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THE YAKURR: A RECONSTRUCTION OF

PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY

THE YAKURR: A RECONSTRUCTION OF PRE-COLONIAL
HISTORY

B Y

OTU ABAM UBI, B.A. (HONS)

SANDHI MEMORIAL RESEARCH COLLEGE
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS,
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

A P P R O V A L

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the Postgraduate School, University of Lagos, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

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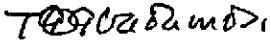
by


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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

EXAMINERS



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A B S T R A C T

This study attempts to use oral sources to reconstruct the pre-colonial history of the Yakurr of South-Eastern Nigeria. The Yakurr now inhabit the territory located between latitude $5^{\circ}40'$ and $6^{\circ}10'$ North and longitude $8^{\circ}50'$ East. This area is about 140 kilometres north-west of Calabar - capital of the Cross River State. The focus of the research is on Yakurr Migration and settlement and the economic, political and social effects of the migration.

The original home of the Yakurr was along the Nigeria-Cameroun borderline. It was from here that a military defeat from the Yakpa compelled the Yakurr to migrate to their present territory. In this new homeland the Yakurr established five new settlements: Ugep, Ekorì, Nko, Nkpani and Idomi and found themselves in a strategic position able to benefit from the Cross River trade. Yakurr participation in this trade brought significant effects to bear on the economy,

The exposure to the Cross River trade also had some effects on the political system. A new class of wealthy traders emerged and sought to translate their wealth into political power. New political

institutions emerged. Following an increase in population and a new economic situation the Yakurr successfully extended their territorial frontiers by warfare. The allocation of "grabbed" land brought about a series of intra-Yakurr misunderstandings. As a solution the Yakurr attempted to bind all their settlements under a confederal system. The institution of Ngbeke was the symbol of this new constitutional experiment. However, the British punitive expedition of 1898 (which in actual fact was an imperial conquest of Yakurr) did not allow the confederal experiment to succeed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is mentally relieving to be able to offer, at long last, my appreciation to all those who have offered guidance and assistance from the inception of this research to its conclusion.

My first thanks must go to Professor A.B. Aderibigbe. He supervised this work and took personal interest in my welfare. His meticulous attention to details of style, spellings, tenses and organisation of ideas has greatly improved the quality of this work.

Professor T.G.O. Gbadamosi is one of my best teachers as far as this research programme is concerned. In spite of his crowded programme, as the current head department of history, he made time for me and went through this thesis with me from the first chapter to the last. His suggestions have been invaluable. I must say that any expression of gratitude cannot but be inadequate. Dr. Ade Adefuye was more than a co-supervisor to me. His continuing astute counsel was freely available until the last word had been written. I am grateful to him.

I have benefited from my discussions with Professors A.I. Asiwaju, E.J. Alagoa, G.O. Olusanya,

Carl Hoffman, Kay Williamson, O. Ikime, Okon Uya and Dr. E.O. Erim. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to them. I am also indebted to the members of staff of the Department of History, University of Lagos, for their advice and various comments which helped to bring needed perspective and coherence in this study. However, the responsibility for all the weaknesses contained in this thesis remains mine.

To the chiefs and people I have met and who must remain anonymous, my appreciation is greatly extended. Mr. Oberu Aribia, Dr. and Mrs Okoi Arikpo have given material support. I thank them. I must also thank my good friends: Betram Obeten, Felix Okoi, Ben Okoi, Wilfred Inah and Okoi Ewa for their continuous encouragements.

The National Archives, Ibadan and Enugu, have responded to what must have at times seemed endless demands on their patience. The University of Lagos Library, the University of Ibadan Library, the University of Calabar Library and the National library of Nigeria have all been great help.

I wish to express my thanks also to the Cross River State Government for funding my studies for the

1975/76 session. I am also indebted to the University of Lagos for the Postgraduate award and for providing a research grant with which I carried out field work. I am also grateful to the Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Lagos, for extending its facilities to me. Mr. Nkanteen, Miss Alage, Mrs Odukoya, Mr Udofia and Miss Rebecca Orusakwe all of the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos; Mr Benedict Ofem, Messrs Ndifon and Unimnake of the School of Basic Studies, Akamkpa, typed the drafts. I am grateful to them.

The patience and fortitude of my family must be acknowledged. To Ijeje goes my thanks for her devotion and unending encouragement and my children for adapting themselves so quickly to life in Ugep after Ibadan.

CERTIFICATION

We certify that this work was carried out
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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	American Anthropologist
ALS	African Linguistic Series
CSO	Chief Secretary's Office(Nigeria)
CALPROF	Calabar Provincial Papers
CHJ	Calabar Historical Journal
CSE	Chief Secretary's Office(Enugu)
EP	Eastern Provincial Papers(Enugu)
GJ	Geographical Journal
IJAL	International Journal of American Linguistics
JAL	Journal of African Linguistics
JAH	Journal of African History
JAS	Journal of African Studies
JNH	Journal of Negro History
JRGS	Journal of the Royal Geographical Society
JRAI	Journal of the Royal Anthropol- ogical Institute
JHSN	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria.
JTG	Journal of Tropical Geography
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society
HWA	History of West Africa
NAE	National Archives, Enugu
NAI	National Archives, Ibadan

NF	Nigerian Field
NM	Nigeria Magazine
OGPROF	Ogoja Provincial Papers
OBUDIST	Obubra District Papers
PRGS	Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society
TAJH	TRANSAFRICAN JOURNAL OF HISTORY.

THSG	Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana.
YHT	Yakurr Historical Text (Interviews conducted among informants)

GLOSSARY

Ayiga	The name for Assiga, Kekpeti and Iyuma villages.
Agbiaghan	The name of an age grade set.
Apamabo	Trapping pits.
Blakam	A shrine along Ugep Agwagune Road.
Benobase	Yakurr designation for the Aro Traders and Smiths.
<i>Bikobiko</i>	<i>The name of a ward in Ugep.</i>
Etor	Family
Epcnama	Extended Family
Ebiabu	Men's Organisation with Police Functions.
Edjukwa	Town Crier
Elomiti	One of the(western) migratory corridors through which a bulk of the Yakurr migrants were said to have passed to their present

Elomiti ctd.	settlements.
Ina	Matrilineal Priest.
Kepun	Patrilineage.
Kekpatu	Ward.
Kejidom	A Fertility Shrine
Koko	Yakurr Big Market day.
Kekon	Jesters.
Ketoma	Smearing of Clay chalk.
Kebojen	Cassava.
Lopon	Town or Village
Ligwomi	A Ward ritual for men
Leboku	New Yam Festival
Lejima	Matrilineage
Lebokom	Palace
Leniga	Elephant tusk horn
Liman	Money
Nkpe	Ekpe society
Nzonogo	Yellow wood paste
Obol	Traditional Ruler (leader).
Okponobi	Small Market day
Ojilikpoto	Powerful charm for self protection in battle.
Okenka	A fraternity with executive functions in village government.
Ogbolia	Head of Ward leaders

Ogometu	Deputy Head of Ward leaders.
Ogbuniji	Yam Title holder
Otamkpawen	Ancient Playing ground.
Okaledji	Meat shearer in feasts
Okpebri	Village Spokesman
Onun Ekor	Commander-in-Chief.
Obam	A Recreational dance but militant in outlook.
Owowo	The chase method of hunting
Osu	A wealthy person
Umowen	Original homeland of the Yakurr
Yakamben	Ward Leaders
Yakpilike	The name of an age grade set
Yakpetitang	Missile
Yose(sing) Ase (pl.)	Fertility Shrine
Yagbanam	Helpers.
Yabilembiben	An <u>ad hoc</u> body formed to serve an Obol-elect while under-going ritual confinement.
Epundet	Lineage Shrine
Etesan	The Insignia of Ligwomi
Edet Lupon	Village Shrine (animism).
Egai	Yakurr nickname for the village of Abayon.
Ekoi	Leboku Ritual dance
Ibom	Damask and/or velvet.

Isei Ekpo	A fishing pond
Iplong	A ritual that ushers in the harvest season.
Ngbeke	A Shrine
Ta Enyum	A war shrine
Aten, Ajou, Ledu	Yam titles
Yajonajona	Water Spirits
LoboPON	Town of the dead
Kekakai	Unripe palm fruit bunch.
Kekpan	A Ward ritual
Lebojima	Royal Family
'Yakpa'	The Yakurr nickname for Nsofan
Korta and Ekau	Ritual to ensure continuous births of males and females respectively.
Ojekwou and Opalapala	Priestess and Priest of Ekau and Korta respectively.
Obol LOPON	Village Head
Owuna	Ritual praise singer
Omenka	Man or woman who performs circumsision ritual.

D E D I C A T I O N

This work is dedicated to

IJEJE, OKOMA AND ESUKU

For their love, devotion and solicitude for my success

AND

My children

For their understanding.

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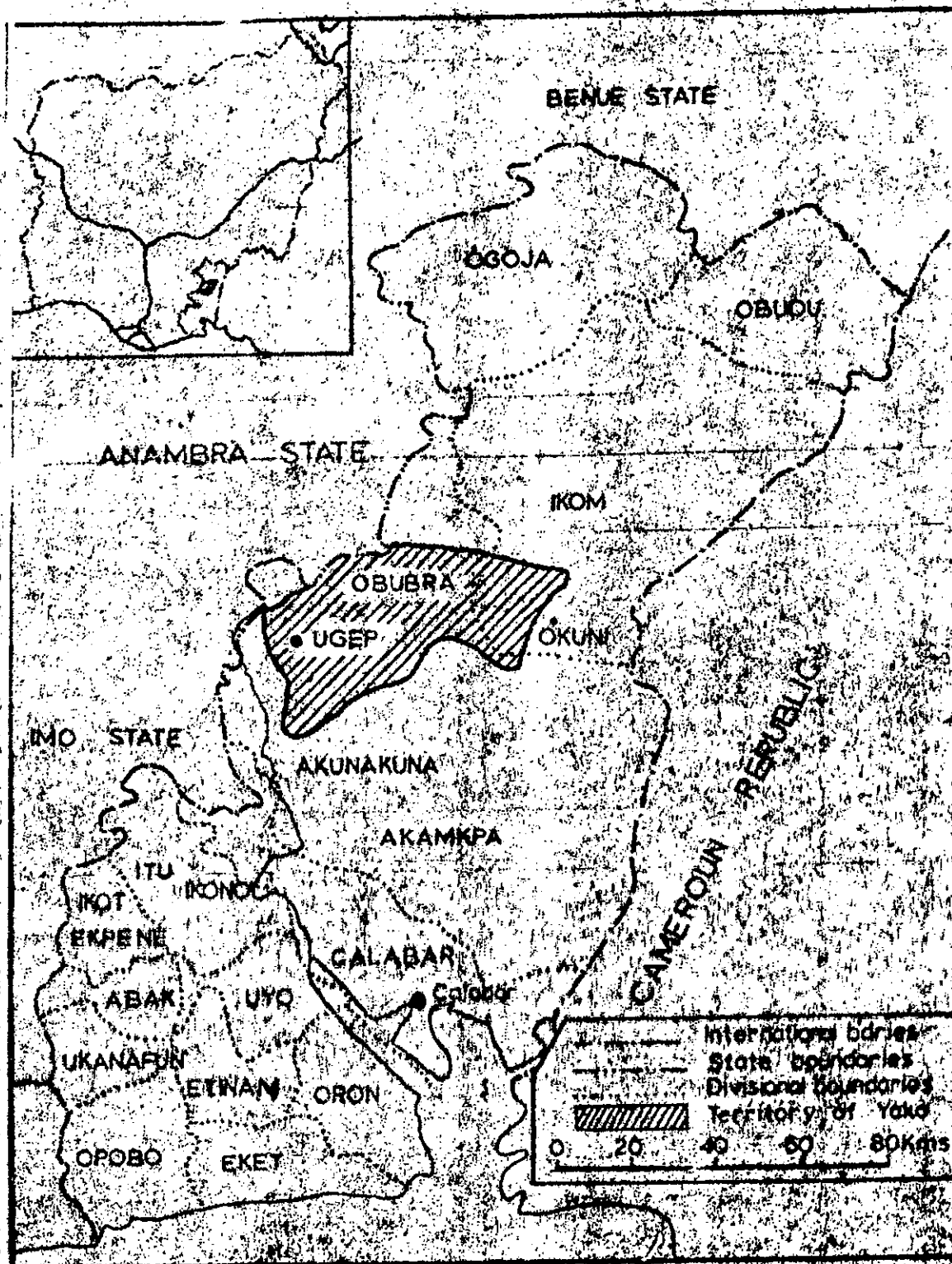
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MAP OF THE CROSS RIVER STATE
 SHOWING POSITION OF YAKURR
 Map Extract Nigeria's S.E. States in Introduction
 (ed) Ernest Ekom, 1972, p. 3

I N T R O D U C T I O N

A serious history of the Yakurr¹ has not been attempted. This work is the first effort at writing the history of this Nigerian people. The work is based mainly on Yakurr oral traditions. It has, therefore, benefitted from other studies conducted by E. J. Alagoa; A. E. Afigbo, E. O. Erim and N. C. Ejituwu² who used oral tradition to write a history of peoples within the same administrative environment (Eastern Nigeria) as the Yakurr.

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1. The term Yakurr is used to refer to the indigenes of the five towns of Ugep, Ekorì, Nko, Nkpani and Idomi. There is a variant of the term. It is sometimes written as Yako. This is because there is no standard orthography for the language. Both terms (Yakurr and Yako) are synonymous in all respect. For this study, the term Yakurr shall be used. The expression (Yakurr) is popular and easier to type than Yako.
 2. E.J. Alagoa, "The settlements of the Niger Delta: Ijo Oral Traditions." Ph.D. Thesis, Wisconsin University (1965). "Dating oral traditions" African Notes: 4, (1966), 6 - 10; "Stereotypes in Ijo oral traditions." Ikenga: 1, 1 (1972) 6-10, A.E. Afigbo, "Ibibio origins and migration. A critique of methodology." Niger Magazine Nos. 107-109, pp. 62 - 69. "The 19th c. crisis of the Aro slaving oligarchy of South Eastern Nigeria". Nigeria Magazine Nos. 110-112 (1974), 66-73, E.O. Erim, "Yalla migration and settlement: Idoma Pre-colonial history". CHJ Vol. 2, 1 (1978) 55-77. N.C. Ejituwu, "The Andoni: A reconstruction of Pre-colonial History", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Lagos (1977).

Yakurr history, like the history of other non-literate societies, exists in oral forms. Therefore, transforming that history from oral to written form implies a reconstruction of that same history. Since the publication by Daryll Forde of his scholarly work on the Yakurr (Yako Studies) very little has been done by scholars to add to our knowledge of the Yakurr. Even within the Cross River basin context, they are historically neglected. Much of the historical literature deals with the Igbo, Ibibio and Efik.³ The minorities within this basin constitute groups whose history we have little or no knowledge about. The Yakurr constitute one such minority group.

The economy, especially the growth and organisation of commercial activities, in the Cross River basin has been examined by both European and

-
3. A. E. Afigbo: The Warrant Chiefs: London, Longmans, (1972). "Efik origins and migrations considered". Nigeria Magazine 87, (1965), 267-280. "Trade and Politics on the Cross River Basin in 1885-1960", THSG, Vol. 13, (1972), 21ff; "Pre-colonial trade links between S.E. Nigeria and the Benue Valley". JAS, Vol. 4, 2, (1977), 119-139. K.K. Nair: Politics and Society in S.E. Nigeria 1841-1906: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar. London, Frank Cass (1972). A.J.H. Latham: Old Calabar 1600-1891: The impact of the international economy upon a traditional Society. London, Clarendon Press (1973); M.E. Noah: Old Calabar, Uyo, Scholars Press (1980).

African historians in several studies.⁴ Yet a strange imbalance exists in the literature covering the economy of the Cross River basin. Researchers have examined the activities of the Efik, Ibibio and Igbo, ignoring most of the hinterland - producers of the products of the export trade. For instance, Alagoa's work on this subject matter devoted only two pages out of forty-two to the hinterland producers.⁵ This is not to challenge the importance of the middlemen city states in commerce but to place them in a larger

-
4. K.O. Dike: Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885, Oxford, Clarendon Press(1956); D. Forde (ed) Efik Traders of Old Calabar. London, O.U.P., (1956). G.I. Jones: Trading States of the Oil Rivers. London, O.U.P., (1963), E.J. Alagoa: The Small Brave City State: A History of Nembe-Brass in the Niger Delta. Ibadan, I.U.P.,(1964). "Long Distance Trade and States in the Niger Delta." JAH, XI, (1970), pp. 405-19; A History of the Niger Delta, Ibadan, I.U.P.(1972); K.K. Nair: Politics and Society in S.E. Nigeria: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar. London, Frank Cass,(1972). A.J. Latham: Old Calabar, 1600-1891. Oxford, Clarendon Press(1973). "Currency, Credit and Capitalism on the Cross River in the Pre-colonial Era." JAH, XII(1971) 249-60. M.E. Noah: Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans 1800-1885. Uyo, Scholars Press,(1980); W.I. Ofonagoro: "From traditional to British Currency in Southern Nigeria." JEH, Vol. 39, 3,(1979) pp. 623-654; D. Northrup: Trade Without Rulers, Oxford, Clarendon Press(1978); A.E. Afigbo: "Trade and Politics on the Cross River Basin, 1895-1905". THSG, Vol. XIII, 1(1972). The list is far from complete.
5. E.J. Alagoa: "The Nigeria Delta States and their Neighbours to 1800." History of West Africa, Vol. 1(eds) Ajayi and Crowder; London, Longmans, (1975), 331 - 373.

historical context. The Yakurr are among the hinter-land producers in the Cross River basin who had extensive commercial transaction with the Aro and Akunakuna. Thus, a study of Yakurr history can actually throw more light on the economic activity of the Aro and further our understanding of the history of the Cross River basin.

The neglect of Yakurr history can be explained. Nigerian historians have been more concerned with major Nigerian ethnic groups, especially those that are known to have evolved centralised states. These include the Yoruba, the Hausa-Fulani and the coastal communities of the Niger Delta States. These groups attracted at a very early date in their history the attention of European and Arab traders, explorers and missionaries. Thus, some Hausa-Fulani became literate in Arabic while some Yoruba and some Delta peoples became converted to Christianity and as a corollary acquired literacy. Consequently, the history of these peoples was preserved in some documentary form. These documents were created by the Arabs, Europeans and literate Africans.⁶ It is these

6. The Arab records include the following: Tarikh al-Sudan by Ibn al Sadi Tarikh al-Fattash by Ibn al-Mukhtar: J. Barbot: Description of the Coast of the North and South Guinea and of Ethiopia Interior..., London. First printed from his original MS 1731. Reprinted by Frank Cass (1965) Ref. Niger Delta, pp. 380-84; 461-66. J.A. Adam: Sketches taken during Ten Voyages to Africa between the years 1786-1800 up the Kwara and Benue 1854, London, (1856).

documents that have attracted the attention of historians. On the other hand, the Yakurr and such other groups who lack the advantage of documented materials have largely been neglected.

Another explanation may be found in what has been described as the fragmentary nature of the political and social organisation which characterise the so-called segmentary or stateless societies.⁷ In the Cross River basin, the political segmentation or statelessness is further combined with linguistic variation.

There are, however, a few documents which mention the Yakurr. These are reports of travellers, anthropologists, missionaries and colonial administrators. These records⁸ do not show that the

7. R. Horton: "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa." HWA, Vol. 1(eds) Ajayi and Crowder. London, Longmans(1976), pp. 72 - 113.
8. Nigeria, National Archives, Enugu(NAE). C.J.W. Chessman to Secretary to the Government, Lagos, 13 April, 1939. Ref. EP10187A. File CSE1/85/100; Obubra Divisional Officer to Resident, Ogoja, 6/1/1930; OG1940A. File OBUDIST 6/1/36. N.A.C. Weir to Secretary to Government, Lagos 10/11/29, CSE 6/1/311.

oral tradition surviving at the time of contact was fully, accurately and objectively recorded. Forde, for example, was only interested in documenting Yakurr ethnological traditions. Missionaries in Yakurr appeared more concerned with the rooting out of Yakurr gods than documenting Yakurr oral tradition. Colonial administrators wrote Yakurr intelligence reports more as a spare-time interest than a duty. The result is that these documents have glaring gaps. The information contained in them is painfully inadequate and imprecise about some important matters of historical value. In fact, what one finds is the barest outline, and much of that speculative. One therefore has to rely almost entirely on oral tradition for a reconstruction of the pre-colonial history of the Yakurr.

This kind of study may, rightly, be regarded as micro-history. It is now becoming increasingly clear that without the benefits of such micro-studies a more meaningful history of Nigeria is impossible. It is, therefore, hoped that this study would be a worthwhile contribution to the understanding of an important aspect of the pre-colonial history of Nigeria.

DATING YAKURR ORAL TRADITION

One of the problems grappled with in this study is dating Yakurr oral tradition. Dating is an essential aspect of history.⁹ It helps in the placing of historical events in their proper perspective and succession. In handling Yakurr oral traditions, the writer was faced with the problems of placing events in their proper perspective. According to Yakurr tradition, the Yakurr migrated from an ancestral homeland to their present settlements. This statement raises a number of chronological questions. At what point in time did this migration take place? When did the Yakurr

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9. J. Vansina: Oral Tradition; P.D. Curtin: "Field Techniques for collecting and processing oral data." JAH, Vol. 9, 3, (1968), pp. 367-385; P. Pentecudlip: "Oral Traditions and Anthropological Analysis." Azaria, Vol. VII, (1972), pp. 16-17; D.P. Henige: The Chronology of Oral Traditions; Oxford, Clarendon Press, (1974); M.I. Finley: "Myth, Memory and History." History and Theory 4, (1965), pp. 285-7. The list of bibliography on the subject matter is far from complete

settle in their new localities.¹⁰?

In an effort to solve these problems, the writer has proposed a tentative chronology. This chronology is derived from Yakurr genealogies. The genealogies were used to establish biological generations. A biological generation is the age differential between the birth of a man and that of his first surviving son.¹¹ Samples of genealogies were collected from the Yakurr. Ten lineages were sampled. These lineages were as follows: Aneja, Ugom, Kekonkole, Utom, Egbizum, Lepakom, Usaja, Akugom, Edang and Otalosi. These lineages were

-
10. Many historians have addressed themselves to the problem of chronology in oral traditions. The following bibliography is but a few of some of the writings on the subject matter. D.P. Henige: "The Chronology of Oral Tradition: The problem of feedback on oral tradition." JAH, XIV, 2, (1973), pp. 223-235. B.A. Agiri: "When was Ogbomosho founded: An analysis of the tradition of origin with special reference to the problem of chronology and Feedback?" TAJH. Vol. 1, (1976). J. Vansina: Oral Tradition, pp. 114-140, Iran Hrbek: "Towards a periodization of African History", in T.O. Ranger (ed) Emerging Themes of African History. London (1965), pp. 37-52. E.J. Alagoa: "Dating Oral Tradition", JAH, XI, 2, (1970), pp. 161-176. G.I. Jones: "Time and Oral Tradition". JAH, VI, 2 (1965), pp. 153 - 60.
11. In some studies, a generation has been defined as the average difference between a king and the son or nephew who will succeed him ultimately if not immediately. See R. Oliver and G. Mathew: History of East Africa, Vol. 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press (1963), p. 172.

picked for sampling because they are said to be some of the oldest lineages that came into being after Yakurr migration.¹² The longest genealogy contained ten generations. This was Aneja lineage.

The problem of how to determine the duration of a generation in terms of years was, again, tackled through another sampling. A sample of twenty names was collected. The sample concentrated on those who were certain of their dates of birth and those of their first surviving sons. The case in point shows that those interviewed were born between 1925 and 1978. The average generation obtained is above 30 years.¹³ Since the longest genealogy is ten generations, it should follow that the lineage (Aneja) is not less than 300 years since it came into being. However, when the writer cross-checked this result with the result obtained through the extrapolation of kinglists, he thought that it should be necessary to allow a margin of error of five years. This aspect is explained below under the discussion on regnal mean. If a margin of five years is

12. YHT. 53, Ibor Esu Oden; Ugep, 30/4/77.

13. An average of 30.8 years was obtained from the computation of the sample.

allowed, then the first ancestors of Aneja would have lived 300 years(i.e. plus or minus the margin of error). It is necessary in practice to assume such margin of error since absolute mathematical accuracy is not possible in such a situation.

This conclusion, however, raises a number of problems. The first is whether the conditions which existed in the period under reference - 1925-1978-can be applied to the earliest period of this study. Secondly, if the conditions are not uniform, can the conclusions of the sampled period hold true for the earlier period? Thirdly, is the sampling representative of both the literate and illiterate members of Yakurr society and, if not, why? The answers to these questions indicate the inherent problems in attempts at dating oral data generally and in attempting to propose a chronology for Yakurr history based on genealogies and generations in particular.

The sampled genealogies used in this study cover both the literate and illiterate members of the Yakurr. But the generation samples are collected from literate members of the Yakurr who know their specific years of birth and those of their sons. The problem of whether the results of these samplings should have a uniform application

throughout the period of this study is arguable. But the writer strongly feels that the result of 300 ± 5 years is possible. This is because two other methods employed in cross-examining the reliability of the result obtained from the genealogical sampling indicated similar results. These are the kinglist and extant records from written sources.

A sample of kinglists was collected from the five Yakurr Villages. An average of the datable parts of the kinglists was worked out. The results were not uniform for the various Yakurr settlements. For instance, in computing the regnal mean, the writer obtained the following result:-

Ugep	20.6
Ekorì	25.0
Nko	24.3
Nkpani	24.8
Idomi	20.3

However, for purpose of uniformity, the writer used the Ekorì figure of 25.0 to work out the undated portion of the kinglist and assumed a margin of error of five years which is the difference between the highest and lowest regnal means.

The estimated dates of events derived from the extrapolation agree with the oral tradition in

the more recent period. For instance, the names of the rulers for the various towns during the British punitive expedition against Yakurr is Ugep:(Obol Ubana); Ekori (Obol Eta) and Nko: (Obol Usang). The incident itself took place in 1898. From the computation, table (i) below shows the period during which these rulers may have been in power:

Table (i)
(BASED ON EXTRAPOLATION OF KINGLISTS).

UGE P	EKORI	NKO
UBANA	ETA	USANG
c. 1885-1910	c. 1894-1919	c. 1873-1898

These dates fall within the incident bracket-1898.

Table (ii) below shows the application of the result of the extrapolation to the traditions relating to the coming into being of four Yakurr settlements after migration.

Table (ii)
(FOUNDATION DATES FOR YAKURR TOWNS).

TOWN	REGNAL MEAN	PROBABLE DATE OF BEING
UGE P	25 Years	c. 1660
EKORI	" "	c. 1694
IDOMI	" "	c. 1690
NKO	" "	c. 1698

Table (iii) below shows a comparison of the results obtained from genealogical computation and those obtained from regnal extrapolation.

TABLE III. (GENEALOGICAL DATES).

TOWN	PROBABLE DATE OF BEING
UGEPI	A (Kinglist) 1660 B (Lineage) 1678. (Aneje)
EKORI	A (Kinglist) 1694 B (Lineage) 1708 (Akugom)
NKO	A (Kinglist) 1698 B (Lineage) 1708 (Lepakom)

An analysis of table (iii) shows that, for Ugepi, the time differential between the Kinglist result and the genealogical result is 18 years.

According to oral tradition, Ukpawen lineage(Ugepi) is the oldest lineage.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the writer did not succeed in compiling the genealogy of Ukpawen. If Ukpawen came into being before Aneja, it stands to reason that Ukpawen was founded earlier than 1678. A more serious problem, however, is in table (ii). According to the results in table (ii), Idomi came into being about 1690. This result contradicts Yakurr oral

tradition. Idomi was the first place of settlement by Yakurr migrants. Consequently, Idomi settlement should have come into being before Ugep(c.1660), which is the second Yakurr settlement after migration.

The 'Idomi discrepancy' can be explained. One of the disagreements that occurred during my interviews at Idomi was over the inclusion of a name in the Kinglist. It was argued that Obol Ibor II (c.1865-1890) was the son of a slave mother. Therefore, he could not have been, by tradition, a ruler in Idomi. A majority held that he was a legitimate ruler.¹⁵ The disagreement suggests that there is a possibility of some names being dropped out of Idomi Kingslist.¹⁶

The figures of the Kinglists and genealogical estimates, therefore, give a fairly good idea of the period in which the events in tables (i), (ii), and (iii) above took place.

15. YHT. 1: 13/8/76.

16. This tendency will not be peculiar to the Yakurr. Studies have shown that names are sometimes dropped from Kinglists intentionally or by loss of memory e.g. J.S. Boston: "Oral Tradition and the History of the Igala." JAH, Vol. X, 1, (1969) pp. 29-43; J. Vansina: Oral Traditions: p. 148. D.P. Henige: op. cit., p. 16; D. H. Jones: op. cit., p. 163; G.I. Jones: op. cit., p. 2.

The second device used in cross-examining the reliability of the figures in the proposed tentative chronology is from existing records on Yakurr. Forde suggests that the present settlements of the Yakurr came into being in about 1800.¹⁷ Other records show that a good number of slaves came from Yakurr to the Efik (Calabar) market at the coast.¹⁸ Yakurr oral traditions corroborate such records. Obol Ibor II (c. 1865-1890) of Idomi is said to be the son of a slave mother. According to the Yakurr, they participated in the Cross River trade after migration. It was during this period that the category of rich men (Yasu) appeared in their society. It is, therefore, more probable that an Osu (rich man) bought a slave girl who begot Ibor who in c. 1865-1890 ruled Idomi. Of significance for this study is the implication of this reconstruction of the tradition. In Yakurr, it is a standing practice that a ruler is installed when he

17. D. . Forde: Yako Studies, London, (1964) p. 179.

18. Rose Mary Harris: "The History of Trade at Ikom, Eastern Nigeria." Africa, Vol. XLII, (1972) p. 127. M.E. Noah: Efik Expansion and Influence in the Cross River basin 1884-1935. CHJ, Vol. II, 1 (1978) p. 11. A.E. Afigbo: "Pre-colonial Trade Links between South-Eastern Nigeria and the Benue Valley." JAS, Vol. 4, 2, (1977) pp. 119-139.

is seen to be Onotam - mature in experience and age.¹⁹ The writer thinks that such a person falls within the 35 to 50 years age bracket. The Yakurr installation practice, therefore, suggests that Obol Ibor's mother may have been bought in the second decade of the 19th century.

Afigbo has suggested that the Aro came to prominence about the middle of the 17th century through their control of the Aro oracle and their participation in the slave trade.²⁰ Yakurr traditions are replete with stories of Aro activities in Yakurr. For instance, Imom Okan (a man of Yakurr extraction) was sold into slavery by the Aro but he escaped and returned. Besides, the slave route from Ikom passed through Yakurr territory. One of the Yakurr towns served as a resting point along the

19. The term Onotam describes a mature person in terms of experience and age. The emphasis is on ones sense of maturity which is in itself a function of experience rather than age. It is not unusual for people to reject offers on the excuse that they are not the most eligible in terms of age.
20. A.E. Afigbo: "Pre-colonial Trade Links between South-Eastern Nigeria and the Benue Valley." JAS, Vol. 4, 27 (1977), pp. 119-139; "Trade and Politics on the Cross River Basin, 1895-1905." THSG, Vol. XIII, 1 (1972), p. 21.

slave route from Ikom to Akunakuna.²¹ The slave trade was abolished in 1807. In Calabar, the missionaries made sure that slave trade abolition law was obeyed. Ayandele has observed that following the abolition legislation the Efik traders were quick to make the transition from a slave economy to one that came to be supported by palm oil trade.²² Noah has also noted that the Efik took the abolition legislation seriously and so could not be deceived to pursue the slave trade having accepted palm oil trade.²³ What these records suggest is that the prevalence of the slave trade in the Cross River basin is not in the 1800s, but much earlier. Since the Yakurr participated in this (slave) trade in their new localities, it must have been before 1800. Forde's suggestion of c. 1800 is, therefore, a miscalculation.

There is no written record indicating the period of Yakurr migration. The following tentative

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21. R. Harris: "The History of Trade at Ikom, Eastern Nigeria." Africa, Vol. XLII(1972), 127.
A.J.H. Latham: Old Calabar, 1600-1891, p. 28.
 22. E.A. Ayandele: "The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria: 1842-1914", London, Longmans(1966), p. 17.
 23. M. E. Noah: "Efik Expansion" CHJ, pp. 14 - 15.

chronology is therefore proposed.

(TABLE IV)

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY BASED ON A GENERATION MEAN
OF 30 YEARS OBTAINED IN YAKURR

	<u>Generations from 1978²⁴</u>	<u>Approximate Dates</u>
17.		c.1497-1527 +/- 85
16.		c.1527-1557 " 80
15.		c.1557-1587 " 75
14.	General Dislocation of Yakurr ancestral homeland.	c.1587-1617 " 70
13.	Yakurr Migration	c.1617-1647 " 65
12.	Some Yakurr arrive Umor(Ugep) area.	c.1647-1677 " 60
11.	Foundation of Ekori and Nko	c.1677-1707 " 55
10.	Yakurr Ibe Nkpani	c.1707-1737 " 50
9.		c.1737-1767 " 45
8.		c.1767-1797 " 40
7.		c.1797-1827 " 35
6.	Beecroft visits Ekori Waterside.	c.1827-1857 " 30
5.		c.1857-1887 " 25
4.	British Punitive Expedition against Ekori.	c.1887-1917 " 20
3.		1917-1947 " 15
2.		1947-1977 " 10
1.		1978 " 5

24. The data for the computation of this
chronology was obtained in 1976 - 8.

It is important to stress that the chronological proposition is an attempt at providing a chronological frame-work for Yakurr history. It is, therefore, far from firm. One can only hope that this effort will stimulate research into Yakurr studies.

Hopefully, misconceptions and errors shall be improved upon in the works of future scholars of Yakurr history.

CHAPTER ONE

YAKURR ORIGIN

The Yakurr of the Middle Cross River area in Yakurr Local Government Authority live in five neighbouring compact towns, each of which used to be politically autonomous. They are by far the largest ethnic group situated between the Efik (Calabar) at the Atlantic coast board and the Ogoja at the northern limits of the Cross River State of Nigeria. Projected population figures based on the 1973 census show that the Yakurr number about 300,000.¹ Today, Yakurr territory lies between latitude 5°40' and 6°10' North and longitude 8° and 8°50' East. This area is one hundred and forty kilometres north-west of Calabar - the State capital.

A study of Yakurr history should start with their origin. The question of origin is, however, a difficult aspect of history especially when it has to deal with non-literate peoples. In the circumstances of the Yakurr, some information is better than none at all. This chapter shall thus, focus

1. The figure is derived from a bulletin published by the Cross River State Ministry of Economic Development, Statistics Division, Calabar.(1979) (ed) P.H. Iwara. The actual figure in the bulletin is 294, 893.

on Yakurr origin. The objectives of the writer is to attempt to answer three questions: What is meant by the term Yakurr? Who are the Yakurr, and what is their Origin? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to mention that there are two main limitations to the answers. The first is the lack of published material and the second is the nature of Yakurr oral tradition.

