In Kalabari, the growing of food plants in general and yam in particular has even been traditionally taboo. For a long time the salt water peoples have obtained almost all their food stuff from their inland neighbours, to whom they sell fish in exchange. (32)

The implication is that the Ijo states depended on Ogoni as a source of food supply. This emphasizes the importance of Ogoni in the Eastern Delta not only as a source of food supply but also as an independent state in the region. The significance of this is even greater when we realise that the city of Port Harcourt did not exist in that vicinity at that time.<sup>33</sup> As a centre of trade, Ogoni played a similar role

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30. Kpea, Edward Nwebon of Mogho, (Aged 89). Interviewed at Mogho on 7.2.84. Text 6, pp. 20-24.
31. Laaka, S.O. of Onne, op.cit.
32. Williamson, Kay "Some Food Plant Names in the Niger Delta", International Journal of American Linguistics, Vol. 36, 2 (1970), pp. 156-167.
33. Barigwere, Inee of IlooLoo (Aged 98). Interviewed at IlooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-173.

in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the city of Port Harcourt does in the twentieth century. Although the political influence of Ogoni declined in the era of the Atlantic slave trade, more especially in the era of the British and French, its commercial influence did not decline especially in the food and pot trade and in the inland slave trade.

I have already stated that no study had been done on Ogoni until now. Perhaps this lack of information on Ogoni was the factor responsible for the erroneous representations of the pattern of trade in the Eastern Niger Delta by some writers on this region. For example, David Northrup in his recent book, Trade Without Rulers, described Ogoni markets either as Andoni or Okrika, from where Bonny obtained yams in the eighteenth century:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bonny was accustomed to sending large canoes upstream, evidently to Okrika for yams. Later in the century they reportedly bought yams from Okrika and from Andoni to the east. (34)

David Northrup goes further to add that "these places were not themselves major producers but were the markets to which yams came from further away ... ". The fact is that these places were not even minor producers of yam or of any other agricultural product. Market towns or ports of trade<sup>35</sup> located on the Ogoni coasts were also the sources or supply depots from where these products were obtained, as shown above. Andoni and Okrika, as well as Bonny, obtained their yams from market centres in Ogoni.

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34. Northrup, David, Trade Without Rulers, p. 181. See also pp. 32 and 120 for maps.

35. cf. Polanyi, Karl, et al. (eds) Trade and Markets in Early Empires, Glencoe: The Free Press, Illinois, 1957.

A glance at the map of the Eastern Niger Delta reveals that Ogoni, as the most important source of supply for the area during this period, was in no way far from either Andoni, Bonny or Okrika. The early European traders who traded in this area in the seventeenth century, namely Dapper, as well as John Barbot, seem to have identified the Ogoni markets more accurately than some modern writers. John Barbot wrote:

"The territory of Crike lies some leagues north-west of Rio Real and borders towards the south, on that of Moko (Mogho), which lies near the sea as well as that of Bany (Bonny). (36) (Emphasis mine).

To the early European traders, Mogho, which was one of the Ogoni market towns, was equally as near the sea as either Bonny or Okrika.

#### THE CITY OF BANGHA: ITS EARLY HISTORY

According to the oral tradition, the largest and most populous Ogoni city which was situated on the Atlantic coast was called Bangha. It was situated at a point on the coast about midway between Mogho and Kwuribue, on approximately 4°36'N and 7°18'E.

It was a maritime city, and one of the early Ogoni towns. It was founded in the contemporary period of the founding of Gokana. I suggest this period as the closest possible date for the founding of Bangha because when it was founded, Gbenesaakoo, the founder of Gokana was still alive.

It will be recalled that the founding of Bangha came as a result of the incident of adultery by Boonen, the brother of Gbenesaakoo, with

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36. Barbot, John, A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea ... op.cit., p. 380.

the latter's wife. It will be recalled also that I suggested that the incident occurred during Gbenesaakoo's long absence from home, because he was at the war-front where he was commanding the Kana forces in the war for the conquest of the Gooch peoples. According to the oral tradition, this incident resulted in a permanent separation between Gbenesaakoo and Boonen. Not only that, there was also a direct confrontation between the two of them in the field.<sup>37</sup> When Gbenesaakoo saw that he could not prevail against his brother-turned-enemy, he instituted a powerful curse between the two of them, decreeing death to any one who 'talked' or gossiped about the incident.<sup>38</sup>

The oral tradition records that the town of Gaagaa was founded by Boonen as a direct result of the separation. But the fall of Gaagaa which occurred later was said to have been caused by the action of the curse of Gbenesaakoo, an expression which must be understood to mean an organized punitive action by Gbenesaakoo against a secessionist town. For the whole episode must be seen as a case of secession by a dissident group from the overwhelming dominance of Gbenesaakoo. The bulk of the population which fled from Gaagaa founded the town of Bangha on the coast.

#### THE BANGHA MARKET

Bangha soon developed into a large town having the largest market on the Atlantic coast of the Eastern Niger Delta during this period. Its market was attended by the earliest European travellers who visited

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37. M.A.M. Tonwe III, and J.P. Bagia of Biara, Gokana (Aged 48 and 70 respectively). They were interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-6.

38. Bagia, J.P. (Aged 70). Interviewed at Giokoo, Gokana, on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

the Bights of Benin and Biafra, particularly the Eastern Niger Delta, as well as by long-distance traders from the hinterland who flocked to this market because of the exotic resources of the sea for which Bangha became famous. According to the oral tradition, sometime in the early sixteenth century the white peoples who attended the Bangha market introduced a strange, deadly disease - small-pox - into the town; and it almost destroyed the entire population of the town:

Those who ultimately came to Boue area first migrated to the coast and built the city of Bangha. Bangha became a large, populous city on the coast. People from many different parts of the world attended Bangha market. The white peoples who attended Bangha market brought small-pox (poro-efop, lit. "polluted wind") into Bangha. The small-pox wiped out the population of Bangha. The survivors scattered to different places; some went to Kako, some to Baraboue, etc. The descendants of Boonen who escaped from Bangha founded the town of Toga. It was from Toga that they moved into Uwegwere and founded that town. (39)

As stated in Chapter Three, it was the population escaping from Bangha which founded Kwuribue (Kuleba) and its subordinate towns, which Dapper reported after the visit of European travellers there in the seventeenth century. Evidently Dapper's informants did not actually see the city of Bangha. Therefore certain questions must be asked. If Dapper's informants did not see Bangha, and the oral tradition from Bangha sources in Boue area reports that white men attended Bangha market and introduced the strange, deadly disease, small-pox, which white people could they be?

The earliest report by any European visitor to this area was that by the Portuguese traveller and explorer Duarte Pacheco Pereira, who

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39. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue, (Aged 48). Interviewed at Noobana, on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

wrote his description in his book, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, between 1506 and 1508.<sup>40</sup> Although the description falls short of much evidence, yet there are bits of information and clues which give us some insight into the nature and manner of life that existed in the area before that century.

Pereira sets down as much as possible a description of the Central and Eastern Niger Delta. He describes all the region west of the Rio Real to the Forcados river, where he indicates that there had been no trade, and that there was no prospect of trade there in the foreseeable future. By contrast, in the region from the Rio Real eastwards he describes a very active trade transaction going on between the hinterland and the coastal towns.

Although the description falls short in many details, yet certain phrases and words in the description point to other details which are not apparent. For example, he mentions a "very large village" at the mouth of the river within the creek. The village is said to have about 2,000 households. The village is not named. Some scholars have suggested that it was probably Bonny or Inyankpo (Tombia).<sup>41</sup> But the phrase 'within the creek' makes Bonny unlikely because Bonny is out on the edge of the open sea. And it could not have been Tombia either, because Tombia could not have been a very large village of that size of population by the end of 1400. Similarly, Bonny could not have been a very large village of 2,000 households by that time, because when, after another 200 years James Barbot visited it in 1699, it was still the modest town of about 300 houses.<sup>42.</sup>

It could not have been New Calabar either for the same reasons. For in 1699, when John Grazielhier, companion of James Barbot, visited

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40. Pereira, Duarte Pacheco, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis. Tr. Raymond Mauny, (Bissau, 1956), pp. 143-147.

41. Jones, G.I., The Trading States ... op.cit., p. 34.

42. Barbot, John, A Description of the Coasts ..., op.cit., p. 381.

New Calabar, his description of it would not qualify the town to have been a town of about 2,000 households two hundred years earlier.

His "Description of New Calabar" is contained in James Barbot's

Abstract:

The town is seated in a marshy island, often overflowed by the river, the water running even between the houses whereof there are about three hundred in a disorderly heap .... The land about the town being very barren, the inhabitants fetch all their subsistence from the country lying to the northward of them, called the Hackbous Blacks (Igbo Blacks) ...

In their (the Igbo) territory there are two market days every week for slaves and provisions, which the Calabar Blacks keep very regularly to supply themselves both with provisions and slaves, palm oil, palm wine, etc. There being great plenty of the last. (43)

Besides what I have already stated above, it is also clear from the above description that New Calabar was not even a market town in 1699, for its inhabitants had to keep very regularly twice a week markets outside their own area in order to procure food supplies. This description represents an important historical basis for Professor Horton's description of a typical Kalabari fishing village, which was the basis from which New Calabar developed to become a city-state in the era of the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>44</sup> Thus New Calabar could not have been the 'very large village' of Pereira's description, to which large canoes loaded with yams, goats, sheep, cows, etc. come to sell.

Which town then existed in that general area which could best qualify for Pereira's description at that time? I like to propose

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43. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage to New Calabar River or Rio Real in the Year 1699" in Churchill and Churchill A Collection of Voyages & Travels, Vol. V., (London, Messrs. Churchill for Lintot and Thomas Osborne, 1752), pp. 455-466.
44. Horton, R., "From Fishing Village to City-State" in M. Douglas and P.M. Kaberry (eds), Man in Africa. 1969, pp. 37-58.

the hypothesis that the "very large village" of Pereira was the city of Bangha, which was situated on the Ogoni coast. I have already given above the geographical location of the city.

Pereira stated that the "very large village" was situated "within the creek". The word "within" also means inside; and the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982 ed.) defines a creek as "inlet on sea coast, small harbour; short arm of river". The position of Bangha city on the Ogoni coast, in the neighbourhood of Bonny and Okrika, meets this description.

Secondly, Pereira reported that unlike the Ijos of the Central Delta the people of this area have bigger canoes.

Notice the phrase "this area". Now Ogoni covers the whole length of coastline from the mouth of the Bonny river (i.e. the eastern estuary of the Rio Real) to the greater length of the Imo River. Thirdly, most Ijos of the Eastern Niger Delta did not make their own canoes.<sup>45</sup> One of the big industries of Ogoni from the very earliest times was canoe making. And they made their canoes for 'home' use as well as for 'export'.

Fourthly, the Ogoni were known to use bigger canoes because they needed them for the transportation of heavy, bulky goods such as yams pottery (e.g. large pitchers), Lee, etc..<sup>46</sup> In contrast, before the era of the Atlantic slave trade, the Ijos, whose chief occupation was fishing, did not need and they did not use bigger canoes. The fishing

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45. Baikie, W.B., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage, 1854, (London, John Murray Albemarle Street, 1856), p. 336.

46. For the explanation of Lee, see pp. 276-277.

task at that time required a moderately light and fast canoe to be able to chase and close up on shoals of fish with speed and minimum noise. And the fishing canoe was usually paddled by one or two partners whose attachment to the fisherman was just ephemeral, to use Horton's word.<sup>47</sup> Now if the Ijos of the Eastern Delta were indeed the same people as the Ijos of the Central Delta (Forcados area), carrying on the same occupation of fishing as their kith and kin in the Central Delta (as Pereira's description shows), can there be any special reason to expect the Eastern Ijos to possess bigger canoes in the period before the Atlantic slave trade?

Actually, a close reading of Pereira's description shows that it was not the Eastern Ijos who possessed and used the bigger canoes. It was the inland peoples who used these bigger canoes, which he described as "the largest in the Ethiopias of Guinea" to transport their heavy, bulky goods to the market of the "very large village". "And they came ... bringing yams in large quantities ..."<sup>48</sup>

Sixthly, and this is very important, Pereira reports that in this area sheep are called "bozy". Now this word is an Ogoni word of the Gokana language. Although the word is wrongly spelt, yet any diligent student of the Ogoni language will not fail to recognize it as the Gokana word bol, meaning goat or sheep.<sup>49</sup> The word bozy (or pozy) is an Igbo word meaning cat. It is possible that the writer or his

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47. Horton, Robin, op.cit., p. 44.

48. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, op.cit., p. 147.

49. Wolff, Hans, "Niger Delta Languages: I Classification", Anthropological Linguistics, Vol. I, 8 (1959), pp.

interpreters got mixed up with the Igbo word. Another possible cause of the error may be the long delay which Pereira's original manuscript underwent before it was published. The manuscript was written between 1506 and 1508, but Esmeraldo was not published until 1905, by the Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa, four centuries after it was written. During this long period, the western world had become more familiar with the Igbo language than with the Ogoni. Thus the Igbo word was given preference over the Gokana word. The fact that the word "bozy" is enclosed in inverted commas instead of italics is indicative that the editors had a problem with the word, which they could not resolve. There are many examples of such errors in the writings of the early European travellers. For example, John Grazihier, James Barbot's companion referred to a people whom he called the Hackbous Blacks. Hardly would anyone have realized that the people he really meant were the Igbo Blacks.<sup>50</sup>

Many of these errors were caused not by the European travellers themselves, but by the ignorance as well as the poor communication skill of those from whom the European travellers obtained their information. William Balfour Baikie was probably aware of this when he added this special footnote to what he had written:

Among the places mentioned to me by ... as known to himself, were Ndoki, Uzuzu, Ikpofia, Egane and Abua, these being written according to his pronunciation. (51).

Thus it is my suggestion that the people whom Pereira described were

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50. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage ... " op.cit., p. 461.

51. Baikie, W.B., "Narrative of an Exploring Voyage ...", op.cit., p. 336.

Gokana people of Ogoni, who were travelling in large canoes loaded with yams, goats, sheep, etc., from the coasts of Mogho, Gbee and Goi to Bangha market, which was also on the coast to the east of them. This does not preclude traders from other parts of the hinterland, as well as from the Delta areas. For as the oral tradition states, "people from all parts of the world attended Bangha market". I have already pointed out that there was no Port Harcourt city in the Eastern Delta at that time. Thus as a centre of trade what Bangha was to the Eastern Delta in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is what Port Harcourt city is in the twentieth century.

Seventhly, Pereira noted that the people carried daggers, not like any type he had seen with any people in any other place, but like those "of the White Moors of Berbery".<sup>52</sup> This description fits the Ogoni, who were always with their curved two-edged sword called Kobege. This weapon was always in a sheath of leather and fastened on the waist by a leather belt. Men wore this sword both as a weapon and as an insignia designating those who have performed the tradition of Yaage. It was this traditional weapon that Pereira described as a dagger. I have identified this weapon as Ogoni. An engraving of it is Item "E" in Plate 26 in James Barbot's "Abstract of a Voyage" in John Barbot's A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V, p. 462. This was erroneously said to have been made by the so-called Hackbous Blacks, a common error made by European travellers to the Eastern Niger Delta, who generally assumed that if an object or work of art found there was not Ijo, it must be Igbo. It never occurred to them that there are other peoples in that region who are neither Ijo nor Igbo. I have identified

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52. Pereira, op.cit. p. 147.

some of these erroneously classified objects both in shrines in Ogoni and in the Museum of Mankind, London, Department of Ethnography. Among such objects were pottery, bronze, iron tools, weapons and masks.

It is significant to notice that Pereira did not see a like weapon anywhere else in Guinea except that it was "like those of the White Moors of Berbery". Now this is what my informant said when I questioned him about these Ogoni weapons and tools:

The Ibos do not have kuna and kobege; the Ibibios do not have; and the Ijo do not have. Khana people (Ogoni) brought kuna and kobege from their place of origin when they were coming. Khana people did not buy kuna and kobege from the Ibos (Igbo) or from any other people. They bought the iron which they welded in their blacksmiths' workshops into kuna and kobege, and all other tools which they used for their work. (53a)

The kobege was carried only by gentlemen and young men who have performed the traditional rite of Yaa-Ge (the Yaa of bearing the sword).<sup>53b</sup> They were carried in leather sheaths and were of various sizes and grades, and of artistic decoration, depending on the class of its bearer. The kuna was also curved and two-edged, but shorter and broader. They were never in sheaths. They were the common working tool carried by every adult male and female and used for general cutting and for farmwork. A picture of it is in A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V, p. 251, plate 22, figure "R".

Eighthly, Pereira referred to a very large village of about 2,000 households. No other town in the Eastern Delta by the end of the fifteenth century qualifies better for that description than the city

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53a. Bagia, J.P. (His Royal Highness) of Biara (Aged 70). He was interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

53b. Because of this their demeanour, Pereira described them as warlike. op.cit., p. 147.

of Bangha. Moreover, there is also the fact that Kwuribue, which was founded after the destruction of Bangha by small-pox, also became the largest town in the Eastern Delta Coast, its location being some kilometers east of the site of Bangha.

When Olfert Dapper's informants visited the area in about the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was the city of Kwuribue which they also described as a "very large village having nine or ten other villages under its authority", and he called its name Kuleba. Notice that although Dapper mentions both Bonny and Okrika in this context, he does not describe them in any significant terms. But he mentions them much in terms relevant as geographical points of reference in relation to Mogho, "where a kind of iron currency is made ... "; and that "the province of Moko (Mogho) lies near the sea as well as that of Bani (and) another territory, whose Chief village is Kuleba (Kwuribue), which has nine or ten other villages under its authority, and whose territories extend from the west of the river Calabarie (Rio Real) to Sangama".<sup>54</sup>

It is no coincidence that Dapper should describe both Mogho and Kwuribue in such graphic terms. Dapper's description reveals Kwuribue as the direct successor city to Bangha, and as assuming a similar position and authority in the region which, according to oral tradition Bangha did exercise in the previous century. It is no coincidence that Dapper, like Pereira, should also describe Kwuribue as "a very large village" exercising a commercial and political influence in the region far beyond its borders. Notice how Dapper followed

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54. Dapper, Olfert, cf. Naukeurige Beschrijvinge de Afrikaensche Gewesten, (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1676), p. 135.

Pereira's mapping directions very closely so that he did not miss the Ogoni territory, which was the centre of trade at that time.

For example, Dapper mentions Beli (Bile) as "where they also trade in slaves but the business is not as good (there) as to the east of Calabarie river (the Rio Real)"<sup>55</sup> Now the territory to the east of the Calabarie river (especially the Bonny) all the way to the Imo River is Ogoni. Bearing in mind that New Calabar participated in the Atlantic slave trade before Bonny and Okrika,<sup>56</sup> and New Calebar is not to the east of the Calabarie river; and bearing in mind that Dapper had mentioned both Bonny and Okrika without describing anything of special interest about them; it is quite logical to conclude that those states were still at the level of fishing villages at the time Dapper's informants visited the Eastern Niger Delta.<sup>57</sup> It is therefore clear that the active business which was going on in the area to the east of the Rio Real, reported by Dapper, was carried on with the Ogoni states, as also witnessed by the oral tradition.<sup>58</sup>

In view of all these considerations, I suggest that the "very large village" described by Pereira at the end of the fifteenth century was the city of Bangha.

One other point must, however, be clarified. Pereira mentions that salt was made in the "very large village". There are several explanations for this. The first explanation is based on Ogoni oral traditions, which reports that when the Ibani (Bonny) as well as the

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55. Ibid.

56. Jones, G.I., op.cit., pp. 35-36.

57. cf. Robin Horton, op.cit., pp. 39-45.

58. Tonwe, M.A.M., of Kono Boue (Aged 43). Interviewed at Noobana on 21.2.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

Okrika first arrived in the Eastern Niger Delta, they first of all temporarily settled on the fringes of the Ogoni mainland, where they were near to large populations which could buy their fish and thus enabled them to earn the money with which they in turn bought the food supplies which they needed. While their men were out at sea doing the fishing, some of their women remained at these temporary locations, which were sited near market points.

According to what I heard, the Gokana first settled before the Bani and the Bono (Andoni). When Bani people came, they did not settle in their present town at first. They settled along the coasts of Gokana. They settled near the Gbee waterside and along all Gokana watersides. They and the Gokana people were like one people. Before that time it was only the Gokana who occupied all that land. The Bani people left those places because Gokana people told them to leave their land. When they left those places they went to their towns, where they are now. There was no war about it. The only war fought was the Bono war, but Bani people fought in that war. After that war, Bani people left Gokana land. Because they did not own that land, they left peacefully, since they knew already that the owner of the land had taken his land. (59)

This is just one of so many such accounts. Actually, the Gbee waterside was the Mogho market. And it may be suggested that this was the market which Dapper's informants visited and saw the iron currency which he wrote about.

Here at such locations the women awaited the arrival of fish from their men at sea. Meanwhile, they had purchased the food supplies which their men would take with them on their next trip to the fishing grounds. While the women were there, they also carried on some of their

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59. Giah, Dimkpa of Gbee (Aged 75). He was interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-9.

cottage industries and crafts such as mending damaged fishing nets for their men, making empty fish-rackets for placing the fish on before smoking on the fire, or picking out the winkles from the shells, etc.

In such circumstances it was possible that those of them who knew the technique of salt-making also brought such industries near to the market centres, where they could both sell the salt and also be able to purchase the food supplies which they needed. It should be remembered that a very important economic law demands that, for purposes of optimum returns in profit and production, an industry should be sited with consideration for proximity to the source of raw material and to the market. The Ogoni market towns were ideal for these purposes, being both near to the raw material for salt-making and to the large population centres which provided the market.

Another explanation is that certain Ogoni coastal towns had the knowledge and technology of salt-making. Such towns would include Gbee, Mogho, Goi, Boomu, etc.. It is also possible that the indigenes of the city of Bangha also made salt. This question did not arise during my fieldwork; for that reason, I did not raise any queries about the subject. But I gained the knowledge that the above-named towns and others too possessed the technology for salt-making during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70). During that time the Eastern Nigerian ports were blockaded by the Nigerian Federal Government. By that action, all essential commodities, including salt, were cut off from the Eastern States of Nigeria, but the lack of salt was greatly felt by everybody. It was then that these towns resorted to making salt. People from many places in the hinterland came to these Ogoni towns for their supply of salt. It was then explained that salt-making

by these towns was not a new thing, that it was an ancient industry which existed there before the coming of European salt.

As stated above, it must be understood that more investigation is necessary on this particular subject before we make any conclusive statement on it. Since the Ogoni are known to have been the first people to settle in this part of southern Nigeria, it is possible that their oral tradition will have some thing to say about the salt industry in the area in ancient times.

That notwithstanding, the basic hypothesis is that Bangha was the "very large village" reported by Pereira in the Eastern Niger Delta in the fifteenth century.

#### THE DUPLICATION OF PLACE-NAMES

Further to the foregoing arguments, certain questions must be raised concerning the nature and origin of certain place-names or markets in the Eastern Niger Delta. The most relevant in this context are "New Calabar" and "Old Calabar". What were the historical origins of these identical place-names (or market place-names) in the Eastern Niger Delta? How and when did these place-names appear in history? Which of these two place-names existed first? Why and by whom were they so similarly named? Who were the Calborg or Calbongas? Or were these terms simply the variant forms of Calabarie or Calabar?

According to P.A. Talbot the terms "Calabar" or "Old Calabar" were applied to the Cross River state by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. He argues thus, "The town of Calabar is known to the natives as Efuk

(Efik), and they regard the word Calabar as of European origin." 60

Professor G.I. Jones states that "In the time of the Portuguese empire .. as in the nineteenth century, the principal Biafra trading river was the Rio Real in the Eastern Niger Delta. Portuguese traders did not apparently use the Cross River and no reference is made in their published records to it and to the Efik tribe and their prawn fisheries at its mouth." 61

Thus according to both Talbot and Jones, the terms "Calabar", "New Calabar" and "Old Calabar" came into use after the era of the Portuguese. Talbot is even more precise by suggesting that the latter term was applied to the Cross River by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. But according to Hope Masterton Waddell, "Calabaras and Calabongas" were names given to the tribes in the Bight of Biafra by the Portuguese, the first discoverers of that coast. The former has come to be applied to Efik people especially, though it is not a word of their language, and they did not occupy their present seats when Europeans first visited that country. Originally they dwelt in Ibibio or the Egboshary country, between the Niger and Calabar rivers, bordering on the great Ibo tribes." 62

H.M. Waddell goes back still further by asserting that the terms were names given by the Portuguese to the people of the Bight of Biafra.

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60. Talbot, P.A., The Peoples of Southern Nigeria ..., op.cit., pp. 183-4.

61. Jones, G.I., "The Trading States of the Oil Rivers", op.cit., p. 20.

62. Waddell, Hope Masterton, Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858, (London, Frank Casee & Co. Ltd., 2nd ed. 1970), (1st ed. published 1863), p. 309.

What all these scholars are puzzled about is how and why the term came to be applied to the Efik people of the Cross River. H.M. Waddell goes further to argue that at the time the Portuguese visited the Eastern Niger Delta area, the Efik people of the Cross River had not even settled in their present locations. And he points out that the word itself is not a word of their language. In his own view, Talbot felt that "What in all probability actually happened was that the word was taken from the (New) Calabar river which was named from the town of the Kalabari who lived on it, and seems to have been more important from the trading standpoint than the Cross River. The words Kalabonger, Calabaros, or Calabongas, used by the Portuguese to denote the inhabitants at the back of the Rio del Rey are probably also variants of it. Through some error this name was applied to the Cross River estuary, which was finally called 'Old' Calabar to distinguish it from the Kalabari River, which was then named New Calabar River."<sup>63</sup>

From the above, we notice that Talbot acknowledged the fact that the use of the term "Old Calabar" for the Cross River estuary had been an error. Nonetheless, he stopped short of explaining how and why the error had occurred. However, Professor G.I. Jones has explained that:

"When the Dutch and English traders became interested in slaves from these rivers, they distinguished three principal trading states, each on its own river of the same name. These were Calbaria or New Calabar (Kalabari), Bonny and Old Calabar. The last referred to the Efik state and one can only guess how this name came to be applied to it. The Efik people have always dissociated themselves from the name which they say they received from the

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63. Talbot, P.A., op.cit., pp. 183-4.

Europeans and have acknowledged no connections with the Kalabari.<sup>64</sup>

THE WHY AND HOW THE ERROR OCCURRED

As explained above, the Portuguese traded with the city of Bangha on the coast of Ogoni. On the northeastern part of Ogoni was the kingdom of Bangha with its capital city called Kabangha situated on the Imo River (See map). The market town of Ko (Opuoko) was also one of the major towns of Bangha Kingdom. Both Ko and Kabangha controlled the trade of the Imo River. They were the greatest professional canoe makers in all Ogoni. They travelled by canoe through the Imo River to the Bangha market. Traders from the coast also travelled to their market via the Imo River. One of the overland trade routes from the Igbo hinterland terminated in the kingdom of Bangha on the Imo river at Ko and at Kabangha before continuing the rest of the journey through the Imo River to the sea coast (See map). Traders from the Anang and Igbo hinterland attended markets at Ko and at Kabangha via the Imo River. In view of their location at the extreme back of Ogoni, it is my suggestion that these were the people the Portuguese referred to as the Kabangas, or Calbangas.<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, it has to be noted that in those days there were no newspapers and no radios. The movement of news was very slow and very restricted. Moreover, it took a long time for the Portuguese traders to make one return journey from Europe to their West African markets. Thus when the city of Bangha was destroyed by small-pox as explained above, the Portuguese did not know about it. It is very probable that when they returned to Bangha on the coast of Ogoni, they found

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64. Jones, G.I., The Trading States . . . ., op.cit., pp. 20-21.

65. Waddell, H.M., Twenty-nine Years . . ., op.cit., p. 309.  
See also, P.A. Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, op.cit., p. 184.

that the place had been deserted and that it had become a wilderness. It is only natural that they began to search the coastal areas trying to get information as to what had happened.

It is very likely that during such searching they came across some Kalabari fishermen, most probably Bile fishermen, and learned from them that they were Kalabari people. To the Portuguese, both the Ogoni names of Bangha, Kabangha and the Ijo term Kalabari, appeared to be similar. The Ka- (or Kal-) and the Ba- (or Bangh-) sound or root was present in all the forms. Presumably, they imagined that the two peoples were the same people, or of the same nationality. The more they had further contacts with the Kalabari, the more popular or more frequent the Kal of the Kalabari became in usage among the European traders. Very soon the forms Calbarie, Calborg, Calbangas, Calbongos, began to appear in the writings of the early European traders.

It is to be noted that those European travellers were not always the same persons on every journey to the West African coasts. New travellers or traders learned the same error from the previous ones and added their own errors still. But in all this they did not forget about the early Portuguese mapping directions about the great, Old Bangha market which existed east of the Kalabari river on the Ogoni coast. It was the search for this old market that led to the erroneous duplication of the term "Calabar" in the Eastern Niger Delta. Thus in order not to confuse this "Old" market with the "New" trade that was now growing on the Rio Real, they began to apply the qualifying adjective "New" to the chief Kalabari town or the trading centre on this river, the Rio Real, while they reserved the adjective "Old" for the old town or trading centre which they were still searching for.

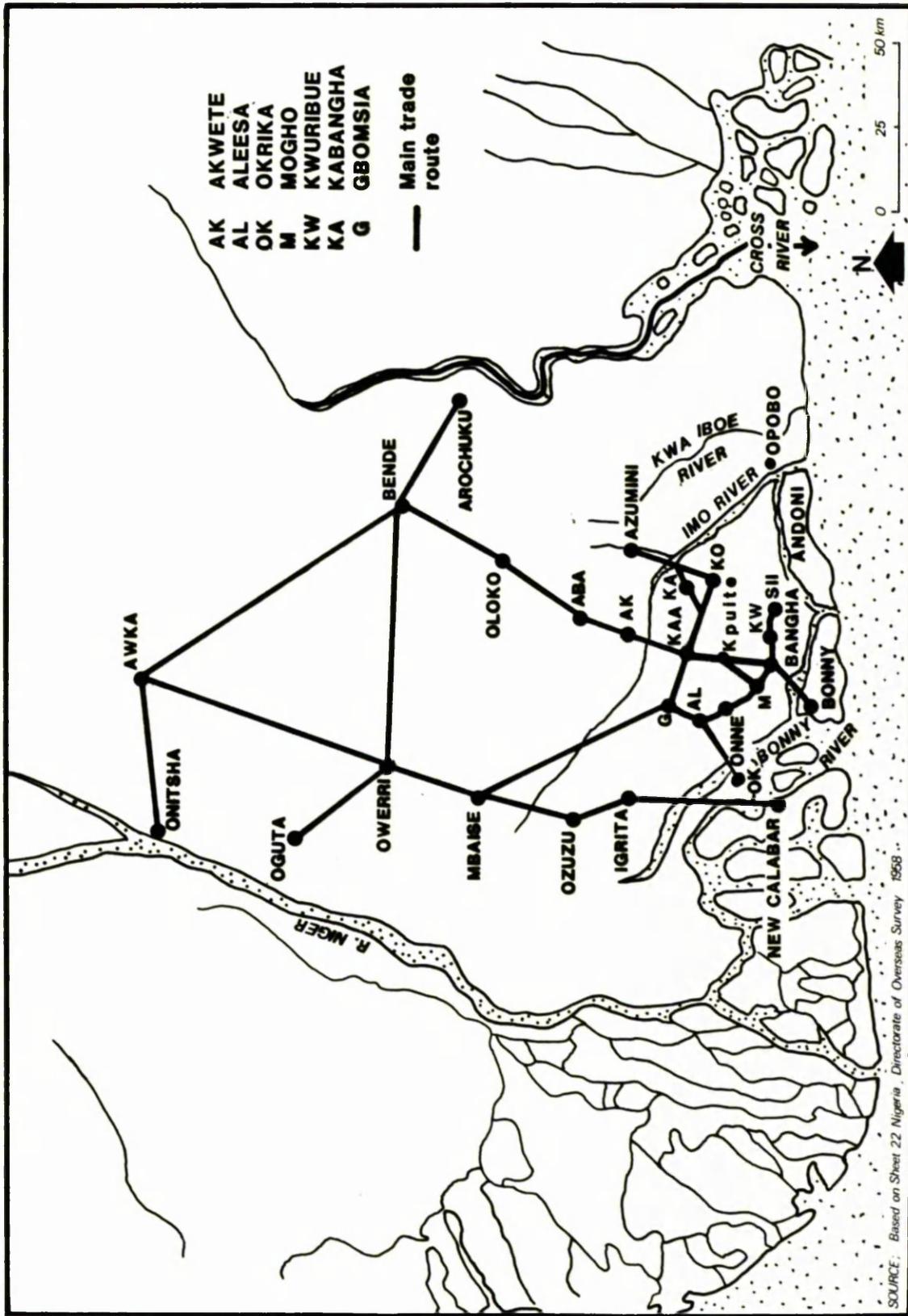
As Professor G.I. Jones has rightly pointed out, the Dutch and English traders relying on a notion of the big rivers as the only key for locating the "Old market" assumed the Cross River estuary to be it. After the Portuguese Pereira, Dapper was the next European who described these markets. Undoubtedly, Dapper's informants obtained their information from the Portuguese. But in error, having been misled by the big river they assumed that the Cross River estuary was the "Old Portuguese market".<sup>66</sup> This assumption also led them to make a further erroneous assumption by stating that the Kabangha (Calbongas) Kingdom which I have described above lay at the back of the Rio del Rey (the Cross River) instead of at the back of Ogoni on the eastern bend of the Imo River. Notice that the great bend of the Imo River flows round the 'back' of Ogoni and that the Kabangha are located just at that point in the north-eastern corner of the great bend. (See map)

Apart from the fact that at the time of the Portuguese, the Efik had not settled in their present location in the Cross River estuary, as pointed out by H.M. Waddell, there are also other factors which point to the error of Dapper's assumption. One of such factors is the fact that Efik/Ibibio oral traditions do not support the existence of any people called the Calbongas in that general area. Encouraged by their first assumption, Dapper's informants applied Pereira's earlier description of the Rio Real area to the Cross River area; thus misleading some scholars into believing that the Rio Real of Pereira was the Cross River.<sup>67</sup>

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66. Dapper, Olfert, op.cit., p. 316.

67. For example, see M.E. Noah, Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans 1800-1885 (Uyo: Scholars Press (Nig.) Ltd., 1980), pp. 1-4; M.E. Noah, "Political History of the City States of Old Calabar, 1820-60" in Boniface I. Obichere, ed. Studies in Southern Nigerian History (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1982), pp. 39-70; P.A. Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria ... op.cit., p. 184.



**Trade Routes from the Hinterland to the Ogoni Coast**

Fortunately, however, there were other scholars and travellers who did not permit themselves to be misled. Among such scholars or travellers was James Barbot and his team in 1699. To a great extent they restricted their search for the "Old" market within the logical limits of the information and directions which they had received from the Portuguese traders by taking other geographical factors into consideration. Thus in their map of 1699, they located the "Old Calabar" almost on the site of the modern city of Port Harcourt which is very near to the Ogoni coast. But again, they were misled by the deep harbour conditions of that place.<sup>68</sup> It is interesting to notice the comment which these pilots placed on their map referred to above:

A New, Correct, Mapp of Calbar River vulgarly called Calabar. And, by the Portuguese, Rio Real. And also of the coast of Guinea about it, from Cape Formosa to Donny (Andoni) River. Drawn very exactly on the spot in the year 1699 by several pilots jointly. (69)

The above statement represents the declaration of a search team of experts. They regarded the term Calabar as the vulgar form of Calbar or Calborg (Kal + Bangha as explained above). They stressed the fact that the map had been drawn very exactly on the spot, indicating that they had a blueprint or a collection of data to comply with. They also emphasized the fact that the map was not the idea of one man but the joint conclusion of a team of pilots. They made sure that the location of the "Old Calbar" or Bangha was within the eastern area of the Rio Real but not much wide off the mark to the east, not even as far as to the Andoni River. They probably took notice of other pilots' errors, as referred to above.

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68. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage ...", op.cit., pp. 455-466.

69. Ibid. See Plate 17, p. 463.

Since Bangha on the coast of Ogoni was the only market town which traded with the Portuguese before the emergence of Bile and New Calabar on the Rio Real, it is logical to conclude that the "Old Calabar" of the European traders was the city of Bangha.

Finally, it is a well-known fact that the Kalabari State on the Rio Real traded with Europeans before the Efik State on the Cross River estuary. Normally, the Kalabari market on the rio Real should have been qualified with the adjective "Old" and the Efik market on the Cross River qualified with the adjective "New". Instead, the opposite was the case. Why? The answer is that the Cross River estuary was completely out of the question as far as the location of the "Old" Portuguese markets was concerned; and this has also been noted by H.M. Waddell, as quoted above. Thus the conclusion may be drawn that the application of the term "Old Calabar" or "Calabar" to the Cross River estuary was a terminological imposition by European traders without any historical or ethnographic basis.

#### DEVELOPMENT IN THE OTHER SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

In addition to agricultural production in which large quantities of yams, plantains, palmoil, fruits, vegetables and nuts were produced both for home consumption and for export, the Ogoni also specialized in certain other industrial activities and trade, such as pottery, canoe-making, palm-wine tapping, slave trading and the sale of traditional medicines. In each of these occupations, the Ogoni produced in large quantities and were able to export the surplus by means of long-distance trading.

THE POTTERY INDUSTRY

In general terms the Ogoni pottery was not made as a work of art. Only in a relatively small number of pottery forms found in shrines do we notice some evidence of art. The main reason for this was because most Ogoni pottery was intended for every day use. For this reason Ogoni pots were generally plain vessels tailored to the needs of households or for occupational purposes, such as palm-wine tapping, and for use by individuals. Production was therefore based on the laws of the market place - the laws of supply and demand - with respect to home consumption as well as to the long-distance market. It provided jobs and means of livelihood for more than fifty per cent of the population of Kono Boue, the town which specialized in the industry. For it was the occupation of all the women folk of the town and a sizeable percentage of the male population also engaged in pot-carrying for long-distance trading.

In the whole of Ogoni, pottery was produced only in the town of Kono Boue kingdom. A woman from Kono Boue who was married to Kwaawa, another Ogoni town, introduced pottery to Kwaawa, but it did not quite succeed there.<sup>70</sup> Kono Boue was founded in the seventeenth century during the long, protracted Baan war. According to oral tradition, Kono Boue pottery was originally the industry for the whole of the womenfolk of the town of Kwuribue.

During my fieldwork in December, 1983, Prince Inatura of Kote Kwuribue House of Kono Boue took me to the site of Kwuribue and showed me the spot where he said the womenfolk of Kwuribue used to fire their

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70. Nuaka, Lemue of Tego (Aged c. 90). He was interviewed at Tego on 30.11.83. Text 59, pp. 212-4.

pottery. He explained to me that the spirit-medium of Kote (currently possessing somebody) took him to the site and showed him the spot and the place from where the women dug out the clay which they used in making the pots. Kwuribue was evacuated in the 1600's because of the Baan war. According to oral tradition, the people evacuated the town because of pressure from the Baan war, and because the position of the town was unsuitable for effective defence against enemy attacks.

As a result of inadequate natural protection for the town, they decided to move the capital town Kwuribue from Kwuri area to a more central and secure position. As pointed out in Chapter Three, the Ogoni preferred to name their towns in accordance with the most important natural feature of its environment. The new town was therefore called Kono, for they said, "Being here we are like the volute, which lies deep down on the bed of the sea where people hardly know that he is there".<sup>72</sup> Notice that this Kòno' is different from the other Kónò at the mouth of the Imo River, which means head-hunter.

With the movement from Kwuribue to Kono in Boue area, Kono Boue became the centre of the pottery industry in the whole of Ogoni, in

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71. Inayo, Prince Inatura of Kono Boue (Aged 62). He was interviewed at Noobana on 27.12.83. Text 51, pp. 183-6.

72. Tonwe, M.A.M. of Kono Boue (Aged 48). He was interviewed at Noobana, Kono Boue on 21.1.84. Text 40, pp. 130-4.

fact in the whole of the Eastern Delta and far beyond. The style of pottery at Kwuribue was more artistic and ceremonial in character. In Kono Boue, the style of the Ogoni pottery changed dramatically. The emphasis shifted from the heavy and ritualistic types to the light, plain and streamlined types. There was also a great increase in productivity.

In ancient times, the people did not make as many pots as people did in recent times. The potters of today have been able to make larger numbers of pots than people were able to make in past times. They have also made new types which did not exist in ancient times. One of the new types is called Ikpu, another one is called Ibibiisi. (73)

The most important factor that led to the dramatic increase in the volume of production in Ogoni pottery was the invention of the Ogoni Potter's wheel.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps this Potter's wheel was already in use at the time they were at Kwuribue. If this is true, then it would be responsible for part of the popularity and influence of Kwuribue which Dapper reported in the seventeenth century.

The Ogoni Potter's wheel was shaped like a disc with a heavy knob at the bottom on which the disc rotated. The top part or the upper part was widened out and formed into a saucer-shaped pattern, so that its concave shape formed the bottom of the pot as it was being moulded on it. The wheel was spun or rotated round by a slight tipping of the potter's big toe. The potter's hands were free to form the individual coils of clay one upon the other until the pot was formed from

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73. Ikie Deezua, Nnaadu of Noobana (Aged 82). She was interviewed at Noobana on 16.1.84. Text 67, p. 262.

74. Jeffreys, M.D.W., "Ogoni Pottery", Man, Vol. XLVII, 84 June, 1947, pp. 81-83. See Plate F., p. 81.

bottom to finish. The potter sat on a stool or on a platform. If the pot was the tall type, the potter stood up to form the upper part of the pot, as the wheel would continue to rotate or spin by a slight tipping of the potter's hand or big toe. Such tall pots would include large water or palm wine pots, some ritual pots, etc. By using the potter's wheel known as Laadem, the Ogoni potter did not have to bend down and walk round and round the vessel when it was being formed. Such crude methods were not only very slow and painful to the potter's waist, but the pot that was formed was also clumsy, heavy and unbalanced. The use of the Laadem put Ogoni pottery far in advance of any pottery industry practised by any of the neighbours of the Ogoni:

In the scale of development which culminated in the potter's wheel, the Ladum (sic), turned with the foot, may be regarded as an improvement on the broken pots-herd used by the Ibibio women (which involves continuous use of the left hand to keep it turning), and still more on the Ibo method, found in the Aboh Division, in which the potter walks round and round the pot, as shown in Fig. 3. (75)

This improvement in Ogoni pottery industry was responsible for the wide extent of its market and the high demand of its products in Igbo, Ibibio and Ijo territories.

#### ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION

The use of the potter's wheel increased the speed in production, and the output per potter per day. A potter could make six to eight or ten very large pitchers (the 20 gallon size) in a day or fifteen to twenty-five smaller size (5 gallons).<sup>76</sup> The disc-shaped wheel also served as a pattern for standardization, since the depth and size of the Laadem dictated the shape and size of the pot that was formed in it.

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75. Jeffreys, M.D.W., op.cit. p. 82.

76. Ikie, Deezua, Nnaadu of Noobana, op.cit. Text 68, pp. 263-4.

The potter knew the number, length and thickness of the clay-coil that would complete the particular size of pot that she intended to make.

Various potters' co-operatives were formed throughout the town. Groups of women potters came together on a given day to make pots for a member, each woman potter making a given number of a particular type and size of pot. On another fixed date, the members went to make the same types of pot, number and size, for another member. The members did not have to be present at the same place. Some members remained in their own homes, or chose to be in the home of a friend with whom she was more intimate, who also was a member of the particular potters' co-operative. The pottery co-operative was called Lera-Ba.

Once the name of the pot to be made was agreed upon, the members knew all the other details concerning that type of pot; its size, that is height and circumference were dictated by the size of the Laadem to be used, that is its disc shape and form, and by the number, length and thickness of the clay-coils, called akpobeen. Other details like the height and size of neck and the rim pattern were also known. With all these details well standardized, a potter could make the same type of pot irrespective of where she chose to stay to carry on the production. The colleague for whom the pot was being made provided the clay, already kneaded according to her quality of production. For the quality of the pot to be produced was determined by the quality of the clay, the way it was kneaded, its texture, the proportion of ingredients used, etc. Such ingredients included wood-ash, fine sand and powdered potsherds.

Sheets of the kneaded clay were laid flat on the floor, measured, cut, and rolled into soft clay-scrolls. A clay scroll measured about 10" diameter by 15". By measuring the clay, a potter could determine in advance how many pots of a particular type could be made out of one clay scroll. In this way, it was possible to know if a potter to whom a clay scroll was sent cheated, that is if she did not return the extra clay, or if she took some clay for her own private use. This was the cause of many troubles among the members of a potters' co-operative, as scrolls of kneaded clay were sent by the owners of the pot to each member of the potters' co-operative at the place they chose to stay to carry out the production.

The Ogoni (at Kono Boue) had about twenty-four names for different kinds of pots, each representing a particular shape or quality (Appendix VI). Because of the similarities of pottery types, irrespective of the different potters who made them, the Ogoni devised a system of identification. This was the origin of the Ogoni pottery trade marks known as akuu-ba (Appendix III)<sup>77</sup> When pots of the same type were placed together, it was difficult to distinguish the pots belonging to the different potters. But the use of the pottery trade marks solved this problem:

With the trade marks (akuu-ba) even though your pots got mixed up with the pots of another person, immediately you came you were able to identify your own pots. Similarly, if the pots of another person mixed among your own pots, as soon as she came, she was able to identify her own pots. Each household had a distinctive pottery trade mark throughout the different

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77. Jeffreys, M.D.W., op.cit., pp. 82-83. See Fig. 4, p. 82. The name Bekia was the way Boue was known at Bonny and Opobo. Jeffreys states that he collected the 45 samples of Ogoni pottery trade marks at Dukono market in the summer of 1930. Hence he did not have other details, such as the names of the individual families to which each trade mark belonged.

communities of Kono Boue. A daughter who was in her parents' house and adopted her mother's pottery trade mark, when she got married, she adopted the pottery trade mark of her husband's mother. (78)

Pottery trade marks were usually inscribed on the neck of the pot by the maker at the time of production, when the clay was still soft. However, in pots produced by means of a pottery co-operative, no marks were inscribed on such pots. But shortly before firing the pots, the owner then 'wrote' her own pottery trade mark on the pots by means of a brush-stick dipped in a yellow colour. The yellow colour turned orange after firing. Such marks remain indelible on the pots but they usually become invisible as the pots get older and darker on their bodies.

There were two market days every week (an Ogoni week has five days). One was a major market, and the other a minor market. The major market day was Deeko and the minor market was on Deebom. Originally, finished and dried pots were fired early in the morning of the Deeko market so that the pots were ready for display at the Dukono (Kono market) square by noon time. It was later discovered that people who had travelled very long distances from far away places and who had slept overnight in Boue in order to buy pots on Deeko day were unable to do shopping for pots until about noon. Because of complaints from the long-distance traders who desired to shop for pots early and return to their own places early, a new law was passed that women potters should fire their pots on the day before Deeko, that is on Deeson.

In 1950, an amended version of this law was enacted, providing that women potters who could not fire their pots on other days could

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78. Ikie Deezua, Nnaadu of Noobana (Aged 82). Interviewed at Noobana on 16.1.84. Text 67, p. 262.

do so on Deeko days at a private bush. The pre-amble to the laws began like this:

Kono Boue local laws and customs:  
The following laws should be strictly observed  
by both men and women, boys and girls of the  
Fore-named Town (Kono Boue).  
They are our town's guiding laws ...

No. 13. Firing of Earthen Pots

There should be no more firing of earthen pots  
in the market squares on Deeko days except on  
other days.

Women who wish to fire their earthen pots on  
Deeko days only, may do so at a private bush at  
a corner, where their bare bodies may not be  
exposed before the Crowd - as the women always  
neglect to cover their bodies while engaged in  
this work because of the heat of the fire. (79)

At first, I was surprised to notice in the above law that the word Crowd was capitalized. Then I realized that it was the Crowd, a particular, familiar Crowd. This was the particular crowd of pot buyers, consisting of both local and 'foreign' buyers who had travelled long distances to this market to buy pots.

There was also a local class of men pot-traders, who used to buy the pots in bulk at wholesale prices from the women potters and carry them by large canoes to far away places to sell at high profit. On Deeko days when 'foreign' buyers used to come to buy the pots, the women used to sell at higher prices, as there was usually a competition between the foreign buyers and the local pot-traders on that day. For this reason, most women potters used to prefer to fire their pots on Deeko days.

Because of that very reason, the men pot-traders used to lobby

with the Elders, persuading them to stop the women from firing their pots on Deeko days. They used to advance such reasons as cited in the above-quoted law, namely, that the women in the course of firing their pots on Deeko days exposed their bare bodies to the view of 'foreigners' who came to the market on Deeko days. But actually, their main reason was to cut off the 'foreign' buyers from having direct access to the women potters.

Another reason the women potters preferred to fire their pots on Deeko days was because on Deeko days they were able to sell all their stock of pots for that week, thus saving themselves the trouble involved in packing and storing till Deeko day. Such a situation arose where a woman potter wanted to sell her pots at higher prices than the local pot-traders were willing to pay. Usually big women potters who belonged to the big potters' co-operatives preferred to fire their pots on Deeko days because they had large numbers of pots to sell. One such potter could fire about two hundred to three hundred pitchers in addition to a number of smaller, supporting pots, known by various names according to their loading functions for firing. But she must take about four to five Kana (Ogoni) weeks to complete all the arrangements, from getting the clay to the firing of the pots, and the sale of them.

#### THE ACTIVITIES OF POT-TRADERS

The activity of men pot-traders in Ogoni society, particularly at Kono Boue, was an important source of revenue for the total economy. This writer personally knew many of the men pot-traders in the 1950's. On several occasions I actually accompanied my elder brother, the informant, who was himself a well-known long-distance pot-trader and

traveller. We travelled by canoe, carrying pots to some markets in Kalabari and Ikwere areas, and on one occasion to some markets in Ibibio area via Opobo. Besides himself, I also accompanied two other pot-traders on different occasions on such journeys. For these journeys I was paid a hiring fee as a canoe boy. These experiences make me familiar with a lot of what he narrates in his testimony. For example, I knew Choba market and many markets in Ikwere and Kalabari area, as far back as the 1950's, travelling by sea in large canoes fully loaded with pots. But it was as recently as 1980, when I became a staff member of the University of Port Harcourt, that I travelled for the first time by road to Choba, Iwofe, Aluu, Ogbakiri, etc.. The following testimony by my informant provides a considerable amount of information and a description of the activities of the Ogoni long-distance pot-trader:

Some names of pot traders of Kono Boue Town were Dugboo Kara, Naado Dobu, Deebom Bira, Deebari Teenwaa, Gbebe Kole, Naadole Ideme, Akiikpa Iguru, Obeeye Kpone-Tonwe, Nwidae Gbege, Kobe Igbug, Pianee Borabe, Bogona Deebom, Porogbara Ikporah, Kpugibue, Nnaapop, Piesu, Uegbara Yokoo, Diginee, Obed Ana-ana, etc., and from Keneke Boue, Johnson Lewa.

We used to carry the pots in canoes to Okporoba market in Okrika, and to Ahiaimunu market, also in Okrika. Another place we went to sell the pots was in Port Harcourt; there the markets were at Ahiagorogo and at Iwofe. But in Ikwerre proper we traded at Agbogoro, Ogbor, Aluu, Choba, Isiokpo, Ibaa and at Ogwa markets. Yet another place where we went to sell the pots was at Opobo and at Omumadaboro, as well as the Akoro villages in Andoni.

When going to Okrika, we passed through Iyoba village, Bodo Town and Booro, before entering Okrika. In the case of Ikwerre, we passed through Port Harcourt, Ahiagorogo, Beakoip (80) and Iwofe. When going to Opobo, we passed through Uyada, Nkoro, and Karibiama, before reaching Opobo Town.

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80. Beakoip: According to my informant, this name was given to this village by Ogoni people; and it means 'house of palm-kernel shells'. Probably there were many palm kernel shells in that village.

At Okrika, the only customer I still remember by name was a woman named Ezinwayi. She was a woman from Okrika, and she was a bulk purchaser to resell by retail. Some canoes carried about 300 pots, while others carried about 400 pitchers, depending on the size of the canoe. Only three persons paddled the canoe.

In Kalabari, we went to the markets at Tombia, Osorgo, Asani, Abonnema and at Awusara. When we went to Ibibio area, we passed through Egwanga and Mkpa; and we traded at Urua-eka market in Mkpa, and at Esene, Urua-ete, Urua-Ugwa, Kefe, Ikparikpa, Urua-dapa, Azumini, etc., all these markets were in Ibibioland. (81)

According to my informant, they carried pots of various types to those places to sell, especially pitchers for storing palm wine, for tapping palm wine, for storing drinking water, for fetching water from the streams; mini-pitchers for drawing water from wells, for carrying water to the farms, or for use by children for fetching water from the streams. They also carried pots for household cooking, such as pots for cooking soup, for boiling water, for bathing, for cooking yams or cassava, and for many other purposes. As they travelled by their large canoes to all these places to sell pots, they also bought some food stuffs which they sold on the way as they returned home.

The importance of a good pottery industry in those days is something that cannot be overstressed. The society at that time did not have pipe-borne water supplies. Many societies still do not have them today. There were no buckets, and there was no plastic industry in Nigeria, no cooling flasks or bottles, etc. The Ogoni pottery had certain qualities and advantages which were responsible for the high demand for them. They had the capacity to "breathe", sending out heated air and "sipping" the cool all the time, even in the hot sun.

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81. Kpone-Tonwe, Obeeye of Noobana (Aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Noobana on 11.10.84. Text 69, pp. 265-8.

For this reason Ogoni pots were not glazed since glazed earthen pots could not act this way, for the glazing sealed up the 'breathing' pores of the pot, thereby trapping gases inside the pot. These gases warm up and cause the water to become dull and lukewarm. The Ogoni pottery, by 'breathing', maintained a current of cool air circulating round the body of the pot all the time, thereby allowing the water inside the pot to retain its freshness, which is the one thing highly desired in water in a hot climate.

Housewives who understand the benefit of Ogoni pottery for storing drinking water bought several pitchers so that they could use them alternately, allowing at least one pitcher to be empty over a period of time to let it dry over the fire place before using it again. In that way, the pot or pitcher retained its 'porousness', which enables it to 'breathe', yet without leaking.

Other places where the Ogoni pottery was carried to include Nembe and adjoining towns. Three men among the list given above were well-known, even to this writer, to be carrying their pots to the Nembe markets. These were Dugboo, Naado and Johnson Lewa. According to what I heard, these men had prominent customers or agents at the Nembe markets, who bought their pots in bulk. These customers then carried the pots still further to Western Ijo and thence to other far away places, where they sold the pots at still higher prices.

On their return, these men who traded the Nembe markets brought other goods from that area. Dugboo and Naado were known to be bringing Lee, while Johnson brought lumber. Lee consisted of heavy bundles of

the red barks of a certain tree. The Ogoni ground these red barks into powder and used it to treat the palm wine to make it taste good and strong. Its deep red colour and tart quality gave the palm wine an irresistible colour and a compelling scent. This product was highly demanded in Ogoni by the palm wine tappers. In Ogoni they sold the Lee in bundles to some market women who specialized in this particular product. The women then broke the bundles for retail.

After selling these goods, the men bought pots and set out again for the Nembe markets. These men who carried their pots to the Nembe markets used the largest and longest canoes. Usually their return journey took about two to four weeks.

#### LARGEST CANOES

I have argued earlier on that the Ogoni were known to use some of the largest canoes known in the Eastern Niger Delta in the period before the era of the Atlantic slave trade. This was because the Ogoni enjoyed the monopoly of a carrying trade which required the use of some of the largest canoes that existed; and the Ogoni were also the makers of such large canoes, as I will show shortly. It is quite apparent that any canoe that can carry up to 300 or 400 pitchers is a large canoe indeed. For pitchers are bulky goods in terms of volume but comparatively light in terms of weight or density. The Ogoni pottery was especially prized because of their light weight and yet very strong and dry. The big problem of the carriers was therefore not that of weight but of volume. Hence their highest desire was to possess the largest canoes.

The class of long-distance pot-traders became the wealthy middle

class in Ogoni society. In Kono Boue, they constituted the middle class men who dominated the membership of the House of Lieutenants (To Pya Zuguru). This was the second House in Ogoni constitution as demonstrated in the Boue Kingdom. In time of war, they were the fighting men who led other men into battle. Naado in particular performed the distinguished traditional rite of YaaNwii and planted the Tree of Wealth (Te-Mene) in the centre of his compound.

The Te-Mene was a special live-tree which did not grow too fast or too big, and with little foliage. It could live for centuries without dying. It was planted in the centre of a man's compound, who had become great by virtue of his wealth, as shown by his performing the distinguished traditional ceremony of Yaa-Nwii. If a man from a Royal House performed the same ceremony and the tree was planted in the centre of the one's compound, the tree would be called Te-Bari (Tree of God). As far as the Trees were concerned, there was no difference. The difference or distinction lay only in the names, which indicated that in the case of the royal man, his greatness came to him from God through inheritance, whereas in the case of the non-royal person, his greatness came to him through his wealth. In our example of Naado Dobu, he became a member of the upper class of society through his wealth, out of his personal hard work as a long-distance pot-trader. In 1950, he was the thirteenth signatory to the Laws of Kono Boue.<sup>82</sup>

What I have described here is only an indication of the fact that there is much more that can be investigated concerning the pottery

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82. "Kono Boue Statute Book", Section I (1950), p. 9.

An unpublished hand-written document kept in King Tonwe's Archive at Kono Boue.

industry in ancient Ogoni. For example, the whole area of the mining of the clay, ownership of clay pits, organization of the mining process, sale of clay, etc.; these and many other aspects of the industry need to be studied.

The decline of this industry was caused chiefly by the introduction of the plastics industry in Nigeria and the aluminium industry in Ghana and Nigeria. These industries producing pots, buckets, etc. destroyed the Ogoni pottery industry. The introduction of cooling bottles, vacuum flasks, the increased availability of pipe-borne water supplies and indoor water systems also contributed to the decline.

#### THE CANOE-MAKING INDUSTRY

The next great industry of ancient Ogoni was canoe-making. In those ancient times there were very many big trees. The best type of trees were those which produced tough, lighter wood, capable of being buoyant. Trees of that type were ideal for canoe-making. The canoe-makers were highly gifted, tall, strong men, with strong arms and square shoulders. They possessed several sharp tools. They were men of the forest, who understood the nature of trees. The axe was their major cutting tool.

In all Ogoni and the Eastern Delta, the greatest canoe-makers were Ko (Opuoko) people. They did not only make canoes for sale within Ogoni, they also made canoes for sale to other parts of Southern Nigeria, and to the hinterland towns along the big rivers.<sup>83</sup> Canoe-making became a big money making industry for an upper middle class group.

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83. Obuh, J.B. of Kabangha (Aged 74). He was interviewed at Kabangha on 15.3.84. Text 30, pp. 108-9.

When the big trees in Ogoni forests became exhausted, they travelled to the Igbo hinterland along the Imo river, the New Calabar river, and to places as far as Nembe and Western Ijo forests. They also travelled to the Cameroons.

As they travelled to each of these places, they carried on the canoe-making industry. The first thing they did was to search the forests in those places and when they found suitable trees, they bought them from the local chiefs or landlords. They then cut down the trees and used them in making canoes of various sizes.

The demand for canoes in the Niger Delta and in the riverside towns of the hinterland was both old and expanding. The Ogoni had the canoe-making technology right from their place of origin. It was by canoes that their ancestors travelled from their place of origin to settle at Nama. Many of Ogoni's neighbours did not make their own canoes and paddles, such as the Andoni, the Ibani (Bonny), etc.. And yet these were great users of canoes, not only because they were riverain peoples, but more so because their chief occupation of fishing required the use of canoes. For these reasons, the demand for canoes was always very strong. Thus the market for canoes was in fact a very important one in the Niger Delta area.

When the canoe makers from Ogoni travelled to far away places to make canoes, they did not always bring the canoes to Ogoni to sell. They usually sold the canoes at strategic centres in those places. Since the raw material for the canoe-making industry was heavy and

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84. Baikie, W.B., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage ..., op.cit., p. 336.

difficult to transport, the industry was always moved to the source of the major raw material, that is, where there were many big trees. After the canoe had been made, fired and straightened, they were then pulled from land to the river and paddled to specific centres which were well-known to canoe buyers throughout the Delta area. In some cases where the canoe was specifically big, there were prospective buyers even while it was in the making stage, so that at the point when it was pulled to the river, the owners actually paddled it away. Each canoe was sold for a very substantial amount, depending on the size and quality of the canoe.

To move the canoe from land to the sea after it had been made, the Ogoni took advantage of the shape of the canoe. They knew that the exterior bottom of the canoe was convex, and that its bow and stern were curved upwards. Thus only a relatively small portion of its bottom rested on the ground. They therefore cut many straight, smooth sticks, each about four to five feet long, and placed them cross-ways, about five to eight inches apart, on the path of the canoe. At the point where the canoe's bottom rested on the ground, they made small tunnels under the canoe and passed some of the sticks into them. They then removed some earth from the bottom of the canoe to let it rest on the sticks. With that done, a number of strong men could pull the canoe from any distance on land to the river. The bottom of the canoe slid easily on the sticks when pulled. Since the river was always at a lower part of the ground, they followed the gradient or slope of the land in laying the path of the canoe. Once the canoe had reached a river, it was then paddled from there to the sea.

Such professional canoe-makers returned to Ogoni only occasionally, when they had sold some number of canoes.<sup>85</sup> Thus it will be seen that in most cases the indigenes of the particular locations or market centres where canoes were bought and sold, were not necessarily the makers of the canoes. Their nearness to such markets was due mainly to the fact that they lived in an environment where there many big trees suitable for making canoes, which attracted the professional canoe-makers.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

From the very beginning of settlement, the Ogoni appear to have developed a kind of social organization in which the youth were trained to fit into the society as responsible citizens. There are two instances reported in the oral tradition in which children born into the society were observed from the time of their youth to the time when they became responsible leaders of the society. One of such youths was Gbeneakpana the Younger, who was said to have been born at Kugba. The oral tradition records that when he became a young man he gave much trouble and headaches to the people. But it was also reported of him that he was very skilful in the use of the sword.<sup>1</sup> As an adult, Gbeneakpana became a medicine man and a warrior, and was one of those who achieved the highest military title in ancient Ogoni. For the name Gbeneakpana means that his actual name was Akpana, but when he achieved the title of Gbene (Great), his name became Gbeneakpana (Akpana the Great).<sup>2</sup> He became the founder of the town of Kono on the mouth of the Imo River.<sup>3</sup>

Another young man mentioned in the oral tradition was Gbeneatekina. According to the oral tradition, he was born at Gure. This man also became a great leader. In growing up, he also passed through all the rigorous stages of social ascendancy in ancient Ogoni and attained the highest military title of Gbene. Evidently his real name was Atekina

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1. Iwagbo, John, in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of field Study Visit to Nama and Kugba on 24.3.84". Text 15, pp. 66-70.
  2. Gbigbo, A'ean of Kwaakwa (Aged 45). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 27.12.83. Text 42, pp. 141-6.
  3. Na'uwe, Leonard Opusunju of Kono (Aged 72). Interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-5.

but when he obtained this title, he became known as Gbeneatekina, (Atekina the Great).<sup>4</sup> This Gbeneatekina was again mentioned by Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium as one of the principal participants in the inaugural ceremony<sup>5</sup> of the kingdom of Nama at Gure, which was the second and the greatest capital of the Kingdom until the seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> On that occasion, Gbeneatekina became the highest officer of the state after the king; for he was given the posts of Chief Minister of State (Lah-Bue) and Priest of the Land Deity (Mene-bee Bari-Asaan).<sup>7</sup>

From the above examples, it is clear that Ogoni society from its earliest days had a system of promotion which enabled people of exceptional ability to gain varied experience in lower positions before rising to the highest ones.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Ogoni Society was divided into a number of social classes. Yet between these social classes there were no strict barriers, since there existed the means and methods for social mobility between them. Ideally one should perhaps describe the social organization in every part of Ogoni, but in practice this is unnecessary since the social structure in every part of Ogoni was essentially the same. Therefore, while drawing on examples from as many parts of Ogoni as possible, the main focus of the present analysis will be based on the kingdom of Boue,

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4. Gbigbo, A'ean of Kwaakwa, op.cit.

5. Gbeneyaaloo Spirit-Medium of Gure, interviewed during possession at Gure on 12.3.84. Text 16, pp. 71-4.

6. See Chapter IV for my explanation of the decline of Gure. 16th/17th century was the date of the Baan war which brought about the eclipse of Nama. 16/17th century was suggested because firearms were introduced into that war for the first time.

7. Gbeneyaaloo, Spirit-Medium of Gure, op.cit.

which like the kingdoms of Gokana, Tee, Nama and others, appears to have developed one of the best examples of social organization in Ogoni society.

The first major class distinctions were between the rulers (Pya bee-bue) and the commoners or ordinary citizens (Pya Kebue). The class of rulers was further divided into:

1. The King ... .. Gbenemene
2. The Chiefs and Elders ... ( Pya Kanee or  
( Pya Kabaari
3. The Lieutenants ... .. Pya Zuguru  
(sing. Zuguru)

The commoners or citizens were further divided into:

4. The Elite or Gentlemen ... Pya Gbara  
(sing. Gbaranee)
5. The Common or ... .. Pya Kune nee  
ordinary freemen (sing. Kune nee)
6. The slaves ... .. Pya Zooro  
(sing. Zooro),  
or Gbon (sing. only)
7. The strangers ... .. Pya Saanee  
(sing. Saanee)

E.J. Gibbons has stated that there was no slave class in Ogoni society.<sup>8a</sup>

This assertion is true only to a degree. The fact is that the Ogoni did not permit a large, separate slave class in their society. Slavery was indeed practised by the Ogoni but such slaves were quickly assimilated into the society,<sup>8b</sup> as wives and concubines, or treated as ritual

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8a. Gibbons, E.J. "Intelligence Report on the Ogoni" (1932), p. 8. Ogodist, Calprof, Opobo Div. File No. 28032 CSO 26/3.

8b. cf. Robin Horton has described a similar process in New Calabar, where slaves were admitted into families and households where 'mothers' were assigned to them as a policy of conscious assimilation into the culture and society. This, according to Professor  
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subjects, or sold to 'foreign' buyers. Subjects for ritual sacrifices were required during the foundation of new towns. According to the oral tradition, for every new town that was founded, two human beings - a male and a female - were required for sacrifice to the Earth Deity.<sup>9</sup> Human victims were also required for sacrifice when a great warrior performed the ceremonies for earning the title of Gbene (Great).<sup>10</sup> But human subjects used as victims for title rituals were usually those taken captive in war. They were usually men who were active and powerful on the enemy side. The Ogoni seemed to have entertained a belief that such powerful victims were capable of making their own war medicines to become more active and more powerful than those of their enemies. Sometimes ritual victims were captured in wars fought outside Ogoni territory, to which Ogoni warriors were invited by one side or the other to fight as mercenaries.<sup>11</sup> According to the oral tradition, the Ogoni warriors were always looking for such opportunities, because of the heads which they hoped to get.

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8b. (Contd.) Horton, gave New Calabar a unique success in state building, in contrast to Old Calabar, where there were constant slave revolts, or to Bonny where the overwhelming population of alien slaves changed the original Ijo language of Bonny to the language of the alien slaves.  
"From Fishing Village to City-State: A Social History of New Calabar" in Mary Douglas and Phyllis M. Kaberry, eds. Man In Africa, (London: Tavistock Publishing Co., Ltd., 1969), pp. 37-58, see pp. 48-57.

9. Kpugita, Nnaa of Keneke (Aged 55). He was interviewed at Keneke on 2.1.84. Text 46, pp. 159-63.

10. Ibid.,

11. According to J.B. Yomii, Bonny was one of the states in the Eastern Delta which used to hire Ogoni warriors whenever it was at war with another state. But in the civil war of 1870, Ogoni supported Jaja. See J.B. Yomii of Ko (Aged 58). He was interviewed at Ko on 15.3.84. Text 29, pp. 104-7.

They were constantly searching for captives which they sold as victims of sacrifice at Nama. The people wanted human victims to sacrifice at Nama as part of the rituals for the title of Gbene. In the course of such searching for victims, they dispersed and founded towns and kingdoms. (12)

In the case of victims for the foundation of new towns, the evidence suggests that skulls were sometimes used. On occasions when the need for such rituals arose, men were always available who took upon themselves to supply such skulls at high prices. According to the source, one skull was sold at as much as one thousand two hundred manillas (taa boo kpugi).<sup>13</sup> To obtain the proper victims, therefore, the Ogoni men engaged in slave-raiding, kidnapping, head-hunting and war. Most of these activities took place in pre-European times.<sup>14</sup>

#### Gbon and Zooro

As I have stated above, there was no special slave class in Ogoni society, but there existed in the society a sizeable number of slaves who were always at various stages of transition into full assimilation into the society. Such slaves, as long as they were still identifiable, formed the lowest stratum of the society. Two Kana words were used to describe such slaves. Gbon, which means servant or slave, was used to refer to those slaves who were personal servants to individuals or to households. They performed the menial tasks. Thus in Ogoni, if you asked or ordered a person to perform a menial task the person might retort or react by querying "M lu O gbon?" ("Am I your slave?"). The word itself was never used in the plural. When the plural form

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12. Fogho, Doonee Nwighbue of Bara Sii (Aged 70). Interviewed at Bara Sii on 21.10.81. Text 20, pp. 83-4.
  13. Barigwere, Inee (Chief) of ILooLoo (Aged 98). Interviewed at ILooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-73.
  14. This calculation is based on the fact that the practice began at Nama, the first settlement and continued from there onwards.

was required, this was indicated by the preceding personal pronoun: "I lu O gbon?" ("Are we your slaves?"). If the word was preceded by the untranslatable Kana particle Pya, i.e. Pya Gbon, it means the Igbo, or Igbo people; thus: nee gbon, Igbo man; nwaa gbon, Igbo woman; nwi gbon, Igbo Child, etc. Thus the Kana word gbon appears to have derived from the term Igbo. What this suggests is that some time in the pre-colonial period, probably in the Portuguese period, the Ogoni obtained their personal servants or slaves from their Igbo neighbours to the north of them. It is to be noted however that this class of slaves were acquired only by the wealthy who wanted to display to the society the degree of their prosperity.<sup>15</sup>

The term Zooro also means slave, but it carries with it the notion of bondage. It is the lowest form of servitude. While gbon was a form of luxury, Zooro was something to be abhorred. The Zooro were usually taken or captured in foreign wars. For this reason, they were normally not owned by or attached to individual persons or households, Their assimilation was therefore very slow or almost impossible. Those of them not sold or dispatched as ritual victims were placed under the protection of deities and lived in isolation on the property belonging to that deity.<sup>16</sup> Neither the gbon nor the zooro could advance socially since they could not perform or join in the performance of the traditional rites such as Yaage or Yaanwii, which were the means of social differentiation..

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15. Laaka, S.O. (Revd.) of Onne (Aged 67). He was interviewed at Ekara, Onne on 21.2.84. Text 8, pp. 28-36. See also D.L. EJOR of Onne (65 ). Interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

16. An example of this was a man named Itobarino, who was captured alive from a 'foreign' war. See Inee Barigwere (Chief) of ILoLo (Aged 98), op.cit. Text 48, pp. 167-73.

Pya Saa nee

The earliest strangers (saa nee) who settled on Ogoni land were Bonny people, whom the Ogoni called Ebani, meaning people from afar, or from a distant place.<sup>17</sup> Other early strangers who initially settled in Ogoni land were the Okrika, called Kirika by the Ogoni. Still others were the Andoni, who, according to Ogoni oral traditions, were said to have come later from the Ibeno in a flotilla of canoes. And they were called Bono by the Ogoni. The oral tradition records that when these peoples first came, they came in the form of canoe traders along the Ogoni coasts. Initially they settled on Ogoni land along the coastal fringes and traded with the Ogoni in fish and bought agricultural foodstuffs in return. All these peoples were regarded as strangers (Pya Saa nee) because they did not form part of the Ogoni society. They were not required to participate in Ogoni traditional rites but they were expected to observe the laws of the communities in which they settled and to refrain from tampering with the wives or property of the citizens, as such actions could bring real trouble. The Ogoni were also expected to behave hospitably towards the strangers. There was freedom of movement and of trade.

The other group of strangers were the Igbo. Although the Ogoni had had contacts with the Igbo from very early times,<sup>18</sup> Igbo traders later settled in Ogoni communities along the trade routes leading from the Igbo hinterland to the Ogoni coasts.<sup>19</sup> These too were not regarded as citizens of the Ogoni society.

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17. For more details see Chapters III and V.

18. Bagia, J.P. (His Highness) of Gokana (Aged 70). Interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

19. See Map in Chapter V showing the trade routes.

They settled on land granted to them by the landlords<sup>20</sup> on payment of rent. The use of such lands was regarded as temporary; and, accordingly, they erected temporary settlements and quarters. Such settlers were not allowed to plant fruit trees or economic trees such as coconuts, plantains, etc., on the land so granted because they did not own the land; certain garden vegetables, such as bitterleaf was excepted. If such settlers ate a fruit and threw away the seed in their backyard, if the seed germinated and became a tree and bore fruit the landlord became the owner of that tree. The settlers were not allowed to pluck fruit from it, because they did not own the land.

Farmlands and raffia palm bushes were the major causes of trouble and quarrels among Kana (Ogoni) people. It was illegal for somebody to plant a plantain tree on another person's land, or on land on which one was a temporary occupant. (21)

If after a long settlement in a community a stranger decided to plant some food crops (usually not elite crops), he had to 'apply' for a piece of land from the landlord. For consideration of such 'application', the landlord concerned consulted the village or community Chief and the Elders, who used the opportunity to review the activities of the settler in question, whether he had been too avaricious in his trading activities by charging too much, or whether he had been cooperative with the community, honest and trustworthy, etc.. If the request was granted, then the piece of land must be located in the area for minor crops and must be in a place closer to the village and must

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20. There is no 'community' land in Ogoni. Land is owned by certain Houses, which are known as the landlords Pya Te-ere Keneke (lit. owners of the ground). The Land Priests of a town or community in Ogoni come from such Houses. They are descended from the original founders of that town or community. No farming can begin each year until these priests have done some ritual sacrifices.
21. Tonwe III (His Highness), M.A.M. of Boue, (Aged 43). Interviewed at Kono Boue on 22.1.84. Text 61, p. 221.

be isolated from the citizens' farms, lest the stranger be found 'loitering' about in the middle of the citizens' farms on the pretext that he was going to his own farm. The grant of the piece of land must be for only one crop season. Further planting by the settler must be by a new 'application' and on a new piece of land and in a different location. It will be recalled that in Chapter V it was explained that one of the causes of the war with the Aros at Agbonchia was because they tried to settle down to cultivate the land.

The exception to this law was the case of the Bonny people. According to the oral tradition, at a certain period during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, Bonny people brought some new crops - the cassava and the banana - into Ogoni and requested land where they would plant the new crops as food for the slaves. The Ogoni 'leased' out virgin forest to them along the coastal fringes. The Bonny cleared the forest by slave labour and planted the cassava and the banana.<sup>22</sup> Thus by this means the Bonny introduced the banana and the cassava into Ogoni.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the Ogoni also regarded this use of their land by the Bonny as a temporary arrangement, as they later claimed their land back:

Bani (Bonny) people left those places because Gokana (Ogoni) people told them to leave their land. When they left the places, they went to their town where they are now. There was no war about it ... Since

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22. Kpea, Edward Nwebon (Chief) of Mogho (Aged 89), interviewed at Mogho on 7.2.84; Gbarato, Aanee (Chief of Lewe (Aged 110). He was interviewed at Lewe on 5.2.84. Text 6, pp. 20-4, and Text 2, pp. 7-9.

23. The Ogoni knew only the plantain, which they called ebue. When Bonny people introduced the banana, they also called it plantain but it was the 'Bonny type' of plantain (ebue-bani). The cassava they called ekpakpuru, a name derived from its characteristic, because when the starch was boiled too strongly, it became hard, drawn and elastic.

they did not own that land, they left peacefully, for they already knew that the owner of the land had taken his land. (24)

Pyä Kune nee

Apart from the slaves and the strangers, the next social category in Ogoni society were Pyä Kune nee (the ordinary or freemen). The English word 'commoner' does not have an exact equivalent in Kana, the principal language in Ogoni. The Kana word Pyä Kebue (translated 'commoners') is really a combination of two words, namely, ke meaning the down or lower part of, and bue meaning town or country. Thus Pyä Ke bue means "people of the down or lower part of the town or country". The word pictures the citizens of a town or country in tiers. Those occupying the upper tiers were the rulers (Pyä bee-bue) and those in the lower tiers were just citizens (or commoners).

Within the mass category of citizens or 'commoners' were further subdivisions, and the lowest class of these were the ordinary freemen, Pyä Kune nee. This category of citizens were not placed in their class by any accident of birth, or by any other cause. They remained ordinary, free men because they could not perform the traditional rites of Yaage. The traditional rite of Yaage was the great differentiator of social classes in ancient Ogoni. The inability to perform this important traditional rite had many implications. It could mean that the individual was born of poor parents, or that he was an illegitimate son whose maternal background was also obscure, or that he inherited no landed property, or that the person himself had not been hard working so

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24. Giah, Dimkpa (Chief) of Gbee (Aged 75). Interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-19.

that he was unable to pay for the cost by himself. In other words a Kune nee was an ordinary poor person. Nevertheless he was a citizen.

#### DISADVANTAGES

People who did not undergo the experience of Yaage were said to be spiritually deficient, spiritually inactive and spiritually unwise. They were therefore incapable of leadership and could not make decisions which could affect the destiny of other people. For this reason, they were not listed as soldiers or fighters in time of war because it was believed that in time of emergency a man's spiritual soundness was more important than his weapon. For a spiritually weak person could easily be 'entrapped' and killed by his enemy, who would then seize his weapons. Since the kune nee lacked the benefits of the spiritual and 'military' training which the Yaa traditional rites provided, they were considered deficient in the essential ingredients that equipped a man to fit well into an active society.

If a community meeting was held to which all the citizens were invited, a kune nee could attend such a meeting but he must sit apart from the meeting and listen from a distance. He could not sit in the meeting or contribute to the discussion.

If an important matter occurred in the community and they wanted people to meet to discuss it, only those who had performed the Yaa ceremony could enter the room where the matter was being discussed. Those who have not performed the Yaa ceremony would sit outside and listen from outside. They could not be able to take part in the discussions. (26)

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26. Nii, Isaanee (Prince) of Eepie (Aged 95). He was interviewed at Eepie on 29.12.83. Text 63, pp. 249-55.

KPOROWA

A Kporowa literally means one who was "poor of a woman", i.e. a man who had not married a wife because he was poor. In Ogoni, the first social responsibility of a mature man was to get married. A mature man who had not fulfilled this social obligation was rated in the same social class as the man who had not performed the Yaa ceremony; and the term kune nee applied to both of them. If the man who had not performed the Yaa ceremony was married, his wife was rated in the same social class as himself, but he was higher in the social scale and commanded a greater respect in society than the man who could neither perform the Yaa ceremony nor marry a wife. The Kporowa was therefore regarded as a worse pauper, as well as irresponsible. For he was not responsible to a household, which was the smallest unit of society. Hence he could not take part in any decisions affecting the community.

In Leme (Ogoni) society, unless a person was married, he could not take part in important deliberations of the village or community. If there was a gathering of the community, and they wanted to select people who would form a committee for consultation, only persons who were married could be summoned to such a committee. If there was a community gathering and they wanted to appoint some people to make some findings and report back, only those who were married could be appointed to the committee. (27)

PYA GBARA

The term pya gbara means gentlemen (sing. gbara nee, gentleman). The pya gbara were those youths and adults who had performed, or rather gone through the Yaa traditional experience. The first stage of the Yaa traditional rites which every young man of consequence was expected to pass through was called Yaage. The terms contains a

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27. Osaronu, J.D. (Chief) of Ogoloma, Onne (Aged 47). He was interviewed at Onne on 25.2.84. Text 10, pp. 42-48.

main word Yaa, which was the root term for the traditional rite, and a suffix ge, which means sword. Thus the term Yaage means the Yaa of bearing the sword. Thus the significance of the military implications of the traditional rite is clearly evident.

Early on in this chapter I referred to the fact that the Ogoni began very early in their history with a system of training the youth. The example of Gbeneakpana suggests that the Yaa traditional rite was a very ancient tradition. It implies that it was introduced by the Ogoni ancestors from their place or origin. It also implies that the social class distinctions which the Yaa traditional rites effected were as old as Ogoni society. However, it seems likely that while the military aspects were evidently quite ancient, the social aspects may have evolved gradually over the years.

One of the major arts in which the young man undergoing the Yaage experience was trained was fencing. This was probably the essence of the name Yaage. Other aspects of the 'course' were spiritual fortitude, bravery, gentlemanly character and behaviour. That was why all the young men who had performed the Yaage traditional rite were virtually soldiers. They were the men who were called to arms in time of war. They also performed the difficult social works such as the digging of the deep trenches round the towns.<sup>28a</sup>

In Ogoni, age was not the main determinant of social classes. It was the Yaa traditional rites. Thus a youth of fifteen who had performed the Yaa traditional rites was more acceptable to the Elders than a man of forty who had not:

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28a. Kinanwii, Kpoko (Chief) of Tego (Aged 87). Interviewed at Tego on 5.1.84. Text 50, pp. 179-82.

28b. See next page.

Note 28b.

Graham Connah has described two kinds of city walls in Nigeria: one is a free-standing mud-built wall, the other an earthen rampart, which in archaeology is called dump rampart. The Ogoni type appears to have been a ditch, but instead of using the earth removed from it to form the dump rampart, they camouflaged its approaches on both sides with trees, thorns, thick undergrowth, poisonous weeds, etc.

In the oral tradition, it is stated that it was the task of women to carry away the earth removed from the ditches to another place, probably to avoid its being washed back into the ditches. Evidently, however, their aim seems to have been to conceal the nature, extent and the actual formation of the ditches from the enemy.

According to Ajayi and Smith, the thick, thorny undergrowth system, in combination with a wall of earth and ditches, was a common method of fortification used by important Yoruba towns during the nineteenth century.

Connah, Graham, The Archaeology of Benin, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 98-101.

Ajayi, J.F.Ade and Smith, Robert, Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century, 2nd edn., (1st edn. 1964), (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1971), p. 23.

Every male child must perform the traditional rite of Yaage before he could have respect in the society. A person who had not performed this tradition might not enter certain places or certain houses in the town. He might be excluded from certain groups. When such a person died, he was buried at the back of 'his' compound, not in the front part. (29)

If a youth who had performed the Yaa traditional rites entered the presence of the Elders, he could be offered a drink by them without embarrassment. Such a youth was regarded as an "Elder in the making". He was considered as spiritually alert and sound. Thus they were called Pya gbara (gentlemen). It was from the general class of Pya gbara that the class of rulers were selected. As the years went by, the youths in this social class were exposed to various activities, including elite occupational activities, such as yam cultivation and palm wine tapping. Apart from practice in fencing with swords, other sports for building stamina, agility and self-defence, like judo, kanikpo and certain dances were emphasized, as well as the capacity for hard work and the ability to save wealth or money for the purpose of performing the higher traditions.

#### THE AGE FACTOR

As stated above, age was not a parameter for determining social class in Ogoni society, but it was a factor in social organization for purposes of role performance. Thus to organize the activities mentioned above, the whole social class of pya gbara was sub-divided into social activity clubs or associations known as gbo, which means mates, comrades or equals. The members were not necessarily of the same age-range. A leader of one such activity club or association which

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29. Teedee, F.B. (Prince) of Gure (Aged 43). He was interviewed at Gure on 18.3.84. Text 14, pp. 60-5.

existed in the 1940's described the age-range of the members like this:

All the members were not exactly of the same age, some were twenty years old, some twenty-two years, some twenty-five, and some thirty years old. There were male and female members. Two leaders called Adue gbo were appointed in each community to organize the club in that community. (30)

Each social club or association performed public as well as private services for the association and for the members. Women fell into the same social class as their husbands. Thus they joined in the same social club as indicated in the above text, although that particular aspect of the social clubs must be seen as a modern innovation. But even then women members did not perform the same roles as the men. Their membership appeared to have been conspicuous only on occasions of big feasts or dinners such as the feminine Yaa ceremony or the Bogo.

Each gbo had its specific name. The most popular names were Gbo Taanuunu ("The Three Horns") and Gbo Kodoo ("The Doers of Words").

"The Three Horns" (Gbo Taanuunu) were a select group. They were powerful men; men of great strength in this area. Any town where they needed that type of men for any difficult task, they used to come and hire us. For example, like the catching of a live 'wild' bull to be used for some ritual sacrifice. When there was a judo tournament, whether within the communities or outside, the members of the club were the men who used to do it. Next to "The Three Horns" were the Gbo Kodoo. They were the able-bodied men "The Doers of Words". They and "The Three Horns" were often hired out in any matter that required strength and power. (31)

These groups engaged in public activities as well as in the activities of their respective clubs or societies. In public activities

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30. Gbaratee, Deezua of Tego (Aged 55). Interviewed at Tego on 7.1.84. Text 71, pp. 270-2.

31. Legbara, Bakoba of Noobana (Aged 74). Interviewed at Noobana on 5.1.84. Text 70, pp. 267-9.

each club tried to excel the other clubs of the same age-range based in rival communities. For example such rivalries were particularly strong in competitive sports like judo (kpurube).<sup>32</sup> Within each association or club, the members worked co-operatively to encourage their individual members to succeed in life by becoming financially and socially successful. For example if during a particular farming season a member could not plant crops on his farm because he lacked the seeds or because he could not buy the seeds, the members of his gbo supported him by making it possible for him to plant crops on his farm that year.<sup>33</sup>

The degree of a member's success was judged by his ability to perform the recognized traditions, by the number of wives he married, especially by the number of 'wives' he was able to marry from 'abroad', and by the number of special or 'king' yams (mgwe) he could produce during each farming season.<sup>34</sup> When a man had distinguished himself in all these areas of life and was judged to be a capable leader, he joined the class of rulers (Pyä bee bue).<sup>35</sup>

#### THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

##### The Gbenemene

In Ogoni the highest officer of state was the Gbenemene (the Great Ruler or King). According to oral tradition, the first great officer of state and sovereign ruler of the Ogoni was a woman, Queen Kwaanwaa.<sup>36</sup>

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32. Osaronu, J.D. (Chief) of Ogoloma, op.cit.

33. Legbara, Bakoba of Noobana, op.cit.

34. Osaronu, J.D. (Chief) of Ogoloma, op.cit.

35. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness) of Boue, op.cit.; see also Osaronu, J.D., op.cit. Text (His Highness), p. 240.

36. See Chapter IV for details.

After that her son, Gbeneyaaloo ruled at Gure.<sup>37</sup> Her daughter, Zah, who was called "the Mother of the Ogoni" also died at Gure. Following the death of Gbeneyaaloo, the succession passed to the daughter of Zah, by name Bariyaayoo, whose seat of power was based at Luawii. The Bariyaayoo dynasty continued in power till about the middle of the seventeenth century. The seventeenth century was the period of the Baan war, when the power of Luawii declined.<sup>38</sup> During the same period, the kingdom of Boue emerged out of the war as the leading state under King Gbenekiri.

According to reports by European travellers the state of Boue (formerly Kwuribue) consisted of about nine or ten communities and was ruled by a "captain or King".<sup>39</sup> This report by the European travellers was written long before the Baan war. In the seventeenth century, however, as a result of the Baan war, Kono Boue became the new capital of the kingdom under the leadership of Gbenekote, and his brothers Gbenekwerre and Gbenetibarakan. From that period till the colonial conquest, the evolution of political institutions is abundantly reported in the oral traditions. The following analysis will be based on the developments which took place during this period, since this was also the period of some of the most important political changes.

#### THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT

The King ruled with a small group of Elders called Pya Kanee. The word Kanee in Kana language is a combination of two words, Ka,

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37. See Chapter IV for details.

38. Ibid.

39. Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V., (London: Churchill & Churchill, 1732), p. 380.

which has two meanings, Mother, or "fully-grown", "fully-developed" or "well-matured"; and nee, which means "a man" or "a person". In this context, the King ruled with a small group of well-matured men, otherwise called The Elders. The King and the Elders constituted the decision-making body as well as the highest judicial court in the land. The executive arm of this body was a select group of men in the age-range of about forty to fifty years. This group was known as Pya Zuguru (the Lieutenants). Originally the King and the Elders met at the King's palace, for all matters of government. However, in the period after the Baan war there appears to have been a 'revolution'. A separate House of Elders was created, which was at a different location from the palace of the King. The highest authority in the land became the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee), instead of the King.

Prior to this period, even from the time of Gbeneyaaloo, the King was the highest authority in the land. Next to the king in the scale of authority was the Lah-Bue (the King's Deputy or Chief Minister), followed by the Elders, and lastly by the Pya Zuguru. The structure of power could be represented like this:<sup>40</sup>

Table 2

1.	Gbenemene	King
2.	Lah-Bue	Chief Minister/Deputy
3.	Pya Kanee	The Elders
4.	Pya Zuguru	The Lieutenants

However, the period after the Baan war witnessed a considerable change. The evidence suggests that the king was confronted by a strong opposition from some of the great warriors who took part in that

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40. cf. Testimony by His Highness Chief M.A.M. Tonwe III, op.cit. Text 61, p. 224.

war. In the face of such opposition, the King conceded to some degree of political reform. The result was that a House of Elders was created as a separate institution from that of the palace of the King. Consequently, the power of the King was considerably reduced. One may catch a glimpse of these developments in the following testimonies:

The founders of communities and the Elders and the House of Gbenekote were the actual rulers of these towns ... Then Gbenekote said, 'I am the Te-Ere-Bue (lit. The Father and the Owner of these Towns) but I alone cannot rule them'. Gbenekwerre said, 'I am the Te-Ere-Bue, but I alone cannot judge them'. Thus they divided the functions of government piece by piece. They selected Igbara Abbe House as the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee). They decreed that all the possessing spirits of ancestors and deities should be represented in that House. It was in that House that they always gathered in the first instance, whether they would hold Assembly or judge a case; or whether it concerned a public announcement.

If there was a public Assembly, unless they had all first retired to that place in orderly procession, and had there consulted together in whatever it was ... they would not return to the Assembly from Igbara Abbe House. The Assembly would wait patiently. When they came from there, that was the time they told the people at Eeyoburubu whatever they had decided. (41)

Another source gives the account of the origin of the House of Elders as follows:

Originally the palace of the King was also the meeting place of the Elders. With the expansion of towns and communities it became necessary to divide the functions of government in order to ensure for peace .... Thus in the process of dividing the functions of government they separated the House of Elders from the Palace of the King. (42).

The above testimonies clearly point to the fact that there was a political struggle between the King and the other veterans of the Baan war for the sharing of political power in the state. Thus in its

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41. Nuaka, Lemue of Tego (Aged 90). Interviewed at Tego on 2.12.83. Text 59, pp. 212-4.

42. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness), op.cit., Text 61, pp. 220-36.

historical place, the House of Elders was created out of that political struggle which undoubtedly occurred about the middle or in the latter part of the seventeenth century

#### FORMATION OF THE HOUSE OF ELDERS

##### Membership

After the partial 'separation' of the King from government, the oral tradition records that the work of organizing the new House of Elders was entrusted to a man called Assobienee. This Assobienee was the son of Gbenebalikina, the man who first introduced firearms into the Baan war, having purchased them from a customer and friend from Bonny.<sup>43</sup> Assobienee organized the membership of the House of Elders on the basis of the seven ancient (or original) lineages or kindreds of Ogoni known as Gaan. Obviously Assobienee did not make that decision of his own accord. It is significant to notice in the first text quoted above that reference was made to a decree stipulating that "all possessing spirits of ancestors" should be represented in the new House of Elders. In my opinion, that stipulation provided the constitutional basis for representation in the House of Elders. In their view the best way to represent all the original ancestors in the new House was to base the membership on the Seven Ancient Lineages (Gaan). They probably considered that on that basis, government might be completely removed from total control by the King and that the seven ancient lineages provided the best formula for extending participation in government to those who qualified for it.

By the seventeenth century, however, there was no doubt that the number of such ancient Gaan had greatly increased. Nevertheless, they

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43. Kinanwii, Kpoko of Tego (Aged 87). Interviewed at Tego on 5.1.84. See also my explanation in Chapter IV. Text 50, pp.179-282.

reckoned their judgement on the seven original ancient lineages. In that way, they effectively limited the membership of the House of Elders. Since the King was already a member of the House of Elders, the King's (or the founder's) Gaan was given one additional member of the House. Thus, including the King, the total membership of the House of Elders became eight. On that basis the membership of the House of Elders in the Boue kingdom was represented as follows:

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HOUSE OF ELDERS - THE BOUE KINGDOM : TABLE 3

<u>S/No.</u>	<u>Name (or Owner) of Seat</u>	<u>Name of Gaan</u>	<u>No. of Members</u>
1.	Gbenekwerre / Gbenekote House	Taankaan	2 members
2.	Gbenebalikina / Assobienee House	Abere	1 "
3.	Gbenekiri House	Noobana	1 "
4.	Gbenebio / Gbenebaligboro House	Dookunu	1 "
5.	Gbeneguatee / Gbenenaa House	Joko	1 "
6.	Gbenetigina House	Gbaabio	1 "
7.	Gbom / Gbenelakarakue House	Barabuue	1 "
8.	Gbenegaraa- Tigina House	Kono	1 "

Notice that the eighth Gaan named Gaan Kono above was not one of the original Seven Ancient Gaan of Ogoni. According to the oral tradition, Gaan Kono branched off from Gaan Gbaabio as a result of a quarrel which occurred at a Yaa ceremony. The quarrel resulted in a bitter fight which caused a schism in Gaan Gbaabio. Gbenegaratingina led a dissident group from the original Gaan and founded a new Gaan

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known as Gaan Kono.<sup>45</sup> It was apparently named after Kono Boue, the principal town of the Boue kingdom. Since Kono Boue was founded in the seventeenth century during the Baan war, it means that Gaan Kono came into being some time after the seventeenth century, and most probably long after the House of Elders of Boue had been constituted.

The oral tradition states that one member with observer status was granted to Gaan Kono because a prominent member of this Gaan named Nii Yeegboronwaa married a great-great-grand-daughter of King Gbenekote, named Deedu. Deedu herself was a direct daughter of Gbenegaraa-Naalo, who descended from Gbenekote. Having achieved pre-eminence by obtaining the highest title of Gbene, he branched off from Gbenekote House and founded a separate House - the House of Gbenegaraa-Naalo.<sup>46</sup> This marriage associated the House of Nii Yeegboronwaa with the royal House. Since Nii was from Gaan Kono, they honoured the Gaan by granting it membership of the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee) albeit with observer status.<sup>47</sup> That is why the membership in the above schedule appears to be more than eight.

Further reforms were made at a later date by a grandson of Assobienee by name Igbara Abbe. The source reports that Assobienee 'bequeathed' the authority to organize and lead the House of Elders to his grandson Igbara Abbe. One of the reforms for which Igbara Abbe was remembered was the introduction of 'Nominal Members' into the House of Elders. The Nominal Members were those members whose membership did

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45. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit. Text 61, pp. 220-36.

46. Dezua, Koanye (Prince) of Kwerre House, Kono Boue (Aged 87). He was interviewed at Noobana on 27.12.83 and by personal communication by letter on 22.5.85. Text 43, pp. 192-4.

47. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit. Text 61, pp. 220-36.

not derive from the membership of their ancestors. Such members did not have their permanent seats in the House of Elders. The explanation for this was that at the time the House of Elders was created under the leadership of Assobienee, a certain number of Gaan among those which were entitled to send one member each, did not actually send a representative to assume their place in the House of Elders. Perhaps there were no qualified candidates in such Gaan at the material time. Thus in time those seats lapsed into oblivion.

Another point which contributed to the situation was that in Ogoni numbering, the number four was used in ritual circles as a substitute for the number seven. But the number seven was a sacred number which was frequently applied in ritual services. Thus if in a ritual sacrifice, seven numbers of a certain item were required, four numbers of that item were actually used, and it was as though seven numbers of the said item had been used. This principle was applied at the time the House of Elders was formed. At that time only four members representing four Gaan actually attended the House of Elders. Those four were counted as the equivalent of the seven statutory members. The four members together with the King formed the 'complete' membership of the ancient House of Elders. In theory, however, the number was seven plus the King, eight members. Thus when Igbara Abbe assumed control of the Elders he took practical steps to bring into the House the representatives of all the remaining Gaan who were not physically represented in the House of Elders. This was what was referred to in the oral tradition that Igbara Abbe introduced the 'Nominal Members' into the House of Elders. Legally, he did not increase the membership of the House to more than eight. He only established membership by making

by making it possible for the full physical representation of all the Gaan that were entitled to membership.<sup>48</sup>

HOW ASSOBIENEE BECAME THE ARCHITECT OF THE HOUSE OF ELDERS

According to the oral tradition, when the King was the sole ruler in the land and the palace of the King the highest court and centre of government, the King and the Elders who supported him made use of a group of physically strong and courageous men, who enforced the order of the government. To get such men, the King and his supporters searched the towns and communities and recruited such men to the King's service. Assobienee was a leader of such a group of men who did service for the King.

If a man was sued in the palace of the King, the King sent Assobienee to summon the accused person. If the accused was a strong man, or if he was recalcitrant, Assobienee was ordered to arrest him and to bring him bodily to the King's Palace. When the person struggled with Assobienee, the latter broke his limbs to disable him and did not care even if he died. (49)

Another informant gave the account like this:

The Elders employed Assobienee to be near them in order that he might watch over their interests. If any one broke their law, he should arrest that person. Whenever the Elders settled a divorce case, they gave of the fees paid, three manillas to Assobienee ... The Elders paid him this money as wages for his work for them. For it was he who used to ensure that their laws were enforced completely. (50).

As stated above, Assobienee was the son of Gbenebalikina, who, by the very prefix of his name, was not only a great warrior, but also the first man to possess firearms in Ogoni, which when they were introduced

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48.. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit. Text 61, pp. 230-2.

49. Ibid.

50. Assoo, Koobee, of Uwegwere (Aged 120). He was interviewed at Uwegwere on 12.1.84. Text 47, pp. 164-66.

into the Baan war effectively brought the war to a quick end by giving to Boue a decisive victory.<sup>51</sup> Assobienee had such a bulwark of power behind his back. Besides, Assobienee had his own outstanding physical strength and courage which earned him recognition and brought him into the service of the King. Moreover, Assobienee came on the scene in a particularly critical period in Ogoni, the aftermath of a great war, the Baan war.

It seems that the great warriors who fought in that war came to the realization that they all had made tremendous sacrifices to preserve the peace and the security of the state. They therefore felt strongly that it was time that they all also joined hands together in determining the affairs of the state, and that it was no longer the ideal thing to let the King alone control the destiny of the State.

They decided that all the functions of government should not be vested in the King alone. For the King would not live alone in his Town, even though he was the founder of the Town. (52)

In these circumstances, they got Assobienee, the strong man, on their side and there is little doubt that what took place was a grand coup d'etat. To ensure that the action was successful they placed Assobienee in charge to organize the new power structure. Thus the House of Elders came into being probably in the seventeenth century.

#### THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HOUSE OF ELDERS

The Elders were responsible for war and peace. In time of crisis such as war or a great epidemic, the Elders were by 'law' never to

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51. Kinanwii, Kpoko (Chief) of Tego. op.cit.

52. Tonwe, III, M.A.M. (His Highness) op.cit. Text 61, p. 230.

vacate the town. They were to stay at their House to pour the libations, to prepare the rituals and to make the medicines and potions which would bring the crisis to the desired end. The Elders did not go to battle but they remained at home to strengthen the people. If a warrior was wounded in battle, the treatment of such a person was the responsibility of the Elders. If a citizen (usually an important citizen) was in a state of crisis, such as a coma or seizure, information was sent to the House of Elders, who sent one or two of their members to act as intercessors between the victim and the supernatural, pouring libations and speaking prayerful incantations to the Supreme God to spare the life of the victim.<sup>53</sup>

When the House of Elders sat as the highest court, it dealt with only the most serious cases, such as murder, witchcraft, sorcery and all cases concerned with the loss of human life. When one of such cases was brought to the House of Elders it took seven sittings for it to be disposed of. The seven sittings could extend over two months or two years, depending on how urgent the circumstances of the case were. During that time, the case went through prescribed stages. The Court met always on the first day of the Ogoni week,<sup>54</sup> i.e. on Deemua only. The cases that were dealt with at the King's court, or at the palace were land cases, such as cases about farms, raffia palm bushes, oil palm bushes; adultery cases, divorce cases, affray, theft, slander, defamation, etc. The King, the Elders, and the Zuguru together took part in the settlement of such cases. But cases in the House of Elders were dealt with by the King and the Elders only. The

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53. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness) op.cit. Text 61, p. 234.

54. An Ogoni week consisted of five days, namely, Deemua, Deebom, Deezia, Deeson and Deeko.

Zuguru were not admitted to cases in the House of Elders.

The Elders not Kingmakers

The Elders did not have the authority to act as kingmakers. If a ruler was installed, the Elders were present as witnesses like the other citizens. However, after the new ruler had been selected and installed, he then presented himself to the House of Elders according to tradition. This was the occasion on which he presented the Traditional Basket to the Elders. The Elders then performed some ceremonial 'cleansing' on his hands. One of the actions performed on this occasion was that the new ruler made traditional gifts to all the previous rulers who had sat in that position, while the Elders recited their names. On this occasion Assobienee or his representative, or his spirit medium was present to perform the ritual cleansing of the King's hands. Although the Elders were present when the new ruler was installed, it was only after this ceremony in the House of Elders that they recognized him and accepted him as King and ruler.<sup>55</sup>

Usually the Elders did not recite only the names of the royal successors. They also recited the names of the founders of the separate communities and towns and the names of all other important personalities who contributed in various ways to the establishment of the state. One could see in this tradition a method by which the Elders 'compelled' the King to make a de facto recognition of other 'founders' besides himself. Secondly, by making this ceremonial ritual to the president of the House of Elders, the King thereby acknowledged the House of Elders as the Highest Authority in the land.

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55. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit.

This tradition created an environment in which the King was made to appreciate the importance of all the other personalities and architects of the state other than the royal lineage. It pointed back to the root cause of the political coup d'état which created the House of Elders. The facts seem to suggest that this tradition was invented to safeguard the aims and purposes of that political coup d'état.

The Kingmakers were the members of the royal Houses. In Kono Boue the Kingmakers were the members of Gbenekwerre House, Gbenekote House and Gbenetibarakan House. These were the Houses which met to select a new King upon the death of the incumbent. During the selection period, the identity of the elect was kept secret although the public could make their own guesses. The identity of the elect was released when the proclamation fixing the date of enthronement or installation was made. By this time all the traditional rituals have been completed.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, when a seat in the House of Elders became vacant, the Elders sent an official message to the Member's House informing them that their seat in the House of Elders had become vacant and that they should send their representative to fill the seat. On receiving such a notice the members of that House summoned a meeting in which they 'elected' one of their most senior members to fill their seat in the House of Elders. The person selected was usually the most senior first-born son (saaro) who must also be qualified in other respects, such as having performed the traditional rites and ceremonies and having achieved some titles. He then dressed the Traditional Basket to be presented to the House of Elders on an appointed date. With this he was introduced to the House of Elders.

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56. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness) op.cit. Tonwe III himself was installed in 1975, upon the death of Tonwe II, who ruled from 1943 to 1975.

THE HOUSE OF LIEUTENANTS (TO PYA ZUGURU)

The word Pya Zuguru was a close synonym of Pya Gbara, which means gentlemen. However, while the latter conveyed the notion of youthful exuberance and drive, the former portrayed a sense of nobility, power and wealth. Thus Pya Zuguru might also be translated as the gentry. They were called the Lieutenants because they formed the militant arm of the House of Elders. The House of Lieutenants (To Pya Zuguru) was the Junior or Lower House of government. No laws were made in the House of Lieutenants but laws passed in the House of Elders were implemented by the House of Lieutenants.

According to oral tradition, the House of Lieutenants was founded by a man from the House of Gbenegoo<sup>57</sup> by name Biiragbara,<sup>58</sup> which means Black Gentleman. Gbenegoo House was one of the noble Houses of Kwuribue before the Baan war and before Kwuribue was evacuated only to be refounded under the new name of Kono Boue.

Gbenegoo was also one of the founders of Kono Boue. Gbenegoo House was therefore one of the landlords of Kono Boue, the capital of Boue Kingdom. It is therefore of great importance to know that Biiragbara, the founder of Pya Zuguru, was himself a noble man. This, no doubt, explains why the organization which he founded had such noble characteristics and fulfilled such noble aims for the whole society.

It is, however, not quite clear when the House of Lieutenants was

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57. Inayo, Teera (Prince) of Gbenekote House, Kono Boue (Aged 55). Interviewed at Noobana on 5.3.84. Text 52, pp. 187-91.

58. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness) op.cit.

founded. It is generally believed that it was founded sometime after the establishment of the House of Elders. It is also possible that it was founded before the founding of the House of Elders. This latter suggestion is based on the fact that many of the functions which the Zuguru performed in society were functions which the leaders of the elite class (Pya gbara) fulfilled in society from a very early period in Ogoni history, as explained at the beginning of this chapter. Such functions included the organization of defence, organization of social activities such as sports, and tournaments and the execution of public or community services.<sup>60</sup> Leadership of such youth groups, namely the Pya gbara, was the duty of noble gentlemen, Pya Zuguru like Biira-gbara.<sup>61</sup>

What seems to have happened was that the impact of the Baan war infused a political dimension into many of these otherwise non-political organizations. The successful coup d'etat by a group of Elders led by the 'strong man' Assobienee, acted as a political incentive for the leaders of the Zuguru, who now imitated the example of the Elders and constituted themselves into a House of Lieutenants (To Pya Zuguru).

#### THE FUNCTIONS OF PYA ZUGURU

The Lieutenants or Pya Zuguru acted as the executive arm of the Elders by carrying out the decisions made by the House of Elders. All projects and decision made by the Elders were effectively carried out by Pya Zuguru. The following testimony provides some examples of the kind of duties carried out by the Lieutenants:

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60. Ngofa, Obo (Chief) of Aleto (Aged 58). Interviewed at Aleto on 4.3.84. Text 12, pp. 54-6.

61. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit.  
See also J.D. Osaronu (Chief) of Ogoloma, Onne, Interviewed on 25.2.84. Text 10, pp. 42-8.

They applied force to the decisions of the House of Elders. The Elders made decisions in their House, then they announced these decisions at the Public Assembly located at Eeyoburubu. After the announcement at Eeyoburubu, the Te-Ere-Bue then summoned a meeting of Pya Zuguru in which they discussed the preparations and fixed a date for the start. Before the date arrived a public announcement was made by the Town Crier, by means of the Royal Drum or Gong (Akere-Bue). The announcement carried the details of the task to be performed. All able-bodied men and women and young adults were expected to take part in such a communal task. On the set date, those who failed to take part in the communal service were penalised by Pya Zuguru through the imposition of fines. All fines collected were presented to the Elders. If there was a fight or war between two towns or communities it was the Zuguru who led the Boue troops into battle. The Zuguru were the warriors. It was in this connection that their real name was Pya Adam Gbara (lit. 'The Male Men', i.e. manly men or virile gentlemen). (62)

#### QUALIFICATION OF A ZUGURU

The first and foremost qualification of a Zuguru was popularity. A member of Pya Zuguru was a person who was well-known in society. He achieved this popularity by his outstanding participation in one or more of the important activities of the society, such as judo, sword play, or fencing, etc., or by being specially gifted in social organization and in community service.<sup>63</sup> I have already referred to the case of Gbeneakpana the Younger who was very popular as a youth because he excelled in sword play or fencing.<sup>64</sup> In this case, his society saw in him the qualities of a 'general' or 'commander in battle'. The sword was the greatest offensive weapon in those days. Being exceptionally superb in the manipulation of that weapon, the Elders knew that here was a man who could compel his enemies to make very limited choices -

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62. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness) op.cit.

63. cf. Testimony of Chief Obo Ngofa of Aleto, Leme. op.cit.

64. John Iwuagbo, "Concerning the Founding Fathers" in S. Kpone-Tonwe, "Report of Field-Study visit to Nama on 24 March 1984". Text 15, pp. 66-70.

to die or to retreat! But the Ogoni also knew that there was another ground on which to fight such a formidable adversary, namely on the spiritual ground. That was why the ancient Ogoni emphasized spiritual discipline in the youth as shown in the Yaa traditional rites. It is remarkable to notice that Gbeneakpana the Younger achieved a degree of excellence in this area as well. For he did not only submit to spiritual discipline, he actually became a medicine man himself.<sup>65</sup> Thus he combined in himself the qualities of physical and mental power with spiritual fortitude, and rose to the top of the society of his day.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, his name has never been forgotten in Ogoni oral tradition.

Apart from popularity, the Zuguru was expected to be a married man and a householder; a good farmer (producing bumper crops of 'King yams' (mgwe)); a man who owned his own house, and compound; a good palm wine tapper, a lover of progress in his community, and a man of honour. When a man like that had been accepted as a member of Pya Zuguru, he was required to make certain traditional payments. These included a fowl, some yams, a bunch of plantains, a bottle of gin, a large pitcher full of palm wine, and 400 manillas (zii boo kpugi). In a later period, the payments were increased to one thousand two hundred manillas (taa boo kpugi), twenty 'King yams', twenty rackets of mullets, a large pitcherful of palm wine, a bunch of plantains, and a bottle of gin. They cooked these things and ate them together in a fellowship of comrades and in honour of the new member.<sup>67</sup> After

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65. Na'uwe Leonard Opusunju of Kono (Aged 72). Interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-5.

66. This is indicated by the title of Gbene- in his name. His actual simple name was Akpana, then he became Gbeneakpana.

67.. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit.

this the new member was introduced to the Elders at the earliest opportunity.

#### THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

There were two Kana words which were used to convey the idea of Elder, namely Kabaari and Kanee. Kabaari referred to all the titled men who had risen to the topmost level of society irrespective of whether or not they were members of the House of Elders. The feminine of Kabaari was Kabaariwa. The term Kanee had no feminine; it was masculine only. This was probably because no women were permitted in the House of Elders. Pya Kanee referred to that small group of Pya Kabaari who were members of the House of Elders, and were therefore concerned with the work of government. Very often people used the two terms interchangeably without taking note of this important distinction.

To become a Kanee, one must necessarily be a Kabaari. The only difference between a Kabaari and a Kanee was that the latter knew by oral tradition that he descended from one of the Seven Ancient Gaan (lineages or kindreds) and being qualified, was selected by his House (BE) to represent them in the House of Elders. In theory, however, every freeborn Ogoni citizen who was not a descendant of a slave, was believed to have descended from one of these ancient Gaan.<sup>68</sup> However only those who had been studying and practising the traditions remembered their Gaan.<sup>69</sup> If a man was qualified and had been admitted as a member of Pya Zuguru, it was believed that if he lived long enough and prospered more he could be able to perform the higher traditions and become a Kabaari; and if he was from one of the ancient Houses,

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68. Bagia, J.P. (His Royal Highness). op.cit.

69. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Royal Highness). op.cit.

he could become a member of the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee).

To become a member of the House of Elders, one must be above fifty years old and must be the head of a House. One must have performed the traditional rites of Yaage and Yaanwii.

Kpa Bina, which was the highest title and the last stage of traditional rites, was not easy to perform. The title of Gbene was reserved only for people who have performed the rites of Kpa Bina. (70)

A candidate for the House of Elders must be spiritually upright and of unblemished character. He must be a married man<sup>71</sup> with children, a property owner (owner of land) and must be physically fit, intelligent, and a good orator.<sup>72</sup>

#### THE POWERS OF THE HOUSE OF ELDERS

Before the Baan war, the highest court and highest authority in Ogoni was at Luawii, the seat of Bariyaayoo. It was there that all cases pertaining to the taking of human life were referred. It was there also that persons condemned to death were sent for confirmation and execution. No other constituted body or authority could execute a criminal or any other person except the authorities at Luawii.<sup>73</sup>

It was also at Luawii that the Ogoni calendar containing the names of the days of the Ogoni week (see note 54) and the important feasts of the year was prepared; and according to the oral tradition this took

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70. Tonwe III, M.A.M., *op.cit.* See also "Kono Boue Statue Book", pp. 5-9 & p. 11. cf. Testimonies by Chiefs Nnaa Kpugita of Keneke and A'ean Gbigbo of Kwaakwa, *op.cit.* Text 46, pp. 159-63.

