

MAP 2.

MAP OF NIGERIA SHOWING Omu-EKITI  
IN THE NORTHEAST OF THE OLD WESTERN  
REGION.

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OMUO-EKITI: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF  
A PEASANT SOCIETY IN THE ONDO STATE OF NIGERIA.

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TO MY PARENTS.



ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with continuity and change in the social organisation of Omuro-Ekiti, a predominantly rural and peasant community in the North East of the old Western Region of Nigeria. It focuses on the dialectical relationship between kinship and power relations, and in particular on the way in which these have changed together over the last few decades as the society has been increasingly caught up in the market system.

Up to the early 1940s, in what I term the Traditional Period, the lineage was the basis of political organisation and action. The king was the ritual head of the whole Omuro-Ekiti community, and nominally the owner of all lands. But power was effectively held by chiefs, lineage heads and elders, and the natural resources of the community were shared between, and distributed through the corporate lineages. Kinship was the main principle organising the society, and in this situation marriage—in particular the selection of a spouse — was a key determinant of group solidarity and social distance.

Since the early 1940s, in the Modern period, there has been an increasing and dramatic change in power relations. The introduction of cocoa farming has disrupted lineage control of land tenure. Related to this, there has been a shift to modern forms of government, with elected local councils displacing lineage power. These developments are affected and limited by processes and relationships at the local community level. The significance of kinship and residential groupings has changed, in response to changes in the community's ties with the world outside. Cash cropping has led to increasing individualisation of economic interests; and the intervention of central government and political parties in the life of the community has intensified.

Much of the traditional culture and society still survive, though. For example, the ideology of patrilineal descent, and of lineage restrictions on marriage, is still respected. Ceremonial rituals connected with the various festivals are still observed. And these cultural forms determine the particular nature of Omuro-Ekiti responses to their changing circumstances.

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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When I was in the field, I was affiliated to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan, under the direction of the late Professor and Head of the Department, F.Olu Okediji. I also had advice and suggestions from Drs. Otite and Onogie, both of the Department. I should like to thank the authorities of the University of Ibadan for permission to use the library facilities and also the library of the Faculty of Social Sciences; Federal Ministry of Education Archives, Ibadan.

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## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

### a) THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

IN this thesis I discuss the processes of continuity and change in the social organisation of the Omuo-Ekiti, a peasant society in the Northeast of Ondo State in the old Western Region of Nigeria. The analysis will focus on the dialectical relation between kinship and marriage-hereafter referred to briefly as kinship-on the one hand, and politico-economic relationships-hereafter referred to as power relations-on the other.

For this purpose the time span is divided into two major phases; first that up to 1945, which I term Traditional Period, when there was very little change in the economic and political institutions of the society; secondly, the Modern Period from 1945 to 1974, when major developments have taken place. This broad division of the time dimension will make it possible to compare the past with the present and the present with the past.

Omuo-Ekiti is very much caught up in the development of the New Nigeria. Even so, within the state, Omuo-Ekiti people assert their own identity, and so re-interpret their cultural symbols from time to time in order to sustain their exclusiveness under a new distribution of power. For reasons that I should outline, I consider it appropriate to analyse this problem in terms of continuity and change in the Omuo-Ekiti people's social organisation patterns.

Although the community is a part of Ekiti Division, and also an integral part of the Yoruba kingdom, yet they place emphasis on a few distinct characteristics which they regard as making them unique in relation to the Yoruba-speaking people as a whole. That is, they exaggerate their distinctiveness. A similar point can be made of the relation between Omuo-Ekiti society and Ekiti Division, both of which claim a common descent from Ile-Ife. However, it is apparent that Ekiti as a people cannot claim to be homogeneous in every aspect of life be it cultural or in political administration. It all depends on the particular area of the society in which one is interested at a given time, and on the level of analytical abstraction. Such a study is.....

needed because little attention has been given to contemporary Ekiti communities, much less Omuo society in Nigeria. This thesis therefore can make a contribution to the modern ethnography of the area. Moreover, studies of Nigerian communities are still needed, not merely to highlight those cultural aspects which are regarded as peculiarly "Nigerian" or "African", but also to further knowledge in the more general field of rural sociology. For, the movement of population from the village to the town is rapidly continuing in Nigeria, as it is elsewhere in Africa. It has been estimated for example, that while the urban population growth rate is 6% per annum and the national rate 3%, that of the rural areas is only 2%. Analysis of the social change inherent in this process of demographic imbalance must be based on studies of rural communities as much as on urbanization.

Community studies are well established in social anthropology and some branches of sociology, indeed, it is in the area of small-scale studies that the convergence of the two disciplines has been most evident. In recent years sociologists have become participant observers in hospitals, schools and villages, and social anthropologists have studied social interaction in Western societies which have hitherto been the "preserve" of sociologists.

There are many reasons for this convergence, but perhaps the most important is the awareness of some sociologists that social theory should be "grounded" in everyday, "common-sense" world. The phenomenological sociologist thus becomes a participant observer and the traditional distinctions between sociology and social anthropology cease to be relevant. But even those scientists who retain a preference for "macrosociological" perspectives will accept that there are evident advantages in concentrating on a microcosm of society, where social processes can be examined in their everyday manifestations.

There have been two broad developments in sociological and anthropological studies in Africa. First, they looked at societies which are predominantly agricultural or pastoral, and in which the traditional social organisation is seen as subject to massive change. In recent years, however, attention has also been focused on African cities; and on the associated problems of urbanisation. There has,

however, been limited considerations of what I would regard as an intermediate type of community which is of growing importance, and which were identified as such by Middleton (1966:31) and Gutkind (1969). That is to say, a small town which is still based on agriculture, but which has numerous links with the city and wider-world. The ecological boundaries of such a community extend far beyond the individual town, thus raising numerous interesting questions of scale and of special network. This research is intended to be one of such town: Omuo-Ekiti which has an agricultural system with sectors both food and cash crops, and is near an urban town (Ikare), and yet shows a persistence of traditional, social, economic, political and religious institutions.

(b) Outline of main changes in Omuo-Ekiti society

Omuo-Ekiti has moved into this intermediate condition over the last generation or so. For purposes of this analysis, and in order to show the dynamic interplay of power relations with kinship that is involved, it is useful to look at this development by comparing Omuo-Ekiti society as it was in the 'traditional' period-up to the second world war-with the subsequent 'modern' form. This periodisation helps draw attention to the main structural forms present in Omuo-Ekiti society today.

Omuo-Ekiti, like most societies elsewhere, has been continuously changing since the society was founded. The reason for this is not difficult to explain. In the first place, the community is not static. On the other hand, it has been developing all the time in the spheres of economic, political, demographic and so on. At the same time changes of various kinds take place in the institutions that I have mentioned. There are also changes in the interpersonal relationships both within the lineages and among the people in the society. It is for this reason that I analyse the changes in the social structure of the community in terms of historical processes. This is to say that changes observed in the spheres of economic, political, religion, demographic, are explained in terms of periods in the life of the community.

During the Traditional Period the basis of political action was the king and the lineage. Economic production was on a co-operative basis and there was a good deal of interaction between the people in the course of their economic activities. There was hardly any change in the traditional norms, values and beliefs of the society while there was little change in power relations.

The second period - the Modern Period - sees a dramatic change in both economic and political conditions. The changes at the same time have effects on kinship relationships. For the first time cocoa as a cash crop had been introduced and economic interests and activities are being diversified from that of food farming. Besides, in Nigeria itself, modern political parties had been introduced as well as local government whose constituencies are no longer based on the lineage but in clearly defined geographical areas outside the lineage boundary. Moreover, the king, lineage elders and chiefs if they want to represent their people must now stand for election with the educated people at the same time.

During the Traditional Period lineages play important collective roles in the economic and political, as well as the kinship spheres, and lineage organisation provided the basis of political organisation in the community.

At the head of each lineage was a lineage head - (oloriebi) chosen by virtue of his age, seniority and personal ability at a meeting of both male and female lineage members. Certain lineages were invested with certain titles and where this occurred the oloriebi would bear the hereditary title. Within the compound the oloriebi was the acknowledged leader, the custodian of lineage land with full responsibility for its allocation, the person to whom all personal questions and problems were referred for advice and assistance, and the person who presided over all lineage meetings, rites and ceremonies. The administration of justice began at home in the compounds, where the oloriebi was also responsible for arbitrating and adjudicating in civil disputes between compound members.

In relation to the rest of the community the oloriebi was the lineage representative. If one of his lineage members conceived a grievance against another member or a dispute with a member of another lineage the oloriebi was called upon to negotiate with his

opposite number and he was responsible to the town authorities for the conduct of those in his compound.

When the village became bigger as a result of population growth lineage heads from adjacent compounds formed a ward council. One of their number was then selected as ward head to represent the interests of the ward. The ward head had similar functions in relation to the ward as the lineage head had vis-a-vis the compound. He did not interfere in the internal affairs of the compounds any more than the lineage head stepping into the matters of the domestic group unless they were specifically brought to his attention. The concern of the ward head was with questions or disputes involving members of two or more of the different compounds under his aegis.

The king's council which combined legislative, executive and judicial functions, comprised titleholders of various categories. It had been pointed out that some titles were vested in certain lineages and the oloriebi held it by virtue of his seniority. At the same time it is also relevant to point out that a few titles were awarded on merit for services. Others were important titles associated with religious organizations or cult groups. Such titles were also generally transmitted within particular lineages. Through the inter-relations of these titleholders a system was produced in which no single lineage group could dominate the village and the king could act only through the council. The title holders sat on the king's council as representatives of particular lineage groups. As such it was their duty to safeguard the interests of their own groups while considering those of the community as a whole. They often sought the advice of the oba in the government of the kingdom. The same titleholders who assisted in the administration of the town also sat in judicial capacity as the highest court. At the same time they acted as the intermediaries between the king and his people: they were the channel through which his decisions and instructions were promulgated and through which the ordinary person might voice his opinion on current affairs, transmit dues or oppose iniquitous palace policy.

Although the king was the head of the executive during this period, it is also relevant to point out that distribution of power sharing was, indeed, the norm between the king, the chiefs and the lineage heads and elders. This was a necessary prerequisite for the smooth running and administration of the community. If the king ignored the various categories that I have mentioned he would have virtually found it impossible to maintain law and order.

In fact, as I will try to argue, even though changes in power relations had begun to take place with the emergence of the colonial administration, traditional authority and government was still the norm. However, there was a difference in the strategy adopted by the colonial administrator. The traditional structure was retained but now the king was used as an intermediary between the colonial administrator and the people. In spite of the change in the status of the king and the way the community was now being run, the functions of the chiefs and lineage representatives continued to be relevant and the king did not ignore them despite the support the latter was enjoying as the instrument of the colonial administrator.

I also hope to show that corresponding changes have taken place at other levels. Thus, within the community, wards or quarters had lost some of their political cohesion under the impact of the establishment of elected local councils. Similar changes had modified the role of the descent-groups in community politics, although again, in terms of outward form, these continued to exist almost unchanged. On the other hand, new forms of political alliances have begun to emerge at the community level, more flexible in their structure and more heterogeneous in terms of their bases of recruitment.

The establishment of elected local council also coincided with the development of modern political parties. As it will be seen, the advent of party politics and the introduction of representation based on residential qualifications meant that the principle of representation had changed. The kin group was no longer the basis, as it was when each lineage was represented by the lineage-head.

In the economic spheres, Omuo-Ekiti, by tradition, has always been an agricultural society. Farming was principally aimed at self-sufficiency rather than market economy. During the early period land was plentiful. Each patrilineage was given land by the king who claimed ownership to all land. The lineage, once given the land, owned it in perpetuity. The agricultural land was then distributed among those lineage members who were old enough to own and able to cultivate land. Each member was allocated land in proportion to the number of members in his household. Members co-operated in farming activities. Members of the same age group combined and formed themselves into Egbe and worked on each others' farms in rotation. Farming system was by crop-rotation. A cultivated land was, after harvest, left to fallow for a period of four to five years after which the owner concerned would return to the land to cultivate it. The system was facilitated by the fact that land was plentiful. As ownership to it was permanent, when the farmer died the surviving children inherited his plots. Where there were no surviving children, ownership reverted to the deceased's siblings or any other male relatives alive. Women were excluded from owning land, but a man, if he wished, could give a portion of his land to the wife for temporary use. However, the man could claim the land from her at any time whether durable or short-term crops had been planted on it.

Omuo was a conglomerate of hamlets during the Traditional Period. Nevertheless, the entire community was regarded as a unit. For this purpose, it was the duty of each hamlet to collect its own tax but under the direction of the hamlet chief. The latter normally advised the lineage head who called a meeting of the households within the lineage and advised them how they should collect the tax. A lump sum was levied on each hamlet, in turn; the hamlet chief allocated a sum to each lineage, again, on the advice of lineage heads. The amount individual members paid in the lineage depended on the sum total for that lineage and the aggregate adult population of the lineage. On the whole, it was a fair and an egalitarian system of paying tax.

The introduction of cocoa farming to Omuo-Ekiti led to a rise in the wealth of the individual farmers. The wealthy farmers could afford to build better houses and were able to finance the education of their children. Acquisition of modern education had become a reality. Those who successfully completed their school education became, among others, teachers, professionals, businessmen, traders and political functionaries. A few richer families left Omuo-Ekiti for big industrial towns and cities such as Ibadan, Lagos, Kano and Kaduna where they engaged in trade, finance and politics. Their economic and political power, however, continued to rest mainly in the Omuo society. In return, they provided certain services for their supporters in the community, such as mediating between these and the central bureaucracy.

Side by side with economic and political development is the revival of what I call cultural awareness, not only within each lineage but throughout the community. The intrusion made on the lineage norms and beliefs by education and modern politics has been tremendous, but after decades of this intrusion the community, suddenly, has become aware to the damage already done to lineage beliefs and values and is now beginning to rectify the damage. This is seen in the emphasis placed on common participation in the lineage rituals and ceremonies pertaining to the ancestors and the lineage gods. Thus the resurrection of these norms is due to a combination of factors one of which is the loss of faith in the modern religion which the majority of the community think has failed to meet their spiritual needs and problems. A similar feeling is permeating throughout the country. For instance, the founding and organisation of FESTAC aims at cultural revival and a return to old traditions.

Towards the end of the 1950s the economic position of the peasants, who formed the bulk of the population in the society, improved, and this gave impetus to new developments in agriculture. There was now the gradual diversification of economic activities and interests. The activity had shifted, though not totally, from that of food farming to cocoa farming. A part of the food grown and produced on the farm was consumed in the cocoa farm. Thus while the bulk of agricultural production in the community was still for subsistence, an increasing proportion of produce was sent to the market where it found its way to other towns and villages. Traders also went to cities to purchase industrial goods and provisions for



sale in the community. The migrants from the community to the other towns and cities did not sever their links with their natal community. This was because of the importance attached to their home of origin to where they normally returned after retirement. Moreover, the relatively advanced means of communication between Omuo-Ekiti and the rest of the country enhanced a regular link between the migrants and their community.

(c) Organisation of the argument

The main body of the thesis is divided into two parts. The first part deals with power relations while the second part is about kinship organisation.

In chapter 1 I describe the nature of land tenure under the traditional system of production. When the community was first established the king acted as the land giver to the pioneers and founding lineages of the society, hence, all lands were owned in the name of the king. As time passed by more and more people arrived and, naturally, the population gradually expanded. Eventually the lineage structure became the dominant factor, this meant that allocation and distribution of land to individual lineage members became the responsibility of each lineage under its head. Moreover, there was full economic co-operation and activity between the people during this period. The system of agriculture was by crop rotation. Although an individual's rights in land was permanent during the traditional period, yet no member was allowed to alienate his portion without the approbation of the lineage acting together as a corporate group.

The chapter also examines the development of market economy under modern conditions. The economic transformation within the society followed the introduction of cocoa crop to the community in the beginning of the 1940s. The economic innovation marked a change in the attitude of the individual from the co-operative participation to individual activity.

There is also a decline in the power of the lineage authority. Nevertheless, the change is not complete. In fact, there is much continuity and overlap between the traditional and modern methods. For example, the lineage is still the sole distributor of land and the agricultural system is still by crop rotation as under traditional methods.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Traditional power structure. The king (Oba), is described as the head of the executive council. Under him were the chiefs, lineage heads and elders and the various associations, e.g. egbe and ogboni, who influenced and participated in the political administration of the community. Although I have described him as a powerful being, on the other hand, he reigned at the pleasure of the masses and the various categories that I have mentioned above.

Under modern conditions and with the introduction of local government, the emergence of political parties plus universal adult suffrage, marks a major transfer of power from the lineage to the elected bodies. This means that the power of the king as well as the lineage has become circumvented. Under the modern system political parties have adopted a constitution based on democratic political theory. Despite the change, there is a degree of continuity of the traditional values in the community, for instance, the king is still the president of the local council and the chiefs help in the community's day-to-day affairs.

An analysis of the composition of kinship groups is traced in chapter 3 which begins the second part of the thesis. It shows the traditional groups and relationships. The smallest household unit comprised a man, his wives and children.

Chapter 4 is concerned with Traditional Marriage patterns. Under this system marriage was allowed among clan members as opposed to lineage members, the latter being regarded as closely related through a common ancestor, marriage  
/was therefore not encouraged

among members of the same lineage on the grounds of 'blood relationship'. Under this Traditional system it was the normal practice for parents to choose a partner for their son or daughter because it was thought by the parents that they were in a position to choose future partners from what they then regarded as "good homes". Marriage formed an alliance between two unrelated lineages. Such an alliance was always a political one in the sense that the affairs of both lineages became a joint concern of all those involved. Every marriage was characterised by ceremonials in which all members of the lineages concerned participated. The ceremonials were symbolic, so was the bridewealth, which must be paid before marriage took place. It legalised and cemented the union between the couple just as it validated the political alliance between the lineages concerned.

Chapter 5 describes the various forms of relationships in the community. Ideologically, relationship through agnatic descent is more important and receives more emphasis, yet other forms of relationships, namely, non-agnatic and matrilineal are not ignored. In fact, I attempt to show that the difference between the former and the latter is only in the idiom attached to the agnatic relationship and because of the principles governing inheritance. I also demonstrate the importance of matrilineal relationships particularly in the use of resources where the matrilineal side are at an advantage over the agnatic relationship. Moreover, the new economy has effect on the power and influence of the lineage. In the first place, because of individual rather than group participation in economic activities it enhances mobility of individual members and renders the lineage less cohesive as a corporate body. Secondly, because the lineage solidarity is weakened, its rules are easily flouted by the young, ambitious and enterprising members in the community.

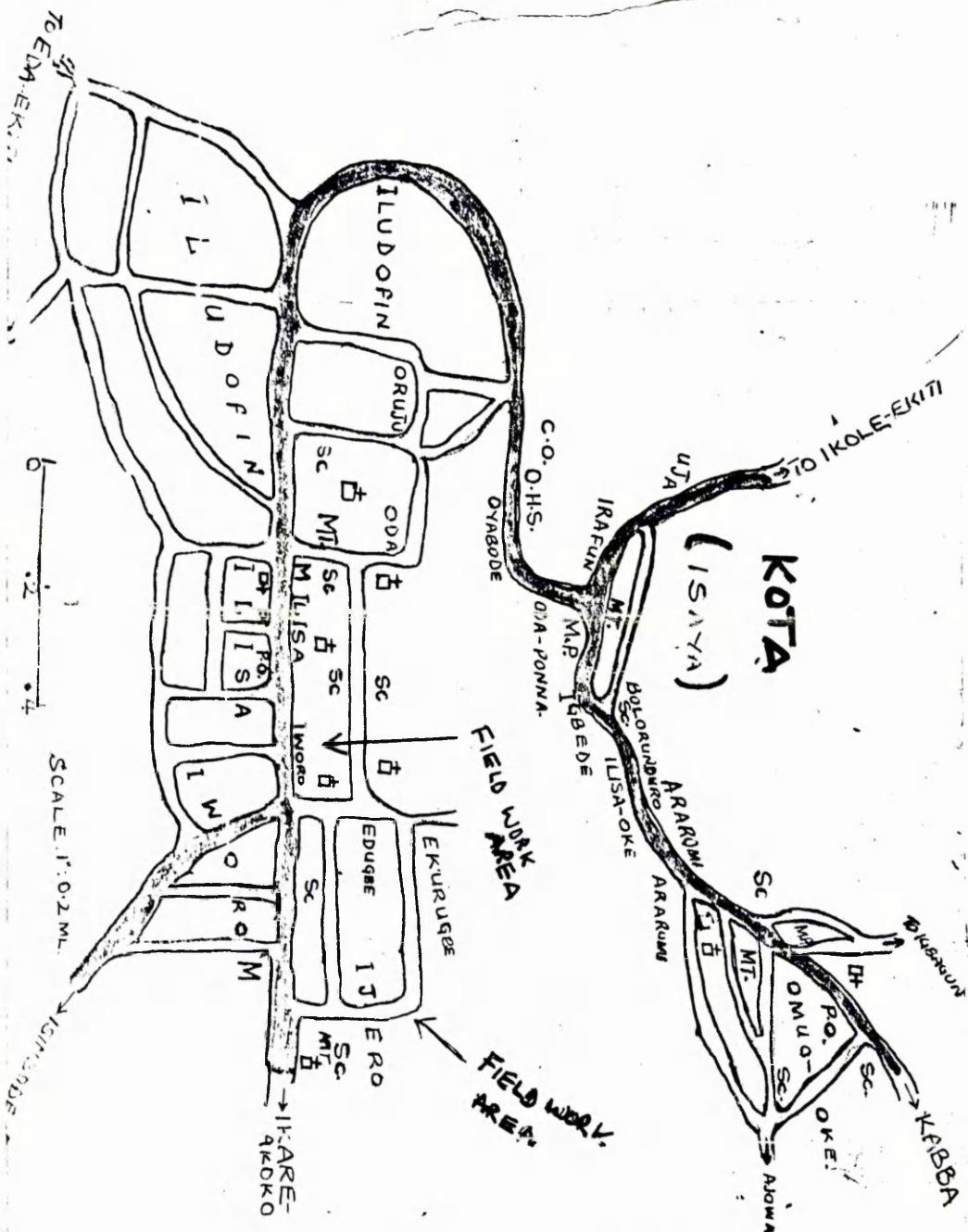
In Chapter 6 I discuss the New Marriage Patterns. Under modern conditions men and women choose their life partners although parents can and still <sup>will</sup> veto their children's choice if the children's choice does not have the approval of their parents. Marriage between the people of two unrelated lineages has a symbolic and political significance. It is an alliance between the lineages concerned. Despite the changes in the manner of choosing a spouse, the payment of bridewealth is still of symbolic importance. Where it is unpaid it is assumed that no marriage has, in fact, taken place.

Divorce was apparently infrequent and difficult to obtain under the traditional system, because it was only allowed for flagrant breach of the husband's obligations to his wife. Even if it is true that divorce was difficult to obtain and rare in the past, there is reason to believe that since the turn of the century significant changes have taken place, due largely to the curtailment of the power of the traditional authority which used to enforce the sexual morality of the citizens. Now divorce is comparatively common. I explain the processes underlying the shift from infrequent to frequent divorce.

The Conclusions contain a summary of the discussion, looking in particular at the interrelationship of changes in economic and political spheres-in the structure of power-with those in kinship organisation.

MAP ONE

MAP OF CHUO-KITI TOWN.



KEY

- CHURCHES.  
MOSQUES.  
SCHOOLS.  
PALACE.  
MATERNITY AND CHILD  
WELFARE CENTRE.  
MARKETS.  
TARRED ROAD  
UNTARRED ROAD  
O.H.S.. DMUO HIGH SCHOOL  
C.O ... COUNCIL OFFES  
P.O ... POST OFFICE  
M.P. .... MOTOR PARK

(d) Note on field-work undertaken

Very little fieldwork material has been published which relates to Ekiti, let alone Omuo. The nearest any scholar has attempted ~~the~~ study of the Ekiti society is P.C. Lloyd in his Yoruba Land Law (1962). Even there, Lloyd selected only one urban town in the Ekiti Division for his study, namely, Ado-Ekiti. The result is that a student who aspires to study any part of Ekiti (apart from Ado-Ekiti) must start from scratch. This in itself is exciting and challenging provided the society to be studied is small and compact as this usually enhances a more thorough study of the community.

Although Omuo is a part of Ekiti society just as it is a composite unit of the Yoruba land, yet, each area differs markedly in certain aspects: namely, in the political constitutions and kinship structures. It is by detailed studies of the different groups that the similarities and differences between them can be established. This present study, which aims to fill this ethnographic gap to some degree, is based on an intensive study carried out in two of the six quarters into which the community is divided- namely, Ijero and Iworo (see Map 1)-during the academic year 1973 to 1974, and more briefly again in 1976.

Malinowski's insistence upon regarding every element of culture as relevant to the anthropologist's view of society, coupled with Radcliffe-Brown's postulate that a society must be regarded as an integrated whole, the function of each part being to contribute to the integration of the whole have often been interpreted to mean that the field worker must be able to encompass every aspect of a whole society by means of first-hand observation. This is more or less feasible in a rather small-scale societies where the variations in the pattern of social life were small over the whole population. Omuo-Ekiti, incidentally, fits this characteristic.

The population of the areas covered for intensive study(4,260) was of such a size as to permit a thorough study of family structure. These areas were not chosen according to rigorous sampling techniques, and therefore, strictly speaking, the conclusions drawn from the study could not be generalised to other towns and villages in Ekiti Division. However, there is nothing to suggest that the conclusions reached from the Omuo-Ekiti study would differ significantly from most of Ekiti towns and villages.

The main centre of field work was Omuo-Ekiti but visits were made to other areas in search of documentary material. For example, I visited the then Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, the Secretariat Ibadan; Local Government Council Office, Ado-Ekiti; Northern Divisional Council Office, Ikole-Ekiti and the University of Ife, Ife-Ife.

Omuo-Ekiti was chosen as a suitable community for the study for the following reasons. Firstly, it appears to be sufficiently typical and also it is a fairly homogeneous small face-to-face society in terms of occupational and cultural similarities. Secondly, I have had a prior knowledge of the area which gave me an added certain advantage and made my work in the field much easier than perhaps it would have been had I been a foreign investigator. Finally, the community had not, before then, been subjected to any kind of study whatsoever.

There was no attempt to extend the study further afield outside Omuo-Ekiti, the aim of which would have been to obtain data for comparative analysis. To have undertaken a major work such as this would have meant employing paid assistants to do the interviews. It is hoped that further work on Omuo-Ekiti would be able to undertake this important aspect of the research. Methodologically, however, there is something to be said in favour of limiting such a study to a single community, in which certain values, at least, are shared. The investigator is thus free to explore varying ways in which a given sort of social change is seen by different individuals to impinge upon the more or less commonly shared values within the community.

The methods I used to obtain and record data depended very much on the situation of the moment, but note book, pencil and tape recorder were my main tools. The questionnaires used for the three secondary schools towards the end of 1974 fieldwork were designed to include open-ended poll-typed questions. In addition, free or informally directed interviews, friendly discussions on topics of interest, collection of both life and genealogical histories, participation in most of the events taking place, namely, the series of annual and periodical festivals, became the principal methods used. The methods employed could be described as a combination of qualitative and quantitative ones (cf. Fortes, 1949, Oppong, 1974:15).



TABLE 1 - Populations of some Akoko towns including Omuo-Ekiti as of April 1934.

Source: Federal Ministry of Education National Archives, Ibadan.

Town	Adult Males	Adult Females	Children	Total
Oka	3743	3593	4800	12136
Ikare	4472	5572	7831	17575
Ogbagi	1453	1730	2565	5748
Ishua	3041	3385	3921	10447
Ikaram	1539	1672	2570	5781
OMUO-EKITI	2032	1151	1797	4980
Arigidi	2932	2649	4273	9854
Irun	819	861	1099	2779
Total	20031	20313	28856	69200

P A R T O N E

POWER STRUCTURE

CHAPTER 1I The Traditional Landholding Lineagea) Introduction

The cognatic lineage is the backbone of traditional Omuro-Ekiti society. Much of this society still survives, but the system as a whole does not. In the forthcoming account, I shall use the present tense when referring to elements which still survive, but use the past tense when dealing with those inter-relationships, peculiar to the traditional period, which are no longer evident.

Omuro-Ekiti myths suggest that all lands are owned by the king. During the Traditional Period land was allocated by the king to each domestic unit according to their needs. But it was not unusual to find people wandering round in order to cultivate land where they found it convenient for them to do so. Nevertheless, as time went by the membership in each household grew and the community's population expanded. Land became scarce and the method for distributing it was modified. The main development was a move towards allocation of land on a lineage rather than a household basis. It did not, however, mean the complete abolition of land allocation to households, but the lineage now assumed a supreme importance in land owning and allocation.

In spite of the modification in the land allocation system it was customary during the Traditional Period for foreigners who wanted to settle in the community to beg for land from the king. This practice, at that period still confirmed with the myths that the king owned everything including the people themselves plus the land they occupied.

The main burden of organisation and political action had however now shifted to the lineage. Inevitably, land, as a natural resource, became more important and interests in it were more guarded than before. It also meant that those areas where individuals could cultivate land for farming were now clearly demarcated. This led to the arrangement and organisation of land into the following categories.

b) Landholding

During the Traditional Period there were three types of tenure by which land might be held in the community. The organisation of land into these categories was prompted by political motive in the community whose main aim was to create law and order in the community's affairs, as a necessary precondition for political and economic stability.

The division of land then might be classified as follows: the first was the family land, second the lineage land and thirdly the category that could be termed the public land.

In the case of family land, every domestic unit, led by its head, bale, owned a particular piece of land. It was normally inherited from father to son or sons. Subject to the availability and the quantity of land unused, the bale's role was to divide the land into portions on the basis of the total number of members in the domestic unit, and according to their needs.

This is one of the primary functions of the bale in relation to land. The bale of each domestic unit was entitled to the enjoyment of sufficient land, within the limits imposed by its availability, for the support of his households. Continued use was guaranteed by good behaviour, but there was rarely an instance when a member or members were dispossessed of their shares. Once a man had farmed the land, he had the right to return to it after its fallow period. There was hardly any opportunity for friction as far as the family land was concerned and disputes between superior and inferior were rare in this kind of land tenure since effective occupation was the main sanction of possession. Therefore land once given was never taken back, even if it was not being utilised at the particular time, provided there were marks of occupation. Such land was by right inherited from the previous holder. No one outside the domestic unit could make use of or alienate the land except with the prior approbation of the bale. It must be added, however, that the right to manage the family property - in this case land - and to alienate it, resided in the group acting corporately and not in individual members. Therefore, access to land and rights to its occupation and use of the family land for the purposes of farming, derived from membership of certain families

with the same descent line or ancestor. An individual who acquired land by inheritance enjoyed certain rights over it, that is, including the right to lease the land to another person, to the free and uninterrupted use of such land, to build a house and cultivate it for food production purposes.

However, nominal ownership did not give an individual exclusive rights to land with complete powers of alienation. Reversionary rights of ownership fell to the maximal family head (bale). Usufruct, as has been explained, was invested in the domestic group - the family - and inheritance of rights of occupation was within the group. Today, when the bale dies the land is inherited by his own children, this is in contrast to the old practice where by a younger sibling would have inherited the land. Preference was for male heirs, but a woman was not barred from the inheritance of usufructory rights. A woman might be the owner of a certain piece of land in the sense that she had the right to cultivate it and she might pass on the right to her children, although by birth they were members of another lineage, that of their father. As will be shown in a later chapter, more and more people are resorting to this type of land use in the community because their own lineage does not have adequate land to meet the demands of the individuals concerned, hence, the resort to the use of land on the matrilinear side.

The transfer of rights to the use of land from parent to daughter does not, however, impair the ultimate rights of the lineage to the land. And in the final analysis, it is noteworthy that if a woman had been acquired, the person to whom she fell did not hereby acquire the property she may have had, she still retained exclusive control of that. The husband did not have the right to take over even a part of the land belonging to a wife, or to use it without her permission.

The bale conducted any dealings in family land. If there was a court case involving family land, he, as the head of the family, or someone in the family representing him if he was not available, appeared to defend the family interests. Everything was done in his name, he protected the interests of the family, he also expected the family members to solidify their support behind him. No family

land could be utilized as such without the formal agreement of all family members. If a stranger (alejo) was accepted as a family member - but usually as a lineage member - use of land might be granted to him for life and to his heirs. This might occur, for instance, when an alejo married a daughter of the lineage and took up residence in the lineage compound.

As the land is associated with a particular group - be it family or lineage - all members have an interest in it. The land belongs not only to living members but also to dead members - the ancestors - whose aid is essential for the well-being and prosperity of the family or lineage. It is a link between them and their living descendants, and it is from them that the living have inherited the right to use the land. In the same way the present occupants are trustees for all future generations. There is therefore a ritual attitude towards the land and this religious aspect may suggest a reason for the reluctance to alienate it.

#### c) Land Use

The proportion of family land was indeed very small in relation to the amount of land held in the name of the various lineages that constituted village society. Although it was important for the domestic group to have a land distinct from that of the lineage, the greater proportion of land was traditionally held by the lineage rather than by the individuals. Everyone within a lineage has a common ancestor with others in the same lineage, and each lineage takes its descent from an immigrant founder who had been given the land by the Oba. The lineage land was a territorial unit whose boundary with that of another lineage was distinctly marked. The land, usually, was scattered over different areas. It was owned corporately by the lineage.

It is the usual practice for a farmer to cultivate several plots of land at the same time in different places. This means that he will make use of the family land in the first place and will resort to the use of the lineage land only if the former is not adequate for his needs. No one may be refused the use of lineage land even though he might have a large portion of family land. But lineage land is not unlimited!

The amount of land owned by different lineages varied. For instance, I was told that Ijero quarter is the most deprived of land in the entire six quarters. On the other hand, Ijero people attribute the land shortage to the arbitrary boundary fixtures between them and Oyin - a small town of about 5,000 people 4 miles to the South of the Omuo town - by the then District Officer for Akoko Province during the colonial era. As a result, each year Ijero farmers beg for land from other lineages in the town and also from the adjacent towns and villages. The Ijero people, in turn, pay an annual contribution in terms of cash, palm wine and Kola nuts to the owners of the land for its use. This payment is called Isakole. It is an acknowledgment that the land does not belong to the renter. The fee varies from one area to another just as from one person to another, but it depends on the relationship established between the owner and the person renting the land. Occupation of the land lasts until all the crops have been harvested when the land reverts to the person or lineage originally owning it.

Other quarters seem to be more fortunate. For instance, Iworo, Illisa, Illudofin and Kota are endowed with plenty of land. In these places, it is not unusual for a lineage and its segment to own several acres of land in several places.

A lineage owns its land in perpetuity and no other persons may deprive the lineage of its land. A lineage acts corporately to defend its rights when and if a land dispute arises.

A lineage may alienate its land to (alejo) strangers in the customary manner; the alejo, on the other hand, offer presents to the lineage in addition to the annual payment of Isakole. However, as I have stressed in the introduction, there are very few alejo in the community and most of the few are found at Omuo-Oke section of the town. The alejo cannot, under any circumstances, sell the land because the property is inalienable. They may enjoy the benefits of reaping the palm kernels but in all cases the alejo are obliged to offer a tin of palm oil to the oloriebi in appreciation of the enjoyment of land rights.

The oloriebi exercises his powers as the representative of his lineage to ensure that all members within the lineage have enough land before it is rented to an outside interest. The land may not,

at any given period, be farmed by the lineage as a whole, this is because there is the family land as well.

#### Public Land

There is very little reserved land as such at Omuo-Ekiti because land is so scarce. The Oba has the overall power over the public land. He is in a position to allot a part of the land to whosoever demands it. An individual who is allowed the use of a part of public land is not allowed to plant durable crops such as kda trees or cocoa on it. The reason given for this is that the land may be called back at short notice. The person may however plant short term crops such as yams, cassava, maize and beans. These crops take at most six months to one year to germinate and be ready for harvesting except cassava which takes anything from eighteen months to two years before it is ready to be reaped.

Most of the public land is within the surrounding of the community. A large area of the land was declared public land in 1930 by the late Oba Adeyemo. This was a prelude to the re-unification of the various quarters and settlements of Omuo-Ekiti in 1938. Undoubtedly, land so commuted initially belonged to some families or lineages. The Oba's authority to requisition the land was not challenged. In all cases, compensation was paid to the original owner or owners.

The Oba's Afin is situated in one of such public lands in the town today. It extends over ten acres of land in the centre of Illisa. It is bounded by a mud wall. The traditional palace building consists of a large open courtyard; on the right of the building is a small hall which seats about thirty people at a time, this is where the Oba receives visitors and regularly holds small-sized meetings as well. The series of meetings I had with the Oba during the field-work took place in this hall. There are other rooms designed for ceremonial occasions and in particular where the Oba receives his chiefs for very important discussions. The fact that the Oba has several wives and children - most of whom live in the palace - seems to warrant the necessity for a large number of rooms.



Outside the gate, lying between the palace wall and the main road, are the customary court, the maternity centre the dispensary, and the Local Authority (LA) primary school buildings. The police station plus one of two motor parks are situated in Kota. The other motor park is in Omuro-Oke. All these establishments are on public lands. The present site on which the High School is situated was purchased from its owner in 1968; this was also true of the land designated for the new market in Kota part of the community. Such lands once acquired were declared public property. The original owners were usually compensated, a way of discouraging them to make any claims on the land; any durable crops or trees e.g. bananas and palm trees, were deemed to be public property.

It is observed that there is a correlation between the natural vegetation, the climatic conditions and the crops grown by the farmers in the community. The community could also be classified within the category of the root crops region of the South of Nigeria. Here rainfall was abundant during the wet season and crops that required much rainfall were grown for domestic consumption. On the other hand, palm produce, kola nuts and tea were the major crops.

#### a) Traditional Farming System

There was a common system of farming throughout the land. Farmers practised the common African system of rotating fallow, under which crops were grown on the same land for a few years, then the new land was cleared and the process started again. Towards the end of the last century land shortage had become a problem to the extent that there were no virgin forests available but only secondary growth in the bush.

Most farmers went to their farms and returned each day to the community. The exception was a few farmers who owned farms several miles away and lived on the farm in grasshuts for a few days during the busy seasons. Otherwise, the farming land was situated roughly within a few miles radius of the community, most of it being in an arc from the West to the North-East of the town.

Farming activities were spread throughout the year as dictated by the climatic conditions of wet and dry seasons. As it is today, the rainy season began in late March to early April and continued 'till the end of September and sometimes to the beginning of October.

The dry spell started in middle to late October and dragged on to the beginning to middle March. During the dry season there might be two or three sporadic rainfalls if the farmers were lucky, otherwise it was dry until the rainy season commenced. Most of the land for crop plantation was semi-fertile and only in some places did one see what looked like a mixture of sandy and clay soil; the latter type of soil was more suitable for the growing of ground nuts.

The heaviest farm work was that of clearing the bush, which took from three to four weeks. Towards the end of the dry season (late September - early October) farmers began to clear the land for the new crop. Usually, the new land had been left fallow from four to five years before cultivation.

Most farmers owned land either on the family or lineage land. It was not unusual for a single farmer to own plots of both family and lineage land, although priority was given to family land over lineage land. The number of strips a farmer owned depended on the availability of suitable land for cultivation (See section on land tenure). Some lineages had more cultivable land than others, but land shortage was a general problem all over the community. Some Omuo farmers went to Oyin - a nearby town of about 5,000 people - to beg for land. In the past the two communities had had disputes over land. The present boundary between Omuo and Oyin was readjusted in the 1930's following the dispute. The readjustment seemed to favour Oyin which had more gross land acreage in proportion to its population. There was no plan to re-open the boundary question for the moment, and both sides, meantime, seem to accept the status quo, although the boundary readjustment in favour of Oyin was given as one of the reasons for Omuo's land shortage.

Bush is cleared by a sharp cutlass, specially made for this purpose. All vegetation, with the exception of large trees, e.g., Iroko, Mahogany and Palm trees are cut down. A few saplings are saved for later use as vine poles (edo) for the yams. The farmer together with his male children might do the clearing if the latter were not already attending school. The wives accompanied their husbands to the farms in order to prepare and cook food for them.

Where the farmer was unable to do the clearing himself, he employed the services of his in-laws to help him. Where the

in-laws were not available, the farmer might resort to employing a wage labourer; but to get wage labourers in the community today is more problematic than is usually imagined. Wage labourers occasionally came from Ikare, Ishua and Arigidi. Omuo-Ekiti people regard working on another man's land for money as a kind of serfdom. The situation is further aggravated as everybody is so busy doing the same kind of work at the same season that no one seems to have time to help his neighbours.

An old woman of about seventy years of age explained to me that she had to cut the bush of her farm every year since she lost her husband and the only male child she had; this was because she was unable to find a wage labourer who would help her to do the work. Where the services of a wage labourer are employed, he is hired and paid on a daily basis with lunch and evening meals guaranteed. The daily rate (1974) was ₦2 but it can vary.

Another form of institutional arrangement is that of communal help. This is where a company of young men hire out their services. This is done on 'by turn labour', whereby individual households work on each others farms in turn. Communal help is organised by the Egbe, it is 'free', but the farmer is required to feed everyone who comes to his aid.

The piled up bush is burnt as soon as it is dry, this may take one to two weeks, which means the end of October or beginning of November. Plenty of precautions are taken during the burning process in order not to burn valuable trees such as palm and Iroko by mistake, moreover, the fire may spread to another neighbour's land, causing untold damage. For this reason, the piled up bush is arranged at strategic points. This is at the peak of the dry season when the leaves, the grass and anything dry can be sensitive and highly inflammable.

The farmer therefore stands by while burning the bush to see the direction in which the fire is going. He acts like the fire brigade. Many farmers remembered quite vividly the series of fire accidents that have occurred in their life time. These accidents occurred and still occur for one reason or another. The wind might be too strong while the burning is going on; this is the quickest way in which a fire could spread to where a farmer does not plan or foresee.

Not all of the whole pile is burnt, some of it, particularly the tender parts, are used when dry as manure to fertilise and enrich the soil. I was able to observe a farmer in mid-November, (1973), during the burning of the pile. I felt that a lot of the richness in the soil is destroyed in the process of burning. While the farmer friend did not disagree with this conclusion, at the same time he pointed out that the mode of farming in Omuo and Ekiti in general did not make things easy for the ordinary farmer who would like to use the pile up for manure purposes. The method of farming here is full of hardships and difficulties. Modern techniques are still a long way off. In the first place a farmer would need initial capital to buy the modern tools, this necessarily means many years of saving which is not easy for a farmer with no access to resources that will bring in some appreciable income. Moreover, their method may look 'primitive' to a foreigner who is not used to the rudimentary system of agriculture as is practised in Ekiti. Their effort is not without success if we can measure success in terms of the amount derived from their crops during harvest time.

The next stage in the process of preparing the new land for crop farming is the making of heaps (mounds). This lasts from late November to January, and in 1974 some farmers had not completed this process by the end of February. There were reasons for this late activity. One of the reasons given by some of the farmers I talked to was that between November and January they expected a period of one or two rainfalls. If it rained, this would naturally soften the soil and therefore make it easy for the farmer to till. Secondly, as more and more time was spent on the cocoa sector, a farmer who was working single handed was not certain to work to the time-table.

A wide hoe called Oko is used for tilling the soil. Local blacksmiths, using old lorry springs, make the hoe as well as other tools, e.g. cutlasses. Some farmers who are unable to get the tools made locally buy imported ones, which in many cases have larger blades, shorter handles and are slightly more durable than the locally produced ones. Local cutlasses come in different sizes for men, women and children, and have at the end of the blade a hook

which is used for cutting creepers on the path and in the fields. Axes are little used except when there is a tree to be uprooted. When clearing the bush, farmers use a pole about six feet long, sometimes with a forked end, which is useful for breaking down high branches or piling up the bush for burning. It is made on the spot. The hoe as a tool for tilling the soil is primitive in that it takes so much of the farmer's energy in the course of the operation.

The heaps or mounds are of two types, the small and the big one. The small one is called ewero (lit. small), this is where the late yams are planted. The big mound is called akuro (lit. that part of the soil that is waterlogged rendering it soft), it is in this that the early yams are planted. Akuro is much easier to till because it often contains water, unlike ewero. Farmers make sure that their akuro is cultivated by the end of December or before, this is to ensure that the yams would be ready by the time the New Yam Festival takes place in the first week of July. The yams in ewero will not be harvested till late September or early October.

Yam seeds (Alagbe) planted in akuro are much bigger than those planted in ewero. In fact, the sizes of the yam seeds go with the sizes of the mounds, the results come out in the same way when the yams are ready for harvest. Farmers give yams different names, they know the type most suitable for pounding and the type to be eaten without being pounded.

Farms vary in size. Some of the ones I measured range from three to six acres, the size appearing to depend on wealth, availability of land and also availability of labour. The smallest ones were those of old women who had no one to help them. The largest belonged to men who could command some labour to help them and who worked hard themselves. There is prestige in farming a large acreage of land just as there is in owning several wives. Women by tradition loved to marry men who worked hard and owned plenty of land, thus ensuring that they would be well fed if and when they married such men. A man with a small piece of land was regarded as lazy and a woman who already knew all about him would hesitate to marry him.

The shape of each farm varies, some being rectangular, but mostly they are irregular, according to terrain and topography. As well as quantitative differences there are qualitative ones in the farms, according to the nature of the soil, some of which is stony, and the extent of the slope, though even 40 degree slopes do not deter

persistent farmers, and surprisingly steep farms seem to escape soil erosion. Some farms which were particularly sought after were in the fertile valleys of Aginju near the streams, for these areas produced the earliest maize and gave good yields.

Time was very crucial to the farmers' activities. Seasons dictated time to them in this society, this again directed their activities in a particular direction.

To meet the Yam Festival deadline in the first week of July (July 7th is declared for this purpose throughout Omuo-Ekiti), the farmer must begin to plant yam seeds towards the end of November, or at the latest, the beginning to the middle of December. Yam seed takes about six months to grow into a full yam. Lack of rain hinders its proper growth.

The alagbe is prepared between July and August. Old yams are dug out of the soil, cut into sizeable pieces and buried in the soil again till the planting of the yams in the new farm. There is a standard method of planting yam seed. A hoe is used to make a hole three to four inches deep on top of the mound, then the alagbe is placed in a sloping position in the hole, covered with a layer of earth. To protect it from the heat of the sun, some dry leaves or grass are placed on top of each mound and fastened with a couple of short sticks on each side of the leaves. This is called ipoye. The idea is to prevent the leaves from being blown off by a strong wind. Thus the yam seed is protected until it sends out its first shoot.

A similar procedure is adopted in the case of ewero, although there is no time fixed for planting alagbe on the small sized mounds provided this is done by April of the year. Farmers sometimes adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards ewero cultivation in contrast to Akuro. But they realise that ewero cultivation is just as important since the farmers look to this sector for food once the akuro food had been exhausted.

From now until the New Yam Festival the farm is regularly weeded both by hand and with the hoe. About the second month the yam begins to bring out its first leaves and its stalk gets longer and longer. At this time vine-poles (edo) are used for the yams. The poles vary in size. Some may reach ten feet high. The stronger and longer the pole the better it is for the yam. A slender pole might be unable to carry the weight of the yam when all its leaves and stems are out.

TABLE 2 Farming Calendar (Omuo-Ekiti) 1974

<u>Month</u>	<u>Average Rainfall (Inches)</u>	<u>Farming</u>	<u>Other</u>
September	4.0	Harvest of beans	Ibere Awe.
October	2.6	Clearing of land for new crop	Ogun festival. Republic Day (October 1st) Ituna Awe
November	Nil	Making mounds - both Akuro and Ewero. Weeding maize farm	Harvest Thanksgiving Period for Christians.
December	Nil	Cocoa season, harvest and drying the beans	Odun Ileya Festival (Modern). Christmas.
Janaury	Nil	Planting new yam seeds especially in Akuro and sometimes in Ewero as well	---
February	0.8	Planting new yam seeds in Ewero; sowing early maize, Ipoye.	Odun Ikeregún
March	2.2	Installing vine-poles. Some weeding	Ayan Festival Easter.
April	5.6	Weeding and hoeing in Food farm.	---
May	6.8	Weeding and hoeing in Food farm.	---
June	9.6	Weeding and clearing in cocoa plantation	Egungun Igbede Festival
July	8.4	New Yam Festival (July 7) throughout the community.	Egungun Ipo and Epa Festival.
August	6.8	Sowing late maize	Egungun Oja Festival. Asekuro.

Source: Based on intensive interview and field work material.

Farming was effectively organised on a six day week. The church attendants who observed Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest did not go to the farm on that day. The working hours varied greatly according to the season of the year, the age and ability of the farmer and the number of helpers. For the period from November to April, which was relatively busy, a fairly common pattern was for the farmer, with or without others, to leave very early in the morning, say, 6-6 30 a.m. walk for fortyfive minutes to an hour to the farm, worked 'till midday then have a lunch of roasted yam, maize and garden egg. Most farmers return home early these days, around one o'clock in the afternoon. A couple of decades ago, farmers worked 'till about 3 p.m. before returning home.

It was not common to see a man and his wife farming together. If they did, the farmer may clear the bush, burn it and prepared and harvested the yams, whilst the wife may plant, weed in some cases, and harvested the maize, cassava and coco yam. This arrangement was rarely followed, partly because husband and wife rarely farmed together. However, it was not unusual to see a wife owning her own farm separately from that of her husband. This was more often so where the husband neglected to feed his wife and the children of the union.

Food crop farming in Omuro-Ekiti is mixed in the sense that it invariably contains the following crops: Yam, Beans, Coco Yams, Cassava and Maize, which are the five principal crops. Yams, known as isu generically, come in many varieties, the three main ones being white yams (isu funfun), water yams (ewura) and yellow yams (ole), Ewura are easy to grow, produce good yields and are plentiful and cheap, but are considered tasteless, and the other two varieties, which require more care, are preferred.

Coco yams grow almost everywhere, even wild in many places, and are easy to grow, taking twelve to eighteen months to mature. The coco yams' tender leaves like those of the cassava, are often used as a kind of spinach in stews. Cassava, also taking twelve to eighteen months to mature is planted at the same time as maize, between February and March, soon after the yams and preferably before the rain commences; if planted too early, birds and insects eat the maize seed, and the sun dries out the cassava sticks.



Usually the previous year's cassava is harvested at the same time as the new planting: after digging up the tubers, farmers cut off twelve inch lengths of cassava stalks and simply push them back into the ground at an angle of 45 degrees.

Other crops include plantain and bananas, although most farmers prefer to have a separate farm for these two crops. Normally, the farmers hate to see the yam crops overshadowed by leafy crops such as bananas and plantains, hence they are grown on separate grounds, depending on how much land is available.

There was no sheep farming as such at Omuro-Ekiti, but most households had a few goats, sheep, pigs, dogs and chickens. They all fell within the category of domestic animals since they were looked after at home.

Cattle are brought into the town regularly from the North of Nigeria for slaughter. A few households also have ducks, turkeys and pigeons. Beef meat is very expensive and only a few people could afford to buy it for food. The high cost of beef was due to the drought situation in Northern Nigeria where the cattle are reared and from where the local butchers buy them.

Chickens, goats and sheep are generally eaten on festival and important holidays such as New Yam, Ayan, Easter and Egungun Epa. Otherwise the main source of protein is the dried fish sold in the market and hawked about by young girls and women at prices from 10 Kobo, thus ensuring that most people could afford them. Where there are plenty of goats and sheep within a particular household, one of the animals could be sold in order to bring in extra cash and this was one of the sources of income. The current price (1974) of a goat was 30N and some sheep, if big enough could fetch as much as 40N. The prices of course fluctuate depending on the market supply and demand. Pigs are much more expensive. A fat one could sell for about 50N. They are sold, if to local buyers, during a funeral ceremony, or any of the many festivals that take place during the year. Otherwise, sellers take them to the markets in the adjacent towns, e.g. Oke-Agbe, Ikare or Ikole where they could guarantee a good price.

Those farmers who are hunters always carry their guns with them to the farm. Animals or small birds could be shot for food although animals are getting scarcer in the bush. In the period of plenty most people relied on bush meat for their main meals. Then it was

not only cheaper but readily accessible to most people. Mushrooms grow naturally in the forest beginning in March to coincide with the rainy season. There are several edible varieties of mushroom, but two types are mainly eaten, the big, umbrella-like one called ogogo and the button-type variety simply known as osusu. Women and children who want to make sure that they get some go out to the forest very early in the morning. Mushrooms are available everyday during their season.

As it has been seen landholding and most activities centred around the lineage. After unification of the various hamlets in 1938 the community was, for tax collection purposes, divided into five wards. They were Oogun Otun, Oogun Osi, Kota, Aiyebode and Omuro-Oke. In each ward was grouped a number of lineages. The head of each lineage collected taxes from his members and he made sure that no lineage member was unfairly assessed. Moreover, it was the responsibility of the lineage head to supervise the handing over of the tax collected to the ward head who in turn went to the Afin to report to the king the progress made, or of any difficulties encountered in the course of his duty. Before 1938 taxes were collected by the household members themselves after each household had been instructed by the lineage head. At that time the lineage head was responsible for handing over tax collected to the hamlet head chief who was the representative of the king. In the community at this time there was a clear-cut cleavage on lineage lines just as each hamlet, before unification, had consisted of a number of lineages. Each lineage formed a political unit with collective responsibilities in disputes involving its members with those of other lineages.

