

**HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION IN
URHOBOLAND, 1916-1999**

BY

ASHE, MUESIRI OBERO

MATRIC NO: 069015030

Ph.D THESIS

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, AKOKA

SUPERVISORS:

DR J.G. N. ONYEKPE (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR)

&

DR. DAVID AWORAWO (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR)

2017

SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the Thesis:

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION IN
URHOBOLAND, 1916-1999

Submitted to the
School of Postgraduate Studies
University of Lagos

For the award of the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)
is a record of original research carried out

By:

ASHE MUESIRI OBERORAKPOVIOMA
In the Department of History & Strategic Studies

M.O. Ashe
AUTHOR'S NAME

Ashe
SIGNATURE

06-10-2017
DATE

Dr. JGN Onyekpe
1ST SUPERVISOR'S NAME

Onyekpe
SIGNATURE

06-10-17
DATE

Dr. David Amoran
2ND SUPERVISOR'S NAME

Amoran
SIGNATURE

06/10/2017
DATE

Dr. O. T. Oduwabi
1ST INTERNAL EXAMINER

Oduwabi
SIGNATURE

6/10/17
DATE

Dr S. C. Ugoch
2ND INTERNAL EXAMINER

Ugoch
SIGNATURE

6/10/17
DATE

Prof. U. O. Edo
EXTERNAL EXAMINER

Edo
SIGNATURE

6/10/17
DATE

Dr. G. S. M. Okeke
SPGS REPRESENTATIVE

Okeke
SIGNATURE

06/10/2017
DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for his Grace and Mercy that keeps me alive, and to my late wife Mrs. Veronica N. Nkoyo Obaro-Ashe (nee Edem-Okon).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I appreciate the priceless effort of my father, Late Chief Ashe Obigba and my mother, Madam Revwirheri Akponome that sustains my education up to the university level. Other personalities in this category are my late wife, Mrs. Veronica N. Nkoyo Obaro-Ashe, my two children and my brother, Joseph Kiri. I equally appreciate the invaluable effort of Dr Chigozie Nnabiuhe of the Department of Linguistics and African Studies and Miss Elizabeth Olugbade of Distance Learning Institute (DLI) that have played a crucial role in sustaining my PhD research.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Dr J. G. N. Onyekpe and Dr David Aworawo, for their painstaking effort to read through the various chapters of the thesis and come up with comments and suggestions that have tremendously enhanced the intellectual quality of the work. I am also grateful to both my internal and external examiners for their valuable comments and suggestions. Besides, I thank the entire members of staff and PhD students of the Department of History and Strategic Studies for their support and co-operation to ensure the success of this work. I am particularly thankful to Dr Mrs. Irene N. Osemeka and Dr Edmund Chilaka as well as my colleagues, Mrs. C. O. Ben-Akinduro, Dr Henry Ogunjowo, Dr Omon Osiki, Dr H. E. Eiguedo-Okaeguale and Dr. Friday Aworawo for their advice and other support. Other colleagues in this category are Dr Justus Nzemeka and Mr. Bayo Asala.

I am grateful to the Post-Graduate Coordinator of the Department of History and Strategic Studies, Dr Obi Iwuagwu for his support and motivation at certain stages of the research. Other scholars in this category are Dr S. O. Osoba of the Department of English

language, but presently in Ebonyi State University, and his colleague, Professor Adeyemi Daramola in the same department for their assistance at the early stage of my fieldwork.

Many thanks to my numerous informants during my fieldwork for the sacrifice they made to furnish me with relevant facts and figures. Among them are Chief Bright O. Okumagba and other members of the Council of Chiefs to the Royal Family of the Okere-Urhobo clan, Warri. Also in this category is Victor Dabur-Fuludu, Head of Community Relations and Protocol Department, NNPC, Warri. In respect of my fieldwork, I am also indebted to many members of staff of the various local government secretariats in Delta State. Among them are Benjamin Oghroko (Administrative Officer) and Mrs. C.B. Alphonsus, Deputy Primary Health Education Coordinator, Ethiope West Local Government Council, Oghara. Also on the list are Daniel A. Obofukoro, Principal Administrative Officer, Uvwie Local Government Council, Effurun, and Osasa James Onovughakpor, Chief Community Mobilization Officer, Okpe Local Government Council, Orerokpe, to mention a few.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....1

Background to the Study.....1

Statement of the Problem.....3

Aim and objectives of the study.....5

Significance of the Study.....5

Scope and Delimitation of the Study.....6

Research Questions.....7

Operational Definition of Terms.....8

Theoretical Framework.....8

Literature Review.....11

Research Methodology.....17

CHAPTER TWO: GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION.....24

Urhoboland: Geographical Location.....24

Warri and its Environs.....25

Physical Features and Traditional Occupations.....	26
Traditions of Origin, Linguistic Features and Related Issues.....	34
Pre-colonial Political Institutions.....	39
The Local Government Unit: A Re-assessment.....	52
CHAPTER THREE: THE EVOLUTION OF COLONIAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT UP TO 1933.....	66
Precursor of the Native Courts Proclamation and Native Courts Ordinance.....	73
The Operation of the Native Courts before the Appointment of a Head Chief for the Warri Division.....	77
The Implementation of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1916 and the Appointment of a Paramount Chief.....	84
The Policy of Native Administration and the Introduction of Taxation	101
CHAPTER FOUR: THE REORGANISATION AND ITS AFTERMATH IN THE URHOBO DIVISION, 1934-1949.....	117
Origin of the Reorganisation, Introduction of Taxation and the Creation of Local Councils.....	117
Approval of Divisional Councils and Challenges Encountered.....	133
CHAPTER FIVE: REFORM EFFORTS AND GRASSROOTS ADMINISTRATION, 1950-1983.....	168
The Local Government Reforms of the 1950s.....	179