71. Laaka, S.O. (Revd.) of Onne, *op.cit.*

72. Kono Boue Statute Book, pp. 5-9 & p. 11

73. Tigiri, John, (Chief) of Luuyo, Gwaara (Aged 83). Interviewed at Luuyo on 10.3.84. See also testimony of Teewoo Nwimea of Luawii, (Aged 87), interviewed at Luawii on 19.3.84.

place as part of the re-arrangements following the Baan war.<sup>74</sup> As already explained in Chapter IV, Bariyaayoo was the elder daughter and heir of Zah. She ruled at Luawii after the death of Gbeneyaaloo but her dynasty continued long after she herself had died. The Bariyaayoo dynasty was the last Nama dynasty.

The Baan war brought about the decline of the Bariyaayoo dynasty. Boue emerged out of that war as the leading power and the highest authority. All cases of murder, witchcraft, sorcery, etc., were now referred to Boue. In Boue, the trials were conducted in the House of Elders at Igbara Abbe House, but the execution of condemned persons was carried out at Kako, which was the oldest village and war centre in Boue before the Baan war. But with the emergence of Kono Boue as the capital of the Boue kingdom, all matters were dealt with at Kono Boue. A war shrine and a new "Hall of Skulls" were built at the Yobue Centre in Kono Boue, which became the new war centre in Boue Kingdom after the Baan war.<sup>75</sup>

According to the oral tradition, the leader of the House of Elders, Assobienee, and Yobue, the commander of the Boue armies, went to Luawii and claimed Boue's rights. These rights included the right to try the big cases, the right to administer capital punishment, and the right to transfer Boue's treasures from Luawii to Boue.<sup>76</sup> Among the

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74. Tigiri, John, (Chief) of Luuyo, op.cit.; His Royal Highness M.A.M. Tonwe III, op.cit.; Chief Koobee Asoo of Uwegwere, op.cit.

75. Gbigbo, A'ean of Kwaakwa, op.cit.; see also Chief Adoo Gbarato of Noobana, 18.1.84 and Chief Inee Barigwere of ILooLoo (Aged 98) Interviewed on 3.1.84. Texts: 49, pp. 174-8 and 48, pp. 167-73.

76. Asoo, Koobee (Chief) of Uwegwere (Aged c. 120). Interviewed on 12.1.84 at Uwegwere. Text 47, pp. 164-6.

treasures claimed were the Boue skulls, for in ancient Ogoni, skulls were highly valuable treasures.<sup>77</sup> The skulls brought from Luawii by these men formed the first stores of the new Hall of Skulls built at Yobue Centre in Kono Boue.

In Boue, the Elders at Igbara Abbe House who presided over these matters dealt at two levels. At the first level they dealt with matters which pertained to Kono Boue town as a separate entity. At the second level, they incorporated representative Elders from the various Boue communities and they dealt with matters of wider consequences. For example, if a person from one of the towns was accused of witchcraft, or sorcery, and was brought to trial at Igbara Abbe House, some members of the House of chiefs of the town concerned would be expected to sit on the 'bench of judges' in the course of the trial. These Elders had power to order the execution of a condemned person. They could punish the leaders of any community or town if they arrogated to themselves the powers which belonged to the Elders at the Centre.<sup>78</sup> They could outlaw a community or town if the inhabitants contravened the laws of the state. When that happened a state of war was declared against that community or town. Under such circumstances the community under the ban was attacked, their property, particularly their farms, were free to be looted by able men as well as by men of all characters from the loyal communities. Their plantains were cut down, the houses of the leaders were deroofed, if they proved stubborn; their goats, sheep, fowls, etc., were seized. The community was put under pressure until the leaders sued for peace and paid the fines.

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77. Barigwere, Inee (Chief) of ILooLoo, op.cit.; see also Fogho, Doonee Nwigbue of Bara, Sii, interviewed 21.10.81. Text 20, pp. 83-4.

78. Tonwe III, M.A.M., op.cit.; He gave the example of Kaa community in Babbe whose chiefs were executed because they had executed a man whom they suspected as a foreign head-hunter without reference to the Elders at Kono Boue.

Once the Elders had publicly pronounced the ban on the disloyal community, the execution of the ban was usually the responsibility of the Zuguru, who then planned the strategy for carrying it out. They might decide to mobilize all the Kpaankpaan Secret societies in the loyal communities against the disloyal community. The aim was usually not to cause bloodshed or bodily harm to people but to ravage property and to disrupt society, as this testimony indicates:

In ancient times, the Kpaankpaan was the political force of the authorities or powers that were. If any citizen was stubborn, and the Kpaankpaan secret society was called upon to see to the matter, the Kpaankpaan society came with music and dance and took occupation of the man's house. Within a short time, they deroofed the house and did irreparable damage to the man's property. They continued the occupation until the stubborn person begged for peace. It was the Kpaankpaan that had the power to discipline society. (79)

It has to be noted that membership of such powerful secret societies like the Kpaankpaan was one of the prerogatives of the elite class such as the Pya Gbara as well as the Pya Zuguru. Thus when such a society was invited to punish a stubborn community or individual, it was really this class of people who were in fact taking the action. However, when they were on such expeditions, they did not necessarily go secret or in masks.<sup>80</sup>

They might decide to go in broad day light or at night, but either way all non-members must run away from their approach and shut themselves in behind doors. Moreover, the members were highly disciplined, so

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79. Imene, Nwii, of Kwaakwa (Aged 64). Interviewed at Kwaakwa on 28.12.83. Text 66, 259-61.

80. cf. Professor Robin Horton gives an example of the Kalabari who used masquerades to achieve similar results or to enforce law. "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa" in History of West Africa Vol. I, Ajayi & Crowder, eds. (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971), p. 108.

that under oath, they dared not reveal the actions of fellow members to non-members, or discuss them outside the inner circles of the society. Thus, whatever damage they caused in their attempt to punish the stubborn person or community was never blamed on any individual person or group of persons, because it was the 'action of the Kpaankpaan' and not of persons.

When the colonial forces advanced on Ogoni territory at the beginning of this century, it was in Boue kingdom that they encountered the toughest resistance. It was there too that they first learned about the Kpaankpaan society:

On arrival in the Ogoni country and while passing through the friendly portion messages were sent on to the seven towns specially mentioned in my instructions as requiring attention ... The seven towns however absolutely refused to submit to the government openly stating that they had no desire to be forced to obey its harassing laws. On enquiry it was found that these towns were the acknowledged leaders of the Akpakpa (sic) Secret society of which the Apia juju was the oracle. This Secret Society had branches in practically every Ogoni town ... The head chiefs of Bewa (Boue) and Betem, who were the heads of the Akpakpa (Kpaankpaan) Secret Society were .... captured and are at Egwanga awaiting an investigation of their case. (81)

The colonial invaders realized the tremendous power of the Kpaankpaan as a disciplined and well-organized militant force behind the indigenous governments throughout Ogoni. They therefore concentrated their efforts on these organizations by first discrediting them and then destroying them. They also took advantage of the Ogoni constitutional law which forbade the Elders from vacating the towns in times

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81. Captain E.H. Smith, "Extract of Aka and Ogoni patrol Report to the Hon. Provincial Commissioner, Calabar, dated 14.3.1907" in "Intelligence Report from Ogoni", Ogodist, File RP. 6402/Vol. II, Opobo Division, Calprof.

of emergency. Thus they lured the Elders of the Boue Kingdom into negotiations and then seized them and deported them to Egwanga, where they held them as hostages until their militant supporters laid down their arms and agreed to disband all those organizations like the Kpaankpaan which they saw as a threat to the colonial government.

Thus it has been shown from the foregoing analysis that in Ogoni the practice of government began from a very early period and continued to develop with specific institutions from the seventeenth century until the colonial conquest, in the early twentieth century. It might also be suggested that in the Kpaankpaan organizations which existed throughout Ogoni, a kind of 'standing army' was already in being.

#### Other Aspects of Social Organization and Social Ascendancy

There were opportunities for individuals to advance to positions of recognition in society. Such opportunities existed in the form of membership of certain elite societies, performance of acts of bravery and association with certain religious organizations. These groups of individuals were identified in the society as priests, mediums, medicine men, hunters and skilled craftsmen.

Hunting was practised in ancient Ogoni. Boys were taught the art of hunting from a very early age. The ability to hunt and kill small animals by boys was considered a mark of manliness, diligence and responsibility.<sup>82</sup> It was believed that a hunter was one who constantly practised the habits and character of a warrior. Thus the Ogoni dedicated two of their major annual feasts to hunting, namely the feast of

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82. Osaronu, J.D., (Chief) of Ogoloma, Onne, op.cit.

Yonwidam, which took place in March, and the feast of Nubien, which took place in August.

The word Yonwidam is a combination of three Kana words, each having a distinct meaning, viz: Yo means a feast or a deity; nwi means a child; and dam (or edam) means a male. Thus Yonwidam literally means feast of the male child, or of the virile youth, or of the rugged male. This was the feast of hunting or of the hunters. The feast marked the opening of the hunting season. Usually by March when this feast began, the most difficult part of the year's farm work had been completed. There remained the less difficult part of the work, which consisted mainly of weeding by women. It was at this time that the men took off to engage in hunting. The hunting expeditions continued through the dry months before the rains set in. By June when the impact of the rainy season had increased, the hunting season was brought to a close.

The provision of bush meat was an important luxury for the ancient Ogoni. The feast of Yonwidam therefore represented an occasion on which every man tried to provide bountiful bush meat for his wife and family to celebrate this feast. For example:

At the feast of Yonwidam, the men paid attention to their wives. Trappers, fishermen and hunters intensified their efforts in order to catch some big game which they would use for the feast of Yonwidam. They provided large resources of meat and food for the feast. They did this to please their wives. (83)

One of the highlights of the Yonwidam celebration was the great war

dance at Kako.<sup>84</sup> On the first day of the feast, boys, armed with mock weapons and dressed like men with well-girded loins and bells on waist, went there to show their prowess in fighting. Usually among such groups of boys were some who considered themselves tough and powerful. They challenged similar groups of boys from the other towns or parts of the same communities. The challenge often began by one group of individuals attempting to capture the mock weapons of the other group. Some days after the boys' celebration, the Elders, the warriors and some brave hunters went there for the great war dance known as Koogian. The word Koogian is a contraction of two Kana words, namely, Koo, which means friend, mate or comrade; and gian, which means bravery. Thus the koogian war dance was a dance by comrades of bravery.

In 1984, I came across a type-written document dated June 1964, by the Gbenemene I of Babbe, Tonwe II, in which he and his Elders tried to write down these traditional feasts in their order of occurrence and to state the major features of each of them. The following is a brief description of the Yonwidam celebration taken from that document:

During this occasion children received valuable gifts from their parents and were well-dressed in the appropriate costume, in which they went to the 'playground' to display their 'warlike' actions. Fifteen days after the opening celebrations, all the Elders, important men, and warriors went to the 'playground' and danced to a special music called Koogian (meaning the dance of the braves). During this time, all the dancers were dressed in their war garments and had their war 'hats' on. (85)

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84. Kako was the most ancient town and war centre of Boue. When Kono Boue became the capital of Boue in the 17th century, and a new war centre was built at Yobue Square in Kono Boue, Kako retained certain aspects of its traditional status, which included the Yonwidam celebrations.
85. Tonwe II, M.D.K. (His Royal Highness) Gbenemene I of Babbe, "Some important Festivals in My Clan", unpublished type-written document, written at Kono Boue, June 1964.

The above statement clearly indicates that the feast of Yonwidam which opened the hunting season was in fact a feast of war. It could be seen that hunting and war were close correlatives in the life of the ancient Ogoni.

While Yonwidam, the men's feast opened the hunting season, Nubien, the 'boys' feast' concluded the hunting season. In actual fact, however, both men and boys began the season from Yonwidam, but the aim was that the bulk of the meat should be preserved for the Great end-of-year feast known as Zua, which was coming on in August and whose celebrations coincided with the Nubien feast. An interesting description of this Nubien feast has been reproduced from the testimony of an informant. It confirms the fact that both feasts were designed to create interest in hunting as a manly sport and to enhance the status of hunters in society.

Another feast which was celebrated during the Zua celebrations was the feast of Nubien. It was celebrated between the first and the second Zua feasts; and it was celebrated once a year ... On Nubien day, husbands provided their wives and families with bountiful quantities of meat for the feast. The Bien or Nubien was a simple contrivance or trap used in catching small animals. It was the first contrivance used by boys to show their skill in hunting and trapping animals. Its proper use determined the future capability of a particular boy to be able to provide meat for his household. It was on Nubien day that some parents knew which of their boys had the resourcefulness which he would need in future as a hunter or as a provider. (86)

The word Nubien seems to have been derived from two Kana words, viz: Nu, which means a thing; and bien, which means a press. Thus Nubien means a "thing that will press" or "that will produce pressure".

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86. Tigiri, J.P. (Chief) of Luuyo, Gwaara. op.cit.

Accordingly, the Bien or Nubien consisted of a wooden frame weighted with hard beaten earth so that when it was set with a bait, it collapsed and pressed to death any small animals that attempted to eat the bait from it. From this it could be seen that the feast was designed to encourage boys in the habit of hunting. Similarly, the feast of Yonwidam was designed to stimulate men in the same noble practice at a much higher level.

With the initial celebrations on Yonwidam day, the hunting expeditions became intensified throughout Ogoni. The period of the Yonwidam feast thus represented a period of great excitement. Men tried to boost their masculinity and endeavoured to raise the women's expectations. Wives, mothers and women in general looked forward to their men with enthusiasm in anticipation of their success at the hunting expeditions. The names of those who succeeded in killing a big game or animal spread like wildfire. Moreover such men became popular with the Elders and with the medicine men. This was because their success had assured them of large supplies of meat. Their success was also a vindication of the power of the 'game-charms' which they had invoked on the animals before the hunting began.<sup>87</sup> Thus it will be shown in the next few sections that success in hunting was another avenue through which a man could rise to the higher social classes.

Out of the whole lot of hunters, a small number of them became outstanding. These were men who were especially brave as well as being experienced sharp-shooters. From hunting the regular game, they moved

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87. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness). op.cit.

on to hunting the dangerous animals, like the leopard, the elephant, or the python. Any hunter who killed a leopard or any such dangerous animal was awarded the title of Damgian (literally Male of Bravery, i.e. Brave Man or Gallant Gentleman). When a hunter killed an animal like the leopard, the whole animal was carried to the War Centre at Yobue Square, located at Kono Boue. There the Elders presided over the rituals. The killing of a fierce animal of this kind was treated in the same way as the killing of an enemy in battle, or in a hand-to-hand fight, or in a warlike action such as a raid. In the case of a human enemy, it was the head of the enemy which was brought to the war shrine, at Yobue Square. By tradition, it was illegal for any person to keep the head of a war victim in his own house. The same law applied concerning the body of a leopard. At Yobue Centre, certain ritual purifications were performed on the body and hands of the warrior or hunter to release him from the power of blood.

One of my informants, who himself had killed three leopards, and had three times received the title of Damgian, stated that among other things, the purification prevented the hands of the warrior or hunter from shaking, so that he could drink from a cup without splashing his wine:

That leopard which I shot at Bonny which you see there (pointing to its skin on the wall), that was the third leopard I have shot. When I shot my leopards, I took them to Yobue House, because there was no other place where people who shot leopards could take them, except to Yobue House.

For each bullet hole in the skin of the leopard the killer paid three manillas; and sixty manillas for one of the bullets which killed the leopard. If you ask me 'Who paid that money?' It was I who shot the leopard who paid the money. They said that I damaged the skin that belonged to deities. When the killer had stretched out the leopard at Yobue Square ... about three mediums would perform

rituals on him. These mediums must be of the highest class. They must be the mediums of men who founded the towns ... Gbenebega would perform some rituals on him so that he could hold a cup and drink from it without his hands shaking to splash out the wine before it touches his mouth. (88)

It is interesting to notice that in the four Niger States of Igbo, namely Abo, Onitsha, Oguta and Osomari, a similar tradition has been recorded by Professor Ikenna Nzimiro, in connection with what he termed the Igbu title. In Igbo, the term Igbu means to kill. According to Professor Nzimiro, the Igbu title existed in these four riverain Igbo states in pre-colonial times.<sup>89</sup> What is particularly interesting about the existence of Igbu title in these Igbo states and the existence of the Damgian title in Ogoni, is the apparent similarity of their rituals. While it is not within the scope of the thesis to discuss in any detail the apparent similarities between these two traditions, for purposes of comparison, it will be necessary to point out a few of them:

1. In Ogoni, the killer of a leopard underwent a prescribed set of rituals, including the purification from the power of blood.

In Igbo, the candidate for the Igbu title also went through a set of rituals, including the purification from the power of blood. But he was not necessarily the killer of the leopard. He could have bought it from someone else who had killed it. (90)

2. In Ogoni, the whole leopard was carried to the war centre at Yobue Square in Kono Boue at the time it was killed.

In Igbo, the candidate for the Igbu title might not necessarily produce the whole leopard. He could buy a jaw-bone of a leopard killed by someone else at some date in the past.(91).

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88. Gbarato, Adoo (Chief) of Noobana. op.cit.

89. Professor Ikenna Nzimiro, Studies in Ibo Political Systems: Chieftaincy and Politics in Four Niger States (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1972), p. 34.

90. Ibid., pp. 34-5.

91. Ibid., p. 35.

3. In Ogoni, the killer of the leopard traditionally went into 'the leopard's hibernation' (bogo kune) for a period of ten days (taa eeri). At the end of this period, he was led in a triumphal procession through the major market at Kono Boue amidst dancing, praises and great cheering. The skin of the leopard, strapped with a tender palm frond, was carried on a pole in front of the procession.

In Igbo, this period of hibernation varied from one night in one of the states to twenty-one days in another. In each case, there was also a triumphal procession through the major market of the area. However, instead of the leopard's skin, a leopard's jawbone and a tender palm frond were tied to a canoe-paddle and carried in front of the procession. (92)

4. In Ogoni, the insignia of the title of Damgian were two narrow raffia ribbons, one red, worn on the right wrist of the killer of the leopard, and one black-and-white, worn on his waist on top of the cloth; a finely-wrought grass arm-band, worn also on the right wrist, along with the red raffia ribbon and one old manilla.

In Igbo, "The insignia of an Igbu title consisted of a sword (mma Igbu) which represented the instrument used by the title holder in cutting off the head, a canoe paddle (amala Igbu), with a palm frond (omu) tied to it and signifying safe journey home after the engagement, an eagle's feather, symbol of military superiority and achievement, a human or leopard jawbone which was tied to the paddle, a red band tied around the head or worn across the shoulder with a bell attached to it, red being the symbol of bravery". (93)

5. In Ogoni, the meaning of the title of Damgian described the character of the holder of the title, namely that he was a Man of bravery.

In Igbu, the meaning of the title of Igbu described the action of the holder of the title, namely that he was a 'Killer' of something, in this case a leopard.

As stated above, the Igbu society existed in these Igbo states in pre-colonial times as a society of warriors or head-hunters; and at that time, as Professor Nzimiro explained, only the human head was

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92. Ikenna Nzimiro, Studies in the Political Systems ..., op.cit., p.35.

93. Ibid., p.35.

required for the award of the title. However, he further explains in colonial times when the hunting of human heads was abolished, a leopard was substituted for a human being. Later on a leopard's jaw-bone was substituted for the whole leopard in the majority of the states.

In considering the above analysis, certain questions arise. If the leopard element was introduced into the Igbu traditional title in Igbo in colonial times, then one may draw the conclusion that the leopard tradition in Ogoni was older. It may therefore be surmised that the leopard tradition in Igbo had been culturally transmitted from Ogoni. There are several reasons why this was probably the case. Firstly, it has been shown in Chapters IV and V that there were trade routes from the Igbo hinterland to the Ogoni coasts in ancient times. Secondly, several elements in the insignia of the Igbu traditional title appear to be innovations on those of Ogoni. For example, the red cloth replaced the red raffia ribbon (ikeeneewa); the canoe paddle replaced the pole, etc.. Thirdly, in the transmission there was a tendency to mix elements which belonged to another tradition into the leopard tradition. For example, in Ogoni, there was no eagle feather in the insignia of the leopard tradition. The eagle feather fixed in a circular crown known as kpanabee was reserved for the purely military tradition of Yaa. This eagle crown was worn by all the Yaage candidates, fully armed, on the occasion of the Yaa 'Marathon', and by the great warriors on occasions of the war dance during the celebration of such military-oriented feasts as the Yonwidam. This was what the Gbenemene I of Babbe, Tonwe II, referred to in the passage quoted above as "war hats". Fourthly, the significance of a canoe-paddle as part of the insignia of the Igbu traditional title in connection with the killing of a leopard

needs to be re-examined. Obviously, it is not being suggested that a canoe paddle has anything to do with the actual killing of a leopard. But reference to some collateral evidence may provide some clue which will explain the significance of the canoe-paddle in the tradition.

Professor Robin Horton has described an association of head-hunters existing in Kalabari in pre-colonial times. In the era of the Atlantic slave trade, this association of head-hunters became known in New Calabar as Koronogbo (literally the Strong Club). Together with Ekiné and the Canoe-House, it became one of three key institutions of that state.<sup>94</sup> According to Professor Horton, the targets of this Society were the Igbo and the Ibibio:

It is difficult to be sure what the aims of this group really were, but older informants say that its members came out on certain appointed nights and challenged everyone they met. If those challenged gave their names with a good Kalabari accent, they were allowed to go their way. But, if they gave their names with an accent betraying Ibo or Ibibio origin, they were promptly seized and killed. My own feeling is that Koronogbo was probably more important in threat than in execution. (95)

It will be recalled that during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, the river Niger was a great commercial highway between the Niger Igbo states and New Calabar, as well as the other Ijo states. The Igbo slave merchants plied the Niger highway transporting their slaves to the coasts. It is possible that the Niger-Igbo slave kings encountered the activities of the Koronogbo society in New Calabar in the course of their trade in that area. In reply, they founded their own Igbu

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94. Horton, Robin, "From Fishing Village to City-State: A Social History of New Calabar" in Man in Africa, ed. Mary Douglas and Phyllis M. Kaberry (London, Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1969), pp. 37-58; see p. 54.

95. Ibid., p. 54.

Society. When this background is brought into perspective, the role of the canoe-paddle in the insignia of the Igbu traditional title becomes significant. Thus Professor Nzimiro was correct when he explained that the canoe-paddle signified a safe journey home after the engagement. It may be argued therefore that the Igbu traditional title of Igbo had its origins both in Kalabari and in Ogoni.

Hunting enjoyed a very high popularity in ancient Ogoni. According to the oral tradition, the founder of modern hunting in Ogoni was Gbene-balikina, the man who introduced firearms into Ogoni during the Baan war in the seventeenth century, as explained in the last two chapters. The oral tradition states that he founded the Hunters' Society and a House of Hunters (To Uwegbo). There are two terms connected with the 'history' of hunting in Ogoni, namely Ton Uwegbo and To Uwegbo. The word Uwegbo is a combination of two Kana words, viz: Uwe, which means a bush, and gbo which means a dog. Thus Uwegbo literally means "the dogs' bush"; and that was the term for hunting. Accordingly Pya Uwegbo literally means "people of the dogs' bush", i.e., hunters.

Originally the Ogoni hunted with dogs. A group of men, armed with knives and spears, set some game traps at the opposite end of a bush or forest and waited to kill or catch the animals. Then the hunters let loose a pack of highly drugged hunting dogs, each having on its neck several dangling bells and mini-gongs. Inside each of the bells and mini-gongs was fitted loosely a small bar of iron or wood to produce jingling sounds as the dogs charged to frighten and to chase out the animals towards the waiting men. Occasionally, some of the waiting men were killed especially by the dangerous animals, such as the leopard or

the python. That was why a man who killed one of these animals was honoured.

Now the words Ton and To are similar but they also have important distinctions. To simply means a house. Ton is a contraction of Keton, and it means a home, or resting place, a waiting place, or a stable position. Ton Uwegbo therefore meant 'the home of the hunters', i.e. their resting place after the full day's hunt, or the place where they assembled to share out the meat according to tradition. This was a square on the outskirts of the town. Evidently Ton Uwegbo was the older word which applied to corporate hunting and to hunters in ancient Ogoni. In the seventeenth century, when Gbenebalikina introduced the gun, hunting became a higher institution. A House of Hunters, To Uwegbo, was founded. The oral tradition credits Gbenebalikina with the founding of the House of Hunters.<sup>96</sup> Another version of the oral tradition stated that he was the first Ogoni man who used the gun to shoot an animal, when he tried out the gun on a goat.<sup>97</sup>

With the knowledge that the gun was both a powerful weapon of war, as well as for hunting, all the leading men of the state rallied round Gbenebalikina, and an inner club was formed at Kono Boue, known as the Hunters' Society (Pya To Uwegbo), with Gbenebalikina as the head, and their place of meeting was the House of Gbenebalikina. This society controlled and regulated all hunting in Ogoni. They also collected meat tribute on all game killed during the annual corporate hunting, following the Yonwidam feast. Its membership was highly restricted

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96. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness), op.cit.

97. Kinanwii, Kpoko (Chief) of Tego, op.cit.

and consisted of the very top men of the state. The following testimony gives an idea of the nature of this highly elitist society:

The founder of professional hunting and the Hunters' Society (To Uwegbo) was Gbenebalikina. He became the founder of modern hunting because he was the first man to introduce the gun into hunting in Ogoni. It was the Baan war which made Gbenebalikina acquire the gun. The Baan war brought many new things and changes into Ogoni ... Being the first person to use the gun in Ogoni, he became the 'Father of Hunting' in Ogoni.

People used to join the Hunters' society like they used to join the House of Elders. If a man possessed a gun, he could go to a hunting expedition and if he was able, he might kill an animal but that did not show that he was a member of the Hunters' Society. (98)

It is important to notice that the House of Hunters (To Pya Uwegbo) was founded before the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee). The explanation for this is very obvious. At the time Assobienee, the son of Gbenebalikina became the founder of the House of Elders, Gbenebalikina was no longer alive; nor was Gbenekiri, the first king of Boue and all Babbe after the Baan war and contemporary of Gbenebalikina. It may be suggested that the founders of the House of Elders took their cue from the House of Hunters, of which Gbenebalikina was the founder and head. The fact that Gbenebalikina was no longer alive explains why the leaders entrusted the organization of the newly formed House of Elders into the hands of Assobienee, instead of to Gbenebalikina, even though Gbenebalikina was posthumously made the Head of the House of Elders. That was the position which his son, Assobienee, occupied.

Once the hunting season was declared open on Yonwidam day, the

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98. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness), op.cit.

hunting continued throughout the season at the rate of one expedition a week on every Deeson.<sup>99</sup> The founders of the House of Hunters who were also the very top brass of the Society, regulated the hunting procedure in such a way that each of the leading men of the age was honoured with one hunting expedition in the year as a kind of meat tribute for their bushes and forests. For example, there was one annual hunting expedition called Uwegbo Yonoobana, which was dedicated to the honour of King Gbenekiri, and named after Gaan Noobana, which was the Gaan of King Gbenekiri. The hunting was done on the territory belonging to King Gbenekiri. Similarly there was one annual hunting expedition called Uwegbo Gbenebalikina which was dedicated to the honour of Gbenebalikina, the great warrior and founder of the Society of Hunters. There was one hunting expedition for each of the founding fathers who owned forests. Such expeditions took place in the forest or bushes belonging to the person in whose honour the hunting was conducted.

One hunting expedition a year was for Gbenekiri, which was called Uwegbo Yonoobana. During that time a feast dedicated to Gbenekiri was celebrated. Gbenekiri who became a spirit (Zim), was the founder of Gaan Noobana. Another hunting expedition was for Gbenebalikina, known as Uwegbo Gbenebalikina. Gbenebalikina was the founder of Uwegbo in Khana (Ogoni). He was the Te-Ere-Uwegbo (Father of Hunting), because it was he who introduced the gun into Ogoni and was the first to use the gun in the area. He was the Te-Ere-Naa (Father of the gun).

If a man accidentally shot somebody with a gun, the casualty was taken to the House of Gbenebalikina for ritual 'inoculation' so that the treatment that

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99. The week referred to here was the Ogoni week of five days. Deeson was the fourth day of the week. It was the day of gathering in of agricultural produce against the fifth day, Deeko, which was the principal market day and a day of rest for most men. Usually the professional hunters from distant places like Gokana, Tee, Kpong, Baan, etc., did not return to their homes that Deeson evening. They spent the night in Boue at the homes of their friends, drinking the palm wine. They returned home on the Deeko after doing a bit of shopping at the Dukono market.

would be applied to the person might be effective. Any Zim (ancestor) who was honoured with a hunting expedition had a forest of his own in which the hunting was done. Only Yobue did not have a forest of his own because he was a refugee (Iyiinayo). Thus on the day that they gave a hunting expedition to Yobue, it was a general hunting in the bushes surrounding that part of the town... (100)

By the above analysis, it has been shown that hunting and hunters were important aspects of social organization in ancient Ogoni. It has been shown also that through success in hunting a person could rise to the higher levels of the social order, and that in ancient Ogoni hunting and war were complementary activities.

#### Priests, Mediums, Medicine Men and Skilled Craftsmen

The importance of priests, mediums, medicine men and skilled craftsmen in ancient Ogoni society cannot be overemphasized. All state rituals in time of war or in peace were performed by priests, mediums and medicine men. When a warrior was wounded on the battlefield, the treatment was done by high state medicine men, mediums or priests. When going to war, the mediums and priests were consulted. If there was an epidemic or a state of general crisis, the mediums and priests were consulted and put to work to stave off the danger. For example, as reported in the oral tradition, when the newly-founded Buan community was faced with the threat of a civil war, the chief of Buan invited Gbeneakpana the Younger to come and make charms for him so that there might be peace in his community and that his people might be united.<sup>101</sup>

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100. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness), op.cit.;  
See also Chief Uranee F. Iwerebe et al of Uwegwere, interviewed on 22.1.84; Text 44, pp. 152-6.  
Chief Inee Barigwere of ILooLoo, Boue (98). op.cit.

101. Na'uwe, Leonard Opusunju of Kono (72). Interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81.

Soon after the Ogoni founding fathers arrived at Nama, they established a state religion. The officers responsible for the establishment were priests, mediums and medicine men.<sup>102</sup> From that state religion the title of Gbene has been transmitted to posterity. Again at Kugba, which was the second settlement of the Ogoni ancestors, it was stated in the oral tradition that two of the top leaders of the Ogoni settlers, namely Gbeneyaaloo and Gbeneyiranam, discovered a powerful spirit in a rock that was in a forest near to the settlement. They communicated with the spirit force that inhabited that rock and made it a deity as well as a source of personal power. According to the oral tradition, the two men kept the existence of this spirit secret to themselves.<sup>103</sup> Gbeneyiranam became the first priest of the deity, whose name was given as Yogurezoghomo. In later times it became known as Bari-Sii (i.e. the earth-deity of Sii). The forest was later cleared and its site is where the town of Sii stands today.

Another example may be given in the time of the Baan war. When the war became very tough for the Southern States, it was reported in the oral tradition that the leaders of Boue heard that there was a powerful medicine man at Bonny in the house of Ikuba, the state deity of Bonny. The account states that the Boue leaders sent men to Bonny to bring this medicine man to come and make war charms for them in connection with the on-going war. One of the men who travelled in the delegation to Bonny was Gbenekiri. The oral tradition reports that it was on the occasion that Gbenekiri brought the raffia palm from Bonny

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102. Birinee, T. Appolos (Chief) of Sii (Aged 53). Interviewed at Sii, on 18.10.81. Text 21, p. 85.

103. Iwuagbu, John, "Concerning the Founding Fathers" ..., op.cit.

to Ogoni. According to the account Gbenekiri saw some Ibibio men (probably slaves) tapping palm wine from the raffia palm at Bonny and liked the new drink. It is probable that they were entertained with a drink of palm wine for the first time. On their return, Gbenekiri brought some raffia palm seedlings with him and planted them in Boue. The following testimonies explain the background to the introduction of the raffia palm into Ogoni:

It was at that time that Gbenetigina came from Nama and settled at Gbam, Boue. The district where he settled first was Ke'on. While he was there at Ke'on, the Baan war continued to rage. So they went to Bonny for they had heard that there was a medicine man at Bonny. They brought Yobue from Bonny. (104).

Kono Boue and the whole Boue had prospered and become a mighty place. But the Baan war had been going on. The war had become a war between Boue and Baan. Therefore Gbeneteebete and Gbenekiri travelled to Bonny. At Bonny they discussed the war with Bonny people. Bonny people gave them a medicine man who used to serve in the House of their deity called Ikuba, who they said would help them to win the war. Gbenekiri and Gbeneteebete brought the medicine man named Yobue from Bonny to Boue. On the trip from Bonny, Gbenekiri obtained raffia palm seedlings which he brought to Boue and planted them there. Thus he became the person who introduced the raffia palm and palm wine tapping into Boue, and from there to all parts of Ogoni. That was how Gbenekiri became the 'owner' of the palm wine. That was why the feast of Gbenekiri was also called the feast of wine (Yomii). (105).

Apart from the case of seeking the services of a medicine man in connection with war, the above testimonies also contain a vital piece of information, which deserves a closer attention; and that is about the introduction of the raffia palm into Ogoni. This account raises

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104. Deemua, D.D. (Chief) of Gbam, Boue (Aged 62). Interviewed at Gbam on 5.12.83. Text 45, pp. 157-8.

105. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness), op.cit.

certain questions. Why was it that up till the seventeenth century the Ogoni did not know about the raffia palm and the palm wine, whereas the Ibibios and the Ijo knew about them? Yet, as already shown, the Ogoni settled in the Eastern Niger Delta before the Ijo. There may be a number of reasons but this appears to be the most important. The raffia palm is not a salt water plant. It grows in fresh water areas. Professor E.J. Alogoa has shown that when the Ijo settled in the Niger Delta, they first migrated through the mainland. It may be argued that the Ijo became familiar with the raffia palm and its uses during their long migration through the mainland.<sup>106</sup> In contrast, as already explained, the Ogoni did not migrate to their present home from the interior. They came by sea. But this raises still yet another question. Where was the original home of the Ogoni? Since they were not familiar with the raffia palm and its wine, its implication is that their original home was not within the rain forests of West Africa. They probably came from a savanna region where the raffia palm does not grow. The account of Gbeneyaaloo's spirit-medium which spoke of very long treks through dry regions where there was no water deserves careful consideration.<sup>107</sup>

One inconsistency in the above testimony must be explained. The testimony asserts that Gbenekiri introduced the raffia palm into Boue and thence to all Ogoni on the occasion of the mission to Bonny. This was in the sixteenth century. But another testimony states that Gbenebalikina, a contemporary of Gbenekiri, introduced the gun into

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106. Williamson, Kay, "Some Food Plant Names in the Niger Delta", International Journal of American Linguistics, Vol. 36, 2 (1970), pp. 156-167.

107. Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-Medium of Gure, interviewed on 12.3.84. Text 16, pp. 71-4.

Ogoni during the Baan War and gave to Boue the victory in that war. According to the informant, Gbenebalikina got information about the new weapon from a Bonny friend and customer when he took his palm wine to the Kwuri market (Du Kwuri) at the sea coast.<sup>108</sup>

It is true that Gbenekiri was acknowledged as the 'owner' of the raffia palm and of the palm wine, and that he was actually honoured or deified as the god of wine (Yomii):

In the early times the Yomii feast was celebrated at Nuloo (Palm wine camp). It was a celebration in which they remembered their past achievements. They honoured the raffia palm as one of the gifts of God. They remembered King Gbenekiri for introducing the raffia palm into Kana (Ogoni) and for being the first man in the area to tap the palm wine from the raffia palm. All Boue kingdom and all the Houses of Gbenekiri levied money and raised funds out of which they slaughtered a bull in ritual honour to Gbenekiri. They did so as a memorial to him because he introduced the raffia palm into Boue kingdom and to all Ogoni, that he created the occupation of palm wine tapping and the production of palm wine as a drink of the people. (109)

Similarly, Gbenebalikina was acknowledged as the 'Father' and 'owner' of the gun (Te-Ere-Naa), and honoured in all rituals pertaining to hunting and to the gun as the 'god' of the gun.

Gbenekiri probably introduced the raffia palm while they were still at Toga. Toga was founded in the same period as Kwuribue.

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108. Kinanwii, Kpoko (Chief) of Tego, op.cit.

109. Iwerebe, Urane Frank (Chief, 65); Zaga, Baridon (Chief, 60); and Gbarato, Gosi (Chief, 92); interviewed at Uwegwere on 22.1.84. Text 44, pp. 152-156.

At that time the language of Boue people was essentially Gokana.<sup>110</sup> Thus the Ogoni word for palm wine (mii) is Gokana. Notice also that the family name of Tonwe, who was a descendant of Gbenekiri is Gokana; and it means literally one who stands as the rearguard of another, or protector. Thus it may be suggested that Gbenekiri introduced the raffia palm in Ogoni before the Baan war. This may also explain why he was chosen to lead the mission to Bonny to obtain the gun and to bring the medicine man. This must have been done with the knowledge that he had been there before.

On the other hand, it is possible that Gbenekiri actually introduced the raffia palm on that occasion, as stated in the oral tradition. If that is true, then it may be argued that what Gbenebalikina went to Kwuri market to sell during the war was not palm wine, but something else, most probably yams. Therefore, the notion that it was palm wine must be seen as a later innovation by the transmitters of the tradition, as palm wine became a popular product with the upper class.

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110. See Chapter V for my explanations.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### OGONI AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

Ogoni was surrounded on all sides by neighbours. These included the Igbo, the Ijo, the Ibibio and the Ikwerre. Ogoni oral tradition records that these neighbours arrived at their present locations at different times. Ogoni established external relations with each of these groups through trade. In some cases there were marriage relations and cultural exchanges. Although there were times when war broke out between Ogoni and some of her neighbours, Ogoni oral tradition does not appear to emphasize these occasional episodes. As one informant put it, there was always the constant presence of mutual respect and mutual fear of each other.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, the object is to examine the extent and character of the early relations between Ogoni and its neighbours.

#### The Igbo (Pya Gbon)

The Igbo lived in the area to the north of Ogoni beyond the Imo River. They were the largest ethnic nationality with whom Ogoni had external relations; and they consisted of many dialectal groups.<sup>2</sup> The earliest Igbo group mentioned in Ogoni oral tradition were the Asa, whom the Ogoni called Saga:

There was also a people called "Saga" people (Pya Saga) who used to come to Kana (Ogoni) to clear the forests for our forefathers. They were neither Ibibio (Bibi), nor Ibani (Ebani), nor Igbo (Gbon). They came from places much farther away. (3)

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1. Barigwere, Inee (Chief) of ILooLoo (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at ILooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-73.
  2. Leonard, Major Arthur Glyn, The Lower Niger and Its Tribes, (London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1906), p. 31.
  3. Bagia, (His Royal Highness), J.P. of Gokana (Aged c. 70). He was interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, pp. 1-5.

The name "Saga" is a Kana idiom. It had been formed both by contraction and by alliteration, so that its meaning described both the people and the type of job they performed. The Kana word Saga means to slash or to cut at random. The picture is that of a butcher who places a large piece of meat on a slab and cuts it into tiny pieces by striking his knife at it violently and at random. In effect, that was the style of cutting that took place when the equatorial forests of Ogoni, with their thick undergrowth, were cleared. They had to be cleared in that way because they were tough and because there were no cultivated crops in them to be spared. According to the oral tradition, the Asa were doing this type of job for the early Ogoni farmers. They were migrant labourers who came annually at the time of clearing the forests and performed this type of job. Now from the name Asa and the Kana verb saga, the Ogoni formed an alliteration. To do this they dropped the first syllable in Asa then contracted the result with the Kana verb Saga. Thus -sa + saga = Saga or Pya Saga, meaning the "Saga people" or "those who slash" the forests.

The alliteration was derived from the sound of the name Asa and from the verb saga, the combination of which described both the people and the job they performed. However, when the job ceased to exist, the name remained in the oral tradition, but it then tended to apply only to "a people" instead of to "a people in connection with a job". In those days, there were more forests than the comparatively fewer people had need for. The farmers had many large farms and the fallow period was longer, so that the farms were like forests. In some cases, the forests were actually virgin forests. Thus extra hands were needed each year for the clearing of the farmlands as well as land for other purposes.

Such extra hands were still needed by good and successful farmers even in recent times.

The Asa appeared to have been the first external people who supplied the Ogoni with farm labour in ancient times. There might have been other Igbo groups who supplied similar labour, but the Asa appeared to have been the dominant group; they were probably more efficient at this type of job than all the others.

The fact that this people were actually the Asa has been confirmed by collateral evidence recorded among the Ngwa by Professor G.I. Jones. According to the story, the Ngwa were part of a larger group of Igbo during their migration stages from the west, probably west of the Niger. On reaching the Imo river, the Ngwa group crossed the river and settled on the east bank, while the Mbaise, who were part of the original group, remained on the west side of the Imo. However, when the Ngwa arrived on the east bank of the Imo, they found that the Asa were already settled there. The Ngwa conquered the Asa and pushed the bulk of them further south towards what is today the Ndoki borders. According to the story:

Their name was modified by the Ngwa to Asia (from the root sia, to cut), which said that their ancestors gave them this name to indicate that they were their servants, the people who cut wood, i.e. cleared the forests for them. (4)

Whether the Ngwa at a certain time in their 'history' enslaved the Asa is not within the scope of this study to prove. One thing, however,

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4. Jones, G.I. "The Aro Trading System", a new work now in press. This particular story was taken from the section in chapter 2, where the author discussed at length the various implications of historical myth or local traditions.

is clear from this evidence, that is the fact that the Asa were experts in clearing forests and that they worked as migrant labourers in this type of job for the early Ogoni farmers.

Another point in the Ogoni oral tradition which requires attention is the statement that this Saga (Asa) people "were neither Ibibio, nor Ibani, nor Igbo". This statement has also been confirmed by the Ngwa legend. The statement that they were not Igbo could mean a number of things. It could mean that the Asa spoke a language different from the Igbo language prior to their conquest by Igbo immigrants who migrated into the Imo valley and that they later spoke a dialect of Igbo as a result of that conquest. In that case, it might be suggested that the Asa were probably an autochthonous people who originally occupied an area in the Upper-middle Imo valley before they were conquered by the Ngwa. It could also mean that the name Igbo did not exist, or that it did not apply to all Igbo at the time the Asa made contacts with the Ogoni.

Apart from the above, the most important point, however, and one which is particularly relevant for our argument, is the assertion in the Ogoni oral tradition that the Asa were "from places much farther away". This statement has also been confirmed by the Ngwa oral tradition as indicated in the above-quoted passage from G.I. Jones. It states that when the Ngwa arrived on the east bank of the Imo River, they found the Asa already settled there. But the Ngwa attacked and pushed them to a place further south. Thus it is crystal clear from these two independent sources that the Asa originally lived in a place further north than where they are now. Secondly, that the Asa were one of the earliest groups from the Igbo hinterland who made contact

with the Ogoni, and that they performed the task of migrant farm labourers in forest clearing for the Ogoni farmers.

Thirdly, it is also clear from the two sources that the Asa were settled in the valley of the Imo River long before the Ngwa and the Mbaise settled in their present locations, which again supports the idea that they were probably an autochthonous people.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it shows clearly that when Ogoni was settled, most of what is today Southern Igbo was either not occupied or sparsely occupied, not by the Igbo but by some autochthonous peoples.

One question arises out of all these discussions. Why were the Asa, who, like the Ogoni, possessed iron weapons and tools, easily conquered by the Ngwa? One explanation would be that the Asa were not socially well-organized into large political units. They probably lived in petty independent, widely dispersed homesteads, so that when their enemy attacked each of these homesteads, they easily fell. Another explanation could be that both the Asa and the Ngwa probably lived together during an initial period. During that initial period, the Asa used their expertise in dealing with the thick forests of the Imo Valley in helping the Ngwa in clearing the forests to make room for the latter's settlement. At that time, the Asa probably performed such tasks not as prisoners of war or slaves but as independent contract labourers, based on their past experience, having performed the same type of tasks for the Ogoni. In that circumstance, the conquest of the Asa by the Ngwa must be seen in the context of later events, which

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5. Isichei, Elizabeth, Ibo People and the Europeans, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1973), pp. 31-32.

took place at the instance of the introduction of superior weapons, such as firearms. In that case, the conquest would have taken place at a much later period, i.e. in the era of the Atlantic Slave trade. It is probable that the Ngwa first got the gun before the Asa. If that was the case, then they must have got the guns through the intermediary of the Aro slave traders.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the supply of labour by the Asa, the Ogoni also had long trade relations with the Igbo hinterland, particularly the trade in iron. It is not certain what form or pattern this early hinterland trade took, but it is clear that it occurred before the coming of the Portuguese. According to the oral evidence, the Ogoni travelled to many far away places to obtain the iron which their blacksmiths used in making farm tools such as the kuna, the kontoa (spear-shaped hoe), the palm wine tapping chisels, etc. It was from the same source that they obtained the iron which they used in making such traditional weapons as the kobege (sword) and the spear-heads (suwe).

There was also a big trade in fish. Traders from Asa, Ngwa, Mbaise, Nkwerre, Ommuma and parts of the Igbo hinterland came to the Ogoni coastal markets to buy smoked salt-water fish and shells which were highly prized in the hinterland. Ogoni pottery was also in great demand in certain areas of Igbo. Trade in pottery was carried in canoes by the Ogoni through the Imo River into Ndoki area and from there either through Akwete into Orata area or through the Azumini 'river' into Ngwa, Asa and parts of Annang in Ibibio territory.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Isichei, Elizabeth, Ibo People ..., op.cit., pp. 124-5.

7. Kpone-Tonwe, Obeeye of Noobana (Aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Noobana on 27.11.84. Text 69, pp. 265-6.

During the era of the Atlantic slave trade, Ogoni continued to act as a major commercial route from the Igbo hinterland to the coast, and thence either to Bonny or to Okrika. In Chapter V, I referred to an eye-witness account, i.e. the story of the ex-slave girl, Mgbeké, who was discovered at Okrika by Archdeacon Crowther in 1880. She described how she was kidnapped at Onitsha and sold at a slave market in Bende. From Bende she was taken on an overland route to the coast. She was finally taken through Ogoni into Okrika.<sup>8</sup> Ogoni was the final station of the overland route before they were eventually taken across the sea by canoes either to Bonny or to Okrika.

Apart from the Aros, the Nkwerre were also very keen traders. Many of them settled in Ogoni, a great number of them having been brought into Ogoni by the Aros during the Atlantic slave trade, as this testimony indicates:

During the time of the slave trade, the Aro Chuku brought many people into Leme (Ogoni). The people they brought were mainly Nkwerre people of Igbo. When they (the Ogoni) asked the Aros why they brought these people, they answered that they had brought them to do yam work. That is why today you have some names in Leme with Igbo roots. (9)

It was not only the Nkwerre elements that were introduced into Ogoni by the Aros during that period. There were also other Igbo elements although the number of the Nkwerre appeared to have been very significant. Many of them naturalized in Ogoni after the slave trade was abolished. Many of these took to trading in the palm oil and palm kernel carrying business.

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8. Cooley, S.J.S. "An Igbo Slave Story of the Late Nineteenth Century and its Implications", Ikenga: Journal of African Studies, Vol. I, 2(1972), pp. 1-9.
  9. Laaka, S.O. (Rev.) of Onne (Aged c. 67). Interviewed at Ekara on 6.3.84. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

Apart from these, Ogoni appears to have established a generally friendly relationship with the Igbo from a very early period in their history. Many Ogoni men, especially those who had prospered, preferred to marry their second or third wives from Igbo. Usually their next preference as a source was Ibibio. The reason is very obvious. The Igbo being basically an agricultural people, seem to have possessed some qualities which were akin to those of the Ogoni, both being agriculturally industrious. Thus the Ogoni preferred to marry their extra wives from Igbo as a sign of their prosperity.

After this title feast of 400 Ntate sa<sup>\*</sup> the man became a recognized chief. He would then go outside Leme to either Igbo or Ibibio to marry another wife to make three wives. He was then a rich man and well-recognized Chief. He had enlarged himself, and by so doing, he had enlarged the state. The next stage was that each of his two Leme (Ogoni) wives would go either to Igbo or to Ibibio to choose each a wife for him. He would then have five wives; two of Leme (Ogoni) and three from 'abroad'. (10).

This pattern of marriage seemed to have proved very successful over the centuries, since the Igbo women who were married into Ogoni were able to adapt easily and successfully in their new environment. Usually after a short time such wives became fully assimilated; and they fitted well into the society.

One factor that was responsible for the success of the marriage relations between the Ogoni and the Igbo was that both groups practised similar kinship systems. As stated in Chapter IV, by the end of the seventeenth century, Ogoni had moved from the matrilineal endogamous

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10. Laaka, S.O. (Rev.) op.cit.

\* Ntate sa: one ntate sa = 22 large 'King yams' called Mgwe.

system of marriage to the patrilineal exogamous system with a virilocal practice. Although there were differences within the Igbo system,<sup>11</sup> the Ogoni usually married from areas which had marriage systems similar to their own. This was not the case with the other neighbours of Ogoni, who were thought to practice the matrilineal endogamous system.<sup>12</sup> In addition to having similar kinship systems both the Ogoni and the Igbo were agricultural people, so that the role of a housewife in an agricultural environment was in both cases the same.

Another factor which contributed significantly to the success of the external relations between Ogoni and Igbo was the role of Ogoni palm wine tappers and liquor producers. With the introduction of the raffia palm into Ogoni in the sixteenth century (see Chapter VI), many Ogoni men both young and old, practised the culture of palm wine tapping, and very soon they dominated the industry in Southern Nigeria. Many young men from Ogoni travelled far into the Igbo heartland, following the course of the Imo river along whose banks the raffia palm were known to be plentiful. Some of them also combined palm-tapping with crop cultivation. During their stay in Igbo land, individual friendly relationships as well as corporate relations were established. And many Ogoni young men married Igbo wives.

Perhaps one of the reasons that may account for these factors was the fact that there were not many major wars reported in Ogoni oral tradition against any Igbo groups, except the war against the Aros (Ch.IV).

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11. Cf. Talbot, P.A. The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. III, (London, Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 340-1.
  12. Alagoa, E.J. "The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder, eds., History of West Africa, I, (London, Longman Group Ltd., 1971), pp. 269-303.

In later years, however, during the colonial period, a few skirmishes were reported along the Ndoki borders. According to the evidence, the cause of those clashes was because the Ndoki attempted to convert lands which were granted to them by the Ogoni into Igbo territory.<sup>13</sup> Such actions were never contemplated in the pre-colonial times. There was ethnic inter-dependence and co-operation then. The age of massive ethnic migrations had long passed and the ethnic boundaries were already firmly established. The boundary between Ogoni and Igbo was particularly naturally demarcated by the wide Imo River. Thus the desire for territorial aggression and expansion did not exist. Even at the time the colonial rulers constructed the old hanging bridge across the natural boundary, the Imo River, they took care to carve the name Ogoni into one of the steel pillars which supported that old bridge across the Imo River, to indicate that the territory on that side of the river was Ogoni. This fact was discovered in 1977 by the Irikefe Boundary Commission appointed by the Nigerian Federal Government. A notice of this boundary demarcation between Ogoni and Igbo was first brought to public attention in a memorandum presented to the Commission by Chief S.E. Aforji on 9 April, 1976.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless the external relations between Ogoni and Igbo may be set in its proper perspective by beginning with an analysis of the relations between Ogoni and Ndoki who are the closest Igbo group on the Ogoni borders.

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13. Mpeba, Mbaedee Francis (Chief) of Nyoogo Luekun (Aged 98). Interviewed at Nyoogo on 19.3.84. Text 27, pp. 97-100.

14. Akekue II, (Chief) M.N. of Kpuite (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Kpuite on 16.3.84. Chief Akekue has written a book on the history of Ogoni entitled "Ogoni in Perspectives", (in Press). The above facts were read by the author from portions of a type-written copy during the interview.

NDOKI (IDOKI)

Discussion of the external relations between Ogoni and Ndoki raises a number of questions, among them this. Why is Ogoni oral tradition mindful of the ancient Asa and yet says almost nothing, beyond a few statements on trade and border disputes, about the Ndoki, who are its closest neighbours? One explanation for this was that Ndoki, like Bonny and the other neighbours of Ogoni, was settled in a relatively recent period, compared to some autochthonous peoples like the Asa. Another explanation could be that the Ndoki did not make any great impression on its neighbours until recent times.<sup>15</sup>

Ndoki territory lies to the northeast of Ogoni and shares a boundary with Ogoni. According to Professor E.J. Alagoa, the Ndoki, although often classified as Igbo, were not really Igbo in origin. They were originally part of an Ijo group which migrated from the Central Niger Delta through the mainland and later moved back to the Niger Delta. These included the Ijo of Nembe Brass, and the Ijo of Kalabari, Okrika and Bonny.<sup>16</sup> Ndoki oral traditions, however, claim that they migrated along with the Ibani from Benin. The Ndoki have also been found to be closely related to the Ibani in kinship and culture. For example, they were reportedly said to have worshipped the same deities as the Ibani. One of such deities was Ikuba which became the national deity of Bonny.<sup>17</sup> W.B. Baikie, who interviewed some Igbo slaves on the island of Fernanado Po in 1854, described the Ndoki as the "mina" (i.e. blood relations) of the Ibani.<sup>18</sup>

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15. Isichei, Elizabeth, Igbo Worlds, (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1977), pp. 209-212.

16. Alagoa, E.J., "Ijo Origins and Migrations: II Migrations", Nigeria Magazine XCII (1967), pp. 47-55.

17. Ennals, C-T.C., "Intelligence Report on the Ndoki Clan", 1933, p. 8. Alagoa, E.J., History of the Niger Delta (Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 178.

18. Baikie, W.B. Narrative of an Exploring Voyage, (London, John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1856), pp. 336 and 438.

Despite these testimonies, Professor Alagoa argues that the claim for a Benin origin was a cliché, and goes on to suggest that the actual location for Ndoki origins was to be sought in the Sagbama-Igbedi creek area as for Ibani and Kalabari. However, unlike the other Ijo groups, Ndoki never finally made it back to the delta.<sup>19</sup>

Originally the Imo River separated the Ndoki from Ogoni. However, during the course of trade and external contacts, some Ndoki elements crossed the Imo River and settled on Ogoni territory. According to the oral tradition the action resulted in war between Ogoni and Ndoki, and the Ndoki were forced to retreat back to their own side of the border. After some years, friendly relations were restored again. Then some Ndoki elements approached the Ogoni and formally asked for some land in the traditional way. According to the oral tradition, the Ogoni on that occasion granted some land in their territory to a Ndoki community on traditional terms. That was how the Obete community of Ndoki elements came to be situated in Ogoni territory. According to the testimony, the terms of granting the land consisted, among other things, of the following:

Later Obete people came to Luekun to beg that they had no place and no land to settle on; that Luekun people should give them some land to settle on. Luekun people told them that they would give them land only on condition that every year when the Zua (the Ogoni New Year) feast takes place, they (Obete people) would come to Luekun to do the traditional rites and to present the ritual offering to the National deity of Luekun (Bari Luekun), and to the Zim (ancestor, now spirit) of the founding Fathers who own the land of Luekun. I grew up to see them when they used to come, even to the court at Booli. And they used to pay their taxes to Kana (Ogoni) people at Taanbaan. (20)

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19. Alagoa, E.J., "Ijo Origins and Migration", op.cit., p. 54.

20. Mpeba, Mbaedee Francis, op.cit.

As cited above, during the Colonial period, in the era of aggressive ethnic nationalism in Nigeria, an attempt was made by the Igbo to claim that land as part of Igbo territory. The result of such actions was inter-ethnic wars and border disputes which were common from the early colonial period up till the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>21</sup> It will be interesting to observe how the colonial administrators coped with the type of ethnic pressures that arose with their handling of these problems.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the border problems, the normal trade relations between the Ogoni and the Ndoki continued unabated. Ndoki was a very important market for Ogoni pottery. Ogoni pot traders travelled by canoes through the Imo river via Ndoki into the heart of Igboland, including parts of Ngwa and Annang via the Azumini river.<sup>23</sup> During the era of the Atlantic slave trade, the major trade routes which came from the Igbo hinterland through Ogoni territory, also passed through Ndoki territory.<sup>24</sup> Thus there is little doubt that there were especially great trade links between the two territories during this period.

Nevertheless, there were no marriage relations between the two territories. It is not certain why it was so, but it could be due to differing kinship systems.

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21. Ahanotu, Austin M. "The Role of Ethnic Union in the Development of Southern Nigeria, 1916-1966" in Boniface I Obichere, ed., Studies in Southern Nigerian History. (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1982), pp. 155-174.
  22. Ahanotu cites Decree No. 33, Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, Lagos, 24 May 1966, by which the first Military Government of January 1966 banned a total of twenty-six ethnic unions in the country because their activities were inimical to unity in Nigeria.
  23. Kpone-Tonwe, Obeeye of Noobana (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Noobana on 27.11.84. Text 69, pp. 265-6.
  24. Isichei, Elizabeth, Igbo Worlds, op.cit., pp. 211-212.

Ibibio (Bibi)

The Ibibio occupy a territory on the east border of Ogoni. The Imo River serves as the natural boundary between the two peoples. From very early times there had been trade contacts and external relations between the Ibibio and the Ogoni. Prosperous Ogoni men usually married their third or fourth wives from Ibibio.<sup>25</sup> Like the ancient Asa, one of the earliest references to Ibibio in Ogoni oral tradition was in connection with migrant labourers from Ibibioland to Ogoni.

According to the evidence, Ibibio men used to come to Ogoni in ancient times to work on the farms for pay. The type of work they did included bush slashing and forest clearing. Some of the men usually remained behind until the next season. Two such men were mentioned in the time of Gbenesaakoo in connection with the founding of two Ogoni towns, namely Kpoo and Mogho. When the men found out that it was a long way to travel from Ibibio every year to do this type of job, they asked for a plot where they could build a hut to stay until the next farming season. It was probable that during the 'waiting' period, they hired themselves out to Ogoni farmers in other jobs such as cutting palm fruits, cutting wood or clearing virgin forest.

According to the oral tradition, the personal names of the two Ibibio men were not known; so they were addressed by the name of their ethnic nationality. However, although the usual Ogoni word for Ibibio was Bibi, in this case the two men were not called Bibi, instead they were called Mogho-Mana (or Mogo-Mana). After the men had lived and

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25. Laaka, S.O. (Rev.), op.cit.  
Ejoo, D.L. of Agbeta (Aged c. 65). Interviewed at Agbeta  
on 25.2.84. Text 11, pp. 49-53.

died there, the camp which was known locally as Mogho Camp, later grew to become a town but the name Mogho remained. That was how the town of Mogho in Ogoni got its name, as it is indicated in the following testimony:

According to what I heard from the ancients, certain two men on their journey came to Gbenesaakoo, having come from Ibibioland (Bibi). The two were brothers. Gbenesaakoo brought the two men to this place. He gave the land of Mogho to one, and the land of Kpoo to the other. Because they came from Ibibioland, they called them "Mogho-Mana". That was how this town came to get the name Mogho. The men were migrant job seekers. When they had stayed too long, they asked for land where to stay, which they were given. Their real names were not known, so they called them Mogho-Mana. Later, that name was passed on to the town. (26)

One of the interesting points about the above account is the name Mogho-Mana. It raises certain questions. Why were the men called Mogho-Mana, instead of Bibi? There are several explanations. Firstly, the word Mana was the Ogoni name for the Eastern Igbo, namely the Ariba, the Ohafia, the Aro, etc.. They were called by the Ogoni Pya Mana ('Mana' people). The Ogoni (Kana) word Mana means to bump into one another, to criss-cross or to collide together. The history behind this very descriptive name is not very certain. Perhaps at a certain time in the history of this people they spread all over the region criss-crossing the towns and villages. If so, then it must have occurred in pre-European times. In that case it would mean that the role, as carriers of commercial goods, which the Aros played during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, and later during the 'legitimate' trade, had been part of their nature from an earlier period, and not a characteristic which they just invented during those periods. Unlike the other Igbo groups, like the Ngwa, the Asa, the Elele, the Etche, the Isiokpo, the

Ndele, etc., the impression of the Ogoni about the Eastern Igbo (rightly or wrongly) was that they were not settled agriculturists. Consequently the Ogoni did not identify them with specific names or by the names of their towns, which they probably did not know.<sup>27</sup> They were generally called Mana or Pya Mana, meaning literally the "people who criss-cross" (the land or country).

Professor K.O. Dike appears to confirm this impression of the Ogoni about the Eastern Igbo when he wrote thus:

Perhaps the most important factor conditioning Ibo history in the nineteenth century and in our own time is land hunger ... Hence the Ibos pressing against limited land resources had, of necessity, to seek other avenues of livelihood outside the tribal boundaries. In the nineteenth century and earlier, the growth of a large unagricultural population in areas where the land was too small or too poor to sustain the people gave rise to some measure of specialization among sections of the tribe: the Aros became the middlemen of the hinterland trade; the Ada and the Abam constituted the mercenaries ... (28)

Secondly, the word Mogho (or Mogo) was the name given by these Eastern Igbo to the Ibibio.<sup>29</sup> But it was a name which was very much detested by the Ibibio. No Ibibio person would tolerate being called Mogo without a fight or some kind of strong protest.<sup>30</sup>

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27. Nwilabba, Teete Edamni of Buon Ko (Aged c. 120). Interviewed at Buon on 15.3.84
28. Dike, K.O. Trade and Politics, op.cit., p. 28.
29. Jones, G.I. The Trading States of the Oil Rivers, op.cit., p. 32.
30. For example this writer attended secondary school, Junior and Senior Seminary at Uyo in Ibibioland from 1955 to 1964, inclusive. During those years both at the High School and at the Seminary, the overwhelming majority of the students were Ibibio. There was only a very small minority of Igbo students. Because I was the only Ogoni student there at the time I attached myself to the Igbo minority group. One of the things that used to cause frequent fights between the Ibibio and the Igbo students was when an Igbo student called the Ibibio "Mogo".

In a recent work, Monday Efiiong Noah seems to suggest that the name Moko (Mogo or Mogho) originated in the Caribbean Islands, where slaves of Ibibio origin were so called. In his attempt to prove that the Rio Real was the Cross River, he went on to argue that since Pereira mentions the Rio Real<sup>31</sup> and since Dapper<sup>32</sup> who wrote after Pacheco Pereira identified the inhabitants of the Rio Real area as Moko; and since "Moko was the name by which slaves of Ibibio origin were known in the Caribbean islands"; and as nothing in Ibibio tradition suggests that they ever settled in the estuary of the New Calabar and Bonny Rivers; therefore, the "Rio Real was the Cross River"; and the very large village in the Rio Real area where salt was made, mentioned by Pereira, was Tom Shott Island in the Cross River area; since salt was made there.<sup>33</sup> While it will not be necessary to go into any detailed argument here, it will be sufficient to point out just two facts which Noah has not taken into consideration. Firstly, there are geographical limitations which both Pereira and Dapper placed on their descriptions. Pereira gave the approximate nautical distance on the 'ground' from the Forcados River to the Rio Real. Dapper gave the district of Krike (Okrika) the district of Bani (Bonny) and the district of Kuleba (Kwuribue) as the geographical limitations of the Moko he wrote about. Secondly, Dapper did not describe his Moko as a people or as an ethnic group, but as a locality, a district or town. To make the Rio Real of Dapper and Pereira the Cross River, Noah must also show that the districts

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31. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo, op.cit., p. 3, pp. 130-2.

32. Dapper, Olfert, Description de l'Afrique ..., op.cit., p. 315.

33. Noah, M.E., Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans, 1800-1885, (UYO: Scholars Press (Nig.) Ltd., 1980), pp. 2-4.

of Okrika, Bonny and Kuleba are also located in the area of the Cross River.

Another point which Noah has not explained was the fact that the name Mogo (Moko) was not the actual name of the Ibibio but that it was a name given by the Eastern Igbo, and that the Ibibios considered the name derisive and would often object violently to it when called. For example, W.B. Baikie wrote:

Old Kalabar is known at Bonny as well as in Igbo as Efik, and at Aro they talk of a people living near or among the Efik, whom they call Mom or Mong. (34)

And D. Simmons wrote, "slaves of Efik or Ibibio origin were regarded as exceedingly fierce; in the West Indies they were known as Moko".<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps, if Noah had taken time to explain the facts about this name, he would have succeeded in throwing some light on why the slaves of Ibibio origin in the Caribbean islands were fierce, namely because they were called a name which they bitterly detested. It may be argued that those Ibibio slaves did not volunteer to be called that name. Most probably, they might have been so called by some Eastern Igbo slaves living in that land.

At this point it is possible to explain why the Ogoni called the two Ibibio migrant labourers Mogho-Mana. They did not call them this name as an ethnic identity or ethnic name but as a geographical description of their place of origin. Namely, that they came from that part

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34. Baikie, W.B., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage (London: John Murray Albemarle Street, 1856), p. 337.
35. Simmons, D. "An Ethnographic Sketch of the Efik People" in Daryll Forde, ed., Efik Traders of Old Calabar, (Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 1-26; see p. 7.

of Ibibioland which the Eastern Igbo called Mogho (or Mogo), i.e. the Mogo of the Mana (Mogho-Mana), Mana being the general name which the Ogoni gave to the Eastern Igbo.

This piece of evidence suggests that there were close contacts and external relations between Ibibio and Ogoni in ancient times, i.e. before the coming of the Europeans. A further example of this, as reported in the oral tradition, was when Gbenesaakoo, the King of Gokana, wanted to kill his junior brother by name Boonen, because the latter committed adultery with his wife. At that time, according to the testimony, Boonen escaped and went into exile in Ibibioland. The oral tradition states that when Boonen returned from exile in Ibibioland, he founded his own town and eventually became the ancestor of the Boue group of Ogoni people.<sup>36</sup>

Another example of external relations between Ogoni and Ibibio in ancient times was reported in Boue oral tradition. About the middle of the seventeenth century, the eldest son of King Gbenekwerre of Boue, by name Akara, travelled to Ibibioland. It is not clear what his mission there was, but it was stated that when he returned from there he introduced into Ogoni the all-male secret society known today as Amanikpo.<sup>37</sup> However, it was also stated that when he travelled there a second time, he was murdered because they discovered that he had taken their secret cult.<sup>38</sup>

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36. Tonwe III, M.A.M. (His Highness) of Kono Boue (Aged c. 43).  
in His Royal Highness J.P. Bagia, the Gbenemene of Gokana (Aged c.70)  
They were interviewed at Giokoo on 19.2.84. Text 1, p. 6.

37. Inayo, Inaatura (Prince) of Kote House, Kono Boue, interviewed at  
Noobana, Kono Boue, on 27.12.83. Text 51, pp. 183-6.

38. Ibid.

Compared to the thoroughly ancient secret societies like the Kpaankpaan, the Amanikpo is considered of relatively recent introduction. Nonetheless, it was until recently the most dominant secret society in Ogoni. The fact that there existed an exchange of secret cults between Ogoni and Ibibio as far back as the seventeenth century indicates that there were diplomatic exchanges between the two peoples. Although the man was murdered during his second mission to Ibibioland, that act must have been brought about on grounds that he broke the terms of his diplomatic immunity under which the secret cult was revealed to him.

There were also trade relations between Ogoni and Ibibio particularly with the Annang. Ogoni pottery was one of the products which were highly demanded by the Ibibio. Ogoni men carried pots in canoes through the Imo river into parts of Annang. Some of the markets visited by Ogoni pot traders were Mkpa, Urua-eka, Uruaete, Esene, Uruagwa, Kefe, Ikpanikpo, Uruadapa, etc..<sup>39</sup> Of all the ethnic Ibibio groups, the Ogoni knew and called only the Ibeno by name, and they called them Ibono. But all the rest, including the Efik were known to them by the general name Bibi. The whole of the Cross River estuary was known to the Ogoni as Ibeno Sea (Pene Ibono). The names Cross River, Calabar, etc. were unknown to the ancient Ogoni.<sup>40</sup> Even today Ogoni seamen who ply the sea between the Eastern Niger Delta, the Cameroun and the Island of Equatorial Guinea (formerly Fernando Po) in the course of trade or fishing still use the old terms Pene Ibono (Ibeno Sea).

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39. Kpone-Tonwe, Obeeye of Noobana, Kono Boue (Aged c.58) He was interviewed at Noobana on 27.11.84. Text 69, pp. 265-6.

40. Cf. Talbot, P.A., Southern Nigeria, I, op.cit., p. 183.

Apart from the Igbo, the Ibibio, particularly the Annang, were the next ethnic group with whom the Ogoni established marriage relations.<sup>41</sup>

There was also some kind of military co-operation between Ogoni and Ibibio in ancient times. According to the oral tradition, when there was war in Ibibioland either between fellow Ibibio groups or between Ibibio and another people, like the Igbo or the Ekoi, the Ibibio came to Ogoni to ask for military assistance. One example of such instances resulted in the founding of several Ogoni communities or colonies on the east bank of the Imo River, such as Wiisue, Daen, Sogi, Okukuk, Warife, Ibesit, and Utetuk Ikot. Professor G.I. Jones explains that the last four communities received Ibibio names from contacts with their Ibibio neighbours.<sup>42</sup> Ko (Opuoko) oral tradition states that Wiisue was a colony of Ko people, and that it was founded by the son of Gbenemenebere.<sup>43</sup> According to sources at Buon, Sogi and the other Ogoni colonies on the east of the Imo River were founded by mercenary warriors from Ogoni who fought in Ibibio wars to protect Ibibio territory from their enemies. For example:

The Ibibios did not cross the river to this side. Rather, it was Kana (Ogoni) people who crossed the Imo River and settled on the other (east) side. There is an Ogoni town called Sogi which exists on the east bank of the Imo River. How they went there was that war broke out among the Ibibios. One side in the war came to Ogoni to "borrow" warriors to help them in the fight. Many Ogoni people went to the war. Unfortunately many of them were killed. The few that remained alive refused to return to Ogoni because they had lost so many of the people who

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41. Cf. E.J. Gibbons, "Intelligence Report on Ogoni", 1932, N.A.E. CS026/3, File No. 28032, Opobo Division, Calprof, p. 9.
  42. Jones, G.I. Personal Communication.
  43. Yomii, J.B. (Chief) of Ko (Aged c. 58). He was interviewed at Ko (Opuoko) on 15.3.84. Text 28, pp. 101-3.

followed them to the war. They settled on the east bank of the Imo river. After many years, the Ibibios sought to remove them from there but they refused saying that they fought for that land and lost many lives. They won many litigations against the Ibibio on that ground. (44)

From the foregoing analysis, it is clearly seen that the external relations between Ogoni and Ibibio had been many-faceted. It has consisted of not only the social, economic and cultural aspects but also of the diplomatic and the military as well.

#### Andoni (Bono)

The Andoni occupy the coastal flats to the south and southeast of Ogoni. Although the name Andoni had remained on the official records, the Andoni of today prefer to be called Obolo.<sup>45</sup> The name Andoni was thought to have been derived from the Portuguese St. Anthonio after whose name the river Andoni was supposed to have been named by the Portuguese.<sup>46</sup> From very early times the Ogoni have known the Andoni by the name Pya Bono (Bono People). The Ogoni believed that the Andoni were related to the Ibeno, whom the Ogoni called Pya Ibono. And Professor G.I. Jones has described the Ibeno as "a small ethnic group of fisher folk who speak a dialect of Ibibio similar to Andoni".<sup>47</sup> It would seem that the Ogoni derived the word Bono from Ibono (Ibeno) or vice versa. The word Obolo was not known to the Ogoni. It seems also that the word was not known to the Europeans until colonial times. That may explain the

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44. Nwilabba, T.E. (Chief) (Aged c. 120). op.cit.

45. Jones, G.I. "The Andoni Legends", Chapter 6, p. 87 of a new work on E. Nigeria, now in press.

46. Ibid. p. 89. Jones credits this explanation to E.A. Ayandele and M.D.W. Jeffreys. The latter wrote an intelligence report on the Andoni in 1930.

47. Ibid. p. 94.

conspicuous absence of the word from the early European records.<sup>48</sup>  
For this reason, it will be difficult to argue that Ogoni derived the word Bono from Obolo.

As stated above, the only Ibibio group known to the Ogoni by a separate ethnic name were the Ibeno, whom the Ogoni called Ibono; and they called the whole of the Cross River estuary the Ibeno Sea (Pene Ibono). The names Calabar, Efik, etc. were unknown to the Ogoni.

Now the words Bono and Ibono are cognate Kana (Ogoni) words. The only difference is that the "i" preceding the word Ibono indicates smallness or lesser degree. Thus by Ibono the Ogoni indicated that the Ibeno were a smaller nation of the Bono. But the two Ogoni words have the same meaning; they both refer to manner of speech. It is probable that when the Ogoni first came into contact with either the Andoni or the Ibeno, the first impression which they received was from the nature of their speech, which they probably considered too fast. Hence the names Pya Bono and Pya Ibono.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, the Andoni introduced the species of bananas with short or dwarf fingers into this area. Hence the Ogoni called that species of banana ebue-bono, (Andoni banana).<sup>49</sup> Notice that the Ogoni who claim that their ancestors

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48. cf. G.I. Jones, The Trading States, op.cit., p. 116, n. 25.

49. Igbug, Deebari of Eepie, Kono Boue (Aged c. 67). Interviewed at Eepie on 22.1.84.

Note: The Ogoni distinguish between two types of short-fingered bananas, one green and the other red. The Ogoni associate the green type with the Andoni. The red type they claim existed wild in the forest, like the plantain. See Chief E. Nwebon Kpea, op.cit.

domesticated the plantain in the area have one word for the whole genus; namely, ebue (plantain). They distinguish the various species of the banana, which they claim were later introduced from outside through Bonny and Andoni, by qualifying words such as ebue-bani (Bonny 'plantain') and ebue-bono (Andoni 'plantain').<sup>50</sup> The Ogoni admit that several species of the plantain had emerged over the centuries but they distinguish the old or original species by adding the word Ka (Mother) to the word ebue (plantain). Thus Ka-ebue generally refers to the plantain and specifically to the original species. Following the claim that their ancestors domesticated the plantain, they use it as their principal ritual food.<sup>51</sup>

Although the elderly Ogoni and priests did not eat the banana, because they regarded it not only as a foreign food but also that it would weaken their spirit, they nevertheless discovered that the ebue-bono ('Andono banana') was very good for feeding babies who were learning to eat solid food. They claimed that it was not allergic to their stomachs.

Dr. C.N. Ejituwu suggests that the Andoni migrated from the east via the Cameroun.<sup>52</sup> It is probable that the Andoni brought this particular species of the banana along with them when they came from that area. The Ogoni say that the Andoni settled in their present location in relatively recent times, that they had earlier settled further to the east; they probably settled nearer to the Ibeno at that time.

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50. Igbug Deebari of Eepie, op.cit.

51. Ibid. See also Aanee Gborato (Chief) of Lewe (Aged c. 110). He was interviewed at Lewe on 5.2.84.

52. Ejituwu, C.N. "The Obolo (Andoni) of the Eastern Niger Delta" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Lagos, 1977), p. 524.

According to Professor Jones:

The Ibeno claim to be related to the Andoni and their origin myth brought them from the same parental home of Rombi in the Rio de Rey area, the Ibeno moving first and settling on the Kwa Iboe, the Andoni following and passing through them to their present home. (53)

Their migration into their present location must have taken place some-time after the visit of Pereira, as there is no mention of human activity in their present location at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

If the Portuguese saw the Andoni at this period, they probably saw them somewhere further to the east. It has to be borne in mind, however, that in fishing societies, the speed of migration from one settlement to another was much faster than in agricultural settlements where land had to be developed over a long period of time for permanent settlement. Thus by the end of the century when James Barbot visited the area in 1699, the Andoni societies had been well established.<sup>55</sup>

The Ogoni say that when the Andoni first came, they came in canoes as traders of fish, which they sold for food stuffs to the Ogoni farmers.<sup>56</sup>

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53. Jones, G.I., "The Andoni Legends", op.cit., Chapter 6, p. 95.

54. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo, op.cit., p. 147.

55. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage" in A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V, Churchill & Churchill (eds) (London, 1732.) pp. 455-466.

56. I personally heard most of this information from my uncle M.D.K. Tonwe II, Gbenemene I of Babbe, who died in June 1975. He was widely acknowledged as the most knowledgeable in the "history" of Ogoni and of the surrounding peoples. He not only took great interest in but he also made great efforts to collect information from people of older generations. He was the only source of information about the Ogoni city of Bangha, the city of which I am now arguing that it was the city erroneously referred to by early European travellers as 'Old' Calabar and not the Efik city of the Cross River. For my argument on this issue, see Chapter V.

At first they lived in mat-covered canoes at the market or exchange points on the Ogoni coasts. After sometime some of them founded villages at points close to the markets as well as to the fishing grounds. Some actually settled on the Ogoni mainland.<sup>57</sup> According to the oral tradition, one Andoni chief actually became naturalized in Ogoni and attained the highest Ogoni military title. His name was Gborowaate (or Gboroate). After he went to Nama and successfully performed the traditional rites for the title, he became known as Gbenegboroawaate (or Gbenegboroate).<sup>58</sup> He was the only man who was not an Ogoni by birth who attained this highest title. The other man who was equally highly placed in Ogoni society but never attained this title was the medicine man and warrior from Bonny by name Yobue. His failure to attain the title may have been due to the fact that he was assassinated shortly after the Baan wars in the seventeenth century.<sup>59</sup>

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the Ogoni and the Andoni had friendly relations from the beginning. It is probable that some of these facts were not available in Obolo oral tradition. The fact that they were not available does not diminish their value. One advantage which Ogoni had over most other riverain peoples was environmental stability. Since the Ogoni settled in their present territory, there has been no major upheaval which forced them to migrate from this territory to another territory. This, coupled with other favourable factors, has tended to make Ogoni oral traditions cumulative.

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57. Cf. C.N. Ejituwu, "The Obolo (Andoni) ... , op.cit., p. 316.

58. Nwilogbara, N.B. (Chief) of Sii, (Aged c. 55). Interviewed at Sii on 17.10.81. Text 19, p. 82.

59. Tonwe, (His Highness) M.A.M., of Boue, op.cit.

In the riverain areas where the occupation was mainly fishing, the people were constantly on the move, following the movements of the fish.<sup>60</sup> Under such circumstances, familiar environments were often abandoned in favour of better ones; and when there was a crisis, human or natural, especially in the early stages of their 'history', this mobility was often accentuated and accelerated. Frequent detachments from familiar environments and traditions led to the loss of vital links in a people's memory and in their oral traditions. Faced with the reality of this problem during his research in these areas, Professor G.I. Jones complained that the oral traditions had very little to offer with which to fill the gap between the Portuguese and the Flemish descriptions.<sup>61</sup>

A time came, however, when Ogoni and Andoni had to fight wars. The 'wars' probably took place during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, most probably in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But the wars between Ogoni and Andoni were never all-out wars, and they were never prolonged. Very often, a war was started when a person from one ethnic group was killed by members of the other ethnic group. The circumstances of the killing were never investigated. The offended ethnic group revenged by killing a person or persons from the other ethnic group. This was followed by counter revenge and a war was started. Often the original victims were persons of questionable character, who committed felony or transgressed into another person's property within the common fishing grounds between the two peoples. Apart from this type of dispute, there was no natural cause of hatred between the Ogoni and

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60. Horton, Robin, "From Fishing Village to City-State" in Phyllis M. Kaberry and Mary Douglas (eds) Man in Africa (London, Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1969), p. 44.

61. Jones, G.I. The Trading States ... op.cit., p. 35.

the Andoni. For example, one account recalls that one of the wars between Ogoni and Andoni was caused by a fight between two traders in an open market during which one of them died. The revenge that followed led to war between the two peoples.<sup>62</sup> The system of 'international' relations at that time was very poor. There was no regulated system of maintaining law and order between the different ethnic nationalities trading across ethnic boundaries.

During the colonial era however, the causes of border disputes and wars between Ogoni and her neighbours were different. The case of Igbo ethnic nationalism has already been cited. It spread like wildfire and affected almost every ethnic group in Nigeria, particularly in Southern Nigeria, including the Obolo. Thus it was misleading for Dr. Ejituwu to use as a point of his argument the biased views of an administrative officer who thought that because the Ogoni were mostly agriculturists, they "were just coming to realize the value of fishing [and that] so far they had depended for fish on the Andoni to whom they sell their farm produce".<sup>63</sup> Apparently the administrative officer did not know that the Ogoni settled on that coast centuries before the Andoni came there. But certainly Dr. Ejituwu knows this from Andoni oral tradition and from other sources. The question one may therefore ask is this. During those centuries when the Andoni had not yet settled there, on whom did Ogoni depend for fish?

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62. Giah, Dimkpa (Chief) of Gbee (Aged c. 75). He was interviewed at Gbee on 8.2.84. Text 5, pp. 14-9.

63. Quoted by C.N. Ejituwu, "The Obolo (Andoni) ...", op.cit., p. 318.

Ogoni oral tradition reports two major wars in the Eastern Niger Delta in which Ogoni played an important role, although Ogoni was not directly involved. One was the war between Andoni and Bonny. According to the Ogoni version the Andoni of Ngo killed some Bonny people. War broke out between Bonny and Andoni. When the war went hard against Bonny, the latter came to Ogoni to ask for assistance.<sup>64</sup> Ogoni sent some warriors into the field to relieve Bonny and to raise the blockade mounted by Andoni against Bonny on her trade route via Andoni, to her Imo river markets. By entering into the war, Ogoni did not thereby demonstrate any particular hatred against Andoni. The action was taken as a matter of principle. Bonny was the major trade partner and customer of the eastern part of Ogoni through the Imo River. By blockading Bonny on that route, Andoni's action indirectly affected the trade of the eastern part of Ogoni which lay on the Imo River. Ogoni therefore decided to enter the war in order to force Andoni to agree to terms of peace. Nonetheless, when the peace treaty was finally signed, Ogoni was not represented. According to Professor G.I. Jones, although Bonny was clearly the loser in that war, she nevertheless scored some diplomatic victory in the treaty that was signed. Her trade relations with some captains of certain English slave ships which were anchored at Bonny at the time worked in her favour. Those English traders prepared the treaty in advance, adopting the same pattern which Great Britain had adopted in her treaties with some African rulers, with Bonny getting the better part of it.<sup>65</sup> Jones expressed the view that obviously those Andoni chiefs who signed the treaty did not understand fully the meaning of some of its Articles.<sup>66</sup>

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64. Yomii, J.B. (Chief), op.cit.

65. Jones, G.I. The Trading States (1963) op.cit., p. 115.

66. Ibid., p. 116.

But it was not only that, the interest of those English traders was paramount. They saw Andoni's sovereignty as a threat to their own commercial interests, which were linked to that of Bonny. They felt that the war and the blockade by Andoni had disrupted their trade with Bonny and placed them in an unfavourable situation. They therefore drafted the treaty in such a way that Andoni would have no legal right to mount such a blockade in future. Undoubtedly, this was also the point which Ogoni would have emphasized had she been represented at the peace treaty. For Ogoni regarded the waterways between her coast and Andoni as a kind of 'international' highway, which neither party had any legal right to blockade against the free flow of commerce.

This was the second Bonny-Andoni war; and it was fought under King William Dappa Pepple I of Bonny.<sup>67</sup> According to the account, he ordered the killing of some Andoni men during the funeral celebration of King Opubo. It was probably a second burial or a memorial funeral, since according to Alagoa's and Fombo's Bonny Kinglist, Opubo was the fifteenth ruler and William Dappa Pepple I was the seventeenth.<sup>68</sup> The report says that the occasion was used to commemorate King Opubo's victory over the Andoni in a previous war. It was this action by Bonny that prompted the Andoni to kill some Bonny men in revenge. It is probable that Ogoni did not know about this first killing by Bonny until much later. Professor Jones suggests that Captain Tucker's report (F.O. 84/384) of 1841 contains a reference to this killing by King Pepple of Bonny.<sup>69</sup>

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67. Jones, G.I. The Trading States, op.cit., p. 115

68. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A., A Chronicle of Grand Bonny (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 89.

69. Jones, G.I. The Trading States, op.cit., p. 115.

The second war in which Ogoni also played a vital role was the civil war at Bonny in 1869. This is discussed in some detail under Bonny and Opobo. In that war, however, both Ogoni and Andoni played complementary roles in favour of Jaja, that is to say that Ogoni and Andoni allied with Jaja against the interests of Bonny. The relationship between the two peoples improved very dramatically from that period onwards. Both gained from the economic development of Opobo port at Egwanga, which was closer to both Ogoni and Andoni. Trade between Ogoni and Andoni increased. There was free movement between the two neighbours. Important markets along the coasts of Ogoni became the chief distributing centres for the fish of the Andoni, Opobo and Bonny, and for the Ogoni yams and other agricultural produce. As already pointed out, it was not until the first few decades of the colonial era that some sporadic squabbles began again between Ogoni and Andoni; and that was only because of the epidemic of extreme ethnic nationalism that affected all Southern Nigeria at that time. According to one colonial observer not until 1923 was there any further trouble between Ogoni and Andoni over fishing rights in their common water fronts.<sup>70</sup>

While the external relations between Ogoni and Andoni have generally been very close and cordial, it will be historically speculative to conclude on that score that Ogoni and Andoni were from a common ancestral origin and that they spoke a similar language. This is the position which C.N. Ejituwu appears to adopt when he argues:

The Obolo say that the Ogoni call 'cannon' 'tikiri' and that the word was a derivative of their word 'etiri' (cannon). There is evidence that this

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70. Nigeria Police, "Memorandum about the Andoni-Ogoni Disputes", p. 1. Opobo Division, February 1954.

linguistic similarity between the Obolo and the Ogoni can be extended further. For example, Obolo word for manilla or money is 'Ikpoko', Khana word for it is 'Kpugi', Gokana 'Kpege', Eleme 'Ekpii'. (71)

Dr. Ejituwu went on to conclude that these comparison suggest "common ancestral origin for the two peoples".<sup>72</sup>

Dr. Ejituwu's arguments have a tendency to mislead some people. No serious work has been done on these peoples, particularly on the Ogoni. The few linguistic studies that have been carried out in the Niger Delta area have shown Ogoni to be linguistically distinct. Much depends on what methods a researcher uses and what objects he compares. The most acceptable method of linguistic comparison for historical analysis was the method developed by Professor Kay Williamson of the University of Port Harcourt in her study of some food plant names in the Niger Delta.<sup>73</sup> Professor Williamson discovered that the names of food plants which were indigenous to the area appeared to be restricted within the boundaries of established language families in the area, whereas names of food plants which were recently introduced from America or Asia into the area tended to 'jump' such established linguistic boundaries along the trade routes, showing that such words did not belong to the core vocabulary of that language family.<sup>74</sup> Thus it was misleading for Dr. Ejituwu to assume that the word for cannon belonged to the core vocabulary of Obolo language and that the Kana word Tigiri was derived from the Obolo word etiri. It could well be that the opposite was the case. It is known that the

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71. Ejituwu, C.N., "The Obolo ... ", op.cit., p. 318.

72. Ibid., p. 319.

73. Williamson, Kay, "Some food plant names in the Niger Delta", International Journal of American Linguistics, Vol. 36, 2(1970), pp. 156-167.

74. Ibid., pp. 164-167.

Europeans introduced the cannon into Africa. It is also known that the Portuguese introduced the manilla into West Africa, and that they were the first Europeans who traded with Africa, and with West Africa in particular.

Now in Chapters IV and V of this study, it was shown that the first people the Portuguese traded with in the Eastern Niger Delta were the Ogoni. It follows therefore that the first people in the Eastern Delta who used the manilla which was a Portuguese currency were the Ogoni. Therefore the word kpugi (money or manilla) must be seen as an original Kana word. It is not certain, however, whether the Obolo word Ikpoko (money or manilla) was derived from the Kana word or from a Western Ijo source, since the Portuguese also traded with Benin<sup>75</sup> about the same time they were trading with Ogoni.

Although it has been established that there was an indigenous currency in Ogoni before the Portuguese introduced the manilla, it is not known what the Ogoni called that currency.<sup>76</sup> It is, however, very evident that the Kana (Ogoni) word kpugi (money or manilla) was an entirely new word coined by the Ogoni. I will explain how this happened.

Sound, and the characteristic of a thing, are very important elements in the formation of words and the names of things in the Kana language. For example, the Kana word for bell is geen. When a bell was struck with a metal bar or rod, the sound the Ogoni received was geen; and that

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75. Ryder, Alan, Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897 (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1977), pp. 24-75.

76. Dapper, Olfert, Description de L'Afrique, op.cit., p. 315. See David Northrup, Trade Without Rulers (London, Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 159.

was the name they called the bell. Recently, the Ogoni have also coined a new word for the motor-cycle - itog-tog - a name derived from the sound of its engine.

When the Portuguese first brought the manillas to the Ogoni, they were a new thing. The Ogoni tested them. Because they were coiled copper rods made to fit on the wrist as wristlets, when two of them were suspended by the fingers and struck against each other, they produced the vibrating metallic sound, ging. When they were let drop to the hard earthy floor or to the ground, they hit the ground and bounced against each other, producing the combined sound, kpug-ging. Thus the Ogoni called the manilla kpug-ging, of which kpugi is the shortened form.

Again, the Kana (Ogoni) word Tigiri does not necessarily mean cannon. Actually the Kana word for cannon is naan (or naa), which is also the word for gun. It was the cannon-ball that the Ogoni called Tigiri. To distinguish the cannon from the ordinary fire-arm, they gave it the compound name, naa-tigiri. The word tigiri was not specially invented for the cannon-ball either; it was a general descriptive word for anything that was heavy, short and waddling or trampy in motion. For example, if a person was both short and fat, his motion and personality would be described by the Ogoni as "tigiri-tigiri".

Thus when the Europeans brought the cannon to the Eastern Delta, because its ball was heavy and round, when the Ogoni rolled it on a hard, bare floor, the sound it produced was tigiri-tigiri ... The Ogoni therefore called the cannon-ball tigiri. They then applied to the cannon the compound word naa-tigiri, meaning literally gun of the cannon-ball,

with tigiri as the major word. From the above analysis, it is clear that the Ogoni did not derive the words tigiri (cannon-ball) and kpugi (money or manilla) from the Andoni. Perhaps what happened was probably the reverse.

Finally, in answer to Dr. Ejituwu's conclusion that the Kana and Obolo languages were similar and that the Ogoni and the Andoni must have come from a common, ancestral origin, I refer below the views of Hans Wolff. Hans Wolff had done a considerable research, not only on the Ogoni languages but also on the other languages of the Niger Delta.

Ogoni forms part of the Benue-Congo Branch of the Niger-Congo linguistic family. A superficial comparison reveals no special similarities to Ibibio-Efik, their closest neighbours to the east, or to the Abua group of languages spoken in the eastern Niger Delta and belonging to the Benue-Congo branch. Until further comparative data is available, therefore, Ogoni must be regarded as a distinct group within that branch. (77).

Since it has been shown that Obolo (Andoni) is similar to Ibibio.<sup>78</sup> but Kana (Ogoni) is not similar to Ibibio, it follows that Ogoni is not similar to Andoni. It was therefore unlikely that the two people had migrated from a common place of origin.

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77. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni Languages", Journal of African Languages, Vol. III, (1964), pp. 38-51.

78. Jones, G.I. "The Andoni Legend", op.cit., (in press) Ch. 6, pp. 94-95.

### Bonny and Opobo

Bonny is an island situated to the south of Ogoni and located at the mouth of the river known by the same name, which is the eastern estuary of the rio Real. Opobo is another island situated off the east coast of Ogoni at the mouth of the Imo river. The inhabitants of both islands are the same people and they speak essentially the same language. Opobo was founded following a civil war at Bonny in 1869, as a result of which one side in the conflict led by Jaja of Anna Pepple House seceded and founded the new state of Opobo. The name Opobo was derived from Opubo, a former king of Bonny and head of Anna Pepple House.<sup>79</sup>

According to Ogoni oral tradition the name Ebani was first given to Bonny by Ogoni at the time the two peoples first came into contact at Ko (Opuoko), the Ogoni market town located on the west bank of the Imo River.<sup>80</sup> The Kana word ebani means far, afar, or distant. In other words, the Ogoni regarded Bonny people as a people from a distant land. When they settled on the island, the Ogoni called that island Bani, meaning 'land of strangers'. For example, in Ogoni idiom, if one sounded strange in speech or words others might react or retort by saying "o ko bani" (You speak like a stranger" or You sound strange"). If one behaved strangely or out of tune, they might query, "o lu bani?" ("Are you from a strange land?". Thus the two forms Bani and Ebani were used by the Ogoni to refer to Bonny or to Bonny people.

It is significant to notice that the early European travellers

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79. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A. A Chronicle ..., op.cit., p. 31.

80. Yomii, J.B. of Ko, op.cit.  
See also Alagoa and Fombo, A Chronicle ..., op.cit., p. 3.

also used these two forms to refer to Bonny and to the people of Bonny.<sup>81</sup> From the writings of W.B. Baikie it is known that as late as 1854 when Baikie visited Bonny, the Ogoni form Ebani was still the standard usage at Bonny. For example:

The Bonny people claim an Igbo descent. Their territory, which is not very extensive, is by them named Ebane, whence Bonny. By the Igbos, it is pronounced Obane; and by New Calabar Ibane. (82)

From the above passage, two points are made clear. First, that the form Ebane was the standard usage at Bonny in 1854. Second, that the form Ibani was the New Calabar pronunciation of the form Ebani. Since New Calabar is Ijo, it is then clear that the Ijo form Ibani was derived from the Ogoni form Ebani.

Furthermore, after Pereira, Dapper was the second European traveller who described or named specific territories in the Eastern Niger Delta. Dapper used the Ogoni form Bani to refer to Bonny; so did John Barbot.<sup>83</sup> Thus it is understood that the form Bonny<sup>84</sup> was a corruption of the Ogoni form Bani, as it is also indicated above by Baikie. Moreover, the form Ibani is conspicuously absent from the early European travellers' records. There is therefore no doubt that the original names of Bonny and of Bonny people were the Ogoni forms, Bani and Ebani, notwithstanding the fact that in recent years the people of Bonny have decided to adopt the corrupted forms Bonny and Ibani.

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81. Dapper, Olfert, Description de l'Afrique, op.cit., p. 315.  
Barbot, John, Description of the Coasts ..., op.cit. p. 380.

82. Baikie, W.B., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage .., op.cit. p. 335

83. Dapper, O. op.cit., p. 315  
Barbot, John, op.cit., p. 380.

84. Baikie, W.B., op.cit., p. 438.

Professor E.J. Alagoa's research on the Ijo and on Bonny in particular has shown that during their migration, Bonny people passed through Ogoni territory on their way to their present location via the Imo River. According to Professor Alagoa, when they moved from Ndoki and arrived at the Ogoni market town of Ko (Opuoko), they stopped for a while before proceeding to the coast.<sup>85</sup> It is probable that after establishing contact with Ogoni at Ko, they continued to remain at Ndoki for a long period of time. Their final movement to the coast probably took place when they received news at Ko of trade with the Europeans by some coastal towns of southern Ogoni. It seems that they were still in the area of Ndoki when the city of Bangha was trading with the Portuguese; and they must have attended Bangha market from Ndoki by an overland route which was shorter.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, the Ibani arrived on the Ogoni coast before the Andoni.<sup>86</sup> If that was so, why did the Ibani not settle where the Andoni now live? Why did they have to travel all the way almost round Ogoni to settle where they are now? Why did they not settle even where Opobo is now, which was still unoccupied as late as 1869? It would seem likely that they were trying to reach the southern Ogoni markets by sea. In Chapter V, it was shown that there were several direct overland trade routes through Ndoki territory and through Ogoni territory to the coastal markets of southern Ogoni. Long-distance traders travelling on these routes brought news of white men who came by sea to trade in these markets with exotic goods.

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85. Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A., A Chronicle, op.cit., p. 3.

86. Tonwe II (His Royal Highness), M.D.K. of Babbe. Personal communication.

Thus it would seem that one of the incentives which encouraged the ancestors of the Ebani to make the long journey by sea to a point directly opposite those markets was to establish contact with those white people.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, when the Ibani came at first, they settled on the Ogoni mainland, close to the market points. It is said that they and the Ogoni were like one people.<sup>87</sup> Their movement to the island could be attributed to the time when they had established contacts with the European traders. Bonny oral tradition speaks of a hunter Alagbariye who travelled by canoe all the way from Ndoki to discover the island.<sup>88</sup> It must be remembered that there were no firearms yet in these areas. Moreover it was a highly risky undertaking for any man to make such a long journey in an area that was practically uninhabited. Granting that he was the first to settle on the island, or on the earlier one called Okoloama, it is to be understood that he did so from their settlement on the Ogoni coast, and that his initiative was based on information he obtained from the Ogoni, who possessed a commanding knowledge of the Eastern Niger Delta coasts then.<sup>89</sup>

Professor A.J. Alagoa and A. Fombo in their work on Bonny noted that early in the history of Bonny in the reign of the only woman ruler of Bonny, Queen Kambasa, the third crowned head from Asinini, Bonny waged a war against Ogoni. In that war, Bonny defeated Ogoni and took home

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87. Kinanwii, Kpoko (Chief) of Tego (Aged c. 87). Interviewed at Tego on 5.1.84. Text 50, pp. 179-82.

88. Leonard, A.G., The Lower Niger ..., op.cit., p. 22.

89. Dapper, O, Description, op.cit.

numerous heads of the Ogoni victims with which they inaugurated a house of skulls in Bonny. They went on to say that this institution of a house of skulls had been derived from Andoni.<sup>90</sup>

The writer made a diligent enquiry throughout the length and breadth of Ogoni concerning this war or any other war with Bonny at any time in their history. In every case the response was negative. According to the Ogoni, there had been no direct war between Ogoni and Bonny at any time. The wars in which Ogoni had been involved had been wars in which Ogoni played the role of third party, in most cases in support of Bonny.

The report claimed that the heads of the Ogoni victims killed in that war were used to inaugurate a house of skulls, which became the national war shrine of Bonny. Furthermore they claimed that the practice of keeping a house of skulls had been imitated from Andoni. In 1699 when James Barbot and Grazihier visited the Eastern Niger Delta, they found no house of skulls in Bonny, but they did find one in Andoni.<sup>91</sup> According to Professor G.I. Jones:

Barbot had plenty of time to see all there was to be seen on the very small and congested acre or so of drier land that was Elim Kalabari. He saw dried heads of beasts and other 'Joujous' but he saw no human trophies whatever. He met them in Andoni in the 'large press full of skulls of their enemies', but not apparently at Bonny, a people or village which he described as being the same as Kalabari: the only head trophies the Barbots noticed in Bonny were the twenty-five elephants' skulls in the juju house they

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90. Alagoa, E.J., and A. Fombo A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, p. 73.

91. Alagoa, E.J., "The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours 1600-1800", in J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.) History of West Africa, Vol. I, (1971), pp. 269-303.  
Alagoa, E.J. and Fombo, A. A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, pp. 11 & 73.

called 'the grange'. By contrast, in the nineteenth century the Bonny juju house with its pyramid and platform of human skulls was a feature which impressed itself on everybody who visited the place. (92)

From the above facts, it is understood that there was no house of skulls (except skulls of beasts) in Bonny before the eighteenth century. Since Queen Kambasa ruled in Bonny before the eighteenth century,<sup>93</sup> it follows that the supposed war which she is said to have waged against Ogoni, did not take place. If that is the case, then it is known that she did not inaugurate any war shrine in Bonny with the heads of Ogoni war victims or of the war victims of any other people. Thus it is seen that the Ogoni oral tradition with regards to the nature of her external relations with Bonny is true.

Now concerning the introduction of a 'war god' and the preservation of the skulls of war victims in the Eastern Niger Delta, certain questions must be raised. Where did this practice originate? Which people started it in the Eastern Niger Delta?

First of all the idea of a national deity must be distinguished from the idea of a 'war god' or 'war deity'. Every people usually have some kind of deity at a certain stage in their history but such was not necessarily a war deity: for example, when the Barbots visited Bonny in 1699, they saw twenty-five skulls of elephants in a house.<sup>94</sup> A collection of twenty-five such giant skulls in one place certainly looked

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92. Jones, G.I., The Trading States ..., p. 44.

93. Kambasa was the third crowned ruler of Bonny after Asimini, and King William Dappa Pepple (1835-66) was the twelfth. See Alagoa and Fombo, op.cit., p. 89. See also, Jones, G.I., The Trading States ..., p. 115.

94. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage", op.cit., pp. 455-466.

like a 'juju'. But these were not the national 'god' of Bonny. many of them were probably the skulls of elephants which had become aged and died naturally in the forest and their skulls were carried home in order to extract the ivory from them.

However, Ogoni oral tradition affirms that there was Ikuba worship in Bonny in the seventeenth century,<sup>95</sup> but at that time the Ikuba was only a national deity of Bonny; it was not yet made into a 'war god' as well. A national deity was a thing by which the ruler or rulers controlled the people. It was the rallying point in the life of the people. On the other hand a 'war god' was a thing for a select group, a class thing. For example, Jupiter was the national deity for the Romans, but they had a separate deity for war. Similarly, the Greeks had Zeus as their national god but a separate god for war. A god of war did not have to have a house of skulls. That is why it will be necessary to know from where the practice of keeping skulls originated.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, a certain Bonny man whom the Ogoni renamed Yobue, was a priest of Ikuba, the national deity of Bonny. But he turned to become a wizard and sorcerer and killed many people by his sorcery. Because Bonny people were afraid of him and could not kill him they only managed to drive him away from their town. This man took refuge in Ogoni. A long and bitter civil war was going on in Ogoni at the time. When the Ogoni heard about such a man, they sent for him because they wanted him to use his sorcery for the war, as this testimony indicates:

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95. See Chapter IV

Yobue was a Bani (Bonny) man. He was a wizard and sorcerer who killed many people by his sorcery. Bonny people rejected him and drove him away from their town. He took refuge with Kana (Ogoni) people, who sheltered him and gave him a place to stay. The first place where they gave him a house was at Eeyoburubu in Kono Boue ... It was from there that he went to the Baan war. (96)

It is known that this civil war took place in the seventeenth century, because when Dapper's informants visited the area early in the century they saw the Ogoni town of Kwuribue (Kuleba).<sup>97</sup> Shortly after that the city was moved from the Kwuri area which was nearer to the coast to a point further inland. Thus when John Barbot visited the same area between 1678 and 1682 he did not see Kwuribue again. Thus in his description, he only reproduced Dapper's earlier description.<sup>98</sup>

Now coming to the institution of "war gods" and the preservation of the skulls of war victims, who introduced the practice into the Eastern Niger Delta? My explanation is that the practice was introduced by the Ogoni and that the Andoni derived it from Ogoni.

As explained above, initially the Andoni settled on Ogoni mainland.<sup>99</sup> The area where the Andoni settled was near to the Ogoni national war centre which was Nama. It was noted also that even one Andoni man, Chief Gborowaate, became naturalized in Ogoni and was initiated into the highest military rituals of the Ogoni and gained the title of Gbene. He became known as Gbenegborowaate. In ancient Ogoni, a person who

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96. Inayo, Teera (Prince) of Kono Boue (Aged 55). Interviewed at Noobana on 7.3.84. Text 52, pp. 187-91.

97. Dapper, Olfert, Description ..., op.cit., p. 315.

98. Barbot, John, Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, op.cit., pp. 380-381.

99. cf. C.N. Ejituwu, "The Obolo", op.cit., p. 316. See also N. Nwilogbara (Chief) of Sii, interviewed at Sii on 17.10.81 and 8.3.84. Text 18, p. 78.

possessed this title was no longer subject to the command or rulership of another man, but to command, and he must own a piece of territory even if small. Thus it might be suggested that he was the founder or ruler of the Andoni settlement on the Ogoni mainland.<sup>100</sup>

In Ogoni, a national deity was distinct from a war god or war deity. A national deity existed in grades, i.e. from the lowest level to the highest level, or from the village level to the state level. For example, the national deities were Bariyaayoo for Nama or Kana area; Bari-Luekun for Baan or Northern Kana area; Barigokana for Gokana, Bari-Kinanwii Bari-Gbenenee for Boue area, etc.. The national deities were established at the time a town or village was founded. There were aspects of a national deity. One was for the control and regulation of the use of the land. This was the Land deity.<sup>101</sup> Its priest was usually the first man who joined the founder at the time the village or community was founded, or his descendants. He was responsible for the collection of tribute or tax on land for the state; at the highest level he was the equivalent of the modern Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The other aspect of a national deity was for the control of the people or society. Its priest was usually the ruler or the king, or someone to whom he delegated certain of its functions. Its shrine was the place where all the powerful charms commanding the obedience of all citizens were kept; and it was only the ruler who could go there to invoke his authority or command the obedience.

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100. N. Nwikogbara, op.cit.

101. Mpeba, Francis Mbaedee (Chief of Luekun) (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at Nyoogo on 10.3.84. Text 27, pp. 97-100.

To establish the Land deity, two human beings were sacrificed to the Earth-god in a covenant with the founders, for it to grant a fruitful yield of that land. To establish the people's, or national deity, powerful and renowned mediums and medicine men were invited from afar to prepare powerful charms which would establish the king's authority over the citizens and command their obedience. For example, Yoko, the famous medicine man of Kwuribue (Dapper's Kuleba) was invited by the Chief of Keneke to perform such a service for his newly founded town of Keneke.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Gbeneakpana the Younger, the famous warrior and medicine man of Nama, was invited by the Chief of Buan to perform such a service for him in his newly founded town of Buan.<sup>103</sup>

The war deity was established when a community or state began to go to war against another community or state. The establishment of a war deity also involved the invitation of powerful mediums, priests and medicine men to prepare potent charms which would enable them to establish their power over their enemies. The war deity belonged to the class of warriors or the brave; and the chief warrior was its priest and all other great warriors his assistants.

In the case of Ogoni, the national war centre at Nama was founded right from the beginning because the ancestors of the Ogoni were already at war when they fled from their former place of origin.<sup>104</sup>

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102. Kpugita, Nnaa (Chief) of Keneke. (Aged c. 55). Interviewed at Keneke on 2.1.84. Text 46, pp. 159-163.

103. Na'uwe, Leonard Opusunju of Kono (Aged c. 72). Interviewed at Kono on 23.10.81. Text 25, pp. 94-95.

104. Gbeneyaaloo's spirit-medium of Gure. op.cit.

In Ogoni, the land deity, town deity and war deity did not normally have personal names except where the spirit force existing in a place revealed itself by a proper name, as at Sii, Luuyo and Kono. Otherwise they were all referred to as god (bari) or deity (yo).

Because the establishment of these powerful deities required the highest kind of sacrificial elements, namely human beings, from very early times the Ogoni made the possession of human heads or skulls illegal, except by certain grades of priests, medicine men, mediums and warriors with the title of Gbene. Human skulls were controlled like the super-powers of today control plutonium. All heads or skulls obtained from war were deposited at the national war centre with the chief priest <sup>105</sup> of the war deity, who stored them in a house of skulls. These had nothing to do with the national deity.

According to one informant, one skull was valued at one thousand two hundred manillas (taa boo kpugi) at a certain period.<sup>106</sup> That was a big amount of money in those days. Only very wealthy men could produce cash of that amount at one transaction. From that fact alone it can be seen that with the ancient Ogoni, a house of skulls was not just a relic of war but a kind of treasure which could be converted into actual cash or wealth.

As stated above, the Andoni settled near to the centre of these things in Ogoni when they came newly into the Eastern Niger Delta; and one of their chiefs named above was actually admitted into the core of

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105. In the Boue Kingdom in the seventeenth century, the wizard sorcerer who was banished from Bonny, by name Yobue, having naturalized in Ogoni, was made the priest of the war deity and keeper of the skulls. They gave him this post because they said that he had no family and no household with children. See Prince Teera Inayo of Kono Boue, op.cit.

106. Barigwere, Inee (Chief) of ILooLoo (Aged c. 98). Interviewed 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-73.

signed, being favoured by the English slave traders who drafted the Peace Treaty (1846).<sup>111</sup>

In a previous war between West Central Ogoni (Gokana) and Andoni, a war which was provoked by a fight between two traders at Gbee/Mogho market at a date which is now not known, some Bonny settlers on Ogoni land aided the Andoni in that war. This unfriendly act by Bonny was not received kindly by the Ogoni. They therefore asked the Bonny to leave Ogoni territory.<sup>112</sup> However, peace was soon restored between Ogoni and Andoni as well as between Ogoni and Bonny, and normal trade relations resumed between the three neighbours.

Nonetheless, in 1869, when a civil war broke out at Bonny between the various trading factions<sup>113</sup> of the state, namely between the Opubo Anna Pepple faction (led by Jaja) and the Fubara Manilla Pepple faction (led by Oko Jumbo), Ogoni had to make a difficult decision as to which side to support. While the Ogoni were still undecided, Jaja took the initiative. He remembered what happened earlier on in the century in the war with Andoni, that if he did not act quickly to secure the support of Ogoni, his secession was doomed to failure. He therefore acted quickly and took asylum with the Ogoni. This forced the hand of Ogoni, to support his cause.<sup>114</sup> In taking this decision, however, the Ogoni also took into consideration that Bonny had acted treacherously in the

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111. Jones, G.I., The Trading States ..., op.cit., p. 115  
cf. Alagoa and Fombo A Chronicle ..., op.cit., pp. 74-5.

112. Giah, Dinkpa (Chief) op.cit.

113. For details see Alagoa and Fombo, op.cit., pp. 30-31.

114. Yomii, Jim B. (Chief) of Ko. (Aged c. 58) Interviewed at Ko on 15.3.84. Text 28, pp. 101-3.  
Obuh, J.B. (Chief) of Kabangha (Aged c. 74). Interviewed at Kabangha on 15.3.84. Text 30, pp. 108-9.

last war with Andoni when it failed to notify Ogoni when the Peace Treaty was signed.

According to the account given by the Ogoni on the civil war, Jaja had been completely defeated and thrown out of Bonny. In his hopeless condition as he floated aimlessly in the creeks, he remembered the Ogoni and acted as stated above:

There was a civil war at Bonny. Bonny people fought and defeated Jaja and expelled him from Bonny. The town of Opobo is a new town. When Jaja had been driven from Bonny, he and his men escaped; and as they floated about in the creeks, he came to our water side and sought help from our leaders. The first thing our leaders did was to send out our warriors to assist him. They first cleared a place along our water front to provide a temporary settlement for him. Later on our Chiefs took him to where Opobo town is today. There they cleared the bush and built their permanent home. (115)

According to Ko (Opuoko) sources, the Gbenemene (King) of Ko at this time was Deedam Nwidere, who died a very old man in 1927. He controlled the trade of the Lower Imo River by his big market centre at Ko. He was also a trading partner of Bonny and a friend of Jaja.<sup>116</sup> According to the source, while work on the site of Opobo was going on, Ogoni warriors protected the trade route through the Imo River. As stated above (see *Ibibio*), there were Ogoni settlements also on the east bank of the Imo, so that they could mount an effective blockade from both banks of the river against enemy intrusions.

Ogoni medicine men and mediums prepared for Jaja the war charms which he needed to win against his enemies. With the help of King

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115. Obuh, J.B. (Chief) of Kabangha, op.cit.

116. Ibid.

Deedam, Jaja obtained the services of some of the greatest mediums and medicine men of Ogoni who came with them to the new site and set up the 'foundation of the town in the way the ancient Ogoni used to do. They also created for Jaja the state deity by which he would rule and control the citizens, as earlier described. As part of the rituals of these services, every year before King Jaja celebrated his state feasts, which in actual fact was a renewal and strengthening of these instruments of state powers, King Jaja and his close men brought wine to Ogoni to do libations to the sources of his powers. As a gesture of high-level diplomatic exchanges, King Jaja also invited his Ogoni friends to Opobo to participate in these annual celebrations, as this testimony indicates:

They used to invite our people to come and celebrate with them but after some time, our people stopped going there. Thus they said in their language, 'Okoloama na Ogoni gboro fini', which being interpreted means 'Okoloama and Ogoni are one people the same people, or are united'. (117)

Very often in presenting the history of the founding of Opobo and of King Jaja, there is a temptation towards over-simplification of the realities of the situation. Often after reading these stories, as they have so far been presented, one gets the impression that after the gun shots at Bonny, Jaja simply sailed to the east like a heroic head of state; and after making a brief 'courtesy' call in Andoni, sailed into his new kingdom of Opobo, with all the streets fully laid out. And having flung the gates open, he walked into his palace. No-one cares to remember that that place was a complete wilderness infested by giant mosquitoes and all other hazards that are usually resident in such places.

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117..Obuh, J.B. (Chief) of Kabangha, op.cit.