#### (c) Conclusion

It can be argued that there was an egalitarian distribution of wealth during the Traditional Period in the sense that land holding and distribution was on the basis of individual needs. It was rather easy to uphold the ideology because of the abundance of land available then. Even though the king was in theory the owner of the land, there was little difference between one man and another in the amount of land owned. The ideology of egalitarianism made it difficult or impracticable for concentration of property ownership at the expense of his fellow members. The king was the exception. This was understandable when it is realised that he was the original distributor of land to the lineages that first settled in the

community, the lineages, on the other hand, were responsible for the redistribution of land to their members and the various households to which they were responsible.

What is worthy of note is that during the period and before the second World War, the absence of specific economic roles had showed that social groups were not distinguished in terms of their skill, scarce or common as they might be, they were not differentiated in the way it is in modern society. In some sense all Omuo were peasants who were trying to utilise the given resources in the form of land for self-sufficiency.

The lineage was important because it was the axis around which all activities centred. It was regarded as a political as well as economic unit, in the latter sense because it was the only body that could alienate the land in its name. Moreover, the lineage co-operated for economic production as well as maintaining peace and seeing to the welfare of its members.

If the Traditional Period was a time of economic self-sufficiency, remarkable changes began to take place after the second World War. As we shall see in the next chapter, economic diversification began to take place. Landholding did not differ markedly from that of the Traditional Period but due to population expansion the community started to experience land shortage. In order to remedy this situation they had to resort to land begging in the neighbouring villages and towns who had more arable lands to offer than Omuo-Ekiti. With the introduction of cocoa plantations, economic activity within the community had shifted from that of co-operation to individual competition, hence the ideology of egalitarianism is gradually receiving less emphasis than before. However, land as a durable commodity is still very important. The lineage as land distributor is also still very important.

The above account of traditional farming is not intended to be a mere historical situation. Most of the traditional techniques are still practised today in the community. This is understandable because there is as yet no mechanised farming and farmers continue to apply the old ways in the day to day activities.

## II Development of Modern Market Economy

### (f) Introduction

Omuo-Ekiti has always depended upon rudimentary agricultural farming whose main purpose was to feed the farmer and his households. There was hardly any consideration for market production. During the Traditional Period land was abundant and was allocated to the various lineages by the king. Distribution of the land among the lineage members was the function of the lineage head. Under Modern conditions the pattern or system of land tenure has not changed. Land is still owned corporately by the lineage with the lineage head allocating it to individual members. However, there is a fundamental change in that land is becoming in short supply.

Although land is theoretically owned by the king, it is the lineage that looks after the affairs of each member and also protects his interests. Whenever there is land dispute either between two members of related lineages or of different lineages, the heads and elders of the lineages concerned attempt a settlement at first. Resort to the customary court is made as the final solution and only if the intervention of the lineages in question has failed. In this case the king still exercises his power over the people.

In the past farmers have reported poor harvests. Many reasons were given for it. In the first place farmers cannot achieve maximum production under the crop rotation system which lacks adequate planning including modern techniques such as mechanisation of farming. The result is that land becomes barren and the yields become scanty. Secondly, related to the first point, farmers lack of capital, which makes it more difficult for them to improve their yields. Thirdly, although I have earlier stated there are no variations in climate from year to year, there is sometimes lack of rainfall during its season. This indeed had added more problems out of which farmers could not escape. There is virtually no ritual organisation of agriculture. When there is a longer dry spell than expected, farmers pray for rain in the whole community. The year 1973 was cited as a typical example when rainfall failed to appear at the time expected. Otherwise, each farmer organises his own work, generally following 'traditional' methods.

In spite of these difficulties, after the Second World War, there was a new awakening in the farmers' minds. This consciousness dictated the pace of events and is the subject of this chapter. In short, a farmer could no longer rely on the philosophy of self-sufficiency but had to look beyond that in order to satisfy his needs and those of his immediate family - the household. Under the new economic conditions there is still not much by which one can differentiate one household from another, nevertheless, there had been a diversification of economic activity.

(g) 1945-1960, Innovation of Cash Economy

The significance of cocoa farming and its importance to the economy of Omuo people cannot be over-emphasised, although the people themselves did not awake to this until relatively recently. Traditionally total preoccupation was given to food crop farming. Now farmers divide their time between food and cocoa farming rather than devoting it all to food farming. In fact, cocoa farming has a far-reaching effect on all aspects of economic and social life in Omuo society.

According to local account, cocoa was introduced to Omuo around 1945.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that a few individuals had heard and known about cocoa growing before this date. For years, migrant wage labourers had gone abroad to work on the cocoa plantations. Many went to Ado-Ekiti, Ile-Oluji, Ikire, Okeigbo, Gbongan, Ondo, Apomu, Ibadan and its surrounding towns and villages. The time spent by each labourer in these places varied, but a few went for over a year, while others spent as little as six months. Their primary objective was to accumulate capital and buy a bicycle, which then was very popular.

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<sup>1</sup> For various dates when cocoa was introduced to Western Nigeria plus when different areas experimented with the crop, see Berry 1975:44. Evidence also suggests that a few farmers already learned about the crop and had actually experimented with a few seedlings before this time.

According to Lloyd (1962:190), the late development of cocoa farming in Ekiti has been associated with that area's remoteness from the railway, navigable waterways and paved roads. See also Galletti et al, Nigerian Cocoa Farmers, 1956:206; Berry 1975:46-50.

On returning home, some of them would set up a shop with the money earned abroad, or build a house. (cf. Hill, 1963:190-191; Brokensha, 1966: 57-58).

Even though the original idea about the cash value derived from cocoa production came from these wage labourers who had been abroad, it is still a big question in Omuo why, despite the realisation by the migrant labourers of the great economic value of cocoa, it took several decades before the idea became a reality in Omuo.

There are several factors which have helped in accelerating the introduction of the cocoa economy in the community. The middle 1940's to early 1950's saw a great rush and unprecedented consciousness in the school education of the young ones. As education as such was not free, the burden of paying fees was laid squarely on the shoulders of the parents. Food farming did not bring in much money to meet this demand. In addition to this factor is the 'perennial problem' of paying taxes. With the emergence of cocoa farming, these financial problems became less difficult. The participation in cash economy for several years through the production of palm oil and kernels was not enough to meet the resulting expansion in their wants and needs.

The shortage of land made it difficult for many people to start planting cocoa. To overcome this problem they had to seek their neighbours' help for suitable virgin land on which to plant the crop. Cocoa will not grow on any type of land, it needs a particular type of soil. For good growth and yield, cocoa requires shade temperatures averaging some 80 degrees F; protection against strong wind and direct rays of the sun; high atmospheric humidity at all seasons; moreover, the annual rainfall must not be less than about 50 inches; and finally, the soil must be retentive, yet freely draining, rich in humus and of considerable depth. Most of Omuo land fulfilled these prerequisites but the most pressing problem was the insufficiency of land to cultivate cocoa plantations.

Other factors which encourage people in wanting to cultivate cocoa included the presence on the coast of Nigeria of European traders who were prepared to buy the crop, plus the fact that the surrounding towns and villages have large tracts of uninhabited land suitable for the growing of cocoa. (cf. Berry, 1975:47; See also Kopytoff, 1965:31-33) Berry has suggested that two factors are

responsible for the early planters of cocoa in the Western Region of Nigeria: 1) that they had travelled, and 2) the high proportion of the early planters were Christians influenced by Christian clergymen who spread the information about cocoa through Western Nigeria.

From about 1945 onward Omuro farmers began to acquire land in earnest from the neighbouring towns and villages. In many cases this meant migrating to the new plantation. The following towns and villages were the favourite places in which farmers acquired land, together with their distance from Omuro-Ekiti:

<u>Eda</u>	7 miles	<u>Aiyeteju</u>	6 miles
<u>Isinbode</u>	10 miles	<u>Ejiegbe</u>	3½ miles
<u>Igbo Odun</u>	3½ miles	<u>Igbo Agba</u>	5 miles
<u>Odo Egbe</u>	5 miles	<u>Oke Oya</u>	4 miles
<u>Imesi Ile</u>	12 miles	<u>Imesi Lasigidi</u>	34 miles
<u>Oke-Agbe</u>	11 miles		

Some of the plots bought were very large, amounting to several acres, some a few strips. The buyer did not acquire full rights over the land, he could not re-sell the land under any circumstances. No one could sell his cocoa plantation without prior consultation with the landlord. On the death of the cocoa farmer the children - where there are any - assume ownership.

Depending on the size of the land, an initial amount of about ₦2.25 was paid to the land owner. Subsequent buyers, in fact, paid much more than this. Nowadays a farmer may find himself paying as much as ₦ 20 for some strips of land. This indicates that the levying of the initial fee could be arbitrary and much depends on the favour of the landlord and how many gifts he has received from the intending tenants. Moreover, as more lands are demanded, the owners raise their prices to meet the increasing demands.

In 1960, there was a boundary dispute between the Isinbode and Eda people. Omuro farmers hold land in both villages but much more in Eda than in Isinbode. In the course of litigation, the head chief of Eda demanded contributions from Omuro tenants towards the cost of the dispute. This was reluctantly agreed to by the Omuro farm tenants. Two years after this event (1962) a similar incident took place, this time between Eda and Ikole. As in the first dispute, Eda wanted the Omuro farmers to subscribe towards the cost of the litigation, but the Omuro farmers firmly rejected the suggestion. It was at this time that the issue of Isakole was raised. In

In recent years it has been agreed between landowners and tenants that Isakole should be paid to guarantee and protect the farmer's rights over the land. Once the annual fee called Isakole is paid, it annuls the prerogative of the landowner of involving the tenant in contributing towards the litigation cost between the landowner and any other party. Moreover, Omuo people do not wish to take sides in this type of dispute as it might injure their interests and portray them as partisans. Following this second dispute, an annual fee of ₦2 was fixed. Omuo farmers felt that this was fair and satisfactory. Failure to pay Isakole means that the farmer forfeits his rights to retain the land and is expelled outright from the land and his right to farm there is withdrawn.

There is very little formality when land is granted or sold to the farmer. Before the sale, the farmer approaches the landlord with the customary gifts of kolanuts, palm wine and nowadays schnapps. The landlord then pours a libation for his gods who are supposed to be living on the land in spirit form, and also to his ancestral spirits. In this ceremony, prayer is offered to the effect that the land in question is being given away to the purchaser and therefore they should remove from the place and settle elsewhere, for the purchaser will come to settle in the locality with his own spirits. As in other ceremonies, the acceptance of palm wine, schnapps and kola nuts before witnesses seals the contract. Once the land is 'bought' it is customary to mark the boundaries with concrete blocks or atorin trees.

Two months are devoted to cocoa farming during the year, December and June - the weeding and harvesting periods. They coincide with the time when there is less work to be done on the food farm. The rest of the time is spent on the food farm, where the food consumed on the cocoa farm is produced. An attempt is being made to grow some food in the cocoa sector, but it has not succeeded because both lands have different vegetation. However, bananas, plantains and oranges thrive on the cocoa soil.

The rights of the farmer extend to everything that grows on the land - this includes the palm trees which also flourish well in dense forest. If there are any palm trees on the land, the farmer



will enjoy an extra income from the sale of palm oil and kernels. Palm trees also yield a lot of palm wine if the farmer can utilise and tap the trees, but where he is unable to do this he may employ the services of his son-in-law or a paid labourer from outside. Urhobos are specialists in the art of palm tapping, in the past their services to the Yoruba farmers had been immeasurable.

Cocoa takes roughly four years to germinate, grow and produce pods. In addition to cocoa, farmers grow kola trees (obi). The rationale for this is that if one crop fails to bring in cash at a particular period, they expect the other to yield some dividend. Moreover, kola trees have been a source of income long before cocoa was known in Omuo. Again, both seem to thrive in the same type of vegetation. On the other hand, cocoa does not grow well on the sedimentary soils of the escarpment and the principal permanent crop is therefore the kola nut. As a rule, no farmer may plant too many kola trees on food farms for fear of destroying the crops.

#### (h) Individual involvement in cash Economy

Since the late 1950's and the early 1960's cocoa has become the major source of income in Omuo, just as in the whole of the country before the discovery of oil. One of the primary objectives of the farmers is to be financially strong, with the affluence this brings. Once this is achieved, it is then transmitted to their offspring. There have been good as well as bad seasons in cocoa growth. This is besides the series of fluctuating cycles experienced in cocoa prices. During a good season, the farmer harvests a considerable quantity of cocoa beans. It could be several tons rather than a few bags. This of course depends on the size of the farm. A good yield from several acres will produce several tons of cocoa, whereas a farmer who owns one or two acres can only expect to realise a few bags.

Farmers here regard themselves as peasant producers rather than rural capitalists; they give as a reason that their primary concern is with the expansion of the farming business. In this case, a farmer who acquires more land regards it as a form of saving.

A bad season can be classified into two interrelated spheres. In the first place, farmers explain with vividness what will happen

to a cocoa crop when it has not had enough rain, the result is the poor harvest which breaks the equilibrium that was hitherto achieved. This is not a new phenomenon, when it happens farmers usually feel bitter because of the deficit it generates. Farmers who get loans from friends are unable to pay back what they have borrowed because of a bad harvest.

The second reason is interrelated with the first. The 'benign cycle' came to an end several times since the introduction of the cocoa economy to Omuo; particularly in the early middle 1950's when the cocoa was attacked by swollen shoot and black pod diseases. The only known remedy then was to cut out and burn the trees that were affected. Unfortunately for the farmer, no help or advice was forthcoming from the government of the day as to the best remedy for it. Neither did Omuo farmers have any knowledge of spraying techniques, the information only filtered through to them much later. When they actually knew about spraying, some could not afford the cost of the apparatus used for the purpose.

But by the end of the 1950's the swollen shoot and black pod diseases were under control through spraying; and by 1960 an estimated 200 million cocoa trees had been sprayed; but even then the farmers were exceptionally hurt by the amount of damage perpetrated by these diseases.

Nowadays most if not all Omuo farmers spray their cocoa trees regularly whether or not there is an outbreak of the swollen shoot diseases. This is done as a matter of routine and also as a preventative measure. In fact, they believe that constant spraying enhances yields produced.

Besides the months of December and June during which farmers harvest and weed their plantations, there are other occasions when visits are made to the farm in order to check that everything is well.

Farmers who own land in the same area group themselves together on a communal basis in order to build dwelling houses or huts where they can live during the time they work on their farms. This applies more so to those farmers that have farms in distant places, e.g. Ede, Aiyeteju, Isinbode, etc. To weed, harvest and dry the beans takes anything from three to four weeks depending on the size of the

farm and the yields. Wives and children carry plenty of food from the food farm to the plantation before work starts. Cooking material, mats to sleep on and pots to store water are also carried to the farm.

In the December season, if the harvest is good, farmers rejoice with gratitude. It is a time when the whole town is deserted as everyone - except school children - travels to the farm to join in the harvest. Christmas is spent on the farm these days by most farmers. When the harvest is brought to a successful end, the farmers, together with their wives and children, return to the town to start work on the food farm.

Omuo men participate in the cocoa industry not only as producers but also as buyers or agents for the Nigerian Co-operative Society and Cocoa Marketing Board. The 'pan buyers' as they are called from the local measure of volume used, are the first link of a chain which goes through as many as three or four increasingly large-scale middlemen until it reaches the licensed buying agents who sell at controlled prices to the Cocoa Marketing Board. The 'pan buyers' are usually women. There are three organised groups in Omuo that buy cocoa from the farmers.

The first group is that of shop keepers, sometimes called produce buyers. They may buy cocoa or kernel. They buy directly from the farmer. The smallest quantity they can buy at a time is one pound of cocoa or kernel, they may buy as much as a ton. They are known as 'scalars' because they use a weighing machine. (cf. Galletti et al. 1956). The produce buyer initially undergoes some training in the art of buying, weighing and selling cocoa. At the end of his training, he sets up his own trade. He needs some capital to begin with to buy the equipment needed for the trade, such as tarpaulin and a scale. If he is not financially strong enough to buy the equipment by himself, he then seeks the assistance of the second category of cocoa buyers.

This is the Licensed Buying Agent, popularly and generally known as L.B.A. There are several L.B.A's in Omuo. They are not a company in the real sense of the word, but groups of professionals in the trade who are bound together for a common purpose. They are often called 'graders' by virtue of the fact that they weigh and grade cocoa.

The contents of the cocoa bag must first be examined in order to ascertain whether or not it is adulterated, then the bag is weighed on a scale and is now classified into a, b or c grade. The better the quality of the cocoa beans the higher the grade and the more that is paid for it. In theory every cocoa bag is supposed to be examined, in practice this is not so. Sellers that are particularly 'friendly' to a certain grader may have the rules waived in their favour even in the face of open dishonesty. The sellers are paid almost immediately for their produce.

The 'pan buyer' sells to the produce buyer while the latter buys cocoa in order to sell it to the L.B.A. The L.B.A. relies on the produce buyer for the regular supply of cocoa. He is paid a commission for the economic role he plays. His remuneration depends on <sup>two factors</sup> ~~two~~ however: (a) his relationship with the L.B.A., and (b) whether or not he has been given financial assistance in the past by the L.B.A., in the supply of capital to buy his equipment. If he has he is paid a lower commission than someone who is independent of the L.B.A.

The L.B.A. depends on the bank for loans. The loan, if given, is with interest to be repaid at an agreed time. If the L.B.A. fails to repay the bank at the stipulated time, the bank can sue them and seize their property. When the L.B.A. receives the loan, they pay the produce buyer his commission plus the price of the cocoa he bought from the farmer. If he has not paid the farmer before, he must do so at once. The L.B.A., it is explained, prefer to deal directly with the produce buyers because the latter are consistent in the supply of cocoa to the former.

The third category of cocoa buyers in Omuo is the Co-operative Society Limited (Omuo Branch). Its function is different from that of the L.B.A. only in certain respects. It is more structured in the sense that it has a chairman, secretary and treasurer. It is a company with limited liability. Farmers with large cocoa plantations can belong and become members, and many of them are actually full members of the society. The farmers' names must be registered with the company. The advantage to the farmer of being a member is that he can be guaranteed a regular sale of his produce to the

company. The company, on the other hand, assures itself of a regular supply of cocoa because the members are also the producers for the organisation.

Another advantage to the farmer of being a member, is that he can be granted a loan by the Co-operative Bank. The bank does not sue its members if they fail to pay back the loan at the agreed time. The Co-operative Society has a couple of branches at Omuo. The one at Illudofin caters for the farmers at Ijero, Illisa and Iworu wards. The other branch is situated at Omuo-Oke, this one looks after the interests of both Kota and Omuo-Oke farmers.

Farmers hold regular meetings at which their interests and grievances are discussed. Farmers usually have a lot of complaints to make against the government as well as the various buying agents for the ludicrously low price that is paid to them relative to the world price.

The Nigeria Cocoa Marketing Board (N.C.M.B.) does not pay the farmers directly. This is the function undertaken by both the L.B.A., and the Co-operative Society. These organisations hold regular meetings to discuss how much to pay the farmer-producer. This means that the two organisations do not even pay the farmer the government-declared price. Like the government, the L.B.A. and the Co-operative Society pay the farmer a sum determined by them and pocket the balance.

The government agent, N.C.M.B, like the buying agents who are always the tool of the former both rationalise the way the farmer is treated by arguing that without them the producers could not be assured of a regular income for their products in the face of the unexpected and expected fluctuations in the world price. The government reasoning may be logical but anyone will still argue about the colossal difference in the two prices.

Unfortunately for the Omuo farmers, they have not much choice but to comply with the government's directives. In the other West African countries the farmers are paid much more for their produce. It is no surprise that cocoa is smuggled to these neighbouring countries. The farmers involved in these smuggling operations are from Ibadan, Abeokuta and Epe areas. Dahommey (Benin), the nearest neighbour which has a common border with Nigeria is the favourite

place for the smuggling operations. Despite the two governments' vigilance, the operation continues in a clandestine way, though on a lesser scale, often with the connivance of the customs officials guarding the border between the two countries.

Farmers in Omuo were responsible, together with others, for the building of a series of roads and bridges from the beginning of 1960 onwards. The roads are Omuo to Isinbode and Omuo to Eda. Before the construction of these roads, farmers had a hard time transporting their produce from the farm to the town. The system of transportation then was to carry the bags on the head to the town. This was done principally by women. Because only one bag could be carried at a time, transportation of the bags took several weeks to complete. Many farm sites like Omuo to Eda, Omuo to Aiyeteju and Isinbode to Omuo are too far to make a double journey in a day. The carriers may be too tired the following day to repeat the journey in the hazard of the heat of the sun.

Things have changed for the better in this respect. All the farmers need do these days is cut through the farm, to carry the bags to the main road, and wait for a lorry to carry the bags to the town. The farmers themselves need not make the long journey to and from the farm; they can use the lorry as a means of transport to convey them to and from the farm.

#### (1) Modern Division of Labour.

The domestic group-idile - forms the unit of production and consumption. This may consist of a man, his wives and unmarried children. Sometimes it can include the man's father and mother in cases where the man marries and remains at his father's house in order to continue to render his services to the parents, although this is not so common today particularly since the cash economy has become so popular and competitive.

The plot of land the young man cultivates is a part of the family land, allotted to him by the father before the man marries, or as he is old enough to own land for cultivation purposes. The land remains part of the economic unit as long as the Bale remains alive, the economic unit may be broken up. In some cases - and this is becoming rare - the full siblings may remain together, otherwise the land is broken up into parts and divided among the surviving siblings.

The correlation of the farming unit with the domestic group is patently clear, although as time goes on this may develop into a nuclear lineage group of female agnates, this development traditionally becomes of finite duration. The pattern in Omuo agriculture is a system of shifting agriculture. When the soil is exhausted the plot is temporarily abandoned - usually for 4-5 years - to remain fallow, and another plot is cleared and cultivated. Where the farm is not far away, the farmer makes daily return journeys, where it is far away, he remains on the farm for the duration of the week before he returns to the town again. This is more so in the cocoa farming sector than in the food farming sector. In the latter, most farms are within walking distance and the farmer need not make a hut on the farm for sleeping purposes during the time he cultivates the land.

The farm work is done by men while women help in preparing crops like beans (ere), cassava (gbaguda), pepper (ata), Maize (agbado) and vegetables in general. They also help a great deal during the harvest period. Only a few women take part in the actual farming, unlike their counterparts in some parts of Nigeria, e.g., Aba and Onitsha where women assume all farming tasks. In Omuo, one of the major tasks performed by women is the processing of the produce for family consumption. This is particularly so of the turning of cassava into gari and marketing whatever surplus there is.

Otherwise the division of labour means in the main that a woman takes care of the home, does the cooking, tends the livestock and rears and cares for the children while the husband works on the farm, supplies food for domestic consumption, provides a house and maintains it whenever necessary.

The demarcation between what a man and a woman must do in terms of labour is clear and unambiguous. It is still on the traditional lines and has not changed much, if at all, especially among the illiterate majority. In addition, most women attend nearly all the market days in and around Omuo. They believe that they can only expand their economy and maintain a higher standard of living by selling and buying in the market. The initial capital may be provided by the husband, though this is not always the case.

A woman who belongs to an Egbe can collect the esusu, a very important way of making capital for trading purposes. A successful trader is able to afford the daily necessities for herself and for her children, such as clothes.

Where a woman is assisted by her husband in providing capital or goods, she may have to return what she borrowed to him as soon as she has 'made it'. And if there is a divorce, it becomes more imperative that the woman must return what she borrowed from her former husband.

Various forms of specialisation have been mentioned in passing. Hunters form a special occupational group with specific functions and regulations, the principal of which are, in peace time, policing; in war time, defending the town as well as reconnaissance. Other occupational specialisations include blacksmiths, weavers, drummers, carvers and leather workers. These specialisations are by no means full-time and are invariably combined with farming. Women's crafts include spinning, dyeing and pottery. A woman normally teaches her daughter how to perform any of these crafts, just as a boy observes how his father clears and tills the soil for cultivation purposes. This is by no means saying that women's organisation is comparable to that of men however, "Since marriage is patrilocal there is a dispersion of women from their natal compound, and this makes the establishment of a craft organisation difficult." (Bird, 1958).

On the traditional level therefore, the lineage structure and the economic structure seem to merge or coincide. This is to say that the primary sources of production are in the hands of the kinship group, and labour organisation is in terms of this group. The unit of training and production is in fact restricted to a nuclear segment of the kinship group, yet the individual bases his rights to the use of resources on his membership of a lineage. This also explains why the members of a lineage group have a feeling of collective responsibility for the contribution of goods and services for the marriages, funerals and other ceremonies of fellow members. The group - although not strictly these days - must provide for the care of its elder or infirm members; its members must perform mutual services during critical periods of the farming cycle, in the



construction of a house or any other important task undertaken by any of its members.

I will now consider other occupations with special reference to them as sources of income. Omuo, it must be emphasized here again, is not an industrial town, in fact, there is not a single factory in the whole community and the town is not situated near any industrial town. With this particular question now clearly explained, I can now begin to describe the various occupations and sources of income in the community.

Before the political merger with Ikole in 1973 to form the Northern Divisional Council, Omuo had its own council. Among those employed in the council secretariat were the secretary-cum-treasurer, two typists, two messengers and two sanitary inspectors. The council office is now run by a part-timer, the rest of the staff are employed in the Ikole office under the 1973 arrangement.

Most of those employed in gainful occupations are in the teaching profession. There are twelve schools altogether including two secondary modern and one grammar school. They have a total population of over 5,000 (5,056 in 1974) pupils and students, with a total of 163 teachers.

Ten staff members are employed in three maternity centres. There is no resident doctor but three doctors visit the institutions on a weekly and fortnightly basis. There is a postal agency in the community, situated in Illisa, which has one full-time employee; a second one is being built in Omuo-Oke which will be in operation in early 1976. Two council employees supervise the two motor parks in Kota and Omuo-Oke. The police department has a staff of five on its roll. The Oba is a regular wage earner, although he is no longer a member of the House of Chiefs which was dissolved after the coup d'etat in 1966. He has a messenger whom he rewards accordingly. The ministers of religion, of whom there are twelve, are paid by the various denominations they represent. The salaries of the functionaries described above, including the teachers, form a substantial proportion of the money generated in Omuo.

There are three categories of commercial groups: the market women and men, the street traders and the shopkeepers. Nearly everyone within the various groups would work on a part-time basis, income from the trading activities is generally low. There is a

market on every day of the week. A market is situated in each of the principal quarters, that is, Ijero, Omuo-Oke, Iworo, Kota, Obadore and Illudofin. The market in Omuo-Oke is the most popular and the biggest in terms of attendance and it was the first to be founded in Omuo (in 1890). The one in Obadore was founded in 1905. Besides these markets in the community, women and men traders also patronise the markets in the adjacent villages and towns, namely, Isinbode, Osele in Ikare, Oke Agbe, Ilasha and Ogbagu markets in Kwara State. The journey to Ogbagu takes a day by lorry and women traders usually spend from four to six days there before returning home. (cf. Comhaire-Sylvain, 1956). The fact that Omuo is saturated with markets makes trading convenient for the buyers and sellers; goods which are not available in one may be obtained in another.

Attendance at the various markets in the community varies. I visited them all, and observed that each market tended to have the following number of people at it. The majority of customers were women:

<u>Illudofin</u>	350	<u>Ijero</u>	210
<u>Kota</u>	225	<u>Iworo</u>	125
<u>Obadore</u>	900	<u>Omuo-Oke</u>	1650

Although the majority of the traders are women, there are many men traders as well, who carry their assorted goods on their bicycles from market to market. Customers also come from the adjoining towns and villages to patronise Omuo markets, especially from Ikare, Oyin, Oke-Agbe, Arigidi, Igashi, Uro, Isinbode, Ikole, Ilasha, Ode, Eriti, Ojo and Daja in Kwara State.

Different kinds of vegetables can be obtained in any of the markets - tomatoes, peppers, onions, garden egg, okra, etc. Each seller specialises in one or more of a range of related commodities and the market is usually divided into the range of identical goods - dried fish, vegetables, yams, gari, cloth, imported manufactured goods etc. On a market day one can find watch repairers, shoe menders and bicycle repairers.

The traders probably make a profit of between ₦8 and ₦10 a month, depending on the commodity sold and the demand for it. For instance, a trader may sell more at the onset of a major festival when the demand for the article is elastic. When a trader says that 'trade is good', this means that some profit has been made,

'trade is bad' means that there has been no profit.

Many Omuo women spend part of their time as street traders, either selling from the main street or, as happens frequently, hawking. The women specialise in commodities; most sales are in small quantities and by volume rather than weight. Young girls go about selling fish (eja), porridge (eke), bean cake (akara), green vegetables (efo), and kerosene (epo itanna) in the evenings. Each seller advertises by shouting the name of the commodity she is selling, anyone interested in the product will catch the seller's attention and buy from her. Hawking in the evenings can go on 'till 7 or 8 p.m. and much later if there is moonlight, although each trader works for only part of this period. School children are the best customers for buying food like akara on the way to school and at lunch time.

There are only a few shop keepers in Omuo, most of whom are in Omuo-Oke. I, in 1974, counted 32. Of these, 18 opened regularly, the other 14 were closed for a period of several days while the owners were away on the farm or engaged in some other activity. The shops sell assorted goods like soap, detergent, lanterns, sugar and provisions. Some specialise in liquors and soft drinks, some in palm wine, (emu). A few sell patent medicines. Sales in the shops fluctuate, depending on the time of year, for instance, during the Ayan and Egungun festivals, sales go up considerably.

There is an important group of artisans and other skilled and semi-skilled workers. Blacksmiths and goldsmiths have been long established in the community. Each occupation has a history behind it, and they are usually inherited, unlike shoe making. This inheritance from ancestors suggests that the early craftsmen were men of some importance. The present holders regard their trade as honourable. The oldest blacksmith in the town inherited the occupation from his father, the latter originally came from Iyagba in Kwara State. He expressed regret that none of his children will be following suit as they are all attending school and they have so far shown no interest in their father's occupation.

The bricklayers who are builders at the same time are all natives. They learn their trade abroad but return home on completion of their training to practise their calling. They form a powerful association. It is an offence for one member to backslide on another over a contract already made with a third party. The solidarity

with which the association acts can sometimes be embarrassing. If a client breaks his contract with a brick-layer-builder, the word is immediately passed round that under no circumstances must another bricklayer-builder agree to undertake the job until there is an honourable settlement with the first builder, who will, in that case, announce to other members that the dispute has been settled.

Omuo-Oke is a common settlement area, for the Hausas and Iyagbas, many of whom have settled there for a good number of years. One reason given for this is that it is the part of Omuo that is nearest to Kwara State. Moreover, Sabo, a predominantly Hausa abode - is only a few miles from Omuo-Oke. The Hausas make various kinds of handicrafts, such as straw hats, cloth caps, leather work and they also sell 'medicines for health' called agunmu.

The tailors and seamstresses have more to complain about. In the first place there are more people in the occupation than are needed. Sewing for some of the women is full-time, but she may have a shop where she sells provisions in addition to her calling. If she is married, her husband is invariably a farmer. The tailors are first and foremost farmers because there is not enough work for the job to be done on a full-time basis. Seamstresses are busier at Christmas, New Year, Ayan and Egungun Epa festivals and new dresses are usually ordered on these occasions. Tailors are busiest at the beginning of the new school year sewing the children's school uniforms.

The same goes for the few photographers in the town, as there are no formal weddings nor naming ceremonies as such on an elaborate scale. In the big cities, there are occasions for a photographer to make a good deal of money. Occasionally a mother wants a picture of her new born child. Since the founding of the secondary schools, students are required to append to their application forms two copies of a passport-sized photograph. This marginally adds to the work of the photographers.

The carpenters have a well organised union which is akin to that of the builders. They help the members to roof their buildings and contribute towards the general cost of building material when a member is building a house. Their occupation is the most inelastic as few houses are built at a time. Therefore, every carpenter is a farmer before he is a carpenter.

As mentioned earlier, the hunters defend the town at night and carry out reconnaissance from time to time. Theirs is a specialist job. They form an association of hunters, their guns are carried with them to the farm. A deceased member is given a special burial by the association and his effigy, called Ipade, is made in his remembrance. Again, like most of the occupations already described, it is carried out on a part-time basis, that is, in addition to farming.

Another tightly knit group is the association of butchers. This trade is foreign in as much as none of its members is a native. I counted fifteen members at one of the early morning meetings. Its membership is fluid and fluctuates at each meeting. Out of the fifteen counted that morning, two were from Iwo - a big town in the Oshun division of Western Nigeria, the rest were from Ilorin - a city in Kwara State, Northern Nigeria.

The trade is more popular among the Moslems, particularly, Hausas, than among the Southerners. One reason given for this is that cattle are reared in the North of Nigeria. Moreover, cattle killed for food in the South are usually transported down from the North of the country. Butchering is a male prerogative. (cf. Cohen, 1965: Comhaire-Sylvain, 1956).

The butchers slaughter a cow every other day in Omuo. Each member is expected to contribute towards the cost of the animal. When it is killed, it is divided equally among the members, - assuming that every member has contributed the same amount - and each member sells his share. The members are required to make as much profit as possible. They meet again the following day, each giving an account of his sales, including the profit made. A member may fail to disclose all the profit made but they are all urged to put honesty first, which means the interest of the collective must come before personal welfare. The council sanitary inspector is always present at all times when the animal is killed. His function is to ensure that the meat sold conforms to the standard of hygiene laid down by the council, and that no foul meat is sold to the public.

Beef meat is expensive, for which the rising cost of cattle is blamed. I was told that one particular cow I saw slaughtered, cost ₦184. A slightly bigger one would have cost much more. This is one reason why many of the people in the community cannot

afford to make beef their main dish. At the end of the days's sales, whatever is left over is eaten by the sellers concerned.

The next occupational group to be discussed here is the drivers association. No one was able to give me the precise date when motor vehicles first reached Omuo, but most people we talked to agreed that there had been motor vehicles coming to the town before the Omuo - Ikare road was constructed in 1928. Before its construction it was a rugged, hilly, but still motorable track. Today Omuo is flooded with traffin from all sides. The busiest routes are Ikare - Omuo, Omuo - Kabba, Ikole - Omuo and Omuo - Ibadan. The drivers perform an invaluable service to the community by providing the means for the essential transport of persons and goods.

There are ten vehicles (1974 figure) plying between Ikare and Omuo. One bus, six lorries and fourteen Peugeot 404 transport vehicles, popularly known in Nigeria as 'pick-ups' run from Omuo to Ibadan. All but four of the vehicles are owner driven; each vehicle however, has at least two drivers, particularly those plying between Omuo and Ibadan. If one of the drivers is absent due to illness the other relieves him, but it is common to find both drivers working together on a relief rota particularly since they start their journey practically at midnight before the day of the trip. Because of lack of regular sleep, many of the drivers find it difficult to keep fully awake while they make the journey, a good reason for having more than one driver on the job. In addition, there are various assistants who help to collect goods and fares. The assistants are usually apprentice drivers who only take over the steering when the day's business is over.

Drivers often overload their vehicles. They are supposed to be prosecuted for overloading by the policemen who are placed at strategic points. But this rarely happens and it is widely believed that drivers give the police regular presents (dash) to avoid prosecution. The taxis are four to five seater passenger cars, some of them new, others a few years old. Except for those that travel between Omuo and Ikole (18 miles), all the taxis run between Ikare and Omuo, (16 miles). The Omuo - Ikare road is the worst of all the roads entering Omuo. Despite that hazards many of the taxi drivers manage to do the trip several times a day. It is one of the busiest roads particularly on a market day in Omuo, Oke Agbe or Ikare. Market woman who have no

luggage prefer to make the journey by taxi, otherwise they use one of the 'pick-ups' which have luggage space.

The only available bus used to run Omuo - Ibadan, but it is now re-routed to Kabba - Omuo (25 miles). There are two reasons for the change. One is that the bus is getting old and gradually decreasing in power, making it more difficult to do a return journey of 350 miles. The other reason is that it is hard to compete with the 'pick-ups'. The latter are smaller in size, more compact compared to the bus, and take about a dozen to fourteen passengers altogether.

The bus rarely makes more than two trips a day, depending on the number of passengers. If there are any seats vacant they may be filled en route at other towns, but the driver makes sure the bus is almost full before setting off. The bus carries boxes, baskets and suitcases on the roof rack. It is much more comfortable than the lorry with its hard seats, bad ventilation and assorted bundles and packages, produce and livestock. The lorries are three to five ton vehicles designed for the dual purpose of carrying goods and passengers, and they frequent places like Eda, Isinbode and Aiyeteju. It is a common sight to see a lorry returning to Omuo from the towns and villages mentioned with passengers in the rear and a third or more of the space occupied by cocoa, plantains and other food stuffs.

The 'pick-ups' make the longest journey - Omuo-Ibadan, a return distance of 350 miles. They make the trip once a day, although I witnessed one driver who made a second trip to Ibadan during the New Year (1974) because many Omuo people working abroad, (Lagos, Ibadan, etc) were returning home for the vacation. Sometimes, particularly at Easter, the journey is extended to Lagos to pick up passengers bound for Omuo.

The Omuo - Kabba - Egbe - Abuji traffic is also heavy. Traffic takes off from the Omuo-Oke side each morning for these towns, collecting passengers en route. There is also early morning traffic from Kabba and Egbe to Omuo-Oke.

There are two drivers' associations; one group is based in Ikare - mostly taxi drivers - and the other group in Omuo. Neither of the groups is known to hold regular meetings except at the onset of a season when they expect a considerable increase in passengers on their various routes. Christmas, Easter and the New Year normally increase the volume of passengers from outside Omuo to the town itself.

During these periods the association decides what the new fares will be. The increase may be retained, as happened after Christmas 1973.

Nevertheless, Omuo regards itself as lucky to be linked by various networks of roads. There are no rail links or connections, which makes it more important that the standard of the roads should be improved so that communication with the rest of the country would be speeded up.

There is little ritual attached to any of the occupations I have discussed, apart from the rites of passage of apprenticeship and the annual blessing of the tools of blacksmiths and hunters - which take place in case of the latter, partly for fear of accidents and partly in order to be blessed with more kill.



<u>TABLE 3</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Monthly Income</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Blacksmith Occupation	5	₦4 - ₦5	Make Cutlasses, Hoes, Repair Guns.
Goldsmith	6	₦10	Make earrings, Necklaces, Bangles
Bricklayer	60	₦50 - ₦60	Make concrete Blocks, Build houses.
Carpenter	94	₦20 - ₦30	Make Furniture, Roofing, Doors, Windows.
Tailor	27	₦4	
Shoe Repairer	8	₦2	Repair shoes, Make Sandals.
Laundryman	5	₦7	Collect Clothes for washing and ironing weekly
Baker	2	₦24 - ₦30	
Seamstress	34	₦ 11	
Driver & Assistant	96	₦16 - ₦20	
Bicycle Repairer	7	₦1.50	Repair Punctures
Photographer	10	₦8 - ₦10	
Mill Operator	9	₦4 - ₦5	Open every Day for Grinding purposes.
Butcher	15	₦14 - ₦20	
Cloth Weaver	600	₦5	A Pastime for Middle-aged Women and a Seemingly Full-time Job for Old Women.
Barber	26	₦1	
Watch Repairer	9	₦6 - ₦10	

TABLE 3 - showing the various occupational categories in Omuo.

Monthly income earnings are approximate and arbitrary, and subject to fluctuations on the supply - demand principle.

1974: Source: Based on intensive interview and research.

It is important to distinguish those aspects of farming methods that have changed from the traditional techniques, those that have not changed, and those in the areas where both traditional and modern methods overlap. The most important change is the diversification of economy from the purely food production for self-sufficiency to the one of market economy. Because of the change the farmer no longer spends all his time on the food farm but divides time between food for consumption and the crop that is intended for the market.

However, most of the methods which were applied in the Traditional Period continue to be used today. For example, the system of crop rotation is still in operation, land is left fallow as before, although for a shorter period because of land shortage.

The system of land distribution is still controlled and supervised by the lineage head and elders. Moreover, land in the community has not become a commercial commodity. As mentioned earlier, no lineage member can alienate his portion without the approval of the whole lineage concerned. Land is still sacred and is constantly protected by the ancestors. This is why individuals guardedly protect their interests in land supply, plus the fact that there is a steady deterioration. If the land is barren, it is because there is still no system whereby a farmer can use artificial fertiliser or manure to enrich the soil. This is still related to lack of capital rather than to lack of information. Inadequate rainfall obviously complicates the problem as well.

Farmers draw on both old and new methods in planning their economic activities, so there is a blending of Traditional and Modern techniques. No really dramatic change can be expected in this area until there is an advanced technology in the sense of mechanised agriculture.

(j) CONCLUSION

From the account given above it will be seen that life at Omuo is changing on a progressive scale. With the introduction of cash crop, life has become more competitive although there is still some co-operation particularly between the households, friends and the various egbe. The co-operation I am referring to under modern conditions differs markedly from that of the Traditional Period. For example, in the past it was customary for the egbe of one kind or another to work in rotation on each others's farms. Moreover, all the children of a farmer no matter how old they were, had to work on their father's farms regularly. Today the egbe no longer regard it as an obligation in helping themselves. Most, if not all, the farmer's children go to school. Those who do not, no longer regard it as a primary duty to help their father on his farm. The emphasis has shifted to self-help, away from the co-operative spirit of several decades ago.

Lineages may segment, but in spite of it members still want to live in close proximity to one another. Those that move away continue to bear the name of the original lineage. Children who are married but who are unable to build a house for themselves continue to live with their parents, and they normally have a separate room and parlour to themselves where space allows.

What is more significant about the modern period is the degree to which Omuo depends on the outside world for the purchase of the commodity produced on the farm. This is to say that people are no longer focussing their attention on Omuo, but beyond. For instance, they want to know how much a farmer in Ghana or Benin producing a similar commodity as his is getting for his effort. This is the new awareness that is permeating the whole community. Communication and dissemination of news and information are also enhanced by the increasing number of educated Omuo children who work abroad but who inform their people of the events taking place in other parts of the world whenever they visit home on holidays or at weekends.

CHAPTER 2I Traditional Power Structure

The Traditional Period at Omuo was a period of communalism. People in the community worked in groups in most aspects of life, in the production of the necessities such as tilling the soil for crops; as a result there was very little division of labour. Land was abundant and equitably distributed. Land given to each lineage by the king was redistributed to the lineage members by the head of the lineage (oloriebi). Redistribution of land to each member was based on the principal of 'to each according to his needs'. The idea that the king owned the land was widely accepted by the people in the community. This was also validated by the system of land distribution that then existed. However, the myths had begun to gain less currency towards the close of the last century, mainly because population expansion coincided with the beginning of land shortage and the king no longer held overall control over the land which was effectively distributed by the lineages. Nevertheless, those strangers who came to settle in the community still looked to the king for land, until they became members of a lineage of their choice. No stranger could be absorbed in a lineage immediately on arrival. If he wanted to make a home in the community the initial land must be given to him by the king. On the whole, however, all lands continued to be distributed in the name of the king who was the guardian of all the people in the community.

a) The King

The king exercised his power over the people in the community in many ways. I have so far argued that all lands were owned in his name, both in theory and to some extent in reality. This was true to the extent that initially land could be given to the lineage only by the king. In this way the king enforced his political authority over the people. As the Head of the Executive, the king himself had to realise at the same time that leadership was a collective attribute. To rule effectively he needed the co-operation of all the people in the society, and in particular the lineage heads, the chiefs and elders, who were his representatives and linked him to the people. But at the same time the lineage, whose members were linked together through kinship network, was the basis of political administration and control.

The traditional political system of Omuo-Ekiti may be described as "centralised" since it provided for a centrally constituted executive authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions. At the head was the king (Oba) who lived in the palace (Afin) - regarded as a sacred place made holy and guarded by the gods.

Although political authority was vested in the Oba who was regarded as a divine person, there was at the same time a judicial distribution of powers and functions. The political inter-relationship was between the Oba, his chiefs, the lineage heads and the Age sets in the community.

Before 1938 when the amalgamation of the various units took place, the general pattern of political organisation was that each village and hamlet had a council (Apejo) and a responsible head who claimed descent from the founder or conqueror. Each village and hamlet controlled its affairs, laid down local laws, met together and discussed any important matters that arose, and also performed all work of a judicial nature. The local laws formulated by these councils were of the simplest, being chiefly concerned with law and order in the context of the prevention of theft and violence. The degree of centralisation was small, and all the local settlements (villages and hamlets) enjoyed considerable autonomy. Before then and during this time the central authority was invoked only in time of war and in serious judicial cases such as homicide, which were beyond the competence of the villages and hamlets and the chiefs and lineage elders and heads responsible to them. This indicates that these latter were subject to the Oba in the final analysis. But the Oba was relatively autonomous and owed no allegiance to anyone.

The kingship was vested in two royal clans, Adumari and Ajila, the present incumbent being of the Ajila Royal clan. The rotary principle was strictly adhered to, but primogeniture was not the rule. Instead, when it was the turn of one clan to provide the king, elders of the clan met to select a candidate who in the end had to be approved by the king makers. Usually the various segments of the clan, each presenting its own candidate, competed with one another for sometime before a candidate acceptable to all emerged. This has always been the traditional way of selecting the candidate to assume the title of Oba.

As mentioned, the Oba used to live in seclusion in his Afin, a sacred palace associated with gods. This meant that he remained indoors and never appeared in public. Consonant with his seclusion from his people was his prerogative of not going to war. The Balogun was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the nation; it was therefore his responsibility to direct and lead any wars that had to be fought. The Egbe were his forces. By custom the Oba must never fix his gaze upon a corpse, this would spell disaster for his people. His was the Obaship and High Priesthood at the same time, and as such he had to remain at home and perform sacrifices for success in war.

As the King lived in seclusion, matters came before him only through the senior chiefs, after they had discussed them with the village chiefs under them. The Oba discussed these matters with all the senior chiefs and the elders. It was usually the affairs of the whole kingdom that came before him. The Oba's council therefore combined legislative, executive and judicial functions and comprised title holders of various categories. At the same time these title holders acted as the intermediaries between the Oba and his people, they were the channel through which his administration or instructions were promulgated and through which the ordinary man might voice his opinion on current affairs or transmit dues to the palace.

Judicial work was carried out in the kingdom by a council of chiefs and elders under the Oba. The council was sometimes assisted by the senior "Egbe" who took part in the discussion which took place before a decision was given, but had no voice in the final decision. In addition there was always another Egbe present who, though taking no part in the judicial proceedings, nevertheless, were responsible for the custody of the prisoners and the maintenance of order. Trials were usually held either at the Oba's compound or in the market place.

Before a civil case could be heard, it was necessary for both parties to deposit a fee of cowries. The amount represented by these fees varied from about one shilling to five shillings. But some informants stated that the equivalent of ten shillings was deposited by both parties, however, this is probably an exaggeration. In addition to the fee it was necessary to demand a goat from each party. When judgment was given the successful party received his fee back,

whilst that deposited by the other party was divided between the judges, the senior Egbe and the Egbe who did the police work. It was usually the custom for the Oba to have the custody of these fees until a reasonable sum had been amassed, when a division could be made.

The Oba's court was the last court of appeal. As he did not in theory judge cases in the first instance, those which reached his court were usually cases which had already passed through the courts of the village or hamlet and their head chiefs.

Civil judgments whether for damages or debt were enforced, where necessary, by the seizure of live stock belonging to the debtor. In some instances, a member of the debtor's family would be seized and held as a hostage. The seizing of the live stock, to the value of the debt, was done, by the creditor himself and, in others, by an Egbe specially appointed for the purpose. When the live stock was seized the creditor either kept it in lieu of the debt or it was sold by auction and the proceeds given to the creditor. It could also be redeemed by the debtor settling the debt. When a member of the debtor's family was seized, he or she would be kept in the Oba's house until redeemed by the settlement of the debt. It was customary for litigants to take an oath before the hearing of their case. In some cases they swore by the heads of the judges, and frequently, the usual traditional oath-swearing on a sword or a knife, was taken.

#### b) Maintenance of Law and Order

Punishment for crime varied in the different villages and hamlets before amalgamation. Punishment was invariably carried out by an appointed Egbe. Below is a given list of crimes and examples of their punishments. In general, however, a person who committed murder was himself also executed.

Manslaughter: The accused was usually made to pay the funeral expenses of the deceased. In some cases, the deceased was also replaced by a member of the accused's family of the same sex. The latter became a slave.

Adultery: Except in the case of adultery with the wife of the village head, this did not seem to have been regarded as a serious offence. In some cases, it was merely left to the husband to settle his account with the adulterer. In others a goat or a dog was sacrificed by the adulterer as an atonement. Where it was the custom

to impose a fine the latter was usually the equivalent of a few shillings. Adultery with the wife of the village head was, however, a serious offence. In many instances, it was the custom to behead the offender; in others, he was sold as a slave, and the most lenient punishment seemed to have been the confiscation of all the property of the accused and his family.

Theft: This offence was punished by a fine which varied from a few shillings to as much as £2 or £3. The culprit could also be sold as a slave if he offended more than twice.

Witchcraft: Witchcraft was usually punished by making the accused drink sasswood poison.

In doubtful cases the judges might call upon the litigants to undergo a trial by ordeal. If either party refused to agree to this he was adjudged guilty. The ordeal sometimes took the form of swearing a special "Juju" as a result of which the guilty party died within a given time. Besides the swearing of "Juju" there was what could be described as the "ordeal of the leaves". Two leaves were placed on the ground tip to tip and overlapping slightly and a small stone was placed on them. These preparations were made by a "Juju" doctor. Each litigant then took hold of one of the protruding ends of the leaves and tried to pull his leaf away from under the stone. It was alleged that the guilty man was unable to do so. Another trial by ordeal was to make both parties drink boiling palm oil in which a special "medicine" was placed. The innocent man would come through the ordeal unscathed.

The fines inflicted on offenders formed an important part of the Oba's income. He also had farms on which he exacted corvee labour from the slaves and the chiefs' people. But the greater part of his revenue came from gifts from chiefs and wealthy individuals, especially local and foreign traders operating in his country. Booty obtained as a result of the frequent wars was also shared with him. Directly below the Oba and the senior chiefs were the Balogun and the Egbe. It was the function of the Balogun to captain the military divisions as represented by the Egbe in times of war. Though military in origin, the Egbe came to be incorporated in the traditional system of the government. It was the responsibility of the head chief in each village and hamlet to ascertain that each Egbe was in a state of preparedness at all times. No matter



could go to the Oba without first passing through the courts of the village and hamlets respectively.

As the leadership of the military divisions needed special fighting qualities it was not traditionally hereditary. The post was given to a chief who had distinguished himself in previous battles and had the necessary qualities of leadership. This is the real meaning behind his name - Balogun (Ba father, Ogun = war, i.e., father or head of the military, that is to say the army). Since the end of serious inter-tribal wars, however, the posts have remained hereditary within the lineages of the last chiefs to hold them in the period of wars.

At the village or hamlet level, the head chief was assisted by a council of chiefs and elders. There was no hard and fast rule about the composition of this council, but it was expected to include all the chiefs of the village or hamlet, the heads of the various Egbe, influential individuals and men who had distinguished themselves in the various spheres of life, warriors, etc. There were also no regular meeting times for the council, but the head chief was expected to summon it whenever an important matter arose. Regular consultation with his advisers was an essence of good government. Not only did it show that all the essential elements in the village had a say in its affairs but, as Omuo people usually say, one person by himself does not make a meeting or a council.

The next political unit was the town, ilu, with the Oba, chosen from the lineage of the first settler. Here again, the real power rested with the people and not so much with the Oba and his council of chiefs. The town had a governing council comprising lineage heads and leaders of the Egbe. Though there were no fixed and regular meeting times, the Oba was expected to summon the village or hamlet chiefs whenever any matter came before him. In effect all executive decisions concerning the town and its relations with other towns should have the support of the town people. The elders of the royal lineage also had important functions in the local government. They were the advisers of the Oba, and any position he might take vis-a-vis the town people represented the end result of his discussion with elders of the royal lineage. And since the Oba was elective within the royal lineage, the elders of this lineage also had the task of choosing a new Oba. For though the town people

might disagree with a particular candidate for the post of Oba, and could depose an unpopular Oba, the selection of the Oba was always the prerogative of the royal elders. They had to make the selection first, before seeking the approval of the town people.

At the town or village level a distinction was always made between the executive and the judiciary. The town people and the royal elders, as I have tried to show, jointly constituted the executive authority. The judiciary, however, was composed entirely of the Oba and the royal elders. The Oba's court was the highest in the village or town. It was concerned with the settlement of disputes between villagers and hamlets, and also with such cases as stealing, adultery and divorce. As I have indicated earlier, all cases going to the court of the Oba had to pass through the village head chief's court.