The Quest for Recognition of Sub-Ethnic Identity by a Number of Sub-Groups in Urhoboland.....	187
Creation of the Midwest Local Government Loans Board in 1973.....	193
The Question of the Ownership of Warri Land	198
The 1976 Local Government Reforms.....	207
The Trend from 1979–1983.....	221
CHAPTER SIX: FROM DASUKI COMMITTEE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRISIS, 1984 – 1999,	237
Fresh Challenges	237
Origin of the Local Government Crisis of 1997 – 2003.....	248
Major Stages in the Conflict and its Impact.....	263
Grassroots Development and Petroleum Exploitation.....	273
CHAPTER SEVEN: CHALLENGES AND IMPACT OF THE SYSTEM SYSTEM.....	289
Cultural Integration and Involvement of Traditional Rulers.....	311
The Question of Democracy.....	321
Gender Equality.....	326
Conflict Resolution.....	327
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION.....	340
Summary and Findings.....	340
Recommendations.....	357
Contributions to Knowledge.....	363
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	366

APPENDICES.....383

LIST OF TABLES

Some Native Courts in Urhoboland and their Membership Composition.....81

Grants Due to Local Government Councils in Respect of Education, Medical and Health Services (selected councils from Urhoboland and neighbouring communities).1967-1970.....195

Local Government Areas and population figures in Bendel State after the 1976 Local Government Reform.....212

Population of Delta State by Local Government Area, 1991 and 2006.....247

Health Institutions Owned by Individual Local Government Authorities in the Mid-Western State 1963-1966.....293

Health Institutions Owned by Individual Local Government Authorities in the Mid-Western State 1967-1971.....403(Appendix XI)

Maternities and Dispensaries in Ughelli Local Government Area (former Eastern Urhobo Division), 1964-1982.....295

Health Centres Owned by Each Local Government Council in Urhoboland by 1999.....298

List of Health Centres with Basic Facilities for Admitting Inpatients.....299

Centres for Adult Literacy Programme in Urhoboland by Local Government Area.....302

Total Capital Expenditure of Councils in Urhoboland on Motor Parks and Similar Projects, 1977-1981.....309

Number of proposed and executed projects by local government councils in Bendel State 1985 - 1987310

Approved Annual Salaries of Traditional Rulers in Urhoboland following the 1976 Investigation
into the Role of Chiefs316

Others.....see Appendices

LIST OF MAPS

Urhoboland and its Local Government Areas.....55

A Map of Delta State Identifying Local Governments in Urhoboland56

A Map of Delta State Showing Urhoboland and Major Rivers of the Western Niger Delta.....57

Urhoboland and its Neighbours.....58

Rivers in Urhoboland.....59

Native Courts in Urhoboland.....107

Warri Town in the 1950s.....391

Effurun-Warri Metropolitan Area in the 1980s.....392

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR DOCUMENTS FROM NATIONAL ARCHIVES,
IBADAN**

A.D.O. Assistant District Officer

Cal. Prof. Calabar Province

C.S.O. Chief Secretary's Office

D.O. District Officer

War. Prof. Warri Province

ABSTRACT

The work analyses the intricacies, complexities and trends in local government administration in Urhoboland commencing with the pattern of colonial grassroots system in the 1910s, as well as the reforms carried out to refine the system between 1930 and 1950 in the area. Further reforms were embarked upon from the 1950s to the 1980s with varying impacts on Urhobo communities. These embraced the use of traditional rulers. Urhoboland is among the places where local government reforms have been most contentious. Therefore, in spite of the reforms, by 1990 Warri, one of the most important cities in this coastal society had become a proxy or actual battle ground for all groups in the area in their demand for equity, fair play and justice with regard to the sharing of resources. This resulted from the failure of the reforms to address the peculiarity of these groups and respond to what most of them considered their most crucial grassroots demand. In collation and analysis of data, the study relies on secondary sources but more on primary source materials. The study employs the relative efficiency theory and the theories of grassroots democracy and autonomy primarily to refine the understanding of local government administration in Urhoboland. These theories highlight the relevance and importance of efficiency, democratic government and autonomy to the success of local government administration. The research problem is conceived within the context of the conflicts associated with the local government institution in this part of the Western Niger Delta vis-à-vis the inability of studies at the national and regional levels to capture the index details of each locality. The Urhobo situation demonstrates that the local government system produced some positive impact in the area even though on a general note it has performed below expectation. It reveals that grassroots policies framed at the federal and state levels of government are sometimes hijacked by political parties and individuals to achieve their selfish ends at the expense of grassroots development. It has shown that the existing reforms and local government policies were not comprehensive enough to ensure peace in all parts of the country by identifying and addressing the relative peculiarities of each area. The study establishes that local government administration compounded the pattern of inter-group relations and accelerated the rate of inter-group land disputes in Urhoboland. These factors partly account for the sporadic conflicts in the operation of the system in the area. The work indicates that apart from conflicts, the system encountered the challenges of corruption, administrative ineptitude and excessive use of management committees. It concludes that the ability of the existing local government institution to record some noticeable achievement in spite of the enormous challenges indicates that it could be transformed and utilised for national development if appropriate steps as those recommended in the concluding chapter of this study are taken.

KEY WORDS: Local government, administration, institution, grassroots