Only people who are familiar with events in a crisis situation and refugee problems will be able to perceive the tremendous difficulty into which Jaja and his minority supporters were plunged after they had been defeated and thrown out onto the open sea without food and water and without sufficient clothing. Only such people will understand, and appreciate the great contribution the Ogoni made to the creation of Opobo. Ogoni was the main source of food supply to both Bonny and Andoni.<sup>119</sup> Apart from Ogoni, Ndoki was the next source of supply for Bonny. But as Professor G.I. Jones has rightly pointed out, it took Bonny one week or more to make one journey to its Ndoki markets.<sup>120</sup> But to reach Ndoki markets Bonny must first pass through Ogoni. It must therefore be realized that when Jaja and his group were cast out of Bonny onto the open sea, they were simply hopeless refugees, lacking the most essential supplies. Although Jaja stopped briefly in Andoni,<sup>121</sup> it was crystal clear that Andoni could not support him for any length of time, since Andoni itself also depended on Ogoni for its own food supplies. It is here that the ability of Jaja comes out prominently, which enabled him to take a quick, wise and decisive action in the face of utter difficulty. He quietly retreated and retired to his friends in Ogoni. He was aware of the truism that no army could fight a war on an empty stomach, no matter how strong or how 'well'-equipped. Thus for him the best place to go was where he could get the necessary supplies. In Ogoni, he got both supplies and military assistance, as well as diplomatic recognition, as illustrated above.

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119. Ejituwu, C.N., "The Obolo" . . . . , op.cit., p. 318.  
See also Ogoni oral traditions.

120. Jones, G.I., The Trading States . . . . , op.cit. pp. 38, 47.

121. Alagoa and Fombo, A Chronicle, op.cit., p. 31.

Small wonder then that Bonny could not stop Jaja from building a new state, even from scratch and at its own peril. Instead Jaja stopped Bonny from reaching its Ndoki markets.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, the site where Opobo town now stands belonged to Ogoni. The account states that during the period Jaja was a political refugee in Ogoni, King Deedam of Ko took him to the site and showed him where he should build his permanent settlement. According to the account, the place was an Ogoni fishing ground, and the Ogoni name for it was Ekposogo. The Kana word akpo means a bush, but in the sea, it means an island. Sogo was the Kana name for the delicious, edible leaf known at Bonny or in Igbo as okazi. According to the story the Ogoni gave this name to the place because this edible leaf was exceedingly plentiful in the place.<sup>122</sup> It will be recalled that in Chapter III, it was pointed out that Ogoni place-names were usually not according to persons or ideas, but according to the most prominent natural feature of the environment.

Professor E.J. Alagoa and A. Fombo however suggest that the place was formerly an Andoni fishing ground, and that the Andoni gave the place to Jaja. Professor Alagoa explains that the previous name of the place was Idoni nko toru. It is not improbable that both the Ogoni and the Andoni had separate sections of the same fishing ground. Before the era of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria, both the Ogoni and the Andoni usually fished together in common fishing grounds and lived in adjacent fishing camps without trouble. If this was the case, then it can be

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122. Akekue, M.N. (Chief) of Kpuite (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Kpuite on 21.10.81 and 16.3.84. Text 35, p. 120.

understood that Jaja must have negotiated with each of these groups separately, especially since both groups were actually co-operating to help Jaja in his refugee situation. The truth is that the Ogoni version of the story has never been told; and for that reason, the history of the founding of Opobo has always been lacking in some essential ingredients.

#### Okrika

Okrika is situated on the south west of Ogoni. It consists mainly of an island referred to in the maps of early European travellers as the Horse-shoe Island. Besides the Horse-shoe Island<sup>123</sup> there are other smaller Okrika islands. One of these is Ogu, which is situated some distance southeast of Okrika Island. The inhabitants of Okrika were said to have consisted of two ethnic origins - Igbo and Ijo, but the Ijo elements were predominant.<sup>124</sup>

According to Ogoni oral tradition, the Okrika came from Ijo by way of Bonny. At first they settled on the mainland, on the coastal fringe of south western Ogoni. At that time, that part of Ogoni was occupied by the Etabajo, who were the descendants of an autochthonous people.<sup>125</sup> A quarrel later developed between the two peoples because the Etabajo discovered that some Okrika settlers were tampering with their crops (yams). To resolve this problem the Etabajo were said to have told the

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123. Barbot, James "An Abstract of a Voyage" ..., *op.cit.*, p. 463.  
Talbot, P.A. The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, *op.cit.*, p. 2

124. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report on the Okrika", File 29004, CSO/26/3, p. 8.

125. Laaka, Rev. S.O. of Onne, op.cit.

immigrant Okrikans to cross to the island because the island was unoccupied.<sup>126</sup>

Okrika oral tradition appears to suggest that it was they who were plundered by the Etabajo, whom they erroneously referred to as the Mbolli.<sup>127</sup> They claimed that it was the pressure from the Etabajo which forced them to cross over to settle on the island.<sup>128</sup> This could not have been the case because the Okrika immigrants were a small group of subsistence fishermen who had nothing to be plundered. Their fishing equipment then was crude and their catch was just minimal. Moreover, fish was not preserved out of doors like yams were. In contrast, the Etabajo were famous for their mighty polished yam tubers. Their kings were called "Yam Kings"<sup>129</sup>. It was from the Etabajo that the whole of Western Ogoni got their special large round yams called mgwe, which became popular with the early European traders in the seventeenth century, who also called this elite crop "King's yams".<sup>130</sup> These polished delicious tubers were raised by the King and by the elite for titles; and thousands of such tubers were kept in barns close to the farms. They were arranged in order and exposed to the sun to become dry and polished.

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126. Laaka, Rev. S.O. of Onne, op.cit.

127. For details about the Etabajo see Chapter IV.

128. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report", op.cit., p. 9. See also E.J. Alagoa A History of the Niger Delta, p. 148.

129. King Sauwe was a famous Yam King of Etabajo. See Chapter IV. See also Chief Oji Awala of Ogale (Aged c. 55). Interviewed at Ogale on 4.3.84. Text 13, pp. 57-9. See also Rev. S.O. Laaka of Onne. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

130. Barbot, James "An Abstract of a Voyage" ..., op.cit. p. 460.

According to oral tradition certain of the Okrika settlers actually went into the yam barns and stole the yams. This was a very serious offence which in those days carried the death sentence, even with the citizen. The report said that one Okrika youth was actually caught, but instead of killing him in accordance with the law (who knows how many persons would have been killed that way?), for the sake of peace, the Etabajo chiefs seized the opportunity to ask all the Okrika settlers to cross to the island, which then was unoccupied:

According to the ancients, the Okrikans stayed with the Etabajo people for some time before they moved to the island. During that time, one of their sons proved to be so bad; for he was a robber who stole the property of the Etabajo people. When they caught him they did not want to kill him as they used to do before, because they considered them to be strangers (i.e. people in transit). So they asked them to take him to the other side (i.e. the island); that they should cross to the other side so that he might not have the chance to come and steal their yams and crops. (131)

Again, Okrika oral tradition suggests that Fenibeso, their national deity was a human person, who, having become a great warrior, was deified.

For example, this statement:

On the Mbolli (Ogoni) mainland, a mile to the east of Okrika Island, there was a small settlement which was probably composed of members of the Ibo tribe. Among them was a certain woman and her husband. They had a stranger with them named Fenibeso. He was of a contentious nature and he quarrelled with the Mbolli. Later the couple followed a pillar of smoke and there met Oputibeya mending his net. After exchanging greetings and mutual complaints against the Mbolli (Ogoni), they decided to transfer to the island to live with Oputibeya. Fenibeso later proved himself a powerful warrior and after a warlike and victorious career, he was 'swallowed' up in the ground. He became deified, and the cult of this fetish demanded human sacrifice,

these things. By his possession of the highest Ogoni military title of Gbene, he was authorized to keep skulls. And by the same token, he was entitled to be lord of a piece of 'territory', no matter how small.

From the above analysis, there can be no doubt, therefore, that the Andoni derived the idea of a 'war god' and the practice of keeping skulls from Ogoni. But like all cultural transmissions, they have tended to mix up the separate identities and functions of these things. They have also identified deities with certain animals such as the iguana or the monitor lizard.

The Ogoni say that cassava was introduced into their area by Bonny people. According to the story, during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, Bonny people came to Ogoni to rent virgin forests which they cleared by slave labour and planted the cassava which they used in feeding the slaves at Bonny. From there the cassava was introduced into Ogoni.<sup>107</sup> Thus it is interesting to note that the cassava entered Ogoni from the south; probably through that way into the Igbo hinterland.

Similarly the Ogoni also say that the banana with longer fingers was introduced into Ogoni from Bonny. According to the account, these food items were brought into Bonny by the Europeans, then from Bonny they were introduced into Ogoni.<sup>108</sup>

In Ogoni, the cassava was a taboo to priests, mediums, medicine men, Elders, and to most ordinary men and women. It was not allowed

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107. Kpea, Edward Nwebon (Chief) of Mogho (Aged c. 89). Interviewed at Mogho on 7.2.84. Text 6, pp. 20-24.

108. Igbug, Deebari of Eepie (Aged c. 67). Interviewed at Eepie on 22.1.84. Text 60, pp. 215-219.

to be carried across the main townsquare, or into the main market where yams were sold; or taken into the house of an elder, priest, medium or brought near to these men. Similarly, most men and elders did not eat the banana. They claimed that it was a food that weakened the spirit. These foods were not used for rituals unless it concerned evil spirits. Hence they regarded the banana as food for demons.<sup>109</sup>

In the last Bonny-Andoni war fought in the reign of King William Dappa Pepple (1835-66), Ogoni entered the war on the side of Bonny after receiving an appeal from the latter. As stated above, that single act by the Ogoni saved Bonny from total humiliation by Andoni in that war. But Bonny afterwards gained a diplomatic victory in the treaty that was signed, being favoured by the English slave traders who drafted the Peace Treaty (1846).<sup>111</sup>

In a previous war between West Central Ogoni (Gokana) and Andoni, a war which was provoked by a fight between two traders at Gbee/Mogho market at a date which is now not known, some Bonny settlers on Ogoni land aided the Andoni in that war. This unfriendly act by Bonny was not received kindly by the Ogoni. They therefore asked the Bonny to leave Ogoni territory.<sup>112</sup> However, peace was soon restored between Ogoni and Andoni as well as between Ogoni and Bonny, and normal trade relations resumed between the three neighbours.

Nonetheless, in 1869, when a civil war broke out at Bonny between the various trading factions<sup>113</sup> of the state, namely between the Opubo Anna Pepple faction (led by Jaja) and the Fubara Manilla Pepple faction

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109. Gbarato, Aanee, (Chief) of Lewe, (Aged c. 110). Interviewed at Lewe on 5.2.84. Text 2, pp. 7-8.

111. Jones, G.I., *The Trading States ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 115.  
cf. Alagoa and Fombo, *A Chronicle ...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 74-5.

112. Giah, Dimkpa, (Chief), *op.cit.*

113. For details see Alagoa and Fombo, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31.

(led by Oko Jumbo), Ogoni had to make a difficult decision as to which side to support. While the Ogoni were still undecided, Jaja took the initiative. He remembered what happened earlier on in the century in the war with Andoni, that if he did not act quickly to secure the support of Ogoni, his secession was doomed to failure. He therefore acted quickly and took asylum with the Ogoni. This forced the hand of Ogoni, to support his cause.<sup>114</sup> In taking this decision, however, the Ogoni also took into consideration that Bonny had acted treacherously in the last war with Andoni when it failed to notify Ogoni when the Peace Treaty was signed.

Accoridng to the account given by the Ogoni on the civil war, Jaja had been completely defeated and thrown out of Bonny. In his hopeless condition as he floated aimlessly in the creeks, he remembered the Ogoni and acted as stated above:

There was a civil war at Bonny. Bonny people fought and defeated Jaja and expelled him from Bonny. The town of Opobo is a new town. When Jaja had been driven from Bonny, he and his men escaped; and as they floated about in the creeks, he came to our water side and sought help from our leaders. The first thing our leaders did was to send out our warriors to assist him. They first cleared a place along our water front to provide a temporary settlement for him. Later on our Chiefs took him to where Opobo town is today. There they cleared the bush and built their permanent home. (115)

According to Ko (Opuoko) sources, the Gbenemene (King) of Ko at this time was Deedam Nwidere, who died a very old man in 1927. He

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114. Yomii, Jim B., (Chief) of Ko. (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Ko on 15.3.84. Text 28, pp. 101-3.

Obuh, J.B. (Chief) of Kabangha (Aged c. 74). Interviewed at Kabangha on 15.3.84. Text 30, pp. 108-9.

115. Obuh, J.B. (Chief), op.cit.

controlled the trade of the Lower Imo River by his big market centre at Ko. He was also a trading partner of Bonny and a friend of Jaja.<sup>116</sup> According to the source, while work on the site of Opobo was going on, Ogoni warriors protected the trade route through the Imo River. As stated above (see Ibibio), there were Ogoni settlements also on the east bank of the Imo, so that they could mount an effective blockade from both banks of the river against enemy intrusions.

Ogoni medicine men and mediums prepared for Jaja the war charms which he needed to win against his enemies. With the help of King Deedam, Jaja obtained the services of some of the greatest mediums and medicine men of Ogoni who came with them to the new site and set up the 'foundation of the town in the way the ancient Ogoni used to do. They also created for Jaja the state deity by which he would rule and control the citizens, as earlier described. As part of the rituals of these services, every year before King Jaja celebrated his state feasts, which in actual fact was a renewal and strengthening of these instruments of state powers, King Jaja and his close men brought wine to Ogoni to do libations to the sources of his powers. As a gesture of high-level diplomatic exchanges, King Jaja also invited his Ogoni friends to Opobo to participate in these annual celebrations, as this testimony indicates:

They used to invite our people to come and celebrate with them but after some time, our people stopped going there. Thus they said in their language, 'Okoloama na Ogoni gboro fini', which being interpreted means 'Okoloama and Ogoni are one people the same people, or are united'. (117)

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116. Obuh, J.B., (Chief) of Kabangha, op.cit.

117. Ibid.

Very often in presenting the history of the founding of Opobo and of King Jaja, there is a temptation towards over-simplification of the realities of the situation. Often after reading these stories, as they have so far been presented, one gets the impression that after the gun shots at Bonny, Jaja simply sailed to the east like a heroic head of state; and after making a brief 'courtesy' call in Andoni, sailed into his new kingdom of Opobo, with all the streets fully laid out. And having flung the gates open, he walked into his palace. No-one cares to remember that that place was a complete wilderness infested by giant mosquitoes and all other hazards that are usually resident in such places.

Only people who are familiar with events in a crisis situation and refugee problems will be able to perceive the tremendous difficulty into which Jaja and his minority supporters were plunged after they had been defeated and thrown out onto the open sea without food and water and without sufficient clothing. Only such people will understand, and appreciate the great contribution the Ogoni made to the creation of Opobo. Ogoni was the main source of food supply to both Bonny and Andoni.<sup>119</sup> Apart from Ogoni, Ndoki was the next source of supply for Bonny. But as Professor G.I. Jones has rightly pointed out, it took Bonny one week or more to make one journey to its Ndoki markets.<sup>120</sup> But to reach Ndoki markets Bonny must first pass through Ogoni. It must therefore be realized that when Jaja and his group were cast out of Bonny onto the open sea, they were simply hopeless refugees, lacking the most essential supplies. Although Jaja stopped briefly in Andoni,<sup>121</sup> it was crystal

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119. Ejituwu, C.N., "The Obolo" . . . ., op.cit., p. 318.  
See also Ogoni oral traditions.

120. Jones, G.I., The Trading States . . . . , op.cit. pp. 38, 47.

121. Alagoa and Fombo, A Chronicle, op.cit., p. 31.

clear that Andoni could not support him for any length of time, since Andoni itself also depended on Ogoni for its own food supplies. It is here that the ability of Jaja comes out prominently, which enabled him to take a quick, wise and decisive action in the face of utter difficulty. He quietly retreated and retired to his friends in Ogoni. He was aware of the truism that no army could fight a war on an empty stomach, no matter how strong or how 'well'-equipped. Thus for him the best place to go was where he could get the necessary supplies. In Ogoni, he got both supplies and military assistance, as well as diplomatic recognition, as illustrated above.

Small wonder then that Bonny could not stop Jaja from building a new state, even from scratch and at its own peril. Instead Jaja stopped Bonny from reaching its Ndoki markets.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, the site where Opobo town now stands belonged to Ogoni. The account states that during the period Jaja was a political refugee in Ogoni, King Deedam of Ko took him to the site and showed him where he should build his permanent settlement. According to the account, the place was an Ogoni fishing ground, and the Ogoni name for it was Ekposogo. The Kana word akpo means a bush, but in the sea, it means an island. Sogo was the Kana name for the delicious, edible leaf known at Bonny or in Igbo as okazi. According to the story the Ogoni gave this name to the place because this edible leaf was exceedingly plentiful in the place.<sup>122</sup> It will be recalled that in Chapter III, it was pointed out that Ogoni place-names were usually not according to persons or ideas, but according to the most prominent natural feature of the environment.

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122. Akekue, M.N. (Chief) of Kpuite (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Kpuite on 21.10.81 and 16.3.84. Text 35, p. 120.

Professor E.J. Alagoa and A. Fombo however suggest that the place was formerly an Andoni fishing ground, and that the Andoni gave the place to Jaja. Professor Alagoa explains that the previous name of the place was Idoni nko toru. It is not improbable that both the Ogoni and the Andoni had separate sections of the same fishing ground. Before the era of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria, both the Ogoni and the Andoni usually fished together in common fishing grounds and lived in adjacent fishing camps without trouble. If this was the case, then it can be understood that Jaja must have negotiated with each of these groups separately, especially since both groups were actually co-operating to help Jaja in his refugee situation. The truth is that the Ogoni version of the story has never been told; and for that reason, the history of the founding of Opobo has always been lacking in some essential ingredients.

#### Okrika

Okrika is situated on the south west of Ogoni. It consists mainly of an island referred to in the maps of early European travellers as the Horse-shoe Island. Besides the Horse-shoe Island<sup>123</sup> there are other smaller Okrika islands. One of these is Ogu, which is situated some distance southeast of Okrika Island. The inhabitants of Okrika were said to have consisted of two ethnic origins - Igbo and Ijo, but the Ijo elements were predominant.<sup>124</sup>

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123. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage ...", op.cit., p. 463.  
Talbot, P.A. The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, op.cit., p. 2.

124. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report on the Okrika", File 29004, CSO/26/3, p. 8.

According to Ogoni oral tradition, the Okrika came from Ijo by way of Bonny. At first they settled on the mainland, on the coastal fringe of south western Ogoni. At that time, that part of Ogoni was occupied by the Etabajo, who were the descendants of an autochthonous people.<sup>125</sup> A quarrel later developed between the two peoples because the Etabajo discovered that some Okrika settlers were tampering with their crops (yams). To resolve this problem the Etabajo were said to have told the immigrant Okrikans to cross to the island because the island was unoccupied.<sup>126</sup>

Okrika oral tradition appears to suggest that it was they who were plundered by the Etabajo, whom they erroneously referred to as the Mbolli.<sup>127</sup> They claimed that it was the pressure from the Etabajo which forced them to cross over to settle on the island.<sup>128</sup> This could not have been the case because the Okrika immigrants were a small group of subsistence fishermen who had nothing to be plundered. Their fishing equipment then was crude and their catch was just minimal. Moreover, fish was not preserved out of doors like yams were. In contrast, the Etabajo were famous for their mighty polished yam tubers. Their kings were called "Yam Kings"<sup>129</sup>. It was from the Etabajo that the whole of Western Ogoni got their special large round yams called

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125. Laaka, Rev. S.O. of Onne, op.cit.

126. Ibid.

127. For details about the Etabajo see Chapter IV.

128. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report", op.cit., p. 9.  
See also E.J. Alagoa A History of the Niger Delta, p. 148.

129. King Sauwe was a famous Yam King of Etabajo. See Chapter IV.  
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See also Rev. S.O. Laaka of Onne. Text 9, pp. 37-41.

mgwe, which became popular with the early European traders in the seventeenth century, who also called this elite crop "King's yams".<sup>130</sup>

These polished delicious tubers were raised by the King and by the elite for titles; and thousands of such tubers were kept in barns close to the farms. They were arranged in order and exposed to the sun to become dry and polished. According to oral tradition, certain of the Okrika settlers actually went into the yam barns and stole the yams. This was a very serious offence which in those days carried the death sentence, even with the citizen. The report said that one Okrika youth was actually caught, but instead of killing him in accordance with the law (who knows how many persons would have been killed that way?), for the sake of peace, the Etabajo chiefs seized the opportunity to ask all the Okrika settlers to cross to the island, which then was unoccupied:

According to the ancients, the Okrikans stayed with the Etabajo people for some time before they moved to the island. During that time, one of their sons proved to be so bad; for he was a robber who stole the property of the Etabajo people. When they caught him they did not want to kill him as they used to do before, because they considered them to be strangers (i.e. people in transit). So they asked them to take him to the other side (i.e. the island); that they should cross to the other side so that he might not have the chance to come and steal their yams and crops. (131)

Again, Okrika oral tradition suggests that Fenibeso, their national deity was a human person, who, having become a great warrior, was deified. For example, this statement:

On the Mbolli (Ogoni) mainland, a mile to the east of Okrika Island, there was a small settlement which was probably composed of members of the Ibo tribe. Among them was a certain woman and her husband. They had a stranger with them named Fenibeso. He was of a contentious nature and he quarrelled with the Mbolli. Later the couple

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130. Barbot, James, "An Abstract of a Voyage" ..., op.cit., p. 460.

131. Laaka, Rev. S.O. of Onne, op.cit. Text 8, p. 32.

followed a pillar of smoke and there met Oputibeya mending his net. After exchanging greetings and mutual complaints against the Mbolli (Ogoni), they decided to transfer to the island to live with Oputibeya. Fenibeso later proved himself a powerful warrior and after a warlike and victorious career, he was 'swallowed' up in the ground. He became deified, and the cult of this fetish demanded human sacrifice, cannibalism and the decoration of the shrine with the heads of the victims. (132)

It is indisputable not only because of evidence from Okrika oral tradition itself, but also because of sheer weight of evidence from other sources that the Ogoni were settled in their present home long before the Okrika came. That is why the testimony from Ogoni oral tradition concerning the settlement of Okrika must be of considerable importance. According to Ogoni oral tradition, the ancestors of the Okrika who first settled on the Ogoni mainland were pure Ijo people. There were no Igbo elements near this area at that time. (See Igbo above).<sup>133</sup>

Secondly, Fenibeso was not a human person, as some had hitherto believed.<sup>134</sup> According to Ogoni oral tradition, Fenibeso was a fetish or a deity which the Okrika ancestors brought with them when they arrived in the Eastern Niger Delta and settled on the Ogoni mainland. It was a kind of ethnic or ancestral cult worshipped by the Okrika immigrants for prosperity and for protection in a defensive sense. At that time it had not yet assumed the role of an offensive deity, or 'war god', since its worshippers were still too weak and too dependent on their host neighbours.

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132. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report", op.cit., pp. 9-10.

133. Jones, G.I., The Trading States ..., p. 32.

134. Alagoa, E.J., "The Niger Delta States ...", op.cit., p. 287. See also Alagoa, E.J., A History of the Niger Delta, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972), p. 148.

Its rituals consisted mainly of fish and cocoyam offerings, not human blood and skulls.<sup>135</sup> According to the evidence, the Etabajo who were the closest neighbours of the early Okrika settlers also took part in the worship of the deity or cult, since both needed to have their occupations blessed. Both had priests for the deity, and its feast was annual. In a typical worship, they poured the libations to the land and to the water, prayerfully calling for prosperity for the tillers of the land and for the fishermen who laboured in the water, as this testimony illustrates:

When the Okrika (priest) spoke to the deity  
to beg anything from the deity, the Leme (Ogoni)  
man (priest) also spoke to beg whatever they  
wanted. They did not separate:

'They ate the food together  
They poured into the water  
They poured onto the land  
That they who were planting  
And they who were fishing  
Might prosper together.'

Thus they spilled the ritual oblations and the  
libations with prayers to the deity for the good  
of the two peoples. (136)

When trouble broke out between the two peoples as a result of the yam case stated above, the Okrika settlers had to be told to leave the mainland to settle on the island. At that time the deity remained behind on the mainland. It is not certain whether they left all of the cult, or only part of it was left behind on the mainland. However, before that time, the Ogoni had already had their own priest who took over the services of the deity. Some Okrika worshippers also returned each year to the feast in a kind of reunion fellowship with their neighbours on the mainland.<sup>137</sup>

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135. Rev. S.O. Laaka of Onne, op.cit.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

From the above analysis, it is very clear that Fenibeso was not a human person deified. For he could not have been deified twice. It has to be borne in mind that at the time the Okrika ancestors moved from the mainland to the island, the ancestors had not even got a name by which they could identify themselves as a people, much less a 'national hero' of the type to be deified. It is also plain that the conversion of Fenibeso into a 'war god' with the additional elements of human sacrifice, cannibalism and adornment of shrines with human skulls,<sup>139</sup> represent a series of later innovations transmitted either from Bonny or from Andoni. The latter place is probably more likely since it was reported that Oputibeya, the man credited with the founding of Okrika proper, had spent some time in Andoni.<sup>140</sup>

J.C. Porter reporting from Okrika oral tradition wrote:

'When Oputibeya was placed to act as buffer between the Mbolli marauders, he remonstrated. The Ogulamas reassured him by saying that they would stand by him in the event of trouble and that the two settlements would be one in mutual co-operation. Hence the name Okrika, for 'Kirike' in the language means 'not different'. (141)

Notice that the action in the above-quoted passage represents a stage in the 'history' of a people when they began to assert their own identity as a people, the stage of 'national consciousness'. It was the stage when they began to assert their freedom and independence from a neighbour whom they considered as an 'aggressor' or 'oppressor'. No-one knows the date when this stage arrived, but no-one can be in doubt that it occurred some centuries later. It is to be noted also that it was at this stage that the people's deity began to 'assume' the

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139. Porter, J.C. "Intelligence Report on Okrika Clan" op.cit., p. 10

140. Ejituwu, C.N., "The Obolo ....", op.cit., p. 310.

141. Porter, J.C., op.cit., p. 11.

characteristics of a 'war god' and its priest became venerated, especially if they happened to win some victories.

Another significant point that comes out of the passage quoted from Okrika oral tradition above is the fact that the name 'Okrika' came into being at this stage, namely the stage when the two sections of Okrika formed an alliance against their 'enemy', whom they called Mbolli. This raises a number of questions. What were they called before this time? Why does Okrika oral tradition not mention the Etabaje, who were their closest neighbours? Why Mbolli instead of Etabajo or even Leme? An analysis of these questions reveals that much of Okrika oral tradition is made up of anachronisms, i.e. events of later times are pushed backwards in time to an earlier period. According to Ogoni oral tradition the name Mbolli came into existence in the early colonial period, i.e. early twentieth century.<sup>142</sup> But the names Leme and Etabajo existed. The Etabajo were the direct neighbours of the early Okrika settlers. They occupied the territory opposite Okrika Island. In their position they served as buffer between the Leme and the immigrant Okrika settlers. Thus when the Okrika oral tradition speaks of the Mbolli marauders, they really mean the Etabajo. But from what is known from oral tradition about the Etabajo, it is extremely doubtful whether they were marauders at all. For they were the producers of the coveted 'King's yams' of history, otherwise called mgwe.<sup>143</sup>

It is interesting that Okrika oral tradition does not recall the name Etabajo, yet it is known that this people worshipped the deity

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142. Rev. S.O. Laaka of Onne, op.cit.

143. Ibid.

Fenibeso with the ancestors of the Okrika when they settled on the Ogoni mainland. But what is even more interesting is the question as to what the Okrika were called before the formation of their 'union' or alliance against what they termed the Mbolli (by which in fact they meant the Etabajo)?

J.C. Porter records that on that occasion, the ancestors of the Okrika called themselves Kirike. But the Ogoni name for the Okrika is Kirika. In the seventeenth century Dapper and Barbot used the term Krike and Crike respectively.<sup>144</sup> The form Okrika must therefore be seen as later changes, which must have taken place during a period of an influx of Igbo elements into Okrika society. For example, W.B. Baikie records that the Igbo pronunciation of the term Ebane (Bonny) was Obane.<sup>145</sup> Thus the 'O' element of the Igbo is here very evident in the term Okrika. But why Okrika instead of Okrike? The 'a' element here suggests an Ogoni influence. It shows that the first contacts between the Igbo and the Okrika was through the Ogoni in the course of trade. Thus the Igbo first learned the - 'a' - ending in Okrika from the Ogoni before they actually met and became acquainted with the Okrika themselves. To this 'a' ending of the Ogoni, the Igbo added their own 'o' prefix, and the result was Okrika.

Since the 'O' of the Igbo did not show in the writings of the early European travellers in the seventeenth century, it means that Igbo influence did not begin in Okrika until sometime after the seventeenth century.

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144. Dapper, Olfert, Description, op.cit., p. 482.  
Barbot, Description, op.cit., p. 380.

145. Baikie, W.R., Narrative of an Exploring Voyage..., op.cit., p. 335.

But the original question still remains. What were the Okrika ancestors called before the formation of their 'union' or alliance out of which the name Kirike emerged? For the word Kirike was said to have meant, 'We are not different'. And from the context it is known that this actually meant 'not divided' but 'united' or 'allied together' against the same 'enemy'. What were they called before this time? Or rather, what did the Etabajo call them?

If the word Kirike had existed originally, it would have been logical to assume that the Ogoni form Kirika was derived from the Ijo Kirike. Since the term Kirike did not exist originally, that assumption cannot stand. Certainly the Etabajo must have had some way of referring to this group of immigrants with whom they were in constant close intercourse, such as fellowship in the worship of Fenibeso, the immigrants' deity.

Now the word Kirika (or Nkirika) was an old household popular name in ancient Ogoni. It was an endearing name which loving grandmothers and grandfathers were fond of giving to their darling granddaughters and grandsons. For a girl or woman, the name conveyed the idea of perfect beauty in the sense of form and size - not too big and not too small - just the desired frame of body. Besides all this, the name carried with it the image of dashing smartness in movement and in action. Sometimes happy nursing mothers in a sitting position were fond of holding their darling little babies on their laps with both hands and playing with them by throwing them up and catching them, while speaking the various forms of the word, viz., Kirika..., Nkirika..., Ndigirika..., Kirikawa..., etc.. While a mother fondly played with her darling baby with these charming names, each form of the word emphasized a particular

aspect of beauty. For example, the last one Kirikawa emphasized the fact that it was a darling little woman (wa), and the second last, Ndigirika, stressed the idea of portableness.

The name originated in the Tee area of Ogoni, and from Tee it was popularized throughout Ogoni. Moreover, the name existed in Ogoni before the Okrika came to the Eastern Niger Delta. In Chapter IV, it was explained that during the wars of conquest by the Ogoni ancestors in the Tee area, the first group of the Gooch peoples who escaped from that war went to settle in the Leme area. They in turn conquered and mixed with other autochthonous peoples who lived in that area and became the Etabajo.

The implication is that the Etabajo spoke a dialect similar to the Tee dialect. It is to be noted that a similar dialectal discovery was made in the Tee-baan (Taanbaan) area<sup>146</sup> of Kana, where it was similarly noted that a remnant of the Gooch peoples who fled from the same wars had also settled.<sup>147</sup>

The conclusion may therefore be drawn that the Etabajo used the term Kirika or Nkirika to describe the little and seemingly beautiful village of the early Okrika settlers. For example, they might have used such expressions as Kirika-bon, Nkirika-bon, or Ndigirika-bon; bon being the Gooch or gokana word for village, town, country or society. Why was their community beautiful and attractive to the Etabajo? The most obvious reason was because they were not agriculturists. For agriculturists had to toil on the farms day-in and day-out; and they had to wait

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146. Wolff, Hans, "Synopsis of Ogoni languages", Journal of African Languages, 3, 1(1964), pp. 38-57.

147. See Chapter IV.

a comparatively longer time for their harvest. In contrast, this little fisher society and their women, they just 'waited' for the tides to come and go, bringing with them each time bountiful supplies of fish! Such a society must be attractive, especially to the lazy among the Etabajo. This must explain why the 'religion' of the early Okrika settlers was also attractive to the Etabajo.

In conclusion the following points are to be noted:

- i. The Ogoni called the Okrika Kirika.
- ii. The word Kirika, or Nkirika, or Ndigirika existed in all the languages of Ogoni long before the Okrika settled in the Eastern Niger Delta. In all cases the meaning of the word conveyed a notion of ideal or perfect beauty with particular reference to form and size.
- iii. The Etabajo who were the closest neighbours of the early Okrika settlers migrated from an area of Ogoni where this word originated and where it was popularized.
- iv. The Okrika did not seem to have remembered any name by which they were called or addressed until some centuries later, when they adopted the name Kirike as a label of an alliance against their enemies.
- v. It is known that the Etabajo had close relations with the early Okrika settlers. It is therefore assumed that the Etabajo used the term Kirika to describe the little Okrika settlement which was very close to them.
- vi. Although centuries later the Okrika settlers adopted the term Kirike to describe themselves, that did not appear to have had any effect on the Ogoni term Kirika, which had already been in use, except for the 'O' of the Igbo, which was prefixed to it some time after the seventeenth century.

According to P.A. Talbot, in 1887, the Okrika murdered one hundred and sixty Ogoni citizens of Alesa and ate them.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately, Talbot did not elaborate. Thus it is not known under what circumstances the murder was committed. However, Ogoni oral tradition did report

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148. Talbot, P.A. The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. I, (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 271.

about the incident but with some variations. According to Ogoni oral tradition, the victims were not the Alesa but the Eteo; and their murderers, though Okrikans, were not those of Okrika Island, but those of Ogu, and the number killed was not 160, but 164.

The testimony records that there was no war between Ogoni (Leme) and Ogu. Instead there was peace and trade relations between the two peoples. There was a big market on the mainland between Eteo and Ogu. Farmers from Leme, Tee and Gokana used to sell their agricultural produce in that market. Ogu and other Okrika settlements depended on the market for their food supply. As trade in the market went on, a quarrel developed between the Ebubu and the Eteo, both of Leme in Ogoni. In the course of the quarrel, the Eteo waylaid and murdered the Paramount Chief of Ebubu, by name Gumba Nuuma, as he travelled through Eteo to visit the market.<sup>149</sup> The Eteo were nearest to the market, and almost all other Leme towns had to pass through Eteo to get to the market. Eteo's action sparked off great fury throughout the rest of Leme. The market stopped. Meanwhile the Ogu and the other Okrika settlements who depended on the market for their food supply began to suffer the pinch of Eteo's action. While the rest of Leme were planning the best way to punish Eteo for the murder of the Ebubu Chief, Ogu quietly invited the Eteo chiefs to a feast on their Island. The account states that this was a normal reciprocal practice between the two neighbours. While they were there, the Ogu fell on them and murdered one hundred and sixty-four of their chiefs and prominent leaders.<sup>150</sup>

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149. Rev. S.O. Laaka of Onne, op.cit.

150. Ibid.

The account explains that the Ogu murdered these men in revenge for the murder of the Ebubu chief, and that there was no war or quarrel between them and the Ogu; or between the Ogu and any other Leme town. The fact that so many Eteo people attended an invitation of the sort would support the notion of the existence of peaceful relations, but the question is, why must the Ogu take this heavy responsibility upon themselves to commit such a heinous crime? The account answered the question in this way:

This incident disrupted the flow of the market. The Ogu people became angry because by stopping the market, they were gradually starving to death, as the market was their only source of food supply. (151)

While there may be some truth in this, it alone does not explain Ogu's action. Ogu's murder was grossly out of proportion to the earlier murder by Eteo. The account stated that the rest of Leme refused to take action against Ogu because all of them were at the time very angry against Eteo and were looking for a way to punish them for their murder of the Ebubu chief. But the question is, did Ogu have the legitimate right to punish Eteo in the particular circumstances? Why did the Leme fail to appeal to their brethren in the other parts of Ogoni on this occasion as they did on the occasion when they were threatened by the Aros?<sup>152</sup> There is therefore a strong suspicion that the other Leme towns were in collusion with Ogu in planning and carrying out this mass murder. For the account says: "The place being an island, the Eteo could not swim to escape". It is arguable that the planners of the action knew in advance about this condition. While many questions may

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151. Rev. S.O. Laaka of Onne, op.cit.

152. See Chapter IV.

never be answered, the case of collusion remains strong. Nevertheless, this incident stands as a dark spot in the history of Okrika.

In the last war between Bonny and Andoni, Okrika allied with Andoni against Bonny, but Ogoni came to the aid of Bonny.<sup>153</sup> In some versions of Ogoni oral tradition, this war was referred to as Ogoni-Okrika war.<sup>154</sup> During the missionary era, Okrika was alleged to have obstructed the spread of Christian education to Ogoni, particularly to the Leme area of Ogoni, as Leme was then attached to Degema Province.<sup>155</sup>

Despite these negative episodes, the main characteristic of the relations between the two neighbours had been trade. Ogoni pottery was highly demanded in all the towns of Okrika.<sup>156</sup> Although the Ogu of Okrika later learned how to make pottery, these were too thick and too heavy to be used as utility vessels in households. Hence they were mainly used for ritual purposes in the houses of their gods. Ogoni pottery was efficient as household utility ware. Archaeological excavations at Okrika have shown evidence of Ogoni pottery which was used by the early Okrika settlers.<sup>157</sup> This evidence proved beyond reasonable doubt the early trade relations between Ogoni and Okrika.

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153. Ejituwu, C.N., "The Obolo...", op.cit., p. 313.  
E.J. Alagoa, A History of the Niger Delta, op.cit., p. 153.  
G.I. Jones, The Trading States, op.cit., p. 115.
154. Barigwere, Inee (Chief) of ILooLoo (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at ILooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-173.
155. Mackenzie, J.G. "Intelligence Report on Eleme Clan", File E.P. 9595, CSE1/85/4888.
156. Kpone-Tonwe, Obeeye of Noobana, Kono boue (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Noobana on 27.11.84.
157. Nzewunwa, N. The Niger Delta Pre-History Economy and Culture, (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 203.

Ikwerre, Kalabari and Brass (Nembe)

The Ikwerre occupied a territory west of Ogoni. It seems that there was no overland east-west trade route between Ogoni and Ikwerre. The trade routes on this region followed more or less the valleys of the rivers from the hinterland to the coast. In Ogoni the trade routes from the Igbo hinterland followed the valleys of the Imo river and its tributaries. In Ikwerre area, the trade routes kept to the valleys of the Orashi and the New Calabar (Rio Real) Rivers through the Abua and the Ikwerre territories into the Ijo and the Kalabari areas respectively. For this reason, very little communication or contact existed overland between the Ogoni and the Ikwerre areas in ancient times in an east-west direction. For the same reason there seems to have existed a large expanse of unoccupied territory between Ikwerre and Ogoni in ancient times. Much of that characteristic of emptiness in that area persisted into more recent times. A great part of that empty territory included part of what is today Port Harcourt and adjoining areas. However, there is evidence that there were trade contacts between Ogoni on the one hand and Ikwerre, Kalabari and Nembe (Brass) on the other, by sea and river communications.

In the seventeenth century Dapper noted that the Ogoni city of Kwuribue (Kuleba) dominated and ruled the whole territory of the Eastern Niger Delta from west of the river Kalbarie (Rio Real) as far as Sangama.<sup>158</sup> Sangama was a town situated at the mouth of a river of the same name and located west of the river Nun on Cape Formosa. But Dapper, although he acknowledged Kwuribue as wielding a considerable power and influence in the region, nevertheless questioned its claim to rule all the territory in the area described above.

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158. Dapper, Olfert Description de l'Afrique, op.cit., p. 315

One can notice here an important debate in this region between the early Dutch traders, represented by Dapper or his informants on the one hand, and the Ogoni traders, represented by Kwuribue, on the other. To get an insight into the nature of this debate, certain questions must be asked. Why did Kwuribue make the claim? And why did Dapper of the Dutch doubt such a claim? What of the other participants in this debate? What role did they play? By 'other participants' is meant all the other 'states' in the region in the contemporary period. Commenting on this debate, Professor G.I. Jones wrote:

Culeba, ... although its claim to rule all the territory traditionally regarded as in the political spheres of Nembe and Kalabari can be dismissed as an idle boast, it at least indicates that [it] felt strong enough to challenge the dominant position formerly held by Kalabari in this area. (159)

One can understand the enormous problems that Professor Jones faced at the time he wrote the above commentary. One of such problems was lack of information on Ogoni, a vital state in the region. Thus when confronted with the names of such Ogoni towns as Kwuribue (Kuleba), he often thought that it was a local name for Bonny, which I have already explained in Chapter V. Sometimes he thinks that Mogho (Moko), another important Ogoni market town, was located in Ikwerre land, the chief trading area of Nembe. Thus when he uses such phrases as "... territory traditionally regarded as in the political spheres of Nembe and Kalabari ...",<sup>160</sup> one can understand that he is evidently

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159. Jones, G.I., The Trading States ... , p. 36.

160. Ibid.

referring to a relatively recent period. Beyond that, one can only observe that there is no evidence either in the oral tradition or in the writings of the early European travellers, which credits the existence of such political spheres to these states in an earlier period, or at least in the contemporary period. The earliest description about activities in this area was that of Pacheco Pereira.<sup>161</sup> Pereira did not even name these states or describe any political activities in their locations. The second earliest European traveller's writing was that of Dapper,<sup>162</sup> which is now under review. Dapper does not assign any political spheres to the above-named states.

When Dapper mentioned Okrika and Bonny, he named them as geographical districts to be used in locating the markets of Moko (Mogho) and Kwuribue (Kuleba), which were on the Ogoni coast. He did not mention anything special or of interest about Bonny and Okrika. Thus these states were, as it were, in the contemporary period 'silent' in the present debate. The only place mentioned by Dapper in the Kalabari area as a town, or market, and not just as a 'district', was Bile (Beli), which he described as "where they also trade in slaves but the business is not so good as to the east of the Kalabari river".<sup>163</sup>

And east of the Kalabari River or Rio Real were the Ogoni markets of Mogho and Kwuribue. Mogho as a market was of particular importance because they operated a real market economy backed by an iron currency. When he

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161. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo ..., op.cit., pp. 145-147.

162. Dapper, Olfert, Description ..., op.cit., p. 482.

163. Dapper, O., Naukeurige Beschrijvinge de Afrikaensche Gewesten ... op.cit., p. 135.

mentioned Kwuribue, he described it not only as a market or trade centre, but also as a political authority. Thus if there were any political spheres in the Eastern Niger Delta in the time of Dapper, they were those which were then being administered by the 'financial' and political authorities based at centres on the coast of Ogoni.

Now why did Kwuribue make the claim quoted by Dapper? In Chapter V it was explained that Kwuribue was built after a great disaster had befallen its parent city, the metropolis of Bangha, which was on the coast of Ogoni at a position between Mogho and Kwuribue. In that chapter, it was argued that that city was the "very large village of about 2,000 households" described by Pereira.<sup>165</sup> Incidentally, Dapper also found his activity centres in the same vicinity. According to Ogoni oral tradition, the disaster which befell Bangha, and from which Kwuribue emerged, was of such magnitude that in modern terms it would have required massive aid from other towns and nations.

Thus when Kwuribue made the claim that it ruled all the territory from the west of the Rio Real as far as Cape Formosa or Sangama, it was not only reasserting the present state of things, but it was also invoking an ancient glory which they enjoyed in the days when Bangha, its predecessor city, dominated the political and commercial sphere of the Eastern Niger Delta through trade with the Portuguese, while Benin dominated that of the Western Delta. This was the time framework in which Kwuribue made the claims. For if it was an argument based only on the present state of things, then the Dutch would have been in possession of the full facts and their querying would not have arisen.

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165. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo ..., op.cit., p. 147.

Moreover, Kwuribue invoked this ancient glory in response to some new developments taking place in the region, such as the emerging rivals like Bile or some potential ones like Bonny and Okrika. Although the Dutch traders (Dapper) recognized that Kwuribue was actually wielding a considerable power and influence in the region, at the same time they could not believe that its power was as great as it claimed, for they could not fully comprehend how great Bangha was.

The above analysis explains the circumstances of Kwuribue's claim and the ensuing debate between it and the early Dutch traders who came to the Eastern Niger Delta.

In the meantime, Kwuribue began to make a move to reassert its ancient authority in the region. While this move was going on, a devastating civil war broke out in Ogoni and diverted all its energies and attention in the first half of the seventeenth century. The civil war forced the rulers of Kwuribue to transfer the city from the coast to a more central position further inland in the Boue area and to change its name from Kwuribue to Kono (or Kono-Boue). While it was involved in this long and bitter civil war, the Dutch traders returned only to find that Kwuribue was no longer there. So they turned to Bile. But Bile not being energetic enough was soon outbidden by New Calabar.<sup>166</sup> Meanwhile Bonny and to some extent Okrika had filled the vacuum created by the exit of Kwuribue from the maritime trade by reason of the civil war and by virtue of its transfer from the coast.

Thus by the time the Barbots came on the scene at the turn of the century, New Calabar and Bonny had become the leading trading states

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166. Jones, G.I., The Trading States..., op.cit., p. 39.

in the Eastern Niger Delta, with New Calabar leading, having first superseded Bile. This was the circumstance in which the Barbots in their time described Bile as being in a state of decline.<sup>167</sup>

From the above analysis, it can now be possible to date the beginning of the slave trade in the Kalabari area as starting with Bile, sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century,<sup>168</sup> and that Bile was quickly superseded by New Calabar, which itself soon faced an energetic rivalry from Bonny.

The fact that these new emergent states were established off the coast on the edge of the seaways became convenient to the European traders. However, Ogoni continued to dominate in the hinterland trade and in the trade in foodstuffs and agricultural produce. Ogoni pottery enjoyed complete monopoly throughout the region.<sup>169</sup> Traders from Kalabari and from other parts of Ijo came to Ogoni to sell their fish and to buy foodstuffs. For example, in 1699, when James Barbot and Grazihier visited New Calabar, they saw there certain types of weapons which they engraved. They noted that the weapons were not made by the Ijo of Kalabari but that the latter had bought them from the Igbo country, whom they erroneously called Hackbous.<sup>170</sup> Now this writer identified a curved, double-edged sword<sup>171</sup> with decorated hilt among those weapons as Ogoni. It was the gentleman's weapon in ancient Ogoni, and it was called Kobege.<sup>172</sup> This proved that a lot of

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167. Barbot, John A Description of the Coasts...., op.cit., p. 380.

168. cf. G.I. Jones, The Trading States..., op.cit., pp. 35-6.

169. Kpone-Tonwe, Obeeye of Noobana, op.cit. Text 69, pp. 265-6.

170. Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages ...., op.cit., p. 461.

171. Ibid., Vol. V. Plate 26, Item E.

172. Bagia (His Royal Highness), J.P., of Gokana, op.cit.

the times when it was stated in the European writings that the people of New Calabar or Bonny, etc., went to markets in Igbo country, the place they went was not always Igbo country, but most of the times it was in fact Ogoni. Thus as Pereira reported, the Ogoni markets were big centres where traders from all parts of Ijo, Kalabari and Ikwerre came to trade in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>173</sup>

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173. Pereira, Pacheco Duarte, Esmeraldo...., op.cit., p. 132.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE COMING OF THE EUROPEANS

Ogoni after the Era of the Slave Trade

After the end of the slave trade in the nineteenth century, the participation of Ogoni in external commerce steadily declined. A number of factors was responsible. The first was that the introduction of the 'legitimate' trade was unfavourable to Ogoni. Although Ogoni territory lay within the major oil palm belt, it was not a major palm oil producing area. From very early times, the Ogoni did not allow too many oil palm trees to grow on their farms. This was because the yam crop which was the main crop of the Ogoni, did not grow well under the shade of palm trees. The yam needed plenty of sunlight before it could grow well to produce bigger and better tubers. For this reason, the Ogoni did not allow more than two or three palm trees to grow on any single farm. Palm trees, however, grew wild on lands which were unsuitable for yam cultivation, but the quantity of palm produce coming from such lands was relatively small compared with the quantities coming from other parts of the Imo and the Cross River valleys.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, during the era of the slave trade, Ogoni was a major trade route for the overland trade from the Igbo hinterland to Bonny and Okrika. This brought a lot of business and trade to Ogoni. The coastal market towns of Ogoni provided the final resting place or depots for the slaves before they were finally ferried across the sea either to Bonny or Okrika. This meant that there was a considerable amount of trading activities for the Ogoni middlemen in this respect. With the introduc-

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1. cf. Northrup, David, Trade Without Rulers, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 120 and 193.

tion of 'legitimate' trade, the overland trade routes virtually closed. This was because palm oil was a heavy, bulky commodity, consequently its transportation had to be done by canoes only; and this was confined to the river routes. The result was that Ogoni declined both as a trade route and as a source of supply of the staple commodity for the new trade, namely the palm oil trade. Since the quantity of palm oil produced in Ogoni was relatively small, the Imo market towns of Ogoni declined to the status of minor sources of supply.

The third reason was that the shift from slave trade to palm oil trade brought about a substantial fall in the farm produce trade of Ogoni. For example, during the slave trade, large quantities of Ogoni yams and other agricultural products were exported overseas along with the slaves. Yams, goats, pepper, etc., were required for feeding the slaves not only during the time they were kept at the depots, but also during the journey across the Atlantic to the Americas.<sup>2</sup> Thus besides participating in the slave trade, the Ogoni also carried on a lucrative trade in the sale of their yams and other agricultural products. But Ogoni lost all these trading activities following the end of the slave trade and the introduction of the palm oil trade in the nineteenth century.

#### Trade Monopoly by the Delta States

Another factor which contributed significantly to the decline of Ogoni in the nineteenth century was the trade monopoly by the coastal middlemen. Although this monopoly provoked a trade war between the

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2. Barbot, John, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. V., (London: Messrs. Churchill & Churchill for Lintot and Thomas Osborne, 1732), pp. 460 and 465.

European firms and the coastal middlemen, the outcome of the struggle did not alter in any significant way the pattern of monopoly already set by the Delta traders.

The Delta States had depended on the prosperity brought about by the slave trade.<sup>3</sup> The whole wealth of these states and their social structure had been based on this trade.<sup>4</sup> With the abolition of the slave trade, the economic superstructure of these states was seriously undermined. K.O. Dike explains that the abolition simply threw the Delta middlemen into financial ruin.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, the European firms (mainly English) began to push their way into the hinterland oil markets. They were now determined to by-pass the coastal middlemen and to trade directly with the hinterland producers. Obaro Ikime reports that by the 1850's, the firm of Macgregor Laird had established stations at Aboh, Onitsha and Lokoja. By the 1860's, the push into the Niger valley had dramatically increased by the presence of such trading firms as the West African Company, Miller Brothers and company, the Central African Trading Company, James Pinnock and Company, etc..<sup>6</sup>

K.E. Ume points out that the push by British traders into the hinterland gathered momentum following the transfer of the British Consulate from Fernando Po to Calabar in 1872. According to him, the transfer of the consulate to the mainland encouraged many British subjects to

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3. cf. G.I. Jones, The Trading States of the Oil Rivers, p. 89. Alagoa, E.J. "The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours" in J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, eds., History of West Africa, Vol. I, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 269-303.
  4. Jones, G.I., The Trading States ..., pp. 88-101.
  5. Dike, K.O., Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1850-1885, (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 47-54.
  6. Ikime, Obaro, The Fall of Nigeria, (Ibadan: Heinemann Education Books, Ltd., 1977), p. 30.

penetrate inland to the oil markets in armed boats. Notable in this were Messrs. Miller Brothers & Company, who built some factories in the Qua Iboe Valley, between Opobo and Old Calabar, despite bitter opposition by Opobo. In this way they diverted a part of the inland trade from the two city-states.<sup>7</sup> Obaro Ikime has observed that the push was a threat to the very livelihood of the Delta traders and made them determined to obstruct any further penetration of the hinterland.<sup>8</sup> According to the report, King Jaja of Opobo and King Archibong of Old Calabar eventually drove the European traders from the hinterland markets of their areas.<sup>9</sup>

In the view of Obaro Ikime, both Jaja and Nana rejected Articles VI and VII of the Protection treaty signed with the British in 1884 because they rejected free trade. Article VI provided for freedom of religious worship and free practice by Christian ministers. Article VII provided for free trade by the subjects of all countries in every part of the territories of the Kings, Chiefs, etc., of the country.<sup>10</sup> Although Ikime argues that Jaja and Nana were within their treaty rights when they refused free trade and sought to protect their own interests, he nevertheless admits that free trade might have been necessary in the interest of British commerce and in the development of the hinterland of the Oil Rivers.<sup>11</sup>

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7. Ume, Kalu E. The Rise of British Colonialism in Southern Nigeria 1700-1900, (Smithtown, New York: Exposition Press, 1980), p. 198.
  8. Ikime, Obaro, The Fall of Nigeria, op.cit., pp. 30-1.  
--- --- Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta, (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., 1968), pp. 52-3.
  9. Ume, Kalu, op.cit., pp. 198-9.
  10. Ikime, Obaro, Merchant Prince, op.cit., pp. 52-53.
  11. Ibid., p. 53.

It will be shown below that because of the trade monopoly mounted by the coastal middlemen in general and by Jaja in particular, Ogoni suffered severe economic isolation as well as isolation from contact by other European agencies such as missionaries, travellers and by the colonial administrators.

The late Professor J.C. Anene has described an area defined as Jaja's hinterland markets in three directions. To the north were the Ndoki markets of Ohambele, to which oil producers from as far away places as the districts of Bende and Owerri brought their palm oil to sell. To the north-east were the Annang markets of Essene, to which oil from the Annang districts was transported to trade. To the east, were the Qua Iboe markets.

From the above, it is clear that both the northern and the north-eastern markets of Jaja were within easy reach of Ogoni through the Imo and the Azumini rivers. In fact Jaja had to pass through Ogoni in order to reach these markets. As noted above, although Ogoni was not a major producer of palm oil, the monopolistic policies of the coastal middlemen provided no opportunity for fair trade, which could only exist where there was a free and fair competition between rival trading groups. This was disadvantageous to the hinterland producers. The absence of free trade and free competition also gave Jaja a wide range of choice of sources of supply to the disadvantage of minor producers such as Ogoni, even though the latter was an old market centre within the network of the Imo and the Azumini rivers. Under a free trade system, the Imo market towns of Ogoni, like Ko, Kabangha, Baene, Kono, etc., could have developed into fairly large collecting centres of palm produce from within Ogoni itself, as well as from farther away in the hinterland

through the Imo and the Azumini rivers. Some rival firms could have taken advantage of the favourable market situations of these Ogoni towns, basing such decisions on their role as centres of trade in the period before the nineteenth century.

Apart from the 'legitimate' trade, the nineteenth century was also an era of great exploratory journeys into the interior parts of West Africa. Up till the time of the abolition of the slave trade and the introduction of the 'legitimate' trade, the condition in many areas in the interior of West Africa was still largely unknown to the outside world. To open up such areas in order to establish proper trade relations as well as social and humanitarian or christian contacts, attempts were made by European organizations, groups, and individuals to explore the hinterland districts. As part of the monopolistic schemes of the Delta traders, they devised various methods to prevent the Europeans on the coast from making such exploratory journeys into the hinterland. In that way, they succeeded in preventing direct contacts between the Europeans and the peoples of the hinterland.

The Reverend Hope Masterton Waddell gives an account of the reaction of the people of Bonny in 1850, when a small group of Europeans made such an exploratory journey via the Imo river to Ndoki land:

The business which occupied the attention of the elders of the town (Bonny) was the right of white people to ascend the river and visit the interior. Four of the captains had lately made an excursion up to the towns in the Ibo country, whence part of the palm oil comes to Bonny. They went for two days not towards the Niger, but in a north-east direction towards the Calabar river; and they reached a country with clear streams, high and cultivated ground, clean towns, pure air, and most friendly people; who were delighted to see white men, eager to

show them every attention, and anxious to prolong their stay. Ahombly (Ohumbele), the principal market town, seemed like home in comparison with Bonny. There they saw about two hundred canoes engaged in the oil trade, and remained a night and day. On the fifth day they returned.

The King and Chiefs of Bonny were highly displeased with the excursionists, and alarmed at this intrusion on their preserve ... After some further hot debate, the chiefs advised their king to moderate his tone, and in conclusion it was agreed to resume trade, provided the shipping did not attempt to open trade with the Ibo ....

The account those gentlemen gave of the country they visited, entirely agrees with what we have ourselves seen and heard of the same district between the Calabar and Niger; and the jealousy of white men exploring it, displayed at Bonny, is matched by the fears of Calabar people; that their commerce would be thereby destroyed. (12)

The above is an illustration of the type of attitude adopted by the coastal middlemen against the hinterland peoples in the nineteenth century. In the Eastern Niger Delta, Ogoni became the constant target of this type of policy by Bonny and Opobo. From that time on, these states made sure that later exploratory trips to the interior by European travellers, missionaries, or colonial agents, were strictly controlled. Such later trips were directed mainly to the usual places of Ndoki, Aba, Bende, etc.. For example, in 1866, W.E. Carew, travelling from Bonny and stopping at Opobo, visited Ndoki and nearby districts. A chief of Bonny, Oko Jumbo, was controlling and directing this trip:

Oko Jumbo took me to the war-drum house, and their drum, I can say, is very neat, the height of a man of five feet: it is carved all over with animals and men smoking pipes, guanias, etc.. Their market consists of articles of native produce of every sort. Provisions in abundance. It abounds in corn, palm

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12. Waddell, H.M. Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa, 1829-58. (2nd edn., London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1970), pp. 417-8.

wine, rum, fish, deer's flesh, dog's flesh, cats, fowls, tobacco, yam, eggs, spices, pine-apples, palm oil, bananas and plantains, cassava, cloths, gun powder, pipes, and things which I could not number. (13)

Similarly guided exploratory visits were made in 1892 to parts of Isiokpo and Elele by K. Campbell,<sup>14</sup> and in 1896, A.B. Harcourt travelled through Ndoki, Ngwa and Asa. In the same year (1896), Major A.G. Leonard, an official of the Niger Coast Protectorate, journeyed from Opobo through Ndoki to Aba, and thence to Bende and Arochuku.<sup>15</sup>

These trips and contacts had their impacts and benefits for the people of the areas concerned, as they opened up a window on them to the outside world. Commenting on Major Leonard's journey through parts of Igbo land, Professor Isichei wrote, "For all its ethnocentricity and arrogance, his account sheds much vivid light on southern Igbo culture at that time."<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, however, none of these European travellers visited the Ogoni area, even though all these journeys were made via the Imo river. Consequently, no reports or descriptions were written about Ogoni to the outside world, as a result of a policy of isolation mounted by Bonny and Opobo. For example, Major Leonard, who made a brief but erroneous entry on Ogoni confessed that he himself did not visit Ogoni but that he obtained his information from his Bonny agents. And those Bonny agents made sure that they painted the picture of Ogoni in such a way that no one would want to go there.<sup>17</sup>

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13. This is a shorter quotation from a much longer passage quoted by Elizabeth Isichei in her book Igbo Worlds (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1977), pp. 209-10.

14. Ibid., pp. 210-1.

15. Ibid. pp. 212-22.

16. Ibid., p. 212.

17. Leonard, A.G., The Lower Niger and Its Tribes, (London: Macmillan and Col. Ltd., 1906), pp. 24-5.

It is clearly noticeable that the isolation of Ogoni from the outside world began from this period. This isolation was later to be identified as one of the factors responsible for the economic and political retardation which the citizens of Ogoni were to experience from the nineteenth century into the colonial period. As noted above, this monopolistic attitude also affected other areas of contact, particularly, the extension of Christian missions into the hinterland. Commenting on this attitude in 1850, the Reverend Hope Waddell wrote:

Such misapprehension on the part of the coastal tribes presents a great obstruction to the advance of our missionary operations into the interior and can be overcome only by long continued patience, on our part .... (18)

As early as 1842, the C.M.S. began work in Yorubaland under the pioneering initiative of the Reverend Henry Townsend at Badagry.<sup>19</sup> In 1846, the Reverend Hope Masterton Waddell opened the Presbyterian mission field at Old Calabar.<sup>20</sup> Eleven years later (1857), the C.M.S. began work at Onitsha under the supervision of Ajayi Crowther, who was ordained Bishop in 1864.<sup>21</sup> Then in 1865, Bishop Ajayi Crowther began Christian work at Bonny. In the same year, a Christian school was opened at Bonny.<sup>22</sup> By 1867, the Christian church had spread to Nembe<sup>23</sup> and to Okrika in 1878.<sup>24</sup>

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18. Odu Yoye, Modupe, "The Planting of Christianity in Yorubaland 1842-88" in Ogbu Kalu (ed.), Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story, (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1978), pp. 239-302.
  19. Waddell, H.M. Twenty-Nine Years...., op.cit., p. 419.
  20. Ibid., pp. 275-6.
  21. Kalu, Ogbu U. "Protestant Christianity in Igboland" in Ogbu U. Kalu (ed), Christianity ...., op.cit., pp. 308-20.
  22. Tasie, G.O.M. Christian Missionary enterprise in the Niger Delta, 1864-1918. (Leiden; The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1978), p. 32.
  23. Ibid., pp. 51-2.
  24. Ibid., pp. 76-7.

A careful examination of the spread of these missions reveals that for about half a century, the church remained within the areas of the coastal states, to the exclusion of the hinterland peoples. J.G. Mackenzie notes that even though the Leme of Ogoni and the Okrika had been in touch for centuries through trade, the latter exploited the former and hindered the spread of Christianity and education to the area "for fear that it should bring their supremacy to an end."<sup>25</sup>

The Christian missions carried with them into those areas not only the civilizing message of the Gospel, but they also devoted their energies for the spread of literacy and education. Consequently there was an emergence of a class of westernized educated elite in those places.<sup>26</sup> For example, in 1901, the R.C.M. established a secondary Grammar School at Onitsha.<sup>27</sup> Then in 1925, the C.M.S. opened the Dennis Memorial Grammar School, also at Onitsha.<sup>28</sup> At Old Calabar, as early as 1846, the Reverend Hope Waddell had already begun to assemble a Vocabulary of the Efik Language.<sup>29</sup>

Christian mission work was not introduced into Ogoni until in the 1920's, when the Primitive Methodist Mission based at Oron, established

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25. Mackenzie, J.G., "Intelligence Report on the Eleme, Opobo Div., Calabar Province", File 9595, CSE1/85/4888.
  26. Ade Ajayi, J.F., Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891. (London: Longmans Green & Co. Ltd., 1965), p. 172f.
  27. Ekechi, F.K. Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914. (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 184.
  28. Ibid., p. 190.
  29. Waddell, H.M. Twenty-Nine Years...., op.cit., p. 275. See also, H.M. Waddell, Vocabulary of the Efik or Old Calabar Language: With Prayers and Lessons. (Edinburgh: Grant and Taylor, 1849), p. iii.

a preaching station at Kono on the Imo river. But real earnest work was not started until the Reverend Paul Kingston acquired land at Kono for the Mission House in 1929, and began building what he described as a "semi-permanent house"<sup>30</sup> for the mission residence. One of the greatest contributions of this mission was realised through the efforts of the Reverend Kingston, who committed the Kana language of Ogoni into writing and began the translation of the New Testament into the Kana language. The first fruit of this work was the St. Mark's Gospel, which was published in 1930.<sup>31</sup> The occasion also witnessed the publication of a hymn book in the Kana language. Then in 1968, the complete bible in the Kana language was published by the Bible Society of Nigeria.<sup>32</sup>

Ogoni at the End of the 'Legitimate' Trade: the Colonial Conquest

By the end of the 'legitimate' trade, i.e. the beginning of the colonial period, Ogoni had declined economically, socially and politically to the status of a minor ethnic group in Southern Nigeria. The isolation of Ogoni by her two coastal neighbours is seen to have continued unabated into the colonial period. Ogoni, with her agricultural resources, was treated like a private preserve to be exploited by her neighbours. Colonial agents and missionary groups continued to be diverted or kept ignorant about the internal conditions of Ogoni.

Finally in 1901, the British colonial forces invaded Ogoni territory from Opobo and established a foothold at Kono on the Imo river, from

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30. Kingston, Paul to Ayre, 27th July, 1929. Primitive Methodist Missionary Archives, SOAS, 1907-1929 (6) 1167.
  31. Ayre to Kingston, 12th November, 1930. Primitive Methodist Missionary Archives, SOAS, 1907-1929 (6) 1167.
  32. Kpa Baebel Kae, (Lagos: The Bible Society of Nigeria, 1968).

where they proclaimed Ogoni to be under British protection.<sup>33</sup> But that was not the end of the matter, because after that proclamation, the British withdrew back to Opobo. They failed to establish an effective presence in the area, presumably because they did not know very much about the territory and its people as a result of the monopoly of the European presence by the coastal traders. The lack of an effective presence by the British gave the Ogoni an opportunity for resistance. They refused to submit to colonial rule. One of the main reasons for this was because the British made serious mistakes about the Ogoni. Being ignorant of the Ogoni traditional system and social organization, they appointed people who were not socially recognized to represent their interest in the area, such as maintaining law and order.<sup>34</sup> The Ogoni resented the appointment of such persons as rulers, and would have nothing to do with them.

In 1905, the British launched a further attack on Ogoni territory. This time, the attack was more systematic and more devastating, as this report suggests:

Four years later, a patrol was sent to enforce administrative control. This patrol travelled via Obete on the river Imo in the north to Soo (Sogho) and destroyed a number of villages chiefly in Gokana and Tai (Tee) country. (35)

Likewise this second patrol did not pacify the area because after destroying the towns and villages, the British troops withdrew from Ogoni to Opobo.<sup>36</sup> Although these operations were officially described as

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33. Gibbons, E.J. "Intelligence Report on Ogoni" (1932), p. 13. N.A.E. File No. 28032 CS026/3, Opobo Division, Calabar Province.
34. cf. Afigbo, A.E. The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1972), pp. 37-77. See also Obaro Ikime, Merchant Prince....,op.cit., p. 50.
35. Gibbons, E.J., op.cit., p. 13.
36. Ibid.

patrols, judging by the scale of the destruction they inflicted on the people and property, and by the standard of African warfare<sup>37</sup> at that time, they were nothing short of war. Locally, these operations were given various names. In the southern area they were called Ikosi war. Here the word Ikosi refers to a certain people whose identity is not yet certain. Analogically, the people described the British operations, which were a form of guerrilla warfare, as the Ikosi type of warfare. As already explained, up till now, the Ogoni were still very ignorant of who or what the British and their intentions were. Later on, the term Ikosi was identified with the colonial government in the sense that it was a government of the Ikosi. The colonial officials were then referred to as Pya Ikosi, meaning, Ikosi people. In the northern parts, the war was called Kaani-Teegbara war;<sup>38</sup> Kaani being the name of the last great battlefield in the north, and Teegbara, the local hero.

The clear identity of the British invaders was not known. As already explained, there had been a clear lack of contact between the two peoples. It is a known fact that the British often used 'local' troops to fight their colonial wars.<sup>39</sup> The fact that such local troops were often very successful represents an assumption that they were properly trained and disciplined. However, in the Ogoni operations, the burning of towns and villages obviously includes the destruction of ancestral shrines and other traditional places. Undoubtedly, the destruction of such places or their desecration, was partly responsible

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37. cf. Johnson, Samuel (Rev.) The History of the Yorubas. Dr. O. Johnson (ed.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1973), pp. 131-2.

38. Akekue, M.N. (Chief) of Kpuite (Aged c. 58). Interviewed at Kpuite Text 74, pp. 75-6.

39. Sir Alan C. Burns gives a good illustration of this in the British conquest of Northern Nigeria between 1901 and 1906. Sir Alan Burns, History of Nigeria 2nd edn. (London: George Allen & Unwin) pp.183-200.

for the people's anger and refusal to co-operate with the colonial administration. The latter could not effectively enforce its authority because it was an absentee administration; for there was as yet no permanent colonial presence in Ogoni. Thus as late as 1913, there was still some resistance in the southern half of the territory, spear-headed by the rulers of the Boue Kingdom, which controlled the whole of that area.

In that year (1913) the British were again forced to launch another attack on Ogoni which finally broke the resistance. They entered Boue and destroyed a number of towns and villages by burning, and arrested the leading chiefs, many of whom were deported to Egwanga (Opobo), where many died in detention. The following eye-witness account gives an idea of what happened:

Preceding the founding of the city of Port Harcourt was the destruction of towns and villages throughout the Boue kingdom by the colonial people (Pya Ikosi). I was a boy at that time. A man called Tende, the father of Inu'ue, was returning from DuKwuri (Kwuri market), where he went to sell his palm wine; they shot him at the farming area of Gbarasoo. The bullet broke his rib and he fell on his calabash and on his money. He died. The people of our town fled to the bushes near to the sea, where Bonny people (Pya Bani) used to settle. The first time they came, they burned all Boue. That time, I was not born. (40).

The colonial conquest of Ogoni was finally completed in 1914 with the destruction of the Gbenebega shrine at Gwaara, which was the chief religious centre of the Ogoni.

After the departure of the 1913 patrol, an Assistant District Commissioner (Mr. Lovering) was stationed in Ogoni country. In 1914, Major H. Webber, Assistant District Officer, was accompanied by a large police

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40. Barigwere, Inee (Chief) of ILooLoo (Aged c. 98). Interviewed at ILooLoo on 3.1.84. Text 48, pp. 167-73.

escort under Major G.H. Walker, D.S.O. They destroyed the shrine at Gwaara, and re-opened the Soo (Sogho) Native Court, which had been closed due to the disturbances which took place after Mr. Lovering's departure some months previously. (41)

With the destruction of the religious centre at Gwaara in 1914, the way was cleared for the re-opening and for the proper functioning of the first instrument of colonial administration in Ogoni, the Native Courts. But the question is, why did it take so long for the British to settle the Ogoni case? Although the Ogoni of those days were really very war-like and would certainly want to fight a war against the aggressors, that is not to suggest that they were strong enough to hold the better-armed British forces for any length of time. While there are no official answers to this question, yet the historian must attempt to suggest suitable explanations which will provide a clear understanding of the events of this period.

The first suggestion is that at first, the British Colonial authorities under-estimated the population and the military strength of Ogoni. They therefore failed to plan the task of conquest of the territory in the most popular and most successful way. Secondly, they were ignorant of the economic potential of the territory as a market for the distribution of British goods and as a source of raw materials for British industries. As explained above, this ignorance was due mainly to the fact that up till the time of the conquest no European traveller had visited Ogoni territory and written a report on the internal developments of the area, as they did on the neighbouring territories. Thirdly, the colonial

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41. Gibbons, E.J., "Intelligence Report....", op.cit., p. 13.

agents did not provide accurate or correct information about Ogoni. Consequently, the colonial administrators were misled into drawing wrong conclusions about Ogoni.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Results of the Conquest

The traditional rulers were deposed and replaced by commoners who knew little or nothing about the working and the organization of the indigenous system of government. For example, the new rulers were selected purely on grounds of their co-operation or assistance during the conquest, and on grounds that they could speak a major Nigerian language, especially Igbo.<sup>43</sup> The result was that when the time came for the colonial administrators to write the history of the people in the Intelligence Reports, the new rulers could not produce the authentic facts. Thus the names of such vital historical places as Nama, Kugba, etc. are conspicuously absent from the Intelligence Reports on Ogoni, and the names of such towns as Luawii, Kono Boue, etc. were mentioned just as the names of ordinary towns or communities and not as the headquarters of the previous indigenous governments. This was a clear indication that the people from whom the colonial administrators obtained their information were not the right sources of information concerning the origins and systems of the indigenous establishments.

The situation was made worse by the practice of the colonial administrators who created entirely new centres of government away and far-removed from the familiar centres of the old indigenous system. With

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42. cf. Leonard, A.G., The Lower Niger ..., op.cit., p. 25.

43. Gibbons, E.J., "Intelligence Report...", op.cit., p. 20. See also Chief Leele N. Ngito of Kpuite (Aged c. 99). Interviewed at Kpuite on 17.3.85. Text 37, pp. 122-4.

the new rulers imposed from the new centres, the colonial government became completely alienated from the people. One inadvertently advantageous consequence of this situation was that the traditions in the old centres were thus preserved, except for the destruction that took place during the wars of conquest. With that exception, the indigenous system in the old centres continued fairly normally as before the introduction of colonial government.

In the light of the new situation, this, however, was not a favourable condition for Ogoni to be in, because it kept the people of Ogoni backward in comparison with their neighbours. In contrast to Ogoni, new developments were already taking place in all the states surrounding Ogoni, and the citizens of those states were being introduced to new ideas, including western education and the new enlightenment of the Christian missions. Some of the senior officials of the colonial administration stationed at Old Calabar, who had the executive control over the fate of Ogoni, appeared to have entertained an indifferent attitude towards the situation in Ogoni, as this report clearly shows:

British rule has penetrated so little below the surface of Ogoni organization during the last thirty years that in many respects the country is more or less as it was before the advent of Government. Lawlessness is to be found everywhere and there is little or no public spirit outside the confines of the villages, which in their outlook are as parochial as ever. The reasons for the foregoing are obvious, and Mr. Falk in the Provincial Annual Report for 1930 is of the opinion that the absence of contact with civilization has been a boon rather than the reverse. With this view of the situation, I venture respectfully to disagree ...

I now wish emphatically to reiterate the considered opinion of not only myself but of the other District Officers who have been in charge of the Opobo division

that no real success can attend to the administration of this large tribe until the local organization, placed on proper footing, is guided by a European officer of experience and stationed permanently in the area, to replace the haphazard method of occasional visits from Opobo, which has hitherto been in force. In many portions of the Southern Provinces, among peoples far less primitive and lawless than the Ogoni, but not so much more numerous, there are two officers stationed for administrative purposes so that there would seem to be little reason, apart from shortage of staff, why this tribe should so largely be left to their own devices. (44)

The above is a graphic illustration of the fate of Ogoni during the first thirty years of British colonial government in Nigeria. In actual fact, however, the Ogoni suffered for a period of more than forty years in that condition of isolation and neglect by the colonial administration. The plans recommended in the above-quoted passage were not implemented until 1948, when an ogoni Division was finally created.<sup>45</sup>

After the indigenous system had been overthrown and destroyed, and its leaders deposed and deported to Egwanga, where many were said to have died,<sup>46</sup> it was expected that the new system would be introduced immediately to fill the vacuum created by the removal of the old indigenous system. But with the long period of inaction on the part of the colonial administration, the people of Ogoni were virtually left to themselves in a state of helpless stagnation after the traumatic effects of the conquest. The vacuum created by the removal of the old system

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44. Gibbons, E.J. "Intelligence Report...", op.cit., pp. 19-20.

45. N.A.E. RP 6378 I.F.W. Schofield D.O., Opobo to the Resident Calabar, No. C. 1348/17 of 2nd Nov. 1946, "Proposed Ogoni Division" Opobo Division, Calabar Province. See also Public Notice No. 156 of 1948, The Nigeria Protectorate Order in Council, 1946: "The Ogoni Division of the rivers Province" G.P. Lagos 3145/1048/100 of 13th October 1948.

46. N.A.E. RP 6402/Vol.II "Ogoni Patrol Report" 14th March, 1907. Ogodist, Opobo Division, Calprof.

without a substitutionary replacement for so long, created the conditions which gave vent to lawlessness and degradation. The result was a state of general decline to a level worse than before the advent of colonial government, as noted in the above-quoted passage.

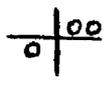
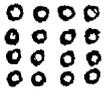
In the meantime, the citizens of the neighbouring States were receiving the benefits of western education, which were being provided by the Christian missions and by the colonial government. This then explains why the Ogoni remained backward compared with their neighbours. For example, the first Ogoni man to obtain a University degree, Mr. Timothy Paul Birabi, did so in 1948; and that was only by that slimmest stroke of 'luck', in that his brilliance was noticed by a missionary pastor from Bonny during his itinerant catechumen classes in the area. The Reverend Jumbo (later Bishop Dimieari) took him to Bonny where he attended school through the primary stage before moving on to the secondary stage at Onitsha in subsequent years.<sup>47</sup> Thus if today Ogoni was considered backward in comparison with her neighbours, the root of that backwardness must be traced back to this period of Nigerian history, a period which stretches from the end of the slave trade through the colonial conquest to 1948, the year an Ogoni division was created.

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47. LooLoo, G.N. (Chief), "Timothy Naakuu Paul Birabi of Ogoni" in T.N. Tamuno and E.J. Alagoa (eds), Eminent Nigerians of the Rivers State (Ibadan: Heinemann Education Books (Nig.) Ltd., 1980) pp. 125-134.

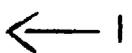
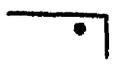
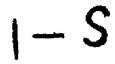
APPENDIX I : OGONI POTTERS AND THEIR TRADE MARKS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name of Potter</u>	<u>Trade Mark</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Name of Potter</u>	<u>Trade Mark</u>
1.	Duko Ipaan		19.	Kewale Nwanadee	
2.	Dorah Dugboo		20.	Mary Eeti	
3.	Gbibia		21.	Deenwa Barina	
4.	Wanaanee Gbonama		22.	Naagbi Toodee	
5.	Grace Iyo		23.	Siga Yaabue	
6.	Rose Nwidae		24.	Ideekobia Kpazoo	
7.	Waaiyenewa Tekii		25.	Uebia Kagbara	
8.	Legbo Zainu		26.	Penuwa Tooue	
9.	Kariwa Simee		27.	Dapii Agbem	
10.	Aloole Fade		28.	Uekpugi Soogbara	
11.	Bieba Akpea		29.	Nubiaga Soogbara	
12.	Biraloo Naado		30.	Kiribia Soogbara	
13.	Kpugimii Inu		31.	Eremee Adoo	
14.	Sigaloo Nii		32.	Naawadee Neewaa	
15.	Dalee Piagbo		33.	Ere'ep Naafo	
16.	Kweneton Agbem		34.	Nyoone Naafo	
17.	Piadogo Agbem		35.	Jenny Nyiazi	
18.	Sizo Isogosi		36.	Naabip Naasua	

No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark	No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark
37.	Ogbonne Johnson		56.	Noobekee Daewii	
38.	Keebia Nnaa		57.	Kpupku Ilegbara	
39.	Kiri Piesu		58.	Waakono Daewii	
40.	Nwiimaa Isagane		59.	Biiranwii Bakiri	
41.	Legbo Yoronee		60.	Naabo Keekpo	
42.	Leton Tete		61.	Diidiwa Barika	
43.	Ue-isa Gbarato		62.	Nwibari Yo'oh	
44.	Lesere James		63.	Guweue Ibeanyie	
45.	Deekae Ibom		64.	Eeloo Legbara	
46.	Kirika Kporah		65.	Ledee Iputu	
47.	Wuubiloo Nnaa		66.	Gbiwa Bakpo	
48.	Alice Ibakpo		67.	Ideeyo Bakpo	
49.	Ideeko Needam		68.	Nem Ibirayie	
50.	Sonaatee Sunday		69.	Mercy Gooni	
51.	Fere Ueta		70.	Kpaadee Babip	
52.	Ada Nyiazi		71.	Ikpowa Deemua	
53.	Esta Kanee		72.	Kumba Naabie	
54.	Kirinwi Goneewa		73.	Kiade Kpakue	
55.	Tuawa Daewii		74.	Naayiga Toodee	

No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark	No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark
75.	Zigriwa Tah		94.	Grace Kagbo	
76.	Naadoole Ikinako		95.	Mary Augustus	
77.	Ikpugiwa Deebom		96.	Lenaaboloo Piamaa	
78.	Isagawa Idadoo		97.	Ikoowa Owen	
79.	Kirikawa Baadee		98.	Kwasang Doonu	
80.	Daabaloo Ita		99.	Titi George	
81.	Igosi Ibaaga		100.	Logloo Ilogate	
82.	Kpobu Daeko		101.	Yaade Kpuruwa	
83.	Leton Kuebee		102.	Iiwa Dibia	
84.	Leamua Ideeyo		103.	Bawii Komene	
85.	Epwa Tonwe		104.	Anawa Aatonko	
86.	Ibogowa Ikinako		105.	Fere Maagbo	
87.	Ibana Neewa		106.	Mary Deeson	
88.	Kpugwa Toodee		107.	Mary Ikinako	
89.	Dasere Ikanee		108.	Baakawa Naasiwii	
90.	Eenga Ipiagbo		109.	Ikoyaa Ilemue	
91.	Biadu Adamkue		110.	Naakpe Kole	
92.	Gbobia Gbaadam		111.	Mue'ue Kinanee	
93.	Kiade Kpakue		112.	Mary Nwidai	

No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark	No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark
113.	Mnaadu Deezua		132.	Daloo Meeko	
114.	Zoowa Tabarade		133.	Igbo Lemue	
115.	Berewa Gbenegbara		134.	Iporo	
116.	Siga Kosi		135.	Epwa Diisi	
117.	Teezia Piagbo		136.	Biale Wiibie	
118.	Kiiwa Iyo		137.	Sile Ledee	
119.	Pabia Gbia'aga		138.	Maako Mmamue	
120.	Tagiba Adoo		139.	Bomwa Kodam	
121.	Nyadu Kuapie		140.	Nwibari Bako	
122.	Kpoga Toodee		141.	Bomwa Gbabie	
123.	Nwiga Ikara		142.	Telewa Nii	
124.	Bomwa Toodee		143.	Ndaa Yoronee	
125.	Nyaawa Lemea		144.	Siwa Ineedamgbo	
126.	Loere Gbigbo		145.	Nene Iko	
127.	Inyoone Idinee		146.	Sine Iwaan	
128.	Kpaadee Deeko		147.	Kawa Naado	
129.	Anawa Eremee		148.	Tamwa Donaata	
130.	Ba'ore Ikpakue		149.	Akobawa Nuaa	
131.	Neele Tanee		150.	Maa Igbo	

No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark	No.	Name of Potter	Trade Mark
151.	Dumwa Ideeson		170.	Wereloo Gbigbo	
152.	Siniki Tanee		171.	Nwi'eedam Lenee	
153.	Aterekana Taade		172.	Barako Toodee	
154.	Neenwaa Bakpo		173.	Berewa Yogbaradoo	
155.	Mary Muenee		174.	Gbiyegee Jacob	
156.	Lu'uenia Maa'ereme		175.	Kiri	
157.	Beti Deezo		176.	Kwaton Yogbara	
158.	Titi Anyaagbo		177.	Taezia	
159.	Alice Nnaa		178.	Sira Izuumia	
160.	Naasue Deeko		179.	Sonaatee Diginnee	
161.	Nukpugi Toodee		180.	Tagaligi Ago	
162.	Fere Kuwete		181.	Igolee Gbiaga	
163.	Matha Deeko		182.	Namle Igbia	
164.	Roda Deeko		183.	Lewura Naabea	
165.	Biakana Naanuunu		184.	Lenu Yonwaatedoo	
166.	Akpogbara Teebee		185.	Katherine	
167.	Ikaamua Tigiri		186.	Neenia	
168.	Saaromii Abanee		187.	Bianwaa	
169.	Zigiriwa Kinanwii		188.	Uwega	

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name of Potter</u>	<u>Trade Mark</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Name of Potter</u>	<u>Trade Mark</u>
189.	Zianwa		207.	Kpadee	•• + J
190.	Idudu	OC	208.	Aanesua	
191.	Neele Yorosi	↑			
192.	Aliiwuga Boogbara	•••			
193.	Daabaloo Ibatan	∩			
194.	Titi Lemea	☿			
195.	Kwenekia Digbo	:B			
196.	Kpandee Itanee	≡≡≡			
197.	Zuawa Kina	∩			
198.	Sosi Gbarato	•••			
199.	Duboo Naakue	•••			
200.	Nyaanwa	••• 66			
201.	Irikien Monday	•••			
202.	Leneenwa James	∩			
203.	Bakoma Piagboo	∩			
204.	Ndidiwa Nnaapop	∩			
205.	Nyaawa Lemea	∩			
206.	Uenaakie Iana	∩∩∩			

APPENDIX II : SOME OSONI POTTERY TYPES



SOURCE : KOTE HOUSE, KONO BOUE



SOURCE : KONO BOUE

APPENDIX II (cont'd) : SOME OGONI POTTERY TYPES



SOURCE: KPAANKPAAN SECRET SOCIETY  
KONO BOUE



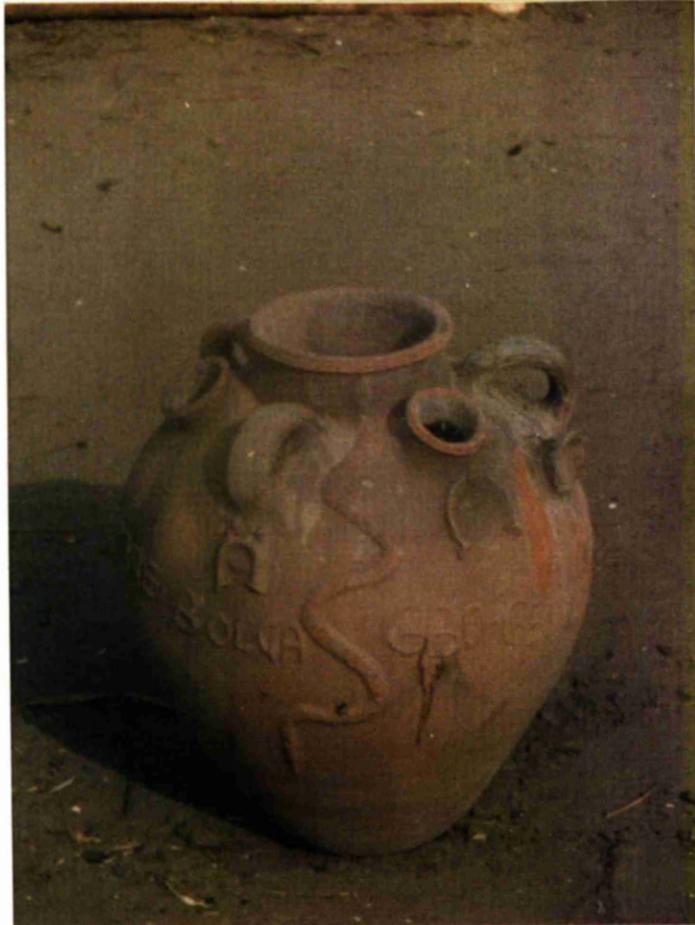
SOURCE: GBENEKARAYOO HOUSE  
KONO BOUE

APPENDIX III : SOME OGONI RITUAL POTS



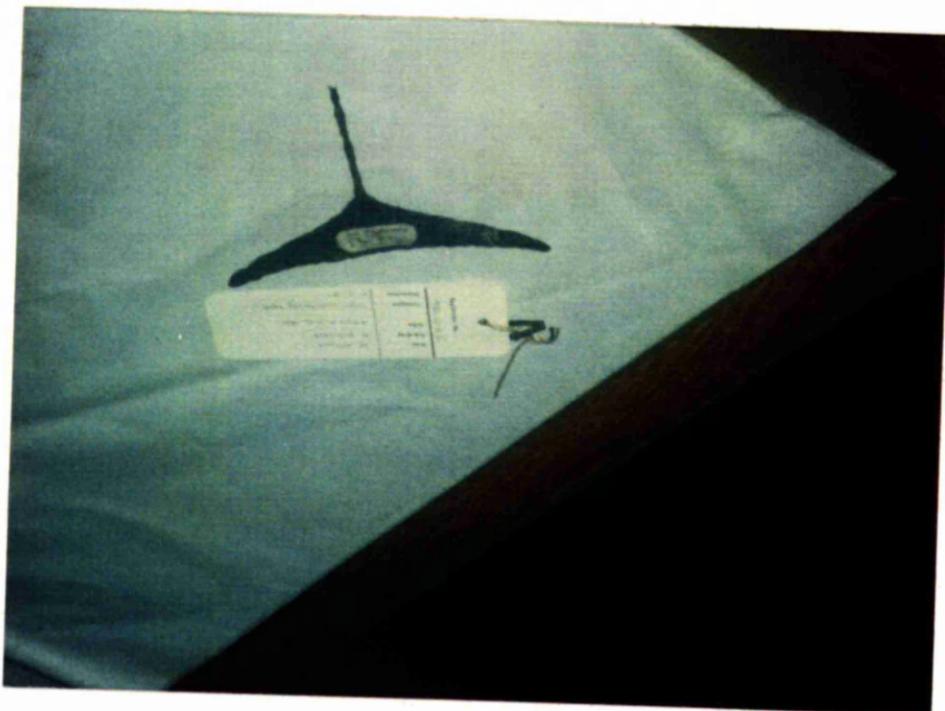
SOURCE : YOBOUE HOUSE, KONO BOUE

APPENDIX III (cont'd) : SOME OGONI RITUAL POTS

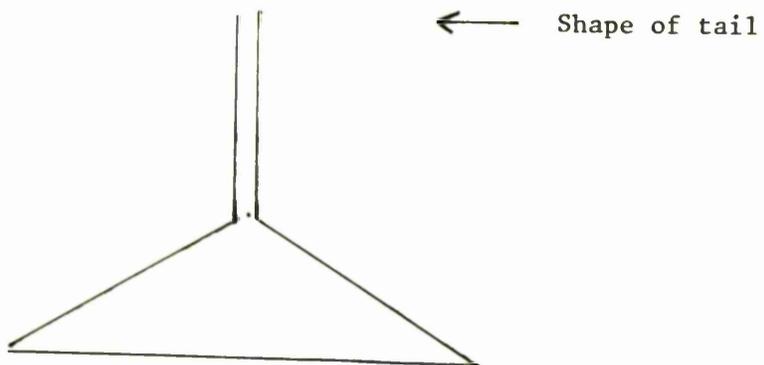


SOURCE: KONO BOUE

APPENDIX IV : OGONI IRON MONEY



SOURCE: ETHNOGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT  
MUSEUM OF MANKIND, LONDON



APPENDIX V : OSONI KNIVES



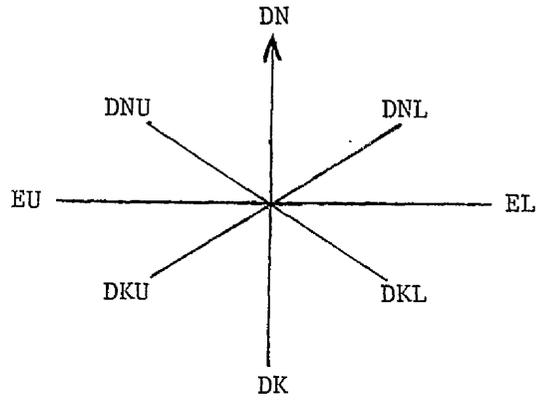
SOURCE: KONO BOUE

APPENDIX V (cont'd) : OGONI KNIVES



SOURCE: KONO BOUE

Appendix VI



OGONI CARDINAL POINTS

Deenyon (DN)	North (N)
Deeke (DK)	South (S)
Enaani Loole (EL)	East (E)
Enaani Uune (EU)	West (W)
Deenyon Enaani Loole (DNL)	North-east (N.E.)
Deeke Enaani Loole (DKL)	South-east (S.E.)
Deenyon Enaani Uune (DNU)	North-west (N.W.)
Deeke Enaani Uune (DKU)	South-west (S.W.)

APPENDIX VII

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON INFORMANTS

ADOOKON, EMMANUEL (Aged c. 77), is the head of the House of Gbeneabee, the founder of Luuyo, Gwaara. He is the Traditional Chief and the Spirit-medium of Buga'uwe, the Land deity of the town. As the Chief Land Priest, he controls all land rituals and the traditions of the town, including farming and agriculture.

AKEKUE, MARK NUKA (Chief), is the son of the elder Akekue, who became a leader and ruler in Tee during the British conquest of Ogoni at the beginning of this century. Chief Nuka Akekue (aged c. 58), is a university graduate with a degree in Sociology. He recently completed a manuscript on the history of Ogoni.

ASOO, KOOBEE (Chief), is over 120 years old. His father, Asoo, came to the chieftaincy stool by bequest, when the incumbent ruler, Chief Ateteenwaa Garaabari, became convinced that he could not have an heir. Despite this, Chief Koobee is very highly regarded as an able ruler of Uwegwere.

AWALA, OJI (Chief) of Ogale (Aged c. 55), is a university graduate and the Chief of Ogale. He descended from the eldest son of Lene, the founder of Leme. In 1984, Chief Oji Awala was nominated for the post of Paramount Ruler of Leme.

BAEDEE, ELI (Aged c. 55), is the Chief of Eepie. He is a descendant of Gbenelakarakue, the founder of Eepie. He came to the chieftaincy stool in 1979, having claimed it from the incumbent ruler, Chief Abane Gbege, who had ruled as a regent.

BAGIA, J.P. (His Royal Highness) (Aged c. 70), is the Gbenemene Gokana. His father, Bagia, was a descendant of Gbenegboro, the initial founder of Gokana and the father of Gbenesaakoo and Demedom. Although Gbenesaakoo was not the first son, he ruled after Gbenegboro because of his great power and popularity. His name became pre-eminent. But he had no heir, so the rulership reverted to the line of Demedom from whom Chief Paago, the present ruler descended. As the Paramount Ruler of all Gokana, Chief Paago holds the key to the national shrine at Giokoo and is the embodiment of the national traditions.

BARIGWERE, INEE (Aged c. 98), is the Chief of IlooLoo in Boue. He is a titled chief, holding the warrior title of Damgian (Brave Male). His ancestor, Gbenebari, was a brother and co-founder of IlooLoo with Yofiribeb. Chief Inee Barigwere is widely recognized as one of the notable men in Boue and in all Ogoni.

BIRINEE, TUANEE A. (Aged 53), is a descendant of Gbeneyaana, one of the early leaders of Sii. He is a member of Pya Zuguru (the Lieutenants) in Sii. In 1979, he was elected to the position of Menebua, a new class of chiefs, with functions relating to the spiritual aspects of the traditions.

- DEEMUA, DAASANG D. (Aged c. 62), is the Chief of Gbam village, one of the oldest villages in Boue. Elected Menebua in 1979, he became the keeper of the traditions of Gbam village, and has a wide knowledge of the area.
- DEEZUA, KOANYEE (PRINCE), (Aged c. 87), is a Priest of the town deities. His father, Deezua, descended from Gbenekwerre, co-founder of Kono Boue with his brother, Gbenekote.
- DEEZUA, NNAADU IKIE (Aged c. 82) is a Kabaariwa (Elder Woman). She was a leading potter and the owner of a clay quarry in Kono Boue. Her husband, late Ikie Deezua, was a descendant of Gbenegoo, one of the founding ancestors of Noobana in Kono Boue.
- DUNWAA, EDWARD of Buon Ko (Aged c. 58), was a former councillor and Youth Leader. Today he is a member of Pya Zuguri (the Lieutenants).
- EJOO, DENNIS L. of Agbeta, Onne (Aged c. 55), is a school teacher and a Christian Lay Reader. His knowledge of the oral traditions grew from his continuous contacts with the elders and with the members of all the sections of Onne Community.
- FOGHO, DOONEE NWIGBUE of Bara, Sii, was about 70 years old at the time of interview. His grandfather, Fogho, came from Gaan Bara, Sii, whose founders were two brothers, Gbeneguasoo and Gbeneyaanwaaka. Doonee was one of the elders who were widely acknowledged as possessing a wide knowledge of the oral tradition.
- GBARATEE, DEEZUA, of Tego (Aged c. 65), was a Youth Leader, who founded an age-group society in the 1940s. His organizational ability and the type of functions his society performed in the communities made him popular in Boue.
- GBARATO, AANEE (Chief) of Lewe, (Aged c. 110), is an elder, a priest, and the spiritual head of the house of Kpegbara, the ancestor of Lewe people. His position and functions in society make him the custodian of the people's traditions.
- GBARATO, ADOO of Noobana (Aged c. 72), is a chief and a member of the House of Elders in Kono Boue. He holds the warrior title of Damgian (Brave Male). He is a recognized hunter and acknowledged as very knowledgeable in Ogoni military traditions.
- GBARATO, GOSI of Noobana, Uwegwere (Aged c. 92), is the oldest living descendant of Gbenekiri, the founder of Uwegwere. He is also the priest of Gbenekiri Shrine and the president of the annual feast of Gbenekiri, otherwise called Yomii, or god of wine.
- GBEGE, ABANEE (Aged c. 87), was the Chief of Eepie until 1979, when his regency ended. He is a member of the House of Elders in Kono Boue; his father, Gbege, was a spirit-medium and priest; his ancestor, Gbenegaligboro, was the founder of the extinct town of Gbamene, from where they settled at Eepie. His rulership of Eepie was a regency entrusted to him by the incumbent, Kue Kiriki, because the latter's heirs were minors.

- GBIGBO, A'EAN of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 45), is the son and heir of Gbigbo, who until his death in 1976, was the Spirit-medium of Yobue, a deified national hero of Boue people. A'ean met his father through whom he had the opportunity to witness the state ceremonies and rituals, and learned the oral traditions from the elders at the Yoboue Centre in Kono Boue.
- GBORO, ZORABA of Mogho (Aged c. 67), is the Priest of Barigokana, the national deity of Gokana people. His position as priest of this deity places him at the centre of Gokana traditional life and religion.
- GIAH, DIMKPA (Chief) of Gbee, (Aged c. 75), is a descendant of Gbeneyogbaa, the original founder of Gbee. Later settlers who joined him included Gbeneogbo, Gbeneyogbee, Gbenefedom, Gbenekaragbaratee and Gbenegborobie. With the descendants of these, Dimkpa Giah occupies the paramount position in the town. He is also acknowledged as the custodian of the society's traditions.
- GININWA, G.N.K. (Aged c. 58), is the Gbenemene Tee. His ancestor, Gbenegininwa, was the Keeper of the sacred instruments of state, namely the traditional instruments of Yaa and Bina. G.N.K. Gininwa inherited this office. Thus he is not only the paramount Ruler of Tee but he is also a central figure in the people's traditional life.
- GOOKINANWAA, IBEYO GBENEGBARA (Aged c. 98), is a titled Chief and an Elder; the head of Gbenegbara Gookinanwaa House of Uweke, Tee; the President of the House of Elders; and the Chief King-maker of Tee. He is also the consultant in matters of higher traditions. All such matters must first be referred to him.
- IGBUG, DEEBARI of Eepie (Aged c. 67), is the Chief Yam Priest in Boue. He inherited the office from his ancestor, Gbenetanwaayo, who was said to have been the first to domesticate the yam in the area.
- IKPODEE, GOABERE (MRS.) of Tego (Aged c. 78). Her ancestor was married from Zaakpon to Kwuri. From Kwuri they married her father's mother to Tego. Goabere herself was married by Ikpodee Baiwere, whose ancestors were the land priests of Tego. At her husband's death, Goabere inherited a vast land at Tego.
- IMENE, NWII of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 64), is a descendant of Biira Nwaamii, the founder of Kpaankpaan Secret Society in Boue. His father, Imene, maintained the leadership of the Society. By modern standards Nwii himself is an artist. He is a song-maker, a singer, and a master at the instruments. His activities cover both the Kpaankpaan and all the other Ogoni traditional societies and music.
- INAYO, INAATURA (PRINCE) of Kono Boue (Aged c. 62), is the head of Gbenekote House in Kono Boue. His ancestor, Gbenekwerre, was the eldest brother of Gbenekote and Gbenetibarakan, the founders of Kono Boue. The descendants of these three brothers constitute the King-makers of Kono Boue.
- INAYO, TEERA (PRINCE) of Kote House, Kono Boue (Aged c. 55), is a descendant of King Gbenekote, the founder of Kono Boue. His mother

Nnaadu Inayo, was the heir but being a woman, the rulership passed to Tonwe II, the son of Iko, another daughter of Gbenekote, who was married to Tonwe House. Prince Teera Inayo inherited much of Gbenekote's land in Kono Boue.

IPAAN, TOBINA of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 63), is a descendant of Gbenebaara, a great warrior who fought in the Baan wars and captured the Tingtán drums. He went to Nama and got the title of Gbene (Great). After his death, he possessed his descendants.

IWEREBE, URANEE FRANK (Aged c. 65), is the Chief of Noobana, Uwegwere, and a descendant of King Gbenekiri, the founder of Uwegwere. Chief Uranee and the other descendants of King Gbenekiri are the landlords and land-priests of Uwegwere.

IYORO, DIKE (Chief) of Noobana (Aged c. 70), is a double spirit-medium, being possessed by the Land deity of Kono Boue and by the ancestral spirit of Assobienee of Gbeneabere House. He was the founder of To Pya Kanee (House of Elders) in Ogoni. Chief Dike Iyoro is a titled chief and the President of the House of Elders in Kono Boue.

KEEKEE, DOMINIC ANDERSON of Kpong (Aged c. 53), is a Chief, Youth Leader and a member of the House of Lieutenants (To Pya Zuguru) in Kpong. He is acknowledged as possessing a wide knowledge of the early history of Kpong.

KINANWII, KPOKO (Chief) of Tego (d. 1985 aged c. 87). He was a Land Priest and spirit-medium of Gbenekarayoo, the founder of Tego in Kono Boue. He began life as a youth leader, then as the leader of the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru) in Tego, and finally as an Elder (Pya Kabaari).

KPEA, EDWARD NWEBON (His Highness) (Aged c. 89), is the Paramount Ruler of Mogho and a Judge in the Customary Court of Gokana since 1935. He succeeded his father, Kpea, who was too old to carry on the rulership, and ruled three years before the latter died in 1938.

KPONE-TONWE, OBEEYE of Noobana (Aged c. 58), is a descendant of King Gbenekiri, the founder of Uwegwere and of Gaan Noobana-Uwegwere and Gaan Noobana-Kono. His father, Kpone-Tonwe, was a titled Yam Chief in Boue. Obeeye himself is a leader of the Association of Long-distance Pot Traders of Kono Boue.

KPUGITA, NNAA (Aged c. 55), is the Paramount Chief of Keneke and a descendant of Gbeneloo, the founder of Keneke. His father Kpugita, was a member of the House of Elders in Kono Boue. From him Nnaa learned a great deal concerning the early history of Keneke and about the traditions of Ogoni.

KPUNU, NAABUE THOMPSON (Aged c. 65), is a Chief of Uwegwere. He descended from Gaan Noobana-Uwegwere, i.e. from the seed of Gbenekiri, the founder of Uwegwere.

- LAACA, SOLOMON O. (The Reverend) of Ekara, Onne (Aged c. 67), is from a royal family in Onne. His great ancestor, Nabiriko, who came from Barako in Gokana, was one of the founders of Onne. Today, the Laaka family are the landlords and land priests of a section of Onne.
- LEGBARA, BAKOBA of Noobana (Aged c. 74), was a Youth Leader in Kono Boue. In the early 1940s, he founded an association known as "The Three Horns", consisting of strong, virile men. They collectively hired themselves out for pay to accomplish difficult public works and private tasks in Boue and in all Ogoni.
- LOOLOO, GODWIN N. (Chief) of Ko (Aged c. 57), is a Senior Civil Servant of the rank of Permanent Secretary. He is a University graduate with a degree in history, with emphasis on the British Empire history. His book on the history of Ogoni was going to the press at the time of this interview.
- MENEWA, PIA'OO of Kpong (Aged c. 85), is the Chief Land-Priest and the Spirit-medium of Gbeneyokpong, the land deity of Kpong. He is the head and tail of all rituals and traditions of Kpong. All land and agriculture are under his control.
- MPEBA, MBAEDEE FRANCIS (Aged c. 98), is the Paramount Chief and the spiritual head of Luekun. He is also the Chief Land-Priest and the Keeper of the sacred instruments for the national deity called Bariluekun.
- NAASA, AGBEEBE of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 63), is a land-owner and head of Gbeneteebete House in Kwaakwa. His ancestor, Gbeneteebete, was a titled warrior who gave land to Yobue, a former priest of Ikuba, the national deity of Bonny. He was expelled from Bonny, having turned a wizard and sorcerer. But in Ogoni he became a hero in the Baan wars.
- NGITO, LEELEE NAABEE (Chief) of Kpuite (Aged c. 99), is a retired Court Bailiff. His ancestor, Kooko, was the Lah-Bue Kpuite (i.e. next to the founder or deputy chief of Kpuite). They are therefore the Land Priests of a section of Kpuite.
- NGOFA, OBO (Aged c. 58), is the Chief of Aleeto, Leme. He is a University graduate, businessman and former politician. He began life as a Youth Leader, from where he rose to the rank of Chief of Aleeto by election.
- NII, ISAANEE (PRINCE), was the head of Nii House in Eepie. His mother, a daughter of King Gbenekote, was married by Nii Yeegboronwaa to Eepie. Because of this marriage, the House of Elders granted to Nii House one honorary membership of the House of Elders in Kono Boue. He died in February, 1985, aged c. 95 years.
- NNEKA, EMMANUEL (Aged c. 80), is an elderly citizen of Kpuite, Tee. He is regarded as one of the few men alive who knows the stories of the ancients.
- NTEYOO, NDII of Lewe (Aged c. 65), is from the House of Gbara Digi in Lewe, Gokana. They are from Gaan Giokpee (the kindred of Giokpee) in Lewe. Lene, the founder of Leme, and his brother Giokpee, are said to have

migrated from this family group in Lewe, Gokana.

NUAKA, LEMUE of Tego (Aged c. 90), was a great sportsman, acrobat and masquerader in Ogoni. Because of his achievement in sports, the Elders took him and gave him appointment as their special messenger to proclaim announcements from the House of Elders. Today, he is the Priest and Keeper of the Yoboue Centre in Kono Boue.

NWIKOGBARA, MOSES DEEKAE (1929 - ), is the Paramount Chief of Sii Town. He succeeded his father, Nwikogbara Nwisene (1871-1976), who was until his death the Chairman of Sii Council of Chiefs. Moses Nwikogbara is a graduate of a Teacher Training College and the head of Government School, Sii Town.

NWILABBA, TEETEE EDAMNI of Buon, Ko (Aged c. 120), is the Chief Land-Priest of Buon, Ko, and a member of the House of Elders. His ancestor, Nwilabba, was the founder of Nwilabba Village in Buon, Ko.

NWIMEA, TEEWOO of Luawii (Aged c. 87), is the Spirit-medium of Bariyaayoo, the deified royal ancestor of Kana people. Bariyaayoo was the eldest daughter and heir of Zah, the royal Princess who arrived at Nama with the Ogoni ancestors. They later migrated to Gure, from where Bariyaayoo was married to Luawii.

NWINEE, DEEGBARA of Kono (Aged c. 68), was a Youth Leader and a member of the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru). His father, Nwinee, was a member of the House of Elders, and a descendant of one of the early settlers of Kono. Today, Deegbara is a chief of Kono.

NYONE, E.B. (Chief) of Lewe (Aged c. 67), is a descendant of Gbenekpelewe, the founder of Lewe, Gokana. He was interviewed together with Chief Tonkie, and the Elders and chiefs of Lewe. Chief Nyone is a well-known farmer and the owner of salt-water fisheries in Gokana.

OBUH, J.B. (Aged c. 74), is the Paramount chief of Kabangha and the Chairman of the Council of Chiefs and Elders. He descended from one of the early settlers of Kabangha.

OPUSUNJU, NA'UE LEONARD of Kono (Aged c. 72), is the Spirit-medium of Gbeneyokono, the Land Deity of Kono. As the Chief Land Priest, he controls all land rituals and agriculture in Kono.

OSARONU, J.D. (Aged c. 47), is the Chief of Ogoloma, Onne. He is a legal practitioner, a former M.P., and property owner. He is also a titled chief, being recognized as having achieved the highest Yam Title in Leme in recent years.

TANEE, KUENEE of Kwaakwa (Aged c. 57), was the youngest Youth Leader in Boue in the early 1940s. His father, Tanee Idigidi, was an able Elder and one time a ruler of Kono Boue.

TEEDDEE, FREDERICK BUEBAA of Gure (Aged c. 43), is a Prince and heir in the House of Gbeneyaaloo in Gure. His great ancestor, Gbeneyaaloobaari, was the first King and leader of the Ogoni ancestors who founded Nama, Kugba and Gure. The latter's sister, Zah, is regarded as the 'mother' of the Ogoni.

TIGIRI, JOHN (J.P.), (Aged c. 83), is the Paramount Chief of Luuyo. He is a descendant of Gbeneamuunu, the founder of Luuyo, Gwaara. He has held office as Councillor and, later, Chairman of Booli Divisional Council (1970s); Secretary, Babbe Council of Chiefs; Board Member, Rivers State Newspaper Corporation (1972), and Rivers State PABOD Finance Company (1973); and Headmaster, Government School, Gwaara.

TONWE III, M.A.M. (His Royal Highness), J.P., C.P., Paramount Ruler of Boue (Born 1943 ), is a descendant of King Gbenekiri, the founder of Uwegwere and of Gaan Noobana-Uwegwere and Gaan Noobana-Kono; and the first ruler of a united Boue and Babbe after the Baan Wars in the 17th century. He succeeded his father, Tonwe II, who ruled as Gbenemene Boue from 1943, and as Gbenemene I of modern Boue and Babbe from 1959-1975. Died June, 1975. On 1st October, 1985, Tonwe III himself was honoured by the Federal Nigeria Government by the award of Co-operative Patron of Nigeria (C.P.).

YOMII, JIM BENEDICT (Aged c. 58), is the Paramount Chief of Ko. His grandfather, King Deedam Nwidere (d. 1929), was a contemporary and friend of King JaJa of Opobo. His father, Yomii Deedam (d. 1976), was a Court Judge and a Warrant Chief in the colonial era.

ZAGA, BARIDON (Chief) of Uwegwere (Aged c. 60), is a descendant of King Gbenekiri. His father, Zaga, was a Land Priest of Uwegwere and a member of the annual Yomii Council of Gaan Noobana-Uwegwere and Gaan Noobana-Kono.

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THE HISTORICAL TRADITION OF OGONI, NIGERIA

VOLUME II

SELECTED TEXTS

Appendix to Thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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by

Sonpie Kpone-Tonwe

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School of Oriental  
and African Studies  
University of London



Dedicated to the Memory  
of my beloved parents  
Chief Feeba Kpone-Tonwe  
and Madam Leyo Kpone-Tonwe  
for their foresight

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1. HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS J.P. BAGIA, GBENEMENE GOKANA (Aged c. 70),  
Interviewed at Giokoo on 19 February 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

Gbenemene (Great Ruler or King), the first thing I would want you to speak about is how you came to be on that seat, where you are the Gbenemene Gokana today. Are you there because the people considered you suitable and fit for it, or because it is an inheritance you received from your ancestors?

If that is the case, I would want you to tell me how your ancestors founded Gokana.

Starting from Gbenesaakoo, recite the Kinglist of Gokana.

According to what you heard from your ancestors, from where did they come?

When they arrived in Gokana did they find other people in the area?

If there were no people here in Gokana, what of places like Bani (Bonny), Kirika (Okrika), Bono (Andoni), Kalabari, etc., were those people there?

After Giokoo was founded, how were the other Gokana towns founded?

Where did you hear that Gokana people came from?

Tell me about some ancient markets that existed in Gokana. From where did Gokana people have the first yams they ever got? What about the plantain? From where did Khana people obtain it? Which type of food did Khana (Ogoni) people use as ritual food for feeding their ancestors?

Tell me what you know about Borigokana?

Tell me the story of how Leme (Eleme) came to be.

Do you recall any war which the Gokana, or Khana (Ogoni) fought with other people?

What weapons did Khana (Ogoni) people use?

What tools did Khana (Ogoni) people use for their farm work?

From where did Khana (Ogoni) people obtain the iron which they used in making the pipe-hoe (tua gbono-naa)?

From where did Khana (Ogoni) people obtain the model for Kuna and Kobege they made?

Tell me the ways and means Khana (Ogoni) people got the title Gbene.

Can you tell me where the Gaan Gbenesaakoo (kindred of Gbenesaakoo) can be traced?

Do you know whether the kindred of Taankaan (Pya Gaan Taankaan) exist in Gokana?

Have you heard about a brother of Gbenesaakoo named Boonen, who committed adultery with a wife of Gbenesaakoo, and who escaped when the act was discovered?

Cannot the curse be removed in this modern time?

Who was the father of Gboro?

Where did those people come from?

B. The Narrative

This my STOOL, which I am sitting on, it was not chosen by man, it was from God. For it was my father who became the first man to stand up in Gokana land and made it possible that there was a Gokana. This man, who founded Gokana was called Gbenegboro Saah Feeh. He and his followers were known as "The Great Sevens" ("Ereba Mene, Ereba Gian"). They were the people who did it.

Gbenesaakoo was the son of Gbenegboro Saah Feeh. Because Gbenesaakoo was a man of great power and popularity, his name became more widely known than that of his father. My own name is Paago, and my ancestor was Gboro Saah Feeh. The Kinglist may be presented thus:

Gbenegboro Saah Feeh

|  
Demedom  
|  
Meabe  
|  
Bagia  
|  
Paago

Nobody knew where Gbenegboro and Gbenesaakoo came from. When they settled at Giokoo, they did so as people who came from somewhere else. It was from Giokoo that they moved to each of the other places. In their time, they were like spirits. My father never said any day that Gbenesaakoo came from such and such a town.