It is also appropriate that mention be made of the residential group known as agbo ile. All large settlements were territorially divided into sections or wards known as agbo ile. The agbo was a residential, not a 'kinship group, which occupied a portion of the town or village, but the core usually consisted of members of a single lineage, the descendants of the first settler in that section. To this lineage were added, in time, descendants of later comers, related or unrelated to the first settler. The ward had a head, usually the head of the dominant lineage, who governed the ward with the help of the heads of other lineages within it.

In his study, Forde (1950:289), describes the ward in Yako as 'a territorial segment in communities grown too large for convenient organisation of secular activities on the basis of interpersonal relations.' This statement fits the situation in the Omuo settlements in the sense that certain functions were considered to be more effectively performed within the framework of the ward than in that of the whole settlement. Only large settlements were divided into wards, and even there the number of wards was determined by the size in terms of area and population. For instance, Edugebe, with a population of 1250, had only three wards, Inegun with 850 had two wards, while Igo with 475 had only one ward.

The organisation and management of funerals of members were among the most important functions performed at ward rather than village or town level. After the kinsfolk of the dead person

ward members of the dead were the most active participants in the funeral. On the day of the burial members of the dead person's ward were forbidden to go to work. From that day until the end of the rites, which might take anything from two weeks to a month, the ward had to meet time and again to dance and sing dirges in remembrance of the dead person. Dances were also organised by the ward. It was only in small villages that they were organised by a whole settlement. In the biggest settlements like Edugbe, every ward was a dancing group, and it was only on special occasions, such as the death of an important chief, that a whole settlement would emerge as a dancing group.

But the final, and perhaps the most active, political and judicial authority sub-groups were the lineages, under the authority of the lineage heads (Oloriebi). A fuller account of the lineage and its organisation will be given in another chapter. Here it is sufficient to point out that the Oloriebi was responsible for the administration of justice in cases involving members of his lineage.

#### c) Colonial Era: The Oba as an instrument of indirect rule

In 1910 the Imperial Government took over administration in Nigeria from the Royal Niger Company. In the years 1919 to 1921 the system of native administration which had been devised in the first instance for the Northern protectorate was extended from that part of Nigeria to include Yoruba land. The man principally concerned with the administration, the establishment and practice of indirect rule was Lord Lugard.

The main characteristics of this system was that a community should be governed through the existing authority. It meant that the British agreed to support the indigeneous authority but that, in turn, the latter had to recognise the over-riding authority of the British and also to accept as adviser the local (British Appointed) Resident or the District Officer. It was through this British Official that Central Government exercised its supervision.

The immediate result of Lord Lugard's policy was to turn Yoruba Rulers from more or less constitutional monarchs, whose actions were restricted by a number of traditional checks and

and balances, into autocratic despots. Under the traditional system, the kings were in theory absolute, but in practice their actions were controlled by a council of title-holders (chiefs), lineage heads and elders, who had the rights of selecting the kings. All matters of state were dealt with by the king in consultation with this council, and should his reign become excessively tyrannical or his policies unacceptable, the council had the right to intimate to him that it was time there was a new ruler.

Under the British, the king became a salaried official whose position and authority were backed by the British Government, and who was removable only by this power. Later there was some modification and the ruler was made the chairman of a council, consisting at first of a number of arbitrarily selected chiefs and later of men and women elected by popular vote.

The position of the king during the Traditional Period and colonial era is therefore as follows:- While the king once installed was a divine person whom in the former period it was ritually dangerous even to see, this element of choice and lobbying in his selection upheld the fundamental authority of the people. Although the office of the king was sacred, the king did not rule by divine right but by the will of the people. There was a sharp distinction between the sacred office and the individual who filled it. He was not blessed with infallibility and, subject as he was to human error, his government did not always measure up either to pre-installation expectation or to pre-election promises. As a non-sacred individual he was expendable.

In theory the king was an absolute monarch, but in practice his authority was circumscribed. He governed his kingdom with the advice and assistance of those of his chiefs and lineage elders who sat on the council. All routine matters were dealt with by the king in consultation with the council and he ruled less by decree than by order-in-council. However, the king and his chiefs did not form an oligarchy. The channels of communication between him and the populace were direct and clear. It would be recalled that the chiefs held office not only at the pleasure of the king but as representatives selected by the lineage or quarter members. Their function among other things was to keep the people well-informed of

of the policies and activities of the king and to keep him well aware of public opinion.

The immediacy of public reaction to his action was not the last check on the king's absolutism. A third limiting factor was the division of functions which obtained in administration. Not only did the king have a council of chiefs to aid him. Many of the functions of government were under the direction of other agencies such as the Ogboni society. We may see the king, then, as the ultimate source of justice and government and as the high priest. But he was a symbol of sacred and profane authority rather than the instrument of its exercise. The higher echelons of the religious associations, together with other title holders, provided the operative legislative, executive and the judicial bodies.

### Conclusion

From this brief account it can be seen that the king was very powerful during the Traditional Period and up to the colonial period. He was the giver of land as well as the Head of the Executive. But he could not rule without the full co-operation of his people. Moreover, both administrative and judicial functions were shared with the hamlet and village chiefs, lineage heads and elders. This was more so before the unification of these hamlets and villages into the unit that later became known as Omuo-Ekiti.

With the colonisation of Nigeria by the British, indirect rule was introduced and the king became a link between the colonisers and the people. In spite of this change, the lineage retained its importance as the basis of political administration; for in the final analysis, the success and achievements of the king during his tenure of office depended on the degree of rapport and co-operation he had with the chiefs, elders and lineage heads who were the direct representatives of the people.

## II Modern Redistribution of Power

### (d) From Lineage to local council politics

In the Traditional Period at Omuo the king was the head of the executive. The lineage, however, was the basis of day to day political administration. Disputes between members and other routine matters were dealt with, in the first instance, by the lineage head and elders; only serious cases, which could not be dealt with at this level, were referred to the Oba's court and the chiefs' council. The whole town and its component lineages fitted together as a single political unit. Within each quarter were lineages, at the apex of each of which was the oloriebi - the lineage head. He was responsible for the affairs of the lineage and was its political head. Next in Hierarchy above the oloriebi was the quarter head chief, who also supervised the affairs of the whole quarter, settled disputes within his jurisdiction and communicated the demands and wishes of his people to the king. He was the intermediary between the quarter and the king. The king, in turn, was the supreme head of Omuo kingdom holding jurisdiction over the various sections within the kingdom.

However, with the advent of indirect rule and colonial era in 1900, the king's position changed in many respects. The introduction of a local government system to Nigeria and Omuo in particular in 1940 saw the beginning of a redistribution of power. The king was not as powerful as before, nor were the chiefs and lineage heads and elders. The king became the chairman of Omuo local council. Universal adult suffrage guaranteed that anyone who cared to stand for election, provided he satisfied the conditions laid down by the regulations governing local election and if he could command enough votes, would be elected even though the king was the chairman. Furthermore, the king's own position continued to be limited by traditional checks.

When election to the new council first took place during the beginning of the 1940s the king as representative of tradition found himself in opposition to the young educated men who were elected then. The king, as chairman, found himself in an

uncomfortable position when confronted with these new men. This uneasy alliance between the king and the elected councillors continued throughout the 1940s to the mid-1950s. In 1957, the trouble between the king and these young councillors reached a climax, when a fierce campaign was mounted to depose the king. To exacerbate matters the councillors held a meeting and unanimously passed a motion to suspend payment of the king's salary. This proved to be one of the celebrated cases in Omuo history.

On the 29th November, 1957, the Oba Olomuo of Omuo lodged a petition at the Divisional Adviser's Office at Owo, an urban town in the East of Yorubaland. He stated that his salary for three months was being withheld by the secretary/Treasurer of Omuo Local Council representing the council. At the same time the king sent a copy of this letter to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice and Local Government Ibadan. In 1947, Seven years after the election took place the clash between the king and the councillors was so serious that a resolution was passed at a council meeting to replace the king as the chairman of the council. The motion was carried by a large majority whereby since then the king ceased to be the chairman of the council and he was replaced by a young educated and militant native teacher. Therefore, when the 1957 resolution was passed which asked the council to withhold the king's salary he was no longer the chairman of the council.

The king's petition to the Divisional Adviser contained many allegations against the council and its chairman. The Oba had asked among other things that the council should be dissolved; that the council's new chairman was upsetting the community because there was a violation of law and order. The council was also accused of corruption.

While the council was in session on the 16th November, 1957, the supporters of the Oba physically attacked the councillors at the meeting with stones and bottles. The councillors wanted the Regional Government to conduct a plebiscite within the community to determine whether or not the Oba should remain on the throne or be deposed. The then Regional Government in the person of the Ministry of Justice and Local Government intervened and ordered the council to reinstate the Oba's salary and to reimburse him with the arrears owing to him.

The council's Secretary/Treasurer, armed with the resolution passed unanimously at one of its council meetings (voting in favour 21-1) on the 24th August, 1957, stood by that resolution and therefore refused to comply with the Ministry's orders. (The August 24th meeting had adopted a resolution to the effect that the Oba must be deposed by the Government). Later, at a meeting of the council on the 16th December, 1957, the Divisional Adviser suggested the council prosecute the King if they felt that he was conducting the community's affairs illegally. The councillors were unhappy about such a suggestion but insisted on the removal of the Oba.

This case illustrates clearly the shift in the position of the Gba. He was no longer in a position to rule without questioning if these young councillors found it unconstitutional. Political power has been redistributed in a more democratic manner than before, promoting a clash of values between the old and the young which led to the latter to call for the removal of the former's reactionary anachronism.

However, the ruler still commands the support of the older and conservative sections of the community and for this and other reasons, the Government of Western Nigeria found it inadvisable to dispossess the natural rulers of all their prerogatives of political power. Instead, the Government's policy has been to gain the support of the rulers, according to them all the pomp and pageantry which is by tradition theirs, and purporting to guard their privileges against the iconoclastic incursions of the opposition party. Meanwhile, it was quietly and busily depriving natural rulers of the substance of power. Nor did the Government hesitate to use the sanction of removal from office to coerce the recalcitrant Oba to toe the appropriate line. Should any of them be tempted to harbour misconceived ideas, he has before him the salutary example of the ex-Alafin of Oyo, the Olowo of Owo and the Zaki of Arigidi, who, after a long exile were summarily deposed.

The ruler was not the only person whose role had changed at this period. The position of the chiefs had also undergone some radical change. During the 1950s, the number of appointed to the local council was restricted and many minor chiefs were displaced in favour of elected and often literate councillors. The new system wedged a division between traditional authority and the young with their modern and progressive ideas.



In 1964 Omuo became a part of Akoko North Provincial Authority, Before too long, however, a government edict (number 6 of 1967), excised it from Akoko North Division. As a result, it followed the establishment of Omuo Provincial Authority in October 1969. In 1973 it became a part of Ekiti North Local Government Council and was subsequently merged with Ikole Council to form Ekiti Northern Divisional Council.

There are, however, new developments. In 1976 the Military Government issued a white paper containing a new Local Government Reform throughout the country. This was intended as a prelude to the 1979 National Election when, it was hoped, the country would revert to civilian rule.

Under the 1976 Reorganisation of Local Government, Omuo was chosen as the Headquarters for a newly created council - the Ekiti East Council. The new development<sup>meant</sup> the end of a joint council between Omuo and Ikole as the Ekiti Northern Divisional Council with its Headquarters at Ikole.

I have argued that under the old local council system the Oba's position was becoming marginal. It was indeed true when his powers were compared to those of the Traditional Period. However, under the 1976 Reform, the Oba has been made the "active" President of the new Local Government but the council's chairman is chosen from among the elected councillors.

According to the statement issued by the Government in 1976, in order to make the new councils effective and local, they should serve populations of between 150,000 and 800,000, except in the cases of major towns. In most cases, the authorities should be co-terminous with the existing state administrative divisions. The new bodies are to be "modern functional institutions", but which are not intended to destroy the "organic unity of traditional areas under Emirs, Chiefs or other authorities". Moreover, paramount chiefs who are Local Government Presidents should avoid any kind of political partisanship so that they can remain "impartial fathers of their people". If they wish to stand for election they can resign their offices. Whereas under the previous system the Oba was replaced as the chairman of the council, under the 1976 Reform, he remains the President of the council for life, and can only be dismissed by the Government.

Although the powers of the Oba and his chiefs have been diminishing, there is one sphere of the community's political life where the Oba still commands a comfortable position. This is in the judicial sphere.

Under the traditional system, all cases were first heard by the Oloriebi - the lineage head and the senior members of the lineage - in order to attempt a settlement between the disputing parties; only rarely would a case be by-passed this channel to a higher authority before the lineage members have had a say in the matter. Where the oloriebi and senior members could not effect a settlement, the case was referred to the quarter head chief. His chiefs and advisers were summoned to his house. A meeting was held among themselves before the disputants were called in. If the case was successfully settled here, the lineage or lineages concerned were informed. But if the head chief and his chief advisers failed, the case was taken to the Grade "C" Customary Court.

Omuro Native Court was established in 1927, but it was not until 1966 that the first Grade "C" Customary Court was established in the community. The Oba is the president of the court and the Elekota, the second in rank to the Oba, is the vice-president, the latter presiding over the court proceedings in the absence of the Oba. Chiefs from other quarters rotate to adjudicate cases with the Oba in their judicial capacities. Before the country became independent in 1960, the D.Os and the Residents representing colonial administration had the power to veto decisions reached in the native courts and subsequently in the customary courts. The Customary Courts Law, 1957, effected many changes in the system of customary courts. First, the courts are no longer a part of the 'administrative' system of the country, but have been incorporated into a single judicial system with the Magistrates' and High Courts. No longer do the D.Os and the Residents have the powers of review and of hearing appeals. The new courts have no power to try criminal offences known only to customary law; their jurisdiction is limited to offences under statute law as listed in the Criminal Code.

In the Omuro Grade 'C' Customary Court, the Oba sits as the president of the court with two chiefs on either side as bench judges. There is also the court clerk, who is usually literate, whose function

/is to record

the proceedings of the cases that are heard in the court and advise the judges how to interpret the law. Also in the court is the Akoda - the court messenger whose principal function is to call witnesses to appear in court, to produce and show the judges any exhibits that may be brought to court. The Oba's messenger is always with him including coming to the court with the Oba.

The court session is open to the members of the public. The plaintiff is first called upon to give his/her version of the case, this is normally followed by the plaintiff's witnesses, where there are any. Likewise, the defendant is similarly called to tell the court about the case. When he has given his evidence, his witnesses are called to corroborate his story. The witnesses in either case could be the relatives of the plaintiff and the defendant, but could as well be friends, acquaintances or people who have witnessed the incident when it took place.

Most cases taken up by customary court are divorce cases. Where other cases arise, e.g., land dispute, they are heard meticulously and reported with great care. It is normal for the disputants and their witnesses to swear on the Ogun (God of Iron,) or the Bible if the people concerned are Christians, or the Koran if they are Moslems.

The court will find it hard to believe some one who has not brought at least one witness to corroborate his story. It is generally assumed that he must have felt his guilt otherwise he would have called some one to give evidence on his behalf. Each of the parties and his witnesses are thoroughly cross-examined at the end of their evidence by the opposing party. This is followed by the judges cross-examining both parties and their witnesses 'till the judges are satisfied that the doubts in their stories have been thoroughly scrutinised.

Where one of the judges has a personal interest in a case being heard, he makes this known to the president of the court and accordingly vacates his seat on the bench 'till the case has been heard and settled. Where it is the Oba himself, he follows the norm, vacates his chair and the vice-president takes it over 'till the case is finished. Theoretically this is done so that the judge cannot influence the case; but as the following example indicates, this may not work out.

During the two weeks I spent in court as an observer most of the cases were divorce cases. On the last day of my visit, the president of the court had a vested interest in the divorce suit brought by one of his sons' wives. He therefore quite correctly vacated his chair when it was time to listen to the case involving his son. Afterwards, the son was interviewed by me. I wanted to know what role the father had played in the case. It transpired that the father had previously instructed his son to oppose a grant of divorce to the woman. On the other hand, the king's son wanted to let the woman go as he, the son, already had three other wives but he had been specifically instructed by the father to contest the case. A reason adduced for this was that the woman only became fecund when she married the prince as none of the children born before then to other men had survived. Therefore, the Oba had regarded the woman as very ungrateful for wanting to leave his son. From this observed case, we can see that judges can influence a case behind the scenes but outwardly they try to demonstrate their virtues of impartiality and credibility.

In most cases involving divorce suits, the judges take into consideration the length of time the couple have been living together as man and wife. The judges also take into account whether there are children in the marriage. Once these factors have been sorted out, the husband in the case is asked to submit his expenses that he has incurred over his wife. He may claim in excess of what he has actually incurred on the wife. In a case of this nature, the wife challenges the account as inaccurate. The man may have included all gifts and services to her and to the members of her lineage. In most cases, the wife would have brought with her the full brideprice. When she is called upon she would tender this before the judges and will be asked to pay a sum fixed by the judges towards the husband's expenses. Whatever the amount of claim, it is limited to ₦100 and the judges rarely award to a person the full amount claimed from the woman, particularly if the couple have been living together for a length of time and if there are children involved in the marriage.

When land dispute occurs, either between two individuals within the same lineage, or as is common between two lineages, it is the practice for one party to call as his witness the quarter chief responsible for the area concerned. The chief is expected to be impartial as he does not wish to create bad feelings between people

in the same lineage, whatever he does, in the end his evidence may seem to support the party that calls him as a witness. It is normal practice for him to have inspected the land before the court hearing and will then tell the court what he has seen.

When the bench of judges is large, some of their members are deputed to visit the land. For instance, this took place in a highly celebrated land dispute between Illasha people (Ekiti Province) and Omuo people (then still in Akoko Province), which was known as one of the most protracted land cases that Omuo has ever experienced. The dispute began in 1930. However, in 1956, the court decided to inspect the land. The inspection party included the Assistant Divisional Advisers of Ekiti and Owo Divisions, the Surveyors of both Divisions, delegates from Illasha and Omuo and <sup>the</sup> Oba Zaki of Arigidi, the last one, "whose immense knowledge of the area was no doubt, invaluable to the party". Their report was later submitted to the court including the sketch and survey of the land in dispute.

In their report to the court, the chiefs (or rather one of their number so deputed) tell of their itinerary to the land in question, of its situation and quality, of the number of permanent trees (oil palms, kola or cocoa) found, of its boundary marks. They also give the statements made to them by the local chief and by parties, their witnesses and kinsmen, reporting not only on the facts deduced but also on the demeanour of the people.

In reaching their conclusions the judges take into consideration not only the evidence given in court but their knowledge of the norms of the society and of the general pattern of its land tenure - and in some cases, one or more of the judges may have a detailed knowledge of the area in which lies the disputed land.

They will probably have heard through other channels much of the background of the quarrel between the contesting parties. In giving its judgement the court first summarises the evidence, stating what facts it accepts and what it rejects as unreliable (cf. Lloyd 1962). Land cases often take longer to reach final decision than other cases, particularly if they are taken on appeal to a higher court- in this case to Ado-Ekiti.

At the same time the traditional associations such as the Ogbomi and Egungun have lost their political functions and have become ceremonial societies. The influence of the chiefs and elders has waned and is often less than the new elite of educated men and women in the community. Moreover, the new elite of teachers, police and other literate functionaries in the community, are often strangers in the town and subject to fairly frequent transfer. As a result, they are less committed to specifically local government and show greater interest in central politics (c.f. also Lloyd, 1953c). An effect of their growing influence is the pulling of Omuo-Ekiti further into the mainstream of national politics.

#### (e) Emergence of Modern Political Parties

In the above paragraphs I have pointed out that local government system was introduced to Nigeria during the colonial era. In this section, however, I intend to push the discussion further by explaining the role the Action Group, as a political party, played in the lives of the people of the Western Region. What I intend to do is to look at how the formation of the Action Group in the Western Region had its offshoot from the traditional association called the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a basically Yoruba Cultural Organisation, the latter having been organised along the lines of lineage organisation. Although my subject matter is the Omuo-Ekiti, the community can no longer be discussed in isolation. What happens in the capital of the country usually seeps through the whole country in the end, particularly now that communication is improving.

With the colonisation of Nigeria by the British and indirect rule, there was a gradual awakening of political consciousness by the people, particularly the educated ones. The introduction, later, of local government system heightened this consciousness. Nigeria, also, did not close her eyes to the events taking place in other countries, especially Ghana. Nationalist desire to free the country from foreign rule was a strong motive underlying the emergence of political parties. Naturally, as the South had more educated people than the North, the struggle was spearheaded by the politicians in the South. In the 1930s there had sprung up two political parties, the Nigeria Youth Movement and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NYM and NNDF). The two parties fought for

the Africanisation of the civil service, and for the abolition of discriminative practices against Africans which were then rampant in the governmental and commercial life of the country during the colonial era.

When Dr. Azikwe returned to Nigeria from abroad in 1937, he came with his ideas about new nationalism and New Africa. He had the choice of joining either the NYM or the NNDP. After some consideration he chose to join the former organisation. It must be pointed out at this stage that neither party was a sectional nor regional in base but nationalistic in ideology and had a wide following particularly in the South and in the Middle Belt of the North. Dr. Azikwe brought with him a propaganda technique which was new in politics and journalism in Nigeria, and which further boosted the popularity of the Nigerian Youth Movement and disarrayed its opponents. However, before long, it became apparent that Dr. Azikwe was more interested in journalism, which he took up by becoming the Managing Director of "West African Pilot" a daily newspaper based in Lagos. He soon used this medium to attack his colleagues in the NYM with whom he disagreed ideologically.

In 1941, Dr Azikwe resigned from the NYM and all the Easterners excepting a handful of non-Ibo intellectuals, left the organisation, but the Movement was still strong in Ibadan. In the Movement at this time was also another important Nigerian personality, Chief Awolowo who was based in Ibadan. In 1947 the Ibadan Branch of the Movement was dissolved for lack of support and enthusiasm. The break-up and dissolution of the NYM and the ineffectiveness of its opposing party - the NNDP - was the beginning of the formation of regional parties.

I had mentioned at the beginning of this discussion that the founding of the Action Group as a political party in the Western Region is closely linked with another cultural organisation, also in the West - the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. My reasons for saying this will be explicit as the discussion progresses. In 1944(August), Chief Awolowo left Nigeria for the United Kingdom as a student. In 1945, less than a year after he reached England, he gathered together a group of Yoruba, mostly students, and founded a Yoruba organisation in London, named the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (meaning 'A Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa'). According to Chief Awolowo, as one of the founding fathers, the aims of the association were divided into

two categories in regard respectively to: a) Yorubaland, and  
b) Nigeria. The following is a synoptic analysis of the aim of  
the association:

Yorubaland:

- 1) To study fully its political problems, combat the disintegrating forces of tribalism, stamp out discrimination within the group and against minorities, and generally infuse the idea of a single nationality throughout the region:
- 2) To study its economic resources, ascertain its potentialities, and advise as to the wisest utilisation of its wealth, so as to ensure abundance and prosperity for its people:
- 3) To plan for the improvement of educational facilities both in content and extent, to explore the means of introducing mass education promptly and efficiently, and to foster the study of Yoruba language, culture and history:
- 4) To promote the social welfare of Yorubaland, combat the canker of superstition and ignorance, spread the knowledge of medical relief and stimulate the provision of hospitals, maternity homes and suchlike amenities.

Nigeria:

- 1) To co-operate in the fullest measure with other regions to see that the aims set out in (a) above are applied to the whole country:
- 2) To aid and encourage similar groups in other regions in every way possible to achieve these ideals (Awo, 1960:168-9).

From its inception, the AG was heavily backed both financially and morally, by the Obas, Chiefs and important people in the West. These dignitaries saw the AG as the party to cater for the Yoruba people. Therefore the vigour and energy put into its organisation both in villages, towns and cities, ensured that the basis of unity and organising the party must begin from the lineage level, elders and quarter chiefs. Their co-operation was essential for the success of the organisation. At the same time, the same dignitaries who had supported Egbe Omo Oduduwa, were the founders of the AG. Moreover, it was the same membership in both organisations except that the AG broadened its base to the grass roots in order to win mass support.



The success of the AG. in later years was primarily because of the support it derived from the Oba, the chiefs, lineage heads, elders and the various associations which are culturally based in Yorubaland.

In the Omuo-Ekiti context, the Oba of the community, like his counterparts in the Yoruba land, was a supporter of Egbe Omo Oduduwa, and when the AG. was founded he and his chiefs together with the lineage heads and elders became the recruiting agents for the party. It was the beginning of political campaign on modern lines as far as the community was concerned. Although the emphasis had shifted from the lineage as the basis for political action, yet no political party could win mass support in the community at that time without the support of the lineage heads, chiefs and elders.

(f) Continuity of Traditional apparatus

It will be observed from the foregoing paragraphs that in spite of the introduction of modern constitutional form of government into the Omuo-Ekiti polity there is the continued need for traditional values in the day-to-day running of the community. This means that there is a blending of traditional as well as the modern apparatus. It will be difficult to discard the traditional values, since modern forms need the latter for the smooth running of the community.

In my analysis of Omuo-Ekiti political structure I have unduly placed much emphasis on the roles and functions of the Oba, the lineage heads, the chiefs and the community's elders. There are other categories in the society whose co-operation and support is essential for the orderly running of the town's affairs and who actually participate in the political as well as the judicial administration of the community. For example, there is the Egbe, the women chiefs and the Ogboni society, to a lesser extent. It would be relevant to mention, even though briefly, their importance in the political structure of Omuo-Ekiti.

Egbe (Age-set) has many functions among which it acts as an association for mutual help, policing function as well as sharing in the political function of the town. During the traditional period the egbe in Omuo-Ekiti and perhaps in the whole Ekiti, reinforced rather than undermining the authority of the lineage. As I have pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, in the traditional period, the egbe defended the community in times of war with outside enemies. They were regarded as the army of the community.

As well as defending the community against external aggression, the egbe today still plays an important role in the administration of justice in the society even though there appear to be a gradual decrease in the demand for this type of role with the emergence of modern judicial structure. One of the primary functions of the egbe today is to carry out the communal duties in the nature of clearing the market places and the streets including the bush paths, repairing damaged bridges, policing the quarters and help to maintain law and order and rethatching or repairing the head chief's house. Any person or persons caught who have violated the society's norms and values, the offenders are brought to justice by the agba ilu at the instigation of the egbe doing the policing work. There is a division of labour among the various egbe in regards to the functions performed in the respective quarters and those which affect the society as a whole. When there is a project in the community in which the various egbe have to participate, the Oba gives gives the directives through the quarter chiefs thus the latter conveying to the egbe what need be done and where. In this case the quarter chiefs act as the intermediary between the Oba and the masses.

Perhaps more important for our purpose in this section is the new development in the political sphere as it affects women in the community. The women chiefs in particular are enjoying some political prestige. There are women chiefs in all the six quarters of the community.

The titles which many of the women bear are lineage and non-rotatory titles, other titles are national in the sense that these titles are conferred on the women by the Oba and strictly speaking, are not titles of a particular lineage . A title which falls within the latter category is the Olowu. Olowu, whosoever bears the title at any one given time is the supreme head of all Omuo-Ekiti women. The present holder lives in the Kota section of the community. She is the intermediary between the Oba and the women and ~~she~~ is the spokesman for them. It is by tradition that Olowu must be consulted by the Oba in most if not in all matters that affect the community as a whole and in particular, matters that concern women in general.

The Olowu has her senior chiefs to whom ~~she~~ delegates functions as well as some powers. Both men and women chiefs attend town meetings together. For a woman to be a chief is an attribute which enhances her status. In a traditionally oriented society as Omuo is, it is regarded as a radical change for women to obtain and enjoy the limited political advantages that I have mentioned. The educated women in the community are, however, arguing that the advantages are not substantial enough to offset the enormous disadvantages to which women had been subjected in the past. An example often cited by the women radicals concerned the situation that prevailed in the 1960s during the local government politics in the community. Then there were 36 councillors in the council-all men with not a single woman on the council to represent women's interests. The women now ask themselves why this should have been the case. To an outsider trying to find out the answer, it was due <sup>to</sup> apathy. These very women were not conscious of their rights at the time hence, they failed to exercise their political rights-the right to register their names as candidates for the election. As a result, the men held all the seats on the council while the women were, as usual, relegated to the domestic roles.

If the present change in the political status of women can be regarded as revolutionary, there is still plenty of room for improvement. There is one particular area where I think there is a need for adjustment in order to bring equality between men and women in the society. This is in the judiciary of which the Oba is the president of the community's customary court. Whenever the court is in session he is flanked on either side by two male chiefs. During the time that I spent in the court there was not a woman sitting on the bench either as associate judge or deputising for the Oba in his absence. As expected men are anxious to explain away the reason for lack of women judges in the usual traditional manner. As far as the man on the street is concerned no woman is yet ready for this very important role. Men are content to sit on the judgement bench over women but it must not, at least as yet, be the other way round. In spite of this it is true to assert that women are a strong force and play a vital role in the political administration of Omuo-Ekiti society.

Finally, it is appropriate to mention one other organisation whose influence on both political and judicial structure was immense during the traditional period. This is the Egbe Ogboni. If its functions had confused many people in the past it is because its deliberations were surrounded by a shroud of secrecy. The present day Ogboni in the community is the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity.<sup>1</sup> Its important functions are mainly economic as well as ritual. It is hard to say how much influence the organisation exercises on both political and judicial system. Although the Oba is the ritual head of it, its influence on the political as well as the judicial administration is virtually intangible.

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<sup>1</sup> This differs markedly from that as described by Bascom (1944), however, see also Morton-Williams (1955), whose observations in his Oyo studies corroborate my data on the Omuo-Ekiti findings.

(g). Conclusion

I began the discussion in this chapter by emphasising the role of the king as someone who was traditionally regarded as a divine person and the high priest of his kingdom. The chiefs who represent the lineages in their respective quarters are chosen by the unanimous decision of the lineage as a corporate group. At this stage I wish to highlight the nature of political changes and look at their relation to the economic developments I have outlined in earlier chapters.

The beginning of change can be traced to the introduction of local government to Omuro-Ekiti. Before then, the community's political organisation was the affairs of the lineage. The lineage head (Oloriebi) was usually the spokesman for the people in the ward or quarter. However, when the new system evolved, there was a shift from the lineage though not completely - for political discussion to the community's hall where the affairs are discussed by the elected representatives - the councillors - mainly the educated minority in the community. The elected councillors also include the chiefs if they have been elected or sometimes chosen as ad hoc members to the council. The king is still the president of the council. However, a chief who wishes to be elected to the council must stand for election just like any other person.

Modern political developments have affected the traditional organisation. In the first place, the advent of party politics and the introduction of representation has brought some changes. The kin group is no longer the basis for political action and organisation as it was when each lineage was represented by the lineage head. In a medium-sized community as Omuro-Ekiti is, kinship affiliation and residential patterns still coincide so that representation may still cover the same units of aggregation of these.

Despite the modern constitutional framework and apparatus which are now used in implementing the community's political affairs, there is in fact, a degree of continuity of traditional norms. For example, the lineage is still relevant and many cases are settled within it. It is only serious cases which are referred to the customary court. Moreover, cases that are heard and settled

in the court are dealt with by applying traditional apparatus. In this respect, both tradition and modern methods are used.

As already stressed, the success of recruiting masses for a political party depends on the relationship established between traditional rulers and political leaders. Recruitment within a lineage of political supporters is mainly the function of the lineage head, elders and chiefs. This indicates the relevance of traditional apparatus.

These changes that have occurred cannot be divorced from the economic changes already discussed. The introduction of cash crop means access to money and more affluence. Better and free circulation of cash indicates that political authority cannot any longer be the prerogative of the elders and the natural rulers. Young people who at the same time are affluent can challenge the traditional authority either by standing for election and win a seat on the council which automatically gives them the authority and power to influence and make decisions that affect the community, or to challenge any decisions which they think are not popular and which may be imposed on them by traditional rulers. In this way a kind of democracy has been created as a result of changes brought about by economic innovation.

P A R T                      T W O

K I N S H I P      O R G A N I S A T I O N

KINSHIP ORGANISATIONCHAPTER 3COMPOSITION OF KINSHIP GROUPSa) The Household in its physical setting

Theoretically Omuc young men become independent of their parents at marriage. This independence is emphasised by the Omuc-Ekiti tradition that a young man should have a house of his <sup>OWN</sup> before thinking of marriage. In the past when a young man was unable to afford a house of his own before he got married, he stayed in his parents' house until such time that he could build a house for himself and his wife. The economic prosperity brought about by the cocoa innovation seems to have enhanced the possibility for many young men to fulfill the traditional ideal of having their own house before getting married. In this chapter I shall try to describe the physical structure of this traditional homestead, the kinship ties of its inmates and the interpersonal relations which obtained within it.

The traditional houses in Omuc-Ekiti consisted of mud and thatched rectangular huts, surrounded by rectangular walls of mud. Each compound was clearly demarcated from the others, though sometimes compounds belonging to members of the same cluster of a lineage might have joint side-fences linking them.

The size of the hut built was dependent upon the number of people in the household. If the man was polygynous he would build a bigger hut to accommodate himself, the wives and the children. All the huts were divided into two or more apartments by wall of mud, in such a way that each hut had a living room, upepe, and one or more iyara isun, bed room. The typical hut for a monogamous family comprised two bedrooms opening into a common living room (Figs. 1 and 2). Every house had a kitchen, adiro, and a bathroom, ile iwe. In a polygynous setting each wife had a kitchen to herself. All huts opened into a yard and were surrounded by a rectangular fence about six feet high.

Developments having been continually bringing changes in housing styles. Towards the end of last century saw a different fashion for wooden houses built on two storeys with wide eaves and balconies. More recently concrete houses and storeyed brickhouses have been erected by private individuals, but the majority of the houses are



still made of mud plastered with cement. The mud houses also now differ considerably in size and complexity. The concrete houses are those of the few elites in the community, the school teacher and mission authorities. A few individual farmers who have made good from cocoa cultivation are today building houses made of either concrete blocks or burnt bricks. In both Ijoro and Iworo quarters I counted 32 houses made of bricks and six of concrete belonging to farmers; however, these are the exceptions rather than the rule. Otherwise most of the houses are still made of mud but plastered with cement.

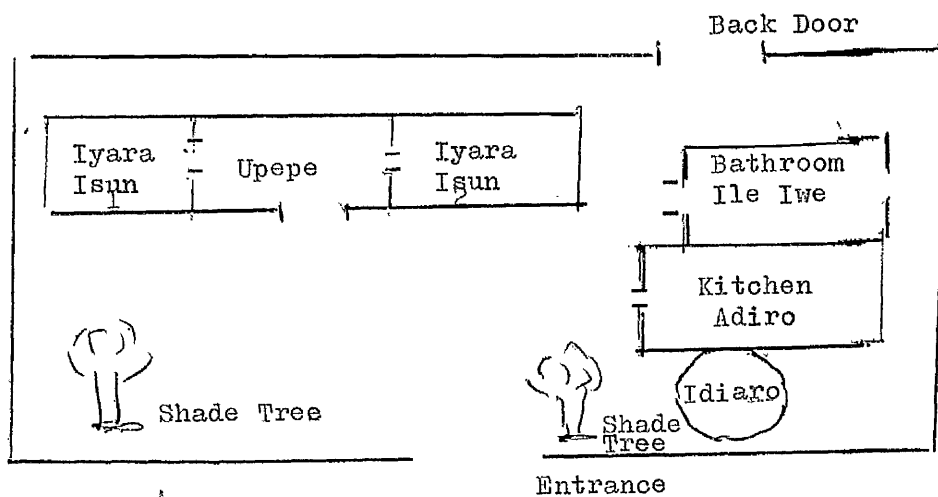


FIG: 1 The plan of a homestead: monogamous family (1)

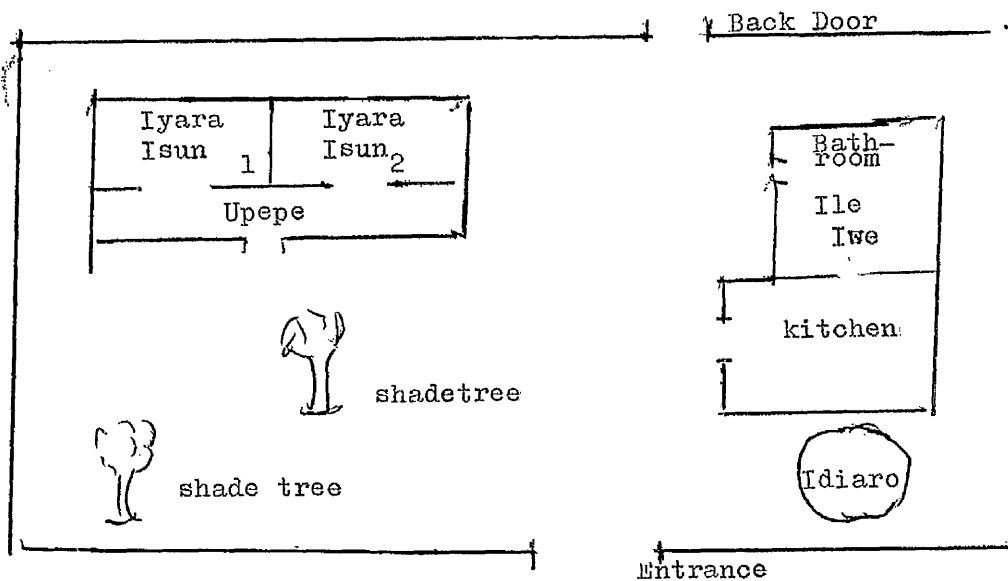


FIG: 2 . The plan of the Homestead: Monogamous family (2)

Whatever form taken by the house, the kitchen occupies a special position. It is usually built on the leeward side of the main huts to prevent smoke from disturbing the latter and since winds are normally South-Westerly, it was built East of the huts. For the wife the kitchen is the centre of her life. It signifies her status as a wife. Foodstuffs, cooking utensils and other household materials were kept there. Besides using it for cooking and dining she received her visitors there and her neatness was judged by the way she kept it.

But in a tropical climate, especially in dry weather, it was often more convenient to be out of doors, and it was the open space in front of the kitchen, especially if the roof projected over it, which provided shade for visitors. Shade trees are also planted inside and outside the compound to provide shelter. The most popular tree was called odan while the next most popular was the acacia tree. Open hospitality was an obligation of Omuo social life, and the living space was flexible enough to make visitors welcome. A man entertained his visitors in his upepe, living room, and also under the shade provided by the eaves and trees. Some children slept with their mother in her iyara isun, her bedroom, others in upepe. In a monogamous family the wife's apartment fell into the hands of her children, since she often spent her nights in her husband's. In a polygynous house a woman may spend her turn with the husband either in her own room or in his.

In many houses in the community one found square or circular structures of mud about five feet in diameter and four feet high with roofs of thatch. These were idi aro which were used by women for dyeing clothes. On the opposite side one could find a similar structure, used as a shelter for poultry in the night.

In many quarters there are two different styles of housing. In the original village residential areas and the older sections of the settlements known as adugbo ebi, lineage homes, lack of space made spatial expansion of compounds difficult. This was because the lineage founders acquired these residential areas for a much smaller number of members than exist today, and all suitable land nearby had been taken by other lineages. The result is that for some time now many compounds in the Adugbo ebi are already crowded to capacity, and even beyond, through the building of more and more huts. Compounds here are small and closely packed together.

As already noted, this overcrowding made it necessary for some members of the lineage to move out of the adugbo ebi and found new residential areas on their lineage lands outside the original home. These new residential areas, called adugbo tuntun, may be as far as one mile from the adugbo ebi, though many are much nearer. The distance of a man's adugbo tuntun from his adugbo ebi is dependent on the distance of available and suitable lineage land from the adugbo ebi. In the old residential area lineages were localized, in the sense that the houses of members occupied a continuous stretch of land and were visibly demarcated from those of other lineages. Outside the adugbo ebi the lineages had bush and farmland scattered here and there within the village boundary. As a result of moving from the old areas, it was some of the bush areas which have now been converted into adugbo tuntun residences. One effect of this was to disturb the localized nature of lineages. Since some lineages had bush land in more than one place, there was no rule as to where a man should build his adugbo tuntun, it was possible to find many colonies of the same lineage in different sectors of the community. Because land was normally abundant in the adugbo ebi. Here every homestead had a large expanse of land round it planted with such crops as okra, maize, vegetables of all kinds. Adugbo tuntun settlements were not regarded as independent ones, but as sections of the parent village or town.

Not all lineages had enough land for use of their surplus population in this way. This applied especially to Igo, Inegun, Iworo, Iwada, and a section of Odoyi. When all these lineages moved to the new settlement near Omuo-Oke to form Araromi they found that most of the lands were being in use by the Omuo-Oke people. As a result, there was overcrowding which had no outlet to any available land nearby, and in case of acute land shortage complete emigration from that part of the town was the only solution. In Araromi the compounds were much smaller and the population very dense. The contrast between the spatial distribution of the houses in Iworo and Araromi can be illustrated by comparison of the number of houses in them. In 1974 there were 441 houses spread over the two square miles at Iworo, and no less than 200 squeezed into Araromi's whose total area was a little less than 1/12 square miles.

In the following discussion every building, whether it is a single house, fenced or unfenced, mud or concrete, which is looked upon by the inhabitants themselves as a unit, is termed a dwelling. The essential features of a dwelling were its separateness and independence. A dwelling was separate and independent if a person or group of persons can isolate themselves from others in the community for the purpose of sleeping, co-operating in its upkeep, preparing and taking their meals or protecting themselves from hazards of climate such as harmatan. The inmates from the dwelling group, and it is this unit I shall refer to as the household.

#### b) The Composition of the Domestic Group

In every society kinship ties between members of a household are determined by the rules of post-marital residence. However, the uncertainties and complexities of social life make it impossible for the kinship composition of every dwelling in a community to be uniform. Thus in a patrilineal society with ideally virilocal residence, this ideal is never fully realised. This is because in a society with limited welfare services to care for orphans, the old, the disabled, the poor and the unemployed, the relationships entailing an obligation to provide shelter and food extend beyond the ideal of a man, his wife and unmarried children. There is also the question of the degree of freedom of choice of post-marital residence. Nevertheless the actual residence pattern will approximate in varying degrees to the ideal. The extent to which this approximation had been attained can only be determined by quantitative analysis, which will be attempted in the following paragraphs.

My analysis is based on a random sample I took of 140 households in Iworo and 120 in Ijero quarters in May 1974. These households may be divided into those with male and those with female heads. The latter numbers 20 (14.2 per cent) in Iworo and 12 (10 per cent) in Ijero. The headship of households was determined in terms of age and authority structure. When married couples formed the nucleus of the household unit, the husband was taken as the automatic head. Where the household was built around an adult man he was taken as the head. The figures show some significant differences in the composition of households headed by men and those headed by women. These differences

will be considered presently.

In Iworo all except 18 of the 120 households headed by men were built around nuclear families, while 40 (about 33 per cent) were composed of the head's simple family alone. In fact the household consisting of a man, his wife and unmarried children was regarded by the Omuo as the ideal, and this is still largely the case today, though it was not always realized in practice. From the remaining 66 per cent of the male-headed households it was possible to discover the kind of relationships which in practice seem to carry with them the obligations for the provision of food and shelter.

There were only five households in which the dependents were not kin of the head or any member of his family; four were headed by teachers, and the other by alejo, a stranger in the town. The unrelated dependents were described as omo odo, or attendants, all young boys and girls between the ages of eight and fourteen, who helped with the housework and attended school in return. The keeping of distant relatives and unrelated children as Omo odo of this kind was a common practice among middle class families throughout Nigeria.

Kinsfolk in the household who were not members of the head's own simple family seemed to fall into four main groups: head's siblings and their children, head's parents, head's children's children, and affines. There were only three old mothers and two old fathers living as dependents of adult sons. The men were incapacitated and were being looked after by their sons. All the women were widows. Other old women living as dependants were eight affines, widows of heads' brothers, but not remarried to the latter, however. They were living there because they had no adult sons or daughters to care for them. Their husbands died when they were too old to maintain households by themselves, and they decided to remain in their marital homes.

The dependants of ten heads included relatives of their wives, mostly school children whose parents were away in Ibadan. It was stated that they would return to their parents' compounds when the latter returned. In fact, I was still around when some of the parents came back, and they were immediately joined by these children. Other affines included relatives of the head's wives married from other towns, who were living in Iworo during term-time because

of the educational facilities in Omuo. The boarding-out of children of school-age with relatives of any kind is quite common in Nigeria wherever there is a good school. From these figures it is clear that the attachment of young affines to these households was the result of special conditions such as the absence of their parents and the quest for educational facilities. Their presence in these households was purely temporary.

Twentyfive heads had younger brothers and sisters living with them, either because their parents were away on trading expeditions or because their parents were divorced or their mothers widowed. Most of these dependants were unmarried. This was certainly true of all the youths. Two of the sisters had children but were unmarried, while six were married to men who were abroad. The latter were temporary cases, because they would go back to their husbands' houses as soon as they returned. All the women, both married and unmarried, who were living with brothers admitted that they were there only because their mothers were not alive or were not in town at that time. They would have preferred living with parents to living with their married brothers. This view underlines further the tensions which mark the relations between a woman and her brothers' wives, especially <sup>if</sup> they happen to live together.

TABLE 4. Kinship ties of Household Members with Male Heads 1974  
(Members of Nuclear Family excluded)

<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Iworo</u>		<u>Ijero</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Parents	5	4	3	3.2
Siblings and their Children	50	40	34	35.8
Affines	18	14.4	12	12.6
Other Relatives	22	17.6	10	10.5
Children's children	30	24	36	37.9
Totals	<u>125</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Siblings' children living with male heads were fairly equally divided between brothers' and sisters' children. Thirty-six households included such relatives. The only households composed of members resembling an extended family were those in which married and unmarried children and their children were living with the head.

There were forty households of this kind at Iworo and thirty-three at Ijero, and in all but one the head's children were daughters. The only man in this category was a young man of 24 whose wife had died leaving a two year old baby who was being cared for by his aged mother. He said he did not want to live alone and so had left his own house to live with his parents. Six of the daughters did not want to live with their husband because he had his first wife with him.

It was quite common for a young wife to remain in her parental home for some time after marriage, especially if her husband already had other wives living with him. Others preferred to have the first child in the parents' home before moving to the husband's, because it was thought that the first travail needed great attention, for which the young mother's own mother's presence at the time of the pains was considered necessary. Many such women left their parental homes soon after the first birth, while others stayed on if there was no pressure from the husbands. A wife was also likely to remain in her parents' home if she was the youngest daughter of parents who were old and needed assistance in the home. Other women found with their children in their parents' homes were those whose husbands had left them behind when going abroad.

In the 36 households at Ijero composed entirely of members of the nuclear family there were six married daughters and four married young men. The four young men had just married and built their own houses, but they wanted their wives to move in before they left their parents. The married women were in identical situations. They were newly-wed girls who were preparing to leave soon for their husbands' houses. There was also five young women living with their parents but spending the night and one or two days of the week with their husbands. Sleeping with the husband in this way was quite common with the abandonment of the seclusion ceremony. Traditionally, immediately after the marriage, a wife had to live in seclusion in her husband's house for about three months. Nowadays the bride instead starts sleeping with her husband while still in her parents' house, before finally moving to his house.

Not all households were dependent on male heads, and it is now necessary to examine the composition of those dependent on females. There were 20 such households, 14.2 per cent of the total sample at Iworo while that of Ijero were 11 per cent of the total sample. The most striking feature about them was the difference in the type of kinfolk composing their membership. Only 30 per cent of the 201 dependants were the heads' own children, as compared with 61.1 per cent in households with male heads. On the other hand, the heads' grandchildren formed 48.7 per cent, compared with 24 per cent in male headed households.

These differences are to be explained partly by the ages of female household heads. Of 20 such household heads only seven were below forty years of age. As a result many of their children had been married and moved into their marital homes. The ages of the female heads affected their overall marital status too. Eleven of them were either widows or divorcees. Five had their husbands away in Ibadan, while three, though married, were living in their parents' houses, where they became heads because their parents had died and their brothers had established their own households. Two women were living with their husbands in houses built by themselves. In both cases the husbands were not natives of Omuo. Uxorilocal marriage was not only disapproved, it was considered very contemptible for a husband to move into his wife's house. In only one case did I find a native of Omuo in uxori-local marriage.

But a woman need not be widowed or divorced before finding herself at the head of a household. Many had remained in their parents' homes after marriage for one or other reasons mentioned above and became household heads after the death of their parents. As we have seen, this was likely to happen when a woman's husband had another wife living with him. Such women did not have to set up their own households. They emerged as heads when the death of their parents had left them in charge of the houses.



TABLE 5. Female-headed Households: Classification of  
Members' Ties with Head 1974

<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Iworo</u>		<u>Ijero</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Own children	60	30.0	103	41.2
Daughters' Children	75	37.3	67	27.0
Son's children	23	11.4	17	7.0
Siblings and their children	11	5.3	25	10.0
Affines	20	10.0	20	8.1
Husbands	6	3.0	11	4.4
Others	6	3.0	6	2.3
Totals	<u>201</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>249</u>	<u>100.0</u>

As with the male-headed households, all the adult children were either unmarried daughters with children or married daughters and their children who were living with their mothers, either because their husbands left the town for abroad or because they were second wives.

The marital status of the female head also accounted for some of the differences between the figures of their dependents and those of the male-headed houses. Only 10 per cent of the persons dependent on female households were affines. This was slightly over half the percentage of affines in male-headed households. One of the reasons for this was that a widow or divorcee who had young children in special cases brought these children by previous marriages to her new husband's house. But it was only temporary in the case of a divorcee as such children will normally return to their legal father when they were old enough to do so. A man also accepted relatives of his wife as dependents when they were in difficulties. Some women extended the same hospitality to their husbands' kinsmen, but the decisive factor in the difference between the figures seemed to be the large proportion of female heads who were divorcees and widows. A divorced woman living independently, or who had returned to her parents' home, was most unlikely to accept as dependants in her house any relatives of her divorced husband other than her own children. Similarly, only special circumstances would make it necessary for a widow to have the relatives of her dead husband as dependants. Consequently the few affines in these houses were found where the heads had been managing the houses for their absent husbands.

Daughters' children in female-headed households exceeded sons' children in a ratio of about three to one. This was probably because most of these were children of the daughters of the head who were themselves living with their mothers. An adult son, if he can help it did not live in his parents' house, and his children lived with their grandmother only if he himself had gone abroad, had died or had been asked by the mother to allow some of his children to live with her - quite a traditional custom which was commonly practised.

TABLE 6: Age and Marital Status of Female Household Heads: Iworo 1974

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Unmarried</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Total</u>
20-24	0	0	0	0	0
25-30	0	0	0	0	0
31-40	2	11	2	0	15
41-50	1	14	0	5	20
51-60	0	1	7	9	17
61-	0	4	26	2	32
Total	<u>3</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>84</u>

TABLE 7: Age and Marital Status of Female Household Heads: Ijem 1974

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Unmarried</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Total</u>
20-24	0	3	0	0	3
25-30	0	3	0	0	3
31-40	0	0	0	0	0
41-50	0	11	3	0	14
51-60	1	8	16	0	25
61-	1	16	14	0	31
Total	<u>2</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>76</u>

It would seem that dependants of female household heads were predominantly females. In Iworo there were 151 females to 50 males and in Ijero the ratio was 190 to 59. In contrast there were in male-headed households in Iworo 225 females to 200 males and in Ijero 188 females to 121 males. One reason for this difference was that Omuo believed a boy can only be properly trained by a man, otherwise he will grow up to be asole, one unlearned in the skills that make the perfect man. Parents therefore did their best to see that, whatever the circumstances their sons did not live long with women. Grandmothers especially had the reputation of being too soft to their grandchildren. This tenderness was considered detrimental to the development of a man. A girl did not face similar problems, since every household, whether or not it was headed by a woman, had a woman to look after her feminine interests.

The preceding paragraphs lead us to some general conclusions about the composition of Omuo households. One fact that stands out clearly is the absence, as a unit, of extended family of parents and their sons and the latter's children. Wherever the household existed as a three-generation unit members of the second generation were daughters of the head. This was in accord with the independence attained by men on marriage and the values associated with it. One of the important considerations that qualified a young man for marriage was the possession of his own house, if at all possible. On marriage, therefore, he automatically established his own household and became independent of his parents. Marriage was thus obviously virilocal rather than patrilocal, in the sense that a wife on marriage moved into her husband's house rather than his father's house.

In Omuo, a patrilineal society with ideally virilocal marriage, the usual form of extended family would have been a patriarchal one with married sons and their families under the authority of their father. This was not commonly practised. The three-generation pattern, in which married daughters and their children lived with their parents, <sup>was</sup> largely a temporary phenomenon. It became permanent only in response to a special contingency, as when a last-born daughter was asked by the father to live with him in his old age. Though independence in men was cherished it was clear that a similar value was not put on women setting up their own households. All

All women heads of households found themselves in that position because they were widows, divorced, or past childbearing. All had at one time or another depended on a husband. The only exceptions were those who could not, or did not want to, move to their husbands' houses because they were second wives. The need for the dependence of young married women was also shown by the fact that whenever circumstances made it impossible for them to live in the households of their husbands, they attached themselves to their parents or brothers for moral support. Here it may perhaps be necessary to explain the case of the six young women household heads found in Ijero and fifteen at Iworo who were below 40 years (Table 16). The six young women at Ijero were all living alone with their children in their husbands' houses. At the time of enquiry the husbands were away in Ile-Oluji as seasonal labourers on cocoa farms. It was likely that the husbands would return to their wives before long. The case of the fifteen young women at Iworo was more difficult to explain. They were in their late thirties and most of them were married. Two, as already explained, had married alejo, strangers, who were living with them, so that in actual fact the wives were rather owners of the homestead than heads of the household. Three of the fifteen were widows living in their dead husbands' houses. One was a divorcee, and as a successful trader had built herself a house. The remainder were either unmarried or were keeping the house for their absent husbands.