THE ORIGIN OF THE YAKURR

One way of defining the term Yakurr is to employ the language spoken by the people. The Yakurr speak Loko. But, they refer to themselves as Yakurr. An indigene is called Okurr(singular). The plural formation employs the prefix 'y' and changes the 'o' to 'a' to give Yakurr.² Thus, the term Yakurr means an indigenous speaker of Loko. The term is an indigenous expression. Who then are the indigenous speakers of Loko?

According to Yakurr traditions, they are the descendants of the migrants from Umoen (Yakurr ancestral homeland) between the period of about

2. F.D.D. Winston: "The Nigerian Cross River language" in The Polyglotta Africana Part I, p. 74. Part II, p. 122; (Idem). "The Nominal Class System of Loko". ALS, 3, (1962), 49 - 70.

1550 to 1650.³ The Yakurr are said to have migrated from their ancestral homeland to their present locations: Ugep, Ekorì, Nkpani, Nko and Idomi, all in Obubra Division of the Cross River State.

According to a reliable informant,⁴ the Yakurr are those who by inheritance are entitled to free use of Yakurr territorial land and are indigenous speakers of Loko. This answer is simplistic. There are many people who, today, have become Yakurr by absorption. Yakurr society tolerated the 'marriage' of slave girls who eventually were absorbed into various families.⁵

This accepted norm makes it difficult to identify the pure biological descendants of the migrants from the absorbed descendants of the Yakurr.

3. The date is obtained from the tentative chronology proposed for this study.
4. YHT 1. Chief Omini Ifere. Idomi, 13/8/76.
5. D. Forde: Yako Studies, pp. 121-9. This attitude was not peculiar to the Yakurr. The history of slavery in Africa shows that slavery was not a permanent status. One rose from it to positions of eminence. There was the case of Jaja of Opobo who rose from slavery to the headship of his House.

Besides, a comparison which acknowledges only those who can inherit property in the form of land according to an informant, fails to take into consideration those Yakurr who may have left the rest of them either as political refugees, adventurers, or soldiers of fortune. Such people are still Yakurr and are of historical importance. If it is argued that such people have become absorbed into their new societies, then the same should apply to the absorbed members of the Yakurr. However, these observations do not invalidate the view that the Yakurr are those who have a right of inheritance of landed property and speakers of Loko. This is because in the final analysis, it remains true that the Yakurr, whether pure or absorbed, have a territory, a language and a culture that mark them out from others. The problem can be examined from another dimension by using the linguistic parameter. According to linguists,⁶ the Yakurr belong to the Upper Cross sub-family of the Benue-Congo complex of languages. It is believed that the ancestors of the above groups once belonged to one social

6. "The Languages of Nigeria by language families". A bulletin of the Department of Linguistics, University of Ibadan, (1976).

complex which broke up some two thousand years ago?⁷ In other words, the proto-group spoke a common language but with the split, its members went into various regions where they today speak dialects of the proto-language. Explaining the nature of the present linguistic relations between the various members of the original group (Upper Cross), the writer was told that the various groups of the Upper Cross have been derived from a single social group, parts of which have at various times become separated. The spatial distribution of the people concerned seems to correspond to the length of the period of separate developments.⁸

The above postulate has been undermined by two basic considerations. The first is that there is an unproven assumption that the modern speakers of Loko are by origin Yakurr. It has been shown that most of them were absorbed. That is, the ancestors of some of these inhabitants came from various sources and directions. Therefore, to lump every ethnic group in Yakurr as deriving from the proto-group represents an effort to cover up an enormous

7. YHT A4, Kay Williamson, Ibadan, 29/1/76.

8. Ibid., 29/1/76.

complexity of historical development. Secondly, assuming that the Yakurr existed, is that language (Loko) not as divergent as that spoken by both the Doki (Uyanga) and Agwagune cluster, both of whom have been classified as belonging to one sub-family, Upper Cross? Indeed, the divergence is so obvious that it is difficult to believe that these groups originated from one proto-group or social complex. It does appear that a good deal of archaeological as well as historical data may be needed to supplement the linguistic contribution on this issue. This is not to undermine the important role linguists have to play in clarifying the emergence of an ethnic identity call Yakurr. The problem is that, as of now, very little has been done in that direction. What this analysis suggests is that the problem of who the Yakurr are cannot be solved in isolation. It is the same attitude that should be adopted to the issue of where Yakurr origin is. This is because some of the issues involved (in the problem of Yakurr origin) have to do with archaeology and linguistics.

The answer to the problem of Yakurr origin, shall be approached from three sides. The first is the origin of the Negro race of whom the Yakurr

form a part. The second is the time and place of differentiation. The third is Yakurr tradition of origin. The present state of knowledge of African history, archaeology, anthropology and linguistics suggests that the origin of the Negro race of whom the Yakurr form a part appears to be below the belt south of the latitude of Asselar (north-east of Timbuktu) and Khartoum at which places the remains of the earliest representatives of the Negro race have been found.⁹ The significance of this information is that it sets the territorial limits within which to look for the Yakurr ancestral homeland. The research into the subject matter of Negro origin, is still in progress.

It may well be that in the future a solution of the Negro origin may throw further light on the problem of Yakurr origin. The time and place of differentiation of the Yakurr from Negro stock is another issue to be analysed. The analysis shall depend solely on linguistic evidence since archaeology has yet made no contribution towards the solution of the problems. The chart on the

9. D. Fage and R. Oliver: A Short History of Africa: Penguin (1962), 19-22; D. Wiedner: A History of Africa South of the Sahara: N. Y. (1962), 11 - 13.

following page shows the Benue-Congo of Negro languages. Loko is one of the languages which linguists designate Upper Cross: a sub-group of the Benue-Congo. In an interview with Professor Kay Williamson on the genetic relationship of the Benue-Congo linguistic family, she suggested that the Upper Cross linguistic group must have diverged about 2,000 years ago.¹⁰ Carl Hoffman suggested that the Upper Cross group diverged between 1,500 years and 2,000 years ago.¹¹

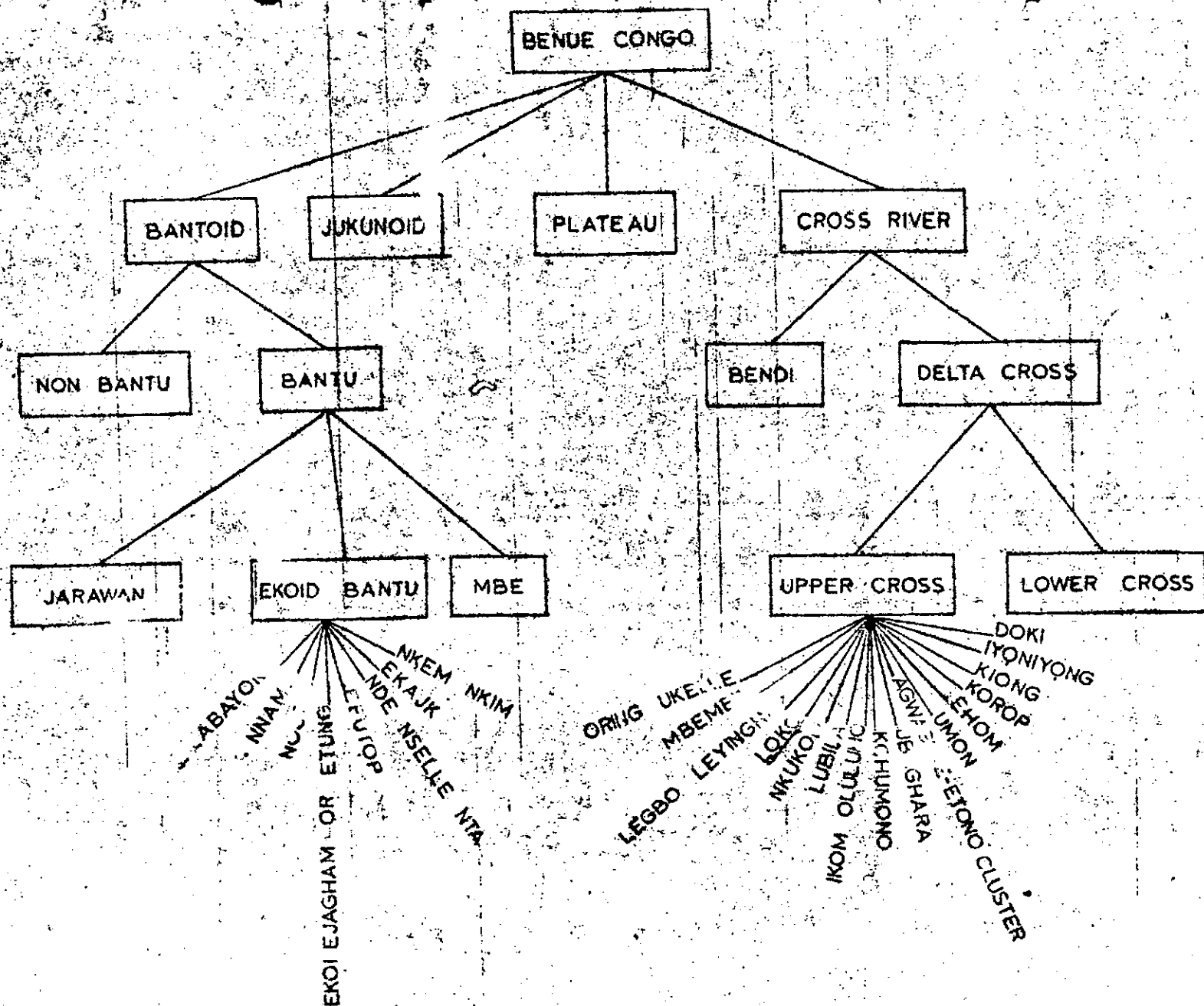
The historical inference is that the Yakurr as a distinct people began emerging from about 2,000 years ago. The differentiation took place in Africa south of the Sahara. Precisely, where this differentiation took place shall be considered when analysing Yakurr tradition of origin.

YAKURR TRADITION OF ORIGIN

The Yakurr tradition of origin is that their ancestral homeland is called Umoen. The area is said to situate in a locality called Lekanakpakpa .

10. YHT A4: Kay Williamson, Ibadan, 29/1/76.
Professor Kay Williamson is a linguist.

11. Ibid.,



4 GENETIC RELATIONSHIP OF THE BENUE CONGO FAMILY
 BASED ON LANGUAGE FAMILIES OF NIGERIA
 COMPILED BY PROF. CARL HOFFMAN 1976.

In that area, according to the tradition, there lived a person called Ebongara Umor. This person was a hermaphrodite - possessing male and female reproductive organs. Ebongara Umor one day miraculously had a daughter. When the girl grew up she was held hostage by a water spirit called Ojonajona. Ebongara consulted a soothsayer to find out what to do in order to have her daughter back. The soothsayer advised Ebongara to sing the following song:

Lowi kam wen omi (2 times)

A yeni ta kam wen omi

Translation: Water(spirit) please give me my child (2 times)

You should please give me my child.

For this pleading Ojonajona (water spirit) returned the child. Soon after, another water spirit held the girl hostage again. Ebongara went back to the soothsayer a second time. The soothsayer told Ebongara that it was the water spirit called Nkpokiwen that held the daughter hostage, and that Nkpokiwen desired to have a girl for his male child. Ebongara was, however, advised to plead with Nkpokiwen.

Ebongara Umor went back to the stream and sang the song again

Lowi kam wen omi (2 times)

A ye ni ta kom wen omi.

The daughter emerged with a man from the stream. These two later married and had many children. It was one of the daughters of marriage called Isuen who was the great grand mother of the Yakurr. The other offspring were the ancestors of the people of Ojo, Okuni, Ikom and Nsofan. The Yakurr have, therefore, been living together as neighbours with Ojo, Okuni, Ikom and Nsofan at Lekanakpakpa, until the Yakpa¹² fought them (Yakurr) and they (Yakurr) were forced to migrate to their present localities.¹³

This tradition, leaves unexplained a lot of issues. Biologically, hermaphrodites reproduce by cross fertilisation. With whom did Ebongara Umor cross fertilise as to have a child? How was Ebongara Umor herself created? If she was an hermaphrodite, why do the Yakurr decide to recognise

12. Yakpa were the neighbours of the Yakurr in their ancestral homeland.

13. This is the version which is known even by small children in Yakurr. The story was narrated by Chief Omini Iferi at Idomi - 13/8/76. Vide YHT 1.

her female nature in preference to the male? Had Isuen other children - who should be more closely related to the Yakurr? The tradition has not answered these and perhaps more questions. But, the names which appear in the tradition attract attention: Umor is the traditional name for Ugep which suggests, although in a very vague form, the genealogy of the Yakurr and also explains the historical evolution of some of the Yakurr social institutions such as double descent. According to Forde, each child in Yakurr belongs to a matrilineage. A matrilineage consists of a woman, her children, her daughter's children. While a patrilineage consists of a man, his children and son's children. Both groups are extended families which are co-ordinated by a genealogical charter of descent from a male or female founder.¹⁴ According to this tradition, the male and female founders of the Yakurr genealogical charter of descent would appear to be the unnamed daughter of Ebongara Umor and the unnamed son of Nkpokiwen. The line of females and their relations is, in Yakurr terminology, called Lejima while the line of males and their relations is called Kepun. Each

14. D. Forde: op. cit., pp. 85 - 120.

of these groups owns property, has certain of its own rituals and obligations towards one another. For instance, Kepun has a dwelling area in which a majority of its men and their wives and children reside. Like each Lejima, each Kepun has a name which is used to refer to the people and the dwelling area.

The tradition does not appear to be reliable. This is because no one witnessed Ebongara's creation and she herself had given no account of it. Therefore, it must have been invented by an original informant who was not an eye-witness. But of historical significance is the name Lekanakpakpa which is mentioned in the tradition. Today, the name is used to refer to the Cameroun-Obudu mountain range. An informant confirmed that the name Lekanakpakpa mentioned in the tradition refers to the same area as the Lekanakpakpa of today.¹⁵ Therefore, the Lekanakpakpa in the tradition more or less corresponds to that area of the Cameroun-Obudu range as it stands today.

The Cameroun-Nigeria borderline has figured prominently in the scholarly discussion on Bantu

15. YHT 2. Ugep, 18/8/76, (Obol Yaseni is aged c. 89 years.)

origin.¹⁶ The Yakurr tradition of origin makes reference to an area that has figured prominently in the discussion on the Bantu origin. The word Bantu is a linguistic term. Today, the term refers to a group of African languages spoken south of an irregular line running eastwards from Calabar(Nigeria) passing north of Lake Victoria and turning south into Tanzania.¹⁷ The word itself means People. The origin and migration of the Bantu has been a subject of considerable research. Malcolm Guthrie made a comparison of 22,000 Bantu words from 200 Bantu languages. He came out with the conclusion that 2,300 words were common root words which have a wide regional distribution. Plotting the percentages of these root words on a map of Africa, he found that the highest percentage formed a cluster on the map in the shape of a long flat ellipse with its main axis running east and west. The centre of the cluster coincided with the Nigeria-Cameroun axis.

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16. J. Posnansky: "Bantu Genesis Archaeological Reflections." JAH, 9, 1(1968) pp. 1-11; R. Oliver: "Bantu Origins." JAH, Vol. 7, 3,(1966) pp. 361-367. H. Johnston: A Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi Bantu Languages, Vol. 1, Oxford (1919) pp. 15-17. M. Guthrie, "Bantu Origins: A tentative hypothesis", JAL 1, (1962) pp. 9 - 21 etc.
17. The Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 3, p. 216. Everyman's Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, (1967)(ed) p. 24, The New Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. 1, 15th ed., p. 797.

He, therefore, concluded that that must have been the Bantu homeland.¹⁸ Other language experts have suggested that the origin of the original mother language of all the many Bantu languages of today is in the region of the Niger and Benue River.¹⁹ Yet **another group, on the basis of archaeological** evidence, has suggested that the principal region of early development of the Bantu lies within the grasslands of the Eastern Congo basin or what are now known as the provinces of Katanga and Kassai in the modern Republic of Zaire. According to this school, it was from there the Bantu migrated east, west and south.²⁰ Thus, the hypotheses suggest that the Nigerian-Zairian axis is the centre of the Bantu diaspora. This conclusion is of historical importance for this study. First, the various views on the Bantu origin have pointed to an area south of the latitude of Asselar in general and in particular the

18. M. Guthrie: "Bantu Origin: A tentative hypothesis". JAL, Vol. 1(1962) pp. 9-21.

19. H. Johnston: A Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi Bantu Languages, Vol. 1, Oxford Clarendon Press, (1918). J.H. Greenberg: Languages of Africa, Bloomington(1966). The Language of Africa: The Hague(1963); Essays in Linguistics, Chicago(1963); R.G. Armstrong: The Study of West African Languages, Ibadan,(1964).

20. J. Posnansky: "Bantu Genesis: Archaeological Reflections." JAH, Vol. 9, 1,(1968) 1-11; Roland Oliver: "The Problem of Bantu Expansion" JAH, Vol. 7, 3,(1966), pp. 361 - 376.

Niger-Congo axis. Second, if the Yakurr are Bantu then their origin is the Bantu homeland.

Loko (the language of the Yakurr) is classified under the Upper Cross linguistic group. But, it appears that this classification of Loko is tentative. This is because linguists are yet to come to a consensus as to whether Loko is Bantu or semi-Bantu. Winston held that as far as the nominal class system is concerned, Loko conforms to Guthrie's requirements for Bantoid, and so it is semi-Bantu. On this basis, Winston classified Loko as Bantoid.²¹ Winston suggests that there should be a synthesis whereby clearcut criteria can be established by which language may be judged Bantu or semi-Bantu.²² Winston's suggestion appears to derive from linguistic literature on the problem of the classification of Bantu and semi-Bantu languages. This is because Talbot classified Loko as Ekoi.²³ Abraham included the Ekoi among the true Bantu

21. F.D.D. Winston: "The Nominal Class System of Loko", ALS, 3, (1962) pp. 49 - 70.

22. Ibid.,

23. Talbot and Mulhall: The Physical Anthropology of Southern Nigeria. London, C.U.P., p. 1 (see also the table in the appendix).

languages.²⁴ Crabb, on the other hand, classified Loko as Ekoid Bantu,²⁵ a term Guthrie suggested should be called Bantoid. Cook suggested that linguistically the Kohumono and Doki are semi-Bantu.²⁶ Buf Huffman classified Loko, Kohumono and Doki, among others, as Upper Cross.²⁷ In other words, Hoffman's classification is what Cook regards as semi-Bantu which Arbaham regards as true Bantu. Similarly, Winston's Bantoid agrees with Hoffman's Upper Cross. Thus, Loko linguistically is either semi-Bantu or true Bantu..

There is a possible explanation for these differences in linguistic nomenclature, interpretation and classification of Loko. The writer believes that the material upon which these linguists worked is similar. A possible explanation for the difference of opinion might be methodological. This is because the use of the terms Bantu, Semi-Bantu, Bantoid, Ekoid Bantu, Ekoi and Upper Cross suggests that the

24. R.C. Abrahams: The Principles of Tiv. London, (1968) Crown Agents.

25. D.W. Crabb: Ekoid Bantu Languages of Ogoja, Eastern Nigeria; West African Language Monographs, 4 (1965).

26. T.L. Cook: "Some Tentative Notes on the Kohumono Language"(1969); "Doki-A Brief Note"(1975) in Research Notes. 2,(3). A Bulletin of the Dept., of Linguistics, University of Ibadan

27. C. Hoffman: "The languages of Nigeria by Language families". A bulletin of the Dept. of Linguistics, University of Ibadan, (1976).

creators of these terms have models in mind. A model is a prototype of what is Bantu and Semi-Bantu. Thus, for some of these scholars Loko fits into the semi-Bantu prototype while for others Loko fits into the true Bantu prototype.

As far as the Yakurr and Loko are concerned, the linguistic material is constant. The variable is the linguist. The multifarious linguistic nomenclatures only imply that research is in its infancy. This notwithstanding, it should be remarked that the review of the linguistic literature on the Bantu and semi-Bantu has some historical value. As Newman points out, language groupings into **families** or sub-families is an evolutionary historical circumstance. Linguistic classification into families should not be confused with groupings based on language typology.²⁸ Greenberg puts the idea more succinctly and tersely "... classification is the basis for practically all historical inference drawn from language".²⁹ Murdock holds

28. P. Newman: "Linguistic Relationships: Language Shifting and Historical Inference" in Afrika Un Ubersee, Vol. 53 (1970) pp. 217 - 225.

29. J.H. Greenberg: "Historical Inference from Linguistic Research in Sub-Saharan Africa" Boston University Papers in African History. Vol. 1, (1964) Boston p. 6 (ed) J. Butler.

that in the absence of written records, linguistic relationships provide by far the most dependable evidence of historical connections.³⁰

The historical inference, from the linguistic review on whether Loko is Bantu or semi-Bantu, is that if Loko is Bantu, then Yakurr origin is perhaps the area of the Bantu-language cluster within the Nigeria-Cameroun axis described by Guthrie in his Bantu Origin Hypothesis. This area seems to correspond to the area referred to in Yakurr tradition as Lekanakpakpa. However, if Loko is semi-Bantu (Upper Cross), we would need first a linguistic determination of the relationship between the terms Bantu and semi-Bantu. Secondly, we shall require further linguistic research to determine the origin of the semi-Bantu for purposes of historical inference and otherwise. Unless that is done, it is not possible to make further contribution to Yakurr origin using linguistic evidence.

The next important issue worth mentioning is to draw attention to the statement in the tradition to the effect that the Ojo, Okuni and Nsofan were of the same grand parents as the Yakurr and that they

30. G.P. Murdock: Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture, History: NY. (1959) p. 12.

all once lived in the same environment: Lekanakpakpa. In the absence of archaeological evidence, this statement shall, again, be subjected to linguistic scrutiny. Linguistically, the languages of Ojo, Okuni and Nsofan are classified as Upper Cross and Ekoid Bantu respectively (using Hoffman's classification). Ojo speaks Lubila. Okuni speaks Olulumo. Lubila and Olulumo are classified as Upper Cross. But Nsofan speaks Ejagham which is classified as Ekoid Bantu.

In linguistic theory related languages are said to derive from a common parent, if there is no evidence of language shifting. Language shifting occurs when one language absorbs another to a point where relics of the absorbed language are completely obliterated by the absorbing language. Applying this theory to the statement under analysis, it should mean that in the dim past Loko (Yakurr), Lubila (Ojo) and Olulumo (Okuni) were one language. Historically translated, it should mean that the Yakurr, Ojo and Okuni in the dim past (C. 2,000 years ago) had a single language now called Upper Cross (using Hoffman's nomenclature) which has become differentiated into more than one language.

This is very possible since language groups develop in the same way and by the same processes as those which produce dialectical variations in the same language except that the dialectical variations take a shorter time to be effected.³¹ Therefore, there can be no clearcut demarcation between a group of strongly differentiated dialects of a language and between a group of closely related languages. Therefore, since Libila, Olulumo and Loko are within the same linguistic group, there seems to be some authenticity in the statement of the tradition. To this extent, the statement is a possibility. But there is no evidence (oral or written) to suggest or show that Nsofan (Ejagham) has experienced language shifting. To this extent, therefore, the statement can be questioned.

Between August 1976 and February 1977, the writer conducted interviews among the Ojo, Okuni, Ikom, Nsofan and others whose names have been mentioned in Yakurr traditions or the traditions of these other peoples.³² The writer's aim in having

31. F.D.D. Winston: op. cit., p. 122.

32. I visited Ojo on the 14th of September, 1976.

Okuni/Ikom	-	19/11/76.
Nsofan	-	12/2/77.
Edondon	-	17/2/77.
Ekuri Eyeyen	-	19/2/77.
Etara	-	21/2/77

these interviews was to collect the traditions of these peoples for purposes of cross-checking and analysing Yakurr traditions. As to the statement of the Yakurr tradition under analysis, it should be remarked that the traditions of Ojo, Okuni and Nsofan corroborated the Yakurr claim of having once lived together at Lekanakpakpa. The Ojo refer to their ancestral homeland as Lekpamkpa whereas the Okuni/Nsofan refer to the area as Onugi. It is in the same direction as Lekanakpakpa and Lekpamkpa. The origin of the words, Lekanakpakpa, Lekpamkpa and Onugi is not clear. Besides, the writer made attempts to visit and explore if possible this cradle of the Yakurr. The writer could not find even one guide. The area has become amorphous to all his informants. Nobody can precisely or imprecisely, say where the settlement was.

This chapter has attempted to explore the background necessary to our understanding of the story of the Yakurr. The problem handled was that of Yakurr cradle. It was found that Yakurr cradle like that of other non-literate people is not easy to determine. The solution of the problems is made more difficult by the lack of published material on the Yakurr and the nature of Yakurr oral

tradition. Yakurr cradle according to tradition, is Umoen. This area situates within Lekanakpakpa. Lekanakpakpa appears to be an area within the Nigeria-Cameroun axis and south of Obudu highlands. This conclusion is based on the evidence of Yakurr oral tradition and linguistics.

The chapter also *examined* two other problems: Who are the Yakurr and what is their origin? It is shown that the first question is difficult to answer on the basis of genealogy since it is impossible to identify the pure biological descendants from the absorbed descendants of the migrants from Umoen. But the Yakurr have a territory, a language and culture. The second question posed a similar problem. The linguistic classification of Loko is tentative. Thus, the debate on whether Loko is Bantu or semi-Bantu is still in progress. In the circumstance, a firm conclusion cannot be made until the linguistic issues of the Bantu and semi-Bantu origins have been resolved. Until then, it is suggested that the oral evidence which places Yakurr cradle in the neighbourhood of the Nigeria-Cameroun borderline and South of Obudu hills is more authentic and that that area is the Yakurr cradle.

In that area, the Yakurr had a conflict with a neighbouring village which resulted in war. Following a series of defeats, the Yakurr decided to migrate to found a new homeland. That migration and settlement constitute the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT (C. 1617-1647)

Migrations are a common aspect of life in pre-colonial Africa. The Bible contains the story of the Israelites in Egypt and their migration out of Africa into Palestine. Other records tell the story of Arab migrations into Africa.¹ The Bantu are said to have migrated from West and Central Africa to East Africa.² The Fulani are also said to have migrated across the Sahara to the Futa Toro region. The trans-atlantic slave trade led to millions of people being shipped from Africa to the Americas.

Such mass movements of peoples was also experienced by the Nigeria-Cameroun borderline in general and especially the Cross River basin. According to existing records on the Cross River, pre-colonial movements of peoples across the Cameroun-Adamawa ranges were not uncommon. The Ekoi groups of the Cross River basin appear to have

1. R. Hallet: Africa to 1875 Vol. 1, London, H.E.B. (1974) pp. 73 - 111.

2. R. Oliver and G. Matthew: History of East Africa. pp. 58 - 169.

entered Nigeria from the Camerouns through the Cross River gap.³ The Efik migrated from Uruan to their present settlements.⁴ The Yakurr are said to have migrated from the east - Oban forest-to their present settlements.⁵

The migration of the Yakurr in pre-colonial times is therefore not an uncommon phenomenon. For the Yakurr the period from the last decade of the 16th century to the fourth decade of the 17th century (c. 1597-c. 1647) was a time of mass movements. The Yakurr, Ojo, Okuni and Nsofan moved en masse from the Nigeria-Cameroun zone to new territories. On this activity, no contemporary written record is authentic. The most authentic information on the migrations in question is what the peoples of Yakurr, Ojo, Okuni and Nsofan have handed down about that past.

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3. R.K. Udo: "Environment and Peoples of Nigeria: a Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria" in Groundwork of Nigeria History, p. 8.
 4. M.E. Noah: Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans 1800 - 1885, p. 14.
 5. D. Forde: Yako Studies, p. 167; E.J. Alagoa: "Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta", in Groundwork of Nigerian History. p. 59.

CAUSES OF YAKURR MIGRATION

According to Yakurr tradition, their migration from Umoen was sparked off by a burial incident. There are two variants of this tradition. The first is that it was the practice for the Yakurr to be called upon to bury any human corpse from Nsofan village when the cause of death was unnatural. Such corpses were buried in a forest grove near the village. The owners of the corpse were, by custom, to provide the following: salt, pepper, palm oil and yekpang (a special wood for seasoning food). Women and children were prohibited by custom from attending such burials. It is said that that relationship had been going on for many years between the Yakurr and Nsofan.

One day a girl died. She was the only child of Mma Ogar of Nsofan village. The corpse was delivered to the Yakurr for interment. The provision for burial rites was met. The corpse was then conveyed to the forest cemetery for interment. Shortly after, Mma Ogar decided to witness the burial. She knew it was uncustomary to do that since she was a woman. Yet she trailed the Yakurr secretly to the forest cemetery.

At the cemetery, Mma Ogar was shocked by what she saw. She saw the Yakurr seated in a horse-shoe formation and in the centre were some men chopping up the corpse into pieces. She saw the meat set on fire to cook. While this was being done, she gently and quietly went to the village to inform the village head of Nsofan that contrary to the impression which the Nsofan had had that the Yakurr buried their (Nsofan) corpses, the Yakurr cooked and ate the meat.

It was this incident which provoked the people of Nsofan also called Yakpa to take up arms and pursue the Yakurr who ran first to the settlement of Yabila (Ojo) where they were told not to run (migrate?) and that the village head of Yabila and his people would intervene in order to pacify tempers in the environment. Eventually, the pacification attempt failed. The Yakurr, therefore, had to migrate.⁶

The second version is that Nsofan as a custom interred those who died unnaturally in a forest cemetery. The said forest cemetery separated the village of Umoen (Yakurr) from Nsofan. Part of

that evil forest was owned by Yakurr while the other part belonged to Yakpa (Nsofan).

One day the daughter of Mma Ogar of Nsofan died. The corpse was buried by the Yakpa(Nsofan) in the forest cemetery. A few days later, Mma Ogar went to the daughter's grave. To her surprise, she saw from a distance some Yakurr exhume the corpse and chop off its head. She tip-toed back to the village and informed the village head of Nsofan of what she saw. It was that incident which provoked the Yakpa(Nsofan) to take up arms against Yakurr.⁷

The value of a tradition depends upon the extent to which the account it renders is reliable. It is necessary to examine closely and critically the information contained in this tradition to ascertain its reliability or otherwise. To do this, there are a few questions which need to be answered. Is the tradition reliable? Why were the Yakurr burial specialists at Nsofan? Who are the Yakpa who attacked the Yakurr?

To determine the reliability of the tradition, it is necessary to find out whether the Ojo(Yabila) and Nsofan (Yakpa) traditions corroborate the Yakurr tradition. This because the Yakurr

tradition mentions the Ojo and Nsofan. The Ojo (Yabila) claim to have left Lekpamkpa because the soil was profaned.⁸ Nsofan admitted that they had a disagreement with Umoen (Yakurr). According to one informant, Mma Ogar was from Ekoma (Ikom/Okuni) but married to an Nsofan man. It was Mma Ogar who profaned 'Onugi' by committing sorcery and so forced them (Nsofan) to migrate to their present settlement.⁹ The informant denied any Yakpa (Nsofan) attack on Yakurr. Okuni and Ikom (Ekoma) traditions firmly assert that they migrated from Onugi because they were attacked by people they call Akpatai.

The traditions of these former neighbours of the Yakurr at Lekanakpakpa corroborate the Yakurr tradition. The information contained in these traditions, therefore, suggests that the Yakurr tradition is reliable. This is because, the various accounts suggest that the events leading to the mass migrations of these peoples were public. Thus, a large number or all of the initial informants of these traditions appear to be eye-witnesses. In this sense, this tradition appears to be more

8. YHT. 4 Ojo - Uyanga 14/9/76.

9. YHT. 14 Nsofan - Ikom 12/2/77.

reliable than the Yakurr tradition of origin. The MMA Ogar incident suggests that the original informants must have based their information on eye-witness accounts. The difference in content between the variants suggests the degree of distortion the tradition has undergone during the process of transmission.

The answer to the question of why it was the Yakurr who buried the dead at Nsofan is not clear. There is a lack of corroboration by Yakurr neighbours. Nsofan, Ojo and Okuni deny ever handing over their dead to the Yakurr for burial. Besides, the Yakurr are unable to remember examples of those families who were responsible for such burials whilst MMA Ogar's name could still be remembered. Yet Yakurr tradition is firm that they (Yakurr) interred all 'bad deaths'¹⁰ in Nsofan. The writer thinks that the Yakurr claim about such burials should not be interpreted literally. It is possible that the Yakurr claim arises from a ritual incident in which the Yakurr ate human flesh or the claim is referring to an incident which the Yakurr themselves do not

10. These were those who died from small pox, suicide, and leprocy. It also included women who had twins and had to be executed.

want to relate. This is because, according to tradition, human blood was used in the preparation of certain medicinal charms meant to toughen a man in war (Ojilikpoto). Before the Yakurr move out to fight a war, soldiers drank Ojilikpoto. To the Yakurr, magical protection was as important as conventional weaponry in preparing for war. Therefore, it is most probable that the claim is an allusion to a ritual eating of human flesh before or during the course of the war with the Yakpa.

The Yakurr and Okuni claim that they were attacked by the Yakpa and Akpatai respectively. It would appear that the name Yakpa refers to the people of Nsofan. Nsofan confirms that they are so called by their neighbours. But, they deny the claim by the Yakurr that it was they who fought them and Okuni thereby causing their migration to their present locations. The question is who then are these Yakpa?

This question is problematic. The Yakurr tradition does not provide an answer. It was not Nsofan that attacked the Yakurr as the tradition claims. The name Akpa has attracted a lot of attention from many scholars who worked on the Cross River. In all probability the name Yakpa

and Akpa refers to one and the same people. Some scholars have suggested that the Akpa who have been mentioned in many traditions of the Cross River area were probably fugitives from the Jukun of the Benue Valley. Anene suggests that the fugitives from the Jukun power arrived in Ekoi land (Cross River) and then broke up into smaller groups and scattered into various isolated openings in the forest, triggering off waves of other migrations.¹¹ Anene's remark implies that the said fugitives came from outside Ekoi land into the Cross River. But, this idea has been controverted by Erim who suggests that it is more probable that the Jukun moved out of Ekoi land to the Benue Valley at about 1600. He cites the Jukun tradition which confirms this and the distribution of related languages which supports the Jukun claim of migrating from the Cross River.¹² Meek argued similarly by holding that the similarities in traditional religious practice between the Jukun and Ekoi suggest that the former must have planted their religious practice among

11. J.C. Anene: International Boundaries of Nigeria: London, (1970), pp. 55 - 58.

12. E.O. Erim: "A Pre-colonial History of the Idoma of Central Nigeria", Ph.D. Thesis (Dalhousie University) 1977; pp. 116-118; 133.

the latter.¹³ Meek sounds like Lucas who used religious similarities between Yoruba and Egypt to derive the former from the latter. Arikpo accepted the idea of the Jukun hypothesis and brilliantly made an explanation based on the theory of cultural diffusion between the savanna and forest belts.¹⁴ It appears that Arikpo was concerned with an attempt to link developments within the Cross River basin with a centralised state. The Jukun, being one of the nearest centralised states to the Cross River basin were thus credited to have influenced events in the Cross River. Alagoa, appears to have accepted the Jukun hypothesis. Quoting Arikpo he writes:

"....most of the peoples of the Cross River Valley relate how they migrated from somewhere north of the Cross River as a result of pressure from the Ankpa... the Aros, Ejagham, Yakurr must have come from an area in the Valley of the Benue". 15

Alagoa left one in a dilemma when he uncritically employed Talbot's and Arikpo's views on the issue. Talbot and Arikpo referred to migrations from the

13. C.K. Meek: Sudanese Kingdom. London, Kegan Paul (1931) p. 55.

14. O. Arikpo: "Who are the Nigerians? Lugard lectures, Lagos, 1957." Dr. Okoi Arikpo (SAN) is a scholar of local extraction. He was born in Ugep (Yakurr).