When they entered Gokana, they did not find any other people in any place. When they settled in Giokoo, that became the only place where there were people. It became the first settlement in the whole area. All the people who came from wherever they came from settled first at Giokoo. Giokoo was the Landlord of Gokana. Whenever a group came, they settled at Giokoo first. When they had found a place for themselves, they came to Gbenesaakoo, who gave them Strength (ooge)

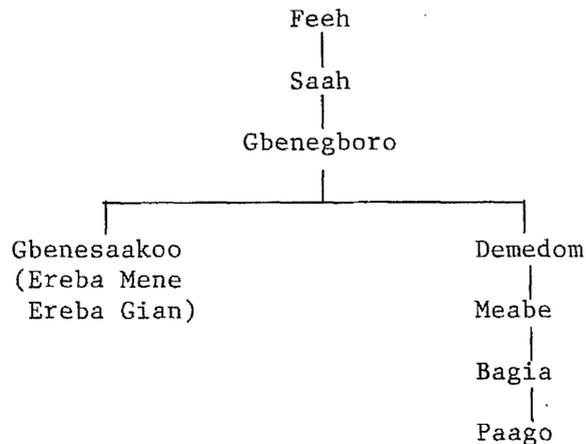
before they went to settle in that place. My father founded all Gokana, except Bodo, which was founded relatively recently as a new town.

When Gokana was founded, the riverain towns were not there. When Bodo, the youngest Gokana town, was founded, they saw a man of the riverain peoples who lived there in a house built of bamboo screens. The man's name was Gbeneyokpaan. If our ancestors were not strong and hardworking Gbeneyokpaan would have been the founder of Bodo. But it was Gbenedeera who became the founder of Bodo. Gbenedudu became the Lah Bue Bodo (the Right-Hand or Vice-founder of Bodo).

Everyone who came first settled at Giokoo. As each one sought out a site suitable for settlement, each one reported to Gbenesaakoo, who took the one round the place and vested him with authority to rule that area, or that town. This was the pattern for the founding of the towns near to Giokoo, such as Mogho, Nwebiaro, Barako, Kpooka and Goi (or Goyi). This method continued until all the Gokana towns were founded. That was why they named all the Gokana towns "Gokana Saakoo".

Gbenegboro Saah Feeh was the first founder of Gokana (Tua nee abee Kabara Gokana). Demedom was the first son of (Saaro) Gbenegboro Saah Feeh; Meabe, the first son of Demedom; Bagia, the first son of Meabe; and Paago, the first son of Bagia. Gbenesaakoo was not a first son of Gbenegboro Saah Feeh; he was a second son (Lah), but he was a very powerful man. Because of that he grabbed the instrument of rulership into his hands. He was the embodiment of what was known as "The Great Sevens" ("Ereba Mene, Ereba Gian").

Genealogy:



Gokana people did not come from Ghana. Gokana people and Khana people were the same people (aba eteene). Khana people and Gokana people were in the same place before. It was when they left that former place that they went to their different places; the Khana to Khana area, and the Gokana to Gokana area.

Kibangha market (Du Kibangha) was the oldest market in Gokana. This market was holding from the time of Gbenesaakoo. The next oldest market was Du Baraol (Farm Market). What was sold in those markets was mainly farm produce.

The first yams were got from the forest. Some yams are still in the forest till now. Our men who travelled to the forests of the Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea recently in the course of the palm wine tapping still report seeing numerous wild yams in the forests there. Such yams were not planted by anybody. That was how our ancestors got the yams which they planted from the beginning.

The plantain was also in the forest. The plantain was one of the foods which God sent and placed it in the forests. It was in the forest that Khana people got the plantain which they planted. Yams and plantains are also foods which Gokana people use as ritual food for the ancestors. These two foods were the first foods which God made. These were also the foods the ancestors knew.

Barigokana came like a spirit. Nobody knew where he came from. When he appeared, he appeared at Gbee. Because Gbee was not good for him, he moved to Mogho. He carried a bell, and he was very powerful. He was able to command the rain to fall, or the sun to shine and they obeyed. Barigokana was the King of all demons, as Gbenesaakoo was the King of all Gokana. If they did not make human sacrifices to him, he would have become something which people would have worshipped as God (e bee lu nu ba e bee taaga loo nua Bari).

The period during which Leme was founded was a very dangerous period; it was a period of great fear. As I said in the case of Barigokana, that they made human sacrifices to him, if anybody did evil, they did not spare such a person. Some of the men who took refuge with Gbenesaakoo were men who were condemned to death in their former towns. Under Gbenesaakoo some of them got families, and having expanded greatly they started new settlements. The men who founded Leme were in this type of condition when they left Gokana to found Leme.

During the colonial wars, Gokana people dug long trenches round their towns. The weapons which Khana people used at that time were bows and arrows, spears, pointed or wood javelins, guns, etc..

During the time Bonny (Bani) and Khana (Ogoni) were trading, Khana people brought yams and all the produce of the land. Bani brought fish. So they exchanged, because there was no money then. Everyone who came to the market exchanged things, yams for fish, or pepper for fish, etc., or plantains for fish.

After some time money came. Money came and stayed to be ancient before the coming of Ikosi (colonial people).

The chief tools which Khana (Ogoni) people used for farmwork were Kuna (1) and Tua gbono-naa (2). The iron which they used in making the kuna and pipe-hoe was obtained from very far away places (ba wee ere aa: kaa kpaadee). There was trade. Our forefathers travelled

- 
- (1) Kuna: This was a short, heavy, curved, two-edged iron "sword" with a wooden handle, used for cutting and slashing.
  - (2) The tua gbono-naa: a pipe-hoe with handle and blade made out of one piece of iron. The handle is long and hollow like a pipe. The blade is oval-shaped with a pointed tip for digging, and the two edges for brushing.

to many faraway places to obtain the iron. There was also a people called "Saga" people (Pya Saga) who used to come to Khana (Ogoni) to clear forests for our forefathers. They were neither Ibibio (Bibi), nor Ibani (Ebani), nor Igbo (Gbon). They came from places much farther away (ba lu ka ke ebania).

The Igbo do not have kuna and kobege; the Ibibios do not have them and the riverain peoples (pya bue maa) do not have them. Khana (Ogoni) people brought the kuna and kobege from their place of origin when they were coming (pya Khana bee aara kuna la kobege aan ke ba bee aa tua so). Khana (Ogoni) people did not buy kuna and kobege from the Igbo or from any other people. They bought the iron which they welded in their blacksmiths' workshops into kuna and kobege, and all other tools which they used for their work.

In Khana (Ogoni) society, a man must distinguish himself by performing notable actions and by doing deeds (doo dogo). A person who has done all these things would then perform the traditional rite of Kpa Bina for his ancestors. On that day he would plant the Tree of Greatness or Wealth (Te Mene) (3) in his compound. Then it would be known that he was a wealthy man. And he would sit on the Stool of his great ancestor (O egete nyon Kpote olo gbene te), which no-one can ever take away from him. The whole process may be stated in a few words thus:

O doo dogo  
O taagi nam  
O ere zo  
O kpa Bina.

(Do the deeds, Slaughter the cows, Own lots of wealth, Play the Bina).

Members of the kindred of (Gaan) Saakoo are in many places in Khana (Ogoni). They are at Kono, at Luawii; they are everywhere. Similarly, the members of the kindred of (Gaan) Taankaan are at Boomu, at Lewe, and everywhere. Thus the proverb has been spoken in Gokana that "There is no lack of people, if it is Gaan Saakoo". ("Nee naa bie sa alu Gaan Saakoo"). The implication is that in every small group of people a certain number of them must belong to Gaan Saakoo. In a family, if the father was not from Gaan Saakoo, the wife must be; If one's father was not, one's mother must be; one's grandmother must be, etc.

I have heard about Boonen, the brother of Gbenesaakoo, but I will not comment or recount the facts because there is danger in doing so. There is a curse against us who sit on this Stool not to talk about it. For it was that thing which brought about their scattering.

---

(3) Gokana: Uramii

Part 2: HIS HIGHNESS M.A.M. TONWE III, who was also present, took over from this point and narrated the story:

"My father told me the story. However, when he narrated it, he was reluctant to say everything plainly, 'Because', he explained, 'there was a curse on it'. But I wanted to know the details. I heard the story from my father, who heard it from one named Nyiasae Kiwa:

"There was a man, who was a brother of Gbenesaakoo. He committed adultery with a wife of Gbenesaakoo. His name was Boonen. When the act was discovered, Boonen escaped into Ibibioland (a teera kii barasiloo Bibi). When he returned from Ibibioland, he came to where his brother was in his farm. As soon as Gbenesaakoo saw him, he rose up with his arms to challenge him (a aake sa ye nyone lo ebeye).

"Then Boonen spoke to him and said, 'If you know that you can overcome me, command that hawk to come down'. When Gbenesaakoo could not command the hawk to come down, Boonen did it. When Gbenesaakoo saw it, he was overwhelmed. He therefore told Boonen to stay apart from him in any place of his own choice. Boonen departed from there and went to a place where he founded the town of Gaagaa.

"Gaagaa grew and became a large town. From Gaagaa, he moved to Bangha, where he founded another town by that name near the coast. Bangha became a large populous town. But a deadly epidemic of small-pox destroyed the population of Bangha. The remnants who escaped the disease founded the Boue Kingdom. It was from Boonen that the name of Boue derived.

"My informant told me that there was a curse that people should not speak about this matter or discuss it. That the curse had killed many people; and that it was the main factor that caused their towns to scatter. The matter caused the town of Gaagaa to scatter. If you make a trip to the site of Gaagaa now, you will see old potsherds, and many ancient things which they left behind. The same matter was responsible for the extinction of the ancient town of Goi. (4) The matter brought much trouble so that they scattered to the different Gokana and Khana (Ogoni) towns (Ue a bee wa lab sa doo ko ba a yaara kii dadee bue Gokana le Khana)."

As for the curse, we cannot remove it. What one needs to do is to save oneself from it, and to have fear concerning this matter (era boo akii loo Uea). For as you were narrating it, and as I listened to you, there was fear in me, because I know that law. I know what it is (Msua nu lo log kura). This thing was what scattered the towns abroad. (Nu ama na a bee lab Bue yaaria). My father narrated it to me, that is why I have fear about it (ke a doo me era boo loo lo).

The father of Gboro Saah Feeh was Saah. Another person was Ala. You cannot know where these men came from, because Khana (Ogoni) people did not come from Ghana. Khana (Ogoni) people came as spirits (ba bee lu doodoo edon). There is no-one who knows where they came from.

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(4) Reference to this was made in the Gbee account as the second oldest town in Gokana, after Giokoo, and Gbee.

2. AANEE GBARATO OF LEWE (Aged c. 110 years).  
Interviewed at Lewe on 5 February 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate what you heard from the ancients about how this town and your own kindred came to be.

Who founded Lewe?

Who was Gbenekpelewe?

Narrate what you know about this Khana (Ogoni) tradition described as "Entering or Retiring into the Yam House" (Yii to Zia).

What were the laws, taboos, or rituals during this period of retreat?

Why did they forbid people from wearing clothes when entering the premises of the Yam shrine during this period?

Those people who first planted the Yam, where did they get their yams from?

Why did Khana (Ogoni) people use only the Yam and the plantain as ritual food for traditional ceremonies?

Why could they not use foods like banana and cassava?

Did the Elders and priest eat the banana and the cassava?

What tools did Khana (Ogoni) people use for agriculture?

B. The Narrative:

Aanee Gbarato is my name. Gbarato was the son of Kpegbara. Our kindred came from Giokoo. The first man who settled at Giokoo was called Tete.

Kpegbara was the father of Gbenesaabiira, and Gbenesaabiira was the founder of Lewe.

Gbenekpelewe was the son of Gbenesaabiira and co-founder of Lewe.

Gbenekpelewe was a human being, but now he has become a spirit (zim). When you came, as you have just come, the forest you passed by when you entered the town, that is Gbenekpelewe's forest, where his shrine is located. That forest is the only "virgin" forest in Lewe. The forest has remained till today because the assembly of the town put a legal ban on it.

The House of Lote and the House of Kpegbara, they both have equal parts in the ownership rights of the Yam institution in Lewe.

When it was time for the farming season to begin, the Elders and the Yam Priest retired to the Yam House. There they would be drinking

(Palm) wine one day in every Kpo-eeri (Khana week of five days), until five weeks. On the first day, they opened the door of the House of Yam (To Zia). From that day, the news was spread about that "They have opened the House of Yam" ("Ba e kpaana bun to Zia"). During the period of retirement or retreat, all farm work was stopped. There was a partial rest from all strenuous work. On the last day, which was in the fifth "week" of the retreat, there were dances and celebrations. The music consisted of those of the elderly men (Pyä Kanee) and of the elderly women (Pyä Kabaariwa).

During the period the people were in retreat, nobody was allowed to come there or pass through there with clothes on. Men must wear their cloth knotted on their waist like people prepared for action. No trousers were allowed. Women must not wear scarves on their heads. Anyone breaking these rules was heavily fined. The reason for these rules was because Yam said:

I don't like clothes  
Let no one bring  
Near me white clothes  
Aint from Bani  
Bani are they  
Who wear white clothes

The first yam specie that was planted was Sa (Kana: Ya). The next one was Gura. We grew up to see our people planting yams. According to tradition, they said that Ya and Gura were the first to be planted. All the yams they planted came from the forest. When they saw them in the forest that they produced tubers, and were pleasant to be eaten, they brought them from the forest and planted them in the farms (ba su kuma barabe wee so).

Because when our forefathers came, they saw their ancestors planting and using yams, that was why they also used yams as ritual foods whenever there was a national feast at which the ancestors were given ritual food and drink. They gave them yam for food, because that was the food they used to eat.

Foods like the banana (ebue-bani) did not come from Khana (Ogoni). It was Pyä Bani (Bonny people) who brought them into Khana (Ogoni) area. That was why Khana (Ogoni) people did not use the banana as a ritual food for our ancestors.

As for the plantain (Ka ebue) it grew in Khana (Ogoni) forest (bee si lu ke bu kue pyä Khana). That was why the plantain was used as ritual food for our ancestors, because it was they who discovered the plantain (alaba na ba bee gbi ka ebue mue a). The banana is a food for demons (zia pyä taa).

Elders, priests and spirit-mediums did not eat the banana or the cassava, because when they would feed the ancestral spirit with hands defiled by those foods, their ancestors would punish them saying, "Why did you bring demon food near me?" For the ancestors did not know those foods.

The early tools used by our ancestors for farm work were kuna (a heavy, curved, two-edged, iron tool) and do (a heavy stake).

3. THE CHIEFS AND ELDERS OF LEWE, GOKANA.  
CHIEF E.B. NYONE (Aged c. 67),  
Principal informant interviewed in Tonkie House, Lewe, 26 February, 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how Lewe came to be.

What happened at Mogho which forced Gbenekpelewe to emigrate from Mogho to found Lewe?

When you said that the founder of Lewe came from Mogho, where did the founder of Mogho come from?

Describe something about the market which the people at that earliest time used to attend, the people who used to come to the market and the commodities they sold and bought.

I notice that the principal occupation of Gokana people is agriculture. Would you tell me some traditions connected with agriculture which you have received from the ancients.

Who introduced cast-net fishing into Gokana?

Tell me the traditions about the Yam crop in Gokana and about the opening of the farming season.

I heard that somebody from Lewe founded Leme. What can you say about this?

B. The Narrative:

The founder of Lewe was a person from Mogho. He emigrated from Mogho to found the town which is Lewe today. His name was Gbenekpelewe. His forest is in Lewe today. In that forest you find his grave and shrine (LiZim). The name of the forest is called Kue Kpelewe (Forest of Kpelewe)..

Gbenekpelewe's mother was an aggressive and powerful woman, whose power and aggressiveness provoked the anger of the ruling class in Mogho. They teamed up against her. When his son Kpelewe (Kpee plus Lewe (Kpee of Lewe) plus the prefixed title, "Gbene" equals Gbenekpelewe), saw the bitter opposition against his mother, he persuaded his mother to emigrate from the town with him, so that they could go and found their own settlement. His mother's name was Laago. Laago has a forest or grove in Mogho. The forest is called Kue Laago Lewe (The Forest of Laago Lewe).

When they had founded Lewe, the people of Mogho derided them, calling the new settlement Mogho's "backyard bush" ("ol ke nwee be"). They argued that the place was not really outside their area of influence. Mogho people still use that nickname to refer to Lewe until today.

In Lewe, Gbenekpelewe had a son whom he called Gbenelewe. When Gbenelewe got a son, he named him Kpegbara, after his father. Afterwards Gbenelewe's wife gave birth to twins. But Gbenelewe did not

separate himself from his wife, contrary to the accepted norm of the time. This raised a big quarrel between Gbenelewe and his father, who felt that his heir apparent had defiled himself and thereby disqualified himself from succeeding him.

Gbenelewe went into voluntary exile, during which he founded several new settlements, one of which was the town of Boomu (meaning built on, or standing "on water").

After the exit of Gbenelewe, Gbenekpelewe gave the inheritance to his grandson (Goh) named Kpegbara. Kpegbara succeeded to the rulership of the town. Till today the rulership of Lewe is in the House of Kpegbara. Descendants of Gbenelewe have tried to claim the rulership of the town but they have always failed. The last attempt was in the 1930's, when they made a very bold attempt to take the rulership of the town. Their ancestor, as a spirit (Zim), acted swiftly to prevent it. So the rulership of Lewe has remained in the House of Kpegbara till today.

According to tradition, we heard that the founder of Mogho came from Gbee, which is on the coast.

When you hear about Giokoo, do not suppose that it was a town by itself. Giokoo was a centre, where all the great and mighty men of that time used to assemble. It was a place where men who were founders of towns and cities used to meet to discuss common problems and common interest. That was why they called it Giokoo (Centre of Friendly Relations, or Friendship Centre). They called it Gion as distinct from Bue (town).

Their leader who first settled there was Gbenesaakoo. He was the man to whom all such great men used to come for conferences and discussions.

But Gbenekpelewe came from Mogho. If you went to Mogho to the House of Barigokana (the National Deity of Gokana) you would see the Seat of Gbenekpelewe there.

There was a big market in ancient times, called Kisao. The market was situated at Gbee waterside. Bonny people (Pyā Bani) used to come to that market. They used to bring goods from European peoples. Boue people used to attend the market. The market held on Deebom and Deeko. The market scattered due to a war between Gokana people and the Andoni (Pyā Bono).

What Khana (Ogoni) people used to bring to that market includes yams, plantains, sweet yams, sugar canes, maize, vegetables, okra, etc.. Bonny people brought fish, and various kinds of shell fish and crabs, etc.. They also brought goods from the Europeans to this market.

But Gokana people also did some fishing of their own because they were very close to the sea. The first Gokana man who practised cast-net fishing was a man called Sibara Ebsi. He was a native of Lewe. Later his assistant, Kpaama Yaabē, also became a cast-net fisherman. These were fishermen from Lewe. There were other fishermen from other Gokana coastal towns, such as Gbee, Dere, Boodoo, Boomu and Kpoo.

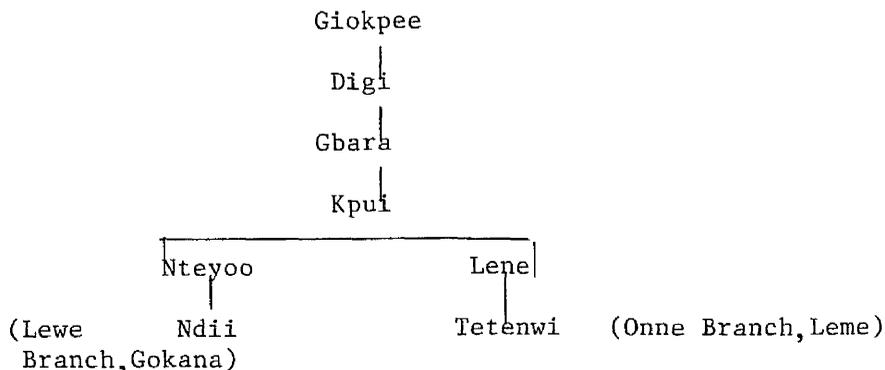
When it was time to start the farming season, certain laws must be passed. If the cultivation would be within the towns and communities or close to them, a public announcement was made by the Chief that owners of domestic animals, such as goats, etc., should restrict them in their homes or in their private enclosures. The next important thing they did was that there was a "retreat" to the Yam House where the Elders drank the "Yam wine" (mii Zia). There is a House of Yams in this town. In Lewe, the House of the founder of this town are the owners of Yam. They also produce the Yam priests. Kpegbara, the successor of Gbenekpelewe, was the Yam King in Lewe (Mene Saa).

A certain Lewe man called Digi, owner of the compound you (the editor) visited, had a son whose name was Gbara. Gbara begat Kpui, who had two sons, the name of one was Nteyoo and the other Lene. All these came from the kindred of Giokpe (Gaan Giokpe) in Lewe.

There was a quarrel between Nteyoo and Lene over a plot of farmland. The trouble grew so big that Lene had to quit the town into voluntary exile to Leme (Khana, Gokana, and Tee, for "Eleme"). While there, he introduced himself as a man from Lewe. From Lewe the name Leme derived. When he told the people that he came from Lewe, the people thought that he said "Leme".

While in his new place, he practised the traditions of his kindred (Gaan). When he was asked by his neighbours what those things meant, he replied that he was following the traditions of his kindred back in his place of origin (Lewe). When they asked him what his kindred was, he replied Gaan Giokpe. From these it was known that he originated from the House of Gbara Digi in Lewe, Gokana.

They named one of their sons after their ancestor Kpui. The name of that son was Ntetenwii (or Tetenwi). Till today the family of Tetenwi in Onne have been coming to Lewe during the feast of Zua, bringing wine, yams, fish and many other things to the House of Digi in Lewe, to do rituals and pour libations to their ancestors at the Zua feasts. They are doing that till today. Now they have a kindred Organization between all descendants of Giokpee in Lewe and descendants of Tetenwi House in Onne. Sometimes they hold their meeting at Onne and at other times they hold it at Lewe.



4. NDII NTEYOO OF LEWE, GOKANA (Aged c. 65).  
Interviewed at Lewe on 12 February 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

The men who were expelled from the town, what were their names?

What is your own name?

What was the cause of the trouble which resulted in their expulsion from the town?

B. The Narrative: Introduction by S. Kpone-Tonwe:

Nyeyoo was the only "surviving" man I saw in Gbara Digi House at Lewe, Gokana, when I visited there on 12 February, 1984.

Digi was their ancestor

Gbara was the son of Digi

Kpui the son of Gbara

Nteyoo the son of Kpui

Ndii the son of Nteyoo

The oral tradition asserts that people from the Gbara Digi House of Lewe, Gokana, founded Leme. It claims that people from the same group founded Onne in Leme.

I visited the Gbara Digi House of Lewe on 12th February 1984. I was taken to the compound by the Chief of Lewe, Chief Sibe Tonkie. I saw a broad compound with a wide central courtyard having only one rectangular house standing there and facing the public road on the east side. A second hut housing the shrine of the compound stood on the southern part of the courtyard. The only house in the compound was empty at the time we visited, but I took a photograph of the compound.

After that, the Chief took me to another part of the town where I saw a man lying in a house, seriously sick of the swelling. He was Mr. Ndii Nteyoo of the Gbara Digi House of Lewe. According to my informants, he was the only surviving man of the House at that time. His condition had become so desperate that it was not an overstatement to suggest that he would expire any moment from the time I saw him. He could no longer raise himself up from where he lay down, or sit up if raised by others, so he spoke from lying down, only a few words, barely audible.

By Ndii Nteyoo, Informant:  
The Origin of Onne and Leme:

The compound you visited is my House. Sickness drove me from that compound. That compound you visited, that is the origin of the people of Leme (Ke Pya Leme tee aa lo). The people who founded Onne

came from our House (ilii BE). The people of Lewe troubled them and finally expelled them from the town, after they had confiscated all their possessions (dedee wa nu). Being desperate, they ran away into the wide world, and travelled to a very far away place (ba biewo teera do uwe sa kia kil ka ebini ke). That place they went to was what became Leme, as we see today. When they reached there, they found that the place was broad and good for them. So they remained there; they were "unable" again to return to Gokana (ba naa sike dabna obia kii Gokana). They settled down there. The first place where they settled down and founded a town was Onne.

I do not remember the names of those men. But my own name is NDII NTEYOO. NTEYOO was my great-grandfather (namate). KPUI was the father of NTEYOO. GBARA was the father of KPUI. And DIGI was the father of GBARA.

The trouble that resulted in their expulsion from the town was a quarrel over land (keneke). When they (Lewe people) had seized that land from them, they expelled them from the town. Having left the town they never came back, since they were driven out of it. They did not come back, and people from here never went to them, because nobody knew where they were. After a long time, a certain man from Nwe'ol named Deera was in the course of going to that part. On a certain occasion when they were having the feast of Zua (So ba aa de Zua), he observed that they did things like Gokana people (ba doo nu bee Pya Gokana). When they did the sacrifices and the rituals, it was like Gokana people. When they cut the palm fruit, it was also like the Gokana doing it. So he asked them where they came from, or rather which people they were (alaba pya meke). They replied that they belong to the kindred of Giokpee (Pya Gaan Giokpee). When he heard that, he knew that they came from Gokana, because it was the House of Gbara Digi in Lewe which were the kindred of Giokpee.

Thereupon, those people explained to him that their ancestors (Pya elaba nama te) fled from Gokana. That that was how they came to be there.

5. DIMKPA GIAH (CHIEF) OF GBEE, GOKANA (Aged c. 75)  
Interviewed at Gbee on 8th February, 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

Tell me, who was the first ruler of Gbee?

After Gbeneyogbaa had settled in Gbee, who else joined him?

Recite the Kinglist of Gbee from Gbeneyogbaa to the present.

Name some achievements or deeds by which you remember some of these rulers.

Have you ever heard this saying, "Du Bari le nee"?

The Gokana-Andoni (Pya Bono) war you mentioned, what type of weapons did they use in that war?

Among Gokana, Bono, and Bani, which of them first settled in their present locations?

When Bonny people (Pya Bani) came, they first settled along Gokana waterside. Why did they quit those places? When the white man came, did they reach Gbee?

From where did Khana (Ogoni) people get kuna?

If Gbee was the oldest town, which town was next to Gbee in age?

Was Gbee larger than it is today, or smaller?

According to what you heard from the ancients, Khana and Gokana, which came from which? Did Khana come from Gokana or Gokana from Khana?

Where did they come from?

Where did they settle first on arrival?

Tell me what you know about the origin and development of Barigokana (Gokana National Deity).

When the man arrived, from where did he come?

When he spoke, which language did he speak? Did he speak in Gokana or in some other language?

When he arrived at Mogho, what happened?

Is there a word, a figure of speech, or proverb which the ancients retained from his mouth?

How would you estimate the position and influence of Barigokana in Gokana today?

Is a priest of Barigokana living today?

What do Khana (Ogoni) people call aa'oo ?

Why did Khana (Ogoni) people call yams Ka Zia?

Which food stuff did Khana (Ogoni) people plant first?

B. The Narrative:

The founder of Gbee was Gbeneyogbaa. He was the first man who came to Gbee and settled. He came from Giokoo to settle in Gbee. When he arrived in Gbee, there were no people. The place was pleasant. The forest was the open type, without undergrowth. The trees were only bagara. One could look to a very considerable distance through the open undergrowth of the scattered bagara trees. It was beautiful and the soil was very fertile.

After he had settled in Gbee, other people came to join him and took part in extending the size of the town. Among these other founders were:

Gbeneogbo  
Gbeneyogbee  
Gbenefedom  
Gbenekaragbaratee  
Gbenegborobie

Each of these people cleared a part of Gbee. Others who took part in the clearing of Gbee I cannot name all of them. But Gboronwabile was the first son (saaro) of Gbeneyogbaa, and Gbaranwii was his second son (Lah). The following is the Kinglist of Gbee from the time of Gbeneyogbaa:

Gbeneyogbaa  
|  
Gboronwabile  
|  
Baakee  
|  
Giah  
|  
Saatee  
|  
Yotee  
|  
Menega  
|  
Dimkpa

The ancestors planted yams and did fishing. The first variety of yams they planted was what they called Ka Zia (Mother Yam). Cassava came relatively recently (Ekpakpuru lu aan).

The cassava was brought by the Bonny (Pya Bani).

About geere (old cocoyam, or taro, colocasia esculenta), a certain man who was a palm fruit cutter discovered it. They said that on a certain day, as he was in the bush cutting oil palm fruits, while on top of a palm tree, he saw the geere. When he descended from the top of the tree, he uprooted some and took them home. At home he cooked it and found that it was good for eating. From there other people joined him and planted it. The place he discovered it was not in the thick forest but in the bush (bu wii). Because he saw it while he was atop the palm tree, he said that God gave it to him to show to people so that they might eat it. (Bari bee ye ne ko a su nua ko nee ade).

Concerning "Du Bari le nee", I have not heard about it. But the first market which existed in Gokana was at Gbee waterside; it was called Du Gbee (Gbee Market). Bonny people (Pya Bani) and Andoni people (Pya Bono) used to come to that market until there was war between Pya Gokana and Pya Bono. The Bono people killed one Gokana man in the market. Because of that the Gokana people also killed some Bono people. From there war broke out between the two peoples. Many Khana people went to that war, people from Boue fought in that war. Because of the war, Gbee market scattered, Bono and Bani people stopped coming to the market.

A new market was later founded at Bomu waterside, which was called Du Numaa (Waterside market). When this new market was founded the Bani and the Bono returned and began to come to this new market. The market was held on Deeko and Deebom.

The principal weapons used in that war were matchets (Ge), bows and arrows (Bun le akpa), etc.. There was no gun at that time because that was very ancient time.

Another market which I grew up to see was Du Kibangha (Kibangha Market) at Nweol. It was held on Deebom and Deeson.

According to what I have heard, the Gokana first settled before the Bani and the Bono. When Bani people came, they did not settle in their present town at first. They settled along the coast of Gokana. They settled near Gbee waterside and along all Gokana watersides. They and Gokana people were like one people. Before that time, it was only Gokana who occupied all that place.

The Bani people left those places because Gokana people told them to leave their land. When they left the places, they went to their towns where they are now. There was no war about it. The only war fought was the Bono war, but Bani people fought in that war. After that war, Bani people left Gokana land. Since they did not own that land, they left peacefully; for they knew already that the owner of the land had taken his land (ba sua ko sua te-ere-keneke e sua ye keneke).

Before the European (Bekee) came, Khana (Ogoni) people did not wear cloth like we see today. What our people wore was Igwa (raffia cloth called by that name). This igwa was made from the raffia palm (i.e. material from the unopened shoots of the raffia palm). The same igwa was used in making clothes for wearing on the body and for cloth for wearing on the waist or loins.

When the Europeans (colonial) began to come, Khana (Ogoni) people at first used to run away from seeing them. Then Bani people brought them to Khana people. Bani people persuaded Khana people that they should not run away or avoid the Europeans. Bani people also told the Europeans that Khana people were their good neighbours.

When the founders of Gokana first came, they gathered at Giokoo. The reason they called that place Giokoo was because the founders who gathered there were friends, equals and comrades (Pya Koo, Pya Koo). So they named that place Gion Pya Koo (the ward or quarter for comrades). So the name became Giokoo. That place was the first Gokana town, or settlement. From Giokoo the people spread to the different places where they founded settlements and towns. It was during that period that Gbee was founded. At that time there was another town near Gbee called "Koo". That town, like Gbee, was another ancient town in Gokana. Towns were founded, one after the other, like that. The last town that was founded in Gokana was Bodo. Gbee is older than Bornu, Bodo, Mogho, and many other towns in Gokana. The only town that was as old as Gbee was Goi; it was situated very close to Bodo.

Gbee was a much bigger town than it is today. It was a very big town. What destroyed Gbee was war and more especially civil war.

There was a masquerade dance called Keekpo. When they played it, they sang a song which said:

Lo o mue pee, o ku  
Lo o mue kon, o ku  
Lo o mue gbo, o ku  
Lo o mue nam, o ku

(If you see goats, kill them, If you see cocks, kill them, If you see dogs, kill them, If you see cows, kill them).

As they dressed in masquerades and were running through the towns killing these animals, they inadvertently cut through a man with a machet and he died (ba yeredee su ge gbaara bu nee fe).

Then the relatives of the man who was killed went and put on masks and began to slaughter the relations of the man who was in the keekpo masquerade that had killed a man. It became a civil war (no do bu bue). They killed people, they slaughtered so many people with matchets, etc., until the whole town scattered. That was the cause of Gbee becoming a small town today. That keekpo was different from the modern kanikpo or akeekpo masquerade in which players do somersaulting. The ancient keekpo of Gbee was a masquerade dance only. The players or dancers were completely covered in masquerades and they held matchets. They were very powerful and the faces of the masks were broad and terrifying.

When the Gokana came, they first settled at somewhere in Kekana area. From there they moved on to Gokana area. That was why they called them Go-Khana (Khana-kinsmen). As for the original place from where they came to reach Khana (Ogoni) area, I do not know. But I have heard that they came from Bibi (Ibibio), but I do not know the actual place in Bibi (Ibibio) from where they came.

When they came into Kekana, they first settled in the area of Boue and Babbe, from there they moved to Giokoo. From Giokoo, they spread to towns of Gokana.

Barigokana: What I heard was that on a certain day, the people of this town (Gbee), got ready to go to the sea for a communal fishing.(1) In this type of fishing, they used what is called apaan. (2) When it was time for them to go, they saw "God" walking from the sea and entering the town (ba mue "Bari" a kia aa bu doo yii ke bue), and walking straight to the people who were about to go to the fishing. The first compound he entered was the House of Gbenegborobie. What they saw in his hand which he brought with him was a handbell, a Bible, an image and some other things which they did not remember again. He also brought with him his eating vessels (nu a wee de Zia bu). He invited all the people who were about to go out to the fishing that they should come because it was to them or on their account that he came; that he had an important word to speak to them. So all of those people assembled.

This Borigokana, you hear about, he was a human being just like you are now. He was not a god. So I will tell you how we got Borigokana. He told them to stay, that is, that they should stop going to the fishing that day, so that he might speak to them. They refused. He told them that they should forgo the communal fishing that day only, for his sake, because he had a very important word to tell all of them. The men of Gbee refused, saying that he should wait for them until they had returned from their communal fishing which was planned for that day, that whatever word he had for them, he would be able to tell it to them then. He pleaded yet again that they should not go to the fishing but that they should stay and hear the word. The men of Gbee refused. Finally, they set off and went to the fishing grounds, leaving "God" alone (aba "Bari") in the House of Gbenegborobie, the only place where he came and set his feet. When that happened, he never spoke a word again, neither to Gbenegborobie himself nor to anybody else in Gbee, until he left the house and began to "stroll" towards the countryside (kia lelou kii dee wii). At that time, the countryside was pleasant, there was no undergrowth, no forests; it was open, airy and studded by beautiful stands of bagara trees. You could see through the trees to a long distance.

While strolling like that in the countryside, he saw a woman named Gbori, whom he asked "This road, to where does it lead" ("Dee ama, tee ina meke?") "That place where people are talking, where does it lead to?" The woman told him that the road led to her town. So he walked with Gbori, who took him to Mogho. At Mogho, he spoke the word which he wanted to speak to Gbee people. That was how Borigokana left Gbee to settle in Mogho.

When he came to Gbee, he arrived straight from the sea grounds, without any canoe or boat, and without any other things except the handbell, the Bible, the image and his food kit. People did not remember specific words from his mouth. As for the language he spoke, there is no tradition about any special language he spoke. Since he was a spirit-man, he probably spoke Gokana; for he was capable of speaking any language (ebee dabnage ko eregeba ega Ue).

At Mogho, the people received him. People from all Gokana towns flocked to him at Mogho and he spoke to them. He spoke to them about

how they should live and how they should do things. People from the different towns continued to come to him. Sometimes they brought dances. The Elders from the different towns came to him, bringing palm wine with them. They sat together with him and visited together, talking about different subjects. It continued like that until one day he just disappeared. Nobody knew the way he went, or the way he took, or how he disappeared.

Since the people at that time were very ignorant, people did not ask him many questions when he was with them, so from that they could have known a lot of things from him concerning his origin. Also, the people were illiterate, so that no-one wrote down the words that he spoke to them. Perhaps Mogho people will remember something or some specific words which he spoke; of that, I cannot be sure.

Aa'oo is wild yam Ziakue (literally Yam of the forest, or forest yam). It is the yam that grows in the forest. In the beginning, that was the Yam people used to eat. They used to collect it from the forest. Aa'oo is the real ancient yam (lu kaa nama Zia).

What we call KaZia (mother of yam/foods), are Gura, Akpaga, Ako, Ya, etc.. They called all this group of foods under one name, KaZia. They are the mother of foods (alaba na ba lu Ka Zia) because they own all the food that men eat. Cassava, cocoyams, etc., each has its separate name. They do not belong to KaZia (alaba naale loo kaZia). Gura was the first KaZia that was planted. Ya were used as ritual food.

6. EDWARD NWEBON KPEA, HIS HIGHNESS, CHIEF OF MOGHO (Aged c. 89 )  
Interviewed at Mogho on 7 February 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of the founding of Mogho.

When you heard from the ancients, what did they say happened at Bibi which forced them to leave their land.

When you say that they came to Gbenesaakoo, where was Gbenesaakoo at that time?

Where was the first ruler of Mogho buried? Or where is his shrine?

Where was the first settlement in Mogho?

Narrate some memorable events you learned from the ancients, which took place in Mogho, or in Gokana, or in any other parts of Khana (Ogoni).

Did the smallpox epidemics occur only in Mogho, or did it occur in other places also?

What did Bani (Bonny) people do when they settled on Gokana land?

When the Bani settled in Gokana, did they trade with Gokana and Khana people?

What war do you remember between Bani and Gokana?

Say what you heard about how Leme was founded.

How did Khana and Gokana people spend the wealth they produced from farming?

From where did the ancestors have the yams they planted?

Say something about aa'oo and ebue.

Narrate the story about the coming of Europeans.

What currency existed in Mogho?

Say what you know about Borigokana. What were his characteristics?

Can you show me his handbell?

B. The Narrative:

My name is Nwebon, and my father was Kpea. The first person who ruled Mogho was Gbenekpegbara. The Kinglist of Mogho is as follows:

Gbenekpegbara

Gbenegbata

Badom

Kpea

Feega (d. 1938)

Nwebon

My father was very old and alive when I began to rule and started to attend court as a Judge. My father was very old and was no longer able to attend court. So he nominated me to be in his place. I began to attend court in 1935. My father died in 1938.

According to what I heard from the ancients, a certain two men on their journey came to Gbenesaakoo, having come from Ibibioland (Bibi). The two were brothers. Gbenesaakoo brought the two men to this place. He gave the land of Mogho to one, and the land of Kpoo to the other. Because they came from Ibibioland, they called them "Mogho-Mana". That was how this town came to get the name Mogho. In the early times, Gokana people used to call Ibibio people "Mogho-Mana".

The men were migrant job seekers (pya sitam Kpugi). When they had stayed too long, they asked for land where to stay, which they were given. Their real names were not known, so they called them Mogho-Mana. Later that name was passed on to the town.

Gbenesaakoo was the King of Gokana (Gbenemene Gokana), and he lived at Giokoo. All Gokana towns came from Giokoo before they were established in their different places. Although the town of Mogho is still in its original position, nobody knows the graves of the early founders.

According to what I heard, they said that a great smallpox epidemic broke out in Mogho at one time and killed all the citizens, leaving only ten persons. In our own lineage (bua), they said that the disease knocked down all the great sons of my father's grandmother. They said that I was then a very little child. When she saw her sons about to be killed by the deadly disease, and because the disease had also attacked me, she took me from my parent and used me as a sacrificial object (or scapegoat) to appease the goddess Gbenebega, the "owner" of the smallpox disease, so that her sons might be spared. She carried me round those sons as they lay sick of the disease speaking prayers to Gbenebega, that Gbenebega should take me and spare "these". What happened was that the "goddess" killed all her sons and spared me.

When the population of the town had been wiped out, leaving only ten persons, eight men and two women only, the eight men went and made "medicine" for the two women, that they would want men and thus become prolific in bearing children to replenish the town.

According to the tradition, the epidemic was widespread. It spread in all Gokana towns. It faced each town turn by turn. Once

it had destroyed the population of one town, it turned to the next town, until it had destroyed the population of every Gokana town.

Another thing that happened in ancient time was that the cassava was introduced into Khana (Ogoni). It happened that Bonny people (Pya Bani) came to Gokana and rented virgin land or forests, which they cleared by the labour of some Igbo slaves who they had bought. They then planted cassava in those places. From these the cassava spread into Khana (Ogoni). Before that time the cassava did not exist in Ogoni.

At that time there was a big market at Bomu waterside. The market was founded by Gokana people. All Khana people as well as Bani people used to attend the market. Khana (Ogoni) people used to bring agricultural produce to the market, while Bani people brought fish, tobacco, and cloth to the market. The agricultural produce brought by Khana people included yams, maize, pepper, sweet yams, sago, fluted pumpkins, plantains, palm wine, pitchers, etc.

Bani (Bonny) and Khana (Ogoni) people have not fought any war. Gokana people and Bono (Andoni) people have fought a war, but I heard that that war took place in very ancient time, in the time of our ancestors (son pya i namate).

In these parts, Gokana was first settled. Bani and Bono people, when they came, they saw Khana people already settled in their various towns.

According to what I heard, people from Lewe founded Leme. According to the oral tradition there were five persons who emigrated from Lewe. At first, they settled at Lelenwa. Later, they left that place and settled in Leme. Those five persons from Lewe founded Leme. If you listen to Leme language, you will find that much of it is Gokana (sigaloo Ue Gokana le bu wa Ue). Gokana was their first language; when they had stayed very long in that place, their language changed (wa Ue yaa). Nevertheless, when they speak, Gokana is still in their speech till today.

The chief occupation of the ancestors was farming and palm wine tapping. They sold the yams and the palm wine and made money. The wealth they produced, they used performing the important traditional rites, such as Yaa and Kpa Bina. After completing the rites, you performed the rite of Kpa Bina. Once you have done that, you were recognized as "Gbene Mene". All these things you could do through your labour in agriculture and palm wine tapping.

When our ancestors came, they came to see the yam in existence. It was something that God gave to Khana (Ogoni) people. Every Khana man, when he grew up, the first thing he learned to do was to plant yams and to tap palm wine. Then when he had fully developed materially, he began to do the traditional rites (doo doo nu).

Aa'oo was the yam that grew in the forest; it was never planted. If you went to the forest, you could see aa'oo (wild yam) but the fact is that we do not have forests again in Gokana. They have cleared all the forests.

Bani (Bonny) people did not plant yams; what they planted was cassava.

The ancestors of Khana people also found the plantain in the forest, as they found the yam. Both of these crops were in the forest when they came.

There are two types of banana. The short, round and red type, called ebue-de is the old one. It existed in the forest like the plantain. It is from Khana (Ogoni). The type that has thin, long fingers is called ebue-bani. It was brought into Khana (Ogoni) by Bani (Bonny) people. That is why it is called ebue-bani.

When the white men (Bekee) came they first stayed at Bonny. From Bani they found their way into Khana (Ogoni) territory. A certain Bani man named Joe brought a European into Gokana-area. A certain Bomu man named Dekia, interpreted the medium of communication which was Igbo into Gokana. The European spent about three days in each Gokana town and wrote down whatever was said. It was after that they established Native Courts in Khana.

Three types of currencies existed in Khana: Giaradaa, Nama Kpugi and Ka-Kpugi.

Ka Kpugi was in circulation when the colonial administration was established. Ka-Kpugi was removed from circulation only recently. Nama Kpugi and Giaradaa were in circulation from the time of the ancestors. We do not know where our ancestors got those currencies. Some of these currencies are still preserved in shrines today.

Concerning Barigokana, they said that a "being" (Zii "NU"), having the stature of a child, yet well advanced in age, appeared to people on the sea shore at Gbee at a place quite close to their waterside. They saw in his hand a bell, a Bible and a metal image of a four-footed creature, like a dog (I say like a dog because it had a tail).

He told Gbee people to come because he wanted to speak to them. Before he knew it, all Gbee people had gone away to a communal fishing. So he rose up and began to walk away, until he arrived at Mogho. When he arrived in Mogho, Mogho people received him. All the Elders of Mogho assembled together and provided a place for him to stay.

While at Mogho, people came to him from all places. Those who were sick, he used only cold water to bath them, they became well.

If somebody committed murder, they would go to him, and he would tell them the person who did it. If somebody stole something, he would say who it was that stole, and why he stole. If somebody died, he would explain to them the cause of his death, and the manner of his death.

When Gokana people saw all these things they went home, held a meeting in which they decided to buy a human being to sacrifice to this "being" because they said that he was God (me ee Bari). When they did that, they did not know that they had made him an object of worship, a deity, whereas what he came for was to give them the Word of God (Kereme ba e sua ye nua yo, e nu ale bee lu nyon na Ue Bari).

The next time they came to see him as usual, they discovered that he had gone. Nobody knew the way and manner he went away. His bell, his "image" are there till today. The Bible spoiled when they buried it in the ground (in an attempt to hide it from some idol-burning sects).

He was a human being, a man, but his stature was small like a child. They just saw him on the shores of Gbee waterside, nobody knew how he got there; there was no canoe with him. When he spoke, he spoke in Gokana language; he also spoke a European language. Nobody interpreted his speech, and nobody interpreted Gokana for him (logo nee naa tab ye Ue nu, e logo nee naa tab Gokana ye ne). He spoke Gokana when he had never learned it. When he left, he left all his things behind; and all those things are there till today, except the Bible, which has spoiled. A certain Christian sect were destroying idols all over the towns in Gokana. So they buried those things, to hide them. By the time they wanted to bring them up, the Bible had spoiled, but the other things of his are still there

I could have shown you these items, but I do not have the right to do so. All Gokana entrusted those things to the hand of the House of Gboro to keep. That was the House where Barigokana lived when he came. Look yonder, that is Barigokana's Grove (or forest). There you will find the House of Gboro. Today, that House has made him an object of worship (Nyamo, pya lo Be ba e sua ye nua yo). This thing happened in very far ancient time, when not a single light has come anywhere (Kaa ebini so kere, so logo ee dee sii bee yii).

7. ZORABA GBORO, Priest of BARIGOKANA (Aged c 67)  
Interviewed at Mogho on 11 February, 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

Narrate how you became the priest of Barigokana.

Tell me about other people who were with Barigokana when he came.

When they came, which language did they speak?

How did you come to know these things?

Is there a word or phrase or statement which you can recall as having been spoken by Barigokana?

Does it mean that the Christian churches in Gokana today grew from the teachings of Barigokana?

At the time Barigokana came, was there a Bonny nation?

Why did Barigokana go away?

When he went away, did he take all his belongings with him, or did he leave something behind?

Where are those things which Barigokana left behind? I want to see them, and if possible to take a photograph of them.

- B. Barigokana was a spirit, who came from the whiteman's land (edon a bee aa Bekee). He came as a man, just as you have come. He came by the sea of Gbee; and from there he reached this town (Mogho). When he came from the sea, the first place he entered was the town of Gbee. He wanted to stay at Gbee. He told Gbee people not to go to the sea for a communal fishing that day. Gbee people refused.

He spoke to them about the Laws of God. That very day Gbee people still went to the sea for fishing. Because of that, when they came back from the fishing, they did not see him again. He had gone away.

When he left Gbee, he went to Mogho. At Mogho all the Elders of Gokana came to see him. Even people from Gbee came there to see him. He was a real human just like we are today.

About his work, if somebody was sick, he would ask them to bring water. He would bathe the person with water and he would be healed. If somebody was infertile, he would do the same, and he or she would begin to bear children.

He told people to worship God. All went to worship God with him at the place where he stayed, people from all other towns came to him. They would come from morning and stay the whole day, in the evening they returned to their homes.

Those who were with him were also human beings, but it was discovered that all of them were spirits (Kereme dedee aba Pya edon) They knew this because when they went away, they just disappeared, and nobody knew the way and manner they went away. When they came, they came by way of the sea, yet they did not bring a boat. How they came, nobody knew. They just appeared on the sea shore so that people who wanted to go to sea saw them and spread the news about.

All that he taught and did, came from a book. When he spoke, he spoke from the book. That book was the Bible, which he brought with him. He spoke about this world, and how people should live together in peace. He told them that to kill was a sin. Therefore nobody should kill any person.

The word that I remember from his mouth is that he told people that they should not kill. They should love one another. If they brought anybody to him accused of murder or of theft, he would know at once whether or not the person did what he or she was accused of. He would ask the person to go home.

The first churches that entered Gokana were Christ Army churches.

The Christ Army churches came after Barigokana had long gone away.

Bonny (Bani) had not been established or founded when Barigokana came (Bani sii bee le).

After he had taught the word of God and how people should live, he went away. But he did not tell people that he would go away. And he did not fix a day, that on such and such a date, he would go away.

Artifacts: When Barigokana went away, he left behind certain things. Things like a Bible and a bell were left behind. This is the house in which he lived (showing it to me). The whole Gokana built this house for him. From that time till today this place does not belong to one town alone. The commonwealth of Gokana own this place together.

Every year, all Gokana bring dances, plays, palm wine and drinks to this place to commemorate Barigokana, just as they did when Barigokana was in their midst. This is Barigokana's square or play ground (Eete Barigokana).

Anybody in Gokana who commits murder, or is accused of sorcery or witchcraft, here in Barigokana Square they will judge him. Whether they took the matter to Giokoo, at Giokoo they will refer the case to Barigokana.

Supreme Deity: The New Year Feast in Gokana is proclaimed from Barigokana before it is celebrated in Gokana. All rituals concerning the opening of the farming season is performed in Barigokana. The rituals connected with the sowing of the first seeds must be done in Barigokana, and from here it will be made known to all Gokana that sowing seeds has begun.

During the farming season, each Gaan in Gokana has a day to do ritual sacrifices for all the members of that Gaan in Barigokana for the prosperity of that Gaan. This is done every year. Although each

town in Gokana has its own yam shrine, there is the All-Gokana Yam Shrine in Barigokana.

The Lion and the Bell: Among the items left behind by Barigokana only the bell and the "cast lion" remain. The Bible has disintegrated and spoiled. When the colonial war broke out and the Ikosi people (the colonial invaders) were burning down buildings and towns, my father buried those items in the ground when they escaped. By the time they returned to the towns, the Bible had rotted and spoiled. That is how we lost the Bible, leaving only the "Lion" and the Bell. (1)

Genealogy of the Informant:

Zoraba was the son of Gboro;

Gboro the son of Gbori;

Gbori the son of Mkpee;

Mkpee, the son of Zua

Zua  
|  
Mkpee  
|  
Gbori  
|  
Gboro  
|  
Zoraba

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(1) These items are housed inside an inner shrine or hut, over which a concrete building was erected. The door of the outer building was open so that I could view the inner hut. No admittance was allowed into the shrine itself. This can only be in July each year, during the celebration of the Feast of Zua. The items could be brought out for photographs only at that time.

8. THE REVD. S.O. LAAKA OF AKARA, ONNE (Aged c. 67)  
Interviewed at Ekara on 21 February 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell the history of Onne, how Onne came to be.

Why did they leave Gokana?

What is "oloi", by way of explanation?

You mentioned that some of the people lived at the waterside near to Okrika. Where was Okrika at that time?

Who do you refer to as "this people"?

What name do you give to this deity?

Did the Leme have a name for this deity?

Did you know from the ancients when the Okrikans came and how long they stayed with the Etabajo people before they moved to the Island?

Did the Etabajo people have a priest of their own for that deity?

When the Leme people brought the yams and other produce of the land to sacrifice to the deity, to whom did they give those things?

Did they sacrifice those things through their own priest or through somebody else?

When the Okrikans came every year to this deity which they called Finibeso, through whom did they make their own offering to the deity? Did they give their offering through the priest maintained by the Leme people?

What name did they give to this feast, whether the yearly feast, or the seven year feast?

You spoke about "other people" when describing how Onne and the various nationalities combined to form the Onne community. Who were those "other people"?

Did Onne and Leme come at the same time or is Onne a branch of Leme?

How did you get this history?

What was the occupation of the settlers after they settled in Onne?

Where did the man from Gokana do his fishing?

What was the occupation of these groups of settlers?

Did your father or grandfather speak of any ancient markets that existed?

Was there another war between the Leme and Ogu, or between the Leme

and Okrika which you heard about in history?

You mentioned that in early times, the Okrikans first settled on Leme land when they came from Ijo area. Was there any quarrel or struggle for land between the Leme and the Okrika at that time?

In recent years have there been any wars between the Leme and the Okrika people?

In the "war" between Ogu and Eteo did the Leme join with Eteo against Ogu for what they did? If they did not, why did they not?

Why was it that sometime ago, the Leme people were also called Mboli?

You said that the Leme people were in origin farmers. Can you name some of the major crops which they planted and say if there are any traditions connected with those crops?

Was there reciprocal or inter-marriages between the Ibos and the Leme and between the Ibibios and the Leme?

The two new wives chosen for their husband by his Leme wives, did they serve the Leme wives, or did they live separately in their own houses?

Why was it that marriage from outside Leme was important in this matter?

Why was it that the Leme married from Igbo and from Ibibio but they did not give their own daughters to those people in marriages?

Was there a time when the Ibos or the Ibibios complained that the Leme people did not give their own daughters to them in marriage? Or was there a time when men from these places attempted to marry from Leme?

I have seen that the yam crop is very important in the economic and social systems of Leme. Were there any rituals and traditions connected with this crop?

Where do you have the oldest yam shrine in Leme?

B. The Narrative:

I learned the history of Onne from my father and from my grandfather. Onne was not the original name of this place. The original name of this place was the name of the founder of Onne, known as Giokpe. In Eleme pronunciation, Giokpe is pronounced Giokpo (or Jokpo).

This Giokpe was living together with his brother at a place where Nchia is today. His brother's name was Lene. Both of them were from Gokana. They were living together but they became separated from each other.

According to my father, Lene's wife gave birth to twins. The condition at that time was that twin babies and their mothers were killed. Lene was determined that he would not let his wife be killed, not even the babies. So he fled the town with his wife and the twin babies.

His brother Giokpe followed him. In their new settlement Lene got other children. These were: Ogale, Agbonchia, Aletto and Alesa. Giokpe also got children. In course of time, Giokpe became wicked against his brother's children and grand children. He killed a child of Aletto. The result was war. Lene's children went to war against Giokpe. Giokpe was killed in that war, but his first son, Onne, fled with his father's other children to another place. They pursued him to that place. He fled again to another place; till he had fled about five places. They sought to kill him as they had killed his father. He finally came to a place called "Oloi Ekara" in Onne bush. There he settled. Oloi means Law.

At first he was not aware that other settlers were also living in the neighbourhood of his new location in parts of the bush. Another Gokana man had crossed into the area from the direction of the sea. In this case the man had fled because of the trouble which resulted from a masquerade dance. As he wielded his matchet during the masquerade dance, he fatally wounded a person, who later died. When the relatives of the deceased man wanted to kill him in revenge he fled the town and came to "Onne" by way of the sea. His original town in Gokana was Barako, and his name was Yaa (or Eyaa) of Gaan Muyo.

This Eyaa was both a farmer, a fisherman and a hunter. While hunting in the bush, he discovered the settlements of the different peoples. His own place was by the sea. One day he saw a man named Ogosu from a "town" called Etabajo. The two became friends. In the course of their friendship, the man from Etabajo put the question to Eyaa, whether it was not for their common interest to bring all the different people together into one large community. The idea pleased both of them. So they two agreed that each one should go back and bring together his own people. When Eyaa came back he brought, among others, his senior sister and another brother.

When they came together they founded this place, where Onne is today, which was a more central position than their two former communities. For before that Ogosu was living at a place near to the place which later became Okrika waterside, while Eyaa was living at a place near to what is today Oku waterside. The new settlement was now central to these two places. When they themselves had settled down, they decided to bring together the so-called villages round about: Oku, Ebregu, Mbule, Etabajo, etc.. People from all these places were brought together to settle in Onne. They decided to divide the "country" into four sections.

In the meantime, they had not known about people who had settled in the area around Nchia. These were the descendants of Onne. They were more numerous than any other group. They also possessed their own deity. When they saw them, they asked them how they came to be there. They replied that they had been warring against their "brother". They invited them to join them in the new community.

They agreed that since the Onne people had a deity, their deity should be the protector of the community, and that the Onne people should administer the "government" of the town. Their name "Onne" should also be the common name for the community. The different peoples who were joined together were Mbule, Eyaa, Etabajo, Oku, Mgube, Ebregu, and Onne. They divided the community into four parts.

After they had divided the town into four parts, the man from Barako, named Eyaa, who founded the place called Eyaa, since he was the founder of that place, he was to rule in the village (or section) called Agbeta. The other people who immigrated from Nchia should stay separate. They should name one of the sons of their late father Giokpe to rule the people there because of their deity. That is where Onne people go every year for rituals and sacrifices. That place (or section) is called Alejo.

Ekara was the next section, comprising the villages of Oku, Ebelegu, etc.. Eyaa's nephew, that is, his sister's son, ruled Ekara. His name was Ogalo Echie, and his mother's name was Oya. She fled from Barako in Gokana with Eyaa at the time he escaped from there. One of the brothers of Eyaa also ruled the fourth section called Ogoloma. The name of this brother was Konoya. That was how Onne started.

Finally they gave the post of paramount chief to Eyaa, because he was the first person who arrived there, having come from Barako in Gokana. The post of Land Priest went to a man of Alejo, that is, one of those who came from Nchia area, being descendant of Onne. Since that time the town had existed in this order. This is the story of how Onne came to be.

Okrika: All this time that we are talking about, there was no Okrika in the whole of that area. Okrika had never been established where Okrika is today. Okrika came along from Ijo area and entered the lands of those people called Etabajo. The Okrika came from very far away. They came from there because of war too. The war pushed them from all those parts till they came into the lands of the Etabajo. It was the Etabajo who directed the early Okrikans to cross the river; that there was land behind the river. When the Okrikans crossed the river from the mainland to the island, they left behind their deity with the Etabajo people.

Because of this deity which the Okrikans left behind at the time of their migration from the mainland to the island, they made annual pilgrimages to the Onne bush to the land of the Etabajo to make sacrifices to their deity. They made these pilgrimages every year, and every seven years they made a greater one which they called the Jubilee Pilgrimage, during which the rituals and sacrifices were greater.

Both Onne people and Okrikan people joined together in the sacrifices and celebrations. The Onne brought cocoyams, yams and other produce of the land; while the Okrikans brought fish, that is the produce of the sea. They brought these things for sacrifices to the deity. Both peoples sat down together to enjoy the merriments of the occasion.

The Okrikans called this deity Finibeso. This was the deity they brought from Ijo area during the time they came from there. When they came, they came by way of Bonny and entered that bush, but the bush they entered belonged to Etabajo people. After the Etabajo had directed them to cross, that they would see an island, they crossed, leaving their deity behind with the Etabajo people. That is why their deity is still there till today.

The Eleme people also have a name for this deity. Since it was on the land of the Etabajo, they called it "Ejo Etabajo" (the deity of the Etabajo People).

According to the ancients the Okrikans stayed with the Etabajo people for some time before they moved to the island. During that time one of their sons proved to be so bad, for he was a thief who stole the property of the Etabajo people. When they caught him, they did not want to kill him as they used to do before, because they considered them to be strangers (people in transit). So they asked them to take him to the other side, that they should cross to the other side so that he might not have the chance to come and steal their yams and crops.

The Eleme people had a priest for that deity. Before the Okrikans departed, the Eleme people had provided their own priest who looked after the deity. Thus, each year before the Okrikans came to do sacrifices to the deity, the Eleme people first did their own sacrifices before the Okrikans came to do theirs. Thus, they had a priest for it; and it was also on their land.

As you know, in those days there was no Christianity, so the people took these deities as their God. So when the Eleme returned from their harvest with their crops, they offered some of the crops in sacrifice to the deity through their own priest, who was the spiritual Head of the Etabajo Houses and Kindreds. It was through this man that the offerings were made to the deity.

The Okrikans also maintained their own priest of the deity. This was their old man, who was in charge of the deity at the time they came from Ijo area, and his descendants. When they wanted to make offerings to the deity, they gave them through this man and his descendants. This man then took the offerings to the Etabajo priest, the man to whom he entrusted the deity. Both of these men sat down to cook and eat the ritual foods together. When the Okrikan man spoke to the deity to beg anything from the deity, the Leme man also spoke to beg whatever they wanted. They did not separate.

They ate the food together  
They poured into the water  
They poured unto the land  
That they who were planting  
And they who were fishing  
Might prosper together.

Thus they spilled the ritual oblations and the libations with prayers to the deity for the good of the two peoples. They did this yearly, but in the seventh year, they had a bigger feast. At the bigger feast the Okrikans brought some drums and the Eleme also brought their own drums. They would play dances to the deity, both men and women taking part. In Eleme, this Seven Year feast is called "Agba Ejo Etabajo" ("Year of the Deity of Etabajo").

Some of those who later joined the Onne community were part of the immigrant Okrikans who came from Ijo, some were the remnants of those who fought in the war with Giokpe, the father of Onne, who scattered in different directions. It was like the time of a great war when people do not know where they go or where they are. Like the

immigrant Okrikans they did not enter the area at the same time. Some groups when they were tired remained in a place that seemed pleasant to them. Various groups of people at the time of Giokpe went to different places. These were the people Eyaa and Ogosu brought together to form Onne.

The name of the place was not Onne before; it was called Eyaa. There is still Eyaa village in Onne today, where people from all parts of Gokana live. They live there because their "brother" had lived there before. There they have a church and their own school; and nobody will remove them from that place.

When Eyaa first came from Gokana to live there, there was nobody in that place. Nobody ever lived there. He was the only one living there until afterwards he went and brought his brothers and sisters to live with him. They lived there till he found a friend who suggested to him that they two ought to live together in a central place. And that was the beginning of Onne.

Lene (Leme or Eleme): Onne did not come at the same time with Eleme (Lene) because Onne was the son of Giokpe. It was Giokpe, his father, who came at the same time with Eleme (Lene) his brother, because of what the people of Gokana forbade, namely the twins. The man did not want his wife to be killed. He escaped with his wife and the twins, and his brother Giokpe followed him. In Gokana, the man's name was Lene. But in the new place the name Lene was corrupted to Leme, or Eleme.

How I came to know this history is that I met my great-grandfather, my father and my grandfather too. I met my great-grandfather. It was he who used to say to me, "Don't you know that we came from Ogoni?". Everytime he always mentioned that to me. It was my grandfather, not my father, who took me to the bush and showed me where Eyaa lived at the first time he came from Barako. That was why I myself, not another person, went to Barako and found out the "family" of Eyaa (or Yaa). Chief Enoch Taa-ol of Barako is a member of the Gaan Muuyo of Barako from where Eyaa emigrated. Nnaa Biradee of Nwe'ol is from the same Gaan Muuyo. I knew also one John Muesigia of Biara, also of the same Gaan Muuyo House. There are other Gokana towns which I know from where the founders of Eleme emigrated, such as Lewe.

These men when they emigrated from Gokana, they were both farmers and fishermen. They did their fishing on the river between Bonny and Gokana. So that they got fish from the river and food from the land. As all the different groups came from Ogoni, particularly from Gokana, they had the same occupation. That was why they lived near the sea. They chose places near the coast so that they could farm the land and do fishing in the sea.

Early markets: One of the earliest markets in ancient times, as I heard of it from my father and grandfather, was the market with Ogu people. The Ogu also came from Ijo area. In the early stages of their arrival they first settled on the mainland, but the Eleme people who had been there, the Ngube, told them to cross to the other side, that is to the island, because they were mainly fishermen, that it was not good for them to remain on the mainland. So the Ogu crossed to the island. The Ngube were a part of the group that followed Eyaa when

he migrated from Gokana. They were both farmers and fishermen. But the Ogu were fishermen only.

In order to get food, the Ogu would bring their fish to the mainland to exchange food stuffs. Then the Ngube would bring their yams, palm wine, oil, etc.. As they exchanged those items the market started. Thus the early market, as my grandfather told me, was the Eleme-Ogu market. This market brought about a great war in Eleme.

A quarrel arose between the Eteo and the Ebubu of Eleme. The Ebuba had to pass through Eteo in order to attend the Eleme-Ogu market. On one occasion, the Eteo ambushed and murdered a prominent Ebubu chief as he travelled through Eteo to visit the market. The name of the Chief was Gumba Nuuma, who was also the Paramount Chief of Ebubu. This incident disrupted the flow of the market. The Ogu people became angry because by stopping the market they were gradually starving to death as the market was the only source of their food supply.

The Ogu people therefore treacherously murdered one hundred and sixty-four Eteo chiefs in revenge. (1) They invited the chief men of Eteo to a feast. It was a common reciprocal practice between them to invite each other to a feast. While the Eteo were there eating and drinking, the Ogu suddenly fell on them and killed one hundred and sixty-four of their chiefs and noble men. The place being an island, the Eteo could not swim to escape.

Another war I heard about was the war between Alesa and Alode in Eleme and Okrika. This war was also caused as a result of another market. The market was at Alesa on the mainland. The Okrikans used to come to that market with their fish while the Eleme would bring food stuffs.

On one occasion, an Okrikan assaulted an Eleme woman. The assault resulted in a fight during which some Alesa people killed some Okrika women. Alode people joined in with the Alesa to kill the Okrika women. A war broke out between Okrika and Alesa and Alode, because the Okrikans did not forget the killing of their women. That was another war I heard about that it took place in ancient time.

When the Okrikans settled on Eleme mainland when they first arrived from Ijo area, there was peace between the two peoples. The Okrikans on their part, they knew that they were strangers. So they lived together peacefully. If they wanted to do anything on the land, they would ask permission from the Eleme people. The Eleme, on their part, were very generous, so that they were willing to give bits of their land along the shores to Okrikans to enable them to have shelter where they would stay to catch fish and dry them and then sell to the people on the land.

The two wars I mentioned above were the only wars I heard about that took place in ancient times. In the war between Alesa-Alode and Okrika, there was actual fighting, but the one between Ogu and Eteo was by treachery.

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(1) Talbot, P.A. dates this incident to 1887. The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. I (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1926, p. 21).

The Egbu chief whom the Eteo murdered angered all Eleme people. Eteo people were looked upon as very wicked people. Because of this, when Ogu people killed the leaders of Eteo, the other Eleme people did not join Eteo to fight Ogu.

The Eleme people were once called "Mboli". The name was a recent name introduced after the colonial government in Nigeria had been established. As the colonial officers were going about in the area, from place to place, to know where each people came from, they came to Ahoada. The interpreter of the British colonial officer was an Ibo man. Some Eleme people could speak Igbo, some could not. When the Eleme chiefs met the colonial officer at Ahoada, the officer asked them "What is your occupation?". The Eleme spokesman replied "We are tillers of the land". The Ibo interpreter who spoke Igbo interpreted this partly in English and partly in Igbo to the white man: "They are Mba-Olili" ("a nation of planters").

From that time, the Ibos started calling the Eleme, "Mba Olili". Later on the final syllable "li" was dropped and the word became "Mboli". That was how the name "Mboli" came about.

The Mgwe Traditional Titles: The major crops of Eleme are yams and cocoyams. There are many varieties of yams and cocoyams. There are those that are specifically men's crops and there are those that are women's crops. The yam for men is called Mgwe. This was the yam which was used in competing for traditional titles. Any farmer who produced this mgwe in large numbers, was entitled to make a First Traditional Title Feast. Women's yams were Mkpai, Ngulo, Nkikonu, Egwa, etc.

A man who wanted to be known as a real farmer in Eleme (Ogoni) endeavoured to excel in this: after marrying his first wife, the two of them would work together to plant yams and to produce large quantities at harvest. These yams they tied twenty-two to a stake up to two hundred stakes. A man and his wife who were able to produce such quantities of yams were qualified to make a feast for the "whole" town to earn the title of "Good Farmers". The stake of twenty-two yams was called Ntate sa.

At that stage the man married his second wife and continued to increase his farms and to produce more yams. When, with the help of his wives, he was able to produce four hundred stakes of yams, each containing twenty-two yams, he was again qualified to make another feast. After making this second feast, he was given the title of Chief.

After this title feast of Four Hundred Ntate Sa, the man became recognized as a higher grade of Chief. He was then ready to go outside Eleme to either Igbo or Ibibio to marry another wife to make three wives. He was now a rich man and a well-recognized chief. He had enlarged himself and by so doing he had enlarged the state. The next stage was that each of his two Leme wives went either to Igbo or to Ibibio to choose each a wife for him. He then had five wives; two of Leme and three from "abroad".

The marriages between the Leme and the Igbo or the Ibibio were not reciprocal. They were only one way marriages. We just married from them. Wives married in this way lived with their Leme mistresses but when they began to have children, separate houses were provided for them.

Nevertheless they still served and recognized their mistresses.

With this number of wives, the man worked harder to increase his production from four hundred ntate sa to six hundred ntate sa, and even to eight hundred ntate sa. He might then top it by slaughtering a cow or bull for a high feast, during which he secured the highest traditional title in Eleme.

Marriage from outside was a way of securing recognition in society. Eleme marriage was also different from the system in Igbo or Ibibio. The system of farming was also different in these places. These differences explained why the Eleme girls would not want to be married to these other places. In any case, men from either Igbo or Ibibio have never made any attempt to marry from Eleme, possibly due to the higher costs.

The tradition of "tying" yams in Eleme for titles involved certain rituals and insignia accompaniments. With the tying of the two hundred ntate sa the rituals consisted in providing a ram, a tortoise, one cock, yams, two bunches of plantains, one racket of fish, 10 yards of white cloth, palm wine, palm fronds, plantain leaf, seven manillas, etc. In the ceremony, these things were offered to the Yam Deity. This was why Christians did not want to take part in the ceremony of Yam Titles.

In Eleme, the oldest yam shrine is called Ejian-nchia and it is located at Agbonchia. That was the first settlement of the ancestors of the Eleme. From there yam shrines were established in other Eleme towns. Onne has its own yam shrine and its yam priest.

9. THE REVD. S.O. LAAKA OF EKARA, ONNE (Aged c. 67)  
Interviewed at Ekara on 6 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

What I want to discuss with you today is what we touched on during the first interview, which we could not fully discuss; and that is, concerning any traditions related to the opening of the farming season in Eleme.

To whom or to which deity did they present the rituals of the sacrifice?

What did they call this yam deity?

Did they have a yam shrine in Leme?

What type of music did they use in these ceremonies?

When you were giving the history of the early past, you mentioned the Etabajo. Do you recall any wars that took place between the Etabajo and the Alode of Nchia?

When did this war take place?

I have heard from other people that the origin of Alode was very circumstantial, by that I mean that its origin was by accident. Can you elaborate on this history?

I have two questions in my mind. First, what war was it that resulted in the invitation of this people? Second, what type of war materials did they produce?

From where did the Leme get those weapons craftsmen?

What evidence suggests that Sii people were actually involved in that war?

Now, Reverend Laaka, I am quite pleased with what you have told me about the origin of Onne and of Eleme; and about all other related stories. What I want you to do at this point is to say something about yourself. How did you come to know all these things?

What is your own position in this town and this society?

Does your family own land in Onne?

B. The Narrative:

We have a tradition. The tradition is that in each village of Eleme there is a Land Priest. Nobody could go to clear any bush for the purpose of farming unless the land priest had first gone there with ritual palm wine, accompanied by some Elders, to the special bush that was to be cut that year for cultivation. On arrival there the Land Priest would say a certain prayer and pour libation to the Land deity so that all the people who would be cutting bush and doing all types of work that year would not meet accident, such as falling down from a

tree, or being bitten by a snake. That whatever they did should be peaceful, that the planting of crops should be in peace, and the crops, prosperous; that all who went to the farm each day should also return. Then he would pour the libation, with the Elders, who went with him supporting and affirming. They would then loose the goat which they had with them for the sacrifice and kill it, spilling its blood to the ground for the deity for a prosperous soil.

Their cooks would then dress the meat and cook it for them. They all would sit down in that bush to eat and drink, until they had consumed all the meat without taking any part of it home. This was the overall custom and tradition before the start of every farming season in Eleme.

The Eleme believed that there was a yam deity. They also believed that the founding ancestors had power in the spirit world to communicate with the deities on their behalf and to make the ground produce its highest yield. So when they did the sacrifice they spoke to the ancestors who in turn dealt with the deities, that their requests and desires might be met in the form of more and bigger yams and plentiful yields of all other crops.

In every village of Eleme, there is a yam shrine, where dwells the yam deity known as Ejo Mgwe. In the month of April, the Elders retire to this shrine in preparation for the opening of the farming season. There is a pitcher, a well-made and decorated pitcher in each yam shrine. This pitcher was specially for use during the festival of yam. Before the start of a new farming season, the yam priest and the Elders assembled at the yam shrine for five days. The yam pitcher was filled with palm wine and the elders drank from it, making libations to the yam deity and to the ancestral spirits. During that period nobody went to do any work in the farm. Their prayers were that the yam should "return", the ground should yield its abundance; there should be no accidents, and no sudden deaths. There was a celebration at the end of the five days. After that everybody went to begin the new farming season.

During the ceremonial or ritual period, certain types of music and dance were played. The women had their own songs and dance, in which they praised the gods, the ancestors, the greatest farmers, etc. The musical instruments include special pitchers, a musical box (or "harp"), a mini-gong (wooden), clapping boards, etc. The Women's Society (or club) is called Ogbo Egbemba.

The men also supply their own music. Their own songs and musical instruments are some drums, special wooden gongs, etc. They sing to praise the gods and the ancestral spirits; memories of great farmers, titled men, etc. During this ceremony some men may be moved to declare their intention to "tie" the yams in the coming year. The men's societies that supply the music at this time are the Ogbo Mkpa Egoni and the Ogbo Ekereson.

The Yam War was a famous war that cannot be forgotten. The cause of the war was a type of exaggeration of fact. The daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Alode had a friend who was also the daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Etabajo. On one occasion the daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Alode went to the market. While there she visited with her friend. As they talked together, it turned out that

"yams" became the dominant subject of their conversation. At a point in their conversation, the daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Etabajo told the daughter of the Traditional Ruler of Alode that her own father was the greatest Yam King in all Eleme. She said:

As from this year  
My father is greatest  
And richest in yam.  
As from this year  
He is the most famous  
And wealthiest of all.  
If you'll see it,  
I'll take you for a short walk  
Just to view his barn.

The friend said, "Thank you. I'll follow you to see it". When they reached the barn, she found out that her friend had spoken truly. Her friend's father had such large quantities of yams that it was not possible to count them. They were large, clean and well-kept yams.

The daughter of Akara Olu, for that was the name of the Traditional Ruler of Alode, knew that her friend's father had truly beaten her own father by far in yams that year, in numbers, sizes, types, quality, cleanliness, etc. She bore it in mind and left the barn quietly to her own home. As soon as she drew near to her village, she began to weep. When her father saw her, he was moved with pity and began to enquire what had happened to her in the market. She narrated what had happened to her father. She said:

I followed my friend to her father's barn  
She boasted to me of her father's yams  
She bowed my head to her father's yams  
And knocked my face on her father's yams  
Saying to me:  
    Don't you see that my father  
    Don't you see that my father  
Has got more yams than your father has.

The father asked her whether it was true that she knocked her head on the yams. She affirmed this. Akara Olu summoned all his men and declared war on Etabajo people. That was how the war began.

Akara Olu went to war with his soldiers, but he could not crack the power of Etabajo. He went the second time, he also failed. He made a third attempt and failed too. He returned home angry and disgraced.

He then appealed to his other brothers to help in the war. Alode had five brothers (towns), namely, Agbonchia, Ogale, Alesa, Aleto and Akajo. Because the Etabajo lived on the coast and were always taking cover in the water, the Alode people went to get the Onne to agree to join the war on their side. Onne people also lived on the coast and knew about the creeks.

When the attack began this time, the Onne first got into ambush inside the creeks. The commander of the Onne forces was called Adeya. As the Nchia forces pressed the Etabajo people towards the coast, they

they entered the encirclement of the Onne ambush. When the Etabajo discovered that they had been encircled, they broke their ranks and became disorganized. Many of them threw away their arms and ran for their lives. The Etabajo were defeated. Their towns were destroyed and their land divided among the victors.

As Onne and Alode lived adjacent to Etabajo territory, their land was divided between Onne and Alode. Part of that land, which Onne took is where the Federal Government is building a fertilizer complex today. The remnants of the Etabajo were scattered all over Eleme. They are in Onne, in Alesa, in Alode, in Agbonchia, in Ebubu, etc.. Wherever you find them, they are always very industrious and prosperous. They are also a very highly educated people. But there is no Etabajo town again in Eleme today. The name Ogusu is a common Etabajo family name. Wherever you find this name in Eleme, know that the person is a descendant of the ancient Etabajo.

I learned about this war from my father and my grandfather. They did not give any idea about the time when this war took place. I asked my father how old he was when the war took place. My father told me that he was a very small boy, about eight years old when the war took place. But as he grew up he learned more about the war from his father. My father lived to the age of 86 years before he died.

I know the history of Alode, how it came to be. The name Alode means a "village where people manufacture war materials". The people were brought from somewhere else and kept there in a concealed camp where the enemy could not discover their existence. After that work they remained there to form a strong village community. Till today, people know Alode people to be warriors.

The war that caused the Eleme to invite "foreign" people to make weapons for our fighters, as we learned it, was caused by a certain group of Ibo people who came from very far away. They did not come from anywhere near Eleme land. What we know is that they were Ibos, who came from a distant place. We do not know the exact place of their origin. In that war, the Eleme people chased them away.

To fight the war, the Eleme people got hold of these specialists to manufacture the weapons needed for the war. Those men were not Eleme people. They were people from another area. They got the people (makers of weapons) from Ogoni. I heard of the name of a people called Sii. This people were said to be experts in preparing spears and swords. These were what they used in those days in addition to bows and arrows. They got this people into a concealed place which was also central to all the allied villages of Eleme.

During the time of the slave trade, the AroChuku brought many people into Leme. The people they brought were mainly Nkwerri people of Igbo. When they asked the Aros why they brought these people, they answered that they had brought them to do yam work. That is why today you have some names in Leme with Ibo roots. For example, Olumgwe, Igwe, Okparaji, etc.. The Eleme people also sold some of their own wicked people into slavery.

Sii people were known to be warriors. They could prepare potent medicines, charms, and black magic for war. The spears, matchets, swords

bows and arrows which were prepared for the war, were not taken to the battle until Sii medicine men had applied some "black magic" to them to make them more powerful in war.

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About the Informant:

Reverend Solomon Laaka was from a royal family in Onne. His great ancestor, NABIRIKO, who came from Barako was a leader of Onne people. He ruled Onne and his sons after him also ruled Onne. His first son was Ngolayi. As far as it could be remembered, the following have occupied positions of rulership in Onne of that lineage:

Nabiriko  
Ngolayi  
Kanwichika  
Laaka

"My father taught me these things because he had great hopes in me that I would rule Onne after him. He sent me to school for the same purpose.

Our family own more land in Onne than any other people. I can give only two examples. After every eight years, I leave one portion of land which bears the name of my great grandparent, Oka Nabiriko, (Nabiriko's Farm) to the whole of Onne to farm on. They would come to me to pour libation on the place where my great grand parent was buried (i.e. in his shrine).

They would slaughter goats and make sacrifices to the spirit of my ancestor before they could farm on that land.

When I became a Christian pastor, for I am an ordained minister of the Church, I gave up these things. It is one of my uncles who officiates in these rituals. But if there was any important matter in the village or in Onne as a whole, I was always invited; and if it was something where I could take part in the discussion, my opinion was always respected."

10. J.D. OSARONU (CHIEF) OF OGOLOMA, ONNE (Aged c. 47)  
Interviewed at Onne on 25 February, 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Taking Onne as an example, how did a person advance socially in Leme?

What rituals were usually connected with social advance, particularly with reference to Yam as an instrument of social ascendancy in Leme society?

What ritual name did the Leme give to the cat which the judo champion slaughtered?

Was there a name for this particular stage of the champion's ascendancy?

The dog which was slaughtered in a widow marriage, to whom was it slaughtered?

What name did the people give the 'Yam-Tying' tradition in Leme?

The highest class of Yam Chiefs only could dance to a particular type of drumming. Was there a name for this type of drumming? Of the Leme's neighbours, which of them existed at the time the founders of Leme migrated from Gokana, which of them came later?

Were there any stories about wars that took place between these societies?

Before the colonial time, did those Okrikans who stayed on Leme land participate in the local traditions?

Did the Okrikans intermarry with Leme?

Did the Okrikans have the same wrestling rules and methods as the Leme?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief J.D. Osaronu. I am the Traditional Ruler or Village Head of Ogoloma Village in Onne community. I am a legal practitioner.

In Eleme, when somebody grew up as a child, he had to do certain things to distinguish himself as a person in the society. He could be a good judoist. If he did it well, he could become a champion. In Onne, if a particular drum or egelege was played in the month of October and a judoist from one village of Onne threw down a judoist from another village during that particular ceremony, he was regarded as a champion, and he did one of two things. He would have to slaughter a cat (symbol of "power") and a cock would also be tied to his arm; and then he would be playing a particular song. Whenever there was a judo tournament, because he had thrown somebody down before, he was allowed to march the drum with his feet, either with his right or left foot. He was the only one who could touch the drum with his feet. If anyone who had not thrown down a person attempted to touch the drum with his feet, such a person was fined. Only a judoist who was a champion, and who had taken part in the judo championship in the month

of October, i.e. during that particular Egelege ceremony, could do that. That was one aspect by which somebody was recognized in the society if he was a good judoist.

In Eleme, the cat which a judo champion slaughtered was called "Ekomere". The drum and the ceremony was called Egelege. The occasion was known as Egelege ceremony. One who threw a person down during an Egelege ceremony became a champion, and the title he earned was known as Etutuake.

Recognition was also counted in the practice of shooting, as a person grew up. If he shot a bird, the first bird he shot with an arrow, was cooked and pieces of it distributed to relatives. Everyone who ate a piece of it was obliged to make him a present. This was called Elepueno ceremony, and it is recognized in Eleme society. The same thing would happen if he shot an animal, that is, if he used a gun to shoot an animal. The meat was cooked and distributed to relatives and friends. Anyone who ate a bit of it, made him a present. This was known as Elenna ceremony, that is, ceremony of the first animal (killed). These were features of growing up.

If he grew up and learned how to climb a palm tree with a climbing rope, the first palm tree he climbed was done in the same way. The oil from the first fruit cut was distributed to relations. This was known as Ele Mgbo.

Marriage: As a person came to the age of marriage, he had to choose between two ways of marriage. There was the Marriage of a Virgin and Marriage of a Widow. Marriage of a Virgin was done once a year, always in February. The marriage of a widow was done at any time of the year.

In the case of the virgin marriage, several things were required to be done before the marriage celebrations on a day in February.

Such things included giving of presents, buying drinks, payment of the bride price, etc.. On the appointed day in February they went to the market square known as Okii. All the brides were lined up on one side, and the bridegrooms on the other side. At a point in the ceremonies all the bridegrooms would dance towards their brides and make presents to them in the presence of large crowds of cheering townsmen and women, parents, relations and friends, all gathered at the townsquare.

After the ceremonies at the townsquare, the bride would follow her bridegroom to his home on that day. Before that day, the bride was not supposed to come near the bridegroom. That was one marriage called virgin marriage in Onne.

When a man married a woman who was married to another man before, that was Widow marriage. In such a case the man slaughtered a dog to the deceased man's people. He also paid bride price to them. In the case of Virgin Marriage, the man slaughtered a goat to the parents of the girl, together with the bride price and four kobo (4k.). Whatever else was paid, the four kobo (4k) had to be paid.

The other types of marriage are divorcee marriages. In that kind of marriage, the man must return the goat and whatever the first husband paid.

Social distinctions: In Eleme society, unless a person was married, he could not take part in important deliberations of the village or community. If there was a gathering of the community and they wanted to select people who would form a committee for consultation, only persons who were married could be summoned to such a committee. If there was a community gathering and they wanted to appoint some people to make some findings and report back, only those who were married could be appointed to the committee. The next stage of social distinction in Eleme is that of "Tying Yam". This is a very important title in Eleme.

The yam title was very , very important in Eleme. Okon esa was the name of the ceremony. The first 'yam-tying' was for the purpose of getting a particular social title. If a man was married, he was just recognized as a man. If he wanted to be recognized in the society as belonging to a certain class of chiefs, yam chiefs, he must tie yams.

The first tying was called A-achu. This consisted of two hundred stakes of yams, each consisting of twenty-one yams.

In that one the man slaughtered two goats, and lots of fish. The actual costing of the feast would depend on the man's popularity; how many people he invited, how many relatives he had, etc.. A man was expected to feed as many people as came, and to give large fish with the food.

Whether the man invited many people or not, he must do certain basic things like slaughtering the goats, feeding the Elders and the Chiefs of the town; feeding each of the six recognized yam-tying societies. These were the Owoko, the Ekpete, the Ekor, the Yimenekoro Esa, the Yime Esa, and one other. He was also expected to feed the woman of the village, the elderly, and the young. These groups would demand certain things which were customary, such as yams, fish, etc.. The goats were slaughtered for the Elders. The particular group to which the man belonged would demand certain things from him. They were fed more than all the other groups.

After he had achieved the Aachu, which was the Two Hundred, that was regarded as only one line of yam in Onne. If he made two lines of two hundred each, that is four hundred, everything that was done for the Two Hundred would be doubled for the Four Hundred, that is, the Obo.

The next stage was the Eight Hundred (Obere Obo). That was where the Eleme personal name Oborobo came from. The next stage after that was the Etaa Obo (One thousand two hundred). After that, the highest stage was the Achu Ete, that is 200 x 20 (Four thousand). In that case, whatever was done in the case of the Two Hundred, would be done twenty times for the Achu Ete.

When a person tied yams, they were supposed to be big yams. For every 200 stakes of AchuEte, there were two stakes of Nsi Esa. There were altogether forty-two stakes of Nsi Esa. These were the very big yams. If it was Obo, there would be four stakes of Nsi Esa. But if it was Ota Obo, there would be six stakes of Nsi Esa. But if it was Achu Ete, there would also be Ewo Achu Nsi. This means one hundred of the very big yams.

For the highest title the person would slaughter two cows or bulls. Once he did that, he became the Highest Yam Chief. In Onne, there are at present only five of us who have reached that level; myself, Justice Wai-Ogosu and three other persons. Only five persons have slaughtered the cows and completed the "tyings". So these are the Highest Yam Chiefs in Onne. When the drum is played only the Highest Yam Chiefs can also touch the drum with their feet. There is a particular drumming for this class of chiefs; and if you have not get the Highest Yam Title, you could not dance to this particular drumming when it was played. The particular drumming for the Highest Yam Chiefs was called Mkpa Egoni.

There is also competition in this. The competition is based on the first to take the title, that is, a particular title. For example, if two men of the same class are dancing when the drum is played, if both of them dance in a certain way, it is an indication that they have agreed to take a particular title that year. Now, if we are dancing to the drum a person who has done the Aachu, that is, the Two Hundred Stakes Title, can never dance with more than one walking stick in his hands. Similarly, a man who has attained the Obo title, can never dance with more than two walking sticks in his hands. But if a man who has attained a higher title carries a number of walking sticks while dancing, and if a person holding a lower title dances to him and takes these walking sticks from him, he has indicated to the people that he wants to take that title in the coming year. If he fails, he would be heavily fined by the Town.

If a man who has attained the Highest Yam title is dancing, he can carry as many walking sticks as he chooses. He may even take all the walking sticks belonging to the other dancers and bear them over his shoulder while dancing in the square, if any one coming up to him takes the bundle from him, that person must take the Highest title that year. If he fails, he would be very heavily fined, and he would go down in "history" as someone who endeavoured to achieve a title but failed because he was unable to do it.

Once a man has achieved the Highest title, the Town, and the Council of Chiefs will recognize him, and would initiate him into the rulership of the Town. That is the Yam-Tying aspect of social advancement in Eleme.

During the ceremony, all the chiefs of Eleme would be there. The Mkpa Egoni (the Yam Drums) from the different villages would be brought to the townsquare. The skulls of the cows that the title candidate slaughtered would be displayed at the townsquare. A person who has done the highest title may dance to the drums, but if he has not slaughtered the two native cows, he must not touch the skulls. If he does, then it is known that he has taken the challenge to slaughter the cows within the farming season. If he fails, then he would be fined.

Persons who have attained from the Obo title up, anyone of them who dies, his funeral would be held at the townsquare. That is the Yam-Tying aspect of social ascendancy, which can lead a person to the rulership of a village.

But as a young man, a person may have contested in judo championship and thrown someone down or defended the town in one way or other,

he may be selected to lead as a youth leader. Each Onne village has two Youth Leaders. One is the first and the other his assistant. If a man has done remarkably well, as a youth leader, but then it will depend on his age and his own family, he may be selected as an Elder and become a member of a Village Council of Chiefs, not of the Town.

From being an Elder, a man may be selected a member of Ogbo Mkpono, which is the Highest Judicial body in the town. Only those who are recognized Family Heads in the villages are appointed as members of the Ogbo Mkpono. A man must perform certain rituals after his appointment as a member of Ogbo Mkpono. In order of ascendancy from the Ogbo Mkpono group, one may go up to the position of Land Priest. To be in that position, one must be a descendant of the original settler, or of the "family" of the original settler. Every Onne Village has one "family" or House known as the "family" or House of the Original Settler, or founding ancestor. After the Land Priest, the next highest position is the Village Head. The Village Head is the number one person in the ladder of ascendancy in a village. He is selected from the Ogbo Mkpono. If because of some achievement a man is made a Village Head, he must immediately be initiated into the Ogbo Mkpono, before he can take office as a village head.

Out of the four village heads, one of them is selected as the Paramount Chief of Onne, and he becomes the Chairman of the Council of Chiefs, and Head of his own Village as well. Now this is for the rulership.

The other one is Yam. Initially in Onne, if a man was selected to be a member of Ogbo Mkpono, or Village Head, he would strive to perform the Yam-Tying ceremony. The Yam-Tying ceremony is not compulsory. But if a person in a high position wants to command greater respect and influence he will want to perform the Yam-Tying ceremony. But the Yam-Tying ceremony depends on the individual's means, or whether he has some wealth. Usually, the Yam-Tying ceremony is an occasion for chiefs to present themselves in a special way to the people; and it will not look nice for a chief if he could not be there.

Origin of Onne: I now consider the question of the origin of Onne. We believe that this Onne is made up of different groups who migrated from different areas. The founder is usually called Giokpo, who was supposed to be the second son of Eleme; and he was living where Ogale is today. He disagreed with his brother, which made him migrate from there to live in Onne. Then there were migrations from other areas into Onne. People migrated also from Gokana. By strong tradition we regard the people we called Land Priests as the descendants of the original settlers of Onne. Their ancestors were from Gokana. The Eyaa, the Land Priests of Agbeta, the Ekonoya, the Land Priests of Ogoloma, the Oyaa, the Land Priests of Ekara and Land Priests of Alejo (name I cannot remember now); these four migrated from Gokana.

What happened was that when Giokpo came down to Onne, there were some settlers near to Okrika called Ajo People. There were others like the Mgbaja, also living in scattered places. According to tradition, there was a war between the Alode of Nchia and the Ajo people. The Ajo people were defeated, and so they migrated to Onne.

All these people settled in Onne, but the settlers from Gokana became more virile and strong so that they were able to suppress all the other settlers, including the children of Giokpo, and become the controller of the land, or the original settlers. We are told from "history" that the descendants of Giokpo were weaklings and because they were weaklings, those from Gokana overpowered them in some skirmish, and they sort of abdicated their rightful control of the Land. The remnants of Giokpo family are still in Onne today, but they are scattered.

The Land Priests as we know them today were the descendants of the original families from Gokana. This is the history of Onne. Some of the people came from Mbulee, some from Mgbaja. In fact, Chief B.L. Osarowate was from Mgbaja, the place where the Federal Ocean Terminal is built now. That was exactly their original place. Chief Andrew Diala was from Oku village which was also in the same area. The Mbulee lived in the same area but they are now extinct. They all migrated to Onne. On the basis of oral tradition and by available evidence, we are strongly convinced that the original settlers are those who migrated from Gokana.

We are told that Giokpo and Ogale were the sons of Eleme. It means that there was a man by name Eleme who had these two sons. Giokpo migrated to Onne, while Ogale remained and became the great ancestor of Nchia people. The Ebubu, the Ekporo, the Eteo, etc., are just extensions of these two sons, Giokpo and Ogale. These are the original families of Eleme. Other small, small villages were founded because of expulsions, ostracisms, etc, of their founders as a result of various offences, such as witchcraft, etc.. This is what we have gathered by oral tradition from our grand parents.

Some of Eleme's present neighbours might have existed as different societies at the time our ancestors settled here. The Okrikans in particular came later by canoes. They came into contact with the Eleme on land. They first of all founded small, small market villages on the coastal fringes where they could exchange their fish for agricultural food stuffs. They were islanders but they came to the land for needed food exchange. The two societies depended on each other for existence. One was a fishing society and the other farming society so they depended on the exchange of their goods.

Markets: As I said, the Okrikan people were islanders. Their need for agricultural food stuffs brought them into constant contacts with Eleme people. These contacts resulted in the establishment of markets. These markets were founded in suitable places along the coastline, which was the natural meeting point between the two peoples. Some Okrikans built small huts around the markets, points where they stayed overnight, or as places where they dried their fish. In time some remained in such places as their home.

What brought trouble was taxation. The colonial masters wanted the Chiefs to collect taxes. When the Eleme Chiefs wanted to collect tax from those Okrikans living at the exchange posts, they refused to pay their taxes through their chiefs on the island. This trouble continued for several years, until the time of Chief Samson Adoki of Okrika Island and Chief Michael Igwe of Alesa. These men were spokesmen for their communities. They were not really Paramount Chiefs because the villages at that time were autonomous villages. Chief Michael Igwe became spokesman for Eleme because he had a bit of western education.

The D.O.'s of these areas were all involved in the dispute; the D.O. Degema, Bonny and Ahoada were all involved in mediating the dispute. A big clash between the two people took place on May 7, 1946, in which about twelve persons of Eleme origin were killed, especially people of Alesa and Alode. The Okrikans who had been living at the exchange posts abandoned those places and fled to the island. Later on some litigations took place during the colonial period.

Before the colonial time, the two peoples lived in peace; they mutually exchanged their goods peacefully. Although the taxation became the immediate cause of the trouble, those Okrikans who were staying at these exchange posts, in a sense, near to the centre of the exchange, were becoming established; and they tended to lay some claims to the land on which they were staying.

Before the colonial time those Okrikans staying at the exchange posts participated in the local traditions and activities, such as the annual judo matches, and the annual marriage celebrations in which their women also took part in the dances. It seems that there was a very low degree of intermarriage between the two peoples in those early days, because there are some Eleme families in Okrika who had been there because of marriage. In recent years they do not intermarry because of the trouble I have just cited.

They probably intermarried in earlier times, as one can see that there is Olungwe family in Okrika, particularly in Ogu, and there is Olungwe family also in Eleme. These were not real marriages, they were in the form of concubines. They did not go through the traditional system of marriage. For this reason, they could not be considered properly as marriages.

Although the local Okrikans participated in Eleme traditional judo festivals, this did not mean that Eleme and Okrika have the same methods. They do not have the same wrestling methods and rules. In Okrika, the judoists could touch the ground with any parts of their body, except the back. In Eleme as well as in the rest of Ogoni, the combatants are not expected to fall to the ground with any part of their bodies from knee up.

11. D.L. EJOO OF AGBETA, ONNE (Aged c. 65)  
Interviewed at Agbeta on 25 February, 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me what you heard about the history of Onne.

What was the cause of their migration from Lewe to Onne?

When Giokpo came to Onne, where in Onne did he first settle?

What traditions did they have in connection with their chief occupation and crops?

How did people know that a particular sickness was caused by Ejile?

If a person did not commit a crime, how was innocence discovered?

After a person has confessed to a crime which he first denied, and for which he was punished, does he get well after paying the appeasement fee?

Under what circumstances or condition would Ndowa be invoked to take action against the guilty person?

How was the action of Ejile identified?

Did all these gods and goddesses have their priests?

Did the Okrikans appeal to Ekinejo?

Did the Eleme have a deity of agriculture?

B. The Narrative:

What I heard from our most elderly people is that the founder of Onne was Giokpo. He and his counterpart in Ogoni travelled all the way from West Africa, from parts of Ghana to Ogoni. They travelled from Lewe. The first man who came had a brother, and the first place they settled was at Ogale in Nchia. The brother was strong-headed and could not stay long in that place. This brother, Giokpo, was himself a warrior. He travelled from Nchia to Onne, fighting his way through, and conquering some weaker peoples who had occupied that area.

According to the tradition, the two brothers decided to leave their home in Lewe and to look for a new place of settlement because of a bitter quarrel which occurred. Although they first settled at Ogale, but it was not long before they also separated; when Giokpo moved from Ogale to settle in Onne.

How the word Eleme came to be used to apply to the whole people is not well known. But it is said that when the two brothers first came they used the expression "Aleme me", which means "I like it", or "I like the place". From this expression the word ELEME developed.

In Onne, the place Giokpo and his people first settled is called Eyaa. Eyaa is situated in Alejo village of Onne. When they arrived



at Onne, there were no settlers there but some people were scattered about in the surrounding area. With Eyaa settled, the scattered groups moved in to join the Onne community. Among such formerly scattered peoples were the Mgbaja and the Ebregu. The Ebregu occupied areas near to the coast. Giokpo being a strong man, forced them to come together to live in a compact society. By this method, he got control over the land formerly occupied by these groups.

All these people were principally farmers. They liked to till the soil and they also believed in a deity which had control over the land. They also believed that there was somebody who communicated with this Earth deity in matters connected with land cultivation. So that before the farming season begins, they must give some libation and sacrifices to the deity of the land through the Land Priest.

The animal, the wine, and all the ritual items for the sacrifices were taken to the bush that was to be farmed that year. There they killed the animal to the Earth deity, together with the wine and the other items. They stayed there to prepare a feast and consumed it there, making sure that nothing of it was brought home from the bush. The purpose of these sacrifices was that the crops should do well, that no insects should destroy their crops, and that there should be no accidents, that peace and joy should reign among the people.

The people know that there is a God but they do not know who this God is. So they have many gods with whom to deal on many subjects.

Ejile was a god that acts as judge. For example, if somebody's property was stolen, such as money, and the owner invoked Ejile, if the thief did not return the money, Ejile would catch him by making him to be sick in such a way, that he would use his own mouth to confess the truth. When that happens, the money that would be used to appease Ejile would come from the confessor of the crime. If he did not pay the appeasement fine, he would die. After the person's death, his family people would still be liable to pay the appeasement fine to Ejile, otherwise more people would die in that family. Thus Ejile was regarded by the people as an avenger of evil.

The suspect is identified when under pains inflicted on him by Ejile, he would say certain things which will make people know that it is Ejile. He makes statements in the form of confession so that he might get well. But if he did not steal, nothing happens to him.

Where the person committed the crime and denied it at first until he was "caught" by Ejile, he might get well after confession and payment of appeasement fines, but not always. It will depend on the right person to consult and the type of dispute.

Ndowa (Gbenebega) This deity was usually consulted in land dispute cases. It was believed that Ndowa had power to bring smallpox on the suspect if he was guilty.

The appeal to the gods depends on the choice of people. The individual aggrieved person chooses the deity he wants to act for him, bearing in mind the kind of punishment he wants to see inflicted on the culprit. If the aggrieved person invoked Ndowa, it means that he wants the culprit to be inflicted with smallpox. If somebody within

the place gets smallpox, it will be taken that he was the person who committed the crime for which Ndowa was invoked. To prevent Ndowa from inflicting the epidemic of smallpox on the general public, the Elders annually or periodically make appeasement sacrifices to Ndowa on behalf of the community. Individuals who commit offences may then see to their own cases with Ndowa. Ndowa is a "goddess". Ndowa is the Eleme name. In parts of Tee she is called Lewa, in Khana and Gokana, the name is Gbenebega.

When a person dies bleeding, it is said that Ejile has killed him. Ejile is believed to be a merciless deity who has a sword. With the sword he kills the guilty victim. Thus death by bleeding is attributed to Ejile, the fierce and merciless deity.

Mkpata is another deity; and it is related to Ejile. The only deity Ejile will fear is Mkpata. Mkpata is a very senior deity. He is thought of as very tall and serious looking, a "deity who would not let people see his face when he is eating". He is believed to be the junior brother of Ejile but he is feared by Ejile. Mkpata is invoked in cases of infidelity between husbands and wives. If a man was accused of adultery with another man's wife, such cases were usually referred to Mkpata.

When there were any cases of dispute or denials between persons, such cases were referred to Mkpata. When the suspects were brought before the priest of Mkpata, the individuals were asked to swear to Mkpata that:

If I did so and so  
Let Mkpata see to it  
That I am punished  
But if not, let me be free.

The Elders and others present will then give a time limit within which Mkpata should act; and after which the accused should be considered innocent.

Nsi Esa is not really a deity. It grows out of the tradition. When a man has "tied yam" for the first time known as Aachu, he erects a hard wooden pillar known as Yam Pillar in a conspicuous spot in his compound. When he gets a higher title, he adds another pillar. This particular spot becomes a sacred spot in his compound known as the 'Face' of Yam (Nsi Esa). This is the spot where the man slaughters animals and pours libations each year when the farming season begins. When he does this he prays to the ancestral spirits and to the Yam deity for success, better yield, wealth, etc. Apart from this, there is no specific deity, with specific name to be known as "god of yam".

The method of farming demands many hands. This is the essence of marriage. The first wife is therefore very important. This is why the first wife is called Wa Ku Eji (wife of the ancestors). All other wives are auxiliary.

With the first wife, a man struggles hard to achieve the first title of success which was the Aachu (Two Hundred Yam Stakes). To receive this title you must feed the "town" at a public banquet to which all the Elders must be invited and in addition you must do certain

customs. After that you marry a second wife from your town. Then you marry one other wife from Ibibio or Igbo. This third wife from "abroad" was named after your father. All these showed that you were growing. Then you would want to get the second title, the Obo (Four Hundred Yam Stakes). On the occasion for the ceremony for the Obo title, your first son would be there, your first daughter would be there, your first wife and all other wives would be there; all would be well arranged and seated together at the townsquare. There would be guests of all great men and women, titled men, etc.. You would give an oration of your life history; of all that you ever achieved. After that stage, there are other stages, like the Obere Obo, (Eight Hundred), the Ota Obo (One Thousand Two Hundred) and the last and final stage, the Aachu Ete (Four Thousand), and the Ewo Achu Nsi.

Parents search out a wife for their son. In the farm, a father observes other parents with their daughters working in their own farms. The first qualification they want to see in the girl who is to be their son's wife is hard working. The girl must be hard working, and the best place to test that is in the farms, as parents and their daughters go about their normal farm work. The second point to note was that the girl must come from a fruitful family. Thirdly, the girl must come from a family background whose moral characters were unquestionable. Other points to be taken into consideration are the manner of eating, the gait in motion, etc.

Having decided on a suitable girl, I will now discuss the matter with my wife (the Wa Ku Eji) and mention the girl I thought of to her. We agree. From that time, the necessary contacts will begin, accompanied with the payment of the bride price and all the customary wines and drinks.

On the day of the marriage, all girls marrying that year will marry one day in February. They all will dress in a special way with their bodies exposed, but carefully decorated and finished with a thin layer of smooth "gold" powder, (1) on top. Their lower part or waist is slightly covered, with a "bikini" beneath and girdles of beads with tiny bells on top of it. Their hair beautifully and specially plaited; decorated armlets and anklets on wrists and ankles, respectively. They go to Ekenejo, the god of protection, for blessings, carrying with them some rituals with which they seek for protection and for a fruitful and prosperous marriage. They will all appear in the market square on an appointed day in February for a dance in a great pageantry of brides and bridegrooms.

One vital item of the marriage were FOUR MANILLAS that must be on top of the bride price. The numbers four and seven were used interchangeably. The number seven was sacred, but where it was not seven, four was used; and it was the same as if seven had been used. The four bronze manillas were placed on an ikiono (2) leaf.

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- (1) "Gold" powder: Eleme = owaro; Khana = waaro: special ornamental powder, coloured like gold, used for smoothening the skin.
- (2) Ikiono: (Khana) Gokana = Uramii; Leme = Adoro  
A sacred tree used for land demarcations and agreements

The Ikiono was a sacred tree used for marking land-boundaries or demarcations between plots of land belonging to different families or individuals. It was an ancient tree and it was illegal to remove it from its place.

The four bronze manillas were placed on the Ikiono leaf and together placed on the marriage package, which included the bride price. This sealing of the package represented the payment of the ancestors of the bridegroom. It represented the approval and sanction of the ancestral spirits. That was why the first wife was called Wa Ku Eji (wife of the ancestors).

A goat was then slaughtered, the blood of which was used to seal and sanctify the marriage agreement between the living parents of the two families and between their ancestral spirits. During the slaughtering and the pouring of libation, the parents of the bride would bless her and pronounce the benediction of marriage on her, to be fruitful and multiply and to wax great in her new home. They offered prayers of protection to the ancestors on her behalf.

The rest of the evening was spent in drinking and in fine talks, etc., till the other family returned to their own place. The girl would remain with her own parents. She must not go to the husband's place, or come near him, until after the grand dance at the Market Square in February of that year.

12. OBO NGOFA (CHIEF) OF ALETO (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Aleto on 4 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Do you have what is called Kingmakers?

Do the Leme intermarry with their neighbours, such as the Okrikans who are very near neighbours?

B. The Narrative:

The first god of Eleme was the Ejian-Nchia. The Ejian-Nchia is situated at Agbonchia in Nchia. The name of the founder of Eleme was Nchia. Nchia had four sons, Ogale, Agbonchia, Aleto and Alesa. These four sons founded the four original towns of Nchia. Akpajo developed out of Aleto, because of banishment. The sixth town was Alode, which also developed out of an accident of history.

Alode was originally the home of blacksmiths, who came from outside Eleme. In Alode you find names like Kamalu.

Nchia consists of six communities, not villages; starting with Ogale, Agbonchia, Aleto, Alesa, Alode and Akpajo. In traditional wrestling the same order is followed. But Akpajo fell out because somebody from Akpajo was killed during such wrestling. Akpajo was the last settlement.

Eleme drew populations from all over the place. Names like Ngofa, Ngei, etc. are riverain names. Ngo means wealth; Ngei means one. According to tradition, a group of people called Ukpa came from Arochuku and settled in Agbonchia. They have now become part of Eleme, but you still find names like Ukpa till today. From Agbonchia those people shifted and settled at Obigbo. So in Obigbo, we have indigenous Eleme population living there. So we cannot say that Eleme people came from one place. We came from across the river, Odoo (salt water area). All salt water areas we call odoo. If there is an indigenous population where they came from, I don't know. As for Nchia himself, I do not know where he came from.

Gokana origin: There used to be a general statement that Eleme people came from Gokana. I call it general statement because it borders on legend. We occupied the banks of the river (Bonny River) from Eteo to Akpajo.

Linguistic Transition; Consider the Odido side, Ebubu, Onne, Eteo and Ekporo. The Ekporo man is closer to the Seme man than to the Ebubu man in culture, language and attitude. Similarly, the Eteo man's Eleme is not the same as that spoken at Agbonchia. They are closer to their Tee neighbours than to the other Eleme communities. It is true that they share boundary and trade together, so that there is exchange of culture, yet the facts remain. There is that blurring between these groups. The statement that the Eleme came from Gokana can be weighed against the background of the history of Gokana. From very early times, there has been a great pressure on the land in Gokana area.

At the present, we have a large population of Gokana indigenes living at Agbeta Camp. There is a large number of Gokana people at Baan Goi.

There must have been such movements of people in the past because of pressure on the land in Gokana. I foresee in the next forty or hundred years from now that these people may be assimilated whether the founder of Eleme came from Gokana, I cannot say yes or no. If when he came he met some people, or he met nobody; I am inclined to believe that these had been an indigenous population, particularly at Nchia here.

"A person like the Reverend Solomon Laaka is a person who knows much about Eleme people. He is interested not only in Eleme language but also in their culture."

The political units of Nchia are autonomous. The Oneh-eh-Nchia cannot properly be called Paramount Chief because he has no political power. He is a Traditional Representative of the people. He is responsible for the sacrifices at the Ejian-Nchia. In such matters all Nchia will do together. In wrestling, it is a serious thing for one to be thrown down. If you have thrown somebody down, you have the right to touch the drum with your feet when the ceremony is on. It is a distinctive mark of honour.

The administration of the community is in the hand of the Ogbo Mkpono. Every community has its Ogbo Mkpono. They hold the political power. Membership is distributed on the basis of families before you are initiated.

In Eleme, what exists is a People's Government. Power is not concentrated in one man. There is the Oneh-eh-Eta in every community. I am the Oneh-eh-Eta of Aletto. My authority ends here. Each of the Ten Towns of Eleme has an Oneh-eh-Eta. As the Oneh-eh-Eta Aletto, I cannot take a decision for the community without consulting the Ogbo Mkpono. There is in Eleme the Mature Adults. These are the men who go to war if war breaks out. Some matters are discussed at the community Square known as Okporo-ee. There everybody contributes to the debate. At the end, people may be selected to sit in committee to look into any remaining part of the matter. The process is very democratic.

The Youths: The youths ( a loose term which includes people from under twenty to those over forty), they carry out the public works, such as clearing the roads, etc.. If you want political leadership in Eleme, it is there you will show it. It is in the Youth that you receive your political leadership and training, right from when you are a young man.

In Eleme, women also have political power. There are elected women in political positions in the traditional constitution. Any major decisions must be sanctioned by women. When the community meets, the women have voice in the decisions. Certain matters are even referred to women. Oneh-eh-Eta is an elected position in Eleme.

The Ogbo Mkpono are the Kingmakers. There is Ogbo Mkpono at Nchia level. The Oneh-eh-Nchia is the only one who can convene it at Nchia level.

The Ngofas are found in Okrika, in Elelenwa, in Oroworokwo, etc. We spread out. The Onwuchekwas, their mother was married from my

family here. We intermarry but in these days, one had to be a polygamist and it was expected that you must have married at least one wife from Eleme.

13. OJI AWALA (CHIEF) OF OGALE (Aged c. 55)  
Interviewed at Ogale on 4 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

How did the founders of Leme come to their present place and from where did they come?

In my interviews with people, a story was told about a deity which was worshipped both by the Leme and by the Okrikans. The Leme called it Ejo Etabajo, while the Okrikans called it Finibeso. How did this deity come about?

When did the Etabajo war take place? By that I mean whether the war took place during the colonial period or before it, and if before it, how far back before it?

Who were the Leme's neighbours when they first came to Leme?

What is the approximate date of the war which resulted in the exchange of positions between Ogale and Aleto?

What was the cause of the war?

You mentioned another war, the Etabajo war. What was the cause of that war?

Did the Chief of Etabajo knock the head of the daughter of the chief of Alode on his yams?

B. The Narrative:

I really cannot tell where the founders of Eleme came from. Our oral tradition does not say this. We heard that the founder of this place was a man called Eleme. According to oral tradition, when Eleme came to this place, he first settled in a central place, which is where the market is now. That place is called Echieta. He had two sons, Nchia and Odido. These two sons established the Eleme communities. Nchia had six children, sons and Odido had four sons.

The first son of Nchia was Ogale. The second son was Agbonchia. The third son was Aleto, the fourth was Alesa, the fifth Alode, and the sixth Akpajo.

Odido's four children were Ebubu, Onne, Eteo and Ekporo. Each of the four sons of Odido also established communities which they named after themselves.

Etabajo was an Eleme Community on the coast, and it had a boundary with Onne. There was frequent conflict between Etabajo and Alode, which is an Nchia community. The conflict led to war between Alode and Etabajo. When the war started, the war was unfavourable to Alode people because they could not stand the Etabajo people. Alode appealed to the other Nchia brother communities. There was a combination of forces on the side of Alode, following the appeal.

Etabajo was completely defeated and destroyed. The community was completely annihilated. After that war, there was nothing like Etabajo again till this day. The former people of Etabajo were scattered, some are in Eleme, some in Ogoni, some in Okrika, etc.

The war took place before the colonial period. It took place before the coming of Europeans. According to the oral tradition, people who escaped from the war founded Samson's village, Okrika (that is, Samson Adoki).

According to tradition, the Okrika island was a forest when the founders of Eleme arrived in the area. There were no people on the island. The Gokana and the Tee were Eleme's neighbours. Obigbo as it is now was not there. Obigbo is a recent settlement. The Asa settled on the other side of the Imo river. So that our neighbours at that time were the Asa on the other side of the Imo. The Ikwerre were also our neighbours.