TABLE 16: Age Distribution of Household Heads 1974

Age Group	Male Household Heads				Female Household Heads			
	<u>Iworo</u>		<u>Ijero</u>		<u>Iworo</u>		<u>Ijero</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
20-24	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	3.9
25-30	2	2.5	4	4.3	0	0.0	3	3.9
31-40	32	28.6	22	23.6	15	18.0	0	0.0
41-50	22	19.6	20	21.5	20	23.8	14	18.4
51-60	25	22.3	16	17.4	17	19.2	25	33.0
61-	31	27.2	30	33.2	32	39.0	31	40.8
Totals	112	100.0	92	100.0	84	100.0	76	100.0

The comparatively large number of female-headed households in a patrilineal society calls for further explanation. As far as numbers are concerned, and given that divorce and widowhood were important factors making necessary the establishment of independent households by women, this high proportion may be attributed to the reluctance of old widows to remarry and the relatively high frequency of divorce. But since an independent household presupposes economic self-support, it would seem that women cannot maintain their household unless they were economically self-sufficient.

The economic enterprise of women has been indicated, and will be discussed more fully later. Here it is sufficient to point out that the fact that a woman did not need to depend much on her husband in economic matters made it easier for women who had nothing more to gain from marriage because they were old to live on their own. Even then, it would seem that economic self-sufficiency alone was not crucial here. A woman did not have to pass the menopause, be divorced or widowed before embarking on independent economic activity. Women of all ages and of all marital states did indulge in one economic activity or other. This being the case, the fact that setting up, and living in, independent households was largely limited to women of advanced age, mostly without husbands, can be explained by the ideal of post-marital residence. Where women set up households or managed existing ones this was not due to a desire for independence. It was because their marriage ties had been broken and they had no need to attach themselves to men. A wife should live with her husband in the latter's house. Where this had not happened it was because the husband had either left the town for abroad or died.

The composition of households with female heads suggests that they will be more unstable than those headed by men. In other words there was likely to be more frequent change of personnel as well as of the kinship ties linking the members. Acutally instability was inherent in all households. We have seen that children, both sons and daughters, left their parents on marriage; therefore a group compased of parents and offspring was not likely

to be a stable one. The instability in male-headed households was alleviated by the tradition of virilocal residence, partly because, when divorced or widowed and when his older children had left, a man could, if he so wished, marry other young women as wives and produce more children. There is no way out for a woman. The instability of a woman's household was increased by the fact that this was a patrilineal society, in which the children of a widow or divorced woman could expect less from the estate of their mother's lineage than their father's. But a woman herself had no rights in her deceased or divorced husband's lineage property. Therefore in most cases, if a widow or divorced woman remained unmarried, she must, as a rule, go back to live on her own lineage land, and her male children, having less to hope for there, left on marriage to set up their own homes on their own lineage land while the females left for their husbands' homes.

The discussion so far has shown that Omuo post-marital residence was essentially virilocal. This usually gives rise to two-generation households comprising parents and their unmarried children, with or without other dependants living with them. But the household group was not a static one. It grew, decayed and sometimes was reborn. It was therefore a cyclical system. In its ideal form, its life started from the establishment of a household by a man on his first marriage. It reached the height of its development after the wife or wives had finished their reproductive functions, and ended with the death of the last surviving spouse or the marriage of the man's last child, whichever was the later. But the ideal growth was not attained by all households. In many cases, in the course of its life-span some external circumstance brought persons outside the nuclear family into the group. The most important factor was introduced by the failure of some married daughters to follow the normal pattern of post-marital residence, so that although they were married they remained with their children in their parents' homes instead of joining their husbands. Another complication was introduced when divorced women and widows returned to join the households of their parents. Some of these daughters even grew up to become heads after their parents had died. But the important thing

was that these households, which later included the heads' married daughters and their children, also started with only members of the nuclear family.

Viewed from this angle the nuclear family and the domestic group of which it formed the core, were only the starting points in this growth cycle, and the other forms of domestic group, such as female-headed households and a man's household containing his married daughters and their children, may be regarded not as deviations but rather as phases in the cycle.

These findings are generally in line with the three phases of development of the domestic group formulated by Fortes (Introduction to Goody, ed., 1958:4-5. See also Fortes, 1949: 54-84). He holds that the domestic group not only grows but that its growth is cyclical. He mentions three phases of development after which growth may be restricted. The first he calls 'phase of expansion'. This lasts from the marriage of two persons and establishment of a household until the completion of their period of procreation. The second stage he calls 'the phase of dispersion and fission'. This begins with the marriage of the oldest child and continues until after all children are married. The last phase is 'the phase of replacement', which is marked by the death of the parents and the replacement in the structure of the family by the father's heir amongst the children.

These phases of development have been borne out to a large extent by my figures and findings. What they amount to in effect is that the term 'virilocal marriage' when applied to the Omuo residence pattern must refer only to the first phase. In the second and third phases the life experiences of the inmates begin to affect its structure. It ceases to be a unit comprising parents and their unmarried children only, for it is at this time that the head's daughters, if unsuccessful in their marriages, began to make their way back into their parental home, while others who failed to move to their husbands' homes added to the number. But it is difficult to fit into Fortes' scheme the case of a divorced woman or a widow who sets up her own household. It seems we have to regard this as another birth of a household because it does not develop from any previously established one. If so, then it is only here that we may speak of a deviation from the ideal residence pattern.

At this stage of the discussion it will be useful to examine a few actual cases of households at different stages of development in order to see how the processes I have described work out in practice:

#### Case No.1

Oke, a part-time farmer and trader of Iworo Quarter, was 56 in 1974. In 1954, when he was 36, he built his house of concrete just outside the old village site because his lineage's residential area was overcrowded. Living with him were his 26 year old wife and their three children between one and eight years. His household represents the ideal simple monogamous family type described.

#### Case No.2

The household of Ilesanmi Owoeye, 60 in 1974, was the largest in our sample at Ijero Quarter. He and his sixteen dependants were living in a house comprising six bedrooms. This was a house made of mud and thatch surrounded by a wall made of palm stalks. In this house was living Ilesanmi Owoeye himself, his three wives, six unmarried daughters, two unmarried sons and two married daughters and their children. The house of his eldest son, 28, opened into his through a gate in the wall which separated the two compounds.

Ilesanmi Owoeye's house represents a typical lineage house in the old section of the quarter, for Ilesanmi Owoeye was the head of the large Oya lineage of Ijero clan at Omuro. He first built his house about thirty years ago when he married the first wife. Next to his house was that of his father. The dividing fence between his house and that of his father was removed to merge the two into one when his father died ten years ago and he took control of the entire house. His mother and her co-wife were living there at first, but left for their parents' homes later. Ilesanmi Owoeye's mother was still alive in 1974.

Edun, Ilesanmi Owoeye's eldest daughter, 25, was married and had two children. She was living with her parents waiting for the return of her husband and co-wife from a temporary sojourn at Apomu— a cocoa belt region near Ibadan. Amoke, the third daughter (the second was not living in the house), was at this time spending leave at Omuro with her husband, a producer buyer at Owo, about 80 miles away. Ilesanmi Owoeye's ten children were all living with him. Ilesanmi Owoeye is a babalawo, a professional diviner belonging to the Ifa divination cult. Sick persons and those suffering from



misfortunes of any kind, or believed to be threatened by witches, were brought to him for diagnosis, treatment or advice. There were also in the house, just before the census was taken, novices whom he was training for qualification in the Ifa cult. I had the pleasure of living in his house for a week-end during the first period of my field work in 1974, that therefore put me right in the hub of Omuo social life. Despite his reputation as a diviner, Ilesanmi Owoeye could not be described as rich by local standards. Divination was bringing him a fluctuating income of between ₦1 and ₦6 a week. Occasionally he would get about ₦9 a week and sometimes nothing at all. He himself told me that but for the assistance he was getting from his wives he would find it very difficult to run his large household. His relative poverty was shown in the mud-thatched buildings found in his house. Houses are great symbols in Omuo. Concrete buildings or those built with burnt bricks with roofs of corrugated aluminium sheets are the goal of every man. They are the mark of prosperity. It is most unlikely that Ilesanmi Owoeye will ever build one. His first wife Ibijola, whom he married in 1936, was baking akara, bean bread. Half the product was being bought at home by the immediate neighbours, while the remainder was hawked around in the more distant neighbourhoods by her two young daughters. Every morning she would give a small parcel of eko, cooked corn meal, to each of the children in the house, including those of her co-wives, who were not really always happy about this gesture, which they regarded as simulated benevolence. Ibijola was self-supporting. Ilesanmi Owoeye told me that he didn't give her owo onje, household money, because 'she is rich'. The second wife, Aina was doing petty trading, dealing mainly in provisions such as milk, soap, biscuit, sardines, corn beef. Twenty four year old Mopelola, the third wife, had not yet engaged in any occupation, although she was already thinking about one. Meanwhile, she was the only one of the wives who was then looking to her husband for financial support.

### Case No.3

Abejoye, who was 60 in 1974, had a household consisting of her youngest daughter, the latter's children, and her eldest daughter's daughter and her baby. The present composition of the household came about as follows. Abejoye's husband died in 1939, when her youngest child was only two. For nearly five years she lived in his house with the children. Later she decided to remarry, and as this move

was opposed by his brother, who himself wanted to marry her, she was turned out of the house by her brother-in-law. She moved to her father's house, where her widowed mother was also living alone. Soon afterwards her eldest daughter Taiwo married a man from Ode, some 12 miles West of Omuo. In 1954, after Taiwo had only one child, Lola, her younger sister, who had reached puberty, visited her at Ode but died as soon as she returned to Omuo. Because of this, diviners said the dead did not approve of Taiwo's marriage. She was therefore divorced, and came back with her daughter to live with her mother. Taiwo had since left for Kabba, where she was trading; but her daughter, though unmarried, had a baby in 1974 by a school boy, and was still living in her grandmother's house. Ilori, Abejoye's youngest daughter, was married to a farmer and had three children by him. She was the farmer's fifth wife, and he said he had no room in his house for her.

#### Case No.4

Asake was living in her father's house with her youngest sister Tinubu. Also living in this house were Asake's three married daughters, Omotola, 25, Funke, 22 and Ope 20, and their children, Tinubu's three children between the ages of 2 and 8 were also there. This made a total of ten in the house. The household was formed in this way. When her mother died in the 1930s, Asake was the only female child old enough to look after her father and her younger siblings. She was soon to marry, but after the marriage her father asked the husband to allow her to remain with him. Her husband readily agreed, as he already had another wife living with him. Before her father died in 1948 all her brothers had married and established their own households. Asake therefore decided to make her father's house her permanent home. The only one of her siblings still living there was Tinubu. She had a child in 1952 when still a maid. The relationship with her lover was legalized later, but she left him and was in 1974 the concubine of a well-to-do transport owner who had no less than six wives before adding her to them. Asake engaged in all kinds of occupations, as a trader in kola nut, fish and rice. She was also engaged in some farming and planted such things as yams, maize and vegetables in her farm. Tinubu was an expert in the making of gari-powder or grain made from cassave tubers.

These four cases show the composition of the household group at different stages of development. Case one shows a household composed entirely of members of the nuclear family. That this house did not include any relative outside the nuclear family was due partly to the youth of its head and partly to the fact that both his parents were alive and his younger siblings were living with them. In fact, every household started with only members of the nuclear family had every potentiality of developing into a unit incorporating dependants outside it. This has been illustrated by all the other cases. In some cases the nuclear family ceased as a unit. This happened usually in the third phase of the development cycle.

In these instances the household was nothing more than a collection of relatives united with the head by various ties of kinship. On the other hand, the younger the household the greater the likelihood of the presence of the nuclear family. The household in its development may assume several forms. In the examples given only key cases have been mentioned to indicate the general pattern to which the rest approximate. Although the figures given represent present-day conditions in the two quarters that were intensively covered during my field work, there is no doubt this was the general pattern in the whole Omuo society. In the community the development of three-generation household with married sons under the authority of their fathers has been avoided by more intensive use of the lineage residential areas, the reclamation and use of less hospitable land for residence and also by emigration. There are many Omuo people abroad both in Nigeria and outside the country. This has eased congestion in the town.

#### c) The Clan

Every Omuo belongs to one of the twenty-five patrilineal clans around which the society is organised. The Omuo term for clan is omolebi, and this may be defined as a group of people, male and female, who are believed to have descended in the male line from a common ancestor and who share the same totemic and other ritual observances.

Membership of the clan is, in principle, ascribed by birth, but in the past strangers and slaves were sometimes incorporated into the

clans of their masters, and were accorded almost full membership status. It was not uncommon, however, to find strangers who did not belong to a particular clan. Such strangers were those who were always on the move, from one place to another and did not live long enough in one place to achieve full assimilation into a clan. Today, most of the strangers in Omuo actually live in the part of the community called Omuo-Oke. These strangers do not belong to any particular clans but regard themselves as part of Omuo. They are there as traders of one kind or another and many of them have told me that they desired to go back to their homes of origin once they have achieved their objectives in Omuo. Because they do not belong to a clan, they are not entitled to certain rights, namely, the succession rights. Moreover, as I have pointed out, these foreign elements are not big enough to be grouped into one special clan.

The clans are dispersed throughout the whole of Omuo in such a way that every large settlement like Iworo, Illudofin and Illisa has a branch of most of the clans living in it. The twenty-five clans in the community are as follows:- Illisa, Iworo, Ijero, Edurugbe, Ahan, Iron, Odo Ovi, Igo, Iwada, Inegun, Uia, Edugbe, Isaya, Igbede, Irafun, Oda-Ponna, Obajoda, Esa Oke, Bororunduro, Apomu-Kota, Illudofin, Oruju, Oda Odo, Illoro, Oya and Omuo-Oke (see Map 1.) Although my informants gave me a list of twenty-five as set out above, however, there is still some controversy about the number of clans in the community today. For instance, it is disputed by the Omuo-Oke Quarter that they are more than a clan, because, in the past, they absorbed weaker clans in order to protect them. These claims were counter-checked in several areas of the community. In the end, the total number given to me by any one person always came to twenty-five, therefore, I have decided to accept the number as twenty-five clans existing in the community, and am restricting the use of the term clan to the twenty-five listed.

These clans are the basic units of Omuo society, in the sense that they are regarded as permanent and above change. Historically, no one clan is more important than another clan, although it is true that one clan may be larger than another. However, in actual fact, the clans are grouped into three categories for the purpose

of sharing the sacrificial meat, food and other offerings. In this case, the food is divided into the number of clans in that group and according to the size of each clan in the group. A practical example is the group comprising of Kota, Ijero, Edugbe, Ahan, Ekurugbe and Iwada. In this group Kota is the largest unit and so it takes the lion's share while a clan like Iwada is very small and as a result receives only a tiny share of the food offering. On one occasion I witnessed the sharing of beef meat among the three groups. This was on the occasion of the death of the last Balogun Omuo. The Iworo group complained that they did not receive enough share in proportion to the number of clans and the total population in the group. Such an occasion is a time when a clan wishes to assert its value. What matters is that each clan, even the smallest, is seen as an important unit in Omuo society, with a contribution to make to the welfare of the whole.

Each clan has a name and in almost all cases, the name is different from that of the component lineage. Moreover, like all Yoruba and perhaps all African names, each of the names given to an individual clan has a meaning behind it. For instance, I was told that the meaning of Ijero, is "we decide together"; Bororunduro, "Stand with God" and Omuo-Oke "the North-end part of Omuo". It is believed that the latter clan was the last to arrive in Omuo. Its ancestor, it is claimed, must have originated in Iyagba in Kwara State. This indicates a distinction between this clan and the majority of Omuo clans who trace their descent from Ile-Ife. Although the cultural differences between Omuo-Oke and the majority of clans are getting blurred, there is still a noticeable variation between the slangs spoken by both groups. But there is no problem of one clan not understanding what the other is saying, as mutual comprehension has been enhanced by interaction between the clans over the past centuries.

It is an observed fact that the members of the various clans have dispersed all over the country, i.e., Lagos, Ibadan, Kano and places not very far from Omuo itself, such as Irun, Imesi Lasigidi, Ode and Isinbode.

The situation I am describing is similar to the Lugbara example. In the study of Lugbara society, Middleton (1966:30), observes that since the founding of Lugbara society the descendants of the clan founders, "who were the sons of hero-ancestors, have moved about the country, groups of kin segmenting and moving apart just as they

do now". In Omuo, the members who have moved away from the original clan did so in search of economic prosperity. The best example is Ekurugbe clan where a large section of the clan has actually moved and settled in Imesi Lasigidi, a distance of 34 miles from Omuo. They have, in fact, formed a community within a community there. The first members who went there did so to beg land for growing cocoa. The pioneer members have done well, and many members from the Ekurugbe clan has since moved to join the pioneers. In spite of the large emigration of the Ekurugbe clan to Imesi Lasigidi, the main part of the clan has not moved and still inhabits the territory associated with the clan. This is what Middleton (1965:30) has called the 'localised core of the clan, the sub-clan'. According to Middleton 'A clan is a shadowy group that consists of a sub-clan living in the clan territory and a number of off-shoots that have moved away at various times in the past and now live in other territories elsewhere. The sub-clan is the important unit in everyday matters. In the territory associated with it, and which is given its name, live members of other clans whose ancestors settled there or who have settled there recently themselves'.

Thus in the Ekurugbe example, the members who had settled at Imesi Lasigidi, following Middleton's definition are a sub-clan of the original clan in Omuo. Moreover, it is the sub-clans that segment into smaller descent groups, the lineages.

The number of generations given in any genealogy from living people to the clan founders is usually from eight to thirteen. However, Omuo people rarely do this and in fact did not think it as a problem until I raised it. Leaders in the community do not bother to calculate the generations in any genealogy, which they regard as charters which must be preserved and handed on from one generation to another. The same ideology is applied to the tracing of genealogical relationships of any two members of a clan or sub-clan, the marked difference here is that ties between individuals are traced only within lineages (cf. Middleton, 1966:31)

In the discussion so far, I have referred to Ekurugbe clan as an example of a particular clan of which many members had left the original clan territory to settle elsewhere. Ekurugbe clan is of course not the only clan that has segmented in this fashion.

Many members of Ijero clan have also left home to live elsewhere, even though temporarily. Hence we have proliferation of clans as well as lineages and for various reasons. The large settlement of a part of Ekurugbe clan at Imesi Lasigidi was because of shortage of the type of land that was most suitable for the growth of cocoa, which is not in abundance in Omuo. The first family that went to Imesi Lasigidi meant to beg for land for cocoa plantation. The success in achieving their objectives meant that more families in the Ekurugbe clan were informed of the development taking place in Lasigidi. This encouraged more people to migrate. The other reason for the proliferation of a clan is simple over-population. A clan is always expanding and at a given time it may have overgrown and exhausted the available resources, consequently some members will decide to leave the original clan territory in order to seek their fortune elsewhere. By doing this, the migrant members will found a segment which is an offshoot of the original clan. Land shortage was the reason most given by the Omuo people for the segmentation of a clan or for that matter a lineage. Another reason, but one that is not common, is the dispute between the clan or lineage members. Where the dispute is not satisfactorily settled the complainants may decide to disaffiliate from the main body and form a separate body. This was the case between Awanse-Oke and Awanse-Odo in Ijero side.

Although it is a dispersed group, the clan has many characteristics of corporateness. For instance, land, palm groves and kola trees are owned by clans. Here I must distinguish clan property from lineage property. Clan property is what is believed to have been acquired by the ancestors of the clan, as opposed to what was acquired by the founders of the lineages. The latter belonged to the lineage of the founding ancestor, not to the whole clan. The former, however, belonged to the whole clan. However, most of the property that used to belong to a clan has now been divided between the lineages composed in the clan. The result is that today in Omuo there is not much property left that can be called clan property. The fashion is to regard the property as that of the different lineages in the clan. All the clans have appointed leaders in whom are vested legal and ritual powers. They also meet occasionally to discuss matters of common interest.

I have mentioned the corporate nature of the clan. Two instances can be cited to illustrate this. In the first one, there arose between 1932 and 1948 a prolonged land dispute between the late Chief Elekoju of Ijero clan and one Awolola of Oda Odo clan. Although the dispute was between one individual and another in two different clans in the community, it soon became an issue between clans. Ijero claimed that the Chief owned the land and had cultivated it from as far as their memories could take them. Oda Odo responded and claimed that the land was leased to the Chief by the descendants of Awolola of Oda Odo and they now wished to revoke the use of the land for Chief Elekoju of Ijero. As the case could not be settled on clan level it was taken to the customary court where it was decided in favour of Oda Odo. However, the Ijero side appealed to the Akoko Provincial Court. In addition, they engaged the services of a lawyer to fight the case for them. The cost towards the appeal was borne from the levy imposed on every adult person at Ijero. Oda Odo followed suit and copied the Ijero pattern in fighting the case.

The second instance, according to my informant<sup>15</sup>, occurred in 1940. This time the dispute was over the dumping of a certain sacrificial object by the Illisa clan on Ijero territory. Someone -- who was not mentioned by name -- had given a hint to the head chief at Ijero about Illisa's plan to dump this object somewhere near Ijero territory. The head chief duly summoned his people to warn them about the coming danger (Ijero people actually regarded this particular case as a sign of bad luck or an ill will towards them by the Illisa people, so it was a provocative thing to do). The result was that a vigilante group was formed by the Ijero people. The vigilante group was instructed to man the road leading to Ijero from Illisa (See Map 2) and stop the carriers of the object by all means at their disposal. Effectively the matter had become two clans at war. The Oha intervened but was too late. A big fight ensued between Ijero and the Illisa people as the latter approached Ijero territory. The point in these two case studies demonstrates the corporateness of a clan particularly when they are faced with an outside enemy -- even though that enemy might have come within the same community but of a different clan.

All clans have their ancestral shrines in their territories. The Ijero have theirs on Okuta Ayan (Ayan Rock) about two miles from the town on the way to Ikare. It is on this rock that the



Egbe, who are responsible for the performance and organisation of Ayan, every year between March and April. While they ~~were~~ on the Rock, they carried out a series of rituals to the ancestors and the gods of Ijero. In the evening, they returned to the community for a lavish welcome and celebration by the whole community. It is at this time of the year that many clansmen from all over the tribe come home to participate in the celebration of Ayan Festival. Today, however, the celebration is not as elaborate as it used to be since members who live far away from Omuo cannot make it either because they cannot travel home in terms of expense or because they are unable to arrange their holidays to coincide with the Festival.

As I have argued at the beginning of this discussion, there are no aristocratic clans in Omuo. All are equal instatus; but they perform different functions in the community. For instance the Obaship belongs to Adumari and Ajila Royal Lineages of the Illisa clan, who alternately provide the King. The Balogun Omuo, who is the hereditary head of the Omuo warriors, belongs to the Ayauna Lineage of the Iworo clan. Iworo is one of the first clans to have settled in Omuo and was also a dominant clan in terms of numbers.

Membership of a clan carries with it many distinguishing marks. Among these are names, food taboos, avoidances and injunctions and the possession of a clan cult. Each clan also has its totems, associated with stories about the clan and its origin or referring to some exploit of the founding ancestor.

Membership of a particular clan may be spoken of as wicked, even-tempered, violent or even fecund. These qualities are imputed not to a particular group of agnates but to all the members of the clan.

Because of its dispersed character the clan is not exogamous. In fact, marriages are encouraged among clansfolk whose genealogical connection could not be traced, although there is no rule of clan endogamy.

The relation between clansmen is characterised by friendliness and mutual help in general terms. Of the greatest importance from the individual standpoint is perhaps the help a man may receive from clansmen outside his own settlement. An Omuo traveller stranded in any part of the country would only have to trace his clansmen there to be assured of the utmost hospitality. For the belief they share.

Members of the same clan, wherever they might be living, have a common patrilineal ancestor, even though genealogical connections between them may be difficult or impossible to establish. It is the recognition of this belief that keeps clansmen together and why mutual help is an integral part of their relationship. In this way the clan system provides for the application of kinship categories over a social field much more extensive than known kinship. But as a dispersal group the clan is not an important unit for regular and frequent social interaction. Although clan membership defines a person's status and citizenship in Omuo and provides him with the rules which regulate the behaviour in every day life and in times of crises, it is through lineage that these agnatic ties are clearly brought into play at the local settlement level.

d) The Lineage

All large settlements have segments of many clans living in them. The members of these local segments who trace common descent from a known ancestor form the lineage, which is the most important group in the community after the domestic group. The local name or term for the lineage is ebi, and the head of the lineage is called the oloriabi.

The ebi may be defined as that branch of a clan found in a settlement which comprises all those persons, male and female, who are able to trace relationship by a series of accepted genealogical steps through the male line to a known putative male ancestor, and thus theoretically to each other. The genealogical depth of the effective lineage is about eight to ten generations. The lineage, unlike the clan is exogamous.

Every lineage is named after its founding ancestor and has as symbols of interest and unity an ancestral shrine or igbo oye, a lineage cult, oro, and a basic interest in common property. Since the lineage is ideally a corporate group, its members comprise of all members living, dead, and those yet to be born. It is observed in the Omuo community that although it may be recognised that lineage and residential unit are not necessarily coterminous, a lineage is often more or less confined to a particular part of the society.

Within the lineage, members are entitled to a number of rights and privileges. By his membership every man has a right to a plot of land to cultivate, a place to live and a group to care for him in times of difficulty. With these rights and privileges go duties and obligations such as helping needy members, working towards maintenance of the lineage's good name, promotion of its unit, reverence to the wishes of his lineal ancestors and obedience to the lineage head (oloriebi) and other older members.

The oloriebi is generally the oldest surviving member in terms both of generation and age. Where age and generation conflict, the latter takes precedence, for the office has to run complete through each generation laterally before descending to the next. The oloriebi is often identified with the ancestors because of his age. He knows more about them than the other living members. He is the intermediary between his people on earth and the ancestors. Indeed, the older he is the more venerable his ritual powers are held to be, and only extreme incapacity or senility will necessitate the transfer of his office to the next in line of succession while he is still alive. His duties are as many as they are varied. He is the father figure for every member of the lineage. His roles are at once political, social and economic, and he is the spokesman for the lineage in ward meetings. He represents his people at important social and political functions. He supervises land distribution and other property, and no transaction concerning this or other lineage interests can take place without his consent. He judges disputes involving the lineage members. He presides over ebi meetings which are usually held at his house. He is normally always consulted about any major undertaking in an individual member's life such as marriage, joining of a cult group and, today, joining one of the Christian denominations.

As the executive head of the group he may and often issues all manner of orders and prescribes values and norms the group should follow and emulate; but he is nevertheless, subject to the expressed will of the group at the meeting. Yet though his office commands deference and great respect, and his position is almost inviolable unless he is extremely arbitrary, few major decisions concerning the lineage will be taken without the advice and approval of the elders from several segments, who together form an informal council of the lineage.

Lineage myths or history must be preserved, to ensure the continuity the traditions within the lineage to maintain the separateness of the lineages from the others. As head of the group oloriebi has the role of ascertaining that the myths gods and deities connected with the group are perpetuated. I observed this during the Ayan Festivals in both Ijero and Edugbe quarters at which women dancers chanted the appellations (oriki) of their respective lineages. No two lineages bear the same oriki, although where two lineages have segmented from the same stock, they will continue to bear the same oriki, as they still recognise a common descent. The oriki is handed down from one generation to another. All the male members within a group have identical oriki, which can be numerous. The same principle applies to the female members, except that they do not bear the same oriki as their male counterparts.

The oloriebi's functions are not only secular. He is also, so to speak, the chief priest of the lineage. He is believed to be the link between the living and the dead, and the only one who can speak with sufficient authority to the understanding of the ancestors. All offerings made to the dead are presented to them by him on behalf of the ebi.

Ancestor worship plays an important part in the life of the ebi. There is a strong belief in the efficacy and power of the ancestral spirits in the lives of their living descendants. The doctrine of reincarnation, whereby some ancestors are reborn into their earthly kin -groups, is also given credence. The dead are believed to live somewhere in the world of spirits in orun, heaven, from where they watch their living descendants in the earthly world. They are believed to possess supernatural powers of one sort or another coupled with a kindly interest in their descendants, as well as the ability to do them harm if the latter neglect them. It is said that nothing is nearer to the hearts of the dead than to know that their descendants live in peace and unity. They are believed to punish quarrelling among the kinsmen, adultery and incest, the possible disruptive forces within the lineage. Such punishments take the form of serious illness or sickness, and the wrath of the ancestors is made known through divination, Ifa. Ancestor worship, therefore, provides powerful sanctions for accepted social behaviour, and generates a series of reciprocal rights and duties among lineage members that are essential factors in the corporate unity and solidarity of the lineage, and the preservation of its existing structure.

As Schwab (1955:357) has expressed: "The ancestor cult is not merely an insignificant routinized ritual carried out for the sake of it. On the contrary, an individual's secular life is marked by its importance in spiritual affairs". Each lineage member recognises the fact that paying allegiance to the ancestors of the lineage is a prerequisite whose fulfilment by each member is obligatory. This is reinforced by the fact that the ancestors are believed to be omnipotent.

The fear and worship of the dead are expressed in several ways, the most important being offerings of food and drink which the living members make both individually and in a body. The practice of putting the first morsel of food, the first drop of emu, palm wine, on the ground before satisfying oneself (libations) is one of the many ways by which individual express belief in the ever-watchful presence of the ancestors; while the lineage as a group does so in the periodic ancestral Ipo or Asekuro festivals. The festivals are celebrated annually in order to appease the ancestors for their protections. The rite itself entails the slaughter of animals, especially sheep or goats, and the offering of drinks, with supplications to the ancestors to pardon sins committed against their persons and wishes, and ends with prayers for the long life and prosperity of the living members.

Whatever the oloriebi does is, in fact, achieved through the power of the ancestor. The ancestors are the only force that ward off evil. Although they are no longer seen in person, their presence is everlasting. As they are omnipotent, their spirits are reincarnated for the progress and well-being of the lineage. This is observed when a new child is given the name of a dead ancestor who was renowned for his great deeds; there is a general feeling that the ancestor has come back again. Names such as "Babawale", father comes home; "Iyabo", mother has returned, are given in commemoration of great ancestors - male and female.

The regular sacrifice to the lineage ancestor is a plea to protect the members as a group. His protection is necessary at many times; on the occasion of a marriage of a member, on festival days, building a house, for the safe delivery of a new child and the welfare of the child and mother, of a wish to render a barren woman fecund or that the new farm might yield plenty of harvest and a promise to offer him the first produce harvested in the farm, usually during the New Yam Festival. Another corollary of the points just made is that if the lineage is

faced with some temptation, the general assumption is that the spirit of their ancestors is angry and no longer with them. Hence, Ifa is quickly consulted, and advises that the remedy lies in the offer of sacrifice to the ancestors in order to pacify their spirits. Thus, the members believe that the ancestors can bring good as well as evil.

The beliefs serve several purposes: firstly, the belief in ancestor spirit serves as an effective source of social control in the lives of members. Secondly, collective responsibility and social obligations among members are enhanced. The third point is inter-related to the second, with collective responsibility having been enhanced, the group feels a sense of solidarity. Finally, the belief in the spirits of the dead ancestors and the idea and practice of reincarnating them, reinforces the identity of the group which is a necessary prerequisite if the group were to preserve its image.

Despite their importance in the religious lives of the Omuo people, neither the lineage nor the clan is coterminous with the religious unit. In addition to ancestor worship and lineage and clan cults, individuals may make their own personal cult affiliations by joining one or more public cults, as they were for example doing in the community with Ogboni cult, whose membership cuts across lineage and kinship ties.

Within the lineage there is differentiation of roles whether political or social. Oloriebi is at the top of the government of the group. He assigns roles to the members and supervises the performance of the functions. By virtue of his position, he, together with the senior members of the group nominates a candidate for chieftaincy title. A man could only inherit a title if he was born into the lineage. A title may be hereditary; when this is so, a senior member may enjoy the benefit and have the title conferred on him. No hereditary title may pass beyond the lineage circle. It is an offence to hawk lineage titles to an outsider. Oloriebi is the custodian of the lineage titles. It is he who guards against unnecessary encroachment by any person not indigeneous to the lineage.

As I have mentioned above, strangers in the community were not entitled to inherit titles. The reason for this needs further explanation. Strangers that come to Omuo attach themselves as individuals to members of the host group as clients. A stranger is usually referred to as 'Alejo', if the Alejo wishes to become a member of the lineage of the host in whose house he is residing, the matter is then

referred to the whole lineage for consideration under the leadership of oloriebi of the lineage. Although in the end he is usually admitted as a member of the lineage, yet he couldn't inherit the lineage title, because to everyone he is still Alejo. However, children born by these Alejo to the lineage of their affiliation could and do enjoy full rights as other members because the children have now become "children of the soil". The position of Alejo was different from that of Dinka among the Nuer, and those Kakwa immigrants in Bunyoro and Buganda. (See Middleton 1966:33; 1958; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Southall 1956).

Marriage within the lineage was a taboo; therefore, male members looked outside the lineage for marriage partners. When a woman married she did not necessarily cut off her connection with her natal lineage; her membership was retained in perpetuity. In the community, people regard the bond that is created between the two groups as more important than the material gain that accrues from the union. Both sides, once the marriage was contracted, owed each other a mutual understanding, responsibilities that went with marriage and loyalty as long as the relationship lasted. The expenses incurred on the marriage became the responsibility of all the members of the lineage. The woman's interests were protected and she was admitted as a full member of the family though not necessarily the lineage. Her lineage membership was still in force although the fact that she lived elsewhere now weakened her contact with her lineage.

The lineage, on the other hand, does not relinquish all its responsibility over its women. The husband is legally held responsible for any debts the wife might owe. In addition, he could be called upon any time to help in paying up the wife's father's debt as well, an assumption that the daughter would normally help in this respect but the function is now transferred to the husband. The mutual understanding and obligations on the husband's part to his wife's people enhances the structural linkage between the groups. The wife's religious duties are retained in that<sup>of</sup> her natal gods. The moveable deity of her lineage symbols are carried with her to her husband's house. She may be confronted with the dual function of participating in the rituals and religion observed in her husband's lineage but her paramount duty in this respect lies with her natal lineage.

The woman's right to inherit immovable property such as land and titles in her lineage is not enshrined in the lineage constitution, but she is entitled to a share in the movable property, namely, clothing and jewellery. There are titles throughout the community - many of which are hereditary such as Imowu in Awanse-Oke lineage - which are mainly conferred on women. A woman, even though she might be married, can still enjoy the benefit of being given one of these titles if the majority of the lineage members wish it that way. A title like that belongs to the lineage in perpetuity.

An example is here given where the lineage title is conferred on a married woman by her lineage kinsmen. The present holder of Imowu title is of Awanse-Oke lineage in Ijero Quarter. The title became vacant after her marriage into Igbede lineage of the same clan. However, the lineage, acting together through unanimous decision as a corporate group, decided to confer the title on the woman. This is another way of rewarding her of rights, some of which are exclusively the prerogatives of men, like the rights to own land. Even where a woman inherits land, the lineage always retains the reversionary rights. Here, the woman will inherit usufructory rights. A man might give a piece of land to his wife and cultivates it in her name, but the ultimate rights to the land does not lie with the wife but with her husband who gave her the land. Moreover, in cases where the farm is cultivated by the wife, the husband has reversionary rights over it and can dispossess the wife of the right to farm the land at his will.

However, there is an exception to what I have just said above, but it is a rare exception indeed. This is in the case of a female child who was the only child to survive her father when the latter died. In this case, she inherited everything belonging to her father including his land. The woman, on marriage, is entitled to pass on what she inherited to her children. As I have just mentioned, such cases are rare in Omuo, but one of the best examples I came across at Ijero side was the case of a young woman who was the sole survivor of her father. The woman told me that she was the last born in a family of five members including her parents. The first born was a boy who died of tuberculosis at the age of 28. Next was a woman who died in child-birth a few years before this case was recorded. The father died of a mysterious illness in 1969. He left behind a large plantation of



of cocoa and food farms. The woman automatically inherited the cocoa and food farms. Any children she may have in the future will have dual advantage of inheriting from their father as well as from their mother's side. The woman's lineage will certainly give their approval to this type of enjoying rights by the woman's children.

The lineage is largely a residential unit. As will be seen later, while all the lineage members do not live in the area which bears its name, a lineage is almost always confined to a single section of a ward or quarter. In this section the houses of the lineage members occupy a continuous stretch of land, divided from each other only by fences made by the people themselves. The original site of the house of the founding ancestor, which normally lies in the centre of the lineage houses, is given pride of place. There one finds the ancestral shrine. It is a small mud house roofed with thatch. This was where the lineage members gathered when they met in the old days. Nowadays the meetings take place inside the oloriebi's house.

Not all lineage members live in the area around the ancestral home. Demographic and economic factors often make this impossible. Ago ile, the lineage compound may be and is often overcrowded, at this point some lineage members may feel obliged to move and form smaller segments in order to alleviate the hardship in the primary lineage. This was not often difficult, as many lineages had uncleared bush land in different parts of the settlement. Moreover, dissatisfied members of a polygynous family, such as omo iya, children born of one mother, or obakan, children born of one father, may feel, as a result of disputes among them, that founding their own segment is the answer to persistent dispute. The disputes can arise over land, title, inheriting property or one group may feel that they have been cheated over allocation of rights. This is a common feature in a polygynous society and is usually a signal warning to the head of the domestic group not to favour one group at the expense of others. Although when a dispute arises it is submitted for arbitration by the oloriebi.

The most and best known example of a lineage that had segmented into two because of a dispute is Awanse-Odo Lineage. Its segment is called Awanse-Oke. The words 'odo' and 'oke' mean down and up respectively. The primary lineage had its residence at the bottom part of the settlement while the segmenting lineage had settled at

the opposite side of the community almost facing the primary lineage about 1,000 metres away from each other. I was told that the cause of the original dispute which led to the breakdown of the lineage was constant argument between the wives of two brothers in Awanse-Ode. When the conflicts became unbearable, the senior brother decided to found a separate segment. But in keeping with the tradition of showing reverence to the original founding ancestors, the original name was retained. Moreover, there is still a common allegiance to the service of the same gods and deities. In addition, meetings are still held in the eldest oloriebi.

Another reason why all lineage members may not live in the area around ancestral home is that it happens that a lineage becomes too large to be supported by the farms and other resources at its disposal, in which case the only remedy is for some members to move to another place or even to a different town altogether. A good example here is in the wake of what Omuo people usually describe as the period 'for scramble for land'. This is a reference to the sudden consciousness generated by the economic value of cocoa as a cash economy. As Omuo was not sufficiently endowed with the type of land most suitable for the growing of cocoa, the consequence was the mass emigration of many lineage members to the different parts of the then Western-Nigeria in search of land to grow cocoa. The clan with the most emigration was Edugbe who flocked to Imesi Lashigidi - another town of some 34 miles from Omuo - where they were guaranteed sufficient land to meet their aspirations. Today, there is a large Edugbe settlement at Imesi Lashigidi. They have become what can be termed the 'accessory group' in the sense in which Middleton (1966:32) has used the term in his study of the Lugbara of Uganda.

Wherever they may be, whether they live in Agbo ile or oke or have migrated, all lineages members are regarded and treated as full members. Nor does the movement of sections of the lineage to other dwellings (apart from the only example I have given above) results in fission. This is partly because the movements to other dwellings does not necessarily follow genealogical lines (as those who occupy these new dwellings may be drawn from different segments of the lineage while others remain in the Agbo ile) and partly because of the strength of the pull towards the ancestral home. Another factor helping the unity of lineage is the fact that there is no hierarchy of ancestral shrines, and therefore in matters of lineage worship only one head matters.

Before leaving the discussion of the lineage one important aspect of its unity may be mentioned here. This is the relationship between land, ile (lit. earth), and the lineage. The unifying force of land was based on the belief that it belonged to the dead, who did not expect the living to divide or alienate it by selling. The ancestors did not have an exact name in Yoruba but the nearest one to it is Baba latirandiran, the father or one that was there from the beginning - which of course embraces the concept of the owner of all things, including the earth. The ancestors <sup>were</sup>/believed to live in spirit on the land all the time. The reverence for the ancestors is further illustrated by the seriousness with which the beliefs connecting them with land are respected. There is no earth cult as such, but any major use of virgin land, either for cultivation or building, is preceded by prayers and offerings to the dead. The right of the lineage members in the land is therefore purely usufructary, under the administration of oloriebi, and it is this quality of the land which keeps the lineage together as people with interest in common property.

At this point it will be necessary to digress a bit and consider very briefly how clanship, as opposed to the lineage principle, operates at the local level. Though agnatic relations at the local level are usually seen and described in terms of lineages, it is more convenient here to speak of the clan rather than the lineage in certain social situations, especially in cases of taboos and life crisis rituals. Thus what a person may not eat, what he must do on specific occasions and the funeral rites to be performed on his death, all these are governed by the clan, not lineage rules. This is not as confusing as it appears at first sight. It is true that, as the lineage is a sub-division of the clan, the principles governing the latter applies ipso facto to the former. But in the social situations mentioned the Omuo people speak and think in terms of clan and not lineages, even at the local level. Several reasons may be adduced for this. In the first place, the taboos and practices concerned with these occasions are common to the whole clan. Secondly, clansfolk from the other quarters are always invited to these functions, and these visitors by definition share the same observances and could participate fully in the ceremonies, local sentiments are submerged in favour of clan solidarity. Besides, it even happens many times that suitable persons cannot be found among the lineage members for the performance of certain rituals,<sup>4</sup> and visiting clansfolk had to be called upon.

4 It was said to me during the Egungun Epa Festival in 1974 that special skilled dancers had to be hired from Kota for the Arunsewa masquerades - that is - the Oba's Egungun - as no skilled dancers could be found at Ellisa where the Festival was taking place.

Also, in the case of funerals, any death occurring outside the home town of the deceased is the responsibility of his clansfolk in the vicinity.

Thus in planning funerals and visits to funeral ceremonies one of the first questions which immediately come to mind concern the clan affiliations of the deceased. A knowledge of this will determine the sort of people the principal actors at the function would be, the specific rites to be performed, and the dates when the principal ceremonies would take place.

Taboos and rites of passage are the domains of clanship as such, which cut across relations at the local level. They are therefore important means of furthering the interests of the clan as opposed to those of its local segments. In the absence of frequent social interaction amongst members of the clan, common taboos and observances and belief in the inter-dependence of clansfolk wherever they might be at times of life crisis, these and the belief in common origin serve to enhance the solidarity of the clan. The solidarity of the lineage, on the other hand, lies on a different plane. It is based on permanent co-residence and co-activity and is therefore concerned more with <sup>the</sup> material aspects of everyday life.

Returning to the lineage, it is important to add that it is not an undifferentiated mass of agnates united by land, lineage head (oloriebi), a name and ancestral home. Nor are the rights and duties of the members uniformly distributed. It is true that theoretically the structural distance<sup>5</sup> between members, both in terms of residence and degree of social interaction is correlated with their relative positions on the genealogical chart: the nearer they are the closer the relationship. Yet this correlation does not in practice radiate symmetrically from the nearest to the remotest agnates. Rather, every individual has some closer one with whom he identifies himself in the co-operation of everyday life. With others he only comes into contact in times of crisis and during ancestral rites, funerals, and other occasions when the lineage as a whole meets in a body. These two sets of agnates may be described as close and distant relatives respectively.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'structural distance' is used here as defined by Evans-Pritchard (1940:110), as 'the distance between groups of persons in a social system, expressed in terms of values'.

The dividing line here is the result of the general cleavage which governs the authority structure and internal organisation of the lineage.. The group we call close agnates is three to four generations in depth, and is itself divided into smaller segments. The smallest unit within the lineage is the idile (lit. basic house), the home of a man, the wife and her young children. Omuo is a polygynous society where about 90% of the married men have more than one wife. A wife shares a room, if it is a small house, with her young children while the husband has his own separate room. In a polygynous household it is usual for each wife to have her own kitchen, but it is not uncommon for two women to share a kitchen where they both have to cook their own meals separately. It is sufficient here to point out that one idile of a person is distinct and separate from those of related families and surrounded by its own walls. As I have pointed out before, idile, which in its literal and social senses means house, is the home of a man, his wife or wives and their unmarried children, the adult sons on marriage building their own ile nearby, while the married daughters leave for their husbands. One idile, is in a sense a compound where the man is the master administering his own affairs free from outside interference.

The compounds are usually grouped together into larger residential units, which may be called 'cluster of families' (Figs 2 and 3). A cluster consists, in the main, of the compounds of full and half-brothers, and sometimes parallel first cousins, under the authority of their eldest living member. The family cluster is not a static group. It undergoes a cycle of growth and segmentation, and sometimes even declines and fuses with others within the lineage. It rarely includes agnates whose common ancestor is more than four or five generations removed. But whatever its size it is defined by the possession of an elder. He is responsible for the settlement of minor disputes within the cluster, for not all cases are referred to the oloriebi of the whole lineage. The cluster is therefore an identifiable unit in the intergroup relationship within the lineage, and in many cases the structural distance between the clusters is shown in the spatial distribution of their compounds, which is only prevented in some cases by lack of suitable land for settlement.

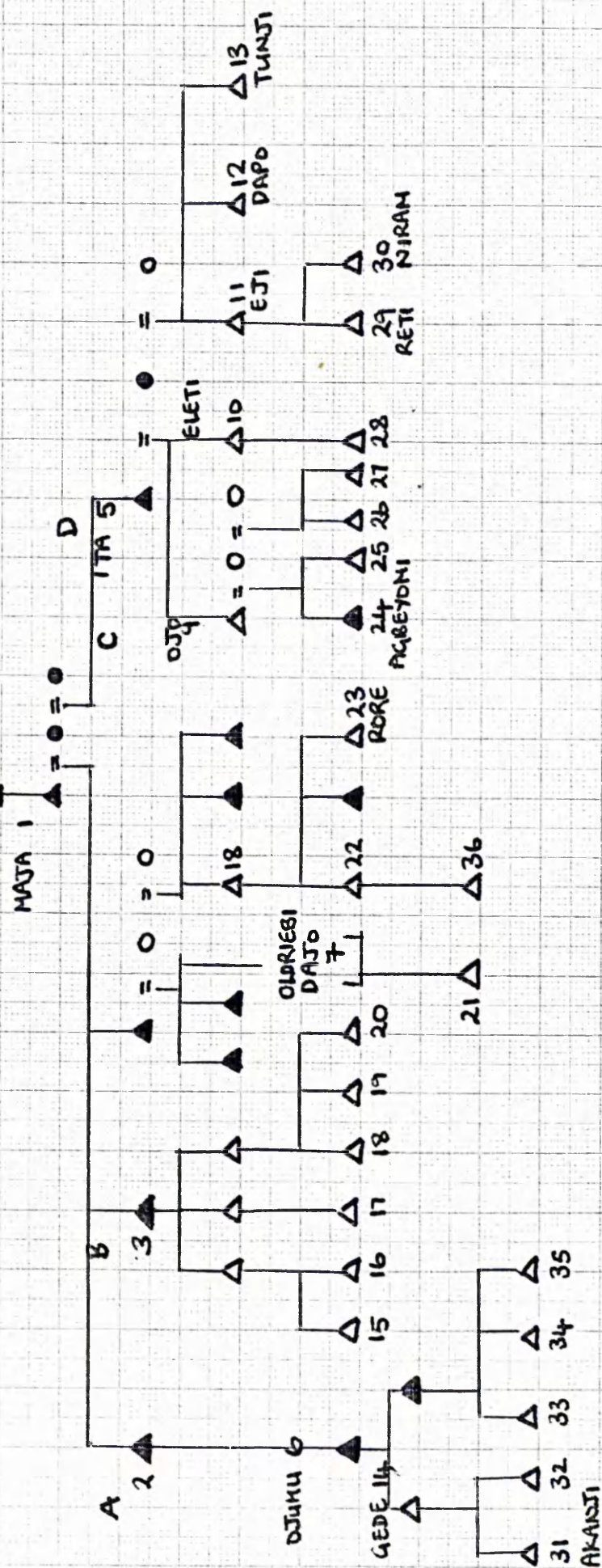
In function and structure the cluster is modelled on the lineage at large, and the functioning of its authority may be explained by comparison between the lineage and the ancestors. Just as the oloriebi is the link between the lineage and the ancestors, so is the head of the cluster the link between his group and the lineage as a whole. This relationship is based on Omuo principles of seniority. A man is generally considered a minor as long as his father lives. During meetings of the lineage, for instance, when the heads of the various clusters together with the rank and file are present, a man is not expected to speak or to perform any major task while his father is around. It does not, however, necessarily follow that a younger man who loses his father attains social maturity earlier than an older man whose father lives. The principle does not revolve solely around the father-son relationship. On the contrary, age is an important consideration, and it is this which results in the fusion of close groups of family clusters. A man usually assumes jural responsibility for his younger brothers and the children of a dead brother.

The point I want to emphasize here is that the social relations between members of the same family cluster are much closer and more intimate than those between members of different clusters. Members of the lineage are expected to be friendly and to help one another in general terms. A man looks to them for hospitality and support in times of serious trouble. But it is on the members of the family cluster that he relies most. These people advise him and help him in all his problems and undertakings. They assist him in work and such duties as housebuilding or fencing his house. His more distant agnates, unless they are actual neighbours, seldom figure prominently in his life.

I shall try, with the help of Fig.1, to illustrate the relationship between the family cluster and the lineage by certain events in the life of a section of the Idoko lineage of Ijero. This is a fairly large lineage, and unlike most in the area, it has not lost any members by emigration. In many respects it may be taken as a fair approximation to the past. This is mainly because they have sufficient fertile land to support them, and they are all agricultural farmers with the exception of Akanju (No.31), who is a tailor, and Rora (No.23) who is a bricklayer. The lineage head (Oloriebi) is Dajo (No.7), who at about 72 years old in 1976 was one of my principal informants.



- ▲ Dead males  
 △ Living males  
 ● Dead females  
 ○ Living females



One important index of social relations within the lineage was the conduct of the funeral of Agbeyomi (No.24), who died in August 1976. Dajo No.7), as the Ororiebi, was officially announded as the chief mourner, though the effective administration of the funeral was done by Ojo (No.9), the father of the dead man.

Before analysing the fact brought out by the death, it may be necessary to say a few words about how funerals are conducted in Omuo. It must be mentioned at once that local variations in detail occurs and the following description refers only to Ijero.

Nowadays the major funeral rites and ceremonies take about a month to complete. The important events connected with the death fall on the following days:

- Ojo Kini: the day of the burial
- Ojo Keji: the day following the burial, when the chief mourners receive greetings from sympathisers
- Ojo Kerin: The day for wake-keeping.
- Ojo Karun.: The day following wake-keeping, when lineage rituals are performed in memory of the dead person. On the same day the mourners begin to receive donations from the public.
- Ojo Kejo: Three days after the lineage rituals, when donations are assembled.
- Ojo Kesan: The early morning outing by the deceased's relatives and friends to thank everyone who has helped and sympathised with them in their grief

The first six occasions listed are public functions, involving the whole clan or settlement, and relatives and friends from other clans. One important aspect of Omuo funerals, however, is that, though these dates are strictly adhered to, there is a continuous stream of sympathisers and donors flowing in every day between the date of the burial and the last ceremony. There are also relatives from abroad coming to spend several days at the funeral.

About a month later there is usually another big ceremony. However, it was the attendance of lineage members from various clusters at the funeral during these nine days which became crucial in showing the degree of social interaction in the Idoko lineage.

It is significant that in addition to the public ceremonies (six in all) which all the lineage members also attended, Ojo (9), the father of the dead man, his brother Elet (10) and all the four



children of these two spent every day at the funeral till Ojo Kejo. So did Eji (11) and Dapo (12). Tunji (13) was there on three occasions, and Reti and Niran only twice.

The attendance of people from family clusters A, B and C was even more irregular. Dajo, the Oloriebi, was the most regular of them all, failing to turn up only twice. Nearly half the total, fairly equally distributed among the three clusters, never turned up at all. One of these was Gede (14) and eightyyear old whose absence might be excused on account of his age. But of those who turned up none was there on more than three occasions.

Decision concerning the payment of the expenses was also not without interest. At the meeting concerning this case it was revealed the the money toward the funeral expenditure was advanced by Ojo's brother. Elet (10), a fairly well off man by Omuo standards. It was decided that all members of D except Ojo (9) should contribute ₦4 each, and Ojo (9) the remaining ₦ 8. When I asked Why Dajo (7) the Oloriebi, did not have to pay anything, Eji (11) told me it was because he was not one of them. Dajo's own explanation was that his duty as lineage head was to see that the debt was fairly distributed among the chief mourners. I am, however, inclined to agree with Ejo. If the death had occurred in cluster C, Dajo's own cluster, he would certainly have had a share of the debt, as Ejo indicated. Actually it would be a drain on Dajo's pocket if his status as Oloriebi obliged him to involve himself in financial matters concerning all segments of the lineage.