15. E.J. Alagoa in Groundwork of Nigerian History. p. 59.

Bantu areas in the East into the Cross River basin.¹⁶ Erim's study of Yalla shows that they migrated from the Benue Valley into the Cross River basin in about the 17th century.¹⁷ There is a basic assumption in Talbot's, Arikpo's and Alagoa's views: that Jukun is one and the same as Kwararafa. Erim disputes the idea. According to Erim, the Jukun became part of the Kwararafa empire at about 1600 when they (Jukun) migrated into the Benue Valley.¹⁸ Afigbo has dismissed the idea of deriving the Akpa and the Aro from the Jukun. To him, it is an attempt to sever a section of the Igbo from the main stock with "a single savage stroke of the Hamitic axe".¹⁹

There is incontrovertible evidence to show that the Jukun were a remarkable people. They successfully established an extensive empire which in the days of its prosperity dominated a large area of Hausaland and the Benue region of Adamawa. The Bornu chronicle shows that Kororofa (Jukun) had close

16. P.A. Talbot: Op. cit., p. 67; O. Arikpo, Op. cit., p. 6.

17. E.O. Erim: "Yalla Migration and Settlement" Passim.

18. Erim: "A Pre-colonial History of the Idoma of Central Nigeria." pp. 133 - 4.

19. A.E. Afigbo in Groundwork. p. 74.

political relations with Borno.²⁰ The Kano chronicle contains records of extensive devastation wrought by Jukun armies in Hausaland including Kano itself.²¹ Sultan Bello suggested, in a description of the Sudan which he gave to Clapperton in 1827, that Jukun activities extended as far south as Calabar. As proof he mentioned an anchorage called Atakpa (which according to Bello meant King of Akpa) in Calabar port which belonged to the Jukun King.²² It might well be that the extensive wars waged by the Jukun were intended to provide slaves which the Jukun exported through the port of

20. C.K. Meek: A Sudanese Kingdom: London(1931) Introduction by H.R. Palmer, p. xvii. H.R. Palmer: "Notes on the Kororofawa and Jukun." Journal of African Society(1912), p. ix.

21. H.R. Palmer: Sudanese Memoirs, Vol. 3, Lagos (1928), p. 116.

22. The Atakpa evidence is slim. It is not seen against the background of the fact that the Efik imposed themselves on the indigenous peoples known as the Qua (Ejagham) who are also called Akpa. It would be easy to confuse the terms Qua and Akpa. Unfortunately, historians of the pre-colonial history of Calabar have not investigated the connection between Kwararafa and Calabar sea port. Latham, could not see any connection between the Abakpa of Calabar and the Abakwariga of the ancient Kwararafa Confederacy.

Calabar.²³ The term Ata is today found among the Igala and other groups westwards to the Niger-Benue confluence.²⁴

According to traditions collected from the Cross River, the name Akpa refers to the Ejagham speaking peoples of the Cross River. The Ejagham are called by various names. The Efiks call them Abakpa. The Yakurr call them Yakpa. The Aro call them Akpa. The Edda (Afikpo) call them Ukwa. The Okuni call them Akpatai. All these names refer to one and the same people: the Ejagham speaking people of the Cross River State. The writer's findings show that they are so called because of their locution. The name Yakpa is derived from the sentence Bak.pa meaning come here.

This phenomenon of deriving names from neighbours or outsiders is not peculiar to the Ejagham speaking peoples. The name Mbembe refers to the Okum, Osokpong and Adun peoples of the Cross River. They are called Mbembe because the word

23. Slaves from the Benue Valley were sold at Calabar. See Curtin and Vansina: "Sources of the 19th century Slaves". JAH 2, (1964), p. 190ff; A.E. Afigbo: "The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria." African Notes, Vol. 6, 2(1970/71) and Vol. 7, No. 1, (1971/72).

24. J.S. Boston: The Igala Kingdom. Ibadan, I. U. P., (1968), p. 57.

Mbe is common in their speech.²⁵ The name Wa-Wa is now used to refer to the Izzi, Ezza and Ikwo peoples of Abakaliki for the same reason. The name Brass is derived from the Nembe sentence Bra sin which means leave me. Brass is now the name of a town - formerly Town - in the Niger Delta. It is, therefore, not uncommon to find outsiders nicknaming a people. The name Yakpa is but an instance of this phenomenon. In the circumstances of the Cross River, the word Akpa is not synonymous with the Jukun word Akpa or Ankpa. The coincidence or similarity in spelling is not historical. It is purely accidental.

All the evidence - written and oral-suggest that Jukun influence in the Cross River was a possibility. But the written documents do not answer the question of who the Akpa are. Oral tradition suggests that they are the Ejagham speaking peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria. Whether these people acted under the influence of the Jukun during the period of Yakurr migration is a matter outside the scope of this study. But it is possible that the Ejagham might have been influenced by the

25. R. Harris: "The Influence of Ecological Factors and External Relations on the Mbembe of South-Eastern Nigeria." Africa, Vol. 32, No. 1, (1962) p. 38.

activities of the Jukun at the time when the Jukun empire was flourishing. The Ejagham might have developed features derived from their former contacts with the Jukun. This can also probably explain why their neighbours call them Akpa by which the Jukun were also known. The problem of Yakpa identity notwithstanding Yakurr tradition is firm that their migration was triggered off by the aggression of this people.

MIGRATION (C. 1617-1647)

The migration story is based completely on Yakurr tradition. According to Yakurr tradition, there was still tension between Umoen (Yakurr) and Nsofan (Yakpa) when the latter attacked them. The Yakurr attempt to counter the attack was unsuccessful. The Yakurr, therefore, migrated to found a new settlement at Kofilopon. The Yakpa attacked the Yakurr at Kofilopon. The Yakurr left Kofilopon as a result of the new Yakpa offensive. They migrated westwards. But during this migration, the Yakurr migrants split into three groups. The split was caused by the pandemonium which arose as a result of the renewed offensive. The main group migrated westwards. This westward route is referred to as

Elomiti. According to an informant:

"What my father told me is that Ekori, Idomi, Nkpani, Ugep took the same route which is 'Elomiti' from 'Kofilopon'. But when we (Ekori, Idomi, Nkpani and Ugep) left 'Kofilopon' we settled at 'Emontobonti'. The 'Yakpa' came once again and attacked us, drove us away and so we migrated again westwards. At a point, which is the present location of Idomi (Ilomi), a section of us hid in the bush to give succour to a woman in labour. These people and their offspring founded the settlement of Idomi (Ilomi). The rest were still pursued on by the Yakpa. They ran finally to a place called Lebokom, now a ward of Ugep, on the crest of a cliff called Elomikpon. It was here they stayed to deal with the Yakpa. 26

The second group migrated northwestwards together with migrants from Okuni and Ikom. At some unnamed point, the Yakurr section parted with the Okuni/Ikom migrants. No reason is given for this parting. But after the parting the Yakurr group settled at Iko. Later this group left Iko through Adun territory to the present site of Nko. According to this informant, the name Nko was picked up while they were at Iko. It was to identify them from the Iko - non Yakurr.²⁷

26. YHT. 51, Usang Ebinyang et al, 15/7/76(Ugep).

27. YHT. 9, Ete Obeten Ejukwa et al, Nko, 10/10/76.

The third group migrated southwestwards from Kofilopon. This group passed through Ekorikpana. At Ekorikpana, the Yakpa sacked them and so the group left Ekorikpana to Ikotana, then to Egai (Abayon) and finally to the present site of Ekori. According to these informants, when the group migrated past the present territories of Ugep, the Ugep group (western route group) had not settled in the present site of Ugep. Asked if any of the informants knew Ekorikpana, one of them said:

"I do not know the place and I do not know anybody who has been to the place. But this thing (story) I am telling you is what my father said his father heard. 28

None of the other informants in the group disputed this statement. The informants of the account of the third group are from Ekori while those of the first group (western route) are from Ugep. The informants of the second group's (northwestern route) account are from Nko.

The tradition collected from Ugep claims that the Ekori formed part of the Ugep-Idomi-Nkpani migration wave, but the informants at Ekori deny this contention. Indeed, if Ikotana lay within the Ekori migratory corridor, it would seem most

probable that the Ekori did not form part of the Ugep-Idomi - Nkpani wave. But, there is nothing in Ikotana traditions to indicate that the area had been an ancient migratory corridor for the Ekori. A possible deduction could be that the Ekori migration through Ikotana, perhaps, preceded the foundation of Ikotana. The inhabitants of Ikotana claim that they migrated from Umon (Ikot Okpera) to found Ikotana.²⁹ The migration history of Ikotana has not been studied. It is possible that Ikotana migration took place later than the Ekori migration through Ikotana. Such a possibility raises a question: how did the Ekori migrants know that ^{the} corridor through which they were passing was called Ikotana? The mere mention of the name Ikotana in Ekori tradition suggests that the foundation of Ikotana preceded the Ekori migration. If Ikotana had been founded before the Ekori migration through the territory one would expect references made to the Ekori migration in Ikotana traditions. This is not the case. The claim by Ekori tradition that they migrated past the present site of Ugep when the people of Ugep had not settled in the area and that the Yakpa turned

their attention to the other Yakurr groups after warring with the Ekori suggests that there was at some point in time a break in communication between the Ekori group and the rest of the Yakurr. The claim also suggests that the Ekori group constituted a migration wave distinct from the Ugep-Idomi group. There is, however, corroboratory evidence from the traditions of Iko Ekperim referring to the migration of the people of Nko through their territory.

The absence of any corroboratory tradition from Ikotana to confirm the authenticity of the Ekori tradition regarding the migratory corridor as is the case with the Nko tradition raises a fundamental question. Was the Ekori account an after-thought? If it was, when did the manipulation of the tradition start and what was the intention? Documentary evidence suggests that the Ekori tradition may have been manipulated. Chessman,³⁰ for example, recorded that he heard two versions of the Yakurr traditions of origin and settlement. Four of the five Yakurr settlements gave him one version while Ekori gave him a version which he strongly doubted. According to Chessman, he

30. Nigeria NAE, Chessman to Secretary to Government, Lagos, 13 April 1939. CSE 1/85/100. p. 13.

thought the Ekori version was made up in an attempt to secede from the rest of the Yakurr or perhaps the Ekori were suspicious that Ugep (Umor) may be made paramount over them.³¹ Unfortunately, Chessman did not record the version he heard at Ekori but merely mentioned its contradiction of the recorded version- which is similar to the Ugep account above. However, his comment on the Ekori version is historically important since it shows that historical events can be used^{as} an excuse to create new traditions. This is because there appears to be some basis in Chessman's suspicion, for after the Cross River British Expedition of 1898 during which Ekori was shelled, there was much ill-feeling between Ekori and the rest of the Yakurr.

Ugep and Nko played roles which were instrumental to the success of the punitive expedition and thus detrimental to Ekori. About 1896, Ekori killed 19 carriers from Nko who were conveying yams, from Nko to the Yakurr Beach at Ekori, for an Akunakuna trader. Ekori killed the 19 carriers because, according to Ekori version, Nko refused to pay reparation for three Ekori children who lost their

31. Ibid., p. 13.

lives at the hands of Nko people. The Akunakuna trader lodged a report with the Protectorate government at Calabar.³² The government followed the report up and accused the Yakurr of violating the 1888 treaty. In 1888, Sir Harry Johnson made a treaty with the Akunakuna to ensure that the Cross River was open to all local peoples on the Cross River for purpose of trade.³³ In 1898, a force 200 strong, under Major Milne marched through Ugep and attacked Ekori.³⁴ Ugep supplied the guides. One reason for the Expedition was to punish the Ekori for the massacre of the 19 Nko carriers and to compell them to give up the murderers.³⁵

The force spent a day at Ugep where they collected information and guides for the assignment. Because of the information received at Ugep, the force marched unopposed to within one kilometre of Ekori and through a route the Ekori least expected.³⁶

In 1901, the Ekori confessed to the Divisional Commissioner at Ediba that they (Ekori) had been

32. Nigeria, NAE, Roupel to Moor, 10 January, 1897. Calabar, CSO 1/13/Vol/8, No. 26.

33. Nigeria, NAE, Gallway to F.O. 15/2/1898, CSO 1/13Vol/8, No. 29.

34. Nigeria, NAE Chessman to Secretary to Government, Lagos 13/4/1939, CSE 1/85/100, p.13.

35. Ibid.

36. Nigeria, NAE, Chessman to Secretary to Government, 13/4/1939, CSE1/85/100, p. 13.

very bitter against Ugep on account of the Ugep showing the road from Ugep to Ekori to the 'whiteman' when the latter went to war against Ekori.³⁷ This ill-feeling probably induced Ekori to give a version of the Yakurr tradition of origin and settlement which is different from the others. The Ekori still make reference to their war with the whiteman when the rest of Yakurr deserted them. From the various accounts of the migration and settlement, there is no doubt that the Yakurr migrants moved in different waves and directions. The various versions are, however, silent on the question of organisation of the migrations although in three of the Yakurr settlements; Ugep, Ekori and Nko the first rulers in the post-migration era are assumed to have led them to their present settlements. At the end of the migration each of the migration groups founded new settlement(s). Thus, the Western (Elomiti) group founded Idomi and Ugep. The South-western group founded Ekori while the North-western group founded Nko.

37. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 31/12/1901, Calprof. 10/3, Vol. II

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that Yakurr migration was triggered off by the aggression of Yakpa following a misunderstanding between Yakurr and Nsofan over a burial incident. It is doubtful whether the aggressive Yakpa are one and the same people as Nsofan whom Yakurr traditions also refer to as Yakpa. During the migration, Yakurr split into three groups. The main group moved westwards. This migratory route is known as Elomiti. The second group migrated north-westwards while the third went south-westwards. The migrants had resting points enroute. The western group rested at Kofilopon. The northwestern group rested at Iko, while the southwestern group rested at Ikotana. It seems eventually, the three migratory groups arrived at their present location where they founded five new settlements.

S E T T L E M E N T

Idomi was the first settlement the Yakurr founded in their present territories after the migration from Umoen. The founders were among the migration wave that took the western direction also called Elomiti. According to tradition, at some point on the western migration route a section of the migrants hid in the bush to give succour to a woman in labour. That point along the western route is the present location of Idomi (Ilomi).

The other migrants of this wave, according to the tradition, were pursued by the Yakpa till they got to a place called Lebokom in Ijiman - now a ward of Ugep - on the crest of a hill. They decided to found the settlement of Ugep. Thus, Ugep is the second settlement the Yakurr founded following their migration from Umoen.

Soon after settlement in Lebokom, the Yakurr migrants sighted the Yakpa at the base of this hill-Elomikpon - in large formations advancing on the infant settlement of Ugep. The Yakurr took heart and decided to 'run' no more. Instead of being scared, they made up their minds to defend the new place. They took a stand. As the Yakpa climbed

to attack, one man called Edem Omini pushed a huge rock down on them. This rock killed many of the advancing foe and thus forced the others to retreat.

Since then, the rock has been nicknamed Omini Akpa (slayer of Akpa) and the man who pushed it is referred to as Edem Omini Akpa. An annual sacrifice was performed on the site by all the Yakurr in the past but today Ugep (Umor) performs the sacrifice on behalf of all the Yakurr, in commemoration and gratitude. The rock is thus venerated to this day.

The Omini Akpa tradition appears to refer to one of the initial problems the Yakurr encountered following their decision to establish a settlement in the present site of Ugep. The enemy under reference could not have been the (Nsofan) Akpa. First, the Yakurr met non-Yakurr in their new environment. Secondly, Nsofan tradition claims that they too migrated, at about the same time the Yakurr migration took place, from 'Onugi' on grounds of Mma Ogar's sorcery. Thirdly, the present locations of the territories of the Yakurr and Nsofan suggest that the Yakurr and the Akpa(Nsofan) migrated in opposite directions. The Yakurr migrated westwards while the Nsofan migrated eastwards. Given this direction of migration pattern it could not have

been the same Akpa (Nsofan) who advanced on the Yakurr at Elomikpon. Besides, Yakurr tradition appears to imply that the migration was of a very short duration. Given the nature of the tropical rain forest vegetation and the distance between the present territories of the Yakurr and the supposed area of Umoen, one finds it difficult to accept the contention of the tradition: that the migration was a continuous and uninterrupted movement from Umoen to Ugep. Fourthly, some accounts from Nko and Ekorl referring to some periods during which the migrants rested at Iko and Ikotana respectively suggest that the migration was not done in one straight lap. Besides, the tradition also asserts that after Umoen, the Yakurr settled in a place called Kofilopon. Therefore, it is most probable that the migration took a period of time. It is difficult to reconstruct the precise period because the evidence is lacking. This evidence strongly adds weight to the view that the enemy mentioned in the Omini Akpa tradition could not have been the Ejagham - speaking peoples, and begs the question of who the enemy referred to in the tradition was.

According to Yakurr tradition, the land at Lebokom - Ijiman was empty on their arrival.

That was why they decided to establish the settlement of Umor. But in their attempt to expand territorially, they came in contact with Egai (Abayon) and Bahumono peoples. The Yakurr succeeded in pushing out the peoples of Abayon and Bahumono from the present territory of Ugep.³⁸ The question is how did the Yakurr push these peoples out of the territory? Was it by peaceful persuasion or by combat? This question will receive a fuller treatment in Chapter Five of this study. But all indications suggest that the Omini Akpa tradition refers to the conflict of the Yakurr on the one hand and the Egai (Abayon) on the other over the question of whether the Yakurr had any justification to establish a settlement in Lebokom-Ijiman. The defeat of Egai at the battle of Elomikpon appears to have given the Yakurr the right to make a permanent settlement at Lebokom. The use of the word Yakpa in reference to the Egai enemy during the Elomikpon

38. This is another evidence which suggests that the Ekori appears to have taken the same migration route with the Ugep, Nkpani and Idomi. The Ekori version, holds that after Ikotana, they migrated to Abayon (Egai) where they rested. This perhaps was before the Abayon themselves migrated to the Cross River bank. The traditions of Abayong only make reference to their war with Ugep as being the cause of their migration, suggesting that the Yakurr settlement in Ugep had been founded before their migration.

70.

battle appears to have been for propaganda purposes.

It is more probable that the Yakurr regarded their Egai enemies as being in alliance with the Yakpa. Hence they saw the Egai advance on the infant settlement of Ugor (Ugep) as a continuation of the Yakpa offensive, otherwise they have no basis to link the Elomikpon battle with Yakpa aggression.

GROUP DISPERSAL

Shortly after the foundation of Ugep, a splinter group emerged. This group left the main group at Ugep to found a new settlement of Nkpani. Essentially, it appears that two factors were responsible for the emergence of the splinter group from the Ugep bloc. These are internal disharmony arising out of petty misunderstandings and the attraction of vacant lands to the northeast of Ugep. According to tradition, during the reign of Obol Eja of Ugep (c. 1710 - 1735) a splinter group from Ugep migrated from the rest to found a new settlement. This splinter group decided to migrate following a clash it had with another group in Ugep. The splinter group was called Ibe while the other group was called Ijiman.

The splinter group migrated following a clash it had with Ijiman. The clash started with children of the Ibe and Ijiman groups. The clash later escalated to include parents and other relations. Eventually, weapons such as Yekpetitang³⁹ were used by the Ibe group in fighting the Ijiman group. Consequently, children who were hit by the missiles-Yekpetitang-succumbed and died. When the tricks became known to Ijiman, Obol Eja ordered that the Ibe group should be punished.⁴⁰ As a result, the Ibe group migrated from Ugep. They settled at a place called Emontobonti yo Obia Obol, (settlement of Chief Obia) which was about three kilometres north-east of Ugep. Later, they (Ibe) left that area to their present site following an invasion of their farmlands by Ijiman.⁴¹

The narrative is straight-forward in its statement of what happened. The causes of these

39. This is a missile formed out of a lump of the dense and thick stem of the collocosia anti-quorium stuck all over like a pin cushion with short barbs of raffia bamboo, weakened by half cuttings near the tip so that they would lodge in the victims flesh on contact. These small sharp darts would generally cause a wound within a few days..

40. YHT. 35, Chief Linday Ikpi Itam et al Ugep, 9/10/76.

41. YHT. 10, Chief Ibiang Okan et al, Nkpani 20/11/76.

later dispersal appear internal to the Yakurr as a people. The dispersal of the Nkpani was not a mass movement as such but a movement that was accomplished in waves. Apart from the superficial disagreement with the rest of the Yakurr at Ugep (Umor) there was, it appears, a more plausible motive which provoked the dispersal: the quest for farming land. Thus, whereas the migrations of the Yakurr from Umoen were generated by the desire of the people to exist in the face of the Akpa on slaughter, these later dispersals were not so much determined by the desire of self preservation but by the quest for farming land. This is because if the land to the northeast was not vacant, the Ibe group would most probably have been prevented from further migration by some other people. In such a circumstance, they would have found an alternative way of reconciling themselves with the Ijiman group and thus restoring the status quo in the environment. The tradition does not indicate that any reconciliatory step had been taken in order to solve the conflict between Ibe and Ijiman. The absence of such reconciliatory move suggests that the Ibe group took advantage of the vacant lands to the northeast to move away from the rest of Ijiman. It was the quest for

farming land rather than the conflict with Ijiman that provoked the movement. The conflict merely provided an opportunity for taking up the vacant land to the northeast. It, therefore, appears that land shortage and accompanying economic factors led to the Nkpani dispersal.

The disagreement between the Ibe group and the Ijiman group, as well as the subsequent migration of the Ibe group did not in any way adversely affect the political relationship of the Yakurr. For one thing, the migrating lineage had relations in the group left behind. Hence one finds that, although, there was this separation of groups, the migrating lineages constantly called upon the others to render assistance in wresting land from non-Yakurr neighbours. When the Ekori went to war with Anong, a Bahumono settlement, over farming land, the Ugep (Umor) joined the Ekori to fight the Anong. When Obol Ubi died (c. 1785-1810) and Ugep had no suitable person for the office, they called on Ekori to provide them with a leader. Obol Uket (c. 1810-1835) from Ekori was installed the traditional ruler of Ugep. Similarly, when Obol Amba (c. 1748-1773) of Nko died and Nko had no suitable personality from the royal lineage to fill the office they (Nko)

called on Ugep to provide them with a leader. Obol Okoi (c. 1773-1798), from Ugep was installed the traditional ruler of Nko.

In conclusion, it is necessary to say that the variants of Yakurr traditions of migration and settlement are normal. This is because after settlement in their present sites, different towns developed independently for more than three hundred years. During this period, each settlement transmitted its traditions separately from the other. During this period also they had conflicts with each other arising from non-compliance ^{with} tradition and/or homicidal cases in which, according to some traditions offending settlements refused to pay the traditional compensation to the dead kinsmen, and the injured had thus to take retribution on any of the offending kinsmen. Given this background one would expect a common tradition to diverge through time reflecting the various changes taking place among the people themselves. This would explain why the lack of agreement between the versions received from Ekori and Ugep on the migration should be regarded as normal. Similarly, the Omini Akpa tradition should be taken as

normal. It represents the strongest evidence that the present territory of Ugep was acquired by conquest. The foundation of Nkpani settlement ended the migration and settlement phase of Yakurr history.

The chapter has looked at the causes and course of Yakurr migration. It is shown that following a conflict between the Yakurr and Nsofan (a neighbouring village) over a burial incident war broke out between the Yakurr and the Yakpa. Yakurr tradition suggests by implication that the said Yakpa are the Nsofan. This may not be true. The Yakpa have an obscure identity. But, it is suggested that they are the Ejagham speaking people of the Cross River basin.

As a result of the Yakpa attack on Yakurr, the latter migrated to found new settlements. The migration was in three waves. The first group moved westward and later founded the settlements of Idomi and Ugep. The second group moved northwest. This group founded Iko while the third group moved southwest and founded Ekorì. Following a disagreement, a section of Ugep migrated to found Nkpani.

In the new environment, the Yakurr were exposed to new economic opportunities. How did the Yakurr economy respond to that situation? This question will be dealt with in the next chapter which *aims at examining* Yakurr economy from the pre-migration times.

CHAPTER THREE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Pre-colonial economies of Africa have been pictured as being static. This has led many observers to develop a feeling that Africa's release from such a state of backwardness awaited the coming of the Europeans, who conferred upon the continent the benefits of Western civilization.¹ As if to prove the above assumption, pre-colonial traditional economies were presented, by European scholars, as subsistence economy, which was uniform, static and therefore, uninteresting. To such writers, the obstacle to African development was the dominant agricultural sector which was virtually immobilised by a combination of primitive technology, communal land tenure and the extended family system. The Yakurr pre-colonial economy provides a good test of the accuracy of this assumption and of the beliefs about traditional societies which underlie it. For this purpose, Yakurr economy is viewed in some

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1. Alfred Marshall: Principles of Economics, 8th ed. (1938) pp. 723-4; Thomas and Whittington: "Peasant agriculture in Tropical Africa". Environment and Land Use in Africa (1969), 241-71; B.F. Johnston: "The Traditional Economy in West Africa". Africana Bulletin, 7, (1967), 91 - 112.

depth from about 1500 A.D. and without the complicating presence of Europeans. The writer is aware of recent valuable contributions which have been made to the study of traditional agriculture and markets by geographers, anthropologists, field economists, ^{and} historians. The attempt in this chapter is to use the Yakurr experience as an important case study in refutation of those cynics of African development.

YAKURR ECONOMY

For the purpose of convenience, the examination of Yakurr economy is divided into two sections: the pre-migration and the post-migration periods. Such a division has the advantage of facilitating comparison of economic developments in both periods. Besides, the examination, it is hoped will show that the pre-colonial economy of the Yakurr was not static. In each of the periods the following sectors shall be examined: Agriculture (this has been the major occupation of the people); gathering, hunting and fishing (these are part-time activities which supplement agriculture); livestock; manufacturing and trading.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture, according to tradition, was the most important economic activity in Yakurr society. It absorbed almost everybody in the society. All other economic activities were supplementary to it. Agriculture made it possible to create, accumulate and appropriate wealth in terms of foodstuffs and cash crops. By providing food, agriculture encouraged an increase in population.

Yakurr agriculture depended on the effective organisation of human and land resources. The Yakurr unit of labour was Eto (family unit). The Eto embodied everyone who was related by blood to the man and his wife or wives.² All activities, be they economic, political or spiritual, were performed within the auspices of Eto and Kepun. Kepun was (and still is) the residence of members of a family (Eto). Every Kepun had its rules and regulations. Every Kepun had its recognised head called Obol Kepun.³ The Obol Kepun was usually the oldest male

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2. D. Forde: "Double descent among the Yako" in African Systems of Kinship and Marriage (eds.) (Radcliff-Brown and Forde. London, O.U.P. (1950) pp. 285-332; Forde: "Kinship in Umor" American Anthropologist. Vol. 41, (1939) pp. 523 - 55.
 3. D. Forde: "Fission and Accretion in Patrilineal Clans of a Semi-Bantu Community in Southern Nigeria" JRAI, Vol. 68 (1938), 311-88. See also Chapter Two of this thesis: Nkpani is a splinter group from Ugep.

member of the family. He had authority over all members of the family. His functions included seeing to the economic livelihood of members and preserving the harmony and continuity of the family.

It was within this established system that the Yakurr performed their agricultural and other economic activities. Even when families experienced fission⁴ at different times in Yakurr history, the organisation of labour remained essentially the same. In the pre-migration Yakurr society at Umoen, the entire Yakurr were knotted together (on family basis) by socio-economic ties. The economic bonds between members of the same lineage were not disrupted by fission or migration occasioned by disharmony. In fact, Kepun was always able to split itself into smaller more manageable production units without experiencing any break or disorganisation. Thus, Kepun had various family units within.⁵

The head of each Eto unit organised and co-ordinated the labour of the members of the unit.

4. 'Fissioning' is the splitting up of a family unit to form new units, independent of the parent unit from which they derive. See D. Forde: Yako Studies, pp. 49 - 84.

5. D. Forde: Yako Studies, pp. 135 - 164.

They did not work for wages but were fed and clothed by the man. It was partly because every eto performed its own economic work that the Yakurr placed value on large families. A man who wanted to be a prosperous and successful farmer had to have many wives and children. Family labour was efficient and well organised to meet the needs of the Yakurr society. There are no reasons to suppose that pre-colonial Yakurr economy was disorganised because it did not make use of wage labour. Rather, the quality of Yakurr labour force compared favourably with that of other societies in Africa and other parts of the world. This is because the Yakurr placed premium on hard work and condemned laziness. Members of the family began working at a very early age and remained in effective employment of the family (Eto) until they became infirm or died. The writer did not in fact come by any evidence to suggest that any Yakurr was permanently inactive as a result of serious or peculiar mental and physical disabilities.

However, inspite of Yakurr's reliance on family labour, it was sometimes realised that the Eto could not always perform its agricultural work on its own. This was not due to the inadequacy

of family labour. It was due to the nature of agriculture, the season and the requirements of crop tendering. At peak seasons like weeding and harvest periods, inadequate family labour renders the family incapable of coping with work on its own farms. In such periods, the most popular avenue to get more labour was through co-operative work groups.⁶ This was the pooling together of the labour of several families to work for a single person. The organisation of labour in this regard took a number of forms. The first was Kojena which involved the rotation of labour by members of the same Kepun (extended family), age group and friends. This was a sort of working club where members rotated their services to work for one another in turn. People of comparable age (age grade) and physical ability usually belonged to the same Kojena. Cheating and laziness was frowned upon: those who exhibited such lapses were repaid by other members in their own coin. The second form was Kebila. This was a service offered to a farmer who needed extra hands for clearing, hoeing, weeding or harvesting. Kebila probably began among members of the same

6. D. Forde. Op. cit., pp. 1 - 30.

Kepun (patrilineage) or lejima (matrilineage) but later improved in organisation and scope to cut across family lines. The third was Kokobla. This involved all members of an age group going to farm for one of their members. This happened when a member proposed to take a yam title.⁷ In such a circumstance, the member concerned was expected to cultivate many hectares of land. Such cultivation would involve more hands than the family unit could provide. Kokobla provided the extra hands. Participants were lavishly entertained with food and palm wine (drink) as an expression of gratitude. Finally, Yakurr chiefs and a few wealthy citizens (this was after Yakurr migration) made use of slaves. The use of slaves never succeeded in supplanting the services of the free born. It was only a supplement to the family labour.

The family also had another economic function apart from recruiting and mobilising labour for work. It was only through the family that the individual could lay claim to a piece of land in Yakurr. Land was the inalienable communal property

7. A yam title of Ledu is conferred on a farmer who harvests up to 10,000 yam tubers in a farming season.

of the Yakurr. Each Kepun (patriclan) had a share of the communal landed property. The head of the kepun held in trust the kepun (patrilineage) land. He was supposed to act as the defender of the lineage's interest in land matters. But he had no powers to treat members of the kepun as tenants or deny them of land. He could, however, allocate an unoccupied plot to any Yakurr citizen if the latter made a request with a calabash (pot) of palm wine. The person had no right to use the land again after the farming season. The Obol Kepun could not also allocate land used for religious purposes. Thus, every family in Yakurr had a right to own farm land.

According to Yakurr tradition, the origin of Kepun ownership of land in Yakurr was that it was the Kepun that collectively surmounted the problem of 'killing' (clearing) and cultivating the primeval forest. A group of people had to work together and in effect family ownership became complementary to the family approach to work. Besides, it was imperative for members of the same family to work together thereby acting as a common force against any danger. In addition, the dangers of land hunger and natural disasters could be solved if many people held land in common. Finally, land

had no exchange value which could stimulate a more individualized form of landholding. The right of the individual to land was recognised within each eto (family). This right to land derived from being a member of a lineage and a person belonged to Yakurr community by virtue of being born into or being absorbed by a lineage.

The Yakurr welcomed strangers. Such strangers included specialist craftsmen from remote areas. The majority of these were smiths or people working at crafts like mat weaving, carving or carpentry. According to the writer's informants, before the migration, they were few in number and although they may have come from distant place in the Camerouns, the Cross River coast and elsewhere they struck no roots in Yakurr. They usually returned at intervals to their homes. They brought their wives from among their own people and though they lived as the guest of the Yakurr, they did not seek incorporation in the Kepun group with which they lived. They maintained this independence because they did not farm and were thus largely unconcerned in the everyday affairs of a Kepun. Strangers who needed land had to associate themselves with a lineage. Forde

summarised the idea when he wrote that "the social remoteness of strangers among Yakurr reflects their (stranger's) independence."⁸ A brief description of Yakurr agricultural practices is necessary to show how they successfully adapted to the tropical rain forest environment. The farmers' working tools included the long cutlass, knife, axe, hoe, baskets, ropes and the digging stick. The Yakurr relied on simple tools. Some of these working tools were imported. But after migrations, most of these tools were locally manufactured by the Yakurr.

Today, the tools appear simple and inadequate for serious farming, but this was not the situation in the pre-colonial era. Then, they were used to cultivate extensive land, the products of which were more than sufficient for Yakurr population. These tools which were based on the use of iron were the product of an innovation over the wood and stone technology which characterised the stone age. The Yakurr conquered their environment to an appreciable extent with these tools.

The method of cultivation was, and still is, the rotational bush fallow, although there is

8. D. Forde: Op. cit., p. 75.

reason to believe that during their migration, they adopted shifting cultivation. The ease with which they settled in their new environment suggests that they shifted their farms and settlements annually during the migration. In the rotational bush fallow scheme, settlement is fixed while the land under cultivation rotates over a defined area.⁹

Farm work consisted of clearing land, making heaps (hoeing), sowing (planting) weeding and staking yam tendrils, harvesting and storing the yams in stacks. To clear the land, the farmer used his machet to slash the plants. Fire was set on the cleared plot to burn. Burning the slashed trees was one way by which the farmer returned mineral matter in the form of ash to the soil.¹⁰ The next step was to gather off the unburnt undergrowth and set them on fire. Heaps were then made with hoes. The heaps varied in size depending on the nature of the soil. But generally yam hill mounds were hoed up to about two feet six inches. Planting was the next stage. Planting was jointly undertaken by men and women as soon as the heaps were prepared.

9. D. Forde: Op. cit., p. 7; A.G. Hopkins: An Economic History of West Africa: London, Longmans, (1973) p. 32.

10. Hopkins: Op. cit., p. 35.

After planting and weeding at intervals, the preparation and erection of stakes and strings for the yam vines was the next stage. The women did the weeding while the men staked the yams. Weeding and staking of yam vines was considered important if the farmer wanted a good harvest. Harvesting was the last stage. The crops harvested were consumed, stored in stacks, processed or sold. The cultivation of subsidiary crops like maize and beans went on at the same time as the planting of yams progressed.