Aleto-Ebubu War: One event I recall was the change of positions between Ogale and Aleto. Where Ogale is now was not the original place for Ogale. Originally, Ogale was at the place where Aleto is today. Originally Aleto was in the place where Ogale is today.

There was a struggle between Aleto and the Ebubu. In the war, Aleto could not withstand the Ebubu. Aleto had to appeal to their big brother, Ogale. As Ogale could not move its forces easily to the other end, and the position of Aleto was at the same border with Ebubu, the solution was the exchange of positions between Ogale and Aleto.

After the war Ogale remained in the new position, while Aleto also remained in the exchanged position. This was an historical event that was significant, which I can recall. The war was originally between Aleto and Ebubu, but after the exchange of positions, the war became mainly a war between Ebubu and Ogale.

The war was fought a very long time ago before the coming of Europeans. Imagine that this is the Ogale we all came to know. My father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather were all born here. So it must have been very, very long time ago. As for the cause of the war, it was most probably land. I cannot see anything else that should cause such a war.

The Etabajo war was caused by a very minor matter; very, very minor matter. There was a chief at Alode, called Akara Olu. He was a very big and wealthy chief. He had a friend called Sauwe, who was the chief of Etabajo, another big and wealthy chief. The two men had been friends for a long time.

On one occasion, the daughter of Akara Olu went to the chief's barn at Etabajo, took the girl to his barn and showed her his yams. When the girl returned home, she narrated the story to her father, Akara Olu. Akara Olu became angry saying, "Why should my friend take my daughter to his barn and knock her face on his yams? Is it because he has plenty of yams or what?" That was the cause of the war. He then sent a message to his friend, the chief of Etabajo that he was

offended by what he did. Because of that he should be prepared for war. He himself got his "troops" ready and began a march on Etabajo. The war broke out.

The story that the Chief of Etabajo knocked the head of the daughter of the Chief of Alode on his yams may well be a fictitious claim by the Chief of Alode. From what we know, there was nothing like that. He used that accusation as a pretext in order to wage war against the other Chief. There were other causes which were not disclosed. One of such causes was the great prosperity of the Chief of Etabajo. Others were the vast and fertile land which the Chief of Etabajo controlled; his large yams were also the causes of jealousy. As it happened, after that war, the Chief of Alode claimed that land, as Etabajo was completely destroyed.

14. PRINCE FREDERICK BUEBAA TEEDEE OF GURE (Aged 43 years)  
Interviewed at Gure on 18 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

State how the Zua festival was celebrated in your area.

Who was Gbeneyaaloo?

Who was Gbenegure? What position did he occupy in Gure history?

Who had the right to announce the Zua feast in Gure?

To whom in Duko did the people go for the New Year proclamation?

Who was Bariyaayoo?

When they went to Bariyaayoo at Luawii what did they do there?

Why did the people announce at Duko that the Zua feast was ten days' time, when they in fact meant five days' time?

What other traditions and laws did you have in Gure? How did they originate?

What happened to the person who broke this tradition?

Have you heard about any example from the ancient or in modern times?

If a man did not know that a woman had born twins and he had sex relations with her, what would happen?

What would happen if a man spilled blood on the land, and refused to pay the prescribed fine?

Who enforced the law?

How would they hold the offender?

When a man set fire to his farm, and if by accident the fire escaped into other people's farms, what was the liability?

Somebody says that he had his own farm and burned it, how would they ask him to pay fine? What happens in such a case?

If the land priests delayed to begin the farming season, was there any law to check the action of land priests?

Who assisted the land priests?

What laws governed the funeral ceremonies of an elder?

Those who own the plantains, goats, fowls, etc., which were destroyed on such occasions, could they make claims for their property?

Did they play the koogian when an Elder died?

Where did the Ogoni learn these things from?

Say what you know about the masquerade called "Dooporo, Doonaporo".

What rights did Gure people have over Nama which Sii people did not have?

Was Kugba a settlement in Nama?

Why did Sii people make some claims over Nama?

Is Dem Nama (Nama Rock) still there?

B. The Narrative:

The Zua feast in Gura and in all those parts of Khana was like this. The Kaan Zua (Lean feast) took place in July. The Aan Zua (New Year) took place in August.

The celebrations began after ritual foods had been offered to Gbeneyaaloo. Gbeneyaaloo was the founding ancestor (Zim Te-ere Bue) of Gure. Then ritual foods of the new crops harvested that year were offered to all ancestral spirits and gods.

In ritual order, after Gbeneyaaloo, you have Gbenegure, and finally you have Gbenetignanwaa. Gbenegure was the Land Deity of Gure. It was not a human, it was a spirit which existed in the area before the founding ancestors arrived. When the founding ancestors arrived in the place it revealed itself to them, and it was adopted by the ancestors as the Land/Earth god of Gure.

After the gods of Gure had "eaten" the Elders and the priests went to Luawii to consult with Bariyaayoo concerning the proclamation of the New Year.

Bariyaayoo was the ancestral founder of Luawii town. She was the Zim Te-ere-bue (Spirit and founding ancestor) of Luawii. Bariyaayoo was a woman, a niece of Gbeneyaaloo, and the first daughter of Zah.

Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-medium, during possession on 12 March 1984, referred to Bariyaayoo as "My sister's daughter". Since we have not come to that one yet, what I would say is that after we have finished with this one (interview with Gbeneyaaloo's Spirit-medium of Gure), the next place you should go to investigate this history is Luawii, with the Spirit-medium of Bariyaayoo. She was the first daughter of Zah, just as Gbeneyaaloo was the first son of Kwaanwaa. Bariyaayoo and many others were all the children of Zah. They spread out and founded towns and cities, such as Luawii. For after Gure, Luawii was the second oldest existing town in Babbe.

At Luawii, they began the ceremony by collecting the annual tribute from the traders at Duko market, which was held on Deeko days.

From Duko they moved to Dukono in Kono Boue, which was another big ancient market in Babbe; and it was also held on Deeko days. The next Deeko, they moved to Boue where they received tribute of pottery, that is, Kono-Boue pottery; and so forth.

At Luawii, on the day they celebrated Duko, they blew a trumpet (or a horn) called gbon, round the market and "clapped the hands". Then they announced, "Zua taa eeri ni'ee" ("Zua is ten days today").. Once you heard an announcement like that, you knew that the next market day, that is five days from the day of the announcement, was the Zua feast. The incident was described as "God clapping or banging hand in the market"; and it ushered in the New Year with its celebrations. If anyone followed the proclamation literally, that is, that the Zua feast was "ten days today" that person would be in error. The feast actually took place five days from the date of the announcement. The feast took place the next Deeko day. The historical connection behind the hitch in the announcement is what I don't know. But what my mother told me was that they put this hitch in the announcement so that those children (or sons) who were not careful about the things of the past might eat their feast on the wrong date.

Some Laws of Gure: As we received it from our ancient fathers, in this society, you do not kill a person or commit murder. If you kill a person, your family would be destroyed (or will quench). There were no options for a fine.

Also stealing was forbidden. That means that it was unlawful for example to seize another person's goat, chicken or any other property. Such offences were a crime against the Land Deity or Earthgod. The person who did this received the penalty first by himself without anybody having anything to do with it. Then it would be publicly known by the whole people.

The children of the person might die unexpected or sudden deaths, or very serious illness might befall some members of that family. When that happened the Elders of the town are contacted about what was taking place. They then intervened to investigate the cause. In that way, the secret was revealed.

A woman who gave birth to twins was first taken to Nama with the babies to have a purification washing in a special stream before she was readmitted to the town with the babies. Until that had been done she was forbidden to be washed elsewhere. In the town she was separated from her husband. Her husband did not copulate with her again, but a separate home was prepared for her outside the community. If the husband went to live with her again, evil was sure to happen to him.

Examples were many, even in these times. The first signs were that the man who had done that would begin to behave extraordinarily, like a confused person. If he went to do work in the farm, he might leave his own farm and go to work in another person's farm. Recently, a man who had committed this "offence", during the Zua festival, put the ritual foods for his ancestors on the hearth instead of on the floor opposite the front door.

If a man was "abroad" and while there he had sex relations with a woman without knowing that such a woman had given birth to twins, the man would not be affected, because the gods regard that the man was in a foreign land, and that the woman was a foreign woman. But if he knew it, and did it in secrecy, the Land deities would catch him.

Every male child must perform the traditional rite of Yaa Ge before he could have respect in the society. A person who had not

performed this tradition might not enter certain places or certain houses in the town. He might be excluded from certain groups. When such a person died, he was buried at the back of his compound, not in the front part.

If a person struck another person with a knife, a club, or any sharp instrument so that blood was caused to spill on the ground, that person will pay a prescribed fine which includes a goat, twenty yams, a gourd of palm wine, a bunch of plantains, fish, pepper, salt, oil, etc.. He will carry all these things to the chief's house, where the elders will slaughter the goat and perform the "ground touching rite" on him to undo the blood from the "face" of the land. If he refuses to pay these fines, "death follows behind him".

Even if the person himself has died, diverse evils will be occurring in that family, such as violent deaths, accidents, etc.. When they have paid the traditional fines and the Elders have performed the rites of "ground touching" on him, or his representative, these evils will cease. No-one asks, or urges the offender to pay these traditional fines. He himself will have to decide whether he will pay them or not. It is only when he begins to experience the trouble that he will realize what he should have done. It is the Zim, or the Te-ere-bue, or the ancestors, who are now spirits, who will "arrest" him.

The way through which they will "arrest" him are many. He may be sick, or a member of his family may be sick, or anything drastic may happen to him or to any of these. Then he will try to treat the case the best way he knows, but it will be worse. Finally, he will decide to enquire from the Mediums. There they will ask him that when such and such happened whether he went to pay the traditional fines to the Elders? When he does that, the particular problem will stop immediately.

Some Laws of Farming: When a certain farm area will be cultivated during a particular year, the land priests will first go and do some ritual sacrifices in that farm area. Then they will first clear their own farms before the towns-people will follow suit. They will also first burn their farm for planting before the rest of the people will do likewise. If any other citizen does any of these two things before the Land priests, that citizen has broken a law of farming, because no other citizen should lead the people into farming or particular farm area, unless it is a land priest.

A person who is guilty of these offences will pay certain traditional fines which are prescribed. He will carry the items in a head-carrier basket to the "House of Yams". There the Yam priest and the Land priests and Seven Elders (Ereba Kabaari) will sit and judge him. After he has paid the traditional fines, they will absolve him by taking him to the farm, where they will perform the "ground touching rites" on him.

If a person refuses to pay, the Land priests will abandon the farm for him; and that will mean a more serious trouble for the offender. It will not be death, but mishaps, like fire will burn his farm, his crops, etc.. It is then that he will begin to look for the Elders, the Land priests, etc., for the necessary rituals; and nobody will listen to him until he has paid the previous fines that he was liable to

pay. Nobody will just set fire to his farm wilfully, but it will happen accidentally by the action of the gods.

Where a particular land priest delays to lead the public to open the farming season, the Seven Elders will, after due warning to the Land Priest, lead the people into the farming season. One of the Elders will take the prerogative of Land priest and perform the necessary rituals for the start of the farming season. There are seven farm areas in Gure: 1. Barazo and Gui; 2. Gborkobana; 3. Karakara; 4. Bianu and Basabe; 5. Zo. Barazo and Gui were farmed in 1984.

Death of an Elder: When an Elder died, there were laws which governed their funerals. There were certain rituals and sacrifices. Some ancient plays were in attendance. Societies or clubs of Chiefs and Elders were presented.

If he was a brave man or a warrior, there was war music and drumming, such as Koogian, Kpakpana, Bina. A fence was erected, inside which certain items of bravery might be on display for only the brave to enter inside and drink the wine that was kept there, or eat the fish that was kept there.

When the kpakpana drums were played, spirits were high and men reach out for their swords and matchets! At that moment, every male was a soldier and the plantain trees, the goats and the fowls were the victims. They would cut down the plantain trees in the town. They would kill any goats or fowl they saw to be eaten at the funeral of the dead Elder. The owners of these properties could not make a claim for their property if they were taken at the time the Kpakpana drums were played. The best precaution was for anybody, as soon as he heard that an Elder of that sort has died, to seize all his goats, fowls, etc., and keep them locked in. As for the plantains, nothing could be done about them, except that the owner might attempt to harvest the mature fruit.

Like the kpakpana, the koogian was rarely played. Where the Elder was known to have done some brave deeds, then they might hear the sound of the koogian. When it was heard brave men from all parts would come. It was only when the Koogian was played that a fence was erected. It was from inside this fence that the koogian was played, and only the very brave, who have actually killed a person in war could enter inside it; and whatever they saw in it they ate.

Any person who had not done any such deeds which must have led him through certain rituals, if he entered the enclosure and ate anything there, if he did not die immediately, he might die when he reached his own home. But he must surely die.

All these traditions came from the time of the ancient fathers, the time of Gbenyaaloobaari, when they lived in Nama. That time was a time of war. It is said that if a man was not especially brave, he could not enter Nama. To be considered to be a brave man at that time, a man must have performed many brave deeds, so that if the phrase, "Dookiri doobe" were applied to him, it would fit. The phrase "Dookiri doobe" in Khana means a person who could do all kinds of brave deeds, both good and evil, to perfection.

Concerning the rights of Gure over Nama, all the ancestral spirits (or fathers) of Gure have their shrines in Nama and in Kugba. They have their sacred groves in each of these places. Although the present priest of Nama and Kugba deities is a man from Sii, though living at Gure, yet he will confirm to you that the shrines of the founders of Gure are at Kugba and at Nama, and that the first deity of which he must present the rituals on feast days is Gbeneyaaloo, the ancestral founder of Gure.

Kugba was the second settlement after Nama. After they had moved from Kugba to Gure, they began to spread to different places. Some of them went to Kpong, some went to Kono. A man like Gbeneakpana, who founded Kono, came originally from Kugba.

The matter of Nama is like this. As the Gure used to say "Dara lu dee lu" ("The apple just came"). So it is with Sii people. Their taking Nama to be their own is because their present location is near to Nama, and because of the fishing they are doing in Nama waters. Gure people are the owners of Nama. There are certain traditional rites which Gure people can do at Nama, which Sii people cannot do. Gure people perform traditions concerning twin births at Nama, without the consent of Sii people.

There are certain laws of Nama which are binding to Sii people but not to Gure people. For example, Sii people cannot cover their heads with an "umbrella" when going through Nama, but this law is not binding to Gure people.

Nama was not a place where a single power or personality landed. The powers that landed at Nama were many. Moreover, when they moved away from Nama, they did not return back to reoccupy Nama. But those who lived at Nama, left their footprints at Nama. To these they can refer back at Nama. Therefore no one town can claim ownership of Nama.

The first man to land at Nama and leader of all those who landed at Nama, as you heard the ancestor said (through the Spirit Medium) was Gbeneyaaloo. He has a Rock which he claims and refers to at the landing entrance of Nama waterside where he first set his feet. That Rock is there now. The Rock is still standing right at the Nama waterside. When the tide floats, it covers the Rock, but there are parts of it which you can stand on when coming from the land. This waterside should have rightly been Gure waterside, but for the fact that Gure is a bit further inland than Sii. Nevertheless, when Gure people come to this waterside, they do not come through Sii, they come direct from Gure.

In the hunting season, if there is a hunting expedition to Nama, no Sii man can lead a hunting expedition to Nama. It is the Gure man who must lead such a hunting expedition to Nama. Sii people can be in the hunting party but they cannot lead it in Nama. The groves of Gbeneyaaloo which are in Nama and in Kugba, nobody can cut them down or clear them. They are sacred groves.

15. REPORT OF A FIELD-STUDY VISIT TO NAMA AND KUGBA  
(Accompanied by a Team of Informants and Guides from GURE) 24 March 1984

(Chief Guide and Narrator: John Iwuagbu, Priest of Nama Deities)

John Iwuagbu:

The Title of Gbene

"A man seeking to become Gbene (Great) would go to Nama to do certain traditions. If he was successful, he would stay alive seven days after he had successfully completed the traditional rituals at Nama and returned to his own home. On the seventh day he would die. From the day he successfully returned from Nama, the title of Gbene was accredited to him; and when he died he was able to possess any one of his descendants from generation to generation. Some of them did so while they were still alive.

Concerning the Founding Fathers when they Arrived at Nama

"When they came, they came by sea in a boat. As they approached near Teenama, they saw a huge rock which grew out of the water and hung above it. There was a passage between the rocks. As they piloted their boat through that little passage the bow of their boat hit against the rock and broke, but the boat did not capsize or sink. Because of that incident they named that spot "Nyon Eba Fah" (place of the broken canoe or boat). The place is near to Teenama. From there they continued their journey until they arrived at Nama. They disembarked at Nama and established their first settlement there. That rock is still there till today.

"When they arrived at Nama there were two women with them. One of the women was called Yaagunwaa, the other Kwaanwaa. Kwaanwaa was the mother of Gbeneyaaloo. While at Nama, they discovered that the place was not quite suitable for them. Then the Elderly man who was with them named Gbeneakpana summoned all the people and invited Gbeneyaaloo. In the discussion he told them that the place was not convenient for them, that they needed to search for a better place for settlement. After that they found a new settlement at Kugba. Kugba was very good for them. So they settled at Kugba and established a town there. Nama, Kugba and Teenama are all on the coast. Teenama is a recent and existing village, while Nama and Kugba are extinct, ancient settlements.

While at Kugba, Gbeneyaaloo told the people that the town was becoming too crowded, as the people had multiplied greatly. By this time Gbeneakpana had begotten a son who was called Gbeneakpana the Younger. He was a wild man and a warrior who knew how to wield the sword. He gave them too much trouble at Kugba. He afterwards moved away from Kugba and founded Kono. Thus he was also known as Gbeneakpana Kono. His mother was Yaagunwaa. Some people (versions) say that the person who begat Gbeneakpana the Younger was Gbeneyiranam, another leader of the people who landed at Nama. They say that he begat him also in Yaagunwaa. Gbeneyiranam was one of the founders of Kugba. He had a shrine at Kugba and he was one of the ancestral spirits of Kugba.

From Kugba, the populations began to move further inland. Gbeneyaaloo began the movements from Kugba northwards to Wiisoro and from Wiisoro to Gure. Gbeneakpana the Younger took a northeast direction and then east to Kono. At Gure they begat another great leader named Gbeneatekina. "My father narrated all these things to me. My father's name was Iwagbo. Iwagbo's father was Kina. Kina was possessed by Sii Land Deity known as Bari-Sii. Hence Kina was also called KinaBari-Sii (Kina of Bari-Sii Deity)."

The deity called Bari-Sii was existing at Sii (then a forest) when the people were still living at Kugba. The person who discovered this deity was Gbeneyiranam. As he was going through the forest, he discovered this supernatural being or force. It revealed itself to him; he spoke to it, and it spoke to him. (Note: Bari-Sii was not a human, and not an ancestral spirit. It was a supernatural "force" existing in that forest; for the whole of that area was a forest without any human dwelling anywhere. Its presence was revealed by the "element" carried by the ancestors.) Gbeneyiranam established contact with this supernatural "being", built a shrine for it and became its first priest.

Bari-Sii (Yogurezoghomo):

Yogurezoghomo was the original name for Bari-Sii. When they (the ancestors) were still at Kugba, they walked through the forest and came to it as it stood, a huge rock that towered and spread out in the forest. Gbeneyiranam and Gbeneyaaloo were the only two people who first knew about its existence; and they kept the fact to themselves. They used to go through the forest from Kugba to this Spirit-Rock to offer sacrifices and rituals.

After Sii town was founded this deity became the Earth-god or the Land Deity of Sii. If Yogurezoghomo were a human, it would have been the founder of Sii; for it was there when no town or any human dwelling existed in that whole area. Nevertheless, Gbeneyiranam is recognized as the Te-ere-bue (Father owner of the town) Sii. Later, other founders joined him. One of these was Gbeneteetagana. The others were Berezi and Gbeneteenwawoo.

The Journey through the Bush to Nama and Kugba Places Shown:

Along the way they showed us the various places where people going through the traditions for the title of Gbene used to perform various stages of sacrifices and rituals. These places were named according to the major items of sacrifice. For example:

Akom Nam was the place for the sacrifice of bulls.

Akom Pee was the place where goats were sacrificed.

Akom Kuru was the place for the sacrifice of tortoises, etc..

Teenama is a relatively recent village which is still existing. It is situated at about two kilometers southeast of Nama, while Kugba is a little over two kilometers to the northwest of Nama. All three are on the east bank of Teenam Creek. A certain type of sea palm has covered a wide area of the creek and seems to have changed considerably the original course of the river by the combined action of silting and erosion.

At Nama, we were shown the shrine of Gbenegaragiri, who was a brother of Gbeneyaaloo, but who died while they were on the journey to Nama. When they arrived at Nama, they made a ritual burial for him and built a shrine for his memorial.

Umbrella: While travelling through the Nama bush, it was mentioned that Sii people could not cover their heads with an umbrella while passing through Nama. The same law did not apply to Gure people, who claim that it was so, because their ancestors were citizens of Nama. That is to say that Nama was directly an ancient Gure town.

Between Nama and Kugba we saw the "dried-up" bed of an ancient stream, where the residents of Kugba got their drinking water. We saw numerous potsherds with unusual thickness, very much unlike the potsherds of modern Ogoni pottery. I picked up some of the potsherds but what I could not determine immediately was at what level they originated, whether they belonged to the original settlers there, or to later age farmers of the area, especially because they were picked up along the path ways and on the surface as we walked through the bushes.

Kugba: When we arrived at Kugba, we saw that Kugba was also situated at the sea coast. It was right on the east bank of Teenama Creek. The whole place has been turned into a farm except some sacred spots, like the townsquare where there are some shrines. But what they regarded as the townsquare has become a thick forest with large trees in it. In my observation, the place has the appearance of a typical Ogoni townsquare. There were other shrines which belonged to the important personalities who lived in the town. Unlike the site of Nama, the site of Kugba is on a much lower ground, and seems to suggest as does a part of the oral tradition, that the cause of their leaving the town was because of flooding which killed their children.

All over the farms we saw old shells and potsherds. The informant showed us places which they supposed were pathways leading from the shore to the town, or frontages of compounds. Down there on the shore sands we could see old shells and other items washed there by running rain water.

Among the sacred spots shown were:

Ekpo Gbeneyaaloo: This was a sacred grove which belonged to Gbeneyaaloo, the leader of the Immigrants and founder of Nama and Kugba.

Ekpo Gbenedamni: The sacred grove of Gbenedamni who was one of the great leaders.

Loo Gbeneyaaloo: This is a shrine which they said belonged to Gbeneyaaloo.

Loo Gbeneyiranam: This is the shrine of Gbeneyiranam, one of the leaders of the Immigrants. It was he who discovered the existence of a supernatural "force" in a rock in the forest, which became Bari-Sii, and he later became the founder of Sii.

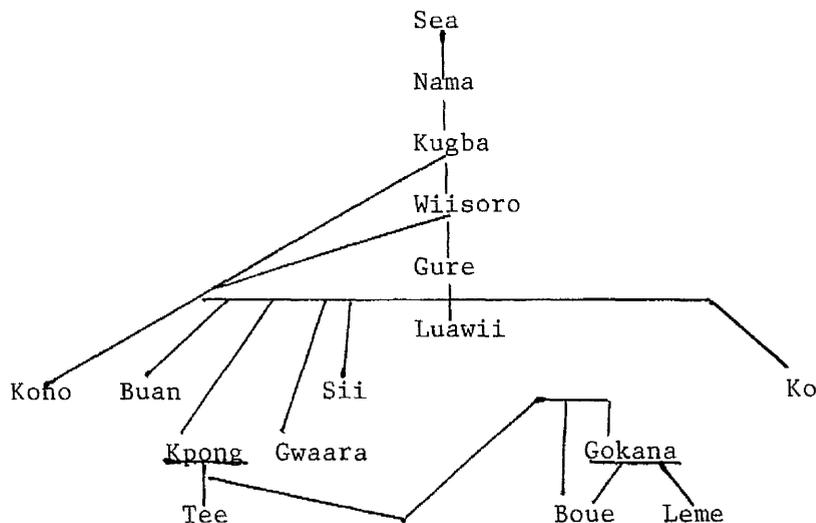
John Iwuagbo, the leader of the excursion and chief narrator of the traditions, is a descendant of Gbeneyiranam family and he is presently the priest, not only of Bari-Sii deity, but of all the deities

of Nama and Kugba. He poured libation at the shrine of Gbeneyiranam on this particular occasion.

They showed us what they believed was the gateway into the town from inland. There was a long depression in the forest which seemed to have been filled by erosion. They claimed that it was a deep trench which guarded the entrance into the town, and the people crossed over it by means of a moveable bridge.

Why Kugba was abandoned: According to the tradition, there was too much flooding in Kugba. The culmination reached when during one severe rainy season, together with the high tide of the sea, flood swept away a number of their children. As a result of this calamity, they decided to move away from the place and from too close to the sea.

Wiisoro: Led by Gbeneyaaloo, the people founded a new settlement at Wiisoro, which was situated at a place about two kilometers or more north of Kugba, and about one kilometer south of Gure, the present settlement. It is also about one and a half kilometers east of Sii town. From Wiisoro, they moved again to Gure. More expansions took place at Wiisoro and at Gure. The best known expansion from Gure is Luawii, which is acknowledged as the next oldest existing town in Khana. These movements from Nama may be represented like this:



We saw a line of aged Kiono trees symmetrically planted through the bush from Nama and Kugba to Gure, and another line branching to Sii. Each kiono was planted seemingly equidistantly from the other at about fifty to eighty meters apart. The kiono is a kind of live tree used by Khana people for making landmarks. It does not die, and it does not spread out; nor does it grow too big. It uses very little space, and produces only very scanty foliage. It can live to a great age without increasing in size.

According to my informants, the early fathers used them to mark their paths through the forests. They claim that the lines of kionos followed the ancient bush paths used by the ancestors in their movements between Nama, Kugba, Gure and Sii. I questioned them whether they thought that, in any case, the kiono could live that long.

They explained that the kiono could live for centuries; besides that, if any one of them was accidentally uprooted, or died of age, it was immediately replaced. In that way the lines of kiono landmarks had been maintained through the centuries.

As we were returning from Kugba, we passed through the site of Wiisoro. At a point between Wiisoro and Gure town, we came under a huge, tall, white-bodied tree of the kay pok family. In Kana, it is called UM. About fifteen to thirty meters from the tree towards the town, they showed me the remains of a deep ancient trench which surrounded the town. They explained that, as the kiono is a landmark for farms and roads, the Um is a landmark in Khana for towns and villages; and that the Um marks the gateway into a town. In the case of Gure, the place we passed under the Um tree, was the crossing point over the trench into the town. As if to drive home their point, they quoted an ancient Khana saying which goes like this:

Ke waa eb sa o muee te Um  
Sua ko me ke'a me bue nee le

Where you see a kay pok tree  
There you know you'll find a town

Members of the Excursion Team:

1. Kaedaa Teedee - Priest of Gbeneyaaloo and of Kwaanwaa  
(aged c. 80)
2. Frederick Buebaa Teedee - Head of Gbene Yaaloo House  
(aged 43)
3. Michael Nwineedam - Interpreter of Gbeneyaaloo Spirit Medium  
(aged 35)
4. John Iwuagbo - Priest of Nama and Kugba Deities  
(aged 70)
5. Gbenetee Boobura - a school teacher and my Field Assistant  
(aged 38)
6. James Biranaale Nwiidumere - Chief and former councillor for  
(aged 55) Gure (1964-69)

16. STATEMENTS OF GBENEYAALOO'S SPIRIT-MEDIUM  
Recorded at Gure Town on 12 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

They want you to narrate how you travelled and from where you originally came before you arrived in this place. (1)

These are the traditional gifts we brought that you may speak to him.(2)\*

What is your name?

How did he travel from his original place before he reached here?

We want him to say how he travelled and where he started when they began?

They are asking that when you heard from your mother, where did she say she came from?

From where did they begin to walk?

When you arrived at Nama, how did you arrive there?

When you left Nama, where did you settle next?

About how many of you settled at Kugba?

After he had arrived at Gure, three others later joined him. What were the names of those three?

He was the first to clear the site of Gure, before two others joined him. Because of their work in assisting him, he assigned the function of Ne Zia Esaa (Land Priest) to Gbeneatekina. Which function did he assign to the other person?

What was the relationship between you and Gbenebega?

What was the name of your town before your mother fled with you and your sister from there?

When you were coming, did you come by sea, or how did you come?

Ask him how they came? By what means? Whether they came by boat?

When you arrived at Nama, what did you find? What did you see?

When you and your mother fled from your town originally, what and what did you carry with you?

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(1) Introductory statement by the Head of Gbeneyaaloo House of Gure, Prince Frederick Buebaa Teedee.

(2) Presentation of traditional gifts by Prince Teedee.

\* Point of presentation of gifts.

B. The Narrative:

He says, "Pay attention and I will speak to you. For words follow after words. As you have spoken like an Elder, you will do well.

This environment which is now as clear as it is, it was not done by demons (taa) nor by Spirits (Yo). It was the work of Honourable Elders (Pyä Kabaari); it was I, and these others who did it. It was I who was in the lead to do these things. The Elders which I speak of, one Elder is behind the other. There are crowds (du) in front and crowds (du) behind - . Honourable Elders do not make noise like a crowd; they speak with one voice. That is my word.

Now before you want to speak to an Elder, what and what did you bring? Explain clearly. \* Thank you. I have seen my basket which you have adorned. I thank your ancestors who are behind you. I thank the God who is guarding you. Stay comfortably; and do well, for your gifts are what we eat. For I will not have to run away to any place because I am not a "vulture". (3)

Fire does not burn without a warning. This talk, which is on the ground today, since we were in this town has any one come to ask me about this type of talk? Which man from this town has ever come to ask me to tell him this type of story? (All present replied, 'Nobody has done so, and we have not seen anyone who did so').

I am Saarogbeneyaalooaari. Kwaanwaa was the mother of Zah. After the birth of Zah I was born. Kwaanwaa was the mother of Zah and myself. Zah was the First Daughter of my mother (Sira Naka) In the beginning when we came the "world" and the environment were not as "civilized" as they are today. The world of that time was a world of war. We walked on foot (kia to), walked, walked, walked, walked....

The world at that time was not "open", it was a world of forests and forests. We walked, walked, walked. I was a boy who was able to know and to remember something. There were no houses anywhere. War was raging. As the war was raging, my mother pulled me and pulled my sister and we ran away from "Gaga". We walked till we reached where we saw water. It was when we reached where there was water and we have crossed the water that we had our bath. All the other places where we walked we did not have any bath because there was no water.

The environment was a thick forest; and we did not see water flowing to any direction. We walked, walked, walked, walked ... Then we reached Nana. It was after we had walked, walked, walked again that we reached Nama. If you were not a "strong" man you could not enter Nama. If one had not done the traditional rites one could not enter Nama.

I am speaking in my own house. I am no longer in the bush; I am no longer in the forest. I am at home. Daybreak stands before

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- (3) Vulture: For "vulture", he used the word "Saawoo". Which language is it? Or rather this word which the interpreter interpreted as "vulture", whether it really means vulture?

day-break, and nightfall stands before nightfall. He who went to the market has been back from the market, and he who went to the farm has been back from the farm. An Elder cannot abandon his own house. A word is a word. Farewell, and be in peace. (4)

When war was raging, and continued to be raging, my sister and my mother followed me. That day, that ancient time, none of those who knew about it is alive again. If we go to Nama, you will see my own Grove; it is there. That is where I lived. I moved from the forest and lived in the centre of the bushes. Nobody will be able to cut down my Grove. There is no man who can do it.

At that time, when we were walking, and walking, and walking, and war was coming behind us and we were walking and walking and walking; no house was found anywhere. We did not drink water, we did not eat food, and we did not drink wine. Who can stay like that today? This time you are living now, there is no war again. At that time, if you filled your stomach with food, you would not be able to go to war.

That time has receded far, far back. As I walked, I noticed that the environment was not secure. That was why we moved to Kukubaba (or Kukugbagba). (5) Thus when we moved from Nama, the first place we settled was Kugba. As there was war in front and war behind, only the brave cut through the battle lines and got away from where he was trapped.

When I moved from Kugba, the place I "rested" for a while was "Soso". (6) Wiisoro was the first settlement of Gure town. When my sister arrived at Wiisoro, she gave birth to many more children. The population grew and the town was established. My mother and my sister they were there, and I was their leader. There was no more war then, and the place became crowded with people. Houses squeezed together, foundation to foundation and frontage to backyard.

It was then that I moved to clear the site of Gure. When I had settled down, three other leaders joined me, following my back. These were Gbeneatekina, Gbenetiginagure and Gbeneakaka. They all joined hands together and held the hilt of this sword (Geama). This happened after I had cleared the site of this town, established the town Deity (Bari Bue) and the Land Deity (Esaa Bue). Together they pinned my sword into the ground to symbolize that I am te-ere-bue (the Father-Owner of the Town, or Lord of the Town). Thereupon, I appointed Gbeneatekina to be my Right Hand, to act as the Land Priest.

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- (4) He almost stopped at this point but a question about the conditions in Nama put him on again.
- (5) "Kukubaba" or "Kukugbagba": This was Kugba. Similarly for Nama, he said "Nana".
- (6) "Soso" was Wiisoro, Gure. Wiisoro was the first settlement of Gure before they moved to their present site. I visited the place. It is a farming area now.

Old time is old time. When you were a man who had been brave, and your arm was strong ... If you were not truly masculine, and had not done all the rites and rituals, and "men" had not held your hand to touch the ground, you could not "possess" any person in a town. The work that was given to a person, it was given because of what he had done.

On the same occasion, I appointed Gbenetigiangure to be ruler and guard of the part towards Sii. Also the same day, I appointed my friend Gbenemene to be ruler and guard of the part towards Wiizo.

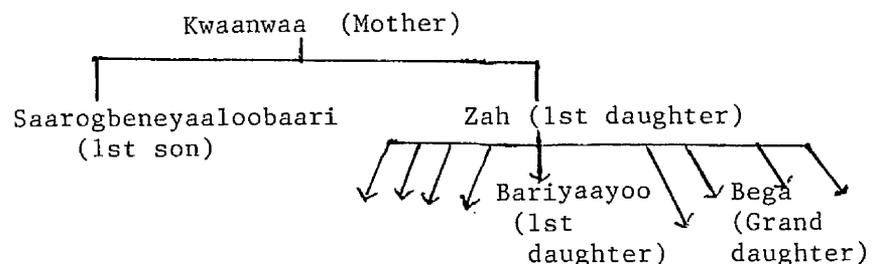
Bega and I came from the same root. Now my sister Zah, from whose house did she come? Zah was the mother of Bega. Kwaanwaa bore me and bore Zah; and Zah bore Bega. It was not Bega alone that Zah bore, she bore children around all over the world (EE mee nwii tema Egene dedee myo'ue).

The name of the town from where my mother fled with me and my sister was called "Gaga". As it is now, if something happened and we all ran and came to where there was water, would you run into the water? Won't you look for ways and means to get across the water? When you reached the water, if the water had not receded, you "prayed"; if it did not recede you stayed patiently. As you waited beside the water, praying and praying, and speaking to the water, and the water did not recede, you waited patiently again, till nights and days passed by. When finally it receded, you crossed immediately. Then you entered the forest and began to walk. When we came, we crossed water.

At Nama we saw a great Rock which grew out of the water high above the water. We stayed under that Rock, but we did not know what was under the ground in the water.

At the time we fled from our town, we carried spears (Ega), and swords (Ge).

Genealogy:



Present at the Interview:

Naa'era Deezia (29 years) - The Spirit Medium

Michael Nwineedam (35 years) - Interpreter of the Spirit Medium

Frederick B. Teedee - Head of Yaaloo House, Gure

Gbenetee Boobura - My Field Assistant

Kaedaa Teedee - Priest of Gbeneyaaloo and of Kwaanwaa.

17. GBENEYAALOO'S SPIRIT-MEDIUM OF GURE: Statements and Explanations:  
Interviewed at Gure 24 March 1984

Michael Nwinedam et al, Interpreter of the Spirit-Medium (Aged c. 35)

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

What place is this, which he calls "Gaga"?

How old does he say he was at the time they fled from this town because of war?

He said that they "walked, walked, walked." What distance of walk was he talking about?

Was his mother alive when they arrived at Nama?

How did you understand his speech, because his speech does not resemble any speech spoken around these parts?

Do you mean his mother reached Gure before she died?

B. The Narrative:

He said that the place was "Ghana", that that was the place from where his mother took him when they fled. We asked him whether this word "Gaga" is old speech or new speech. He said that the word was the old speech spoken at that time, or at that age of the world. That what we ourselves speak now, that we have changed (or distorted) the speech. We asked him whether by "Gaga", he was referring to the forest Cane (Ga), or to the sea "Cane" (Ga)? He said no to both of these. We gave him many likely illustrations which it could mean, none was acceptable to him. Finally, one of the persons present suggested to him whether he meant "Ghana"? Then he agreed, nodding his head violently and with approbation and speaking in the language of their time elatedly while at the same time pouring libation profusely with the drink that he held in his hand, in exaltation of himself.

When he called the name of something, and the way we understood it was not correct, he would not respond to what we said. But when we have said the correct thing, he would nod his head in approbation. One example was when he called the name of Nama. He called it "Nana". He said so many times, "Nana", but we did not understand it, until one person asked whether he meant Nama? Then he agreed nodding his head violently in approbation and speaking in the language of his time elatedly and in exaltation of himself. These are the things that make us know that the language spoken in their time is now different from the language we are speaking today.

When he called the name of Wiisoro, he said "Soso". He said this so many times but we did not know what it was, until we asked him whether he meant Wiisoro in Gure? Then he nodded his head violently again, and spoke elatedly in the language of his time with approbation and with self-exaltation.

Now Gure people call the place Wiisoro. It was the first location of Gure town before they moved from there further inland, about one to two kilometers, to their present location. What has become clear to us is that in the language of that time, they repeat certain names, syllables or phrases. For example, for Nama, he said "Nana", for Kugba, he said "Kukubbagba" (or Kukubaba), for Wiisoro, he said "Soso".

Concerning his age at the time they fled from their town, he said that he was a young boy, who was able to recognize things and remember things.

He said that they walked, walked, walked - , without seeing water. That they did not reach any place where there was water, and that they did not see water any where they passed through. They walked until they reached where there was water. He said that they walked many years before they reached where there was water. That it was when they reached where there was water that they had their bath, since they left their home.

When they reached the water, they remained there for a long, long time, "praying". That at that time, people did not eat, nor drink water or wine, because if you ate food, you would not be able to go to war. If you went to war you would not be able to fight. He said that they were on the journey, he who was a boy when they started, later became a man, a full grown man, and the leader of the people. That it was he who led his mother and all the other people at the time they entered Nama. That it was he who organized and led the landing at Nama. That he was on the journey and became a recognized man who had performed all the manly rituals and traditional rites. That he had performed all the traditional rites before they landed at Nama. That was the reason he had his Sacred Grove in Nama. That he had "spots" in Nama and in Kugba where he placed his "medicines"; that those places are still there till today. That his grove and his shrine are in Kugba today.

That their first settlement was at Nama. From Nama they moved to Kugba, from Kugba they moved to Wiisoro, and from Wiisoro, they moved to Gure, which is the present location. That it was he who led his mother and his sister through all these places. That Nama was their first settlement. That at Nama, there is a Rock at its sea entrance. That at their first arrival, they took shelter under this Rock for some time. That the Rock was tall above the water, and its roots deep inside the water. (Note: The actual position of the Rock is directly opposite the present village of Teenama, which is about one kilometer south east of Nama, on the coast).

When they first arrived, they made the Rock their God.

He brought his mother to Gure. But the name he called his mother was somewhat different from what Gure people called her. Her Shrine is at Gure. He called his mother's name Kwaanwaa, but Gure people had been calling her name Tiginanwaa. He was the first son of Kwaanwaa, while Zah was the first daughter. That her mother brought the two of them with her during their escape from the wars that broke out in their original country. (Note: He gave his own name as Saarogbeneyaaloo-baari. Until the date of this interview, 12 March 1984, Gure people had been calling his name as Gbeneyaaloo).

When they had moved from Kugba to Wiisoro, his sister gave birth to more children. But they had to move away from Wiisoro because at Wiisoro, the "law" (or taboo) was that a woman in child labour was not allowed to give birth to her baby within the society. She had to be taken outside the town to a bush where she would give birth to the baby under a tree. She would remain there until her bleedings were dried up before it would be lawful for her to be brought into the society. Because they could not tolerate this condition, they had to move away from Wiisoro to found Gure.

His language was the language spoken in the place where they came from originally. But he tried to make us to understand him a bit. If he spoke in the way they spoke then, we would not understand him at all. What he did was to kind of "interpret" it for us so that we could understand.

His mother was no longer bearing children even before they landed at Nama. The person who became prolific in child-bearing was his sister, Zah. That was why it was said of her that Zah was the "Mother of the World". Gbenebega was one of her daughters.

Kwaanwaa herself was alive till they arrived at Gure. She died at Gure. That was why her grave and shrine are in Gure. She was one of the founding ancestral spirits of Gure, known as Zim Te-ere-bue (Spirit(s) of the Owners of the Town). All these ancestral spirits possess one of their descendants from generation to generation.

#### NOTES

i. Kaedaa Teedee (Chief) (Aged c. 80): He is the Priest of Gbeneyaaloo and Kwaanwaa. Gbeneyaaloo is the traditional name of the founding ancestor of Gure Town and the leader of the founding Fathers of Nama and Kugba (Supposed first Ogoni towns). Saarogbeneyaaloobaari was the revealed name of the same person. Revealed by the Spirit-medium during possession on 12 March 1984. Kwaanwaa was the revealed name of the mother of this person; revealed on the same date. Tiginanwaa was the traditional name. By traditional is meant, name known to their descendants by oral tradition.

ii. Beetee Edoo (Aged c. 55): He was the Priest of Zah, whose Shrine is at Gure.

#### Present at the Interview with the Spirit-Medium:

1. Michael Nwineedam - Interpreter of the Gbeneyaaloo Spirit Medium.
2. Kaedaa Teedee - Priest of Gbeneyaaloo and of Kwaanwaa.
3. John Iwuagbo - Priest of Nama and Kugba Deities.
4. Frederick Buebaa Teedee - Head of Gbeneyaaloo House.
5. Akeere Teedee - An Elder of Yaaloo House.
6. Naaera Deezia (Aged c. 29) - Spirit-Medium. Did not take part in discussions, and was not present.
7. Gbenetee Boobura - My field Assistant.

18. M.D. NWIKOGBARA (CHIEF) OF SII (Aged 57)  
Interviewed at Sii on 8 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell what you know about the founding of Sii Town?

You say that Gbeneteetagana came from Kugba. Where was Kugba?

What caused the people of Kugba to move away from there and to spread abroad?

Why do Sii people used Kugba as a place for keeping their valuables, even though the town is no longer inhabited?

Those who founded Kugba, where di they come from?

Kugba and Teenama, which was earlier?

Is Nama in Kugba? Or are they separate places?

Did people from Gokana come to Nama for the title of Gbene?

Did Khana people practise fishing?

What instruments did they use?

What is the origin of the title Gbene?

Describe the steps to the highest title in Khana?

Describe the principle by which the ancestors were able to possess their descendants after they had died. Which of your ancestors was among the founders of Nama or Kugba, who has become a Spirit and possesses his descendants?

What did the settlers of Nama and Kugba plant?

Did they have a House of Yam at Nama or Kugba?

From what food items do you prepare ritual foods for your ancestors on feast days?

Why did the ancestors like Ka Zia (Yam) and Ka ebue (Plantains)?

How did you know this?

How did the ancestors get their boats or canoes?

B. The Narrative:

Gbeneteetagana first cleared the site of Sii town. He came from Kugba. Nyowii was the part of Sii where he settled. When he came to Nyowii, two of his brothers were with him. One of them was called Gbeneanwaka, the other Gbenesirakinabia. These three cleared the site and became its founders.

They first settled at Nyowii. From Nyowii they cleared all the other parts of Sii. They then divided the area into separate communities or towns, with each one of them becoming the ruler and founder of one town. Gbeneanwaka took Bara and became its ruler. Gbenesirakinabia took Ebia and became its ruler. Another leader, Berezi founded an additional town called Tem; and became its ruler. Then Gbenekaratee cleared another area known as Korogbere and became its ruler.

Kugba is near to Nama. Both Nama and Kugba are on the coast but Kugba is more to the land than Nama. The founders of Kugba came from Nama. While they were at Kugba, Nama became a holy land where they went to do traditional ceremonies for power and popularity. From that time on, Nama became the place where all Khana leaders went to do the ceremonies for the title of "Gbene".

According to tradition, a great flood covered the settlement at Kugba which resulted in much damage and loss of lives. For that reason the settlers abandoned Kugba and spread out to many parts of Khana (Ogoni). We do not know when these things took place, but even in relatively recent times when Sii was founded, we heard it in oral tradition that the founder of Kono named Gbenekpana also came from Kugba. He is the last person mentioned, who, having come from Kugba, founded a town in Khana (Ogoni). Today Kugba is a farming area for Sii people, and a place for preserving their valuables. Till today, whenever there is a heavy rainfall, Kugba still has the tendency to be flooded, and the ground is extremely muddy. It may be that that was why the ancients called its name Kugba.

The ancients made Kugba and Nama their sacred place. As the people of today have also made them their sacred land. Anybody who goes there to steal dies. I do not know where the Khana (Ogoni) people came from but I heard that one of the brothers of the founder of Kugba was the founder of Teenama. Teenama is on the coast, just as Nama is also on the coast. However, Kugba was founded much earlier than Teenama.

Nama is a bush behind Kugba. Nama became the place where the settlers of Kugba went to do their ritual ceremonies and sacrifices. When a man desired to have the title of Gbene-, he went to Nama to do certain rituals and sacrifices. When a person had completed all the stages of rituals and ceremonies at Nama, he was asked to go to Gure to perform the final stage. That final stage was called Kue Su. The candidate's "friends" (consisting of Priests, Mediums and Spirits) took him to Gure on an appointed day in the following year after completion at Nama.

At Gure, he was taken to a sacred grove or forest, where he was given a piece of ground to plant seven yam seedlings. The yams grew and became matured on the same day. He harvested the yams, cooked and ate them on that same day. Once he had eaten the yams, he knew that he was about to die. The title of Gbene- was then accredited to him, as a prefix to his name.

If he died or was killed in the process without reaching that climax, he was said to have failed. He would still be a spirit and be able to possess one of his descendants but he would possess as woman.

Of all places in Khana (Ogoni), the only place where people went to have this highest title was Nama. People from all parts of Khana (Ogoni) came to Nama to get the title. That was why we had men like the Gbenesaakoo of Gokana, and the Gbenekuapie of Tee.

Khana (Ogoni) people knew how to catch fish. That was why they originally settled near the sea. The first fishing net (my parents told me) our ancestors used for fishing was made from Siri. Siri was made from a tough forest cable, which they pounded with clubs after fermentation, into wiry fibres. The tough wiry fibres were then used in making nets which they used in catching fish. Those tough cables are still in our forests today.

Though we do not know the exact place from where the founders of Nama and Kugba came, we know that they came from the directions of the sea (dee Pene). That was why their first settlement was on the coast. If they had come from the upland, their first settlement would not be at the coast. The second point is that, the settlers of Nama and Kugba, after they had moved into the hinterland, they always came back to Nama to do rituals and sacrifices because they regarded Nama as the land of their ancestors, and as their ancient Town.

We do not know from where the ancient Khana people got the idea of the title Gbene. It would seem that when they began to found towns and cities, there was much competition among them. So that it became necessary for them to do certain difficult things in order to see who was greater than the others. In the traditions, some of the things which they did to show distinctions in society were:

1. Yaa - The rite of Yaa.
2. Yaage - The Yaa of bearing the Sword.
3. Yaanwii - The Yaa of Sons (as father, grandfather and Head of of House)
4. Yaa Be - A traditional Cloth ceremony.
5. Kpa Bina - A highly expensive ceremony for the glorification of great ancestors, consisting of playing a large set of sacred musical instruments - very inspiring and spirit-invoking - accompanied with lavish entertainments.
6. Si Nama - A pilgrimage to Nama.

A man who prepared himself to be a spirit and to possess his descendants after his death, when he had died and had been buried, he would become a spirit and possess one of his living sons or descendants. During possession, he would point out all his property and all that he did when he was living. He would show his lands, trees, plantations, etc.. He would name and identify his children, show his own house, tell whatever he did, and the account of how he went to Nama and what he did there. He would exalt himself and boast of his greatness. He would tell his children that he was their father, and that if they did not conduct themselves properly towards him, he would punish them (ebee e wa) and cause them to know that he was their daddy (Sa wa toge ko me ale ee e na wa tea).

At a point, the elders of the town would intervene. They would question him to test whether it was a genuine possession. If they seem to be satisfied, they would tell him to cease possession and to come back on a given date. On the given date, they would get ready

other spirit-mediums and priests. They would put him to further tests. If they felt satisfied, then they would put off again and ask him to come back at another given date. On this third occasion if they were still satisfied, then they would fix a date on which to instal him and proclaim him as a genuine spirit-possession of the man who had been to Nama and had died and the possessed as the genuine spirit-medium of the man named. Once he had been certified and installed as a genuine spirit-medium, from that day he would be given authority to speak openly and to operate publicly as a genuine spirit-medium of the said man.

One of such ancestors who possessed his descendants after his death was Gbenemene Nama. He was among the founders of Nama. His spirit-medium died five years ago. Since that time he had not possessed another person. Before he possessed the last person, he had been possessing his descendants from ancient times, and from generation to generation.

Crops: As agriculturists, the crops that the ancient Khana (Ogoni) people planted consisted of gura, ya, geere, ka-ebue, etc.. In addition, they practised palm wine tapping. They also did some fishing. There was a yam shrine at Nama. There is a yam shrine at Sii today, also. Without completing the rituals and ceremonies at the yam shrine (To Zia), each year, we could not begin the farming process any year.

Ritual Feeds: To prepare ritual foods for the ancestors, the commonest food items that were used were gura, ya, eko and ka ebue. These food items were the ancient food items. These crops were among the crops discovered and domesticated by our ancestors themselves. The ancestors knew them and were familiar with them. That was why they used them for ritual foods.

According to the ancestors, the first food items they discovered were ya and gura and ka ebue. They found the ya in the forest, when they roasted it in the fire it was good for food. So they planted it. As for the ka ebue (plantains), they seem to have brought it with them when they came.

Our ancestors made their own canoes from trees. It was these canoes that they used in going out to the sea and for fishing. They also made some wooden vessels or bowls and bowl-tables (kua kasi) for dining.

Other informants who contributed to this narrative were:

1. Gbenenee Idag (Aged c. 65)
2. Doba Nwikogbara (Aged c. 68) All of Sii
3. Nwibira Kagbo (Aged c. 70)

19. CHIEF MOSES DEEKAE NWIKOGBARA OF NYOWII, SII (Aged c. 55)  
Interviewed at Nyowii, Sii, on 17 October 1981

1. I am Chief M.D. Nwikogbara, son of late Chief Nwikogbara Nwisene (1871-1976) of Nyowii, Sii Town. He was until his death Chairman of Sii Council of Chiefs.

Moses who succeeded his father was born on a Sunday in 1929, the Sunday on which the women's riot began at Opobo in 1929.

2. Chief Jackson Nwiigerebu Nwiidag of Bara, Sii, was co-informant.

Sii: Gbenesaakoo - founded Gokana  
Gbenekuapie - founded Tee  
Gbeneguasoo - settled at Bara, Sii  
Gbenekombari - first settled at Nyowii, Sii  
Gbenesirakinaebia - founded Ebia, Sii  
Gbeneteenwaawoo came from Luawii and settled with Gbeneteetagan. He later founded Nyowii, Sii  
Berezi participated in the founding of Bara, Sii. He was captured and killed in battle; for that reason he could not earn the title of Gbene. He was a brother of Gbeneteetagan  
Gbenegborowaate - was from Andoni. He settled at Bian in Sii in the territory of Gbenesirakinaebia.

According to my late father, the settlers at Nama came from Ghana, in a ship. They came on land to raid for slaves, but when the ship left they became stranded. They settled in Nama; for they were soldiers in that ship. The settlers used to say that they originated from Ghana. They introduced the fishing net to the community. They later settled at Kugba, which was not far from Nama, and about two kilometers from Sii town.

20. DOONEE Nwigbue FOGHO OF BARA, SII (Aged c. 70)  
Interviewd at Bara, Sii, on 21 October 1981

I am Doonee Nwigbue of Bara, Sii. My father was Nwigbue Fogho. He was a customary court judge till he died. We are from Gaan Bara.

Sii: The founders of Bara, Sii, were two brothers, Gbeneguasoo and Gbeneyaanwaaka. Gbeneyaanwaaka was the second son. According to tradition, they came originally from Ghana and settled at Nama.

Their occupation was hunting and some agriculture. The first of them to arrive in Sii was Gbenebere'ezi. Later Gbeneteetagana took over the leadership and rulership of the town because Gbenebere'ezi had become deformed in the nose, and could no longer give the leadership. Gbenesirakinaebia was the next person who joined in the founding of Sii. He founded a separate town, which later became part of Sii. The part he founded was called Ebia Sii.

Gbeneteetagana founded Nyonwii Sii. Gbeneyaanwaaka and Gbeneguasoo were co-founders of Bara, Sii. Later Gbeneyaanwaaka moved to found Yeghe, Sii.

Gbenemene Nama was the highest authority in Nama. He ruled with a council of chiefs. Among others who also came from Ghana were Gbeneyaanwaaka, Gbenesaakoo, Gbenekuapiedam and Gbeneyaaloo.

Gbeneakpana moved to Kono and founded the town of Kono. The reason for their spreading out was that they needed more space. Their numbers had increased, and the place where they first settled had become too narrow for them. There was also that spirit and ambition for independence and leadership in each of them.

They were constantly searching for captives which they sold as victims for sacrifice at Nama. People needed human victims to sacrifice at Nama as part of the rituals for the title of Gbene. In the course of such searching they dispersed and founded towns and kingdoms.

Gbenekuapiedan founded Tee.  
Gbenesaakoo founded Gokana.  
Gbeneyaaloo founded Gure.  
Gbenekobari founded Duburo and parts of Nyokana.

The founder of Eleme: his wife gave birth to twins. His brother threatened him. He therefore decided to migrate with the woman out of the place. In doing so, he founded Eleme. He claimed that he liked the new place and that he was satisfied with what he did, or with the choice he made (Aleemam). From that word, the name Eleme developed.

Each of the founders and men had control of a trade (or ministry) which they each controlled. For example, Gbeneyaanwaaka had the control of fisheries (doq).

Kono: Origin of the name: As Gbeneakpana was frequently seen in the forests along that way, people thought that he was practising head-hunting or cannibalism; and they spread a rumour about him. Therefore after he had founded Kono, he told the people "They said that I was

walking the walk of cannibaliam. Here it is. This is the cannibalism". (Ba bee ko, ale am Kia Kono. Ne ee li. Kia Kono na ama).

From that time the name of the town was called Kono.

21. CHIEF APPOLUS TUANEE BIRINEE OF SII (Aged c. 53)  
Interviewed at Sii on 18 October 1981

Mr. Kaezia Pueba (Aged c. 48) was co-Informant

I am Chief Appolus Tuanee. Tuanee was my father, and Biiranee the father of Tuanee. Luaka was the father of Biiranee and the son of Ineetebiira. Gbeneyaanaa was our ancestor.

Gbeneyaanaa was among the early Khana (Ogoni) people who migrated from Ghana and settled at Nama. They migrated from Ghana because of a civil war.

The men were hunters and medicine men. They were also warriors and spiritualists. From them the institution of priests, medicines and medicine men became widespread in Khana (Ogoni). The mediums greeted themselves as having come from Nama. When they made libation speeches they narrated how they came from Nama.

Some of the crops they were familiar with include:

plantains - they called first food (tua Zia)  
yam - Mother food (Ka Zia)  
water yam - ya, used as ritual food  
Gura - a species of yam  
Geere - old cocoyam

They knew fruits like logoro, yagara, pee, zoo (palm fruits) raffia palms, dara, emimi, nema, alilib, etc.

They also used spices like alligator-pepper, pepper, tapere and bitter nuts like garagara, kola nut, etc. Their dyes included Biogo (indigo), do (orange/red dye from camwood), demnua, etc. These dyes and colors were used for painting and decorations.

Their musical instruments included: xylophone (geregere), drums (kere), gongs, etc.

Their hunting weapons were spears (koi), javelins (suwe), heavy iron weapons (kuna), matchets or swords (ge), use of dogs, traps, etc.

Carvings: masks, taa (artistic stools), spoons (bugu), bowls (kua), double bowls on stand (kpote-kua), trays (gbono-kua), etc.

Weavings: Raffia cloth (Igwa), ribbons (ikeeneewa and biirabe) mats (bui), square baskets (to), round baskets (kuwin), (Gana), (Uwi), etc..

Pottery: Pitchers (kanamaa), Kpu, Giah, baraba, etc..

22. JOHN TIGIRI (CHIEF) OF LUUYO, GWAARA (Aged c. 83)  
Interviewed at Luuyo on 10 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate what you know about how Luuyo, Gwaara, and if possible, how Khana (Ogoni) came into existence.

When you say that Khana (Ogoni) people came from Ibibio, did they tell you what happened in Ibibioland which caused their migration from there?

You suggest that they crossed the Imo river and that the first place they settled was Nama. Now Nama is on the sea coast at Sii waterside in Babbe. Are you saying that they crossed the Imo river and walked across the land to settle at Nama or that they arrived at Nama by sea?

What are the names of the three men whom you said founded Luuyo, KaGwaara and Bien?

Who was the father of Gbenetigina?

After the reign of Gbenetigina, who succeeded him?

Your chiefship originated in the House of Gbeneamuunu. Recite the names of previous rulers in that House.

What traditions involving Luuyo or Babbe as a whole have you received from the ancients?

Why did they receive pottery vessels from Boue?

Why did they receive fish tribute from Kaa?

How did the name Luuyo (Spirit Quarters) originate?

Have you ever heard this Khana saying, "Du Bari le nee se?" (A trade between God and men).

Recite the rulers of Luuyo from the beginning till the present.

B. The Narrative:

I will tell you some of what I heard and how I heard it. I heard that the founders of the three towns of Gwaara and some others came from Ibibio. When they were coming, they crossed the Imo River. At that time the Imo River was not big, so that they could walk across it on foot into the land which we know today as Khana (Ogoni) and into this part known as Babbe. The first place they settled was at Nama, where they stayed for many years. After they moved from Nama, they advanced further into the hinterland and there they spread to all directions. Thus Nama was the first settlement of Khana people in Babbe. Nama was situated on the coast very near to the present site of Sii town.

When they left Nama, they moved to Gure. It was at Gure that they spread out to all directions. Some to Kani-Babbe, some to Luawii, some to the different parts of Babbe, including Gwaara.

Three men among the leaders moved to the area of Babbe called Gwaara and founded the three towns of Gwaara.

The first of them founded KaGwaara.  
The second man founded Luuyo.  
The third man founded Bien.

The three towns formed the Gwaara federation.

Those who went to Luawii, Kaani-Babbe, Boue, Eeken, Gwaara, etc.. all joined together to have one centre in Babbe where they gathered every year to do certain traditions, rituals and deliberations.

That place was at Luawii in the House of Bariyaayoo. Representatives of ancestral founders (or fathers) of important Houses in every town gathered there to discuss plans for activities. If a person broke a certain law, he would be taken to Luawii in the House of Bariyaayoo for judgments; if found guilty, he would be executed there. Such offences would be murder, sorcery and wizardry or witchcraft. If you were sued in the House of Bariyaayoo, Representatives of all the Great Houses in every town would gather there to do the judgment. If you were found innocent, you returned to your own home. If found guilty you didn't return.

If a person was made a Great Ruler or King in Babbe, he must go to Bariyaayoo to do homage and to receive the approval of the founding ancestors there. He would do obeisance to the ancestors there, while the spirit-medium of Bariyaayoo would pass wine around him and pour libation to the ancestors supporting and approving his rulership. Only when men have selected such a ruler that they will take him to the House of Bariyaayoo at Luawii for the final consecration and approval by the founding ancestral spirits. The Spirit-medium (the priest, if the spirit-medium is dead) would pass the wine round him a certain number of times, while he knelt before the altar of Bariyaayoo, and pour libation to Bariyaayoo and to all the ancestral spirits and deities with words of prayer, investing him with power and authority to rule. Then he would stand up. Then the spirit-medium would hold his right hand and touch his open palm to the ground in front of the altar of Bariyaayoo and then lifting it up high above his head, he would speak the word "Rule". The Spirit-medium of Bariyaayoo is alive today; his priest is also alive. They will be able to tell you more.

The Khana (Ogoni) Calendar: It was at Luawii in the House of Bariyaayoo that all Khana (Ogoni) people, Nyokana, Kekana, Gokana, Babbe, Tee, Leme, gathered in ancient time to plan and arrange the Khana Year. (Zua Pya Khana), the numbering of days, weeks, the various market days, and all days of ceremonies and feasts in Khana (Ogoni). They arranged the Feast Day for the Supreme God, names of days, and many other things pertaining to the whole life of the Khana (Ogoni) people. They arranged the Khana (Ogoni) week to consist of the following days: Deemua, Deebom, Deezia, Deeson and Deeko.

The five days in the Khana (Ogoni) week were arranged from there.

All the kings and rulers from KeKana and from parts of Babbe came and all of them remained at the House of Bariyaayoo and arranged

all these things. They arranged the Feast of the Supreme God and other feasts. Each ruler carried the things that were arranged to his own part. That was the origin of the proverb which you probably have heard which says "Sleep the sleep of the King of Duburo" ("Daadaa mene Deburo". The King of Duburo slept because they had taken much wine. Till they arranged and concluded everything, nobody woke him up from sleep. The conference ended and they dispersed. As each part began to celebrate their Zua Feast, according as it was arranged at the conference of the House of Bariyaayoo, that such and such towns and communities should have their Zua Feast on such a date; and such and such towns and communities should have their on such a date, the day which Duburo people had their own Zua Feast became different from the date all the other towns had their Zua Feast. Because, just at the moment when the announcements were made the King of Duburo slept!

Migration Story: When the ancestors came from Ibibio they did not say that they left their former place because of war or because of anything traumatic happening there. When I heard the story, the narrator did not say which way they took, but after they had crossed the river, the first place where they gathered was Nama.

The person who cleared the site of KaGwaara was Gbenealoga. The founder of Luuyo Gwaara was Gbenetigina, and for Bien Gwaara, the founder was Gbeneamenebien. The father of Gbenetigina was Gbeneamuunu. I am from that Gaan (i.e. Gbeneamuunu). This is the Kinglist of Gaan Gbeneamuunu:

Gbenetigina  
Gbenetiginakara I  
Gbenetiginakara II  
Gbenebiirago  
Teegwoo  
Damyomui I  
Damyomui II  
Tiginakara II  
Guanwii  
Iyeghe  
Tigiri II (Regent, because Tigiri I was minor)  
Yote  
Baal  
John Tigiri

Once every year the whole Gwaara and parts of Babbe used to gather in Gbenebega House to do certain traditions. They begin in September and continue till December. During those three months no drums were played and there were no gun shots. There might be singing and dancing but no drumming and no booming of guns. The period is said to be a commemoration of when Bega came from the "sea" to Gwaara. During the period, it is said that Bega is in austerity or "holiness" (Bega eyira ke), (literally, Bega has "landed").

When the period was over in December, there was music and dancing and the booming of the guns. On that occasion there was a Gbenebega itinerary in Gwaara and in parts of Babbe, especially in those towns bordering the coasts. At Kaa, they received gifts of fish; in Boue, they received pots. On returning to Gwaara, they cooked, ate, drank and rejoiced.

I do not know why they received these items (fish from Kaa and pots from Boue), but I do think that they were all in alliance in ancient times when the "world" was taking shape, or was being founded ("so nyouwe bee yiike"). It is said that because Bega came from the Sea, "when she would take off" ("so e aake"), they should also give her fish that comes from the sea.

Zua: Another tradition in which all Babbe used to participate together was the Feast of Zua. The Feast of Zua was a period when the people remembered their ancestors to let them know that they have brought down the fruits of the land. They would cook yam meals, provide good fish, and tasty wines for drinking and rejoicing. Some towns and communities celebrated it on Deeson, some on Deeko, and some on Deebom. There was no work on that day. People stayed at home to prepare the meals and to present traditional 'dishes' and libations to their ancestors, to inform them that they have brought down the fruits of the land.

There were two celebrations. The first celebration which took place in July was known as Kaan Zua (Lean Feast, lit. Lean Year), because it was celebrated with the 'dried' yams preserved from the previous harvest. The second feast which took place in August was known as Gbene Zua or Aan Zua (Great Feast or New Year), because it was celebrated generously with the bounties of the current year's harvest. There was a lot of festivities and plays, including judo tournaments (by able young men), Kpaankpaan (by the elderly), and Yowaalo masquerades (by the children and youths). The Yowaalo masquerade was originally played in Kpong area, but it was later introduced into Kekana and Babbe areas.

Another feast which was celebrated during the Zua celebrations was the feast of Nubien (Feast of Meat). It was celebrated between the first and the second Zua feasts, and it was celebrated once a year. There was a big market at Uwegwere in Boue. This market was held once a year on Nubien day. The whole Babbe people went to that market to buy the things that they needed. On Nubien day, husbands provided their wives and families with bountiful quantities of meat for the feast.

The Bien or Nubien was a simple contrivance or trap used in catching small animals. It was the first contrivance used by boys to show their skill in hunting and trapping animals. Its proper use determined the future capability of a particular boy to be able to provide the meat for his household. It was on Nubien day that some parents knew which of their boys had the resourcefulness that he would need in future as a hunter or as a provider, by his success in acquiring the skill and the diligence through the use of the Bien in catching small animals. This success was determined by the number of such small animals which the "young man" presented to his mother, in supplement to what his father provided for the feast of Nubien.

The town Luuyo was so called because the Founder's Deity was there. For the same reason KaGwaara is honoured because Gbenebega is there. Gbenebega was a Kabaariwa (feminine of Kabaari meaning Elder) among "Spirits".

I have heard the saying "Trade of God and Men", but I do not understand its root meaning.

23. EMMANUEL ADOOKON (CHIEF) OF LUUYO, GWAARA (Aged c. 77)  
Interviewed at Luuyo on 4 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of your lineage (Gaan) and how you became the Paramount Ruler of Luuyo Gwaara.

Recite the kinglist of Luuyo Gwaara from the time of Gbeneabee to the present.

You are the Paramount Ruler of Luuyo Gwaara, and there are many communities in Gwaara. How do you get things done?

What was the relationship between Buga'Ue and Gbenebega?

You said that Gbenebega came from the Sea. Where in the Sea do you mean?

When she spoke about herself (during possession), did she say that she came from Bonny (Bani)?

What did she say?

What was the relationship between Gbenebega and Yobue?

Where did Khana (Ogoni) people come from and where was the first settlement in Khana (Ogoni).

Who founded Gure?

Where did Zah come from?

Which town in Gwaara was first settled?

That statue standing in front of the Shrine, was it from the ancient or from a relatively recent period? Would you let me take a photograph of it?

B. The Narrative

Gbeneabee, Gbenetigina and Gbeneamenebien came from the area of Gure, when the population of the town had over increased and people began to spread out to different places. They came from the direction of Gure and arrived at Luuyo. Gbeneamuunu stopped in the neighbourhood and began to clear that site for settlement as his town.

Gbeneabee passed on by him and went ahead to this town (Luuyo) where he cleared and settled as his town. He got a place near to where the citizens should obtain their drinking water. Thus Gbeneabee became the founder of Luuyo.

Gbeneamenebien went to settle at Wiibara. Gbenekuru continued on to Luulee, the site of which he cleared and settled as his town. After some time a war broke out between Bien people and the people of Sii. Because of that war, Bien people withdrew from Wiibara to

settle at their present site which we call Bien. Again war broke out over land at Luulee between Gbenekuru and the people of Sii. Then Gbeneabee persuaded Gbenekuru to withdraw from Luulee in order to avoid the constant wars with Sii people, to settle in a place closer to him (Gbeneabee) so that he (Gbeneabee) might assist him (Gbenekuru) in waging the war against Sii people. Gbenekuru pointed out that he had been an independent ruler of his own territory, and wanted to know what the condition would be if he consented to settle on Gbeneabee's land.

In his reply, Gbeneabee told Gbenekuru that he should come, that whatever his need was, he would be satisfied. On the ground of that promise, Gbenekuru withdrew from Luulee and joined Gbeneabee on the latter's land. Gbeneabee gave a portion of his land to Gbenekuru to rule independently, that whatever he got out of it he should enjoy because he had been an independent ruler in his own "house". Shortly after that it was discovered that Gbeneamuunu, who had settled in the neighbourhood at the beginning, that his town was vulnerable to dangerous flooding. Therefore it was agreed that a part of Gbeneabee's land be given to Gbeneamuunu to settle on. In the end, the three men settled together on the land which was originally founded by Gbeneabee.

The day they installed me, I performed all the rites and rituals according to the traditions of the land. I "opened" the ears (MKaaraton) of the Community or Council of Chiefs and Elders (Bogene Kabaari) who owned the communities. Representatives of the House of Gbeneabee were there. They held the Keys of the town; and they opened and locked the Town's "House of Souls" ("To ekoo bue"). Representatives of "Kings and Generals" (Menele Gian) from all the Houses I named earlier were present. The Community of Chiefs and Elders (Bogene Kabaari), representatives of the Civil Authorities (Pya gbo ba lu Nyoue); they were all present. Then they crowned me (Basu pegere me yere bee).

These persons have ruled in the House of Gbeneabee:

Gbeneabee  
|  
Gbosigwere  
|  
Gbenekarabaa  
|  
Nwinam  
|  
Thomas Nwiko  
|  
Aaron Adookon (1972)

When there was any undertaking or important decisions to be made, representatives of each of the Houses of founders of towns and communities (Gaan Pya Te-ere-bue) were selected to undertake such decisions. The Houses of founders are:

Gaan Gbeneabee (Abee)  
Gaan Kuru (Gbenekuru)  
Gaan Amuunu (Gbeneamuunu)  
Gaan Amenebien (Gbeneamenebien)  
Gaan Tigina (Gbenetigina)

There is a difference between Buga 'ue and Gbenebega. Gbenebega came from the Sea and walked through this place. She was a young woman who was bearing a carrier basket on her head when she walked through the town of Luuyo; and that was the very road which, by tradition, she was said to have walked on her way from Luuyo to KaGwaara (pointing to it).

She found no place to stay in the town (Luuyo), so she continued on her journey until when she became tired she rested at a place in the farm there known as "The Resting Place of Bega" (Si Ton Bega). The place is standing now, a sacred grove by the roadside in the middle of the farming area between Luuyo and KaGwaara. When she left that place, she walked on until she arrived at KaGwaara, where she was received by a great lady whose name was Nyanagwaara. That was how Bega remained at KaGwaara. Bega was a young woman who carried a basket (to) on her head and walked on the road like any human being. The road she walked is there now, and the place she sat down and rested like a person who has walked a long distance and has become tired, is there too. That place is now a sacred grove preserved and it is called "Si Ton Bega" ("The Resting Place of Bega".) Now Bega has become Gbenebega, a wealthy Queen, who has dominated all lands.

Gbenebega originally came from the part of the Sea near Bonny, the sea which is called Okolomatoro. From there she came to the land. When she arrived here, she was just walking with a carrier basket (to) on her head; so that if you saw her you would think that she was possessed by a spirit, a young woman with standing breasts.

I used to hear, and people used to talk about it too, that Yobue and Gbenebega were one people (aba eteene, lit. one and the same). That is why Boue people used to come to do certain traditions in Gbenebega House. In ancient times, Yobue used to come to Bega House when there was something to be done, and Gbenebega herself would not do anything without first going to consult with Yobue.

As regards Khana (Ogoni) people, the first town that was founded in Khana (Ogoni) was Gure; and the founding ancestor of Gure was Zah. But I do not know where Zah came from. Nevertheless, as I said, I heard that the first town that was settled in Khana was Gure and that the person who founded the town was Zah.

In the case of Gwaara towns, as each of the founding ancestors moved away from Gure, they came towards Gwaara area. The founder of KaGwaara was the first to arrive. KaGwaara thus became the first town to be founded in Gwaara area. The ancestors who founded Luuyo Bien and the other towns passed by KaGwaara and went further on till they arrived in the places where they founded their own towns.

The ancestor who founded KaGwaara was called Gbenenyanagwaara. She was a great Elder woman (Gbene Kabaariwa).

24. TEEWOO NWIMEA, SPIRIT-MEDIUM OF BARIYAAYOO OF LUAWII (Aged c. 87)  
Interviewed at Luawii on 19 March 1984

A. Questions answered at the Interview:

Have you any examples of people who were accused and brought before Bariyaayoo at Luawii for judgment, who were found innocent, acquitted and allowed to go home unpunished.

Who founded Luawii?

Where did Gbeneyereoo come from?

B. The Narrative:

Boue and Luawii celebrated the Zua feast on the same day. Others who celebrated the Zua feast on the same day with Boue and Luawii were Gure, Kabyon, Eeken, Betem, etc., they celebrated the Zua feast on Deeson/Deeko.

Gwaara, Sii, Kaa, Kono, Kwaawa and Zaakpon have their Zua feast on Deebom.

Deeko was the day of Bariyaayoo. In those days if any one committed murder or killed a person, the offender was taken to the court of Bariyaayoo for judgment.

Whether justice was obtained in this court can be illustrated by the case of a certain Boue man, who asked another person to climb a coconut tree in order to pluck the nuts for him. By accident the climber fell down from the tree and died. The man who asked the deceased to climb the coconut tree was accused of being responsible for his death. He was brought to the court of Bariyaayoo charged with murder.

In his judgment Bariyaayoo asked whether one was no longer to give or receive the services of another person? When they could not answer she declared that the accused should be allowed to go, because the accused was receiving a service which was freely offered to him by the deceased when an accident occurred, and that he was not responsible for the death of the deceased.

One of the founders of Luawii was Gbeneayeereoo. His first settlement was Luumene. When he left Luumene he founded Luawii. Luumene is now a farming area between Gwaara and Luawii.

Other founders of parts of Luawii were:

Gbeneguatee

Gbenekinakote

Gbenekamene

Gbeneawuago

25. MR. NA'UE LEONARD OPUSUNJU OF KONO (Aged c. 72)  
Interviewed at Kono on 23 October, 1981

Gbeneakpana was the founder of Kono. He came from Kugba. (1) He was a priest and a medicine man. Once, he was invited by the Chief of Buan, named Gbenekuebaa to make charms so that his people could be united.

When he went into the forest to look for the herbs and roots, he saw a beautiful spot which was round and without any weeds growing on it. He liked the spot, so he got out from his bag a piece of money and spoke on it saying:

I like this place. I want to stay here as  
a dwelling. Would the god of this place  
allow me?

When he took the piece of money to the mediums to interpret what the reply on it was, he was told that the god of the place was Gbeneyokono, and that he could come and stay there. After that the first thing he did there was to build a hut on that spot and dwelt there in the forest. Two other men joined him afterwards who founded sections of Kono, Bekwe and Bom.

Gbeneakpana went back to Sii and invited Gbenemiinwaa, Guabugor and Gbenesirawoo. These came and dwelt with him. With these he shared the government of the place:

Gbenemiinwaa became ruler of Nyonkuru  
Guabugo became the priest of Gbeneyokono  
Guabugo as priest of Gbeneyokono was responsible for the  
settlement of treasonable cases, murder cases, etc.  
Gbenemiinwaa was responsible for all civil cases.

More people arrived later and increased the population of the town. This brought squabble with Buan people over land. The land belonged to Buan people. But Gbeneakpana overcame Buan people by use of his war charms.

All traditions of Kono, including all annual feasts, are based on the traditions of Sii.

Anything of traditional importance to be performed by Kono people must first have approval from Sii. The population of Kono was dominated by immigrants from Sii, consequently, the culture of Kono was dominated by the culture of Sii.

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1. Kugba is now extinct. It was the second settlement after Nama. Kugba was not a section of Sii town, though the site is near to it. Sii was founded much later. The founder of Kono did not come directly from Kugba. Kono history is connected with that of Sii because Sii derived its traditions from customs based on the deity Bari Sii, worshipped at Kugba.

Kinglist of Kono: (2)

Gbeneakpana  
|  
Yaah  
|  
Nwikina (d. 1928, Year taxation began in Nigeria;  
Heir, Nwikipurubu refused the stool, saying  
that he had no people)  
|  
Nwinee (1928-1955)  
|  
Abednego  
|  
Edwanu (Was kidnapped by the Biafrans in the Nigerian  
Civil war in 1968.)  
|  
Nwiko  
|  
Degbasa  
|  
Thompson Kpugita Birinee - was installed at Kugba  
according to ancient tradition in May 1976

- 
2. At Sii, it was said by one informant\* that the name "Kono" developed from the accusation by Sii people that Gbeneakpana was involved in cannibalism. That accusation arose because he was always found in that forest. In reply Gbeneakpana was quoted as having said "You say, this was a Kono business" "ba ko ale ama kia Kono"

\* This was reported by Doonee Nwibue Fogho, son of Chief Nwibue Pogho of Sii (aged 70), the reporter. Interview 21 October 1981.

26. MR. DEEGBARA NWINEE OF KONO (Aged c. 68)  
Interviewed at Kono on 23 October 1981

Kono originated from Gbeneakpana, who came from Sii. He was a medicine man, who was hired by the Chief of Buan to make charms for him. As he went into the forest to search for his material, he saw a place swept clean. He became curious about the place and went and consulted the mediums about it. He was told that the place belonged to a deity called Gbeneyokono. Gbeneakpana settled in the place.

Later on two brothers joined to settle in the place. One of these brothers was called Gbeneguayira. He founded the part of Kono called Bara. The other brother named Gbenemiinwaa founded Yokuru. Each of the brothers became the priest of his area of authority.

Kina-Kono which was also settled afterwards by immigrants from Buan. This latter settlement expanded faster and absorbed populations from earlier settlements.

Bom was a heavily forested area which was owned by Buan people. There were many raffia bushes in the area. Now the place is owned by Buan, Baene, Ewae and Kwaawa.

27. MBAEDEE FRANCIS MPEBA OF NYOOGO LUEKUN (Aged c. 98)  
Interviewed at Nyoogo Luekun on 10 March, 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

Where did the founders of Luekun come from?

By which way did they arrive in Khana (Ogoni)?

Recall some of their traditions after they had settled in Khana (Ogoni).

When Korokoro Luekun was founded, have the white people come?

When Luekun was founded, where did they have their market?

What is this saying, which Khana (Ogoni) people used to say,  
"Du Bari le nee"?

Is there any war which you remember which the ancient people fought?

Tell the story about some "plays", clubs or societies which the  
ancient people used to have?

Recite the Kinglist of Luekun from the ancient founders to the present.

B. The Narrative:

From what I saw and from what I heard from the ancient fathers,  
the whole of Khana (Ogoni) was a thick forest. It was Khana (Ogoni)  
people who came and cleared the forests and established the different  
towns which you see. When you hear people say "Khana" as you are  
hearing, what they are saying is "Ghana".

The Gokana, which you hear, and who live at yonder, they were  
"Ghana" but what they are saying is that they are "Go pya Ghana"  
(Ghana kinsmen). All Khana (Ogoni) people came from "Ghana".

Gbenetiginagua was the founder of Luekun. He came by way of  
Tee and entered Korokoro, where he first settled. When he looked  
carefully it seemed to him that that place was too narrow, that it  
would not have enough scope for expansion. For everyone of them who  
came (originally from "Ghana") each took hold of a territory.  
(Nyonebee zii zii aba ba bee lua yigagi zii zii beega, zii zii beega).  
He therefore moved from Korokoro and began to search out bigger  
land for himself. He kept on searching the forests until he came  
to where Gbeneatee of Kpong was. For a while, he stayed with him there.  
As they walked through the forests, the only food they ate was meat  
from the game they killed. According to the ancients, game was sur-  
plus. They said that if you sat at a place in the forest, you would  
see troops of game which would just walk to your side like goats do  
in the villages. Then you kill the one you liked.

Where Gbenetiginagua and Gbeneatee stayed together at Kpong,  
they did not build a city there, they lived in huts made of palm leaves.  
From that point however, they moved in the forests to clear sites for  
towns.

It was from Kpong that Gbenetiginagua found his way through the forest to Baan area. At that time, there was no Taanbaan. The first site he cleared for settlement in Baan area was Korokoro. There you would find the ancient townsquare where Baan people used to meet or gather for any important celebrations. His own house was situated where the old Dara tree is standing. Here you find his shrine also. (Ke ye Loo Zim le nage lo).

After he had finished constructing his house, he went and invited Gbeneatee to come and know where his house was. When Gbeneatee came, he liked the place and what he had done. However, Gbeneatee asked him why he did not clear all the area he passed by on the way. Gbenetiginagua replied that he could not touch those areas because he had already told him that all that part belonged to his (Gbeneatee's) territory. That is why Kpong people never wage war against Baan people on account of land. All the time Gbenetiginagua and Gbeneatee were travelling through the forests and occupying territories, they left their wives at Korokoro Tee. After they had cleared and marked out their towns and built themselves houses then they went back to Korokoro Tee to take their wives (or families).

Gbenetiginagua made Korokoro Luekun his capital; and he ruled all Luekun as the paramount ruler. When other people came into the area looking for where to stay, he would say to this one, "You clear this area". To another he would say "You clear that part", and to yet another, "You advance to that part". He became the Gbenemene who ruled all Baan. Before they settled down in their capital towns, they first travelled far and wide through the forests, marking places that they considered suitable for settlement, and clearing such places. Then they planted colonists in those places. And from those who came first he appointed their chiefs, while he remained their Gbenemene (Great Ruler).

What Khana (Ogoni) people called Jongon, which form parts of some towns, were separate towns at the beginning when the settlements were founded.

Woman founder: The founder of the town of Luudee was a woman. That is why if an animal was butchered and shared among the representatives of the towns, the representative from Luudee would take the breast as a reserved share.

Ghana Origin: The place where the founders of all the Khana (Ogoni) came from was called "Ghana", when war devastated the whole of that country, and the inhabitants were scattered abroad to different places (So no bee gbee lo bue leeke, sa ba yaara kiigi zii zii ke).

When they came, they came by sea and entered Khana territory at a town which was situated in the southern Khana (KeKana), but I do not remember the name of the town again. When they have come on the land, they began to travel through the forests to found settlements.

Establishment of Deities: Among their traditions when they arrived was the annual feast of Zua, when they presented ritual foods to their ancestors. Gbenetiginagua made the Zua feast in Luekun to coincide with the feast of his ancestral deities at Korokoro Luekun. The Zua drum would be beaten to announce the event to all, far and wide.

Another thing they did was that they established deities for the Land (Bari-asaan) and deities for the people (Bari-bue) for each town. Then they established a National Deity for the nation or nationality, for example Bari-Luekun at Korokoro Luekun, the principal town. In Luekun, on the national day (Feast of Bari-Luekun), nobody would go to work. The Zua feast takes place in July while the National Feast (Bari-Luekun) takes place in September.

The snail became a taboo to all Baan people because as it said "Gbenetiginagua gave a decree that Lueku people should not eat the snail because the snail is a taboo to Bari-Luekun" (the national deity of Luekun). Coincidentally the snail is also a taboo to the people of Korokoro Tee from where Luekun people are said to have come to their present location.

When all these things took place, no white man had come into our country. At that time, the most ancient market in all these parts where our people bought and sold, was Du-Bom which held at Korokoro Lueku on Deebom days. Today that market does not exist again. I am the man who removed the many large ancient pots and pottery wares that were heaped in that market from ancient times.

"Du Bari le Nee": It is like a story. They used to say "Nwii ake a, o kuma me 'Du Bari se du nee'?" (This child, do you mean to end me up in the 'Trade of God and Men'?)

Du-Bom: (Bom market) at Korokoro Luekun was the ancient market in all Luekun. Then the people of Daen (who live across the Imo river) came and said "Because our market, Du-son, is by the river side, and because the Ibibios (Pya Bibi) and the Bonny people (Pya Bani), who come to the market, are foreigners (pya ii sua loo) (lit. People we do not know), we cannot protect the market in the event of a war."

Having made this appeal, Tem people decided to provide land for the market to be shifted from the river side at Dael to Tem, which is further up the land above the river. When the matter was being considered, Tem people came to Luekun to say that Luekun people should provide land for the market because they themselves would not be able to defend the market.

The Daen people came, and all the people gathered in a conference and they unanimously conveyed the market Du-Son from Daen to Luekun. They also mandated the market, Du-Son, to the charge of Bari-Luekun (the Luekun National Deity). The market became Luekun market and was held at Korokoro on Deeson day. Instead of holding once a week, it was decided that Du-Son should hold twice in a kpo-eeri (a week of five days). One day on Deebom day to retain the day of the ancient Bom market (Du-Bom). The other day on Deeson to maintain the original day of the original Daen market (Du-Son). The new Luekun market was then called Du-Son.

Whenever a town was founded, the first thing that was done was to dig deep trenches around that town. That time, the white people have not come. Even in the middle of the bush, once you have crossed a deep trench, you know that you have entered another town. It was because of war that they did all those things. But what caused the wars was because of land.

The Obete people crossed the Imo river and settled on our land. Luekun people and Obete went to war. Luekun overcame them and drove them from our land. Later Obete people came to Luekun to beg that they had no place and no land to settle on; that Luekun people should give them some land to settle on. Luekun people told them that they would give them land on condition that every year when the Zua feast takes place, they (Obete people) would come to Luekun to do the traditional rites and to present the ritual foods to the National Deity of Luekun (Bari-Luekun) and to the Zim (ancestor, now Spirit) of the founding fathers who own the land of Luekun. I grew up to see them when they used to come even to the court at Bori; and they used to pay their taxes to Khana (Ogoni) people at Taanbaan.

Koromu and Ka'alu were among the ancient plays. Tintan, I heard that it was a musical instrument which they used to play in accompaniment with other instruments and used for dances in ancient times. I did not see it; I was not born then. But I heard that it was called tintan.

The Kinglist of Luekun;

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Gbenetiginagua
 |
Menedee I
 |
Akpurukue I
 |
Akpurukue II
 |
Menedee II
 |
Akina
 |
Suku
 |
Nuunu
 |
Mpeba I
 |
Mbani
 |
Mpeba II (Mbaedee Francis Mpeba)
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28. JIM BENEDICT YOMII OF KO (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Ko on 25 October 1981

OPUOKO (KO)

The origin of Ko began when two brothers came from Ibibioland across the Imo River. One of them settled at Baene, the other settled in Ko. The man who settled in Ko built his hut by the river. While there, he met another man who had settled on the land. When the man who had settled on the land demanded to know who he was, he introduced himself as a friend, which in Khana language meant Koo. The two men dwelt together. Gbenesaagba was the name of the man who had settled on the land. As they dwelt together, Gbenesaagba continued to call the man on the bank of the river "my friend" (Koo).

In the course of time, the two men divided control of the territory. Gbenesaagba took control of the land, Koo, the river ways. There was intermarriage between the two people. Gbenesaagba got a son, Gbeneiloo; Koo also got a son named Gbenemeneko. When these settlements began there was no other settlement in the area. Taego was founded later.

Intermarriage was practised. The custom of Bogonoo was introduced. A newly married woman was groomed for a period of six months. At the end of the period, the young woman was introduced to the public as a married woman. She attended the market ceremonially. Presents were made to her by relations and friends.

The young men were initiated into the traditional rites of Yaa, to mark the age of manhood.

There were nine settlements in Ko:

1. Gamenebaan - First settled by Gbenesaagba
2. Ko - Settled by Gbenemeneko
3. Taego - Founded by some aborigines
4. Boori - Founded by Gbenedinee, son of Nwigbara Yogo.
5. Gbeneiloo - Founded by Iloo son of Gbenesaagba
6. Daamu - Founded by another son of Gbenesaagba
7. Luewii - Founded by still another son of Gbenesaagba
8. Uwekuwe - Settled by the aborigines from Koo's settlement
9. Nonwa - Founded by Gbeneiloo, son of Gbenesaagba

The sister towns of Ko were Buon, Luuwa, and Bianu. These towns share the same customs and traditions with Ko. They have the same types of sports and festivals, and share boundaries and the same farming seasons.

The settlers of Buon came from Ko. According to tradition, it was founded as a settlement for twin-mothers. They were isolated because they bore twins, or copulated with twin-mothers.

Luuwa was founded by two hunters from Beeri, and one other from Bere. The founder of Bianu was Kporoneme, a man who migrated from Ko. Nonwa was founded by another man who also migrated from Ko.

Chief Yomii Deedam was appointed a warrant Chief of Ko from 1927. He began to attend Court first at Opobo town, then at Igwanga, and later at Sogho in 1923. Before his appointment as Warrant Chief, he had been a Court Judge for more than ten years.

His father was Deedam Nwidere, died April 1929. Yomii himself died 1976.

Kinglist:

- Gbenemeneko
- Gbeneda
- Deedam Nwidere
- Yomii Deedam
- J.B. Yomii

Some people from Ko went to Kono and established a part of Kono.

Their occupation consisted of: Palm wine tapping; farming, yam etc.; fishing; canoe making.

Their tools consisted of: Kuna - for clearing the bush; kobege - for cutting, used for Yaa tradition; Kon - for yaa and for war.

They traded in slaves and lae, tobacco, wine, palm oil and kernel, agricultural produce, etc. Large market at Ko waterside, and a market at Wiisue in Ibibioland. Also a large market at neighbouring Ibibio land called Dude. Ko people traded in these markets. Ko's neighbours were Bonny, Opopu, Ibibio, Ndoki, Andoni, etc.

Wars: (1) Bionu War was caused as a result of land dispute. This war took place in the late nineteenth century. Ko won the war.

(2) Beeru war was also caused by territorial dispute. This was in the early twentieth century. Ko won this war also.

Ko was strong because it had links with European traders who supplied Ko with arms. Ko traded in the Atlantic Slave Trade as middle men. Ko also had natural war instincts. The weapons used by Ko included guns which were obtained from Europeans, spears, bows and arrows, swords, etc..

KpaanKpaan was the most early Secret Society for the Elders. Duu was another Secret Society for the Elders.

The main shrine of Ko was called Gbeneda. It was the Loo (or shrine of) Gbenemeneko. It could be visited by persons who have been initiated in the Yaa traditions. There were also sectional shrines for each of the settlements enumerated.

Intermarriages existed between the various sections of Ko. Ko existed before Bonny.

Gure and Ko came to be about the same time.

Buon was established as a result of twin births. Buon or Buun means double or joined. It was therefore called Buon Ko because they were the same people, or part of the original town.

The Ibani: The Ibani traded with Ko people in ancient times. They came in batches over decades and centuries. They were known to Khana (Ogoni) people at Ko as Ebani, Bani or Beeni people or people

from Ebani (1). (Pya Ebani, or Pya Bani or Pya Beeni).

The Ibani distinguished between the two Ko towns. Ko they called Opuoko; and Buon, they called Kalaoko. Opuoko, meaning Great Ko; Kalaoko, meaning Lesser Ko. These names have remained till today, but Ko is the name known to Khana (Ogoni) people.

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1. Ebani means far, afar off, or from afar, or from a distance, or beyond. Later the word was corrupted to "Ibani". The implication is that the Ogoni at Ko did not know from where the Ibani had come; and apparently the Ibani themselves could not identify their place of origin and they did not seem to have had a definite name or identity.

29. J.B. YOMII OF KO (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Ko on 15 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

I would like you to tell us how Ko came to be and about other towns in this area.

Where did the first settler in Ko live?

When he arrived in Ko, did he see people?

What traditions did they bring with them?

Did the Ibibios marry from Khana (Ogoni)?

Did other Ibibios come to settle also?

Did people from other parts of Khana (Ogoni) come to settle?

What do you know about Gbenesaagba concerning the founding of Ko?

Why was this town also called Opuoko?

What traditions did the people of Ko have in common with Ibibios?

Did the Ibibios have such traditions as Zua?

Did the Ibibios have similar traditions regarding the farming season as the Khana (Ogoni)?

What traditions did you have in connection with marriage?

Were there any wars between Ko and other people?

Were there any wars between Ko and Bibi (Ibibio)?

What kind of trade existed between Khana (Ogoni) and Bani (Bonny) in ancient times?

Have you ever heard this Khana saying "Du Bari le nee"?

Tell the story of Wiisue, Ko.

B. The Narrative:

Two friends who were hunters came across the Imo river and settled on this side. One of the men settled in Ko, the other settled in Baene. The friend who settled at Ko was called "Konee", while the one who settled in Bane was called "Baanee". When they first arrived, they did not find or see any person in these parts. Some Ko people can speak Ibibio language and dance their dances. Similarly some Ibibio people can speak Kana language and dance Kana dances.

The Khana (Ogoni) people marry wives from Ibibio but the Ibibio do not marry wives from the Khana (Ogoni) people. Apart from those two men who migrated to this side in the earliest times, no other

Ibibio people migrated to this side. The Ibibios who are here were those sent away from their place by marriage, i.e. those married by Khana people. It seems that those who first settled on this side did not allow other Ibibios to settle here. Even those who crossed over and attempted to settle here were driven back.

Gbenesagba was from Ko. He was the founder of the town of Gan or Gamenebaan in Ko. Gbenemene Ko founded the town of Buapaari. Gbeneiloo founded the other town called Nuaga. The following are the towns and villages in Ko:

Gan (or Gamenebaan) - founded by Gbenesagba  
Buapaari - founded by Gbenemenebaan  
Nuaga - founded by Gbeneiloo  
Luwii  
Gbara  
Wiikue  
Boori  
Nwidamii  
Bara  
Taego

Gbenemenebaan was the first to arrive and was settled before the others arrived and settled in their respective towns. Taego was settled by later immigrants. At first they established a village at the site where the community Secondary School now stands. Later on they moved to their present location. They were refugees escaping from war. They took refuge under the protection of Gbenesagba who made them slaves (Lo su wa nua pya ya zooro). Their main social function was to provide entertainment whenever there was a national celebration.

Our grandfather Deedam was a friend of King Jaja. When King Jaja fled from Bonny (Bani) because of civil war, he came to our river where he stayed at our waterside for some time. After some time, Deedam took him to the present site of Opobo. Deedam also recruited some warriors to assist him; and they helped to clear that place. Through this friendly relationship between Deedam and Jaja, the latter, in trying to distinguish between the two towns, called Ko, Opuoko, and Buon, Kalaoko, because it was the smallest town. But these were not the original names of the towns.

I do not think that the Ibibios have similar traditions like Zua which Khana people have, because the calendars were different, and also, in Khana, the Zua feast was something that everyone honoured. In Ko, a feast like the Yomii (Feast of Wine, or of the Wine deity), everyone honours and has a holiday to celebrate it. This feast prepared the people for the beginning of the new farming season. Once the Feast of Yomii had taken place, people whose lands were rented, pawned or pledged, were no longer allowed to redeem such lands that year, because it was believed that by that time of year, those who held such lands would not have time again to look for alternative lands for planting their crops. I do not think that the Ibibios had this type of tradition. If they did, then it must have been that I did not know about it.

Khana people also had special traditions about marriage. One example of such traditions was this. When a suitable girl had been

selected for marriage, on a certain date the family of the young man carried marriage wine to the family of the girl. The package consisted of two bottles of good wine, a gourd of palm wine, one hundred manillas, etc.. The girl herself was present, her parents were present, her brothers and sisters were present, some relatives were also present. In the presence of all these the father of the young man brought out the package and gave it to his son, the young man, to present to the parents of the girl. The young man presented this package to the girl, who gave it to her parents. If she accepted the package from the young man's hands, it was an indication that she would marry him. If she did not, it was understood that she had not made up her mind concerning him. When she had accepted the package from the young man, then her parents asked her why she accepted it. Then she answered: "Because he is the man I will marry". She then gave the package to her parents. From that point the ceremonies of that evening proceeded.

About war, whenever a war was fought, it was because of land. The people of Bianu Bangha waged a war against Ko on account of our farm land. We fought in the war and drove them back. Bunu Bangha did the same. Bunu and Bionu joined together and fought against Ko, but we repelled them.

Bani and Khana (Ko) had never been at war with each other at any time. Rather what used to happen was that Pya Bani (Bonny people) used to hire warriors from Khana to join them to fight against their enemies. One of such occasions was in a war between Pya Bani (Bonny people) and Pya Bono (Andoni people). The Andoni of Ngo killed some Bonny people. Bonny people came to Ko to borrow (bogara) some men who could fight in war. With these they waged a war against the Andoni.

There are two Banis that exist. There is the Bani okolomatoro, and there is the Bani Opobo (also called Okontoro by the Khana (Ogoni)). Of these two, none has gone to war against Ko at any time.

There was a system of trade that existed at Ko riverside market. When the Bani people brought their fish or other merchandise, Khana (Ogoni) people would act as middle men. They would buy those things from the Bani people and take them to the main market on the land to sell them. Similarly, these Khana (Ogoni) traders would buy food stuffs from the farmers and from the market women and take to the riverside market to sell to Bani people. Bani people were not allowed to buy directly from the producers in that market, or to sell directly to the buyers.

"Du Bari le nee": I have often heard the saying "Du Bari le nee". My own father used to say it also. The reason behind the saying was that, in that trade, there was no changing of trade items and you did not see each other face to face. I heard that such a market existed.

Wiisue, Ko: Wiisue is a Ko town situated on the east bank of the Imo River. It was founded by the first son (saaro) of Gbenemenebere. This man called Gbenemenebere was from Tee, but he was a wizard and sorcerer in those ancient times. They expelled him from Tee. When he arrived in this town he hid himself in the bush (or forest) near

the town. It was observed that whenever the owner of a farm had done his day's work in his farm and left the farm, he came out of hiding and began to do some work in that farm. The wife of Gbeneiloo named Wa'anape prepared some food, concealed it and placed it in the farm. Then she spoke loudly saying "Whoever had been doing work in this farm should take this food and eat". Having spoken thus she walked away to a distance and concealed herself to observe. Then Gbenemebere came out of hiding and took the food to eat it. She saw him. They caught him and brought him to the town to the house of Gbeneiloo her husband. People gathered and clamoured that he should be killed because he was an evil person.

Gbeneiloo refused to yield to their demand, saying that if the King of Ko (Gbenemene Ko) should hear about it, he himself would be in trouble. They sent him to the Gbenemene Ko. The Gbenemene Ko took him and placed him before the shrine of the Land deity and declared that he should become the Town deity. They painted (or rubbed his shaved head) with the red camwood powder (do); and his body with "gold" powder (waaro) and white 'clay' powder (nem). Then they decreed that nobody should ever touch him because he has become a citizen. They gave him land at the gate of the town (bee bana bue) to control the gateway to the town. They did this so that if any evil thing would attempt to enter the town, he would be there to prevent it.

From that day, it became a law that if two wives of a man quarrelled and fought, the more beautiful of the two would be asked to quit her husband's house to live in the compound of Gbenemebere. She would cease to be the wife of her former husband.

When the son saw what was done, he became afraid and fled from the town across the river. There he founded his own settlement, which became known as Wiisue, Ko. He married from Khana (Ogoni). They speak Kana as well as Ibibio. They do things with Ko people as well as with Ibibio people.

30. J.B. OBUH (CHIEF) OF KABANGHA (Aged c. 74)  
Interviewed at Kabangha on 15 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

Narrate the story of the founding of Kabangha?

What was the name of the village where Gbene Oleghere saw the smoke?

Did Gbene Oleghere find out how long Namayo had been at Baragboo before their first meeting?

When you say "riverain people" ("Pya bue maa"), which specific riverain people do you mean?

Where in Ibibioland (Bibi) did Gbene Oleghere come from?

Are there any traditions which Bangha people share with Sii people?

Name the towns (or communities) in Kabangha.

What were the major occupations of Kabangha people?

Had the white men come at the time Kabangha was founded?

B. The Narrative:

The founder of Kabangha was Gbene Oleghere. Oleghere was his father. He lived in Ibibioland where he was a hunter. He crossed the River from Ibibioland by means of a canoe. After he had found a good land for settlement, he went back to take his wife. On a certain day, he saw smoke in the forest. When he approached the place, he found a man named Namayo who had settled there. Namayo told him that he came from Kugba, Sii.

Namayo told the story that he fled his town because they accused him that he was a sorcerer. The two became the rulers of Kabangha and they caused the town to grow and expand. Gbene Oleghere became the "leader" and Namayo became his deputy. If they decided on something to do in the communities, Namayo was the person who appointed the persons to carry out the tasks. Today it is the members of the House of Namayo (Pya Gaan Namayo) who control or bear the "Town's Basket" (ba "Toora to Bue"). That is to say that Gbene Oleghere was the Ruler (Gbenemene) and Namayo, the Chief Minister (Lah-Bue).

The town Namayo founded was called Baragboo. They tried to find out how long Namayo had been there before Gbene Oleghere met him. We know this because when the riverain peoples came to do the annual rituals to the deities of this land, they asked Namayo to tell them who between him and Gbene Oleghere was the senior person? Namayo replied that Gbene Oleghere was his "father".

By riverain people (Pya bue maa), I am referring to Bonny people specifically. They used to trade with our people. Once there was a civil war at Bonny. Bonny people fought and defeated Jaja and

expelled him from Bonny. The town of Opobo is a new town. When Jaja had been driven from Bonny, he and his men escaped; and as he floated in the creeks, he came to our waterside and sought help from our leaders. The first thing our leaders did was to send out our warriors to assist him. They first cleared a place along our waterfront, to provide a temporary settlement for them. Later on our King (Deedam Nwiidere the Gbenemene Ko) took him to where Opobo Town is today. There they cleared the bush and built their permanent home. While this work was going on our warriors protected the trade route through Imo River while our medicine men prepared for Jaja the war medicines (charms) which he needed to win against his enemies. For this assistance, each year whenever Jaja and his men did their annual celebrations, they brought wine to our leaders to do rituals (libations) at the war shrine which helped them in the time of their troubles. They used to invite our people to come and celebrate with them but after some time our people stopped going there. Then they said in their language "Okoloama na Ogoni gborofini". That is, that the Ogoni and the Bonny people were "one people" or "one brother".

We do not have traditional activities with Sii people. The reason was that when Namayo left Sii, he did so because they expelled him. He was running away to escape being killed. So he did not go back there again. That prevented the continuation of traditional links with Sii.

The following are the names of the towns and communities of Kabangha:

Luubara - founded by Gbene Oleghere  
Baragboo - Namayo's town  
Nyojongo  
Nyongo  
Taeke  
Yaakoo - founded for twin mothers

In ancient times twin mothers were killed together with their twin children. It came to be that some influential men whose wives became twin mothers and who had pity for their wives, paid money to the elders to spare the lives of such women. The result was that a separate town was founded for the isolation of such women. That was how the town of Yaakoo in Kabangha developed.

The major occupation of Kabangha people includes farming, fishing, palm wine tapping, canoe-making, etc.. But the principal canoe-makers in these areas are the Ko people. They specialized in canoe-making, which they sold for big money.

When these towns were founded, no white people had come. That was why the people had their own governments and their own laws by which they could condemn a person to death.

31. TEETEE EDAMNI NWILABBA (CHIEF) OF BUON, KO (Aged c. 120)  
Interviewed at BUON, KO on 15 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the interview:

What is the name of this village?

What is the name of the whole town?

What names did Khana (Ogoni) people call them before they had contacts with Bani (Bonny) people?

Did Ko and Buon do things together in ancient times?

What contacts did Bibi (Ibibio) people make with this place?

Explain the origin of this name Ko.

Mention some important traditions in this town.

Narrate the story about any wars which occurred between Khana (Ogoni) and Bibi (Ibibio) either on account of this land or this river (Imo River, Bonny)

Why did Ko and Buon answer Bani (Bonny) names?

What were the principal occupations of this town?

Was there any war which Ko and Buon fought against other people in ancient times?

Did Ko and Buon take part in the slave trade?

What is your own position in this town?

The big market which you said was at Ko and Buon waterside in ancient times, why is it not holding again? When did it stop holding?

B. The Narrative:

This village is called Nwilabba. The whole town was called Kalaoko by Pya Bani (Bonny people). The other town they called Opuoko. Khana people called this town Buon. The other town they called Ko. The founders of these towns came from Tee.

Gbenesagba was the founder of Ko. He was the leader of the group who came from Tee. One of the men in the group was called Gbeneiloo.

At first they settled at Ko. After some time Gbenesagba told Gbeneiloo to move to another place because Ko would not provide sufficient space for all of them. Thereupon Gbeneiloo moved to Buon, and cleared the site of Buon. He later invited Gbenesagba to come and have a look at the new town. Many other people joined. Gbeneobia joined him, Nwilabba followed suit, so that Nwilabba and Gbeneobia together cleared one village in Buon and became the Te-ere-bue of

that village. One called Olodee came also. Another called Nwibira cleared a part. Bookurawa cleared the site of Eeneme village.

Ko and Buon are almost the same, they are together on the west bank of the Imo river. The two towns begin their farming season together. Their farms are side-by-side. Ko and Buon are like two brothers.

The Ibibios did not cross the river to this side. Rather, it was Khana people who crossed the Imo river and settled on the other side (east side). There is a Khana (Ogoni) town called Sogi (or Jogi) which exists on the east bank of the Imo river. How they went there was that war broke out among the Ibibios. One side in the war came to Khana (Ogoni) to borrow warriors to help them in the fight. Many Khana (Ogoni) people went to the war. Unfortunately many of them were killed. The few that remained alive refused to return to Khana because they had lost so many people who followed them. The remnants settled on the east bank of the Imo river.

After many years the Ibibios sought to remove them from there, but they refused to leave, saying that they fought for that land and lost many lives. They won many litigations against the Ibibios on that ground.

The name of Ko started from the time the town was founded. When the Ibani (Bonny) began to trade with Ko and Buon, they usually pitched their boats either on the Ko side or on the Buon side of the large market that held on the riverside. As they came from their towns they would decide beforehand which side they would pitch their boats. Because Ko was the large town, they called it Opuoko. Since Buon was the smaller town, they called it Kalaoko. In the course of time, these names remained. "Opuoko" means that this one is Great (Gbene) "Kalaoko" means that this one is little or lesser (Ikina).

One of the traditions of Buon Ko was the feast of Yomii (the Palm wine deity). This feast takes place in August. People used to invite relations and friends to dinner. People painted their bodies with artistic designs. The occasion was full of joy and there were many dances and plays.

The chief occupations of Ko and Buon include fishing, farming, canoe-making and trading. Their farm produce includes yams, plantains, maize, cassava and vegetables.

The Seven Nations of Bangha made war against Ko and Buon over our land. Only that war we know. No other people have waged war against Ko and Buon.

In ancient times, they sold evil men, men who committed crimes, such as adultery, stealing, having sex relations with a woman who had born twins (lo-elo), having sex with a woman without having done Yaa traditional rite, and other like offences. There was a great market at the Ko and Buon waterside, but they did not sell people in that market. Those to be sold were taken "abroad" (su kuma ue).

Those who used to come to the market were Pya Bani (Bonny people) Pya Mana (certain Igbo nations), Pya Bekee (Europeans). Khana people

used to bring yams, plantains, maize, palm oil and palm kernels, and much other farm produce. Bani people used to bring fish, and European goods which they obtained from the white men.

What caused the market to decline was that Bani people stopped bringing fish to the market. Other causes were that palm oil and palm kernels were no longer bought.

Note

Chief Teetee Edamni Nwilabba - A member of the Council of Elders  
A member of the Royal House of  
Nwilabba (a founding Ancestor)  
A Land Priest and traditional man  
Aged ca. 120 years

32. EDWARD DUNWAA OF BUON KO (Aged 58)  
Interviewed at Buon Ko on 15 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Who founded Buon, Ko ?

Where did the founders of Buon, Ko come from?

B. The Narrative:

The founder of Buon, Ko was Gbeneabee. In these parts the name was pronounced Gbeneobia, but it is the same person. His actual name was Gbeneabee. He was among those who came from Tee.

According to what I heard, they came from Korokoro, Tee. It may be that some of them came from another town in Tee.

Gbenesagba and Gbeneiloo were the people who founded Ko. Gbeneoso and Gbeneabee were the first founders of Buon before others came to join them. It was Gbeneabee who invited his friend Nwilabba. But Nwilabba was a very energetic man. He soon overshadowed his leader and made himself more popular than Gbeneabee. For this reason the name of Nwilabba was widely remembered by the people.

It was reported that Nwilabba himself came from Kaa. But I do not know which Kaa it was; whether it was the ancient Kaa of Tee which was destroyed, or the Kaa of Babbe. I suppose that the ancient Kaa in Tee is more probable since the Kaa in Babbe is of relatively recent times.

33. PIA'OO MENEWA, SPIRIT MEDIUM OF GBENEYOKPONG  
Interviewed at Kpong on 24 October 1981

How Kpong was Founded

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

You say that Kpong was founded by Ateeh. Narrate how Ateeh became the founder of Kpong? Where did Ateeh come from?

Do Baene people agree that they came from Kpong?

Are there any rituals, ceremonies or feasts which Baene people share with Kpong people? Whether connected with the farming season, or connected with deities, or with the New Year?

During which month of the year does the Zua Feast take place?

Would you say then that all these things take place in July or in August?

When Ateeh first arrived at Kpong, what did he begin to do?

What were his activities and occupation?

Which town or place did you hear that Ateeh came from?

When he (Ateeh) goes into "possession" and "boasts" himself of his achievements, where does he say he comes from? You mean that there was a fight in their former "community" and in their farm which made him escape and found Kpong?

Who are Kpong's neighbours? Is Beerri a community in Kpong?

How many communities are in Kpong?

Why did the people here dig deep trenches around their communities in ancient times?

Are there any parts of those trenches still existing, which have not been filled?

Were those trenches made during your life time or did you grow up to see them?

According to what you heard, where were the trenches dug?

With whom did Kpong people fight their wars? Which weapons did they use?

B. The Narrative:

He (Ateeh) divided the territory and gave one part (or town) to Gbeneakpong, one part to Gurete, one part to Yaakaragute. Then he sent colonists to Luawii and to Baene. It was people from Kpong who went to settle at Baene. The old men who first entered the world did not teach people the type of questions you have asked me now.

What was called a Ruler, as far as the whole of these parts was concerned, was Gbeneakpong. He was the Ruler of the whole of this area, and was the first to be recognized, even in matters of tribute (or taxation). Thus, they used to say, the Ruler, Gbeneakpong, the Ruler, Ateeh, the Ruler, Gurete; each one according to this order. When they offered food and libations to the ancestors during the time of feasts, they followed the same order.

As I was going to announce the Festival of Yomii on Deeson coming, it is I myself who will "eat" the feast first before the Yormii Feast is celebrated in this town.

The sacrifices and the rituals which my forefathers performed, into which they also inaugurated me after they had departed, are the things I must begin to put in order. That is why every feast that is celebrated in this town I must first celebrate it before the general public will celebrate it. If you ask any other person, they will tell you exactly what I am recounting to you now. It is just like men are teaching me, and that I am learning, too. That is why if any of you should ask me about it, I must say it. It is for that reason that I am making this statement now, namely that I (Gbeneakpong) am the Ruler of the part of this kingdom called Bara, that is, Bara Kpong. And the founders of the whole of this land can say that the name of one of the rulers was Ateeh and the other Gurete.

It was Ateeh who divided the territory at the time the towns were founded. He gave a part of the territory to Yaakaragute. When Ateeh went over to the place, he saw Yaakaragute who had already crossed the river and planted his "flag" there. So Ateeh told him to occupy that area and he named the place Yaakara.

He then left that place and rushed to Luawii, where he stayed for some time. He cleared the forest in that place for settlement, and built there a house for himself. He then left Luawii and went to clear the site of Baene. After that colonists from Kpong came and occupied the whole of Baene, both men and women, as you can see today. Thus people from Baene marry wives from Kpong, and people from Kpong marry wives from Baene. When they intermarry, they do not regard themselves as marrying from outside, it is like your own daughter coming to marry you. People from this town are always moving to the other town and people from the other town are always moving to this town. If you ask other people, they will tell you that Baene is full of people from Kpong, both men and women.

Concerning the annual feasts, we have the Zua Feast at the same time as Wiiyaakara people. The day we pour the libations and throw the food to the gods is the day they do.

Our farming season begins in December. When the crops that are planted, such as the yams, have begun to ripen, people go to harvest some of the yams and use them for the Zua feast. Some people would go to the market to buy the yams they will need for the feast, that is those who did not plant their own yam crops that year. They buy fish, wine, etc.; with these they will make the Zua feast. They will make presents of food and drinks to their ancestors, and they also do custom to the ancestors of their wives as those from whom they married.