This example, though somewhat mundane, shows clearly a progressive lack of interest in each other's affairs which corresponds closely to the relative distance of the lineage members on the genealogical chart. It is events of this kind which helped in my grouping of the four family clusters. The break of cluster D from the others stems from the maternal origin of Ita (5) and Maja's (1) other three children. That the Ita segment has not yet segmented is due primarily to the fact that Ita was an only son, so that his segment is smaller than the others.

There was also the conflict between the age and generation within the segments, especially A and D. Gede (14) at 80 was much older than Dajo (7) the Oloriebi, and Dapo (13), who was in his early forties, was the same generation as Gede's father Ojumu (6). This, as Eji (11) told me, was because Eji's father's mother was married by Maja (1) in his old age. Even in cluster D there was already a sign of

Figure 4

Compounds of the Idoko lineage 1926 (Not according to scale). Compounds of matrilineal kin not included. The numbers refer to persons in Figure 1.

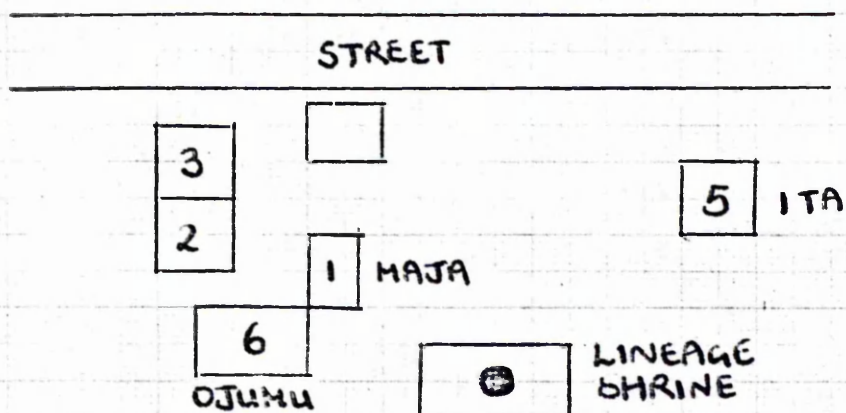
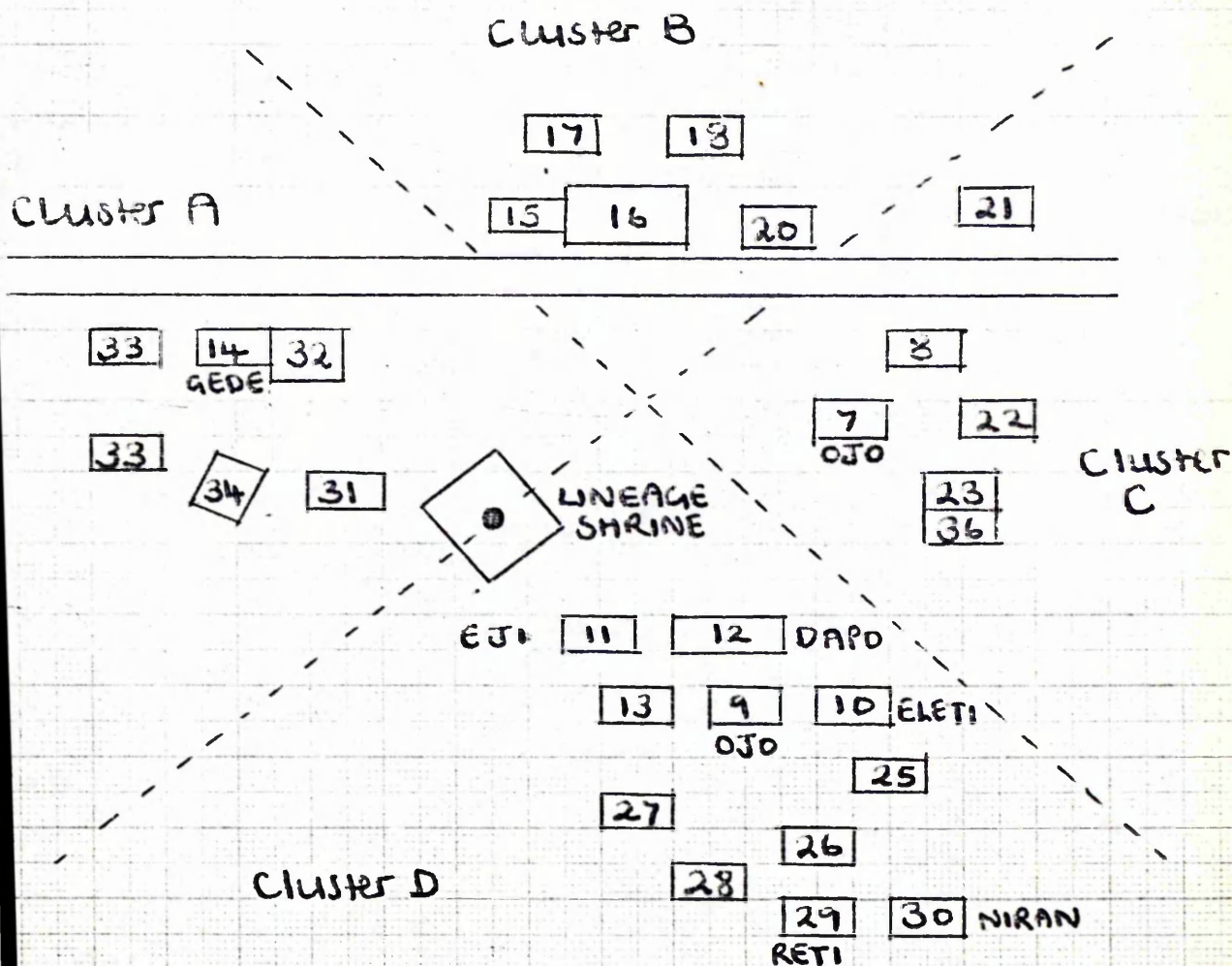


Figure 5

Compounds of the Idoko lineage showing their grouping into family clusters 1974. (Not the same site as in 1926).



cleavage, as shown by the rather irregular attendance of the descendants of Ira's second wife at Agbeyomi's funeral.

There is, therefore, a continuous proliferation of family clusters within the lineage, in which the degree of social intercourse and identification are a function of the relative distance on the genealogical chart of those involved. Every generation produces men who are potential branching points of the genealogical tree in a process described by Barnes (1962:8), as chronic segmentation. Before two brothers are born it is fairly certain that their descendants will sooner or later segment.

The role of the oloriebi as a link between the various segments and as symbol of unit is shown by the activities of Dajo. Though a member of a different family cluster, his status as Oloriebi placed him above sectional interests in the performance of his duties.

Another point of interest illustrated by the Idoko lineage was the role of ancestral rites in maintaining or at least expressing the unity of lineage. The fact that there is no hierarchy of lineage shrines corresponding to the various branching points on the genealogical chart concentrates all ritual power of the lineage in the oloriebi.

Nevertheless, the influence of genealogical distance on social relations is reflected in certain ceremonies. For instance, at one of the annual Ipo festivals of the Idoko lineage which I witnessed there was not a single absentee. This was in connection with a ritual concerning the founding ancestor of the lineage, an occasion on which the whole lineage was expected to merge in a body. It was therefore not surprising that every member was present. When, however, on another occasion Ifa asked Eji (11) to sacrifice to the ancestral deity because of the illness of his son, this being a minor occasion, there was no less than six absentees from clusters A,B,C. It may be argued that the importance attached to the annual festivals especially Ipo, made it imperative for all to attend, whereas Eji's sacrifice was a minor one. But the fact that the absentees belonged to A,B,C, and none to D. Eji's own cluster, was, no doubt, a result of the relationships involved.

The development and spatial segmentation of the lineage can be seen by comparing the sites of their compounds in 1926 and 1974. This shows how in nearly fifty years one cluster had segmented into four (Figs. 4 and 5).

These few facts about the Idoko lineage give some idea about the factors influencing interpersonal relations within the lineage.

To say the lineage emerges as a corporate group on major occasions concerning its members is to tell only part of the story. Occasions for the attendance of all members are very few and are limited to the periodic ancestral rites like Ipo and Ayan and meetings called for the discussion of lineage property. In most cases it is the cluster which emerges as the most effective unit. It is equally important to remember that every generation sees the proliferation of the lineage into a bigger and less solitary unit. This, in turn, increases the number of effective sub-units within the lineage.

CHAPTER 4Traditional Marriage Patternsa) Marriage Prohibitions

The Omuo-Ekiti prohibit marriage and cohabitation between relatives of certain categories. By a 'marriage' I mean here a union in which the man and woman, having passed through the approved customary procedures, are legally recognised as husband and wife, and are therefore subject to such rights, duties and obligations as the relationship entails.

In the Traditional Period the selection of spouses was one of the first important considerations in any discussion of marriage. Accordingly, I shall begin the discussion of customary marriage patterns by looking at the rules which during this period, and to varying degrees since then, govern the choice of partners. There are several categories of kin and affines between whom marriage is forbidden. Stated in general terms, lineage exogamy and the prohibition of marriage between uterine kin and between affines are the most important restrictions.

A man may not marry a woman from his own lineage. The rule is observed and enforced with meticulous rigidity, and its breach is regarded as incestuous. The explanation the Omuo-Ekiti usually give is that everybody within the lineage and its segment has 'blood relationship.' Its importance to the Omuo is seen in the fact that youths and girls are taught not to look towards agnatic relatives for sex matters as soon as they begin to think in terms of sex. The adults do not discuss it at all unless a question is posed on that particular issue. I never heard of any breaches, and constant enquiries led to the conclusion that they are always prevented.

Through exogamy a series of kinship ties and mutual interests are established between hitherto unrelated lineages. These ties are of much value in the settlement of inter-lineage disputes. Whenever there is a dispute between lineages joined by marriage, it is said that a member of one lineage who has mother's brothers and other matrilineal relatives in the other is usually the mediator. For example, I was told time and again that in the old days there used to be hostilities and rivalries between one area and another. The hostilities were expressed in songs. This was a common scene in the old site when the Eduge youths could be seen dancing up and down singing hostile songs against another ward, namely, Igo, Iro, or Inegun and so on and so forth. It appears that one of the reasons for the lack of interest in inter-ward abusive songs today is probably not that the present generation does not like orin owe but that more inter-quarter marriages are taking place now than in the past, with the result that many lineages have affines and matrilineal relatives in other quarters in the community.

Another prohibition is that against marriage between uterine kin. The feeling and close intimacy in the relationship of ebi or uterine kin is best illustrated by the Omuo attitude to sexual relations between them. It is considered incestuous for two persons to have sexual relations if their uterine connection is known, however distant the relationship, and marriage between them is of course forbidden. It is like incest between full siblings. The residence pattern also militates against this in that the dispersed uterine kin can easily be identified, this indicates the closeness of the residential pattern in the society where everyone knows who is whom, a characteristic of a small-scale and face-to-face society.

Informants, for instance, declare that a person may not marry within the following categories:-

sister

father's mother's daughter

father's brother's son's daughter

mother's sister

mother's brother's daughter

mother

grandmother  
daughter  
grand-daughter.

Lineage exogamy and the prohibition of marriage between uterine kin represent the only restrictions based on kinship per se, though these are by no means the only relationships covered by rules prohibiting marriage. Added to them are another long list of affines. In this regard one of the most striking features about marriage regulations is the taboo on bride exchange. A man may not marry a close affine. For instance, marriage between a man and his sister's husband's sister is forbidden. Omuo say that such a union is bad because it is like an exchange of spouses by two lineages or kin groups. It also spoils relationships between kinsmen by transforming kinship relations into affinal ones.

It is clear that such a union may bring confusion into kinship statuses and in-law relationships. It will also affect kinship terms, as informants pointed out. For how will the children of couple A address children of couple B if both parents marry the siblings of their own siblings' spouses? (Fig. 6). And it will certainly bring confusion into the role expectations of the children of the marriages.

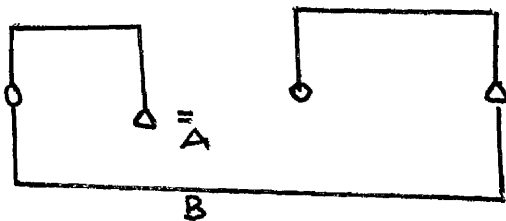


Fig. 6. An example of prohibited matings: taboo on bride exchange

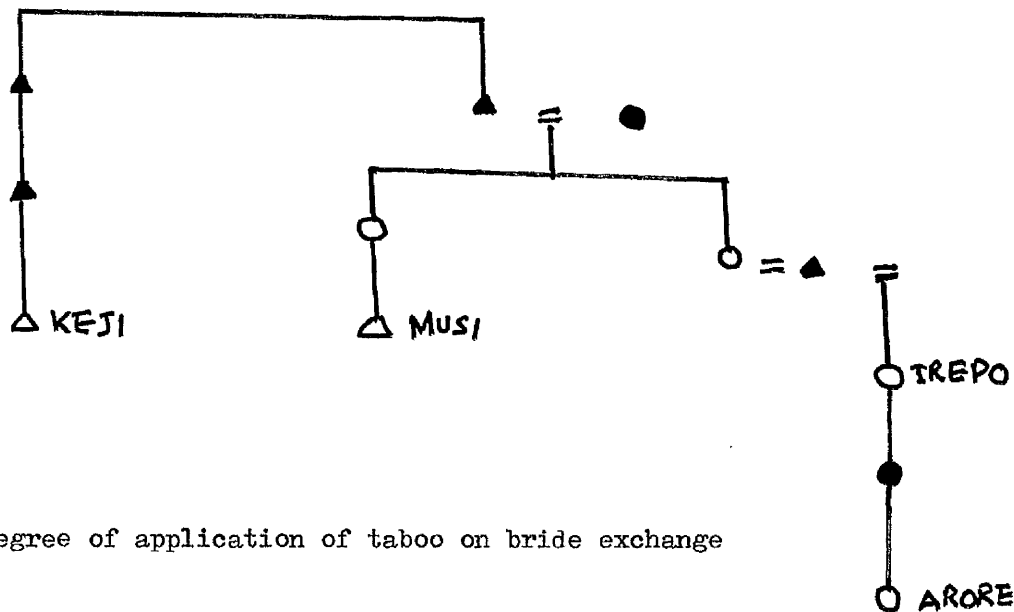


Fig. 7. Degree of application of taboo on bride exchange

This rule, I was told, is rarely violated. Informants could remember only one instance some fifty years ago, when one man insisted on marrying the sister of his own sister's husband; he then died suddenly, and his death was attributed to the violation of this rule. The prohibition is extended to all close agnates of the spouses to about the degree of third cousin. Thus in 1952, according to informants, when Musi wanted to marry Aröre, her mother's mother Trepo objected on the ground that Musi's mother's sister was married to Aröre's great grand-father, and suggested that Keji, a more distant relative of Musi, would have been a more agreeable suitor (Fig. 7 ).

A rule of this kind sometimes brings frustrations to young lovers, especially these days, when pre-marital friendship is increasingly becoming a necessary prerequisite for marriage, and when both youths and girls are having more say in their choice of partners. Many a time it happens that marriages contemplated by lovers are stopped on account of these restrictions.



Related to the above are the rules forbidding marriage between a man and two sisters, and another which forbids two kinsmen to marry two sisters or two kinswomen. These rules are based on the fact that Omuo consider it an act of benevolence for one kin group to give its daughter in marriage to another. It is therefore regarded as improper for more than one man from the same kin group to enjoy this benevolence from a single other kin group. This will mean a group of relatives enjoying undue benevolence from one lineage or kin group. The only exception to this rule was the case of freed female slave kinswomen, who were in the past sometimes married into the kin groups of their captors or owners irrespective of the latter's genealogical connections.

Another argument for this prohibition is the belief that the jealousies of co-wives will spoil the love of sisters or kinswomen. This reasoning, though often advanced, runs counter to that given in favour of sororal polygyny in many parts of Africa, where a man is encouraged to marry a sister or kinswoman of his wife in order to reduce co-wives' jealousies.

In the past these prohibitions extended to as far as third cousins of whatever line. That is, it was forbidden for a man to marry women who were third cousins. In 1934 the marriages of two second cross-cousins to two sisters provoked much discussion in the community concerning the closeness of the relationship. The gossips maintained that the girls' parents were opportunists and fortune hunters, olujukokoro, who were trying to exploit the good looks of their children to enrich themselves. The girls were actually very attractive and the cousins comparatively rich. Beyond the degree of second-cousin the rule could now be disregarded without criticism. The death of one of the spouses may, however, bring some alterations into the situation, making it possible for the surviving spouse to remarry a sibling or other kinsman of the deceased.

In making enquiries into marriage prohibitions in Omuo, one difficulty that I frequently encountered was the problem which results from the use of the same kinship terms for kinsmen who are differently related to ego. Of special interest here are terms like omo iya, uterine kin and omo egbon, agnates or children of 'brothers.' As I have tried to show earlier, persons in these relationships are forbidden to marry, yet many couples maintained that they were so related. The difficulty can be<sup>re</sup>solved by referring back to what I have said about kinship terms. The fact that two persons are terminologically the 'children of sisters' i.e. omo egbon, does not mean that their female forbears were matrilineally related. What the terminology denotes is that their mothers are relatives. The mothers might even have been agnates, and by this fact alone their children have become children of sisters. Thus it may be necessary to emphasise once more that in the application of the rules regulating marriage, only omo iya, uterine kin, omo egbon, agnates in the strict lineal sense or terms, are covered. It is genealogical connections, not classificatory groupings, which count in placing bars on particular matings.

b) Incest and Adultery

The rules which prohibit sexual intercourse between certain categories of kin are directly related to those which prohibit marriage. This is because sexual intercourse is regarded as the prerogative of married life. Whenever it occurs before or outside marriage, the reaction to it depends on the question whether it can lead to matrimony. In short, the gravity of the wrong is determined by the relationship between those involved. Where marriage is forbidden between two persons, sex play is considered a sin rather than a mere legal offence. Adultery is also viewed in relation to the rules governing marriage, and, like ordinary affairs, is classified accordingly into 'sin' and 'offence.'

'Sin' and 'offence' are governed by religious and legal sanctions respectively, and are clearly differentiated in Omuo verbal categories. Sin is expressed by the Omuo word ewo. Here there may or may not be penal sanctions against the culprits, but mystical retribution is believed to follow automatically. An offence is represented in Omuo or Yoruba in general by ese (lit. violating the law). It is the former that, following the sanctions applied and the verbal categories of the actors themselves, I designate incest, here represented by the Omuo term ewo, sin.

Ewo is a term applied generally to immoral behaviour of a serious kind, behaviour so serious as to be followed by inevitable supernatural punishment, and to violations of tribal and religious prohibitions which normally persons take for granted. Thus for a youth to beat his father, mother or grandparents, (to take an extreme example), whatever his reasons, or for someone deliberately to kill his totem animal, would be considered unpardonable behaviour for which mystical retribution will be incurred as a matter of course. They are ewo. Incest is classed with such behaviour. Compared with this, adultery and fornication by persons between whom marriage is allowed are mere sexual peccadilloes. Incest in Omuo-Ekiti therefore includes sex relations with lineage members, close affines and uterine kin.

The closeness, love and intimacy of the mother-child relationship make copulation between a man and his mother the most serious of all forms of incest. It is, I was told, quite rare in Omuo. I heard of only one possible instance. It took place over fifty years ago in the old site among some Iyagba settlers in the community. The boy was ill and was taken to see ifa, where he confessed, after being warned that his recovery depended on confession of some heinous sin. He recovered, but his mother died soon afterwards, and her death was attributed to the sin.

The fact that the incidence did not take place among the indigeneous people but strangers from another land made Omuo feel that it could not have happened among them as the taboo is a serious one. The incidence was remebered with contempt and abhorence for many years.

A sex offence of a more general kind which falls outside incest is adultery by a wife. Since Omuo marriage is potentially polygynous, a man's adultery does not provoke any unfavourable reaction from the community unless his partner is married. If it is an affair with an unmarried woman the man can say he wants to marry her and get away with it. Adultery by a woman, however, is considered very serious, and it is not surprising that it is covered by legal as well as religious sanctions.

A wife's adultery is believed to cause her own death and even that of her husband, and there is also the belief that a sick man nursed by an unfaithful wife will die. That was prevalent in the old days, I was told, was a disease called magun, a kind of medicine left on a woman suspected of adulterous association by her husband. If a man had an affair with the woman he was liable to contract magun which could be serious. The characteristic of magun when contracted by a person is the violent spasmodic contraction of the body, restlessness, drooping of the mouth. It is aggravated by the fact that the sufferer must not drink fluids while it is on. The Omuo recollect the many lives that were lost by the contraction of magun. Normally, the wife is not aware that something had been left or placed on her by the husband. The remedy used to lie in the man confessing and giving the name of the woman with whom he had sexual relations, when it was done an approach was made to the woman's husband who would undo the damage. Lives were believed to be lost because many of the men affected refused to name their women friends with whom they were together having an affair.

Magun, in a way, was an effective deterrent for women and men who would otherwise have sought extra-marital affairs. At the same time, it is claimed that magun was most dangerous. However, the incidence of magun is difficult to ascertain as it is almost impossible to know the cause of every death or sickness in a community.

To my informants there was no doubt about a death caused as a result of magun. It was explained to me that its manifestations are distinct and cannot be mistaken for any other illness. Moreover, it is not possible to forestall magun by means of charms or antidotes. To many people, therefore, avoidance was the best remedy. Today, things have changed and men do not any longer leave magun on their wives even though the wives may be having affairs with other men. The reason for the absence of magun is because the community people have reacted quite strongly against it following the loss of many young men in the community through the believed contraction of magun.

Sometimes, it is believed, confession by the adulteress could have saved a life since the woman would be aware that her paramour has contracted the illness. Omuo claim that the woman's husband must always have a remedy ready in hand for such ailments.

Four deaths at Ekurugbe in 1954 were believed to have been caused by the infidelity of wives. In one case a woman died less than two months after her husband because, it was thought, she refused to make the necessary confessions demanded for her recovery. Sometimes adultery is believed to make childbirth difficult, and unless confession is made the adulteress may die with the child. Omuo men know well the risk to their lives of the infidelity of their wives. To prevent these misfortunes many men have charms which help to strike terror in wives with adulterous intentions.

c) Preferential Marriages

Though marriage prohibitions cover a wide range of relatives, marriage between certain categories of people was traditionally favoured. Omuo considered that marriage between persons not bound by any ties was not likely to be stable, because it was believed that besides being spouses, couples who had special ties regarded themselves also in terms of kinship obligations and behaved towards each other accordingly.

Because of this fact, Omuo parents from the outset took a special interest in the marriages of their children, and themselves took the initiative to find them suitable spouses, sometimes even before the children were born. In my interview with 120 households 50 per cent of all first marriages the initiative in arranging the match was taken by the parents.

It may be easy to over-emphasise this point. Because of inter-lineage marriages, which result from the rule of lineage exogamy, all lineages are interwoven through several links, so that in any quarter everyone is related through one tie or another to someone in most of the lineages represented there. This was especially the case with the hamlets and villages that used to form Aiyebode ( In this group was Edugbe, Ekurugbe, Ijero, Inegun, Igo, Inegun and Iwada). Here almost everyone is related to everyone else. In this situation it is difficult to find someone outside one's lineage who is not a relative, as 95 per cent of the marriages in the Aiyebode sector of Omuo-Ekiti were between local people it was inevitable therefore that a high percentage of these marriages must have been between people with special ties or relation.

Moreover, although other factors, such as good character and economic considerations, may be responsible for favouring one man rather than another, it is easy and more plausible to attribute the reason for his choice, as marriage partner to special ties or existing relation. Implicit in this attitude is the importance of kinship in Omuo inter-personal relations. Kinship exerts peacefulness on social relations, and is therefore considered necessary to perfect even the matrimonial bond. The legal joining of a man and woman is not considered enough for the full realisation of the perfect union. Kinship considerations add something extra, the need for spouses to extend to each other all the essential attributes of kinship behaviour.

By far the commonest was cross-cousin marriage. The Omuo do not make any verbal distinction between matrilinear and patrilinear cross-cousin marriage, but figures show that the former exceeded the latter by a ratio of four to one. Of this kind of marriages recorded in Igo, Inegun, Iwada, Edugbe, Odoyi and Ahan, 82 per cent were cross-cousin marriages. The Omuo have no special name for this type of marriage, to them, it is just like any other kind of marriage in the community.

The closest kin who can be married without violating any of the rules of incest are first cross-cousins. First cross-cousins occur fairly frequently. Ten per cent of all marriages recorded in my sample were between full first cross-cousins, while 20 per cent were between persons whose parents were half-siblings. The majority of the kinship marriages were between remote cousins. It is therefore clear that Omuo actually prefer the marriage of children of half-siblings and remoter cousins to that of first cousins. In fact, when Omuo refer to marriages of this kind they say iyawo omo ibatan, meaning, marriage of children of brother and sister, they do not always refer to marriages of first cousins. Many informants even maintained that the first cross-cousin relationship is now too close for marriage. Case histories of older members of the population suggest that it was common in the past. Today many youths and girls are averse to this form of marriage because, they say, it lays them open to undue interference in their marital affairs by over-enthusiastic aunts and uncles who are also their parents-in-law. Nevertheless, cross-cousin marriage remains an important Omuo-Ekiti institution.

The importance attached to cross-cousin marriage may be further illustrated by the fact that it is not affected by the rules forbidding marriage between close affines. That is, marriage between two cross-cousins are not considered a bar to marriages between their other relatives, so long as the subsequent couples are neither agnates nor uterine kin ( nevertheless, while I have said this, I must add that the rule forbidding two brothers from marrying two sisters is an absolute prohibition which is not included in this exception).

was explained  
 This exception in this way. The aim of the rule forbidding marriage between affines is, first, to prevent the direct exchange of spouses between two kin groups, and secondly, to prevent two women from one kin group marrying into another. Now if, after a marriage between cross-cousins, their own cousins, who are also cross-cousins, are married to each other, this will be an advantage to no one, because the four belong to the same kin group though not to the same lineage. Let us look at Fig. 8..

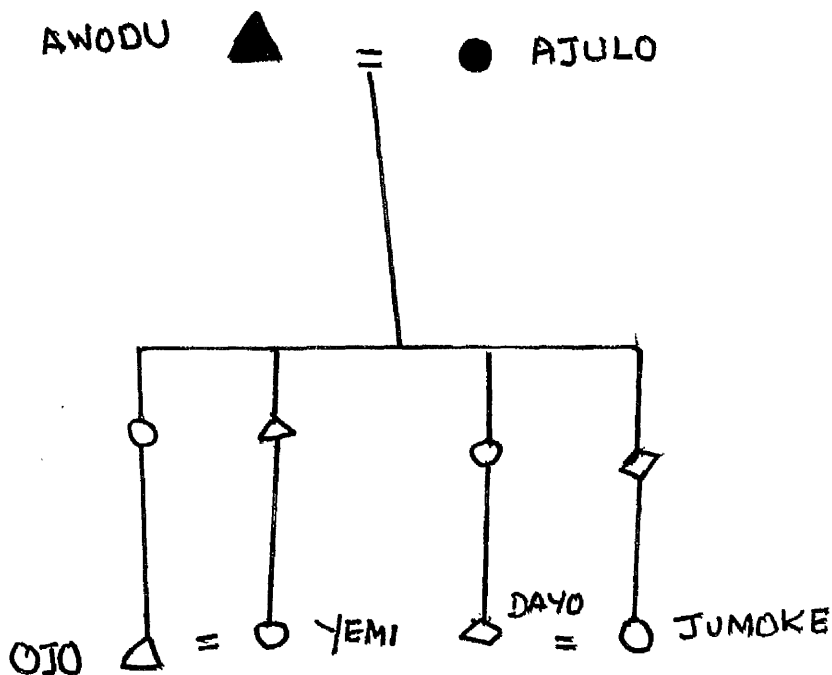


Fig. 8. An example of cross-cousin marriages involving four cousins.

In this diagram Yemi and Ojo are not affines to Dayo and Jumoke, but rather first cousins because both are related to them as first cousins, being all grandchildren of Awodu and Ajulo, and therefore the reasons given against marriage between affines cannot be legitimately applied to them.



Marriages between members of the clan was very much favoured and used to be the most popular in the old days. In this case the clan used to look inwards rather than outwards in terms of marriage. The change to look for a wife outside one's clan seems to have begun in earnest in 1938 after the amalgamation of the various settlements into one whole. Of all the marriages that I recorded among the 120 households in Ijero Quarter, 89 per cent were between members of the same clan, this is to say that most people had actually married within Ijero itself rather than taking their brides from the other clans. This was of course subject to availability of omoge, marriageable women, in Ijero. It was also made possible as there were many lineages within each clan. A man could still marry his women without violating the marriage rules of marrying outside his lineage. On the other hand, of all marriages that I recorded at Igo and Inegun-two of the smallest clans in the community-25 per cent were between members of the same clan. This represents a lower percentage than that of Ijero, but we have to bear in mind the relative populations and sizes of the clans mentioned.

There were two reasons for this relatively low percentage both at Igo and Inegun. First, as there was a tendency for people to choose spouses from their own quarter, in a clan where there were not many lineages or where there was only one lineage of the same clan ( and in fact, Inegun, Igo and Ahan all fell into this category) members will be forced to look to lineages of other clans for their spouses. Secondly, since no actual rule of clan endogamy existed, not even clans with many lineages in a quarter can expect to marry all their members into their own clans. But in fact, as the local segment of clan in most cases consisted of a single lineage, it was only in rare cases that several lineages of the same clan were found together in one quarter. In this case the figures for intra-clan marriages in my sample in Omuo as a whole seems high by today's standard, and this has been confirmed by the series of enquiries I made in the various quarters in the community. For instance, both Iworo and IIIudofin are large quarters in terms of their sizes, populations and their composite lineages. The high figures for both Iworo and IIIudofin (33.6 and 37.8 per cent respectively), was largely due to the presence in each of them of one or two large clans with many lineages. At Iworo, where the percentage of intra-clan marriages was 33.6 per cent, the six lineages

of Fajana and OlaREWaju clans accounted for more than 50 per cent of the total population, and at IIIudofin, Alaje, the largest single clan in the town, had no less than four exogamous lineages.

The importance of the quarter or ward<sup>1</sup> in social life has already been described. Here, it is necessary to mention again that the competition between different quarters in the community increases in-group solidarity and cohesion, which are further strengthened by marriages among ward members. More often than not girls use their ward affiliations as excuses for refusing offers of marriages from suitors of other wards. As the ward is the most effective unit for the organisation of dances, the dances organised by youths and girls, through which many select their spouses (described in the next section) also help to increase the tendency towards marriage within the ward.

It will be seen from the discussion so far that though very close cognates, such as first cross-cousins, are allowed to marry, and prenuptial intercourse between them is overlooked, rigid rules, sometimes backed by religious sanctions, are applied to those who fall within the area of marriage prohibitions, however far apart they may be on the genealogical chart. The rules taken as a whole amount to this. A young man looking for a wife has a wide range of kinswomen to apply for so long as they are neither his lineage mates, close affines, nor uterine kin, and as he was born and brought up in a circle of kin which normally embraces the people of his immediate neighbourhood, people with whom he has been play mates from early childhood, he is generally well placed from the outset to get acquainted with potential wives.

<sup>1</sup>The context in which I am using 'ward' and 'quarter' here implies the same meaning. It is therefore legitimate to use both words interchangeably.

This social interaction of young men and women, helped by the fluid residence pattern, one way or the other, accounts for the tendency of the Omuo to marry in their own localities, because young men and women between whom there are no prohibitions are neighbours at a time when they are looking for spouses.

These considerations of personal relations between young men and the immediate relatives of their parents can help to account for cross-cousin marriages, because both the paternal aunt and the maternal uncle exert great influence on the selection. For it is to be remembered that though contiguity facilitates marriage between neighbours and relatives, the initiative is usually taken by parents.

In the past many Omuo felt it an obligation to give at least one of their children in marriage to a sibling's child. We have already seen that the maternal uncle's house is the second home of every Omuo young people. During his frequent visits he was encouraged by the mother's brother to get interested in the latter's daughters. Even if the nephew did not develop any special interest or love for uncle's daughters or vice versa, the maternal uncle made the union easier by taking the initiative himself, with the co-operation of his sister, knowing well that the offer will not be turned down. If this point is established and accepted we may suggest that preference for matrilinear cross-cousin marriages was another manifestation of the love and intimacy between a man and his maternal uncle.

This fact is enforced by the Omuo belief that 'there is nothing nearer a man's heart than to see his daughters married to men he himself loves.' Yet the impression must not be given that the parental initiative in these matters always came from men. On the contrary, women were very active match-makers, but their position was affected by two considerations. First, women had more influence on their daughters than on their sons. Secondly, the special relationship of formality between a woman and her brother's children limited the chances of intimacy necessary for discussion of this kind. As my figures have shown, it appears that men preferred to have their daughters marrying the sisters' daughters.

But perhaps the most significant consideration on this subject is how cross-cousin marriage fits into the Omuo special inheritance system, whereby daughters and their children are entitled to a portion of a person's estate, particularly the moveable property. In a patrilineal society the tensions likely to arise when non-agnatic relatives use lineage land may be greatly alleviated through kinship marriages. Thus it happens that in many cases where a man from a poor lineage had to fall back on his mother's brothers for economic help, he was also advised to marry one of the mother's brother's daughters. In the same way a woman from a rich lineage might ask her daughters to marry her brother's children.

Of the 100 farmers in my sample of the 120 households interviewed at Ijero Quarter in connection with the utilisation of matrilineal claims on land, 16 were actually married to their first cousins. All these were among the 42 who were farming matrilineal lands. Of the 12 farmers who had no farms apart from their lineage lands, only 2 were married to close kinswomen, none of whom was a first cousin.

It is possible that in some of these cases the primary motive for the marriage was not property. The relationship between men farming land claimed through their mothers with their maternal uncles and their families was likely to be close. In some cases the use of property inherited through a woman results either in, or from, residing near maternal uncles, which increased the chances of meeting with cross-cousins. Nevertheless, many of these marriages originated from the desire of parents to keep inheritance rights within as narrow a range as possible. The limiting of the range of inheritance rights was also the effect of intra-clan marriages, so that both lineage inheritors of a lineage property and non-lineage inheritors could belong to the same clan.

d) Mate selection

Marriage in Omwo-Ekiti, as in many African societies, is a political alliance between lineages. The particular interests of these groups are clearly shown in the marriage negotiations, in the offering and receipt of the marriage payments, in the lineages participation in the rites that institute the marriage, and above all in their active participation in the selection of partners for their members of marriageable age. The active interest of the kin group in the selection of a spouse is an index of the individual's lack of independence in his own choice. But the Omwo-Ekiti, like other peoples, know that marriage is also a union between a particular man and a particular woman, and each one's assessment of the life-long partner is also considered. Today this individual aspect is steadily increasing in importance. In the following sections an attempt will be made to describe how the kin group's interest is reconciled with that of the individuals directly concerned in the contract.

Older people say that, in the past, first marriages were arranged by parents without consultation with the young people. The young men, however, certainly managed to know that marriage negotiations on their behalf were under way, and there is no evidence that any man was ever forced into marriage against his will, though in some cases his own choice might have been vetoed by his parents. Older women, however, claimed that they were given little chance of studying the character of the partners chosen for them. Some of these women maintained that they were compelled to marry against their will—in some instances they wished to marry young men of their own choice, in others they disliked the young men chosen for them or rebelled at the thought of being a second or third wife. Nevertheless, they were married. Others explained that they persisted in refusing to live with the husband chosen for them and succeeded in forcing their parents to relent. Again, others were said to have eventually given up the struggle.

An alternative customary practice, quite commonly adopted, was to use the services of a marriage intermediary other than the person's parents.

The intermediary could be a friend or relative. The boy, if he liked a particular girl would approach the mediator who might be a man or woman; but it is stressed that women were better at carrying out this special operation than men. It was the duty of the intermediary to find out all about the girl and her family. In return, a report was given to the boy and his parents. If they were satisfied with the report, the boy's parents now directly approached the girl's parents and relatives in order to declare their intention. If the girl's parents were, at first, unenthusiastic about the proposal, the intermediary would step in again till they finally agreed to their daughter marrying the boy. Eventually when marriage took place, the intermediary felt proud of his feat and both the bride and groom congratulated him or her for the important achievement.

Despite some contrary examples, it is probable that many women were willing enough to accept men chosen for them; and those betrothed before puberty certainly knew whom they were to marry long before marriage took place. Usually, it was the girl's parents who were most careful about her future partner. The important things considered were the characters of the young man and his parents and the success which the latter's marriage attained, because it was believed that the home may affect the young man's behaviour. This meant that when negotiating a marriage the parents worked against a background of considerable knowledge about the characters of possible candidates. They were concerned to choose those considered to have the qualities necessary for a spouse: a man who had learned the work expected of him, who was courteous, showed no disposition to engage in quarrelling or other improper actions, and was industrious.

At present, and this will be fully developed in chapter 9, there appears to be a gradual change from the position of parental control over the choice of spouses towards a new position where those directly involved are given some latitude in making their own selection. Many prospective couples now plan almost everything about their intended union before the young man tells his parents to approach the girl's parents on his behalf. Nevertheless, the parental veto is far from dead, and it is no exaggeration to say that the final word still lies

with the parents particularly in the case of the illiterate boy or girl whose pressure of parents and lineage is far greater than among the educated young men and women as the following case will show.

#### Case No 1

In 1954 Arigun, a farmer, fell in love with Folake. With her consent he asked his father, a distant maternal relative of her father, to approach her parents. Folake's father readily consented to the match, but her mother refused on the ground that Folake's other sisters married to kinsmen of their father were not experiencing successful marriages. Folake should therefore be married to a maternal relative. Accordingly Folake was forced to marry a distant cousin on her mother's side.

This case shows not only the veto retained by parents, but it also illustrates the possibility of disagreement between parents. Many a time parents and relatives were divided among themselves as to the correct choice for their children.

#### e) Courting

The traditional pattern of courtship was for girls to be visited by young men in their parents' homes. Traditionally, every Omuo-Ekiti girl who reached puberty was a great joy to her parents. On this occasion her body was painted in camwood osun, and dressed in rich beads. Her parents were congratulated for the great achievement and gifts were showered on the girl. It showed that she had grown old enough for marriage. If the girl was not already betrothed it gave their suitors the opportunity to begin to chase the girl now and propose marriage to her.

If a young man was interested in a girl the usual methods he adopted was to tell a close friend to take him to her house in the late evening. This was the most convenient time because by then she had finished the most important household duties, which more often ended with a bath. There the visitors were offered seats, and after

exchanging greetings with members of the household they called the girl and told her they were visiting her. She might express wonderment at this pronouncement and then said: 'se ko si o, se emi ko jale enikankan.' 'I hope nothing is the matter, has any one accused me of pilfering'? The girl said this teasingly knowing fully well that the visitors had come to talk about marriage proposal with her.

No appointments were necessary, but the young men were able to see their girls <sup>at</sup> previously arranged dates. Whether the girl was interested or not, tradition and good form demanded that at first she simulated indifference and even surprise or dislike. She reluctantly approached her suitors and sat down. If she was a shy girl, she would sit with her back to her visitors. The suitor's friend then introduced the reason for the visit, which herself had already surmised, for all such visits had only one aim, courting. During the visit, there was much mutual assessment going on.

Several visits were necessary before the girl would give a decisive answer, but some told me they could read the direction of the wind after only a few visits. If they gathered that things might not end well, some withdrew honourably, but others persisted. Persistence, even in the light of apparent failure, was necessary, because, it was said that 'a woman does not say yes to a suitor's first proposal just like that,' obinrin ti ki ba se eru lati mo riri ara re. It sometimes took several months, or in some cases even years, before a girl's consent was finally won.

Many informants emphasised to me that wooing a girl during the traditional period in Omuo was an arduous business. A young man must not only be witty and ready to flatter the girl effusively, he must also be ready to answer and counter any questions the girl might ask. Girls were never willing to succumb without testing the ability of the young man as a person well versed in wooing tactics. Many old women also said to me that when they were young girls they tried to be impossible only to pull the legs of the young people they found to be inexperienced. Others said they would be considered cheap if they gave in readily, but they also considered that should they become too difficult their suitors might leave them and look for other girls, so



that although they were neither easy with their virtue nor give straight answers to proposals, they could do their best to make it known to a young man that they were not altogether averse to him. This was usually done by polite prevarications and tricky evasions.

Both words and actions were needed during the period of wooing. Besides being generous to his sweetheart, a young man must appear neat and responsible. Adolescence is an important time in the life of both boys and girls. At this time of his life a youth modelled himself on the accepted pattern of what a young man should do to win the approbation of his girl in particular and the regard of girls in general. He was conscious all the time that girls were watching him. He paid great attention to his appearance, and took every opportunity to excel in feats of courage and endurance. At dances he showed that he was a good dancer and singer. Every opportunity was seized to display his newest clothes. All this a young man did because his mind at this stage was set on girls and marriage, and he was always careful because the girls were the arbiters of decorum, and the severest sanction of breach of good form was their disapproval. Not only was the shame of this disapproval a sanction of etiquette, it was also an important influence in making a young man generous, brave, respectful, and dutiful to his parents, kinsmen and the community at large.

The girls on their side were anxious to earn the good opinion of the young people through correct behaviour in and outside the home. At this time they began to put on blouses, covered their breasts, tied or plaited their hair, covered their heads with kerchiefs and seized the least chance to their newest dresses. A young man must be particularly generous to his sweetheart. If he was a farmer he had special obligation to his girlfriend at harvest time. Lavish gifts of fruit and vegetables plus yams were poured on her. When a girl began to bring home such gifts, her parents realised what was happening, if they had so far been ignorant of her associations.

It was not unusual for a girl to propose love to a boy, in fact, I was told that it happened occasionally. If she liked the boy who had had some conversation with her before, then she would find an opportunity to corner him somewhere particularly on one of those evenings when the moon was shining brightly and told him that she loved him. 'Nje o mo wipe mo feran re pupo'? 'do you realise how much I love you'? was usually what the girl might say to the boy, and it was customary for the boy to reply, 'O pe ti oju mi ti wa lara re,' 'It has been a long time since my eyes have been on you.' This bold step was sometimes taken by the young men also. This could take place at dances or in the market. Many such approaches ended in serious unions, but others were taken as jokes.

Visits of youths to their girls' homes gave the opportunity for the girls' parents to know the suitors of their daughters, and the reactions of the parents were not at all difficult to discern. Visits by a suitor whom they favoured were condoned and even encouraged. An informant claimed that when he was courting his wife, who was no close relative, he normally visited her house every other evening. On each occasion, the girl's mother used to rebuke her if she appeared slow in entertaining him. The mother would also question him if he failed to keep his usual date.

On the other hand, a suitor disliked by the girl's parents faced many obstacles. I understand that such a man, especially someone disliked by the mother, might not even be offered a seat during his visits, and, should the girl draw nearer towards him, their conversation would be interrupted by frequent calls to her to go on with her house duties. The mother, and sometimes the sisters too, may start making loud and offensive remarks about him. A rather extreme manifestation of disapproval from a girl's mother was mentioned to me. It was clear from the report that, in spite of the mother's disapproval of the boy, the girl herself was interested in him. The mother was, however determined to strike a final blow,

and on one of the boy's visits, she approached him and the girl with a bowl full of eko gbigbona, hot porridge, and on reaching him dropped the bowl on him 'accidentally.' But the intention was clear. Many parents did not go so far. When they were dissatisfied with a daughter's boy the normal practice was to advise her against the dangers ahead. Some parents even forestalled the hopes of a lover they disliked by betrothing the girl to another young man of their choice.

Young people had several occasions for meeting the girls they fancied. These included dances, market places, ipade egbe, egbe meetings, festive gatherings and moonlights. Dances formed an important recognised occasion for boys and girls to meet in public. At fairly regular intervals of about six or twelve months the youths and adolescent girls of a ward, helped by adults, would organise a dance, and a bigger dance was normally organised about every three years when a junior egbe was upgraded. For about two months before the actual occasion commenced, both boys and girls in the egbe would gather each night for several hours in the house of their olori egbe to rehearse and to learn the newest songs for the occasion. Before and after the rehearsal, the youths seized every opportunity of displaying their talents and skills by singing and also meeting the girls. Unattached boys and girls did their utmost to catch the eye of someone who could be a suitable partner. After the dance had taken place, it was usual to hear of several engagements.

Despite the opportunities for getting acquainted, girls who had not been betrothed before puberty must still take their parents' reaction seriously. 'Emi ko lo ni ara mi,' 'I do not own myself,' implies that the father of the girl had the last word, was the usual reply from girls, even from those who had accepted their suitors offer. The veto retained by parents, and the free pre-marital associations of the sexes, brought great discord into many marriages and the negotiations that accompanied them. A girl sometimes found some other boy more congenial than the one to whom she had been betrothed.

If she took an active interest in him, her dissatisfaction and resentment at her parental intervention may lead to unfortunate incidents.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, parents were not always cognisant of all the love affairs of their children. Sometimes lovers reached a stage in their affairs where intervention of the parents was difficult to accept without a struggle. It happened occasionally that a girl had become pregnant before betrothal or marriage. In such an event, if the young man who had impregnated her was responsible and respectful and liked by the girl's parents, he was asked to make the necessary payments (bridewealth) to legalise the relationship. On the other hand, if the boy was not in favour with the girl's parents, she might be given to another man after the birth of her child, or be asked to look for a better man.

Once a girl was betrothed, she now became 'iyawo' and her prospective husband 'oko'. Any young man who had a girl betrothed to him owed services to her parents even before marriage took place. Services consisted periodic presents such as livestock, farm produce, eg., yams. He must help repair their house and the mother in-law's kitchen whenever the roof needed repair. He must be ready to do any work for which the girl's parents might need him.

It was customary for the suitor, once a year, to take a large gang of men-usually his own egbe-to do a day's work on the farm of the girl's father during the clearing and making mounds oko kiko in the new farm.

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<sup>2</sup>I was told of two instances where two young women died a few days after they were married to men to whom they were betrothed but whom they did not like. Both women were not ill before their sudden deaths, but it was widely known that they did not like their husbands whom their parents had made them marry. My informants would not commit themselves as to the cause of death, but my conjecture is that they had both committed suicides, an extreme way of protest at parental interference in marital affairs.

Nowadays, when the practice to roofing the house has changed from grass to the use of iron sheets the prospective husband helps by donating some money to the costs of the sheets. On her side the girl pays frequent visits to her future parents-in-law and participates freely in any household work under way. She also helps during harvest time, and assists in the preparation of yam seeds, alagbe, for the new season. Persons who had early betrothals therefore started services to their future parents-in-law much earlier than those who had to fend for themselves.

It is claimed that Omuo married in the past at a later age than they do at present. It was explained to me that men used to marry between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, by which time they had learned everything necessary for a married man. Women married earlier, because in the ideal mating the husband was expected to be older than the wife by about five years. My own investigations, based on comparison of the ages of older members of population and those of their first born children, show that the age of marriage for men in last three generations was between twenty and twenty-five. For women there seems to be very little difference between past and present. As negotiations and preparations for marriage started immediately after puberty, which was about fifteen, marriages occurred two or three years later, between seventeen and eighteen or a little later, and there seems to be a tendency for young men and women to be married earlier if they had been betrothed before puberty.

The preceding paragraphs have been devoted to a description of the traditional choice of marriage partner and premarital relations between the sexes. I conclude by emphasising that, though courtship and romance were recognised during the period in the Omuo-Ekiti society, they were not always allowed to determine the selection of partners by the young people themselves.

The important limiting factors were the influence of parents and other relatives of the prospective spouses and the characters of the young ~~man~~ concerned. It must also be mentioned that though marriage was the purpose implicit in many a romance, courtship had not yet become a necessary prelude to marriage. It was true that, even if a girl was betrothed, the boy still found it necessary to have opportunities to discuss love with her, but it is equally true that sometimes, even between lineages not linked by any matrilateral ties, a man asked for the hand of a girl to whom he had never declared his love .

- f) Marriage Ceremonies  
 (i) The Preliminary arrangements

The informal relations between lovers, and the comments of their parents, were given an emphatic stamp of seriousness and permanence by a ceremonial called idana-the making of affinity. This procedure followed the normal betrothal of a girl. The idana could take place any time between six months to a year before the girl married. This used to be the occasion to pay the bridewealth either in whole or a part of it. The boy and the girl did not need to be present during the ceremony. The standard price then was £5 compared to the present day's £15(30 Naira, ₦30). Two thirds of the money went to the girl's father while the remainder was her mother's share. Besides the money there were gifts of various kinds reflecting the wishes of the young man's family in respect of the match. When the ceremony was concluded a date was set for the marriage-usually an arrangement between both parents-but this time not excluding the youth and the girl. In fact, the young man had an important role to play here. If he was a farmer he knew when there would be plenty of food available on the farm to feed people during the marriage ceremony. When the date was known, it was then called igbeyawo, i.e, the day they would "carry the bride."

ii) The Ceremonies

The wedding followed the formal betrothal of the girl. There will be no wedding if the contract to marry had been broken off during the betrothal period. Where things remained equal the girl, was now ready to be married to the man to whom she was betrothed. The girl, usually was taken and escorted to her bride-groom's home in the evening. Before this occasion the second part of the formalities, the idana (the making of affinity) took place. The bridewealth was now paid in full if it had not been done during the preliminary ceremony.

A message was sent to the bride's home that a group of visitors calling on the bride's people was imminent. Already, the bride's relatives-her father, mother, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, and so on, were assembled in readiness to receive the important visitors. In fact, everybody knew who the visitors were and the purpose of their visit, yet the visit was full of decorum. On the groom's side, the senior sister, aunt, or cousins were assigned to carry the message to the bride's compound.

On a large covered tray were gifts with the following items:

A large bottle of honey

A bottle of dry gin or schnapps

Kola nuts

Bitter kola nuts

Another separate dish covered containing the full or remainder of the bride-price

2complete sets of native woven-cloth (Ala)

Blouse (Buba)

Head tie (Oja or gele)

Wrapper (iro)

Alligator peppers (Atare)

Palm wine or beer (Imu or otin)

Shoulder veil (iborun)

Various cooking utensils

The significance and symbolic importance of these articles were apparent. Bitter kola nuts (orogbo) represented long and durable life while alligator pepper (atare) represented the fecundity of the bride--the seeds of alligator peppers are numerous so will be the issues of the bride. Kola nut (obi) stood for the warding off of evil. The honey typified a hope that the future life of the young couple might be as sweet as honey (oyin).

When these items were presented, prayer was said to the effect that the wife may live long to use the wrappers for as many children as possible: Ki omo ki o su si, ki o si to si, that the child may soil the wrappers. It was a sincere wish for the wife to fecund.

When the groom's party finally arrived at the girl's compound, the senior of the party approached the girl's father and a reason was given for and why they had come. Whereupon, the bride's father asked the spokesman to repeat his message louder in order to make it sufficiently audible for the rest members of the audience. At this point, the boy's sister or Aunt repeated the message to the hearing of everyone in the bride's audience. At last she was asked to produce her gifts. The tray was now uncovered, the items were picked up one by one with prayer at the same time. She prayed that all evil may be driven from the young couple; that they may have long life; that their children may be countless as the seeds of the alligator peppers.

When she had finished her presentation, one of the bride's kin began to examine the articles one by one for quality and quantity. For instance, the complaint could be about insufficient beer, palm wine or schnapps, the quality of the kola nuts or the wrappers. In fact, there was usually a long list of altercation and bickering ranging in different cases from jest, through mock severity to a marked degree of hostility. However, in time agreement was reached and the gifts accepted.



Before the groom's representatives returned to their compound, they were given part of the kola nuts and in some cases gift of money, say, ten shillings. All the clothing (dresses) went to the wife, while the schnapps, beer or palm wine were opened and people began to drink in merriment. As I have mentioned earlier, the bride-price itself was divided entirely between the father and mother in the ratio of 2:1.

In the evening she prepared to leave for her husband's home. Before leaving she paid farewell visits to members of her kin, who wished her luck and gave her gifts. It was her first consideration to obtain the blessings and advice of her father and mother. While she knelt down, she was advised to be obedient to her husband and his kin and prayed that her union might be blessed with happiness and fertility.

The girl now became emotional and approached her mother in tears for her blessings while she knelt down again. Often, the mother if unable to control her emotions, also broke down and joined her daughter in shedding tears. She embraced her daughter, wished her farewell, god's blessings and a fertile home where she would take care of her grandchildren. When this simple but informal ceremony was over, the wife was now ready to be escorted to her husband's home.