The following crops were cultivated:-

Yam (*Discorea* spp).

Cocoyam(*Colocasia* and/or *Xanthifolia*).

Cassava (*Manibot Utilissima*).

Maize (*Zea Mays*).

Okro (*Hibiscus esculentus*).

Pumkin (*Cucurbito pepo*).

Egg plant (*Solanum melogena*).

Groundnuts (*Arachis hypogaea*).

Banana (*Musa sapientum*).

Plantain (*Musa sapientum* var *parra*).

Pepper (*Dsiaca*).

Kola trees (*Cola acuminata*).

Oil palm (*Eleneis guineensis*).

Pear trees (*Pachylobis edulis*).

Pawpaw (*Carica papaya*)

Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*).

The history of these crops show that some of these crops came to West Africa from other continents. West Africa had strong connections with other parts of the world. The flow of plants and seeds came into West Africa through these connections. The cocoyam, banana, plantain are Asian crops which were brought to West Africa by way of the near East between the first and eighth centuries, A.D.¹¹ The coming of the Europeans in the late 15th century led to the introduction of a number of other crops which are now regarded as typical of West African agriculture. The most important of these were maize, cassava, groundnut as well as a variety of fruits. The principal source of supply was South America. The two main channels of diffusion were a direct route ^{from} Brazil to West Africa and an indirect route through Iberia. Both were established by the

11. G.P. Murdock: Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture History, p. 64; C. Wrigley: "Economic Pre-history of Africa", African Pre-history (eds). D. Fage and R. Oliver; London, C.U.P. (1970), pp 62; 66. Kay Williamson: "Some Food Plants names in the Niger Delta", IJAL Vol. 36, 2, (1970); Desmond Clark: "The Spread of Food Production in Sub-Saharan Africa", African Pre-History, pp. 25 - 42; R. Porter: "History of Food Crops", JAH Vol. III, 2 (1962) pp. 211-228. Hopkins: op. cit., p. 29.

Portuguese.¹² There has been some debate on the timing of the introduction of maize. There is a view that maize was present in Africa before Europeans made contact with the continent of America. This is a possibility which has not been proved.

According to Yakurr tradition, the only crop that was introduced to them after migration was cassava. Cassava was introduced by the Igbo.¹³ The Yakurr name for cassava (*manihot Utilissima*) is Kabojen.¹⁴ The name Kabojen confirms the information that cassava was introduced into Yakurr by the Igbo. Some other crop names suggest possible mode of introduction. The Yakurr name for cocoyam is Okalang which means whiteman. This suggests that it was probably introduced by the whiteman - possibly the white traders.

It is difficult to say precisely when the Yakurr acquired these crops and how they tried them out. But the experimentation must have taken some time. This is because no community would place its

12. D. Clark: op. cit., p. 36.

13. YHT. 2 Ugep, 18/8/76.

14. Yam is called Kajen in loko. The Igbo are called Yabo in loko. Kabojen is a compound word in loko meaning Igbo-yam.

established food supplies in abeyance and hastily adopt untested food crops which have been introduced. Besides, the rate of diffusion can be inhibited by technical problems. For instance, cassava is said to have been introduced into West Africa in the 16th century. But it did not begin to spread rapidly until the close of the 18th century when it became known how to process the crop in such a way as to remove the prussic acid which some varieties contained.¹⁵

The Yakurr had adopted most of these new crops before their migration. It is most probable that the new plants were adopted because they were seen as useful additions to the existing range of foods. Maize was seen as a useful addition to yam. It was taken as snack. Cassava was a good supplement to yam. Some of the new crops may have been picked up as a result of Yakurr trade contacts with the coast.

GATHERING, HUNTING AND FISHING

Farming was not the only form of economic activity. Gathering and collecting were another

15. Hopkins. op. cit., p. 31. Prussic acid is a colourless, volatile, highly poisonous gaseous acid. It is also called hydrocyanic acid.

waiting in ambush. Owowo was employed in the dry season when the demand for farm labour was at its lowest and when restricted water supply made it easier to locate game. Fishing was a subsidiary activity to hunting. During the dry season, women searched for fish in streams. Fishing was done when the streams were shallow enough for the women to wade through. The technique was to construct a temporary dam by blocking a stream at two ends. The fish would be trapped in the dam and caught. Water was also occasionally poisoned to stupefy fishes for easy catching.

The writer has not come across any evidence to suggest that the Yakurr hunted with guns in the pre-migration period. The possibility cannot be ruled out given the commercial interaction that existed in this area between the coast and the hinterland. Yakurr oral tradition suggests that the Yakurr began owning guns after migration. According to this source, it was the Akunakuna and the Aro(Benobase) who sold guns to the Yakurr.¹⁶ Informants confirmed that this was after the Yakurr migration. Hunters were important in Yakurr because they served as

16. YHT. 2 Ugep 18/10/76.

defenders of the people in periods of wars especially in the post-migration period.¹⁷

Fowl, ducks, pigs, goats, sheep and the dwarf cattle were found in Yakurr even before migration. These domestic animals were fed on grass and wild plants. The fowl was reared to provide eggs and meat. They were fed mostly on grains. Goats and sheep were sacrificial animals. They could also be given as gifts for services rendered. Forde observed that goat meat was a common food, among the Yakurr, at feasts, "the excellence of which is judged by the amount of goat meat provided."¹⁸ The herds of these various domestic animals were, however, not kept in special farms. They were merely allowed to scrounge around for food.

MANUFACTURING

The Yakurr had craftsmen/women who possessed the skill to process raw materials into finished,

17. Iya Osu is the current head of the hunters (Yajenen) in Ugep. In each settlement, there is a recognised organisation known as koje (hunting). A senior hunter (one who must have gunned down leopards etc.) is recognised as leader. His other name is Okopmkpa meaning "one who listens to death" (a fearless and aggressive fighter). To seek admission, a man must possess a gun of any make. After several kills (animals) he is accepted as a full fledged member.

18. D. Forde: op. cit., p. 28.

manufactured products. In comparison with other parts of Nigeria, traditional arts and crafts were poorly developed in Yakurr. The most important rural crafts were mat weaving, wood carving, palm leaf and bamboo work, calabash decoration, rope making and the making of various kinds of musical instruments. After migration, iron smelting was introduced to the Yakurr.

Mat weaving was a very popular craft among the Yakurr. Every woman was in fact expected to know the art of making sleeping mats. The mats were made from local resources of screw pine (kikumi) and reeds (tharnatococus). Wood and ivory carving were the specialities of certain families.¹⁹ Descendants of these families ~~are~~ still among the best carvers in Yakurr. Baskets (for conveying loads from the farms) were produced from palm leaves and bamboo.

The quantity of these local manufactures and the extent to which such manufactures were commercialised in the pre-migration period is difficult to state. One can only say that the craftsmen and women made use of local materials found within Yakurr, though, it is not being suggested that

19. D. Forde: op. cit., p. 128.

some materials were never imported. This in effect suggests how the Yakurr succeeded in adapting and adjusting to, and moulding their environment to their various needs.

By far the most important period, as far as local manufacturing was concerned, was the post-migration period. During this time, specialist craftsmen from remote areas came to Yakurr. A majority of these were smiths. It was these smiths who taught the Yakurr the art of iron smelting. According to Yakurr tradition it was the Benobase (children of god) who introduced smithing into Yakurr.²⁰ It is most probable that Benobase encouraged the development of smithing because they realised that there was a high local demand for iron products. In fact in Ugep, the smiths were given a piece of land to settle on. The area was called Letekom(place of smithing). It was Obol Ayele (c. 1735-1760) who allocated the land to the smiths.²¹

Knowledge of iron working reached West Africa during the first millennium. About 500 B.C., the Noks were smelting iron. By about the fourth

20. YHT 11, Ekori, 26/11/76. -

21. Ibid.

century A.D. iron producing techniques had spread to most parts of West Africa. Iron implements (hoes, knives, spearhead, swords) were in common use. If the Yakurr learnt the art of smithing about 1700, one may ask, why did the Yakurr wait so long before acquiring the art of smithing? It was most probable that their iron needs in the pre-migration period (before 1600 A.D.) were met by their commercial contacts at the time.

The means by which they obtained their iron ore are not clear. But today, the Yakurr smiths depend on scrap iron rather than on iron ore deposits. The technique employed is that scrap iron is heated in a clay furnace fired by charcoal. The heated scrap iron is then fashioned into various kinds of implements. Finally, like farming, craft production was based on the house-hold unit. It was within the lineage that ideas of production were passed from generation to generation. The organisation of the local industries along family line made it possible to exercise control over entry and to regulate standards of finished products, workmanship and prices.

TRADE

Yakurr oral traditions say very little about their trading activities in the pre-migration period. According to tradition, the Yakurr had a market site called Lekpabo²² in Umoen. It was in this market they traded with the communities of Ojo, Nsofan, Okuni. The question is: was Yakurr trading contact only limited to Umoen and her neighbours? The writer is of the view that the Yakurr participated and benefited from the commercial activities that went on along the coast of Calabar in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Nigerian-Cameroun zone which was the former abode of the Yakurr is contiguous to Calabar coast. Let us examine this trade at the coast of Calabar deeply. Before 1700, there was trade between Europeans and Africans at the coast of Calabar. This trade has been documented by many European traders and

observers.²³ European observers recorded information about the Cross River hinterland which they learned from Africans at the coast. This information reveals that there were various and on-going levels of interaction already present at the coast of Calabar even before the arrival of the Europeans. These levels of interaction were principally of a commercial nature involving the exchange of farm and sea products among the Ibibio, Ekoi (Yakurr inclusive) and Efik communities. This is borne out by John Barbot's record of his visit to Old Calabar River in 1698. This record shows that Barbot bought plantain from an African -- Duke Ephram (Duke Aphrom) for twenty copper bars:

"forty baskets of plantain, sixty copper bars"; twenty copper bars to Duke Aphrom for the same.... 24

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23. The most useful sources for the period before 1700 are Durate Pacheco Pereira: Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis: (jr) (ed) by George H. I. Kimble. London, Hakluyt Society(1937) pp. 131-132 and footnotes. Edwin Ardener: "Documentary and Linguistic Evidence for the Rise of the Trading Politics between Rio del Rey(the Cross River) and Camerouns 1500-1650" in I.M. Lewis(ed) History and Social Anthropology, London, Tavistock Publications(1968), reprint by Frank Cass(1969). p. 184. Hope M. Waddel: Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Eastern Nigeria, London, T. Nelson,(1963) p. 309; K.K. Nair: Politics and Society in S.E. Nigeria 1841-1906, London, Frank Cass (1972), p. 2.
24. J. Barbot: A Description of the Coast of South Guinea, Lond., Churchill(1732), p. 465.

Another evidence can be derived from Pereira's description of another commercial interaction in the Cross River.

At the mouth of the Rio Real(Cross River)... is a very large village in which dwell, 2,000 souls; much salt is made there and in this land there are canoes made from a single trunk, which are the largest known in all Guinea, some of them are large enough to hold eighty men. These come down this river for a hundred leagues and more and convey many yams... and many slaves, cows, sheep... all of which sold to the Negroes of the aforesaid village... 25

The salt town at the mouth of the Cross River is also mentioned by Barbot.²⁶ Africans all along the coast, however, manufactured salt. Noah identifies the salt town at the mouth of the Cross River as Tom Shott Island.²⁷

The records mentioned above show that African trade in the Cross River area in particular preceded the arrival of the Europeans. The economy of this area had developed beyond subsistence production to production for exchange and the products of the hinterland farmers supported a vigorous commercial

25. 'Pereira': Ibid., p. 164.

26. Barbot: Ibid., p. 382.

27. M. E. Noah: Old Calabar, p. 3.

life. Secondly, it is clear that the European trade was but one facet of a system of exchange.

The Nigeria-Cameroun zone which was the former abode of the Yakurr is contiguous to the Cross River coast. It is possible, therefore, that the Yakurr benefited from the commercial life of this area. The Yakurr probably acquired new crops through the process of this trade. It, therefore, seems that the basic economic activities in pre-migration Yakurr society were based on a framework of agriculture, manufacturing and trading. Rights to farmland were acquired through membership of a family. The family was the unit of economic activity. It was the family that recruited and mobilised labour for production whether it was in agriculture, manufacturing or trading. This economic foundation had been laid before the arrival of the Europeans to the Cross River coast in about 1500 A.D.

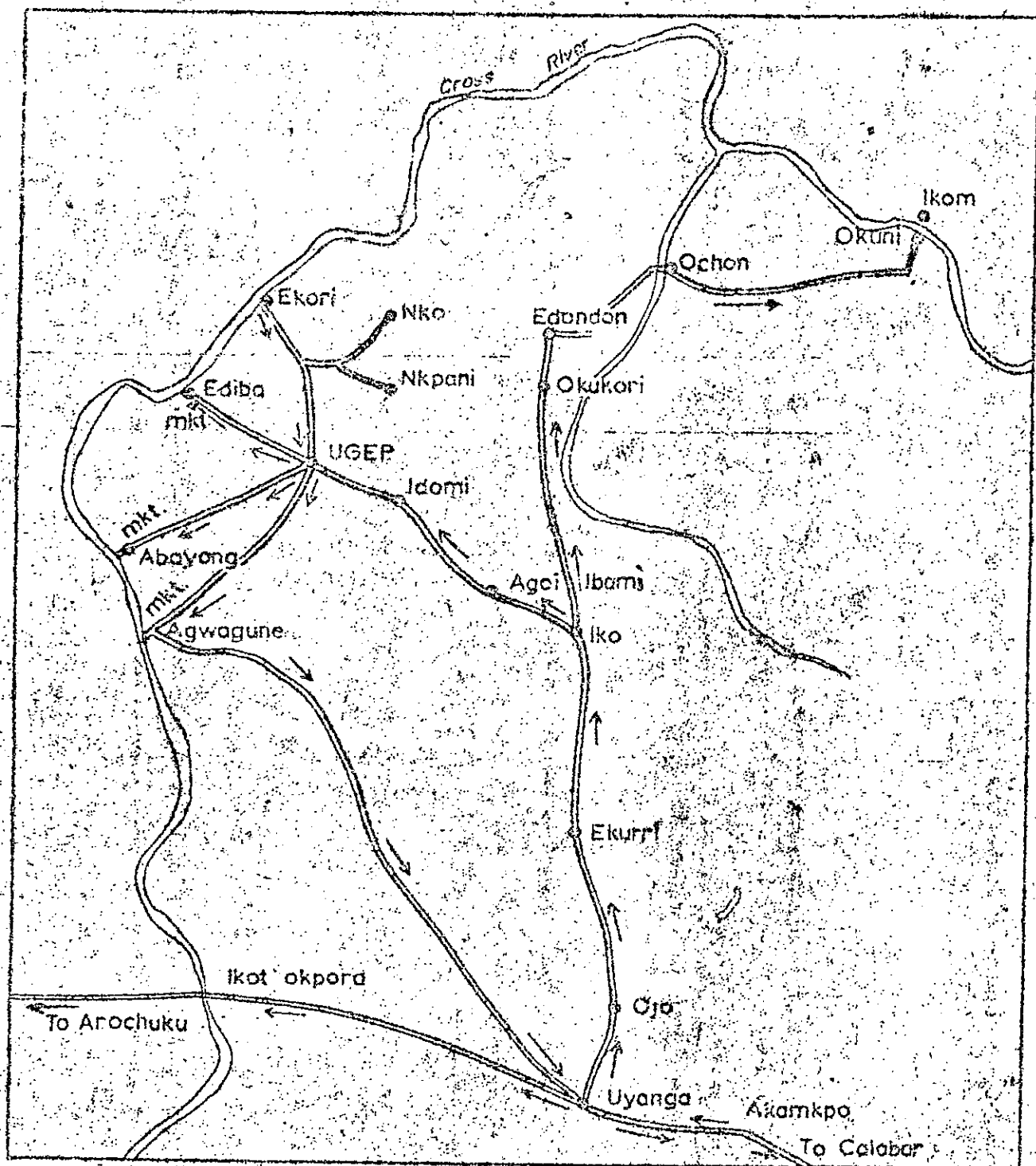
POST MIGRATION PERIOD

The economy shall be considered under the same sub-headings as in Section One above, for purposes of uniformity.

AGRICULTURE

The vegetation of the post migration locality was the same as that of the previous environment: tropical rain forest. The soil was the same deep, rich tropical soil. The economic unit was still the eto. The eto possessed the same characteristics as in the pre-migration period. It had the capacity to expand itself and could adapt its size and skills to meet changing circumstances and to create new opportunities. In this regard, slavery became a more noticeable phenomenon in the economic unit of production. According to Yakurr tradition, men of wealth bought slaves who were absorbed into their families. Men bought slaves because wealth was measured in terms of men rather than in terms of landed property. Landed property was communally owned. It was, therefore, 'men-owners' who exercised authority rather than land owners.

The slaves were bought from the Aro. Yakurr buyers often went down to the Cross River to meet the Aro traders at Abaomege and Uburu to buy slaves from them. In most cases children were bought. According to this source, many of these children were deliberately stolen while others were obtained



MAP SHOWING TRADE ROUTES IN THE UPPER CROSS RIVER
 routes reconstructed from Oral Data.

in exchange for payments from impoverished families of southern Igbo.²⁸ But if it was the Aro who sold the children then the mode of acquisition may not be unconnected with the Aro oracle. Most of the adult slaves bought by the Yakurr were from Mamfe. They were brought into Yakurr by traders from Ikom.²⁹

Throughout this period, agriculture was still the chief activity of the Yakurr. Cassava appears to have been introduced during this period. It was probably introduced by the Igbo hence it is called kabojen (Igbo yam).

The method of farming was the rotational bush fallow. Agriculture generally received a great boost during this period. The Yakurr located their settlements between the Cross River to the west and the inland trade route from Ikom to Calabar to the east.³⁰ This position of the Yakurr made its location a resting point for traders using the land route from Ikom to Calabar and vice versa. Besides,

28. YHT 9, Nko-Ugep, 10/10/76; D. Forde Op. cit., page 73.

29. R. Harris: "The history of trade at Ikom, Eastern Nigeria". Africa, Vol. XLII, (1972) p. 127. According to Harris, the two main sources through which slave were obtained for sale were warfare and local miscreants.

30. R. Harris: Op. cit., pp. 121 - 39.

the Yakurr had a port on the Cross River at Ekorì. This ensured that traders who used the Cross River had access to Yakurr markets. The map *above facing page 103* illustrates the position of the Yakurr in relation to the trade routes. Yakurr territory thus became a meeting point for Aro, Akunakuna and traders from Ikom. This new development expanded the demand for Yakurr foodstuffs, especially yams and palm produce. The expansion in demand had to be met by expanding cultivation of these foodstuffs. This implies that more land was brought under cultivation.

GATHERING, HUNTING AND FISHING

There was no noticeable change in the methods of gathering, collecting and fishing as subsidiary forms of occupation to farming. It does appear that hunting had a boost during this period. The Yakurr bought dane guns (the muzzle-loading flint-lock musket) during this period. The dane gun made changes in hunting possible. Hunting became both seasonal and a night affair. The timing and duration of night hunting was based on the phases of the moon which determined the relative length of moon-light and total darkness. Nocturnal

animals prowl around in the darkness of the night especially when there is no bright moonlight. Hunting was, therefore, at its highest during the first and last quarters of the moon when there were longer hours of darkness than at other phases.³¹

MANUFACTURING

The most important development in the area of manufacturing was the acquisition of smithing skills (kote). The process of kote has been described. Iron smithing, however, was a part-time occupation for the few Yakurr families that learnt the craft. But as the demand for hoes, matches, diggers and the like increased, some members of such families that had learnt the art of smithing may have reduced the size of their farms in order to cope with demands for their manufactures.

These smiths organised themselves into a guild (it still exists) which regulated prices of finished products and set rules governing admission and ensured the production of high quality goods. Admission was relatively easy since applicants belonged to the families of the smiths but the

31. YHT 55, Ugep, 22/12/76.

number of apprentices who eventually qualified to practice the profession was limited. Efficiency in kote was the ostensible qualification for private practice. Today, the profession has become the preserve of a few families. Of course, in the apprenticeship system, only the best survived.

For this study, the importance of the industry lies in the boost it gave to farming. Besides, many of the brass objects found in the fertility shrines (Ase) in Yakurr were perhaps manufactured by these smiths. As far as Yakurr traditions are concerned the origins of these brass objects are clouded in mystery. Some of these objects have stylistic designs which according to one informant, who is currently working on some of these objects, are peculiar to the Cross River.³² Some of the objects are similar to those described by Robin Horton and Ekejiuba.³³ Their similarity to those of the Delta and Igbo land may not be entirely fortuitous because of the link through the Aro(Benobase) traders and

32. YHT 112, Keath Nicklin, Uyo, 13/3/77.

33. Robin Horton: "Recent finds of Brasswork in the Niger Delta." ODU, 2, 1, July (1965) pp. 76-91. Ekejiuba: "Notes on Brasswork of Eastern Niger." African Notes, Vol. 4, 2, January (1967), pp. 11 - 15.

perhaps Abriba smiths. Common among these objects are bells of different sizes and shapes most of which apparently were made locally and are of considerable importance in ritual performances - wrestling, ebiabu, funeral, ase, leboku. It appears that some of the objects were produced by simple beating and twisting but a few others show evidence of casting. Unfortunately, none of these objects have been dated. We can, tentatively, say that by about 1750 smithing had emerged as a part-time occupation in Yakurr. Ekejiuba has suggested that the Abriba in the area west of Edda were the earliest workers on smithing.³⁴ Her arguments were based on Aro oral traditions and its corroboration with the reports of Baike and Leonard.³⁵ The reports under reference are scanty. There is the view that metal work in the Cross River - which includes Abriba - is not a very ancient activity and that some of the crude implements found in the Cross River were made by Akwa itinerant smiths, who were

34. F.I. Ekejiuba: op. cit. See T. Shaw: Igbo Ukwu, Vol. 1, Faber and Faber, (1970), p. 272.

35. W.B. Baike: Narrative of an Exploring Voyage, London, (1854), p. 310; A.G. Leonard: "Notes on a Journey to Bende", Journal of Manchester Geographical Society., Vol. 14 (1893), p. 196.

more famous as smiths than the Abriba.³⁶ My informants could not say how recent metal work is in the Cross River. The Yakurr themselves do not like to discuss the brass objects used in their Ase worship because of the religious character the objects have now assumed in their culture.

TRADING

The Yakurr had known the techniques of disposing of surplus goods long before their migration. According to Yakurr tradition, the communities of Umoen (Yakurr), Ojo, Nsofan and Okuni had one site called Lekplabo where they bought and sold various items.³⁷ Origins of local markets are a subject of controversy among scholars! Some scholars argue that local markets evolved from a barter system. Others have argued that it was long distance trade that led to barter and local markets. Some have integrated the two views arguing that long distance trade gave rise to some markets while demands for locally produced goods tended to give

36. YHT. 112, 13/3/77.

37. YHT 41, Ugep, 3/8/76.

rise to markets too.³⁸ The division of labour and specialisation in certain functions encouraged the need for markets and trading. The same must have been true of the Yakurr in pre-migration times. The Yakurr farmers needed tools and tool makers needed food. Therefore, they had to enter into a symbiotic relationship among themselves for the purpose of meeting their demands. It has been suggested that the Yakurr benefitted from the long distance trade with the Efik and Ibibio at the Cross River coast.

A market (Ekpla) in the Yakurr concept was a place where people met to exchange goods. It occupied an open space in a definite area. This view of a market is contrary to the substantivist view that the market was periphery to the African economy.³⁹ An analysis of what transpired in a pre-colonial local market suggests that there was no

38. For details of these arguments, see B.W. Hodder and U.I. Ukwu: Markets in West Africa, Ibadan, I.U.P.(1969) Chapter 2; B.W. Hodder: "Some comments on the origins of traditional markets in Africa South of the Sahara." Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers(1965) pp. 47-59. C. Meillasoux: The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa. Oxford, (1971) Bohannan and Dalton: Markets in Africa, Evanston(1962), pp. 1 - 26.

39. A. G. Hopkins: op. cit. pp. 8 - 77.

difference between what obtained in Africa and the so called advanced markets of Europe and America.

The market activities were:

- (a) Goods passed from the hands of the producers to those of the trader thereby becoming merchandise with an exchange value;
- (b) The goods were exchanged between one trader (hinterland perhaps) and another thereby preserving their exchange value;
- (c) The goods passed from the trader to the consumer into whose hands it acquires its final use value; and
- (d) Products were exchanged as use-values directly between producers.

Therefore, properly considered, there is no justification in the substantivist views of the pre-colonial African market.

The post migration period in Yakurr witnessed the coming into being of two markets in Yakurr. One was at Ugep and the other was at Ekorì. The Ugep market was held ~~after~~ every six days. The market days and terminology were (and still are)

as follows:

Ugep	Ekori
Koke(big market)	Koke(market)
Kokeblake(after koke)	Kokeblake(after koke)
Ayoi Okponobi(before Okponobi)	Ntili(middle day)
Okponobi(small market)	Ayoi koke(before
Okponobiblake(after Okponobi)	koke
Ayoi koke(before koke)	

According to informants at Ugep, it was the Akunakuna who 'sold' the Ugep market to them. At Ekori, the writer was informed that it was the Aro who 'sold' the market to them.⁴⁰ The Ugep tradition has it that it was Obol Eja (c. 1710-1735) who 'bought' the market from the Akunakuna while in Ekori it is said that Obol Ubi (c. 1719-1744) 'bought' the market.⁴¹ The formation of markets in Yakurr, however, provided them with easy and regular access to goods and services which they needed.

40. YHT. 2, Ugep and YHT. 11, Ekori. The establishment of these markets entailed sacrifices to ensure that human enemies and natural catastrophies would not destroy the markets. These 'medicines' were sold by the Akunakuna and Aro to Ugep and Ekori respectively for the purpose of establishing the two market centres. The words 'bought' and 'sold' in this circumstance refer to the payments made by Yakurr to the Aro and Akunakuna for the 'medicines'.

41. Ibid.

Trading in pre-colonial Yakurr can be classified into five fairly distinct categories which were to a large extent in different hands. The first was the local traffic in food supplies by the Yakurr (producer to producer). This often took place when a farmer proposed to expand his out-put and so bought more crops for cultivation. The second category was the purchase for consumption. The third was the category of local traders who purchased for retail to foreign traders (Aro and Akunakuna). The fourth category involved the traders who produced and participated in long distance trade. This class operated a complicated business. After harvest, yam's ^{were} stored for about six months (October to March), at which time prices of yams rose before sales. The yams were conveyed to Itu or Calabar for sale. With the proceeds, imported items were bought for retail in Yakurr. During the period of their absence - which lasted for about a month or so - they entrusted their farms to relatives, dependants and slaves (the family).⁴² Long distance trade appears to have been an attempt by Yakurr entrepreneurs to

42: YHT. 2 Ugep, 7/1/77. The writer was told that long distance trade with Calabar by Yakurr followed the signing of a trade treaty between the British and the Akunakuna in 1888. The treaty was meant to open up the Cross River to all traders.

overcome the limitations of local trade. Unfortunately, no data has been obtained on actual out-put of families to permit a direct computation of village production. But the activities of this category of traders suggest that pre-colonial production strategies were influenced by market principles. The fifth category was the professional (Aro and Akunakuna) traders. These men had no direct control over the production of goods in Yakurr. But indirectly they created a demand which stimulated production. According to Yakurr tradition, the foreign traders (Aro and Akunakuna) had buying agents in each Yakurr village. Some of these agents were the channels through which the Yakurr benefited from the trust credit system. It does appear that the Aro and Akunakuna had a very free hand in Yakurr markets. In most West African States, foreign traders were prevented from buying directly from producers. According to an informant, one does not bite the finger that feeds him. The Yakurr 'bought' their market from these (Aro/Akunakuna) people.⁴³

After 1888 enterprising individuals and groups competed freely with the Aro and Akunakuna in Yakurr

markets. These indigenous traders made trips to Calabar to sell their farm produce and on return bought European goods for Yakurr markets. According to my informants, it was the eto that provided the funds which enabled these enterprising individuals and groups to launch new undertakings. Similarly, such individuals were offered a refugee by the eto if the venture failed.

The following items formed part of the trade under discussion.⁴⁴

Foodstuffs	Livestock	Manufactures
Yams	Dwarf cattle	Salt
Cocoyams	Ducks	Textiles
Beans	Goats	Calabashes
Melons	Sheep	Sleeping mats
Groundnuts	Fowls(chickens)	Raffia cloth
Pepper		Iron implements
Maize		Tobacco
Okro		Spirits
Vegetable leaves		Ornaments
Palm oil/ kernels		

44. D. Forde, op. cit., p. 23, 35, 45, 46.

Foodstuffs	Livestock	Manufactures
Palm wine		
Native ropes		
Fish, meat.		

CURRENCIES

Various currencies were used by the Yakurr in pre-colonial times. These were: cowrie shells, manilla and copper rods. The origin and history of these currencies in West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular have been the subject of many studies.⁴⁵ According to Yakurr tradition, the cowrie (cypral moneta) was the earliest currency they used. But exactly when the currency was first used is difficult to know.

The various currencies performed most of the general functions of money. They served as an

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45. W.I. Ofonagoro: "From traditional to British Currency in Southern Nigeria: Analysis of a Currency Revolution 1880-1948." JEH, 39, (1979) 623-654; G.I. Jones: "Native and Trade Currencies in Southern Nigeria during the 18th and 19th centuries". Africa, 28, (1958) 42-54; A. Kirk-Green: "The major currencies in Nigerian History" JHSN, 2(1960) 132-50; M. Johnson: "The Cowrie Currencies of West Africa." JAH, 2, 1 (1970) 17-49; No. 3, (1970) pp. 331 - 353.

effective measure of value, a unit of account which made it convenient to assess the value of each good in relation to others and to fix prices to all kinds of goods. They also acted as a means of deferred payment. A person could buy on credit or borrow and use these currencies to defray later payment.

Ofonagoro has argued that these traditional currencies "resisted persecution and penalisation by the British sterling currency" because the traditional currencies "discharged completely and efficiently the primary exchange function of money as well as its asset function...."⁴⁶

TRANSPORT

There were two major means of transportation: land and water. Communication by land was based entirely on human power. Traders hired carriers to convey goods to the river port of Ekorì for further transportation on the Cross River. Head portage was very popular because there was no other means of conveying goods on land. The Cross River was used for transporting commodities to Calabar. The river was and remains navigable for locally made

46. Ofonagoro. op. cit., p. 650.

canoes throughout the year from the Yakurr port of Ekori.

The foregoing survey of Yakurr economy from the pre-migration period to the post migration era suggests that Yakurr economic foundation had been laid before the Yakurr migrated. The structure of the economic system, even when considered on a sectoral basis, did not change after the migration when the Yakurr became exposed to a wider economic horizon. What the migration did was to locate the Yakurr in a strategic environment which exposed them to the expanding market of the Cross River trade.

The Cross River trade was the commercial interaction conducted by the down-river people - Calabar (Efik), Akunakuna, Aro (Inokun) and Umon - who came up the Cross River in their big canoes, bringing European goods from abroad or the Calabar factories, retailing them to the people of the Upper Cross River: Yakurr, Bahumono, Ekajuk, Atam and purchasing the indigenous products of the Upper Cross River people which they took down to the port of Calabar for sale to the European merchants. The most important items in this trade were palm produce, yams, plantains and kola-nuts.

Economic opportunity created a positive change in demand for Yakurr commodities especially foodstuffs and palm produce. The Yakurr were quick in taking advantage of the opportunity. This they did by establishing two markets centres: one at Ugep and the other at Ekorí. The Yakurr did not stop there. They participated in purchase, retail, and long distance trade. Their participation in the long distance trade was an attempt to overcome the limitations of local commerce. In all this, as well as in other sectors of the economy, it was the family unit (eto) that was the main basis of operation.

The Yakurr thus, participated successfully in a large and complex network of trade within the Cross River basin. By so doing, the extended family system showed that it was not an obstacle to development. First, the family regarded trade as normal. That was why individuals, under the auspices of the family took the initiative to adopt production strategies based on market principles. Besides, virtually the whole of the massive expansion of domestic production which occurred in the post migration period was met with the aid of traditional tools.

Therefore, to assume that the failure to adopt a more complex agricultural technology was a cause of underdevelopment in Yakurr is to put the cart before the horse or invention before need.

Finally, Yakurr contribution to the trade in the Cross River in the post migration period, must have been substantial. Unfortunately, there ~~are~~ no data to substantiate this claim. Judging by the experience of the 1930s, it is reasonable to make that conclusion. In 1935, records of sales from one production unit compiled by Daryll Forde⁴⁷ for the period January to August showed that the said family sold the following:

Yams	4,940
Palm oil	411 tins
Palm wine	2,297 gallons
Native ropes	38 bunches etc.

According to Forde sales of yams and palm oil were made at Calabar. This suggests that he took statistics from the long distance trader. Statistics of sales at Calabar do not indicate that the goods came from the Yakurr. This would also be

47. D. Forde: Yako Studies, p. 35.

true of the pre-colonial period. But the experience of the colonial period suggests that the pre-colonial period must have contributed to the export trade in Calabar since all Yakurr exports were made through Calabar.

Economic developments operated within a political framework. What was the structure of that political framework and what was the impact of the economic developments on the Yakurr political institutions? These questions and more shall be treated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are some works which deal with political systems in general and the so-called stateless societies in particular.¹ A critical analysis of these works leads one to a number of conclusions. The first is that the problem of the origin of the state and the so-called stateless societies is universal. Secondly, the examination of this problem (origin of states) by various researchers leaves many loopholes, as will be seen in a review of these theories below.

1. R.S. Elman: Origin of the State and Civilisation. N.Y. Norton Inc., (1975). R.L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State". Science 169, 47, (1970) pp. 733-751. The first major analysis of small scale African societies was by Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (eds): African Political Systems, London, O.U.P. (1940); elaborations of their stateless societies were made by J. Middleton and D. Tait: (eds) Tribes Without Rulers, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul (1958) who delineated three types of segmentary lineages systems. A still more complete typology has been proposed by S.N. Eisenstadt: "Primitive Political Systems: A preliminary comparative analysis." Am Anthr. LXI (1959) 200-20. Important contributions to the study of small scale political organisations in South-Eastern Nigeria have been made by C.K. Meek: Report on the Social and Political Organisation in Owerri Division, Lagos, (1934); G.I. Jones: Report on the position, status and influence of Chiefs and Natural Rulers in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Enugu (1958). Important contribution to Yakurr political organisation is by: D. Forde: Yako Studies; M. Ruel: Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a Cross River People, London, Tavistock (1969); L. Bohannan: "Political Aspects of Tiv. Social Organisation" in Middleton and Tait. op.cit, pp. 33-66. Simon Ottenberg: Double Descent in an African Society: Seattle, UWP (1968).

The present writer, therefore, finds it difficult to accept most of the theories or suggestions put forward to explain how states and stateless societies evolved.