Since it is the fruit of the yam crop planted in December of the old year that will be used for the feast in the New Year, the Zua feast naturally takes place in July of the New Year, because it takes that long for the yam to get ripe. After the Zua feast, there follow the various feasts of the gods.

Ateeh and his son, Saah, were ruffians. They were both head-hunters and warriors. Their job was head-hunting. If a man was not a warrior or a hunter, he was regarded as worthless. In our time, we tell "them" that it is a new era, and that no-one can do such a thing now. In those days whenever he (Ateeh) was in possession of a medium he would tell you "Go abroad" and fight and bring human "trophies". Now no-one can be asked to do that.

According to what I heard from the ancients, this Ateeh came from Ba in Tee. When he possessed a medium, he himself used to say that he came from Ba, Tee. According to the story, he and his junior brother were working on a farm with their mother. When their water got exhausted, he asked his junior brother to go and fetch water for them to drink, the brother refused. He himself went and fetched the water. No sooner than he brought the water that his brother took hold of it and drank the water. Ateeh became infuriated, and in the fight that ensued, he carried his brother and landed him on a stake in the farm which pierced him through and he died. When he saw that his brother had died, he escaped from Ba. It was in the course of his exile that he founded the kingdom of Kpong.

About Beeri people our ancestors did not open any road for them. The only section of Beeri, which our ancestors occupied, that part is called Yoo. There you find our citizens, such as Idoba. That is the area where our ancestors sent colonists. That was the part Ateeh himself cleared; it is called Yoo in Beeri. Apart from that part of Beeri, I would say that the whole of Beeri does not belong to us. Every one of our sons who went to live in Beeri, lived in Yoor. As you pass through Akogboro quarters, you begin to enter Yoor, which is our town; and that is where Idoba lives.

Kpong itself was divided into several communities or towns. One of the communities is called Bara, one is Gure, another is Korogbere. The others are Yaagogbara, Keon, Taebara and Uwegwere. Now the towns have grown towards each other. People have built houses in places which were formerly bushes. The result is that our towns are expanding towards Koor, and Koor is expanding towards our towns; they will soon merge together.

In those days when there was war, the deep trenches acted to prevent enemy forces from entering the towns. If you were a warrior you would know your movements, how you would do to overcome the enemy who crossed the trenches and entered the towns. You would know that you have cut them off, and that they could not get away. When they would turn back to escape, you would ambush them; they would not know that you have taken positions in places you previously selected outside the communities. It was for this purpose that the ancients dug the trenches round the towns. If anyone tried to damage the trenches he was fined according to the rules laid down by the ancients, which we came to see: sixty bronze manillas, one goat, a bunch of plantains, a basket of yams, fish, drinks, etc.

As it is, the trenches have not totally disappeared from around the towns. They never do. Those who tried to fill them, we are making case against them to prevent them, so that you cannot talk of the trenches disappearing altogether. When an "evil wind" blows, or any "evil" comes to the trenches, it will stop and say to itself:

"I will not go over this trench.  
If I go over this trench,  
It will mean that I have gone astray;  
It will mean that I have gone the wrong way".

I grew up to see these trenches. I did not know when they were made. Before I was born they were already in existence. I do not know when my ancestors and all the ancients who lived at that time dug the trenches.

After they had dug the trenches they made a crossing point over it by means of a bridge made of a single coconut trunk and a hand bar, over which people placed their hands when crossing, either going or coming from the farms, or when carrying a load of yams, wood, or other things from the farms.

Nowadays people are filling these trenches. And all of us are angry about it; that is, all those who follow the way of the ancients. As they have said that they would not listen to our warnings, we have kept our peace, knowing that if any evil enters the towns as a result, it will affect all of us.

It was over these trenches that the ancients used to place an "injunction" or a "ban" whenever there was a crisis or an extraordinary condition in the towns. Thus if you went to any town, like Taanbaan, Beeri, Wiiyaakara, etc., and you saw a ban placed over the trenches, you knew that the people in the towns are dealing with very serious matters. And anybody who broke such a ban was heavily fined - sixty bronze manillas, a goat, wine, yams, etc..

In those ancient times, the war implements included kobege (short two-edged swords), spears, suwe, guns, bows and arrows. The spears, swords, guns, etc., were made by blacksmiths.

34. CHIEF DOMINIC ANDERSON KEEKKEE OF KPONG (Aged c. 53)  
Interviewed at Kpong on 24 October 1981

The founder of Kpong was Ateeh. Ateeh came from Ba, Teeh. He escaped from Ba after killing his brother and took asylum in Kpong. At that time, there were no settlers at Kpong, and no villages. Ateeh built a hut there. He married a woman named Yiranwaa. Before that marriage, Yiranwaa had had her first son by a previous marriage at Luubaara. This son was named Saah.

Yiranwaa brought Saah her son to the new husband's place. Ateeh was not very pleased with Saah at first, but later on he received him well. Because of the existence of plenty of land, King Ateeh became very prosperous. His wife gave him his first son and many children afterwards.

His first son named Yaakara settled on the river.

This new settlement was called after his name Wiiyaakara. This is why the traditions of Wiiyaakara are based on Kpong traditions.

Saah became strongheaded in the community. Because of this, he was banished (1) to Baene. His property is there till today. He later escaped from Baene and returned to Kpong. He married and established his own lineage at Kpong. Other people joined him.

Ateeh established a national deity with one of his sons as its priest.

Another of Ateeh's sons founded the town of Koo. His name was Gbenegarah. Another founded Nyonkuru. This was why Kpong exercised sovereignty over all the surrounding towns.

Saah attempted to kill his stepfather but he escaped. For this act, Saah was not given any inheritance in his stepfather's property. Ateeh shared his property while he was still alive, except the rulership of the city.

Nwidag descended from Saah, which was not a ruling house. He was allowed to act as Regent because of his contributions to the welfare of the town. He got the function of Court Judge during the colonial era.

Early Settlements: The first settlement of Kpong was Buabee. The second settlement was Uwegwere. Uwegwere is still part of the city but Buabee is no longer settled. The site of Buabee is now occupied by a Federal Government agricultural farm. But before they occupied the area, the antiquities which were there were transferred to another site called GbeneKpong. GbeneKpong or Gbeneyokpong was a deity which existed in the area before Ateeh came there. It became the Land Deity of Kpong. Zah was another name connected with the founding of Kpong.

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1. Some accounts say that he was actually sold to slave dealers; that he escaped from them, and for some time lived at Baene.

The people of Kpong were farmers. They grew yams, plantains, cocoyams (geere), yagara, sweet yams, water yams (ya), etc. Ya was the ritual crop. The founding ancestors of the land first eat the Ya before anyone else. Other economic activities included hunting, fishing, carving of masks, canoe-making, blacksmithing, etc.. The smiths made knives, matchets, hoes, razors, kuna, kobege, spears, etc. Certain occupations were based on lineages.

Kpong traded with Gure, Sii, Sogho, Ebani, etc. The ancient markets were Duko at Tem, Lueku, and Dukpong at Kpong itself.

The articles of trade included food stuffs, fruits, nuts; crafts, slaves, etc. Wicked citizens were sold into slavery. Ateeh was a slave trader during the Atlantic Slave trade. He sold Saah but Saah escaped and returned home.

The Sogho war was fought over land boundaries. Kpong collected tributes of palm wine from the subordinate communities, Luawii, Betem, Nyonkuru, Taabangh, etc..

In Kpong, land was cultivated in seven yearly rotations. This coincided with the cultivation of Sogho people. Thus each seven years, their boundary war was renewed.

The communities of Kpong include the following:

1. Keeon - Founded by Apemaa Maapie, first settled.
2. Barakpong - First settled by Nwideezua Kpagi
3. Korogbere - Settled by Fepee Nwikpaa
4. Yaagorugbora - Settled Agbu Kpobu
5. Wiinua - Settled by Aasu Baridam
6. Uwegwere - Akobanee Igunu
7. Jongo Gure - Settled by Kinee Babaa
8. Jongo Eedee - Settled by Agamene Nwiga

35. CHIEF M.N. AKEKUE OF KPUITE, TEE (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Kpuite on 21 November 1981

Ekposogho was the former Khana name for the site of Opobo town. It was a former fishing camp owned by Khana people. In 1922, two Khana men, Zegenee from Kono, and Nwibane from Ewae, testified at a Calabar High Court concerning the site. One of them stated that the first day he came there, he saw only one palm tree, and that he picked up a tortoise from under the palm tree.

The case was the result of a struggle over right of ownership of the place where the men were staying to do fishing, which was still within the neighbourhood of Opobo town. A group of newcomers from Bonny had wanted to take the place from them in order to use it for the new trade in palm produce. They named the place Ekposogho, because it was full of these vegetable plants.

Namene was the founder of Baezor in Eleme; it was a site between Alode and Onne, but is now extinct.

Kaa was the largest city in Tee. The inhabitants scattered abroad because when the town was invaded in the middle of a night, the king was murdered

Those who escaped from there founded other towns:

Gbarakaa - founded Nwebiara in Gokana

Gbenebe - founded the New Kaa in Babbe

Other villages founded by people who escaped from Kaa, Tee, were Deeyo, Kaani, Biara, etc.. Biara was founded by Gbenewiga and Kaani by Teeyira from Sogho. The inhabitants scattered because they feared a repeat of the incident if anyone remained there.

36. EMMANUEL NNEKA OF KPUITE (Aged c. 80)  
Interviewed at Kpuite on 16 November 1981

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell the story about this Khana (Ogoni) saying:

"Du Bari le Nee"

When that trade was going on, have white men come to the land?

B. The Narrative:

"Du Bari le Nee" ("The trade of God and Men"), refers to the period when our ancestors changed over from wearing raffia cloths. Du Bari le Nee was a place from where people used to buy cloth to wear. The market used to be held very early in the morning, and it held every five days. One must go to that market very early in the morning. People did not carry any money to the market. What you carried to sell in the market, you did not have to bring it back home. You placed the thing which you brought to the market by the cloth. Then you took the cloth home. It was not a market where people see each other eye-to-eye, and you did not price. The person who kept the cloth, you did not see him.

The next five days when you came to the market, you saw cloths already placed on the ground (bui muenage kee ba sere ke). You placed what you brought to the market by the cloth. Then you took the cloth home. The reason they called it Du Bari le Nee was because you did not see the person who kept the cloth there. So they called it Du Bari le nee (The Trade of God and men). That was how the story went.

After that trade was no longer in existence for a long time,

There came a time in Tee area when white men have come, that they saw a certain man who wore a shirt and trousers.

People ran away, saying that they have seen God. They cried:

"Ba e muela Bari a ni'ee  
Ba e muela Bari  
Ba e muela Bari

They have seen God today  
They have seen God  
They have seen God

The people who used to bring the cloth we have been wearing, they have come. God has come today". The whole people rushed to the place to see him. For it was from them that people used to obtain the cloth to wear. They did not know that the people who came were white men, but they called them God. Whether it was God, nobody knows.

After that has passed, the white men came fully. Then they destroyed whole nations before they established their rule.

37. LEELE NAABEE NGITO OF KPUITE, TEE (Aged c. 99)  
Interviewed on 17 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Say something about your own ancestors: Were they among the rulers? Were they members of the Council of Elders? Or were they among the Priests and mediums?

Were the Gaan Kooko among the rulers of Tee?

Tell the story about how Tee was founded.

Why did they call the shooting of Tee people and the destruction of their towns by the white men "No Popo"?

Who was the ruler of Tee before the white men came?

We have heard that Korokoro was the most ancient town in Tee. Tell the story about how Korokoro became the most ancient town in Tee.

Who was the founder of Uweke?

Where did he come from?

Have you ever heard this saying which Khana (Ogoni) people used to say "Du Bari le nee" ("The Trade of God and Men")?

Tell us how that saying entered the Kana language?

What did "God" keep on the ground for the people to "buy"?

Why did they not see each other?

How many times did people do the Yaa traditional rites in Tee?

When there was an argument over a matter between two persons or parties, how was it settled?

Which spirits or mediums did they consult in Tee?

B. The Narrative:

My father came from Gaan Kooko. The people of Gaan Kooko were next to the ruler. They were the Lah Bue (the Right Hand, of the Town or of the Ruler). There were many other Gaan in Tee. One called Yaah was a ruler in Tee. He was a friend of the King of Ko (Opuoko). The Ko people and the Bani Bonny people were tight friends (like two fingers of the hand together). The Bani people passed many war materials like firearms to Ko people. Yaah obtained some of these guns from his Ko friend. With these guns Yaah became very powerful in Tee. People became afraid of him. From this, Yaah became a ruler in Tee, although the House of the Chief of the Town was still there. After Yaah had died, they built a memorial for him on which they lined human skulls. They called this memorial Loo Yaah. It was erected at Kpuite townsquare.

When the war called "No popo" came, when all the people had to flee the towns into the forests and bushes, the first house they (the invaders) burned down was Yaah Memorial (Loo Yaah), when they saw the human skulls on it. That war was not like the type of war they (Nigerians) are waging nowadays (lo no ba aa dogi a ya). I was a child when that war took place. As the people fled from the towns they (the invaders) caught whoever they saw. Tee people called that war "No popo". I do not know why they called it "No popo"; whether Bani people (of Opobo) were with them, I cannot figure it out. However what happened was that they caught people unaware and whoever they caught, they took him away to sell him. All the towns were scattered.

Formerly, because Yaah had possessed the gun, our towns were peaceful. All the other surrounding towns relied on us for protection. They came to Yaah to enlist their loyalty to him. The only town our people drove its people away was Gio. That is why you often hear people say "I am going to the Gio farm (Mgaa si bara Gio), or "I am going to the Gbam farm (Mgaa si bara Gbam). It means that Kpuite people drove away Gio and Gbam people from these places. If we went to the farms where Gio people settled before or where Gbam settled before, we would see remains of things that they left behind which are scattered about. Gbam people were too strong-headed, that was why they were driven away from this area.

After peace had returned, the white men came. Then they appointed the man called Akekue as ruler. At that time, he was addressed as Chief Ogbuagwu. Now Ogbuagwu is Igbo language; later on his own "boys" translated it into Kana that it means Akekue. Akekue was not from the Gaan Yaa, which means that he was not from the King's Gaan or the Royal House. They took him because he was a man who was bold (bee ere gbene e aga dee). In those days, anybody who could learn a word of Igbo or Bani (Bonny) was made a leader or chief. It was on that ground that Akekue was made chief.

I was already a grown up young man when people from the House of Yaah used to attend Court. It was at that time that they made Ogbuagwu (or Akekue) the Gbenemene (Great Ruler or King) of Tee.

The fact is this, the most ancient town in Tee is Uweke. Whenever people perform the traditional rite of Yaa, there is one thing they called Akob (Khana: Apa-pee), to which they used to go. Any one who undergoes the traditional rite of Yaa must go to the 'face of' (or before) the Akob (ere e si si apa-pee). But the Akob was kept at Korokoro. That is the reason people used to go to Korokoro whenever they do the traditional rite of Yaa. Despite that, Uweke is really the most ancient town in Tee. There is a forest at Korokoro where they kept all the things about the Akob. It is there that they used to do the rituals and ceremonies whenever they are doing the traditional rite of Yaa. We take that place as the Si Yo'ue Yaa (Front of the Yaa Deity). Although I do not know the name of the founder of Uweke, or where he came from, I know that Uweke was the first town in Tee. That is what I heard from the ancients.

"Du Bari le Nee": I have heard the saying. There are two stories connected with the market. In the first one, Tee people used to say it like this: "Du Bari le Bekee" (The trade of God and white men). According to the story, God used to bring merchandise, after fixing the

price, he would place it in the market and go away. When the white men (Bekee) came, they took those things. The merchandise which God used to bring is cloth and other merchandise. When Bekee came they paid money for that merchandise. They (the seller and the buyers) never used to see each other. They called it "Du Bari le Bekee".

Du Som: The second story is this: There was an ancient market at Korokoro called Du Son. The market was held inside a thick forest, called "Namake Du Son". A certain people used to come to that market. They did not arrive there in day time at any time. They always arrived at the market at night. While in the market, they did not rise up to walk about in the market for whatever they wanted. No matter how early anyone may come to that market, they would always find those people already seated in their places at the market. They did not stand up to go and buy whatever they wanted, nor walk about in the market. Whether they wanted to sell or to buy, they only invited people to come. They wore long flowing garments (ba yaa nyoonnyoon below). Till the market dismissed they did not stand up.

Korokoro people were another type who would not ignore anything that appeared to be suspicious. On one occasion, Korokoro people set up a watch on those people, to see the places where those people eat when the market had dismissed. After those people had gone, they went to inspect the places where they sat and discovered that they sat over holes inside which they put their tails! (ba mue ko me pya lo egbo nee bee egegite nyon bana sa su wa zu yeregi bu bana).

Tee people kept the watch till it was dark, because the people would not go until it was night. It was when it was night, and the people had gone that Tee people went to inspect the places where each of them sat and found that there were holes in the places where each of them sat.

On the next market day, Tee people put some ripe palm fruits inside each of the holes, which attracted a certain type of ants called biop-biop into the holes. When those people arrived in the night again and had sat on their holes very early in the morning, the ants started to bite them, but they tried to endure it. Soon the market became full. As they could no longer endure the bites from the ants, every one jumped up from over his hole. As they did so, the people inside the market observed that those men had tails! From that day, those people stopped coming to that market. Tee people also removed the market from inside the forest into the town. This thing happened in ancient times according as I heard it from the ancient fathers.

On the matter of the Yaa traditional rites in Tee, they perform it two times. The first time takes about two years to complete. The first consists of various acts. The next year the community of Yaa candidates entered the forest to perform some acts. (bogene Yaa ekii kue sa doodoo nu).

To investigate matters of argument between parties usually involved using the services of mediums, priests and medicine men. Normally spirits (or mediums) like Gbenebega, Kobaa, Akpoghoru, etc. were consulted.

38. G.N.K. GININWA (HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS) OF KOROKORO, TEE (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Korokoro on 19 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Having given an account of what took place in Tee during the colonial era, may you at this point say something about the precolonial era.

According to what you heard from the ancestors, who was the first person who founded Tee?

Recite the Kinglist of Tee.

What was the relationship between Gbenekuapie and Gbenegininwa?

Narrate the traditions of farming in Tee.

Which were the principal crops planted by Tee people?

Did Tee people have Yam Shrines?

B. The Narrative:

There are forty-two towns in Tee. Many of the things that take place in Tee do take place in my town, Korokoro. I grew up to see and I know that as a result of the many ancient things that are in Korokoro, Korokoro is one of the ancient towns from which Tee developed. The ancient things we talk about are Be, Kpa and Zua (Khana: Yaa, Kpa Bina and Zua). The Zua was the feast which was celebrated at the time of gathering in the New crops, because Tee people were farmers who planted various crops. The proclamation of the Zua (or the New Year) in Tee was done by Korokoro people. In Tee, the New Year feast (Zua) began on the 30 July each year. The Zua feast took three days: the first day was called Dee Zua. The second day was known as Dee Piemaa. That was the day all children born in that year were remembered. The third day marked the end of the celebrations (Kpedume Zua).

On Dee Piemaa, people invited their relations, friends and servants to dinner. It was a day of generosity; attention was given to the poor so that whether they had things or not, they must have this day to forget their condition and to enjoy fully. A certain play called Mbiudam was played on this day and it brought great happiness to everyone.

About Yaa: In ancient times all the participants in the Yaa traditional rites first had a pageantry procession through the market square on Dee son (market day), then on the Deeko (name of the following day) was the Zua feast. Everyone who had male children, and if they wanted to honour their boys, they must enlist their boys in the Yaa ceremony to perform the traditional rites of Yaa, and the ceremony of simbete (a traditional cloth-wearing symbolizing manliness or virility). A boy who had performed the rites of yaa was able to enter many restricted places and circles in Tee, whether in his own village or outside it, and he was welcome, and people were able to offer him drinks. Such a boy could enter in the presence of the Elders without hindrance. He was a boy marked out for progress and for greater achievements in the future.

Kpa Bina (Kpa): When the traditional rite of Kpa Bina was performed, it was to the House of Gbenegininwa that they came to the portion of Saa-Soo. And there they were told the necessary rituals. We are the custodians of the instruments which were played during the Kpa Bina. Representatives of Gbenegininwa House had the prerogative to carry the instruments to the place where the ceremony was to take place and to bring them back.

I have explained these points to show that, as the ruler of Tee people, I am from a House whose founders were among the founders of Tee. Also that Korokoro, which is my town, was one of the earliest towns in Tee. As you have seen, the traditions by which any Tee man was known that he was truly as Tee man, comes also from my father's House.

Tee people came from Khana. Tee came from Luekun. For example, Bunu is a town in Khana, there is also a town in Tee called Bunu. So with other towns. There is Bangha in Khana and there is Bangha in Tee. There is Nonwa in Khana, and there is also Nonwa in Tee. There is Korokoro in Khana, and there is Korokoro in Tee. If you listen to Khana speech and Tee speech, you will notice that there are not many differences. It is particularly so in Luekun and Bangha areas. The tone may differ slightly but the speech, the words, and the names of things do not differ very much. In traditions, the traditions in Khana and the traditions in Tee are the same. It is from all these things that we know that Tee people came from Khana.

Colonial era: During the colonial era, certain people were selected to rule the people as Gbenemene (King, lit. Great Ruler). The first man to be so appointed was Soo. Soo was a man from Korokoro, Tee. After Soo, the next man was Akekue, a man from Kpuite. The next ruler was Ndonake; he was also from Korokoro. Another person appointed was Demua of Chara. He was appointed to function as a Treasurer. Next, they appointed Ndonake II. Finally they appointed Ngbor. All these rulers of Tee ruled in the colonial period. They were, however, known to have ruled in the capacity of Gbenemene.

Tee people were an independent people who had their own traditions, culture and knowledge in themselves. In Tee area, we usually have much argument concerning the first man who founded Tee, or concerning which town was the first ancient town. Some people used to say that Uweke was the most ancient town in Tee. Some people used to say that it was Korokoro. I know that Uweke and Korokoro were the two ancient towns in Tee. There is no other town in Tee older than these two. All matters pertaining to Tee traditions were done in Uweke and Korokoro. These two towns were two brothers.

As I said earlier about Kpa, Uweke people have their own. They call it "Bina", Korokoro people have their own, which they call "Kpa". The founder of Uweke was Gbenekuapie. The founder of Korokoro was Gbenegininwa.

I suppose that these two persons were brothers. Why I said so is that if a new play was shown to the public at Korokoro, the third day of play, the play was shown to Uweke people at Uweke. If they

failed to do so somebody among the players died. In the same way, if a new play was shown to the people of Uweke, they had to go and show the new play to Korokoro people at Korokoro. This tradition was the given, the permanent. Nobody could change it, because if they failed, somebody must die among them.

The next ancient town in Tee after Uweke and Korokoro was Horo. The founder of Horo was Gbenetem. All these traditions represent the traditions of Tee, and all the towns together kept them from origin. But when the colonial rule came, many of the traditions were destroyed or neglected. But others, they could not neglect, such as Zua, Yaa, and the showing of new plays at Uweke and at Korokoro, etc.. They knew that if they neglected these, it would not be well with them. For these reasons, Uweke and Korokoro were the most ancient towns in Tee, and they also held the traditions of the people.

The main occupation of Tee people is farming. In ancient times, Tee people used to begin clearing the bush in January, and plant the yams in the same month. By March, they weeded the farms. In July, they harvested the first yams. In August they celebrated the Zua feast.

KaZia and Kpee were the principal crops. Ka Zia was the principal crop for men, while Kpee was the principal crop for women. Although the two were under the general name of Zia, yet there were some differences between them.

There are yam shrines in Tee. At the beginning of the farming season, they brought down the Akere Zia. They then performed some sacrifices and rituals round the towns and communities for protection in the coming farming activities, for safety from accidents, for prosperity, for good harvest, etc.. This ritual was called De Gwe. All farm work was forbidden during this period which lasted from November to December. The Elders gathered at the Yam Shrine every evening and morning to drink palm wine and to pour libations in prayers to the ancestral deities. Occasionally some ancient plays or songs were performed there for entertainment. In January the farming activities began. The hunting season also began. The first hunting expedition after the De Gwe ceremonies took place in the bush of Agbaraton; and it ushered in the farming season in full scale.

39. IBEYO GBENEGBARA GOOKINANWAA (CHIEF) OF UWEKE (Aged c. 98)  
Interviewed at Uweke, Tee on 18 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how you became an Elder, and a chief in Tee.

Tell what you know about how Tee began to exist from the beginning.

Who founded Uweke?

Where did Gbenekuapie come from?

Where is Gbenekuapie's Li Zim?

When there was a Tee National performance or action, where did the Elders and Chiefs go to do it?

B. The Narrative:

My name is Ibeyo. My father first did all traditional rites. He married seven wives. His name was Gbenegbara Gookinanwaa.

My father told me that Uweke was the first town in Tee which God brought. The founder of Uweke was Gbenekuapie. Gbenekuapie did not come from Korokoro; he did not come from Kpuite. Gbenekuapie was a man God sent in the form of a promise or vow (Yii) to come and help us. To come and give us strength and the place where each of us should live. Gbenekuapie was the man who first cleared the site of Uweke. The Shrine of Gbenekuapie is here at Uweke. His brother's Shrine is also at Uweke. His brother's name was Agbogoro Kunu. Agbogoro Kunu was the second son (Lah) and Gbenekuapie was the first son (saaro).

When there is any Tee national undertaking, the Elders and Chiefs must go to Uweke. Whenever there is any new play in Tee, the players must bring it to show at Uweke. They used to do that in ancient times but nowadays some towns do not do that again. Uweke people used to take their new play to Korokoro to the presence of Akob (the sacred Yaa instrument, in Khana it was called Apa pee). Akob was a sacred spiritual object which Gbenekuapie kept at Korokoro. Gbenekuapie also kept a guard over the shrine and the sacred objects at Korokoro. Because Gbenekuapie and all Uweke people made Korokoro their secret place for consultations (ke bira-bira), their hideout (ke goa), their retreat (Ke begia-loo to), their sanctuary (Korokoro ke), when they had a very serious matter to deliberate upon, they went there to discuss it.

They also prepared "somethings" and kept them there; things that would make the decisions that took place there become strong and buttressed; things for national ceremonies and rituals, etc.. That was why whenever the traditional rite of Yaa was performed, they went there to the "front" (si) of that sacred thing (Akob), in their sanctuary (Korokoro ke) to do certain ceremonies and rituals. Akob (Khana: Apa pee) was one of the sacred things Gbenekuapie prepared and preserved there.

Gbenekuapie gave land there to one of his able servants (probably a priest) to live there so that he might watch over the National things (nu bue) that were kept there (ba bee sere loke). Because they had prepared the "soul" of the "communion" of all consultations and kept there (nyonebee ba ebee kwa si bogene biraloo-ue sere lo korokoro ke). That was the reason they used to take new plays to Korokoro so that they might show it to the person and the "things" they kept there.

Now I am the person who crowns anyone who wants to receive a high title in Tee. Such men are men who will be known as the rulers or Elders of Tee (Pya Kanee by Tee). I am the person, when they come to me, I give them the "prescriptions" (mlo nu wa ne). Nyegenee was one whom I crowned not long ago.

Note

Chief Ibeyo Gbenegbara is Head of Gbenegbara Gookinanwaa House in Tee.

He is a Traditional Ruler and Chief Kingmaker of Tee.

He is a Member of the Council of Elders (To Pya Kanee).

He is also a farmer and land owner.

40. HIS HIGHNESS M.A.M. TONWE III OF KONO BOUE (Aged c. 48)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 21 January 1984

THE HISTORY OF BOUE I

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how your ancestors became the rulers of Boue and of a considerable part of Khana (Ogoni)?

You said that after smallpox had destroyed the population of Bangha, that of the remnants, some went to Kako, some to Baraboue, some to Toga; that the descendants of Boonen from Toga founded Uwegwere. What of Kono?

What happened to Kono which was very near to Uwegwere?

Why did Yobue who was a refugee have such privileges and powers in Boue where he was a refugee?

Explain how Yaayoo became Bariyaayoo.

Are people still doing some of those things?

B. The Narrative:

What I am going to speak about is what I heard from my father concerning our origin. Our ancestor came from Gokana. Our first ancestor was called Boonen. He was a brother of Gbenesaakoo. Their own ancestors came from a different part of the world to Khana (Ogoni). They were called Ikosi, but in recent times they are better known as Ghana. The genealogy of the first sons from Boonen is as follows:

Boonen

Bute

Kiri

Aka

Gboroate

LooLoo

Ikpani

Tonwe I

Kpuginaata (died before Tonwe I)

Tonwe II

Tonwe III

All those listed were the first sons (Pya tuatua saaro) from Boonen down. Each of these first sons had his own brothers and sisters, who grew up and multiplied. For example, Kiri, who became Gbenekiri, had his brothers born after him whose names were Gbenesute, Gbenewee, Gbenekpanidookunu, and others. They belonged to Gaan Noobana, that is after the people had branched out. There were "Seven Powers" or

"Greats" that constituted Gaan Noobana. (Ereba pya Gbene ba lu Gaan Noobana). They were Gbenekiri, Gbenesute, Gbenewee, Gbenekpanidookunu, Gbeneakerenwa, Gbeneakakiri, and Gbeneguatebiira.

Gbenekiri was the founder of Uwegwere. Gbenekiri also had an elder brother called Gbenekaabie. He later joined in the founding of Uwegwere. Gbenekiri founded Uwegwere after his ancestors had left Gaagaa, which was their old town. They left Gaagaa because of trouble.

At first they came from Giokoo in Gokana. From Giokoo they settled at Gaagaa. Later the town of Gaagaa scattered. After the fall of Gaagaa, some of the inhabitants went to Yeghe. Those who ultimately came to Boue had at first migrated to the coast and built the city of Bangha. Bangha became a large, populous city on the coast. People from many different parts of the world attended Bangha market. The white people who attended Bangha market brought smallpox (poro-efob) into Bangha. The smallpox wiped out the population of Bangha. The survivors scattered to different places. Some went to Kako, some to Baraboue, the descendants of Boonen, who escaped from Bangha founded the town of Toga. It was from Toga that they moved into Uwegwere and founded that town.

When Gbenekiri had cleared the site of Uwegwere, he went back to Toga to inform his brother Gbenekaabie (a senior brother but not a first son) that he had founded a better place for settlement. Gbenekaabie followed him on his next trip and he helped by extending the site by a small addition. That was how Gbenekaabie, the brother of Gbenekiri, came to own a small part of Uwegwere town. Otherwise Gbenekiri is the founder of Uwegwere town.

Some of the people who fled from Bangha because of the epidemic, also went to found the town of Lee. Others founded the town of Kwuribue. Some of those who lived at Kwuribue later moved on and founded the town of Kono Boue. These were three brothers of the same parents. Kwerre was the elder brother; Tibarakan was the next and Kote the last or youngest.

It was Kote who travelled through the forests till he came to the site of Kono Boue, which he cleared and built a hut there. Then he went back to Kwuribue, tracing his marking through the forests. When he reached Kwuribue, he invited his elder brothers to join him in the founding of the town. When his brothers followed him to the place, they found that it was too deep inside the forest, apparently not near to any habitation. So they said, "Who can know that we exist here? To live here, we would be like the Volute (Kono) which hides deep down on the bed of the sea, where people hardly know of its existence." Thus when they all returned back to Kwuribue to report about the new settlement, people began to call them Pya Kono (the Kono people). That was how the town Kono Boue got its name.

Tibarakan, who became Gbenetibarakan, helped to clear the site of the new town by extending it by a relatively small section. Kwerre, who had also become Gbenekwerre, did not clear any part. But he played the role of the Elder Brother by giving the necessary support and by taking care of their total needs. When there was any problem, he presided over the consultations.

After they had completed the ground work, they invited people from different areas to come and settle in the new town. Gbenegarakara came from Bara Boue and founded Eepie, which later became a community of Kono Boue. Because Eepie was the second community to be founded after Noobana, Eepie was made the Right Hand of the town (Bale bue). Gbenetiginagua came from Teenama and founded Kwaakwa village. Gbenekarayoo came from Gokana and founded Tego. The site Gbenetibarakan, the brother of Kote, cleared became known as Noobana. The area which Kote, the founder, first cleared was called Eetenaayii. It was situated at a place two hundred meters north-north-west of Maawaabogo stream.

Those who migrated from Bangha to Boue later became involved in war. There was a market called Du Nubien which held at Baraboue. People from many parts of Ogoni used to attend the market. Some Zaakpon men took advantage of the market situation to waylay and rape the Baan women who were returning from Nubien market. When those women arrived in Baan, they reported the matter to their husbands. This was the cause of the war. Baan people waged a full scale war against Zaakpon. They attacked Zaakpon and over-ran their town. Zaakpon people fled from their town and took refuge in Boue. When Baan people saw that Zaakpon people had taken refuge in Boue, they declared war on Boue also. This was what brought Boue into the war. Because of the war, the Nuubien market was moved from Baraboue to Kono Boue, because Kono was more central and it was also the chief town and more powerful to be able to protect the market. At Kono Boue the market was called Dukono.

Kono Boue and the whole Boue area had prospered and become a mighty place. But the Baan war had been going on. The war had become a war between Baan and Boue. Therefore, Gbeneteebete and Gbenekiri travelled to Bonny (Bani). At Bonny, they discussed the war with Bonny people. Bonny people gave them a medicine man who used to serve in the house of their deity called Ikuba, whom they said would help them to win the war. So Gbeneteebete and Gbenekiri brought the medicine man named Yobue from Bonny to Boue. On the trip from Bonny, Gbenekiri obtained raffia palm seedlings which he brought to Boue and planted there. Thus he became the person who introduced the raffia palm and palm wine tapping into Boue and from there to all parts of Ogoni. That was how Gbenekiri became the "owner" of the palm wine. That was why the feast of Gbenekiri was also called the Feast of Wine. (Yomii).

When they had brought Yobue from Bonny, Yobue asked them to say what his reward would be if he was able to cause them to win the war. They agreed to give to Yobue a piece of ground to live on. He would have his own square. Since he was a stranger, whenever he would do rituals to his "medicines" he could kill any fowl on the land on that occasion. Similarly, he could harvest some plantains for the same purpose, without hindrance.

Gbenekiri also demanded to know his own reward as the man who sought out and brought the medicine man. They agreed that if what Yobue would do was successful and they won the war, Gbenekiri should be the supreme Ruler and the controller of the palm wine and raffia palm. On the day of Yomii (Dee Yomii) the public should honour him. After they had decided everything, they took an oath that what they had decided should stand.

After the agreement was concluded, they went to the Baan war. Boue people defeated the Baan forces and over-ran their towns. Baan people scattered and abandoned their towns. Boue fighters entered Baan houses and took valuable war booty, which they carried home. Among the things they took from Baan were a mask called Gbenegbe, and another called Teebee.

After the victory from the Baan war, Yobue decided to stay in Boue. He therefore went back to Bonny to take his mother, whom he brought to live with him in Boue. One of the things his mother did when she arrived in Boue was to "dry up" a flood that covered Wiibue farm area.

After some time the mother of Yobue decided to visit Bonny from where she came. On her way, she died at a village called IlooLoo. At the spot where she died a mound of red earth rose over her and covered her body like an anthill, so that nobody buried her (logo nee naa bee ye li). Since that ancient time till today, that place has been called "The Front of the Mother of Yobue" (Si Ka Yobue). That spot is at IlooLoo till today.

When Yobue decided to stay in Boue, the Elders sought out a wife for him. The wife selected was a (grand?)daughter of Zah named Bega. That woman, she was a glamorous lady. (Nwii neewaa, bele gbene wa-kia-uwe). Wherever there was a famous man, or a powerful man, to that man she would cling! (Wee wa su loo debe loo). So the Elders of Boue sought out this woman and presented her to Yobue that she might be his wife. (Ko a lu ye wa).

Gbeneteebete, one of the men who went to Bonny to bring Yobue from Bonny turned against him and became his enemy. He assassinated Yobue in the House of his gods. When Bega saw what was done, she was terrified. She quickly gathered her husband's property, including his "medicines" and other "instruments" of power and escaped. She was on her way to Gure, her home town; for it was from there she was brought to Kono Boue. She stopped at Gwaara to rest. While there, the people of Gwaara received her and offered her accommodation. That was how Bega came to be known as Bega Gwaara till today.

Yobue was a great man of power. He introduced a system of power politics into Kono Boue. Through him Kono Boue became very powerful people in Khana. Wherever there was war, they would come to Kono Boue to seek assistance. Whenever that happened Yobue would lead his warriors to the place, and they would overthrow the enemy, and bring such enemy under the influence of Kono Boue. Every town feared Kono Boue.

If a big animal or game was killed, they would bring it to Kono Boue to the Yoboue Centre for ritual ceremonies before they could be butchered and dressed. Such animals would include the leopard, the boa-constrictor, the elephant, etc.. When the animal is slaughtered at the Yoboue Centre, the head, one hind leg, the skin, the heart, etc., will belong to Yobue.

Among the weapons which Yobue carried were an axe which he held in the right hand, and a spear which he held in the left. On days of his feast, when he would stage a military parade through the towns of

Boue, he (1) would demonstrate the effective use of those weapons. With the left he would throw the spear at any fowl within sight and kill it with one stroke, without missing. Then he would wield the axe with the right hand to slay a victim.

Yobue was given tremendous powers and privileges because of his role in ending the Baan war. He introduced the gun into the war which gave victory to the Boue side.

Post-war settlement: Warriors and towns which contributed to the winning of the war were rewarded. Babbe was added to Boue. Yaayoo who originally came from Kpong to settle at Luawii, was given the control of Yam. Political leadership and government was given to Gbenekiri. Also to Gbenekiri was the control of wine and the raffia palm (yomii). Control of war and armament was given to Nama. Anybody who wanted to distinguish himself as a warrior of distinction must go to Nama to do certain things.

Yaayoo "discovered" the shortest way of producing yams which helped to stave off the severe famine which occurred during the Baan war. That "power" which enabled him to do such a thing was elevated to the status of a supreme Deity (Bari). Thus Bariyaayoo came into being. Among the functions of Bariyaayoo was to announce the end of the Khana Year by "clapping hands" at Duko market. By tradition the performance of this ritual on a Deeko ushered in the Zua feast on the following Deeko day.

Warriors who died in the war were taken to Luawii first for a ceremonial washing before they were taken to their respective towns for burial. Those who were wounded were taken to Nama for treatment. The special stream at Luawii where the dead were washed before burial at the deceased person's home town was called Maa Lee Nee.

Gbene-: Concerning the taking of the title Gbene at Nama, the last person, we heard, who went for the title was a Kani warrior named Teegwoo. He returned from Nama shortly before the colonial war (No Ikosi) began. The cause of that war was taxation. They wanted to collect tax from the people for the cost of administration. Khana people refused to pay that tax. All Khana rulers gathered at Eeyoburubu in Kono Boue and resolved not to pay the tax. War broke out. Teegwoo died in that war. As Kono Boue was the root of Khana (Ogoni) leaders, when war had broken out Boue people decided that Khana (Ogoni) people should pay the tax in order to avoid too much suffering to the people. That was how Khana (Ogoni) people finally agreed to pay the tax.

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1. "He" here refers to his spirit-medium during possession. These actions are performed by his spirit-medium during possession.

41. HIS HIGHNESS CHIEF M.A.M. TONWE III OF KONO BOUE (Aged c. 48)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 21 January 1984

THE HISTORY OF BOUE II

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Describe the political organization of Kono Boue and all Boue.

Give examples that will suggest the dominance of Boue in Khana (Ogoni) during the ancient period.

A town or community which took upon itself to deal with a case involving the life of a person, without referring it to Boue, what was the penalty for such a community?

Is there an example of a community which was punished for acting contrary to this law?

If a community did not present its new play or dance to the Elders of Boue at Kono Boue, what would happen to such a community?

Zaakpon people who caused the Baan war, how were they treated after the War?

After the rule of Gbenekiri, who ruled?

What role did the members of the House of the Founder of Kono Boue (Pyä be Te-ere-Bue) play in the selection of a ruler, and during the term of office of such a ruler?

Biirago usurped the office of rulership in Boue, did the House of Kote and Kwerre support him?

When did Biirago rule? Who was the ruler during the colonial conquest?

Who ruled after Biirage?

B. The Narrative:

The Seven States of Khana (Ogoni) (Ereba Edo Khana):

In the heyday of Boue, all Khana was divided into Seven Parts known as the Seven States of Ogoni (Ereba Edo Khana): They are:

Boue	Tee
Gokana	Luekun (Baan)
Leme	Baen
	Babbe (Nama)

These seven states existed before the Baan war. Starting from the Baan war, these seven states were united under the leadership of Boue Kingdom. There were rulers in each of the states, but the ruler of Boue had power over them.

When there was a new play or dance in any of these kingdoms, they would play the first three days of the show in their own towns. The fourth day of play would be brought to Kono Boue to show to the Elders

of Boue. This was done on the second Deebom after the dance was first shown publicly. In bringing the new dance or play to Kono Boue they carried with them a well-loaded traditional basket full of presents for the Elders: Yams, plantains, drinks, fish. The Elders of Kono Boue and the Elders of all the other towns of Boue would sit together to watch the dance. They would then eat together all the things brought to them by the players.

Every year when they would collect yam tribute from the farmers in their towns, they would send to the Elders of Kono Boue to inform them of their intention. Kono Boue would send men to be present. They would bring all the yams collected to Kono Boue. At Kono Boue, they would share the yams with all the chiefs and Elders and with every ruler (ba don Zia a negara ziizii mene, zii zii mene).

If they arrested a sorcerer or a wizard, who was accused of "murder" by his art, and who by tradition, was condemned to die, they could not kill him by themselves. They must bring such a person to Kono Boue. At Kono Boue, the Council of Chiefs and Elders of Boue would examine the case. If the accused was found guilty and condemned to death, then he would be executed; if not guilty, or if not considered worthy of death, then he would be allowed to go. There was a law that no other community or town could judge a case which could lead to the taking of a man's life except at the Centre at Kono Boue.

If a town or community contravened this, those concerned would be arrested by the Boue Central authority (Pya Boue ba e aa pya Kee ba doo lo dogo sa wa fe), and they would be executed. Such a thing had happened with Kaa community.

As for Kaa people; they were originally a refugee people who escaped from Tee area, after the colonial invaders had destroyed their city. They came to Boue under the protection of Yobue, who gave them land at the coast, where their community now stands.

Kaa people caught a man whom they said was a "headhunter" or cannibal (kuelob) and by themselves condemned the person and executed him. The matter leaked to Boue people. The Kaa Chiefs who had done it were arrested and brought to Boue for trial. They were found guilty and executed.

In cases where the act of disloyalty did not involve taking of human life, heavy fines were imposed. An example of this happened to Kwuri people. They showed a new play (or dance) to the public but they failed to bring the dance to show to the Elders at Kono Boue. Yobue punished the leader of the society, named Igbarato. When they consulted the mediums, they were told to pay the fine and to take the new dance to Kono Boue to present to the Elders of Boue.

The rulers of Kono Boue during the Baan war were Kote-Kwuribue, Gbenekwerre, Gbenetibarakan, Gbenekiri, Gbenegarakara, Gbenekarayoo. It was then that the Kono market (Dukono) was moved from Baraboue and established where it is today. It was during that period that they established the Central Square known as Eete Eeyoburubu where it is now. It became the assembly place for all Boue and Babbe.

As they had given Gbenekiri the office of Head of State, when Kono Boue was made the Centre of Government, Gbenekiri had to move from Uwegwere, the town he founded, to Kono Boue. When Gbenekiri had moved to Kono Boue, he did not give up the rulership of Uwegwere. His grandsons remained at Uwegwere. Among these was his first son Aka, who became Gbeneakakiri. Others were Gbenesute, Gbenekpanidookunu and Gbenewee. These, he left to be in charge of various parts of Uwegwere. The paramount rulership of Uwegwere he entrusted to his brother Gbenekaabie to act for him only in minor matters. In major matters like the time of Yomii Feast, Gbenekiri would return to Uwegwere to officiate by himself.

At Kono Boue, Gbenekiri was given land at Noobana, the principal town of Kono Boue, founded by Gbenetibarakan, the second or elder brother of Kote. That land was to be the perpetual possession of Gbenekiri. (Me lo keneke alu ale ume deedee).

"Noobana Uwegwere, Noobana Kono": In Uwegwere, the name of the original town where Gbenekiri lived was called Noobana. When he came to Kono Boue, he named the part where he occupied Noobana also. From this the expression "Noobna Uwegwere, Noobana Kono" developed. From this situation also developed the two Ga Noobanas, namely Gaan Noobana Uwegwere and Gaan Noobana Kono. They are the same people and same kindreds. From those explanations we see that Gbenekiri ruled from two great centres of River Uwegwere and Kono Boue, in addition to all Babbe.

After the reign of Gbenekiri his son Aka ruled. After Aka, Gboroate ruled. After Gboroate, LooLoo ruled. After LooLoo, Ikpani ruled. After Ikpani, Tonwe ruled. Tonwe ruled for a very long time because he lived to be very, very old. It was during the reign of Tonwe that the colonial wars and colonial rule began in Nigeria. When he had become very old, one of his servants who used to work for him in state affairs, seized power by force and declared himself King. This man was Biirago. But he did not rule very long when he died.

While all these things were happening, the function of the Royal House of Founders, namely, the House of Kote-Kwuribue and the House of Gbenekwerre, consisted in pouring libations to ancestors for the support of whomever they had crowned to rule. (ba wee su mii egara ke sa yere kpo te pya alaba bee su bue ne ko ba abea).

Just as when they chose Gbeneakiri to rule because of what he did, the whole members of the Royal House of Founders (Pya be Te-ere-bue) together gave him their support. The Royal House of Founders are the people who have the right to nominate a ruler. In the case of Gbenekiri they gave him the rulership from a meeting of an all-Khana organization. And when they reached home, the members of the Royal House of Founders also gave him their support and the rulership.

The Royal House of Founders did not give such a support to Biirago. Nevertheless, Biirago himself was a very powerful man, he was also a man of great courage. And he had very strong eyes (sa a beé erenage gbene ekpodee). When he had seized power into his hands he not only ruled all Boue, but all Babbe as well, just as Gbenekiri and all those who had ruled after him did. Biirago ruled with an iron hand in all Babbe and in all these parts.

Biirago ruled in a time when the colonial rule had been fully established. He seized power when Tonwe I was already very old. Tonwe I died in 1927 after a very long reign. Biirago did not rule very long. His reign lasted for only seven years (which means that he died not quite many years after Tonwe I's death).

For some time there was no immediate succession after the death of Biirago. The reason being that Tonwe I's son and heir, who should have succeeded him died by accident when Tonwe I was still alive. This son was called Kpuginaata. He died in 1922. Thus after the deaths of Tonwe I and of Biirago, the throne remained vacant for some time, because the rightful person who should have filled it was not there.

After some time a son of the Royal House of Founders (Be Te-ere-Bue) named Famaa took up the rulership. This Famaa was a descendant of Kote-kwaribue (Kote of Kwuribue), the Te-Ere-bue of Kono Boue. He ruled until he was very old, so that he could not go out to places again.

One of Famaa's servants, who he used to delegate to go places for him because he was too old, was named Kagbo-Iboori. During his association with the Royal House, Kagbo "married" (Kui) (1) a daughter of the Royal House. When Famaa died, Kagbo assumed the rulership.

Kagbo's abdication: While Kagbo ruled, trouble struck, and Kagbo abdicated. The trouble occurred when a man named Kedoo Igbozua killed two Obolo (Andoni) men.

The Obolo men were at their fishing camp at Nanabie with other Obolo men. Kedoo was also with them doing fishing. The owner of the camp was also an Obolo man. He collected dues from fishermen who used the camp. The two deceased men were said to have been very strong-headed men. They refused to pay the camp dues in opposition to both those who had paid the dues and to the owner of the camp. The latter group teamed up against the two men but they could not succeed.

Kedoo Igbozua was a powerful man. He was also a very courageous man. The group found that Kedoo was the type of man who could deal with their two opponents. So they approached him, offering him money that he should eliminate the two men (ba yiga kpugi ye ne ko ee afe bae elua nee Bono a).

Incidentally, the two men needed some pitchers for holding their drinking water at the fishing camp. Kedoo seized the opportunity to convince them that if they reached Dukono (Kono Boue market) they could buy any pitchers of their choice. The men agreed that Kedoo should take them to Dukono market at Kono Boue, so that they could buy the pitchers. For all people from Bonny, Ibibio, Andoni (Obolo), Ndoki Ikwere, etc., buy their pitchers and pots from Dukono in Kono Boue (Dedee pya Bani, Bibi, Bono, Idoki, Ikwerre, etc., aba Dukono na ba

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1. Kui as opposed to ii; both would mean "marry" in English. ii (marry) the woman goes to live in husband's house or "family". Kui (marry) the woman remains in her parents' house. No bride price is paid by the man. Children belong to parents of woman. Notable Houses don't marry first daughter out. Hence Kui is proper.

wee yee a). (2) Kedoo lured the two men at night to a secret water-side in Boue called Temaa and killed them there. Having done that, Kedoo went back to Nanabie to those who hired him to report of his performance and to claim his pay. They paid him.

After some time the matter leaked, and it was reported to the colonial government at Opobo. When the colonial authorities heard what was done, they poured armed police into Boue area and arrested people indiscriminately. In the midst of the confusion, Kagbo the incumbent ruler of Boue, abdicated and escaped out of Boue. The throne became vacant.

When Kagbo Iboori had abdicated, the members of the Royal House of Founders met and decided to go and invite their sister's son to come and fill the throne. Among those who took part in that meeting of the Royal House were Nyiabue Kote (Saaro Te-ere-bue), Nnadu Inayo (Sira Te-ere-bue), Deezua Inayo (Saaro Te-ere-bue), Ison Nwaale (Saaro Be Gbene-tibarakan), Itaakue Kwerre (Saaro Te-ere-bue).

Tonwe I married a daughter of the Royal House of Founders named Iko. She was of the House of Kote. He married this Princess for his Son and heir, Kpuginaata. Deebari Tonwe was the First Son of (Saaro) Kpuginaata by Iko of Kote House. This Deebari Tonwe was the person they invited to fill the throne, because his ancestors had ruled on the throne before; and because it was his legitimate right to take the throne anyway. So they sent to call him from Egwanga (Opobo) where he was working.

When he came, they gave him the rulership. They slaughtered a goat, the blood of which they used to seal an oath by which they agreed that the rulership should be vested in him and his descendants perpetually (Ba kee zii pee su yia-yii sa ko bee bue a ton ye nuto ume deede). They then took him round the towns of Kono Boue. They also took him to the House of Yoboue in Kono Boue, to the House of Bariyaayoo in Luawii; and to the House of Gbenebega in Gwaara; saying these three places were the three Great Places in the territory of his rulership; that it was so from ancient times. (Ko me taa do ama na ba lu gbene do bu barasiloo ee aa bee a; me ke abee le doo lo aa li kere). The day they showed him round the towns, they invited a representative of the colonial government, a District Officer, to witness his acceptance as Ruler of the People of the area. He began to rule as Tonwe II in 1943. Then in 1944, he was installed.

The time he began to rule was the time of the Second World War. So when the colonial government sent a letter that they should send young men into the army, he sent young men from different towns, among whom were Green Kpakue, Ikpugi Itoo, James Koroba and Leya Muesi.

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2. Only occasionally did people come directly from these places to Dukono. The bulk of Kono Boue pottery was bought by "distributors" who carried the pots and pitchers in canoes either to markets in these places, or to markets which these people also attended, or which were closer to them.

They gave him all the papers of the town from the time of Biirago to the time of Famaa and Kagbo; because when Kagbo abdicated, he first returned all those papers to the Royal House of Founders (Be Te-ere-bue) before he escaped.

In 1948, Tonwe II summoned a meeting of all the Elders of Babbe (dedee Pya Kanee Babbe) at Kono Boue, at the end of which they wrote a petition to the colonial government at Opobo demanding that Babbe should be restored to its constituent body as it was before the advent of the colonial administration of the area.

They named one colonial officer who destroyed Babbe, one Captain Sinclair, who burned down every town and village in Babbe. Moreover, he changed the whole system of administration and rulership in Babbe, taking the power and office of rulership to where it did not exist before. (Lo a eega, ba sike noo bebee kiira; ba su bebee ture ke bebee naa bee le), and such like things. Also, they merged the whole Boue and all Babbe with Kekana (Baen) as one. By doing that, they subordinated Boue and Babbe under Baen.

The Colonial government refused to restore Boue and Babbe to their former status, saying that Boue and Babbe opposed the colonial people and encouraged the whole Khana not to pay tax. Moreover, that they waged war against the colonial people.

They did not give up the matter. They continued to press on for the restoration of Boue and Babbe until Regional self-governments were established in the various regions of Nigeria. These Nigerian governments tried to rearrange things as they were before. They sent people from Enugu to Babbe (Commission of Inquiry, Local Government) to enquire into the nature and system of organization of government in the area. They sat at the Methodist School, Luawii in 1959. There Tonwe II presented the case for Boue and Babbe with some documents connected with this matter, and related to Boue and Babbe. Those people took the documents with them to Enugu but they later returned them.

In 1959, Boue and Babbe were separated from Kekana (Baen) and restored as they were before the colonial era. The period Boue and Babbe were merged with Kekana (Baen) was forty-four years. Thus when they were ready to choose Traditional Rulers in each part of Nigeria, they chose Tonwe II to be the Traditional Ruler of Boue and Babbe, as Gbenekiri and his descendants had done since ancient times. Thus in this new era which began in 1959 Tonwe II ruled with the title: Gbenemene Babbe I (Tuatua Gbenemene Babbe).

Kinglist of Boue Kingdom:

Gbenekiri - Gbeneaka-kiri - Gboroate - LooLoo - Ikpani -  
Tonwe I (d. 1927) - Biirago (1927-1934) - Famaa (1934- ) -  
Kagbo (abdicated 1943) - Tonwe II (1943-1975) - Tonwe III (1975- )

42. MR. A'EAN GBIGBO OF KWAAKWAA, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 45)  
Interviewed at Kwaakwaa on 27 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell the story of your ancestors.

Where did they come from?

When they arrived at Kono Boue, where did they settle?

From where did they obtain the yams which they planted?

Why did they call the yam KaZia?

Why did the Elders and the Land Priests take yam tributes annually?

Why was Yobue given the right to harvest plantains and kill fowls whenever he had a ceremony?

You said that Yobue was a "foreigner". Where did he come from?

How did you know these stories?

When he possessed somebody, as he did your father, did he speak in a way that people could understand what he said?

Did he ever say where he came from and how he arrived here ?

What was the "Koogia"?

When the Koogia was played, did the drums "say" anything?

When you used the expression "pee koogian", how would you describe the performance?

Did they "leap about"? Or did they dance? Describe what they did.

Who played the Koogian?

Which type of weapons did the warriors use on this occasion?

It was stated that Yobue used to "dance" the Koogian. Could you comment on that?

Describe the weapons used by Yobue?

About the Baan War of which you spoke, are there any things which they brought from that war which you remember?

Describe Yobue's axe. Who could be buried in his house? Who could not?

When did Gbosi go to Nama?

B. The Narrative:

Gbeneitekina was one of the original ancestors who first came into this world. He first settled at Baraboue, having cleared part of that area. They did not come from a different part of the world into that place, they were naturally there from the beginning of the world, (autochthonous). No other people had settled at Baraboue before them. They were the only people who ever settled in Baraboue.

They later moved from Baraboue to Kono Boue. Gbeneitekina was one of those who took part in the founding of Kono Boue. What forced them to leave Baraboue was war. This was the war between Baan people and Boue people. When the war brok out, Gbeneitekina moved from Baraboue to Kono Boue.

In Kono Boue they first settled at Tego. There their shrines are. Yam was what they planted. This yam (KaZia) they obtained from the forests. When they planted it they discovered that it was smoother and more pleasant-looking than the wild ones. So they continued to plant it. Yam was called KaZia (lit. Mother of foods) because it was the first food which God brought into the world, before he sent other foods. Similarly, Ka ebue (plantains) was one of the foods they first knew in the place they settled.

The Baan war was a very serious war which Boue people fought. The war brought many problems and many great sacrifices. People did whatever they could in order to stop the war. It was during that time that they found Yobue. He was a stranger (or foreigner) and a medicine man.

With Yobue leading the Boue armies, Boue people won the war. They captured people alive from Baan to this place. One of the men they captured alive from Baan and brought to Boue was a craftsman who made household vessels out of wood (a wee tog koro).

When they had defeated Baan people and had returned to Boue, the Elders of Boue, including Kote, Gbenekwerre, Gbenebalikina, Gbenetigina, Gbenekoori, Gbeneteebete, Gbenetibarakan, Gbenegoo, Gbenegarakara, Gbeneiteekina, Gbenebaara, and many others whom I have not named, they all sat down together and decided that it was necessary to remember Yobue. They agreed that it was Yobue who enabled them to win the war and thereby to bring peace in the area. They recognized him as a deliverer in that war. So they decided that in July when they used to celebrate the feast of Bari Kinanwii Bari Gbenenee (God of the Little Child, God of the Great Man), they would remember the achievements of Yobue. "Yobue should have a feast on that occasion", they agreed ("Lo dee na Yobue a de Zia a"). Any fowl he liked in each of the component towns, he should slay for his feast. He should also harvest plantains in each of the towns of Boue. Any raffia palms that were being tapped he could obtain palm wine from any of them for his use throughout the Boue Kingdom.

On that feast day, all the notables I named above and others whom I did not name, and all brave men and warriors from other parts of Khana, and from all towns of Boue, should gather at Yobue House (Be Yobue); plays, dances and entertainments should be brought from the

different towns to Yobue House to entertain the assembly of the notables there. There should be plenty of things to eat and to drink. On that occasion they would "dance" the war dance known as "pee koogian". (1) This war dance took place when the sun was up in the morning of Deebom of that week (Kpo'eeri). The essence of how Yobue and the Elders got power to take tributes of yams annually came from these developments.

According to what I heard, Yobue came from the riverine areas, but I don't know the exact town of his origin.

I came to know these things because the Spirit of Yobue possessed my father. My father was a spirit-medium of Yobue and all these things which I tried to describe happened right before our eyes. We were the people who prepared the things. My father, who was Yobue's Medium, performed these things and I used to be there, and I used to hear when they were recounting these things.

When my father was in the possession state, the Yobue Spirit used to speak, but we never used to understand his language. There was somebody whom he made to be able to understand his language. That man was the person who used to interpret what he was saying to us. That was the time he used to recount what happened. (lo so na a wee lo nu a bee sira a). He did not speak about his own origin, and no-one remembered to ask him then.

Koogian was a powerful thing which the ancients kept. It consists of three drums; the length of each drum was slightly longer than a man's outstretched hand. The drums were played. The way they played it was not the kind of thing that every one could dance. They played it as a war dance; and that was what it signified.

Anyone who had ever gone to war, even though it was not the very war Yobue himself went to, whatever war it was, if he went and fought and returned alive, he must come there that day to honour himself. He will remind himself that he too was one of the brave men who performed a gallant act in such and such a war. This, in short, explains what the koogian is.

The drums praised brave men and called their names in honour. The drums also praised Yobue who was the leader of the brave. The drums told how he fought valiantly in the Baan war. The drums further praised every King and General who went to that war (a Kaege zii zii mene le Gian ba bee Sinage lo no) and fought to victory (a be eebe). They then praised everyone who fought in any other war. They would tell how they fared bravely in action and made it possible that there was peace again. They would tell about the Andoni war, how they fought bravely and defeated the Andoni.

Finally, they would boast that it was now a fact that no war could shake them.

"Pee Koogian": When the drums were played, all the men who went to war, but who had passed into Spirit, and were possessing living persons as their mediums, all their mediums would come.

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1. "Pee" literally means to jump, leap, fly, etc. Was this a jumping, leaping, flying dance? It was probably a combination of all these and more.

The second class of people who would come were those still alive who went to any war. They would come with that weapon which they used at that war, that weapon with which they killed somebody at that war. When the drums were played and began to praise Yobue, his Spirit Medium would lead the dance, then all those men who went to the Baan war at that time, their spirit-mediums would follow in the dance behind Yobue. Then people who were still living who went to war and did brave deeds, would follow behind them.

Then the drums would begin to greet each one of these great kings and generals (Kere a ekanamue zii zii mene le Gia a) and praise him how he had been very gallant in action (sa ye kaege ke ee bee si gia doo). Yobue (his Spirit Medium in possession) would bear his weapons as for battle and go before the drums. The next general (his Spirit Medium also in possession) with his own arms, would go before the drums, as they called his name and praised him. They would go like that until all had gone before the drums.

When each goes before the drums, this is what he does. The drums would call his name. He would step backward, backward, backward, (Ton kii dume, ton kii dume, ton kii dume). Then he would brandish his sword (Ge) in the air, and brandish again. Then he would suddenly take off with a run towards the drums. Then he would shake the gola (2) to its foundations. Again, he would retreat backwards, backwards, backwards. Again he would brandish his sword, several times. Then he would take off again with a run at top speed towards the drums. He would do this seven times. At the seventh time, he would present a gift of money to the drummers. He would circle this money round his own head and then drop it into the gola. At that point he has completed his round of pee Koogian. He would then return to his own house. The next person following in line would do the same until all the warriors have completed. This is what is called pee Koogian.

Not any body could play the drums of Koogian, because they were sacred drums, and because there was "power" in them. The person who could play the drums must be an Elder who had himself done great deeds and had performed the ceremonies of Yaa Ge and Yaa Nwii and of the same class as those coming to perform the tradition of pee Koogian.

Concerning the weapons, what I meant was, that any warrior alive could go there with any weapon (sword) even though it was not the exact one he used when he went to the war. But if he still had that very one, that would be his first choice.

Yobue was the one who used to perform the war dance before anyone else. But all spirit mediums of all the men who went to the Baan War with Yobue, who were possessing people in the particular year, all such spirit mediums would perform the war dance first after Yobue's, before men alive who were warriors would perform.

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2. The drummers are in a fence of palm fronds or leaves. They are not seen but they see the warriors. This enclosure is the Gola. In it are kept many war memorials of ancient times which had been brought out for display on this special occasion.

Concerning Yobue's axe, I used to see it. On ceremonial days when his spirit-medium went round the towns, he used to wear it on his waist and hold the spear in his hand. When he saw a fowl, he would throw the spear and kill, saying that that was how he struck those enemies who brought war to Boue kingdom in those days. When he threw, he never missed his target and he never threw at the same target twice.

War Booty: The large wooden Bowl in which they used to put ritual food for Yobue was taken from Baan. The drums of Koogian were also taken from the Baan war. Others were what was called Tintan which was a musical instrument. All these things were important instruments of bravery which Baan people had before. But they were taken as a memorial of the war.

The Yobue's axe which I mentioned was a small hand axe. It was his weapon for war. (Ye nu gia a wee su sia ne). Another use of the axe was that, after the Baan war, the Elders of Boue honoured him and gave him authority to have the Power of Military Guard of Boue kingdom.

If anybody violated the sacredness of the land, he should fight him with the axe. If anyone violated the laws of the land, he should fight him with the axe.

It was forbidden that anybody should be buried in his house. If anyone violated that law, he should fight him. The ancients together put these things down to be observed and made Yobue its watch-dog.

According to the ancestors, the only people who should be buried in their house were those who have performed the rite of Baa Li. (3) This is what we call LiZim (Shrine). LiZim is a very big thing in Boue kingdom.

A person who could do that was a person who was a man and a real great man, who had wealth and property. A man who had performed all the traditional titles such as Yaa Ge, Yaa Nwii, Yaa Be; and was able to do "all" things, ("Dookiri, Doobe"), (4) with the hope that after his death, he would possess his descendants. He prepared and paid all custom to the ancestors, that he was one of them, and that he wanted to be able to possess his descendants after death, or even before death. If such a person died, he would be buried inside his house, and Yobue would not fight.

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3. Baa Li: This was the final preparation of those who made it their life's ambition that when they had died, they would come to life to possess their descendants. LiZim is the Shrine over their graves and the things they prepared.
  4. "Dookiri Doobe" is a Khana phrase which describes a man who could do both good and evil equally.

The title of Gbene: What I heard was that any person, or any ancestor, who had "Gbene" attached to his name, as we have Gbeneiteekina, Gbene-teebete, Gbenebaara, etc.; Gbeneiteekina's real name was Iteekina, but after he had performed the traditions and rites, Gbene- was added to it, and he became Gbeneiteekina.

Last attempt at the title: Attempt at this title belongs to one who was a wealthy man, who possessed wealth, and his hand was firm; a man who married wives, "built" a House (Ere be), and had children. One who had performed the traditional ceremonies and rites of Yaa Ge, Yaa Nwii, Yaa Be; one who could perform the rite of Yaa Nwii several times; "Count the Corn" (Buun Kpakpa), (Doo kiri, Doo be) (do "all" things); "Tie the Pillar of Possession" (Bob te-aah). go to Nama (si Nama), become a spirit and possess a person even while still living. It was somebody like that that they granted the title of Gbene- to be prefixed to his name.

The last person or ancestor (Zim) who went to Nama on an attempt to this title, and after whom no-one else ever went for that title again was Gbosi. He went to Nama but he was unable to complete all the requirements, because of that he was not granted the title of Gbene-; otherwise his name would have been styled Gbenegbosi.

The time when this attempt was made I was not yet born, but I heard it from the Elders, who heard it from the ancients. That time is quite a long time ago because even my own father was not born yet, and my father's father was not yet born.

"Gbene-" ("Great") was not a name. It was a word appended to a name as a reward of performance or deeds.

Genealogy of the informant's ancestors:

Gbeneiteekina  
|  
Teemene  
|  
Ituan  
|  
Gbigbo (d. 1976)  
|  
A'ean

43. ELI BAEDEE OF EEPIC, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 55)  
Interviewed at Eepic on 23 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Do you mean that all Uwekuwe was a forest?

Did your forefathers invent the Akwuni?

What about the Zim ancestors of the Bakina group called Gbenetibarakan, did he not also invent and own the Akwuni?

When did this market (Dukono) begin to be held?

Mention the peoples who used to attend the Dukono market?

Did people bring animals to the market?

What major item did Kono Boue sell at this market which attracted other peoples to the market?

Which people used to buy the pottery wares most?

Did people who traded at the market pay any dues?

Did Yobue have any claims or entitlements in the market?

How would you describe the market as it is today?

Do you still have the Akwuni musical set?

B. The Narrative:

This town of Eepic in Kono Boue was founded by Gbenegararakara at the time when Kono Boue was being founded. Gbenegararakara founded and settled in Eepic as a separate town by itself. He planted his own Kiono to mark its boundaries, then he settled down.

The market which is now called Dukono was originally at Eeyobia in Uwegwere. People from all places used to come to that market, from Sogho, Kani, Baan and from all the different towns - they used to come to it. Occasionally they stirred up a fight in the market and matcheted people to death inside the market and escaped, jumping into the nearby large, thick forest called Kue si Yomii (forest of (the Palm) wine Deity), which contains the shrine of the wine deity. Once they were in that forest, and once they crossed from there into Uwekuwe (the Bush of Leopards), they were gone. All Uwekuwe was a great forest, and Eeyobia was near to it. These things happened long, long ago, when our ancestors lived in their own separate towns.

There was a man called Gbenelakarakué. Gbenegararakara was his uncle. The mother of Gbenelakarakué and Gbenegararakara came from the same womb. Because of that, Gbenegararakara said, "What? Why is this thing happening this way? They will by so doing kill my sister's son". So the Elders gathered together and said "Well. What shall we do?" Then they

decided to remove the market from Eeyobia and to take it to Gbenegararakara for him to have custody of it. They then set to work the hand of a man called Gbeneakaragu who was captured from Baan war. As the saying goes "Ba aga ge tob" (A strong hand makes the matchet sharp") They gave him a blunt matchet because he was a war prisoner, and ordered him to clear the new site for the market.

Gbenegararakara took the Elders round the site. It was a thick, virgin forest situated in the centre of the towns. Gbeneakaragu was forced to clear the site because he was a captive of war. They did not give him a sharp matchet, because they wanted to punish him for the war. Gbeneakaragu himself was an extraordinarily strong man. By his wisdom and strength he cleverly cut the hard, tough, virgin forest to the utter surprise of the whole people. He was nicknamed Akaragute, meaning Akaragu the hardwood (or the oak). From him the saying has come to be, "Akaragute, ba aga ge tob" (a strong hand makes the matchet sharp).

Finally they brought the market from Eeyobia in Uwegwere to the place saying, "If a fight occurs inside the market, before the enemy could escape from the market to Uwegwere in order to get to the forest, he would be caught". They decided that each year at Nubien feast, which falls on Deebom and Deeko in a Kpoeeri ( a Khana week), the market should be held at Uwegwere. That is two days in a year the market should be held at Uwegwere as a memorial of its old site.

So Gbenegararakara said "Surely my sister's son (nephew) who is at Baraboue (for Baraboue was the town), Gbenelakarakue must leave Baraboue and come to live here also lest anything should happen to him there, where my eyes cannot see him. He must live near me here so that my eyes can see whatever may happen to him; so that I can protect him." Thus Gbenelakarakue came from Baraboue and lived at Eepie in Kono Boue. He became the Father of Gaan Baraboue in Kono Boue. Groups like the Kpurube of Saganee House, or the Naako of Neewa House in Kono Boue, belong to Gaan Baraboue. Gbenelakarakue's shrine (LiZim) is at Eepie, near to Gbenetanwayo's and Yonwatedo's compounds. He has become a possessing spirit (Zim). He possessed late Naako Neewa. (1) Gbenelakarakue was a human person, but he became a spirit that possessed people. The piece of ground on which Gbenelakarakue's shrine (LiZim) stands was a virgin land cleared by Gbenegararakara. It was given to Gbenelakarakue by his maternal uncle, Gbenegararakara, as a perpetual inheritance (or gift). No person can take it from him. Even we the sons of Gbenegararakara cannot take it away from him, because, as he said, "He is my sister's son". That was how Gbenegararakara came to own Dukono (Kono Market).

After he had gotten hold of the market firmly in his hands, all the Elders of Boue assembled, great men, powerful men, Kings and generals (mene-mene gian-gian), they all assembled. They said, "Though we are a strong people, we still need additional protection for this market".

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1. Late Naako Neewa was known personally to the writer as a spirit medium in Kono Boue. His children and grand children are alive today.

So, having consulted together, they decided that Gbenebega, the powerful goddess (2) of Khana people, should assist in the protection of the market. All possessing ancestral spirits (mediums) (dedee Zim), including Gbenekote and Gbenekwerre, were given the rights of protectorship of the market, Dukono. They erected a fence in the centre of the market, round the spot on which the agreement was made. The ritual objects and materials used for that agreement remain buried beneath the Shrine which stands inside that sacred fence. That fence you see there was not put there today. It is an ancient fence and it is sacred. No ordinary person, except myself, and after me, my son, can enter the circle demarcated by that fence. As it was the practice in those days, they entrusted their things to the guardianship of gods.

Akwuni: Later on Gbenegarakara decided that some thing must be done on the Feast of Markets to commemorate the establishment of Dukono in Kono Boue. While these things were taking place, something else was happening. That year was the year for the public show of the young maidens who were specially groomed to dance at the Feast of Markets; and the Akwuni musical set was to be played. To everyone's disappointment, it was discovered that the members of the ancestral House of Gbenetibarakan, who owned the Akwuni musical instruments, had neglected the musical set.

So Gbenegarakara said, "What will people take to remember that a great market has been established here at Kono Boue? How will people know, when the Feast of Markets comes, that we are celebrating the establishment of this market?" Thereupon he began to make a new musical set for the Akwuni dance, for celebrating the annual Feast of Markets in honour of the goddess of trade. When he had made the instruments everybody was glad about it.

On the Feast of Markets in March every year all the ladies decorated their bodies with beautiful designs of indigo (biogo), azigirizi and boozua (lit. a "thousand years"). The Akwuni was played. The news spread abroad that the people of Boue were celebrating the Feast of their market. People from all places both far and near came. They came from the fields and from the farms (ba aa Ue-Ue, bara bara) and filled the towns, not only to hear the Akwuni music but also to see the beautiful ladies and the young maidens. The news was spread through all Khana saying,

Pya Boue ba aa de Du ani'ee  
Ba aa de wa Du, Ba aa de wa Du  
Ba si Dukono, Ba yeb Akwuni  
Ba de Dukono, Ba ere eebu.

Boue people are celebrating the Feast of Markets today  
They are celebrating, They are celebrating,  
They go to Dukono, They dance Akwuni.  
They celebrate it, And have joyful hearts.

That was how we came to own the Akwuni and the Akwuni dance.

- 
2. Another example of a human who became a spirit and possessed people. This one in quite an early period; and still very active today.

After they had given the function of guardship of the market to Gbenebega, she asked to know what reward they would give her. They agreed that every year she should come to Dukono to receive some pots. Pottery was the major industry of Kono Boue women at this time. As they were the only potters in the entire area, pottery wares became the principal attraction of people from many different places to Dukono. They came because they wanted to buy water pitchers for collecting and storing drinking water for the dry season. Gbenebega then gave a head carrier basket to Gbenegarakara that each year when they collected market dues from the traders, they should put her own share in that basket and bring it to her.

That was how Gbenebega's basket came to be in Gbenegarakara House. These things that I have told you are the old, old things from the ancient times. As they have said:

Old men may fleet away  
But old words will ever abide

(Nama nee tage me nama ue naata)

Before the Baan war broke out, the market existed right from ancient times. I heard that the market started at the time when the towns in the area were founded. It was the Baan war that caused its removal from Eeyobia in Uwegwere to Kono Boue. With its transfer to Kono Boue, the market received its present name, Dukono, and it held two days in a kpo-eeri (one Khana week of five days), on Deeko and on Deebom. The Deeko market is the big market, to which all Khana people and beyond attend. The Deebom market is a much lesser market which holds in the evening for nearby communities. It holds mainly for fish and vegetables and other foodstuffs which people buy when they return from the farms.

People from all these parts of Khana attend the market with various items of trade: Gokana people brought yams, Tee people brought Geere; Sogho people - Tuu; Kwaa people - abege, kpaakpaa (pepper, corn); Baan people - pee, kpaakpaa, (goats, corn); Babbe people - pee, bari (goats, fish); Boue people - pee, bari (goats, fish); Gokana - kon (poultry); Kaani - kon (poultry); Yeghe - kon (poultry); Kono Boue - Ba, Kanamaa, Bari, pee, (pots, pitchers, fish, goats, etc.).

People from parts of Northern Khana and parts of southern Khana such as Kono, etc., came to buy these things which they took to their own places to sell. To them it was like people go to the big cities like Port Harcourt today to buy goods which they take back to sell in their own towns. They came each Deeko day to buy things: people came from far and wide to buy Kono Boue pots, especially water pitchers, which people who lack drinking water during dry seasons needed very much. People who live in the dry areas used to say "I want to go to Dukono so that I may buy some pitchers for storing cool drinking water for the dry season. For water stored in Kono Boue pitchers remains cool for a long time, even in the hot season". Kono Boue was the only place where pottery was made for all Khana (Ogoni) and beyond.

At the end of each year, the owner of the market (Te-ere-Du) or his representatives used to carry the basket into the market to collect dues from the traders. They collect dues according to the major articles of the individual traders. For example if you sell fish, they will collect fish from you. If you sell yams, they will take yams from you. Thus they do for all commodities sold in the market. Those who sell things like goats, give money or other lesser goods instead. This is done for three market weeks (Taa eari).

During the collection weeks, each basket full is brought to the House of Gbenegarakara, the owners of the market. At the end of this period the whole collection is shared:

This portion for the elders;  
This portion for the Zuguru;  
That portion for Gbenebega;  
And portions to all the Zim  
(founders of all the towns in Boue)  
And to Yobue.

The remainder is cooked into a big feast for both the young and old to enjoy for the joy of this market, while they dance to the tune of the Akwuni in the premises of the House of Gbenegarakara.

As far as Yobue was concerned, he did not have a special entitlement to the market. However, as the god to whom the protection of the town was entrusted, he had a portion of the annual dues collected by the owners of the market, just as the Zim who founded the towns and who are the owners of the towns (Pya Te-ere-bue) have their own portions.

The market is still a big market as it used to be in ancient times. The Akwuni musical set is still there intact. I hang it above the hearth in a special place so that destructive agents cannot attack it. The market basket of Gbenebega is still there. When it gets old, a new one is made and portions of the old one is place inside the new one, as you can see here.

44. CHIEF URANE FRANK IWEREBE (Aged 65) )  
CHIEF BARIDON ZAGA (Aged 60) ) All of GAAN  
MR. GOSI GBARATO (Aged 92) ) NOOBANA, UEGWERE

Interviewed at Uwegwere on 22nd January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Among your ancestors, who founded Eegwere?

When Gbenekiri founded Uwegwere, where in Uwegwere did he first settle?

Is there anything at Eegwere at present which will show that the founder of Uwegwere lived there?

After Gbenekiri and his sons had founded Uwegwere and settled, was there anyone else who joined them?

Where did they say that they came from?

According to the story they told from the ancient, what happened at their former place?

When they arrived at Baan, did they find people at Baan?

When they arrived at Kpong were there people at Kpong then?

Did the Uwegwere of Kpong exist at the time your ancestors arrived there?

Was there any tradition which existed between Kpong and Uwegwere which you can remember?

Was the feast of Gwere observed at Kpong?

Tell the story of what happened when Uwegwere was settled.

What was the major occupation which they practised and through which they survived?

What was the history behind the feast of Yomii?

Did Gbenekiri have a tribute in the raffia palm which he introduced in Khana?

Narrate the story of how there came to be Ga Noobana Uwegwere and Ga Noobana Kono in Boue kingdom.

Tell the story of how Toga was founded.

Name the component towns of Uwegwere.

Narrate what you know about the saying "Du Bari le nee" ("The Trade of God and Men").

Did they name the type of goods which God used to leave for the men?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief Urane Frak Iwerebe. My ancestor was Gbenekiri, the founder of Uwegwere. The sons of Gbenekiri were Gbeneakerenwa and Gbenesute. When Gbenekiri cleared the land of Uwegwere, his two sons were with him and they assisted him in the work. The following are the generations of Gbenekiri:

Gbenekiri  
|  
Gbeneakerenwa  
|  
Gbenesute  
|  
Gbenebalidookunu  
|  
Gbenewee  
|  
Gbeneakakiri  
|  
Gbeneguatebiira  
|  
Gbeneamiioo  
|  
Gwere

When Gbenekiri founded Uwegwere the first town he cleared and settled was called Eegwere but he let his sons help him. Gbenekiri was the Father of Gbeneakerenwa, and Gbeneakerenwa was the father of Gbenesute. That particular area called Eegwere was the place which Gbenekiri made his base when he was doing the work of clearing the towns. It was where he made his permanent home. It was from Eegwere that Uwegwere derived its name, which applied to the component towns together.

If we went to Eegwere now, we would see the shrine known as Gwere Shrine (Si Gwere). Every year before the people of Uwegwere eat the New Yam, they must first celebrate the feast of Gwere (De Gwere). During the feast of Gwere, there was a masquerade dance which used to be played, it was called Toga. Everyone in Uwegwere knew about this masquerade. It originated from an old town (extinct now) by the same name as the masquerade.

When Gbenekiri settled at Uwegwere, the next person who joined him afterwards was Gbenekaabie.

They said that these men came from Ibibioland (Bibi) and first settled at Kpong. There is a town in Kpong which also bears the name of Uwegwere. When they came from Ibibioland, they settled at Baan first before they moved to Kpong. They left Baan because of war. When they left Kpong, they then settled at Uwegwere. They probably left Ibibioland because of scarcity of land. Baan people gave them place to settle. While at Baan, they noticed that they were insecure because of war, so they moved to Kpong.

When they arrived at Kpong, there were no people at Kpong. They were the first people who settled at Kpong. But they soon left Kpong because the war from Baan had shifted to Kpong also. That was why they moved as far south as Uwegwere in Boue kingdom.

I am Chief Baridon Zaga. I am also a descendant of Gbenekiri. I learned the story of the founding of Uwegwere from my father.

Why we got the name Eegwere in Uwegwere was because at the beginning, when the founders arrived here, they found that there were so many Gwere trees in the place. In certain parts the vegetation was all Gwere trees. In our tradition, there was the Feast of Gwere in the month of October each year. Then in the month of May, we celebrate the feast of Yomii. In July we held the feast of Kaan Zua (the Lean Feast, or Lean Year) and in August we celebrate the feast of Aan Zua (New Year, or Great Feast). Our Zua feasts were celebrated at the same time with all Khana people. Kpong and Baan people had their Zua feast together. As Uwegwere Boue left Kpong behind, the traditions of Kpong were also forgotten, so that Kpong traditions and Uwegwere traditions were no longer the same.

Gbenekiri, Gbenekaabie and Bie were the first to settle in Uwegwere before other people joined them. They invited other people to come and settle with them so that the towns might grow. Their chief occupation was agriculture. They planted yams, cut the palm fruits and tapped the raffia palms.

In the early times, the Yomii feast was celebrated at NuLoo. It was a celebration at which they remembered their past achievements. They honoured the raffia palm as one of the gifts of God. They remembered King Gbenekiri for introducing the raffia palm into Khana and he was the first man in the area to tap the palm wine from the raffia palm (Ba nyegia bu loo Gbenekiri ko me ale na a bee dasi gbi eekuwe mue bu lo barasiloo ama a).

All Boue and all the Houses of Gbenekiri levied money and raised funds, out of which they slaughtered a bull in ritual honour to Gbenekiri. They did so as a memorial to him because he introduced the raffia palm into Boue kingdom and to all Ogoni, so that he created the occupation of palm wine tapping and the production of palm wine as a drink of the people. In Boue kingdom, all palm wine tapped on Deeko was given to King Gbenekiri. Every Deeko palm wine tappers brought palm wine to him.

On the feast of Yomii, annually Gbenekiri was honoured by this feast. Two masquerade dances were played. One was called Ka-Alu (Mother of Masquerades) and the other Teebee (Uneasy head). On that occasion palm wine tappers did not take their palm wine to any market to sell. It was forbidden. Any person who broke this law was arrested. The Town ("Government") arrested such a person and the fine was that he slaughtered a goat and dressed the "Traditional Basket". Lo Zii nee su mii sia du ba wee ye aa pya bue wee ye aa sa a kee pee.

I am Mr. Gosi Gbarato, the eldest descendant of Gbenekiri alive today, and priest of Gbenekiri Shrine at Uwegwere.

The three persons who founded Uwegwere were Gbenekiri, Bie and Gbenekaabie. When Gbenekiri and Ikpani moved to Kono to settle there, they named that part of Kono Boue where they settled Noobana Kono.

Chief Urane Iwerebe:

Concerning the settlement of Toga, this was what I heard. As it is, my own father was not yet born at that time, and my father's father (grandfather) was not born either. But, as it was often said, "Old men may be scarce, but old stories may never" (Me ba ko, nama nee tage me nama ue naata). So that was how I heard the story.

When they had moved from Baan, as I said earlier, some of them settled at Baraboue, some moved on to Kwuri, some to Kono Boue, a section of them settled at Toga. This Toga was a very large town which existed. Gbeneakakiri was the founder and King of Toga. He was the brother (1) of Gbenekiri. That was why we became the owners of Uwegwere and Toga. (Nyowo, ili lu Te-ere-Uwegwere le Toga)

The effect of the Baan War was that a whole part of Khana came together with Boue kingdom; the parts of Luawii, Wiiyaakara, they began to celebrate the Khana annual traditions of Zua together. The war also united all Boue so that they had one centre at Baraboue.

Chief Baridon Zaga:

The component towns of Uwegwere include: the original towns founded by Gbenekiri and the additional towns founded by other newcomers.

Gbenekiri founded: Eegwere, Noomaa, Noobana  
Gbenekaabie founded: Eeyobia  
Ga Gbaabio: Kuruga, Eelolo  
Gbenebarikina: Kako, Baraboue

The founders were men who had performed great traditional rites and ceremonies and obtained the highest titles in Khana "Gbene-". They performed the rites of Yaa Nwii, Bina, doo dogo ("do deeds"), Kee nam (slaughter cows), Baa Li ("open" or "break" the grave) wob-ewob (perform rituals), etc. Gbenekiri was one of such men, who did those things and possessed his descendants. We are right here in Gbenekiri House (To Gbenekirina ile ama). Look at Gbenekiri Shrine (Si Gbenekiri na ke) (2).

As the Feast of Yomii will be celebrated on 25th May this year, the world will fill this place with palm wine which they will bring to Gbenekiri House (Pyayouwe ba e su mii nua to Gbenekiri). Nobody will take any wine to the market to sell. It was illegal for any person to cut down a raffia palm tree. If anyone did that, he would be heavily fined by the Town authorities. Or if somebody uprooted a raffia palm, he would be fined. Anyone who contravened these laws

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1. Other sources say that Gbeneakakiri was the first son of Gbenekiri (See name analysis: Gbene + Aka + Kiri). See Chief M.A.M. Tonwe III's testimony.
  2. Gbenekiri had two Houses, one at Kono Boue and one at Uwegwere. This interview took place at the Uwegwere House.

would be brought to Gbenekiri House and there he would be judged and fined by the Town Authority (Pya Bue).

Gbenekiri fought in the Baan war, he went to Baan and did "all things" there (doo kiri doobe), and returned to take control of the rulership (li Baan, sa aa dee su bue yere to, yaa ba ye).

Mr. Gosi Gbarato:

"Du Bari le Nee": When you hear "Du Bari le Nee", that is Khana language that we speak. What I heard in ancient times, and I hear it today also; I heard that there was a time when God and men traded together (Mbee da doo wo ko, soli, Bari le nee bee ura du, Bari wee su nu egarra ke, sa olo lu wee su). God used to pour (egarra ke) things on the ground and men came to take them. You sell them, and go again, God had already placed things on the ground. You take and you go to sell or trade on them.

When people heard about the trade of God and men (Du Bari le Nee) it was the white men and God that traded together (Pya Ee le Bari na ba bee ura du a).

They did not state what God poured on the ground for them but whatever God wished that was what he poured for them. (Nu Bari sua na a wee wa su uu ke ne a).

45. CHIEF D.D. DEMUA OF GBAM, BOUE (Aged c. 62)  
Interviewed at Gbam on 5 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

War broke out and some refugees came to Ke'on, how did they know that those refugees came from Kpong, and not from any other place?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief Daasang Deemua. My father was Ikpuru. I heard words from my father Ikpuru. Demua and Ikpuru were brothers of the same father and mother. Their elder (brother) and Senior was Koo Deenwa. Ikpuru told me that he heard all these things from Koo Deenwa, concerning the beginnings of Gbam Boue.

There was war between the peoples of Zaakpon, Wiiyakara, Baan and Kpong. The war spread as far as Sogho and then to Boue. People scattered in every direction seeking places of shelter from the crisis. For all Khana people came originally from a place called Ghana. (Me dedee Khana ama me ba bee an Zii ke akura Ghana). It was from there that they settled at Nama. From Nama they began to spread. (So ba aa Nama, ba yaara).

It was at that time that Gbenetigina came from Nama and settled at Gbam, Boue. The section he first settled was Ke'on. From Ke'on, he went and invited one of his brothers named Kote, that he should come and settle with him at Ke'on because it was a good hiding place (me e alu me e muena e ke eton, ea lu le ke egoa).

While he was there at Ke'on, the Baan war continued to rage. So they went to Bonny, for they had heard that there was a medicine man at Bonny. They brought Yobue from Bonny (ba su Yobue aan Bani). Yobue was a medicine man (nee dambie).

When they brought Yobue from Bonny they settled him at Ke'on (ba su ye sare Ke'on). I know the exact spot where he settled, because the person who narrated it to me showed the place to me also. When Boue had settled down and the towns had spread, the Elders of Boue came and said that the place where Yobue was kept at Ke'on was too secluded. So they removed Yobue from Gbam and brought him to Kono Boue where they settled him and gave him a piece of land (lo son na ba su Yobue kuma Kono a sa ye ne keneke).

They told Yobue that if he could prepare medicines and charms so that they won the war, the piece of land should be his property (Me lo ee dabge doo pie sa ba be e no a eebe, me ye keneke na ama). For Yobue was a refugee (iyiinayo). This would suggest that the oldest towns in Boue were Ke'on and Kono.

They discussed about markets. There was a market at Uwegwere. When a war broke out between Uwegwere people and Yeghe people, they moved the market from Uwegwere to Kono Boue. That was how Dukono originated, for the position of Kono Boue was most central (nyonebee Kono bee lu bue ale tee yee).

The first son of Gbenetigina who founded Gbam, was the founder of Nookwuri. His name was Gbenekwaa'oo. He was a wizard and sorcerer. Because of that his father expelled him from Gbam. (So abee lu nee taa a, ye te kpo ye lee Gbam). So he went to Nookwuri waterside, and there founded a town. Thus Nookwuri came from Gbam Boue.

During the time of war, they all took shelter at Nama. From Nama. they spread out to found everyone his own town.

The person Gbenetigina invited to come because he had founded a settlement was Gbeneyokpong, who was his maternal uncle. He came from Kpong. His grave and shrine are at Ke'on. The other person whom he also invited to come was Gbenenaaloo. His shrine and grave are also at Ke'on. Gbenetigina's grave and shrine are also at Ke'on, between Ke'on and Gbam.

As to whether they could have come from another place other than Kpong, I do not know that very well, because when I heard these stories I was a child; if I was older, I probably could have asked that type of question. (Mmsua lo ama leere, nyonebee son m bee le gbo miogo a mm bee dab bib lo dua e bib ama).

Kinglist:

Gbenetigina  
|  
Deenwa  
|  
Sobie  
|  
Koo  
|  
Saaba  
|  
Ikpuru (d. 1951)  
|  
Porobee (Regent)  
|  
Dasang Deemua (1964- )

46. CHIEF NNAA KPUGITA OF KENEKE, BOUE (Aged c. 55)  
Interviewed at Keneke on 2 Janaury 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how your ancestors came to Keneke.

Could anybody play the Bina?

How many people in Keneke have played (hired) the Bina?

Where was the first settlement in Keneke?

How did Gbeneloo get the title Gbene?

What did the people of Keneke do as their main occupation in early times?

Where did the people of Keneke sell their products in early times?

I heard that there was a big market at Keneke waterside in ancient times known as Dukwuri: could you say something about that market?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief Nnaa Kpugita. My ancestor who founded Keneke was Gbeneloo. His father was Gbenegaratigina. Gbenegaratigina came from Uwegwere. While they were at Uwegwere Gbeneloo walked through the bush till he came to the place which is Keneke today. When he found the place to be pleasant, he built a shed there. After he had built the shed, he continued to explore the area. One day, he came to the coast where he saw salt water. In the salt water (maala) he saw some mudskippers (kpebee tua) which he described as fish with wings (bari paa le dume).

After staying for a while, he returned to Uwegwere, where he gave an account of what he had seen to his brothers and friends. He told the people that the place was the meeting point of land and sea (Keneke maa). From that the name of the town was called Keneke. The next person who came to Keneke to settle with Gbeneloo was Gbenekaranaaloo. He came from Lee. Lee was an old town (nama bue). A large part of the population of Keneke came from Lee. Today Lee is a farming area for Keneke people. The Shrine of Gbenekaranaaloo is in Keneke now.

Another person that came to settle in Keneke was Gbenenyeene. Gbenenyeene came from Tee. He also had a section of the land of Keneke, and his grave and shrine are in Keneke.

The next settler was Gbeneboori. When he came, Gbeneloo gave him that part called Boori, and he settled and occupied that town.

The person who founded IlooLo was called Yofiribeb. He came from Nookwuri. But Gbenekwaa'oo came from Gbam to found Nookwuri. For some time Yofiribeb lived at IlooLo endeavouring to seek ways and means to make the town of IlooLo grow. Later on Gbenebarigwere, who also came from Uwegwere joined him. The two of them settled there; and together they sought to make the town prosperous.

Yofiribeb then decided to make human sacrifice for the good of the town. He bought a male; but he also wanted a female: this became difficult. One day, when his friend Gbenebarigwere had gone to the palm wine camp (Nuloo) where he used to stay to tap his raffia palms, the thing entered the head of Yofiribeb to seize one of the wives of Gbenebarigwere as a sacrificial victim for the earthgod of the town. (1) (Yofiribeb su zii wa Gbenebarigwere daa zoo ko bue a yii ke). When Gbenebarigwere heard what had happened, he was furious against Yofiribeb and took his gun to go and shoot him. Yofiribeb escaped into exile and never returned to IlooLo. (Son Yofiribeb emoena doowo, a teera aa bue kii ke a binia, sa naa sike dab yii IlooLo).

Gbenebarigwere became the owner of IlooLo (Te-ere-IlooLo), till today. For he said "I have taken the town, because it was the town for which my wife became a sacrifice" (A Ko, "Me sua lo bue, nyonebee a lu bue na wa bee lu zoo ne").

There were three towns which formed the three communities of Keneke. These were Keneke, Iboori and IlooLo.

Yoko was still living at Kwuribue when the towns of Keneke were founded. He was invited from Kwuribue to come and help in the work of establishing the town because he was a medicine man (Nyonebee ale bee le nee dambie). So he came and helped to make the town to grow. For his work a part of the town was designated to him (Ba su zii parasiloo ke ye ne). He occupied a special position as the Chief's spiritual man whose function was to guard and protect the town (spiritually). (Alu "Yo"-Te-ere-bue. Ye tam lu tam bae-bae loo bue lo e doo no logo poro aa tee yii bue). If they wanted to do anything in the town without him, they could not do it. (ale sii lu, ba naa dab doo) He was popularly called Yoko-Kwuribue. (2)

Another person who was there at that time was Yokonwaa. He was Gbeneloo's client (Nwii-be). When Gbeneloo died, he buried him. When Gbeneloo's son and heir was a minor, Yokonwaa took control of the Rulership. That child of Gbeneloo was called Garaloo, being the name of his grandfather who lived at Uwegwere (Go ye te ebee uh'li Uwegwere). He became Garaa II, son of Loo, who became Gbeneloo; who was the son of Garaa I. Gbenegaraatigina was their ancestor.

When Garaloo attained majority the first thing he did for his father was to play the Bina (Bee ye kpa bina ne). The Bina had eleven drums (lob-le-ezii ka kere). In some areas they call it Akwuni. The Bina was played on very important occasions (dee gbene doodo nu). It was something they used to do to honour somebody who was great, a great Elder, and one who had done great deeds (nee edora gbene doodoonu).

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1. This was an example of "Dookiri-Doobe", the quality of being able to do both good and evil equally well.
  2. cf. Kote Kwuribue, Gbenekwerre-Kwuribue. These were two of three brothers who came from the same ancient town of Kwuribue and founded Kono Boue. The third brother was Gbenetibarakaan.

When the Bina was played, women would have that day off to honour the occasion. The young girls (Pya zege emua) would have their bodies decorated with artistic paintings of biogo, boozua and azigirizi. They would dance the Bina "band" and music. The older women (pya Kabaariwa) and the young ladies (pya Zugurubia) would beautify themselves to dance the Bina. They would make gifts to the Bina "band". It was a holiday for them; and they would cook good meals for their husbands (ba e bui le nu ede ne wa dam). The Bina was played early in the year to usher in the new farming season (Lo kpa ama wee su do bu zua bu zua son yii wii).

Not anybody could hire the Bina. A person who could hire the Bina to be played in memory of his father must be a really great man in the traditions of Khana. (Nee e lua gbene nee bu doodoonu pya Khana). That man must certainly be a really great man (Nee ama ere elu Kasi Gbene Nee). He must have performed the traditional rites of Yaa Ge, Yaa Nwii, etc., before he could hire the Bina to be played for his father (or ancestor).

Since the day Gbeneloo played the Bina for his father, nobody else has done the same. The reason is that the performance was a sacred undertaking (Lu gbene doodoonu ale kae). If care was not taken, and you undertook to do it you could die in the middle of the performance without coming to the end of it. (3) (Lo oo sua ke o doodoo, le ke o ton doo o uh bia nyon lo doodoonu, sa oo dab doo lee).

The only man who undertook to do this performance was one called Benaale Jowa. He hired the Bina, not to be played in honour of his own ancestors but as a memorial of the Bina which Garaloo played for his father, who was the founder of the town (Bee kpa ko me a nyegia bu loo lo kpa Bina Garaloo bee kpa ne ye te abee lu Ta-ere-bue). A few days after the Bina ended, he died. That was in 1983. (4)

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3. A very clear example was a man whom I previously knew, one Chief Dezim of Sii. He was a civil servant, but he became very prosperous from the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70). Then he undertook to make a name for himself in Khana by going into the Traditions leading to getting the title "Gbene". He died in later part of 1980, a few months after I returned from the U.S.A. In 1981, I was doing my fieldwork, I went to his town, Sii. Eye-witness accounts told me that he became extremely terrified when he had "opened the door" at Nama. He surely wanted to withdraw but it was impossible to withdraw. He had gone too far into the mysteries! He died in the middle of it. One could feel the awe of it if one were to hear it from the eye-witnesses.
  4. I also witnessed the death of the man named above. His town is not quite three kilometers from mine. I was around when he was performing this tradition. His death was reported to be directly caused by the Bina he played, because he thought that it was achieved by money, rather than by deeds.

The first settlement in Keneke is where we are standing now. The first compound is the very one we are in now. This was the place where Gbeneloo built his first shed.

Gbeneloo performed the traditional rites. If one had not performed the prescribed traditional rites and be able to possess a person through whom one could declare his powers and identity, "Gbene" could not be attached to his name. (Lo o sii doo doonu sa aa nee koa uwe, ba naa yere "Gbene-" loo o bee).

Gbeneloo performed the traditions and went to Nama. That was why he could possess a person and has the title of "Gbene-" (Great), attached to his name.

"Opening the Door" at Nama: The first thing a man who wanted to perform the traditional rites at Nama had to do was to carry wine to the Priest of Nama and say that they should open the door of Nama for him, because he wanted to perform the traditional rites (Ko ba a Kpaana bu Nama ye ne e, me a doo e doonu).

They would knock at the door at Nama and open for him. Than they would take the wine which he brought and pour libation saying that "This man is coming to perform the traditions" (ba e su mii a egara ke ko me "ee aa lu wee doo doonu"). When they have done that he would then return home to prepare concerning the performances. When he had returned to Nama and had completed the traditional rites, he would close that door. (son e obia lu sa doo lo doonu sa, ale kpee lo Bu).

That door would remain closed until someone else would come to say that it should be opened for him because he wanted to perform the traditional rites. When a man had completed the "doings" (doodoonu) at Nama, and the title of "Gbene-" had been prefixed to his name, a proclamation was made throughout the whole Khana, that such a man had got the title of Gbene to his name. (ba wee ko ume dedee ke ko me nee ama e ere Gbene loo ye bee).

Any person who had gone to Nama to perform the deeds, must be a person who owned a territory, or the Ruler of a section of a town. Even if someone else was the founder or Lord of that territory or town, immediately a person got the title of Gbene to his name the founder or Lord of that territory must give a separate part of the territory or town to him, and he would be the Lord of that part of the territory or town (lo nee ere e ko a kii zii sibiraloo wee ton sa lu Te-ere-lo-Barasiloo). (5)

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5. Te-ere-Eba Asaa: lit. means Father-owner of a piece of the ground; or Lord of a territory. The implication was that one Lord could not be under another. This arrangement was part of the whole process of attaining the title. The giving of territory was automatic, because men of that calibre were sought after, to be in league with, to provide defence, and to give leadership. They were warriors.

The people of Keneke were both farmers and fishermen. They were fishermen because the town was located near the sea. (ba lu bue ba le numaa). That was why its name was called Keneke Maala (the junction of Land and Sea). The people cultivated the land and they also tapped the raffia palms. The women were weavers of mats. (Py a neewa wee lo bui).

Dukono at Kono Boue was an important market where they sold their products. Dukono was located in a central place for all Boue. Some farm produce and fish were their main trade items.

There was also a big market called Dukwuri (Kwuri market). Riverine people used to attend the market, which was located at Keneke waterside. People from Bonny, Andoni, etc., used to bring fish to the market. Khana people used to bring yams and other farm produce. Khana people also brought palm wine, palm oil, and palm fruits. We do not know when the market began, or when it came into existence. My father did not narrate this. But he told the story of how the market scattered and ceased to function. It ceased to function in 1932, as a result of a war between Kono Boue people and Keneke people. When the market was being held, Bonny people used to rent land at our water-side where they stayed to trade in the market. (son du a bee wee ura, pya Bani bee bara Keneke sa ton numaa sa wee ura du).

47. CHIEF KOOBEE ASOO OF UWEGWERE, BOUE (Aged c. 120)  
Interviewed at Uwegwere on 12 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me the story of how this town Uwegwere, started, from the beginning.

Ateteenwaa, who entrusted the Rulership of the town to your father, where did he come from before he became the Ruler of this town?

Who was his own father?

Where did Assobienee come from?

How did Assobienee become the Zim and Ruler of Uwegwere?

How did people know that the symbol of Assobienee was the fish racket?

Why then was he called Assobienee?

Why did the Elders agree to give a certain amount out of the revenue from divorce cases to Assobienee?

If the Spirit (Zim) of Assobienee arrested a person, if the person went to pay the prescribed fees did the person get well?

How was the government of this town organized?

Tell me something you remembered about the Baan War.

What ancient markets existed in Uwegwere and in Boue in the beginning?

Have you ever heard the saying, "Du Bari le Nee"?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief Kobee Asoo. I am the Ruler of (Te-ere-bue) of Uwegwere.

Boue people used to go to Luawii where they usually met at Bariyaayoo. From Bariyaayoo, the next place they used to assemble was Kako in the House of Yolue.

How my father became a Ruler: The person who entrusted the Rulership of Uwegwere to my father was Ateteenwaa Garabari. He gave him the Rulership after the death of his wife. He said that he could no longer continue the Rulership. That the Rulership should be given to him instead of farmlands which should have been given to him; and that the Rulership should be given to him instead of raffia bushes which he should have given to him. (me bue ama ale kere uwe ebee ye nee, e bue ama ale wa e bee ye nee; alunwii ebee ye nee). Let it be to him as the children which he should have given to him, and the wives which he should have given to him.

Then he put an oath to it saying if anyone should take the Rulership away from him, that one's life should be taken away from him. (a su yii yereloo ko nee aye su lee ba nu a su ye).

That was how my father became the Ruler of the town.

Ateteenwaa was from the House of Assobienee, that was where he came from. As for Assobienee, I don't know where he came from. What I know is that he was an ancestral spirit (Zim) which was placed in the town just as Yobue was placed in the town. Yobue and Assobienee, these two spirits (Zim) were the two people to whom I belonged. (Py a ba me ere lo).

Ateteenwaa  
|  
Asoo  
|  
Ikpae  
|  
Kobee

Assobienee's symbol was the fish racket (Akwereka). The fish racket that came from fish which were used for ritual sacrifices to deities and spirits (Zim). That was why if people put a fish racket on something, it would be said that Assobienee had been hired to watch that thing. (lo pya naa su Akwereka sere loo Zii nu ba ko ba wu Assobienee loo lo nu).

Assobienee was his name at birth, but Akwereka was what he adopted as his symbol (ye nu kwadee). Assobienee was the guardian of domestic goats. He was appointed to watch all goats in the towns against thieves. If anyone stole a goat he was to arrest that person. (Ba bee ye sere ko aku dee loo pee bu bue. Nee a yib pee, a aa). The way they knew that Assobienee had arrested somebody was that he used to break the legs of the culprit. (Wee wa buu to).

The Elders employed Assobienee to be near them in order that he might watch over their interests (ko ee a ku dee loo wa keton). If anyone broke their law, he should arrest that person. (Nee a do wa log, ee a aa).

Whenever the Elders settled a divorce case, they gave of the fees paid three manillas to Assobienee. Every divorce case settled, three manillas was Assobienee's entitlement. The Chief used to collect these three manillas on each divorce case settled throughout the year. On the day of his feast he would send the amount to the House of Assobienee. (Te-ere-bue wee bogene lo taa-taa kpugi ama uma dee ba e de Assobienee, a su ture ye Be).

The Elders paid him this money as wages for his work for them. (Ba ne ye doodoo tab loo tam aa si ne pya kanee). For it was he who used to ensure that their laws were enforced completely. (Ale wee ku dee loo pya Kanee sa mue ko wa log era). They did not give him money in every case that the Elders settled, only in divorce cases. Divorce cases were as serious as murder and witchcraft cases. These other cases were settled in Yobue House. Divorce cases were considered to be serious because it involved the change of wives from one ancestral spirit to another. (lu nyana wa aan ba zii Zim ture ba Zii).

If a person was "arrested" by Assobienee, if the person paid the fines, he got well. Any one who refused to pay the fines remained in his condition (lo nee anaa si wee kpe wee bia bu).

At first, Boue people used to take big cases like murder and witchcraft to Luawii for trial in Bariyaayoo. Yobue and Assobienee changed that position. They took the right to try such cases from Bariyaayoo in Luawii to Boue. In Boue, the place they used to meet was at Yolue House in Kako. All consultations were done at the Houses of Yolue at Kako. Any decisions that were taken at Kako, the chiefs carried them to their separate towns for announcement or for publicity. Kako was one of the oldest towns in Boue (Kako in Zii nema Boue bu Boue). Yolue was the Zim (or ancestor) who founded Kako. But I do not know where Yolue came from when he settled in Kako.

I heard from the ancients about the Baan War. They spoke about it. The ancestors fought the war and narrated about it. Boue people fought at Baan and defeated Baan people and carried home a sacred bowl. They took it after all Baan people had scattered and fled from their houses. (Son yube Baan eyaera teera aagi wa ta).

Concerning ancient markets, Dukono (Kono market) was one of the big ancient markets in Boue.

I used to hear people say in proverb: "Is it the market of God and white men?" (Ba wee ko, "Alu Du Bari le Bekee se?") They used to say this when a person became disagreeable (Ba wee ko son nee naa yiga).

48. CHIEF INEE BARIGWERE OF ILOOLOO (Aged c. 98)  
Interviewed at IlooLoo on 3 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how IlooLoo was founded.

Who else joined Yofiribeb afterwards to found this town?

When did the war with Okrika take place?

What caused the war?

Which other war did you recall between Boue people and Okrika?

When the war with Okrika took place, was Bonny there?

When Bonny people attended Kwuri market, what did they bring to the market?

Narrate the story of how Port Harcourt was founded? What do you recall that happened?

Was there any war between Boue and Bonny?

I heard that you are one of the Leopard killers in this area. Would you narrate the story how you became such a man?

What concerned Yobue in all these things?

Why did you have to go to the House of Gbenebega also?

Now that you are a leopard killer, you have been to the Yoboue Centre and have done all these things, what do they call you in Khana?

Have you danced the Koogian?

Tell me about Kpakpana.

How was the Kpakpana played?

Have you ever heard the saying in Khana, "Du Bari le Nee"?

B. The Narrative:

I am Inee. My father was Barigwere, the son of Gbenebari.

The founder of IlooLoo was Yofiribeb. Later on his brother named Gbenebari joined him. When these two had settled down, one other person afterwards joined them. This person was Demeteenwaa. Yofiribeb and Demeteenwaa were friends. It was Yofiribeb who invited Demeteenwaa to come and settle at IlooLoo. He gave him an area to settle. Yofiribeb came from Baraboue. He travelled through the forest until he arrived at IlooLoo, where he began to clear the forest for settlement. First he built a hut (iloo). After sometime he went back to Baraboue. There people asked him where he had been for some time, he told them that

where he was, he built a hut (iloo), so that it was that that made him to feel comfortable to be there for long. That the hut was there still (iloo le ke a). However, when people from Baraboue visited the place they found that the man had prepared the ground for the settlement of a large community (so ba aa nyone ye ina, kereme ee aa bee kpo bue). So they said, You emphasized to us that what made you to remain longer there was the fact that there was a hut there. You never told us the fact that you were founding a town. So they jested about it, calling him Iloo le (there is a hut there) (Nyono ba ko be ee bee ko iloo le a, kere me bue). From that they called the name of the town ILooLe (Te ma loo wu ba su lo bue kue ILooLe). From Iloole, we had ILooLoo.

Afterwards Gbeneloo came to Keneke bush and built a shed there as a shelter from the weather. He did not clear the land for settlement. When he returned to Uwegwere he also said that he had built a shed (iloo) there, and his shed (iloo) was there also. It was that shed that they described as Loo's iloo (Lo iloo a na ba kue "iloo Loo" a). When it came to distinguishing between these two places, they also called Iloole as ILooLoo. That was how this town was called ILooLoo. (Ke ateedoo ba kue bue ama doo ILooLo lo).

Then Gbeneloo and Yokonwaa returned afterwards to clear the site of Keneke. When they came they found that Yofiribeb had cleared the site of ILooLoo and built a hut there. (So be ina ba mue sa ko me Yofiribeb e kpoa ILooLoo sa tob Loo). Thus ILooLoo became the first town in Keneke (ILooLoo sike lu tuatua bue bu Keneke).

That was the history that if there was a new play or dance, or masquerade to be shown in Keneke for the first time, they must begin from ILooLoo (ke teedo sa lo ba e bob alu ale eregeba bii, sa ba wee su kuma ILooLoo lo).

The next person who joined in the foundation of ILooLoo was Gbenekwaa'oo. It was a result of a war with Okrika (Bee tema nyo no; ba bee be no Krika). Boue people went to that war. One of the captives Boue people took from Okrika (Krika) was named Itobarino. They took him alive from the war. When they arrived home they did not kill him. They handed him to Gbenekwaa'oo to keep him. (Ba su ye su ne Gbenekwaa'oo ko a sere ye).

He remained in the House of Gbenekwaa'oo and became prosperous and married a wife. He married a woman named Iligi from the House of Igbarakaranwaa. He got three children from this marriage whose names were Kwagua, Iyegenee and Fuuyo.

When the other warriors who went to that war saw that the man had become prosperous and that Gbenekwaa'oo had taken the benefit alone, they protested. Assobienee and Gbenebalikina complained that Gbenekwaa'oo had taken all the children from the man.

Gbenekwaa'oo took this Kwaagua and settled him on the part of ILooLoo land, which Yofiribeb pledged to him for the sum of one thousand two hundred manillas (taa boo kpugi). This money was the price of a human skull which Gbenekwaa'oo sold to Yofiribeb, because the latter needed it as part of a ritual sacrifice to the earth-deity when he was founding the town of ILooLoo (Yofiribeb bee ye baa lo eba keneke ne loo zii eKobeenee ale bee ne Yofiribeb loo taa boo kpugi). Yofiribeb

su lo ekobee nee su ye a bue ILoLo ke). It was agreed that the day Yofiribeb brought one thousand two hundred bronze manillas (taa boo kpugi) to Gbenekwaa'oo, he would take back his land.

As Yofiribeb had not paid that money, Gbenekwaa'oo settled the man captured from the Okrika war on that land. That was how Gbenekwaa'oo became a person who owned a part of the land of ILoLo as one of the landlords of the town (ke a tee doo sa Gbenekwaa'oo sike lu yiiloo pya ba ere eba keneke ILoLo lo). But the actual territory of Gbenekwaa'oo is Nookwuri. I am the owner of ILoLo (Gbenekwaa'oo ere Nookwuri, m da ere ILoLo).

If you have ever heard about the Andoni war (No pya Bono), I mean the ancient one, the Okrika war (No Krika) was earlier than that Andoni war. The Baan war, however, was earlier than the Okrika war. The Baan war was the most ancient war (Lo No Baan na alu nama no a).

The Okrikans killed a Boue man when he was at sea for fishing. Because of that, Boue people carried war to Okrika to fight there. After they had killed many Okrikan people, they captured one of their men and brought him alive. That was how Itobarino came to our town. When he died, they did not bury him at Okrika, they buried him in our town. His compound is here now at ILoLo. The compound is full of many descendants and many able men (lo be le ke, nwii nee ka mee le bu, pya nee dam le bu).

If they were in this house now, I would have pointed to them one by one, telling you that these men their ancestor came from Okrika, as I used to tell them that their ancestor came from Okrika (Ke adoo m wee wa ko ne lo, ko me ke wa te aa lu na Krika).

The war ended without settlement. There was no government at that time. When the Baan war took place, there was no government also. When the Andoni war took place, there was no government. Of the three wars, no government existed. In the last war we fought with Andoni the mediators were the Bonny (Pya Bani). The war with Okrika, there was no mediation. In the other Okrika war, there was no government also. There was no mediation - There was mutual fear and caution on both sides until the colonial rule was established. (I gbaa ere boo loo Zii sa wee gbaanage si doo ume so government yii).

At the time of the Okrika war, the Bonny people were not there. They probably were in their own place at that time. But they used to come to Kwuri market (Dukwuri), though they had not come closer to our area. When they came to DuKwuri, they brought wines and spirits in casks, which they brought from Europeans (mii Bekee).