Two maids, usually the girl's sisters or nieces, were assigned to carry the wife's special jewelry box consisting of beads (akun) to wear around the hips and wrist, necklace, ear-rings (iyeti), woven cloth and her other belongings. Two maids were also assigned as errand girls during the pleasure of the wife. Wives from the extended family of the girl, her egbe, and members of her lineage mainly women, joined the band of escort. Her face was heavily veiled even in the dark. Friends, relatives and egbe rejoiced amidst singing and drumming. The journey could be prolonged depending on the size and nature of the crowd.

Before entering the house and if it was during the dry season, some water was sprinkled on the ground in order to wet and remove dust. Her feet were also washed. This also symbolised the future happiness of the wife.

When she finally entered, she was handed over to the groom's parents and the two most senior wives from her husband's lineage, carried her bodily into a room specially prepared for her. This was known in Omuo and perhaps throughout Yorubaland as igbe-iyawo or lifting of the bride. Her belongings were also arranged in a careful order in her new room. Apart from the two maids-omo iyawo, two women from the groom's home were also assigned to the new wife. Their principal function was to look after the wife during the next three months. Next, she was washed, dressed and prepared to meet her husband. Before now, the husband had disappeared to somewhere else. It was forbidden that he should see her before he consummated the marriage.

On the contrary, during the first night, the wife slept separately from her husband. The chaperons made sure that this old established norm was strictly observed. But on the second night and the following morning the marriage was consummated on a bed laced with white sheets. The virginity of the bride was a matter of great moment. On the morning after the consummation of the marriage the bed sheet was 'carefully scrutinised for the blood stains which would prove her erst-while virginity.' Her parents who also felt concerned about her virginity sent a relative on the morning following the consummation to receive the news. If it was found that the girl was in fact virgo intacta money was wrapped up in the sheet and sent to her mother<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>A bride whose virginity had been established at the consummation was said to have been 'met at home,' a ba iyawo nile; one who had sex previously 'had not been met at home', a ko ba iyawo nile.

The parents were happy at the receipt of the news, they felt proud of their daughter and more gifts were bestowed on her. The news was spread around the quarter and the girl was deemed 'to have come from a good home.' There was followed a greater degree of merriment and rejoicing in the girl's home and at the husband's place as well.

She was washed by the two women three times a day, her meals were cooked for her and she was not allowed to do any domestic work for the next three months. She also painted herself with camwood, osun, rested and slept for the next three months. This was the time that can be called the honey moon period in the English sense.

If, on the other hand, the girl was unchaste, she felt ashamed, full of remorse and guilt. Her parents also got criticised and the girl's home was termed 'a bad one', She was described as promiscuous, and was treated with contempt. Obloquy and labour were showered on her, she received no special treatment nor was she secluded. She remained, however, a legal wife. It was probable that she would be beaten until she confessed the name of her seducer who was liable for damages to the new husband.

On the seventh day after her arrival, there was the outing, ijade iyawo. For this purpose, she was dressed elegantly and with jewellery. In addition to the two wives and the maids, some of her favourites in her egbe followed her during the outing. One of the maids held a purse, this was to receive the gifts of money on her outing. Up to this time she had been veiled, but now removed her veil. At the end of the outing, she returned to her marital home while her egbe members returned to their homes. She remained in seclusion until the period allowed for this was over. Traditionally, the actual duration of the seclusion was three months but each particular case depended on the wish and income resources of the husband, for the seclusion was fairly an expensive business.

So long as <sup>she</sup> remained there the bride was expected to eat only the choicest dishes, fresh meat, rice, etc., and only men with ample means could afford to keep their brides in seclusion for long periods.

During the seclusion period the bride's sisters brought her food from the homestead, while the two wives continued to cook food. The bride always remained in her room, going out only for toilet, and even this she must do surreptitiously so as to avoid meeting anyone. Throughout the day her time was occupied with handicrafts, but mostly with friends and relatives, who entertained her to indoor games and pastimes. The relatives also, especially her own parents and grandparents, continued to advise her on the prerequisites of successful family life.

But the main idea behind the seclusion was to emphasise from the onset the husband's monopoly over sexual services. When she finally appeared in public, she would have become pregnant to the joy of her admirers, relatives and kinsfolk. In fact, she was expected to get pregnant before coming out because this gave hope of a successful union, children being considered a most powerful stabilising influence on marriage. The period of adjustment remained in force until the wife had given birth to her child, after when she resumed in totality the duties of a housewife.

From the brief account given so far it is clear that the traditional marriage ceremonies were very elaborate. As such they helped to bring home to the couple and their relatives the importance of their undertaking. Most of the splendour and ceremony surrounding traditional Omuo-Ekiti marriage are fast disappearing. There is evidence to indicate that up to fifty or even forty years ago nearly all couples at their first marriage went through the processes described.

The seclusion is now considered a luxury no one is able to enjoy. The consummation ceremony has lost its main function because of the increasing laxity of attitude towards virginity. Finally, formal education and the introduction of christianity have an impact and thereby introducing a good deal of flexibility into the marriage procedure.

g) The marriage payment

It has been observed that each stage of the proceedings was marked by the bridegroom supplying or buying specific articles, both in the form of gifts and as necessary objects for the performance of particular rites. During the formal handing over of the bride, for instance, drinks were provided. Important though these were, and despite their necessary connection with the ceremony, they were not part of the marriage payment. The marriage payment were special payment given as such, regardless of anything the groom might have paid for other purposes.

The list I have earlier given contains what were expected to be the ideal load of what the bride must take with her to her husband's place. However, there was much variation in practice. Out of the list collected no two were identical. A man may give gele, head tie but may not give iborun for the bride. What we can legitimately say, however, is that though there was an ideal list of items, individuals tried to approximate their payments to it in various ways, since the ideal payment was not insisted upon in practice. This was largely the reason for haggling which usually preceded the payment.

Generally speaking the items may be divided into two, those for the use of the bride and those for her relatives. Many of the articles are the basic things a bride would need during the early part of her married life and of course, later in life, as clothes are durable articles. Their inclusion in the marriage payment or items emphasises the view that the general material well-being of a wife is the responsibility of her husband. But this does not mean that all the bride's trousseau is included in the marriage item or provided by the groom. On the contrary, every Omuo-Ekiti girl and her parents try to make sure that she is as little dependent as possible on her husband. Omuo-Ekiti women have a remarkable fancy for good clothes, and take great pride in providing their own clothing. Not only is a woman's dependence on her husband for clothes a constant subject of abuse for her during quarrels among co-wives and between spouses, it is also indicative of her own economic failings. In short, a woman must work to provide her own basic needs. Petty trading is one of the commonest occupations of women which provides them with reasonable independent incomes, for it is only through this type of independent occupation that she is respected.

Nevertheless, however independent a wife may be in the provision of basic necessities, she needs capital for her trading or whatever occupation she takes up, and for this she must look to her husband and to a lesser extent to her parents. Thus, although a woman's hard work is cherished, the husband's help in his wife's economic activities explains the importance of the money payments. With this money the young wife starts life as asowo, trader for kola nut or rice.

Other items, especially the ring which is popular among christian marriages, are of a rather symbolic value, and, in view of what has been said about them, clothes must also fall within this category. Clothes received as marriage payment are used, it is true, but many prefer to regard them as life-long possessions to which they can point with pride to friends and immediate posterity; for, despite their material value, a woman has some sentimental attachment to her marriage clothes. Receipt of marriage payment means maturity before marriage, premarital moral behaviour and above all proper marriage. Hence the special value placed on them.

CHAPTER 5Kinship and Community Lifea) Principles of Agnatic Relationships

The basic pattern for interpersonal relations within the lineage is governed by three main factors: the opposition of adjacent generations within the nuclear family, epitomized by the father-son relationship; the residence pattern, which results in co-residence and habitual co-operation of agnates; and patrilineal inheritance, which makes agnates common owners of lineage property.

As in many patrilineal societies, the father-son relationship is characterised by the authority and superordination of the father and the total dependence and subordination of the son. Though it is recognised that a strong affection should develop between father and son through co-residence and co-operation in work, disciplinary role of the father is not easily reconcilable with any free association between them. As Middleton (1966:27-8) has succinctly expressed this in his Lubgara study: "A father should discipline his sons, yet he does not wish them harm. He beats his children when they are small, but once they are adolescent he uses religious sanctions against them for all but trivial offences ". The relationship is developed in the son's childhood when he is learning from his father, and perfected in his adulthood, when he prepares to take over from him.

In the household the father as the head is the most important person. He is the Bale, owner of the house and land and everything within it. So long as he lives all his property, including any that he has given to his son, remains in his name, because, as Omuo people express this, ' a ki njogun eni laye', a living parents property is never inherited, only a dead man's is. A son is expected to be deferential and submissive to his father. On no occasion should he address him by name, but always by the kinship terms applicable to a father, baba. He is expected not to look at his father's face while talking to him. The son is expected to squat while giving his own version in a quarrel between him and his siblings. It is improper for a son to sit on a seat vacated by his father. If he does, he will be accused of wishing the latter's death in order to replace him. At meal times the son must not start eating before his father does. If he is eating with his father he must sit on the floor while his father sits on a chair. Moreover, the son must not dip his

fingers into the dish but must wait until he has been given a big morsel by the father. Under no circumstances may he eat any fish or meat in the soup until his father tells him to. Moreover, talking at table while eating with his father is a taboo.

The duty and respect due to a father continues up to the son's adulthood. Though a man is expected to establish his own compound after he is married, he only does so if he is financially viable; even then he remains almost at the beck and call of his father, and is master only in his own compound. After, and even nowadays before the son's marriage, a father gives part of his own land, or the uncleared bush adjoining it, to his son for his own use; but at sowing, hoeing or weeding times the father still has a claim on the son's labour. In fact his demands take precedence over the son's own needs. Thus the establishment of a separate household by the son does not in itself establish his independence of his father. Indeed he builds his compound at a place chosen for him by the father, usually not far from his own compound, so that the son can be of help to him whenever he needs him. A further index of his authority is the fact that the son cannot start building his new house until the father has ritually laid out the groundwork for it.

A good son is one who obeys his father, is gentle, and models himself on his father's life. The Omuo people express this by saying: 'ko si bi ti omo yi fi yato si baba re', 'this boy follows his father's footsteps'. A bad son, on the other hand, is one who is disobedient, avoids his father, and is always running from him to seek refuge in his uncle's house.

One may speak then of an institutionalised inequality and even antagonism between father and son. The saying that one does not inherit the property of a living man, and some of the other usages associated with the relationship, are expressive of the hidden unwillingness with which the father concedes responsibility and authority to his son.

The father-daughter relationship is not different in general principles, but owing to sexual division of labour there are limits to their co-activity in everyday life and the preceding discussion must be considered less relevant to daughters. But in spite of this, or rather because of it, it is said that a daughter must be even more



Respectful towards her father, in keeping with the general subservience of women to men.

The relationship between a man and his father's brother, who in Omuo is also called baba, father (big or small according to his age relative to the father's) is similar. It is said that because this relationship lacks the intimacy of the real father-son relationship the maternal uncle is feared and is even more respected than the father himself. It is further said that there is an inherent hatred between them, stemming from the belief that the paternal uncle regards the brother's son as a rival to his own son in relationship to paternal property. However, though he can ask for his help in performance of various tasks he has not as direct a demand on his brother's son's labour as on his own sons'.

A father's sister commands even greater respect than her male siblings. Owing to virilocal residence, when women marry they leave their parental homes and their male agnates behind, though links with them are never severed. Subject to the relative distance of her new home from her male siblings' there is lacking between her and her brother's sons the frequent social intercourse amongst male agnates which co-residence entails. But the relationship is formalised in specific terms with deep mystical overtones. For instance, the father's sister's curse is believed to be the most dreaded and her blessings are something to look forward to with great expectation. In fact, there is more of blessing coming from her rather than curse. These prerogatives of the father's sister make her a very important person in the life of every Omuo, and it is said that a person's one important life-long consideration is not to offend his father's sister.

When we move from members of adjacent generations to agnates of the same generation, we at the same time travel from the realm of inequality and to comradeship. The relationship of agnates of the same generation is distinguishable from the previous one by lack of formality. Siblingship in general is discussed below. Here we are only concerned with agnatic siblingship.

Comradeship and co-operation characterise the relationship of children of the same father or of brothers, though potential rivalry and hostility are also recognised. Paternal half-sibling and ortho-cousins help each other in the farm tasks and have first claim

to the use of land formerly held by their fathers. For, though the administration of the lineage land as a whole is in the hands of the oloriebi, a person's rights of usufruct are inherited on his death by his own sons and daughters. The position of daughters and their children in the inheritance system will be discussed later.

A man regards his brothers and patrilineal cousins, especially those in the same family cluster, as important advisers. He would not decide such important matters as his own marriage or the marriage of his children without consulting them. These people advise and help him in all his problems, and, as members of his own generation and generally of his own age group, he is on much more intimate and freer terms with them than with his father and his siblings..

Due to the lineage exogamy ortho-cousins cannot marry, and they are taught from an early age that sex relations between them are forbidden. But daughters and sons of brothers do not avoid each other, they are often seen playing together. Yet within this framework of habitual co-operation and collective rights, there are sometimes jealousies and disputes, especially among male ortho-cousins, owing to rival claims to unused land and other properties, and the arbitrary exercise of authority.

We turn finally to a consideration of relationship between relatives of alternate generations. There is a close relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren. The relationship can be described as free. This is a time when both are on the fringes of useful social life, one generation being in their extreme youth and the other in their old age. Few responsibilities in the day-to-day management of the compound are theirs. As a result a pleasant, free and easy relationship can be obtained between them.

Though no distinction is made in language between maternal and paternal grandparents. it is with the latter that children are more intimately acquainted. But they too do not normally live in associations which mark the relation of adjacent generations. The Omuo child, therefore, like those in many other societies, looks to its grandparents for especially kindly treatment, for gifts, endearments and general spoiling.

## b) Non-Agnatic Relationships

So far we have been concerned solely with a description of agnatic kinship, without reference to the ties which join people of different lineages. This procedure is useful as a way of giving an unadulterated picture of the lineage, its structure and its internal organisation. But in a sense this picture is both artificial and unreal, because the social horizon of every person extends beyond the limits of clan and lineage. In short, the lineage does not exist in isolation. As women marry they create new ties with other lineages in the community, which have important influences on members of their own lineages as well as those of their husbands. The children of these women too retain some rights and duties in the lineages of their mothers. As the Omuo themselves put it, by marriage a woman joins kinship with other lineages.

Of all a person's non-agnatic ties the most important are those which connect him to his mother's patrilineage. The social and economic relations springing from association with the mother's patrilineage are second in importance only to those derived from his own. Generally speaking the difference between the two is one of degree and not of kind, and it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction in their spheres of application. It is true that patriliney takes precedence over non-agnatic kinship, especially in respect of political rank, land usage, the inheritance of transferable wealth, residence rights, funerals and ritual allegiance. Nevertheless, as we shall see, these rights and obligations which characterise the patrilineage can be conferred upon an individual by his mother's patrilineage.

One important field in which this is clearly demonstrated is inheritance. We have already indicated that in the inheritance of a dead person's property, the daughters are not completely left out, particularly as far as movable property is concerned. The portion allocated to the daughters does not pass after their death to their brothers but to their children. This practice applies equally to both lineage property and personal property acquired by a man. As far as daughters are concerned it is to be emphasized that, though no fixed proportion is allocated to them by traditional custom, especially in the area of immovable property, but where a share is given to them it is a great deal smaller than that of the male

offspring. But the important thing is not the actual size of the share that matters but the principles which govern the distribution. Thus usufructuary rights in land and other properties are transmitted both patrilineally and matrilineally.

The cumulative effects of this dual approach to inheritance are that:

- 1) An individual potentially has links with several lineages apart from his own, to whose land and other properties he has claims, and many people actually do utilise these matrilineal claims.
- 2) In every succeeding generation an increased portion of lineage land falls into the hands of matrilineal relatives, though it nominally remains in the name of the lineage. This is the reason why a land standing in the name of a lineage or clan invariably has among its cultivators many who do not answer to this name.

Ideally there is little difference between the rights of lineage inheritors and those of non-lineage kin, since both are governed by the belief in the inalienable nature of the land, so that nobody can have more than usufruct,

There is however one relationship between the land and the lineage members from which non-agnates are debarred. Since succession to leadership is through lineal descent, no outsider to the lineage can become the head of the land-owning group, and since sacrifices to the land and its dead owners are made by the lineage owning the land, no non-lineage user can perform these. Any non-agnatic user of the lineage land who wants to make such a sacrifice must do so through the Oloriebi. As will be shown later, a man can make sacrifices to the ancestors of lineages other than his own, but these have to pass through the lineal descendants of the ancestor in question. By enjoying the land or property of a lineage not his own a person indirectly places himself under the authority of the land-owning lineage and their ancestors.

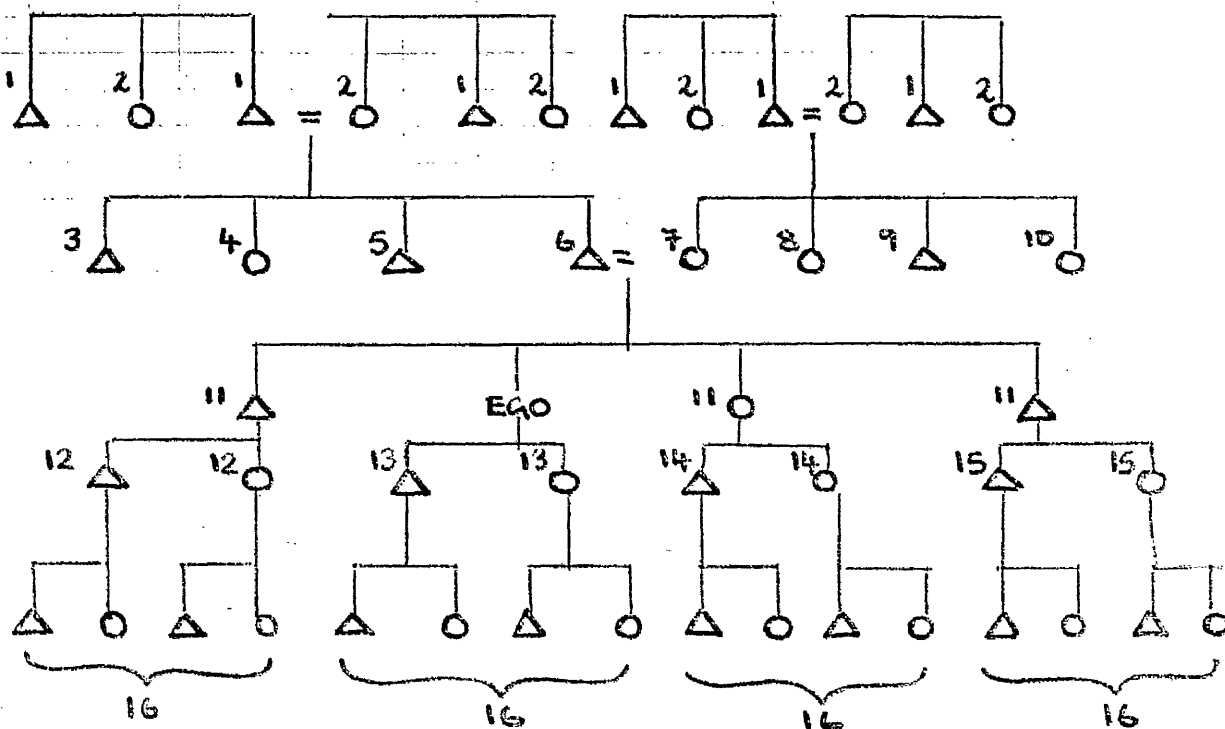
The above are the main principles which govern inheritance of lineage property. How the system works in practice, however, depends in each case on the relationship of demographic factors to available land and the reasonableness of the various claimants. For instance, a man whose lineage has a large area may not find it necessary to utilise his matrilineal claims elsewhere. In other cases large portions of land have been given to non-agnatic relatives.

Related to this system of inheritance is the development of an identifiable group of relatives, which may be called Ibatan (lit: offspring), a group comprising all the lineal descendants of an ancestor and his descendants through all other lines. This is a group of members of which in every generation have rights of one kind or another in their ancestor's property. Within this group agnates are differentiated from matrilinear kin, both in name and rights. The agnates are the nominal holders of the group's property, the observers of its taboos, the bearers of its name and the successors to its titles. They include not only males but also their sisters, who form the originating points of the non-agnatic members. As marriage is virilocal, the non-agnatic members do not form a residential group with the agnates, and they do not often utilise their rights in the property of the group, except where, as we have seen, their own agnatic group has not sufficient land. Moreover, unlike agnatic ties, the links of non-agnatic kinship do not go on ad infinitum. After a few generations the matrilinear relationship (especially if it has not been attached to property) becomes lost, if not to recognition, at least to active participation with it. The nearer one's generation to the matrilinear ancestors who utilised these claims the greater one's chances of remembering the links.

Claims through women therefore provide a subsidiary source of income and capital for people whose lineages have insufficient property. Thus in Omuo-Ekiti a man can turn with greater confidence than in many patrilineal societies to groups outside his own lineage for support.

The principle of dual aspect of the kinship is also further illustrated in ward membership. Though a person normally belongs to his father's ward, he can if he likes when he becomes an adult, or even much earlier in his life, choose his mother's. Moreover, though every ward is territorially identified with the section of the settlement which the members usually occupy, to the Omuo themselves it is participation in the ward's activities, not residence, which determines membership. A man whose parents belong to different wards, and who prefers, for instance, the festive activities of his mother's to those of his father's, may choose the former. Thus it happens that a person may live in the quarter of his lineage and ward and yet be counted as a member of another ward. An example may help here.

Kinship terms for paternal and maternal kin (where Ego is male).



Glossary:

- 1 Baba baba=Grandfather
- 2 Iya iya = Grandmother
- 3 Baba Nla = Big father
- 4 Egbon baba (Obinrin) = Father's older sister
- 5 Baba kekere = Small father
- 6 Baba = Father
- 7 Iya = Mother
- 8 Iya Agba = Big mother
- 9 Egbon iya (Okunrin) = Mother's elder brother
- 10 Iya kekere = Small mother
- 11 Omo obi = Full sibling
- 12 Omo egbon okunrin = Elder brother's child
- 13 Omo = child
- 14 Omo aburo tabi egbon obinrin = Sister's child
- 15 Omo aburo mi okunrin = Younger brother's child
- 16 Omo omo = Grandchild

Olatoju and Babafeju belong to different wards although they are full brothers. The reason given for this is that Olatoju spent his childhood with his mother's brothers and grew to like their activities. He still lives there (Iworo), and does not very much participate in the activities of his father's ward in Ekurugbe. He is not on the register of his father's ward and does not regard himself as a member of it. As he himself told me in a conversation with him one day, he said that when he dies, 'it is my mother's ward, not my father's, who will bury me, because that is where I belong'. It suffices to add here that although the option is open, there are not many cases like that of Olatoju in the community. Most people do tend to remain in their father's ward. In the case of Olatoju, he had been fostered with the mother's brother in his childhood. This is what Omuo people mean when they say: 'A lo to omo ni ita ki o ba le gbon si'.'

It has also been pointed out that Omuo people attribute immortality to their ancestors through their belief in the doctrine of reincarnation. The dead are believed to return into their own lineages. This aspect of my study is slightly different from that carried out among the Anlo Ewe by Nukunya (1969:47.8). In the Anlo study, it is said that because of the importance attached to 'both sides' of relationships, the dead person 'is reincarnated as a member either of his or her own lineage or of his or her descending kindred or personal kindred', from a younger generation.

I will round off the general discussion of non-agnatic kinship by a further look at the ancestor-worship. This subject had earlier been treated purely from the point of view of the lineage. Here we must see how non-agnatics fit into the picture.

The principles governing the relationship between the living and the dead resemble in some respects those of the Lugbara. There, as Middleton (1966:57-61) reports, lineal as well as matrilineal ancestors make certain demands on their living kindred, and the latter in turn expect certain guidance and help from both. The difference between the two systems in this respect is that, unlike the Lugbara, the Omuo do not make matrilineal shrines, but pray or sacrifice to the matrilineal ancestors in question through the ancestors' lineage shrine and the oloriebi. An Omuo individual is then linked ritually with many other lineages apart from his own. And because of the

interest of the ancestors in their cognatic descendants, all known descendants are invited to and do attend the lineage's ancestral rituals. We can now see how non-agnatic kinship is, thus given emphasis in some of the important aspects of Omuo social life. This I have tried to show by considering the part played by it in inheritance, ancestor worship and other aspects of the social system. One important effect of the extra-lineage ties, especially those deriving from the inheritance system, is to widen the cleavages, when they occur, within the lineage. This happens particularly in lineages which are poor, and whose members have to look towards their different matrilineal kinsmen for support.

### c) Rules Governing Matrilineal Kinship

Perhaps the most significant feature of non-agnatic kinship is that it is not the basis of any corporate group. Since residence is virilocal and lineage exogamy the rule, non-agnatic relatives must be distributed among the different patrilineal territories of a settlement. Also, matrilineal ties are ego-oriented, in that the circle of kinsfolk is distinct for each group of full siblings. It is for this reason that some authorities, notably Fortes (1949:37) prefer to call this set of relationships 'personal kinship'. Because of their dispersal, persons linked by these ties are not subject to such friction as characterises agnates with their permanent co-residence and co-activity. Hence from the personal point of view the non-agnatic bond is held to be stronger and more affectionate than that of agnatic kinship. That the absence of shared residence among matrilineal kinsmen is a strong factor in the maintenance of these affective ties is realised by the Omuo themselves, and is expressed in several proverbs and maxims. 'Ore a ra ita miran san ju ti ibatan miran Io'. says one maxim, 'kinsfolk are at peace when they live apart'. In other words, co-residence is known to cause friction. Little wonder, therefore, that at the level of interpersonal relations, agnatic are less strong than non-agnatic.

The basic behaviour patterns among non-agnatic kinsfolk radiate from the relationships within the nuclear family. From the Omuo point of view, the strongest ties of affection are not those between the spouses, but those between parent and child and between siblings.



Of the parents the mother is considered much closer and more intimate. The mother-child relationship, as the strongest of all ties, is created in the first place by the child's physical dependence on the mother and the close bodily contact between the two in the child's formative years. She fondles and tends it, and carries it around on her back until it is weaned after two years. Compared with this the father's relationship with his child is almost negligible. The rules forbidding him to sleep with his wife 'till the child is weaned, and his outdoor activities during the day, keep him away from mother and child, thus preventing him from giving the child any care at this time comparable to that of its mother.

As the child grows its attachment to the mother deepens, while its relationship to the father remains shallow. The harshness, authority and disciplinary functions of the father have already been described. Between these and the child the mother serves as a buffer. She tempers the father's wrath whenever it is aroused, while her own relationship with the child is characterised by softness and indulgence.

Apart from the mutual trust between mother and child during infancy, it seems that the effects of travail on the mother also introduce a special relationship between her and her child, which the father-child bonds lacks. This is expressed in the concept of the feelings aroused in a mother bringing to mind the time of travail. These emotions are aroused when her child is in pain or in trouble of any kind. For instance, a mother whose only surviving child out of six children was taken ill with malaria, said to me meditatively: 'Edumare ati olorun idile mi ni ogba omo mi sile Iowo esu, bá ko ba sebe ni, omo yi iba ti fi aiye sile bayi gegebi awon egbon re to ti saju re'. 'God above and the lineage gods have saved my child from the terror of Satan, otherwise my only child would have left this world like all the siblings that preceded him'. What this woman meant was that had this child died like the others, it would have been an empty world without him as he was the only hope left for her. In another sense, the woman would rather die than be left empty handed without a single child in this world. The child was her only and last hope.

Often when a father is beating a child one can hear the mother pleading: 'Jowo fi omo yi sile, on nikan ni o ku fun mi ni aiya yi' 'please leave this child alone, he is only a child, and the only one I have got left in the world'. Many mothers told me that it is the recalling of that day, the day of travail, which generates this sympathetic attitude.

It has been said that because of the sexual division of labour in everyday life a father has more to do with his son than his daughter. A mother for the same reason is more closely linked with her daughter, and it is a mark of affection of the mother that this co-operation, which also involves some degree of discipline, does not result in antagonism. Moreover, there is a recognised preference among Omuo women, like the rest of Yoruba women, for their first child to be female<sup>1</sup> as it is among men for sons.

A daughter will help the mother tend the younger children and assist in the housework, such as fetching water, cleaning, cooking, preparing and marketing the farm supplies. At the same time economic importance of the son is also emphasised. At an early age a boy follows his father to the farm, starting by helping with the weeding, fetching and carrying, looking after the fire, and bird-scaring. There is a steady development up to a complete proficiency in farming activities. He takes charge of his father's estate as he grows older, and is looked to by his mother for support in her old age. The lack of frequent contact<sup>which</sup> results from the difference of sex is compensated by their permanent co-residence, which the daughter does not share once she is married. The result is a free permanent relationship of affection.

The affective free and informal ties of mother-child relationship also extends to the mother's siblings. A mother's sister is also called mother. When travelling outside the settlement a mother prefers to leave her children with a sister if she has one rather than with her co-wives, even if this would mean taking them to a different section of the village. When a child loses its mother it is more

<sup>1</sup>This desire among women is not strong, because of the nature of inheritance system which favours male children over females. The ideal and the desire today is to have more male children than female. The more there are of the former, the greater the share of wealth they are likely to inherit from their father.

usual for its mother's sister than its father's sister to assume responsibility for it. The familiar pattern described for many patrilineal societies, of the informal, intimate relation between a man and his sister's son is also found in Omuo (cf. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952:15-31: Goody, 1959:61-6).

A mother's brother's house is the second home for every Omuo. A sister's son may take certain liberties in his mother's brother's house: he may help himself to food and take anything at all that he likes, because 'your mother's brother - 'Egbon iya' is like a mother to you. He will not be stern with you'. It is not unusual for children, especially boys, to live with their mother's brothers. In fact, it occurs in the community though not with the degree of frequency these days compared with the old days when there was a high frequency of this.

Something has already been said about siblingship in an agnatic context. Here we consider the relationship in a uterine context. The absence of primogeniture eliminates one important element of potential hostility among uterine siblings, particularly as the paternal estate is equally divided among brothers while the sisters are not completely forgotten. But the same is not true of succession to titles within the patrilineage and the family clusters within it. There, as has been seen already, seniority is given great emphasis, and a man cannot hope to be a head so long as his elder brother lives. There are some grumblings occasionally here and there about an elder brother, as oloriebi, taking the lion's share of the sacrificial objects or making arbitrary decisions, but on the whole these tensions occur within the general agnatic framework of the lineage, where full siblings - omo iya - usually side together against their opposite numbers. Seniority within the sibling group, though given expression in language and general behaviour among siblings, does not cause conflicts as in the agnatic group at large. Siblings, therefore, form a very closely knit group, among whom there is mutual trust and confidence.

There does not seem to be any special ties by sex among siblings. However, the relations between sisters are remarkable for lack of tension. Though they change domicile after marriage their relationship is maintained by frequent visits. Brothers and sisters too grow very fond of each other. Before women marry they grow up in close contact with their brothers, and talk freely with them about all their interests. A young man often discusses his love affairs with his, who is undoubtedly placed in a position to know much about other

girls, and she may approach the girl in whom he is interested on his behalf. There is no privacy between them. They can see each other's nakedness without remorse. But they may not have sexual relations. This is taboo, and violation may result in serious sickness for both. Brother and sister maintain close ties after they have married. However, long the distance between them, frequent visits are exchanged. A sister may pay long visits to her brother, which he has to reciprocate. These links are further strengthened by personal interest in each other's children, who are often taken to spend several days with their parents' siblings, some even living with them permanently.

It is because of the importance attached to full siblingship - omo iya - that special mystical sanctions are associated with permanent disputes among them. It is believed that when omo iya quarrel and remain unreconciled, the ancestors will intervene by bringing sickness on them or their children. Such a sickness can be cured only after the parties have brought offerings to appease the ancestors. Omo iya do quarrel, but they are expected to be reconciled as soon as possible. The same applies to half-siblings - obakan, but it is omo iya which is always emphasised.

One other fact which underlines the unity of the sibling group is the belief already mentioned that omo iya share the same witchcraft ancestry through the female line. If someone is accused of witchcraft it follows that the accusation applies equally to the whole sibling group. Witchcraft and its accusation is becoming less of a social problem in Omuo, but association with it carries grave social stigma, and accusations are fiercely resented by those involved.

The above considerations serve to unite the sibling group and to foster great affection among them. Hence the uterine relationship is the one on which all other kinship ties are modelled. Accordingly the term omo iya-children of one mother - the usual term used to describe full siblings, is often used to refer to anyone else with whom one has close kinship, or to differentiate a very close relative from among a class.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The relationship between male and female cross-cousins is also close and cordial, but rests on a different plane because of the sex element in it. Cross-cousins are expected to associate freely on terms of great intimacy and love. They are regarded as the most suitable mates. Even if they do not marry, or are of the same sex, they are entitled to be familiar. If they are opposite sexes one often hears their parents referring to them as potential spouses. The relationship is symmetrical between cross-cousins on both sides.

In addition to the special cases described, the relationship between classificatory siblings of all sorts is recognised as widely as genealogical connections are known. In all cases the relationship is characterised by mutual help and friendly behaviour. The strength of the tie in each case, apart from the distinctions made, is dependent on relative genealogical closeness.

#### d) The Language of Kinship

One important way by which kinship behaviour patterns can be studied is through the terms used to address or speak of different categories of kinsfolk, usually referred to as kinship terminology.

According to Radcliffe-Brown (1952:62), 'In the actual study of a kinship system the nomenclature is of the utmost importance. It affords the best possible approach to the investigation and analysis of the kinship system as a whole. This, of course, it could not do if there were no real relations of interdependence between the terminology and the rest of the system. It will be borne out... by any anthropologist who has made a thorough field study of a kinship system'. The central problem, then, for the student of kinship is, according to Firth (1957:247), 'to see his kinship terminologies as a definite part of the dynamism of kinship relations, to determine how far the separation and combination of relatives under linguistic labels can be correlated with other sociological phenomena.'

The first step in this exercise is to discover what terms are used and how they are used. We shall then consider these terms in relation to the whole system of social relations. Omuo kinship terms are a combination of classificatory and descriptive terms, though the former are more common in ordinary usage. In its classificatory aspect the kinship terminology shows many of the social categories in observed behaviour. It was Morgan who first made the distinction between descriptive and classificatory terminologies. He applied as the criterion of the latter application to certain relatives of terms applying primarily to lineal relatives. Again, Radcliffe-Brown (1950:9), made this point when he says that the "general rule is that the inclusion of two relatives in the same terminological category implies that there is some significant similarity in the customary behaviour due to both of them in the social relation in which one stands to each of them".

In the same category are included near or distant relatives. It is relevant to draw a distinction between the two categories. In this regard, it is appropriate to refer to what Sir Henry Maine (1875:214) has to say on this subject: "The effect of the system is in general to bring within your general grasp a much greater number of your kindred than is possible under the system to which we are accustomed." This is no doubt a reference to the importance of rights and obligations between kinsfolk. The relevance of this statement is borne by the kinship system in Omuo society.

The basic pattern is set by the terms used within the family, for the distinction of kin in ordinary terms of address, apart from individual description in detail, does not go further back than the second ascending generation, that is, the grandparent level.

Parents are distinguished according to sex. Father is baba and mother is iya. Children can also be distinguished according to sex, a son being omokunrin and a daughter omobinrin, but the common term for both is simple omo or omo mi - my child. The general term for a sibling is omo obi, parent's child in the literal sense. However, it is an important principle of traditional etiquette that while a young relative may be called by a personal name, an older one should always be addressed and called by the appropriate term of seniority. In these terms of seniority sex is clearly shown. A person may find it necessary, in order to make himself intelligible, to specify what is the sex of the person to whom reference is made. At this point descriptive adjectives are added as in: older male omo obi are called egbon okunrin, elder brother, and older female omo obi are called egbon obinrin, elder sister.

Grandparents are distinguished by sex as well as between the father's parents as well as the mother's. But the general term for grandfather is baba baba, father's father, and for a grandmother, iya iya, mother's mother. However, if one wishes to indicate between the mother's and the father's grandparents, it is appropriate to add the sex of the parent to whom one is referring, as in the: Baba Baba iya or Iya iya baba, grandfather's mother or Grandmother's father.

These basic terms are generally extended to all relatives outside the family, according to generation, with some modification in detail. In the first ascending generation the father's siblings are clearly

Kinship terms for near and distant kin in the first and second ascending generations (1)

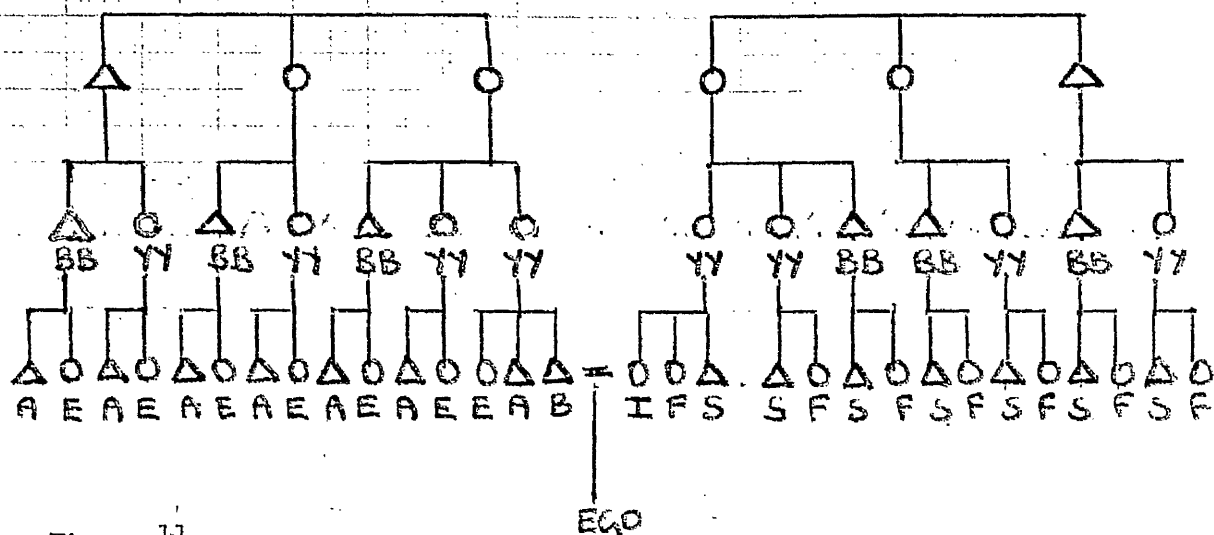
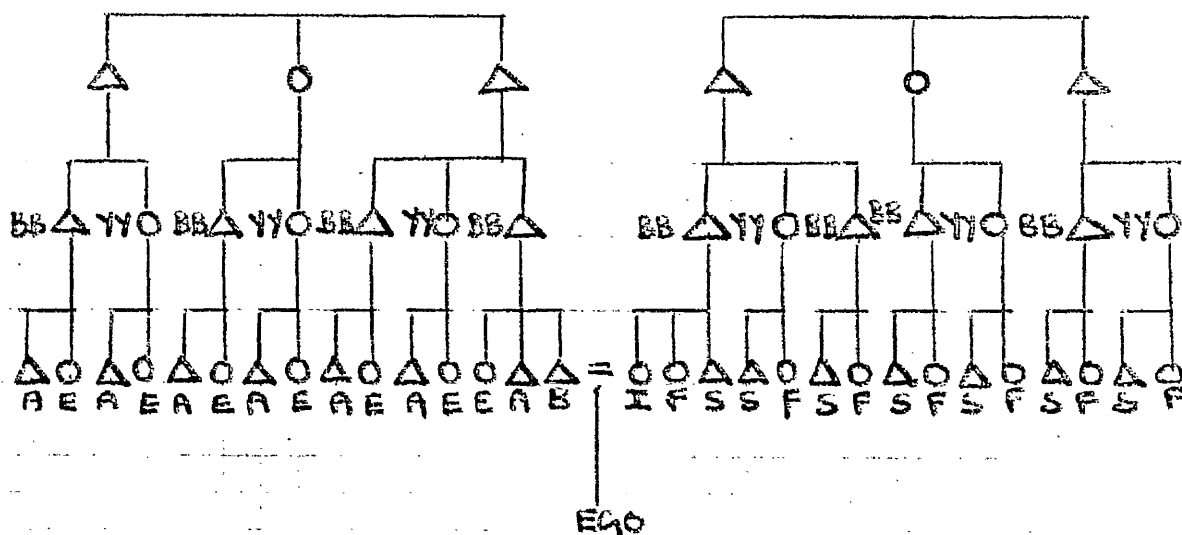


Figure 11

Kinship terms for near and distant kin in the first and second ascending generations (2)



Glossary:

BB = Baba baba = Grandfather

YY = Iya iya = Grandmother

A = Egbon tabi aburo baba = Father's elder brother or father's younger brother (lit. big father and small father respectively)

E = Egbon baba tabi aburo baba = Father's sister (junior or senior)

B = Baba = Father

I = Iya = Mother

S = Egbon tabi aburo iya = Mother's brother (junior or senior)

F = Egbon tabi aburo iya = Mother's elder sister or mother's younger sister (lit. big mother and small mother respectively)

distinguished from the mother's, the appropriate distinctions are made for relative seniority. Father's elder brother is baba nla, big father, and father's younger brother is baba kekere. The same terms are used on the mother's side, which can be confusing until someone asks which of the two parents the speaker is referring to, it is then that the sex is indicated again such as, iya baba nla or iya baba kekere, big father on mother's side or/ and small father on mother's side. Similarly mother's elder sister is iya nla and her younger sister is iya kekere. Thus, where the sibling is of the same sex as the parent in question, the sibling's age is indicated in the term.

These terms are also used for ortho-cousins and matrilineal cousins of the parents, and in fact for every relative of the parents' generation to whom consanguineous relation can be traced. One remarkable feature of the terminology is that in the classificatory usages of the terms, lineage kin of the parents are not distinguished from non-lineage kin, even on paternal side. The principle of equivalence of siblings is so extensively applied that any kinsman or kinswoman of a parent is seen as a sibling, regardless of the nature of the ties which connect him or her to the parent in question. Thus the father's full sister is called egbon obinrin baba and is classified by the same term with the father's mother's sister's daughter. In the same way mother's full elder sister is called iya nla (iya kekere for the younger one). The same term is applied to the mother's mother's sister's daughter who is older than ego's mother and to all maternal female relatives of this generation. Also the father's elder brother is called baba nla, the term used for the father's father's sister's son and for all male paternal relatives of this generation. (See Figs 6 and 7). Ego's main concern is with the parent to whom the person is related, and not with the details of the genealogical relationship.

As already noted, the general term for full siblings is Omo obi. This term is extended to all relatives of ego's generation. But within this category there are important differences expressed terminologically, and the addition of suffixes to denote sex has been noticed. Other important distinctions are those between full siblings and paternal half-siblings and between full siblings and maternal half-siblings. Paternal half-siblings are distinguished from full siblings by the term obakan and iyakan, 'one father' and 'one mother',



respectively. As terms of reference Obakan is used only in contradistinction to iyakan to emphasise that the relationship is not that of full siblingship. Another distinction is that between cross-cousins and parallel cousins is awon omo obi, i.e. children of siblings of opposite sexes; for ortho-cousins, omo egbon okunrin, i.e. children of brothers; and for maternal parallel cousins, omo egbon obinrin, i.e. children of sisters. Here again actual genealogical ties are not meticulously distinguished. For instance, though the expression omo egbon obinrin, 'children of sisters', refers to the common maternal origin of the children's mothers, it is also used for children whose mothers are related by agnatic kinship. In other words, ego and the children of any woman ego calls egbon iys (mother's sister) are in omo iya relationship whether or not the mothers are real siblings. What is important in determining the usage is that the mothers are related, and as such are 'sisters'. In the same way the term omo egbon, children of brothers, can be applied to the children of male cross-cousins, because as cross-cousins they are 'brothers', though the term literally applies to children of male agnates. These terms are only terms of reference and not of address. Omo obi is the general term of address among them, and to this further indices of 'precision'<sup>3</sup> age and sex may be added as described for siblings.

Subject to these distinctions the general term for full, half, and classificatory siblings is omo obi. This clearly illustrates further the principle of the social equivalence of siblings. There are of course important observable differences in general behaviour, which may not be covered by the classificatory principle. Moreover the strength of the affection between persons in omo obi relationship is not uniformly diffused. In each situation the special bonds of uterine kinships, the frictions among agnates and, most important of all, the relative position on the genealogical scale of those involved, are important considerations. Nevertheless, omo obi does form a category which may be recognised by their behaviour both mutually and

<sup>3</sup> Firth, 1957:261

and to outsiders. After all, omo obi can only be understood in the context of particular social situations. An example may help here. The Omuo explain that distant relatives from the community may refer to each other when in Lagos as omo obi. In Omuo itself the same term would be used to distinguish members of the ward or lineage from the others, while inside this group the same term would denote those of a closer degree of consanguinity. Finally, within the family group, omo obi would refer to what might be called its exact meaning, full siblings as opposed to half-siblings. In each of these different situations the behaviour towards the persons designated omo obi will be that of uterine siblings, that is mutual help and identification. It is an important description of uterine kinship that the term omo obi, parents' child, is used in all these contexts, as well as in other situations where people appeal to good kinship behaviour. This is because the full-sibling bond is the prototype, for the Omuo as for many other societies, of the strongest possible bond.

In the first descending generation the commonest term is omo, child, which is used by any person for his or her own children, for the children of siblings and for other consanguineous relatives of one's children's generation. No distinction is made between children of agnates and non-agnates, nor between children of female and male siblings. But in many social situations the term omo with its indices of precisions does not give sufficient meaning to relationships outside the nuclear family. Therefore, to clarify the situation, ego may refer to the sister's son as omo mi, my child, so we have omo aburo okunrin, younger brother's child; omo egbon okunrin, elder brother's child; omo aburo obinrin, younger sister's child.

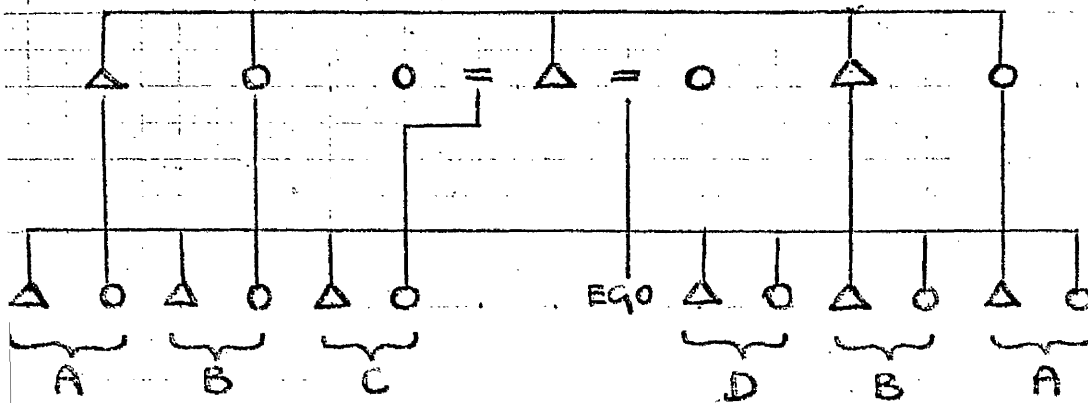
In the second ascending generation although paternal and maternal relatives are merged (Figs 4 and 5), however, sex is still distinguished. Father's father is still called baba baba and mother's father baba iya; and mother's mother iya iya. On the whole a grandchild is addressed as omo omo, child's child but is usually addressed by name or merely called omo mi, my child, like the speaker's own child.

Other points which are equally relevant and which must be discussed here at the same time concerns the position of the affinal relations in Omuo classificatory and descriptive terms in their kinship organisation.

Figure 12

Distinctive terms for near relatives of Ego's generation otherwise known as

Omo iya



Glossary:

- A = Omo egbon mi okunrin = children of brothers  
 B = Omo egbon mi obinrin = children of siblings of opposite sexes  
 C = Obakan = paternal half-sibling (father's child)  
 D = Omoiya = maternal half-sibling (mother's child)

The Omuo explain that all these relations are important as well. For instance, an affinal relative is called ana, oko mi (my husband) is the name a wife calls any member of the lineage no matter whether or not it's a junior or senior member. It's a form and denotes respect for the husband's lineage members. On the other hand, baba oke is used as a descriptive term for any lineage member senior to her husband; likewise iya oko is any female lineage member senior to her husband. The wife becomes iyawo to the husband and all members of the lineage whether junior or senior to her.

Among wives the following terms are used and very often for that matter, their uses are of course reciprocal. A wife deems herself senior to the others if she was married before them. Thus by virtue of her position she becomes iyale (the mother of the house) to the junior wife or wives within the family. On the other hand, the senior wife addresses the junior one or ones as iyawo (wife or wives). What counts is the length of marriage, that is, the first married woman is the most senior over subsequent ones. To explain this point better the following observation may help. Omuo would explain that it is very important that the personal name is avoided when addressing a person who is senior. Therefore, there have been other ways to identify them. As already pointed out, different terms for reference and address are not common. Hence, when addressing a senior, it is quite legitimate and permissible to use the classificatory term, such as eghon mi, my senior sibling. A parent may be addressed in terms of his children - not necessarily the eldest child - e.g., Baba Ebun or Iya Ebun, Ebun' father or Ebun's mother

Finally, the young wives within a lineage will address children of the compound male or female, oko mi, my husband. This traditional way of showing respect is also extended to persons who are older or who are in the same age-group as one's parents. Omuo society, in common with the rest of Ekiti in particular, and Yoruba in general, regulates their behaviour strictly according to seniority and one of their characteristics is the deference and respect to age and status. Violation of the norm can be very serious, particularly in a closely-knit society such as in Omuo community. It is also relevant to make a point in regards to the equivalence of members of the same generation. While on the surface it may appear as if everybody is

on equal terms regardless of birth order and regardless of the distinction between full and half-siblings. In fact, a corollary of the principle of generation equivalence and the emphasis on seniority is the asymmetrical relationship of superordination and subordination between proximate generations. This relation of social inequality necessitates the maintenance of attitudes of respect on the one hand, authority on the other.

e) Conclusion

These then are the main principles governing Ewu-Ekiti kinship nomenclature. Relatives who are grouped under the same linguistic labels form distinct social categories vis-a-vis ego. That is, similar behaviour patterns are expected from persons covered by the same linguistic labels. This is clearly in evidence when social relationships are idealised in such remarks as 'A father's sister is an important relative'; 'an elder brother and sister must be respected'. etc. There are indeed important cases where relatives to whom different patterns of behaviour apply are also called by different terms. The parent-child relation, which forms the basis of all terms between adjacent generations, is always characterised by respect on the part of the younger generation and superordination on the older. However, by traditional usage and practice, in this same generation further distinctions are made which correspond to observable behaviour. Mother's brothers and mother's sisters are considered more affectionate, but have the same terms as father's brothers and father's sisters, who are sometimes identified with the father's discipline and relative formality. Equally true are the age differences among siblings and classificatory siblings, which are expressed both terminologically by terms like egbon okunrin, elder brother, and egbon obinrin, elder sister, and in the respect shown to them.

CHAPTER 6New Marriage Patternsa) New Patterns of Mate Selection

I have already explained how during the Traditional Period, the selection of a partner was usually the affair of the parents rather than the couple concerned. There was little or hardly any consultation with the couple. The explanation for this was that the parents wanted the best partner for their son or daughter. In a closely knit community where everyone knew much about each other, the parents were the best judge in assessing the character of the parents of the girl their son wanted to marry. Homes were classified as "good" or "bad" in the context of mate selection. A "good" home was deemed to have the qualities that the parents would approve of. For example, such a home must be free of witchcraft accusation, the parents of the girl must be even tempered, they must be industrious and polite. It was on basis of these virtues that the girl was judged. Whereas, a "bad" home had the opposite qualities that I have mentioned. A girl's parents and particularly the mother of the girl need not possess all the labels before she could be termed <sup>a</sup>/good or bad mother. One or two of the labels were sufficient in either case. But if the mother was accused of witchcraft, even though she might possess all the other qualities in a positive way, this was sufficient to render that home unsuitable for the choice of a spouse for one son. An accusation of witchcraft was a strong factor which over-ruled all other qualities, whether negative or positive.

I have also described the various other ways by which the choice of a spouse could be made. I need not repeat them here again. The task of this chapter is to describe the modern selection of a spouse and examine some of the changes that have taken place in this respect over the years and point out at the same time some of the continuities that still persist in the midst of the changes that may be mentioned.

The choice of a partner in the Omuo community in the modern time is largely the responsibility of the people concerned; that is to say that most marriages of today are by personal choice.

In the case of a girl the approval of the parents may be necessary but not essential. The boy may inform his parents, particularly his father, after he has made his choice. It is not necessary to obtain

The educated minority are monogamously married while the illiterate majority remain polygynously married. The educated man or woman finds it much easier to choose his girl or her man as they meet in a variety of circumstances. Moreover, the educated people are more mobile occupationally and geographically. They feel more free and emancipated from the traditional constraints which they regard as impediment to free choice of life partner.