The following is a review of some of the theories and suggestions. Aristotle thought that the state was natural because it had existed long enough in history and, therefore, did not need an explanation.² Locke and Rousseau argued that the origin of the state should not be placed beyond scientific understanding. They, therefore, suggested that the state was the outcome of the social contract theory.³ The theory holds that the social contract is the unwritten agreement between individuals who decided to unite and form a larger political organisation. Some other scholars saw agriculture which brought food surpluses and specialisation of labour as the prime agent of state origin.⁴ Heraclitus put forward the theory of coercion which derived the state from warfare.⁵ The various opinions merely show wide divergence of view

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2. R.L. Carneiro: "A Theory of the Origin of the State." Science 169, 47(1970) pp. 733 - 51.
 3. R.S. Elman: Origin of the State and Civilisation, N.Y. Norton Inc., (1975).
 4. Elman: op. cit., p. 27.
 5. G.S. Kirk: Heraclitus of Euphrates: The Cosmic Fragment. Cambridge Press, (1954) pp. 245 - 9.

which indicate that the problem is complex and controversial.

In Africa, the origin of the state is still not well understood. Initially, analysts of state formation assumed that state institutions could not have been originated by the Negroes. Later, however, when the existence of empires in pre-colonial Africa became known scholars derived them from forces outside Africa. They thus, implied that these African societies imported state institutions. In the end, these scholars failed to explain the process of state formation in Africa. According to these scholars, African states came into existence as a result of some civilised invader who came from outside Africa and conquered the indigenous peoples and imposed on them a centralised political organisation.⁶ This theory is popularly called the Hamitic hypothesis whose chief proponent is Seligman. It is also the view of this school of thought that state organisation spread from the savanna to the forest regions. This theory has been refuted and its racist bias exposed.⁷ Fage and Oliver put forward the Sudanic state hypothesis which

6. C.G. Seligman: Races of Africa: London(1930), p. 19.

7. R.G. Armstrong: "The development of Kingdoms in Negro Africa", JHSN, 2, 1(1960) pp. 27 - 38.

derived states in Sub-Saharan Africa from the "Egypto-Meroe centre" (sic).⁸ African historians of the 1960s have refuted the Sudanic State theory and have instead suggested that states were derived from 'lucrative economic activities'.⁹ Some other scholars have also suggested that African states were derived from proto stateless societies.¹⁰ These scholars argue that state formation took place through the development of indigenous principles of social organisation. This review of the theory of state origin in Africa again shows that no single concept is entirely satisfactory in explaining the process of state formation.

The first major analysis of stateless societies was made by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard.¹¹ Middleton and Tait elaborated on the stateless societies by distinguishing three types.¹² Horton attempted an explanation of the origin of the so-called stateless

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8. R. Oliver and D. Fage: A Short History of Africa, pp. 51 - 2.
 9. A. Boahen: "A review of J.E. Flint: The History of Nigeria and Ghana", JAH, VIII, 3(1967) pp. 541 - 46.
 10. R. Horton: "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa" HWA, Vol. 1, (eds) Ajayi and Crowder, London, Longmans(1976), pp. 72-113.
 11. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard: African Political Systems, pp. 33 - 52.
 12. Middleton and Tait: Tribes Without Rulers: pp. 1 - 30.

societies.¹³ These scholars derive statelessness from the concurrent operation of a subsistence economy, a communication system which was largely pedestrian, communal land tenure system and the absence of a wage labour.¹⁴ Their analysis is unsatisfactory. First, it is not true that land in pre-colonial Africa was scarce. Land in Africa, as they have admitted, was communal. This means that no individual (not even the ruler) had an outright possession of it. How then could one talk of inadequacy of land in pre-colonial Africa? Scarcity is related to demand and supply. Thus, what these scholars are saying is that land was scarce in pre-colonial Africa. On the contrary, land was not a scarce commodity in the sense of its being demanded and offered for sale at a fixed price. The scholars who have worked on stateless societies attempt solving an African political problem with a European tool. Secondly, communications in pre-colonial Africa, even in centralised states was largely pedestrian especially in the forest region. Thus, the communication problem was applicable to Benin, Oyo and Asante to mention a few states. Therefore, the analysis of

13. Horton; op. cit., pp. 72 - 110.

14. Horton; op. cit., p. 76.

these scholars is unsatisfactory in its explanation of the prime movers of statelessness.

This chapter aims at making some contribution to the debate using the Yakurr experience. The Yakurr settlements were politically independent throughout their pre-colonial history though they had a strong sense of solidarity. According to one of the major analysis of small-scale African societies¹⁵ the Yakurr is classified as a stateless society. A stateless society is said to be one within which, from the point of view of the individual citizen, there is no fixed point of reference which he regards as the focus of his political allegiance and of his legal obligation.¹⁶ In a stateless society, the focus of political allegiance and legal obligation is, therefore, said to be relative to context.

This definition is unacceptable. First, it is Eurocentric. Secondly, the definition suggests by implication that a state is synonymous with centralised political institutions. But this is not true. A state is the grouping of people that constitute a

15. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard: Passim.

16. Horton, op. cit., p. 84.

basic political unit.¹⁷ Thirdly, the definition should not apply to Africa since in the pre-colonial period each African society had a way of ruling itself. African societies maintained law and order by means of accepted norms which ensured social cohesion and peaceful co-existence. The fact that European historians could not find parallels between African and European definitions of a state should not connote that there were stateless societies in Africa. Fourthly, the essence of the state is the protection and guaranteeing of the interests of its citizens. The classification of societies into states and stateless, therefore, suggests, by implication, that there are some societies within which the essential state functions were not operative. This is not a possibility. To this extent, the term stateless is unsatisfactory and unacceptable because it does not represent the reality of history. There is no stateless society. The Yakurr political system shows that the essential state functions were operative, as in any centralised state, and there is, for the individual citizen, a focus of political allegiance.

17. The Concise Oxford Dictionary, New Edition, 6th Impression (1970) p. 1125. See also Acamolekun and Osuntokun: Government and Politics for West African Studies. Ibadan, Heinemanns, (1976) p. XI.

and legal obligation.

Within the Yakurr political system was the Council of Yabol¹⁸ which in all respects was the legal and legislative body. It was this Council which ensured that the various sections of the society performed different functions for the well being of the Yakurr. For the Yakurr, the Council of Yabol is the individual's focal point of political authority and legal obligation. An examination of this Council shall be made below.

Meanwhile, the economic development which occurred within this period did take place within the Yakurr political and social framework. What was the origin, structure and organisation of that political system?

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN UMOEN¹⁹

The origin of Yakurr political organisation is not clear. None of the writer's informants can say what induced their ancestors to evolve the political system they now operate. Like Aristotle, the writer's Yakurr informants think that their political organisation has existed long enough and therefore does not need an explanation. The following is the writer's

18. The word Yabol means leaders. These were priests who were heads of matrilineal clans and custodians of matrilineal shrines called 'Asc'.

19. Umoen is Yakurr ancestral homeland.

reconstruction.

The Umoen homeland from where the Yakurr migrated is said to have been located within the Cameroun-Obudu ranges (Lekanakpakpa). There is every indication that that area was fertile, from a very early date. The Ebongara tradition describes the area as forested and with streams. Since the area was fertile, it is logical to infer that the area must have had abundant food supplies as a result of its soil fertility and favourable climatic conditions.

Extant records on the Cross River basin reveal that the adjoining hinterland to the Cross River estuary had considerable trade with Tom Shott Island (salt town) as early as 1500.²⁰ Talbot shows that there were different ethnic groups living in Nigeria-Cameroun zone in pre-colonial times.²¹ It is logical to infer that it was the abundance of food supplies in that area that brought about the existence of a large number of people who inhabit the Nigeria-Cameroun border in pre-colonial times. The various groups of people did not amalgamate to form a centralised political organisation. Rather, they

20. Pereira: op. cit., p. 164; Barbot: op.cit., p. 382.

21. Talbot: In the Shadow of the Bush, London, Heinemann (1912) pp. 76 - 79.

lived in compact settlements politically independent of each other even when some of these groups claim to have been offsprings of a proto-parent (Yakurr, Ojo and Okuni).

It is possible that the Umoen ecology influenced the emergence of the early Yakurr political organisation. The existence of food in Yakurr ancestral homeland may have led to an increase in the birth rate. Over time, some families experienced fission. Since the family was the basic unit of economic production and since fission was caused by an increase in population induced by adequate food supplies, the nascent family units naturally acknowledged the supremacy of the original family from which they derived. The political implication would be that the nascent family units would allow the head of the elder family unit some degree of authority over them. Subsequent splitting of families created problems for the families over land utilization. The fission may have brought about disagreement on the utilization of available resources. To reconcile these disagreements, the various families realised the need to establish an organisation that would be charged with the responsibility of resolving conflicts among all the settlements. Once established, the

organisation Yabol became a powerful force in its own right. This, in the opinion of the writer, is how the Yakurr political system evolved. The Council of Yabol operated within Yakurr and survived the conditions that brought it into being. As the volume of assignments for this organisation increased, it became necessary to increase its membership and to assign other specific functions. Thus, the organisation was given a name -- Council of Yabol -- and members were assigned specific functions. In this way, groups (families) that were hitherto politically autonomous came together and formed a larger political organisation.

Harris derived the Adun 'pocket state' (sic) from the persistent external threat of the North-east Igbo.²² The Adun are the northern neighbours of the Yakurr. According to Harris, the unity born out of the external threats was the prime mover of the Adun State. There is no doubt that in the face of an external threat, internal disagreements of a people are usually driven underground. Erim derives the Idoma political system from ecology and

22. Harris: op. cit., pp. 151 - 98. Fortes and Evan-Pritchard classified the Adun (Mbembo) as a 'stateless' society.

fertile plains of the Kwararafa environment brought about food surpluses which enabled the Idoma to specialise in other occupations. Specialisation in occupations brought about trade which became the prime mover of the Idoma State.²³ The writer thinks it possible for a people to evolve a political system without occupational specialisation. Political problems do not wait for occupational specialisation before they rear their heads. Children, adults and families do disagree over issues. The same factors which create disagreement among people can induce them to find political solutions. However, this is not to say that the factors as suggested by Harris and Erim do not apply to the Adun and Idoma states. The writer posits that for the Yakurr, the influence of the Umoen ecology and a continuous increase in population were the major factors that led to the emergence of their state. These factors tended to create political problems which in turn brought into being the Council of Yabol. This organisation to all intents and purposes became the Yakurr traditional political system.

23. E.O. Erim: The Pre-colonial History of Idoma, p. 214 - 218.

THE STRUCTURE OF YAKURR POLITICAL SYSTEM

In understanding the Yakurr political set-up, it is necessary to stress that Yakurr parenthood was dual and recognition was equally accorded to both parents at each generation. The line of descent traced from a father is called kepun²⁴ while that of a mother is called lejimo.²⁵ Kepun was the basic unit of residence and it consisted of a patriarch (Obol Kepun), his sons and their wives, children and dependants. Each kepun was self-governing in all internal matters. The Obol kepun (patriarch) was the ritual lineage head. In this position, he had great moral authority as a guardian of the ancestral shrine (epundet) and thus he was the ultimate source of authority and kepun solidarity. Solidarity was also reinforced by the fact that kepun was a land holding group whose members were entitled to an appropriate share. The Obol kepun held the land in trust and defended such property when the need arose.

Lejimo, on the other hand, was not a residential group but members of matrilineans who were dispersed through each village in particular and Yakurr in general. The most valuable possession of each

24. Kepun means Patriclan.

25. Lejimo means Matrilinean.

Lejimo was the Ase. Ase were (and still are) objects to which supernatural personality and power are attributed. The Ase are not distant gods but vaguely personalised in-dwelling powers believed to intervene in human affairs and are subject to influence by appropriate offerings. These Ase consist of a varied collection of objects such as bronze manilla, copper rods, clay mound, pottery flasks and bowls. Individuals had rights and obligations to both kepun and lejimo. The individual's rights to lejimo were those of ritual observance and succession to property. Lejimo took precedence over kepun in the inheritance of movable property (livestock and currency) while kepun's rights relate to immoveable property (houses, land and the like).

The above dichotomy shows that the smallest political unit among the Yakurr was the kepun(family) and the largest unit was the aggregation of ajimo (lejimo: sing). In Yakurr parlance, Ajimo is the village. Each individual belonged to a patriclan(kepun) and a matriclan(lejimo). Since marriage in Yakurr was exogamous, matriclan kins were found in almost all patriclans. Therefore, for the Yakurr, lejimo is an aggregation of patriclans. Thus, for all political purposes, lejimo was accepted as the village writ

small. Hence the largest political unit was the village.

In between the village and the family (kepun) was the ward (kekpatu). The ward (kekpatu) was strictly territorial. It was an aggregation of Yepun (sing. kepun) adjacent to each other. The ward was a ritual unit for organising age grades. How the ward came by this ritual role is not clear. Forde has suggested that the wards were formed by processes of fission and accretion between lineages and coalescence of lineages.²⁶ The suggestion is a possibility. According to tradition, Bikobiko ward of Ugep was founded by a splinter group from Ikpakapit ward of Ugep following a disagreement between Ugep and Benobase(children of god) and a consequent clash.²⁷

WARD (KEKPATU) ORGANISATION

The ward had a council Kekpatu composed of the heads of the patriclans making up the ward. These patriclan heads elected one of them as their ward head who was called Ogbolia while the patriclan members of the ward council were called Yakamben.

The ward council had three principal functions:
initiation of boys into the village male community,

26. Forde: op. cit., p. 137.

27. YHT. 48, Ubi Okoi et al, Ugep, 4/10/76.

organisation and recognition of age-sets and the regulation of social and political activities within the ward. We shall look at these functions in detail.

The most important function of the ward was the initiation of boys of the ward into Ligwomi. Ligwomi was the ritual initiation of boys (12 to 16 years of age) into the male community of the town. The ritual was performed after every four years and it lasted for about three months (December to February). Until he was initiated, a boy was not regarded as a male; he was not distinguished socially from a girl-child and his parents were to see that he kept the same taboos as women.

Forde has given a vivid description of what takes place on the first day of ligwomi initiation. According to Forde, on the appointed day for ligwomi, boys of the ward (kekpatu) are brought out by their fathers to the ward assembly house and before the ward head (Ogbolia) and other ward leaders (Yakamben). Two of the ward leaders (Yakamben) don masks and costumes to represent the spirits of the ward (Yakowa); one male and the other female.

The leaders sit in a semi-circle close behind the crouched Yakowa with the ward head (Ogbolia) in the centre. The boys with their sponsors are then brought up one at a time to stand before the masked figures. The ward head (Ogbolia) tells the boy to place his right hand on the male mask, pointing to it. As the boy does so, a falsetto voice comes out of the mask crying out kakapana (don't touch) which makes the boy shrink back but his sponsor urges him to do so until he overcomes his fears. The ward head (Ogbolia) leans forward and makes a transverse mark with clay paste on the back of the boy's hand and the boy is set for the next stage.²⁸ When all the boys have been presented and blessed in this way, the first phase of the initiation closes. Subsequent meetings of both the leaders and the initiate take place outside the village in a small clearing surrounded by high bush known as Kegomitam (ligwomi meeting place). Here the initiates receive lessons on various aspects of village life.

The Yakurr world was male-centred and the greater responsibility for the success of the village was

28. Forde: op. cit., pp. 135 - 144.

placed on the male. Hence, it was of utmost necessity that a boy goes through ligwomi rites since any unbecoming behaviour on his part would be a discredit to his father. The most important lessons were on the norms of Yakurr society, the society's responsibilities and the man's obligations to it.²⁹

The other function of the ward was the recognition of age-sets. Men's age-sets (Nko) were formed within each ward. In Yakurr the formal establishment of a new age-set from young men about to marry followed a four-yearly Ligwomi ritual. A new set was called into existence by the ward head (Ogbolia) to whom it (age-set) ~~presents~~ its chosen leader and his deputy. The principle of age grouping operated long before the formal recognition of the set. In fact, a man's age-set membership is established in childhood. Gradually during childhood, the boys of a ward sort themselves out into series of groups of increasing seniority and as the members of each group reach the age of marriage (17-20 years) it is formally established as an age-set.

Age groups are similarly formed among the girls of the ward during childhood and the separate groups

29. The writer underwent Ligwomi rites in January, 1959. See also Forde: op.cit., p. 143.

are distinguished in the ward dancing parties which take place after the new yam festival.

Age-sets (male and female) act corporately in performing tasks such as weeding farm paths at the request of the ward head. The age-sets as corporate groups have definite obligations to the ward, of which the most important is guarding the houses against fire during the dry season. In any ward assignment to an age-set, backsliders without good excuse are fined by the age-set; but where a set refuses customary duties without cause it is brought before the Council of Yabol (village government) which punishes such a set with a fine.³⁰

VILLAGE POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Politically, each village was ruled by the Council of Yabol.

COUNCIL OF YABOL

The composition of this council was as follows:-

1. OBOL LOPON: Village Head and Priest of Okjokobi fertility shrine of Yabol matrikin group.
2. OKPEBRI:³¹ Speaker of the Council of Yabol, and Custodian of Edel lopon-shrine of the whole village.
3. ONUN EKO: Commander-in-Chief.

30. Forde: op. cit., pp. 144 - 147.

31. The Okpebri summons meetings of this Council on the instructions of the Obol lopon. He (Okpebri) presides over and directs the meeting. At trials, he (Okpebri) announces the judgment of the Council.

4. EDJUKWA: Town-criers who represent each ward(Kekpatu) of the village in the Council. These officers are nominated by the ward(Kekpatu) from among their members.
5. OGBOLIA: These are the chairmen of the ward (Kekpatu) organisation.
6. BINA: These are the heads of the matrilineages in each town. The various matrilineages are shown in table y below.

TABLE V
TABLE OF MATRILINEAGES(AJIMO) AND FERTILITY
SHRINES(ASE) IN YAKURR

Original Lejimo	Ase (Fertility Shrines)	Present-day Ajimo
YABOL	OJOKOBI	YABOL YAKPOLOBOL YAKUNKUNEBOL YAWANBOL YAKPANBOL YATEBOL
YAJENI	OBOLENE	YAJENI
YASENI	OKALEFON	YASENI
YAKAMAFE	ATALIKUMI	YANALI YABONO YABAYE YABUN
YANYO	OBETEDDEL	YANYO
YABOLETETE	OBOLUKONO	YAKUMIKO YABOLETETE
YATEBA	ESUKPA	YAKAMAFE YATEBA
YAKANKANG	ATEWA	YATIYOMO YAYALI YAKANKANG
YAPUNI	OTABELUSANGA	YALOWO YAPUNI YAJOKPOLO

The most important members of the Council of Yabol were:
 Obol Lupon(VILLAGE HEAD): Okpebri(Speaker); Onun Eko
 (Commander-in-Chief) and Edjukwa(Spokesmen). We shall
 comment on these members of the Council.

OBOL LOPON(VILLAGE HEAD)

According to Yakurr tradition the office of Obol Lupon is traced to one Isonawen who erected a shrine called Odjokobi. Odjokobi was the first Ase the Yakurr possessed. Hence the incumbent priest(Isonawen) became the head of the village(Obol lopon). Successors had to be members of Isonawen matriclan called Yabot.³² The other matriclans accepted the leadership of Yabot matriclan because of the precedence she created in erecting Odjokobi.

An informant has also suggested that the emergence of the office of Obol lopon should be attributed to the fact that certain individuals possess attractive qualities and charisma which make others choose them as leaders in their society. The first incumbent of Obol lopon - Isonawen - must have been a good example.³³ According to Read, in a tradition-oriented society, charisma wins followership because it is the individual

32. YHT. 2, Idomi 18/8/76.

33. YHT. 34, Ugep, Dr. Okoi Arikpo, 31/12/76.

with such qualities who usually is equal to challenges.³⁴ It is, therefore, most probable that Isonawen was a charismatic leader who over the years attracted a number of followers. As a result of his creation of Odjokobi, his position as a leader was strengthened. Among the Yakurr then the Obol lopon was (and still is) the highest office within the village group.

The Obol lopon is both the priest of Odjokobi and the religious head of the community. He assumes office by undergoing certain ritual performances which, it is believed, severed his connection with his immediate family and lineage and thus made him an impartial father to all. After the ritual performances, the Obol lopon was supposed to relinquish his personal building and all the property and obligations that he might have owed to others in the society. On installation he goes to live in a special site - Lebokom (Palace) - which is not within the territory of any kepun.³⁵ Thus, the Obol lopon is the head of the corporation of priests and the father of every other person in the village.

However, his influence rested more on age and personality, reinforced by fairness rather than force. Maturity in age and experience, and not wealth, were the

34. Quoted in Elman: Origin of the State, p. 74.

35. D. Forde: op. cit., p. 45.

main criteria for selecting the village head. It was not unusual for people to reject offers of headship on the excuse that they were not the most eligible in terms of age.

To some extent the Obol lopon can be likened to the Eze Nri in Igbo land - notably Awka. Eze Nri is a religious leader.³⁶ Like the Eze Nri, Obol lopon is the priest of the primary fertility shrine - Odjokobi. Unlike the Eze Nri the Obol lopon performs political and administrative functions. This is why he is the head of the Village or town. In this sense, the Obol lopon can be compared with the Obi in Igboland. The Obi is the head of village or town as in Onitsha, Asaba and other Igbo towns.

OKPEBRI (SPEAKER)

The origin of this office is attributed to a misunderstanding between two Yakurr families. According to the traditions, in the pre-migration period there lived in Umoen a man called Tata Ekwa Ebaba. This man went to bed with his friend's (unnamed) wife and was caught in the act. The news was spread through the village. The resultant uproar prompted Obol lopon -

36. S.N. Nwabara: Iboland: A century of contact with Britain, 1860-1960. Hodder and Stoughton, (1977), p. 22.

Isonawen - to summon all Yakurr families to a meeting - Kipali (Congress) - to discuss the issue so that the 'fire can be put out'.³⁷ In the end the 'fire was put out' by the erection of a shrine called Edel lopon (village shrine). The shrine was to check and ensure that violation of tradition met with supernatural punishment. A priest called Okpebri was installed as the custodian. The narrative appears simple, straightforward and authentic. But how and why did the officer of this **institution become the speaker of the Council of Yabol?** The answer to this question is not clear. But it does appear that it may not be very wrong to attribute it to the sterling qualities of the first holder of this office. It is suggested that the first officer holder, called Odidi Mbai, must have established a precedent which has become a standing practice. Another possible explanation is that the Okpebri is the priest of a shrine which oversees the activities of all individuals in the village whereas the Obol lopon is the priest of Odjokobi - a shrine owned by one matrilineage, among others, within the village group. One other point must be made. Okpebri is a member of the Council of Yabol by virtue of his office as the priest of Edel lopon. He summons

37. YHT. 2, Idomi 18/8/76.

meetings of the Council, presides over and directs proceedings. At trials, he announces the judgment of the Council.³⁸

ONUN EKO (COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF)

The first Onun Eko is said to have emerged during a war with the Yakpa. It is said that at the present site of Ugep a man called Omini Akpa single handedly pushed a stone which rolled down a slope called Elomikpon and crushed the Yakpa aggressors who were bent on sacking Ugep. Thus, the emergence of the office should be traced to the war with Yakpa. There is indeed a view that the prevalence of warfare in any society leads to the emergence of military leaders as well as military institutions. According to Spencer, if warfare is endemic in any society the otherwise disparate groups will unite against the common foe and if the threat to their existence is continuous, a war leader or his governing centre will emerge.³⁹ The Yakurr migration experience fits perfectly into this

38. The Okpebri is obviously not a spokesman. Among the Yakurr, it is the Edjukwa who is the spokesman. For parallels, see O. Ikime: The Isoko People: A historical Survey, Ibadan (1972) p. 30. Edjukwa performs similar functions as the Otata. See also E.J. Alagoa. The Niger Delta: pp. 17-19. Ogulasowei (spokesman) performs similar functions as Edjukwa.

39. Quoted in Elman: Origin of the State. p. 74.

contention. The Omini Akpa tradition is an instance which supports the view that the prevalence of warfare plays a significant role in the emergence of political institutions even among the so-called segmentary peoples.

EDJUKWA

Edjukwa represented the ward (kekpatu) in the Council of Yabol. He was selected not on the basis of age, but on such criteria as whether he was reliable in keeping secrets, quick^{to} execute orders and generally not afraid^{of} darkness. It was his duty to announce the decisions of the Council to his ward (kekpatu). This was often done at such periods of the day when it was calculated to reach the majority of the inhabitants - usually at night, shortly before bed-time or at dawn.

The above survey of the structure, organisation and analysis of key political institutions shows that the idea of Obol lopon is rooted in Yakurr society. The Obol lopon was first a family figure before he became father of the village. Secondly, it is also clear that the idea of Obol lopon is rooted in religion since the office is connected with the primary fertility shrine of the Yakurr - Odjokobi. Thirdly, although, it has been stressed that warfare plays a significant role in the evolution of Omun Eko, the Yakurr

experience suggests that warfare did not originate the institution of Obol lopon but merely strengthened it.

The Council of Yabol needs further comment. Like most groups in southern Nigeria, Igbo, Ijo, Urhobo, Kwale, Ibibio and Efik it is a group of village leaders. But unlike these groups, the Council of Yabol is unique in more than one way. The composition of the Council of Yabol (village leaders) is based upon office and/or personal talents. Edjukwa was a member by talent whereas other members sat in the Council by virtue of their offices as priests or leaders of ward (Yekpatu) organisation. Secondly, the Council is not a clan organisation. In fact, up to 1896, the Yakurr had no clan organisation. To that extent, the Council of Yabol is different from the Obong council among the Efik. The Obong council is a clan assembly of the committee of heads of houses. Thirdly, decisions of the Council were executed by matrilineal groups (Ajimo) whereas most groups in southern Nigeria executed decisions of their village assemblies through the age-grade institutions.⁴⁰ Among the Yakurr, age grades were used at the level of the ward (Kekpatu). Later, however, Okenka a fraternity of wealthy traders and

40. O. Ikime: The Isoko People. pp. 28 - 42.

heads of patricians took over the executive role of the matrilineages (Ajimo). This issue shall be examined later. It was, however, this Council which was responsible for the spiritual, political, legal and economic matters of Yakurr. None of its members combined in himself these powers, and no other institution in Yakurr performed the functions of the Council of Yabol. The Council was the pivot of control of Yakurr affairs.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF YABOL

This Council was concerned with matters of:

- (i) War and defence.
- (ii) Worship at fertility shrines (Ase)
- (iii) Inter-village relations.
- (iv) Recognition of age-grades.
- (v) Adjudicating very serious breaches of law and custom.
- (vi) Festivals. These include: yam festivals, wrestling, war, Ligwomi, and religious festivals.

It appears that the Yakurr Council of Yabol was very effective at the early period of Yakurr history since the society was essentially a simple one. Later, as the society grew more complex the various units began to question its composition and as the society became even more complex, especially after migration,

the Council of Yabol began to use such bodies as the secret societies to execute some of its policies. Besides some of the matrilineage groups experienced proliferation. We shall examine these two developments beginning with the matrilineage proliferation.

According to Yakurr traditions, some matrilineage groups experienced serious internal crises after migration. The result was that some members of these groups broke away from the original groups to establish new ones. These new groups worshipped at the same fertility shrines (Ase) as did the original groups from which they broke away. There were nine original matrilineage groups⁴¹ (see p. 136). These were: Yabol, Yajeni, Yakamafe, Yapuni, Yanyo, Yateba, Yaboletete, Yakankang, and Yaseni.

In the post-migration period some of these groups proliferated themselves. For instance, originally, the Yabol matrilineage alone worshipped at Odjokobi fertility shrine. In the post-migration period, six matrilineages worshipped at that shrine. These were: Yabol, Yakpolobol, Yakunkunebol, Yawanbol, Yakpanbol and Yatebol. Although, each of these groups had its own tradition of origin which did not link it, with

41. YHT. 2, Ugep. 18/8/76.

the original Yabol matrilineage yet it is common knowledge in Yakurr that the groups were derived from Yabol group. All the groups worshipped at Odjokobi(Ase) shrine. All their names ended in 'bol' just as the original group. It is not an accident of history that these names end in 'bol'. The names tell part of the story of their being. Similarly, Yakamafe, Yapuni, Yabolsetete, Yateba and Yakankang have each reproduced new groups which share fertility shrines with the original groups. This development is historically interesting. The factors responsible for this development will be examined in conjunction with the development of secret societies in Yakurr with particular reference to Okenka.

SECRET SOCIETIES IN YAKURR

A study of secret societies presents some singular problems because of the very nature of their secrecy. This, however, can be explained. Some secret societies were of a religio-magical nature and the way they functioned could be divulged only to the initiated. Besides, members were bound by oath not to reveal their secrets so that the little knowledge obtained comes through a combination of extra-polation, inference and hearsay.

In a study of West African secret societies, Butt-Thompson has held that secret societies were instituted to enforce as well as to maintain customs and beliefs which were in danger of changing or becoming obsolete.⁴² Furthermore, he stated that the organisers were the champions of the old against the new. They were conservative: they restricted mental advance, and punished heresy and radicalism. They were clever enough to know that prohibition alone was not sufficient foundation for any organisation desiring longevity, and therefore, made their societies the repositories of the folklore, myths, history and the conception of arts and culture and learning and wisdom the 'tribes' (sic) possessed.⁴³

Butt-Thompson's appraisal obscures the purpose for which secret societies were formed. Even viewed in retrospect, it is unimaginable that a people could have formed secret societies in anticipation of the coming of the Europeans. Rather, it can be argued that the idea of obsolescence is directly related to the suppression of these societies during colonial rule in Africa. It was this attitude of colonialism that

42. F.W. Butt-Thompson: West African Secret Societies. N.Y. Argosy-Antiquarian Ltd., (1969) p. 16.

43. F.W. Butt-Thompson: op. cit., pp. 16 - 23.

precipitated a confrontation between traditional and new systems of values. Besides, the paradox that the organisers of secret societies which fostered the history, culture and art of a people could be regarded as *people* restricting mental advance only begs the type of mental advancement to which these people were aspiring and becomes meaningful only within an eurocentric perspective. Suffice it to say that, in Yakurr, secret societies served different functions in the society. The following table (vi) shows the different categories of secret societies:

(TABLE VI): YAKURR SECRET SOCIETIES

MYSTIC AND RELIGIOUS	YOSE) PL. ASE)	DEMOCRATIC AND POLITICAL	SUBVERSIVE AND CRIMINAL
ODJOKOBI	EDET (PL. NDET)	LIGOWMI	KUTAN (witchcraft)
KUKFATU		NKPE (EKPE)	
ATEWA	EPUNDET	OKENKA	NKABI (Socery)
OBOLENE	EKPEDET	EBIABU	
OKALEFONG	AKOTA	KOJE	
ATALIKUMI	EDETLOPON	OBAM	
OBETEDEL	EKAU	YEJO	
ESUKPA			
OTABELUSANG			

Basically all these secret societies were meant to provide stability to the society and support and represent classes whose existence was justified by the functions they discharged. In very broad terms, they discharged functions which are comparable to those discharged by the law courts and the several departments of modern-day governmental structure. This is not to say that all the secret societies listed above discharged useful functions, but at least it can be argued that members had their reasons for joining them. Sometimes these reasons might have been psychological, but mostly the societies served societal needs. In the post-migration era, one of the secret societies, Okenka, became the most prominent of the Yakurr secret societies in terms of the influence it exerted on the daily lives of the people. How did this development come about?

Between about 1600 and 1650, the Yakurr abandoned their ancestral homeland in search of a new and independent one. The migration exposed the Yakurr to a new economic situation. The forces created by this new development seriously stretched the political and social institutions and in effect weakened the principle of the Council of Yabol to a point of crisis.

Between 1650 and 1707, the Yakurr successfully established five new settlements within the middle Cross River area. These were: Ugep, Ekori, Nko, Idomi and Nkpani. One of these was situated on the bank of the Cross River. In this locality, the volume of trade in yams, cocoyams, palm produce, ropes and ^{the like,} ~~it~~ increased tremendously. This led to the establishment of two market centres within Yakurr. Soon there arose a need to maintain law and order in the markets. Evidence suggests that the Council of Yabol had little control over these markets even when it was the Obol lopon who 'bought' the markets. Thus, the institution which effectively accommodated and controlled economic activities in the pre-migration era found itself increasingly incapable of coping with the post-migration economic problems. Who conducted the trade in question and how did the Yakurr get initiated? The answer to these questions indicates the factors that led to the emergence of the new merchant class (Yasu) in Yakurr. The voice of tradition is unanimous that the Yakurr merchants became noticeable during the reign of Obol Ikpi I of Ugep (c.1860-1885) and Obol Eyu (c. 1869-1894) of Ekori. In answer to a question: 'How did your family become

connected with trade? an informant answered as follows:-

Our grandfather called Mbil Aguba was the man who first built up the wealth of the family. Mbil did not travel out of the Ugep as we (descendants?) are told. His house was a sleeping place for Akunakuna traders. On arrival for marketing in Yakurr, the traders will stay in his (Mbil Aguba) house. In that way he(Mbil) fraternised with them. One of these traders called Uyok made him(Mbil) his (Uyok) agent in Yakurr. From that time, he(Uyok) will hand Mbil European goods and some times ten strings of cowries 44 to sell and to purchase palm oil, kernel, yams, camwood, sleeping mats etc." What European goods did Mbil collect? "Goods like salt, gun powder, matchets, cloth, mugs, padlocks, beads, brasspans, glass etc. Mbil will then take these goods and money to purchase the items required by the Akunakuna trader. When the trader comes back he will collect the goods and take them away while he (trader)hands Mbil some 'new goods' to be sold in the same manner.

But usually when the Akunakuna trader directs that the items should be sold for a certain quantity of produce, Mbil will sell the items more than was directed. The excess became his wealth. In this way, he built up the wealth of the family. As our people have said, the spot where the ant hill had once stood always retains red earth. This is why we still have 'Yasu' in this family." 45

According to another informant:-

"in the past traders came up to Ekori waterside in their big canoes bringing European goods and retailing them and purchasing Yakurr products which they

44. 40 Cowries was equal to one string. See Noah, Old Calabar. p. 80.

45. YHT. 4, Ugep: Ete Bassey Iwara et al, 3/8/76.

take down for sale to the Europeans at Calabar. It was these traders who engaged some of us (informant? or Yakurr) to buy for them and they paid us commission. In this way our grandfathers (Yakurr) built up their capital and in addition to the Commission had their own smaller trading venture. But from the time of Obol Eta (of Ekorí c. 1894-1919) the whiteman came and told us (Yakurr) that we can go to Calabar to buy European goods by ourselves. Since that time we (Yakurr agents) did not buy for the Akunakuna, Umon and Aro. We (Yakurr) bought and sold goods at Calabar." 46

The oral evidence suggests that the Yasu were products of the trust credit system. The trust system, in this regard, involved the Akunakuna, Aro and Umon trader giving his Yakurr agent European goods on the understanding that the Yakurr agent would supply him (trader) with palm produce, yams and the like to the value of the goods delivered. From this means the Yakurr agents built up their wealth.