They kept some in our compound, where Boue people came to buy other things including tobacco, pipes, cloth, fish, etc. There was no Port Harcourt at that time. I am older than Port Harcourt. The day the site of Port Harcourt was cleared two persons were conscripted from our compound, Iparabari Nyiakpuru and Kpaama Imana. They conscripted people from all Boue and from all Khana. The day they came back, not one Kobo (penny) was found on them.

Preceding the founding of the city of Port Harcourt was the destruction of towns throughout all Boue by the colonial people (Pya Ikosi). I was a boy at that time. A man named Tende, the father of Inu'ue, was returning from Du Kwuri, where he went to sell his palm wine. They shot him at the farming area of Gbarasoo. The bullet broke his rib and he fell on his calabash and on his money. He died. (A suu naa tube ye kee koo, a do nyo ye gbara mii le ye kpugi sa uh).

The people of our town fled to the bushes near to the sea, where Bonny people used to settle (bu wii ale de numaa, dee ke pya Bani wee ton). The first time they came, they burned all Boue. That time, I was not born. (lo tua son, ba bee tere mia loo dedee Boue, lo dee, m sii bee mea).

There had been no war between Bonny and Boue at any time. What I heard that took place when I was not born, was not war. It was a mere fight over farming land. It was like a fight of two brothers (doodoo be bae wuga). What caused that fight was that some Bonny people were given land in a farming area where they settled. When those Bonny people (pya lo Bani) had died, their children turned round and claimed that land as their own property (pya wa nwii sike ko me lo wii alaba e). Boue people fought over it. That farming area was Lee, which was one of the ancient settlements of Boue; and it was near the sea. (Lo wii bee le Lee, ke a bee le zii nama bue Boue li numaa).

The first headlight I bought for hunting, the money was provided by one called John Gbo. But at that time I did not shoot any leopard, until that headlight became worn out. I bought another headlight. It was during the lifetime of this second headlight that I shot a leopard. When I shot the leopard, I carried it to the Yoboue Centre.

When I carried the leopard from the bush to my compound, they (the Elders) charged me one bottle of wine for (1) my mother, one bottle for my father, one bottle for Gbenebalikina, who was the first man who bore the gun in Boue, one bottle for the town of ILooLoo, one bottle for the town of Iboori; one bottle for the town of Keneke, one bottle for the town of Nookwuri, three bottles for the Church People; one bottle for Itanee, the first slayer of leopard in Keneke, one bottle for Yokue (the deity of forests).

When I had done all that at Keneke, I carried the leopard to Kono Boue. At Kono Boue, the first place they took me to was the House of Gbenebalikina (Be Gbenebalikina). They charged me one bottle of wine there. Then they took me to the House of Gbenekarayoo in Tego. There they charged me one bottle of wine. Next, they took me to the House of Gbenegarakara in Eepie, they charged one bottle of wine there. Then they took me to the House of Deemaa, I paid one bottle of wine there. After that they took me to Gbenekiri House (Ga Noobana Kono), they charged me one bottle of wine there. Then they took me to Igarara Abe House, they charged me one bottle of wine there. Finally they took me to Yoboue House.

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1. In this context for means "on behalf of". This is because the wines being charged did not go to the people named but were consumed by the Elders and Pya Zuguru and the Kabaariwa.

At Yoboue House, the first thing they asked me to do was to pay twenty-one bronze manillas and one bottle of wine with which to "cross" the door step and enter the House. The members of Yoboue House produced one bottle of wine with which they said to me "Welcome from the hunting". (Pya be Yoboue do zii mii me ko, mea ara kue). Then they told me that they had seen the leopard which I shot. That I should go to the House of Kpobee Deerakara. There I should pay twenty-one bronze manillas and a calabash of palm wine. That I would be told what to do from there. After I had paid the prescribed things and the money they performed some rituals on me. Among the "ingredients" was oil palm fruit fibre.

After that we came back to Yoboue House. This time they asked me to pay sixty manillas (taa-tub kpugi) and a bottle of wine. Then they stretched out the leopard on the ground. They asked me to bring two gourds full of camwood powder (do); one for Chiefs Ipiagbo Akpoyo and Itanee Ikiriki, and the other for the second person who would take part in leeing (2) the leopard. (lo a ere ye bae nee ba e lee kuwe). They prepared the body or carcass of the leopard just like they used to do to a human corpse! (Ba lee kuwe bei nage ke ba wee lee nee doo!)

They charged me four manillas for every bullet hole in the body of the leopard. They called this bullet fee (kpugi asuu naa). When they were done with leeing the leopard, they carried it into the forest to butcher it there. I myself did not even see the place they stayed to butcher that leopard. (Mda m mue dee loo ke ba ton kee lo kuwe). That is why you used to hear them say in proverb that "Men do not open the stomach of the leopard in public". ("Ade kuwe ba naa wee baa tee ke").

They gave me one leg, one piece of the heart, and one half of the skin. They did this because it was I who killed the leopard. They gave the head, the tail, a piece of the heart and the skin to Yobue.

Then they told me to go to Gwaara to the House of Gbenebega. The day I would go to Gwaara, Yobue would take me to the place. The day I went to Gwaara, Yobue possessed his medium, and Gbenebega possessed her medium (Yobue aa nee, Gbenebega aa nee). I "dressed" the Traditional Basket, and put money in it. (M Yere kpugi bu to). Late Gbigbo, the Spirit-Medium of Yobue, he was alive then.

We had to go to Gwaara because Yobue said that Gbenebega was his wife (or lover). (Nuanua sa i si Gwaara na be Yoboue ka me Gbenebega lue ye ga e); that whatever entered his hands, she must eat. It was he who took me there.

Having done all these things, in Khana people can call me DamGian.

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2. This is an Anglicized Khana word, Lee, pronounced "Lay". It is a technical word involving the "mortuary" preparation of the corpse of a dead person, usually of an Elder, before putting into the coffin for burial. Here the "corpse" of this member of the ruling class of the jungle is being accorded the same kind of honour.

I have "danced" the Koogian. This is what the Koogian is: they would make rituals on your wrist seven times seven (Ba ewob a mee ba ereba so ereba). They would slap your open palm and blow it with the mouth and proclaim to you that wherever you go, you could drink with your left hand! That is what is called "Strengthening the wrist". (Nu ba kue sim mee ba lo)

They would then ask you to bring the gun which you used in shooting the leopard. They would take it from you and give it into your hand, saying to you "Touch it to the ground" (ba e su a ne ko O su kue ke). Then they would take you to dance the Koogian (Ba su a pema Koogian se). They would grip your hand and take you to run to the top of a hill (or raised land), at the top they would touch your palm to the ground. Then they would take you to run down to the vale, there they would touch your palm to the ground. They would take you to run like that seven hills and seven vales. (Ba e aa a ba su tea yii nyon kpoke ba su ba a kue ke. Ba su a tea yima bu feb ke, ba su ba a kue ke. Ba e su a tea doowo sia nyon ereba kpoke le ereba feb ke). When you have completed the runnings, you would fire the gun. They would applaud you with honour and say that you have become one of the braves! (Ba e koba sa a ne ka ko me wee lua zii nee Gian!)

The kpakpana was never played at random. Unless it has become extremely dangerous, the kpakpana cannot be played. The day that the kpakpana was played must be the day of battle. (Dee ba wee kpa kpakpana wee le dee be). It was never played on an ordinary day. The day that everything else has failed, and it has become clearly obvious that a battle must be fought, then the kpakpana must be played (Dee e era ba, sa lu bee no elua, lo dee na ba wee kpa kpakpana a). If the kpakpana was a thing played on just any day, you would be hearing it. The kpakpana was a thing used to call up spirits. (Kpakpana wee le nu ba wee su kwema edon lee ke).

If the kpakpana was played now, some young men who are now in their father's homes would be (temporarily) possessed ("Nu e do wa loo") All the Kings and Generals who had died, and all the Spirits, would arise to go to war. All the mediums, they would be "fired" round the towns (Yo e do wa loo tema loo bue).

When that has happened, if a people brought war you would fight them and defeat them. And wherever you went to war you would defeat them. The kpakpana followed the Pumbu (3).

The Pumbu used to call:

Ti - iiiiii ----- Ti-iiiiii -----  
Kwuri saajugi, Boopie, Baraboue,  
Ga Kono, Nyogui Ti - iiiiii -----

Teb teb teb teb teb tegedeb teb teb  
tigbam, gbam, gba-gbam gbam  
tigbam, gbam gba-gbam gbam gba-gbam  
tegedeb tegedeb tegedeb teb teb  
tigbam, gbam gba-gbam gbam gba-gbam

3. The Pumbu was a horn instrument of war, used to call people to arms. It had a robust and far-carrying sound. It was blown in time of war and on battle fields. It was also blown on the occasion of the funeral of a warrior.

At the sound of this "band", if you were at the top of a tree, it would be too slow to come down the normal way. You would jump down to the ground and you would not be hurt! (Lo obee le nyon te O aa nyon do ke a muu naale e yu a loo). If you were at the top of a palm tree, you would jump down from there and you would not be hurt, when you have heard the sound of kpakpana and the Pumbu. You would know that something has happened. Men, brave men, know the sound of Kpakpana (Pya needam, Pya Gian, ba e nyegene loo mue kpakpana).

Since you were at Kono, have you heard the kpakpana? If things has not become very difficult, kpakpana cannot be played. The thing called kpakpana is a wonderful thing. (Nu ba kue kpakpana lu gbene e aga nu).

"Du Bari le Nee": "The Trade of God and Man":

I have heard the saying. It was because God used to bring trade things to men, and they did not have the price of them. (oo wee yiga du loo). This was because men did not see God.

This thing did not happen in the world of recent times; it happened in the beginning, when the world was coming into being. (Naa bee tema aa ba pya lo so nyowe ama, me a bee tema aa tua so nyowe).

49. CHIEF ADOO GBARATO OF NOOBANA, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 72)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 18 January 1984.

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how you became a hunter and how you became a killer of leopards.

Why was it traditionally the role of the Members of Gbenebaara House to eat the jaws of leopards?

As something that you have done two times, three times, and more times, when you heard from the ancients, who did they say began this tradition?

A man who had gone through these rites, what would he be called?

Was the Koogian able to greet or salute people?

Must the player of the Koogian be one who had also done all these things?

What was the difference between Koogian and the Tingtán?

From where did you learn the idea of hunting? And who taught you how to use the gun to shoot game?

B. The Narrative:

I thank you because you identified me with the work I did in this town (Ko me o su tam m bee si abue me kue). That leopard which I shot at Bonny, which you see there (pointing to its skin on the wall) that was the third leopard I have shot. (Lo le ee taa ka kuwe metaana). When I shot my leopards, I took them to Yobue House, because there was no other place where people who shot leopards could take them to, except to Yoboue House.

For each bullet hole in the skin of the Leopard, the killer paid three manillas (zii zii edee esuu naa a bee taa kuwe a, taa taa kpugi, taa taa kpugi do ke); and sixty manillas for one of the bullets which killed the leopard. If you ask me "who paid that money?" It was I who shot the leopard who paid the money. They said that I damaged the skin which belonged to deities.

When you have stretched out the leopard at Yobue Square, the man called Sauwe from Uwegwere must be there. There would be somebody who would go and fetch water. You who shot the leopard would be seated. The person who went to fetch the water, would wail as he bore the water pitcher from the stream to Yobue Square where the leopard was. They would use the water to bathe the leopard as they do the corpse of a human being (Ba e su lo maa bire kuwe a sa ye "lee" doo ke ba wee "lee" ii-nee doo). They would use the water and oil palm fruit fibre to "lee" the corpse of the leopard like they were "leeing" (1) the

1. "Lee" (pronounced as "lay"): This is a technical or professional term relating to the traditional "mortuary" washing and other preparations on the corpse of the elderly before putting into the coffin for burial. Unfortunately the "corpse" of this member of the ruling class of the forest which is now so highly honoured, shall have neither coffin nor a grave; but his final resting place shall be in the stomachs of Elders and gods.

corpse of a person who died (Ba e su maa le efee zoo ye leema doodo be ba aa lee ii'nee a bee uh)

When the "leeing" had been done, they would go and make a fence of palm fronds, and carry the leopard into the fence (gola). If you were not well-known and of a highly recognized status, you would not be allowed into the fence, where they are "butchering" the leopard (Lo o sii bee lu kaa gbara needam ba sua loo, oo le e ina ke ba aa yue kuwe). They would drive away everybody. Every person who was there before must now leave. For the place where the leopard was butchered was a different sort of place.

About three mediums would perform rituals on you. These mediums must be of the highest class. They must be the mediums (Zim) of men who founded the towns (Kaana pya Zim ba bee kpo bue ama na ba e si a tam loo a). They would bring down Yobue's bag and bring out of it a "sponge" which they would use to fan your body. Then you would experience things moving all over your body. This would continue more than a week, and bathing would not stop it.

When the meat of the leopard was eaten, the members of the Gbenebaara House ate its jaws and licked its jaw-bones (Pya Be Gbenebaara na be peeloo bereke Kuwe a). This tradition was from the ancients. By tradition, they had the function of butchering leopards. People don't just eat the head of a leopard any how. The people whose right was to eat the heads of leopards would do it; and they must eat it in such a way that they did not damage its skull (Pya ba ere e pee loo ba e pee loo sa mue ko ma logo nu naa gbe loo).

Next, you would be taken to the House of Gbenebega at Gwaara by members of Yoboue House. They would take you there to let Gbenebega know that you killed a leopard (Pya Be Yoboue ba e aara a sia ko me o bee taa kuwe). Gbenebega's Shrine was very large, and its hall was as large as from here to there (pointing to a distance). They would take you into the building (i.e. the Hall) there you would see the seats of every King and every mighty man lined up, where they used to sit. (ke ama na o mue ke zii zii mene, zii zii mene wee to a).

Gbenebega (2) would perform some rituals on you so that you could hold a cup and drink from it without your hand shaking to splash out the wine before it touches your mouth (Gbenebega e si a tam loo lokwa o dab do mii orn sa ba a naa yeb kwak-kwak).

After the rituals at Gbenebega House, they would fix a date when you would parade through Kono Market. On that day, they would anoint your body with do (the red camwood powder). The skin of the leopard, they would rub the underneath part of it with do also. Then they would fix it to the top of a pole and lift it high up. Then SooSoo (3) would

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2. That was her Spirit-Medium. There was always a Gbenebega Spirit-Medium.
  3. SooSoo was an ancient popular dance. It was popular with men as well as with women. It is still popular today. I recorded its music when I attended the "Yam Retreat" in January, 1984, during my fieldwork in Kono Boue.

lead you through the market place (SooSoo zaa a si sa a su tema du). They would lead you round all the important places in the towns. They would take you to the Houses of all the Mediums and deities, and to all the Great Houses and compounds. (le sia zii zii gbene gbene Be). In all these places they would make presents to you, in each of these places they would give you three manillas (ba e waara a taa taa kpugi).

They would put one old manilla currency called ka kpugi on your wrist. The mediums would do this. At the end of all this, they would cut the leopard skin into strips, one strip would be sent to each of the mediums and to each of the great Houses you visited when you paraded round the towns.

One young girl, a virgin, would fetch water for you for your bath. You would enter into seclusion for ten days. This hibernation period was called Bogo kuwe (o yii Bogo kuwe taa eeri). The day you would come out of seclusion, you would parade through the central market at Kono Boue. They would paint your body with the gold spots of the leopard (Baa e tia a kpukpu biogo kuwe loo). They would tie a live chicken to the tender shoot of the palm tree and tie them to the gun which shot the leopard. And you would bear the gun on your shoulder, wear a real traditional cloth on your waist, with your waist to top bare, exposing the leopard spots on your body. All who would accompany you to this traditional parade through the market would also have their bodies bare. Anyone whose goat, or domestic animal was killed by a leopard would make presents to you. Anyone whose child, or relation, was killed by a wild beast would make you a present. (Eregeba nee kuwe bee fe ye nee, e waara a, eregeba nee kuwe bee aa ye pee, e waara a).

Koogian: ("Dance" of the Brave)

On the Day of Yonwidam Feast they would play the Koogian. They would make a fence of palm fronds called gola. They would give you a small double gong called Igira. Not you alone would be there on that day. All men who had performed a brave act, done a brave deed; men who had killed in war; all would be there. (Dedee pya nee ba ebee sigie gia, ba elu; Pya ba ebee kee nee dedee aba ba elu).

You would bring with you three manillas as you come. You would tie the tender shoot of the palm to the money. (O su emoe sim loo taa kpugi a).

The Koogian would "call" your name. You would run to the call (o teera si). Then you would present the palm and the money to the koogian (o su emoe le kpugi waara koogian). You would shake the gola seven times seven (Ereba so ereba). You would shake the gola again seven times seven. Then they would enter into the gola, before the Shrine of Yobue, which was there, and take the Igira and give it to you. Then you begin to leap and dance with it.

You leap and dance and beat the gong gbang  
You leap and dance and beat the gong gbang  
You leap and dance and beat the gong gbang

O pee o bira bii, o doo gbang  
O pee o bira bii, o doo gbang  
O pee o bira bii, o doo gbang

Then you would run to the top of the hills that are there:

You run to the top, you dash to the base  
You run to the top, you dash to the base

O teerayii nyon, o teera do ke  
O teerayii nyon, o teera do ke

While you are dashing to the base, if you are not firm-footed and you fall, you die.

You run to the top, you dash to the base

You turn your face to this way, you beat the gong gbang  
You turn your face to that way, you beat the gong gbang  
You turn your face to this way, you beat the gong gbang  
You turn your face to that way, you beat the gong gbang  
Seven Mighties, seven times seven.

O teerayii nyon, o teera do ke

O kiira si kpeg lo ba ama, o doo gbang  
O kiira si kpeg lo ba ama, o doo gbang  
O kiira si kpeg lo ba ama, o doo gbang  
O kiira si kpeg lo ba ama, o doo gbang  
Ereba gbara, ereba so ereba.

On that day, which was Yonwidam Day, if you had not heard the sound of the Koogian, you did not go there. You could go there only when you have heard the sound of the koogian.

The way they butchered the leopard was different from the way they butchered ordinary animals.

Concerning the history of these traditions, because the place was a place of awe and fear, I did not ask questions. What they told me to do that was what I did. All the Great and the Mighty and the Aged, were seated there. (Pya Gbene, Gbene, nama, nama nee legara ke). You would not be able to say a word, and you just have no mouth to ask any question. What would occupy your mind all the time would be how you would do and get well (ke o tee edoo sa loo o Zee). What they told you to do, that was what you would do.

Mediums would line up this way,  
Mediums would line up that way.  
And Yobue possessing his Medium would be seated in the centre.

A person who had gone through this experience, a person who knew him would call him Damgian. (4)

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4. Damgian: It is a combination of two words. Dam which is formed from the word edam, which means a male; and Gian which means bravery. Thus Damgian means lit. Male of Bravery, i.e. Brave Man, or Gallant Gentleman.

The person who plays the Koogian must be an artist in the play of drums, one who was able to use the drum to communicate and to salute a person by his name through the drum. He did not have to be somebody who had done this tradition himself, but he must be an Elder.

Koogian and Tingtan: Kpakpana was a war "band" which they used to play only when they were about to go to battle or to war. This was how they used to play it;

Teb teb teb teb teb teb teb teb teb  
tigbam --- gbam --- gbanagadam ---

Teb teb teb teb teb teb teb teb teb  
tigbam --- gbam --- gbanagadam ---

1. Aasab -- aasab, ke nyowe too doolo oooooo
2. Aasab -- aasab, ke nyowe too doolo oooooo
- 3\* Tuun --- tuun --- tuun ---tuun --- ton ---
4. Nee kpalubu aton kii dume, a ton kii dume
- 5\* Kono kpoziiga, yere nwini Uwegwere beebie
6. Nee kpalubu aton kii dume, a ton kii dume
- 7\* Tuun --- tuun --- tuun --- tuun --- ton ---

1. Aasab, aasab, Is this the way of the world !? ---
2. Aasab, aasab, Is this the way of the world !? ---
4. Let the only son of his parents withdraw to the rear,  
withdraw to the rear.
6. Let the only son of his parents withdraw to the rear,  
withdraw to the rear.

3\*, 5\* and 7\* : 3\* and 7\* were drum signals; 5\* was the Pumbu speaking a special language which could not be translated.

Tingtan was what they used to play when they were carrying away a condemned wizard to execute him. They used to play it like this:

Dana Zan --- Dana  
Zan --- Dana Zan --- Dana Zan ---

Bear (him) away --- bear away --- bear away --- bear away ---

Concerning how I learned these things, somebody who will be a hunter, will begin by hunting a bird. I learned how to shoot from Ipaago Kedee, a man who used to make guns (nee a wee kwa naa). When he went to hunt, he carried two small stools. I was the one who carried the two stools and followed behind him in the night. He bore his gun. We poured dry sand on the path where we suspected that the animals were frequenting. Then we went to a distance to sit down and watch. The animal approached making a rough sound. When it entered on the white sand, it made a shadow. Then he shot immediately. If we shot an animal at one spot, we moved to another part. Besides that I was smart and diligent (M bee lu ewana dee nwii). I used to attend my duties quickly. These qualities enabled me to stay with Ipaago Kedee, and he taught me how to shoot a gun.

50. CHIEF KPOKO KINANWII OF TEGO, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 87)  
Interviewed at Tego on 5 January, 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Where did Gbenekarayoo first settle when he arrived at Tego?

Why was it that Kee-Ikum Square in Tego was often used as an assembly place by all Kono Boue?

Was there any war which Tego people fought which you can remember?

Had Yobue arrived in Kono Boue during this time?

At the time Gbenebalikina introduced the gun into the Baan war, was that the first, second, or third war?

Were there any tributed due to Gbenekarayoo as the founder of Tego in Kono Boue?

Was there any war which Khana people fought in ancient times which you recall?

Was there any war between Khana people and Bonny people in ancient times?

Khana and Bani, which of the two first settled in this area?

This Te Bari standing in the middle of your compound, could you tell me its significance in Khana?

B. The Narrative:

I am Kpoko Kinanwii. Kinanwii was my father, and Kpugbara was the father of Kinanwii.

The founder of Tego was Gbenekarayoo. His son was Yaamiinam. The saying "Tego Yaamiinam li mii Bugura lee ke" was spoken of Gbenekarayoo because he caused a jar of palm wine to disappear into the ground in the presence of his friends and raised it up again.

When he arrived at Tego, the place he first cleared and settled was called Kee'Ikum. That was the place he built his house. That place where his shrine is standing now was the spot on which his house stood. There too is where his grave lies. It was said, that he came from Kako in Baraboue.

The Kee'Ikum square (Eete Kee'Ikum) was right in front of the Chief's House (Be te-ere-bue). Tego was a separate town by itself. When it joined with Kono Boue, Kee'Ikum became a secluded place for very important meetings (bee lu ke goa aa loo bue).

I heard from the ancients about the Baan War and Boue people. The place called Kwuribue was previously a town. Baan people invaded it. They also invaded Kako. The Zim, (ancestor, now Spirit) called Gbenebalikina which is now in Kono Boue, came from Kako. Another man called Gbeneyaapue and still another man called Aapieri, they also came

from Kako. It was the Baan war that caused them to flee from Kako to settle in Kono Boue. They came to Gbenekarayoo at Tego, and he gave them a place to settle.

At that time Gbenekarayoo mustered a group of comrades and they raised an "army" which went to fight at Baan (a kue pya ye gbo, ba lee no sia Baan). Among his comrades-in-arms were Gbenebaara, the Zim which possessed Ipa and Garasira, the Zim which possessed Gbarato of Tego. They led their men to Baan. At midnight, they invaded Baan. By their magic, Baan people could not wake up to fight. That was the occasion Gbenebaara captured the instrument called Tintan from Baan. They killed many Baan people. On their way back from the battle, Gbenebaara saw oil palm wine which Baan people kept. He drank of it because they were very hungry. But he slept there. His comrades had gone without knowing it. When they were almost reaching home, just before they crossed the deep trench into Boue, they looked behind and discovered that Gbenebaara was not with them again. They had to go to Baan again to search for him. They came to find him still sleeping, the tintan which he had taken from Baan, lying by his side. (Ba mue ye a le daa, Tintan abee su aan Baan ye le kpee). They woke him up, and they returned home safely together. That was what you used to hear the Pumbu say:

Gbenekarayoo Tego  
De Zia lee kua baa kua  
Sa kee mene kee Gian

Gbenekarayoo of Tego  
Ate food from Bowl and broke the Bowl  
Then killed their Kings and Generals

It was this Gbenekarayoo who dug a hole in the ground and buried the jar of palm wine which he and his friends were drinking in the presence of them all and they did not see him. And after many years he called them again, and in the presence of them all, he dug out the jar of palm wine and the wine did not go bad. That was what you used to hear when it was said:

Gbenekarayoo li mii bugara, mii  
(Gbenekarayoo buried wine and dug out wine)

It was the Baan war which prompted the ancients to dig deep trenches round their towns and around Baraboue (Nyo no Baan ama na ba bee baa gbene eba bana tema egene Baraboue a). Every man and woman in Boue went to dig that large trench. Whoever failed to attend the work was fined twenty old bronze manillas and one bottle of wine (nee anaa si kpe log: zii tub nama kpugi le zii mii) The women's task was to carry the earth removed from the trenches to another place.

During the same war, as it continued over many years, Gbenebalikina discovered the gun through a Bonny man as he was in the course of going armed to the market (so aa bee si du) to sell his palm wine. He bought the gun. The Bonny man (gbara Bani) told Gbenebalikina that he had heard that there was war between Boue people and another people. He persuaded Gbenebalikina that if he bought the gun, Boue people could win the war. For the gun had not reached anywhere in Khana at that time. (Nyonebee naa sii bee ina bu Khana lo so) They tested the gun

on a goat, and it killed the goat. When Gbenebalikina saw this, he bought the gun. That was how Gbenebalikina became the first person to own the gun in Khana. That was why, also, the people used to call the gun the wife of Gbenebalikina (Wa Gbenebalikina).

When they took the gun to the war at Baan they killed Baan people greatly. Baan people fled away from their towns. Boue people entered Baan and took lots of war booty. The war ended as Baan people did not attempt to fight again (Baa naa sike luna uwe be do ni'ee).

From that time on, whenever they killed game at a hunting party, they gave the back-end part of the animal to Gbenebalikina because he was the owner of the gun, and also the owner of the forest deity (Te-ere-Yokue).

By this time Yobue was already in Boue. But he was a foreigner. He was a powerful man who used to do wild deeds, Boue people took him in and tried to coax him so that he might settle in Boue (ba bee ye keere sa ko a ton a bue) But he did not found any part of Boue.

Before Gbenebalikina introduced the gun into the Baan war, the war had been fought many times; about three wars had been fought. The first war was fought with swords and matchets, bows and arrows, etc.. In the second war, they also used swords, matchets, bows and arrows, etc. It was in the third war that Gbenebalikina introduced the gun (lo ye taa so no na Gbenebalikina su naa yere bu a). The war lasted a very long time. It was not a war that was fought once or twice. It was long, but it was the gun that stopped it finally.

Gbenekarayoo enjoyed the privileges and rights of the founder and Ruler of Tego. After Tego joined with Kono Boue, whenever they did something in the Centre, they did not forget him (ba naa wee ye ibere). If a new dance or play was shown publicly, they used to send money to the House of Gbenekarayoo to inform him that such a dance was about to be shown to the public (ba wee su kpugi ture ta Gbenekarayoo wee ko ko me bii adoowo ama e saa e aa go).

Khana people used to wage war against the Andoni (Pya Bono) and kill many people. Now the Andoni and Khana people are good neighbours. Khana people go to Andoni and the Andoni come to Khana freely (Nya wo, e nee Bono na ba esia ama). At one time when there was enmity, Khana people put a law that nobody should go to the sea for fishing on Deeko (1) days because of the war that existed between Khana people and the Andoni.

A certain Kwuri woman named Gbugurunwaa went to the seaside to pick up some shell-fish on Deeko. She was captured by the Andoni. As she yelled and cried for help, a certain Khana man from the top of his raffia palm heard her. But he knew that it was useless at that

1. Deeko was the fifth day of the five-day Khana week. It was the principal market day. Men left their normal places of work to be home on Deeko, much like modern Saturdays or Sundays. The implication of the law was that there would not be men around to offer the protection since they would be home on Deeko to visit the markets, see friends, or just to relax.

point to offer any rescue attempt. So he shouted a curse saying "Hold her tight. Why did she break the law which forbade going to sea on Deeko days?" It turned out later when the details became known that the woman was the man's mother. So it became a saying "The cry of Gbugurunwaa" (Kpa Gbugurunwaa) (2) which reflected an action or speech which bounced back to the individual.

What I referred to was the Andoni war. I do not know of any war between Bonny people and Khana people. Nevertheless, here is Bonny and here is Andoni (Kerewo, Bono na, Bani na); they are adjacent.

Khana people settled in Khana before Bonny (Bani) people settled in Bonny. When the Bonny people were coming in the beginning, they first settled along our watersides at Kwuri, so that Kwuri and Bani were like the same people (aba eteene). Some of the places which are today our farms were places where Bonny people first settled. Such are the farms we call Barike.

If there is a Te Bari or a Te Mene standing in your compound, it means that you are a wealthy man in Khana (ale o lu nee mene bu Khana). It means also that you are a man who has performed the Traditional Rites of Yaa Ge and Yaa Nwii. Such a person never used to be running about again. He was a man who had settled down in his own compound and House, while his children brought things home to him. (Nee ale doowo maa wee piagana Me a lu nee ale bu a lea BE egeteke, sa pya nwii boo nu aan dee ye ne). Such a man has become an Elder. (Pya Kabaari).

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2. It became a warning in Khana didactic against both inaction and disobedience to state law. Inaction on the part of the son because he regretted that he should have risked a rescue if he had known that the person was his own mother. Disobedience on the part of the woman against state law because its consequence was too expensive to the individual.

51. PRINCE INAATURA INAYO OF KOTE HOUSE KONO BOUE (Aged c. 62)  
Interviewed at Kono Boue on 27 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Where did Saakua come from?

From where did they come before they settled in Kono Boue?

Do you know the place where they settled before Kwuribue?

If we went to Kwuribue, would we see the mound of charcoal in the place where they fired their pots when they were at Kwuribue?

Are there some potsherds from that time which you know of?

What happened at Kwuribue which caused them to move from Kwuribue to Kono Boue?

When you said that your ancestor spoke to you, was it when he was possessing his medium?

When he spoke during possession, did he tell stories about how things were in the past?

How did they preserve that drum and the mask that they survive till today?

B. The Narrative:

I am Prince Inaatura  
My father was Inayo.  
Inayo descended from Gbenekwerre Kwuribue.  
Gbenekwerre Kwuribue descended from Saakua.

According to what I heard, Saakua came from Kpawo. He arrived in Khana by way of Bonny (tema aa dee Bani), during the time when the world was beginning to take shape. They settled at Kwuribue. From Kwuribue they moved to Kono Boue. Kwuribue became their old settlement.

I know the place in Kwuribue where they settled. I also know the spot where they used to fire their pottery wares when they were in Kwuribue. I also know the place from where they obtained the clay which they used in making their pottery. I can take you to show you the exact spot. It was the founder, the person who cleared the ground for this town who showed me all these places. He said to me, "This was the place where they (the women folk) used to fire their pottery. This was the place from where they (the women folk) dug the clay".  
("Lo ke ba wee nam bana ama. Lo ke ba wee doora bae aan na ama").

When they were at Kwuribue, they did not fire their pottery at Kwuribue. The place they went to fire their pottery wares was Eresoo. That was also the place from which they dug out the clay which they used. They carried the clay from Eresoo to Kwuribue where they stayed at home to make the pottery wares. After they had made the pots, when they were ready to be fired, they carried them to Eresoo to fire them there. (So ba e dema sa, ba su lo ba kuma Eresoo wee nam). After the firing, they carried the wares to Kwuribue where they dwelt.

If an excavation was made at the place, they should be able to find some charcoal in the ground there. You should take into account that the time we are talking about is a very long time ago, so that many things have covered that mound to a great depth. Nevertheless, the place he showed me is there.

Potsherds from that time exist. Their type of pottery has knobs on its body (lo gbo ba ba lugora kpokpo loo). That type of pottery was no longer in existence because people no longer made it. But some that came from that time are in that House (pointing to the ancient House of his ancestors, which is now a Shrine.) (Me siga lo alu lo son le To ike).

They were three brothers who migrated from Kwuribue:

Gbenekwerre, Gbenetibarakan and Kote.

While they were there, the place was no longer comfortable to them, since they said that they were in a mighty sea. Therefore that brother called Kwerre began to explore the forests. The "world" had not been established as it is today. There was no cloth then. What they wore was Igwa (a type of raffia cloth). There were no matchets, what they used was kuna. (1) That was what my ancestor told me that he used in clearing the site of this town (Kono Boue). Through the forest he walked till he reached the place which is Keneke today. He continued through the forest till he reached a stream, which he crossed by jumping over it. That is the stream which is called Maawaabogo. After crossing the stream, he saw the land that it was good for settlement. Then he decided that he would settle there. So he began to clear the site (a buate kabara yube ke a, yiina yube Eete a lee).

The place which is now the townsquare in Eepie was a watery land where he used to catch fish, using fish traps (kara). There were plenty of bush canes in that area. This knife was what he used (Ge ake na a bee ye le ba a). (2)

At first he built a hut there and lived in it. Later he left that place and built his house where his shrine now is, which was opposite the Eete Eeyoburubu (Eeyoburubu Townsquare). (3) He lived there many years before other people came to settle with him. Later on Yobue also came and settled in Kono Boue. Afterwards he sought to kill Yobue, but he did not find him again.

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1. Kuna was a heavy iron tool, curved, two-edged, and it had a wooden handle.
  2. He showed me a Kuna which had become short and straight due to age. It was pinned in front of the shrine. It took photographs of it. It was not always in front of the shrine. It was brought out from a secret room that day because I wanted to see it.
  3. I visited this spot and saw the shrine. I took a photograph of the place. When I saw it, the roof over the shrine had collapsed. They told me that its repairs were being delayed due to high ritual costs; and the economic condition in Nigeria at that time (1983/4) was not conducive to such expenses.

He lived there until the population of the town increased and became populous. His own first son called Akara was born at this time. This Akara was the person who took the secret cult called Amanikpo from Ibibio (Bibi). But he was killed there when he went there a second time because they discovered that he had taken their cult.

Afterwards other settlers came to found adjoining towns.

The Zim which possessed Kpoko called Gbenekarayoo, he founded Tego. Others were Gbenegoo, who cleared a part of Noobana. He appointed them to the different parts which they cleared and became the founders. But he continued as their overlord and paramount Ruler till today.

This was what I heard from his own mouth. Nobody narrated it to me. He himself narrated it to me when he was possessing his Spirit-Medium. (Ke mbee da aan nu ale doo lo nee naa bee me ko ne, ale na a wee me lo ne so a aa nee a). (4)

He used to narrate these things to me when he was possessing his medium. It was under such circumstances that he showed me where his house was situated originally. That spot is where that shrine is standing. It was from that house that they went to the Baan war.

All the place was forest. What showed them the way was their "medicine". Whether they stayed away from home for a month or three weeks, they were not hungry or became weak. They had something like a medicine stone in their shoulder bag, which they licked or sucked whenever they were hungry, and they became "filled". (Ere bee nu a wa le ba bu wa bere. Lo loo wa lee, ba su biora nu wa bu wa Uma).

They entered Baan and hid themselves in a forest which surrounded their central townsquare. The occasion at Baan was the festival of Yonii; and they were dancing a play by that name. So they tested their own charms on them, they stampeded. So they let them alone and withdrew to plan the assault. (Ba su e pie wa nyee, ba si zii ikina, ba lee e wa ba loo sa kii be wee biraloo).

According to my ancestor, that central townsquare was inside a thick forest. There the Baan people were dancing their play. He said that it was like the Yobue Square in Kono Boue. When they arrived, Baan people were dancing at that townsquare. Then they saw a masquerade with a terrible face, broad, with a wide mouth. This masquerade was in the midst of them. (Kpegere si, su yaeri ega, sa wa le yee).

When all Baan people, their great Chiefs and principal men, were all assembled at the Townsquare, there they commanded their charms on them. The whole crowd stampeded and ran in confusion. They seized

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4. This Zim was currently possessing somebody at the time of my fieldwork.

the masquerader together with the mask. That mask is here now (lo alu le anyano). They also took a large drum (5) and many many other things from Baan.

The ancients regarded the Drum and the Mask as symbols of their power and bravery; something of awe, and of honour. Because of that, they kept those things sacred (Bee wo a, ba bee su dedee nu a sere kae).

They used to hang them up in a place where fire would not heat them too much, at the same time, they would be warm and dry enough that "woodworms" (Kem) would not be able to touch them (ke mia e zia sa kem naa tagi).

More importantly, the type of wood they used in making them was very hard wood (Lo a eega te ba wa su kwa lu gbene e'aga te). The same way the ancients preserved them, that is what we do now.

It was from the same war that the Apapee emerged. People who perform the Yaa Traditional rites used to bring wine to inform us about it. On the appointed day when the Pee dance would take place, we used to carry the Apapee to the one's house to play it for the Yaa candidates. After the play, we carry it with us to the Te-ere-Bue House. The Te-Yaa would pay the prescribed fees.

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5. I saw the Drum. It was made of very hard wood. The woodwork was decorated. What remained of it was only the wood part. Very heavy wood and hard. I also saw the Mask. Also made of very hard wood, like iron. I took photographs of them. It was interesting to note that they took special care to preserve these items, in the inner room.

52. PRINCE TEERA INAYO OF KOTEHOUSE, NOOBANA, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 55)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 7 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how your ancestors became the founders of Kono Boue.

Of the three brothers, Kote, Kwerre and Tibarakan, who was the eldest brother?

How did he know that there was a spirit in the pond which he saw when he arrived at the site of Kono Boue?

How was it that among the three brothers, Kwerre got the title of "Gbene"?

Why did they migrate from Nwe'ol?

Name all the ancestors who took part in founding Kono Boue.

How was it that Yobue became so powerful in the town where Kote and Kwerre were the founders and its rulers?

What was the relationship between Yobue and Gbenebega?

Did Yobue have any role to play in the House of Gbenebega?

What was the cause of the Baan war?

Was colonial rule established at that time?

What was the significance of the saying "Gberegbe, the ancient masquerade"?

B. The Narrative:

Our ancestors who own the land of this town came first from Nwe'ol to Kwuribue, where they first settled. God gave to Kono Boue people a craft. This was the craft of pottery (dem ba). There is an old place where they used to fire their pottery at Kwuribue. There is also an old townsquare there.

There was a quarrel (Kana) between two brothers because of adultery while they were still at Kwuribue. On account of that the elder brother called Kote decided that he would not stay there any longer because he found that their mother had much love for his junior brother. (bu wa ka ee loo e lua ye wuga a gbene). So he took off on a long walk in the forests until he came to a water, which he crossed by climbing on a forest cable. (A tee nyo zii ekpogba sa yee maa a ina lo si loo ama). Having crossed the big stream to this side, he found a deep pond of water at a place by itself. He discovered that there was a spirit in the pond. That spirit is what they called Gbenekere, which was at Kote House.

Kote, Kwerre and Tibarakan were three brothers of the same parents. They were human beings. Kote was the eldest brother, and Gbene-

tibarakan was the youngest. They were people who did not know God, as there was no church (ba naa bee sua loo To Bari). All of them were medicine men (Pyä dambie). They were able to do many strange things (dedee aba bee ere ekpo lo e doo kara kara nu).

From the river he walked northwards (denyon) about two hundred meters to where the shrine of Gbenekere and the Gwere Tree are standing. From there to another two hundred meters northwest (denyon enaani uune) where he built his first house. There also was the first townsquare which was called Eebiawa.

He lived on fish which he caught from the river and on the ya (water yam) which he got from the forest. He hung his shoulder bag (made of skin) up there. Eebiawa was the place they had their meetings. When the town grew and new squares were founded, this Eebiawa remained the place for secret consultations in serious matters (biraloo alu gbene ana-ana sa boloo goa, ke ba e kii lo). Tibarakan had his own square in another part. It was located at a place called Keebog.

All the three brothers became great men. All of them had the title "Great" to their names (dedee aba ere "Gbene" loo wa bee). We have Gbenekwerre, Gbenekote and Gbenetibarakan.

At the time they left Kwuribue there was no general trouble. It was a quarrel between brothers who had hatred towards each other when they were living together in one place. (bae wuga ba naa were loo zii so ba le aba zii kedo). When they left Nwe'ol, the first place they settled was Bangha. When they left Bangha, they moved to Kwuribue.

There were many great men at Kwuribue (Gbene gbene aba ba bee gbaa le Kwuribue). Men like Gbenegarakara, Gbenetigina, Yoko, Gbenegoo, Gbenekarayoon, etc. Gbenegoo was from Kwuri. Those who founded towns and owned the ground were:

Gbenekarayoon - founded Tego  
Gbenegarakara - founded Eepie  
Gbenetigina - founded Kwaakwaa  
Gbenetibarakan - founded Noobana Bog

Yobue was a Bani man (nee Bani). He was a wizard and a sorcerer who killed many people by his sorceries. Bonny people rejected him and drove him away from their town (Pyä Bani bee ye ana sa ye kpo lee wa bue). He took refuge with Khana people, who sheltered him and gave him a place to stay (Pyä Khana su ye sa ye don keneke ne). The first place where they gave him a house was at Eeyoburubu in Kono Boue, southwest of Eeyoburubu, near to where Tego people used to sit when they attended an assembly at Eeyoburubu. It was from there that he went to the Baan war.

When they returned from the Baan war, they returned with many baskets full of the heads of the people they killed. All the warriors who took part in this thing no longer wanted those things to come near their own Houses (zii zii gbene gbene Zim ba bee gbaa doo lo nu a ba naa yigana esu lo kpo kpo ekobee nee a yima wa be). They invited the Zim called Yobugurugbe to take them to preserve them. He refused, saying that he had children. They called the Zim Nookwuri called Gbenekwaa'oo, he refused, saying that he had children. They called the Zim of the

founder of Gbam, he told them that that was not the type of thing they should give to a man with family.

When they did not see anyone to take care of those things then Yobue said that since he did not have wife nor children, he would take care of those things; that if it would mean death, he was also ready to die (me lo alu luh, me a dab e nage uh). Then all the Elders of Boue moved Yobue from near Eeyoburubu to the place where he stayed till today, for they considered that the former place was not suitable because of his new functions, since that place was situated in the centre of the town. (Nyone bee lo ke lu tae bu bue ba su ye ture lo ke a le anyawo). They built a large "hall" in that forest where they kept all the skulls (ba tob zii gbene loo bu lo kue sa su dedee ekobee nee a sere lo ke),

When Yobue had been settled in the new place, they asked him to tell them whether anything was a taboo to him which he could not eat. (ena a lu kae e anaa dab de a se)? He replied that nothing was taboo to him, even the meat of dead animals, such as goat, he could eat (a ko wa ne ko me anaa ere logo nu a naa dabe de, ale pee a uh, ale eregeba nu). So they decreed that any goat or any animal that died on the land of Boue he should claim and eat. (Nyowo ba ko eregeba pee a uh bia nyo esaa Boue ee a wee su ba; ale eregeba ka nu a kia keneke a uh, ee a ba).

The day he had become a spirit or deity (Zim) and possessed somebody, and paraded round the towns, he should kill goats and fowls in each Boue town for the purpose of the feast of that occasion. (ee a fe kon le pee bu zii zii bue Boue kere nu ee e su daa lo doonu). He should harvest plantains in each Boue town whenever there was a traditional feast or activity in Boue. That they had given him the authority to do these things without hindrance. (Me ba nee ye ekpo ko ee a doo dedee lo nu ama).

They gave him land to build on. They built a large shrine where they preserved all their war equipment. Yobue also became a spirit and possessed somebody, like all of them who were in that activity became spirits and possessed their descendants. For he also went to Nama to perform the deeds so that he might be able to become a spirit and possess a person. (Nyonebee ko ale bee sinage Nama wee doo doonu ko e aa e nee).

Gbenebega was the mistress who was in the hand of Yobue (bele wa abee le ba Yobue). Gbenebega was a woman. When she became Yobue's wife, Yobue allowed her to enjoy the resources of his own domain. That when it was time to make the annual distribution of pots to the Great Houses, they should also keep a share for his wife. (Me son ba e don ban turegi Be zii zii Zim, ba a sunage zii ton see alee wa e). Thus it was through Yobue that Gbenebega used to obtain a share of pottery from Kono Boue. Yobue also had privileges at Gwaara, the domain of Gbenebega. For he had certain functions to perform there. Whenever there was a feast of Gbenebega, if Yobue was not present, it was not good (Lo Yobue naasi a naa lee). At any time, if Yobue was absent from Boue, it was because he was at Gwaara.

All these things which I have narrated to you, I knew them because I met Famaa, I met Nyiabue, I met my own mother who bore me

I also met Deezua. These were the people who narrated these ancient stories to me (Pya lo nee ama na ba bee me ko dedee elo-so-kere ama ne a). (1)

Causes of the Baan War: The Baan war was fought because of women. Baan women used to attend market in Boue, but they used to sleep overnight because of long distance. It was not possible for them to come to Boue market and return to Baan on the same day. When Baan women slept in Boue towns in order to attend Boue market the following day, some men of Boue demanded sex from them. (Pya nee dam Boue doo wa ga ba). When that had happened, the men used this thing in speech in such a way that it would seem that Baan women were cheap and that to get them in that way was easy. (ba sike su lo nu yere bu ekoa uwe egbe bera doo ko me eere pya neewa Baa bu si dee ale doowo lu nu awae).

These things reached the ears of Baan people. When they heard it, Baan Elders and Chiefs and all their young men became angry. They stopped their women from coming to Boue market. Having done that they proceeded to wage war against Boue people (son ba edora wo sa, ba sike lee no pima pya Boue).

When the war broke out, all the Northern States supported Baan people in the war against Boue people (dede pya lo barasiloo Khana gbaa yii dume pya Baansa beno loo pya Boue). That was how the Baan war started.

Baan people fought the war with great might and they overran many Boue towns. There was a masquerade which Baan people set in front of their forces. The name of the masquerade was called Gberegbe. The masquerade had parents, father and mother (alu a ere Ka, a ere Te). All the attacks that came from the enemy against Baan forces were absorbed and neutralized by the masquerade. (Eregeba nu no alu etob nyone pya Baan, aba si alua na ba do a ba naa ina loo pya Baan).

As Boue people were a people who had wild (or strong-headed) blood in them, they said, "Why are we being so hard pressed by this people?" (Ena pya gbo ama i kpene doowo loo a?) They rose up and went to the fight (Ba aa ke si uwe be a). They fought the war into Baan, and defeated Baan people (Ba be no yii Baan, sa eeba pya Baan). Gberegbe, that great masquerade which they captured from Baan is in my house

1. Famaa was one of the rulers of Boue who actually descended from the Royal House of Kote and Kwerre. Nyiabue and Deezua were first sons of different branches (wives) of the Royal House but they did not actually rule, probably because the right of succession did not fall to them. Nnadu was the name of the informant's mother. She was a first daughter of the Royal House, and was directly on the line of succession, but she was a woman. She was a Kabaariwa, dignified and highly respected by all.

now. (2) In May, when they used to celebrate the feast of Yomii, that was the time that the masquerade was usually taken down and placed on the ground. (Bu O'oo enoo son ba wee de Yomii na ba wee ye su lee nyon sere ke a).

In May each year Gberegbe masquerade was played at the Yomii festival. The masquerade was a great wizard and sorcerer. (Alua lu gbene alu taa le booboo nu le loo). The person who wears the mask must not carry with him any medium or agent of sorcery or wizardry. If the person who plays the masquerade carries any such thing when he goes into the mask, he would die. (olo ole yii bu a, oo le e aara logo poro nu ba, ale pie. Lo o su zii nu ale doowo yima bu o uh).

On the other hand, if anyone approached the masquerade with charms or sorcery, evil must happen to him (nu e doo a ye). When the masquerade was in play, they used to blow a certain "horn" to which certain animal skulls were attached, and another "horn". There would be kpari on the ankles of the masquerade. They would move round the towns of Boue on Yomii festival. They would visit every important place. (Ba sigara zii zii gbene gbene ke ton). This is how they used to blow the horns as they praised his name:

GBEREGBE NAMA ALU KERE!

(GBEREGBE, THE ANCIENT MASQUERADE!)

Whitiii	-----	Whitiii	-----	1st Horn
	-----P U U -----		-----P U U -----	2nd Horn
Whitiii	-----	Whitiii	-----	1st Horn
	-----P U U -----		-----P U U -----	2nd Horn
Zag-zag	-----Zag-zag-----	Zag-zag	-----Zag-zag-----	Kpari

GBEREGBE NAME ALU KERE!

2. Gberegbe: I took a photograph of this mask. This informant was abroad then. Though he is the son of the heiress, he is not the priest of the sacred things. That person is another son of the Kote-Kwerre House, and an elder. As he says it is true, it was not easy to get access to the mask. It was only through the personal intervention of Chief Tonwe, Chief Abane Gbege, and others; and to some degree, out of respect and support for me and for my project; and it cost them some ritual expenses to do it for me. The mask is treated as a national property, well-preserved.

53. PRINCE KOANYE DEZUA OF KWERRER HOUSE, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 87)  
Interviewed on 27 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story of how Kono Boue was founded.

Where did they settle first when they came to Kono Boue?

Give the Kinglist of Kono Boue.

When Kote House was the Royal House, why did they go to Igbara Abbe House also?

How was it that if an Elder died, the plantain trees in the communities were cut down?

Why did Khana people call yam KaZia, and plantains, Ka ebue?

Tell me how the House of Yam started in Kono Boue?

Describe the yam rituals

If they did not do all those things what would happen?

B. The Narrative:

I am Koanye.  
My father was Deezua.  
Deezua was the son of Sugu'oo  
Sugu'oo was the son of Sugudam  
The father of Sugudam was Barinwa  
We descended from the kindred of Taankaan

The people of Kono Boue came from Kwuribue. Gbenekwerre Kwuribue was the founder of Kono Boue. Gbenekote Kwuribue was also the founder of Kono Boue. These were the two men who founded Kono Boue. Kwuribue was the name of their former town from where they moved to Kono Boue. They called their names to their former town. (ba kue wa bee tureloo lo nama bue)

When they founded Kono Boue the first place they settled was near the townsquare, where the grave-shrine of Kwerre is (ke li zim kwerre le a).

The Kinglist:

	Biirago
	Tanee
	Famaa
	Kagbo Iboori
	Debari Tonwe
	Matthew Tonwe

Igbara Abbe House was the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee). That was the place Elders used to meet whenever they wanted to consult or to discuss something. The House of the Te-ere-bue (the Ruler) was different, and the House of Elders was different. Big cases like murder, witchcraft, sorcery, etc., were taken to Igbara Abbe House. All other matters were taken to the House of the Te-ere-bue.

An Elder who had performed the traditional rites of Yaa-Ge, and Yaa Nwii, and had planted the Te-Bari or Te-Mene in the centre of his compound, if such an Elder should die, many plantain trees in the town would be cut down. An Elder like Dike Iyoro is today (Doodoo ke Dike Iyoro le doo anyawo) only he in all Boue has performed the rites of Yaa Nwii. If he should die today, the Pumbu would be sounded (ba e fuuri Pumbu). Immediately the Pumbu was blown, people would begin to cut down all the plantain trees in the town. (aba sou ba fuuri Pumbu, na ba e wonage ebue loo dedee be ale bu bue a).

The Pumbu was an instrument of war. When men heard the sound of the Pumbu, they reached out for their weapons. Now when an Elder of that grade died and they heard the Pumbu, they would grab their matchets and begin to cut down the plantain trees in the town. The Pumbu would "lift" them up as it used to do in times of actual war. (doodoo ke a wee doo son no). Then they would do the plantain trees as they would have done to the enemies. (Ba su ke ba ebee doo bu no su doo loo ebue bu bue).

The Yam Crop: The Yam (Zia) was the first food crop that came into the world when the world was beginning to come into being. (tua Zia abee yii nyowe son nyowe bee yu ke). Food crops like the cassava (ekpakpuru) did not exist. Just recently that the cassava was introduced. So the yam was called Ka Zia (mother of foods).

The plantain (Ka ebue) entered the world at the same time as the yam. These two foods (bae Zia ama) were the foods men first ate. (na pya nee bee dasi de a).

Only at Kono Boue that the House of Yam (To Zia) was. That's it there (pointing to it). When it was time to begin the new farming season; that time when the feast of "God of the Little Child, God of the Great Man" (Bari kinanwii, Bari Gbenenee), Uwegwere would come, Gbam would come, Keneke would come, Nokwuri would come, etc.. All would gather at that House. (aba lo BE na dedee aba wee bogona a), that is, the House of Gbenetanwaayo, that is where the House of Yam is (BE Zia Lo). Without coming from there, they would not begin the farming season.

Kono Boue was the capital town of all Boue, including all those towns I mentioned. That was why they used to preserve all their things there. When they had done it from here, they would all go to their different towns to continue the traditions. Though they had their own towns, it was when they had done it at Kono Boue, that they took what they had done there to do in their own towns. (Alaba bue legarage me son ba e aara teetee lo bue ama na ba a kiigi zii elaba bue wee doo a).

They built a house for yam because the yam was something to which rituals must be made. (Zia lu nu ba wob zoo ne). If they wanted to

pour libation to the yam, it would be done in that House. The House is where they created its presence (ba top to ye ne ko alu ke ba ye kpooge loo sere). Because of that, whenever they would sacrifice concerning the yam, they would go to that House. (Nyobee wo, son ba e wob Zoo ne Zia, ba kii lo To).

Yam Rituals: At the beginning of each year (Bee Zua, bee Zua) they used to "Enter the Yam House" (ba wee "Yii To Zia"). On the first day that they would enter there, a woman of that compound would prepare a bowl of fish salad (Gwo) and the palm wine would be provided. With these they would do the rituals and pour the libations. Then it would be said that they have "opened the House of Yam today". (Ba ko ba e kpaana Bu To Zia a ni'ee)

They would then open the House and enter in, and then present the fish salad (ba Tere Gwo) and pour the libation (ba egora mii ke). Then they would proclaim that they have "opened the House of Yam today". They would do this on every "Yam Day" (zii zii DeeZia) (1) until seven Deezia. On the last day that they would come out of the Yam House, much (palm) wine would be provided. There would be dancing and celebrations. A goat would be slaughtered for the ritual. If it fell that the ritual should be buried, they would do so. Certain ancient dances would be played, such as Yowaabogo. At the end of the celebrations, they would announce that they have come out of the Yam House today. They would shut the door of the House. Then the farming season would begin. If they failed to do these things any year, the yam "deity" would arrest those responsible for failing to open the door of its House that year (Lo ba naa doo a be nee ko me baa naa kpaana bu ye to ee). Nothing would be good that year. The yams planted would fail to yield well (Zia naa le ezii).

There were two ancient plays or dances which the yam "accepted". These were Ywaabogo and SooSoo. (Bae bee bii a yiga ne Zia na Yowaabogo le SooSoo)

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1. The Khana dedicated one day in their five-day week to Yam. This was called "Yam Day" (DeeZia). The five days in the Khana week were: Deemua, Deebom, DeeZia, Deeson and Deeko. And the day of the Yam Feast was called DeeZua (Day of the Feast of Yam).

54. CHIEF ABANEE GBEGE OF EEPIC (Aged 87)  
Interviewed at Eepic on 25 November 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

When did Jim Pie begin in Eepic?

Who began it?

Where did Gbenebalegboro come from?

Tell us about yourself. How did you come to know something about the beginnings of this town?

When Karakina had died in that place (at Gbamene) what happened?

What is your own position in this society?

B. The Narrative:

Jimpie started from the foundation of this town (Eepic), and it was started by Gbenebalegboro. Gbenebalegboro was a human but now he has become a possessing ancestral Spirit (Zim).

Gbenebalegboro came from Gokana area. He belonged to the kindred of Buate (Ga Buate), which is our own kindred (Ga). When he came from Gokana the first place he settled was Gbamene. All that Gbamene area which is now a farming area, was a thick forest. They cleared all the forests and built their first town there. Part of what is today called Kaboo farming area was part of that town (Siga barasiloozii Kaboo beele bu wa bue). They had good water supply. Their stream was also called Maa Waabogo. This was something that used to stabilize the population of a town.

Karakina and Gboro: (Karakina le Gboro):

Karakina which became that evil forest of Gbamene, which you see there, was a human being, who lodged with Gbenebalegboro (Karakina alu kue taa Gbamene aya, beele nee abee yii keeba Gbenebalegboro). When he had returned from Gokana where he went to do "medicine", for he was a medicine man; when he arrived at Gbamene in the middle of the night (bu era son edee), he stood at the gate and called "Gbenebalegboro, Gbenebalegboro". Gbenebalegboro answered. When he had answered, his wife rebuked him saying, "Which person is he that stands at the gate to call in the middle of the night and you answer him?" ("Me na a wee yira gboo kue kue a bu edee aya sa O yiganage a?")

When Karakina heard that, he turned away from the gate and walked towards the shrine of Gboro, which was nearby. There he sat down and died. When the ancestor of Kinanee Yaako who was on his way to tapping his palm wine very early in the morning passed through that way, his foot touched the dead body of Karakina (To ye Kpora loo ii Karakina). He had died there, and his medicine bag was by his body. (e ua bia loo dee, sa ye bere-pie le ye kpee). For the place he sat was by the roadside. The man cut some leaves and covered his body. As he was a medicine man, and where he died, he died with all his "forces", including

his medicine bag, nobody dared to lift "him" from that place (Be alu nee dambie a, e dedee ye bere-pie le ee na a uh bia lo ke a, logo nee naa sinake ye leena lo ke). His body remained there, and it became the "evil" forest of the Taa (1) Gbamene.

That spot where he died was just in front of the shrine of the ancestor of the founder of Gbamene town. That ancestor was named Gboro; and his shrine constituted the deity of the founder, Gbenebalegoro (Gbene + Bale + Gboro). It was therefore believed that Karakina had "leased" the spot where he died from Gboro. (ba ko me ee bara keneke ba Zim Te-ere-Bue. Lo Zim Te-ere-Bue Gbamene na Gboro).

That was how when they would "greet" them they would greet Karakina first (because he sat at the door) before they greeted Gboro. And they did not "greet" one without "greeting" the other:

Karakina and Gboro (Karakina le Gboro)

But Karakina is Taa, while Gboro is Zim (Karakina, taa; Gboro, Zim).

I came to know these things because my father was possessed by our ancestral spirit and they showed me these things. That was how I knew about them. Two ancestral (Zim) possessed my father. One was called Gbenebio, the other was called Ibiiranwaa. Because my father was a medicine man as well as a spirit-medium, whenever anything happened in the town, he was called. So he knew of the things that were happening. (Be na te beele nee dambie, sa lunage nee i'aa-yo, erege ba nu a sira bu bue ba wee ye kue).

My position in the town is that I am the Chief of the Eepie. I am also an Elder and Member in the House of Elders at Kono Boue. (M lunage nee m le To Pya Kanee di Kono Boue).

Kue Kiriki, the Ruler of the House of Gbenegarakara (2) the founder of Eepie, was the person who gave me the rulership of Eepie town. (3) I am Chief Abanee Gbege. My father was Gbege. Gbege was the son of Ipeba. Our ancestor was Gbenebalegoro. He was the founder of Gbamene, after they migrated from Gokana.

1. Taa: In Khana cosmology, "Taa" consisted an order of evil spirits which were both wicked and unclean. They are barred from human contacts by certain laws. Because by their trade, medicine men and sorcerers operate by the agencies of several orders of these spirit forces, it was believed that they had certain claims over the bodies of such men. Till today, such men were never buried within the cities.
2. The universally acknowledged founder of Eepie was Gbenegarakara. Gboro as well as Gbenebalegoro were connected with founding the extinct town of Gbamene. Whatever position Gbenebalegoro occupied when he moved to Eepie was subsidiary.
3. Kue Kiriki was the heir of Gbenegarakara and the incumbent of the stool of Eepie. When he became too old, he gave the rulership to Abanee Gbege as Regent because his heirs were minors. Chief Abanee Gbege also told me ex-tape, that he was given the Regency because he was physically able and also from a noble House. He agreed that the rightful heirs (he named Eli) had taken the rulership. That since they demanded it, he had already handed it over to them.

55. CHIEF DIKE IYORO OF NOOBANA, KONO BOUE, SPIRIT-MEDIUM OF ASSOBIENEENEE  
(Aged c. 70)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 5 February 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Enumerate the Gaan you know of.

How were you able to perform the traditional rite of Yaa Nwii in these days?

If the Koogian was played now would it mention your name?

Was the Koogian played at the Yobue square during the Feast of Yonwiidam?

I was informed that you were the only one who performed the Yaanwii rites in recent years. How long did it take you to perform the traditions from beginning to end?

What type of person did they call Iza person?

What did they mean by "Yii Loo"?

How would you describe the instrument they called Gbon?

When a man had done the rites of "Baa Li" and Yii Loo, what would they call such a man?

What did they call "Aa'oo"?

Why did the Elders not eat the banana?

Was there any special reason why Khana (Ogoni) people used the yam and the plantain as ritual food for their ancestors?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief Dike Iyoro. Iyoro was the son of Adamnee, who was of Gaan Abere. I am from Gaan Noobana (Kono), from the House of Gbenekiri Adogoro. They married my mother from there, and she was married to Gaan Abere. That shows that I came from the Ruling Houses. These are the known Gaan which existed:

Gaan Abere  
Gaan Gbaabio  
Gaan Noogui  
Gaan Joko  
Gaan Taankaan  
Gaan BuaLooLoo  
Gaan Baraboue  
Gaan Noobana  
Gaan Kono

The Gbenemene I of Babbe, M.D.K. Tonwe II, his mother was married from the Royal House of Gbenekwerre and Kote. These royal Houses were his mother's House (Pya be ye Ka); just as I myself took the Royal House of Gbenekiri and Tonwe I as my Mother's House.

As to the question of how I was able to perform the Yaa Nwii rites and ceremonies in these days, this is what happened. I am possessed by Zim which was the King of Abere House and founder of Gaan Abere (Kindred of Abere House). For that reason, I became the Ruler of a Gaan (Nyowo m lu mene gaan) (1) Secondly, I am possessed by the Land Deity (Asaa Bue). Because of these positions, the people demanded that I must perform the Yaanwii ceremonies and rites. The recent one was the second Yaanwii I have performed.

As I have performed the Yaanwii now, the Koogia can now name me (or call my name) whenever it is played; it will salute me in honour and it will salute the Zim which possesses me in high exaltation and in honour (Koogian dab me kana moe bu ka, sa kana moe lo Zim ame aa bu sidee a kii nyon le bu ka). The Koogian can no longer castigate or deride me and the Zim that possesses me. The Koogian will call my name and I will be able to walk to the Gola and shake it. (Koogian e kwue me, lo soa na m aadee sa yonge gola a).

The Koogian was played at Baraboue. It was there that the war village existed. They used to play the Koogian also at Yobue Square when they celebrated the Feast of Yonwidam. But it was moved to Baraboue afterwards because there the oldest city was. It was from there that people spread to all parts of Boue and to all other places.

YaaNwii: The first thing that must be done when a person was preparing to perform the rites and Ceremonies of Yaanwii, was to assemble the Elders. The Elders would "enquire" concerning you, and concerning the conditions of the towns, lives, and the general state of things. (2) The Elders would then perform the necessary sacrifices and rituals to ensure that lives were safe; that somebody walking on the road might not fall down dead; that everyone going about his work, whether on the farms, in the bushes or in the forests, that no evil might befall him, that there should be peace and prosperity between wives and husbands in their homes; that there should be general peace in all the component towns. That there should be no outbreaks of deadly epidemics to destroy lives.

They would remove the causes of trouble among men from the towns and send them to the sea. They would do all these things because if any evil thing happened to a citizen during the period one was performing these ceremonies and Rites, then it would be said that the Yaa had failed (Yaa egbe a).

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1. The Mene Ga was not a political post. The Mene Ga was the spiritual Head of the Kindred or Gaan. It is a large, largely invisible nationality which trace their origins back to one man, the founder of the Gaan. Sometimes a Ga could branch out to form a new Gaan.
  2. This enquiry by the Elders involved the use of Mediums who were supposed to tell them whether the man performing the ceremonies would live long enough to complete them, whether those joining would live through to the end? What they must do to ensure peace? The Services of Medicine men, priests, mediums would be used.

Next he would go to the House of his Ancient or Great, Great Grandmother (Be Nama Kaama), where he would also pay dues and perform traditional rites. There the members of the Nama Kaama House would bathe (6) him (Pya Be Nama Kaama ba e biere ye Maa) at the conclusion of the ceremonies there.

On returning from the Nama Kaama House, he would give notice of the day he would "undo" the traditional bed (La bara Dee). He would make invitations about this (e kue-kue). Then he would enumerate the requirements (sa a lo alo nu anyone). Once he has "undone the bed", he would then proceed to enter the "face" of the Totem (a Yii Si Ku) (7). Next he would invite the sacred ancient musicians called SooSoo. He would enter the presence of the father's Totem one day (Si Ku Te), and the presence of the Mother's Totem on the next day, (Si Ku Ka).

Next he would go to Youwe-Yaa. After Youwe Yaa, he would perform the ceremony of spreading the mullet (Egara Aka). The preparation for the Egara Aka would begin from the time of going to the Youwe Yaa. The day of Egara Aka was one of the great days of the ceremony (lu zii gbene dee).

Day of Parade: Then a day would be fixed for parade or presentation through the towns (Dee Teeloo Bue). The day of parade was the day the Yaa-Father or Yaa-Lord, or Yaa-Chief (Te-Yaa) used to show himself off to the public, to let the public know that he has become one of the great and wealthy men that exist (lo edoo ko pya bue ba a sua ko me ale e lua e zii gbene nee mene ale). On that day, the Yaa-Lord (Te-Yaa) would be dressed in his great apparels and their attachments or accessories, as the Mene-Yaa (Yaa Chief) which he was (doodoo Mene-Yaa). Then he would be accompanied by his friends and comrades (Pya ye gbo), and the Elders; and they would walk in procession through the towns. They would visit all the great houses and all the great spots and centres in all the towns. In each of these places they would be "scattering" money (wee pi kpugi). (8)

The first important place the parade would visit was Baraboue, which was the first ancient town in Boue, and it was also the place where they preserved the "things" belonging to Kings and Generals from ancient times (Ke ba bee su nu Mene le Gian bogene sere aa li kere). He would go there to "announce" that he has been numbered among the Rulers in Ogoni.

6. This was probably a type of baptism. Actually this was a sacred traditional washing by members of his most ancient place of origin.
7. SIKU: ("Face" or presence of the Totem): This is their "Holy of Holies". A sacred and highly secret spot, one for each Bua. It is a mysterious place, invisible ordinarily to people, yet in common, common-place.
8. Pi Kpugi: As they moved in procession through the towns, crowds would be cheering and applauding. The Yaa-Chief would be dipping hands into his "purse" and scattering handfuls of coins, sometimes paper currency, over the cheering crowds, who would then struggle to get the money. The poor especially have a field day on this occasion.

From Baraboue, the parade would continue through the towns. They would pass by the gates of great men (ba e tee beegboon zii zii Mene), and through important cross-roads, and junctions, and in front of shrines of important ancestors. At each of such places, people would set up road blocks to prevent the procession (Pya nee e su te gbee nyodee, ale beegboo Mene, ale bae-te-dee, ale ke alu zii gbene ke ton ale bu bue). When the Yaa-Chief (Te-Yaa) reached such places he would scatter handfuls of money to the public. Then they would open the way for him and for the procession to proceed.

When the parade had been successfully completed, the Te-Yaa would then send money to the House of Pee (To Pee) (9).

There were two Pee that existed; one Pee was the Pee of the Elders (Pee Pya Kanee). The other Pee was known as Pee Iza.

The Pee of the Elders was for the "spiritually upright", people who had not defiled themselves with profane sex life; for men who kept themselves holy (Pya nee ba su loo wa sere kae); for men who were completely "whole" (Pya nee logo 'Yoora' sii tee loo) (10). The Pee of the Elders (Pee Pya Kanee) was kept in the House of Gbenetanwaayo (Be Gbenetanwaayo).

The Pee Iza was for men who could not keep themselves holy (Pya nee ba naadab sere wa loo ko ale Kae); those who have slept with twin-born women, or have slept with prostitutes; or committed fornication and such like things (ale due nu ale gara doowo). This Pee was in the House of Kote (Be Kote).

The Iza: The Iza were men who had not performed the rite of Yaa when they slept with women. Any man who did that, when he comes to do the Yaa rites, he would dance Pee Iza. In ancient times, a young man who kept himself holy, would not sleep with a woman until he had performed the rite of Yaa, and his wife had also performed the Yaa rites of women.

If an Iza person danced the Pee of the Elders, and touched it, he would die instantly. They would have to carry him away a dead corpse. (Ba e dana ye ii aan lo to kuma).

After the Pee dance today, and they danced it in the night, then

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9. To Pee was the ancient House where an ancient sacred music was provided for the Yaa dance known as Yeb Pee. All the Yaa candidates taking part in the Yaa ceremony would dance this music and touch the sacred instrument. Only the spiritually "upright" could touch it.
  10. "Yoora": literally, a leakage. The picture was that of a fully inflated balloon which could soar confidently on the winds. Such a life was completely "whole". A life with "Yoora" or spiritual leakages could not do this. By "leakages" was meant spiritual defilements.

tomorrow would be the day for Teera Yaa (the Yaa "race") (11) On that day, the Yaa Father would not depart from his compound. He would stay home, taking his seat at an appropriate position (Ale e egeteke bu yo BE). Then each of the Yaa candidates called Dam Yaa would be running the Yaa race (Pya zii zii dam Yaa teera Yaa). When they had run the Yaa race from all the places (aan dedee ke) they would come to the House of the Te-ere-Yaa (Father and Owner of the Yaa). (12). The Te-ere-Yaa would give to each Dam Yaa a plantain tree with a matured bunch on it. These plantain trees would be within or near the compound of the Te-ere-Yaa, or within the immediate vicinity (Te-ere-Yaa e ne zii zii Dam Yaa zii zii kum ebue loo ye Be ko ba a fii su kuma wa be). This was part of the magnanimity of the Te-ere-Yaa towards his Pya Dam Yaa. (13).

11. The Yaa "Race" (Teera Yaa) was the climax of the traditional Rite. It was the concluding part. The race was not like the western race in which certain winners were selected. In this race there was no loser. All were winners; having successfully completed the long and tedious traditional experience up to that point. The race began from each Yaa candidate's house as early that day as five a.m., or before dawn, till eve.
12. The House of the Te-ere-Yaa, or Te-Yaa was the official finishing point of the Yaa race but they would have to continue to their own homes. The Te-Yaa gave the prize of the Yaa race.
13. For this race, or this Yaa "Marathon", a Dam Yaa's body was rubbed smoothly with do, which was a red powder manufactured from camwood. His hair was cut short and smartly trimmed. He wore on his waist a black and white ribbon of raffia cloth called biirabe and a red one on his right wrist called Ikeeneewa. On his waist also he wore a leather girdle or belt; in front of it was fixed a bronze dumb-bell called ipii-Yaa (the Yaa Penis). It is about 4 cm. in diameter and about 12 cm. high. On his head he wore a girdle crown called Kbanabee. To this was fixed an eagle feather (white). This was the symbol of his glory and power. He had two swords called Kobe-Ge, one on his waist, and one he held tight in his hand. The one on his waist was in sheath. The virgins were fitted like that. The non-virgins wore a slim raffia cloth (dark-red) called Igwa on their waist, with the other outfits on top of it. The race, which could properly be called a marathon, began from each Dam Yaa's house before dawn and covered all the important places in the kingdom.  
The Dam Yaa had a Guardian called Tebe and a Page called Igia-Yaa and several Guards, all fully armed with swords.  
The Igia-Yaa carried his decorated Stool called Ta-Yaa.  
In the race, "enemies" would attempt to capture or take the Dam-Yaa's crown or Eagle. He would wield or brandish his sword and cut his way through. So would his Guardian and Guards. About evening the race would end at the Te-Yaa's House where he would cut down his plantain tree with one stroke of his sword.  
At every corner the race was cheered by young women.

After the race (Teera Yaa) today, the next morning, they would carry the Pa-Yah (Yaa- "awe") (14) to the sea to "dump" it in the sea. The Te-Yaa never sent his own Pa-Yaa to the sea, but he would send his own to Be Nwaa Pa (the House of the Awesome Lady) at Yoamaa House. There the Te-ere-Yaa would go to do the sacrifices and rituals connected with the Pa-Yaa. After that he would leave his Pa-Yaa there.

Loogi: When a person had done the rites of Yaanwii and performed many other rites and sacrifices, and performed the rite of Baa-Li (15) then they would play the Bina music for him. Then it would be proclaimed by blowing the Gbon and the Pumbu that such, or this person has "prepared" (Me nee ama e baara Li) his shrine.

This proclamation was called Lee LooGi. They would proclaim that he has "passed into the Shrine" (Me ee e yi'ra Loo). They would make the proclamation throughout all Ogoni to let people know that such a thing has taken place. (Ba e lee Loogi tema dedee ke ale dedee Khana sa doo ko ba s sua Ko me nu atonwo e doo a).

Gbon: The Gbon was also like the Pumbu but it did not sound like the Pumbu (me anaa sere mue Pumbu) (16). Gbon was like the Pumbu in the sense that they were both instruments for blowing.

A man who had prepared his shrine in that way would be called a Great man (Gbene nee). He was called Great because of the traditional rites which he had performed (ba ko ee elua Gbenenee abee doo Yaa BE). As I have done the Yaa Nwii, I have become the Head of the House of Elders (Mda me elua Akobee pya Kanee), because the Zim which possesses me was the person to whom whoever wanted to join the House of Elders used to send a dressed Traditional Basket (Nyone bee lo Zim ame aa ama na nee e yii Pya Kanee wee dasi nooto ma a), before he could be permitted to dress the Traditional Basket to the House of Elders.

14. Pa-Yaa: This expression is really difficult to explain. It is very abstract. What they meant however was that if this Pa-Yaa was not taken away by rituals, it would remain on the candidates and produce a negative psychological effect on behaviour. It was an evil "thing" which tried to cling on to the candidates having been attracted by the activities of Yaa. Such evil "things" were banned to the sea.
15. Baa Li: This was almost the final stage in the process to become spirit and possess one's descendants after death; in some cases even while still alive, though very old. The Bina music was a music for ancestral spirits. It stirred up spirits.
16. Gbon: This was a low key instrument. It was blown on occasions of serious thoughtfulness like the one being described. It related to death and to spirits; and it was patterned after the owl who makes his sound, when all other creatures are silent.  
Pumbu: This was a horn instrument of high key with high velocity and a robust sound. It was an instrument blown in war time, or at the death of a great man and warrior, or at a great national event. It called men to arms in war time. On the occasion under review, both instruments were blown; usually, it was at night or before day break.

Aa'oo: Aa'oo was a wild yam which used to grow in the forest. It was the first yam which people ate, and it was also the oldest yam (ale na abeele tuatua Zia ba bee dasi de a; ale na a beelee nama Zia a). There were three types of old yam which existed, Aa'oo, Gura and Ya. Those were the three oldest yams which first appeared in the world.

The Banana: As to the question whether the Elders ate the banana or not, the Elders did not eat the banana, because they said that the banana came from Bonny (Bani); it was something that belonged to Bonny people (ebue-bani lu nu pya Bani). What the Elders used to eat was the plantain (Ka ebue). They could roast a plantain in the fire and eat it. As for the banana, they never like it to come near them. (me ebue-bani, ba naa wee yiga ko a to e wa wae loo).

Ritual foods: Khana (Ogoni) people used the plantain and the yam (ka-ebue le kaZia) as ritual foods for the ancestral spirits because those were their food. Whenever a Traditional Basket was dressed to any Zim, seven yams and a bunch of plantains must be in it, among other things (Ereba Zia le kum ebue ere e le loo).

Seven yams must be inside the Basket and the bunch of plantains must be on top of it. Those were the food for the Elders as well as for the ancestors (Zia Pya Kanee le Pya Zim lo). Other accessories were kola nut (Buu), alligator pepper (Akee), white chalk (nem), palm wine (Too mii), mullets (Bari le Aka ereba) etc.

The ancestors did not know about the cassava (ekpakpuru) and other new foods (aan Zia) which have come into being. Many people who are still alive are older than the years the cassava has been around. (Mee nee ale dum nama ekpakpuru a ya).

56. MR. TOBINA IPAAN OF KWAAKWAA (Aged c. 63)  
Interviewed at Kwaakwaa on 9 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me what you know about the Tingtán drums?

What was the importance of the instrument or drums which induced Gbenebaara to take them from Baan? What were they like?

Was the drum preserved?

When or on what occasion were the drums played?

Describe the Drum?

This thing called tingtan which Baan people used the Drums for, what was it?

When your ancestor went to that war and brought back the Tingtán, was he honoured in any way for having done that?

Did Gbenebaara have the title Gbene at the time he went to that war?

B. The Narrative:

I am Tobina.  
My father was Ipaan.  
The father of Ipaan was Gwerre.  
Their ancestor was Gbenebaara.

According to the story, Gbenebaara and his friends went to war at Baan. They fought the war and killed so many people (ba fege ka edo nee). He brought the Tingtán from the war. A human head which they brought from the war, they could not enter the town with it, so they kept it in a bush some distance outside the town. The place became an evil forest known as Taa Luuwa (1). That is the forest you see there (pointing to the direction).

The drum was used by Baan people for their Tingtán and for their Akwuni dances. When they had fought the battle into the town, and having entered the house where they kept those things, he took the drum, his friend also took other things. What they took were things which were of importance to the people and things which made them brave (Kuma nu alu nu gian na ba sugara a).

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1. Taa Luuwa; Luuwa is the name of a town in Bangha area, while Baan is the name of a town in Luekun area. But the two kingdoms are adjacent to each other, and share farming boundaries. It is my view that the war in question included people from these two kingdoms, Bangha and Luekun. The name Luuwa was applied to the evil forest, possibly because the victim, who most probably was a medicine man or a medium, came from Luuwa.

The drum was there but after our house collapsed, the drum was damaged (perhaps, crushed) (Kere a beelee me son to fee a na kere a gbe a). The drum was beaten on important feast days.

On the feast of "All gods" (2) when Gbenebaara (now Zim) (3), was remembered, the tingtan was played. The feast of "All gods" took place in July each year, after the feast of Yomii, when the Teebee masquerade was played. (son ba de Bogeneyoo na ba wee de Gbenebaara a - Lo son na ba wee kpa kere tingtan a).

The drum lasted very long. My father saw it, my grandfather saw it, my great grandfather saw it. I, myself, when I was a boy who could remember something, also saw it. When the house collapsed, termites destroyed the drum. (son to fee a na kere a gbe a. Lo bia-bue naa bee taa kere a, e beelege ume ni'ee).

The drum was as long as my arm, with a wide top and slimmer to the lower part. The wood they used in making it was a very hard wood. (gbene egara te). (4)

The drum was used by Baan people in company with other instruments, to praise their great National Deity. As they were also warriors, each year, when they returned from war to celebrate their national deity, they played the tingtan as something (or an occasion) to show their bravery (doodoo alaba nu gian). And they used that occasion to narrate how many people they killed. That was why, when my ancestor, Gbenebaara, had fought the battle into that place, he grabbed the drum and took it home as a trophy from the war.

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2. Feast of "All gods" (Bogeneyoo): One feast in the year was declared for all gods, during which each family, kindred, or House, remembered their ancestors and deities, by giving them ritual foods and drinks. It involved a revival of whatever the particular ancestor was noted for. Masquerades, plays and dances were re-enacted. Those ancestors who did not have a special national day in their honour (like Gbenekiri had the Yomii Feast in his honour) were remembered on the Feast of Bogeneyoo, which each family could apply as the feast of their ancestor, e.g. Feast of Gbenebaara.
  3. Zim: Khana term for ancestors (human beings) who became gods and who came back after death to possess their descendants.
  4. Hard wood: Certain hardwood cannot be destroyed by termites. Termites could destroy other parts of the drum, like the leather part. I saw a giant drum in Kote shrine, said to have been taken from Baan in the same war. Its wood part was intact; a heavy, solid, hardwood. No termite could scratch it. In the case of the Tingtan drum, there seemed to have been a period of neglect after the death of Ipaan, the last person possessed by the spirit of Gbenebaara. The family shrine was neglected. The Tingtan was probably crushed by the fallen house.

According to my father, when they returned from the war each of them with trophies, they were honoured (ba bee wa yere ka loo). All of them who went to that war, each of them was given a "cap and eagle", "cap and eagle" throughout (ba bee wa yere tu bee sa wa tuegi Go bee zii zii aba. Zii zii aba, zii Tu le Go, zii zii aba, Zii Tu le Go). They did that, so that they might be known as brave men.

Gbenebaara was a human, who had father and mother like all men have. But he initiated himself into many supernatural things. He travelled to many places where he initiated himself into supernatural affairs (bee yae pie, kia si nyuwe sa yae pie yaa loo ye). He went to Nama, where he did all the things (bee si Nama, sa doo dedee nu). When he died, the first person he possessed was Gwerre.

57. IDENTIFICATION OF A WILD YAM PLANT BY RANDOM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AT KONO BOUE ON 2 FEBRUARY 1984

Introduction

During my interview with the Yam Priest of Kono Boue on 22 January 1984, he asserted that he inherited the office of Yam Priest from his ancestor, because his ancestor was the first man to domesticate wild yam in Khana (Ogoni). He also asserted that in 1984, there were still wild yams in some Khana (Ogoni) forests.

Upon this statement, I decided to accompany him to the forest to search for wild yams. We set off on 2 February 1984, and after a long search, we found just one. The interesting thing about it was that as we were carrying it home from the forest, all who saw us quickly identified what it was, including some boys and girls. They knew it to be Zia Kue (the yam of the forest, or wild yam). For the apparent knowledge of the people of the existence of wild yams, I decided to take down some random testimonies. We set our position by the public roadside in front of Tonwe House in Kono Boue. There we asked some few questions of passers-by about the subject:

WILD YAM (ZIA KUE)

Mr. Bakina Gunu (Aged c. 98)

I am Bakina Gunu. What I see is Zia Kue (wild yam). People don't plant it in the forest. It was kept there by God (Bari na a bee ye sere bu kue a), that it might be called Zia Kue. People used to eat it in ancient times when they brought it from the forest. They are still in the forest till today, but only in old forests. When old forests were cleared, they were rooted up. That is why they cannot be found in new forests.

Mr. Browson of Nookwuri (Aged 28)

I am Brownson. I am from Bori, and I'm going to Kwuri. This town is Kono Boue. What I see is what we used to call Aa'oo in Khana. It is also called Zia. It is found in the forest, and it is not planted. It grows in the forest by itself. It may still be found in the forest today.

Mr. Monday DeeZua (Aged 39)

Where I am is Kono Boue; this road from Bori, goes to Kwuri. The object I see is yam (Zia), but it used to be called Aa'oo. It is found in the forest. It grows in the forest by itself. But if some one takes one from the forest and plants it, it will grow well.

Mrs. Sarah Tonwe (Aged 38)

I am standing at the gate of Tonwe on the road from Kwuri to Bori. The object I see is yam (Zia). It is a yam which used to grow in the forest, without being planted by anyone. It grows up in the forest by itself. If people went to the forest to search for it, they could get some which they could eat.

Chief Eli Baedee (Aged c. 55)

I am the Chief of Eepie. This road is from Bori via Kono to Kwuri, the southern end of Khana (Ogoni). I am at this moment standing at the Gate of Tonwe Ikpani. The object I see is Zia Kue (wild yam). It grows by itself in the forest. If we went to the forest, we could find bigger ones than these. In ancient times people used to go to the forest to search for it as food. This is what I heard from the ancients (M bee da aan nu pya nama te).

As yam is plentiful now, people don't eat it again. It is called Zia Kue (yam of the forest) because it is different from the yams which have been planted on farms.

Mrs. Kewale Nwanadee (Aged 32)

I am Kewale. This road on which I stand comes from the farm over to Kono Boue. And the point where I am standing is at Tonwe's Gate. The object I see is Zia Kue. It used to be in the forest. I have personally seen its plant in the forest (M da maa wee moe ye mea a le bu kue) If we go to the forest, we can find another one.

Mr. Nnaa Leyoo (Aged c. 64)

I am from Uwegwere, but I am just visiting at Kono Boue at this moment. The object I see is Zia Kue. It used to be in the forest by itself. If we went to the forest, we would see another one.

Mr. Nwidae Tonwe (Aged c. 67)

I am at the gate of Tonwe, on the road from Kwuri to Bori. The thing I see is Zia (yam), but it used to be in the forest. It used to be called Aa'oo. If people went to search for it in the forest, they could find another one.

Mr. Aaron Nii (Aged 42)

I am just returning from work in the forest. What I see is Zia Kue. It grows by itself in the forest. At first people did not know that it could be eaten. Only in relatively recent times that people discovered that it could be eaten. (Kwene aan son ama na pya nee sua ko ma be dab de sa ton dum a).

Mr. Lebura Bakpo (Aged c. 33)

This road goes to Kwuri, and where I am is at Tonwe's Gate. What I see is Zia Kue. It used to be in the forest, and it was never planted by people.

Biological Identification:

At the end of this exercise, I took the yam to the University of Port Harcourt, Department of Zoology. There the plant was identified by Dr. R.A. Odihirin, Root crop disease specialist (Yam), and Dr. B.A.R. Wilcox, plant taxonomist. After lab. tests, Dr. R.A. Odihirin identified the species as the wild variety of the White Yam of the family Dioscorea Rotundata.

58. Mr. LEMUE NUAKA OF TEGO, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 90)  
Interviewed at Tego on 30 November 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Who founded Kono Boue?

About enforcing a law in the communities, who has the power to do it?  
And how do they go about it?

When did Yobue emerge in Boue? Who was the ruler at that time?

You spoke about a Baan war. When did this war take place?

What evidence can you give about this war?

Concerning the axe of Yobue, what can you say about it? What was  
its use? And how did it begin?

B. The Narrative:

Nuaka was the son of Tokue. Tokue was a hunter, his name derived from his occupation as a hunter. He was the son of Girinwa. The oldest founding ancestor was Gbenetigina. The ancestors were autochthonous in Kono Boue; from there they spread to other places. The murder of one of their brothers caused them to scatter abroad. Some of them went to Uwegwere.

Gbenekwerre and Kote were the founders of Kono Boue. They first founded the town of Noobana. Kono Boue people are potters; people from other places come to Kono Boue to buy pots. Recently, a European woman came to Kono Boue to study about our pottery. Kwaawa people learned the art of making pottery from Kono Boue. A woman who was married from Kono Boue to Kwaawa introduced the pottery industry into Kwaawa.

If a woman finished a freshly made pot and brought it outside to dry it in the sunshine, and if any person intentionally broke that pot, Yobue would demand payment of compensation for the broken pot from the offender.

The enforcement of laws was the function of the Elders, but they did not do the actual enforcing. They had some people or agents who did that for them. Yobue was one of the agents who did the enforcing of laws.

I do not know the time Yobue came to Boue, but I suspect that he must have emerged during the time of the founder Kote.

The Baan war in which Yobue was a commander took place very long ago; I was not born then. There is a large, wooden Bowl in Yoboue House. It is said that the Bowl was taken as a war booty from Baan. It is said that Baan people used the Bowl ceremoniously to feed their gods from it. I now use the Bowl to feed Yoboue from it. There was another thing called Tintan, a musical instrument which they captured from Baan. It was kept in Ipaadubia House, who himself was a spirit-

medium and a warrior. His ancestors fought in the Baan War and captured the instrument. (The name of the ancestor was called Gbenebaara). I did not grow up to see the instrument but I was told about it. As for the wooden Bowl, it is still there. I put ritual foods in it for Yobue.

Yobue had an axe. If Yobue wanted to punish an Elder or a Chief because of an offence, he uses the axe by giving a blow of it on the Elder's waist. He does not break his leg. Also he did not have to go to the offender's place. He simply acts with the weapon while remaining in his own place, and the offender is affected.

The axe is now lost. The last person or spirit-medium of Yobue hid the axe away; and when he died, no one could find out where the axe is. (Note: The Yobue Spirit-Medium died on 4 October 1976. His name was Gbigbo. I visited his compound and saw his grave. I also interviewed his son).

When we asked for it, he told us that he was sick with a fever, and he later discovered something like leprosy on his own body, so he kept away the sacred weapon. But he never let us know where he kept it till he died. He also said that it was because the Chrisitans burned the Shrine, so he hid it.

The Christians he referred to were the Christ Army people. They claimed that they were driving away evil from the towns, but they did not destroy the sacred things because those were preserved in Yoboue House.

59. MR. LEMUE NUAKA OF TEGO, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 90)  
Interviewed at Tego on 2 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

When Gbenekwerre and Kote were the founders and rulers of Kono Boue, in what capacity did Yobue have such a great power in the towns?

Can you show me the Bowl which you said was captured from Baan during the Baan war?

Did Yobue lead the Boue armies in battle?

As so many privileges and powers were given to Yobue after the Baan war, did he become the ruler? If not, what position did he occupy? And what were his functions?

How was the task of government in Boue organized?

B. The Narrative:

As I heard it, Yobue was a Medicine man at Bonny Okolomatoro. When they heard that he could fight in war and cause people to win in war, they went and brought him. All the deep trenches you see dug round the towns were dug because of that war. (ee o mue gbene, gbene bana ba dugara tema egene dedee ke a).

When they had brought him, he "did work" for them and they went to the war. The whole of Baraboue which you see, a big trench was made round about the whole area. The gunners took positions in the trenches. It became difficult for the enemy to attempt to cross the trenches in order to enter the towns. Enemy forces from places like Koo, and from all other warrior towns of the north were held at bay behind the trenches. Right now, as I am narrating this exciting story evidence from Baan such as the sacred Bowl, are in this town today.

They (Boue people) fought the war and defeated Baan people completely, and drove them out of their towns. (Ba be no eebe pya Baan sa kpo Baan sa Ke).

When they had returned from the war, they told Yobue that they had no other task to assign to him, but that he should settle in the land. They gave him a vast portion of land to settle on. If a goat died on the land, he should take it for his use (Note: In those days they ate dead animals). He could kill fowls on the land for his ritual use or on feast days, without charge. Palm trees that were being tapped in the land, he could take palm wine from them for his use on Deemua days. They told him that since he had been brave in war and had led the Boue armies to victory in the Baan War, he should now be the Defender of the Realm (Nee Bae loo Bue). That is what I heard from the ancients. I was not born at that time of the war, but I heard all these things from the Elders.

When an assembly was to be held for all Boue, whether to discuss some matter or to plan a trip, proclamation (or announcement) will be made from Kono Boue. Nookwuri will come, Keneke will come, Uwewere

will come, Gbam will come. We will strike the gong from Kono here to Nookwuri, to Uwegwere, to Gbam, to Keneka. If they arranged or decided upon something to deliberate upon, they would then assemble at Eeyoburubu in Kono Boue. All their Elders and Chiefs would assemble. After they had discussed the matter, each one would then return to his own town. Whatever they decided to do, on whatever day, every town must be there to put it in order. It was to Yobue that they entrusted the function of seeing to the fulfilment of all decisions involving all the towns of Boue.

In battle, it was Yobue who had the duty to lead the armies of Boue. If they shot at him the bullets could not penetrate his body. If they struck him with a sword, the blade could not penetrate his body. For he was a medicine man. Now that he had become a spirit and possesses people, it is here in Kono Boue that he has possessed people. They bestowed on him much favours and wealth.

If they kill a leopard in any town in Boue, they must bring it to Yobue House. They dared not butcher it in their own towns. So they would do in all towns, whether at Nookwuri, Keneke, Uwegwere, or Gbam. They would carry it to Kono Boue, where they would butcher it ceremoniously in Yoboue House. I know when Leopards are butchered in Yoboue House. I have witnessed about seven leopard being butchered there. After that we went to Baraboue, and coming from all directions they congregate in this town. aa si, aa dume, ba gbaa doo abue Kiang! (lit. Coming forth, from the front, from the rear, in this town, together they would throng!)

A certain man who was allowed to live in this town, and who dwelt among them, Yobue ruled the whole of these towns. All the towns gave him the full honour. The Elders and all the ancestral spirits (Zim) who own these towns agreed that he should rule. But he did not rule as the civil authority but as the military authority, whose functions consisted in protecting the towns. For that reason he was to be maintained from the resources of the towns. (E eregeba nu ale bu bue ba ane ye ee de).

The founders of the communities (Pya te-ere-bue) and the Elders (Pya Kanee), and the House of Kote; these were the actual rulers of the towns. They appointed a man called Igbara Abbe that his House should be the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee). Then Gbenekote said, "I am the Te-ere-Bue of these towns, but I alone cannot judge them. Gbenekwerre said, "I am the owners of these towns, but I alone cannot judge them". So they divided the functions of government piece by piece (Ba doon zii zii nu a sege, sege).

They selected Igbera Abbe House as the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee). They decreed that all possessing spirits of ancestors (Zim) and deities (yo) should be represented in that House. It was in that House that they always gathered in the first instance, whether they would hold the Assembly (Yii Eete), or consult together (bira-bira) or whether it concerned a public announcement (ale zii Ue ba e ko). If there was a public assembly, unless they had all first of all retired to that place in orderly procession, and had there consulted together in whatever it was, they would not return to the Assembly from Igbara Abbe House. In the meantime, we (the assembly of the people) would

be waiting at the Townsquare, knocking the Town-Crier's Gong (Al'ilenage Eete sa wee doo Akere Koi Koi). The Assembly would not wait patiently. When they came from Igabara Abbe House, that was the time they told the people in the Townsquare whatever they had decided.

When people talk of the House of Yams, House of Yam, House of Yam; it is here in this town. When you hear an announcement, that it is the Feast of Bari-Kinanwii Bari-Gbenenee ("God of the Little Child, God of the Great man"), it was from here in this town (Kono Boue) that they used to make the announcement. In the announcement, they would specify what each town or community would do, and what type of play, or dance or entertainment each town or community would bring. And all would come to this townsquare as it was arranged.

Self-government, self-government; that is what you hear nowadays! Ere-bue bee bue, ere-bue bee bue, ke ale doo anyawo lo. (lit. Own Town rule town, own town rule town; that is what is now).

In those days, all arrangements or decision were made from this Kono Boue, then the decisions and arrangements were taken to each of the towns, where they were carried out, so that in the end, they corresponded together. In the beginning there was only One House of Yam in the Boue kingdom. Now everyone has his own small house of yam. (Lo so ama, nee ale ere ale ito Zia). The first House of Yam originated in Kono Boue. It was at Kono Boue that all the towns used to assemble at the Townsquare. And then they would proclaim:

Boue, nam e leera ewo e!  
Nee a ere ye be  
Nee a era ye bue,  
A kii wee baa Zia,  
Yii wii e leera.

Boue, it is time for bush clearing!  
Heads of Houses, leaders of Towns,  
Let them return to their farms,  
The farming season has begun.

I grew up to hear it, and I saw it (M bee lu tura sa da).

60. MR. DEEBARI IGBUG OF EEPIC, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 67)  
Interviewed at Eepic on 22 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate how the institution of To Zia (House of Yam) began in this community.

When did they use to assemble for these rituals and traditions?

What type of dance or music were required at this time?

What and what were the sacred items of value in the House of Yam?

Why did Khana (Ogoni) people call Yam Ka Zia (Mother of foods)?

Why did they also call plantains Ka ebue (Mother of plantains)?

Which year did your ancestors bring the yam and the plantains from the forest?

When was the Banana brought from Bonny to Khana (Ogoni)?

Did Khana (Ogoni) people use the banana as a ritual food?

If the banana or the cassava were used as a ritual food what would happen?

Why did Khana (Ogoni) people stop farm work during the period of "entering the Yam House"?

Why do Khana (Ogoni) people stake the yam from a special side?

Why did the yam climb its stake from the right, whereas other lesser crops like the sweet yams climb from the left?

You said that the yam was originally in the forest. Are there yams in the forest in this present time?

B. The Narrative:

The House of Yam (To Zia) began at the root of Boue people, when they used to gather at each farming season. My ancestor named Gbenetanwaayo was the person to whom the whole Boue entrusted the guardianship of the House of Yam. Each year, when it was time to begin a new farming season, all Boue used to assemble at Gbenetanwaayo House. Representatives of Great Houses throughout the Boue kingdom used to bring wine and yams. When all the great men of Boue had taken their seats, my ancestor and ancient father would take his seat. The Elders of Kono Boue would be seated. Then they would ask Gbenetanwaayo to "slice" the yams. (1)

1. In those days a yam tuber was sliced into certain number of pieces, which were put into nurseries to germinate as yam seedlings for planting. It was believed that if a person who was holy had "clean" hands, kept the traditions, did the slicing, the yams would prosper. In all Boue Gbenetanwaayo was the Yam Priest who fulfilled these conditions. He also belonged to the original yam family.

The Elders of Uwegwere would come. Their leader or Elder would bring palm wine and a yam tuber. He would be seated before Gbenetanwaayo. Then they would say "Let Gbenetanwaayo slice yam for Uwegwere people". Gbenetanwaayo would slice the yam for Uwegwere people. Nookwuri Elders would come with a yam tuber and wine. Gbenetanwaayo would slice the yam for Nookwuri people. Keneke people would come with wine and a yam tuber. Gbenetanwaayo would slice the yam for Keneke people in the same way. Gbam Elders would come with wine and a yam tuber. Gbenetanwaayo would slice the yam for Gbam people.

As this was a traditional ceremonial slicing, he would not slice the whole yam tuber. He would cut off the head of the yam tuber and give the yam head to the yam priest or Elder of the representative town. He would do so for all the representative towns now meeting at the Yam House in Gbenetanwaayo House at Kono Boue. The body of the yam tuber would be the one they would cook on those occasions for a feast. at the To Zia in Kono Boue. At the end of the period in Kono Boue, there would be dances and merriment and feasting.

At the conclusion of the period at Kono Boue, each representative town of Boue would take home the yam head given to them by the yam priest at Kono Boue. In their town they would plant this near the Yam House in each of the towns, as the representative yam and as a symbolic prosperous yam for all that community. They would then celebrate with music and dances in all of the towns of Boue to mark the beginning of a new farming season, just as they did at Kono Boue. Once that had been done in all the towns, then all Boue would begin the new farming season (Dedee Boue gbaa yii wii se).

Yii To Zia: They used to assemble together at Kono Boue on the 10th of January every year. That was the day it was said that "they have entered the Yam House" (Ba yii To Zia). During the period they were said to be in the Yam House, they gathered there once every Kpo'eeri DeeZia (2) to drink the health of Yam. They would continue like that every kpo'eeri DeeZia until seven times, or seven kpo'eeri Deezias. That would be for women. Another seven kpo'eeri DeeZia of drinking once every kpo'eeri DeeZia to the health of Yam (orn mii Zia), would be dedicated to men. On the seventh day for men there would be a great rejoicing in dances and music and in feasting. After that date, it would be said that they had "come out of the Yam House" (Ba e aara To Zia) for that year. Then they would shut the door of the Yam House until another year. They stayed at the Yam Retreat for fourteen weeks (Kpo'eeris).

For the celebrations at the end of the retreat only ancient songs and dances were played. Songs and dances of the young were never used (Ba naa wee bira bii pya nwii). For the dances, and during the "Yam Retreat" people did not wear clothes on the upper body; no wearing of hats, and no wearing of shoes. Women were forbidden to wear scarves over their heads. The dances that were played were SooSoo and Yowaa-bogo. (3)

2. "DeeZia" means "Yam Day". The Khana dedicated one day of their five-day week to Yam. The weekly meeting at this yam ritual met on this day. Farmers also like to plant their yam crops on DeeZia, "Day of Yam".
3. SooSoo was a dance for ancient men and Yowaabogo for ancient women. Men and women took part in both.

If people wore clothes during the celebrations and rituals, a certain disease called uwa (4) would destroy all the yams of that year. A person who had had sex relations with a woman who had born twins must not touch any of the sacred instruments in the House of Yam.

I am the Yam priest in all of Boue kingdom. I do the libations and perform the rituals connected with Yam in Boue kingdom. I keep the sacred instruments in the House of Yam. (To Zia). The sacred items are Akere Zia (the Yam Gong), Kere Zia (the Yam Drum), To Zia (the Yam Basket), and Kana-Mii Zia (the Yam Pitcher).

Whenever the Yam Retreat began the first instrument people heard the sound of was the Yam Gong (Akere Zia). As soon as they heard it, they knew that they have opened the door of the House. Then they would know that the Yam Retreat had begun.

The reason Khana people called the Yam "Ka Zia" (Mother of Foods) was because it was the first food they ever ate. It was the first food that entered the world. The other foods that came later, some of them like the cassave (ekpakpuru), some people still have not eaten it till today (pio nee sii dege ume a ni'ee). Others are the cocoyam (ide), which some people also have not eaten yet.

KaZia was in the forest. It was my own ancestor, Gbenetanwaayo, who brought the yam from the forest into the town. At first people used to go to the forest to look for wild yams. Whenever they found a wild yam, they uprooted its tuber which they took home to eat. My own ancestor took such a wild yam home, but he planted its head after eating the main tuber of it. (Mda namate bee su Zia aa bu kue su nua be, so edea Zia sa, a su ye ekobee fo, a zii lu Zia). It produced new yams. When people saw it, they began to plant yams. They got yams from my ancestor before they were able to plant yams.

Nevertheless the yam was in the forest. But people used to spend a long time searching and searching before they could get enough to be sufficient for their households. It was a thing of much suffering then. (wee lu moe taaga). When yam was in the forest, there was no ownership of it. People did not know that it was possible to plant yams and it would produce better yams.

Gbenetanwaayo, my ancestor, was the man who brought yam from the forest into the towns. Gbenetanwaayo was the first man who planted yam in Khana before anyone else planted it. (Gbenetanwaayo na a bee dasi fo Zia a leelee pya dona nee . aa sii fo). That was why the yams head used to be in Gbenetanwaayo House. Yams planted in the towns (farms) were smoother and more beautiful than those gathered from the forests. Because of this, men began to plant yams.

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4. Uwa was one of the most dangerous crop diseases Khana (Ogoni) people knew about. It attacked the matured yam tubers by eating underneath their skins from the surface inwards, of the yam tubers. Its effect was similar to that of rust on iron when exposed to heat and dampness.

Wild yams: Right now, there are still yams in the forests, even in the forests of this area. I myself, Naa'ii Tah, Boobura Deyo, (5) Nubo Ideezua, and others, we went to the forests of Cameroun to search for raffia palms not very long ago. We saw many different species of yams in the Cameroun forests. Gura was especially plentiful, and there were other species, too. Since Gbenetanwaayo was the first to plant yams (bee dasi fo Zia) they agreed that he should be the owner of Yam (ba ko ale alu Te-ere-Zia).

Wild plantains The plantain was also in the forest, like the yam was. When Gbenetanwaayo went to search for wild yams on a certain day, he could not find enough of the wild yams. But he saw the plantain. So he collected it home. When he cooked the yam and the plantains, he discovered that the two mixed very well and that the plantains increased the quantity of yams to be eaten for a meal. There was sufficient food for the whole family.

From that day Gbenetanwaayo knew that the plantain and yam together produced good edible food (aa nyo lo dee Gbenetanwaayo sua ko me ebue le Zia me ba lu kaana nu ede). He continued to cook yams and plantains together to produce enough food. People came to observe him (Pya nee wee ye si wee eb), and many people began to eat the plantain as a supplementary food to the yam.

Ka Ebue<sup>(6)</sup> The first plantain was the Ka Ebue (lo tuatua ebue na Ka Ebue-gokana), (Gokana plantain), Ebue-bani (the banana; lit. Bonny "plantain"), and Ebue-bono (a species of banana, lit. Andoni or Obolo plantain), are all different.

The Ka-ebue (plantain) was the oldest. Also the ebue-bono. Ebue-gokana was planted by "pya fonu" (lit. "the planters". These were government agricultural field extensions).

The banana (ebue-bani) was first planted by Bonny people (Pya Bani). But the Bonny people did not own it. The Europeans brought it to Bonny, and Bonny people planted it (Pya Bekee bee su ume Bani. Sa Pya Bani fo). From Bonny the banana reached Khana, and it spread to other places also (tema aan Bani na lo ebue ina Khana a le zii zii ke). That was how Khana people came to call it ebue-bani (Bonny plantain).

As for the year my ancestor brought the yam and the plantain from the forest and planted them in the towns, nobody knows the year. Khana people call such numberless years "buu Zua naa sua Zua" (lit. "count without-knowing-the-number-of-years").

As for the year the banana was brought from Bonny to Khana, I was not there then. But what I heard from my ancestors is what I say. The same way the banana was brought to Khana, was the way the cassava came

5. Boobura Deyo was the father of my field Assistant. my field Assistant confirmed the story. He told me that his father had told him the story at their home when he returned from the Camerouns. That for most part they lived on wild yams during their stay there.
6. Ka Ebue is the name for plantain. But all the genus, including the banana were called "ebue". In Khana cosmology, the prefix "Ka" ("Mother") is the essence or source. Hence Ka Ebue was the first or source of the genus. Similarly, Zia is the general name for all foods. KaZia (Mother of foods) given to Yam, indicated that in their view, it was the first, source, or essence of all foods.

to Khana also. These foods are all new foods (Pyalo nu-edede ama balu aan nu-edede) (7)

People do not use the banana or the cassava as ritual foods. Even many people do not eat them because they are foreign foods. (boobonee naa wee de ebue-bani, boobonee naa wee denage ekpakpuru, yononebee pyalo ne-edede ama naa beea ali si).

If any one uses the banana or the cassava as ritual food, if that person did not die, his child would die, his wife would die; someone must die in his house. His ancestral spirits would kill him. (Pyaye Zim bae fe ye). They would query him why he should feed them with the types of food which they never ate. (Tee doodoo wa ee su nu alaba naa wee de esa wasu e tea e Zia?)

Concerning the closing of farm work during the period of Yam House Retreat, it was because farm work was a very hard work (tam wii lu gbene e aga tam). They closed farm work to enable the people to get well prepared for the work coming ahead. It was also to honour the Yam and the new farming season. People don't take yam to the market to sell at that time. The same law applied to peppers, sweet yams, and anything else that was planted in the farms.

When staking the yams, the farmer observes the direction of the wind. In Khana, the wind blew from the sea. So the farmer would stake his yam so that it faces the direction from which the wind blew. When the wind would blow, it would press the yam tendril on to the stake. If the stake was fixed from the 'back' or from any other direction, the wind would disentangle or loosen the yam tendril from the stake and "smash" it on the ground. The yam tendril would be broken. (efobe gbaara Zia lee loo te sa ye su zib ke, sa mee Zia fura).

All these yams were originally in the forest (dedee gbo Zia ama beele bu Kue). The ancients studied them carefully; how they grew naturally, that was how they raised them. Yams were a forest crop. That was where my own ancestor brought the yam into the communities. Yams are still in the forest till today. There are yams in Cameroun forests, there are yams in the forests of this town right now. (Ziale bu kue Kameroun, Zia lenage bu kue bu lo bue ama enyawo). (8)

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7. Nu-edede means lit. "things edible", or edible things. He does not classify them as food (Zia). He seems to place them in a special class of edibles.
  8. On 2 February 1984, the informant and I went to the forest to search for wild yams. We found one in Boue forest. People who saw us confirmed that they existed in wild state in the forest.

61. HIS HIGHNESS CHIEF M.A.M. TONWE III OF KONO BOUE (Aged 48)  
Interviewed at Kono Boue on 22 Janaury 1984

THE BOUE KINGDOM : Political and Judicial Systems

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Describe how the administration of Boue Kingdom was organized in ancient times.

When they asked people to swear oaths, what did they place on the ground to be sworn to, or to what did people swear?

Name some of the "Spirits" which killed or affected people when sworn to falsely.

Explain how people "swore" to an oath. Are there examples to show a case where somebody swore like that and he was found guilty or not guilty? My concern is, how did people know when justice had been done?

Is there another example where somebody denied a matter and took oath falsely, but when the oath "punished" him, he confessed; then when he was released from the oath he became better?

A judicial case in the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee) took seven sessions or sittings; what did they do each session?

If the accused person decided that his accusers should be subjected to oath that they would speak the whole truth only, was that allowed?

Where in Boue did they administer such judgement oaths?

Why did they choose Eekamii as the place for administering judgement oaths?

How did they know by the oath that a person was guilty or that he was innocent or not guilty?

Where a person denied an accusation at first and took oath falsely, when the oath had seized him, he confessed and wanted to be released from the oath, how was such a case handled?

What was ground-touching rite?

Cases other than murder cases, where were they settled?

Who constituted the judges in such other cases?

When did all these things begin?

If Assobienee is now a spirit and possesses a person, does he act as he used to when he was human?

When fines were paid to the Elders, was any share of the fines given to Assobienee?

Is there a representative of Assobienee's House in the House of Elders?

How did the "Speaker" maintain order when the assembly of the whole people meets at Eeyoburubu?

Who are eligible to attend the assembly at Eeyoburubu?

When the Council of Elders have announced at Eeyoburubu what they wanted to be done, who saw to it, after that, that it was done?

B. The Narrative:

Before the colonial people came, our people in these parts had their own type of government as any other people had their type of government. It was not when the colonial people came that they taught us how to rule. Having said that, it must be borne in mind that what I am going to talk about happened when the colonial people had not come.

In the early system of government, they had the Te-ere-Bue (lit. Father-Owner-of Town), or Chief. He was the most powerful man in the community or town. He had authority over every individual in the town to see that everyone lived according to the laws of the communities. Their rule concerned very much about agriculture because agriculture was a very important aspect of Khana life. They planted yams, plantains, ya, gura, sia, geere, raffia palms, etc.. The ancient Khana (Ogoni) people called plantains "Tuunga", and palm wine they called "maamaa Beera".

Farmlands and raffia palm bushes were the two major causes of trouble and quarrels among Khana (Ogoni) people.

It was illegal for somebody to plant a plantain tree on another person's land, or on land on which one was a temporary occupant.

If there was an argument over a matter between two parties, and there was no way of knowing the truth of the matter, the chiefs and judges would demand that both or one party in the dispute be subjected to oath. Thus oath taking was an important aspect of delivering justice in the Khana social and political system. In the Judgement Hall, the parties may be asked to swear to the Town Gong, by touching it with their tongue, or they may take them before a spirit, where they would swear to the name of a spirit.

Spirits that are sworn to in oath-taking: Assobienee, Yoamaa, etc:

Yoamaa was not a human. It was a demonic spirit ("Yo"), as opposed to ancestral spirits (Zim). What Zim is, is that it was a human being who existed but who, after death, became a spirit and possessed his descendants. Assobienee is Zim. Gbenekiri is Zim; Gbenebalikina is Zim, etc. Amaagon was a human, but he was a wizard or sorcerer, so when he died, he went into the evil forest and died there and became a wicked spirit. When he possessed his descendants, he became a wicked, evil, spirit known as Taah. Such spirits (as above examples) are what people swear to in oath because they do kill people.

Procedure for oath-taking:

They poured a cup of wine and placed it on top of the symbolic

instrument of the particular spirit, calling its name. Then they would state the pros and cons of the case as follows:

If it was argument over a piece of property as to the person who owns it, the person claiming the property would state his case like this:

If this property belongs to me or to my father, etc., let me be free, but if not, and I want to take it by fraud, let me be held accountable.

He would then take the cup of wine and drink it, all of it.

After taking the oath, he would go straight to his own house. He must not stop at any other place, except his own house. The reason was that, if he swore falsely, he would take the evil to his own household, to his family, wife, and children, and not to another place.

The ancients used oath-taking as an important part of judgement, or of settling disputes because they knew that telling the whole truth was too difficult for many people. This example which I want to give happened during the colonial era.

A certain man from Uwegwere named Akeenam stole a goat which belonged to a Kono Boue man. Announcement for the lost goat was made in Kono Boue, Uwegwere, Kwuri, Gbam and in all other towns in Boue; they did not find the goat. It was taken that the goat had been lost. After many days had passed, the owner of the goat went to Dukono, where he saw his goat being offered for sale by somebody. When he came near the goat it bleated after him.

The owner went to report in the Chief's House about the goat. Tonwe II, my father, was the ruler to whom the report was made. The owner of the goat reported to the Chief that he had found his goat which was lost with somebody in the market. They sent people from the Chief's Council to bring the person and the goat. In the presence of the chiefs the man denied, saying that the goat was his.

The matter was taken to the court at Baen. At the Court, the man whose goat was lost gave evidence that his goat gave birth to a kid recently before it was lost, and that the kid was at home. The court asked him to bring the kid to the court on the next sitting. They asked other people to bring other goats on that day. On the appointed day, all goats were brought and kept at one place. They also kept the goat on which there was argument with the rest of the goats. Then they let the kid loose among them. The kid ran to the very goat that argument was about and sucked. The Court decided that the man stole the goat, that the owners of the kid was the owner of the goat.