On the other hand the illiterate boy is still very much bound to the lineage and does not enjoy the same degree of freedom, mobility and education. In order to please his parents, he seeks their advice when making his first choice of wife. Nevertheless, the selection of the subsequent wives are his responsibility only, but he may inform the elders of the lineage in order to have their blessing and, perhaps, some financial support.

In all cases, men are more free in the choice of wives than women, whether they be educated or illiterate. But the literate woman is relatively freer than the illiterate one when it comes to deciding whom to marry. The illiterate woman is subject to the rigid control of lineage members. The following illustration shows the difficulty which an illiterate woman still faces before her parents and the constraints of the lineage:

Mrs S. was twice married before. Both husbands were natives of Omuo but from different quarters of the community. Her third marriage, in 1974, also to a native but of a different quarter from hers, was on the brink of collapse. She had left the present husband for her parents' home since 1972. She refused to return to the matrimonial home despite the husband's pleading. In June 1974, she filed a divorce summons against the present husband at the customary court. This meant that she must refund to the husband N60 (£30), N30 of which was the bridewealth and the other N30 towards the loan from her husband with which to start a trade.

As Mrs S. was unable to find the money she sought the help of her father who agreed to put up the money after some hard talk to Mrs S. But there was a string attached to it that she must marry someone of the father's choice.

The case of the illiterate woman that I cited above indicates, as would be observed, the degree of pressure to which she could be subjected in spite of the freedom she enjoys in the modern day. Mrs S. later confided in me that none of her three previous marriages had been approved by her parents and the lineage group, on the grounds that none of her suitors had come from the same quarter as Mrs. S.

Another interesting observation about some of the changes taking place in the sphere of selection of partners is the narrowing in the range of the relatives whose approval would have to be obtained before marriage is contracted. It would be remembered that during the Traditional Period, such an affair was the responsibility of the lineage as a group. Today, the lineage still has a say in the matters of spouse selection, but the main responsibility seems to be primarily that of the parents rather than the lineage. The parents, on the other hand, can, if they wish, inform other patrilineal and matrilineal members.

Also the choice of a partner is no longer restricted to that of one's quarter. The choice is spread throughout the whole community and even beyond Omuo. Among the educated elite, the choice of a partner is occasionally from the place of work, such as Lagos, Ibadan, Ife, Abeokuta, Illesha. The broadening of the horizon is due to education and other changes brought about by economy.

The new tendency is for an educated woman to want to marry a well-educated man, perhaps more educated than herself. Secondary school graduates in the town are more ambitious in terms of the choice of marriage partner. They aspire to marry university graduates rather than their own contemporaries in the secondary school. On the other hand, the university graduates, most of whom are men, prefer to marry women with higher education than West African School Certificate holders. In most instances, it is still the pattern for a teacher to want to marry a teacher.

Where the demand for the well educated woman has outrun supply, it is the practice for the educated man to choose a girl from one of the local secondary schools, following a thorough investigation of her family background. If things work out well they may get engaged while the girl continues her education, the man also contributing towards it. There have, however, been pitfalls in this respect



and / either party - but in most cases the girl - jilts her fiancée and marries someone else. The man can hardly claim back the expenses incurred on her education which are rarely legally documented. Those few cases that have occurred have sown seeds of discord and bitterness within the lineages to which the persons concerned belonged, even though these people could have made the initial arrangements without knowledge of their respective lineages where all the men and women in question were from Omuo.

The men tend to draw a sad conclusion here. Educated men feel it is an advantage to marry an educated girl with a profession that will bring in added income to the family budget; so they try to marry an educated girl of their choice. They help towards the financing of her education, with all the problems it entails for a man who is not financially strong. But her fidelity cannot be guaranteed. She now has more knowledge about men, she is more conscious of the fact that she cannot be tied down to someone she does not fully appreciate. Education has enhanced her sense of value and she is more analytically minded. An illiterate woman, by contrast is deemed to be more fidel, loyal to her husband - giving him more respect and obedience than the educated one. These are the dangers for a man whose ambition is to marry a well-educated woman. Thus, there are other factors, apart from education, that decide selection of a spouse between an educated man and a woman.

I may here have given an exaggerated picture of the degree of control a man or a woman has now in the selection of a spouse. The fact is that amidst the freedom that I have described there is some restraint. The lineage is still important, just as the parents are important when a young person is making the choice of a mate. The final choice may be made by the educated person, but he still consults his parents, and the whole lineage participates in the ceremony should a wedding take place in the end between the couple. The educated man or woman is more independent in this regard because he ceases to live with his parents once he has completed his education. Education provides a financial reward, this means that the young man or woman is financially independent of the parents and on marriage, they set up their own home from that of the parents; moreover, his work takes him or her away from his home of origin, so that the family constraints are minimal. The less educated or illiterate man or woman is less mobile and so he or she is more tied by these constraints.

The fact that the lineage and the young person's parents are still important and are usually informed in most cases of spouse choice indicates continuity of cultural norms and values in the midst of change.

b) Continuity and Change in the Marriage Ceremonials.

If there has been a decline in the parental and lineage control over the choice of a future partner as I have argued, so has the ceremonial activity connected with marriage undergone some modification. In Chapter four, I have described in detail the ceremonial aspect of marriage; what I wish to do in this section is to point out what has changed, and those ceremonial aspects of wedding which continue to be part of marriage in spite of changes in other areas.

It would be recalled that during the Traditional Period, the young woman after her betrothal to the man chosen for her, was married to him at a time arranged by the parents of the couple. On the evening of the wedding, the woman was escorted by a large contingent of well wishers and admirers to the husband's home, singing and dancing at the same time. There was always a great rejoicing by the lineages concerned. Two or more of the bride's relatives would carry her belongings and other gifts which had been given to her by friends, relatives and her parents. The gifts belonged to the bride and were to be used by her during the period she was married to the man and even thereafter if there was a divorce.

A lot of changes have taken place since the passing of the Traditional Period. In the first place, the idea of betrothing a woman to a man is gradually dying out. This is inter-related to the change already noted in the choice of mate, which is more a matter for the couple concerned. However, the parents are normally informed after or during the choosing of a mate.

Another observed change is that the escorting of the bride to the bridegroom's home by night, and the processional aspect of the ceremonial, are no longer observed. In the modern day, the woman can go to her husband's home any time of the day or night, whenever she wishes. Friends and relative need not accompany her, but if her husband's home is outside the quarter of her birth, she can then be helped to carry her belongings by her sister or a friend.

Moreover, the woman on marriage no longer undergoes the ceremonial of seclusion, which in the Traditional Period was between three and six months depending on the wealth and resources of the husband. It will be remembered that the bride might have been pregnant during the seclusion period so that by the time she came out she would have indicated to her admirers that she was expecting a baby. Today the woman could have been pregnant by the time she was married. Moreover, it is also relevant to point out that the seclusion ceremonial was linked with the virginity of the woman. If she was a virgin, it was an honour to seclude her and in praise of her virtue. Today, virginity is no longer regarded as an important feature of a wedding. The fact is that not many women are virgins by the time they get married. The seclusion is also regarded as a waste of resources.

Despite all the changes there are some elements of the wedding ceremonial that still persist. For instance, if the young woman is marrying for the first time, it is still the practice to receive both the lineage and her parents' blessing before going to her husband's home. Moreover, it is still symbolically important to pay the bridewealth on a woman either before or during the time she is married. The payment of bridewealth confers legality on the union, and where this has not been paid it is deemed that the woman has not married legally, even though she might be living as a wife with her husband.

Apart from the husband's gifts to the wife, it is the practice for any prospective husband to take gifts to the wife's parents and her lineage. In Chapter Seven I have described the symbolic importance of the articles contained in the gifts. These offerings to the ancestors are a necessary part of the ceremonial whose purpose is to protect the couple during their life time. This aspect of the wedding ceremonial is popular and widely observed by most people irrespective of their social class and educational background. The continued observance of this procedure indicates its importance to the people in the community.

It would be seen from this brief account that while there have been changes in the procedures that go with weddings, there are many traditional values which continue to play an important role in the life of young people who are getting married. What this amounts to is that people are making use of the procedures in a different form otherwise the basic rules are still the same

c) Marriage and the Filiation of Children

Bohannan (1949:278) has made the distinction between rights in Uxorem and rights in Genetricem, that is, between rights in a woman as a wife and rights in a woman as a child bearer. QmuD attach much importance to procreation and the transfer of rights in genetricem is represented by the giving of Idana. Once this has been done it establishes the paternity of all children born by the woman. The man, for his part, has claim over all the children born once he has paid idana, even in cases where the wife cohabits with another man and bears a child. Although the husband is not the genitor in this case, he still has claim over the child, unless the woman has left the husband and idana is refunded to him.

The rights in genetricem are absolute and in the case of a divorce there is hardly any distinction made between who is right or wrong. It is traditional practice in Omuo to return all the children born of the union to the husband. Where there is a child too young to be cared for by its father, it is ordered to stay with the mother until such a time that it is old enough to be returned to the legal father.

The husband's sexual rights are personal and end with his death. His widow is then free to remarry anyone of her choice, if she chooses to remarry. But the levirate, as a rule causing a woman to be remarried to, or inherited by, her husband's brothers or lineage, does exist in Omuo. However, the widow, if she refuses to do this cannot be forced against her will, and she is entitled to choose her next partner from any where she may like. While this is so in theory, on the other hand, there are factors which militate against this. One of the factors is in the case where there are children as they are involved in the distribution and inheritance of the property left by the deceased. This is a period of emerging prosperity in the life of the community where most of the farmers own cocoa plantations. Where this is the case, the widow may like to stay in order to participate in the prosperity. Any plots of cocoa land allocated to her children are done so in her name. Notwithstanding this, no woman can be held down to the lineage against her wishes if she decides to leave and seeks her fortune outside the deceased's lineage.

As for her first husband, the children of a woman's second and subsequent marriages belong to the husband absolutely. This is in line with the Omuo attitude where no distinction is made between the biological father and paternity. In all cases the husband is regarded as the genitor as well as the pater. As already stressed, an adulterine child belongs to its mother's husband, and what makes this absolute is the idana - hence its importance in the life of married people in Omuo. It is conceivable in Omuo for someone's biological child to be incorporated into the clan of another. When I told my informants that it could not happen in all societies, the expression of wonderment in their faces showed they felt that their society had adopted a wise approach in this matter. For example, one man said to me: 'Ko si iyato larin mejeji, eje kan soso na ni, eje iya won'. 'There is no difference between the two (meaning adulterine and legitimate), it is the same blood, the blood of their mother'. I came across many children and youths who belong to this category, who are incorporated into the lineage of their mother's husbands. Omuo do not regard them as of dubious paternity.

The distinction between pater and genitor is here purely academic. Normally there is no reason for disputing a man's paternity over his wife's children, and their recruitment into his lineage and clan is a matter of course. A woman may commit adultery that may bear fruit. If she decides to leave her husband for her seducer, she is entitled to do so but the child nevertheless belongs to the legal husband. The woman despite her adulterous association may still be willing to stay with her husband. No man will condone adultery by his wife unless he is impotent. Since sterility is very much loathed, a sterile man may condone his wife's adultery with a fertile man if she intends to remain with her husband. A few persons were pointed out to me as not the children of their paters. In all cases the husbands of the women concerned were believed to know what was going on, but only at a late stage in the incident.

A wife's infidelity is generally considered a great offence to a husband. Should a husband know of his wife's adultery, or become dubious about the origin of any of her children, he may divorce her but will not reject the child. It occasionally happens, however, that a man refuses to divorce an unfaithful wife, even if she has had children by another man, as shown in the following case:

Case No.2

Olaide had three wives in 1950. When he went to ile-Oluji as a wage labourer on the cocoa plantation, he took two of them with him and left the third with her mother. While he was away she had an adulterine child with a young farmer. On his return in 1952 Olaide was reconciled to her. The case was brought before the elders of the lineage concerned which was fined £7 and two bottles of local gin. However, the child was deemed to belong to Olaide who naturally claimed it as he - Olaide - had already paid idana on the wife, so by tradition the child was his anyway. Olaide's situation is not common in these days, when there is no longer seasonal emigration to foreign cocoa growing areas. Moreover, his reconciliation to the adultress was not unusual, many husbands do not divorce adulterous wives. A husband is not bound to take action against his wife's seducer, though he is expected to and a few do.

2) Second Marriages and Irregular Unions

The discussion so far has been centred on normal matrimony. There are, however, other forms of domestic union. One of the spouses may die and the survivor enter into another union. Divorce may occur and be followed by the remarriage of one or both of the divorcees to another person. Moreover, in the first unions not all couples pass through the normal marriage procedures before settling down to live together.

We have seen that widow inheritance exists as a practice with much flexibility, and no widow can be forced against her wishes if she decides to the contrary. On the death of their husbands, Omuo women perform an elaborate and strict mourning ritual, ofa, which lasts for between nine months and a year and is regarded as the transitional period necessary for the ritual separation of the dead husband from his wife. The ritual separation involves a fair amount of expenditure, which must be borne by a male relative of the deceased, or failing him by any of her own male relatives. This man has become the guardian of the widow and her children and any man wishing to marry her must first pay him the expenses of the ritual. If the guardian happens to be the relative of the deceased, then he himself would like to marry her if she agrees.

After the end of the mourning period the widow may either choose to remain in her husband's house or move away to live in her parental home. Her decision depends largely on the number and age of her children, the relative cordiality between her and her affines and her plans for the future<sup>1</sup>.

Some indication of the extent to which widows remain with or are married to their dead husband's kin is given here by data from Ijero and Iworo quarters. Altogether 150 in my sample had experienced widowhood. Of this number 113 were remarried to the dead husband's brother or some close relative. In 21 cases the widow took a new husband not related to the dead one. In the remaining 16 instances she had not remarried and was living independently.

A man may die at any stage of his marriage. If he has given the marriage payment and died before the consummation, the payment will have to be returned. Similarly, if a betrothed girl dies before she is married, the betrothal will have to be nullified by the return of the marriage payment. Once the marriage has been consummated there is no question of return of the payment in the event of one spouse's death. If a girl dies soon after betrothal, however, her parents may give her sister to the groom, but this is not obligatory.

Young widows normally remarry. Only economic sufficiency and old age prevent widows from remarriage. Omuo believe that a woman, like a man, cannot live for long without sexual intercourse, so that if a young widow remains single for a long time she lends herself to accusations and gossips of wanton behaviour. Almost all the widows in the sample who were living on their own became widows when they were over fifty-five years of age, though some above this age have remarried.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Other considerations, principally economic, have been discussed above.

<sup>2</sup> See example Middleton(1965:58) who has pointed out a distinction between widow inheritance and true levirate. The latter is found among the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard, 1951). Omuo system is akin to that of the Lugbara rather than the Nuer type, as such, it is legitimate to describe the Omuo system as widow inheritance rather than levirate marriage.

Widow marriage needs neither marriage payment nor ceremony apart from ofó, the expenses on the mourning ritual. The proposal is decided and agreed upon by the widow and her suitor. Drinks of palm wine and about two bottles of ajase, local gin, may be offered in prayers to the ancestors and deceased.

Another form of second marriage is the marriage of a divorced woman. This is usually more expensive than widow marriage, though here again, neither marriage items nor ceremony is involved. If her divorce is due to adultery with the man she now marries, he will have to repay the marriage payment (bride-price of ₦30 ) to the first husband in addition to all debts incurred by the latter on behalf of the woman. If, however, the first marriage has been legally dissolved before their marriage, the subsequent marriage will cost the second husband nothing more than a few bottles of drinks and some gifts.

The general atmosphere in which second marriages are conducted may throw some light on the need for the parents' active participation in the selection of partners in the first marriages. In second marriages the parents of the spouses are less fastidious about what they expect of their affines by way of character and kinship affiliations. The reason given for this indifference is that in the first marriages the young couples are not experienced enough to know much about their partners and their parents. They are also charmed by qualities which are not necessarily good in married life. But their own experience in their first marriages enables them to judge better in their next choice.

The conduct of second marriages has been discussed only from the point of view of the condition of the women entering into them, because it is their marital conditions which are considered crucial. A widower marrying a maiden is expected to perform all the normal marriage rites for her. In the same way a divorced man who is marrying a maiden has to follow the same procedure. Similarly all subsequent marriages of a married man to maidens must be conducted from the girl's point of view as if both were being married for the first time.

<sup>3</sup><sub>4</sub> We must add here that even though the marriage might have been dissolved legally before the second marriage, it sometimes happens that the woman is unable to refund the money before her second marriage. Where this is so the second husband will help in the refund of the marriage payment. If the woman had paid the money she asks for its refund from the husband she is now marrying.



But where a man who has not been married before is marrying a woman who has already been married, the normal procedures described for first marriages are not required.

In all forms of union so far described the woman was legally married in the first instance. But not all women go through the proper ceremonies in their first unions. I now describe a type of union in which the woman had never been married.

The interference of parents and relatives in the choice of partners often results in disagreements between the girls and their parents. This gives rise in some cases to elopement and open revolt against parental authority. The parents, finding that they cannot control their daughter, let her do as she pleases. This may mean allowing her to live with a man of whom she is very fond, but who has not won the favour of her parents to make possible the performance of the ceremonies which bring about a marriage. Others in this category are those who have borne children before marriage and have not been married to their lovers, but have continued to live with them despite the objection of their parents.

A girl who finds herself in such a union must have considerable trust in the sincerity and ability of her lover, because she cannot expect the same support from her parents in family disputes as a wife can. This is the kind of union Evans-Pritchard (1951:117) called 'simple concubinage' among the Nuer. Among both the Nuer and the Omuo this union, despite its name, is a permanent one, the primary aim of which, like that of any legal marriage, is the procreation of children and the establishment of a family. The couples call and refer to each other by terms appropriate to spouses. A man does not treat his concubinary 'wife' differently from a legal wife, and in a household containing both types, one cannot know who is the legal wife and who is a concubine by mere observation of behaviour. A man may even treat a concubine with greater consideration than a legal wife<sup>4</sup>, because the only control he has over her is what his personal influence gives him. Obviously he cannot claim compensation in case of her infidelity, neither can he restrain her should she wish to leave him for a new lover.

<sup>4</sup> This often happens where the legal wife is barren and the concubine is fecund.

It is difficult to determine how frequent non-legalised unions were in the past. My informants were quite unanimous in their opinion that this was quite rare, though not non-existent. This seems to be correlated with the greater authority of parents and lineage control in the past. Of the 15 women (out of 300 married women) who fell into this category in Ijere and Iworo in 1974, only one was over fifty years old. This may mean very little, since the number of older women in the population, and consequently <sup>in</sup> the sample, must of necessity be much smaller than that of the younger generation. However, case histories show that the frequency of non-legalised unions could not approach the high percentage we have today, about 5 per cent of all unions (15/350<sup>5</sup>).

Certain conclusions follow from this account of Omuo marriage. Though a woman may be married more than once, only her first marriage must be accompanied by payment and ceremonies. Second and subsequent marriages, though lacking in ceremonial and payments, constitute proper marriages all the same, because not only are the purposes implicit in them found in legal marriage, but also because their creation and form are socially accepted. Of primary importance are the procreation and establishment of legitimate families, economic co-operation and companionship.

The difference between these second and subsequent marriages on the one hand and concubinage on the other is that the latter, though a first union, lacks ceremonial. The marriage ceremony is something more than a formality for transferring the bride's sexual services to her husband. It also goes beyond a mere occasion to test her virginity. To the bride it marks an important stage in her social development. We see in the consummation a solemn expression of sex as a prerogative of married life. This is illustrated by the Omuo attitude towards virginity. But it does not matter for the function of the ceremony whether the girl has had a previous affair. What matters is that, for the first time in her life, society has given her ceremonial permission to indulge in sex

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The figure is still considered high given the nature of a closely knit community I am referring to where permissiveness is not countenanced. It is also relevant to point out that 11 of my sample were living 'abroad' and only visited their homeland occasionally.

for the purpose of procreation, and for this reason she must be associated with a man. Ceremonial then becomes the social qualification for married life. It is in this sense a rite of passage. But the ceremony also has through its sanctions the effect of promoting premarital chastity.

If it is accepted that marriage in Omuo is a rite of passage per se, then the absence of ceremony in second marriages becomes understandable. because those involved have already passed through these rites. In fact, it is only on this explanation that legal marriage differs from concubinage, since they cannot be differentiated according to the legitimacy of the children resulting from them, although Omuo believe that it is idana and not the mere biological fatherhood which is the basis for establishing paternity.

The position in Omuo, then, is as follows. For women adulthood and the married state appear coterminous. To pass from the category of child to that of adult a girl must go through a full marriage ceremony with a youth. That the ceremony is associated primarily with girls is difficult to explain, but it is probably not unrelated to the polygynous nature of marriage and the greater moral stigma attached to premarital sex relations for women than men.

#### g) The Stability of Marriage

The stability of marriage, which the Omuo believe was absolute in the past, apparently was actually high. This statement holds, in view of what we have already said in the preceding paragraphs, whether we are speaking of the stability of the jural or the conjugal relationship (cf. also Schneider, 1953). This was the unanimous opinion of my informants, who maintained that Omuo regarded marriage as ideally a permanent union between the spouses and their kin groups, and divorce was allowed only for flagrant breach of the husband's obligations to his wife, her parents or any of his close affines, for childlessness and for the wife's adultery. The important thing, however, is that it did occur. But in the absence of statistical

evidence it is impossible to assess correctly the actual frequency of these 'rare' cases. Nevertheless, case histories and genealogies of the older members of the population also tend to give general support to the views in the difficulty and infrequency of divorce in Omuoland. We may also mention in this regard the fact that infidelity and adultery, both important causes of divorce and broken marriage, though not unknown in Omuo were severely punished in the past. Divorce was also considered immoral, especially on the part of women. These legal and moral sanctions imbued in the authority of the lineage must have greatly reduced the number of divorces. As Evans-Pritchard (1934:172) observed long ago, marriage 'derives its stability from the restraint imposed by law and morals'.

Even if it is true that divorce was difficult and rare in the past, there is reason to believe that since the turn of the century significant changes have taken place, due largely to the curtailment of the power of traditional government which used to enforce sexual morality of the citizens. Now divorce is comparatively common, and it may be useful to have some quantitative estimate of divorce frequency. In my measurement I have followed the methods suggested by Barnes (1949; 37-62 and 1951:50) in his articles on the subject. One aspect of the occurrence of divorce is presented in Tables 9-12, where the marital experiences of men and women of different ages at Ijero and Iworo are set out.

One general feature about divorce in Omuo is that it is initiated by women. The Omuo term for divorce is 'ijawe' that is, literally, to cut out a slip, a reference to the divorce summons paper. Informants explain that according to tradition a man may not refuse his wife but must be divorced by her, as it is believed that vengeance for his taking the action will be exacted of him by the spirits of his lineage ancestors, whose interest in large families he has violated. Related to this view is the belief that a boy accused by his lover of being responsible for her pregnancy, even though he is certain that the accusation is false, may not refuse, because if he did it would be held that he had refused a first child and hence he would himself be punished, again by the dead, by never having other offspring.

There seems to be another reason why it is ~~women~~ and not men who must take the initiative in divorce. This is that if a man did, it is felt that he would forfeit the chances of having the idana refunded to him. Perhaps more importantly, it will be seen later that one of the principal reasons for divorce is childlessness. This could be satisfied by further marriages. Marriages are potentially polygynous but not polyandrous, so that from the lineage point of view and that of the relatives it is unnecessary for a man to divorce his first wife before taking another. On the other hand a woman in the same predicament has no choice but to divorce before remarrying.

In the past it was possible to divorce without taking the matter to the courts. Kinsfolk of the spouses met together under the lineage heads, discussed the marriage, and agreed among themselves whether or not it should be dissolved. The party in the wrong was fined to pacify the offended party. Today, however, while marriage is established without the knowledge of the Omuo Customary Court, since there are neither marriage certificates nor registrations of any kind, divorce cases often resort to the court. In fact, in an interview I had with the Commissioner for Customary Courts at the Secretariat, Ibadan, Western State, he pointed out that four out of five cases dealt with in the customary courts in the State today are divorce cases. My own observations at the Omuo Customary Court support this Statement. The court hears the case, awards damages as appropriate, and if it thinks fit, declares the couple divorced. Where there are children, it is the tradition to grant their custody to the husband, 'Gbogbo omo je ti oko' 'all children born within a union belong to the husband'.

It will be seen that the mean number of divorces per head of the married population is 0.21 for females in Ijero Quarter; 0.27 in Iworo; and 0.70 for males in Ijero and 0.72 in Iworo. Combining the figures for the two quarters we find that the mean number of divorces per head of the married population is 0.71 for men and 0.25 for women (See Table 10). The difference in the figures for men and women may be due largely to the greater reluctance on the part of women than of men to admit to divorce.

I have reason to believe that many informants, especially women, were very reluctant to tell their marital history in full because of the moral stigma that divorce entails. And the difference in the figures for the two quarters may be due partly to the varying reliability of their informants and partly to their different degrees of assimilation of Christianity.

The higher figures for Iworo Quarter may be explained by its greater exposure to social change, which results in greater fluidity in the social set-up, and the greater mobility of the population, which has come about following the innovation in cocoa plantation, Iworo quarter being one of the foremost to have experimented in the growing of cocoa in the whole of Omuo, hence this seems to have created the environment for divorce.

To make the Omuo figures comparable with those of other societies, we can express as a ratio the relationship between the number of marriages that ended in divorce and the number that did not or have not yet done so. This I have tried to do in Tables 12.14

TABLE 9.

Marital Experience of Males by Age: Iworo, Omuo, 1974

Age in years	All Males with Marriage Experience. No. of marriages experienced since birth.						All Males with Marriage Experience No. of divorces experienced since birth.						
	1	2	3	4	5	Total	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
18-25	4	2	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
26-35	16	2	3	1	1	23	10	6	5	2	0	0	23
36-45	12	6	2	1	0	21	9	7	5	0	0	0	21
46-55	10	5	5	1	1	22	15	4	1	2	0	0	22
56-65	4	6	4	1	2	17	10	3	1	1	1	1	17
66-75	5	4	2	1	2	14	13	1	1	1	0	0	16
76-85	2	0	1	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
86	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	53	25	17	5	6	106	64	23	13	6	1	1	104

TABLE 10

Marital Experience of Males by Age: Ijero, Omuo, 1974

Age in Years	All Males with Marriage Experience No. of marriages experienced since birth.						All Males with Marriage Experience No. of divorces experienced since birth.						
	1	2	3	4	5	Total	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
18-25	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
26-35	6	4	0	0	0	10	6	4	0	0	0	0	10
36-45	9	7	4	0	0	20	13	3	2	2	0	0	20
46-55	5	1	1	1	0	8	6	1	1	0	0	0	8
56-65	4	6	4	1	3	18	9	4	1	1	1	2	18
66-75	4	4	1	1	0	10	6	2	1	1	0	0	10
76-85	3	1	0	0	0	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
86	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	34	23	10	3	3	73	46	15	5	4	1	2	73



TABLE 11

Marital Experience of Females by Age: Iworo, Omuo, 1974

Age in Years	All Females with Marriage Experience No. of Marriages experienced since birth.	All Females with Marriage Experience No. of Divorces experienced since birth.
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	1	2	3	4	Total	0	1	2	3	Total
18-25	32	0	0	0	32	32	0	0	0	32
26-35	44	4	2	0	50	44	4	2	0	50
36-45	16	9	1	2	28	13	12	2	1	28
46-55	6	20	2	0	28	20	6	2	0	28
56-65	7	15	0	0	22	14	4	2	2	22
66-75	21	7	2	0	30	28	2	0	0	30
76-85	4	2	0	0	6	5	1	0	0	6
86	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
Total	132	57	7	2	198	158	29	8	3	198

TABLE 12

Marital Experience of Females by Age: Ijero, Omuo, 1974

Age in Years	All Females with Marriage Experience. No. of marriages experienced since birth.	All Females with Marriage Experience. No. of Divorces experienced since birth.
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	1	2	3	4	Total	0	1	2	3	4	Total
18-25	42	2	0	0	44	44	2	0	0	0	44
26-35	23	2	0	0	25	23	2	0	0	0	25
36-45	16	4	2	0	22	21	1	0	0	0	22
46-55	12	6	1	1	20	16	1	3	0	1	20
56-65	20	5	3	1	29	19	4	2	1	1	27
66-75	15	4	2	0	21	18	3	0	0	0	21
76-85	1	2	2	0	5	4	0	1	0	0	5
86	1	1	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	3
Total	130	26	11	2	169	148	13	6	1	2	167

TABLE 13

Mean Divorce per Head: Iworo and Ijero, Omuo, 1974

<u>Locality and Sex</u>	<u>Mean per Head</u>
Ijero Females	0.21 (36/169)
Ijero Males	0.70 (51/73)
Oworo Females	0.27(54/198)
Iworo Males	0.72 (76/106)
<u>Combined Figures: Iworo and Ijero</u>	
Females	0.25 (90/367)
Males	0.71 (127/179)

TABLE 14

Divorce Ratios: Ijero

<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Value</u>
Males Only:	
A	37.2% (51/137)
B	43.6% (51/117)
Females Only:	
A	16.1% (46/223)
B	17.9% (36/201)
Both Sexes Combined	
A	40.2% (102/254)
B	16.9% (72/424)

TABLE 15

Divorce Ratios: Iworo

<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Value</u>
Males Only:	
A.	36.0%(76/214)
B.	40.0% (76/192)
Females Only:	
A	20.0% (54/275)
B	21.0% (54/262)
Both Sexes Combined:	
A	37.4% (152/406)
B	20.1% (108/537)

TABLE 16

Divorce Ratios: Iworo and Ijero Combined

<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Value</u>
Males only:	
A	36.2%(127/351)
B	41.1% (127/309)
Females only:	
A	18.1% (90/498)
B	19.4% (90/463)
Both Sexes Combined	
A	25.6% (217/849)
B	28.1% (217/772)

A.. Divorce figures expressed as % of all marriages

B. Divorce figures expressed as% of all marriages except those ended by death.

A woman usually seeks divorce because of cruelty, desertion or childlessness. Cruelty often takes the form of beating. Omuo men are fond of beating their wives in quarrels. A wife may also be beaten for not cooking in time, for cooking a bad meal, for not coming back in time from a trading trip or for general disobedience. A woman's parents are always adverse to the idea of a husband beating their daughter. The husband will naturally be warned, but if he remains obdurate the only thing is 'to take the wife from him', as it is put by the vulgar.

Desertion is another common ground, usually when a husband leaves his wife behind while going abroad without making adequate provision for her support. A variant of this ground is lack of support, which is different from the former only in the fact that here the husband refuses to, or cannot, look after his wife though they are living together. Fifty-seven per cent of divorced women alleged that lack of support and desertion were the principal causes of their divorce.

A husband's liability for the support of his wife is stated in specific terms. He is expected to 'fi owo onje sile', (i.e. give money for food). This is the money with which she provides condiments and meat for the household. The actual amount given in any household depends on its size, the husband's financial position and the market conditions, and varies generally from 25 kobo for a family of four to ₦7 for a family of eight in a 'market-week' of five days. When I was there my calculations of family budgets showed that wives depending solely on the 'owo onje' needed a good deal of economy to make both ends meet. But many do not have to depend on that ~~done~~. Their husbands will normally bring yams and vegetables of all sort from the farm, although the supply of vegetables may not be regular relative to the supply of yams and coco yams. The only regular addition a wife makes to 'owo onje' is from her own independent income. One often hears wives complaining that their husbands give 'owo onje' at very long intervals, sometimes once in three months instead of once in five days. There<sup>are</sup>/even more serious cases. In one instance, a father of eight, who was being provided regularly with food by his wife, gave 'owo onje' only once in 1974.

Situations of this kind are likely to arise in polygynous families where a husband has attached himself to one wife to the neglect of the other or others. When it is found that the husband is not being fair to his wife, she may be taken away from him. Men do their best to support their wives, but in polygynous families, if a man finds himself unable to give 'owo onje' regularly to all his wives he is guided in his choice by each wife's economic standing, the number of children she has and how regularly she provides him with food. But refusal, or rather inability to give adequate 'owo onje' is a social problem.

It was explained to me that a work-shirking husband is dealt with by his egbe thus by-passing the oloriebi. This is not intended to indicate the irrelevance of the oloriebi. The fact is that ridicule suffered at the hands of one's egbe is a better deterrent and stronger sanction than the merely gentle warning of the oloriebi. The explanation for this is that the oloriebi will perhaps be unable to deal with the complaint as he should have done, whereas, the bond that binds the egbe together transcends the old kinship relations. If, however, a husband persistently fails to maintain his wife, she will be forced to seek divorce.

Another frequent cause of divorce is inherent in the institution of polygyny itself. The relationship between co-wives, is always potentially explosive. A husband has to be a big flatterer to maintain the balance of his affection between them. This is not always easy. Love is not amenable to mathematical calculation. Neither is the congeniality of the wives to the husband likely to be exactly equal. A man must love one wife more than the other, however much he may try to behave to the contrary. The result is friction. In the long run it is the fittest, naturally his favourite, who survives. Of the 110 women divorcees only 10, about 9.3 per cent., had no co-wife when they were divorced.

Childlessness is another important cause of divorce. A sterile husband does not find favour with his wife or with her relatives, who want her to have children to care for her and themselves in old age. A barren woman is in the same difficulty with her husband's

relatives. Sterility and impotence are both shameful diseases, and men do not easily admit to them, especially the latter. A man who is impotent is called okobo and it can be a serious stigma if and when a man is labelled as okobe. A case in point is Adebayo, who up to 1974 had married six wives, all of whom left him without issue. The uncharitable believed that he was okobo, but others were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt. No one except his wives knew the true position. He himself maintained, however, that he was not okobo. The okobo man, lacks sexual vigour and hence automatically the procreative power.

If the medicines fail to cure a husband's sterility, and it is suspected that the trouble lies with him rather than his wife, she will be advised to leave him and try her luck elsewhere. But sometimes a woman remains barren while sleeping with a fertile man. Omuo explains this by eje ko bara mu, or 'disagreement of blood'. Credence is given to this theory because when a barren couple separate, their subsequent marriages sometimes bear fruit.

Barrenness is a great social handicap. When it is believed that a change of partners may remedy it, little time is wasted to bring about the change. The seriousness with which Omuo regard barrenness may be found in the words of this informant:

We regard childless-ness as most unfortunate. The procreation of children is the principal function of life in this world. A dead tree is resuscitated by its own seed. So it is with us human beings. When we die, our children replace us. Our concern about the disease is demonstrated in no uncertain manner. When an adult dies childless special rites are performed on the dead body. A dead man has a stick thrust into his genital organ, and ijoyin leaves are tied on that of the woman, with the injunction, 'you must not come into the world in this manner again'.

The most important single reason for which a man can divorce his wife is adultery. But he will not divorce her if he has great affection for her, and especially if the fault is not her own. In adultery cases it is the adulterer, not the adulteress, who is fined by the court. This is based on the reasoning that the adulterer has violated someone's rights in the woman, while the woman is more of a victim than an offender. It is difficult to accuse a wife of

adultery just as it is to accuse the man if neither of them admits it, since coitus<sup>rarely</sup> has a direct witness, unless the culprits are caught in flagrante delicto neither the husband nor the wife could take action and hope to be successful. I never came across any case of a couple being caught in this state; but it is no longer a closed secret who is a friend or concubine of whom. This means that it is a widespread phenomenon. Nearly all the women interviewed on the subject agreed, though secretly, that they too have outside 'lovers'. They explain this by saying that they are driven into it by their husbands, and agreed that they were merely paying back in the same coin what their husbands had done. A few who did not at the time have extra marital relationships (11 out of 100, about 11%) explained that they were restrained by the love shown to them by the husband's lineages. The women who do, go on their adventures in the evening or in the day when their husbands are not around. Some visits are, however, made in the presence of the wife or husband, although no sexual intercourse may take place then.

However, information on the occurrence of adultery in specific instances was based on quarter gossip and accusation in the court, and not admissions by those concerned, who are naturally very reticent. If, however, a woman is bent on leaving her husband, she may leave his house on any flimsy excuse and go to her parents' home, where she can make public her relationship with a lover, and thus provoke the husband into taking action.

Even though a man may lose the changes of the idana being refunded to him if he initiates divorce proceedings against his wife, there are a few instances today where men do this. Besides adultery, for which a man could initiate divorce even in the past, a man can now divorce his wife on a number of grounds, namely laziness, quarrelling, the interference of affines and anything considered to be contrary to accepted wifely behaviour. Usually it is a combination of these which made divorce necessary.

### Case No. 3

Ajayi married Aduke as his second wife. Soon afterwards a great quarrel took place between his wives, in which he ignorantly took Aduke's side. Aduke made unfounded allegations of misconduct against the first wife and forced her to leave Ajayi for another man. But then, Aduke, whose main aim was to remain alone with Ajayi, became more and more impossible when she heard it rumoured that Ajayi



was to marry another woman. Her behaviour towards her affines too became eccentric. Things came to a head when Ajayi's mother's paternal half-brother gave his daughter to him in marriage. Adjike was so infuriated at the idea that when she next met this girl at the quarter well she picked a quarrel with her and inflicted such a beating on her that the girl's face was badly swollen. Ajayi, until then unconvinced of Adjike's ill-temper and unpardonable misbehaviour, decided at last to take the most obvious course. He divorced her in the town's customary court.

Sometimes a man just gets tired of his wife without any fault of hers. Such a man does not need any specific reason for getting rid of her. Since he cannot take her into court without good reason, he may resort to all sorts of subterfuge to provoke her to take action. His principal weapon is a technique of making himself insupportable should a court case arise. A wife in such a position is given no presents and is provided with, if anything at all, only the barest necessities. He absents himself from home to go visiting when it is her turn to sleep with him, neither eating her food nor having much to do with her in other respects. Such treatment is the strongest disciplinary force that can be brought to bear on a woman. In a compound where many wives strive for the favour of their husband, the material for divorce is not difficult to find, because the wives who are in favour lose no chance to taunt those who live unnoticed by the husband. In most Omuo compounds a woman who in the opinion of the husband merits treatment of this kind is also beaten if she breaks any of the ordinary rules of wifely conduct. This being the harshest method of discipline, a man who takes a thorough dislike to a wife will most certainly employ it much more often than he would otherwise have done.

He may even go further. At dances or funerals he may intentionally get drunk, and insult his parents-in-law and other affines when he meets them. In due course a family or even lineage council is called by her parents to discuss his behaviour. He ignores the summons and by his action compels the council to instruct the wife to take divorce proceedings against him.

A man who takes to this behaviour need not necessarily be cruel or foolish by nature. He only simulates this attitude to get rid of this wife. It is left entirely to the wife and her people whether they take action against a husband who is thought to have offended her. Some women in spite of many harsh treatments do not take divorce action, either because of their great affection for their husbands or because social or economic considerations. Others who are more sensitive to such treatment seize the least chance to bring their husbands to book.

Sometimes a couple separate without any formal divorce. The process most frequently begins with the woman leaving her husband's house with her children, if she has any, for that of her parents, complaining of maltreatment, lack of support or disagreements with co-wives. She disregards her husband's entreaties to return and remains there unless her parents are willing or able to persuade her to do so<sup>6</sup>. She starts informing potential suitors that she is not going back to her husband, while dismissing as false any arguments favourable to his point of view. She then attaches herself to a lover and as time goes on there comes a visible sign that they have been sleeping together. This is not of course divorce. There is only formal divorce when after she leaves her husband an attempt has been made, normally by her parents and the lineage members, to thrash out the disagreements and it has been agreed that divorce is the only solution. It should be mentioned once again that though the initiative for divorce is usually taken by women, some of them do not seek a legal dissolution before they attach themselves to new lovers. The effect of this practice is to transfer the burden of the offence from the woman to her new lover. It is for the husband to choose whether he will claim damages from the new lover. If he does not like his wife to leave him, he will prefer to claim damages only from the seducer, but not seek divorce.

My interviews with men in this <sup>situation</sup> give the impression that many of them are not anxious to press their claims unless they have

<sup>6</sup> A woman who returns to her parents' home after separation or divorce from her husband is not given much encouragement to remain too long in her natal home. There is the parental as well as the lineage pressure to sort out her differences with her husband or remarry quickly. It is only in rare cases that the woman is disowned by her lineage and parents for her action.

incurred heavy debts on their wives' behalf. But some who have the law on their side quickly seize their advantage. A husband is most likely to take action against the seducer of his wife if she does not get married to him, for a substantial payment; but these considerations alone are not decisive. Many factors work in combination, as the following case will show:

Case No. 4

Toke's marriage to Gbadamosi, a proud middle-aged man, was her first and his third, his two previous marriages having been ended by death and divorce respectively. From the outset her mother was against the marriage, because he is given to bullying his wives. On Toke's own insistence, however, the marriage was concluded with a payment of the normal bride-price (N30) and other gifts for the new bride. But when she was expecting her first baby, Toke, who is not very presentable by Omuo standards, began to show some dirty habits, much to the dislike of her husband. His discontent was fuelled by a stealing case in which she was involved after her first child was born. After this incident, Gbadamosi refused to visit her for nearly a year, and it was to his great relief that she became impregnated by one of the salesmen that frequent the community. Naturally he did not raise a finger at this. It must be made clear that it is considered a great disgrace for a man to have his wife taken away from him either by her parents or by a seducer. A husband normally guards his rights in his wife, and only serious maladjustments result in, or create, the atmosphere for a break-up.

The break-down of any given marriage depends on a variety of causes, including the economic situation as well as maladjustment between the spouses. These factors, operating adventitiously together in different cases, produce an overall divorce rate which does not differ much within the same society from year to year unless something dramatic takes place. However, certain major determinants of divorce rates can be isolated in different societies to explain their trend,

following the method used by Durkheim (1952) in his study of suicide, Durkheim argues that a variety of factors affects the incidence of suicide, but the rate is determined in different countries by a few major social variables. Divorce may also be studied in this way.

In assessing the causes of any one divorce case it will be necessary to take into account all possible relevant factors operating in the society. This I have tried to do in the last section, where I mentioned as the main causes of divorce adultery, childlessness, desertion, lack of economic support for women and cruelty. When, however, it comes to the understanding of the trend of divorce in general in Omuo, the influence of the major determinants, as recommended by Durkheim, becomes of paramount importance.

The first application of this Durkheimian methodology to the analysis of divorce rates was made by Gluckman in 1950 (167-206). His original argument was that kinship was the dominant feature in traditional African social life, and therefore the kinship structure must have a decisive effect on the divorce trend. This led him to put forward his famous hypothesis that divorce is rare and difficult in tribes with corporate patrilineages, such as the Zulu and Nuer, and common among those which are either matrilineal or bilateral, such as legal institutions and normal values, could have some influence on marital stability, he did not consider these factors decisive.

Since that time Schneider (1953); Leach (1957:50-7); and Fallers (1957:106-23), among others have taken issue with Gluckman and offered modifications to his original hypothesis. Schneider drew attention to the need to distinguish between conjugal stability and the stability of jural relations which arise out of marriage because there is, for instance, 'a greater degree of probability that a Nuer man will remain undivorced, than there is that his wife will remain with him...' (1953:55). This distinction is necessary because off the rule common to the Nuer and some other patrilineal societies, that a woman may remain her husband's legal wife while having children by copulating with lovers 'in the bush' (cf. also Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 115). Gluckman later admitted that he 'dealt only with the jural stability' of marriage but recognised the need for working with two rates, (1) a rate for jural divorce and (2) a rate for conjugal separation (1953:142).

In this section an attempt will be made to relate the Omuo material to Gluckman's original hypothesis and its later modifications. I shall then consider certain factors which, though not necessarily discussed in Gluckman's framework, seem relevant here.

It has been seen that, although the Omuo have corporate agnatic lineages, they lack some of the institutions, such as the obligatory levirate, sororate, sororal polygyny, and the 'house-property complex' which according to Gluckman, help to perpetuate the marriage tie in patrilineal societies as the Zulu and the Nuer. However, Omuo marriage does transfer rights in genetricem. The presence of this particular institution makes the Omuo kinship structure less akin to the Lozi than the Zulu type. In the Zulu type marriage 'transfers a woman's fertility absolutely to her husband's agnatic kin group', however, the nearest Omuo have to the Zulu's ghost marriage is widow inheritance. But the presence of these institutions in Omuo and Zulu social structures does not have the same effects on their divorce rates. In Omuo divorce was not frequent in the old days, nor among the Zulu. My main contention here however, is to explain the difference in the divorce rates between that of the Zulu and the old Omuo. The difference in rates between the two societies lies partly on the attitudes of the traditional authorities to the problem. It must be admitted at once that in Omuo the presence of the agnatic lineages may have been responsible for the rigid attitude towards sexual immorality where a seducer was punished by death, while for a woman her adultery constituted a grave public disgrace. What we are saying is that in the old Omuo the restraining factors on the breaking of the marital bond were inherent in the kinship structure and the principles of descent and were not introduced by the power of government.

This view supports Gluckman's explanation of the present high divorce rates among the Azande, who were 'organised on father-right but without the agnatic lineage'. The Azande had rare divorce in the past, but it is rife at present; and he suggests that the reason for this change in the rate may be that in the past 'the state power prevented women from leaving their husbands if they wanted to.. when that authority was restricted by British occupation divorce became rife' (1950:203).

If this view is accepted, the difference in the rates in old and present Omuo could be accounted for partly by the influence of the traditional authority - the lineage - in the past and its curtailment and laxity through the introduction of modern systems of administration. The acceptance of this view pre-supposes the presence in the Omuo traditional kinship structure of elements of marital instability which remained dormant in the past only because of the traditional authority. It will therefore be necessary to have a further look at some of these 'elements of instability' in the kinship structure. This will require the analysis of the whole kinship structure with the divorce question in mind.

The first point which comes to mind is the strength of the sibling bond. As both Audrey Richard (1950:250) and Leach (1957:53) have observed, the marital bond is likely to be weak where the sibling bond is very strong. The relationship between siblings has already been discussed at length. It may be mentioned here in addition that the continued closeness of the sibling bond even after brother and sister have been married is reinforced by the fact that a woman remains under the protection of her paternal and maternal ancestors and the religious cults which she joined with her siblings before marriage. This provides not only the opportunity for frequent meetings between her and her brother but also a community of interests supported by supernatural sanctions. These sanctions are further strengthened by Omuo funeral customs. Though the husband has certain rituals to perform at his wife's funeral, the corpse belongs to her own lineage, and the management and organisation of the mortuary ceremonies are entirely their responsibility. A married woman therefore has one ~~fat~~ in her parental home and another in her husband's, and the problem that faces every husband now and then is how to reconcile his affection for his sister with the love he owes through marriage to his wife. The wife is usually regarded by her husband's sister as the person most likely to poison his mind against her. Indeed many a quarrel between spouses results from what a wife considers to be interference by her husband's sister.

Yet kinship obligations require that a man must never support his wife against his own sister. 'Iyawo le fi oko re sile nigbakigba, papajulo nigba iponju omoiya nikan lo ma ku eni nigba yen'. 'A wife can leave her husband any time including times of need, those remaining then will be the siblings.'

In addition, after a quarrel with her husband a woman is sure to get from her brother any economic advantages she might forfeit as a result of the quarrel. This ready presence of the brother as an alternative support for the wife does nothing to strengthen the marital bond in any way, and indeed makes a close marital bond difficult. This view closely resembles that of Fallers. In his study of the Basoga he put forward the view that 'where a woman ... is socially absorbed into her husband's lineage, patriliney tends to stabilise marriage; where a wife is not so absorbed and thus remains a member of the lineage into which she was born, patriliney tends to divide marriage by dividing the loyalties of the spouses' (1957:121). But this single cause explanation of a complicated phenomenon such as marital instability is far from satisfactory. It is true that the non-incorporation of women into their husbands' lineages after marriage may strengthen the sibling bond at the expense of the marital bond. But this alone cannot be the decisive factor, as my several examples have shown.

The relation of co-wives also has an adverse effect on the marital bond in Omuo. The absence of tension-reducing mechanisms, such as sororal polygamy and the sororate in the co-wife relationship, is another threat to it. Though separate rooms are provided for each wife, joint activities with the husband, and quarrels resulting from troubles among their children, bring co-wives into frequent direct confrontation. The trouble between Ajayi and Aduke is a case in point (Case 3). Ajayi's first wife would not have been dismissed if the quarrel had not arisen over the next wife.

Filiation of children is straightforward in that <sup>any</sup> adulterine child born while the woman is legally married belongs to the husband so long as he is willing to claim its paternity, even though he is not the genitor of the child. However, is is a different situation if the husband refuses to lay claim on the paternity of the child; in that case the child can be claimed by the genitor. Omuo do not recognise the biological fatherhood as the determining factor for filiation of children. Where it is important however, is that the separation of spouses can be heightened and easily transformed into divorce when children are born out of wedlock. Moreover, marriage loses its function as an important prerequisite for the establishment of legal families, since procreation of legitimate children does not necessarily have to be a product of legally constituted unions.

Furthermore, while a husband can take back an adulteress -

although the lineage may frown at this - and adultery which is fruitful will in most cases lead to a new union. But in the past adultery, a common prelude to many a marital separation, was severely punished, sometimes by death. My view therefore is that the incidence of adultery in a union will normally lead to tension among spouses plus the existence of adulterine children in the case where the husband claims paternity for the children. These factors may affect the stability of marriage.

Another cause of instability inherent in the marriage system is the initiative of parents in the choice of marriage partners. We have seen that this is why most Omuo marriages are not love-matches. Parental interference imposes on girls and youths a choice which they have little power to oppose at the time of the marriage, when they are young and dependent. Such a marriage may end in divorce as soon as one of the spouses is in a position to precipitate it. Though a girl is expected to agree to a proposal before the marriage is arranged, respect for parental authority and the pressures often brought to bear on her make her independence only nominal.

f) Conclusion:

With Gluckman's theory in mind I have tried to show that, though the Omuo have agnatic lineages like Zulu, they lack some of the institutions which perpetuate the legality of the marital bond. Moreover, certain aspects of Omuo social structure, as well as some of their values, make divorce basically easier than in many patrilineal societies.

Despite these differences, the Omuo have a great regard for marriage stability. In the past, helped by strong paternal authority and the power of the lineage, it was possible to enforce marriage stability through moral and severe sanctions. Moreover, these attributes were inherent in the rights conferred by marriage, the gradual weakening in the lineage authority through the introduction of modern systems of government and administration has given free scope to the inherent elements of instability.



In addition, certain changes in marriage ceremonial might be held responsible for the increased incidence of divorce. The elaborate ceremonies of the past included the ijohun, first ceremony or the engagement, followed by idana, the second ceremony, the consummation and the bride's seclusion for several months during which she was subjected to advice on ideal wifely behaviour. This elaboration of ceremonial, as Gibbs(1963) has shown on the Kpelle of Liberia, emphasises the importance of the marriage to the couple and their kinsfolk. It also served in the past to bring home to the married pair the seriousness and solemnity of their undertaking. But today even the Osun powdering and the seclusion no longer form part of the ceremony. The result is that it has lost its message to the couple and their kinsfolk and its function for society.

The influence of supernatural beliefs on the marriage must also be mentioned. The religious sanctions which made the powder one of the legalising substances plus the idana in the old marriage rites stemmed from the mystical powers associated with osun tree, from which is made. Osun is said to have been associated with one of the gods of the Omuo when they were at Ife. Pieces of the bark of this tree were used there as the official seal for concluding agreements. On their departure from Ife they brought with them branches of the tree, some of which can be seen to this day. In view of its importance in legal and religious spheres it was used to give legality to marriage rites. That is why the osun powdering occupied such an important position in the old marriage ceremony. The ring, which is replacing the osun powder, has not the same religious backing.

Gluckman also suggests that marriage payments fall in value with decreasing dominance of patrilineal descent, but he regards the influence of property on marriage stability as secondary. He claims that 'it is rare divorce which allows high payment rather than high marriage payment which prevents divorce' (1950:192). To this view Leach (1953:180) has added the fact that 'high' and 'low' marriage payments are relative terms and must be related to the economic resources of each society. This point is very important, because in view of the differing economic systems of African societies it is impossible to speak of high or low marriage payment in absolute terms. In Omuo, although the items making up the marriage payment have

changed considerably since the turn of the century;<sup>7</sup> considering the relative cost of living, little difference may be observed in value between the old and the new payments. To raise ₦30 for a major undertaking such as marriage is not beyond the means of an ordinary Omuo youth. A year's wage labour abroad may yield a net income of about ₦300 (£150), while cocoa farmers get rather more. With a little thrift plus parents' and lineage members' help, many youths should therefore be in a position to raise this amount with ease. Apart from the idana itself, which is the owo ori and fixed at ₦30, differences are allowed in the value of the other items that make up the marriage payment, especially in kinship marriages. This makes payment much easier. Another element of flexibility in the rules governing the marriage payment is that if a divorce is successful idana fee must be paid in court on the same day, the refund of the marriage payment by a man who has married an adulteress may be made in instalments, say within three months. On this score, therefore, the figures seem to support the Gluckman hypothesis. But the problem still remains complicated, since so many variables go to determine the rate.