The trust system of trade was not peculiar to the Cross River. Infact, it was widely practised throughout the entire stretch of the West African coastline down to the Camerouns.⁴⁷ For the Yakurr, it was the

46. YHT: 81, Ekorí; Ete Jacob Ofem Eno et al, 20/11/76.

47. The trust system with its problems is a subject that has received serious scholastic attention. The following bibliography deals with the subject matter: Dike: Trade and Politics, p. 109; John Whitford: Trading Life in West and Central Africa, London (1877) Reprint: Frank Cass (1957), p. 303, Wadell: Twenty-nine Years, pp. 274-565 - 6. Noah: Old Calabar, pp. 87 - 91.

migration and settlement that placed them in the place where they could participate by obtaining trust goods and in the process some Yakurr derived personal wealth which ultimately elevated them to the status of Yasu.

Patridge shows that some producers in Obubra district (Yakurr inclusive) became middlemen partly because the 'Country'(sic) was opened up and partly because the Aro, Akunakuna and Umon middlemen could not cope with the volume of produce that could be got out of this country. They (middlemen) could not transport trade goods from all areas from which produce was obtainable and therefore had to grant trusts to the Upper Cross River indigenes to enable them reach the nooks and collect produce for the down river(Cross) middlemen.⁴⁸ Such action of granting trust goods assisted the down river middlemen since it induced their Yakurr agents to go further afield to make fresh contacts to collect produce.

The indication that from the reign of Obol Eta of Ekorì (c. 1894-1919) the former Yakurr agents were no more working for their former employees needs comment. Patridge appears to allude to the idea when he refers to the 'opening up of the country.'⁴⁹ Why did the Yakurr undertake direct trade with Calabar? According

48. C. Patridge: Cross River Native, p. 245.

49. C. Patridge: op. cit., p. 245.

to tradition, "the whiteman came and told us (Yakurr) that we can go to Calabar to buy European goods by ourselves".⁵⁰ This information appears to allude to Johnston's trip up the Cross River in 1888 to secure independent treaties of friendship and unity with Umon, Akunakuna, Ekumorut (Bahumono), Yakurr.⁵¹ As indicated earlier, enterprising individuals of Yakurr extraction became free to trade on the Cross River in the 1880s. Hitherto, the river could not be used freely by traders. According to Johnston"... Calabar was at odds with Umon, Umon with Akunakuna, Akunakuna with Ikomorut(Bahumono)...⁵² Indeed, the Cross River was divided up into areas of influence among various people who lived by its banks. As a result of Yakurr participation in the Cross River trade, the traders became exposed to new ideas as a result of which a new class emerged. The class was called Yasu. Yasu were men who had distinguished themselves in trade and had made substantial wealth from it. Thus, they were men who by their personal achievements had become the new elite. They were men of talent and determination. In most societies a

50. YHT. 81, Ekor1, 26/11/76.

51. Ibid.

52. Quoted by J.C. Anene in his work International Boundaries of Nigeria, p. 75.

successful person in business, or a man of good judgment and intelligence in any age is always accepted as having leadership qualities. Therefore, the Yasu were men who became leaders by their personal achievements. The possession of leadership qualities won the Yasu public respect. They thus, became opinion-makers and a force in Yakurr. Admission into their fold was through one's personal achievements. By stressing this criterion, the Yasu promoted individual initiative or what Henderson describes as "the king in every man".⁵³

The origin of this class (Yasu) appears to derive from man's natural propensity to group together once there is a singleness of purpose. Thus, it was most probable that the successful traders in the post migration period began fraternising to discuss trade and from that nucleus the Yasu group emerged. This class (Yasu) began to question the composition and leadership of the Council of Yabol and matrilineage groups respectively. Evidence suggests that the Yasu felt dissatisfied with the state of things. They believed that the political system (Council of Yabol) and the priests of the matrilineage shrines (Bina) did

53. R.N. Henderson: The King in Everyman: New Haven, Y. U. P. (1972).

not accord them proper recognition. Besides, the Yasu felt that the Council of Yabol did not have an effective control of the markets. They realised that as traders they needed a more effective form of protection to be able to operate successfully. Above all, they felt that the economic situation as at the time required the modification of the existing administrative system. Therefore, the Yasu began to agitate for a significant increase in the size of the Council of Yabol (the traditional system of government) and participation in the running of the affairs of their matrilineage groups. This new attitude on the part of the Yasu caused the proliferation of the matrilineage groups. The Yasu led the break-away groups, desiring political recognition which they knew they could only have through their leadership of matrikin groups.

They did not carry their political ambition too far. In spite of the break-away, they recognised their social and cultural links with the original group; and so they continued to worship at the same fertility shrines as did the former groups from which they had split.

The emergence of Yasu was responsible for the formation of Okenka,⁵⁴ which will now be examined more closely.

THE FORMATION OF OKENKA

The arrival of foreign traders in Yakurr had a tremendous impact on the Yakurr. The foreign traders, through the trust credit system created traders of Yakurr extraction - Yasu. The trust credit system of which the Yakurr were availing themselves was such that needed an institution which could settle disputes that may arise as a result of the trading intercourse. Consequently, Yakurr traders were exposed to new ideas relating to government. Among the Efik, the Ekpe society had been brilliantly used as an institution for the solution of the problems which emerged from the rapid expansion of trade in the nineteenth century. The expansion of trade necessitated the granting of credit-trust or pawn or pledge facilities.⁵⁵ Commercial credit of the kind of which the Efik were availing themselves was essentially capitalist in nature and origin. The Ekpe society was, therefore, adopted as an

54. Okenka is a fraternity with executive functions in Yakurr village government.

55. A.J.H. Latham: op. cit., p. 28. See also K.K. Nair: Politics and Society in S.E. Nigeria 1841-1906; A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar. Oxford, (1974), p. 83.

institution to settle disputes which might occur during commercial intercourse.⁵⁶

The Aro had adopted the institution of the Ekpe from the Efik as a result of their trade contacts. The Aro, like the Efik, adopted the Ekpe as an instrument for settling trade disputes and in fact utilised the Ekpe for enhancing trade. Following the arrival of the foreign traders - Aro, - the idea of Ekpe society playing a role in the government of Yakurr, in order to facilitate trade was introduced. But among the Yakurr Ekpe did not encompass the whole village; it operated on patriclan basis. Therefore, when the need arose for a political arrangement which would serve the entire village as an instrument of enhancing trade, the Yakurr created the Okenka.

Okenka, like Ekpe, was graded; it had a form of sign writing called Nsibidi and had as its symbol of authority, the picture of the leopard. Unlike Ekpe, Okenka was not open to all free born in a patriclan. It was only open to Yasu (rich men in the village) and Yabol Kepon (heads of patriclans). The heads of patriclan placed Okenka in a position to discuss political

56. Latham: op. cit., p. 28.

matters on behalf of their patrilans. Similarly, the Yasu placed Okenka in a position to discuss economic matters. The strength of Okenka, therefore, lay in the quality of its membership and composition. The Yasu and the heads of the patrilans controlled the commercial and production media in Yakurr respectively. Okenka thus, linked together the control of commerce and land (Obol Kepon held the family land in trust and ensured its proper utilisation by members of his family).

Admission was by payment of fixed fees and performance of prescribed ceremonies - which included the marriage of a slave girl into the member's matrilineage group; killing of a goat and cooking of food. There were three grades: Ebuto, Kamle and Abu. Promotion into the higher grades (Kamle and Abu) depended upon a number of factors such as the length of membership and mastery of the sign language (Nsibidi). Promotion to the highest grade - Abu - entailed the killing of a cow to celebrate the elevation of the member to the high status of Abu.

Forde has argued that the village Head (Obol lopon) in Yakurr lacks the secular means of enforcing decisions and judgments even though the Council of Yabol is a centralised authority in the moral and

spiritual sense. He argued that as a judicial institution, the Council lacked an in-built mode of enforcement. Secondly, the absence of secular powers of enforcement in the village Council facilitated the emergence and exercise of executive powers through the independent association notably Okenka.⁵⁷

It appears that Forde was more interested in studying the functions of Okenka instead of its development. As Radcliff-Brown has rightly pointed out, it is not possible to understand the functioning of the institution of a people at a certain point in time without knowing how they have come to be what they are.⁵⁸ Indeed, the evolution of the social and political institutions of any society derives from the historical development of the people. Forde lacked the advantage of the pre-colonial history of the Yakurr society he was analysing.

Largely because of this, Forde's view is untenable. His entire logic is based on the false assumption that the Council of Yabol had no in-built mode of enforcing

57. D. Forde: "The governmental roles of associations among the Yako", Africa, Vol. XII, (1939), pp. 129 - 162. Yako Studies, pp. 165 - 209.

58. M. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard: African Political Systems, pp. 6 - 9.

decisions and judgments. But the Council had this, since decisions were enforced through the matrikin groups (Ajimo) in the pre-Okenka days. The Okenka, which developed largely out of trade, only took over these functions. Besides, the Okenka served as a means of economic control in the hands of the Council of Yabol.

The Council of Yabol then was the focus and residue of political authority and legal obligation. No single person in Yakurr combined in himself these political and legal powers. There was also no other institution in Yakurr that performed these functions. Undoubtedly, the Council had intimate power over virtually all matters, religious, moral, political, military and economic.

This chapter has focused on the state apparatus and the various origin theories connected with it. It has also taken a close examination at the evolution of the institution of Council of Yabol as is found among the Yakurr. Evidence suggests that this institution is a natural phenomenon which was built up over the years upon the family, lineage and kindred ties and emerged from the structure, history and development of the Yakurr.

This chapter has also shown that the institution of the Council of Yabol was deeply rooted in religion; and that it provided religious and spiritual leadership. Through the priests of the original fertility shrines it maintained the social and cultural links of the Yakurr and maintained their cohesion and identity. Furthermore, the Council of Yabol provided political, military and administrative leadership for the people. This chapter also analysed the effect of trade on the institution of the Council of Yabol. It was found that in response to economic forces at work, the institution was modified by increasing its membership. For this purpose, the wealthy merchant class - Yasu - was accorded political recognition. The class became the executive arm of the Council of Yabol through a fraternity of its own creation - Okenka. Some authorities have interpreted this development as a sign of constitutional defect. But it has been shown that that was only a natural historical development.

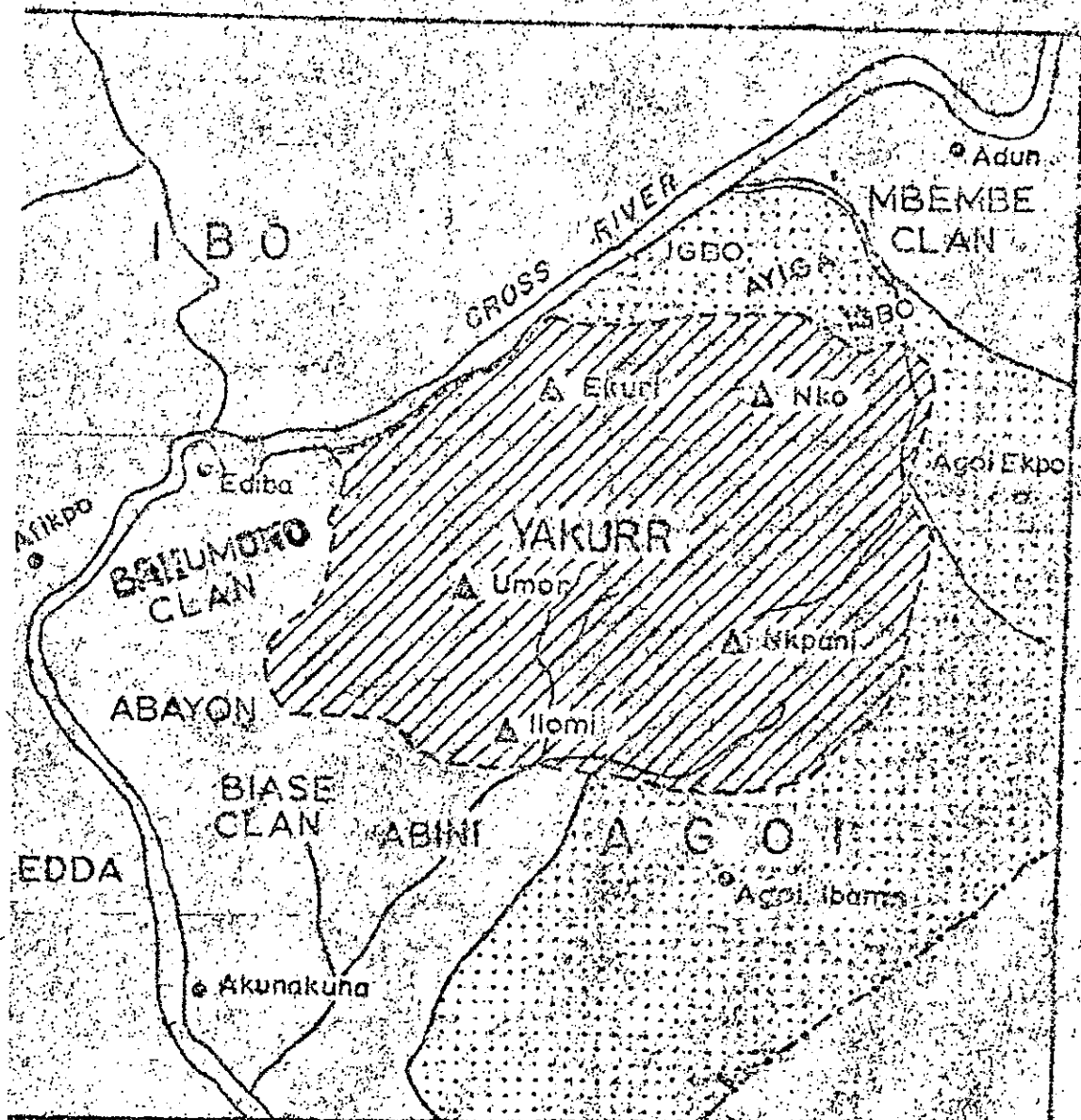
So far, this study is yet to explain Yakurr internal political experiences in the new homeland. This problem shall be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

WARFARE

This chapter aims at examining the external and internal conflicts experienced by Yakurr in their new homeland, and how such conflicts were solved.

Between c. 1600 and 1707, the Yakurr founded five new settlements in a new homeland. These were Ugep, Ekori, Nko, Nkpani and Idomi. This new homeland soon became the scene of various wars fought between Yakurr and non-Yakurr. From every indication, this new homeland was not empty when the first Yakurr migrants arrived there c. 1600. It was inhabited by several ethnic groups all of whom were non-Yakurr. Some of these original inhabitants were called Yagai while others were called Yakumero. Between c. 1707 and 1810, the Yakurr exerted heavy military pressures on the new environment. For instance, it was during this period that the Ugep went to war with Egai (non-Yakurr indigenous people of the new homeland); Ekori went to war with Anong (non-Yakurr); and Nko went to war with Adun (non-Yakurr). In all these wars, the Yakurr were victorious. Their victory caused the Egai to flee westwards. The Anong fled to the northwest while the Adun accepted a new



--- PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES



YAKURR TERRITORY

0 8 16 Km

MAP OF THE TERRITORY AND SETTLEMENTS
OF YAKURR AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS
MAP EXTRACT FROM

boundary with Nko which was fixed at the Lopoi River. Another significant event in Yakurr cultural life took place within this period. This was the treaty-making event with Egai and the formal possession of Ekoi¹ drums said to have been captured from the Egai during the war. The end of that incident (treaty-making), according to tradition, marked the origin of Ekoi dance in Yakurr. Ekoi dance, today, marks the beginning of a new year for the Yakurr. The dance is performed once a year; during the new yam festival. What were the causes of these developments? What political consequences did these developments have for the Yakurr in general? It is with these broad questions that this chapter will be principally concerned. We shall now examine the issue more deeply.

EXTERNAL AGGRESSION

Indications are that Yakurr military pressures on non-Yakurr stemmed from two factors: an increase in population and economic demands in the new environment. According to tradition, Ugep went to war with Egai during the reign of Obol Eja. But it

1. YHT. 1, Ugep, 18/7/76. Ekoi is a ritual dance performed during the new yam festival.

was Obol Esekpa who finally forced the Egai to flee.² Obol Eja ruled Ugep from c. 1710-1735, while Obol Esekpa reigned from c. 1735-1785. Therefore, the war with Egai was intermittent and lasted on and off from c. 1710-1785 - a period of seventy-five years. The duration of this protracted war - about three quarters of a century - suggests that what actually took place, was a series of battles or skirmishes separated by long periods of peace. Interviews conducted among Abayon (Egai) informants confirm that they had bitter wars in the past with the Yaberr, notably Ugep. According to an informant:

"We (Abayon-also called Egai) fought bitter wars in the past with the Yaberr which forced our ancestors to move (flee?) here" (pointing to their present site) 3.

The period c. 1710-1785 is significant in Ugep tradition. It was within this period that Obol Eja (c. 1710-1735) 'bought' and established a market in Ugep. It is the same Obol Eja whose name is mentioned in connection with the military offensives and counter-offensives between Ugep and Egai. The establishment of a market at Ugep by Obol Eja and the Ugep-Egai war occurring at the same period

2. ILL 1, Ugep, 18/7/76.

3. YHT. 113, Chief Isonig Egbai et al Abayon, 15/9/76.

suggest that there is a causal link between the two developments. Unfortunately, Ugep tradition is completely silent on which of the events preceeded the other. But it is said that during the Ugep-Egai war Obol Eja 'took' (Bought) guns from the Akunakuna with which the Yakurr fought. This statement suggests that trade must have existed between Ugep and the Akunakuna before the Ugep - Egai war. But whether this implies that a market had been established in Ugep before the war is another matter. It is possible that Ugep had had a market before the war. The guns were paid for. They could not have been obtained without payment. According to this source:

"... the Akunakuna brought us(Yakuri) salt, matchets, guns and rod money from the 'whiteman'. The Akunakuna trader will 'say' he will take: 50 yams for one bag of salt, 100 yams for four matchets. 1,000 yams for one gun..." 4

Apart from confirming that barter was one of the methods of exchange, the information shows that guns were brought to the Ugep market for sale. In the circumstance, it may not be too far off the mark to suggest that the market at Ugep was probably established before the Ugep - Egai war. This

4. YHT. 36, Okoi William et al. Ugep, 8/8/76.

suggestion begs the question as to whether it was the establishment of the market at Ugep that provoked the Ugep-Egai war. The writer's informants could not answer this question. It seems that Obol Eja (c. 1710-1735) successfully established a market at Ugep. From all indications that market attracted traders from Akunakuna, Arochuku and nearby neighbouring villages. As a result of this development demands for Ugep goods rose. Such an increase in demand had the effect of stimulating production in the long run which could only be met by an increase in land utilisation. In the face of such an increase in demand for Yakurr agricultural products, they could only meet the new demand situation by expanding their cultivation. To do this Yakurr (Ugep) needed more land the search for which may have led to the Ugep-Egai war.

The Yakurr practised the rotational bush fallow system of agriculture. This meant that their settlement (Ugep) was fixed while farms were situated round the settlement. After harvest, the land was allowed fallow for regeneration and refertilisation for a period of eight to ten years before it was brought under cultivation. An increase in population and a desire for more fertile land

induced by new economic situations may have caused some sections of the Yakurr, and in this regard Ugep, to move further inland from the settlement to make new farms. Such a move could have provoked war with neighbouring villages. According to Patridge:

"... until the recent British occupation of the district (Obubra - the Yakurr and Abayon were under this district) its tribes (sic) and towns were frequently fighting one another. Generally, the victors took possession of the vanquished land while the latter had to go further afield and build a new settlement elsewhere..." 5

This statement agrees with Yakurr oral tradition that it was the Ugep-Egai war which forced the latter to abandon their settlement for a new one. Besides, the implication of Patridge's statement is that land grabbing was a most frequent cause of war among these 'tribes and towns' (sic). Thus, it was more probable that economic factors and an increase in population caused the Ugep-Egai war. The same may be true of the Ekori-Anong war and the Nko-Adun war. It is necessary to remark that the writer did not find any evidence to suggest that the Yakurr acquired slaves either for personal use

5. C. Patridge: Cross River Natives, London, Hutchinson (1905), Kraus Reprint(1973) p. 229.

or for sale from these wars with their non-Yakurr neighbours. The Yakurr denied any such act on their part. The non-Yakurr neighbour's evidence appears to corroborate the Yakurr statement on the issue. This is not to suggest that the Yakurr did not keep slaves. In fact, it has been pointed out on pages 102-103 that the Yakurr kept slaves. To the Yakurr, valour in war required that a hero brings home human heads. Hence the Yakurr obtained their slaves from Mamfe in the Camerouns and Igboland and not from war.

At the end of the war a treaty was made with defeated non-Yakurr neighbours over boundaries and cessation of further hostilities, perhaps to ensure a steady flow of trade and passage of traders to Yakurr markets. For instance, the history of Ekoi dance is the history of the peace-treaty between Ugep and Egai. Similarly, the end of the Ekorionong war witnessed the erection of two shrines variously called Atewa and Akwo Ateba by the Yakurr and Bahumono respectively. These shrines were symbols of the treaties made to end the Ekorionong war.

Treaty-making was one of the familiar ways by which the politically independent settlements of the Yakurr and other non-Yakurr villages settled their differences or inter-village disputes and thus ensured amicable and enduring relations. Such treaties were customarily sealed by oath-taking or by 'eating edet' (juju). In the case of the Ugep-Egai treaty and Ekori-Anong treaty, the writer is informed that the most important terms of the accords was that the Yakurr, Egai and Bahumon(Anong) were not to 'see' each others blood. In other words, there was to be no further attacks or even thoughts of an attack on each other.⁶

In Ugep, it is said that it was Obol Esekpa c. 1735-1785 who made a peace treaty with the Egai. In Ekori, the writer was told that it was Obol Mbang c. 1744-1769 who finalised a peace treaty with the

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6. Treaty-making was a familiar way of ending feuds. See the following: A.A. Boahen: "Traditional African Diplomacy and Diplomatic Techniques." A paper presented to the Congress of Africanists, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December, 1973. C. Patridge: op.cit., pp. 190-3. With the advent of the Europeans treaty-making in Yakurr acquired a new dimension. Treaties had to be witnessed and documented by the Europeans. Dike has shown that one of the qualities of the documented agreements was their unrelatedness to their social environment. The European officials were usually not interested in whether the local parties involved in the treaty-making had a good understanding of the terms of the treaty but whether assent by acclamation was obtained for them.

Bahumono (Anong) while at Nko, it was Obol Ofem c. 1790-1815 who is said to have made a peace treaty with Adun. Obol Ofem according to this source, died five harvests after that treaty. Therefore, the peace treaty which brought the Nko-Adun hostilities to an end must have been effected by about 1810.

The details of these wars in terms of leadership, organisation, weapons are not clear. Time and the mode of transmission of oral tradition has driven such details underground. But generally wars were conducted during the dry season. Since it is not possible to have all the details of each war, the writer shall discuss in general Yakurr military organisation, equipment, strategy, conventions, truce and peace. Hopefully, such a discussion will give us an idea of what happened during the Yakurr wars.

War is taken to imply a state of open hostility between either two or more Yakurr villages or non-Yakurr. The Loko word Leko implies a war, a battle, or just a skirmish. Similarly, the word kosella has similar implications.

YAKURR MILITARY ORGANISATION

According to Yakurr oral tradition, the military organisation of the Yakurr following their

migration and settlement, was centred around the Onun Eko (Commander-in-Chief). Warfare was classified into three broad categories: First, ~~some~~ wars ~~were~~ considered to be of major importance. These were wars caused by land disputes or the killing of a Yakurr by a foreigner. Such wars often involved more than one Yakurr village. In the second category were wars between two Yakurr villages; and in the third, were wars between two wards of the same Yakurr village.

An ~~agg~~rieved family is free to make an oral report to any of the following officers: Obol lopon; Okpebri; Onun Eko and Edjukwa. The causes of the grievance(s) range from land disputes with non-Yakurr to a member of the family meeting his death at the hands of non-Yakurr. In such and similar circumstances, the Council of Yabol was summoned to take a decision. Since there was no regular army, a decision to declare war was followed by the raising of troops. Usually a kipoli⁷ was summoned to alert the people about the imminence of war and to invite the assistance of all able-bodied adult males. This support was normally expected from all such

7. Kipoli is a general meeting of all male adults in Yakurr village.

men. The Onun Eko - the general and tactician - in the event of a war took command of all such fighting men. It was his duty to ensure that each warrior brought the necessary fighting kit: a bag containing ammunition, charms, matchets, Yekpetitang(missiles), Yowon (knives) and, for some, a dane gun. It was the Onun Eko who addressed the ad hoc army to ensure that each warrior was in a state of high morale. Able-bodied men voluntarily served in such wars for three reasons: to show that they were brave; to acquire booty; and to derive individual satisfaction from the knowledge that they assisted the village in the attainment of its set objective.

Before the Yakurr move out to fight a war, they would camouflage themselves with soot and green leaves, carry their war bags (Ajokpa) on their backs and drink the potent medicinal concoction called Ojilikpoto.⁸

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8. Ojilikpoto is vulnerable to scientific weapons of precision. On February 24, 1968, a group of men was gathered in a hut at Ijiman, concocting Ojilikpoto for some soldiers fighting in the Nigerian Civil war in the Ugep sector. Unfortunately, a Nigerian plane on a bombing mission arrived in Ugep at the time. Bombs were released from the plane which either by design or accident fell a few yards away from where the group was gathered. In a split second, the group involved in the Ojilikpoto had been destroyed in the bomb explosion. Ojilikpoto failed to protect them as it did in the past. The writer witnessed the incident.

Wars, often inter-ethnic, of the first category were fought in the forest. Unlike the grasslands where there was a greater ease of movement, the forest inhibited movement. Movement in the forest was along narrow winding pathways, requiring the adoption of indian file and giving little scope for mobility or tactical development. Close combat and reliance on the ambush were apparently dictated by these conditions. As for logistics, the forest environment of the Yakurr gave little scope for enveloping movements or indeed for the exercise of military leadership and skill other than in the ambush or the timely use of the ad-hoc reserve. For the Yakurr, the introduction of firearms did not profoundly alter the method of warfare. There was no concept of covering fire or of fire and movement, even though all available weapons were employed in such inter-ethnic warfare.

Sometimes an insult or an injury to any Yakurr or the mysterious death of any Yakurr visiting a non-Yakurr village could, and did lead to war. In such warfare on adjoining territories undertaken for the purpose of avenging the death of a kinsman, a group of individuals of good military reputation could lead expeditions, apart from the Onun Eko.

Thus, when Idomi went to war with Abini c. 1870s, some of the outstanding warriors such as Efoli Mbang and Abondu who led expeditions, were men who had no place in the traditional political hierarchy. Both men were not Onun Eko (Commander-in-Chief). Such men acted instantly, before other arrangements were made to strengthen their ranks, because according to Yakurr tradition, they were men with 'blood' (they were brave) and they possessed guns. The possession of a gun gave the owner a psychological combat superiority. It was this feeling that spurred some into leadership on such occasions.

During battle, a fallen foe had to be beheaded and the head brought home. The skull was valued as a concrete and unequivocal proof of personal valour and so brought such a warrior different types of honour. Harris sees the act of a warrior beheading his victim as a 'head-hunting propensity'.⁹ This is a moral judgment which completely ignores Yakurr military ethics and convention. It is not every foe who is beheaded. More will be said on this aspect of Yakurr warfare under military conventions later.

9. R. Harris: "The influence of Ecological factors and External relations on the Mbembe of S.E. Nigeria". Africa, Vol. 32, (1962), p. 36.

YAKURR MILITARY EQUIPMENT

About the 1750s, traditional weapons of warfare were supplemented by firearms. Oral evidence about the period before the spread of firearms is very scanty and, therefore, has been used in this study with great caution, although, it has nevertheless been of value in suggesting answers to questions about types, patterns, provenance, handling and manufacture of weapons. The weapons which preceded firearms were later still used along with firearms though, on an increasingly smaller scale. Some of such weapons still survive in some homes. Sources of evidence are the representations of warriors which were carved and were usually designed for religious or semi-religious purposes and are in fact imposing works of art. Such carved objects can be seen on pillars mounted in Ikpakapit ward of Ugep and in Epenti ward of Ekorì.¹⁰ These pillars have elaborate carvings on them of armed men with bifurcated

10. A Photograph of the Ikpakapit Pillar can be seen in Forde, Yako Studies, London, 1964, O.U.P., p. 128; plate XIA. Such pillars can also be found in Aruma ward of Nkpani and Assiga Old town. The current pillar in Ikpakapit ward of Ugep is not of great antiquity but it replaced an earlier one which was destroyed by fire in 1919.

knives, clubs and dane guns protecting nursing mothers.

The primary armament of the Yakurr armies before the general introduction of firearms consisted of Yekpetitan (missiles), Yowon (bifurcated knives). These were blades which slope or curve outwards from the hilt to reach their greatest width of about three inches. They vary in length from about 18 to 24 inches. They are of iron and appear to be locally made. The hilt handles are of wood. Today, there are many variants of the knife which must have developed from the type of combat envisaged:

The types seen by the writer during field interviews, many of which would have been useless for thrusting, suggest that among the Yakurr the knife was regarded essentially a cutting weapon used in close combat. Today, the yewon is for the Yakurr a symbol of membership of a secret society. The third primary armament was the club (letipi). This was probably their oldest and certainly the simplest form of weapon. This was used as a secondary armament for close fighting and also developed in various forms.

The club seems to have been made from Kekekewa (*Lecaoidiscus Cupanoides* Sp.)¹¹. The club is a stick selected from the forest with branches trimmed and one end cut from the thick intersection of branches with the main stem to form the club head. Clubs were used as cudgels or as throwing sticks. It is believed that they are poisonous because they are smeared with a poisonous substance.

There is no evidence in Yakurr oral tradition to suggest that the Yakurr did possess firearms before about 1710. It appears that the Yakurr used firearms for the first time during the Ugep-Egai war. According to tradition, it was Obol Eja c. 1710-1735 who 'took' guns from the Akunakuna which the Yakurr (Ugep) used in fighting the wars. No mention of guns had been made in traditions referring to the earlier period. Firearms were probably most decisive in wars at the time they were introduced, and their practical effect appear devastating especially because of the psychological impact it had on the Yakurr. Obviously, the Akunakuna obtained guns through trade with the Efik at the coast and

11. I am indebted to Mr. I.I. Ndifon (Forest Ranger) and E.E. Ubom (Ranger) both of the Forestry Office, Obubra for identifying the species and giving the botanical names.

used guns much earlier than most of the peoples in the Upper Cross River. It seems that it was not until the late 19th century that the use of firearms became widespread in Yakurr - especially after the British Cross River Expeditions of 1895, 1896 and 1898.

From the traditions, it appears that the Yakurr were not perfect at manipulating their dane gun. The result was that sometimes when the trigger is pulled the gun will not fire (Ekon ebekekpani - lit. the gun has played tricks). The gun is a mechanical object and, therefore, it cannot 'play' tricks. Rather, it was the Yakurr who did not know how to manipulate the gun hence its failure to fire when the trigger is pulled. The fact that they fought wars successfully with dane guns suggests, in general, that firearms were of greater psychological than practical effect.

YAKURR MILITARY CONVENTIONS

The destructive effects of war were held in check by an elaborate set of military conventions. The conventions, of course, relate to the three categories of war. In an inter-ethnic war between Yakurr and non-Yakurr, it was total war and any

fallen foe had to be beheaded and his head brought home. In intra Yakurr feuds guns were used but victims were not to be beheaded. In a war between members (wards) of the same settlements no formal declaration of war was needed. Only clubs, missiles, stones and matchets were used, but those wielding matchets took pains to avoid a fatal blow. This strictly speaking, may not qualify as war but Yakurr terminology refers to this as war.

In all the categories of warfare, women and children were to be unharmed. Markets and those visiting them were to be left in peace. This, however, was in theory and not always practised. Sometimes war dragged on for many years but agriculture and other forms of economic life continued. Feasts and festivals were still held. In most cases, combat was restricted to the clearing season - December to February.

TRUCE AND PEACE

When a party desired to make peace in an inter-ethnic or inter-village war, it would send a delegation carrying the tender palm fronds which symbolised peace. Typically, women played a key role as a pressure group for peace because of the

matrilineage system which transcended village boundaries. If the cause of the conflict was a land dispute, the apparent victor often adjusted the boundaries to his advantage. But, there was never any total conquest.

In most cases involving two Yakurr villages, a neutral Yakurr settlement could initiate a peace move. In this case, the initiating party was expected to inquire into the causes of the conflict. The leader of the mediating party would visit the two warring villages to determine the cause. Both parties would then be invited by the mediating leader to a meeting during which peace terms would be arrived at. Such meetings required no preconditions and discussion, by tradition, were expected to be cordial. Palm wine, kola and meat shared at such meetings symbolised pacification. Agreement was then entered into and if any conditions were imposed on one of the villages, the mediating town had to supervise compliance. Such conditions were often imposed on the guilty after striking a balance between their military losses. In cases involving wards of the same Yakurr village, the system of restoring peace was slightly different from what

has been said above. According to oral tradition, if two or more factions of a village were in conflict, other members of the village could reconcile them. In the alternative, any of the factions could bring the matter before the Council of Yabol for settlement.

The one hundred years - c. 1710-1810 - immediately following the foundation of the five Yakurr settlements in their new homeland witnessed their successful acquisition of a territory which they claimed to be theirs in fact and in law. They acquired this by conquest. By about 1810, various peace treaties had been made with neighbouring non-Yakurr. Thus, Ugep made a peace-treaty with Egai (Abayon), Ekori made another with the Bahumono (Anong) while Nko made a third with the Adun. These treaties, among other things, fixed territorial boundaries and stipulated that parties should not 'see' each other's blood.

Internally, however, the period c. 1710-1810 witnessed cordial relations and co-operation in intra-Yakurr relationship. It was the cordial relations and co-operation to a large extent that accounted for their successes in the various wars with the Egai, Anong and Adun. Indeed, there is the view that the prevalence of warfare in any

society tends to unify that society for the period of the external threat.¹²

The period c. 1835 and 1898, however, witnessed intra-Yakurr conflicts. This was a period of problems for various Yakurr settlements. The problems ranged from misinterpretation of actions, to disagreement over land allocation and homicidal cases. It was a period of politics and conflicts. The first signs were shown when Ugep and Ekori disagreed over the problem of the relationship of Benobase and Yakurr. Soon other Yakurr settlements took sides either supporting Ugep or Ekori. Nko openly supported Ugep while Nkpani sided with Ekori. Idomi sat on the fence. The absence of external threats brewed internal problems for the Yakurr. Let us examine this development.

INTERNAL CONFLICTS

The first major incident which sparked off disagreement between Ugep and Ekori probably occurred between c. 1835 and 1860. According to tradition, in the reign of Obol Ekpani of Ugep (c. 1835-1860) some Ugep disputants went to consult Obase Ubulukpa.bi (the Aro Oracle) for a settlement.

12. Elman. op. cit., p. 74.

Usually litigants who went to the Aro Oracle for consultation never returned in the same number as that which went for consultation. It was alleged that the oracle had 'eaten' the guilty. At home, the Yakurr would, according to custom, perform the funeral rites of those 'eaten' by the oracle and perhaps, organise reception for the favoured.