The other man appealed the case to the D.O. (District Officer), a colonial official. The D.O. upheld the decision of the court. But the man still denied having stolen the goat. Then the D.O. granted that the chiefs should take the case home to judge according to their system, that is, by use of oath.

At the Chiefs' Court, they decided to give him the oath. They took him to Kwaakwa Townsquare called Eekamii; there they gave him

the oath. He swore the oath and went to his own house, and was declared "not guilty". Days passed, nothing happened to him. But afterwards the oath arrested him. It began by killing people in his house. When he discovered the cause, he secretly bought a goat and let it loose on the land as a restitution offering. It was not all right! When many people (his children) had died in his family, he could not hide again. So he went to the chief, my father, to confess that he stole the goat.

The case was re-opened. In the second judgement, the Chiefs agreed to release him from the oath after payment of all the fines and costs. On top of that, he was arraigned publicly and paraded through the full Kono Market (Dukono), jeered and hooted at by the public as a thief, according to tradition. This was done to him.

Some years later, a son of the same man, named Gbara, was at a palm wine camp where there were also other people. Another man who was at the palm wine camp was also a fisherman who used fish traps to catch fish. This Gbara engaged in stealing fish from the man's fish traps. Every morning before the owner of the fish traps came, somebody had already removed the fish from the fish traps. The owner planned and watched to catch the person. When he caught him, it was Gbara, who had been doing the evil. So he reported the matter to the people at the camp.

Gbara denied having stolen the fish. The matter became a big case, so that all the members of the camp had to return home. The case was brought to the Gbenemene Babbe I, Chief Deebari Tonwe II. At that place, Gbara still denied. Then the Chiefs gave him some days to go home and think whether he would be able to take oath as evidence of his innocence. When the day given to him was up, he came and declared that he would take the oath. The Elders and Chiefs (Pya Bue) took him to Eekamii in Kwaakwa, Kono Boue. There they gave him the oath and he swore to it and returned to his house. After six months (1) nothing happened to him. They declared him not guilty, and he paraded himself through Kono Boue market with some dancing society to say publicly that he was innocent and exonerated from the crime for which he was arrested.

Shortly after he did that the oath "arrested" him. The spirit to which he swore killed two of his children and was about to kill him too. When he discovered that it was the oath that he took that had "arrested" him, he secretly went to Chief Ipiagbo Akpoyo, one of the Elders who judged the case and who also administered the oath to him. He confessed to the Elder that the oath had arrested him and that he swore falsely. That he actually stole the fish. He pleaded that Ipiagbo should intervene and persuade the Elders to release him from the oath. He offered to pay them money if they would release him secretly.

Chief Ipiagbo Akpoyo and a few supporters took Gbara at night to Eekamii, with goat, fowl, yams and all the ritual articles and

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1. Six months was a set period tentatively given by the judges within which the oath should act; after the six months, the person was considered not guilty; and it was illegal from that time to associate him with the crime for which he took the oath.

released him from the oath secretly.

Soon after they did that, the spirit of the oath seized Ipiagbo and seized Gbara also. Under severe pains caused by the power of the "spirit" of the oath, they could not hide it again. Gbara publicly confessed the theft. He sent to the Elders and Chiefs to intervene in order to release him. The Elders became angry when they heard what he and Chief Ipiagbo and a few others had done. They refused to have anything to do with them. The Spirit of the oath killed Ipiagbo and one of his sons. Then it killed Gbara himself.

These are only two examples out of many I know of, where judgement oaths killed people who swore to it falsely.

It has happened that when a person swore to an oath falsely and was "arrested" by the oath, if he confessed the offence, he would then appeal to the judges (Chiefs and Elders) to be released from the oath.

When that was done, the Council of Chiefs and Elders, and the Zuguru would meet. When the man had paid all that he was asked to pay, they would all stand at the spot where the oath was administered and say: "This person had admitted the matter which he denied. Therefore the Town people (Pya Bue) now intervene to say that the oath which he swore falsely should let go of him because he has confessed". Then they would pass the ritual elements over his head and body. Then they would perform the "ground-touching rite" on him. If they were not unanimous the release would not be valid.

This swearing or oath-taking was a vital part of Khana justice in ancient times, because it helped to establish the truth. It was used to resolve issues in which the parties were in too much argument.

#### THE CONSTITUTION

The Ruler had a group of people with whom he ruled. These consisted of Pya Kanee (the Elders) and Pya Zuguru (the Lieutenants). They worked with the Ruler even though they had their own Separate Houses. These two groups were the people who took part in the work of government. A person might be rich and able to do all traditions, it would not be said of him that he was one of the rulers, or a governing person; unless he was either a member of Pya Kanee or Pya Zuguru.

Te-ere-Bue: The Ruler was the Te-ere-Bue. There was also the Lah-Bue, who was the second highest officer of State, after the Te-ere-Bue. The Lah-Bue was the first man who came to join the founder (Te-ere-Bue) at the time the town or city was in its founding stages. In government the Lah-Bue occupied the second position of authority. When the Ruler (Te-ere-Bue) was not there, the Lah-Bue officiated or acted for him. The Lah-Bue was higher up in the scale of power than Pya Kanee.

Scale of Power:

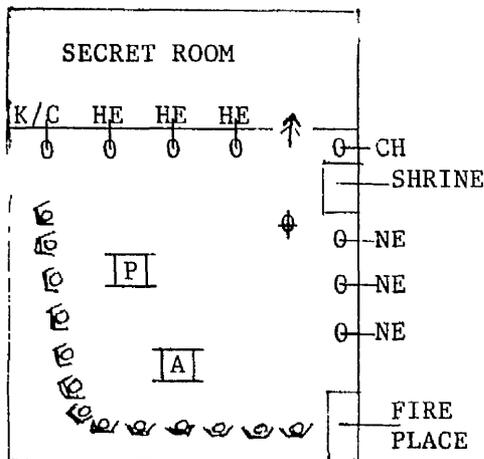
	Te-Ere-Bue
	Lah-Bue
	Pya Kanee
	Pya Zuguru

Pya Kanee: Every Khana town had seven Elders (Ereba Kanee). Together with the Ruler they constituted the Eight Members of the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee).

To Pya Kanee was different and separate from the Palace of the king or the ruler. The type of cases that were tried in the House of Elders were murder cases, witchcraft, sorcery; all cases that dealt with the taking of human life. A case in the House of Elders took seven sittings to be disposed of (Ereba dee).

Procedure: In a case of witchcraft or sorcery, the accuser or plaintiff must offer to the accused an Ikiono (1) branch. He might give it to him or her directly, or send it through a third party, or drop it at his door step. Where the Ikiono was not available, or if the accuser desired, the shoot of the old cocoyam called Geere was used. With this symbol, the accuser publicly stated what the accusation was. If the accused was sure that he did not do what he was accused of, to clear himself he had to sue the accuser in the House of Elders by payment of a prescribed fee. This was sixty bronze manillas and a bottle of wine (Taatub kpugi le zii mii).

The King or Ruler was not the leader of the House of Elders. The House of Elders had its own Leader or Chairman.



HOUSE OF ELDERS, KONO BOUE

Ground Plan by S. Kpone Tonwe

KEY

- K/C = King or Chief
- HE = Hereditary Elder
- CH = Chairman or  
Leader of House
- NE = Nominal Elder
- P = Plaintiff
- A = Accused
- ☞ = Member of Public  
Relatives, Friends
- ↑ = Exit to Secret  
Room
- ♠ = Pitcher of Palm Wine

Hearing Days: Hearing days for cases in the House of Elders must be on Deemua (2) days. If there was a hearing today, Deemua, the next hearing would be on a Deemua also. They might wish to fix for a kpo'eeri (one week) or Taa'eeri (three weeks), or one month or two months; but it must be on a Deemua.

1. Ikiono: A sacred live tree used for demarcation or as a landmark. Its leaves were also used as a seal for agreements, sacred deeds, etc.
2. Khana week consists of five days. Deemua is the first day of the week called kpo-eeri. The five days are Deemua, Deebom, Deezia, Deeson and Deeko.

That was why cases of murder or witchcraft took a long time to settle. Each day they sat for a case, they would draw a line on the wall, until seven lines. On the seventh day of sitting (for a particular case) the case ended. Then they would draw a cross-bar to cancel the seven lines drawn on the wall.

Proceedings: The first day, the plaintiff stated his case. All in the House only listened. When they had heard the case, they would drink the palm wine. Then they would announce that the next hearing had been fixed for a certain Deemua; it could be kpo-eeri (one week), or o'o eeri (five Khana weeks), etc..

The second day of sitting, they called upon the accused or defendant to respond. After he had responded, they again adjourned. They would then fix the third hearing for another Deemua; nia eeri Deemua (four Khana weeks) or o'o eeri Deemua (five Khana weeks), or as long as they wished. They would tell them to bring their witnesses on the date fixed.

On the third day of sitting, the witnesses were asked to state what they knew about the case. After their statements they allowed both the plaintiff and the defendant to question the witnesses. After that they fixed the next hearing for say ereba eeri (seven Khana weeks) on a Deemua also.

The fourth day of sitting, the judges (the Elders) asked questions of them. After that they adjourned again for a certain Deemua in so many weeks. They would then tell them that on the fixed date they should bring their men who would be appointed in a team to go and consult a spirit-medium on certain issues in the case.

The fifth day of sitting, both the plaintiff and the defendant were asked to present their men who would be in the group to go and search out and consult a spirit-medium. The judges then appointed their own representative. Then they adjourned. They would hear the report of the group appointed to seek out and consult a spirit-medium on the sixth sitting, which had been fixed for Taa eeri Deemua (Three weeks Deemua).

On the sixth sitting, the group appointed to consult a spirit-medium gave their report. After they had given their report, they were subjected to oath that what they had spoken was what they heard, and that they had not added their own words to it.

When the Elders had heard their evidence, they adjourned to a very far date. They might fix it for the first Deemua after the Nuubien Feast in the coming year; or on the Deemua following the Yonwidam feast in the coming year; or on the Deemua after the Zua feast. That would be the judgement day.

On the seventh sitting, the Edlers delivered the judgement. On that date, if there was any one who was to be subjected to oath, it was on that day that they fixed the date for such oath-taking.

If the opponent decided that he would provide the most effective oath he knew of, in that case the Elders awarded damages to be paid to the person swearing the oath, by the person providing the oath.

The award provided that after six months from the date of swearing, if the oath did not arrest the swearer of the oath, the opponent who gave the oath should pay so much money to the swearer of the oath as damages to clear his name.

If, on the other hand, the parties agree that the Elders should provide the oath, no costs or damages were awarded, because it was regarded that it was the Town which had administered the oath.

Swearing was part of the judgement if there was an argument on a point made in the evidence. If there was no such argument, then swearing was not a necessary part of the judgement.

The judgement provided options for both the plaintiff and the defendant regarding either the taking of the oath or the giving of the oath. When the options had been made, a date for the oath was fixed.

The person who opted to give the oath was allowed to go to wherever he liked to hire the most effective oath he knew of. On the appointed date, the Elders took them to the place of oath-taking. The oath must be taken in the presence of witnesses. The relations of the person taking the oath must be present; the Elders must be present. The Ruler or his representative was also present. The accuser or plaintiff must bring his own people and the accused person or defendant must also bring his own people.

The person giving the oath, who brought the oath, was asked to swear to the oath first, that he had not added anything else to the oath, otherwise the oath should kill him. He was asked to make a statement of oath to that effect. After he had made the statement, the Elders, as Town, made a statement of oath that if he had added anything evil, or anything else to the oath, the Town decrees that he should die; if not, he should be free. He then swore to the oath.

After that he was called upon to state the terms of the oath for the accused person to swear to. After he had stated his terms, the Elders, as Town, stated what they considered most appropriate and just terms. Then the swearer of the oath swore to the oath on the terms so stated.

When swearing, the person was not allowed to have any clothes on, except a grass skirt. After swearing he was made to walk through an evil forest supposed to harbour wicked spirits and demons, known as Kue taa, from one end to the other. His relations, carrying his clothing waited for him at the other end of the forest.

At the other end of the forest, he dressed up and went to a stream where he had a bath. From the stream, he went straight to his own house. In Kono Boue area, the forests of wicked spirits or evil forests usually passed through in that area were Taa Gbamene (3), Taa Luuwa and Taa Maawaabogo.

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3. Taa: In Khana, "Taa" belong to the order of evil spirits that are both wicked and unclean. Their abodes are what are called "Evil Forests". They are barred by certain laws from coming near human dwelling.

In Kono Boue the place where the Elders give judgement oaths was called Eekamii. It was the Townsquare of Kwaakwa village in Kono Boue. The ancients put all kinds of spirits there, so that the place itself became an abode of spirits. Sometimes the Elders gave judgement at the Yobue Square, known as Eeyobue. And this type of oath was only in cases involving the taking of human life through sorcery or witchcraft known as Taan.

Period under oath; To avoid uncertainty on the part of the person who had taken an oath, the ancients fixed six months as the period a person could be under oath. At the end of six months, if he did not die, the person who swore to the oath would go to the House of Elders with a bottle of wine, and report that six months had passed and that the period of the oath had been completed. They should therefore ask the person who gave him the oath to come and perform the "rite of Shaving" for him as a sign of his innocence.

For from the day the man took the oath, he was under a ban not to shave, or to have a hair-cut, until the period of the oath was completed. Because the period of the oath has been completed and he did not die, he is declared not guilty and innocent.

The person who gave him the oath, or who accused him, will now be required to perform the "rite of shaving" for him. To do that he will "dress" the traditional basket and carry to the House of Elders (To Pya Kanee): a goat, seven yams, a bunch of plantains, "fish and mullet, seven" ("bari le aka, ereba"), a shark (tae), a fowl, salt, pepper, oil; money, etc.. He will carry these to the House of Elders. If damages were awarded as part of the judgement, the amount will also be in the basket. He "dressed" this traditional basket to show that he was the guilty person. The other person who took oath and was not killed by the oath has become "not guilty". The person who accused him falsely was viewed as one who attempted to cause a break down of law and order, or bring about social unrest by raising such a grievous accusation against an innocent person.

Publication: The person who was falsely accused was shaved in the House of Elders of his beard and hair, and certain rituals were performed to remove the ban of the oath from him. He then invited one or two popular dances to lead him through Dukono (Kono Boue market) on the market day (Deeko). With music and dances, they led him through the full market and around the town centres.

The man dressed well according to tradition. He rubbed his body with a red powder known as do, which made his body smooth and silky. He, accompanied by friends and relatives, danced the music amid cheers and congratulations by well-wishers, who felt relieved by the news of his innocence. People made donations to him.

People from different places who came to the market carried the news to their towns. The news was spread about that he was falsely accused but that he had been found innocent and not guilty. There would be a great rejoicing for many people.

Some Examples from the past:

A certain man from Gbam in Boue, from the House of Deemua, and a first son of that House, was accused of witchcraft. They accused him that he had killed many people by his sorcery. The case was brought to Igbara Abbe House, that is, To Pya Kanee, (House of Elders) in Kono Boue.

In the judgement, they said that the man who accused him should give him an oath. He did. He swore to the oath. The six months passed, and he did not die. So he was declared "not guilty". The man who accused him paid the traditional fines. He, the son of Deemua of Gbam village returned home, called music and dances, and passed through the full Dukono market in music and dancing, that he was innocent.

After nearly Taa eeri (three Khana weeks), the spirit of the oath seized him. When it was about to kill him, it seized and forced him to speak from his own mouth and say that the accusation which had been made was true; that he actually killed by sorcery or witchcraft; that he was indeed a wizard; that he swore the oath falsely.

When he had made these confessions, his relatives went to Kono Boue, to the House of Elders at Igbara Abbe House, to invite them to come and intervene to save his life. By the time they were able to do all the necessary preparations there was no time left. He died.

Steps to Release from an Oath:

When a person who swore to an oath falsely had been caught or seized by the spirit of the oath, if notice was given to the Elders to intervene to save his life, the Council of Chiefs and Elders would be summoned immediately. The person would be summoned to appear or be brought before the Elders. There he would use his own mouth to confess the truth, what he had done. When he had made his confessions in the presence of the Ruler, the Elders and the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru), they would perform the ritual of release known as "Ground-Touching Rite" (Tuag Ba Ke). When that has been done he would recover. Then they would reopen the case and a new judgement would be pronounced by the verdict of "guilty". He would then be asked to pay the necessary costs and fines or damages.

Tuag Ba Ke (Ground-Touching Rite):

It was a ritual of release performed by use of certain prescribed ritual items. By it, human authority intervened in a spiritual matter to stay spirit actions. The Elders would tell the active spirit of the oath to let go its victim because he has confessed and has paid the prescribed fines. They would invoke the fact that they, the Elders, the Town, the Zuguru and all the people have intervened to restore peace.

To Te-Ere-Bue:

The type of cases that were tried in the King's Palace were cases involving land, farms, raffia palm bushes, adultery cases, defamation or slander, divorce, etc. The Elders also took part in settling such cases at the King's or Chief's Palace (To Te-Ere-Bue). The

Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru) were another group of judges who take part in settling disputes and cases in the King's Palace.

#### History:

The development of these systems began in ancient times. Some aspects of it were developed during the reign of Tonwe I.

There was a man named Igbara the son of Abbe. He was a man of superior bravery, a very powerful man. He was in the top rank of real "gentlemen" of the state, strong-eyed and quick. But he was a blood-thirsty warrior, who killed many people.

The mother of Igbara Abbe was married from the House of Assobienee in Uwegwere. When the members of his mother's House in Uwegwere (that is, Assobienee House), saw that he was constantly going out to engage in warlike activities, they feared that he might be killed by so doing, if he was not stopped. They could not entertain the idea of losing him abroad through that way. So they invoked Assobienee the Zim (4), of his mother's House to "arrest" him (or to stop him). Assobienee "arrested" Igbara Abbe by "breaking" his legs (Assobienee be Igbara Abbe saye buu to); so that he was not able to go out to engage in warlike and blood-thirsty activities again.

#### Origin of the House of Elders: (To Pya Kanee)

Assobienee was the founder of To Pya Kanee. Assobienee was the son of Balikina, who became Gbenebalikina (5), when he got the title "Gbene".

Before any person joined the Elders, Assobienee must be present; his father Gbenebalikina must also be present. Assobienee was a human being but he was a great sorcerer (Gbene nee Taan). Originally, the Palace of the King was also the meeting place of the Elders. With the expansion of the towns and communities, it became necessary to divide the functions of government in order to ensure for peace. They agreed that all functions of government should not be vested in the King (Te-Ere-Bue) alone. For the Te-Ere-Bue would not live alone in his town, even though he was the founder. So, in the process of dividing the functions of government they separated the House of Elders from the Palace of the King.

#### Early Stages:

At the initial stages they entrusted the work of organizing the Elders to the hand of Assobienee. But Assobienee later re-entrusted the task to his grandson Igbara Abbe. That was how Igbara Abbe House became the House of Elders. With Igbara Abbe, the organization of the House of Elders began to take shape. The ruler or king was also a

4. Zim is Khana name for deified ancestors. The term conveys intimacy in relationship. It does not exactly mean "spirit". It is more than that. "Revered parent" would be close.
5. Gbenebalikina was a warrior in Baan War. See Testimony of Chief Kpoko Kinanwii of Tego, interviewed 5 January, 1984.

member of the House of Elders. Igbara Abbe in whose house they met became its chairman or Leader of the Elders.

Membership:

In every original or ancient Khana (Ogoni) town (Eregeba nama bue Khana) there were seven Gaan (6) (kindred). However, with the expansion of people and towns, the original Gaan also branched out, but they still maintained the original Gaan. For example, the Gaan Noobana (Kono) branched from Gaan Noobana (Uwegwere). Similarly, Gaan Kono branched from Gaan Gbaabio. Gaan Gbaabio was the original Gaan.

A split occurred when a fight broke out at a place where they were performing the Yaa ceremony. The Leading men of the Gaan got into an argument over the ritual elements and a fight broke out. The result of the split that occurred was the formation of a new Gaan known as Gaan Kono from Gaan Gbaabio. However, whenever there was an important thing to be done the Members of the two Gaan usually came together and the head of the original Gaan presided as the most senior man (Pya lo tuatua Ga na ba luge Gbene nee a).

It was on the basis of the seven original ancient Gaan that membership of the House of Elders was formed. It was also on that basis that the membership of the House of Elders was seven, one member from each ancient Gaan. The Founder's Gaan had two members in the Elders, all the other Gaan had one member each. They were reckoned like this:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Owners of Stool (or seat)</u>	<u>Gaan</u>	<u>Member</u>
1.	Gbenekwere Gbenekote	Taankaan	2
2.	Gbenebalikina Assobienee	Be-Abere	1
3.	Gbenekiri	Noobana	1
4.	Gbenebion Gbenebaligboro	Dookunu	1
5.	Gbeneguatee Gbenenaan	Joko	1
6.	Gbenetigina	Gbaabio	1
7.	Gbom Gbenelakarakue	Baraboue	1
8.	Gbenegaratigina	Kono (7)	1

- Gaan is an invisible and yet all-present organism. The members of a Gaa seem to be everywhere and yet difficult to identify them. Gaan looks at the origin of a people from one man. Then it branches out into New Gaan. The Feminine of Gaan is Bua, which traces the kindred of people through the Mothers as they were married from or to different places. The original marriage forms the Root of the Bua.
- Gaan Kono was a new Gaan branched from Gbaabio. Nii Yeegboronwaa married a daughter of King Kote. Hence they send an observer Member.

Igbara Abbe was the person who made important reforms in the House of Elders. He introduced the Nominal Members into the House of Elders. The Nominal Members were those whose membership did not derive from the membership of their ancestors. Such members did not have their permanent seat in the House of Elders.

There used to be trouble in the House sometimes because of that. When members from Houses which had permanent seats and members from Houses that had no permanent seats came on the same occasion, there was some attempt by those who had no permanent seat to try to use the seats of the members who had permanent seats in the House.

Igbara Abbe did not increase the membership of the House of Elders more than seven, but he did increase the number from four to seven. In ancient Khana (Ogoni) the number four was used as a substitute of seven. When seven was required, four was actually used, and it was as though seven had been used.

Originally there were four Elders who constituted the House of Elders. Igbara Abbe added three more members, thus actually raising the membership from four to seven.

#### Assobienee, Servant of the Elders:

When the King's Palace was also the House of Elders, Assobienee and a group of men who worked with him provided the Force of the Elders. When the king was the sole ruler (autocrat), he used to look into the towns, if he found a man who was physically strong and powerful, he invited such a man into his service. That was the position of Assobienee. He was that type of person. If a person was sued in the king's palace, the king would send Assobienee to invite the accused. If the accused was a strong man, or if he was recalcitrant, Assobienee was ordered to arrest him and to bring him bodily. When the person struggled with Assobienee, the latter broke the former's limbs, to disable him and did not care even if he died. That was why when Assobienee became Zim (spirit), when he "arrested" people, he would "break" their legs. (8) This Assobienee was a man, but now he is a spirit (Zim) who possesses a person.

Assobienee is one of the oaths people swear to in judgement oaths, or by people generally, when there is argument between two parties. If people swear him falsely, he acts fiercely against them. When he acts, he also breaks their limbs as he did when he was human. People swear to him and people also "hire" him to protect their property (by putting his symbol on that property). (9) If somebody stole that

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8. Assobienee was one of those Khana (Ogoni) men of ancient times who underwent certain rituals and experiences so that they could possess their descendants after they had died. There is an Assobienee spirit-medium at Uwegwere at present. His House is like a court. People sue their opponents or debtors there. If the accused did not respond, the Spirit of Assobienee "breaks" his legs so that he would not be able to walk again, unless appeasement had been made.
  9. Symbol of Assobienee was the empty racket from which fish had been eaten. When ritual fish and foods were given to the ancestors and gods, the empty rackets were left before the altar or shrine. (Cont.)

property (or any goods), Assobienee would "arrest" that person by "breaking" his limbs (lo zii nee yib lo nu, a be lo nee sa ye bung ba le to).

Case History:

Assobienee "arrested" my own father, Tonwe II. People hired Assobienee and put him (his symbol) on a piece of landed property. A certain kinsman of my father named Awosa of Zaakpon Town bought a piece of landed property from my father. The property was at Kono Boue, and the man wanted to build his house on it. Later on Zaakpon people persuaded him not to build his house at Kono Boue. So Awosa abandoned the piece of land at Kono Boue, and built his house at Zaakpon. Shortly afterwards Awosa died.

My father simply took back his land without refunding the money paid to him by Awosa to the latter's children. Awosa's children secretly "put" Assobienee on the land and left it quietly.

When my father went to brush the land to build a house there, Assobienee "broke" one of his fingers. He went to the Hospital at Booli and was hospitalized for some time. The doctors treated it but it was not better. My father sent people to consult the mediums. They told him that it was Assobienee, that "he" was put on a piece of land which he cleared.

My father bought drinks and went to the House of Assobienee at Uwegwere. They invited the children of late Awosa and the case was judged at Assobienee House and settled. That very day the case was settled, my father's finger was cured. (aba dee ba bie lo Ue a na bii ba ye leranage a). (10)

In the House of Elders, whatever the Elders shared, they gave a share to Assobienee. They could not share anything without keeping Assobienee's share aside. Whoever Assobienee possessed, that is, his spirit-medium, was the person who occupied Assobienee's Seat in the House of Elders. (11) Any new person who desired to join the House of Elders must first "dress" the traditional basket and bear it to Assobienee or his representative to begin with, before he could talk about joining the House of Elders. (12)

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9. (contd.) According to Chief Kobee Asoo of Uwegwere (interviewed 12.1.84), aged c. 120 years, Assobienee chose this symbol because he was a servant of Kings and Lords. What they left over was what he got.
  10. The finger was bent and could not be straightened, a painful condition. After the judgement the finger became straight and the pains were gone.
  11. This man is Chief Dike Iyoro. I interviewed him on 5.2.84.
  12. People did not just join the Elders. It happened only if a seat became vacant by death. Then replacement had to come from the proper Gaan and by an appropriate candidate of that Gaan or House.

Functions of the Elders:

If war broke out, the Elders must not vacate the Town. They must stay at their House to pour the libations, prepare the rituals, and the "medicines" which would give them victory in the war.

The Elders did not go to war. They did not fight. Their duty was to stay at home to strengthen the people.

If a warrior or any person was wounded from the war front or from the battle field, the treatment of such wounds was the duty of the Elders. Those going to the battlefields, it was the Elders who gave or rubbed them with the potions that would make them fearless and powerful. If a citizen became ill, they could invite all the Elders who would make propitiations by pouring libations and petitions on behalf of the sick person, and the person would recover.

When there was an assembly of the whole people at the Central Town-square (Eete Eeyoburubu), it was an Elder who greeted the various Assemblies from the different towns and communities to maintain order and quietness, before the Elders spoke on the subject of the day. Eete Eeyoburubu was in the centre of Kono Boue Town, but it was not the Assembly Place for Kono Boue only; it was the Assembly Place for all Boue. The townsquare which was for Kono Boue was located at the place first settled by the founder of Kono Boue. That townsquare was called Eete Naayii. (It was situated at a place about 150 meters northwest of Maawaa bogo Stream).

When the townsquare was moved from there, it was established at a place where the Kiono Kue was standing. (13) At the end of Baan War they decided to move the townsquare to Eeyoburubu where it is now. The House of Gbenekwerre, the founder (Te-Ere-Bue) was near to Eeyoburubu. His shrine is also by it. (14).

Sitting Arrangement at Eeyoburubu:

At Eeyburubu, the Elders sat to the north of the arena, with the arena of the square in front of them to the south. They sat at the foot of the Dara tree. The Te-Ere-Bue (Ruler) sat on the first seat to the west (right). Igbara Abbe, the Chairman of the Elders, sat on the last seat to the east (left). The Lah-Bue (the King's Right-Hand Man or Vice-Ruler) sat next to the Te-Ere-Bue (or King). The rest of the Elders sat between them; all facing South. The side towards which the King sat was called Bale Bue (The Right-Hand of the Realm (or Town)), while the part towards which Igbara Abbe sat was called Bakie Bue (The Left-Hand of the Realm (or Town)).

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13. The place is between Kote House on the north and Tonwe House on the south, and the space is about 200 meters between the two Houses.
  14. I visited the Shrine of Gbenekwerre there. His house was by Yoburubu Square, on the east of it, and facing it on the west. I took a photograph of the Shrine which had collapsed but was not yet rebuilt because, as they told me, the ritual cost was very high. They were waiting for the easing of the hard economic condition prevailing in the country before they could start work on it.

The Town-Crier (Nee Kpa-akere-bue) sat somewhat to the centre of the arena in front of the Elders. He sat at the foot of the palm tree, which stood slightly from the centre of the arena to the west. Two small huts called Iloo stood close together under this palm tree; and the town-crier sat close by the three, to the east side of them. The town-crier did not sit on any seat. He sat on the ground, with the Town-Gong (Akere Bue) in front of him.

When the Townsquare was full, one of the Senior Edlers rose up to call the whole Assembly to order (Kue-kue Loo Eete). He rose up and walked to the right-hand of the town, where the Eepie community were gathered and with a loud, clear voice, he shouted a salute, saying, "Pya Eepie Mkana I Mue Eh!" (People of Eepie, I salute you!). (15) Then the Assembly of Eepie responded with a thunderous "Hey!!!" From there, he walked following his right hand, to the place where the Assembly of Tego were gathered and did the same. From the Assembly of Tego, he moved on to the Assembly of Noobana, and finally to that of Kwaakwa. Here he completed the Four Assemblies of Communities of Kono Bue.

When he had saluted the four assemblies of the four towns of Kono Boue, he walked with dignity across the arena to the front of the Elders, where they were seated, and did obeisance by bowing to the ground and touching the ground with his two hands (wu ba ke), and by saying audibly the words "M wuba ke ne Pya Kabaari" ("I do obeisance to The Elders"). Then he walked with dignity to take his seat. By this time, the whole Assembly was completely silent.

Then the Te-Ere-Bue or King rose up and walked with dignity to the Centre of the Arena and began to speak, or to make proclamations. When he was speaking, there were no questions or side talks. When he had finished, he walked to his seat. Then Igbara Abbe, sitting at the eastern end of the row, rose up and led the way from Eeyoburubu to the House of Elders, the other Elders followed after him, one behind the other, with the King coming last. With their exist from Eeyoburubu, the Assembly dismissed.

When they came from Igbara Abbe House (To Pya Kanee) it was the Te-Ere-Bue who led the Elders into Eeyoburubu.

#### Discussion:

If there was anything for which the people wanted more explanation, or anything they wanted to say, they said it through the Leader of the Lieutenants (Adamsi Pya Zuguru), who brought such comments to the Elders.

#### Assembly of All Boue:

If it was an Assembly of All Boue, Uwegwere sat next to Eepie, slightly behind where the Elders sat. Gbam sat next to Kwaakwa on the east side. Keneke and Nookwuri sat on the south side. Kaa sat

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15. As the man shouted the Salute, he correspondingly swung the full length of his right arm from the left shoulder clockwise to half circle, pushing the air forcefully towards the anxious Assembly of men and women.

on the other side of Eepie, to the northwest. Youths and children did not attend this Assembly. Those eligible to attend were adult males and women who were heads of families (married men and women).

If there was any task to be accomplished or anything to be done, after the Assembly, the execution of such tasks were the function of the Te-Ere-Bue through the Lieutenants (Pyä Zuguru).

62. HIS HIGHNESS CHIEF M.A.M. TONWE III OF KONO BOUE (Aged c. 48)  
Interviewed at Kono Boue on 22 January 1984

THE BOUE KINGDOM : Political and Judicial Systems  
TO PYA KANEE (Continued)

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

If the Elders were not kingmakers, who then were the kingmakers in Kono Boue?

When your father died and you succeeded him, what did the kingmakers do to you on the basis of what you have recounted?

When a person was made King or Chief, what did he begin to do?

How did they fill the position of an Elder which became vacant by death in the House of Elders?

If the kingmakers made a person king or chief, if that person did not come from a House which had a Seat in the House of Elders, what did they do in such a case?

If an emergency had taken place in the towns, what would the Elders and the Zuguru do?

Narrate the "history" of To Pya Zuguru (House of the Lieutenants).

When your father made Diginnee Neewa the Leader of the Lieutenants, did they meet at Diginnee's house?

Who was the Leader of the Lieutenants (Adamsi Pya Zuguru) during the time of your father?

What type of person could be a Member of Pya Zuguru?

If a man was considered qualified to be a member of Pya Zuguru, what was he expected to do?

What were the functions of Pya Zuguru? If the Elders decided to undertake a project, say a road project, would they first inform the Zuguru about it, or how would they go about it?

If there was a man who was powerful, strong, resourceful, and qualified in every way to be a member of Pya Zuguru, if such a person did not want to join Pya Zuguru, how did they handle such a case?

Was Pya Zuguru an organization which people were anxious to join? We know that the total membership of To Pya Kanee was seven. What was the maximum membership of To Pya Zuguru?

If a person joined Pya Zuguru, did they inform the Elders about it?

According to the tradition, Kpurube was an important aspect of social life. Explain the significance of Kpurube in the social life of Khana (Ogoni) people.

Explain how you came to know these traditions?

Are you aware that, like your father, other parents used to teach these traditions to their children?

Say what you know about the institution of NuLoo (Palm wine camp).

What time of day did people go to the NuLoo?

Did people who spent most of their time at NuLoo know about the daily happenings in the communities?

Much of what you have spoken concerned the activities of men. How was the life of women at that time?

B. The Narrative:

An Elder did not involve himself in trouble. He was not to fight. His responsibility in society was to make peace, or to ensure that there was peace.

The Elders were not kingmakers. They did not have the authority to act as kingmakers. If there was an installation of a ruler, the Elders were present as witnesses like other citizens could also be witnesses. It was after the person had been chosen and installed that it became the responsibility of that person to present himself to the Elders. Such action by the new ruler was according to tradition. In the traditional basket which he had to present to the Elders, there were a number of items such as a goat, fowl, seven yams, a bunch of plantains, akee (alligator pepper), white chalk (nem), kola nut (buu), palm wine and gin (too-mii le mia-mii). The Elders performed some rituals on his hands; and he gave gifts to all kings who had sat on that kpoté (royal seat), beginning from Kote. Even though the Elders were present and saw when he was installed, it was when he had performed this tradition that the Elders recognized him and accepted him as the ruler or king.

The Kingmakers:

The Kingmakers were the members of the Founder's or royal Houses or the owners of the town. In Kono Boue, the kingmakers were the members of Kote House and of his brothers' Houses, namely, Gbenekwerre House and Gbenetibarakan House. These were the people who met and selected the next ruler. After they had selected the new ruler, they fixed a date for his installation. During the selection, which must be done after the death of the incumbent, they kept the matter secret from the public. The day they installed the person into office was the day they let the public know about it. The publication was made about a week ahead of the installation ceremonies. Before making the proclamation they must first complete all the traditional rituals.

These things were done to me when I succeeded my father. The first traditional act the new ruler must perform was to "dress" the Traditional Basket, which was carried to the House of Elders. This first act was important because it enabled him to be able to enter into the midst of the Elders.

The day he presented this Traditional Basket, Assobienee must be present to perform the ritual "cleansing" of his hands. Assobienee was the Te (Father) of the Elders. He was also their Head. If he was not present, they would not do anything.

When a Seat in the House of Elders became vacant, the Elders sent a message to the House from which the former member came, to inform them officially that their Seat in the House of Elders was vacant, and that they should send somebody to fill it. When that happened the members of that House summoned a House meeting in which they selected one of their members to fill their vacant seat in the House of Elders.

The person they selected must be from the line of the senior first son (Gbene Saaro). After they had selected him, he then dressed the Traditional Basket to be presented to the House of Elders. It was then that he was received by the Members of the House of Elders.

A person could not be the ruler without being a Member of the House of Elders. For that reason, once a person had been selected as the ruler, he must "dress" the Traditional Basket to the House of Elders, in order that they might receive him formally and make him as one of them, since his position as ruler had elevated him to be a Member of the House of Elders. That was how the Membership of the House of Elders became Eight, that is, Seven Members based on the seven ancient Gaan, and the ruler.

If there was an emergency, the Elders summoned an emergency meeting in which they discussed the ways and means of dealing with the emergency. They must see to it that there was peace.

To Pya Zuguru (House of Lieutenants):

There were two Houses of Government. The House of Elders (To Pya Kanee) was the Senior or Higher House. The House of Lieutenants (To Pya Zuguru) was the Junior or Lower House. The founders of the Zuguru were the House of Gbenegoo. The man who founded Pya Zuguru came from that House.

A man named Biiragbara, the father of Ikanee, founded To Pya Zuguru. But for some time afterwards Pya Zuguru remained dormant and inactive. After my father, Tonwe II, became the Te-Ere-Bue (King) he revived the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru). From that time Pya Zuguru began to meet at Tonwe House. Later on they decided that it was inappropriate to make the House of the Ruler also the Meeting Place of the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru) so they chose the house of a man by name Daginee Neewa as their meeting place, although when there was an important matter, like the initiation of a new Member, they returned to Tonwe House, where they performed the rituals. Thus Pya Zuguru continued to remain at Tonwe House, even though they frequently met at a different location. That had been the position since that time.

My father was not a member of Pya Zuguru before he became the Te-Ere-Bue. It was when he had become the Te-Ere-Bue (Ruler) that he joined the Zuguru, and he continued to be in Pya Zuguru until the Elders invited him to come and fill Tonwe's Seat in the House of Elders. So he joined the House of Elders. At that time, the Leader of To Pya Zuguru was Prince Ison Nwaale.

All members of To Pya Zuguru were known, and their names were also known. Nowadays, members of Pya Zuguru are also known, since not every man could be a member of Pya Zuguru. A member of Pya Zuguru must be a married person, a good farmer, he must own his own house in his own compound. He must be a palm wine tapper, a householder, a lover of progress in the town and a man of honour.

When a man like that had been accepted to join the Pya Zuguru, he was required to pay a fowl, some yams, a bunch of plantains, a bottle of gin, a full pitcher of palm wine, and four hundred manillas (zii boo kpugi). Later the amount was increased to one thousand, two hundred manillas (Taa boo kpugi), twenty yams, twenty rackets of mullet, a full pitcher of palm wine and a bottle of gin. They cooked these things and they ate and drank the wine together in a fellowship of comrades and as a memorial of the admission to the rank of Pya Zuguru.

The functions of Pya Zuguru were to carry out the decision of the House of Elders. They saw to it that the projects and decision of the Elders were carried out effectively. They applied force to decisions of the House of Elders. The Elders made decisions in their House, then they announced these decisions at the General Assembly located at Eeyoburubu. After the announcement at Eeyoburubu, the Te-Ere-Bue then summoned a meeting of Pya Zuguru in which they discussed the operations and fixed a date for the start. Before the date arrived a public announcement was made by the town-crier, by means of the royal drum or gong. The announcement carried the details of the task to be performed. All able-bodied men and women and young adults were expected to take part in such a communal task. On the set date, those who failed to take part in the communal service were penalised by Pya Zuguru through the imposition of some fines. All fines collected were presented to the Elders.

If there was a fight or war between two towns or communities, it was the Zuguru who led the Boue troop into the battlefields. The Zuguru were the warriors. It was in this connection that their real name was Pya Adam Gbara (lit. The Male Men).

A person who fulfilled the qualities of a Zuguru but did not want to join Pya Zuguru was not regarded as a member of the ruling class. (ba naale e buu nee ale doowo yere loo pya ba le loo beebie bue). He was regarded only as a citizen. But if there was an emergency or war, such a person was required to go to war (Me lo be do, ba e kuenage ye sia ue be). The people who were recognized as members of the ruling class were Pya Kanee and Pya Zuguru. People are interested in joining the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru) but not every one who was interested was admitted. Before a person was accepted as a member of Pya Zuguru, he was carefully studied to see whether he was a proper candidate.

In the Register of Pya Zuguru which I found in my father's possession (Tonwe II's), the number of the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru) was fifty men. Each of these fifty men was in control of a number of men. If there was a task to be accomplished, all of these men brought the men under them to perform the task. Where a set task was assigned to each town, it was the chief of that town or community and the members of Pya Zuguru resident there who sat together to plan the accomplishment of the task in that community.

When a new member had been initiated into Pya Zuguru, the new member must be introduced to the House of Elders. But the House of Elders were always aware of any new members in Pya Zuguru, since they knew all the regular members of Pya Zuguru.

The leader of Pya Zuguru must inform the Elders beforehand, because Pya Zuguru were a separate body. Normally the introduction took place at a meeting in which the Elders and the Lieutenants met together. After the introduction the new member bought drinks for the Elders to formally inform them about himself as a member of Pya Zuguru.

#### The Annual Kpurube Tournaments:

It was the practice of Pya Zuguru to arrange annual Kpurube (1) (judo) tournaments. The purpose of these tournaments was to identify men who were strong and clever in each town or community. From there they knew which town produced the greatest number of such men who could fight and win. As it was an annual tournament it kept people alert and fit, and it prepared them for any challenge.

The sport of Kpurube was held during the Ogoni New Year called Zua. It took place in the months of July and August. The importance of this period was the fact that there was less farm work to be done. It was a period of gathering in the crops. Kpurube was a sport that warmed up the communities and created an atmosphere of joyous emotions in the society.

I learned these things from my father. He taught me these traditions like they teach people in school. Other parents probably taught the oral traditions to their children like that but my father taught me about these things so that I might know how things were from the beginning.

#### NuLoo:

NuLoo was a place where the ancients taught their children. There they taught about farm work, how to cut and prepare stakes for yams, how to tap palm wine, the art of fishing, etc. Fathers took their boys to NuLoo (Palm Wine Camps) where they were taught concerning these things. Girls were not taken to NuLoo. NuLoo was a very important place which the ancients loved and honoured. In ancient times NuLoo was like schools are today. It was the place where boys learned many things that made them wise in later life. At NuLoo the boys listened to great men, how they talked and how they did various things.

People began to go to NuLoo as early each day as four o'clock in the morning (Tua son KuKpa Kon), or at first cock crow. They continued going until the second cock crow, that is, about five o'clock in

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1. Kpurube: This was Khana (Ogoni) judo. It was an unarmed combat in which two men struggled by dexterous use of hands and legs to throw down each other. If during the combat, one person staggered and fell with any part of his body from knee up to the ground, this meant he had been felled. The other man becomes the winner. There was an umpire and judges.

the morning. They returned from NuLoo from six o'clock in the evening to seven o'clock in the evening. Some people who had no young boys with them remained longer at NuLoo. From NuLoo the men went to work in their farms and later returned to NuLoo. Those who had nothing more to do at NuLoo returned home from the farm.

Fathers who took their sons to NuLoo woke them up as early as four o'clock or five o'clock each morning when they moved to NuLoo. That was why the boys at that time did not sleep for too long. Nowadays boys cannot wake up that early because they go to school, and schools do not teach that kind of thing.

News centre:

It would seem that people who spent most of their time at NuLoo would not know what went on in the society, but they did. NuLoo was the place where people heard the news. NuLoo was the place where idioms, proverbs and metaphors were spoken and explained. It was the place where people spoke without inhibitions because "what people spoke at NuLoo, never reached home". (Ue ba ko Nuloo ba naa wee ko ume be). It was at NuLoo that bards, minstrels, and other singers were found.

Women:

There was what is called Pya Kabaariwa just as we have Pya Kabaari (or Kanee). But people did not join Pya Kabaariwa in the same way as they did Pya Kanee. If something happened which the Elder women wanted the Elders to decide on, they went to the Te-Ere-Bue and told him about it. He took the matter to the House of Elders for discussion. The Elders then put what they arrived at into announcements at Eyo-burubu.

A Kabaariwa (Elder Woman) was a woman who had gone through the rites of Yaa and Bogo, and she was a grandmother of children. She was a woman who had her own house and was married, or was the first daughter of her parents who was not married out. Examples of such women were Zuawa Teegui, who was a Leader of Kabaariwa (Adamsi Kabaariwa) and Gbooro Itoo, another Leader of Kabaariwa. Others were Nnadu Inayo, First Daughter of the Royal House of Founders (Sira be Te-Ere-Bue), Zuraloo Tanee, Ideeko Gbarabe, Ikiriwa Tonwe, First Daughter of (Sira) King Tonwe I, etc. All of these were of the class of Pya Kabaariwa (Elder Women).

The Elder Women did not have their own House as Pya Kanee or Pya Kabaari (the Elders) did. They met at the home of their Leader. The Elder Women also had their music or dancing clubs. The best known of them were Sogo, Sangni and Gbenebe. All Kabaariwa dances and song were performed in the open and during daylight.

The Elders' Clubs were secret societies. They played them at nights. If they played in daytime, they must construct a cloth booth for it. They did so because they did not want people to know what they were doing. The best known of them were Kpaakpaan and Amanikpo.

In early times parts of Tee and Gokana, the Elder women (PyaKabaariwa) could join the Elders' societies, such as Kpaankpaan and Amanikpo. My father Tonwe II prevented it in Tee and Gokana areas. Thus from the time of Tonwe II, women were no longer allowed to join the Elder Men's Societies in Tee and Gokana, and in all parts of Khana. When he made this law the women took it kindly because his rule was good.

#### THE HUNTERS' SOCIETY

##### A. Questions asked at the Interview:

In my experience when I attended a hunting expedition many years ago, I observed that the Members of the Hunters' Society took from every game that was killed, the head, one foreleg, and the back-end part. On enquiry, I discovered that they did that on every hunting expedition through the hunting season each year. Would you explain why they did that?

Did Yobue have a share of meat whenever there was a hunting expedition?

Did every member of the Hunters' society have a share of meat each time there was a hunting expedition?

Narrate the origin of the practice of collecting yam tribute every year.

Did the Elders and the Ruler receive a share of the annual farm produce?

Did the Elders get a share of palm wine from the raffia palm bushes?

Say what you know about the various Khana feasts in a year.

What did the people do during each feast?

When was the feast of "God of the Little Child, God of the Great Man"?

Which God did they mean?

I noticed that the people frequently appealed to the gods and deities in situations of provocation, anger, arguments and grief.

How would they know the truth by these acts?

Which gods did they go to in such cases?

Were these mediums able to know and tell the truth?

Explain the implication of what is meant by "invoking a deity against somebody"?

What happened to properties on which a deity was invoked? How would people know when and/or if the spirit invoked acted at all?

Describe the ancient Khana tools.

Ton Uwegbo

Hunting (Uwegbo) was something which the Elders, the Lieutenants (Pya Zuguru) and young men (Pya gbara) valued very much. The founder of professional hunting and of the Hunters' Society (Ton Uwegbo) was Gbenebalikina. Gbenebalikina became the founder of "modern" hunting because he first introduced the gun (naa) into hunting in Khana (Ogoni). It was the Baan war which made Gbenebalikina to acquire the gun. The Baan war brought many new things and changes into Khana (Ogoni).

The Baan war broke out and was fought for many, many years and nothing could stop it. Because Gbenebalikina was the first to acquire the gun and the first to use it in the war on Boue side, Boue people won the war. The first gun which Gbenebalikina used was brought by Yobue. Being the first to use the gun in Khana (Ogoni), he became the "Father of Hunting" in Khana (Ogoni). People used to join the Hunters' Society like they used to join the House of Elders. Not every person or anybody could join the Hunters' Society, as not every person could join the House of Elders. If a man possessed a gun he could go to a hunting expedition, and if he was able, he might kill a game but that did not show that he was a member of the Hunters' Society.

To Uwegbo:

The membership of the House of Hunters (To Uwegbo) was very small. Each time a hunting expedition was planned, the Hunters (Pya To Uwegbo) used to prepare charms to lure the animals to the particular bush or forest where the expedition was to take place. The founder of Uwegbo and the owner of the particular territory and all the members of the Hunters' Society joined together to pay for the cost of the preparations. For these reasons they took tribute of each game killed.

That was why the members of the Hunters' Society always got meat each time there was a hunting expedition. Whether everyone of them went to the hunting or not, every one of them got a share of the meat. However, a person or member who did not go to a particular hunting expedition was required to provide palm wine which those who went to the hunting would drink when they returned. The palm wine was sent to them at the House of Hunters (To Uwegbo) where they assembled when they returned.

They did not send a share of meat to Yobue House unless they killed a leopard, or any such animal, in which case they sent the whole of such animal to the Yoboue Centre. Concerning Yobue's share of meat, in every year, there is one hunting expedition for Yobue. So they did for all the great personalities who lived who are now Zim (spirits). There was the hunting expedition called Uwegbo Yobue, (Yobue's hunting expedition). All game killed on that expedition belonged to Yobue. All the preparations for it must be done at Yobue House.

One hunting expedition a year was for Gbenekiri, which was called Uwegbo Yonoobana. During that time, a feast dedicated to Gbenekiri was celebrated. Gbenekiri who became a spirit (Zim) was the founder of Gaan Noobana (Kindred of Noobana). During the same time, another Feast dedicated to Gbenekiri was celebrated. This was the Feast of Yomii (god of wine), the Spirit of Gbenekiri being the person so honoured as Yomii. It was Gbenekiri who introduced the raffia palm

into Khana (Ogoni). He was the "owner" of the palm wine.

Another hunting expedition was for Gbenebalikina, known as Uwegbo Gbenebalikina. Gbenebalikina was the founder of Uwegbo in Khana (Ogoni). He was the "owner" of Uwegbo (Te-ere-Uwegbo), because it was he who introduced the gun into Khana (Ogoni) and was the first to use the gun in the area. He was the "owner" of the gun or firearm. If a man accidentally shot somebody with the gun, the casualty was taken to the House of Gbenebalikina for a ritual "inoculation", so that the treatment that would be applied to the person might be effective.

Any Zim (ancestor) who was honoured with a hunting expedition had a forest of his own in which the hunting was done. Only Yobue did not have a forest of his own, because he was a refugee (Iyiinayo) (1). Thus on the day they gave a hunting expedition to Yobue, it was a general hunting in bushes surrounding that part of the town. (Son ba wee ma uwegbo Yobue, ba wee aa bee mo yaara yii aya). They hunted scatteredly about (Yaara yii aya).

#### Yam Tribute:

The taking of yam tributes from farmers is like when the Hunters take meat tribute from those who killed game in a hunting expedition. Each farming area was owned by some ancestor. Each farming area was originally a virgin forest but the different ancestors who owned these farming areas first cleared the forests and made them suitable for farming. It was after these early ancestors had prepared the areas that other people joined them to farm there.

During the harvesting season the landlords of the farming areas used to give notice to the chiefs and Elders of the day when yam tribute would be collected from the farmers. The Te-ere-Bue and the Elders approved the date and they sent their own representatives to go with them to the farming area concerned to collect yam tribute from each farm plot.

They harvested seven stakes of yams from each farm plot in the farming area. The representatives of the town ensured that Pya Te-ere-wii (the landlords or land priests of the farming areas) did not exceed the approved number of yam stakes in each farm plot, and that they did not take tribute of any other crops except yams. And if any person damaged anything, the Elders fined that person.

All the yams collected were carried to the House of the Te-ere-Bue where all the Elders gathered. They shared and gave a share to the Te-ere-Bue; a share to the Elders; a share to Pya Te-ere-wii (owners, or land priests of the farming area); a share to Pya Bue (Towns people) and a share to the representatives of the chiefs who worked with the land priests. This practice was observed in all Khana (Ogoni). However, since the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70), some customs and traditions have been dislocated in some parts of Khana (Ogoni). Nevertheless, the tradition was still practised in most parts till today.

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1. Iyiinayo does not mean exactly stranger. A refugee or "political exile" would convey the sense better. I = one, yii = enter, Yo = deity; lit. it means one who enters the shelter or protection of a god or deity. In those days people took refuge under gods. Hence the term Iyiinayo.

Palm Wine and Raffia Palms:

Concerning the raffia palm and palm wine, the Te-ere-Bue and the Elders did not collect tribute. People owned the raffia palm bushes. The palm wine tappers tap the palm wine for the owners. The Te-ere-Bue and the Elders did not have any rights in palm wine bushes, or in the wine that was tapped from them.

The only occasion each year when a tribute of palm wine was taken of the owners of raffia palm bushes was during the Feast of Yomii, which was celebrated in honour of Gbenekiri, the "owner" or founder of the raffia palm and palm wine in Khana (Ogoni). On that occasion, all palm wine tappers used to send palm wine to Gbenekiri House. The palm wine was not taken to the market on that occasion, for three Khana (Ogoni) weeks (taa eeri). Also, it was illegal to take the palm wine to another town during the Feast of Yomii (god of wine). Any person who took the palm wine to the market or to a place outside Boue kingdom was heavily fined. The feast of Yomii was in May each year.

Zua Pya Khana

The Khana year begins at the starting of the farming season. The Feast of Nubien would mark the beginning of the Khana (Ogoni) year. It starts with the opening of hunting expeditions (So Nubien ama na ba wee mo uwegbo a). Those who kill game would preserve the meat for use during farm work, and for the feast of Nubien. Children engage in killing small animals with traps called Bien, and they would preserve the meat for the Nubien feast.

In March (bu Taa Enoo), they will celebrate the feast of Dukono (Kono market). This feast is a memorial of how Dukono was founded. The same feast is called Yobia in other towns. Yobia (goddess of Beauty or womanhood) (2) was celebrated to remember the position of woman. Husbands remembered their wives and the whole estate of womanhood. This feast took place in March every year.

In May, it would be the feast of Yonwidam (feast of husbands, or manhood). This feast was celebrated as a war memorial. (ba wee de sa nyegia bu loo no).

In June the feast of Yomii takes place. In the feast of Yomii (god of wine) the person honoured was Gbenekiri. He was the person who introduced the raffia palm and the palm wine into Khana.

The feast of Kaan Zua (Lean Feast) takes place in July. Then in August, the feast of Gbene Zua or Aan Zua (Great Feast or "New Year") was celebrated. At the end of August, people began to get ready for the new farming season.

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2. No specific deity was honoured on this occasion. In Khana anything so exalted and honoured with national feast was itself a deity. Yo = deity, bia = womanhood. But what was actually displayed on this occasion was the beauty of women, as demonstrated in the dancing of the Akwuni.

Between the feast of KaanZua and Aan Zua was the feast of Bari Kinanwii, Bari Gbenenee (Feast of God of the Little Child, God of the Great Men).

At Nubien, hunters went to hunting expedition during which they preserved meat for Nubien feast. Boys killed small animals such as the bush mice which they preserved for Nubien. At this feast, the Dukono market would be moved to Uwegwere for two days to remember where the market was originally. Wives prepare special meals for their husbands. They would prepare delicious melon balls as part of the special treat for the occasion. At Kono Boue, this would be called feast of Dukono (Kono Market), while at other places it would be called feast of Yobia (Womanhood or Beauty).

At the feast of Yonwidam (feast of manhood, or war) the men paid attention to their wives. Trappers, fishermen and hunters intensified their efforts in order to catch some big game which they would use for the feast of Yonwidam. They provided large resources of meat and food for the feast. They did this to please their wives.

#### Bari Kinanwii, Bari Gbenenee

This was the feast of the "God of the Little Child, God of the Great Men". This feast was dedicated to their Creator. It was the feast of the God who created them. At this feast they offered food and meat to this God and said prayers (in libations) for their needs, and for protection.

They gathered all their tools and implements of work at the altar where they made the prayers (libations). While they offered the meat and food, they addressed this "God of the Little Child, God of the Great Men" as Bari. First, they would invite Him and say, Bari, lu (God, come). Then they would invite their ancestors by name, beginning with their immediate parents (if they had passed into the beyond), saying, "Come and eat food, this was the yam we planted. This was your own. Eat, and so bless us. If we sowed yam, let the yam produce bigger yams. If we tapped the raffia palm, let the raffia palm yield wine. Whatever we put our hands to do, let it be blessed. When we go to the farms, let no-one be in danger of accident. Let the farm work be blessed. If we go to the market, let the trade be blessed. We want peace, let trouble go away." They would then pour the libation and touch the bowl of food to the ground. Then they would take a lump of food and cast it to the altar; and one of the fish, they would cut its head and tail and cast that to the the altar for the gods. The rest they would carry away to eat.

When the master of the house had finished, he would place morsels of food in line before the altar place, one for each child of the household. Each morsel of food would have a fish on it. From the eldest child, every child of the household would come to the altar to take the food and the fish and do as the master of the house did. They would take a little of the food, and cast it to the altar; the fish they would cut off the head and tail and cast them to the altar for the gods. The rest they would take away to eat with their own share of the feast.

This God (Bari) which they are honouring they do not know Him, and they do not know His name. But they know that He has power. They call him "God of the Little Child, God of the Great Man". (Bari Kinanwii, Bari Gbenenee).

Other deities celebrated by a feast were Bariyaayoo, Barigokana, Bariluekun, etc..

63. PRINCE ISAANEE NII OF EEPiE (Aged 95, d. February 1985)  
Interviewed at Eepie on 29 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me the story of how Kono Boue began.

What happened at Kwuribue which made Kote to leave that place?

When he arrived at Kono Boue, which people did he find?

The people who joined him to clear the site, where did they come from?

Who ruled Kono Boue after Kote?

Tell me how this town was governed.

Why did Khana (Ogoni) people call yam KaZia?

When they fed the ancestors, which food did they use?

There was Yobue, there was Te-Ere-Bue (the Ruler). How did they share the power?

Where did Yobue get his axe from? What did he use it for?  
Was there any other people whose rulers used such axes?

Is there any wise saying from the ancients which you can tell us?

Name some ancient societies which existed from the beginning.

When did the traditional rite of Yaa begin?

What were the benefits of performing the traditional rite of Yaa?

How long did the ceremonies take from beginning to end?

How did they select and train for war?

That water which they poured on their heads, what purpose was it for?

Do you recall any wars that were fought in ancient times?

Why did other people have to bring men to Kono Boue to be killed or sold?

B. The Narrative:

I am Isaanee Nii.

Nii was the son of Gboro.

My mother came from the House of Kote, the founder of this Town.

It was from there that my father married my mother. In other words,  
I came from the Royal House of this town. (Mda teena aa Be Te-Ere-Bue).

Kono Boue originated from Kwuribue. That was where Kote came from.  
When he came from there and arrived in Kono Boue, he liked the place, so  
he began to clear the site for settlement. The origin of our town

therefore was in Kwuribue. That is why you often hear people say "Kote Kwuribue".

The reason for their leaving Kwuribue was that the place was too small. There was no space for expansion. That was why he searched for a broader place. When he arrived in Kono Boue, he found no people (Naa mue logo mee). He therefore took the area in haste (a su mem Kpoa). It was when he had taken the place that other men joined him. (Pya nee sike lu sa ye nyone kpo). Those who came later also came from Kwuribue, because he went back to tell his friends that he had found a better place for settlement.

Famaa was one of the rulers who ruled the town afterwards. What happened was that many of Kote's children died (Pya ye nwii ugara). Those who were alive, including those who are living today, they did not rule (ba naa bee bee bue). Men like Deezua, Manyee Ikib, Isoon, Koopee, etc., they did not rule.

The functions of rulership involved much sacrifice and rituals. (wop Zoo wee le loo mene bue). When it was time for a new farming season, they would have to invite people from all the towns round about Kono Boue, such as Uwegwere, Keneke, Nookwuri, Gbam, etc. All of them would sit together to plan what they would do, whether they would slaughter goats or cows for the rituals. They would all do the sacrifice. When they have done that, each people would return to their own community to begin the farming season. (son ba e dora wo sa na zii zii bue ama ba e kii alaba bue wee yii wii a).

Khana (Ogoni) people called the yam KaZia because it was the first food that sustained life. That was why they called it "Ka" ("Mother"). (Ke adoo ba kue ye "Ka" lo). They also called the plantain "Ka-ebue", because it was the "first plantain" (1) they got (nyonebee ale na tuatua ebue ba bee dasi ere a). There are different types of plantain; for example gagara ebue is one and Ka ebue is another (gagara e bue kee, ka ebue kee). (2)

The yam and the plantain were the main ritual foods for ancestors (KaZia le Ka ebue na be wee su tea Zia Zim a). And in the species of yams, Gura and Ya were the oldest (Nama Zia); these were preferred as ritual foods for ancestors.

Yobue was a man but after he had died he possessed a person. (Beele nee, me son e Ua na a buate aa yee a). He was from Bonny. When it was known that he was a brave man, the Te-Ere-Bue, Kote, took him

1. "First plantain": The Khana word for the entire genus is ebue. There are however, different names for the various species. Even the banana is a species of ebue.
2. The Khana phrase "Kee ... kee", lit. "different ... different" is best translated, "one ... another". The gagara ebue was the species with only two clusters in the bunch. Other species were Ka ebue, ebue Mene, ebue gokana, miimii ebue, etc. In the banana family, they have these species: ebue de, ebue bono, ebue bani, miimii ebue, miimii a red, etc..

and gave him authority to rule. For he said, "he would be able to perform many different functions"(Ko me kera dera tady bue ee e dab si) Because a citizen would not be able to kill any fowl in the land, a citizen would not be willing to take his machet and kill a goat, in the land. (3) Therefore Kote took him and let him stay in the land; for Yobue came to Kono Boue when Kote was ruling.

Kote used to send him to the different towns to go and take territorial tribute (Etab Asaa-Bue). Then he would go to Keneke, harvest plantains, catch fowls; go to Nookwuri, harvest plantains and catch fowls; to Uwegwere, harvest plantains and catch fowls; he would do like that through all the towns of Boue. He was a strong man. (Beele nee ekpo).

If a man in any town killed a leopard, they must bring the whole animal to the Yoboue Centre at Kono Boue. There the animal would be butchered. Kote granted to Yobue one hunting expedition in a year. This was called Uwegbo Yobue. In every game killed on that occasion he was entitled to take the head, one hind leg, and the skin. (Ale wee su akobee, zii to, le Kpa loo eregeba nam ba ge bu lo Uwegbo).

Kote also made an axe for him. It was an axe to which charms were tied firmly, which they kept as an instrument of power for war. (Kote na a bee ye kwa sii ne a. Beele sii bob pie le loo ba bee sere kere nu gia ba wee, su sia no). Whenever he was about to go out to do violence he would tie the axe firmly on his waist and off he went. Anyone who saw him with the axe must never stand still. It was frightening. (La nu yegere). No other ruler used the axe like that. Only Yobue had the axe, no other people had it; and it is not found in any other place.

The ancients used to speak a proverb like this:

"To know the way  
Is not to go to Baan"  
(Knowing the way, does not take a man to Baan)

("Yegene dee naa sia nee Baan")

Baan was a place of great war with Boue people. Only men of "stamina" could go to Baan. It was a challenging place (Gbene ana-ana ke). It was not only a question of knowing the way to Baan, it was more a question of whether you were brave enough and whether you had the equipment of a brave man. Then you could be able to go to Baan. (Leelee o edab si Baa).

3. What is meant here is that the citizen's action would be seen not as state action but as the action of the particular citizen, in which case revenge against that citizen would be sought. With Yobue, who was not a citizen, had neither wife nor children, nor relations; this would be different. Since he would act on state laws, it would be seen as state action. Robin Horton makes a similar point in his "Stateless Societies in West Africa", History of West Africa, Vol. I, ed. Ajayi & Crowder, 1971, pp. 72-113. In his context, Horton was discussing the use of secret societies to effect state action. In our context, the action of state was in Yobue.

In general the saying means that a person might be able to recognize something but it did not mean that he understood its implications or uses.

The societies that came from the ancient Khana were Kpaankpaan, SooSoo and Yowaabogo. These three societies were invented by the ancient Khana themselves. They did not copy them from any other part of the world.

Kote began the Yaa ceremonies in these parts. He said that the thing pleased him. So he invited people and prepared the Apapee and set down the Yaa Pot (a baa Apapee sa ege Baa Yaa ke). That was how the Yaa ceremonies became a tradition of these parts. (Ke adoo, doo Yaa yii lo siloo amalo).

If a person was performing the Yaa rites and ceremonies, those who join the Yaa, would have to dress the Traditional Basket to each of their grandmother's Houses to inform them of the Yaa ceremonies. They would also dress the Traditional Basket to each of their ancestors. (Be zii zii Zim). There would be one day set for the pouring (or spreading) of mullets (ere dee ba e egara aka). Once they have done that, then it would be three weeks (taa eeri) (4) before they would run the marathon. (5) (Ba e egara aka, o sua ko me taa eeri na ba e teera Yaa a).

A man who had not gone through the Yaa traditional experience, if his wife performed the ceremony of womanhood (Bogo), she would not visit the Waabogo stream (Maawaabogo) (6). Secondly, a woman whose husband had not performed the Yaa ceremony, if she danced the Yowaabogo music (7), she would not place her hand on the pitcher (kpu-Yowaabogo). (8). If an important matter occurred in the community and they wanted people to meet to discuss about it, only those who have performed the

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4. Taa eeri, three weeks; a Khana week was five days, one week was called Kpo'eeri.
  5. The Yaa Marathon (Teera Yaa). This was a whole day race. For a full description of this, see testimony by Chief Dike Iyoro, notes 11, 12 and 13.
  6. Maawaabogo was the most popular occasion where a woman performing the ceremony of Bogo went to have a ceremonial bath, accompanied by trains of cheering maidens and women.
  7. Yowaabogo was one of the most ancient musical societies in Khana. Their major instruments were pitchers of various sizes. They provided the music for the Bogo ceremony.
  8. Kpu-Yowaabogo; This was the bass pitcher in the set. The set was considered very sacred. A woman belonged to the social class of her husband. It was a high honour for a woman to dance and place her hands on the set.

Yaa ceremony would enter the room where the matter was being discussed. Those who have not, would sit outside and listen to the matter from outside. (Pya ba sii doo yaa, ba e ton kpeedee sa gbae ton loo uwe ba aa ko to). They would not be able to take part in the discussions.

The evidence that one has performed the Yaa ceremony were Biirabe and Ikeeneewa. They were worn on the wrist, on the neck, or on the waist. Any person who saw Biirabe and Ikeeneewa (9) on you would know that you have performed the ceremonies of Yaa. If a man was advanced in age and he did not perform the Yaa ceremony, if he died, he would be buried at the back of his compound, not in front.

The Yaa ceremony was a very important thing in Khana tradition; not only in those parts but in all Khana.

It took about one to two years to perform the ritual preparations secretly without the public knowing anything about it. After all the ritual preparations had been concluded in this year, then by the following year, it would be made known publicly that such and such was performing the Yaa ceremony.

The purpose of the preliminary ritual preparations was to prevent death, accidents, misfortunes, and epidemics. Also that the Yaa ceremonies should be of interest to everyone, both young and old, people should join; and that the whole undertaking should be honourable. (Ba wop zookonee aa uh, yaa a tee kinanwii, a tee gbene nee, pya nee ba a yii loo, yaa ama alu ka).

If you joined the Yaa which was performed by the Head of another House, Te-Bari (10) would not be planted in your compound. If you had not performed the ceremony, by joining any House, and you wanted to perform it in your own House for the first stage Yaa Ge, the Te-Bari would not be planted in your compound also. If you set the Yaa Pot in your own House, having done the Yaa Ge before, this was called Yaanwii. The Te-Bari would be planted in your compound.

Any person who saw the Te-Bari in your compound would know that it was a Great House (Gbene Be) or that it was the House of a man of great wealth or a Ruler (Be Mene). As this tree was not in every compound, they would see it and know that, this man was a Ruler, or that this man was an Elder, or that he was a Kabaari. When this man performed the Traditional Rite of Yaanwii (Yaa of Sons), it was not his sons only that were involved. The sons of other men and from other towns and places were also among them.

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9. The Biirabe was a black-and-white raffia cloth ribbon about 0.5cm. wide, usually worn on the waist under the garment; its length was 108 cm., or 43 inches. The Ikeeneewa was an orange-coloured ribbon of the same material, about 0.3 cm. wide. This was worn on the wrist or as a necklace; or together with the Biirabe, as an arm band.
  10. Te-Bari (God's Tree): is a kind of live tree used by Khana people for landmarks, or for agreements. It is the one of two such trees in Khana. The other is called Kiono. Both are used for the same or similar purposes. They grow slowly. They don't increase too much in size, do not take too much space; and they can remain for centuries. It is illegal to remove them. They are sacred.

naa le aba pya alee nwii; nwii pya donanee le loo, pya ba aa dona dona bue le loo).

Selections of fighters and training:

If a war broke out between Boue and another people, to select those who would go to war they would "test" them by their "medicine" (ba e do pie). Those acceptable, or those who passed the "test" would go to the war, regardless of whether he was a youth (Kere ba lu pya nwii). Those whom the "test" rejected (lo nee akii) they would be told to return home, regardless of whether they were able-bodied men. (kere ba beele pya gbene nee).

They usually assembled at the Yobue Square. That was the place Kote used to tell them to assemble. There he would show them how the battle would be organized. (Lo ke na kote wee wa su kuma a, sa a doba ke ba e be doo). Kote himself was a warrior. On returning from battle none would be allowed to go to his own town. All would assemble in this town grigidib; (11) and he would lead them to the Yobue Square. (Son ba e aara no, dedee aba doonage abue grigidib; ale Zasi, ba nyone ye ba gbaa kiinage Be Yobue). There at the Yobue Square, they would baptize or pour water on the head of each of them before they could return to their various homes and towns.

Ba su maa a ton bee, O kii be  
Ba su maa a ton bee, O kii be  
Ba su maa a ton bee, O kii be  
Ba su maa a ton bee, O kii be

They pour water'n your head, you go home  
They pour water'n your head, you go home  
They pour water'n your head, you go home  
They pour water'n your head, you go home

The water made them feel stabilized and steady. "Bad winds" ("poro efob") could not shake them. (12)

Some wars I remember which they fought were the war with Lewe, the war with Kwuri, the war with Eeke; they also travelled from here to fight a war at Baan, and defeated them there.

There is a drum at Ipa a Dubia House. They called it Kere Tingtan. It was captured from Baan in the war. The man who took it was named Gbenebaara. Gbenebaara was a man who went to that war. Now Gbenebaara has become Zim (a possessing ancestor spirit). That Drum is in their compound.

11. Grigidib: This is a Khana alliteration. It has no meaning as a word. Its meaning is in its sound and effect. Here the informant used it to express the sound of the footsteps of so many people, warriors, just returned from battle with all their baggage and arms. The vibration of the ground as they let down these weights.
12. Bad winds: The nightmares, and other unpleasant after-effects. A release from companionship with spirit forces.

There was also a mask (alu) which used to be in Needam I'emadee House, called "Dooporo-Doonaporo". They also took that mask from Baan in war. I suspect that the children of that compound have sold it. (Alu ama, pya miogo e sua oore pya ba aa yeegi alu aya). They have sold it to those people buying ancient masks; such an ancient property! The mask used to have a very broad face.

Afterwards peace was restored between Boue and Baan. Baan people returned to attend market at Dukono in Kono Boue. They made that market their important place where they sold their farm produce. (Ba sike aa wa bue sa gbi dee lu wee ura Dukono Boue, sa su lo du kere ke ba oo wa nu).

After the war had ended, Gokana people said that Boue should not kill them; that Boue should be their haven. So they brought two men Ginigini and Beema. They brought them to Kote. Kote kept Beema in this town at Yoboue House. Ginigini, he sent to Gwaara to the House of Gbenebega.

Yeghe people brought two men also that they wanted to be in peace with Boue and wished to attend Kono market (Dukono), to sell their produce and to buy their needs. So they brought two men. One was called Meabe, the other I do not remember his name again. Meabe was kept here, but the second man was sent to Gbenebega at Gwaara.

Kaa people, whenever they caught a cannibal, they brought him to Boue. When it was the feast of Yoboue, their women prepared shell fish in advance with which they made large bowls of ark shell fish salad for the feast. These were brought to the feast on the appointed date by their chiefs and Elders. The salad represented their tribute for the produce of the sea.

Eeke'n people prepared entertainments (Pya Eeke wee su bii nua zii zii son ba de Yobue). They entertained the people during that feast by providing dances and plays. On all these things, if any town or community failed to do their part, Kote and Yobue punished those concerned. (Dedee nu ama lo zii bue obe edoo Kote le Yobue be wa).

64. MR. AGBEEBE NAASA OF KWAAKWAA (Aged c. 63).  
Interviewed at Kwaakwaa on 4 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the interview:

How did it happen that your ancestor Gbeneteebete, gave land to Yobue?

How did it happen that Yobue did not have his own land, and had to be given land?

Why did the people of Kaa have to present shell-fish salad (Ark shells) to Yobue annually?

B. The Narrative:

Yobue and Gbenetaaduu of Gbam were friends (bae Koo). Yobue came from Bonny; and he was a medicine man and a warrior. Yobue followed Gbenetaaduu from Bonny (Bani) and was staying at Gbam Boue (bee nyone Gbenetaaduu aa Bani sa le Gbam Boue).

As the Baan war was going on, the Elders of Boue held a meeting and decided that it was unsafe for Yobue to stay at Gbam, because Gbam was situated at a corner (baraloo ke). That if an attack came from the direction of Kaa, or from the direction of Eeke, they would get to him quickly (me lo no aa dee Kaa, ale dee Eeke, me ba e nwaa ba ye ere). Because of that, the Elders of Boue consulted together and requested that Gbeneteebete should give land to Yobue, because Gbeneteebete's territory was at a central place in Boue. (Nyonebee Keneke Gbeneteebete le ke alu teeyee).

They agreed that they should hunt in the forest behind (or on the East of) Kwaakwaa community once a year for Yobue. (1) On the day the Feast of Yobue (2) was celebrated, he could tap palm wine from any raffia palm bush for the feast. He could kill fowls in each town and harvest plantains in each town for his use during the feast. He could also pluck coconuts from any coconut trees along that area, up to the Kwaakwaa stream. Any day people cleared or moved the grass at Yobue Square, those doing the work could pluck any coconuts in the area for their refreshment. (Eregeba ip-zoo ale bee maa Kwaakwaa ba a kaana taa dee ba ya ke nyon Loo Zim Yobue.)

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1. The whole of that forest also belonged to Gbeneteebete. My informant was the present administrator of that land, being the most senior man of the House.
  2. Yobue did not have a special feast day. His feast was arranged to coincide with one of the general feasts, such as the feast of Bogeneyo (All-Gods).

That since he was Iyiinayo (3), and did not found any land anywhere, and did not have any piece of ground anywhere, that whatever they provided for him he should enjoy, because he was a brave man. (Me be ee lu Iyiinayo, sa ee naa bee kabara logo ke ale zii ke, e ee naa ere logo eba asaa ale zii ke, me eregeba nu ba ye ne e, me ee a de sa ee ton, me ee nee gian).

Kaa people, they should always bring large bowls of salad of ark-shell fish (gwo-akoro) on Yobue feast days. So also were Kwuri people to do. When these things were brought, the first bowl should be given to Gbeneteebete. That before Yobue would eat, Gbeneteebete should eat first. (Me lee Yobue aa de zia, Gbeneteebete a dasi de).

In Yobue House, the Seat of Gbeneteebete was at the Right Hand of the House (Bale To). (4) Any new dance that was shown to the public, one day should be played at the Yobue Square. Though Yobue was Iyiinayo, he was a brave man, who could fight in battles. Whenever they went to war, he was the leader. (ale na a wee zaa sia).

Kaa people and Kwuri people were required to supply ark shell fish salad to Yobue feast because he fought wars to protect them. Moreover Kaa was under the rule of Boue. Yobue was like soldiers are today, he had no other job except to fight in wars. (Yobue bee le doodoo ke pya no le doo a-ni'ee aba ye tam na tam be no).

They also forbade Kaa people from taking any human life by capital punishment; even if they arrested a cannibal, they must not kill him by themselves; they must keep him or bring him to Boue. It was from this that you used to hear the saying:

"Kaa would keep a cannibal for Boue" (5)  
("Kaa aa kuelop see Boue")

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3. Iyiinayo, lit. I = one; yii = enter; yo = a god, or deity. It means "One who enters the shelter or protection of a deity or god". In ancient Khana people sought the protection of gods as security against violence, or ill-treatment by other people. Yobue was completely provided for by the Town. He had no property, e.g. land of his own.
  4. I visited this House. Chief Lemue Nuaka, the present servant of the House took me there. I took photographs of several sacred items, including Yobue's shoulder bag or medicine Bag. I was warned not to sit at that spot that nobody else sits there. It was Gbeneteebete's seat. It is first on the left when entering but first on right when going out. I did not sit down at all.
  5. Cannibal here means a "foreign" head-hunter. In Ogoni, if a head-hunter from a different area of some unknown place, was caught, he was usually killed. In the Boue kingdom, no community was allowed to kill such a person. They were required by law to bring such a person to the Yobue Centre at Kono Boue. There his fate was decided.

65. MADAM GOABERE IKPODEE OF TEGO, KONO BOUE (Aged c. 78)  
Interviewed at Tego on 15 January 1984

"DU BARI LE NEE"

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Narrate the story about this saying that is usually spoken:  
"Du Bari le Nee".

What period in ancient times was this saying spoken?

Where did this market hold?

B. The Narrative:

I heard that there was such a market. They said that God used to place merchandise in that market and withdraw from it. When Bekee (white men) would come, they would see the merchandise, read what God had written on them, and take them home. They said that they (Bari and Bekee) did not see each other with their eyes. The men would leave the things they brought to the market and go away, so that when those coming from abroad (i.e. God) would return, they would take them away.

According to the story, they continued to trade like that for a long time, until one day a certain man said:

What kind of trade is this our trade; why do we not see each other?

(Me ba du na ba una doo woa, E a doo sa ii mue dee loo zii a?)

So, a certain man climbed up and hid himself in a tree so that he might see what was going on. The result was that he died up in the tree. For it was law that they should not see each other. You only place what you brought to the market and withdraw. The other party would come and take it. There was no seeing together.

This thing happened very long ago. I grew up to hear the story, as they used to say: "Is this a trade of God and men that there is no seeing face to face? Or that there is no sitting down together to discuss? (Ale nu ake lu Du Bari le nee se (Bekee), Sa ba naa mue si zii se?) And what they have set down, there is no changing of it (or Man dare not alter it)? (E lo ke ba ekoa doo, nee naa sike Labarana se?)

The trade was between God and Bekee (white men) in their place. They dared not see face to face, and they dared not alter what they had set down (or had said).

My father, they married his own great grandmother from Zaakpon to Kwuri. From Kwuri they married my father's mother to Kono Boue here. The people of this House to which I am married, they own the land of this village (Tego); they are the land priests of the village. Their ancestors were the founders of the town. All the land from here to that stream belongs to them. They and the people of the House of Kote, the Paramount Ruler or owner of the towns (Te-ere-Bue), used to do things together.

66. MR. NWII IMENE OF KWAAKWAA, KOMO BOUE (Aged 64)  
Interviewed at Kwaakwaa on 28 December 1983

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me what you heard concerning the founding of KpaanKpaan Secret Society.

Who else was connected with the founding of the KpaanKpaan?

In my enquiries all Khana agree that KpaanKpaan was the oldest society that still exists. Tell me the functions of KpaanKpaan from the earliest times.

B. The Narrative:

I am Nwii Imene.

My father was Biira Nwaamii.

My ancestor named Biira Nwaamii was the organizer of KpaanKpaan Secret Society from ancient times. In his own time, my father Imene became the leader of KpaanKpaan. In this our time, I, Nwii Imene, am the leader of KpaanKpaan.

What I heard was that my ancestor travelled to Northern Khana area, there he heard when the KpaanKpaan Musical Society was having a day. Because it pleased him, he sought about it, and introduced it into our area. (Son e nia ye, a gbite loo sa su bii a aan dee yima a bue). That was how the other secret society called Gbeneyaakpaga came about in this town. For in those days, the people travelled a lot, seeking one another. (Nyonebee lo son li ba wee kiagi sa gbi zii).

At home, he invited some people and discussed the matter of the society with them. They decided to introduce the KpaanKpaan Secret Society into this town (ba gbaa bira loo sa su bii a yere). Afterwards they themselves took their own society to tour Northern Khana, with an aim to learn more of the inner mechanics of the society from there. (ba sike su bii a sia Nyokana uwe ko lo kwa ba da e bee loo kaana).

The Leaders of the Society

In a society like this, certain members became the key members because of the functions they performed in the life of the society. Such members would be the Drummer (Dam-Kere). It would be said that such and such was the Drummer. If there was a Gong player, they would say, this was the Gong player (Dam Akere). Then there was the Bard/singer, (Adamsi-yo). All the respondents, and the accompaniments, no-one would worry to name those individually. Those who could be remembered were those who used to "lift" a part of the matter (Pya o dab yegia bu loo na pya ba wee doo "pani" loo lo doonu). Whenever a libation was poured in the society, it was the names of such persons that were remembered. The names of such persons never perish, and the names of the leaders never perish (Bee pya ba le doono naazim, bee mene-bii naazim).

Libation

Biira Nwaamii, wine is in my hand.  
I pour libation to your name before I speak.  
Your house is where I stand;  
In your name, I also dwell.  
You owned me, but now, I own you.  
You gave me food, yet I feed you;  
Some of the things I have, I acquired from afar;  
The things you left behind, Whence have they all come?  
Nevertheless, I have travelled more than you.  
I have travelled more than you, yet you are stronger than I,  
Let there be good (things). (Libation)

I will also live long, just as you did;  
Then will I be stronger than you are strong.  
Let there be peace. (Libation)

I am talking about KpaanKpaan!  
When it is KpaanKpaan, my head will never ache,  
And colds will never me dare.

You who lifted KpaanKpaan up;  
And You who poured the KpaanKpaan libations;  
Isitam Gbooro, Naabeanyee Nii,

KpaanKpaan wine is in my hand;  
I am talking about KpaanKpaan. (Libation)

The Functions of KpaanKpaan:

In ancient times the KpaanKpaan was the political force of the authorities or powers that were. If any citizen was stubborn, and the KpaanKpaan Secret Society was called upon to see to the matter, they would come with music and dance, and take occupation of the man's house. Within a short time, they deroofed the house and did irreparable damage to the man's property. They continued the occupation until the stubborn person begged for peace.

It was the KpaanKpaan that had the power to discipline society. The KpaanKpaan was invited to intervene in difficult cases between wives and their husbands in order to discipline the obstinate, or recalcitrant spouse.

A person who committed adultery and refused to pay the customary fines, the KpaanKpaan was invited to enforce compliance to the laws of adultery, with costs to the defaulter.

Land disputes were referred to the KpaanKpaan Society which planted their flag (1) in that piece of land or farm barring it from use until the dispute was settled by the proper authority.

Most of the functions performed by the KpaanKpaan society have now been taken over by the Amañikpo Society. The Amañikpo Society did not exist in Khana (Ogoni) in ancient times; it was introduced in a later period.

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1. Flag: This consisted of a raffia palm or oil palm frond with one side of its pines (or leaves) removed and the other side also removed to about a quarter left. Then a piece of a dried leaf of the plantain was tied to the stem of it.

67. MADAM NNAADU IKIE DEEZUA OF NOOBANA (Aged c. 82)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 16 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

On the basis of what you heard from your own parents and from the ancients, how did Kono Boue people know how to make pots?

If daughters used the pottery trade marks of their parents, what happened when a daughter was married into another House? Did she carry her parents' pottery trade mark with her to her husband's home?

B. The Narrative:

I grew up to see the pottery industry in this Kono Boue. I learned pottery when I grew up, and became a potter. My mother's pottery trade mark was what I adopted on my own pottery wares (EkUU-ba mda ka na m da sunage kuura loo mda ba a). With the trade marks even though your pots were lost among the pots of another person, immediately you came, you were able to identify your own pots. (Tema loo ekuu-ba ama, kere o ba bee pe yee ba pya dona nee, aba son o lu na o sumenege loo o lo ba a). And if the pots of another person were mixed among your own pots, as soon as the owner came, she was able to identify her own pots.

Each household had a separate pottery trademark, (1) throughout the different communities of Kono Boue. A daughter who was in her parents' house and adopted her mother's trade mark, when married, she adopted the pottery trade mark of her husband's mother. (e su ekuu-ba ye kadam).

In ancient times, the people did not make many pots as people did in recent times. The potters of today have been able to make larger numbers of pots than people were able to make in past times. They have also made new types which did not exist in ancient times (sigaaan bee ba ba sike dem e ma nyon pya kere lenage). One of the new types was called ikpu, another one was called ibibiisi.

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1. I took down some 212 different pottery trade marks by going through the town from house to house. They are represented in a separate appendix.

68. The following are the names of pottery and the names of some things used in making pots:

<u>Khana (Ogoni) Name</u>	<u>English Name/Description</u>
Komaa	The pot: with wide rim diameter
Giah	The large decorated Bowls used by Priests in shrines.
Kpu	Decorated pitcher used for palm wine on ceremonial occasions. Some with narrow mouths used as musical instruments.
Kaba	The ancient Komaa (lit. mother-pot)
Kpuruba	A cooking pot, favoured for cooking yams, cocoyams, etc., shaped like an egg, moderate narrow rim.
Kanakuwe	Palm wine receptacle, used by palm wine tappers.
Kanamaa	Water pitcher, used for fetching and storing water.
Baraba (2)	The larges bowls used in shrines with a lid similarly shaped.
Gaaganu	Large pitchers.
Garaba	Largest type of pitchers.
Baenuunu	Two lips (or rims). It could be any type of pot. Rim description only indicates shape of lip of the pot or pitcher.
Taanuunu	Three rims.
Nianuunu	Four rims. The two rims are archaic.
Ifeemaa	Gourd-shaped type. Used for drinking water in farms, or carrying water to the farm.
Ibibiisi	Narrow mouthed pitcher, smaller in size; used by young girls.
Ikpu	Smaller pitcher, with round belly, small mouth, used as musical instrument.
Igiah	Soup or food bowls used in household.
Ikomaa	Small pot. Used in households for washing hands; also for bathing children.
Igbonsi	A pot with fanciful lip.
Ipegerenu	A small pot with short and thin lip.
Ibamuukoo	A mini-pot used for nursing the wounds of a newly circumcised baby.
Laabienee	The blacksmith's blow-pipe.

Laadem	The potter's "wheel". Bottom of pots rests in the Laadem. The potter rotates it by a touch of her toe.
Ikana	Mini-pitcher. Used by children for fetching water from the stream.
Apabee	Smoothing piece made from a calabash.
Tebee	Smoothing and cutting stick or ruler
Lebee	A sheet of soft, refined clay.
Akpobee	A clay coil.
Uwibee	A "scroll" of refined clay.
Bee	The soft, refined clay used in making pottery.
Akwerete	Excess clay peeled off by use of the Tebee.
Yoo	Ground potsherd used to strengthen the clay.
Buguru	Finely sifted sand used to mix with the clay.
Ton	Ash, finely sifted and used to mix with the clay.
Ikwinyoo	Yoo sifter.
Koroyoo	Yoo grinding mortar.
Tumyoo	Yoo grinding pestle.
Toro	Gold-coloured liquid used in marking pottery before firing.
Agudoo	Material from which Toro was made.
Akuuba	Pottery Trade Mark.
Nyaite	Instrument used in designing pottery lips/rim.
Tebiogo	Instrument used in making designs on pottery.
Biogo	A design on pottery.

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2. There were certain pottery types which I saw in shrines, the names of which are no longer known to the people of today. Their type is also not made. I took photographs of some of them including the Baraba and its lid.

69. MR. OBEYE KPONE-TONWE of NOOBANA (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 27 November 1984

LONG-DISTANCE POT TRADERS

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Name some long-distance pot-traders you know of.

Name some places and markets to which pots were carried in canoes.

Describe the journeys to the different places or markets.

Name some customers to whom the pots were sold in those markets or towns.

As one of the long-distance pot traders, when you carried the pots by canoe to one area, say, Ibibioland or Ikwerre or Kalabari or Ijo, did you remain at one market or town until all the pots were sold out or did you visit several markets or towns in the area?

What type of pots were usually carried to those places, and for what uses were the pots demanded?

When returning from these markets, did you bring anything for trade from there?

B. The Narrative:

The following were some names of long-distance pot-traders from Kono Boue: Dugboo Kara, Naado Dobu, Deebom Bira, Deebari Teenwaa, Gbebe Kole, Naadoole Ideme, Obeeye Kpone-Tonwe, Akiikpa Iguru, Nwidae Gbege, Lobe Igbug, Pianee Barabe, Bogona Deebom, Porogbara Ikpoorah, Kpugibue, Nnaapop, Piesu, Uegbara Diginee, Obed Ana'ana, etc; and from Keneke, Boue, was Johnson Lewa.

The pots were carried in large canoes. At Okrika one of the markets was Okporoba and the other was Ahialmunu. At Port Harcourt, the markets were Ahiagorogo and Iwofe. In Ikwerre, we traded at Agbogoro, Ogba, Aluu, Choba, Isiokpo, Ibaa, Ogwa, etc.. Another place where we sold the pots was in Opobo area. There the markets were Opobo Town, Mumadanboro and at the Akoro Villages in the Andoni district.

When going to Okrika we travelled through Iyoba, Boodoo Town and Booro before arriving at Okrika, and from Okrika to Port Harcourt. To get to the Ikwerre markets, we had to pass through Port Harcourt, Ahiagorogo, Be-ako'ip (so named by the Ogoni) and Iwofe. Before arriving at Opobo, we passed through Ayanda (in Andoni), Nkoro and Karibiamama.

The only customer whom I still remembered, her name was a woman from Okrika called Ezinwayi. She was a bulk purchaser to retail. Some canoes carried about 300 pots, and others carried about 400 pitchers, depending on the size of the canoe. Only three persons paddled the canoe. Some of the places we visited included those already mentioned above. In Kalabari, we visited Tombia, Osogo, Asani, Abonnema and Awusara markets.

When we travelled to the fresh water areas, i.e. to Ibibioland, we passed through Egwanga and Mkpa; and we traded at Urua-eka market in Mkpa area. Other markets we also traded at in that area included Esene, Urua-ete, Uruagwa, Kefe, Ikporikpo, Uruadapa and Azumini.

The type of pots we carried were earthen pots of different kinds and for different purposes. There were pitchers for storing drinking water (Kana-maa), pots for palm wine tapping (kana-kue), pots for storing palm wine (kana-mii). There were also pots for bath-water (Komaa), pots for cooking in (pegereba); soup pots, (ba-maalo), pots for drawing water from wells (ikana-bana) and pots for carrying drinking water to the farms.

On the return journey we brought other things from along the way, such as pepper, coconuts, cocoyams, plantains, palm oil, etc.. We also traded on these things as we travelled home.

70. MR. BAKOBA LEGBARA OF NOOBANA (Aged c. 74)  
Interviewed at Noobana on 5 January, 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me the story of the "Three Horns" Age - Grade.

When you began how were you able to get hold of so many people and to organize them into a group?

In what ways were the Age-grades useful?

What brought about the decline of the "Three Horns"?

B. The Narrative:

In those early days, when men planted yams from the fruits of their land, a man performed the social rites of Yaa, and the Bogo on his wife; and he invited his age-grades (ba wee doo yaa wa, ba lee wa bogo, ba kue pya gbo). A palm wine tapper, who was prosperous, would perform the same rites and invite his age-grades (pya Gbo). I was both a palm wine tapper and a planter of yams. Your own (the writer's) father was both a palm wine tapper and a planter of yams. It was your father who taught me how to tap the palm wine. Those were the good days. (Le beele lo gbo dee). There was respect then. Nowadays, it is not so. Today, the world is aflame.

Clients are no longer faithful in the affairs of the masters, a page is no longer faithful. They can be unfaithful to you and to your spouse; they can be unfaithful to your money and to your property. All these deeds have poisoned the air and scattered the world. Yam production has declined; palm oil production has declined, and palm wine production has also declined. (Zia i wee foa, naalena; Zoo i wee tob a, naalena; kuwe naalena).

The age-grades used to help each other (Pya Gbo wee yereba ne zii). If you planned to perform a tradition of marriage, and you had not enough money, the age-grades used to come together; and they decided to lend you money. After the ceremonies, you refunded it to them. If you built a house, you would send money for drinks to the age-grades requesting that they should come and help in the work. The age-grades would come to do the work for you without extra cost. And the work would be completed faster than before. Your only expenses then was to provide food and drinks (obui zia wa ne, o ne wa mii).

During the farming season, the age-grades used to help each other mutually in slashing the farm bushes. In that way, it was possible for them to clear two or more farms in one day. (Pya Gbo wee dab wo bae ale taa kere nam tereke bu zii bira dee)

Organization

This was how they were organized. I appointed an able man at Tego. Then I instructed him to invite and assemble all men of that age-grade in Tego to his own house.

Next I appointed an able person at KwaaKwaa. Then I told him to do the same. I appointed another man at Eepie, and instructed him to do likewise. I appointed one at Noobana, and instructed him to do the same. I did like that throughout all Kono Boue. Sometimes I invited these leaders to my own house, where we met, and I was their leader. (M Ko ba a gbaa lu mda to m da lu wa te, sa lunage wa nee zaa si).

The age-grade clubs (gbo) or associations were very useful. If you were a member, you were encouraged to do things for your own progress which you would not have done had you not been a member. For example, in the farming season, if a member was unable to plant crops in his farm because he did not have the seedlings, the members of his gbo supported him by making it possible for him to plant the crops on his farms that year. The aim was to support the members so that they might grow and become progressive. (lo soa, alu e yere ye ekpo loo lokwa ee dum, sa kii zi).

A member who had not married, they encouraged him so that he might be able to marry. The membership increased rapidly within a short time, it grew up to about three hundred. There were both men and women members. Married couples joined together, but as separate members. When there was dinner, wife and husband did not have to sit together but they sat on individual seats and were served individually. (so ba ere nu ede, dam egete nyo a le te kee, wa egete nyo ale te kee).

After some time, the club declined. Some members became unfaithful with other member's spouses. When this happened, some members withdrew from the club. But the greatest cause of decline was death. Many of the able members and leaders died. The children of members did not fill the places left by their parents. If there were such replacements, the club should have survived, because the former members had children and grandchildren who were grown up men and women. That has been the way the "Gbo Dooni" had survived till today.

"The Three Horns" ("Gbo Taanuunu") were a very select group. They were powerful men; men of great strength in this area. (ba weele pya Gbo ekpo bu lo barasiloo ama). Any town where they needed that type of men for any difficult task, they used to come and hire us. For example, like the catching of a 'wild' bull (1) needed for some ritual sacrifice.

Men like Gbenekpee, Amoeyo, etc., were powerful men in the club; they were the strong men.

When there was a judo (kpuruba) tournament, whether within the communities or outside, the members of the club were the men who used to do it. (ala ba na ba wee si eregeba bue kpurube we si a).

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1. "Catching a bull": These were not the tamed farm animals. These African cows were wild. They lived out in the wild, though they were owned by people. They were not milked. They bred themselves. When there was need to catch one of them alive, it required real men to perform the task.

Next to "The Three Horns" were the Gbo Kodoo. (2) They were the able-bodied men (Pya Zuguru gbara), "The Doers of Words". They and "The Three Horns" were often hired in any matter that required strength and power. (Pya Gbo Kodoo ama le Pya Taanuunu na ba wee kue loo eregeba doonu ekpo a).

"The Doers" were based in the House of Gbarakpugite. Their leader was Naagon Gbarakpugite.

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2. Kodoo: Literally it means "Say and do it". In plain language the name means "Doers of Words". They prided themselves as "The Doers of Words", that is, they always accomplished what they set out to do. They were in alliance with the "Three Horns".

71. MR. DEZUA GBARATEE OF TEGO (Aged c. 65)  
Interviewed at Tego on 7 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me the story of how the Gbo Dezua Age-Grades began.

What range of age-group were the members of the society?

Tell me some of the works the society performed?

What did you do with the money which the society produced?

Is the society still as progressive today as before?

Was the idea to form the society your own original idea, or did you see a like organization in another place?

Do you recall any memorable thing which the society did?

B. The Narrative:

We were just sitting down under the Dara tree at the Central Town square at Eeyoburubu. There were many young men and boys. Then I observed that many were grown up. So I invited all the young men who were there to my house, where I entertained them with some drinks. Then I spoke to them that we ought to form a society (M ko me ba adoo me i yere Gbo). After some time I invited the group again. We assembled together and discussed something about it. After a period of time we had a third meeting.

In that same period they performed for my elder sister the ceremonies of Yaa, following her marriage and the birth of her first child. I seized the opportunity to invite the group with a formal invitation of our society (Na M wa kue yere toa sa wa sukpugine). With the invitation fee which I paid to them they bought plenty of wine and palm wine, and the ingredients for the pepper soup (1) which would accompany the wine. On the appointed occasion, all the members came. It was on that day that all the people knew that we had established our society.

After that day, we met again, and sat down to write down our bye-laws:

- 1). Any member who stole, would be expelled from the Society.
- 2). Any member who committed adultery with a spouse of a member would be liable to pay a fine, which would be imposed. Failure to pay the member would be expelled.

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1. Pepper soup: A hot light soup, with fine slices of meat, used to keep down the power of the wine, where heavy drinking was expected. On this occasion the host provided money for this (fee). The Society appointed their own members to take care of these things for the occasion, like a kind of pot-luck dinner. This took away the burden from the host. But the host provided the main course of the dinner for which each member paid a fixed amount. This went to the host.

- 3). If a non-member seduces the spouse of a member, all the members as a unit would "fight" that individual.
- 4). Members of the Society should not be traitors; they should not be under-cuts or leg-pullers in the affairs or businesses of fellow members.
- 5). A member of this Society should not be a sorcerer or a wizard. Members should not seek to possess or to have anything that kills or harms a person's life.

All the members were not exactly of the same age. Some were twenty years old, some twenty-two years, some twenty-five and some thirty years old. There were both male and female members in the club. Two leaders called Adue Gbo were appointed in each community to organize the society in the part.

If a person had work and he wanted our society to do the work, such people consulted the Adue Gbo in their town. These men would bring the matter to the Mene-Gbo (General Leader). A meeting was then called to plan the work, and to determine the amount of money the owner of the work must pay us. (sa iko nu a kii loo lo tam, le nu te-ere lo tam e kpe i ne). If the owner of the work agreed to the price charged, we did the work. (Lo te-re-tam yiga, i si lo tam).

Our society was helpful to people who had hard work which they could not finish by themselves alone. It also helped to make such works easier. (sa a doo ko me dua tam a le doono a wae).

We used to save all the money we produced in that way. Whenever there was a need, we used it for that need. On occasions, when we were happy, we used part of it to buy drinks for our merriment.

The society declined afterwards because of the way the new age was. (temaloo ke nan nyowe le doo). A falling apart (or a scattering) invaded the world (laba-laba nyowe yii). We used to offer rituals and sacrifices whenever we were undertaking a project; and this used to cause the society to come together. But when the Christian teaching entered the "world", even I, myself, who used to do all those things, did not do them again. Another thing was that people began to go apart to different far-off places (Pya nee ba kiigi zii zii barasiloo nyowe wee boo ke ba e teedoo ere nu ede), where they went to seek ways and means to have "daily bread". All these things had worked together to weaken the society (Dedee nu ama naayigana ko Gbo a agate). Moreover, the number of individual wage labourers increased more and more, so that some of the work for which our society was hired, these groups did them. (sigatam ba e bee kue pya Gbo loo, pya tam kpugi an si).

When we were born, we grew up to see that those who were older than we, had age-grade societies (Gbo). Age-grade societies were in existence from ancient times (Gbo beele aali kere). Each age group had its society. When we noticed that we were grown up, and that we ought to have our own society, we began it.

One thing our society did which I can remember was when they bought an "electric" lamp (mia electric) for use when we had social evenings.

Why it was important was because our society was the first society to use this type of lighting in this area. It made our society popular.

The society also bought a large (conference-type) table whose legs were specially made with metal ornaments (Ba bee yae nage zii gbene kpote ba su kpe iga to kee). We were also the first group to use that type of table.

72. MR. KUENEE TANEE OF KWAAKWAA (Aged c. 57)  
Interviewed at KwaaKwaa on 4 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

Tell me how you became the leader of the Gbo Kuenee Age-Grade.

What function in society did your society perform?

What was the average age of the members when you started?

B. The Narrative:

My father performed the ceremonies of Yaa and the ceremonies of Bogo, (1) for my elder sister. It was at that time that I invited boys of my age-grade and entertained them. Each person who came on that day and ate the dinner paid three manillas to the host. But they ate as much as they wanted to. Those who wanted to do so even took some home. (Nee ekpea taa kpugi e de Zia eregeba ke ale wee denu doo. Lo ania ye, e sunage siga Zia kuma ye be).

If a member of the Society died, the members contributed money for the purchase of his coffin, cloths, clothes; as well as paying for the cost of his burial. Even if the person had no relations, the society took care of the occasion. Men and women were members.

If there was community work in any part of the town, and the Ruler or the Elders gave notice to us, we undertook to do such community works.

If a member had a task for which he needed many hands, the member would buy a bottle of wine and come to the Leader to discuss the nature of the work. The Leader would then summon the members by ordering their special horn (Dooni) to be blown round the communities. When they met, they discussed the terms and set a date when the work would be done. (Ba Fuuri Dooni Sa Kwera kue sa ba ko nu akiiloo sa ba sere dee lo tam e su do). Part of the terms was that on the day of the work, the owner provided lunch for the members who did the work.

At the time we started, we were very young. I could say that we did not know much at that time. But now the society is no longer strong (NyaWo ama, lo Gbo a naa aganate). Our register got lost, our horn also got lost. Those who were members no longer had interest in the society. The times have also changed. Many who were members have gone away to many different places in the world to "search" for money. The strength of the society was unity, and agreement in action, so that if someone attempted to find trouble with us, we fought him as one man. (Kii si a wee le bu Gbo ama na gbaaloo bu doonu, le ko lo ale zii nee gbi uwe ipima, l gbaa ye bebe loo).

1. Yaa and Bogo: were the feminine counterpart of YaaGe and YaaNwii for men. But there were no rigorous activities in the case of the women; they were also very short. Usually these ceremonies were performed by the husband of the women, which placed them in an upper class in society. In the present example, the father, Chief Tanee Idigidi, was an able Elder and one time Ruler of Kono Boue. First daughter of this class of men did not marry out. They married endogamous. So the father performed the ceremonies. The informant was young and only son.

73. CHIEF THOMPSON NAABUE KPUNU OF UWEGWERE (Aged c. 65)  
Interviewed at Uwegwere on 5 January 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

I observed that you had a big ceremony going on, and that the ancient musical society of SooSoo was on the spot. Could you explain to me the purpose of the ceremony and why you invited the SooSoo society?

Was your father a high ranking Elder who had performed the traditional rites?

Why did you have special interest in SooSoo?

B. The Narrative:

I am Chief Thompson Naabue Kpunu. My father was Kpunu. He was a man who had performed the major traditional rites in Khana. He had performed the ceremony of YaaNwii (Ebee doo YaaNwii).

The present ceremony was a memorial for his death many years ago; at the same time I am performing the traditional ceremony of his second burial. (doonu bae soa Lili).

Kpunu descended from the kindred of Noobana Uwegwere (Gaan Noobana Uwegwere), and he was the son of Doonu.

SooSoo:

The reason I invited the SooSoo musical society was because one could not do enough in a Khana traditional ceremony without having the SooSoo Musical Society on the spot. (Leelee o dab doo gbomea bu Khana, o ere e mue ko me bii SooSoo le a loo bu lo doodoonu).

Without having the society present on such occasions it was not regarded with any measure of approval (a naa lu e yere ka loo ko nee o doo zii doonu). Because of that, it was the SooSoo which used to bring them home conclusively.

The SooSoo was a play of the ancients, our ancestors. It was also the "first" popular musical dance which came into being. For this reason, I am sure that on this occasion, the ancestors and the Elders, both spirits and men, in all Uwegwere, Kono and Boue, and every one in all this area, are glad today because of what has taken place on the occasion of this ceremony.

74. CHIEF M.N. AKEKUE OF KPUITE, TEE (Aged c. 58)  
Interviewed at Kpuite on 16 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview:

What war do you refer to as Kaani-Teegbara War?

What connection does this have with Tee?

How do you associate the word Tee with Tai?

B. The Narrative:

This was at the beginning of the twentieth century, the beginning of colonization in Ogoni. The aim was to humiliate our people through taxation and by colonization. It was believed that they planned to seize some land from the people. The method of taxation was crude. They forced the people without explaining the reason for the taxation, why the people should be taxed.

That was an era of war in Ogoni. There were many warlike people around at that time, such as Teegbara (Kaani people called him Teegwaara). The war was associated with this man. He was the leader in the wars against the British. Hence the name Kaani-Teegbara War.

He was also a medicine man. He became a leader because of his boldness and the associated powers which were attributed to him.

They used bows and arrows, spears, swords, etc. There was inadequate explanation as to why the British had come into the area. People were forced to pay the tax. Men were forcibly dragged and beaten up in the streets for failing to pay. The people were afraid that the British were coming to take their land and to kill their sons and daughters, etc..

The war was known as Tee Bekee or Ikosi and it lasted for about a year. It created serious refugee problems. Chief Teegbara himself having been shot in the chest, remained three more days before he died. Tee became a ghost land for about a year, people ran into the forests. It was at the end of this war that the colonial administrators moved into the villages and tried to make peace with the traditional heads and Chiefs who had been taking refuge in the forest with acute hunger and abject poverty. Kpuite in Tee became a wilderness. The war affected the whole of Ogoni as it was the first physical contact with the British.

In 1904, Ogoni was again attacked. After that colonial rule was established in Ogoni.

The word Tai is mutilated, and it is abusive. It is a corruption of the word Tee, meaning father. Tai is not only traditionally meaningless, but vague and misleading, a bye-product of an administrative blunder.

Kaa, the most populous community in Tee was destroyed. People who escaped from there founded other communities such as Biara, Deeyo, Kaa (in Babbe), Nwebiara, etc. Boodoo was founded by people who migrated from Korokoro, Tee.

Boundary of Ogoni

During the Irifeke boundary Commission, 1977, the word Ogoni was discovered on one of the iron pillars that supported the Old Imo River hanging bridge. (By the 1875 Boundary Agreement Ogoni comprised Ibigbo and Ndoki South of Imo River. My father told me that he testified in the Calabar High Court, in connection with this case).

This fact was earlier brought to public attention in a memorandum presented to the Commission by Chief S.E. Aforji on 9 April 1976.

75. G.N. LOOLOO (CHIEF) OF KO (Aged 57)  
Interviewed at Port Harcourt on 25 March 1984

A. Questions asked at the Interview

I read Part II of an article published by you in the Sunday Tide (1) where you briefly discussed the origin of the Ogoni. I was interested but I noticed that what you said there was very brief. So I felt that you must have discussed it at length in the Part I of the article. Unfortunately, I have not seen the Part I. Now that you have touched on this subject, I should like you to discuss it a little further.

How did you obtain the information which you have propounded into your theory? How did you gather the materials?

Which 'history' are you referring to? Is it Ogoni history?

You have adopted a theory which suggests that the Ogoni came in two waves. One is that which suggests that they came in slave ships that were running away from capture by the British anti-slavery patrol. That would establish Ogoni in a later period, that is, in the nineteenth century. The promulgation of the Law of Abolition of the slave trade was in 1807, and the enforcement of that law came much later.

Another point I want to raise is this. If you want to argue that the abolition of the slave trade marked the beginning of the establishment of Ogoni, then you must have to drop your other argument based on Professor Alagoa's book, in which he asserted that the Ibani passed through Ogoni territory on their way to Bonny in the days of their migrations. According to that theory, Ogoni existed before Bonny. But you know that the Ibani participated in the Atlantic Slave trade long before the abolition law of 1807.

What did you find out about Gbenesaakoo? In my interviews with Gokana people, he seems to occupy a very prominent place in the history of Gokana.

It is from you that I hear for the first time that Gbenesaakoo was a "juju" priest. I would therefore like you to explain it a little further.

Another area of interest in the history of Ogoni is Nama. Some people say that Nama was the oldest settlement in Ogoni. And I was wondering if you have the same view? Your argument is based on the 'theory' that the Ogoni came to their present place by sea. That being the case, they could not have reached an inland location first. Is that your argument?

B. The Narrative:

The geographical position of Ogoni is favourable having access both by sea and by land. It is also a fertile land. If people migrated

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1. Sunday Tide, issue of 25 July 1976, p. 5.

from the hinterland either from the east, north or west, such people would have wanted that land. The people occupying that land today would not be Ogoni people since they are very small (compared with the large ethnic groups to their north, east and west).

Professor E.J. Alagoa in his book (2) suggests that Alabaraye, who established Bonny, came by the Imo River and passed through Ogoni land. If there was an Ogoni land already established by the time the founder of Bonny passed there, then Ogoni is older than her neighbours.

The situation prior to this period was that Europeans left their ship anchored in the mid-water and then got to land in small boats to raid for slaves which they wanted for the American plantations. By the mid-seventeenth century the practice was common. By the late seventeenth century the British government sent troops to prevent the slave trade.

One of such slave boats having entered the Imo River, ran aground in the Ko (Opuoko) creek. Ghanaian escorts travelled in these boats to bring the slaves to the ship. When they got stranded, the slaves in the ship were still under them. They then moved inland and began to plant crops.

Ogoni was populated in two waves. One wave from the Ko - Kono direction. The other wave from Gokana through Bodo. Professor Dike says that the Niger Delta was populated by waves of immigrants. That means that they did not come at the same time.

Notice that the area from Baene to Opuoko speaks the same dialect. The migrations spread from Baene due to land scarcity to Ewee, Kwaawa, Baen, Kpean, etc. From Ko, they spread to Bangha, Beeri, Baan, Sogho, Korokoro, etc.

The wave through Boodoo came by way of South Cameroun. They settled at Boodoo for a long time. From Boodoo they moved to Gbee, as at that time people did not want to stay too close to the shore, because they would be open to attacks. From Gbee, they continued to go to fishing at Boodoo and returned to Gbee, which was further inland.

At Gbee the leader propounded a religious 'theory' which stated that whoever came there should pay obeisance to the original settler who happened to have been a woman. Because of that people began to move inland. As a result of this attitude, Gbee has remained a small town till today. It is nevertheless an old town, because it was the first place of settlement; but it is still the smallest town in Gokana today.

From there they moved to Nweo'l and from Nweo'l they moved to Boue. At Boue, they came into contact with the other group moving from Baene area. There they said of themselves "We are your Brothers" (Ili Go Pya Khana). From this the name of Gokana was derived.

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2. A Chronicle of Grand Bonny, by Alagoa and Fombo

At Barayira, a man committed sacrilege by making love to a woman who had born twins. He was expelled from Barayira. He went to settle at Boomu, an already existing town. There he discovered that he was not welcome because of the same matter. He left Boomu and finally settled at Aleto. When his relatives from Boomu visited him and enquired how he found life in the new place, he replied "Aleemam", meaning "I like it". From this word, the term "Eleme" developed.

First and foremost, I think that I am Ogoni's first historian. I was the first Ogoni man to obtain a recognized degree in a single subject, history. History (in this sense means history) as a subject, which at that time was based solely on other areas except Ogoni history.

My informants included late chief Egbani Nwikina of Kono, Chief F.M.A. Saronwiyo of Gwaara, Chief Nwifa; and others in the villages along the coast, as well as oblique references by other historians.

It will be of interest to you to know that Professor E.J. Alagoa was one year my junior at Ibadan University and that Professor T.N. Tamuno was one year my senior. Professor A.E. Afigbo was my classmate.

I became convinced that the only contribution I would make for my people was to go and find out how this small unit of people so unrelated to people around them, could have a history. So over the years I did oral traditional enquiry and compared it with oblique references, because there was no written or direct references to the Ogoni people until 1901. All the references are oblique and indirect.

As far as the law of abolition of the slave trade was concerned, my contention is that before a law is promulgated, there is usually an executive decision before that. For that reason, I am arguing that by the late seventeenth century, the abolition law had already begun to become operative.

With regards to Gbenesaakoo, unfortunately he was not a chief. He was a juju priest. Because of the beliefs and the superstitious influences that anything mysterious had on the people, whoever was a juju priest held a very important role in influencing the society. The juju priest held a very prominent position in society, because he was the only man who could divine what would happen. Disputes over land and other property were also directed to him. As there were no written agreements over issues of the past, the juju priest was the man to whom appeals were made. This is what I think made Gbenesaakoo get into a position where he was thought of more than the King.

I do not presume to suggest that this explanation was obtained from any written source. The thing is that when a researcher begins to collect oral tradition in a community, he gets exposed to all sorts of views and stories from the different informants. The Gbenesaakoo shrine is at Mogho, whereas the head of the Gokana people was not from Mogho. Yet every year all the Gokana people go to Mogho to celebrate it. It is from this sort of thing that I drew my conclusions.

Concerning Nama, my view is that Nama was not the oldest settlement in Ogoni. I can advance a lot of reasons or explanations why Nama could not be the oldest settlement. How could Nama be the oldest settlement when it is situated far inland? The early Ogoni settlers could not have flown through the air to reach there. My argument is that they settled near the coast first before moving further inland.