To conclude, a detailed account of marriage system in the Omuo has been given. The data has shown a significant change from the traditional customs. This tendency cannot be divorced from the frequency at which marriages break down today in the community. A number of factors have been adduced for this, among which is the gradual erosion in the power of the traditional authority, plus the fact that women are economically more independent of their husbands today than before.

7. The actual bride-price in Omuo until 1959 was £5 sterling after when it was raised to £15 which is still today's price.

C O N C L U S I O N S

CONCLUSIONSContinuity and Change in Omuo-Ekiti

In this final chapter I will try to review the extent of the changes which have taken place in Omuo-Ekiti social organisation in recent decades, and to assess their significance.

a) Decline in Lineage authority

I have tried to show that a fundamental source of traditional lineage unity was common interest in property, in particular land. Group unity, and the authority for its head, were easily sustained when land was the only capital, and when most individuals were economically dependent on inherited rights in it.

Now many occupations are open to the individual outside his lineage. Moreover, he can now build a house anywhere he desires in the community<sup>1</sup>. Lineage land is still inalienable, in spite of the introduction of cocoa—a cash crop. This crop was first introduced into Omuo-Ekiti round about the beginning of the 1940s, although it was not until the ending of that year that cultivation started on any large scale. The boom which soon followed led many to seek land elsewhere, because only certain lineages had land of suitable quality, and because the crop thrives only in thick wooded forest. At the same time congestion in some quarters coupled with land shortage, e.g. in Araromi near Omuo-Oke, made some lineage members to seek for building plots outside their own lineage. About three-

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<sup>1</sup>Despite the overall changes brought about by cash economy it is relevant to point out here that land has not become a commercial enterprise in the community. Building plots are not sold so that individuals who wish to build a house can do so on lineage lands.

-quarters the adult male population of Omuo-Ekiti (98.8%) are cocoa and food crop farmers. From the former they make on average about N240 net during the two harvest seasons in the year, which is not at all bad for a rural community with a comparatively low cost of living.

Some idea of the extent to which people have now become independent of inherited property for their living is given by my sample of 120 cocoa farmers in Omuo-Ekiti in 1974.

Seventy-two (60%) were farming land they inherited from their lineage or matrilineal kin. But 52 of these had other plots of farmland mortgaged to them by non-relatives. The remaining 48 were farming only plots mortgaged to them, although some of the latter had inherited land which they considered unsuitable for use at the time of the enquiry.

Since farms are scattered in different parts of the community and many people have farms in more than one part of it, the above figures have little bearing on the residence pattern. But the fact that an Omuo-Ekiti can now build his house on land other than the lineage land has affected the degree of localisation of lineages. As we have seen the local agnatic incidence, which is said to have been 'very high' in the past, was just above 70 per cent in 1976.

There are other economic activities. Of these the making of cloths, baskets, mats and ropes as I have pointed out in chapter three are of the most important. Other occupations introduced by these changes are handicrafts of all kinds, including tailoring, carpentry and blacksmithing.

By far the most effective means to independence has come through the opportunities offered by school education. This offers chances of employment which guarantees a steady and regular income. Through education the Omuo becomes, to some extent, wedded to European ideals which are foreign to his native training.

One factor which accelerates the estrangement of the educated Omuo from his indigeneous culture, and which at the same time reduces his influence on the traditional society, is the inevitable tendency to find his future not in his natal community but in a commercial or industrial centre. In the absence of such centres in the Omuo-Ekiti district, he realises his ambition in most cases in the large towns and cities outside Omuo-Ekiti, such as Lagos, Ibadan, Kano or Port Harcourt. A sizeable number find work as well in Akure, the capital of the new State (Ondo) and Ile-Ife. Such educated migrants return home occasionally, and for brief periods, only when they are 'on leave' from their employers. This is the position today and in spite of the fact that Omuo-Ekiti is the Headquarters of the new Ekiti East Council, nearly every school leaver in the community has to go outside the town to find work.

The emigration of school leavers reflects the ordinary Omuo-Ekiti literate's attitude to farming or trading. These occupations are considered unsuitable for educated men. This attitude has persisted because of the tendency among literates to live differently from the uneducated majority in their own community. One is made to think that the educated man is forced to adopt this attitude because the illiterate locals, among them his own relatives, do not expect him, after his education, to come and 'be one of them.' They expect him to be a teacher or clerk, that is, to work with a commercial firm or a Government Department. Any educated man who indulges in farming, or trading for that matter, is bound to subject himself to derision of all sorts and even abuse.

One of the reasons for this state of affairs is the fact that agriculture has not been modernised in a way which would make it more profitable and so more attractive to educated men. Another reason is that, rightly or wrongly, the school leavers believe that there is a wide gulf both of civilisation and physical distance between the inhabitants of Omuo-Ekiti and those of the city. The standard of living in the villages and towns is far below that in the cities.

Modern facilities, such as hospitals, electricity and pipe-borne water supply do not as yet exist in Omuo-Ekiti as they do in the cities; hence the attractions the cities have to those young aspirants whose dream of an ideal life is that epitomised by the city.

The result is that many lineages are losing their sturdiest members. Also, since traditional values and customs are not learned so much by theoretical education as through participant observation, there is the added result of the gradual but steady disappearance, among the educated, of knowledge regarding traditional usages. For instance, it was found that nearly half the students at the two secondary modern schools in the community did not know the totems and taboos of their clans. Yet of the illiterates of the same age group not a single one was ignorant of these facts.

There is not much that can be done at the local level to stop emigration of school leavers. At the national level the state as well as the federal governments are aware of the problem of lack of jobs for the school leavers. For instance, the <sup>4</sup>federal Ministry of Agriculture has advised all state governments to pass to grant-aided schools and universities the new policy of including in their curriculum agricultural science as a compulsory subject. It is hoped that by doing so it will encourage school leavers to take to farming and to distract them from the much sought after white collar jobs. Whether this is the panacea to the problem remains to be seen. However, agriculture will have to be made more attractive in the way of mechanised farming if it is to recruit school leavers to it. Although the Government has launched the scheme of 'Operation Feed the Nation,' in my view, much need be done in terms of creating state farms both at local and national levels with the formation throughout the country of young farmers association, on the style of that of Ghana. It will help to change the people's attitude to farming. Moreover the use of tractors, and the fact that the majority of the employees in such an association will be illiterates, will be important contributory factors.

With the introduction of free and compulsory universal education (UPE) in 1976, there has been a great demand for school leavers as 'pupil teachers,' which makes it possible for many educated young people to remain in their areas. Moreover, a few junior clerks have to be recruited for the Ekiti East Council now established in the community, although all the posts will not necessarily be filled by the locals. Nevertheless, the employment of school-leavers in these jobs enables them to work with their own people and to decrease the dishonour usually associated with school-leavers working in their town.

These new establishments open new vistas to the educated Omuo-Ekiti both in his own town and outside it. His employment offers him a new circle of acquaintances, or that continued from school, based both on occupational or professional interests and congeniality of personalities. In such environments mutual aid societies are the rule. These societies which cut across kinship lines, are now <sup>more</sup> important in his life than the lineage or other kin groups. Many such associations have rules which govern the behaviour of members. Disputes are referred to their executives. To give financial and moral help to members in time of need is one of their important aims. Certainly in such a crisis as bereavement, the chief mourners will be lineage members and other kinsmen, but his comrades will offer him financial and moral support. He is therefore able to look outside his kin groups when the need arises. Indeed when he is far away from home it is his associates who play the major role or part of it in these cases.

Co-operation of this nature is not limited to the educated Omuo-Ekiti. The various egbe in the community also have their own rules, one of these is that disputes between members must be referred to the egbe's leaders for settlement. Kola nut traders, egbe olobi, for example, give themselves wide powers, enabling them for instance to determine that only those women who trade in kola nut are eligible to be members of the egbe.



One result of the increased occupational differentiation is that junior members of a lineage may gain economic power which places them above the others. And since leadership in the association is based on ability and professional qualification rather than age or birth, able men can easily rise to positions of leadership. School education per se may also have influence. In many lineage matters the advice of the educated members is sought, and family disputes are sometimes brought to them instead of the lineage head for settlement. This may have far-reaching repercussions on the structure of the lineage. The fact is that at the present time neither personal eminence nor the constitution of co-operating local groups is significantly determined, as it was in the traditional period, by membership of or attachment to any kind of genealogically defined unit.

One or two examples may serve to illustrate this. Agbegi, whose father was one of the Omuc-Ekiti pioneers to participate in the cocoa growing innovations in Ilesha and who had inherited a vast wealth from his father, was at 40 a junior but most respected member of the Idoko lineage in Ijero Quarter. At the time he was undoubtedly its richest member. In 1972 during the Egungun Igbede Festival, a woman belonging to another lineage defied tradition by publicly watching the masqueraders. She was caught in the act. Tradition also decrees that any woman caught doing this unless by accident, should be put to death. A meeting of the Igbede lineage was convened immediately where it was decided to carry out the penalty at once. Although Igbede is the supreme lineage in charge of the Egungun affairs, somehow Idoko lineage also has a part to play in the Festival. Soon afterwards Agbegi, who was noted for his progressive views, was informed about the decision. He spoke against the death penalty but instead proposed a heavy fine, and everyone murmured approval.

The other example concerns the chieftaincy dispute within Awanse Odo lineage about a successor to the Aro title. Several candidates in the lineage had laid a claim to the title. The dispute left the title vacant for seven years. On Easter Monday in 1974 a group of Omuo-~~M~~kiti Progressive Union members were sent from Ibadan to help resolve the dispute. I also know a group of siblings whose disputes are never settled until their educated brother comes home on leave, although he is not the lineage head. Several similar instances could be cited. The de jure structure of the lineage may persist; the oldest surviving male member may remain the lineage head; he may still be regarded as the only one who prays to the ancestors. But decision-making becomes more and more a function of the de facto power structure. Moreover, many other functions previously performed by the lineage are now outside its domain, and it is in these new functioning associations that men like Agbegi are making their mark.

Missionary activities have also had a great influence on the social structure. In Nigeria, as in many other parts of Africa, christianity was a necessary concomitant of school education, because most of the early schools were run by missionaries, who almost always made baptism a condition of attendance. The converted were soon to lose touch with most of their traditional values and beliefs, for the missionaries were not content with teaching the scriptures. They considered many native practices unsuitable for christians and were determined to crush them. As Professor Mair (1934:3) puts it, 'the christian missionaries have set their faces against all the patently "'uncivilised"' aspects of native culture, whether or not they were directly forbidden by the scripture: they have opposed polygamy, slavery, the payment of bride-price, initiation ceremonies, dancing...as all being equally repugnant to a civilisation in which mechanical warefare is a recognised institution.'

This attitude greatly alienated many Omuo-~~M~~kiti educated young people from their traditional beliefs and institutions, especially their faith in the efficacy of the power of the ancestors,

which was the most important sanction on lineage unity and its leaders' authority. In the individual sphere too one finds as a result the disregard of clan taboos and injunctions which may now be regarded as superstitious. In the community as a whole between 25 to 30 per cent of the population are at least nominal christians. Many of these people accordingly stay away from ancestral rites and other indigeneous practices which they think run counter to conditions laid down by the missionaries.

In the field of law and public order the direct outcome of the British occupation has been the establishment of customary courts all over the country with wide powers over and above the traditional procedures. The effects of this were mainly political, but it also affected the relations of the Umuc-<sup>ki</sup>kiti with their lineage leaders. In the traditional system, where the oloriebi lacked the backing of force, the ultimate sanctions governing behaviour in everyday matters were religious. The adjudication of lineage matters rested solely with the head and elders. Though cases were sometimes taken to the Oba' or the quarter chiefs, matters concerning the lineage were settled within it. This meant that it was not necessary to sue a fellow lineage member at the Oba's court.

Backed by the sanctions of the dead, the elders' decisions were considered final. There is no pretending that these decisions were always just, or that the disputants were always satisfied with them. In the main the elders concerned themselves with reconciliation and the maintenance of harmony between kinsmen, rather than giving judgment on the juridical merits of a case. In other words, the punishments and compensations did not always measure up to the offence.

This position was radically altered by the establishment of British-type courts. Disputes between lineage members, as well as inter-lineage ones, are still sometimes settled by the elders, but many litigants have taken the advantage of the presence of the customary court in the community and the appeal courts in both Ado-Ekiti and Akure where they expect more impersonal treatment. In this respect the present trend has been helped by the cracks already appearing in lineage solidarity and the authority of the elders as a result of the increasing economic independence of the individual, and doubts concerning the efficacy of the ancestral sanctions.

One of the greatest blows to lineage unity in this field has been quarrels concerning land. The quarrels are caused by improper distribution of rights. Although as we have seen land is still inalienable, there is no reason to suppose that family land as opposed to lineage or public land cannot be sold, as we have seen in the example of the land sold to the public on which the High School stands. Lineage land can only be dispensed with if it is held in per petuity by the member, and then only with the approval of the entire lineage concerned. However, I came across a case in 1976 where the head of lineage wanted to sell a portion of the lineage land without authority from the members and was taken to court by his juniors. This case was an exception rather than the rule.

The land shortage in the community has affected the lineage in two ways. First, the lineage ceases to be a unit with a common interest in property, particularly since members have to look to other adjacent communities to beg for land, especially to grow cocoa. Secondly, the litigation which follows some irregular practices gives rise to situations with which the lineage heads are not fully equipped to deal.

Consequently their authority is disregarded and cases are transferred from them to the customary court or one of the appeal courts in the Division. The elders themselves sometimes indirectly contribute to this mismanagement and improper practices of lineage property.

One other index of the disintegration of lineages must be mentioned here. This is the dispersion of members. When lineages were localised in the ward, agbo ebi, co-operation was much easier, and so was the regular expression of their corporate unity. Now, in addition to the periodical movements of traders and migration of educated members, overcrowding, in some cases, has led to the dispersal of lineages even in the same ward or quarter. Today at the ancestral rites, when the lineage used to meet in a body, only a fraction of its total membership is present. At impromptu meetings for ad hoc purposes people live far away from the lineage home may find it difficult to attend. As Barnes (1962:7) has observed, 'co-residence implies the possibility but not necessity of continual day-to-day face-to-face interaction, and in non-literate society, however clearly their rights are recognised, absent members cannot play as full a part in the activities of the group as do those who are present.'

b) Shifts in interpersonal relations

Although the corporate lineage itself is less powerful than it used to be, kinship behaviour continues to play an important part in Omuo-Ekiti life. Mutual help between kinsmen, for example, is still regarded by most people as imperative. It is obvious that in the past, in addition to the lineage's collective responsibility for the economic welfare of its members, kinsmen co-operated among themselves.

Other informants maintain that 'in the past relatives used to eat from each other. Anyone who had a bad harvest had ready assistance from more fortunate relatives.' It was not even considered necessary for anyone to ask his brother or cousin, real or classificatory, before plucking a few ears of corn or a couple of sugar canes from his farm. Indeed, it is pointed out that a person could not steal a relative's property. He could only take it. And co-operation among kinsfolk was considered one of the most important obligations.

This aspect of kinship is still taken very seriously by those who are in a position to help. But it seems that the range of kinsfolk now considered important is narrower and more specific. In what follows I try to give a rather detailed account so as to bring out clearly how the ordinary Omuo-Ekiti now feels about it. One way in which this spirit is expressed is the regular sums given by well-to-do members of the society for support of kinsfolk and the ad hoc financial assistance given to those in need. Salaried workers and farmers are known to be the principal benefactors in this respect, but the educated men who also form the majority of the salaried workers are by far the most important.

In the area where there are frequent fluctuations on account of drought resulting in poor harvests, the educated elements in the various kin groups have become the insurance institutions on which their relatives fall back.

The salaried workers I interviewed were working at Ibadan, Ife and Ikole-Ekiti. In all they numbered eighty. Seventy-two per cent gave some regular income or help to at least one relative outside their household, apart from wives and dependent children, and over 50 per cent said they gave an average of over ₦2.50 kobo (£3 sterling) a month. Since most of them were earning just about ₦60 a month, this contribution was a substantial part of their income. About 25 per cent spent over ₦10 on relatives and about 10 per cent over ₦12. These sums, it was claimed, did not include occasional gifts or the expenses of lineage rituals, which some of them are expected to bear.

Most of the help went to old people such as parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts and elderly cousins and related widows without children of their own. Apart from old people their main responsibility was towards the education of younger siblings, nephews, nieces, and married sisters. Some were helping relatives of their own generation and others of their children's age groups. But all relatives by far the most generally accepted responsibility was for the mother. 'Iya ni wura baba ni dingi, enikeni ko gbodo fi iya re jafara', 'mother is gold father is the mirror, one does not therefore neglect one's mother.' The mother must be helped. 'Anyone who does not help his mother must be a fool.' Ninety per cent of those interviewed whose mothers were alive regularly supported them. Where this did not happen it was because the mother was herself wealthy and in a position to help herself and other dependants. After their mothers, they most often gave help to siblings, maternal aunts, fathers, or paternal aunts in that order. Both men and women support their relatives, and a wife will try to set aside something for her family from trade or selling pigs, poultry or goats, but the amounts are smaller than those that men usually give.

The heaviest responsibility tends to fall on their eldest son, even while his father is still working. Bamisile, a ₦80 a month school teacher in Ikole-Ekiti told me, 'I have two younger brothers and two sisters. They are all attending school. It is my intention to give them the best possible education. My father did a lot for me even when the going was bad for him. Now that he is getting old I must relieve him of some of his responsibilities. Next year Lajide, the second brother, is going to Victory College in Ikare. The first brother is a brilliant chap, but I have advised him to take up a teaching appointment so as to help me educate the younger ones. Both girls will go to the Omuro-Ekiti High School.' This teacher was also giving about ₦2 regularly to his mother, and another ₦2 to 'my small mother, who sometimes even asks for more when the need arises.' As soon as the father dies, responsibility for his mother and siblings falls squarely on the eldest son.

It may be assumed by a younger brother if the eldest is not so well off, as in the case of Ibukun, the youngest of four brothers and the one of his family to have gone to school. He was a senior clerk at a bookshop in Ibadan receiving about ₦100 a month.

'I have two wives and four children. But when my father died last year my responsibilities for my mother increased. My brothers were formerly fairly prosperous farmers, but we lost our cocoa plantation in a law suit. Now they have not got much to themselves. Two of them got some farms on lease with my assistance. But they have not yet found their feet. The third has left for Kano. WE do not even hear from him. So every month I send about ₦5 or ₦6 to my mother. Other relatives are also asking for help.'

Where possible the responsibilities are adjusted to fall fairly on all earning members of the sibling group. A trader told me, 'My two elder brothers and I are fairly rich, so we have devised a method by which each <sup>one</sup> of us assumes a certain share of the responsibilities to our younger brothers' and sisters' education. We also built a new house for our mother after the death of our father. Our only married sister is now living with our mother. My own daughter is staying there to help them.'

In addition to these regular sums, there are occasional calls for help. A mother's brother whose crop is destroyed by drought calls suddenly for help, and his sister's son will have to do something. A brother's wife falls sick, and help is readily sought from an elder brother.

In the present day when economic opportunities have been enhanced through the introduction of cocoa certain segments of lineages have quite rich and self-supporting members, and the regular exchanges described are no longer considered an important feature of inter-family relation. In other prosperous lineages, where every family is financially independent, the reciprocal exchange of gifts tends to balance up and no hardship is entailed.



In a poor family, on the other hand, it is not uncommon to find a regular income earner who has to deprive himself of even the smallest luxuries for the sake of his kinsfolk. The important thing about these gifts is not so much the amount or frequency as the spirit in which they are given. As informants always claimed, 'A ni lati ma se iranlowo fun ibatan wa,' 'We must always help our kinsfolk, honour our kinship obligations.' The best way to do this is to help relatives in need. Now that social and economic conditions have introduced differences in income, not all are able to reciprocate the favours they receive from their relatives. But in a sense the gifts given them by their parents and other kinsfolk when they were attending school can never be repaid. Thus, though kinship makes it necessary for them to help elders and parents who are in need, many educated Omuo-Ekiti, when giving help, recall what their parents, aunts, and uncles did for them, in the hope that their own children's generation will support them in turn.

Not all regular income earners find it necessary to give help to relatives beyond parents and siblings. Others do not even include siblings in their responsibility. They do not understand why they should be expected to look after others when they have families of their own to care for. One such man was Asiru. He told me that 'the best way to deal with this mass of relatives is to be tough. If they know you are miserly they will stop troubling you. Once you start parting with money freely they take advantage. Boy, let me tell you. This ibatan, kinship thing is a thing of the past and the illiterate folk should realise that. Yesterday I was just going to bed when a relative of mine, my father's sister's son, dropped in. He wanted to stay the night. He also wanted some money. I managed to despatch him immediately. No money. The way I treated him he would never try again.'

There are some people like Asiru. Their attitude is usually a result of the treatment they received from their relatives during their school days. They are in the main those who went through school the hard way by looking after themselves.

But they form a negligible proportion of the educated Omuo-Ekiti, though Asiru's view of kinship as a thing of the past is increasing in popularity. It is necessary to add, however, that all the educated men that I interviewed, including those in the last category, agreed that close relations who are really in need must be helped.

This analysis of mutual help as an expression of kinship obligation shows that the modern conditions which alienate educated men from their traditional values provide also the means by which these very people help their kinsmen, whose economic weakness is a result of the same changes. But these benevolent gestures are not limited to the educated few. All fairly prosperous farmers, and young men of all descriptions who are in a position to help do so. It is also important to add the help does not always go in the same direction, that is from the educated man to needy relatives. On occasion a clerk who loses his job tells his parents and uncles, and they all contribute a few Naira to secure him as an extra hand man in a trading store probably in Ibadan or Lagos.

In general, <sup>therefore,</sup> relatives, especially those with regular incomes, still assume responsibility for the welfare of the less fortunate. As yet there are few welfare services in Nigeria to relieve them of any of these duties. In the absence of these services this sense of mutual help or obligation will continue for a long time to sustain kinship ties as the dominant concern of everyday life. Every member of the kin group has rights, obligations and privileges, and enjoys the sense of security which they provide. Everyone is protected against the financial difficulties of unemployment, old age and sickness, and can look to close kinsmen for support in difficulty.

It is difficult to ascertain the degree of relationships which in the past carried with them the obligations of mutual help and support. Records are not specific. It appears from the life histories of some informants that the range was extensive. If this is so, then the economic individualism which resulted in the weakening of the lineage as a property-holding group may be held responsible for the present narrowing, for the important consideration which made help obligatory was not only the kinship itself but also the fact that the source of income was a common property.

Other changes in kinship and interpersonal relations can be related to the political effects of the incorporation of Omuo-Ekiti into the modern Nigerian State. The introduction of local government and modern politics have resulted in redistribution of power within the community. The old symbols still remain, but on a competitive basis with modern forms. Politics has shifted away from its traditional base to the new council made up of elected members, though this shift is limited by the fact that councillors owe their election to the loyalty of the lineage members. There has begun a reinterpretation of the old values which, in many cases, are blending with the new ones. It is this process of osmosis which has kept intact the Omuo-Ekiti social institutions.

The introduction of modern politics and the emergence of political parties was a watershed in the history of Nigeria. The parties were, at first, ideally based and organised on ethnic loyalties of the principal groups of each region. It also clearly shows the relevance of the lineage as a basis for political organisation and mass support as became evident later in the election campaign that followed.

The 1964 General Election in the country was fierce and characterised by controversy and political thuggery. This was partly due to the question of the distribution of rewards among the participants. As there was no immediate resolution to the conflict, the masses became disillusioned. In the end the Army took over the political control of the country. One of the accusations levelled against the politicians during the take-over was the lack of respect towards the traditional values, including the traditional chiefs. The take-over therefore was the beginning of a campaign for the revival of traditional values and ideals, particularly the idea of going back to the lineage as a basis of political stability.

The 1976 Local Government Reorganisation in the whole country was a step towards the emergence of traditional authority and the revival of the old values and ideal. This revival and restoration of the values was possible because they have always been part of the community's history since its foundation.

c) The changing basis of marriage and divorce

The change in power relations also affects kinship relation in another aspect. It has been pointed out that whereas during the Traditional Period the choice of a spouse for one's child was mainly the function of the parents or the lineage. It was a type of arranged marriage. The spouses themselves hardly participated in the negotiations and had little say in whom they should or should not marry.

Today, the choice of a partner is principally the responsibility of the spouses concerned although the parents can and sometimes do have a say in the choice. But they can be overruled if they make any objections which the spouses themselves consider as obstructive to their aspiration. Besides, the payment of bridewealth is now the sole responsibility of the man rather than the lineage. However, the ceremonial aspect of the wedding, which also has been modified in the face of political and economic change, is the prerogative of the lineage, thus to ensure the success of the marriage whenever it takes place.

The new system thus, has been adjusted to the realities of economic and political transformation taking place in the Omuo-Ekiti society. The ceremonial, although modified, is a constant reminder of the continuity of the old order in spite of change. Its continued existence is assured as long as marriages continue to take place. As Cohen (1974:135) points out, symbols achieve a measure of continuity-in-change by their ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings. A ceremonial may be repeated over and over again in the same form though its symbols may be charged with different meanings to accommodate new developments.

The rising rate of divorce today in the community is partly a function of the change in power relation. In the first place, it is an indication of the erosion in the structure of the traditional authority. The power structure of the lineage has lost some its cohesion. During the Traditional Period, the lineage was a powerful force in enabling couples to face to the marital obligations. Whenever there was a violation of this norm the lineage was ready to impose a severe sanction on the offending party. Secondly, the economic transformation, from a purely peasant subsistence farming to that of market production, means that distribution of wealth enables the hitherto less well off to accumulate capital, which in turn allows him a degree of economic independence that he had previously not enjoyed. Omuo-Ekiti women, like their Yoruba counterparts, are traditionally traders. In the present century, trade both local and long distance, has expanded and the women are taking the

advantage offered by the continued increase in the volume of money circulation.

The fact that marriages are now discussed by the young people before they approach their parents introduces new elements into the relationship of the spouses-to-be. Nowadays the lovers are able to study each other before making their final decision. One adverse consequence is that virginity at marriage is becoming rarer, since marriage is only the final stage in a relationship which the lovers themselves had already decided on. This in turn leads to the danger of premarital pregnancy. This danger is really grave in view of the young people's ignorance of the contraceptives. 79 per cent of married men knew nothing about contraceptives, and of those who knew only about half considered their use worthwhile. Premarital pregnancy is now a social problem, and the free association of the sexes, helped by the schools and churches, is blamed for it. Even in the mission schools established by the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican and Seventh Day-Adventist Churches, inquiries showed that sexual experience among adolescent boys and girls is widespread.

In one mixed secondary modern school containing 180 boys and 83 girls, about six girls become pregnant every year. Among the town girls too premarital pregnancy is high. Premarital pregnancy is not always the result of ignorance or accident. The Omuo-Ekiti, like their Yoruba, see the purpose of marriage as primarily for the procreation of children. This presupposes that a girl becomes a wife in order to become a mother; but the usual procedure of first becoming a wife has now tended to be reversed, and some girls aim at first becoming pregnant and then considering how to make the men marry and maintain them. Equally, due to the present dubious sexual morality of girls, many young men wish to make sure that their girl friends are capable of bearing children before embarking on marriage.

Paradoxically enough, this tendency is more prevalent among those Christian literates who intend to make monogamous civil or religious marriages, because if the woman proves barren remarriage cannot take place without dissolving the first marriage on Christian grounds. Surrounding this practice is the popular superstition, mentioned to me by several informants, that a bride who is not pregnant before a church wedding or civil marriage remains barren for life. They mentioned some cases in support of this.

The girl may wish to become pregnant because she is afraid her lover does not mean to marry her. She makes herself available to him because she knows their parents will bring pressure on him to marry her. In such matches love, which is supposed to be the primary factor, tends to be secondary to distrust and economic considerations; consequently tensions arise at the outset from the element of constraint imposed on the man. It often happens that an unmarried girl finds after her pregnancy that her seducer is not in a position to maintain her, as is usually the case when the lover is in school. This may be tricky for the girl, because it may be a sufficient cause of abandoning her unless his parents are willing to look after her. Because of these dangers, the sensible girl from a good home still finds it necessary to rely on parental advice, knowing that if still marries without her parents' full consent, she will not be able to fall back upon them should the marriage prove unsuccessful.

The problems created by modern conditions go beyond the choice of partners and premarital pregnancy. We must recall that the establishment of the British style type of judicial system during the colonial era curtailed the powers of the traditional authorities, so that they no longer have the power to execute hardened adulterers. Adultery is now punished by a fine of between ₦15 and ₦20, which is not beyond the means of the ordinary Omuo-<sup>U</sup>kiti.

The attitude of the christians too, which derides the mystical retribution believed to be visited on sexual offences, has not helped. 'Since coitus has no referee,' as an informant put it, the most important sanctions against illegal liasons were the mystical beliefs associated with them. The difficulty of detecting adulterers is grave, although rumours and community gossip have it that adultery is relatively rife among christians, there was not a single trial for the offence that I know of during my eighteen months stay in the town.

Even if there are adulterers among the christians, it is doubtful whether disciplinary action can have any effect on most of them, because only a few are practising christians anyway. In discussing Omuo-Ekiti attitudes towards sex offences it is important to distinguish christians from the traditional believers. If there is one aspect of Omuo-Ekiti social life in which the traditional believers have not yet been greatly influenced by christianity, it is this. Curiously enough, adultery occurs much less frequently among the traditional believers. This may be explained in several ways. In all the cult groups and pagan religious organisations, the faithfulness of spouses is one of the first injunctions. There is also the belief in the efficacy of the pagan deities, and in their power eventually to detect and punish every sin committed. It is also believed that failure to confess in the face of punishment, which always takes the form of serious sickness, will result in death or madness.

There are many instances to remind the Omuo-Ekiti pagan of this. If a woman suddenly dies divination may reveal that the cause of death is the result of her adultery. Mention was made in chapter 4 of women who were believed to have died because of failure to confess their infidelity. Moreover, many pagan women believe-and with justifications-that their husbands take magical precautions against their infidelity.



It is these beliefs which account for the differences in moral behaviour between christians and traditional believers, though the two images presented are to some extent stereotyped. On the one hand, many christian wives are faithful to their husbands. On the other, quite a number of traditional believers could be found to be unfaithful, as evidenced by those who have confessed during the confidential talk on the issue with them. Moreover, there are many traditional believers who do not belong to any retributive organisations mentioned, and others have been disenchanted by christian influence from the mystical beliefs associated with illicit sexual behaviour. But still, christianity and the indigeneous religions have great influence on Omuo-Ekiti sexual behaviour and, given the division into christians and traditional believers, the above conclusions should hold.

Another important structural change that can be attributed to external influences is the decreased incidence of polygyny. In the old days a man acquired dependants by begetting, buying or capturing in war. Wealth consisted largely of dependants who could help him in his economic activities. The well-remembered names of the past are those of men who had several wives, and probably slaves too. Nowadays, in addition to the fact that the churches oppose polygyny, wealth and leadership can be obtained by other means. Moreover polygyny demands greater expenses now than before. People who have many wives must be able to feed them in the first place. In the early days of colonialism the few people who had money had limited uses for it. Giving marriage payment, and perhaps buying slaves, were the chief uses to which it was put. Now there are not only many other uses for money but it can be obtained in several other ways.

Despite what I have just said, it must be stressed again that polygyny is still an important feature of Omuo-Ekiti family life. When the christian churches opposed polygyny. they were fighting an institution practised by the traditional leaders themselves, which was an essential aspect of the traditional social structure.

This was one of the reasons for the relative failure of the missionaries in converting the Omuo-Ekiti to monogamy. Many Omuo-Ekiti still consider that marriage to a plurality of wives is a man's right, and most men cannot reconcile this belief with christianity's preference for monogamy.

In the course of my field work I carried out detailed and intensive interviews with the functionaries of the various denominational churches in the town. It soon became apparent that the views held by these churches on the sensitive question of marriage in relation to polygyny differed from one another. The Roman Catholic regard marriage as a religious not a civil institution. Based on this premise, it adds that civil formality in marriage is not enough. Where a marriage is contracted under native law and custom the marriage is expected to be raised by baptism to the status of a sacramental union, but the marriage itself must have been a monogamous one. The view of the Anglican Church (CMS) is slightly different and is in fact not uniform on the question on the question of marriage. In their view a secular statutory marriage is not a christian marriage. The consequence of this dilemma is that the failure of the cultural graft has to some extent undermined Africa's own marriage culture.

The Anglicans (CMS) try to compromise by distinguishing degrees of membership which are related to marital status. A full member of the church must be a monogamist, married in terms of the Marriage Ordinance. However, it does not mean that a polygamous man is completely rejected: he may have restricted membership although proscribed from participating in communion. But there are certain categories of people on whom the enforcement of polygyny is made, these are the church functionaries or officials like the church officer or a teacher employed by the mission.

But it is a common knowledge throughout the community that practically all illiterate christians are polygamous, and it is therefore not surprising that only a few men turn up for the Holy Communion. The low proportion of male christians who receive Communion may also be explained by the apparent indifference of men in religious matters compared with the enthusiasm of the women. At service the pews for women are always full, while the men's are completely empty, or filled only by children.

But the ratio of monogamy to polygyny shows no significant difference between christians and traditional believers, except for teachers as already mentioned, whose profession makes it necessary for them to be monogamous.<sup>2</sup> Apart from teachers only a small number of men, who are strongly influenced by christian belief, set a positive value on the strict observance of monogamy.

Thus christianity has not very much affected the Omuo-Ekiti outlook towards polygyny, and if there is any difference between its incidence today and in the past the explanation must be sought in other directions. It is not easy to assess whether the incidence of polygyny as a whole has decreased over the years. Since my information on the past is based on genealogies, it is possible that it is incomplete on barren wives and the wives of men whose descendants are no longer in the localities studied. It is also not clear on the proportion of polygynists who made successive monogamous marriages, or 'diachronic polygyny' in

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<sup>2</sup>Out of a total number of 163 teachers employed in Omuo-Ekiti schools in 1974 all but one were monogamously married. The exception being the son of the Oba.

Southall's terminology (1959:52).

Making allowance for these limitations, there is evidence to indicate a decrease in polygyny, for in the past two out three were polygynists, whereas today's figures show roughly three out five. Today many economic factors militate against polygyny. The financial implications in the initial stages have been mentioned. House-building is much more costly and difficult now, and a man must be very rich to provide adequate homes for many wives. At the same time, as many wives now prefer to live apart from their senior co-wives, provision of houses for those who cannot or are not willing to live with their parents or other relatives means the establishment of a new homestead for each wife.

Moreover, monogamy indirectly curbs the sexual rights of men over their wives and increasing those of the women. Monogamy puts the rights of husband and wife on the same level by limiting the husband's sexual activities to his wife as hers are to him. These are in complete contradiction with the male attitude mentioned above. The large number of polygynous marriages at Ijero and Iworo Quarters (42.4 per cent) shows that quite a large number of Omuro-Ekiti women still accept the jural superiority of men. Others, such as the few literates and rich market women who have somehow emerged from traditional constraints, tend to interpret equality to mean permanent monogamy for both men and women. Those who are first wives try to prevail on their husbands to get rid of them or make life impossible for them so that they leave.

On the whole, traditional male values on sexual rights have only been slightly modified. "emale criticism and the churches' pressure have had little result. On the other hand male criticism of laxity in women, being less revolutionary and backed by traditional values and christian teaching, carries considerable weight. At the moment the conflict still remains unresolved, and looks like continuing in intensity with the increase in the number of educated women.

Compared with the above, interpersonal and authority relations between spouses in the home have moved a long way towards equality. This has been greatly helped by the traditional economic independence of women, which now provides them with a strong basis for adjustment to the demands of modern conditions for an emancipated status. Conversations with many couples, especially those in monogamous unions, indicate that today as much weight is given to the wife's as the husband's view. It is true that matters concerning the upkeep of the home have always been under the direction of the wife, but the segregation of the sexes is no longer as rigid as in the past. Many decisions about the children are now taken by both parents together.

These new features of domestic life were clearly brought out during my interviews. On many occasions, husband and wife sat together and answered my questions either independently or in consultation. On other occasions wives would insist on being present when the husband wanted to confide in me. The atmosphere in these homes all ways savoured of equality.

In an answer to questions on authority structure within the household, among 222 men, 37.1 per cent maintained that the relationship between a man and his wife should be based on absolute equality. They said they didn't expect their wives to be subservient to them in any way, and always treated by, them as equal partners. However, of all the husbands only 11 per cent were addressed by name by their wives, and all these were among the 37.1 per cent.

The remainder were divided on the best form of address. Some did not find the use of the term oko mi, my husband, the traditional term of obedience, for a husband, inconsistent with equality. Others would have liked to be addressed by name, but as one informant explained, 'Owing to the natural respect for a husband a wife will prefer to address you in terms other than the personal name.' I did not meet an illiterate couple on first-name relationship, though there were quite a number whose relationships can really measure up to the equality described. Perhaps one might agree with the informant quoted that the right to call a husband by name is not an index of equality. On the other hand, 64.9 per cent of the married men thought that the wife should be subservient to the husband. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a gradual change from the former attitude of total submission by the wife.

d) The Nature of change

In the course of attempting to document the changes that have overtaken the Omuo-Ekiti, I may have given the impression that the traditional social structure is disintegrating. To a large extent, however, the basic pattern of traditional kinship and family relationships does remain. The individual now has more independence from kinsmen; but contemporary Omuo-Ekiti ideas and values still derive from the traditional kinship system.

The limits to change may be partly because Omuo-Ekiti has not been exposed to full industrialisation. As I mentioned in the Introduction, it is still essentially a marginal society, with strong rural roots. Not one factory has yet been established there.

Changes that have occurred, have been incorporated into a peasant, still largely subsistence way of life. Lineages, although weakened, are still localised.

Because of the limited impact of urbanisation, traditional cultural forms and identities have survived, albeit with altered content and applications. Changes may be evident in the economic and political spheres. But there is considerable continuity in kinship ideologies, as the symbolism is flexible enough to absorb extensive modifications in behaviour. Whatever changes may have taken place in power relationships, the old symbols have been able to reassert their relevance in the new circumstances, and have not needed to change themselves.

So in spite of this incorporation into a wider society, the sense of community in Omuro-Ekiti remains. Individual networks are now generally looser-knit; and multiple relationships the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, a common identity based on kinship, descent, socio-cultural affinity and a community of interests persists despite the penetration of economic innovation and modern concepts of government. It is this continuity, arising out of the fluidity of symbolic formations, which enables the changes which are taking place to do so in an orderly and systematic fashion.

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G L O S S A R Y

GLOSSARY

<u>Yoruba</u>	<u>Meaning in English</u>
<u>Adugbo</u>	Quarter
<u>Agba ile</u>	Family Head (lit. "Senior of the House")
<u>Agba Ilu</u>	"Senior of the Town".
<u>Ajele</u>	Tax Gatherer
<u>Akoda</u>	Court Messenger
<u>Apejo</u>	Council
<u>Egbe</u>	Companies, clubs, age-sets or grades
<u>Ijoye</u>	Titled Persons
<u>Oba</u>	King
<u>Ogboni</u>	Secret Society
<u>Olori Adugbo</u>	Ward or Quarter Head.
<u>Olopa</u>	Police
<u>Olori Ebi</u>	Lineage Head
<u>Obakan</u>	One Father
<u>Iyakan</u>	One Mother
<u>Ebi tabi idile</u>	Lineage
<u>Iyale</u>	The Mother of the House
<u>Egbon Okunrin</u>	Elder Brother
<u>Egbon Obinrin</u>	Elder Sister
<u>Iya mi</u>	My Mother
<u>Baba mi</u>	My Father
<u>Ojuto</u>	Gutter
<u>Oriki</u>	Praise name or song
<u>Omo ale</u>	Bastard child born through adulterous association
<u>Isakole</u>	Annual payment for the use of land
<u>Iyawo mi</u>	My Wife
<u>Oko mi</u>	My Husband
<u>Igbe Iyawo</u>	Lifting the bride
<u>Bale</u>	Head of Family Unit

A P P E N D I X

## CLANS, LINEAGES AND CHIEFTAINCY TITLES

<u>Clan/Title</u>	<u>Quarter</u>	<u>Lineage</u>	<u>Rotatory/Non Rotatory</u>	
The Royal Lineage is segmented into two ruling Houses:-				
1	Royal Lineage <div><div>Ajila</div><div>Adumari</div></div>			
2	Elekota	Kota	Oda Odo Odan Ponna Bolorunduro Asekun Illisa-Oke <b>Obayode</b>	Rotatory
3	Olisa	Illisa	Idi-Aha	N/R
4	Odofin	Iludofin	Ayagbe	N/R
5	Asaoye	Kota	Igbede	N/R
6	Oloruju	Oruju	3 Lineages	Rotatory
7	Aro	Iworo	4 Lineages	Rotatory
8	Aja	Kota	Ose	N/R
9	Eleshi	Araromi	Odoyi	N/R
10	Ije	Ijero	Awekan	N/R
11	Asaya	Isaya	Aya Odo Aya Oke Asatu	Rotatory
12	Alahan	Aban	2 Lineages	Rotatory
13	Olugbe	Edugbe	Igbe	N/R
14	Oloda	Oda	Oda Odo	N/R
15	Oloda	Oda Ponna		N/R
16	Adimmo	Kota		N/R
17	Alafoju	Illisa-Oke		N/R
18	Alfoju	Kota	Asekun	N/R
19	Elejinrin	Kota	Obajoda	N/R
20	Aro	Oya		
21	Olu Iloro	Illudofin		
22	Alauta	Illudofin		
23	Alage	Iworo	Ilawe	N/R
24	Eleuta	Euta		
25	Ogboye	Igbesi		

TABLE 17. Showing Omwo-Ekiti Principal Clans, Lineages and Titles. 1974.



APPENDIX 1BIJERO QUARTER WOMEN CHIEFS: IN ORDER OF SENIORITY

Chief Abejoye

Chief Orinje

Chief Imowu

Chief Ewi

Chief Esimiji

Chief Ojigbade

Chief Relu

Chief Eyelaje

Chief Eyelaofin

Chief Eyelua

Chief Eyelojua Agba

Chief Eyelojua Kekere

Chief Eyelobinrin

TABLE 18.

Showing Title grouping among Ijero Quarter women

The grouping here corresponds with the rest of the quarters in the community. 1974

TABLE 19

OMUO-EKITI PRINCIPAL CHIEFS: ORDER OF SENIORITY-1974OBA OLOMUO

	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>QUARTER</u>
1	Chief Elekota	Kota
2	Chief Odofin	Illudofin
3	Chief Olisa	Illisa
4	Chief Asaoye	Iworo
5	Chief Olomuo-Oke	Omuo-Oke
6	Chief Oloruju	Oruju
7	Chief Aro	Iworo
8	Chief Aja	Kota
9	Chief Eleshi	Araromi
10	Chief Balogun ***	Omu(Iworo)

\*\*\*Declaration made under Section 4 (2) of The Chiefs Law, 1957 of the Customary Law Regulating The Selection to Balogun Omuo Chieftaincy indicates that there is one ruling house identified as Ayauna. Therefore, the persons who may be proposed as candidates by the ruling house entitled to fill a vacancy in the chieftaincy shall be:

- a) a member of the ruling house
- b) of male line only

There are seven kingmakers as follows:

- 1) Chief Olu of Ayauna
- 2) Chief Aro of Iworo
- 3) Chief Alage of Ilawe
- 4) Chief Alauta of Aluta
- 5) Chief Oye of Ayagbolu
- 6) Chief Ereke of Ayaro
- 7) Chief Ojisu of Aiyasusu

The method of nomination of a candidate is that at a family meeting which is normally summoned by the family head, a candidate will be agreed upon for the chieftaincy who in turn is presented to the kingmakers. However, such a nomination is contingent upon the agreed consent of the Oba. He may withhold his consent under one principal condition and that is if the candidate is grossly deformed.

One observation to be added in connection with the post of Balogun is that he is recognised as the chief of the whole Omuo rather than the quarter from where is is elected. He is the traditional leader of all the Egbes in the community - a kind of minister of defence. The Egbe, by tradition, are responsible for the defence of the community at all times and more particularly in the times of war with outside enemies.

TABLE 20.

OMUO-EKITI. FIVE WARDS IN THE OLD STRUCTURE  
FOR RATES AND TAX COLLECTION PURPOSES (1974)

1	2	3	4	5
<u>Oogun Oten</u>	<u>Oogun Osi</u>	<u>Kota</u>	<u>Aiyebode</u>	<u>Omuo-Oke</u>
Illudofin	Illisa	Oda Odo	Ijero	Omuo-Oke
Oruji	Iworo	Oda Ponna	Edugbe	
Oya	Euta	Irafun	Ekurugbe	
Illoro		Uja	Iroro	
		Isaya	Odo Oyi	
		Igbede	Igo	
		Asekin Bolo	Iwada	
		Runduro	Inegun	
		Illisa-Oke		
		Obajoda		

APPENDIX 2BTABLE 21.

1	2	3	4	5	6
<u>Illisa</u>	<u>Iworo</u>	<u>Aiyebode</u>	<u>Kota</u>	<u>Illudofin</u>	<u>Omuc-Oke</u>
Illisa	Iworo	Ijorq	Isaya	Oruju	Omuc-Oke
		Ekurugbe	Uja		
		Ahan-Odo	Igbode	Oda Odo	
		Iroro	Irafun	Illoro	
		Odo Oyi	Odo-Ponna	Oya	
		Igo	Obajoda		
		Iwada	Esa Oke		
		Inegun	Bolorunduro		
		Edugbe	Apomu-Kota		

TABLE 21      Showing Omuc-Ekiti quarters. Modern structure divides the community into six sizeable quarters based on the principal lineages for electoral, rates and tax collections.  
(1974)

APPENDIX 3TABLE 22

<u>DENOMINATION</u>	<u>FOUNDED</u>
Methodist	1916
Baptist	1918 (no longer in existence)
Anglican (CMS)	1918
Roman Catholic	1925
Cherubin and Seraphin	1930
Seventh Day - Adventist (SDA)	1935
Christ Apostolic Church (CAC)	1951) AAC is a segment
African Apostolic Church (AAC)	1952) of CAC
Jehovah Witness (Alakatakiti)	1968
<u>Aladura</u> (formerly Apostolic Church)	1937
Islam ( <u>Imole</u> )	n.d. but it is believed the faith was introduced into Southern Nigeria during the <u>Bida</u> was between 1905 and 1909.

TABLE 22 Showing Omuro-Ekiti Denominational Churches and  
the years when founded.

SOURCE: Based on interview and field work material. 1974.

## APPENDIX 4

TABLE 23. SCHOOLS IN OMUO-EKITI 1974

SCHOOL	YEAR FOUNDED	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	No.OF TEACHERS	TEACHER/ PUPIL RATIO
L.A. Primary Omuo-Oke	1955	304	231	535	18	1.29
Methodist Sec.Modern Iworo	1957	141	72	213	7	1.31
All Saints Sec.Modern Iworo	1962	180	83	263	9	1.29
S.D.A. Primary Ijero	1955	138	127	265	9	1.29
Omuo High School (O.H.S.)	1970	207	109	316	15	1.21
* St.Andrews Primary Illudofin	1955	190	255	445	14	1.31
United School Primary Iworo	1942	285	257	542	18	1.30
* L.A. Primary Obadore	1955	148	156	304	9	1.33
L.A. Primary Kota	1948	325	253	578	18	1.32
Methodist Primary Illisa	1955	221	207	428	12	1.35
* St. Marys Primary Illudofin	1936	227	378	605	17	1.35
St. Silas Primary Omuo-Oke	1940	288	274	562	17	1.33
<u>TOTAL</u>		2654	2402	5056	163	1.31

TABLE 21 Showing various schools in Omuo-Ekiti in 1973/4 and the years founded.

\* Indicates schools where girls are in a majority of the total population.

SOURCE: Based on detailed interviews with all schools in the community.

DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE OMUO-EKITI STUDENTS (1974)

The main functions of any questionnaire, are to translate the research into specific questions, and to assist the interviewer in motivating the respondents to communicate the required information. Moreover, to achieve both these ends it is vital that the questions should be cast in the language of the respondent. The questionnaire must be designed to include the definition of the problem to be studied and a breaking down of the whole into important and relevant parts. The other decision is the way we must phrase the questions to be presented to our subjects - this in turn - cannot be divorced from the understanding of the respondent's situation, what to expect of him and limitations.

The choice between alternative techniques of interviewing involves important issues of methodology in the sense that it involves decisions about the type of information required, and the kind of analysis to which the information will be subjected. In the Omuo-Ekiti study, it soon transpired through the pilot surveys that it would not be advisable to use a strictly and relatively 'direct' open-ended questions to measure certain social issues such as divorce rate in the household. Moreover, for example, questions such as 'what is your ideal marriage, polygamy or monogamy' ? and ' Is your preference for urban or rural life'? were met by a large proportion of 'don't know's, blanks and confusion, etc. Therefore, the problem of formulating concepts involved in a way that would be comprehensible to the children was raised in an acute form.

As a result of this experience it was decided that another method must be formulated like simple straight forward and factual questions void of technical jargons, like how many wives does your father have, at what age do you hope to marry, etc. I did not arrive at this decision in order to make qualification easy for me but to help the children answer the questions to the best of their ability and knowledge.



Despite the closed schedule questions used, there are still a lot of problems involved consequent ~~upon~~ which some answered questionnaitre papers had to be declared null and void.

The aim of the questionnaire for the upper forms secondary school students was to elicit their views on general multiple social issues. It was hoped that such an objective might help in supplementing my data collected in the community as a whole. The schools were visited several times at which I made known the purpose of the study. A rapport was established between me, the students and teachers.

APPENDIX 5BSELECTION OF THE SAMPLES

At the time of the field work in 1974 there were three secondary schools in the community which included a grammar and two secondary modern schools. I decided to use the two <sup>best</sup> forms from each school in the following ways:

All Saints School, 44 girls, one third from Form two and two-thirds from Form three (Form three being the top or highest class in modern school). Furthermore 24 boys were selected as respondents, two-thirds of this from Form three and one third from Form two.

An identical arrangement was organised for the Methodist Modern School. In the case of Omuro-Ekiti High School (OHS), 68 students were selected; 44 of whom were girls and 24 boys. Out of the 44 girls, I chose two-thirds of them from Form five - the highest class in the school - and one third from the next highest class - Form 4. A similar arrangement was made in the case of boys in that school (OHS).

The objectives behind the selections were as follows:

- a) they were the students most likely to comprehend the nature of the questions by virtue of the educational attainments they have achieved so far;
- b) it was decided (by me) that the number of the samples should be small enough but which could still be regarded as a representative sample of the total population in the three schools;
- c) there was no clear-cut decision on my part to use the answers as a qualitative or quantitative presentation. Rather, both methods were kept in mind and, possibly, could be combined instead of drawing a dichotomy between them.

There were no refusals among the respondents which was perhaps a good sign that can be used to measure the success of the study? Indeed, what happened was that a great deal of pressure was put on me by the lower form students who were excluded from the study, but now pleaded to be included. This of course was rejected firmly on the grounds that it would upset the aim of the study.

In the process of selecting my samples, I had the fullest co-operation of the authorities in all the schools.

APPENDIX 5CTHE SCHEDULEQUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, OMUO-EKITI, 1974

The questions that you are now answering are completely confidential and none of the answers you give will be disclosed to any other persons. Please try to answer all the questions in full and to the best of your ability.

First, some general information about yourself:

- 1 Please give your names in full beginning with surname.....
- 2 Address.....
- 3 What is the name of your Quarter if you are a native of Omuo-Ekiti, or your town if you are from outside Omuo-Ekiti ?.....
- 4 How old are you in years and months: Years.....Months.....?
- 5 Are you male or female? (Underline the correct one).

Now, some questions about your parents.

- 6 What is your father's occupation? .....
- 7 What is your mother's occupation?.....
- 8 How many wives has your father? .....
- 9 Did your mother marry someone else before she married your father? .....
- 10 How many husbands did your mother have before she married your father? 1,2,3,4,5, none (please underline the correct one).
- 11 How many children are there altogether in your family?.....
- 12 In the arrangement of births, what is your position among your parents' children?.....

Again, some information about yourself.

- 13 What is your ambition in regards to further education after you would have left your present school? .....
- 14 At what age do you hope to marry? .....
- 15 To whom would you rather be married - Omuo-Ekiti or a non Omuo-Ekiti person? .....

Now Girls only:

- 16 Would you like your husband to marry more than one wife?  
Yes/no (Please underline the correct one)
- 17 How many children do you hope to have altogether when  
you marry? .....

Now Boys Only:

- 18 When you marry, would you want to marry a virgin?  
Yes/No (please underline the correct one)

Now Everybody:

- 19 What religion or religions do your parents belong to?.....
- 20 Are your parents living together? Yes/No (Please underline the  
correct one).
- 21 Have you made up your mind about the kind of job you want to  
do when you leave school?.....
- 22 Where in Nigeria, that is, the town or city, would you rather  
want to work?.....
- 23 If you are offered a job in Omuo-Ekiti would you accept it?.....
- 24 What are those things about which you and your parents  
disagree? .....
- 25 What do you do after school house, rest, go to the farm, read,  
help in the home, play about? (please underline those things  
that you normally do).