On this occasion, the disputants set off for consultation. Some members of the party (the favoured) returned to report that the missing members of the party had been 'eaten' by the Long Juju. There was nothing unusual about the report. If anything, it strengthened the people's belief in the potency of the oracle. Funeral rites were performed for the missing people according to the Yakurr tradition. However, after over four harvests (4 years) one of the men alleged to have been 'eaten' by the Long Juju and whose funeral rites had been performed, re-appeared in Ugep. His name was Imom Okan. People were surprised to find him (Imom) alive after he had been declared dead.

Imom reported that he was not 'eaten' by any oracle, that he and some other Yakurr people were in actual fact taken to various places, chained, to be sold as Ofoli (slave) but he managed to escape

during the process. It seemed an incredible story; yet Imom Okan was the living evidence.¹³ For the Yakurr, it was unimaginable that any Yakurr person could be sold into slavery. Even offenders against society were never so treated, much less citizens who did not offend the village. In fact, the kin system (double descent) stressed the formal attachment of each individual to both his father's and mother's kin. Very commonly jural authority was exercised by a matrilineal kinsman. The males throughout their lives and the females until marriage lived with their father's kin (Kepun). This combination of patrilocal residence and matrilineal authority meant in effect that the agreement of both parties would have to be obtained for the sale of a kinsfolk. This was so hard that a man would rather pledge himself for an offence than his child, because the child's matrikin would not allow it, and he could not pledge the sister's child since the father

13. YHT. 48, Ubi Okoi, Ugep, 4/10/76. Ubi Okoi was the Field Assistant and interpreter to Daryll Forde in 1935 and 1939 while the latter was doing his field work among the Yakurr. At 97 in 1977, he still possessed a clear voice and spoke reasonably fine. He died in May, 1977. His death is a big loss to historians of Yakurr.

would not allow it either. The Yakurr could tolerate the purchase of slaves for absorption into their society but they never sold their kith and kin. Imom Okan thus, destroyed the trust the Ugep had for the Benobase (children of god) and the faith in Obase Ubulukpabi - Aro oracle. The people of Ugep schemed for a vendetta.

The **6** Council of Yabol met over the Imom Okan's issue and decided that Ugep should attack and sack Letekom (smithing compound). Words were passed round each Kepun that a 'chicken' had hurled a stone on the Ugep. This was a coded statement which implied that able-bodied men should prepare themselves for military action. A market day was fixed for the operation and the Onun Eko made sure that all necessary arrangements were properly made. On D-day, Ugep struck at Letekom in the morning hours of KoKa (market). According to this source, the attack was launched before the cock crew.

Benobase traders and craftsmen were woken up from sleep to find their houses burning. Those who ran out of their homes met the Ugep men outside who dealt heavy machet blows on them. Many of them were killed that morning. But many escaped into the nearby bushes.

According to the tradition, during the operation, there were cries of biko, biko from the benobase which in Igbo literally means please. After the offensive, the Ikpakapit ward of Ugep sent some of her people to establish permanent settlement on the piece of land where the attack took place. This settlement is called Biko biko.¹⁴ Ever since the distrust for the Benobase became so entrenched, they were not given land to erect buildings in Ugep any longer. But according to tradition, the smiths ran away to Ekori and established there. Why did Ekori absorb the Biko biko fugitives from Ugep? This question has not been answered by the writer's Ekori informants. The writer posits that the smiths chose Ekori as an alternative to Ugep because Ekori had a market. The absorption of these fugitives by Ekori became an act that strained the relationship between Ugep and Ekori. Matters between Ugep and Ekori became worse when the smiths from Ekori carried out a revenge upon Ugep. According to Abriba tradition, matchets called Omerugem (killer of Ugep) were used to revenge upon Ugep for the Biko biko incident.¹⁵

14. YHT. 48, Ugep, 4/10/76.

15. YHT. 122, Abriba. 20/3/77.

Following the Bikobiko episode, trade appeared to have slackened in Ugep. But soon the situation returned to normal. A treaty was made with Akunakuna traders. The traders were not to sell an Yakurr into slavery directly or indirectly. The men of each village (Akunakuna and Ugep) were not to make love to women of the other village. It is not clear why the 'love clause' was part of the treaty. It is also not clear whether any of the parties dictated the terms, but, according to the tradition, the terms served to restore the trust needed by the Yakurr since, according to my informant, once bitten by a snake the sight of earthworm frightens. These terms ensured that no Yakurr would be sold into slavery by the Akunakuna middlemen. A shrine, Blakam, was erected on the foot-path through which the traders passed and before this shrine oath was 'eaten' to ensure that the terms were obeyed. Violation, of course, was said to have adverse concomitant result - death.

This shrine was held for more than a hundred years to be the symbolic expression of the common sentiments that sustained the relationship between the two peoples - a relationship which from all

indications is not filial but purely commercial. If the creation of blakam was motivated by the desire for sincerity in trade between the Akunakuna and the Yakurr, to what extent was the motive achieved? There is no evidence, from oral tradition, to suggest that the Akunakuna did sell any Yakurr into slavery. With or without blakam, ^(the treaty) it appears that the Akunakuna would not have sold Yakurr into slavery. For unlike the Aro, who had the Long Juju, the Akunakuna lacked such an institution of deceit.

A second incident occurred during the reign of Obol Eko of Ekori c. 1844-1869. According to tradition, some farmers from Ugep farmed on a disputed plot of land. Ekori claimed the parcel of land to be theirs. Ugep on the other hand, also laid claim to the same parcel of land. Thus, there was disagreement between Ugep farmers and the Ekori farmers. The case was brought home to their various Yabol(rulers). In Ekori, the report came to the Yabol at a time Ekori was preparing to stage Ligwomi. Ligwomi was the ritual initiation of boys (13 to 17 years of age) into the male community of the town. The ritual, performed after every four years, normally lasted during the period of the clearing

season (December-February). According to tradition, Ligwomi was a period of peace. Therefore, Ekori did not take immediate action on the farmers' complaint-over the alleged trespass of Ugep into Ekori farmland.

While the disagreement over land was still pending, Ekori sent one of her Ligwomi officials called Ina Okeledji, according to custom, to inform other Yakurr villages that Ekori was going to stage Ligwomi. Ina came to Ugep and performed his official assignment. On his way back, Ina passed through a farm path called Kiwel. Enroute, Ina met one man - a widower - returning from farm with a bunch of libuwa (leaves) for his goat, a pot of wine and a goat.

At the sight of the goat Ina lifted his machet with the intent of killing it. The owner advised him (Ina) to steer clear from the goat adding that it was an inheritance from his late wife. Rather, he offered Ina palm wine. Surprisingly, Ina rejected the offer. If an offer is rejected among the Yakurr, the donor would assume a hostile motive. While the man was pouring back the palm wine into the pot Ina, in a split second, cut the goat's head off. The man's reaction was instant: he released several

matchet cuts on Ina and murdered him.

The news that Ina had been murdered while on an official errand reached Ekori. Ekori felt that since Ugep knew that Ina was on an official errand, they (Ugep) would merely have reported Ina to them (Ekori) of whatever crime he must have committed, and at worst demanded compensation for the loss he (Ina) may have caused his assassin.¹⁶

Immediately after the Ligwomi rituals, Ekori decided to take the path of vengeance against Ugep over the land issue and the assassination of Ina Okeledji. Thus, Ekori went to the Ugep farms on the disputed territory and ransacked them. The unfriendly relationship between Ugep and Ekori became worse.

Meanwhile, the death of Ina Okeledji had not been settled when another case of assassination came up. According to tradition, in the reign of Obol Eyu of Ekori c. 1863-1894, one Njom Okpata, a farmer from Ekori, went to a parcel of land jointly owned by all Yakurr to collect ropes for his building. By evening, Njom tied up his bundle of ropes. On the same day, there were some other farmers from

16. YHT. 2 and YHT. 11. The reported version is the writer's synthesis of the Ugep and Ekori versions of the incident.

Nkpani in the same forest collecting ropes. When these Nkpani farmers saw Njom's ropes, they decided to steal them. Njom caught them. A scuffle ensued. The Nkpani farmers killed Njom during the process. They picked up his corpse and deposited it along the footpath leading to Ugep and through which Ugep farmers entered the forest. During the scuffle an Ekori tapper, while tapping palm wine, had over-heard the murderers call some Ugep names and utter statements such as 'let me hack off his head' and 'allow me give a cut'. Later, the evidence of this tapper plus the fact that the corpse was picked up along the footpath leading to Ugep convinced Ekori that the assassin(s) came from Ugep.

In Ekori, meanwhile, the family of Njom Okpata reported their missing member who went to farm the previous day but had not returned. A search party was organised and set out to look for him. His corpse was found in pieces. The party saw the blood stains and followed the trail left by his spilled blood. They found that his murderers went towards the direction of Ugep. The search party concluded that Njom must have been killed by people from there. The people of Ekori became even more convinced when

a farmer reported the names and words he heard while tapping palm wine the previous day.

Ekori decided to take revenge upon the Ugep for the death of Njom Okpata. Meanwhile, Ekori bore the anger and pain with the silence of a waiting leopard on a prey, but aware that they (Ekori) would strike once the opportunity offered itself.¹⁷

Soon, an opportunity did. According to tradition, in the year Obol Ikpi I of Ugep died (c. 1885) a maiden from Ugep called Itam Ojekowu went to Ekori with her friends to see her relations. It was customary for Yakurr girls about to be circumcised (fattening-room ceremony) to visit other Yakurr villages with their friends to inform their maternal relations of the ceremony and to officially invite them. Itam Ojekowu - the most beautiful in her age group - and her friends went to Ekori to inform and invite her maternal relations to her circumcision ceremony. The girls were killed the night they arrived Ekori.

For the Ekori, the heads of the maidens paid for the head of Njom Okpata. But for Ugep, it was an abomination that girls should be killed in cold

blood. For even in warfare, convention required that women and children should always go unharmed. Ugep rejected their corpses which Ekori interred. After this incident, Nkpani confessed that she was responsible for the murder of Njom Okpata. Following this confession, the relationship between Ugep and Nkpani, Ugep and Ekori and Nkpani became very strained.¹⁸

It was in this state of affairs in intra Yakurr relations that Nko added insult to injury. According to tradition, four 'harvests' before the whiteman burnt Ekori - c. 1894 - an Nko man called Edel Obilobilowo had some gun-powder in his house. One day, while he was in his farm, the gun-powder caught fire and in the ensuing conflagration many other thatched houses in the village were set ablaze.

By tradition, such an incident required the man who was responsible for the fire outbreak to pay a fine to the Yabol for his negligence. He, in conjunction with his matriclan, had to make necessary sacrifices in order to avert future occurrence. When such demands had been met well

18. YHT. 2 op. cit., YHT. 11, op. cit. YHT, 10, op. cit., The versions collected on this incident from Ugep, Ekori and Nkpani corroborate in all details.

wishers would normally take palm wine and perhaps gifts to the victim of the fire disaster in order to bear with him the loss and to express sympathy

Ewa Asinya from Ekori, a maternal relation of Edel Obilobilowo (the fire victim at Nko), sent his two sons: Osim Ewa and Ugobo Ewa with cloth, a gun and a pot of palm wine to Nko to sympathise with Edel for the fire disaster and to hand him the **gift** as his (Ewa Asinya) contribution to his (Edel) expenses as a result of the fire incident. Osim and Ugobo never returned to Ekori alive. They were murdered. The circumstances are not clear.¹⁹

Two years later - c. 1896, it is said that an Akunakuna trader called Ogban Egort bought yams from an Nko farmer called Abam. Ogban Egort arranged with 24 carriers from Nko to convey the yams to Ekori river port where the yams were to be loaded into a canoe. The 24 carriers - men and women - were conveying the yams to Ekori beach. Enroute 19 of the carriers were killed at Ekori by the Ekori as a revenge for the death of Osim Ewa and Ugobo Ewa. The Akunakuna trader (Ogban Egort) made a report of the incident to the Colonial government at Calabar.²⁰

19. YHT. 11, op. cit., and YHT. 10, op. cit.

20. YHT. 10, op. cit., YHT. 11, op. cit.

The killing of the 19 Nko carriers was a new dimension of vengeance on a scale undreamt of. It became obvious that something positive had to be done to halt the deteriorating situation in the political relations among the Yakurr. By about 1896, all but one Yakurr settlement had some form of accusation against the other. At the instance of Idomi, Obol Ifere (c. 1890-1915) of Idomi summoned a meeting of all the village heads (Yabol lopon) of other Yakurr settlements: Ugep, Ekori, Nko and Nkpani at Idomi. All the village heads attended the meeting with their Yakpebri (Speakers). Idomi tradition recalls the instance eloquently in a song:

"Obol Ifere oto kebol onang enen
Otona ke kakurr oke "Yabol be Yakurr" ²¹

Translation:

"Obol Ifere used his office very befittingly
He settled Kakurr (Yakurr) for Yabol in
Yakurr."

After the summit meeting, it was said that all the participants agreed to a treaty and oath-taking ceremony. The terms of the treaty were that a

21. YHT. 1, Idomi. op. cit.

new shrine for all Yakurr was to be erected on the neutral land that belonged to all Yakurr.²²

The question is why did Idomi wait for so long before taking that initiative? Perhaps, we may never know the answer to this question. But, it does appear that the answer may not be unconnected with the qualities of Obol Ifere of Idomi. The massive response from the other heads of villages suggests that such a move had long been anticipated. Although, the details of the deliberation are not known, it is obvious that the participants were not unconcerned with an examination of the Yakurr political process. In this regard, the problem may have centred on how to resolve inter-village disputes.

The outcome of the summit meeting was an interesting development; the creation of a new political institution for purposes of diffusing political ~~tension~~ among members. About 1897, Ngbeke shrine was erected. There are two versions as to why the shrine was called Ngbeke. The first was that a slave girl called Ngbeke was purchased for the ceremony. All heads of neighbouring villages to the Yakurr were invited to witness the oath-

22. YHT. 1, Idomi, op. cit.

taking ceremony and sacrifice. At the end of the ceremony, the shrine was called Ngbeke after the name of the slave girl.²³ The second version was that Ngbeke is derived from the Igbo word Oguike, meaning medicine which is strong.²⁴

During the ceremony, it is said that all the Yakurr rulers (Council of Yabol) took an oath that henceforth all misunderstandings between Yakurr villages would be brought before Ngbeke for settlement. All village heads in Yakurr were to be present. By this oath, the Yakurr under Obol Ifere of Idomi found themselves embracing a new life and hope. The political implication of the Ngbeke experiment was a new dimension in conflict resolution among the Yakurr. Ngbeke was to provide a forum for the Yakurr to discuss and take decisions on issues affecting one or more of its members. It became necessary to create this forum when it became increasingly clear that a political arrangement based on the village set-up, in the circumstances of the 1890s, was to say the least inadequate. To meet that political inadequacy, a political institution deeply rooted in religion was thus created.

23. YHT. 2, op. cit.

24. YHT. 11, op. cit.

TABLE VII

Political Organisations in some parts of E. Nigeria

IGBOLAND	YAKURR
<p>A. <u>KINDRED</u> <u>Composition</u> (i) <u>Onyeisi</u>(The oldest man). (ii) Titled men (iii) Elders</p>	<p><u>KEPUN</u> (i) Obol kepon (Patriarch). (ii) All adult males</p>
<p>B.</p>	<p><u>KEKPATU (WARD)</u> <u>Composition:</u> (i) Obol kepon(heads of kepon) also called Yakamben. One of them is elected chairman is called <u>Ogbolia</u>. (ii) Edjukwa(Spokesman)</p>
<p>C. <u>Village</u>(Composition) (i) Onyeisi (ii) Representatives of kindred families consisting of Elders and titled men</p>	<p><u>Council of Yabol</u> (i) Obol lopon(Village Head). (ii) Okpebri(Speaker) (iii) Onun Eko(Commander-in-Chief). (iv) Edjukwa(spokesman) (v) Ogbolia(Ward Representative) (vi) Bina(Matriclan Priests).</p>
<p>D. <u>Clan Organisation</u> <u>Composition:</u> (i) Onyeisi of each village making up the Clan(Secular-Obi - and Religious - Eze Nri). (ii) Oldest titled men (iii) Oldest Elders</p>	<p><u>Ngbeke Organisation</u> None up to 1896. Thereafter, <u>Composition:</u> (i) Obol lopon of each Yakurr village. (ii) Okpebri of each Yakurr village.</p>

This was Ngbeke. The creation of Ngbeke requires a deeper analysis. Apparently, Ngbeke is a clan organisation similar to what is found in certain parts of Eastern Nigeria. Most parts of Eastern Nigeria have a political arrangement that is hierarchical ranging from the kindred to the clan. Table (vii) ~~above~~ showing the level of authority and composition of the political arrangement in Igboland and Yakurr will bring the point of the similarity of Ngbeke and the clan organisation out.

From table (vii) above, certain deductions can be made. Up to 1896, the Yakurr had no clan organisation. They did not recognise any political authority greater than that of the village (Council of Yabol).

The creation of Ngbeke was a new authority in the Yakurr set up. The composition of this (Ngbeke) authority made it unique among clan organisations in southern Nigeria. The Ngbeke arrangement did not fit into the Obishop arrangement in Igboland. The Obi institution is hereditary or elective with an Ndi-Ichie (cabinet) to advise it. The Ngbeke arrangement did not fit into other Igbo clan organisation as is outlined in table vii above. Besides, Ngbeke neither resembles the Efik nor the Ijo Committee of heads of Houses under the Obong or the Amayanabo which are clan organisations. However, Ngbeke was similar to the clan arrangements of the Igbo, Ijo and Efik in the sense that Ngbeke was a political authority higher than the village Council of Yabol.

It is pertinent to ask what the political intentions of the founding fathers of Ngbeke were when they created the institution. The founding fathers of Ngbeke had no intention to compromise the political autonomy of their villages by the creation of Ngbeke.

The writer posits that the Ngbeke experiment was, to all intents and purposes, a Yakurr attempt at a confederation. It was a means of governing

the politically autonomous Yakurr villages. Ngbeke was the union of Yakurr independent states. Each state in the union retained its independent status virtually intact just as the confederacies of ancient Greece, the Swiss up to 1848, the U.S.A. before 1787 and Germany under the Weimer Republics. The entire idea of Ngbeke was a compromise between the need or the desire for union and the rights of the states forming the union. It is necessary to stress that the idea of a confederacy in this regard should not be seen to fit perfectly into a European concept of a confederation. In this view, one might not find answers to questions as to the features, terms and conditions of the union and how Ngbeke was implemented or was supposed to be implemented. The important fact, as far as the writer is concerned, was that the coming into being of Ngbeke was a new device of maintaining cohesion and peaceful co-existence between politically autonomous Yakurr states.

There is the view that of all the factors which tend to promote the establishment of a confederal union, perhaps, the most important single one is the quality of leadership. All the other factors which help in the formation of the confederacy are the raw materials which underlie the formation of the

union. It is the leadership which combines the different factors into a coherent whole, gives them weight and direction which is conducive to union.²⁵ The leadership provided by Obol Ifere of Idomi favoured the formation of a confederacy. Obol Ifere was dynamic, perceptive and conciliatory. What happened next to the Ngbeke experiment can only be appreciated when placed against the background of the current of political events taking place in the Oil Rivers during the period.

Prior to 1891, Britain regarded the Oil Rivers as her sphere of economic influence. It was difficult to know the exact limits of the territory but it included the territories adjoining the Bights of Benin and Biafra. British citizens had investments in the form of trusts, ships, warehouses and so on in the area. The trading activities of the British in the Oil Rivers were not, however, without problems. In most cases, there were misunderstandings between the African and British traders. The persistence of such misunderstandings over trade between the two groups of traders led to the appointment of a British Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra in 1849. The Consul was charged

25. F.O. Adams. The Swiss Confederacy, London, Kraus Reprint (1873) p. 27.

with the responsibility of protecting British citizens and their trade in the Oil Rivers.

Between 1849 and 1891 most of the African peoples in the Oil Rivers retained their political sovereignty in spite of the activities of the European traders amongst them. In 1891, with the British establishment of a regular administration in the area, British interest was no longer limited to trading. Britain evolved policies for the political control of the area. This explains why the political history of Nigeria in the 1890's is the history of treaties, punitive expeditions and conquests. The paramount consideration, according to the British, was to create "a stable country"²⁶ so that trade might proceed in peace. For the Yakurr, the problem was whether they would escape a punitive expedition such as has been sent against other areas. For while they were trying to consolidate their political sovereignty, the Protectorate government had already been established in Calabar and was preparing itself for an effective occupation of the entire Cross River.

26. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O., 14/6/1897, CSO, 1/13/Vol. 3, No. 138.

THE OVER-THROW OF INDIGENOUS AUTHORITY IN YAKURR
1898 - 1930

The over-throw of Yakurr indigenous political authority took place between 1898 and 1930. The process, according to Moor (the Acting Consul General), was triggered off by the Yakurr when they blocked the interior roads against traders. The line of thinking of the Protectorate government was that the Yakurr rendered their territory "in an unsatisfactory state of crises".²⁷ For this, they had to be pacified. Pacification meant the introduction of British law and order and was, according to the British, the route to civilisation. The Yakurr were to be civilised by British standards and under British rule. They were to be forced to learn the English language, culture and religion.²⁸

The Yakurr first felt the presence of the Protectorate government which was established in Calabar in 1893, following the punitive expedition against Ediba in 1895. Ediba is ten kilometres West of Ugep. In August 1895, an expedition of 180 men under the Acting Consul General Major Roupel,

27. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 20/9/1897.
 CSO 1/13/Vol. 5, p. 140.

28. Ibid.

shelled Ediba on grounds that she was obstructing trade.²⁹ Ediba did not obstruct trade. According to Ediba oral tradition, two people were killed for violating a curfew during the performance of a traditional ritual. An Agwagune trader, called Odidi, who claimed that the two persons killed were his slaves lodged a report with the Protectorate government in Calabar. The result was the punitive expedition of 1895.³⁰ For the Yakurr, the expedition of 1895 against Ediba was a most confusing development. The confusion derived from the fact that the Yakurr believed that Ediba was right to punish by death the two persons for the crime they committed. Thus, the first impression the Yakurr had of the Protectorate government was that it was a government that punished people for doing the right thing. Besides, the Ediba were producers who sold their products to the Agwagune because their area was under the sphere of influence of the Agwagune middlemen. They had dealt with them for a long time. They could not have turned round in the 1890s to obstruct the Agwagune or any other traders from trading.

29. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 20/9/1897, CSO 1/13/Vol. 5.

30. Emmanuel Egbe, Ediba, 18/10/76.

Between 1895 and 1898, Yakurr concern centred on the issue of their political sovereignty and the confederal arrangement. Therefore, when an agent of the Protectorate government appeared in Yakurr in 1897 following a report of the killing of 19 carriers by the Yakurr in Yakurr territory, the agent was not welcomed. The Yakurr refusal to welcome the agent triggered off the Cross River expedition of 1898. We shall now examine this expedition and assess its effect on the confederal experiment of the Yakurr.

THE BRITISH CROSS RIVER EXPEDITION OF 1898

1. BACKGROUND

On a report from an Akunakuna trader to the Protectorate government in Calabar, a team of policemen was sent to the Yakurr village of Ekori. The report was that Ekori was obstructing trade in the Cross River. It alleged that Ekori killed 19 carriers who were conveying yams and looted the yams in addition.³¹ The policemen were to arrest all those persons alleged to have taken part in the killing of the carriers and looting of yams and to produce the accused in Calabar for trial.³²

31. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 14/6/1897, CSO 1/13/Vol. 3, No. 138.

32. Ibid.

In November 1897, the team of policemen arrived at Ekori. For three weeks no arrest was made and so the policemen returned to Calabar without producing the accused.³³ As far as Ekori was concerned, the issue of killing of the 19 carriers had been amicably disposed off. Ekori had taken ('eaten') an oath over the issue and a treaty had been made that thenceforward any disagreement between Yakurr villages had to settled before Ngbeke shrine. Meanwhile, Ekori had secretly sent emissaries to Nko to find out what part they played in the current police questioning over an issue which had been settled, Nko denied knowledge of any of her citizen having a hand in the police affair at Ekori.³⁴ Besides, Ekori did not understand what the Calabar authority meant by her action. As far as Ekori was concerned, there was no greater authority over her than the authority within Yakurr.³⁵

The failure of the police team to produce the suspects induced the Protectorate government to write to the Foreign Office on the matter. The official view was that it had become necessary to

33. Nigeria, Moor to F.O. 14/6/1897. CSO 1/13/Vol. 3
No. 138.

34. YHT. 11, op. cit.

35. Ibid.

use force to subdue the Yakurr. There were inter-tribal wars, raiding and murder. Trade in the area had virtually come to a standstill as a result of the hostilities of the Yakurr to traders in the Upper Cross River. The area was in a most unsatisfactory ferment of disorder. All efforts made to bring the chiefs into a meeting in order to settle matters peaceably failed; rather, a "most determined resistance was met".³⁶ The official view which probably derived from the failure of the police team to produce the suspects from Ekori calls for a comment. There is no evidence to support the claim that the Yakurr obstructed trade. The 19 carriers were killed not because they were traders but because they came from Nko. Besides, the Yakurr territory was not in an unsatisfactory state of ferment. If anything, the year 1897 was remarkable in that it witnessed the erection of Ngbeke that brought real peace to the Yakurr.

It does appear that the so called Protectorate government felt dishonoured by the refusal of Ekori to co-operate over the arrest. But how could Ekori co-operate? Co-operation would have implied an undermining of her independent status. The

36. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 20/9/1897.
CSO 1/13/Vol. 5, No. 140.

Protectorate government's stand was that "... such a state required decided action on the part of the government..."³⁷ The consequence, for the Yakurr, was the Punitive Expedition of 1898.

2. PREPARATION FOR THE EXPEDITION

The object of the punitive expedition was to effectively open the interior roads for the purpose of trade and to punish the Ekori for the massacre of the 19 Nko carriers, and to compel them to make redress in the traditional way. The expedition was also designed to compel the people in Ekori and the neighbourhood to make absolute submission to the colonial government. These objects were, if possible, to be executed peacefully but where not possible, by a show of force.

The following officers took charge of the expedition:

Consul: Major Gallway, D.S.O. Political Officer

Commandant: Major Milne D.S.O. O/C Troops.

Gallway was to determine the country to be pacified and people to be punished, while Milne was to carry out the operations and render the punishment

37. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 14/6/1897.
CSO 1/13/Vol. 3, No. 140.

effective. These two officers, however, co-opted the native political agent, Chief Coco Bassey, who was well acquainted with the area and the customs. F.S. James, the Travelling District Commissioner, accompanied the expedition but had instructions to remain at Ediba as Headquarters at the termination of the expedition with one officer and a detachment of 60 men. This was for the purpose of receiving the submission of the chiefs and people in the neighbourhood, and visiting all places to which he could obtain access with a view to establishing friendly relations. Arrangements for transport in canoes and carriers were to be made locally with the aid of 'native' (sic) allies. The Principal Medical Officer was detailed to accompany the expedition but was to take instructions from the Commandant. The Marine Officer was to assist the rocket party in addition to arranging transport matters. The whole assignment was to be carried out thoroughly and as expeditiously as possible.

The force under the command of Major R.L. Milne arrived in Ugep on January 14, 1898 and there awaited Coco Bassey's arrival. In the meantime, Lt. Daniel was requested to join him from Ediba

which he did with 25 men from the Ediba detachment. Between 14th and 19th January, 1898, the force obtained information on routes leading into Ekori. This information enabled Milne to move on the 19th through one of the rear paths leading into the village from where it was hoped the Ekori would not expect the force. His surmise was correct for the Protectorate force marched unopposed to within one kilometre of the village before they were sighted.³⁸

On the other hand, Ekori had organised search parties and home guards who were deployed to cover all the possible routes through which the enemy could enter the village. When Milne arrived at Ugep, Ekori had knowledge of it. The home guards were thus positioned in ambush along the route through which they were expected. Some of them were sent to Ekori beach (waterside) where they took up positions along the beach. They did not expect that the force would move in through a rear farming foot-path into the village.

38. Nigeria, NAE. Moor to F.O. 15/2/1898.
CSO 1/13/Vol. 8, No. 26.

3. FIELD OPERATIONS

On the 19th of January, 1898, at about 9.20 a.m. the Protectorate force arrived at Ekori and after desultory firing the troops entered the village which by Milne's assessment was capable of holding at least 1,000 fighting men. Milne directed Captain Middleton to fire two rounds of canon shell and then Lt. Buckland was ordered to fire a rocket into the village. Subsequent firing ignited the village. Meanwhile, Milne himself skirmished through the village and occupied one of the wards. Captain Fenton was ordered to occupy the second ward of the village. In the attempt Fenton was hit severely on the knee by a 'native' (sic) marksman but Milne's ward was already ablaze and so the Ekori fighters were kept off the ward by the conflagration. Milne took more men up to the second ward where the fighting was more serious and from there directed firing at the third and fourth wards. In the process Captain Middleton was slightly wounded in the neck. After four days of fighting, the Chiefs of Ekori surrendered.

It is necessary to remark that the contest was an unequal one. The Protectorate government

had the canons for which the Yakurr military leaders (Onun Eko) had no ultimate answer. But there was no doubt that the Yakurr gave the Protectorate troops a much stiffer battle than the latter had anticipated. According to the report, the Yakurr were still attacking ferociously till late at night. As Milne puts it "We were annoyed by the enemy till late at night".³⁹ According to Ekori tradition, the military leaders surrendered because the whiteman burnt down every thatch house in Ekori and killed every domestic animal they found. When the situation continued for up to four days, Ekori decided to end the war.⁴⁰

LIST OF THE WOUNDED

Milne reports that the casualties on the side of Ekori were heavy. He estimates that eight hundred and sixty-two enemy fighters were killed.⁴¹ Some other report puts the figure at three hundred and nine.⁴²

39. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 15/2/1898, CSO 1/13/Vol. 8, No. 26.

40. YHT. 11. op. cit.

41. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 15/2/1898; CSO 1/13/Vol. 8, No. 26.

42. J.C. Anene: Southern Nigeria in Transition. C.U.P., (1966), p. 207. K.K. Nair: Politics and Society. p. 246.

There is no Yakurr record to show the number of casualties - wounded and killed-on the side of Ekori but my informant confirmed that Ekori chiefs surrendered to the whiteman and also handed over Ekpo Osim, Eteng Owuna and Mma Ajungbo who were responsible for the massacre of the Nko carriers. But the surrender was necessitated by the military losses on the side of Ekori both in terms of men and property. Almost every house was set ablaze and many were wounded.

On the side of the Protectorate forces, the list of casualties and wounded showed that four men were killed and in the confusion, their bodies as well as their rifles could not be recovered.⁴³ Yakurr military convention required that a fallen foe should be beheaded. Milne attributed the casualties - killed and wounded-to the conduct of the local allies during the fighting. From the list of casualties and wounded, one will see that Ekori was conquered after sustained resistance. According to Milne, the casualties on both sides were unavoidable. But he attributed the government losses to the small size of the force at his disposal, the lack

43. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F.O. 15/2/1898;
CSO 1/13/Vol. 8, No. 26.

of information about Ekori prior to the on-slaught and his gross under-estimation that the village was to contain some 1,000 fighting men, when in actual fact they were more than 6,000 fighting men.

According to the report after the severe handling of the Ekori, the neighbouring villages felt constrained to come to terms with the Colonial Administration.⁴⁴

At the end of the war, peace treaties were signed for the opening up of the Cross River for free trade. It is the writer's view that the signing of the so-called peace treaty did not reflect the true intent of the punitive expedition. If anything, this study has shown, in chapter three that there was free trade in Yakurr territory. It has also been suggested earlier that the Yakurr did not obstruct trade even when Ekori took vengeance on the 19 carriers. And, at any rate, it was doubtful whether the chiefs of Ekori and other Yakurr settlements who were signatories to the so called peace treaty had a good understanding of the terms of the said treaty. The Protectorate government wanted to ensure absolute submission to it by the Yakurr. A submission which they eventually had by the signing of the so called

44. Nigeria, NAE, Moor to F. O. 15/2/1898.
CSO 1/13/Vol. 8, No. 26.

peace treaties. By the terms of the peace treaty, the Yakurr became protected by the Protectorate government even when no British official was stationed in Yakurr territory. In terms of trade, the writer has not come by any evidence to suggest that the expedition made any positive difference on the volume of trade or that it influenced the attitudes of the Cross River peoples to the British in relation to other European powers. It is the writer's view that the Yakurr punitive expedition was embarked upon in order to have the Yakurr sign the submission document (Peace Treaty). In this regard, Britain needed the document to prove that she was in effective control of the area.

It is, of course, common knowledge that during the last decade of the 19th century, West Africans experienced a common phenomenon: colonial occupation which was preceded by treaty-making expeditions. At this time, various European agents buoyed with high ideals of extending the commercial interests of their respective fatherlands led expeditions into the interior of Africa. For the Cross River zone, acquisition of territories by European powers made headway after the Anglo-French-German declaration

of the 1890s.⁴⁵ After these declarations, the British launched an operation to determine the limits of their territories, and those to which the French and German laid claim to, by virtue of the Royal Niger Company's commercial influence which was often based on treaties allegedly made between the company representative and the local chiefs whose signatories were often represented with crosses on the stereo-typed treaty forms. The Cross River expedition against Yakurr was, therefore, not peculiar. It brought the Yakurr from their particular area into Nigeria.

These developments should not be seen in isolation but as part of a grand movement for the acquisition of colonial territories. The eventual imposition of British rule created its own problems for the Yakurr and for a long time the colonial administrators were saddled with the problem of how to accommodate the Yakurr expressions of resistance. Following the establishment of colonial rule, there was the apparent abeyance of traditional authority. This is a historically interesting phenomenon of

45. J.C. Anene: The International Boundaries of Nigeria: 1885-1960, London, Longman, (1970) pp. 52 - 73.

colonialism. The colonial government introduced a political arrangement which did not correspond to the Yakurr traditional government. For the Yakurr, the traditional models of authority continued to exist whereas for the British it was a monolithic administrative pyramid in which the Obol lopon and his Council of Yabol occupied a side position. The colonial government created warrant chiefs who became the link between the colonial administration and the local people. The warrant chiefs were the agents of the alien conqueror whose motives and goals were in fact unfamiliar to the Yakurr. This is why the warrant chiefs lacked the legitimacy accorded by the ordinary Yakurr to their traditional counterparts. On the other hand, the warrant chiefs enjoyed the determined support of their new master who, while holding a monopoly of effective force, was greatly dependent on them for the implementation of his policies. The fact was that the Yakurr did not recognise any political authority outside Yakurr. Therefore, to talk of the Obol lopon not being invested with some of the powers held by the colonisers merely confused them(Yakurr). As a matter of fact, the establishment of colonial

administration placed the Obol lopon in an ambiguous position between the two systems of government - the traditional and colonial authorities. In the eyes of the traditional society, the Obol lopon was their representative; but, in the eyes of the colonial authority, the Warrant Chief represented the traditional society.

In the cultural aspect, all indications show that the cultures and values of the colonial system were super-imposed upon the Yakurr. This meant that the role of Obol lopon as a priest became ambiguous for his decisions and behaviour were seldom approved by both the colonial authority and the Yakurr people. There is the story of Obol Ubana of Ugep c. 1885-1910, who refused to respond to a summons from a touring political officer, not because he feared he may be punished, but because he felt being the head of the village, tradition required that the political officer ought to have come to him rather than ask his messenger to summon him to the rest house for some 'talk'.⁴⁶ Such action received the approval of the Yakurr but not the colonial authority. In any conflict which arose between the Yakurr and the

46. YHT. 38, Eyong Arikpo et al Ugep, 18/8/76.

colonial authority, the Obol lopon's position became even more precarious since both parties would want him on their sides. In the end, the Obol lopon ran the risk of either alienating himself from his community or ceasing to 'represent' them in the eyes of the colonial authority. Indications, however, were that the Obol lopon pitched their camps on the side of traditional authority as should be expected.

To the colonial officers, the Yakurr were always lawless even when the laws (colonial laws) had been explained to them; they would not obey the chiefs (warrant chiefs).⁴⁷ Indications are that the Yakurr did not accept colonial rule until the 1930s. This is an issue outside the scope of this study.

This chapter has examined the various wars the Yakurr fought to acquire a territory they can claim to be theirs. In this regard, it was found that the most serious and protracted wars were those fought with Egai, Anong and Adun. By about 1810, various peace treaties had been made with these non-Yakurr

47. Intelligence Report on Yakurr by C.J.W. Chessman, 1939, Part III, pp. 15 - 17. NAE: Assessment Report on the Yakurr by Weir, 1929. NAE: OG 537/Vol. XII (OG Prof. 2/1/99). Annual Report - Obubra Division, 1940, NAE, A.E. Afigbo: The Warrant Chiefs Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria 1891 - 1929. Longman, London, 1972, p. 235.

neighbours. The terms of the treaties fixed territorial boundaries with the non-Yakurr. It was shown that the major causes of the wars were an increase in Yakurr population and the economic demands of the period.

Between 1835 and 1898, there were series of events which completely overstretched Yakurr political relations to a point of crisis. There was the Imom Okan incident. Imom Okan was sold into slavery by the Benobase, contrary to Yakurr custom, but he escaped and returned. There were the homicidal cases involving Ina Okeledji, Itam Ojekwou, Njom Okpata, Osim Ewa, Ugobo Ewa and the 19 carriers from Nko. In order to halt the worsening political situation between Yakurr settlements, Idomi took the initiative and advised on the formation of a confederate union. Ngbeke shrine was the symbol of Yakurr confederation. Unfortunately, the confederation attempt was not allowed to mature. The British punitive expedition on the Yakurr in 1898 nipped the confederation effort. The Yakurr became colonised by the British in 1898.

C O N C L U S I O N

This study started with an analysis of Yakurr origin, migration and settlement. The examination has shown who the Yakurr are, why and how they migrated to their present locations. The discussion has shown that the Yakurr belong to the negro race, and, therefore, the problem of their origin cannot be treated in isolation. It has to be discussed in relation to the problem of the negro origin. The research on the problem of the negro origin is still in progress.

According to Yakurr oral tradition, their origin is in Lekanakpakpa. Lekanakpakpa is Yakurr name for the Cameroun-Obudu mountain range. This is an area that has figured in the debate about Bantu origin. The Linguistic analysis of Yakurr oral tradition on this issue, however, suggests that the tradition is authentic. But, since the debate on whether Loko (language of the Yakurr) is Bantu or Semi-Bantu is still in progress, one cannot make a dogmatic statement on Yakurr origin. Meanwhile, Yakurr origin is probably within the Nigeria-Cameroun borderline, south of Obudu hills.

In their ancestral homeland, conflict erupted between the Yakurr and Nsofan (a neighbouring village) over a burial incident. There are two versions of this incident. The first claims that the Yakurr buried all those who died unnaturally from Nsofan and that misunderstanding arose in the performance of that role. The second claims that the Yakurr exhumed a corpse and made away with the head. Whatever the truth was, a conflict emerged between the Yakurr and Nsofan. It was at this time the Yakpa attacked and sacked the Yakurr.

The Yakpa have an obscure identity. But it is suggested that they are Ejagham-speaking peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria. Following Yakpa victory over the Yakurr, the latter migrated to found new settlements. The migration appears to have taken different routes. According to tradition, it was in three groups. One group moved northwest, and later founded the Yakurr village of Nko about the 1680s. The second group moved westward to found the villages of Idomi and Ugep c. 1650-1680. The third group moved southwestwards founding Ekorì town c. 1677. Following a disagreement between a section of Ugep, a splinter group migrated from the rest of the

group to found a new settlement called Nkpani in about 1707.

The study also examined Yakurr economy from the pre-migration times to the post-migration period. The survey showed that the economic foundation had been laid in the pre-migration era. The structure of the economy, even when considered on a sectoral basis, did not change. What the migration did was to locate the Yakurr in a strategic environment which exposed them to the expanding market of the Cross River trade. The new economic opportunities thus, caused a positive change in demand for Yakurr goods, especially foodstuffs and palm produce. The Yakurr were quick in taking advantage of the economic opportunity. They established two market centres: one at Ugep and the second at Ekorì. Thereafter, they participated in trade. By so doing, the Yakurr showed that they were capable of development. Individuals, under the auspices of their families, took the initiative to modify their production strategies to meet market demands. Yakurr contribution to the Cross River trade is substantial. The experience of the 1930's strengthens this conclusion. The Yakurr sold their goods through

the port of Calabar.

The study further analysed the political institution under which the economy operated. A close assessment was also made of the evolution of the institution of Yabol among the Yakurr. The evidence suggests that that institution is a phenomenon which emerged from the general structure of the Yakurr society. It was built up over the years upon the family, lineage and kindred ties. It is shown that the institution is deeply rooted in religion.

The study further examined the effect of Yakurr participation in the Cross River trade on the institution of Yabol. It is shown that in response to military and economic forces at work, the institution of Yabol was modified by increasing its membership. For this purpose, a commander-in-chief (Onun Eko) and the wealthy merchant class (Yasu) were accorded roles in the Council of Yabol.

Finally, the study investigated some of the various wars the Yakurr fought in order to acquire a territory they can claim to be theirs in their new homeland. It was found that the wars were protracted; but, by about 1810, the Yakurr had successfully made peace treaties with neighbouring non-Yakurr

settlements. The terms of the treaties, among other things, fixed the territorial boundaries with the non-Yakurr. Between 1835 and the 1890's, series of developments emerged which completely over-stretched Yakurr political relations. There was the Imom Okan incident. Imom Okan was sold into slavery by the Benobase (children of god) contrary to Yakurr customs, but he (Imom) escaped and returned. There were the homicidal cases in which Ina Okeledji, Itam Ojekwou, Njom Okpata, Osim Ewa, Ugobo Ewa and 19 Nko carriers were killed by fellow Yakurr.

In order to halt the worsening political situation between Yakurr settlements, Idomi took the initiative and advised on the formation of a confederation. Ngbeke shrine was the symbol of the Yakurr confederate union. Unfortunately, the confederation attempt had no time to mature. The British punitive expedition in 1898 nipped in the bud the confederation effort. The Yakurr became colonised by the British in 1898. The British annexation of Yakurr in 1898 had a profound effect on the future of the Yakurr. There was a rapid pace of political change which culminated in the imposition of British colonial rule. But the imposition of this rule exposed the Yakurr to series of problems which, to

date, still rear their heads. The administrative machinery set up by the British was strange to the Yakurr, especially as it did not take cognisance of the Yakurr traditional system. The Yakurr reacted in various forms but met with punitive patrols, expeditions, killings, burning of houses and general destruction of property.¹

Perhaps, the greatest impact of the new system was its gradual erosion of the power of the Yakurr traditional government and the weakening of the force and potency of the spiritual beliefs of the Yakurr. The Obol lopon was placed in such an embarrassing position that he became a political enigma both to the colonial administrator and his subjects. In any case, with or without his services, the colonial administration established its own administrative machinery which was propped up by a monopoly of effective force backed by guns. Christian missions

1. In 1899, Rousel had severe fighting with Nkpani. In 1903, a column was sent against Nko and Nkpani. In 1915, a patrol visited Ugep, Nkpani and Ekor. In 1918, a column was sent against Nko. In 1918, there was tax revolt in Ugep.

soon followed.² and within a short span of time, the Yakurr were torn between an alien ideology and Yakurr tradition.

Chinua Achebe's novel - Things Fall Apart³ - applies to the Yakurr experience as much as it does to Igboland. In Yakurr, the colonial administrators with the help of the missionaries succeeded in superimposing the British culture upon the Yakurr. The process through which this imposition was effected is a sad tale. In the immediate period following colonial rule there is no evidence that the British won over the good-will of the Yakurr. This lack of good-will on the part of the Yakurr did not take long to explode. The formation of the Hunters Association (Koje), the Yakurr protest against taxation in 1928⁴ and other events are indicators of discontent and disaffection on the part of the Yakurr.

Finally, notwithstanding the very scanty non-historical documentary materials on the Yakurr and

2. In 1911, the United Free Church of Scotland started a mission at Ugep. By 1916, the mission school had 137 pupils on roll. See C.J.W. Chessman: Intelligence Report on Yakurr, Part III, P.S. Ref. 1785/100. NAE.

3. Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart: Heinemann, London, (1958).

4. D. Forde: op. cit., p. 196; E.A. Afigbo: The Warrant Chiefs. p. 73.

the problems of handling Yakurr oral traditions in terms of dating, interpretation and verification, this study has shown that scholars should not be scared from researching into the histories of non-literate Nigerian peoples such as the Yakurr. Since this is the first effort at writing the history of this Nigerian people, it has not been possible to answer all questions or cover all issues in great depth.

Inspite of this inadequacies, the study attempts to add fresh historical information to the available body of our knowledge of Nigerian history. In this regard, it makes a definite contribution. It serves as a basis for further research. It is now increasingly clear that without the benefits of studies such as this a more meaningful history of Nigeria cannot be attempted. Besides, this study is dependent very heavily on oral tradition. Therefore, it is an addition to the increasing number of works on African history that depend on this sort of historical source material.

A Select List of Interviews

DATE	PLACE	INFORMANTS AND REMARKS
YHT.1 13.8.76	IDOMI-OBUBRA	<p>Chief Ifere Oka, aged c. 81 years, Farmer; Lineage head of Kákowa Compound. Chief Ofem Ina; aged c. 65 years; Priest of Kejidon shrine; Farmer. Eyaugom Bassey aged c. 80 years; Farmer. John Arikpo; aged c. 55 years; Teacher. Eni Ibo; aged c. 60 years; Farmer, Omini Ifere; aged c. 52 years; Teacher; (He has a profound knowledge of Yakurr traditions). Mbe Arikpo; aged c. 75 years; Farmer. Chief Ubani Abai Bassey; aged c. 73 years; Head Chief of Idomi. This interview was held in one of the class-rooms in Primary School 1, with the kind co-operation of the Headmaster - Mr. Ubi Okoi Ofem.</p>
YHT.2 18.8.76	UGEP-OBUBRA	<p>Chief Okoi (Obol Yaseni); aged c. 89 years; Farmer; Priest of Yaseni matrilineage shrine (Ase). Chief Mbui Ubani; aged c. 60 years; Okpebri of Ugep (Village Speaker and second to the Head Chief) (an erudite and shrewd man with a giant</p>

knowledge of Yakurr customs). Farmer. Ujong Ina; aged c. 73 years; Farmer; Ward Head of Ijom. Chief Eyong Arikpo; aged c. 87 years; Ward Head of Ijiman. (A public Orator); Farmer. Chief Ikpi Eteng; aged c. 76 years; Farmer; Ward Head of Bikobiko. Lindsay Ikpi Itam; aged c. 63 years; Farmer; Ward Head of Ikpakapit. The interview was held in Chief Okoi's residence in Aneja. Chief Okoi's official residence is in Loseni-Ugep. During the army/civilian clash of 24th December, 1975, many houses were set ablaze by soldiers resident in Ugep. Chief Okoi had therefore to live with his patrikins in Aneja - pending the completion of a new house at Loseni.

YHT.3 13.9.76

BETEM-AKAMKPA

Chief Isong Egba, aged c. 66 years; Clan Head of Ehom in Biase Farmer. Chief Oham Arikpo, aged c. 74 years; Farmer, Village Head of Betem; Chief Ekpo Obe; aged c. 70 years; Farmer. Inyang Amang Uti; aged c. 20 years; Grade II Teacher. Sampson Bassey Evong; aged c. 30 years; Undergraduate of the University of Lagos

(Acct.) Mr. Evong was my interpreter. The interview was held in Chief Oham Arikpo's residence.

YHT.4 14.9.76 OJO-UYANGA

Chief Imo Obo, aged c. 80 years. Head Chief; Farmer and Hunter. Chief Ogan Osim, aged c. 75 years; Farmer. Paul Effiom Ekuri; aged c. 72 years; retired Teacher. Akom Onwo; aged c. 50 years; Farmer. Asuguo Egbe Mbe-Egbe; aged c. 45 years; Farmer. (A very intelligent man and good public speaker. Ekpe O. Agbor, aged c. 38 years; Grade II Teacher. Mr. Agbo was my interpreter during the interview. Ogar Ujong Ina, aged c. 39 years; Teacher (H/M Ojo Primary School). The interview was held in Chief Imo Obo's Palace.

YHT.5 15.9.76 OLD NETIM-
AKAMKPA

Ntufam Agu Ita; aged c. 54 years; Paramount Ruler of Netim; Farmer and Hunter; Michael A. Edem; aged c. 40 years; Grade II Teacher; (H/M Primary School; Old Netim) William O. Omonga; aged c. 23 years; Grade II Teacher. He was my interpreter.

Chief Akim Akpo; aged c. 78 years; Farmer and Hunter. The interview was held in the Paramount Ruler's house-Nrufam Agu Ita.

YHT.6 16.9.76

UWET-UYANGA

Chief J. Isokpo; aged c. 90 years; Farmer; Village Head of Uwet. Andrew A. Nkan; aged c. 80 years; Village Head of Ewen; Farmer. Madam Nkoyo Ewang, aged c. 73 years; Farmer. Chief Okon Oyon, aged c. 58 years; Farmer; Chief Effiong Okon; aged c. 70 years; Farmer. Chief Eriyan aged c. 75 years; Farmer. Linus Agbor, aged c. 25 years; Teacher (He was my interpreter). The interview was held in Chief Isokpo's residence.

YHT.7 18.9.76

OBAN-AKAMKPA

Ntufam J.A. Offiong, aged c. 81 years; Paramount Ruler of Oban. Chief G.A. Asong, aged c. 84 years; Retired Customary Court Scibe; Member Oban Clan Council. I.I. Oru, aged c. 64 years; retired Teacher; Member Oban Clan Council. Chief Etim Hakin, aged c. 79 years; Farmer and Hunter. Second in authority to the Head of Oban. W.E. Effiong,

aged c. 43 years;
Teacher. Clement E.
Offiong aged c. 63
years; retired Civil
Servant. Oka Bassey
Iwara, aged c. 22
years; Civil Servant.
Oka was my interpreter.
The interview was held
in the Palace of Ntufam
Offiong.

YHT.8 20.9.76

OKOYONG-
CALABAR (AKPAP
OKOYONG)

Okokon Ekpo Akam, aged
c. 86 years; Farmer.
U.N. Udo, aged c. 37
years; Grade II
Teacher. (He was my
interpreter). Affiong
Asong, aged c. 60 years;
Farmer. Eyo Okon Etim,
aged c. 40 years;
Teacher. Interview
was held in Akpap
Okoyong in the
residence of Mr. U.N.
Udo. The Village
Head was under admission
in the General
Hospital, Calabar.
Mr. Udo a native Teacher,
made it possible for
the interview to be
held.

YHT.9 10.10.76 NKO-OBUBRA

Chief Isaac Eleni, aged
c. 76 years, Head Chief
of Iko town. Madam
Okoma Eleni, aged c.
99 years. A very
intelligent woman who
still recounts vividly
many incidents of the
past, in Yakurr. Age
has almost robbed her
of her voice. She was

still most useful during the interview. Chief Eleni montifored most of what she said. Chief S.O. Enang, aged c. 90 years, Farmer; Okpebri (Village Speaker and second to the Head Chief). Chief Obeten Akpama, aged c. 80 years, Ward Head of Ukpawen, Farmer. Chief Eta Obeten Ejukwa aged c. 87 years, Farmer, Lineage head and Edjukwa (Messenger to the chiefs Council). The interview was held in Chief Eleni's residence.

YHT.10 20.11.76 NKPANI-OBUBRA

Chief Ibiang Okan, aged c. 81 years, Head Chief, Farmer; Chief Lawrence Simon Uket, aged c. 38 years; Teacher. Chief Okoi Eko, aged c. 76 years; Farmer. Onun Eko (Commander-in-chief) and Yoduma Ward Chief. Chief Abam Ofem, aged c. 59 years; Farmer. Onun Eko of Afaben. Chief Akpama Omini, aged c. 86 years, Farmer. Eteng Dan Ubi, aged c. 42 years, Gd. I Teacher. Mr. Ubi is a power house in the community and highly enlightened. He made all the connections for this interview. The interview was held in the Palace of the Head Chief (Obot Ibiang Okan).

YHT.11 26.11.76 EKORI-OBUBRA

Elder Omini Eno, aged c. 98 years, (He is now blind) but his reasoning power has neither been tinted by the defect nor his age. He recalls vividly all the incidents he had witnessed as a young man including the Cross River Expedition of 1898 against Ekori. Obono Akpang, aged c. 52 years; Gd. II Teacher. He has some useful records relating to the history of the royal family in Ekori which he compiled. He belongs to the family. Chief Nta Uket, aged c. 67 years; Farmer. Igiri Omini Enon, aged c. 52 years, Farmer. The interview was held in Elder Omini Eno's residence.

YHT.12 22.1.77 AGOI-EKPO
OBUBRA

Chief Onum Mbang Ekpo, aged c. 99 years, Farmer. Head Chief of Agoi-Ekpo. Chief Eyo Abu, aged c. 47 years, Farmer, member, Yakurr Customary Court. Onun David Onun, aged c. 40 years, Teacher, Chairman Village Council Chief Edet, aged c. 83 years, Farmer, ward head of Akarukpat. Chief (Madam) Avong Etim, aged c. 85 years. Head of all the women

in the village,
Farmer, Village
Speaker and second
to the Village Head.
Chief Egu Ikum, aged
c. 79 years, Farmer
(Onun Eko) Commander-
in-chief. Chief Arong
Abami, aged c. 76
years, Farmer.
Edjukwa of Agoi Ekpo
(Messenger to the
Council of Chiefs).
The interview was held
in Chief Onun's
residence.

YHT.13 5.2.77

ASSIGA-
OBUBRA

Chief R.U. Onun, aged
c. 82 years, Farmer.
Cland Head of Ayiga.
Chief Enang Okpebri,
aged c. 79 years,
Farmer. Village
Speaker of Assiga.
M.B. Demben, aged c.
31 years, Undergrate
of the University of
Lagos(Dept. of
Education). Demben
was my interpreter.
He has a sound
knowledge of their
oral tradition. The
interview was held
in Chief Onun's
residence.

YHT.14 12.2.77

NSOFAN-IKOM

Ntufam J.N. Ntui,
aged c. 88 years,
Clan Head, Farmer.
Ntufam Erim Nkpa,
aged c. 96 years,
Head Chief of Nsofan.
Ettah Mbu Ogar, aged
c. 34 years, Grade II
Teacher; (Mr. Ogar

was my interpreter during the interview). Usani Iwara Okri, aged c. 31 years, Civil Servant. Bassey Utre, aged c. 38 years, (he was my Field Assistant who guided me through my trips in Ikom). Okoi Ikpi Ewa, aged c. 31 years, Civil Servant.

YHT.15 19.2.77 EKURI
EYAYEN-IKOM

Chief Ayi Ewubi, aged c. 71 years, Farmer, Village Head. Chief Ekom Ayang, aged c. 79 years, Farmer. Chief Egbe Egot, aged c. 86 years, Farmer. Chief Nada Osu, aged c. 54 years, Farmer. Chief Ayang Egbe, aged c. 87 years, Farmer. Madam Mafon Omor, aged c. 37 years, Teacher. She was my interpreter. The interview was held in Chief Ewubi's house.

YHT.16 21.2.77 ITARA-IKOM

Ntufam Ntutui Erim, aged c. 68 years, Village Head of Itara, Farmer and hunter. Chief Ndifon Ogar, aged c. 62 years, Farmer. Michael Ovat, aged c. 36 years, Teacher(H/M Primary School, Itara). Mr. Ovat was my interpreter. S. O. Otio, aged c. 33 years, Teacher. Chief Agben Efu, aged c. 83 years, Farmer. The interview was held in Ntufam Erim's house.

LIST OF INFORMANTSPRIVATE INTERVIEWS

	NAME	PLACE	DATE
17.	Frank Eteng	Idomi	14.8.76
18.	Ete Ofem Ikona	"	"
19.	Chief Eyaugom Bassey	"	"
20.	Eten Eyong Okoi	"	16.8.76
21.	Chief Otoh Eteng	"	"
22.	Inyang Eyong Ibor	"	"
23.	Ofem Edet Obeten	"	14.11.76
24.	Otor Ubi Effiom	"	14.8.76
25.	Ete Bassey Ubana	"	"
26.	Michael Demben	Assiga	5.2.77
27.	Chief Edet Uket	Nko	26.10.76
28.	Chief Onar Okoi	"	"
29.	Oba Onen	"	"
30.	Samuel O. Ofem	"	27.10.76
31.	Aguba Asam Onun	"	"
32.	Ofem Jack Onun	"	"
33.	Onun Jack Onun	"	"
34.	Dr. Okoi Arikpo	Ugep	31.12.76
35.	Lindsay Ikpi Itam	"	9.10.76

36.	Magnus O.E. Williams	Ugep	18.8.76
37.	Chief N.U. Ofem	"	"
38.	Chief Eyong Arikpo	"	18.8.76
39.	Chief Eno Ebri Eteng	"	16.7.76
40.	Justice Etowa E. Arikpo	Calabar	23.10.76
41.	Ete Bassey Iwara	Ugep	3. 8.76
42.	Oka Ewa Okri	"	2. 8.76
43.	Edward Abam Ubi	"	4. 8.76
44.	Ikpi Ibiang	"	"
45.	Ikoi Eteng	"	31. 1.76
46.	Obol Ubana	"	18. 2.76
47.	Onen Eno	"	5.12.76
48.	Ubi Okoi	"	4.10.76
49.	Okoi Ifere	"	12.10.76
50.	Okoi Eteng Omini	"	5. 9.76
51.	Chief Usang Ebinyang	"	15. 7.76
52.	Iha Ubi Okoi	"	10. 2.78
53.	Ibor Esu Oden	"	30. 4.77
54.	Egu Usani	"	20. 7.76
55.	Omini Okoi	"	22.12.76
56.	Onen Eyong	"	13.11.76
57.	Ubi Omini	"	27. 1.78
58.	Ikpi Ofem Ogar	"	4. 2.78

59.	Okoi Omini Edet	Ugep	4. 2.78
60.	Emmanuel Egbe	Ediba	18.10.76
61.	Nancy Etarrh(Mrs.)	"	"
62.	Omini Otu	Usumutong	19.10.76
63.	E.E. Ubor	"	"
64.	Okima Ekpo	Agoi Ekpo	21. 1.77
65.	Ifa Obong	"	"
66.	Eno Akpama	"	"
67.	Ofem Arong	"	"
68.	Mbang Andei	"	"
69.	Ofem Anne	"	"
70.	Mbang Egong	"	"
71.	Chief Oken Abu	"	"
72.	Ikum Ibo Ikum	"	"
73.	Obeten Omini	"	"
74.	Ikum Arung	"	23. 1.77
75.	Chief Abu Onun	"	"
76.	Mbang David	"	"
77.	I. O. Ekpo	"	"
78.	David Agbor	"	"
79.	Chief Onun Abu Oyira	"	"
80.	Bassey Igiri	Ekori	26.11.76
81.	Jacob Ofem Eno	"	"

82.	James Omini Eno	Ekori	26.11.76
83.	Itam Omini	"	27.11.76
84.	Itam Omini	"	13.11.76
85.	O.S. Uket	"	"
86.	Clement Nta Uket	Ekori	"
87.	Igiri Sam	"	28.11.76
88.	Chief Uket Okoi	"	"
89.	Michael Obono	Nkpani	2. 2.77
90.	Ubi Ofum	"	"
91.	Edet Obomo	"	"
92.	Ebri Asuquo	"	23.11.76
93.	Nkanu Omori	"	"
94.	Ogar Eta	"	24.11.76
95.	Ntufam J.O. Assam	Br. Agbokim	20.11.76
96.	I.I. Ndifon (Forest Ranger)	Obubra	15.11.76
97.	Inok Itagbor	Old Netim	15. 9.76
98.	Thomas Mbey	"	"
99.	Ojong John	"	"
100.	Okorn Agu	"	"
101.	Omone Okpa	"	16. 9.76
102.	Oka Omonga	"	"
103.	Ndifon Iserom	"	"

104.	Bassey Ita	Old Netim	16. 9.76
105.	Ata Inyang Onok	Ojo-Uyanga	14. 9.76
106.	Ata Efi Ogar	"	"
107.	Ata Egbe	"	"
108.	Ata Ayi	"	"
109.	Ata Ebup Iyamba	"	"
110.	Ata Ekungba	Ojo-Uyanga	14. 9.76
111.	Ata Ita Obo	"	19.12.76
112.	Keith Nicklin	Uyo	13. 3.77
113.	Chief Isong Egbai	Akpet	13. 9.76
114.	Bassey Okon Effiong	Uwet	17. 9.76
115.	Chief Asiya Ita	"	"
116.	Imo Udoma	Nsofan	12. 2.77
117.	Jacob Ewu	"	"
118.	Linus Ndifon	Itara	20. 2.77
119.	Sylvanus Imong	Ekuri Eyen	19. 2.77
120.	Sampson Ibor Ogben	Agwagune	23. 3.77
121.	Major E. S. James	Calabar	11. 1.77
122.	Arukwe Ijroma	Abriba	20. 3.77
123.	Uko Nwachuku	Item	"
124.	Chief Nkan Isokpo	Ikotana	28.12.76
125.	Arikpo Otumise	Ugep	3. 3.79
126.	Esu Nkanu Ejerko	Abayon	4. 2.79

KING-LIST

The tentative chronology used for this study is extrapolated partly from Yakurr King-lists. The method of extrapolation is explained in the Introduction (Dating Yakurr oral tradition). A regnal mean of 25 years has been used for computing the unknown dates of the King-lists. The estimated datable events appear to agree with oral tradition.

KING-LIST (NKO)

AWUGO	c.	1698 - 1723
OBONTI	c	1723 - 1748
AMBA	c.	1748 - 1773
OKOI	c.	1773 - 1798
OMINI I	c.	1798 - 1823
UFALA	c.	1823 - 1848
UGURU	c.	1848 - 1873
USANG	c.	1873 - 1898
ENANG	c.	1898 - 1923
OMINI II		1923 - 1939
OFEM		1939 - 1952
EDET		1952 (PRESENT RULER)

KING-LIST (UGEP)

IKO	c.	1660 - 1685
USANI	c.	1685 - 1710
EJA	c.	1710 - 1735
AYELE	c.	1735 - 1760
ESUKPA	c.	1760 - 1785
UBI	c.	1785 - 1810
UKET	c.	1810 - 1835
EKPANI	c.	1835 - 1860
IKPI I	c.	1860 - 1885
UBANA	c.	1885 - 1910
OMINI	c.	1910 - 1926
EFA		1926 - 1926
IKPI II		1927 - 1939
OBU		1939 - 1950
MBUI		1951 - 1957
INTER-REGNUM		1957 - 1980
ENANG		1980 (PRESENT RULER)

XXX

XXX

KING-LIST (EKORI)

OBLA	c.	1694 - 1719
UBI	c.	1719 - 1744
MBANG	c.	1744 - 1769

OKOMA	c.	1769 - 1794
OFEM	c.	1794 - 1819
IBOR I	c.	1819 - 1844
EKO	c.	1844 - 1869
EYU	c.	1869 - 1894
ETA		1894 - 1919
IBOR II		1919 - 1944
UKET		1944 (PRESENT RULER)

KING-LIST (IDOMI)

NKPATEOLE	c.	1690 - 1715
ISONAEM	c.	1715 - 1740
IBO I	c.	1740 - 1765
KOTOKE	c.	1765 - 1790
OFEM	c.	1790 - 1815
ISU	c.	1815 - 1840
UBI	c.	1840 - 1865
IBO II	c.	1865 - 1890
IFERE	c.	1890 - 1915
OBLA	.	1915 - 1944
UBANA		1944 (PRESENT RULER)

One of the methods used in cross-checking dates obtained through extrapolation of king-lists is the computation of genealogies. This method is discussed in the Introduction. A few samples of lineages whose genealogies were computed are supplied below:

ANEJA LINEAGE (UGEP): Informant: Ibor Esu Oden

<u>GENERATIONS</u>	<u>GENEALOGY</u>
10	OKONDEM
9	OKPEKU ODONDEM
8	IYAMBA OKPEKU
7	EDET IYAMBA
6	NKPONG EDET
5	ODEN NKPONG
4	EDOR ODEN
3	EBRE EDOR
2	ODEN EBRI
1.	BASSEY ODEN

UGOM LINEAGE (UGEP): Informant: Okoi Eteng Omini

<u>GENERATIONS</u>	<u>GENEALOGY</u>
7	NTETE
6	LEKAM NTETE

5	EYONG LEKAM
4	EBRI EYONG
3	LEKAM EBRI
2	ARIKPO LEKAM
1	UJONG ARIKPO

UGEPIKEKONKOLE LINEAGE: Informant: Sunday Ebri OfemGENERATIONSGENEALOGY

9	ETEYEN
8	BUTUM ETEYEN
7	USANI BUTUM
6	INA USANI
5	ABAM INA
4	UBI ABAM
3	OKPATA UBI
2	OFEM OKPATA
1	AGBOR OFEM

UTOM LINEAGE (UGEP) Informant: Okoi Eteng OminiGENERATIONSGENEALOGY

7	NTETE
6	MBANG NTETE
5	OFEM MBANG
4	OMINI OFEM
3	UBI OMINI
2	OKOI UBI
1	SUNDAY OKOI

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY BASED ON A GENERATION MEAN OF 30
YEARS OBTAINED IN YAKURR

<u>Generation from 1978¹</u>	<u>Approximate Dates</u>
17.	c. 1497 - 1527 = 85
16.	c. 1527 - 1557 = 80
15.	c. 1557 - 1587 = 75
14. General Dislocation of Yakurr ancestral home- land	c. 1587 - 1617 = 70
13. Yakurr Migration	c. 1617 - 1647 = 65
12. Some Yakurr arrive Umor(Ugep) area	c. 1647 - 1677 = 60
11. Foundation of Ekori and Nko	c. 1677 - 1707 = 55
10. Yakurr Ibe founded Nkpani	c. 1707 - 1737 = 50
9.	c. 1737 - 1767 = 45
8.	c. 1767 - 1797 = 40
7.	c. 1797 - 1827 = 35
6. Beecroft visits Ekori Waterside	c. 1827 - 1857 = 30
5.	c. 1857 - 1887 = 25
4. British Punitive Ex- pedition against Ekori	c. 1887 - 1917 = 20
3.	c. 1917 - 1947 = 15
2.	c. 1947 - 1977 = 10
1.	c. 1978 = 5

1. The data for the computation of this chronology was compiled in 1976 - 8.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

- i. Oral Tradition.
- ii. Archival Materials

NAI (National Archives Ibadan)

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2. CS0.26/29017 Intelligence Report on the Aro Clan-Cross River Province. T.M. Shankland (A.D.O.) 1930.
3. CS0.26/19701/Vol. II Intelligence Report on Afikpo Division. L. H. Shelton (D.O.) 1928.
4. CSE0.26/27674 Intelligence Report on the Okoyong Clan - Calabar Division. Major Sealy-King (D.O.) 1932.
5. CS0.26/30639 Intelligence Report on the Ukelle Clan. Ogoja Division. B. W. Walter (D.O.) 1935.
6. CS0.26/27640 Assessment Report on the Adun Clan Obubra Division Capt. A.C. Weir (A.D.C.) 1929.
7. CS0.26/28179 Intelligence Report on Ezza Clan Abakaliki Division G.B.G. Chapman (A.D.O.) 1932.

8. CSO.26/30465 Intelligence Report on Akparabong Clan Ikom Division Major V. C. Kesley (D.O.) 1935.
9. CSO.26/26804 Intelligence Report on Ikwo Clan Abakaliki Division G.B.G. Chapman (A.D.O.) 1930.
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16. CSO.1/13/Vol. 12 No.78-9 Report of the invasion of the Cross River Forward Correspondence re-state of affairs 1900.
17. CSO.1/13/Vol. 5 pp.138-44 Cross River Expedition of 1895. Attack on Ediba.

18. CSO.1/13/Vol. 23 No. 3 Cross River Expedition,
Afikpo operations 1903.
19. CSO.1/14/Vol. 32 No.149 Occupation of the Cross
River-Afikpo Division.
20. CSO.1/13/Vol.29 No.154 Annual Report Cross River
District. 1904.
21. Cal. Prof 8/2 Vol. II Report of a visit to the
No. 189 Cross River by the
Political Officer of Ediba
Government Station -
E.P.S. Roupel.
22. Cal. Prof 6/1 Vol.4 Report on Incidents on
the Cross River District
(Collection of trade tolls
and German attack)to Moor.
23. Cal. Prof 9/1 Vol.3 & 4 Southern Nigerian Papers-
Cross River District vide
CSO. 1/16/Vol. 4.
24. Cal. Prof 10/3 Vol. 4 Southern Nigerian Reports:
Cross River District
(Ediba).
25. Cal. Prof 10/1 Southern Nigerian
Minutes 1900 - Cross
River District.
26. Cal. Prof 10/3 Vol. 11 Report on the Ediba
District for the quarter
ending 31st Dec,, 1901.
27. Cal. Prof.2/1-10/9 Deals with Reports and
correspondences between
Political Officers and
the Consul at Calabar,
up to 1906.
28. Cal. Prof 6/1 Vol. 3/
Vol. 4 Cross River District.

29. CSO.1/13 Vol. 8 No.29 Gallway to F.O. 15/2/1898.
30. CSO.1/13 Vol.7 No.79 Despatches to F. O.
31. CSO.1/13 Vol.10 No.297 Despatches to F. O.
32. CSO.1/13 Vol. 12 No.78 Moor to C.O. 14/6/1899.
Enclo. extracts from
Roupel to Moor.
33. CSO.1/13 Vol.13 Nos.
123, 135, 203,215,227 Reports from Roupel to Moor.
34. Cal.Prof 5/7(pp.81-83) Treaty of 1852 meant to
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peoples on the Cross River.
35. CSO.1/13 Vol.34No.267 Cross River Division vide
CSO. 1/14 Vol. 34.
36. NAE (National Archives Enugu)
36. EP 10187A (CSE. 1/85/
5100) Intelligence Report on
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